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# VARSITY

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## Cambridge flying high

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### Varsity News Team

"No one smokes weed because they don't have time. It makes you so fucking lazy."

Over the past few weeks, Varsity has been talking to students across the university from all undergraduate year groups in a series of anonymous interviews about drugs. Limited to certain friendship groups, club nights and drugs, these testimonies paint a remarkably consistent picture of drug-taking among Cambridge students.

Many we spoke to agreed that the scene was highly compartmentalised, mostly restricted to club nights at venues like Fez and The Junction, and events like Turf all-nighters, Boomslang and ArcSoc.

A wide range of drugs are taken, including acid, cannabis, cocaine, crack cocaine, memphedrone, meth-

“

I HAVE SO MUCH MORE FUN ON DRUGS THAN ALCOHOL AND IT'S ACTUALLY TERRIFYING

amphetamine, ketamine, shrooms and valium, though every interview cited MDMA as the drug taken most frequently by students. MDMA is the chemical name for the main component of ecstasy, and is known to make users feel energised and stay awake for prolonged periods of time.

This feeling was cited as one of the reasons that drug-taking is such a limited scene in Cambridge. One respondent told us: "If it's an all nighter, it means 'take drugs'. No one is at Fez at five in the morning on alcohol, not a single person in there. Same with



Boomslang at The Junction."

Other clubs were dismissed for the same reason. Another said: "We also just have really shitty nightlife. Who wants to be fucked and then listen to the Lion King at Cindies?"

The lack of nights out with electronic as opposed to 'cheesy' music has seemingly created an exclusive group of habitual drug users, who "seek each other out on nights out... because, [they] don't want to be the only person [taking drugs]". As one student told us: "There's a group of people who always go to Fez; they are the drug culture, I suppose." Indeed, the scene appears so compartmentalised that one user said

when you only attend such nights it "massively limits your social circle".

Despite being concentrated on particular nights and events, however, use of MDMA is widespread. "I genuinely prefer the feeling I get from MDMA than the feeling I get from alcohol," one second-year told us.

"I have so much more fun on drugs than alcohol and it's actually terrifying because I try to persuade myself that I don't, because... when you have that much fun... you don't really look forward to [nights out] anymore unless there are gonna be drugs," another student said.

Drinking is so embedded in

Cambridge culture that drugs are a useful form of escapism "from the stressful monotony of Cambridge life", according to some.

"You go to matriculation and you get pissed on your first night of Cambridge, and that's how it goes." Drinking alongside professors, college bars and drinking societies were also mentioned.

Bored of drinking, "people want to make the most of nights out where it's not the usual crap stuff", as one student put it. For some, this boredom has reached serious levels.

One regular user spoke of looking forward only to nights out that would

centre around taking drugs, reaching the point where "instead of it being like 'when's the next time I'm gonna be with my friends going out and having fun?' it's like 'when's the next ArcSoc? When is the next Turf all-nighter? When's the next Boomslang?'"

Drugs, however, still carry significant stigma in ways heavy drinking does not. "People assume that because you take drugs you're trying hard to be something you're not", one respondent told us. "Most of my friends who are perfectly happy to get out-of-control drunk aren't comfortable with the fact that I occasionally like to get high."

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# Has Cambridge gone to pot?

EDITORIAL

In 1952, a Varsity investigation into student drug use revealed that 20 students in the University regularly smoked “hashish”. This issue, a series of interviews with student drug users around Cambridge reveals a very different picture.

The student press periodically produces ‘shocking’ statistics detailing the drug habits of Cambridge students. A 2008 investigation found traces of cocaine in eight colleges. A 2012 study said 63 per cent of students had taken illegal drugs.

Presenting such numbers as minor revelations each time they surface continues to mask the one, unsurprising truth: students take drugs. They take drugs during term, they plan their work around it, and they buy these drugs from home, friends and dealers.

So is this worth a front page? As the rest of Cambridge floats around in an alcoholic haze, drugs continue to be taboo. An extensive series

of interviews conducted by Varsity over the past few weeks creates an image of students too worried to seek help when they think something has gone wrong, often unsure of the substances they are taking and unwilling to share their experiences with non drug-using friends. As such, the Cambridge drugs scene is insular, compartmentalised and at times worryingly complacent.

Most of all, however, our interviews revealed a significant ambiguity surrounding that highly loaded term – ‘drug problem’. When does regular drug use become ‘problematic’? What areas of one’s life does it have to affect to be a ‘problem’? And, a question asked by a near majority of those surveyed, is it even possible for Cambridge students to have a drug problem?

Media portrayals of drugs consistently draw a clear line around those with ‘problems’: they are dependent, obsessed and can be recognised as drug addicts as soon as they enter a room.

In Cambridge, however, the majority of drug users we spoke to continue to hand in work, keep up with deadlines and even perform relatively well academically. Do they have a problem?

Shock-tactics and taboo are unhelpful. In Varsity’s pages alone, students in Cambridge have been seen to be using drugs since 1952. Some are and will go on to be perfectly fine. Some, however, may not. What has emerged is that within Cambridge’s insular drugs scene, what constitutes a ‘problem’ is not always clear. There should be recourse to which students can turn to help them figure this out.

Those interviewed for this study have been fun, intelligent and interesting members of this university. What this newspaper hesitates to say they have been, is criminals – treating them as such adds yet another layer of secrecy and misconception to an issue that more than ever needs some transparency.

## NEWS

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Sarah Sheard takes a look at group sex and swinging among Cambridge students (*page 4*)



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Tom Bevan previews their upcoming gig and finds out why they say: “We don’t want to turn into Muse” (*page 28*)



## Applications open for Easter

Applications to join Varsity’s Easter editorial team are now open. More details on page 10.

## Letters to the Editor [editor@varsity.co.uk](mailto:editor@varsity.co.uk)

Dear Editor,

My train journey back from Cambridge to London today has been considerably improved by reading Varsity, an experience I have not had the opportunity to enjoy for many years.

You speculate that Eddie Redmayne may become the first Cambridge alumnus to win the Oscar for best actor. Technically, I am sure that you are correct, and Eddie will richly deserve it. However, please don’t neglect the many and varied alumni (among them, Kenneth Branagh, Stephen Fry, and, ahem, the under-signed), who featured as extras in Chariots of Fire, which won four Oscars in 1982, including that for best film.

I’m sure that Eddie is far too modest, and and will be sufficiently successful in other ways, to need to dine out on his success as shamelessly as we have on ours. But then again, I’m also sure that he wad paid more than a fiver a day for his art, and he didn’t have to spend the rest of the Easter term catching up on missed work and recovering from a 1920s haircut.

Yours sincerely,

Dick Tyler  
(Fitzwilliam 1978-82)

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# Cambridge drug culture: A snapshot



*Continued from page 1*

"The conclusion jumped to is that you're irresponsible or reckless if you take drugs".

There is stigma not just among friends, however, but among users themselves, with many afraid of getting into trouble if they sought help when having a bad experience. Regarding their friends, one student told us: "They've been worried that they're feeling ill, but they haven't been able to tell anyone, like the bouncer." Others spoke similarly: "There've been times that I've felt like I should tell someone something, but also been worried that they'd be really angry at me for telling if I get them into trouble".

Yet respondents were quick to point out that they thought it difficult to develop a drug problem in Cambridge because of the workload and pressures. "You're... watched here a lot more than at other unis," one user said. "You have DoS meetings, and you wouldn't turn up fucked to a DoS meeting".

Do students here have drug problems, then? No, was the general answer. One student replied: "Ironically because it's so hard to stay floating here... it's almost hard to develop an actual problem, because a problem demands so much time and energy that you just don't have to spare".

Some even went as far as to say it is impossible to have a drug problem in Cambridge. "I don't think it's possible to do a Cambridge degree and have a drug problem because you'd just be way too highly-functioning an addict then to classify," one habitual user said. As another put it, "I know many people in Cambridge who you would consider to be hardline 'druggies' based on how often they take substances, but they are still on top of their work, and content with themselves. I wouldn't consider that a problem." Others, however, were more mixed in their assessments.

In an interview, one person commented: "I think the nature of the Cambridge environment means that if you had a drug problem you'd be caught out quite quickly". However, they went on to detail how their own experiences of drugs had not always been positive; 'coming down' from a particularly heavy week of MDMA usage, they spoke of "crying in my room for two days... really depressed... I didn't do any work".

"My work that week was appalling," they continued. "In my supervision, my supervisor just put the essay aside and was like, 'I think it's best if we just move on from this essay'".

"It's kind of scary".

A reluctance to define either themselves or their friends as having a 'problem' with drugs was a consistent theme among respondents. "I don't know anyone with a specific drugs problem, but I definitely think some friends take too much," one finalist observed. "Not everybody that loves drugs has a problem. There's a

distinction between appreciation and dependency," another commented.

The ability to continue handing in work was repeatedly cited as evidence of drug taking not proving problematic in students' lives. As one user put it: "I'd just drink if I didn't have the drugs, so would be equally dead the next day anyway". When asked whether drugs got in the way of academic responsibilities, another responded: "No, because I know my own limits. There have been a few times where it has started to affect my work, but I quickly realised and sorted it out." Another described their drug habit as "distracting" from work, but not a serious problem (though one respondent did admit to giving a history presentation while on acid).

One finalist, however, expressed reservations about what constitutes a problem: "It's really easy to normalise certain attitudes, in particular seeing someone's love of drugs as 'really fun' as opposed to a cause for concern, and I feel this is only exacerbated in the university environment".

Does this mean students are complacent? In selectively choosing club nights at venues such as Fez and The Junction to take MDMA, or apparently less frequently cocaine, multiple respondents spoke to Varsity of a feeling of "security".

"Those nights now have a reputation, and so you go knowing that everyone will be [taking drugs]. There's a kind of security in that". Others evoked a similar "safety in numbers" mentality, exacerbated by the fact that "the bouncers turn a massive blind eye to everything".

This 'security in numbers' seems to extend to the drugs people are taking, with many revealing that they know little about the substances involved. "There have been these 'plus minus' pills going around, I think from Berlin, which are great. They're like MD but don't make you sweat or give you a comedown," said one user, though they were unable to say what chemical they contained.

When asked whether the chemicals in MDMA could have any impact on academic performance, one second-year told us: "I wish I put more thought into this and knew more about it... I hope they don't." Although one student was sceptical about pills "because of the dangerous substances that can be mixed in with them", the general attitude appears to be complacency.

On the matter of known substances, however, attitudes were more mixed. The vast majority of respondents were firm that they would not try heroin. "Seen too many amigos drop dead from that shit," as one student put it.

Views on ketamin were less uniform. "It's not meant for human consumption," one respondent told us. "It just means you can't move... It's a horse tranquiliser [laughs]. Why the fuck would you take it?" Another said they "don't understand the appeal" of

"I DON'T WANT TO SAY 'WEED IS A GATEWAY DRUG'... BUT IT'S DEFINITELY THE PEOPLE WHO DO IT FIRST WHO ARE OFTEN THE FIRST TO GET BORED BY IT."

**SECOND YEAR**

"WELL OBVIOUSLY THE BOUNCERS TURN A MASSIVE BLIND EYE TO EVERYTHING, THEY KNOW THAT EVERYTHING'S HAPPENING BUT THEY JUST DON'T LIKE NOTICE IT."

**LAW STUDENT**

"THERE'S A K DROUGHT ATM SO DON'T KNOW WHERE PEOPLE ARE GETTING THAT (MAINLY THEY'RE NOT), BUT I HEARD OF ONE PERSON GOING TO LEEDS TO GET SOME."

**HISTORY STUDENT**

"BECAUSE MANY PEOPLE IN CAMBRIDGE REMAIN HIGH-FUNCTIONING INDIVIDUALS DESPITE EXCESSIVE DRUG USE, IT'S DIFFICULT TO KNOW IF ANYONE REALLY HAS A PROBLEM."

**FINALIST**

ketamin. "The only time I've ever taken it I've sat in an arm chair for four hours and literally couldn't remember being there. I literally don't know why people take it." Others, however, said they reserved ketamin for "quieter evenings", while some cited the current "global drought" as the primary reason they didn't take the drug at university.

It is only a small group that take Class A drugs in Cambridge, and the majority of these users consume such drugs only a few times a term. However, there is a smaller and more isolated group which consumes far more frequently and that those casually involved in the Cambridge drugs scene are not aware of. One fresher claimed to take MDMA and acid five times a week in much of term, and a few older students spoke of smoking weed five or so times a week, though one evidently more casual user said: "The busy lifestyle in Cambridge means that you can't get high every night, but once a week at minimum".

So where are students getting the drugs from? Buying from fellow students is particularly common, not as dealers per se, but from someone who buys from dealers to distribute among a small group of friends. One second-year told us "I feel like very few people actually have a dealer's number".

Students from bigger cities such as London were repeatedly cited as a common source of this kind of drug sharing. One respondent quipped: "I'm from London, so obviously drugs are more readily available", while one third year said that in her experience "students who deal drugs" are "mainly getting them from London".

Why? "Just because the people who have lived in London probably already have a supply set up, and again they're the ones introducing other people to [drug-taking] because they're the ones who have been doing it for years," one user observed.

In addition to sourcing drugs, respondents also linked drug consumption to students from bigger cities. "You're more likely to get drug use with people who... come from London... because you're just more exposed to it," one said. "It's also a wealth thing. A lot of rich kids do quite a lot of cocaine."

Another second year said: "I get [drugs] when I go home (London) - it's cheaper and my friends at home deal, so I get mates rates". "I'm a girl and I'm not eager to go pick up alone on Parker's Piece," she continued.

As for sourcing drugs in Cambridge, we were told "the ease comes in waves". One student even said they bought drugs from local teenagers, which "can make you feel a bit bad".

For those without access to larger cities' networks, Cambridge locals were frequently mentioned as a source, with Mill Road, Queens' Backs and Parker's Piece cited as choice locations for dealing.

Drug quality is apparently far lower

in Cambridge than in cities such as London and Leeds, although prices are higher due to a lack of competition between dealers.

"We had a lovely dealer called Chris for a while," one finalist told us. "We all had drugs delivered to us by him, but some of my friends had met different men going by the name of Chris, which made me feel like maybe 'Chris' was a brand rather than a single entity".

Other sources named were mail from cities like Berlin, although it was not disclosed whether this was delivered to college addresses, and buying drugs through online black markets, such as the recently closed Silk Road.

Do students worry about getting caught and damaging their future prospects? One user commented on how their dealers were Cambridge locals, rather than students, because "I wouldn't think that students are willing to take the risk of losing their place".

Cocaine and MDMA are both Class A drugs, being in possession of which can result in up to seven years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. Trinity College's White Book of "Regulations and General Information for Student Members of College" states: "Any member found to have supplied anyone with... [an illegal] drug, or to have knowingly assisted anyone to obtain illegal possession of such a drug, will be... liable to expulsion from the College." The threat is reiterated in similar policies across colleges.

Only a couple of incidences of arrests were detailed in our responses, although wider impacts of drug usage were recognised. One respondent told us a friend, who "had got quite far through the application process", had to drop out of the Civil Service Fast Stream because they were asked whether they had taken drugs in the past six months.

Generally, however, students tended not to link current drug usage with future career prospects. One user told us "no one really gets caught", while a second-year law student said: "The parties I drop at are very student exclusive, so I'm never worried about being caught by a bouncer or police. It makes you complacent. I never think about how taking drugs could affect my career, just because the possibility of me being found in possession seems slim." Some students who spent their summer doing "banking internships" and "spent it all on drugs" were also mentioned.

Are such students likely to stay part of the drug culture after Cambridge? "I'm only 19," one second-year told us. "When I'm 25, I'm still going to want to be doing exciting things. I want to keep some stuff for the future. Because if you're doing coke when you're 19, what are you going to be doing when you're 25? People get bored after a while."

Reporting by Eleanor Deeley, Eleanor Hegarty, Tom Freeman and Talia Zybutz.



# The more the merrier?

Orgy societies have long been a part of Cambridge urban legend; but **Sarah Sheard** discovered a very different world to the one she'd anticipated.

**T**he term "orgy society" is thrown around a fair amount in Cambridge, often with an air of impenetrable mystique about it; an urban legend passed down from finalist to fresher, in hushed yet titillated tones. This, at least, was my experience – but the fundamental flaw remained that no one I'd heard about these fabled societies from had actually attended one – "a friend of a friend" being the common narrative trope used. And so I set out to see if orgy societies really did exist beyond the smoke and mirrors of the drunken fresher's imagination.

Ironically enough, my first contact was through a friend of a friend, who directed me to someone she described as the "ring-leader" of such a society. He wishes to remain anonymous, for reasons that will become clear, and so we will call him Jamie (not his real name, obviously).

When we met up, however, immediately my image of an "orgy society", complete with membership forms, fees and fire stewards in high vis jackets, à la the Cambridge Union Society, disappeared. Jamie was categorically not the "ring-leader", and, besides, there was no formal society to lead.

This is probably apparent to anyone who has spent more than a few drunken minutes thinking about the matter; as I soon realised, the mythical "orgy society" presupposes far more openness among its "members" than is consistent with both an overtly sexual group and the very vague and mythical representation of such societies themselves. One can hardly imagine tripping merrily along to CUSU to register such a society.

With much patience on Jamie's part, the titillating façade of the "orgy society" dropped to reveal the fact of the situation; swinging, in particular, one specific group of people or "scene" which partakes in group sex, of which Jamie was part, which is just one of many in Cambridge. It should go without saying that these are the experiences of one person within one specific group.

This particular scene, Jamie said, had been going for around a year or so with generally spontaneous events. Sex in general, we agreed, presupposes some level of spontaneity; instead, whenever there was a "critical mass" of the scene's members in one place, group sex might follow, although Jamie stressed that they "hang out together way more often than we have group sex".

The group grew somewhat organically from a loose friendship group; their initial response after they began experimenting with group sex was to retain complete secrecy from all mutual friends. This, from Jamie's wry smile whilst describing this early blanket secrecy, did not last very long.

When some of their friends began to find out, their reactions were surprising. Although Jamie admitted there were a few "admirers", even curious people, there was an equal proportion of those who were appalled by the very idea of group sex, calling Jamie and the others "disgusting, depraved, sick".

This to me was utterly at odds with the giggles of my own friends at the thought of being invited to an orgy, as well as their out-and-out laughter when they found out I was looking into orgies for this feature (the phrase "most straight-laced person I know" occurred more than once).

But on a serious note; how could something between consenting adults be "depraved", I thought,

when weirder stuff probably happens in the private sexual lives of monogamous couples?

I got the feeling that Jamie was just as confused and frustrated by the hostile reaction; throughout he seemed determined to debunk misconceptions about orgies in general, and their attendees. For instance, when I asked about the main demographic of the scene, he said the common denominator between them was open-mindedness and a willingness to explore, rather than anything stereotypically kooky or weird. Jamie made clear that the typical association of orgies with the LGBT+ community was something of a myth, too. Orgies and the LGBT+ community, he said, had been linked through the tendency of a cis- and hetero-normative society to collect all "sexual deviants" under one and the same umbrella; he also said that the accusations of depravity levelled at swingers were particularly hurtful, based on their similarity to the belief popular in the 1960s that gay men and paedophiles were essentially the same.

He also wanted to make clear that orgies in real life are "nothing like porn", which is the primary medium through which most people would probably "experience" group sex; far from being "high-octane", Jamie described swinging as "friendly, fun", and something which becomes normal quite quickly. One truly memorable snapshot of our meeting was how he breezily recalled sitting having coffee with friends as two people had sex in a corner, as if it were the most normal thing in the world.

If you didn't figure it out from the laughter of my own friends above, an orgy is one of the oddest ideas in the world to me. Let me be clear; it is in no way, shape or form my place to judge, and it is completely the prerogative of consenting adults to do whatever in their own private lives, but personally, it would paralyse me with fear. Even just thinking about the world of group sex had my inner control freak breaking out in hives; how do you set your own limits? How do you know the limits of others? What if secretly no one there is actually attracted to you and it's all polite and obligated, rather than sincere?

Unwritten rules, Jamie said, was probably the best way to describe common orgy practice, although he admitted there was a known etiquette. With contraception, the group is "overcautious" (the other memorable moment of our meeting was Jamie comparing the increased risk of sex with multiple people with "like, you know they circulate the air on planes, and everyone then gets the same cold?"). Similarly, consent is taken very seriously; Jamie said that you need to get some kind of clear consent from each new partner for each new act, and that turning up to an orgy is in no way a presumed "yes" to whatever other people may be participating in. I couldn't help feeling that this hyper-vigilance with regards to contraception and consent was definitely something even monogamous pairings could learn from.

And as for whether it's all polite and obligated (one phrase cited by Jamie as part of the etiquette was the "don't hog the hottie" scenario), Jamie admitted this can actually be a problem. The basic fact of human sexuality is that not everyone is sexually attracted to everyone else; but an equally basic fact is that there is no polite way to turn someone down. This, Jamie said, can lead to an "uneasy" relationship between the obligation to at least try with other people and one's own sexual autonomy.

This is countered somewhat, however, with the idea

that any new member to the group has to be considered based on the reaction of the group rather than individual preferences. Jamie talked about how a new member should probably be attractive to a "decent proportion" of the group, and that new members usually come around instinctively.

You meet someone, you like them; you think that most of the group would also like them, they seem into similar things and you propose that they come along, often in euphemistic language. This isn't fool-proof by any means – Jamie himself had experience of inviting someone to an event of which they had wildly differing expectations – but it generally seems to work. The alternative, Jamie said, was that some people find out about their group and then deliberately find them on a night out and linger, until the invitation to someone's room or house is finally extended.

At this point I decided to ask about relationships. If most people in the group are single, how do you tell a new partner that you're involved in a group sex scene? Do you wait until you're

## ONE TRULY MEMORABLE SNAPSHOT OF OUR MEETING WAS HOW HE BREEZILY RECALLED SITTING HAVING COFFEE WITH FRIENDS AS TWO PEOPLE HAD SEX IN A CORNER

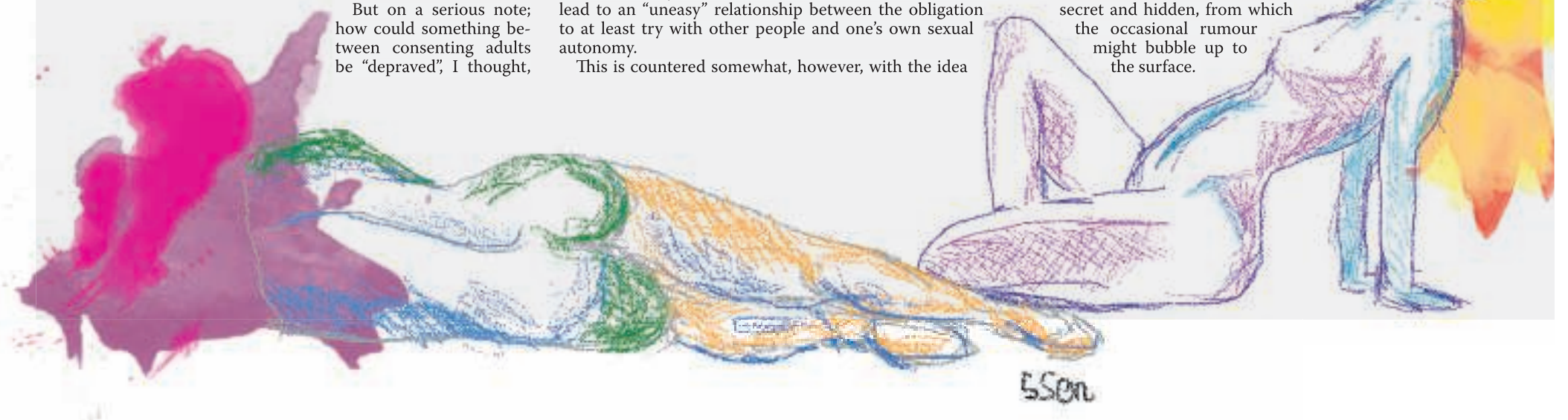
comfortable together or do it upfront? Even as I asked, my own boyfriend's tense eyebrows on learning about my investigation were at the forefront of my mind.

Jamie said unequivocally that he is open with whoever he's dating, often asking them if they are interested in coming along. Some partners agreed and now enjoy the scene; some tried and found it wasn't for them; others dismissed the idea from the beginning. When I suggested that such honesty should be pre-requisite in all relationships, he laughed and agreed.

And that was that. Jamie was one of the friendliest and most understanding people I've met through my work for Varsity. Talking with him made me wonder why people should care so much about group sex – to the point of provoking accusations that it is "depraved" or "disgusting".

For me, the immortal words of Mark Corrigan from Peep Show ring true: "Sure, an orgy sounds great, but you're basically just multiplying the number of people you're not going to be able to look in the eye afterwards". I was happy to see Jamie go, a glimpse into a world of Cambridge I'd never experienced, and had no real desire to; but I wondered why it had to be so secret, why it had to be confined to untruths, myths and rumours.

All I could think of as I finished my coffee was how Jamie, admittedly just one of many involved was approachable and kind and cheerful, and how such gut reactions of hostility to something different had mired people like him into a world that was secret and hidden, from which the occasional rumour might bubble up to the surface.





# Election Profile: Chamali Fernando

**Richard Nicholl**  
Deputy News Editor

To many people, a Conservative candidate in Cambridge has the same ring to it as a candidate for the Snowball Party in Hell. Yet the Conservatives came second here in 2010, and held the seat consistently before 1987.

Is that why Chamali Fernando, the current Conservative candidate, seemed so confident despite a nasty cold when we sat down at Trockel, Ulmann & Freunde? "I only entered this race because I believe Cambridge is winnable by the Conservatives," she says by way of an introduction.

The Lib Dem dominance of Cambridge since 2005 can be broken, she says. "There's a tactical vote that has been going on in Cambridge for two electoral terms: people have been thinking that they have to vote Lib Dem to keep Labour out."



A barrister by trade, Fernando left the Lib Dems for the Tories in 2009 after an unsuccessful campaign to become their candidate for Mayor of London; her brother Chandila defected soon afterwards, having run for Lib Dem party president. Their father Sumal ran for the SDP in 1983 and 1987: Fernando recalls being "the babe in arms wheeled out for photographs".

Why did she quit the Lib Dems? She pauses. "The ability to sleep at night."

What? "I found there were a lot of things going wrong in the Lib Dems," she says. "While they talk about democracy, it wasn't really the grass-roots-up structure it claimed to be."

The Tories, by contrast, have been pioneering open primaries for parliamentary selections in England, though not without problems: the 2010 open primary in Cambridge was not repeated this year, while the South East Cambridgeshire primary last year was marred by allegations of a miscount.

So what appealed about Tory politics? "I'm a Buddhist by philosophy," she says, gesturing to a little dharma-chakra she wears around her neck. "Generally I follow a middle path." She credits Cameron with having brought the party "to where I stood", citing JS Mill as a philosophical inspiration.

This centrist liberalism is broadly similar to most candidates in Cambridge, particularly Julian Huppert. How is she intending to differentiate herself from the others?

She starts with the Greens. "Many Green policies rely on the idea of negative growth. We've got to be sure that as many people have access to jobs as

possible, and if we go down the path of negative growth then all that will happen is unemployment will go up.

"[But] you have to have the ultimate goal in mind of tackling climate change, you need to be brave." That's why, she says, she is an adviser to the campaign to establish an International Court for the Environment – to establish, as she puts it, "an organisation with teeth" to enforce agreements like the Kyoto Protocol.

As for the Liberal Democrats and Labour? "In Romsey, someone told me they hadn't seen a Conservative out there for years... we're running a very active campaign, and also the demographics of Cambridge mean that the membership of our association has changed... it's a really diverse community."

Fernando herself is the only woman running this year, and the only non-white candidate ever to seek election in the Cambridge constituency. "I've had to deal with the fact that I'm a woman and I'm brown since the day that I was born," she says, smiling ruefully.

It's "interesting", she says, that the local association was not worried about selecting a non-white person as their candidate. "If I'm elected here in such a vibrant constituency, a global constituency... you are actually telling the world that we embrace the desire of a woman to get into politics."

Don't the Conservatives have something of an image problem among BME voters, as Culture Secretary Sajid Javid said recently? She thinks for a moment. "We get caught up in talking about the economy a lot," she says.

"We get sidetracked from articulating Conservative values."

"If you look at the community that [Conservative BME candidates] work in, they often run small businesses, they believe in a strong sense of family, in a strong sense of society, and these are Conservative values."

In as much as that seems like natural blue ground, that's all very well, but what do the Tories offer to students? She had been expecting this question, it seems, not least on tuition fees.

"I would still like to see a free education system, but we just cannot balance the books to make that happen," she says. "We envisage getting the university generation and moving them to a state where there are jobs available [and] people will be in a position to pay back that loan. No business is going to start up in an economic downturn, unless they're insolvency practitioners."

What about the leak recently that showed her candidate picture tagged as a "non-target candidate" on the Conservative Party website? She laughs it off. "The Prime Minister was here to say we want Cambridge to come back to us, and we want to win Cambridge in 2015. Not every candidate gets the Prime Minister coming to their constituency!"

The spectre of another prime minister has hovered over her campaign, after Conservative materials carried the quotation often attributed to Winston Churchill: "If you are not a Liberal in your twenties you have no heart, and if you're not a Conservative by the age of forty then you have no brain."

Is this unwise in a student

constituency? She smiles again. "It's OK for you to have Liberal thoughts, but it's OK to change. Not only have I changed, but someone as politically huge as Churchill has changed."

In the end, she says, "the real issue for the electorate at the next election in 2015 is 'What do they see as the future for Britain, and what do they see as the future for Cambridge?' 'Cambridge can punch above [its] weight. We're already doing well; we can go further, to tackle issues such as climate and child poverty, and I believe that Cambridge can lead the charge for a greener, fairer, sustainable society.'"

Fernando strikes me as a pragmatist, a realist, though sometimes this can make a politician a bit of a weathervane. I left even less certain about my vote this year than I was when I began. Perhaps that's healthy.



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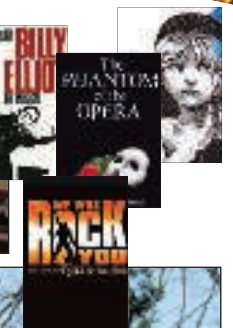
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# Cambridge launches city-wide Pink Week

A cancer awareness initiative is holding a week of events.

## Grace Donnelly

News Correspondent

Today marks the beginning of Cambridge Pink Week, a week of events designed to help raise money for and awareness of breast cancer charities.

All proceeds raised from the events will go to Breast Cancer Care.

Pink Week was set up to endorse and continue the activism of the late Dana Rabinovitch, who wrote a regular column for *The Guardian* documenting her own experiences with cancer. Nina Rauch, an undergraduate at Clare College, conceived the idea of Pink Week before coming to Cambridge.

Pink Week was first launched in 2011 at Haberdashers' Aske's School. In 2014, a week of events was held within Clare College. This year, the initiative has expanded university-wide, with more than fifty representatives throughout various colleges. Rauch is joined by Vice Chair Kate Davis, as well as by Eliza Elliot, Sarah Assaf, Rowan Douglas, Madee Higson, Claudia Barclay and Lizzie Walsh, on this year's committee.

Cambridge Pink Week will be opened with a pink-themed Clare Ents, followed by an official launch night on Sunday at the Sedgwick Earth Museum. 'Pink Night at the Museum' will offer pink food and drink as well as live music, tarot readings and

magicians. Tickets have already sold out for the launch night, but remain available for the after-party 'Crate Digging and Cocktails' at La Raza.

The list of Pink Week events includes a talk by Dr Walid Khaled on Monday at Clare College reviewing the advances and challenges in cancer treatment since President Nixon's declaration of war on cancer in the 1970s. Dr Khaled works at the forefront of cancer research and is scheduled to speak alongside Coppafeel, a charity that emphasises the importance of self-checking for early detection of breast cancer.

As part of its awareness program, Pink Week will run a 'Pink Cheeks Tuesday' event during which there will be dance classes at the Union, followed by smoothies in the bar.

Pink Week is also teaming up with RAG for an event on Wednesday, which requires all participants to wear pink, invoking Mean Girls. Coppafeel will be distributing information on cancer awareness outside Cindies.

Cambridge University Rugby Team has also joined the initiative, with a match against a team representing Wetherspoons at 7.15pm on 3rd March. All players will show their support by dressing in pink.

Cherie Blair, the patron of the national organisation Breast Cancer Care, will also be giving a talk at the 'Clare Pink Formal' on Thursday.

Badges will be on sale throughout the week, allowing participants to show their support for the initiative.

The organisers of Pink Week were clear on their website about the



Last year's Clare Pink Week involved a choreographed dance number in Market Square

motivations that lay behind the event:

"Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in the UK, with approximately 50,000 women and 350 men diagnosed each year. Due to innovative new research and fundraisers such as Pink Week, more people are surviving than ever before. Through spreading awareness of the disease and encouraging early detection, organisations

such as this bring us that much closer to ending breast cancer forever."

Samia al Qadhi, Chief Executive at Breast Cancer Care, said: "We're thrilled the committee is organising 'Pink Week' to help raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of breast cancer at Cambridge University. The majority of breast cancers occur in women over the age of 50, but it is still

really important that people of all ages look at and feel their breasts regularly. One in eight women will be diagnosed in their lifetime, so it is crucial that people feel confident about recognising any unusual changes and don't put off going to their GP."

Further details can be found on the Cambridge Pink Week Facebook page, or on [www.pinkweek.co.uk](http://www.pinkweek.co.uk)

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## NEWS IN

## BRIEF



### Prince in Peterhouse: Charles opens new JCR

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales formally opened new student accommodation in Peterhouse earlier this week. Prince Charles was spotted walking around the college before opening the Whittle building, which will house 22 student rooms, a new JCR, bar, gym, a function room, two music practice rooms, a Fellow's set and a guest room.



### Woman vomits during 50 Shades of Grey screening

A woman was thrown out of a cinema near Cambridge last week after repeatedly throwing up mid-way through a screening of 50 Shades of Grey. It is unclear whether she was reacting to the scenes of bondage and sexual submission, or was drunk.

# Difficult start as CUSU election season begins

CUSU's manifesto booklets were delivered on Thursday inside out

**Eleanor Deeley**  
News Editor

Elections for positions on the Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU) for the academic year 2015-16 have begun this week. Campaigning officially opened on Wednesday 25th February, and last night hustings were held at the Arts School.

Four candidates are nominated for CUSU President, including Priscilla Mensah, Leonardo Kellaway, Katie Akers, and Footlights comedian Milo Edwards, whose election slogan is "Prosperitas. Unitas. Sandwichas. Dignitas".

However, the past week has seen both controversy and mishaps in the run-up to the election. On Wednesday 25th February, campaigning officially commenced at 8am. However, a full list of nominations was not made available on the CUSU website until the early afternoon, over four hours after this initial start time.

Further problems arose on Thursday 26th, when a printing error led to CUSU's 'Little Manifesto Booklets' being delivered to their offices printed inside out. In a statement to Varsity,

Helen Hoogwerf-McComb said: "Unfortunately the booklets CUSU received had been folded incorrectly during production, leading to manifestos for the Coordinator position being printed on the front and back covers."

However, she went on to stress: "The problem was raised immediately and no booklets were distributed. The error has been flagged to the printers and replacement booklets will be delivered by the end of the day, in time for their scheduled delivery on Friday."

TCS has in previous years taken responsibility for the printing of manifestos in an extended week seven edition of their paper. Its Editor, Jack May, told Varsity: "We decided not to give the manifestos any space within issue seven because it's important to be clear about our editorial independence from CUSU."

"That being said, it's important that people are able to make informed decisions about the elections, so it's a shame that these manifesto booklets, printed, I assume, at great expense, haven't worked out exactly as planned."

Eliza Jones, a second year lawyer, said of the developments: "While problematic, I don't think the issues this year are nearly as worrying as those of 2014."

In last year's elections, all sabbatical roles except that of Access & Funding



Around 10,000 manifesto booklets were printed inside out

Officer were uncontested, including CUSU President, making 2014 the least contested CUSU election to date in terms of number of candidates per position. This year, however, four out of the six paid roles have multiple candidates, although two positions remain uncontested – with only one

candidate each running for Education Officer and Welfare and Rights Officer.

Online voting for the election will open on Monday 2nd March and close on Tuesday 3rd March. Full results will be confirmed and announced on Thursday 6th March.

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# UCAS to include European universities

UK students will be able to apply to universities across Europe via UCAS

**Sarah Baxter**

News Correspondent

UCAS has announced that it will now allow UK students to apply to universities in the rest of Europe, in a major shake-up of its admissions system.

Currently, students from the UK wishing to take a course at a European institution have to apply directly to that university, rather than through the UCAS administration process.

These universities would also participate in the clearing system, which offers students vacant places remaining after the release of A-level results.

UCAS have not disclosed which universities might be joining their system, but a spokesman has said that those accepted would have to "demonstrate that they meet equivalent standards to those in the UK".

The quality of education in many European universities is generally high. Twelve German universities featured in the most recent Times Higher Education World University rankings top 200, placing the country behind only the USA and UK globally for the number of top ranking higher education institutions.

Some European universities are already popular with UK students, such as the Dutch university of Maastricht,

which has been attracting increasing numbers of UK students.

With tuition fees currently standing at £9,000 per year in the UK, concerns have been raised that lower fees across the rest of Europe might tempt as many as one in ten prospective

“

**THERE'S A CHANCE OF A BRAIN DRAIN"**

students abroad. In the Netherlands, many degree courses cost less than £4,000, while Germany abolished tuition fees altogether last year.

Many European universities also offer courses in English, including Paris Saclay, a new mega-university just to the south of Paris, which will accept its first cohort of students in Autumn 2015.

Ian Fordham, co-founder of the think tank Education Foundation predicted that UCAS's decision will "have a pretty significant impact on the higher education sector given the level of tuition fees already there."

He also warned that "[i]n the short term you might not see a big spike, but I think in the next couple of years it could take out a good 10 per cent of students, at least.

"I think there's a chance of a brain drain; on the whole the top universities would stay stable, but those



La Sorbonne may soon be as easy to apply to as Swansea

middle-tier universities and those out of the Russell Group would probably be hardest hit as European universities may well have the edge on them."

Leland Hui, a second year law student, said of the changes: "I think that encouraging students to move around Europe is a good idea, and it would have been great to have the option

of applying outside the UK through UCAS.

"However, I'm not sure how much difference this will actually make, as I think most prospective students want to stay in the UK.

"Also, people have always been able to apply to European universities, just through different channels."

This announcement comes as figures show record numbers of students applied to UK universities for admission in Autumn 2015.

Figures indicate a two per cent increase from last year, with 592,290 applicants, almost 10,000 more than the previous record set just before the rise in tuition fees.



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# Harman's pink bus tour brought to a halt by fathers' rights campaigners

MP's tour visits Cambridge to encourage more women to vote

**Dan Hepworth**

Senior News Correspondent

Labour's Deputy Leader arrived in Cambridge in her pink minibus on Tuesday, but was interrupted by fathers' rights activists who branded the event "sexist".

Harman and her bus are a feature of the nationwide Woman-to-Woman tour, which aims to talk to local women about their involvement in politics. Arriving at Parker's Piece, she expressed a desire to engage a large sector of apathetic voters this May.

Harman dubbed the fact that 9 million people didn't vote in the last election in 2010 "a judgement on our politics". Her hope is that the campaign will be a "genuine attempt to get out there, to engage with women... and show them that there are women in politics standing up for them".

Flanked by Labour supporters and Daniel Zeichner, Labour's parliamentary candidate for Cambridge, Harman spoke to a number of women from the town and University about domestic violence, as well as on more local matters like the dangers of the A14.



Critics have criticised the colour of the bus for being "patronising"

The event on Parker's Piece was unmistakable due to the presence of the large pink minibus, which has caused controversy in the national media over its "patronising" colour, with some describing the campaign as a "gimmick".

However, Harman continued to back the initiative.

"This has never been done before," the MP for Camberwell and Peckham stated. "We are focussing on listening to women who might otherwise think politics is a men-only business". The

tour so far has shown that women are "quite intrigued" that there is a campaign aimed at them and their concerns, she claimed.

During Harman's chat with locals on the Piece, fathers' rights campaigners halted proceedings and used the opportunity to brand the event "sexist", calling the MP a "bigot" because of the campaign's female-centric nature.

After interfering in a photoshoot and refusing to move, the Labour congregation moved elsewhere to continue

with the interviews and conversations with the electorate.

Attention then turned to Zeichner, who met up with Harman on her way from Bedford. He and his local supporters canvassed for his election campaign alongside the event.

Both later spoke with representatives from Cambridge Women's Resource Centre, Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre and the Cambridge Women's Refuge at a meeting held by the Cambridge Family Mediation Service.

Zeichner strongly endorsed the tour: "People are talking about the issues that affect women and families, and that's a big change in our national politics".

He also claimed the event will be successful in making Cambridge a 'white ribbon city', which would mean "accreditation for the policies we are putting forward to help people" in terms of domestic violence.

Zeichner was also pressed on local issues during people's conversations

“

PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE ISSUES THAT AFFECT WOMEN AND FAMILIES, AND THAT'S A BIG CHANGE IN OUR NATIONAL POLITICS

with Harman. When asked about how to enthuse the student population to vote, as well as women, he said:

"All the big issues of politics are things that young people are interested in... but particularly women students. [It's] violence against women, safety on the streets.

"These are important to people".

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**VARSITY**





# Cambridge officially a Fairtrade uni

The Fairtrade Foundation grants Cambridge official status as 'Fairtrade uni'

**Till Schöfer**

Deputy News Editor

The University of Cambridge has been granted Fairtrade status by the Fairtrade Foundation, a national organisation whose official aim is to empower disadvantaged producers in developing countries by tackling injustice in conventional trade.

This is mainly done by promoting and licensing the Fairtrade certification, a guarantee that products retailed in the UK have been produced in accordance with internationally agreed Fairtrade standards.

The Fairtrade designation currently only applies to facilities run by the university itself, such as lecture site butteries, and does not cover the various constituent colleges of Cambridge. Currently, only Newnham, Fitzwilliam, King's, St Catharine's and Robinson can claim to have an officially certified Fairtrade status.

Due to the fact that Fairtrade certificates have to be renewed regularly, several colleges, such as Pembroke and Queens', have had Fairtrade Marks in the past but no longer have up-to-date Fairtrade status, even if they are still Fairtrade institutions.

As a recognised Fairtrade distributor, the University of Cambridge is joining the ranks of other UK institutions

such as Queen's University Belfast, the Worcester College of Technology, the University of York, LSE, the University of Manchester and the University of Glasgow among others. UK initiatives aimed at securing Fairtrade status for higher education institutions date back to June 2003, when Oxford Brookes became the first university in the UK to be officially given the Fairtrade Mark by the Fairtrade Foundation.

The current CUSU Ethical Consumerism Officer (ECO), Susanna Hartland, who spearheaded the campaign to make Cambridge a Fairtrade institution, spoke to Varsity about the difficulties she encountered during her time as ECO.

Hartland revealed that several of the university's outlets were already Fairtrade certified. However, in order to fulfil the necessary criteria, she revealed that an official policy had to be created with the approval of the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Institutional Affairs, Professor Jeremy Sanders.

In the past, according to Hartland, it was difficult to meet the Fairtrade Foundation's standards, as originally at least two-thirds of the university's colleges had to be recognised as fairtrade before the Fairtrade Mark could be granted.

Now, however, it is enough for the Pro-Vice Chancellor to sign an official policy document with regards to fair trade.

Asked about the scale of the campaign, Hartland revealed that public student support for the Fairtrade initiative was minimal, particularly when



Susanna Hartland, the CUSU Ethical Consumerism Officer, led the Fairtrade campaign.

compared with other CUSU-affiliated movements such as the Living Wage Campaign. She said:

"It [fair-trade] depends on student lobbying, I'm not sure you can rely on the university staff to do this on their own. If we had needed more lobbying, we may have had to rely on student support."

Attempts to raise awareness of the work of the Ethical Affairs Team over the summer holidays via student media were fruitless, when Cambridge newspapers seemed "interested in other things".

With regards to the future of CUSU attempts to

promote ethical consumerism, Susanna Hartland stated:

"I am worried about the fact that CUSU has changed the structure of standing orders."

The replacement of the post of Ethical Consumerism Officer by a broader Ethical Affairs Team, which runs the Go Greener, Living Wage and Socially Responsible Investment Campaigns, as well as the Ethical Consumerism Campaign, has led to fears that Fairtrade will be less prominent.

Hartland also commented on the university's federal structure, which means it is difficult for the Ethical

Affairs Team to create a coherent, college-based strategy.

The structures and aims of different JCRs make it difficult for CUSU to implement fair-trade on a college level.

Fitzwilliam College, for example, has a Green Officer and a Charities Officer, thus spreading responsibilities with regards to the ethics of college actions. Newnham however, only have a Green Officer, and this inconsistency between colleges can prove an obstacle for specific CUSU-affiliated campaigns.

In the words of Hartland: "Colleges are always a challenge, and it very much depends on the people involved."



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# The Interview: Mark Goldring

## THE MAN BEHIND OXFAM



Allan Hennessy and Mark Goldring, CEO of Oxfam, discuss inequality and the various controversies surrounding the organisation

I met Mark Goldring at Trinity College, before his talk hosted by 80,000 Hours and Giving What We Can. Goldring has had a formidable career in international development – from education to disabilities, working for commendable charities such as VSO and Mencap. A law graduate from Oxford, Goldring has dedicated his “entire life to making people’s lives better”.

We sit in a bare and gloomy room, only furnished by two very low chairs. It seems the recession has hit even Trinity.

Recent statistics released by Oxfam state that, by next year, one per cent of the world’s population will own more wealth than the other 99 per cent. In a time of recession, with falling standards of living among the poor, how come the rich are increasing their wealth so greatly? “If you start with money, you have power; you help make the rules, and you make more money. That doesn’t mean that rich people will never lose money, but it puts them in a strong position to keep it. The recession is not hitting them in the same way as the poor”.

Goldring is spot on. The rich have assets to invest. They can move their money around. Because they have assets, they might be *temporarily* hit by recession, but they hang onto what they have until things get better. After some contemplation, he notes: “They’ll be the first to benefit from the fruits of growth. By contrast, the poor lose everything and it takes a very,

very long time to get it back.”

The economic power of the one per cent can also be explained by failures in global taxation regimes. Forbes suggests that a third of the billionaires in the world have inherited at least some or all of their riches. Do we need tougher inheritance tax laws in the UK? “I think we should have stricter taxes across the board, not just inheritance tax,” he argues. “It’s not about punishing people for wealth; people should be able to earn money. We need a taxation system that stops people moving their money”.

Goldring supports “stricter laws” on inheritance tax rather than an actual increase on the rate of tax, which many people advocate: “It’s not about taking a higher proportion, it is more about preventing people from taking advantage of legal technicalities to avoid paying the existing rate”.

Goldring clearly has strong views on the balance of power between government and big business. From this perspective, do big businesses like Apple hold more power than governments? “There is a distinction to be drawn between power and influence,” he notes. “Barack Obama has more power, but Apple certainly has more influence. Obama can take the big life or death decisions – ‘do we bomb Iraq?’ kind of decisions. However, in day-to-day life, especially with a dysfunctional US government, Apple is allowed to have more influence.”

Oxfam itself is considered to be a

highly influential organisation. But is there a point at which philanthropic work is hindered by the saturation of charities?

“Yes. If you look at cancer charities, if you look at ex-service people’s charities, they would be two very strong examples. That normally happens because people have a very specific passion; they have lost a loved one, or want to start up a charity in their local village. A lot of these charities are successful, but those that aren’t pull the rest down. We need more charities to come together and merge.”

During his tenure, Goldring has also been the subject of controversy, after revelations in the press about his perceived ‘excessively’ high salary. Are six-figures salaries justifiable in the charitable sector? He is quick to defend the figure.

“My salary is the same as a senior headmaster or doctor,” he argues. “It doesn’t compare to big business – nor should it. I believe that my salary is pitched at just the right level”.

Money seems to be a recurring and contentious theme around Oxfam. How does Goldring respond to the criticism that Oxfam is spending too much on administrative costs?

“Oxfam spends about 82 pence in every pound directly on our work... We must have well managed campaigns. We have a budget of four hundred million pounds. People want that to be well spent. That means we have to invest in our company’s infrastructure. We could always donate more

directly to the campaigns, but we think that we have struck the perfect balance”.

Controversy around the work of Oxfam extends beyond its finances, however. Last year, Scarlett Johansson quit her role as an Oxfam ambassador as a result of a “fundamental difference of opinion” between herself and

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**“MY SALARY IS THE SAME AS A SENIOR HEADMASTER OR DOCTOR... IT DOESN’T COMPARE TO BIG BUSINESS”**

the charity over the Israeli company SodaStream’s operation in the West Bank. What is Oxfam’s position on Israel’s intervention in Gaza?

He thinks for a second or two before adopting a very formal tone. “Oxfam publicly called an end to the blockade in Gaza, and we called for a ceasefire during the war last year. Oxfam does not advocate a boycott of Israel, but we don’t support Israeli investment in the Palestinian territory.” He continues, “It is done on Palestinian land without their consent. That is where we differed with SodaStream – they had a built a factory with Israeli permission, not Palestinian.”

After relaying the ‘company line’,

he adds: “Interestingly, they’ve now closed the factory – I’m sure public opinion had some part to play in this closure.”

Much of the developing world is said to be living in the extra-legal sphere – outside the reach of the law. Oxfam has made some general suggestions about fiscal and legal policy in its latest report. Do you not think we need a more localised approach first before we can make sweeping reforms? After joking that “I could give you an essay on that,” he says “we [Oxfam] advocate grass roots approach just as much as we call for big structural reform”.

With this in mind, he tells me about his recent trip to Sierra Leone and Liberia to learn more about the Ebola crisis. The most effective response to the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone came with the mobilisation of thousands of volunteers living in the worst-hit regions: “We set out to educate, inform, support, and treat people with Ebola, and link them with the health services that were miles away. That was a real grass roots movement tackling structural issues.”

Goldring studied Law at university, a subject he found problematic at times due to its propensity to ignore the bigger picture: “I never cared much for the procedures involved in making a will”.

I laugh at this. Given Goldring’s work with Oxfam, it is clear to me that he has the bigger picture very much in mind.



# Comment

## Are we losing sight of who we are?



Jack Benda

*Don't communicate via a façade, but as your true self*

In many respects, gender inequality and insecurity about sexuality can be traced largely back to our society's "prescribed identity fetish". We are so bombarded by ideals that we lose sight of our own individual selves, and become preoccupied with fulfilling a series of expectations: being feminine, masculine, straight, gay and so on.

These ideals are presented as the most desirable way to be by celebrity culture, mainstream media and advertising, although they are, by definition, unattainable. This combination of the impossible and the desirable allows for it to become all consuming, until people are so insecure, constantly checking themselves against society, that they lose sight of their own desires and their own relationships.

Looking at different manifestations of these social expectations illuminates the power of prescriptive identity. 'Wolf whistling', for instance, is a bizarre phenomenon, as it expresses a person's sexual lust while in no way bringing them closer to acting on it. It is usually (though not always) performed by a male in a group as a means to show off his 'masculinity'. Masculinity is a social construct, and the form of 'laddishness' represented by vocal sexual expression appeals to this masculine ideal.

I reject the idea that this highlights how males are inherently female-intimidating sexual predators, as they rarely achieve sexual success from their mating call. It is a purely social construct, appealing to a particular identity to which some males feel

they must conform. This sort of masculine ideal oppresses women, while also contributing to a patriarchal social structure in which both men and women are insecure, constantly attempting to meet ideals.

When a female wears clothing which is 'slimming' or designed to 'cover up the curves', or wears particularly revealing clothes, or a layer of expensive face paint to hide their natural skin, it appeals to our social ideal of femininity. Our society bombards young girls with skinny models, or celebrities with implants, talking about how their clothes and makeup contribute to the perfection of their body form. This ignores the fact that females are largely born how they are, and should be comfortable in their body, so long as they are of a healthy size.

Showing your body in a way which is explicitly sexually provocative is treated as a goal, even though it invariably appeals to a 'lad's' masculine sexual ideal. Is that empowering for a woman: that she has a sexual authority over men? Or does it just define women by exactly what the social ideals want?

What is more perverse is that these clothes are often physically uncomfortable, with makeup potentially irritating skin, and excessive hair styling damaging the hair itself. You are forced to sacrifice physical comfort for comfort in a social context.

The convenient upshot of this complex web of insecurities is that people feel the necessity to become nothing more than a consumer. The tools to

aspire to 'perfection' are expensive: clothing, makeup, fast cars, surgery; things that change how you look but not who you are.

People are divided up and compartmentalised into different identity groups, which focus on the spectacle and not on the individuals. Countless arbitrary prescriptive labels have the

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**WE ARE SO BOMBARDED BY IDEALS WE LOSE SIGHT OF OUR OWN INDIVIDUAL SELVES**

social effect of stopping people looking at the broader issue.

It contributes to political apathy and allows for us to be entirely distracted from the realities of inequality. It disarms us from feeling we have any power, as all that we are "good for" is fulfilling our little place in the broader society.

The real question is: who benefits from this insecurity? Largely the people who pedal the labels. The clothing industry advertises on impossibly thin mannequins or impossibly perfect models. They even define what social 'perfection' is through their advertising. They present different ways to identify as a particular identity. Behind their pseudo-individuality mottos and taglines, there is an underlying sense of gendering and

labelling.

Political parties push the message "be proud to be British", but that is just another way to get people to blindly stand behind a political system with some kind of collective psychology. It is justified by mythologies of the past and ideas of national identity which just serve to distract from the problems of the present. It is another label benefiting those in power.

The insecurities, alienation and general apathy that prescriptive identities bring to modern society clearly only benefit those at the top. People are systematically distracted from what is important and kept in a perpetual state of misdirected aspiration. It enables big businesses to get bigger, and governments to stay in power while the population has no choice but to ignore what is going on.

In this situation, the question of what the individual can do is the hardest to answer. To notice that your individual self has its own distinct identity, and that the labels imposed on you are potentially there to control you, undermines this system fundamentally.

If you define yourself by yourself then your place in society becomes your own: you are not communicating via a façade, you are communicating as yourself. You aren't preoccupied with looking one certain way, earning a certain amount of money, nor being a certain person. By giving humans greater individuality, society develops into one concerned with people, not types.

## We must hold the Union to account



Noa Lessof Gendler

*Your 'famous people club' isn't a game*

As I wrote this, news was breaking of the attack by gunmen at the free speech debate which left one dead and three injured in Copenhagen. The question "What is freedom of speech?" invites maximalist responses and the opinion seemingly held by the majority is that anyone gets to say whatever they like, wherever they like.

The Cambridge Union appear not only to support this view, but to go further by inviting any and all offensive voices over their threshold. As they continually remind us, they're an organisation independent from the university, and as such are quite literally impossible to hold to account. Over the last few years, and attracting particular publicity in recent months, they have taken advantage of this by inviting controversial speakers including Dominique Strauss-Kahn (2012), Marine Le Pen (2013), and most recently Germaine Greer. Each time they claim their goal is to generate stimulating debate; each time their excuse is "freedom of speech".

The thing is, though, that freedom of speech doesn't mean providing prestigious platforms and large audiences to anyone you fancy having

a chat with. If you take that stance, and as such invite suspected rapists, racists and transphobes into possibly the most famous debating society in the world, you grant them credibility which they do not deserve, and which is not in the public interest. The Union is not Speakers' Corner. The voices which the committee choose to share influence opinions, both within the debating chamber and around the world, as hateful messages are spread. These problematic individuals have freedom of speech: if they want to, they can go to London and stand on a soapbox. More worryingly, they have the entire internet at their disposal to offend people via personal blogs, Twitter, or Facebook, which reach audiences of millions. They don't need the Cambridge Union to grant them freedom of speech, or to legitimise their views.

The Union needs to start taking into account the values and opinions of its members as well as its committee. The committee may, by and large, not feel threatened by airing the views of its speakers, but its membership is as diverse as the University (not that that's saying much). Those inviting speakers would do well to

recognise the real offense potentially caused to paying and contributing members, and aim to avoid it. I'm not suggesting that every individual should go through university without risk of offense or having to defend their values, but there's no reason why a society should put them in that position for the sake of 'stimulating debate'. Stimulating debates can be had without hand-picked controversy. Rape survivors, ethnic minorities, and gay and transgender people will meet enough opposition and threat in their lives without the Union providing platforms to the preeminent perpetrators of their abuse.

A friend of mine, who paid for Union membership in Freshers' Week along with me and many others, went so far as to suggest that they should refund our membership if they refuse to act on members' criticism. As implausible as this solution is, it does appeal to me. Without any form of accountability in place, there is nothing to stop the Union from inviting any bigot straight from their den into the debating chamber, where they can be questioned as though their prejudiced views are academic opinions that deserve thought and

scrutiny. Threaten their plump bank account and they'd surely be more considerate in their selection. But these measures are painfully unrealistic, and we must therefore trust that they'll be considerate in their selection. Recently, this trust has been broken.

It is outrageous, then, to label those who protest against these controversial invitations as dramatic, undemocratic or immature, which is how most no-platforming advocates have been portrayed recently. No-platforming is a form of protest non-comparable with censorship and other atrocities associated with true denial of freedom of speech. Unlike the Charlie Hebdo attacks, or the more recent attacks in Denmark, no one is being hurt; no one is being oppressed; no one is even being silenced. We're simply asking you to recognise that when you decide to listen to someone whose views marginalise minorities and victimised individuals, you marginalise minorities and victimised individuals.

Your famous people club isn't a game, so grow up. The Union seriously needs to rethink its modus operandi.





## The Ismist

Allan Hennessy

They say anything goes in Cindies, but it really doesn't. And shouldn't. Over my last two terms, I have met my fair share of twats – surprisingly, not many have been from John's, though when I have encountered a John's twat, it has been bad. Really bad. To whet your appetite, here are some corkers. To find out more, come to Wednesday Cindies – let's be mortified together.

A tells B that C is a lovely person. B asks A: "Yeah, but like, is she a BNOG or just a nice girl?" Sit back and cringe. Before breaking this down, anyone who uses the word BNOG seriously deserves chastisement. This is why snobbery and self-importance are associated with Cambridge. Notice how B creates a dichotomy between being a BNOG and a nice person. Also noteworthy is B's use of the word "just", suggesting 'niceness' is not enough, it is subordinate to BNOGhood. The sad thing is, many who go around being nasty because they think that this is characteristic of BNOGhood take this view. How insecurity can hijack the soul.

After looking down at my Converses, one John's twat remarks: "Oh, you must be from a hill college." I did warn you that, though I have been mostly sheltered from John's imbeciles, when I have come into contact with them, they have been awful.

Let's call this one Xander. Some lip service ought to be paid to Xander's assertion that I reside at the top of a hill.

The present author is, frankly, offended that, in his feeble attempt at reasoning through the process of elimination, Xander was all too quick to eliminate Homerton and Girton. I mean, after all, my converses did look battered – those walks back to Girton take their toll.

It is a shame Xander is not as perceptive. But then, I shouldn't be surprised, since most people at John's pay their way in. Sadly, I never found out whether Xander did so as he walked off with his VK, like the lad he is.

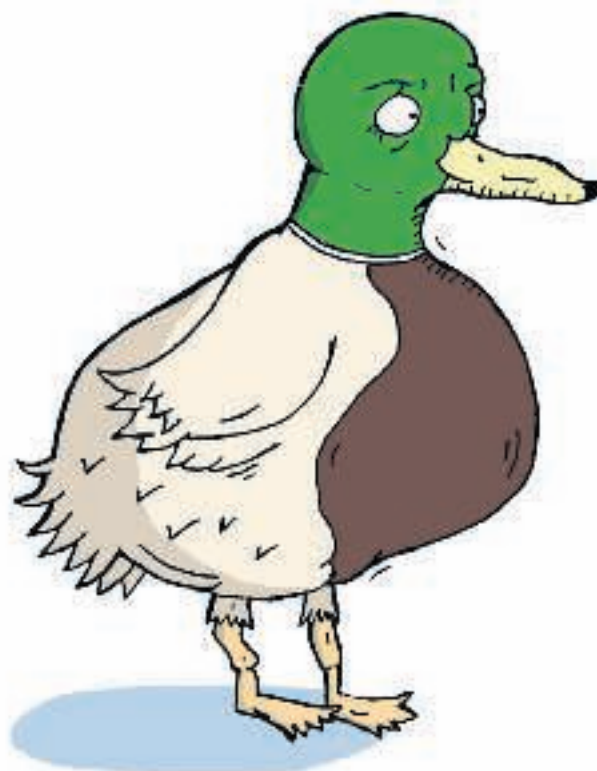
"I'll give you a cigarette, man, as long as you tell me which of those girls over there I should fuck."

The identity of this person is, alas, unknown. Let's call him Lad. Now, Lad is a special case. Part of me is livid. But it is sadness that plagues my heart. Lad, wherever you are – whoever's bed you're currently invading – know my heart goes out to you. My readers and I pray salvation comes your way.

Sadly, I cannot deconstruct any further quotes. But I'll leave you with some absolute screamers for you to enjoy alone, as you weep profusely at the current state of affairs: "Let's take a picture with [X], think how many likes we'll get."

"Yeah, like, I don't like the music at Cindies; I just come here because everyone knows me."

"I was so happy when her laptop crashed, and I was like, 'yeah, good luck getting a First.'"



BEN WATERS

# Follow your own path, not others'



Anna Rowan

*We don't always have to fulfil the demands and expectations of others*

I recently had a supervision which started at noon. Might not sound like a big deal, but I always avoid scheduling supervisions for 12, because I get light-headed if I don't have breakfast and lunch early. I figured it would be okay, though, because it would only be an hour long, and having lunch at 1.15 wouldn't be so bad.

The supervision turned out to go on for a lot longer. It was an intense – useful but demanding – not the kind where you can just sit back and listen, the kind where every little thing you say is questioned and re-questioned. At 1.30, my concentration started to go. I felt myself getting shaky and dizzy, and realised I needed a break.

Luckily, my supervisor was fine with it. But as I got lunch, slowly reviving myself with a sandwich and a hot chocolate, I noticed that my automatic reaction was to criticise myself for 'not being able to keep up'. And I decided that I didn't want to do that anymore.

I used to see this kind of thing as weak: having to take a break or admitting things were too much. It didn't matter whether it was about food, or tiredness, or stress. But as I sat in the cafeteria, I thought – why on earth should we let other people decide what is and what isn't too much for our own bodies? Why do we have to cater to other people's standards of endurance and why do we feel so bad when we don't match them?

My supervisor didn't realise that the supervision had gone over, she wasn't trying to push my boundaries or imply I was inferior for needing a pause. Unlike her, however, there are lots of people in positions of higher authority, in work and at university,

our supervisors, bosses and superiors, who do set explicit expectations of what we should be able to handle emotionally and physically. We should be able to handle the overtime. We should be able to handle the stress. We so badly do not want to break those expectations of us.

And yet, sometimes we find the stress really is getting too much. It seeps into our weekends, into our breaks. We just can't stop thinking about work, about all there is to do. Time off just becomes either time wasted or time treading water, waiting to have to plunge in again, the inevitable dive. Sometimes we get ill, we get a cold or the flu or bad back ache, and we are expected to keep going as normal when we feel far from it.

We do not always have to fulfil the demands and expectations of others. Sometimes the people who set those demands are not in tune with their own health needs, and enforce their own unhealthy way of working on other people. Sometimes the people who set the standard are so distracted that they are blind to the adverse effects that their expectations are having on others.

We all have the possibility of being in tune with our own physical and mental needs. It can be hard because we rely so much on the feedback of others to know how we ourselves are feeling, and when that feedback is 'you should be fine' it can be hard to admit that the reality is far from it. It can be hard because we live in a world that loves proof, proof that we are not okay, and how not okay we are, and we cannot always get proof.

There is no measure for how tired and stressed you are. No one can give

you it on a scale of 1 to 10, 8 being the health limit. In hospitals, you decide where you are on the pain scale, because there is no apparatus that can show it, it can only be guessed at approximately by external sources.

Last year, I had a six month internship. I was working for a disorganised start-up company and was given a high work load and a lot of responsibility from the very start. I constantly felt on the verge of a breakdown and I never said anything, until I developed health problems that made it impossible for me to continue working at the same pace, health problems which I am still recovering from. I ignored how I felt for so long because I was always waiting for someone to acknowledge or verify how bad I felt. But no one did, because no one can truly tell you how you're feeling and often other people aren't paying that much attention.

This is equally applicable to Cambridge, where only you know how much work you have and only you know how that makes you feel. Don't wait for someone to pick up on what you're really going through, because it might not happen. If you're in crisis, you can feel it. And it is not something to be ashamed of.

Sometimes the standards we feel we have to live up to are broken. The demands imposed on us can be arbitrary and unrealistic, and we are so much more than them. If it is too much, speak up. If you need help, speak up.

Whether it is to friends, to supervisors, to work colleagues, to family or to a counsellor. These expectations only have power if no one speaks up against their validity.



# Being realistic about reality TV



Ellie Coote

*We all know it's not real, but reality TV's problems run deeper*

Reality TV is a fallacy – this much we know. We are all familiar with the fine print: “Some of these scenes have been created for entertainment purposes.” Much like any scripted show, we as viewers can suspend our disbelief; our imagination just developed enough to buy into this faux realism.

Yet, unlike Broadchurch or Coronation Street, this suspension does not entirely evaporate when the show ends and the telly is turned off. It's a bit like magic. We know there's a logical trick somewhere, and yet we continue to gasp when we are smugly asked “Is this your card?” In the world of television, broadcasting companies hold all of the cards.

From their middle-class centre ground, entrepreneurial broadcasters look upwards to find a fascination with the rich (cue Made In Chelsea) and extend their gaze downwards to see a burlesque of regional dialects, benefits and the nouveau riche (cue TOWIE).

Yet these farcical portrayals are not new to television, and neither is a middle-class monopoly of the media: it has merely become more overtly absurd in recent times due to the illusion of realism that surrounds such programmes.

I could tirade against constructed stereotyping, yet scripted dramas also continue to stereotype and underrepresent minorities on screen. I could rant about bigoted caricatures of the working classes, yet soap operas continue to generate these day after day.

In a strange mutation of reality, ‘real lives’ are given pilot episode confrontations, weekly cliffhangers

and end of season resolutions. Gleeful broadcasting companies have found a way to spate out soap operas and dramas for a fraction of the price, and we lap it up.

Conveniently for these companies, reality TV is marketed on this cheapness. Broadcasters stand with their hands held up while spewing out game shows, makeover programmes,



**IN JEREMY KYLE WE FIND BULLYING AND HARASSMENT, AND PARTAKE IN CLASS-BASED MORALISING**

talent contests, talk shows, docu-soaps, reality sitcoms and many more media-hounding sub-genres. Reality TV is everywhere.

In Deal or No Deal, we find get-rich-quick attitudes, placing the underprivileged in a position of vulnerability and gullibility; in The X Factor we humiliate the delusional and give false hope to the aspirational; in Jeremy Kyle we find bullying and harassment, and partake in class-based moralising; and in The Only Way is Essex we mock regional caricatures, and distort images of fame and success.

It is impossible to defend the majority of these programmes. Our basic morals will not allow it. Ritual humiliation and the exploitation of individuals cannot be defended, and

nor should it be tolerated. Further, the rise of reality TV has coincided with a dramatically shifting societal perspective on fame.

Let's take Big Brother, that mother of all fly-on-the-wall shows. Many of the past and present contestants that grace the pages of Hello! magazine are accredited with the title “famous for being famous”. But rather than figures of celebrity, ‘celebrated’, as the name implies, for their achievements, the stars of reality TV are instead reduced to subjects of humiliation and triviality: less concerned with accomplishment and more concerned with petty personal dramas.

The problem with attacking these programmes is that the criticisms of reality TV often feed directly into the stereotyping perpetuated by the shows. To say that Big Brother is damaging is to suggest that we are becoming crueller, stupider and more gullible as a society. To attack distorted images of fame is to suggest that the current young generation are too stupid to learn a discipline, too lazy to get a job, and too narcissistic to function.

By partaking in the attack on reality TV, we partake in the class-based moralising that defines many of the shows, believing that those who are watching the programmes are mirror images of the caricatures we find there.

Reality TV contains many evils, but this doesn't mean that it should be used as a scapegoat for the greater pitfalls of the media, or even for our own superficial pitfalls as a society. If we look inwardly, we might see that unease with The Undateables is more likely a reflection on our own

discomfort and awkwardness in regards to disability, rather than the show's (although notably, the show has received unprecedented praise in amongst all the scepticism, though there is still much to be desired). If we claim that the genre is to blame for social stagnancy, stereotyping and laziness, we are insulting our own intelligence and suggesting that we cannot see beyond the façade and experience reality TV in its satirical and fictional glory.

Reality TV is the marmite of television. Even those who love it can't ignore its claggy texture, murky colour and pungent smell. To admit to watching reality TV is to admit to all of these overtly unpleasant aspects of the genre: admitting to escaping for an hour of schadenfreude, laughing at the humiliated and gawking at the bizarre.

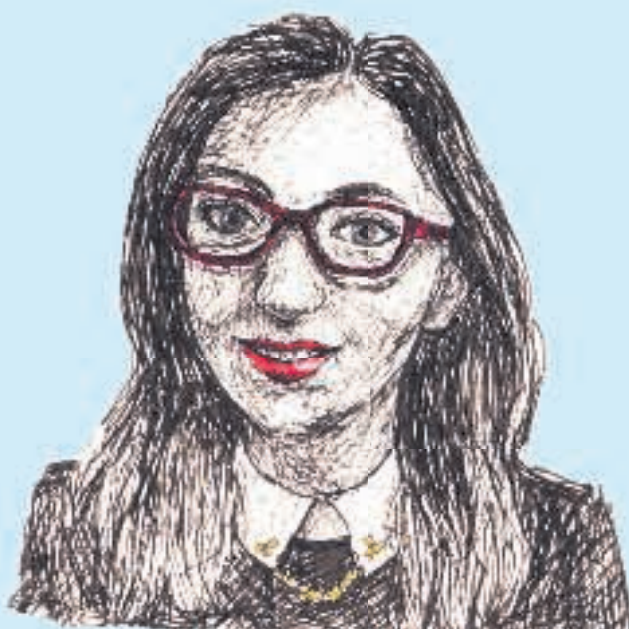
In its current state, reality TV is degrading, but it is the only genre legitimate to a young generation obsessed with social media and materialism and unconcerned with privacy. Like social media, reality TV has its own corruptions; both distorting the reality they claim to present.

Yet we have irreversibly accepted social media as a necessary and unavoidable presence within society. If we learn to embrace reality TV, it has the potential to build connective action and inhabit social movements in the same way that social media has grown to do.

Placed in the right hands, it has the capacity to document the underprivileged, give autonomy to the unheard, and give stories to those who are inspirational: if only it would embrace reality.

## Millie Brierley

*The vitality of reading*



I'm four. Tucked up in bed, surrounded by teddy bears, I'm reading my first proper book by myself. Peter Rabbit is up to mischief; Mr McGregor is making me nervous; Beatrix Potter is drawing me in. Six years old, and I'm having to hide Harry Potter, Voldemort and the magic in my bedside cabinet, because it's too scary and I can't read on any further. Eight, and Roald Dahl is showing me the true depths of the human imagination, so much bigger and so much more exciting than I ever thought possible. Ten: I am queuing up outside Waterstones to get Jacqueline Wilson's latest book signed by the author herself.

It is not enough to say that I loved reading as a child. I loved cycling, craft and TV, but I never felt like I might actually become those things. Riding my bike round and round the car park next to my house didn't make my mind feel like it might burst out of my head because it simply needed more space to take it all in. Cutting and sticking never seemed so fantastic that I wanted to stop, in case I used up my lifetime quota of it too quickly. Not once did the thought strike me that Blue Peter might just be all I ever needed.

No, I never did seem to find anything quite like reading. I loved it – there was so much out there that I wanted to read, digest, cram into my brain – that one book rarely felt enough: I would regularly have anything up to four on the go, simply because I couldn't bear the thought of not reading any one

of them at that moment in time. Every minute spent with one book felt like a minute not with another.

Each new book was a new den – a hideout, shut off from the rest of the world. I would climb inside and make myself at home, filling every crevice, top to bottom, wall to wall. But the books would fill me, too, opening my mind, pushing it past fresh boundaries, setting it on fire. I read Judith Kerr, Allan Ahlberg, Francesca Simon, Jeremy Strong, and fell in love with writing before I'd even tried, because I knew that, somehow, I had to get closer to this thing that I'd discovered, that possibly no one else knew about. And how could they know about it? Books were too special – too mine – to belong to others.

Nowadays, I read less. Or perhaps I just read differently. I read for essays, for supervisions, for work – a page here, a chapter there. Pitiful, almost sacrilegious fragments of something beautiful, desecrated. And I think I feel different because of that. I think I am aware of the creaking, grinding of rusty cogs – once so fresh and shiny – turning begrudgingly somewhere in my brain. It's not about intelligence – reading less hasn't made me any less clever, or earned me any lower grades – but something has definitely changed, disappeared. Something more ethereal than mere intellect, lying somewhere in between creativity, imagination and spirit. I'm the same, but ever so slightly less, living outside of that rich, heady world of literature that I once

called home.

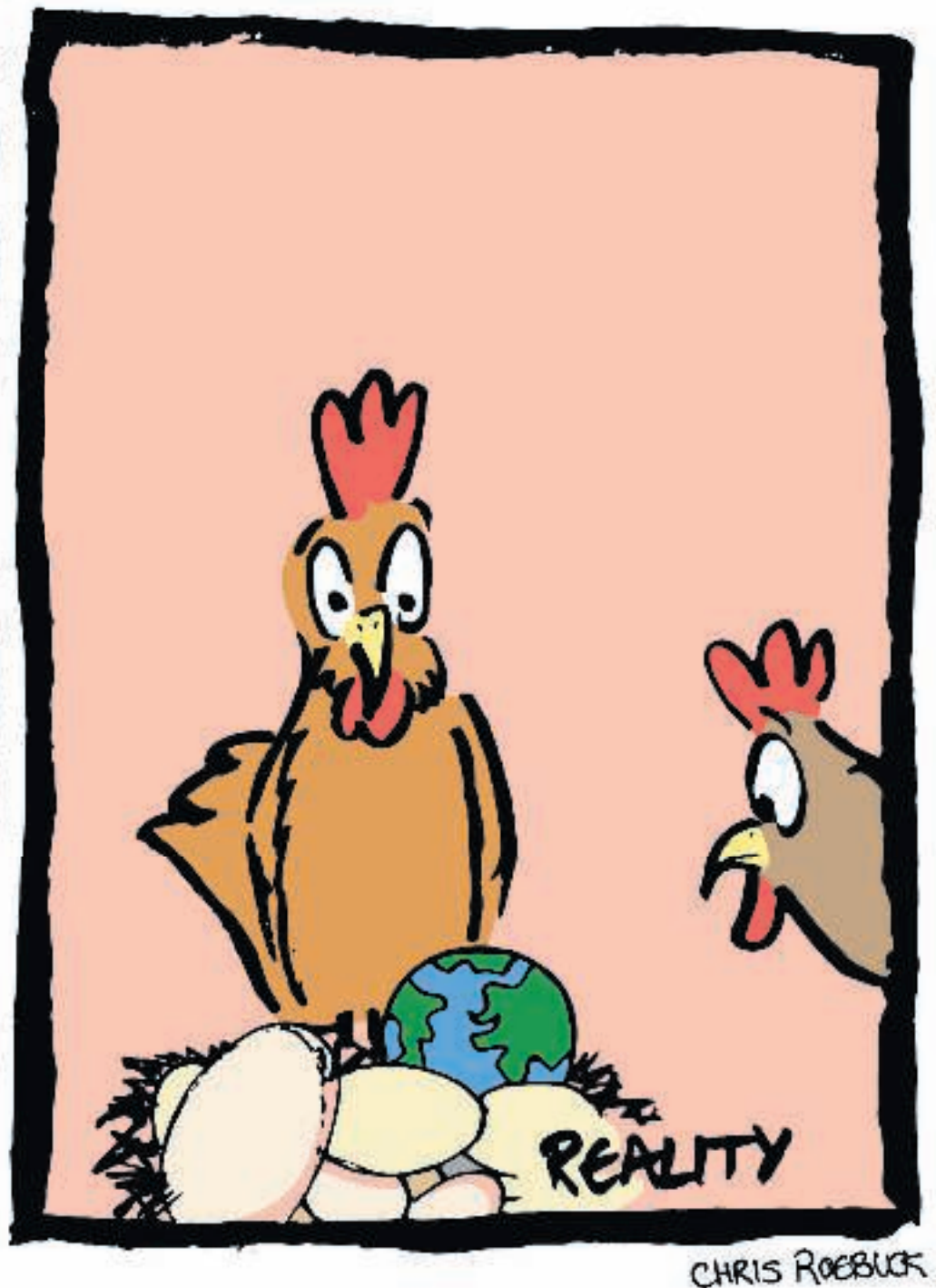
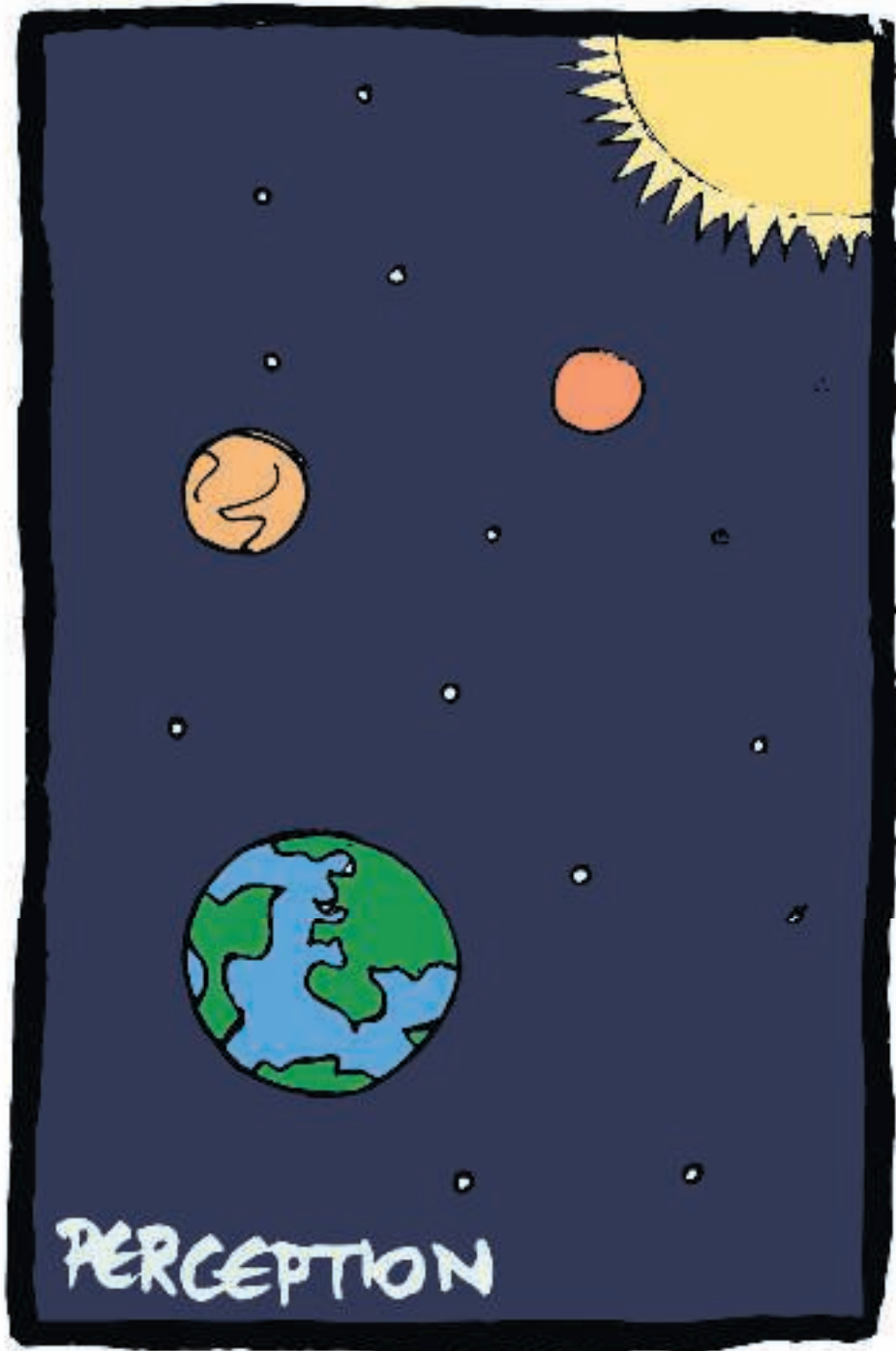
But the damage is far from irreparable, and, at some point last year, I finally realised this, and decided to do something about it. So, now, I am on a mission to read more – for pleasure, crucially. Not snippets here and there, quickly skim read and soon forgotten, but whole, entire books.

And, in the last few months, that's exactly what I've done. I've become reacquainted with old friends – Nancy Mitford welcomed me back in a way only she could: sharp, shrewd but warm – and made new ones, too. I've read Mindy Kaling, Caitlin Moran, Robert Galbraith, Lena Dunham. I read Tina Fey's memoirs in an afternoon. I'm currently working my way through Maya Angelou's autobiography.

Of course, I haven't read as much as I would have liked – Cambridge has little patience with such luxuries. Or perhaps I simply never could. But I've read, and, in the process, I've been reminded of something that, perhaps, I had forgotten: that reading is one of the most vital things – vital, in every sense of the word – that you can do with your mind.

Those innumerable voices you hear echoed back to you when you call out to a book – they are the lifeblood of creativity and imagination. They are 3D glasses, allowing you to see the world in a new, magical way. They are Catherine wheels, rockets, Roman candles – setting the sky alight. The silence without them is deafening.





## Dangers of the Cambridge dream



Emily Page

*Cambridge isn't utopia, but we love it all the same*

From my window, I look out over church spires and tiled college roofs towards the hazy fens. Soft sunlight glints off a distant steeple as the cheery ring of a bicycle bell rises up from the street below. I am also on the phone to my mother, who asks me for the second time what exactly it is that I am mumbling about as I repeat the words 'fantasy' and 'disappointment', and whether or not she just heard me sob. I may omit to mention to her the hangover gnawing away at my internal organs, but I cannot blame Sunday Life for all my misfortunes.

My problem is that despite the surroundings I find myself in, my second term at Cambridge has been accompanied by the realisation that the constant euphoria of my first could not be maintained. While in the rush of newness everything may live up to the archetypal Cambridge experience, we can't fool ourselves into thinking that this fantasy will be constant, and holding on to it too tightly can actually do more harm than good. Undoubtedly, we might all get a kick out of playing up to the Cambridge stereotype (I, for one, will always remain a sucker for a gown and a bottle of port), but in the long run this is simply not a sustainable way to live. As a wise man or woman may once have said, 'never believe your own hype'.

This is not for the reason you

might expect; that if we believe our own press we'll all morph into self-satisfied snobs, chortling all the way down King's Parade with aforementioned bottle of port clutched confidently in hand. No, we must

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WE CAN'T FOOL OURSELVES INTO THINKING THIS FANTASY WILL BE CONSTANT

not believe our own hype because it creates a whole new layer of stress that Cambridge students simply don't need. Applying to Cambridge, our parents, teachers, and friends all contribute to the expectation that it will be three blissful years of riding bicycles down sunlit cobbled streets and jolly punt trips down the Cam occasionally interrupted by the odd intellectually enriching supervision before we all merrily trot home to our castle-like abodes.

However well-intentioned these people are, and however well we may logically know that this cannot actually be the case, these collective expectations percolate through our consciousness and manifest

themselves as a pressure to be having the best time of our lives all of the time in an endless utopia. In the social media age, FOMO is a universal phenomenon, but it acquires new vigour in the concentrated time-span of a Cambridge term. It's already half-way through the academic year and, to paraphrase Heather Small, what have you done today to make you feel like a worthy Cambridge student?

Because despite many elements of fantasy, the creeping tendrils of reality are pervasive – even at Cambridge. The prettiest college chapel doesn't stop you from getting your heart broken and the most well kept lawn will not prevent your supervisor from looking at you after a protracted pause and simply asking you 'what went wrong'. I am sure that even punts have seen their fair share of friendships fall apart over the stress of a poorly used punting pole. Regardless of your personal position on the Whose University? or Cambridge Defend Education campaigns, it is also clear that for a significant proportion of students the 'Cambridge experience' far from conforms to the ideal. For those who are already finding it difficult, the message we give ourselves that we should all be constantly grateful and be 'getting the most out of it' can carry the implication that if we don't fulfil this we are somehow ourselves personally at fault.

Conversely, I also don't want to live out the rest of my time here in disillusionment and disenchantment. Admitting to ourselves that Cambridge isn't always a paradise shouldn't be tantamount to condemning it as a hellhole, and if we really want to 'get the most out of our time here' we need to escape this false dichotomy. Trying to force ourselves to experience this place in the very narrow framework of what we think it ought to be like takes up too much energy. The more that we can let go of this burden, the more we can open ourselves up. Then, we're much better able to create a 'Cambridge experience' that means all the more to us for being relevant to our own unique and individual needs and predilections rather than some cookie-cutter model. And, as I think we can all feel my idealism creeping tenaciously back in here, when problems and issues do arise, as they will, we're in a much better place to deal with them effectively when we face them head on, instead of bemoaning our inability to make our lives attain some mythical ideal.

This morning, looking out across the Cambridge rooftops the sky is grey rather than brilliant blue, and it is the hiss of a lorry's brakes rising up from Trumpington street that reaches my ears. I know that I don't live in an earthly paradise, and as it happens I'm fine with that.





# Vulture

CULTURE - FEATURES - FASHION - THEATRE - REVIEWS

UNDEREXPOSED

St. John's has included victories such strong to Savage, Providence, St. Francis, and C.C.N.Y. The notable victory not only spectators were turned away because it was played on the home floor, after City College had defeated Princeton and Yale to establish an unbroken line of victories.

The Beemen realize that they dispose of the victory-eager Bees to lay claim to the supremacy, and they are on Coach Freeman's invaders.

It will be a great occasion when two universities meet—a veritable "Battle of the Roses."

## GIRLS' GAME

Girls' basketball game at the college conference.



# CLEAN BANDIT

*Ciara Nugent chats to the Grammy-winning Cantabs after their breakout success*



"We have played in Fez a couple of times. We kind of perched in front of the DJ booth and did a gig there." If you're going to measure a band's success based on the floorspace of the venues they play, and I'm going to, then string player Milan Neil Amin-Smith's words make it clear that Clean Bandit have come a long way since their beginnings in Cambridge six years ago. Their first gig was at a self-organised club night in the tiny and now closed Kambar but they'll return next month to play the Corn Exchange as part of a UK and US tour.

Of course, you could also go by awards, and they're not doing too bad on that front either; having just won the Grammy for Best Dance Recording with 'Rather Be', the band found themselves amongst Alt-J and Coldplay in the nominees for Best British Group at the Brit Awards, and with a Best British Single nomination for the track.

Yet the nomination announcements weren't an entirely positive affair for Clean Bandit. While they were thrilled to have been selected, both Amin-Smith and fellow bandmate Grace Chatto commented on the lack of race and gender diversity across the nominees, an issue that cropped up again days later at the Grammy awards. While he insists that there is a problem to be discussed there, Amin-Smith clarifies, "to be honest I think I was slightly misinterpreted with my comments about the Brits. I wasn't having a go at the actual nominations. Obviously Sam Smith, Ed Sheeran, they've all had massive years and deserve the nominations they got. But I think, nevertheless, that there was such a lack of diversity in the nominations speaks of some sort of wider structural problem." An increasing

lack of government financial support for the arts may be "part of it" but Amin-Smith suspects it's "even more entrenched and insidious than just financial support. I think it's probably connected to so many different things like role models and aspirations and social mobility on a wider scale." Nevertheless, he expresses dismay at the media's reduction of a very complicated issue into "tiny soundbites": "I think they just replayed me on Radio 1 saying 'It was the year of the white man and that's depressing.'"

Furthermore, he says, "it feels funny" making these comments as part of a band that is "known for coming from Cambridge", a place with no shortage of privileged opportunities for young acts. Despite the notable lack of a student music scene, he insists that Cambridge is a pretty good training ground for musical success: "the May Balls just give you such a great opportunity to learn about live performance because [of what] you play on – we played on the same stage as like Dizzee Rascal and Calvin Harris and Ellie Goulding at such an early stage and it meant that we were kind of used to performing on a big stage. The balls always hire quite amazing sound equipment and sound engineers. So I think we actually learnt quite a lot from that."

The band's signature sound of strings mixed with electronic music also has its roots in Cambridge when Amin-Smith and Chatto were in a string quartet and Chatto's then-boyfriend/now-bandmate Jack Patterson began mixing their performances with electronic beats on his laptop. While they continue to irreverently mix genres, including reggae ('Come Over') and club anthems ('Show Me Love'), their sound has evolved a lot since those days: "When we were

playing in Cambridge our sound was... really quite Hip Hop and we sampled a lot of classical music whereas now we mostly make more house-y, dance-ier stuff and we mainly have original string parts rather than sampling actual classical stuff." While the odd track like 'Mozart's House' does contain pieces lifted directly from classical musicians, Amin-Smith says he doesn't think "the actual classical influences in our music are that strong any more; it's just that the prominent sound of a violin is still, for a lot of people, kind of the marker of classical music". The majority of string compositions on 2014's *New Eyes*, including those in 'Rather Be', were written by the band themselves.

Alongside their irreverent genre-mixing, Clean Bandit have always been notable for the importance they accord to music videos. Patterson spent a year at film school in Moscow and in the past they've exclaimed that they prefer to think of themselves as makers of music videos rather than of music or videos by themselves and funding from their record label has allowed the band some incredible experiences recently; "I think my favourite video to make was 'Dust Clears'. Because we went to this lake in Sweden, which famously freezes over in such a way that it's like glass, you can just see all the way down. And we were just skating around on that all day."

Success has also significantly ramped up their tour budget; "this coming tour is quite a step up for us. It's much bigger venues than we've ever toured before and so we'll have a much bigger production." Amongst all of this, are they tired of performing the song that arguably pushed them to the top? 'Rather Be' was released in January 2014, but Amin-Smith maintains that

he "still love[s] the song. I guess the thing that makes me not get tired of it is that every time we play it to a different audience their reaction is always kind of new and fresh and when you're on stage that kind of reflects to you, you feel the same thing."

Jess Glynne, the featured vocalist on the track (and several others including 'Real Love') will be joining them for a few dates on the tour, including the Corn Exchange show, but Clean Bandit's use of a different vocalist on nearly every track is something of a hallmark. Far from frustrating, this is "kind of quite thrilling because it gives us so much leeway to do something quite different. Even our single after 'Rather Be', 'Extraordinary'... I don't think Jess would have wanted to sing it and it would've been the right song for her voice but we were able to do that with Shana Bass who has a really amazing voice which is so different to Jess'. So I think it's always just given us a lot more freedom in what we do".

The band has built up "a really long list of people we'd love to work with" but plans for the new album, which Amin-Smith reckons will be finished by the end of 2015, have had to be momentarily put on hold; "we haven't really had a moment's peace. It's been mad. We've got a month off – well not a month off but a month when we're not touring – in May that we're gonna use just to write and record".

They've got a few months of touring before that 'month off' but life on the road may not be so bad – the group are "really excited" to return to where it all started on 8th March, with a few perks that is: "We'll be staying in the Master's Lodge".



# A MICHELANGELO DISCOVERY

Isabelle Kent gets the story on the Fitzwilliam Museum's recent discovery from Professor Paul Joannides

Michelangelo is one of the most famous artists of all time. His name conjures in the mind's eye the great marble nude of David and the iconic Creation of Adam. However 'bronze' is not a common association, at least not until now.

Walking into the Italian gallery in the Fitzwilliam Museum I am confronted by two raised bronzes depicting virile nudes, both mounted on panthers. They are bacchants, followers of the decadent wine god. Accompanying me is the internationally renowned authority on Michelangelo, and the man who has attributed these sculptures to the great artist, Professor Paul Joannides. The announcement of the discovery, made on the 1st February, has sparked international interest. If his attribution is accurate they would be the only surviving bronzes by the Renaissance master.

These Rothschild Bronzes, named for their former owner, Baron Adolphe de Rothschild, have had a turbulent past when it comes to attributions, so in 2013 Professor Joannides was asked to investigate them. "I was very surprised because the figures immediately seemed to me to be intensely Michelangelesque in a way which I had not, and have not, encountered in the work of any other 16th century sculptor." He points to the lower arms, the way the wrists are bent and the hands clenched, much like Michelangelo's David and some figures in the Sistine chapel. "The combination of expressive musculature, that anatomical mobility Michelangelo so much prized, and satisfyingly abstract form, placed these bronzes very close to Michelangelo – and at a specific period: his treatment of physical form becomes very different and broader in [the] next decade."

An attribution to an artist such as Michelangelo is exceptionally risky, even more so in the case of these bronzes. Until 1878 the sculptures were completely unknown to the public, and no documented evidence has been found to suggest the nature of their commission. However Professor Joannides has managed to date the works very specifically to the period 1506-08. "Michelangelo studied the Laocoon [an ancient Roman sculptural group] immediately on its discovery in April 1506. Here the men's movements, the arrangement of their arms and legs, the contrasting tensions of heads and torsos and legs, reflect elements of the Laocoon and I cannot conceive that they could

have been done without knowledge of it," he says.

Michelangelo's interest in art of the antiquity was only rivalled by his obsession with anatomy; he is known to have been one of the few Renaissance artists allowed to dissect cadavers. "Professor Abrahams [the anatomist consulted by Joannides' team] demonstrated that the men's bodies are true to underlying anatomy as known through dissection." He points to a muscle on the thigh, explaining how Michelangelo must have knowledge of it through dissection since it does not physically appear, even on the most herculean of men. "This manipulation of knowledge for his own purposes... is entirely characteristic of Michelangelo," Joannides says.

The sculptures are highly enigmatic. Coming to just under a metre in height they are too large to be table ornaments and too small to work as monumental or niche sculptures. Joannides shakes his head when asked about their purpose. "I wish I knew. My hypothesis – which did not make it into our booklet – is that the felines had a double function: when their riders are removed, easily done, they work as bases for something else – perhaps flag-staffs or the poles of a baldachin, placed either side of a throne. This would also account for the animals' symmetry. But I have been unable to find anything comparable, and friends who know much more than I do about the decorative arts have produced no examples; so it was thought best to omit my idea. However, it still seems to me – if to no-one else – the most economical explanation of the facts of removability and disjunction."

Looking at the panthers it is easy to see how they could be stand alone sculptures. They are highly stylised, completely at odds with the classical nudes. "We should really have called them 'indeterminate stylised felines'," Joannides jokes. "They are energetically modelled but their relative simplicity of pose is surprising and must reflect their function. A couple of years before Michelangelo was drawing dynamic studies of fighting cavalymen for the Battle of Cascina, in which men and horses are integrated in ways that Leonardo could not have bettered. If figures and mounts are here disjunctive, that was intentional."

The only contemporary document that ties these bronzes to

Michelangelo is the Musée Fabre facsimile drawing said to be a copy of one of the sculptors own 'concetto', a preliminary thumbnail sketch. It depicts a nude male riding a panther, just like the bronzes, however the poses differ greatly. Joannides states "the concetto would have been followed by many more drawings and, probably, wax models. What is revealing in this drawing, and connects it unequivocally with the bronze groups, is the fact that the feline is so stylised, and that the figure is not integrated with it: i.e. that disjunction between rider and mount is inscribed from the start."

It will be interesting to know how these bronzes may change the way Michelangelo is studied. Joannides nods, "I hope it shows that, even about Michelangelo, not everything has been said. We know that he sometimes made designs for the decorative arts – and these bronzes are essentially decorative – of which virtually nothing survives. And it may encourage more thought about interaction among forms and media in Michelangelo's art: it is obvious that he is a sculptural painter, but less so that he could be a very painterly sculptor, or that his treatment of marble – especially his early years – is heavily indebted to prototypes in bronze. Finally, it may encourage people to look around Michelangelo. On the Musée Fabre page is a Virgin and Child extracted from a larger group; some years ago I stumbled across a painting to this design, plus St Joseph. Whether the painter had access to a more complete drawing, or whether he might have copied a lost painting by Michelangelo himself, is an open question. I suspect that there is still much to discover on the periphery of Michelangelo."

The discovery of the bronzes has been picked up by news organisations the world over, and many are visiting the Fitzwilliam to see the works. Joannides smiles, "I'm astonished. Interest in Renaissance art is declining in museums, among collectors and, perhaps even, the public, with attention now directed to modern and contemporary art. However, I can only suppose that 'Michelangelo' still means something. Certainly, if people look at his work with an unprejudiced eye, they will find he has a great deal to offer."

*The Rothschild Bronzes are on display until August 2015. A Michelangelo Discovery is on sale in the Fitzwilliam shop.*

## Theatre



Roll up! Roll up! Catch the comedy highlight of the week, Cirque de l'Extraordinaire (11pm, Wed 4th - Sat 7th, ADC).

But if the space between hope and glory is more your sort of thing then ADC Mainshow The Strip (Tue 3rd - Sat 7th, 7.45pm) might be just what you're looking for.

## Talks



Human rights lawyer and Orwell prize winner Raja Shehadeh talks to Ruth Padel about the language of politics and the politics of language. The Language of Peace continues the Cambridge Literary Festival (6pm, Sat 27th, St Mary's School)

## Music



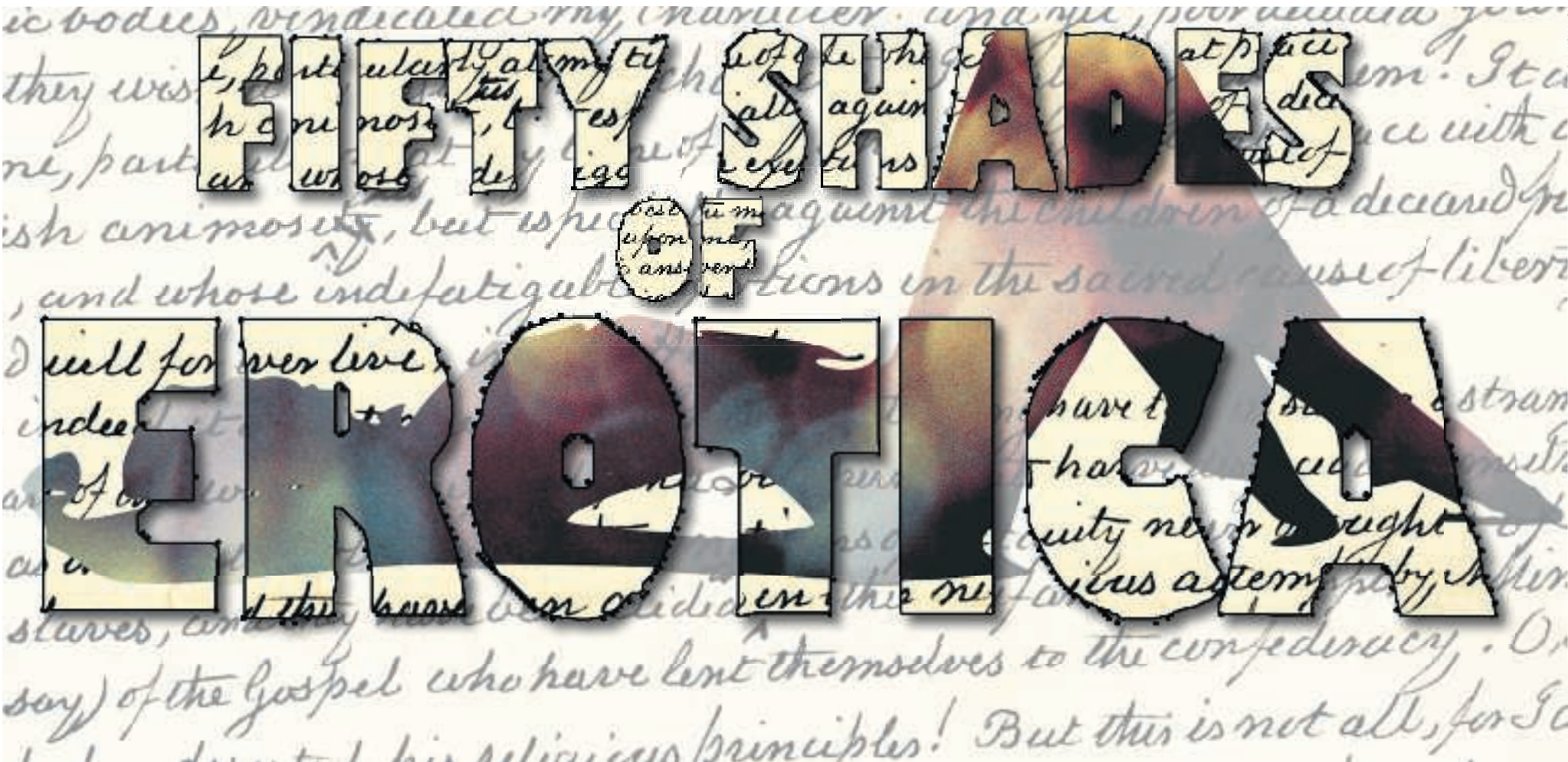
The Glass Animals tour reaches the Junction (8pm, Mon 2nd). In an interview with the band in Michaelmas Varsity wrote, "they hold the promise of being rawer and more bizarre than ever before." Don't miss your chance to see them live..

## Film



Appropriate Behaviour, the anticipated debut from Desiree Akhavan will be out in the next week. The Arts Picturehouse will be hosting a Q&A with the director, talking about the film and its LGBT+ themes (6.30pm, Thur 5th)





*Sarah-Jane Tollan explores the colourful heritage of erotic fiction*

Sex sells. This age-old adage has defined our society for decades, from Wonderbra's traffic accident-inducing 'Hello Boys' billboard campaign in the 1990s to the scantily clad women in the infamous music video for 'Blurred Lines'. Sexualisation has long been a mainstream consumer interest. Perhaps it is not so startling, then, that Fifty Shades of Grey has conquered the public curiosity and grasped media interest so heavily, its iron grip spawning an empire that has culminated in one of the most highly anticipated films of the decade. It is extraordinary to track its development, from its humble beginnings as a piece of Twilight fanfiction posted on the internet under the pseudonym 'Snowqueen's Icedragon' to the bestselling book in the UK since records began in 1998. Simultaneously beloved and disparaged by the public and media alike, it has been described as 'Mommy Porn' and, according to Salman Rushdie, "made Twilight look like War & Peace".

While its prose may not be poetic or skilful, its depictions of sexual relationships, of power play and the socially 'taboo', is but the 21st century's latest addition to a rich historical heritage of erotica that began in classical antiquity. Catullus, the Roman Republic poet famed for his lovelorn verses, continues to attract attention for his poem 16, its obscenity resulting in a full English text translation being unavailable until the late 20th century, and whose explicitly sexual opening line was deemed by The Telegraph as "one of the filthiest expressions ever written in Latin – or in any other language, for that matter". Ovid, too, dabbled in the erotic; the finale to Book 3 of his instructional Ars Amatoria details female bedroom decorum, from the "cries and panting breath" a woman should make to advice on sexual positions, such as the highly unsubtle reference to Andromache, the Theban wife of Hector, who was "too tall to straddle Hector's horse". Depictions of the erotic were, however, not isolated to the West; the Arabian Nights, a collection of Asian and North African folk tales from the Islamic Golden Age, is not only

the source material for Disney's Aladdin, but also an iconic literary work that includes tales such as Ali with the Large Member and The Caliph Harun Al-Rashid and the Three Slave Girls, all set within the kingdom of a tyrant ruler who satiates his misogynistic lust by marrying virgins and murdering them the next day.

Sir Richard Francis Burton's unabashed translation of the Arabian Nights caused a moral outcry in Victorian England when it was published in 1884; yet this was just the latest in a long line of eroticism and literary brazenness that caused a lurid public fascination and culminated in imprisonment and court trials. Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure, or Fanny Hill to refer to its famed namesake, was deemed the first 'prose pornography' after its publication in the middle of the 18th century; its depiction of the sexual exploits of a young prostitute, not limited to scenes of voyeurism, masturbation, and masochism, resulted in the arrest of its authors under the charge of "corrupting the King's subjects".

Within the same century, across the English Channel, the infamous libertine, the Marquis de Sade, wrote the twin novels Justine and Juliette, the former a virtuous woman subject to sexual torture and humiliation, the latter her nymphomaniac sister who indulges in sexual depravity at its extreme. Napoleon ordered de Sade's arrest in 1801, and the Cour Royale de Paris agreed in favour of the demolition of all de Sade's works in the same year.

It was over a century later when fiction depicting sexual language and imagery was purged of its lewd label in the renowned R v Penguin Books Ltd. trial in the 1960s. The call for the uncensored transcription of D.H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover to be banned from print under the Obscene Publications Act of 1959 was implemented due to the fear that it would be accessible to women and the working-classes. Drawing attention and critical thought to the definition of obscenity and to the question of a value judgement system being imposed on art, and justifying the literary

merit of a piece of literature, the overturning of the case was the spark that ignited libertarianism in the printing press and kindled a kind of deviancy in the published written word.

It was Lawrence's prose that safeguarded him, the "pure deepening whirlpools of sensation swirling deeper and deeper through all her tissue and consciousness", the "peace on earth of her soft, quiescent body", that deemed him a lyricist in the jury's eyes. There is a stark transition between these quotes and the repetitive ramblings of E. L. James' heroine about her "inner goddess", swaying in a "gentle victorious samba", her cheeks turning "the colour of The Communist Manifesto" as she listens headily to the voice of her lover, "warm and husky like dark melted chocolate fudge caramel... or something".

Evidently, it is not for the aesthetic merit of the prose that society has become irresistibly drawn to James' tale; it is to indulge in the graphic, the explicit and the unadulterated world of sexual fetishes that are void of discussion in casual society. The introduction of e-books has enabled us to indulge in fantasies without judgement, to be both liberated and surreptitious in our consumption, and it is a probable explanation for how erotica has paradoxically reached such endemic proportions in the public consciousness. A hasty search on the internet brings to the fore thousands of erotic literature sold solely in the e-book format, images of a rippled torso or a crimson lip enticing customers alongside their price; many are for free, or charge a petty price. Perhaps the most striking aspect is the volume of the work that is self-published, with many authors linking to their biographical information on short story and fiction websites.

For it is the clandestine world of the internet, the ability to read material and erase it from traceability, to be able to attach words to your desires anonymously, that has pioneered erotic fiction. A simple search brings a whole realm of erotic fiction to my fingertips, from homoerotic fanfiction between Sherlock

and Watson to a website whose short stories involve categories as diverse as 'Xeno' (for the uneducated prudes xenophilia, or sex with aliens), 'Humil', appertaining to acts of humiliation, and 'MC', the curious acronym for sexual acts regarding mind control. The most popular stories, however, duly follow the BDSM trend that Fifty Shades of Grey has pushed to the forefront; hundreds of thousands of hits bestowed upon the poetically titled I Watched My Wife Get Drunk, Seduced, and Abused, although it loses its virtual laurel wreath to the most popular story on the website, Claire Turns Slut. Tales of women gaining sexual gratification and pleasure from maltreatment and from affirmed declarations of their 'want-onness' are incredibly widespread, to the point of oversaturation on almost every website that acts as a platform for erotic fiction.

In itself, the type of behaviour exhibited in these types of stories ushers in questions regarding whether female sexuality is being exploited to the point of inequality. It is a controversy that Fifty Shades of Grey has already been subject to, from the accusations around its celebration of an emotionally abusive relationship to its depiction of highly-enforced traditional gender roles. It is exploitative and liberating all at once because a female author writing about female sexuality and building a platform, albeit unintentionally and controversially, upon which we can discuss it, is freeing in a society where we can gape and sigh at Rihanna's body but never make mention of our own.

Whether erotic fiction is a harmless playground for individuals to build and engage in their most extreme sexual desires and fetishes, or whether it is detrimental to the cultural perception of women in the same degree as video pornography, seems to be a question lost in the hype of the release of the most publicised erotic work of all time. It is testament, however, to the burgeoning curiosity and openness regarding the most intimate and dark parts of humanity, and a firm validation of the age-old adage "sex sells". But at what cost?



# Cambridge needs to lose its **virginity**

Rebecca Maggs on the V-word in Cambridge

**V**irginity. Sex. It's something we as a society obsess over. "When did they lose their virginity?", "I'm saving my virginity for someone special", or "They've slept with so many people" are all phrases we think and hear a lot.

Of course, now we come to it; what is virginity? Most people would view it as penis penetrating the vagina. Plain and simple. Boom. Cherry popped. Done. Sex is construed as the same thing (and this is how it will be defined here). Never mind oral sex, anal sex or anything else we define as sex or sexual experiences. But sex is a subjective term, and virginity should be too.

This is precisely the point: our conception of virginity is purely a social construct. Hopefully we're all aware of how it's developed over centuries when expectations of marriage were entirely different. Then, virginity was essentially a form of paternity testing for safeguarding legitimate bloodline property transfer. Hence the association of virginity with purity and innocence was idealised, bolstered by religion. With it came the stigmatisation of female sexuality (especially non-marital sex) as dirty, slutty, and shameful.

But we don't live in this kind of society anymore, right? It's normal (or at least accepted) that unmarried people have sexual relationships and flings. Don't get me wrong, the point here is not to devalue how special and exclusive all acts of physical intimacy often are. But

why is losing your virginity still such a big thing as opposed to giving oral sex? Why does 'sleeping around' make a man cool and a woman a slut? Our ideas about virginity have not morphed correspondingly to societal norms. So the way we think about sex is somewhat irrelevant. Virginity in the modern day is a huge topic, but there were some specific things I wanted to pull out:

**1 Virginity, Sexism and Sluts:** Prejudices around virginity embody sexual double standards. Society has internalised the idea that virginity is a commodity women have to be careful not to lose at the wrong time, with the wrong person and for the wrong reasons. In other words, virginity frames a woman's worth as inversely proportional to how much and what kind of sex she's had. The more sex a woman has had, the less pure she is, and therefore the less 'valuable' she is. This sounds ridiculous – until you realise that we pat men on the back for 'getting laid' while we slut-shame women, dealing out guilt, judgment and subordination for their sexuality. How many times have we heard of a promiscuous girl and immediately thought "what a slut" before realising that we do not think of men in the same way? Female sexuality is still internalised as something disgusting and impure, and slut-shaming reinforces this puritanical mindset. Men don't entirely get off scot-free here either, though. The pressure of avoiding being a 40 year-old virgin is enormous, and having lots of sex is synonymous with masculinity.

**2 You Can't Mistake My Biology:** Virginity is lost when the hymen is broken by penetration, right? (Note how irrelevant this definition is for men). Wrong. There is no biological marker for virginity – most hymens wear away shortly before or during adolescence. So if a hymen was an indication of virginity, most women are not virgins before they even become sexually active.

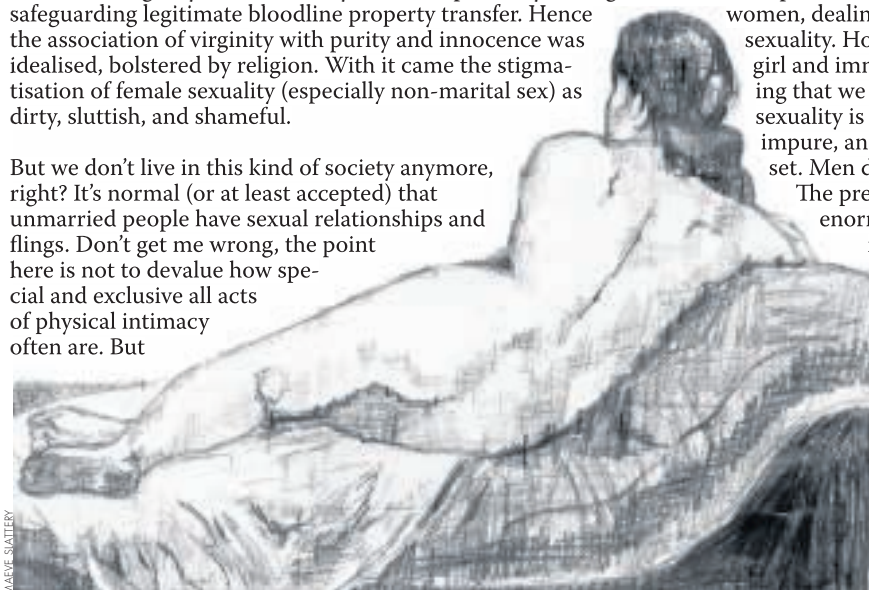
**3 'Virginity' is exclusive:** This is another reason 'virginity' needs overhauling. Of course

we don't think of same-sex couples as lifelong virgins, despite their purely technical inability to have penetrative vaginal sex. But the language of virginity has not adapted to this, devaluing their romantic and sexual experiences.

So how should we think about virginity? The language of shame needs to change immediately. 'Slut' is a disgusting word that serves no purpose except to vilify female sexuality, and frameworks of 'loss' and 'broken' imply virginity is an idealised state to be lamented once gone. Furthermore, the construction of the language of sex and virginity narrows it down to a technicality that not only ignores and devalues many people, but also ignores and devalues any other type of sexual experience, which can be equally valid and intimate. These attitudes belong to an age with different socio-sexual norms, and don't have any place in our society now.

So is 'virginity' a helpful construct to define how we sexually interact in the 21st century? No, not really. Perhaps it's more socially relevant now to consider other forms of intimacy equally valid. If you're going to have oral sex, can you really still call yourself a virginal innocent? Why can't a woman, now armed with contraception and independence, enjoy and express herself through frequent sex too? Is 'innocence' still a helpful or relevant way to think about sex, given the exposure to physical intimacy through magazines, TV, clothing and social media?

We should not be thinking in terms of 'losing virginity', but rather 'becoming sexually active' (i.e. engaging in physical intimacy). Yes, this is very ambiguous, but then intimacy is not homogenous in people's experiences, desires or meanings. The attempt to put sex into a box in the form of 'virginity' imbues it with the language of exclusion. I am not attempting to advocate a sexual free-for-all just because we can, and obviously choice, consent and romantic intimacy are all integral in how we conduct ourselves sexually. But sex and sexualities are something to be celebrated and embraced, and the language of 'virginity' screams of negativity. We need a much more positive construction of sex and intimacy. It's time society lost its virginity.



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On Depression

NOA LESSOF GENDLER

I'd been in therapy for a couple of months, but no one said the word 'depression' until last November, when for the first time I understood that I had no idea as to why I was really crying.

My prevailing state had been based on apathy, disengagement and frustration since I was about 16. I spent weeks feeling blank and monotonous, finding everything exhausting and pointless, despising people who demanded things of me and avoiding confronting problems and my own emotions. Cambridge exacerbated this, and provided plenty of excuses for my thrill-seeking behaviour.

But for a long time I never questioned that there was anything wrong. No one treated me differently because no one saw the changes, so I carried on like that, never asking for help because I didn't think it was necessary, always feeling numb, looking forward to being drunk, feeling like I was oozing through each waking moment. It took someone else throwing an umbrella term at me for my eyes to open.

Every depressive experience is unique, so saying someone is 'depressed' will never begin to cover it. But to begin one's recovery, it can help to be given an explanation for the emptiness. For me, it was an opportunity to forgive myself. I stopped feeling guilty about staying in bed, not writing essays, going home every weekend, and some of the weight lifted. I didn't feel ashamed to email supervisors to ask for extensions, so my work improved. The rest that I needed became truly restful, and my time away from the intensity of college became more regenerative.

You are allowed to feel cold all the time; to never want to talk to people; to want to hide under your duvet every day and never open your eyes. You are allowed to eat everything or eat nothing; you are allowed to drown yourself in work or procrastinate until the end of days; you are allowed to cry all the time. You're allowed to feel lonely and hurt when no one knocks on your door to see if you're okay. But if you feel these things, maybe you should be the one seeing if you're okay.

Using the word 'depression' can be scary but it can also be a relief. It can be an admittance that you need looking after, and that actually, no, you're not fine.

Despite the outmoded mental health support available in Cambridge, my experience of discussing depression, therapy and medication has been positive and encouraging: most treat the subject with the respect it deserves. I suppose a small benefit of being at a university with such high rates of mental health problems is that it's just impractical for it to be a taboo subject. Don't let yourself consider it a taboo, either. If there's a problem, that's okay – and once you recognise it, I reckon you'll start feeling better.

Cocktails on a Shoestring

Callum Hale-Thomson

It's Tuesday evening, the Sainsbury's Basics table wine is flowing, and everyone is descending into increasing levels of drunken numbness and jollity. Someone arrives with a bottle of cheap vodka and mixers: it's cocktail time. But for anyone who doesn't enjoy the corrosive burning of paint stripper and ice cream (aka vodka and cream soda), there are lots of easy and quick ways to add a bit of sophistication to your pre-drinks. Forget buying watered-down cups of juice in clubs (£7!?) and make use of what you (mostly) already have.



The **Gin and Tonic** is already an excellent start to a classy night, but with a few simple additions can be transformed from a reliable staple into a perfectly pizazzed pre-drink. The golden ratio of one shot of gin to three shot-equivalents of tonic water gives a good balance without drowning out subtle notes of the gentle gin infusion, whilst the soft aromatics of the cucumber and mint are surprisingly complementary:

- 3 shots tonic water
- 1 shot gin
- 1/2 shot elderflower cordial
- Cucumber
- Mint to garnish

Combine all the ingredients, be sure to stir the cordial, and serve with plenty of ice

Musical accompaniment: 'Time Out' by the Dave Brubeck Quartet

Dress code: Smart casual; lounge suits, cocktail dresses



When a heavy night at Cindies is looming, prime yourself with a (perhaps foreboding) **Dark and Stormy**, a heavy, spicy concoction balanced by the sharp acidity of the lime:

- 2 shots dark rum
- 4 shots ginger beer
- dash of lime juice
- wedge of lime

Combine ingredients with ice, stir, and coat rim of the glass with lime juice.

Musical accompaniment: 'The Circle of Life' from The Lion King

Dress code: Neon



The **Twinkle** is the shining star of your drinks arsenal, the perfect sparkling trophy and pat on the back after that long essay you've finally pretended to finish:

- 1 shot vodka
- 1 shot elderflower cordial
- 3 shots prosecco

Shake/stir the vodka and cordial, fill with prosecco to finish.

Musical accompaniment: 'The One and Only' by Chensley Hawkes

Dress code: Glitter



A cheeky **Aperol Spritz** will instantly transport you from the ominous grey concrete facades of Sidgwick to the fiery heart of Southern Italy. Unleash your inner hipster with this simple, refreshing (and exotically coloured) summer drink:

- 3 shots white wine/prosecco
- 2 shots aperol
- 1 shot sparkling water
- 1 shot gin (if you're feeling adventurous)
- Orange slice and cocktail umbrella to garnish

Start with aperol/gin, add the wine, sparkling water and stir with ice to finish.

Musical accompaniment: 'I giardini di marzo' by Lucio Battisti

Dress code: Shorts, linen shirts, sunglasses, vespa (optional)

For when only a glass of gin will do, an elegant, well-made **Martini** hits the spot. Prance about like James Bond, pretending that you actually enjoy the taste:

- 1 shot dry vermouth
- 2 shots gin (or 3, or 4)
- Green olive to garnish

Combine the ingredients and stir with ice for about 30 seconds, then strain into a glass.

Musical accompaniment: Theme Song from From Russia With Love

Dress code: Black Tie

Note: Maybe it's time to repurpose an old case as a drinks cabinet. Ask friends to leave their drinks, and you will unwittingly become master of the cabinet... just make sure it doesn't go straight to your head.





# Joss Stone

Joss Stone was thrust into fame when she was just 13, winning *Star for a Night*, a BBC television talent show. Since then she has won a sizeable cabinet of awards, appeared in a number of television programmes, toured all over the world and released 32 singles and six studio albums, with another on the way. Her career has spanned nearly 15 years and she still maintains her position as one of the most respected and popular singers in the music world. Despite being a super star celebrity, she is one of the most down-to-earth people that I have ever met. She was cheery, chatty and seemed more than pleased to talk to me despite having just got off a long-haul flight.

Coming from a small village in rural Devon, how did Joss get into the music industry? “When I was a little girl I didn’t even realise there was an industry surrounding it. I was more inspired to become a singer because music was something I connected with much easier than everything else in my life; at that point my life was school. That was it – school and animals!” She explained how she would “stay up all night watching MTV and then my mum would come down and tell me off, and say ‘you have to go to school in the morning’... Then I’d sneak back downstairs later and turn it on really quietly”.

Arguably, it was livestock that catapulted her into the public eye in the first place. She initially entered *Star*

for a *Night in order to try and make enough money to keep her expensive yet much loved horse, Freddy*. “My logical brain started going ‘fucking hell I need to get a job, I must get a job’... Then I was watching *Star for a Night* and I thought ‘ah people do that for a job, I can do that; that’s easy!’”. They only actually paid her £75, and she didn’t get to keep the horse, but that show marked the start of Joss’ music career, and placed her firmly under the limelight.

She quickly became extremely famous, and I wondered how she found, and continues to find the pressure of celebrity life: “Well, I didn’t much like it to be honest. It’s probably my least favourite part of my job I think because it’s nothing to do with music”. She explains that fame is “everybody watching you, looking at you, judging you and judging everything about you” and that “they’re more interested in your clothing and your boyfriend” than the music. She feels that this is “so beside the point; so far from all the reasons I do it... I mean it just gets boring!” Joss continues to live in the country home in which she was brought up, in part because she loves where she comes from, but also as an escape from the “pressures of celebrity life”.

What does Joss think about a music industry that seems to be almost totally ‘image-centric’? “There’s lots of different sections to the music industry... There’s the commercial side of

things; the records that sell millions and millions” but “that’s one area and that’s, like, massively visual, with the videos and the photographs and the red carpets and the ‘who are you wearing’ questions...” She expressed her “massive” respect for artists like Beyoncé (who can “sing her arse off”), but notes how it is very concerned with the visual “and that’s because the consumer – they want that”. But there

## AFTER SOME PUZZLEMENT SHE EXCLAIMED “OH THE PLOT ORDEAL WHEN PEOPLE TRIED TO KILL ME!”

is “no one thing better than another... But that doesn’t necessarily mean that I want to be a part of it; that’s not what floats my boat”.

Joss had a large legal battle to leave the EMI record label a few years ago when she decided that this side of the industry wasn’t what appealed to her. She told me how she was “pissed off” at the time, because “they didn’t care” what she thought or wanted “but ‘ha-ha, you either do what we want you to do honey or you aren’t going to sing at all!’”. Despite their “abuse” they couldn’t stop her singing, and after a long legal battle Joss could finally sing whenever and whatever she wanted.

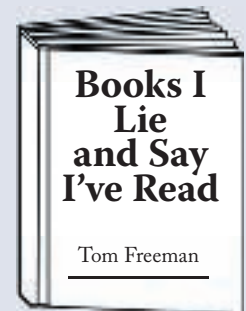
Besides the normal celebrity interest, Joss has also attracted a

dangerous kind of attention. In 2011 she was the target of a kidnap and potential murder plot because of her relationship with the royal family. I wasn’t sure how to approach this issue, and so I asked her about the “2011 plot ordeal”. After some puzzlement she exclaimed “oh the plot ordeal when people tried to kill me!”

After that I felt more comfortable, and mentioned how it’s so hard ask tactfully about something like that, to which she laughed “well how can you: someone tried to chop my fucking head off!” The attitude which she had adopted was remarkable, and she spoke freely, even laughing about how she doesn’t “really know what to say about it... I got asked these questions when I was doing interviews on TV when I was promoting another record and they were like ‘so... by the way... how’d that go for you’ and I was like ‘well... yeah it was great’”.

She told me how she bought two more dogs (she already owned two) and had to step up security. She now “always has someone in the house with her pretty much” but that when she’s alone she “puts the dogs in each room” to make her feel safer. It’s clear that, despite the kidnapping plot never actualising, it has made a deep impact. But her philosophy is admirable: “it’s just the tapestry of life: there’s lots of ups and there’s lots of downs you know, and I guess that’s one downside”.

Jack Benda



My friend Tabs tells me I have the most pretentious bookshelf she’s ever seen. Given my idea of a great time after a bop was to harp on for two hours that *War and Peace* was the best book ever written, she might have a point. But that doesn’t mean I’ve actually read the books. I know nothing about how Chekov’s angst relates to Sartrean existentialism, but I’ll certainly have a crack at convincing you I do. They’re important texts. That’s all I really know about them, and that’s all you know, too, so let’s pretend we know why and enjoy the intellectual prestige.

Paying attention to a book’s importance has made me the sort of hypocrite who says Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* is one of the funniest books ever written (it is), despite having only read half of it. I once wrote an essay on Flaubert arguing that *Sentimental Education*’s entire plot could be predicted from its first and last chapters, which might have been because that was all I’d read of it.

Laziness? Possibly. But if your essay deadline is tomorrow I’d say you’re better off cobbling together some lit crit, glancing at chunks of the text and arguing a ‘brave’ interpretation than forcing your way through all 500 pages in French. So you take a punt on a ‘new’ twist, and hope you can make it through your supervision. In the end, this got ridiculous: presented with a passage I was supposed to have read (but obviously hadn’t), I based a timed critical commentary, written in a furious panic, on a Sheryl Crow lyric. It got a first.

Lying for cultural credibility is one thing, but pretending I’ve read Proust only means I can parrot that some books are ‘significant’ without being able to make up my own mind. Last week marked the 50th anniversary of James Baldwin’s historic Union debate: *Giovanni’s Room* is said to be a landmark piece of LGB fiction, but I can’t know that unless I read it, even if I ‘know’ it’s important. What if I said “Ayn Rand’s fiction attempts to mask its melodrama in weak attempts at highfalutin philosophical discourse that belie naïve readings of Aristotle”? I could have got that from a cereal packet, for all you know. Ditto when I argued with a friend about *Brave New World* being a better book than *1984*, when I hadn’t read the latter.

Does this matter? That it insults those who engage in the serious study of literature is irrelevant: more fool them for not spotting I didn’t have a clue. But if I can’t explain why we study novels like *Sentimental Education*, why did I bother with that essay? I know no more having written it. I know no more than someone who’s never heard of Flaubert at all. If knowing a book means grappling with its ideas and forming your own conclusion about its message, then I know very few books indeed.

Do I understand *War and Peace*? Not as much as I’d like. But, for the record, I did read it. Twice. Andrei makes it worth it every time.





# INDECENT EXPOSURE



Varsity Fashion questions the taboo of nudity in this Eduardo Recife-inspired shoot. The human form is beautiful and we should be able to parade it, celebrate it. Yet media sites such as Facebook “impose limitations on the display of nudity” (Facebook guidelines).  
Is the nude form indecent?



Photography | Gayathiri Kamalakanthan; Illustrator | Sophie Buck; Model | Ruth Jenkins;  
Concept, Direction, Setting | Livs Galvin & Gayathiri Kamalakanthan



# Showcasing Talent



**Gabriella Jeakins** speaks to professional director Nicholas Barter about this year's Marlowe Showcase and the Cambridge theatre scene

Cambridge has a never ending list of famous actors who have passed through its halls. Just this week, Trinity alumnus Eddie Redmayne walked away with a Best Actor Oscar and you only have to poke your head backstage at the ADC to see crowds of current students hoping to follow in his footsteps. But the path to fame is difficult and not every hopeful can make a career in this competitive world.

The first step is getting representation, and the annual Marlowe Showcase offers finalists the opportunity to perform for agents in what could mark the first step of their career. This year fourteen students will take to the stage at London's Arts Theatre with a series of monologues and duologues to showcase their talents.

The showcase is being directed by industry professional and Cambridge alumnus Nicholas Barter. A former Principal of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), he has a wealth of experience in training young actors and has also directed professional productions from London's West End to Tokyo.

He has fond memories of acting and directing while a student here in Cambridge

and calls it "one of the richest amateur theatre scenes in any university in the country. There's a great tradition". Some notable highlights for him were directing the Marlowe Showcase as an undergraduate, as one of only three undergraduates to do so, and directing a performance of Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* at the ADC. While here, Barter worked with several other students who later became professional directors, including Sir Richard Eyre, Mike Newell and Robert Knights, and he credits the university theatre as having a huge impact on his later career. "I think I did 21 plays in the 3 years I was here, either as an actor or director, and you learn an awful lot."

Barter certainly seems very fond of the Cambridge theatrical tradition and sees it having a bright future. He assures me that "no doubt one or both of my student assistant directors on the showcase (Henry St Leger-Davey and Emma Wilkinson) will be running the National Theatre one day."

His advice for any student considering a career in theatre is: "Do as much as you can!"

"Don't be deflected from the fact that Cambridge is an amazingly rich source of experience. I would always say that if that's

what you really want to do, you've got to give it your best shot.

"Of course try and get a degree, don't sacrifice your degree, but do as much as you can."

Indeed, he notes that the actors this year seem to have more academic commitments than he remembers from his time, but as he says himself, "I was rather cavalier about that when I was here."

However, he acknowledges that it will be an uphill struggle for his cast of actors before they can forge their own careers. While the Marlowe Showcase provides them with a great opportunity, it can be a real struggle, even for actors with a huge range of experience in university drama; "it's a purely commercial event, it's not about art, and that's hard for actors to take on board." And the showcase itself doesn't always have predictable results.

"They can't really control how the agent sees them. If the agent already has someone on their books who looks like and sounds like them, they're unlikely to pick up the actor."

Barter acknowledges that for many, this will only be a first step. He cites the relatively

low number of Cambridge alumni who have managed to sustain an acting career without further training and emphasises that going on to drama school is important for anyone thinking of going into acting.

"They don't get the voice work here and indeed they don't get the movement work... they're not really in their bodies to the extent that an actor should be, it's all a little bit in the head... we've actually brought in an Alexander teacher to work with [the actors in the Marlowe Showcase] to try and get them more in touch with their bodies and of course in drama school you'd get Alexander Technique lessons every week."

The finalists involved in the Showcase are certainly aware of the difficulties involved in breaking into acting. Guy Clark tells me that while he would love to become an actor, "it's a slightly terrifying thing to commit to."

However, they are also clearly very grateful for this opportunity. Kay Dent feels that it "could very well help us for the rest of our lives."

*A preview of the Marlowe Showcase will be performed at the ADC at 4.30pm on Thursday 5th March.*

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# THE BARD IN CAM

“**T**he Bard of Avon”, “England’s national poet”, “the greatest dramatist of all time”: these are just some of the epithets that have been bestowed upon the playwright and poet who has come to dominate our consciousness as well as our theatres: William Shakespeare.

Such is the adulation for one man that the Globe Theatre in London dedicates itself to the performance of a multiplicity of his plays each year, while the Royal Shakespeare Company plays host in his birthplace of Stratford-upon-Avon, attracting a plethora of acting talent to play Shakespeare’s leading men from Ian McKellen to David Tennant. It is commonplace to see two or three of the Bard’s plays making an appearance in Cambridge’s theatre calendar each term, and there are numerous annual touring groups, such as CAST, the Pembroke Players’ Japan Tour, and the ETG, that stage Shakespeare’s plays across the globe. The attraction to the Bard is not just national; he is a part of school curricula in countries as diverse as Azerbaijan, Poland and Hungary, and is widely studied in translation elsewhere, either at secondary or university level. The English Tripos even includes a compulsory Shakespeare paper for its first year students.



It is a cultural obsession that George Bernard Shaw bitingly dubbed ‘Bardolatry’, an excessive worship of Shakespeare. In our vigorous study of him, we forget his contemporaries – playwrights that were also highly talented and skilled poetic craftsmen, such as Kyd, Marlowe and Jonson. It is to the detriment of these poets and their works that we glorify Shakespeare above all else, to the extent that many generations may never read, see, or hear mention of the magnificence of *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Doctor Faustus* or *The Alchemist*. It seems that Shakespeare has moved beyond the name of a dramatist into a name that is associated with nationalistic pride and ‘high culture’, a symbol of literary and cultural prowess. Quoting ad lib a few lines from Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy, or just attaching the name to a semi-meaningful quote you found off Tumblr (‘I can’t make everyone happy, I’m not a pizza’ – William Shakespeare), is guaranteed to score you intellectual brownie points.

Yet there is something strangely prescient in Jonson’s referral to Shakespeare in the Preface to the First Folio as “not of an age, but for all time”. It is the universal nature of the themes about which he writes, such as loyalty and ambition in *Macbeth*, or identity and pride in *King Lear*, that make themselves startlingly relevant as themes of the human experience. Alongside this is the sheer breadth of Shakespeare’s literary works: tragedies, histories, comedies, he covers the main ranges of humanity, and excels in them all. Within them lurks ideas about life and death, dialogues regarding English history and Elizabethan society, overwhelming discourses on love and overtly sexual, bawdy puns; there really is something for everyone.

His characters, from fairy kings and queens to cross-dressing women, can step out of the page or from the stage as characterisations of

quintessential humanity. It is no wonder, then, that films such as *10 Things I Hate About You*, based on *The Taming of the Shrew*, strike such a chord with its audience; its popularity is not due to its association with Shakespeare, but due to the relevancy of its discussion upon ideas such as gender politics and the vibrancy of its characters (with a little help from Heath Ledger, of course).

And who can deny the compellingly beautiful lure of his words, be it Lady Macbeth’s fatalistic “Life’s but a walking shadow”, or the elegiac Ariel’s Song – “Of his bones are coral made” – in *The Tempest*. Even renowned poets such as Keats, who deemed Shakespeare his “Presider” – both a God and a Muse – were pressed upon by Shakespeare’s poetic verse and inspired to achieve the same in their meter. The relentless influence of his poetic craftsmanship has pervaded our everyday communication, with most of us being completely ignorant of it; if you have ever uttered that you’re “in a pickle” an hour before an essay deadline, or referred to yourself as the “green-eyed monster” when you caught your lecture crush dancing with someone else at Cindies, then you have the Bard to thank for the eloquence of your expression.

Shaw may have blasted it as ‘Bardolatry’, but even he acknowledged the brilliance and brightness of the idol at whose altar everyone worships; the man who roused envy and frustration for his “enormous power over language” and his “prodigious fund of that vital energy”.

To live on over 400 years after his mortal death, reincarnated in the global enactments of his plays and in the minds of students and readers alike, is testament to the human value of his legacy. His works, the characters and poetry that encompass them, and the performances that materialise them, will justifiably ensure that the name of Shakespeare continues to ring loud in the public consciousness, “passing through nature to eternity”.

*Sarah-Jane Tollan*

The producer is an odd creature. They can usually be recognised by their tired air, mismatched clothes and constant attachment to a laptop. Their job is certainly very important – that of managing the budget, ensuring everything goes to schedule and liaising with everyone in the production team – but it also can be very bureaucratic. They don’t necessarily need to be at all the show’s rehearsals, and when they do, they often sit at the back, mumbling about Doodle polls. Despite its affectation of being the most important role within a theatrical team, ‘producer’ can at first glance appear a fragmentary and thankless job.

Although I have experience in producing shows for the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom, my experience has primarily been for



## Introducing Producers

**Jamie Rycroft** unmask that elusive theatrical best: the producer

sketch and comedy shows, which, being a bit homespun and ‘ropey’, mean that you can usually quickly solve any problems that come up in the production process. The highest-profile show I’ve produced was *Santa is a Scumbag* last week at the ADC – not quite the Footlights Pantomime or *Lent Term Musical*. And yet, I like to think that producing any show, no matter how small, teaches you valuable things about how theatre is put together, and I’d recommend anyone with an interest in drama to give it a go, whether they are a budding actor, techie, director, or anyone else.

The most fascinating thing about producing is accompanying the play from inception to delivery, from when it’s merely a twinkle in a director’s eye to the moment the curtain falls on the final performance (and then some time afterwards as you work out how much money you’ve spent). Apart from the

director, there’s no other role in which you can view all of these stages, and it’s partly why producers tend to get very attached to the show that they’re working on (aside from the fact that they’re also trying to sell tickets). Far from being parasitic to the creative process, many producers, by being so involved in every aspect, end up being integral to the show’s direction, even if it is in decidedly minor ways. I’m very proud of the fact that I inspired Orlando Gibbs to mop the stage during his comedy show *Who Am I?*, though obviously I can’t take credit for the fact he delivered one of the most high-quality hours of stand-up I’ve seen here.

That’s producing in a nutshell, really: small and random tasks, like suggesting someone uses a mop, that seem absurd on their own but accumulate to create a finished product you hopefully feel proud of. There’s little that distinguishes it from

other managerial professions: you have to count the pennies, create schedules, oversee cross-departmental communication and maintain a product’s public image. But there is one crucial detail that separates theatre production from similar types of roles, and that is the magic of theatre itself, the indescribable atmosphere that can only exist on or behind a stage, the almost scientific process of creating a supernatural illusion to convince an audience that something fake is real. The satisfaction one receives when a show they’ve produced is performed is worth every menial discussion about copyright and the logistics of the post-show get-out.

That satisfaction is common to most people no matter what their role is in the play, but as a producer one gets the added excitement of dealing with theatre at its most abstract and its most practical. Being a producer teaches you that a play is not

conjured from thin air, a misconception other positions (even, rather worryingly, the director) can fall into. There’s an incredible amount of talking, thinking, building and shifting that goes into every performance one sees at Cambridge: the number of first aid injuries I’ve received while working on a show have made me aware that the phrase “blood, sweat and tears” is in no way an exaggeration. It’s the perfect job for someone who straddles the line between the artistic and practical, and it can help someone to become better at both. The next show I’m producing is an Edinburgh Fringe run of a show that I wrote, one that I would never have had the confidence to write were it not for my production and technical experience helping to see me what can and can’t be done in a play.

So if you’ve never produced before, but want to help create brand new theatre, then there’s nothing holding you back. Apply for the role of Assistant Producer for an ADC show, or as a Producer for a college or Playroom show. Diving head-first is the best (though scariest) way to start, though there are always people to ask for help.



## Overlooked: The Cripps Building

India Rose Matharu-Daley

A visit to St John's College is an architectural promenade through its history. We begin at the Great Gate of 1516 and venture westwards. Having progressed chronologically past the early Tudor elevation of First Court to the 17th-century Second and Third Courts, we cross the neo-Gothic Bridge of Sighs into the Victorian frippery of New Court. We pass through its cloister and under its fan-vaulted portal to see the Cripps Building. After the historical ornamentation in the rest of the college, its modernist architecture, with its sheer surfaces and hard angles, is a bit of a shock.

During a period of university expansion that saw the construction of colleges such as New Hall, Churchill and Fitzwilliam, and numerous satellite sites, including Sidgwick, St John's received a £1 million benefaction from alumnus Sir Cyril Cripps for new student accommodation. British architectural firm Powell & Moya won the resulting commission. The Cripps Building, completed in 1967, was one of the first examples of the International Style in Cambridge.

Architect Sir Philip Powell was a follower of Le Corbusier and responded to his 'Five Points of a New Architecture' and 'Machine for Living' idea in the design for Cripps. For instance, its reinforced concrete structure relieved the walls from loadbearing constraints and allowed large areas of glazing, so the interior space is light and airy. The bulk of the building is also raised off the ground, allowing circulation beneath. A roof terrace stretches the full 250m of the building, and was a popular hangout, party venue and sunbathing spot (Health & Safety has banned it from student use today). Other features of the design focused on the living experience. A bathroom for every four rooms and a gymnasium for every eight was, in the 1960s, a new luxury.

One of the Cripps' most remarkable characteristics is how sensitively it negotiates the setting. Its long, narrow site, stretching from the Backs to Northampton Street, is overlooked by an awkward confrontation of buildings, including the 12th-century School of Pythagoras and Lutyens's Benson Court in Magdalene College. Powell & Moya united these disparate elements by suggesting two three-sided courts. The academic community in Cambridge has been organised in courtyards based on monastic precedents since the 14th century, while the three-sided court was pioneered at Gonville & Caius in 1565 to ward off disease with good ventilation.

Powell & Moya continued the collegiate tradition of architectural embellishment with lavish materials. Their concrete columns are covered in white Whitbed Portland Stone, while the external ground floor walls are Roach Portland Stone with fossil-like pits. Take a closer look next time you visit.

## Preview: Man Without Country

After spending the majority of last year in the studio, Man Without Country are bringing their deliciously atmospheric brand of synth pop to The Portland Arms next month for what is set to be a refreshing highlight in Cambridge's otherwise tame live electronic music scene. The duo of Tomas Greenhalf and Ryan James hail from South Wales and will be playing tracks from their gorgeous second album, *Maximum Entropy*, which was released earlier this month, on Lost



Balloon. Speaking to *Varsity* in the run up to their 2nd March gig, the pair seem in high spirits and are very keen to entertain the university town.

Ambient electronic music is difficult to define and describe journalistically without coming across as wanky and pretentious, a trap I will surely fall into despite being highly aware of its presence. According to lead vocalist Ryan himself, the MWC sound is "a combination of programmed digital and analogue synthesisers mixed with live drums, drum machines and densely reverberated vocals... it's emotional, intense, powerful and honest."

With many of the new tracks written in separate home studios, with ideas sent back and forth via email, when listening to the intricately layered soundscape on offer I remain curious as to how the multipart

tracks will be recreated in a live setting. And indeed, after some pretty extensive touring following their previous release, the pair have, by their own admission, focused on this all-important translation into a live environment much earlier on in the writing process. "Although," warned Ryan, "it's dangerous and restricting to overthink that aspect. We don't want to turn into Muse!"

The band's name carries an instant intrigue and derives from "a sense of not belonging." Based in the South Wales area, Tomas further hints at the origins of the duo's alias with his comments that living outside the bubble of a huge city has resulted in healthy distance from any coherent electronic scene, with their "approach to music almost as outsiders" meaning an ability to "focus solely on writing." And this sense of isolation seems to have paid off; their beguiling, emotive, sweeping electro is indie-pop at its most dreamily indulgent and makes for a soothing listen time and again. If they can recreate this glow for a live audience in Cambridge, then we're in for a treat.

Tom Bevan

*Man Without Country play on Monday 2nd March. Tickets are available from the The Portland Arms's website for £6 plus a booking fee.*



## Second Life, S.J. Watson



A lacklustre sequel to what was already an average thriller, *Second Life* certainly doesn't fail to disappoint.

Although I wasn't the biggest fan of *Before I Go to Sleep*, a page turner that, in my opinion, was let down by a distinctly predictable ending, I felt that after the relative success of the film adaption, S. J. Watson's latest release had great potential for improvement. I was evidently mistaken.

The thriller centres on the repercussions following the murder of Kate, the sister of Julia, the protagonist, whose son Connor had been adopted by Julia ten years prior to the opening of the novel. Julia's guilt, both over her failure to protect her sister and her adoption of Connor, which was motivated by Kate, is the driving force of the action in the book and eventually leads to her beginning a tame imitation of a sadistic affair with a stranger she meets online.

This ill-founded and stereotypical guilt appeared as a poor justification for Julia's actions in the novel. Her relative lack of grief over her sister's death meant that she simply appeared to be self-serving and motivated by self-interest, and Watson's attempts to present her as moved by a duty to 'avenge' her sister's death and to find answers on behalf of her son were entirely unconvincing.

Instead, the affair and its ensuing complications are lacking in bite and are presented as an alternative form of monotony to Julia's clearly failing marriage rather than a product of desire.

She comes across as irritatingly

naïve to the potential dangers of online dating and the whole resulting situation is a predictable and unrealistic coincidence.

The inside cover of the book ends with the tagline "She's living two lives. She might lose both." Just as the disappointing lack of drama in the affair projects an image of traditional suburban nonconformity, this also seems a particularly conservative perception that the end of a marriage is a life-ending prospect. Although the shadow cast by Kate's murder does lend a degree of danger to the novel, the story would have been far more satisfactory if it had surrendered to the classic thriller genre as opposed to focusing on a fairly dull form of family drama. Yet, Julia's main preoccupation throughout the book is her attempt to balance 'two lives' while professing the importance of sustaining a marriage of convenience she appears completely uncommitted to.

Every character in this novel seems to have been selected from a box of stock-character stereotypes, from the overworked doctor husband and the dissatisfied housewife through to the charming-but-dangerous online fling. While I hadn't entirely predicted the eventual ending, the story took so many predictable turns to reach that point it was hardly a surprise.

The only favourable conclusion I can reach on *Second Life* is that it may have been bearable if it were 100 pages shorter – as it stands, it is not worth your time.

Christie Morrallie



## Bitter Lake



Adam Curtis has been both praised and ridiculed for his innovative style, patching together short fragments of BBC archive footage, which he spends weeks trawling through, and compiling a collage of clips that range from the comic to the affecting; the bizarre and dream-like to the brutally real. It has been said that his technique obscures the facts; indeed, this blurred and flickering mass of footage amounts to something rather hypnotic.

Watching his newest documentary, released on iPlayer so as not to be restricted by the rigid schedules of television (it runs for an exhausting two hours and 20 minutes), one may be lulled into a sort of trance by the shimmering and contrasting visuals.

This is not, in my opinion, to a negative end. The effect is brilliantly kaleidoscopic and often beautiful. More often, it is unsettling, with footage from *Carry On...* Up the Khyber placed alongside harrowing clips of US Marines revelling in their slaughters.

Furthermore, the images are accompanied by an eclectic soundtrack, which spans from David Bowie to Kanye West, creating an effective juxtaposition of culture and era – footage of traditional folk dance is set to West's 'Runaway' and an elegant harp plays over pixelated night-vision footage of a menacing helicopter, hovering like a wasp.

In short, *Bitter Lake's* narrative is an attempt to uproot the oversimplified stories that we are told by politicians and the media: "Once upon a time," Curtis begins, in sardonic fairy-tale fashion, "politicians told confident stories that made sense of the world." Now, "we live in a world where nothing makes any sense. Events come and go like waves of a fever, leaving us confused and uncertain. Those in power tell stories to help us make sense of the complexity of reality. But these stories are increasingly unconvincing and hollow."

His assertions are confident and often appear brash, like those of a conspiracy theorist. He has been accused of a narrative simplicity akin to that which he claims to debunk, and of igniting controversy for the sake of contrarianism.





Bitter Lake, however, is enchanting and informative. It makes a lot of sense of a perplexing period in our history, the events of which are, for so many people, limited to disjointed fragments of TV journalism on BBC Breakfast.

This limited, warped viewpoint from which the modern world suffers is expanded into a vast map of

## AN ATTEMPT TO UPROOT THE OVERSIMPLIFIED STORIES THAT WE ARE TOLD

previously unobserved patterns of events and political deals.

Curtis traces the conflicts between the West and the Middle East to a single deal made aboard a yacht on Bitter Lake by Roosevelt and King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, in 1945. The US was to support the recently formed state in return for an ongoing supply of oil: a complex relationship began.

At one point the film turns to footage of a group of British students travelling through Afghanistan. The camera zooms in

as they climb a flight of stairs onto a sandy stone promontory, then retreats into the distance, revealing the stunning cliff-face dotted with caves and the (now destroyed) Buddhas of Bamiyan atop which they stand.

This is, in a way, the structure of Curtis' film-making; as he readjusts the perspective of our narrow lens, he reveals the detailed network of interrelated patterns which come together to form a new whole. While, in the midst of the conflict, those involved suffered an often misinformed and myopic vision, Bitter Lake surveys these sequences of events from above, forging telling links and associations: an artificial dam funded by the US irrigates the surrounding poppy fields, giving way to a multi-million dollar heroin trade, for instance.

Within this inundation of surprising facts and particulars, however, Curtis is sure to remind the viewer of the underlying humanity of those caught in the conflict. A grinning Afghan man dances for the camera, revealing a flicker of the joy and pride he takes in his culture; a group of children perch

on a lakeside rock, their myriad expressions of distrust and delighted curiosity brought into focus.

In one particularly touching scene, a soldier sits among the bushes like a huge tortoise in his hefty camouflage, with a look of utter delight as a small bird settles on his gloved hand. He tentatively strokes it, gazing in mute disbelief at the camera in this moment of small joy, perfectly still in fear that the bird will be frightened away.

In a world so riddled with clashes of culture and belief, saturated with images of war, it is increasingly important to see beyond the hollow stories and simplifications we are presented with by the media and by politicians.

Curtis aims through his use of archival footage, seemingly unintended in many cases for broadcast, to zoom out to a wider perspective. But he also zooms in, to the human and the sentimental, highlighting the individuals within the masses. Bitter Lake may assert a lot that it does not have time to necessarily back up, but it is masterful in its scope, and its humanity.

Chloe Carroll

## Soumission, Michel Houellebecq



A century and a half before Michel Houellebecq's provocative works shook public discourse in France, Paul Verlaine wrote a poem called *Langueur*. Its first line, "Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la décadence," captures the bittersweet spirit of impending and complete change that is so fundamental to Houellebecq's latest novel. In *Soumission*, France, or at least the Fifth French Republic, is indeed in the final stages of its downfall, but so are Houellebecq's characters and the misanthropic literary universe of the book.

*Soumission* takes place in the year 2022. François, a middle-aged literature professor at the Sorbonne, feels he has reached a dead end in his intellectual and personal life. It has been years since he last made a valuable academic contribution. To chase away the ennui, he casually sleeps with his female students, one of whom, a Jewish girl called Myriam, eventually becomes his girlfriend. François believes that he is in love with her, but when she decides to emigrate to Israel under the increasing pressure of anti-Semitism in France, the only thing he truly misses about her is the quality of her fellatio. The feelings of emptiness prompted by Myriam's departure are exacerbated by the death of his parents: François is increasingly haunted by suicidal thoughts.

The slow ruin that creeps over his personal life is set against the backdrop of a fundamental transition in French society. A moderate and skillful politician called Mohammed Ben Abbes, leader of the Muslim Fraternity party, wins the presidential election, trouncing Marine le Pen and making a coalition pact with the Socialists. He brings back palpable stability to French public life, enacts major changes to French law, campaigns for the use of green energy, privatises universities, and scraps gender equality by allowing polygamy. Ben

Abbes initiates further enlargement of the European Union, which leads to the accession of Turkey and the Maghreb countries and the establishment of a new quasi-Roman Empire, with France at the helm. François adapts remarkably well to this new world and converts to Islam to secure a high-paid job in academia and two well-connected wives. The novel combines fiction with reality in an attempt to make its prophecy more realistic: François Hollande, Marine Le Pen, François Bayrou and Jean-François Copé, among others, are all characters in the book.

*Soumission* is arguably not about politics at all. It is an 'end of history' novel, describing the synthesis of Muslim and European culture as the last stage of nation-building in Europe. François, a world-renowned expert on French writer Huysmans, the high priest of 19th-century decadence, eventually embraces sweet decline in its fullness, dreamily looking forward to a future of sensual pleasure and little adversity. Despite the strong temptation to compare, François is not a 21st-century Meursault, the protagonist of Camus's *The Stranger*. His encounter with meaninglessness is not profound and absolute in an existentialist sense, but rather hedonistic. François discovers that no higher purpose is high enough to be preferred over an easy and peaceful life.

*Soumission* is a stunningly pessimistic exploration of human nature and the meaninglessness of ideology in the face of multiculturalism. It describes, but does not preach, a sense of ultimate "soumission" (submission, a controversial and literal French translation of the Arabic word "Islam") to the sweet decadence of a world where all battles have been fought, and all ideals lost.

Georgi Rusinov

An English translation of *Soumission* is to be released in September.

## Kingsman: The Secret Service



I had high hopes for this, but was incredibly let down. Matthew Vaughn's new film brought promises of action, spies and violence with a fantastic cast featuring the likes of Colin Firth and Michael Caine. Taron Egerton is introduced as the new hero, and takes the audience away from their typical expectations of an Alex Rider to a more rough, modern and generally believable teenager. This is refreshing, quite honestly, and makes the film much more relatable at face value.

Without giving too much away, it follows a simple plot, basically about a group of British secret agents called the Kingsmen who do the "James Bond kind of thing," saving the world and all that jazz. Eggsy (Egerton) is recruited and has to go through an intense and brutal training programme to become the replacement of a recently killed Kingsman. There is a subplot weaving in and out throughout, in which there is the usual madman trying to take over the world, killing and looking quite cool on the way; pretty predictable.

However, in my view, the plot ultimately gets lost in all the blood, guts and gore and this also distracts from the acting quality and basic driving force of the story. At times it feels almost like a video game, where more grotesque ways to kill someone scores you more points. One scene in particular left me gobsmacked and appalled, where a

massacre takes place in a church, of all places, leaving multiple people stabbed with everything from crucifixes to pews, knives and fire-extinguishers. In a church? I struggle to see how the producers even 'got away' with showing this, let alone limiting it to a guidance rating of a 15.

Although I concede there are some humorous elements to the film, and the initial portrayal of a 'lad from London' is especially effective, there is something wrong with the whole concept of the film. The comedic parts somehow lag behind the rest of the progression, giving a disjointed sense, with the funny bits (like the lisp of the 'Baddie' or Pug as a choice of guard dog) seeming more intended for a kids' TV show, and the rest of the content, more oriented towards a death-obsessed psychopath.

The moral of the film (if you can say there is one) is that you can't be a killing super-spy without being a gentleman first; you have to have elegance, grace and poise. Yet this philosophy is betrayed by the bloodthirsty and often disgusting action scenes, that I cannot fathom as even being a form of dark humour. All in all, I would not recommend this film to anyone who has even the remotest set of ethical principles or, for that matter, the desire to make the most of two hours. It may claim to be about 'gentlemen', but if a gentleman is what Vaughn presents the Kingsmen as, we should all be worried. Very worried indeed.

Meggie Fairclough





# Dwain Chambers visits the Union

Dwain Chambers talks candidly to the Cambridge Union about his career

**Peter Rutzler**

Sport Editor

Dwain Chambers is one of the fastest athletes of all time. That is no exaggeration. He is the fourth fastest British sprinter ever; he holds the European record for both the 60 metre and the 4x100 metre relays. He has won countless medals both indoor and on the track. But for many, he is notorious for one thing only: his use of performance enhancing drugs.

On Tuesday night Chambers gave a remarkably honest and open talk to the Cambridge Union, making plain his motivations, his decisions and ultimately, his regrets for those mistakes which cost him so much of his career.

From the very start, it was apparent that his mistakes are not what Chambers wants to be remembered for. After a delay, Chambers emerged on stage smartly dressed, refined and composed. A video was shown of a young woman, Saidi, who had been helped by the cancer charity Teens Unite, one of two he is patron of. He thanked the Union for agreeing to make a small donation. Sadly, Saidi has since passed away. For Chambers, his charity work keeps things in perspective.

Three quotes were then read out, by Nelson Mandela, Oscar Wilde and Winston Churchill, the latter's being: "All men make mistakes, but only wise men learn from their mistakes." The tone was set. He would go on to present himself as the man who regretfully did wrong, has admitted it, and seeks forgiveness. We were told that we will all come to our own conclusions about the sprinter's actions. By the end of his frank and candid talk, it would be hard to doubt his sincerity.

The talk ran through a series of questions, proposed by his agent, the Barrister Siza Agha, to whom he owes so much for helping him put his career back on track – literally. The questions were prepared, but that said, Chambers, in testament to the image he wants to put across, rarely shied away from answering any, even those coming from the floor. Only when asked about contemporary troubles in athletics was he reluctant to give an answer.

Chambers and Agha quickly went through the beginnings of his career, his fame from a young age and how he dealt with it, and how he missed out on the "normal" things of growing up.

But Chambers was no ordinary young man. He burst onto the international stage as a junior world champion, and then in 1999 he would become the youngest ever recipient of a World



**"I never realised that once I got on that train, I couldn't get off"**

Championship medal. At the Sydney Olympics the following year, he would finish fourth in the 100m final.

Though for the highly ambitious Chambers, this wasn't enough. It became evident that Chambers' drive and determination, his thirst for success, was ultimately what led to his downfall. After his remarkable Sydney exploits, he describes how he was just not been satisfied by fourth.

"I wanted more, I wanted to know why they were superior."

It was in America that he would encounter performance enhancing drugs for the first time. Having been drawn by the likes of Remi Korchemny and working with World and Olympic champions, he hoped to close the gap on those above him. And then in his own words, a "the man with [the] brown bag", Victor Conte, appeared, promising to take him "to number one".

Chambers openly recounts the taking of the performance enhancers, how he knew deep down that it was wrong, but the influence of those around him, all champions, all doing the same thing, meant it was difficult for him to stop.

"I never realised that once I got on that train, I couldn't get off. I feared that if I stopped, the others would beat me. The only way I could stop

was to get caught."

And in October 2003, he was.

Chambers describes the memory of it vividly; there was both a sense of happiness that he was caught, but also shock. "Have you ever had the

dream where you're falling, and then you wake up? I didn't wake up for 12 years, I kept falling."

His way back to the top would be a long and arduous one. He describes the uncertainty and antagonism he felt from other athletes, who remained suspicious.

As a result, this led him to try other sports, including American Football and Rugby League, neither of which he particularly enjoyed – he described the latter as the "worst thing ever".

Chambers made it clear, however, that getting caught was not enough for him to feel at ease with himself. His full admission to the press – he was the only athlete to do so as Agha pointed out early on – was how Chambers felt he could the best achieve this, despite how far it would set back his career.

"I had to be able to look my kids in the eye," he said. Telling his children, he would later go on to say, was one of the hardest things he's had to do. Besides, of course, telling his mother.

His appearance at the London Olympic games caused controversy and disquiet from many quarters. But for Chambers, it was the end of a long battle, one that he said if he lost, he would have quit athletics altogether.

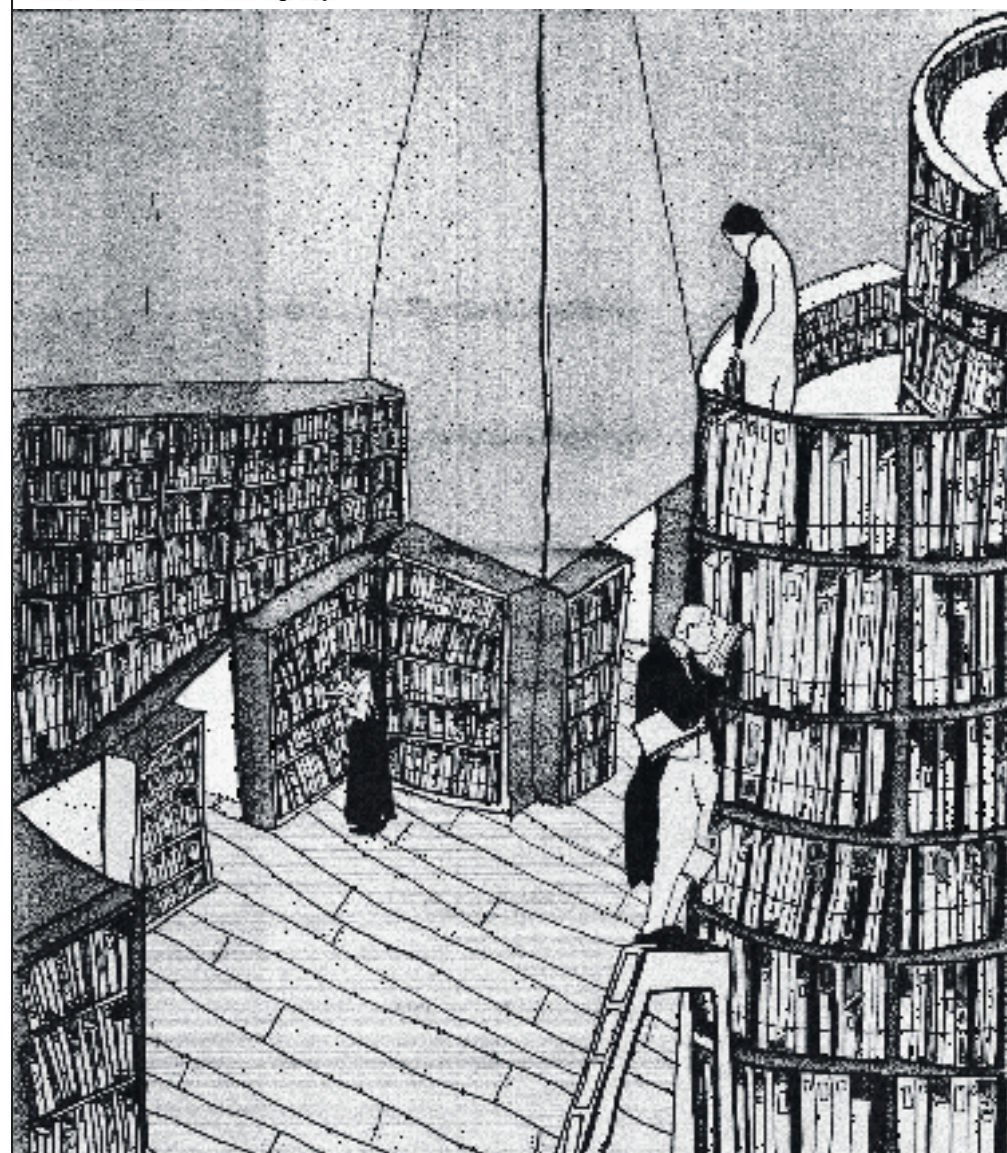
"This was the moment I'd been fighting for," he said. "Just to hear the crowd call my name again, it was the greatest feeling ever."

For now, Dwain Chambers has his mind set on continuing to race and compete for medals, especially in the wake of his eighth consecutive British indoor title. But for the future, it is clear that he wants to give something back to the sport that gave him a second chance, with coaching and mentoring certainly his consideration.

He wants to make sure that other youngsters don't make the same mistakes as he did. Mistakes that, for 12 years, "ruined his career."

## THE MAYS

The Mays publishes new student writing and artwork from Cambridge and Oxford Universities. For information on The Mays XXIII: Facebook: TheMaysAnthology Twitter: @MaysAnthology



## The Cambridge Knee Clinic

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# Somebody needs to shut him up

Trying to take on José Mourinho

**James Dilley**  
Sport Correspondent

José Mourinho remains one of the true characters in modern football. The Special One has long been a favourite of the British press for his witty aphorisms and outspoken opinions, provoking laughter and criticism in equal measure, but never boredom.

Yet sometimes fans of the sport do wonder: will he ever shut up?

One moment the bloke's calling his 2013-14 Chelsea squad, one worth £360,300,300 of actual buys-you-houses-and-stuff money, a figurative "little horse that needs milk".

The next he's lambasting referees for timidly informing Diego Costa that, contrary to the latter's belief, it isn't okay to skewer another player as if they were a kebab from Gardies and not an actual human being with feelings.

Maybe Mourinho should take a leaf out of Basil Fawlty's book and tell Michael Oliver, "Sorry, he's from Barcelona – nope, Brazil. I meant

Brazil. Oh he is Spanish? My mistake. No, no, actually, he's a horse. He's a little Spanish horse that needs milk. Ergo, he kicks. Horses do kick. What can you do, ey?"

I mean, come on José. There's only so much you can say as a manager before you're forced to admit that either you or a player working for you might have made a mistake.

Mourinho does seem to have a perennial sense of delusion when it comes to his team and perceptions of it.

True, people in general don't really like Chelsea. Ask anyone who isn't an actual fan and they'll let you know exactly where the club can go.

After all, Mourinho's roster only exists because a Russian criminal got bored of super-yachts and decided he needed his own fleshy Subbuteo kit to fiddle with.

Add to the dirty money an assortment of fans more known for their wankery than Dapper Laughs is – some of them, as we now know, are horribly racist – and you've got a pretty stinking melting pot of nastiness.

But this is by the by, and as a Manchester United supporter I certainly cannot lay claim to Ariel-white finances or an entirely sane manager.

But there is not, as Mourinho would have us believe, a campaign against Chelsea, either among officials or the media.

In footballing terms, they've got a lot going for them.

Mourinho has some fantastic players at his disposal – Eden Hazard, Cesc Fàbregas, Thibaut Courtois – players better than most of those they end up facing on a regular basis.

Even the aforementioned Diego "Looks And Acts Like A One-Man Mexican Drug Cartel" Costa is pretty good at sticking it in the net.

To claim that there is a plot to undermine the team just because of a few disciplinary issues on the pitch is rubbish. In doing so, Mourinho just looks like a tinfoil hat conspiracist, one that might find solace in an obscure subreddit, but not the world's biggest football league.

Yet perhaps this is exactly how he wants us to react. Mourinho is not stupid. I am not stupid, I don't think – well, maybe I am. Ask my supervisor.

Anyway, in railing against Mourinho's nonsense, maybe I am simply playing into the man's hands.

For if the Special One can portray himself as a delusional, stubborn and



unrepentant lunatic, it makes it all the easier for idiots like me to focus on the things that don't matter: the politics, not the football.

And as I grow more and more incensed by Mourinho's excruciating

diatribes, bashing out my own responses for Varsity articles that only my mum reads, I may miss the fact that, all the while, the sly old fox has been quietly winning the bloody league.

## BADMINTON

Where: University Sports Centre  
When: Saturday 7th March  
Women's Captain: Alex English

"Both the Men's and Ladies' Teams this year have surpassed expectations in the BUCS League and are topping their divisions.

"We are stronger than ever and ready to fight our corner against Oxford. We believe this year could be our year."

## WOMEN'S WATER POLO

Where: Parkside Pools  
When: Saturday 28th February  
Women's Captain: Sophie Clarke

"We've beaten Oxford in both of the fixtures we've played against them this year.

"We're feeling positive at the moment, but still working hard to put our name on the trophy for the seventh year in a row."

## MEN'S BOXING

Where: Corn Exchange  
When: Sunday 1st March  
Men's Captain: Chris Hooton

"After a few years struggling as we lost our gym, the squad has rededicated itself to winning this year.

There is a buzz and drive among the members. We're ready to put CUABC back on the map and take back the trophy."

## WOMEN'S BOXING

Where: Corn Exchange  
When: Sunday 1st March  
Women's Captain: Silke Riele

"This season has been full of sacrifice and hard work! The exhilarating fist exchange seen at the past TvG on 31st of January is only a small sample of whats to come.

"We are strong and confident, and overall fierce! This year we will smash it."

## FENCING

Where: Guildhall  
When: Sunday 1st March  
Men's Captain: Harry Boteler

"Our season is going really well. We're aiming to win both BUCS and Varsity this year, and feel quite confident of doing so, having taken the league title and beating GDBO 130-121 and 135-102 along the way. One of our fencers, Alex Schlindwein, is the BUCS individual champion. We're confident for Varsity."

# GDBO

It's Varsity season. Find out when and where you need to be to get behind our Blues

## MEN'S WATER POLO

Where: Parkside Pools  
When: Saturday 28th February  
Men's Captain: Thomas Bennet

"The team will be going in this year as underdogs.

"But, we are buoyed by recent qualification for BUCS semi-finals and have the advantage of the support of a raucous home crowd.

"I am very optimistic we can produce an upset."

## NETBALL

Where: University Sports Centre  
When: Sunday 1st March  
Captain: E.R. Coulter

"We're having our most successful season to date.

"This year we want to make history in the christening of our new sports centre, with a triple win.

"We certainly are not going to let Oxford ruin our undefeated record.

"This could be the best, biggest and most successful Varsity to date – you wouldn't want to miss it!"

## FOOTBALL

Where: R Costings Abbey Stadium  
When: Sunday 8th March  
Men's Captain: James May

"It's been a difficult season for the Blues. Nevertheless, we've improved throughout the year, and with a few warm-up games under our belt we will be confident of bringing the Varsity trophy home for the fourth successive year. We certainly hold the momentum going into the fixture and are hoping that the presence of a vocal Light Blue crowd will spur us on to victory on the day."

## LACROSSE

Where: St John's Pitches  
When: Saturday 7th March  
Men's Captain: Konrad Mushkens

"The Cambridge men's lacrosse team has had an incredible season in both the South of England (SEMLA) and BUCS leagues to date.

"Cambridge's men's team are aiming for a double promotion this season with a very strong new intake joining the existing squad from previous years.

"It's a challenge our squad is ready to win."

## SWIMMING

Where: Parkside Pools  
When: Saturday 28th February  
Women's Captain: Alexandra Wiseman  
Men's Captain: Graeham Douglas

"Our team is one of the strongest in recent memory, with a good intake of freshers and improvement from returnees.

"Oxford has had some key swimmers graduating – it promises to be a close and exciting Varsity!

"Come and support the team, cheering does make us swim faster!"



**Dwain Chambers**

The sprint star tells all at the Union

**José Mourinho**

James Dilley on the forever-whining Mourinho

## Sport



Nathan Hammond, who may be part of next summer's Under 21 GB Canoe Polo team, in action

## Canoeing for success

GB hopeful Nathan Hammond talks about his up-and-coming sport

**Sarah Collins**

Sport Correspondent

"It's not actually played in canoes, it's played in kayaks," Nathan Hammond laughs as he dispels the first misconception about canoe polo, a sport with a buzzing national and international scene, but one that has not yet reached Olympic status.

Nathan, 19, from Fitzwilliam College, is an example of one of the many various sporting faces you can find here at Cambridge. Having first picked up his paddle at the age of ten, after his god-parents bought him a two-day kayaking course for his birthday, Nathan has gone from strength to strength in the nine years since, and he now harbours hopes of making it into Great Britain's Under-21 side next summer.

The sport is one of the many kayaking disciplines, which Nathan explains are in numerous, complex categories. These include canoe marathon, canoe freestyle and some you might perhaps have heard of, such as canoe sprint, or the more well-known canoe slalom.

Of the many varieties of kayaking, canoe polo is perhaps more physically demanding than most. It's a sport that requires a high level of physical contact, one where, as Nathan tells me, it is more than acceptable to dunk people into water. "You can just bin them" he says. Not your average tackling!

Each half begins with each team

lined up on either side of the lake and one player from each team sprinting into the middle to get the ball, something that can not only result in head-on collision, but can cause one boat to ride up onto the other, and smack the opposition in the face.

I wonder if anyone who says that canoe polo is not a real sport has ever taken a boat to the face before.

He describes the sport as a mixture of basketball and water polo with raised goals. It can be played on any flat body of water, like a lake or a pool, or even a wide canal. Nathan describes

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**I WONDER IF ANYONE WHO SAYS THAT CANOE POLO IS NOT A REAL SPORT, HAS TAKEN A BOAT TO THE FACE BEFORE**

the exhilaration of "sprinting across the water with paddles flying everywhere", something truly unique about the sport.

But he also expressed his frustration about its low profile, especially in spite of the introduction of stop clocks, which limit the amount of time the ball can be held for, making the game even more exciting for spectators.

"It would really help us to push on to the next level. Increasing people's interest and awareness of the sport in the long term could maybe lead to

more funding and the sport moving forward."

As he embarks on his mission to join Great Britain's Under-21 team for the European championships coming up in September, he describes his grueling training schedule.

"Often in the winter we would train, and there would still be ice on the lake, and next summer I will be training twice a day to try and secure a position [in] a GB kayak."

Having competed all over the UK and Europe, Nathan feels the sport deserves a higher profile, especially with the need for coverage of the play at the top international level competitions. Some of the techniques, like learning to roll underneath the water while staying in your boat are not only difficult to master but also exhilarating to watch.

Nathan participates in the Cambridge University Canoe Club, but laments the lack of funding, a problem that seems to be common across all minority sports at Cambridge.

Sports like canoe polo are often forgotten about in the Cambridge sporting bubble of rowing and rugby, and elite-level athletes in minority sports do not perhaps receive the resources they deserve to pursue their sport to the top level.

Canoe polo is certainly not a sport to be scoffed at, with a brutal training regime and an inherent excitement for both players and spectators. Fed up with those average ball-chasing, dirt-laden land-based sports but still crave an adrenaline rush and the chance to hit someone with a boat? Then canoe polo is the sport for you.

## A test nation?

After their fine World Cup start, should Ireland be a full test nation?

**Rory Sale**

Sport Correspondent

Ireland's back-to-back victories, including a convincing win over the West Indies in the early hours of last Monday morning, have triggered discussion as to where they stand in the hierarchy of world cricket, especially since they have a strong chance of getting out of their group.

In order to become a test-playing nation, Ireland will have to win the 2015-17 Intercontinental Cup, a competition played by the so called 'associate' cricketing nations (i.e. countries that play cricket but do not have rights to play Test matches).

Next, they would have to win a five match series against the lowest ranked current test side. Their route to Test status is a long and rather convoluted one, and I see very little reason why they shouldn't currently be given the opportunity to compete at the highest level.

The quality of their performance against the West Indies has gone a long way to prove they have the ability to put up a challenge in the five day game. At the very least they will be more than strong enough for sides like Bangladesh at the weaker end of the scale.

It was not a one-off, either. Four years ago, Kevin O'Brien demolished the England bowling attack to chase down 329.

The West Indies game,

though, was perhaps an even better win. In 2011 it was one man defeating England, but this was an all-round convincing team performance.

It looked early on as if Ireland would bowl the West Indies out cheaply when they held them 100 for five, but they let the opportunity slip. Their response with the bat was an excellently constructed run chase, different batsmen contributed and they hardly fell behind the run rate at any stage.

While you could view four years ago as a fluke, there is little denying that the better team won last week. So why is a team of such potential being held back by the authorities?

Not having Test status is causing Ireland to lose its best players. Imagine adding Boyd Rankin and Eoin Morgan to that team, both of whom have deserted Ireland for England in their desire to play at the highest level.

If the ICC allowed Ireland to compete in Test matches, then they would not have had to change country. This is inherently unfair, not just for Irish cricket, but for the fans as well. This will continue to happen if nothing changes. Ex-West Indies great Michael Holding expressed this view in the wake of his country's defeat to the Irish, saying they "need to be recognised immediately."

"If they (Ireland) continue to linger around the lower regions of world cricket, they'll continue to lose good cricketers," he said.

Hopefully, the public attention that Ireland are now receiving will make cricket reconsider its position.

It's about time that cricket looked beyond tradition and fully recognised the potential in Ireland.

In 1975, Sri Lanka were in the same position, now they are one of the best sides in all formats. We would have never seen the brilliance of Murali or of Sangakkara, had this initiative not been taken.

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