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No. 845
Friday 2nd March 2018
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VARSITY

Student quits working group in protest

- Leaked draft report reveals working group's plans to push for partial divestment
- Student representative resigns in protest

Rosie Bradbury
Senior News Correspondent

Cambridge Zero Carbon Society has condemned a draft report by the University's Divestment Working Group, saying that it "exposes a deeply anti-democratic and wilfully blind attitude amongst university management" toward divestment.

Alice Guillaume, a counsel to the society and its representative on the Divestment Working Group, resigned from the group yesterday in protest of the draft. Writing for *Varsity* today, Guillaume argues that the report "fails to address the urgency of climate change and the injustices it engenders".

In response to Guillaume's resignation from the Working Group, a spokesperson for the University of Cambridge thanked Guillaume for her "significant contribution to the Divestment Working Group", praising that she "has given

a strong voice to students" and that "it was with regret that [the University has] accepted her resignation".

Zero Carbon has vowed "large-scale disruption" in response to the report, promising a march of "hundreds of students" on the University offices.

The draft report by the Working Group, which was leaked to *Varsity*, recommends that "the University adopts a position of partial divestment". It proposes the following measures for the University of Cambridge:

- Adopt a position of partial divestment, as well as "a positive investment strategy and positive engagement with investment managers, policy-makers, and relevant sectors of industry"

- Sign up to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment and to join the Institutional Investment Group on

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Hack attack

Campaigning begins for CUSU's annual elections



Inside ● Why some faculties strike harder than others **Pg.2-3** ● Huge rent disparity within colleges **Pg.5**

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Editorial

No time to lose

Today we lead with the dramatic resignation of Alice Guillaume from the University's divestment working group. Writing for *Varsity* today (page 16), Guillaume cites the failure of the University's report to address the urgency of climate change.

Cambridge has made its mind up on climate change. From CUSU to the Regent House to the City Council, students, academics, and residents all wholeheartedly favour divestment. One hold-out remains. The trouble is that this one has fiduciary duty over the University's £5.9bn endowment. As the principal executive body of the University, the University Council is advised by Regent House on matters of policy.

Yet, the Council has proved unwilling to execute last year's Regent House vote in favour of divestment. With more than £370m invested in fossil fuels, abandoning these industries would make Cambridge the largest university in the world to divest. Yet their excuses thus far have been pitiful. After the failure to implement the Regent's House's directive on divestment last year, a University spokesperson said that while the Council "recognises the concerns around climate change", Cambridge requires oil money to "fund key research and education about, among other things, the reasons for and solutions to climate change."

But it is duplicitous to pretend that the relationship between Cambridge and fossil fuel firms is benign. It may invest in fossil fuels because they bring good returns, but the University's relationship with oil runs far deeper, including a £22m donation from BP to create the University of Cambridge BP Institute, which researches how fluids behave in different environments.

In the wake of Britain's vote to leave the EU, Cambridge has emerged as a leading advocate of liberal values, defending the merits of immigration, science, and tolerance. But if it wishes to maintain this status, to be seen as more than another profit-seeking agent, it must take a stance that requires sacrifice. That is what defines true moral leadership. Many Cambridge graduates will go on to occupy the highest positions of private and public authority in the country, and the world, and the University has a responsibility to provide moral leadership to these students.

But the message it has sent over the past year is clear — stewardship of the human environment does not fall within the responsibility of our leaders. As the decisive moral issue of our generation, the Council's reticence regarding climate change is an insult to students, to science, and to the world. We urge the University to do the responsible thing, the moral thing, and to stand with the rest of Cambridge against the existential threat of climate change.

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Varsity is published by Varsity Publications Ltd. Varsity Publications also publishes *The Mays*. Printed at Iliffe Print Cambridge – Winship Road, Milton, Cambridge CB24 6PP on 42.5gsm newsprint. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. ISSN 1758-4442.

News

Strikes Science subjects leave less leeway for industrial action by staff

The staff pension strikes have affected science students less than their humanities counterparts

Stephanie Stacey
Senior News Correspondent

Following the strike action that swept Cambridge this past week, many students and staff have reported a disparity between the effect of the strikes on the sciences and the arts and humanities, noting that significantly fewer science lectures have been cancelled as a result of striking staff.

The deputy head of the Engineering Department (Teaching), Dr Claire Barlow, called the impact of the strikes on her department "very slight".

"To my knowledge, the only disruption has been that a couple of lectures have not been delivered," she said.

Students often receive credit for attending laboratory sessions and have therefore been anxious about missing them due to the impact on their degree success, which has led to CUSU coming under fire for advising students not to cross picket lines.

The students' union has adopted a position of solidarity with striking staff, passed at CUSU Council. In its official guidance it suggests students should "avoid crossing picket lines" and "organise study groups to make up for lost teaching."

While this advice was recognised by some as well-intentioned, several science students raised concerns regarding its applicability to their degrees. The advice has put some students in difficult positions, since their marks are directly impacted by not showing up.

Barlow, however, confirmed that "no labs have been affected" in the Engineering faculty.

First year engineering student Jenn

Chan added that the strikes' impact on science students has been disproportionately small, with a greater proportion of them choosing to cross picket lines in order to attend lectures and labs which are still running. Chan said that "there have been very few visible signs of the strike around the engineering department".

The reasons for science departments' relatively low strike turnout are manifold. Although Barlow declined to comment on the reasons behind individual staff decisions within the engineering faculty, she noted that "very few of [the department's] academic staff are union members".

Several science students spoke to *Varsity* about their discussions with supervisors and lecturers.

Hannah Kossowska-Peck, a Natural Sciences student, pointed to the nature of the contracts held by staff from science faculties, which generally have a greater number of international staff, thus perhaps less likely to be members of the University and Colleges Union (UCU) and therefore fewer may be eligible to strike.

She suggested that since many lecturers have employment contracts linked to their research opportunities, they may be less willing to sacrifice opportunities to continue this research.

Another student, who wished to remain anonymous, suggested that, due to the marketable nature of many science skills, it may be easier for discontent academics to seek careers working outside of academia, for businesses, government, or in the field.

Her sentiments were echoed by an engineering student, who remarked that it is common for staff in the department

to have spent time working for private companies prior to, or alongside, their work within the University and they may therefore be entitled to different pension schemes.

With students rallying in solidarity with the strikes and much discussion urging students to support striking academics, some students have voiced concerns about the strikes' disproportionate effects on their education.

When asked about the disparity in lecture attendance on strike days between humanities and science students, a first-year mathematician, who chose to remain anonymous, told *Varsity*: "I think it's much easier to catch up on a humanities lecture than a science lecture", adding that "due to the more technical nature of the sciences, you really rely on the lecturer's explanation."

Chan said that disparities in number of contact hours may have affected students' choices: "Humanities students in general have fewer contact hours and more of their study time is independent, so missing a day of lectures isn't as damaging to their education as it could be for science students."

The issue of students crossing picket lines is further compounded by the need for lab and practical work in many undergraduate science courses. Belinda, a Natural Sciences student, described labs as "an experience that you physically cannot learn out of a book," while another student emphasised that, unlike lectures, labs are "compulsory" and "attendance is recorded."

Simply making the decision not to cross a picket line, many science students fear, could damage "education and future prospects".



News



To strike or not to strike? Why some staff have chosen not to join colleagues at the picket lines



Isobel Bickersteth
Senior News Correspondent

Amid the hustle of the UCU strike action, many staff have chosen not to participate, continuing with their usual teaching routine.

A lack of involvement in strike action does not necessarily mean a lack of support for the strikes. Many staff are simply not union members, and thus not eligible to strike.

Some are concerned about the immediate impact on students. While some of those striking also see their actions as part of a broader campaign in the interests of students and staff to prevent the marketisation of higher education, many academics may feel that it is unfair for 14 days of content to be missed and thus have chosen to continue teaching for the immediate benefit of students.

The financial cost of participating in strikes is also something staff have had to consider in choosing whether to strike. Pay is deducted for each strike day, so striking is less viable for those in weaker financial positions.

However, some staff on the lower end of the salary scale appear to have traded short-term financial pain for longer-term financial security, which they believe will be more easily guaranteed through maintaining the current pension scheme, a main aim of the strike.

Many on temporary contracts have also been striking, despite any unease they may have around their job security as a result of doing so.

Those who have continued to teach appear to be disproportionately senior staff; relatively few professors are striking. This may be due to the fact that the pension scheme is capped once salaries reach £55,000 per year, meaning higher earners are not hit as hard by the reforms as their junior colleagues and so feel less inclined to strike.

Less cynically, senior managerial staff may feel that their obligations to Cambridge render them unable to participate in strike action. While they may sympathise with the reasons for strike action, some perhaps see their position within the University as a way of delivering change to the system.

Notably, a significant proportion of the Economics faculty has not participated in the strikes so far.

This may be due to the fact that the market among universities for academic economists is more international and thus staff are more mobile. They may not feel as tied to the British university pension scheme as academics in other departments as they are more able to find new work in different countries than staff in departments with more UK-specific curricula.

Economics staff are also more likely to have the potential to earn external income, for example through consulting, and such are not so reliant on their pension.

This could also be ideologically-based, with free-market economists less concerned by claims that the higher education sector is being marketised. Some economists are opposed to strike action as they deem the reforms necessary to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the higher education sector.

Moreover, gains achieved by striking workers may ultimately have to be funded through other means, which may drive up costs for universities. If Cambridge does go down the path of contributing further to its staff's pensions, this may limit funds in other areas. In an email to staff and students on Thursday, vice-chancellor Stephen Toope noted that a University-funded solution "would likely require trade-offs and cuts in other parts of the University".

Many staff are reluctant to strike, and most of them are even more reluctant to explain why they're not. But this is an issue which affects the whole higher education system, and the debate should not be confined to ivory towers.

NEWS

Do strikes have a negative influence on students?

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NEWS

A week of cold weather gets Cantabs all in a flurry

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(THOMAS J. NELSON)

SCIENCE

Our sexist stereotypes could be down to science

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OPINION

Martha Krish

Why we must fight for our education

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Waithera Sebatindira

Varsity has failed as an accomplice

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Alice Guillaume

The University is scared of divestment

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SPORT

Katherine Grainger on sport's funding woes

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News

Leaked report recommends partial divestment, but students unsatisfied

◀ Continued from front page

Climate Change (IIGCC), so that the University's "voice can be heard even through its indirect investment holdings":

- For the University's Investment Office (IO) to operate "with greater transparency in its actions and reporting"

- For the University to commit "now and for the future not to invest in the most polluting products of tar sands and thermal coal", and to divest from any current holdings over which the University has direct control

- For 10% of the Cambridge University Endowment Fund (CUEF) to be invested explicitly in Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) funds, "in the expectation this percentage will rise over time"

- For the "small proportion" of the University's investments under direct control to be invested "in [a] manner consistent with a carbon neutral future"

- Set up a Centre for Carbon Neutral Futures, tasked at a coordinator for research and policy on climate change

- Cambridge Zero Carbon has criticised the proposal of an ESG fund as "small" and "vaguely-worded", and regards its outlined measures as "cosmetic tinkering". It argues that the decision of partial divestment is "no different to the commitment made two years ago by a previous working group".

The University described "no holdings in tar sands companies and only negligible holdings in thermal coal companies" in a 2015 report on investment responsibility, claims which the University Council endorsed last week.

The University created the Divestment Working Group last May in response to a Grace passed by Regent House in January 2017, which called for a report to be published within twelve months. The working group is chaired by Professor



Dame Athene Donald, and includes a number of academics, as well as University Councillor Umang Khandelwal.

Zero Carbon has protested the University of Cambridge's indirect investments in fossil fuel industries in recent months with a staged crime scene outside of the Investment Office, as well as a mock wedding of the University's ties to Shell.

In a statement to *Varsity*, President of Cambridge Zero Carbon Society Eleanor

▲ **Guillaume stepped down from her position on the working group yesterday**

(MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)

Salter drew a link to the current dispute over staff pensions, which has led to nationwide strike action at universities this month. Salter condemned "an unaccountable financial bureaucracy [as] hindering progressive change at Cambridge", in regards to both "its attack on staff pensions" and "its unyielding determination to block divestment".

The Divestment Working Group's report will be received by the University Council this May.

EXPLAINER

Making sense of the University's investments strategy

The University of Cambridge's investments are overseen by the Investment Office (IO), a subsidiary of the University which manages the Cambridge University Endowment Fund (CUEF). The development of its investment policy is overseen by the University Council and the Investment Board, whose main objective is "to maximise the total return from the University's investments within an acceptable risk exposure".

The Investment Office, which was established in 2008, has relationships with third-party fund managers who operate pooled funds and other investment vehicles. Like many higher education institutions, the University does not have direct control over the majority of its investment portfolio.

The Divestment Working Group argues that the fact that a large proportion of the University's holdings are indirect investments is in part a result of the "lack of transparency in the way IO has operated." The office's expertise is in assessment of external fund manager activity and in identification of funds which will yield high returns for the University.

The IO has yielded a 350% return in the University's endowment fund since its establishment.

The draft report recommends that 10% of indirect investments by fund-managers be moved into explicitly Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) funds.

Students' stressful experiences at pickets

Elizabeth Shaw
Senior News Correspondent

With increasing discussion about the impact of ongoing strikes on students' education, several students have voiced concerns about the impact of the strikes on their welfare.

Students have targeted their criticisms at CUSU, expressing concern about the lack of preparation in advance of strike



▲ **Pickets have been established across the University this week** (UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)

action, especially due to the negative impact the strikes have on particular subsections of the student body, like disabled students. Although many students are in support of the strikes, concerns as to how the strikes will affect upcoming exams show no signs of fading.

Shadab Ahmed, a student at Christ's College who announced his campaign to run as CUSU access and funding officer yesterday, voiced concerns about how the complexities of students' decisions to cross picket lines have been ignored by what he deemed a "damaging rhetoric perpetuated by CUSU and other campaigns."

He described the rhetoric as equating crossing picket lines with not being educated about the strikes or failing to display solidarity, then pointed out that there exist a range of mitigating factors and questions students must ask themselves when deciding to cross picket lines – for instance, books only available in departmental libraries, and the importance of labs for science students, who may miss out on a significant part

“It is students with disabilities who are most impacted”

of their teaching.

The other candidate running for CUSU's access and funding officer, Rhianon Melliar-Smith, reiterated to *Varsity* that "CUSU have been democratically mandated by CUSU Council to support the strikes, thus they have to ask students not to cross picket lines."

She noted, however, that CUSU have advised students not to attend the strikes, but this has repercussions for subsections of the student body. She said: "We must recognise that it is often those students with disabilities who are most impacted. Students with dyspraxia or other learning difficulties are put at a disadvantage when having to miss lectures."

However, CUSU are actively considering ways to reduce the negative impact of the strikes on students. Melliar-Smith said: "I am aware that CUSU know that they could be doing more. At an open meeting with CUSU, CULC and CDE last week, we discussed ways in which CUSU can better reach out to these students, including hosting studio spaces for ar-

chitecture students, and setting up mentoring systems between different year groups in STEM subjects."

The tension surrounding strike action has been physically manifested at the picket lines themselves. One student told *Varsity* that they were prevented from attending a scheduled supervision on the Sidgwick Site by an academic, who "squared up to [them] and asked if [entering the building] was a good idea, which [they] found uncomfortable and a little threatening". In another case, a second-year Law student said that he was told to "go and f*** yourself," after he told picketers that he supported the strike action but still needed to attend the lecture for his educational benefit.

Speaking to *Varsity*, Rhianna Voice, a student studying Classics at Trinity College, stressed the grey area of students' decisions to cross picket lines: "I respect the right to strike; it is an important method of expression. Nevertheless I also support the decision not to strike, I don't think people should be forced to do things against their will."

Huge disparities in college rent

Oliver Guest
Senior News Correspondent

Certain colleges have been charging significantly disparate prices for their undergraduate rooms, a *Varsity* investigation has found.

Varsity looked at the difference in prices of the most and least expensive undergraduate room in each college. Where colleges have sets, the figure that each individual would pay was used.

Data obtained through Freedom of Information requests, as well as from publicly available sources, found a disparity of £1000 or more in the prices that undergraduates at Trinity Hall and Peterhouse pay for their accommodation every term. The disparity at Trinity Hall is £1036, and exactly £1000 at Peterhouse.

The cheapest rent at Trinity Hall is £732 while the most expensive is £1768. A Kitchen Fixed Charge of £175 also applies in both cases. The cheapest room at Peterhouse costs £800 while the most expensive costs £1800. There is a Kitchen Fixed Charge of £184. Relative

prices at both colleges are determined by factors such as size and facilities. A spokesperson for Trinity Hall told *Varsity* that the level of rent, based on these factors, was “determined by the JCR a few years ago in consultation with the Junior Bursar”.

In contrast, two colleges – Girton and Newnham – charge all undergraduates the same price. Termly rent costs £1973 at Girton and £1497 at Newnham. Newnham also has a Kitchen Fixed Charge, although it announced last week, in response to reporting by *Varsity*, that it would trial an opt-out.

On the other end of the spectrum, five colleges have a difference of under £400. Similarly to Girton and Newnham, Gonville and Caius charges all non-fresher undergraduates the same rate. The differences in rent for freshers at the college is also comparatively small, with a small variation of £120, as all first-years are housed on the same site in two buildings, Harvey Court and the Stephen Hawking Building, on West Road. Sidney Sussex and Homerton have similarly smaller differences of £265 and £316 respectively for all their undergraduates.



Across all colleges, excluding mature colleges, the average difference between the cheapest and most expensive termly rent in each college is £564.

College accommodation for students with families, which include more amenities and larger space compared

▲ **The largest difference in rent prices was found at Trinity Hall** (ANDREW DUNN)

to undergraduate facilities, were kept separate from these calculations to focus on rooms with comparable amenities. Mature colleges, which set aside a significant proportion of such rooms, were not included.

The finding comes at a time when rent is under increased scrutiny in Cambridge. A *Varsity* investigation last week found dramatic differences in the average rents of different colleges. Notably, the investigation revealed that students at Newnham pay 67% more in rent and fixed charges than the average student at Homerton.

In addition, five colleges currently have Cut the Rent campaigns calling for a reduction in costs, as well as an increase in room quality. The campaigns have been launched at Magdalene, Murray Edwards, Robinson, Newnham and Downing. Up until now, however, different prices within colleges have received little attention.

£564

The average difference between cheapest and most expensive termly rent

Despite the disparity, bigger differences in accommodation prices can give students more opportunities to choose a room corresponding to what they can afford. Peterhouse writes on its website, for instance, that its accommodation charges can “suit all budgets”.

University Council to elect latest member

Devarshi Lodhia
Deputy News Editor

The results of Thursday’s by-election for the newest member of the University Council – its principal executive and policy-making body – will be announced today, following eleven days of voting.

In light of Dr Pippa Robinson’s decision to step down from the Council, candidates Dr Jennifer Hirst and Dr Jeff Miley were nominated earlier this year by members of the Council as her possible successor.

The elections come at a critical point in the Council’s engagement with the issue of divestment. Just last week, the Council reaffirmed its endorsement of a 2016 report on its investments, which contradicted media reports of its ties to the fossil fuels industry. The report included claims that the University has “negligible exposure to the fossil fuel industries”, which the University’s Financial Officer confirmed.

Dr Miley has centred his campaign on the issue, seeking to “be a voice on the University Council not only for those concerned with the ecological crisis”. In his statement for nomination, he described how he was approached by students from divestment campaigns



▲ **The Council convenes at Senate House**
(JOHN SUTTON)

urging him to run.

He wrote: “I feel honoured to respond to their appeal, as it is my strong conviction that the problem of climate change is the most urgent problem of our deeply problematic age”, deeming it a consequence of “ubiquitous, deeply entrenched and unjust hierarchies”.

More broadly, he pledged to engage in the struggle against “unjust, undemocratic hierarchies” and “neoliberal austerity”, as well as “resistance against patriarchy”.

In a statement, divestment campaigners Zero Carbon Cambridge said: “This election is a chance for students and staff to unite behind Jeff’s progressive manifesto, for fossil fuel divestment, for freedom of thought unshackled by the racist Prevent agenda, for decolonisation and democratisation.”

Dr Hirst is currently a Principal Research Associate at Jesus College, specialising in clinical biochemistry, while Miley, a Lecturer of Political Sociology is a fellow of Darwin College.

She has emphasised her hopes, if elected, to “represent the interests of senior researchers within the University, in particular relating to diversity and inclusion, career progression and promotion, and public engagement” while also promoting “interdisciplinary research” between the sciences.

The Council currently comprises the Chancellor, Lord Sainsbury, the Vice-Chancellor, Stephen Toope, and twenty-three other members. Membership is made up of four elected heads of Colleges, four elected Professors or Reader, eight other elected members of the Regent House, three student members (the Presidents of CUSU and the GU, and one elected student member), and four appointed (external) members.

The elected candidate will serve with immediate effect from 31 December 2020.

“The elections come at a critical point amid discussions to divest”

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News CUSU Elections

Snow and strikes force candidates to be social-savvy

Louis Ashworth
Editor-at-Large

CUSU's annual elections launched yesterday, with three students set to compete for the role of president, and a spread of competitive votes set to be held across several other roles up for grabs.

The presidential candidates – Evie Aspinall, Connor MacDonald and Siyang Wei – all set off their bids with leafletting missions and social media campaigns.

MacDonald and Wei could both be seen on the Sidgwick lecture site in the middle of the day taking advantage of the two-day break in staff strikes to catch students as they travelled between libraries and lectures.

Meanwhile, students at Pembroke were treated to a wall of blue as Aspinall (or her campaigners) systematically filled the college's pigeon holes.

Students adopted familiar tactics in elections that have seen an ever-increasing emphasis on social sharing: almost all updated Facebook cover photos and profile pictures, with some even offering their keenest fans the option of a photo frame to show support. Some candidates have also made videos or launched campaign websites.

Aspinall, MacDonald and Wei went head-to-head for the first time on Thursday night, meeting for a discussion at an open Sidney Sussex JCR meeting, which was still taking place as *Varsity* went to print.

The major set-piece event, however, will be Sunday night, when all candidates will meet at a hustings event chaired by Elections Committee (EC) head Sam Longton. Outside of the presidents, this will give an opportunity for candidates in the other roles to meet face-to-face, with interesting competitions likely for the positions of Graduate Union president, welfare and rights, access and funding, and University Councillor.

Current conditions are likely to ramp up the need for a strong digital campaign



Elections Timeline

Thursday 1st March
Campaigning period opened at 9am

Sunday 4th
Hustings in evening, 5–8pm

Tuesday 6th
Voting opens at 9am

Friday 9th
Deadline for declaring spending 12pm

Friday 9th
Voting closes 5pm

even further: staff strikes will continue through next week until Friday, the very last day of campaigning, and disruptions to Lent Bumps – a hot spot for Eyre's campaigning last year – mean that candidates have to find new ways to reach students, many of whom are not venturing outside often.

Drawing conclusions on candidates' chances based on these initial launches is unlikely to aid any attempted estimations about outcome: last year's turnout for the presidential vote was 4,719 students, around 22.5% of students. In contrast, the number of students who will 'like' a campaign profile picture of list themselves at 'attending' an election Facebook profile event usually only stays in the low hundreds.

For what they are worth, current interaction numbers put Wei in the lead, with Aspinall shortly behind and MacDonald trailing. Ultimately, however, those numbers only reflect the reach of a personal profile: candidates will need to find a way to win over students that they have never met.

It is here that CUSU's voting system could become an important factor: the student union uses a system in which votes are given in a order of preferences, meaning if the election is tight it could be dictated by a candidate sweeping up second-preference votes.

Depending on how voters are motivated, this could well play into the hand of Aspinall or Wei, both of whom could benefit from a perception that they are both representatives of the broad student left.

Equally, bubbling discontent from some parts of the student body against the current staff walkouts – some of which has been directed against CUSU – could lead to a backlash against Wei, who has aligned himself strongly with the striking academics. In comparison, Aspinall and MacDonald have raised criticisms of the student union's stance on walkouts at the heart of their campaigns.

Within this dynamic, there are a number of factors that could radically alter how the election plays out, based on the candidates' varied similarities: voters might opt for the candidates with the most experience, which would see MacDonald and Wei dominate.

The biggest split in positions however, lies between these two: MacDonald's position as Cambridge University Conservative Association (CUCA) chair, and Wei's involvement with both Cambridge Universities Labour Club (CULC) and the activist left, may put them at odds with each other in the eyes of the electorate.

This split could cause Aspinall to benefit, despite her outsider status, if she is able to collect sufficient second preferences from the other candidates.

Who's running for president?



Political aspirations?

All this year's presidential candidates are taking the Human, Social, and Political Science Tripos; meaning next year's president – unless Re-open nominations mounts a staggeringly good campaign – will once again be a scion of the course, following in the footsteps of Amatey Doku and Daisy Eyre, both of whom read HSPS at Jesus. Is CUSU a first step for the politically-bent student?



(MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)



(ALEX POWER)



(MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)

Evie Aspinall

Aspinall has the lowest profile of the three: though highly active within her own college, both as women’s officer and as founder of the Jo Cox feminism society, she has never been highly involved with CUSU, and only began attending CUSU Council – where many prospective candidates try to cut their teeth and gain experience of the student union’s operations – this term. She sees outsider status as an advantage.

Connor MacDonald

MacDonald has arguably the most direct experience of any of the candidates. He was president of his college’s JCR – unique among this year’s candidates. He has a high profile at CUSU Council, is a Cambridge National Union of Students delegate, and is leading the ongoing inquiry into the student union’s financial woes. However, he is chair of the Conservative Association – putting him at odds with many students.

Siyang Wei

Wei has a wide range of experience: across the campaign group FLY, BME theatre, the Cut the Rent campaigns, and recent UCU strikes. They can most likely be assured of a strong backing from the activist student left. In addition, they were previously co-chair of the Labour Club. Wei is Varsity’s Deputy News Editor, a role they have temporarily stepped down from for the duration of the elections.

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Policy matrix

Where do the students stand?

	<div>  </div> Aspinall	<div>  </div> MacDonald	<div>  </div> Wei
How should CUSU be responding to the strikes?	While broadly supportive of the right and the ‘need’ to strike, Aspinall worries that CUSU has treated student distress and welfare throughout the process as an afterthought.	MacDonald publicly supports the strike action, but adds that CUSU has not shown enough time and care to deal with students’ anxieties over missing lectures and supervisions.	Wei praises CUSU’s current handling of the strike action, calling it a critical moment for the future of higher education, and has been involved with student solidarity organising around the strikes.
How would you engage with Cut the Rent campaigns?	Aspinall notes the limitations of CUSU’s powers, with colleges making their own final decisions, but would like to centralise resources and templates to support student rent campaigns more effectively.	He thinks going about cutting the rent college by college may be a mistake, and would like more publicly available information across colleges for JCR Presidents to use in negotiations.	They are involved in Newnham’s rent negotiations, and in their manifesto, prioritise centralising rent figures, as well as institutionalising their public availability and coordinating JCR efforts.
Should we decolonise the curriculum?	Worried that Cambridge is “full of white, male traditions,” Aspinall sees a need to decolonise and wants a curriculum that exposes students to a broader range of thinkers from different backgrounds.	Despite admitting that decolonisation is not an issue he has particularly engaged with, he believes that questioning the teaching canon is an entirely normal process within a university.	Wei fully supports University-wide decolonisation efforts, having participated within her own department, and would try to coordinate them between departments, as well as sharing CUSU resources.
Do we need to divest?	With a mandate from CUSU council to actively encourage divestment, Aspinall says she would continue with this if she felt it was what students wanted.	MacDonald believes that with the possible financial ramifications for the University, he would hold a student referendum on divestment to determine a clear position before moving forward.	Vocal in their support of divestment, they note that divestment is an issue of engagement, with the University not having been transparent about investments.
Can we address college inequality?	She considers it unacceptable that provisions for students vary so dramatically by college, and would standardise intermission processes across colleges as well as expand the Bursary scheme.	He would bring JCRs together to hold colleges to account, and “defragment” student movements across Cambridge, as well as to comparing colleges to make them compete.	Placing special emphasis on educational inequality across colleges, they would seek to standardise education standards, and promote students raising their concerns further.

In the running Several roles up for grabs likely to see hot competition

● As campaigning opens, *Varsity* runs through each role, and the candidates vying to take them

Catherine Lally
Investigations Editor

While this year's hotly-contested CUSU presidential election will inevitably draw the most attention, Catherine Lally takes a look at other wannabe Sabbs.

Graduate Union president

The Graduate Union president is the other top-level role up for grabs. The president heads the GU as its chief spokesperson, representing graduate students, and manages the GU's "long-term, strategic development." Currently there are three candidates in the running: Joe Cotton, Mrityunjay Guha Majumdar, and Sofia Ropek Hewson. Cotton stresses his wish "to see a GU that is in touch with the postgrad and mature undergrad community and strives to improve education for everyone." Guha Majumdar points to his experiences as 3-time CUSU-GU executive officer, and notes his plans to put "our graduate students back at the heart of our University" as "a president who knows that #GradsMatter." As president and women's officer at Pembroke's MCR, Ropek Hewson describes herself as "an intersectional feminist with a huge amount of energy for campaigning on issues that affect all of us," citing her interest in "developing strong communities and advocating for graduate students."

Access and funding

The access and funding officer is tasked with "promoting equal opportunity for access to Cambridge," with a focus on students from underrepresented backgrounds at Cambridge, and addressing financial hardship. The role is currently contested by Rhiannon Melliard-Smith and Shadab Ahmed. Melliard-Smith is currently CULC co-chair, and in her manifesto promises "tough conversations about economic privilege in Cambridge," as well as "reaching out to offer holders from underperforming schools." Speaking to *Varsity*, she added that, with her campaigning experience, she aims to "work for a fairer and more accessible Cambridge." Ahmed has served as Christ's access officer, and in his manifesto expresses his wish to create a "college level mentor system between current students and offer holders," including an offer-holder shadowing scheme, and to provide "funds for academic support to those at high risk of missing offers." In a comment to *Varsity*, he said: "Having



▲ **Rhiannon Melliard-Smith, a candidate for access and funding officer, handing out flyers** (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

been deeply involved in access for my three years here, I have seen the difference it can make to peoples' lives."

Disabled students' officer

The disabled students' officer role, created in 2016, is one of three uncontested positions this election season. They are primarily responsible for running the autonomous CUSU Disabled Students' Campaign, and advocating on behalf of self-defining disabled students at Cambridge. The candidate, Emrys Travis, told *Varsity* that they are "well acquainted with the barriers that disabled students face at this university," and wants to add to the "incredible legacy of improvements to their university experience made by our current and previous DSOs, as well as implementing new policies, such as a central fund for medical evidence notes and diagnostic assessments."

Education officer

The education officer represents students in "matters pertaining to academic provision and experience."

Seeking to fill the uncontested role, candidate Matt Kite said he wants to build a "less marketised and more liberated university" by "supporting the power of students."

Policy priorities would include "campaigning for standardised sexual misconduct guidelines," tackling the "Islamophobic Prevent strategy" and "supporting efforts to decolonise the curriculum."



Welfare and rights

The role of welfare and rights officer is split between CUSU and GU, and centres around advocating for "students' mental, physical and social wellbeing," and "the rights and protections afforded to students." Walinase Chinula and Christine Pungong are competing for the role. In Chinula's manifesto, she prioritises welfare continuity, accessibility – addressing college disparities and increased visibility – and inclusivity. She cites experience with the Law Society and Cambridge RAG, and told *Varsity* that "making welfare available everyday, everywhere and for everyone" is an "important ultimate goal of all welfare initiatives." Pungong, former Women's Campaign disabilities officer, is pushing for improved mental health provision, an improved intermission process, and mandatory welfare and pastoral training. She said that as "someone with extensive experience of

▲ **Pembroke's pigeon-holes are peppered with pamphlets** (CATHERINE LALLY)

the welfare support that the University provides," she "understands the ways in which the current system often fails the most vulnerable students."

Women's officer

Current Women's Officer Lola Olufemi has perhaps been CUSU's most high-profile sabbatical officer this year. This year the candidate standing is Claire Sosienski Smith, a former Selwyn LGBT+ Officer who aims to raise awareness for women's campaign issues, to create networks between college women's officers, and to run "meaningful campaigns." She told *Varsity* she believes she has "said a lot" throughout her degree, "but most of it outside the classroom." She says that she has "learnt how to listen as an activist tool and how to collectively organise to ensure that women and non-binary people have a voice." Her end vision is of Cambridge as "a space where women and non-binary people feel heard and prioritised."

University Councillor

The university councillor is elected to serve both as a trustee of the university and as the student member on the University Council, Cambridge's highest policy-making body. The election is currently split between three candidates: George Breckenridge, Hugo Larose, and Marcel Llaverro Pasquina. Breckenridge has previously served as student representative in the Physical Sciences faculty, and says that having "been given insight into the current agenda at University-level boards," he can "contribute to the conversation very constructively," and "can be the campaigner to push a number of current proposals over the line – to the vast benefit of students." Larose told *Varsity* that he intends to prioritise "mental health," student "outreach" – by attracting more students from "minority groups and disadvantaged backgrounds" – greater "gender equality" among students as well as staff, and "the rights of research students." Pasquina, who was unsuccessful in his bid for the role last year, said: "The democratic nature of Cambridge has been co-opted by a Council that blindly obviates students and staff overwhelming demands to divest from fossil fuels," and vowed to "stop the neoliberal attack on higher education and decolonise the University." He is looking to take "grassroots campaigns' voices to Council," and escalate demands until it "faces up to the facts."

Ethical affairs officer

There were no candidates for this role, which involves increasing "the awareness of social and environmental issues around campus, and helping student campaigns." Ellen Pearce-Davies and Dylan Amin, the current officers, will remain in their roles until a by-election can be held.

Freeze a jolly good fellow

University members took to Twitter to show off their snowy creations chilling out

(THOMAS J. NELSON/
AMY HAMIZAH
HAIDI/S. BROWN)



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Interview

Bill Browder



Putin's 'number one enemy' on webs of money and power

Felix Peckham
speaks to the hedge
fund manager turned
human rights activist
about Russian and
American politics

Vladimir Putin's unlikely 'Number One Enemy' is a bespectacled American man in his early fifties. He's not a politician, diplomat or tyrant. No, he's a disgruntled banker. Bill Browder, grandson of Earl Browder – the leader of the US Communist Party in the 1930s and 40s – was a US citizen until 1998, when he renounced his citizenship in favour of British citizenship, motivated partly by a desire to avoid paying US income tax on his foreign investments. He is best known, however, as the CEO of Hermitage Capital Management, a hedge fund that was once the largest foreign investor in Russia. It's this job that generated his fascinating and murky story.

Browder is sincere and almost frosty in our exchanges. What surprises me most, however, is how guarded Browder is on the topic of Russia, Trump and collusion. "I'm waiting to see the results of the Mueller investigation" is his deadpan response to my probe into Russia's collusion in the 2016 election. "We just have to wait patiently and see whether there was [collusion]." For Putin's 'Number One Enemy' this is startlingly non-committal, especially as the intricate and damning web of Trump's involvement with Russia is being unwound.

Despite his amiable comments on Russia's subversion of American democracy, Browder is adamant in the defence of his 'Number One Enemy' title: it's "just a factual description." While this title, brandished on the front of his thriller-like book *Red Notice: How I Became Putin's No.1 Enemy*, may have earned him book sales and kudos amongst Russophobes, it has come at a cost. "I've been threatened with death, kidnapping, extradition, arrest". Browder explains he has a "very tenuous security situation compared to everybody else in the world."



◀ Putin's government prevented Browder from re-entering Russia in 2005 (WWW.KREMLIN.RU)



Putin has a brutal track record in silencing his critics. Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian secret service agent who defected to the UK, is testament to this. Litvinenko was poisoned in London, by Russian agents in 2006, accused of being a traitor to his country. I ask Browder how his insecurity manifests itself. He recounts that "on Monday this week, as I was leaving Switzerland my passport was flagged at the border by a Russian request and I was detained, asked a number of questions, with the information passed onto Russia."

Browder's story is one of two extremes. The first half of his book is essentially an account of his pursuit of 'The American Dream': a search for the seemingly unfettered riches that post-Soviet Russia offered. Browder was rewarded for his speed in taking advantage of the privatisation of Russian state industries – he has allegedly accrued a personal fortune of more than \$4 billion. "If you stop reading halfway into the book you'd think of this as a kind of clever business story", Browder explains, though in reality it's "an inspiring justice story."

"What I was doing was investing my time, resources, energies on trying to improve the corporate governance of Russian companies at a time when nobody else was doing that." This is Browder's attempt to defend his business and investments in Russia as an altruistic,

albeit profitable, pursuit. The lucrative Russian venture came to an abrupt halt in 2005, when Browder was denied re-entry into Russia and accused of being a national security threat. It's at this point that Browder undergoes a "transition from being a hedge fund manager to being a human rights activist."

Aggrieved at the injustice of his denial of entry to Russia, Browder and a Russian lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, seek to reveal the corruption at the heart of Putin's Russia. Something that stuck from reading *Red Notice* was how Browder seemed to be content to tolerate Russia's human rights abuses and political corruption up until the point it jeopardized Browder's money-making scheme. Browder dismisses this interpretation: "I guess it depends on which part of the book you read last." He tells me, "at this point everyone thinks of me as being a human rights activist."

When Magnitsky was tortured and killed in 2009, Browder championed legislation to prevent the Russian individuals involved in Magnitsky's murder from being able to travel abroad and use the riches they had accrued through corruption: "I came up with a piece of legislation that affects Putin's personal financial interests" to which Putin reacted by choosing "to chase [Browder] around the world with red notices and arrest warrants."

▲ Bill Browder spoke at the Union last week (THE CAMBRIDGE UNION)

“I've been threatened with death, kidnapping, extradition, arrest”

Browder hits back against the "superficial interpretation" of his career that sees him as a disgruntled banker: "that would be the 30,000 foot impression", he tells me. "I got to Russia, I discovered corruption in the companies I invested in. Unlike other Westerners who sat around and just waited for it to happen, I started to fight against it. I took great personal risk to try to stop kleptocracy from happening as an investor."

Hermitage Capital Management, Browder's Russia-specialising investment fund, saw a 2,697% rate of return between 1996 and 2007, and is said to control assets worth \$400 billion. Despite the extent to which money begets influence on Capitol Hill – where Browder was instrumental in lobbying for the Magnitsky Act, which was passed in 2012 – he is adamant that his personal wealth and financial capital had no impact on the success of the legislation. "The reason why the Magnitsky Act happened was not because of the resources that I had", he says, though he admits that "there're many, many people that are coming to Washington with an issue. Rich people, poor people. Most people don't succeed in getting their issue on the agenda."

Instead, Browder ascribes his lobbying success to the fact that the story of Magnitsky was "so incredibly horrifying." He tells me that "anyone who looked at the situation would have the same reaction, which was how can you allow an innocent man to be tortured and murdered." This is a curious explanation for the successful passing of the Magnitsky Act, and I wonder how much the American people are concerned with the welfare of the citizens of a state on the other side of the world, and one which has traditionally been demonised and vilified in the United States.

Given the proximity of the recent attack on a school in Florida by a boy using an assault weapon, I ask Browder why the Magnitsky Act was successful while even moderate legislation to gun crime consistently fails. "There was no pro-Russian torture and murder lobby in Washington to fight against me and my compatriots", Browder stutters in response.

"In the gun debate there's an anti-gun lobby and there's a pro-gun lobby and because of that it creates a different dynamic. It's not about money. There's two different groups of people arguing against one another. In the Magnitsky story there's nobody arguing against us."

We segue into a comparison of corruption and kleptocracy in Putin's Moscow and Washington D.C. "I would say that there is absolutely no comparison between the United States and Russia. In the US you have an independent judiciary, a free press, and a democratic process to throw out corrupt politicians." Browder assures me that "the Sergei Magnitsky story would have never happened in the United States, it's a non-comparison to suggest that anything even comes close to the United States."

FUNDS FOR THE FREEZE RAG launches appeal for homeless caught by winter weather

Student charity Raising and Giving (RAG) have launched an emergency homeless appeal to raise money for the homeless in the wake of Storm Emma. Teaming up with local charity Wintercomfort, they are asking students to support the charity with a suggested £10 donation. They hope to raise £5000 through the campaign. Wintercomfort said: "During the cold weather we continue to be open and our work is of greater importance during the exceptionally cold winter months. We are most grateful for any help great or small."



▲ Cambridge in the snow (MONSARC)

CAM CRIME-FIGHTERS Police predict criminal behaviour with Cambridge AI

Police in Durham Constabulary have been trialling the Harm Assessment Risk Tool, an artificial intelligence based technology, installed by researchers at the University of Cambridge's Institute of Criminology. The technology aims to decide whether an offender is at a high, moderate, or low risk of committing a new offence. It uses histories of people processed in Durham custody over five years, alongside a two year follow up. The researchers believe the tool helps to identify the "needles in the haystack" who may pose a major danger.

PUNTING WITH PINTS Punting company can now serve alcohol on the river

Founder of Rutherford's Punting Emma Wynne has become the first to be legally given permission to serve alcohol on the river. She is personally licensed to sell alcohol, but now has a premises license to store alcohol too. While many companies have provided drinks previously, this diminished last year after a punt owner applied for a license for a floating bar. "We're looking forward to offering innovative tour experiences for our customers this summer," Wynne said. "It's great to be able to celebrate!"



▲ Punting on the river Cam (ARDFERN)

Office for Students recruitment showed clear partisan bias

Rosie Bradbury
Senior News Correspondent

The Commissioner for Public Appointments has concluded that the recruitment campaign for the Office of Students (OfS) took "too partisan an approach to candidates' views" for student representatives to the board.

The Office of Students (OfS) is a new government-created regulatory body for higher education, tasked with implementing aspects of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which will come into effect on 1st April 2018. It will replace the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). It has 15 board members, including the required student representative.

The Commissioner's report reached a damning conclusion over the appointment process for student representatives; it wrote that "political factors completely unrelated to the remit of the OfS were cited by the special advisor in objecting to the preferred candidate". The report cites candidates' views over free speech on university campuses and over the Prevent agenda as a "central reason" for Downing Street's rejection of recommended student representatives.

Submissions and email records also reportedly prove a desire among ministers and special advisors "not to appoint someone with close links to student unions, like the NUS" which it noted was a desire "not made clear in the advertised candidate information". Both Shakira Martin, current president of the National Union of Students (NUS), and Amatey Doku, the incumbent candidate for NUS Vice-President for Higher Education and former CUSU president, applied and were rejected for the role.

The recruitment process for student representatives to the OfS board involved two separate rounds by two panels, both chaired by OfS Chair Sir Michael Barber; the Commissioner also noted that the panel for generic non-



▲ NUS president Shakira Martin applied and was rejected for a position on the OfS board based on "political factors" (NUS)

executive roles were all-male. The panels proposed appointable candidates to special advisors, who "made objections" to one candidate for the student experience representation role, "on the basis of [their] public statements and student union activity".

The OfS board currently includes one student representative, Ruth Carlson, an engineering student at the University of Surrey who has past experience as a student course representative for civil engineering and president of the Surrey women's football team.

The review was commissioned in the wake of controversy over the appointment of Conservative and free-schools

advocate Toby Young to the board as generic Non-Executive Director.

The public outcry saw the publication of an open letter by nearly 100 Cambridge academics who condemned Young as "a serial purveyor of misogynist, homophobic, racist and ableist commentary". Young then resigned from the board on 9th January 2018.

According to the Commissioner, furthermore, the process "lacked a consistency in the approach to due diligence", as it overlooked controversial past tweets by Young while "the social media activity of the initially preferred candidate for the student experience role was extensively examined".

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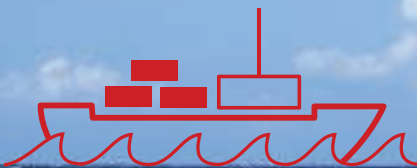
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Gendered scientific research reinforces our sexist stereotypes



Bethan Clark

We like to idealise science as an objective enquiry, independent of politics, religion, class, race, or gender. However, unfortunately, all of these aspects are in reality inseparable from science. In the case of gender specifically, scientists' biases have historically often affected research, showing just how pervasive and powerful society's prejudices and stereotypes can be.

In this sense, gendered research comes in two flavours. The more straightforward of the two is in the research outcomes. The conclusions scientists draw from research are easily swayed by their own assumptions, picked up from society. Historically, these have legitimised the view that women's subordination was the result of nature rather than culture.

Ironically, science's power in affecting our beliefs actually stems from the view of it as an objective, values-free enquiry. An example from the Victorian era illustrates this precisely: Using Darwin's theories of evolution, scientists concluded that the physical and mental characteristics that Victorians viewed as typically male or female were the result of natural selection. Darwin himself applied the process of sexual selection to the differences between men and women to conclude that only the strongest and most intellectual men would breed successfully, while women would be selected only on the basis of attractiveness. In historical examples like this, the social biases and their influence are outlandish and easily identifiable and their impact on scientific theory is clear to see. However, this doesn't mean that such effects are merely historical artefacts. The same

process happens just as easily today – it's simply more likely to slip under the radar because the pervasive nature of social biases lends them a certain degree of invisibility.

Trickier to spot, with more insidious effects, the second way in which research is gendered lies in its focus. What gets studied, and how it is framed, plays a huge role in reinforcing the way in which society views women. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the field of reproduction. Throughout history, women's bodies have been regarded as pathological, compared to the assumed norm of the male form. The result? Women's bodies were (and continue to be) seen to be in need of medical intervention.

A vast array of theories about women's reproductive health have emerged from this, some more ridiculous than others from today's standpoint. At the more extreme end: in the nineteenth century, women's reproductive organs were believed to have a disturbing effect on the brain: an explanation for the view that women were particularly susceptible to hysteria.

But this view of women's bodies as pathological has also directed the focus of scientific research. With women's bodies in need of special intervention, women's reproductive health has become a specialty discipline. Meanwhile, male reproductive health exists under the general field of health: there is no comparable equivalent to gynaecology as a practice of its own.

This has huge knock-on effects on what gets researched. For example, there is still no substantive effort being made to make a male contraceptive pill, despite its potential. Admittedly, there are a considerable number of factors that drove the initial and continued target-

“Gendered research props up existing beliefs about the place of women in society”

ing of contraceptive research to women. However, the underlying view that it is women's bodies which are in need of intervention was, and is, a significant influence in this approach.

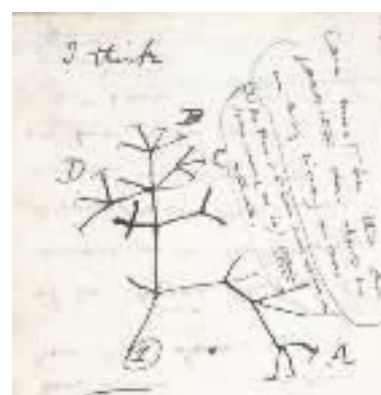
Gendered research, then, both props up existing beliefs about the place of women in society and affects the approaches to women's medical needs. Rather than a deliberate distortion of evidence to support biased preconceptions, it is generally recognised as the product of particular historical and social circumstances. Science is an activity carried out in the context of society, and so society's values are the lens through which research is interpreted. When some of those values are discriminatory, the results of research generally reflect that.

This is not a reason to be disheartened or defeatist. Instead, it's a chance to approach scientific research with an open mind, and be critical of assumptions when they are found in the practice and process of research. By recognising the influence of these biases and interrogating them, there is an opportunity to tackle them and make lasting change.

▲ It was believed that women's reproductive organs made them particularly susceptible to hysteria

(ALBERT LONDE, WELLCOMELIBRARY)

► Victorian ideas about gender were shaped by Darwin's evolutionary tree and theory of natural selection (SEWING)



SPOTLIGHT

Astronomers fighting the dark matter of misogyny

Like many women, American Vera Rubin faced hostility throughout her life when she revealed her scientific ambitions. After informing her high school physics teacher of her acceptance into Vassar, a women's college in the US, Rubin was met with the response: “That's great. As long as you stay away from science, it should be okay.”

Rubin developed a passion for astronomy from a very young age, fascinated by the stars she saw from the window of her childhood bedroom. With the help of her father, she constructed a telescope out of cardboard and began to observe meteors. Although rejected from Princeton's astronomy programme on the grounds that they did not admit women, Rubin earned a bachelor's degree in astronomy from Vassar and went on to obtain her PhD from Georgetown before beginning a lengthy research career.

In the late 1970s, Rubin observed that the outermost components of the galaxies she observed were moving as quickly as those very near to the centre – a perplexing discovery which appeared to contradict Newton's laws of motion and the results of classical mechanics. This observation would later be recognised as one of the first pieces of evidence for the existence of dark matter in our universe.

In fact, Rubin's calculations demonstrated that galaxies must contain at least five to ten times as much dark matter as ordinary matter. Although these theories surrounding dark matter were initially extremely controversial, the scientific community have since recognised Rubin's work after further research and



▲ Rubin, pictured in 2009, attending a NASA conference (NASA)

experiments took place, corroborating her data and conclusions.

Vera Rubin died in 2016, having never received the Nobel Prize that many of her colleagues claim she deserves for her revolutionary discoveries. No woman has received the Nobel Prize in Physics since 1963.

Described by fellow astrophysicists Faber and Bahcall as a “guiding light” for women astronomers, Rubin spent her life advocating for women in science. Alongside Margaret Burbidge, she fought for more women to be elected into the National Academy of Sciences, describing the lack of progress for women as “the saddest part of [her] life.”

Stephanie Stacey

Opinion

We are in the midst of a fight for the future of our education system



Martha Krish
is the CUSU
Education Officer



◀ Picket lines have formed across the Sidgwick site and other university properties
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

As CUSU Education Officer I spend my time arguing for student needs to be provided for and put first, for staff to work in ways that help not hinder students and for this university to be set up to give all students the best chance of success. Surely then, I would be the last person to support four weeks of escalating strike action that will see lectures and seminars cancelled, library staff on strike and the workings of the university severely disrupted at a crucial time for students. However, with the exact same values and interests that I use to argue for students to get the best education possible in every committee meeting I sit in, I wholeheartedly support this strike.

The characterisation of this strike as a conflict between staff interests and student needs is not only false, but damaging. The immediate impact of the strike hurts both students and staff together, but the long term impact of its failure would hurt both groups to a much larger degree. The fight over pensions is the same fight that students have been having about fees, interest rates, extortionate rents and about the lack of funding for graduate study. It is just in a new iteration that is one step removed from being about what is going directly out of students' pockets. The transformation of universities from public bodies to corporate entities, that will take every penny they can from students as they slash staff costs, hurts us all. It is imperative that we realise that our collective destiny as students is intrinsically tied to what happens to our staff.

The cuts to higher education have resulted in a crucial moment in our history. This can be hard to see as the vast majority of us entered higher education at a time when fees were already prohibitively high, funding grants for graduate study were already a distant memory, and universities were already set on a path of investing in image rather than substance. However we must not lose sight of how these things are related to what is still happening around us. Although fees have gone up over 900% in the last 20 years, the real terms pay of staff at this university has gone down by 15-20% in just the last 9, on top of increasing workloads. This means a worse educational experience for students, as the lecturers, librarians and admin staff we rely on to deliver the education that we pay so much for are less able to invest time in delivering quality care and academic support.

It is essential that universities remain a site of critical and radical thought in society. This is impossible with over-stretched and under-resourced staff. The government is maintaining a discourse around 'value for money' while hundreds of thousands of students will be left with a lifetime of debt, with the poorest students hit hardest. Furthermore, the amount universities are spending on teaching provision is decreasing. None of this is in the interests of students; both economically and academically our education is being destroyed.

However this is not the only way in which what happens to staff in this pension dispute is inherently linked to our interests as students. At this university,

academia is the future that many students see for themselves. Those studying now may want to find themselves in academic professions in the coming years. And yet this could become an impossible future for a large number of those who want to pursue knowledge, research or teaching. These changes will determine who can afford to participate in the future of the academy. Much in the same way that continually rising tuition fees won't stop the wealthy from attending university, these cuts will prevent those most marginalised from being able to have a voice in our academic community. We will lose working class academics, academics of colour, women academics and disabled academics at a much faster rate, as those already economically disadvantaged won't be able to afford the

▶ 14 days of strikes are planned across 61 of the pre-'92 universities
(LOUISE ASHWELL)

risk of being left on a poverty pension. This will result in not only a restricted education for future students but the loss of essential stories, perspectives and research for society as a whole.

This is a bleak picture of the future, but this fight is not over. It took Stephen Toope, Cambridge's Vice-Chancellor, only two days to cave to the outrage of staff and students and demand that negotiations were resumed. Only an increase in student pressure can ensure that these negotiations are substantial, and not merely a distraction aimed to end the strikes without meaningful change that will ensure that staff are properly compensated for a lifetime of hard work.

It is important to remember that we are not alone in this fight. Students up and down the country are occupying university buildings and protesting on the streets because they understand just what is at stake not only for staff but for students as well. Staff are standing out in the freezing cold, unpaid and nervous for their futures because they also understand what is at stake, not just for themselves but for the students they teach, and those who will be coming to university in 5 or 10 or 50 years time. We are reliant on each other. This is a fight that we both win or we both lose.

It takes an admirable amount of courage to stand with those facing injustices that don't affect you, but this is not what I am asking from students when I encourage them to engage with and support the strike. This is a fight for the future of our education system. For the dignity and protection of those who we rely on to guide us, for the makeup of the academic world which many of us wish to inhabit and for the insistence that marketising the higher education system will hurt all who exist within it. It is irrefutably our fight. We must support the strike however we can.



Martha Krish

Can Varsity be an accomplice?



Waithera Sebatindira is studying for an MPhil in Multi-disciplinary Gender Studies at Trinity Hall

Waithera Sebatindira

One of my favourite things about student press is the platform it gives to marginalised students. I've learned a lot about experiences different to my own from Varsity columns and have had formless feelings crystallised by opinion articles. To this end, the paper facilitates the dissemination of important ideas and is a very useful tool for students of colour.

However, I hesitate to frame its usefulness in the language of effective accomplices. Ultimately its purpose is to generate clicks and create opportunities for aspiring journalists. Within the context of a white supremacist society, this leaves Varsity in a position where it can become complicit in the oppressions that affect students of colour.

Let's first take the example of Jason Okundaye, CUSU BME President. When his tweets on racism were picked up by Katie Hopkins, he was thrust into the national spotlight and subjected to wide-ranging racist responses. Varsity reported on the story objectively. One might think there's no prima facie issue here. After all, Varsity wasn't set up to defend marginalised people, and its journalists are entitled to report on interesting news that involves Cambridge students.

But this left a bad taste in my mouth because months before Jason had been contributing a weekly column to the paper on queer black masculinity. The paper had materially benefitted from Jason's anti-racist activism, but when this activism led to death threats, all Varsity could muster was a "neutral" account of the situation, which wrongly implies that neutrality in the face of white supremacy isn't a political position in itself.

This leads to my next example, whereby the close attention that the national press pays to Varsity's articles was made abundantly clear in the case of Lola Olufemi, our CUSU women's officer. The Telegraph picked up, and distorted, a story about her decolonial work within the English faculty, and she was consequently subjected to misogynistic vitriol from across the country.

Varsity's actions following this mael-



▲ A placard at a Black Lives Matter rally in Oregon (TIM PIERCE)

strom evince at best indifference towards Lola's welfare, and at worst a deeply troubling cynicism concerning the publication's exploitation of her national profile. Soon after the Telegraph article, Lola spoke at a decolonising the English faculty meeting, where confidentiality was explicitly guaranteed. Regardless, Varsity attempted to publish and name Lola's statements, despite this clearly putting Lola in real danger. In the end, her comments were not printed. Varsity also published an irrelevant story in which Lola was wrongly accused of "blocking free speech". In using her name as opposed to her CUSU title (which is common practice) in a headline which included a common trope about student activists, they risked exposing her to sexist and racist abuse for the sake of the hits that her name recognition would bring.

A final, more recent, example concerns Faria Tabassum, who the paper commissioned to illustrate a piece on the subject of split identity. This commission came after her work— which explicitly challenges white supremacy— was noticed

by Varsity at a BME art exhibition. Faria's piece featured a woman looking into a mirror and contained the statement "white silence = violence". Upon submission she was contacted and questioned specifically about the meaning of the statement (as opposed to the illustration as a whole), and when that week's Varsity edition went to print, her illustration was not included. Neither an explanation nor an apology was given, even though Varsity had initially reached out to Faria. It seems likely that this illustration was discarded for fear that it would make (white) readers uncomfortable.

Nothing in these examples sets Varsity apart from other similar student publications, but we clearly need to reimagine the role of these papers. What does neutrality mean in the face of oppression? How should people of colour engage with a paper that seeks to profit from their experiences, until the relationship stops being mutually beneficial? These are the sorts of questions that tomorrow's journalists need to consider if they ever hope to apply the label of "accomplice" to themselves.

Good Friday has by no means 'outlived its use'



Nadia Hourihan is a second year at Trinity studying English

Nadia Hourihan

For hard-line Brexiteers, there is a catch and that catch is the Belfast Agreement, better known as the Good Friday Agreement. The architects of this agreement assumed that the United Kingdom would remain within the European Union and its institutions (because leaving would be insane).

The Good Friday Agreement specifies cross-border cooperative practices that will become impossible if the United Kingdom scotches its membership of the customs union and the single market. If you want a hard Brexit, you have to leave these institutions; but if you leave these institutions you have to ride roughshod over the Good Friday Agreement; and if the UK so disdains a universally admired peace settlement, negotiating any kind of agreement with the rest of the world will prove more than a little difficult.

It's a hell of a catch.

Like a child told that it's their bedtime, some Brexiteers have chosen to put their fingers in their ears and to babble, noisily, over any mention of this inconvenience. This a dangerous attitude to assume, and one that puts the entire

agreement into jeopardy.

Writing in The Guardian, Irish journalist Fintan O'Toole said that Boris Johnson, when quizzed about this hellish catch, had "implicitly adopted the great vernacular slogan of people in Northern Ireland during the Troubles: whatever you say, say nothing".

Others have simply unplugged their ears and decided that a hard Brexit is worth gambling with the lives of their fellow citizens, and the regard of the international community.

Owen Patterson, a former secretary for Northern Ireland, has tweeted that the Good Friday Agreement had "outlived its use".

Kate Hoey, Labour MP for Vauxhall, has also attacked the treaty by calling it 'unsustainable'. Thankfully, her local party then attacked her comments.

Daniel Hannan, a silver-tongued Tory MEP, has similarly scorned the agreement, saying it had "failed" and that "its flaws have become clearer over time."

This isn't exactly new. In certain Brexiteer circles there is a longstanding tradition of loathing the Good Friday Agreement. Famously, Michael Gove went so far as to compare it to the appeasement

of the Nazis.

However, of late there has been a notable uptick in articles and tweets that pick apart the Good Friday Agreement. Responding to allegations that this is motivated by a desire for a hard Brexit, Daniel Hannan tweeted that this was "bollocks on every level".

Well, I call bollocks.

The timing is about as obvious as the nose on Pinocchio's face.

The Good Friday Agreement isn't a perfect agreement, there's a robust chorus calling for its reform, but this does not justify the systematic attempt to rubbish its hard-won successes.

Is it more maddening when British politicians ignore the glaring contradictions of the Good Friday Agreement, or when they attempt to steamroll right over them?

At the time of writing, the second most read article on the Irish Times website is "Brexit la-la-land just gets madder and madder". Maybe we should be encouraging the airing of this madness.

Sometimes it's only when you hear yourself out loud that you can hear how stupid you sound.



Belle George New Zealand's dirty little secret? Abortion legislation

Editor's take

Technically, abortion is illegal in New Zealand. Kiwi women who, for whatever reason, don't wish to carry their pregnancy to term are deemed *criminals* unless they meet certain requirements under an obsolete legal framework.

There are many reasons I am proud to call New Zealand home. This law isn't one of them.

The introduction in 1977 of what is commonly referred to as the 'abortion compromise', sought to appease both vocal Pro-Life and Pro-Choice factions. Abortion remained a criminal offence, but was permitted to be carried out by medical professionals if the pregnancy is dangerous to the woman's mental or physical health, the child risks being handicapped or in cases of incest. Cases of sexual violation and social factors like age may be considered by the doctor (*not the woman*) but are not themselves legal grounds for abortion. Under this law, a Kiwi woman must have an abortion approved by at least two medical consultants.

This legal framework is frankly archaic and totally disregards a woman's right to choose whether or not to have a child. This choice should always be a woman's - not that of two doctors working off an outdated law that holds blatant disregard for women's agency over their own bodies and their futures.

The current system disadvantages the many Kiwi women who live rurally, who have to visit medical professional miles away on *two separate occasions* in attempt to gain permission for something which should be their individual right to choose. There's the difficulty of arranging time off work, childcare and travel plans just to see a doctor - not to mention the added complication for those who are attempting to do so in secrecy.

Doctors have recognised that change is necessary and have made access to abortions increasingly easier in recent decades. There has developed a sort of wink-and-nudge attitude to abortion laws amongst medical professionals, who have effectively liberalised the laws in practice, whilst they remain painfully conservative in theory.

But with hundreds of abortions still declared "not justified" annually, we have a long way to go. Legislation needs to be changed. Every woman should have the right to decide *for and by herself* whether or not she wishes to have children without third party approval.

With the staunchly Catholic and unwavering Pro-Life Prime Minister in New Zealand having recently been replaced by a more liberal, female Prime Minister who campaigned promising to reform abortion laws, the future looks encouraging. About time.



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Opinion

Cambridge is failing on climate change



Alice Guillaume is a third year at Newnham studying Geography

Alice
Guillaume

For almost a year I have been representing Cambridge Zero Carbon on the University's divestment working group. Today, I am resigning from the group on the grounds that the report fails to address the urgency of climate change and the injustices it engenders.

Climate change is not a future issue. It is only a future issue if you value the lives of the privileged – white lives, the lives of the wealthy – over the marginalised. For people across the globe, particularly vulnerable communities in the Global South, the climate crisis arrived long ago. This sense of urgency was conveyed by students and members of staff in the Town Halls. However, this has not been reflected in the report. The significant sections of the report dedicated to reform of the university's estates and improved coordination of climate-related research, are woefully inadequate. The university can, and should, take action to reduce the emissions of its estates and operations, and researchers can always gain insights and impact by working together. But these responses will not address a crisis that threatens the livelihoods of hundreds of millions and the security of our ecological and social systems.

Through its failure to make any substantial commitments, the report lets

down not only those that have campaigned for divestment for so long, but also those communities across the world already experiencing the deadly effects of climate breakdown.

Climate change is a political issue that intersects with other axes of social injustice, including gender and racial inequality. All members of the working group accept that climate change is real, but the notion of climate change represented in the report is one that is depoliticised and made technical. These framings of the problem shape the spaces for potential solutions. Implicit in the report is a dangerous dependence on the idea that fossil fuel companies will change their behaviour and, somehow, prevent us from exceeding the 2°C temperature rise limit entrenched in the Paris Accord, let alone the 1.5°C that is necessary to ensure the security of the livelihoods of those at the frontline of climate change.

The report is superficial in its understanding of Cambridge's responsibility. On the one hand, it acknowledges the responsibility Cambridge has, conveyed at the Town Halls, to use its influence and reputation to lead on issues regarding climate change and investments. What is not acknowledged is that this responsibility stems from a need to ad-

“We want Cambridge to embody the values of its members”

► Senate House has been the site of many discussions around divestment

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

dress Cambridge's role in the current climate crisis, through its funding of companies engaged in the extraction of fossil fuels.

The working group is afraid to be ambitious, in the fear that its recommendations will not be accepted by the University Council. It is afraid to commit the university to change. But we fear that, by failing to commit to divestment, Cambridge will miss our final opportunity to acknowledge our historical contribution to climate change, change course and act in solidarity for a just, respectful and sustainable future. We fear that, if the university continues to invest in fossil fuel companies, it will remain complicit in an industry that not only continues to fuel climate change, but is responsible for horrific human rights violations and neo-colonial claims on the land and resources of indigenous peoples.

Zero Carbon has made the argument for divestment heard, challenged the depolitical framing of climate change and countered the insufficient and technical solutions posed in the report. Recognising that climate change affects the vulnerable most is not about offering our sympathy but campaigning in solidarity, by challenging the power structures that perpetuate this crisis where we have access to them. Unsurprisingly, those

that embody these same power structures within the university do not want, and cannot see the need for, things to change. Climate change cannot be tackled without tackling the political power of the fossil fuel industry, a reality that the university will not accept. I have no faith that the working group will recommend a commitment to divestment and I cannot, in good conscience, sign on to it in its current form.

We want a university that is democratic, transparent and is accountable to staff and students alike. We want Cambridge to embody the values of its members and act on its responsibility to the entire global community. This is our collective future, and we, a united community of staff and students, will not stop fighting until our University plays its role in building the socially just world we urgently need.



At Cambridge, surrounded by adversity, I have found a stronger sense of my Welsh identity



Maia Davies is a first year at Newnham studying English

Maia
Davies

Being Welsh is categorically the Best Thing Ever™. As Wilfred Wilson wrote, 'To be born Welsh is to be born privileged, / not with a silver spoon in your mouth, / but music in your blood / and poetry in your soul.' Raised on a diet of choral singing, rugby, and the best national anthem of all time, it's not difficult to understand why I'll be lovingly shoving daffodils in everyone's faces on St. David's Day, and why I tell everyone I meet that I, did you know, am Welsh.

Being Welsh at Cambridge, however, has proved rather difficult.

Coming to a university in England, I knew that this was more than likely. I expected that I would miss speaking Welsh – my first language, it is the one in which I was raised, took my early education, and in which I still speak to my friends at home. I expected that I would miss living in Cardiff, a stone's throw away from a pretty impressive castle and the Millennium (never the Principality) Stadium.

I also knew that I'd face a few sheep-centred jokes and a healthy amount of Gavin and Stacey references from the English – who can blame them? Nessa is a national treasure. These concerns, I suspect, mirror those of any student leaving their country of origin to go to university.

What I did not expect, however, was the singularly hostile and derisive at-



▲ Cardiff Castle, a short distance away from the city centre, is a symbol of Welsh identity (PIXABAY)

titude towards the Welsh identity held by many students. I am frequently surrounded by otherwise liberal students that scoff when I state that I'm 'Welsh, not British' as they seek to disprove that my identity is at all worthy of distinction from Englishness, that identity preposterously seen as synonymous with Britishness.

This is only exacerbated by the vast outnumbering of Welsh students in Cambridge: of the offers made in the 2016 undergraduate intake, only 1.6% went to Welsh students, while 18% went to Greater London alone. I sit in stunned silence as I hear students that disparage Brexit and the xenophobic rhetoric of the Leave campaign tell me that the Welsh language is useless, flippantly remarking "same thing" when I correct them for calling me English.

Such attitudes mark a totally dumbfounding disregard for the historical effacement of the Welsh identity. There's no difference between being Welsh and being English?

Perhaps I should remind you of the ceaseless efforts made by the English to erase the Welsh monarchy (yes, we did have one, once) which culminated at the hands of Edward I with the murder of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd in 1282 and the committing of his daughter, the Princess Gwenllïan, to be raised in a convent, hidden away and unable to continue the royal line.

I'm bilingual, but is it true that Welsh 'doesn't really count'? Think, maybe, of the Welsh Not, the punishment stick used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to systematically prevent children from speaking Welsh at school, before making that claim.

I do not expect everyone to be well-versed in Welsh history – even though it goes without saying that I should know English history from top to bottom – but I'm tired of a modicum of respect towards it being the exception, not the rule.

This is why, when I am told that I am 'technically' British, I simply cannot care for technicalities.

Being at Cambridge has not once dimmed my pride in being Welsh. In fact, facing these challenges has only uncovered its importance to my identity. Where home was once what I was excited to leave, it is now the thing to which I hold fast when Cambridge works to swallow me whole. Ringing my mum and not having to worry about the way I speak, listening to a song only I can truly understand as it rings out in Welsh, I have found my escape, and knowing that these very acts mark the culmination of centuries of defying such derision, I am ready to withstand the worst.

As Myrddin ap Dafydd noted in his *Gwenllïan*, 'cwyd llanw'r llais / o fawl wedi'r holl falais' – 'the tide of praise, in the wake of all this malice, rises'.

Vulture

FEATURES [20-21] THE POINT OF IT ALL
ARTS [22-23] CULTURAL CROSSWORD
FILM & TV [24-25] FRENCH FEMALE AUTEURS
FASHION [26-27] DEPOP OP-ED
THEATRE [28] PEEP BACK: MITCHELL AND WEB
MUSIC [29] WAGNER'S ANTISEMITISM



Rage, protest, solidarity

by Rosie Chalmers

From Woolf to Smith, Toksvig to Audre Lorde, Rosie Chalmers has been influenced by countless generations of female writers and feminists. What new prominence do these writers take after the Me Too movement, and in the age of Donald Trump and Harvey Weinstein? Check out the Arts section on **page 22** for the full list of Rosie's female literary heroes.

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20-21

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Humanities subjects get attacked for being “useless” or “pointless”. Tom Crew explains their enduring power in the modern world

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Feminine influence

From Woolf to Zadie Smith, Rosie Chalmers discusses the women writers who have shaped her literary tastes the most

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2018's best fashion app

Fashion Editor Eli Hayes talks to the Depop's fashion specialists, after CEO Maria Raga recently visited Cambridge

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'Hung like el Diablo'

We trawl the Varsity Theatre archives, and uncover cuttings from the student days of Mitchell and Webb



Talking to Cambridge University Poetry & Prose Society

Literary excellence is a facet of Cambridge life. **Tom Bailey** talks to the founders of CUPPS about keeping this tradition alive.

Cambridge has always had a vibrant literary scene, producing some of the most significant writers ever to have put pen to paper: Christopher Marlowe, John Milton, William Wordsworth, and Lord Byron, to name but a few.

Ted Hughes's poems were first published in the Cambridge University poetry magazine *Chequer*, and Zadie Smith started writing her highly-acclaimed debut novel, *White Teeth*, when she was in her final year at King's College. Happily, this creative tradition is alive and well today. *The Mays* anthology is now in its 26th year, and *Notes* magazine will very soon be publishing its 50th edition.

And yet, surprisingly, it wasn't until last year that Cambridge had a university-wide creative writing society for both poetry and prose. On Sunday night, I met up with Rencun Ho and Murat Demir, co-founders of the Cambridge University Poetry and Prose Society (CUPPS), to find out more about their society.

CUPPS is now one of the most thriving literary platforms at Cambridge, originally set up, Ren and Murat tell me, to “connect the existing literary community” at the University. There are plenty of college-based creative writing societies and numerous established publications around Cambridge, but the two CUPPS co-founders wanted to bring those

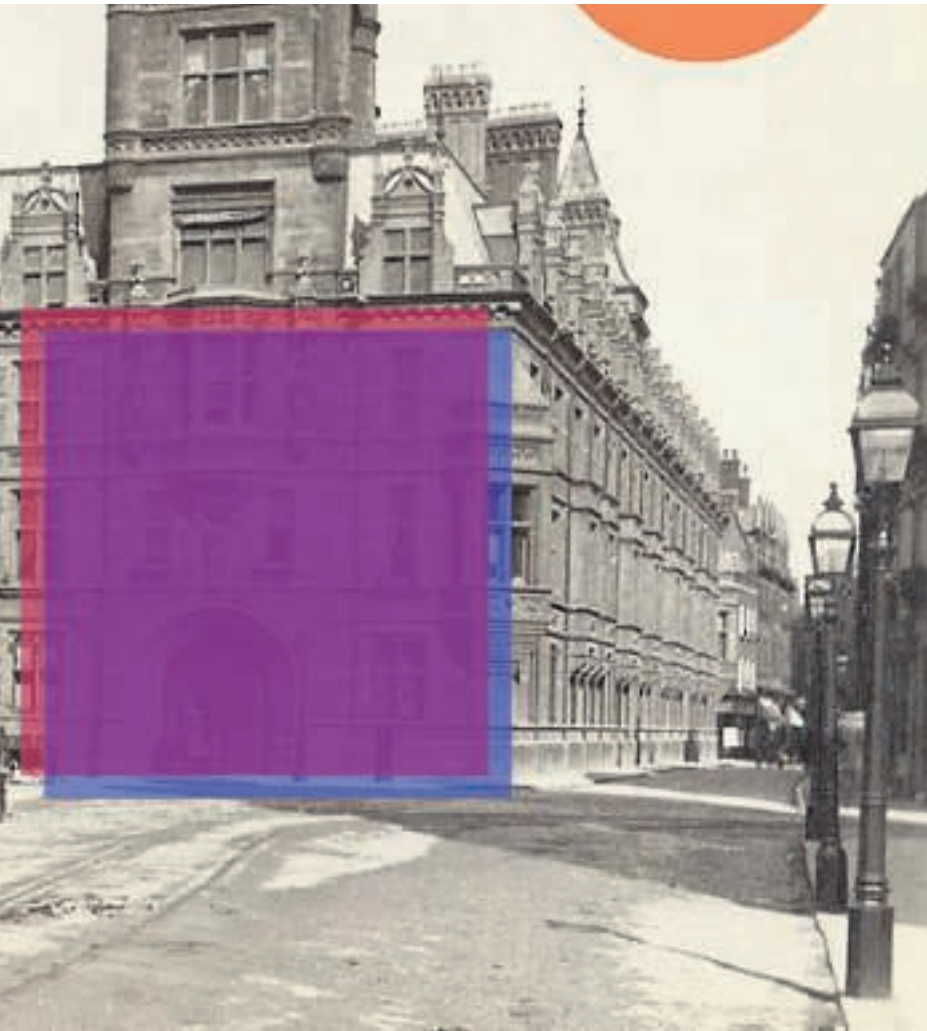
groups together in order to enrich the University's literary scene.

This, they tell me, is their central aim – to “bring together readers and writers from across the University.” Every term, CUPPS run speaker events, student sharing groups, workshops, open-mics, and socials, all of which are advertised on their website and Facebook page. CUPPS organizes these events, they explain, in order to create an accessible and inclusive space for literary creation, “regardless of subject, college, or ability level”.

Ren and Murat are keen to stress this. Rather than seeing CUPPS as competing with other literary societies around the University, their aim is to build bonds and encourage collaboration between existing groups. On their website, they have a list of all the writing opportunities that Cambridge has to offer, from the prestigious *Mays* anthology to publications founded more recently like *Ink* and *Motley*.

Ren and Murat also want to forge greater ties between Cambridge and the literary world beyond the University bubble. That's why they organise a speaker series every term, with past speakers including well-respected poets Sarah Howe, Helen Mort, and Simon Armitage. Many of the speakers they invite already have connections to Cambridge; both Howe and Mort were students at the university in the 2000s. By building up a rapport between the university and its alumni in the creative writing world, CUPPS hopes to encourage more students to do some writing of their own. Diversity is another major part of the CUPPS ethos. When I asked them about their speakers' term-card, Ren and Murat told me:

▲ **CUPPS have hosted poet Helen Mort, among others**
(CUPPS)



“We try to include writers from as many different backgrounds as possible. If you see someone speaking on stage who has a similar background to you, you’re more likely to feel encouraged to write yourself – that’s part of inclusivity.” Next week, the poet Nick Makoha, who fled Uganda’s civil war and Idi Amin’s tyranny as a boy, will be giving a reading for a CUPPS event. Makoha was shortlisted for the Felix Dennis prize in 2017 for his collection *Kingdom of Gravity*, much of which talks about his experiences of exile and loss.

We soon got to talking about CUPPS’s next big venture, their new publication. The plan is to publish a biannual magazine of student-written poetry and prose, and submissions are now open for the first edition. Ren and Murat hope to draw a significant amount of the writing from their sharing groups and workshops, so that the people who have taken part in CUPPS events can have the pleasure of seeing their work in print, many for the first time.

I think it’s safe to say that CUPPS is now firmly established in the Cambridge creative scene and that, as long as societies like this are active, the University’s rich literary tradition will continue to thrive ●

“*Their aim is to build bonds and encourage collaboration*”



▲ Poet Simon Armitage reads at a CUPPS event (CUPPS)

What’s On This Week



MUSIC 3RD, TRINITY CHAPEL

Bach: Mass in B Minor
The Kilgour Consort, consisting of some of Cambridge University’s finest players and singers, perform Bach’s monumental and spectacular Mass in B Minor.

ART 5TH, HOMERTON

Homerton Art
Student artists of all ages and levels can display and talk about their work in a comfortable environment.



THEATRE 6TH-10TH, ADC

Snow Orchid
Cambridge University Queer Players are staging a show which brings new queer narrative to Cambridge’s biggest fuck-off stage.

ART 7TH, KING’S

‘Monument to the Invisibles’
A performance not dedicated to anyone or anything in particular, but rather to commemorate those who are forgotten and who do not have access to a public voice.

TALK 7TH, DOWNING

Peter Bradshaw
The Blake Society is delighted to welcome *The Guardian*’s chief film critic, Peter Bradshaw, for an evening of conversation and questions.

ZINE 8TH, CAIUS

Frankly Speaking Launch
This is the launch of *Frankly Speaking* - an inclusive and diverse biannual publication, discussing all aspects of feminism and gender politics.

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.

FILM 4TH, JOHN’S PICTUREHOUSE

Murder on the Orient Express
When a murder occurs on a train celebrated detective Hercule Poirot is recruited to solve the case. This film is shown using a cinema grade DCP projector.

FILM 7TH, FRANKOPAN

Secret of Kettle’s Yard
In 2016, Cary Parker spent 21 days in Kettle’s Yard, documenting the art and the people at a moment when everything was about to disappear. This is the showing of that film.

MUSIC 8TH, JOHN’S CHAPEL

SJCMS End of Term Concert
SJCMS presents its second orchestral concert of the academic year, played by musicians of the college and the wider university.



From our Chief Designer...

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

A lot of us will have been snowed in this week. Rather than drawing the snow scenes, map the directions of the snowflakes: you could do a series of waves and arrows showing how the snowflakes fall, or document everything in a table: the time it takes for one to fall to the ground, how many people go out and play. See how many excessive diagrams and tables you can make like this. Processing nature in such a rigid process can make you feel like you have control over it



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Tom Crew

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Only twice in the history of Western civilisation has philosophy assumed the leading role in human governance: in ancient Greece and during the Enlightenment.

According to Immanuel Kant, the motto of the Enlightenment was “Sapere aude!”, or “Have the courage to use your own reason!”. This was, and surely remains, a claim of revolutionary proportions. Aside from undermining the power and legitimacy of the church, the spirit of the Enlightenment also lent a new validity to the scientific temper, which has since come to dominate our understanding of ourselves and our environment. Yet in his most famous work, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes that he “found it necessary to deny knowledge to make room for faith.” For all its merits, Kant suggests, explicit knowledge of the kind sought by natural science would never provide us with a complete understanding of what it means to be human.

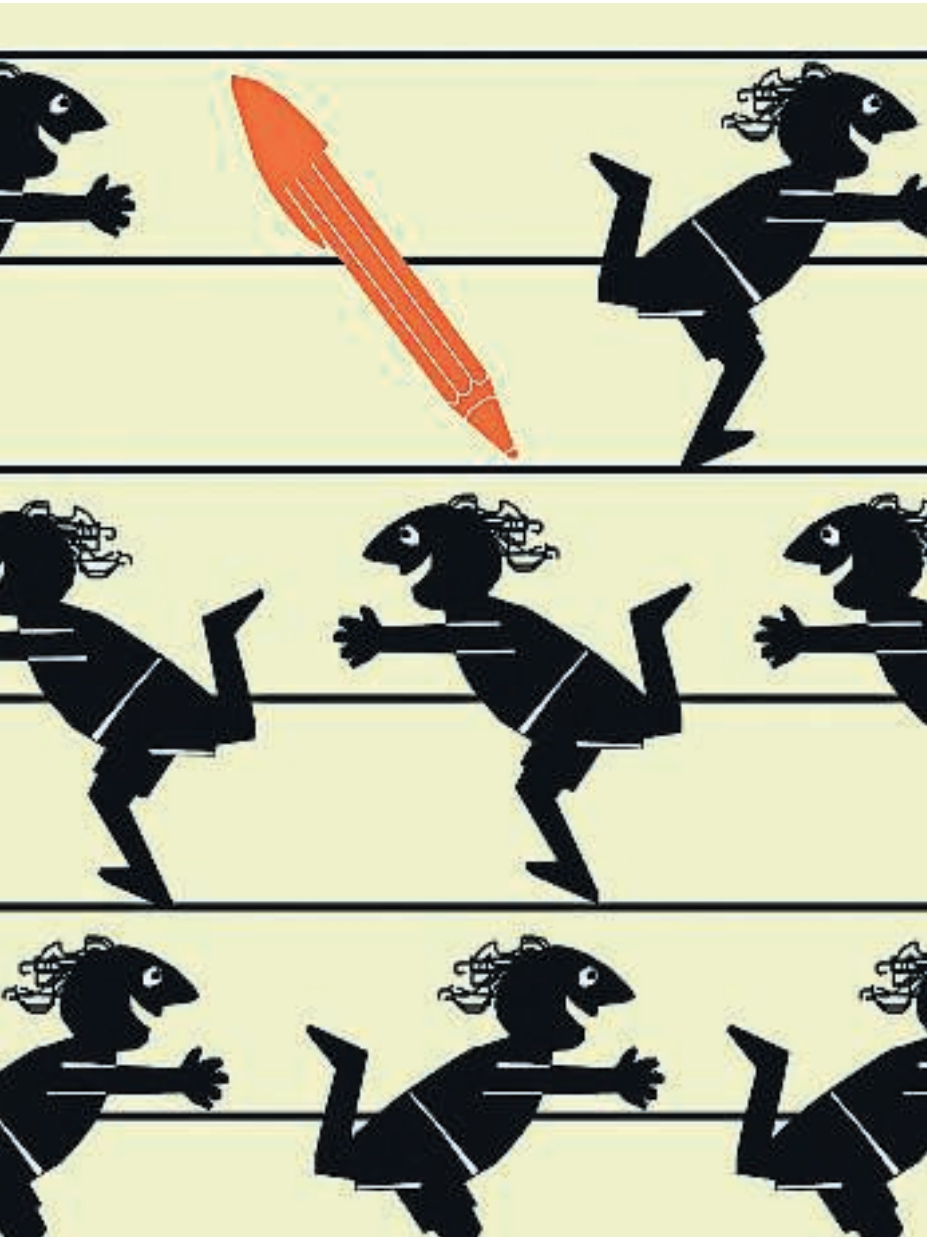
Nearly 240 years after Kant’s proclamation on the limits of knowledge, however, few today would be inclined to ask: what’s the point of science? This reflects a general prejudice of the modern world which ascribes particular value to scientific study. Biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, along with their practical applications in subjects like medicine, engineering and economics, are all perceived as contributing to the progress of society to such an extent that the technology and innovations spawned of these sciences underpin our very understanding of civilisation. Beyond life expectancy, the differences between the so-called First and Third Worlds, for example,

could be reduced to their respective states of technological development. To be civilised is to be industrialised.

For the humanities, however, the situation is a bit bleaker. Literature, classics, history, film and philosophy may all be interesting subjects, but struggle awkwardly with the question of ‘relevance’ and the pernicious thought that they are merely symptoms of wealthy cultures and people with too much time – privileged indulgences with little connection to or bearing on the ‘real world’.

But left to science, the description of this real world comes to bear no resemblance to the world in which we actually *live* – a world comprised of desire, grief, pain, anxiety, ambition, delight and occasionally even joy. Despite its ability to explain and manipulate the natural world, its findings are therefore incapable of providing any guidance about what to do and how to live.

If the sciences come to form the foundation of the way we understand ourselves and are held as the peak of human endeavour, we risk chronically marginalising the existential human issues which form the backdrop to our lives: “questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this human experience”. It is no coincidence that Husserl was occupied with such thoughts in 1936 – and formed them under the title *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, by which he understood Western intellectual practice in general. For what, if not a sense of meaning, is supposed to act as a guide in life – and what, in its absence, is likely to take its place? The often fraught nature of modern experience suggests that as



“
Humanities
could be
defined as
the study of
the human
soul
”

a new metaphysics, as the new authority on world ‘as it really is’, science leaves us cold. Perhaps knowledge will always ring hollow unless it is coupled with something more essential, something pertaining more directly to what it means to be human. And perhaps this is where the humanities come in.

But what exactly are the humanities? In German the word translates as *Geisteswissenschaft*. The word can be more easily grasped split in two: *Wissenschaft* usually means science – not in the strict sense of natural science, but rather ‘the study of knowledge’. The first part, *Geist*, refers essentially to the idea of ‘spirit’. In restoring the link to the English, the humanities could be defined as the study of the human spirit – or, more traditionally, the study of the human soul.

In the 1920s, the playwright Bertolt Brecht wrote: “First comes food, then comes morality.” In a modern Western world which has largely solved the immediate concerns of survival – bread is in plentiful supply, and, for most of us, the question is not how am I to survive, but how am I to be happy, or, more philosophically: how am I to live? – it’s high time to reprioritise the study of the human spirit. The questions raised in this field are some of the most pressing that we are capable of asking. Beyond technological advancement and physical comfort, a truer marker of civilisation might be human fulfilment – a gauge which, although too qualitative and even naïve for our current ‘rational’ outlook, would at least set us on the path to creating a collective space aimed at true human development ●

▲ (ILLUSTRATION BY SOPHIE LUU)

Griefsters, happiness is more than a performance

Ana Ovey



When I received the call that my dad had died, I was in the Blue Mountains in Australia, fortunately with some of the people he loved most dearly. As strange and disjointed an experience as it was for me, it must have been just as strange for them.

How do you go about comforting a person who has been suddenly and unexpectedly struck by tragedy? They were grieving, too, and yet felt a responsibility to their friend’s daughter as they mourned him.

I knew that I didn’t know how to be comforted — if I wanted to be comforted — if I wanted to be left alone, or surrounded by people, given hugs, given space, allowed to cry, made to laugh. The appropriate response to the death of a loved one is sadness, of course — but is it *relentless* sadness? In the hours, then days following my dad’s death, while a heavy sadness hung underneath everything, I was distracted in various ways by those around me. The intensity of grief, and of a grief so huge, was counteracted by card games, by walks, by jokes and kindnesses. Of course, I felt the loss with just as much of a confused intensity as I always would, but I wasn’t *alone*. And importantly, I felt sad, but I was also being allowed to feel, in fragments, a comforted kind of happy.

I look back on this retrospectively and feel guilty — guilty that anything could have comforted me at all. It’s still unclear to me why exactly that ought to be: just getting through those immediate weeks after the shock of my dad’s death was almost impossible at the time, and at best I drifted and forgot myself rather than retaining an idea of who I was or what I had lost. And on reflection, that fact makes it seem as though the pain should have been easy. An hour is shorter once you are looking back on it than when you are living it. But had I not been surrounded by people soothing me with hugs, talking to me about books they were rereading, or songs they loved — in essence, diverting me — I don’t know that I would’ve even made it back to England. I cried for hours on end, but I was also made to smile and laugh.

Accepting sadness paradoxically often seems a less bitter pill to me than accepting, in spite of my loss, that I will still feel happiness. When I was first grieving, knowing things would never be the same was hard; now, knowing that there will come a day I feel *better* feels like a betrayal. Sadness seemed, for a long time, the only means I had of retaining the pieces of my dad left in the world. Letting it go would mean letting *him* go — and so even loosening my grip on heartbreak seemed a cruelty to the memory of the man who raised me with so much love.

The long and the short of it was, and is, I knew I was entitled to my sadness. I struggle

to accept that in spite of the death of my dad, I am still entitled to happiness.

I’ve taken joy, along with functionality, to be a performance — especially at university. I *want* people to think I’m functioning, because it would worry them if I was not. I also, then, want people to think I’m happy, because it would not only worry, but sadden them, if I wasn’t. In thinking this way I doubt I’ve been a very good friend to myself. And yet I also doubt that I’m the only one with this mindset.

Griefsters, happiness is more than a performance, and while it’s certainly not something you should force, it is something you should mean. It’s also not something for you to feel guilty over. Feeling happy does not mean forgetting the person you have lost; feeling happy does not mean neglecting your sadness. It is not a disrespect to the weight of your bereavement and it is not an indictment of your character. Just as with sorrow, it is a piece of the shifting tide of this life. You will find yourself tangled up with joy in some moments, loss in others, and often, a strange and unfamiliar mixture of the two — paired with every other volatile human emotion. Doing right by the person you grieve for doesn’t equal never feeling joy again, and you don’t let go of any pieces of them in any of your moments of happiness.

In my first column, I mentioned a friend who gave me paragraphs of advice and affirmation after my dad died. Of all her wisdom, the guidance I fear I most neglected to accept, or act upon, was that I shouldn’t feel guilty for the times I felt happy. The entirety of the first few months of my grief were so unreal I’m not sure I really did it right; in my head, my dad was on a trip, and would return home any day. A year later, and I’m still processing — or perhaps, I’ve only just begun to do so. And so the advice is just as pressing, and just as profound, as ever.

To those bereaved, feel entitled to your pain. But please, feel just as entitled to your joy. There will be miserable and hazy days, and there will be days rendered vibrant with happiness. Don’t feel guilty for either of these. And don’t mute whatever it is you feel ●



▲ “To those bereaved, feel entitled to your pain” (ANA OVEY)



FULL REVIEWS ONLINE
VARSITY.CO.UK/ARTS

Feminist literature that I've loved and learnt from over the years

Rosie Chalmers

on the texts which have shaped her, giving us her top recommendations

The return of CUSU's Women's Campaign reading group last term introduced me to a number of pioneering feminist writers, like Angela Davis and bell hooks. This got me thinking about the writing that has shaped and educated me. Feminist writing stretches from Aphra Behn's bawdy plays to George Eliot to the explosion of criticism and theory in the 70s and 80s. Although there will always be a place in my heart for *Middlemarch* there is a wealth of recent writing, be it poetry or essays that is just as beautiful, intricate and exciting as the classics.

Children's

When I was younger I received Sandi Toksvig's *Girls are Best*, and all I remember is poring over it for hours. It's a collection of stories of female achievement and often forgotten contributions to technology and progress. Think *Horrible Histories* but with a strongly feminist focus. When I started working at a bookshop at 15 I couldn't find anything like it, but this gap has been filled with *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls* – a much better and more up to date version. Adorned with the most beautiful illustrations, it's a celebration of cultural icons, remarkable scientists, athletes and historical figures.

Fiction

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is a classic that I love re-reading and one of the most interesting of her texts in terms of exploration of gender and sexuality. Written for Vita Sackville West, it reads as a love letter spanning the centuries. However, one of my all-time favourite portrayals of female relationships comes in Tove Jansson's *Fair Play*, which documents the life of two solitary artists on an almost deserted island. It is idyllic and heart-breaking all at once and I fell as deeply in love with both Mari and Jonna as they do with each other.

In Charlotte Gillman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* the author relays the mental unravelling of a woman confined to her room as a treatment for 'hysteria'. The text is significant in terms of understanding where prejudice towards mental health comes from and how it was perceived as a 'feminine' affliction. This continues today, as is easily proven when we look at men's suicide statistics and a reluctance to seek counselling. The magical realist element of the text is also revolutionary, freeing the woman from the confines of a stereotypical narrative and her suffocating marriage.



▲ Clockwise from left: Virginia Woolf, Audre Lorde, Mary Wollstonecraft's text of 1772, and Zadie Smith (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS AND TUMBLR)

Poetry

I first encountered Sujata Bhatt through her love poems. Many of these are erotic, pushing against the unspoken taboo of female sexuality. She also writes about her childhood in Gujarat and her family. *Monkey Shadows* is one of her most famous collections with *White Asparagus*, an ode to a pregnant woman's sexual desires, being one of the many incredible and polylingual poems among them.

Last year saw the 15th anniversary of the death of Audre Lorde whose writing remains supremely relevant and challenging. The anniversary saw the posthumous publication of a collection of poems, essays and speeches in *Your Silence Will Not Protect You*, which is an amazing amalgamation of her writings and ideas.

A more recent writer to turn to is Travis Alabanza who spoke at Cambridge in Michaelmas. Her debut collection was released last year, *Before you Step Outside*. It's a raw exploration of our perceptions of gender and also demonstrates the absence of intersectionality in feminist circles.

Essays and Non-Fiction

Some time back I discovered *We Should all Be Feminists* at the bottom of my stocking, and it remains a favourite. Adapted from the Chima-



“
Fair Play ... is idyllic and heartbreaking all at once
”

manda Ngozi Adichie's TED talk of the same name it's the kind of text you want to gift to people who shy from the word 'feminist', as it unpacks cultural attitudes to the label in a funny and deeply personal format. In 2015, Sweden distributed copies to all 16-year-olds in the country as it was deemed so important. If you enjoyed this, read *Dear Ijeawale, or a Feminist Manifesto in 15 Suggestions*, which is written as advisory letters to a friend on bringing up her baby girl.

Cambridge's own Zadie Smith is indubitably a figure to admire, and her new book *Feel Free* is a collection of essays on everything from dance to mourning. Another recent one is Ruby Tandoh's *Eat Up* which offers simple recipes that return joy to eating and warn us against damaging lifestyles and punishing diets.

This fails to cover the vast expanse of feminist writing, but these books are some that have had a profound influence on me. Feminist writing is incredibly important in moving ideas forward. But it also incites rage, protest, solidarity and inspiring confidence. It gives our feelings of frustration a language to debate in, also fostering a deep love for those who have chosen to communicate and fill the literary landscape with remarkable talent and bravery ●



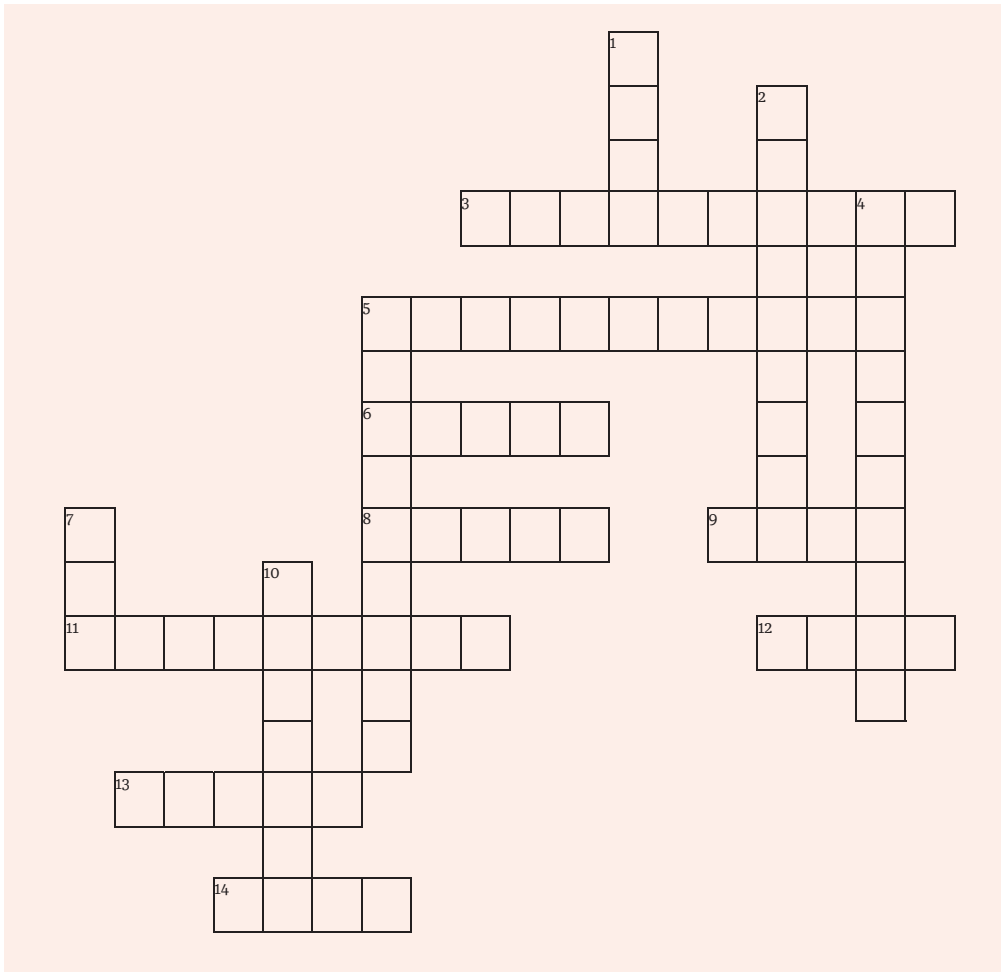
Vulture's Cantab Crossword

Across

- 3. The lowest things to grace a stage (9)
- 5. Herbal consumer covered in gold (11)
- 6. Strike organisers debate here (5)
- 8. Reverend sire and flower of French philosophy (5)
- 9. Advanced mid term (4)
- 11. Easter Sunday (9)
- 12. MML with aspirations (4)
- 13. Lord of burgers and friend of ursula (5)
- 14. Fiddler earns money on King's Parade (4)

Down

- 1. Travelling troupe of actors stuck in Paris (4)
- 2. Tearful, I glimpse the Cam (9)
- 4. Mix your mettle here with some sylvan libations (10)
- 5. Brutal proponent of sand squabbles (9)
- 7. Club night, serves coffee by day (3)
- 10. Central figure in drunken carousing (7)



Across: 3 - Footlights; 5 - Chronophage (thyme - eater); 6 - Union; 8 - Camus - Cam described by Milton as "Camus, reverend sire" / flower = river; 9 - Lent (as in, advanced money / it's the middle term); 11 - Caesarian; 12 - AMES; 13 - Byron; 14 - Nero
Down: 1 - CAST - cos it's one of the ADC tours, also if you're stuck in (plaster of) Paris you have a cast on; 2 - Magdalen (Maudlin, there's a line about glimpsing the Cam from Magd in a wordsworth poem); 4 - The Elm Tree; 5 - Churchill; 7 - Arc; 10 - Maypole

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Mia Hansen-Løve spurns the bombast for an oeuvre of quiet consideration



In her column on pioneering female filmmakers, the career of a French director is traced by
Madeleine Pulman-Jones

In conversation with *Film Comment* in 2011, French writer-director Mia Hansen-Løve said that, “I write all films by myself. I really try to close a door and go inside myself to search for my own truth. It would be a limitation to stick to those cineastes that I look up to. What I admire in them is precisely their sense of independence, how they created their own language and how they plunged into themselves to make their own films.”

Despite her evident predilection for introspection and introversion, in summarising the career trajectory of the French filmmaker, critics like to remind us that she was an actress before she was a director. They like even more to imply that this means that she must have been an actress first and foremost, despite Hansen-Løve often correcting them in interviews. The subconscious belief that women are primarily objects of the gaze is one commonly propagated in traditional critical circles.

What makes these assumptions so ironic is that Hansen-Løve’s cinematic output could not be further from the theatrical if she tried. After making her first short film, *Après mûre réflexion* (2004) she honed her craft making

short after short, before graduating to features with her debut *All is Forgiven* (2007) and soon after *The Father of My Children* (2009), which was based on the life of a film producer she knew. From the offset, it was clear that Hansen-Løve was gradually building a cinematic universe that was sensually original, ever nearing the achievements of these auteurs she admires who “created their own language.”

Hansen-Løve’s unusual way of subtly depicting the stillness of characters in the midst of a world in violent motion is almost unparalleled. Even in 2014’s *Eden*, a film based on her brother’s DJ career which marked a departure for Hansen-Løve, one gets the sense that it is not the movement or even the music that fascinates her, but the moments of quiet just after the rave, when everything is silent and suddenly ambiguous.

Having commenced her career with two films about tortured men, the two films of Hansen-Løve’s career that most define her sensibility are 2011’s *Goodbye First Love* and 2016’s *Things to Come*. This is not to say that these films define her oeuvre by the fact of their featuring female protagonists, but that they embody a certain quietude and consider-

ation that distinguishes her from her contemporaries. *Goodbye First Love* is a coming of age story told through the lens of its protagonist, Camille’s (Lola Creton) “first love.”

What is so unusual about her telling of this story, is that though love is the dominant theme, it is not a story about a girl whose coming of age is occasioned by the men that pursue her, but a delicate meditation on what happens when someone uses love as the building blocks with which to construct their life, and someone pulls out the foundations. Hansen-Løve’s script is as poetically elliptical as her camera, which here moves and watches with Camille; she is just as much the agent of the film’s perspective as she is its object. This agency is mirrored in Camille’s own trajectory from confused student to talented architect, designing and restoring buildings as she restores and builds her new life.

Fast-forward five years and Hansen-Løve’s protagonist has aged forty years. Now she’s Nathalie, a philosophy teacher whose husband of twenty-five years has just left her for another woman, and she is played by Isabelle Huppert. 2016’s *Things To Come* is another film by Hansen-Løve that plays with autobiography. Following *Eden*, which was based on her brother, *Things To Come* takes inspiration from her own parents, who were also both philosophy teachers. Perhaps no other filmmaker has ever devoted so much time to a woman reading onscreen. Huppert’s Nathalie reads on the metro, she reads on the rocks when she goes swimming in the mountains, she reads from Pascal’s *Pensées* at her mother’s funeral.

In *Things To Come*, Mia Hansen-Løve does something incredibly rare and important in validating and giving artistic justice to the life of the intellectual, the intellectual woman in particular. Her nuances and complexities are particularly well-captured in a scene in which Nathalie has just told her favourite ex-student that her husband has left her, she says, “I’m lucky to be fulfilled intellectually — that’s reason enough to be happy.” In an interview Huppert stated that she thought that this statement was at once true and untrue, and this question of how emotion and academia coexist is expertly observed throughout the film.

Mia Hansen-Løve’s films are not bombastic or provocative — they are not going to incite protest or ignite a political movement, but this is why they are so crucial. Even more shocking to the cinematic establishment than a film by a woman is a film by a woman that is not a digestible statement about the plight of womanhood. It might be that Mia Hansen-Løve’s understated films are a protest, however personal ●

▲► Hansen Løve’s latest film focuses on Isabelle Huppert’s philosophy professor and the separations of her life
 (LES FILMS DU LOSANGE)

“Hansen-Løve’s script is as poetically elliptical as her camera”

COMING UP

Nothing happens and everything happens: the cinema of
Chantal Akerman



There may be entertainment in the madness

FILM REVIEW

The Cloverfield Paradox

Dir. Julius Onah
Available on Netflix now
★★★★☆

It has been ten years since the original *Cloverfield* hit the big screen, and for a long time it seemed like there would be no plans to add more entries into its canon. However, due to the film amassing something of a cult following, quite possibly thanks to its imaginative use of the found footage style before the format became overused, it seems the film's creators believed there was still some life to be found within the brand. Giant, alien life, but life nonetheless.

What is possibly most interesting about this set-up is that the scripts being used are not actually sequels, or indeed prequels for that matter. The scripts were not even intended to be *Cloverfield* films, but are instead pulp sci-fi stories that have retrospectively had the name slapped on them to make them more palatable to today's franchise-hungry audiences. It has already been shown this can work, and work well, with first of these additions, *10 Cloverfield Lane*, actually turning out to be far superior to the original itself.

We open in the near future, where the earth is on the brink of an energy crisis that will likely lead to an all-out world war unless a solution is found quickly. So, a crew of intrepid astronauts venture out into the darkness of space to figure out a way to end the crisis. It is basically the same premise

►▼ There are plenty of crew members for the giant worms to sink their teeth into (NETFLIX)



as Danny Boyle's *Sunshine*, and no doubt a number of other dystopian sci-fi tales.

However, this is not really a huge problem, as there is actually a good amount of unexpected fun to be had once the film gets going. Sure, the flow feels somewhat erratic, as if the writer may have been in the midst of a sugar-high while writing large portions of the script. But if one can switch off the brain when watching certain nonsensical segments, and instead enjoy them as an exercise in entertaining oddness over logic, then a good time might be had.

As for the film's visual style and special effects, they are unfortunately nothing but passable, and would look relatively at home on a high-end TV show. This is



“The writer may have been in the midst of a sugar high”

not particularly unexpected since the film is not even getting a theatrical release, condemned to the fringes of Netflix's home-viewing brand.

The film is all about wondering which members of the crew are going to turn on the others, or which reality is any of this actually happening in, or where did all the worms go? All truly important questions. The crew at the start of the film is just about large enough to rack up a decent body count, which is really one of the big joys when watching this sort of genre.

Overall, it seems to be a positive thing that the *Cloverfield* franchise is giving a few more strange little sci-fi scripts a shot at the screen. And while this entry cannot quite reach the surprisingly impressive heights of *10 Cloverfield Lane*, it still adds more than it detracts from the cinematic universe. Particularly for fans of this genre, while there is not anything ground-breaking here, there is certainly entertainment in the madness, with the film being most successful in its eccentric mid-section, before losing a little steam in a vaguely hammy conclusion ●

Alex Campbell

SPOTLIGHT Must see



Lady Bird
Dir. Greta Gerwig

Hilarious and heart-breaking, Gerwig's directorial debut is a wondrous display of deftness and human emotion. It's the perfect choice for Mothering Sunday or a nostalgic trip back the early naughties.

Catch-up



The Death of Stalin
Dir. Armando Iannucci

With an all-star cast led superbly by a breakout Simon Russell Beale, the funniest film of last year draws on the past to create its chaos

Standout poster



You Were Never Really Here
Dir. Lynne Ramsay

A harrowing narrative perfectly described by its title, this is a thriller unlike any other, and at only 85 minutes in length, it is over in the blink of an eye

ONLINE THIS WEEK
RIHANNA RETROSPECTIVE

The fashion app that's revolutionising how millennials build their style

Fashion Editor **Eli Hayes** investigates the app's role in the youth-driven shopping revolution taking place on smartphones and social media

When I was ten, I would make jewellery and sell it to my family from my own pop-up shop on the hearth in my living room. Had I been born a few years later, though, my naïve hopes of profiting from my hobby might have been realised. Teen 'moguls' are making thousands by selling handmade and pre-owned items on Depop.

When it first launched, Depop was described as "part Instagram, part eBay". Since 2011, the social media-come-shopping app has amassed a user base of over 8 million and caters for upwards of twenty thousand transactions per day, boasting fans in showbiz and celebdom.

Depop offers a user-friendly, community-based platform for (mostly young and mostly female) creatives to buy and sell clothes, accessories, art, and whatever else can be made to look vaguely alternative. Scrolling through my own purchase history, there are t-shirts, earrings, backpacks, and a fairly grimy second-hand Baby-G watch. Think Instagram except it's possible to actually buy the cool things you see.

I've been using Depop for about as long as Maria Raga has been the company's CEO. In that time, I've spent approximately £300 and Raga has doubled the company's revenue. One of us is doing something right. But I have also noticed that throughout her reign, the nature of the app has changed. There are more interesting and unique products, sellers are



▼ **Fiona Short** has 150k followers on the app

(INSTAGRAM: FIONAJHAPPY)

becoming brands, and, perhaps consequentially, prices have risen. Last month, Raga gave a talk for the Cambridge University Start-Up Society and Cambridge Women in Business; a perfect opportunity to investigate.

Central to what Maria had to say was the creative vision of Simon Beckerman, Depop's founder. The app was an experiment, originally; Beckerman had heard about designers creating apps instead of developers and set about having a go himself. His previous endeavours include PIG, a now defunct but once edgy Italian pop-culture magazine intended to provide a platform to young talents and creatives. Maria, who herself comes from a business background, also expressed how she had not wanted to work for large corporations, preferring the buzz and excitement of start-ups.

Intrigued by what the Depop workplace must be like, I spoke to Tainá Vilela, who Maria assured me is the brand's resident "expert on fashion". Vilela echoed the sentiment that Beckerman and Raga clearly share: "being creative and following your own instinct is more important than following trends". The ethos of Depop is one of individuality and thrift: make it yourself, find it yourself, sell it yourself. But while focus is placed on the personality and aesthetic of 'Community Leaders' (big sellers on the app), there is deliberate encouragement of community.

Social media is relied upon by sellers and staff to widen their reach and incubate the relationships they purport to be forming. A cynic might view this attitude as further evidence of the narcissism of modern youth; even the Depop twitter account encourages users to "show off". As a user who has watched, wincing, as prices on the app rise, it is easy to understand why some might be put off by what seems to be a profitable identity parade.

But such a view necessarily rejects the fundamental purpose of Beckerman's creation, and devalues the efforts and innovation of those who use it. Depop, like PIG before it, is designed to be a platform from which young and fresh talent can develop a brand, achieve success, and influence others. There are parts



“Depop recognises the limited scope of high-fashion in an age where smartphones and hashtags rule”

of Depop where you may find a Champion sweatshirt you could buy at Cancer Research listed for £45, but the users who are representative of the firm's ethos are engaging with a world that would otherwise have been inaccessible. In our conversation, Tainá gave me her perspective on the direction of the fashion industry: "trends are being born, spreading, and dying through social media". Depop recognises the limited scope of high-fashion in an age where smartphones and hashtags rule. It isn't vain to tap into the energy of the creatives using social media to share their work, it's progressive. Fashion is changing, and Depop is not merely symptomatic of that, but responsible, too.

At a time when sustainability is the word on everybody's lips, and the ethical negligence of big brands is being exposed, it is easy to see how Depop is thriving. They've just been given \$20 million investment to fund expansion in the US. Millennials (or as Beckerman calls them, "people who like to be independent, creative, and free") are the driving force. Depop sits at the intersection of fast- and slow-fashion and provides a space for young imaginations to flourish. Long live the shopping revolution ●



◀ **Sisters, Liberty and Mathilda**, have a combined following of 170k

(INSTAGRAM: LIBERTYMAI)



The Autumn/Winter highlights of Milan Fashion Week 2018

If New York is about modernity, and London about creativity and diversity, then Milan is about glamour; the Italian city is renowned for showcasing the cool, nonchalant attitude of Italian fashion, with its unapologetic love for luxury and decadence.

The Autumn/Winter 2018 shows so far, in New York and London, have been nothing short of impressive, with both cities presenting us with their take on the new powerful woman in the wake of the social upheaval stemming from #MeToo and the Time's Up campaign. While it has been wholly exciting and liberating to see the fashion industry respond to these important movements and incorporate their opinions into their collections, there is something eternally gratifying about the Milan shows, and knowing what you are going to get and knowing that you are (almost undoubtedly) going to like it.

British *Vogue*'s fashion critic, Anders Christian Madsen, asked, "how, for instance, is a brand like Roberto Cavalli supposed to interpret its sexy, glamorous, glitzy legacy in this new climate?" but, as always, Milan rose to the challenge. There's a feeling in the air right now that women cannot embrace their femininity and sexuality, through fashion or otherwise, without compromising stereotypical preconceptions of power and strength. Milan proved, as it has continued to throughout the years, that the two can indeed go hand in hand for women. But what always draws me to the Milan shows is that they never seem to forget their love of fashion, and that a political statement need not *always* be made. Sometimes that's enough.

One noticeable trend on the runways – also a hit in London – was the presence of bold, bright colours and clashing patterns, showing that matching is no longer a necessity. At Versace, Donatella did this in the garish, manifested in the form of ball-skirts and skin-tight cat suits that most of us could only dream of pulling off.

Miuccia Prada also chose to indulge in this new trend but took a different approach, with injections of bold brights juxtaposed with futuristic, galactic prints. There were white wellies, neon gloves and toeless socks, which, despite what you may be thinking, came together in true Prada style. It was also an unforgettable moment to see 19-year-old model, Anok Yai, be the first black women to open a Prada show in 20 years (second ever after

Naomi Campbell was the first in 1997).

The Milan shows also demonstrated an affinity for their grungier side, something that hitherto has been reserved for the likes of the London designers. Max Mara designer, Ian Griffiths, who previously worked under British designer Ossie Clark in the punk era, claimed that the chance to show this side of the label was "30 years in the making". His collection showed an abundance of animal prints and black leather, in addition to graphic tees under boxy, masculine tailoring and coats. Paul Surridge, in his second collection for Roberto Cavalli, also made use of animal prints. However, as the collection progressed we moved into slinky cut-out dresses in earthy tones and striking leather jackets and trousers in monochrome, which allowed Surridge to retain the sexual element of Cavalli's heritage but also present a bold new side to the brand. It was a more refined collection than we have seen before,

However, it was statement coats that dominated the runways this season, in every city so far. Marni showed these in bright, patent cobalt blues and greens, while Alberta Ferretti presented knee-grazing trench coats in amongst its gothic but glamorous collection. Jil Sander, as the industry's ultimate token minimalist label, also complied, presenting coats with long, simple silhouettes in a neutral palette to compete with other designers used colour and pattern to grab attention. At Tod's, we had another



Clockwise from above: Max Mara designer Ian Griffiths gave his models messy hairdos and smudged black eye makeup to complete his grungy look; Kaia Gerber (right) was seen walking the Prada runway; Donatella Versace was just one of the several designers who chose to use bright colours

“It was statement coats that dominated the runways this season”



example of a warm-toned, earthy palette, this time in the form of shearling jackets, leather jackets and a number of stand-out jumpsuits. It seems that a lot of attention is being paid to these typically masculine shapes in combination with the usual sexier side we see in Milan, perhaps in a bid to prove that this dichotomy between the sensual and powerful can, and does, exist harmoniously.

I couldn't write this review, though, without some mention of the Gucci show. Since joining the label in 2015, creative director Alessandro Michele has skyrocketed the Italian brand into stratospheric stardom, morphing it into something of a global super brand and pop culture phenomenon. This season, things took a turn for the weird and, at points, unexplainable. The set was an operating theatre, and models were adorned with a third eye and carried wax replicas of their own heads, apparently based on the idea of "superhuman transformation". While I personally didn't love the collection – something about it just didn't cohesively click – I certainly respect Michele's creative vision. From the New York Yankees logo emblazoned on lace jackets, to knitted balaclavas, snakes and nipple tassels (yes, you read that correctly), Michele moves to the beat of his own drum.

In an industry which is so often dictated by a tendency to follow suit, it's undeniably exciting to see someone unabashedly shun this. Michele aptly summed up his thoughts for this season, saying, "fashion is not simply what you wear or an instrument to generate business. It's something more" ●

(INSTAGRAM: MARNI)

(INSTAGRAM: VERSACE)

(INSTAGRAM: ROBERTO_CAVALLI)

FULL REVIEWS ONLINE
VARSITY.CO.UK/THEATRE

Vulture Review Round-up

Footlights Spring Revue: Judi's 40th

★★★★★

7.45pm, ADC Theatre



(ALEX POWER)

Director Jasmin Rees must be praised for her emphasis on the comedy itself rather than theatricality – often the latter drowns the former. The selection of music was spot on, often nodding to jokes from previous sketches and occasionally driving the comedy itself: Ashleigh Weir's Depeche Mode-fuelled cake binge was pure joy.

Judi's 40th is an impressive, well-orchestrated work. Nevertheless, there are clearly some comics who are head and shoulders above the already talented group. Coward, Tothill and Delaney are indisputably the stars of the troupe. When collaborating, all three illuminate the stage, and Cambridge is perhaps not aware how lucky it is to have them ●

Coriolanus

★★★★★

7pm, Corpus Playroom



(EVELINA GUMILEVA)

The effortless use of multi-roling and abstract features in *Coriolanus* was what made it remarkably interesting to watch, but this also, at times, made the plot more difficult to follow. As a result, it felt more like a piece of performance art than a play – which is not an entirely negative criticism.

The hard work and creativity of the entire team means that they have been triumphant in creating a spectacle unlike anything else I have seen in Cambridge, and I sincerely hope that future artists view this production as an encouraging testament to the wonderful possibilities of commitment, boldness, and experiment ●

I.M.P.R.O.V

★★★★★

9.30pm, Corpus Playroom



(CAMBRIDGE IMPRONAUTS)

The Cambridge Impronauts' newest offering has a premise that is ambitious, exciting, and just a bit intimidating – how does one improvise a sitcom, perhaps the most rehearsed and pre-prepared of comedic forms?

Though faced with the natural difficulties of an improvised work, the show was entirely enjoyable. Powered by a strong willingness on

the audience's part to laugh at all sorts of gaffes, as well as an admirable eagerness to please on the parts of all the actors, the result was a show that, despite the ambition that may be read in its title, essentially knew what it was about: an hour of ludicrousness, hilarity, and unadulterated laughter. In that sense, the Cambridge Impronauts achieved their goal and should be commended ●

roles, which seem to merge into each other, reflecting Bernard's mental state. The rather thin audience on the first night certainly enjoyed themselves, relishing the tart one-liners and surreal situations. The performance was well acted and directed, managing to be both funny and sad. It's the perfect remedy for those revision blues – see it.

SIMON GARDNER



A peep back at Mitchell and Webb

Looking through the Varsity archives of 1994-6, theatre reviews are peppered with mentions of both David Mitchell and Robert Webb. The comedic duo have been responsible for gracing our screens with several hilarious productions, including *That Mitchell and Webb Look* and *Peep Show*, which have certainly stood the test of time and continue to be firm favourites. Their tale allegedly began when the pair met at an audition for a Footlights production of *Cinderella* in 1993. Both undergraduates at Cambridge, Webb studied English at Robinson and Mitchell read History at Peterhouse.

One of Robert Webb's early mentions in *Varsity* appears in an article reviewing *The Barracuda Jazz Option*, a comedy sketch show performed in October 1994 and comprised of original material partially written by Webb himself. In the article, a young Webb is pictured with his comedic contemporaries and the reviewer certainly seems impressed by Webb's efforts. In perhaps a slightly back-handed compliment the reviewer commends the actor's performance as "always worth the £3.50 that he [...] costs". Similarly, his comedy writing is praised as "exquisite" and "near perfection" and his delivery is described as being "with all the acting skill that you could demand of any play".

David Mitchell's name also crops up periodically in *Varsity*, and the reviewer of his production of *Stud* the month after Webb's mention is particularly complimentary. The play (partly written by Mitchell) recounts the lives of two undergraduates at university, and is described as "unashamedly self-indulgent" with "universally excellent" performances. Mitchell's "bravura comic display" is praised as allowing the other actors to make the most of their roles and this early example of Mitchell's writing presumably paved the way for his future successes.

After these early individual acknowledgements, the comedy twosome start to appear together in *Varsity* articles. The 1994 pantomime *Dick Whittington* starred both Mitchell and Webb and apparently set the Bridgemas celebrations off in style. Webb's performance is "awesome", his role performed "confidently and masterfully"; while Mitchell "impressively played" the supporting role. The pair are described as "playing off one another to great effect" leading the reviewer to praise the show as "a charming and hilarious show that is never static".

The following year the pair are again referenced in a review of the Footlights 1995 tour production, *Fall from Grace*, a sketch show depicting the Seven Deadly Sins. The interplay between the two comedians is given a special mention with the reviewer comparing Mitchell's "unworldly sexual innocence" with Webb's "predatory bisexual queen bitch", a contrast they called "particularly memorable".

The list of their skilful collaboration goes on – and the fact the pair went on to work together to compile the 1995 Footlights Revue is testament to their astounding comic ability. In 1996, *Varsity* published an interview conducted by Mitchell asking Webb about the writing process behind the Summer 1996 Footlights tour, which provides an insight into the gruelling procedure behind the scenes. Webb adopts a light-hearted approach in his answers yet manages to convey the huge task faced by the team responsible for producing such a mammoth collection of sketches every year.

The success of the duo was clearly not limited to the Cambridge theatre scene, as both David Mitchell and Robert Webb continue to be household names and familiar faces to the British public, with their latest collaboration, *Back*, being well-received by critics ●

Francesca Vella-Bonnici

▲ Both of the Peep Show duo were regulars on the stages of Cambridge (VARSITY ARCHIVES)

“The success of the duo was clearly not limited to the Cambridge theatre scene”



▲ The pair kicked off their TV careers together on *That Mitchell & Webb Look* (BBC)



Can music be tainted by its history?



Discussing composer Wagner’s associations with Nazism, **William Poulos** explores the ethics and morality behind artistic legacy

In July 2001 the Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim conducted the Berlin Staatskapelle orchestra at the Israel Festival. He had included an excerpt of Wagner’s *Die Walküre* on the programme, but, at the request of the festival’s organisers, replaced it with music by Schumann and Stravinsky. At the end of the concert he turned to the audience and proposed a Wagner piece as an encore, saying: “Despite what the Israel Festival believes, there are people sitting in the audience for whom Wagner does not spark Nazi associations. I respect those for whom these associations are oppressive. It will be democratic to play a Wagner encore for those who wish to hear it. I am turning to you now and asking whether I can play Wagner.” A heated 30-minute debate followed, people shouted “fascist” and slammed doors on their way out. But most of the audience stayed, responding warmly to Wagner’s music.

Although Israeli government-owned radio stations play Wagner’s music, a Wagner opera has never been staged in the modern state of Israel. It is curious that Wagner, who died in 1883, is the only musical figure who is so strongly connected to Nazism that his music causes protest. Admittedly, Hitler found in Wagner’s works anti-semitism, a strong nationalistic sentiment, and a desire for a unified German people, but Wagner had many Jewish friends and colleagues: he sent letters of gratitude to Thomas Mann’s Jewish father-in-law, who had helped build the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth.

Many musical figures had a similarly com-

plicated relationship to Nazism. Although privately critical of Nazism and Anti-Semitism, Richard Strauss accepted the position of president of the Reichsmusikkammer, the Nazi institution set up to promote “good German (i.e. Aryan) music.” Some biographers speculate that he took the position to protect his Jewish daughter-in-law and grandchildren, and indeed he continued to collaborate with the Jewish librettist Stefan Zweig. This collaboration caused Strauss to be dismissed from the job in 1935, two years after he accepted it.

When Strauss was made President of the Reichsmusikkammer in 1933, the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler was appointed as its Vice-President. He resigned from the post a year later but, while helping many Jewish musicians flee the Third Reich, was unable to leave it himself. After publicly denouncing the Nazis he remained, a non-political artist with no official position. Despite refusing to contribute to Nazi propaganda, he conducted Beethoven’s ninth symphony for Hitler’s birthday in April 1942. You can find part of the performance on YouTube, the conductor between the swastikas. After the Second World War, Furtwängler said that he stayed in Germany because he felt responsible for German music, and that in a time of crisis people needed to hear Beethoven’s message of freedom and human love. There’s something to this: in occupied nations the orchestra was considered a necessity of cultural life and was (admittedly weak) proof that there was some good left in the world.

The justifications of Strauss and Furtwängler did not convince their fellow conductor Arturo Toscanini, who had become publicly

▲ **Wagner’s legacy remains inherently tied to his heinous political ties**
(COMMONS)

anti-Fascist by the early 1930s. When Strauss became president of the Reichsmusikkammer in 1933 Toscanini apparently said, “to Strauss the composer I take off my hat; to Strauss the man I put it back on again.” When he met Furtwängler he said that anyone who conducts in the Third Reich must be a Nazi. Furtwängler denied this and said that “music belongs to a different world, and is above chance political events.” Toscanini disagreed, and by 1939 had refused to conduct in Germany, Vienna, Salzburg, and his native Italy. Yet he did not believe that the music itself was intrinsically anti-Semitic; during the Second World War he conducted all-Wagner concerts in America.

While you might argue that Furtwängler and Strauss – the leading conductor and composer of their day – gave the Third Reich prestige, and ought to be rebuked for it, attributing moral value to the music itself seems misguided. While Wagner was alive, Germans weren’t murdering Jews by the million. And even though Richard Strauss lived during the systematic extermination of Jews, it is Wagner and his music which are most associated with Nazi atrocities. Barenboim’s efforts at the Israel Festival tried to emphasize that Wagner’s music has been treated unfairly; tunes have no moral value. Michael Avraham, a Holocaust survivor, heard Barenboim conduct Wagner at the Israel Festival and said, “there’s no need to link the fact that Wagner was a big anti-Semite with his music, which is beautiful...The man was anti-Semitic, not the music” ●

“Attributing moral value to the music itself seems misguided”



▲ **An ardent anti-fascist, Toscanini had little time for the prevarications of Strauss**
(US OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION)

Vulture TUNES

Snowed In

//////////

This week has brought a surprise flurry of snow to Cambridge, creating a rather belated winter wonderland. Despite how pretty it is, it has created treacherous conditions. It’s slippery and dangerous out there, an arctic wasteland. It seems best to keep safe and stay inside. *Vulture* have crafted the perfect playlist to listen to wrapped up warm, while getting that Instagram post of your college covered in snow just right.

Half-Light
Rostam, Kelly Zutrau

It’s You
Robert Schwartzmann

Mood
Porches

Moon River
Frank Ocean

Champagne Coast
Blood Orange

Mystery of Love
Sufjan Stevens

Honey Do
Beverly

Flamingo
Fruitbats

Modern Woman
Tennis

Hai Bby
The Bilinda Butchers

Sport

Katherine Grainger

‘We can't necessarily count the numbers of people that might have their lives made a little bit better’

UK Sport Chair offers fierce defence of athletes' funding, writes Lawrence Hopkins

Katherine Grainger appeared at the Cambridge Union only days after returning from PyeongChang, where she had observed British success at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games. The ex-athlete, who now chairs UK Sport, talked of the “heartbreaking” experience of watching speed skater Elise Christie crash out, falling short of her dreams yet again.

Though relatively new to her role, Grainger is now accountable for the raft of public money spent on elite athletes

► Grainger was in a buoyant mood during a Q&A session

(ALISA MOLOTOVA/
GETTY IMAGES)

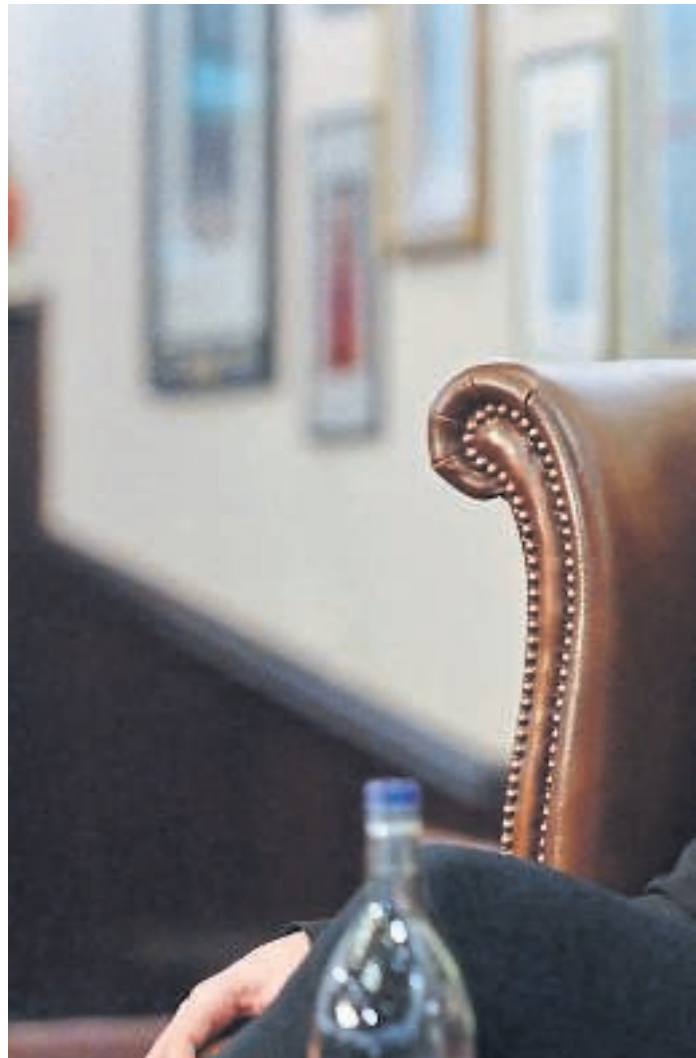
such as Christie. An interview at the Union is an opportunity to hold her to account.

I ask how her organisation justifies its backing of British Cycling, a medal factory embroiled in scandals? Grainger's answer is that her job is to create “inspirational success.” Having spoken of her personal interest in justice and injustice, she adds that she does not wish to “punish the innocent.” She points out that her organisation moved quickly to facilitate an independent investigation of British Cycling in the wake of Jess Varnish's sexism allegations, and that implementation of recommended changes begets funding.

UK Sport's money is public money. For the Tokyo cycle, over £50 million has been allocated to rowing and sailing together; is funding for such class-based sports something she wishes to change? “So what UK Sport gets a lot of credibility for is generally how fair the decision

making is.” Addressing the influence of class, she stresses how it is the “potential of athletes and the systems that they are part of” which determines funding; “it does not get decided because of class background,” she adds.

When pressed on whether her tenure will see a move away from traditional medal factories, Grainger comments that there are opportunities for change, but that “you have to be consistent in decision-making.” Grainger seems to have cornered herself, proselytising consistency despite reversing a decision to cut the funding of Olympic medal-winning badminton. Yet the Scot fiercely defends the apparent U-turn, explaining that UK Sport's investment is renewed annually. Badminton's success at last year's World Championships is offered as reason enough for funding reinstatement and evidence of a working system. I ask if badminton won the “wrong medal” at Rio, but Grainger is quick to dismiss such



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a notion: "There's no right or wrong medal, trust me." Grainger won four Silvers and one Gold during her career. Grainger's position is often perilous, but her defence of badminton's funding situation is sage. It does, however, bring up the noteworthy comment that "the money we have doesn't go as far as it used to." Badminton fell just below the line for funding following Rio, and Grainger has boasted of the review system, but that money is tight will be a concern going forward.

The Winter Olympics were beamed into our homes and Eve Muirhead's curling squad enthralled the nation. It is in no small part due to the approach of UK Sport that Team GB's medal haul is a hot topic. The focus on medals is not, however, without cost, which I put to Grainger. "Do you think that the cost that comes with this insatiable drive for medals is acceptable?" I reference Rebekah Wilson, a bobsleigh athlete who reported self-harming due to stress, and ask if this is "good for the public?" Grainger's response is to ask my own opinion - I don't know anymore, largely due to a belief that medals in sports that are difficult to participate in have little impact. Grainger then emphasises that her organisation considers its impact more widely than one might think: "we have to try and help inspiration through sport and through medal success."

Grainger also cautions against the phrase "insatiable drive for medals," suggesting instead that athletes self-impose pressure. Yet, she is also well aware that the support necessary for athletes under immense stress must be in place. Grainger recalls that, when she started out, athletes were often in debt. Now, athletes can earn a full-time wage, but "with that, it brings in a new intensity and an expectation from everyone watching that we can keep delivering these great medals." It is this intensity, says Grainger, which some will find tough and "there's a growing awareness that actually the mental side can be just as testing and

“
There's
no right
or wrong
medal,
trust me
”

potentially as damaging." Grainger goes on to list the achievements of UK Sport which ameliorate the impact of being a professional athlete: athletes now have access to the Priory, and independent, safe outlets now exist for discussion away from coaches. Funded sports "have to meet certain criteria to make sure that they have put checks in place for athletes in the system." For Grainger to be satisfied with delivering on the remit of UK Sport - the deliverance of medals - would be seriously misguided. Her stance is reassuring.

Grainger concludes by again addressing the question of whether all the effort is worth it. "When you're talking about the value of what you get when those medals come in, the inspiration that we have is far wider than we probably list." She adds that courtesy of Lizzy Yarnold's success, interest in skeleton is rising, and that "you get people taking up different sports, and people who just want to be active." Her message is that UK Sport's work is beneficial beyond all measure, that "there are more things that those positive messages will have the influence on than we will ever know and that we can ever measure and capture fully."

Positive messages being the stories of success of UK Sport-funded elite athletes. "We can't necessarily count the numbers of people that might, in some way, have their lives made a little bit better by watching that level of success."

Katherine Grainger is now focused on a myriad of sports, not just her native rowing. Not afraid of answering the tough questions, she struck a tone befitting an individual with such influence. Only time will tell if she decides to persevere with the support of medal-winning sports, or her tenure will see a change in direction for an organisation derided by many as out of touch.

► Eve Muirhead failed to match her 2014 Bronze in 2018
(RYAN CLARE)



Snow gives Bumps cold shoulder

Matt Gutteridge
Associate Editor

Rowers have been left disappointed as the Lent Bumps was disrupted by weather for the first time in more than fifty years.

The annual races began as scheduled on Tuesday despite snow flurries and sub-zero temperatures; however, conditions on the towpath deteriorated on Wednesday. Umpires made the call that the races could no longer be safely run after three out of the scheduled six races had been run.

Cambridge University Combined Boat Clubs (CUCBC) announced shortly before 12pm on Thursday that racing would again be cancelled, as freezing conditions and forecasts of heavy snow again made racing impossible.

With a decision yet to be made on remaining races, boaties from various colleges are in the process of coordinating a combined effort to grit the towpath. CUCBC has previously said they are not in a position to do so themselves.



▲ Crews battled snow on Wednesday (VIVI WAY)

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Rowing UK Sport Chair Katherine Grainger defends approach to Olympic athlete funding **30**

Sport



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Ain't no mountain high enough as Cambridge reign supreme in Varsity

Tom Wade

Despite the freezing temperatures and strong, blustery winds, the Cambridge male and female Mountain Bike Varsity teams arrived in good spirits at the ex-Olympic venue of Hadleigh Park in Essex. These spirits were no doubt aided by the news that Oxford had a very depleted team. There would be twenty-one Light Blue jerseys tackling the track, but Oxford could only muster five entries, including only 1 woman, making a Cambridge victory a likely prospect.

Before racing could begin, however, both teams were given a practice lap to assess the conditions. The men's race involved 6 laps of the track in a race lasting approximately 1.5 hours, whereas the women were to complete 4 circuits.

As soon as the whistle blew to get the contest underway, Cambridge's trio of Tom Simpson, Rob Walker and Wil Weatherill, accompanied by Oxford's Oliver Bent, immediately established themselves as the main contenders at the front of the pack. Ffion James of Cambridge set to leading the women's race in the opening stages and giving chase to the top men.

Meanwhile in the chaos of the mass start, Oxford's Hugo Underhill ventured slightly off the racing line and unluckily hit a sharp flint which sliced his front wheel open. His tyre instantly deflated and the subsequent half-hour repair was a misfortune that Oxford could ill afford. As the Team Varsity Winner would be determined by the aggregate of each team's fastest three times, this crash severely hampered Oxford's challenge.

If Oxford had any hope left, it was dashed when then fifth-placed Bryn Davies dropped out of the race on the second lap with a terminal mechanical issue. During the Olympics in 2012, the professionals had made this course look easy, but this was not the case for the Varsity riders as those who remained were tasked with tackling the steep uphill and switchback descents, constantly impeded by the high winds. Despite the hard work and ever-rising heart rates, many of the Varsity riders were struggling with freezing cold hands as they began to catch and overtake the slower veteran and sport racers with whom they shared the course.

When the riders passed the halfway point, the Cambridge supporters were

in full voice, not only cheering on the Light Blues from trackside, but also whilst competing themselves. By this stage, Toby Cowell and Elliot Scott of Cambridge had both been forced to retire, but at the head of the field Walker's relentlessly fast laps had earned him a healthy 90-second buffer. Further back, Weatherill and Simpson were still battling over second place.

In the women's race, it was no surprise that Cambridge's National Champion Ffion James was putting in a sterling performance at the head of the field, building the lead she had established in the opening stages over all her opponents.

It wasn't over until the flag was out though - in such an unpredictable sport a mechanical issue or small mistake on one of the difficult rocky sections from James could have handed the race to Oxford. James kept her concentration, however, taking the chequered flag and finishing in what would have been 5th place, if she had been competing in the men's race.

Oxford's Tamara Davenne kept her Light Blue adversary honest the whole way and finished, to her credit, only 12 minutes adrift in second place with the

▲▼ The rocky terrain took its toll on both athletes and bikes (PATRICK BLYTHE)



Light Blues' Jess Atkinson taking the final podium spot with a great effort, working hard throughout the race on adapting her fast road-based style into the more twisty and technical world of mountain biking.

With the women's competition decided purely on the fastest time, James's unassailable pace had clinched victory for the women's Light Blues, and as she refuelled and rehydrated somewhere warm and out of the crisp wind, the men were still fighting it out on track.

In the end, Walker was the runaway winner, opening up a 4-minute gap to Weatherill in second. It was not be a Cambridge clean sweep however. Simpson tired and Oxford's Bent dug deep to make a last-lap pass and take the bronze medal position, beating Simpson by less than 30 seconds. Cambridge filled out the next 5 positions with Felix Barker, Finn Allen, Robert Clucas, Max Vesty and Ieuan Best respectively, with an Oxford athlete rounding out the top 10.

After a poor showing, Oxford are likely to find a closer venue and more competitors for next year's encounter, but for the moment it is Cambridge who are the Mountain Bike Varsity Champions.