New VC nominated

Top medical scientist set to be 345th Vice-Chancellor

Emma Mustich
News Editor

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz has been nominated to replace Alison Richard as Vice-Chancellor of the University.

If his nomination is approved by Regent House, Professor Borysiewicz will step into the University’s top role on October 1st 2010, when Professor Richard’s seven-year term ends. He will be the University’s 345th Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Borysiewicz is currently Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council (MRC), and holds, among other posts, a Fellowship at the Academy of Medical Sciences, as well as a Fellowship at Wolfson College.

He was appointed as Head of the Department of Medicine at the University of Wales, and was Lecturer in Medicine at Cambridge from 1988 to 1991. He is an Honorary Fellow of Wolfson College.

He was awarded his knighthood in the 2001 New Year’s Honours List, in recognition of work that led to a vaccine which stops the growth of cervical cancer.

Of his nomination, Professor Borysiewicz commented: “I am excited by the opportunity to build on Cambridge’s strong tradition of academic excellence in both teaching and research. I will be sad to leave the Medical Research Council but I am proud to have helped the MRC write the next chapter in its long and successful history of improving human health through the impact of its excellent research.”

Professor Alison Richard has held the post of Vice-Chancellor since 2003, when she became the first woman to hold the full-time role. She came to the job from her former post as Yale University Provost.

Of Professor Borysiewicz’s nomination, she said: “Professor Borysiewicz is an outstanding scholar with an impressive record of achievement and leadership at the highest level. I wish him the very best in the role and will hand over the Vice-Chancellorship next October confident that Cambridge can look forward to continued success as he leads it into the future.”

Speaking to Varsity last year, Richard said of leaving her post as Vice-Chancellor: “I don’t think about legacies. I focus my attention on the institution, not on how I’m thought of.” She also expressed the hope that she would leave Cambridge with “its ambitions high, its confidence intact, and its flags flying.”

7
Maximum length, in years, of a Vice-Chancellor’s term of office

1412
Year the University’s first Vice-Chancellor was appointed

World cup-winning England rugby Number 8 Lawrence Dallaglio visited The Eagle pub on Wednesday night to promote next year’s ‘Dallaglio cycle slam’, a 2877km charity bike ride from Rome to Edinburgh. He stayed late into the evening to chat rugby, sign autographs and have pictures taken with fans. Dallaglio also asked fellow pub-goers to read about his charity efforts at dallagiolfoundation.com. Regarding the upcoming Varsity match, he predicted that Blues captain Dan Vickery’s “huge experience could prove crucial”, and that “Cambridge, as the underdogs looking to regain the MMC trophy, may have that edge. They will go well”. See p30-31 for full preview.

Dallaglio: “They will go well”
In Brief

Finances: only the prudent survive?
The recipe for the perfect financial trader has been revealed by research from the University of Cambridge. Several years of experience, combined with profit sharing incentives and the right hormonal levels create the best most profitable traders, according to a new study. Aggressive risk-taking, however, may not be as central to successful trading as has been thought. The males who took bigger risks were exposed to bigger losses, according to the study, and therefore were less effective in the long term than more prudent counterparts.

Antarctic Twittermania
Researchers at the University of Cambridge’s Scott Polar Research Institute have started blogging and tweeting Captain Robert Falcon Scott’s diary entries, written exactly 150 years ago. Started yesterday, the entries will follow Scott’s ill-fated final expedition across Antarctica and are timed to coincide with the centenary of the trip. The idea is to allow modern readers to relate more easily with what the group were trading as has been thought.

Varsity scoops six prizes at the Guardian Student Media Awards
Decca Muldowney and Andrew Spyrou were also nominated, for Best Feature Writer and Best Music Critic respectively.

The judging panel included Jon Snow, Texas Davis, Polly Toynbee, and Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger.

Varsity was the most successful newspaper at this year’s Awards, and Patrick Kingsley is the first Cambridge student to win the coveted award for best Student Journalist since the category was established in 2001.

‘Town Takeover’ in Cambridge

Yesterday, anti-fee protestors ‘took over’ Cambridge. Demonstrators, overseen by Anglican Ruskin students, circulated the town with balloons, signs, and megaphones. The demonstration was a part of a nationwide series of ‘Town Takeovers’ organised by the NUS in aid of the ‘Funding our Future’ campaign.

The Cambridge demonstrators performing a number of publicity stunts throughout Cambridge. Their route ran from East Road to Parkers Piece, via St Andrews, Sidney Street, Green Street, Trinity Street, Kings Parade, Queens’ Lane, Silver Street, and Queens’ Green.

In addition to the ‘Takeover’, a debate with local political leaders on the issue was held in the evening at the Law Faculty.

In London, the campaign has gathered increasing support from Westminster; 60 MPs from diverse political parties were persuaded to sign a pledge promising to vote against a hike in top up fees and to pressure the Government to find an alternative.

On Sunday, a YouGov poll revealed that just 27 per cent think the review should even consider raising fees.

Varsity News

Varsity celebrated six prizes and two further nominations at the Guardian Student Media Awards on Wednesday night.

Winners were Ben Elley-Smith (Best Sports Writer), Zing Tsjeng (Best Feature Writer), Charlotte Runcie (Best Columnist), Robert Peal (Runner-up Columnist), Mikey Stothard (Best Reporter), and Patrick Kingsley, who was named Student Journalist of the Year.

Name Xchange for Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race

The Varsity Boat Race will now be known as ‘The Xchanging Boat Race’ after the business processing company has sponsored the event for five years.

The sporting event, which began in 1828, will take place in April next year for the 185th time, with Xchanging branding featuring prominently on the new event logo and along the Tideway course from Putney to Mortlake.

Xchanging announced the renaming in a press statement released on November 19th. David Andrews, founder and CEO of the company, said: “We are pleased and honoured to allow title sponsorship of an event that typifies the best sporting events, and will allow the Boat Race to be renamed and will allow the event to go forward as an event we treasure so much.

It is thought that the decision to allow the Boat race to be renamed was made due to financial difficulties. Last year ITV decided not to renew their contract with the Boat Race Company Ltd.

The decision to allow Varsity, 2009 Blues rower and current trialist Hardy Cubasch spoke of the ‘true honour’ it was to row in the ‘historic and iconic event’.

He continued: “In modern times though, the resources required throughout the season and on Boat Race day are extensively stretched. It is only through partnerships that both the CUBC and OUBC have been able to support their students to the levels we so fortunately enjoy.

“In an ideal world, with the passionate and close knit student and alumni community that both our clubs share, perhaps it would be possible that one day we ourselves, through our own resources, could find a way to preserve and nurture an event we treasure so much. “However, until that day, finding partners that respect the heritage of the Boat Race is our next best option and will allow the event to go forward as a highlight on the University and the international sporting calendar.”
KCL students spotted swimming naked in Cam

» Members of KCL Boat Club cause disruption on ‘Spy Who Ginned Me’ tour

Stephanie Howard-Smith
Reporter

Naked students from King’s College London (KCL) caused serious disruption at the Anchor pub and along the Cam near Scudamore’s this past Sunday afternoon.

A group of approximately 30 rowers from the King’s College London Boat Club (KCLBC), all of whom were reportedly intoxicated, were visiting the city on a weekend-long mini-tour titled ‘The Spy Who Ginned Me’.

The climax of the tour featured an initiation during which the fresher rowers, of both sexes, were instructed to strip naked and swim in the River Cam in the early afternoon in front of onlookers, including families punting on the river.

Oldest club members on the trip then, according to the barman at the Mill Pub, ran off with their discarded clothes while the newest members were still in the river.

After their refreshing dip in the Cam, the swimmers decamped to the Anchor pub, some of them still naked. Staff there reported that a large group took over the entire establishment, leaving their large kit bags covering all the seating, allegedly making it impossible to take in customers for two hours.

According to one member of staff, the rowers became increasingly “rowdy” despite the manager’s best attempts to avoid conflict. Eventually, it was made clear to the group that they would “not be welcome again”, at which point they were invited to leave, and eventually vacated the premises.

Mandelson’s “sinister” new proposal to diversify top universities

Claire Gatzen
Senior Reporter

Government plans to force Oxbridge to accept more working-class pupils have been attacked by CUSU and the heads of leading private schools.

Earlier this month, Business, Innovation and Skills Secretary Peter Mandelson proposed reforms – ever.” He added, “This is potentially one of the most dangerous pronouncements I have heard – ever.”

Mandelson: more proposals

Mandelson has processes in place to take into account the type of contextual data which would inform about impediments to a student’s exam results.

According to one member of staff, the rowers became increasingly “rowdy” despite the manager’s best attempts to avoid conflict. Eventually, it was made clear to the group that they would “not be welcome again”, at which point they were invited to leave, and eventually vacated the premises.

The King’s College London Boat Club (which also incorporates members of Guy’s, King’s and St Thomas’ Hospital) describes itself as “a friendly and dynamic club” formed in 1997. It is “one of the largest and most successful sports clubs at King’s and each year [invites] entrance and women of all abilities to join our traditions of success and societies.” The Club’s annual Cambridge mini-tour is considered a highlight of the year, serving as “a chance for the squad to bond”, and includes first years, other members, and some alumni, known as the “Junipers”.

Freshers were instructed by the Club’s “ Fresher Captains” to “bring a bottle of gin with you, this [sic] is the most important. Doesn’t matter which type but bare [sic] in mind you will probably be drinking it.”

The weekend was, according to the KCLBC’s message boards, a riotous success, with one of the touring party, postling as “Juniper Grip”, leading the “great banter” on the part of the freshers, their willingness to participate and praising “A great weekend all around.”

On Tuesday night, KCLBC’s Captain Tom Webb posted the following to KCLBC’s website: “Clearly, some of our number were spotted by the Spy Who Ginned Me.”

“Although I was not in Cambridge on Sunday, I haven’t heard of any complaints during the tour, whether on the water or at the Anchor.

“I would hope that any misdemeanours be taken in good humour and that any transgressions of good grace be put in perspective.”

“We hope to be back next year in finer fettle than ever. Needless to say, I apologise for any offence taken. None was intended.”

Members of KCLBC take a dip in the Cam near the Anchor

Members of KCL Boat Club cause disruption on ‘Spy Who Ginned Me’ tour

» Members of KCL Boat Club cause disruption on ‘Spy Who Ginned Me’ tour

When: Friday November 27th 2009

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News Editors: Avantika Chilkoti, Emma Manisch and Beth Staton

www.sonycentres.co.uk
Cambridge student attacked in Russia

» Irish student Christopher Connolly has been beaten to a pulp by a hammer in a garage in the Yubilee region of the city.

Police have said that “the reason for the altercation is not yet clear.”

According to Yegan.ru, a local Russian internet news portal, a 21-year-old local resident, Daniel Korobotchenko, is now in custody. He has been charged with ‘deliberate infliction of grievous bodily harm’.

On Saturday following an assault in the Yubilee region of the city,” Korotchenko, is now in custody. He has been charged with ‘deliberate infliction of grievous bodily harm’.

Russia has been plagued by high crime rates for a number of years. Between 1988 and 1994 the homicide rate more than tripled, placing it amongst the highest in the world. Last week, Bill Browder, once the leading foreign investor in Russia, stated that he believed the country had now turned into what was “essentially a criminal state”.

Be part of journalism’s future

The next decade heralds a new dawn. Print’s out; web and broadcast are in, and hackery faces its biggest makeover since Caxton invented type. And you – yes, you – can be a part of the revolution right here at the award-winning Varsity. That’s right: our fledgling new media arms – VarsiTV and Varsity Online – are looking for new talent.

We want to hear from anyone who’s interested in 24-hour news, and who thinks they might be a dab hand at either manipulating the moving image or embracing the web. We want Varsity to be more than just the world’s greatest weekly paper; we want to be a volcano of round-the-clock journalistic activity.

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Be part of the future.

Email: editor@varsity.co.uk for more information.

College Chefs’ Competition: winners announced

“We moved the competition venue to the Guildhall to fit more,” said Robert Lee, one of the committee members for the event, who sees the 800th Anniversary as a “platform for the future: the boosted entry for this year should carry over to the next.

The momentum for the competition to develop is particularly important: its predecessor, the Stewards’ Cup, collapsed 20 years ago partly because of its insularity. Fellows would judge their college catering staff based on their personal satisfaction with the food rather than a professional culinary judging.

In contrast to this the new event aims to diversify, with new live cooking competitions and a petite fours competition introduced for 2009, and sponsors promoting more esoteric categories.

“It’s good fun. It definitely makes your cooking improve,” said Davis of the competition’s diversity.

Shit hits the fan in ARU housing dispute

A bitter row between Cambridge residents and Anglia Ruskin (ARU) students culminated this week in the sending of a package of excrement to a member of Anglia Ruskin’s housing staff.

The dispute concerns The Forum, an accommodation complex on Tiverton Way on the outskirts of Cambridge. The Forum had for a long time been used as sheltered accommodation for the elderly. But recently, Anglia Ruskin Staff began renting the accommodation from a private landlord. There are now 109 students in the flat complex.

Local residents are complaining of general anti-social behaviour, disruption in the early hours of the morning, and increased traffic in the area. It is also alleged that food waste was dumped in an elderly resident’s garden after she complained about excessive noise.

No Cambridge University students are involved in the dispute. Indeed, a local resident, Ellis Hall, commented: “If this was happening to Cambridge University they would be down on it like a ton of bricks but ARU doesn’t seem to care.”

Speaking to Varsity this week, Steve Bennett, Anglia Ruskin’s Secretary and Director of Estates and Facilities Services, explained that given the private landlord-tenant relationship subsisting on Tiverton Way, the University can do little to intervene.

While the Tiverton Estate Action Group is meeting to discuss the issues fully in the coming days, it is clear that there has been an unseemly escalation in the dispute.

A package of excrement was recently posted through the letterbox of a member of Anglia Ruskin’s Housing Team on account of the Tiverton Way debacle. Threats to the member of staff’s children were also made.

Mr. Bennett confirmed that two Anglia Ruskin students had allegedly brought the University into disrepute on account of the housing row, and said that those students would go through “the proper University disciplinary process.”

Mr. Bennett commented that the member of staff who received the mailed excrement and child threats “had been considerably shaken up” by the threats. The matter has been reported to the Cambridgeshire Police, who were unable to comment.
The curse of the drinking classes

Varsity News

Cambridge’s swapping culture has been marred by a series of unusual and violent episodes in the last term.

Several incidents, which include plate-throwing, punch-ups and vandalism, have resulted in police involvement and hospitalisation. College authorities have responded to the events by curtailing student privileges, whilst members have risen to the defence of Drinking Societies.

In the most recent incident, on Tuesday, a punch-up at Cindies led to one student being knocked unconscious, when a verbal altercation between the “Clare Cunts” and another party was followed with a violent confrontation.

One witness blamed the incident partly on swaps. “Intercollegiate violence is accentuated by the culture of drinking societies in Cambridge,” he said.

The incident follows an assault on two female swappers during a week off swaps in Hall.

The police attended the incident, but left when no party decided to press charges. Spokesperson Emma Harding said drinking society violence was not usually a concern.

“In the main the majority of drinking activity is on a Friday or Saturday night,” she said.

At the drinking-society staple the Mahal, however, other students have been injured as a result of alcohol-fuelled indiscretions. Several female students were hurt after being hit by plates and platters, which were thrown across the room. In one incident, a girl required medical attention after being hit, and the male drinker, who threw the plate, faced disciplinary action from his college.

“People from drinking societies are really good customers, very gentle, until they start drinking” the owners of the Mahal said.

“Everyone knows what happens: shouting, throwing food which ends up on the ceilings and the walls, sometimes even jumping on the tables. We can become angry as we try and keep everything calm, but because they are drunk, drinking societies are definitely more rowdy than other customers”.

One society member was similarly unimpressed. “It’s an environment which allows you to act like a child so it’s not surprising that boundary lines are crossed,” he said.

“Once one drinking society does one thing, the other feels they have to up the. I just think this Big-Dick culture needs to stop and people need to concentrate on just having fun on swaps,” another added.

Similar problems have hit colleges. In week three, a drunken race in Caius old courts was halted when a fresher from a visiting society smashed a vestry window, interrupting a choir audition and forcing him to Aldenbrookes for treatment.

A second incident, in which an unnamed Johnian urinated on the college bar, resulted in both Caius drinking societies being banned from swapping in Hall.

“At John’s the ban on bringing wine to the college’s hall has effectively ended the swapping culture there. The increase in such incidents is worrying for Drinking Society members.

“I enjoy going out, and meeting different people, and for me swaps are about a group of friends having fun,” said Alice Beardmore-Gray, president of the Caius Cupids.

I don’t think that rude or violent behaviour is normally a problem, and when it is, it is largely due to a few individuals who would no doubt cause trouble whether they were on a swap or not”, she said.

“As a medic I managed to make (nearly) all my 9am lectures last year without missing a Cindies, as well as getting involved in other areas of Cambridge life”.

For many college authorities, however, an association between drinking societies and misbehaviour has lead to the prohibition of swaps and, in some cases, the total proscription of drinking societies.

Misbehaviour following swaps, including damaged property, prolific vomiting and rudeness to staff, lead to the closure of Pembroke’s bar three weeks ago, and a ban on all swaps in Formal Hall was imposed this week. Disciplinary measures against individuals were also taken.

Corpus Christi saw a similar state of carnage after a swap-heavy Sunday, which resulted in two large chunks of stone disappearing from the walls.

“In this big-dick culture needs to stop and people need to concentrate on just having fun on swaps”, Drinking Society member

From the Archives: Drinking and thinking

In 1951, it seems, student boozing was limited to staff parties. One Varsity writer describes turning “green with envy” at the sight of “a dozen crates of beer, four five gallon barrels and assorted bottles of rum, gin and sherry standing in the main hall of the biochemistry laboratories. Is this a sign of decadence?” they asked; inquires, however, proved the remains to be “of an excellent staff party held on twelfth night.” The writers gleefully vow to head back to term “earlier next year.”

Our sixty counters-parties were far too concerned with race, gender and class equality, to worry about the Mahal’s fancy-dress code. The scandalous aftermath of one 1963 party at Girton, however, included a broken washtub in a front-page appeal for the responsible party, organiser Beth Shaw said “there were 200 guests and about 30 garter-catchers” at her event, where “the basin was discovered, with its bottom knocked out, just as they were going home about ten-past eleven.”

“Things get rowdier in the eighties, with the Selwyn Sports Society dinner and its accompanying ‘banter’. The society is reported to have “decimated the dining room, leaving a sticky mixture of cream coloured and red wine trodden into the carpet. Next, to the bar, where there cacophonous boorish chanting deafened everyone else, so much beer was spilt that the bar had to be closed for two days to be cleaned.” Further carnage ensued, one member decided to burn himself in a fire extinguisher, and a £30 fine from an impressed Dean.

By the ’90s sporting societies are established enough to merit a commentary. What, writes Ruth Musgrove in Michaelmas 96, can persuade “these young men who look so dashing in lycra, and so handsome wielding hockey sticks, to abandon all sense and reason and subject themselves to a night of forced drunkenness, gruesome acts and ridicule?” Her conclusion is aided by the poetic abilities of one member of the Catz Kittens – “We drink beer in amounts that other men fear And women think sex when a kitten comes near”.

News Feature
**Cambridge University Green Association**

This is a difficult time for those who would choose Green as the principle that underlies their political identity. With virtually every traditional environmental villain borrowing the robes of an eco-friendly character, the Labour and Liberal Partnership to British Petroleum, it is only natural to think that without something more to say, the Cambridge University Green Association is simply preaching to the choir.

Within Cambridge, there are numerous groups campaigning to make the University more sustainable; CUSU ethical affairs and most JCRs work tirelessly to change attitudes and implement reforms on a large scale, whilst groups like Cambridge University Environmental Consulting Society advise on more niche issues, such as the environmental impact of May Balls.

CUGA is happy to work with these groups but making Cambridge greener is not their main aim. According to CUGA, it is diffusing their ideas and influence on national policies in a difficult way.

CUGA are currently divorced from a commitment to areas in Nepal, Mongolia and India that aims to help Tibetan exiled communities in India and other areas of the Himalayas.

**ELST** is a Cambridge-based charity that aims to help Tibetan exiled communities in India and other areas of the Himalayas.

The charity's work is twofold. Firstly, ELST arranges for a small number of 3 month scholarships to Cambridge for those in exile to partake in intensive language courses. They also send volunteers to areas in Nepal, Mongolia and India to help the Tibetan community learn English. It is the provision of these volunteers which forms the main purpose of the Cambridge University ELST Society.

People are often sceptical about travelling with charities or organisations fearing a scam, but reading the testimonials of past volunteers on the ELST website makes it clear that this organisation is different—"this is not a program but a charity". ELST focuses upon the individual traveller creating their own trip.

Students are selected through application forms and interviews and are simply provided with contacts in their host country so they can each formulate their own unique experience. ELST also provide travel grants to volunteers and help with raising of funds. One ELST volunteer said, "there are so many travel grants available in Cambridge that it is just a question of knowledge about them. Equally, by volunteering with ELST you put a reputable charity on the application form which increases your chance of receiving funding."

She described her experience of teaching and greengrabs, Karnataka: "Mornings were spent teaching the lay community and in the afternoon I taught at the Sera Jey monastery nearby. It's not just English you can teach too. My students were really keen to do some debating, drama and art so we spent some time on that, and CVs and interview skills as well. Working in a community of 6,000 male monks was a phenomenal experience and Tibetans are truly the most gentle and generous people I have ever met, offering to show us around the monastery, organising special lessons on Buddhism for us and even inviting us to their yoga classes at daybreak."

The period of teaching undertaken by volunteers must span a minimum of six weeks and volunteers are encouraged to travel before or after the teaching programme, as well as using weekends to discover the surrounding area.

Applications are open to all Cambridge undergraduates until midnight on Saturday January 16th 2010. See www.elst.org.uk for more details. Tilly Broyn
Two weeks ago, the JCR of Caius created outcry by controversially proposing to end funding to religious, political or charitable societies. This would have included organisations such as Amnesty International and the Christian Union.

This Sunday, after heated opposition, an Open Meeting was held and this motion retracted and wholly revised. The college’s JCR Secretary commented: “I think the Open Meeting was a big success – we had a good turn-out...The result was that we will be amending our Mission Statement to make it clearer how society budgets are allocated and that students are welcome to see the details of the budget allocation process. We will also be holding a referendum next week on the proposed changes to the Constitution: chief among them is a proposal to separate ‘recognition’ of a society from our funding of a society”. The revised motion has met with positive feedback from students.

Students of the College have been asked to “refrain from climbing over locked gates on College property”, in an email from Acting Dean Robert Busch. This follows significant injuries to offending students this term. Sidney students have been assured that the porters would prefer to be telephoned to let them in rather than having to deal with offenders both in terms of proof and first aid assistance. It has been threatened that the matter will transcend the boundary from being a matter of safety to one of discipline.

The JCR of Magdalen College Oxford has passed a motion to rename itself ‘Gryffindor’ and will henceforth be referred to as such in official documents. Successful amendments to the motion include purchase of a ‘Sorting Hat’. Less successful, was the suggestion of a letter to the college President asking that he change his name to Albus Dumbledore. The JCRC President also has a mandate to contact his peers at Christ Church, St Hugh’s and Merton to propose renaming their own combination rooms Slytherin, Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw. With the blasphemous prospect of the UL becoming ‘The Deloitte Library’, Varsity suggest we jump on the Rowling bandwagon with ‘The Azkaban Library’ to start, John’s as ‘Slytherin and Christ’s as Hufflepuff, of course.

The governors of London Metropolitan University have been given six days to “consider their positions” in light of a report which found the institution has misused public money. The institution must now repay the £65.5 million debt as the inquiry found the university had received tens of millions of pounds in overpayments from the Higher Education Funding Council for England because it submitted inaccurate student data to the council. The report, which will be published this week alongside a second inquiry by Deloitte, attributes the situation to a combination of false reporting by the university and the institution’s failure to address high rates of incompletion.

Hundreds of emails and documents hacked from a computer server at the University of East Anglia are being used by skeptics against the idea that humans have a lasting impact on climate change. These global warming skeptics claim the emails, attributed to prominent American and British climate researchers, show that scientists conspired to over-exaggerate the anthropogenic causes of climate change by discussing whether or not to release certain data, withholding it and deciding collectively how best to combat the arguments of skeptics. The university has brought in police to investigate the security breach.
The world can only be grasped by action, not by contemplation.”

Jacob Bronowski, University of Cambridge 1927-1933

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To register for the Open Day, go to cambridgemphil.co.uk/openday
A healthy appreciation of our sexuality is essential to happiness, says ALBAN McCOY. But popular culture cuts off the groin from the heart – and nowhere is the resulting alienation more obvious than in the universities

**THE ESSAY:**

**Misunderstanding Sex**

**Michael Lucas**

A healthy appreciation of our sexuality is essential to happiness, says ALBAN McCOY. But popular culture cuts off the groin from the heart – and nowhere is the resulting alienation more obvious than in the universities.

The deluge of advice concerning sex that greets freshers, much of it depressingly grim and notably humourless, and the discovery that many a College laundry room may lack an iron but never fails to have one or even two condom machines, prompts one to wonder whether we haven’t, somewhere along the line, lost the plot.

No one can or should deny that a healthy appreciation of our sexuality is essential to a balanced, integrated and flourishing life – essential, that is, to happiness – and an unhealthy view of sexuality has the opposite effect. But it surely doesn’t follow from this that you can’t be happy without having sex – and lots of it. That sex and happiness automatically belong together is nothing but wishful thinking, which would be risible if it wasn’t so damaging. Sadly, many people coming up to Cambridge fall victim to the prejudice that sex is proof of social success and a non-negotiable ‘must’ if you’re normal or, at least, acceptable among your peers. This failure to distinguish sexuality and sex reduces sex to nothing more than genital plumbing and cuts off the groin from the heart and both of our lives, including the spiritual.

Sexuality pervades every aspect of our lives, including the spiritual. It is an immensely powerful drive, a formidable force for life and love. But, misunderstood or badly managed, it can be the cause of unimaginable unhappiness.

There are many ways of misunderstanding both sexuality and sex, but two stand out. The first is prudery and prurience, attributed specifically to Catholics: on this view, sex is far too messy to be regarded as an important part of our lives, and certainly has nothing to do with the spiritual life. Admittedly, this has been the view of many religious sects in history, some of them Christian heresies, but it is a view that leads, at worst, to neurosis, hypocrisy and hardness of heart and, at best, to missed opportunities for human flourishing. Whatever individual Christians may have thought and taught, Christianity as such does not deny the intrinsic goodness of our sexuality. Christian mystics have freely and famously used the language of erotic love and sexual metaphor to describe the communion with God to which Christians believe all human beings are called. And theologians of unquestioned stature have taught the goodness of our sexuality. St Thomas Aquinas, for instance, unambiguously asserts that it is, in itself, good (Summa Theologica 2.1(1) and 2.1(2) and that lack of due delight in our senses is a serious failing (ST 2a2ae 1.22.1). According to Aquinas, God has given us our senses so that we might delight in his creation.

If the first misunderstanding fails to register the importance of sexuality, the second makes of it an idol. Our age is undeniably prudish. His latest book is An Intelligent Person’s Guide to Christian Ethics.

Our sexuality is intrinsic to our humanness and it follows that sex can never be insignificant, no matter how casually we may treat it: it will always either build us up or diminish us; either enhance life or diminish it. In a committed, exclusive and permanent relationship, it can be life-giving in every sense, leading to lifelong trust and love. Conversely, casual or ‘recreational’ sex trivialises trust and alienates us from one another.

Popular culture, of course, tests that this is to accord too much importance to sex, which doesn’t or needn’t carry such significance. Sex, on this view, is no more psychologically significant than any other mutually satisfying pastime.

But anybody who holds this view must surely be struck by our growing awareness of the socially and personally destructive impact of sex misuse. We’re more conscious than ever before of the tide of human suffering caused by sexual abuse of all kinds. And it’s not just violent, non-consensual sex that damages and destroys: casual, impersonal, uncommitted sex has equally damaging consequences.

Sex never happens without some consequence, at the time or in due course.

Sex is safest (in the fullest sense, and not just from an hygienic point of view) and therefore most positively significant, in the context of a permanent, exclusive and committed relationship, open to the possibility of new life, in which the free gift of shared intimacy is not inhibited by a desire to avoid the consequences of commitment in both biological and psychological terms.

By its very nature, sex is a unique bodily language expressing trust and mutual commitment through time. It is a gift of self in the most vulnerable of all human situations. Where these qualities are not present, there is inevitably a damaging dissonance between our desires and our intentions. Sex in the absence of these conditions is a pretence, a charade, an empty and meaningless gesture, going nowhere and conveying nothing: “the expense of spirit in a waste of shame”.

A final point about the much-misunderstood and unfashionable virtue of chastity. Chastity doesn’t mean not having sex: the virtue of chastity is as much at home in marriage as anywhere else. Nor does chastity mean being a prude: being prudish offends against chastity as much as being prurient and promiscuous. In fact, chastity isn’t primarily concerned with sex at all. Chastity has to do with all our relationships, including our relationship with ourselves. It primarily concerns reverence and respect for ourselves and others.

To be chastie is to relate to others with integrity and with integrity, without manipulating or invading their freedom to be themselves. It is to relate, in other words, within appropriate personal, emotional and physical boundaries: within the boundaries, that is, set by another person and the truths that inform and shape their lives. It is to treat other people as ends and never means, relating to them in themselves and for themselves. Of course, chastity is particularly important in the area of sex because, more easily than many of our other appetites, it can lead us to offend against another’s or our own good by crossing boundaries.

To fear and dislike sex is as much a testimony of chastity as is the fear of it for selfish gratification. Chastity protects and enhances the significance of our sexuality, challenging prudery as much as promiscuity. Instead of either escaping or exploiting our sexuality, we should rejoice in it and be grateful for our bodily lives, living our lives lastly but never lustfully.
A term marred by corporate intrusions

From now on, thousands of Oxbridge students past and present will congregate each Easter on the banks of the Thames to catch up with friends, cheer on their alma mater and enjoy that time-honoured crown jewel of British sport: The Xchanging Boat Race. This sad news is the latest in a line of events which have made corporate intrusion into university life the theme of this term. Whether it is companies advertising on the pavements outside King's, the UL selling its name to the highest bidder or the CBI advising the Government on university policy, Cambridge seems to have lost any idea of its autonomous reason for existing and is becoming merely a precursor to professional life.

Some may say that a name is irrelevant, or a small price to pay for the money it brings in, but this is clearly not the case. The name of an event is important and that is precisely why Xchanging are willing to pay money to have it usurped. It implies that the culture and purpose of university life is merely to process youngsters into aspirant go-getters armed with transferable skills and ready to storm the battlements of Canary Wharf. Love of learning, the virtue of teaching and intellectual enrichment are now by the way, merely the means to a six figure salary end.

The University of Cambridge's nomenclature used to reflect a reverence for learning. In 1897 the University's History library was renamed in honour of the historian Sir John Seeley, and when fifty years later a new site was developed in part to hold the Seeley Library it was named after the philosopher Henry Sidgwick. The buildings and institutions of Cambridge reflect a history and heritage of intellectual endeavour, but from now on they threaten to reflect a sad subordination to business and material concerns.

The deal with Xchanging may be financially lucrative, but in spirit it is cheap. The fact that their CEO can, with a straight face, claim that “Xchanging draws strength and inspiration” from Oxbridge rowers shows how far we have fallen in tolerating executive speak. This term has also seen the absurdly named ‘Research Excellence Framework’ established to decide upon university funding, and as Cambridge's Stefan Collini has argued in the TLS its “menus” of “impact indicators” shows the Government’s dispiriting lack of understanding of why the humanities in particular should be studied. However it would appear that our universities are equally capable of justifying their existence and standing up to big businesses.

There is a reason why universities exist aside from churning out employable students. However, the renaming of the boat race is just the latest in a long line of theTypeId has overtones beyond bloodsucking and hormonal angst. Hell, vampire stories have come with their own illustrous history of allegory, since Bram Stoker's seminal 1897 novel, the vampire has meant desire, depravity, and promiscuity. These qualities are knowingly subverted in Twilight, with the vampire heroes instead opting for monogamy and chastity. Twilight reclaims the well-worn tale of sexual desire and makes it palatable to the Bible Belt. The message is clear: abstinence is sexy.

Twilight shows how Disney lost its childhood innocence: thanks to capitalism, the tween is dead

I confess: I went to see Twilight: New Moon on the day it came out, mainly because someone had already written a review to entice me into seeing it. New Moon is one of those long drawn out moments of sexual tension, helped along by plenty of rock-hard abs. (Team Jacob!) What’s more, if you don’t stop at eye candy, there’s a scene in this latest installment of Stephanie Meyer’s sparkly vampire-restrain-erotic-queer-everything goes a bit meta. It’s about a third of the way through when lip-biting necrophiliac Bella Swan goes to see a zombie movie with her friend Jessica (who looks and acts like a refugee from High School Musical). As they leave the cinema we’re treated to Jessica’s opinions on the film, which mainly consist of her bemoaning its lack of "hot guys" and absurdist vision for its supposed status as a metaphor for capitalism. Twilight, of course, is nothing but hot guys. Zombies…D’you get it?

You’ll forgive me for paraphrasing: I couldn’t take detailed notes in the screening, as a Moleskine at a festival of fantasy just isn’t terrify gauche. Anyway, unexpected Wes Craven moment dealt with, New Moon soon gets back to the important business of finding spurious reasons for impossibly attractive men to remove their shirts, and it becomes clear where the film’s priorities lie. But is Twilight really an economic metaphor, too? Or is it just a festival of all things pop-tween, nothing more than what the Times critic Kevin Maher called “the cinematic equivalent of a Jonas Brothers concert”? With all that sexual tension flying around, it’s hard to think otherwise.

But it’s old news that Sci-Fi and Fantasy are vehicles for commentary on the real world. Everyone’s familiar with the utterer motives of Narnia, so it’s not exactly groundbreaking to suggest that the most recent fantasy sensation has overtones beyond bloodsucking and hormonal angst. Hell, vampire stories have come with their own illustrous history of allegory, since Bram Stoker’s seminal 1897 novel, the vampire has meant desire, depravity, and promiscuity. These qualities are knowingly subverted in Twilight, with the vampire heroes instead opting for monogamy and chastity. Twilight reclaims the well-worn tale of sexual desire and makes it palatable to the Bible Belt. The message is clear: abstinence is sexy.

I hope there will be no more references to Blueprint in this week’s ‘Independent’ Varsity. Dom Pelemum Jesus

Contrary to reports in last week’s Varsity, Sidney’s dons are not on the brink of sexual oblivion, all you need to do is push them over the edge. Forget about ponies and sleepovers; the innocent tween must die. Surround them with sex, teaching them how to do it, and make everything glibber to ease the transition.

Evidence that this strategy is working is that the process of growing up is becoming an overnight switchover from childhood to libidinous adolescence, can be found in the diminishing market for anything squelchy clean. Disney tween queen Miley Cyrus was photographed in a provocative pose for Vanity Fair at age 15 and, still underage in America, she pole-danced at the 2009 Teen Choice Awards. Her estimated worth is around $50 million, making her the world’s richest teen. And it’s diffi- cult to defend her as child-friendly.

It’s happened in the US, and it’s happening here. The people keeping Jedward in were twentieth somethings with a sense of irony and anyone wanting to annoy Simon Cowell, and both of these camps have far less than the tween stuck at home with their parents every Saturday night.

Jedward’s departure proved that the tween is dead. Non-threaten- ing is over; 11-13 year olds are demanding something darker, and the promise of more to come with every hint of burgeoning sexuality. The relentless drive of capitalism has led us further towards the sexualisation of children, and big corporations like Disney are happy to keep it that way. Maybe Twilight isn’t a metaphor for capitalism, but it certainly embodies its darker side.

Letters to the Editor

I have been giving some thought to the vexed question of the University Library’s new sponsor

which is such a source of anxiety in some quarters. Tescos seems to offer the slightest of alibis; Sainsbury’s is not interested; EAE Weapons Systems is probably unsuitable; but surely no one could object to naming the UL after a publisher. So I suggest ‘The Oxford University Press Cambridge University Library’. No-one could take offence at that.

Steven Edmondson
Ex-Pembroke

Varsity claims to be ‘The Independent Student Newspaper’, but I notice not one but two flattering reviews of the ‘Cambridge boyband’ Blueprint in last week’s issue. Is someone going on here? Do Blueprint really deserve a five-star review when they have already been described as ‘soooo amazing’ (Rafael Meruna, My Week)? It is difficult to imagine that Blueprint could really be as good as you say.

Marcus Back
Clare Cellars Publicity Officer

Newnham College bar turned student-run in Michaelmas of 2008, and has been successfully running under student management since then. The bar, which boasts a plasma screen TV, a pool table and some of the cheapest prices in Cambridge, is staffed and run by the students of Newnham.

That said, the bar committee would like to register our support of Sidney’s efforts to retain their student re-status. The Sidney bar team were tremendous when helping to set our bar up and we can vouch for their undeniable hard work and ability. It would be a great shame if this privilege was removed, especially given that it does not reflect a lack of talent or ability on the Sidney bar team, only the poor behaviour of a few drunken outsiders.

Anna Montgomery
Bar Manager, Newnham

Email letters@varsity.co.uk for the chance to win a bottle from the Cambridge Wine Merchants. Letters may be edited.

Charlotte Runcie
Student Columnist of the Year

I confess: I went to see Twilight: New Moon on the day it came out, mainly because someone had already written a review to entice me into seeing it. New Moon is one of those long drawn out moments of sexual tension, helped along by plenty of rock-hard abs. (Team Jacob!) What’s more, if you don’t stop at eye candy, there’s a scene in this latest installment of Stephanie Meyer’s sparkly vampire-restrain-erotic-queer-everything goes a bit meta. It’s about a third of the way through when lip-biting necrophiliac Bella Swan goes to see a zombie movie with her friend Jessica (who looks and acts like a refugee from High School Musical). As they leave the cinema we’re treated to Jessica’s opinions on the film, which mainly consist of her bemoaning its lack of “hot guys” and absurd vision for its supposed status as a metaphor for capitalism. Twilight, of course, is nothing but hot guys. Zombies…D’you get it?

You know all this. And yet the theme doesn’t quite work, not least because telling the tween (for the tween is absolutely the target for these films and books) not to have sex will only make them think about it more. South Park’s Jonas Brothers episode is a much more adept critique of the JoBro/abstinence phenomenon than I could manage, and I recommend you check it out. But there’s more to be said; there’s something darker afoot in Twilight.

For an economy dependent on using sex to sell products, the virgin tween market has always been a challenge. But now Disney seems to have cracked it; to appeal to a demographic poised on the brink of sexual oblivion, all you have to do is push them over the edge. Forget about ponies and sleepovers; the innocent tween must die. Surround them with sex, teaching them how to do it, and make everything glibber to ease the transition.

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The main parties don’t want to talk about tuition fees. It’s up to students to fight for a fairer system

Tom Chigbo

“The main parties don’t want to talk about tuition fees. It’s up to students to fight for a fairer system”

Comment

Let’s be sensible about stem cell research

Tom Chigbo is President of CUSU.
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by Charles van Valkenburg - Student

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The Mays is an anthology of the best new writing and artwork by students from Cambridge and Oxford. Previous guest editors include Ted Hughes, Zadie Smith, Nick Cave, Ali Smith, Sebastian Faulks, Seamus Heaney, Jeanette Winterson, Stephen Fry and Patti Smith.

We are looking for students to help us select submissions for the mays xviii. If you would like to be on the prose, poetry or visual arts committee, please apply by January 24th, 2010.

We are also looking for people to help organise workshops, readings and masterclasses throughout the year. Please apply by January 2nd, 2010.

Please apply to mays@varsity.co.uk with your contact information, and the position(s) you are interested in, and explain why you want to be involved and any relevant experience you have.

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That Was The Decade That Was

We get nostalgic for the Noughties and round up the best of the last ten years of arts.

From the Arctic Monkeys to Facebook, from reality TV to WAGs, the decade from 2000 to 2009 will be one to remember.

There’s been the fall from grace of Labour, with Blair vilified and Brown even more so, the rise and demise of the Bush administration and the Obama-mania that followed. However, the War on Terror has been the defining feature of the decade’s politics: 9/11 shook the confidence of the Western world and kick-started the invasion of Afghanistan and the Iraq War, and continues to dominate today’s papers.

Jostling for headline space was the credit crunch, which saw the bankruptcy of firms like Lehman Brothers, and the shrinking of many a fat banker’s wallet. The decade has also seen climate change become a major concern on the world’s agenda, with continuing pressure from environmental protesters met only by hazy promises from politicians.

The Noughties have also heralded the arrival of the ‘Information Age’, with the globe linked up by the internet, mobile communications and social networking sites, creating a world where everyone is plugged in and switched on, 24/7.

To celebrate the sun going down on the first decade of the new millennium, we’ve sought out the decade’s best TV, music, fashion, books, film and art. It was a difficult task and there had to be some exclusions (sorry Crazy Frog), but if it shows one thing, it’s that the Noughties have been a brilliant decade for culture. Bring on the next ten.
The Noughties: Reviewed

It's been a good decade for the old idiot-box. Despite the ever-burgeoning proliferation of crap, the noughties also saw a lot of truly great TV, headed – inevitably, overwhelmingly – by The Wire. Enough ink has been spilt over this show to prevent us adding anything new here; suffice to say, those who haven't yet immersed themselves in the Baltimore underworld are denying themselves one of the decade's cultural peaks, in any medium. It was joined by a number of other high-quality American dramas, mostly from upmarket channels HBO and AMC: The Sopranos and Six Feet Under earlier in the decade, as well as the sumptuous, intelligent Mad Men.

British programming, on the other hand, found itself reduced to big-budget dramatisations of Victorian novels and quasi-historical romps (Rose, Desperate Romantics). Reality TV was where the money was. The X Factor, Britain's Got Talent and I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! have been keeping ITV afloat for years. Channel 4 gave us Big Brother, complete with 24/7 coverage on E4, and The Apprentice gave us noughties catchphrase: “You're fired!” What we have yet to loosen their viper grip on our ankles, which is heading to the Mahal for a ‘Noughties Swap’, what will they remember about this century's debut?

Bling probably captures the pre-cession cheer: remember how for around eight of the ten years, we all had more money than we knew what to do with (or at least, banks did)? WAGs exhibited appropriate excessiveness: orange skin? Check. Implausibly spherical breasts? Check. Interchangeable, overpriced outfits with matching shoes and bag? Check.

The high street helpfully churned out catwalk imitations for those without a Premier League lifestyle. Primark and Topshop became the new stomping grounds for those looking for a quick fashion fix, and high street and high fashion collided with collabs like Christopher Kane for Topshop. Who could lose, besides your bank balance?

On the edgier side of things, club culture made a comeback, and Agyness Deyn happened to step into the limelight just as the nu-rave zeitgeist needed a face. In housemary, Henry Holland's irreverently garish t-shirts (“I'll show you who's boss, Kate Moss”) and a bleached crop have yet to loosen their grip on our ankles, which is heading to the Mahal for a ‘Noughties Swap’.

There are so many more to mention: Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Kings of Leon, Daft Punk... the list goes on. So dust down your record collection and relive the best moments of the noughties; they've been a brilliant ten years.
The noughties was the decade that saw the golden promise of the 90s YBAs quite literally go up in smoke. In 2004 the Momart warehouse fire destroyed works by Tracey Emin, Michael Craig Martin and the Chapman Brothers - the bonfire to end all vanities.

For Damien Hirst it was the skull what did it. After two decades as the Emperor of Britart, in 2007 Hirst was finally exposed as having no clothes. The £50million diamond-encrusted skull entitled Beyond Belief debuted just as the Credit Crunch dawned. The start of the noughties saw auction houses blissfully reporting record-breaking sales. In 2006, a Jackson Pollock sold for $140m, the highest sum ever paid for a painting. By 2009, the good times were going, going gone. Credit-crunchy collectors rushed on the back foot, the plinth problem was predictably politically correct: Marc Quinn's encrusted skull entitled Beyond Belief lost $28.2million on a single auction.

The jury's still out on Twilight, but the noughties more than made up for sparkly vampires with a mixed bag of notables and masterpieces. Sacha Baron Cohen took on the mantle of gross-out humour, with Borat and Bruno doing in real-life what South Park only dared to do in cartoons. Meanwhile, Judd Apatow churned out hits like Superbad and Knocked Up, featuring sloppy protagonists and giving hope to geeks everywhere that social awkwardness and an addiction to weed could land you a beautiful girl (e.g. Katherine Heigl).

The action film evolved from steroid-added Arnie vehicles into a slicker, more morally ambiguous beast in the form of the Bourne trilogy and the rebooted Bond and Batman films. Punching people very hard was cut it anywhere; protagonists have to plumb the depths of personal tragedy too. With the darker tone came a new way to film action, too - jerky cameras leap across roofs and tumbled down stairwells with their heroes, and fights were intense, knock-out scenes edited for maximum brutality and speed.

Movies like The Lord of the Rings were characterised by sweeping visuals, grand scores and human (and hobbit) tragedy on an epic scale. Faithfully adapted by Peter Jackson, LoTR brought fantasy culture into the mainstream: no longer did fantasy or comic book genres have to hide in the shadows (of the Internet). By the time Iron Man rolled around, Hollywood had finally realised the power of the geek, wooing them with special screenings and freebies - all the while stripping the fantasy and comic book genres for new material, with questionable success (see: Fantastic 4).

More than anything else, our generation will be defined by the breakout indie movies of the decade. Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Lost in Translation, Donnie Darko (and most of Wes Anderson) all shared the same lo-fi aesthetic, with impeccable indie soundtracks, deadpan humour, and quirky visual surrealism - who can forget the Tenenbaums' uniforms? And most important: a very 21st century ennui, best experienced through the eyes of teenagers or young adults yearning for something the world has yet to offer.

The noughties also saw the rise of the docu-drama. From healthcare in 25 Years of Smoking to climate change in An Inconvenient Truth, Michael Moore’s Bowling for Columbine created a new thirst for creative agit-prop film-making that took on the big issues with urgency and occasional self-righteousness (we’re looking at you, Al Gore).

The decade’s most illustrious books were J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series; whatever your reservations about the adverb-heavy prose, her stories provided an escapism craved by children and adults alike. Similarly sensationalist was Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code, where the typical detective story was taken to the furthest extreme.

Other rotating installation spaces fared less well. The annual Serpentine Gallery Pavilion was reliably ugly and now gone. Credit-crunched Christie’s fired of the 90s YBAs quite literally go up in smoke. In 2004 the Momart warehouse fire destroyed works by Tracey Emin, Michael Craig Martin and the Chapman Brothers - the bonfire to end all vanities.

Gormley’s Hayward exhibition was a virtuoso exercise in the sinister manipulation of space and the famous Blind Light inspired one of the decade’s most memorable political cartoons: Peter Brookes’ image of Gordon Brown stumbling hopelessly inside Gormley’s claustrophobic glass prison.

Japanese artist Takashi Murakami’s collaboration with Louis Vuitton made him one of the most recognizable artists of the decade and by way of Chinese counterefiting, the most imitated. Also widely copied was illustrator David Shrigley - whose influential fat black marker drawings spawned a thousand greeting card copyists. Grayson Perry was the decade’s Turner Prize hero. Dubbed the transvestite potter, his frocks and pots garnered interest in equal measure, and his long-running Times column offered the decade’s most intelligent and sensitive commentary on the art world.

The most exciting venue for large scale art installations. Olafur Eliasson’s The Weather Project (the floating sun) and Anish Kapoor’s Mirrors (the giant trumpet) were triumphs. Over Kapoor’s was predictably politically correct: Marc Quinn's encrusted skull entitled Beyond Belief. The Upper Room. Beautiful installation of the decade: The Plinth.

When asked about contemporary fiction, writer Philip Roth said crankily, “I don’t think in 20 or 25 years people will read these things at all...there are just other things for people to do,” and his despair at modern life animates some of the decade’s most memorable books.

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Readers unsatisfied with Potter could look back to Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials for more imaginative pleasures, The Amour Deep Blue (2002) brought the trilogy to its climax, threading a coming of age narrative through moral and theological discussion. But what was so uplifting in Pullman’s rationalist vision would infect one of the decade’s most notable pieces of non-fiction: Richard Dawkins’ The God Delusion. Although nobody would doubt Dawkins’s skills as a scientist, he wound up causing more problems than he solved in his work. Writing with all the zeal of the evangelists he describes, Dawkins won 8.5 million readers by refusing to analyse religion on its own terms.

Less intellectually stimulating was the craze for celebrity memoirs, ghost-written by jobbing fashion or entertain-ment journalists, Victoria Beckham, Jade Goody, Jordan et al. all shared their life story with the book-buying public.

Ian McEwan’s Atonement and Lionel Shriver’s We Need To Talk About Kevin excelled ethically and aesthetically, light- ing up modern concerns about childhood through dilemmas of authorship and what it means to play out a fictional role. Better still were the exuberant, modernist debuts from Zadie Smith and Jonathan Safran Foer, whose novels White Teeth and Everything is Illuminated poignantly elaborate the nuances of ethnic identity. Indeed, on the evidence of such writing it is less likely that Roth’s prophecy will prove true than that, in 25 years’ time, Smith and Foer’s novels will be acknowledged as modern classics.
All I want for Christmas is you...
I want for Christmas is you...

Bow by Johnny Loves Rosie
“I always thought you were an only child.” “Why?”
“Well, you just seem like you’ve never had to share anything.
Ever.” So said Dreamy Architect.
I should learn how to give in time, he muses on the question, and
decides his unnatural level of friendliness is down to a childhood of
self-centred witch and perhaps a bit of free time in-between the
rehearsals and concerts. “And all you really do is eat toasties” he
concludes, “so you could be a lot less evil than you are.” “But I have to
make decisions which affect others” I protest. “I have to decide whether
to update my blog, and how often to feed my Tamagotchi
(which I can’t compete with that. They’re too much),
and how I can become one too. He muses on the question, and
and how I can become one too. He muses on the question, and
decides his unnatural level of friendliness is down to a childhood of
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Come Together

Boys who are girls like boys to be girls do girls like they're boys who do boys like they're girls... Deck the halls with wine and sex toys, tra la la la la.

It arrived at the porters’ lodge in a long phallic package. “That’s either the biggest dildo Ann Summers has ever dispatched,” Charlie said, “or a bottle of wine.” We name our porters after the seven dwarfs. Bashful didn’t know quite where to look.

“You’ll never know. Enjoy the mental images, though.”

“If it’s wine,” he called after me, “you should share it.”

“And if it’s not?”

Romance is always tactical, and nothing helps those tactics more than Christmas. Big fires and lots of warm, thick alcohol. Tacky lights on John Lewis. The only time of year when you can sing “You scumbag, you maggot, you cheap lousy faggot” in a lover’s face with heartfelt adoration. The Christmas Bop incorporates all such festivities. Kris came last year, and she wore a Mrs Santa suit with removable crotch. A porter found her on the College roof at 3am seeking a chimney. This year Charlie knocked on my door late in the evening with a ‘Santa’s Coming’ hat on and a tinselled crotch.

“You’re not going to go!” he looked aghast. Then amused. “I thought we’d be spending the night together. End of term tradition, and all that.”

I thought of King’s Affair Tinsel would be even harder to remove from my sheets than the glitter had been. “Not this time,” I said. “You look like a pornographic Blueprint reject.” I went a while before calling on Anna, relieved that this wasn’t the evening for her integration into a sweaty hovel of fancy dress and Apple VCs. She was sitting at her desk watching Trintiy. “How very Scroogeish of you,” I said. The great crushing silence of Christmas echoed.

“So I bought you something,” I said. “It’s not much,” all the time thinking, pretty fucking pricey, but we’ll roll with it. She took the bottle and turned it over. “A replacement.”

“And this isn’t just a sudden attempt to join the F*ck A Fresher club?”

“I’m long enrolled.”

“You know,” she said, “I think the reason you wouldn’t before was because, well, it’s pretty conventional, isn’t it? Boy meets girl. Not exactly what you’re used to. Scared?”

I took the corkscrew from the shelf. “We could be wearing Santa hats and dancing to Mariah Carey,” I said. “It could be worse.” She put the needle down on Abbey Road. “We could start with The Beatles and sex. It seemed as good a place as any.

Recipe: Gingerbread Men

This Christmas classic does not taste better in liquidised form from Starbucks. Stop lying to yourself.

Ingredients:
- 350g / 12oz plain flour
- 175g / 6oz soft light brown sugar
- 100g / 4oz butter
- 1 medium egg
- 4 tablespoons of golden syrup
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- ½ teaspoon of ground ginger

Method:
1. Mix flour, butter, ginger, bicarbonate of soda in mixing bowl until crumbly. Add sugar, syrup, egg, mix until it forms a firm pastry mix.
2. Pre-heat the oven to 180°C / 350°F / Gas Mark 4
3. Roll pastry to about 5mm thick. Cut into shapes with pastry cutter. Place on greased or non-stick baking tray.
4. Put baking trays in the pre-heated oven. Remove after 15 minutes (check after 10 minutes).
Despite a celebrated career as one of the nation’s greatest Shakespearean thesp, Simon Russell Beale tells Lauren Cooney that acting wasn’t always his strong point.

Simon Russell Beale tells me that his trouble is that he is “rather passive”. Fair play, given that we are both settled, sunny and very good at making a cup of tea to be topped up with chicken soup.

Beale knows what he wants and knows what he likes, he is expressive and hilarious. In his career so far he has avoided film because he is constantly offered parts for “gay, overweight, Oxford-educated, middle-class boys”, and convincingly argues, “I can do that or I can play Richard III.” He muses that Philip Seymour Hoffman has a monopoly over the roles he’d have liked to have played, unless someone offers him a delicious piece of meat.

Despite a celebrated career as one of the nation’s greatest Shakespearean actors, Simon Russell Beale tells me that acting wasn’t always his strong point. He attended Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where a director, Steve Unwin offered him a part at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) for eight years. The company kept him interested, offering him a succession of meaty roles. This didn’t stop him being wary of accepting when new hotshot Mendes asked him to play Thersites in his debut RSC production of Troilus and Cressida, not wishing to play another Shakespearean clown. Luckily he was won over and developed a relationship with Mendes as one of his most valued productions: “It was sooo cool - a pale colours, cynical and sophisticated world. There was no waving to mummy”.

Beale is aware of the directors that have inspired him, and of those directors and writers he would like to work with in the future. “Most actors I know want be directed. It’s about wanting to learn something new... the most terrifying thing would be to be considered a big stage star and not to be directed”. As an actor he places great importance on directors being able to reassure him about the work, and admits to recently calling up Nick Hytner and making him promise that their upcoming show together will be funny. Having toured with Mendes’ Anglo-American Bridge Project, performing The Winter’s Tale and The Cherry Orchard in repertory, he found little discrepancy between the English and American actors’ training and ability, except that American actors are more private about the preparation of their characters. British actors will “ask other people, ‘Well, why did you do that?’”

This questioning stems from Beale’s desire to learn. He marks that his unsuccessful career in Cambridge drama was because “nobody taught me what it was about, how to do it really”. He is grateful to Steve Unwin who took him in hand, and who taught him to “just absorb clarity, simplicity, and listening”. Considering how many emotionally charged roles he has played, he has developed a technique for understanding characters that stems from Unwin’s teachings: “don’t worry about the emotional state of the character, until you have worked out exactly what they are saying, then you’ll find an emotional state that you don’t expect or preconceive”. Beale’s method takes him straight to the text. He uses his interpretation of Cassius in Julius Caesar to explain: when preparing for the role he found that Cassius threatens to commit suicide in every scene that he is in. This turns the perceived image of Cassius as a “cool, cold, calculating, political operator” into a “passionate man - if you play it so that he really means [suicide] every time”. Looking out for such repetitions and ideas has helped him avoid the trap of simply repeating words.

The Cherry Orchard’s opening lines are famous: “The village is really rather good’”. This questioning stems from Beale’s desire to learn. He marks that his unsuccessful career in Cambridge drama was because “nobody taught me what it was about, how to do it really”. He is grateful to Steve Unwin who took him in hand, and who taught him to “just absorb clarity, simplicity, and listening”. Considering how many emotionally charged roles he has played, he has developed a technique for understanding characters that stems from Unwin’s teachings: “don’t worry about the emotional state of the character, until you have worked out exactly what they are saying, then you’ll find an emotional state that you don’t expect or preconceive”. Beale’s method takes him straight to the text. He uses his interpretation of Cassius in Julius Caesar to explain: when preparing for the role he found that Cassius threatens to commit suicide in every scene that he is in. This turns the perceived image of Cassius as a “cool, cold, calculating, political operator” into a “passionate man - if you play it so that he really means [suicide] every time”. Looking out for such repetitions and ideas has helped him avoid the trap of simply repeating words.

“The most terrifying thing would be to be considered a big stage star and not to be directed.”
David Pegg challenges Andy Tompkins, Andrew Sheerin and Tom Morgan-Jones masterminds behind controversial board game War on Terror to a round in the firing line

A few days prior to March 20, 2003, Andy Tompkins and Andrew Sheerin were sat on a sofa, dejectedly watching Newsnight. Dubya had issued his ‘leave Iraq ultimatum to Saddam. Invasion was pretty much inevitable. Frustrated, angry, and slightly drunk, that was the moment that they hit upon their plan for the ultimate act of subversion, the perfect satire, a slap in the face to the powers that be. “By the end of the night, we pretty much knew it would be called ‘War on Terror: The Boardgame’ and that it would have an Axis of Evil spinner,” recalls Andrew.

Such was the beginning of TerrorBull Games. The two Andys, web-designers and friends since childhood, began brainstorming rules and mechanics, and recruited Tom Morgan-Jones, an illustrator and satirist, to design the game’s artwork. They had no previous experience of boardgames (other than the occasional bout of Christmas Risk) or design, but they perceived this as an advantage, describing their debut as “the sort of game that would never get made if we knew anything about board games”. And they’ve enjoyed plenty of hassle for their troubles.

War on Terror: The Boardgame requires its players to “wage war on the most dangerous abstract noun known to man”, encouraging them to fight for “truth, justice and a decent slice of oil-rich land”. Wielding banknotes from the “World Bank of Capitalism”, each empire attempts to “liberate” the nations of their rivals. All the while they funnel money to terrorists, who are extremely useful for destabilising opponents, they funnel money to terrorists, who are "ate' the nations of their rivals. All the while Capitalism”, each empire attempts to ‘liberate’ the nations of their rivals. All the while...
Meating of Minds

Google ‘Meat Magazine’ and you get two results. One is a trade journal for butchers. The other is a hub of creativity and a typography geek’s dream. Roisin Kibed meets co-founder James Pallister.

The joke goes that on the internet no one knows you're a dog. In publishing, likewise, no one knows you've no office and a minimal budget. Many magazines like to give the impression of being a bigger operation than they really are, but Meat takes this to a new level. The whole thing is run out of one desk in a rented house in Kilburn. The desk belongs to James Pallister, co-founder of Meat, recent Cambridge graduate and self-taught graphic designer and publisher. The desk is cluttered with sketches and printed submissions, scrap books documenting the first mock-up issues, and on the wall, thumb-tacked samples of the gorgeous, varied illustrations that will make it into future editions. Pallister skims through a scrapbook of plans and layouts for the first issue. “We wanted a four or five-letter word for the name, something one-syllable and memorable. ‘Baby’ was one we played around with. And it was called ‘ARSE’ for ages.”

Before they had even settled on a name and image, Pallister and co-founder Nick Hayes took their project to the pavements on the Sidgwick Site, handing out fliers and looking for submissions, in revolt against what they saw as a dreariness of creative writing in Cambridge. “There wasn’t any business plan as such, we hadn’t even thought that far ahead. A lot of the stuff I just learned as we went along.” With the first issue assembled by the following term, Pallister and Hayes slowly began to break into a scene of upcoming writers and artists in London. “There was this network of independent magazines in the city, I think it was a very good time for independent media.”

Pallister describes himself as having been tied them up with twine. Issue Four of Meat took ‘Publish or Perish’ as its motto, but it’s hard for a small-scale publication to keep going to press without a few concessions to commercial printing. Pallister is under no illusions about the realities of keeping his dream alive. He explains “it already is commercial, really, in that we have a distributor who takes fifty percent of our costs. We’re not scared of making money. But because of the way it’s set up, as a sideline, there’s no time to do ad sales.” He’d like to work towards a similar project, but slightly more commercially viable. “Right now I’m researching different business models. I’d like to be able to make a living out of this, maybe not with Meat, but with something like it.”

I ask what his advice would be for aspiring writers and illustrators, whether they should put their time into web-based projects, or try to keep print media alive. “We’re keen to get new blood into the magazine. Ideally I’d like our website to work as a community hub, but still keep this really beautifully produced print edition to go with it.” He’s sceptical of forming false friendships at university for the sake of networking, but adamantly that everyone should pursue their creative interests. “One thing I took from Cambridge was that there were loads of creative people who were motivated to do side projects. If you can get involved with them, they’re the kind of people who, provided they don’t get jobs in the City, will continue to do creative things. Find something specific that you’re interested in, and just WRITE, keep at it and persevere!” Enthusiasm and dedication can amount to something great, and Pallister’s own story serves as proof. ‘Publish or perish’. And for any aspiring magazine publishers, the name ‘Arse’ remains untaken.

“I don’t want it to be some poncy art magazine”

They’re shite, I’m not interested in that!” Rather than live up to the detractors’ views of a pretentious ex-Oxbridge magazine (“there are people who’ll think you’re just a bunch of stuck up little pricks, even if that just isn’t true”), Meat stuck to its founding aims of promoting new creative writing and art. “One of the original ideas behind Meat was that it would serve as a springboard for young artists”, says Pallister. “Many of our illustrators are only just out of college; I go around the country looking for new work at Grad shows.”

I ask Pallister if he worries about the future, or if the fall in commercial publishing might actually bring about a rise in handcrafted zines and indie media?

“We definitely do have our own niche audience, and niche magazine sales are still doing well by comparison. They’re a bit more bespoke and handcrafted, and there’ll always be a market for this.” There is something endearingly to-4 and collectable about Meat, with its unusual print-size, wood-block graphics and grainy brown paper. For a recent launch party, held in a friend’s gallery, Pallister even gift-wrapped 200 copies and tied them up with twine.

Grad shows.”

With so much achieved after only two issues, the project had too much potential to abandon after leaving Cambridge. “I moved down to London, and the two of us decided we would give ourselves a year to get the project off the ground. We had to do shitty jobs to support ourselves, we tried to get Arts Council funding but didn’t have much luck. Essentially we were trying to launch a start-up business, and it’s quite a hard thing to do.”

Through their Borders connections Pallister and Hayes slowly began to break into a scene of upcoming writers and artists in London. “There was this network of independent magazines in the city, I think it was a very good time for independent media.” Pallister describes himself as having been an outsider at Cambridge; did he not find himself up against a yet more pretentious art-media clique on arriving in the city?

“I suppose that at some point you have to embrace what you’ve become part of, and not be quick to disparage things you’re intimidated by. From the get-go we’ve always tried not to take ourselves too seriously. I don’t want it to be some poncy art magazine.

“England is perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals are ashamed of their own nationality.”

George Orwell
Fed up with the drinking ban on the train? It’s your one way ticket out before the end of term. Public transport has never been so fit.

**Film**

- **Glorious 39**
  
- **Dr Feelgood and Nine Below Zero**
  - THE JUNCTION, 19:00 (£17.50 ADV)
  
- **Saturday November 28th**
  - CUMS
  - ELY CATHEDRAL, 19:30 (£5-10)
  
- **Sunday November 29th**
  - OASIS @ FEZ
  - FEZ 22-23-24 (FREE)
  
- **Wednesday December 2nd**
  - 3 Daft Monkeys
  - CLARE COLLEGE, 20:30-23:45 (£4)
  
- **Thursday December 3rd**
  - ALISON MOYET
  - THE COM EXCHANGE, 19:30 (£27 ADV)
  
- **Friday December 4th**
  - MICK HUTTON GROUP
  - CAMBRIDGE JAZZ CLUB, KETTLE’S YEARD, 19:00 (£8-16)

**Music & Nightlife**

- **Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves**
  - ABBEY THEATRE, TUES-SAT 19:45, SAT MAT 14:30 (£6)
  
- **Going Short**
  - ABBEY THEATRE, FRI-SAT 23:00 (£4-6)
  
- **The Blue Room**
  - ABBEY THEATRE, WED-SAT 23:00 (£4-6)
  
- **The Lesson**
  - CORPUS PLAYROOM, FRI-SAT 20:00 (£4-6)

**Theatre**

- **Ongoing Exhibitions**
  - FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM
  - Special Display: Matthew Boulton and the Industrial Revolution (until March 21st).
  - Sculpture promenade (until January 31st).

- **People’s Portraits**
  - GIRONTON COLLEGE, UNTIL DECEMBER 1ST.
  - MILLENIAL ROYAL SOCIETY OF PORTRAIT PAINTERS (LONG-TERM)

- **Courtyard Installation: ‘100 Questions’**
  - FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM, UNTIL NOVEMBER 29TH.

**Arts**

- **Roger Hilton: late works and the night letters**
  - KETTLE’S YARD, SATURDAY 25TH-SUNDAY 26TH.
  
- **Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabi: M* of Bethlehem and other films**
  - KETTLE’S YARD, UNTIL JANUARY 12TH, 11:30-PM (FREE)
  
- **Rosenzweig and Gudilenstern are Dead**
  - PEBBLEBEE NEW COLLEAGUES, FRI-SAT 19:30 (£4-6)

**Talks & Events**

- **Friday November 27th**
  - TERRY ALDERTON
  - THE JUNCTION, 12:30 (£3)

- **Saturday November 28th**
  - SPOONED SLEEP-OUT
  - PARKER’S PIECE, 21:00 (REGISTER ONLINE)

**Listings**

- **Monday November 30th**
  - REFLECTIONS ON RETREADING DARWIN’S ‘GIGANTIC BLUNDER’ IN GLEN ROY
  - SEMINAR ROOM 1, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE, 13:00-14:15 (FREE)

- **Thursday December 3rd**
  - PREDICTING BIOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS AT DIFFERENT SPATIAL SCALES: FROM MOLECULES TO ECOSYSTEMS
  - SMALL PUBLIC LECTURE ROOM, MICROSOFT RESEARCH LTD – 1, THOMAS AVENUE (OFF MARCHINGLY ROAD), 14:00-15:00 (FREE)
MUSIC

Motörhead
THE CORN EXCHANGE, MONDAY NOVEMBER 23RD
★★★★★

M y Dad saw Motörhead in 1978 aged 16 and in the interests of self-preservation, enjoyed the concert from the safety of the foyer. Three decades on, Lemmy, the legendary lead singer and bassist for the band, is eligible for a bus pass and judging from those in attendance, most of their fans are well into a sedate if grizzled middle age. However, there was no evidence in the performance that the band had meadowed. They blasted away noughties’ health and safety sound regulations with ninety punishingly loud minutes of no frills heavy metal – as Lemmy growled in the performance that the band’s fans are well into a sedate if grizzled middle age.

The leg shaking noise of the first several songs was initially overwhelming but Lemmy’s growl soon cut through the texture, inserting nihilistic menace into ‘Metropolis’. After the opening barrage, the structure of the songs started to loosen up. The turbo charged speed metal of ‘In The Name Of Tragedy’ ended with a breathtakingly virtuosic five minute drum solo from Mikkey Dee. Making full use of his twin kick drums, he pummelled the kit until it felt like a helicopter was landing in The Corn Exchange.

Phil Campbell’s guitar solos combined the technically assured fiddle of Led Zeppelin era heavy rock with Motörhead’s brand of shrieking noise to formidable effect. At one point a wailing pinched harmonic was drowned under an unintentional squawk of feedback which he imitated, deftly turning it into a chord of feedback. The slower tempo and single throbbing chords meant that ‘Just Goin’ For The Power’ stood out as one of the most powerful songs of the set. Lemmy’s strangled vocals; “Just cos you got the power, doesn’t mean you got the right” were repeated as Campbell wove increasingly complex guitar lines around the hypnotic pounding of the rest of the band.

The demented ode to gambling, ‘Ace of Spades’ was the inevitable encore. The offbeat palpitations of the kick drum almost added fervency to the audience’s fervour.

Lemmy, legs apart, a black Stetson jammed on his head and an iron cross on his chest had the unknowable aura of an old fashioned, no nonsense rockstar. While younger metallers like Ozzy Osbourne have fallen from grace, Lemmy is far from having any reason to give up rocking and collect his government pension.

Cambridge Psalms - Caius College Choir
ST JONH’S CHAPEL, SUNDAY NOVEMBER 22ND
★★★★★

Six Cambridge composers were commissioned to write new Psalm settings for this concert. The problem with writing for an English church choir is that such a task requires real skill and imagination not to lapse into either staid hymnody or grave cerebrality. For the most part, these settings fell into the latter, dryly and uninterestingly chromatic, lacking colour or contrast, and in the end sounding curiously old fashioned and inhibiting.

None of these settings were particularly religious in tone and there was a general pall of unease and joylessness to the new works. The whole dreary affair could be seen as a reflection of the malaise felt by the composers in being cast as ‘British Choral Composers’. As the Anglican church arguably becomes less relevant to British society, the efforts of the composers to recapture any sense of ecclesiastical usefulness or even just genuine religious sentiment were synthetic and stilted. The fact that most of these composers are atheists and agnostics is not necessarily an issue. Howells, Finzi, Vaughan Williams and Britten, for instance, all produced magnificent ecclesiastical works. Cambridge Psalm’s indifference to the message of the Scriptures was the problem, the touchstone of the text was largely absent, in both detail and overall mood.

The notable exception was Cheryl Frances-Hoad’s ecstatic and beautiful setting of Psalm 1, imaginatively written in its disavowal of any one particular harmonic scheme, its use of light and shade and extraordinary final organ chord glissand to the heights and depths of the instrument’s range, as if the entire building was exhaling a final breath. Perhaps it was genuine religious sentiment.

Christmas Releases

Bob Dylan
CHRISTMAS IN THE HEART
★★★★★

Dylan has always been contrary: going electric in 1965, the born-again evangelism of the late 1970s, and his present refusal to play old classics in recognisable forms. Being typical, rather than anomalous, features throughout his lengthy career.

That said, Christmas In The Heart is unexpectedly by any estimation. A modern-day a cappella Dylan, his general misanthropy of recent years has been transformed, the limited edition version of this release even including Christmas cards.

The culmination of a love affair with the Bing Crosby era, this album delivers seasonal standards without the slightest hint of irony. Dylan’s cracked voice struggling to do justice to kitsch favourites is a rare moment of vulnerable humility.

Descending his prophet’s pedestal to raise money for homeless charities, this could just be his most original and exciting album of the last decade.

The Gentlemen of St Johns
A GENTLE CHRISTMAS
★★★★☆

A Gentle Christmas is a collection of festive pieces encompassing Renaissance polyphony, traditional carols and witty arrangements of festive pop hits. The ensemble display their flexible musicality by convincing in all genres without compromising their distinct sound.

Victoria’s ‘O Magnum Mysteriorum’ opens the record, the alto lines climbing above the hushed polyphony of the lower parts creating a sound of incandescent purity. The sparse medieval textures and hypnotic repetition on ‘Coventry Carol’ are embellished by a three voice rendition. The best tracks are arrangements that make even the most overplayed Christmas songs surprise. Former organ scholar Leon Charles’ delicately mournful arrangement of ‘Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas’ gives the track an emotional weight which does not exist in the original.

This is a sophisticated Christmas record.

Sufjan Stevens
SONGS FOR CHRISTMAS
★★★★☆

Songs For Christmas proves that seasonal music can be more than just the tinsel of department store trucks and alcohol-hazy sing-alongs. On the five EP’s in this box set Sufjan Stevens wanders through the whole thematic wonderland of Christmas and (thank baby Jesus) gives the holiday back its proper joyous sound.

Terror origins and skilfully arranged standards abound on each of the EP’s, although Vol. III: Ding! Dong!, with tracks like “That Was The Worst Christmas Ever!”, is where the collection really takes off. Vol. III-IV showcase original pieces strong enough to be on Stevens’ regular LPs, and it is these songs that make the box set such a pleasing listen.

Whether or not you’ve experienced his chamber-folk sound, this is the place to escape the numbing bluster of uninspiring holiday standards and hear what Christmas sounds like when it has some actual life.

Peter Morelli
NAXOS IN TERRA PAX
★★★★★

There has always been a large gap between English carols and Bach’s Christmas Oratorio in terms of quality and scope in trying to capture the Christmas story in music. This recording tries to bridge that gap.

Everything here is a rarity, Vaughan Williams’ oft sung Fantasia on Christmas Carols is studiously avoided in favour of more obscure repertoire. While many of the newer numbers are slight, the settings by Howells, Warlock and Leighton are well worth hearing.

The major item here is Finzi’s In Terra Pax, simply one of the most moving choral works of 20th century. A beautiful pastoral retelling of the Christmas story, this may be his single most perfect work.

The singing from the City of London Choir is full, clear and committed throughout, and soloist Roderick Williams is magnificent in the Finzi.

Guido Martin-Brandis

Guido Martin-Brandis
**FILM AND ARTS**

**Roger Hilton: Late Works and Night Letters**

Marking the publication of a new edition of the ‘Night Letters’, the Roger Hilton exhibition at Kettle’s Yard is a poignant sequel to last year’s first instalment of Hilton’s works at the gallery. Whilst last year’s exhibition, ‘Swinging Out Into The Void’, celebrated Hilton’s contribution to the abstract painting of the 1950s and 60s, this latest show examines the artist’s tragic descent, encumbered by peripheral neuritis, into senility and helplessness through the documentary evidence of his late gouaches and night letters to his wife, Rose.

Together these sources form a visual and literary requiem, written from his sick-bed. Hilton’s letters to his wife, here arranged separately from the paintings under glass cases, offer the viewer an insight into his addictions, particularly his debilitating alcoholism, and insecurities. In one letter entitled ‘Bollocks and the same to you!’, Hilton includes a drawing, a kind of spider diagram showing the ‘House’ as the physical and metaphorical epicentre of his neuroses; the words ‘She’, a reference to his wife, and ‘He’ are separated by such loaded phrases as ‘self-loathing’, and other more banal references to his daily activities, such as ‘painting’.

Hilton’s wife, Rose, is a central figure in his late oeuvre, predominating in his figurative sketches, where the female form appears in numerous guises – as the monumental nude, at the helm of a ship, and sitting sensuously cross-legged next to a dining table, her breasts and the curvature of her leg lovingly highlighted. Hilton’s sketches of women pertain to a number of styles and show a long-lasting understanding and full absorption by the artist of the numerous aesthetic movements that he had encountered in his lifetime. Some of his female figures are seen from behind, drawn with a Degas-esque lucidity and perspective, whilst in his other drawings the nude is reduced to its sexual signifiers, perhaps a nod to his Abstract beginnings.

Aside from the female figure, the other main recurring motif in Hilton’s work is the bird, a preoccupation which could be read as a symbol of freedom through flight. However, the final picture in the exhibition depicts a starkly opaque kestrel-like form descending from the white sky into a muddy brown abyss; a strikingly emblematic image that conveys instantly the tragedy of Hilton’s own fall into decrepitude.

Whilst there is definitely strong element of pathos in this exhibition (unsurprisingly given the context), Hilton’s use of colour in his infantile poster paint sketches is joyous, especially in his vivid depictions of Antibes. A moving combination of rationality and guilelessness, this exhibition is a beautifully orchestrated paean to an artist who, despite his afflications, never neglected his craft.

**Florence Sharp**

**A Christmas Carol**

The VUE

The last time Jim Carrey did a Christmas film we got The Grinch. This is better. Indeed, it is slightly better than better. Director and screenwriter Robert Zemeckis has given us a remarkably faithful retelling of the Charles Dickens classic. Zemeckis even keeps aspects of Dickens’ social commentary, representing the callousness of Victorian London as well as the famous humbuggery of its protagonist. Is this the first film version of A Christmas Carol not to shy away from the denunciations of the original author? In this way, Zemeckis’ interpretation is more satisfying than the versions that have preceded it. But it doesn’t make a very jolly film. This is a A Christmas Carol for adults. While the first half-hour is a slow and ponderous affair, overall this is a stunning piece visually. Performance-capture animation and 3D may not be the future of cinema, but Zemeckis is a savant of the genre. More importantly, the visuals work perfectly. The book is populated with grotesques, and the Dickensian London Zemeckis has created would not look anywhere near as gloomy or threatening in live action. When it comes to acting, there are good turns from Gary Oldman and Colin Firth among others. However, it is the performance of Jim Carrey that looms large. Playing both Scrooge and each ghost, he occasionally misses the spot, particularly as the Ghost of Christmas Past. Cast as Scrooge though, he curts his vowels with malicious delight. Ultimately, however, one does question the wisdom of using such an expressive actor like Jim Carrey in performance-capture. If nothing else, it’s a waste.

OK, this film is classic Hollywood; utterly commercial, cashing in on the Christmas pound complete with tedious tomfoolery, only present to keep the kids entertained. But Zemeckis has still managed to give us a film that’s well-crafted and detailed. More amazingly, however, it doesn’t have a saccharine Christmas spirit. It refuses to uplift the audience in the way that a festive film should. It’s just too joyless, but maybe that’s the point.

**James Sharpe**

**'Film Night' one of the few devised plays in Cambridge this year**

The poster is a worrying part of the process. When it comes to acting, there are good turns from Gary Oldman and Colin Firth among others. However, it is the performance of Jim Carrey that looms large. Playing both Scrooge and each ghost, he occasionally misses the spot, particularly as the Ghost of Christmas Past. Cast as Scrooge though, he curts his vowels with malicious delight. Ultimately, however, one does question the wisdom of using such an expressive actor like Jim Carrey in performance-capture. If nothing else, it’s a waste.

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**James Sharpe**

**'Film Night' one of the few devised plays in Cambridge this year**

The poster is a worrying part of the process. When it comes to acting, there are good turns from Gary Oldman and Colin Firth among others. However, it is the performance of Jim Carrey that looms large. Playing both Scrooge and each ghost, he occasionally misses the spot, particularly as the Ghost of Christmas Past. Cast as Scrooge though, he curts his vowels with malicious delight. Ultimately, however, one does question the wisdom of using such an expressive actor like Jim Carrey in performance-capture. If nothing else, it’s a waste.

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**James Sharpe**
View from the Groundlings

**Theatre**

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves**

Cambridge Theatre

The time is nigh, the day has dawned, the sun has set on our time together. Don’t shed a tear, I’ll think on ye, and on the time we spent forever. You never read the News, you skipped fashion in your Jimmies, didn’t care for the clues in the Cambridge spies – it made you snore. Instead, you flicked to the theatre spreadsheet. Congrats, your life has been enriched, so much you think you’re going to switch, to do an MA, in Theatrical Criticism, when you leave here some day.

But don’t fret-well, at least not yet. Though I’ll be gone, and you’ll be re-reading old issues to prolong, the devastating realisation that this is my swan-song – Cambridge drama won’t let you down: you so turn that frown, upside down. The Blue Room is the premise (in case least one person a night will be sick with Swine Flu). This is not to say that the old modes will be bloody brilliant, in fact. Despite plenty of pressure from an unscrupulous and quite frankly unprofessional editor, We never going to give this one star. Anything (that according to director Matt Bulmer’s cheerfully rambling programme notes) has been SEVEN MONTHS in the making deserves respect. Anything that covers both the inadequacy of the Topic bar within a Celebrations box and the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics will almost certainly have earned it.

Ali Baba’s story doesn’t spring from a nightclub bouncer. It’s about a hapless UN translator (‘c’est la vie, not a trauma survivor), a series of fragmented sketches (‘Dan’s stopped referring to his anecdote about “masturbating to himself in the third person”), and complete with a deadpan second-year Phil Wang, an Egyptian-cum-Justin Lee Collins. Wang in a series of fragmented sketches (‘Dan’s stopped referring to his anecdote about “masturbating to himself in the third person”), and complete with a deadpan second-year Phil Wang, an Egyptian-cum-Justin Lee Collins. Wang in a series of fragmented sketches (‘Dan’s stopped referring to his anecdote about “masturbating to himself in the third person’), and complete with a deadpan second-year Phil Wang, an Egyptian-cum-Justin Lee Collins.

The answer, in the very wise words of Michael Jackson, is that it’s all about the kids. Whilst the ever-dependable Keith Akushie featured as a hapless UN translator (‘c’est l’ennui des vacances sexuelles’), the stoically deadpan second-year Phil Wang, an engineer ‘by default’, who opened the show with his pathological – and hilarious – deadpan reading of a letter from his ancillary about ‘maternity leave’ so farcically that an independent observer could only conclude that you were interrogating your genitals” was a perfectly crude conclusion to the evening. The pick of what was always going to be a mixed bag included a hapless Egyptian-cum-Justin Lee Collins.

Young recurred throughout, his best offering coming as a hapless Egyptian-cum-Justin Lee Collins. Oh, and he must be commended for the ability to keep a straight face when in one sketch George Amery was ‘the Iain Duncan Smith of Bonds’. But at times, the needless desire for him to carry the show felt unnecessary. Compared with the freshness of Tamar Astor’s bizarre and original ‘sit down comedy’, Young at times looked a little laboured.

The same cannot be said for Dannish Babar, arguably one of Cambridge’s most promising comedians. After combining with Wang in a series of fragmented sketches (‘Dan’s stopped referring to his anecdote about “maturing to himself in the third person’), and complete with a deadpan second-year Phil Wang, an Egyptian-cum-Justin Lee Collins.

Hold back the tears: today the last issue of term falls crisply off the presses, rendering anything in week eight borderline obsolete. In much the same way, sketches from this week’s Smoker will echo around the ADC, before crumbling into the dust, never to be seen again. So the question is, why are you even bothering to read this, when you could flick over to Cambridge Spies and learn about the Wyvern’s sexual deviancies?

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TEATRE

for himself, his sudden redemption doesn’t reflect a rediscovered modesty in the City, just an unlikely turn of character. It’s all meant to be catalysed by Martin, an old socialist friend who rolls occasionally onto stage as third wheel to clash with Polly in Serious Socialist Warfare.

Still, Deli Segal enhances the encounters, all sarcasm and dismisive pleasantries. Her Polly is marvellously stoic; even Stephen grows incredulous at the absence of emotion: “Your poor daughters.” She ignores his comment until the end of the scene, with a piece of cool, unflurried advice: “Don’t ever insult my mothering skills again.” It’s strange, then, that she too must undergo a little Hollywood softening, juggling phones in a panic at the realisation that Northern Rock’s collapse is imminent.

The 2D Bitch is overrated, but so too is the sheepish villain. Jones directs with great pace, really getting the sense of the City. Blasts of money-themed music added spark to the scene changes, a welcome explosion to the tension of plummeting shares. The claustrophobic emptiness of the office was well captured by the stage’s stark furniture. “Do you know how dry this office feels?” Stephen ponders. And we do.

The presence of day and time projected above the stage could have been a great technical touch, were it not done upon an OHP which looked like a reject from Grange Hill’s prop department. To tackle this brutal business world is to heighten expectations for satire and wit. This might be slick, but it’s not quite special enough to survive.

ABIGAIL DEAN

Valued Friends

Theatre

Going Short

ADCLATESHOW

★★★★

T

This is nothing cooler on screen or stage than cold-hearted suits in the midst of a crisis. They sneak at their laptops and each other; they face minor moral dilemmas; they slam down phones and neglect their children. Nestling nicely between The Day That Lehman Died and any one of Armando Iannucci’s babies, it’s not difficult to see why Going Short took the RSC/Marlowe Other Prize for new writing. Issey McCann’s script does the topical thing with nice insight, but its office blurs inspire a smile—rather than a gulp, and despite some neat direction, this take on the Northern Rock crisis never quite hits the jugular.

Polly is the ball-crushing hedge fund manager behind the shorting of Northern Rock shares, high on insider trading and the prospect of Northern Rock’s collapse is imminent. The 2D Bitch is overrated, but so too is the sheepish villain. Jones directs with great pace, really getting the sense of the City. Blasts of money-themed music added spark to the scene changes, a welcome explosion to the tension of plummeting shares. The claustrophobic emptiness of the office was well captured by the stage’s stark furniture. “Do you know how dry this office feels?” Paul ponders. And we do.

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ABIGAIL DEAN

Valued Friends

Corpus Playroom

★★★★★

Valued Friends, by Stephen Jeffreys, is a play set in the 1980s property boom. It satirizes the idea that the boom is relevant! Thank God. Now we can move on.

These “valued friends,” struggling to hold their friendships and dreams together, are Leftist academic Howard, music journalist Paul and his girlfriend Marion, and down and out aspiring comedienne named Sherry.

The play avoids many of the pitfalls of political writing: its characters have real interest. Matt Kiley’s Howard is touching, and his understated delivery leaves room for the bursts of emotion that seem to take the character by surprise, especially when he is embraced by Sherry. Giulia Galatro’s Sherry is eccentric and permanently wired, a changing exuding manic energy. Galatro seems to have been made for the part, though the quiet delivery doesn’t always carry the full intensity of the emotion that she needs to convey. Whilst her costume makes her look more like a modern indie eco-terrorist than a 1980’s wastrel, it is nevertheless a testament to the flair and attention to detail which characterises costume in this production as a whole: Talissa Dewhurst should be applauded. The same is true of the set.

Oliver Marsh is believably Paul, responding acutely to the actors around him, though his delivery is unduly domicering at times. Victoria Ball portrays the glamorous Marion with confidence, and her character is perhaps the most roundly realised of all. Her accent is well judged, but Ball seems uncertain in moments that demand emotional poignancy. When she crumples a receipt in her hand at the very end of the play, she does so in abuff which is hardly an expression of despair or desperation.

The space available in the Corpus Playroom is used skilfully, with characters blurring the boundary between onstage and offstage space as they wrestle with Christmas trees and bins of rubble. A weaker show might have been overwhelmed by the 80s pop music between scenes, but this serves to finesse an already lively production. Olivia Creedlin directs a fluid, even fluent rendering of Jeffreys’ play.

ABIGAIL DEAN

Creative Writing Competition

Each week we set a different creative writing exercise. The people who submit the running-up and winning pieces have their work printed in the next week’s Varsity, and the winner is rewarded with two free tickets to an ADC Theatre show.

Week 8: Centos

Winner: The Triumph of Light

by Christina Woodger

But then it was rainy weather, and I, sad,

Poetry, oh my love, here I am, alone in your game,

With silence where hope was; the silence

Of things we can’t see. ‘I come, I come! Oh, where am I going?’

Love came and ransacked the house. I fell back from there.

Now only the maiden is sorrowing,

Blind voice, an ethereal adolescent form, moon-faced beloved,

You, who grope in the darkness of memory –

‘Who will kiss my cold and wrinkled lips and set my dreaming spirit free?’

‘Mad heart!’ The nightingale calls to me,

The ice-feathered sea-eagle beats me with his wings of watered silk,

Admit your beauty, angel of white lead!

These fall, the hearts – oh, our arrows,

These fall, the hearts – oh our arrows.

Here is separation and there is connection.

Runner Up: A Vision of the Titans, Keats Cento

by Kieran Corcoran

Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see,

In the retired quiet of the night,

Many a fallen old Divinity?

Flash’d were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright,

Tasting of Flora and the country green,

For Summer has o’er-himmed their clammy cells

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene.

That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well

That first in beauty should be first in might.

In solemn tenor and deep organ tone

To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain,

And bid old Saturn take his throne again.

Poetry, oh my love, here I am, alone in your game,

With silence where hope was; the silence

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VARSITY

Games & puzzles

Varsity Crossword

Across
7 Implore alien to procreate (5)
8 Apparently; this can be truly deep (8)
10 Agree with current line (6)
11 Coming back, yet taking a part in social event (3,5)
12 Guess I’m escorted into the
grounds (8)
13 Point no-one returned: they carry a charge (4)
15 Purell is told to expel a player (7)
17 Images made by instrumental noise? (7)
20 Ancient drinking vessel might be French (4)
22 Lazy, fashionable party at time of restraint (8)
25 Infectious alcohol put in, pure (8)
26 Rough, like 13 and 31 perhaps? (6)
27 Poaching nice moose to save money (9)
28 One falling in love shortly turned back; a bigiddle (5)

Down
1 Quiet: drunken seducers made a noise (9)
2 Immoral and irrational number involved in canonising (8)
3 Very lightweight accomplishment by his sister? (7)
4 Rapped, or the settlement might be balls (8)
5 German transport with no right to reserve (6)
6 Thin glass made by loud, antiquated instrument (5)
9 Thought I would hear only its filling (4)
14 Bank invested in crooked supply (9)
16 Those which mean the same as the great and the good can be examples (8)
18 Moving 14, mention getting up after dance (8)
19 Balls, having been aimed, might be rambling? (7)
21 Arson disaster inhaled gas parts (6)
23 Vat murderer hauled up halfway? (6)
4 Slag of... company at party (5)
24 Slug off... company at party (5)

The Varsity Scribblepad

Sudoku

The object is to insert the numbers in the boxes to satisfy only one condition: each row, column and 3x3 box must contain the numbers 1-9, and never use a number more than once per run (a number may recur in the same row in a separate run). Fill the grid so that each run of squares adds up to the total in the box above or to the left. Use only numbers 1-6, and never use a number more than once per run (a number may recur in the same row in a separate run).

Kakuro

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Blues girls edged out of league cup

Tenacious rivals come back in 2nd half to knock Cambridge out of regional cup

Tennis Grasshoppers take on Oxford

Fiery encounter ends in a draw leaving league victory undecided

Men’s Hockey

In the first of the weekend’s two matches, a pair of penalty corner strikes from Mike Legg and Simeon Penny bagged the Blues a narrow 2-1 win away against bitter rivals Haverings. On Sunday, however, National League outfit Stoughton proved slightly too strong for the Blues as they slipped to a 3-1 defeat. Overall, a credible performance. Cambridge’s next challenge will be against Ipswich on Saturday.

Absolutely nothing to do with Cambridge

In the all important penultimate group game of the Intramural Football League of the University of Leicester, the GMS Panthers crushed The Loaded Cog 6-2 in a result which shook the city to the core. The Panthers are unbeaten all season—a remarkable position for a team whose year was disrupted as a full-scale riot broke out between their matches with the Greek-Cypriot Society.

Since narrowly beating Modern Language 17-1 early in the season, the Panthers have been on an upward trend and now find themselves on the verge of qualifying for the quarter-finals.

Much of their success has been put down to manger Mike Bevan, who at 19 is one of the youngest in the top-flight. “Managing the Panthers is a bit like organising a gay pride march - a lot of pink and no support from the right wing”, he remarked making reference to the feminised strip his troops sport.

Real Santander manager Johan Meza made the trip from Colombia to the hallowed Stoughton Road after reports leaked across the pond of centre-half cum centre-forward Will Metcalfe, who has 11 goals in 5 games. Defender Andy Pierino Occidentale impressed him most, but no contract was offered due to growing (literally) concerns over the Anglo-Italian’s beer belly.

The Anorak

Football

League Division 1: Downings 2-1 Girton

St John’s 5-1 Pembroke

Emmanuel 3-1 Fitzwilliam

Trinity 4-2 St Catharine’s

Cambridge and Oxford.

Men’s Football

The Blues drew 0-0 against title rivals Bedford (Bedford) on Wednesday in the toughest league fixture they will have this season. Bedford (Bedford) have been the boggy pitch, windy conditions, or the opposition’s 4-2-4 formation, the Blues struggled in the first half but failed to take a chance on shots from the edge of the area, their tired strikers and midfield ultimately failing to produce the finish that was required.

The Blues’ coach Lee McElderry was disappointed that they had thrown away a 2-0 lead but attributed the Cambridge defeat to the visitors’ speedy attack in the second half. Cambridge paid dearly for failing to take a bigger lead in the first half, and missed their sidelined key players, particularly in central defence. Their return looks essential for the success of the rest of the season.

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View from Oxford
The low-down from The Other Place

Oxford’s story this term reads similarly to that of Cambridge. After some impressive wins over Premiership A sides, the Dark Blues were well beaten by Northampton before losing in the last minute to Saracens. Last week they registered a comeback victory over Northampton before losing in the last minute to the Dark Blues. Will Brown has notched up twelve tries this term, with Sean Morris also on top form. That said, the impor-
tance of the pack cannot be underestimated, says Steve Hill, Oxford’s director of rugby: “Unless we secure good first phase ball we won’t get these wingers into the game. The forward battle will be key in deciding who dominates the line-out."

1. Prop: Niall Conlon
Age: 26 Height: 6’1” Weight: 17st 9lbs
St Edmund’s, Land Economy
Despite being plagued by injury this year, a key figure. His scrumming and ball carrying will be crucial.

2. Hooker: Pat Crossley
Age: 23 Height: 6’1” Weight: 16st 3lbs
Homerton, Religious Administration
Accurate in the line-out and good in the loose, he will need to provide Cambridge with a steady base at the set-piece.

3. Prop: Andy Daniel
Age: 23 Height: 6’1” Weight: 17st 13lbs
St Edmund’s, Land Economy
Andy’s aggression in the contact area makes him crucial in defence. Strong in the line-out.

4. Lock: Dan Vickerman
Age: 26 Height: 6’8” Weight: 18st 13lbs
Hughes Hall, Land economy
An inspirational figure as captain, Vickerman will need to lead from the front and dominate the line-out.

5. Lock: Will Jones
Age: 23 Height: 6’4” Weight: 16st 7lbs
St Edmund’s, Land Economy
Ever-present in the team this season, his tackling and ball-carrying have been a vital part of the side.

6. Flanker: Ed White
Age: 22 Height: 6’2” Weight: 15st 10lbs
Jesus, Management
Has stepped up well after playing with the u21s last season. Mobile in attack and strong in defence.

7. Flanker: Joey Wheeler
Age: 24 Height: 5’11” Weight: 14st 13lbs
St Edmund’s, Arch and Anth
Another who is key in the line-out, his work at the breakdown will be vital in slowing down the ball.

8. Number 8: Ben Maidment
Age: 21 Height: 6’3” Weight: 18st 6lbs
St Edmund’s, Land Economy
Strong and versatile, Ben has made a big impact on the side whenever he has played.
des of fans from Cambridge and that other place known roes with a possible starting XV.

From the Archives

'Light Blues Rugger Side Are Ready To Do Battle', Varsity 2 December 1950

The rugger team selected to play against Oxford next Tuesday represents the climax of a term of intense anxiety for Glyn Davies. The extraordinary misfortunes that have dogged the University in the form of injuries may be emphasised by the fact that the team, as it stands, has never played together before. This fact, together with the much publicised, star-studded, composition of the Oxford side, has served to label the “Dark Blues” as firm favourites. However, pessimists and so-called “realists” have tended to voice their opinions without due consideration of the assets the Cambridge side undoubtedly possess. Man for man and as a whole the Cambridge pack have shown extraordinary stamina. In the inter-Varsity match such a quality is of paramount importance, since the last twenty minutes are often the most vital to the result. Such weakness as the forwards may have lies in their covering both in defence and attack. This is easily remedied, and probably has been, in training. Our back division is potentially as strong as that of Oxford as an attacking combination. Their defence, however has not proved to be by any means adequate in the past.

Form Guide

Cambridge
26/9 vs Old Boys XV 33-19
29/9 vs L’brough University 24-13
7/10 vs Blackheath 25-12
12/10 vs Northampton 14-73
19/10 vs Saracens 24-35
4/11 vs Crawshays XV 19-19
9/11 vs London Scottish 20-38
10/9 vs Steele-Bodgers XV 48-34

Oxford
19/9 vs Chinor 70-0
23/9 vs Gae Force 20-27
28/9 vs N’castle Falcons 15-10
12/10 vs London Scottish 17-12
19/10 vs Northampton 0-50
26/10 vs Esher 30-22
2/11 vs Saracens 28-39
9/11 vs Sale Sharks 31-31
18/11 vs Major Stanley’s 51-5
22/11 vs Trinity College, Dublin 40-7

Week 8: France

It’s very tempting to walk through Paris wearing imaginary glasses (Chanel) that filter out anything that doesn’t fit in with a preconceived image of the city. I stalk people who I feel are likely to make a charming comment about how great strikes are, or lunch, or black lace. “Ha!” I cry to myself, committing the Bastille-worthy sin of smilling in the public space, “I can tell mum about that on Skype tonight!” (Perish the thought of making the most of my year abroad…)

The main problem with this strategy is that one becomes some sort of ambulant fascist censor. One of the figures that I always censor from my mental photograph is the Parisian jogger. Reputed abroad to be a rare breed, within the city he is often believed to be the American-in-Paris jogger who, misleadingly, treats the same turf as the Parisian jogger and is only distinguishable by his immense height and superior quality of running shoes.

It turns out, however, that most of the joggers in Paris are actually French. I know this because I have stopped them and asked them, and they were very rude to me, so they must have been French. (This isn’t actually true, but as a Year Abroad student I feel a sort of responsibility to perpetuate clichés.)

Confronting the Parisians with the ‘widely-held Anglo-Saxon belief’ that the French don’t do any sport at all, are naturally slim just by walking in high heels and making love vigorously (femmes) or skinny and weedy and too petulant for team sports (hommes), I was frequently crushed. “There is a great sporting culture in France”, said Laurent, a 27-year-old fireman. “Lots of Parisians jog, but they get up very early so you don’t see them”. I leapt on this, remembering an acquaintance of mine who takes the metro to a park far away from her quartier to go jogging so that nobody she knows will see her. “That’s because French social codes say it is shameful to take exercise in public, isn’t it?” I said to Laurent, excitedly. “No, it is because the streets get very busy and it is less practical”. Damn.

Later that day I set off to the Cimetière du Pere-Lachaise (the only green splodge on the map I could get to and from in my lunch hour), hoping at least to see some tourists jogging between the graves of Jim Morrison and Oscar Wilde, but was disappointed. “I have noticed”, I said to a man building a tomb, “that there is nobody jogging today. This is surely because the French are a nation of cyclists.” “Non, mademoiselle”, he replied, “it is because in France it is forbidden to jog in places of worship.” I persevered: “Would you say that the French are particularly fond of cycling because one can sit down?” I suggested wittily. “Non, I would say that it is because France, with its great variety of terrain, is an ideal landscape for cyclists.” You can’t really argue with that. I was starting to panic that I wouldn’t have anything to put in my article, so I loitered out and asked a St Germain-des-Prés waiter and later a Montmartre portrait painter, who both replied that Parisians didn’t do sport because they all care about “les femmes, et la bouffe!” Inverting the responses of these people who are paid to spout bullsh!t to tourists is a sure way to find out the Truth: Parisians take exercise, just like everyone else. **JOANNA BEAUFOY**
Resurgent Blues show their steel

» Impressive display gives good reason for optimism in the run up to the Varsity match

Ed Thornton
Sports Reporter

On Wednesday afternoon the Blues showed their strength in front of a packed Grange Road with an important late season win against the invitational Steele-Bodgers. With the drinks flowing and the brass band in full swing hundreds of Cambridge supporters were treated to not only a party atmosphere but also an impressive Blues performance across the park.

After a two week rest the Blues looked both refreshed and composed and their first half performance was immaculate. The forwards performed their job at the breakdown proficiently; winning their own rucks and their first half performance was looked both refreshed and composed when they had possession. This was epitomised by the work of the centre partnership who tore the Bodgers’ defence open when Freddie Shepherd broke the line and was supported by Fred Burdon to beat the visitors’ full back in a classic two on one. The Steele-Bodgers looked frustrated after the first half-hour as their lack of unity didn’t let their individual talents show. Frequent knock-ons and poor organisation in defence let them down and even when chances came they were squandered. Cambridge on the other hand were playing like a team possessed and managed to fit in two more tries before half time. The first of these came when fullback Jimmy Richards broke through at pace and offloaded to Joe Wheeler who used his strength to fend off three defenders and touch the ball down under the posts. The second showed off some of second row Will Jones’ flair as he dummied a pass to his winger but instead gave a lovely inside pass to Richards for a stunning try. This set the score at 33-0 at half time with four of Cambridge’s five tries converted.

The games running up to the Varsity match, on December 10th, are the perfect place for the Blues to fine-tune their squad and make any last minute adjustments. Perhaps for this reason, and also to steer well clear of any injuries, the Blues used all of their substitutions throughout the second half and the team who finished the match was very different to the starting line-up. This inevitably weakened the side and for the rest of the match the two teams were very even. The two teams nabbed three tries a piece and both possession and territory were relatively even. Cambridge captain Dan Vickerman seemed equally calm about the situation commenting “It gets a bit disjointed, that’s just the way it happens sometimes.” With only one match to go before the chosen team steps out at Twickenham there are still a few small things for the squad to concentrate on. Both Vickerman and hooker Jamie Gilbert recognised that there is room for improvement on the set piece, a Cambridge strong point in the recent past: Gilbert noted, “We didn’t dominate the line or the scrum today”. However, the significance of Wednesday was that the Blues scored three tries and lots of them. Richards, who racked up two tries, said, “It was our highest scoring match so far this season with over forty points and that’s important.” It is the self-confidence to go out, score well worked tries and dictate a match that will be most important come December 10th and this week the Blues proved that they have that confidence.