The fine art of gossiping
Is it ever okay to talk about someone behind their back?

Bitch!

Features 20-21

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‘I wasn’t treated like an actual human being’

Varsity investigation reveals disparities in intermission practices and their harmful effect on students

INVESTIGATION 2-5
Cambridge must change its nonsensical rules on intermission

Students are well aware of the pressures which we all face, and years of campaigning, advocacy and support mean that though problems remain – they are not totally hidden. We are constantly encouraged to talk about issues which we face, to support and provide community for those around us who suffer from mental welfare issues.

The issue of community is key – support, self-care and solidarity are collective actions. Never are we more aware of this than in the infamous Week Five. Intermissions are different. Students who intermit are normally already overburdened with physical or mental illness, or both. They try their hardest, battling through sickness and fatigue to hand in one more essay, or make that 9am lecture.

Before long, many of the work that has been too much. At this point, intermission should be a kind, considerate and sensible process – giving students the time to recover, and then sensitively bringing them back into college when they are better. Instead, they are often very alone, presented with alienating guidance which seems written with no consideration given to the human factor. They are often misadvised by senior tutors who fail to understand the issues they face. Then, they find themselves treated no differently to any other student when they return. Worst of all, they are still told, after years of campaigns, that they are banned from Cambridge. The University should undertake a review of its guidance, properly educating senior tutors about how to treat intermitting students. It should also immediately repeal the nonsensical, archaic and embarrassingly unenforceable rule that intermitting students are not allowed in Cambridge.

It’s time for the University of Cambridge to step up, and give students who intermit the sense of community they deserve. It’s time to treat them as human beings.

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Investigation: Intermissions

Revealed

Sick students failed by Uni guidance

● Intermitting Cantabs are still banned from the city, despite years of campaigning

Written by Tom Richardson

Investigations Editor

The intermissions investigation team is Louis Ashworth, Sam Harrison, Jack Higgins, Anna Menin and Tom Richardson

A Varsity investigation has revealed serious problems with the intermissions process, despite years of student campaigning on the issue. Archaic and unclear guidance from the University, inconsistent treatment when intermitting and returning, and mishandling of mental health issues were all raised as concerns by the students Varsity spoke to, with the President of Student Minds Cambridge (SMC) calling out colleges’ “distasteful nature” towards “troubled” students. The investigation found:

● Inadequate understanding of mental health issues by some senior staff.
● Archaic and unclear guidance on rules, including banning intermitting students from the city.
● Total numbers are increasing, with disparities between genders, colleges and subjects.

Intermission, which involves students skipping terms, or often the whole academic year, is almost always aimed at helping students overcome serious issues, medical or otherwise. However, of the many students who contacted Varsity, all had experienced mental health issues, some alongside physical ailments, with many reporting that applying for intermission had worsened their condition.

It is the colleges which are largely responsible for this. While some students reported feeling supported through the process, others endured delays, during which their condition worsened, as well as suspicion from senior staff. One student told Varsity: “it is the colleges which are largely responsible for this. While some students reported feeling supported through the process, others endured delays, during which their condition worsened, as well as suspicion from senior staff. One student told Varsity: “It is the colleges which are largely responsible for this.

Disparities between colleges also translated into markedly different rates of intermission. Between 2010 and 2016, the non-mature college with the highest rate, Girton, intermitted almost double the proportion of students as Corpus Christi, which had the lowest rate. This may reflect different attitudes towards granting intermission, with some students reporting reluctance from their senior tutors and others being pressured into the process.

Disparities in the treatment of students were also apparent between faculties. One postgraduate student said that his department lacked the “bare minimum” that “mental health and physical health are not the same,” suggesting that they treated his severe anxiety “much like after one breaks an arm.” While departments are not directly involved in intermission, data nonetheless showed significant gaps between Tripodes, with Psychological and Behavioural Sciences students almost five times as likely to intermit as Engineers.

The total number of intermissions appears to be rising, albeit with some fluctuations. Between 2010 and 2016, the total number of students intermitting rose from 195 to 250, with rises observed in four of the six years. Sophie Buck, the CUSU and GU Welfare and Rights Officer, put the rise down to “greater acceptance of intermission as an option and stigma reducing campaigns”, including ‘Degrading is Degrading’ in 2011. (See box opposite.) However, a University spokesperson noted that “data fluctuates year-on-year,” and warned that the small numbers available “do not provide sound evidence of pattern.”

For many students, attaining permission to intermit was the first of a number of challenges they faced. Once intermitted, a number of complex regulations come into force for students, who are required to sign an agreement as part of the process. They are routinely barred from entering colleges and University buildings, and most were advised not to visit Cambridge at all. Students reported feeling confused by the rules, and cut off from their friends. One student even reported being barred from their college’s June Event, despite non-University guests being otherwise permitted.

Responding to Varsity’s investigation, the University stated: “it is important that students use their time away from their studies to focus on the cause of their intermission (often recovering from illness) and that this is not disrupted.”

However, SMC President Keir Murray strongly criticised current intermission procedures, telling Varsity that the group “condemn[s] the practice.” Murray noted that, although leaving Cambridge and returning home is “useful” for some students, for others “going home is not an option if their life there is not healthy”. The University pointed out that the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) remains available to students during intermission.

The most difficult stage for the students Varsity spoke to was their return. Cambridge is, according to a 2016 investigation by The Guardian, the only one of the 30 universities contacted which required some students to sit an exam, as well as submit medical evidence proving that they had recovered, in order to return.

A University spokesperson said that it was “rare for an intermitting student to be required to take an academic assessment as a condition of returning”, and that this would only be the case if “it would provide reassurance to both the student and their College that the student is in a strong position to resume their studies.”

Buck suggested that such exams were
 Queens’ Raphael Levy

“... At no point did anyone treat me as an actual human being.”

My experience of attempting to intermitt was a disaster from start to finish. I suffered severe panic attacks leading to the loss of my voice and have been in therapy since. I initially decided to make the application on the advice of my course director after discovering that my results had prevented me from continuing my Master’s. I was told there was no strict deadline. Two weeks later, I received an email informing me that the committee had declined my application on a technicality.

It transpired that because I had submitted work it was assumed that my mental health was fine. I was advised to make another application, which was once again declined on a technicality. After my dad phoned them and made it clear this was absurd in the extreme, I received another email approving my application. The reason I was intermitt was because of panic attacks and anxiety, and the fact that I was treated around and given false information is likely to cause anyone further anxiety, especially when I had offers to study law next year dependent on being allowed to retake the MPhil.

Returning was no better. I was told to submit the relevant forms at least two weeks prior to the start of term. I did so a month and two weeks prior to the start of term. I still had not heard back on the day before term was due to begin despite emailing twice. At no point did anyone have a clue what they were doing or treat me as an actual human being with emotions, feelings and the capacity to respond to events. Instead, there was a blind insistence to stick to rules that either should not have been applied or simply did not apply regardless of the detriment to my health that it would cause. Cambridge failed spectacularly in their duty of care towards me and I am launching a formal complaint.

...
Women and older students more likely to intermit

Even more stark was the difference between the numbers of mature and non-mature undergraduates intermitting. Over the 2010-2016 period the proportion of undergraduate students at the three mature colleges was more than double than at the non-mature colleges. Wolfson in particular intermitted an average of almost six per cent of its students across the six years examined, the highest of any college, compared with only two percent at Girton, the highest rate among the non-mature colleges. A fluctuation in statistics for mature students could be attributed in part to low sample sizes, but the disparity is present across all four mature undergraduate colleges.

Speaking to Varsity, CUSU and GU Welfare Officer Sophie Buck suggested there was a lack of data on why people intermitted, but suggested disparities along gender lines came down to the increased prevalence of mental health issues among women. She also noted that “any kind of oppression poses added stress; women, for example, are much more likely than men to experience sexual harassment, and this can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.”

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Anonymous, Clare

“A lot more could have been done by college to make sure I was rehabilitated correctly

After matriculating in 2013, I intermitted in Lent 2014 due to clinical depression; I was aware that something was wrong in Michaelmas 2013 but was only diagnosed in time to intermit in Lent.

Due to me having completed first term, Clare only allowed me return in Lent 2015; this was despite the fact that I: a) tried to testify that even my first term was undermined by depressive symptoms, b) a whole year out of a strenuous subject like maths would do me a great disservice academically, c) I would be at a huge disadvantage socially, having not done Freshers’ Week in 2014.

Despite appealing and even having my GP submit a letter stating that coming back late would be detrimental to my mental health, the University did not grant me entry in Michaelmas and all of the things I said would occur, in fact, did. I believe a lot more could have been done by college to make sure I was rehabilitated correctly so I wouldn’t have to struggle with both academic and social demands.
students’ experiences with intermission

Jennifer Thorpe, St John’s

“College were extremely supportive

My health began to decline during the summer term of my first year when, on the day of my exam, I had a seizure leaving me with a minor head injury, forcing me to spend the remainder of my day in hospital. Following my ordeal, I decided to continue through to second year; however, anxieties associated with a desperate need to prove myself (having missed all my exams) and the stress of coursework deadlines led to a worsening of my epilepsy and anxiety.

The words of my tutor following my seizure of ‘you can enter second year but MUST pass the year’ haunted me for the best part of six months, giving me the impression that intermitting was not an option. Over the Lent period my condition worsened, with my anxiety preventing me from leaving my room and leaving me with sleep problems, depression, and an increase in stress-related seizures. Eventually, I became too overwhelmed to continue and visited the college nurse to tell her I just couldn’t continue with university. The college nurse immediately told me that I should consider intermitting, reassuring me that I had the grounds to do so. She played a pivotal role in the process, providing me with emotional support and contacting the college tutor. They explained the process and allowed me to leave a few weeks into Easter term.

College were extremely supportive, reimbursing me for the four weeks’ rent after I left and granted me money to pay for private specialist counselling while I was on the NHS waiting list to see a consultant psychiatrist.

The process was fairly straightforward. College paid for a doctor’s letter outlining why I should intermit, which they submitted to the exam board. The only requirements I had to meet was another doctor’s letter recommending my return, also paid for by college. Upon my return, I had a strong support network in my college, the Disabilities Resource Centre and the Department of Geography, providing me with a positive outlook.

Eventually, I became too overwhelmed. I just couldn’t continue with university.

Hannah, Pembroke

“I felt cut off from the student community

I didn’t really have a choice when it came to intermitting, as my college had to follow hospital advice: I did feel backed into a corner and powerless at the time, though in hindsight I think intermitting was the best. Although most of the college staff were very supportive, I was given the impression that my presence in college might negatively affect those still studying, as though my circumstances were in some way burdened to others. I was permitted to stay in Cambridge, largely because of the proximity to Addenbrooke’s, and my college were supportive in offering me graduate accommodation to rent while I did; I don’t feel they were overly punitive, but there was an implicit understanding that I was temporarily no longer a student. I felt cut off from the student community, and struggled with the lack of purpose and social group.

While applying for intermission was very much out of my hands, the process was fairly smooth: preparation for returning was a far more stressful ordeal, as there was no information as to when/whom you should contact if you were considering returning to your studies. The deadline for approving my appeal to return had passed when I contacted the University, and so I only had confirmation three weeks into Michaelmas term – my college were quick to act with regards to informing Student Finance and the relevant authorities of my return, but there was very little information available about the process. Upon returning I was informed of various University support systems, and Pembroke offered to help if I wished to access them. I do feel that, while such support systems are necessary, the social side of reintegrating after intermission is often overlooked: joining a new year group throws up its own problems that can’t be addressed by the UCS, and it can make you feel like you’re an outsider even after you return to study.”

Have you experienced intermission?

We would like to hear from students who have intermitted, whether it was good or bad, to find out more about how the University’s guidance can be improved.

If you have intermitted, and would like to discuss what the experience was like, please contact the Varsity intermission investigation team at: investigations@varsity.co.uk. Please give your name, your college, whether you wish to be anonymous, and an outline of what your experience was like.
Interview

Matthew Elliott

‘We’re stepping out of Europe and into the world’

Alice Chilcott

Matthew Elliott was a key player in the Vote Leave campaign during the EU referendum (Conservative Home)

It’s so nice to be talking to you guys,” Matthew Elliott, Chief Executive of Vote Leave, is addressing the Cambridge University Conservative Association (CUCA), “I was at a conference before this,” he tells the audience, “there was so much intellectual dishonesty going on!”

If anyone needed reminding, Cambridge was one of the strongest Remain constituencies, with a vote of 73.8 per cent. Yet tonight, besides a few concerned or curious academic types, the audience seemed to be mostly Leave voters. There was an odd atmosphere – palpable satisfaction with just a hint of siege mentality. One attendee’s observation that “it’s so hard to be a Brexiteer in Cambridge” draws murmurs of assent from the overwhelmingly male audience.

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But all that disintegrated, he tells me, with Gove’s leadership bid. The phrase “stabbed in the back” escapes his mouth before I can say it. “I was so surprised, because they had worked extremely closely together on the campaign and I never saw any ill-will between them. For me, it must be said, the immediate aftermath of the campaign was very sad.”

Elliott is incredibly well-versed in the argument he makes, but delivers it with the peculiar detachedness of one used to being harangued at dinner tables. He is optimistic about Theresa May’s premiership: “May has impressed people. She hasn’t been kowtowing and tugging her forelock to international leaders.”

Perhaps predictably, he is keen to present May’s coy preference for the Remain camp as a political advantage at the negotiations table. “She can say to other member states, hand on heart, ‘I was Remain but you’ve got to listen to the people now.’” Then, that now well-known line once again: “Brexit means Brexit.”

Elliott walks the fine line between condemning Farage and UKIP on the one hand, and their voting bloc on the other. “We made an explicit commitment to be distant from UKIP” he tells me firmly. “We didn’t like the tactics they had used in the past, we wanted to have a broad-base campaign with sensible people from business, academics, etc. There’s no love lost between myself and Nigel Farage.”

It’s a distinction which seems to preoccupy him. He later reminds me that “we denounced the ‘breaking point’ poster in quite vocal terms, so we don’t feel any responsibility for that.” Yet twice in under 15 minutes he dodges the issue of whether Vote Leave owes at least some of their success to anti-EU prejudices propagated by UKIP. If he disowns Farage, he is reluctant to disown Leave voters. “I think there’s a clear distinction between Nigel Farage and the UKIP leadership, and the UKIP activists. Lots of UKIP activists, who are good people and passionate people, took part in Vote Leave events.”

But he knows Farage? He smiles wryly.

No love lost

The differences in personality between the cogitative, private Elliott and the boisterous Farage were reflected in the two men’s separate campaigns. Elliott’s Vote Leave, pitching for liberal centrists, emphasised the EU’s democratic deficit above the immigration question. Farage wanted a campaign that was like UKIP: populist and visceral. Each was convinced that the other would lose the referendum, and although their fears did not come to pass, it seems the bad blood has not disappeared.

“We don’t talk. Basically, he won’t talk to me, because [we] stopped him from heading up the official Vote Leave campaign. The funny thing is, and I don’t think he accepts this, but he wouldn’t have won the campaign.”

Elliott is just as unequivocal in condemning Farage for his endorsement of Donald Trump. But he is relaxed when I ask him if he’s irritated by Trump’s appropriation of Brexit. “I think Trump will be as successful as Nigel Farage would have been on his own, had he been running the [Leave] campaign – i.e., he’s going to lose.” I cannot help but remind him that Cambridge had one of the highest Remain votes in the UK. “After Lambeth,” he interrupts with a smile, “where I live.” Can he, I ask, understand why the vote to leave has upset a great many people on a personal level?

“I can understand it,” he says, after a long pause, “I’ve been in situations as a Euro sceptic where I was in the minority position, and felt that the EU was imposing laws on my life and curtailing my freedoms, so I can understand how frustrating it can be when you feel that the political system is against you.”

“We’re not stepping out of Europe and pulling up a drawbridge. We’re stepping out of Europe and into the world.”
News

Paxman did it.

Can you?

Apply to edit Varsity in Lent 2016!

We are now accepting applications for Editor for Lent term. Joint applications are welcome.

Application forms are available for download from varsity.co.uk/get-involved.

For more information, and to apply, email the editors at editor@varsity.co.uk.

The deadline for applications is 5pm on Monday 14th November 2016.

All students with a passion for journalism are encouraged to apply. No experience at Varsity is necessary.

So long, Stratchey

Newnham’s Stratchey building, built from 1966 to 1968, was demolished yesterday as part of major reconstruction works at the College.

Diggers pulled down the internals of the building, with a site supervisor telling Varsity that builders had been banned from using explosives due to the proximity of other buildings.

Stratchey – which contained several student bedrooms – was considered to be a luxury block when built, but had recently become too costly to maintain, with the kitchens and bathrooms described as small and squalid. The Porters’ Lodge is also being destroyed, and a new entrance will be built on Sidgwick Avenue.

The buildings will be replaced with new “high quality, flexible and energy efficient” accommodation.

Louis Ashworth

▼ How Varsity covered the plans for the new block in 1961.

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Scholarships are available based on need.

Early Decision application deadline with scholarship preference: November 15

Regular Decision deadline: January 15

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Cambridge wrestles with spectre of Trump

Joe Robinson
Political Editor

Several events in Cambridge over the last week have focused on Tuesday’s upcoming American presidential election, many have centred on the candidacy of Donald Trump, amid polls suggesting that the election will be extremely tight.

The first of these events was last Monday’s debate at King’s Politics Society, entitled ‘Does Trump have a point?’, which saw a number of academics joined by journalists and peers to discuss the merits of the GOP nominee’s campaign.

Dr Chris Brooke, a Politics Fellow at Homerton, contended that though Trump represented a “threat to the republic”, he nevertheless echoed the anger widely felt against both parties. In particular, Brooke contended that Trump was “calling bullshit” on the “folksiness” that he claims the Democratic and Republican party establishments use to conceal what is essentially elite control of the political process. Spectator deputy editor Freddy Gray drew parallels between Trump’s campaign and the success of Jeremy Corbyn, arguing that both represented a “cult of leadership” around a “strange figure that nobody thought could win”. Speculating that he may have entered the race to help his business, Gray nevertheless concluded that “Trump has destroyed the Republi-
can Party and that is no bad thing”.

Helen Thompson, Professor of Political Economy at Clare, emphasised Trump’s critiques of both US foreign policy and also the corruption she believes is endemic at all levels of US government. Quoting Jimmy Carter, she argued that Trump was correct in asserting that there is something “fundamentally rotten” in the operation of both parties. Thursday night saw the Union debate the motion ‘This House Has No Confidence In The American Electorate’. The proposition’s case was opened by barrister Lucas Fear-Segall, who argued that the “deep strain of racism” in the American electorate was partly responsible for them having “made a series of singularly poor decisions”, including so many of them voting for Mitt Romney after electing Obama. He also pointed to America’s militarism, which extended beyond “arming themselves to the teeth” to “equipping” their police with military hardware and tacitly instructing them to shoot young black men on sight” as evidence of their lack of trustworthiness.

Continuing the case for the proposition, University of Reading’s Dr Mark Shanahan branded Trump an “orange, thin-skinned, narcissistic pensioner” while calling Clinton the “apogee of Washington insiderism”, while undergraduate Connor MacDonald looked to Obama having “utterly failed to manage expectations” as an explanation for the rise of Trump.

Opposing the motion, Alex Sundstrom, FIP Fellow of Corpus Christi College, said: “Does the average American voter really want either of these individuals to occupy the Oval Office? The research indicates a resounding no”.

Some observers have called Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton the least popular candidates of all time (COMPOSITE: LOUIS ADWORTH). What will Obama’s legacy be? Obama currently has better than a 50 per cent approval rating according to the national polls in the US. I think he has been a good president overall. He inherited an economic meltdown and two wars, and managed these issues fairly well in the face of an obstructionist Congress for most of his administration. US actions under his watch have left a mess in Libya, but he has been restrained in his use of force compared to the previous Bush administration, and has resisted the most aggressive voices on foreign policy — especially as far as Iran is concerned. I think the historical evaluation of his presidency will rest a lot on how Obamacare fares once he has left office.

Expert view: ‘I expect partisan polarisation to get worse’

Joe Robinson
Political Editor

Much of this election’s coverage has, rightly or wrongly, focused on the candidacies and character of Donald Trump. The Republican nominee is seen as a threat to the foundations of the American republic. His supporters, so the argument goes, are casting their ballots on the basis of an irrational fear of the ‘other’ and a wistful yearning for the status quo ante. Making America great again, in this analysis, amounts to little more than thinly-veiled dog-whistle politics.

But these perspectives miss out on the important issues that Trump’s campaign has brought to the fore, and could drive a fundamental shift in US foreign policy. Clinton and Trump both argue that the US is facing a new global order and a ‘new world’. But, as Obama has warned, Clinton and Trump would both want to pursue different policies in the face of this challenge.

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I absolutely do not think it will be a return to normal. At least 60 per cent of the electorate seems to be willing or eager to vote for a person in Trump who has authoritarian tendencies, and zero political experience to boot. Senate Republicans are already indicating that if Clinton is elected they would block a vote on any of her Supreme Court nominees to replace Justice Scalia. This could lead to a revolution in the way the Senate does business. The director of the FBI just may have broken the law by intervening in a campaign a week before election day. I expect partisan polarisation to get worse, not only between but within the parties.

Do you think if Clinton wins that America will return to normal?

What will Obama’s legacy be?

Are politicians really more dishonest than they used to be?

The logical case for Trump?

Joe Robinson
Political Editor

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Green leader lays out desire to ‘represent the 99 per cent’ at talk

Caitlin Smith
News Correspondent

Professor Nigel Slater has stepped down from his role as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Enterprise and Regional Affairs. He was appointed to the post in January last year.

Professor Slater, a Fellow of Fitzwilliam College, will continue in his role until the end of the year, “after which time the role will be carried out by the wider senior leadership team,” a University spokesperson said.

As part of his responsibilities, Professor Slater sits on the executive board of the controversial Greater Cambridge City Deal, a project aimed at improving the quality of life and prospects of Cambridge residents.

The City Deal, one of several similar projects across the country, seeks to tackle the problems surrounding housing, transport and training opportunities for local residents which have arisen following the city’s rapid development as a global research and technology hub. The project has a budget of £1 billion over 15 years.

Campaigners, including local MPs, councillors and residents’ groups, have highlighted several issues with the proposals of the City Deal. Controversy has centred on its plans to deal with congestion, particularly the Peak-time Congestion Control Points (PCCPs). The measures would see six roads in central Cambridge closed to all vehicles, except buses, bicycles, taxis and emergency vehicles, during rush hour.

The University has also been accused of a conflict of interest regarding the proposals to create a new bus route between Cambridge and Cambourne, with the proposed route running through University-owned farm land. Campaigners say the plans threaten green belt land between Madingley Mulch roundabout and West Cambridge.

Earlier this year, chief executive of Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce, John Ridge OBE, also resigned from the City Deal board, which is now down to three of its original five members.

In their statement, the University said Professor Slater “decided to stand down in order to focus on his research interests and his role as Professor of Chemical Engineering in the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology.” They added: “The search for a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor is underway.”

According to the Cambridge University Reporter, the role’s title will be changed to Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise and Business Relations), reflecting its reponsibility to “enhance and develop the University’s engagements and partnerships with industry and commerce, and the wider enterprise economy in the University’s immediate region.”

Although there has been no information released as yet regarding the University’s future representation on the City Deal board, the spokesperson affirmed that “the University remains committed to its City and regional responsibilities and leadership.”

Amy Gee
Senior News Correspondent

Jonathan Bartley, the recently elected Co-Leader of the Green Party, visited Cambridge on Tuesday for a discussion and Q&A session with local activists and Reid Jenkins, the Dean of Emmanuel College.

The session was hosted by the Cambridge Young Greens in Clare College, where Bartley emphasised the Green Party’s relevance to current politics and condemned the government’s response to the crisis at Calais. “It’s absolutely shocking, it’s disgraceful, it’s a national shame, that less than 50 miles from the British coast, there is a refugee crisis.”

“And the best that we did was, in the tabloid press, have a debate about whether some of those children were over eight or not. That is absolutely scandalous. Someone has to stand up and say it,” said Bartley, “and that has come down to the Greens.”

He celebrated how “the Greens have managed to shift the economic debate” on points such as universal basic income.

Barley stated that many of Jeremy Corbyn’s policies from the Labour leadership election were “soft lifted from the 2015 Green Party manifesto”, adding that “those policies have become mainstream.”

Barley argued that only the Greens are adequately responding to “a future where we have to deliver on climate change,” saying “you can’t, as Jeremy Corbyn wants, support Hinkley C and give it a £30 billion subsidy, and at the same time support the renewable energy revolution.”

Citing Labour’s supportive stances on Heathrow expansion and Trident, Bartley questioned whether the party was preparing Britain for its place in the world in the 21st century, and which party is looking backwards to the 20th century, and 20th-century solutions?”

Barley voiced support for energy investment campaigns, but warned that “quite often as Greens we’re seen as what we’re against, rather than what we are for. And investment implies withdrawal, and we’ve also got to make the case for reinvestment”.

He also criticised the first-past-the-post electoral system, advocating for a proportional system. “I don’t want to just represent the 48 per cent that voted Remain – I want to represent the 99 per cent” he said, referencing areas “neglected by both Labour and the Conservatives” due to electoral complacency.

Bartley argued that many, the EU Referendum was a “your vote counts whichever way you cast it” decision for the first time. “There’s this feeling that people really want their vote to count, and we’ve got to give that to people.”

While he praised “authentic, grassroots campaigning” from communities on issues like housing and library closure, he cautioned against putting too much faith in social media activism, as “a lot of it is happening in a social media bubble” and “echo chambers”.

He also condemned current government “narratives” – “turning the working poor against the non-working poor, the disabled against the non-disabled”, and spoke angrily of the government’s failure to challenge the fact that wealth is “being held very, very tightly by one per cent of the population who are super rich”.

“Until someone comes along and challenges that and changes the story, things aren’t going to change,” Bartley stressed. “Labour has not been dogmatic in their messaging. The Greens have been but we haven’t been heard. We need to get that progressive alliance on the Left, to start telling that story.”

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Cambridge remembers Pink Floyd guitarist

An artwork (right) in memory of Syd Barrett, a founding member of Pink Floyd, has been unveiled at the Cambridge Corn Exchange. Barrett, who died in 2006, was born in Cambridge in 1946. There have long been calls for the city to commemorate the musician in some way. At last, on the 70th anniversary of Barrett’s birth and the 10th anniversary of his death, those calls have been answered.

Although he was Pink Floyd’s main songwriter in their early years, Barrett’s heavy use of psychedelic drugs and mental health issues meant that he had to bow out of the public eye just as the band were making their breakthrough.

Pink Floyd would go on to release The Dark Side of the Moon and The Wall, two of the best-selling albums of all time. The band paid tribute to their former bandmate in their 1975 song, ‘Shine On You Crazy Diamond’.

After a short solo career, which ended at the Corn Exchange in 1972, Barrett lived much of the rest of his list as a recluse.

Hawking commended

Professor Stephen Hawking has received a Pride of Britain Award for Lifetime Achievement in recognition of his accomplishments in the field of Physics in the face of a 50-year battle with motor neurone disease.

The famous physicist and Fellow at Gonville & Caius College is praised on the Award’s website for a career spent “grappling with the biggest questions facing humanity... while in the cruel grip of the most debilitating disease any of us could suffer.”

It also praises his “boundless passion and enthusiasm for the universe” and his ability to convey them “with wit, wisdom and humanity”, concluding: “His stellar career and full and happy life fifty years after his devastating diagnosis are the most potent symbols imaginable of the power of the human spirit.”

Hawking was presented with the Award by Prime Minister Theresa May, who described him as “an amazing man” and “one of the most inspirational scientists in the history of our time.”

Hawking used his acceptance speech to paint a picture of the future, which, he predicted, would benefit from “the development of robots [and] driverless cars” but be marred by “many challenges such as climate change and the effect that this will have on the world.”

However, he ended on an optimistic note, saying: “I am sure the next generation will rise to these challenges.”

Hawking has frequently voiced opinions on the promises and perils of technological innovation in the future, particularly regarding artificial intelligence (AI).

In October of this year, he opened the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence, a multi-disciplinary institute at the University of Cambridge dedicated to the issue of AI. There he offered a similarly equivocal message, opining that AI would be “either the best, or the worst thing, ever to happen to humanity”.

In his words, the new institute will “finally eradicate disease and poverty.”

In his words, the new institute will be “crucial to the future of our civilisation and our species”, adding that “we spend a great deal of time studying history, which, let’s face it, is mostly the history of stupidity. So it’s a welcome change that people are studying instead the future of intelligence.”

The ceremony did not miss out on a cheeky quip of its own, this time about Britain’s vote to withdraw from the European Union. Hawking told May, “I finally eradicate disease and poverty.”

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Fossilised dinosaur brain discovered

A team of Cambridge scientists, working with the University of Western Australia, has confirmed the discovery of the first fossilised dinosaur brain. The fossil, originally discovered in Sussex more than a decade ago by amateur fossil hunter Jamie Hinceck in 2004, has been preserved in highly acidic, low-oxygen water that has ‘pickled’ the brain tissue of the dinosaur, believed to be an Iguanodon, in the 133 million years since the 30-foot-long reptile died.

The potential benefits of creating intelligence are huge

Shadmin error

WomCam election beset by confusion

By-elections for the executive committee of CUSU’s Women’s Campaign have been disrupted by a mistake that has left several students off the electoral roll. CUSU Women’s Officer Audrey Sebatindira blamed an “admin error,” but did not specify how many students were affected. Those accidentally left off the roll were permitted to submit a paper ballot at CUSU offices, but only within narrow windows on Wednesday and Thursday.
University opens centre to tackle ‘post-truth politics’

Matt Gutteridge
Deputy News Editor

A new centre based at the Faculty of Mathematics had been established by the University, aimed at countering the narrative of ‘post-truth’ politics.

The Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication, established by a £5 million benefaction from Winton Charitable Foundation, seeks to promote the presentation of accurate, relevant, and transparent information on important issues.

Led by Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter, the centre will seek to develop methods for analysing and distributing quantitative evidence driven by the needs of different audiences. This will be achieved through ensuring that risk, data, and evidence is presented in a clear and unbiased forms.

Professor Spiegelhalter, a fellow of Churchill College, has been Winton Professorship of the Public Understanding of Risk since 2007. His research, which focuses on the modelling of uncertainty, the unknown, and the unmeasurable, has been the subject of the BBC 4 documentaries Tails You Win: The Science of Chance and the award winning Climate Change by Numbers. Professor Spiegelhalter was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2005, made an OBE in 2006, and knighthed in 2014.

According to the centre’s aims, researchers will collaborate to ensure that “everyone has a right to balanced evidence on issues important to them; evidence presented in a transparent way, to inform but not persuade”. The centre’s first project will be to create a website to clearly display the benefits and harms of alternative treatments for women with early stage breast cancer.

WHERE’S WALLY?

Cat-astrophe averted at Trinity Hall

A missing cat who went on a week-long adventure in Cambridge has been returned to his owners. Wally, a six-month old tabby cat, had become a frequent visitor to Trinity Hall and other colleges in the centre of Cambridge, where he became an instant favourite of students. Once Wally had been identified as missing after posters appealing for his return went up around the city, he was swiftly caught and returned to his delighted owners.

SUSTAINABILITY GONG

ARU shortlisted for sustainability award

Anglia Ruskin University has been nominated in the Sustainable Business category at the 2017 Sustainability Leaders Awards in recognition of its commitment to sustainability. It was the first UK university to sign up to the Rio+20 declaration, a commitment to sustainable practices in higher education and founded the Global Sustainability Institute in 2011.

The winner in all 19 categories of the Sustainability Leaders Awards will be announced in January next year.

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Science

‘Nobody else I’ve ever met has it’: life with a rare condition

Saskia Pain
Science Correspondent

I’m writing this article at midnight, lying in bed, having just thrown up. But, unlike most other students, the reason isn’t a bad hangover from a night out: it’s because I have a rare illness, called Sphincter of Oddi Dysfunction (SOD).

If you’ve heard of SOD then you’re probably either one of my friends or a very precocious medical student, because it’s something most people (including many doctors) don’t know about. There are no articles about it, nobody else I’ve ever met has it, and it can be a struggle even to find decent medical information or a doctor who can help.

The Sphincter of Oddi is a band of muscles at the bottom of the biliary tree which controls the flow of pancreatic juices and bile into the duodenum, and is a necessary part of the digestive process. If someone with SOD, the sphincter muscle does not open when it should and can unpredictably go into spasm.

This prevents the bile and pancreatic juices from flowing normally and causes a backup, which can then cause problems with the liver and pancreas, which can be very painful. It usually occurs in people who no longer have gallbladders.

The main symptoms of SOD are sickness, diarrhoea, fatigue and episodic flare-ups, which cause severe pain. These flare-ups are unpredictable, can cause pancreatitis or liver problems and often lead to hospitalisation.

While having SOD is unusual, having some form of rare illness actually isn’t, and nearly seven per cent of people in the UK will be affected by one at some point in their lives. Having a rare condition can be difficult, lonely and limiting, and can be particularly hard in an environment like Cambridge – one with an overriding focus on success, high work load and pressurised terms.

In an environment where nearly seven per cent of people in the UK will be affected by one at some point in their lives, having a rare condition can be difficult, lonely and limiting, and can be particularly hard in an environment like Cambridge – one with an overriding focus on success, high work load and pressurised terms.

As someone who had always been fierce-minded in science classes, I never thought I would understand the world of disability politics, or know more about the law. It has introduced me to all kinds of amazing people who are changing the system for the better, and has given me a greater passion for social justice. Although having SOD is hard, I am also better, more driven, more empathetic and always human.

Commentary
We must do more to combat rare illnesses

Jon Wall
Science Editor

Entering Week Five, Cambridge’s thoughts turn to health. We profile some sufferers of various conditions at Cambridge – in particular the sufferers of rare conditions who are not always helped by scientific research. Whether the illness has a significant impact on one’s life, the sufferer’s ability to do certain tasks, the impact is always significant.

This is why it is an issue that many health professionals do not deal with rare conditions in an appropriate manner, or give them more importance in the long term – that research is often not targeted on rare conditions. Commonly, treatments are the side effects of drugs aimed at other problems. Where conditions are preventable, it can be difficult to justify funding, or to find people for clinical trials.

As someone who spent my way through science classes, I never thought I would regularly use words like duodenum or be comfortable with discussing conditions, or be involved in a project aiming to move towards more integrated, less commercial approaches in vital.

We can and should do more for these sufferers.
Vertigo is common, yet commonly overlooked

Keir Baker  
Science Correspondent

I tilt my head. The world spins in a clockwise direction, ad infinitum. The feeling of nausea and a dull pain in my head begin to build. It feels like it just won’t stop and I am scared.

I move my head back. The world – to my great relief – returns almost immediately to normal. Any discomfort I had felt resides, yet the threat of that awful feeling inevitably triggers dizziness at a very intense level – it provides much-needed relief from the symptoms to the extent that life feels effectively normal.

BPPV is therefore scientifically fascinating, continually receiving in-depth research and examination. Practically speaking, though, it is an illness that needs more public awareness, particularly for students who may dismiss it as the result of stress, tiredness, and a work-intensive university lifestyle.

BPPV and similar conditions are particularly disruptive in Cambridge, with our short and intense eight-week terms. Given that BPPV has symptoms that can cause significant physical and psychological limitations, if left untreated, I hope that increasing awareness of its existence can prevent others from suffering the panic, confusion and worry of their studies being affected by an affliction they cannot resolve.

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Hillary, this is how we can Make America Great Again

Democrats might be content to watch Republicans stew, but Hillary must work hard to calm rural America

I spent the last two years living abroad in China, observing my home country, the USA, from afar. I would wake up in the morning to news of mass shootings, a gridlocked Congress, and an increasingly vitriolic electoral process as the presidential campaign began to ramp up. Then I would cycle off to class to teach students how the US government was organised. We discussed the three branches of government and the checks and balances available to make sure individuals didn’t gain too much power.

I paused there, looking for some kind of reaction in the eyes of my students, before continuing. I showed my class the graphic of a tree seen in many secondary school textbooks – the US Constitution providing the trunk, with the executive, legislative, and judicial branches flowing out of the top. The tree looked healthy and vibrant. My front row students dutifully took notes.

Yet we didn’t touch on was the need for a general consensus towards progress – a baseline level of respect and willingness to compromise among our leaders in order to move matters forward. In this increasingly polarised political climate, that is all but absent. The exorbitant amount of money in politics, the torrent of news leading people to retreat to simplistic narratives, and the myriad ways legislation can be defeated has led to political stagnation.

This stagnation feels like regression, and voters are seeking an outlet. Donald Trump. Next week, however, Trump will lose the US presidential election. The base of the Republican party is shrinking with changing demographics. Urbanisation, immigration, and education tend to pull voters leftwards. If the Republican Party fails to evolve, it is possible that the Democrats will become the dominant political party for the next decade.

Hillary and her party leadership might be tempted, therefore, to sit back, contented, and watch the Republicans stew. This might feel good, but it is dangerous in the long run. Even if we make many of the necessary institutional and legal changes to get the gears of government grinding again, we will only be part way there. What we also need is a period of national reconciliation – right and need to interact with each other again.

Hillary must engage with the American electorate as no president has done before. She travelled extensively as Secretary of State, and now she needs to do the same – with a decidedly domestic focus. She needs to speak at town halls in every state and seek to create a real dialogue with the American people.

She should start with the states in which she had the least support. The swing states have been given their due during the campaign, and now it’s time to talk with Nebraska, Wyoming, and West Virginia. These states hold the frustrations of rural America, and they feel left behind. She needs to field questions and talk about her vision for the country. She needs to answer questions until there are no more questions left to ask.

So what should her vision be? That government can be a force for good. That government is for us. That government, done right, can be transformative. This sounds a bit flimsy, so let me add that while the Republicans are down, she needs to unapologetically hammer away at their political dogma that any government is bad government.

This is the dragon that needs slaying. American is a country of rugged individualists – far more so than our friends in Europe – but we need to be able to meld that philosophy with one of institutional cooperation. This will not be easy. But if our leaders can begin to make compromises again, and our national psyche can begin to recover.

In addition to addressing the anger of the American heartland, we also need to address our ugly history of racism. It is worth considering the creation of a truth and reconciliation commission to confront the legacy of slavery, institutional racism, and police treatment of people of colour.

Like Germany after the Second World War, we need to bravely confront our past in order to move forwards. This movement would likely work best via a decentralised, grassroots-based approach, supported by federal funds.

It will be hard to manage two parallel national conversations. To achieve this, Hillary will have to turn over some of her international responsibilities. Her pre-inaugural transition team needs to raise the profile of Tim Kaine and pick a high-profile Secretary of State who can independently work with the international community, without Hillary feeling the need to micromanage.

Thinking back to my time in China, it was hard to describe the US in glowing terms. At the same time, however, I was surprised to find myself becoming more patriotic. Living abroad is a crash course in cross-cultural comparison, and there is much the US has to be proud of. We strive to create a better world and have been the inspiration for democratic governments across the globe. The delicate balance of our system is beautiful, despite its flaws.

The Cam community is like a strong family, with a strong history of getting on with each other through thick and thin. There are no more questions left to ask.

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Hillary Clinton has a massive task ahead of her as President (Image: Varsity)

Ted Mackey
Hating on houseboats? Cry me a river...

Houseboats. Like houses, but wetter. A familiar sight to any of us who frequent the river at obscenely early hours of the morning, and the bane of any novice coxswain. They’re a pet project for boat owners, and the river bank itself. Houseboats are an integral part of river life in Cambridge. Some, apparently, want to evict their residents, but who couldn’t love the friendly banter (read: bitter animosity) shared between the early morning rower and the houseboat owner? It’s friendly jibes like ‘get the fuck away from my boat!’ that really make that Sam start worthwhile.

The Cam community is like one big family, only with a river instead of a house and ours instead of genuine emotional connection.

It’s not hard to form an emotional connection with houseboats, though. I myself find relief in knowing that, even though I was born in Cambridge, I may or may not be feeling that Cindies from the night before as I row down the Cam, at least I didn’t get the name on my boat printed in Comic Sans. Comic. Sans. It’s also hard not to chuckle at the shameless punnery of ‘Fanta-sea’, forever hoping that someone will moor next to them with a boat called ‘Is this the real life, is this just...’ (Usually followed by a spot of verbal abuse from the cox to stop staring at the houseboats and focus on my abysmal rowing.)

As a self-professed expert on houseboats, having spent much of my rowing career within touching distance of them (read into that what you will about my rowing prowess), I’ve learnt that although they get a bad rep, they really are there for you when you need that push in the right direction – just so long as you don’t scratch their paint in the process. Sometimes they even come with cute dogs, which is a panacea for any damage Cindies has done to my body.

So thank you, you Comic-Sans-loving, pun-making, dog-owning houseboaters. Love them or hate them, houseboats are a part and parcel of life on the Cam – and I have the utmost respect for their owners. Anybody who can cope with being around that many boaties every day is a stronger man than I.

The delicate balance of our system is beautiful, despite its flaws
The sound of the underground? S Club and Steps

When the world discovers you like to listen to Eurodance, you’re better off just accepting it

I was recently on the Tube, merely listening to my iPod and minding my own business, the background noise of the train-on-track means our music lovers are free to hold down the Volume Rocker to our heart’s content, and watch as the little white dots race along the screen with ear-splitting abandon.

Me being me, of course, I managed to cock this up. I had been lost in the land of my playlist for a couple of minutes when I became aware that a) the music wasn’t quite as loud as it should be, and b) people were starting to look at me. Ego contact on the Tube is never the problem. No, the problem was that with the world’s smallest boombox, like a 21st-century remake of Say Anything, only set in London, and with an alarmingly red-faced protagonist. This wouldn’t have been so bad, of course, were it not for my song choice. For the track my phone had shuffled up first was none other than ‘Saturday Night’ by Whigfield. You remember the one – that nineties Eurodance classic which begins with a strange buzzing sound not unlike the iPhone alarm, and continues in a heady trance of keyboard, clapping and what appears to be some sort of quacking sound. The immortal opening lines – “Saturday night, I feel the air is getting hot/Like you baby” – rank, in my opinion, as one of the finest similes ever put to music. Truly, the subtle lyrical beauty of the “Da ba da dan dee dee da/Nee na na na” segment speaks to me with the same passion as any of Keats’ poetry. More, probably, given I haven’t read any.

So why the embarrassment, Will? If you’re such a fan of this disco claptap, why the shame at playing it aloud? Well, disconcertingly intolerant disembodied voice of the reader, that’s just the thing. See, while I will happily scoff a whole banquet of nineties electro floor-fillers in one sitting, it is very much a private passion. To make matters worse, as I shamefacedly fumbled to fit the headphone jack back into my phone, I clicked next on my playlist and was greeted with an uninterrupted series of much cooler, more appropriate artists. Why did I have to lead my accidental musical sermon with Eurodance, when one swipe away was Bob Dylan, or Nina Simone, or Jeff Buckley? (To be fair, queued at those numbers about his student days. The ones about the rumours that were spreading. The ones about his if-you-could-only-choose-one record ‘Angels’ by Robbie Williams (after Kirsty had pointed out that sometimes listeners are “sceptical about politicians’ choices” on the show). Often castaways will embarrassingly apologise for one of their eight, assuring the listener it’s been chosen ironically, or because it was their late great-aunt’s dog’s favourite song. All of which affirms my view that there seems to be a hierarchy of cool in music. However, I think it’s high time we all stopped worrying about what people think about our music tastes. Surely, for all of us, the duller if not. So go, ignore the haters. Turn up the volume. Listen to whatever it is you want. Just make sure you plug your headphones in first.

▲ Why did I have to lead my accidental musical sermon with Eurodance?

(MATTHEW SECCOMBE)
Of course I oppose Heathrow: why wouldn’t I?

My small town of 30,000 people deserves better than the hell of Heathrow’s ‘third runway’

I grew up under the Heathrow flight path. For as long as I can remember, the rumble of jumbo jet engines shouldered overhead at regular three-minute intervals. Countless phone conversations were hopelessly inaudible until quiet could be found in some well-shaded corner of the house. Everyone was aware of it. From the car park to the supermarket, from the canteen to the classroom, everyone knew that the rumble was there, and that it never stopped. The police were powerless to do anything about it, and neither was the council. The rumble filled the air, it filled the heads of the children, and it filled the hearts of the parents. It was a problem that needed to be solved. In an era when social media was at its infancy, Facebook was still a matter of minutes away, and Twitter had only recently been invented, the rumble was a source of constant concern. It was a problem that needed to be solved.

Gatwick would breed a healthy culture of competition

A crowded runway at Heathrow airport (PHILIP CAPP/REUTERS)

If happiness is an avocado cocktail, count me out

Suggesting that we can achieve a constant state of ‘happiness’ is a lie. I want to feel so many more things than happy

A small town of 30,000 people deserves better than the hell of Heathrow’s ‘third runway’. I grew up under the Heathrow flight path. For as long as I can remember, the rumble of jumbo jet engines shouldered overhead at regular three-minute intervals. Countless phone conversations were hopelessly inaudible until quiet could be found in some well-shaded corner of the house. Everyone was aware of it. From the car park to the supermarket, from the canteen to the classroom, everyone knew that the rumble was there, and that it never stopped. The police were powerless to do anything about it, and neither was the council. The rumble filled the air, it filled the heads of the children, and it filled the hearts of the parents. It was a problem that needed to be solved. In an era when social media was at its infancy, Facebook was still a matter of minutes away, and Twitter had only recently been invented, the rumble was a source of constant concern. It was a problem that needed to be solved.

Happiness is about more than a juice cleanse, whatever Insta-gram may tell us

Anna Fitzpatrick

The idea of pure happiness is overrated

Anna Fitzpatrick

Not in the sense that I experience happiness as an enduring, unwavering feeling. I have been, and will be happy. Presented as the pure, ideal to be reached, ‘happiness’ seems to be a state of being that we collectively perform online. On social media, we’re all singing “if you’re happy and you know it” clap your hands”. With self-improvement being the mantra, the implicit message is that we can choose to be happy – if we just eat less bread. Happiness seems to be the collective goal and juice cleanses are marketed to us through unhealthy and poisonous, then it’s your own fault if you’re miserable.”

But it’s not that simple. Reducing emotional fulfilment to this equation is ironically tonoming. If you’re not 100 per cent happy, 100 per cent of the time, you’re made to feel weird. ‘Live, laugh, love’ as a mantra is a trawling lie. What an obsession with document- ing self-improvement indicates to me is a gaping hole of potential, a void of inadequacy. Happiness is tangible and it’s not helpful to pretend that it is. Emotions are complex: a kaleidoscope, a nebula, that we’re yet to un- derstand. What makes them valuable is that none are exactly the same. To appre- ciate them, our eyes need a background. We were powerless but to tolerate the rumble of jumbo jet engines streaming overhead. For as long as I can remember, the rumble filled the air, it filled the heads of the children, and it filled the hearts of the parents. It was a problem that needed to be solved. In an era when social media was at its infancy, Facebook was still a matter of minutes away, and Twitter had only recently been invented, the rumble was a source of constant concern. It was a problem that needed to be solved.

You’ll be unsurprised to hear that I am opposed to the expansion of Heathrow and the prospect of another 250,000 flights a year rattling over my parents’ house. I’m not massively keen on the extra 50 million cars that will be clogging up the M4 by 2030 either. But I have a vested local interest. I’m lucky enough to carefully consider each and every ca- veat of the seemingly endless Heathrow-Gatwick-Boris Island debate when one of the options is so extremely close to home. Big boosts to the tourism industry, employment figures and investments in infrastructure struggle to add up to more than the potential impact on my family’s quality of life at home. The faceless eco- nomics titans suddenly shrink away from the heart of the argument. It’s clear what is best for my local community and that is enough to settle the argument. Suggesting that we can do more things than happy shouldn’t be controversial. It is not. I am not happy. Not in the sense that I experience happiness as an enduring, unwavering feeling. I have been, and will be happy. Presented as the pure, ideal to be reached, ‘happiness’ seems to be a state of being that we collectively perform online. On social media, we’re all singing “if you’re happy and you know it” clap your hands”. With self-improvement being the mantra, the implicit message is that we can choose to be happy – if we just eat less bread. Happiness seems to be the collective goal and juice cleanses are marketed to us through unhealthy and poisonous, then it’s your own fault if you’re miserable.”

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With or without the Union, solidarity continues

PalSoc member Ed McNally offers his personal defence for the group’s recent protest at the Union

Controversy at the Cambridge Union is nothing new – they have long basked in it. When the South African ambassador came to speak in the 1980s, their website fondly recalls, student protestors rioted outside, bricks flying. In retrospect, one might wonder whether it could be gained by providing a platform to the representative of a settler-colonial state engaged in the violent enforcement of racial separation while cadres of the ANC were imprisoned and black South Africans lay dead on the streets of Soweto. Similar questions may be asked of the Union’s new annual tradition of hosting representatives of the Israeli state.

“What’s so horrifying about understanding that the entire Palestinian people is the enemy?” asked Ayellet Shaked, Israel’s current Justice Minister, in the midst of Israel’s last exercise, during the summer of 2016, in massacring Gaza’s stateless, beleaguered civilian population, which included at least 53 children. When the new Michaelmas term came, then-ambassador Daniel Taub was among the first through the door of the Union, as was the case before the preceding assault in 2012. Last year, the Union asked Cambridge University Palestine Society (PalSoc) for suggestions of potential Palestinian speakers, expressing a desire to host a joint event, only to retract this when the Israeli embassy didn’t fancy the list, instead inviting their spokes-person alone.

These events, including new ambassador Mark Regen’s appearance last week, have taken a Q&A format, with speakers not shielded from boos, protests and thunderous applause. But the Palestinians, victims since 1948 of Israel’s colonial dispossession and routine brutalisation, have been conspicuously by their absence in the Union’s busy speaker schedules. Giving primacy to the voice of the oppressor at the expense of those without one serves merely to reproduce the toxic power imbalance that enables perpetration of war crimes with impunity and denial of fundamental Palestinian rights – among them the right of refugees to return home.

In its attempts at even-handedness, the Union underscores its miscomprehension of the realities on the ground in occupied Palestine. That neutrality was the case a/f.caltter the preceding assays. Rather, the Israeli present in the West Bank – sits on the brink of becoming the pariah state that South Africa was three decades ago. The reactive propaganda offensive manages, but many, including some at the Union, are at best ignorant of this reality, and at worst, engaged in wilful denial through the exercise of impurity.

The fallacious objectivity obligation will be fulfilled, supposedly, when the Palestinian representative to the UK visits later this month. However, as an appointee of the Palestinian Authority (PA), the unelected body to which Israel contracts enforcement of its occupation in parts of the West Bank – an arrangement commonly characterised as neo-colonial – he is hardly an embodiment of Palestinian civil society.

Mark Regen’s illustrious past career as spokesperson for the Israeli Prime Minister offered no shielding from public mockery for a diplomat, a well-known face. During Israel’s recent attacks on Lebanon and Gaza, he toured our television screens, professionally packaging actions condemned by the UN as war crimes as justified self-defence. As ambassador, Regen has been an eager presence on campuses, with visits to SOAS and Oxford as well as Cambridge.

Such appearances take place against the backdrop of an international crisis of legitimacy for the Israeli state. There is a deep-seated fear, as the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement gains momentum on campuses across the West, that Israel – once spun as the ‘light unto the nations’ in the dark Orient – sits on the verge of becoming the pariah state that South Africa was three decades ago. The reactive propaganda offensive manages, but many, including some at the Union, are at best ignorant of this reality, and at worst, engaged in wilful denial through the exercise of impurity.

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You shouldn’t have to tame your rebellious streak to perfectly adhere to the law

Id you see Bake Off last week? Wasn’t it absolutely criminal how Paul gave both Candice and Jane the famed handshake and completely shunned Andrew? Do you know what else is criminal? You. Probably.

Recently, the law on TV licensing has been changed, removing a well-known, well-loved loophole. This loophole meant that you didn’t need a TV licence to watch live or catch-up BBC TV on a laptop or mobile device, as long as it wasn’t plugged into the mains. Not any more. The TV licensing website now says: ‘Anyone who downloads or watches BBC programmes on demand on player must be covered by a TV licence’ – whatever the device. So you have unless you delved into your pockets and coughed up the necessary money for a TV licence, watching BBC iPlayer is now a crime.

This is the so-called ‘micro-crime’ that is common among citizens of the UK. A recent poll revealed that 75 per cent of British people break the law on a small scale, and many others probably do too, but don’t admit to it. Other micro-crimes common among the people of the UK include paying someone some cash-in-hand, and avoiding paying fares on public transport. In general, the attitude towards these crimes is that they’re not really illegal. In fact, my use of the word ‘crime’ there probably warranted a raised eyebrow or two. How can something really be the law if it isn’t enforced? Surely if everyone does it, it’s ok? It’s not really breaking the law. And anyway the law’s just a guideline, isn’t it? These are the unsaid sentiments behind committing these micro-crimes.

The whole idea of micro-crimes and crimes that aren’t really crimes casts us right into the lion’s den of bigger questions about morality. All in all, there are three different positions that we can take. First, we can say that the law is the law, so anything within the letter of the law is acceptable, and anything that is against the law is wrong. Secondly, we can say that the basis of the law should be followed, but there are a few bits on the edges that can be taken away and extra bits can be added to form our own ideas of right and wrong. Thirdly, we can say that the law is irrelevant and everyone should do what they want, regardless of what the government or another person thinks.

I would hazard a guess that most of us fall into the second category. If we can’t possibly fall into the first. As for the third category, it’s practically impossible to form our own morality in a vacuum. Whether we like it or not, our ideas of right and wrong are based on the law. Not to mention the threat of some severe fines or jail time, depending on how deeply buried your rebellious streak is.

So what are the problems with this? Well, first of all, when the law is lenient, everybody can do what they want. Or is it? Fortunately we don’t have to exist in a terrifying Orwellian world, where everyone perfectly adheres to the law. Humans are not robots and we can cope with moral disparities. It is possible for each person in this country to have their own ideas of morality tightly or loosely based on the law.

57 per cent of British people break the law on a small scale

You’re able to watch Paul Hollywood with a clear conscience

We simply have to move on and let people legally avoid taxes or illegally dodge fares if that doesn’t scratch their morals. Fortunately, however, we can say that next year, we won’t need to face a moral dilemma to watch Bake Off – Channel 4 is not affected by TV licensing laws.
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Bitch!

If you can’t say something nice...

...is it better to say nothing at all?

by Anna Hollingsworth
Most of us can’t get through the day without it. Anna Hollingsworth tried to give up bitching for a whole week – and made some rather profound discoveries along the way.

Illustrations by Abigail Popple

Hello, nice to meet you. I’m Anna and I’m a bitch destined to burn in hell. I talk about people behind their backs and I have come to be known as a bit of a gossip. It’s gotten to the point where my friends now use ‘have you got any goss for us?’ as the standard way to start a conversation with me.

No one likes a bitch. As Eleanor Roosevelt famously, and somewhat unfortunately for me, once said: “great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.” Similarly, there’s a Jewish proverb which goes “loose tongues are worse than wicked hands.” If this wasn’t damning enough, there’s another Psalm which reads: “Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy.” Gulp.

The idea of living my life in apprehension of eternal damnation and being branded as a small-minded busy-body was incentive enough for me to take on the task of trying to give up bitching for a whole week. Seven whole days without one single snide comment or a fantastically juicy chinwag with a pal. Extremely ambitious and no small feat.

I apologise for the mother of all anticlimaxes, but no, I didn’t succeed. In fact, I failed miserably. But that is not to say I didn’t try. There were many times when I was on the verge of making a snide comment or catty remark about someone’s mannerisms or quirks in a wholly good-hearted and jovial way when I realised that this, too, would qualify as talking about someone behind their back – just a few steps away on a continuum from full-on bitching.

To make matters worse, my test week didn’t actually involve any interaction with my most gossip-loving friends. I don’t even want to think about the totality of the failure that hanging out with them during my weeklong break from bitching would have resulted in.

My failure to go teetotal with bitching may be embarrassing, but at least for once embarrassing, but at least for once embar- rassing myself here in print serves a higher purpose. Despite my failure, I am completely certain that I am not alone in often being a gossiping, bitching, psychoanalysing person. It is quite simply what people do – what everyone does from time to time.

Evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar found back in 1997 that the vast majority of people devote about two-thirds of any conversation to gossip, irrespective of factors such as gender or social standing. These numbers come as no surprise. After all, psychoanalysing acquaintances is much more interesting than talking about the weather, or the embarrassing pitfalls of our most recent supervision or your favourite up-and-coming musician.

In more recent research, Dunbar, now a professor of psychology at Oxford, has gone so far as to claim that gossip is what makes us human. It serves as a way of transmitting vital information about whom to trust, and helps us to bond with family and friends. As such, it has been crucial to human evolution: an individual’s social network is argued to be the single most important factor in keeping the individual alive. Petty gossiping hardly seems a way for the individual to grant themselves a greater chance of survival. However, the gossiping I’m referring to here can be as harmless as just keeping up with one’s social scene (even if it involves talking about people behind their backs).

The importance of gossiping to human nature is also suggested from a non-evolutionary perspective by Dr Jennifer Cole, a senior lecturer at Manchester. She found that people are not only suspicious of those who gossip too much but, interestingly, also of those who gossip too little. If we need a healthy dose of gossip to survive and to fit in, who can blame us?

However, just because something is evolutionary and natural does not mean it should be acceptable. Just think about nutrition as a parallel: humans have a strong predisposition for fatty and sweet foods – hence the queues to the Van of Life and the droves of people going in for samples at the Fudge Kitchen. This evolutionary craving was crucial to survival in times when sufficient nutrition wasn’t very readily available. However, in the era of supermarkets and 24/7 delivery services, the very same temptations have resulted in greater health risks.

So, it leads us to ask, surely we have evolved enough grey matter to go on surviving with—
Our generation seeks to rise above stereotypes. We’re breaking glass ceilings, tearing down gender binaries, and valiantly fighting against inequalities of all stripes. And I would like to do my part by declaring, loud and proud, that sugary cocktails – so-called girly drinks – are delicious.

Men should not be afraid to embrace Cosmos, Sex on the Beaches, Mai Tais, and brightly-coloured alcoholic concoctions of all varieties. It took me a long time to get to where I am today. I hate the taste of beer, but entering uni I was afraid to admit it. I saw long lines at the bar, with people queuing to get their hands on what I viewed to be one of the most vile vats of fermented nastiness known to man. Vile nastiness that also required mandatory and frequent trips to the bathroom (like Pringles, once you pop the fun doesn’t stop).

Were we all just lying to ourselves? Was this mass psychosis, or perhaps a particularly strong response to clever marketing? Perhaps it was just the cheapest alcohol we could get our hands on. So I stood at dozens of parties, demonstrating my maturity by casually holding a beer, hoping it would end.

After first year, the craziness died down. Going out became a cheap, very casual affair. I found friends who preferred bars where you could find a place to sit. Most importantly, I was introduced to the Amaretto Sour. This was to be a pivotal moment in my journey to becoming a sugary cocktail-loving man.

If you haven’t tried an Amaretto Sour before I’ll walk you through the process. There are three ingredients: amaretto liqueur, lemon juice, and simple syrup. Get amaretto where you get your liquor, buy a half dozen or so lemons for lemon juice, and buy a small bag of white sugar for the syrup. The syrup is made simply by mixing equal parts water and sugar in a pan on the hob until it becomes clear. Pour the amaretto liqueur, lemon juice, and simple syrup in a 6:4:3 ratio in a glass filled with ice. Boom. Done. If this seems too complicated, stay tuned for even easier recipes below. But trust me, it’s worth it.

So there you have it. My road to becoming the person I am today, drink-wise at least. If you’re like me but have up until now been afraid to admit it, stay strong. The world is changing. Your friends will support you. Embrace the colour, the sugar, and the silly drink names. Also, I would be remiss to add another option: you don’t have to drink at all. Save your sterilising for a trip to mainland Europe. That’s fine too. Do what makes you happy, and avoid standing around with a drink you don’t like.

Cheers!

Gin and Tonic: not gender stereotypes

Mojitos and Margaritas aren’t just for girls. Chris Canary gives you his rundown of effeminate cocktails for manly men.

Our generation seeks to rise above stereotypes. We’re breaking glass ceilings, tearing down gender binaries, and valiantly fighting against inequalities of all stripes. And I would like to do my part by declaring, loud and proud, that sugary cocktails – so-called girly drinks – are delicious.

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From the Amaretto Sour I moved onto other drinks – the Dark and Stormy, Sidecar, White Russian, and the ubiquitous Mojito. But don’t think my journey wasn’t without adversity. At a hostel bar in Malaysia, on a rooftop overlooking Kuala Lumpur, I once ordered a Sex on the Beach only to be denied by the Russian bartender. “That drink is for women,” he said, and turned away. Oh, the shame. I suppose he wanted me to order the Machine Gun Oppression or something masculine-sounding like that. Men, I implore you to be strong. Hold your ground. Don’t give up. Don’t say it’s for your partner. It’s for you, and it’ll be delicious.

Now, once you’re past the past social stigma there’s another hurdle: you’re a Cambridge student, you’re busy, and cocktails take time to make. Not so. Below are a few recipes with three or fewer ingredients that require little to no preparation time. Enjoy!

The Greyhound: Vodka and grapefruit juice, in whatever ratio you like.

Black Russian: Vodka and Kahlúa or other coffee liqueur, in a 2:1 ratio, poured into a glass with ice. Stir well.

Dark and Stormy: Rum and ginger beer, in a 2:1 ratio, poured into a glass with ice.

Kolomatomxo: Red wine and Coca-Cola, in a 1:1 ratio. Not for everyone, but a decent poor man’s sangria. Try adding lime.

Amaretto Sour: Amaretto liqueur, lemon juice, and simple syrup (½ water and sugar melted in a saucepan until clear) in a 6:4:3 ratio, ideally mixed in a cocktail shaker with ice or simply poured into your flatmate’s tea mug and hoping for the best.

He wanted me to order the ‘Machine Gun Oppression’

“Hold your ground. Don’t give up. Don’t say it’s for your partner. It’s for you, and it’ll be delicious.”

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Cheers!

Read more online at varisty.co.uk/features

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Cheers!
An antidote to national institutional decline?

Churches in Cambridge

Joshua Kimblin discusses the wonder of Cambridge’s many religious spaces, in a city bucking the trend of declining congregations.

In Cambridge city centre, you are never more than 500 metres from a church. If you include chapels, then you are never more than 300 metres away. Such a large concentration of churches in such a small area raises questions over their use: how many people attend church in Cambridge? What attracts people to these institutions?

There is good reason for asking these questions. Earlier this year, it was announced that weekly attendance at Church of England services had fallen below one million people for the first time: the media duly responded with reports of a crisis within Anglicanism. Each secular milestone is the consequence of a long-term but apparently interminable decline in church membership across Britain. In 1930, 30 per cent of the British population were members of a church – of any denomination. In 2010, the figure was 10.3 per cent and, according to the latest Church Statistics survey, membership is projected to fall to 8.4 per cent by 2025. Last year, a report pointed out that more than a quarter of churches have fewer than 20 people in a Sunday morning congregation. This negative news cycle echoes the one paradox: here are now over 900 churches and places of worship in Cambridge city, the expanding congregation.

This vibrancy and resilience is largely due to the unique Christian heritage attached to Cambridge and the University. History has bequeathed 39 churches to the city and the surrounding area, meaning that Cambridge has churches to cater to all Christian denominations, from Baptist to United Reformed. There is no shortage of clergy to serve them, either: Cambridge has one of the highest numbers of resident clergy (per capita) in the country. Equally, the clerical tradition of the University has always been strong, and remains so. Since Cranmer, the University has produced 18 Archbishops of Canterbury, including the last two. Within the colleges themselves, chapels can create Christian communities on a small scale and engage those who would otherwise not attend any form of worship. The number of students attending Evensong services is a case in point. Before the last Christ’s College Evensong, I asked two students – one a Methodist, the other an atheist – about their reasons for going and received identical replies: “because it’s nice.”

Although that answer may seem banal, it reveals something profound about our contemporary relationship with churches. We are increasingly drawn to the aesthetic and sensory appeal of churches and chapels. The buildings themselves are beautiful. Cambridge has an abundance of architectural riches, from the glorious fan vault of King’s College to the panel tracery in the windows of perpendicular chapels. The stained glass and choral music only add to the effect. We also see Britain’s churches, and especially its cathedrals, as historic microcosms. They are filled with the physical tokens of our past: tombs, plaques, carvings and gilt. Their defaced statues and charred walls tell us of conflict and war; their extensions and architectural adjuncts tell us of prosperity and growing populations. The names on headstones give us the names of families who moulded Britain as we see it today. Some of Cambridge’s churches have the added authority of being ancient. St Bene’t’s, for example, is approaching its millennium celebration, having been founded in 1033. The city’s churches often have surprising significance, too. It is well known that all undergraduates must live within three miles of the Church of St Mary the Great. It is less well known that the same church is the origin of the famous Big Ben bell chimes.

Cambridge’s ecclesiastical history and culture is unique. The fact that the enduring image of the University is a chapel, albeit a very grand one, indicates its association with the Church. More importantly, the curious mixture of secular, historical and religious interests which we vest in our churches might even suggest a way to salvage those which are increasingly empty, decrepit, or both. Only by attracting the secular interest of the local community in these historic buildings can we hope to equally preserve their religious functions. It may be a hopeful dream, but a dream which separates the image of churches as relics from the image of church renewal.
Upon googling “Cambridgeshire”, you will be met with a torrent of maps of the British Isles, non-descript photographs of swathes of green, English countryside, and a splattering of images of King’s College Chapel. The former are, of course, a sensible result in inputting such a general term, but the latter is peculiarly specific. King’s College Chapel is a symbol, the badge of Cambridgeshire, emblematic of the University and town’s roots in a religiosity that is only observed in the student consciousness through candle-lit Evensongs in college chapels and weekly postings by the college Christian society. King’s College Chapel evidently holds an architectural splendour, a curious history and a convenient central location that has motivated its display on postcards, T-shirts and keyrings, as well as its etching in the public approach of the diminutive city of Ely it is not only an hour away: Ely Cathedral.

The octagonal vault at Ely Cathedral (Flickr: ststawarz)

It is truly the epicentre of Ely, its magnitude a flag that waves in tourists

It is a beacon for Cambridgeshire a lot more

The cathedral’s towering stature and boundar-y indicate Early English Gothic. Despite the epicentre of Ely, its magnitude a flag that the façade has beautifully wrought, restoration work: its lower, round headed styles that have shaped the cathedral due to the Puritan defacement of the space during the Reformation. Its windows open up to a glorious array of light, however, that fill the grey walls with a particular splendour, and while its empty pedestals and defaced figures signify its brokenness, David Wynne’s modern statue of Mary gives it life in the 21st century. Perhaps the most spectacular component of the cathedral, however, is the Octagon: a momentous display of religious symbolism and 14th-century Gothic, it is a vast, silent space that sings in light with its lantern. Yet despite the archaic grandiosity of it, the statue of Christ in Majesty by modern artist Peter Eugene Ball, placed above the pulpit, is a reminder that the cathedral transcends our world has undergone. It is a remarkable mixture of medieval, Victorian and modern artistry, and its brokenness lies besides its glorious, lofty structuring. The call to the community to help finance recent renovations was met with widespread approval and participation, and it is not difficult to see why. It is an education and an aesthetic’s dream all in one, and it should be appreciated by Cambridge as a beacon for Cambridgeshire a lot more.

The wonders of its externality are only met with widespread approval and participation, and it should be appreciated by Cambridge as a lot more.

5th – 11th NOVEMBER

What’s on this week?

PORTRAITS OF PLACE / Heong Gallery, Downing College

Focusing on pieces that have been inspired by the locations and settings that have made up each artist’s life, this exhibition, part of Kettle’s Yard’s In New Places and Spaces, draws works from their own collection as well as pieces by Richard Long. Free to attend on Tuesday 1st November, from 5-6pm.

Saturday 5th
Science Makers: Drones for Science
Makespace Classroom, Mill Lane, 12pm-5pm
This monthly event aims to “discuss and build low-cost, DIY and open hardware for science and education”. Featuring talks from researchers using drones for science, the day ends with a hands-on project.

Monday 7th
I have lost myself
Corpus Playroom, 9.30pm
This play focuses on Auguste Deter, the first person diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease, and the recordings made of him by Dr Alzheimer.

Wednesday 9th
Kettle’s Yard Picture Loan Scheme
Murray Edwards College, 12.30-2pm
This annual tradition dates back to Jim Ede’s time as founder of Kettle’s Yard: students can borrow up to two pieces from the collection for a year, and it’s first come, first served.

Thursday 10th
Better than TV
Hot Numbers, 7:30-10:30pm
After the success of their first gig of Michaelmas term at Clare Jazz, the Cambridge-based band continue their aim to bring Jazz to Cambridge with an evening performance at Hot Numbers. betterthancoo.co.uk

Friday 11th
ARU Student Action for Refugees presents English Disco Lovers
ARU, The Academy, 9pm-2am
This charity event offers an exciting night of House, Nu-Disco and other eclectic sets. £5 entry, all welcome.
facebook.com/ARUStudentActionforRefugees

If you’d like to submit a listing, send details to culture@varsity.co.uk

Find more cultural content online at: varsity.co.uk/culture

Kettle’s Yard Picture Loan Scheme

TOP PICK

TOP PICK

I have lost myself

ARU Student Action for Refugees
Pany Heliotis on why the poetics of cinema are relevant for us all

After leaving a late night screening of Jim Jarmusch’s Paterson, I started pondering what the point of the film was. More specifically, the point of making films on the topics of art and its artists? Surely art itself is the true reflection of an artist – the embodiment of their thoughts and life. Why devote an hour and 40 minutes to documenting their thoughts and life? Why devote a life to artistic expression? Why do we lose sight of one self and notice another self taking a dominant role in your everyday life?

Birdman actualises this psycho-social phenomena – the washed up actor – Riggan Thompson, haunted by his id (his retired superhero persona), suffers both crippling self-doubt and monumental arrogance that gives him ‘flight’. The selves slide into one another seamlessly, disorienting him and pushing him to near psychosis. Sound familiar? Remember Freshers’ Week: “I’m on top of this, I’ve got this university thing down – hello Cambridge – oh, actually, my room’s quite cozy and that guy I was talking to last night definitely hates me. I think I’ll stay inside and get Dominos to deliver.”

Whiplash, a film about a narcissistic and determined teacher, also works as an elegy to输给ins and his narcissistic and mundane and elevate it to literary significance. Jarmusch, as one would expect, skillfully integrates repetitions of dialogue and recurring visual motifs to generate an internal rhythm that means the film hums along like a rigidly metered poem. However, being able to spot homonyms embedded in the dialogue is precisely the kind of niche film observation one would expect from an English student.

But what if these tropes, as well as mimetic, are allegorical? What if the film’s concerns for the artist’s struggle are merely veiled concerns of our own? Take Alejandro G. Iñárritu’s Birdman. His long continuous takes blur the line between the actor’s on stage and off-stage performance, suggesting an ambiguous seamlessness of different selves – where do their various performances end? So far, so self-indulgent. But let’s take this further. Consider our own capacity to present different versions of ourselves. How often do you lose sight of one self and notice another self taking a dominant role in your everyday life? Birdman resonates with an audience looking for a personal cinematic experience? Like much of Jarmusch’s work, the film’s existential ennui lingers on the lonely experience of living. His attempts to detail and his commitment to scrivving verse in his battered notebook give his life an anchor, just like any hobby. The film merely emulates this. However when, later in the film, his writing suffers a major set-back, the character visibly degenerates – his lips adopt a blue hue and his shoulders collapse inwards. A chance encounter with a Japanese poet provides reinvigoration. The pair engage in a discussion on the lives of poets and suddenly we recognise the form’s impact on the character’s life. It offers an opportunity for discourse, to engage with the world through shared experience. The poet, the actor and musician all strive for communion with their audience. Though all these films adapt their form to mimic the artist, they also go beyond. The films reflect back at the audience the difficulty of communication and transmitting ourself in the social sphere. The archetype of the artist in film symbolises our own thirst for an efficient communication of self.

Birdman’s elision of selves has surprising echoes of daily life (Regency Enterprises)

I am going to begin with a cliché. The books we read say a lot about who we are. Now you can even wear your favourite books, thanks to a recent boom of dedicated literary merchandise companies set up in recent years. One of my best friends bought me a tote bag that says ‘BLOODY LOVELY BOOK’. Holding it, I feel like I’ve reclaimed the identity Topshop loaned to a generation of teen girls with those ‘GEEK’ and ‘NERD’ t-shirts. There’s something troublingly elitist about pairing fashion and literature with this kind of self-expression. It’s a clear sign of your literary preferences (and personality), and is inaccessible to anyone who doesn’t know the book. T-shirts often also sport more benign, pop culture references: ‘I solemnly swear that I am up to no good.’ The problem with these is that what begins as self-expression quickly becomes generic. Know the Levi-OH-sa / Levis-SAH quote? It’s one of my favourites, actually.

But, somewhat vainly, I couldn’t shake the fear that by wearing a T-shirt of it, I’d be accused of jumping the bandwagon. This is true of all of the examples I’ve discussed. Many people love The Great Gatsby, but what if you saw someone else wearing a T-shirt of it? Two identical T-shirts just don’t allow for the same sort of nuance in personal preferences. It boils down to whether you care what people think. As Oscar Wilde says: “Fashion is what one wears oneself. What is unfashionable is what other people wear.”
Patrick Wernham talks to the Sidney Sussex student about the importance of studying music, his influences and his upcoming plans

How did you get involved in music at all, and then start to pursue it outside of your studies?

Music was always this double thing. To get in somewhere like Cambridge, you always have to be doing extra stuff at school, and when you get here you're expected to do choirs and orchestras and everything else outside of your degree. I was about 11 or 12 when I started writing songs, and from then on it wasn't really anything I thought about: it was just something I did. I started playing the violin when I was five, and from then until about 10 or 11 it was all classical, and then I discovered pop music. I found Pink Floyd: that was my way in, listening to The Wall on repeat!

Does studying music help your songwriting?

To a certain extent I would be writing songs no matter what I was studying, but there are aspects of it where I think 'ah, this would feed in nicely.' So, there was a part of the course which talked about the Romantic fragment, where with a song cycle in classical music you can have certain songs that fit into a larger arc and work really well as a larger whole, but are also approachable as a single unit. So for me, and because I love Pink Floyd, an album should really aim for that.

Could you describe your music?

I don't really know how! 'Alternative' for lack of a better descriptive word. It's kind of folk-infused, electronic singer-songwriter-ish!

Who else would you cite as influences?

Joni Mitchell and James Blake. With Joni Mitchell, it's her emotion, and they way she conveys it through her lyrics. As for James Blake it's certainly his musical approach, his recording techniques, the way he uses glitchy effects. There's so much to learn from so many different people – I love Bon Iver, and I used to be really influenced by people like Tom Odell and Gabrielle Aplin. You can draw influences from so many places - I'm currently writing a song based on a poem that's based on a painting I once saw in a library – the poem hasn't been released, but I'm in contact with the poet, Alison Hayek, which is very exciting.

Have you got any upcoming plans?

I'm planning to release my debut album at the beginning of next year; I don't yet have a release date but my single 'Real Fear', which is on my SoundCloud, is going to be featured and I'm planning to release another single, called 'Half Answers' in the next few weeks.

You can listen to some of Fionn's music on his SoundCloud, at soundcloud.com/fionn-connolly

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Fashion

FEATURING

The new emperor’s clothes

Elizabeth Huang dissects the sartorial choices of the candidates for the US Presidency

Illustrations by Alisa Santikam

On 8th November, Americans will descend en masse to polling stations to choose their next president. While we’ve painstakingly dissected the policies, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, less attention has been paid to the external elements. What do the sartorial choices of candidates tell us about them?

In politics, where image is king, politicians try hard to use their clothing as symbolic shorthand for that elusive political creature: values. This election, both Trump and Clinton have succeeded in cultivating distinctive visual styles that say interesting and sometimes contradictory things about their campaigns.

The classic Trump look is a dark, boxy suit with a distinctly corporate feel, accompanied by a tie (typically in loud, Republican red). By wearing business suits, Trump is selling two messages: first, that he is ready to be CEO by a tie (typically in loud, Republican red). By taking advantage of existing associations between clothing and class, politicians can inhabit a space of nebulous identity shaped by the external trappings of clothing.

Yet despite this, he makes use of fashion’s historical connotations in the same way as that he too can lead the USA out of decline and into glorious capitalist prosperity.

Yet there is an inherent tension between Trump’s expensive power suits and his attempt to appeal to economically marginal groups. Cue the marketing genius of the Trump hat emblazoned with the now immortal slogan ‘Make America Great Again’. The rope cap has strong associations with blue-collar America, allowing Trump to broaden his appeal. By taking advantage of existing associations between clothing and class, politicians can inhabit a space of nebulous identity shaped by the external trappings of clothing.

Though likewise besuited, Bernie Sanders cuts a very different figure – rumpled, even dishevelled, Sanders dresses in the clothes of the everyman. Yet despite this, he makes use of fashion’s inherent tension to choose his next president.

But is it making this money by buying into drug abuse for profit, is not only exploitative, but dangerous.

Many, especially in the US, view the collection as trivialising a serious issue. Deaths from overdose on prescription opioids have quadrupled since 1999 and almost two million Americans abused or were dependent on prescription opioids in 2014. This is a serious epidemic affecting millions of lives.

Moschino, however, defends the garments and accessories as reflecting “Jeremy Scott’s fun, provocative language” present throughout the brand’s collections. But is this collection a step too far?

Nordstrom, a major US department store, clearly thinks so as they will no longer be selling the controversial collection after protests from many doctors, addiction specialists and parents of overdose victims.

Jeremy Scott claims “fashion is the only drug I do”, but for others it is not. Moschino have called the negative interpretation of the collection “a misunderstanding”. But if the collection is supposed to be tongue-in-cheek, what is the joke? Are those protesting not elite and fashionable enough to understand the punch line?

However, while we can hope that the initial idea wasn’t to promote drug addiction, what was the purpose? It could be a comment on the American obsession with prescription drugs, in keeping with Moschino’s provocative collections. But does this collection start a conversation, reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness, or is it an offensive glorification of drug abuse?

Are these bold and bright creations a step too far, or the beginning of the future for edgy fashion?

Quite arguably, by making something deadly fashionable, this undermines the seriousness of the issue for so many people. What about the parents whose children have died from a drug overdose? Or the person whose life has been ruined by addiction?

The romanticising of mental illness in the arts is an increasing issue. It is becoming fashionable to be depressed or anxious; meanwhile, there are people struggling to get through the day.

The stigmatisation of mental health needs to be overcome. But perhaps the way to do this is not through encouraging damaging behaviour that will ultimately lead to a spiral of decline in the mental health of Moschino’s consumers.

Not only is the fashion industry largely blamed for eating disorders, but is drug abuse now being advertised as the new ‘skinny’? Are pills the new black, and death by drug overdose the new death by starvation? Fashion should push the boundaries, but endorsing drug abuse to a largely young demographic seems, for a designer brand, to be in quite poor taste.
Octavia Akoulitchev  
**Fashion in the days of Brexit**

It was admittedly difficult to forecast a post-Brexit British fashion industry... through the shadow of overcasting gloom. Isolationism is diametrically opposed to London’s identity as the world’s locus of vanguard artists, writers, and musicians. In their fusing of cultures and art forms, they create fertile ground for fashion – which we all use to express our positions within wider contemporary culture, beyond the shores of our island. Concretely, London’s status as fashion’s capital city can be directly traced to it providing the best fashion education in the world, which inevitably attracts the best students. Just look at the designers leading Europe’s most influential fashion houses: Phoebe Philo (Céline and Chloe), Stella McCartney (Chloe), John Galliano (Givenchy, Dior and Maison Margiela), Alexander McQueen (Givenchy)... all were educated in London.

But how, we wondered, could all this possibly continue if foreign students couldn’t easily get visas? Or if British designers couldn’t easily get European work permits? Well, according to 90 per cent of British Fashion Council designers (who voted Remain), it couldn’t. One of these voters, Mary Katrantzou, relies on non-British soil to provide 85 per cent of her brand’s employees and a diversity of artistic perspectives. That says something about the ‘Britishness’ of the people fuelling London’s fashion industry. London’s leading reputation depends on its providing a hub for the world’s fashion renegades, and neither telling them what to do, nor thinking it can do the job better and pushing them out.

But Brexit would mean doing both those things. It would also, as if things weren’t bleak enough, mean an increase in prices for the British fashion buyer. Oh wait, there’s worse – in an industry which relies on image and inherent association, what would happen to brands synonymous with British heritage? Could Burberry really expect buyers to associate their trench coats with aspirational English luxury, and not some xenophobic chieftain in an anorak who’d cut off his nose to spite his face? Perhaps not, because upon Brexit’s announcement, Burberry suspended plans for a trench coat factory in Northern England. Everyone, it seems, was re-evaluating the concept of British heritage, and ultimately, London’s orientation as fashion capital.

But maybe we were hasty. Orwell – who I had admittedly not been far off from in my vision of the future – famously argued that in order to create culturally relevant art the artist must remain outside society, and not be ‘swallowed up by it’. Of course, this metaphor only works if the artist maintains a critical perspective and connection, but it turns out that London’s designers are doing just that.

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**PARKERS BARBERSHOP**

Make it one of your better choices this term.

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**THE MAYS - 2017 EDITOR WANTED**

Applications are now open to edit the 2017 edition of The Mays.

Interested volunteers should email mays-director@varsity.co.uk by midday on Saturday 19th November, attaching a CV and editorial statement (no more than 1 page). Individual and group applications are both welcome; shortlisted candidates will be interviewed week commencing Monday 21st November.

Published annually by Varsity, this book brings together the best new student writing and artwork from Cambridge and Oxford. This will be its twenty-fifth edition.

The selected student volunteer editor/editors will be responsible for assembling a committee of other students to invite submissions of prose, poetry and drama, as well as illustration and photography. Guest editors will also be appointed and involved in the process. Previous guest editors have included Stephen Fry, Nick Cave, Jarvis Cocker, Patti Smith, Sir Quentin Blake, poet laureate Ted Hughes and Roger McGough CBE.

www.themaysanthology.co.uk
The Duchess of Malfi
ADC Theatre
8th - 12th November, 7:45pm

I sit off to the side of the rehearsal room, trying to make myself as invisible as possible. Zen music drifts through the sun-drenched air, and across from me two people sit cross-legged in the middle of the floor. They are holding hands, and I am immediately struck by the connection they seem to have. Every gesture and flicker of expression seems to respond instinctively to the other person, giving the impression that an entire unspoken conversation is being carried out, untranslatable by any onlooker.

Naturally my first question for Kate Marston and Joe Sefton, cast as the Duchess and Antonio in the Marlowe Society’s upcoming production of John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, is how being a couple in real life affects their portrayal of the famous tragic lovers.

They look at each other, then at director Anastasia Bruce-Jones, and all three simultaneously burst into peals of laughter.

Kate and Joe are not actually a couple, they explain, as Anastasia fist pumps the air and I feel my face redden. But their obvious chemistry promises a casting match made in heaven.

Anastasia envisions a “more naturalistic and more sympathetic” take on this classic Jacobean revenge tragedy. She tries to teach Kate and Joe to feel each other’s energy in rehearsal by asking them to lean towards and away from each other according to how drawn or repelled they think their characters feel to each other at a given point in a scene. Her attempts to foster an emotional connection between the play’s romantic leads stem from her own experience connecting with dramatic material.

“I had a real struggle doing *Hamlet* at one point, and there was an exercise we were doing where you felt how forwards and backwards impulses affected your character. I think that can be really helpful. Often it’s easier to feel things when we’re doing things. Physical can lead to emotional. Different people work indifferent ways. So doing as many different things as possible... going for physical, spiritual, and energetic approaches”.

Yet Kate recalls that she was initially slightly sceptical of such approaches: “It can be quite dangerous, emotional recall, because you can be quite mixed up between yourself and the character,” she remarks. “It reminds you the things the characters are feeling are real. But it allows the audience to relate to it”.

Kate has been considering carefully the delivery of the play’s most famous line, when its heroine declares “I am Duchess of Malfi still”. “I’ve been trying to say it and lay the emphasis on different words. I don’t know whether it’s the fact that she’s the Duchess or the Duchess of Malfi.” The line comes, intriguingly, at the point of the Duchess’ greatest suffering in the play, and Kate is “not sure it’s her trying to assert her authority so much as reminding her of what she is”.

Joe faces a rather different challenge, as he finds that he often has to navigate the conspicuous silences of Antonio and their contrast to the voluble Duchess. Part of the complication comes from the vast class separation between the characters. “It’s working out what he can and cannot say, and what’s wise to say,” Joe explains. “I think particularly in the proposal scene. He’s constantly reminded of who he is, so I think it’s partly like the speech where he says he loves listening to her talk. “And I can imagine his mind wandering quite a lot and then zoning back into what she’s saying. I think when you’ve got this character that you’re playing opposite, it’s written so beautifully that I understand why he doesn’t say anything”.

Anastasia remarks too that she has made significant changes to the drama’s primary villain, the Duchess’ twin brother Ferdinand. Webster’s text, she explains, often makes it very easy to stereotype Ferdinand, whereas this production will offer a new interpretation, attempting to push against the original play’s “insensitivity to mental illness.”

*A more naturalistic and more sympathetic take on revenge tragedy*
I have lost myself
Corpus Playroom
7th - 9th November, 9:30pm

I have lost myself is a play that resists definition. It isn’t Shakespearean. It isn’t a Greek tragedy. It’s far from an adaptation of a well-known Broadway play turned cult movie. In fact, for the two hours that I sat in on rehearsals, there wasn’t much dialogue at all. So, what is this play about?

At its heart, I have lost myself is about Alzheimer’s disease (and the early onset kind at that), a disease hugely under-represented in mainstream media, widely misunderstood by the public and barely understood by the scientific community. Because of the peculiar nature of the disease, patients suffer a loss of brain functions like memory, followed by the loss of speech and, eventually, every facet of their personality.

Using techniques of physical theatre, director Jonathan Ben-Shaul and producer Phoebe Bright have explored the anguish and the inner workings of the mind of Augustus Deter, the first person to be diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, and the woman whose self-observation forms the play’s title.

The play has been developed collaboratively under Jonathan’s leadership, beginning with only the basic structure of each scene. As a result, a lot of the action comes from movement rather than dialogue. Indeed, when I walked into the rehearsal, I was greeted by a scruffy guy in a white T-shirt being pushed around the stage. I was pleased to learn that this was indeed part of the play and not blatan bullying: a sequence carried out by the impact of his performance will be amplified when the Corpus Playroom becomes his cosy little bedroom – and we’re invited in to join him. If you’re looking for something different, refreshing and insightful, I highly recommend watching I have lost myself. I know I will.

By Thomas O’Connor

Thomas O’Connor tells us why musicals are more than just the junk food of theatre

The term ‘musical theatre’ can send shivers down the spine. The dramatists bemoan its triviality. The opera buffs ridicule its lack of musical merit. The public see it as juvenile, daft fun. So what is it about the genre that keeps shows running forever? Why do certain people go weak at the knees for the musical? I have lost myself is worth going to see?

To answer these questions, I pop into the rehearsal of the Corpus Playroom’s Coram Boy. It’s a play that resists definition. It isn’t Shakespearean. It isn’t a Greek tragedy. It isn’t an adaptation of a well-known Broadway play turned cult movie. In fact, for the two hours that I sat in on rehearsals, there wasn’t much dialogue at all.

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The cast and crew of the Corpus show speak to Kritarth Jha

Opening in Week 6

Tuesday 8th
Are You Sitting Comfortably?
Corpus Playroom
7:00pm (*‘til 12th)

A View from the Bridge
Pembroke New Cellars
9:30pm (*‘til 9th)

Wednesday 9th

Foxfinder
Judith E. Wilson Drama Studio, Faculty of English
7:30pm (*‘til 12th)

Comedy Weekly
ADC
11:00pm (*‘til 12th)

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The Cambridge Jazz Festival, now in its second year, has a stellar lineup of jazz stars, writes Karl Schwonik

The Cambridge Jazz Festival, now in its second year, operates with a sense of engagement, inviting education and collaboration. The festival's aim is to bring together musicians from across the University and from several different academic disciplines. On the evening of Leys School on the 22nd. If you are a vocal jazz lover, make sure to catch Lauren Kinsey and her group Snowpoet at the Unitarian Church on the 26th. At their opening concert last Friday, conducted by Soweto Kinch, who is currently the chief conductor of the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra and music director at the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, they brought the perfect blend of energy and alacrity to the 30th anniversary of the Cambridge Classical Concert Series. Given the long-standing commitment of the RPO and Cambridge Live to outreach programmes and diversifying of the contemporary classical audience, it is fitting that the programme opened with the overture to Rossini’s Gial-laurone Tull. One of the most loved and most accessible of all orchestral overtures – perhaps overshadowed in the collective conscience only by that of Bizet’s Car- men – it was a lively way of warming up orchestra and listeners alike. Indeed, Shelley – conducting without a score – used the affectionate bluster of the overture to highlight from the outset the excellent rapport he’s built with the RPO since his appointment in January of last year. The orchestra looked on with rapt attentiveness during his intimate dialogue with principal cellist Jonathan Aylng in his serene solo introduction, and the audience couldn’t help but follow suit.

The whole first section of the overture was sparsely done with a reverent remove, such that the bluster could tend within which punctuate the famous theme roused even more than usual. The Mendelssohn Violin Concerto was a treat. Carolin Widmann, acclaimed German soloist, married perfect technique to a visceral musicality. The saccharine tones of her 17/82 G.B Guadagnini violin soared over Shelley’s delicately thumping orchestra in the first movement’s moorish theme.

The movement’s cadenza did as all cadenzas do and fascinated the audience, but it was the understated virtuosity directly following it as the orchestra wistfully took up the theme that stole the show. Shelley made much of the lachrymose ambiguity of the second movement’s opening bars, which allowed Widmann to truly blossom into her delightful pastoral C major theme. Her encore, the Sarabande of Bach’s Second Partita, was announced in a gruff bark at odds with the warmth evoked in the concerto – but this was quickly mollified by an excellent perform- ance. The elision of the third and fourth movements was handled with aplomb: an ephemeral flick of Shelley’s wrist and the monumental climax that rode us into the cold chill of a miserable October – our bellies were well and truly satisfied, full of freshly-stoked Sibelian fire.

“Jazz is evolving and now encompasses numerous cultures and musical styles”
New releases

ALBUM

D.R.A.M. is an American rapper and singer, making music somewhere between R&B and trap-rap. If your immediate reaction is ‘another one?’, I don’t blame you. His first full-length album arrives at a time when its genre is double-edged. This year has shown there’s an audience for bright R&B influenced rap.

But the fact that Drake, Chance the Rapper, Rae Sremmurd and literally hundreds of Soundcloud rappers have dominated the hip-hop world this year makes it difficult to stand out. Big Baby D.R.A.M. doesn’t try to do this with an album that is unapologetic about being ‘2016 rap’.

Big Baby D.R.A.M.
D.R.A.M.

ALBUM

Hamburg Demonstrations is Peter Doherty’s second solo album, and the former Libertines’ frontman finds himself in a peculiar position. 10 years after a bitter split, the band made its spectacular comeback: playing at Reading and Leeds Festival and Glastonbury before releasing the album Anthems for Doomed Youth in 2015.

Many of the songs on the album, such as ‘Birdcage’ and ‘Down For The Outing’, have been floating around for the last few years. Its last track, ‘She Is Far’, which describes a walk through London in the winter, was written in the Libertines’ early days. This is complimented by strong newer material on the album as well.

Hamburg Demonstrations
Pete Doherty

To listen to Varsity’s Spotify playlist, go to: goo.gl/psEVsJ

Friday 4th
Lottery Winners
Cambridge Junction, 7pm (doors)
Recently signed by Warner Brothers by the same person who signed The Ramones, Madonna and The Smiths (among others), Lottery Winners are a band on the rise. To top things off, it’s also a benefit gig for WaterAid.
£17 adv

Sunday 6th
Dodgy
Portland Arms, 7:30pm (doors)
Widely popular band Dodgy comes to Cambridge to play this intimate space
£16.50 adv

Tuesday 8th
Cambridge Music Festival: Steve Reich turns 80
Cambridge Corn Exchange, 7:30pm
The legend is celebrated for reaching yet another milestone in his career. £15.25 (concs)

Thursday 10th
Cambridge Modern Jazz: Andrew Bain Project
Hidden Rooms, 7pm
Bain brings his high-octane ensemble of heavy hitters from the UK and across the pond. £12 (concs)

Highlights of the week

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Cambridge Modern Jazz: Andrew Bain Project
Hidden Rooms, 7pm
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IN CONVERSATION WITH

D.R.A.M. is an American rapper and singer, making music somewhere between R&B and trap-rap. If your immediate reaction is ‘another one?’, I don’t blame you. His first full-length album arrives at a time when its genre is double-edged. This year has shown there’s an audience for bright R&B influenced rap.

Many of the songs on the album, such as ‘Birdcage’ and ‘Down For The Outing’, have been floating around for the last few years. Its last track, ‘She Is Far’, which describes a walk through London in the winter, was written in the Libertines’ early days. This is complimented by strong newer material on the album as well.

Hamburg Demonstrations is Peter Doherty’s second solo album, and the former Libertines’ frontman finds himself in a peculiar position. 10 years after a bitter split, the band made its spectacular comeback: playing at Reading and Leeds Festival and Glastonbury before releasing the album Anthems for Doomed Youth in 2015.

Many of the songs on the album, such as ‘Birdcage’ and ‘Down For The Outing’, have been floating around for the last few years. Its last track, ‘She Is Far’, which describes a walk through London in the winter, was written in the Libertines’ early days. This is complimented by strong newer material on the album as well.

Big Baby D.R.A.M.
D.R.A.M.

ALBUM

Hamburg Demonstrations
Pete Doherty

ALBUM

Hamburg Demonstrations
Pete Doherty

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**Reviews**

**THE TOP 5**

**Teen Films**

**Clueless (1995)**
Based on Jane Austen’s Emma, Clueless is film with impeccable comedy and fashion choices. Alicia Silverstone’s Cher fancies herself as a matchmaker, who has to accept that not all of her matches are perfect.

**10 Things I Hate About You (1999)**
By far the best Shakespeare adaptation, 10 Things is a feisty feminist movie, with Kat giving some of the greatest put-downs in film history. Bianca and Kat are banned from dating, unless the other does.

**Ferris Bueller’s Day Off (1986)**
Desperate for another day off school, Ferris runs wild with girlfriend Sloane and best friend Cameron, all while trying to avoid detection from his sister, parents and the school’s principal.

**Juno (2007)**
Ellen Page stars as pregnant teen Juno. With her relationship with sort-of-boyfriend Michael Cera still on tentative ground, and the addition of prospective adoptive parents, she struggles balancing her new life.

**Mean Girls (2004)**
Tina Fey’s Mean Girls is an irreplaceably quotable cult classic. Lindsay Lohan plays the previously homeschooled Cady, who ends up infiltrating a notorious clique, only to be entangled in a plot to take down its infamous leader.

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**FILM**

A gloriously unconventional work of sci-fi, writes Alex Izza

Doctor Strange
Dir. Scott Derrickson
Opened 26th October

★★★★☆

Marvel is pushing itself. It could quite happily have kept churning out its conventional cannon of superheroes like Iron Man and Captain America. But who needs convention? After the roaring success of a film about a man who can shrink to the size of an ant, Marvel clearly decided that anything was possible. Logically, therefore, the next step was to cast aside the very fabric of reality and replace it with sorcerers using magic to tap into infinite dimensions.

The film opens by introducing us to the life of the arrogant but successful neurosurgeon, Steven Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch). After a car accident destroys his professional career, he finds another path in the enclave of the Ancient One (Tilda Swinton) by connecting with his astral self. Strange delves into the complexities of the mystic arts, and mysteriously improve, credited to his “photographic memory”. Thematically, Doctor Strange seemed unsure of its direction. Hubris runs throughout the film, with director Scott Derrickson beautifully drawing out the trope of a ‘great’ man’s downfall and his ultimate redemption. Yet this is contrasted to a dizzying onslaught of magical terminology, as the viewer is introduced and then immediately expected to care about moments such as Kacellius (Mads Mikkelsen’s) theft of pages from the Book of Cagliostro. As a result, certain pivotal later scenes in the film lose their emotive impact. The viewer struggles to process decades of fantasy lore, when they should be absorbed in the unfolding inter-dimensional drama.

Cumberbatch gives a strong performance as Steven Strange, delivering complexity to a role the viewer could easily disregard as another superhero in a cloak. He gives mastery to his clashes with the forces of the Dark Dimension. But he also makes an item named the Cloak of Levitation into a device for physical comedy, a gargantuan feat which adds welcome levity to the film’s darker moments.

However, there is also a great crime: Mikkelsen is wasted as the villain in this film. His nihilistic hatred of the laws of the Universe is never really developed. As someone who re-watches Casino Royale regularly just to see his performance of Le Chiffre, it was soul-depressing to see Kacellius warped into little more than a plot inconvenience.

Doctor Strange is a gloriously unconventional work of sci-fi. The CGI set pieces are some of the greatest I have ever seen. Every Marvel film to date has relied on sprawling special effects, but here they have a purpose. The screen frequently explodes with a dazzling spectacle of colour, whether in the aptly named “Dark Dimension”, or shattering reality to enter the (again, innovatively named) “Mirror Dimension”. The visuals engross the viewer in this mystical vision of our world and give the action a pulsating and totally unpredictable quality; typified by the fight scene across the skies of New York which challenges every conventional idea of an action sequence.

It is difficult to capture such kaleidoscopic imagery and an avalanche of fantasy. Director Scott Derrickson has created something that is now the benchmark for the effective use of CGI. As a fully formed film, Doctor Strange is a mixed bag. A strong leading performance from Cumberbatch is lost as we are thrust headlong into a chaotic world of underdeveloped characters and disparate plot lines. These inter-dimensional set pieces will have a future in Marvel films only when they remember the value of retaining the viewer’s attention. It is a rare film review that ends by defending CGI. Strange times indeed.

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Got your own Top 5 List? Email it to reviews@varsity.co.uk
Xavier Dolan’s latest film It’s Only the End of the World is an intense, suffocating representation of the strained relationships within a family. The film won the Grand Prix at Cannes, the festival’s second most prestigious prize; however, it has divided critics and audiences alike.

It tells the story of Louis-Jean, a well-known French dramatist who returns to his hometown after an absence of 12 years. We discover early in the film that he’s gay, terminally ill and has returned to announce his impending death to his family. The experience of watching the film is uncomfortable and claustrophobic, a reflection of the strained relationships which weave together the fabric of Louis-Jean’s family. The use of close-up shots limits the camera view such that the spectator feels that they are in the same room as the actors on screen. The cinematography is slick and cool but the scenes feel a bit disjointed and awkward.

Dolan’s film is worth watching for the sheer intensity of the performances. It’s nicely filmed and well-acted, but ultimately unsatisfying. Too many questions are left unanswered, and the film may be just a bit too stylised for its own good. The glossy aesthetic comes at the expense of a gripping plot or storyline.

James Swaden

Snowden

Dir. Oliver Stone
Opens 2nd December 2016

A thrilling biopic following the events preceding and following Edward Snowden’s decision to leak classified NSA files to the public in 2013, with Joseph Gordon-Levitt in the leading role. Gordon-Levitt does a fantastic job in character study, playing Snowden’s mannerisms so accurately that when the man himself makes a cameo at the end of the film one can scarcely notice a difference. He is certainly the stand-out performer of the film, as he skilfully documents Snowden’s cumulative guilt, horror, and anxieties about the very operations he works on.

One of the few problems with the film was where it tended to fall into hackneyed Hollywood clichés, perhaps inevitable in the dramatisation of a story that demands so much technical understanding and computer operation. In spite of this, the film kept a tense and exciting pace, cutting between scenes of ‘present’ Snowden, and ‘past’ Snowden, with tensions apparent on both sides. If Snowden’s real-life leaks were not enough of a call to action, this film certainly provides a second push. It is a well-executed tale of sacrifice in the name of the right to know, and the right to call our governments out on their surveillance practices. The film has perhaps been released strategically (the US election), and is, at this time, essential viewing.

Sarah Wilson

* Full versions of both reviews online at: varsity.co.uk/reviews

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Classy CUWAFC continue their unbeaten march

Cambridge 3
Bedfordshire 0

Keir Baker and Alexis Crockett
Sports Editor and Sports Correspondent

Cambridge University Women’s Association Football Club (CUWAFC) continued their undefeated start to the season on Wednesday afternoon by putting in a dominant display over the University of Bedfordshire to secure their second consecutive 3–0 victory.

In a high-octane and extremely physical game, which saw a number of the Light Blues players forced off the field with a wide array of injuries, CUWAFC were forced to work hard to break the deadlock. Yet their quality and determination won through and they created plenty of chances, never looking like they would miss out on the three points. Indeed, within the opening moments, the Light Blues were threatening the home side’s goal as Daisy Luf broke through the defence, but the Fitzwilliam striker was unable to capitalise. He early scare shocked yet the CUWAFC defenders were soon to the ield with a wide array of injuries, the CUWAFC team continued their unbeaten march


So, has cycling cleaned up its act?

▶ Continued from back page

began testing riders during races. Slow to begin with, drugs testing became increasingly rigorous, culminating in the breakthrough year of 1997, when five-time Tour winner Eddy Merckx tested positive for Pemoline during La Flèche Wallonne. Amazingly, however, he was let off with just a one-month suspension and a pittance of a fine to his name.

And even when technology enabled the UCI to see cheating, they did little to change the status quo in the drugs department. Indeed, the 1990s saw doping experience a second wind with virtually untraceable EPO injections: Bjarne Riis was victorious in the 1996 Tour de France and remained highly respected until a 2007 book written by his former soigneur revealed his diet of EPO and cortisone.

However, Lance Armstrong’s fall seems to have paved the way for a clean future, where talent and training surpass the syringe. The disgraced American enjoyed unjoyed unhealthy power relations with members of cycling’s governing bodies and fostered a toxic culture with those who stood against him suddenly rejected at the roadside. Tyler Hamilton and Floyd Landis, two former team-mates, both claim they were threatened with taking EPO during the 2004 Tour de France, crowing “They couldn’t do it!” Yet, by exposing this code of omertà for all to see, Armstrong’s fall led to a spate of confessions that has wiped the slate clean for professional cycling. No sooner had the US Anti-Doping Agency banned Armstrong for life and stripped him of his seven Tour wins, did 15 other high-profile cyclists confess to similar transgressions, including Jan Ullrich, winner of the 1997 Tour and 1999 Vuelta de España.

Once the secret left the peloton, the transformation was rapid: in the follow-

▶ Jan Ullrich, winner of the 1997 Tour, confessed to doping in 2013 (Rene Schütte)

standing the sport really want to fix it’. Yet by exposing this code of omertà for all to see, Armstrong’s fall led to a spate of confessions that has wiped the slate clean for professional cycling. Notably, today’s races are markedly slower: according to Ross Tucker, sports scientist at the University of Cape Town, the power-to-weight ratio of today’s leading riders is around 10 per cent lower than in the EPO era. In the post-Armstrong era, professional teams have begun to take more transparent approach towards their preparations. Following the inevitable accusations of doping that Chris Froome had to endure throughout the 2013 Tour,
CURUFCW give outplayed Oxford an ominous sign

Cambridge 22
Oxford 0

Jess Lister
Sports Correspondent

Cambridge University Rugby Union Football Club’s Women (CURUFCW) drew their game on Wednesday afternoon, putting heavy recent defeats behind them to record their first BUCS Premier South home win: 22–0 against their Oxford rivals at Grange Road.

Having been dubbed the “Varsity Match warm-up” before kick-off, the highly-anticipated match was characterised by exciting tactical battles across the pitch. But it was the solid and clinical Light Blues who won through, reinforcing the belief that they go into December’s Twickenham showdown as favourites to retain their Varsity crown.

Initially, with neither side wanting to give much away, the game was a cagey affair. Tactical switches – usual CURUFCW scrum-half Molly Byrne joining the pack and Jess Charlton shifting from number eight to inside centre – were taking their time to bed in. Nonetheless, it was the Light Blues who began on the front foot: a knock-on from Oxford’s hooker, Pat Metcalfe-Jones, gave the home side a chance to make an early mark on the scrum. But as the opening passages of play developed, the Dark Blues fought back to gain early possession and territory: a superb, jinking run from Elmarie Van Heerden who began on the front foot: a knock-on from Oxford’s hooker, Pat Metcalfe-Jones, gave the home side a chance to make an early mark on the scrum. But as the opening passages of play developed, the Dark Blues fought back to gain early possession and territory: a superb, jinking run from Elmarie Van Heerden

The game, but the opening few minutes were scrappy as a series of penalties and handling errors saw the ball switch sides again and again. Stamping their authority on the game, the Dark Blues nearly pulled a score back, but for the sensational tackling work of Marks, preventing substitute Oxonian Anna Gibson from scoring after fine work in the breakdown from substitute Princess Ashilokun.

Yet five minutes in, CURUFCW found their feet to score the try of the game: Middleton seized on the loose ball and when it found the hands of Gibson, she turned on the afterburners to run 40 yards down the left-wing and score under the posts. A conversion from Middleton took the score to 17–0.

The Dark Blues were unrelenting in their pursuit of parity, but in their desperation to score, they left gaps in their defence. And at the 60th minute mark, Middleton took advantage, grabbing a try to take the score to 22–0.

As the clock ticked towards 80 minutes, there was drama: shortly after substitute Fiona Shuttleworth presented Middleton with a golden chance to score, which she spurned, a dangerous looking high tackle from Chloe Withers on Ashilokun saw the referee produce a warranted yellow card.

Under pressure and down to 14 players, CURUFCW toiled away to prevent the determined Dark Blues from grabbing a consolation score. Both teams were putting their bodies on the line, exemplified in the 75th minute as Lydie Thorn pulled away from contact with a bloody nose. Just moments later, the referee drew the game to a premature halt to wave on treatment for a suspected broken leg (confirmed later as a dislocated ankle) for Oxford flanker Anna Gibson.

That the fierce passion with which the teams played had resulted in such injuries was indicative of the importance of the match for both sides, a fact noted by CURUFCW captain Middleton as she spoke to Varsity after the match.

“Varsity clashes are always special occasions, and the CURUFCW approach the fixture with fantastic intensity and passion. There have been key aspects of the game that we’ve been working on in the last weeks and we were really pleased to see that come to fruition on the pitch today,” she said.

“I’m dead chuffed that we’ve got this result under our belt for the BUCS league, and am of course excited that we now have this as a platform to work from ahead of the Twickenham clash in December. We have a tough four weeks of training ahead of us and are looking to continue working on some new combinations we had out on the pitch today. All in all, a good day in the office!”

Oxford: Trott, Harrap, Bunting, Rose, Robison, Wilson, Wilcock (c), Bliss, Smith, Metcalfe-Jones, Phebe, Taylor, Van Heerden, Robison, Anna Gibson, Behan

Substitutes: Matte-Gregory, McCay, Cartwright, Duff, Ashilokun, Rees

CURUFCW: Middleton (c), Lara Gibson, Suggitt, Charlton, Farrant, Marks, Thorn, Sanchez-Schilling, Pierce, Nunez-Mulder, Probert, Pratt, Byrne, Withers, Elgar

Substitutes: Patmann, Johannessen, Burgess, Shuttleworth, Bramley, Brickel, Evans, Monks

Oxford: Trott, Harrap, Bunting, Rose, Robison, Wilson, Wilcock (c), Bliss, Smith, Metcalfe-Jones, Phebe, Taylor, Van Heerden, Robison, Anna Gibson, Behan

Substitutes: Matte-Gregory, McCay, Cartwright, Duff, Ashilokun, Rees

A superb hand-off saw Lara Gibson score her first try (MATTHEW IMPEY)

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“IAm excited we now have a platform to work from ahead of December”
CUWVC net historic set victory against the Other Place

Cambridge 1
Oxford 3

Danny Wittenberg
Sports Correspondent

Cambridge University Women’s Volleyball Club (CUWVC) clinched only their second set against Oxford in two-and-a-half years on Wednesday evening, during a hard-hitting, jaw-splitting encounter that saw the Light Blues fall to a spirited 3-1 loss.

Despite eventually losing, there were times where the rapidly-improving Light Blues squad was bursting with acrobatic blocks and penetrating spikes to reveal glimpses of volleyball at its electrifying best. And while their 27-25 second set was serve-receive, “we have a talented bunch of girls and I am confident that we will be successful this season,” Light Blues’ captain, said afterwards.

The outstanding set turned upon a gutsy service spell by Heather Rigby, more than justifying her promotion from the second team this season. Resolute backcourt action and varied attacks helped CUWVC defend three set points at 24-21 down to level the score.

Few meetings between these Varsity rivals, whatever the event, could compete with the intensity that followed in sudden death. Neither side displayed obvious weakness in a series of gruelling rallies under maximum pressure. Every punch and block over the net appeared to carry the force of a physical blow, before the Light Blues’ Alizée Pace provided the knockout attack.

“There were moments when we all played in complete harmony, which is impressive for a squad with so little time to get to know each other,” Pace, a Natural Sciences fresher playing her third game, enthused.

The Light Blues consolidated their dominance for much of the third set, streaking away to a 19-13 advantage. The hosts lost concentration, however, at the crucial stage and allowed Oxford to fulfil their table-topping potential. Their opponents set up and prevailed in another close finish from 21-21, playing with an almost arrogant degree of energy and pulverising the ball on every spike.

“We can be proud of the way we fought for every single ball and there were moments when we played really well,” said Weronika Wrocz-Kaminska, who showed her Norwegian elite league prowess with several point-blank blocks.

“I was disappointed by our mental attitude because it felt as though we gave up towards the end,” she admitted. “Overall we did a good job.”

Although CUWVC continued to score regularly, the match slipped away as morale plummeted in the fourth, and ultimately final, set. Oxford, meanwhile, protected every ball as if it were porcelain and deserved to leave with their third successive league victory.

Nevertheless, the fixture gave valuable experience to a number of Light Blue debutants, including Anna Suchánková: “Everyone on the team supported each other well but we need to keep up our concentration and take a responsibility for the ball when others make mistakes,” she concluded.

“We are still getting used to play with each other, since there are a lot of new faces on the team, including myself, and we will only get better over the course of the season. We are going to smash them next time.”

The Light Blues will have an opportunity to exact revenge on the Dark Blues of Mount Ventoux, with three vials of amphetamines in their back pocket and a combination of wine and whisky in their bloodstream. Clearly, cycling’s governing body, UCI, could no longer let matters slide and

Jess Lister
CUUFCW triumph over Oxford
Page 35

Tom Higgins Toon
How cycling managed to put the brakes on doping

Professional cycling, with its colourful history of blood doping and internal corruption, has faced an uphill battle in recent years to demonstrate its worth to the neutral sports fans. However, the spate of confessions and subsequent openness about doping that followed Lance Armstrong’s dramatic disclosure on live TV suggests that cycling, as an elite sport, may have a chance for redemption.

In recent years, cheating has become increasingly sophisticated, as riders turn to blood transfusions and epoetin (EPO) injections to artificially increase oxygen levels in the bloodstream. In a farcical period of 13 years from 1996 to 2010, 70 per cent of those finishing on the Tour de France podium were penalised for doping. Yet cheating is not a recent phenomenon: the winner of the 1904 Tour, Maurice Garin, was retroactively disqualified for taking a train, and it was not uncommon to see riders sneaking a bottle of wine into their packs to numb the pain of the arduous 3,600km stages.

Even if rules were not specifically broken – and they often were – fair play often played second fiddle to cunning chicanery. Diminutive in stature, the 1947 Tour winner Jean Robic would pick up water bottles ballasted with lead to make up lost time descending hills. Greatly embarrassed, the organisations passed rules stating only liquids could fill bottles. His solution? Fill them with mercury instead. Such chutzpah may have amused the crowds and outraged the authorities, but behind the scenes, riders were gambling with their lives. Roger Rivière fell into a ravine, allegedly too drugged to pull himself out, and Tour winner Jean Robic would pick up water bottles ballasted with lead to make up lost time descending hills.

Lance Armstrong (SEBASTIAN TINGLER)
Tour winner, Maurice Garin, was retroactively disqualified for taking a train, and it was not uncommon to see riders sneaking a bottle of wine into their packs to numb the pain of the arduous 3,600km stages. However, the spate of confessions and subsequent openness about doping that followed Lance Armstrong’s dramatic disclosure on live TV suggests that cycling, as an elite sport, may have a chance for redemption. Clearly, cycling’s governing body, UCI, could no longer let matters slide and

Continued on page 36