



Issue 804

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# VARSITY

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## Gender pay gap a 'wake up call'

- 89 per cent of university's top earners are men
- 'Matter of deep concern', says equality champion

**Jack Higgins**  
Senior News Editor

A Freedom of Information request by *Varsity* has revealed that of the 101 staff paid £140,000 or more by the University of Cambridge in 2015, only 11 are women.

This follows a similar request last year which revealed that at the University of Oxford "only 8 per cent of its top-paid staff are women". By comparison, women represent 10.9 per cent of these high earners at Cambridge.

The university's response to the Freedom of Information request said that "these figures relate to salaries paid by the university" to "members of academic or administrative staff of the university" in the "financial year ended 31 July 2015" and excludes "non-salary payments".

In 2014, the University's Equal Pay review found that the pay gap between men and women across the board had closed by £110, but that women on academic contracts were earning on average £8,400 less than men. At the time, the university said it was making "positive progress" in addressing the pay gap.

Responding to the information, the President of Lucy Cavendish College, Jackie Ashley, told *Varsity* that "these figures should act as a wake up call to the university. It's not right that in

2016, only 10 per cent of the top jobs in the university are held by women."

She went on to say that "the problem is not that women are strongly discouraged from entering a career in academia, but they are not encouraged" and that "above all we need a culture change".

"At a time when Cambridge is making great efforts to improve diversity among the student body, it seems odd not to take a look at the academics too."

A spokesperson for the Women in Academia campaign – part of CUSU's Women's Campaign – told *Varsity* that "this information isn't particularly surprising but we expect that it doesn't show the full story".

"When we look at employment statistics such as these, it is also important to look at where specific groups such as women of colour, trans women and disabled women fit into the pattern. It would be interesting to see the differences in salary between and among these groups."

The University of Cambridge's current Gender Equality Champions, Professors Judith Lieu and Anne Davis, recognised the issue when speaking to *Varsity* but said that the university was actively taking measures to address the problem.

Professor Lieu said that the "gender disparity at the top bands of pay is obviously a matter of deep concern." However, she added that it is a problem which the "university is very

aware of and which it is undertaking work both to analyse and to address".

She continued by saying that the "pay gap has to be seen within the broader context of the opportunities for progression for all members of staff regardless of gender or any other aspect of diversity."

"The significant drop-off of in the percentage of women from undergraduate through to the senior levels is evidence of the historic challenges facing women seeking a career in academic life across the sector (not just Cambridge)."

She added that the issue was "multi-layered" and that whilst "there is a long way to go" there is "deep commitment among the senior leadership".

"The goal is not just one of numbers and pay packets (although they are important) but of developing a culture where all people can be supported in giving of their best within the institution — which is the only way of ensuring that it continues to be a leading centre of creative intellectual dynamism, attracting and retaining the full range of talent."

To this end, Professor Lieu said that the university is taking "a number of active steps" to combat this, such as "active participation in the Athena SWAN Charter which was set up to support women's careers in the STEM subjects and has now been extended to include the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences."

*Continued on page 4*



**Over the moon:** UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at Senate House on Wednesday to accept his Honorary Degree

**INSIDE:**

**ETHNICITY REPORT, RAINBOW FLAGS, DSO REFERENDUM, ACCESS ISSUES**



# A milestone, not a landmark

It's been a big week for Cambridge. Not in any material sense, of course – the usual to-ing and fro-ing of work continues – but in some important and highly symbolic ways.

The victorious Yes campaign in the CUSU-led referendum billed the creation of a Disabled Students' Officer position as a "positive step for greater equality and liberation." Likewise, rainbow flags have flown from flagpoles at colleges across the city this week to mark the beginning of LGBT History Month. As Dominic Cawdell rightly points out (page 15), this is a landmark moment for an institution which has historically excluded, and in some ways perhaps continues to exclude, certain groups.

This history of exclusion is still what we find when we report that female academics are struggling to make it to the top of the university's pay scale (front page),

that the university's own Ethnicity & Diversity Report has found that only 24.4 per cent of undergraduate students are black or from ethnic minorities (page 4), or that the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission has condemned the fact that not a single pupil eligible for free school meals in Cambridgeshire got a place at either Oxford or Cambridge in 2014 (page 6).

These aren't simply problems which have been consigned to the past, the products of years of systematic prejudices (although this is, of course, one side of the coin). These are also real-time issues: we only have to look at the way in which thousands of students seem to have dropped off the electoral register (page 9) to realise that people are still being denied a voice.

Becoming aware of the problem of exclusion is often a 'landmark moment', but it

should only ever be seen as a milestone on the way towards further change. Perhaps it would be more helpful if we view the raising of the rainbow flag in Cambridge less as a celebration and more as the raising of a standard – an announcement of the push which needs to follow.

When thinking about these sorts of progressive issues, we often try to figure moments such as the realisation of significant disparities or systematic prejudice as a sort of line in the sand; a turning point after which nothing can be the same again. The crucial thing to remember, though, is that lines in the sand can easily be washed away: without action, change will not stick.

This is precisely the case here. So while we may hail the creation of the Disabled Students' Officer as a step in the right direction, that's all it is until someone is elected to that role and begins to enact changes.

So too with LGBT History Month, which is described on its website as being "celebrated in February in the UK," but comes with the insistence that "work to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia continues throughout the year".

We might think that such a bold statement of continued campaigning spirit is superfluous – of course LGBT+ people are going to continue campaigning for further recognition and equality! – but it is indeed necessary when faced by the somewhat fantastical impulse to turn every slight change into a big headline, and to transform every victory along the way into the end of the struggle.

This is why we cannot be too celebratory when much remains to be achieved, and why we must be wary of headlines which try to tell us that the 'change' we see before us is a grand historic landmark.

## Referendum passes to create CUSU Disabled Students' Officer

**Louis Ashworth**

Senior Investigations Editor

Results for the Disabled Students' Officer referendum show it has been a success for the Yes campaign, with 4,315 for and 336 against.

The referendum on the creation of a full-time Disabled Students' Officer for Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU) saw a 92.22 per cent vote for the Yes option, with 4,679 votes cast. This comprised a 21.4 per cent total turnout.

The referendum ran from Wednesday 27th January until 9am on Wednesday 3rd February.

It proposed adding the role of Disabled Students' Officer (DSO) to the six current sabbatical officer roles: President, Education, Welfare, Women's, Coordinator and Access.

The first DSO will be elected by "all those ordinary members who self-define as disabled". This would operate in a manner similar to the election for Women's Officer, whose electorate consists of self-defining women.

The DSO will operate as head of the autonomous CUSU Disabled Students' Campaign. They will work full-time and be paid £20,000 a year, the same salary as other elected CUSU officers.

In a statement, Jemma Stewart, CUSU Co-ordinator and Returning Officer for the referendum, said: "CUSU Elections Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all those students who voted in what is now the highest voter turnout in a CUSU referendum in over 6 years." She said the high turnout was "in no

small part down to the excellent campaigning techniques and dedication of those involved."

Implementation will now be handed over to the Union Development Team – composed of CUSU President Priscilla Mensah, Cornelius Roemer and Umang Khandelwal.

The referendum question was phrased "Do you accept the proposed constitutional changes, which would add a Disabled Students' Sabbatical Officer to the CUSU Full-Time Elected Officer Team?", with "Yes" and "No" as the responses. It was run under tight rules for campaigning and social media. This included a blanket ban on any posts which advocated either voting option from public social media groups, including JCR and MCR pages.

The official Yes guidance offered by CUSU Elections Committee said that the creation of a full-time DSO would be a "positive step for greater equality and liberation" within the university. They said that a student elected into this role could "feed into general discussions on whole-team Sabbatical Officer campaigns with both personal and representative experience much more easily".

It was also suggested that the creation of the new role will "set a precedent for other Students' Unions" around the UK, as full-time officers for disabled students are currently a rarity.

Speaking to *Varsity* about whether CUSU could afford the DSO, President Priscilla Mensah said that the referendum had to be "separate from the practical questions as to how it can be implemented".



CUSU will now have seven sabbatical officers

She also said that how quickly the position could be created "depends on the university's response to us going forward and showing them the formal results of the referenda".

When questioned about whether the entire sabbatical team was behind the result, she said: "Yes, because it's the result. The result is the result," adding that she thinks "everyone's happy with it because... I think I speak for everyone when I say we're delighted about the extent to which students engaged with the referendum".

"The result is just a real testament to how we can democratically engage students, and that's a real delight. I think we potentially have different views on how representation works and what it looks like, but I think we're all behind the fact that disabled students of course deserve great representation", she added.

Reacting to the outcome of the referendum, a spokesperson for the Yes campaign said: "This is a huge victory. We hope that we can build on this support and mobilise more students to get involved with the Disabled Students' Campaign, and we will continue working relentlessly to make Cambridge a less disabling place. [...] We want to thank every single student who took the time to vote and engage with the campaign."

Concerns were raised about the value for money that a full-time Disabled Students' Officer would offer. The CUSU guidance for the No campaign stated that an "additional full-time officer would increase the demands on staff support, which may consequently result in a need for more roles within the support staff team", and stated that this could have its own "financial implications".

Options proposed by CUSU to fund the newly created post include "ceasing existing activities" and "looking to raise additional income". CUSU is currently in the early stages of pursuing a general re-negotiation of its funding model – seeking to gain money directly from colleges rather than from JCRs and MCRs. This new approach has received mixed responses.

The vote was triggered by a petition held by the Disabled Students' Campaign at the end of last term, which gained the 350 signatures required to trigger a referendum.

According to the university's Equality & Diversity Information Report for 2014-15, "numbers of students who have diagnosed a disability continue to rise". 8.1 per cent (968) of undergraduates and 5.9 per cent (497) graduates disclosed a disability in 2014-15.

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# Cambridge is taking 'active steps' towards equality, despite evidence of top-level pay gap

*Continued from front page*

Cambridge is just one of seven higher education institutions that has an Athena SWAN 'silver institutional award', and was the first HEI to sign up to the 30 Per Cent Club – a private-sector initiative to increase representation at senior levels in the corporate world.

In 2015, Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz said he was "delighted to have overseen an unprecedented level of activity to support women and advance equality with the university" with regards to Cambridge's performance in relation to the Athena Swan charter. Professor Anne Davis – also a Gender Equality Champion – endorsed what her colleague told *Varsity* and added that "in the university there is an historical gender imbalance" and that this was "more pronounced at the senior level" but that the university "is trying to address this in a number of ways".

She continued by saying that the university is partly addressing the problem with the 'Returning Carers' fund, open to staff members who return to work "after caring responsibilities so that the member of staff can 'kick-start' their career after a break" and has "mainly been used by those

returning from maternity leave".

She added that the "The Senior Academic Promotions scheme has been changed to ensure all contributions are treated fairly and has resulted in more women being promoted" and will help to "address the historical gender imbalance at the senior level".

Speaking to *Varsity*, Professor Dame Athene Donald, current Master of Churchill College and Cambridge Equality Champion from 2010 to 2014, said that she did not "believe the university discourages women from academia or is inherently sexist".

"However, the way pay is negotiated can disadvantage women who are anyhow in small numbers in the pool from which those who could earn upwards of £140,000 could be drawn. The university is acutely aware of the issues and actively attempting to find solutions."

She also said that the university was the first of the Russell Group institutions to publish an Equal Pay Review and that this "in itself is a demonstration of its commitment to equality and transparency".

Explaining the pay disparities, Dame Athene told *Varsity* that a key factor was that men tend to be more "mobile", can often demonstrate attractive



Professor Dame Athene Donald believes that the university is making progress on inequality

offers from elsewhere and are better able to "negotiate salaries upwards". She added that there was "plenty of social science evidence" showing that "women who negotiate are less likely to be successful and so may not even try".

She added that recent measures to tackle the problem may "not yet fully be reflected in the salary figures you see" and that "crude figures can hide complex facts".

Responding to the information

revealed by the Freedom of Information request, CUSU Women's Officer, Charlotte Chorley, said: "The fact that only 10 per cent of those earning over £140,000 a year are women is testament not just to a gender pay gap, but a gender gap in recruitment and retention of women in this university."

"While the statistics are shocking, they are not altogether unexpected, especially at this institution. The university should be doing more to address its bias. I would, however, be

interested to know how many of these 11 women are women of colour, or disabled, or lesbian, or trans women. Because, to talk about the gender pay gap without any recognition of how both pay and promotion are affected by other identity characteristics ignores the fact that the University of Cambridge is not just discriminatory in terms of gender."

*Varsity* has reached out to the University of Cambridge for comment on this matter.

## University report shows progress on minority representation

**Louis Ashworth**

Senior Investigations Editor

New data from the university's Equality & Diversity Information Report shows small increases in representation for women, BME and LGBT+ people, and disabled people within the university.

The report, which covers both students and staff within the university, reflects the most up-to-date statistics upon all issues related to Equality & Diversity.

The percentage of female undergraduate students is lower among those studying subjects in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine (STEMM), at 35.7 per cent compared with 58.5 per cent of those studying Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS).

Among prospective undergraduates, there is presently a higher proportion of male applicants, at 54.9 per cent (compared with 45.1 per cent female applicants). More female applicants pass the interview stage – they make up 47.3 per cent of Cambridge's acceptances, compared with 52.7 per cent who are male. These numbers show an increase in the proportion of females from the year before, in which males made up 56 per cent of applicants, and 57 per cent of those admitted. Across the UK, women are 35 per cent more likely to go to university than men.

The figures for postgraduate admissions show no change from last year – 44 per cent of those admitted were female.

There has been an increase in the overall percentage of undergraduate students getting Firsts, with male students now being nearly nine per cent more likely to get into the top grade boundary than females, at 29.4 per cent of males to 20.6 per cent of females.

There has been an increase in the percentage of non-white students. BME students made up 24.4 per cent of undergraduate students and 33.3 per cent of postgraduate students in 2014-15, compared with 23.2 per cent and 33 per cent respectively the year before.

BME students are more likely to get undergraduate firsts at 22.1 per cent, compared with 21.9 per cent of white students.

968 (8.1 per cent) of undergraduates and 497 (5.9 per cent) of graduates identified as disabled, an increase of 0.1 per cent and a decrease of 0.1 per cent respectively.

The proportion of minority groups among staff has increased as well.

There has been an increase in the number of BME staff. Of the 81.2 per cent of staff who disclosed their ethnicity, 11.4 per cent are BME. This is a 0.4 per cent increase on the year before. Of those who identified themselves as BME, the biggest groups were those listed as ethnically Chinese (3.5 per cent), and Asian or Asian British Indians (2.5 per cent).

The highest proportion of non-white staff is amongst researchers, of whom 20.5 per cent are BME.

66.9 per cent of staff are from the United Kingdom. The university states that it does not hold data on the nationality of 16.1 per cent of its staff.

2.9 per cent of staff identified themselves; however, this is out of just 15.6 per cent who responded to the question. Over a third did not specify their disability.

The university states that it holds sexual orientation data for 21.4 per cent of staff. Among these, 6.7 per cent identified as "lesbian, gay, bisexual or other".

55.6 per cent of staff described themselves as having 'no religion'. The next biggest group is those who described themselves as 'Christian', at 35.3 per cent.

There has been an increase in places filled by women in university governance – from 18.8 per cent of committee members overall in 2012 to 27.5 per cent in 2015. The 10 female staff who attend the University Council make up 50 per cent of its number.

The proportion of women in the roles of Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor all grew from 2012, increasing respectively by 7.2, 5.4 and 0.9 per cent, to new levels of 37.6, 25.3 and 16.7 per cent. In the case of Professors, this means an increase in real terms from 89 in 2012 to 103 in July 2015. The proportion of women in the role of 'University Lecturer' dropped slightly in the same period, from 34.5 per cent to 33.6 per cent. Overall, women make up 28.1 per cent of academic staff at the university.

Women are more prominently found across the faculties of the AHSS, making up 52.3 per cent of all

AHSS staff. In STEMM, women make up 46.2 per cent. However, among academics within the faculties there is a lower proportion of women: 38.2 per cent with AHSS, and 20.9 per cent in STEMM.

One area where representation of women remains low is among the Head of General Boards Departments, in which women make up just 11 of the 63 places, according to the University's "Pyramid of Power 2015". All six Heads of Schools are currently male.

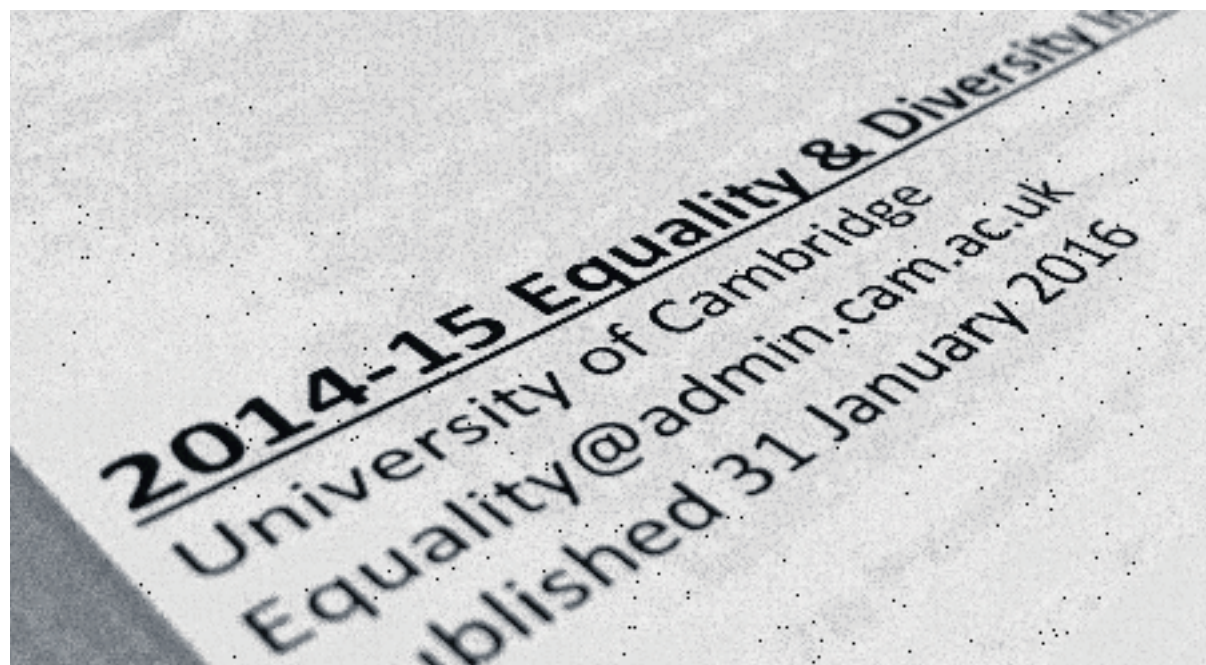
The university has developed new processes for handling applications for promotion, after studies "appeared to show that while female academics were just as successful as their male counterparts if they applied for promotion, they were less likely to do so".

Across the university's 11,086 employees, the report stated that 49.4 per cent (5,471) identified as female and 50.6 per cent (5,615) as male.

The report states that with regards to transgender staff members, numbers disclosed "remain too small to publish but continue to be monitored internally".

The report also features pay scales for all staff. The proportion of women peaks within the first four pay grades, with 62.1 per cent of those receiving Grade 4 pay (£21,391–£27,864 PPA for the time period covered by the report) being women. The proportion then "decreases through the remaining grades", with women making up 17.4 per cent of those in the top pay Grade (12), which for 2014-15 covered salaries from £67,411–£173,346 PPA.

Data covering the gender of staff against their age reveals that, after the age of 60 onwards, female staff make up an increasingly low proportion of staff numbers. The average age of staff dropped slightly from 2013/14 to 2014/15, from 42 years old to 40.





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# Cambridge 'failing' local disadvantaged children

**Anna Menin**  
Deputy News Editor

Children from disadvantaged families in Cambridge have less chance of gaining good exam grades than those from the most deprived areas in London, a report has said. The report, by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, ranked every English council by the prospects of their disadvantaged children.

Identifying Cambridge as a social mobility "coldspot" (meaning it is among the worst-performing 20 per cent of areas), the report condemned Cambridge as one of the "affluent areas" that "fail[s] young people from poor backgrounds".

The report also found that of children eligible for free school meals in Cambridge, only 15 per cent go on to university, and only 2 per cent to a selective university.

By contrast, in London's Tower Hamlets, which has the highest rate of child poverty in England, 39 per cent of children eligible for free school meals go on to university, and 10 per cent to a selective university.

The report also revealed that not a single Cambridgeshire pupil eligible for free school meals took up an Oxbridge place in 2014.

Speaking to *Varsity* about the report's findings, Cambridge's Labour MP, Daniel Zeichner, said: "People are right to be shocked by this report's findings – but it comes as no surprise to those of us who have been pointing out for some time that Cambridge is a very divided city."

Zeichner also condemned the

abolition of Educational Maintenance Allowance by the previous Conservative and Liberal Democrat government, describing the Allowance as "a lifeline for young people from poorer backgrounds", and claiming that they "also left Cambridgeshire schools woefully under-funded."

"Getting to Cambridge is only one measure of success, and many of our young people do very well at other educational institutions, but a very divided society is bad for everybody", he claimed.

"I am sure that the University of Cambridge will want to look once again at the admissions process, but the real challenge lies earlier, and there is much to be done."

However, Julian Huppert, former Cambridge Liberal Democrat MP, told *Varsity* that "one of my priorities as the MP for Cambridge" was to secure more funding for the city's schools, claiming that "neither the previous Tory or Labour governments had been prepared to do anything about it."

“

## CAMBRIDGE IS A VERY DIVIDED CITY

Huppert also stated that he was "pleased with other measures [the coalition] introduced to help pupils in need across the country", citing "the pupil premium" and "infant free school meals" as examples.

"We simply cannot tolerate the way our education system has let people down for so many decades", he added.



St Catharine's College, the "dedicated Area Link College" for local schools

Professor Dame Athene Donald, Master of Churchill College, also spoke about the report this week. Writing on the *Times Higher Education* website, she noted that "for many years, Cambridgeshire schools have been underfunded compared with neighbouring counties".

Furthermore, she acknowledged that although "[d]uring the past year, this shortfall has finally been made up", but "it will take time for this to increase the numbers from the poorest families entering Cambridge."

She appealed for people not to "blame Cambridge" as a university for this "failure", saying: "Look to who controls the purse strings that directly impact on children's opportunities."

When questioned about Cambridge's efforts to improve access for local children, a University of Cambridge spokesperson said that it is "already running projects specifically aimed at raising the academic attainment and aspirations of disadvantaged young people in Cambridge, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough".

"We are currently considering our local outreach provision and we have identified this as a high priority area for future widening participation work", he added.

The spokesperson also highlighted the fact that schools in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough "now also have a direct way of developing a relationship" with the university through a "dedicated Area Link College", St Catharine's, which organised events that "led to more than 1,500 student interactions" in 2015.

# Oxbridge academics push for 'morally sound' investments

**Daniel Gayne**  
Senior News Correspondent

Over 300 Cambridge and Oxford academics have signed a joint statement imploring their universities to pursue "morally sound" investment policies.

The letter, announced this Tuesday in a press release by activist group Positive Investment Cambridge (PIC), contains the signatures of former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, ex-Cambridge MP Julian Huppert, and Sir David MacKay, former chief scientific adviser to the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

The call is also being backed by Cambridge alumnus and former Tory environment secretary Lord Deben, who said: "These universities are doing tremendously important work on the

research side; it would be great to see those contributions reflected in the investment strategies of Europe's two largest university endowments."

Deben, currently the chair of the government's official climate change advisory committee added: "Positive investment is a crucial element of any plan to keep global warming to safe levels."

The statement comes on the back of student pressure within the university, spurred on by the successes of students at other universities.

The University of Glasgow became the first academic institution in Europe to divest from fossil fuels in 2014, withdrawing £18 million worth of investments.

For its part, Oxford has ruled out future investments in coal and tar sands, but remained mute on divestment within their existing portfolio.

Back in Cambridge, 40 Cambridge JCRs and MCRs (including the undergraduate representatives at all colleges) have supported the statement.

In a statement to *Varsity*, Zero Carbon congratulated PIC on the "tremendous news", but emphasised that "above all else, fossil fuel investments have to go".

Unlike PIC, Zero Carbon is a divestment group pure and simple, arguing only for the university to remove its investments in fossil fuels.

But they were nonetheless keen to point out that the 2,000 students who signed their own petition showed that "the message is clear" on ethical investment.

Hoping to fulfil their more ambitious goal for an active and ethical investment policy, PIC have created an education document and announced in their statement a seminar for journalists on the topic.

"We'd like to create a template for the smartest, most ethical investment strategy there has ever been," said Ellen Quigley, a Cambridge PhD student who helped with the campaign.

Their hope is to bring the university's investment in line with their mission statement, which holds as a central value: "concern for sustainability and the relationship with the environment".

The University of Cambridge responds that it already "seeks to invest responsibly for the good of the university in accordance with our mission to contribute to society".

Lily MacFadyen, a member of PIC, appreciated the positive contribution to education and research, but noted



Positive Investment Cambridge's press conference on Tuesday

that "considerations such as sustainability are not presently being considered or engaged with systematically".

She also mentioned the difficulty in finding out what exactly the university is investing in, since the university believes this would compromise their financial advantage. However, it is highly likely that they are investing in resources like fossil fuels because they tend to make excellent returns.

The campaign is being advised by green and ethical investment specialists Abundance Investment, who's co-founder Bruce Davis said: "Investing is not just about future returns, it is also about building the future you want for yourself and future generations."

So far they have succeeded in pressing the university into commissioning "a thorough and unique review" of the environmental and social aspects of investment decisions and set up a working group to develop on this evidence.

The working group, which includes two members of PIC, is due to produce a report for presentation to the University Council, expected by spring, which will be responsible for action taken thereafter.

The joint statement commends this development while asking the university to take a strong stand when the issue comes to the University Council.

The University of Oxford is yet to respond.

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# Oxbridge admissions processes condemned as 'intimidating and complex' by Sutton Trust report

**Anna Menin**  
Deputy News Editor

The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have been condemned by the Sutton Trust for the "intimidating and complex" nature of their admissions processes.

The educational foundation called for both universities to "standardise their admissions processes across subjects and colleges" to help students and teachers who are "unfamiliar with the process".

The same report, entitled *Oxbridge Admissions*, also recommend that the restriction that means that students can only apply to either Oxford or Cambridge "should be reviewed", with "further information on the access implications [of this] gathered".

It also compared the acceptance rate of state school applicants to all Oxford and Cambridge colleges from 2012 to 2014. Five Oxford colleges (Brasenose, St John's, Worcester, Keble, and Merton) rank within the six with the lowest acceptance rate, alongside one Cambridge college, King's.

However, all of the five colleges with the highest rate of successful state school applications were Cambridge colleges: Newnham, Sidney Sussex, Girton, Homerton, and Murray Edwards.

In 2014, 62 per cent of successful applicants to Cambridge were state educated in the UK; at Oxford, the

rate was 56 per cent. However, the Sutton Trust points out that just 7 per cent of young people in the UK go to a private school, which rises to 14 per cent among sixth formers.

In response to their report, the Sutton Trust's chair, Sir Peter Lampl, described Oxford and Cambridge as "simply Britain's greatest universities", stating that: "[o]ur research over the years has shown their importance... in moulding the elites who shape all our lives."

"That's why it is so important that we do all we can to ensure that both universities benefit from talented young people of all backgrounds", he added.

Lampl acknowledged that both universities are "far better focused on access than ever, and are led by people with a strong commitment to improving opportunities for able students from low and middle income homes", adding that "there 'has undoubtedly been progress' in this area.

However, he noted that the Trust's research has shown that "five elite private schools and sixth form colleges send more students to the two universities than 1800 state schools combined".

Lampl also claimed that "as our greatest universities", Oxford and Cambridge also have a "responsibility" to "constantly review practices that owe much to tradition, but which can militate against fairness".

In response to the Sutton Trust's



Brasenose College, Oxford, the alma mater of Prime Minister David Cameron

report, a spokesperson for the University of Oxford said: "We are disappointed that one of our long-standing access partners is actively perpetuating some of the most common myths about how the selection process works."

They claimed that "[t]hese myths are a fundamental barrier to Oxford's access work, and only reinforce perceptions that deter exactly those candidates we try hardest to encourage to

apply."

A spokesperson for the University of Cambridge claimed that the university has worked closely with the Trust to improve access, and "[w]e are therefore disappointed that this report demonstrates a lack of understanding of our admissions process and makes a series of incorrect and unjustified criticisms and recommendations".

"We have a proven track record of improving access. We are committed

to widening participation whilst maintaining high academic standards" and "continually review our admissions processes and the effectiveness of our extensive widening participation work", they added.

This report comes just days after Cambridge announced that from 2017, prospective undergraduates will have to take written tests as part of the application process, intended to remedy the loss of AS-Levels.

## Latest figures show gross disparity in college endowments

**Sahil Chinoy**  
News Correspondent

The latest release of college accounts reveals a more than tenfold difference in the financial resources per student between the wealthiest and least wealthy colleges.

Trinity College, with net assets of more than £1 billion, has resources on a vastly different scale than St Edmund's, with assets of about £13 million.

Amid concern over inequality between colleges, the 2014-15 reports highlight that the disparity in the size of financial resources continues to grow.

Trinity — historically the wealthiest college — is followed by St John's, with assets of £690 million. The other colleges each have assets less than one-third that amount: Jesus, with £295 million, and Peterhouse, with £284 million, are next in the rankings.

In terms of assets per capita, Trinity — with more than £1 million per student — is a far cry from Queens', with only £90,000 per student. Fitzwilliam and Homerton are also near the bottom of the list, with £95,000 and £120,000 per student, respectively.

"I think that students at Homerton are keenly aware of the differences between colleges in terms of money and funding," said Ruth Taylor, the Homerton JCR President. "I also think the issue is one of perceptions as much as resources themselves."

The graduate-only, mature and women's colleges fall even further below. St. Edmund's has only £33,000 per student, and Lucy Cavendish, £67,000.

The difference between the wealthiest and least wealthy colleges, Trinity and St. Edmund's, grew by £62 million from 2013-14 to 2014-15.

But endowment and net assets might not have a direct impact on student life in the way that the college's expenditures do. In this regard, the colleges still display some degree of inequality — Trinity spent £67 million compared to Murray Edwards' £7.7

million — but most colleges spent about £10 million in 2014-15.

Funding is partially equalised by contributions to the university's Colleges Fund, which differ in size according to the financial position of each college.

Last year, Trinity's contribution totaled £2.2 million, while Peterhouse's was £241,000 and Sidney Sussex's was only £33,000.

Grants can be made from the fund to colleges to support individual or current projects.

But some, including Paul folkes Davis, Trinity Hall's bursar, have argued that the program "needs review".

"The system is creaking, and the time when the Colleges' Fund which supports the younger, poorer colleges will need to be overhauled is fast approaching," he wrote in the college's

report.

Other programs to equalise funding across colleges exist, primarily the Isaac Newton Trust, which supports fellowship schemes for less well-endowed colleges to hire young teachers and researchers.

“

### THE SYSTEM IS CREAKING

Trinity College, which founded the Isaac Newton Trust and contributed £1.5 million last year, claims that 20 per cent of its budget provides for student support and teaching across the university.

"[Trinity] College's relatively healthy financial position must therefore be seen in the perspective of the College's many responsibilities," according to its website.

Its total donations dropped, however, from £5 million in 2013-14 to £4.3 million last year.

College endowments depend in part on their history. The size of Trinity College's assets is in part explained by "astute investment decisions" that have built upon Henry VIII's original endowment in 1546, said Fiona Holland, the communications officer for the college.

In terms of absolute size, Cambridge is the wealthiest university in Britain with an endowment of £5.9 billion, compared to Oxford's £4.2 billion. Still, both pale in comparison to the assets of private universities in the United States. Harvard, for example, has an endowment of about \$37.6 billion.



Trinity, with net assets of more than £1 billion, is the wealthiest Cambridge college



# Strange Bedfellows

Male students and academics are heading to Grindr to find casual sex together. Is technology changing power dynamics within the university?

Tom Freeman investigates.

Ben\* waited for Simon's reply to come.

A first-year English student, he was outside the Buttery at the Sidgwick Site on a hot day in exam term. Simon was not the first man he had met via an app – he describes himself as a “massive fan” of them. He is quite open about using them frequently, and about the encounters he has as a result. “I don't pass round names,” he says. But this meet-up was different.

“We were chatting,” he says. “Standard flirty chat. I don't remember who made the offer to do what first, but we went to his room near the Sidgwick Site.”

Simon, who described himself on Grindr as a “member of the university”, was in fact a Senior Lecturer, Director of Studies, supervisor and a fellow of a central college. The room in question was his college-owned accommodation, something Ben describes as “reckless”.

“I left cordially, on good terms,” he says. “We chatted again a few times on the app afterwards... but it was an off-the-cuff suggestion that happened the same day.”

“I never saw him again in real life.”

Ben's experience is not uncommon. Grindr, a geosocial networking application that shows a list of profiles of men near you, has revolutionised how gay men meet – for hook-ups or otherwise. It has become a staple in the global gay community, available in nearly 200 countries, with millions of users. A cursory glance illustrates its popularity in Cambridge: at most hours of the day hundreds of men are online, and its users are highly active. Many are associated with the university – students, researchers and lecturers can all be found on the service, and the level of anonymity it affords makes it easy for people to meet almost any type of man they want.

“One of my theories is that Cambridge people on here don't really have time for real socialising, and end up using Grindr more than people in other places because of how insane Cambridge is,” one student user told me.

**“It's always been a fantasy of mine”**

For Seb, this widespread popularity made certain things much easier.

“It's always been a fantasy of mine, to have sex with a supervisor,” he admits. He consciously sought out supervisors and fellows, revealing that

he was “turned on” by the attention from older, powerful men.

Seb graduated last year, and was a frequent user of the app and similar services before leaving. In total, he estimates he slept with four supervisors he met via apps – and they weren't hard to find. Academics who state their occupations are easily found on the service. One describes himself as “proudly indiscreet”. Others even specify their areas of research.

“

**“OH MY GOD,” SHE CRIED.  
“THAT'S WHERE I HAD  
MY INTERVIEW!”**

Seb admits that he might have slept with more, however – some never told him what they did. As Ben tells me about both of his meet-ups with fellows, he wasn't aware of their exact occupation until “a decent way through the conversation”.

Initial discretion, however, does not equate with hiding: Ben believes that neither of the fellows he slept with were actively trying to conceal their occupation. “It didn't really come up,” he states. It is simply a matter of choice: some fellows flaunt their status; others prefer to be discreet.

Some students feel a strong attraction to figures of authority.

As one geography fresher put it: “The idea is kind of hot: to be the object of desire of an older, very intelligent man is flattering, and I think a lot of young guys will be drawn to the whole experience and power dynamic.”

It doesn't matter for Ben whether or not the older man is a fellow – it is more the case that, in a small university city, many older men in the centre of town have a connection with the institution. But while not specifically attracted to the power dynamic, Ben admits that the idea of sleeping with a supervisor was a turn-on.

“It was collaterally exciting, especially doing stuff like going to fellows' rooms... it's the context of a college, especially the older colleges, that makes it feel quite clandestine.”

Everyone I spoke to drew the line at their own supervisor, however. As Seb put it: “It crosses boundaries.”

“I think a supervisor should never sleep with a supervisee, and if he does,

then he should declare it to the college and recuse himself, for that person,” he argues.

Grindr allows you to unilaterally ‘block’ users at any time, preventing you from seeing and getting into contact with each other on the app.

Seb saw one of his own supervisors on the service, and blocked him “because it would have been too awkward”. Supervisors frequently admit to doing the same: one PhD student I spoke to who supervised Part 1A chemists blocked one of his students when he saw him.

For James, an undergraduate at a central college, one fellow, Bill, stood out in particular.

“He's sent me messages before, even pics, but then blocked me when he found out I went to his college. But then a couple of months later, he does it again.”

The second conversation was much the same as the first. No pleasant-ries were exchanged: the supervisor opened by saying “hot”, which disappointed James, who was mindful of when Bill did this the first time. He decided to continue the conversation, to see if Bill would cross Seb's boundary.

“I just said ‘thanks,’ James says. “He asked what I was looking for. I said: ‘Nothing in particular,’ and asked what he was. He said something along the lines of ‘Hot fun with hot guys,’ that he was ‘very oral’ and that I could turn up to his room, have my cock sucked, and leave.”

This time, Bill sent a photo of his nude reflection in a mirror. James showed it to a friend.

“Oh my God,” she cried. “That's where I had my interview!”

After sending more pictures, Bill also sent a location, a room in a building James already knew.

“At this point I told him I was at his college, and he blocked me.”

He also spoke on the app to another fellow and lecturer in Languages who, after a brief, flirtatious conversation, told him: “I shouldn't play with undergrads.”

Student users readily acknowledge the potential for risks and abuse, including the fact that abuse means students are far less likely to speak freely about their experiences.

“I don't think the university has a problem, because a problem is when the dynamic is abused, and in those cases people are a lot less likely to come forward anyway,” Ben argues.

“You're much less likely when you're quite drunk to have a giggle with your

best friend about sleeping with a fellow if it was in a compromising situation that you didn't enjoy or didn't feel like you consented to.”

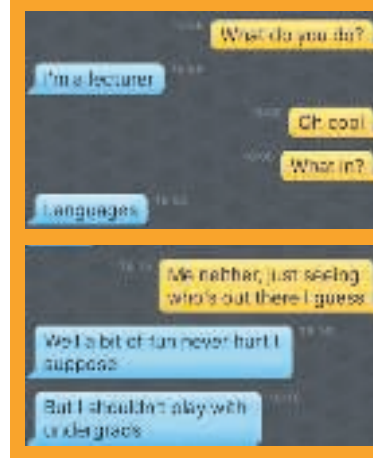
But Ben believes apps actually help to clarify difficult issues like consent.

“If I respond to a message, then it's from the same position as if I'd sent the first message, so there's no real tangible difference,” he believes. As one maths supervisor put it to me: “Nothing wrong with other undergrads on apps, if they are consenting adults.”

Chris, a PhD student and supervisor, agrees, and sees no problem with sleeping with an undergraduate in his faculty.

“It depends on how mature the person is, and you can very easily gauge how mature people are,” he says.

## Grindr encounters



## The new normal?

What about that other gay Cambridge institution: the candlelit Adonian Society dinner at Peterhouse? Many cited it as a turn-off.

“Grindr provides a nice buffer to going up to someone at high table and asking for their number, which obviously you wouldn't do,” Ben says. “You don't need to wait for an invite.”

He argues that apps have changed the dynamic, facilitating meetings between supervisors and students without troubling a teacher-student dynamic – unlike the dinner.

He received an invite from someone he met at the university who offered to “sponsor” him, paying his £70 ticket.

“The reason I turned the invite down was because there was then that dynamic... Him offering to pay makes

that dynamic so much worse.”

Seb also expressed reservations. “It's not so much that I actually wanted to go – I know a friend who went and he found it weird. At one point they blew all the candles out, and then people were outside, in the deer park, having sex in the bushes.”

Chris, who has been going to the dinners since his MPhil four years ago, is sceptical.

“It's never been a hook-up thing,” he says. “I find it quite funny that people always have this idea of this sleaze of academic power dynamics.”

“The people getting off in the bushes, it's always undergrads with undergrads,” he claims.

Is Grindr having an impact on the society? “I don't think there's any cross-over. Grindr is not a virtual version of a five-course dinner in Peterhouse.”

For Chris, the distinction between casual sex facilitated by an app and a dinner is crucial.

“If you just talk to someone on Grindr, go round to their house and have a shag, yeah, you've met them, but if you sit next to someone at dinner and have a conversation with them, that's a completely different context.”

“If you're saying, ‘Has Grindr changed the ability for students and supervisors to meet to have sex?’ of course it has, it's a lot easier. But it wouldn't be fair to not distinguish between those two types of meeting.”

Undergrads put off by the society's reputational baggage, however, appear not to be likely converts. Grindr is here to stay.

“It seems a much more egalitarian approach,” Ben believes. “There's a lot more agency with the student. It felt much more like something that happened between equals.”

It's not just used for hook-ups, either. Seb tells me that he dated a supervisor and Director of Studies in Land Economy “for a bit – not in my subject – but he got too intense. He's now in Chicago”.

Perhaps paradoxically, the net effect of the explosion in app culture is to reinforce the separation between public and private. Students and their superiors have been hooking up for far longer than the university has acknowledged. By making encounters easier and providing an outlet for those who do find attraction in age and experience imbalances, without forcing them to resort to clandestine dinners or their own supervisors, the student-teacher relationship is reinforced.

*\*All names have been changed.*



# Concerns raised over student voter registration

**Haroon Mohamoud**  
News Correspondent

Changes to the way in which voter registration takes place risk an estimated

800,000 people falling off the electoral register, according to claims made by the Labour Party.

The party fears that the change, from household registration to a new system of Individual Electoral

Registration (IER) is most likely to affect university students who do not live at home for most of the year.

The Electoral Commission itself has raised concerns about the way in which IER is being implemented, with the speed of the change prompting it to encourage the government to undertake a voter registration drive.

The Electoral Commission has also warned that without a significant publicity drive, the government is risking up to 1.9 million people disappearing from the register.

However, a Cabinet Office spokesperson told *The Guardian* that the system of individual registration was being implemented to tackle fraud.

The spokesperson said: "We have worked hard with local authorities for years now to clean up the register – any entries removed will be people who have moved house, died or never existed because they were registered fraudulently."

In December 2015, the first electoral register figures to be released under IER showed a drop in the number of registered electors compared with the year before. The effects of these changes may be felt in the upcoming elections in May.

Although the changes have been implemented to make the register more accurate and to stop fraud and errors, approximately one in ten people have not been automatically transferred to the new list of voters.

Among the 1.8 per cent of voters estimated to have dropped off the register, areas with high student populations are most severely affected.

For example, Canterbury saw a 13



per cent drop, while Cambridge and Dundee West both experienced a fall of 11 per cent.

Since the introduction of the new system, Cambridge has seen a fall in registration numbers. There was a drop of 10,104 electors between the figures published in December 2014 under the old system versus those published in 2015 under the new one.

“

**CAMBRIDGE AND DUNDEE WEST BOTH EXPERIENCED A FALL OF 11 PER CENT**

As of 1st February this year, there were 81,395 voters registered on

Cambridge City Council's records.

Cambridge has around 20,000 students who are eligible to register and vote, with 12,000 of them living in university accommodation.

Although it is not currently possible to say exactly how many students are actually registered to vote due to a change in the way Cambridge City Council reports its data, the body expects to have this remedied in the near future.

Vicky Breeding, a spokesperson for Cambridge City Council, told *Varsity* that "we have invested a lot of time in encouraging students to register, by holding events, using social media, placing registration cards in pigeon holes and sending direct e-mails".

Today is National Voter Registration Day. As part of this, Cambridge City Council will be running a registration desk, organised by CUSU, on the Sidgwick Site from 1pm.



## Looking for work this summer?

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Closing date for applications: 21 March 2016.

# BBC journalist named new Peterhouse Master

**Siyang Wei**  
Senior News Correspondent

Peterhouse has announced that journalist Bridget Kendall will become the first female Master of the college. The journalist will take over from Professor Adrian Dixon, a Professor of Medicine, in June 2016.

A graduate of Modern Languages at Oxford and Harkness Fellow at Harvard, Kendall has worked at the BBC for over three decades.

She joined the Corporation in 1983 as a radio production trainee for the World Service, then became a foreign correspondent in the early 1980s, and was named BBC diplomatic correspondent in 1998 – a post she has held for the past 18 years.

In 1992, she won the James Cameron Award for distinguished journalism in recognition of her reports as foreign correspondent in Moscow during the breakup of the Soviet Union, becoming the first woman to do so. She has also been the principal host of the World Service discussion programme *The Forum* since 2008.

Peterhouse is the oldest Cambridge college, and also became the penultimate college to admit women in 1985. Of the 31 constituent colleges of Cambridge, nine are currently led by women.

In a statement released on the college's website, Kendall said: "I feel very privileged to have been chosen by the Fellows of Peterhouse to be their next Master. This is an exceptional College with a distinguished history and record of academic excellence. It represents all that is best about



**BBC journalist and new Master of Peterhouse Bridget Kendall**

Cambridge University."

She added: "On my visits to the College I have been struck by its friendly atmosphere and the way it has turned its reputation of being the University's oldest and smallest college to its advantage: balancing a respect for traditions with a readiness to adapt and innovate, and remaining small enough to foster an intimate environment, yet seek engagement with the wider world."

"I am thrilled to be joining the College and look forward to collaborating with everyone at Peterhouse on the challenges and opportunities ahead."

A former student of the Perse School for Girls in Cambridge, before spending two years in Russia through British Council scholarships, she has further described the move as "both a new chapter and back to [her] roots".

The reaction from Peterhouse's

student body has been similarly positive. Following the announcement, Stevie Hertz, the college's newly elected JCR Women's Officer, expressed hope that the new Master would be "a sign to the world that Peterhouse has changed".

Commenting on Peterhouse's desire to leave behind its conservative history, Hertz added: "[Bridget Kendall's] presence alone is hugely significant; we don't have any portraits of named

women on the walls, so having a woman as Master is very significant."

Despite this, she acknowledged that this is merely "a step" in the right direction; the college and university can "always do better".

Julian Sutcliffe, LGBT+ Officer for Peterhouse, also described the appointment as hugely positive, calling it "an historic moment for the college that will hopefully mark a change from Peterhouse's reputation as the most conservative college".

The outgoing Women's Officer, Ellie Myerson, shared this optimism, commenting: "I was warned against applying to Peterhouse by a teacher who suggested it might not be the best place to study as a woman, but I've had a really positive experience."

"[The appointment] really marks a big shift for Peterhouse and shows how far the college has come and what changes it is intending to make in the future. Apart from anything else, we're certain to get at least one portrait of a named woman now!"

"This appointment makes me proud to go to Peterhouse", she added.

Peterhouse's outgoing Master, Professor Dixon, said: "Peterhouse has enjoyed great benefit by electing masters from a wide range of backgrounds: these include the church, the armed forces, the diplomatic services as well as academia."

"Bridget will bring to the college her exceptional skills in communication and knowledge of international affairs. She also provides an outstanding role model for students and young academics alike."

He said that he "look[ed] forward" to working with her over the summer.



# News in Brief

'A FEW CORSETS AND SWING DRESSES'

## Women's Institute goes burlesque

Cambridge City Women's Institute, the members of which range in age from those in their twenties to those in their sixties, have taken part in a burlesque workshop.

"There was definitely a buzz in the room. There were a few corsets and a few swing dresses and we did a little routine based on the Diet Coke advert," said Jo Beal, the group's leader.

SWIFTKEY SOLD TO MICROSOFT

## Cambridge grads sell company for £174m

A firm started by two Cambridge graduates has been bought by Microsoft in a deal estimated to be worth £174 million. Swiftkey, which is known for its smartphone predictive keyboard software, was founded by Dr Ben Medlock and Jon Reynolds in 2008. The pair claim that their software has led to "100,000 years of reclaimed typing time" for its users.

WOMEN MORE LIKELY TO GO TO UNI

## Applications gender gap remains

The gap between male and female school leavers applying to British universities sits at record levels. UCAS figures show that young women are 36 per cent more likely to apply to university than young men in England. This gap is the widest on record and the same as last year. The number of women entering higher education has now superseded men for many years.

'SHOULD SHAME OUR COUNTRY'

## Cameron criticises universities' diversity

Top universities have defended themselves against David Cameron's recent criticism concerning the numbers of black and ethnic minority students they admit.

The Prime Minister argued in *The Sunday Times* that the low numbers of black and ethnic minority students securing places at elite universities "should shame our country" and said institutions need to "go the extra mile" to tackle the "ingrained, institutional and insidious" attitudes holding people back.

Cameron has announced new rules that will require universities to publish data on applications broken down by gender and ethnicity.

The University of Oxford said that it did "not see the need for further legislation", arguing that for many years it had been publishing the very information that the PM was now demanding.



NUMBER 10

## The Week in Numbers

11

The number of female academics and staff at Cambridge who earn more than £140,000

92

The percentage of people who voted Yes in the Disabled Students' Officer referendum

£1m

How much each student would receive if Trinity College divided all of its assets among them

'A BIT OVERWHELMING AT THE MOMENT'

## Cambridge Olympic hopeful

Hayley Simmonds, a Cambridge PhD student who is reading experimental chemistry, is in contention for a spot in the Rio 2016 Olympic cycling team. She is currently battling to finish her thesis before the end of the next month in order to focus her efforts on making it into Team GB.

Simmonds told *Cambridge News* that "it's a bit overwhelming at the moment" and that she is writing her thesis on her rest days. She's going to America in March for two months, saying she will be "over the moon" if she gets her Olympic spot.

'URGENT RESTORATION'

## Union begins consultation

The Union is hosting a public consultation this Friday for its upcoming site development.

The consultation will be open to the public from 1pm to 8pm and will give people a chance to look around and ask Union executive members about the development.

The Union announced the development a year ago, stating that it was seeking to "finance the urgent restoration of its 149-year-old home".

The restoration is likely to include a new student-only Bar and a public-facing café.

## Body of missing Cambridge student found in Cairo

Joe Robinson

Senior News Editor

The body of Cambridge PhD student Giulio Regeni was discovered by Egyptian officials in Cairo this week.

Regeni, a 28-year-old PhD student from Fiumicello near Udine in north-east Italy, had been in Egypt since September.

He had been conducting research for his dissertation on Egyptian labour movements, which he had been undertaking at Cambridge's Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS).

He had last been seen on 25th January, when he was leaving his residence in the Duqqi district of Giza to visit a friend.

The date marked the fifth anniversary of the Tahir Square demonstrations which led to the downfall of the presidency of Hosni Mubarak in 2011, leading some commentators to suggest that Regeni may have been caught up in a police raid against demonstrators.

His body was found on the Cairo-Alexandria Desert Road on the outskirts of the city, after several days of increasing concern on the part of the Italian media concerning his whereabouts.

While Egyptian media have speculated that he might have died as a result of a robbery which turned violent, security officials have suggested that Regeni may have died in a car crash.

Following news of the discovery of his body, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation summoned the Egyptian ambassador to Rome to express its "bewilderment

over the tragic death".

The ambassador, Amr Mostafa Kamal Helmy, was said to express "profound condolences for Regeni's death" and has "assured [the ministry] that Egypt will cooperate fully in finding those responsible for this criminal act".

Late on Wednesday, the ministry stated: "The Italian government has asked the Egyptian authorities to make every effort to ascertain the truth [...] and immediately launch a joint investigation with the participation of Italian experts."

Italian police and forensic experts are expected to fly out to Cairo to assist in the investigation.

Egyptian media have speculated that the PhD student might have died as a result of a robbery which turned violent.

The Egyptian prosecutor leading the investigation team on the case told media that authorities had discovered Regeni with stab wounds, cigarette burns, cuts to the ears and signs of beatings and a "slow death".

Debora Serracchiani, President of Regeni's home region of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, said: "We had hoped with all our strength that this would not be the outcome."

She added: "All our thoughts are with his family, who are going through indescribable agony."

A spokesperson for the University of Cambridge told *Varsity*: "We are deeply saddened to hear news of the death of Giulio Regeni. Our thoughts are with his family and friends." The Vice-Chancellor and the Mistress of Girton College have been in contact with Giulio's family.

## Rainbow flags fly in Cambridge

Harry Curtis

Deputy News Editor

Colleges around Cambridge this week flew the rainbow flag as part of initiative co-ordinated by the CUSU LGBT+ campaign to mark the beginning of LGBT+ History Month.

While the pride flag was conspicuous by its absence atop some colleges, among the colleges where it could be seen on Monday were Clare, Christ's, Downing, Emmanuel, Homerton, King's, Magdalene, Pembroke, Robinson, Selwyn, Sidney Sussex, and St Catharine's.

Corpus Christi College joined the ranks of the colleges flying the flag on Tuesday following a meeting of the college's governing body, where the motion was passed with little resistance. The flag was only flown for the day, however.

On Wednesday Newnham College also raised the flag, having previously flown their college flag at half-mast on Monday for reasons that *Varsity* has been unable to ascertain.

Elsewhere, the rainbow flag will continue to fly for the duration of February, for instance above Emmanuel College's South Court.

This is not the first time the pride flag has been seen in Cambridge, however. St Catharine's College hoisted the flag in 2014 in honour of the actor Sir Ian McKellen after he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the university. Likewise, Homerton has previously flown the flag.

Among the colleges that didn't fly the flag were Gonville and Caius, St John's, Trinity, and Wolfson.



TOM FREEMAN



In a Facebook post that has since been deleted, Trinity College Students' Union (TCSU) said that Trinity would not be flying the flag as the college did not want to "set a precedent to deviate from the traditional flag schedule".

Jesus College is also yet to fly the rainbow flag, as the college awaits the outcome of a vote by the College Council on the issue. In the meantime, however, the flag is visible in the Jesus College porters' lodge.



# Zika virus: global emergency?

**Kane Toh**

Science Correspondent

Unlike its related counterparts in the virus family Flaviviridae, the Zika virus does not have the luxury of a petrifying title. Yet the Zika virus, with only its exotic-sounding name to bear, is alongside Donald Trump on the sensationalist headlines of most American newspapers.

The Zika virus is spreading like wildfire, and it does not appear to be stopping its juggernaut-like invasion anytime soon. Once a virus restricted to the narrow equatorial belt from Africa to Asia, it was a virus unknown to the Western hemisphere until it started spreading eastward across the Pacific Ocean to French Polynesia, then to Easter Island and, in 2015, to Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America, where the outbreak has reached pandemic levels.

Like some zoological viruses that affect humans, mosquitoes (specifically *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*) are friendly hosts to the Zika virus. We expect that the geographic distribution of these pesky insects should be similar to the incidences of Zika virus infections, and indeed this is the case. The problem is, therefore, that these mosquitoes are extremely versatile breeders and are prevalent in hot regions. With objects that hold even the minutest amount of water, you can bet that the *Aedes* mosquitoes are dining and courting like all hell let loose in a Shangri-La hotel.

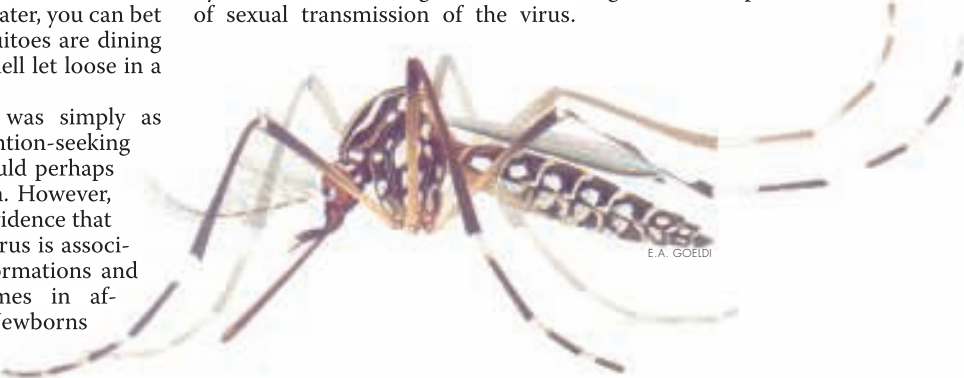
If the Zika virus was simply as harmless as an attention-seeking friend, then there would perhaps be no cause for alarm. However, there is very strong evidence that the rise in the Zika virus is associated with birth malformations and neurological syndromes in affected individuals. Newborns with reduced head

size, a symptom of a neurodevelopmental disorder called microcephaly, are often born from infected mothers. Numbers rose from 147 cases in 2014 to 2,782 cases before the end of 2015. Coincidentally, 2014 was also the year that the FIFA World Cup was held in Brazil, during which the Zika virus is thought to have made its entrance. The Zika virus is also strongly associated with an autoimmune disease called the Guillain-Barré syndrome, where the body's immune system perceives one's own peripheral system to be dangerous and starts launching a ceaseless chemical offensive against it.

If the Zika virus does not have the capacity to cause a worldwide pandemic, we can perhaps be a little less worried. Yet, we do need to bear in mind the recent Ebola crisis where the World Health Organisation (WHO) failed to implement efficient measures and did not announce that the Ebola virus had caused a pandemic. This inaction led to thousands of preventable deaths. A healthy amount of worrying commensurate to the degree of virulence of the viral agent is required. The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a Level 2 travel alert for people travelling to certain countries where the transmission is ongoing. It also announced 31 cases of Zika infection among US citizens who travelled to areas affected by the virus, including the first case of sexual transmission of the virus.

However, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito vector is common in the US only in Florida, along the Gulf Coast, and in Hawaii, although it has been found as far north as Washington, D.C. in hot weather. So even if infected individuals return from an overseas trip, the mosquito vector may not be present to cause human-to-human transmission in the United States.

There are no vaccines available for the Zika virus, despite their availability for other flaviviruses. Nikos Vasilakis, of the Centr for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases, predicts that 10 to 12 years may be needed before an effective Zika virus vaccine is available for public use. With the virus causing largely asymptomatic infections, many people may be affected carriers and not know of their condition. This is compounded by the fact that efficient diagnostic measures are still not in place, given our limited knowledge of the Zika virus. The best we can really do at this point is to protect ourselves against these mosquitoes through the religious use of insect repellents and attempting to clear sites of stagnant water, as with any generic mosquito-borne viral disease. However, with the Summer Olympics to be held in Rio de Janeiro, the second-hardest-hit region in Brazil, it seems that stopping the Zika virus will require a lot of scientific progress and political gamesmanship.



# Graphene: the neuron of the future?

**Sarah Foster**

Science Correspondent

Implants that communicate with and influence our brains may seem like the stuff of science fiction. However, such neuro-electric interfaces are eagerly pursued by biomedical scientists and engineers who envision a revolution in the treatment of a vast spectrum of neurological pathologies.

Some neuro-electric implants could help translate raw brain processes into action, providing a pathway to Luke Skywalker-like cybernetic limbs or to restoring motor function in patients paralysed by stroke or injury. Other implants might suppress abnormal brain signals, such as those thought to cause the characteristic tremor of Parkinson's disease.

The requirements for a successful neuro-electric interface are strict. Much rests on the physical and electrochemical properties of the implant's material. It must be able to receive and to communicate electrical signals to neurons, but it must not disrupt the delicate network of electrical communication. Furthermore, implanting foreign material in the human body is tricky. The presence of foreign materials and trauma from surgery can trigger an inflammatory response, and induce a protective layer of glial cells to surround the implant, ultimately insulating it and dulling its communication with neurons.

Any materials implanted over long periods of time must be non-toxic to cells (biocompatible), flexible, and electrically stable even in harsh aqueous environments. The design of neuro-electric implants therefore presents a formidable challenge to materials scientists, but an interdisciplinary collaboration of scientists from the Cambridge Graphene Centre and the University of Trieste in Italy has

recently shed light on the enormous potential of nanomaterials.

In particular graphene, a two-dimensional honeycomb lattice of carbon, is a tantalising potential material for the fabrication of neuro-electric interfacing devices. Graphene is remarkably stable, maintaining structural and electrical integrity even in harsh biological environments. It is also flexible and has excellent electrical properties.

Their work published this past December in the journal *ACS Nano* explored neuronal growth on graphene-based substrates (GBSs). The researchers grew rat neurons on GBSs and glass control surfaces and examined the density of neurons and non-neuronal brain cells as well as the emergence of nascent communication networks among the neurons.

Cells grown on GBSs seemed identical to their sister cells grown on glass, leading the authors to conclude that GBSs do not appreciably alter neuron and synaptic growth. Notably, the surfaces used in this study were pure graphene, free of any coating. Frequently surfaces are coated with proteins to facilitate cell growth and adhesion. However, such coatings may impede the transmission of electrical signals between the implant and the neurons which make naked surfaces optimal.

The ability of GBSs to support and nurture healthy neuronal growth without disrupting the formation of neural networks has important implications for the use of GBSs as a material for constructing neuro-electric interfaces. While further examination is necessary to reveal how such substrates would actually compare to the squishy 3D environment of the brain, this study provides a first indication that GBSs may play a prominent role in realising the immense potential of neuro-electric interfaces in the near future.

# Brains left, right, and centre: the biology behind politics



**NEUROPOP**

WITH  
JOY

THOMPSON

US election drama is once again in full swing. The presidential debate has been and gone, pundits are arguing, and the tension increases with every poll. Amid the rush, political scientists and psychologists have been seeking to explain what drives us to vote liberal or conservative –

and why we are so stubborn about it.

Political views can certainly be unshakeable. Imagine two people arguing about an emotive issue: each tries to prove they're right, but rarely manages to convince the other. We also speak off-handedly of 'inheriting' our beliefs from those who helped shape them. But is this brainwashing or biology? As it turns out, biology may be more important than we think, and several studies suggest that even our political leanings may be influenced by our genes.

It's also true, though, that the 'Make America Great Again' gene has not been discovered, and probably never will be. On an evolutionary timescale, political debates are such a recent invention that it doesn't make sense to have specific genes encoding our ballot-box output. Instead, it's more likely that our genetic inheritance shapes our collection of personality traits, and that these in turn influence our political views. This is the increasingly popular hypothesis of 'genopolitics', which periodically turns up in journals ranging from

*Nature* all the way through to the science pages of the *Economist*.

A decade's worth of psychological research seems to agree. In 2005, for instance, political scientists Hibbing and Alford analyzed the political opinions of 300,000 identical and fraternal twins. The results, published in *American Political Science Review*, were startling. Identical twins were more likely than fraternal twins to give the same responses for every political question on the test! Since identical twins share all their genetic material, while fraternal twins share only half, this was a tantalising correlation between genetic inheritance and political beliefs. (It's still one to be interpreted with caution, though; in twin studies, it's notoriously difficult to control for extraneous factors.)

So much for DNA, but do politics and personality traits match up? A large-scale 2003 survey in *Psychological Bulletin*, by John Jost and colleagues, suggests that they do. In this study, conservatives tended to score higher on measures of dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity and need

for order. (Intriguingly, they were also more likely to have neat and organised living spaces!) Liberals, in contrast, were more open to new experiences and change. Jost concluded that the differences between left and right could stem from our underlying psychological make-up.

Personality could thus be the missing link between genetics and political stance. Take, for instance, the 'Big Five' model of personality used by many psychologists. The big five traits are openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism – and several studies have now shown that they are all moderately heritable. (30 to 50 per cent of the variation in these traits can be traced to genetic differences, depending on the study.) Most importantly, two of the Big Five traits associate closely with political leanings: liberals have significantly higher openness scores than conservatives, while conservatives score higher for conscientiousness. Jost's conclusions were also consistent with this overall. In short, psychologists and political

scientists agree with the old truism that conservatives resist change while liberals embrace it.

So what does this mean for political debate? Political tendencies might be written in our DNA, but it doesn't mean that the energy we spend arguing is wasted. Certainly it would be folly to stop all protests on the mere assumption that because presidents cannot change their genes, they cannot change their policies. Public opinion and policy do alter over time, and without vigorous debate the change would be far slower... but that could just be the writer's liberal genotype talking.





# VARSITY INTRODUCING

Imogen Rae

IMOGEN RAE is a singer-songwriter studying Medicine at Sidney Sussex. A past winner of the OpenMic UK Future Music Award, and finalist in the UK Songwriting Contest, she released her second album, *Queen of Hearts*, in 2015.

## How would you describe the style of your music?

I think it's a fusion of jazz, and increasingly pop. I also like to throw in a bit of story-telling as well.

## What are your main musical / lyrical influences?

Number one is Tim Minchin – I absolutely love the guy, I think he's incredible. I also really like Sara Bareilles. The thing about music and lyrics is, in my opinion, both music and lyrics have their own merit, but if you put them together and they work together than the merit is more than just the sum of the individual parts. I get inspired by lots of rhythmic things. But musical ideas – I think they're completely separate. Every song has its own, some are better than others, but every song has its own lyrical idea and I don't think you can pinch from other people's lyrical ideas.

## When did you start writing songs?

When I was thirteen. I know this because we used to have something called the House Music Festival at school. It was always the Sixth Formers who did the Composition category, because they were doing A-Level Music, so it was always a classic piano-accompanied flute piece or whatever. But our house was rubbish at music at that time, and they were like, "can you write us a song?". I had two weeks to do it, and I won the competition, beating all the Sixth Formers! It was incredible – I realised I could actually write songs, and from there I just carried on writing.

## Did singing or song-writing come first?

I think singing probably came first... I've always been good at music – as a youngster I played the piano, the drums, the clarinet, the violin, the recorder, everything. But I never dreamed of being a singer. But ever since I've been writing music... I love writing, and I really want to promote my writing more than just my singing, because I'm perfectly aware that there are better singers in the world than I am, but there's only one songwriter like me! *[laughs]*

## How do you start a song?

If I'm honest, normally an interesting phrase or an interesting idea will come into my head. It's usually lyrics, or lyrics and a melody – the accompaniment can change, and does change as you write the song. If you record it then, and listen to yourself in two months playing it, you'll realise how much it's changed from the initial version. I find whenever I stop for a breather, I tend to do a lot of writing. I'm a very very busy person but I often find I write things on planes or on trains, just when you've got protected time when

there's nothing to do. You have the time to think when you're travelling.

## What's the best song you've ever written?

That's a difficult one! Well, I think the best song I've ever written is the one I've just written, every time. But I've written a new one called 'Doctor Doctor', which I like a lot. It depends what it's for, I think, because I have quite a lot of different styles. Probably, lyrically speaking, 'Mr Uniform' has to be up there, just because it's so sassy. I feel really cool when I sing it.

## It's a cliché, but a lot of your lyrics seem like diary entries. Do you write about real or imagined life?

A huge combination of both. When I was a bit younger, almost all my songs were make-believe. As I've got older, there have definitely been events in my life that sparked an idea. Maybe I fabricated things from the idea, but the idea was a real one in the first place. In the phase when you write songs about real people... I remember singing this song to about 250 people, and the person in my view was the gentleman who I'd written the song about! It was a very peculiar scenario. I have actually shied away from properly opening my heart up, otherwise you end up singing your diary, literally, to an audience of

people who know exactly what you're talking about. I also don't often tell people what the songs are about, so that's how I get round it.

## You're studying medicine – are you considering music as a career path?

It's the classic question. Every time I'm interviewed on the radio they're like, "so what are you doing at the moment?", and I say I'm a student, and they pry further, and I'm like, oh I'm a medical student... at Cambridge. Then they're like, "so do you actually want to sing...?" But if you look at any songwriters around, until they are big, they all have a job. They have to, because you can't afford to just be a singer-songwriter, really. Why can't that job be medicine? I think they're both compatible, because I'm most stimulated when I'm really busy, and I definitely am with medicine, so!

## Where do you see your music going in the future?

I really like being challenged. Earlier this year I got a request from BBC Radio Lancashire, and they said they needed a jingle for a thing for Children in Need, so I wrote them a jingle, and that sort of thing is amazing. So if I could get sufficiently well-known with my musical style, I'd love to be asked to do really cool writing, any type of genre – I've written a musical, and I've written for the 24-hour musicals at the ADC. These days, I don't mind singing to anybody. I'm sufficiently comfortable with my piano and singing, and I've made pretty much every mistake you can make. I'm getting so much better at covering them up – it doesn't bother me any more. So, yeah. I'll sing to any audience, anywhere.

*Imogen was talking to Alice Chilcott*

# Kate Hoey: "there is a very credible left-wing argument" to leave the EU

## Theo Demolder speaks to the Co-Chair of Labour Leave about democracy, internationalism, and 'the fear campaign'

Following CULC's 9-6 decision last week to affiliate to the Labour In campaign, I spoke to one of the party's most prominent eurosceptics: Vauxhall MP Kate Hoey.

I began by asking her about the latest story from Britain Stronger in Europe, which had appeared in the papers that morning; Karren Brady had said that leaving the EU would be "devastating" for British football. Hoey, a former Minister for Sport, chuckled.

"I have to say, I find that one the most ridiculous. It's the sort of story that will actually back-fire... It will only help to show that the Remain campaign has got very little argument. We find that when we do debate with them, they come out with the same three or four things – it's all doom and gloom, it's all depressing – they're the fear campaign. Everything they want to say is about fear."

One particular fear I asked her about was the fear of harm to the economy from leaving. She noted that the EU market is "shrinking practically by the week. It's the emerging economies of Asia and South America where the growth is; we have a huge opportunity as a country which has our language so widely spoken to sign our own trade deals... If Iceland can have its own trade deals with China and India, the idea that somehow we would suddenly be isolated and have no one to trade with is nonsense. We

would first of all get our seat back on the World Trade Organisation which is crucially important, instead of having someone from Belgium represent the whole 28 countries of the EU... We maintain that leaving would actually lead to more jobs – and the EU countries which depend on selling to us aren't going to stop selling to us."

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## THEY DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT SPENDING OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY

Emphasising the costs of membership to our economy, she continued:

"It's hugely expensive: it really is worth repeating – £50 million a day, £350 million a week, £19 billion a year – and we get back something like £11 billion of that, but how that money is spent is all decided by unelected commissioners... You have to ask anyone who's speaking up for the Remain campaign at a senior level 'what are your links with the EU?', and of course universities are a classic example: the idea that somehow all the universities are going to fold because they get this great support from the EU – but it's

just our money back."

This dislike of EU bureaucracy, she tells me, is informed by her time as a Minister, during which she had to work with Brussels.

"I found the wheeling and dealing very undemocratic. And also the whole paraphernalia of Brussels; it's clearly done by people who have nobody to be accountable to. They don't really care about spending other people's money. Their accounts aren't even properly audited. Whatever you say about MPs, at least we have a constituency to elect us, and who can kick us out."

She went on to quote renowned Eurosceptic Tony Benn.

"If you cannot get rid of the people who govern you, you do not live in a democratic system", before adding: "I want to see the U.K. be a free country again, where we can co-operate with the rest of the world, be internationalist, and get away from this little EU clique which is full of people who are more interested in working with global corporations than with working people" – adding that the EU's instability makes leaving the safer option.

We turned, then, to discuss the 'Britain Stronger in Europe' campaign, and she told me that its name was in itself a bugbear.

"It is a deliberate ploy to call it 'Europe' – that anyone who votes to leave is leaving Europe, as if we're

going to somehow drift away. That's the idea of it – to link the whole continent, which of course we're going to stay a part of, with the 27 other countries out of something like 56 or 57 in Europe." She laments, too, claims by some Europhiles "that somehow anyone who speaks up for us to be an independent, democratic country again is some kind of 'Little Englander' stroke racist – which is the other thing which gets thrown at people... There's a real feeling around that this is going to be a battle with the cosy cliques of the leadership of all of the main political parties, the establishment, in terms of banking and some of the media – and that will actually count in our favour... And I'll have very different reasons for coming out from someone like John Redwood, who's on the right of the Tory party. There is a very credible left wing argument."

And, Hoey tells me, this is now gaining traction at events by Labour Leave and other campaigns with which they work.

"It's just so interesting... particularly with younger people who've only ever

grown up hearing how wonderful the EU is – it's only really beginning to dawn on them that it's not this great supporter of workers' rights and equality – it's actually much more about supporting global corporations."

It strikes me that if any case for a Leave vote has a chance of winning over students en masse, it's the one Kate Hoey is making.



PATRIOTIC POPULIST



# Comment

## The obvious choice: reflections on the referendum



Noa Lessof Gendler

*We've won the battle, but not the war... yet*

Well, thank goodness for that. It would've been pretty embarrassing otherwise.

And I don't mean just for CUSU, whose track record for getting people to participate in referenda and generally getting stuff done isn't exactly premier. It would've been embarrassing for the entire student body if not enough people had cared about people with disabilities to vote, or, even worse, if people had actually voted no.

As you might be able to tell, I've been a strong supporter of the Yes campaign since the referendum was proposed. My reason for this was that there was no good reason not to be. How do you justify opposing an officer designated specifically to aiding and liberating some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students at the university who, incidentally, make up 8.1 per cent of undergrads and 5.9 per cent of grads?

I suppose that the 336 people who opposed the motion did so based on how expensive it would be for CUSU to fund another full-time sabbatical position. But, to be honest, I can't think of a better place for the money to go. What's more important than enhancing the experiences and ability to succeed of those most likely to be overlooked? CUSU have said themselves that they may have to

"cease existing activities", which I can deal with because, you know, equality is more important than the Freshers' Week pub crawl, and that they're "looking to raise additional income" (which they're always doing anyway, so no big deal).

So come on, you 336 no-voters. Get with the times. Access is crucial and you can live without your Union perks.

But, in all honesty, I didn't find the success of the Yes campaign that surprising. Most people in Cambridge aren't complete and utter wankers, regardless of the *Daily Mail's* preferred angle and the impression given by the people who write for the *Tab*. From within my comfy left-leaning friendship group, it seemed to be a given that the motion would pass, and that enough people would recognise the need for a new kind of representation in our students' union. For me, in the same obvious way that you try not to be racist, you also try to recognise the difficulties that people with disabilities face in their lives, and you automatically expect everyone around you to do the same.

But that's quite clearly not the experience many disabled students have had during their time in Cambridge, considering that the petition triggering this referendum was signed by well over the required 350 people. It's

easily taken for granted that people with disabilities should just get extra support and that's that. Let's think for a moment, though, about the life-changing difference this vote is going to make for so many people. I remember just last year when Corpus finally voted to have a 'gender equalities' officer on our JCR (and we only voted yesterday on whether this should actually be called the 'women and non-binaries' officer). Taken for granted and considered an obvious choice by many from other colleges, this was actually a ground-breaking change.

Think about how much more significant a change it'll be for those with disabilities to have a sabbatical officer representing them to the university. It's one more protective layer that'll hopefully stop people from slipping through the net into unmanageable difficulties. This isn't just a ticked box for the liberals, another accolade to show how PC we are – this has the potential to have a hugely positive impact on many lives.

But that will only be the case if the individual who takes up this role actually manages to do something with it. At the moment, CUSU seems to be on a roll: the last presidential election was record-breaking in its turnout, just like this one, and this year's sabbatical team seems to know how to make a big noise in their favour

rather than winding everyone up. They might not have universal support yet, but at least people seem to know what they're doing, and the President, Priscilla, even made it onto the *Tab's* 'Biggest Name on Campus' shortlist this week. That list might be a disgraceful concept and an embarrassment to be associated with, but Priscilla's presence on it does show that she has an audience. Which of her predecessors did?

So hopefully, the new full-time Disabled Students' Officer role will help to further this trend of engagement and awareness. I hope that the visible support for disabled students is encouraging for those whom it personally affects; and I hope that the overwhelming landslide pushes everyone else to challenge the ableism that they encounter, from the girl who used horrific, outdated terms to insult people she didn't like, to the non-wheelchair accessible stage that prevented a speaker from sitting alongside her fellow panellists. These situations are avoidable, but so far we haven't done very well as a community in countering them. Voting for a sabbatical officer to spearhead these changes is the first step, so well done, Cambridge. Now let's bloody well support whoever fills the role and make some equality happen around here.

## Sugar Babies are a sign of capitalism gone wrong



Connor MacDonald

*The Sugar Daddy culture points to broader issues in modern relationships*

From the outset, I should confess that it was very difficult to write this article. Having gone through the website seekingarrangement.com to gain some background knowledge, I found myself so appalled that I sat speechless in front of my laptop. Rarely do I have moments when I despair for modern society, but this was certainly one of them.

Upon opening SeekingArrangement, I was greeted with the simple tagline "Relationships on Your Terms", as if romantic and personal relationships are some sort of business deal where it would be helpful to have solicitors present. I then clicked on the "Sugar Daddy" tab, where a series of wonderfully helpful graphics appeared. "A Sugar Daddy is someone who comes with a variety of financial commitments including: family..." (who would have guessed?). "Sugar babies are an expense that must be accounted for" and "Sugar Daddies are all about business".

The definitions for Sugar Babies were no better: "The Sugar Baby is an individual seeking mentorship, financial support". The site also helpfully points out that a large portion of Sugar Babies are in university, "aiming to graduate debt free". It also warns Sugar Babies that revealing a Sugar Daddy could be harmful to the Sugar Daddy's "career or personal life". Again, useful, if totally obvious, advice.

I hope I am not alone in rejecting this commodified, thoroughly selfish view of relationships as one that is both utterly vile and has no place in our modern, equal(ish) society. The feminist critique is an obvious one: the fact that the vast majority of Sugar Daddies are men and the dependent Sugar Babies are women demonstrates that a site like this encourages ideas of female dependency on the financial prowess of her male protector.

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SEEKINGARRANGEMENT IS THE DARK SIDE OF CAPITALISM, AND LIBERALISM GENERALLY

The very words 'Sugar Baby' conjure up images of a dumb gold digger, a stereotype we should rightly extirpate from our discourse. Similarly, they evoke Sugar Daddy images of the 1950s à la Don Draper, whose feminist sensibilities were non-existent.

However, I think this critique, while obvious to anyone with half a brain, misses the wider point – namely the fact that society wants to replace real human connection with artifice and façade. The idea that you

can 'buy' a personal dinner or private retreat with someone, even without the sexual component, should immediately strike us as suspect. The fact that there are people who actively try to create relationships through prior agreements and reciprocal benefit should be immediately concerning. I am sure many of us would call any relationship built purely on some sort of material reward a sham, but now we can find one online instantly.

This equation of personal relationship with business deal seems to be a natural outgrowth of our selfie culture, a culture where it is easier to excoriate someone online than it is to confront them directly, where it is easier to hook up regularly while drunk than it is to seriously commit to loving another person for longer than 24 hours. This is a culture in which it is easy to buy a night of good conversation with a beautiful woman but infinitely harder to ask someone out on a date.

I rarely say this, being a free-market Tory, but I believe that SeekingArrangement is the dark side of capitalism, and liberalism generally. Those two -isms have undoubtedly given succour to millions and rights to many, but they have also deprived us of any ability to actively discuss values in the public sphere.

We are told that this is a matter of choice, that it really is of no concern to anyone else. Excuse me for being a

prude, but I think it is rather obvious that we do not construct our society in a moral and ethical vacuum. Why should we accept as a *fait accompli* a community where relationships are devoid of any meaningful connection? Why can't I call the practice of buying sexual services for money depraved, and one that we should aim to eradicate? When we accept the idea that relationships can be bought and sold, and subsequently commodified, we are accepting a society where emotional bonds gradually get broken down and replaced by pure self-interest.

Finally, to those (including a friend of mine who writes for *Varsity*), who argue that the Sugar Baby phenomenon is really an indictment of high tuition fees and marketisation: you are missing the point entirely. Undoubtedly, many are feeling the squeeze of high tuition fees, but that should never excuse exploitative and selfish behaviour. Indeed, as one of the women in last week's *Varsity* investigation put it, it's an "easy and convenient way to support myself" – as if getting a real job or taking out a loan aren't acceptable alternatives. I object to the fact that some choose the easy path over the right one. I believe, in the long run, our society will bear the costs – in ephemeral, vacuous relationships that will have as much meaning as the Snapchats we send every few minutes.





# We should fight the privilege, not the privileged



Alex Mistlin

*The Damian Lewis row calls into question the best way to deal with privilege*

A recent row at Acland Burghley School, a north London comprehensive and my alma mater, illustrates how divisive the issue of privilege is in British society. The row erupted after former pupils argued that it was inappropriate to invite old Etonian actor, Damian Lewis, to take part in the school's 50th anniversary celebrations. Given that Lewis is an amiable and popular member of the local community and the school is a performing arts college it seems an eminently sensible decision to invite the *Homeland* star. However, a small group of campaigners did not agree. They argued that Lewis should be disinvited because of his "elitist education that provides a small minority with vastly more opportunities than the rest." This is undoubtedly an admirable sentiment but it represents a simplistic analysis that does not adequately address social inequality.

I'll begin by conceding the fact that the protestors had a legitimate point. Our society cannot be considered truly meritocratic while it is dominated by a privately educated elite. In 2014, a study by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission found that 43 per cent of newspaper columnists, 33 per cent of MPs and 71 per cent of senior judges were

educated at independent schools. However, it is unfortunate that too often this legitimate frustration with an unfair system takes the form of reverse snobbery. The danger of this is that it sets a bad precedent by which people can be attacked *ad hominem* for their background. You might think this a trifling issue and to some degree it is. But ask yourself: would a society where people are pigeon-holed based on schooling benefit those who currently sit at the top or the bottom of the pile?

This is not to say that those who seek a more equal society should not call for radical upheaval. In fact, that this anger is often directed at easy targets like Damian Lewis reflects the small-mindedness of many campaigners. Snubbing or criticising someone who has benefited from their privilege might make you feel better but it does not address the real drivers of inequality.

Papering over the cracks with misplaced anger might mean that there are a few less prominent public schoolboys, but it will not change the status quo. For instance, inequality in early years provision means that privileged children far out-perform their peers well before they take up that place at Eton or Winchester.

Recognising the endemic nature of the problem is the first step in finding real and lasting solutions.

Counter-intuitively, to create a more progressive, egalitarian society we must strive to extend privilege by distributing opportunities to as many people as possible. This means encouraging children at comprehensive schools to emulate the example of successful people from all walks of life. In other words, we must adopt a nuanced approach that recognises the role that privilege plays in the success of people like Damian Lewis without dismissing them as individuals.

Social mobility cannot exist unless everyone works to break down the class barriers. This means being sympathetic towards those who would like to use their considerable privilege to prevent others being let down by a system from which they have benefited. Prejudice towards the privileged has the pernicious effect of entrenching class divisions while alienating those who have the power to address the issue.

As an elite institution, the University of Cambridge is in a difficult position. As a product of an unjust society, its admissions statistics make for grim reading. Independent school pupils are five times more likely to go to

Oxbridge than those educated in the state sector, and only one in every 1,000 students eligible for free school meals get in.

The difficulty for Cambridge is how to distribute places more equally without compromising the first-rate education that makes this university the envy of the world. While quotas are a blunt instrument, measures must be taken to ensure that places go to those who truly deserve them. Studies have repeatedly shown that students from state schools routinely outperform students from the independent sector with the same grades.

Perhaps admissions criteria could better acknowledge the different contexts in which grades are attained in order to better identify the students with the most potential. This is an incredibly complex problem that cannot be unilaterally solved, but the admissions process must adapt to ensure Cambridge is academically rather than socially elitist.

To the dismay of the protestors, Damian Lewis bravely accepted Acland Burghley's invitation, insisting that his critics had missed the point. He is right; reverse snobbery does not solve the privilege problem. It merely perpetuates it.



# Cambridge is right to raise the rainbow flag



Dominic Cawdell

*It's a step in the right direction, but flying the rainbow flag is by no means the end goal*

On Monday, the flag-poles of many Cambridge colleges were adorned (many for the first time) with the Rainbow Flag, flown to mark the beginning of LGBT History Month. For many queer people in Cambridge it was a day to be proud of; a day when our feeling of belonging in this university was affirmed. In a small way, we have struck yet another victory on the path towards the full and equal inclusion of LGBT+ people in our university. Of course, some of the colleges were notably absent from this move – Girton, Trinity and St John's, to name but a few – which has raised anger in some student bodies. But what is all the fuss about?

Believe it or not, the flags of our colleges are important. We may not have the kind of pseudo-idolatrous practices seen in the States towards our flags, but they remain part of the backdrop of collegiate life and represent a significant aspect of our history. The Union Jack or Royal Standard flies on the Monarch's birthday, the college flag is flown on graduation day and major Christian and national festivals, and the flag flies at half-mast to mark the death of a member of the college. They are symbols of our modern values and respect.

With this rich history at work, to fly the LGBT+ flag is not just a meaningless gesture, but brings our flag into this tradition – our symbol, the banner of our campaigning efforts, is taken up and displayed for all to see. Flying from the ivory towers of a university which often seems so reluctant to change – in a society where gender-binaries and heteronormativity still retain their currency – these small flags remain radical signs of hope for anyone willing to look up from the streets to see them. They represent publicly our fundamental belief that LGBT+ people belong to this university as much as anyone else, and I hope pictures of our historic buildings hoisting these wonderful flags will be seen far and wide.

However, the flags of history are not just symbols to adorn our buildings but banners under which to campaign. For those of us who felt that our place in this university was affirmed and that our rights have been confirmed, LGBT History Month reminds us how far there is to go. Deeply entrenched attitudes of prejudice and suspicion still have to be changed. For some of us, especially gay men, it can feel like the fight is won – but, as long as others in the LGBT+ community suffer, it isn't over. Yes, the

recognition demonstrated by some (but, not all) of Cambridge's historic colleges is a positive step, but there is much about this institution which requires reform. Those of us who have found the acceptance and freedom to be who we are have a duty, born from our shared history of oppression, to continue to campaign for those in the LGBT+ movement who still face daily and systematic oppression.

As Jack Renshaw's Students of Cambridge video highlighted, the mainstream acceptance of LGBT+ people tends to focus heavily on the 'LGB' aspects of the movement. This month, we have a golden opportunity to turn the spotlight towards transgender folk who still suffer underrepresentation, and have not received the same acceptance as LGB people have in our university. Under this flag, we have the opportunity to draw our colleges' and university's attention to the systematic exclusion of non-binary people with gendered language in official documents; the retention of gendered dress codes and bathrooms; and the failure of the university to educate supervisors about their use of gendered language. Until the whole LGBT+ community is fully welcomed and accepted in Cambridge we simply can't rest on our laurels and think the

campaign is over. We have come so far, and we have much to be proud of, as we look back at the sacrifice of those who have gone before and the hard-won liberation which means that our colleges can fly the Rainbow Flag, but there is more to be done.

Unless we strengthen our solidarity with one another, continue to demonstrate to our colleges and university the ways in which it continues to oppress those who don't fit into preconceived notions of gender and sexuality, and to challenge our own prejudices and assumptions, then the flag will be meaningless. We have to use this month to stand under the Rainbow Flag, in solidarity with one another, and with those around the world who still live with the risk of capital punishment for their sexuality. I don't excuse myself of the need to continue to raise awareness and change attitudes; I write as an ordinand (trainee-priest) of a church which still refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of same-sex marriage. I know when I am called to 'fight the good fight' (so to speak).

To finish, I would like to offer a personal thanks to all JCRs, LGBT+ groups and students who campaigned for this, and to all colleges who will fly the Rainbow Flag this month.

## Head space

*In her fourth weekly column, Rhiannon Shaw discusses how to tackle talking to family about mental health*



Rhiannon Shaw

Telling your parents you're not ship-shape up in the brain area is a great way to add a dash of excitement to any family occasion. Will they get angry? Will they start crying? Will they kick you out for being ungrateful about all the things they've given you?

"Back in my day I had to work at a fish and chip shop to pay my way through university and it was the Seventies and I didn't even have an iPhone – you didn't see me wallowing in a pit of despair!"

Cross-generational communication can be difficult even at the best of times. Explaining why you'd prefer they shared cute cat gifs rather than endless ranting *Daily Mail* articles on their Facebook wall will end in fury rather than fluffy kittens. Trying to convince your grandmother that Skype isn't a way for criminals to see into her kitchen won't stop her from covering up the camera with her finger every time she wants to chat to your uncle in Australia. Pointing out that

neither you nor your partner burst into flames because you slept in the same bed will garner the retort that they never thought that would happen – just maybe that the neighbours would take you off the Christmas card list.

Mental health issues aren't new and they weren't 'invented' by some internet entrepreneur who has it in for your parents. But the more and more open we become about depression, anxiety, eating disorders and addictions, the more foreign the world becomes to a generation that just didn't talk about it. It's unlikely that anyone of any age or walk of life has sailed through without, at some point, at least knowing someone who has a mental illness, but it may have been brought to their attention as a secret – an embarrassment, even.

And maybe we have a right to be angry about that. I certainly get angry thinking about the people, just like me, who were sectioned and isolated from their families, treated like criminals rather than given the necessary help to become healthy and happy again. I get angry that so many were told to just 'get on with it', because their problems weren't worth anyone's time. I get really angry when I think of those whose way of life – their gender, their sexuality, their way of thinking – was wrongly and horrifically pathologised. I'm not saying that any of this has ended, either. Injustices in mental health are, unfortunately, not a thing left in our grandparents' or our parents' youth, but at least we're making strides to talk about it.

This is one reason why I think you

should speak to your parents about mental health, even if you're healthy. Talking about an article you've read or a campaign at uni is a simple way to broach the topic. Point out the lovely cartoons that my pal Luke Johnson does for this column every week. They're pretty cool.

Another reason is the simple fact that your family is an important support network, and, assuming they listen to your concerns, they can be the first people you call in a crisis. I'll never forget coming home after a terrible few weeks and getting a hug from my little brother. You'd be surprised how unexpectedly kind and wonderful people can be if you give them a chance.

But for every hero of the hour,

there's someone who's... maybe... a little bit shit and unhelpful. It'd be stupid for me to demand that you tell your parents because telling your parents is definitely going to solve everything – I've heard enough horror stories to know that isn't true. Bringing up your university counsellor in conversation may not feel like the safest thing to do when your father has made a disparaging comment about someone at work being 'lazy' rather than seriously ill. Going to a parent and having your experience utterly invalidated can make you believe, incorrectly, that you're alone.

There aren't any hard and fast rules when it comes to mental health, but even if you feel like you can't tell your parents or family members, I urge

you to find yourself a surrogate family who know about your illness and can check up on you whenever, wherever. Opinions aren't going to change quickly and you shouldn't put pressure on yourself to try and make your family see sense when your mental health is at stake – it's exhausting, it's dangerous and what matters is you getting better. Fighting some outdated social mores is tough enough, even when you're feeling fabulous.

I'm lucky and I don't take that lightly. If you're not as fortunate as me in the random lot of family allocation, don't ever think that you're alone. It may sound cheesy (pretty camembert-y, in fact) but you will find people who love you no matter where your head's at. I promise, they're about.





# Barbie's new body: marketing to reverse falling sales



Lucia Keijer-Palau

*The new Barbie dolls are a sign of a more progressive society, not a genuine step to end discrimination*

In December 2005 the University of Bath released research on young girls' disavows of their Barbies, branding it a "rite of passage and a rejection of their past" which came in forms as diverse as the classic shaven head to the more off-the-wall decision of some 7-to-11-year-olds to micro-wave their dolls. It is, perhaps, somewhat surprising that actual academic research had to be done to figure out that destroying old Barbies was a teenage millennial rite of passage. Almost every conversation I've had with female friends in the wake of the news of Barbie's transformation in the past week has ended in discussions of how we lovingly mutilated our treasured dolls once we had decided they were no longer worth playing with. A favourite of mine was full body tattoos in various shades of sparkly nail polish, but it's a question of personal taste.

That Barbie's sales have been falling for nearly five years now is hardly a massive shock: she's barely changed since her 'birth' in March 1959 when Ruth Handler sensed a gap in the toy market for more adult-looking dolls. Handler based Barbie's body on a German doll called Lilli who had risen to prominence via artist Reinhard Beuthien's cartoons and was what one might call an adult novelty toy.

Barbie's manufacturing company, Mattel, suffered a painful 59 per cent

drop in profits last year, leading to the sacking of the chairman and chief executive Bryan Stockton. In 2014 *Frozen's* Elsa doll beat Barbie as the top-selling doll, while Lego overtook Mattel (who also sell Hot Wheels and Polly Pocket) as the top-selling toy brand.

The first major change for Barbie (apart from a temporary split from Ken in 2004) came last year, when Mattel introduced 23 new dolls to its Fashionistas line. The dolls had more varied skin and hair colours and, most excitingly, had actual flat feet as opposed to the weird semicircle things Barbies had before. For the first time in her 56 years, Barbie could wear flats. The big news now is that versions of Barbie are being released with actual curves. Supposedly, that is.

Under the codename 'Project Dawn', a team at Mattel has spent two whole years revamping the classic Barbie shape to make it sellable to what Evelyn Mazzocco, head of the Barbie brand, has called the 'millennial mom' (millennial dads don't buy kids toys, in case you were wondering). This is all very well and good. Some change is better than no change, I guess. But the picture changes if we take a step away from the hype and consider some of the numbers involved in this year's new Barbie Fashionista line. There are 33 new dolls, 30 hair colours, 24

hairstyles, 22 eye colours, 14 face shapes, seven skin tones, four body shapes. Notice how, curiously, the numbers go down as we get to the important stuff we're all supposed to be excited about.

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**BARBIE NOW COMES IN FOUR BODY SHAPES: ORIGINAL, TALL, CURVY, AND PETITE**

Barbie now comes in four body shapes: original, tall, curvy and petite. There are more than a couple of issues here: for starters, curvy Barbie looks like a size 12/14 whilst the average UK size is 16. There are also problems with the categorisation of Barbie's body - she is either tall or curvy or petite but never more than one, which gives an underlying suggestion that it's somehow okay for there to be one deviation from the 'original' but that's it. Ladies, you can be 'fat', that's cool, but just don't think about being short at the same time.

Equally, the norm for Barbie hasn't changed. Barbie 'original' still has such unrealistic proportions that if she were a real life woman she probably

wouldn't be able to lift her six-times-bigger-than-her-waist head and would be 5ft 9 but under eight stone and so lacking the BMI normally needed to have regular periods. Does this really mark change from the 1963 Barbie which came with a diet book with just one piece of advice: 'don't eat'?

Holding up the changes announced last week as if they're some brilliant progressive move on Mattel's part just doesn't make sense. Ultimately they're just matching modern consumer demands and desperately trying to reverse their falling sales while repackaging it as some bold new move. A bolder move would be dolls which are actually curvy and maybe really tall, too. Or with some kind of non-superficial physical disability. Or a Ken that questions male body expectations - Dad-bod Ken, perhaps.

The new Fashionista range only reflects changes that have already happened in consumers' expectations; it's a weak nod to the rise of pop culture feminism in the last five years. This is fair enough: Mattel employs 28,000 people worldwide and needs to keep profits up. But what this means is that last week's unveiling of new Barbie isn't really a story about Mattel but, rather, one about the important - if still only partial - ways in which our expectations of representations of the female body have begun to change.



Miranda Slade



It's Week 4 and with it comes the end of January. Need I emphasise how painstakingly I have counted out the 31 days of Veganuary lentil by lentil? On this cold February afternoon I celebrated the end of a month of discipline by sitting down in Fitzbillies and making two of my best friends watch me inhale a cream tea. I could barely hear the clotted cream clogging my arteries above the rhapsody being sung in my brain.

For some people, a vegan or gluten free or 5:2 diet may truly make them feel amazing. I found myself scrolling through many blogs by such people while I was looking for vegan recipes. I take the authors of those blogs at their word, and believe that their ability to turn a courgette into something resembling pasta really does emotionally and spiritually move them, but I am not one of those people.

When embarking upon Veganuary I was, vainly, hoping that I would shed the 'my sense of humour is my most attractive feature' skin which I have worn for so long, and be reborn as a glowing goddess. Sadly this did not come to pass, but did it make me think more carefully about how to

properly nourish oneself and consider the ethical value of the food I was consuming? Sure. Would I be tempted to remain vegan any longer? Hell no.

I'm proud of myself. I never thought that I would be able to exercise enough self-control to abstain from all of my favourite foods for a whole month, but here I am. When it comes to desire, I am not at all monkish. I am always disproportionately impressed when I come across people who don't smoke, don't stay in toxic relationships, and for whom a few glasses doesn't inevitably become the whole bottle.

While I am impressed when such people flaunt their self-control, I remain very sceptical of being governed by restraint.

One of the healthiest things I've heard recently was from a friend in the pub over the Christmas break. She described how wonderful her Christmas had been, and rather than the obligatory self-deprecating 'too many mince pies... too much alcohol' comment, she said she had gained a bit of weight over the holidays and that she thought she looked

great (FYI: she always looks gorgeous and has one of my favourite laughs ever). This comment was not striking in itself, but by comparison to the conversations I'm used to having with friends around the subject of indulgence, it stood out.

I've become so accustomed to hearing friends - most often, but not exclusively, female - apologising for such behaviour. How long has it been since a brownie has been eaten by a woman who hasn't first reproved it as a 'naughty' treat, I wonder.

Everyone needs indulgence, and it is wrong to assume that any deviance from a totalising notion of 'clean living' spells disaster. When any seemingly positive lifestyle choice based on abstinence turns into self-flagellation as soon as it is broken, the entire premise of 'health' is shaken. When we think about wellbeing we need to think about pleasure as much as we think about balance, and this extends far beyond one's diet.

Pleasure in itself is both specific and unique. What's more, it's a complex concept - Cindies capitalises on our so-called 'guilty pleasures' every week. We act against 'our better

judgement' constantly. But ignoring those better judgements every so often incites just enough reckless behaviour to satisfy our need for hedonism. Little and often, deviance should be a staple of everyone's diet.

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**WE ALL REVEL IN THE CHAOS THAT WE CREATE FOR OURSELVES**

Placing such restrictions on your behaviour really limits the creativity with which one can spectacularly fuck up one's own life. Truthfully, we all revel in the chaos that we create for ourselves. Who hasn't been tempted by the lure of Danger-spoons despite being fully aware that The Regal on a Friday exposes the dark recesses of the human condition? And who hasn't achieved the magic proportion of drunkenness to proximity and jumped back into bed with an ex? To describe this be-

haviour as masochism would be too grandiose but, to use a tired cliché, sometimes doing the wrong thing just feels so right. While we may not have learned much we didn't already know from these experiences, they seem imperative in the moment, and certainly keep us entertained (or at least occupied) in the aftermath. I would go as far as to say that these fuck-ups are endearing.

The waves of 'clean-eaters' who gaily post picture after picture of themselves gazing lovingly at quinoa salads or modelling a spray tan and a full face of make up in the gym are doing so to reap likes. In reality, no such judgment needs to factor. Because of this obsession with having our lifestyles affirmed over social media, we may feel as though we can only enjoy things that would receive approval from our followers. Balls to that.

Too often do we let our virtues triumph over our vices, not recognising that the two are far closer than they may seem. Savour illicitness - I can say with some authority that incongruity tastes far sweeter than Alpro Soya. You can have your cake, and eat it too.





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# THE ALTERNATIVE OSCARS RACE

*Will Roberts asks why so many talented BME actors were missing from the Oscar shortlist*

Another year, another list of Oscar nominees, another disappointment. But this time people have had enough. Only nominating white actors has put the Academy in serious trouble this year; while last year people only complained about it on Twitter, this time round things have got serious, with many actors and film-makers of all races condemning the Academy. Some even boycotted the event, forcing the Academy to implement changes to its predominantly white, male and, let's be frank about this, tired and irrelevant voter base. The frustrating thing for me is that there were plenty of performances out there that could have been nominated. When you look at this year's films, the idea that the best performances of the year just happened to be by white people simply isn't true. To remedy this, I've picked my favourite BME performances of last year. Hopefully the Oscars will pay more attention next time.

## 01 IDRIS ELBA: BEASTS OF NO NATION

Two weeks ago, Elba seemed a dead cert for an Oscar nomination. With BAFTA, SAG and Golden Globe nominations under his belt, pretty much everyone expected his name to be called. And yet, by some turn of events, he was left off the list. Perhaps it was to do with *Beasts of No Nation* being released on Netflix, or the tough subject matter of the film putting voters off. Whatever the reason, a huge oversight it most definitely was. While Elba dominates the screen with his powerful speeches and vicious dialogue, it's his physicality more than anything that makes his performance, flexing the muscles of both his face and his body to ignite fear in the viewer. Elba's body and facial expressions often tell us more than his words, turning his otherwise cardboard cutout character into something far more complex.

## 02 OSCAR ISAAC: EX-MACHINA

Oscar Isaac is on the rise. Ever since the Guatemalan-born actor appeared in the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis*, he hasn't put a foot wrong, recently seen flying planes in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, doing dodgy deals in *A Most Violent Year*, and winning Golden Globes for his performance in HBO's *Show Me a Hero*. His best performance of the year, however, came in Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*, playing an enigmatic CEO and inventor of a creepily realistic A.I. Isaac's performance is pure genius because we never quite know the intentions of his character. Isaac lets us just close enough to be interested, yet distances himself before we find out too much. It's a fine line between intrigue and frustration, that a more inexperienced actor would have failed to negotiate. Yet Isaac, with his trademark subtlety, plays it to perfection.

## 03 RINKO KIKUCHI: KUMIKO

*Kumiko, The Treasure Hunter* is a wonderfully bizarre film. Directed by David Zellner, the film follows Kumiko, a woman who, after watching the film *Fargo*, goes to the frozen tundra of Minnesota to search for a satchel of money that was buried in the film, which, as you can guess, doesn't exist. While *Kumiko, The Treasure Hunter* has a slightly off-kilter premise, at the heart of it is a very human performance from Rinko Kikuchi. Without Kikuchi, the film would descend into caricature, or would become one of those well-intentioned, yet unbearably kooky and torturous indie films. Yet Kikuchi keeps us absorbed; her delicate performance draws us in, never quite letting us know whether Kumiko is mentally ill or just naively optimistic, turning an otherwise astute and quirky film into an extremely touching one.

## 04 KARIDJA TOURÉ: GIRLHOOD

French director Céline Sciamma has a tendency of picking out complete amateurs and transforming them into movie stars, as seen in previous masterpieces such as *Tomboy* and *Water Lilies*. Luckily for us, Karidja Touré is no exception. Don't be fooled, it may have been Touré's first film role, but she still has a tough job; she's in pretty much every frame of *Girlhood*, a wonderful film documenting girl gang life in urban France. Yet Touré is never intimidated by her role: at times she's vulnerable, at others she's wickedly fierce, yet she's always completely believable. She manages to create a character that is complex, at times difficult, and yet totally relatable and engaging, making the experience of watching a young girl grow, develop and more importantly change right before our eyes into an invigorating experience.

## 05 KITANA RODRIGUEZ & MYA TAYLOR: TANGERINE

*Tangerine* is quite an extraordinary film. Not only was it the singularly most indescribable film of 2015, one critic getting close by dubbing it the "the best transgender revenge comedy drama of the year", it was shot completely on an iPhone on the streets of Los Angeles. While films shot on a phone can prove extremely naff, *Tangerine* is undoubtedly the most vibrant and electrifying film of the year, with its two lead actresses screaming, swearing, singing, smoking and strutting their way through 88 minutes of pure magic. However, don't judge *Tangerine* before you've seen it; while it may look like a sass fest from beginning to end, thanks to Rodriguez's and Taylor's performances, it's not only full of attitude but also incredibly moving and poignant, plunging you head-first into the world of transgender sex workers.

## THE WEEK IN CULTURE

The Fitzwilliam Museum, which celebrated its 200th birthday yesterday, has revealed lurid details of the private life of its founder Richard, 7th Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion, including the fact he had a passionate love affair with a dancer from Paris during the French Revolution. New letters revealed that Fitzwilliam fathered two children with Marie Anne Barnard: 'Fitz' and 'Billy'.

*Trumbo*, which follows the life of blacklisted American film writer Dalton Trumbo, opens in UK cinemas this weekend. The Oscar-nominated film, starring Bryan Cranston and Helen Mirren, is showing at Cambridge Picturehouse at 2pm and 9pm today.

Annie's Leibovitz's exhibition *Woman: New Portraits* enters its last week in London before embarking on the next stage of its world tour. The photographs feature women of outstanding achievement, from Amy Schumer to the Queen.

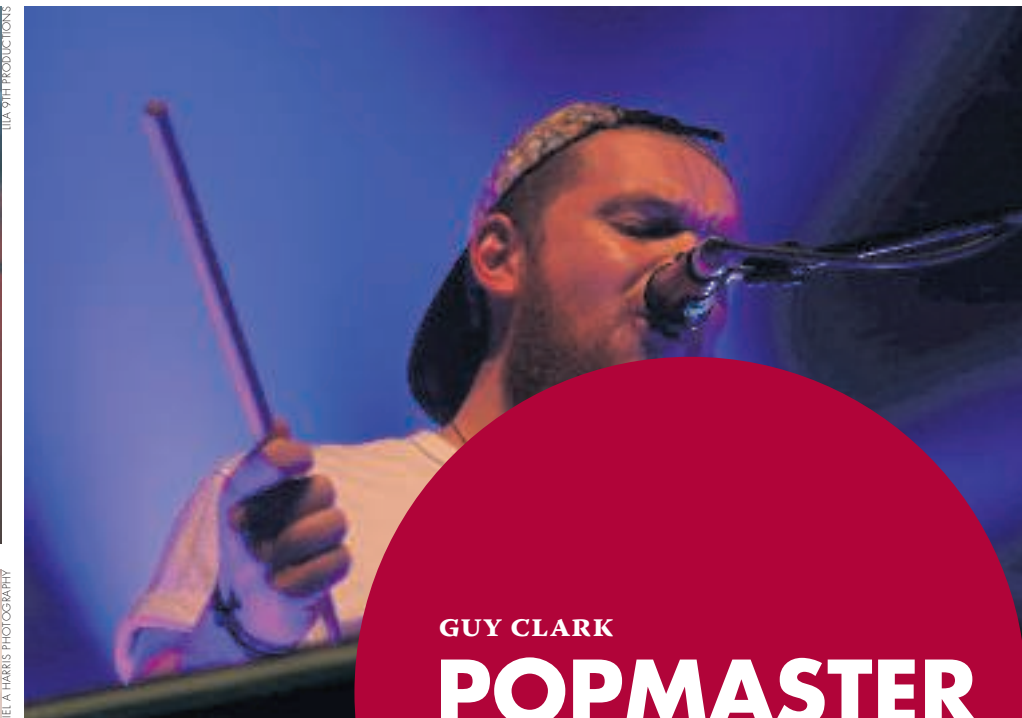
A Banksy artwork worth £8,000 has been stolen from a flat rented out by Airbnb in Islington, North London. Last week, Banksy unveiled his latest mural of a young child refugee in the iconic style of Cosette from *Les Misérables* outside the French Embassy.



ROBERT SCOBLE







GUY CLARK

## POPMASTER

*on Jack Garratt and why he's changing the face of British pop*



January 2016 will not be remembered as a good month for British pop music. However, those feeling shell-shocked at the loss of one of contemporary music's greatest innovators might be feeling a bit better by the end of February. February 19th sees the release of Jack Garratt's debut album *Phase*, and five days later he'll be onstage at the Brit Awards Ceremony receiving the Critics' Choice award, whose previous winners include James Bay and Adele. Needless to say one award maketh not a Bowie-successor. But for the first time in a while British pop has produced a sound that confuses and excites in equal measure.

First, a confession: I am not interested by a lot of modern pop music. I know I am in the minority, I know I am a fossil. I appreciate the technical ability and hard work of everyone in the charts, I just don't like their music very much. Garratt excites even me, and a comparison with the other nominees at the Brit Awards explains why.

Years and Years put out some great synth pop, but I couldn't tell you what puts them ahead of M83 or Passion Pit. Catfish and the Bottlemen's frenetic indie rock is really good, but I've still got all my Bloc Party/The Kooks albums so I probably won't buy theirs. I can't be the only one who thought 'Take Me Home' by Jess Glynne was an Adele

track the first time it came on. Garratt, on the other hand, just doesn't sound like anyone else. Or rather, Garratt sounds like *more* other people than anyone else. Listening to the title track on Garratt's debut single 'Water' is an experience akin to going to a house party and gradually noticing the entire Hollywood A-list is there. When it opens with a nice echoey guitar riff, you're fairly confident you know what you're in for. A minimal hip-hop drumbeat and subby bass are the first surprises. But then the gospel backing vocals turn up, then the Eighties power-riff, then the piano solo, and suddenly you're wondering how on earth your mate knows all these celebrities. The amazing thing is that Garratt has somehow synthesised all these ingredients into a consistent style. He fuses an intensely modern, digital sound with the old-school groove and lyrical dexterity that so often escapes pop music these days, particularly at the more electronic end.

No surprise that in recent interviews he's listed Stevie Wonder and Tom Waits as some of his most significant influences. What's more, his music is infectiously catchy. 'Worry' has a chorus refrain that is harder to get out of your system than a January cold. This distances Garratt in an important way from probably his closest musical relative, James Blake. Garratt is as inventive and downright bizarre, but feels significantly more accessible. All this makes for a very particular

live show. Garratt holds it all together himself, the ultimate 21st-century one-man band: vocals, guitar, keys, drum/bass pad, the whole nine yards. If people were impressed in 2012 when Ed Sheeran first fronted a concert with nothing but an acoustic guitar and a loop pedal (and we were), then Garratt has upped the stakes. This begs the important question: can he rock out? Short answer: yes. For weirdos like me who would rather see Matt Bellamy power-sliding across centre-stage than David Guetta fiddling behind a bank of computers, Garratt is your man. His performance might be confined to small spaces, but it's a little typhoon of soulful synth-rock.

That said, will he keep it that way as the venues get bigger? Or will he recruit a band to keep things ticking over and so give him a bit more freedom? He seems like the type who might not as a point of pride: only time will tell. It's too early for wild predictions of success, but Jack Garratt is certainly surprising. He is original not because he owes nothing to what has come before, but because of the diversity of his debts. He is the only inhabitant of the intersection of a Venn diagram linking Tom Waits, Ed Sheeran, AlunaGeorge and Bastille. He'll combine the strange and the familiar in interesting ways. If, like me, you had stopped paying attention to British pop music, now might be a good time to start again.



## ANNA'S CULINARY CORNER

Back in my early school days, I had a teacher who would repeatedly drill into our obnoxious ten-year-old heads that breakfast was by far the most important meal of the day. How – and why – she managed to fit this into every and any subject class, I still don't know. Of course, most of this was lost on my young, cheese-on-toast-fuelled mind; but my wiser, older student self has found a grain of truth here.

It's not that I have converted into a great believer of the nutritional values of a proper breakfast and all the keep-full-and-work-efficiently until lunchtime nonsense. Rather, I've discovered that there is nothing like the promise of a yummy breakfast to get me out of bed instead of hitting snooze once again.

Cambridge has all the options for a brilliant start to the day. I've been told that the eggy bread with maple syrup and bacon at Michaelhouse Café is well worth forking out £5.75 for. I enjoy the touristy vibe at The Copper Kettle on King's Parade, and I love people-watching down the street at Nero's with an apricot croissant and a hot chocolate complete with whipped cream.

I also have a wholehearted admiration for the religiosity with which a friend of mine starts his day with a fresh baguette and four different types of cheese (a French student, obviously).

Sadly, though, neither my clothing size nor purse can afford any of these options as a regular alternative to an alarm clock. Now, one of my teacher's recurrent breakfast topics involved the superiority of porridge over all other breakfast foods. I'm a great lover of porridge, but I simply don't have the time – read: self-discipline – to be Nigella on a daily basis and rise before dawn to boil my oats to perfection. For a while I survived off the microwaveable variety, but having gone through different makes resembling everything from water to glue – not so much actual porridge, funnily enough – I gave up on the queen of proper breakfasts.

This was until I started hearing whispers of the new vogue, that is – overnight oats. It was not long before all the trendy and hip food bloggers were posting artsy, vintage-filtered shots of their equally trendy and hip creations they had put together the night before in a matter of minutes, ready to

emerge from the fridge as pure perfection in the morning. Initially, I cringed: what could be worse than cold porridge in the darkness of January in a room suffering from your college's decision to stop global warming by saving on heating? Yet, as with all trends, my resistance eventually failed and I found myself googling recipes for the perfect porridge. It turns out that you can have pretty much anything in porridge form: carrot cake, peanut butter, and brownies are all featured in food blogs dedicated to oats. However, for once, I got my sugar addiction under control, and settled for a healthy fruity recipe that I adapted to a Sainsbury's and budget friendly version.

Shopping for my porridge ingredients made me feel more trendy and hip, just like the food I was about to make, than I have ever felt before on a Sainsbury's run. There I was, reaching for soya milk instead of the standard semi-skimmed, placing it into my basket to keep my oh-look-at-my-cool-food Greek yoghurt company. The high was not to last, however: back in my gyp room, the mix of oats, yoghurt and soya milk was rapidly turning into, well, something resembling a toilet in Life rather than an

up-to-the-minute breakfast choice. I hid in the corner with my sorry bowl of porridge-to-be so as to avoid my neighbour witnessing my fall from grace.

Understandably, the next morning I did not crawl out of bed full of anticipation, as intended, but rather full of

fear. A great deal of very advanced photoshopping would have been needed to make my porridge blog material, but I braved a taste. And soon it was all gone (eaten up, not in the bin). I had found an unlikely new breakfast best friend. I bring to you, Gets-You-Out-of-Bed Banana Overnight Oats.

*Vulture*

## BANANA OVERNIGHT OATS

For a big bowlful, you will need:

One banana  
1/3 cups oats  
1/3 cups Greek yoghurt  
1/3 cups soya milk

Mash up the banana, and mix in all the remaining ingredients. Cover up and leave in the fridge overnight.

For extra taste and aesthetic appeal, in the morning top your porridge with blueberries, raspberries, maple syrup, pecans, or granola – basically anything that takes your fancy! For the visual side of things, using a pretty bowl or a glass jar will guarantee you a much more bloggable breakfast than my initial attempt.



# HALO

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## THE VARSITY CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

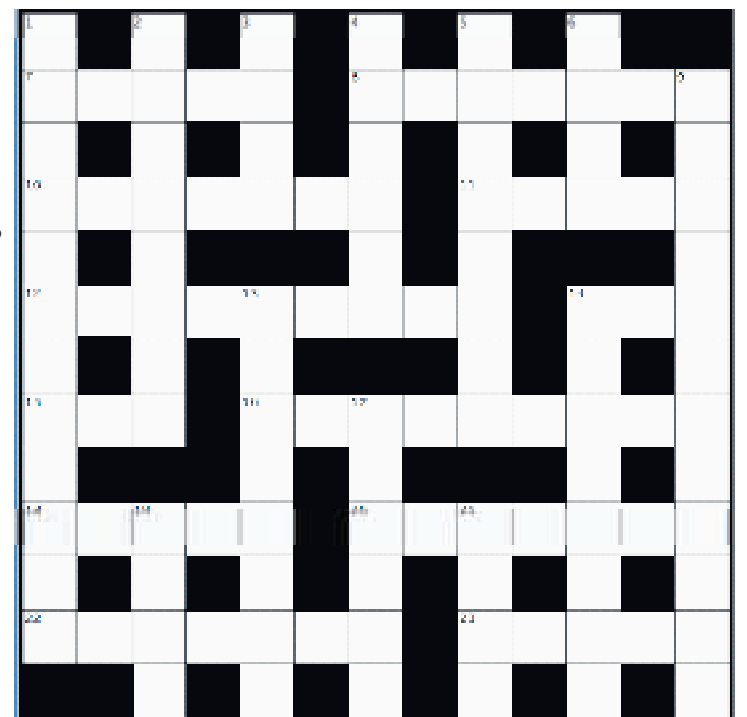
Set by Glueball

### Across

7. Speak for zero interest (5)
8. Sense I'm becoming somebody's enemy (7)
10. Ring piece, en prise unclear (7)
11. Tasty fungus, tomato in sandwich (5)
12. Music making gold box for artist (9)
14. Damaged car in bent shape (3)
15. Islanders ring vocal amateur (3)
16. Distress bird, sweep into trap (9)
18. A tsar from the East follows Jah (5)
20. Cromwell cooked a turnip (7)
22. Important, like a genus member (7)
23. Long note's reverb, produced with no resistance (5)

### Down

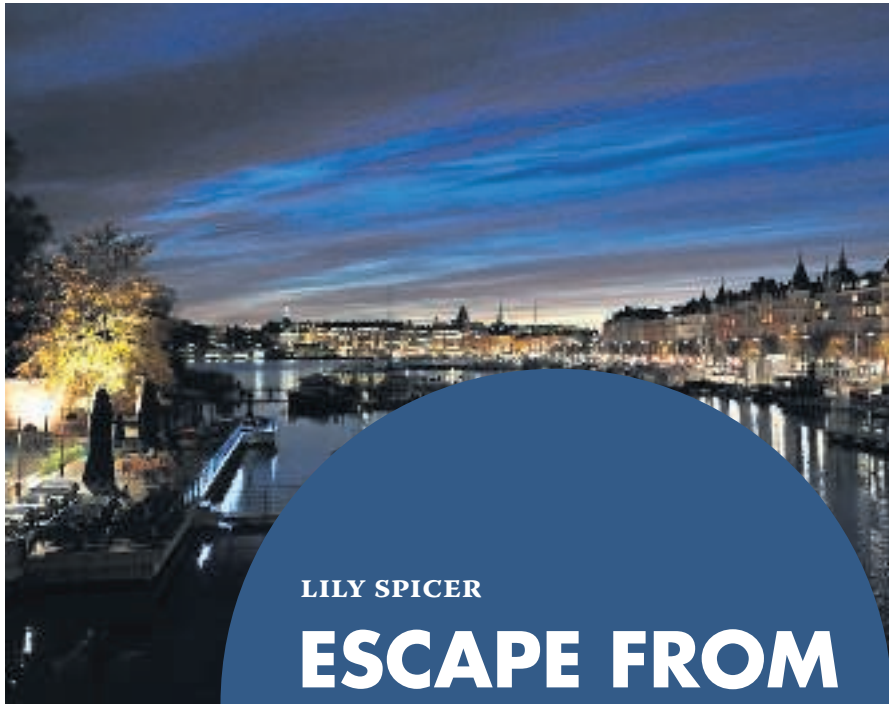
1. Business mistakenly sold for governing body (5,2,5)
2. Mother character plays Latin music (8)
3. Egotistical internet phenomenon (4)
4. United Nations' 'peace' ends in turmoil (6)
5. Angry at regime, leave country (8)
6. Goddess is repetitive (4)
9. Like a tam o' shanter – incredibly hot! (6,6)



13. European Commission still happy (8)
14. Nervously concerned about start of social media (8)
17. Gore – I look wan? (6)
19. Spots running back and forth (4)
21. Jests, in stitches (4)

Congratulations to *Jake Choules* for submitting the first correct answers to the crossword in Issue 803.  
Please submit answers to [editor@varsity.co.uk](mailto:editor@varsity.co.uk).





LILY SPICER

## ESCAPE FROM CAMBRIDGE

*three days in Stockholm*

In December my friends and I made an uninformed, spontaneous decision to go on a mini-break to Stockholm. Common sense should have forewarned that December in Scandinavia consists of bitterly cold days and very long nights. But, after mistaking the 2pm sunset for a solar eclipse on our first day, we resolved to spend our afternoons immersed in Stockholm's indoor delights, namely its fantastic art galleries and coffee houses. The 'Venice of the North', the Swedish capital sprawls over clusters of islands, remaining in constant visual dialogue with the glassy waters of the Baltic Sea. My preconception of Swedish culture had been a hazy, ignorant conglomeration of Abba and Ikea, but the reality was infinitely classier: minimalist, ergonomic interiors and charming Swedes with a sense of style to match. Far from pervading the place with a kind of cold sterility, such insidious elegance makes Stockholm, not unlike Berlin, a decidedly modern city, teeming with youth, innovation and cutting-edge creatives.

### 01 DRINK

Caffeine addicts will particularly enjoy Stockholm. The Swedes take coffee breaks immensely seriously: *fika* is the term given to a leisurely pause in the working day for coffee and sandwiches (more *fika* needed in Cambridge, methinks). Our favourite was IlCaffe, a shudderingly cool coffee house-cum-gallery-cum-florist, serving devilishly strong flat whites and fluffy cinnamon buns.



### 04 STAY

We stayed in the neighbourhood of Söfo in Södermalm – often compared to Shoreditch for its myriad of vintage shops, edgy cafes and mildly pretentious hipster vibes. Most of its streets, however, are peaceful and residential, and within walking distance of pretty much everything. We found Air BnB to be the best value option.

### 02 SEE

Situated right on the waterfront in an Art Nouveau complex, Fotografiska is one of the largest contemporary photography galleries in Europe. We knocked back some strong coffee and saw it all: unforgiving celebrity portraits from Martin Schoeller's *Up Close*, followed by the glossy Seventies opulence of Guy Bourdin's *Image Maker*, startlingly juxtaposed against Magnus Wennman's haunting images of young Syrian refugees in *Where the Children Sleep*. In the city's modern art gallery, Moderna Museet, we fell in love with Danish visual artist Olafur Eliasson, who famously installed a sun in the Tate's turbine hall in 2003. His latest interactive exhibition *Reality Machines* was full of vibrant synthetic colours, squirting water and convex mirrors – bafflingly brilliant. Il Magasin III was another highlight: a contemporary gallery housed in a converted shipping warehouse. From the outside unassuming and accessed via a discreet industrial lift, entrance is free to students and the exhibitions showcase the avant-garde of Swedish and international contemporary art.

### 03 EAT

The wonderful Scandinavian tradition of *smorgasbord* means that many restaurants offer you free range of an impressive buffet spread at a reasonable fixed price – the best option for those with tight budgets and big appetites.

Having nearly the highest rate of vegetarianism in Europe, there is an exceptional standard of plant-based cuisine, as well as plenty of traditional swish fare including smoked fish, rye bread, and meatballs (yum).



# HOW TO PRETEND TO BE A PRINCE

*Hamish Ungless suggests invoking the powers of alcohol and a bad Swiss accent*

Now, this is the story all about how I became the fresh(ers) prince of Cambridge.

Alcohol is a social lubricant. But who might have known it could even sufficiently lubricate the class system to allow the ascent of a mere fresher to royal status? It was the first weekend of Freshers' Week – we were still naive to the dark truth that "week" was not a term to be taken literally – and the foetal entity that was my still-forming friendship group were living out every possible stereotype at the Union Freshers' Ball. Free champers was quaffed – free, here, taken to mean £185 (special discount membership) – and dozens of oysters lost their squelchy, innocent little lives to my newly 'vegetarian' friend and me – "Wait, so, are you saying oysters aren't vegetables?" \*cue confused/concerned looks from shell-shucker\*.

The ball was exactly what we beleaguered freshers needed: music that wasn't tragic, yet generic enough to facilitate movements that might, superficially, be mistaken for dancing and singing (so as to conserve the meticulously crafted façade of being a normal person); photo opportunities to make school friends green with envy and demonstrate

that people at Cambridge do actually have fun and can be down to earth (albeit in the grandeur of the world's oldest debating society); a quantity of complementary alcohol so great that there was the potential, with some perseverance, to get your money back on the single greatest expense incurred by freshers all term.

With the oysters having set the regal atmosphere of the night, and the booze soliciting rather more scintillating conversation than the standard freshers' fare of "Are you northern or southern?" "Why would anyone intentionally study Classics?" etc. etc., we hit the D-floor. The alcohol really is key here, without which the caper (if you can call it that) could never have been pulled off. In fact, I'm not even sure whether we did "pull it off" or whether we were just so blind-



drunk that the whisky/wine combo, forgiving as such concoctions can be, merely allowed us to wallow in blissful ignorance of the actual convincingness of our hilarious [read "sad"] japes.

At one point we were all standing

realised, with back-stories more and more elaborate. Several whisky cokes (well-bred specimen that I am) and a dodgy, Mitteleuropa-ish accent later and Hans, Crown Prince of Switzerland, was born. As it transpires, Switzerland doesn't have a monarchy. Nor has it ever. Nevertheless,

awkwardly by the bar (come on, who put Fun on the playlist?) when another awkward group of proto-friends shimmied over. We all did the obligatory nod of acknowledgement, before moving onto actual conversation. "So, what are your names?" Cue ridiculous pseudonyms – I have no idea why – and equally ridiculous giggling. As an aside, I just want to say how glad I am to be at Cambridge, where everyone has such sophisticated senses of humour.

Continuing down this 'hilarious' conversational jaunt, our characters were realised, with back-stories more and more elaborate. Several whisky cokes (well-bred specimen that I am) and a dodgy, Mitteleuropa-ish accent later and Hans, Crown Prince of Switzerland, was born. As it transpires, Switzerland doesn't have a monarchy. Nor has it ever. Nevertheless,

I was gawped at, whispered about, and introduced to more people. And no one suspected anything – a chilling indictment of people's varying states of inebriation. The fascination with minor European royalty (or even major national royalty) is something I've never really understood. In any case, the prospect of meeting a prince clearly floats certain boats, because before long a veritable salon had formed around us. People spoke to me and were actually interested in what I had to say. All types "just wanted a word". I was even accosted by a Marxist. I was introduced to some Old Wellingtonians who had been at school with a Habsburg princess, and others wanted a piece of me too. I was in demand. It was dire.

Moral: If you want to be admired and surrounded by people who think that titles and breeding are fundamental prerequisites to a lasting friendship, by all means do as I did. If, however, you're a normal functioning human being and actually want to have fun on a night out, don't. Tennyson pretty much hit the nail on the head: "Kind hearts are more than coronets, and simple faith than Norman blood".

But then, didn't he become a baron?

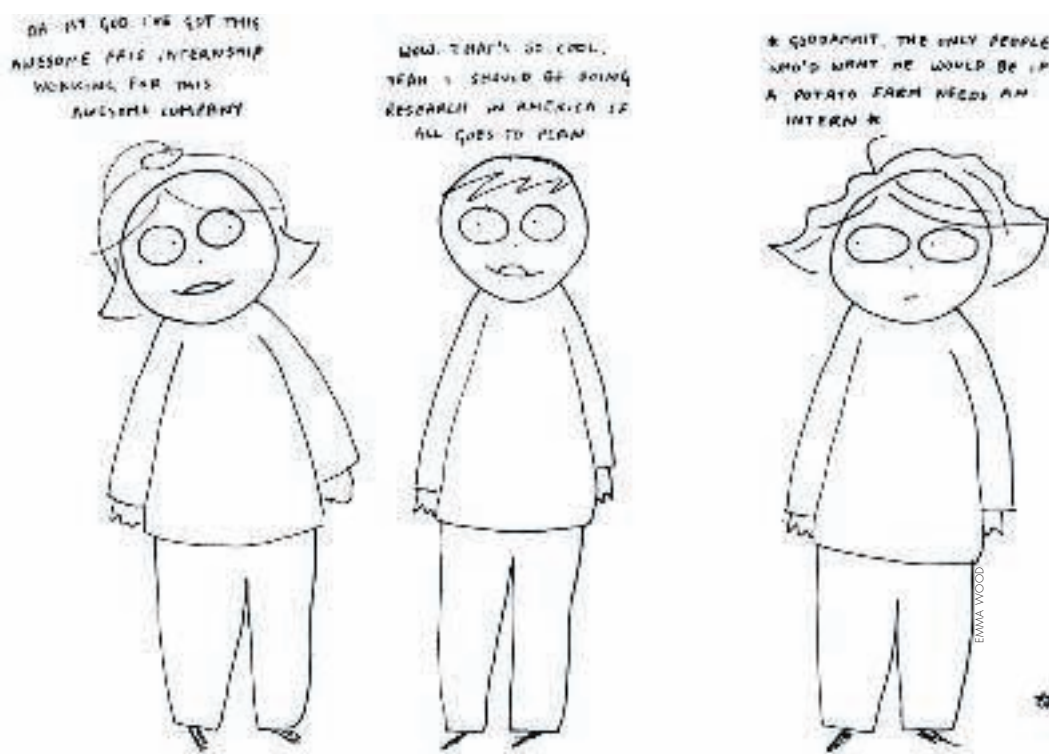


# CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

*Shefali Kharabanda on why sorting out a summer internship isn't the be all and end all*

I don't know why, but for some reason when you get to your second year of uni people start acting like it's your penultimate year. It's so inconsiderate. The word 'internship' crops up too often in conversation. You never know when it's going to rear its ugly, responsible head. For me, it's like marmite: you either hate it or you really hate it. I understand that there are benefits. Maybe you follow someone impeccably dressed around for a week and do more than learn exactly how much soy milk to put into their coffee.

Okay, so maybe my perception of an intern has been somewhat influenced by fictional characters portrayed by Anne Hathaway. I get it, there are benefits. There must be. You get to explore different career options, and later, when you realise doing that was a complete waste of a month, you can kick back and reject with the sweet, sweet taste of making an 'informed decision' in your mouth. Oh, also, you might find out exactly what you want to do, I guess.



And you might befriend a Very Important Successful Person who will provide you in future with employment so you can have a house, a car, and a personalised garden gnome.

But I don't think choosing not to scour out the perfect internship is necessarily irresponsible, or a rejection of future success. We are young. We are so young. Now more than ever is the time to while away the summertime. I don't think we have to, or will, leave this place as confident adults with fully formed opinions about everything we want, and I can understand the desire to minimise the big scary openness of the world outside of inter-collegiate football matches and labelled staircases. And maybe for some people internships are the right way to learn more about themselves and what they want to do. But learning more about yourself, what you value, what you want to protect, and how you are going to do that, does not have to be about structured, planned work experiences. We have time to wander.

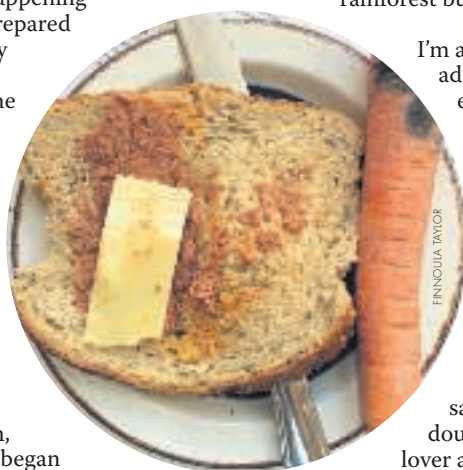
## A VEGGIE MONTH OR A VEGGIE LIFE?

*Finnoula Taylor recounts her experience of meat-free January*

So it's safe to say I've joined the masses entering the world of Vegeuary, Janetarian, or however you want to put it: I've gone veggie for a month. That's full blown, by the way, none of this pescetarian stuff. Why care about such an article, you might ask? Perhaps the same reason I started this escapade in the first place; it's happening everywhere. I prepared myself to smugly declare my vegetarianism on the first of January, only to find that five other friends had already done so before me. At first I was disappointed in my apparent lack of creativity in my chosen New Year's resolution, but eventually I began to see the slow social conformity as a far more interesting phenomenon.

Take a moment to think about the number of vegetarians you knew five years ago, a number you know now. It might be a change in the age or size of a social group, or it might just be the subtle impact of Facebook posts,

tweets, articles on climate change, or videos of chicks crushed to death, all worming their way into your guilt-ridden mind. We're a product of this age of 'Cultural Enlightenment', where we can see the impact of our actions on the planet, and so easily voice our opinions. You can't touch a cup of soy milk without flashes of the Amazon rainforest burning.



I'm ashamed to admit it, but not even these were enough to convince me. Instead, what really pushed me over the vegetarian edge was an unfortunate run-in with a vein-filled corned beef sandwich. It's no doubt I am a meat-lover and always swore I would never turn to the earthy-coloured side. But as I vicariously chewed on the little rubbery vein, I felt my meat-eating days come crashing down, every bit of gristle, every crushed chick, every acre of Amazon rainforest, every guilty McDonald's. I was finished. Suffice it to say, reactions to my new vegetarian mantra were not fully positive. Non-

veggie friends saw me as venturing to the dark-side, one filled with smugness and hypocrisy. My mum's first reaction: "Oh, Finny, why? You're not becoming one of those smelly political vegetarians?" Smelly and political? It felt like my tombstone had already been written and soon enough it became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Maybe it was the tofu or Quorn chicken, but the next time an old friend saw me she remarked on how I smelt like "our school cafeteria's tomato soup".

As for the political side, as much as I tried to resist, I felt myself succumbing to the preaching vegetarian. Even as I write this article I'm researching new, seductive material on depleting fish stocks and deforestation. The change from a meat-heavy diet to a leafy-green one certainly felt like a shock to the system. As someone who takes part in a variety of sports, I was particularly concerned for my energy levels. And for the first few days I did feel hungry, tired and snappy, while dreaming of succulent pieces of pork (though I blame the doubled intake of cheese for that). Not to mention that I was heckled with random bouts of the shits. As weeks progressed, I started to see light patches in my dark, broccoli-filled mind. Energy levels rose. My dire culinary skills were fit only for DepressingMeals.com. But vegetarianism and bad cooks don't go well together, unless you're happy

living off carrots and cheese toasties. Forced to familiarise myself with the infamous 'pulses', I now keep a stash of said quinoa and lentils up my sleeve, ready to hurl into a pot of boiling water with vegetable stock cubes, yelling "pulses for all", at the expense of angry and indignant looks from my host and or guests.

I have reached the end of my month as a vegetarian and I still feel like a bit of a cynic inside, not just because my new 'home smell' is that of garlic and tomato soup, but because I've always questioned the numbers game behind it. Can one person's choice really make a difference? How did my awkward rejection of the family friend's Sunday roast really help the planet? The truth is, no one really knows the individual effect. And there always seems to be more to do. This whole month I've been told that to really help the planet I should go vegan, and after watching the infamous Cowspiracy, my own redun-



dancy as a cheese-eating vegetarian became abundantly clear.

What I do know is that there is an explorative fun behind the change, and a weird sense of solidarity with other veggie-eaters. And like every social movement, it just takes the first few dominoes to fall before the others come down too. If every-

one reading this went veggie for a month, maybe we'd see a difference. Your change might cause others to change. The age-old argument: it's in our 'nature' to eat meat, is understandable. I like the 'sabre-tooth tiger-killing hominin' as much as the next. But in reality, we in Britain are more the 'killing hours in the office' type hominin. From blubber-based diets to the tuber-diets of the Pacific, the 'natural' diet of the human varies and adapts across the world. I can see that I'm becoming my own worst nightmare: a preaching vegetarian. But I'm going to stick with it, and I beseech thee – join me! It feels great.





LAURA DAY

## BREAKING THE RULES

*stepping through the minefield of body image discussions doesn't have to be terrifying*

I, like many other young people before me, have inevitably felt the pressures to look a certain way, fit into a certain dress size, and conform to a specific image of body perfection which, quite frankly, more often than not was bloody impossible to achieve. Yet, as things begin to change in the world of fashion, something is changing in the minds of young people as well. Whenever I log onto Facebook, there are a myriad of images relating to body positivity, articles popping up containing mantras to keep fit for strength, not to be skinny. It's empowering and certainly ticks all the boxes when it comes to getting a confidence kick. But there still are ways that shops, designers, and the media could project a better sense of healthy body image. It's as if it is a never-ending battle against a perceived state of bodily perfection, which is not the reality for most of the population. Both men and women are bombarded on a daily basis,

when they have access to online media etc., with images of how they should look, what they should be wearing, what they should be eating, and what exercise they should be doing. At times it is too confusing to try and figure out which diet is best, or which training regime will garner the right results, or which new-fangled celebrity lifestyle is the one to emulate.

There are so many avenues to explore, that sometimes it is easy to forget that just eating right, and finding exercise

that you enjoy doing, is enough. Although, even the most body positive people in the world cannot deny the creeping in of negative feelings about the way they look, or what size they wear, when they see the so-called 'ideal' body image. For men, this is muscly and toned.

“

FOR WOMEN, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, THIS 'IDEAL' IMAGE IS SIMPLY SKIN AND BONES

Think washboard abs, bulging biceps, and legs of steel. For women, more often than not, this 'ideal' image is simply skin and bones. And who are the worst culprits for projecting this ideation? The answer is straightforward, and right before our eyes: high-street shops.

Many a clothing shop has been struck by the perils of negative social media in recent years, as customers have posted images of the rake-thin plastic clothing models, as well as the apparently 'plus-size' ones, which come in at a size 10. When the average women's dress size in the UK is currently a size 14, this labelling of size 10 as 'plus-size' is not only ironic, but also disgusting. What kind of image does that force upon young shoppers?

For many reasons, this is probably linked to the sudden surge in body positivity companies and social media accounts in recent years. From a clothing brand for women called 'Healthy is the new Skinny', to plus-size models such as Tess Holliday, the rules are beginning to be broken. No longer are the glossy pages of magazines kept only for the top supermodels, but now women and men with real bodies are gracing the pages, showing the world that, while it's alright to be skinny, it's also acceptable to be you – whatever size that may be.

## TESS HOLLIDAY

*Empowering self-love or encouraging obesity?*

*Emily Fishman investigates*

Bold, big, and proud; three words which describe Tess Holliday's presence. Recently there has been a seismic shift in conventional modelling, and Tess's new face is more than just a breath of fresh air into the soulless size 0, stick thin and 6ft tall repressive modelling industry. But Tess has aroused controversy; at size 22, this is a quantum leap for the modelling world, where plus size is anything after a size 8/10.

One of the problems facing Tess is, despite her gorgeous style and edgy tattoos, society has a problem with 'fat'. We associate fat in a purely negative sense; you are lazy, worthless, selfish, and greedy. More importantly the controversy surrounding Tess has been more a campaign against her glorifying an 'unhealthy

lifestyle'. Of course, obesity does come with a range of risks: heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, liver disease, and those suffering from obesity are more likely to suffer from depression. Sure, many other models and celebrities who are not a size 22 engage in activities which are not considered 'healthy'. Drinking, smoking, and stress also come with added risks, yet their lifestyles are rarely questioned and only in extreme cases are bought to attention.

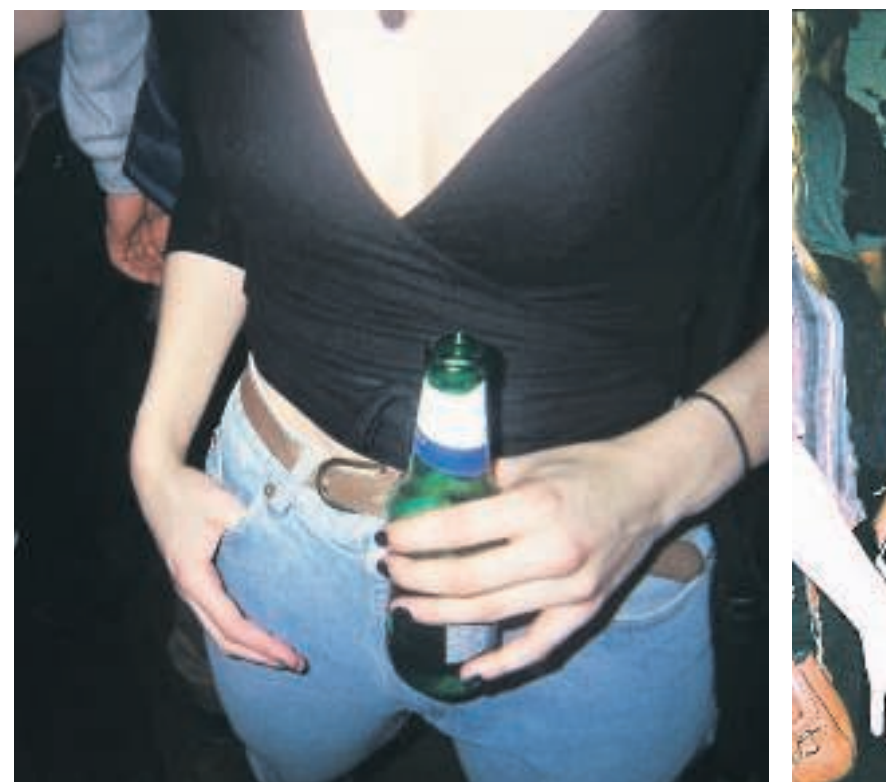
Yet are Tess's critics genuinely concerned for her health? Indeed there are many inherent prejudices which our society has against body image, we consider anything not classed as 'normal' to be abnormal therefore unhealthy. Whilst Tess's size does put her at greater risk of

obesity related illnesses, we should question our definition of what constitutes a healthy body, what even is 'normal', when the preferred body type has been and continues to be in constant flux. But with mounting pressure to look a certain way and be a certain shape, society fails to recognise our achievements, our ambitions, our dreams. Instead, we are classified by our body image; the labelling of 'plus size' perpetuates this attitude. Tess isn't glorifying 'fat' or encouraging obesity – blame the fast food takeouts, global branding, sugary drinks and our inactive lifestyles for the destruction of our health. Tess is simply making a point – a big point.

That before anyone else can love you, you must learn to love and respect yourself.



## PORTLAND FASHION



Models

Edison Rragami  
Charlotte Grace  
Lauren Brown  
Richelle George

Photography

Beth Cloughton



# BANNING LOW-BMI MODELS

...a necessary measure? Asks **Katherine Smith**

The idea of preventing unhealthily underweight models from working in the fashion industry is gaining momentum throughout the most important fashion hubs of the world. Italy demands health certificates from models working at catwalk shows in Milan, and Spain already bars models below a certain BMI from partaking in Madrid fashion shows.

France has recently passed new legislation which imposes heavy fines of up to £55,000 on modelling agencies that employ supposedly malnourished models with very low BMI values. Although the new laws are still yet to define the exact value of BMI under which the penalties will be applied, it is likely to be between 16 and 18.

Despite receiving much criticism in the past, BMI is still widely used as a reliable indicator of human health. It is important, however, to consider the limitations of BMI when making a decision as important as preventing a person from working, especially in fashion, which may be the aspiration of many young people. For example, BMI often falls flat when calculated for a tall person with high muscle

mass and density, incorrectly placing them in the 'overweight' category, when, in fact, they could be in excellent physical condition. BMI is a flawed measure of 'healthiness' and therefore, perhaps a much better approach would be to consider a greater range of health indicators rather than just one which uses average population values.

Furthermore, it seems desperately unfair that in the current state of affairs, models classed as underweight according to BMI face work restrictions, while plus size models do not. Currently this is true even if the plus size model in question happens to fall into the overweight, or even the obese categories. If we are to ban models that have unhealthily low BMI values from working, then surely, by the same logic, we should also be banning models with unhealthily high BMIs, not encouraging them in the name of 'body positivity'.

Models are often scouted when they are very young and still growing, up to the ages of 18 and 19 (the average age females and males, respectively, stop growing). At that age, my own BMI was 17, no matter how much or how little I exercised and regardless

of the food I ate. Despite what was implied by my BMI, I was never unhealthy or malnourished. It therefore seems inappropriate to use BMI to decide whether or not to allow young models to work; especially in a time full of opportunity, when they could be just starting their careers. Surely, the only way to justify this decision would be to impose the same restrictions on overweight models, which is likely to be unpopular, given the demographic of the majority of Western consumers.

Game-changing decisions, such as those recently made in France, do indeed have the potential to start combatting the high levels of anorexia found in and around the fashion industry. It would be nice to see any money taken in the form of fines from large agencies translated into improved healthcare and support for those suffering from body-image related mental illnesses.

However, using BMI as the sole measure to determine whether a model is healthy enough to work in the industry, whether over or underweight, seems to be extremely risky as a strategy.

Alice Chilcott examines changes in attitudes towards body image

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF 'THE PERFECT WOMAN'

Barbie's makeover might seem revolutionary, but there is nothing new about shifts in body image ideals. Throughout history, the image of the 'perfect' woman has been shaped by her role in society. For the Victorians, who believed that physical appetite was linked to sexual desire, a tiny, corsetted waist was a sign of a woman's chastity and self-control. Meanwhile, wide hips and a full bust denoted fertility.

Today, the corset is largely seen as a symbol of patriarchal oppression. But one paradox of the rise of Feminism is that it led to body image trends which are, for the majority of women, harder to achieve than the hourglass model they replaced. A rejection of the 'traditional' feminine roles produced an emphasis on slenderness and muscularity over voluptuousness. Women moved closer to the image of the men whose world they inhabited for the first time. However, this model is becoming more and more extreme, despite the fact that the slim-hipped, long-legged ideal is natural to only around 4 per cent of

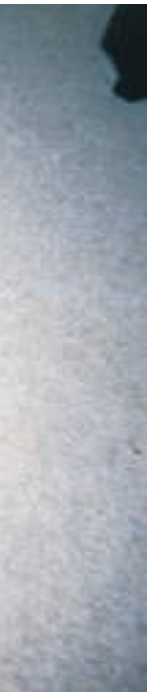
women. 'Normal' Barbie - if 'normal' isn't a slightly dangerous adjective to slap onto a hyper-sexualised toy - has become progressively slimmer over her lifetime.

However, the most major shift in the 20th-century was that the consumer market, for the first time, took control of women's self-image. Western women rarely shaved until a 1915 advertisement in Harper's Bazaar promoted the removal of "objectionable" underarm hair. By the 1970s, the diet was marketed as the yellow-brick road to the woman you've always wanted to be. The invention of airbrushing ensured our continued thralldom by placing the objective tantalisingly and eternally out of reach. Naomi Wolf, in her wonderful book *The Beauty Myth*, sums it up perfectly: "Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that [women] will buy more things if they are kept in the self-hating, ever-failing, hungry and sexually insecure state of being aspiring 'beauties'."

But we might be seeing the begin-

nings of a body image backlash. In the last few years, campaigns like 'This Girl Can' have celebrated all body types, emphasising not only their beauty, but also their strength and endurance. Even as customers criticised Topshop's unrealistically slender mannequins, and Urban Outfitters was slammed by the eating disorder community for selling a t-shirt with the slogan "Eat Less", consumer surveys discovered that women are more likely to spend money when retailers present them with a body ideal which more closely reflects their own. Mattel, the company which makes Barbie, present their new model, 'Average Barbie', as a response to the evolution of American beauty ideals. A cynical translation of this might be that Mattel have realised that there is profit to be made out of making women feel good about themselves.

This is not to say that body image issues are disappearing. But the 21st-century is at last giving us a platform to fight against them, and we ought to seize it with both hands.





*Eleanor Costello gets a glimpse behind the scenes of the much-anticipated Marlowe Society production at the Cambridge Arts Theatre*



# MEASURE FOR MEASURE

**I**n my head, it looks and feels like a really good TV-thriller. People go on and on about it being a 'problem play' – I don't even know what that is. That's a made-up thing."

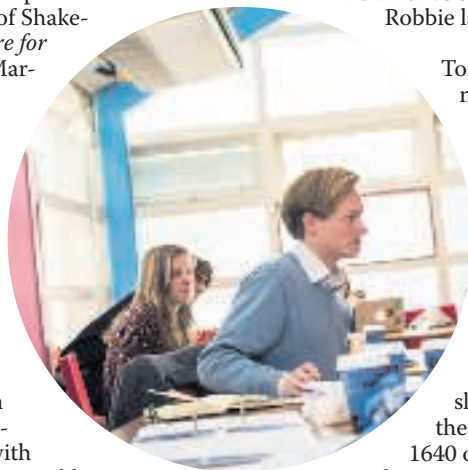
Tom Littler is the professional director of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, The Marlowe Society's annual production at the Cambridge Arts Theatre. We're sat around a table in the penthouse rehearsal space at the theatre – a huge, airy room with lots of windows, littered with chairs and scripts. Robbie

Taylor Hunt, the assistant director, and Mark Milligan, who plays the Duke, are sat with us. Initially both very chatty, Robbie in particular is hard to ignore; he greeted me in the foyer with a loud "Eleanor, at last! I've just been assaulting several young women hoping that they were you!" But as soon as Tom entered the room, Robbie and Mark became much quieter, always watching him out of the corner of their eyes. Tom continues:

"I don't think that Shakespeare is remotely worried about tragedy and comedy. This is a drama, a thriller. I think in contemporary terms it would be a two-part BBC-HBO co-production, and it's kind of moody and side-lit and dark, and really gripping, really exciting". He leans back, munching on his salad contemplatively. "It's a great, great story. I mean if you're telling this story to people who don't know anything about the play you say – 'there's a dramatic pause. I know that what is about to follow is going to be good'. Tom leans forward. "There's a Duke who gives up his power," he says slowly, in a low voice. "He hands it over to this really dangerous man, deliberately, knowing he's really dangerous and kind of unhinged. And then having said that he is going away to Poland, he stays. And he watches, in disguise. And the first thing that happens is that this nice, middle-class, Waitrose-shopping man

gets slung in prison for impregnating his fiancée. And this man's sister is a nun. And she straight away goes to the dangerous ruler, and the dangerous ruler offers her a deal." I gaze at Tom, spellbound. "It's a movie pitch!" he concludes.

"I think I've seen that film!" Robbie laughs.



Tom nods. "He's so modern, Shakespeare, he's so of our time. In Shakespeare's own time they understood it, but then Puritans got hold, and obviously it is the Puritans who get a slam-dunking in the play. So from 1640 onwards it wasn't shown, it was out of the rep for nearly 300 years. Then when it was finally shown on stage again it had to be rewritten and they put songs in it, because they just couldn't deal with it. It seems to me to be completely of our time, with our obsession with the self and our worries about how to behave."

It's fascinating to hear Tom speak about the play, because I can hear that his language and his ideas have completely seeped into Mark and Robbie's perceptions of the play. Mark is a very experienced actor, and I've seen him in several student productions in Cambridge, shifting each time almost beyond recognition as he inhabits each character. In the flesh, he's very intense, as some actors are: quietly watchful, very focused, pulsing with energy. He was the lead in The Marlowe Society's *Henry V* last year at the Arts Theatre, and he talks about working in the space. "Realising the bigger scale is really exciting. At one point I looked up and suddenly went 'Oh, there are people above as well!' It's a very different feeling and very exciting. The space feels really epic, and you need that authority. Working with Tom as a professional director working in industry is also so great because it's such a different process."

Robbie is similarly enthusiastic about the theatre. "The stage is massive, and that's an important factor. You have

to command that huge auditorium. But just being in the Arts Theatre is amazing, because this is a professional production with a professional team. Simon Kenny, who is our designer, is brilliant; he can usually be found at The National or The Globe. And Tom knows his Shakespeare really well, so he has brought an element of brilliance to the production. Well, I'm saying this with him in the room," Robbie grins sheepishly, as he looks at Tom. I ask Tom how he cast the actors. "We were doing a fair bit of converting of the characters' genders, which meant that it was quite open. We were prepared to be persuaded by people coming in, and surprised by people, so there were quite a lot of characters that we had both men and women auditioning for." Tom stabs his salad nonchalantly with a fork. I ask him how comfortable he feels with gender-swapping parts and playing with Shakespeare's script. "There's a big push for female roles at the moment and it's really exciting. It's easier with Shakespeare than some other playwrights because you have a certain flexibility; we can pick a world in which it makes perfect sense for Escalus, as an authority figure, to become a woman." Tom clarifies with relish that this production has six male actors and seven female actors.

Tom is fiercely opinionated on adapting Shakespeare for a modern audience: "Occasionally I've swapped out a word I don't think anybody understands for a word that I think people do understand. I always keep it within the vocabulary he uses within his plays. I've done that because I think if we, sitting in this room analysing, can't understand it and find a way of using it that makes sense to us, then it's perverse to keep it. That's a debate in Shakespeare performance at the moment: Greg Doran says that you can cut the play, but never change a word. Nick Hytner says: "What's the point of saying it if people can't understand it? I don't see the point of doing incomprehensible work for the sake of a playwright – who [sic] I revere, love and who has changed my life – but who has been dead for 400 years. I think he'd be okay with me changing it." I move the focus back to *Measure for Measure* itself, asking what they think the message is at the heart of the play. Tom looks at Mark, who hesitates. "Go on, I'm curious to see what you say," Tom says. Mark

frowns, deep in concentration.

"Mercy," Mark eventually says, softly. "Mercy, mercy, mercy." There is a long pause, where I begin to wonder if that's all that he's going to say. Then he goes on: "He's the protagonist, the hero; he saves the day, but the way that he achieves it is really questionable. That's the great thing about the play; there's so much malleability and flexibility, and it raises a lot of moral and ethical questions about the Duke and his conduct. He's realising that if you are going to be a leader or a politician, it's about having this balance of mercy."

Tom sits thoughtfully, mulling over this. We all look at him expectantly. He makes us wait for a few seconds before he answers. "I'm uncomfortable with the idea of a message from Shakespeare," he says. "I don't know if he thinks in those terms. He problematises things, complicates things, throws up questions, takes stuff that you think you are really comfortable with and throws it around, disrupts the pattern of your thinking – in exactly the areas Mark has highlighted. I think the repression thing is really interesting. Somewhere in the middle between being repressed and doing whatever you want to do is a middle path, where you are healthy but also you're not hurting people. Because Angelo swings from someone who is completely repressed to someone whose 'id', to put it in Freudian terms, takes over, which makes him a very dangerous person. Shakespeare is exploring what's healthy but also considerate."

"One of the other things he asks is how you balance, whether it's in government or your life, the competing demands of what is just and what is fair, what is merciful. It's about the New Testament world of forgiving wrongs; when people wrong you, how do you respond to that? I think Shakespeare is really interested in that, and I don't think he gives a straightforward answer. I don't

think that there is a straightforward answer. We begin in a place that is a city falling apart, and it's because a ruler, the Duke, sees everyone else's point of view too much and consequently never enforces justice of any kind. And then you switch to a ruler who enforces justice at the cost of everything else, and the city's a mess in a different way, and still it doesn't actually make the city any better. And then you have a woman, Isabella, who has every reason to, with full justice, punish Angelo – but she doesn't. She extends an act of mercy, even though the 'just' thing to do would be to punish him. We see justice and mercy put into conflict again and again, when the 'just' thing and the 'merciful' thing are not necessarily the same."

Robbie agrees enthusiastically. "You definitely walk out with lots of questions, thinking 'what would I have done if I had to deal with that?'" I ask Robbie about his favourite moment of the play. "I'm quite jealous of all the characters who get to romp around being prostitutes and brothel owners. In our version we have a female pimp and male prostitutes, so we're not being super gendered. It's just a free-for-all of sexual deviants. A particular favourite moment involves Pompey, who is a pimp played by Aoife Kennan. She is arrested, and she manages to manipulate the executioner so that they're best friends and drinking buddies – and she does a little seducing with a pencil," Robbie laughs wickedly.



"Gosh, don't give that away!" Tom scolds. "Maybe it's with a pen, or with a hole-punch," Robbie is quick to add. I laugh along with him. When I turn around Tom is giving me a speculative look. "So," he says, "Did you get what you came here for?"

*Measure for Measure* is on at the Cambridge Arts Theatre at 7:45 pm, Wednesday 10th - Saturday 13th February, and at 2:30 pm on Thursday 11th and Saturday 13th February.



**T**he *White Devil* sits as one of Jacobean theatre's less well-known pieces. Written by John Webster in 1612, it is often eclipsed by its flashier cousin, *The Duchess of Malfi*, other bombastic revenge tragedies like *'Tis Pity She's A Whore* (last staged at the ADC in Lent 2015), or Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, which is so gruesome that audience members regularly faint during performances. It certainly does not lack the drama of its better-known alternatives, centred on the violent consequences of a dangerous affair between the Duke Brachiano (Tom Chamberlain) and Vittoria Corombona (Beth Dubow), and the perils of all-encompassing ambition. They are circled by a litany of malcontents and murders, such as Vittoria's brother, the ultra-ambitious Flamineo (Ryan Monk), the corrupt Cardinal Monticelso (Joe Spence), the vengeful Francisco (Adam Mirsky), and the reviled Lodovico (Seth Kruger). The body count is high, and the cast is bumped off in all manner of imaginative ways. Its latest appearance on the ADC stage as week four's main show sees it reset from Renaissance Italy to contemporary Russia, emphasising the play's exploration of politics, religion, morality, and murder.

This production seems timely. The shadowy world of post-Soviet Union Russia sees the truth sometimes become stranger than fiction. Only a few weeks ago an inquest into the almost unbelievable assassination of Alexander Litvinenko saw the finger of blame pointed in the direction of not only the Kremlin but Vladimir Putin himself. The former Federal Security

Service agent's murder, poisoned with polonium-210, ingested in a cup of tea in the Piccadilly branch of Itsu, sounds too outlandish for even the most cliché spy film. Other high-profile murders include the opposition journalists Paul Klebnikov in 2004 and Anna Politkovskaya in 2006, and opposition politicians Sergei Yushenkov in 2003 and Boris Nemtsov in 2015. I spoke to the Director, Frank Martin, about how Putin's Russia, especially the violent years of his early premiership a decade ago, provide a new lens to view a revenge tragedy.

The parallel, he says, is "startlingly appropriate", as it emphasises the play's central theme of corruption: in the state, in the church, and especially in the interrelationship between the two. "Nowhere else in the modern world", Martin says, "has a political culture so murderous", especially somewhere with such significance on the international stage. I'm usually a sceptic of transferring the setting of plays — most of the time 'concept productions' underwhelm and don't make sense — but this time I'm convinced. Nowhere else in the world could accurately parallel the openly murderous political sphere of sixteenth-century Italy than Putin's Russia.

In the original text, state corruption is one and the same as that of the church. Cardinal Monticelso embod-

MIMI TREVELYAN-DAVIS

## THE WHITE DEVIL

*speaks with the cast and crew of the upcoming ADC mainshow*

ies one of the most ubiquitous of Jacobean theatrical tropes: the corrupt Catholic 'charity'. Vittoria proclaims at one point: "thou art seldom found in scarlet". He is the mouthpiece of some of the most violent misogyny of the play, as master of a Kangaroo Court, which accuses a female character of, amongst other things, being "worse than dead bodies". The Russian Orthodox Church replaces the early modern Roman Catholic Church, in an interesting thematic parallel that is seeped in conservatism as well as corruption. Martin talks about a strange tale involving the Patriarch Kirill (a position similar to the Pope), who

was photographed wearing a £1,900 gold Breguet watch, which was then unsuccessfully photoshopped out, the reflection revealing the truth of the image. As a church heavily involved with Putin's regime, and especially in Russia's socially conservative 'morality laws', such as those which ban 'homosexual propaganda', the religion depicted in this production of *The White Devil* will be just as powerful and destructive as its original Renaissance incarnation.

I spoke to Beth Dubow who, in playing the complex and ambitious Vittoria, grapples with the construction of femininity and feminine power in a world defined by violent patriarchal misogyny. In some productions, Vittoria is a victim of her circumstance, bartered for power by her brother, Flamineo, who uses his sister for her sexual value. In this production, Vittoria cuts a more complicated figure. Dubow describes Vittoria as a 'Desdemona gone wrong', one of the very few obliquely sexual female characters who comes out of drama in the seventeenth century — even Lady Macbeth, arguably the most iconic female character of them all, is not driven by sexuality as much as Vittoria. She spoke of how Vittoria is "wrestling for agency in a society which is based around the subjection and objectification of women, which defines women by their sexual value, but also shames and criminalises the

practice of female sexuality". Femininity is her greatest weapon and her greatest weakness, weaponised for her own advancement, but also the cause of her downfall. Vittoria, Dubow suggests, embodies an interesting debate in modern feminism about the nature of women's sexuality, and how it can be wielded. The audience should expect to see a nuanced and dramatic portrayal of female sexuality, with the threat and fear that it causes driving much of the action of the play.

Staging a revenge tragedy always has its difficulties. The eventual bloodbath can be comedic — in a bad way. The finale of *The White Devil* is not like that of *King Lear* or *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, when the ensuing brutality is sprayed out across the stage at the same time, but instead spread entirely across the performance (expect your first murder early on). When T.S. Eliot said that Webster saw "the skull beneath the skin", he was referencing the nihilistic worldview that the play depicts — the good suffer and the wicked prosper, and there isn't much hope for the future. This nihilism makes the play darkly entertaining — from the rehearsal I saw, the murder and intrigue will be packaged with a darkly comedic edge.

Strong performances and an interesting reinterpretation means that *The White Devil* is set to be both a thought-provoking and hugely enjoyable production that is definitely worth watching.

*White Devil will be on at the ADC at 7:45pm from Tuesday 9th - Saturday 13th February 2015.*



## TEN PLAGUES



Varsity talks to director **Yasmin Freeman** about the upcoming song cycle

### What makes *Ten Plagues* unusual as a production?

'Plague' is a word that immediately conjures images of the large-scale. *Ten Plagues* shows us the experience of such an epidemic entirely through the interiority of one man.

We hear about death and devastation in the music, but from a single tightly constrained perspective that demands total attention from the audience — helped by the song cycle form itself.

The piece is less about the plague and more about this man and his survival. To me, that's also a compelling take on the Great Plague of London in particular, which is generally discussed in terms of its body count and gory details rather than its human impact.

### What is a song cycle?

The song cycle form is another reason I think this is an unusual production, particularly in Cambridge! Out of the huge amount of theatre that's put on every term, song cycles are very rarely staged — most people don't know what they are, and before I read *Ten Plagues* I'd never heard of the term. A song cycle is a group of songs designed to be performed together in sequence, unified by a theme or plot. Another way to describe it might be as a novella in song form. Mark Ravenhill dubs it "an intense dramatic journey for single voice and piano".

Working with such an unfamiliar form has been very challenging, especially as a first-time director, but also exciting. There are a lot of merits to it — it opens up a lot of scope for a performer.

### What is your favourite line of the play?

"And pulling up your shirt  
Showed me  
The token  
Hard and round  
A silver penny  
Of contagion"

### What do you hope that the audience will take away?

I'd like to be able to convey that the brutality of survival comes not from any kind of action, but rather the lack of it: the turning inwards the act requires, and the tedium and selfishness that arises from it. One of the songs, 'The Hermit', addresses the man's withdrawal into highest isolation. "I wear my finest clothes/Alone I feast and fast/Alone, But how like death/This solitude." He understands it's a Pyrrhic victory, but he's alive.

That's all that matters by that point.

*Mark Ravenhill is a name that keeps coming up in the theatre scene in Cambridge. What do you think is so attractive about his writing?*

I've noticed the popularity of staging Ravenhill at other universities as well. I think his work is very appealing to young people. He doesn't shy away from dark or 'controversial' themes and he always writes with them well. He's also got an especially good sense of humour, always sharp, and sometimes acid — even in *Ten Plagues*. That's an attractive combination for young adults interested in theatre to cut their teeth on.

*Ten Plagues will be performed from Thursday 11th Feb – Saturday 13th Feb 2016 at 8pm.*





JAN VAN KESSEL/FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

## EXHIBITION

## Crawling with Life

Fitzwilliam Museum, 02/02/16

★★★★★

As you walk in, go through the Impressionist room, then down the Renaissance corridor, past the Old Dutch masters and you're there. Tucked away in the Shiba room is the latest Fitzwilliam Museum exhibition on botanical art, a small space that possibly befits the generally dismissive view of this particular genre. The works are rather misleading in their apparent banality and unassuming nature - no pun intended - compared to the oil canvases of the Jan Brueghel father and son duo but the story the exhibits tell, collectively, is one of adventure.

Disclaimer: there are very few introductory words as you step into the *Crawling with Life* exhibition, and quite disappointingly the curators have not made an overarching link between the works that would reveal some secret or other of the artistic genius. I would say that the exhibition taps into a 17th-century European mania for collecting, travelling and dissecting (see also: *The Anatomy Lesson* by Rembrandt). Most paintings and etchings on display were done by North-European artists, which goes

to show the importance of colonialism for the development of the botanical illustration genre, as well as the growing trade links between continents as some of the etchings were done after the importation of exotic flowers from distant countries began.

Prized possessions, these works feature minute detailing and vibrant pigments. Jan van Huysum's busy vase compositions are just what you'd expect to find in Dutch art of the time: a plant encyclopaedia's worth of different flowers, glistening water droplets and insects galore, most of them outlined or even entirely painted with a single-haired brush. Refreshingly organic, the works in *Crawling with Life* lack the suffocating veneer of their more valuable contemporaries, having usually been painted on vellum or a fibrose type of paper with watercolour, befitting their subject matter and showing signs of their venerable age in the form of crumples and smudges where the artist's hand rested in the process.

Much like a #nature Instagram post, the works have a varying degree of verisimilitude; Thomas Robins the Younger stands out due to his attempt at a faded landscape in the background of a frangipani flower being circled by a butterfly while Wenceslaus Hollar's prints are decidedly scientific and two-dimensional. Walking around, you get the sense that the painters are trying to be artistically virtuous as well as true to a subject matter that can often be imperfect due to its natural creator. An example of this is

the carnivorous plants which were of particular interest to botanical illustrators for obvious reasons. Georg Dionysius Ehret's "textbook perfect" drawings focus on these beautifully disguised traps whose apparent beauty gives no clue of their trickery. It really is like an allegorical representation of the century's obsession with fatal attraction or tragic death, featuring in many novels or works of art of the 1700s and 1800s and of pretty much every century ever since, meaning that the botanical illustrations are still very relevant today.

If history, love and death haven't so far tickled your fancy, feminism must. The genre was largely seen as the only acceptable mainstream form of art with which women could engage liberally, which is why almost half of the exhibits were created by women. Viewpoints can differ; some see this as an oppression of the female artist, bound to slave over microscopic detail that no-one would notice while others regard the attention to detail and graceful execution by a woman's hand as superior to their male equivalent - just one close inspection of Barbara Dietzsch's textural tour de force is enough to prove that.

Although probably not the highlight of the Fitzwilliam Museum's calendar, *Crawling with Life* is nonetheless a great introduction to a popular genre of the 17th century and the way it so artistically discloses nature's secrets. Did I forget to mention the huge taxidermic butterfly and beetle?

Ana Persinaru

## OPERA

## Idomeneo

Trinity College Chapel, 30/01/16

★★★★★

For one night only, Trinity College Chapel was filled with Italian voices for the performance of Mozart's *Idomeneo*. Performed by the Lambe Company, the opera is set in Greece and has the 'full Monty' of Gods, guts, love and monsters. I didn't understand a word or really follow the plot, but I didn't need to and wouldn't have wanted to. I just sat back and listened, and was transported to a sort of daydream where people were singing the most beautiful melodies with the most emotionally charged and realistic fluency. Knowing the precise details of the storyline was unimportant compared to just soaking in the atmosphere of the chapel. It was amazing to see just how much the performers cared about what they were doing.

The venue made the whole night and the chapel was packed, but this did not take away from the performance and

the quality of singing and acting. The cast made the most of the space by striding frequently down the centre aisle. It almost seemed as if the performers weren't even aware there was an audience. The ensemble of violins, violas, cello and harpsichord was just as intrinsic to the magnificence of the opera as the actors, and I found the dynamics they used, which mirrored the acting, quite astonishing. It was like a conversation between voice and instrument, seamlessly integrated. Not to mention, who doesn't love a good timpani roll for a bit of drama?

The cast was outstanding, to say the least. I honestly can't pinpoint a single star, as they were all so confident and, most of all, passionate about what they were singing. I'm undoubtedly new to the world of opera, but I was completely shocked at what power can be put into words, beyond a poetry recital or so-called 'moving songs' by the likes of Adele; this was in a different league altogether. It was every man for himself, however, with nowhere to hide in the lengthy solos. The individual performers were tasked with taking the attention of the whole chapel, and they succeeded purely by internalising their roles fully; they were lovers, fathers or

enemies instead of people putting on a show. The subtle exchanges, glances and emotions in their faces spoke volumes, and although I didn't understand a single word of the Italian, the performances did justice to the idea that eyes are the windows to the soul; the emotional content of what they were saying was clear.

Although individually there were extraordinary voices, when they came together it was even better. The chorus deserves a special mention; dressed in white and appearing to glow, each person put in so much effort and passion, and yet they functioned in complete synchrony, moving and working with each other. I was amazed that so many strong voices could go together in harmony and essentially sound as one, despite individually standing out. The highlights, in my opinion, were the momentary silences between acts, or the pauses of the singers where there was not a sound to be heard; despite the number of people everyone was holding their breath which just reflects how enchanted everyone was.

A much better way to spend a Saturday night than watching *The Voice* at home!

Meggie Fairclough



## FILM

## Youth

dir. Paolo Sorrentino, 118 mins

★★★★★

A star-studded cast, a naked Miss Universe and the Queen: walking into the cinema, I struggled to dissuade myself from lamenting Paolo Sorrentino's descent into what the film's protagonist calls "the most obscene job in the world" - that of a pop artist. However, despite the triteness of its themes, *Youth* manages to rise above its shortcomings and become a deeply human exploration of ageing and the importance of the choices we make in fixing a past our memory will revise and shaping a future our decisions will amend.

*Youth* follows the summer vacation of Fred Ballinger, a retired composer, and his friend Mick Boyle, a film director (played by Michael Caine and Harvey Keitel respectively). Fred Ballinger is asked to conduct his 'Simple Songs' for the Queen and Prince Philip on the occasion of the latter's birthday. His decision and its impact on his relationships with his family forms much of the core of the film and leads Fred to re-evaluate his attitude towards his work and his life as a parent and husband.

By his own admission, Fred Ballinger understands music better than emotions, and it is precisely this apparent apathy that makes his relationships with his wife, daughter and friend more moving. It enables *Youth's* exploration of ageing to go beyond treating old people as sympathetic objects of study but as competent agents capable of making their own choices, even when those choices are sometimes harsh or mistaken. Young and old are always interacting and contrasted, and the film's focus on the human body is particularly effective in this respect. Beautiful and ugly, naked and clothed - in all its splendorous and sometimes off-putting reality, the human body features heavily in *Youth*, uniting the characters in their eventual realisation that, where words fail, physical contact can often be a more appropriate means of communication.

Love betrayed, friendships cut short, old age, familial relationships and films within a film are all themes that have been extensively treated in recent filmmaking (and even in Sorrentino's own films) but in *Youth*, they are treated with an appropriate light-heartedness, so that they never become too obvious or intrusive - except perhaps at the appearance of Miss Universe, which gives the impression that its main purpose was to titillate the trailer viewers into watching the film, and subsequently to redeem *Youth's* seriousness by having her





produce a witty riposte to one of the holidaymakers' insults. Sorrentino's wry and surreal humour is served in large quantities, and although it might have lost some of the elegant intellectuality of his earlier films, it is still very effective and keeps audiences amused throughout.

## “A DEEPLY HUMAN EXPLORATION OF AGEING

A comparison with *La Grande Bellezza*, arguably Sorrentino's greatest work so far, is not out of order here and might indicate why, in spite of all its good qualities, the film falls short of greatness. Compared to *La Grande Bellezza*, *Youth* is a very moderate film. The flamboyant blazers and confident pocket squares of Jep Gambardella have been replaced by the grey woollen suits and the textured ties of a man who, in contrast with Gambardella, feels and dresses his age. Sorrentino's great achievement in *La Grande Bellezza* was the creation of the unique character of the unapologetically hedonistic intellectual whose sharp wit, self-indulgent taste and elegance made him an extraordinary individual facing extraordinary

problems. This extraordinariness allowed Sorrentino to create an extravagant film filled with riddles and allusions. Fred Ballinger, despite having been a great artist, is just an ordinary man facing the problems of ordinary men. He inspires respect but not wonder. As a result, Sorrentino's cold, cinematic photography, with its languid long shots and mesmerising lighting, used in *Youth* as in *La Grande Bellezza*, sometimes feel as if they are being wasted on characters who, quite frankly, seem to be too banal and mundane for them. Sorrentino has often been accused of valuing style over substance, and it seems that, whether this accusation (or compliment) is fair or not, compared to *La Grande Bellezza*, *Youth* has a little less of both.

At the end of his vacation, Fred Ballinger returns to London with promises broken, commitments reconsidered and loved ones betrayed and lost. What is left to the audience is the inexplicable sense of nostalgic optimism that so often accompanies the ending of Sorrentino's best films, and an end-credit sequence that fixes viewers in their seats until the music has stopped and the screen has turned completely black. Sorrentino's latest work is no masterpiece but, thanks to his masterful direction, beautiful photography and potent humour, it certainly deserves our attention.

Georgios Topaloglou

## ALBUM

### Sia - *This Is Acting*

released 29/1, RCA

★★★★★

I was disappointed. Oddly, I think that was the point. At first blush, the concept behind Sia's latest release seems gimmicky – an exercise in the singer playing at not being Sia. At worst, it comes off as an attempt to capitalise on songs others had rejected, releasing them with her original vocals and packaging the offcuts as a studio album.

Such criticisms, of course, risk taking the enterprise too seriously. With her seventh studio album, the first released since 2014's *1000 Forms of Fear* brought her the widespread renown that had thus far eluded her, the now-ubiquitous Australian takes evident pleasure upending her reputation as a balladeer and singer of pick-me-up anthems. 'Reaper,' a perhaps unexpected collaboration with Kanye, finds her drawling the slightly affected patois employed to great effect on 'Chandelier' over a softly chugging groove; 'Sweet Design' finds her rapping about her junk, of all things. It's brief and messy; delightfully so.

Even those tracks that play to type upend her songwriting formula. 'Unstoppable,' which recycles 'Titanium' and this album's 'Bird Set Free,' is clichéd karaoke until you untangle the laughably bad lyrics like "I'm a Porsche with no brakes" and "I don't need batteries to play" from among the raspy vocal acrobatics. 'Footprints,' a lyrical reference to the hackneyed Biblical poem, is a platitudinous middle-of-the-road religious song Beyoncé was never going to release, but is mischievously undone by 'Sweet Design,' which follows (also written for Beyoncé) with its lyrics: "Bump, bump, I'mma rub it up on you / My peach, juicy soft and so delicious". We're a long way from 'Big Girls Cry'.

All but one of these tracks was written for other artists, including Adele, Rihanna and Shakira. The resulting lack of coherence is not necessarily a problem on a pop album: half of the fun is imagining what the intended artists would have done. The problem comes once you ask why some of them were rejected.

Musical ideas are shamelessly recycled, as when the caterwauling on 'Bird Set Free,' the album's opener, picks up exactly where 'Dressed in Black,' the closer on *1000 Forms of Fear*, left off. Some of the production is dated: the two key changes in 'Broken Glass' don't channel Beyoncé's 'Love On Top' so much as Westlife at their most turgid; 'House on Fire' is a potentially powerful chronicle of an abusive relationship sung flatly over nondescript perkiness. There was no need for Shakira to release the chaotic 'Move Your Body' when the "feel my rhythm in your system" vibe was far better articulated on 'Hips Don't Lie' ten years ago.

Those songs that echo her classic output also pale in comparison. Gone are dark, intelligent metaphorical flushes ("you're twisted up like a slipknot / tied by a juicehead who just took his t-shot, and I know / there's a hungry dog tugging at your frayed ends"). Instead, we have awkward similes ("We fall down like dogs playing dead / Well our love's not worth playing chicken with") verging on the bizarre. It leaves you wondering what the album's irony was intended to achieve.

And then the musical chameleon drops all pretence when 'Space Between' reveals the chanteuse of moving ballads like 'Lullaby' that won over her early fans. A natural showcase for her rough, soulful vocals and near-unparalleled ability to write and perform songs that find their home in montages during



the season finales of American TV series, the track is her most emotionally direct, the end of the affair she began in 'Fire Meets Gasoline' ("We're too tired, we let the embers cool"). It's a powerful reminder of her uncanny knack for penning piercing metaphors, undoing the rest of the album's mischief.

Frustratingly, it also suggests the seeds of a much sharper musical project. Here's hoping that's where she's heading.

Tom Freeman

## ALBUM

### Bloc Party - *Hymns*

released 29/1, Infectious

★★★★★

In 2005, Bloc Party burst on to the UK's burgeoning indie scene with the excellent *Silent Alarm*. Its thrilling combination of jagged Wire-esque guitars and barbed lyrics briefly made stars of the band and its acerbic singer Kele Okereke. More than ten years later, following a turbulent hiatus that saw half of the band's original members depart, Bloc Party are back with a new album, a new rhythm section and a new sound.

Inspired by a Hanif Kureishi talk Okereke saw in London, *Hymns* is awash with religious imagery. In particular, the evangelical overtones present on 'Only He Can Heal Me' make for a stark change from the band's seedy depictions of apathetic East London. Sonically, the band has evolved further away from the post-punk of their debut. 'Into the Earth' features the telling line "Rock and roll has got so old / Just give me neo-soul". This is largely what the album delivers and while it is tempting to applaud original members Okereke and guitarist Russell Lissack for trying something different, it cannot be sensibly argued that Bloc Party 2.0 represents an improvement on the ancien régime.

The album opens with lead single 'The Love Within' and its infuriatingly bouncy synth riff, which somehow manages to be simultaneously overblown and monotonous. Fortunately, it does not set the tone for what follows it. The third track 'So Real,' with plaintive lines like "What am I supposed to do / When the only good thing about me was you", would have slotted in nicely on *Silent Alarm*. 'My True Name' is also a highlight; built around a spiky riff, the song features some of Okereke's strongest ever vocals.

However, 'The Love Within' aside, the problem with the rest of the album is not that it is awful. On the contrary, it is pleasant enough without ever being truly arresting. Regrettably, too much of *Hymns* feels laboured, and this is in no small part due to the fact that Lissack's guitar playing has been effectively neutered. Where it was once the antagonistic driving force, it is now a mere passenger. Consequently, this allows perfectly good songs like 'Fortress' and 'Virtue' to be weighed down by either their subject matter or Okereke's own lofty expectations.

Meanwhile, new bassist Justin Harris's contributions are largely unremarkable, but former drummer Matt Tong's absence is sorely felt. Without him the band feels blunt and, subsequently, at times *Hymns* sorely lacks momentum. Ultimately, it's a shame that this album consists of many promising songs that plod their way towards predictable conclusions rather than igniting in a ball of frenetic energy.

Bloc Party's biggest strength was that previous hits like 'Banquet' and 'Hunting For Witches' managed to impart the wisdom of a 21st-century pessimist within the confines of taut indie rock songs that never overstayed their welcome. This is not a strength that Okereke seems willing to play to, as *Hymns* confirms the suspicion that he never was a gifted lyricist. The album features some particularly jarring instances of clumsy wordplay such as "the fungi is helping this fun guy deliver" that do not mesh with the sombre atmosphere Bloc Party often tries to create.

While the album, with its religious themes and pleasant verses, makes for a decent Sunday morning playlist, I can't shake the feeling that this is a missed opportunity. *Hymns* is, at best, a tentative reinvention.

On balance, this album is a reasonable addition to Bloc Party's catalogue, but I doubt it will be lovingly recalled in ten years, and certainly not in the way *Silent Alarm* has been. Okereke himself earnestly remarks on 'Exes' that "these words will fall short but I must try" and this sums *Hymns* up perfectly. It is a good effort that ultimately falls short.

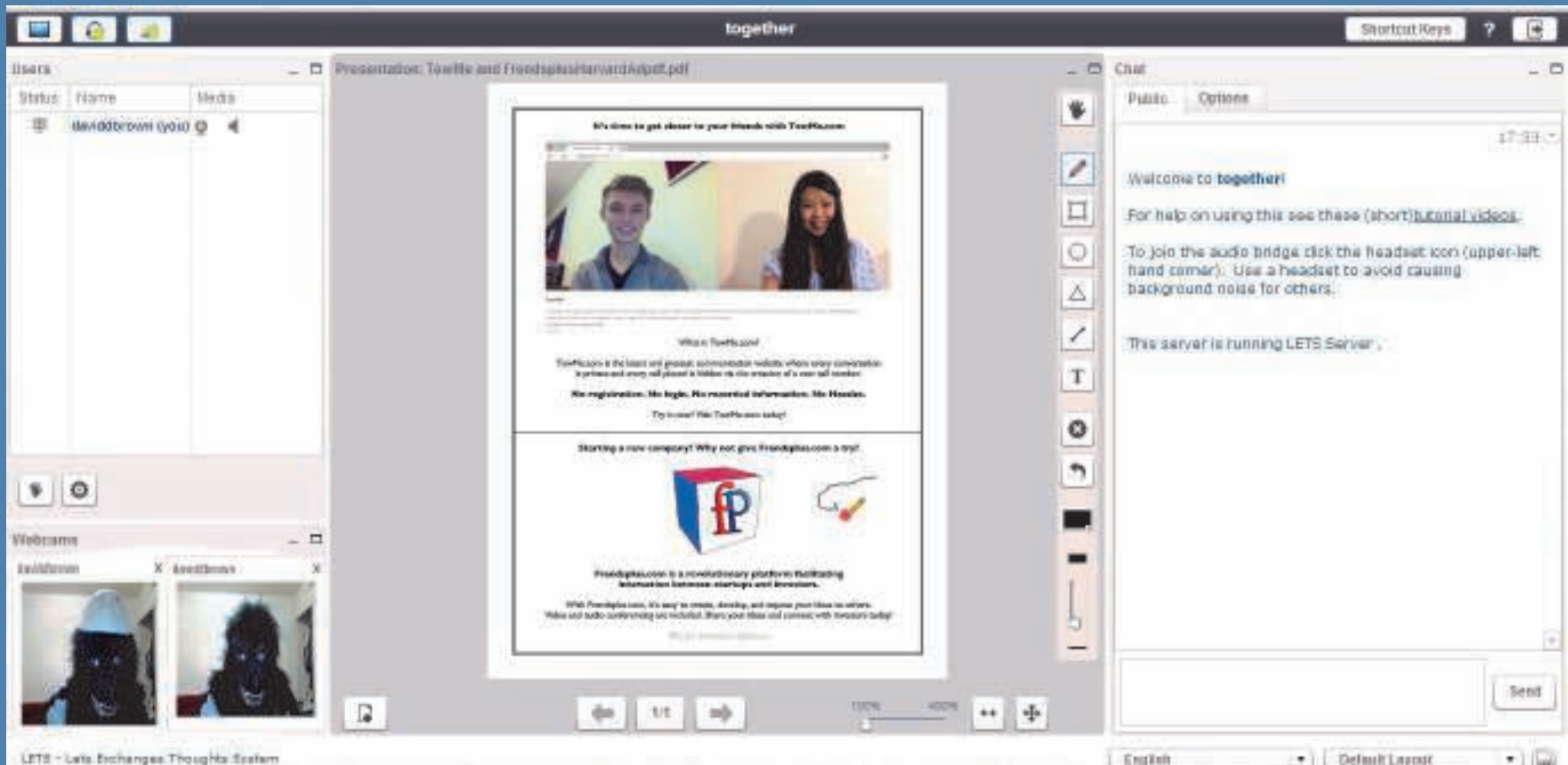
Alex Mistlin



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# Youth: the commodity of football

Akuan Liu analyses football's preoccupation with finding the stars of tomorrow, and asks whether this is healthy for all involved

Football is a game played by the comparatively young. Past the age of 30 players start thinking about retirement, and rarely will you see a player at the top level hit 35. The majority of top players have played competitively from a young age, so it makes sense that clubs are always on the lookout for youthful talent. Young players are often evaluated not only in terms of their on-pitch performances, but also for the promise that they exhibit. They have 'potential' – that mysterious and little-understood quality.

The tale of hyped-up young players who have failed is a common story. Take Freddy Adu for an example. After being first picked in the 2004 MLS SuperDraft by DC United at the age of 14 and appearing for the US national team at the age of 16, it all went downhill. Stints at Real Salt Lake, Benfica, and AS Monaco amongst many others ultimately ended in failure, eventually leading the player once dubbed 'the next Pele' to doing side jobs such as hosting club nights and selling vacuum cleaners. Is it possible that Adu's failure was in part due to the impossibly high expectations set upon him from a young age?

Nowadays, English clubs are investing a lot of money on relatively inexperienced young players. Raheem Sterling moved for a record fee of £49 million from Liverpool to Manchester City last summer, at the age of 20. For someone who proved he was inconsistent, with his string of poor

performances at the tail end of the 2014/15 season, the figure is mind-boggling. City might have recouped some of their investment with the good performances Sterling has put in this season, but they took a massive risk at the time. For half the price, Bayern Munich signed 25-year-old Douglas Costa, who has since shown himself to be consistently one of the best players on the team.

Even transfer rumours have become ridiculous. Last August, Everton rejected a £30 million bid from Chelsea for their 21-year-old centre back John Stones, who has since been subject to criticism for his poor form. In the same window, Spurs signed 26-year-old Alderweireld for £11.5 million, who has undoubtedly been playing better.



**PLAYERS ARE THRUST INTO THE SPOTLIGHT AND EXPECTED TO PERFORM IMMEDIATELY**

The problem is compounded by the high expectations that come with an expensive signing. Players are thrust into the spotlight and expected to perform immediately, otherwise they are quickly deemed to be a 'flop'. Take

the case of Memphis Depay, signed by Manchester United from PSV at the age of 21. Though initially he played well, the winger soon fell out of favour due to his inconsistency. When he does make a rare substitute appearance he tends to try too hard to impress: a vicious cycle.

In fairness, some youngsters do perform consistently to a high standard. In recent times we have seen players such as Hector Bellerin and Anthony Martial become staples in their respective clubs' starting 11 due to their consistently strong performances, with the latter perhaps already worth his colossal £36 million base fee – a figure that was a huge outlay for a relatively unknown player. Looking further back, the well-known 'Class of '92' consisted of six players at Manchester United who won the FA Youth Cup in 1992 and proceeded to play important roles in United's treble-winning season in 1998-9. Theo Walcott and Wayne Rooney were tearing up the Premier League at the age of 18. But are these players the rule or the exception?

Gone are the days where young players were 'one for the future'. With more and more money being spent on acquiring their services, consistent performance is now expected immediately, rather than being nurtured. Players like Dele Alli and Kurt Zouma might be playing fantastically despite the pressure, but are they flying too close to the sun? I guess we'll soon find out.



The now lesser-spotted Freddy Adu rose to fame as a youngster

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## The folly of youth

Akuan Liu questions the importance football places on age. Page 31



# Sport

# Withstanding the test of time

In light of last week's Australian Open, Santi Willder wonders whether an athlete can ever wind back the clock

### Santi Willder

Sport Correspondent

In the post-match interview after his career-ending defeat in the second round of this year's Australian Open, two-time Grand Slam champion and former world No.1 Lleyton Hewitt remarked: "I've been very fortunate that I've had such a great career that I had the opportunity to go out on my terms. A lot of great sporting athletes don't have that opportunity." Indeed, reflecting on the 34-year-old's final professional tennis tournament, it would appear to have been the perfect send-off for one of the sport's greats. For the Australian was able to bow out of the game to raucous applause from his home fans with his head held high after simply being ground down 6-2 6-4 6-4 after battling against both injury and the wiles of world No.8 David Ferrer. Although he failed to wind back the clock by putting together a string of victories at his closing tournament, Hewitt's swansong cannot but be deemed a success since he finished his career at the atmospheric Rod Laver Arena in a tournament in which he has competed for a staggering 20 years in a row.

Turning our attention to the final few years of Hewitt's sporting career, however, tells a far more disheartening story. In the last five years (beginning with the 2011 Australian Open), Hewitt has reached the last 16 of a Grand Slam on only two occasions out of the 18 times he has entered the main draw of a major, and indeed we have to cast our gaze all the way back to Wimbledon 2009 to find the last time that he reached the quarter-finals. Without taking anything away from the legend's achievements in the sport, we can surmise that Hewitt's career had been on the wane for the best part of a decade, marking a somewhat disappointing trajectory for a man who at the mere age of 20 became the youngest ever player to be ranked world No.1 in singles. However, though the Australian failed to keep up with the dizzying precedent that he set for himself in his early twenties, we surely cannot fault him for lack



How many more Australian Opens will the graceful Roger Federer compete at?

of perseverance and determination. Until the very end Hewitt proved himself to be as confident and competitive as always, daring to dream aged 34 by proclaiming "I want six more" after his first-round victory in this year's Australian Open against compatriot James Duckworth. That said, the question remains as to when you should hang up your racquet in an increasingly mercenary sport that could be accused of financially prioritising appearance at a tournament over performance in it.

Indeed, we spectators may well harbour a penchant for nostalgia in tennis, that is to say that we thrive on seeing players, whom we have known and loved for years, continue to perform at the highest level and keep an iron grip over the most prized trophies in the game. One need only hear the screams that perpetually greet the Swiss maestro Roger Federer as he steps onto court to realise that, especially in an individual sport such as tennis, we bear a reluctance to bid farewell to our favourites and perhaps encourage them to play on well past their prime. While it would certainly be unfair to

suggest that the evergreen 34-year-old should hang up his racquet while he still stands a reasonable chance of adding to his formidable collection of 17 Grand Slams, the prospect of watching the current world No.3 dwindle with age and slide miserably down the rankings hardly bears contemplation.



## AN UNHEALTHY OBSESSION WITH EVERGREEN PLAYERS

Does this mean that it would be more fitting for one of the best players to have ever graced the sport to go out in a blaze of glory and call it quits while he is still near the top of his game? This notion may sound outlandish, but in recent years we can see that a precedent for this sort of behaviour has been established. Indeed, we need not look any further than last year's US Open, at which the

winner of the women's singles, Flavia Pennetta, announced her retirement moments after raising aloft her first (and last) Grand Slam trophy, aged 33. This decision to retire at the very peak of her career seems rather poetic, and perhaps was motivated by a feeling that, already in her mid-thirties, she would be unable to scale such dizzying heights in the game again having never before even reached a Grand Slam final. Furthermore, when asked about the reasons for her premature retirement the Italian cited "una stanchezza fisica e mentale" (physical and mental fatigue), pointing to the immense toll that competing at the highest level week-in week-out takes on the elite players of this sport. Indeed, Federer himself has recently been ruled out of action for a month following an injury to his knee picked up during his Australian Open semi-final defeat by eventual winner Novak Djokovic. These revelations point to the fact that the exhausting format of today's game means that it is becoming increasingly difficult for a player to remain at his or her peak for an extended period of time, thus thwarting the spectator's

desire for consistency and drawn-out dominance within the sport. A case in point might be 29-year-old and 14-time Grand Slam winner Rafael Nadal, who recently exited the Australian Open in the first round for the first time in his history. Though writing off Nadal at this moment in time is absurdly premature, it warrants consideration whether his best years might already be behind him and whether he might have already begun on the same downward trajectory that Hewitt experienced during the later stages of his career. The Spaniard has struggled with injuries, and may never recover the form that won him 14 Slams.

Ultimately, how can players possibly know when is the best time to drop the curtain on their career? Such deliberation on their part might well prove futile given the unpredictability of the game, and indeed is not a consideration that any truly competitive player would dwell on for very long. However, we must come to terms with our unhealthy obsession with evergreen players whose duty it is to keep entertaining us beyond the constraints posed by age.

## Brits Shine at Aussie Open

### Ravi Willder

Sport Editor

While the Australian Open may have ended on a sour note for one Andy Murray at the hands of his peren-

nial conqueror Novak Djokovic, that should not detract from what was a superb and historic tournament for those of a British persuasion.

Johanna Konta was rewarded for her valiant efforts with a move up the rankings to inside the world's top 30. The Australian-born Brit reached the semi-finals of the women's tournament last week, and in doing so became the first British woman to reach the semi-finals of a Grand Slam in 33 years. Even though Konta lost to the

eventual winner, Angelique Kerber, she provided a much-needed boost of optimism to British female tennis, after the declines of Laura Robson and Heather Watson due to various injuries and loss of form.

Meanwhile, Andy's older brother Jamie managed to upstage his younger yet more illustrious sibling by winning his first doubles Grand Slam title with his partner Bruno Soares. This resulted in a move up the rankings to doubles world number two. The Brit,

however, has aspirations to make the jump up to world number one (an achievement that would surely draw envy from Andy, who seems destined to remain world number two for a while yet), saying: "I got to number two so why not get to number one? It's one final step to try to get to number one." It's refreshing to see fighting talk from at least one Murray recently. One can only hope that Andy will take a leaf out of his brother's book and return from paternity leave with

a clear plan to wrestle the top spot out of the hands of the formidable Novak Djokovic.

Finally, Gordon Reid won the Australian Open wheelchair singles title with a three-set victory over Joachim Gerard, winning his first Grand Slam. In doing so, he ended British tennis's week on a high, although his remark that "it's been a great weekend for Scottish tennis" may have perturbed more than a few English fans of the game.