

A deafening quiet¹

What does the Prevent duty mean for Cambridge? An academic reflects

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¹ Privacy: a) state of being apart from observation, b) freedom from unauthorized intrusion



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VARSITY

‘This isn’t right. My rapist is still in my college’

Varsity News

Content note: This article contains mentions of rape, antidepressants, and panic attacks

When Sophie* was raped by her boyfriend, she did not think she would still have to be in college with him for the rest of her time at Cambridge.

She has spoken to *Varsity* about her college’s failure to discipline the accused student, and to support her welfare throughout the process, after she took her experience to the college.

Sophie continues to see her rapist in college, and has stopped going to lecture sites at certain times because she knows she will see him. “It makes me feel sick when I see him. It makes me feel sick when I hear his voice. Most of the time it’s fear, and a lot of the time it’s anger, because it’s unfair, and he shouldn’t be here, and he shouldn’t be okay.”

When Sophie approached college with what happened, college authorities informed her of some of the routes she could take, all of which have led to dead ends.

Some colleges ban accused students from accessing college spaces temporarily. “You rape someone and you don’t get to go to the bar for a week?” she said.

One option was to bring her case forward to the police. She met with them after lengthy consideration of the potential risks.

In bringing her case to the police, however, she was afraid that the accused student could bring false claims against her.

She could also have gone through the college’s disciplinary procedures, which would mean she would not be legally protected, should claims be made against her.

The procedures also required her to sit down with her rapist and tell him her experiences, as well as hear his perspective on what happened. Sophie was told there was not much she could do, that it was her word against his. She was not prepared to go through this.

She was also offered counselling, which she accepted, but ultimately found it unhelpful. Around the same time, she started having “really bad panic attacks”, prompting her to go to the GP, who put her on antidepressants.

Sophie also saw a specialist counselor. At her first session, she was told, “this is rape.” She said, “I hadn’t processed what had happened. It wasn’t until after I saw a proper sexual abuse specialist who sat me down and said this, that I

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▲ An anonymous student spoke to *Varsity*

(JOE COOK)

Academics ‘queerying’ Cambridge curricula

Stephanie Stacey
Senior News Editor
Elizabeth Haigh
Senior News Correspondent

“You have to carve a little space for yourself, which is what queer people have done forever”, said PhD student George Severs, speaking about a current lack of opportunities for exploring queer theory in higher education, barring personally motivated study.

“There is space for it”, noted CUSU LGBTQ+ Campaign President Alistair Hyde, and although “a lot of it is self-driven”, “it’s often well-received.”

LGBTQ+@Cam, launched in January this year by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and currently funded for at least three years, is a new programme aiming to promote research, outreach and network building related to queer, trans and sexuality studies at Cambridge.

Thus far, their work has included the development of seminars and workshops, along with a new series on Youtube interviewing researchers about how we can begin to ‘queer(y)’ the curriculum.

“With this area we really don’t know how much we don’t know because of the amount of restriction on areas of study as the inevitable result of the stigmatization of LGBTQ people and identities in the past”, said Dr Sarah Franklin, Head

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Sara Ahmed: ‘If addressing racism gets in the way of someone else’s happiness, then so be it’

Sana Ali talks to the self-proclaimed ‘feminist killjoy’ on how race and gender impact on our experiences within academic institutions

Sara Ahmed’s reputation as the resident ‘feminist killjoy’ and all-round incredible queer theorist is oddly cemented by her deep love for her little cockapoo. “Poppy is coming to the interview too!” she exclaims, sitting down on the floor to stroke, coo over and generally devote all her love and attention to the most sweet and well-mannered dog I’ve ever had the pleasure to meet. “Isn’t she lovely?” she asks, as we proceed to have a full-on conversation about why Poppy is the most incredible dog, and feminist theorist, to ever grace our planet.

With Poppy contently playing with her toy on the floor, the conversation eventually turns to more serious matters. Ahmed has held a number of different positions throughout her life. She’s worked outside of the academy and within it, in her roles as a professor, a guest lecturer here at Cambridge, and various senior management positions. She talks about her growing responsibilities in these academic spaces, sharpening her awareness and experience of “how the institution works in problematic ways, with the reproduction and justification of whiteness as just a part of the geography of the place.”

When probed more on this, she talks openly about the resistance the university has to actually being transformed. “The work that tends to get further is the work that requires those who have the most power to give up the least.” For Ahmed, this means the academy is often actively trying to stop change from happening, as institutions such as Cambridge “paint a profitable illusion of themselves as lively, dynamic and responsive,” whilst in reality they’re actively invested in things *not* changing.

It is clear that Ahmed’s words come not only from her own research, but also from direct experience of outright dismissal and exhaustion when trying to create change from inside the acad-

emy herself. As a woman of colour, she talks about embodying the idea of ‘diversity’ simply because her body is seen as Other – as minorities are often “required to smile as part of their political duty.” Picture those happy, diverse, colourful faces on the front of corporate brochures. This image of happiness allows difficult structural inequalities and racism embedded within institutions to be concealed behind the electric buzz of ‘diversity.’

What Ahmed is alluding to is the idea that institutions like Cambridge neutralise and dissipate political struggles to avoid doing the real work necessary to make change happen. When asked about this in relation to the recent decolonisation movements, Ahmed refers to ‘decolonising’ itself as becoming a buzzword across the country like that of ‘diversity’, as “certain kinds of work are more acceptable and doable within the institution than others.”

She emphasises the importance of recognising that even when one might consider themselves to be ‘anti-institution,’ you can never escape the potentiality of the work that you do to be neutralised, and for you yourself to be co-opted into the structures you’re critiquing.

The direct influence of black feminist thinkers like Audre Lorde is strikingly apparent in Ahmed’s work. So when asked about where she thinks Lorde’s famous quote, ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,’ fits into this paradox, Ahmed admits that “sometimes to work on the University, you have to withdraw your labour from it.”

However, “more often than not it’s a case of working *with* it to make meaningful transformations.” Adding a few texts to a subject’s curriculum *can* be done, she emphasises, at the expense of some other kind of political work that requires more people to give up their power.

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“If you think that asking questions about what and how to teach is vandalising, then just know that we’re willing to be vandals”





Despite this, she goes on to praise the ways Cambridge’s decolonise movements are based on “genuine collaborations between students and teachers,” questioning what it means to even think about our subjects and challenge them. To do this is to open up avenues for difficult conversations to be had, and work towards challenging and changing the academy from the inside. “However the institution responds, these conversations are openings and things happen in them.”

Cambridge students, particularly students of colour, pushing for a ‘decolonisation’ movement which critically deals with the histories of colonialism and imperialism inherently tied to the University are, to use Ahmed’s own term, “vandals” in and of themselves. “Questioning dominant modes of power, even something as small as asking ‘what counts as literature?’ is understood as vandalism, the wilful destruction of the beautiful. But if you think that asking questions about what and how to teach is vandalising, then just know that we’re willing to be vandals.”

The compelling way in which Ahmed uses metaphors to describe structural inequalities evidently strikes a chord

“
I know the feminist killjoy, and I have always known her. She has an existence for me that she also has for others, as a difficult being”

with people, from the “vandal”, to, most famously, the ‘feminist killjoy’. The figure of the ‘feminist killjoy’ takes a fundamental role in everything Ahmed does; wilful in her disruption of problematic narratives and taking up space unapologetically. “I wanted to take her up,” Ahmed demonstrates, raising her hands, “to take that common stereotype of feminists and allow it to do a different kind of work.”

When asked what it is about the ‘killjoy’ that resonates so much with people, Ahmed smiles. “I know the ‘feminist killjoy’, and I have *always* known her. She has an existence for me that she also has for others, as a difficult being.” To then charge that figure with something “other than negation,” is to give it a vitality and energy “that you can almost communicate through” to the point where you can feel the buzz of electricity around her.

As a working class woman of colour, Ahmed’s words here not only resonate with me but hold a hopeful vulnerability that I latch onto. I imagine all the times I *was* that ‘killjoy’: at the dinner table, at school, at the boy spitting slurs at me from across the park. “The figure of the ‘feminist killjoy’ recognises that painful experience and says ‘yes’ to that’

▲ **Ahmed’s academic work focuses on the intersection between feminist, queer and race theory**

(SANA ALI)

– if addressing racism gets in the way of someone else’s happiness, then so be it.” To turn those memories of grief into something that *energises* is not only powerful, but as Ahmed so clearly articulates, necessary for healing.

The conversation eventually turns to the simple act of existence, as Ahmed admits that despite not spending much time teaching in Cambridge, her first thoughts about the discomfort of institutions ironically came from being a visiting Gender Studies Professor here. She describes the institution as an “old garment,” acquiring the shape of those who tend to wear it, such that it is easier to wear if you have that shape.

“When you are a body for whom an institution fits, it’s seamless.” For those of whom it *doesn’t* fit, it is deeply uncomfortable.

When Ahmed speaks of this discomfort, I think of the BME, working class, disabled, LGBTQ+ and other minority students for whom this is part and parcel of the Cambridge experience – from the discomfort of walking into a room to simply being in a place that reflects back a history you can’t be part of. “Like being a square pig in a round hole, it just doesn’t fit.”

So what, if anything, do you do with that feeling? Sometimes, Ahmed admits, “just being in the institution and getting by is enough.” She advises against creating political obligations around figures such as the ‘killjoy’. “We’re not all in that position of challenging, and that’s okay.”

However, Ahmed also recognises that for a lot of people, finding others for whom the institution is a difficult space is not only helpful but energising – “it’s hard to find those people without ending up being one of the challengers!” she laughs.

Simply in sharing experiences, you’re finding a vocabulary to make sense of your experiences and what’s going on around you. It’s all about the process and “where you end up,” she continues; the process of complaining, being dismissed, finding out how things work and connecting with others who are just as angry as you is transformative in and of itself, in order to finally say ‘it’s not just about me, it’s about a system and a structure.’”

“And if those structures don’t enable me to *be* in a comfortable way, there’s a point and purpose to challenging them.”

News

TOWN-SIZING?

Mayor's 'disgust' at too-small town

The mayor of St. Neots, Cllr Barry Chapman, has voiced his "disgust" at Wisbech being named the "biggest town in Cambridgeshire" – arguing that his town is bigger. In their recent report, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Investment and Economic Commission stated that Wisbech had a larger "built-up area", but Chapman argues that St. Neots has the larger population. In response to his complaint in October, the commission chair Dame Kate Barker pledged to recognise the different interpretations of "size" in the final edition of the report.

REACH FOR THE STARS

Hawking raises astronomic sum

Last week, 22 items owned by Stephen Hawking went up for auction – bringing in £1.8 million. His first motorised wheelchair sold for almost £300,000, a script for his appearance on The Simpsons sold for £6,250, and one of the five known copies of Hawking's 1965 PhD thesis sold for £584,750. More than 400 bidders from 30 different countries took part in the nine-day auction, raising money for the Stephen Hawking Foundation and Motor Neurone Disease Association.

SNACKING SINGER

Sigrid sighted in Pembroke College

Brunch at Pembroke college has come under fire recently for price increases and bizarre menu changes, but this clearly didn't stop Norwegian Songstress Sigrid from wanting a try the food on offer. The singer, whose brother studies at Cambridge University, was seen eating brunch in Pembroke College hall last week, later visiting the Union bar. Sigrid, 22 years old, achieved fame in 2017 with singles "Do not Kill My Vibe" and "Strangers". She recently released a new single "Sucker Punch" and performed at the O2 Academy in Brixton.

SELWYN SPLIT

Votes for JCR president split 50/50

Selywn's recent JCR elections saw an exactly 50/50 vote split between the two presidential candidates, second year Philosophy student and former JCR vice-president Joe Foye and second year HSPS student Georgia Crapper. In both the first and second rounds of voting, even when RON (re-open nominations) was removed, the candidates were evenly split. Eventually, the election was resolved by drawing lots, with Joe Foye taking up the presidential role.



Festive feelings

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in Cambridge, with the light switch-on scheduled for this Sunday, and festive displays filling shop windows

(STEPHANIE STACEY)



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News

University of Reading case causes alarm over Prevent

Millie Kiel
Deputy News Editor
Jess Ma
Senior News Correspondent

“The fundamental question we must ask our universities is: ‘How will you preserve and uphold the rights and freedoms of students and faculty to speech and thought this Duty directly targets and diminishes?’”, said Dr Mezna Qato, a junior research fellow at King’s.

Earlier this week, students at the University of Reading were advised to take care when reading an essay entitled ‘Our Morals: The Ethics of Revolution’ written by left-wing academic Professor Norman Geras, because it had been marked as ‘sensitive’ under the government’s Prevent legislation.

Varsity spoke to several academics on their reactions to the Reading’s decision to warn third-year students against reading the essay on personal devices or leaving it lying around, in case they were flagged up under Prevent.

Dr Waseem Yaqoob, a lecturer in the history of modern political thought at Pembroke, called it “depressingly predictable” that left-wing thought would be one of the next targets, suggesting

“*[Prevent] continues to be a central threat to the purpose and promise of higher education*”

that universities are “beginning to cast their net wider” on their Prevent duty.

An investigation earlier this year found the rollout of Prevent in 2016 across Cambridge colleges to be characterised by inconsistencies and a lack of accountability, and several Muslim students said they ‘self-censored’, which one student claimed was born out of “fear of being called extreme”.

A Cambridge University spokesperson emphasised that the Prevent duty is a compulsory legal measure, but noting that it “makes clear that universities must protect freedom of speech and academic freedom in meeting its requirements”. They added, “At Cambridge, we have mechanisms in place to ensure that the University implements this duty in a proportionate and coordinated way, with robust checks and balances.

Benjamin Abrams, Affiliated Lecturer in Sociology, said that he was surprised that the essay was flagged as it was “very far from a radical call to arms”.

He further expressed concern that as university staff do not have “the same training and expertise as civil service counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation specialists”, they are “occasionally liable” to misjudge cases on the side of “extreme caution”. “The notion that someone could read Geras’s article and thereby become a future national security threat belies a fundamental misunderstanding of how violent radicalisation occurs”, he added.

A University of Reading spokesperson told Varsity that the Prevent policy is “designed to uphold freedom of speech, encourage academic freedom and prevent self-censorship”, while safeguarding “staff and students who access security-sensitive materials legitimately and appropriately used for study or research”.

Dr. Adam Branch, a lecturer in POLIS and course organiser of ‘International Conflict, Order and Justice’ – a required first-year undergraduate lecture



▲ **Ahsan Memon described his concern over the University of Reading flagging text controversy**

(EMILY BRAILSFORD)

course – told Varsity that if Geras’ essay is deemed ‘security-sensitive’, “then so should much of the literature written in support of the American, French, and Russian revolutions”.

He elaborated that violence is “a central part of politics” and that he uses texts which justify violence from a range of viewpoints in his lectures.

Branch criticised the premise of such policy as based upon “an assumption that certain ideas will necessarily produce violence”, which he rejects due to the “extremely low estimation” which he said it holds for one’s critical capacity.

He commented that the policy of flagging texts is of “grave concern” for the threat it poses to academic freedom, as well as how such a practice could “align with and intensify existing forms of race, class, gender, and religious oppression.” Dr Qato similarly described the development as “chilling”, but “also to be expected”. She added that Prevent and its implementation “continues to be a cen-

tral threat to the purpose and promise of higher education in the UK”. She argued that, as Prevent is “built into educational administrations”, it will become “more and more difficult to extricate it”, and that “our very voices are at stake”.

Ahsan Memon, a PhD student at Jesus College, said that, in his view, Prevent law is “inherently vague and unnecessarily demanding”, and seems to be developed either “to appease a fringe population of the state who were fear mongered for electoral votes” or to offer undue state power.

Speaking about the specific impact of Prevent in Cambridge, he said, “Our institution is too rational to buy the narrative that such laws are for preventing anything”, adding the only thing these laws help to do “is to bring an embarrassment to the cause of our past and current academic body who have dedicated their entire lives in promoting freedom to research on anything and to think freely”.

Aspinall calls OfS meeting ‘frustrating’, with ‘no answers’ offered on Prevent

Felix Peckham
Associate Editor

CUSU President Evie Aspinall has criticised Chair of Office for Students Sir Michael Barber over his remarks during a meeting with her and several CUSU sabbatical officers on widening participation, and on the Prevent duty, the government’s anti-radicalisation legislation which was introduced in 2015.

In a Facebook post on Monday, Aspinall expressed her frustration at the meeting with Barber, who heads the OfS, a non-governmental regulatory body for higher education which was introduced earlier this year. She said that there were “still no answers on Prevent” offered, and that “OfS [Office for Students] is obsessed with solving access problems with ‘crash courses’”.

She added, “some days this job is like hitting your head against a brick wall.”

Aspinall told Varsity that Barber adopted a “very old school manner” throughout the discussion on Prevent, where in response to her concerns of Prevent’s impact on student welfare,

Barber offered “the same ‘safeguarding students’ bullshit answer.”

“His view on Prevent reminded me of when people say ‘I’ve got a BME friend so I understand BME issues.’”

Aspinall said that Barber had claimed to have spoken to “one imam” and as a result, claimed to “understand the issues of Prevent.”

Aspinall said that she had wanted to speak with Barber about The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), Prevent, and attainment gaps. The OfS has been tasked with implementing elements of TEF, which has proved controversial in its introduction of a new teaching quality measure in 2017. CUSU Education Officer Matt Kite and Graduate Union President Sophia Ropek Hewson were also present at the meeting.

According to Aspinall, she wasn’t able to discuss all of these matters because Barber spent much of the time talking about “widening participation” which she described as the OfS’s “big talking point” and that they see “Oxford and Cambridge to be the epitome for the need to widen participation.”



▲ **Aspinall spoke with Barber on the Prevent duty, TEF, and access**

(MATHIAS GJESDAL-HAMMER)

In July, OfS called for Cambridge and Oxford to undergo a “robust evaluation” of whether its bursary system continues to tangibly improve access, saying that the University has “fallen short” in widening participation from underrepresented groups.

Speaking to Varsity, Aspinall said that Barber “listened to some extent” and that the meeting was beneficial for CUSU

“*[He] offered the same ‘safeguarding students’ bullshit answer*”

because they were able “to get our point across and hammer home that students don’t like the OfS, to the OfS.” She added, “if every [students’] union starts saying that, they might get the image.”

Commenting on the meeting, a spokesperson for the OfS said: “Sir Michael does not recognise this account of his meeting with Evie. He was pleased to meet Evie when he visited Cambridge and to have the chance to discuss ideas with her. He is always keen to engage with students when he visits universities.”

Aspinall took issue with the approach of the Office for Students in lacking adequate student consultation, arguing that speaking to student union officers does not mean “you have engaged with students”, and further criticised the choice of student representative to the OfS board earlier this year being someone who “isn’t from the NUS”.

A review published in March revealed a partisan approach in the recruitment process for the OfS board, where candidates’ views over free speech and Prevent were cited as “central reason” for the rejection of recommended student representatives.

‘Siding with the oppressor’ Students speak out on Bennett

Belle George
Interviews Editor
Stephanie Stacey
Senior News Editor

Following previous open criticism of Cambridge Middle Eastern and North African Forum’s (MENAF) decision to host controversial Israeli politician Naftali Bennett in conversation with *The Independent* journalist Donald Macintyre, the Cambridge University Palestine Society (PalSoc) launched an open letter calling on Macintyre to withdraw from the event. The letter also urged Cambridge students to boycott the event, set to take place on Monday. However, this was rendered unnecessary by the cancellation of Bennett’s UK visit.

It has been reported that the cancellation came as a response to the resignation of the Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who resigned over the cabinet’s decision to accept a ceasefire ending two days of fighting in Gaza. On Sunday, Israeli forces killed seven Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian officials, in an apparently botched undercover raid and an ensuing firefight. The resulting conflict, prior to the ceasefire, has been described as the greatest escalation of violence in Gaza since the 2014 war.

Alongside his appearance in Cambridge, Bennett was also scheduled to speak at an event in London, organised by the Zionist Federation, which was set to be hosted by ITV’s International Affairs Editor Rageh Omaar.

Prior to its public release on Thursday morning, the open letter had gathered signatures from 30 University societies. The letter criticises MENAF’s decision to host Bennett and, detailing Bennett’s violent rhetoric towards the people of Palestine, it states that the signatories “wish to affirm that he is not welcome to express his well known and deeply racist views at our university” and calls on Macintyre “not to support the propagation of this hatred in our student community.”

Cambridge University Students Union (CUSU) endorsed the open letter, arguing that “hosting this man with a history of racist views and incitement to violence serves only to legitimise those positions and to further put at risk Palestinian and Arab people, including those who are residents of Cambridge or students at this university.”

Responding to the cancellation of Bennett’s UK visit, PalSoc said, “Naftali Bennett, preoccupied with agitating for another brutal war on Gaza, was evidently not looking forward to his unwelcome reception in Cambridge. We are pleased he has cancelled his trip and suggest he doesn’t attempt to arrange another.”

MENAF, meanwhile, in a Facebook post announcing the cancellation, promised to “try and host a similar event on [Bennett’s] next visit to the United Kingdom.”

Responding to the open letter, a MENAF representative told *Varsity*: “It is

a shame that people with so much to say about Mr. Bennett and Israeli policy would boycott an event where he will be engaged by a professional journalist and the audience will be able to do so, too.”

Varsity spoke to two Palestinian students at the University, who wished to remain anonymous about the decision to host Bennett.

One student said when she saw MENAF was hosting Bennett she felt “really hurt”.

The other student added, “As a Palestinian student here at Cambridge, I feel violated”, but noted that he believes this “should resonate with the consciousness of all students”. He said, “When [MENAF] offers a platform for someone like him to speak it is not a neutral decision, it is siding with the oppressor.”



▲ Naftali Bennett is leader of the right-wing Jewish Home party (THE ISRAEL PROJECT)

“They will say that inviting him and letting him speak is a matter of free speech. I completely disagree. The insinuation of hatred and violence against Palestinians and Arabs is not free speech: It is simply racism.”

One of the students added that the timing of the planned event was particularly hurtful, acknowledging that MENAF couldn’t have predicted that these circumstances would surround the event, but saying the ongoing conflict should have prompted its cancellation: “You don’t bring someone to promote more violence amidst violence that is already happening.”

The other student claimed that Bennett “is not secretly but blatantly racist, and is proud of it. He is considered extreme both in Palestine and Israel.”

“He is considered extreme both in Israel and Palestine”

“[This] should resonate with the consciousness of all students”

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News

'Carving a little space for yourself' How some academics are trying to 'queery' the curriculum

◀ Continued from front page

of Sociology Department and Director of the LGBTQ+@Cam programme.

Franklin also noted that the programme is based principally in the sociology department primarily because they "get a huge amount of interest in this area", but the department currently employs no permanent members of staff specifically undergoing LGBTQ research. The LGBTQ+@Cam programme is therefore also linked to a fundraising campaign for a chair in LGBTQ Studies at Cambridge.

She described the programme's aim as being "to build a new infrastructure to support LGBTQ research and teaching", noting that "there is already quite a lot of that happening" at the University through the centre for Gender Studies and the Centre for Family Research, as well as within individual faculties.

Franklin emphasised that the goal is not "to replace or supercede" current efforts, but rather to "enhance and build upon" them.

Currently, the programme is working with 15 departments, across all six of the University's schools, as well as a number of colleges, with a view to developing a programme that other departments, across both the University and the country, will be able to replicate.

Speaking about the importance of such initiatives, Franklin raised the Alan Turing question, asking what people such as Turing may have achieved, had they not lived their lives subject to oppression based on their identities: "We don't know how much we don't know because of the restrictions that have made certain ways of being, and by definition I assume also certain ways of thinking, inaccessible."

"What does it cost the university? What does it cost society? What does it cost communities? What does it cost all of us, that a kind of identity policing has so prominently shaped people's experiences?", Franklin asked.

She further spoke of the importance of creating accessible queer spaces, saying that, despite the University's record of being an accepting place for LGBTQ students, this is a "very important thing to do here at Cambridge because I really don't think we're quite at the point where we can just take for granted that it's a picnic to be a queer student here."

Dr Caroline Gonda, a fellow in English at St Catherine's College and subject of one of the recent Queer(y)ing the Curriculum videos, explained that the initiative is "not just about queer content, it's about queer ways of thinking and bringing queer perspectives to bear."

She praised the introduction of a new third-year paper entitled "Love, Gender and Sexuality 1740-1824", explaining that queer thinking "happens in dissertations, it can happen in individual essays or individual lectures, but this is the first time there has been a sustained commitment to making space in the undergraduate curriculum, certainly in my period, for thinking specifically about sexuality, and about gender and sexuality together."

Planned to be taught for the first time



“
Having
more ideas
to play
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always
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scholarship
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in 2020, the paper will have taken three years from the initial proposal to be integrated into the university curriculum.

But Gonda also told *Varsity* that further steps still need to be taken: "Cambridge is supposed to be one of the safest places to be LGBTQ+, but that doesn't mean that there's nothing left to do."

"I'm glad these developments are happening, and that Cambridge is feeling more like a place where this work can happen. There's been for some years now a Queer Cultures Seminar in the English Faculty for postgraduates, but I think that the teaching does need to be happening and visible in the Undergraduate Tripos as well."

As far as the steps taken by the English faculty are concerned, Gonda was enthusiastic but pointed out that "you shouldn't have to wait till the third year [to have access to queer studies]".

Asked how we should go about 'queerying' the curriculum, she argued that a combination of both introducing

new papers and materials and questioning existing perspectives is needed.

Explaining the importance of the movement, Gonda spoke about a recent conversation with a student recently regarding queer love poems. The student spoke of the "importance of feeling seen and validated in the queer perspective she was bringing".

"Queerying" the curriculum is important because having more ideas to play with is always going to be better for scholarship", said CUSU LGBT+ Campaign President Alistair Hyde.

He spoke about the "symbolic historic academic violence committed against groups such as LGBT+ people", and stressed, therefore the need "to recognise the struggles and legitimise the work done by these groups" in order to help to "remedy, or at least acknowledge" past events.

Hyde recounted anecdotal experiences of students attempting to explore queer theory, affirming that "there is

space for it" and that "a lot of it is self-driven but it's often well-received."

He said that, currently, the majority of work is done by students choosing to explore a certain queer angle, saying "that's great but it would [also be] great if that was included more mainstream-ly so that people who aren't part of those minority groups and who aren't necessarily particularly interested in them, also learn about these things."

"The fact that [queer theory] isn't explicitly included in the curriculum shows that there's a long way to go", Hyde added.

Asked how best to bring about progress in this area, Hyde said, "I think a lot of it comes in approaching lecturers personally", adding that "they have streams of emails and I'm sure many of them are sympathetic but it's also about having the time and the energy."

Although the personal approach can be "a lot of labour for the students", Hyde warned that "big targeted campaigns can put people's hackles up which is usually counter-productive, at least in the short term", though noted: "if nothing happens after that, sure, collectivise, push harder, use faculty reps."

Speaking of the future, he said: "Hopeful, always hopeful," and added, "It's something that I'm sure will continue to be worked on and will take more time, but there's progress happening."

Currently researching the history of HIV/AIDs activism in the UK, George Severs, a PhD student at Selwyn College, described how he has been "self-driven" in his pursuit of queer thinking and queer perspectives: "You have to carve a little space for yourself, which is what queer people have done forever."

Asked about the importance of 'queerying' the curriculum, he explained that "If you look through a queer lens you start to see a whole realm of possibilities; but if you look through a modern lens or just a lens that is assuming certain things, you miss out quite a lot." He added, "These people historically were there, and if we don't study them, research them, write about them and teach them then we are denying their existence, denying their agency."

Severs argued that today, "it would be unthinkable to have a History Faculty without a gender or sexuality area." He said: "The university is a very supportive place to do this work, and hopefully we're seeing progress from when in the past it has been a very difficult thing to find the support to do. There is a shift towards this being seen as proper history, valuable history."

He highlighted a tangible increase in interest in queer studies over the last few years. Discussing the compulsory Historical Argument and Practice History paper, he said 2018 "is the first year that they've ever had somebody come in to do a sexuality week", noting "last year everyone was so interested, everyone wants to do this, if there's an option, wherever you are it's always the most popular one."

"There's scope for it, but at the moment some faculties are not fulfilling this to its full potential. There would be a big uptake if they did."

▲ George Severs (above) and Dr Sarah Franklin (STEPHANIE STACEY)

“
Hopeful,
always
hopeful
”

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Interview

Jeremy Paxman

‘My advice to young journalists? I would say, don’t do it’



Oliver Rhodes speaks to Britain’s most famous interviewer about his Varsity past and a ‘sense of malaise’ with politics

I was a little nervous for this interview. Jeremy Paxman is probably the most formidable interviewer alive: he isn’t called ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ for nothing. I’ve seen him fell some of the biggest beasts of British politics.

Thankfully, before I even shake hands with the man, I’ve met his dog, Derek. He’s scurrying around at my feet for a comfortable position in the aisle. Paxman turns to a fellow passenger, with whom he had clearly been speaking before I arrived: “Yours is probably properly bred! He’s from Battersea Dogs Home.” As I sit opposite him on our train departing from King’s Cross Station bound for Cambridge, I’m pleased to say I’ve avoided a *Newsnight* welcome.

“Most people are nice. That’s my big lesson in life. The media stereotype is absolutely wrong.” Sitting behind his laptop and a pair of rounded spectacles (he is just putting the finishing touches on an email to the *Mail on Sunday*), I can see how Paxman is unassuming and obliging to friendly admirers, myself included. He doesn’t like fame, but says “it’s probably quite good for me – It keeps me on the straight and narrow.”

Perhaps it would be hypocritical of him to say otherwise. Paxman has made a career of keeping those in power on the “straight and narrow”. Presenter of the BBC’s flagship political programme *Newsnight* for 26 years, his interviews are remembered as pointed, intensely sceptical and, at times, interrogatory. “I think your job is just to ask the questions. You carry on asking the questions until you get an answer or until it’s abundantly clear that there’s no answer being given.”

That’s a pretty simple formula. There’s a pretty simply motivation behind it too. “I’ve always been curious. You only need two things to be a journalist: you need to be immensely curious about the world, and you need to love words. Both those things were true in my case, so I was lucky, I think. The whole interviews thing just happened, by chance, after I’d spent several years on the road as a reporter, basically working abroad most of the time.”

Paxman’s first encounters with journalism began at this paper (he describes today’s editions as “very slickly done”, in case anyone out there is interested). One of his articles reads: *Why all the lonely people? Sex and the single student* (30th May, 1970). The experiences he described could come from an undergraduate to-



▲ Paxman (front, centre) during his tenure as editor of *Varsity* in the 70s (Varsity Archives)

day. “Many women felt they had in some way been let down. Instead of ‘smooth men’, many had met only ‘utter twits.’”

Paxman has never been one to prevaricate, which is perhaps stating the obvious. It makes for some clumsy moments in our interview. When I suggest that Cambridge privileges those with top educations, I come to regret it: “when we get to the point when University is for the uneducated, it becomes rather pointless, doesn’t it?” Then on the future of print journalism in a digital world: “I don’t know. I’m a journalist. If you want Mystic Meg, go talk to Mystic Meg.”

Such honesty about his own views, of course, fits very well with what the public thinks of Paxman. He’s made a living observing and mediating the opinions of others, not throwing his own around. Perhaps that’s no wonder: years of experience at the forefront of politics have shown him just how fragile opinions can be. “It’s a singularly dispiriting thing to talk to some MP and for him or her to say ‘this policy is nonsense’, and then the next thing you know they’re voting for it.” Paxman would rather do away with party labels. “Look, what I would really like is a House of Commons made up of Independents. People who have made up their minds on the basis of their knowledge and thought, not a bunch of people who do as the whips tell them.”

This sense of malaise with politics is a perception Paxman’s interviews have often confirmed for viewers. Eminently sceptical about established politicians, and adept at slicing through their political jargon – Paxman the ‘People’s Man’

would surely be a fitting campaign slogan.

He would not, of course, describe himself in those terms. What drew him to journalism in the first place was a determination to break down barriers between the elite and the general public. He says he was “slightly appalled” at the culture of journalism in his early years. “There was a distinction between those who were in the know and those who weren’t.”

High-brow journalism was a patriotic occupation, and often perceived as such. His next observation brings to mind the cosy reporters’ lounges of Evelyn Waugh’s *Scoop*: “I think speciality is the enemy of intelligibility very often. [Journalists] can very easily be captured by the lobby or organisation or forum upon which they report. That’s a bad thing because you’re there really as a representative of the public.”

What little seems to have changed. Oxbridge continues to dominate established television and print media institutions; media dynasties don’t seem to be going away either, if the Dimbleby brothers, or the Snow family, are any measurement.

Indeed, Paxman’s comments come at a time of increasing strain between the public and the established media. The BBC seems to be caught in a partisan tug-of-war over Brexit which both sides claim is rigged against them. Is this a sign that it still occupies centre-ground? “If you’re funded by tax, you’ve got to be very assiduous in trying to discharge a multiplicity of obligations to people who have a huge variety of interests.”

Diplomatic enough. But too often, argues Paxman, the BBC has sacrificed empiricism for impartiality. “They [BBC commissioners], in common with others, thought that it was enough to provide a balance to an argument. So somebody said something which was reasoned and empirically based, and they were immediately put up against someone who was just a head-banger on the other side. I think that it’s understandable that you would do that, but it’s a lazy way to behave.”

On the rise of social media and ‘alternative’ news organisations, Paxman remarks that “what I do have a problem with is that they should all be accorded parity of esteem. That something that you read on a tweet or a Facebook feed or whatever... someone who is merely spouting prejudice. I don’t see any reason why you should take that as seriously as you take the product of a newsroom like CNN or the BBC.”

‘Post-truth’ may have become a rather lazy aphorism for our media age, yet I do wonder what impact the fragmentation of the media industry will have on how we conduct journalism. Paxman believes in the importance of “disclosure” over narrative: “The imparting of a small number of important facts to a limited number of very busy people.” Yet he is eminently aware that the acceleration of the news cycle ensures “a lie can be right around the world before truth has got its boots on.”

Does this threaten the ‘fact-finding’ mission itself? “The problem with investigations is that – and I used to do them – when you start you don’t know how long it’s going to take, and you don’t whether at the end of it you’re going to get something that runs. So it demands a lot of an editor.”

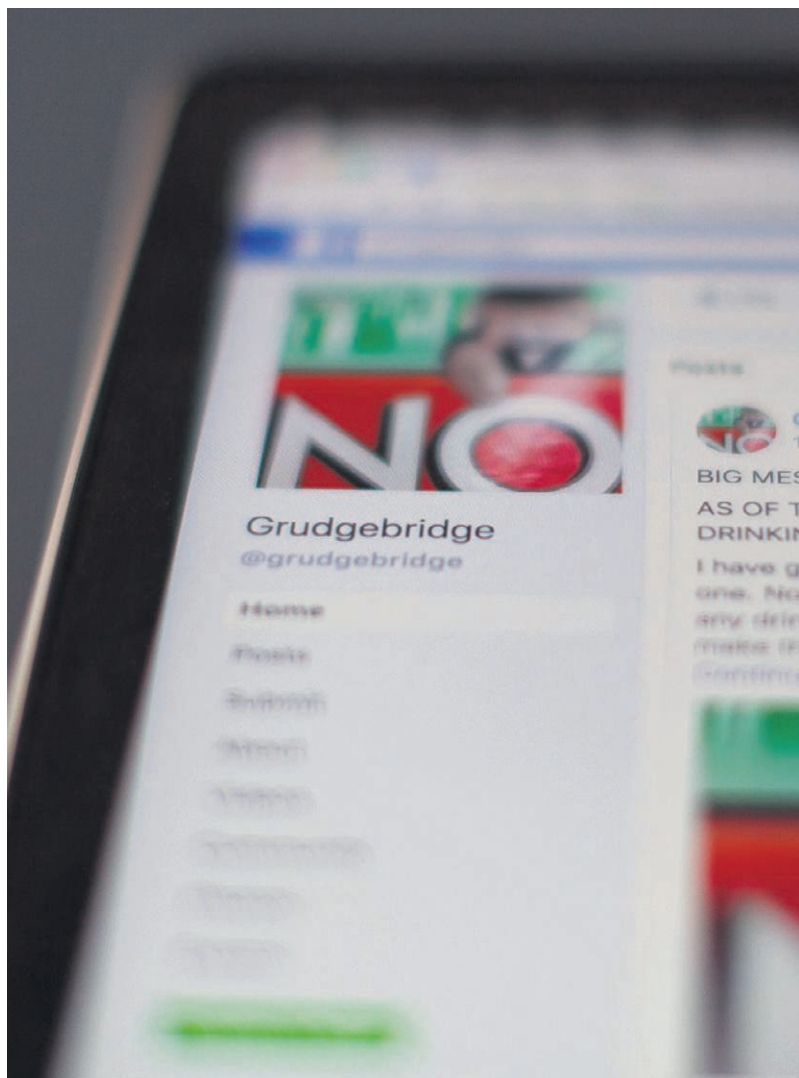
That can only be getting harder as commercial pressures close in, but Paxman does not seem concerned. “I think more people doing the disclosing the better. And we’ll learn who to believe and who not to believe.” Yet it is this faith in the classical liberal model which seems to be under threat.

Critical of the timidity of news corporations and their online alternatives, I wouldn’t entirely blame Paxman for feeling aloof from the whole enterprise. The eye-rolling cynicism we associate with him masks, however, a ceaseless curiosity. That, I think, explains his directness, his scepticism, and his disdain for making assumptions.

Our train pulls in to Cambridge and I have one final question. What advice does ‘Paxo’ have for the next generation of journalists? “I would say, don’t. Don’t do it. The business has become completely casualised now and there’s very little longevity in it, so I think you ought to be very careful.” It’s not the politest thing you could say to a student journalist, but then again, where did politeness get Jeremy Paxman?

“You carry on asking the questions until you get an answer, or until it’s abundantly clear that there’s no answer being given”

How a college responded to one student's experience of rape



◀ Facebook page Grudgebridge launched a crusade against drinking societies last term, publishing anonymous testimonies of toxic behaviour (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

► Continued from front page

knew what it was.”

She was advised by a specialist to file a complaint with the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OS-CCA).

Sophie also discussed this with a college authority, who gave her contradictory advice, which left her confused about what her next steps should be.

The college offered to help, but said their hands were tied and they could not make any specific accusations to the student.

“I said that this now meant nothing to me because the whole problem is that there’s not an authority telling him off,” she said.

Sophie said she felt that she had received little support. “I wasn’t ever like, everything’s fine. I just said this isn’t the solution I wanted. They said, ‘We understand, that’s your choice. Fine. We won’t do anything.’ [Then] no more help.”

Expressing her frustration with the lack of support, she said: “This isn’t right. My rapist is [still] in my college.”

She was particularly stressed about her academics, which she was told would be taken care of. “But I don’t feel like my academics are taken care of. I’m still stressed. I still have to make every

single deadline.”

From the start, Sophie wanted no contact with him. However, he has tried to contact her repeatedly. “I don’t even see him often, it’s just the fact that I could.”

Questions surrounding existing measures of addressing cases of sexual assault within the University have come to the fore in recent years – in October 2017, Cambridge launched ‘Breaking the Silence’, a centralised campaign to tackle sexual harassment and assault.

The launch of the campaign sparked a spike in reports of sexual misconduct to the University’s anonymous reporting system, which between May 2017 and January 2018, received over 170 submissions.

Cambridge colleges’ responses to students’ complaints has come under a process of scrutiny in the past year. Facebook page Grudgebridge announced in May that it would dedicate itself to taking down Cambridge’s drinking societies, sparking a significant number of anonymous submissions detailing instances of sexual misconduct.

And earlier this year, a Senate House discussion took place over whether the University should reform the burden of proof for student disciplinary cases from proof ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ to a ‘balance of probabilities’, where cases

are decided in favour of the party whose statement is most likely to be true.

In September, two students spoke to Varsity about their experiences bringing complaints to their respective colleges – both said they felt their complaints would lead to little consequence, and that they were not taken seriously.

“I’ve been thinking about [what I should do next],” Sophie said. “People have been saying, you know, there’s [not much time] left. But it’s about consequence.”

*The name of the student who spoke to Varsity has been changed to protect her identity.

If you have been affected by any of

“You rape someone, and you don’t get to go to the bar for a week?”

the issues raised in this article, the following organisations provide support and resources:

Breaking the Silence: the University’s campaign against harassment and sexual misconduct (includes reporting mechanisms).

Cambridge for Consent: a student-run campaign to promote consent.

Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre: a charity for female victims of sexual violence.

Cambridge Nightline: a confidential night-time listening service.

Students’ Unions’ Advice Service: the University’s confidential, independent and impartial advice service.

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“I don’t even see him often, it’s just the fact that I could”

Features

My year on antidepressants



Megan Harding explores how antidepressants have changed her life for the better

Last Easter term, my parents came up for the weekend to visit. While we were out for a birthday meal, the conversation turned to mental health. “Did you know, over a third of all students are now on antidepressants?” my mum said. Everyone else nodded in mutual shock, but I kept my mouth closed. By then, I’d been on antidepressants for nearly six months, but no one in my family knew that.

I first went on antidepressants in January of this year. I’d had a truly terrible Christmas break: a bad breakup, the residual stress of a first term at Cambridge, and a genetic insufficiency of serotonin that had wreaked havoc on my mental state. This wasn’t the first time I’d experienced the effects of anxiety or depression. What I’d never done before then, however, was seek medical help about it, always just writing it off as my teenage hormones going slightly overboard. But when Lent term arrived and I still wasn’t feeling better, I visited the doctor. My GP recommended that I take Citalopram, a common antidepressant which treated both anxiety and depression, warning

me about the potential side effects that could occur in the first weeks.

A few days into taking Citalopram, I went to a lecture and started to feel like my legs couldn’t work. They were numb and tingling, I was dizzy, and my heart rate was up — and no, it wasn’t just the shock of finding myself actually attending a lecture (although that does things to the heart rate, too). Over the next few weeks, the hot spells and faintness went away, and with them, so did the unbearable lows and intensely anxious episodes I’d been used to. Instead, I felt more grounded, like my feelings had finally found some sort of balance they’d never achieved before.

One of the weirdest things I found in those first few weeks was telling my friends about my medication. Announcing that I’d gone on antidepressants felt strangely formal, and I remember asking myself why I felt like I had to whisper when bringing it up. Not surprisingly, in talking about it, I found that many of my friends had gone through the same thing, though most people are so skilled at putting up a stoic front that I never would have known otherwise.

The fact that the number of students on antidepressants is considered a pandemic made me more reticent about telling my family. I worried that they’d think I was exaggerating to join this new ‘fad.’ So for a while, I didn’t mention it, hiding the pills and taking them at odd times. But eventually, in May, I was late in picking up my prescription and found myself without medication for five days.

How to describe the withdrawal symptoms of Citalopram? I felt the same disorienting wooziness as the Nicotine

“*I felt more grounded, like my feelings had finally found some sort of balance*”

rush from the first puff of a cigarette — only constantly. Other symptoms swung in with unprecedented force: I was fatigued, horrifically irritable and overly emotional; even just walking too fast made my chest close up and my breath quicken. Whatever grounding I had felt with the medication came crashing down with alarming ease. I had a panic attack every single day.

Realising just how dependant I was on medication frustratingly felt like taking one step forward and two steps back. Towards the end of that week, I thought it might be a relief to tell my dad how I was feeling, so I sat on the wall outside college with a friend and called him. Not only was he completely understanding, but he also told me that every other adult in my family was, or had been, on antidepressants too. So much for any need for secrecy after all.

In a few months, it’ll be a year since I went on medication, and honestly, I can’t see myself coming off them anytime soon. Though I’m probably — hopefully — not going to be on antidepressants forever, the ways they’ve helped me in the past year are undeniable. If you feel even remotely similar, they might be something to think about.

If you at all doubt whether you are ‘qualified’ seek help, I want to say that, a few years ago, I’d have never even considered getting professional help: the idea of having to bare all to a stranger in therapy used to terrify me, and medication felt far like far too clinical an option. I felt invalid about going to the doctor’s about how I was feeling on the inside because nothing in my life externally — like friendships, school or work — ever

reflected how miserable I felt. But since taking medication, I’ve realised that responding to how you’re feeling on the inside really is bloody important when you want to get the most out of life. It might feel like you can succeed by plastering on a smile, without letting anyone know how you’re really doing, but the weight off your chest that comes from being honest with people, and letting them help you, is incomparable.

Since taking medication, I’ve also tried many other ways to help myself mentally. I’ve trialled various therapists, though talking about your issues while you’re on medication that’s meant to alleviate them isn’t always the most natural thing. I’ve been to psychologists, tried to meditate, and attempted the healing power of exercise — all of which have helped me substantially, if not temporarily. But most importantly, since January, I’ve had more conversations with both friends and family about mental health than ever before. I wish it didn’t take me going on medication for this change to happen, but I’m incredibly grateful that it did. I feel like I can be so much more honest with friends and family now that I’ve stopped trying to attain perfection and actually address the ups and downs of my mental health.

So start talking more about your mental health with the people you care about — chances are they’ve been through something similar. Most of all, be kind to yourself. Take time to listen and care for your body and mind, and its basic needs. Regardless of how ‘well’ you’re coping, nothing will ever be more important for you than your mental wellbeing. No excuses.

▲ Illustration by Kate Towsey for Varsity

Simplifying self-care



Effective self-care is more than materialistic acts of consumerism, writes Vee Tames

There is an increasingly materialistic attitude towards self-care. Bath bombs, scented candles, over-the-counter anxiety medication — you name it and there is probably a product out there for you. But the greatest form of self-care doesn't come with a price-tag, it comes from you. Your words; your actions; your choices: no financial sacrifice required.

A google search of 'self-care package' brought up a range of pastel coloured boxes of inspirational quotes and skin care products mainly ranging from £20 - £50. Luxury products like these are at best temporary remedies to get you in the right headspace to tackle the underlying issue, or at worst an all-consuming distraction and symbol of your denial to confront the very thing which is making you unhappy. The effects of material self-care are temporary and short-term. Buying a deluxe bottle of bubble-bath may soothe you for that evening but it may not banish the current of overwhelming thoughts for as long as you were led to believe. On the other hand, you can take far better care of yourself if you examine

“The effects of material self-care are temporary and short-term”

what you say and how you choose to act, both on your own and around others.

'No' is a powerful word in your self-care arsenal. Saying 'no' is probably one of the most important preventative acts of self-care you can perform. Saying 'no' can reduce the number of times you end up in a difficult position. Saying 'no' can guard you from toxic relationships, crises of confidence, imposter syndrome. But, within Cambridge, the word 'no' often feels shameful to say. The fear of missing out dominates far too easily here, and comparison with your peers feels inevitable with the constant barrage of social media posts and LinkedIn gloating. But you shouldn't let it dominate you. Saying 'no' doesn't always close off an opportunity for good — more often than not it just delays it. If 'no' feels too final, replace it with 'not yet'. Pace yourself. Draft emails / messages / texts in advance that you can use to cancel plans if you think you won't be in the right headspace to say 'no' when you need to.

Similarly, 'yes' in certain contexts can be difficult to say. Often, it's hard when we have to directly acknowledge our vulnerability, our shortcomings and our many, many insecurities. A friend, now in their second year at Cambridge, told me that part of succeeding here is 'practising your poker face'. Faking being okay when you're really not okay, as though Cambridge was a 'thrive or survive' environment. Self-care is easy to ignore when there is so much to do here to keep busy and distract yourself. It's easy to commit yourself to societies, work commitments and wider social life

- but the 'work hard, play hard' environment shouldn't make it feel as difficult as it is to stop and look after yourself. With short terms and a rigorous day-to-day life, it is hard to practice self-care for extended periods of time here, and that is emotionally exhausting.

A difficult part of opening up about practicing self-care and needing help is an ingrained feeling of 'gratitude' experienced by many students here. We are made to feel that we should be 'grateful that we are even attending this university'; that the fact we are struggling is simply evidence of us 'being challenged and properly stimulated'; and even that such struggles should make us feel 'even more grateful we attend such a prestigious institution'. But gratitude can be very misleading. It can cause you to ignore your well-being and base your validation on the approval of others: whether that be your supervisor, your friends, or even those back home. So give yourself the permission to practise self-care as intensely as you need and for as long as you require it. Saying yes to a chat and cry with a friend is a greater sign of strength than weakness. So say 'yes' to getting food with someone. Say 'yes', you need a rest. 'Yes', you need an essay extension. Yes, you need some time out. When someone asks 'do you need anything?', say yes.

Self-care isn't always pretty or aesthetically pleasing. It doesn't always fit into that wholesome Instagram post that will instantly generate loads of likes and approving comments. Self-care can be a pretty ugly business, and we don't talk about that side of it enough. At Cam-

▲ The greatest form of self-care comes from you (PIXABAY)

“Self-care is one of the simplest yet most challenging things to do for yourself”

bridge, there is a lot of emphasis on external actions and very little on talking and confronting the issues affecting you. As helpful as it is to do your washing and cook a decent meal, talking about it with someone else is probably more effective at addressing the problem long-term. Part of your self-care regime may be creating an environment for yourself that makes you feel more prepared about doing that: admitting you need help, ending a relationship, crying in public until you burst a blood vessel or two. I have done all these things and I would not be the first to admit that facing those parts of our lives is terrifying.

Yet, in time, I have learnt that they can be some of the bravest and the most healing actions we ever perform ourselves. Being willing to show my authentic self at its worst and its best to more people has been one of the most significant acts of self-care I have performed. And doing so doesn't mean feeling obliged to over-share or feel that your experiences and emotions aren't as valid as anyone else's. Being brave in looking after yourself will help you be brave in helping others when they need it.

In a way, self-care is one of the simplest yet most challenging things to do for yourself. In an environment of work, opportunity and excitement, we often put ourselves last. But learning about what makes effective self-care is very much learning about yourself, knowing your limits and discovering what makes you happy. Those are questions that a bath bomb won't solve, but that saying 'yes' and 'no' to both yourself and others, with honesty, truly will.

Features

‘Everything sparked explosive, clashing ideas’

In Varsity’s latest video on disability, *Chay Graham* discusses his ADHD diagnosis

“No way, you were never a problem as a kid... and you are smart”. Those are the first words my mum uttered after I told her last year I’d shimmied out of a meeting with an educational psychologist with a diagnosis of ADHD and now I needed her help getting a medical diagnosis from a doctor. A snappy chat followed where she grumpily refused to believe or assist. The video call window beep-booped off. Crap, I thought, already ten steps down into catastrophising. No maternal help – no statement from her of my childhood symptoms – conflicting evidence in my medical assessment – no medical diagnosis – no stimulant medication – no change in my attention style – lectures remain blurry and incomprehensible – no 2.I – no PhD opportunities – no world-travelling, dazzling science career – doomed to a boring day-to-day making me mentally ill – “homeless on the streets giving handjobs for crack!”. That last bit was a line in a song from the South Park movie which I think I’d seen once when I was about 13; it resounded around my head, floating up from my humming neuronal soup.

Being able to see non-linear links between everything all at once can be a deadly skill when you use it to daydream up your demise. As is being able to access all of your long-term memory but only if it’s immediately relevant. As are racing, hyperfocussed thoughts.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is definitely something you can have if you are smart, non-disruptive and in the eyes of society, successful. In fact, you’re more likely to have it. CEOs, business leaders, artists, musicians, scientists, engineers, activists, politicians, philosophers, movers, dreamers, shakers, Oxbridge and Ivy League students are all over-represented for ADHD relative to other paths in life, though people with ADHD are even more over-represented in prison, addiction rehab and trauma centres than in the success world. Where we are not found is anywhere boring. Having a high-stimulation-chasing, impulsive, risk-taking streak is amazingly good at getting you into ER rooms both as a patient or a surgeon. When you have ADHD, it seems like the main difference between which role you occupy comes down to what type of support network



you have.

I definitely have not been successfully supported by others during my time at Cambridge. Heartbreakingly, I gave up on supporting myself for a solid chunk.

For example, my very first essay, in my first supervision, in my first week. My genius hypothesis about the evolution of bacterial plasmid DNA from viral transmissions. My supervisor and DoS raised her eyebrows handing it back. Niche, creative, convincing. She also lowered her voice. “This is brilliant, but... you have gone completely off-task. It’s well researched and you have your own ideas. This is what you should be doing during your PhD, though. You have completely failed to answer the question. You haven’t included almost anything from the syllabus.”

I couldn’t understand. I thought at

“Everything I was taught sparked explosive, clashing ideas”

university we didn’t have a syllabus? Zooming exploration was advertised, sparkling quotes about mind-expansion in the prospectus. Buzz, my lecturers kept urging. Go, read, adventure. As a naïve 19-year-old, I listened to them far too attentively. Attention Surplus Hyperactivity Disorder.

I realised I had no idea how to work out where the emphasis was in the information I was given; everything I was taught sparked explosive, clashing ideas. I was in intellectual, daydreaming heaven. Nothing seemed irrelevant. Syllabus? Didn’t exist. There was not core material and periphery. Over and over, as my course went on, I was told to quieten my crackling mind. Underneath the crackle, I found surging overwhelm. I felt like natural sciences spaghetti was being thrown at the wall of my mind,

and I kept begging for help making more of it stick. Over and over, I asked: what can I do to learn?

“Too much partying or something?” my DoS asked me over a morose, desperate phone call I made, when I got my 2.II at the end of my second year.

Pay more attention to key lecture points. Stop making silly grammar mistakes. Order your arguments to achieve formal voice. Memorise, sequence and follow the instructions you’re given. Turn up on time, for God’s sake! You MUST try harder, if you don’t want to get a lower second class! It was cacophonous. Peers and teachers saw me as a space case, lazy. I made such good points out loud when I managed to turn up, that I just must not be putting the effort into my product. Interestingly, the strongest predictors of workplace bullying are deeper

▲ From a Varsity video by Zebulon Goriely, Sarah Ashton, and Victoria Zantotto

Features

differences in working style.

Despite what my academic record might say, I was killing it at science. I zipped off around the world throughout my degree, winning places on competitive research internships at the University of Dundee, IST Austria and Harvard University. My adept hack-and-slash jackhammer approach to problem-solving, which had evolved over a lifetime of never being prepared, gave me an edge in anything immediate. I wrote the application for my summer internship in Dundee over 48 hours, submitting 20 minutes before the deadline at midnight, waking up the next day to a call back, acing the interview after lunch time, then upon arrival, in my first week, changing labs to a much better fit, racing through the project I was set and finishing it in the first of my three months.

But back home, I was losing touch with friends, disorganised with my replies. I was ashamed of my burnt-out body, car-crash bedroom mess and fragile self-esteem. Sleepy from self-directed frustration and boredom. My patchy, pace-changing uni friendships and relationships felt embarrassing to talk about. Facebook invites, society mailing list emails and left-too-long Tinder messages slid by me, piling into a heap I didn't want to look at. My spunky beat wouldn't vibe with my untrusting coursemates nor unimpressed teachers. I lacked the ability to live out anything other than a disconnected life.

Lonely. Well, alone. I still had me, the boom of my imagination and a handful

“
I lacked
the ability
to live out
anything
other than a
disconnected
life”

of mates who adored me when I saw them. Without them, I'd most likely be dead.

Standard CBT or talk therapies tend to engender minimal improvement, even making things worse in some cases, when patients have a neurodivergent condition like ADHD or autism. The University Counselling Service (UCS) unfortunately lacks ADHD-inclusive CBT therapy (which exists!), as did my college counsellor... as did my college private therapist... as do many local NHS services. Coupled with my years lacking a diagnosis, the bulk of care work for my untreated-undiagnosed-ADHD-induced-poor-mental-health-depression-thing has been carried by my stellar friends. They are just as clueless as the NHS and UCS, but at least they recognise, and accept, that they do not know what they are doing.

Likewise, it was my friends and JCR women's officer who helped me get help and report a violent, LGBT-phobic crime that I experienced in my first year: procedures were way too bureaucratic for my bouncy brain, and my empathetic, well-meaning tutor and harassment advisors were simply not trained in working with, or advocating for, someone who is disabled. Far too often in my recovery, trained adults suggested that my problems are related to my bisexuality rather than disability, often because my bisexuality was more visible in the situation. This careless attitude of stereotyping me as a conflicted bisexual pervaded my upbringing and followed me as I waded

into the minefield pathways for ADHD diagnosis; people packaged my ADHD symptoms up as me being bisexual, “flamboyant” and “undecided” rather than hyperactive and disorganised.

It is far too common for invisible differences to be put down to whatever is most visible, especially with women, non-binary people and racialised people. Given the insidiousness of ableism, it is horrifying, but grimly unsurprising that the rate of suicide attempts in people with ADHD is 10-fold higher than the average population. Furthermore, people with ADHD and other neurodivergent conditions are far more likely to experience abuse, violence and, especially at university age, sexual violence, as we are especially vulnerable to predatory types and given inaccessible support services.

Post-diagnosis, I intermitted, volunteering with an ADHD charity to learn more about my condition and what I could do. I have built myself a life with integrated support now: I have an ADHD life coach from the DRC, a study skills tutor, a bunch of government-funded assistive technology, an ADHD-trained private therapist awarded through my college, exam adjustments and one-on-one supervisions with flexible deadlines. My mental health is better, I am engaging in my lectures with vitality, and I've finally invented an organisation system with the help of my coach that enables me to keep friends, hobbies and a semblance of what's going on with my course.

I'm still a work in progress. The NHS

“
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blocked
from truly
shining”

waiting list to trial me on stimulant medication is slow-moving, making it an awkward moment when people chat about getting pinged on Ritalin next night out. On paper, I could be seen as doing alright, flunking a bit; but in reality, like so many disabled students, I am not reaching my potential.

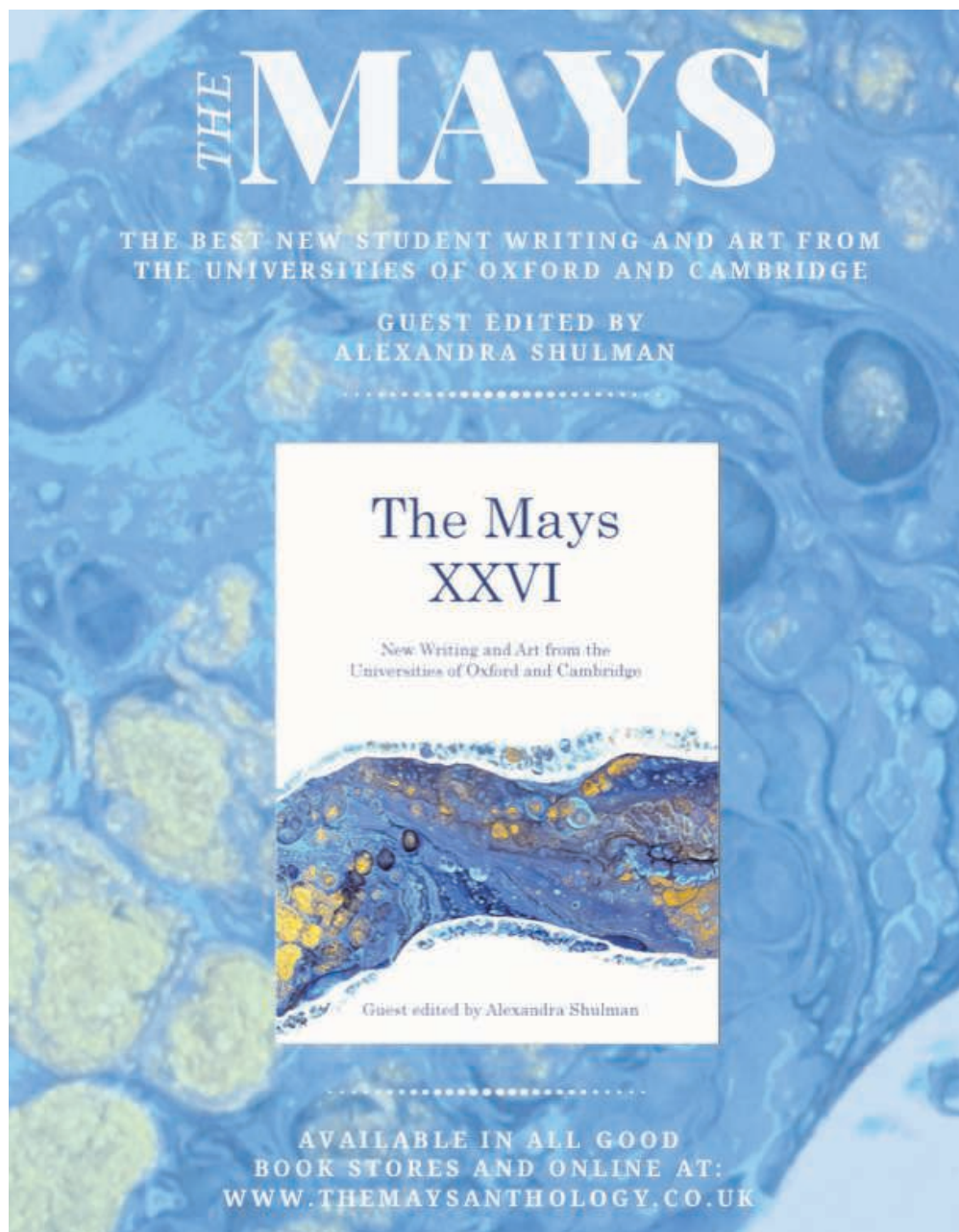
I'm hoping my story can reach others with (undiagnosed) ADHD, who are so often coping but blocked from truly shining. I helped write a website for ADHD awareness during my intermission, and have distilled what I've learnt as a researcher and advocate into an article for *Varsity*. My mum believes me now and since finding out about ADHD's genetic links she's even wondering if her 3AM deadline scrambles during uni were a bit more neurobiological than previously thought...

For anyone who identifies with anything I've written in this article, I encourage you to reach out, get reliable information and ask someone (who knows about ADHD) for help!

If anyone ever wants to chat they can, find me on Facebook or connect through CUSU Disabled Student's Campaign which I am part of: facebook.com/CUSUdisabledstudents or twitter.com/CUSU_Disabled.

CUSU's Disabled Student's Officer can also take questions, meet with you or pass you to me.

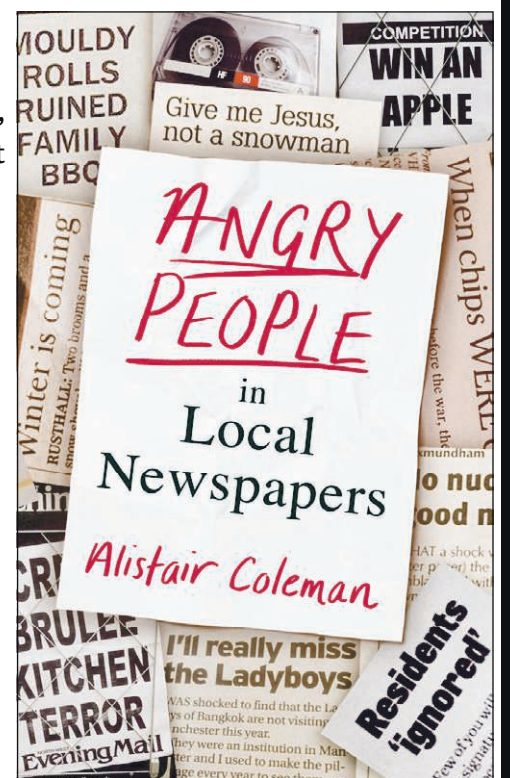
The Disability Resource Centre can advise and arrange assessments for AD(H)D and can be found at www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/.



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Features

The Battle for Cambridge is a battle for access

Using a Harry Potter analogy, columnist **Daniella Adeluwoye** illustrates the distance between her working class background and Cambridge elitism

Much to my disappointment, my acceptance letter from Cambridge was not delivered by a tawny owl. Instead, it popped up in my emails on a January afternoon. Opening the email, my hands trembling, I saw my college's coat of arms: a griffin (and a leopard). I had basically been accepted into Gryffindor! But like Harry – for the closest thing that I could compare Cambridge to was Hogwarts – a sense of confusion welled up inside of me. Surely there had been a mistake; why would they let a muggle like me in? Yet here it was, an offer, addressed so plainly that there could be no mistake.

But once inside Ryder & Amies, I quickly forgot about my worries of not fitting in. Whilst trying on my academic gown, I realised it was probably the closest I would get to living out my secret dream of trying out wands at Ollivanders. Surrounded by a sea of robed peers looking at the High Table, listening attentively to speeches at our first Formal dinner, I half expected an announcement about our new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher. However, it soon dawned on me that unlike Harry, I did not have access to an overflowing Gringotts account to alleviate my financial pressures.

One of the charms of the wizarding world is the little talk of finances during term. Some of my favourite scenes are set in Hogwarts' Great Hall, with thousands of candles floating in mid-air and a bewitched ceiling which resembles the starry night sky, admirably paralleling many of Cambridge's own halls. But unlike Harry, Hermione and Ron, who freely take in the majestic Great Hall, galleons just won't pay for these expensive formals. The fantasy world of Hogwarts is just that, a fantasy. Cambridge is not a fantasy – it is my present reality, one that requires a great amount of finances that I and my family do not have.

Perhaps naively, I thought that an offer to a muggle like me meant that I was now playing on an equal field with the old-money Draco Malfoys of the world,



“*I don't feel ever able to integrate into this society because of my financial position*”

those for whom there is little surprise of an acceptance to Cambridge. I thought I was selected by meritocracy, chosen from the ordinary ranks of life and ushered into lecture halls with the brightest minds of tomorrow and the most renowned academics of the world. I thought my being sorted – admittedly not by the Sorting Hat, but to one of Cambridge's 31 colleges – secured my place in this society.

Goodbye purebloods – Etonians, Harrovians and Westminsterers, and hello muggles – us ethnic minorities and state-school educated students, it seemed. But no sooner had students like me on Results Day announced that they had secured their Cambridge offers on Twitter, was the university greeted by applause for its increased diversity. Sure, the gradual increase of students from minority backgrounds suggests egalitarian progress in the hallowed halls of Cambridge, but the conversation shouldn't stop there.

The conversation shouldn't stop at admittance because I am not a statistic. So please humanise those ticks on diversity checklists. Black students at Cambridge are less likely to acquire first class degrees and are more likely to face mental health issues, likely because of a strong sense of cultural alienation from this institution. As hard as our battle to even access Cambridge is, our difficulties are only exacerbated by the need to make it through the three years of our degree. For as long as tradition is prized as the centre of Cambridge, the institution will remain a remnant of a socially exclusive age, a society full of pure-blood Slytherins and entitled Death Eaters.

I had thought that Harry and Hermione's relatively smooth and successful

▲The closest thing that I could compare Cambridge to was Hogwarts (PIXABAY)

transition from the muggle world to the wizarding world meant that it would be easy for me to move from my 'normal life' to Cambridge. Unfortunately, I realised shortly after fresher's week that the wizarding world is a fantasy and that the romanticising of Cambridge's tradition was in fact, hugely alienating. It is this sense of alienation that is further exacerbated by a sense of imposter syndrome – a voice in the back of our heads, albeit not Professor Quirrell's, reminding us working class, minority students that we really don't deserve to be here.

Many individuals are oblivious about just how far-removed Cambridge is from the muggle reality and are therefore unable to understand the need of pushing the conversation on access. I doubt I would be at Cambridge without the help of outreach work, but that outreach work did not make me feel any less overwhelmed and lost upon arrival. Whilst FLY, the BME Campaign and ACS help students like me make sense of this institution, they do not alleviate my financial worries over the next three years. The new CUSU Class Act might help with this, but it is far too early to tell. For though I have been admitted to the secret society of Cambridge, in many ways, I don't feel ever able to integrate into this peculiar wizarding society particularly because of my financial position.

The arcane traditions of Cambridge demand that, in order to fit in, one has to conform to its culture of wealth. Balls are not exclusive to Cambridge, but it is singular in its assumption that all students can afford it. A similar comment was recently made about Varsity Ski trip. This pressure to fit in found me applying to work long and tiring hours at the Fitzwilliam Winter Ball just so I could

enjoy half of it for free. I didn't want to be the only friend missing from the photos on Facebook!

What is saddening is that the exclusivity surrounding the nature of Cambridge's tradition is very much encouraged by its own students. I was delighted to hear upon arrival that the Weasley Twins would speak at the Union, immediately marking myself as 'interested' on Facebook. But I didn't realise that attending the talk also came with a hefty price tag. For students like me who are on the Full Cambridge Bursary, the Union happily advertised that the membership was only £99. Pardon, *only*? What frustrates me is that this creates a preservation of knowledge by employing financial barriers to access renowned speakers. As someone who cannot afford to throw money at the Union, it only reinforces the power differential prevalent within the university.

The Battle for Cambridge is a battle for access. The reality is that the conversation on access is broken. It is repetitive. It is archaic. While the existing access work is laudable and the societies I attend and friends I meet there keep me sane, I am beginning to see past Cambridge's internationally recognisable brand- enchantment that hypnotised me into believing that we are all on an equal playing field. I'm sorry to disappoint, but Cambridge's idiosyncrasies are still very alienating. Insofar as the university continues to actively ignore problems perpetuated by elitist pure-blood attitudes, it will remain complicit in making it harder for muggle-borns like myself, students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, to thrive within the institution.

“*The reality is that the conversation on access is broken*”

Opinion

The Prevent duty doesn't exist in a vacuum [redacted] increasing hostility to free speech from both left and right. For reasons that I never could understand, there seems nowadays to be a widespread acceptance that the potential harms [redacted] somehow outweigh the obvious and enormously well-confirmed benefits of being able to say them [redacted].

The Prevent Duty undermines the very notions upon which universities were first built

Senior Lecturer in philosophy Dr Arif Ahmed argues that both intellectual and individual freedom are put at risk by the Prevent Duty

Dr Arif Ahmed

We owe the moral, political and intellectual progress of our species more than anything to individuals whose beliefs or values were sharply at odds with those prevalent at the time. Ockham, Machiavelli, Luther, Giordano Bruno, Galileo, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Voltaire - these all stand in this tradition, and at the head of it there was, as Mill wrote, "a man named Socrates, between whom and the legal authorities and public opinion of his time, there took place a memorable collision." We remember Socrates as the founder of Western thought; his followers invented the idea of a university. But the upshot of this collision was Socrates' execution on the charge of 'corrupting the youth' of Athens; and it seems that the threat of that charge (though not of that sentence) has revived against modern universities. The effect, predictably enough, is not only a diversion of their resources but an increasing chill on the sort of free and often uncomfortable discussion of ideas that constitutes much of the point of a university.

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 introduced measures aimed at preventing people from being drawn into terrorism. Public bodies, including higher education institutions, are in consequence subject to the statutory Prevent Duty, meaning that universities are required by law to demonstrate the relevant safeguards. Specifically, these arrangements are supposed to govern speech as well as actions. Two things about the duty should especially alarm anyone concerned with free speech: the language in which it is framed, and the increasing evidence that its imposition is resulting not only in direct state-mandated censorship, though this also exists,

but in an environment in which we are silencing ourselves.

The Government's guidance for Higher Education Institutions states that "when deciding whether or not to host a particular speaker, [the relevant bodies] should consider carefully whether the views being expressed, or likely to be expressed, constitute extremist views that risk drawing people into terrorism or are shared by terrorist groups. In these circumstances the event should not be allowed to proceed except where [the relevant bodies] are entirely convinced that such risk can be fully mitigated without cancellation of the event." The general guidance defines 'extremism' as: "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs."

First of all, everything in life carries some element of risk. How is it even possible for anyone to be "entirely convinced" of the "full mitigation" of the risk that someone, somewhere, might be drawn into terrorism after hearing a lecture on, say, Lenin's social and political philosophy or Peter Singer's views on animal rights? So are we supposed to cancel any such event? I don't suppose that that was anyone's intention; but you could not have inferred this from the wording of the guidance.

Second, the definition of extremism itself here is absurdly broad. "Vocal opposition to democracy" covers an enormous range of views, not only because of the many things that 'democracy' might mean but also because of the many objections that one might raise against it. One might, for example, think that because the individual incentives to vote responsibly are so small, and the col-

lective consequences of irresponsible voting so large, democracy at a large enough scale will inevitably malfunction. Similarly, anyone acquainted with both the impoverished intellectual basis and the vast and disastrous consequences of many religions might think that they deserve toleration but certainly not 'respect'. Whether or not these views are true, they deserve the sort of discussion which, if we continue down this path, is going to be precluded from the very institutions that were designed to conduct it.

Perhaps most importantly, the language represents a shift from what you would have thought was the aim of anti-terrorist legislation, namely the prevention of certain crimes, towards something far more sinister: the promotion of particular values. It is one thing for the state to prevent anyone, by force if necessary, from violent means of achieving whatever ends he or she has. It is quite another thing to regulate the ends themselves, that being a job not for proper police but for thought police. Individual liberty is indeed a fundamental value of humanity if anything is; but if it means anything then it means the liberty to question all values, including itself.

One recent illustration of the descending fog of self-censorship is the decision by staff at the University of Reading to warn students about an essay by a British academic on revolutionary violence (N. Geras, 'Our morals: the ethics of revolution'). According to the *Guardian*: "third-year politics undergraduates have been warned not to access it on personal devices, to read it only in a secure setting, and not to leave it lying around where it might be spotted 'inadvertently or otherwise, by those who are not prepared to

▲ Graphic by Noella Chye for Varsity

"We will never know about the thoughts left unsaid, the articles left unwritten, the lectures considered but never proposed"

view it.' The alert came after the text was flagged by the university as 'sensitive' under the Prevent programme." I hope that this will in fact prompt students at Reading and everywhere else to read the essay and to distribute it more widely; but my fear is of the opposite.

The incident is not isolated, and nor are similar incidents isolated to universities: a 2016 report by the Open Society Justice Initiative, *Eroding Trust*, lists fifteen examples of people being targeted in consequence of the general Prevent duties, for making jokes, for acting in plays or simply for holding particular religious or political views. As you might expect, these cases disproportionately involve Muslims. And of course we will never know about the thoughts left unsaid, the articles left unwritten, the lectures considered but never proposed.

The Prevent duty doesn't exist in a vacuum but has appeared in the context of increasing hostility to free speech from both left and right. For reasons that I never could understand, there seems nowadays to be a widespread acceptance that the potential harms that might sometimes be risked by saying things somehow outweigh the obvious and enormously well-confirmed benefits of being able to say them at will. But perhaps this regression is not so surprising: after all, any sort of acquaintance with the history of just about anywhere readily shows what a fragile thing individual liberty really is.

And perhaps the universities of tomorrow, safe at least from Islamic terrorism in their cocoons of blandness and intellectual vacuity, might feel only relief at having left behind what Tacitus called those rare and happy times when you could think what you like and say what you think.

Opinion

Brexit will mean jeopardising the UK's superpower status in higher education

The UK punches well above its weight when it comes to higher education. Recent changes have put this at risk

Lucy Fairweather

The UK is home to one of the most successful higher education sectors anywhere in the world. Despite representing less than one percent of the world's population, it publishes 16% of the world's highly cited research papers. More world leaders have studied in the UK than in any other country, and the UK regularly dominates world rankings not just with Oxford and Cambridge, but with universities such as UCL, LSE and Manchester.

For all the talk of restoring Britain to some previous greatness or world-power status, it is clear that when it comes to higher education, Britain is already punching well above its weight. However, through our changing attitudes towards international education, we are at risk of jeopardising this success.

The effects of Brexit are part of the problem, especially the potential withdrawal of research funding from the EU. Take the Horizon 2020 programme, which funds science research. Although the government has guaranteed funding for this programme up to 2020, little is known about a replacement for the money from this project in the future.

The UK was the second largest recipient of Horizon funding between 2014-2016, and losing access to it could threaten the confidence of academics to begin new research projects in the UK if they don't have access to funds available elsewhere in Europe. Concerns about the residency of Britain's 35,920 academics from EU countries are justified too: the case of UCL academic Mariana Mazzucato made headlines recently after her application for permanent residency was turned down, despite her having lived in the UK for 20 years and having four British children. While immigration officials have blamed a credit card problem with her application fee, the fact her passport was kept for six months is just another example of how residency can be made difficult for academics we should be desperately trying to keep. Last year it was reported that 95% of UCL's senior researchers from EU countries had been approached by other European universities. Cambridge is already being affected by the so-called 'Brexit brain drain', with 184 staff from the EU leaving in 2017, up 35% on 2014-15.

The position of EU students is in doubt too. In the year 2016-17, 138,000

EU students studied at UK universities, and paid the same £9,250 undergrad fees with the same access to take out a government loan. For students beginning their degrees beyond 2019, it is not yet known whether they will be treated like other international students, being charged as much as £30,000 a year for some courses such as engineering and sciences.

This will make UK universities significantly more expensive than their continental counterparts, with one report estimating that a harmonisation of the rules for EU and non-EU students could reduce EU student enrolments by over 31,000, amounting to a net loss of £40 million for the higher education sector in the first year, even after the new higher fees of the remaining students are taken into account. Beyond just money, it would also constitute a loss of potential future academics, weakening Britain's status as a research powerhouse.

Beyond Europe, the situation for international students is similarly unsure. There are even larger numbers of non-EU students in the UK (over 300,000) and their attendance is a vital part of funding UK universities, as they pay higher fees

without government loans. The government also abandoned the post-study visa in 2012, making the UK a far less attractive country in which to study compared to the US and Canada, countries which allow students to stay for three years after graduating, and Australia, which allows them four. This seems like a huge own-goal given existing shortages in STEM subjects. For all the rhetoric about a global and open Britain, our actions towards international students can seem anything like that.

While there have been areas where Britain's power and influence have atrophied, the higher education sector is not one of them. We should be proud of the achievements of our universities, especially their global influence and international composition. We should be supporting a sector that generates £95 billion for the UK economy, not actively hindering it.

If Britain still wants to be a higher education superpower, it needs to welcome international students and academics. Brexit already puts the our universities at risk. Government policy should be aimed at trying to mitigate the negative effects of this, rather than exacerbating them.

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Cambridge
is already
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Postgraduate funding is woefully inadequate — why aren't we talking about it?

Postgraduate access is crucial in creating social change. Currently, the funding options available are failing students

Charlotte Lillywhite

According to Jo Johnson, students needing to bridge the gap between income and living costs have plenty of options. “They can work [...] they can also save, and then, of course, they can borrow from their parents.” Because (of course!) financial contributions from parents are an option for everyone, and working an exhausting number of hours on top of completing one’s academic studies is the solution to any financial issues a student may have.

These comments were made in 2017, when Johnson was Minister of Universities. If anything highlights the Conservatives’ ignorance of the real-life financial issues facing students, this is it. But beyond how blatantly incorrect they are, what troubles me about these comments is the lack of distinction between undergraduate and postgraduate funding.

While, at the very least, financial pressures facing undergraduate students are recognised in public discourse, postgrads are largely expected to fend for themselves, a fact which receives little recognition. Yes, the government has just introduced a postgraduate loan to help level out this playing-field which (naturally) favours the privileged, but

it is significantly flawed. For a start, the maximum funding such students can receive from the government, at £10,609, still fails to cover course and living costs for most people. Unbelievably, the size of the loan is the same regardless of whether you are studying for one year or four, with the money split between each year. And the loan isn’t even means-tested, despite family income being crucial to the amount of external support students receive. Inevitably, students will have to top up their loan with personal funding, which just isn’t possible for some people. George Osborne’s claim that the loan would “revolutionise” access to postgraduate study seems nothing less than ridiculous.

That is not to overlook the opportunities enabled by the current postgraduate loan for widening participation: since its introduction, there has been an increase in enrolments to postgraduate courses, following a decline up until the 2015-16 intake. This paints a more hopeful picture for the future and proves the importance of financial support in increasing the accessibility of such courses. But increased enrolment could also mean a higher number of students facing more pressure to meet living expenses, without

sufficient financial support.

This inaccessibility is very relevant in Cambridge: the CUSU Big Cambridge Survey for 2016/7 found that postgraduates reported more financial difficulties than their undergraduate counterparts. Furthermore, as opposed to 38% of undergrads, 49% of research postgrads and 56% of taught postgrad students said that monetary issues negatively impact their time at Cambridge. For money to have had such an impact on almost half of research postgrads and more taught postgrads than not, there is clearly a huge problem with the financial accessibility of postgraduate study. And this is considering those who have applied and been accepted to their chosen courses in the first place: such pressures cut off masses of talented graduate students even before the application stage.

Many will argue that funding is rightly focused on enabling HE participation for would-be undergraduates, but this is no longer as important for the career market. As the Bachelor’s degree is becoming the new norm, postgraduate study is becoming a major factor of differentiation for job seekers. Many people are being shut off from top careers solely because the financial pressures involved in such

“The Master’s degree falls prey to the inequalities of our education system and solidifies privilege’s number one status within it”

courses are too great.

Rather than acting as a force for change, the Master’s degree falls prey to the inequalities of our education system and continues to solidify privilege’s number one status within it. This is encapsulated by the Sutton Trust’s recognition of the “postgraduate premium”, offered to those who can afford its expensive upfront costs: those with a Master’s degree can, on average, expect to earn £200,000 more than someone in possession of a Bachelor’s degree, over a work life spanning 40 years. Without better funding arrangements, this will continue to be a premium enjoyed only by a privileged few.

At best, the postgraduate loan is a stepping-stone to truly changing the inequalities of our education system and career market. A higher, means-tested loan, together with the centralisation of grants to mean that help is not dependent on which university people attend, would go a long way to improve the accessibility of postgraduate study. Postgraduate degrees should not remain the turf of the middle and upper-classes, and our education system cannot keep circling back round to the same issue of privilege.

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Opinion

Light-skinned people must not be complicit in widespread colourism

Emma Loffhagen

Tackling colourism will not only require meaningful change from those who perpetuate it, but also from lighter-skinned people of colour who benefit from it

As a black woman, *Blackkklansman* was a film I was supposed to love. Akin to *Girls Trip*, *Black Panther*, *Moonlight* et al., there was an assumption that when the credits began to roll, the black community should have been on its knees, eternally grateful to the Hollywood masters for finally giving us the representation that we had been so vociferously demanding. However, I did not leave the cinema overwhelmed by this one-dimensional elation. Instead, I was left with a complex but all too familiar sense of frustration. Why, in a film that was in theory so ostensibly and unapologetically black, was the female lead so light?

As a woman of mixed heritage myself, I understand that my perceived ethnic “ambiguity” has given me a free pass over hurdles on which other non-white-passing members of the black community have stumbled. I first began to recognise my position within a social dynamic steeped in colourism as a mixed-race woman when rethinking some of the backhanded ‘compliments’ I had been given all my life: “You’ve got nice hair for a black girl”, “even though you’ve got big lips you’re still pretty!”, “You’re not like most black girls!” Why, I asked myself, did these comments of “praise” always serve to negate my blackness? Why was that which made me valuable that which apparently distanced me from my blackness?

Yes, these comments chipped away at my sense of identity, but I know that being seen in this way has also been advantageous for me as a woman of colour - and just as white privilege must be recognised by its proprietor, so must light privilege. Light-skinned people must not be complicit in colourism’s erasure of our dark-skinned counterparts by profiting off it. Although I recognise that I cannot and should not speak for anybody in the black community, including those darker-skinned individuals affected by colourism, I feel a personal and social obligation to do my part to help bring these issues to the forefront of racial discourse - this includes recognising my privilege as a light-skinned woman and calling out the complacency of many lighter-skinned members of the black community on this topic.

However, confronting colourism is not as simple as calling upon the black community to engage in self-reflection. While colourism is indeed perpetuated by the black community, from the *misogynoir* of some black men to the alarming epidemic of skin bleaching, both of which fortify the already axiomatic erasure of dark-skinned women and men, it is crucial that we also remember that its architects are white. Colourism, like its

cousin, racism, is inextricably bound to the cotton fields of colonialism, a latent appendage of the legacy of slavery and a by-product of the centuries-old white supremacist ideology that being as close to white as possible is the ultimate ideal. ‘White is right’ has been not-so-thinly veiled as ‘light is right’.

It is no coincidence that so many of the faces of black success, the pioneers of our shiny new “colour blind” society, share a striking approximation to whiteness, nor is it something we can continue to disregard as a non-issue. Whether it be the first black president or black British princess, both share a common dilution of melanin which has rendered them more palatable to a society steeped in Eurocentrism.

As uncomfortable as this reality is to confront, its proliferation is impossible to ignore. However, this is not a topic of conversation that I have found to be common during my time at Cambridge. While I was pleasantly surprised to find that the topic of colourism forms a small part of my HSPS degree, the lecture and supervision participation (or lack thereof) demonstrated that while countless students are well-versed in the most obscure white-narrated sociological trivia, many are unfamiliar with even the most foundational notions of black history - colourism included. For me, attending

▲ Graphic by Noella Chye for Varsity

“Just as white privilege must be recognised by its proprietors, so much light privilege”

Colourism /ˈkʌlərɪz(ə)m/

Prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group.

ACS events within the University and even simply going home to London bring into sharp relief the lack of nuanced discourse and knowledge surrounding race beyond a Western-centric gaze within Cambridge circles. In a majority-white institution like Cambridge, the silence (and ignorance) surrounding these issues can be deafening.

It seems to me that tackling colourism requires a twofold approach: direct recognition and action from those (largely white) people in power, and reflection and allyship from lighter-skinned POC. First of all, colourism relies on perception, and it is those members of our society with the most social capital that construct our perception of ourselves and others.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of these authors of our social values are white: film producers, magazine editors, record labels, and modelling agencies all have the power to uphold, whether consciously or not, this damaging approach to race and ‘diversity’ where darker-skinned people of colour are time and time again left out of the picture.

But there is also work to be done by light-skinned POC to challenge this special treatment that we often receive. Privilege is always uncomfortable to admit, especially if you have been on the receiving end of some form of dis-

“The dismissal of colourism as an inherently and only ‘black’ problem hinders any possibility of action or concern within the white community”

crimination yourself, but it is impossible to make significant progress if lighter-skinned women and men continue to profit from this system at the expense and erasure of darker-skinned individuals. It is not enough to simply recognise privilege - we must actively challenge this dominant narrative in everyday life to combat this illusion of inclusion. This process need not be revolutionary; small actions such as stepping aside in roles that are more suited to dark-skinned POC, thoughtfully engaging in discourse surrounding colourism, and speaking out via whatever means available to you are all actions that will slowly but surely help to change the shade of the fabric of our society.

However, there is one thing I need to make clear: while it is completely necessary for lighter-skinned POC to take action and reflect upon where we stand in this dynamic, the dismissal of colourism as an inherently and only “black” problem hinders any possibility of action or concern within the white community. Members of the white community must not sit back and pat themselves on the back for achieving a white-washed version of diversity and inclusion. If true inclusion is really your goal, then this is an issue which you, as a beneficiary or an architect of colourism, must face, and that immediately.

vulture



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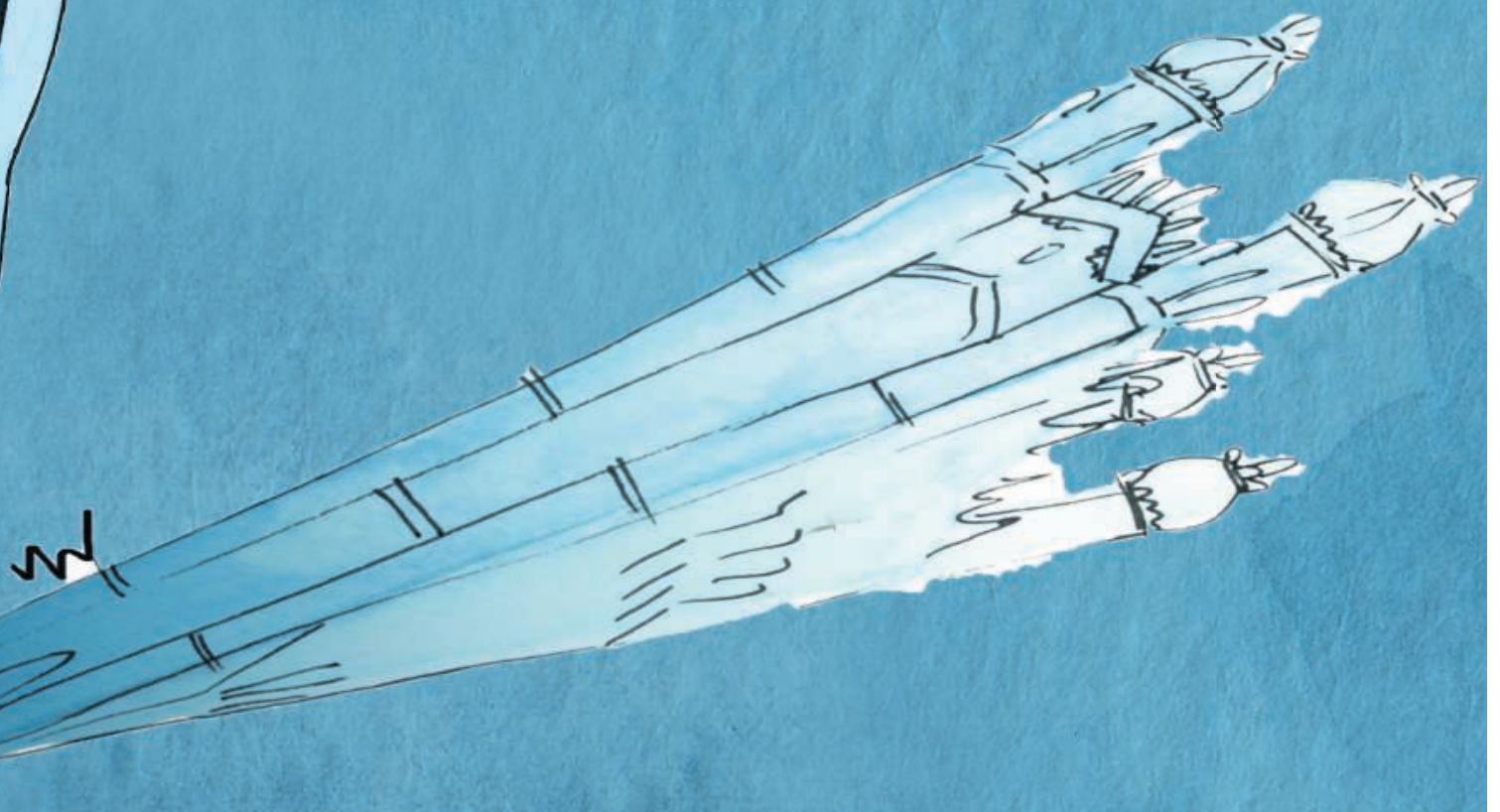


Illustration by Zoë Matt-Williams

Stop assuming theatre is only for the middle class

The middle class assumption in Cambridge theatre must end, write **Emmeline Downie** and **Emma Plowright**

There is a pervasive and dangerous attitude towards class in Cambridge's comedy scene. It is rooted in an assumption that the creators of comedy - and its audience - are from middle-class backgrounds. The issues this presents serve to alienate non-privileged students in an environment that already 'others' them. Class is a complex issue, involving myriad social and economic factors that are constantly in flux. It is thus deeply problematic to assume that everyone at Cambridge has a certain level of privilege and needs to conform to certain stereotypes in the comedy that they write or enjoy.

There is an expectation that a certain universal privilege is shared by all Cambridge students, by virtue of attending the university. But our university does not speak to our socioeconomic privilege. As performers, our sketches are rooted in our lived experiences, as students who identify as non-middle class. We recently performed character comedy in *Two by Two*, a night of comedy duologues at the ADC. This was a wonderful evening that served to showcase the joy and range of the duologue. The characters we wrote tapped into a non-middle class stereotype that is

rarely seen on stage in Cambridge. These women were parodies of the women that we know personally; our mums, our aunts, those friends of your mum you call "Aunty" but she's just a mate from way back. Parodying them is not punching down. By being Cambridge students, we are not automatically lifted from every other aspect of our lived experiences. It is not some sort of salvation. Lots of the characters we write are odes to our childhoods, the people we grew up with and, to an extent, the people we are. Hyperbolic versions - yes, but cruel and classist? No.

It goes without saying that less privileged performers are already at a disadvantage and can feel one step behind when trying to get involved in comedy. It is far easier to nurture confidence when one has opportunities or environments in which creative writing and performing is encouraged. Extracurricular classes and workshops are wonderful but often come at a fairly hefty price. This means that one might find oneself in Cambridge with fantastic opportunities at one's fingertips but not the confidence or know-how to go about getting involved. Undeniably, comedy is a pastime that requires a certain level of confidence and a feeling of inexperience or inadequacy can be exacerbated by a scene that wishes to restrict which of our experiences can be voiced. In turn, this sets a dangerous precedent.

Looking to the history of the Cambridge Footlights and its success stories, the prevalence of the middle-class writer/performer becomes apparent. This is not, however, reflective of Cambridge's diverse class demographic today. Is it so unusual that a performer

in Cambridge, or elsewhere might not be from a certain background? And on the note of audience comfort, is our class viewed as so pitiful that it is beyond parody even when in our own hands? When we mock ourselves and the people we grew up with and, in doing so, make a viewer uncomfortable, is it not the lens through which they are viewing our performance that is the problem? When the middle-class experience has been so overwhelmingly normative, there is no space left for alternative narratives.

Comedy that actively deviates from middle-class tropes is some of the most dynamic, entertaining and interesting on TV at the moment. Some sketch shows which focus on the experiences of white. Men often fail to hit the mark for those from non-middle class backgrounds because the people in them aren't people we encounter - the comedy is not always relatable. If *This Country* were to play on a Cambridge stage would we refuse to see it? Our guess is no, because when creators aren't from Cambridge, we are able to envisage them having a more nuanced class identity rather than default to lazy assumptions. When we got our A-level results and confirmed our UCAS, we didn't leave behind our heritage. If anything, being in a place where such prolific privilege is so visible highlighted this disparity to us even more.

The other ways that class problems manifest themselves are arguably less explicit and more insidious. There is, for example, an assumptive conflation between northerness and working class heritage, something which in itself erases the experience of working-class

people who happen to live below the Watford gap. We must abandon the notion that a regional accent is innately imbued with socioeconomic ramifications and most importantly, the idea that socioeconomic circumstances determine intellect. Cambridge is victim of the exact reversal that Billie Collins observes in northern regional theatre when she discussed the issue in her recent *Varsity* article. Here in the south, "northern" accents are utilised as comedic tools because received pronunciation is the norm in Cambridge and regional accents are othered. This discrimination was highlighted in a 2006 study conducted by the University of Aberdeen which found that the three accents the UK population found to be "funniest" were also deemed to be the "least intelligent". Regionalism is complicated by unsubstantiated intersections of social standing, financial status, cultural awareness and intelligence and this, too, is identifiable in the Cambridge comedy scene.

Ultimately, we are bored by the same stereotypes of middle-class life that are trotted out in comedy shows. It is far more interesting to create something different and nuanced, showcasing diversity. BAME and Lady smokers are often the best received because of the under-represented voices they showcase. To dismiss comedy that has non-middle class characteristics speaks to an unwillingness to know, understand or empathise with an underprivileged class narrative. It explicitly disempowers non-privileged writers and performers, illegitimising their experiences. In short, the Cambridge comedy scene must do better.

Thank u, Ari

Emily Blatchford consults Ariana Grande, love guru

There are many reasons that this year has been a tough one for me, and to top it off I recently got dumped. My year has been difficult but it is incomparable to Billboard's 2018 Woman of the Year, Ariana Grande's last 12 months. The 25-year old singer has been resilient through the Manchester Terror attack, a public break up of an engagement and a death of an ex. I think I can understand, to a far lesser degree, what a hard year feels like, but I certainly haven't dealt with it as successfully as the popstar and her new single 'thank u, next' makes this strength abundantly clear.

The song is undoubtedly a break up anthem, and went straight on my F U Spotify playlist, featuring 'Bust Your Windows' and a lot of Cardi B. Yet that's not exactly its message. She does not hate on exes and past relation-

ships but, radically, thanks them. In the song, Grande mentions her exes by name, including Big Sean, Ricky Alvarez, Mac Miller and, her ex-fiancé, Pete Davidson. She gives them credit for the positive impact that they've had on her life, singing, 'One taught me love / One taught me patience / And one taught me pain / Now I'm so amazing / I've loved and I've lost / But that's not what I see / So, look what I got / Look what you taught me,' before adding, 'I'm so fucking grateful for my ex.'

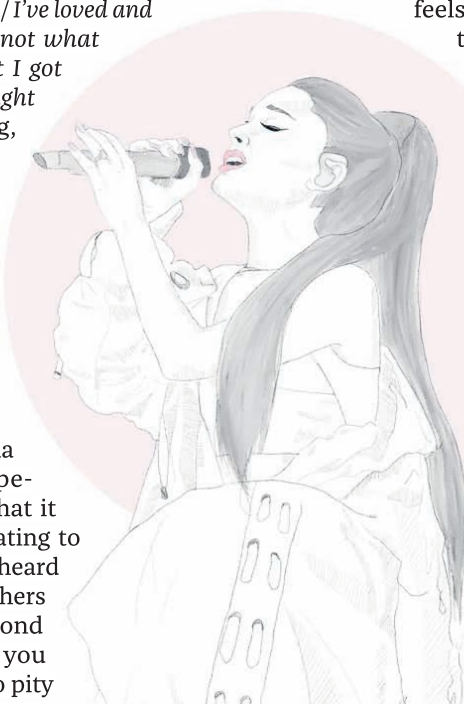
Grande is a new kind of empowered strong woman. One that acquires her strength from learning and assimilating her experiences. There still exists the stigma of break ups, especially for women, that it is somehow humiliating to be dumped. Having heard of your break up, others almost always respond by apologising to you before proceeding to pity you and point out negative attributes of your ex's personality. But Grande's mes-

sage seems to be that going through break ups in your twenties, and indeed at university, is not inherently sad or mortifying, but part of a learning experience that provides you with more positive lessons than negative ones. She resists the urge for a Taylor Swift-esque petty takedown, which always in the first instance

feels like the most cathartic option. She refuses to dwell on her sadness or pity herself, understanding the ends of these relationships as necessary milestones, and not catastrophic tragedies. She, unlike early single me, does not man-hate, or make an F U playlist. She recognises her vulnerability, but also that crying is not going to help (and that screaming in the smoking area of Life isn't productive). She definitely wouldn't write a fake Crushbridge about herself... Instead we should all simply move on. Her idea of moving on does not entail a clear cut black and white reaction however. Her message is not about hating past relationships,

even though it is often easier to think and talk like that to protect your feelings. Instead she manages to acknowledge that there are things that she loved about these past relationships but that she loved herself more.

In the song, Grande continues singing: 'Spend more time with my friends / I ain't worried 'bout nothin' / Plus, I met someone else / We havin' better discussions / I know they say I move on too fast / But this one gon' last / 'Cause her name is Ari / And I'm so good with that'. Here she appreciates the value of her friendships (something I should definitely do more) and acknowledges her own worthiness and self-growth. Unlike every romantic comedy ever, Grande's next relationship is with herself, and not Mark Darcy. She preaches to fall in love and make mistakes, and then to do it all over again. And her advice in support of self-love can be translated to countless other difficult situations we face as we live our lives. Of course, sometimes I don't live up to Grande's maturity and I just want to eat ice cream and be catty and complain to my friends about how past exes are idiots and I'm great, but I know that the pint-sized popstar and her high-ponytail are right. Grande achieves the rare success of writing something so personal and difficult to talk about and yet empower people in different situations. She manages to have a small-scale impact while achieving a large-scale icon status. I have always been cynical of the popstar, but perhaps Ariana Grande should be our new life guru.



▲ Illustration by Alisa Santikarn for *Varsity*

Is sustainable fashion accessible?

As we become more aware of the arguments for sustainable fashion, we must consider whether the fashion industry is equipped to implement it, writes **Caterina Bragoli**

Sustainability was once a foreign concept in the world of fashion, yet with the ever-rising influence of social media, consumers are increasingly being made aware of the repercussions of their spending. The notion of sustainability is something of a dichotomy in the industry: while consumers feel a moral duty to support ethical brands in light of the polluting effects of fast fashion, the high price tags act as a profound deterrent.

But what are these polluting effects, and what is fast fashion? Oscar Wilde states, 'Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months', which perfectly defines fast fashion. Consumers are fed a tirade of seasonal campaigns, encouraging wardrobe renewals as the weather brings new collections of clothing. This leads to a surge in spending, with shoppers flocking to the high-street to update their wardrobes. Yet the consequences of this are unprecedented: shocking statistics reveal that six out of



▲ Sustainability is increasingly discussed online, including by YouTuber Arden Rose (YOUTUBE/ARDENROSE)

ten garments purchased are not being worn by consumers.

This provokes thought into the production of these six unused and disposable garments. A staple clothing item is a pair of jeans, standing the test of time to be included in countless trends and collections over decades of fast fashion. However, do consumers of denim realise the cost behind their favourite pair of jeans, not just financially but environmentally too?

The foremost source of denim is cotton,

which causes wide scale atrocities for the world's water supplies, with over 8000 litres of water needed to produce a single pair. A prevalent example of the catastrophes triggered by the production of cotton is the Aral Sea, situated between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This sea was a crucial water source for an abundance of local communities, yet with the production of cotton in the Northern area

of Uzbekistan, the inflowing rivers were diverted to areas of cotton manufacturing, thus depleting the sea of water. It now exists as the North Aral; the main body of the sea is now exposed land. Disasters such as these cause unparalleled damage to the local population, exposing the unfathomable atrocities undertaken by fashion powerhouses committed to producing fashion on a fast rotation, and at the cheapest cost possible, regardless of the negative impact this will leave behind.

Keeping the industry thriving is gradually becoming inextricably linked with sustainability, and new labels are creating clothing from locally sourced materials, or recycled garments, with a less polluting manufacturing process. Yet a significant journey remains for

the sustainable fashion market to become more accessible, as garments can cost three times more than typical high-street price tags. Ultimately, the consumer is paying for the ethical sourcing of the clothing, however the high prices exclude a large demographic.

As the gap between ethical fashion and high-street prices is gradually bridged, there are ways in which consumers can limit their endorsing of fast fashion, thus making their own difference to the environmental catastrophes occurring as a result of this highly polluting industry. Shoppers can apply the 'Thirty Wear Test' to purchases which encourages consumers to consider whether something can be worn at least thirty times.

Such schemes cement a more ethical approach to partakers of fast-fashion, while also reducing the cost-per-wear of each item. 'Capsule Wardrobes' are another easily implemented sustainable alternative seeking shoppers to reduce their wardrobe to approximately thirty pieces, ensuring no surplus of unused clothes.

Sustainable fashion is a label that cannot be solely limited to expensive brands that, whilst implementing ethical policies, are inaccessible for a wide range of people. By partaking in campaigns such as the 'Thirty Wear Test', consumers are contributing to a largescale rise in the awareness of how damaging the world's second most polluting industry really is.

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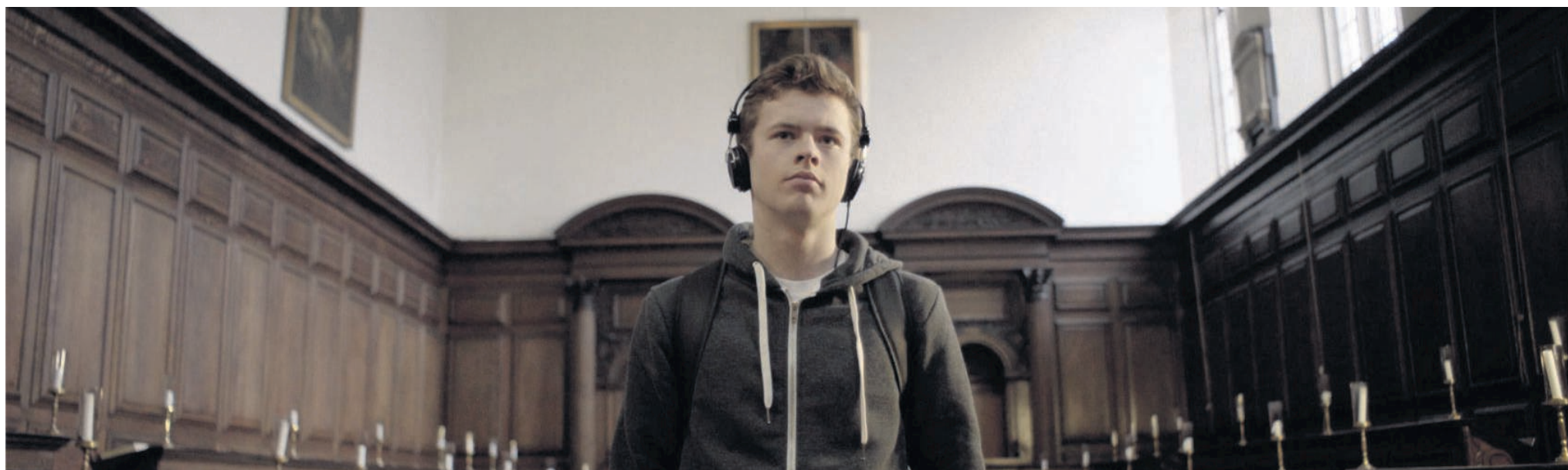
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Cambridge Shorts: the best of student film



Ada Barume and Emma Lubega give us a rundown of what Cambridge filmmakers put on show

Once again, we found ourselves at the Cambridge Shorts, now on its 8th installation. As usual, the crowd was suitably thespian and once again the music was reminiscent of a night in Fez. In a possibly deliberate juxtaposition, this was jarringly followed by the Strictly Come Dancing- style entrance from hosts, the sharply dressed Tom Nunan and Maria von Snatch. The pair took some time to warm up, but once they found their feet had the audience laughing raucously between films. Maria offered a much-needed injection of self-awareness of the ADC's infamous tendency to circle jerk, complemented by Tom's expert comedic timing.

First up we had *The Tortoise* by Alannah Lewis, a short surprising in its profession-



▲ *The Tortoise* (CAMBRIDGESHORTS)
► *The Cyclists* (CAMBRIDGESHORTS)

alism across the board. Innovative camera work and an excellent score provided the perfect backing for Anna Wright's compelling performance, with the refreshingly original storyline allowing her to show a mixture of humour and pathos. The film only suffered from its place in the running order; coming first meant we only recognised its standout quality in retrospect. (*****)

The second film of the night was *The Cyclists*, also by Alannah Lewis. In comparison with her previous short, it was less polished but succeeded in delighting the audience with its distinctly Cambridge brand of relatable comedy. At points the camerawork and sound were notably challenged by the difficulties of filming outdoor bike rides and small student bedroom conversations, however, the overall effect was as light-hearted and entertaining as a trip to Grantchester. (***)

Next up, *100 Days* Since by Kate Collins. This film stood out for its creative camerawork, sharp editing, and locations, managing to transform a college bedroom with astute set dressing. Harry Redding rose to the challenge of the demanding role of a young carer, bringing the interesting concept of confronting religion and mental health to life. The only shortfall was an issue endemic to the overall feel of the evening; a distinct focus on the (white) male protagonist, missing opportunities for the development of female characters. (****)

The *Uniform Party* was the penultimate offering, providing light relief after some heavy subject matter. Dealing with the tribulations of dressing for an occasion, the film did not disappoint with its costumes, whilst the Director of Photography took full advantage of all the scenic (and often overlooked) settings that Cambridge has to offer, marred slightly by the oversaturation.

The lack of dialogue did not detract from the short, thanks to the impressive comedic acting of the lead. (***)

Finally came *Scene* from the men's toilets at a ceilidh, a heartwarming end to the night. Another impressively professional film benefiting from close attention to detail and carried by its naturalistic dialogue delivered expertly by Dan Walsh and Joe Sefton. The unorthodox setting allowed for a clever display of sound recording, whilst the regular, well-timed 'interruptions' of the otherwise serious conversation by the kilt-clad extras kept the scene realistically irreverent. (****1/2)

Overall, the high standard of Cambridge film we have come to expect after two years of attendance was upheld, as we were given an inspiring insight into the talent and commitment students exhibit whilst still finding time to do their degrees. In the time that we have reviewed the shorts, the evening's sense of exclusivity has diminished, a heartening change which has allowed a more diverse audience to enjoy the films, however, this is a diversity yet to be replicated on screen.

▲ *100 Days* (CAMBRIDGESHORTS)





▲ Some of potter Emma Low's recent commissions, shared to her Instagram account (POTYERTITSAWAYLUV/INSTAGRAM)

Emma Low and the invention of women

Helen Grant explores the work of Edinburgh-based potter Emma Low, whose work resets the terms on which women's bodies are presented

'Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?' Feminist activist artists 'The Guerilla Girls' have been keeping tabs on this question since 1989, when they first paid for an advertising campaign that would see it put on display on the side of New York buses. In that year, less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art sections were women, while 85% of the nudes were female. In 2005 the figures on the posters were updated to show the new figures of 3% and 83%; in 2012 these saw negligible improvement in 4% and 76%. Every so often, the question is re-released, or sometimes adapted: 'Do women have to be naked to get into Boston Museums?' 'Do women have to be naked to get into U.S. museums?' And, in Paris, 'Est-ce que les femmes doivent être nues pour entrer au Metropolitan Museum?'

A ceramicist whose work focuses entirely on nudity should not, at least on paper, offer much of a solution to an over-proliferation of naked women in art. Yet Emma Low, also recognisable under the handle 'Pot Yer Tits Away Luv', has managed to do just that. The culprit, after all, was never the female body itself. Low makes naked pots. Most of her work focuses on breasts – 'tit pots' – although she also makes penises and bellies. Her work is notable for its intersectionality, and also for

its realism. She takes commissions, and makes her pots directly from photographs, or sometimes from sitting models. Before sending them back to the subjects, she posts pictures on Instagram, for which she has gained an impressive 63.3k followers. Somehow, in spite of a business model based on making women into objects, she manages to embody modern feminism. How?

The consensus view of breasts in our society is one of contempt. Breasts are public. They don't make someone a woman, but we equate them with women, and thus subject them to the same vitriol suffered by women as a group. We give them responsibilities: feeding (not in public), arousing (slut). We remember them when they are adjectives to accompany 'implant' and 'cancer'. When we think about adjectives to describe breasts, we base them on whether or not they merit our lechery: 'perky' (optimum), 'saggy' (what a shame). We don't know what breasts look like. Their social image, which is round and high up and white, is a total distortion of their actual appearance, which is often only some or none of these things.

'Pot Yer Tits Away Luv' depicts breasts kindly, in a neat inversion of the misogyny echoing in the brand name. The breasts are gently humorous: one pot majestically supports a head of broccoli like Atlas holding up the night sky. What's more striking, however, is their realism: Low makes black, brown and white pots, and sometimes pots with vitiligo. She makes pots that lactate. Pots that sport nipple rings and tattoos. Her pots have silver and gold stretch marks, moles, hairs; they are uneven, large, small; they bear mastectomy scars.

For the most part, people who have breasts mainly see them either by looking down at themselves when they're in the shower, or perhaps in a bathroom mirror. 'Pot Yer Tits Away Luv' reflects this. It makes art out of naked female bodies but, turning the Guerilla Girls' complaint on its head, this art isn't intended to be ogled at in somewhere like the Met.

Low isn't just a ceramicist profiting from making expensive naked sculptures, but a potter who focuses on contextualising female bodies in a space of self-ease. Some of the photographs are taken by Low herself, but many come from customers who've bought pots and placed them in their homes. The point isn't to sip champagne and intellectualise stretch marks and nipple hair because now they're suddenly on a plinth in an otherwise empty room: Low's work compels us to see bodies on a windowsill or mantelpiece, or held up in front of somebody's rhododendrons – normal, comfortable bodies that are in the private sphere, and know that they're worthy of admiration.

'Women are a very recent invention,' Ursula Le Guin observed in her essay *Introducing Myself*. Who's been inventing women in art? The male artists in the Met., perhaps. We have a solid cultural precedent for attributing to men the creation of women: Pygmalion in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* whiles away the hours by chipping at an ivory Galatea; John Mayer, as recently as 2003, won a Grammy for making a disturbingly big deal out of his partner's 'porcelain' skin in 'Your Body is a Wonderland.' Society appears to be rather attracted to thinking about women as sculptures or pieces of art: art is malleable. The artist can pick the

shape and colour according to his own personal taste. Women have not, historically, been the artists of their own bodies. Perhaps it is only to be expected that we would be more familiar with the shape of a bikini shot glass than a pot depicting actual breasts.

When we acknowledge the historic and largely persistent social role of women in unpaid domestic labour, we also have to acknowledge the aggressive prescriptive nature of the home environment, and the message it sends out: women's bodies belongs indoors, but women's bodies are not good enough to be indoors. They are the wrong shape; they are the wrong colour. They have the wrong parts. Oppression has long been cemented in our material culture, and it doesn't take much rooting around to find objects and images on sale that surround the individual with reductive representations of what a woman is. An idle search for 'woman statue home' on Google will throw up 'Western Sexy Slave Nude Girl' as well as 'Exotic African Tribal Woman' and 'Fat Yoga Lady Thai Metal Handcrafted Home Decor.'

Low is part of a new movement of intersectional feminist art that is taking ownership of the process of 'invention' through dealing with bodies and nudity: she recently collaborated on a pair of earrings with Lou Clarke, who makes laser-cut jewellery often featuring stubbly legs; there's also Kenesha Sneed or 'Tactile Matter', who uses a wide range of mediums to depict women of colour; Liv & Dom, a pair of ceramicists who make nude incense holders and coasters; and Lou Foley, the artist behind 'Are We Nearly Bare Yet', where the naked bodies of a diverse range of self-identifying women are illustrated in a bright, bubblegum palette. We are finally able to appreciate a kaleidoscope of different bodies celebrated positively as 'art', rather than fetishised or omitted altogether from the what we see as womanhood. They are material evidence that when women get to define what women are, when women become the inventors, it becomes much easier to market womanhood as an inclusive gender, as well as a muse for friendly anatomical ceramics and earrings.

People will always get different things out of a business that creates nude pots. When I was researching this article, I kept coming back to a particular post from April where Low addresses the fact that in spite of her efforts to build an inclusive brand, pots depicting women of colour are the last to sell from her wholesale orders and the last ones standing on her website. "I understand that people are looking for a pot that maybe represents themselves in a physical way but this isn't isn't this about being valid regardless of the body we are in?" As a white cisgender woman – like Low – I do have to accept that if my stretch marks aren't exactly well-represented, my general shape and colour is. Of course there's a reason why I might be particularly drawn to a white tit pot with metallic stars painted on it, but there is little point in Low celebrating the diverse bodies if the kind that are most conformist continue to be prized above all others. Her brand should be celebrated not because it lets every buyer find a mini-me, but because it demands that people re-evaluate their idea of beauty.

Low's pots take the reality of the female body and ask the environment to work around it: she offers women in a state of repose and neutrality. Her pots don't have shoulders, but if they did they would be relaxed. 'No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anybody but oneself,' as Virginia Woolf once wrote. Radical: a woman in a room without it altering her. Why go through all the stress of being naked in the Met?

A herbal tea for every crisis

Tea connoisseur **Chloe Fitzgerald** shares her picks of herbal teas for every Michaelmas malady

Not long after you've unpacked your stuff and moved into your room, there comes the moment where you need your first cup of tea of the new term. A similar moment comes later in the first week, when you have to accept you've caught freshers' flu, and you find yourself in need of a healing cup of hot tea. But then you recover from freshers' flu just in time for Sunday Life and find yourself the following Monday morning with a hangover and not wanting to do anything until you've got yourself a cup of tea.

Being already a fan of herbal tea, the sheer number of times I find myself boiling the kettle in a week gave me the idea of looking into the different herbs and their supposed benefits. Placebo effect or not, I basically just enjoy drinking flavoured hot drinks when I'm in

one of the aforementioned situations, but my interest in herbal tea has also led to me having interesting conversations with people who unexpectedly turned out to know a lot about it. I've also found that the tea section in Sainsbury's is much better-stocked and varied than I thought it would be!

So here's my list of my least favourite situations that seem to keep recurring, and the types of tea I've discovered can be helpful for each one.

"I'm coming down with a cold"

Having a cold is the worst thing ever and you deserve a cup of tea to help you cope. Citrus teas, such as green tea with lemon, are particularly good if you have a cold. My personal favourite is St Clements tea, although I don't really know how to describe it because "hot liquid orange" sounds gross. Trust me though, St Clements tea is nice.

"This essay deadline has me so stressed"

I know I don't need to mention why I think readers of *Varsity* might be familiar with stress, so I'm just going to cut straight to telling you that peppermint tea contains natural muscle relaxants and doesn't

contain caffeine - it's ideal when you need to unwind. Lotus flower tea is also an option. I hadn't really heard of it until I was in Russia recently and my landlady gave me lotus flower tea, telling me it lowers blood pressure. She had to repeat it so many times to make sure I understood it that I will now always remember that lotus flower tea lowers blood pressure, and how to say that in Russian.

"Help! I can't sleep a wink!"

One of the most annoying things about being stressed in term time is the fact that it also stops you sleeping well: an important way to recover from stress. The herbal solution to this is chamomile tea. It's been used as a natural

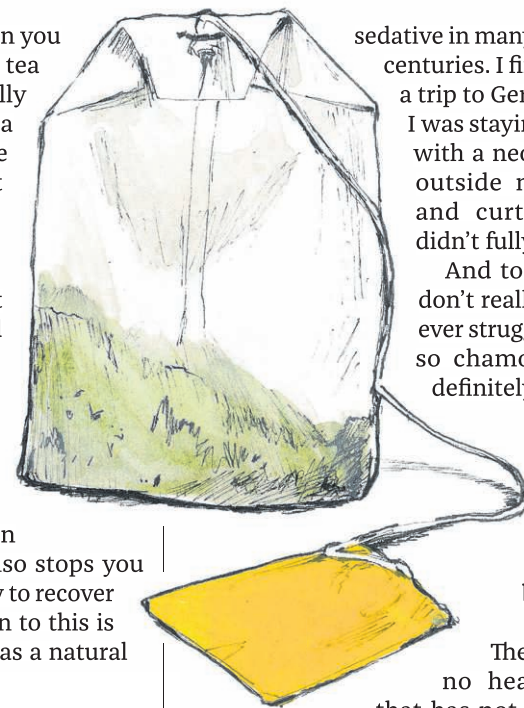
sedative in many cultures for centuries. I first tried it on a trip to Germany, when I was staying in a hostel with a neon sign right outside my window and curtains which didn't fully shut.

And to be honest I don't really remember ever struggling to sleep so chamomile tea is definitely effective!

"My skin has been breaking out really badly!"

Green tea! There is almost no health benefit that has not been attributed to green tea, but it being good for your skin is one that comes up a lot. A lot of people find green tea too bitter to drink. But there are so many varieties of green tea that this is no excuse. I discovered green tea with mango and lychee during Easter term last year and not only was it a lifesaver, but it's also a weird enough combination of flavours that it proves you can get green tea with pretty much anything.

▲ Illustrations by Ben Brown for *Varsity*



Finding La Dolce Vita in Cambridge

In a quest to find the best Italian food in Cambridge, columnist **Eva Schallbroeck** explores some culinary delights the city has to offer

Food is central to student life in Cambridge: it fuels our revisions, gives us comfort during exam stress and serves to celebrate everything from achievements to friendships. It is also a way to meet people from different countries and learn about their culture. This column brings Cambridge's incredibly diverse food scene to life through its students, restaurants, shops and events. Through stories, recipes and experiences, it gives a taste of what food means in different cultures and how it brings people together.

Among students, Italian food means pizza and pasta. Thanks to Aromi, many are aware that Italian cuisine has so much more to offer. The two lesser-known "anciens" I visited this time, however, have been whetting Cambridge's appetite for Italian food for over twenty years.

Limoncello, a shop and bistro on Mill Road,



▲ Aromi's sweet treats (ELLA JONES)

is one of Cambridge's "hidden gems" Trust me when I say that it is worth travelling all the way beyond the bridge. The walls are lined with colourful boxes of pasta, jars of tomato sauce and bottles of extra virgin olive oil. After sampling their deli counter, I ate an Italian classic: bruschetta, a slice of grilled bread topped with sliced tomatoes, mozzarella and parma ham, finished with some balsamic glaze. Alongside a few "usual suspects", pizza and pasta, Limoncello also serves filled ciabatta, antipasti boards and various wines and also caters for events.

Afterwards I went to Savino's, a café and bistro in the middle of the hustle and bustle of Emmanuel Street. With its unassuming front, you would almost miss it. This family business, serving Cambridge's "best coffee"

alongside a wide range of panini - charmingly named after family members - and dolci, such as amaretti, almond biscuits, is all about Italian classics, rather than showy looks. Under the watchful eye of the sumptuous Sophia Loren and surrounded by Italian newspapers, I had a small, but strong espresso.

The respective owners, Steve Turvill and Peter Savino, tell very similar stories about bringing Italian cuisine to Cambridge. Both welcome a wide variety of clients in their premises, ranging from tourists, students, locals and Italians, eager to get the "real thing". Both want to do more than just serve food; they want to showcase Italian cuisine. Finally, both share the same "secret": they're not full-blood Italians. Peter has South Italian roots, but was born in the UK. Brit Steve has

had a passion for Italian cuisine since travelling in Italy.

With a foot in both cultures, they have adapted Italian food to British tastes. Their food might not be precisely what a nonna would prepare in a remote Italian village. But for them, "authentic" food comes down to simple food made with quality ingredients, the crux of Italian cuisine. Both source most of their products and ingredients, including the best cheese and meats, from Italy.

Peter insists on respect for quality ingredients and wasting nothing. This is why he makes his coffee with purified water and beans from the iconic Illy brand, which prioritises these values. "Without good water and beans, you just cannot make a good espresso. You taste a bad espresso in all your other coffee drinks. Once people realise this, you're done". The many empty coffee cups returning to the counter prove Savino's coffee goes down well among Cantabs.

Steve not only wants to turn Limoncello into Cambridge's "number one bistro", he also wants to teach his customers something about Italian cuisine. Clients can taste before they buy and he very willingly explains the difference between mozzarella, cheese made with buffalo milk and burrata, made by turning mozzarella into a pouch and filling it with cream.

Both Steve and Peter have seen Italian food evolve massively in Cambridge. "When I started out, you could hardly get a decent pizza in Cambridge. I was tempted to start my own pizzeria. Nowadays, people are so much more aware of what good Italian food is", Peter says. According to Steve, television chefs "deserve medals for popularising Italian food in Britain". He is very eager to tap into this enthusiasm here in Cambridge.



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Outside the Old Building

Science

How will Brexit affect science in Cambridge?

Scientists are worried about the future of research in the UK post-Brexit. **Sophia Borgeest and Zak Lakota-Baldwin** spoke to two Nobel laureates about their concerns.

Brexit is looming, and scientists are getting worried. Concerns are growing in the scientific community about the future of research in the UK.

At the heart of the problem is funding. Currently, British scientists have access to a wide variety of EU research funds. Over the period 2007 – 2013 the UK received €8.8 billion out of a total of €107 billion expenditure on research, development and innovation in EU Member States. Under a 'no deal' Brexit scenario, UK institutions would lose access to almost half of these funds, leaving a gaping hole of €577.35 million a year.

The cost of Brexit for science is not simply monetary. With 17% of academic staff in UK universities originating from other EU countries, and researchers regularly relocating as part of their careers, the scientific community relies on interconnectivity and the constant exchange of ideas. Whether this international model can survive under Brexit remains to be seen, but scientists in the UK are already feeling the consequences of this uncertainty, as many find themselves struggling to secure collaborators or fill key positions.

As one of the premier scientific institutions in this country, and indeed the world, the University of Cambridge stands to lose a great deal. Its reputation as a global research hub seems far less sure if scientists are not free to come and go as new projects develop, and the issue of funding looms large here, too. At the moment, the University receives around £60 million per year in grant income

from the EU, a sum which represents approximately 13% of the total cost of research in Cambridge.

Prominent Cambridge academics have expressed concern, including Chemist Sir John Walker, Nobel Prize Laureate, emeritus director at the MRC Mitochondrial Biology Unit and fellow at Sidney Sussex college. He was one of 35 Fields Medallists and Nobel Prize winners who lent their names to an open letter addressed to Prime Minister Theresa May in October this year, expressing regret at the UK's decision to leave the EU and calling on May to "strive to ensure that as little harm as possible is done to research".

"I'm very concerned about the impact Brexit may have on UK science", Walker told *Varsity*. Over the course of his lifetime, he observed Europe establishing itself as a key player in the scientific world. "When I was doing my PhD in Oxford in the 1960s, everyone's ambition was to go to the United States for their PostDocs", he said. "Now, when I speak to students or PostDocs about where they wish to go next, the US as a destination has become an exception: most of them want to be in Europe". But without the funding for this kind of European mobility, Europe and the UK's position on the global science market could change. "Science is an international pursuit, it does not happen on a national level", Walker said.

Professor Richard Henderson also signed the letter to Theresa May in October. The Cambridge molecular biologist and Nobel Prize Laureate told *Varsity* that it is imperative to minimise social barriers, so scientific collaborations can flourish. "The most important factor is the ease of getting visas for scientific visitors. Hopefully this will be a high priority for the post-Brexit government, especially for Europeans", said Henderson.

Walker is concerned about the way science will be conducted in the UK

“They are trying to direct science top down, and tell people which projects to work on”



post-Brexit. "From my perception, the UK government wants to increasingly control the projects on which UK science funding is spent. In other words, they are trying to direct science top down, and tell people which projects to work on." This is different from European funding bodies, such as the European Research Council (ERC), which makes their grant awarding decisions primarily on the quality of the research being proposed. The major discoveries of the late 20th century came from scientists pursuing their own interest freely. "Two prime examples which I witnessed first hand were the creation of DNA sequencing by Fred Sanger and the invention of monoclonal antibodies by George Köhler and

▲ **As a premier institution, Cambridge stands to lose a great deal**

(COMPOSITE: NOELLA CHYE)

César Millstein", Walker said. Walker is worried that more and more research in the UK will be directed by the government, instead of scientists themselves. That, Walker believes, "would be a colossal mistake".

Henderson added: "It is important for the UK to remain involved, and this needs an explicit arrangement to be negotiated", said Henderson. Switzerland and Norway currently have agreements with the EU which allow them to be part of its scientific organizations. The UK will need to do the same. In the words of the late Stephen Hawking: "Gone are the days when we could stand on our own, against the world. We need to be part of a larger group of nations."



Varsity explains How do phone cameras work?

Joseph Krol

This year's intake of freshers will perhaps be the first to have grown up never having used a phone without a camera. The technology has improved remarkably rapidly, reaching a new high with the recent iPhone XS. Boasting a dual 12-megapixel setup,

“One wonders how long these improvements can go on for”

image stabilisation on the front camera, and stereo video recording, it's easy to forget just how remarkable it is that one can take professional-quality photos using a phone such as this. But how exactly do they work?

The vast majority of phone cameras are complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor (CMOS) sensors, which consist of arrays of pixels, each with its own photodetector and amplifier; these are much more energy-efficient and more easily scalable than more traditional setups. However, improvements nowadays are increasingly coming from software development. Lately, iPhone cameras use software both to improve image quality and to more deeply interconnect the images provided into the operating system – for instance, rapid recent improvements in the front-facing camera have improved both its stability

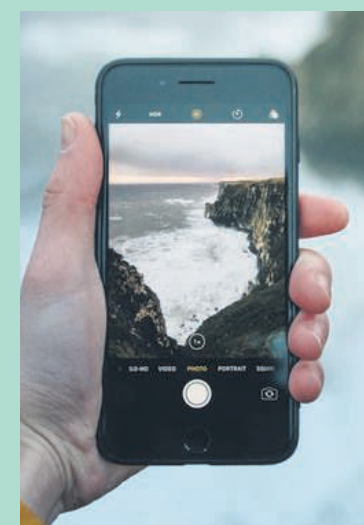
and the phone's face-detection abilities, together making things like FaceID finally viable.

However, even the best phones are inevitably constrained by the size of their lenses and apertures – since phone lenses are usually of a fairly small diameter, flush with the phone surface, the effects of diffraction can more easily dominate compared to a 'proper' camera. This means that beyond a certain level, magnification quality physically cannot be improved.

One wonders, indeed, how long these improvements can go on for. The end of Moore's Law, which predicts that transistor counts in given electronic circuitry double in space efficiency every two years, has already been suggested by eminent computer scientists; it's not inconceivable that camera technology is heading onto the same stagnant path.

► **Phone camera technology has advanced rapidly in recent years**

(LUKE PORTER)



Superiority complexes, complex numbers and the divide in mathematics

Joseph Krol discusses the bridge between two branches of mathematics, and the rift between how they believe their work relates to the world

The feud between pure and applied mathematics must be fairly mystifying to people outside of it. There are these two large groups of people, both doing apparently broadly similar work, and yet the differing natures of their work leads them, for the most part, to strikingly contrasting views on their subject as it relates to the world. It's difficult to go too far into generalities, but the stereotypes, at least, are clear: the pure mathematician wasting away years on obvious-seeming technicalities, versus the applied mathematician loafing about with a spanner, approximating any equation that requires the slightest smidge of thought.

The structure of Cambridge's maths department(s) is pretty curious. Although they're all located together at the CMS up by Churchill, the site is split down the middle: on the left-hand side lies DAMTP, the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics.

“They're led to strikingly contrasting views on their subject as it relates to the world”

Hardly fifty metres over lies DPMMS - the Department of Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Statistics - which has a decidedly different focus.

DAMTP split off from the rest of the mathematics department in the late 1950s, and immediately set itself to a fairly new educational philosophy. Although Cambridge mathematics, and indeed British mathematics as a whole, had had a noticeably applied slant since Victorian times, it was still taught in a very dry, theoretical manner; although there were some notable exceptions, Stokes among them, the links to real physical interpretations were hardly emphasised. DAMTP's founder, the Australian fluid dynamicist George Batchelor, encouraged the new department to take a positive attitude towards experimentalism, going so far as to insist on the construction of an expansive fluids laboratory on the premises.

This lurch - a relatively extreme one by the standards of mathematics - no doubt contributes to the feeling that the two sides of the faculty aren't quite doing the same subject. However, there are certainly deeper reasons for the cultural split. Mathematics, in a very broad sense, sets itself apart as the study of necessary truths - that is, ones following entirely

from logical deduction, rather than being reliant on making observations of reality. The tendency of pure mathematics to stay closer to these systematic roots arguably places it much tighter to this idealistic conception of the subject. Applied is a little more worldly, still perfectly well-grounded in logic, but largely more willing to take less 'ideal' routes if it means that a workable solution will follow. Both of these quasi-moral justifications, though, are really very rarely considered, at least consciously - most people edge towards one or the other based more on their personal inclinations as to style, rather than any highfalutin explanation.

The absurdity is - as hardly needs to be mentioned - that the division is not terribly well-defined in any case. Certainly it makes sense at either extreme, but there are vast swathes in between where such attempts to categorise are close to pointless. A fair amount of pure maths goes more-or-less straight into the 'real world', whereas there is, no doubt, plenty of nominally applied work that won't see industry for decades. Not one of these boundaries - those within mathematics, between it and (the rest of) science, or wherever - could ever be meaningfully demarcated, and the value of such a task

“Setting up these academic hierarchies is rarely very productive”

would never be much more than merely administrative.

It's interesting, though, that situations like this - two subfields set against each other, one of which presupposes itself as inherently superior - recurs across academia: within mathematics, mathematicians against experimentalists, sciences against humanities, and so forth. Setting up these academic hierarchies is rarely very productive; indeed, the tendency of certain academics to take immense pride in just how little connection they have to real-world applications can easily have detrimental outcomes.

The truth is that much of the time, protestations that one's work is purely academic are all but abnegations of personal responsibility, as if by taking the stance that one's work could never be truly applied to anything, there fail to be any ethical implications worth worrying about. Physicists largely discovered the horrors laying dormant within such an attitude with the nuclear proliferation following World War Two; for many mathematicians, however, such a realisation has yet to come. With ever more mathematically-sophisticated developments in cryptography and finance, one wonders for how long these matters can be ignored.



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People add value to businesses that will (supposedly) never be replicated by machines, but there are mundane and repeating tasks that workers have to do. This actively reduces the amount of time they can spend doing other, value adding, tasks. So how do you free them up so they can add that unique human touch to a business instead? With RPA (Robotic Process Automation), and who better to introduce it than Olaide from Retail Reply a Robotics Operator Model architect.

Can you give us an intro to RPA?

Robotics Process Automation (RPA) is a software that mimics the repetitive white-collar activities, tasks and processes of a human being quickly, accurately and tirelessly. This frees humans up to perform tasks that require their strengths such as emotional intelligence, reasoning, interaction with customers. RPA is not a machine learning software, it does not learn. It's trained with logic and specific steps to be carried out.

How did you get involved with RPA?

When I first joined Retail Reply in 2017 I worked as a Business Analyst and showed interest and insight into automation. We had partnerships with a lot of the leading vendors in the RPA software space and Reply noticed that I had the capabilities to start doing some developments. I was able to kickstart my training and have some hands-on experience and actually start developing my own processes. It was really intense but we are very agile and Reply supported me and gave me the resources and platform I needed to actually evolve into RPA. A few months after that I was able to get my accreditations in development and the architecture space.

Would you tell us the history and basics of RPA?

Everyone has their own belief of where it came from. What I know RPA to be is basically a macro on speed. A lot of people like to say it's a screenscraping technology but it's a lot more advanced than that. It's software automating white-collar processes with an Enterprise Approach.

RPA is not only about automating a process or "screenscraping", but it is more about delivering an enterprise-grade digital workforce which is completely monitorable, secure, compliant and which scales on demand.

RPA evolved from the fact that in some domains of business such as banking, retail, whatever it may be, the founder of Blue Prism (a vendor that Reply is partnered with) noticed that these processes can be automated using software. They started RPA in 2001 and since then they've been optimising the technology. The main thing RPA does is mimic human interaction with tools that are used for everyday activities. Before RPA itself, automation



already existed (think about excel macros), but was not at enterprise level: before it was not possible to automate hundreds of processes and deploy them on a robot-farm which can handle the work in a reliable and secure way. RPA products bring this capability within an enterprise. in manufacturing, but it wasn't packaged in a way that was easily deployable onto a laptop or working environment.

Screenscraping, what's that?

Screenscraping is a bridge between current systems and incapable legacy systems, more recently it's been used to extract data from websites. For example, imagine you wanted the software just to gather data from a website (not to code or manipulate or interact, just gather data): that would be screenscraping.

How has the evolution of technology affected RPA?

It is a hard question to answer: I believe RPA is now possible thanks to advances of a huge set of technologies, from cloud to distributed systems architectures through evolution of software languages and development kits. It is now cost effective to deploy hundreds of Virtual Machines hosting robots who automate processes. Thanks to protocols and standardisations it is possible to interact with other softwares by means of a robot. Years ago it wasn't that easy and economical to do so.

I wouldn't say it has, I would say that RPA has affected the evolution of technology. Many years ago, when we built legacy systems it was solely for a human to be able to go in and gather the data.

There were no thoughts of it being automated in legacy systems which a lot of retailers still use. Now when you want to build any sort of system, you need to think about the future and how it could potentially be automated. It needs to be easily accessible and you have to think about what capabilities this system is going to give automation in the future.

The future of RPA?

The future of RPA is bright. Joining the capabilities of a scalable workforce together with cognitive technologies represents a true disruptive approach which will, it transform business activities and streamlines processes of many big companies. As we've seen in the primary and secondary sector, I believe that IPA (Intelligent Process Automation) will evolve the services sector so much that our future works will be for sure impacted, but for the better: people will spend their work-time performing more value added activities, bringing bigger benefits for their companies as well as for themselves thanks to a better quality of work and living; the same way quality of life increased thanks to automation in the past decades in other sectors. Automation technologies will have an economic impact of trillions of dollars by 2025. Industry analysts expect that RPA softwares will be combined with machine learning and cognitive computing. What we'll tend to have is RPA filling in for the human and working alongside technologies like AI. It can't do things like learning, it's an off the shelf digital workforce, you don't want it to learn, you just want it to do what it's been asked to do until it's asked to stop.

How does Reply support your research and learning?

Reply provided resources and support for me to pursue my own personal journey. They've provided me with training, projects, and opportunities to work with specialists in the Reply network that are in different fields too. I'm able to meet new and different people, learn from them, engage with different clients, with different projects from RPA to AI to machine learning. It's amazing.

How does it feel to be in a growing company and what are the advantages?

We work with all of the leading RPA vendors which has been amazing. Reply is a growing company so we keep getting more expertise on board but we stay agile in the way we work. Because we're growing so fast you have to consistently learn new things, be engaged with current trends, all the innovations around the world and you're able to add value because not only do you pick up things from others but you're able to share your own personal knowledge from research and the experience you're having.

New to a Blue: Cambridge University Powerlifting Club are making gains



William Ross discusses the camaraderie of powerlifting with CUPC Captain Raghul Parthipan

Unlike many of Cambridge's other sporting clubs, the Cambridge University Powerlifting Club, formed in the 1980s, is a relatively recent arrival on the University sports scene. It is not steeped in rich history and tradition, but in spite of this, the club has enjoyed rapid growth in the last couple of years. *Varsity* spoke to current club captain Raghul Parthipan to discuss the club's recent successes and find out why readers should get involved with one of Cambridge's fastest-growing sports clubs.

For those new to the sport, the prospect of lifting weights for the first time might seem a little daunting and Parthipan admits that "powerlifting is not the most well-known or understood sport." He adds that "ultimately, it's all about lifting as much weight as possible for a single repetition on the platform in the squat, bench press and deadlift."

"Raw strength alone isn't enough however: the skill of executing each movement consistently in the most efficient manner possible is key to performing well."

Thankfully, Parthipan is quick to reassure readers that "it's really easy to get stuck into it with the relaxed nature of

the sport and the great community here in Cambridge."

"We're always looking to meet potential new members or those interested in the sport and if you're interested I'd recommend coming and talking to us in the club. We can recommend programs and explain the principles behind training, from progressive overload to fatigue management."

Indeed, Parthipan highlights the warmth of the powerlifting community as one of the main reasons why he loves the sport: "The community is a helpful and kind one. I spend around 12 hours a week in the gym and I would love to spend more time there for the social part alone ... When I travel and have to train in other powerlifting gyms, all the powerlifters I have met have seemed really supportive too. What I found quite surprising was that even in competitions, all the lifters were cheering each other on, even if it was the first time they'd met, and despite the fact that they were competing against each other."

This friendly approach towards other competitors, however, has by no means hindered the club's success in tournaments: as well as winning the Varsity match against Oxford for six years running, the club has recently competed in several high level competitions including the University World Powerlifting Championships (the women's team finishing fourth this year) and the British Universities Powerlifting Championships (won by the men's team in 2018).

The club has also enjoyed some remarkable individual successes in recent years. Salman Khan, for example, is a member of the Team GB powerlifting squad and currently holds the British

"Even in competitions, all the lifters were cheering each other on, even if it was the first time they'd met"

Junior and Open Deadlift record with 300.5 kg, while two members of the women's team, Lucy Hart and Suzanne Goulder, have also been selected for the Team GB squad.

This level of success, as well as Parthipan's 12-hour a week training schedule, might suggest that powerlifting is a high-commitment sport but Khan points out just how powerlifting training can fit into the busy Cambridge schedule: "You are your own boss. You can train when you want, how you want, however long you want, where you want etc. This makes the sport very flexible and helps fit into all our varied schedules."

An added bonus for novices is that their training is "different, and far simpler, than that for the intermediate or advanced lifter. Your progress is faster and it is therefore really good fun." So, if you fancy yourself as the next 'Rocky', there's no better place to start than the Cambridge University Powerlifting Club.



◀ "It's really easy to get stuck into it with the relaxed nature of the sport" (CUPC)

◀ CUPC have won the Varsity match for the last six years running (CUPC)

Hare and Hounds brave the elements to impress at Met League

Zoe Bunn
Sports Reporter

The annual Hare and Hounds takeover of the Metropolitan cross-country league was bigger and better than ever this year. An impressive turnout of 70 athletes made the hour long train journey to tackle the undulating course at Welwyn Garden city and battle for selection for Varsity teams.

The competition was hot (perhaps it had to be just to outbalance the freezing conditions), and credit has to be given to everyone who fought through the hail, rain and mud in an epic test of their cross-country runner's grit. It was truly a selection race for the toughest and fittest.

The women were up first, racing over 6km in slightly more favourable conditions than the later men's race, although they still got a good dose of hail and a sprinkling of rain. Second year medic Nancy Scott set off with intent and produced a flying run, buoyed by the cheers of many supporting Hareys to finish an impressive fourth out of 266 (and first U20).

The chasing pack split up in the last 800m having been neck-and-neck around the whole course, with Anna Hollingsworth, Fiona Bunn, Emily Sundquist and Florence Wiggins making up the top five Cambridge finishers and all in the top ten overall.

The men's race was a sight to behold, with a stampede of over 500 runners setting off to the backdrop of a torrential downpour of rain. Credit must be given to the few warriors who completed the 8km course in ever-deteriorating conditions underfoot without spikes. Up front, George Gathercole, another speedy medic, put in the performance of the day to finish a solid second overall, leading in a stream of light blue vests (plus a few traitors running for their home clubs) with Will-Ryle Hodges, Phil Crout, Joe Massingham, Norman Shreeve and MacGregor Cox putting six Hareys in the top 15 finishers.

Congratulations to all who ran — it was great to see such a good turnout.

The Cambridge University Hare and Hounds is a cross-country running club, founded in 1880. Members who compete in the Varsity match against Oxford may receive a full Blue if they perform well in what is one of the oldest annual running fixtures anywhere in the world. And anyone can run in the II-IV's Varsity on 24 November, whether you're a regular attendee of Hare and Hounds training, or have never run before.

Ready for liftoff? The Cambridge Powerlifting Club, where “raw strength alone isn’t enough” 31



Basketball Blues see last-minute comeback over Brookes

Marcus McCabe
Sports Editor

Cambridge men’s basketball Blues have enjoyed a dream start to their season thus far; sitting pretty at the top of the league, with three wins from three and an impressive +86 goal difference accrued in the process, there was an assured atmosphere courtside before the tip off. Oxford

▼ **Both teams showed determined intent from the get-go** (JOE COOK)



Brookes, on the other hand, had only managed to scrape one win this season and languished in fourth position. The stage was set for one more comfortable step on Cambridge’s journey towards promotion to BUCS Midlands 2A. However, Brookes had evidently not read the script and they arrived at the University of Cambridge Sports Centre ready to sweat and fight and put Cambridge under pressure, making for a thrilling encounter on Wednesday evening.

Both teams showed their determined intent from the get-go. Cambridge won the toss up through the long arms of Riccardo Masina, and it wasn’t long before they were ahead. Luka Skorić dextrously stole possession from the advancing Brookes point guard and sent an arcing pass the length of the field to release Ricard Argelaguet who finished the move via the backboard. Oxford immediately went down the other end to hit back, followed by another two basket from the ubiquitous Skorić. 6-2 with only a minute on the clock.

With both players and supporters out of breath from such a frenetic start, the game then descended into a succession of scrappy fouls that disrupted the flow of attacking play from either side; both teams defended stoically but continued to trade points.

And despite Cambridge’s early lead, it was Brookes who began to pull ahead as the half drew on, scoring three 3-pointers in quick succession and putting

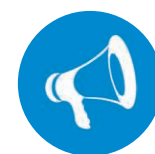
on a stalwart show of defending to frustrate the Blues behind the mid court line. The scores sat at 14 points to 22 at the end of the first quarter. And the second quarter continued as the first had finished. Shot after shot from the Cambridge forwards would kiss the rim of the hoop only to bounce out, and Brookes would counter and rack up points of their own.

At the half-time buzzer the scores were 27-38 to Oxford Brookes, and Cambridge looked rattled. The Blues would need a tremendous push and a bit more composure inside the three-point arc to get back into the game. Meanwhile, it looked as if the Oxford Brookes team, with their slightly smaller squad than the Blues, were finally feeling the effects of their first half exertions and a few players were already getting treatment for cramps.

And as the third quarter commenced, momentum did start to shift. Ricard Argelaguet danced through a forest of defensive arms and legs for the layup followed by a similar hoop from Dami Adebayo and Skorić’s fifth, sixth and seventh hoops on what would be a prolific night for the forward. Whenever they found themselves out of possession, the Blues were buoyed up by chants of “defense” from the home bench and when they regained the ball, Brookes couldn’t handle their rampant attack.

Blues guard Peter Ferguson, who transitioned excellently with his un-

▲ **The hard-fought win was met with jubilation and relief** (JOE COOK)



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catchable pace and silky dribbling all night pulled Cambridge ahead with 20 minutes left to play: 39-38. But the Blues couldn’t rest on their laurels just yet as the pendulum began to swing back from whence it came and a flurry of Brookes baskets pulled the Oxford outfit back in front at 43-46.

Both teams were working their socks off to keep up with their opponents and nobody could pull very far ahead of their rivals. Brookes continued to show their accomplished three-point game from their sharp-shooting centre while Cambridge were too hot to handle on the break – a point no better illustrated than by the swift counter and herculean slam dunk from Skorić that made it 53-48 to cheers from the viewing balcony.

Time out was called with two minutes to go, with the two teams almost neck-and-neck at 65-64. However, this time Cambridge would keep their noses in front till the very end. A nail-biting final minute that felt like an eternity culminated in a free-throw scored by Peter Ferguson to round off the night at 73-68. The hard-fought win was met with a mixture of jubilation and relief from players and spectators alike.

In the end Cambridge will be pleased to have dug out a win from what, at one stage, looked like their first defeat of the season. The Blues will look to take their good form into next week when they host the University of Lincoln in the Last-16 of the Midlands Conference Cup.