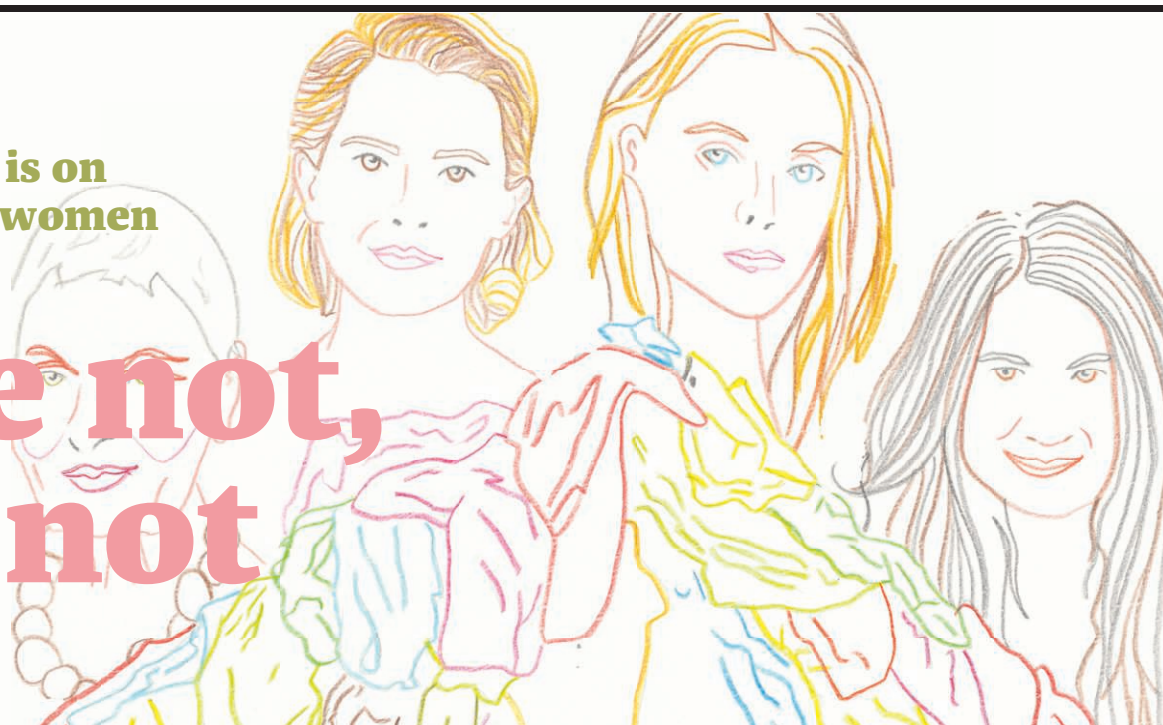


Sustainable fashion is on the cards. Meet the women at its forefront.

Waste not, want not

Features 12



FREE
Take a copy



Seeing pink, the Breast Cancer Art Exhibition

Art 21

The best overlooked film scores

Music 26

No. 860
Friday 1st February 2019
varsity.co.uk

Cambridge's Independent
Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY



▲ Data analysis by Varsity found the largest gender pay gap in the School of Humanities & Social Sciences (LOUIS ASHWORTH/COMPOSITE: NOELLA CHYE)

'The whole process was flawed, flawed from the beginning.' Guillaume speaks out

Noella Chye
Associate Editor

When the divestment working group released its final report in May, 200 Cambridge academics signed an open letter calling the report an attempt to thwart divestment.

On Wednesday, news broke that working group members Professor Simon Redfern and John Shakeshaft were directly involved in donations worth £22m from BHP Billiton and BP to fund research in Cambridge.

Alice Guillaume, who served on the working group for 11 months before she resigned in protest, said divestment was

never really on the table, and it could be traced to power asymmetries in the room.

The working group was made up of ten people: two college masters, four academics, two members of the University's primary decision-making body, one other student representative, then Guillaume, an undergraduate geography

student and the most pro-divestment voice in the room.

Before her first meeting with the group, she had asked herself: "How am I going to make them listen to me, this student?"

When the group convened, Guillaume

Full story page 10 ►

The disc prod 'Balance of probabilities' recommended

News Page 9 ►

Cambridge's 13.7% median gender pay gap

Exclusive
Noella Chye, Chloe Bayliss & Rosie Bradbury

The median gender pay gap between men and women across the University has remained at 13.7% for the past three years — an investigation by Varsity has found.

Using the raw, annually-published data on staff pay distributed across the University's pay spine, the median gender pay gap is calculated as the percentage difference between the salary of the midpoint of the distribution of men employed, and that of the distribution of women employed.

In addition to the basic income paid out to staff, a small percentage of Cambridge employees are awarded market pay supplements — additional pay to

Continued on page 6 ►

News

OPINION

Young people need relatable role models, ones within our reach.

Page 16 ►



FEATURES

Investing the accessibility of intermission

Page 12 ►

OPINION

The recent *Guardian* revelations undermine last year's divestment decision

Page 18 ►

vulture Magazine

Arts editor Lois Wright explores the first ever Pink Week Breast Cancer Art Exhibition.

Page 22-23 ►



EDITORS Catherine Lally & Vivienne Hopley-Jones editor@varsity.co.uk
DEPUTY EDITORS Maia Wyn Davies & Stephanie Stacey deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk
MAGAZINE EDITOR Isobel Bickersteth (Senior) & James Dickinson (Deputy) magazine@varsity.co.uk
DIGITAL EDITOR Joe Cook digital@varsity.co.uk
BUSINESS MANAGER Mark Curtis business@varsity.co.uk
NEWS EDITORS Jess Ma & Kiran Khanom (Senior); Elizabeth Haigh & Oliver Rhodes (Deputy) news@varsity.co.uk
SENIOR NEWS CORRESPONDENTS Belle George, Katy Bennett, Charlotte Lillywhite, Victor Jack, Chloe Bayliss, Molly Killeen, Kyoka Hadano, Hannah Bowen, Nesta Smith & Diana Stoyanova
INVESTIGATIONS EDITORS Amy Batley & Sarah Orsborne investigations@varsity.co.uk
OPINION EDITORS Nicholas Harris, Eve Lynch & Cait Findlay (Senior); Charley Barnard & Bethan McGinley (Deputy) opinion@varsity.co.uk
SCIENCE EDITORS Zak Lakota-Baldwin & Marco Oechsner science@varsity.co.uk
FEATURES EDITORS Marcus McCabe & Sophie Zhang features@varsity.co.uk
ARTS EDITOR Lois Wright arts@varsity.co.uk
FILM & TV EDITORS Lillian Crawford & Madeleine Pulman-Jones filmandtv@varsity.co.uk
MUSIC EDITORS Miles Ricketts & Alex Spencer music@varsity.co.uk
FASHION EDITORS Helena Baron & Cie Jen Wong fashion@varsity.co.uk
THEATRE EDITORS Alex Jacob & Jess Beaumont theatre@varsity.co.uk
LIFESTYLE EDITOR Emily Blatchford lifestyle@varsity.co.uk
SPORT EDITORS William Ross (Senior) & William Robinson (Deputy) sport@varsity.co.uk
VIOLET EDITORS Edwin Boadu & Steven Edwards violet@varsity.co.uk
INTERVIEWS EDITORS & SWITCHBOARD PRODUCERS Daniella Adeluwoye & Raphael Korber Hoffman interviews@varsity.co.uk
LONG READS EDITORS Lucy Fairweather & Iris Pearson longreads@varsity.co.uk
HEAD OF VIDEO Zébulon Goriely video@varsity.co.uk
SUB-EDITORS Hannah Kossowska-Peck (Chief); Alex Parnham-Cope, Hania Bar, Poppy Kemp, Beth Noble, Thea Trollope-Metcalf, Esmee Wright, Georgia Burns, Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov, Ruth Moss, Aimee Wragg, Daniel Maghsoudi & Edwin Bahrami Balani subeditor@varsity.co.uk
PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR Sarika Datta photography@varsity.co.uk
ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR Alisa Santikarn illustration@varsity.co.uk
WEBSITE DEVELOPER Edwin Bahrami Balani online@varsity.co.uk
VARSOC PRESIDENT Caitlin Smith president@varsity.co.uk
ASSOCIATE EDITORS Noella Chye, Rosie Bradbury, Merlyn Thomas & Devarshi Lodhia associate@varsity.co.uk
VARSETY BOARD Dr Michael Franklin (Chairman), Prof Peter Robinson, Dr Tim Harris, Michael Derringer, Caitlin Smith, Noella Chye, Louis Ashworth, Anna Menin, Daniel Gayne, Ellie Howcroft

© VARSITY PUBLICATIONS LTD, 2018. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission of the publisher. Varsity, 16 Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RX. Telephone 01223 337575.

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

Preti Taneja: 'I just put it down and I wrote with all the fury that I had'

*The award-winning author discusses her acclaimed debut novel and what it means to be a 'political writer' with **Raphael Korber Hoffman***

As one of *The Sunday Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Spectator*'s books of the year, as well as the winner of the Desmond Elliott prize, it would be fair to say that Dr. Preti Taneja's debut novel *We That Are Young* has made a remarkably rapid ascent to the heights of the British literary scene since it was first published in 2017. Taneja, now a Fellow Commoner at Jesus College, Cambridge, a graduate of St John's and a former Varsity editor, described the process as "a slow burn."

"It felt like quite a long journey to me."

The novel, a retelling of King Lear set in modern India, takes on themes from caste and gender-based violence, to capitalism, big business, neo-colonialism and women's rights.

While topics like these may not have appealed to those of a more conservative bent, Taneja remained unperturbed. This was despite the "politely couched resistance to the ideas in the book" from the British publishing establishment which led to difficulties in finding a publisher.

When I ask if she considers herself to be a 'post-colonial' author in the traditional sense, Taneja responds: "I think the kind of categories of literature that the academy imposes on us are reductive in lots of ways. And I think all of us who grow up under certain periods of post-Empire have to ask ourselves, did it ever end?"

For Taneja, the attitudes of empire remain alive and well at home. "What

they did was create another empire right here where ethnic minority people can be service workers, professional classes if you're lucky.

"But you will not come to Cambridge, you will not go to Oxford, you will not access high levels of elite culture, the BBC or Channel 4 or whatever. There will be a few of you in place but the rest of the time it just doesn't happen. That's just Empire on home grounds." To Taneja, "people in power are disparaging about identity politics because it's a way of promoting minority voices."

With regards to her writing, Taneja puts emphasis on her perspective as an author born in Britain to Indian parents means that she rejects the reductive simplicity of categorization. She elaborates that she is influenced "just as much by Virginia Woolf and Joyce as [she is] by Salman Rushdie or Mahasweta Devi, or any of these people who stuck two fingers up to power through language". Those who influence her work are those who "try to show that, in breaking text and remaking words, we find new ways to express roots of culture which challenge what we think of as purity, and make something new."

Taneja's family history of migration has a complex effect on her ideas about identity.

Born in Britain – "if you spoke to me on the phone you wouldn't know I was British Asian" – Taneja grew up in a household which still maintained an Indian identity through "comic books from India, epic tales in translation or



Got a story for us? Email our news team at news@varsity.co.uk

“
We find new ways to express roots of culture which challenge what we think of as purity, and make something new
”

News



“
When I’m
research-
ing, I’m not
setting up
interviews
... I’m just
hanging
out in every
situation I
can possibly
get myself
into
”

a foreign correspondent reporting on human rights and conflict across the globe.

Although her journalistic experiences have influenced her writing today, Taneja describes her time as a reporter as “legitimizing wanting to be a writer” From the age of 22, Taneja spent five years caring for her ill mother. She describes the time she spent caring for her mother as living, for the first time, “in a world which we don’t see in fiction, for example hospice carers and people who don’t have jobs and what do they do all day.”

Along with her debut as a novelist, Taneja also edits and is the co-founder of *Visual Verse*, an anthology that sees visual prompts spark both fiction and nonfiction contributions from writers all over the world.

Reviews of *We That Are Young* have tended to focus on what *The Guardian* described as its “unabashedly political” nature. It is this political aspect of the novel which I was interested in asking Taneja more about. Did she set out to write a novel which would be described as ‘politically radical’? “I think it’s the person I am,” she responds. “I read somewhere a quotation which said you learn what kind of writer you are from the way that people respond to you.

“And suddenly people were saying ‘oh it’s very political’, ‘you’re a political writer’, and I was thinking *no, I just wrote what I saw*. I literally just put it down and I wrote with all the fury that I had.”

The inescapability of politics has been clear to Taneja from a young age due to her personal family history, which has been another great influence on her work. “My mother was born in 1947 just three months after the partition, in Delhi. So my grandmother moved from the territory that is now Pakistan to India, pregnant.”

These ideas of movement and its associations with loss have led to Taneja’s “deep respect for the stories and lives of ordinary people” and also inspired her decision to base her novel on *King Lear*, a play she first studied at school aged 17.

“For me *King Lear* is an Indian story in such important ways. It’s a parallel metaphor for partitions because it begins with the division of the kingdom, and one of the most important parts of it for me is the way all of the action drives towards this war at the end, which in the Indian context is mirrored with the conflict in Kashmir which has been ongoing since the partition in 1947 ... for 71 years those people have been under siege.”

Taneja spent a year in India researching before beginning the process of writing her novel, an experience which she says, along with her work with disadvantaged young people from across the UK, emphasised how for her “one of the skills [which] is most important for a writer is listening ... when I’m researching, I’m not setting up interviews and doing recorded pieces, I’m just hanging out in every situation I can possibly get myself into.”

According to Taneja, “fiction is being recognised more and more as something we can’t keep out of political discourse.” She adds that whilst she avoids “speaking from the first-person perspective about the lives of people who have nothing,” she used the novel to “look at power and how it keeps us in place ... and people were going ‘oh [the book] is so political. And I say, ‘what isn’t?’”

How to write a politically radical debut novel (and win awards): a conversation with Preti Taneja’ will be hosted by the Intellectual Forum, Jesus College on 6 February.

music of Bollywood films on Sundays.”

Indeed, questions and conflicts with regards to issues of identity seem to Taneja to be to some extent generational. She remembers that her “mother wore a sari or a shalwar kameez every day of her life almost. And she was an entrepreneur. The questions about identity we think about now, she wouldn’t care. She was like: this is who I am and I can wear a sari and run a business. It didn’t phase her whatsoever.”

Whilst Taneja recognises that when she visits India she is an “outsider” she maintains that her Indian identity remains very important to her, and “is something which no one can take away.” British people of immigrant descent are often faced with the concept that they have “double identities”.

Taneja, explaining this common concept, says some make the assumption that “you don’t know where you belong and you’ve got no country.” She roundly

rejects such an idea, opposing the term “double identity” and preferring to view herself as occupying a “dual reality which I as a whole person navigate.”

The role of women forms a key part of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, which is duly reflected in the way that Taneja approached her novel. *We That Are Young*, told from the perspective of three daughters and two sons, highlights the social and political shifts which have occurred in India since 1947.

A socialist economy until the 1990s and an engagement over the last couple of decades with the global market has led to a capitalist boom in India which, Taneja argues, has resulted in the rise of religious fundamentalism and “right-wing fascism.” Such social and political force have led to an opposition to women’s rights in India, but Taneja views this as ultimately doomed, with enough women in India now in positions of power due to decades of struggle

▲ **On societal attitudes, Taneja says: “We can try and change the law ... but [that may not] implement in people’s psyches and [can] carry on going behind closed doors.”**
(BEN GOLD)

for equal rights, and a growing ‘Me Too’ movement.

However, Taneja points out there is still a long way to go. “You can put an Indian woman in a position of power and she still will collude with the patriarchy because that’s how tokenism works.” Attitudes, she explains, are what will be most difficult to change. “We can try and change the law ... but [that may not] implement in people’s psyches and [can] carry on going behind closed doors.”

Taneja always knew that she wanted to be a fiction writer – “it’s my first love,” she tells me. She reflects on how, as a British Asian woman growing up in the UK in the 1980s and 90s, she “just didn’t have the examples around me to say ‘yes you can do this.’”

Taneja adds that she “didn’t have the belief and the validity of my own experience.” Instead of starting to write fiction straight away, Taneja trained as

News

NUS set to cut entire Postgraduate Campaign budget amid year of financial difficulties

Charlotte Lillywhite
Senior News Correspondent

The National Union of Students (NUS) is cutting the entire budget for its postgraduate campaign, according to the NUS' postgraduate representative, Amelia Horgan. Horgan announced on Twitter: "After winning the right to have a committee elected last year, we were told this year that we wouldn't be electing one as there's no money."

"We, of course, demand that some money be restored to the campaign (our total annual budget is only 2k) along with a guarantee of a committee for future years."

This comes after a difficult financial year for the organisation. In November, national NUS president Shakira Martin and acting chief executive Peter Robertson announced that the NUS was unable to meet a projected £3m deficit from its existing reserves.

In December, the NUS considered a proposal to scrap liberation officer roles whilst last week it formally announced a proposal to defund its Trans Campaign.

On Twitter, Horgan described the de-



The NUS'
projected deficit

“
We were told this year that we won't be electing one as there's no money
”

cision as "really miserable news" and lamented on the campaign's work "on the strike ballot, on curriculum reform, on student-staff misconduct, on the attainment gap, and against marketisation" that will no longer be carried out.

She added: "All the section campaigns have had their budgets cut completely but to do this in the middle of a strike ballot on academic pay where our work could have been genuinely helpful is especially disheartening."

"Of course, NUS is in serious financial difficulty and we understand the need to make cuts but other parts of the organisation haven't had their in year budget taken away completely and without any consultation."

Sofia Ropek-Hewson, president of Cambridge's Graduate Union, told *Varsity*: "[The NUS Postgraduate Campaign] barely had any budget, and to cut it entirely is shameful. This makes clear, if their previous lack of work on postgraduate issues hadn't, that NUS doesn't care about postgraduate students, or access to postgraduate education in general."

"NUS should acknowledge the growing numbers of postgraduate students across the country, and their need for effective representation and restore their

small budget.

"The Cambridge Graduate Union isn't affiliated to NUS, because only one university can be, so their budget cut won't affect our local representative work."

"But the National Union of Students' failure to represent a quarter of its membership is appalling, and symbolic of a national failure to adequately under-

stand the needs of postgraduate students, beyond their perceived function as cash cows."

The NUS did not respond to *Varsity's* request for comment.

▼ **The NUS National Headquarters, London** (LOUIS ASHWORTH)



Together we make a mark

The future of law is global. If you'd like to join a firm that guarantees all trainees an overseas seat, we'd like to hear from you.

whitecasetrainee.com

WHITE & CASE





Students rally against racism

On Monday, students gathered outside St Edmund's College to protest racism in face of the appointment of Noah Carl, who has drawn criticism for his background in eugenics work

(PHOTOGRAPHS BY HASSAN RAJA)



THE NEW LOVE ISLAND? Homerton May Ball applications soar

Due to an unusually high number of applications, Homerton was forced to turn away the majority of applicants for its May Ball this year, which will take place at the beginning of May Week. Rejected students can take comfort in the fact that the odds of simply getting an interview were slimmer than those of getting into Cambridge. A member of the May Ball Committee described this as a "slightly weird honour" and said that it was "heartwarmnig" to see so much enthusiasm for the ball.

SEARCH AND RESCUE Search for lost ship of Shackleton

Expedition scientists in Antarctica, including those from Cambridge's Scott Polar Research Institute, have set off on the last stage of their search for the wreck of Endurance, the steam ship abandoned by Ernest Shackleton in 1915. The expedition set out in 1914, but Shackleton was forced to abandon the ship when it became trapped in 1915 - the rescue was not completed until August 1916, but all 27 crew members survived.

CAMBRIDGE ON CANVAS 'Calligraffiti' mural protected until 2020

A Cambridge block of flats will be keeping its 'calligraffiti' mural for at least a year, until May 2020, thanks to protection by Cambridge City Council. The mural was painted by French-Tunisian artist El Seed in 2018, who collaborated with Arbury Court residents in his design. The mural took four days to paint and was created for the reopening of the Kettle's Yard gallery. El Seed's installations have previously appeared on buildings in Cairo, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, Paris and New York, but this is his only UK work.

FLYING WITH PRIDE Emma flies flag on main pole

Emmanuel College has flown the LGBT+ pride flag for the first time, in celebration of LGBT+ history month. Previously the College had used a purpose-built flagpole to fly the pride flag. The flag was flown this morning at sunrise, as the Emmanuel's Head Porter suggested it would be "fitting" for the flag to be raised at "the start of a new day". The President of Emmanuel College Student Union described the event as a "joyous and momentous occasion".

join.rolandberger.com

Roland
Berger



part of something great.

Roland Berger is the leading international consultancy firm of European origin. With over 2,500 employees working across 50 offices, we have successful operations in all international markets.

We serve top clients on challenging assignments, taking pride in developing creative strategies and supporting the implementation of practical solutions. The London office's main practice areas are Aerospace & Defence, Private Equity, Engineered Products and Healthcare.

Our management consultants are more than just brilliant analysts and strategists. Above all, they are resilient and have creative personalities from a variety of backgrounds.

We are recruiting now! To find out more about our graduate and internship opportunities visit join.rolandberger.com

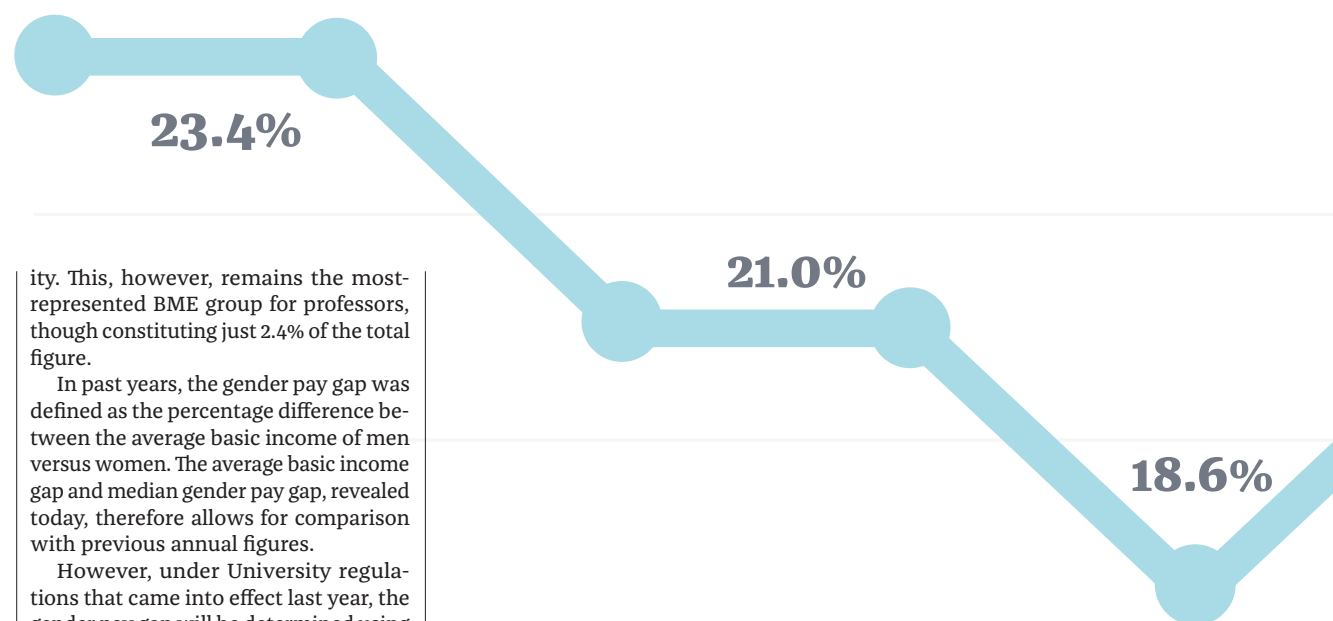
News Gender pay data

In-depth: Cambridge's School of Humanities & Social Sciences has the largest gender pay gap of any School

● Cambridge's median gender pay gap remains at 13.7%

● Analysis finds men paid on average £10,097 more in School of Humanities & Social Sciences, the largest pay gap of any School

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014



Continued from front page

certain staff in order to retain those with highly competitive and marketable skills.

In 2018, 147 men and 67 women received market pay supplements where men received an average of 39.9% more in additional income, totalling £3.3m for men and £0.9m for women.

Since they were introduced, market pay supplements have consistently been awarded to men in significantly greater numbers than women. In addition, employees who have received market pay supplements which comprised a significantly high percentage of their basic income have been men.

The median gender pay gap has rested at 13.68% for the past three years — the lowest in the previous eight years — after a 7.2% drop from 2015. From 2015 to 2016, a significant number of men were hired below the median, dragging the median for men down 4 pay grades, without cor-

responding increases above the median, thereby lowering the pay gap.

Last year also saw a 18.0% mean gender pay gap, defined as the percentage difference between the mean average wages of men and women across the University. This marked a 0.3-percentage-point decrease from last year.

The University of Cambridge declined to comment on these figures to *Varsity*.

A *Varsity* investigation last October uncovered a £12,000 difference in the average annual basic pay between black academic and research staff at Cambridge and their white counterparts, nothing that academics and researchers from Chinese backgrounds make almost £10,600 less.

It showed that pay disparities between people of different ethnicities at the University are often influenced by the under-representation of academics of some ethnicities in senior academic positions. There are only 16 professors from Indian backgrounds, of the 552 professors who disclosed their ethnic-

ity. This, however, remains the most-represented BME group for professors, though constituting just 2.4% of the total figure.

In past years, the gender pay gap was defined as the percentage difference between the average basic income of men versus women. The average basic income gap and median gender pay gap, revealed today, therefore allows for comparison with previous annual figures.

However, under University regulations that came into effect last year, the gender pay gap will be determined using a new government-mandated methodology.

On 6th April 2017, a law came into force requiring all private and voluntary-sector employers in the UK with 250 or more employees to publish their gender pay gap data annually.

Where's the humanit(ies)?

When comparing the disparity in pay over the different schools within the university, it was found that four of the six

Cambridge's median gender pay gap over the past eight years

schools saw an increase in the gender pay gap in the year 2018. The School of Arts and Humanities was the worst offender, rising almost 6% over the past year, from 7.7% in 2017 to 13.6% in 2018.

Though both the School of Physical Sciences and the School of Biological Sciences saw a decrease in the gender pay gap, these changes were only minor at less than 1%. The discrepancy in salaries between men and women only went from 20.7% in 2017 to 19.8% in 2018 in Physical Sciences, and from 12.9% in 2017 to 12.2% in 2018 in Biological Sciences.

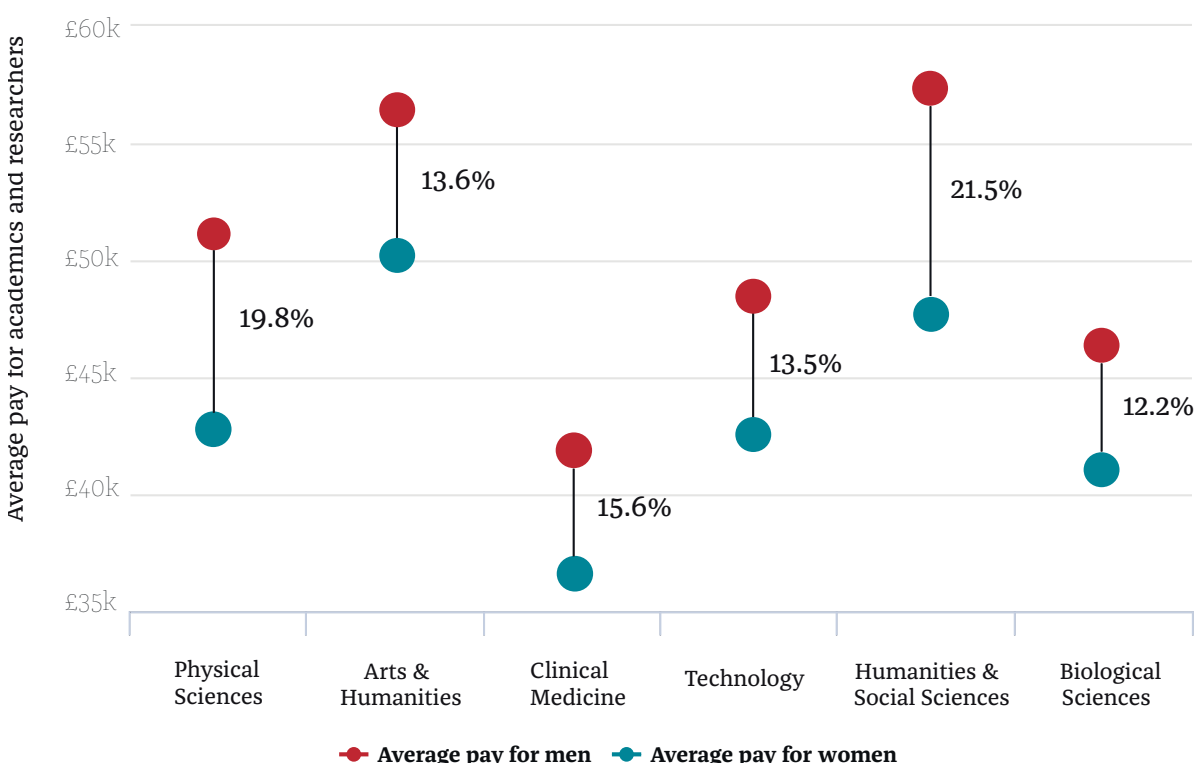
The School of Humanities and Social Sciences has overtaken the School of Physical Sciences as the department with the highest gender pay gap, with women on average being paid 21.5% less than men in 2018 (compared to 18.6% in 2017). The School of Physical Sciences still comes in at a close second, with women being paid 19.8% less than men on average, with both departments paying women around a fifth less than men.

This practically works out as a salary of on average £10,097 less a year for

“[National pay proposals in 2018] would contribute to a worsening gender pay gap”

Dividing lines: Cambridge schools' gender pay gaps

The School of Humanities and Social Sciences had the largest disparity in pay between men and women among academics and researchers, of 21.5%



Graphics by Rosie Bradbury

Extra cash: Market pay supplements by gender

Cambridge offers additional pay supplements to retain employees with highly-marketable or desirable skills

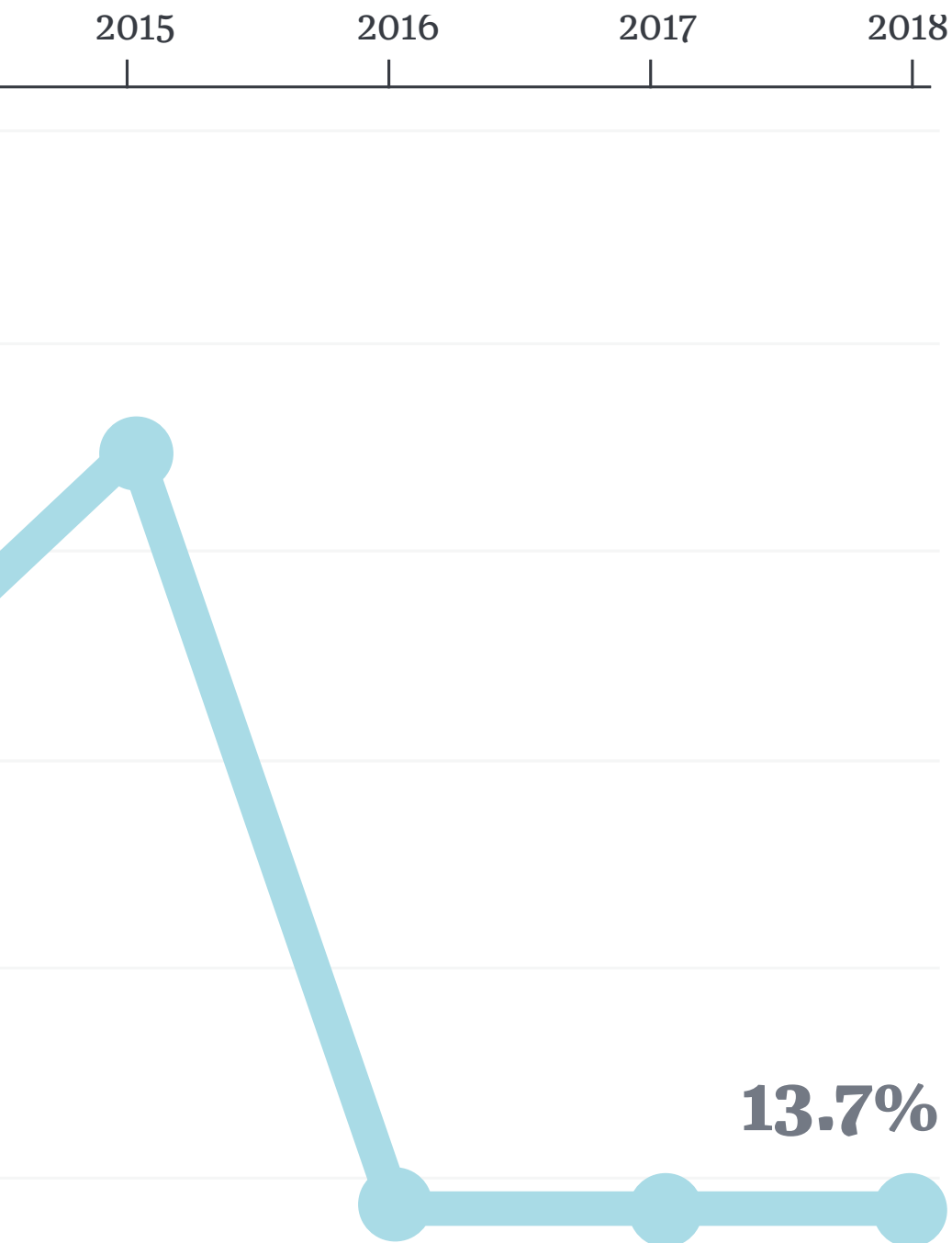
Total awarded to men:

£3.3m

Total awarded to women:

£0.9m

Humanities & Social Sciences saw at 21.5%



Explained: The current national pay dispute between employers and UCU

Every year, 147 universities, including Cambridge, are represented by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and meet with five higher education trade unions – UCU, UNISON, Unite, EIS and GMB – in a Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES) for annual pay negotiations.

These negotiations determine the increase in values of the 51 spine points on the national pay scale.

Employees' unions meet before negotiations begin to decide on their claims. This year, three meetings of the JNCHES culminated in a final offer from the UCEA which employees refused to accept, triggering the UCU ballot calling for industrial action.

“The lack of affordable childcare will fail to attract more women and minority groups to the sector”

women working in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, compared to their male counterparts, and £8,448 in the School of Physical Sciences.

Intercollegiate pay disparities

Amongst colleges, new government regulations on gender pay gap reporting revealed in March last year that women at Trinity College are paid on average 27.2% less per hour than men — the largest pay gap amongst the colleges who were mandated to publish the data. Some colleges were not mandated to report their gender pay gap data because they had too few employees to meet the government threshold.

Robinson College came a close second for its gender pay disparity, with a 24.1% gap, followed by Jesus College, with a median difference of 22.8% in hourly pay. Of those colleges which have released statistics on their gender pay gap, St. John's reported the smallest disparity

in median hourly pay, at 2.9%.

Today's findings come in the middle of a ballot by the university employees' union, the University and College Union (UCU), which will see 70,000 of its members across 143 UK universities vote on whether to strike over issues concerning pay. The ballot concerns perceived inadequacies in employers' proposals for pay arrangements, which employees have argued did not contain sufficient action on the gender pay gap.



Breaking news,
around the
clock
varsity.co.uk

Equalities officer for Cambridge UCU, said in a statement in June that the proposals would “contribute to a worsening gender pay gap, [leading] to lower salary uplifts for women given the significant gender pay gap.”

They added, “The overall decrease in real term pay as well as rising costs of living in Cambridge and the lack of affordable childcare will fail to attract more women and minority groups to the sector”.

ADVERTISE WITH US.

To advertise in any of our print publications or online, please contact our Business Manager:

VARSlTY

tel : 01223 33 75 75
email: business@varsity.co.uk
web: varsitypublications.co.uk

Looking for paid work in Cambridge this summer?

Cambridge Student Assistants

An opportunity to work for the University's world-renowned International Summer Programmes. Rewarding customer-facing work assisting academics and adult students from over 60 countries.

- 5 - 7 weeks' employment, starting 2 July 2019
- Includes four days of training
- 36.5 hour working week on a rota basis
- Free single-room College accommodation
- Up to four free College dinners each week
- Valuable transferable skills to enhance your CV

For details, including how to apply, email:
intenq@ice.cam.ac.uk (closing date 25 February)



News

Is the University's new scheme enough to tackle student mental health?

Elizabeth Haigh and Oliver Rhodes
Deputy News Editors

At an open meeting last week, the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education and three members of the University Council unveiled new plans to expand the Student Support Initiative (SSI).

Professor Graham Virgo, accompanied by Dr Mark Wormald, Secretary of the Senior Tutors' Committee, and the Presidents of CUSU and the Graduate Union (GU), revealed a new priority for the SSI – student mental health and wellbeing.

"It will not be news to anybody to say that, across the world, young people's mental health has become a real issue", said Dr Wormald.

A report entitled 'Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-21', published by the University, outlines new proposals to improve mental and emotional wellbeing across the student body. The paper cites statistics collected by Universities UK, reporting that the number of students disclosing mental health conditions at British universities increased by 194% in the three years leading up to the 2017-18 academic year.

The report also details long-term pressures on current provisions. The University's Disability Resource Centre, which provides specialised care for those with mental health disorders, saw an increase in the number of students declaring a mental health condition of 158% (312 to 805) between July 2015 and July 2018. The University Counselling Service, which relies on student self-referral, experienced a 34% increase in the number of students

“It will not be news to anybody to say that, across the world, young people's mental health has become a real issue”

applying for support between 2013-2014 and 2016-17.

The many faces of student wellbeing

Policy-makers are holding a series of student-led open meetings to help diagnose the problems and guide the University towards practical solutions. "Students have been invited to tell us what changes or improvements they would like to see", a University Council spokesperson told *Varsity*. The biggest challenge outlined by the University will be mitigating disparities in college-based provision of mental health services. Currently, ten colleges employ in-house counsellors, five employ counsellors or therapists on temporary contracts, while two operate a "retainer arrangement" with external bodies, according to the University's report.

According to Dr Wormald, all colleges have agreed to closer collaboration with the University in meeting the aims of the SSI which, given the "historic individuality" fostered by the collegiate system, is "radical for Cambridge."

However, student wellbeing is interconnected with a network of other issues. According to Student Minds Cambridge, equality of provision across the University is "an issue which concerns more than simply counselling provision, with disparity existing in terms of financial support, college nurse services, rent prices, accommodation accessibility, physical health support and more, which all have a knock on effect on student wellbeing."

Regarding financial support, the SSI has pledged £300m to fund new schol-

arships for postgraduate students. For undergraduates, the Cambridge Bursary System has been promised a reform which will widen its availability.

Collegiate differences can also have a large impact on a student's financial conditions, with varying bursaries available and differences in rent charges which can exacerbate financial disparities.

These factors expand the debate over student wellbeing beyond specific diagnosed mental health disorders. Student self-help, as prevention rather than cure, is a central tenet of the new strategy, as shown by the University's new Mindfulness programme, which has now been running for two terms.

The 'wider project' to change Cambridge culture

Beyond welfare and self-help services, the University's strategy puts new emphasis on critically examining Cambridge's social and academic culture. The report states as a main aim: "to facilitate a collegiate Cambridge culture where all members are informed about and take collective responsibility for promoting positive mental health within the institution."

Rigorous academic expectations, for example, can place pressures on students which have occasionally stirred public controversy. The SSI report pledges a "collaborative exploration of University culture, values and structures."

The new strategy, praised by Student Minds Cambridge as "a promising step in the right direction", offers students a greater role than ever before in instigating institutional reform through its emphasis on consultation and meetings.



▲ The University Counselling Service at Lensfield Road
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

“Diversity is a lot more to do with how you talk about identity”: Caius to host first ever ‘Diversity Day’

Kiran Khanom
Senior News Editor

"Diversity isn't really explored in the same way in a college space... there's not really an active effort to embrace the difference that [colleges] have," says Reiss Akhtar, President of Gonville & Caius JCR and organiser of the college's first ever 'Diversity Day'.

Caius Diversity Day, which will occur on Saturday evening will be the first of its kind, hosting a variety of culture societies who will "showcase art, literature, food and dress from around the world".

The event's Facebook page states its aims are to "create a forum for discussion and understanding on a platform that will reduce the disconnect between culture societies, College spaces and members of the University that have not had the chance to navigate identity in either of these spaces."

Akhtar said he was inspired to set up the Day due to the "incredible discus-

sion groups" and "reassuring spaces" he had experienced with University-wide cultural societies, and his experience in JCR politics.

"People don't ask the same questions, people engage with topics in very different ways. In most cases, it's never out of anything malicious."

The 'diversity' aspect of the Day will predominantly reflect ethnic and cultural diversity, which is in response to the way that colleges tend to deal with the issue.

"Having gone to a secondary school that was predominantly South Asian, and a sixth form that was predominantly black and South Asian, for me diversity is a lot more to do with how you talk about identity."

Akhtar wants colleges to engage better with the issue: he believes the conversation should extend beyond getting disadvantaged groups into Cambridge, to also helping them once they are here.

"I've always been in discussions where it's like, we have 'X' amount of BME people - yeah, but you're not re-



▲ Reiss Akhtar, President of Gonville & Caius JCR and organiser of the first ever 'Diversity Day'
(KIRAN KHANOM)

ally engaging with them or asking questions."

He added that Caius have been supportive of the initiative: "I expected it would be a lot of hassle... but immediately they were like let's do it."

"[Colleges] need to open up different routes of discussion with the JCR and MCR, BME officers and Access officers... and ask what can we do for students that are here now."

“We have ‘X’ amount of BME people - yeah, but you’re not really engaging with them”

"[But] just knowing that the college is willing to make the space is a comforting first step."

Alongside keynote speakers such as model and journalist Simran Randhawa, Caius Diversity Day will also be hosting a workshop run by Acting Now.

The workshop's director, Marina Palares-Elias, has previously worked with refugee, LGBT+ and other marginalised groups.

The event has seen immense student support: tickets have sold out. Akhtar said that student willingness to help out with the day is a "testament to the fact that having just a fun, informative space for that kind of discussion is needed."

He said that he hoped the day would "become something that isn't just paid for by the JCR and proposed by the JCR, but is the result of discussion between the college and JCR."

He added: "I think it's important to recognise that I don't see this as a corrective means to issues...I just think that it's a meaningful step to the right kind of conversation."

University Committee recommends shift to balance of probabilities, consultation opens

Rosie Bradbury
Associate Editor

Content note: This article contains mention of sexual assault and PTSD

Cambridge's Review Committee for Student Discipline has recommended a University-wide revised procedure for student disciplinary cases – including that the burden of proof for cases should shift from 'beyond reasonable doubt' to 'balance of probabilities'.

A consultation on the proposed revisions opens today and will run until 28th February, before the documentation is published in a Report to Regent House, Cambridge's primary governing body.

For over a year, CUSU Women's Campaign (WomCam) has campaigned for a shift to the balance of probabilities, arguing that the University is unqualified to act as a court of law, and that as sexual assault often leaves little tangible evidence, allegations are highly unlikely to be upheld under proof 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

The Committee also calls for the creation of a University investigator, a full-time position tasked with undertaking investigations of misconduct and presenting a case to the disciplinary com-

mittee. At present, misconduct cases are handled by the University Advocate, who is also an academic.

"This full-time role enables the University to conduct investigations sensitively and appropriately into student misconduct, including serious sexual misconduct, and other student complaints, presenting this information to senior decision-makers within the University", the Committee wrote.

CUSU Women's Officer Claire Sosienski-Smith remarked on the revisions: "Changing to the balance of probabilities shows that the University actually cares about shifting the culture around sexual harassment and assault, and cares about the welfare of students using the disciplinary procedure. This care extends to employing a full-time investigator who is trained in how to respond to sensitive disclosure from survivors."

The committee noted, in consultations with staff and students, "the majority of students and staff were in favour of adopting the balance of probabilities as the standard of proof for the student disciplinary procedure."

CUSU President Evie Aspinall, a member of the Review Committee, said: "If approved, the revised procedure provides an opportunity to create real change in



“An opportunity to create real change”

the institution so that survivors of sexual violence can come forward with their experiences, with the knowledge that they will be heard, believed, and supported to find a meaningful sense of justice”.

In May last year, around 50 campaigners tied purple ribbons to the gates of Senate House prior to a discussion on reforming the disciplinary procedure, to note that 800 University members had signed an open letter calling for a shift

▲ CUSU Women's Officer Claire Sosienski-Smith tying ribbons to Senate House gates in May
(FELIX PECKHAM)

in the burden of proof.

Sarah d'Ambrumenil, the head of the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA), said that "what is hoped is that by the University providing these revisions, that reporting students will think that the University disciplinary procedures are helpful", and that by the University "being as explicit as possible about what the procedure will actually look like, complainants or reporting persons can make an informed choice about what is going to be better for them."

In September, two students spoke out over how their complaints against University staff members were not taken seriously. In November, a *Varsity* investigation uncovered how one college failed to both discipline a student accused of rape, and support the complainant. Another student spoke out last term about how her college's disciplinary procedures exacerbated her PTSD.

Sosienski-Smith added: "we need to make sure that the University's rhetoric is backed up at every stage by material change, such as a willingness to fund the services for survivors that are often outsourced to already underfunded services which serve the entire Cambridge community."

Domino's

THE OFFICIAL FOOD OF CAMBRIDGE STUDENT LIFE

BUY ONE GET ONE FREE

★ EVERY SINGLE DAY ★

VALID ON MEDIUM OR LARGE PIZZA ONLY

JUST USE CODE: **PIZZA241** AT THE CHECKOUT

34 HILLS ROAD, CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGESHIRE, CB2 1LA
01223 355155



CLOSE FOR COLLECTION:
12AM - 10AM MON-SUN

f /DominosPizza @Dominos_UK StudentsOfDominos Click Tap the app XBOX ONE

*Buy one get one free on medium & large pizza only. Valid online only. Free pizza must be equal or lesser value than the first. Not valid with any other offer. Offer can be withdrawn without notice. Available in participating stores only. Student ID required. EXP 31-5-19

"DO SOMETHING THAT MATTERS" #PGDAY1

FUTURE BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Want to work with brands that millions of consumers can't live without?

Win a summer internship or a full time job! P&G is offering its winner either a ten-week sales summer internship or a sales graduate role, depending on the winner's preference. In addition, the winner will also enjoy a trip to P&G European HQ in Switzerland where they will meet European and global leaders.

What makes an award winner? P&G's winner will demonstrate a passion for leadership, excellent communication and social skills, strong analytical capabilities, and a record of making a positive impact on projects, events and groups.

Apply at www.undergraduateoftheyear.com/leader by 30th January 2019.

Follow our grads @pggradsuk

News

‘We weren’t probing in the way we should’ve been’, says Guillaume

► Continued from front page

sensed some people’s opinions being considered more important than others. She remembered trying to bring up Royal Dutch Shell’s human rights violations as a consideration, and being dismissed.

In her time on the group, Guillaume sensed financial knowledge was seen as superior, but claimed that knowledge of ethical considerations was seen as “fluffy”. She recounts another member trying to raise a point about ethics, then trying to qualify it, calling it “soft issues.”

It struck Guillaume then that others in the group too felt uncertain of themselves when trying to broach social issues; that there was a clear double standard in how seriously members treated financial considerations, while brushing off ethical ones. “But there are other forms of knowledge that are equally vital.”

“[We] have different ways of thinking about the world, of viewing the issues that matter, and you can see it reflected in how people approach an issue.” Issues started, Guillaume claimed, with who was chosen to serve on the working group.

The two ‘academics in relevant fields’ chosen were Professor Simon Redfern and Dr Jerome Neufeld. Neufeld works in the departments of applied maths and theoretical physics, earth sciences, and the BP Institute.

“There are so many ways to understand academics working on relevant topics. To have two individuals from the earth sciences department seemed a bit suspect to me,” Guillaume said. She asked, what about people looking at the economics of climate change, or its social and political implications?

Then, at other points, “it struck me that [we weren’t] probing in the way I felt we should have been”, Guillaume said. She recalled that in evidence sessions with representatives from fossil fuels companies, she noticed some leading questions asked.

Academics called into question aspects of the report emphasising financial knowledge in their open letter. At one point, it quoted an asset manager to CEOs which “emphasises the responsibility of businesses to ensure a good and responsibly managed return for investors”. Academics wrote: “we contest the relevance of this financial language to the Universities sector, which has no CEOs and offers no returns for investors.”

At the mention of the working group’s recommendation of the creation of a centre for a carbon-neutral future, which would “combine research on energy production and use, climate, sustainability, and policy”, Guillaume scoffed.

She added, “a lot of the report is completely irrelevant to the issue of divestment.”

The working group’s final report characterised divestment campaigners’ concerns as a product of insufficient information. It said: “many of the calls for the University to divest completely from fossil fuel companies presupposed that such action was straightforwardly feasible



▲ Alice Guillaume, left, resigned from Cambridge’s divestment working group in March. Right, students called for divestment as University Council debated the working group’s final report in May

(LEFT: MATHIAS GJESDAL-HAMMER, RIGHT: LOUIS ASHWORTH)



What were the working group’s final recommendations on divestment?

The contents of the divestment working group report divided members of the University Council in May, in its recommendations that the University adopt a commitment to “considered divestment”.

It also called for the University to commit to being carbon neutral by 2040, that 100% of the University’s energy come from renewable sources by 2030, and that a centre for a carbon-neutral future be established.

The recommendations also stated that the Investment Office should become increasingly transparent about its investment processes.

Among its recommendations rejected by University Council were that the University commit to not indirectly invest in the thermal coal or tar sands industries, and that 10% of indirect investments be placed with funds that embrace Environmental, Social and Governance funds “consistent with a carbon neutral future”.

to the public, though it wasn’t a formal requirement.

Redfern’s sole disclosed conflict of interest was: “Wife is Editor of ‘Green Christian’ (a journal of an organisation that is linked to advocacy of divestment).”

Shakeshaft declared that he chairs a “private investment fund (Valiance Co Investment) that has an undisclosed small residual interest in Celadon Mining, a Chinese coal mining company. The interest is illiquid, unsaleable and de minimis to the fund.”

Neither Shakeshaft nor Redfern responded to Varsity’s requests for comment.

The public declarations did not detail the extent of the University’s connections to companies including Shell and BP, so it couldn’t capture the extent to which people were influenced by their backgrounds, as Guillaume felt they should have.

Commenting on their role overseeing the donations from BHP Billiton and BP, Guillaume said: “It’s just such a massive thing that was conveniently not mentioned at any moment.”

There were moments she was more hopeful that divestment was possible. Then the group would convene again, and an evidence session or discussion would seem to her to tip things back in favour of the status quo.

She got the sense that for some members of the group, their perspective without her and a couple of other individuals in the group, “it would have just been business as usual, leave the Investment Office to what they do best, and how dare you try and interfere.” In September, four months after the working group’s final report was released, nearly half of Cambridge’s investment office resigned, leaving its future uncertain. “It’s a really important moment for scrutiny.”

and within the direct control of Council and the IO [Investment Office].”

And in academics’ open letter, they wrote: “We believe that the creation of a talking shop of this kind ... is no substitute for direct and decisive action in the present.”

Their point can be traced in large part to decisions made about who the group chose to hear evidence from. She remembers sitting in sessions with experts on carbon neutrality, feeling that they were a waste of time — that, though their work was important, it was irrelevant to the question of whether Cambridge should divest. “It was time that was taken away from actually thinking critically about the issue of divestment on to other issues, and this was right from the start.”

“There were [other] times when I just had to say, wait you’re not understanding what divestment is”. So she resigned.

After she resigned, Guillaume wrote in a Varsity article in March: “For almost a year I have been representing Cambridge

Zero Carbon on the University’s divestment working group. Today, I am resigning from the group on the grounds that the report fails to address the urgency of climate change and the injustices it engenders.”

It wasn’t just about the report, but the entire process she witnessed leading up to the working group’s final recommendations.

“The whole process was flawed. It was flawed from the beginning.”

Following revelations published Wednesday on Redfern and Shakeshaft’s involvement in proposed donations from BP and BHP Billiton, a petition has been signed by over 1,000 people calling for the report to be “revoked”, and says that the legitimacy of the Council’s divestment decision has been “undermined”. For Guillaume, there wasn’t much to begin with. “It’s more about a lesson in the way in which vested interests do impact the way that the university operates.”

All working group members were asked to declare any conflicts of interest

“It’s just such a massive thing that was conveniently not mentioned at any moment”

“To have two individuals from the Earth Sciences department seemed a bit suspect to me”

AHBAB FESTIVAL

15-16-17
February

مهرجان أحباب

15-16-17
شهر فبراير

The 4th Ahbab Festival returns to Cambridge for Valentine's weekend 2019 to celebrate Middle Eastern and North African culture in music, film and food.

Baladi Blues Ensemble

فرقة بلدى بلوز

The Ayoub Sisters (Quartet)

أخوات أيوب

Amira Khier

أميرة خير

USE CODE

“CU2019”

for discounts
on tickets

The Wolf of Baghdad - Memoir of a lost homeland

ذئب بغداد - مذكرات وطن مفقود

CAMBRIDGE
JUNCTION

Clifton Way, CB1 7GX

Box office 01223 511511

www.junction.co.uk



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

Food
Bedouin
CATERERS

The
Surreal
McGoy

Features



Investigating intermission

Olivia Bonsall talks to students about the accessibility of intermission

When I reached out to Cambridge students to ask about their experiences of intermitting, I was surprised at the number of people keen to voice their difficulties with the process. The option is designed to offer a complete break from studies, usually for students to recover, both mentally and physically, from any illness, long-term injury or specific family circumstances.

Sophie*, who intermitted for more than a term due to bereavement, spoke of her ease navigating the process: “For me, the whole process was fairly simple and not stressful, which I would put down to my tutor being really good, and having backing from two DoSes.” But the majority of students interviewed argued that the option, while important and beneficial for some, is by no means accessible or appropriate for all, and suggested that staff members should suggest alternative options to students who are struggling.

Hannah has not intermitted, but has considered the option several times during her time at the University. She highlighted concerns surrounding the lack of support for estranged, homeless or financially struggling Cambridge students. “If you intermit, you don’t get student finance anymore”, she noted, adding: “I’d need money and a home to go back to.” To Hannah, intermission seems inaccessible. She said, “It’s a very middle-class version of self-care.”

A University spokesperson noted that, although undergraduates “will normally be required to leave their College residence for the period of intermission”, if they are facing exceptional circumstances, for example if they don’t have a

“*I’d need money and a home to go back to*”

permanent address beyond their College accommodation, or are receiving specialist medical treatment in Cambridge, “they can remain”. They also highlighted the hardship funds available at the University, saying that the “wellbeing of students is the University’s priority”.

Hannah’s personal experiences, though discouraging her from intermitting herself, have motivated her to support others going through the process. “Tell your tutor as soon as you can, as soon as you even have the idea”, she advises any students experiencing difficulties, since the intermission process is often reported to be lengthy and bureaucratic.

The length of process is also dependant on the understanding of the student’s tutor, which, as Hannah highlights, can be impacted by the background of many academic staff. Speaking from personal experience, she said that the University’s staff are usually “middle or upper class” and “they’re normally white”, thus students who “come from any kind of marginalised or disadvantaged background” can often have increased difficulties relating to their tutors.

Some students I spoke to were alarmed that, according to certain pages on the the University’s website “students are not permitted to study or undertake any form of employment” while intermitting. This guidance was updated in April 2018, and a University spokesperson told *Varsity*: “There is no ban on undergraduates doing paid work during their intermission, and some find it both necessary and helpful, particularly once the cause of their intermission has been addressed.” However, at the time of writing, this updated guidance has not been altered on several official University webpages which may be consulted by students considering intermission, therefore some such students are still liable to be discouraged from the process. Positive change has been made in recent years to improve the intermissions process,

but lack of clarity and awareness among the student body continues to pose challenges to struggling students. One student, Fred argued that the regulation, which has since been altered, has been both financially and mentally damaging to some students, and argued that the inconsistency of information available, with outdated facts still displayed publicly, might “make struggling students think twice about intermitting.”

Speaking on the regulation, which in his own experience looking into intermission he had not discovered had last year been altered, Fred said: “This may dissuade a less financially able student, at the expense of the grades of which they may be capable, or more importantly, their own health”, he said.

The seeming inaccessibility of intermission for certain disadvantaged or chronically ill students may cause them to withdraw from the university, or search for alternative modes of assessment. Laura, who believes intermitting will not benefit her because she suffers from a chronic illness, has suggested the possibility of completing her degree part-time to her supervisor, and now, after a long application process, been granted the option to pursue this mode of study. Although this version of studying, referred to as ‘double time’, indeed exists in Cambridge, she said that the academic staff she initially spoke to seemed unaware of the options available, and simply encouraged intermission.

Part time study is an option which the majority of British universities offer, although it remains rare at Cambridge. “The Applications Committee took six months to approve my application, meaning that I had to do another term full time”, Laura explained. She added that “the pressure of this worsened my illness so much that I had to start using a wheelchair during this time, much sooner than expected.”

I asked Rachel and Sam, who are also completing their degree through part-

▲ Old Schools’ Gate (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

time study, both due to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, what advice they would offer to students who feel that double time would be appropriate for them. “Get your medical evidence together”, Rachel recommends. “Practise talking through your needs and why full time is incompatible with you. Don’t let your college tell you it doesn’t exist.”

A University spokesperson highlighted support networks available across the University, including the University Counselling Service, the Disability Resource Centre, and the Students’ Union Advice Service. Although these services are valuable and commendable, Rachel lamented the fact that it is the student that must prepare themselves mentally to get through the double time process, with their first points of contact, their tutors, too often unaware of the opportunities available for support.

Many of the students I spoke to shared the view that a lack of information has caused applying to undertake either the intermission process or an alternative mode of study to be a demoralising process. A lot of the interviewees voiced hopes that the University will continue begin to consider the nuances of chronic illness and personal difficulties, and also to better advertise the possibilities of alternatives to intermission. Cambridge’s recent organisation of ‘Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy’ discussion groups marks excellent progress in listening to students’ concerns surrounding issues such as intermission and part time study; hopefully, in the future, even more efforts will be made to improve inter-college and staff to student communication. However, described as “cold” by Sarah, without further open discussion and increased awareness of students and staff alike, the intermission process might remain an unappealing option for some students that stand to benefit greatly.

*The names of the students who spoke to *Varsity* have been changed.

“*The applications committee took six months to approve my application, meaning I had to do another full term*”

‘Nowhere to land’: Homelessness and the search for stability

For some, stability must take precedence, says
Charley Barnard

When I left the relative stability of my home for University in October 2017, I had no idea it would be the last time. Just two months after my arrival in Cambridge, my mother and I became homeless. We lost not just a house, most of our belongings and a cat that saw me through the worst spells of my mental health, but we also lost stability.

In my periods of homesickness, I imagine the house in which I used to live as warmth, a loving family and moments of dappled, golden-hour sunlight on my bedroom walls. In reality, it rarely resembled the nostalgic version I crave when I feel most displaced. As a child, I frequently dreamed of running away from the place where I was at my most unhappy, but now that returning is no longer a option, my vision of home is somewhat idealised: I yearn for something that never really existed.

Of course, receiving a full maintenance loan and Cambridge bursary, I am well aware that my version of homelessness is a very privileged one, and the privilege of being a white, able-bodied and well-educated woman means it’s likely to be temporary.

However, as it stands, all that lies between me and an indefinite period

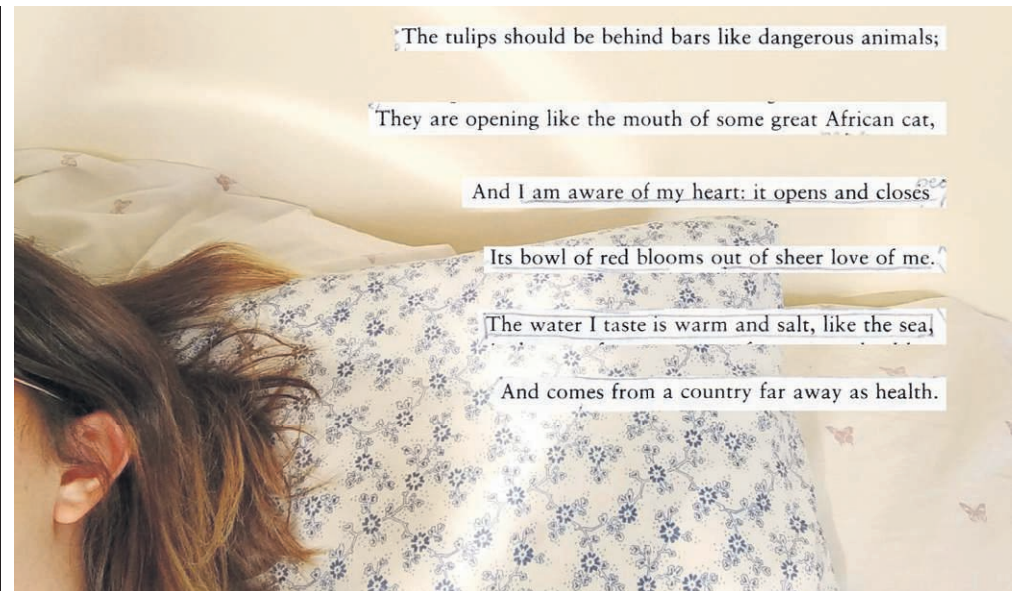
“All that lies between me and an indefinite period of couch-surfing is the generosity of Newnham College and a government loan”

of couch-surfing is the generosity of Newnham College and a government loan that has an unavoidable cut-off point. My mother is still homeless, living between friends, family and her car. She likes to give the impression of an optimist, telling me she has grown used to it, but I struggle to believe she doesn’t feel as lost as I do.

The toll that being homeless takes on my mental health is something I rarely speak about, instead preferring to focus on the practicalities, the everyday stresses of not knowing where I will spend the next long summer, a fear that comes even more into focus when I think about the upcoming 15 months of instability that will constitute my Year Abroad.

The summer between first and second year was spent au-pairing, something I’d never had the guts to try, despite wanting to, but that my home situation pushed me towards. I went into that summer trying to see the positives of homelessness, recognising that it forced me out of my comfort zone. I came back to Cambridge this year needing therapy. I know many people find a second family au-pairing, but for me, I was isolated, mistreated and trapped. Where most other people would have left, I didn’t have that choice.

The future holds uncertainty. I read an article last week from the perspective of a recent graduate. He told students not to worry if we don’t have a plan, the people who have plans “might have gone to a school which prepared [them] for spring weeks, internships and cushy grad jobs in the City.” Instead we should



▲ IMAGE BY CHARLEY BARNARD FOR VARSITY, FEATURING ‘TULIPS’ BY SYLVIA PLATH

“I want a home, I want stability”

try to focus on having time to “relax, plan and think”. These situations couldn’t be more different from my unique reality. I am forced into having plans often months (if not years) in advance, not because I come from any kind of position of class privilege, but rather because there simply is no other option. When I graduate, my student funding will stop, my room license will end, and I will have several bags-for-life filled with everything I own.

I find stability in small moments. When I stop for a breath of fresh air, my back against a sun-soaked tree on Coe Fen. When the local tortoiseshell cat jumps up on my lap for a cuddle, purr-

ing as she leans her weight on my chest. Cooking comfort foods with the people I love most. But all these are temporary and barely begin to mend the loss that runs to my core.

When asked what my ideal future looks like, I describe an apartment with large windows, plants, and an outside space where I can put a hammock. I have no desire for a fancy career, a family of my own or a capitalistic version of “success”. The furthest my aspirations have got to seems the simplest one: I want a home, I want stability, I want to stop fearing that any day now the rug could be pulled out from under my feet and I will have nowhere to land.

How anorexia tried to become my friend

Cordelia Sigurdsson
explains anorexia is more than simply ‘not eating’

Content Note: This article contains detailed mention of eating disorders

It’s difficult to know where to begin explaining something that affected my life so much, but my hope is I will help someone; either to understand, or to show another struggling that it can and will get better.

There is no definite starting point to my struggles with eating disorders - I remember the first time I felt I wanted to lose weight being at the far too young age of 7. Anorexic thoughts have always been in my mind - they were just waiting to be acted upon.

Until I was 16, I appeared to love life. I had a lot of friends, a lovely family, went to a good school and life never appeared too difficult. I have, however, never been good at making decisions; it’s something that doesn’t seem to come naturally to me as a classic over-thinker. Suddenly, I had to choose my A-Levels; whether to leave my school, coupled with exams and also with a, very 16-year-old, friendship breakup and - BAM - my over-thinking,

“My over-thinking, bad-at-losing mind decided it needed something to control: food”

bad-at-losing mind decided it needed something to control: food.

I spent most of the summer after GCSEs losing weight. I started just to eat less and do more exercise. But that’s not all anorexia is, it’s a growing monster, another personality that seeks to take over your mind. The best way to describe how someone can become so enraptured by disordered thoughts is that they fill a hole in your heart that has recently opened. Over that summer it became like my hobby, my biggest interest, and my best friend.

People began to notice. On GCSE results day I ran up to the office of my favourite teacher. He opened his door with a smile on his face, looked at me, and immediately it fell. I knew they wanted to help me, but anorexia thought otherwise, making it its mission to ignore anything said concerning my new gaunt appearance - these people were trying to take away my new ‘best friend’ that was giving me something that nothing else was. I ate less and less. I would set targets for myself, and there was instant punishment (of less food) should these targets not be reached. I got thinner and weaker and anorexia got stronger and sneakier. I was always tired.

Walking up the stairs was hard. I lied

“Anorexia is horrible because the thing it made you hate is also your only medicine”

constantly. I was moodier, and concentrating was difficult.

After crying, at age 17, when my mother put a piece of toast in front of me, I was forced to visit a GP. After blood tests, weight checks, a blood pressure that had doctors questioning how I was standing, and an MRI scan that caused the nurse to run out of the room because she had never seen a heart rate so low, I was sent immediately to an eating disorder outpatient clinic.

My Dad and I were sat in front of two psychologists and an eating disorder nurse. They said if I didn’t change my ways I wouldn’t see past the end of year 13. I couldn’t play sport, go out with my friends, or go to school. If I continued, anorexia would be all I had left.

So, I had another decision: stay loyal to this toxic friend in anorexia or regain my life. To most, this choice seems entirely obvious, but anorexia is very strong - at that time it was much stronger than me and all I wanted was the anorexia. It seemed the easiest option.

So, I was given a meal plan, which included 2 litres of full fat milk a day. I had check up sessions once a week that were clinical and strict. I resisted, but I was made to eat anything put in front of me. Anorexia is horrible because the

thing it made you hate is also your only medicine: food.

I wish I could say that one day it just clicked, and I realised how much I was damaging my mind and body, but it didn’t; instead, it was a tough battle - the hardest in my life. People would tell me that it would get better, but there were points when I really thought it wouldn’t.

I had to separate anorexia from my own thoughts - it wasn’t me that hated food and myself: it was anorexia, or ‘Alan’ as I came to name it. Throughout year 13 I argued with Alan, I surrendered again to Alan’s commands, but I began to talk about it more openly.

I learnt to like myself again. It took some time, but I focused on my dreams and being at the school I loved - without which, I wouldn’t be here today. After countless therapy sessions I now know why I allowed Alan into my mind: it felt like winning. Alan essentially tricked me into thinking he was helping.

Anorexia is far from my best friend - it is my worst enemy. I know that Alan will always be there in my mind; it will never really be goodbye, but finally I have learnt to ignore him. It has almost been a year without Alan and let me tell you...it does get better.

Features

Through death, breathe life



Through nature, *tan ning-sang* explores recovery and mental health

Content Note: This article contains mention of severe mental health issues, abuse, paralysis and psychotic episodes

Having just arrived back to Cambridge from Hong Kong, I walked into Mainsbury's on a mission – equipped with Shopping List in hand – to achieve that arduous student task of feeding oneself. Beyond being welcomed back by the familiar Sains bustle and pre-term “How was your break?” banter, I found myself distracted by bright red stickers on bouquets of alstroemeria reading “2 stems free!” I love alstroemeria. Not only because they're economically efficient, lasting several weeks, but because they were the flowers that my best friend and I used to leave at each other's door on stressful weeks; they were the flowers that my mother purchased ahead of the new year. For me, alstroemeria carry memory, carry stories.

And this year, it being the first that I live in a home away from the one I was born and raised in, I want to continue investing memories and stories into alstroemeria. Having just decorated our kitchen with red paper lanterns, I picked up a yellow-orangish bouquet with dark red tips ahead of the Lunar New Year.

Returning home, I found a small vase, but accidentally cut the stems too short. Instead of finding a different vase or arrangement, I just stuffed as many stems as I could into that vase. But after several days, although all the flowers bloomed beautifully, there were a few drooping flowerheads. Upon closer inspection, I realized that the stems were malnourished and therefore unable to hold the weight of the flowerhead. Spindly, flimsy, discoloured, the stems paled in comparison to the beauty they supported. Examining those drooping flowerheads, I was momentarily confused about how to proceed. An unrelentingly neoliberal maximalist voice began coaxing me in a forget-me-not whisper: “Look, the flowers are still beautiful. They're vibrant, full of life! If you cut them now, you won't receive your money's worth.” At the

▲ Alstroemeria
(TAN NING-SANG)

“It was the stem and not the flower that was discoloured, dysfunctional”

same time, another, bolder voice assured me of what I already intuitively knew: that the only way to save the bouquet was to cut off the flowerhead and stem. At that moment my mind turned to a conversation with a family friend from some years ago. This friend is the principal at one of the best primary schools in Hong Kong, which unlike other schools of the concrete jungle, operates a community rooftop garden maintained by students, staff, parents, and local farmers. I remember him telling me, “All the secrets in life are contained within the DNA of soil.” We stroll through endless rows of corn reaching for the stars. “At first, all you see are containers with dirt. But depending on the particular type of soil, the particular size of container, the particular angle at which the container receives light – all these factors determine how many of what type of seed should be planted in each container.”

We stop in front of a malnourished stalk of corn. “I planted this,” he remarks, “intentionally, to remind students and parents that a living thing's ability to thrive depends on external factors that must be considered when measuring that thing's growth or success. A plant will try to grow regardless of its external environment. In a competitive city like Hong Kong, gardening therefore teaches children and parents that life is not only about achieving goals; it is also about cultivating the correct external environment for a child's growth potential.”

My attention is brought back to the drooping flower, as I more clearly articulate my mistake to myself; that putting too many stems into one vase is the same problem as putting too many seeds into one container of soil: too much of a thing, when placed in too-close proximity to other things, leads to suffocation, unnecessary competition, toxicity, and ultimately death. It is exactly what happened during Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward, during which increasingly absurd quotas set by the Communist Party led to peasants planting too many seeds in each lot, which became one of the causes of the widespread famine, responsible for the deaths of millions of innocents. But it also made me think of the absurdly intense Cambridge terms, during which we all stuff ourselves silly with tasks and responsibilities. To the point where we drive ourselves into the

“Academic results are but one flower within a whole bouquet”

”

ground, not understanding why we can't get up when we've done everything that everyone taught us would lead to success. To the point where we drive ourselves into addiction and abuse – with alcohol, social media, shopping, sex, work, relationships – lying to ourselves as friends caught up in the same lies affirm us that such toxic habits are appropriate coping mechanisms. To the point where we no longer recognize ourselves, when we are unwittingly dispossessed of a self. As someone who received positive academic feedback while experiencing severe mental health difficulties, I was particularly drawn to the observation that it was the stem and not the flower that was discoloured, dysfunctional; that it was the support system that was supposed to nourish the flower, rather than the flower itself, that was clearly disfigured. In relation to my experience of last year's exam term – when I had crippling depression and social anxiety, continuous insomnia and indigestion, various forms of paralysis, even psychotic episodes that rendered me literally unable to study for weeks – to me, Tripos's stringent form of exam assessment is that broken system, a ‘stem’ failing to supply my ‘flower’ of intellectual and creative potential with the right nutrients to thrive. Yet, in miraculously scraping a First, I felt everyone's gaze fixate on that supposedly bright flower of achievement, without any recompense to the disintegrating stem attached to it.

Because of that First, I have been given inconclusive diagnoses by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists regarding my learning difficulties, suggesting that because I continually perform well in my academics, I should not be given clinical ADHD treatment. Because of that First, my decision to change course and intended profession from Law to Theology was severely questioned because “you're so good at Law,” forgetting that it was precisely the narrow nature of that academic discipline which triggered violent psychotic episodes. Because of that First, my decision to take time off was also severely questioned because “you did it before, you did so well, you can do it again,” forgetting how literally paralyzing and traumatizing academic work became for me. For whatever reason that our society privileges achievement in the form of two-digit numbers or single-lettered alphabets printed on pristine pieces of paper, I no longer want any part of such a narrow measurement of humanity. It is a broken, degrading system that diminishes entire, complex persons under a pretense of rigor. A*A*A. A*AA. AAA. AAB. *Not good enough.*

As a person of faith, I am reminded of the biblical metaphors concerning agriculture that I never understood or took seriously as someone raised in an urban metropolis. In particular, when Jesus says in John 15 that “every branch that bears fruit, [the Father] prunes it so that it may bear more fruit,” I never considered *what* is pruned to bear more fruit – that it is old fruit that gets cut off; beauty must die for beauty to survive. And if such fruit are not cut off, they will rot and infect the rest of the tree, bringing death and destruction to the whole. In my life, I am reminded that though the flowerhead of my academic ability *appears* to be in bloom, insofar as it's attached to a toxic stem that measures

a person's worth strictly in terms of academic results – not even academic ability or potential – this flower will not only bring death to my nascent intellectual and creative potential, but to the whole bouquet of my being. It must be cut off. Taking time off has further enabled me to take a step back and realize that academic results are but one flower within a whole bouquet that's increasingly growing, thriving, and being strengthened by non-neoliberal stems of love, community, and faith. These newer, ‘green’ stems consist of GPs, psychiatrists, and clinical psychologists who take the symptoms of my manic and depressive episodes seriously; of therapists, counselors, advisors, and life coaches who listen carefully to my past and enable me to reach my fullest potential; of friends, cousins, aunties, and uncles who pick up my calls of panic at all hours of day, having chosen to be deeply committed to my wellbeing.

To continue with the metaphor, it is further understanding that there are various ways to deal with the fallen flower, once cut; the flowerhead is not completely devoid of value immediately upon separation. In this particular case, I taped the fallen flowers together and used them as ornamentation for a thank you card. Other times, I dry or press the flowers into books for memory and safekeeping. Far more often, I just throw them out. Life does not demand that we actively know which flowers need cutting off, which ones should be preserved, and which ones should get tossed out. In nature, such occurrences just happen, as the seasons come and go, year after year after year.

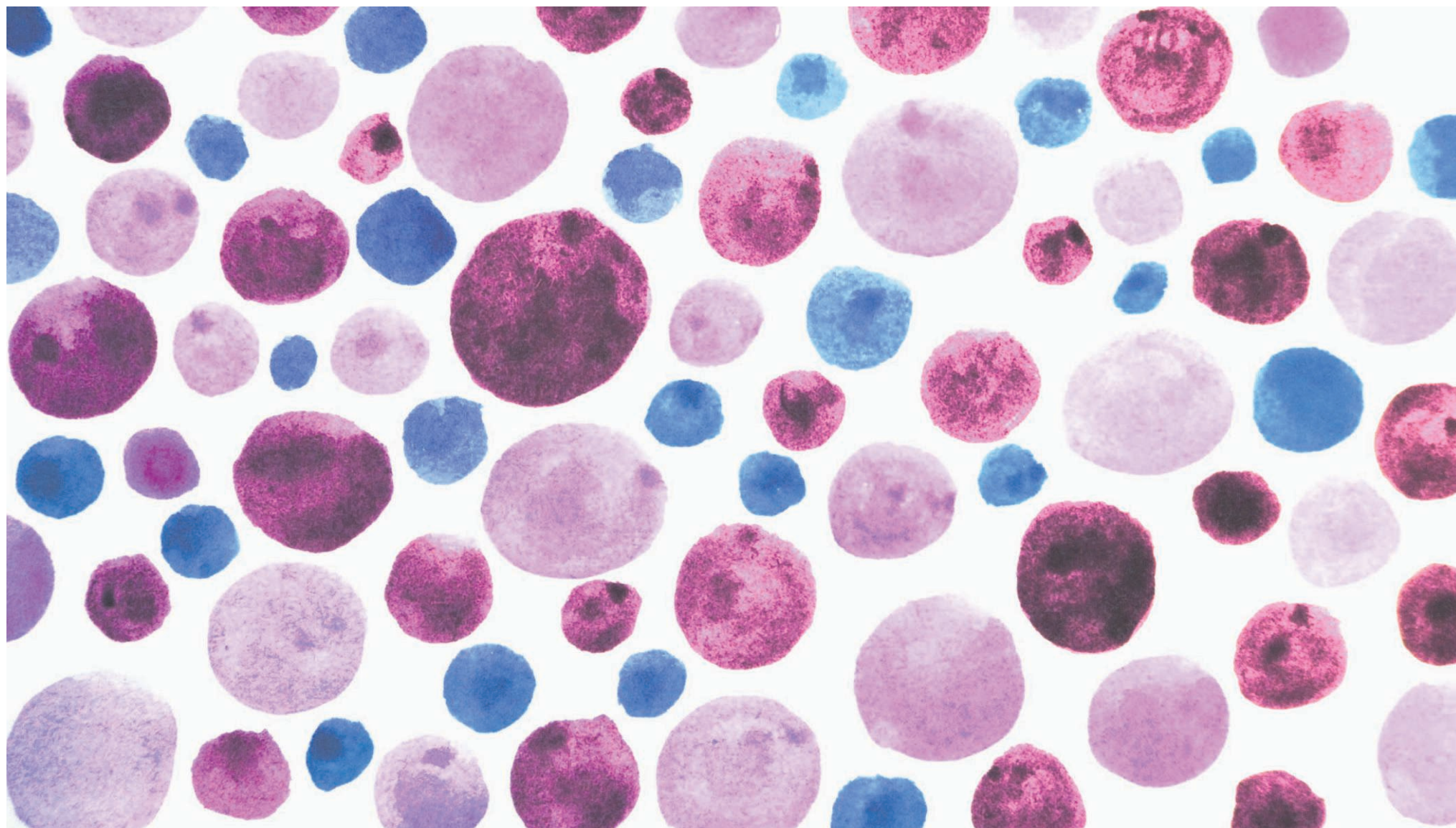
But what of our connection to ‘nature’, of our understanding of such basic rhythms in life? We live in a time in which we've forgotten how to listen, how to sit, how to speak, how to love, how to breathe, how to relax, how to see, how to be; where we turn to Marie Kondo to declutter our incessantly overflowing lives and illegal doses of Ritalin to momentarily enhance our weak muscles of concentration. Where is there space that is slow enough, open enough, in which we could collectively learn to hear again, to know our place in this world of flurry and flux? Is there a place to still hearts, to still minds, to know and remember beauty, love? A way to hear our own heartbeat, our own swan song?

I do not profess to know any secrets about the mysteries of life. All I know is that life demands to be lived, for us to be, to be free; that a necessary part of living is dying, and that indeed it is only through deaths of things and selves that true living, true freedom might chance an appearance. Navigating a complex web of clinical diagnoses, cultural and patriarchal suppression, and personal trauma and abuse this past year has been incredibly difficult, to say the least. But, as Mary Oliver expressed in her poem *Wild Geese*, I do think that I am slowly finding that place of rest, that place of being, my place in the family of things, within myself and in the world around me. In the slowing down, in the learning to listen, I am finding a world open to my imagination, one that accepts and invites my fragmented being. For no matter how difficult, no matter how lonely, I know that I am alive and living, free. And that is a beautiful thing.

“Society privileges achievement in the form of two-digit numbers”

”

We need to talk about miscarriage



An anonymous student suggests that the taboo surrounding miscarriage only deepens pain

Content note: This article contains mention of miscarriage, unplanned pregnancy and trauma

At this university, we are very lucky to see a lot of liberation groups and campaigns tackling taboo issues. They bring people together to talk about issues that, until recently, would never have been openly addressed in the public sphere. Despite this, there is one sensitive topic that I am yet to see discussed or even receive minimal education about. My first encounter of this unfortunate event was my own.

Two days before I left Cambridge after my first year, I had a miscarriage. I was 18, taking contraception and I hadn't known I was pregnant. It's been seven months now and I still struggle to accept the fact that I was, for a time, pregnant. Even now, I am still plagued with fear of what I will see every time I go to the bathroom. I spent my entire summer hysterically hypervigilant about every drop I saw and every pain I felt, yet I

felt completely detached from my physiological experience. I was an outsider to my own body, just trying to keep calm and make sure I was going to be okay.

According to the GP, I was seven weeks along, but she couldn't tell me when the pregnancy had stopped being viable. That thought sickens me to my stomach even now: the thought that this entity had sat dead in me for who knows how long made me feel so ill; I felt angry and betrayed by my body. Prior to my experience, I had always considered early pregnancies to be a bunch of cells and nothing more: certainly not life. But when you are the one who is sat there, alone, it is almost impossible to detach this "bunch of cells" that you see physically before you from a notion of a potential life. It becomes a potential mini you. Or 50% of you. Consider that things were made all the more difficult given that the other 50% of this creation had done a runner a week after I found out. As my counsellor likes to say, I experienced not one, but two losses, both seemingly out of nowhere.

So, I was abandoned in this mess by someone I deeply cared about and left to undergo the anxiety and unexpected grief I was experiencing on my own. My friends provided me with the best support I could have ever dreamt of, but the case stood that there was one person whose support I needed through this, and he'd withdrawn it. The matter was complicated further by the fact my dad was picking me up less than 24 hours after the confirmatory appointment from

“Miscarriage is shrouded in secrecy and shame, which does nothing to help”

the doctor - my family don't even know I have sex. I couldn't tell them. My biggest fear was that some further complication would arise, and they'd have their hearts broken hearing that their baby lost her baby.

The silver lining here, if any, is that I never had to make a decision that some people do. Ultimately, it would have been the same outcome, I know this for certain. But upon reflection, for some reason, I seemed to know a lot more about what to expect from an abortion than a miscarriage. The topic had never come up with my friends before what happened to me, and nobody knew what to say beyond "I'm so sorry" or "that's terrible, you poor thing". And while I craved the sympathy, what I would have much preferred was a bit of understanding about what to expect, it might have made me feel slightly less alone.

Miscarriage is thought of as this vaguely sad event that you may go through when you're older and trying for children; being confronted with it head on was terrifying. When it actually happened, I didn't even know what was happening. I spent the entire night awake, frantic. I waited to call the emergency GP at 7am to get an explanation of what my body had done completely independent of what felt like me.

Now, I understand that this all seems a bit contradictory. I'm asking for more education and more solidarity between those who have undergone similar experiences, yet I am keeping my identity private. This has been difficult for me

▲ ILLUSTRATION BY KATE TOWSEY FOR VARSITY

“I felt completely detached from my physiological experience, I was an outsider to my own body”

to resolve, but I cannot risk my family ever knowing that this happened to me. That's just the way my life is. However, if one person reads this article, hears about my experience and knows that they weren't alone in what happened - that the emotional turmoil they underwent wasn't excessive or even shameful - that's enough for me.

The whole business of miscarriage is shrouded in secrecy and shame, which does nothing to help individuals who undergo trauma and feel as though they have nowhere to turn. No young person deserves to feel shame and self-loathing for something they did their best to prevent. Once again, societal stigma leaves us feeling isolated and with no one to turn to. This is the ultimate tool used by society to minimise discourse centred on female experience (in a biological sense). It doesn't just feel like being silenced, we are silenced. We are deterred from seeking solidarity in one another as a tool for healing and growth. And for what reason? It is time to stand up against this.

Obviously, no one should feel pressured to disclose personal matters beyond whoever they feel comfortable. All I am trying to convey here, in perhaps a convoluted way, is an insight into the suffering of young women who find themselves lost in a trauma they never expected. Be supportive. Be respectful. Be mindful. And most importantly, to those who find some solace in my story, remember that you're never as alone as you feel. You'll move past this. You'll grow, and you will heal.

Opinion

Role models need to be within reach

Oliver Moodie

In order to break down societal barriers, young people need relatable mentors (accompanying piece No Role Models - J Cole)

Oxbridge's access issues begin long before admissions. Of course, access is important at the University level, but how can we attract students to this city of tall spires and strange attires when it is often far removed from their reality? Individuals should never feel restricted in their ambitions due to a lack of representation in the upper echelons of their fields, and having role models is crucial to believing that anything is achievable irrespective of your social or cultural background.

Their importance is highlighted in the track *No Role Modelz*, in which J Cole declares "first things first, rest in peace Uncle Phil". Anyone familiar with the tough love of Will Smith's father figure on *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* can relate to the affection and respect I had for one of television's most influential fathers. Uncle Phil is the highly-educated, successful stoic patriarch of the Banks family. Coming home after school and sitting down to watch their escapades, armed with a glass of squash in one hand, a jam sandwich in the other, and a packet of crisps under my chin, became as ritualistic as the school run. A lawyer and a judge, Uncle Phil undermines traditional black stereotypes and, for many young black males growing up in the 1990s and 2000s, he truly was "the only father that [they] ever knew".

For both characters and viewers, he was someone we could admire not just for being black, but for penetrating an overwhelmingly alien environment and, considering police race relations in the 1990s, for doing so with such brazen disregard for the status quo. Similarly, in a world where black art and literature is too often taught as an exercise in sociology and tolerance rather than a rigorous art form, his wife Vivian, a Professor of English, was an inspiration for black academics as well as for women striving to break into the world of academia.

Uncle Phil was a fresh appreciation of the modern successful black man. Nevertheless, he was fictional, and only ever as close as the pixels on our TV screens.

Likewise, the lives of the Obamas and Ginsburgs of the world are so far removed from our own that they feel more like brands than real people. If we want to break down societal barriers, we need to provide relatable mentors. No one is more relatable for potential Cambridge applicants than current students. We have a unique opportunity to change the frontispiece of the Cantabrigian narrative by engaging with programmes like the CUSU shadowing scheme. Positive experiences for young students rever-

berate in their local communities and are key to ensuring no-one's aspirations are stunted.

The sort of role models I look for are people who make me believe that I have what it takes to be successful - I just need to apply myself. By vicariously sharing their achievements, the possibility of my own ambitions becoming a reality is made all the more tangible. Their success is enough to convince me that no racial, social, cultural, educational or legal barriers can prevent my own.

Prior to sixth form, where I was fortunate enough to have extremely supportive teachers, the idea of Cambridge had seemed oxymoronic to me when compared with my background. I often consider how different my trajectory could have been if I had not had such great mentors in my life. For many people, this is a reality.

There are countless times I've been speaking to students who tell me that they didn't know 'Oxbridge was a place for them'. For too many black children, their only role models are athletes or musicians, for women in STEM, they are women who have had their successes overlooked by society's historical misogyny, and for working-class children, they are actors playing stereotyped characters or entrepreneurs with once-in-a-generation 'rags-to-riches' stories. For too many, there are too few academic role models, and even fewer who aren't just appreciated remotely, but with whom we can share a real everyday relationship.

Role models provide so much more than words of wisdom. Words are ephemeral, misinterpreted and often fall upon deaf ears. Moving speeches stay with a person for a matter of days before fading into the annals of our memories - this is especially true for children. Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but have never failed to imitate them. By providing a window into our lives, mentorship, even in its most informal state, creates a palpable path between their life and ours; a path which shows that academic success should never be above the glass ceiling. Our capacity for prosocial behaviour should drive us to make an effort to be role models for others, especially with so many opportunities available. Shadowing Schemes provide the perfect occasion, because being a role model is not about telling people how to live, it's about living and letting others watch. Mentors have an opportunity to provide salubrious dollops of confidence and experience into the lives of those who look up to them. Imagine if everyone had an Uncle Phil in their lives to emulate and to learn from. It's the intangible factors like communication, motivation and perspective, gained from relatable role models, that will inspire the next generation to dream, and the knowledge of a familiar face in an unfamiliar setting that will help turn those dreams into realities.

“
Being a
role model
is not
about tell-
ing people
how to live,
it's about
living and
letting oth-
ers watch
”

◀ Illustration
by Emily Whit-
tingham for Var-
sity



The Tory-DUP deal is a detriment to Northern Ireland's government

The Tory-DUP deal has serious negative ramifications in Northern Ireland

Peter McLaughlin

When Theresa May announced her intention to form an alliance with her “friends and allies” in the Democratic Unionist party (DUP) after the 2017 general election, the initial reaction from much of the British public was one of confusion. “Who are the DUP?” was one of Google’s most searched-for questions. This question made the headlines in more than one national newspaper. Many who thought themselves politically-informed had little, if any, knowledge of a party that was now to be kingmaker.

More than a year and a half later, you could be forgiven for the thought that the effects of the Tory-DUP deal are common knowledge. The DUP’s commitment to keep Northern Ireland in alignment with the rest of the UK, and specifically its opposition to any backstop, has been a well-known thorn in Theresa May’s side throughout the Brexit process. It is not uncommon to see Sammy Wilson, the party’s Brexit spokesperson, in the papers or on TV news, as he expresses his latest problem with the government. But the confidence and supply agreement has a less-known, albeit not any less significant, consequence. It prevents a return to government in Northern Ireland.

It has been nearly two years with-

“Many were shocked by the DUP’s regressive social policies in 2017”

out devolved government in Northern Ireland. This government is responsible for schools, hospitals, roads, the police, and most other public services. They all currently run without any ministerial direction or policy oversight. While there have been past instances when the government has collapsed, in all of these, Westminster has served as a neutral faction to oversee negotiations. Indeed, the Good Friday Agreement, which brought peace to Northern Ireland, commits the British government to exercise its power with “rigorous impartiality”. But, with the government in bed with one of Northern Ireland’s parties, this impartiality has been compromised. This has dangerous results.

One of the issues with the deal is its disproportionate influence on the conduct of negotiations for the government’s return. So far, the negotiations have been overseen by the Northern Ireland Secretary. Initially, this was James Brokenshire, and now is Karen Bradley. These two have been, frankly, useless – opposition leader Robert Swann denounced the recent round of talks as “depressing”. An independent mediator with knowledge and experience could shake up negotiations and force parties to talk to each other rather than past each other. There is precedent for this.

For example, the Good Friday talks were successfully chaired by former US Senate majority leader George Mitchell. But even if Karen Bradley seeks out an independent mediator, Westminster is unlikely to appoint one. This is because the DUP oppose this idea. And it is the DUP who prop up the government.

Another way in which the deal has prevented a return to government is the Conservatives’ refusal to pass key legislation. Many were shocked by the DUP’s regressive social policies in 2017. However, they are more than just a fringe group. Their power in Northern Ireland has held back social progress in the province. Notwithstanding the support of more than two-thirds of our population for same-sex marriage and the Assembly’s (the democratic devolved parliament) vote in favour of it, the DUP has abused a mechanism called the ‘petition of concern’ to ensure that same-sex couples in Northern Ireland still cannot marry. Reform of the petition of concern, and specifically the passing of same-sex marriage legislation, has been one of the key issues that has stopped a return to government with the DUP.

This is an area in which the government can and should take action. Human rights is an ‘excepted matter’. That is, in this domain, Parliament has a right to

legislate for Northern Ireland, and the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 is explicit that the ban on same-sex marriage constitutes a human rights violation. If the government were to legislate for same-sex marriage in NI, it would force the DUP to give up on its dream of creating a bastion of traditional marriage and push negotiations forwards. But instead, a private member’s bill (introduced in March last year) to extend same-sex marriage throughout the UK was blocked by Tory MPs, and its reading postponed until later this month. It will almost certainly be voted down. Why? Because the DUP have made it clear that same-sex marriage is a ‘red line’, and they would bring the government down before such a law could be passed.

With their reliance on the DUP for confidence and supply, the Tories have done more than just complicate Brexit. They have shown disregard for Northern Ireland and the over 1.5 million British citizens who live there, placed its already-precarious constitutional arrangement under pressure, and abandoned their commitment to equality and human rights for the whole of the UK. The government has given up on “rigorous impartiality”. Their citizens have followed suit.

We should not discourage giving money to the homeless

We have a responsibility to act with empathy towards the homeless in Cambridge

Eve Hodgson

Economic advantage permeates and influences any Cambridge experience. My College’s May Ball will set a pair of you back nearly £400, eight schools (six of which are private) send more students per year than nearly three thousand state schools, and events often seen to be integral to your experience, like subject dinners, can inflate a college bill by £35 or more.

I find it immensely jarring to walk through Cambridge, see its beautiful colleges which host these events, and see people in desperate need sitting in front of them. The contrast between wealth and penury is rarely starker.

This is not a case of justifiable polarity, excusable by some aphorism about ‘freedom breeding inequality’. The dividing line is far starker here than in most places. It is blatantly unfair that colleges endowed with over a billion pounds, like Trinity, occupy the same space as those who cannot afford food or shelter.

What is worse are the preclusions we often collectively place upon homeless people before they earn the right for us to give money to them.

How often have you heard a sniffy

comment that somebody homeless would probably spend money you gave them on drugs, or that they can’t really be in need if they have an smartphone or a dog?

This, it goes without saying, is entirely hypocritical. Many Cambridge students will have tried recreational drugs, and alcohol is fundamental to many of our social lives, though this is rarely met with public scrutiny or derision. Who are we then, to cast judgement on the fact that others may spend their money in this way?

The oldster consensus instructs us to channel money to the homeless through charities. These structures are meant to more systematically aid the homeless than a bit of change here or there can. And, indeed, many homeless people’s lives are made liveable by some charities here in Cambridge.

Streetbite’s food and hot drinks round offers comfort and company, along with nutrition and warmth, and Jimmy’s is invaluable in helping people on the streets find emergency or supported accommodation.

But some charities – including those who advise against giving money to in-

dividual homeless people – are hugely problematic themselves.

The Salvation Army advises giving to charities and avoiding giving to people on the streets, but have had multiple problems with homophobia, including publicly opposing the repeal of Section 28 on the grounds of the harm it would do to “children and the family unit”. Moreover, the Salvation Army’s workers were asked to stop expressing views relating to “hot topic issues like LGBTQ Marriage” only last November. When LGBTQ+ people comprise nearly a quarter of the youth homeless population in Britain, I’d rather give my money straight to them rather than putting it into a charity who have demonstrated such significant prejudice.

And if I give £10 to a charity, some real good can come out of it, but it takes time. If I see money leave my hand and go into theirs, I know it can do them some good now – a sandwich or a coffee or a contribution to a place to stay.

I’m loathe to walk past a homeless person and feel fine giving them nothing when my money would give them a little bit of comfort right there and then. Many people in Cambridge have a huge capac-

“If I can spend nearly £200 on a May Ball, I should be able to give someone £10 without a second thought”

ity to help, not being short of disposable income. Going out three or four times a week most weeks in first year set me back about £15 or £20 a time, but by no means put me in financial hardship.

It should be appreciated that not everyone is in the fortunate position to give, and I don’t particularly mind or worry when I see people apologise for having no change. It bothers me much more when people sail past needy individuals with no regard for how that must make them feel. Yes, it can feel uncomfortable to regard Cambridge’s homeless with nothing to give them, but I guarantee it is a hundred times more uncomfortable to be in that position of need and to not even have your humanity acknowledged.

Empathy is nothing but a strength. We all know how it feels to be ignored, and can imagine how frustrating it must be to need something and to be refused it. We all have an urgent responsibility to give generously and unconditionally to the homeless if we can afford it.. If I can spend nearly £200 on a May Ball, I should be able to give someone £10 without a second thought on what they’ll use it for.

Opinion

The exclusivity of May Balls is more than simply a student issue

Students should recognise the broader impact of May Balls on the entire Cambridge community

Jiayu Qiu

Over the last few weeks, Pembroke, Jesus, Homerton and Downing have followed CUSU recommendations and joined a growing number of colleges subsidising May Ball tickets for students on bursaries. I applaud May Ball committees for their efforts to improve access to May Balls. Though these developments are encouraging, our debate about the elitism and exclusivity of May Balls needs to be extended beyond the Cambridge student bubble. Because the hard truth is this: in the most unequal city in the United Kingdom, May Balls are a frankly ostentatious display of the disparity in wealth and opportunity which plagues this city. Subsidies alone cannot solve this.

Improving May Ball access for students – even if every Cambridge student could afford a May Ball ticket – does not negate the reality that there are still people on the other side of our colleges' gilded gates who don't have a roof over their heads as they watch us set off fireworks, enjoy various performances and indulge in wining and dining.

When I came to Cambridge, I looked forward to attending my first May Ball.

They have come to represent the glamour and the glitz of the Cambridge experience in popular imagination, featured even in the Stephen Hawking biopic, *The Theory of Everything*. This is why May Ball subsidies are so important. No student deserves to feel left out of something which has become so integral to the Cambridge experience.

The debate about the inclusivity of May Balls is a subset of the larger debate about the Cambridge experience. The *Daily Mail's* reporting of May Balls stems from a fundamental assumption that Cambridge students should be perpetually "tucked up in our Hogwarts dormitories thanking our lucky A*s", as a *Varsity* writer once argued. Splashing out on a May Ball with our friends and loved ones subverts this erroneous assumption: it's a celebration that we deserve after a trying academic year and a punishing exam term.

Such a defence of May Balls constructs an incredibly narrow view of the Cambridge experience. It is as though the only thing which matters in Cambridge is what happens to us as students, though we share our time and space here with so many others. The *Daily Mail's* in-

terest is not as simple as an expectation that Cambridge students shouldn't have fun. May Balls are so extravagant that you'd be hard-pressed to find something similar, not just in Cambridge but across the entire country.

The fact that balls produce huge amounts of waste makes this situation worse, in terms of the wider environmental damage. In 2017, a petition that was circulated and signed by Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner called May Balls "extremely wasteful", calling for all committees to have environmental officers. As of 2018, only the Clare May Ball in 2016 successfully achieved carbon neutrality.

The causes of inequality and waste lie in deeper structural issues, which can't be solved by abolishing May Balls. I don't want to accuse anyone who attends a May Ball of being insensitive or inconsiderate, because the fun which we have is well-deserved. But I do think we owe it to our community to recognise that May Balls aren't entirely harmless.

I went to my College's June Event last year, but as much as I enjoyed it, noticing the amount of waste produced and seeing homeless people on the streets outside College broke my heart a little.

“There are still people on the other side of our colleges' gilded gates”

I don't know if I can go to a May Ball or June Event again without feeling profoundly uncomfortable and guilty. They are indubitably part of Cambridge's traditions, but let us not forget that we have the opportunity – and the duty – to change them for the better. In the same way that more colleges have come on board with May Ball ticket subsidies, we need to continue supporting efforts such as those by the May Week Alternative and the Sustain-a-Ball project, and encouraging our respective colleges to set out sustainability commitments.

The Master of Magdalene College pointed out that the problem of homelessness and inequality in Cambridge starts with whether we make the choice to look. Addressing elitism and exclusivity in May Balls starts with whether we choose to recognise the people who are left on the other side of our college gates when the fireworks are set off, be they our fellow students in Cambridge or the people we pass by on the streets. This recognition is the first step towards organising May Balls that are more inclusive, not just for our fellow students but for the wider community and the environment as a whole.

The divestment working group revelations call University democracy into question

It is only through revoking last year's divestment report that the University can begin to regain our trust

Alice Maynard & Anna Feest

Wednesday's revelations in *The Guardian*, revealing large scale conflicts of interest prevalent in the controversial divestment working group, have thrown into question whose interests our University is run in.

The working group, which aimed to examine the 'advantages and disadvantages' of full divestment, was installed by the University after staff voted to support divestment in a supposedly binding grace in 2017.

The article uncovered that Prof. Simon Redfern, head of the Earth Sciences department and member of the divestment working group, was overseeing two major donations from fossil fuel giants BP and BHP Billiton at the time. The donations in question – £20 million from BHP, a multinational mining, metals and petroleum company, and £2 million from BP – were intended for a new Earth Sciences department.

While the BHP donation has since been pulled, BP donations have funded the BP institute since 1998, helping research "recovery from challenging and mature reservoirs" to extract more fossil fuels, in a world where burning even a third of current reserves would have devastating consequences.

“Cambridge has chosen to undermine the voices of students and staff – but at what cost?”

The Vice-Chair of the divestment working group John Shakeshaft was also aware of the donations, with both Redfern and Shakeshaft opposing divestment, and failing to disclose this conflict of interest.

This information completely undermines the decision of the working group not to divest from fossil fuels in June 2018 and calls into question the very democracy of the University itself.

As students we should be able to expect thorough and transparent decision-making in all matters, but it seems that yet again we have been failed in this regard. Cambridge has chosen to undermine the voices of student and staff – but at what cost?

Not only have members of the working group been implicated in this scandal, but it has become clear how deep the University's links to fossil fuel companies run. Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope was aware of Redfern's overseeing of the donations. These revelations highlight the dearth of democracy within the University administration as they work with fossil fuel companies.

University management has shown that it is prepared to set aside the concerns of students and academics in favour of pursuing profit. This is out-

rageous: Cambridge should be leading the way and setting an example in the fight against climate catastrophe, not adding to it.

The scandal doesn't end here. As well as the involvement of Toope and Redfern in these practices, *The Guardian* article has also revealed the extent of the connections between the high levels of University administration and the fossil fuel industry. Other members of the divestment working group also have links to Shell, Total, BP, and fracking companies such as Cuadrilla and Centrica, through research projects, personal investments and past work.

As a centre for world-leading research, including in climate science, Cambridge has a responsibility to look to the future and take action against exploitative companies harming the lives of too many, disproportionately in the Global South. BHP, for example is facing a £5bn lawsuit here in the UK on behalf of some 240,000 people in Brazil, after the Samarco Dam collapse in 2015, which destroyed homes and livelihoods. It is clear that Cambridge is prioritising financial profit not just over their students and academics, but over moral imperatives.

Understandably, in light of this new information, Cambridge Zero Carbon

Society are calling for the decision of the working group to be revoked. They are also demanding that the University launch an immediate, transparent and democratic process to look into how Cambridge could fully divest from fossil fuels.

It is only through revoking the oil-stained divestment report, in addition to launching a new process which fairly investigates the practicalities of divestment – in line with the democratic grace of Regent House in 2017 – that the University can begin to regain the trust of its students and staff.

Divestment is the first step. Our next push should be for the University to cut all ties with destructive fossil fuel companies, the top 100 of which have been responsible for more than 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Research funds and institutes such as Cambridge's with BP allow these companies to accrue positive PR, whilst all the while driving us further into the throes of climate emergency.

By cutting all ties with these companies Cambridge would prove to its staff, students, and the world that it is part of the solution not the problem – ensuring its place on the right side of history, for a change.

vulture



► **LIFESTYLE**
HOMESICKNESS • 20
► **ARTS** PREVIEW OF
THE PINK WEEK ART
EXHIBITION • 21
► **FASHION** COUTURE
WEEK REVIEW • 22

Illustration by Lisha Zhong

From Auckland to Cambridge

Three years on from moving across the world, Hope Whitehead discusses homesickness

Hailing from New Zealand's biggest city, I was sure that I was well-versed in the ways of the big metropolis. Auckland has a population of around 1.6 million people, a somewhat trustworthy public transport system, and two entire H&Ms – moving to England wouldn't be anything to worry about I thought. Not so, I discovered, travelling the wrong way in a tube carriage with more people packed in than perhaps my entire country, and absolutely nobody who laughed at the word 'Cockfosters'.

Cambridge, too, was a shock. I'd been told it was a small town, so I envisioned one main street and a few sheep. Maybe some cobblestones – small town New Zealand doesn't always have sealed roads. I certainly didn't expect there to be traffic lights. Since I'd had my interview in Melbourne, arriving a couple of days before Freshers' Week was the first I'd ever seen of Cambridge, which I'd previously imagined – along with Durham and Oxford – was in London.

After Mum left, it was just me and a college full of people who, while they might not have known each other before, didn't all have accents that made them stick out in unfortunate ways: I am forever haunted by the time I told someone I had the texts for the course, only for her to think I'd said that I had ticks. The advice I'd had from my loving parents was to not worry about not making friends immediately because 'you have to work hard with the English' – whatever that means. Convinced I wouldn't make any friends at all and that the whole thing was a bad idea, it was fair to say the this was a pretty easy environment to feel homesick in. But these feelings don't just magically disappear after Freshers' Week, and although I'm in my third year now, those same feelings of missing home, my family, the warmth of the sun, and people that understand my accent, still sometimes surface.

It can be difficult to feel fully settled in Cambridge, regardless of where you're from. Hearing friends say 'I might pop home for the weekend' sometimes makes me feel bitter with the same hardly being a feasible option, due to it being 18,000 kilometres away, not financially viable, nor a good use of my time during a stressful Cambridge term.

As someone who's never popped anywhere near home during term, I've had to come up with some ways of coping. Even if you're not that far from home, homesickness can affect any of us, and it's worth having tricks up your sleeve just in case. My family loves a good singalong (often in public), so I've found making and listening to playlists of songs I might hear at home to be comforting. While English food is terrible and so they'll never be exactly replicated, I've also gotten my parents to send me a few of the recipes they make at home. This is mainly because I can't cook, but also because it's a little reminder of home. In my first year especially, I'd video chat my parents



▲ “You are definitely not the only person who might be feeling homesick” (HOPE WHITEHEAD)

regularly (although inevitably because of the time difference they'd call when I was on a night out so I can't say this one's foolproof). Crucially, this does not make you bad at coping with being away! It is actually a really smart way of making the transition easier and it improves immensely when your parents learn about all the weird filters they can use during the video call. Arranging to call home friends or siblings can be really reassuring as well – pretending to go the library instead is tiring and you're better than that.

It's important, even when you're nearing the end of uni, to know that you are definitely not the only person who might be feeling homesick, whether that's because you're missing the free food, or the sun setting at a reasonable hour, or all the foundation you can no longer use since you're now two shades paler than when you started. Cambridge, where the phrase 'weird flex but okay' came to die, is so full of people comparing how little sleep they've had and how many books they've not read, and yet the conversation rarely touches on homesickness. This is madness and you do not need to participate in it. One of the best coping methods for most things is having a chat with some friends – you'll quickly find that you're not alone, and at the very least, it'll stop you talking about work for a bit.

If all else fails, it's always okay to obnoxiously bring up where you're from in every single conversation until you run out of friends and have to write for student newspapers instead!



Gourmet roast meats, fresh artisan bread, poutine, sides, craft beers and Monmouth coffee.

All to eat in, take away, or delivered via Deliveroo.

Vegetarian, intolerances and allergies all catered for.

Open every day from 11.30am.

Student nights from 5pm Monday-Thursday.

Bread & Meat, 4 Bene't St, Cambridge CB2 3QN
www.breadandmeat.co.uk

Breast Cancer Art Exhibition: preview

Lois Wright sits down with exhibition curator Miranda Nicholson to discuss the first ever Pink Week *Breast Cancer Art Exhibition*

Each year around 55,000 women and 370 men are diagnosed with breast cancer. On 2nd February, Pink Week will launch in Cambridge for the fifth consecutive year. Inspired by the late Dina Rabinovitch's activism, Pink Week aims to raise awareness and funds for Breast Cancer charities. This year, Pink Week is welcoming a whole new event: on 3rd February 2019 the first ever *Breast Cancer Art Exhibition* will open.

This project has been in the works for a while; first conceiving the idea in August of last year, History of Art finalist, and first-time exhibition curator, Miranda Nicholson spent much of her Michaelmas term sorting out the logistics – something that, when juggled alongside the academic commitments of a final year at Cambridge, is quite a feat.

"It's bigger than I expected it to be" Nicholson admits when asked about the size of the project she's undertaken. Fortunately, she's had "some amazing people to help, and great people to work with" when arranging the exhibition. Aside from Nicholson the committee of five is made up of Sophie Marie Niang, Constance Ayrton, Honor May, and Faith Inch – all students at Murray Edwards College, and all of whom have played instrumental roles in arranging the exhibition.

Via a series of fortuitous leads, Nicholson landed the project in the inbox of St Catharine's alumna, and founder of the *Breast Cancer Art Project*, Adrianna Ford. A few days after her own reconstructive surgery, following a breast cancer diagnosis in July of 2016, Ford founded the *Breast Cancer Art Project* in October 2017 with the vision of it becoming a platform on which those affected by breast cancer could share their artwork. Working in collaboration with the *Breast Cancer Art Project*, Nicholson aims to stay true to Ford's original aims: "I think this exhibition is to convey the reasons that they have done this art: as sort of a cathartic release, or just a way to spend their time when their sitting in a hospital bed, and I think that I'm trying to stay true to what Adrianna wanted from the project in terms of representing those artists."

As a venture still in its infancy, the *Breast Cancer Art Exhibition* will only be the second physical exhibition that the *Breast Cancer Art Project* has had a part in hosting – the first having been held in Puerto Rico in October of 2018. Although this meant that a lot of the



works that are to be displayed in the exhibition were exhibited across the Atlantic only a few months ago, Nicholson has found that "getting artworks has been easy enough" as there has been a lot of help in getting them to the UK. In total the exhibition is made up of sixteen works – twelve of them being sourced from the *Breast Cancer Art Project*, one on loan from David Hilbeck, and the rest being provided by the all-female *New Hall Art Collection* that is housed in Medwards.

Despite, the vast number of works that belong to the *New Hall Art Collection*, "surprisingly few" cover topics like illness, disease or the artists' own suffering. Nicholson tells of how, in her search for relevant pieces, she opened up a catalogue detailing the works in the collection and "just flicked through and read some of the artist's biographies and stories behind each of the art works", eventually picking out some that were associated with the artists' own suffering – particularly with cancer.

The area of Medwards in which the exhibition is going to be held is "curatorially very interesting". Pointing at a corridor just across from where our interview was taking place, Nicholson explained how half of the available

space is windows, so no canvases could be placed on that side. Instead, against the glass will be free-standing plinths and sculptures, some accompanied by headphones playing podcast clips of series such as *You, Me and the Big C*, adding an auditory element to the exhibition.

One particular sculpture, likely to be stood against the glass windows, is a piece by Danielle Piat named *Indistinguishable*, which Nicholson described as "a sort of porcelain silhouette of a figure, and in the back you place a candle, and there's a hole right where the heart is. It's called *inextinguishable* so the idea is that even though your body can change, the essential elements of you are what makes you you will still be ignited." Piat made the piece to honour her mother and grandmother, both of whom battled breast cancer, with the former having lost that battle.

In keeping with the tradition of the *New Hall Art Collection*, the exhibition will solely feature works from female artists. The fact that Medwards is an all-women's college also adds an extra degree of poignancy to the exhibition as. Although breast cancer is not solely a women's disease, one in eight British women will likely develop breast cancer in their life-

▲ This will be the first exhibition that finalist Miranda Nicholson has curated

(ARTWORK: EMILY FRANCIS GUDE, JEANETTE NOWAK, ANITA JAMIESON, KARIN HAMET, SUSAN OLIVERA | PHOTOGRAPHY: LOIS WRIGHT)

time. Additionally, as over 99% of new breast cancer diagnoses each year are in women, the organisers believe that an all-women's college is "quite an appropriate place" to hold an exhibition of this nature. Overall, the exhibition will be an experience rich in art of many media, all brought together by one overriding message: "breast cancer affects everyone".

The *Breast Cancer Art Exhibition* opens on 3rd February at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge and will close on 24th February 2019. The opening night will include performances from Adriana Ford, Susan Olivera, a contributing artist all the way from Puerto Rico, and Miranda Nicholson.

All proceeds from the exhibition will go to its costs and the *Breast Cancer Art Project*. Any donations made will go to the seven Pink Week charities for 2019: Breast Cancer Care, Breast Cancer Haven, Breast Cancer Now, Coppafeel, Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust, Teens Unite Against Cancer, and Victoria's Promise.

Couture Week cheat sheet

Helena Baron brings you a run down of the best of the runway during Couture Week

Every January, the womenswear marathon kicks off with five days of haute couture in Paris. With some of the most highly anticipated presentations of the season, the week showcases the intensely technical and artisanal work of highly-specialised seamstresses, embroidery-technicians, leatherworkers and countless other teams that spend hundreds of hours creating a single jacket, dress or skirt. The main difference between haute couture and ready-to-wear is

that everything is handmade, right down to the last (incredibly technical) detail. Various different teams of artisans lend their particular skill to creating a single item, which is only available upon bespoke order and won't be mass produced. It is also a strictly French form of fashion, and designers must adhere to very clear rules in order to be included into the very exclusive fold.

To most, this is an extremely expensive but intensely beautiful manifestation of fashion, closer to art than it is to the clothes we wear day-to-day. And over last week, this certainly rang true: with a succession of shows, the pieces ranged from the ironic to the tear-inducing, from the clean and modern to the strictly traditional. Now that the whirlwind is over, here's your cheat sheet to the week's highlights.

The Classics: An Italian villa formed the backdrop to the always-impressive Chanel show, which this time transported spectators to an Italian lake-side, where 1950s tailoring met delicate pastels, frills and florals. Models paraded around with dark, diva-like eye makeup and equally dramatic hair, whilst their sharp but fragile silhouettes floated around them as they strolled around the Grand Palais. In a world so intensely fast, Chanel seemed to take a step back, culminating in the most laid-back of its famous wedding dresses: a simple-cut (albeit heavily embroidered) bathing suit.

"The Dior circus comes to town," was the headline of a British newspaper hung backstage at the Dior haute couture show. But as opposed to its 1950 London debut, this revival drew Dior firmly into 2019. An

all-female acrobatics group performed around and with the models: women quite literally holding women up. A somewhat eccentric collection, the models sported harlequin-esque makeup whilst the clothes coupled frayed edges with intricate embroidery and flamboyant frills with toned-down colour palettes.

Valentino was breathtakingly beautiful, and not just for the clothes. Though the radiantly classic and yet modern collection had the industry basking in its couture glow, the beauty of Pierpaolo Piccioli's creations ran deeper.

Not only did the creative director redefine the meaning of couture with his blending of the new with the strict traditions of the craft, but he also had models of colour don at least half of his 65 looks for the show, subverting the often overlooked fact that couture was intended for white privileged clients.

The Instagram Warriors: Two very different takes on the viral slant fashion has started to curate became apparent last week. On the one hand, Viktor & Rolf cashed in on this potential, with dresses emblazoned with phrases such as "I'm not shy I just don't like you," "No photos please" and "I am my own muse" ensuring their creations were instantly meme-worthy. On the other hand, Maison Margiela presented its guests with a collection of obtrusively-colourful garments, referencing how inundated we are with images in the media and on our phones every day, or perhaps warning us to the danger of this form of decadence.

The Enigmatic One: Sculptural, otherworldly and

mysterious, Iris Van Herpen's designs feature everything from intricately pleated sculptures to *trompe l'oeil* layering and defiantly fluid gowns. This season, the Dutch designer cast an Indian summer glow over her collection, straying only slightly from her signature 3D-printed, ethereal and otherworldly creations for a slightly more fluid, romantic mood.

Smoky purples, husky blues, burnt oranges and deep reds dominated the collection, which retained the impressive combination of art, sculpture, graphic design yet intensely flattering design that Van Herpen is known for.

The One for the Oscars: Awards season is now well underway, but the real contest is who will get to dress the biggest stars in the industry come the Oscars.

Who wouldn't love to see Claire Waight Keller's Givenchy collection make a few appearances? Her modern take on lace, billowing skirts and the stand-out giant bow backpacks ensured that her designs remain sleek and sexy with a daring 'fashion' edge. The Givenchy couture wearer is bold, self-assured and not afraid of a burst of volume.

Alternatively, I would love to see a return to the golden days of the Diva with Ralph & Russo's glamorous collection that seemed made for the Monica Bellucci's of the world: feathers, sequins, body-hugging gowns, audaciously high slits and a subtle but sexy amount of sheer.

The Playful Ones: As incredibly lucrative as the couture industry may be, it does know how to have fun. With its famous flamboyant tulle creations (which Rihanna has worn to several red carpet events), Giambattista Valli did not disappoint, reinventing them in black, reds, pinks and even the colour of the year, coral! But the playful extravagance didn't end there, and was also applied to voluminous taffeta sleeves, skirts and bows.

Schiaparelli also brought the fun factor, with bubble-gum colour schemes embedded in whimsical, fairytale-worthy creations, paraded by models who literally had stars in their eyes. The highlight? A spherical dress covered in periwinkle and crimson feathers.

The (Old) Newcomer: New year, new couture venture. Known for its sharp and sexy ready-to-wear (and for its affiliation with and love for the Kardashians) Oliver Rousteing's Balmain made its couture comeback to somewhat mixed reviews: clear intentions to respect the house's founder's classic silhouettes, with a modern, icy twist that didn't completely fall into place, though the beginnings of a successful couture line were clearly visible.

But the house is certainly one to continue to watch, as it starts to reestablish itself as a couture house.

The Standout Show: It's probably reductive to single out just one show and just one designer as the standout from the whole week. The amount of work and technical know-how that is needed to make just one of the pieces we saw is astounding in itself.

Fashion is at its best when it goes beyond the art, beyond the skill and the beauty of the clothes themselves, and furthers the industry's values to evolve its significance. As such, if there's one show to take note of, it would be Pierpaolo Piccioli's sublime Valentino presentation: gentle and yet forceful, stunning in its design and beautiful in its message – no wonder it reduced Céline Dion to tears.



▲ Models' eyes were embellished with feather eyelashes at the Spring Valentino Couture show. (LISHA ZHONG)

Female pioneers of sustainability

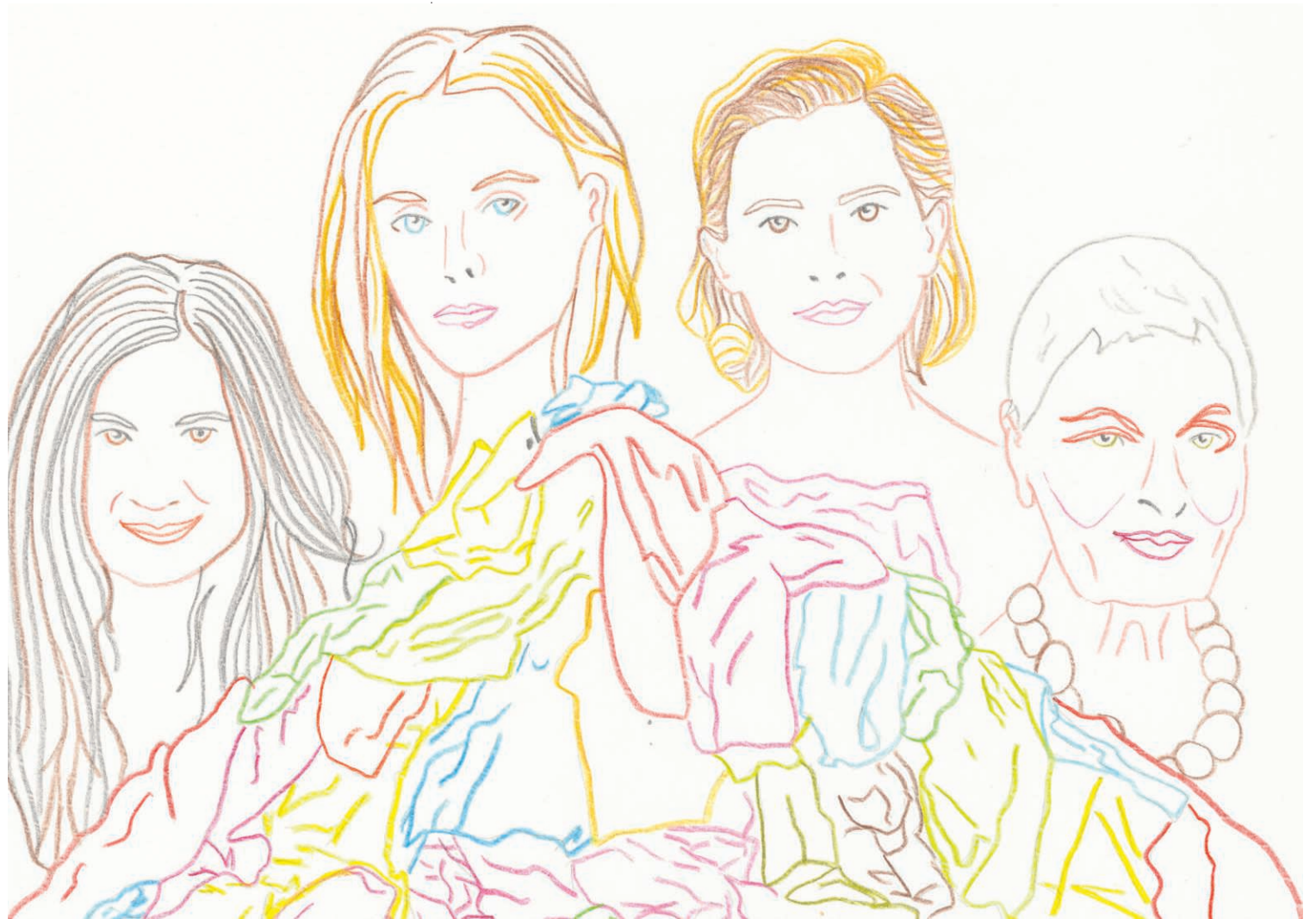
Caterina Bragoli takes a look at the women at the forefront of the sustainable fashion movement

The concept of sustainable fashion has only recently made its way into mainstream media, alerting people to the toxic repercussions of their spending. Attention has been drawn through the pioneering actions of various women who are determined to alter the catastrophic effects of fast fashion by simply advocating the benefits of sustainable production and shopping.

The journey that a garment makes from its point of production to its placement in your wardrobe can often be eye-opening. From toxic waste polluting local water sources, to 8000 litres of water being used to create a single pair of jeans, and the callous deployment of human capital in sweatshops: fashion as an industry can have devastating impacts on the environment, as well as the people who make our clothing. Counteracting this dangerous sequence of events on the surface seems impossible, as there is so rarely an overlap between global conglomerates cutting costs and also caring about the environment. Yet, with so many women beginning to raise their voices in support for the sustainable fashion cause, the easily-ignored reality is finally being called into question.

Long-established and highly successful female designers are shedding light on the negative impact the world of fashion is truly having, a bold action considering that they are so heavily immersed within that which they are criticising. Take Dame Vivienne Westwood as a fundamental example: the 1990s were defined by Westwood's new-wave influence on fashion put forward an image of the unapologetically daring and assertive woman. Westwood is known for echoing the sentiments of sustainability in her mantra for consumerism: "Buy less, choose well, make it last". The simplicity of this statement truly encapsulates the straightforward and seemingly obvious choices that consumers should be making when shopping. Shocking statistics only make Westwood's words that much more applicable: on average in the UK, a garment has a lifespan of only 3.3 years. The simple adoption of Westwood's response to this ongoing issue would make a vital difference to the disposability epidemic within the industry, although it must be noted that she has not officially reformed her company to ethical manufacturing standards yet. Though Westwood may not have contemplated the effect of these words on sales, they certainly promoted a new way of curating your wardrobe – placing longevity at the fore.

Stella McCartney is another female designer paving the way for the future of the industry by making conscious choices in the way in which she designs and manufactures her clothing. McCartney is a priceless voice in support of the sustainable cause, having been awarded an OBE for her services to the industry: she is a pioneer who has a considerable amount of influence in the industry and elsewhere. From the moment she established her self-titled brand in 2001, she refused to use leather or fur on any garment she produced, paying homage to her upbringing on



▲ Safia Minney, Stella McCartney, Emma Watson and Dame Vivienne Westwood (LISHA ZHONG)

an organic farm.

She received a torrent of hostility towards her industry-altering decision when, 18 years ago, the use of leather and fur was highly coveted. Her ethical decision was seen as a brand-destroying choice, yet she maintained her stance and challenged the established order to become one of the most successful female British designers in recent years. Caring considerably about the entire journey a garment makes, McCartney works with the National Resource Defence Council and the London College of Fashion's Sustainability Master Course to make the desperately needed difference to the manufacturing process. However, it is undeniable that McCartney's choices to endorse problematic powerhouses such as Adidas and Target will generate feelings of hypocrisy. Nevertheless the fact that she is making such crucial steps to alter a process that has remained unchanged for decades is paving the way for other brands to follow suit.

Whilst both Westwood and McCartney are long-established names within the industry, room is also being made for rising contributors to the global sustainable fashion movement. One of the leading social entrepreneurs, Safia Minney, has dedicated her career to the promotion of ethical business, especially regarding the fashion industry. Her passionate approach can be seen through her list of achievements: she has established Fair Trade supply chain solutions, launched Global Village in 1995 and started People Tree in London, which is dedicated to selling solely Fair Trade and sustainable fashion.

People Tree was a fundamental forerunner for the development of the sustainable fashion market, with over 200 stores across Europe selling the brand. When a passion like

Minney's for social justice is combined with a love of fashion, the result has the potential to vastly increase the accessibility of sustainability, providing a genuine source of information for people who share her desire to see such change happen.

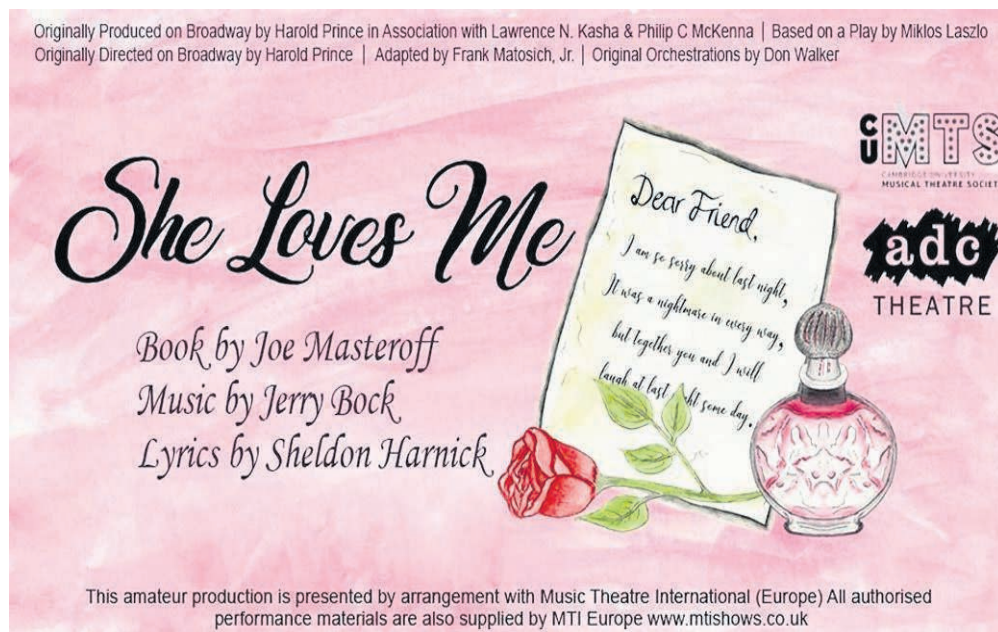
The culture of celebrity fashion is a chief propeller of the fast fashion movement, with consumers flocking to high-street stores to emulate the wardrobes of celebrities. Unfortunately, the media very rarely reports on stars that feel a sense of responsibility for their influence on fast fashion, rather cultivating a culture of disposable trends through daily red-carpet events or pictures of street style.

However, with celebrities like Emma Watson becoming increasingly affiliated with the sustainable fashion movement, the message is starting to make its way into mainstream media. Watson has combined her acting career with her role as UN Goodwill Ambassador, pledging to only wear sustainably-produced clothing on red-carpets in an attempt to promote the importance of reduced consumerism. She has previously campaigned with brands such as Alberta Ferretti, Zady, and People Tree, endorsing the work of passionate activists. Through the global attention she receives, Watson's endorsement provides force that encourages its longevity.

What each of these very pioneers share is a desire to transform an industry that they are extremely passionate about. And fashion is just that: it is something that generates intrigue and creativity. By taking steps to ensure that the dark, toxic elements of the industry are rectified, designers can begin to empowering people through clothing. The work of these women making efforts behind the scenes is finally paving the way for systemic change to come into fruition.

“Westwood's mantra of sustainability "Buy less, choose well, make it last" encapsulates a more thoughtful approach to consumption”

She Loves Me Preview



▲ The set, costume, and lighting will mimic the warmth and wonder of the play

(ISABELLA DALLISTON)

“Unapologetically charming,” *She Loves Me* looks set to be the perfect watch with Valentine’s Day looming

Every so often, we need a show to simply and shamelessly make us smile, and the romantic comedy musical *She Loves Me* manages to bring a breath of fresh air from a 1930s Budapest parfumerie. Director Jamie Williams tells me this is a setting which doesn’t allow half-measures: ‘the stage has to feel like a place you would want to be in; it has to be gorgeous and inviting – it’s all about

the charming aesthetic.’ The set, costume, and lighting will mimic the warmth and wonder of the play, then, but they will also reflect its realism. One thing the team could not stress enough was how unconventional for a musical *She Loves Me* is in its verisimilitude; these are not tropes, but characters that are flawed and well-rounded in a setting that is lifelike and quotidian despite its quirks, made believable by a smart and tight plot. Lead actor Annabelle Haworth (Amalia) praises Joe Masteroff’s script, saying ‘it is so intricate and well written, it’s incredible,’ while Williams adds that the audience may only notice the interwoven motifs and crucial details in retrospect. This is a rich ensemble musical, with a large cast but also a big band, and fellow lead actor Robin Franklin (Georg) commends the score: ‘it’s composed by Jerry Bock, who did *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Cabaret*, and they’re both so well-known, but I honestly think this is his best score; it’s really beautiful but it’s also funny, and very clever.’ Alex Hancock (waiter/ensemble) agrees, telling me it’s a great ensemble to be a part of, and that this is ‘a musical for people who love musicals, but even so it is one that people who don’t like musicals will be able to enjoy.’

This is a romantic comedy as well as a musical, though the central romance between Amalia (Annabelle Haworth) and Georg (Robin Franklin) is not the only one in the plot, and is very much a slow burn. Their relationship is kindled through a correspondence of letters, leading them to fall in love with each other’s minds, and develop an intellectual and cultured relationship with a charming trust in one another. Yet they only know each other on the page, and only as ‘Dear Friend’ – or so they think. As it happens, Amalia has recently got a job in the same parfumerie as Georg, and the pair hates working together. Bear comments that the pair are ‘unconventional, but evenly matched in a strange kind of way.’ The actors agree; Haworth describes Amalia’s ‘relentless energy in a world that

struggles to keep up,’ while Franklin explains that Georg seems proud, but that when he lets his guard down he too is ‘yearning for something more alive.’ The scene I’m watching is the end of the first act when Amalia and Georg find themselves at the same restaurant, each on a blind date. There is a lovely light comedy to the scene which comes from the contrast in the characters; Haworth’s Amalia is anxious and distracted while Franklin’s Georg, having had a bad day and a recent revelation, is unabashedly teasing. The team chat for longer than they act, but mainly because they are so attentive to this mismatch; they work on drawing out the subtleties, understanding the different perspectives, accentuating the juxtaposed tones of Amalia and Georg in every line.

The rehearsal goes slowly for another reason, too: the team cannot stop laughing, and, to be honest, neither can I – in fact, nothing could have better convinced me that this show will leave you with a smile on your face, because that’s how I left the rehearsal room. The team’s adoration for *She Loves Me* was so apparent in the way they talked about the show that I couldn’t wait to see the production in order to share in their joy. I didn’t get a sense of over-enthusiasm or sugar-coating, either, but that the team were genuinely excited to share this underappreciated show with others. Of course, with a romantic comedy musical you have to expect some schmaltz, and *She Loves Me* does dwell in the sweetness at times; assistant director Leo Bear tells me the show is ‘unapologetically charming,’ and the team agree that the golden age glamour and gaiety is more refreshing than stale, particularly in the Cambridge Theatre scene, where shameless happy endings are uncommon. Williams tells me that the gracefulness is why the play is successful: the emotion or comedy comes when that lustre falls away. Some of the comedy is very extravagant but some is muted, so you have to find just the right balance – ‘it’s a Goldilocks play,’ quips Franklin, ‘it’s got to be just right.’ If the enthusiasm of the team is anything to go by, I have no doubt it will be.

Market square discoveries: vegan paella

Callum Wainstein taste tests Black Rice’s vegan paella

Black Rice paella is located in market square, its exact position is always a bit of a mystery, jumping around the central hub – however it is instantly recognisable for its large vats of bubbling, brilliant paella.

Paella is a classic example of how a dish which was originally invented as a frugal way of making use of the ‘off cuts’ has been transformed. Similar trends have happened with American BBQ (the slow cook originally intended to tenderize tough cuts) and even more fundamentally burgers – where a dish originally intended as a cheap way of using the entire animal has mutated into something people unblinkingly pay over ten quid for.

Seafood paella is the most traditional rendition of paella, and Black Rice’s rendition hits all expectations. Of all the paella that I tried it had the most distinct flavour, the saline fishiness being apparent in every bite (even those which did not include an actual piece of seafood). The most prevalent seafood found in the paella are the calamari, which have an excellent texture – avoiding the rubberiness which so often befalls undercooked calamari. It is certainly an acquired taste, and for those who don’t particularly like seafood I would not recommend as it is very strong in its flavours, as a result I don’t think it has the same ‘craveable’ factor that the other dishes demonstrate.

In producing this review, I tried (for the first time ever) their vegan paella. I have to say I was shocked by how excellent it was. With the vegan option you can really appreciate just how fantastic the base of their paellas are. Starting with the rice: flavourful and with an

excellent consistency, it both maintains the integrity of each individual grain (as you bit down one can appreciate a delicate almost al-dente crunch) whilst still binding together to easily conform to the shape of your spoon. The vegetables stop the paella from becoming overly rich, with the green beans in particular standing out for providing a satisfying texture and crunch in what could otherwise be a relatively ‘baby-food’ esc mouthful. I can’t believe I’m writing this – but I honestly think that the vegan paella may be the best of all their offerings.

If the vegan paella is the balanced dish, then for those who are looking for something more rich and flavourful, I would recommend their spicy chicken and chorizo special (over a bed of the vegan paella). The spiciness of this dish permeates throughout, meaning that even mouthfuls of just the base rice are imbued with a spicy flavour. The heat is subtle, not bombarding you from first mouthful but instead slowly growing to a crescendo – luckily one can find our trusty green beans dotted around to provide relief. The chicken’s flavour impressively stands up to this barrage of favours, and acts as a good balance

to the more salty chorizo. At five quid (for a medium) I honestly do not believe you can find anything more value for in the entirety of Cambridge, its incredibly filling and flavourful and costs only 50p more than a Big Mac Meal from McDonalds.

One of the best features of the paella stand is that you are never a 100% sure what you’re going to get when you head over – the menu is constantly rotating and depending on which day you go. Earlier in the term I had visited on a Tuesday when they were serving a ‘traditional Valencian paella’ which consisted of chicken with peppers and vegetables – it was an excellent middle ground between the richness of the spicy chicken and chorizo and the vegan paella. Other visits have shown that they are sometimes offering a king prawn special, a drunken chicken special, or a chicken and chorizo paella – all fantastic. Sadly the paella stand is taking a short break from February 3rd, so I strongly recommend you visit it this weekend or eagerly anticipate its return in a few weeks. It is, in my opinion, not only the best value in all of Cambridge but the single nicest and consistently satisfying food that I have had in my entire time here.

Putting down the textbook

Finding time to read for pleasure during term time can be difficult, Anna Mochar embarks upon an adventure to make time for this often overlooked pastime

It is strange to think about just how much books define my university experience: every week I lug about a stack of books, from the library, to my room, to lectures. And yet, my first year at university seemed strangely devoid of them. I wasn't reading for pleasure and it seemed like I was rarely engaging with books as a complete work. Rather, I would take from them what I needed to complete the task at hand: a few chapters for an essay, a passage for a commentary. Despite this somewhat incomplete reading experience, I felt like I had reached a level of saturation with regards to my wish to read. It wasn't until the summer that I picked up a book to read for pleasure again – and doing so was an interesting

experience. I realized how much I'd missed reading for fun and realised that there must be some way to incorporate it into my weekly routine, even amidst the bustle of university life. This was the beginning of what has now become a challenge I'm setting myself: to read at least a book a week for fun during Lent term.

There are many truisms that deal with time and the way we make use of it. My great-grandma liked to say that you don't have time, you make it. This can be a frustrating sentence to read when you feel smothered beneath time-consuming extra-curriculars and the typical weekly workload. However, I have noticed that parts of my day tend to turn into a kind of time vacuum: I technically have time to do something I will enjoy and benefit from, but I choose to do nothing instead. What if it was possible to make time, as my great-grandma said, and actually fill those minutes or even hours with a few pages of reading here and there? Might this change the way I approach the concept of free time? Up until now I've understood free time as something that has to be completely free of effort of any kind. And then again, how much effort can reading for pleasure really be? Will it turn into yet another stress factor, or will it add a sense of accomplishment to each week?

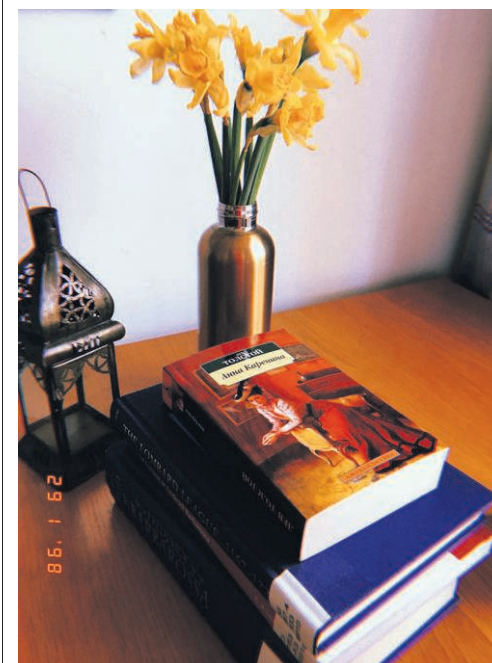
Reading seems like an almost decadent use

of time. You have to sit down and commit part of your day to doing nothing but the task at hand. Whereas, podcasts or TV shows can be consumed alongside a different activity, reading demands your full attention. As mindfulness and meditation become ever more popular as means of taking a step back, refocussing and "being in your head", reading for pleasure could perhaps supplement the effect of these activities. When reading, you have to channel your attention and concentration into one single direction. I am interested to see how nudging my mind to dwell on only one thing – the book I am reading – will affect the creation of headspace.

Finally, reading for pleasure might almost be called an anti-social activity, as it is time that you devote to silence and your own reactions to somebody else's narrative. Therefore, it might be a nice contrast to a social scene, which never seems to sleep during term time. How will themes, such as FOMO come into play when choosing to spend an evening reading? And how will this influence the way I view socialising – perhaps making me appreciate time spent in the company of others in a new way?

These are all questions that I hope to be able to engage with across the course of the next few weeks, simply by making myself read. A page between lectures, a chapter during lunch. Like this, slowly working my way through a book a week, I'll maybe manage to

change up (or establish) my daily routine and approach the time at my disposal in a different way. I am interested to see the development of headspace and my attitude to time spent alone; and, above all, I am interested to see what books will come to define this term.



▲ The wilted flowers – an accurate representation of the current state of my reading.

(ANNA MOCHAR)

dotdotdot

Looking for lower living costs?
Want to make a positive difference
in your community?

Dot Dot Dot is a social enterprise that provides inexpensive housing for people who want to do great volunteering.

You don't have to have lots of volunteering experience (though it's great if you do!) and you are free to choose where you volunteer.

“ ”

You do more than just
live somewhere, you
become part of the
community

Tim, Dot Dot Dot guardian

Sound interesting? Find out
more and view our available
Cambridge properties online.

dotdotdotproperty.com
020 3005 2457
hello@dotdotdotproperty.com



The hidden gems of overlooked film scores

In anticipation of the Oscars, **Seth Jordan** picks his five contenders for best original score, choosing pieces that have been overlooked by the Academy Awards

In recent years, the field of film composition has been saturated with great music. While there has always been a crossover between the fields of music and film music (Curtis Mayfield's score for 1972's *Superfly* is a standout in this regard), scores from artists like Mica Levi (*Under the Skin*, *Jackie*), Oneohtrix Point Never (*Good Time*) and Nils Frahm (*Victoria*), all influential artists in the genre of electronic music, show a growing trend for more experimental, avant-garde



▲ **Maverick** Radiohead guitarist Jonny Greenwood composed the score for Lynne Ramsey's latest (MICHAEL ZAPPA)

soundtracks.

On Tuesday, the Academy Awards announced their five nominations for best original score. On the list was *Mary Poppins Returns* (Marc Shaiman), *Isle of Dogs* (Alexandre Desplat), *BlackKkKlansman* (Terence Blanchard), *Black Panther* (Ludwig Göransson) and, probably the best of the bunch, *If Beale Street Could Talk* (Nicholas Britell). While these scores are varied, powerful and often beautiful, they represent only a fraction of the great music written for film this year. Below are five of the best overlooked scores ignored by the Oscars this year.

***You Were Never Really Here* - Johnny Greenwood**

The Radiohead lead guitarist produced the best score of last year in his swooning work for Paul Thomas Anderson's *Phantom Thread*. He's done it again with Lynne Ramsay's thriller *You Were Never Really Here*, switching gears to a synth-heavy, guitar-laden score, as discordant as anything he's done before. Greenwood's idiosyncratic style tends to attract filmmakers who favour foreground rather than background music, directors who revel in the incongruities between image and sound. This is perhaps clearest in the entirely dialogue-free opening twenty minutes of a previous collaboration with Anderson, *There Will Be Blood*, where Greenwood's swirling strings plunge us into a dark and dangerous world before the story even begins. Though he picked up a nomination for *Phantom Thread* last year, this newest score is among his best work and deserves more attention.

***Eighth Grade* - Anna Meredith**

Bo Burnham's directorial debut about a week in the life of an eighth grade girl could have easily fallen into the teen-movie trap of sappy montages set to indie noodling. Instead he opted for a colourful, bold and aggressive score from Scottish composer Anna Meredith. Constructed almost entirely of synths, the music is of an appropriate palette for protagonist Kayla, but uses jarring harmonies and shifting time signatures to turn the familiar into the uncanny. The score cleverly mirrors the experience of social media presented in the film where everything is a little bit too bright, and channels the anxiety of a 13-year-old girl in a unique and captivating way. Meredith recently released a reimagining of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* which is also worth a listen.

***Annihilation* - Ben Salisbury and Geoff Barrow**

A marriage of seasoned composer Ben

Salisbury and Portishead instrumentalist Geoff Barrow was bound to make something exciting, and the score for Alex Garland's criminally overlooked *Annihilation* didn't disappoint. The film is about a collection of a female scientists investigating a mysterious expanding area that has descended on the earth called 'the shimmer'. Developing on the creepy ambience he employed so well in Garland's 2015 cult hit *Ex Machina*, Salisbury mixes this with Barrow's acoustic guitar and strings to make a profoundly disconcerting but strangely beautiful set of songs. For a film that deals with the confluence of alien technology and nature, this score represents the perfect blend of electronic and organic. If this goes down well, have a listen to their score for *Black Mirror: Men Against Fire*.

***First Man* - Justin Hurwitz**

That the latest score by the *La La Land* and *Whiplash* composer was snubbed by the Academy is a real surprise, particularly as it's probably his best work yet. Hurwitz has a fantastic ear for a melody and works together the motifs he establishes in the first act of the film for a rousing climax in the third. The theremin, an instrument controlled by moving one's hands between two electronic antennae, handles many of the main themes. As well as being apparently Neil Armstrong's favourite instrument, it captures the loneliness of the astronaut in a beguiling fashion. Hurwitz's collaborations with Damian Chazelle begun in their university days with the low budget musical *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench*, and the pair have got the makings of a Hitchcock/Hermann style pairing. Though the film is perhaps not the most groundbreaking, Hurwitz's score certainly pushes boundaries and is a particularly good one to work to.

***Hereditary* - Colin Stetson**

Ari Aster's debut horror movie split audiences with some hailing as the new *Exorcist* and others (like me) not quite believing the hype. What is incontrovertible is the quality of Colin Stetson's score.

In horror more than most genres, much of the legwork in the early scenes is done by the music. Stetson, a saxophonist and Arcade Fire collaborator adds to this long tradition, creating a masterclass in slow, building dread. The warbling bass notes and layered woodwind crescendos play a huge part in transforming family scenes from mundane to sinister. Horror is always an exciting place for musical experimentation and Stetson's work sits among the greats.

The Mays Call for submissions!



The Mays Anthology is delighted to announce that submissions for our 27th edition are open.

The Mays is the premier student anthology, publishing the best new writing and art from Oxbridge students each year. Widely credited with launching Zadie Smith's literary career, The Mays continues to attract the brightest creative talent from both universities. Previous guest editors have included Kate Bush, Stephen Fry, Rupi Kaur, Nick Cave, Patti Smith, Colm Toibin, Jarvis Cocker & Ted Hughes.

We are seeking submissions of student poetry, prose, and art.

For more details see www.themaysanthology.co.uk/submissions/ or follow our Facebook page.



[facebook.com/TheMaysAnthology](https://www.facebook.com/TheMaysAnthology)



twitter.com/MaysAnthology

Aimer la vie avec Michel Legrand

Lillian Crawford
celebrates the life and
work of a great French
jazz and film composer

I am standing at a train station when I learn that Michel Legrand has died. Music fills my head, and the words: “Je ne pourrai jamais vivre sans toi, / Je ne pourrai pas, ne pars pas, j’en mourrai.” The English version of this song, the melancholic motif of director Jacques Demy’s heart-breaking musical, *Les parapluies de Cherbourg*, does not quite express the overwhelming pain undergone by the central couple. As my train pulls in, to take me away, my mind is set on Geneviève (Catherine Deneuve) reaching out from the platform to her lover, Guy (Nino Castelnuovo) as he departs for war. And so too to Celia Johnson swept away from Trevor Howard by the pangs of Rachmaninov in *Brief Encounter*, of Moira Shearer being crushed by a locomotive at the end of *The Red Shoes*. It is too much, and I steady myself in front of the tracks with my own jet-black umbrella.

Sitting at my desk punching these vague thoughts into my typewriter, I look up to see that it is snowing outside my window. Those same words, that same chilling melody flows in once more as I picture Guy and Geneviève meeting again in the wintry landscape of a petrol station, years later, time and life having moved on. At this climax, the hope for rekindling neatly extinguished, the score swells as loud as it dares until one is left quaking with tears. It is a fitting memory to visit upon the death of a man who wrote the most beautiful, perfect music to ever grace the silver screen.

Legrand leaves us with a lifetime of bittersweet compositions to revisit and pass on to future generations. While we knew the curtain would one day have to fall on his life and career, our hearts are left in pieces nonetheless, just as they are at the thought that Geneviève will never be with Guy.

It would be false to dwell too much on the sorrowful airs of Legrand’s oeuvre. He was, first and foremost, a master of jazz, the genre that best captures our *joie de vivre*. *Les parapluies* bursts to life in the garage where we meet Guy, celebrating the pure feeling of being in love. It is the same rhythm, or rather the promise of that feeling, that tingles in the wind on the transport bridge at the opening of *Les demoiselles de Rochefort*. Another musical collaboration with Demy, there is a somewhat happier ending this time round, albeit with plenty of exquisitely orchestrated missteps along the way. With all the twin-motivated antics of Shakespearean farce, it is a film that positively fizzles with romance, almost entirely thanks to Legrand’s endless string of showstoppers. The following exchange comes around halfway through:

Solange (Françoise Dorléac): Voulez-vous du Mozart?

Delphine (Catherine Deneuve): Voulez-vous du Stravinsky?

Solange: Voulez-vous du Jean-Sébastien

Bach?

Delphine: Ou du Bogoslovsky?

Solange: Louis Armstrong? Ellington? Count Basie, ou bien Hampton?

Delphine: Ou préférez-vous entendre du Michel Legrand?

It is a hilarious moment of self-reflexivity, placing Legrand confidently amongst the jazz standards. Indeed, while Western ears have tended to fall upon the American greats, we often overlook the French composer’s non-cinematic works.

Attending the Conservatoire de Paris from the age of eleven, at the same time that the magnificent Nadia Boulanger was there,

Legrand went on to produce over a hundred albums, including *Legrand Jazz* in 1959. Equally excellent are his classical works, having in recent years embarked on a self-titled “final chapter” consisting of a plethora of concerti and the ballet *Liliom*, somewhat different from the haunting melody Solange composes in *Les demoiselles*. It is undoubtedly here that Legrand shone the brightest, combining his music with sumptuous visuals to produce truly holistic works of art. There is nothing pretentious about this lyrical joke.

As the trucks ride out, the couples in tow, at the end of *Les demoiselles*, we exit the cinema satisfied. Like the finale of *Les parapluies*, the score rises to an almost unbearable level of emotion, although the tears are more jovial for the young girls.

As I board my train and put in my earphones, it is their happiness that I select to listen to over Geneviève’s tragic loss. My crying is then not only for the fact that Legrand has left us, but more a testament to the gift he gave me, and everyone else who has ever taken something from his music.

The composer himself said something similar of *The Other Side of the Wind*, the final film of Orson Welles which was released in 2018 after forty years of reconstruction work. Having scored Welles’s documentary *F for Fake* in 1974, the director had requested that Legrand work on his new project, the one he never finished, and so it has proved to be amongst the last scores he wrote. Legrand said that he took it “as a gift from Orson, through the clouds”, touching on this notion of legacy and continued enjoyment I have struggled to express so succinctly. It is this devotion that makes the film, and its soundtrack, the most remarkable artwork to emerge in recent memory.

The Other Side of the Wind stars the real film director John Huston as a veiled version of Welles, lugging on enormous black cigars and bearing an unmistakably miserable

façade. His assistant, aptly portrayed by Peter Bogdanovich, who was instrumental in the film’s completion, panders to his needs and acts as his spokesperson to the torrent of journalists scrounging for attention.

Shot by a dozen different types of camera, Huston, and thus Welles, smirks through the chaos. It is, after all, a party, and we are here to have a good time. So too is Legrand, his music always effortlessly cool. It feels like a rejection, or rather a retraction, from his more recent classical inclinations back to the nostalgia of the French New Wave, of his salad days next to Demy, Agnès Varda, and Jean-Luc Godard. We are privileged to go on that journey with him, establishing the bizarre timeless feeling of a film that seems to have influenced every other picture ever made. Few composers could ask for a finer swansong.

Reading through the obituaries and tributes, most attention seems to have been paid to Legrand’s 1968 soundtrack to an American film, *The Thomas Crown Affair*. This is to be expected, a typical reflection on Western naiveté in response to ‘foreign’ culture. That’s not to say that ‘The Windmills of Your Mind’ isn’t a great song more than worthy of its Oscar – Dusty Springfield’s rendering is particularly sublime.

But it should not be held up in isolation, for it is a piece within a canon of thoughts and feelings that define Legrand’s style. Consider the lyrics: “Why did summer go so quickly? / Was it something that I said? / Lovers walk along the shore / And leave their footprints in the sand.” Now the English version of ‘Je ne pourrai jamais’ from *Les parapluies*: “If it takes forever, I will wait for you / For a thousand summers, I will wait for you / Till you’re back beside me, till I’m holding you / Till I hear you sigh here in my arms.” Legrand had a sensitivity, a sensibility which the rest of us can only try to appreciate. Something deeply sad glides underneath that glossy surface of jazz we know too well.

It is only through Legrand’s music that we can hope to know him, as a human being as well as an artist. I weep as I listen to his music, and can only assume it is bred of some real experience – that which makes it relatable. He directed a semi-autobiographical film, *Cinq jours en juin*, in 1989 which might shed some light on his mysterious life, and we can only hope it will be restored in his memory. What we do know is that music guided him through life. Assumptions are dangerous things, and like the enigmatic lyrics of his songs, these are questions best left unresolved.

“Like a circle in a spiral / Like a wheel within a wheel”, I circumlocute without landing upon an answer, something meaningful to say on a true artist.

For all the snow, wind, and trains that we must endure in the pursuit of value and love, nothing seems more apposite a soundtrack than the music of Michel Legrand.

Perhaps then we should end with his own words, the ‘Chanson de Maxence’ from *Les demoiselles*: “Je pourrais vous parler de ses yeux, de ses mains / Je pourrais vous parler d’elle jusqu’à demain / Son amour, c’est ma vie mais à quoi bon rêver? / Je l’ai cherchée partout je ne l’ai pas trouvée.”

◀ An iconic scene between Catherine Deneuve and Nino Castelnuovo in *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*

(YOUTUBE/ LES PARAPLUIES DE CHERBOURG)



Science

The Great Pacific garbage patch

Sophie Cook explores the crisis of plastic pollution in the world's oceans, and suggests what we should be doing to solve it

It is estimated that the surface waters of our oceans contain 5tn plastic particles. Global circulation and ocean currents corral this debris into foci at the centre of sub-tropical gyres, from which they cannot escape. Five such gyres exist – the largest of which has come to be known as ‘The Great Pacific garbage patch’ (GPGP). Contrary to popular belief, this is not actually a solid ‘garbage island’, but a vast area of ocean where a huge amount of plastic waste is concentrated. The area covers 1.6 m square kilometres, equivalent to three times the size of France. It is thought that of a total 5tn plastic particles, more than 1.8tn are found here. Weighing in at a total of 80,000 tonnes, it is roughly equivalent to the mass of 500 jumbo jets; or in Cambridge terms – 4m bicycles!

The density of plastic gradually increases towards the centre of the GPGP. Here, there are hundreds of kilograms of plastic per square kilometre. The patch has been studied since the 1970s, but more recently ‘The Ocean Cleanup’ project was launched, aiming to actively tackle this constantly expanding pile of human detritus. Each year, between 1.15-2.41m tonnes of plastic drain out of rivers and into our oceans. It is thought that 80% of ocean plastics originate from terrestrial sources, while the remaining 20% come from marine activities. Due to highly variable ocean dynamics, this distribution is not uniform. Fishing equipment, including nets, ropes and lines, makes up 46% of the GPGP by mass. These ‘ghost nets’ are perilous traps which regularly ensnare both marine life and seabirds.

Between 2013-15, ‘The Ocean Cleanup’ set out to quantify the scale of the GPGP. They deployed 30 boats, 652 surface nets and a plane equipped with advanced



sensors and cameras. All this allowed them to measure the plastic content and composition present in the area, in order to understand the magnitude of the problem. They found that 94% of the individual plastic particles were so-called ‘microplastics’ (objects smaller than 0.5cm), while 92% of the debris by mass were objects larger than 0.5cm.

The GPGP has huge implications for both marine ecosystems and human health. The researchers found that there is 180 times more plastic debris than common prey species in the uppermost metres of the GPGP. This makes it far too easy for surface feeders such as seabirds and turtles to mistake plastic for food. Sea turtles caught in and around the GPGP were found to have diets consisting of up to 74% plastic by dry weight.

In addition to the plastic itself, 84% of samples collected were found to contain at least one bioaccumulative toxin. The bioaccumulation of microplastics and

▲ **Marine debris washed up on a beach** (JUSTIN DOLSKE)

their associated toxins up the food chain is a major concern – not only for marine communities, but for the fish and shellfish on our own dinner plates.

The UN estimates that the environmental damage to marine ecosystems caused by ocean plastics totals around \$13bn (US dollars). It is estimated that, by 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Plastic bottles take 450 years to fully biodegrade. For fishing lines, that figure goes up to 600 years. This problem is not going to go away, even if we stop producing plastic tomorrow – the damage done is already too great to ignore.

So, what is being done to fight back? The ‘Ocean Cleanup’ project has developed a large barrage system capable of collecting vast quantities of plastic quickly and efficiently. The first prototype was tested in the North Sea in 2016, and in September last year, they launched ‘System 001’ into the North Pacific. Their aim is to achieve ‘full-scale

system functioning’ by 2020. If successful, this technology has the potential to remove 50% of the GPGP within five years.

The need for action is mounting, as larger debris becomes much harder to collect once it breaks down into microplastic. It is thought that huge volumes of microplastics have already been deposited in deep sea sediments, reinforcing the idea that we are now living through the ‘Anthropocene’, a new geological period marked by drastic human impacts. Our plastic legacy will forever be visible in the sedimentary record.

But, this doesn’t have to continue. Everyone can do their bit. In the UK alone, we use 35m plastic drinks bottles per day, with Londoners being the main culprits.

You don’t have to be part of this. Carry your reusable bottle with pride, do your best to recycle, and to all my fellow NatScis – please use those pipette tips sparingly!

“
By 2050
there will
be more
plastic in
the ocean
than fish
”



This week in scientific history The death of Sedgwick

Thea Elvin

The 27th January 1873 marks the death of arguably Cambridge’s most well-known geologist, Adam Sedgwick. The British priest and pioneer of geology is most famous for his hypothesis of the Cambrian and Devonian periods on the geological timescale, as well as for being the namesake of Cambridge’s Museum of Earth Sciences and the oldest stu-

dent-run geology club in the world.

Born in Yorkshire in 1785, Sedgwick studied Maths and Theology at Trinity College, Cambridge. In spite of having “no working knowledge of geology” upon his appointment, he later became a fellow at Trinity and Woodwardian Professor of Geology, a post he held until his death.

In the 1830s he pioneered a system for classifying Cambrian rocks and also an ordering for the strata (layers

“
A priest
and
pioneer
of
geology
”

of sedimentary rock) of the Carboniferous and Devonian periods. Despite teaching Charles Darwin at Cambridge, Sedgwick was strongly opposed to the theory of natural selection.

Sedgwick also expanded the geological collection started by John Woodward in what now forms the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences, which was opened in 1904 in a ceremony attended by King Edward VII. Today the museum houses around 2m rocks and fossils (including specimens of ichthyosaurs collected by Mary Anning) and spans 4.5bn years of history.

The Sedgwick Club, the geology society founded by Sedgwick in 1880, is still active today.



▲ **A dinosaur skull in the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences** (UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)

Opioids are critical to medicine, but they demand caution



◀ The opium poppy is used for the production of various opioids

(ALASTAIR RAE)

In the wake of the 'complex' opioid crisis, **George Milner** argues that we must simultaneously accept the significance of opioids and seek means to control their use

In 2017 there were an estimated 72,000 deaths from drug overdoses in the US, of which nearly 48,000 were linked to opioid usage. This exceeded the number of deaths involving road traffic accidents and firearms, which stood at 40,100 and 39,773 respectively. This epidemic is far from confined to North America, however; Nigeria, for example, is witnessing a dramatic rise in misuse of the opioid tramadol. Much of this has been traced back to the legal use of prescription opioids in the treatment of pain. It is the responsibility of government, doctors and healthcare providers to consider the current global crisis and where appropriate, challenge the perceptions, clinical use and supply of opioids in the UK and overseas to guard against a similar crisis at home.

The term *opioid* refers to a group of substances which bind to four types of opioid receptors, widely distributed throughout the body, from the nervous system where they exert their analgesic (pain-relieving) effects, to sites such as the digestive system. The diversity of opioid receptors and their location makes opioid drugs more than mere modulators of pain. For example, stimulation of opioid receptors in the gut slows down its movement and can lead to constipation.

More immediately life-threatening, however, are the central nervous system side effects of opioids, which are behind the majority of acute overdose deaths. Breathing is notably depressed with opioid use and can ultimately cease altogether. To make matters worse, the risks associated with opioids increase further in the context of two phenomena: tolerance and addiction.

Tolerance describes the decreasing effect of a dose of a drug, especially when given repeatedly. While some patients don't develop an extensive tolerance,

it is common for opioid doses to be increased substantially over the course of treatment in order to achieve the same analgesic effects. In contrast, addiction refers to the compulsive use of a drug. The potent combination of tolerance and addiction makes it difficult for long-term opioid users to abstain, even if the drugs become ineffective in relieving the very pain that they were first prescribed to combat. Despite potentially fatal side-effects, these drugs are all licensed by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) for medical use. Why is this the case? Opioids are broadly still the most effective treatment for relieving most types of severe short-term pain. The efficacy of opioids in controlling severe acute pain and cancer pain is high, and addiction rates are remarkably low. As such, over half of cancer patients in the last three months of their life are given opioids which play a crucial role in palliative care. Fear of addiction can, however, lead to clinicians being inappropriately cautious in prescribing opioids.

Modern pharmacological control of pain also rarely uses one drug in isolation. The efficacy of opioids can be augmented, or even replaced in many cases, by a number of other classes. Despite this, it is wishful thinking to believe that non-opioid analgesics represent safe alternatives or adjuncts. By one estimate, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen were responsible for more deaths in the UK in 2011 than road traffic accidents, mainly due to gastrointestinal bleeding and cardiovascular disease. Effectively controlling the opioid crisis therefore requires prescribing practices that ensure all analgesics are only used when evidence shows their benefits outweigh their harm.

A 2017 review estimated the incidence of chronic pain, defined as that lasting for more than 12 weeks, to be 43% in the UK, with estimates rising due to an ageing population. Lack of effective treatment for chronic pain can lead to unsuitable prescriptions of opioids and ensuing addiction, with little clinical benefit. GPs, however, with few alternatives, often prescribe opioids for fear of turning patients away without pain medication.

Primary care is in need of more effective support in these scenarios.

Rises in opioid use and misuse are well-documented in the UK. In 2017 there were 24m prescriptions for opioids issued by the NHS, though less than half the number per person prescribed in the US. In the last 15 years the proportion of UK patients prescribed opioids has doubled while US prescription rates have been falling since a peak in 2012. Public Health England is due to publish a report in early 2019 examining dependence on and withdrawal from prescribed medicines, including opioids. This is expected to go further in linking prescribing practices and opioid addiction.

On the other hand, the nature of the UK healthcare system has rendered it more resistant to irresponsible prescription. The vast majority of opioids are prescribed by the NHS, allowing better monitoring of the practices of hospitals, regions and individual doctors. Patients are also less able to shop around for alternative opinions when access to opioids is controlled or refused on clinical grounds. As such, the UK is not likely to witness a prescription opioid crisis of the same

magnitude as that seen in the US.

Yet, the issue runs deeper than problematic prescribing practices. While the opioid crisis was largely initiated by legal use, illegal trade has the potential to fill the void left by a reflexive tightening of prescription guidelines. To complicate matters, an estimated 7.5% of adults in the UK aged 16-59 years old admitted to having taken prescription-only painkillers not prescribed to them, and in doing so, bypassing a crucial clinical checkpoint designed to prevent inappropriate use. There is also an extensive social stratification of this problem, which cannot be ignored any longer.

It is clear that controlling the opioid crisis will therefore require a combination of measures from patient education to improved classification and treatment of addiction and control over illicit supplies. There is evidently huge demand for better management of long-term pain with combinations of opioid and non-opioid drugs in addition to non-pharmacological measures. What links these changes is the need for an evidence-based approach which appreciates the complexity of the current crisis.

“In the last 15 years the number of opioids prescribed has doubled”

“Drugs such as ibuprofen cause more deaths than road traffic accidents”

Haircuts

Clipper Cut	from £11
Dry Cut	from £15
Wet Cut & Dry	from £17
Restyle	from £18
Flat Top	from £18
Long Hair	from £18
Skin Fade	from £20

Signature Cuts

Your style	from £27
------------	----------

Classic Cuts

Your style	from £27
------------	----------

Beard

Trim	from £6
Shape	from £10
Wet Shave	from £25

Boys under 12

Monday to Thursday	
Dry Cut	from £13
Wet Cut & Dry	from £15

Uni Student Discount

Only accepted with a valid uni and N.U.S. card	
Monday to Thursday	from £10
Friday	from £12

Senior Citizens 67+

Excludes Friday & Saturday	
	from £11

Price List



Lui's
Barbershop EST. 2001

01223 566663

www.luisbarbershop.co.uk
facebook: @luisbarbershop1



THAIKHUN
THAI STREET FOOD



20% OFF
FOR STUDENTS

Sunday-Thursday



WWW.THAIKHUN.CO.UK

20% off Food Bill Only, Valid all day Sunday to Thursday, offer only valid off the food bill, maximum 6 guests per table, subject to availability, VALID student card must be shown for each guest redeeming discount, not valid with any other offer, all offers are subject to managers discretion



Hawks vote sees clubhouse move closer to opening doors to Osprey sportswomen

William Ross
Sport Editor

Resident student members of the Hawks - an all-male society comprised primarily of Blues sportsmen - last week voted overwhelmingly in favour of allowing the Ospreys to share usage of the Hawks' clubhouse. The Ospreys are an all-female society comprised primarily of Blues sportswomen.

In last week's vote, all club members that are current members of the University (resident Hawks) were asked to express their view on whether, "in return for payment for a fee equal to that paid by resident hawks, the committee may grant resident members of the Ospreys access to the facilities of the clubhouse."

Of 156 resident Hawks, 127 members participated in the vote, with 113 (89%) voting in favour and 14 against (11%). This, however, was an "advisory" vote and will be followed an "All Hawks" vote which is expected to take place this month, in which Hawks alumni will also be able to participate.

The Hawks' Club was founded in 1872 as a society for the University's elite athletes. Its members have included actor Hugh Laurie, former England cricket captain Mike Atherton, and King George VI. Candidates for membership must be proposed by a current full Hawks mem-

“Both clubs are committed to ensuring the outcome is positive for Cambridge sport”

ber and, generally, have attained Blue status by taking part in a competitive sporting event against Oxford in their respective sport.

The four-floor clubhouse, which opened in 1993 and is located at Portugal Place, houses a members' room, bar, dining room and committee room. The clubhouse is also open to members of the Dining Rights Club, which is comprised of local professional or business people of any gender.

This vote came almost two years after a proposal that the Hawks and Ospreys share the facilities of Calder House was first announced in Easter 2017, and over a year after the Hawks and Ospreys began working together to review this proposal in October 2017. After the announcement of the review, the presidents of the Hawks and Ospreys told *Varsity* that both clubs had "worked in close partnership from the beginning on the clubhouse sharing proposal".

"Whatever the final decision," they said, "both clubs are committed to continuing to work closely to ensure the outcome is both sustainable and positive for Cambridge sport."

Prior to the vote, President of the Hawks Club Mike Phillips had sent out a letter to all resident Hawks which stated:

"The Committee are unanimous in their support of the proposal, not least because it will solidify the long-standing

history of cooperation between Hawks and Ospreys."

The Ospreys were founded in 1985 as a social club for the University's sportswomen, making it a century younger than its male counterpart. The Ospreys do not at present have their own clubhouse. However, as Phillips pointed out in his letter to Resident Hawks ahead of the vote, "the Ospreys currently use the Clubhouse in Portugal Place for a number of purposes on an informal basis."

"Since 2014, Ospreys' post has been delivered to the clubhouse for resident Ospreys to collect. More recently, Resident Ospreys have been invited to hold their committee meetings and prize-giving ceremonies at the Clubhouse."

Following the vote, Phillips expressed in an email to all Resident Hawks that he felt that there now exists "a strong mandate from Resident Hawks to proceed with the proposal."

Speaking to *Varsity*, a resident Hawk who voted in favour of the proposal explained his support for the move: "The Hawks' and Ospreys are different clubs, for different people, but as far as the Clubhouse is concerned there is little to no difference, practically speaking. Hawks and Ospreys use it alike, so I see no reason why this arrangement should not just be formalised and put to bed."

He stressed the importance of showing that the Hawks are "a progressive club, not an outdated institution of a

▲ **Calder House has long served as the Hawks' clubhouse** (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

bygone era.

This attitude was shared in the proposal's original announcement in the Hawks' publication, *The Hawk*. The piece cited examples of how sport in Cambridge is "changing", such as mixed Lacrosse becoming a Varsity fixture. Such changes, it said, reflected "a general coming together of, and mutual respect for, men's and women's sport."

It also noted that sponsors were "not willing to be associated with single sex clubs", and that the move would "give the Ospreys the base that they have so long been without".

The proposal will not involve a merger between the Hawks' and the Ospreys', and both clubs will be expected to maintain their own membership criteria. There will be no transfer of assets between the clubs, and alumni payments will still go to their respective clubs.

Phillips announced that he will now be contacting all members of the club to inform them of the outcome of the vote. A further vote will then be held, in which both resident and non-resident Hawks will be able to participate.

The same Resident Hawk said of the new vote: "I do hope that common sense prevails and that Hawks vote in favour [of sharing the clubhouse with the Ospreys]."

The presidents of the Hawks' Club and the Ospreys have been contacted for comment.

Birds of a feather. Hawks vote to open clubhouse to Cambridge University's sportswomen **31**

New to a Blue: Touching down with the Cambridge Pythons, the American Football Team



William Ross finds out more about one of the UK's fastest growing sports

I just love American Football. I love the speed, the physicality, and the tactical side as well because everything's a designed play. I'm sure there's a better way of putting it, but it's like chess... but hitting people."

The enthusiasm with which Sam Combs, the president of the Cambridge University Pythons American Football Club, discusses the sport is certainly striking.

"I just love American Football. I love the speed, the physicality, and the tactical side as well because everything's a designed play. I'm sure there's a better way of putting it, but it's like chess...

but hitting people."

Originating in the late nineteenth century and now the most popular sport in the US, American Football is a team sport played by two teams of eleven players on a rectangular field with goalposts at either end. The offense, which is the team controlling the oval-shaped ball, attempts to advance down the field and score points either by advancing the ball into the opposing team's end zone for a touchdown or kicking the ball through the opponent's goalposts for a field goal. The defence, meanwhile, which is the team without control of the ball, aims to stop the offense's advance and take control of the ball themselves.

As Combs suggests, American Football is a full contact sport, and the brutal physicality of the sport has been subject to much public discussion. In the early days of the game, President Theodore Roosevelt threatened to shut down col-

“It feels as much like a family as it does a team”

◀ A Pythons player fends off a challenge

(CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PYTHONS AMERICAN FOOTBALL CLUB)



lege American football unless students stopped dying on the field, while recent medical research has shown that the damage caused by repeated concussions can have lasting health consequences for American football players.

Comb, however, is keen to stress that incoming players should not be deterred by the health risks associated with the sport. "The issue of concussion isn't just an American Football issue – a lot of sports, including rugby and football, have had to address these issues. The coaches have to take certain steps in terms of concussion, and there's a specific league protocol – you're almost better off playing a contact sport because there are so many regulations around it."

The team, open to both men and women, play in the BUCS 2A South East division, where they currently stand in second place having won two of their four matches. Most importantly, the team are also currently in the process of organising this year's Varsity match against the Oxford Lancers, which will be held at Cambridge's Grange Road rugby stadium.

As well as training and playing, the Pythons also hold a series of social events, designed to foster a strong team spirit. In addition to regular socials after matches and training sessions, the team's flagship social event is the annual Super Bowl party held at the Cambridge Union, where the Super Bowl final is screened and the kitchen serves a range of American dishes throughout the night, bringing an American flavour

▲ **The Pythons in action against the University of Essex** (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PYTHONS AMERICAN FOOTBALL CLUB)

to one of England's most traditional establishments.

Speaking to the team's players after training, then, it is little wonder that it is the close-knit team environment that really shines through. Comb notes that "we've got a load of like-minded guys who all love American Football. It's good to have that real team atmosphere."

Charlie Cooper, meanwhile, a rookie linebacker, describes joining the Pythons as "one of the best decisions that I've made at uni." Like too many of us, Cooper by his own admission spent 'the entirety of first year drinking a lot, eating unhealthily and doing nothing to keep fit so I knew that playing American football would have a positive impact on my overall health and lifestyle."

Indeed, joining the Pythons couldn't have been easier: "I've honestly found it very easy settling into this team. Most of the other players were also rookies before they joined the University team, which means that both the players and the coaches understand that there's a learning curve and accommodate that, putting particular emphasis on helping new players to catch up."

"Everyone's extremely welcoming to the point that it feels as much like a family as it does a team, and I think that this is in part due to the fact that, unlike other University sports such as rugby or rowing, there is no competitive entry for this team: anyone and everyone is welcome regardless of prior experience or natural aptitude as long as they have the will."

“Joining the Pythons is one of the best decisions that I've made at University”