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VARSITY



'People are struggling'

Varsity investigation reveals huge disparities in rent and charges

High Newn: Newnham has the top average price per week

(ANNA MENIN)

£178.48

Average rent and charges per week at Newnham (highest)

£106.75

Average rent and charges per week at Homerton (lowest)

Anna Menin, Patrick Wernham and Louis Ashworth

There are massive disparities in the average weekly rents and compulsory charges being paid by undergraduate students at different colleges across Cambridge, a Varsity investigation has uncovered.

The investigation comprehensively looked at room costs, including the number of rooms available at different

price points, to produce a comparable measure that covers 27 of the 29 undergraduate colleges.

Reacting to Varsity's findings, student campaign group Cambridge Cut the Rent said that disparities were "unacceptable", saying "rents are being used to plug holes in college finances, with students as cash cows on bursars' spreadsheets."

"People are struggling. Both colleges and the University need to take action, or students will," said the group.

Outcry over rent costs has grown among the student body over the past two terms, with five colleges having introduced Cut the Rent campaigns, which call for an improvement in conditions, reduced rent costs and reductions to overhead prices.

Using data obtained through freedom of information requests, as well as publicly available figures, Varsity was able to calculate the average total weekly amount of rent and compulsory charges paid by undergraduates at each college, which is £145.80.

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The Sopranos? The toxic side of Cambridge's choral culture

News Page 2 ►

Academics strike amid USS pension dispute

Rosie Bradbury
Senior News Correspondent
Catherine Lally
Investigations Editor

The first day of strikes at Cambridge and 64 universities across the country against proposed pension cuts began on Thursday morning. Academics and staff formed picket lines around several University sites, including New Museums, Downing, and Sidgwick.

Over one thousand Cambridge staff joined in the strike action, joined by students who rallied in solidarity and avoided picketed sites. They gathered again for the UCU's first teach-out, which took place that afternoon, and saw dozens of staff and students gather to discuss how to shape the teach-out programme.

A large picket line was situated along the entrances to Sidgwick site, composed of academics and students visiting in solidarity. Students crossing the picket line to attend lectures were handed flyers by picketers and told to ask lecturers

Continued on page 4 ►

Editorial

An injury to one, an injury to all

Yesterday, staff at universities nationwide began a wave of strike action in defence of their pensions. Fourteen days of strikes have been planned across 61 of the pre-'92 universities. The strikes will likely be incredibly disruptive, with students across the country losing countless contact hours.

To such students, many of whom barely have a handle on the complexities of their own student loans, pension reform can seem like an arcane issue, but its importance can't be understated. The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) oversees the pensions of more than 400,000 university staff.

The UCU is undertaking industrial action against a proposed reform of the USS which would transform it from a defined benefit scheme – a guaranteed retirement income in which liabilities are collectivised – to a defined contribution scheme, made up of individual pension funds. The proposed reform would move liabilities from the employer, the university, to the employees, your lecturers, giving them not only a less generous pension, but one at the mercy of the vagaries of the stock market.

This is only the latest turn in a decades-old drift towards insecurity and penury for workers in all sectors, as more and more of our societal institutions are exposed to the winds of commodification. The danger of these forces of marketisation is that their every victory renders solidarity more challenging. We can see this clearly in the present case.

The introduction of tuition fees was achieved against the expressed desires of those concerned. In other words, students were made consumers. This change in conditions may not have been asked for, but it certainly occurred, and the consequence is a strong incentive to think and behave like consumers.

For students today, the staff strike is a genuine financial burden, there is no doubt about that. We are being deprived of something which is of immense value to us. But we should remain strong against the urge to take this out on the strikers. Marketisation tries to divide us by pitching our financial interests against one another. Such situations require us to be more courageous and more resolute.

An injury to one is an injury to all. Stand in solidarity with your lecturers. Support the strike.

Elsewhere in the paper

Todd Gillespie and Sophie Shennan tear off the surplice, covering the toxic culture at some of Cambridge's elite choirs (opposite), and Anna Menin, Patrick Wernham, and Louis Ashworth analyse rent disparities across Cambridge colleges (6-9).

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News

Choir culture Bullying and intimidation pervade the choral community

Current and former members of Cambridge's most elite choirs describe sexism and manipulation

Todd Gillespie Senior News Editor
Sophie Shennan Deputy News Editor

Cambridge is famous for its choirs. They have performed for royalty, frequently tour all corners of the earth, and fill centuries-old chapels and courts with ethereal voices.

On the face of it, being a choir member in Cambridge is an opportunity to sing with the best and be taught by the best, and to take part in an illustrious tradition. But break through the stained glass, and a less angelic picture appears.

Varsity spoke to students and recent graduates from some of the most elite college choirs, who painted a picture of a thankless culture marred by stress, intense pressure and sexism, where singers can be reduced to tears.

One former choir member described a choir culture of "bullying tactics reminiscent of 19th century boys' boarding schools", where social expectations do not fit with the University as a whole.

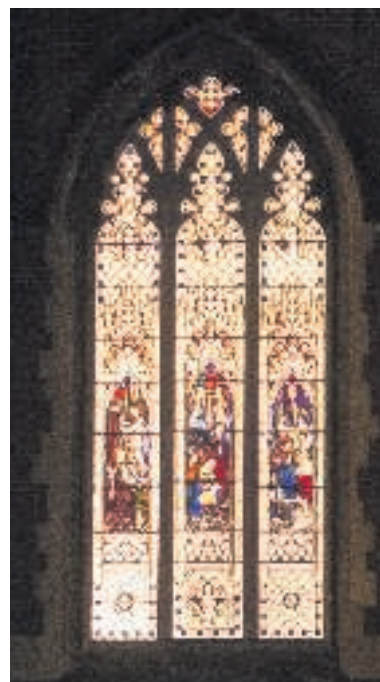
Concerningly, many current and former choir members turned down our requests to interview them, citing how uncomfortable their experiences had been for them and saying they would be scared to speak even if their anonymity was guaranteed.

While all insisted they were eager to spend time singing, some emphasised that choir felt more like a full-time job than an extracurricular activity. Missing rehearsals is often unthinkable – even in cases of illness or academic pressure, many are compelled to suffer through.

At most choirs, if someone has to miss a service they not only have to inform the director of music, but also have to find someone to replace them – normally

a former choir member or singer from another college choir. One student alleged that a conductor had phoned a friend who had reported themselves ill with the intention of knocking on their door to see if they were telling the truth.

Another claimed that after she reported having a concussion, a choir administrator demanded to see her private medical records, a request which was refused by the college nurse. The student was then compelled to attend choir regardless, and was berated after leaving during the rehearsal to be sick. Unsurprisingly, she has now left the choir.



MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER

But these stories are not isolated anecdotes. Some choirmasters are notorious for using ritual humiliation as a teaching technique, publicly shaming individual students for being late to rehearsal, not being able to attend choir, or forgetting items of clothing for the performance. Varsity also received reports of conductors halting practice sessions to berate individuals for little obvious reason.

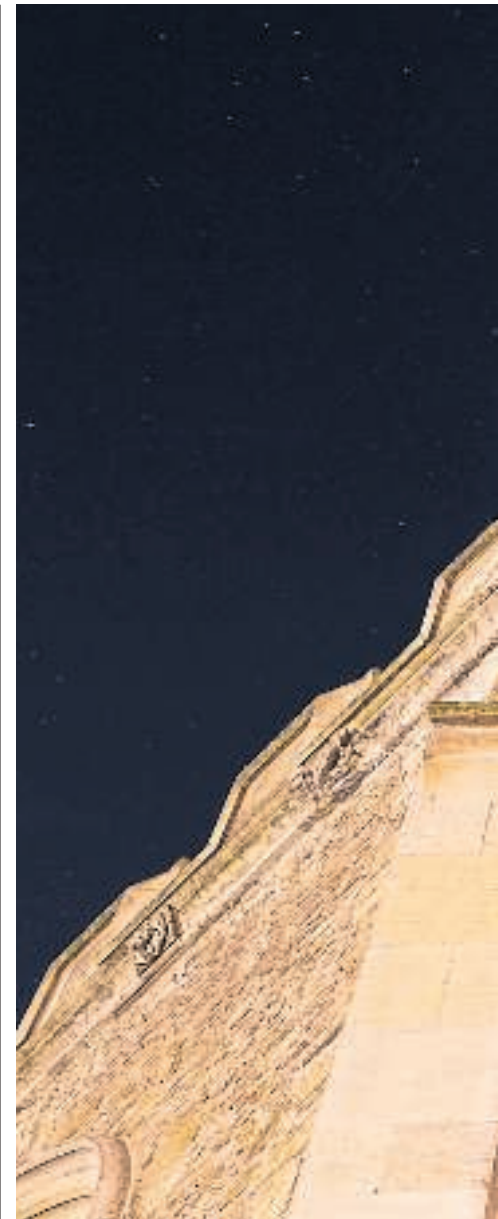
"Disappointment is their favourite expression," as one choir member put it.

The characterisation of choirmasters as musical geniuses means they are able to get away with a lot more than academics, some claimed, leaving singers feeling as if they are expected to prioritise choir above all else.

"If the same stories were told of supervisions, I doubt they would go unnoticed," one remarked. "They are given free rein, whereas if they were a professor they would have been disciplined," said another.

Some female singers also spoke of an undertone of sexism in Cambridge choirs, where the vast majority of choirmasters are men. Two top choirs are only open to men, and one female singer pointed to an "outrageous" gender disparity in terms of opportunities to sing. Some choirmasters are reportedly known for having made inappropriate comments. One allegedly told a singer that her skirt was too short during a rehearsal. Many singers we spoke to said that women were often expected to "look pretty".

The detachment of some choirmasters from the broader University academic and pastoral life does not help the situation. "They are usually middle-aged and old men who are invincible because choir matters are dealt with internally,"





Anonymous choir member testimonials

“If the same stories were told about supervisions in college, I doubt they would go unnoticed”

“It’s hard to enjoy when you’re being undermined, and being told by other singers in the choir that ‘the choirmaster is always like this’”

“The commitment and the rigour is totally acceptable, however the emotional manipulation and the unprofessional behaviour isn’t”

▲ Great St Mary’s, the ecclesiastical heart of Cambridge (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

one choir member pointed out.

Another mentioned that her choir-master was explicitly exempt from dealing with pastoral issues, with students banned from contacting him directly outside of rehearsals. While he was apparently “mortified” when he discovered the real extent of the stresses and strains some of his singers were facing and was thanked for his sympathy, the structural divide helped matters little.

There is rarely an incentive for choir-masters to listen to complaints; everyone knows that most students would not leave such rare opportunities behind by quitting. The experience of singing in Cambridge is highly prestigious – an opportunity some singers can only dream of. Even those with the most serious concerns still insisted that they were hugely grateful for the musical opportunities being at Cambridge had provided.

“The commitment and the rigour is totally acceptable,” said one former choir singer, “but the emotional manipulation and the unprofessional behaviour isn’t.”

The intensity of devoting so much time to choir – in rehearsals, services, and on tour – can take its toll. While many make their best friends singing alongside each other, the stringent competition means that colleagues often heap pressure on each other: “It’s hard to enjoy when you’re being patronised and undermined, being told by other singers that ‘the choirmaster is always like this’ or ‘you’ll get used to it.’” Few feel like they can speak out in choir circles, an industry where professional and university singing is entwined and governed by social reputation, choir-masters’ personal preferences, and word-of-mouth gossip. One recent graduate insisted that the culture is “endemic throughout the UK”.

Many feel forced to accept the traditions without objection, saying the culture and commitment are so dominating that reform seems impossible. Concerns were raised that newcomers frequently feel alienated by the social hierarchy and competitiveness which can emerge among choir cliques, especially

deterring those from underprivileged backgrounds.

Singers feel compelled to internalise the culture, warts and all, or leave. Some said they departed for friendlier choirs and now feel far happier, realising that toxic culture is not necessary to produce high quality.

Many choirs in Cambridge, singers insisted, are welcoming and run by choir-masters who are in touch with students’ needs and understand the stresses imposed on them, both by choir life and academic pressure. But the culture at some choirs, where some students are wracked with guilt for failing to meet expectations and are often brought to tears, maintains social norms largely unchanged over centuries and alien to most of Cambridge life.

The toxic culture, many agree, contributes to the medieval atmosphere of singing in a chapel just as much as the Latin verse and the worn bricks. “It’s an honour – one I really appreciate,” one student said, “but there is another side to it.”

“Disappointment is their favourite expression”

INTERVIEW

Matt Zarb-Cousin on navigating elections and social media

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(HARRY ROBERTSON)

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Oxfam must admit its mistakes



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Statues are a symbol of our history



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Students can force change



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Spain is rugby’s new rising star

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Corrections and clarifications

● Our story last week, ‘Toope sits on his own pay committee’, was inaccurate. In the past, the VC has been a member of the remuneration committee, but since 20 November 2017 the VC has not been a member of the committee. The VC’s current salary of £365,000 a year was set by the University during a global search and so the VC had no say on the remuneration he receives. Varsity would like to apologise to the University and to our readers for this error.

News UCU Strikes

Cambridge staff and students unite to rally against pension reforms

► continued from front page

why they were not participating in the strike. As 10am lectures drew to a close, a group of eight lecturers not on strike were spotted walking in a huddle past their colleagues.

When asked why he felt the strike was so important, Graham Denyer Willis, lecturer in POLIS, said: "It's about education as a public good, and about the future of education". He added that students "know what the value of their education is", and that "students will know how to make their voice heard to the leadership of the University and the leadership of their colleges".

A rally was held outside Senate House by CUSU at noon to show solidarity with striking lecturers. It was attended by several hundred students who held banners and chanted: "Students and workers unite and fight," and: "They say marketise, we say organise".

CUSU Education Officer Martha Krish stood in the middle of the crowd with other sabbatical officers, and urged those gathered to oppose the marketisation of education. She condemned universities for "overworking [academics] and letting their pay slip," saying that "academia is the future for many students."

Her sentiments were echoed by CUSU Women's Officer Lola Olufemi, who told students: "When we look back at this moment, we will know that we were not complicit". Olufemi challenged the "idea that political action is alien to [Cambridge students]," noting that the rally was evidence of a wide level of student engagement.

The rally attendees then marched down King's Parade as colour bombs were set off, before walking past Clare and through to the Backs.

The strike action later continued with the UCU's first teach-out, which took the form of an 'open assembly' to allow participants to shape the programme. It began in a packed Great St Mary's, before moving across to the Senate House lawn to join the student occupation. Anne Alexander, part of the organising group, stressed that the "teach-out programme is something we want to organise collectively with students." She called for those attending to put forward suggestions for teaching themes, facilitating discussions ranging from anti-Prevent organising to "radical" labour organising "across class and racial lines."

When asked about their fellow students who continued to attend lectures, a student at the CUSU rally said they felt that "we are facing a collective action problem, which could have a very damaging effect on the strike." They said that although "industrial action is not designed for university space, and it's awkward and difficult," students should not feel under attack, and instead realise that staff are "mobilising against the University structure."

The sentiment was echoed by members of Cambridge Defend Education, who occupied the lawn outside Senate House, beginning in the early afternoon.



▲ Several hundred students gathered to rally alongside striking academics
(MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)



Stella Swain urged students still attending lectures to "think about why you're not supporting your lecturers," as the "marketisation of education" also affects students' futures.

Many of those participating in the strikes took to social media to air their grievances. Priyamvada Gopal, a senior lecturer in the English Faculty, addressed academics planning on teaching during strike days, tweeting: "Your colleagues will be losing pay, large amounts of it. Remember, 'collegiality' isn't only about ponderous language at meetings & sipping sherry together."

The University of Cambridge Department of Human Resources sent a letter to staff prior to the strikes, requesting staff to advise their "departmental administrator, secretary of faculty board, or equivalent" if they planned to strike.

It threatened to "withhold pay at the full daily rate" if academics refuse to reschedule lectures and classes cancelled due to the strike, although the option to reschedule cancelled classes could undermine the effectiveness of the strike.

Cambridge UCU vice-president Dr. Sam James characterised the letter as "bullying," with its intention being "to intimidate people into not striking." A

university spokesperson responded: "the advice given in the letter was drawn from Universities and Colleges Employers Association guidance to all UK universities on the managing of industrial action."

The strikes also follow the release of a leaked email sent by the Chair of the Pensions Sub-Committee of a Cambridge Intercollegiate Bursars' Committee, Mr. Simon Summers. The email attached a suggested response from the Sub-Committee in favour of the proposed UUK move towards defined contribution plans. Consequently, some have taken this to call into question "the internal democracy of the university, and how that was circumvented in order to attack staff pensions", as Dr. Waseem Yaqoob, Cambridge's UCU Branch Secretary, said.

The strikes, which are the longest that the higher education sector has seen in recent years, have emerged as a hot political issue.

Speaking to Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities Amber Rudd in the House of Commons on Thursday morning, Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner accused Rudd of displaying a "complete lack of interest in the plight of academics who have earned their pension, and are now being denied

the benefits they signed up for."

The UCU has recently announced plans to extend the strikes to examination seasons if negotiations do not resume, which some students and staff have been hesitant to support. One student at the CUSU rally told *Varsity* that support would likely waiver if strikes extended into exam term.

Speaking to *BBC News*, Cambridge University Conservative Association member Angus Groom characterised the plans as "completely disproportionate" and "as damaging as possible to students".

Speaking to *Varsity*, Yaqoob addressed the Union's preliminary plans to strike into Easter term: "We think that the employers would have to be extraordinarily intransigent and hostile towards their own staff if they don't come back to negotiate." He added that a strike during exam term "really is the ultimate last resort".

The strikes will continue into Wednesday of next week. They will then resume on Monday 5th March and continue for two additional weeks, after a meeting on the 2nd March which is set to discuss universities' response to the first wave of strikes.

“It's about education as a public good, and about the future of education”

Students call for Uni to reimburse cancelled teaching amid staff strikes

- International students, who can pay up to £50,130 annually, are disproportionately affected
- The reduction of MPhil students' especially limited contact hours has caused frustration

Rosie Bradbury
Senior News Correspondent
Catherine Lally
Investigations Editor

With the University and College Union (UCU) strikes underway, some students have called for the University to reimburse them for teaching affected by strikes.

A petition was created by student Tamara Brian at Gonville & Caius demanding that the University reimburse every student with £300 for lost contact hours. The petition, which has reached over 600 signatures, comes as some students voice concerns over the strike's disproportionate impact on international and MPhil students.

Students and staff participating in and supporting strike action today expressed mixed views on the petition. One student at the CUSU rally told *Varsity* that the petition was "putting [students] in a position of a consumer of a product." On the other hand, an undergraduate at King's, Cecily Bateman, was supportive of "any kind of action that brings publicity that takes [the strike action] to the highest level".

£300

The amount of reimbursement a student petition is calling for per student

In a closed meeting on Wednesday, Cambridge University Labour Club passed a motion against students petitioning for refunded contact hours. Many UCU picketers, however, told *Varsity* that they were supportive of demands for the University to reimburse students.

Cambridge UCU Branch Secretary Dr. Waseem Yaqoob added that "students should press for an end to the disruption any way they see fit", noting, however, that the UCU would prefer that students "call for negotiations above all".

At a student rally organised on Thursday afternoon, CUSU Women's Officer Lola Olufemi spoke against calling for reimbursement. She said: the "language of marketisation is based on the language of the self". She urged students to ask why they themselves are seeing their education inconvenienced when those who educate them are "about to face huge pay cuts." She then called for a fight for "free education."

The short duration of courses for MPhil students and higher fees charged to international students means that frustration about cancelled teaching runs especially high among these groups.

Callum Hale-Thomson, an English MPhil student, told *Varsity* that he already has relatively little contact time – his course is only nine months long and has twelve 90-minute seminars per term. As a result, it is "a crucial time both for coursework essays and the start of our dissertation projects, so the strikes have caused some real disruption."

He added, "We've received almost no communication from [the University], and it's unacceptable that their unwillingness to compromise or engage has resulted in such disruption to our already time-strapped courses."

Concerns have also been raised that non-EU international students, who pay much higher fees than EU and UK students, are shouldering an unfair financial burden as a result of the strike.

Chair of CUSU International Committee Leo Paillard told *Varsity*: "As international students from outside of the EU pay fees corresponding exactly to the cost of their course, the effect of the strike in terms of cancelled lectures and supervisions is obviously felt more strongly by them."

International undergraduates from outside the EU pay annual tuition fees between £19,197 and £29,217; the costs are dependent on the student's chosen subject. Notably, international students studying medicine pay significantly



higher annual tuition fees of £50,130. In addition to their tuition fees, international students must also pay annual College fees of between £6,850 and £12,700, which cover domestic, educational and pastoral support.

Speaking to *Varsity*, an anonymous international student expressed her frustration over both the conditions that forced staff to strike and its financial cost: "As an international student paying extortionate fees, I find it disgusting that the staff have been driven to this necessity, and if possible will be contacting the University for reimbursement."

£50k

The highest tuition fees international students must pay

She added: "Some might say that this is only further enforcing the marketisation of our education, but lamentably that is the system we live in. To me this seems like a rational way to put pressure on the University."

The UCU plans to meet on Friday 2nd March to discuss universities' response to the first wave of strikes. According to UCU General Secretary Sally Hunt, the union will "urge vice-chancellors to put pressure on Universities UK to get back round the table".

▲▼ Students rallied outside Senate House on Thursday afternoon (MATHIAS GJESDAL-HAMMER)



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News Rent revealed

College rent gap laid bare

Anna Menin, Patrick Wernham and Louis Ashworth

Hannah* has to work during the holidays so that she can afford to live in Cambridge. The vast majority of her student loan goes towards paying rent at Newnham, and her parents are “already struggling” financially, so a job is required to pay for food and other living expenses during term. If she lost this job, she says she would “struggle to pay rent and eat”.

Hannah's story is indicative of the difficulties that many students face in paying rent in Cambridge, and of a system whereby students can expect drastically different levels of rent and standards of accommodation depending on the college they attend.

A *Varsity* investigation, using data obtained through freedom of information requests, has revealed huge disparities in the amount of rent undergraduates have to pay across the colleges, with a 67% difference in the average weekly rent between the most expensive college, Newnham, and the cheapest, Homerton.

While an undergraduate first-year student at Newnham can expect to pay on average £178.48 a week for rent and all compulsory chargers, the average weekly cost at Homerton is just £106.75. Newnham's figure is 22% higher than the figure *Varsity* has calculated as the average across all colleges, which is £145.80 a week.

The investigation found that Robinson has the second highest average weekly cost, at £171.04, with Gonville & Caius, Queens', and Downing making up the rest of the top five. St John's and Pembroke were the second and third cheapest colleges respectively, with average weekly rents of £119.02 and £130.97.

However, fixed room rental times have a dramatic impact on the cost to students, with some colleges forcing undergraduates to pay for their rooms for much longer than others. All students at Girton have to pay for 37 weeks a year, making it the most unavoidably expensive college on an annual basis – with an average termly rent of £1973.33.

Other colleges are also more expensive when considered on an annual basis. While St John's has one of the lowest average weekly costs, the length of time that it requires undergraduates to rent their rooms for, around 38.5 weeks, pushes it into the middle of the pack for



Up to arrears Which colleges have Cut the Rent groups?

Magdalene



Murray Edwards



Downing



Trinity Hall



Robinson



average termly rent, at £1527.43.

Varsity spoke to a number of students who struggle to afford the rent at their college or have complaints about their accommodation. Rachel*, an international student from Newnham, says she “really struggle[s]” to pay rent, despite receiving both a bursary from both her college and the University.

Rachel was so dissatisfied with the cost of living at Newnham that she seriously considered moving into another college's accommodation. She described Newnham's policy of charging all students the same rent “unfair”, arguing that the college should have varied room rates and “let people choose based on their financial situation”.

There was also considerable variation in the amount students had to pay in supplementary compulsory charges, which significantly affected students' overall costs. Newnham came top in this area as well, with a supplementary kitchen fixed charge of £287.95 per term, while Gonville & Caius students have to pay an ‘establishment charge’ of £203.72. Some other colleges, including Emmanuel, Downing and Girton, include such costs within their rent figures.

Differences in the way colleges charge rent make an exact like-for-like comparison difficult, both for prospective students assessing living costs before applying to Cambridge, and for this investigation. Only undergraduate rooms were looked at, and where colleges charge different rates according to year group, the 2017/18 cohort was used. All compulsory charges were taken into account, though minimum meal charges were not, as they then allow students a certain amount of food for ‘free’. Where there was a difference, the figure for the cost of compulsory charges was taken for students living in college.

The differing lengths of room licences also complicate matters. As it is impossible to determine exactly how many students in Jesus and Murray Edwards are staying for what period of time, an average weekly figure could not be calculated for those colleges based on the figures provided. Other colleges also are more expensive than their weekly charges imply, as all rooms were taken as being on a short lease, whereas in reality some of them have to be rented on a long lease.

Within colleges, however, it is easier to look at increases in rent over recent years. Girton has seen the sharpest rise in rent, with an average annual increase of



Huge disparities are revealed

◀ Continued from front page

There is a 67% gap between Homerton, the college found to have the cheapest average weekly cost, and Newnham, which had the most expensive. Undergraduates at Homerton on average pay £106.75 a week, while the average figure for Newnham students is £178.48, 18% more than average.

Varsity spoke to students who either struggle to meet the cost of living at their college, or have been dissatisfied with the quality of their accommodation.

Simone Fernandes, a fourth year at Magdalene, arrived at her student house at the start of Michaelmas term to find it had a wasps' nest outside the bathroom window, forcing her and her housemates to use a toilet across the road from their house, but her college did not take any action for over two weeks after being informed of it.

Charley Barnard, a first year at Newnham, had switch to a longer licence on her room after unexpectedly being made homeless, but could not afford to pay the increased amount. Despite being reassured the charges would be waived, she was charged the increased amount, and had to use her overdraft to pay it.

Barnard spoke of a “stigma about being from a low income background at

Cambridge”, adding: “It's alienating that provisions aren't in place for people like me. Hard-to-access bursaries aren't an alternative to affordable rent.”

The investigation also reveals the complexity of rent payments across Cambridge, with colleges using vastly different systems for charging students, which makes drawing direct comparisons difficult. There are also significant disparities in the number of weeks that colleges require students to rent their room for, as does whether or not any supplementary charges included in within the cost of their rent.

Variations in the minimum number of weeks that students are required to rent their rooms for can have a significant impact on average termly costs. Girton, where undergraduates have to pay for their rooms for 37 weeks a year, was found to be the most expensive college on a termly basis, with an average cost of £1973.33 for its 2017 intake, despite the College having no additional costs.

Responding to the findings, Girton College Bursar Debbie Lowther said “the overall package provided to Girton students represents excellent value for money”, given the length of time that undergraduates have their rooms and the facilities to which they have access.

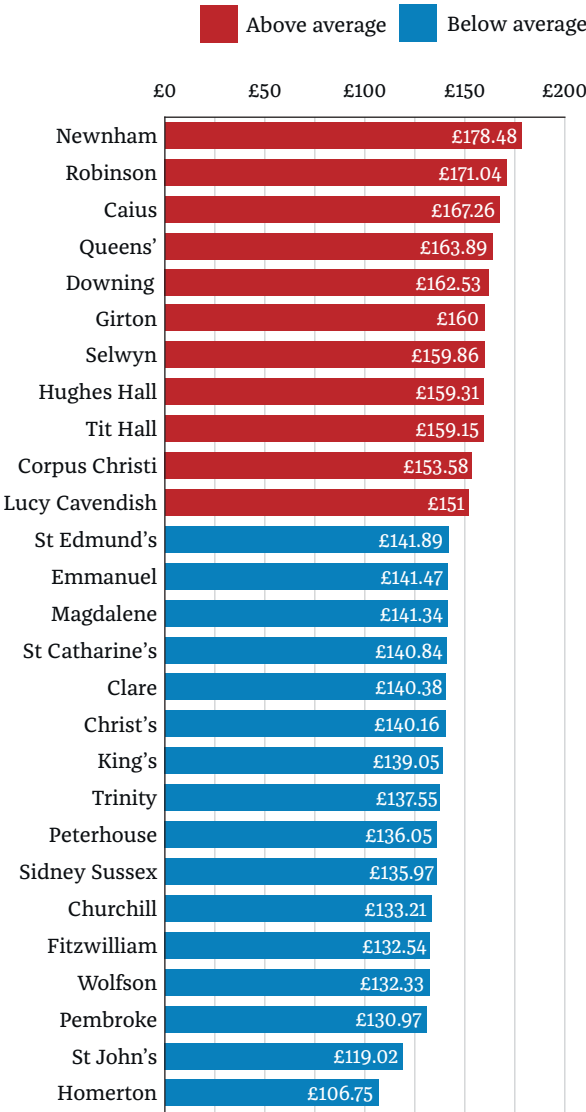
Comment, page 17 ►





The rent ranking

All colleges, except Jesus and Murray Edwards (see article), by their average weekly rent



£145.80

Average rent per week across all of the colleges

£287.95

Newnham's average compulsory charges per term

67%

The rent gap between Newnham and Homerton

£1,973

Average rent per term at Girton, the highest unavoidable rent price

37

How many weeks Girton students have to stay in college per year

237

Responses to a Newnham JCR survey about rent



▲ Simone Fernandes, above, had to battle a wasps' nest. Girton (left), makes all students stay for 37 weeks

(LOUIS ASHWORTH/ THE PALE SIDE OF INSOMNIA)

7.48% over the past five years. The same period also saw notable rent increases at Magdalene, which saw an average increase of 6.47%.

In response to *Varsity's* investigation, Cambridge Cut the Rent (CTR) said the findings "confirm what students have been saying: rents in Cambridge are too high", and accused the University of failing in its stated duty to provide "the widest possible student access to the University" and in "its commitment to student welfare, which is negatively impacted by both excessive rents and unfair fines".

"Rents are being used to plug holes in college finances, with students as cash cows on bursars' spreadsheets," CTR said: "This is unacceptable. As students, we have the inalienable right to affordable, good-quality accommodation. We are students, not consumers. If individual colleges are unable to address this, then the central University must step in."

Responding to the findings, Newnham's JCR president, Jess Lock, criticised the college's rent and kitchen fixed charge as "extortionate", adding that "the Newnham JCR body are evidently, and understandably, dissatisfied with the college's fees".

A number of colleges defended the amount of rent their students have to pay. In a statement to *Varsity*, Girton's Bursar Debbie Lowther said that "the overall package provided to Girton students represents excellent value for money", and called Girton's charging

system "simple, fair and transparent".

She stressed that the fee paid by Girton students "includes free use of two gyms, a squash court and swimming pool on site, as well as 55 acres of gardens, grounds, sports pitches and grass tennis courts in summer."

Lowther also defended the decision by the college to make its undergraduates pay for 37 weeks, saying that it gave students "freedom to come and go during the vacations", "greater independence from parents or guardians", and the possibility of finding work or internships in the vacation.

A spokesperson for Gonville & Caius also argued that their College's rents and charges were good value, telling *Varsity* that "we work very hard to offer high quality accommodation and food and to keep costs to students as low as possible. We also provide free wifi and laundry services, which our students greatly ap-

▼ Robinson has one of the highest average rents

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

preciate".

A spokesperson for Newnham said that the College "offers a very generous system of student bursaries and rent subsidies and students in financial need are encouraged to apply for them."

The pressures of rent are not going unchallenged by students, however. There are now five active Cut the Rent groups in various colleges, with rumblings at four more colleges. Newnham JCR committee conducted a survey of Newnhamites' opinions on the college's rent and kitchen fixed charge, which received 237 unique responses, with Lock saying she is "content" that "visible action will be taken in the following weeks to address issues" with the kitchen fixed charge after meeting with the senior tutor and bursar.

*Some students' names have been changed



News Rent revealed

Priced out What impact do high rent prices have on students' lives?

Charley Barnard, Newnham

“It’s put me in a really awkward situation

At the end of last term, my family situation imploded, and my mum and I were made homeless. I don’t have anywhere to go home to. I had to switch from a termly to continuous licence, but I was clear from the start that I didn’t have the means to pay it: my mum doesn’t, and my student finance still hasn’t changed to reflect my new family situation. In my first meetings with the senior tutor, she said that would be fine, but I was still charged for the change to continuous. I emailed explaining I couldn’t afford it and was told it would be waived, but when I got my Lent college bill, I have been charged the extra money.

When I said again that I couldn’t pay it, I was told I could just pay it when I could. Obviously, that doesn’t make a lot of sense: if I don’t have the money at the start of term, I’m not going to have the money now. I just paid it out of my overdraft, and, luckily because I had worked over Christmas, I’m not at the bottom of my overdraft. Newnham have since given me a £1000 bursary, but there have been miscommunications, and it’s put me in a really awkward situation.

I think there should be a much more accessible guide to all the help that’s available. It needs to be less hidden, because that then adds to the stigma about being from a low income background at Cambridge. It’s assumed that the norm is to be middle class, and comfortable. It’s alienating that provisions aren’t in place for people like me. Hard-to-access bursaries aren’t an alternative to affordable rent.



Simone Fernandes, Magdalene

“I don’t think bursaries should be going towards rent

When I arrived back at the beginning of Michaelmas, the house was in a dire state. Not only was there no key for me, but there were stains on the carpet and a rotting McDonald’s bag in the kitchen. But the worst thing was that there was a wasps’ nest directly outside the bathroom window.

Some of my housemates had arrived back on the 23rd September and reported it straight away, but the first response we received from college saying they had contacted pest control wasn’t until the 10th October. When we wanted to go to the toilet we had to go all the way across the road into Cripps Court. Even after pest control came, there were still quite a few wasps, and college pretty much told us to put up with it.

College also charge a lot of money through fines, but there are very few obvious signs of improvement. A friend of mine was charged £250 for having adhesive on the walls, which is bad enough, but there’s no sign of where any of that kind of money goes.

There are bursaries out there, but there are people left behind who are above the threshold for a bursary but still really struggle to afford the rent. Also, I don’t think bursaries should be going towards rent – it’s bizarre for that money to go straight back to college!

Hannah*, Newnham

“I can’t just not work

Rent is basically my entire student loan, so I have to work during the holidays to have enough for food and other expenses, which adds stress. I did very little revision over the Christmas holidays because I had to work. If I lost my job I would struggle to pay rent and eat. I want to revise more over the Easter break but I can’t just decide not to work then. It weighs on me in the holidays when I’m stuck at work, thinking about the topics I should be revising. I don’t want to have to ask my parents for money, because they are struggling as it is. It’s always there in the back of my mind that something could very easily go wrong, and I would have to leave.

The rent being equal for everyone here is nice, because I can choose the room I want, but at the same time, I would happily take a slightly worse room for less money, and have more money. I don’t ever eat in the buttery, so paying an almost £900 a year kitchen fixed charge for food for other people is not ideal. If I had that money back, I wouldn’t have to work in the holidays.

Concerns about rent have definitely dampened my experience of Cambridge. I feel like I miss out on a lot of stuff, because I’m wary about how much money I’ll have left that week. **Name changed*

▶▶ Newnham College (top), has the highest weekly rent. Students have launched a petition at Robinson College (right).

(ANNA MENIN/
NOELLA CHYE)

Alice Clarke, Robinson

“College did try and fix it in fairness, but it didn’t work

At Robinson the rooms are broken down roughly into ‘value’, ‘standard’, and ‘standard plus’ rooms. Value rooms are about £300 cheaper per term than standard rooms, but you do have to share a bathroom with two other people, rather than just one person.

I tried to get a value room, but there are only four of those in total so I was given a standard room. My neighbour has a value room, and their room is slightly bigger than mine, despite paying £300 less each term. I also have to share a bathroom with two other people, which you’re not supposed to have to do with a standard room.

What’s frustrating is that college give no explanation for why the value rooms are given out to the people they are. My room has a balcony, which is nice, but the door doesn’t fully shut. It’s the same with my neighbour – some nights you can feel the wind and rain in bed. The floor is wet all around the floor in the morning.

College did try and fix it in fairness, but it didn’t work.



“Are you struggling with rent costs?

We want to hear from students who have struggled or are struggling with rent costs, to get a better idea of the situation at different colleges and how it is handled in different areas. If you would like to be interviewed, please email Varsity’s Associate Editors, Anna Menin and Patrick Wernham, via their email: associate@varsity.co.uk. **Please give your name, your college, whether you wish to be anonymous, and an outline of what your experience was like.**

Disabled students face fight to get accessible rooms

Edward Pinnegar
Senior News Correspondent

Certain colleges have been charging disabled students more than non-disabled students for accommodation, a *Varsity* investigation has found.

Accessible rooms, which tend to be larger, are commonly included in colleges' highest rent bands.

A student at Emmanuel College who needed an accessible room was allocated the most expensive room in the college, and was only able to afford it after applying for a rent reduction, an option which is not normally advertised to disabled students. Additionally, their request to stay in College over the vacation was turned down where the applications of other applicants, who were not disabled, were accepted, as the College said that the student's disability made them a "health and safety concern".

The student had sought to stay as their home was not accessible and they

required regular medical treatment in Cambridge. They were given ten days to leave and had to move to a room at Jesus College. Upon their return, they were allocated an inaccessible room with no kitchen facilities for a week. Emmanuel College did not respond to a request for comment.

One student at Trinity Hall told *Varsity* they were paying more than £50 a week extra compared to a non-accessible room. A spokeswoman for the College said: "Trinity Hall endeavours to make every possible effort to accommodate students with disabilities. The College has a number of ground floor rooms which are en suite and furnished to meet the needs to students [sic] with physical disability. Further, Trinity Hall works closely with the [Disability Resource Centre] and other University and College support structures to work with students with disability, to enable them to feel well supported while at Cambridge."

Some students reported that colleges were receptive to their requirements. A



student at St John's, who had applied for an accessible, ground-floor double set, said that the College had been "really good" and that they had "got everything [they] asked for". However, another student at the College, whose only special requirement was for en suite facilities, was allocated a room which was almost £400 more expensive than their room the previous year. The College later offered the student a more affordable option after it was pointed out that it could be acting in breach of the law.

A spokeswoman for St John's said: "If we are unable to offer a room with a standard rent cost due to the specific re-

▲ **St John's College, where one student was charged high room rent** (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

quirements/adaptations then we ensure that we comply with guidance provided by the Disability Resource Centre and where applicable charge the cost of a standard room". It is unclear in which circumstances the application of the lower charge would apply. The student who required an en suite room was not offered it at a reduced rate.

Some students reported that it was difficult to persuade colleges that they had specific needs. After sending details of their requirements and medical evidence to a tutor, a student at Newnham received a reply which they described as "very dismissive" and said that they were "essentially accused of playing the ballot system to get a better room than other people". The College later conceded that the requirement was legitimate, and allocated the student an appropriate room. The incident occurred in 2013-4 under a senior tutor who has since retired.

A spokeswoman for Newnham said: "All of our undergraduates pay the same rent, no matter which room they are allocated. Students - undergraduate or graduate - are never charged any additional fees for making adjustments to their room or specific facilities to accommodate any specific requirements they may have."

Colleges which charge disabled students more for accommodation than non-disabled students are at risk of contravening the Equality Act 2010, which obliges them to make "reasonable adjustments" to avoid price discrimination against disabled people.

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News

University downplays fossil fuel connections

Nick Collin
Senior News Correspondent

The University Council and the University's chief financial officer have responded to the controversy surrounding its offshore investments revealed in *The Guardian's* Paradise Papers published last November.

Following consultations with the chief financial officer, the Council has chosen to maintain its endorsement of a report published in 2016 about the level

of the University's holdings in fossil fuel industries, new reports have revealed. Additionally, it states: "In relation to investments managed externally, there are no holdings in tar sands companies and only negligible holdings in thermal coal companies and any future holdings in such companies are expected to be negligible."

The Council stated that following the Paradise Papers' initial publication, they "shared many of the concerns raised by the speakers" at the discussion. Following this, they consulted with the University's chief financial officer, who confirmed that the initial 2016 report remained correct.

The director of finance and chief financial officer denied, furthermore, what they took to be the Paradise Papers' implications that the University's indirect investments through overseas funds were used to make significant investment in fossil fuels.

They added that the point of the pooled offshore funds was to "minimise costs and enable a single level of taxation in one jurisdiction."

The Council's response was largely centred on comments made by Reverend Jeremy Caddick of Emmanuel College, who questioned the University about the claims detailed above. He also asked the Council to consider issuing an apology and what steps it would take to improve transparency.



Responding to questions about how the University will work towards greater transparency in its investments, the Council noted that, following a meeting on the 15th November, the Investment Board was asked to consider how it might report more transparently about

▲ Zero Carbon Society protested on King's Parade in November (LEFTERIS PAPAROUNAS)

its investment management to the Council in future.

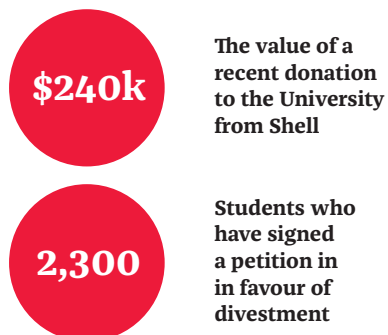
This decision follows a lack of transparency between administrative blocs of the University itself. Council member Professor R. J. Anderson stated in December's discussion that she was "as surprised as anyone by the Paradise Papers".

Cambridge Zero Carbon, a society which campaigns regularly for the University to divest, has been consistently outspoken about the University's ties to the fossil fuel industries.

A spokesperson for Cambridge Zero Carbon told *Varsity*: "Instead of apologising for its immoral investments practices as exposed by the Paradise Papers, University management are doubling down. They have issued no apology, and outrageously it is implied that the University is still investing in offshore funds, which may well include deep-sea oil. Council defends the 2016 Working Group report, but in truth that report isn't worth the paper it's written on."

"Quite simply, University Council are living on another planet, apparently one in which climate change isn't much of a problem."

Yesterday's comments have been sent to the University's Divestment Working Group in order to inform further its deliberations.



of the University's holdings in fossil fuel industries, new reports have revealed.

The 2016 report included comments that the University has "negligible exposure to other fossil fuel industries".

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Black access gets funding boost

Elizabeth Shaw
Senior News Correspondent

Target Oxbridge, a scheme established to help more black students secure places at Oxbridge, is set to treble in size due to increased backing from both Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Both universities have upped their funding for the year-long programme designed to provide support for school students who are black or mixed race with black heritage. This includes mentoring schemes, an Easter holiday residential course and admissions advice.

The scheme was formed in response to criticism that emerged as a result of the low number of offers made to working class and black applicants, and has seen growing success: in the most recent application cycle, 41% of the students receiving support provided by Target Oxbridge were offered places at Oxford or Cambridge.

Varsity analysis last year showed that this year's fresher cohort includes more black men than Etonians for the first time in Cambridge history.

Director of admissions for the Cambridge colleges, Dr Sam Lucy, told Varsity that funding from Cambridge is set to increase fivefold this year. "This increase in funding reflects the significant growth in interest in the Target Oxbridge scheme; the collegiate University is pleased to be able to provide the financial and substantial in-kind support to enable Target Oxbridge to expand the programme this year. We hope that this level of interest from prospective applicants continues, as it is only by encouraging talented students to apply that the figures will improve in overall terms."

The endorsement is mutually beneficial. Target Oxbridge announced that the increased financial backing would now support 160 funded places for the forthcoming year. The founder, Naomi Kellman, noted its recent success: 35 out of the 86 students enrolled on the 2017 Easter residential course have received offers from Oxford and Cambridge.

She said there was an "unprecedented demand" for positions on the upcoming programme, and welcomed the additional backing.

Racial disparities of those admitted



to Cambridge have been a hot topic of debate in recent years.

This week, a satirical proposal by a BME graduate student at Pembroke suggested introducing a role of a 'White Majority Ethnic' officer which aimed to criticise the proposed introduction of a BME officer role as patronising.

Last month, Patrick Sylla, a third-year student at Jesus College, posted a video of his freestyle rap video which criticised negative press coverage around the issue which he said discouraged black students from applying.

Sylla's video was met with controversy by other BME students, including

▲ **Last year, 14 students posed for photos highlighting the black access gap**
(CAMBRIDGE ACS)

5

The University has quintupled its funding for Target Oxbridge

160

Places available on this year's scheme

41%

Proportion of Target Oxbridge students offered Oxbridge places this year

Cambridge University Afro-Caribbean Society (CUACS) president, Ore Ogunbiyi, who previously wrote an article for Varsity about her experiences of being a black woman at Cambridge.

In October, Labour MP David Lammy has slammed Oxbridge for its admissions statistics which show class and race disparities and encouraged a centralisation of their admissions processes.

Last May, 14 black students posed for photos highlighting the low number of black men attending the University, which went viral on Facebook. In 2015, only 15 black male undergraduates joined Cambridge.

Cantabs paid £100,000 in library fines last year

Devarshi Lodhia
Deputy News Editor

Cambridge students received £98,478 in library fines across all University libraries for the academic year 2016/17, new data has revealed.

The sum places Cambridge third nationally, behind Oxford and King's College, London, both of which handed out fines totalling more than £100,000 each.

The findings, which come courtesy of Freedom of Information requests submitted by the i newspaper, show universities across the country received more than £3.5 million from library fines.

Oxford's fines totalled £167,689, ahead of King's College London, with fines amounting to £113,726. Russell Group universities comprised half of the institutions featured in the top ten, which included University College London (£87,194), the University of Edinburgh (£76,501).

Alongside the central University Library (UL), Cambridge University manages a further 21 affiliate libraries associated with the UL, including faculty libraries such as the Squire Law Library and the Seeley Historical Library.

Fine policies differ across each library, with fines varying between 25p and £1 for each working day for overdue books. Notably, the Seeley charges 25p per hour for overdue special subject material, such as primary sources, which can only be



▲ **The University Library is one of 22 libraries responsible for imposing the fines**
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

borrowed from 2:30pm until 10:30am the next day.

According to the Seeley Historical Library website: "Fines still outstanding at graduation will be treated as debts to the University and affect the award of a degree."

This means that students may even be unable to graduate until they pay off their library fines.

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**HOWES
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Interview

Matt Zarb-Cousin

‘The status quo is not working for most people’



Harry Robertson
speaks to Corbyn's
former media man
about the election,
social media tactics,
and press attacks

The fact that Matt Zarb-Cousin applied for the job as Jeremy Corbyn's official spokesperson after seeing the opening ridiculed on *Have I Got News For You* in 2016 tells you a lot, both about him and about the early days of Corbyn's leadership. Back then, no one was predicting that the Labour Party, who were about 13% behind the Tories the polls, would increase their vote share by more in 2017 than at any election since 1945.

Zarb-Cousin was in Cambridge last Friday to speak at the POLIS British politics seminar series at Robinson College, which occur weekly. He held the role of the Labour leader's media spokesperson from June 2016 to April 2017, and maintains that he always believed Labour would do much better than expected. "I knew that our policies were very popular. If you looked at any polling before the election on individual policies, then the public overwhelmingly supported Labour's programme. I think the issue was, before an election people don't really pay much attention to politics, it doesn't really register on their day to day goings on."

He highlights the importance of the election broadcast regulations, which ensure that broadcasters give fair and balanced coverage to parties and candidates in the period running up to an election. "Jeremy had an opportunity to speak with his own voice," Zarb-Cousin says. "Every morning, every day, they had a new policy to announce, and it was invariably very popular."

Having worked in an understaffed Labour team 16 hours a day, seven days a week, and been as close to the action in the 2017 general election as anyone else, bar the candidates, Zarb-Cousin is



as knowledgeable as anyone about the campaign. Why, then, did an election trailed by the Conservatives as being all about Brexit, end up being about anything but?

"Most people think that we made our decision on Brexit in 2016, and that shouldn't define a general election, which is about lots of issues. If both parties accept the result, there's not really a debate to be had about it, and even if there was, it shouldn't dominate the entire election campaign. You could see in their manifesto, the Tory manifesto was just appalling, they had nothing to offer."

By contrast, he says, "the nature of Labour's policy platform was: we're going to tax these people to pay for this thing. It was an antagonism. The Conservatives had to therefore say we're *not* going to tax these people to *not* pay for this thing. By doing that, Labour set the agenda. The election campaign was defined by Labour's policy in many ways, it was fought very much on their turf."

But was the result not really more about young, university-educated liberals and Londoners coming together to give Labour a big boost at the polls, rather than their policies really persuading many voters in the party's traditional working-class heartlands? Zarb-Cousin isn't misty-eyed about the result: "Labour didn't win the election, it was a hung parliament, there was a swing to them and they won seats, but they

didn't win the election." But, he says, "they won seats in Scotland against what most people anticipated". He points to constituencies such as Peterborough as places where the working class vote came back. "In Peterborough you had a situation where the Ukip candidate stepped down to support the Conservative, and then Labour won the seat."

Labour's remarkable achievement was largely down to their extremely effective campaigning, a vital part of which was social media. "More than any election, naturally I suppose, social media played a huge part. It's not enough to do what the Conservatives did, which is to put millions of pounds behind sponsored posts which repeat the key messages. You're taking an analogue communications strategy and applying it to a digital context."

"The difference with Labour's content, and particularly Momentum's," Zarb-Cousin says, "was that it was high quality, shareable. If your friend shares it you're more likely to want to watch it." It helps, he says, "to have a positive message and to have something to say, and the Tories lacked that. They lacked the nous that Labour had, Labour knew that you could actually reach a lot of people through organic sharing. I think a quarter of UK Facebook users saw a Momentum video in the course of the general election campaign. That's astronomical."

Why, then, was the Labour social me-

dia campaign so much better? "Primarily because young people are involved in the Corbyn project, and they get how to campaign in 2018, 2017. But it all comes down to the fact that the Tories haven't really got anything positive to say."

Zarb-Cousin uses Twitter himself in a way quite unlike most people in Westminster. An article from the newspaper the *i* says of him, "he has led the line for a group of hardcore Corbyn supporters with little time for civility". Does he not think the way the left uses Twitter can be damaging to their cause? "No, look, I don't think it's damaging at all."

What about the instances of left wing mobs being sexist or anti-Semitic online? "That's unacceptable [...] people who are abusive in that respect should be thrown out of the party, there's no two ways about it." But on the broader topic he defends the left. "We were denigrated and ridiculed and delegitimised consistently for months and months," he says, "I think that we give as good as we get. I think that it's important that the left doesn't go into its shell."

On that topic, I wonder whether he feels vindicated by the surge in popularity for leftist policies, given the condemnation and ridicule those to the left of left-of-centre have faced for many years. A particular incident I mention was when *Financial Times* journalist Janan Ganesh called Corbyn supporters "thick as pig shit" on Twitter (and subsequently deleted the tweet).

"The problem with the Corbyn project from the beginning was that it lacked any legitimacy from the perspective of the commentariat. They were out to delegitimise it from the outset. I don't mind criticism, that's healthy, I'm not saying no one should be critical of any politicians or movements, but it was a lack of intellectual curiosity or attempt to try and understand why this is happening, or why this appeals to people."

"What's happening around the world - Trump, Brexit - populist movements are growing, in Italy now there's a kind of parallel Momentum organisation. This is happening everywhere because the system, the status quo, is not working for most people."

Attacks on Corbyn, however, have not really abated since the election, especially in some quarters of the press. A recent *Sunday Express* front page called him "Jeremy Carbon", accusing him of great hypocrisy for being driven by a security detail in a diesel car. "It just shows how irrelevant and marginalised the tabloid press is becoming," Zarb-Cousin says.

"There was a report out that day when they did the story on the Czech spy. The IFS said that home ownership among 25 to 34 year-olds has more than halved in 20 years. Even in the highest quartile of earners, the richest people in that demographic, only 60% of them own a home. And you think, that is a massive problem for the country. If this generation doesn't have a stake in the system or a stake in society, they're the big problems the country's facing, and that's what's relevant to people's lives right now."



◀ Media attacks on Jeremy Corbyn have not relented, Zarb-Cousin says
(CHATHAM HOUSE)

▲ Matt Zarb-Cousin spoke at the POLIS British politics seminar series
(HARRY ROBERTSON)

“If your friend shares something you’re more likely to want to watch it”

News

CHICK FLICK

Winging it is a win for Sidney Nug Soc

Those missing the now defunct Clare Lettuce Club are sure to delight in the successful hatching of Sidney Nug Soc. Commemorating the College's founding by Lady Sidney in 1596, each member vowed to consume 1596 chicken nuggets. There was no fowl play involved, as they stuck to their pledge "to finish every remaining nugget [themselves]". A student who attended Nug Soc on Monday confirmed that "all nuggets were consumed," and reported "very high turnout". Despite Sidney's location directly opposite Sainsbury's, the nuggets were sourced from ASDA.



▲ Attendees ate 1596 nuggets (NUGSOC)

BRUNCH AND CHILL

Who says Cambridge isn't cool?

Anyone hoping a recent string of comparatively warmer days means spring is on its way is in for a shock this weekend. The Met Office is now warning of sub-zero temperatures, snow, and freezing wind in the coming weeks in Cambridge. It is supposed to rival England's 2010 Big Freeze, and to be one of the most severe cold snaps the country has seen in recent years. The impending weather is being attributed to cold wind from the east, as a sudden warming 30km above the North Pole is set to disrupt the Atlantic westerly wind patterns British weather usually relies on.

FURRY FRIENDS

Animal therapy at Downing and King's

Students at Downing and King's were treated to some quality time with farm animals at their respective welfare days this weekend. Downing gave its students a chance to see hedgehogs, rabbits, and alpacas. This was rivalled by the welfare provisions at King's, where a group of Shetland ponies visited the backs; lucky students had the chance to walk ponies around the lawn. King's Student Union president Alice Hawkins said that the event "provided the perfect sunshiney break to laugh and be happy together even if just for a few hours".



▲ A Shetland success (GEORGINA BAKER)

Student hacks sharpen their blades as CUSU elections approach

Louis Ashworth
Editor-at-Large

Aspiring student politicians are devising campaign plans and forming teams of supporters, with just a few days left until the launch of CUSU's and the GU's annual elections for sabbatical positions.

Nominations for positions opened yesterday morning, and will run until midday on Wednesday, before campaigning begins in earnest on Thursday.

Student union elections are typically short and brutal, with the compressed election campaigning period meaning students have little time to get their message out to prospective voters.

This year, the position of president looks set to once again be the most competitive, with at least three candidates soliciting supporters in recent weeks, and others showing interest. A rise in advanced campaigning in recent years means there is an increasing pressure on student candidates to have clear branding, and many now launch with campaign videos or websites.

Last year, CUSU President Daisy Eyre saw off her nearest rival, Jack Drury, in a campaign marked by brief controversy after one of Drury's campaign leaflets was found to have been defaced.

The other sabbatical - full-time, year-long roles for which a salary is paid - positions set to be contested are the four other sabbatical roles at CUSU: education, access and funding, disabled students' officer, and women's officer. Also up for election is the role of president of the Graduate Union (GU), and the welfare officer role which is shared between CUSU and the GU. There are also two part-time positions available, which do not require a sabbatical year: head of the ethical affairs campaign, a role which is held between two people, and University Council representative.

CUSU sabbatical officers, with the exception of the president, may re-run for their roles, though this did not occur last year. The year before, the incumbent



▲ CUSU's offices, at 17 Mill Lane

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

welfare officer was defeated in her re-election bid.

After campaigning opens, candidates will be given five days to snap up voters before voting opens on Tuesday 6th. Voting will end on the Friday 9th March, with the results declared in the late afternoon. Following a liberalisation of campaign rules last year, the Elections Committee (EC) - a group of students which oversees election administration - passed a series of further reforms through CUSU Council on Monday night.

Candidates for full-time sabbatical positions are allowed to spend up to £100 on their campaigns, with students in previous years usually choosing to focus on flyers and other printed handouts. University Councillor and ethical affairs officer candidates can both spend £70.

Students are permitted to use materials they already own, but must declare them to EC, who will attribute a cost. Notably, any free resources they

use must be made readily available to all other candidates. In recent years, many student candidates have borrowed equipment from friend or other sources: last year, this included one unsuccessful candidate using a drone camera for their launch video.

Sam Longton, the head of elections committee, defended this rule, saying: "If a candidate wanted to use a resource for free they would need to demonstrate that it was widely available to anyone running in these kinds of elections".

Longton said "a drone would likely incur a cost attributed to it by the EC as it is not a piece of equipment widely available, whereas a camera could be used for free as it is widely available (not least because candidates are able to use a CUSU camera if need be).

"All of this is talking in theory, and the EC reserve the right to rule as they see fit on any specific complaint or query that they receive," he added.

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What's the point? Why the pursuit of 'purpose' is restrictive to research

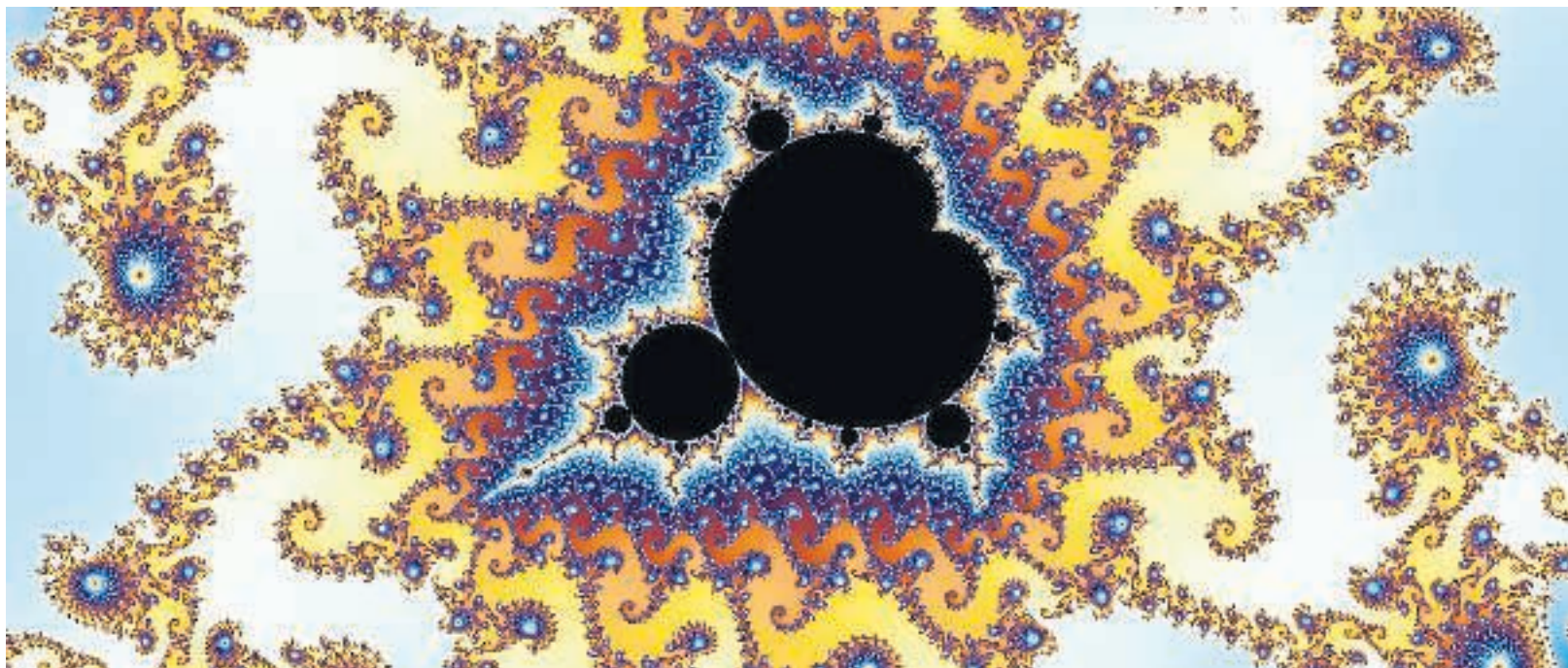
Siri Livingston

In the canon of scientific achievement, many of the most celebrated discoveries are those that were incredibly useful. As a culture we laud Fleming's discovery of penicillin and Faraday's harnessing of electricity, and look back on the polio and smallpox vaccines as some of the scientific community's greatest achievements.

However, our narrative surrounding the long-standing chef-d'œuvres in art and culture is strikingly different. Yes, aesthetes and critics alike sometimes discuss the impacts of artistic pieces and what we as a society or individuals can learn from these creations. On the whole, though, discussions of artistic achievement seem implicitly geared towards the ancient Greek concept of *techne*, that of artisanship and technical skill for its own sake.

In short, we have an instrumental way of approaching the sciences, and a much more intrinsic appreciation of other fields. We see this reflected at the national level; as Russia grappled with an economic crisis in 2016, one of the things considered most expendable was the space exploration budget, which was quickly slashed by 30%. The message is clear: science that is useful for improving lives is valuable; science purely for discovery or knowledge's sake is not worthwhile.

There are many ways in which we can and should push back against these sorts of judgements. The first is an argument from fairness towards areas of knowledge, and towards people. If academics around in the world are encouraged to publish research in literature, history, classics, philosophy, and many other faculties that have the search for knowledge as a significant guiding principle, it is only fair that academics in STEM subjects be equally respected for pursuing their projects on the same grounds.



Derek Parfit, a British philosopher, also identifies an extremely powerful argument for limiting how decisive 'usefulness' as a factor should be in our judgements. Parfit reasoned that if we take usefulness in a given situation as the decisive or only relevant factor in measuring value, we would be forced to accept the following "repugnant conclusion": a world with two extremely flourishing people who experience, say, ten units of pleasure a day, is equally as valuable as a world with one hundred people who experience a mere 0.2 units of pleasure a day, barely enough to make life worth living. This is because the total pleasure in both worlds adds up to twenty.

Clearly, we need other factors, such as knowledge, truth, or beauty to sway the scales in favour of the first scenario, or else the conclusions we would reach would be repugnant, indeed. Apply this

▲ **The Mandelbrot set is an example of the beauty created by scientific research**

(WOLFGANG BEYER)

to science, and we have an argument for allowing the prioritisation, to an extent, of the search for knowledge for its own sake.

A case can also be made for the idea that exploration for exploration's sake is necessary for efficiently "useful" science, which is why we need to keep the former in the picture. In 1977, Ronald Rivest, Adi Shamir, and Leonard Adleman used number theory to create the RSA algorithm. The algorithm uses large prime numbers to encrypt data, and became the most common encryption algorithm in the world by the end of the twentieth century. Enormously useful, it contributed to the development of everything from Internet browsers to email, spreadsheets, and data protection. But the 19th century number theorist Leonard Dickson once said "Thank God that number theory is unsullied by any application."

▼ **Faraday's work is celebrated for its usefulness to society** (JOHN WATKINS)



Sometimes the most fruitful advances are born out of areas with untapped uses, where a wealth of abstract and theoretical knowledge has already been established for its own sake.

But this isn't to say that we should lose sight of endeavours that benefit humanity. Money, time, and human effort are finite resources. When over a billion people live in absolute poverty, surviving on less than a pound a day, it's fair to say that the UK government, and political powers in general, do an undoubtedly good thing when they make altruistic science a priority.

Science has the power, due to the myriad ways it can be applied to real life and real problems, to develop useful technologies that will propel us into a better future. But usefulness isn't all we should consider, as clearly proven by the Mandelbrot set in mathematics, which is undeniably beautiful in its own right.

A discovery the world could not stomach

Andre Lo

The medical world used to think that peptic ulcer disease was primarily caused by chronic stress, too much stomach acid or lifestyle habits like eating spicy food. This condition, which involved having open sores in the lining of the stomach, first part of the small intestine or lower oesophagus, was often chronic, excruciating and debilitating. In life-threatening cases, such as if the ulcers bled or be-



▲ **Robin Warren connected Helicobacter pylori to peptic ulcer disease** (SINEDOV)

came perforated, drastic surgery could be required to remove part of the digestive tract. Such an operation could leave the patient as a 'gastric cripple' - having to live with unwanted side effects such as appetite loss and deteriorating health. Thankfully, such stories are seldom heard of nowadays, due to the pioneering efforts of two Australian doctors: Barry Marshall and Robin Warren.

In 1981, Barry Marshall was completing his internal medicine fellowship at the Royal Perth Hospital, seven years after graduating from his medical degree at the University of Western Sydney. It was in June of that year that he would join the gastroenterology division of the hospital and meet Robin Warren, a senior pathologist more than a decade older than him. Warren had observed two years earlier that *Helicobacter pylori*, a corkscrew-shaped bacterium, was only found in stomach biopsies associated with gastritis (stomach inflammation). Because Marshall was advised to pursue a clinical research project each year, he decided to study the bacteria further

“*Marshall and Warren remind us that we must keep an open mind*”

with Warren.

They received one year of funding to in 1982 to look for the bacteria, but initially failed to culture anything from biopsies. It turned out that the cultures were thrown away after two days - the standard procedure for growing germs from throat swabs - but as it turned out, *H. pylori* was slow-growing. In the end, they found that the bacterium was only found in patients who had gastritis or ulcers, and inferred that *H. pylori* had a significant role in those conditions. But such a hypothesis was met with much scepticism from gastroenterologists. To them, the concept of a pathogen causing ulcers was absurd. Unable to show how the bacteria acted in lab mice, rats or pigs (as it only affects primates), and alarmed by the fact that severely ill patients were sent to undergo disabling surgeries instead of having their ulcers simply treated by antibiotics, Marshall took the drastic step of infecting himself with *H. pylori*.

Thus, on June 12, 1984, Marshall consumed *H. pylori* cultured from a patient,

expecting to develop gastritis and possibly an ulcer in a few years. But very soon, he was feeling ill and vomiting every morning. After just ten days, an endoscopy showed inflammation and damage in the lining of his stomach. It was obvious, then, that *H. pylori* was the cause of gastritis. The results of his dangerous self-experimentation was published a year later, and with more research supporting the role of *H. pylori* in peptic ulcers and gastritis, their controversial theory was soon accepted by the World Congress of Gastroenterology, the National Institute of Health and the World Health Organisation. Marshall and Warren would later win the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2005 for their work.

Maybe I am biased because I too hail from a sunburnt country. But I find their tale - a relentless pursuit to prove their convictions - truly inspiring. In doing so, Barry Marshall and Robin Warren remind us that we must keep an open mind, even when the truth may be hard to digest.

Opinion

For the sake of the most vulnerable, Oxfam must recognise its mistakes



Jemma Slingo is in her third year studying English at Peterhouse



◀ Oxfam provides humanitarian assistance around the world
(OXFAM EAST AFRICA)

Perhaps it was only a matter of time. Westminster, Hollywood, the Church, the BBC and other institutions too numerous to mention have been engulfed by the miasma of sexual scandal in recent years. Until last week, the charity sector had remained untarnished. Now, there is yet another black mark against a once reputable industry.

I'm referring, of course, to the accounts of alleged exploitation on the part of Oxfam employees. On 9 February, *The Times* reported accounts of serious sexual misconduct carried out by a group of male aid workers living in an Oxfam residence in Haiti. The men are said to have paid women – who were potentially underage – for sex, and to have held 'Ca-ligula orgies' in the Oxfam-owned villa. Following *The Times'* report, fresh claims have emerged, cover-ups have been denied and resignations have been filed.

Although Oxfam is joining a host of other disgraced establishments, there is something particularly problematic about the discovery of abuse in the aid sector. The revelations blur the comfortingly stark distinction we draw between good and bad. They force us to reconcile moral extremes: how can a good organisation, rooted in altruism, be simultaneously rotten? And, more importantly, how do we respond to such a discrepancy?

The exploitation of citizens in disaster zones is repugnant in the extreme. Late last week, Mary Beard provoked rage when she tried to contextualise the aid workers' behaviour. She tweeted: "Of course one can't condone the (alleged)

behaviour of Oxfam staff in Haiti and elsewhere. But I do wonder how hard it must be to sustain "civilised" values in a disaster zone. And overall I still respect those who go in to help out, where most of us w[oul]d not tread." She argues that disaster zones must necessarily brutalise the people who inhabit them. But the very purpose of aid workers is to bring food, rebuild shelter, dispense medicine; they are not meant to amplify the aftershock. Moreover, the actions of the employees in question cannot be reduced to, or explained by, the situation they found themselves in. No sociological conditions can justify their abuse of power.

One doesn't have to sympathise with Mary Beard's remarks to recognise that she raises an important point, however. It reminds us that, on the whole, Oxfam is a moral and deeply humane organisation. The charity's long track record – it celebrated its 75th anniversary last year – for improving dire situations and bringing relative comfort to the world's most vulnerable cannot be forgotten.

The comedian Simon Pegg has stood firm as an ambassador for the charity for this very reason. Whilst a number of celebrities, including Minnie Driver and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, have distanced themselves from Oxfam, Pegg declared that "It's an extraordinary charity", adding "I respect [it] enormously and the people that I've always dealt with have been nothing short of heroes to me".

His sentiments are far from universally shared, however. In the past week, there have been a number of politically

motivated swipes at the charity sector, which have harnessed the energy of the Oxfam scandal to further their own ends. A day after the news broke, Jacob Rees-Mogg arrived at Downing Street to present a petition demanding cuts to the foreign aid budget. The petition, which screamed 'Stop the Foreign Aid Madness', was signed by more than 100,000 *Daily Express* readers. The Conservative right is striving to use the reputational damage suffered by Oxfam to diminish the importance of charity work in general. They cannot be allowed to succeed. In this globalised age, and as a wealthy 'western' country, we have a responsibility and an obligation to offer help to those who need it.

“It's only by recognising its immorality that Oxfam can become a truly moral organisation”



▲ The aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake
(LOGAN ABASSI)

However, it is because the aid sector is a fundamentally good, necessary thing that we need to recognise its capacity for wickedness. We cannot simply dismiss the small group of shamed aid workers as blots on an otherwise stainless page. Charities, like all organisations, have the potential to foster abusive behaviour.

This is partly due to the fact that aid workers possess enormous power; for people in desperate circumstances, they are often the only source of essential supplies. This skewed power dynamic is unavoidable; an aid mission is all about helping, but helping necessarily implies helping from a position of power. The exercise of power, however – even for well-intentioned, benevolent reasons – can lead to its abuse. Indeed, it is possible that, in the eyes of exploitative aid workers, the admirable, traumatic nature of their work justifies lapses of moral judgement. I am not suggesting that this outlook, with its unpleasant colonial tint, is shared by the majority of the charity sector. Far from it. However, it goes some way to explain the pockets of abuse that have emerged in disaster zones.

There is also the problem surrounding whistleblowing. In the past year, a culture of silence has been broken. The #MeToo campaign has seen survivors of sexual violence speak out against harassment, exploitation and assault. However, the campaign spotlights how pervasive and stubborn silence can be. It underlines the fact that women were unable to talk about their experiences for years, even decades.

What's more, people who knew what was going on did little to raise the alarm. This last point is important when thinking about the problem of disclosure in the charity sector. If people struggle to talk about abuse that occurs in ordinary workplaces, what happens if your workplace is a war-torn city, or a demolished Haitian town? In such extreme circumstances, the levels of trust and emotional support demanded of one's colleagues must be extraordinary.

It must take a huge amount of strength, therefore, to speak out against one's co-workers. This does not mean that people will necessarily remain mute out of bonded solidarity. Indeed, the shock of betrayal might prompt them act. Nevertheless, the intense social dynamic of aid work should not be ignored.

Oxfam needs to acknowledge that the nature of charitable work can result in the exploitation of those it seeks to help. In order to retain the support of governments and the public, it needs to combat the weak spots inherent to the aid sector. Indeed, it is only by recognising its immorality that it can become a truly moral organisation.

Jemma Slingo

History shouldn't be erased



Nadia Hourihan is a second year at Trinity studying English

Nadia Hourihan

Earlier this month, a petition passed before the Oireachtas (government) Petitions Committee. The petition demanded that a statue of Prince Albert be removed from Leinster House because it celebrates a “monarch whose views are in opposition to that of the Irish Republic.”

I used to walk past this statue every morning on the way to work. Never once did I pay it any notice. I'd nod at Oscar Wilde, resplendent in green nephrite jade, pink thulite and blue pearl granite, but I never once looked up at Albert. I had to Google the statue. It's a strange sight.

Prince Albert, resolute in his Victorian get up, seems unwilling to look left to the Irish flag billowing in the background. ‘Not just yet,’ he seems to say, as his long brow wrinkles in reflection. Prince Albert looks lost in his surroundings. He's trying to figure out how he relates to the world around him.

Just like me. Just like us all.

The meanings of statues change as their surroundings change. Today, it's impossible to look at Prince Albert's statue as just a celebration of the British monarchy. What remains is more complicated than that.

Seán Sherlock, the Labour politician chairing the committee, remarked: “A civilised people does not tear out the pages of history but turns them over”. We can continue to tell the story of Ireland without razing the monuments of the past. I find this heartening; there's more of an opportunity for learning.

Before writing this article, I had never heard of John Henry Foley, the sculptor of the Prince Albert statue. He was born on Montgomery Street in Dublin, renamed Foley street in his honor. I'd never noticed, but Foley Street is right next to my bus stop.

Dublin is defined by Foley's art. He sculpted the statues of Edmund Burke and Oliver Goldsmith who shepherd students into Trinity College Dublin. He



▲ Prince Albert's statue stands outside Leinster House (JTDIRL)

made the Daniel O'Connell that looms large over O'Connell Street, still blistered by the bullets of revolutionaries.

Why is it that Foley's name was as obscure to me as Prince Albert's statue? They each deserve more attention.

The last royal statue to have been erected in Ireland, of Queen Victoria, sat outside Leinster House from 1908 until 1948. The statue, nicknamed “the auld bitch” by James Joyce, was was lugged by lorry to Kilmainham Gaol, and later to a yard behind a disused children's reformatory in rural Ireland. It struggled to find a more glamorous home until 1987, when it was welcomed to Sydney. There it has remained.

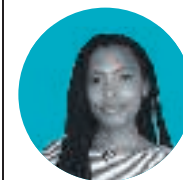
It's a pity “the auld bitch” was expelled to the other side of the world.

The displacement of history is the displacement of heritage, warts and all. We humble our villains by the journeys we make them take. But those journeys do not have to be to the antipodes.

We can tell tricky stories closer to home: in museums, in galleries, in reformatory schoolyards, or simply under the shadows of our flags.

We displace and efface history at our peril. It is surely better to keep it close, and to think carefully about how we relate to the past than to tear it down and throw it out of sight. We should be troubled by the relics of the past, so that we might be troubled to think critically about them.

Too often historical purity is just a synonym for historical amnesia.



Galaxy Henry

We cannot afford to be ‘halfers’ when it comes to justice work

Editor's take

An unpleasant run-in with an unchecked, problematic individual at Halfway Hall was a shocking reminder of the social passivity that seems to shroud my college in a pall of indifference and hypocrisy. What disturbed me most about the encounter was not that I had been confronted with a white male who deemed it acceptable to crack jokes about racism and Hitler, but that this person was notorious amongst members of my year group for appearing to have neo-Nazi sympathies. While I was – questionably – fortunate enough to have made it through one and a half years of my degree without realising this, I was disappointed by the fact that the disgusting social habits of this individual had been tolerated and accepted for so long.

Immediately I was reminded of a similar occurrence that took place in our first year. A morally reprehensible visiting student, whose love of all things misogynistic and elitist allowed him to quickly find a home in the drinking society, was allowed to walk freely about college for a whole year, despite his name being linked to a series of alleged sexual assaults which took place in Michaelmas term. Once again, this behaviour was tolerated by members of the college who had been aware of the rumours, but who deemed it acceptable to leave them as just that. Instead of pursuing the issue and attempting to seek justice, greater efforts were made to forge friendships with the wealthy perpetrator, and to assure anyone who asked if the rumours were true that they ‘didn't know his side of the story’ and that the victim was telling lies.

This disturbing social passivity extends far beyond the oppressive confines of Trinity Hall's four walls. It was also seen when Dame Barbara Stocking, the president of Murray Edwards College, was accused of covering up her staff's sexual misconduct during her time as the CEO of Oxfam. There are an overwhelming number of people in Cambridge who will expend the most energy in order to appear socially active, when in actuality they are the most hypocritical perpetrators of the social injustices and inequalities that make this university an inaccessible place for many. After one and a half years of being continually let down by the passivity of those with the power and the privilege to make social change, all I ask is that if you are audacious enough to talk the talk, please back this up with some meaningful social action. Thank you.

Time has come to ‘Cut the Rent’



Matt Kite and Stella Swain are from Cambridge, Cut the Rent

Stella Swain & Matt Kite

According to the University, the average UK student at Cambridge will need £9,160 to cover living costs in 2018-19. Leaving aside how many students actually have access to that much money, let's look at what it covers: transport, food, the odd night out. Not living on the breadline, but nothing too extravagant either. It's based on the average student spending 30 weeks a year in Cambridge, which comes out at £305 per week.

Say you're a fresher at Churchill, and your room is about £1000 a term. That leaves you with £205 a week after rent, which seems manageable. But with all first-year students at Murray Edwards paying £1800 a term, as a fresher there you're left with just £125 per week. At Girton you're down to £105. Students arrive in Cambridge to find that their friends at other colleges can be £100 a week richer than they are: if nothing else, rent disparity across colleges is unfair.

However, the rents at Cambridge force poorer students into dire financial situations. At Magdalene, a friend has been buying his housemate lunch for the last two weeks because she can't afford three

meals a day, and the sum of the financial support offered to a student at Murray Edwards was advice to bulk buy rice. At Girton, students are already paying £2,000 a term were asked to “chip in” to pay for kitchen repairs, leaving some unable to afford regular meals.

Cambridge's rent problem is also an access issue. If poorer students are not put off from applying entirely, they are often sold the lie that Cambridge is an affordable university. For some students this might be true, but the experiences of those at the sharp end of the dramatic rent disparity paint a very different picture. Cambridge has a systemic access issue which cannot be addressed through managing appearances: material changes are necessary to make this university genuinely open to all.

Rent negotiations are usually undertaken by JCR representatives who have the cards stacked against them: it is the Bursars who hold the information, set the terms of the discussion and often do not take students seriously. When JCRs have real power, it comes not from colleges deigning to listen to their concerns but from the mandate of their students.

A strong negotiating position is built on knowing that you speak for the real opinions of the student body and are backed by the possibility of action.

Rents across Cambridge are at crisis point. The Cambridge Cut the Rent campaign has spread rapidly this term, with new colleges forming working groups and a growing solidarity between students who have found they are not alone in their experiences. Together we can look to the successes of campaigners nationally for proof that something can be done. UCL Rent Strike won £1.49 million from the university this year, and campaigners at Sussex University won major victories with the mere threat of a rent strike. Even the prospect of coordinated action can be enough to disrupt a system built on disempowering students.

Student power can force fairer rents, and it is through a grassroots movement that we can show students and colleges what is possible. Housing should be a social good, not an opportunity for financial profit. We have spent long enough being used as cash cows to prop up college finances. The time has come for student action.



Opinionated? Sign up at varsity.co.uk/get-involved

Opinion

The Cambridge degree is not a social leveller



Alasdair de Costa
is a third year
studying History
at Trinity Hall



◀ The highest marks are disproportionately awarded to white, privately-educated men

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

ment gap is that between the number of first class results awarded to privately educated men and state educated women. A privately educated man was one-and-a-half times more likely to be awarded a first than a state educated woman in 2017. The University did not provide statistics for non-binary students.

BME students are also disadvantaged when it comes to being awarded the top grades, obtaining a disproportionate number of 2.iis and thirds.

Cambridge students from top performing private schools have been encouraged to achieve the very highest marks throughout their secondary education. They are well equipped in skills such as debating, essay writing, often having studied Greek and Latin. Such skills are often luxuries in the state sector.

The majority of state schools are underfunded and have to cater for a vast range of abilities. Underperforming schools are likely to be more inclined to teach students to pass exams than to excel in them. These structural inequalities are compounded by the way in which Cambridge examines and teaches.

Degree classification is a form of capital which can be used for economic and social advancement. A 2.i is often a prerequisite for post-graduate study and the best graduate jobs. A Cambridge education is still giving the greatest opportunity to those with the most privilege at the expense of the most marginalised.

There needs to be a more complex discussion about how we view access. Efforts made up to the point of admission are critical, but do not go far enough. Admission to Cambridge is not the social leveller many believe it to be, and the University has to start offering additional support to those students who do not benefit from the privileges of being white, male and privately educated.

“
The gulf
in Tripos
marks
between
state and
privately
educated
students is
growing
”

There is a presumption that admission to the University of Cambridge is some kind of ‘great equaliser’. Going to an inner-city comprehensive school will make getting in harder, but once this disadvantage is overcome you are taught in the same way as everyone else, by the same people as everyone else, in the same academic environment as everyone else. This narrative obscures the reality of many people’s experience.

I recently requested the statistical breakdown of the achievement of differing classes of degree from the University under the Freedom of Information Act. The results clearly indicate that state-educated students remain systemically disadvantaged. Over the past three years, 24.21 per cent of Tripos marks awarded to state educated students were firsts;

28.95 per cent of marks awarded to the privately educated were firsts. Former grammar school students were marginally (around 1%) more likely to get a first than those who went to other types of state school. Students educated privately were also approximately half as likely to be awarded a third as state educated students between 2015 and 2017. Clearly, educational background is a significant determinant of performance in the Cambridge Tripos.

What I find even more concerning is that this gulf in Tripos marks between state educated and privately-educated students is growing. In 2012, a state-educated Cambridge student was actually slightly more likely to be awarded a first than a privately educated student. Since 2012, however, the attainment gap has expanded year-on-year, with those

educated in state schools faring worse. Between 2013 and 2017 the gap more than doubled: from 2.16% to 5.34%.

Ethnicity and gender also intersect with educational background in ways which further inhibit the academic prospects of traditionally marginalised groups at Cambridge. The disparity in grades between men and women is so significant that gender is a more influential factor in determining whether an individual will be awarded a first than whether you paid for your education or not. State-educated men are consistently awarded more firsts than privately-educated women. However, over the past five years, the former demographic has been one-and-a-half times more likely to be awarded a 2.ii and twice as likely to be awarded a third than the latter.

Perhaps the most significant attain-

Alasdair
de Costa

Unadvertised internships prevent social mobility



Noah Froud is
a third year
studying HSPS at
Sidney Sussex

We’re in yet another cycle of media attention and Twitter scrutiny about unpaid internships. A classic example of what this involves is the Guardian’s recent shaming of Housing Minister Dominic Raab for advertising the role of an unpaid intern (the official job title is “volunteer”) to work 3-4 days a week in Westminster.

Somehow, the fact that not paying someone for their labour is a *bad thing* is now up for debate. We can see the extent of this in the quasi-defence of unpaid internships which has emerged, asserting that because people can do well later due to undertaking an unpaid internship these positions must be a good thing. Essentially, if there are people willing to take an unpaid internship, they can’t be that bad a thing. This, of course, ignores the people who couldn’t take an unpaid internship (read: everyone who doesn’t live in London, and a lot of the people who do). This quasi-defence, therefore, is a pretty easy argument to shut down.

In the current debate that’s about as far as we get. The people who can afford

to do unpaid internships are rich, the people who offer unpaid internships are bad, and the whole situation is awful for social mobility.

But this misses two crucial factors which arguably contribute just as much to the problem as those who advertise unpaid internships in the style of Raab.

Firstly, there are those who claim not to offer unpaid internships while not having any formal paid alternative. The problem can be best illustrated with an example. Say a firm has no paid internship scheme. What then happens if a friend asks one of the firm’s workers if their recently graduated child might shadow them for a few weeks? If a formally advertised, paid internship scheme existed the worker might point them towards that. But if such a scheme doesn’t exist, the likelihood is the worker would give the child an internship, which is, of course, at an individual level the decent thing to do.

In this way, seemingly benign social connections cause our class structure to be replicated again and again. Without work experience and internships made

“
Any firm
which
doesn’t
offer a paid
internship,
open to all,
should be
suspect
”

accessible by formal application processes, who you know is more important than what you know. Paradoxically, the worst unpaid internship is an unadvertised one. This subtlety doesn’t get nearly enough attention, possibly because it’s so endemic. The answer to the question ‘Why are these sectors so elitist?’ is not simply ‘unpaid internships’. In reality, it’s more insidious than that. As the *New Statesman*’s Stephen Bush told me about journalism, “the problem we have as an industry is that it’s hard to get into if you don’t know someone in it.”

For this reason, any firm which doesn’t offer a paid internship, open to all, should be suspect. It isn’t simply enough to innocently hold up your hands and say, “we don’t offer an unpaid internship or work experience”. A failure to offer experience in a paid manner with a formalised application process leaves everything to connections. A phrase which I’ve often heard is the importance of “being in the right place at the right time” in order to get a job opportunity that was never advertised. Some would see this as another way of referring to

luck. The reality is, though, the more people you know, the ‘luckier’ you are.

The second group of culprits who deserve far more attention are those who feed demand for unpaid internships. What I mean by this is every firm whose supposed ‘entry-level’ graduate job is advertised as requiring months of experience in the sector already. Why do we blame those who offer unpaid internships but not those who seem to require them? Why are we shaming Dominic Raab, but not the City firm offering a poorly paid internship which requires 6 months of prior experience with a FTSE 100 company?

If we continue to ignore these two problems, we’ll forever be unable to properly tackle elitism and make industries fully accessible to all. We’ll continue to get our moral sugar-rush by shaming and condemning those who offer unpaid internships, but real change will evade us. Firms which offer ‘entry level’ jobs requiring an unpaid internship and those who only give experience to young people with the right connections need to take their share of the blame.

Noah
Froud



Lara Erritt

Living in a virtual reality: behind the online façade



Michael Reiners is a second year at St John's studying History of Art

Michael Reiners

In the year 2008 it was de rigueur for a twelve year old to have an image of Bart Simpson as their Facebook profile picture. A man could sit back, cross his legs and know he had made it – he was online, and Bart Simpson was his ambassador. Today, this would be unthinkable, likely deemed the result of a ransomware attack, or an outrageous act of self-sabotage.

Just when did social media go from being a novelty, barely tethered to us, to an extension of our very sense of self?

It first became apparent when going 'without it' began being treated as some kind of radical statement. 'I Forgot My Phone', a video released in 2013, was one of the first to popularly suggest this. It portrayed a young woman living a phoneless existence in contrast to her fellow millennials, all of whom had been rendered incapable of conversation by portable technology. Without a trace of irony, 'I Forgot My Phone' promptly went viral, and over the passing five years there have been countless platitudinous videos like it. With them came plenty of self-styled nonconformists going 'offline' for maybe a month or two. This was the first sign that the average social media user held their cloud-identity in high esteem.

Meanwhile, those who stayed firmly

online were able to hone their craft. The presentation of a lifestyle on social media has many similarities to gallery curation, displaying all genres of fine art. A venerable gallery exhibits only the most select works of art, and so does a venerable Instagram user. To this day, landscape and still life are still regarded rather lowly in the hierarchy of genres. As a result, a well-lit image of your dinner can only command a fraction of the capital (likes) as portraiture (a selfie) or a genre scene (a group photo of you and friends on holiday).

The analogy of the gallery is not misplaced. Since 2011, many have come to understand that influence among their peers is a mandate to become an internationally recognised 'Influencer'. Astonishingly, it is only recently that such 'Influencers' on Youtube have received negative attention, possibly because the press is playing a three-year game of catch-up with the online world.

Having discontinued their monetisation program for anyone producing under 4,000 hours of watch time per year, Youtube is not a social media platform one can willingly get into in 2018. Its emphasis is instead on established, influential channels. Most 'Influencers' are lifestyle bloggers, whose means of influencing you is cross between reality

TV and celebrity product endorsement, the difference being that you are seldom told when the reality ends and the advertisement begins.

For many of these individuals, their transcendence to pseudo-celebrity status comes at the loss of their humility. Many YouTubers began as introverted, low-budget vloggers. With time, they evolved into bombastically confident individuals, to whom talking to their camera is tantamount to a stadium performance.

As a former content creator, I can say how easy it is to become lost in this online persona, and indeed the same is true for over-polishing your social media profile. At the base level, influencers are only the sum of the things they say and do offline, but they possess the ability to create a commercially viable public façade.

It is easy to lose sight of your offline self when the façade proves to be infinitely more socially successful. Freud wasn't wrong about the tripartite notion of the self. The only issue is that he was 90 years ahead of his time.

Serina Bergman, writing for i, came out in defence of social media influencers recently, defending Elle Darby who requested a free stay at a hotel in exchange for "featuring the hotel on her social platforms". In turn, the ho-

“It is easy to lose sight of your offline self when the façade proves infinitely more successful”

tel mockingly publicised her request on their own social media platforms, achieving far greater publicity from the ensuing controversy than would have been afforded by Darby.

This also served to shatter her misplaced notion of celebrity-hood. A company unwilling to be complicit in underhand 'influencing' is a refreshing change, but, when it comes to YouTube Influencers, those with a cult of personality are able to influence fans in more sinister ways – a vast majority of whom are minors.

Cases of abuse allegations by notable YouTubers have peppered the past five years. Ed Blann (Eddplant) has been accused of sexually assaulting a fan, and his contemporaries Alex Day and Tom Milsom were both implicated in soliciting female fans as young as 15 at 'fan sleepovers'.

Orwell would no doubt turn in his grave to know we had willingly become our own 'big brother', policing speech and action online, exacting vigilante justice in the court of public opinion, and assuming implications of guilt are as good as convictions. However, there is a certain gleeful schadenfreude in watching the mighty fall, especially when that might is, for the most part, their own delusion of grandeur.



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Vulture

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THEATRE [32-33] IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY



STEPHEN CHAMBERS STUDIO

The Court of Redonda

by Georgie Kemsley-Pein

As I greet Stephen Chambers in the Heong Gallery at Downing College, I am ushered into a court of caprice and imagination, artistic in-jokes and fictitious gesture. Confronting me is a series of 101 painted portraits: alone and individual, the contingent depicted by the London artist is baffling in its stilted flatness and atemporality.

The Redonda legend is the brainchild of the work, a desolate outcrop of an island in the eastern West Indies which is a cluster of rocks the size of Hyde Park: “uninhabitable and almost unlandable”, Chambers explains.

The history of Redonda as a kingdom begins in 1865, when a merchant trader asked Queen Victoria permission to claim kingship over the island. This having been granted, a linearity of kings flowered, and the island was passed onto the trader’s son before poet John Gawsworth became king in 1947. From there, Gawsworth implemented a Redondan court, consisting of creative individuals as he offered knighthoods, ...[continued on page 26]

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Death of the Author

We often ask ourselves: what did the artist mean by this? But why should the artist's intentions dictate our understanding of their art?

28

A welcome change for Marvel

Our Film & TV Editor Lillian Crawford weighs in on the latest Marvel film, *Black Panther*, praising its bold visuals and nuanced story.

31

"No-playing motherfuckers"

Quincey Jones recently dismissed The Beatles' skill, but the concept of technique in music has changed dramatically since the 1960s.

32-33

Measure for Measure

Theatre isn't just an aesthetic experience, it's a business venture. We take a look into how the Cambridge scene bridges these two interests.



Preview: STORMFACE by Kate Collins

After the success of *Spiders*, **Kate Collins** lays out her approach to her new work, *STORMFACE*, opening at the ADC next week

STORMFACE is a play I wrote when I was trying to write another play. I was annoyed about the number of male ensemble plays with parts that are just fundamentally fun to play. Plays like *Jerusalem*, *The History Boys* and *Posh*. I wondered why there was no equivalent for women. "I'm going to write *The History Girls*," I shouted, waving my pen around and wearing my 'I'm a very important writer' hat. "I'm going to write the female Johnny Rooster, and it's going to be the best thing anyone's ever written, and I might make lots of money, but I'll probably live in a reclusive house off the coast of Scotland and refuse interviews to maintain the mystery!"

So, I started to write. I wrote 40 pages of a play called *Sweeties*. It opened with an argument over a sock puppet, wandered into discussions about the death of Amy Winehouse and featured a scene about synchronised wanking. It goes without saying that it was absolutely awful, and should never, never, ever see the light of day. I got 40 pages in, took off my 'I'm a very important writer' hat in shame, thought 'this really isn't working', opened a fresh word document, and poured out whatever came to me. I had the itch to write *something*, I just didn't know what that something should be, or what form it should take, or whose story it was going to tell. After a lot of rejigging, banging my head against a

▲ **Actress Rachel Kitts; Kate Collins's, whose play *Spiders* was a hit at Corpus last Easter; Actor Tom Taplin**

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LOUIS NORRIS, LAURA WELLS)

wall and mainlining Yorkshire Tea like there was no tomorrow, I had a thing, and it was called *STORMFACE*.

STORMFACE is quite different to a lot of things I've written. It's a lot more episodic, a lot less linear, a bit more abstract and I've shown remarkable restraint when it comes to all my favourite four letter words. It's quite personal in some ways, and I'm a bit (read: *really, really, really*) scared for people to see it. It is a play about four people who are all struggling with femininity in one form or another. I've had a few people ask about the subtitle 'This As Well'. It's a phrase that pops up a few times in the play, and it's one that, for me, quite succinctly sums up being a woman (if that is ever a thing that would ever be possible, or should be possible to do, in its many, many forms). You might go to school and then maybe puberty happens which is frankly *rude*, then you're met with institutional misogyny, and a pay gap, and a lack of people who you feel look like and represent you on TV and in plays and in the government, and it doesn't stop there. I remember being around 15, severely fucked off that I was told to put up with bra fittings, gradually realising I was gay and thinking 'this? Are you kidding me? *This as well?*'

I'm afraid I haven't written the female equivalent of *Jerusalem*. I am very much still learning, and *STORMFACE* isn't perfect. I hope that people find something in the play that they respond to, and I hope that we can all have a drink and a chat afterwards, laugh about how ridiculous the world is, and all just shout, 'This as well?' at those things until we feel we've got a bit more power over them ●



What's On This Week



ART 24TH, HEONG GALLERY

The Court of Redonda
Touching upon themes of identity and nationalism, The Court of Redonda is a vast collective portrait of an imaginary court of 101 maverick and singular individuals.

POETRY 25TH, HEONG GALLERY

Inkwell
A creative night that aims to showcase the artwork and poetry of those disadvantaged by the gender paradigm.



MUSIC 25TH, KING'S

KCMS: Maxwell Davies
A brand-new comedy hour without a script or a man in sight. Stellar female and non-binary performers will improvise entirely new scenes, all based on your suggestions.

CULTURE 2ND, KETTLE'S YARD

LATE at Kettle's Yard
Live music, talks, art making and more including producer Clara Dublanc. The café bar will be open. Come and join us for a celebratory late night event.

RADIO THURSDAYS AT 3PM, CAM.FM

The Vulture Show
Our hosts Pany Heliotis and Martha O'Neil bring all of Vulture's culture chops to the airwaves, with interviews, previews, and all the best stuff from our print edition.

LITERATURE 23RD, ST JOHN'S

Poetry of Trees
This writing workshop will be interactive, featuring a writing exercises, and a walk through nearby nature led by Cambridge alumna, Jade Cuttle!

COMEDY 24TH, TIT HALL THEATRE

Comedy Workshop
A workshop featuring Lulu Popplewell as part of the FNTM ARTS FEST which showcases the talent of those who identify as female, non-binary, or trans male.

CULTURE 25TH, ST JOHNS

Setting the Scene
Oscar nominated Production Designer Suzie Davies will share how she visually translates the words on a script or brief into scenes on a screen.

COMEDY 27TH-3RD, ADC

Footlights Spring Revue
Join "the most renowned sketch troupe of them all" (The Independent) for one of the biggest events in the Cambridge comedy calendar.

DANCE 16TH-17TH, LEYS SCHOOL

Swan Lake
Set to Tchaikovsky's stunning score, the ballet threads tragedy, romance and magic into four explosive acts.



From our Chief Designer...

Need some artistic inspiration? Our Chief Designer Sophia Luu is here to help

Some of you have been wanting a creative way to get involved with the strike. How can you do this visually? Go around this week and take photos of the established big cat university buildings, and then literally strike throughout images. You might choose a thick line of purple paint (the colour of the badges) cutting up the images or tapping over them. It's small actions like this which make a great difference, and remind you of the influence of the strikes his week



ONLINE THIS WEEK

NINA JEFFS: WHO IS THE REAL BIG BROTHER?

Our relationship with nature needs a dramatic rethink

“I fear that we have lost sight of the original goal of environmentalism”

Oliver Rhodes

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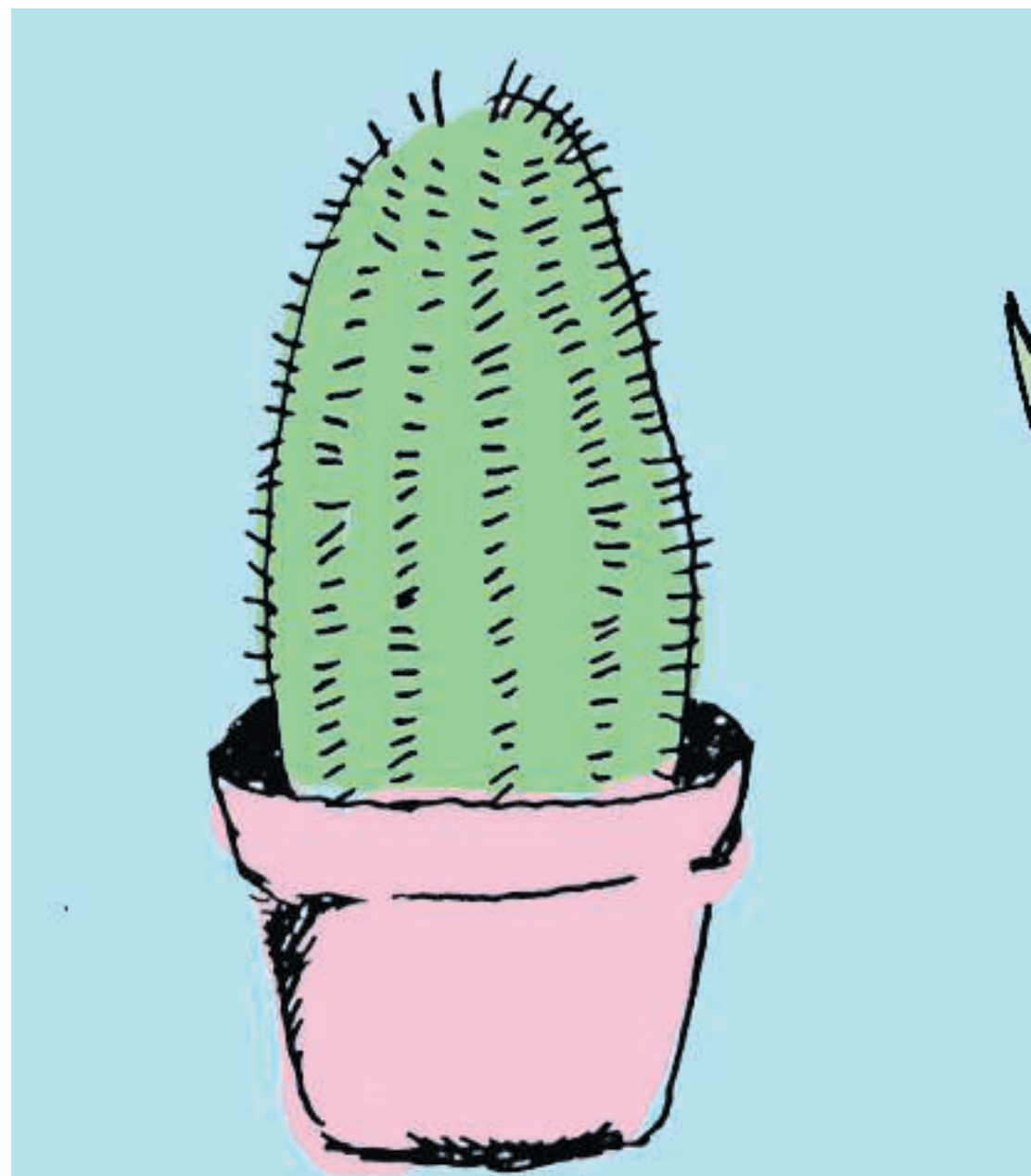
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When we see turtles waddling towards streetlights and falling into gutters, we get upset. When we see acres of rainforest ablaze, we get frustrated. When the world's most powerful leader dismisses climate change as a fabrication, we get angry. Yet the difference between intention and action, which so characterises environmentalism today, is nothing but a symptom of our wider indifference towards nature.

In an era of ever scarcer public resources, environmentalism becomes a concession which inconveniences tax payers, and threatens employment. Environmental protections were, for Trump, “job-killing regulations”. The Paris climate agreement created “draconian financial and economic burdens” for the American people, which could not be reconciled. At home, the Green Party remains little more than a pressure group, failing to provide satisfactory answers to bread-and-butter politics: housing, jobs and economic capacity.

Since the days of the Tudors, the environment has been subject to an ideological occupation with order and cleanliness. This preoccupation informs the terms of environmental debate on both sides. Conservationists fence off woodland into nice little patches, which resemble Tetris tiles more than forests. The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy encapsulates how environmentalism has been sanitised in the public mind. ‘Pillar Two’ payments encourage the ‘protection’ of natural environments by subsidising farmers

to ‘set aside’ land, but only for a limited area. More bizarrely, farmers are fined for allowing the growth of natural vegetation. Set aside land must be kept permanently barren, lest nature reclaims it from human control.

In his book, *Feral: Rewilding the Land, Sea and Human Life*, George Monbiot points out how misguided our relationship with nature has been. He emphasises that the problem is essentially cultural. As a society, we suffer from a sort of collective amnesia regarding what we consider to be ‘natural’. We consider the sheep, for example, to be a staple of the British landscape, even though it is an alien species which has caused widespread environmental destruction. Britain was once rainforest, not the heath and scrubland we have normalised in upland Wales and Scotland. This amnesia influences official environmental policies. Nigel Miller, the then-vice-president of the National Farmers Union Scotland, argued in 2008 that a decline in sheep farming would cause “irreparable damage” to Scotland's landscapes and biodiversity. This was despite the fact that heavy grazing is scientifically acknowledged to reduce soil quality.

By reducing nature to a policy abstraction, we have warped it to conform to our own ‘civilised’ sensibilities. We have packaged it up and presented it as an opportunity cost: a choice society must make at the expense of other choices. Furthermore, I fear that we have lost sight of the original goal of environmentalism: to restore nature to its natural state, *without* human supervision. For environmentalism to be taken truly seriously, we



“
We suffer
from a
collective
amnesia
”

need a rethinking from the ground up of our social and cultural relationship with it. We need to shift the debate away from only a quantitative argument – as important as that is – towards a qualitative evaluation of the natural world.

Monbiot argues for the restoration of natural environments, without supervision, to large swathes of the landscape. He makes some conventional arguments: for common land ownership; and for green tourism. But Monbiot does not dwell on these arguments. In fact, much of *Feral* is a story. He describes his experience stalking a deer, “spear poised above the water... flexed and focused as a heron”, and his travels through the Slovenian forests, “smooth pillars wrapped in elephant skin... like giant gardenias”. For a book about ecology it seemed, at first, peculiar to introduce each chapter with a stanza of poetry. Sentiment does not belong in a science book.

Our yearning for nature at an emotional level is clear enough. *Countryfile* attracts seven million viewers every Sunday. Chris Packham and David Attenborough have become household names. We must listen to these yearnings, for they reveal a dormant passion which can revitalise the debate if used effectively. We should not ignore economic arguments for and against environmental regulations. But we should take the debate further, and allow it to inform a more holistic, integrated discussion of how we can better interact with our natural world. Then perhaps it can become a friend, not enemy, of human progress ●

▲ (ILLUSTRATION BY ANOUK WEAR)

Grief can be acute in the face of trials

Ana Ovey



It's not a revolutionary statement to say that Cambridge is a high pressure environment. Nor is it one to say that all of us, as students here, may approach failure with a less forgiving mind-set than we ought to. But as with all things, grief exacerbates the feelings that anticipate and follow failure.

Bereavement, paired with not just a university working environment, but the Cambridge one at that, makes for greater despondency in the face of adversity. It's easier to feel burned out, and exhausting to carry on in spite of dud essays and awkward classes. Failures, setbacks, or missing the mark or deadline are painful and overwhelming when multiplied with anxiety or depression. Concentration is knocked, anxieties build with the loss of the unconditional support and encouragement a parent often provides, comparisons of personal failings with the successes of others are crushingly constant. It's infinitely more difficult to feel proud of your achievements when the person who would feel proud of you isn't there to express it.

And, naturally, grief is something felt more acutely in the face of trials. I will still feel a particular kind of sadness at the thought of my father when surrounded by my friends, playing music and dancing, joking and laughing. But despondency numbs me and removes me when I've had a bad day, when I'm lonely, when I haven't achieved what I wanted to – and I can't call my dad and talk to him about it. Being bereaved at university is not something I anticipated in the years of envisioning my education after school. And even if it had been, I hardly know how I would have foreseen the acuteness and strangeness of every sorrow. As it was, it was a constant comfort to know that, even at university, if I were ever confused about what I was learning or upset about how things were going, I would be able to contact my fiercely intelligent and always consoling father about anything, who never made them feel insignificant. To have that removed, to be unable to articulate why I felt entitled to the presence of my dad, even in the background of my university experience, makes the weeks when I'm struggling with deadlines, mental blocks or worries even more difficult.

Talking to another girl whose dad had died, I was struck, in the sweetest and saddest of ways, by two things she mentioned while we were speaking of grief, particularly regarding our careers in Cambridge. The first was that, profoundly, “I feel as though I've lost one of my biggest cheerleaders!” – which rang especially true. My dad was always at the sidelines, commenting, beaming, cheering me on and applauding louder than any other, after all of my victories – whether they were personal, academic, or extra-curricular. He made sure to love what I loved, and care passion-

ately for whatever I attempted. He was also there, comforting me, booing the opposition, setting out practical comeback strategies in spite of obstacles, and shouting at the referee, after any of my failures. He never made me feel inadequate, despite his investment in my goals and successes. It's a difficult thing to be deprived of that; it's difficult to cope with it in a place as rigorous, intensive, and often unforgiving as Cambridge. Losing your head cheerleader, it turns out, is a big thing.

The other thing the friend mentioned, when we were discussing the academic and emotional impacts of grief, was her heartache at the notion that her dad would not be present for her graduation. I also remember the day I got my Cambridge offer and how inconsequential and foolish it felt. I got the email confirming I had a place the day I landed back in England from Sydney, after my dad's death. What I had fretted over, what I had wrung my hands over, what I had hoped for after first being told I ought to try for Oxbridge, was suddenly utterly insignificant. In the moment I read I had an offer I realised I would always feel this way. Without my dad to hug me a warm congratulations, to laugh and exclaim, ‘Of course you got an offer!’, to say how proud of me he was – what did it matter? What was the significance of this small victory, when I was so overwhelmed with sadness?

Graduation will be hard without my dad – as will every failure and disappointment from now until then. But it's a joy to reflect on all the kindnesses and encouragements he imparted on me, how much he would have loved to hear of all that I am learning, how he'd complain and eye-roll and tut at anyone who made me feel as though I didn't deserve to be here. It's easy to forget these things. It's easy to feel overwhelmed, it's easy to feel hopeless and desire nothing more than to give up for the week, the month, the term. But, griefsters, it's a bittersweet kind of bliss to remember how, more than anything, the person you grieve for would want you to be kind to yourself, would want you to succeed because it would make you happy, and vitally, would see your worth in spite of your failures. Endeavour to see it for yourself ●



▲ “Graduation will be hard without my dad” (ANA OVEY)



FULL REVIEWS ONLINE
VARSITY.CO.UK/ARTS

Pirates and heavy metal stars

Stephen Chambers' Court of Redonda

As his new show at the Heong Galley opens, **Georgie Kemsley-Pein** meets artist Stephen Chambers

[continued from page 21] ...dukedom and positions of power to his friends. Spanish writer Javier Marías continued this tradition, and it is his court today on which Chambers has based his paintings; the artist has almost mechanically churned out these portraits over a period of 14 months, which were first exhibited at the Venice Biennale last year.

The Royal Academician was dazzled by Marías' works during his time in Brooklyn. He explains to me that at points in his career he often embarks on "an itinerant life, where I go and rent studios around parts of the world". His interludes of travel in a separate time zone (usually America or Mexico) give him distance to work, he says: "It's like beginning again, I'm just left alone."

But while Marías' hand-picked Redondan court consists of real people (Marías conferring titles on figures such as William Boyd and A.S. Byatt), Chambers has chosen to configure the physiognomy and personalities of the sitters entirely based from imagination. The whole project is entirely conceived in the mind, and is fundamentally about the power of the imagination. As Chambers puts it in the catalogue for the Biennale exhibition, "The Court of Redonda is... bringing to the High Table those that would normally be fed in the garden shed." He has conceived his utopian vision of a court of "artisans and creators and makers of things."

That Chambers is offering to us "a court of people who would not otherwise be in a courtly situation" is political, too. In the context of Brexit and its coeval struggles with diversity and tolerance, one can read a greater cultural relevance into the ethnographic types of Chambers' individuals, and his work is based on "undercurrents of dissatisfaction and resentment about movements of peoples around the world." I ask him what he wants the viewer to come away with: "I want to give the beginnings of what might be, and then those to be concluded when I'm not here, and then everyone will get to a different point."

But Chambers doesn't burden his series with overt politicisation; the comic and the whimsical is at the centre of his art, and the coloured etchings in the room bring to mind works like Goya's *Caprichos*. The individual names of the court members are humorous too, and represent types – "everyman, everywoman" – from *Queen of Tickertape* and *Harold the Bum to Boris, el Seductor*. I ask him about



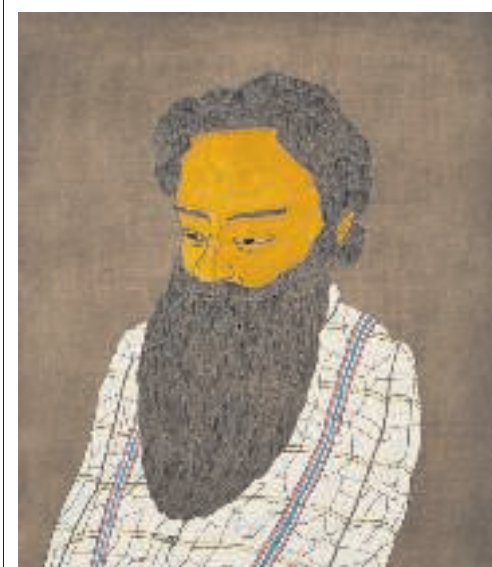
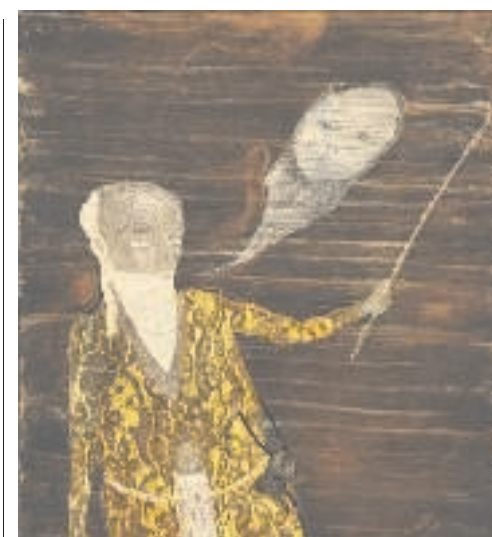
▲ **Stephen Chambers' work is showing at the Heong Gallery from this weekend**

(STEPHEN CHAMBERS STUDIO)

one figure in particular, with long grey hair and an oddly shaped hat, which makes him chuckle. The individuals are "nearly always entirely imagined", but here there was an inspiration. He asks me if I've heard of the heavy metal "psycho" Lemmy, and I reply I haven't. Chambers remarks that he was never that interested in the music, but "thought he had quite a good look".

But on other matters of inspiration, Chambers seems disinclined to talk. Despite the similarities between his work and Indian Mughal painting, he denies any sort of influence, claiming he's "very badly travelled East", and has never actually been to India. The paintings use traditional methods, something which derives from his time as a student looking at the works of 15th century masters such as Sassetta. Comprised of panels of wood

“Chambers has chosen to configure the physiognomy and personalities of the sitters entirely based from his imagination.”



covered with gesso and then painted on in oil, the individual portraits are "set in Netherite", and his style can be explained by his preference for simplicity. "Often with what I do I'm trying to keep things as simple as possible", he remarks, as he relies predominantly on line and brilliance of colour to animate his works, which retain a striking sense of two-dimensionality. He frequently slashes the surface to create a distressed aesthetic, as he likes injecting "a bit of discord or unpredictability" in his works, something which creates "static shock" and tension.

While exquisitely painted and dazzling in their colour combinations, it seems the weight of Chambers' *Court of Redonda* hinges on concepts and ideas. His paintings are about conversations and intimacy; Chambers' own dialogue with Marías is reflected in our viewing of the characters which cover the walls of the Heong, people whom he has fabricated from the vision of his mind. He creates his paintings on an almost subliminal level, allowing the autonomous nature of imagination to be the king of his art, as he explains his indiscernible style with the pithy and equally mysterious statement: "I do what I can't help doing".

The Court of Redonda is at the Heong Gallery in Downing College till the 20th of May ●



Roland Barthes' Death of the Author remains radical today

Last week, a lecturer claimed: "We don't do autobiographical readings at Cambridge". It's something I'd half worked out since my time here, but had never given proper thought to. This got me thinking: just how important is the author in the texts that we read? Separating the author from the work might seem to neglect important experience that might have informed that work. However, there's a stronger case for this separation, not least because it gives the reader more autonomy in interpretation.

In his 1967 essay *The Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes argues that the Author with a capital 'A' becomes obsolete in producing his text. The idea proposed is that the Author's intended meaning is no more important than the textual interpretation of any reader, taking the original creator down from their pedestal. In the words of Barthes: "The voice loses its origin, the author enters his own death, writing begins."

It's interesting to think about writers crafting under pseudonyms. Mary Ann Evans wrote as George Eliot, and maybe her texts would have read differently to a 19th century audience disinclined to respect the literary work of women. Alternatively, maybe the very point of her texts, and of her writing under a pseudonym to gain acceptance, is that authorship is unimportant in light of that bigger thing, the text itself. Her gender shouldn't matter, only that she disappears a little under the writing she has produced. Perhaps it is thus better that we don't analyse her, but her writing.

Does it matter if Shakespeare wrote all the plays that we think he wrote, or is it just the plays themselves as texts that matter? Historians enjoy a good squabble over questions of

undetermined authorship. But here seems to be no reason why we can't just appreciate the plays as texts of art without having to assign them to a particular author and his life.

It's also boring to read works in terms of the author's life. We can't explain and explain away *The Metamorphosis* by the fact that Kafka had an oppressive father, and we can recognise the role of the father in the text without knowing anything about Kafka's life. While such knowledge enhances our understanding of the text, it only advances one particular understanding. If we appreciate particular themes in writing, that these root from the author's own experience doesn't necessarily give them more weight.

This is more the case with authors who seem personally involved in their texts. We read an experience in Wilfred Owen's line, "hot blast and fury of hell's upsurge", without knowing explicitly that he himself fought in the first world war. This raises questions of morality. If we read a text without biographical or historical context, we may neglect experience of the author or of their historical contemporaries that is emotional or disturbing. Perhaps his dying a week before the signing of the Armistice lends a post-poignancy to his poetry. But he didn't pre-empt this in writing, and it doesn't affect the words there on the page, read as they easily can be as isolated black letters of print.

Never fear - nobody's actually going around killing off authors. However, it's evidently a good idea that we liberate ourselves from narrow biography. In this way, we prioritise our autonomy as readers, interpreting as we choose as we allow the original work of art to speak to us on its own accord ● **Lydia Bunt**

▲ **Barthes, writer of *Camera Lucida* and *Mythologies*, died in 1980**

(RAFAEL LEAL)

“Never fear – nobody’s actually going around killing off authors”

POETS & POLYPHONY

To use a tired phrase: imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the cultural sphere where artists, composers and painters have been borrowing each others' ideas for centuries. When first considering this concept, the obvious example of Shakespeare stands out. But cultural intertextuality, so celebrated in *The Wasteland*, can be seen in other, less famous examples.



Poetry set to music

Since the greatest composers were rarely great writers, they deferred to poetry for inspiration for their song cycles. Finzi wrote some much-underrated song cycles based on Shakespeare and Hardy poems, Schumann wrote his *Dichterliebe* based on a set of Heine poems, and Schubert set words by Wilhelm Müller to music for *Winterreise* and *Die Schöne Müllerin*. William Blake's words were, of course, used for *Jerusalem*, and Christina Rossetti wrote the words to one of our best loved carols, *In the Bleak Midwinter*.

Hogarth & Stravinsky

William Hogarth's eight-part series, *The Rake's Progress*, depicts the happy-go-lucky Tom Rakewell's licentious activities. Deserting Anne Truelove for the hedonism of London, his fall consists of a descent into moral decay as he contracts syphilis and is eventually landed in Bedlam.

This has been the inspiration for several cultural creations over the years. Described by British filmmaker Alan Parker as the precursor to the storyboard, Stravinsky wrote an opera in three acts inspired by Hogarth's work with a libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman.

Gabrieli & St Mark's Basilica, Venice

Born and bred in Venice, Giovanni Gabrieli became the principal organist at St Mark's in 1585. Gabrieli designed music to complement the unusual layout of the Cathedral, with two choir lofts facing each other. This polychoral style was probably

used first by Adrian Willaert, but pioneered by Gabrieli with his famous use of brass instruments. A fine example can be seen (and heard) in his *Canzon Primi Toni a 8* (try the recording from the Concerto Palatino or The Brass Principles Japan).

Folk Music & Chagall

Marc Chagall was first influenced by the music of the Hasidic Jewish community in his hometown of Vitebsk, Russia. Known later in life to enjoy Johann Sebastian Bach and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, he was entranced by

the concept of the Jewish fiddler. For Chagall, it became an autobiographical symbol for his own life; 'the image of the wandering Jew'. Chagall's *Green Violinist* or *The Fiddler* are visual representations of this.

Shakespeare & Verdi

It should come as no surprise that William Shakespeare (lastly, not leastly!) makes an appearance on this list. Giuseppe Verdi alone wrote operas based on Othello, Macbeth and Falstaff, and Romeo and Juliet inspired 24 operas,

most notably by Charles Gounod. Hector Berlioz wrote a *Symphonie Fantastique* based on the play, and Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* overture is perhaps the best-known work which uses motifs from the play.

Starting left: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; Marc Chagall (YURY PEN); William Shakespeare; Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky (EDWIN EVANS); Johann Sebastian Bach; William Blake

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Black Panther review: 'all hail the Marvel cinematic revolution'



Lillian Crawford finds much to praise in Marvel's new action thriller, complimenting the cast and Kendrick Lamar's music

FILM REVIEW

Black Panther

Dir. Ryan Coogler
 In cinemas now

★★★★★

Marvel is hardly known for its progressive filmmaking or representation. The casting of Tilda Swinton as the Ancient One in *Doctor Strange* was met with cries of 'whitewashing', and last year's *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* boasted a quietly gay protagonist – hardly the stuff that dreams are made of. Alas, the tide turns, and the murmur of African drums can be heard in the shadows. A revolution is coming, and, as the trailer proclaimed, it will most certainly be live.

From the expository and sandy outset of *Black Panther*, Ludwig Göransson's score strikes up pulsating rhythm with startling immediacy, the tribal sounds beating away the grandiose sludge churned out by Alan Silvestri or Michael Giacchino. Accompanied by a simple yet rousing brass fanfare, T'Challa is re-proclaimed our hero, now given 134-min-

utes of breathing space after the nauseating whirlwind of *Civil War*.

But what is this arising from the depths of the orchestral pit? Electronic vibes pervade the air, and Göransson downplays the joyous chanting for synthesised throbbing. All great heroes need equally malignant villains, and Michael B. Jordan seethes with revenge. The influence of America is here, the manifestation of a conflict between racial cultures, made all the more prescient by Kendrick Lamar's songs. It is a war in which neither side can win, a villain so worthy of empathy that the conclusion is necessarily conciliatory.

Black Panther is most successful when drawing on past memories, contorting them to cast aside the moralistic binaries so often created. No one is flawless, and while T'Challa will come to judge his father for his mistakes, it is his own that drive the poignancy of this message. Scenes taking place in the ancestral plain do this most effectively, the connection with heritage as important as that inherent to Pixar's *Coco*. While seemingly worlds apart, both films draw from foreign cultures to impart a powerful lesson so often lost on Western civilisation. It is Marvel's way of telling us to think on and look sharp.

Ryan Coogler has not wasted a shot in bringing these ideas to life. While Wakanda's sunsets will undoubtedly drop one's jaw, so

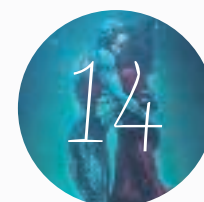
▲ **Chadwick Boseman plays the new Black Panther with little flair but in a gorgeous landscape**
 (MARVEL STUDIOS)

too do the sleek city streets and neon lights, the black and purple mise-en-scène crafting some of the most remarkable visuals. The action comes in fits and bursts, often against an exquisite backdrop that makes these scenes more palatable for audience members who typically find violence a strain on the genre. One scene does stand out above all else, however; a South Korean casino brawl reminiscent of *Skyfall*'s Macau set piece. It showcases all of the film's highlights – a brooding sense of dread wrapped in delicate glamour. Chadwick Boseman proves he would make for a magnificent 007, with Lupita Nyong'o and Danai Gurira as the fiercest Bond girls ever seen. Back at Q Branch, Letitia Wright has a blast as T'Challa's sister, Shuri, delivering Marvel's characteristically silly humour.

The cast's ability to drive the *Black Panther* uprising is consistently moving, one which draws as heavily from culture as it does from politics. The message is there, a threat delivered by a spluttering Andy Serkis that remains prevalent to the bitter end. Taking on arms deals and international collaboration in its wake, Coogler casts his claws wide, and just about rakes it in. It will be a shame to see it all heaped back into the wider universe again in *Infinity War*, but for now cinemagoers may revel in its unique majesty. All hail the Marvel cinematic revolution – long may it reign ●

THE VULTURE FILM AWARDS 2018:

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The Shape of Water



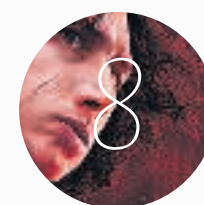
Dunkirk



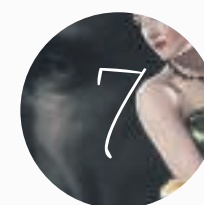
Call Me By Your Name



Blade Runner 2049



The Last Jedi



Phantom Thread

An heroic boringsroman by Clint Eastwood

FILM REVIEW

The 15:17 to Paris

Dir. Clint Eastwood
In cinemas now

★★★★☆

This film is extremely boring. Telling the real-life story of how three men stopped a terrorist attack on a train, Clint Eastwood's *The 15:17 to Paris* adapts five minutes of heroism into over ninety minutes of colossally flabby backstory. Casting the heroes as themselves, the film's concept flirts with becoming an exercise in hyper-realism but lands with a heavy thump on the side of the mundane.

The problem is not so much the quality of their acting, which is not great, but their real lives, and the subsequent script adaptation to produce few stories worth dramatising. Starting during their school days, the three children meet and get to know each other

unceremoniously.

A bollocking from the headmaster over expired hall-passes cements the friendship and they proceed to lark about playing war games and cleaning their air guns. The necessity of child actors at this point could have brought a glimmer of talent but the performances stay very much in the realm of Year 4 school play, wooden and uninspiring.

The boringsroman continues with the men's adult lives in the army. Attempts to create tension through intercutting scenes from the attack on the train fall flat, serving only to remind us that there is maybe a pay-off to all this dross.

The top of the tedium, the summit of the sameness, the high point of the humdrum, however, is reached during the trio's back-packing holiday around Europe. The interminable repetition of banal observations, selfies, coffees, selfies, drinks, selfies form a kind of torturous travel show, only explainable as a cure for insomnia.

In one particularly bizarre moment, Spencer, accompanied by Anthony, meets a girl in Venice and spends a day flirting towards a potential romance. But she just disappears without resolution, Eastwood uninterested in any deviation from the three men and their



▲ Spencer Stone plays himself in a film that fails to break any new ground (WARNER BROS PICTURES)

quest for the most Instagram-worthy photo spot in Europe.

Despite having real friends in the central roles, there is no chemistry or sparky conversation. They are like three old ladies who have so little to talk about that they simply produce noise to fill the silence.

The attempts to work in a narrative of destiny are cringingly contrived, the men needlessly debating over whether to visit Paris, and Spencer at one point suggesting the world is "catapulting him towards something". When they finally do reach the moment of truth, it is amazingly undramatic, the speed with which they foil the attack illuminating just how misguided the concept of this film really is.

The real-life heroes, in another instance, could have created an avant garde piece of experimentation worthy of praise, or at least interest. To be extremely generous, perhaps the mundanity is a comment on the fact that anyone can be a hero, regardless of how compelling their lives are.

Still, experimental or not, it fails on a fundamental level to produce anything more than a clunky mess of tedium and anticlimax ●

Seth Jordan

'Oscar-bait' saved by fourth-wall breaks and visceral skating

FILM REVIEW

I, Tonya

Dir. Craig Gillespie
In cinemas now

★★★★☆

It is Oscar season again, and with it comes the yearly slew of lamentable biopics. *I, Tonya* focuses on one specific scandal involving fellow skater Nancy Kerrigan, a standard 'oscar-baiting' plot; however, the film is sharper than most at using this tired genre to point its jaded finger at the present.

I, Tonya suffers from cliché and well-trodden overarching narrative structures. It takes this familiar mould and diverts from it with some interesting, largely successful departures. The story of Harding is told in *Rashomon* fashion, in key scenes devolving to a semi-narrated style by the conflicting testimonies of Harding, her mother, and her ex-husband. This keeps the audience on their toes far more than usual, meaning the inherently unreliable narrative of a film based on real events is challenged – a welcome development.

One of the most effective moments in the film is one of the numerous Brechtian fourth wall breaks (which go between being astute, as here, and gimmicky), where Tonya directly

accuses the audience of their complicity in the media's harassment of her due to their enjoyment of the film, telling them "you are my abuser". In a shocking Haneke-esque turn, the film insults the audience in their privilege of spectatorship.

Indeed, the film is one largely about privilege. The plot deals with the way America faces (or rather ignores) class differences, circumventing the trite reaffirmation of the American Dream-achieving ending these films often have. The Ronald Reagan era provides the film's subtle backdrop, not invasive yet always pervasive – a world that is startlingly familiar.

Craig Gillespie's direction shines especially during the incredibly visceral skating sequences, without which the film may well have failed. They are not only visually stunning, but also used for vital character development, providing subtle moments of vulnerability and fierceness. There is a recurring motif of shoes, juxtaposing the motion of skating with the stasis of the real world, that of Harding's designated place in American society.

The comic tone often underplays the poignancy of certain scenes, not saved by the brilliant performances by Margot Robbie and Alison Janney. It occasionally feels as if we are laughing at, not with, the unfortunate people the film is about. Ultimately, *I, Tonya* is an affecting film by turning its gaze towards the audience, criticising the very people that take joy in the tired yearly biopic rush, the film ever more human for it ●

Ruben Traynor

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FOR MORE ON FASHION WEEK
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Bailey and his technicolour dream-show



Christopher Bailey's last show for Burberry perfectly balances celebration, narcissism and representation

Vivienne Hopley-Jones

“There has never been a more important time to say that in our diversity lies our strength, and our creativity.” The words of Christopher Bailey preceding his AW18 show for London Fashion Week, his final collection for Burberry, are notable. Bailey dedicated his final to the LGBTQ+ community, which is evident in the rainbow tones which punctuate the broad collection. That Cara Delevingne closed the show may be significant here: with a sharp pixie cut and a punchy attitude the bisexual model reflects the legacy of Bailey as a young, innovative and gay designer.

However, the stark hues of the collection did not solely contribute to the representation and celebration of the LGBTQ+ community which is central to Bailey's life and work. The colour scheme mirrored a more poignant sense of vibrancy and optimism. Bailey offers a celebratory and hopeful vision in his final Burberry collection. It is a celebration of

fashion, culture, art and identity. Anna Win-tour recently remarked that “a fashion show does not exist in a vacuum, it is reflecting our culture”. This can be seen nowhere more clearly than here.

This is what makes this collection so distinctive. Final collections are always a challenge; achieving the balance between celebration and narcissism, all while doing justice to a legacy, can prove too complex. In contrast, Bailey's final collection for Burberry maintained an elegant equilibrium between nostalgia and innovation, the old and the new.

The pieces were loose yet structured, accentuated by the contrast of both the bland and ethereal with the striking and flamboyant. That the collection managed to be both classic and traditional, yet also radical and tapping into youth culture today, is emblematic of Bailey's legacy at the house, particularly in recent years. The combination of the emotive music, playing against the boldness of colour and style in the show, was representa-

◀ **Christopher Bailey showed his support for the LGBTQ+ community in his final show**

(INSTAGRAM: BURBERRY)

tive of the duality of Bailey's legacy at Burberry; recognising that the house “is part of the establishment, but it is always changing, and always learning”. Bailey's celebration of what has come before does not diminish the fashion, culture or style of the present, instead moulding and merging together in a beautiful and eclectic way.

Despite the broad mixture of styles which Bailey draws upon in the collection, there is an underlying similarity in the structures and fit of the pieces. Layering massive jumpers and puffer jackets over long dresses, or combining the traditional English heritage plaid print with sportswear, the collection doesn't just break norms but twists and merges the trends which have shaped Bailey's life and art in a beautiful and incredibly effective way.

Different segments of the collection marked and evoked different periods of fashion both within Burberry under the 17-year creative direction of Bailey, but also of the ‘cultures’ of fashion which he has lived through. The nostalgia running through is profound; a celebration of a legacy encompassing both the classic, utilitarian trench coat to the sports-chic of recent years.

The location of the show itself was a building in an up-and-coming area of London, a notable move in recent years from the traditional more classic venue Burberry has presented in. The industrial setting creates an incredible functionality to the presentation, allowing the clothes to speak boldly and clearly. This was complemented by Bailey's collaboration with United Visual Artists for this ‘Spectrum’ collection created something truly magical. The use of industrial bulbs for lighting throughout and the psychedelic beams of iridescent light which formed a luminous tunnel for the final collective walk of the show marked the show as a pivot for the brand that both reflects and celebrates on what has been, but refuses to dwell or linger.

The sense of hope, excitement and celebration paves the way for the beginning of a ‘new’ Burberry and the furthering of a project started under Bailey to keep what has been seen as a traditional fashion house current, innovative and creative ●



“The collection maintained an elegant equilibrium between nostalgia and innovation”



FASHION NEWS

This year's BAFTAs seemed to followed suit from the Golden Globes, with the majority of attendees watering black to show solidarity with the Time's Up movement in support of victims of sexual abuse and harassment. Frances McDormand, who won the award for Best Actress for her performance in *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, did not follow the unofficial dress

code, but made a point of highlighting her solidarity with the movement ●



London Fashion Week brought yet more emerging design talent from the world over. Notable moments included an anti-fur protester storming the runway at Mary Katrantzou, rumours sparking around Erdem potentially designing the wedding dress of Meghan Markle, and the Queen sitting in the front row of the Richard Quinn show, later presenting him with the inaugural Queen Elizabeth II award for British Design ●



◀ ▶ **Lily James, The Queen, Judy Blame** (LEFT TO RIGHT: @BURBERRY, @BRITISHVOGUE, @MAESTROS-COSTURA)

Judy Blame sadly passed away on the 20th February 2018. The unsung hero was a friend of many figures in the fashion industry, such as Helmut Lang and Kim Jones, helping to launch the careers of those such as current *Vogue* editor, Edward Enninful. Despite the extent of his influence, Blame was admired for his dry humour and tendency to see the irony in fashion, often choosing to present his style by creating clothes from throwaway items instead of indulg-

ing in the luxury of designer items. Blame's own designs were made out of safety pins and buttons, proving that you don't need to have a fortune to create well-designed pieces. Judy's effervescent spirit will undoubtedly be missed, and its absence felt by many in the industry ●





The making of the perfect popstar



William Poulos asks how important ‘musicianship’ is in crafting rock and pop icons

The revered music producer Quincy Jones drew some attention last week after he said that The Beatles couldn’t play their instruments. In fact, he called them “no-playing motherfuckers,” and told the story of how, while recording Ringo Starr’s first solo album, he and George Martin asked the session drummer Ronnie Verrell to record a part Ringo couldn’t play. This story sounds like the one associated with the recording of The Beatles’ song ‘Love Me Do’. The Beatles first recorded ‘Love Me Do’ on 4th September 1962 with Ringo on drums, but re-recorded it a week later with Andy White (“a professional drummer”) on drums and Ringo demoted to the tambourine.

‘Love Me Do’ was the first single from the group, who had been signed not because of

musical or song-writing abilities but because of charismatic appeal. Rock ‘n’ Roll made this possible, but as the personalities became more vivid the music became less demanding. At the same time, the refined popular songs from Tin Pan Alley inspired looser forms of song. Part of the old fogeys’ complaints was surely how young people could dance to The Beatles, an excitement unavailable to a generation which had only Bing Crosby.

Musicianship – the ability to play an instrument well – returned to popular music in the mid-1960s. Guitar players such as Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, and Jimmy Page were exceptionally good at their instruments with huge popular appeal. (A famous piece of graffiti read “Clapton is God”.) Guitarists in pop music continued to improve their technique throughout the 1970s and reached a summit

▲ **Ringo Starr played an important part in “relaxing the standards of musician-ship”**

(ERICKOCH: COMMONS)

in the 1980s, the decade which gave us Hair Metal, or Glam Metal. The guitarists in these bands – Van Halen, Poison, Bon Jovi – had pointy guitars, long hair, and leather trousers, but they were nerds; they practised for hours every night and cared whether their plectrums were 1.2mm or 1.5mm thick. People now often mock the pomp and bombast of these bands, but they were serious musicians.

The success of Nirvana’s album *Nevermind* changed how the guitar player functioned in a popular band. Suddenly, technique was very uncool. In many Nirvana songs, the guitar doesn’t play in the verse at all, and the guitar solos rarely do more than repeat the vocal melody. In 1993 Nirvana’s guitarist Kurt Cobain said: “I have no concept of knowing how to be a musician at all whatsoever... I couldn’t even pass Guitar 101.”

Extreme technical proficiency hasn’t resurfaced in the instrumentalists of pop music, and in the past twenty years seems to have existed in only female vocalists: Adele, Lady Gaga, and – the best of all in my opinion – Amy Winehouse. (The only exception I know is John Mayer, who is one of the best guitarists in the world but leaves all his guitar playing for live performances.)

While the average pop drummer today is much better than Ringo was in the early 1960s, Ringo was the perfect drummer for The Beatles; had he been more proficient, he might not have fit the musical style at the time, which was relaxing the standards of musicianship. When I listen to The Beatles, I almost never notice Ringo’s drumming, and that’s a good thing: his drumming never distracts you from the most important part of the song, the singing.

In this respect, he is a much better drummer and musician than someone more technically proficient. For example, Eddie Van Halen, an extremely good guitarist, was invited to play the guitar solo on Michael Jackson’s song *Beat It*. He did, and the result is as misplaced as a shark in a spa. A worse guitarist might have avoided such a mistake ●

RIFFING IT

Famous musicians who couldn’t read music

Michael Jackson
Elvis Presley
Jimi Hendrix

“I almost never notice Ringo’s drumming, and that’s a good thing”

ALBUM REVIEW

How to Solve our Human Problems

Belle & Sebastian
Out now

★★★★☆



Nostalgia is the lifeblood of Belle and Sebastian. *How To Solve Our Human Problems* is the latest offering from a group formed in 1996 and still making music over two decades later. Familiar company; modest unhewn melodies; creativity that works to its own clock and likes to sleep in on weekdays.

Yet the music doesn’t tally with Murdoch’s soft-sell of production at play. On the contrary, it feels like it’s trying to do too much. True, the quirky indie-pop we’ve come to expect from this Glaswegian group is still evident. As in *Dear Catastrophe Waitress*, we remain confidante to the confessor, in sympathy to the hushed tones of a close friend caught here lamenting the trials of adulthood. But in a departure from the simple humility of their earlier work, we also find layer upon layer of affectation. Saturated with gaudy synth psychedelia, the songs attempt to play this off with lacklustre folk-rock, piercing flute solos and brass fanfare instrumentals. In such a cacophonic soundscape, sharp edges of emotion are blunted and much of Murdoch’s agonis-

ingly tender lyricism is lost.

Part 1 offers a promising start. 70s-inspired disco odyssey ‘Sweet Dew Lee’ stands out as a breezy trance of shivering synths, toughened by a driving energy that shimmies along Murdoch’s vocal to the release of a euphoric chorus. ‘The Girl Doesn’t Get It’ similarly soars. Here there’s “love in the supermarket”, and we’re left “alone on a dark night...sitting down with your worries”, yet such realist disillusionment with the modern age is pitched perfectly. There’s a refusal to languish in bitterness: twinkling guitars and tinsel harmonies smile ruefully at the “kids raised on the internet”. However, these tracks suffer from the same tendency: they dwell on instrumental sections, which become bland and diluting. Take the flute on slow-burning ‘Fickle Season’; incessant chirping undermining the subtlety of this otherwise pensive and whimsical number.

If this feels one-note, Part 2 takes us on a far more exciting journey. The opening ‘Show Me The Sun’ burns with skittering anger and a desperate, disintegrating bridge of “I breathe slowly slowly, what do I believe?”. Even the

abrupt shifts in pace and mood as the hi-hat drops out are not jarring as you might expect. In contrast, they vividly freeze and distort the hunger of the first half before launching back into stride. In fact, on more than one occasion it’s the single which lets the EP down.

Part 3’s ‘Poor Boy’ forays into dance-curious funk with mixed results: although the skeletal drumbeat is refreshing after the overblown choral interjections of earlier tracks, the ticks of rhythm become somewhat plodding and pedestrian. We’re drawn from bitterness, confusion and fears of losing touch into an eternal cycle of common humanity, connecting us to one another. It’s a powerful way to end and works so well because of its pared-back acoustic guitar, the flourish and glut of too much noise stripped away.

Of course, development of style is often crucial to the endurance of bands, and their multifarious approach pays off in sporadic flashes of brilliance. But Murdoch’s nostalgia is catching, and these EPs serve as a wistful reminder of the hallmark simplicity that they had such a knack for ●

Juliet Martin



FULL REVIEWS ONLINE
VARSITY.CO.UK/THEATRE

It's not about the price tag

Theatre's commercial concerns



Alex Colville investigates how theatre straddles its dual nature as artistic and business endeavour

There is a certain stereotype of how creativity and finances should ideally interact within the theatre: in a nutshell, 'show' comes before 'business'. The latter is only ever detrimental to the former; the two are a marriage of begrudging necessity. To misquote the literary critic Cyril Connolly, there is no greater enemy to good art than an accountant in the wings.

The Cambridge theatre scene is fortunate enough to do away with most of the business concerns: there are no salaries to pay for actors and production teams, and there is no real pressure on theatre societies to run a profit as long as they can continue to fund new shows. This frees Cambridge societies up to focus on artistic endeavours and, increasingly, productions designed to create a social or political impact.

Oscar Yang, outgoing Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club (CUADC) President, spoke about how he sees the role of his society, Cambridge's largest student theatrical funding body. He sees CUADC's aim as to provide a "balanced" theatre season, funding "artistically ambitious" productions, such as the highly successful *Teahouse* last year. "We were not aiming to make a profit from that show", said Yang, "as the play is rather

unknown to a mostly Western audience here in Cambridge".

CUADC is able to fund more commercially-unpredictably shows like *Teahouse* and Edinburgh Fringe productions because they also fund theatre tipped to make a profit. This allows the society to maintain its assets, and use them to bolster more original productions.

Cambridge's societies place varying degrees of emphasis on their role to nurture and support content. Myles O'Gorman, President of Selwyn's theatre company, the Mighty Players, says he has used his role to stimulate creativity in the shows the society puts on. He explains, "one of my main problems with drama societies at Cambridge is that sometimes they seem to exist solely to provide money". Larger companies, such as the Marlowe Society and CUADC also pay an active role in nurturing talent, running regular workshops and providing support to people hoping to get involved in the theatre scene as well as providing financial backing to shows.

Some societies have a political or social motive – for instance, the Cambridge University Queer Players, a new society (not yet a funding body in its own right) established to encourage queer narratives on Cambridge's stages. Some

shows donate their profits to charitable causes – for instance, this week's *Ghosts* is donating money to the Terrence Higgins Trust.

Societies, such as the Old Vag Club, exist with charitable donation as a primary aim. The newly established society donated half of its proceeds (£400) from last term's production of *Public House* to the Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre, and is dedicated to producing shows on subjects that they "feel are important or under-represented", removing themselves from the "well-worn structure" of "am-dram versions of Shakespeare and Wilde" frequently performed in Cambridge.

This admirable endeavour is in many ways facilitated by university as a unique safe haven for theatrical innovation and experiment. Societies such as the Old Vag Club rely on original scripts (no rights to pay for), and limited expenditure on costumes, set and venues. Keeping their spending costs to a minimum enables the society to donate as much as possible to charity – the current committee admit that "operating outside of university might in some respects be difficult" due to the inevitable increased costs.

What's going on in the theatre world outside of Cambridge? There seems to be at work the stirrings of a new generation's changed priorities in the drama it produces. According to Guy Chapman, Head of *Target-Live* (a theatrical marketing agency based in the West End), "younger organisations and producers are more flexible when it comes to finances and expect people to work for favours/free". Productions at the Fringe are so unconcerned with their finances that "they are regularly budgeted on the back of an envelope".

Despite cuts to arts funding, there is nonetheless an optimism about theatre's capacity to innovate and adapt. Edward Hall, Director of the Hampstead Theatre (and son of Peter Hall) and Chapman believe a more financially-orientated industry has the ability to stimulate rather than merely stifle. The Hampstead Theatre has started working around the new challenges of the industry, relying on performances of new writing with short runs, which not only keeps audiences paying to come back but maximises opportunities for innovative theatre. "A great play is a great play", says Hall "and it will find an audience".

And this system is working. It has resulted in Hall pulling the Hampstead Theatre back from its initial state of near-bankruptcy.

Chapman points out West End producers often use money from box office hits to fund new writing: Karl Sydow used the profits made from the ever-successful *Dirty Dancing* to fund new short work by David Hare and Mark Ravenhill at the Arts Theatre in summer 2016. Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman* has proved adept at straddling the divide, able to please both the box office and the critics.

So maybe what's going on in Cambridge maybe isn't too dissimilar to the professional industry after all ●

Budget break down

The cost of a typical ADC Theatre main show

SET BUILDING

£1,000

RIGHTS TO PERFORM

< £500

PROPS ETC.

£100

COSTUMES

£150

PUBLICITY & ADMIN COST

£200

STANDARD STUDENT TICKET PRICE

£9

▲ Last year's production of *Teahouse* was an unexpected financial success

(JOHANNES HJORTH)

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

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



The Importance of Being Alone

Theatre has always been seen as a social activity. There are set expectations of pre-show drinks, interval drinks, even a post-show tippie. And what's watching a show without sly comments of approval or tuts of disdain, glancing to see if those you're with find this part quite as hysterical as you do. But in this convention, the art of attending theatre alone has been lost. Surely it's the same as watching Netflix alone, except a little more cultural, wearing real clothes, and with the promise of ice-cream. Galivanting solo is ace. And here's why.

One. It allows for spontaneity. Fancy a heart-wrenching melodrama? Sure thing. A pick me up to make you chuckle after a day of supervisions that made you cry or to get you through your house plant dying? No problem. Even an absurdist comedy about a peacock is on the cards. The choice is yours. No hassle and no stress of making arrangements in the group chat.

Two. It allows you to make your own judgement on the piece you're seeing. Being low key antisocial means no more swaying of judgements before the show is over, especially in interval chit-chat. No more will you be affected by the yawns/laughs/ intellectual 'hmms'/ checking of watches/ nods of approval by those you're with (delete as appropriate). There is time to contemplate and decide your thoughts, which will therefore be completely and utterly your own.

Three. It grows your confidence! This one's a little more obscure, but ask yourself - when was the last time you spent some 'you time' in a public social space? For some reason it is socially unacceptable nowadays to be out and about on your own without your phone being

an extension of your arm. So treat yourself, break those conventions and rediscover the fabulous companionship of yours truly.

Four. Attending theatre alone eliminates the mundane small talk and allows for expansion of your mind with people watching. The world of thespians is an intriguing alter-reality, filled with questionable clothing choices, interesting hair statements and of course, drama around every corner (I would know, I am one!). So, sit back, and become immersed in a world of the weird and wonderful.

Five. You can make new friends. Bear with the cliché - sitting watching *Assassins* at the ADC this week, an older man (also on his own) leaned over and we began to chat. I'm not sure whether it's a generational thing, but sparking conversation with people around you, whether on the bus, in a queue or indeed in the theatre, is unfortunately something we have lost. So let's rekindle it! You may get some crazy talk or learn something valuable. Who knows, but I guarantee it will be memorable.

Six. Unique to Cambridge but one I cannot recommend enough - attending a show alone can mean - wait for it - free tickets! F to the R to the EE people. Stewarding for any Cambridge show gives the opportunity to see amazing theatre completely free of charge. All you have to do is arrive early and leave a little later, with the added bonus of a power complex when wearing the primary coloured t-shirt.

Once we shake off the societal anxieties of being branded a loner by going to places alone, we can realise how amazing ridin' solo can truly be - and see some mind-blowing or utterly abysmal theatre along the way ●

Maddie Paige

▲ **Going solo to the theatre can be a suprisingly fun experience** (B ROSEN)

“Break those conventions and rediscover the fabulous companionship of yours truly”

Vulture

Review Round-up

Wander

★★★★★

7.45pm, ADC Theatre



(ALEX POWER)

Billed as a “story about storytelling”, and with a publicity aesthetic implying wonder and nostalgia, there has been a lot of hype around *Wander*, and hopes were high for a joyous feat of storytelling from this ADC mainshow. Unfortunately, the bar was set too high and while there were some charming and heart-warming moments,

the production was mostly confused and a little messy.

The key problem is that *Wander* doesn't really know what it wants to be. On the one hand, it has elements of pure heart and fantasy. On the other, it attempts to detour into a relatable coming-of-age story, a brash comedy, a love story, and a moral tale, all at once and with minimal integration ●

The Lieutenant of Inishmore

★★★★★

7pm, Corpus Playroom



(LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE)

This is a play that is unapologetically Irish. The politics and language are rich in Irish nationalism, and the music between scenes added to this, not to mention the Irish accents. On the whole, performances were strong across the board: Mulcare delivers the ‘madness’ of Padraic with playful shades of

light and dark, while Jennings' Muraid is wonderfully feisty but still nuanced.

The splinter group scenes were somewhat lacking compared to the rest of the play, although it is hard to say whether actors, director or script made this the case. The highlight is the well executed, extended penultimate scene ●

Spring Awakening

★★★★★

7.45pm, Robinson Auditorium



(ALURA WELLS)

As if following the lead of its teenage protagonists, *Spring Awakening* begins in fits and starts, unsure of itself — alternating between awkwardly funny and melodramatic angst. Once the production figures out what it is and settles down in the second act, it becomes much more powerful, finally in control of its own emotions.

The brooding teenage

angst of Melchior runs the risk of becoming a nuisance, but Icteton adds nuances of lonesomeness and timidity that make him sympathetic. In some sequences, the writing requires the actors to bounce from one emotion to the next at an incredibly quick rate. But when the actors are able to slow down and enjoy a more natural pace, the action becomes more believable and affecting ●

Sport

Football's obsession with money is not going to end soon, and that's problematic

● Ticket prices are high and unaffordable, Arsenal's cheapest season ticket costs £891

Angus Parker

Last week, the Premier League announced that it had sold the five main packages of domestic TV rights between 2019 and 2022 to BT and Sky for £4.464 billion. Although this was a slight reduction on the previous deal which totalled £5.136 billion, it is still an astronomical sum that dwarfs the original deal in 1992 which amounted to a meagre £191 million – a sum that wouldn't even get you Neymar these days. One may think that the reduction in the price of the broadcasting deal is a positive sign; maybe the tide is changing in the ocean of football finance. Alas, such a sentiment would be naïve. Money is still running football and its influence is reaching unprecedented levels.

In recent years, awareness of the astronomical figures and sums of capital dominating football has increased. Fuelled by TV deals and sponsorships, the rapid escalation of transfer sums and players' wages epitomises the inflationary environment that dictates the financial landscape of football. Over the 25 years of the Premier League's existence, for instance, wages have increased thirtyfold, on average. Currently, the league's highest paid player, Manchester United's Alexis Sanchez, is reportedly earning £350,000 per week – a far cry from the 'seismic' moment in 1994 when Chris Sutton became the first £10,000 per week footballer after a move to Blackburn.

Yet to focus on players' wages distracts from the wider point, and players are not to blame. Financial escalation in the Premier League runs deep.

In October, the BBC Price of Football report found that more than 80% of ticket prices have either been reduced or frozen for the current and previous Premier League seasons, with the league also introducing a three-year cap on away ticket prices at £30. A small comfort, perhaps, that things are moving in the right direction, albeit incredibly,



▼ Arsenal fans have staged numerous protests over ticket prices (ARSENAL FAN TV - YOUTUBE)

almost imperceptibly slowly – certainly not at the pace that is needed.

Football especially the Premier League, needs to be wary that attracting big investors and astronomical sums through TV rights deals might be good in the short term, but the long term implications of ignoring the lifeblood of the clubs – the fans – could prove to be extremely deleterious. A recent poll suggested that 82% of 18-24 year olds believed that the price of tickets was the primary obstacle to attending matches. The true effect of this disillusionment is yet to truly materialise but over the next 25 years, such sentiments will serve to radically alter the landscape of the Premier League, and not merely in a financial sense.

What is perhaps most frustrating is that there has been a marked shift over the past decade in how Premier League teams generate their revenue with broadcast deals and sponsorships replacing match-day receipts as the most critical strands of club revenue streams. Over the course of a season, such deals account for approximately 70% of the club's total income. These TV deals thus give clubs fiscal space to make concessions to fans, especially to the younger generation who feel progressively priced out of the game. But, despite this, clubs do not appear to be demonstrating that the windfall that they are getting from the TV rights is being utilised to reduce historically inflated ticket prices. This is dangerous and damaging for the long-term health of the game.

Affordability, especially for the younger generation, is becoming a big problem – this essential node between club and fans is being mismanaged in ways which will prevent fans from continuing to attend in the future.

During last season's Champions League quarter-final between Arsenal and Bayern Munich, the Bavarian fans staged a protest, unfurling a banner that read "Without Fans Football Is Not Worth A Penny" – however, such sentiment appears to fall on deaf ears. While the cash registers still ring loudly in the halls of the Premier League, those in power will fail to hear the growing din from the stands.

▲ Liverpool's famous fans are amongst those who have staged walkouts over ticket prices

Football has been labelled as the people's game in the past, yet current trends are alienating these people and undermining the very confidence which has made football the nation's most watched sport. The danger is that the Premier League creates a culture where what

£87.78

The price of Barcelona's cheapest season ticket for 2017-18

unites football fans is not passion for the game but an antagonism towards prices. Perhaps such antagonism is ultimately what is needed for the financial culture that has enveloped football to change. Or, possibly, renewed and sustained boycotts of Premier League matches is required – perhaps then football executives might pay more attention and respect to the lifeblood of their club.

Unfortunately, this is a quixotic ambition; the passion of football fans will prevent this. Heart frequently triumphs over head where football is concerned. The love for the game and emotional attachment to a club will mean that stadiums will continue to be filled and attendance maximised. That said, existing financial trends in football are not sustainable and something will give within the next few decades. For the future of the game, let's hope that what gives is not the fans.

“Financial escalation in the Premier League runs deep”



Away from the Six Nations, Spain are rugby's starring act

Ben Cisneros
Sports Columnist

After exploring Iberian rugby last term, Spain's improving national side is once again making headlines. The NatWest Six Nations may have taken a brief hiatus with England training with Georgian counterparts, but the second-tier tournament – the Rugby Europe Championship – continued in full swing. Having defeated Russia in Round One (13-20) it was a big weekend for Spain, who played Romania – the team just one point ahead of them in World Cup qualification going into the game.

While the REC is being contested by Spain, Romania, Georgia, Russia, Germany and Belgium, match points between the five teams excluding Georgia – who have already qualified – go towards a separate table, for European World Cup

qualification. Only the winner is guaranteed a World Cup place, while the runner-up enters the repechage.

After 2017, Romania led the way on 15 points, Spain were in second on 13, and Germany behind on 9. After round one of 2018, Romania extended their tally to 20 points, while Spain stayed behind on 17. After Round Two, it is Spain who



Spain have only once qualified for the World Cup, in 1999

are in pole position: one point ahead of their eastern European rivals.

It was a game Romania were expected to win, and one in which a solitary losing bonus point would have been enough



▲ Spain and Romania have faced off on numerous occasions in World Cup qualifiers (DAVID MALDINI)

to leave automatic qualification in their own hands. Ultimately, however, it was a game that finished 22-10 to the home side, leaving the Oaks with nothing.

Romania have been involved in every World Cup to date, though have never emerged from the Group Stage, and in the past 12 months have beaten Georgia, Canada and Samoa. Indeed, the last time Spain beat them was in 2012, thanks to a 77th minute drop-goal, and, before that, you have to go back to 1992 to find a Spanish victory. It was a poor performance by Romania, who suffered a similar slip-up against Germany last year, but it

was a game Spain deserved to win.

Romania possess some enormous backs – of Tongan origin, it must be added – and have shown they are more than capable of scoring tries, after winning 85-6 against Germany last weekend, but Spain clearly knew if they could stop them at source, they would be able to grind out a victory. It was a gameplan they executed brilliantly, disrupting Romanian ball at the breakdown, and harrying the scrum-half at every opportunity. It was this speed around the ruck, as well as impressive tackling in wider channels which forced the Oaks

into countless errors, coughing up possession as well as territory.

Los Leones, meanwhile, were clinical, finishing the few opportunities which presented themselves. Two tries in the first ten minutes put them in control of the match, and they didn't let it go. Though they had opportunities to kick for touch and go for the try bonus-point, they focused on putting the game beyond doubt and, crucially, taking the losing bonus away from Romania. Winger Brad Linklater converted each of his four penalty attempts, pushing the score beyond the opposition's reach. When Romania scored with five minutes to go, this tactic proved its worth.

Arguably the most significant passage of play, though, was when Spain went down to 14 men after an offence on their own line. A series of pressurised scrums ensued but the pack kept its composure and eventually forced the error from Romania. This passage lasted a full 7 minutes, using up a large part of the 10-minute sin-bin. It was a historic performance full of passion, spurred on by a crowd of 15,600 in *el central*.

If Spain can win their final matches with at least one try bonus-point, at home against Germany and away against Belgium, we'll be seeing them in Japan. Anything less, and Romania still have a chance. With Germany conceding 149 points over the recent weekends, the dream is very much alive.

Varsity Matches 2018

Fixtures to look out for this term



Hockey

JMAN Group Varsity Match 2018

Sunday March 4th

Southgate Hockey Club



Athletics

Varsity Field Events and Relays (VFEAR)

Saturday March 3rd

Lee Valley Athletics Centre



Rowing

Cancer Research UK Boat Race

Saturday March 24th

The Tideway, London



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Rugby Spain are Romania’s surprising challengers for a World Cup qualification place 35



Light Blues darken Oxford’s day

Vivi Way
Deputy Sports Editor

Sunday saw five teams from Cambridge University Hockey Club (CUHC) descend on Iffley Road to contest numerous Varsity Matches against their counterparts from Oxford University Hockey Club (OUHC). Three men’s teams and two women’s from Cambridge were seeking to match last year’s clean sweep over the Dark Blues at Wilberforce Road. The first action on Oxford’s home turf was the Men’s 4th teams; unlike the home side, the Cambridge fourth-string side do not play regular hockey together, instead being amalgamated from the College League. This did little, however, to dampen the attacking passing flair exhibited by the visitors. Both sets of players were evenly matched, with man of the match Elliot Wilde pivotal in the centre of defence, consistently thwarting the attacks of the home side. A solitary strike would separate the two sides, when midway through the first half, Daniel Eatough was left unmarked in the shooting circle and was able to slot home past the keeper to give the Light Blues a first victory of the day.

The first women’s outing would be the contest between the third teams. Oxford started as the better side, and were quick to involve their fast-breaking forwards, forcing goalkeeper Holly Hel-lawell into a number of good saves. Once

Cambridge got into their stride, however, they were by far the better team. Sarah Wooding was excellent in midfield and her player of the match performance was capped by a goal courtesy of a first time hit from Katherine Curran’s cross. Lydia Michaelides played brilliantly in defence, ensuring that Oxford’s forwards were well marked and their pace nullified. The game finished 2-0; Izzy Shears steered home the second after the ball ricocheted around the circle for some time, eluding many defenders’ sticks. Two wins from two did much to lift the mood of the raucous travelling supporters and they frequently managed to drown out the cheers for the home sides.

Cambridge’s winning streak continued with the Men’s 3rd team also emerging victorious, albeit they found themselves behind for much of the game. For the first half Oxford had the majority of possession, fashioning chance after chance with threatening through balls. Such attacking pressure was quickly rewarded with an early goal, bringing a brief period of quiet from the Cambridge fans. Half-time came just when needed for the Light Blues, who regrouped and put together a much better performance after the break. The equaliser came midway through the second half, setting up a tense finish. Just as it looked like the game would go to penalty shuffles, Cambridge found the back of the net to move ahead 2-1. David Gibson made the

contest 3-1 as Oxford threw the proverbial kitchen sink at the Cambridge goal, even replaying their goalkeeper with a kicking back, as they desperately sought an equaliser in the dying minutes.

The Women’s 2nd teams squared off in the penultimate game of the day, with the Light Blues hoping to replicate last year’s 4-0 win. The visitors started strongly, going ahead within the first five minutes through Colette Russell’s neat finish. Oxford could not get a foothold in the game, barely touching the ball as Cambridge maintained their attacking pressure and defensive structure well, culminating in a goal for Beth Barker as she intercepted a poor clearance from a Dark Blue defender. The pressure did not ease after half-time as the Light Blues scored a third through Sophie Glanfield. Oxford’s best chances came too late to change the result, and even then Morgause Lomas made some excellent saves to keep the hosts off the board. Four wins from four and dreams of a second consecutive clean sweep were well within reach.

Just as in the Men’s 3rd XI game, the Cambridge Men’s 2nd team went behind early and struggled to find any rhythm going forward. The Dark Blues had a very menacing forward line, which Cambridge’s defence found difficult to mark; each on of Oxford’s ventures into the Cambridge half brought a significant goal threat. Nevertheless, Harry Leng scored a magnificent equaliser against

▲▼ There was much to celebrate for CUHC, winning four of the five Varsity matches (CARL LOMAS)



the run of play to try and give the visitors a foothold in the game. Cambridge could not, however, generate any sustained momentum to build upon Leng’s goal, conceding the lead to Oxford via a short corner in the final few minutes as their extensive pressure eventually told. The Dark Blues, keen to walk away with a semblance of dignity, did not hold back. Wave upon wave of attack was sent in the direction of the Light Blue goal and Cambridge barely managed to reach their shooting circle. Insult was added to injury as Oxford added a tap-in with the final action of the day. This 3-1 win enabled the hosts to salvage a modicum of pride, stopping a run of nine consecutive defeats to the Light Blues.

Last year’s clean sweep may not have been repeated, but a 4-1 slate in favour of Cambridge constitutes a success for CUHC, away from home, fielding an inexperienced fourth-string men’s side, and with the pressure of replicating the previous year’s success. They found ways to win in tight matches, and in the games where they were clearly on top, they could not stop scoring. All things considered, Light Blue Hockey had a field day.

The Men’s and Women’s Blues will go head-to-head on March 4th at Southgate Hockey Club in London. An overall victory may have been secured by Cambridge in Oxford, but with the Blues Varsity Matches to come, the job is far from done.