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No. 855
Friday 9th November 2018
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Big Oil and deep sea drills: The underside of colleges' investments

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(ROSIE BRADBURY/COMPOSITE: NOELLA CHYE)

Noella Chye, Rosie Bradbury and Jack Hunter

Seven Cambridge colleges have holdings totalling £20.7m in corporations engaged in oil and gas exploration, production and refining. Nine colleges hold investments in offshore funds, Freedom of

Information requests on all companies in colleges' direct investment portfolios have revealed.

Oxford and Cambridge colleges will be hauled before Parliament in light of today's revelations, John Mann MP, chair of the Treasury sub-committee, has claimed.

One year ago, Oxbridge colleges were

pushed into the spotlight when the *Paradise Papers* revealed that 29 of them had tens of millions of pounds invested in offshore funds, including in a joint venture to develop oil exploration and deep-sea drilling.

Today, two investigations in *Varsity* and Oxford student newspaper *Cherwell* detail the relationships between several

Oxbridge colleges and companies accused of human rights violations, several of which have also been listed among the top 100 companies responsible for 71% of global greenhouse gas emissions since 1988.

At £9.1m, Trinity College, Cambridge

Full story Page 6 ►

The overseas students burdened by high costs

Catherine Lally
Deputy Editor

"For a university that seems absolutely committed to attracting the best talent in the country regardless of their background, it seems rather dismissive about the financial context of people from other places."

So said one international student, who highlighted that "while the average UK student will incur loan [debts] of over £50,000, I had already paid much more than that by second year."

It's no secret that an education at Cambridge as a non-EU international student comes with a large price tag. To study most humanities subjects, a student starting their course in 2019 can expect to pay £20,167 per year, while a natural scientist will pay £30,678, and a medic, £52,638.

Along with college fees that range from £6,850 to £12,700 a year, covering teaching and pastoral costs, the money quickly adds up.

Although undergraduate tuition fees of £9,000 for home and EU students since 2012 have negatively-impacted the financial situations of students' families, for many international students, with no recourse to tuition fee and maintenance loans from the UK government, and a scholarship system one student criticised for a "lack of transparency" and clarity, a harsh financial burden can

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Platforming Peterson was not an exercise in free speech. It was dangerous.

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Jeh Johnson speaks about the special relationship, immigration and being the 'designated survivor'

On the night of the Midterm elections, the former Secretary for Homeland Security speaks to **Naman Habtom-Desta** about his experiences in Obama's government

Yes, he watches *Homeland*. With that out of the way, former Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson came to speak at the Cambridge Union on the night of the US midterm elections. As the final speaker in last night's debate, he sealed the final victory for the opposition side as he argued for the continued existence and preservation of the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. He began his speech by recounting the day of Trump's inauguration.

By virtue of having been the 'designated survivor' during the inauguration, Johnson holds the distinction of being the first man to resign from the Trump Administration. This anomalous situation arose from the fact that he was chosen to be the person who is moved to a distant location during an assembly of the president and other senior officials so as to ensure that the line of presidential succession is maintained. This is a concept so popular that it has even become the premise of a TV show, where a fic-

tional Secretary of Housing and Urban Development finds himself thrust into the role of president. Instead of clocking out at noon on 20 January 2017, Johnson remained at his desk awaiting the Senate confirmation of his successor. For seven and a half hours, Johnson made up the entirety of the Trump Cabinet.

During the debate Johnson cited how culturally enamoured the United States is by the United Kingdom. Whether it was the popularity of *Downton Abbey* or how "*House of Cards* was inspired by *House of Cards*," it was clear that for the Secretary, a single election cycle could not define the bond between the two states, all the while reiterating his refusal to criticise his government on foreign soil, calling it "bad etiquette."

Perhaps in an attempt to curry favour with the audience, Secretary Johnson highlighted the role that Cambridge plays in solidifying the transatlantic alliance. With close to a thousand Americans currently residing in our colleges and 12,000 alumni having returned to their native country, the veneration held

“The push factors of illegal immigration are always more powerful than any level of border security that you can provide on the southern border of the United States”

▼ The debate taking place at the Union before an all-night event tracking the results of the Midterms (CHRIS WILLIAMSON/GETTY IMAGES)





towards institutions such as ours, Johnson claimed, counteracted any political fluctuations. In a way, he argued for an even deeper bond that did not simply result from the returning Americans but by the very decision to sail across the pond in the first place.

Without burying one's head in the sands, it has been almost impossible to avoid the American coverage of the Central American caravan marching towards the United States' southern border. Earlier this week, Trump's midterms ad fixating on migrants was pulled by multiple national networks after widely being condemned as racist. With many migrants to the US fleeing violence in their homelands, I sought to gauge the Secretary's view on the United States' role in the in-



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stability. Back in 2009, the presidency of the democratically-elected José Manuel Zelaya in Honduras was toppled by a *coup d'état*, with homicide rates exploding since, along with killings of journalists and activists. American aid (much of it in the form of arms) continued to flow in to the small country as its people flowed out, and Obama quickly recognised the presidency of Porfirio Lobo.

The man who had dealt with a similar uptick in Central American migration in 2014 did not quite see it that way. After asking him if there was a causal relationship between the coup and the current wave of migration, he replied "No, I wouldn't make that connection." Though not a surprising answer considering his position, he did nonetheless continue

to elaborate on how "the violence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador is as bad as on any place on Earth and it has been that way for a while and it is getting worse." For the Secretary, "the push factors of illegal immigration [primarily caused by the dangers of gang violence] are always more powerful than any level of border security that you can provide on the southern border of the United States and that is probably true of migration all throughout the world." The solution that he believed was necessary, consequently, was not just merely fortifying the frontier but addressing the root causes of migration.

The problems afflicting the United States, and indeed countries all over the globe, are more often than not institu-

▲ **Johnson speaking in the Union debate** (CHRIS WILLIAMSON/GETTY IMAGES)

tional in nature, with the biggest arguably being the revolving door between big business and government.

As such, I seized the opportunity to ask him about the ethics of senior government officials, such as himself, who led the War on Terror going on to work for major armament producers, with Secretary Johnson currently sitting on the board of directors of Lockheed Martin, the world's largest corporate defence contractor with billions of dollars worth of US government contracts.

He responded by saying that, "we do have, in law, a two year cooling off period where I am not allowed to represent an interest back to the Department of Homeland Security ... and I think that is a good practice."

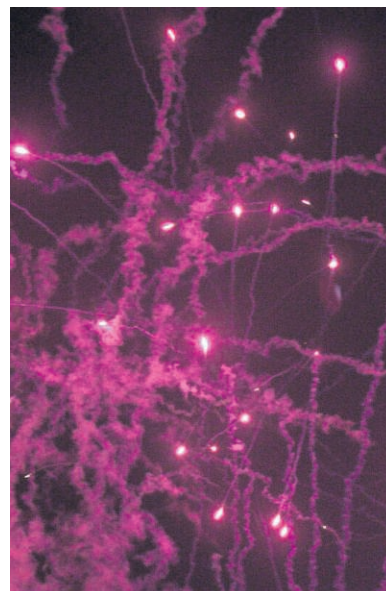
News



Sparks flying

Cambridge residents took to Midsummer Common on Monday evening to witness the city's annual Guy Fawkes fireworks display, while smaller fireworks displays occurred throughout the week

(TOM HIBBS)



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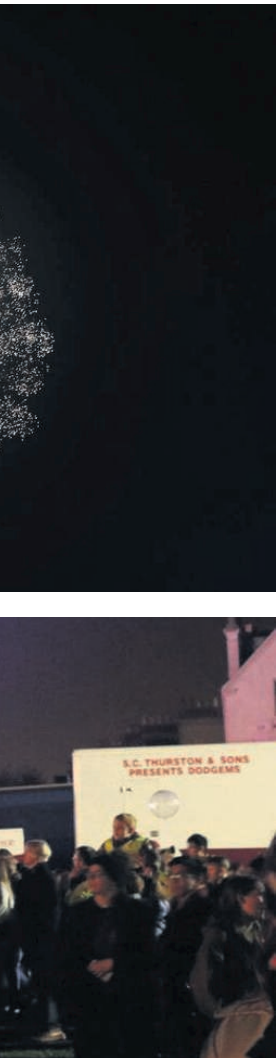
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News



BOTANICAL BOOZE
 Newton’s apples
 take on a new life

Cambridge Distillery was “thrilled” to work with the Cambridge University Botanical Garden to create the “Curator’s Gin”, according to *The Guardian*. The “floral and herbaceous” gin contains botanicals from the garden itself, including apples from Newton’s famous tree. The ingredients were hand-picked and brought back to the distillery, where Master Distiller William Lowe personally oversaw the blending. Cambridge Distillery has worked with colleges in the past, but was excited to take advantage of the unique plants in the Botanical Garden.

HAWKING HIS WARES
 Stephen Hawking’s
 items up for auction

22 items owned by Stephen Hawking are going up for auction this week. This includes the first wheelchair he used, which the auction house described as “the most traveled wheelchair in history”. One of five known copies of his 1965 PhD thesis from Cambridge, where he studied at Gonville and Caius college, is also up for grabs. His daughter Lucy said they wanted to give admirers “the chance to acquire a memento of our father’s extraordinary life”.

FEMINIST FLAG-FLYING
 Newnham flies
 suffrage flag

On Monday, Newnham College commemorated its suffragist heritage and the one hundredth anniversary of UK women’s suffrage by flying the suffrage flag. Newnham was co-founded by suffragist Dame Millicent Fawcett and had a close connection with the suffrage movement. At midday the flag was carried by college students, staff and alumni along Newnham Walk and through the famous Pfeiffer Arch, where it was flown above the college for the day. This march was designed to be a “symbolic overturning” of the 1921 ‘Storming of the Gates’.

MILLIE MOVES ON
 Pembroke college
 cat finds new home

Millie, Pembroke’s college cat, has retired from college life to live with one of the college’s alumni. A familiar face around Pembroke, Millie has found a new home after becoming unsettled by the college environment. Millie was a shy cat and loved her quiet time – one of her favourite habits was people-watching from a safe distance – and she is “settling in beautifully” to her new home, where she can enjoy peace and quiet compared to the hustle and bustle of college life.

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News Big Oil & Oxbridge

The corporations underpinning colleges' investments

● Oxford and Cambridge colleges will be hauled before Parliament in wake of today's revelations, John Mann MP has said

► Continued from front page

holds the most investments in companies involved in oil and gas exploration, production, and refinement, out of the 45 Oxbridge colleges which responded to the information requests. Emmanuel had the second largest holdings in the sector across Oxbridge, with more than £5.7m invested in multinational oil and gas corporations Shell, Total, and Anadarko.

Across five Cambridge colleges, a total of £6.6m has been invested in companies involved in arms manufacturing – Emmanuel College has the most investments in the industry out of the 45 Oxbridge colleges who responded, totalling almost £2.9m.

Trinity shells out £8.2m in big global emitters

Trinity was found to hold £8.2m in the top 100 companies responsible for 71% of global emissions.

The college's investments in Royal Dutch Shell total £1.2m – the second largest holdings of the colleges who responded to the information requests, after Emmanuel, which invests £1.6m in the company. Darwin, Lucy Cavendish and Selwyn were also found to have shares in Shell. Shell has previously come under fire most notably for its activities in Nigeria.

An Amnesty International report in 2017 thrust the company's oil drilling activities in Ogoniland into greater scrutiny. In 1995, the Nigerian government executed nine activists protesting environmental degradation of the Ogoniland land and waters to international condemnation.

Shell has strongly denied complicity in these developments, stating: "Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) has publicly called for reconciliation among Ogonis and between the Ogonis and SPDC, and continues its SPDC's community development programme in the area, despite the fact it is no longer an oil-producing area."

In May, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) called on Cambridge University to "cut all ties with Shell".

In a statement, a spokesperson for Shell told *Varsity* that the company has voluntarily reported on its environmental and social performance since 1997 in annual sustainability reports, and cited the company's Shell Energy Transition Report, which "outlines how Shell's strategy should enable it to thrive as the world transitions to lower-carbon energy".

£1.7m of Trinity's investments are held in ExxonMobil. Trinity also invests £1m in Chevron, £653k in Total, and £497k in BHP Billiton – all supermajor oil com-

panies. It holds a further £408k in Rio Tinto, a multinational mining and metals corporation which ranks 24th on the list of 100 companies responsible for 71% of greenhouse gas emissions, and which has come under scrutiny for environmental degradation through its mining operations, particularly in Papua New Guinea.

In a statement, Trinity said its "core aim is the provision of an environment that offers an excellent education and the capacity for high-calibre research", and that, "as a charitable institution, Trinity ploughs all income received from its investments into education and research, and the maintenance of the College's historic buildings and library collections for future generations."

They added: "A significant proportion of Trinity's undergraduate and postgraduate students receive bursaries, research grants or other forms of assistance."

A spokesperson for Lucy Cavendish said the College's investment managers comply with the UK stewardship code issued by the Financial Reporting Council, and subscribe to the UN Principles of Responsible Investment. They added: "Our investments and policies are reviewed at regular investment committee meetings, with a range of objectives (including ethical) considered."

Emmanuel and Darwin colleges did not respond to requests for comment.

Together, the seven Cambridge colleges with holdings in the fossil fuels industry have invested £4.6m in total in Royal Dutch Shell, £2.4m in ExxonMobil, £1.6m in BP, and £1.5m in Chevron.

Dr Jason Scott-Warren, a Cambridge academic and prominent voice in favour of divesting the University's endowment from the fossil fuels industry, commented on today's findings: "Many Cambridge academics will be sickened by the news that their colleges are knowingly investing in companies that are dedicated to unlocking and burning more fossil fuels."

Pro-divestment campaigning group Cambridge Zero Carbon Society said: "This is a national scandal."

They added: "These are educational institutions that could be part of building a better world, they should not be profiting from its destruction."

Cayman cash: colleges' continued offshore investments

College holdings in offshore investments became a subject of sharp criticism when *The Guardian's Paradise Papers* revealed the extent of colleges' investments into funds based in the Cayman Islands, Jersey, and Guernsey – so-called 'tax havens', which provide investors with greater financial secrecy than for UK-domiciled funds.

Nine colleges out of the 20 who re-

sponded were found to hold offshore investments. Queens' has the greatest holdings in offshore funds, totalling £51.9m. King's and Corpus Christi hold £6m and £5.2m in offshore funds respectively.

The *Paradise Papers* scrutinised one fund in particular: the \$4.8bn Collier International, based in Guernsey. Its largest investment of \$1bn was in Royal Dutch Shell. At the time, Trinity had an estimated £9.9m invested in Collier International. Recent data shows the college now invests slightly over £1.1m in the fund.

Corpus Christi said, regarding their investment in Heronbridge Investment, an off-shore fund with a Jersey structure, that the fund "is regulated by both the [UK] Financial Conduct Authority and the [US] Securities and Exchange Commission in the conduct of its investment business", adding that the equity fund has "a number of international institutional investors", including universities. Queens' and King's colleges did not respond to requests for comment.

Commenting on the colleges' use of offshore funds, Scott-Warren said: "This is yet another case of charity law being used to license socially harmful policies. In the modern world, it seems that a charity can be anything as long as it is not charitable."

Where the divestment debate stands in Cambridge

The past three years have seen a wave of pressure on the University to divest, from students, MPs, academics, and several activist groups, including a six-day hunger strike by pro-divestment campaigners and the forced removal of campaigners from a University administrative building occupation.

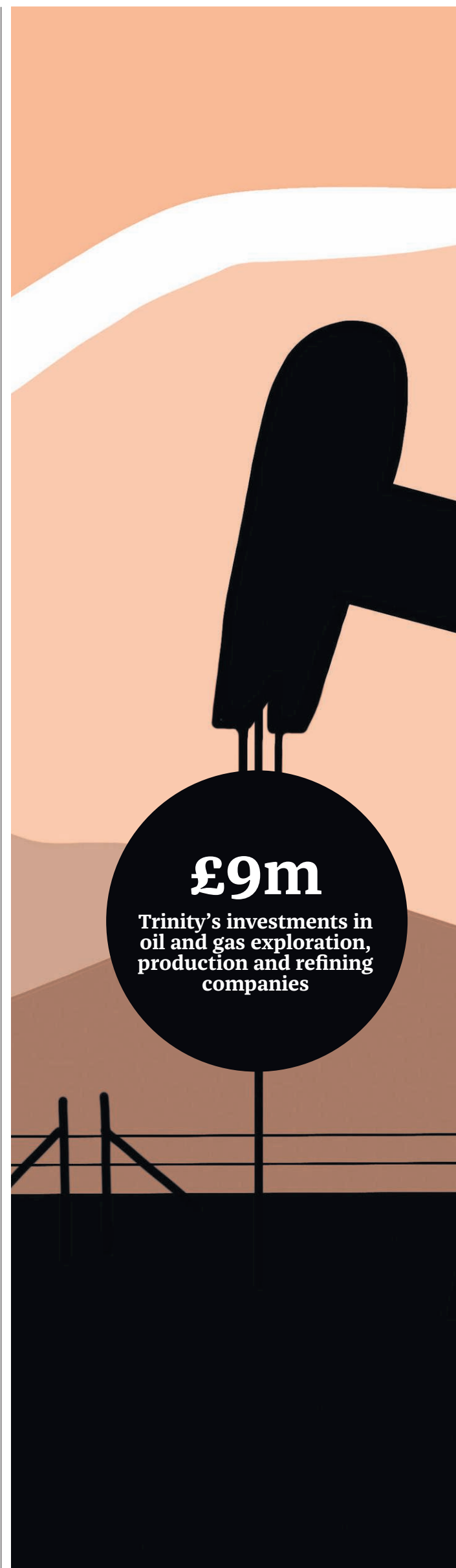
To date, the divestment debate in Cambridge has focussed on the central University, leaving its constituent colleges outside the realm of sustained scrutiny.

Certain colleges have nudged toward divestment from the fossil fuel industry – in March, Peterhouse confirmed that it had sold its direct investments in Shell, while Selwyn has said that it has adopted a long-term bias to disinvestment from the sector which will include the eventual selling of its Shell investments.

Most notably, in July, Queens' was the first Cambridge college to announce that it would fully divest its endowment from the fossil fuel sector.

In light of today's findings, Cambridge Zero Carbon said: "Today will be a catalyst for our new campaigns, aimed at funds across Cambridge Colleges, pushing them to follow in Queens' footsteps and commit to full fossil fuel divestment."

► Illustrations by Lisha Zhong and Zoe Matt-Williams for *Varsity*



Colleges hold over £6.5m in arms companies

Rosie Bradbury, Noella Chye & Jack Hunter

Investments in arms manufacturing companies by Cambridge colleges total over £6.5m, new data from Freedom of Information requests has shown.

Out of the 20 colleges who responded, five were found to hold investments in the arms industry, in corporations including BAE Systems, United Technologies, Airbus SE and Lockheed Martin.

Emmanuel College holds the largest amount, with nearly £2.9m invested in two arms companies, Airbus SE and United Technologies. Airbus SE – a producer of cluster munitions – was excluded from the Norwegian Government Pension Fund in 2016 due to its nuclear weapons production.

Trinity College holds the second highest investments in the sector, totalling nearly £2.5m, in eight companies: BAE Systems, Caterpillar Inc, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Textron and Thales Group. It further holds more than £3.2m in tobacco companies, including Philip Morris, British American Tobacco, Altria, and Imperial Brands, all of which have been excluded from the Norwegian Government Pension Fund.

A spokesperson for the college said: “Trinity’s core aim is the provision of an environment that offers an excellent education and the capacity for high-calibre research. As a charitable institution, Trinity ploughs all income received from its investments into education and research, and the maintenance of the College’s historic buildings and library collections for future generations.”

Demilitarise Cambridge, a new campaign which seeks to end the University’s links with arms companies called for Emmanuel college to “take steps to immediately divest all of the £2,891,021

it holds in these companies, and put in place measures to prevent subsequent investment in arms companies.”

Darwin holds the largest investments in British arms company BAE Systems, with over £320k in holdings. Emmanuel and Darwin Colleges did not respond to requests for comment.

In 2014, BAE Systems signed a £4.4bn deal with the Saudi Arabian government to provide 72 fighter jets to the state. The company has, however, consistently denied complicity in reported war crimes in Yemen.

Ameen Nemer, a UK-based human rights activist originally from Awamiyah, in Saudi Arabia, told *Varsity*: “Without providing the regime with arms, the regime wouldn’t continue or even launch the war in Yemen in the first place.”

Selwyn College previously held £532k worth of investments in General Electric – listed in 2016 as the 36th-largest arms producing and military servicing production company by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – but told *Varsity* that these have recently been sold, in line with its ban on the direct investments in the arms sector. Lucy Cavendish has a ban on investments in arms companies, while Darwin has a ban on investments in tobacco industries.

Demilitarise Cambridge said, “Cambridge’s links to BAE and other arms companies undermine the values that we claim to hold, and ought to hold.” They added: “We call on all colleges – particularly those implicated in the arms trade – to commit to changing their practices. This starts with ending these partnerships and acknowledging the depth of past facilitation.”

Several Cambridge colleges have claimed that Charity Commission rules, which ensure that they must maximise returns, make it difficult to establish a more ethically-conscious investment policy.

£2.8m

Emmanuel’s investments in the arms industry

£2.5m

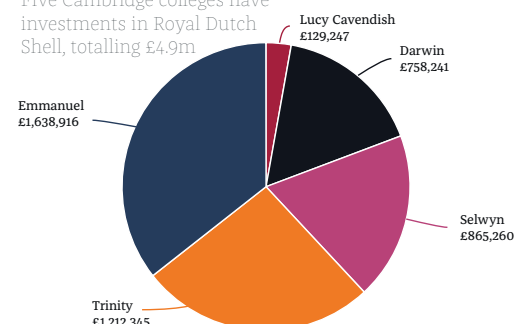
Trinity’s investments in the arms industry

£51m

Queens’ investments in offshore funds

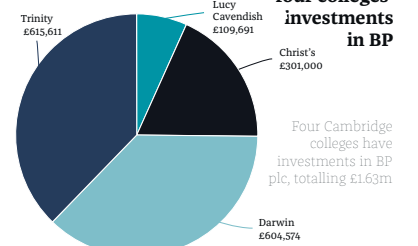
S(h)elling out: Colleges’ investments in Shell

Five Cambridge colleges have investments in Royal Dutch Shell, totalling £4.9m



Deepwater cash: four colleges’ investments in BP

Four Cambridge colleges have investments in BP plc, totalling £1.63m



News

'Closer to home' Zero Carbon takes their divestment campaign to individual colleges



Jess Ma
Senior News Correspondent
Katy Bennett
News Correspondent

"If people are presented with [divestment] next to their hash browns, then they can't refuse", said Newnham College Zero Carbon representative Sophie Thorpe, speaking of the University-wide pro-divestment society's new focus on college-based campaigning.

A fresh wave of college campaigns are currently underway, attempting to breathe new life into Zero Carbon's pro-divestment movement. The group are seeking to pursue new campaigning avenues, having faced disappointment earlier this year when the University made a landmark decision against full divestment from the fossil fuel sector.

15 college campaigns are currently active, and climate justice workshops are being organised in four further colleges.

Explaining Zero Carbon's new focus on college campaigns, Khem Rogaly, co-president of the pro-divestment group, added that campaigning in college feels "closer to home".

Joseph Evans, the King's representative, agreed that "college committees feel more of a responsibility to the members of their college", contrasting the "tight-knit community" of a college to the University, which can feel "a bit more anonymous".

Rogaly added that the fact that Queens' College divested over summer demonstrates that divestment on a college level is truly an achievable goal.

Last year, Zero Carbon principally approached campaign action for divestment on a university-wide level, so their new college-based campaign strategy represents a firm departure from past techniques. Rogaly told *Varsity* that college campaigns will be autonomous, but he explained that Zero Carbon will share resources, such as strategic guides,

▲ **Fieke Van der Spek, Sophie Thorpe and Ellie Thom-son** lead Newnham's divestment campaign
(JESS MA)

information on college structure, and campaigning ideas.

Christ's College has one of the oldest college divestment campaigns in Cambridge, with the campaign having been active for a year already, and has seen a JCR motion on divestment pass last Michaelmas. Jake Simms, Christ's College JCR Green Officer and organiser of the college's divestment campaign, told *Varsity* that the campaign has achieved widespread student support within the college, with their divestment petition last year gaining 140 signatures.

As at Christ's, within Newnham College, students support for divestment appears strong: In February, a pro-divestment JCR motion was signed by over a third of the student body.

King's College, meanwhile, has seen both the JCR and the MCR pass motions calling for divestment, and both the JCR vice-president and Green Officer were elected on pro-divestment platforms. At the beginning of this term, Newnham divestment campaigners met with the college's Vice-principal to establish their goals before launching the Newnham Environmental Justice Society in late October. Sophie Thorpe, one of the three organisers, said that Newnham's campaign will employ a "multi-pronged approach of pressure and presence that college can't ignore" while also engaging in formal processes to ensure the campaign is presented "as a legitimate as well as a passionate movement".

The King's College divestment campaign commenced this term, like many others, with making the case to the bursar and College Council as a starting point. Joseph Evans, a representative of the campaign, emphasised that he doesn't want the divestment movement to be "divisive", describing this as unproductive, especially given the tight-knit nature of college communities.

Logan Malik and Ivan Mouraviev, who co-run the divestment campaign at Clare Hall have organised a petition which will be used alongside a policy proposal in

order to lobby college administration. Mouraviev believes, like Evans, that while it is important to convince those in the governing body, who will meet with the campaigners later this month, the divestment process cannot be a "smooth, convincing" one without student support.

With so many college campaigns launching into action, CUSU Ethical Affairs Officer Jake Simms told *Varsity* that CUSU will take a supporting role in the divestment movement.

Despite Queens' College divesting

“
A legitimate
as well as a
passionate
movement
”

over the summer, the smooth administrative process of this appears to be an unusual case – most college campaigners have encountered some resistance within college, and even those who didn't described the need for ongoing communication within college.

Despite this, many of those involved with college campaigning remain optimistic about their chances. Overall, Rogaly concluded "I feel very positive. I think that we've got a serious opportunity to change this university fundamentally".



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Outside the Old Building

News

The financial struggles of some Cambridge overseas students



▲ Jess Ma, a first-year Corpuscle, will return to Hong Kong to work for at least two years after graduating – a condition of her scholarship

(CATHERINE LALLY)

► Continued from front page

further aggravate financial difficulties.

Yue Pan is the chair of iCUSU, the campaign group for international students, and the umbrella body for all of the University's international student societies. Pan, who grew up in Australia, described students she knows whose families use their "houses as collateral" in paying for a Cambridge education, and said the "financial commitment that they make for higher education" is "quite stressful".

The cost of a Cambridge education, especially if covered by a scholarship or borne entirely by a family, can also deeply impact how students approach their leisure time at University.

Pan said, "I would feel really guilty spending money in Cindie's and on alcohol if I knew my parents were working additional shifts."

She added she has found that "people make the assumption that international students are really rich", which she believes to be inaccurate. This affected the approach to last year's University staff strike: Yue said she felt upset when made aware of international students being

“*People make the assumption that international students are really rich***”**

personally criticised for attending lectures, when for some international students, a single lecture can represent an additionally large sum of money.

Another student, who receives a scholarship from a private company, said "we have to meet a certain grade requirement, behave appropriately and work for them after graduation." The grade requirements "introduce additional stress – there is a part of me always worrying". They are concerned that because the company has "the authority to terminate my scholarship", the eventual "consequences [would be] severe."

"My family isn't well off: we will never be able to repay the company", they added.

One student told *Varsity* that before he took up his offer to study HSPS, he had to produce a bank statement up-front to demonstrate to his college that his family had enough in liquid assets sitting in the bank to cover his studies for three years – which amounted to nearly \$120,000 (£91,554).

A University spokesperson noted that a "requirement of admission" is to declare at the point of a student's offer that "they have sufficient funds for the entirety of the course", in order to prevent

students from being forced to withdraw mid-way through a Cambridge degree or having to "[spend] time researching and applying for funds to support themselves rather than studying".

A relatively small number of countries dominate international undergraduate admissions at Cambridge. Of the 1,653 non-EU undergraduates at the University in the 2017-18 academic year, 420 international undergraduates at Cambridge came from China, 265 came from Singapore, 125 came from Hong Kong, and 94 came from the United States.

A student from Nigeria, which had 11 undergraduates at Cambridge last year, said "the international students that come here are attracted mostly by a standard of education which is unattainable in their own countries", and said that they were disappointed with the "charging [of] tuition fees which would be considered a good starting salary here".

Even getting to a Cambridge interview can pose a barrier to access. The makeup of the international student body reflects the countries in which Cambridge directly carries out interviews – with academics travelling to an interviewing location to meet with applicants. These interna-

tional interviews take place in Toronto, Shanghai, Mumbai, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore. Only in New York is interview via video-conferencing software available. Some international students who attend British boarding schools will already be closer to Cambridge in early December.

As Belle George, a second-year HSPS student at Newnham – who has lived and worked in the UK for long enough to pay home fees but grew up in New Zealand – noted, "there remains no interview opportunities in Africa, Oceania or South America." She added that, "travelling to Asia from New Zealand for interviews rules applying to Cambridge out for the majority of Kiwi students, bar the elite."

Aoife Hogan, a third-year English student at St. John's from Australia said that when she applied to Cambridge, the University "sent an interview team to Sydney", adding, "I absolutely wouldn't have applied otherwise". This service was cut in 2017, and Australian applicants are now likely to need travel to Singapore for interview. A Cambridge spokesperson cited "time difference and quality of connection" as making videoconferencing in certain regions "problematic", adding that they are "looking at ways of resolving this."

Overseas applicants applying in 2018 must also pay £150 to be interviewed abroad.

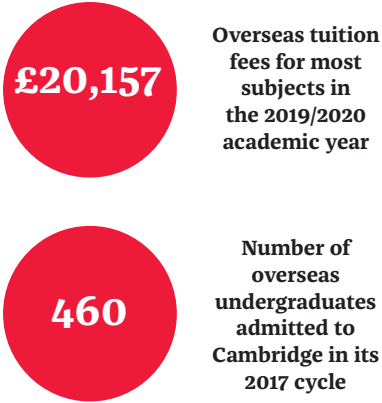
One Singaporean student noted that she "never considered studying abroad, until right before the application deadline" due to her financial circumstances, as she had not been "aware that we have to pay so much to apply: there's a fee for filling in the UCAS form, the COPA form, for the interview, for the test, each costing a substantial amount". The Cambridge Online Preliminary Application is mandatory for overseas applicants, and is used "to make arrangements for overseas interviews".

A spokesperson for the University of Cambridge noted, "the cost of an interview overseas is significantly less than that of travelling to Cambridge".

▼ Belle George is an overseas student from New Zealand (EMMA DE SA)



Overseas and overwhelmed



They also cited the cost of a mandatory English-language exam, saying, “if I had known I wouldn’t have applied!”

Along with high tuition fees, however, many international students at Cambridge do receive scholarships, although iCUSU Chair Pan said she would like to see the University make “scholarships and financial support more accessible”.

Pan added that she found the information was “not very well publicised across the colleges” for applicants, noting that scholarship opportunities are extremely variable in different colleges. Pan noted some particularly wealthy colleges are able to provide high levels of financial support to their students, while she has been made aware of students at other colleges who receive far less.

Pan added that for “a lot of full-time international scholarships, you have to apply” in advance of October, making the window to apply for merit and needs-based scholarships an easy one to miss. She said, “scholarships are very competitive”, and “even if you’re talented enough”, receiving one is notww guaranteed.

Jess Ma, a first-year at Corpus Christi received what she said was one of very few fully-funded scholarships granted to students in Hong Kong who want to study overseas. She said that someone at her school in the year above received it, and their “teachers would encourage us to apply”. Ma found the process “quite competitive”, and did the interview for the scholarship after she had already received her offer – the “interview was conditional upon me meeting the conditions of my offer”.

Ma added that if she “hadn’t got the scholarship ... it would have been quite

hard for my parents”. She also found it difficult to navigate the Cambridge Trust scholarship service, and said she “had to go through previous recipients” to find out what was available. Her scholarship is conditional upon returning to Hong Kong to work for at least two years post-graduation.

A number of students pointed out that schools outside of the UK accustomed to sending people to Cambridge are more likely to be able to advise students on how to receive adequate financial support.

Another first-year from Hong Kong said they rely on two scholarships: one which is “distributed throughout the year, and is reviewed annually in light of my academic progress”, and another one which requires that she works in

Hong Kong after graduation.

They added: “Prestigious secondary school or international school students in Hong Kong are usually from financially-sufficient families, are fairly familiar with the process of application to Cambridge but most students at typical, ... local schools are not.”

They added that some students who would have required scholarships might be unaware of them, saying that this “limits the kind of person who is able to attend Cambridge to those with stronger financial and educational backgrounds.”

Vice-chancellor Stephen Toope recently announced that the University plans to enhance financial support for students “from home and abroad”.

A number of students pointed to what

“
 I would feel really guilty spending money in Cindie’s... if I knew my parents were working additional shifts
 ”

they would like to see more dialogue about high fees for international students from student campaigners within the UK. Pan said that “they’re protesting to their home government and they have a voice ... we don’t really”.

Another student, who grew up in China and completed their MPhil at Cambridge, but their undergraduate degree elsewhere, said that funding opportunities had closed before they applied.

They described deeper feelings of culture shock at Cambridge, and compared “entering a traditional university as an international student” to a home student entering a restaurant where “you try to make an order, but see that you pay more than other customers for the same dish”, and are made to feel “recognisably different”.

“
 Prestigious secondary school or international school students in Hong Kong... are fairly familiar with the [application] process... students at local schools are not
 ”

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News

Delays to Murry Edwards renovations leave students in 'freezing' bunkabins

Alex Spencer
News Correspondent

Paying accommodation fees of £1,180 a term, students at Murray Edwards College have found themselves living in temporary 'Bunkabins' – cabins erected outside, on muddy ground.

Due to ongoing renovations in their College, 15 students have been asked to wait until refurbished rooms become available, a deadline which has been extended on more than one occasion by the college.

Originally, works on the College's accommodation buildings was scheduled to be completed within just less than a month of the start of term, but in early October, students were informed that completion would be delayed until the 17th or 18th of November. This completion deadline was then, once again, extended, with an announcement last week suggesting that renovation could go on beyond the end of term.

"Honestly, there is a very long list of problems, concerning the cold, the damp, and a lot of issues with noises", 2nd Year Law student Naomi Oldham told *Varsity*. "I've had people at like 10 p.m. scrape their keys along the side of my bunkabin for shits and giggles", she added.

"Some people find them bearable, but that's honestly the most enthusiastic anyone feels about them", Oldham said.

Students were able to view pictures of the 'Bunkabin' rooms prior to choosing their accommodation in Easter term, and were sent a document in February, which depicted gravel flooring outside, unlike the muddy reality, and offered only a flattering birdseye view of the room.

After disclaiming that she was one of the more positive 'Bunkabin' residents, second year medicine student Stephenie Yung said she was "pleasantly surprised" with her first impressions of the accommodation, which include a personal microwave, fridge and ensuite bathroom.

She elaborated however, that this was before "all the mini-problems" began to surface, including delays in building work, loud noise of rain on the flat metal roofs, and sodden conditions outside during heavier rain.

Oldham described the ensuites as "honestly freezing", while hot water has become less dependable throughout the term, with showers currently lasting around four minutes.

One kitchen caters for all 15 students, and includes a boiling water tap which was not labelled at the beginning of term, causing one student to burn herself.

"It's like a tourist attraction", Yung said when asked what positive spin could be put on her room situation. "All my friends are so interested: they come, they laugh."

Ten of the students living in the 'Bunkabins', including Yung, appear to have accepted their temporary living arrangements, and consider the possibility of moving out during term-time to alternative temporary accommodation to be too much of an inconvenience.

Others, however, such as Oldham, say



▲ 10 Murray Edwards students currently live in the accommodation (ALEX SPENCER)

that they eagerly await any opportunity to move out.

Both students said that the college promised to allow students to move if they find their accommodation to be unbearable, though there are currently not enough spare rooms for all 15 students to do so.

Murray Edwards is not the only college this term which has seen students distressed with their accommodation facilities due to ongoing renovation projects. Last week, *Varsity* reported that renovations to Bodley's Court have severely impacted living conditions for King's students living in the building, with plastic sheets as windows offering little insulation, and large objects outside windows leaving little to no natural light.

Students in the Bunkabins have also voiced frustration with rent costs, which though low in comparison with other Murray Edwards accommodation – which cost between £1600 and £1900 a term – remains comparatively high.

The college have agreed to ongoing negotiations on rent costs and have met with students twice, which have resulted in the removal of a £40 network charge, and the removal of £250 from students' invoices.

However, the rent charges remain on a par with more well-equipped accommodation at other colleges such as at Trinity, where rents of around £1200 can provide a bedroom and sitting-room.

Following a meeting with students, the College has now agreed that "a further reduction in rent would best be considered" after refurbishment has been completed, based on reports by students on the disruptions they have faced.

Senior Tutor Kate Peters described consultation with students throughout the term as "extensive", with the College "prioritising and dealing with any issues the students experience as swiftly as possible".

“Some people find them bearable, but that’s honestly the most enthusiastic anyone feels

A spokesperson for Murray Edwards College told *Varsity* that the college was “sorry” that ten students will have an extended stay in the temporary accommodation, and has said that they are “committed to the welfare of its students”. They added that the college “will respond to further requests as they arise” from students after the adjustment of water temperature in a room last week.

“The college are trying their best to listen to us, and the senior tutor in particular has been great,” Oldham said. However, she added that “this is a situation which really should not have occurred in the first place” and that “issues will either get worse or pop up more often as it gets colder”, with the students’ stay in the Bunkabins currently expected to continue into winter.

Activist group Cambridge Cut the Rent called the college’s concessions on ‘Bunkabin’ rent costs “a step in the right direction”, but that Murray Edwards has failed to address “wider student concerns with the price of rent [and overhead charges] overall”, adding that “affordable, decent housing should not be up for debate”.

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Features

Asexuality and me



An anonymous student shares how asexuality has impacted their life

Asexuality awareness week 2018 just finished on the 27th of October. Formally, asexuality, as opposed to allosexuality, is the lack of sexual attraction to other individuals. In practice, the phrase covers a large variety of individual experiences, from people physically repulsed by sex to people still engaging in sex despite their lack of sexual attraction.

For some, this awareness week was an occasion to learn something new about a topic they had probably never heard of before. For others, it was an opportunity to celebrate their identity and challenge popular notions of sexuality. But for me, the event just felt bittersweet: it's a public reminder that, regardless of how much awareness is raised, I don't fit in a world that will remain heavily centred on allosexual relationships.

I have always struggled with my asexuality. In fact, I have consistently

found it much easier to deal with being gay than with being asexual. I was lucky enough to grow up in a progressive environment, where I had to face very little homophobia, and never in a violent form. When I came out as gay to my parents a little after my 20th birthday, it hardly came as a surprise to them and it didn't affect our relationship in any way. Whether I will ever come out as asexual to them, and whether I will one day be comfortable enough with my asexuality to embrace it publicly are harder questions to answer.

Allosexual people often find it hard to conceive of the hardships of asexuality. Asexual people don't face discrimination in public; they don't get randomly beat up or killed because of their (lack of) sexual orientation; they're rarely, if ever, the victims of hate campaigns or slurs. What asexual people will often deal with, however, are indifference and disbelief, sometimes rejection – “how can you know you don't like sex?”; “you just need to do it with the right person”; “you're frigid”. Some of the worst situations include asexual people being coerced, or sometimes coercing themselves into having sex, in the belief that ‘it will fix them’ – but that probably says as much about issues of consent, boundaries and toxic masculinity as it does about asexuality itself.

“I don't fit in a world that will remain heavily centred on allosexual relationships”

▲ Illustration by Kate Towsey for Varsity

What I personally struggle with the most regarding my asexuality is its impact on my mental health. This aspect is rarely talked about, even by asexuality activists – maybe because it's a deeply personal topic that is difficult to generalise. See, despite my asexuality, I'm still a gay man: I've gotten with men, been in relationships with a few, and I have to navigate traditional gay environments on a regular basis. In this context, my asexuality has always been a burden. Despite how tolerant or educated people might be, LGBT+ spaces, like all other spaces, implicitly assume allosexuality from their members. I know that my asexuality, if and when I announce it, will make me less desirable. My participation in these spaces is always underlaid with self-doubt and self-loathing: what if they think I'm a fraud once they realise I'm asexual? Should I tell them from the start? Should I try to have sex with them regardless? Can I hide my asexuality? Can I even be attractive to an allosexual person? Can I ever be loved for who I truly am? Why can't I just be normal?

These recurrent thoughts led me to consider reaching out to a doctor to see if I could be ‘fixed’. Of course, I can't; asexuality is not a medical condition, it's an orientation. With time, these thoughts have made me increasingly unable to

fix my own boundaries. The narrative has never been about how partners can adapt to my asexuality, but how I can adapt to my partners' allosexuality: the more men I've been with, the more I've had to forcibly curb or hide my asexuality in order to fulfil my romantic desires. In this context, my brain tends to see asexuality as a defect more than a part of my identity – rather than something I should embrace, it's something I need to suppress if I am to ever find a long-lasting relationship. This logic would seem to dictate that self-love comes not through self-acceptance, but through self-rejection.

Everything that I know and that I've learnt within LGBT+ spaces tells me I should learn to be comfortably with my asexuality, display it with pride. But when I see the effect that it's had on my self-confidence, my feelings of loneliness and inadequacy, and my (in)ability to form meaningful romantic relationships, I can't bring myself to it. As much as I know that I should accept myself the way I am, I keep desperately wishing I hadn't been made asexual. I do not mean to give a damning image of asexuality; some asexual people are perfectly comfortable and proud of theirs. I just wish that when events such as the awareness week take place, I could actually be proud of my asexuality.

“What asexual people will often deal with is indifference and disbelief”

Features

Rethinking the canon: unsettling paradigms

Columnist
Jonathan Chan talks to
Bermudian student Zach Myers

Zachary Myers (Second Year, King's) is an unconventional student in many respects. Zach is from Bermuda, a British Overseas Territory just north of the Caribbean boasting 60 000 residents. One of few students to have ever been admitted to Cambridge directly from a Bermudian high school, Zach pays home fees rather than international fees, but has never thought of himself as British. This background has equipped Zach with a unique perspective that serves to frustrate the ways that race, citizenship, and empire are often conceived of within the English Tripos.

Zach's father is a Trinidadian of mixed descent, bearing Indian, Syrian, African, and Caucasian ancestry, whereas his mother is Bermudian-Portuguese. "Ethnically speaking, it has been impossible for me to pin down a stable identity," Zach notes. He points to historical migrations that have shaped Bermuda – the settlers who were English Protestants or white minorities of Ireland and Scotland, the influx of black indentured labour from the West Indies or captured from Spanish and Portuguese ships by Bermudian privateers, the arrival of Portuguese immigrants meant to offset anxieties surrounding a growing black population, as well as present-day migration of persons born in Asia. In Bermuda, Zach was always considered white. Upon arriving in Cambridge, Zach was confronted by the process of racialisation, or being ascribed racial identities that he does not identify as.

Zach has embarked on a tenuous process of recognising himself as being of black and minority ethnicity (BME). "People see me as an olive-skinned man," Zach recalls. "It's led to me being scanned in so many different ways." He notes being told that he "looked like a terrorist" while carrying a backpack in a nightclub, as well as being accused of stealing from a clothing store. Yet, while attending a BME formal, he was plagued by an iteration of imposter syndrome. "I just remember thinking, 'Am I sticking out like a sore thumb?'" Faced with Britain's societal whiteness, Zach has begun to regard himself as part of the BME community.

This experience of racialisation is consonant with Zach's academic interests. While working on the modern paper

“He remembers being accused of stealing from a clothing store and being told he didn't belong here”



(1870 – present), Zach was fortunate to have a flexible supervisor who allowed him to work on West Indian literature. "Looking back, those essays jumpstarted my process of coming to terms with my identity and gave me the language to articulate my experiences of being racialised," he remarks.

Zach worked on Trinidadian writer Samuel Selvon's seminal novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), which details the lives of working-class West Indian immigrants in London. Selvon made use of a creolised English to capture the thoughts and desires of his characters. Zach also worked on the poetry of Claude McKay, a Jamaican émigré to the United States who negotiated the tension between his new identity as an African-American and his previous identity as a Jamaican colonial subject. As both writers negotiated their Afro-Caribbean identities amidst Western racialisation, their work mirrors Zach's experiences in the past year and helped him better articulate his Trinidadian heritage and Bermudian upbringing.

Zach also wrote about Saint Lucian poet Derek Walcott's epic poem *Omeros*, in which he appropriates elements from Homer and the *Iliad* to the Saint Lucian context. Zach maintains that Walcott's writing articulated the experience of living on a Caribbean island in all of its multicultural complexity. In drawing on the classical form of the Greek epic, Zach asserts that Walcott has demonstrated what it looks like to inherit a literary history against one's own will, owing to

the imposition of the English language. As Zach asserts, "*Omeros* is as long as *Paradise Lost* and is as good or even better." Despite Caribbean writers' positive critical reception in the UK, Zach notes that they remain sidelined in the English Tripos.

While these opportunities to examine literary portrayals of the West Indies have equipped him Zach with a critical vocabulary to examine Bermuda, many of these critical terms are not wholly accurate. "There are aspects of Bermudian history that do and do not fit with conceptions of the 'colony'," he remarks. Bermuda defies conventional narratives of colonial genocide, as the island was uninhabited prior to its discovery by Spanish seafarers in 1505. Bermuda became a British colony in 1707 and remains the oldest and most populous remaining dependent territory of the United Kingdom. The island is internally self-governing, with the UK retaining responsibility for defence and foreign relations.

"The two key sources of Bermuda's economy are imperial endeavours – international business and tourism," Zach notes. Yet, Zach indicates that Bermuda enjoys a high standard of living, a high GDP per capita, and scores highly on the Human Development Index, outcomes of what he describes as Bermuda's 'hypercapitalist conditions'. Zach argues that Bermuda's economic reliance on such industries has made any possibility of seeking independence difficult. Bermuda's unique history and continuing economic success frustrate the notion

▲ Zach Myers is a second year English student at King's College
(NOELLA CHYE)

that political decolonisation will always be regarded as desirable for the reigning conception of a nation-state.

Moreover, Zach notes that an imbibed commodification of the island has been deeply ingrained in Bermuda's cultural psyche. "Just imagine if someone allowed a rich white person to design an island for themselves," Zach notes. "You would get Bermuda." While postcolonial critiques seek to establish cultural identities not defined by the coloniser, Zach laments that Bermudians consume a commodified Bermudian culture masquerading as 'cultural identity', such as taking pride in the aspects of Bermuda most attractive to consumers, including its pink beaches or indigenous long tails. Like many Caribbean writers, Zach shares the anxiety regarding the impossibility of recuperating a pre-colonial identity.

Zach's experience as a citizen of Bermuda reveals that the processes of cultural imperialism are still at work today. Not only does the Eurocentricism of the English Tripos fail to acknowledge the egregious context of colonialism in the past but equally, it fails to recognise the ways in which places beyond the British Isles continue to constitute the United Kingdom itself. While decentering Britain within Anglophone literatures will bring a new dimension of rigour to the Tripos, it may more importantly provide new ways of formulating a Bermudian identity – one defined by the cultural complexities that continue to define the island each day.

“Those essays jumpstarted my identity and gave me the language to articulate my experiences of being racialised”

Switchboard goes to the ends of the Earth

Podcast presenter **Raphael Korber-Hoffman** talks to three Cambridge polar scientists

The polar extremes are some of the most remarkable areas of the world both in terms of wildlife and stunning natural beauty. Yet very few people have travelled to the North or South Poles due to their geographic isolation and extreme temperatures. This week, in our episode on *Changing Climate*, *Switchboard* spoke to two scientists from the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge to find out more about what it's like to go to the ends of the Earth.

Dr Julien Dowdeswell is the director of Scott Polar Research Institute, and has travelled extensively around both the Arctic and Antarctic conducting research on glaciers and ice caps. Dr Dowdeswell reflected on the journeys he took at the beginning of his career, during which it was sometimes impossible to make

contact with the outside world for days on end. Following in the footsteps of his heroes, Antarctic explorers Scott and Shackleton, Dr Dowdeswell has visited Antarctica on numerous occasions. He departs on a 7 week voyage to the Weddell Sea in January. Navigating the icy waters in small dinghies, Dr Dowdeswell reflected on being carefully watched by groups of humpback whales and walrus, and being surrounded by curious Emperor penguins who had come to investigate the visitors to their frozen kingdom.

However, to view the same Arctic wonders that Dr Dowdeswell speaks so fondly of may not just be difficult in the future, but impossible. Scientists vary in their estimates, but the Arctic may be ice free in summer in as soon as three decades. The Arctic experiences temperature increases at twice the rate of the global average, and being one of the most sensitive ecological regions of the world, is at great risk.

Switchboard also spoke with Dr Michael Bravo, who has lived with Inuit communities in Northern Canada throughout his career. We spoke with him about the Inuit desire for decolonisation, as well as the importance of de-romanticising the Arctic in the popular Western imagination so that we can better understand

“We spoke with Dr Bravo about de-romanticising the Arctic in the Western imagination”



its cultural significance.

Lastly, we spoke with Sir Partha Dasgupta, recipient of the prestigious Tyler Prize in 2016, and member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Sir Dasgupta is a pioneer in the field of environmental economics and we asked him

▲ Dr Julien Dowdeswell (RAPHAEL KORBER-HOFFMAN)

about the importance of understanding climate and the changing environment when considering economic and human development over the next half century.

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Features

Me, a coat-switcher from Pakistan

In coming to Cambridge, Khadija Tahir finds herself emboldened to embrace her Pakistani identity

The first time I ever heard the term ‘coat switching’ was at a freshers’ event in Cambridge, when I finally ran into a Pakistani student amid the many British people at a pizza night. After greeting each other with enthusiasm, and talking with animated hand gestures about missing biryanis and salans from Lahore, I was told by a guy observing us that I was ‘changing’ myself to fit in – moving from British to Pakistani.

He said my accent had shifted: I was pronouncing my ‘R’s and hardening the ‘T’s. My accent, my mannerisms, and the frequent shifts in my behaviour were things that I’d always credited to my education at an ‘international school’. The irony of this was that there were no international people at my school: it had become a term for schools that had students who spoke fluent English, with an American or British accent.

My ‘coat switching’ wasn’t at all just a mixture of the cultures and accents that I’d picked up from people around me. It was the social education that I’d received, telling me to act like the West so that I could be part of the West, and eventually have the West become part of my identity. I hardly noticed the changes in my tone and pitch and the shift in my pronunciation when I switched between speaking to a British person and a Pakistani person. I had become so used to being a mirror of the westerner it had become second nature.

The boy from Homerton College who pointed out my ‘pretensions’ made me realise that the power dynamics of colonialism implicitly remained in the post-colonial generations. My ‘coat switching’ was this subconscious abandonment of the disciplines I had been taught to uphold for the sake of being ‘accepted’ into Western society. In the company of another Pakistani, I abandoned what had been the only accent I’d ever spoken in and instead brought out the animations that I’d been told would make British people uncomfortable. I coat-switched and adjusted because I had always seen myself, and my country, as secondary to the West.

That night, I kept wondering why I’d felt like I had to change the way I acted depending on the ethnicity of the person I was speaking to, and why I was feeling so guilty about it. Was it a betrayal of my Pakistani heritage and also my

“*Cambridge had empowered me as a Pakistani*”



▲ Badshahi Masjid in Lahore (KHADIJA TAHIR)

third-generation post-colonial identity? This sense of guilt tied in perfectly with the apologetic attitude I was expected to sustain. From apologising for the religious extremism that terrorist groups killed my own people with, to apologising about the ‘exotic scents’ of the food I rarely cook in kitchens – it was all a quest to make others feel more comfortable around me, and make me no different from them. I had always gone along with this.

I even shortened my name to succumb to the standards that British colonialism has instilled within my people. Khadija, a name so common in the Muslim world, which is a world consisting of around 1.8 billion people, became a tongue twister. I was ashamed of my name being too complex for many of the Cambridge undergraduates to grasp. It was my duty to make my name more convenient, not because they had expected it from me, but because I had put myself in this position. They had only ever seen us apologising for being Pakistani, and no one knew any different. We were sorry for our country. We were sorry for our names.

It was unfair of me to expect people to automatically understand my culture, language and religion, but then why was I so well-versed in theirs? Why was I aware of what a full English breakfast was, or of the political relations between the Conservatives and the Labour party? I just hadn’t known any different. Colonialism, on various levels, played a significant role in my life. My grandfather was educated in Colonial India and migrated during partition to Pakistan. He fought

“*I cannot deny my roots, and now I don’t feel the need to either*”

in the Second World War with the British army and, in order to progress, accepted the fact that adopting their way of living was essential.

This isn’t to say that he accepted his country’s inferior position to the British, but he acknowledged that, even after partition, the impact left on Pakistan would hardly disappear. He was right. The value placed on all things Western was significant: it was why I was sent to Cambridge in the first place. The ‘typically British’ traditions and constant interaction with people I should learn from were driving forces behind my parents’ encouragement for me to apply here. They thought I’d come to appreciate classical music, eloquently written Eurocentric literature, and Renaissance art, alongside getting my degree. That isn’t quite what happened.

I’ve learnt a lot from Cambridge so far, and some of it did coincide with my family’s expectations, but the most important thing I learnt was a simple slang term: ‘coat switching’. It was that boy from Homerton, and this phrase, that completely changed my perspective.

I became aware of how I was responding to the people around me with a sense of embarrassment of where I came from and where I had grown up. Armed with this new awareness, it became easier to appreciate and understand the vitality of people like me, people who had different experiences and different backgrounds from the mainstream dialogue. The conversations became more interesting when I started to relate other people’s anecdotes to my own life back home.

Cambridge had empowered me as a Pakistani, and this institution, which once propagated colonialist ideals, was now the medium through which I became proud of my ex-colonial nation. It was up to me to change the aforementioned power dynamics, and I could only do that by accepting that I was not secondary to any particular race or ethnicity. The right possessed by my country, the right to be heard as a sovereign nation on a global platform, was a right I had to allow myself as well.

Soon enough, after this change in mindset, I found that people valued my viewpoints. I was contributing to their discussions. I held Imran Khan and his politics on an equal pedestal to the British politics that were discussed so frequently. I appreciated Saadat Hasan Manto’s stories as much as I did those of any British writers. I cannot undo colonialism, or even eliminate the British influence, and maybe that point will never come, but this self-awareness has encouraged me to make an active effort to not forget about my country and its incredible presence.

Decolonizing my life began with changing my own mindset, and it is an ongoing process, one that I might carry out my whole life. It’s about appreciating the glimpses of my culture that I see in myself everyday, from listening to Pakistani music while biking past King’s College Chapel, to just talking to my parents and friends in Urdu as I walk through The Backs. I cannot deny my roots, and now I don’t feel the need to either.

Opinion



Platforming Peterson was a legitimisation of transphobic ideas

Regardless of intention, the Union and those who attended Peterson's talk demonstrated a neglect of care for the safety of our fellow students

CN: This article includes references to transphobia and suicide

Trans people in the UK face constant and damaging discrimination. In a study conducted by YouGov and Stonewall, 53% of younger trans adults aged 18-24 experienced a hate crime or incident based on their gender identity in 2017. A third of trans university students experienced negative comments or conduct from staff, while one in seven considered dropping out or have dropped out of university. Another British study from 2012 showed that 84% of respondents contemplated suicide, 35% had attempted it, and 25% had more than once. It is not too much of a stretch to think that even in liberal Cambridge, trans people have faced considerable difficulties that cisgendered people, including myself, cannot even imagine.

This brings us to Jordan Peterson, the Canadian psychologist turned political commentator. Peterson rose to prominence following the controversy surrounding Bill C-16, which added "gender identity or expression" to the Canadian Human Rights code. He criticised this, suggesting that it would "elevate into hate speech" the act of not using someone's preferred pronouns, and threatened his freedom of speech. While Peterson presents his interpretation as fact, prominent legal scholars condemn him for alleged fear-mongering. This includes Brenda Cossman, a Professor of Law at the University of Toronto, as well as Rene Basque, the President of the Canadian Bar Association.

This isn't the only situation in which Peterson has shown his distaste for using someone's preferred pronouns. In a debate with Dr. Mary Bryson, a non-binary person, he refused to use the professor's preferred pronouns of "they/them", instead repeatedly using "she/her", thus misgendering Bryson. In an interview with *Vice*, when asked whether he would comply with a request by a student to address them by their preferred pronouns, he stated that "it would depend on how they asked me", and that "If I could detect that there was a chip on their shoulder, or that they were [asking me] with political motives, then I would probably say no ...". These views show not only a lack of respect towards trans people, but they also undermine the validity of a non-binary identity, minimising their personhood. Last week he was invited to speak at The Cambridge Union.

By inviting Peterson to speak, this platform undeniably legitimised him as a political figure, as, to the outside world,

did the fact that the audience represented a portion of one of the world's most prestigious universities' student body. Let us suspend an analysis of freedom of speech and consider the tangible effects of such an invitation. It is one thing to host someone with views which which the audience may strongly disagree. It is an entirely different thing to host someone who poses a threat to the safety and wellbeing of students. In the case of Peterson, this invitation presented a potential and unacceptable threat to the safety and wellbeing of Cambridge's trans community.

The Union, as the oldest debating chamber in the world and a highly visible body associated with one of the most famous universities in the world, has an incredible amount of authority. Peterson's appalling views on trans people were legitimised the moment he set foot in the chamber, and they were further legitimised when the room was packed with Cambridge students. Peterson, by wilfully misgendering trans people and undermining NB identities, ultimately undermines the personhood of many of our University's members. These were the same ideas that were given a space to be shared within our University last week.

You might argue that popularity of the event didn't indicate support for Peterson's ideas, rather a morbid curiosity or thirst for controversy. But the fact that the Union had to run a ballot for tickets to Peterson's event shows how many people were willing to ignore the potential implications of giving him such an audience so that they could potentially hear something controversial or get a photo to share on social media. This, to me, is shameful. Peterson's YouTube channel already boasts 1.5 million subscribers and his ideas have earned him extensive news coverage. Why should the Union provide even the possibility of furthering his credibility?

The debate over using someone's preferred pronouns isn't a debate between free speech and totalitarian speech controls. Neither is the debate about platforming Peterson. It is a debate about whether non-binary and trans people deserve a level of respect that they shouldn't have to earn – the same respect automatically given to cisgendered people – and a level of safety within our University that every student should be afforded. By inviting him to the Union and going along to listen to him speak, we all showed our lack of concern for trans students at our University.

◀ **Jordan Peterson speaking at the Union** (CHRIS WILLIAMSON/GETTY IMAGES)

Tom Cleere

Opinion

Low salaries deter graduates from charitable and altruistic careers

There is an unhelpful taboo around making money from altruistic careers

Conor Fenton-Garvey



Our current system of ethics regarding compensation within the social sector needs to change. As it stands, the act of making (or trying to make) large sums in the for-profit sector, from activities as diverse as software development to salsa dancing, is for most people perfectly acceptable.

Take (to pick a case at random) David Mitchell's earnings last year. Ask some friends what they think of his £3.5 million pay packet and they will probably

balk at its size. Yet they will not, crucially, make any moral judgments about the actual desire to be compensated for making people laugh on TV.

Ask the same group their opinions on whether a charity CEO should be paid £3.5 million, however, and such a welcome reaction evaporates. Clearly, we are free to make money doing almost anything as long as that thing doesn't involve helping the needy.

Not only is this thinking perverse, it is also preventing large-scale social change

“It must be more than a fuzzy feeling of altruism that guides people”

◀ Last year, only 2% of Cambridge's employed graduates opted for the third sector (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

from taking place. To adequately tackle the big issues of our time – rising homelessness, poor mental health awareness and stagnant social mobility – we need as many of the brightest minds we can find to solve these problems. Yet in the current economic climate, the incentives for recent graduates to work in these areas aren't strong enough.

Last year, only 2% of Cambridge's employed graduates opted for the third sector. Compare this with 23% who chose to work in banking, accountancy, consulting or IT. We are faced, then, with the fact that 98% of some of the most highly-educated students are choosing *not* to use their talent to solve social problems by working for social enterprises and charities.

Are these people greedy? Hardly. They are simply making a choice: do I help myself (and my future family) by taking a well-paying job at JP Morgan or McKinsey, or do I work for Shelter, make an economic sacrifice but help those in need? The two paths seem mutually exclusive.

But it doesn't have to be this way. If we reevaluate our thinking on this topic, we can allow charities to break free from what charity consultant Juanita Wheeler calls the “overhead myth” to offer (slightly) bigger pay packages, making the either/or scenario less off-putting for graduates. This myth is that the less an organisation spends on overheads, the more virtuous it becomes.

The reality, however, is that a charity cannot adequately achieve its objectives without significant investment in its staff.

Charities, therefore, will need to take a larger percentage out of each donation to cover higher employee salaries to stimulate recruitment, which in turn will fuel growth. While many will object to this, it is important to remember that it is the size of the “pie” that matters to those in need, not the proportion of each contribution.

Consider a thought experiment (paraphrased) from charity activist Dan Pallotta: Imagine you are homeless. Would you prefer 100 per cent of a £10 donation or 40 per cent of a £200 donation? Or, extending this hypothetical realm further, would you care about the CEO's salary in the charity that helped you secure permanent housing and a steady job? Getting over the queasiness that these scenarios induce is absolutely necessary if we are to put human and financial capital to better use in the social sector.

At a time where we need more people than ever working in charity, it must be more than a fuzzy feeling of altruism that guides people into the third sector. We should not only allow nonprofits to incentivise graduates like their for-profit counterparts, but also welcome the dual desire to change the world and to accumulate personal wealth. Only then will today's most pressing social needs have a chance to be solved.

The unethical investments of some Cambridge colleges must go

The findings of an investigation into the investments of Oxbridge colleges in Varsity today has shown that the time for complicity is over

Beth Bhargava

Investigations into the finances of Oxbridge colleges have revealed the devastating extent of their investments in the arms and fossil fuel industries. In total, Cambridge colleges invest just over £70 million in offshore funds, including some with links to oil and gas exploration. To cite just one example, Cambridge's biggest investor, Trinity College, currently has £9.1m directly invested in companies involved in oil and gas exploration, production, and refinement, and £7.79m invested in companies that carry out fracking. These raw statistics allow us to observe the extent of the problem we face, but in order to appreciate the nature of this problem it is necessary that we drill down into the specifics of these investments, and look at those impacted on the ground.

For example, Trinity currently contributes £64k to the mining giant Freeport-McMoRan. A *New York Times* piece published in 2005, about the company's Grasberg mine in Indonesia – the world's second-largest copper mine – described “a spreading soot-colored bruise of almost a billion tons of mine waste that the New Orleans-based company has

dumped directly into a jungle river of what had been one of the world's last untouched landscapes.” This year, Bloomberg reported that the tailings from Freeport's mine were being disposed “into a river, where they [made] their way downstream to be stored in a ‘cordoned off area’ since the 1990s.” At the time of the article's publication, Freeport's CEO Richard Adkerson said that this had had “no unexpected environmental consequences.”

These statistics do not just reflect an environmental disaster; they also have a social impact. Although it may seem to be stating the obvious, it is worth highlighting that the devastation of land and eco-systems inevitably causes hardship for those communities dependent upon these resources. Together, 12 Cambridge colleges out of those who responded to the requests for information have £4.6m of investments in Royal Dutch Shell, £2.4m in ExxonMobil, and £1.6m in BP. Each of these companies has faced intense public scrutiny for past oil spills, which have wreaked havoc on their surrounding environments, as well as local communities.

BP's internationally condemned Deepwater Horizon oil spill has been estimated as the world's largest accidental marine oil spill. It was said to have discharged approximately 4.9m barrels, as well as 500k tons of natural gas. In 2012, BP agreed to pay \$4.5bn in fines, after pleading guilty to 14 criminal charges, including 11 of manslaughter following fatalities from the oil rig explosion. A US Department of Commerce report stated that the Deepwater Horizon oil spill killed thousands of marine mammals and sea turtles, and contaminated their habitats.

The 2011 Ogoniland report by the UN Environment Programme found that decades of oil spills in the Niger Delta by Shell had not yet been cleaned up.

Environments where unethical investments are centred are often tied to a history of human rights violations. In 1995, environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, who campaigned against the degradation of Ogoniland, was executed by the Nigerian military, to international condemnation. Shell withdrew from the area in 1993, and has firmly denied complicity in these developments.

The findings of this investigation

“Unethical investments are deeply intertwined in a history of human rights violations, and we would do well to remember this”

make me worry that the image Cambridge institutions present of ethical and social leadership is misleading, and that radical changes are needed to resolve the contradictions between rhetoric and reality.

The recent decision by Queens' to fully divest from the fossil fuel industry stands out as a practical example of how this may be accomplished, and as a symbol of hope. Cambridge Zero Carbon's campaign, which I'm a part of, will this year increasingly focus on the endowments of individual colleges as well as the University, and many campaigners are optimistic about its success.

If these investigations have shown anything, it is that colleges' investments in the fossil fuel industry are merely symptomatic of a wider problem. College divestment campaigns represent a necessary first challenge to the persistence of these investment practices.

This week's revelations have made it eminently clear that the nature of colleges' investments cannot be accepted by students or staff. We will work relentlessly, and together, in solidarity, we will transform them.

Regardless of CUSU's stance: Would a second referendum work?

Although it is a tempting prospect in Cambridge, a second vote on Brexit may not bring the desired change

Lucy Fairweather

That a recent study by Hope not Hate found the Castle area of Cambridge, covering St John's and its surroundings, to be one of the most liberal in the UK is unsurprising. It is also one of the least deprived areas of the country, where economic concerns are uncommon, and registered one of the strongest votes for remain in the country, with 73.8% of those in the City Council district opting not to leave the EU. This is no doubt strongly related to the fact that Cambridge is the most highly-qualified city in the country, with only 4.4% of residents of working age having no formal qualifications, and that has one of the highest average weekly wages at £609.

This week, CUSU Council voted to lobby for a 'People's Vote' on the final Brexit deal, following an open letter signed by organisations such as For Our Future's Sake, Our Future Our Choice and Cambridge University Liberal Association. With debate in recent weeks centring around the appropriateness of CUSU weighing in on national, as supposed

to specifically student issues, the debate at CUSU council largely revolved around whether CUSU should take a stance on another referendum. Debate centred far less on whether supporting a People's Vote was the correct approach in the first place.

Undoubtedly, Brexit would have a large impact on the University and its students. Firstly there is the question of EU students, who currently pay the same fees as British students and who are eligible to receive the Cambridge Bursary and financial support in order to pay fees.

The University is also unequivocally international in its outlook, with academic collaborations, research funding and exchange schemes all currently dependent on the EU and its funding. For CUSU to argue as strongly as possible in favour of maintaining these schemes and the rights of around 10% of the students they represent is widely accepted. Whether to support a second referendum as a way of achieving this is far more contentious.

“Opinion polls have shown relatively little movement since the referendum took place”

Especially as a large proportion of current Cambridge students were too young to vote in the 2016 referendum, to want to have our voices heard is understandable. The higher education sector is at risk of being heavily impacted in the case of a no-deal Brexit, and future immigration rules places many staff members' careers in jeopardy. I have no doubt that, once again, in the case of a third referendum (1975 was our first EU referendum!) Cambridge would vote heavily to remain. But the rest of the country might be equally stubborn.

Opinion polls have shown relatively little movement since the referendum took place, albeit in the direction of a remain vote. However, campaigners for a 'People's Vote' run a high risk of being told the same thing again, leaving them with little recourse to fight for desired protections. While there is a transition period in place until December 2020, the implications of people rejecting any negotiated deal are unclear - it is not just our Parliament that has to vote through any deal, but the Parliaments of the rest

of the EU 27 as well.

It is understandable for CUSU to back a vote on any potential Brexit deal, but we need to be mindful of its consequences. The Hope not Hate report that identified Cambridge as one of the most liberal areas of the UK also spoke of the emergence of “two Englands”, split between areas characterised by Euroscepticism and hostility towards immigration, and “liberal, outward-looking and cosmopolitan areas”.

The underlying structural problems that have led to the development of this gulf in opinion have changed little since 2016. While demographic changes are likely to now give a small advantage to 'remain', there is little sense of any real shifts in opinion - people attending the recent march in London, for example, on the whole voted overwhelmingly for remain the first time around. I understand completely the logic of those backing a People's Vote, but I worry that it will do little to change the situation, if not deepen the divide between these two Englands.

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Opinion

Student activism is as much a product of the institution as it is a critic of it

Cambridge is a playground for the intellectual curiosity from which activism is bred - no wonder it is so central to our University's landscape

Holly Beveridge

Tradition, hierarchy and structure. These were the themes highlighted by a fellow speaking on a panel this week about the experiences of female academics at my college.

Her observations were not far from both the image and reality of Cambridge. Living here can feel like a step back in time. Henry James described its ancient beauty in his 1883 travel book, writing of "gothic windows and ancient trees, [...] grassy banks and mossy balustrades". A summer away draws the peculiarities of this sleepy spot in the Fens into even greater focus.

Yet the escalating campaigns of student organisers makes modern Cambridge out to be anything but dormant. Increasing mobilisation played against a backdrop of Tudor architecture and Victorian rituals seems to serve as a metaphor for the challenges faced by tradition in the 21st century.

Modern activism can seem a strange addition to an environment renowned for its candlelit dinners and antique artefacts. At times it is even framed as existing separately from the general student populace, organised by small factions of the student body. We must avoid this tendency to treat organised campaigns as the work of isolated groups, and instead view them as the product of a culture of



▲ The campaign for Cambridge to divest was anything but dormant (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

intellectual questioning. The juxtapositions may be stark, but the prevalence of protest at Cambridge should come as anything but a surprise. Far from being an anomaly in the rich history of this university, challenge and change are as much a part of Cambridge's story as pattern and conformity.

This hasn't always guaranteed peaceful coexistence. There were moments last year when it seemed that traditional structures would never align with more radical student activity, such as during the campaign for the University to divest from fossil fuels. However, this does not mean campaigns facing conflict are

anomalies of Cambridge life.

Working at the forefront of academic discovery demands a level of curiosity and confidence not dissimilar to the ethos of activism. As much as the roster of Cambridge's intellectual greats were unafraid to ask questions of their fields, organisers can be recognised in a similar vein. It should be no surprise that a university which prides itself on discovery and innovation also serves as a breeding ground for radical protest.

The roots of dissent are ingrained in Cambridge's history as much as the presence of game-changers like Newton and Hawking. The past one hundred years have shown an increasingly responsive student body to matters of political importance. In November 1968, a large demonstration was held outside the Cambridge Union against visiting speaker Enoch Powell following his 'Rivers of Blood' speech.

That decade also saw the creation of the anti-establishment 'Shilling Paper', and a march on Trinity College by CUSAC against the Dryden Society's planned tour of South Africa. Later years have seen a greater focus on domestic issues - in 1972, there were protests against government plans to reform student unions.

Such mobilisation is not unique to Cambridge, and manifests throughout

universities nationwide. During the pension strikes of Lent term, students across the UK occupied university buildings, supported staff on picket lines, organised 'teach-outs' and demanded compensation.

However, it is vital to retain a reflective focus when it comes to student protest so that we can remember how campaigns here have not always fallen on the right side of history. In 1897, male students resisted a resolution that would allow women to receive full degrees. The protest, strikingly punctuated by the maiming and decapitation of an effigy of a stereotypical female student, demonstrates that the history of organisation here is complex - but we cannot face the darker side of our history if we are not talking about this history at all.

Recognising that activists are the natural product of a long-history of challenge and intellectual vigour at Cambridge are two essential steps in granting student organising the respect and legitimacy it merits while also maintaining a clear image of the progress that remains to be done here. Recognising this will inevitably help to quell arguments from those in power that campaigns are anomalies rather than links in a long chain of solidarity. Indeed, normalising campaigning is ultimately what is required to enable lasting change at Cambridge.

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Illustration by Alisa Santikarn

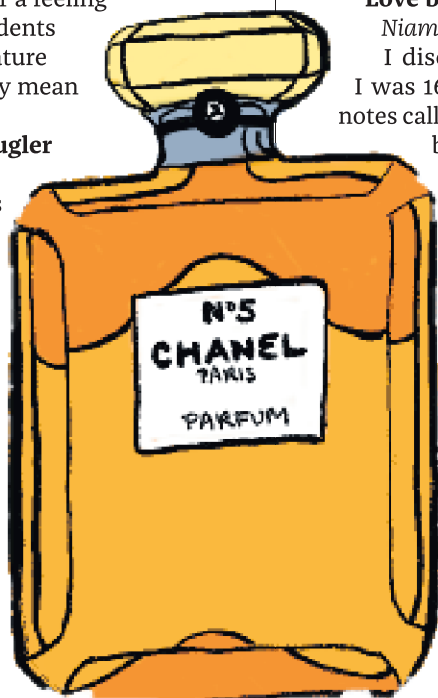
Students' signature scents

Several students reflect on the significance of fragrance and cologne in relation to memory

Scents can evoke memories and feelings - they can remind of us important people or significant times in our lives. Particular fragrances often give us confidence or a feeling of comfort. Several students reflect on their signature scents and what they mean to them.

Angel by Thierry Mugler
Sophie Weinmann

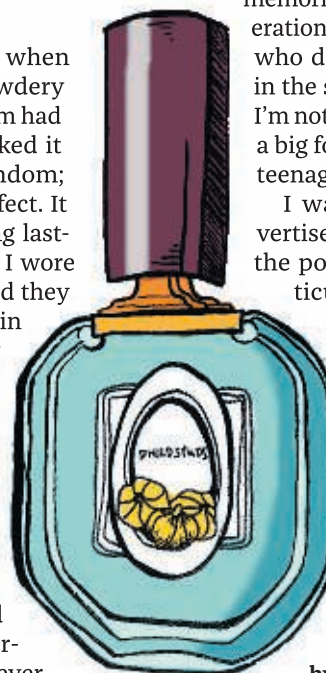
When I was around 14 or 15, my parents gave me a small, refillable bottle of Thierry Mugler's Alien to try. At that time, I stuck to light, floral scents (I distinctly remember a citrusy perfume by Diesel I would wear as my day-time scent) and put on Alien when I went out or to a more sophisticated event. Spraying on



the mix of jasmine sambas, cashmere wood and mellow white amber immediately misted me in a feeling of confidence and maturity. 4 years later, it's become my go-to scent that I wear every single day. Not only does putting on Alien give me a sense of comfort in that the scent has accompanied me through different phases of my life, but every time I receive a compliment on it, it makes me think back to that distinct time of growing up and becoming an adult.

Love by Chloe
Niamh Curran

I discovered 'my' perfume when I was 16. It is a scent with powdery notes called 'Chloe, Love'. My mum had been travelling and picked it up in duty free at random; it ended up being perfect. It is soft but has a strong lasting scent. Even when I wore it in school people said they had known I'd been in a room because they smelt it, and I get that now at university. I remember when they stopped making it I was heart-broken. I didn't think I'd be so upset, but losing this thing that I had decided I wanted forever really hurt, however fickle a thing like that is. I got



lucky though because they started making it again, and I was elated. It felt like I could have this one bit of myself back again. This calming, comforting smell that was, as opposed to almost everything in the world, felt like it existed for me.

Dark Temptation by Lynx

James Dickinson

I will never forget the first time I used Lynx body spray. Yes - the chocolate one. The now infamous scent conjures up

memories for a whole generation of pubescent boys who doused themselves in the sickly sweet stench. I'm not sure how Lynx got such a big foothold in the market for teenage boys.

I was aware that their advertisements were extreme to the point of near parody. Particularly memorable ones had a woman licking a man's face, and the silhouette of a man's testicles growing to a monstrously colossal size. Of course I knew the ads were false, but I still felt special wearing

Illustrations
by Zoë Matt-Williams for Varsity



the scent.

To me, Lynx was symbolic of the unique male teenage desire to become a man.

Now, I laugh at the ridiculousness of it all, and walking past a group of teenage boys and their lingering aura of Lynx still brings a smile to my face - realising how those insecurities that I once had slowly disappeared.

The One: Desire by Dolce & Gabbana

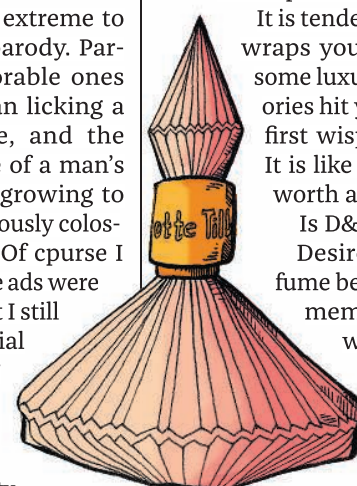
Anastasia Kolomiets

The sweet scent reminds me of grapes, grapes which have been soaked in sugary water and have almost been caramelised in the process.

It is tender and sensual, it delicately wraps you in a soft atmosphere of some luxurious ointment. The memories hit you as soon as you get that first wisp of the scent-infused air. It is like a bottled piece of my life, worth about two years.

Is D&G's

Desire still my favourite perfume because of the emotions and memories it evokes? It might well be, after all there are so many alternatives on the market. And yet I strain away from it, precisely because of its power.



The marvelous Mrs. Zakowska

Jessica Phillips sits down with Emmy award-winning costume designer, Donna Zakowska

‘Clothing really is the highest form of expression’ exclaims Zakowska passionately, welcoming me into her apartment. Dressed in wide black trousers and a long crisp black shirt, with layers of muted-tone necklaces. Her curly hair is pinned half-up-half-down, and she gives off an eclectic but refined, ‘Helena Bonham-Carter’-esque air. ‘Excuse my all black outfit today - it’s the New Yorker in me coming out!’ We take our seats and begin to discuss her educational background.

As an art school graduate who specialised in painting, Zakowska went on to further her studies of fine art at the Bozar and Columbia University. She finished her academic training at the Yale Graduate School of Design in a very

theatre focused program, which kick started her career. She soon began working on Woody Allen films and in the Big Apple Circus, where she remained for 9 years.

Despite now being predominantly known for her television work, Zakowska has always maintained an interest in theatre and tries to do at least two theatre productions a year. ‘For film and TV costume designers, it is important to understand how clothing works in theatre - [how it] really moves’. She explains how invaluable her time with the Big Apple Circus was in helping her to understand rigging and working around physical acts.

Inspired by her current star, she compliments Rachel Brosnahan - who plays the titular character in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* - on her ability to work with clothing. This is something she attributes to Brosnahan's background as a trained theatre actress and dancer, before transitioning into film. Zakowska sees this as how Brosnahan is able to approach complicated jewellery and accessories in a versatile way, as tools rather than obstacles.

Throughout our time together, Zakowska places huge emphasis on her technical and academic background as a painter, as well as her background in dance, describing costume design as the perfect combination of her two main interests - colour and movement. It surprised me to learn that she does not actually sew herself, despite fully understanding garment construction and draping. ‘I don’t sew because I’m too much of a perfectionist’. An unusual comment for someone who is so well-renowned for her excellence in her craft. Yet, her reasoning perhaps resonates with the experience of some students as they strive towards often unattainable standards of excellence.

Working on a period piece requires a vast background of knowledge - Zakowska spends much of her time studying print magazines and copies of French *Vogue* from the 1950s. She believes that this was the unequivocal height of creation for many of the big fashion houses we still love today, such as Dior and Balenciaga.

‘It was fun to take those couture lines and water them down a bit to become believable’. This is just what Zakowska did in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, bringing the colour, shapes and boundary-pushing fashion of the 50s to a light that they had never been seen in before, epitomizing it all in the iconic image of Mrs. Maisel in the blue nightgown and pink coat. ‘Amy [Sherman-Palladino, creator of the show] and I agreed that we never wanted this character to be depressed and we were going to let her assert herself through her clothes’.

We move onto a discussion of the challenges of the industry: a big challenge is that hand-made nature of Mrs. Maisel's wardrobe. ‘Doing that in television a time frame means my assistants and I are out of our minds every week trying to keep that level of design, finding fabrics and coordinating’. With fabrics coming in from England, trying to connect with seamstresses in Italy, and arrive safely in time for shooting in New York City, it is understandably frenetic. Despite her clear expertise in costume design, television series are a collaborative work and we discuss how she encounters issues sometimes with directors fearing the balance between naturalism and stylization. Enthusiastically she explains how her director, Amy Sherman-Palladino, gave her freedom for stylization in *Mrs. Maisel*, something audiences over the world are grateful

for, as it remains one of the most aesthetically pleasing shows on the air.

As far as advice to any budding costume designers goes, she tells me ‘I think you have to live [as] the character a little bit, and that’s the interesting thing about costume design. You have to think what you would wear or do if you were [this character...]. In your mind become these characters and really sense who they are’.

It leaves me reflecting on the way in which the clothes we wear in our everyday lives have the same impact as costumes in the fictional worlds within which Zakowska works. What do the clothes we put on our bodies tell the world about us? How do they shape and reflect our own characters?



Illustration by Ben Brown for Varsity ▲

Cara Nonna, cycling from Girton is no walk in the park

Virginia Bernardi shares her bike-related torments in a letter to her Italian family

Cara Nonna,

Has there ever been something in your life that no matter what, you just couldn't make yourself enjoy it? But that also, when that same thing was absent, for some reason, you just missed it? Before you get confused, I'll explain: the matter in question is cycling.

As you know, I go to Girton, the college known for being faraway, and therefore have a 15-minute bike ride to most places. Cycling may seem like some sort of idyllic picture. A bike, gently rattling the cobblestones and scattering the leaves to the mid-autumn breeze as it drifts through the quiet market town. Well, let me tell you something, it most definitely is not. First of all, there's the wardrobe restriction: flowy trousers and coats, some of my favourite items, are risky at best and avoided most of the time (the last thing I want as I race to my lecture because I'm late is my trouser leg getting stuck in my chain and sending me flying). But that's only the start of it: looking outside my window, the day might look grey and bleak and presumably cold. I'll layer up to avoid freezing (so you don't worry about me),



▲ On her bike from a young age (VIRGINIA BERNARDI)

only to realise about 5 minutes into my cycle, how wrong I was. No matter how cold it is, my torso always generates more than enough body heat itself; I arrive at lectures coated in a somewhat thick layer of sweat. Most days I just feel bad for whoever should sit next to me in lectures and catch a glimpse of my shiny forehead. Normally, going downhill is the saving grace of the cycle but there have been times when it has been so windy that I've had to pedal just as hard as I normally do on a flat, and I'm pretty sure I would have been faster if I had been walking.

And cycling traffic is the worst: I constantly have to be aware of and (try to) avoid peo-

ple, cars and other bikes. I barely know the road rules in Italy, least of all England so I cross and pray I don't get run over (I do wear my helmet, before you get on my case). It's a constant game of trying not to hit or be hit. My bike is heavy, my tires are flat and I seem to struggle more than any of my friends to do the simplest,

quickest cycles, so much that I wish Nonno were here to take a look at my bike from time to time whenever it gets slower. Maybe it's all in my head, but I'm sure I'm not the only Girtonian who has complained about cycling before.

A couple of weeks ago, being the disorganised mess that I am, I lost my bike keys. Hence my bike was locked up and useless; I left on foot. As a previous advocate and lover of walking (not to mention passionate, tears down my face, shouting at the wind, hater of cycling) I thought I would be fine. To my surprise, I suddenly I felt like a bird whose wings had been clipped. Travelling to places just took

too long, going home at night or into the college library during the day felt like they required enormous amounts of effort: what was once an occasionally pleasant cycle became a dreaded walk, a path which seemed endless. I was trying to figure out why this was; I famously hated cycling so why wasn't I happy? Had I perhaps, in my hate of cycling, grown to have it as a constant, the 15 minute ordeal to get to lectures, always there to greet me in the morning like the coldest, most unpleasant shower? Or am I at heart just a very, very lazy person, willing to bite the bullet of cycling just so I don't have to waste all my time plodding along?

Probably the latter option. Needless to say, it was an emotional moment when the maintenance men came to cut my bike lock. I felt that newly independent, free to cycle like the wind (or more likely against the wind, crying). This elation has not lasted. I have a new lock, which requires a combination, not keys (setting myself up to avoid the repetition of mistakes) and hate cycling just as much as before. Within a day I was already shouting my complaints, thighs burning and rain soaking my trousers, but I have learned that you can hate something and still miss it, which is something I'd never really thought about before.

*Baci,
Ginny*

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Why it's okay not to read the book first

Vee Tames explores why we need adaptations

My way into literature and probably my English degree was through adaptation. From BBC period drama boxsets to annual trips as a child to watch the latest Harry Potter film, adaptations provided an excuse to relive a narrative in a different form. And their commercial and critical success is simply unparalleled.

According to new research by the Publishers Association conducted in July of this year, theatre productions adapted from books and films sell nearly five times more tickets than original scripts.

Famous examples that have graced the West End include musicals such as 'Legally Blonde', 'War Horse', 'Oliver Twist', 'Phantom of the Opera' as well as plays like 'The Woman in Black' and 'The 39 Steps'. According to the report, which breaks down data from shows produced in 2016, adaptations took, on average, three-and-a-half times more at the box office and sold 4.8 times as many tickets as original productions.

The report found that, in 2016, an original play achieved an average revenue of £41,000, while a play adapted from a literary source averaged nearly three times that: £115,000. More than 30% of the West End shows that have run for more than 3,000 performances use books as their original source material.

Meanwhile, of the West End's four longest-running productions, 'Les Miserables', 'The Phantom of the Opera' and 'The Woman in Black' are all based on books, while the longest runner – Agatha Christie's 'The Mousetrap' – started life as a radio play and is drawn from a subsequent short story. However, it is the world of screen where adaptation has its firmest grip. Book adaptations compared to original scripts garner on average 44% more box office revenue and 58% higher average viewership. From 1930 – 2016, Adaptations have also won 42 out of a possible 58 awards for Best Film.

These figures don't surprise me in the least. There are instances where I prefer the adaptations of a writer's work than the original: Dickens comes to mind.

His characters are startlingly original and unforgettable even to those who haven't personally read any of his novels, but the serial format of his works often leave plot holes the size of Dartmouth tunnel. In this case, adaptation for stage and screen provides the means of giving his works a dramaturgical MOT. And he is not the only culprit in this.

I feel adaptations are often the better way to go if you have literary commitment issues. Don't have time to plough through 'Middlemarch'? There is undoubtedly a film or TV adaptation for you to get your teeth into.

With an original script, your audience doesn't have any familiarity with the material or even the writer so you are effectively starting from ground zero. Perhaps this is the reason why Dame Emma Thompson, fellow Newnhamite and queen of adaptation, achieved screenwriting success and an Oscar



▲ Maddy Trepanier's stage adaptation of 'Northanger Abbey' in Selwyn Chapel (BENJAMIN KYBETT)



▲ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

on the side through choosing to adapt 'Sense and Sensibility' rather than write an original screenplay. It should be noted when she initially began adapting the novel, her first draft spanned over 600 pages. It took a subsequent 27 rewrites to get it into a state ready for filming. Her subsequent writing projects – 'Bridget Jones's Baby', 'Effie Gray', 'Wit', and the two 'Nanny McPhee' films have also relied on previous source material.

With all this mind, why is it that adaptation is sometimes viewed as a 'safe' option? With a plot, characters and world already in place, it can appear nothing more than a simple transposition for a different medium.

But do not be fooled. As Maddy Trepanier, the writer of the Mighty Player's upcoming adaptation of 'Northanger Abbey' would tell

you, I am sure, a good adaptation is not simply a copy-and-paste affair. It is a delicate balancing act between retaining the skeleton and essence of the original narrative whilst shaping it for a new way of telling its story through an entirely different medium. Often it is rewriting from prose to dialogue and then rewriting again from dialogue on the page to the stage or screen.

Adaptation at its best is a literary echo, retaining features of its original narrative but never replicating it. Nor should it.

Indeed, so long as the essence of the story is preserved everything else is up for grabs. However, whatever you do, don't stop reading the books – any reader gets at least a 10-year headstart on any future Netflix series or BBC primetime dramas. Trust me.

HALFBOY, an interview with Stuart Pearson Wright

Nick Collin speaks to the artist behind the Heong Gallery's latest exhibition

As a young artist, Wright was described as the 'Hogarth of our times' - now with 20 years of celebrity-studded commissions including John Hurt, JK Rowling, and a nude Diane Abbott, *HALFBOY*, his latest exhibition, is an emotionally intelligent investigation into his own childhood and relationship with an absent father. Upon arriving at the gallery, I found Wright drilling in the last few screws to hang the still-wet 'Boy with a bleeding head'. Tall and bespectacled, the artist commanded the gallery space with his words as well as his limbs, stretching meters-wide measuring-tape whilst calling out for numbers and answers from curator Dr Prerona Prasad. Surrounding him are a series of paintings that capture the muted expressions from mandatory school portraits and family gatherings, the awkward postures and empty eyes of children entirely uninterested in being photographed. He cheerfully bounded towards me to say 'Hi'.

Born in 1975 in South London, Wright uses this exhibition to confront the difficult truth that he will never be able to know the identity of his father, an anonymous sperm donor. He begins the exhibition with several images of him as a young boy: alone in his childhood home around a council estate in Buckinghamshire, or amongst half-brothers and sisters in the "drab" domestic scenes of 1970s Britain. These transition to Wright as a teenager and a young man navigating a new set of domestic relationships, and ultimately as a father himself. Wright's paintings exude a sullen personality, with drab backdrops framing Freud-like contorted faces glaring at the viewer. The exhibition does not become overly-serious for this however, often winkingly gesturing to the retired relics of the 1970s: the baggy suits, box TVs, and heavy-set glasses. Compositionally, Wright's thoughtful staging of group portraits and characteristic "half-realist" approach to perspective produce a fascinating dynamic between the characters depicted, fully realising the potential of the "theatricality of portraiture". After a quick break for a burrito and a root beer, Wright was happy to talk with me about the exhibition.

Like many other artists, Wright found an "intuition, a facility" for drawing and painting at a very young age. "I still remember very clearly a painting I did of my stepdad at about 7 or 8 - what I remember very clearly of it were these things about my stepdad that I picked up on, you know, the way he sat, the way he held his fingers together in a certain way - the *fetal processes* that would lead to me eventually painting portraits. I was looking

for these details, this character." Wright's attention to this character is felt when viewing one of his arresting portraits: the richness of personality is clear. Talking on his own process, however, Wright says: "I'll tell you what I don't do, I'm not trying to capture a person's soul, and all those clichés. It really is a question of looking at a person as an object, and they are an object when you are drawing them, crucially - they might not think they're an object but when they are being drawn a person becomes an object: they're composed of abstract elements - form, shape, tone - all those things are illuminated by light which cast shadows, and collectively this reveals the form in front of you. Look at this way: the drawing is a 2-dimensional object, and the object is 3-dimensional, so whatever I'm doing there's some level of fake. It's a piece of theatre.

"Instead of trying to deny the theatricality of portraiture, I grasp that. It's inauthentic to present this as a kind of fact, when it's just pigment on paper. I suppose there's something Brechtian in my work - so I'll piss around with perspective, I'll tilt things up. I present something as a sort of stage-production: kind of like a raked stage. But I'll do this within the language of realism, so you get this kind of play - the feel of real and not-real. I don't want to abandon the language of naturalism, because there is something in naturalism that really pulls the eye in, it's attractive. So I'll play this game with the viewer where I'll pull them in and push them away, so they don't quite know where to stand."

Describing his own childhood as 'nomadic', Wright was moving around the greater London area sometimes several times a year as a child. Looking at the handful of paintings that depict the suburban sprawls iconic of the 1970s, there seems to be notes of nostalgia in how Wright handled them despite the definite wasteland feel - in the corner of one painting we see a dead tree lingering, O'keeffe style, before an infinite horizon. I asked him how he felt now about that environment: "[Those paintings were set] in the same house in Buckinghamshire on this circular council estate - typical two-up two-down council housing with these little twee gardens. These people on that street looked after these tiny little gardens, and so I suppose there is this weird fondness towards the place and how it looks - something endearing about that. But also, an inherent hatred of that architecture, of that drab 70's council estate architecture... I don't like any of it!"

There is no explaining this exhibition without an awareness of Wright's unusual conception. As one of the first children born in the UK



▲ A family photo (top) and Wright's 'Stepdad', oil on linen (STUART PEARSON WRIGHT)

by artificial insemination from an anonymous sperm donor, Wright spoke sincerely about the loneliness and confusion he felt as a boy growing up without the father figure. Indeed, this absence has become more pointed for Wright in recent years given he has become a father. However, Wright is also interested in exploring his "slightly ambivalent relationship" with his stepdad. "When he died I was a student at art school at the time, at Slade, and I had a sense I'd want to paint him someday. So I actually produced a death-mask of him on that basis - I found myself smearing Vaseline into my stepdads dead eyebrows.

"I was just in this morgue in Eastbourne, just putting this stuff on, you know, putting my apron on and I was fine, doing this and then took this mask off and cleaned up, and then I just melted, I collapsed on the floor. This delayed grief reaction, it was very strange. Coming back to this ambivalent relationship with him then, I wanted to think about that, address it, and think about the word stepdad, because I wasn't allowed to use it."

The exhibition grows with Wright - there is a "loose chronology" that takes us from him as an eight-year-old to him as a parent, with a brief look into his teens and mid-twenties along the way. When asked about the transition, Wright points out that this was just the "tip of the iceberg": he began with something like 30 or 40 ideas for the collection but found himself pushed for time. Full-bearded and with a short haircut, Wright found some

problems trying to depict a rather specific memory in '*Up the Downs: a teenage tragedy of erotic ineptitude*' - a self-portrait with an old, rather disappointed lover - "I had to do a sort of 'Frankenstein's monster' effect to some of my own facial features on the life model, a strange stitching together." Nevertheless, the results are deeply striking, both for its stark nudity and other-worldly woodland setting.

A somewhat tangential theme of the exhibition is Wright's exploration of his relationship with this natural world. Whilst he confesses that he has always rather struggled with landscapes ("I was repainting the grass 5 times over!"), he employs natural elements in varied ways - from the tidied box of grass that exaggerates the little boys' isolation in '*The loneliest boy in the whole fucking world*', to the greyed forests playing up the uncertainty of the figure in a painting like '*Wanderer*'. This tangential theme is provocative, though it does draw away from the impact of the central visual themes around the suburbs and the family home - the exhibition loses what could have been a tight cohesion as a result.

Despite the somewhat scattered theming, the exhibition is excellent. There is a deeply sensitive treatment of Wright's own unique childhood experience and relationships, and his unique 'naturalistic' style, together with a powerful eye for character composition, result in a collection of paintings that will fix upon any viewer that wanders through Downing's Heong gallery.

Using pop culture figures to make sense of identity politics

Rachel Weatherley argues that the omission of the AIDS crisis turns the new Queen biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody* into a work of fiction

The hotly-anticipated Queen biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody* hit cinemas last Wednesday, to relatively mixed reviews. Despite this lack of consensus, I thought it made for an exhilarating watch – flamboyant and exciting in some parts, poignant in others. The film storms through almost two decades of studio recording sessions, romances, concerts and debauched parties, the band experiencing a meteoric rise to fame, as well as a fall in the wake of lead vocalist Freddie Mercury's solo deal signing. In an emotionally charged scene, Mercury returns from Munich and reunites with the band, who go on to perform the Live Aid set which would mesmerise a generation.

It is worth pondering over why the producers decided this would be the point at which the film culminates. Of course, there is no doubt that Mercury solidified himself as a world-class frontman at this concert. Rami Malek – prosthetic molars and all – does a superb job in embodying the singer's dynamic vocal genius as he struts across the stage in the final sequence. He reminds the audience that there are not enough superlatives to describe the transcendental magic of on-stage Freddie Mercury.

Unbeknownst to all but the band and his closest friends, Mercury was also in the early stages of his battle with HIV. It would be another 6 years until he succumbed to the disease, dying of AIDS-related bronchopneumonia in November 1991. For this reason, some of the critical heat received by the film has questioned whether Mercury's life story was adequately depicted. Reference to both his diagnosis, and his relationship with Jim Hutton – the man he would stay with for the rest of his life – is sparse; his ensuing battle with the illness in the six years after Live Aid is left out of the film altogether.

David France's brilliant documentary *How To Survive A Plague*, released in 2012, gives much-needed credit to the activist organisations Act Up and TAG, and the tireless work they did in galvanising public support and bringing attention to the AIDS crisis. It would take years of laying down in the streets and disrupting rallies, church services and medical conferences before the FDA (the US Food

and Drug Administration) would cede to the key demand that the usual 7-10 year period for drug trialling would be considerably shortened to speed up the introduction of potentially life-saving treatments. It would not be until 1996 that protease inhibitors were released onto the market, the most effective drug course to reduce the HIV viral load in patients that we have to date. Before this breakthrough, six million people would die of AIDS-related illness.

While *Bohemian Rhapsody* does not purport to be a factual documentary, depicting social issues through the medium of drama is often an effective way to raise public awareness. Film has often proved itself to be a brilliant, accessible way of teaching younger generations about sensitive topics like the AIDS crisis – and with a star-studded cast and \$70 million budget to boot, there is no doubt that *Bohemian Rhapsody* will be watched by a wide audience.

Although a dramatic retelling of the Queen story would not be so captivating without the costumes, lavish parties and debauchery that do appear, films depicting real life equally shoulder a responsibility to do this in an accurate, contextually sensitive manner. There continues to be a plethora of stigmatising misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS, and despite huge advances in the treatment of the condition, there is still work to be done. In July, Larry Kramer, activist and figurehead of the Act Up movement, penned a New York Times op-ed lambasting those who posit that the worst is over for the LGBT+ community. Antiretroviral drugs, Kramer reminds us, are still prohibitively expensive and have many unpleasant side effects.

As such, the film may have done well to address Freddie's later life. When Malek's Mercury breaks the news to the band in the film, he proclaims 'I don't want to be an AIDS poster body – their cautionary tale!' This statement not only emphasises the importance of remembering Freddie as an artistic genius, but also on shifting focus away from popular individuals so as to not diminish the widespread, very personal suffering of all those that died of the illness or knew those who did. Yet while Freddie Mercury himself should not bear the burden of representing the AIDS infected community, his un-

timely death at 45 has left an indelible mark on his legacy, recognised fittingly not just by the hugely successful tribute concert, but also by the Mercury Phoenix trust that was set up in his memory in 1992, and which funds over 700 global HIV initiatives to this day.

Acting like Freddie's death was merely incidental only serves to uphold a dangerous narrative perpetuated by apologists for the Thatcher government and Reagan/Bush administration. That the AIDS crisis was no more of an 'oopsie daisy' on the part of those holding power at critical moments of the epidemic – a narrative which is categorically untrue. The marginalisation of the interests of the gay community underpinned a bureaucratic inertia that would postpone numerous attempts to invest in trials for premeds in the UK. Thatcher also tried to prevent the distribution of public health leaflets about safe sex, which she deemed 'in bad taste' (they did end up being circulated, but with considerable text amendments). These bigoted attitudes can still be found today, particularly in the developing world, where AIDS continues to affect millions. Freddie Mercury was killed by systematic and institutionalised homophobia, as were the 22 million people that have died since the epidemic began. Until we grapple with this fact, Mercury's life story cannot be accurately told. While nobody should be remembered purely for the illness they died of, a film that bypasses the injustices done to Mercury as well as so many others in the HIV and LGBT+ communities does a disservice to his legacy, and is no longer popular history, but fiction.

▲ Actor Rami Malek has been praised for his portrayal of the Queen frontman
(20TH CENTURY FOX)



Feeling blue with The Neighbourhood

Sophie Weinmann uses the autumnal backdrop as a canvas for connecting with the tristful tunes of The Neighbourhood

With the days getting shorter, the arrival of more and more grey and gloomy mornings, and those end of term blues slowly kicking in, I've found myself gravitating towards music that embraces the melancholy and fall feelings without dragging my mood into sadness.

After making Jesse Rutherford's 2017 solo project & the soundtrack of my summer, this autumn I've rediscovered my love for The Neighbourhood, and specifically their self-titled album from earlier this year.

Sticking to their usual moody, low-tempo rock with hints of pop and R&B thrown in, The Neighbourhood fittingly use the album to explore how they have been dealing with the highs and lows of their career, the refreshingly raw lyrics reflecting what it means to be

a part of their band. With a handful of more upbeat songs thrown in, the record is the ideal backdrop to rainy days in the library or dreary strolls to Sidgwick and back.

'Revenge', 'Void' and the appropriately titled 'Sadderdaze' are ideal examples of the generally moody vibe of the album suited to imposing dark afternoons.

The hook of my favourite song on the album, 'Scary Love', a track heavy with synthesizers and drums, blends vulnerable lyrics with a strong, propulsive beat. Both 'Scary Love' and 'Blue' provide a welcome disruption with their wavy and hip-hop elements, but still feel natural within the album's lyrical pattern.

Vocally, Jesse Rutherford is especially strong on the final track of the album, 'Stuck With Me', where he elegantly delivers some of his most contemplative lyrics: "I got caught up in the forest, hangin' with the trees//Realized I'm less important than I thought I'd be." Those lines represent one way in which The Neighbourhood explore the theme of perfectionism throughout the album.

'Nervous' begins with Rutherford's emotional and eerie concession, "Maybe I shouldn't try to be perfect, I confess, I'm obsessed with the surface." As the end of term looms, it is

natural for us to reflect on our achievements, often judging our relative successes or failures ruthlessly, regardless of how many times we've been through the same demanding cycle. Although Rutherford's reflections on the expectations of perfection and the inevitability of falling short are situated within a very different context, they most definitely strike a chord when it comes to a Cambridge term.

One of the reasons why I have been so drawn to The Neighbourhood lately is the comforting familiarity of listening to tracks that I know so well. When the album first arrived in March, it suited the burgeoning notes of Spring, and Lent term in many ways marked a process of etching the lyrics into my memory.

Now, as the shapes and environments begin to shift outside the window, new morphs into old, and we start to search for feelings of serenity and security: putting up candles and fairy lights, watching Christmas movies way too early, or listening to songs that allow us that therapeutic embrace of melancholy.

At this stage of Michaelmas, I'm simply not in the mood to spin any upbeat pop songs or high-energy rap, but not because the grey weather makes me sad; in fact, I must confess

these are kind of my favourite days. No, it is because it can be nice to let yourself wallow in some of those winter blues.

Striking a balance between reflective, melancholic and a hint of darkness, The Neighbourhood's self-titled album is the ideal soundtrack to accompany that wallowing.



▲ Lead singer of the Neighbourhood, Jesse Rutherford (STEFAN BRENDING)

Tangible objects are still important to our experience with music

Music columnist Anna Mochar reflects on the role of the auditory and visual in how she interacts with music

My first forays into creating my own music library happened on a school trip when I was 13. Scrolling through her iPod Nano on the bus, a friend introduced me to the concept of a genuinely personal taste in music. After we'd returned back home, she gave me a USB stick with all her music on it. This opened up a new world of songs and artists to me – I realised just how much was out there besides my parents' CD collection and the tunes I'd heard on the radio.

Since then, I have gone through cycles of listening to various artists intensively, but that first real introduction to curation still sticks with me today. While most of the songs that I was given by my friend seven years ago had originally been bought on iTunes, that has hardly ever been the way that I have purchased music. This memory has got me thinking about the ways in which I support artists in general. When I spend, I'm the kind of person who likes to be able to have a physical object to show for it. With regards to music, this translates to buying CDs, merch, and concert tickets rather than MP3 files. The latter has gradually become less relevant to me over the years. One of the cupboards in my sister's room houses our joint CD collection – a physical representation of virtually everything I have listened to from the age of 13. For some



▲ Album art, booklets, cracks on CD cases – they've always been part of my experience of music (ANNA MOCHAR)

reason, music has always felt more special to me if it is connected to something I can hold in my hands and look at. Album art, booklets, cracks on CD cases – they've always been part of my experience of music.

This connection of the auditory sense with the visual and touch has consistently been an important part of how I interact with music. Naturally, this eventually led to buying merch. Somehow, wearing band shirts feels like an intensely personal way of supporting an artist. Perhaps this has to do with how openly it shows support: it indicates public loyalty to an artist and invites challenges regarding the music you listen to. Furthermore, it's a way of integrating music into your general aesthetic and, especially, the way you dress. These are all quite fundamental aspects of the way we present ourselves to the world. Being able to tie our music tastes into our appearance is

almost a way of asserting our inner life quietly, open to an external gaze.

Besides, I have realized that merch will stay relevant to me for far longer than most other mediums of financially supporting an artist. I have witnessed my personal demise of the MP3 file, now opting for streaming sites instead and sadly neglecting iTunes. CDs have similarly become less relevant to me. I will rarely go and look for my old CD player to listen to music and when I do, it's for the nostalgia more than anything else. My everyday interaction with music isn't actively based on spending in this way. However, I have realised that over the years my friends and I have gradually become happier to buy concert tickets. Of course, this has to do with the fact that we all started to work summer and weekend jobs and suddenly had more money at our disposal than ever before. Nonetheless,

I also think that there is a link to be found to the way I've come to appreciate and interact with music: it is all very much focused around looking for an experience that has more of a bearing on my life than simply providing a soundtrack to fade into the background. A concert leaves me with memories, a new-found appreciation for artists' musical skills, and a ticket. A physical memory.

I accept that my support of artists has morphed a little over the years. Whereas buying a CD was once the only way I could conceive of simply having access to music, it has now become a more complex interaction. Buying music, merch, or tickets is a personal reaction to something that is of importance to me in my everyday life. I suppose it's a way of thanking artists. And, of course, of forging a deeper connection with the music I listen to.

Science

What makes teenagers so resilient?

Thea Elvin discusses new strides in the field of mental health research, investigating how modern techniques can shed light on suicide risk factors

Content note: This article includes references to suicide

One in four people experience the isolating and traumatic effects of mental health disorders over their lives, with around 75% of adult mental health problems beginning before the age of 18. This can harm education and social interactions, leading to long-term adverse effects in relationships and future job opportunities. In some cases, it can cost lives: around 16% of young people have considered suicide, with 8% attempting it at least once.

Yet, surprisingly little is known regarding the brain mechanisms and environmental factors that cause mental health problems in teenagers. One of the groups setting out to combine current understanding of mental health with cutting-edge science is the HOPES (Help Overcome and Prevent the Emergence of Suicide) project, funded through a Brighter Futures Grant from MQ, led by Dr Anne-Laura van Harmelen of Cambridge's Department of Psychiatry and Lucy Cavendish College. The project, which started this September, is a large collaboration between research institutions across the world and looks at

predicting what makes adolescents vulnerable to attempting suicide – and, conversely, what allows them to be resilient. “This research is trying to work out how the pieces of the puzzle fit together,” says van Harmelen. Brain scans from around 4,000 young people, aged between 14 and 24 years old, as well as information on their social and environmental circumstances, are pieced together to create a full picture of those factors, both inside and outside the body, that might lead to someone making an attempt on their life. Such a large sample size allows for complex statistical analyses which had not previously been possible.

At present, HOPES looks at certain factors known to exist within the population, such as bullying, to examine how these are related to brain-based vulnerability regarding attempted suicide. The next step would be to look at whether these vulnerability indicators are able to predict certain behaviours in groups of people over time. Ultimately, the researchers aim to be following people over a span of several years, monitoring changes in their brain and social environment. “We are diving deeper into the factors and mechanisms that might help,” says van Harmelen. “We know there are lots of social, emotional and behavioural factors that help to build resilience, and that these factors are amenable to intervention by therapists – but which are the most important, or, indeed, is it a specific combination of these factors?”

The nature of mental health and its uniqueness characterisation within the mind of each individual means that aspects of the research are not without

their challenges. Reaching out to, and scanning, the brains of adolescents who are having suicidal thoughts is difficult, making the collaborations within the project extremely valuable. The complex nature of mental health problems means that it is also difficult to make progress without looking at a wide variety of factors. Van Harmelen emphasises that the concept of resilience – when a person fares better than expected in the face of stressors – is especially difficult to define. Resilience functioning is dynamic, and can vary within individuals depending on the situation, with many different factors facilitating resilient responses. From genetic phenotypes, to hormonal stress responses, to whether or not the person has had enough sleep, the combination of factors such as these make it impossible to determine resilience.

▼ **Dr van Harmelen's HOPES project is making promising progress in the study of mental health**



“A marked rise in attempted suicides makes the project particularly timely”

ience and vulnerability simply from a brain scan. This is yet another reason why HOPES focuses on the broadest range of factors at the heart of these issues. Research of this kind is not new: psychologists have been studying suicidal behaviours for over fifty years. However, most of this research so far has focused on adults. The HOPES project is taking a strikingly novel approach by investigating suicide and mental health in the adolescent brain.

Adolescence is known to be a turbulent period in brain development, in which many begin to show symptoms of mental health problems.

A marked rise in attempted suicides, particularly in young males, and the worrying percentage of adolescents considering taking their own lives makes the HOPES project particularly timely.

“The collaborative nature of the project provides us with the largest dataset on adolescent suicidality to date,” says van Harmelen.

“It is a really important developmental time.” Although the project is relatively new, its leaders are optimistic for its beneficial future impact. “Any better understanding of what makes you vulnerable to suicidality would be a massive milestone,” says van Harmelen. A better understanding and ability to predict suicidal behaviours could lead to better intervention and, with hope, a long term reduction in suicidal behaviours in adolescents.



Varsity explains How do Bitcoins work?

Joseph Krol
Science Editor

The problem that Bitcoin set out to solve began with a disenchantment with conventional banks. The traditional financial system relies on all users trusting some third party to mediate the exchange, both to confirm

“How can one ensure that the same digital token isn't used twice?”

that the payment was indeed made, and to confirm that both participants have the money they purport to. For many years, cryptographers had been looking for a way in which this middleman could be removed from the transaction, in part to reduce this reliance on trust. However, there was a central issue, known as the ‘double-spending problem’ – essentially, when digital currencies are used without a central authority, how can one ensure that the same digital token isn't used twice? It proved rather difficult to solve; the first practical solution was published in a 2008 paper, credited only to the shadowy, pseudonymous figure Satoshi Nakamoto. (They left the project around 2010; their actual identity is still unknown, despite inordinate amounts of speculation.) Two months later, Nakamoto launched Bitcoin as a practical currency.

The protocol behind Bitcoin is centred on the ‘blockchain’, a public record of transactions made using the currency. Each time an exchange takes place, a message is broadcast, and checked through the network against the records to prevent double-spending. Every ten minutes, the transactions are grouped together into a ‘block’, which is then added to the blockchain.

Nakamoto's idea was to open up the block creation process to public competition, with accuracy being ensured through a ‘proof-of-work’ system. In a broad sense, the ‘miners’ race to solve a mathematical problem, whose answer is included in the block. The problem is set up such that the answer can be checked immediately, but finding the answer takes a vast amount of time. This is then proof that the process has been carried out correctly, and the block is

“The Bitcoin miners race to solve a mathematical problem”

then included in the overall chain. The user who created the block receives a payment in Bitcoin; they hence contribute to both the maintenance of the public transaction record and the introduction of new Bitcoins into the economy.

These factors mean that the system is extremely secure – the public nature makes it almost impossible to successfully carry out fraud. There are certainly other concerns, though – the possibility of anonymity has arguably made it easier for people to carry out illegal business over the internet. There's also the remarkable statistic that, due to the amount of hardware being used worldwide in the mining process, the electricity usage for the currency is approaching 1% of the world total. There are certainly questions to be asked.

Looking into the heart of a computer

Varsity's web developer **Edwin Balani** looks deep into the heart of a computer, otherwise known as an operating system

To talk about the “heart” of a computer is a fantastically vague topic. Rather, I hope to explain how an operating system — or ‘OS’ for short — tries its best to solve issues of scarcity and competition within a computer. It is the invisible player critical to a computer's smooth running, and one quite different from the guts that can be found by dissecting the belly of a laptop. When, for example, someone writes a Varsity article while Tom Misch songs play in the background — hypothetically speaking, of course — and experiences no interruption or hold-up from the computer they're using, they have the OS to thank.

In the beginning of the post-war era, when computers occupied great chunks (or the entirety) of a room, they had only human operators — and the words “operating system” would have fallen on unknowing ears. A computer's users (say, astrophysics researchers needing to process radio telescope data) would leave a program's code with the operators; USB memory sticks were still far in the future at this point, and the more conventional format was a stack of punched cards. The operators would load and run each program in turn, and the researcher could return hours or days later to pick up the printed-out results of their program (or, if unlucky, to hear the news that their badly-written program had crashed).

In jargon, each program to run was a “job”. With time, computers gained features to make the running of jobs easier — for instance, a set of many jobs could be loaded from stacks of cards to one tape, which is then read and executed by the computer as a single batch. What was missing, however, was the ability to run two or more jobs simultaneously, which is sensibly named “multitasking”.

Here we have our first encounter with scarcity and competition at play. In a truth that holds today almost as much as it did half a century ago, true multitasking was impossible: at a basic level, a running job has exclusive use of the computer. Instead, then, the computer must rapidly switch its focus between however many jobs it is juggling.

It was around this time that NASA put Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong on the Moon in the Apollo 11 mission; crucial to its success was the Apollo Guidance Computer (AGC). The AGC's software was built around the same concept of “jobs”: this time, they were hard-coded during the AGC's manufacture, and the computer could multitask to keep up to seven jobs running at any one time. (The actual code used to program the AGC is openly available online, and contains such affectionately named routines as “BURN, BABY, BURN”.) The AGC was ver-

▲ Illustration by Ben Brown for Varsity

satile: astronauts could issue commands to run certain programs, to query status information, to check warnings thrown by the computer, and indeed to disable the computer either partially or totally if things went very wrong.

Back on Earth, interactive computing emerged in the rise of “time-sharing systems”, around the turn of the 1970s; as the name suggests, these systems still allowed the computer's resources to be distributed fairly, but this time the users could sit directly at terminals to use it. This was the point at which the

term “operating system” started to gain a meaning.

By this point, computers had to worry little about fair use, since they were tended over by skilled operators. Taking the hands off the wheel and letting ‘users’ loose on the system themselves presents challenges: how to stop any one user from running an intensive program that consumes resources to the detriment of others? After all, an operator could feasibly flick through a stack of punched cards (which often had a human-readable printout of the

line of code that the holes spell out) as a ‘sanity check’ before loading it into the computer, and potentially spot any fatal bugs, but this

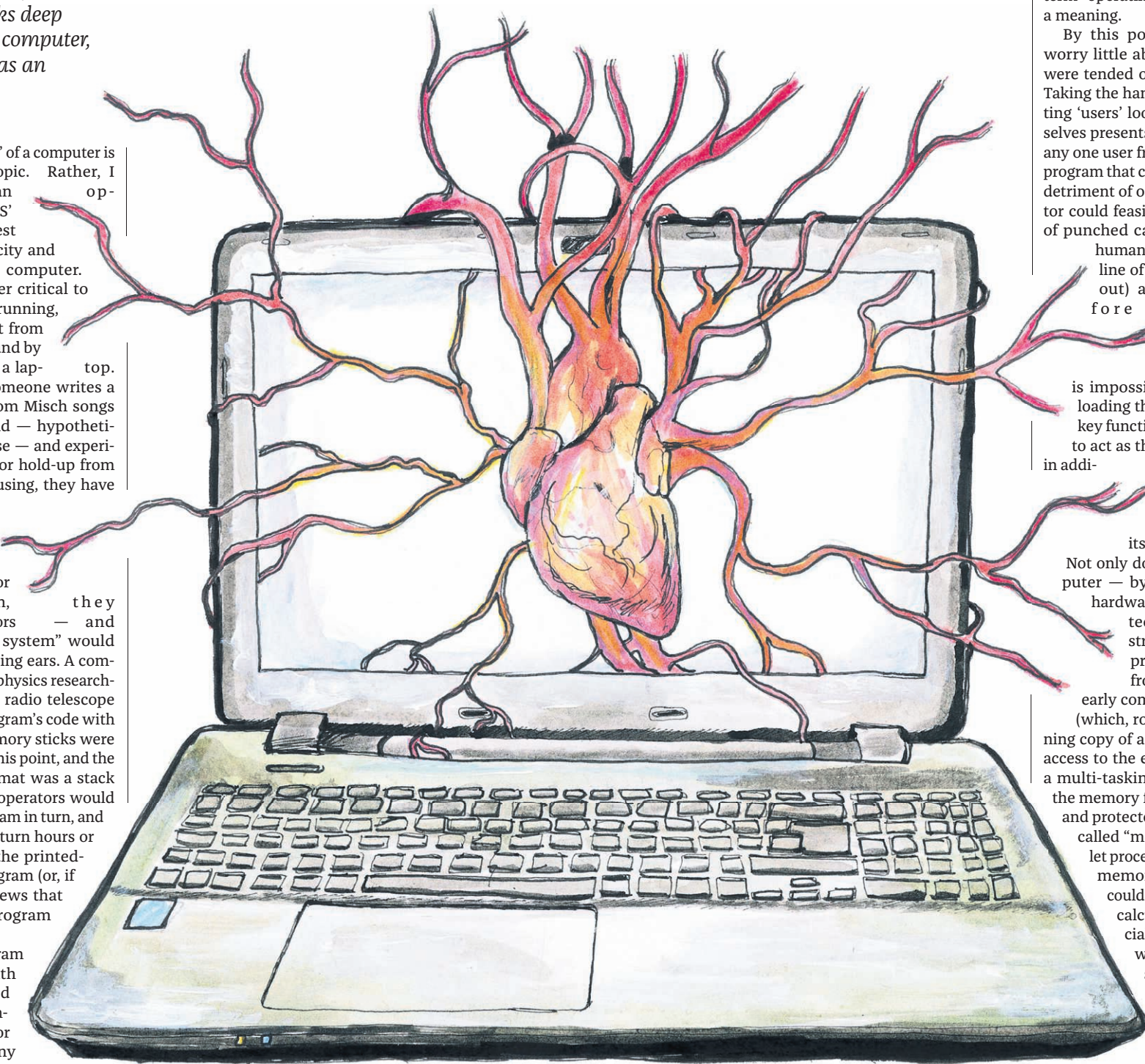
is impossible when the users are loading the programs in directly. A key function of the OS, therefore, is to act as the hardware's bodyguard in addition to being a reasonably fair allocator, to avoid that hardware from being brought to its knees.

Not only does the heart of the computer — by which I now mean its hardware resources — need protection from being overstressed, but so do running programs need protection from each other. Whereas early computers gave one process (which, roughly speaking, is a running copy of a program) full unfettered access to the entirety of their memory, a multi-tasking system needs to keep the memory for each process separate and protected from others, in what is called “memory segmentation”. To let processes read other processes' memory (where that memory could hold anything, from banal calculations to private financial data) or, even worse, to write to that memory and silently modify it, would be disastrous.

These newfound requirements inevitably add complexity to the design of an operating system, and details soon start

to become intricate. At this point, if we were studying the human heart, we would go beyond its four chambers, aorta, vena cava and pulmonary artery & vein, to study more closely the peaks and troughs of an ECG trace, for instance. Nowadays, modern processors can handle memory segmentation, for instance. They also provide layered ‘protection rings’: user processes reside in the outermost, least privileged ring, and the OS lives in “ring 0”. I think the latter is a fitting name for what is indeed the very core of the computer.

“If we were studying the heart, we would go beyond its four chambers”



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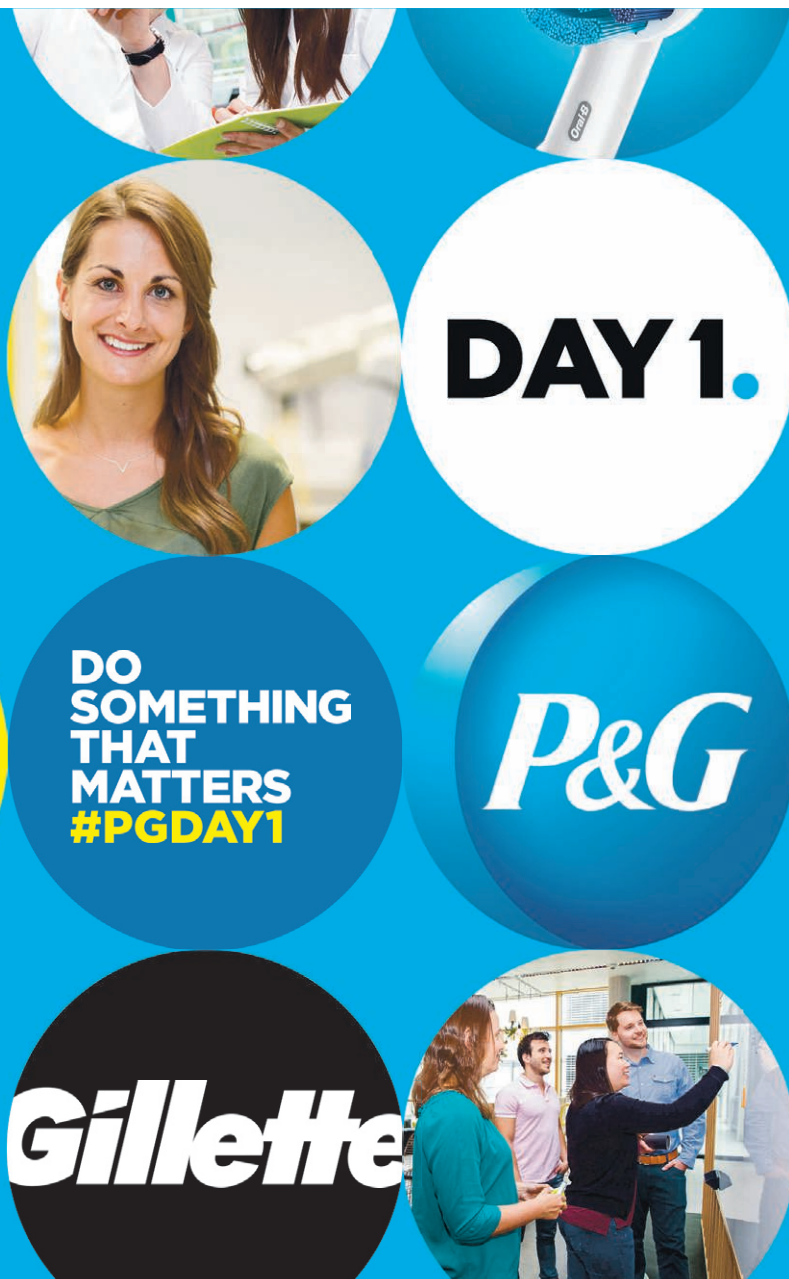
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New to a Blue: the Dancesport team waltzes to success

Maria Ouvarova talks to **Marcus McCabe** about the competitive side to dance

A study conducted by professors at the University of Western Australia found that the average heart-rate and energy expenditure in ballroom dancers was significantly higher than the boundary used to classify exercise as “extremely heavy”.

However, while the elite-levels of physical fitness required to be a professional dancer have been much better documented in recent years, dance is typically regarded as more of an art than a sport. Aesthetic qualities like flexibility and precision of body movement are valued as the most important factors in creating a captivating spectacle on stage.

However, Dancesport delivers both beauty in motion and a competitive edge that only sport can supply. The Cambridge University Dancesport Team is a thriving dance club but it is also an incredibly accomplished, Full-Blue, sports club. We caught up with CUDT publicity officer and avid dancer Maria Ouvarova to learn more.

Described by Ouvarova as “the competitive branch of Ballroom and Latin dancing”, Dancesport in its most germinal form originates from early-20th-century France; French entrepreneur and dance enthusiast Camille de Rhinal held competitions for the local group of dancers, giving what was already an established social hub of seasoned dancers an added flourish of competitive excitement. Today, of course, competitive dance shows like *Strictly Come Dancing* grip nearly ten million weekly viewers nationwide.

But the sport was only recently given the name Dancesport, Ouvarova explained. The step was taken “to help competitive ballroom dancing gain Olympic recognition. The World Dancesport Federation (WDSF), founded in 1957, is the international governing body of Dancesport and has been recognised by the International Olympic Committee. However, it is not yet an Olympic sport!” No doubt this will only be a matter of time.

Like many members of the team, Ouvarova had never danced as part of a contest before arriving at Cambridge; she told *Varsity*, “I have always loved dancing and tried many styles throughout my life. However, previously I had only

“Dancesport delivers both beauty in motion and a competitive edge that only sport can supply”

► Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity



performed dance on a stage whereas with Dancesport the competitions are the main driver.”

This means that there is a relatively level playing field (or stage) when people join. “We recruit many beginners (around 100!) every year and this includes people who have never danced before. I think CUDT is particularly appealing to newcomers as well as more experienced dancers thanks to our extensive network of professional coaches who were once dancers as students at Cambridge themselves!”

One particularly novel way that novice members of the club are introduced is through Dancesport coppers. “Yes, we have a Cuppers tournament – it’s a fun event because we enforce the rule that an experienced dancer must partner with a beginner or someone who has never danced Ballroom or Latin before,” Ouvarova described, making for a relaxed and instructive atmosphere.

New members are swiftly hooked and the team maintains a high membership count every year, with many of those members directly involved with university competitions. “We are a huge team taking around 100 people to compete at Nationals. We have a huge range of subject areas and ages. We have students at all degree levels so it’s a really great place to meet people you wouldn’t otherwise,” Maria reported.

Despite boasting so many enthusiastic members, training sessions are a tight-knit affair. “We have a mixture of dance classes, private lessons and team trainings. The team training is integral to our ethos and success. We compete individually in our partnerships against those at other universities, but we also compete in teams and it is this match that is most important to us – and it is in this event that we have held number one

“I had only performed dance on a stage, whereas with Dancesport the competitions are the main driver”

position for in the last five consecutive years at Nationals. Therefore, we train as a team and we compete as a team – whether we are on the dancefloor or cheering on from the side-lines to make sure those dancing feet don’t stop!”

Impressive stuff, but the team’s achievements don’t stop there. Competitive dancing has been going on in Cambridge for over 40 years now and in recent years the university team has been at the top of the DanceSport game. Not only were they National Champions for the past five consecutive years, but in 2017 they travelled to China and won first place at the Beijing Academy Team match.

And, arguably just as important, they also win consistently in the annual Varsity match. In reflection of this success, the sport has been granted full blue status for the 32 members of the Blues team – “as of very recently and we are very happy about it,” Maria told us.

So, if readers want to learn to untie their two left feet, or else to keep in step with the rhythms of a lifelong passion for dance while achieving coveted Blues status in the process, DanceSport could be the perfect sport for you. Ouvarova recommends attending a trial or sending off an email to the team.



◀ CUDT A Team ready for action (CUDT/MODIFIED BY CATHERINE LALLY)

Boogie wonderland. *Varsity* speaks to the University's Dancesport club about art as sport. **31**



Sport

Women's Boat Club four secure first-place finish at Fuller's Head of the River race

Emma Andrews
Sports Reporter

On Saturday, a team of nine crews from Cambridge University Women's Boat Club and Cambridge University Lightweight Rowing Club along with five from Cambridge University Boat Club raced the full boat race course backwards at Fullers Four's Head of the River race. For many, this was their first time on the boat race course, and everyone got a typical tideway experience with a strong headwind and choppy water in the last 2k of the race after Hammer-

smith Bridge.

Luckily, the conditions didn't faze the Cambridge athletes. Laura Foster, part of the 4+ that took the win in their division as well as being the fastest overall in their boat class (21:31.0), said "The positivity in this crew is incredible, and we saw the rough water in the back half of the course as an opportunity to thrive in a challenging situation." CU-WBC had a fantastic day overall, with their openweight entries placing both first and third in the Academic Champ 4+ and Champ 4+ categories, and with the lightweights who competed in the same events coming fourth and fifth respec-



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tively. CULRC also entered a coxless and coxed four in preparation for their boat race being held on the tideway for the first time in 2019. Granta 'B' placed 2nd in Academic Challenge 4+, and Granta 'A' placed 6th in Academic Champ 4+.

Ida Jacobsen, from the winning CU-WBC 'A' 4+, explained how she found her first experience of the tideway conditions: "We went into the race knowing that we needed to be aggressive off the start, and this tactic enabled us to sit comfortably in our rhythm throughout the race. We hit some very rough winds just after Hammersmith Bridge, but having established a solid rhythm and press

▲ Crews battled against a strong headwind in challenging conditions
(VICKY GILLARD)

throughout the first half of the race, we managed to keep pushing through the rough waters and winds and thus keep speed and morale high towards the finish line. Coming off the water we were extremely happy to find out that we were the fastest women's four in the women's academic championship category, and it gives us a good amount of confidence in the overall program as we head into our winter training segment".

After this strong experience, the squad is looking forward to preparing for the next training block, which includes GB Senior and U23 trials, Fairburns regatta, and finally Trial Eights in December.

Rugby Light Blues celebrate a dramatic comeback

William Ross
Deputy Sports Editor

The visit of Trinity College Dublin to Grange Road on Tuesday night marked Cambridge's final test against University opposition before the Varsity match on the 7th December, and the Irish outfit, who play in the top flight of Irish club rugby (1A) and boast a number of Leinster academy players, seemed sure to provide the Light Blues with a stern test of their Varsity credentials.

Ultimately, however, Cambridge were able to overcome a nightmare start to record a 36-26 victory over a strong Trin-

ity College Dublin side.

Indeed, the opening phases certainly proved challenging for Cambridge, struggling to cope with the expansive running and offloading game of the Irish students, who raced into a 14-0 lead within the first ten minutes and were up 21-7 within the first twenty. In those opening 20 or so minutes, Trinity College Dublin looked likely to score every time that they went wide, and the mood amongst the healthy crowd of both students and locals was bleak, with many gloomily recalling the Light Blue's harrowing 50-0 at the hands of the Dubliners in 2016.

It is testament to the team's character and defensive work that the Light Blues

kept themselves in the contest in those challenging opening phases. As the game wore on, the forward pack, boosted by the return at No. 8 of 29 year-old club captain Nick Koster (former Professional rugby player at Bath and Bristol), began to dominate, providing a base from which the Blues were able to show off their own attacking play. The first example of forward domination came in the 28th minute when after a catch and drive from a line out, Huppertz was able to bundle over in the corner.

Indeed, this proved to be something of a turning point and Cambridge were able to dictate play for the rest of the game, stifling Trinity's attacking verve

bar an inexplicable defensive lapse in the opening minutes of the second half which allowed McKeown to break through the middle for a try. Camped inside the Trinity 22 for much of the second-half, Cambridge reduced the deficit through tries from Jordan Eriksen and Jake Hennessey.

It was not until the 68th minute, however, that Cambridge finally got their just rewards and took the lead for the first time in the game through a Mike Phillips penalty, which was awarded following more good work from the forwards at the breakdown.

The visitors, audibly and visibly shaken by Cambridge's second-half on-

slaught, never looked likely to get back into the game in the final ten minutes. Instead former Harlequins Academy and England Sevens centre Hennessey added gloss to the Cambridge victory with a wonderful solo try, evading three or four tackles to touch down below the posts.

Though coach James Shanahan is likely to have been disappointed by the slow start, the Light Blues put in a hugely promising performance and displayed the strength of character, dominance in the forwards and clinical attacking play which will stand them in good stead as preparations for the 137th Varsity Rugby match intensify.