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# VARSLITY

## Referendum fever grips Cambridge

### ● CUSU sets November date for Class Lists referendum

**Ankur Desai**  
Deputy News Editor

A referendum to change CUSU's stance on abolishing Class Lists will run from the 1st - 3rd November, it has been announced.

All students who are members of CUSU will be allowed to vote in the election, presented with the question: "should CUSU campaign to keep the Class Lists, with an easier opt-out process?"

It is understood that the 'Save the Class List' campaign will become the main campaigning group in support of an opt-out system. A bidding process to become the official group for supporting the 'No' option will open shortly.

This is the third referendum of the calendar year, following a vote on CUSU's affiliation to NUS and on the creation of a full-time Disabled Students' Officer for CUSU.

This vote will not formally decide whether the Class Lists will be abolished or not, which will be decided by a vote of the University's Regent House – comprised of over 5,000 senior academics and staff members – towards the end of Michaelmas term. However, it has been suggested that the referendum held by

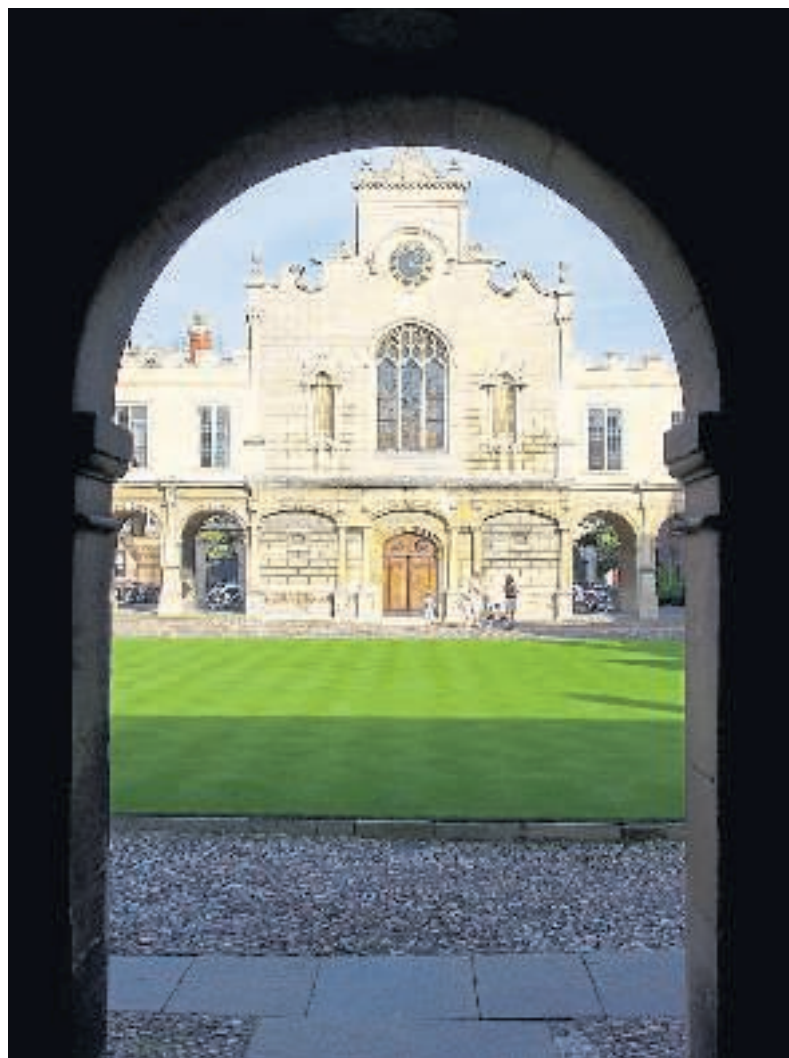
CUSU will give an indication to the way students feel about Class Lists, and so could influence the way members of Regent House vote.

CUSU initially voted to oppose public display of Class Lists at a council meeting in November last year, where there were 20 votes to zero in favour of abolition, with four abstentions. This came after a petition by 'Our Grade, Our Choice', which called for the University to allow students to opt out from the Class Lists based solely on their preference for doing so. This petition was sent to the University, who then backed a review of the usage of Class Lists.

However, the move to abolish the Class Lists was opposed by the campaign group 'Save the Class List', who created a petition that gained more than the 350 signatures needed to trigger a CUSU referendum. The group supports an opt-out system, as opposed to complete abolition of the Lists.

In April, results from the University's internal consultation on the future of the lists, revealed by a *Varsity* Freedom of Information request, revealed that none of the stake-holding bodies consulted supported the idea of an opt-out system.

Reasons for the lack of support have not been fully laid out, but may relate to extra costs which could be incurred.



Could Peterhouse be heading for the exit?

(JOHN TURNER)

### ● 'Sex Club' prepares for Pexit vote

**Harry Curtis**  
Senior News Editor

**PETERHOUSE** In what seems to be becoming something of a Michaelmas tradition, a Cambridge JCR will be asking its members whether or not they ought to remain affiliated to CUSU later this term.

This year it is the turn of Peterhouse's JCR – the grandiosely named Sexcentenary Club (or, less grandiosely, the 'Sex Club' for short) – to decide whether their future lies with or away from the University-wide union, when they vote in a referendum on the matter in Week Four.

The referendum, which is scheduled to run between the 28th and 29th October, with a debate to be held on 26th October, comes on the heels of a letter sent to the Sex Club's Committee in Easter term, claiming that CUSU had "let down Jewish students" in the way they had dealt with the furore over Malia Bouattia's controversial election to the presidency of the National Union of Students (NUS).

**Continued on page 7 ►**



# EDITORIAL

## Brace yourself for the drop

And just like that, we've reached the peak of the roller coaster. There's a short stop, a rush of anticipation, and then the plummet begins. Referenda, continued debates over Palestine and, bizarrely, a plague of lawn-munching bugs has descended upon us. For those who feared the worst after a couple of weeks with the types of incidents which could occur anywhere, you can exhale. Cambridge is itself again.

Where does that leave your average student? One thing's for sure – you're about to see a lot of campaigning. For freshers, this may come as a system shock: the mass profile pic changes, constant invites to voting events and 'personalised' private messages from campaigners. Going on prior form, we should expect gratuitous rule-breaking, dodgy dealing and maybe some gentle back-stabbing.

Also, we should expect a fantastic, if flawed, display of the democratic act on display in Cambridge. Turnout for the two previous referenda this year has been unprecedented – a sizable number of students are engaged and informed about what's going on, and exercise their votes with care and consideration.

Every vote does count – our vote on NUS membership, a hugely emotive issue, produced a lively, heartfelt and strong debate. That the eventual outcome was so narrow testified not only to the nuanced way in which the issue of affiliation affected students, but also to why holding referenda is such an important practice.

The role of the student press in this process is an important one – the pressures of work and life can make it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain a clear understanding about what is going on. We attempt to approach these delicate areas with balance, and endeavour to give a platform to all sides in debates. This matches with the wider aim of *Varsity* as a paper: we are here to inform and entertain, but also to train and develop, and allow people to cut their teeth.

If you think an opinion isn't being heard, tell us. Though dreadfully young by Cantabrigian standards, we're still old enough (approaching our 70th re-birthday) to be somewhat of an institution. Despite this, we are never more than the sum of our parts. We always need you – the student, staff member or Cambridge resident – and what you can bring us. Want to find out more or get involved? Our emails are below...

**EDITORS** Louis Ashworth and Callum Hale-Thomson [editor@varsity.co.uk](mailto:editor@varsity.co.uk)

**DEPUTY EDITOR** Millie Brierley [deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk](mailto:deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk)

**MAGAZINE EDITOR** Kitty Grady [magazine@varsity.co.uk](mailto:magazine@varsity.co.uk)

**BUSINESS MANAGER** Mark Curtis [business@varsity.co.uk](mailto:business@varsity.co.uk)

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR** Jack Higgins [associate@varsity.co.uk](mailto:associate@varsity.co.uk)

**NEWS EDITORS** Anna Menin, Harry Curtis & Daniel Gayne (Senior), Siyang Wei, Matt Gutteridge, Sam Harrison & Ankur Desai (Deputies) [news@varsity.co.uk](mailto:news@varsity.co.uk)

**SENIOR NEWS CORRESPONDENTS** Amy Gee & Sophie Penney

**POLITICAL EDITOR** Joe Robinson [politics@varsity.co.uk](mailto:politics@varsity.co.uk)

**INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR** Tom Richardson [investigations@varsity.co.uk](mailto:investigations@varsity.co.uk)

**COMMENT EDITORS** Theo Demolder (Senior), Peter Chappell, Emily Robb, Haroun Mahmud & Carl Wikeley (Deputies) [comment@varsity.co.uk](mailto:comment@varsity.co.uk)

**INTERVIEWS EDITORS** Anna Jennings, Elizabeth Howcroft & Patrick Wernham [interviews@varsity.co.uk](mailto:interviews@varsity.co.uk)

**SCIENCE EDITOR** Jon Wall [science@varsity.co.uk](mailto:science@varsity.co.uk)

**FEATURES EDITORS** Katie Wetherall & Richelle George [features@varsity.co.uk](mailto:features@varsity.co.uk)

**CULTURE EDITORS** Jon Cooper & Sarah-Jane Tollan [culture@varsity.co.uk](mailto:culture@varsity.co.uk)

**FASHION EDITOR** Agustin Ferrari Braun [fashion@varsity.co.uk](mailto:fashion@varsity.co.uk)

**THEATRE EDITORS** Mimi Robson & Lana Crowe [theatre@varsity.co.uk](mailto:theatre@varsity.co.uk)

**MUSIC EDITOR** Karl Schwonik [music@varsity.co.uk](mailto:music@varsity.co.uk)

**REVIEWS EDITORS** Olivia Childs & Rosie Best [reviews@varsity.co.uk](mailto:reviews@varsity.co.uk)

**SPORT EDITORS** Keir Baker (Senior), Tom Higgins Toon & Charlie Stone (Deputies) [sport@varsity.co.uk](mailto:sport@varsity.co.uk)

**SPORT REPORTERS** Paul Hyland (Senior), Devarshi Lodhia (Deputy)

**ONLINE EDITOR** Imran Marashli [online@varsity.co.uk](mailto:online@varsity.co.uk)

**DIGITAL EDITOR** Nick Jones [digital@varsity.co.uk](mailto:digital@varsity.co.uk)

**VIDEO EDITOR** Jed White [video@varsity.co.uk](mailto:video@varsity.co.uk)

**ARTS EDITOR** Jade Cuttle [arts@varsity.co.uk](mailto:arts@varsity.co.uk)

**CHIEF SUB-EDITOR** Max Gibson [subeditor@varsity.co.uk](mailto:subeditor@varsity.co.uk)

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## News

# Lawn of the Dead What's eating Cambridge courts?

● A cocktail of crows, grubs, and the EU is causing a headache for Cambridge's gardeners

**Sophie Penney**  
Senior News Correspondent

Iconic Cambridge courts are being disfigured, as crows attack the lawns of at least seven colleges.

Jesus and Pembroke have had to re-turf entire lawns, and signs are up around colleges about the problem, while at least five other colleges, including St Catharine's, Emmanuel, Murray Edwards, Selwyn and Clare, have seen lawns destroyed as a constant battle is waged between gardeners and crows.

However, the birds are not the root of the problem. This year central Cambridge has seen an influx of large populations of chafer grubs, the soil-dwelling larvae of chafer beetles. These grubs feed on the roots of the grass, making the lawn vulnerable to damage.

Crows like to feed on these grubs, and the weakened grass roots mean that when they do, they dig up the turf. The large amounts of chafer grubs mean that the crows are constantly feeding on them, giving the turf little time to recover, and creating the mess that we see in Cambridge today.

Many people are asking why some colleges are affected and not others. Paul Gallant, the head gardener of Selwyn, explained to *Varsity* that it all depends on the type of soil. "The grubs like light

sandy soil like the soil at Selwyn. Wolfson and Robinson don't have the problem because they're on clay".

Steve Elstub, the head gardener of Clare College, expanded on this, saying: "There are light soils around the River Cam because of the silts. This is an open, free draining soil that helps grubs to grow at a larger rate. This means that colleges closer to the river have been more affected by the grub. Colleges away from the river have heavier land, meaning it is more difficult for the adult chafer beetle to lay in".

In terms of spreading from one college to the other, Gallant explained that the chafer beetle cannot fly very far or very high, so it is unlikely to travel from college to college. However, he said that Selwyn's infestation had come over from the Sidgwick site.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that the main control measure for this problem has been outlawed by the EU. In April 2013, the EU enforced a Europe-wide ban of three bee-harming pesticides called neonicotinoids, including imidacloprid, which is the active ingredient in the insecticides previously used to get rid of the chafer grub.

In January 2016, this ban was reviewed, but in April it was confirmed that imidacloprid is highly toxic to bumblebees and it was definitively taken off the market.

▼ The chafer grub is the root of the problem (PHOTOGRAPH: JESUS COLLEGE/FACEBOOK)



▲ Fountain Court at Murray Edwards has been ravaged (PHOTOGRAPH: SOPHIE PENNEY)





Elstub said “this is part of a widespread protocol from the EU to reduce chemical use in general because of their possible damaging effects on wildlife and the potential for them getting into the water system”.

Instead, colleges are opting for the use of nematodes, which are microscopic, whitish-to-transparent worms that eat and destroy the chafer grubs. However, nematodes can only live in wet soil that isn’t too cold, which means that the soil needs to be irrigated. Large areas of turf are hard and expensive to irrigate, meaning that this natural, biological control measure can only be used to great effect on areas of 15 to 20 metres squared.

Jesus College have had to re-turf their entire first court lawn as the area affected is too large for the use of nematodes. A post on the College’s Facebook page said: “The situation has become quite severe over the last two to three weeks and large areas of lawn have suffered as a result, First Court in particular. The use of nematodes has proved unreliable. [...] Our gardeners will apply topsoil and seed along with fertilizer (which the birds dislike) once the destructiveness has ceased”.

Clare College, only affected in a few, small areas of roughly four meters squared in its memorial court, are also trying other methods including rolling the land to make it a bit harder so that

the grubs goes deeper into the soil, out of range from crows and birds. They have also tried covering the areas with netting as a deterrent to the crows, allowing the turf time to recover from the grub.

Gallant of Selwyn College says that there is a new product that is not harmful to crows, which he intends to employ a company to apply. The priority is that the grub removal method isn’t harmful to the crows: “as long as I don’t have a lawn full of dead crows”, Gallant said. He ruled out the possibility of re-turfing the lawn as it would require too many hours of labour and would therefore be too expensive.

If noticed early, the threat can be



**Crows are tearing up several courts**  
(PHOTOGRAPH: SOPHIE PENNEY)

reduced before it really sets in. Elstub said: “The egg laying takes place in June and July and at that time, if you spot the adult chafer beetles on the lawn, you can mow the lawns accordingly with a rotary mower and collect up the adults. However, there is only about a two week window for this and sometimes it is difficult to spot them”.

The winter weather could temporarily help solve the problem as the cold

“As long as I don’t have a lawn full of dead crows”



weather will make the grubs go deeper into the soil and out of range of the crows. However, Gallant hopes to remove the grub before they bury down, in order to prevent further problems in spring and, most importantly, for the May Ball. The chafer grub problem goes back 10 years or so and colleges have experienced the problem before. It is also a problem nationally.

“We’ll never be rid of the problem,” said Elstub, “it’s a case of managing it and dealing with it in the most appropriate way possible”.

▲ Jesus, Selwyn, Pembroke and Emma have also been afflicted  
(PHOTOGRAPHS: JESUS COLLEGE/FACEBOOK, SOPHIE PENNEY, DANIEL GAYNE)

## RACIAL DISPARITIES

### Ethnic bias found in grad admissions

An often overlooked topic compared with its more scrutinised undergraduate equivalent, *Varsity* has uncovered consistent gaps in the success rates between white and non-white applicants to post graduate courses at the university, with black applicants prospects of a place particularly stark. Scrutinising figures from the last five years, for both the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the results suggest the elite institutions’ pallid complexions are unlikely to change anytime soon.

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## SCIENCE AND RELIGION

### Anti-medicine ‘cult’ investigated

**Jon Wall** looks into the activities of the Christian Science movement, an America-based religious group which has been subject to numerous controversies. Christian Scientists believe in a doctrine which emphasises the healing power of prayer, and states that conventional medicine is comparatively ineffective. Christian Scientist children have frequently suffered from preventable illnesses as a result. The group has an operation in Cambridge, with a church near the Botanic Gardens.

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## MEAN GIRLS MENTALITY

### You can’t sit with us!

Jokes about hating the poor chalked up as ‘ironic’, casual sexism scoring points on a swap, Anglia Ruskin degraded and mocked. In this week’s column, **Anna Fitzpatrick** takes on Cambridge’s infamous elitism, *Mean Girls* style, as she looks at the exclusivity behind the ‘you can’t sit with us’ mentality. With recent statistics suggesting that 40 per cent of state school teachers don’t encourage their students towards Oxbridge, it’s time to evaluate the part we have to play in creating an inclusive, forward-moving university. Inaccessible is no longer fetch and you can absolutely sit with us.

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## BEAUTIFUL GAMES

### Puncturing the political football

It must be hard for politicians to ignore the engaged audience of the world’s most popular sport. Throughout the years, prime ministers and presidents have looked to football as a way of reaching out to voters, usually with little to no success.

Indeed, as **Percy Burton Preston** examines, there remains a confusing state of affairs: while the actions of people like David Cameron and Sepp Blatter have left the beautiful game unavoidably and embarrassingly political, it is they – and others – who continue to ardently assert the opposite.

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## News Brexit Week

# Brexit: Cambridge academics speak out on Britain and the EU

## Vote is the 'tip of the iceberg'

**Joe Robinson**  
Political Editor

The University of Cambridge's 'Brexit Week' began on Tuesday, inaugurating several days of lectures and talks that sought to interrogate the causes and implications of the UK's shock vote to leave the European Union on 23rd June.

In the first of these events, entitled 'Brexit: how and why did we get here?', the Faculty of Law's Professor Catherine Barnard chaired a discussion of academics from the fields of history, economics and political science as they offered diverse views on how the leave vote came about.

The first speaker, historian Professor Robert Tombs, offered an explanation that centred around the long history of British Euroscepticism and Britain's distinct politics and culture.

"We're not very enthusiastic Europeans," he observed, noting that only Cyprus rivalled the UK for its ambivalence to the continent's political union.

Tombs argued that not only had Britain's retention of the pound made leaving easier versus those countries limited by their membership of the single currency, but he postulated that the UK had an entirely different "political culture" from our European neighbours.

On the result of the referendum, the prominent Eurosceptic argued that "soft Brexit is not Brexit" and that only full exit from the single market constituted an adequate reflection of the will of the

British people.

He was followed by Dr Victoria Bateman, the Caius Economics fellow who notably turned up naked to a faculty meeting earlier this year to protest the possibility of Brexit and sought to explain the referendum's result in historical context, seeing it as a "working-class revolt" with its roots in the Industrial Revolution.

For Bateman, it represented a reaction to the deindustrialisation of the Thatcher period, but noted that it brought together disparate groups from disaffected northern industrial areas and southern Eurosceptic towns in an uneasy coalition.

Bateman noted that Brexit "seemed to offer all things to all people", and that social conservatives for whom "the clock needs to be turned backwards" wanted entirely different outcomes from Brexit than post-industrial areas.

Inevitably, she argued, people would "feel betrayed" and that the referendum would inaugurate a new series of conflicts as the extrication process began.

The final speaker was Dr Chris Bickerton from the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS), who during the referendum campaign advanced a left-wing case for Brexit based on the enhanced accountability of politicians to the British public.

Bickerton observed that the referendum campaign "didn't actually focus on the EU", with the Remain and Leave sides exclusively concerned with the economy and immigration respectively, and that this was because of a conceptual issue in how the European Union is conceptualised. He compared it to a "mirage", arguing that it "appears tangible at first, but the closer you get it begins to tremble and quiver", eventually giving way to a reality made up of national governments



▲ Christopher Bickerton, author of bestseller *The European Union: A Citizen's Guide* (DANIEL GAYNE)

seeking greater and greater legitimisation from their membership of the EU.

The referendum, he suggested, resulted from the "hollowing out" of democracy and the poor relationships between citizens and their governments.

According to Bickerton, the key challenge at the heart of the referendum was how to govern across the "void" created by the retreat of politicians into the state and the public into their private spheres. He suggested that the referendum offered the prospect of enhanced accountability for politicians who, following Brexit, could no longer hide behind the EU as an excuse for their failures or shortcomings.

Bickerton postulated that this trend of elite and public withdrawal, having blended with the previously marginal force of Euroscepticism in the UK, would spread throughout Europe, with the possibility of referenda in Italy and France in the near-term.

Brexit was, for Bickerton, only the "tip of the iceberg". What lies beneath the water is other EU member states for whom the EU will not be a settled issue for some time to come.

## Is it OK to be bored of Brexit?



**Jack Higgins**  
Associate Editor

In his talk as part of 'Brexit Week' currently running at the Faculty of Law, Politics academic Chris Bickerton stressed one of the key positives of leaving the EU: that politicians can no longer use it as a smokescreen to avoid being held accountable by the British electorate. When I interviewed him earlier this year, he had stressed that breaking away from Europe would put an end to "the political class looking to the EU and saying: 'this is Brussels' fault'".

This may well be true when we finally leave, but at the moment Brexit itself has become the very smokescreen it was supposed to banish. The vote was 120 days ago, yet not a single one of those days has passed without the subject being plastered across every news outlet. As I write, in the last 24 hours *The Guardian* alone has published at least 29



**Brexit means Brexit means Brexit means Brexit?**

articles referencing Brexit. And that's in just one publication, six months before we've even triggered Article 50.

This is not to say that Brexit isn't important. I'd be a fool to deny that we should be ignoring the biggest political and economic issue of modern British history. However, at a time when the government is developing a 'Brexit strategy' – or so it claims – it is important to remember that it really isn't the sole job of May's government, contrary to what headlines suggest. And this is particularly significant given that there are arguably more important debates to be had at the moment: how do we, amid continued talk of crisis, keep the NHS alive? Is austerity working? And how do we solve the crippling housing shortage in the UK? If these issues are simply buried beneath the cacophony of Brexit noise – this piece notwithstanding – it may cause some to simply switch off, which is self-evidently bad when it comes to holding the government to account.

And this argument isn't just the conjecture of a disillusioned student. For example, the BBC recently reported that even some Tories at their own conference were said to be suffering from 'Brexit fatigue' due to the "endless speculation about what's going to happen next". If a bunch who tend to be particularly keen for prattling on about politics are bored, what hope is there for the rest of us?

## Brexit will be a Herculean task

**Brónagh Grace**  
News Correspondent

It's difficult to turn on the news without confronting the latest plot twist in the ever-unfolding drama that is Brexit. The turbulence of the political landscape could easily leave one rattled as the pantomime of colourful characters and unforeseen events playing out on the news reports seems a legitimate alternative to Netflix. The University of Cambridge's 'Brexit week', organised in conjunction with 'UK in a Changing Europe', aimed to engage students and the community in discussion around the realities of this too-often dramatised narrative.

Thursday's 'Process and Politics' talk offered an analysis of the legal dance of Brexit. Head of Department at POLIS Professor David Runciman provided insight, if only to verify the obscurity with which we are faced rather than eluci-

date it. The question of parliamentary involvement was quickly heralded as a key factor, as the risk of parliamentary organisation to manipulate the terms of any move towards pushing the big Brexit button plays on Theresa May's micromanagement mind. Runciman denigrated this fear of effective opposition as unfounded.

Ultimately, Runciman declared that politics never stops, citing the Witney by-election taking place that day. When a comparison was made between the 10-1 odds against a Liberal Democrat victory and the 10-1 odds on a Trump win, Runciman noted that "the thing about one in ten chances, is that they tend to happen one in 10 times." The roar of laughter didn't quite mask the wisp of nerves.

Professor Mark Elliott, Professor of Public Law at Cambridge, gave a run-down of the formalities of leaving the EU containing, like all good instruction manuals, as much bewilderment as clarity. Elliott disparaged the 'Great Repeal Bill' as clever marketing and called the aftermath of Brexit "a Herculean task". The suggestion of 'Henry VIII' powers being conferred on the executive to en-



▲ An EU flag hangs from a balcony on King's Parade (FELIX PECKHAM)

able the gargantuan process of undoing EU law only augmented this sense of tragedy, with Elliott concluding that with such a potential transference of powers from the legislature to the executive, the stated aim of Brexit to restore legislative sovereignty "rings hollow."

The large turnout and eagerness to ask questions seemed to reflect the significance of a political moment quite unprecedented in many of our lifetimes. Both speakers led us through the winding, obscure passageways of the Brexit labyrinth, indicating the complexities of both the politics and process. The trajectory of Brexit's plot? Like any good drama, it's complicated.



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## News

# ‘This is your life. Run your own race’

There were mixed reactions to Liz Fraser’s Union speech, which tackled the psychological challenges unique to Oxbridge. **Danny Wittenberg** reports

Cambridge University exists to nurture minds, yet the decline in mental health among some students remains one of the questions it has struggled to resolve.

Despite divided views within the professional and public spheres, it is still taken as a fact that one in four people will suffer a mental health problem, indirectly affecting almost everyone. The reality for Cambridge is believed to be a greater figure.

Liz Fraser – a comedian, social commentator and Clare College alumna – returned to Cambridge on Tuesday, in order to deliver an equally hard-hitting set of solutions, as well as discussing the institution that posed her the toughest intellectual and psychological challenges.

In a poignant talk at the Cambridge Union, the Natural Sciences graduate

argued for the reinvention of mental wellbeing as a universal issue so that society might open up to mental illness. “We need to rebrand mental health completely,” Fraser told members. “It is an unfortunate term that makes us think of madness and weird people. The truth is that everybody is abnormal, therefore we are all normal.”

When Fraser asked the audience whether anyone had never felt panic, depression, anxiety or forms of stress, the debating chamber descended into a rare silence.

A danger particular to Oxbridge, she cautioned, is the false sense of security given by the collegiate system. “You can literally disappear if you want. Cambridge can be so lonely and this does not help perceived mental health.”

Fraser, who specialised in psychology

and neuroscience while at Cambridge in the early 1990s, recalled her own experience with anorexia and mixed comedy with cautionary tales. “I lost weight, I lost focus, it was hard to see. I walked up to the Senate House board and didn’t see my name beside the 2:1s. It turned out I was on the board on the other side of the building for the really, really bad people,” she joked. “And yet, my friends from Clare still had no idea about my illness.”

She added this observation to the practice of students exaggerating the extent of their workload, or lack thereof, as a further example of the intensity in Cambridge. “Don’t believe what anybody around you says. ‘I’ve done no work’ – bullshit. This is your life. Run your own race,” she recommended. “There is a genuine increased pressure at Cambridge, so don’t feel guilty about sensing it. If mental illness affects one in four people in the world, it is probably closer to 30-40 per cent here.”

Confronting the likelihood that every student will know a sufferer of anxiety, Fraser seemed to advocate adopting a hard-line approach to friends.

“There are two schools of thought: one is to continue to be nice, and the other is to say: ‘I’m out’. The second method carries high risk but everyone has their turning point.”

“The onus is on you to recognise that you’re not feeling okay,” she added. “You have to decide that you’re going to change things and you can’t blame the world.”

An author of books such as *Lifesham-*

“The onus is on you to recognise that you’re not feeling okay”



▲ Liz Fraser, who studied at Clare (QIUYING GIULIA LAI)

◀ The Cambridge Union (SIMON LOCK)

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however. CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer, Sophie Buck, said she was “sceptical of the ‘stylish’ Headcase endeavour Fraser is proposing”, and that “Its focus on making mental health ‘sexy’ trivialises what can be exhausting, frightening and disabling experiences of mental health problems.”

Buck also took issue with how Fraser “puts too much focus on individual responsibility for one’s own health”, saying: “It’s important for service providers to make their services accessible, for tutors and DoSes to be checking in with their students, for supervisors to set clear expectations for work and, on broader levels, for systematic oppressions to be reduced, and trauma prevented. These relate to mental health, but are by no means the fault of the individual and their ability to self-care or self-refer.”

Student Minds president, Keir Muri-son, was more forgiving in his appraisal of Fraser’s address, “Liz had some very important messages about self-help and



**CUSU Welfare Officer Sophie Buck criticised parts of Fraser’s approach**

bles and *The Yummy Mummy’s Family Handbook*, Fraser recently founded the website ‘Headcase’, which claims to be “beautiful, sexy, clever, funny, occasionally downright rude” and states its aim as being to “change the face of mental health”.

The project is not without its critics,

taking responsibility for your own health. There were some messages we disagreed with (the SMC committee present) but there is no right answer when it comes to mental health treatment. We aim for flexibility and understanding from all parties in life to get the best outcome for everyone.”

## Pexit referendum date set

► Continued from front page

The letter, which was signed by 17 anonymous Petreans, was sent on the day after Cambridge voted to remain part of NUS, and argued that this latest failing added to “longer term concerns about the organisation’s incompetence”, concluding that the only way forward was to split from CUSU.

The letter resulted in an open meeting of the Sex Club, with a referendum on CUSU on the agenda alongside another contentious issue – the return of a PS3 to the JCR, discussion of which, according to the minutes, was delayed until Michaelmas.

Just who the ‘Peterhouse Seventeen’ are, however, is curiously murky territory – strongly suspected signatories include *University Challenge* winner Julian Sutcliffe, and Eloise Davies, whose 21st birthday cake (a scaled-down replica of the 700-year-old college rendered in sponge and fondant icing) shocked *Daily Mail* readers in March.

The identities of the primary backers of a so-called ‘Pexit’ is not the only unknown in this latest potential secession from CUSU. While Peterhouse weren’t the only college where dissatisfaction with CUSU had reached calls-for-a-referendum levels at the end of Easter



term, they are thus by far the only college pressing ahead and putting the matter to a vote – rumblings and rumours of referendums at Queens’ and Clare having come to nothing.

It all begs the question of whether CUSU affiliation is still the hot political issue it was at Peterhouse in the heightened climate of rampant democracy that took over the University before the long summer vacation.

Indeed, past disaffiliation pushes and moves to re-affiliate have hardly captured the imagination of the student body at large.

Having disaffiliated in 2006, Trinity College Students’ Union (TCSU) later re-affiliated in a move that one Trinitarian said was met with “absolute apathy”, and which was only possible because a *Varsity* reporter pushed the attendance of the re-affiliation meeting up to meet the quorum.

Last year, students at Fitz expressed their lack of interest by voting not to have a vote on leaving CUSU. The last time a college actually put their CUSU membership to a vote, the result was a landslide result in favour of Churchill retaining its ties.

If history is anything to go by, Peterhouse’s referendum probably won’t change anything and, even if it does, it’s unlikely many people will notice.

▲ Will Cambridge’s oldest college leave the students’ union?  
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# News

## Students divided over report into NUS anti-Semitism

**Sam Harrison**  
Deputy News Editor

Representatives from student unions and other organisations across the country have divided over a Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) report that accuses the NUS of an ineffective response to the problem of anti-Semitism.

The report particularly criticises NUS president Malia Bouattia, accusing her of “defensiveness and apparent unwillingness” to engage with the concerns of

Jewish students, with the implication that she has failed “to represent all sections of the student population”.

Bouattia has sparked controversy with remarks that have been interpreted as anti-Semitic, notoriously calling the University of Birmingham “something of a Zionist outpost” and referring to the UK media as “Zionist-led”.

The Select Committee report addresses these points of contention in strongly-worded terms, reprimanding Bouattia’s “choice of language” and labelling the “Zionist outpost” comment a piece of

“outright racism”.

Bouattia has defended herself in written evidence to the Select Committee. She distinguished between opposition to Zionist beliefs and anti-Semitism, commenting that “Zionist politics are held by people from a variety of different backgrounds and faiths.”

However, the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) has welcomed the report, with Josh Nagli (Campaign Development Officer) stating that it confirms “what so many Jewish students have been saying for some time.” He added that the report proves that Bouattia “treats Jewish students’ concerns differently to those of others”.

Reaction among other students has been mixed. An open letter in support of Bouattia had been signed by 350 student union office-holders, academic staff and students when *Varsity* went to print. Office-holders and students are not explicitly distinguished from each other in the letter. Among their number are NUS Vice-President Sorana Vieru and 15 members of the union’s National Executive Committee.

The letter welcomed the report’s hard line on anti-Semitism, but accused it of failing to address “the large majority of anti-Semitic abuse and crime” that is committed “by the far right”, instead focusing on the NUS in the spirit of what it calls “partisan selectivity”.

It also repeated Bouattia’s distinction between “legitimate criticism of Zionism” and anti-Semitism, insisting that “Zionism is a political ideology... held or rejected by both Jewish people and non-Jewish people” that “should be open to discussion, scrutiny and debate.”

Finally, it criticises the report’s “selective and partisan approach”, claiming that it “attempts to delegitimise [the] NUS, and discredit Malia Bouattia as its president.” It then concluded by demanding “a revised report that is impartial and contains factual evidence.”



▲ Josh Nagli, an officer of the UJS, condemned Bouattia (UJS)

However, not all student leaders have been willing to back Bouattia. 98 members of student unions and other student organisations, including the president of the UJS Josh Seidler, the National Chair of Labour Students Kate Dearden, and four members of the National Executive Committee of the NUS, have signed a rival letter which has called upon Bouattia “to issue a full and formal apology to Jewish students, and indeed to her entire membership.”

This letter suggests that for an NUS president to be accused of utilising racist language is an “unprecedented situation”. It also states that Bouattia’s comments following the report do not “go far enough in acknowledging or apologising for the significant damage that her actions and language have done to NUS”.

The letter concludes that if Bouattia “fails to acknowledge the need for an immediate and full apology” and refuses to lay out a strategy for accommodating the findings of the report, she should resign from her post as president of the NUS.

### Analysis

#### Student indifference is Bouattia’s firewall



**Sam Harrison**  
Deputy News Editor

Only three things in life are certain: death, taxes, and Malia Bouattia-related controversies.

Bouattia, we may assume, is going nowhere: partly because she still has the support of many other student leaders, but mostly because the almost 2.3 million students at universities in the UK are almost entirely indifferent to the whole affair.

Passionate cases in favour of and against Bouattia have been made by Jewish students and admirers of the NUS president. But the fact remains that the majority of those students who do not feel either ideologically devoted to, or physically threatened by, Bouattia’s comments regard the dispute as a remote struggle unrelated to their own interests, conducted by people they have never heard of.

Last time an NUS president was forced to resign in 2011, he was facing widespread discontent among students for his perceived failure to resist tuition fee rises. Without similar popular pressure, Bouattia’s position will be not be threatened.

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## CUSU requested £100k for office refurbishment last year

**Amy Gee**  
Senior News Correspondent

Minutes from meetings with the Council Committee for the supervision of the student unions (CCSSU) have revealed that CUSU requested non-recurrent funding of £100,000 for the refurbishment of the CUSU offices at 17 Mill Lane, in November 2015.

The request at the time was rejected by the Committee, partially on the grounds that “the space at Mill Lane had been refurbished prior to CUSU moving in”.

The request was presented within a draft of CUSU’s bid for funds, alongside other bids for increases in funding, some of which were later endorsed by the Committee in May 2016.

Minutes from September 2015 show that funds were hoped to stimulate the “development of a student-facing space”,

as the new space was bigger “than had previously been available” and lacked “furniture, or furniture of the right type, to make the space comfortable and inviting” for students “on the outskirts of Cambridge who had no obvious base when in town”.

The minutes call the cost evaluation “provisional” and suggest that “detailed work would need to be carried out over the next year to finalise the costs”.

The Committee rejected the initial request because “the costs as set out in the paper were not final and would not be ready in time for the submission deadline” in December 2015, and consequently suggested “the bid should be held over until the following year”.

The bids were also criticised by the Committee for their length, running to “50 pages”, and the Committee recommended “a more succinct final version for submission”.

Other bids for funds were also deemed

“unrealistic” by the Committee, “in the context of the financial position of the University, where all departments were being asked to do more within their existing budgets”.

The funding bids had come at a time of financial deficit for CUSU. Accounts from last June show CUSU had run a deficit in 2014/2015, and were £32,454 worse off than they were at the end of the 2013/14 financial year.

Minutes from February 2016 reveal it was “already expected to be a particularly difficult year for new funding bids”, and in May the Committee acknowledged “the difficulties that CUSU faced in trying to balance a tight budget with its aspirations to do more for students”, welcoming that the “CUSU Board was making decisions based on CUSU’s strategic priorities.”

“The Committee encouraged CUSU to formulate clear priorities to guide its future aspirations and spending”.

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# Revealed: black graduates less than half as likely to gain admission as white applicants

- Large disparity also present at Oxford
- University strongly denies racial bias

**Tom Richardson**  
Investigations Editor

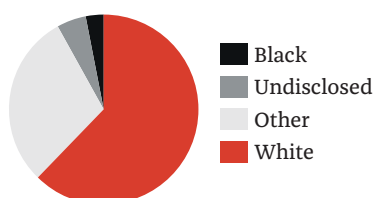
A *Varsity* investigation has revealed consistent and striking disparities between the success rates of applicants to postgraduate courses from different ethnic groups over the past six years.

The data, which are publicly available online, show that the proportion of black applicants confirming places has averaged 10.3 per cent over the period, around a third of that of white applicants, which averaged 29.6 per cent.

The success rates of both groups were also remarkably steady, with black applicants in all years enjoying a success rate of between 10 and 11 per cent, while the white success rate ranged between 28 and 32 per cent.

For the latest two cycles for which

## ▼ Proportion of confirmed places 2015/6 cycle, by ethnicity



information is available (2014/15 and 2015/16), the data was broken down to include how many offers were made, and showed that an average of 22 per cent of black applicants were made offers, compared with 50.5 per cent of white applicants, suggesting the overall success of black applicants cannot be attributed to them turning down offers in higher numbers, or failing to meet the conditions set by the offer.

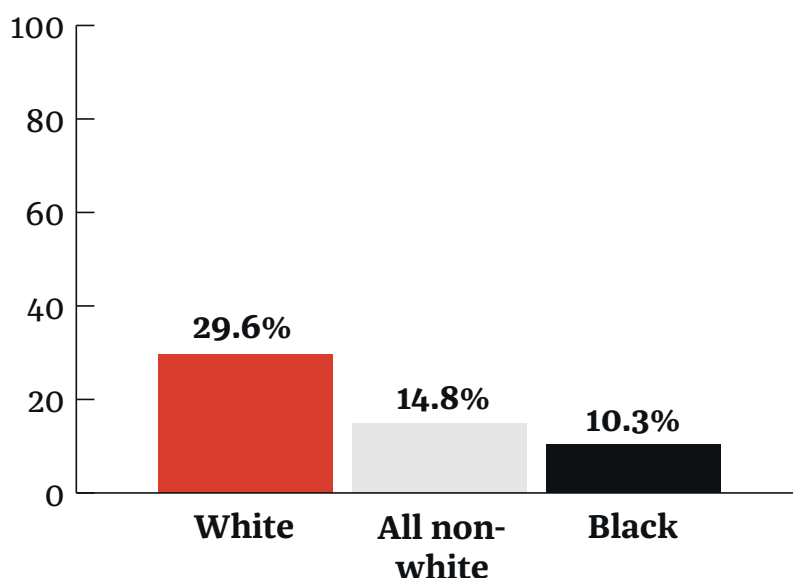
In absolute terms, the number of black applicants, successful or otherwise, was also low. An average of 3.3 per cent of applicants and 1.8 per cent of successful applicants identified themselves as black.

A small proportion each year did not disclose their ethnicity.

Disparities also exist between success rates for white and non-white applicants more generally. On average, non-white applicants had a 14.8 per cent chance of confirming a place, and represented an average of 47.6 per cent of total applications. The only non-white group to consistently out-perform white applicants were Arabs, of whom an average of 50.2 per cent secured a place.

Figures obtained from publicly available admissions data for the University of Oxford show remarkably similar patterns.

Across the four admissions cycles from 2010 to 2014 investigated by *Varsity*, Oxford admitted black applicants at an



## ▲ Average success rate 2010-2015 application cycles

average rate of 16 per cent and non-white applicants at a rate of 16.3 per cent, compared with 29 per cent for white applicants, reflecting marginally more parity between the groups than at Cambridge.

Commenting on the figures, Chad Allen, president of the Graduate Union at Cambridge, suggested that of “a number of factors... the effect of unconscious is no doubt a contributor”. This suggestion was strongly denied by the University, who said: “we admit the best qualified students irrespective of their ethnicity... the application form which departments and colleges assess does not include information on ethnicity at all.”

“Differences in success rates by ethnicity are due to two factors alone,” the University said, specifically that “a higher proportion of international applicants”, who it pointed out were more likely to be of an ethnic minority, “will have obtained a qualification that does not meet the University’s requirements”.

The University also noted that “the level of English language proficiency at the point of application” among international applicants was lower, affecting the quality of the application.

Similarly, Allen suggested “the nature of the graduate application process... can be complex”, and those from “non-traditional backgrounds” might find it harder to tackle, suggesting this barrier came down to the requirement for “a self-drafted research proposal or knowledge of supervisors with projects on offer”.

Commenting on the low total numbers of black applicants, Allen said: “this must be a consequence of Cambridge previously having had no explicit graduate recruitment strategy”.

However, despite criticising “the unacceptably low rate of black applicants”, Allen expressed “confidence” that the University’s new graduate recruitment strategy “will begin to remove barriers... which evidently strongly affect black students.”

“Cambridge needs to attract the very best graduate researchers from every background,” he said. “If Cambridge can-

not attract applications from the most talented black students then it runs the risk of losing out to universities that can.”

A spokesperson for the University of Oxford said: “Discrepancies in offer rates are attributable to a number of factors, including degree and course choice... Oxford monitors its postgraduate admissions procedures to ensure our selection criteria and processes are fair and do not discriminate against candidates based on nationality or ethnic group.”

The University of Oxford and the CUSU BME campaigns did not respond to *Varsity*’s requests for comment.

## Analysis

### Grad admissions: Important issues deserve more scrutiny

**Tom Richardson**  
Investigations Editor



The media and politicians from Prime Minister Gordon Brown down have long criticised disparities in Oxbridge admissions at undergraduate level, to varying degrees of accuracy.

Yet it is at postgraduate level that a large number of undergraduates, around 30 per cent of the total youth population, become a tiny number of experts, ultimately determining the character of future academia. The consistency of the figures *Varsity* has unearthed, and the striking symmetry between the two dominant universities in the UK, can no longer be ignored.

The University’s argument, that their admissions process is race-blind, is plausible in as far as it is unlikely direct bias plays a significant role. Yet the end results for black applicants remain shocking. At worst the two universities may have be-

come complacent at attracting the best talent, and at best the system needs finessing to accommodate the wide variety of backgrounds from which talent might emerge.

Talent, unlike graduate admissions, is colour blind. If academia is to move forward, and learn from campaigns such as the NUS’s ‘Why is my Curriculum White?’ then it needs to address its own complexion. While the new strategy for expanding graduate recruitment is a good start, there remains a significant success gap for those black graduates that do apply.

For better or worse, Oxford and Cambridge dominate academia and their admissions decisions can shape the future diversity of whole disciplines. They must do better, and the media must do better at scrutinising them.

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## Science

# The slow death of Cambridge's anti-medicine 'cult'?

### ● The Christian Science movement investigated

Jon Wall  
Science Editor

Along the series of shop fronts on Regent Street heading out of town, there are a few which stand out: Pizza Hut and Nanna Mexico, for example. As we continue past Downing College, though, the shops get smaller and more niche. It's easy to miss the Christian Science reading room, a space smaller than a John's accommodation room, yet many of us pass it by unthinkingly every day – and why not? It's a harmless little place, empty the vast majority of the time, and only open three days a week.

However, the Christian Science movement as a whole is harder to dismiss. In Cambridge, the movement has repurposed an old Methodist church near the Botanic Gardens, and as well as the town centre reading room, there is a research



library in nearby Elmdon. Cambridge, though, is relatively small fry as far as Christian Science is concerned. The movement is largely US-based, with headquarters in Boston – and it is here that the movement's origins and major controversies lie.

Christian Science was the brainchild of Mary Baker Eddy, a widower from New Hampshire, and came into being in the mid-19th century, at the same time as Mormonism – a religion with which it shared a number of similarities, not least in being deemed by mainstream

Christianity as a 'cult'. The unique selling point of Christian Science was – and still is – that Mary Baker Eddy had discovered a new 'Divine Science' which constituted a return to primitive Christianity and emphasised healing.

She documented this revelation in Christian Science's central text, *Science and Health*, which outlined how healing could be accomplished through prayer. This had two major implications: firstly, in a spiritual sense, Christian Science prayer involves a struggle to realise the metaphysical truth that this world is

◀ A Christian Science reading room (DISTILLATED)

essentially illusory compared to God. As such, *Science and Health* teaches that there is nothing to be healed but the soul.

This prohibits Christian Scientists from using doctors – if all that needs to be healed is the soul, why are physical remedies needed? In fact, Christian Science teachings suggest that healing is more effective when medical professionals are not involved at all, instead relying on Christian Science practitioners, who essentially pray for the sufferer.

This, naturally, has led to a series of controversies, particularly in the United States, by virtue of the larger Christian Science population there. A series of child deaths from preventable causes such as diabetes and meningitis led to an increased drive against 'religious freedom' standing in the way of caring for children, and several convictions of Christian Science parents for manslaughter.

While other minority religious groups with similar views on modern medicine have had members face jail sentences, however, Christian Scientists have been

“  
Mary Baker Eddy had discovered a new 'Divine Science'  
”

## Perspectives: The relationship

Jack Slater *God is dead, and it was science that killed him – but we can still tackle some issues from a religious perspective*

God is dead, and it was science that killed him. Or at least, that's the message you may well take away from some of the more prominent atheists in the public eye – particularly those who can be loosely clustered around the category of New Atheists, such as Richard Dawkins or Sam Harris.

And it is in fact a claim that has a fair amount of merit, although probably not in the manner the New Atheists intend. It is in the enforced humility with which many religious thinkers today have responded to the 'Death of God' that we can see a model for how science, religion, and other schools of thought can come together to address some of the most pressing issues we face today.

Whenever someone talks about God dying, they are almost always (consciously or not) referring to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* and, just as frequently, they are entirely missing the point. Nietzsche wasn't talking about a literal death of God, nor was he claiming that it was now apparent that God did not exist. Instead, he was simply noting that religion could no longer be relied upon as a moral compass and a source of meaning in people's lives. While Nietzsche predicted that the death of God would lead to widespread nihilism, he didn't predict that science might come to fill the role religion once held in Western society.

What is really quite interesting is how this has forced religious thinkers to respond – most notably, taking seriously the work of secular scholars and proposing religious thought as one voice in the



▲ New Atheist Richard Dawkins (DAVID SHANKBONE)

discussion, not the only voice. Examples of this work abound – from this very university I can think of Sarah Coakley and Rowan Williams as two excellent examples of religious scholars who take secular work very seriously. Certainly this humility, for want of a better word, is sorely needed at times among some of the more prominent members of the scientific community.

Prominent examples of scientists overstepping their bounds might include Stephen Hawking's assertion last year that philosophy is dead (which, rather amusingly, is an inherently philosophical statement). This assumption that expertise in science gives one credentials to speak authoritatively in other fields is part of the 'scientism' that is gaining grounds in certain circles. Not only is it bad science, but it represents a very unhelpful way in which science can interact with other fields.

Increasingly, though, some of the most pressing questions of the day are not ones that can be easily described as the sole purview of science or religion. Dogmatic insistence that science or religion is the only applicable analytical tool in any situation (an insistence one finds spouted by the fundamentalist wing of both sides of the theism-atheism divide) is a position which far too often materialises.

Instead, we need to consider the whole range of voices that can make contributions to a discussion – scientific, religious, philosophical, historical – if we are to avoid a studied deafness to voices that might be different from our own.

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# Science

largely protected, due to the foresight shown by some of their members. Christian Scientists had tended to be middle-class and aspirational, playing prominent roles in government. Two of Richard Nixon's most trusted advisors were Christian Scientists who successfully introduced a series of pieces of legislation giving the movement exemptions from important medical policies, such as mandatory vaccinations.

However, in the wake of increasing legal scrutiny, the movement now insists that its members follow local laws – even though these may contradict its core teachings. I spoke further about this with David Willman, the organiser of Cambridge University's Christian Science group.

He said that Mary Baker Eddy's teachings in fact appreciated the work of medical professionals, suggesting that they were positive influences on her life, though he still maintains that healing is most effective without the influence of modern medical treatments.

He also spoke to me about his personal, documented experiences of Christian Science healing, citing several examples. These included an incident when he was hit by a squash ball in the eye, went temporarily blind, yet following a minute's prayer was completely "healed". He offered a further example of an occasion when a painful lump or growth under his left arm vanished after a period of prayer.

While backed up by the Church, these 'healing events', as far as I am aware,



have not been fully investigated or corroborated by medical professionals. The Christian Science movement as a whole relies on verified anecdotal accounts of healing such as these, published regularly in the movement's journals, in order to make its claims for healing. These anecdotal claims are extremely vulnerable to false positives and mis-characterisation, and are not confirmed by outside sources as a matter of course.

All of this begs the question: if we have little good evidence for the healing powers of Christian Science prayer, and thus their particular view of the world,

▲ The Christian Science Mother Church in Boston (SARAH NICHOLS)

why is this religion popular?

The simple answer is that it isn't – at least, not any more. The Cambridge congregation is relatively small, and positively tiny within the University. David Willman suggests that there are single-digit numbers of Christian Scientists across the University – including just one undergraduate.

David himself is a retired academic, his age typical of many Christian Scientists. Globally, at least a third of Church members are aged over 65, frequently living together in clumps of retirement communities.

“Globally, a third of church members are aged over 65”

This is a significant contrast compared to the early half of the 20th century, when the movement experienced a peak of around 300,000 active members in the mid-1930s. Today, the Church stands at fewer than 100,000.

There are a number of reasons for this. Early Christian Scientists were mainly women, drawn by the increase in career opportunities which the movement offered. As these opportunities became mainstream, the movement declined. Christian Science also – unlike Mormonism – does not use missionaries to spread the religion, leading to low conversion rates, even within families of Christian Scientists.

However, the most significant reason is advances in medical care. While in the past prayer may have been as effective as the dubious remedies of 19th-century doctors, discoveries such as antibiotics and breakthroughs in the understanding of diseases meant that Christian Science became substantially less effective.

As such, it is hard to see a future for the movement. The growing age of its members means that this religion will likely eventually die out, with its healing methods increasingly discredited.

Given the number of people, particularly children, who have suffered from preventable illnesses because of the movement's teachings, I'd have to say that this is no bad thing.

Frequently unnoticed, Cambridge's small Christian Science reading room and community may soon fade into the city's history.

## between science and religion

**Sofia Weiss** *While science and religion may disagree, the important thing is coexistence*

Some of those reading will likely be aware of the 'Cold Dark Matter Theory' for the Universe's formation and its illustrious co-developer: Joel Primack. They may not have known – until now – that Primack believes in God. On learning this fact, one of two reactions is likely to ensue: they will gasp and roll their eyes, or they will smile smugly in that easily recognisable 'I-told-you-so' fashion. After all, science and religion are still largely cast as opponents in a battle for human minds.

Such dissonance extends to the scientific community in its near-entirety. Those who question religion often contend that every piece of data that we possess indicates that the Universe operates according to unchanging, immutable laws. Yet 20th-century breakthroughs in chaos theory and quantum mechanics, for example, also suggest that the workings of the Universe cannot be predicted with absolute precision. Hence, even as science progresses, moving towards deeper understandings of particles and forces, there still remains a 'why' at the centre, as to why the ultimate rules are the way they are. At this critical frontier, some scientists find religion. Indeed, to many, their conclusions may not be that different from religious revelations.

The crux of the issue as an omnipresent clash lies in the burden of proof: empirical data is the basis of the scientific method. Followers of many religions have long sought direct evidence for their beliefs, and systematically come up dry. Of course, this is also true for when scientists looked for, say, cold fusion: no

▼ A scientist with faith, Albert Einstein (SOPHIE DELAR)



scientist has managed to prove that cold fusion doesn't exist, but most would assign a low probability to it because the not-insignificant number of attempts in their quest have been all but fruitful.

One might interpret this to mean that individuals – including fellow scientists – are still free to believe that their religion has not yet been disproven, and perhaps even consider this sufficient evidence in favour of their convictions. However, anyone who seeks to bring science into the argument must acknowledge that the evidence thus far is weak, especially when it is combined statistically, for example, in the fashion of meta-analysis.

Such a judgement does not, however, merit the bashing of the religious among us. When we consider the integration of science and religion, I believe that the task has been incorrectly defined. Coexistence is not a question of whether the two issues can resolve their differences, make friends and skip together hand-in-hand into the horizon. It would seem to me that the vital issue is whether effective science can be achieved by scientists, religious and otherwise, working in tandem. Empirical evidence would suggest that the answer to said query is a resounding yes: just look at Primack.

In this light, Einstein's infamous aphorism that "science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind" seems rather irrelevant. The more pertinent realisation is that science and religion can and do coexist in our laboratories, and that perhaps the hour has come to end the trivial arguments and get back to the business of discovery.

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# Comment

## A tale of two unions: will Scots call time on the UK?

*The Unionists' case was strengthened by the EU. The government's pursuit of 'hard Brexit' threatens that*



Jenny Young  
studies MML at  
Homerton College

**A**s a Scot, I voted No in the 2014 independence referendum, and if the referendum were held tomorrow I would vote No again. My decision in 2014 was based on the economic uncertainties which Scottish independence entailed and I believed that, all things considered, we were 'better together'.

However, Nicola Sturgeon announced at the SNP conference that an Independence Referendum Bill would be published this week. While Sturgeon has refused to present a timeline for another referendum, or even say that there will definitely be one, many believe that they will soon be voting on the future of their nation once more.

I know lots of people who don't want another referendum; they say we should accept the results of 2014 and this year's EU referendum and get on with it. It's not that they are happy to be leaving the EU, but they want to move on from these divisive 'us and them' campaigns.

Yet in their manifesto for the 2016 Scottish Parliament election, the SNP said that another independence referendum would only be called if there was "sustained evidence" that a majority of Scots wanted independence, or if there was a "significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014, such as Scotland being taken out of the EU against our will". Scotland made its feelings on Europe pretty clear, with 62 per cent of votes cast for Remain. Now, it looks increasingly likely that Scotland will be taken out of the EU against its will.

While I wouldn't vote for Scottish independence tomorrow, I understand the betrayal that Scots felt on the morning of 24th June. One of the key arguments put forward by the Better Together campaign in 2014 was that, by leaving the UK, Scotland would lose its membership of the EU. The dangers of Scotland 'going it alone' outside of the EU and losing the supposed influence that the UK had in the EU were emphasised by the No campaign. Scotland would not automatically become a member of the EU, they argued, and so would have to negotiate a possible entry into the EU, which would bring further economic uncertainty.

Speaking from personal experience,

economic uncertainty and leaving the EU were key factors which made me vote No. I felt that membership of the EU was too important for our country. And it would seem, at that time, many others were persuaded by these arguments too. So it is no wonder that many Scots are outraged that, a mere two years after this vote, we face the prospect of being dragged out of the EU by the UK government.

Facebook newsfeeds are never a great place to be the morning after an election, but one thing that struck me the morning after the EU referendum was an image of the electoral map of Scotland, with every local area coloured yellow for Remain, shared by lots of Scottish friends. They were all, more or less, expressing the same sentiment: this result is not fair, it in no way reflects the view of the majority of Scottish people.

The result of the EU referendum reinforces an underlying issue which led so many to vote for independence in 2014: while Westminster may occasionally pay lip service to Scotland, we make up less than a tenth of the UK population, so even if we all voted for the same result in an election, if the rest of the UK votes for a different result then we have to accept the outcome. While this seems unfair to many people, if Scotland is just another region of the UK, then this is the way it should be. But even as a No voter myself, I think there is something distinct about



◀ Ex-Leader of  
the SNP, Alex  
Salmond  
(SCOTTISH GOV.)

Scotland which cannot just be subsumed into the rest of the UK. While on my Year Abroad in France last year, whenever someone asked where I was from, the answer was always 'Scotland'. Why not Britain? After all, that's what my passport says, I am a British citizen. But national identity in the UK is more complicated than that and this, in part, is where the problem lies.

While many argue the case for independence in terms of Scotland being a self-governing nation, a major stumbling block to Scottish independence remains: the economy. Once reaching \$120 per barrel and despite optimistic predictions



▲ A European-leaning Scotland is at odds with a United Kingdom  
(CALLUM HUTCHINSON)

for the future of this industry from the Yes campaign, the price of North Sea oil per barrel is now closer to \$50 – not happy reading for supporters of Scottish independence. In 2014, the Yes campaign seemed to avoid getting into the specifics of the economics of Scottish independence, as no one really knew what those economics would be. Arguments in favour of independence were seen by many as matters of the heart rather than the head. With the economic outlook for an independent Scotland looking even less favourable now, it is likely that a future independence campaign would focus on the same again, and not necessarily be unsuccessful; the EU referendum showed that these 'heart' arguments can be extremely powerful and their impact on the voters should not be underestimated.

But the Better Together campaign cannot argue that voting against Scottish independence is a vote for continuity and economic stability, as the UK looks set to leave the EU and the value of the pound falls rapidly. Facing an increasingly uncertain future within the United Kingdom, it's still not clear which path Scotland will take.

“Scotland will be taken out of the EU against its will”



Easa Saad

## Prevent has no place here

Cambridge students may have recently received an email from colleges about needing a 'Prevent approval' before booking external speakers, but many do not know what 'Prevent' is.

Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, the 'Prevent Duty' was placed on higher education institutions. This was an extension of 'Prevent', the government's controversial counter-terrorism programme, which, according to critics, served to "stigmatise" the Muslim community. In 2011, then-home secretary Theresa May criticised universities for being "complacent" in tackling extremism.

Universities will have to fulfil the requirement to report "vulnerable" students, while having stricter guidelines on speakers considered "radical" – plans that the Joint Committee on Human Rights have said would "stifle academic freedom".

The legislation attempts to extend the scope of laws limiting speech to cover the expression of opinions which contradict the seldom-defined 'British values', out of concern over 'non-violent' forms of extremism which can serve as a basis for 'radicalisation'. But is there any evidence that regulation of university speakers is a solution to this issue?

The University of Cambridge found no link between universities and radicalisation, a conclusion echoed by the Chief Executive of Universities UK in 2011. Indeed, academic freedom is one of the best means for tackling extremism.

Where do we draw the line as to which views are unacceptable? Segregation of men and women at events on university campuses has been a big issue over the last few years, with the consensus being that the practice is in opposition to those 'British values' and an insult to gender equality. But is it helpful to equate conservative religious or cultural practices with 'non-violent extremism'?

By criminalising these views, we are telling a large group of people that they may not be heard. The email received by students was about external speakers, but how long before student's views – particularly Muslims – are scrutinised? The University has a responsibility to foster a trusting environment, where dialogue and debate trump stigmatisation.



Cartoon by Ben Brown



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## Charity fop: from Ann Summers to Help the Aged

*My mother used to dress me exclusively from GAP. So how did I become an accidental trend-setter?*



Will Hall  
studies English at  
Emmanuel College  
and often performs  
at Footlights  
Smokers

Will  
Hall

I'm going to lay my cards on the table: I'm one of those twats who likes colourful jumpers. There, I said it. I was once genuinely asked by a friend whether I was colour blind because they couldn't understand what had possessed me to buy a particularly garish crew neck. As it happens, I had been tested as a child for this optical deficiency that was so famously immortalised in song by Darius (remember him?) back in 2002, because my grandfather was colour blind.

The opticians had concluded without doubt that my juvenile eyes were able to comprehensively digest a Dulux sample-chart – plus I knew all the words to 'I Can Sing A Rainbow' – so it was case closed. It was my fashion sense that was awry, and I knew exactly who to blame: charity shops.

Little did I know, however, that I had accidentally blundered, albeit pre-emptively, into the uncharted waters of 'cool'. Well, almost.

To understand how this all came about, we need to stroll back through the history of my 'style', if we can call it

that (and believe me, few do). I never had one of those rebellious teenage phases where I was a goth or an emo or a mod. Well, I say that...

There was a period when I was 11 when a friend and I proudly declared ourselves punks. We listened to a lot of the Sex Pistols (despite knowing very little about sex or pistols) and politely informed the rest of Berkshire that we were committed anarchists, whatever that meant. This all came to a sorry end when I pricked myself trying to attach a safety pin to my school blazer, and besides, I thought, I really quite like the Queen. But other than that, my youthful wardrobe was pretty standard fare.

My mother bought all my clothes under the unwavering rule that if it wasn't sold in Gap it wasn't worth having. But then one day – I think I was about 13 – a friend asked if I wanted to go 'into town' with him. I was not one to say no to an adventure like this, and, armed with my trademark derring-do and £7.40, accepted.

It turned out that going into town basically meant going clothes shopping.

And not just Gap. I browsed apparel I couldn't afford in boutiques I'd never heard of, and even found a store promising "30% Off Swimwear" (I needed new trunks so this was ideal), though I haven't been back to Ann Summers since.

But then I discovered the joy of charity shops. They became my stomping ground, and I think this is probably about the point at which I started to inadvertently dress like a set of fairy lights (you know, back when they were multi-coloured, before it suddenly became the fashion to have them all the same shade called something like 'ice white' or 'cool frost'). This was for the simple reason that all charity shops, no matter what cause they support, will stock the following items without exception: a brown suit, beige shoes (I know) and a luminescent jumper from the 80s. Three guesses what I left with.

In time I graduated from small towns to the bright lights of London: a walking Rubik's Cube on a tight budget. Friends at first were sceptical, but over time more and more people had jumped on the second-hand, polychromatic bandwagon, and I realised I had, quite accidentally, stumbled upon the fringes of the vintage, retro, wavey-garbed trend of the post-noughties. My get-ups started to seem



▲ "I'm one of those twats who likes colourful jumpers"  
(MATTHEW SEC-COMBE)

less and less eccentric. My friends came along too, and we'd march in formation like a packet of crayons in search of more glad rags. The Devil may wear Prada, we thought, but only because he doesn't know about Help the Aged.

I was never quite cool enough to pull off the true streetwear vibe that the vintage fair darlings of this zeitgeist so effortlessly managed. And if you've ever met me you'll know from that last sentence that I'm also a specialist in understatement. I was just someone who happened to have bought a few of Colin from Wokingham's oh-wasn't-that-a-fun-outfit-in-the-eighties-but-it-no-longer-fits-you-darling-so-let's-give-it-to-Oxfam jumpers, rather than an edgy fashionista with an innate taste for all things voguish – but we did briefly overlap.

So there, my confession is over. I have no skeletons in my closet, just a few moth-eaten pullovers which once belonged to the now potentially-dead. I've worn the jumpers a little less lately, but I still rather like them, in all their refulgence. The odd looks have been replaced by appreciation. However, if mullets, flares and double denim are anything to go by, I'm not resting on my laurels. I'm off to get my eyes tested, just in case we're all wrong.



## Comment

# Mutual fear is driving Russia and the West apart

*As winter approaches, increasingly frosty relations reflect a clash of governments, not civilisations*



Matt Gurtler studies German and Russian at Emmanuel College

Matt Gurtler

“I’m sorry, I don’t have my passport. I left it at my house,” I stuttered in highly anglicised Russian, to a stern-faced police officer in a St Petersburg Metro station. “My house is on Vasilyevsky Island. I’m a student, from England.”

Upon hearing these last two words, the *Politsiya* man’s shoulders relaxed and he waved me through the barrier, leaving me to carry on with my journey. I clearly looked foreign – or else the policeman wouldn’t have stopped me – but if he didn’t have a problem with an Englishman wandering around St Petersburg without his passport, what was he checking for? Most probably: Americans.

Due to the similarities in culture, language and our political relationship, it is easy to group the UK and the US into one beautifully convenient group – ‘The West’ – but the Russians don’t necessarily make the same connection.

From the point of view of Putin’s government and the media, it was the US who hovered their finger over the big red button, during the Cold War, and it is the US who have refrozen the thawing relationship now by getting involved in Syria.

Russian newspapers feature headlines such as ‘The C-400 will leave the Americans behind’, and ‘The CIA has declared

cyberwar on Russia. What next?’. These offer a snapshot of Russia’s view of the US. Such antagonism towards the UK, however, is far less prevalent.

This view is given voice in Putin’s words, too. Speaking at the International Economic Forum in St Petersburg earlier this year, the Russian President said that, when the US withdrew from their Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty back in 2002, having been in force for 30 years, they “delivered a colossal blow to the entire system of international security”.

It was surprising to me to hear such powerful words spoken against the US, a country which is rarely painted as posing a risk to international security by UK parliamentary leaders.

Far more common is for British politicians and journalists to demonise Russia, with headlines such as ‘Putin shows who is boss in Crimea’ and Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson’s recent comments in the House of Commons, suggesting that the Russians should come before the International Criminal Court.

To provide some context for Johnson’s speech, a UN convoy was recently destroyed in Syria, en route to providing humanitarian aid. Johnson says that, although they deny it, all evidence points to Russian responsibility.

He insisted, however, that his words weren’t said “out of any hostility to Rus-

sia” – a claim that seems incongruous, given that he outright blamed the country for the attack. Russia have picked up on this, with Putin calling the comments “a storm in a teacup of muddy London water”.

The Americans are no less antagonistic. Amid allegations that the Russians have been hacking into private US documents, the CIA have been told to draw up plans. Obama, Biden, and Clinton are all behind this. The latter has called Russia’s hacks “a direct assault on our democracy”.

The only prominent figure in American politics who does not condemn Russia is, of course, Donald Trump. When asked about who hacked the US system, he responded: “It could be Russia, but it could also be China. It could also be lots of other people.”

The reactionary comments seem to conceal the real feeling between the West and Russia: fear. It’s an emotion that seems weak and so nobody wants to display it, but it underlies everything that Vladimir Putin said in his Economic Forum speech. When he discussed America’s decision to put nuclear warheads in Romania, he was clearly worried. And Boris Johnson, for his part, desperately tried to backtrack on his statements, scared of how Russia might react.

Spokespeople each side are making no effort to appease the other side, but are very quick to take offence at anything said against them, reducing the serious issues of the US, Europe and Russia wag-



▲ Presidents Putin and Obama hide their fear behind glacial smiles (KREMLIN.RU)

“Fear underlies everything Putin and Johnson say”

ing war upon the battleground of Syria to childish name-calling.

However, this bleak view of the relationship between Russia and the West is often misconstrued as being upheld by every single citizen – a notion which seems so ridiculous when written in print that it’s hard to believe it is so often thought to be true, although perhaps only subconsciously.

My encounter with the police proves this, and the fact that I and several other students were welcomed into Russian people’s homes, given food and treated patiently when making feeble attempts at Russian conversation does too.

The media would have us believe that Russia and the West are constantly at each other’s throats, but the real truth is that only the governments are in disharmony. And even then, it’s really about fear.

# You can’t sit with us: Cambridge’s image problem

*I can see why so many state school teachers are reluctant to encourage applying here*



Anna Fitzpatrick studies HSPS at Magdalene College

Anna Fitzpatrick

Maybe this isn’t unique to Cambridge, I don’t know. But at my comprehensive school, gagging to prove how special you are wasn’t a ‘thing’ like it seems to be here.

Open ambition was received as arrogance and was met with a sort of offended bewilderment. One of my teachers, upon my explanation that I’d missed her lesson due to being at an Oxford open day, responded with guffaw: “Oxford?! You have a cheek thinking you’ll get into ANY university at this rate.” I already had an A, which was way above average in my overpopulated class. Apparently I should have been content with that; I should have been grateful. It didn’t seem to occur to my teacher that a few more UMS points could be what decided whether I got into Cambridge or not, because an A was “more than good enough for most unis.”

An assembly was held in which a teacher tried to persuade sixth formers to drop English Literature because the class was oversubscribed. Many of these students were taking the subject against the forces of their background, which already told them that it wasn’t their place to be academic, or to use big words. Yet, a teacher was standing in front of them,



▲ Students at a formal hall event, wearing gowns (SKITTLED OG)

pleading with them to drop it so that the (predominantly middle-class) kids who were already set on doing English Literature could have access to the scarce resource of education.

So the recent revelation that 40 per cent of state school teachers rarely or never advise students to apply to Oxbridge doesn’t shock me. The general attitude was that Oxbridge was not for us. In this context, it’s easy to direct the lens towards working-class people and blame them for their hostility. But the prejudices felt by my friends are founded in the very real experience of class segregation. They are right to suggest that I might feel alien at Cambridge; to suggest that it wasn’t made for me. They are right – there is a cause for their hostilities.

As its population, we are the actors that inject the concept of Cambridge

with life. We navigate within the confines of a gothic architecture, furnished with entrenched traditions and a Bulldog image. Being within this structure, we can try to break these confines, to make it accessible. But contrary to the story told by university prospectuses, I am yet to sit under a tree with my multicultural friends, laughing at a joke that – despite our contrasting experiences – we all somehow get.

Maybe it’s to compensate for no longer being seen as special upon arriving in Cambridge. Maybe we’re all realising that being good at exams is not a substitute for having a personality. It seems that here, everyone is desperate to prove that they are interesting. Being nice doesn’t make you useful, or endow you with cultural capital that people can profit from; it doesn’t make you a network.

Networking has its place. That’s what LinkedIn is for. But in Cambridge, a culture of your social status defining your value as a person runs deep. ‘You can’t sit with us’ has seemingly lost its ironic dimension and has become the actual philosophy of Cambridge students. What this is saying is that to be inaccessible is to be desirable.

The Regina George of Cambridge is a damaging character I’ve seen performed too many times. Guys on my first swap reassured my crying fresher self that they didn’t mean it when they slammed the table and declared “fine if the last girl you had sex with was asleep”, and that they didn’t actually hate the poor, like they’d shouted. I don’t care if you only

hate the poor ‘ironically’. To me, you’re still a posh boy and those words are far from satirical when they’re articulated in a gun-boat admiral voice.

Even before arriving at Cambridge, I remember the freshers’ Facebook page being littered with sixth formers indulging in how superior they believed themselves to be to Anglia Ruskin. One comment read: “I heard they’ll be our waiters... lol”. Whether this was ironic or ‘just pretend’ is irrelevant. To me, it’s in gross taste that Cambridge students seem to get a thrill from the idea that they are The Elite. In the notion that they are the best, they take comfortable refuge in the delusion that their place here was gained entirely by merit; that it was not at all influenced by the thousands of pounds Mummy and Daddy spent on their education – or from being told since birth that they shit glitter.

If you want to see a direct consequence of a culture that worships exclusivity, look no further than our government. It is the culture at Oxbridge that influenced a consciousness that enabled the justification of austerity; enabled them, so detached from the implications of their policies, in a ‘you can’t sit with us’ exclusivity, to make the cuts that forced my teachers to persuade sixth formers to drop English.

Being inaccessible doesn’t make you interesting or cool; it makes you unpleasant. I’m not that special. Neither are you. What we must emphasise, to people of all backgrounds, is this: you most certainly can sit with us.

“You can’t sit with us’ has become a philosophy”



**Indie moment**  
*Chat with The Mystery Jets*

**Inside the ideals**  
*Body image explored*

**Velvet Overground**  
*The lush, plush fabric is back*

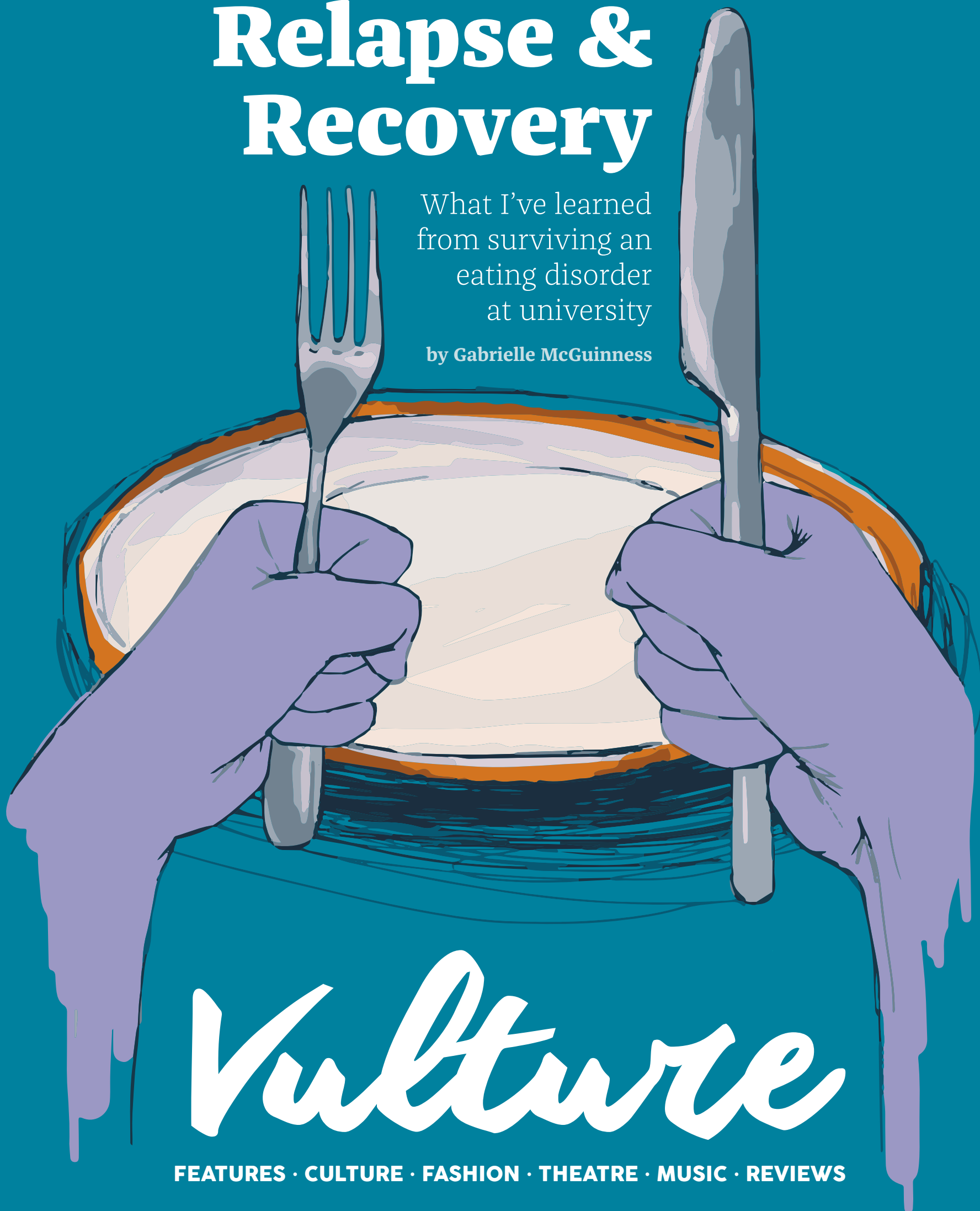
**Varsity Introducing**  
*The barbershop balladeer*

**Sweet as honey**  
*American Honey in review*

# Relapse & Recovery

What I've learned  
from surviving an  
eating disorder  
at university

by Gabrielle McGuinness



FEATURES · CULTURE · FASHION · THEATRE · MUSIC · REVIEWS



## Does being a Cambridge student enable disordered eating? **Gabrielle McGuinness** takes an honest look at the effects intense pressure has had on her body image

Illustrations by **Georgie Joseph**

I've done a few scary things in my life so far, varying from a tandem sky dive to cycling drunk to braving Danger Spoons, but writing this article is probably the most difficult thing I have ever done. My worrying lack of real self-esteem became a serious problem when I was in secondary school and began to develop an eating disorder. Since starting university, my issues have morphed. Although I learnt to battle it to some extent, it is difficult to shake off old feelings of self-loathing and bad habits. It has always been my secret. I've never been good at team sports but I finally found a game in which I excelled. The players were me, my brain and everyone else, while the rules were to trick others into thinking I was completely fine so I could suffer in a self-inflicted silence. Except for a select few friends and eventually my own mum, it has been seven years of lying about this – which cannot go on any longer.

It began around year nine, when my insecurities overwhelmed me, so I chose to become my own bully. When everything felt beyond comprehension, it was the part of my life I had power over. I got trapped in a cycle in which I became so skilled at deception that I tricked myself into proving the feelings of unworthiness that triggered it all in the first place. Towards the end of sixth form I began to try overcoming these issues but the process is slow: old thoughts often come back to haunt you.

At my worst, achievements were falling asleep with a stomach so empty it echoed or being momentarily overcome with dizziness; the days where I invented a new excuse to skip lunch or managed to disguise the noise of vomiting my unwanted dinner so that my parents couldn't hear. I have memories of big family Christmas dinners or friends' birthdays that are marred with the subsequent memory of slipping away to the toilet to purge – at times even taking laxatives. I can reflect

upon a section of my life where I was half-existing: physically present but with my brain totally fixated on the illness.

Eating disorders aren't about wanting to be skinny; they're about feeling unworthy in a deeply psychological way. Your brain totally takes control. But it becomes trickier to battle these thoughts when the society around you seems to encourage your feelings of inadequacy. Disordered eating is not exclusive to women but the omnipotence of a largely homogenous and unattainable ideal of female beauty in films, adverts, music videos, porn or even #fitspo Instagram photos make it challenging to grow up as a teenage girl without developing a fraught relationship with food. I went to a competitive all-girls' grammar school where we weighed ourselves against one another constantly; both grades and appearance were key factors to quantify. I know that my mixed-race identity felt like a constant reminder that I would never be accepted.

Unfortunately, the intense stress of a Cambridge term makes it a breeding ground for disordered eating, and I have met several other people who have experienced similar issues. I eventually learnt that I could not sustain these habits if I also wanted to live happily, healthily and successfully. Or, at least, the rational part of me knows this. But even though I am no longer starving myself, my brain still obsessively tracks and worries about every crumb I swallow every single day.

So it is an oversimplification of the matter to speak of 'recovery'. Eating a slice of cake does not mean I am ok with myself now; there is still an inner voice I cannot exorcise that chides me for not being as thin as I could be. I still cannot look in the mirror without passing severe judgement upon my reflection. Or, there's the hypocritical part of me that feels unbelievably guilty for finishing my plate at

for eating breakfast or not look in the mirror passing severe judgement upon my reflection. Or, there's the hypocritical part of me that feels unbelievably guilty for finishing my plate at



“It is an oversimplification of the matter to speak of ‘recovery’”

▲ We should feel more open about discussing these issues (Georgie Joseph)

dinner while simultaneously being in denial about having an eating disorder. Or the fact that I'm having doubts about writing this article, trying to convince myself I'm perfectly healthy and always have been. By keeping it secret for so long, I have held this lucky card close to my chest that I can play as a way to regain some power whenever my insecurities resurface.

I have developed coping strategies over the years to avoid a full relapse, such as planning lunch dates and making sure I frequently regulate feelings of self-hatred. But I do confess that I am guilty of slipping in and out of old habits. When you develop these thought mechanisms so young, being able to program yourself differently feels impossible.

The unavoidably competitive atmosphere in Cambridge is a glaring reminder of those painful school days. Suddenly I'm the 16-year-old me all over again. Some days I rely largely on coffee and cigarettes to sustain me. While I might start the term with the aim of becoming a paradigm of healthy living, everything changes after a week or so when the essays pile up and the array of verbose articles on the reading list seem beyond comprehension. Our courses are constructed in such a way that we are constantly under microscopic

“The intense stress of a Cambridge term makes it a breeding ground for disordered eating”



examination, through the constant stream of deadlines, the weekly contact with supervisors, and the silent tension between peers in lecture halls. It becomes logical to exchange lunch for a torturous shift in the library.

Starvation seems to balance out perceived underperformance because Cambridge cultivates irrational thought patterns. It's the same reasoning that says it's totally justified for someone to stay up all night finishing an essay, proceed to attend their lectures, and then play a few hours of sport in the evening. We set unrealistic expectations for ourselves and so we shackle ourselves to failure from the offset. The result is that some of us are left feeling powerless. Moderating food intake becomes an easy way to regain some semblance of agency.

During low periods at Cambridge, I have told friends I wouldn't be going to the college buttery as I was cooking my own dinner separately, when really I needed an excuse for skipping the meal and thus sacrificed the social, stress-relieving function of those occasions. I have used an intense day of work or a few extra-curricular commitments in the evening as a way to distract myself from my hunger. I have bought incredibly dull food or barely stocked my cupboards so as to deprive myself of the sorts of foods I actually enjoyed.



▲ **Cambridge can be an alienating place at times**  
(Georgie Joseph)

Now feels like the right time to open up because I have felt stronger lately than I have for a while. I'm terrified, but by making these problems real and public by putting fingers to keyboard, it transforms it into something that the former me suffered from but that the present me wants to truly leave in the past. After all, the health risks of anorexia include liver damage, osteoporosis, infertility and, in serious cases, death.

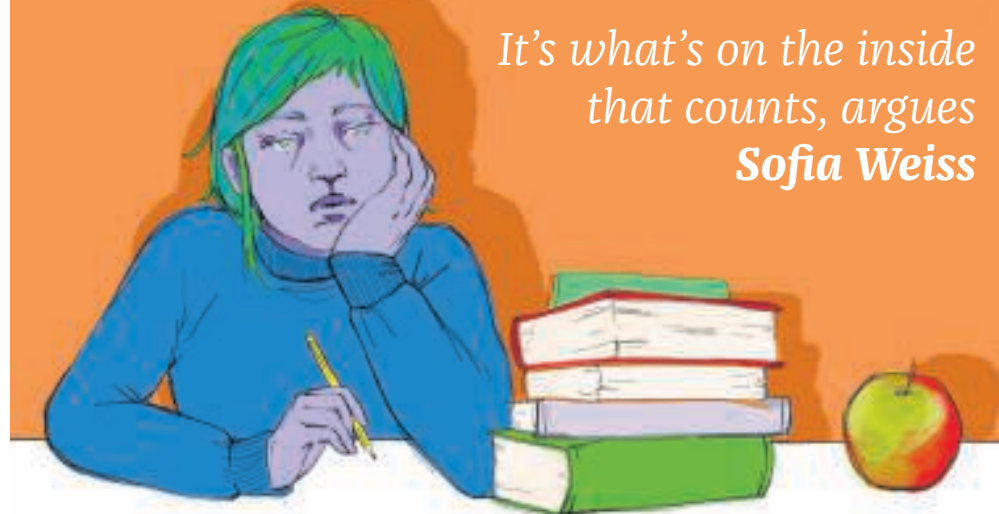
I've been lucky to avoid these but I feel the effects of it on my digestive system as well as my mental health and wellbeing. Cambridge is a stressful environment in which people develop all sorts of issues such as anxiety, physical self-harm, an alcohol problem, gambling, insomnia or physical conditions. I am guilty more than anyone of being secretive for too long; but I'm a fervent believer that we need to begin a genuine dialogue where we speak freely about our own personal struggles with our mental health without fearing the appearance of weakness, because it reminds us that no one is alone ●



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## The ideals of body image

*It's what's on the inside that counts, argues Sofia Weiss*



It will not have escaped our readership's attention that we live in a world highly concerned with physical appearances. For both men and women, socio-cultural pressures – the most nefarious crux of which is arguably the mass media – have set stratospheric standards with regard to the 'ideal body shape'. In my particular experience as a woman, this ideal has been painfully clear: thinner is better.

Indeed, in the face of the universal truth of the teenage years as an era of rapid body change, I have often found myself forced to incessantly reiterate within my own psyche that Marilyn Monroe wore a size 14, or that Barbie's proportions would, if she were a real woman, reduce her to walking on all fours. I have, in fact, built for myself a barrage of such

facts in a vague attempt to retain a semblance of peace with my body in a society that seems to strive for the very antithesis of such. Have I succeeded? In earnest, no. I still struggle with my physique and the paradoxical desire to minimise it, to shrink it almost into oblivion, if not quite. I do not wish to sound too disparaging, however. I do not believe that this issue will be a defining feature of

my future, especially now that I am finally at university, where the opportunity to pursue my passion is a reality, not a schoolgirl folly. Instead, I am choosing to ask questions, and seek answers. Why am I at all interested in the bodies of others, namely waif-like models with unusual genetic dispositions? What is it about my contours that proves so troubling?

Body dissatisfaction seems to me to stem from two assumptions: the first, that a body can be shaped at will, so that the only barrier between any mortal woman and perfection is effort, and secondly, that an imperfect body reflects an imperfect person. On these two premises, it is facile to superimpose a highly unrealistic body ideal, and to lead women into the conflict with their own bodies that we know negative self-perception, and the eating disorders that emerge from it, to be. Tentatively, I would then suggest that a necessary aspect of resolving this problem is to attempt to stop reading character into the size of people's bodies – whether they be those of others, or ourselves.

Indeed, we who find ourselves at university, especially at an institution like Cambridge, are fortunate enough to be enveloped in a milieu that not only enables, but actively encourages, us to craft our characters in ways entirely external to our appearance. Here, we can be activists or artists, academics or all of the above, and be valued for such not only by others, but in our own estimation. Indeed, when we begin to externalise our image of ourselves from our appraisals of our bodies, we begin to loosen the shackles of the pathology of self-hatred.

It is my hope that society, and we as individual microcosms within it, will learn to accept variations in body shape and weight as we do those of hair colour, eye colour and height, among others. Yet, in the immediate term, I strive to remember that my body is merely a transport vehicle, and one that will inevitably succumb to the decay of senility. It is in these times that I am especially reassured by my father's once annoying words: "darling, it's what's on the inside that counts" ●





# Culture

In the decade since his debut album *It's Not A Rumour* was released, Akala – rapper, writer, educator and poet – has released five more albums, carved a name for himself as one of Britain's most politically vocal artists and is now embarking on something of a victory lap. His upcoming album and tour, *Ten Years Of Akala*, is a retrospective look back at the past decade. The album is a compilation of twenty songs chosen by his fans that gives “the power to the people”, and the tour promises to be a massive celebration, stopping off at the Cambridge Junction on 31st October.

I caught up with Akala to discuss his upcoming tour and find out the thinking behind his work. The first thing I ask him is about what we can expect from the tour, and he launches into the first of many fluent, minute-long speeches.

“What we've always prided ourselves on is having a level of production that is two or three steps beyond the size of the venue we're playing. We've mastered all of the music and the individual elements separately so it gives a really phat sound. We've got a drummer, a DJ... We've got full visuals for the whole set. Costume changes. That kind of real theatrical, showmanship energy.”

For Akala, art and politics go hand-in-hand. To get a sense of this, you need only listen to one song of his to be convinced that his politics is intrinsically tied up with his art. I ask him about the relationship between art and politics: should art be political? “Art is political. If we talk about politics as the science of managing human affairs, there's nothing that isn't political. The price of rice is political. How much it costs for a pint of milk at the corner shop is political. Everything is political. It's not just what happens down in Westminster.”

With an almost superhuman-like eloquence, and without needing to pause to think about what he wants to say, he fluently continues: “One of things I really wanted to communicate to my generation really, particularly to young people who feel politically disenfranchised, is the sense of their own political power. Because they might not choose their leader directly, or feel that they have a stake in what goes on in Westminster, it does not mean they're not engaged in politics. Opening a soup kitchen in your local neighbourhood is a political act. Helping out the homeless is a political act. All of those things are forms of political engagement. Choosing to make music that questions the dominant culture is political. Choosing to make music that reinforces it is also political. Artists can choose to engage in progressive politics, or to pretend that they're some sort of apolitical norm – which I don't believe that there is.”

The importance of knowing and understanding roots comes up on numerous occasions during our discussion. Akala's own roots, of mixed ancestry – his father is Jamaican, his mother Scottish – are highlighted in his newest single, ‘Giants’. Unlike most of his previous music, ‘Giants’ is more reggae-influenced. As someone who “grew up on the Jamaican sound system”, why did it take him 10 years to release a reggae track? “I just feel in general I avoided reggae because it was the most obvious thing for me to do.” The track is something of a “homecoming” for him, a homecoming inspired in part by his upcoming BBC4 documentary *Roots Reggae and Rebellion*, which will air in October, and his recent trips “back to Jamaica”.

*In conversation with*

## AKALA

*In anticipation of his performance at the Cambridge Junction on 31st October, Leila Mani Lundie speaks to the musician about art, politics and cultural appropriation.*

▲ **Akala at the Hull Jazz Festival (Ben Pugh)**

He brings up roots again when I ask him what he thinks of the current state of UK grime and hip hop. “A lot of people who actually practice grime and hip hop don't know that grime in particular is a very direct adaptation of Jamaican sound system culture. I feel in some ways I have a place in making my upcoming album and having that whole discussion around the impact that Caribbean music has had on British popular music.”

Somewhat self-indulgently, I finish my interview by asking him about cultural appropriation. I mention that university spaces – Cambridge, in particular – are hotspots for cultural-appropriation-based controversy. True to form, Akala fires off another one of his eloquent speeches. “I think it's about first of all understanding what appropriation is and isn't. See, a lot of people seem to deliberately want to misunderstand the issue. Cultural exchange – borrowing from different cultures – is beautiful, healthy, perfectly normal, and in fact has been one of the key drivers of human progress forever.”

So what, then, is the big deal about cultural appropriation? “I think appropriation, and specifically around the music industry where there's been a lot of sensitivity, is because black American music has been the driving force of the 20th-century American music industry. But black people were pioneering this industry in America at a time when they legally didn't have the right to vote in certain states, where there was racial segregation, where they were literally prevented from going on the radio in some states in favour of white DJs who ‘were told to talk black’. In that history, where people believe that Elvis Presley invented rock ‘n’ roll – which, of course,

he did not – there's a sensitivity around acknowledgement of origin. In the context of modern music it's often been a racialised conversation.”

Throughout our interview, I get the sense that Akala is someone who is unashamedly proud of his art and his work – and rightfully so. Not only does he reach hip hop fans, he is also able to draw people to his music through articulate and impassioned communication of his politics. How has he managed to attract such a diverse following? “I have a really interesting and eclectic group of people that I would say engage with what I'm doing. I deliberately wanted to cultivate that from the beginning. I wanted to affect and provoke thought and make people think and feel and engage with what I'm trying to put out.”

“I put my heart and soul into my art, it's not just something I do because I wanna make money. I wanna make art that I really fucking love, and hopefully other people do to” ●

*Tickets to see Akala at the Cambridge Junction on 31st October are available at [junction.co.uk](http://junction.co.uk). For the full version of this interview, visit [varsity.co.uk/culture](http://varsity.co.uk/culture)*

“  
I put my  
heart  
and soul  
into my  
art  
”

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## Behind College paintings

An alienating reminder of Cambridge's past?  
 Ruby Reding explores

It glows golden in an unusual way and has a sky and horizon in the background that easily hides itself, appearing delicate and tranquil. Thornhill's paintings are recognised as integral to the Baroque style of painting, and I remember seeing some in a book at school for the first time in year 11.

But for most people, the page of a book is as close as they come to experiencing a painting like this.

When a friend at Cambridge told me that the Virgin Queen painting of Elizabeth I was hung above Trinity College's high table in October last year, I was firstly amazed that this fact could be true; and secondly, I thought it was great that there was some female representation going on.

But ultimately the idea that you should eat every day in the presence of something so grand was really daunting and unfamiliar. I don't want to rely too heavily on my own experiences of feeling isolated at Cambridge: I can say, however, that if I felt amazed and intimidated by the interiors in my first few weeks here coming from a state school in London, then I can't begin to comprehend the experiences of those who face this kind of alienation outside of Cambridge.

Part of this amazement at seeing so many dated paintings comes from an appreciation of the history of the art, so why not also represent contemporary history that recognises the importance of diversity?

If the artwork in college halls is a marker of the "political, cultural and intellectual context" in which Cambridge has developed, as Trinity College's website states, then surely there should also be a marker for the development towards a more diverse body of fellows and students. As well as this, the amazing activism going on by BME, LGBT+ and women's campaigns should get the recognition they deserve. Not all students in Cambridge stride

▲ Old portraits are a mainstay of all college halls  
 (Composite: Jon Cooper)

“Murray Edwards [has] the largest body of women's art in Europe”

out of Eton anymore, and so the art should reflect that the student body and political climate has likewise changed (sort of).

I think it's also important to establish when art should take on different responsibilities in different spaces.

For instance, the New Hall Art Collection at Murray Edwards is the largest body of women's art in Europe, which is pretty amazing. It houses works from Tracey Emin to Ghisha Koenig. These pieces, however, are in an exhibition space and do not line the walls of halls and corridors.

It's impossible to expect art to be representative everywhere, but when it's placed in a different social context it must take on different responsibilities.

In addition to this distinction, I think we must also recognise that art is inherently politicised, because of the disparity in opportunities available for artists who aren't privileged, white and male.

The problem lies not just in what is visually apparent in artwork, but also the guise of what goes on behind gallery walls. As the Guerilla Girls point out, this problem is institutional in the social and economic realm of art. The Guerilla Girls are a group of female artists who have been campaigning for gender equality in the art world since 1985.

There is also a sister organisation called Guerrilla Girls Broadband, who have recently revived old campaigns, and argue that these issues can't be left in 1980s feminism.

I also don't want to dismiss the work that has been and is being put in place to transform the interiors of Oxbridge. For example, photography portraits of female fellows in a series called *Portraits that Matter* by Fran Monks have been hung in the hall of St Peter's College in Oxford, among other works such as a portrait of the first female bishop in the Church of England. Homerton College's collection of art is also a lot more diverse.

The problem of acclimatisation for students from different backgrounds is a much greater problem in universities than the old paintings that hang on the walls of college halls.

But if some of the peeling oil paint of dead white men was replaced with contemporary art, or even more representative traditional art, then I truly believe the halls here would seem less intimidating.

Culture and art are political, and even more so when displayed in institutions renowned for elitism. Cambridge cannot deny this problem forever ●

22<sup>nd</sup> OCTOBER –  
 28<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

## What's on this week?

**TREASURES OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY** / North Reading Room, University Library



**TOP PICK**

Expert curators give 10-minute talks on the ancient treasures that are harboured within the library's walls: the Cairo Genizah is explored on Tuesday 25th, while Thursday 27th will feature the first book printed in the West. 10am, 12pm and 2pm on 25th and 27th October.

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>**  
**Trinity Hall Concert: Anniversary of the Organ**  
 Trinity Hall Chapel, 7:30pm

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Carsten Lund Organ (and launching the most recent college CD, *The Young J. S. Bach*), the chapel of Trinity Hall is offering a £5 ticket price for students.  
[trinhall.cam.ac.uk](http://trinhall.cam.ac.uk)

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>**  
**Apple Day at the Botanic Garden**  
 Cambridge University Botanic Garden, 10am-4pm

Featuring apple tasting and a marquee bursting with locally produced ciders, flavoured spirits and other edibles, the Botanic Garden basks in the delights of autumn. £3 for students with university ID.  
[botanic.cam.ac.uk](http://botanic.cam.ac.uk)

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**GoGo Penguin**  
 Cambridge Junction, 7pm.

This acoustic-electronic trio from Manchester, shortlisted for the Mercury Prize in 2014, are influenced by Massive Attack and Aphex Twin (as well as Manchester's moody streets).  
[junction.co.uk](http://junction.co.uk)

If you'd like to submit a **listing**, send details to [culture@varsity.co.uk](mailto:culture@varsity.co.uk)

◀ Akala during a 2016 interview (YouTube: DJVLAD)

## Cambridge Festival of Ideas / Various Venues Until 27th Oct

The 9th year of the festival offers talks from "Brining Listz's Sardanaple to Life" to "Putin's Russia: Dangerous or misunderstood?". Celebrating the arts, humanities, and social sciences, the event aims to engage the public to explore these areas in an inspiring way. Speaker highlights include Lorena Bushell and Professor Claire Hughes.



◀ Intermezzo (1936)



### Who are Fitz Barbershop and what do you do?

We are a group of singers, all male, who dress up in silly costumes: clashing waistcoats, bowties, and boaters. We sing at various events, like May Balls, wedding anniversaries, and we went to the Edinburgh Fringe last year. It's knowingly ridiculous: I don't think we could ever be accused of taking ourselves too seriously.

### What kind of form do the performances take?

At Edinburgh we did it jointly with the Fitz Sirens, the female equivalent. We split the show into four quarters, alternating. It was a collection of songs that intersect, rather than a through-narrative.

### In layman's terms, what makes barbershop barbershop?

The simplest thing which defines it is that the tune is not the top part. In most music, the melody will be the highest voice: in a choir it'll be the soprano. With barbershop, it's the second voice down. There's an extra voice on top of that which is kind of decorative. There's some extra music theory stuff going on which makes it barbershop as opposed to just a cappella.

### Does all barbershop tend to be humorous?

It tends to be either humorous or ballad-y. There's a kind of mix of songs which you do



## Varsity Introducing...

# Jonno Goldstone

*The creative force behind the Fitz Barbershop talks to Patrick Wernham about the group, what attracted him to the music, and the pernicious influence of Pitch Perfect*

because everyone knows them, songs which you do because they're musically really interesting, and songs which you do for sheer comic effect. We have some which have the combination of the three: we do a version of Bohemian Rhapsody, which obviously everyone knows, and there's some really cool musical bits, and there's also a bit where one of the

tenors goes ridiculously high, and everyone laughs. It's the perfect song!

### What's the attraction?

From my perspective, I've always liked singing, and I'm fortunate because the part that I sing is the tune: it's kind of a little bit of an

ego trip. Almost every piece is a solo piece! For the audience, at least in this country, it's not something they often come across: there's a novelty aspect to it.

### Do you think barbershop has a certain reputation? Is it not taken seriously, and do you even want it to be?

I think in the layman's sense it's not taken seriously, and that's fine. It's kind of a niche interest. Given that most of our performances are not given to certified barbershop fans, we end up playing up to that. There is however a small culture of people who take it very very seriously. It's much bigger in the US and Canada, but there's also small pockets of it in Sweden and New Zealand.

### Do you think things like Pitch Perfect and Glee are helpful for you, or do they give a skewed image of that barbershop actually is?

They're not really barbershop at all. They're a cappella. And a cappella has become its own thing; barbershop in the strictest sense is still a cappella music, it's still unaccompanied, but they've gone on very different paths now. My problem with Pitch Perfect and Glee is that I can hear the autotune; you could almost see the binary going across the screen! I kind of wanted to hear what these people actually sounded like.

Jonno performs regularly with Fitz Barbershop at locations both in Cambridge and nationwide. Check them out at [fitzbarbershop.co.uk](http://fitzbarbershop.co.uk)

## HEFFERS PRESENTS POLITICS: BETWEEN THE EXTREMES WITH NICK CLEGG



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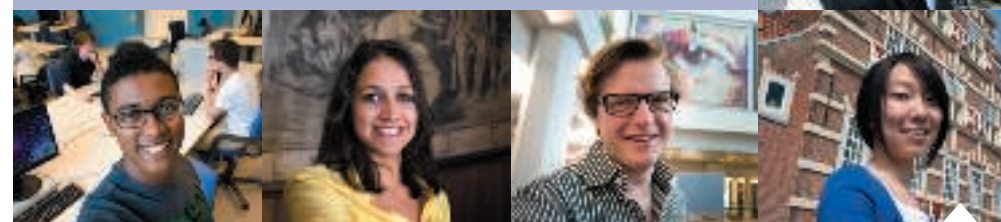
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# Fashion

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## Can the corset's clasp be broken?

**Eléonore Dées de Sterio** explores the nature of this stifling and oppressive lingerie piece

With art by **Emily Dan**

Did you know that corsets make you suffocate? That they jail, contain, and suppress the simple reality that some women have pulpy bodies? That they were created by and for the exhilaration of sheer carnal and masculine instincts, poured into an oppressive, submissive and generally unfair sociological mould? Did you also think that we, supposedly the children of freedom, taking equality for granted, were against this unfair imagination of the womanly stomach?

Well, I have just discovered it and I share my astonishment with you. Wearing and loving corsets is nowadays – in our enlightened generation – judged by an assumption: to embellish (factually and discursively) an artificial construction of the body means hindering the expression of its natural beauty. To strictly feminise this construction means, by extension, to obstruct women in reaching and strengthening their full potential to express themselves freely.

It is a shame that I must disagree here with what seems to be, in the history of human quarrels, the attainment of an undisputed and unnoticed consensus. Corsets have been negative in every social sphere, in every sense of shape and for every body.

The only ones who remain impermeable to this opinion are perhaps the creatures of *haute couture*, whose deeds succeed with scandals and create more crony capitalism than an investment banker and with more fussiness than a diva. They like corsets, but nobody really cares. A few days ago, my neighbour at a formal told me that, for most people,

intuition occupies a much larger space in the mind than that of its intellectual creations. The 'passage' from intuition to creation is therefore the extraction of the internal look and its projection in the world as it is able to be understood.

When it came to corsets, my intuition was double. First, I thought they were deeply beautiful. Secondly, I sensed severe stupidity (or at least shallowness) in the more or less diverse discourses about them in 21st-century Europe. I also felt a strong desire to draw on this train of thought and release this inherent contradiction. There exists a tension between the belief that the modern corset is an aesthetic garment and that it is only and still set up through superficial idealised symbols of the feminine, and this is the view I wish to support.

The modern corset, because of the very fact that it is an insertion of an idealised body onto an actual body, acts as a gesture rather than just as a mere symbol. The modern corset gives more body to the body, just like a light gives more shape to a face. In our generation, it does

not ignore, negate or torture the body, but gives it volume.

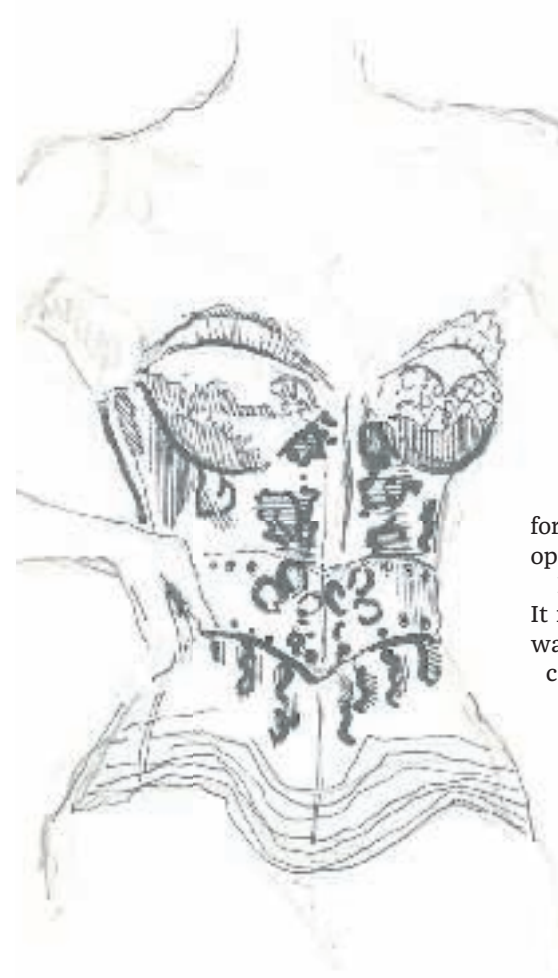
As much as the relationship between the corset and the body may have been like that of two Russian Matryoshka dolls built into each other, the smaller one representing the imprisoned body and the larger one the hermetic corset, it is now very obvious that the linings of the two formerly separated and conflicting parts have operated in a gentle symbiosis.

It is not a mere idealised symbol anymore. It may be argued that it never completely was. And it is therefore useless and stupid to continue living by clinging to a regime of positive discrimination towards certain garments.

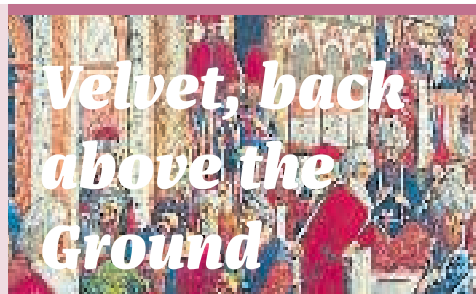
The image of pouring flesh is and was enjoyable. So is and was the idea of upholding (a tool for grandeur, a crutch for confidence and arrogance); encircling (a material protection, a perfect skin); and revealing (with its counterpart, hiding, the two very purposes of all clothes).

Gustave Flaubert, the famous 19th-century French writer, understood the pettiness of the subject. Vividly depicting the burden of wearing a corset, he wrote: "She undressed brutally, tearing off the thin laces of her corset that nestled around her hips like a gliding snake."

Hence, I would like everyone to tear off the thin intellectual laces of the corset apologists that I have described above and let their minds escape into a world where women can liberate their bodies from its clutches ●



“Corsets have been negative in every social sphere”



Miriam Balanescu

Of all things, velvet is one of the most luxurious. Along with candles and incense, it shouts sensuality. Perhaps this is why it is one of the most popular fabrics, returning again and again to the catwalk. It has evolved, become much more accessible, and yet many know little about the material which has come back to collections this fall.

Velvet is made of looped silk; it is woven, and cut to create a pile effect. When it was

first produced, this complex process was time-eating and expensive, making it a fabric bought only by those with money. Its origins are unclear; possibly it was first worn in Baghdad, and from then on we know it was sported in Cairo, Mali and Venice, mostly by the nobility.

This material's popularity exploded during the Renaissance. You may have seen Hans Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII in Trinity, in which he flaunts a red velvet robe with gold ornamentation. The Tudors were very fashion-conscious.

Yet velvet was only worn by members of the Royal Court and the clergy, and the fabric was exported from Italy. Though it is now more available and a lot cheaper, there is still the notion that velvet is only for few individuals, belonging to dandyism or glamorous occasions, and that it should be kept to a minimum.

Vanessa Seward ignores this sentiment in her latest collection. She gives a more gender



▲ Henry VIII

(Holbien)

neutral spin on a former trend, dressing her female models in velvet suits, waistcoats and bow-ties. Because velvet is such a sumptuous material, it brings elegance to this formal wear. Ellery, in contrast, adds a mere touch of brilliant regal sapphire to outfits with high-heeled boots. Alessandro Michele seems highly aware of velvet's Renaissance history in his latest collection.

He slams together the style of the old English monarchy and 70s-80s trends, pairing sequins, florals and Oriental-inspired patterns with velvet. Though the designs are certainly eclectic, the different eras are maybe uncomfortably forced together.

From chic evening-wear of the 1920s to the iconic little dress of 90s grunge, velvet does steal looks, draw glances, and works best as the statement piece of an outfit.

It is tricky to incorporate it into casual clothing, and often, it seems, less of it is more. But there's no doubt that this trend will continue to survive ●





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# Theatre

REVIEW

## 'A unique sneak peek behind closed doors'

A production that aims high, and delivers both humour and darkness, writes **Rose Lander**

**Posh**  
Corpus Playroom  
18th - 22nd October, 7:00pm

★★★★★

**P**osh is a unique sneak peek behind the closed doors of Oxbridge's secret societies. The Riot Club are hosting their termly dinner in a pub outside Oxford as nowhere in the city will host the notorious group, a thinly veiled fictionalisation of the Bullingdon Club. And we're all invited. The audience watches as the extravagant debauchery descends to sinister depths, and are left feeling quite unsettled.

Without a doubt the best part of the production was the superb acting. There was not a single member of the cast who let the ensemble down. The humour, the grit, the improvisation and the impressive dance moves were all accomplished with flair. Even unexpected mishaps were dealt with deftly by the performers. An unfortunate lighting problem at the very opening of the show left the audience waiting with baited breath while two actors stood on a dark stage for what felt like an age. Dan Sanderson, playing Guy 'Bellend' Bellingfield took the brave initiative to apologise for the technical difficulty, which he did very professionally. The tension was broken, the spectators burst into raucous laughter and the awkwardness was soon forgotten.

Anna Jennings's direction is brilliant, with quieter, more well mannered moments contrasting with the riot that ensues. Humour is used very effectively in the opening scenes to reel the audience into this world of the Oxford elite, a task made easier by the familiarity that the Cambridge audience may feel with the characters: the barely understandable *Made in Chelsea* drawl, the dinner jackets, the bow ties. We share the 'banter' with the boys as if we have become members of the club, making the controversial moments in the play even

more difficult to swallow as we consider our complicity.

This play stands in its own right, though having recently watched the film adaptation, *The Riot Club*, it is difficult not to draw comparisons and a couple of things stick out to me that are perhaps more effective in the screen version.

While Alistair Ryle's unnerving speech about "them" and "us" did succeed in making the audience squirm in their seats, it was softly delivered and could have done with a bit more of the punch that was present in the movie. Perhaps Seth Kruger, playing Ryle, could not quite bring himself to mean the shocking words he was saying, which is very understandable.

The women in the play, powerfully por-

“  
Being a  
member  
of the  
right club  
gives you  
a free  
ticket to  
power  
”

trayed by Beth Hindhaugh and Isobel Laidler, only feature as marginal characters, there to serve and please the club members. The production succeeds in portraying worrying scenes which raise questions of consent, rape culture and perceived entitlement.

However, this could have been even more powerful if more of the dialogue had been audible throughout, particularly during the scene in which an escort is asked to do things she is uncomfortable with. The uproarious behaviour of the men is conveyed very convincingly, with improvisation lending a natural feel to the raucous dinner, though sometimes this was at the expense of the dialogue.

The quiet, chilling end was performed very well – the fight scene involving Kruger and Keir Baker as Chris was hauntingly realistic – and forces us to come face to face with the social elitism in our society: where being a member of the right club gives you a free ticket to power, where despicable things said or done in youth are passed off as “silly japes”, and influential people look after their own.

As the audience leaves the intimate Corpus Playroom, they walk over the stage, through the world of *The Riot Club*, and are able to see in detail the true extent of the ‘trashing’. All I can say is that I feel very sorry for whoever had to clear it up. I hope they were given a blank cheque... ●

▼▲ **Posh in performance**  
(Oscar Yang)



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## REVIEW

## 'Anything could transpire, but nothing does'

**Offending the Audience**

Corpus Playroom

18th - 22nd October, 9:30pm

★★★★☆

How does one review a play that repeatedly insists it isn't a play? Faced with this dilemma, I have little choice but to take the Corpus Playroom's production of *Offending the Audience*, directed by Zephyr Brüggén, as exactly what it claims to be: it is not a spectacle; it is not a representation; its stage is not a world, and the world is not a stage.

You are told this soon as you enter the theatre. This production repeatedly defines itself by negation. Repeatedly. For a good hour, its Spartan cast of three (Ellen McGrath, Carine Valarche, Andreas Bedorf) stands at close quarters to the audience in the tiny audito-



**Offending the Audience**  
 (Rachel Tookey)

rium, insisting that they are not playing characters. They speak in incantatory objections, their speeches interweaving: this is not a play. Time is not suspended in a fictional dramatic universe. They assert that there is no plot or narrative. One senses that there is no script either; at several highly awkward moments, the performers hesitate or seemingly utter the wrong line. But, as the play would have it, this is precisely the point. It is not supposed to consist of artifice – it is not really a performance at all. The 'actors' talk directly to the audience, making disconcertingly direct eye contact and drawing attention to movements – while an anonymous performer walks with handheld camera, projecting live video images of audience members onto two large screens. The self-consciousness each audience member feels is probably not unlike the way an actor feels onstage, with all eyes on him. We are suddenly aware of the expectations we unconsciously bring to theatre, our unspoken assumptions of plot and audience anonymity, precisely because this 'anti-play' subverts them. The performance jarringly levels and partially inverts the player-audience hierarchy of traditional drama. The audience, the speakers repeatedly assert, is the subject.

But the play doesn't deliver on this promise. The performers never exploit the infinite pos-



sibilities inherent in breaking down the constraints of performativity. While they make it amply clear that they are dissolving the invisible barrier between performers and audience, they never reach through the fourth wall to make onstage and offstage universes interact significantly – except to invite the audience 'onstage' midway through the performance for crackers and pineapple juice.

The production climaxes with performers donning clown masks and shouting profanities at an audience wearied by an hour's repetition of the same phrases. By the end, your sense of being an audience member has undergone a ruthless Derridean deconstruction.

But you are not particularly offended. The obscenities screamed, along with the recursive monologues, have a numbing effect and are stripped of any shock value by the already iconoclastic nature of the performance. Ultimately, *Offending the Audience* devolves into *Waiting for Godot*. The audience is left in anticipation – a feeling something significant is about to happen – that is never fulfilled. The play is, essentially, anticlimactic. Its repeated formulaic phrases are like a broken record that never quite moves past the skipping point. Anything could transpire, but nothing does, despite the work's interesting conceptual elements ●

Vanessa Braganza

## Opening this week

### Sunday 23rd

*Impronauts Quickfire*  
 ADC  
 8.00pm

### Monday 24th

*Dido and Aeneas*  
 Sidney Sussex Chapel  
 9.00pm ('til 25th)

### Tuesday 25th

*Blink*  
 Corpus Playroom  
 7.00pm ('til 29th)

*Teahouse*  
 ADC  
 7.45pm ('til 29th)

### Wednesday 26th

*Bohemian Lights*  
 ADC  
 11.00pm



# GUIDE FOR FIRST YEAR UNDERGRADUATES

ashurst

✉ [gradrec@ashurst.com](mailto:gradrec@ashurst.com) 🌐 [careers.ashurst.com](http://careers.ashurst.com)

### Manage your workload

While this may seem fairly obvious, make sure that you keep on top of your workload and manage your time effectively. Firms will ask for your first year grades when making an application. So although these grades may not count towards your final degree result, they will count towards your career.

**Ashurst's top tip:** Look ahead and know what university contact time, exams and other deadlines you have scheduled. This will get you in the habit of planning your time – a useful skill for when you are attending interviews and assessment days.

### Get involved

Get involved with university life as much as possible. Societies and other clubs are a great way to develop your skills, while meeting new people and broadening your network. Firms are looking for well-rounded candidates that have something to say outside of their studies.

**Ashurst's top tip:** If you can hold a position of responsibility in any society or club you join, this will help enhance your application, demonstrating your team work and communication skills.

### Do your research

Research different law firms and find out which ones you are most interested in applying to in the future and, more importantly, why. Once you have made your shortlist, focus on meeting them when they are on campus and at any open days they may be hosting in their offices. The best way to identify the right law firm for you is to meet their people and experience their culture.

**Ashurst's top tip:** Our essential guide to researching law firms provides you with a list of useful questions you could be asking and where to start with finding the answer.

### Know what to apply for and when

Law firms typically target their vacancies towards students at certain stages in their studies. Check firm websites for information about application deadlines and what you are eligible to apply for.

**Ashurst's top tip:** While they may differ from year to year, look at different firm's application forms to familiarise yourself with the types of questions they ask.

### Network

Although you may not yet be eligible to apply for a vacation scheme or training contract, network as much as you can at this stage. As mentioned above, meeting firm representatives are a good place to start. It may also be beneficial to explore any connections your university may have – there are often mentoring schemes in place with alumni.

**Ashurst's top tip:** Law societies are a good source of useful career information. Members who are further along in their studies may be able to pass on knowledge from their own applications.

### Develop your commercial awareness

Firstly, ensure that you understand what the term 'commercial awareness' means. Once you are confident with this, focus on developing your own commercial knowledge. An understanding of the wider commercial world is a key competency firms look for when reviewing application forms and during interviews.

**Ashurst's top tip:** Subscribing to relevant magazines or emails is a great way to receive up to date information on a regular basis.

**We will be recruiting for Ahead with Ashurst, our first year spring vacation scheme, between 1 September 2016 – 8 January 2017. Please visit our website for more information.**



# Music

INTERVIEW

## Mystery Jets

in conversation with  
**Rob Bowman and  
Emily Bailey-Page**

**T**hey say you should never meet your heroes. Well, we met Mystery Jets, and they were angelic. We were only supposed to have five minutes of the band's time, but they gave us 45 over quiche in the Fitzbillies on Bridge Street. Jack, bassist, clad in an elaborate fur coat, twiddles a second-hand camera from the Oxfam next door. The band are performing in Cambridge tonight and are touring the Oxfam stores local to their concert venues to promote the 'Oxjam' festival.

Will, vocals and guitar, explains how the connection is personal for the band, not just because they have performed in several charity concerts before, but as keen charity-shoppers themselves. As he says, "it's what a lot of people in their twenties get up to... so it's nice to acknowledge that."

But that's an age most members of the band are leaving behind, a concern around which both their recent album, *Curve of the Earth*, and their most recent EP, *The World is Overtaking Me*, clearly revolves. Jack tells us how they started out trying to write a space-rock album, but then realised the common denominator of all the songs was scale.

Will clarifies: "scale through our eyes", a new sense of perspective on your own past. "You appreciate for the first time the scale of what you've been involved in." The record is definitely one of their most autobiographical, and personal, to date.

It's a far cry from the bubbly nostalgia of Mystery Jets' earlier songs. Is this an album about loss and hopelessness? The band certainly show some signs of despondency about the state of the world, in particular about our technologically-saturated lives. It's a depressing time in America and in Europe, Will says, and the world seems to be self-destructing. "It makes sense for people to disengage from the body and the material: to exist somewhere else inside computers." At the end of the day, though, you have to pick your battles. Would Will like to lead a crusade against music streaming culture, in which artists receive only the tiniest fraction of the profits? Yes, in an ideal world, but that would take an army of lawyers, and as Will puts it: "I'd rather make music."

In fact, the main theme of the album appears to be accepting what you can't control, and holding onto the things you can change. In the song 'Bombay Blue', there's a definite

sense of this in the lines: "they say there's nothing you can do/ but that's what they want you to believe." As it happens, Will says this is the band's favourite song to play off the new album.

There's a certain inevitability, being in a band now a decade old, that you'll be constantly dragging around all the older versions of yourself, preserved for all time in a music video from 2008. But this is a burden the band bear with characteristic humility. Requests from fans to play the old favourites, Will says, isn't annoying; it's flattering.

"Our job as musicians and artists is to update and inform what we have done in the past with what we are doing now. Inject it with fresh energy, like a new set of clothes." The Mystery Jets seem to be saying yes, there are elements of futility, but that doesn't mean everything's hopeless.

“  
You appreciate  
for the first time  
the scale of what  
you've been  
involved in  
”

And in fact, live later that evening, hopeless is about as far from the atmosphere in the Cambridge Junction as you could get. The crowd laps up old and new songs alike, and the band respond to the surge of energy, Jack still spinning around in that flamboyant fur coat. One true constant, through 10 years of music, five albums and

one traumatic line-up change still remains: Blaine's dad, Henry. A member of the band in its earliest days, he is welcomed onto the stage for the final song, leading the audience as everyone sways from side to side in time with the music.

They dedicate 'The End Up', the last track on the new album, to a soon-to-be-married couple in the audience who'll be using the song as their first dance. Earlier that afternoon we mention to Will as the interview closes how, as wide-eyed young freshers, we cemented our friendship over repeated listenings of their song 'Sister Everett'. Will smiles. "The Mystery Jets have a knack for that." ●



## FEATURE

# 30 Days, 30 Songs



**Miikka Jaarte** explores the good and bad tracks of the protest project

**P**rotest music against both candidates in the US presidential election is nothing new, but the *30 Days, 30 Songs* project, started by novelist Dave Eggers, is undoubtedly the largest organised project we've seen so far. It is a playlist of 30 songs, one released for each day remaining until election day, "written and recorded by artists for a Trump-free America". The thing about political protest music is that it can very easily go very wrong. Indie rock, being a genre dominated by straight, middle-class white guys, is especially victim to this polarisation. At its best, protest music articulates the thoughts and feelings of the voiceless in an authentic way, without oversimplifying issues or patronising its audience. At its worst, it is the Green Day-esque cheesiness which treats its audience as a child that has to be won over by a series of edgy-sounding truisms that seem to focus more on the saintliness of the noble performer than the issues at hand. *30 Days, 30 Songs*, so far, has featured both.

### The Good

**'Millon Dollar Loan'**  
*Death Cab for Cutie*

Death Cab has never made an angry song in their career, so it is not surprising that this track is a quiet voice of protest. Accompanied by a beautiful music video, the track is the best thing Death Cab have released in years. It's a somber denunciation of America as the land of the opportunity. "A million dollar loan/Nobody makes it on their own without a million dollar loan" frontman Ben Gibbard sings, backed by a beautiful instrumental combining the classic sound of acoustic guitars and tender percussion.



▲ **Aimee Mann goes after Trump with her song**  
**(6TEE-ZEBEN)**

**'Can't You Tell'**  
*Aimee Mann*

Aimee Mann has always been a masterful storyteller who can inhabit a diversity of characters. Here she tackles the point of view of the man of the hour - Donald Trump. Mann describes an uneasy Trump, surprised that he ever made it this far on a bid that was originally merely a blind attempt at attention and power.

### The Bad

**'The Same Old Lie'**  
*Jim James*

Jim James, lead singer of My Morning Jacket, delivers an adequate song, given that you do not speak a word of English. The guitars, synths and James' voice are hypnotic and beautiful, so much so that I would really like to ignore the incredibly patronising lyricism. But with lines like "Follow on just like most everyone/But you and me we ain't like most everyone", no amount of pretty instrumentation can salvage James' contribution.

**'Demagogue'**  
*Franz Ferdinand*

Franz Ferdinand is unquestionably one of the biggest bands involved, so it is disappointing that their song is a hurried mess. The lyrics referencing Trump's shocking Planet Hollywood tape from only a week before the songs release give this hurriedness away. The song is structured around various one-liners, describing the tired tropes of Trump-satire ("Those tiny vulgar fingers on the nuclear bomb") and a refrain of shouting "He's a demagogue!" after every single one.

You can follow the project at [30days30songs.com](http://30days30songs.com)

▼ **Death Cab for Cutie's song highlights America's inequality**  
**(MARKUS FELIX)**





★★★★★ = AMAZING  
 ★★★★★ = GREAT  
 ★★★★★ = GOOD

★★☆☆☆ = OK  
 ★☆☆☆☆ = BAD  
 ☆☆☆☆☆ = ABYSMAL

To listen to Varsity's Spotify playlist, go to:  
[goo.gl/psEVsJ](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/goo.gl/psEVsJ)



## New releases

### ALBUM



★★★★★

### Walls Kings of Leon

Kings of Leon are a band that most people know of but few seem invested in these days. The family band from Tennessee haven't really been the same since the monumental success of *Only By The Night* and their subsequent meltdown. Their music hasn't had the edge of *Youth & Young Manhood* or the power of their more popular hits. Their latest offering, *WALLS*, has been

marketed as an edgy new output in which "the walls come down" and the band gets personal. This, their seventh studio album, lives up to expectation. It is fresh, interesting and full of the sort of things that Kings of Leon do best. All in all, this is an album which sees the band finally relax and make music which may not be groundbreaking, but undoubtedly good ● *Sarah Taylor*

### ALBUM



★★★★★

### Beyond Now Donny McCaslin

Donny McCaslin and his high-flying electric, cutting-edge and jazz-inspired band offer up their new album full of powerhouse grooves and virtuosity. Hot off the tails of their last record, a collaboration with the late David Bowie, on which this quartet pushed music limits to create a masterpiece, *Beyond Now* is another shining example of the direction some modern music is

heading. The album features drum grooves, electric bass, sustained keyboard chords, soaring sax solos – all of which have come to define McCaslin's distinctive approach. A transformative ensemble, led by a visionary soloist and composer, this record further cements the legend of McCaslin and his bandmates as the leaders of modern jazz music ● *Karl Schwonik*



IN CONVERSATION WITH

## GoGo Penguin



### Perdi Higgs

When it comes to GoGo Penguin, the band are excitingly undefinable. Their music

is an eclectic mix of classic jazz in instrumentation and style, alongside the contemporary addition of synth, drum and bass, and modern production.

The three-person group is made up of a drummer, Rob Turner, double bassist, Nick Blacka, and pianist, Chris Illingworth. Yet when you listen to their music, the layers and complexity make it seem as if there is a whole orchestra involved.

This ambiguity in genre is something that Illingworth himself stressed in our conversation. The problem with such an attempt to define one's genre, is that it can often be limiting. For GoGo Penguin, their priority is to be as "free and open as possible". In order to make their music, they need to exist outside of these barriers.

Their approach to their work is experimen-

tal, and they utilize the individuality within each track to create an overarching theme for their albums. When speaking to Chris, he highlighted the importance of recognizing those who listen to their music based upon each individual track on shuffle, and those who listen to their albums in their whole form. The band has evidently worked to accommodate both these listening approaches. The intention is to create "a progression and story" that creates a sense of fulfillment. This has been a successful formula and the band's work has been increasingly recognized and well received – most noticeably in 2014, when their album *V2.0* was nominated for Mercury Prize, alongside groups such as Young Fathers and FKA Twigs.

Speaking to students in Cambridge, the band is popular. This is interesting because, as basic as this sounds, it is unusual to find a band popular with younger people without spoken word that isn't exactly drum and bass or deep house. GoGo Penguin's repertoire displays incredible instrumental creativity and ability, without any vocals. This makes them a uniquely peaceful listening experience, on the 'studying' playlists of multiple friends of mine ●

21<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER – 27<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

## Highlights of the week

### Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> Flit

**Cambridge Junction, 7pm (doors)**  
Some of today's most influential musicians, including Adrian Utley (Portishead) and Dominic Aitchinson (Mogwai), explore themes of migration through darkly atmospheric songs.  
£25 adv

### Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> Stravinsky's 'The Rite of Spring'

**King's Chapel, 9pm**  
This already epic piece will be played by two talented Cambridge musicians on the King's Chapel organ.  
Free

### Monday 24<sup>th</sup> Jamie Lawson

**Corn Exchange, 8pm**  
Calum Scott opens for Lawson on what could be an epic night.  
£20.50 adv

### Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> Cambridge Modern Jazz: Tina May Quartet

**Hidden Rooms on Jesus Lane, 8pm**  
A superb vocal and piano quartet led by the seasoned May.  
£12 otd



Tina May at Hidden Rooms

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# Reviews

THE TOP 5

## Animated Films



### Toy Story (1995)

Directed by the now legendary John Lasseter, *Toy Story* is not only a technical breakthrough for animated features but it is also poignant, quotable and hilarious for kids and adults.



### Spirited Away (2001)

Directed by Hayao Miyazaki, *Spirited Away* is a surreal and visually captivating exploration of a fantasy world discovered by the protagonist, 10 year-old Chihiro.



### Chicken Run (2000)

An under-appreciated stop-motion film from Aardman, *Chicken Run* tells the story of a group of hens and their attempts to escape their fate of becoming Mrs Tweedy's chicken pies.



### Beauty and the Beast (1991)

With stunning music by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken and a beautifully crafted story, *Beauty and the Beast* captured the hearts of a generation of viewers.



### Shrek (2001)

With a brilliant soundtrack and hilarious parodying of other fairytale films, DreamWorks' *Shrek* is the story of a crude ogre, his sidekick Donkey and their quest to save Princess Fiona

Got your own **Top 5** List?  
Email it to [reviews@varsity.co.uk](mailto:reviews@varsity.co.uk)



Check out more reviews online at: [varsity.co.uk/reviews](http://varsity.co.uk/reviews)

## BFI London Film Festival

Jacob Osborne gives us a sneak peak at some of the best films at the festival

For the past two weekends I've travelled down to London to experience what has turned out to be a highlight of my year – the BFI London Film Festival (LFF). Celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, the festival is a chance to explore the very best of contemporary (and recently restored) film, with 248 features shown over 12 days. It's also an opportunity to explore London's many cinemas, from the booming sound of the Odeon Leicester Square to the intimate setting of the Curzon Soho.

“With an abundance of warm humour, it speaks to adults and children”

The films I saw over the two weekends demonstrated a real mix of style and perspective. One of the best was *Graduation*, the latest from highly-praised Romanian director Cristian Mungiu. It focuses on a middle-aged doctor, Romeo, who is anxious for his daughter to do well in her exams so that she can go and study at university in the UK. After an assault days before her exam, leaving his daughter in a state of despair, Romeo begins to seek morally questionable ways of improving her grades. With almost no music in the film, and with a camera that hovers claustrophobically close to its characters, *Graduation* is a stunning exposition of middle-class male paranoia.

Another film, *Apprentice*, depicts the life of a young Singaporean prison attendant and his deepening fascination with the prison hangman. His new interest threatens his relation-

▲ **Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling in the widely anticipated *La La Land* (Liongate)**

ship with his family, but it nevertheless continues. The film has a deliberate slow pace, but is remarkably powerful in places; the director Boo Junfeng shrouds the corridor leading to the gallows in near-total darkness, the sounds of footsteps and clanging machinery contribute to an unbearably tense finale.

Much lighter, though with shades of darkness, was the intriguingly titled *My Life as a Courgette*. Popular at Cannes, this stop-motion animation brings to life the story of Courgette, a young boy who is sent to an orphanage after a terrible accident at home. Beautifully animated, and with an abundance of warm humour, it speaks both to adults and to children, one of its greatest triumphs.

Another superb animation I saw was *Your Name*. The film's plot is complex, revolving around a metropolitan teenage boy and a teenage girl in the countryside who inexplicably swap places at certain times.

I loved the youthful energy of the music, the themes of loss and regret, and the stunning clarity of the animation, and thought it ranked with some of the best anime I've seen.

But the most high-profile film I saw at LFF this year was *La La Land*, the latest from Damien Chazelle, the director of *Whiplash*. Given the intense competition for tickets, I was astonished I managed to get one.

Far more astonishing was the film itself. Opening with a fabulous song-and-dance routine performed by commuters stuck in traffic, it depicts the romantic relationship between a struggling jazz pianist (Ryan Gosling) and a struggling actress (Emma Stone) in contemporary LA.

It depicts with great pathos the disappointments of pursuing artistic dreams in Hollywood. It's also a modern musical, and features some of the most overwhelming visuals and music of any recent film I've seen, which left me smiling like an idiot. It's not perfect, but of everything I saw, *La La Land* was the only film which made me dance as I left the cinema. It is truly unmissable.

Most, if not all, of these films will be released in British cinemas in the next few months. I would urge you to watch as many as you can, and experience at least something of the diversity and wonder that made this year's London Film Festival ●





★★★★★ = AMAZING  
 ★★★★★ = GREAT  
 ★★★★★ = GOOD

★★★☆☆ = OK  
 ★☆☆☆☆ = BAD  
 ☆☆☆☆☆ = ABYSMAL

To read more of the latest reviews, go to:  
[varsity.co.uk/reviews](http://varsity.co.uk/reviews)



## Recent releases



◀ **Phiona**  
 (Madina Nalwanga)  
 is mentored  
 by **Robert**  
 (David Oyelowo)  
 (Walt Disney Pictures)

▼ **Sasha Lane** makes her film debut as **Star** (Parts and Labour)

### FILM

## Queen of Katwe

OUT: 21ST SEPTEMBER

★★★★★

If you like feel-good but not soppy, funny but not slapstick, and inspiring but not Tony Robbins (for non-Americans, that's Tony Robbins the self-help guru and business mogul), then *Queen of Katwe* is for you. This simply told and beautifully acted film tells the true story of Phiona Mutesi (Madina Nalwanga, a revelation, all poise and quiet strength), a young girl from the Katwe slums in Uganda who discovers that though she cannot read, she can reason – and reason her way eight moves ahead in chess.

Now, chess may not be the most exciting thing to bring to the big screen. Unlike sport, there are no goals or touchdowns, and unlike poker, there is no high-stakes gambling. But the stakes couldn't be higher for Phiona, as chess slowly becomes the means for her to lift her family out of poverty.

She is coached by Robert Katende (David

Oyelowo), a young and talented engineer who can only find work as a part-time football coach. In his spare time, he teaches chess to the Pioneers (a rag-tag bunch of Katwe children). Oyelowo manages to play Robert without any trace of irritating saintliness, and is believable and endearing throughout.

Of course Robert doesn't only teach chess; this is a Disney underdog movie, after all. Through the game, he teaches the Pioneers courage, discipline and a fighting spirit, all of which Phiona will need to overcome the hardships of life in Katwe, and the resistance of Harriet, her protective mother, played with prickly dignity by the marvellous Lupita Nyong'o.

Harriet worries about not being able to feed and house her children, not being able to buy them uniforms were she ever able to send them to school, and the disappointment Phiona will inevitably face.

Mira Nair's *Queen of Katwe* is compassionate, vivid and beautifully shot. It is moving and refreshing, and a rare close-up of urban Africa. Despite rave reviews, it hasn't done very well at the box office, suggesting mainstream (white) audiences are rather too conservative in their choice of entertainment ●

*Yasmin Shearmur*

### FILM

## American Honey

OUT: 14TH OCTOBER

★★★★★

*American Honey*, now showing at the Arts Picturehouse, plunges you into an exciting and exploitative world of door-to-door magazine subscription sales in a dystopic vision of the United States, rife with drug epidemics, economic inequality and shattered families.

The opening scene of the teenage protagonist Star (Sasha Lane) standing in a dumpster to scavenge for food behind a supermarket announces the flip side of the American Dream. Star decides to break out from her desperate life in Oklahoma when she locks eyes with Jake (Shia LaBeouf), a misfit dancing with his friends in a Walmart. She leaves her younger siblings with a sleazy relative before heading off to Kansas City with Jake and his crew, who offer her the opportunity to become part of their team of itinerant salesmen.

Jake entices Star with the prospect of a job, a surrogate family, and even love. But what starts out as a care-free road trip through the American Midwest slowly turns into a bad trip as unexpected and surreal situations break out. The stifling pattern of work-play-travel echoes the absorbing hip hop and rap soundtrack of the salesmen's existence.

The question is, which path will Star choose? And does she have a choice? *American Honey*'s explosive, highly sensual and personal coming-of-age story makes you laugh, yet all the scenes are tinged with an expectation of violence, and a gut feeling that something could go wrong in a split second.

While Jake trains Star, he shares his biggest sales secret: judge the potential client in the first split second and adapt your spiel,



because you aren't selling magazines, you're actually selling yourself. So does Jake actually care about Star, or is it all a mask, as the crew manager Krystal (Riley Keough) tells Star?

British director Andrea Arnold majestically orchestrates this 163-minute epic and immersive experience, and her work was justly awarded the prestigious Jury Prize at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival.

The acting is striking and nuanced; Sasha Lane made a riveting film debut as Star, and Riley Keough – Elvis Presley's granddaughter – was spot on in her interpretation of the ruthless Krystal.

This film echoes Larry Clark and Harmony Korine's works, such as *Kids*, *Ken Park* and *Spring Breakers* – and most definitely surpasses the latter in cinematic eloquence and narrative nuance. The filmic aesthetics of *American Honey* are mesmerising and contemporary, with Instagram-ish lighting and a perpetually wavering camera that echoes mobile phone filming.

Go for a ride with *American Honey* for its coming-of-age story, social exposé of a decaying American society, impressive acting, engrossing soundtrack and beautiful 21st-century American landscape ●

*Sarah-Anne Aarup*

  
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# Sport



## Devarshi Lodhia Trump: The ultimate wrestling bad guy

Donald Trump is in the WWE Hall of Fame.

Yes, the ambitious corn dog that escaped from the concession stand at a state fair and stole an unattended wig is in the WWE Hall of Fame.

The path to the White House has been fraught with self-detonated land mines that would have sunk any other political candidate, but instead have helped catapult 'The Donald' to becoming the most polarising presidential candidate in modern American history. Yet there's arguably nowhere more suited to him than the world of professional wrestling.

Trump's history with WWE goes back decades, with WrestleMania IV

and V taking place at Trump Plaza in Atlantic City. Trump also briefly owned Monday Night Raw in 2009, and he famously participated in the Battle of the Billionaires at WrestleMania XXIII in a fight against WWE CEO Vince McMahon. It ended (as only a wrestling match featuring Donald Trump could) with him triumphantly shaving McMahon's head while 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin energised the audience with a follicular-themed rant.

With his repertoire of dyspeptic smirks and hovering cloud of hair, Trump fits right into professional wrestling's atmosphere of perpetual, petty one-upmanship and theatrical ultra-violence. 'Sports entertainment', as WWE call it, may be meticulously choreographed, but provoking primal emotions can suspend disbelief.

Trump is undoubtedly a master of this. Give him a microphone and an audience and he is a showman, as watchable as wrestling's greatest bad guys (or 'heels'), from Ric Flair to 'Hollywood' Hulk Hogan and Triple H.

Trump's entire presidential campaign has been a masterclass in classic heel tactics. His self-aggrandisement and obsession with his own wealth



▲ Donald Trump

GAGE SKIDMORE

are reminiscent of the 'Million Dollar Man' Ted DiBiase, a man who created his own 'Million Dollar Championship' and even bought the WWE World Heavyweight Championship from André the Giant. One of the greatest heels in the business, Ric Flair, is well-known for the phrase: "You're talkin' to the Rolex-wearing, diamond-ring-wearing, kiss-stealing, wheelin'-n'-dealin', limousine-riding, jet-flying, son of a gun!"

But this all pales into insignificance compared to the wheelin' n' dealin' of Trump. Flair might have walked around in alligator skin shoes, but he never threatened to rival the Great Wall of China on another country's dollar.

Perhaps wrestling's most enduring heel, though – and a direct rival in the 'most deluded sexpest billionaire' stakes – is none other than WWE's CEO, Vince McMahon. While Trump is incapable of referencing God's glory without adding, "but I'm pretty glorious myself!", McMahon is a man who infamously challenged God to a tag team match and won.

Self-made men with the help of multi-million dollar inheritances, both are famous for shouting, "you're fired!", and both are friends with raging racist Hulk Hogan. Neither seems to have the slightest sense of self-awareness, and both have faced lawsuits for sexual harassment.

So, while the pantomime villain may not become president, he will always have a home in the world of professional wrestling.

## Political football? Everyone's at it

Percy Preston  
Sports Reporter

Politics has no place in football.

But try telling that to a politician on the hunt for votes: for them, football's popularity is too enticing a prospect to pass up. Yet, in the end, as all fans know, football can be a cruel game.

In a speech delivered on the South London stop of the Conservative Party's general election campaign trail, David Cameron scored an own goal: he forgot which team he supports. Imploring members of his audience to support West Ham, Cameron apparently failed to remember that he, in fact, claims to be an Aston Villa fan. Later he cleared up any confusion: he was suffering from that well-known politicians' affliction – "brain fade".

Politicians using football to generate popularity is nearly always disingenuous, and often embarrassing. Yet, aside from offering a case study of political insincerity, Cameron's mistake highlights something more essential about football in the 21st (and perhaps any other) century: it is, unavoidably, political. As much as fans, players and anyone involved in the game might squirm at this, it is an inevitable consequence of the fact that the sport attracts such a large global fan base and even larger amounts of money.

But it is a truth repeatedly rejected by those at the very top of the global game's governance. In September of last year, disgraced former UEFA Secretary Michel Platini gave assurances to the Associated Press that, if he were to become FIFA president, his presidency would be "about football, not politics". And Platini's stance is hardly unusual: the former president himself, Sepp Blatter – like Platini currently suspended from footballing activity – has repeatedly rejected the idea that football and politics can, should, or even do mix.



▲ Barack Obama

PETE SOUZA

Yet Blatter's rhetoric is at odds with the events of his presidential tenure, the final few years of which saw an FBI investigation into the awarding of two World Cups, repeated allegations of bribery and extortion against senior FIFA members and condemnation by Amnesty International over the treatment of migrant workers in Qatar. FIFA has also sought changes to local law in Qatar that would allow for the drinking of alcohol in designated public areas: a move designed to please sponsors, but one with considerable political implications.

The question, then, is not whether football should be political. It clearly is. The question is why the opposite is so ardently asserted.

Platini, like Blatter, might argue that football ought to be a space divorced from external, and specifically political, pressures. And this is an attractive rationalisation: one of football's great joys

is that it offers a refuge from these concerns, for players and fans alike. Yet this rationale hides a more pernicious reality, as it implicitly absolves those involved in football of any political responsibility. It perpetuates the belief that football's problems are not political issues. Instead, the most pressing concerns confronting football's governing bodies are the use of goal-line technology, or changes to the offside rule.

Ironically, it is precisely this thinking that sees football repeatedly embroiled in political scandal. Decisions like those to award consecutive World Cups to Russia and Qatar can be justified on the basis that FIFA does not involve itself with politics when choosing host venues for their tournaments. Deliberating over factors such as a country's human rights record, for example, would be a little too close to politics for the comfort of many at FIFA. (If accusations are to be believed, FIFA relies on more impartial and empirically robust measures to elect a host a nation, for example, an association's capacity to bribe FIFA officials.)

FIFA's attempts to defer moral and political responsibility do little for migrant workers in Qatar, nor for LGBT+ people in Russia. And while FIFA can hardly be held responsible for the latter's struggles in particular, awarding the World Cup to these nations confers all the legitimacy and cultural cache that inevitably comes with the one of the most prestigious sporting competitions in the world. Whether FIFA likes it or not, ownership of the World Cup comes with considerable political responsibility.

Indeed, it is perhaps FIFA that stands to lose the most from the false division of politics and football. By repeatedly embroiling itself in political controversy, often as a direct result of its pretence of impartiality, FIFA will become the architect of its own irrelevance. At least with insignificance might come the possibility of political neutrality.

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# A shift in wealth: the rise of the Aviva Premiership

**Ben Cisneros**  
Columnist

The last two weekends have seen the start of rugby's European Champions Cup, with some great matches and some eye-catching performances. Saracens' victory against Toulon was particularly memorable, as it was the first time that the French giants had been beaten at home in the Champions Cup. It was like the Saracens' forwards were wearing All Black, such was the quality of the skills on show.

Yet something which stood out was the number of 'star players' fielded by the Aviva Premiership's teams. This season, more than ever before, Premiership clubs have signed some of world rugby's best players, leading to a hugely competitive league and, hopefully, competitive European campaign.

Wasps have perhaps led the way, having signed the likes of Kurtley Beale, Willie le Roux (though neither have yet played), Danny Cipriani, and Kyle Eastmond, while Leicester have brought in South Africa's JP Pietersen and Australian Matt Toomua. Big back-rowers Schalk Burger and Louis Picamoles have made an impact at Saracens and Northampton respectively, and Sale have signed Welsh veteran Mike Phillips from Racing 92.

Outside of the Champions Cup, Premiership side Bath have brought in Welsh stalwarts Luke Charteris and Taulupe Faletau, along with the hugely talented Kahn Fotuali'i, while Worcester have captured Ben Te'o and South African speedster Francois Hougaard.

It was one of the busiest summers of transfers in Premiership history, when, in previous seasons, many of these players would probably have chosen to play in France, as clubs such as Toulon and Racing 92 put together their squads of 'Galacticos'.

This must largely be attributed to the £1m increase in the Premiership's salary cap this season, to £6.5m, which will rise again to £7m for the 2017/18 season, bringing it much closer to the French limit of 10€m (approximately £8.4m). With this increased financial incentive, the gruelling French TOP 14 season – which spans from 20th August through to 4th June – has become less appealing, and the Premiership evermore attractive.

In addition to the £6.5m, Premiership clubs are allowed two 'Marquee Players'

whose salaries sit outside the cap. This enables clubs to recruit world-class talent, while up to £500,000 is available to clubs in the form of Home Grown Player Credits, striking a balance between the recruitment of top players from abroad and the development of English rugby. Teams are also allowed to spend an extra £80,000 on their wage bill per player called up for England international duty.

This balance is so important, and appears to have been struck well in the Premiership. Having two 'Marquee Players' allows teams to boost their profile and to supplement their squads, while ensuring that English players are given

**£6.5m**  
**English rugby Premiership's new salary cap for players**

the chance to develop.

If there were no limit on players' salaries, clubs would undoubtedly find themselves in unsustainable debt, and the league would likely become uncompetitive.

The strength of a club would rely entirely on its investors' wealth and, unlike in football, English rugby does not have dozens of billionaires willing to pump endless funds into its teams. It is therefore a positive step that the salary cap will remain at £7m for three successive seasons from next year.

The benefits of this system are clear at Wasps, who have made some great signings over the past two seasons. Last year, Marquee signing Charles Piutau made a devastating impact, helping them to reach the semi-finals in both the Premiership and European Champions Cup. George Smith was also on a one-year deal and hugely influential, not only around the pitch but on the development of Wasps' back row. Thomas Young emerged as an outstanding number 7, while Sam Jones, Nathan Hughes and James Haskell improved markedly, demonstrating the importance of being able to bring in world-class players.

Wasps are, in fact, one of the richest clubs in Europe now, following the opening of their retail bond in May 2015, but they remain full of bright young English players. Kurtley Beale may have become the highest-paid player ever in the Premiership, with a £750,000-per-year deal, but 14 out of the 15 players who started

Wasps' opening game of the season were England-qualified.

This shows a system which is working well, in contrast to the TOP 14 in France, where the huge number of foreign players, particularly at clubs such as Toulon, Racing 92 and Montpellier, has had a disastrous effect on the French national team. Parallels are clear with the Premier League and the England football team.

The TOP 14 is fuelled by multi-millionaire owners and massive TV deals: very few of rugby's biggest names are outside of the reach of France's elite clubs. Japanese superstar Ayumu Goromaru has reportedly become the highest-paid player in the world, having signed a deal with Toulon worth over £1.4m a year, while All Black legend Dan Carter earns similar at Racing 92. Several of the world's other highest-paid players are also at Toulon, where Matt Giteau earns £900,000 and Ma'a Nonu earns £600,000. What's more, owners have found ways of circumventing the TOP 14 salary cap, by offering players additional income from image rights and other endorsements – which don't come under the cap in France – allowing their clubs to put together such talented squads.

The league's attraction, though, has been reduced somewhat thanks to the Aviva Premiership's new four-year TV deal with BT Sport, thought to be worth



▲ Matt Giteau, one of rugby's highest-paid players (CLÉMENT BUCCO-LECHAT)

around £70m per season. This deal, as well as greater attendance and increased investment from sponsors, has grown the league's financial clout considerably.

The effect of this has been seen domestically and internationally: five English teams made it to the quarter-finals of the Champions Cup last season and the England national team won a Six Nations Grand Slam. Success breeds success, and the exciting rugby that English clubs have started to play has clearly enticed more top players to come and play in the Premiership. With the right controls, this is good news for English rugby fans.

It is not quite such good news for the Pro 12 and Super Rugby, who simply cannot compete. They do not generate the revenue or investment that the French and English leagues do, meaning they struggle to retain some of their talent.

In fact, the Pro 12 is rumoured to be in discussion with American investors about the possibility of making the league Trans-Atlantic, in order to stimulate growth and attract players.

Such desperate measures reflect the hard reality of modern professional sport, where money seems to be everything.

Only time will tell us of the full impact of this shift in rugby wealth.



▼ Saracens play French side ASM Clermont Auvergne (ZEGREG63)

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# Sport



**Ben Cisneros**  
More money,  
more talent in  
English Rugby  
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## Nomads leave spirited Warwick looking lost in 7-1 walkover



▲ The players in action on Wednesday

(PAUL HYLAND)

Cambridge

7

Warwick

1

**Paul Hyland**  
Chief Sports Reporter

Cambridge University Hockey Club women's second team – commonly known as the Nomads – produced a scintillating display of attacking hockey on Wednesday afternoon to secure a 7-1 win over Warwick II at Wilberforce Road.

Just a week after a chastening 4-1 defeat away to Coventry, the match gave the Nomads an excellent chance to get their season back on track. And while the final scoreline appears emphatic, the initial stages hinted at a much closer affair. Warwick's energy and purpose were on display from the first whistle, with the Nomads' consistently excellent Rhianna Miller soaking up all of the early pressure. All day, Warwick tried to feed their forward line with longer passes along the ground, yet Miller's innate sense to drop deeper or push higher when needed, put paid to almost all of her opponents' attacking threat.

With a calming influence at the back, the home side were also comfortable going forward. The Light Blues monopolised the ball, stretching the play the full width of the pitch, and leaving nothing

to chance with a high line that won back possession time and again.

But after the Nomads squandered a series of penalty corners, suddenly Warwick found themselves in behind the home side's defence. An overhit back-pass out of midfield was just out of reach for Rhianna Miller. Warwick's Elsa Keep licked her lips – the chance handed to her on a plate – and duly dispatched it under the boot of the Light Blues' keeper, Liza Hartley, and onto the backboard.

When sucker punches land, heads can drop. But Cambridge were not about to let that happen. Mere minutes after Keep had put Warwick one to the good, the umpires spotted yet another penalty corner – one of the countless Warwick were to concede. The ball was sent in short with just enough momentum to set Michelle Teplensky up nicely for an equaliser.

And the Nomads soon reversed the arrears thanks to Cat Cox's free hit from the 23-metre line, finding its way wide right so an excellent driven cross could be stabbed home by Georgina Baker for 2-1.

Warwick put up a spirited fight, but the Light Blues were the more expansive side at each turn, widening the pitch well and finding space behind a defensive line that was never given a minute. While most of Warwick's defending was done behind their 23-metre line, most of Cambridge's defending was done in their opponents' half. Their lightning transitions from high pressing to quick attacking helped to turn this affair into a drubbing.

And they certainly helped add the third before half time. The Blues won the ball high up the field, and before anyone knew it, Georgina Baker had received the ball just inside the defensive area, and unleashed a howitzer of a reverse stick shot to soar past Swathi Vankayalapati in the Warwick goal.

Baker was not the only one whose performance raised eyebrows. The Nomads' Alicia Murphy, positioned between defence and attack, was perfect: hardly putting a foot wrong from first whistle to

in our half and [the Nomads] did not give us an easy ride but we didn't go down without a fight!"

However, Warwick did nothing to stop the officials awarding about as many penalty corners against them as in the first half, though it seemed that all the stoppages had robbed the Nomads of some of their momentum. Much more spirited than in the first period, Warwick often managed to reduce the Light Blues to shots from distance and misplaced passes into the final third.

But concede too many penalty corners at your peril. The home side's fifth penalty corner brought with it their fifth goal. This time, the brilliant Murphy passed along the ground to Teplensky, and her shot deflected past the keeper.

The Nomads were not about to stop there. Mere moments after the fifth, a completely unmarked Alice Jones welcomed a driven cross from wide right with open arms, finishing easily past the keeper to make it six.

And there was time for one more. Two minutes before the final whistle, the Light Blues' Rachel Brennan collected a loose pass in the centre and ran all the way into the defensive area with scarcely a challenge to face. She unselfishly tapped the ball in the direction of Rosie Vince, whose turn and shot put the cherry on the icing on the cake for the Light Blues.

*Nomads: Hartley, Miller, Murphy, Cox, Barker, Czink, Baker, Pavay (c), Teplensky, O'Neill, Brennan, Jones, Vince, Norman, Hampel*

5

**The number of  
penalty corners  
which Warwick  
conceded to the  
Nomads**

last, her low centre of gravity allowed her to weave between markers as if invisible. She instigated arguably the best passing move of the day with a characteristic burst forward out of defence, passing well to Tamara Norman, who handed over possession to Annie O'Neill, herself evading a series of markers before putting away for 4-1.

Second half underway, it appeared that whatever had been said to Warwick at the interval had worked. The away side looked much more organised, holding their defensive shape more easily, and keeping Cambridge at bay for longer.

Indeed, as Warwick's Lily Covington told *Varsity* after the game: "We thought that we played well and put up a good fight for a team that we knew beat our first team! It was a good defensive game



**Keir Baker**  
Sports Editor  
All sports are  
created equal

During my short tenure as Sports Editor, two things have struck me. Firstly, there is a craving out there in Cambridge sporting circles for more attention and coverage, and not for the reasons that people might expect. The delight of the Light Blue athletes I have interacted with as they find out that their match will be in *Varsity* is a joy to see, and makes this job worth it.

Sports people at Cambridge, with a few notable exceptions, are not arrogant or elitist, in the sense that they do not look down on their non-sporty counterparts. Rather, they want to see tales of their sporting feats in *Varsity*, because it accords recognition to the time, the hard work and the dedication that they put in.

Indeed, whether it be the sounds of rugby players training on the Grange Road pitch reaching my room seemingly every night, or being woken up by my girlfriend as she heads off to swimming training at 5 in the morning, there are always signs that those who have the honour to pull on a Light Blue shirt are trying to live up to the honour.

And yet, it is also hard to escape the feeling that some sports in Cambridge, and some athletes, do not get just reward for their efforts. Dismissed as 'not real sports' or 'easy half-Blues', these are sports that, as sports editor, I am hoping to give fair coverage to, both through sending correspondents to cover matches and via our online 'Rogue Sport of the Week' column. Korfball, ultimate frisbee and cheerleading may not be steeped in Cantabrigian tradition like rugby and rowing, but history can never justify a contemporary state of affairs – just ask any law student. And it's not about measuring their talent against their counterparts in football, hockey or tennis: I know a Blue or two who could not throw a Frisbee with any great accuracy.

The Cambridge sporting scene is brilliant at facilitating success in BUCS and Varsity matches. But it must not do down, ignore or malign anyone who takes the time out to represent it, whatever the sport.