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**No. 862**
Friday 15th February 2019
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**Cambridge's Independent Student Newspaper since 1947**

VARSITY


# Revealed: Cambridge's bid to house a Ministry of Defence psychological research centre

**By Noella Chye**

The Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, London (DENNY J)

**Exclusive** page 6 ▶

# Cambridge birth control: long waits and high prices

**Belle George**
**Senior News Correspondent**

"I was feeling quite mentally fragile. I would have been in no state to cycle the 15 minutes home on a freezing dark January night," said an anonymous second year student who recently had an intrauterine device (IUD) fitted at Cambridge's Lime Tree Clinic.

Students in Cambridge who want long term preventative contraception, such as IUDs or the contraceptive implant, can obtain it from either their GP or the Lime Tree sexual health and contraception clinic at Brookfields Hospital on Mill Road. The Lime Tree clinic offers a range of services, from fitting contraceptive implants and intrauterine devices to STI testing and emergency contraception.

However, students have complained of the relative difficulty of travelling to the Lime Tree clinic, which is a 30-minute walk from the city centre.

Speaking to *Varsity*, the student who had an IUD fitted at the clinic complained of the effort required to travel for an appointment: "The eight pounds it cost me each way I would rather have spent on something else."

She also spoke of the long time period between first contacting the clinic about getting an IUD fitted and the procedure actually happening. After waiting three

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**An exlusive behind the scenes look at the latest menswear shoot for CUCFS**

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

## *Dr Nisha Kapoor*

# 'We need to think about racism more deeply and more critically than is being allowed for'

***Raphael Korber Hoffman** speaks to the sociologist about racism and deportation in the age of the War on Terror*

From the so-called 'hostile environment' in Britain to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the United States, it seems as if the topic of immigration is becoming an ever more prominent part of political discourses across the world. It was in this context that Dr Nisha Kapoor, Assistant Professor in Sociology at the University of Warwick, published her book *Deport, Deprive, Extradite* in 2018.

Kapoor points out at the beginning of our discussion that of the extradition cases discussed in her book, only one individual had been convicted of a crime before they were extradited, and that crime was not the reason for their extradition. This serves to demonstrate the point that the UK has deported people to "places that are known for carrying out torture who have not been convicted of any crimes."

A large part of this comes down to counterterrorism legislation which "is sufficiently expansive so as to allow for other mechanisms of punishment where the criminal justice system isn't sufficient. So, if you haven't been convicted of a crime because the evidence isn't sufficient … you can nevertheless, because you're deemed to be a risk to national security, be subject to deportation on national security grounds."

With the issue of deportation constantly making headlines on both sides of the Atlantic, with the controversies surrounding the actions of ICE in the United States often focussed on people from Central America, and the Windrush scandal at home regarding the deportation of people originating from the Caribbean, Kapoor acknowledges the fundamentally racial element to deportations and notes the political nature of the original construction of borders as part of the idea of the nation-state. Referring to the "arbitrary boundaries" which was the result of this development, Kapoor adds that "there's no kind of normative way in which certain groups of people belong here, and other groups of people belong there."

Kapoor refers to history in noting how the enforcement of immigration legislation in Britain began in the early 20th century restricting Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, before later being used to restrict immigration from the Commonwealth of Britain's former colonies. Thus, "if we look at the institution of immigration, its history is deeply racially marked in the same way that it is in the U.S and … requires us to understand the way in which borders are constructed and what their purpose has been." Kapoor notes how the intensification of the use of deportation arose in the 1990s in the UK with the growth in the number of asylum seekers often arriving from countries which had previously been colonised by European powers.

In certain high-profile cases public opinion can be swayed towards supporting extradition despite the various human rights concerns. In reference to the media and public hostility to the idea of due process and human rights guarantees in high profile extradition cases, Kapoor argues "a big part of this feeds on racism."

In the era of the War on Terror, "the Muslim comes to be synonymous with the figure of the terrorist in general." She goes on to make the point that "you have these particularly unsympathetic pathologized figures that become tropes in the media. So Abu Hamza with a hook for a hand and a patch over his eye.

"It's an ideal trope for the media to mobilize a sort of demonic monstrous non-human figure upon which you can carry any kind of measures."

The fact that there has been a "mass mobilization of Islamophobia for the last 20 years" only increases the challenge of encouraging the public to support human rights for individuals who have made the news for the attempts to extradite them. Kapoor further raises her concern with regards to the Home Office denying certain individuals passports – that there is "no real transparency" in a process which she describes as being "very much racially targeted", and threatens to "set particular kinds of precedents and the normalization of how power operates and what's possible and what we think of as necessary in the

# News

▲ Dr Kapoor is an assistant professor in sociology at the University of Warwick (RAPHAEL KORBER-HOFFMAN)

name of security."

In the post-9/11 era, countries such as the UK and the United States have greatly expanded their security apparatus and processes which has come, some argue, at the expense of civil liberties. She strongly rejects the argument that such measures have made us safer from terrorism, making the point that "all it's done is enhance the power of the state … If you look at the kind of statistics around counter-terrorism policing there's a number of things that show up. One is that most people … who are arrested are not charged. And then the small number of people who are charged, very few of those are charged for terrorism related offences."

Further to this, Kapoor also notes the variety of acts which governments are classifying as a terrorism offence.

She notes that "it could be something like an expression of a political opinion which is deemed to be solicitation or deemed to be potentially a kind of material support which [could be] an action or behaviour which in other contexts would be defended as freedom of speech."

She adds that individuals spend "very long periods of time in prison" due to convictions based upon acts such as "typing up a document for a website … using somebody's phone and the person who owns the phone is someone who is marked as suspicious … typing a comment on social media about something."

Kapoor adds that she is not "naïve about violence and it's not to say that there aren't some individuals who are carrying out or have carried out violent acts. But we then need to understand the political context in which these things are happening and they're not separate from Britain's role or the West's role in the Middle East in terms of imperialist occupation and military intervention."

Turning back to the issue of counterterrorism, Kapoor contends that the "whole point of this infrastructure of counterterrorism policy is not designed to police or stop terrorism. It's designed to reproduce it to justify or to sustain the whole security industry."

Kapoor makes the point that the germination of these structures in fact began in the 1990s, not after 9/11 which is often used as a justification for the existence of such systems. She explains that "when the Cold War was dying down … there was talk by the powers that be here and in the US about where to look, there needed to be a new kind of global threat … a new kind of enemy to the West … it wasn't communism anymore and Islam came to be a sufficient replacement."

Referencing Arun Kundnani's book *The Muslims are Coming!* Kapoor notes the foreign policy shift which took place in the 1990s and how Islam being a global religion with a global population enabled the "rhetoric of the War on Terror to connect all kinds of disparate political struggles that are very different physically, historically, socially."

Whilst the technology of the modern security apparatus is new, Kapoor add that "there is a big connection between the practices that are used against Muslims in Muslim communities in the US and the police departments and surveillance strategies and techniques that were used against civil rights groups."

Muslim communities across Europe in particular have attracted the wrath of far-right groups who often use Islamophobia to advance their authoritarian and populist political programmes. Yet as Kapoor has noted, liberal democracies in the West have themselves become increasingly authoritarian. Reflecting on this trend, Kapoor notes how liberal states have always "had its colonies or its spaces where democratic principles can be suspended. It's dependent on having those spaces arguably. And so through the liberal centre there has been this whole array of authoritarian practices that have been cultivated and normalized a kind of securitization practice."

Turning to the appeal of populism which has affected the so-called liberal democracies of Europe and North America, Kapoor reflects on how "the centre has always looked to the far right and then tried to rein it back. But it basically replicated what they're saying in a more civilised or sophisticated way to try and manage that relationship. And now things have kind of exploded."

A particular concern for Kapoor is the way in which "this move towards fascism is really dangerous in terms of immigration and it is really dangerous in terms of what it means for people like the Windrush generation." She adds that "through recognising the violence of the immigration system there is a disconnect between what's allowed or legitimated through the immigration system and then the broader security narrative. And so there's a lot of silence around the securitization stuff."

Perhaps noting the complicity in the securitization of the state from both sides of the aisle, Kapoor noted that "Labour have happily passed through more draconian legislation around counter terrorism" – yet she also notes that there is a greater resistance to these types of measures when is it represented in a different way. For example, there is a greater resistance to these laws when "it's represented in a clean anti-racist narrative."

> "*The rhetoric of the War on Terror connects all kinds of disparate political struggles that are very different physically, historically, socially*"

Nevertheless, Kapoor adds that "the problem is that we need to think about racism more deeply and more critically than you could say is being allowed for in this space and I think that's what's a bit worrying."

Turning to the simple matter of Brexit, I ask Kapoor about the centrality of immigration to the debate surround Britain leaving the EU. For Kapoor, "the Brexit vote was a racist vote. Absolutely it was.

"The discourse about immigration is always deeply racialised … Immigration played a massive part but it wasn't about Europeans. There was that big picture with Nigel Farage with the floods of Muslim, brown bodies from Syria, arriving in Europe that was key to the vote. Statistics on voting patterns show that support for Brexit wasn't simply from the white working class, it was as much from middle England."

Acknowledging many of the problems with the European Union, Kapoor nevertheless emphasises the importance of "liberal institutions" such as the European Court of Human Rights which are progressive elements of the EU that Britain would cease to participate in after Brexit.

Kapoor also believes that the Brexit vote "gave licence to a real visceral racist expression" which led to the large spike in Islamophobic incidents immediately following the Brexit vote.

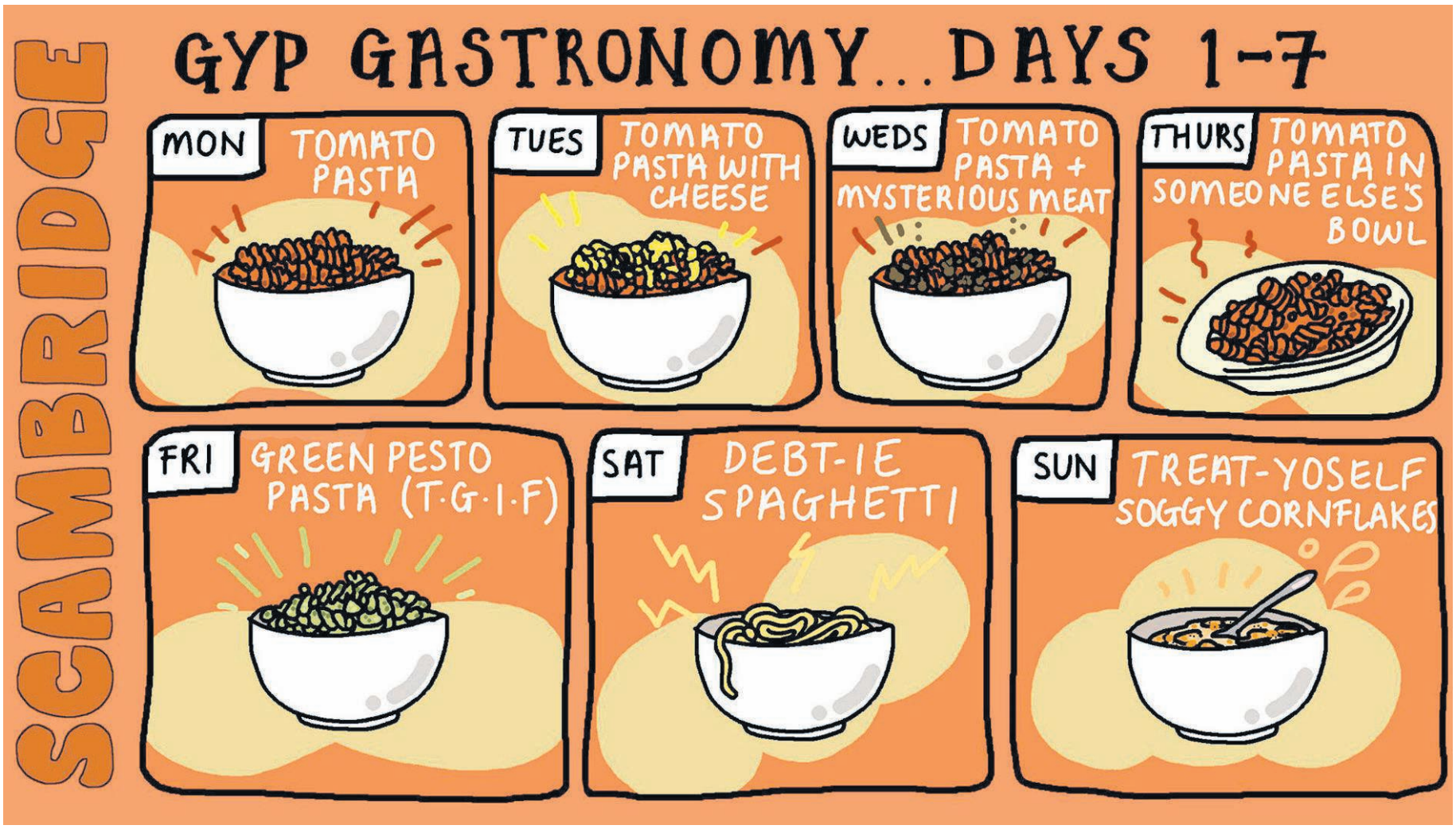
Kapoor adds that in many ways we are already living in a post-Brexit reality of "racism on the street" that she expects to continue.

*Dr Nisha Kapoor was visiting Cambridge to speak at an event organised by the Critical Theory & Practice Seminar Series.*

# News

## Comic timing: Cambridge's student cartoonists

**Chloe Marschner's 'Scambridge' gives us an insight into the cooking habits of some of the University's culinary whiz-kids**



# News


▲ Lara Erritt touches on Brexit, portraying Boris Johnson, Jacob Rees-Mogg and David Davis (from left)

DIONYSIAN DEJECTION

## Drinking order does not help hangovers

'Grape before grain, but never the twain'? It won't affect your hangover, according to recent research by Cambridge and Witten/Herdecke University. This study involved an experiment on three groups of volunteers, where one drank 2.5 pints of beer followed by 4 large glasses of wine, another did the same in reverse, while a control drank only one type of alcohol. Senior author of the study Dr Kai Hensel said, "as unpleasant as hangovers are ... they can help us learn from our mistakes."

FUNGAL FINDINGS

## Darwin specimen found in Cambridge

A fungus specimen from Darwin's HMS Beagle voyage was discovered at the back of a cupboard, where it had been forgotten for over 150 years. The orange golf ball-like fungus, initially collected in Tierra del Fuego, was found by Lauren Gardiner, curator of the Cambridge University Herbarium. Dr Gardiner will discuss this specimen, alongside other highlights of the collection, at the upcoming Cambridge Science Festival.

ICY INNOVATIONS

## Student ice structure wins big

An ice structure designed and built by students from the Department of Engineering and Department of Architecture has won first place at the annual International Ice and Snow Innovation Construction Competition in Harbin, China. The 11-man team created what is said to be the world's first hyperboloid cable net ice structure, which also won the Best Design and Construction Works Award. Students worked in temperatures as low as -20 degrees Celcius over a one-week period in December.

BREXIT IN THE NUDE

## Rees-Mogg dared to 'naked debate'

Cambridge academic Dr Victoria Bateman, who is known for her anti-Brexit campaigning, publicly challenged Conservative MP Jacob Rees-Mogg to a 'naked debate'. "We will get to the roots of this issue", Dr Bateman said, making this invitation while herself in the nude on the *BBC's Today Programme*. "Brexit is the emperor's new clothes," she declared, saying that "Brexit leaves Britain naked."

News

# Cambridge's proposal to compete for a Ministry of Defence research centre

● Documents leaked to *Varsity* said that the proposed programme would be "designed to inform UK Defence and Security strategy, policy, and capability". At some point along the bidding process, Cambridge dropped out.

▶ Continued from front page

Two years ago the Ministry of Defence announced it was looking to set up a psychological research centre tasked with building a better military. The programme would involve research into influencing human behaviour, and promised millions of pounds in funding. Cambridge decided to apply.

The programme, called the Human Social Science Research Capability (HSSRC) programme, involved the "targeted manipulation of information in the virtual and physical domains to shape attitudes and beliefs in the cognitive domain," according to a Ministry of Defence (MoD) presentation in 2017.

If selected, Cambridge estimated it would receive £69 million in research funding over four years.

At a meeting in June 2018, Cambridge's General Board noted they were one of the four final candidates being considered to house the programme, and voted to apply for it, alongside a university committee which reports to Council and "scrutinises sources of significant funding from an ethical and reputational perspective". The centre would have been set up within the School of Arts and Humanities.

At some point along the bidding process, the University told *Varsity*, it dropped out. It did not respond to multiple requests for comment on when and why.

Documents leaked to *Varsity* reveal that if they had been chosen, Cambridge would have collaborated with Frazer-Nash Consultancy, a consultancy firm which supports members of the weapons industry in the design and manufacturing of small arms, naval guns, complex weapons, and artillery systems.

Officials noted the "potential reputational risks" of working with the Ministry of Defence, and detailed a "targeted communications effort" to mitigate them.

In light of today's findings, the national Campaign Against Arms Trade has condemned the proposal, and said that the University management has "serious questions to answer".


▲ **Top, the Ministry of Defence headquarters. Bottom, the building where CRASSH is located** (ARILDV, SIMON LOCK)

### An MoD centre to understand human behaviour

The programme claims a focus in six research areas: personnel, training and education, humans in systems, human performance, and, notably, understanding and influencing human behaviour.

One of the HSSRC's six research areas — understanding and influencing behaviour — would follow a 'full spectrum approach', according to a Ministry of Defence presentation. The presentation described it as a "co-ordinated use of the full spectrum of national capabilities to achieve geopolitical and strategic aims, including military, non-military, overt and covert means, within the rule of law."

A University spokesperson said: "We did not take the application further." They declined to multiple requests for comment on when and why they dropped out of the process.

A spokesperson for the UK Ministry of Defence confirmed the selection process is ongoing.

In 2014, *The Guardian* revealed the Ministry of Defence's "secret, multimillion-pound research programme into the future of cyberwarfare, including how emerging technologies such as social media and psychological techniques can be harnessed by the military to influence people's beliefs", which included the full spectrum approach.

### Collaborating with Frazer-Nash

In June 2018, three members of the University's research office put forth a proposal for Cambridge to enter the bid in collaboration with Frazer-Nash Consultancy, which would "provide the primary interface with industry and cover work that requires high levels of security clearance," according to documents seen by *Varsity*.

Specifically, documents noted, the programme would have administered projects up to the Ministry of Defence's security clearance level of 'secret', which grants access to 'very sensitive information', such as where compromise could seriously damage military capabilities, international relations or the investigation of serious organised crime.

Pro-vice-chancellor for Enterprise and Business Relations, Professor Andrew Neely, also present at the meeting, said that Frazer-Nash was "well-respected" in the defence industry and had been successful with the development of other national research centres.

Professor Neely did not respond to a request for comment. A University spokesperson commented on his behalf: "The minutes of the General Board speak for themselves. Working with business is part of the role for the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Enterprise and Business Relations. Professor Neely talks to and about outside organisations on behalf of the University all the time about potential collaborations."

### 'Potential reputational risks'

In a statement on today's findings, a spokesperson for the national Campaign Against Arms Trade, said: "The University management has serious questions to answer about how this proposal came to be, and what other programmes it has applied for.

"Universities are for education, they should never be treated as outposts for the MoD or research departments for the arms industry."

The proposal was brought to the General Board for consideration because it was seen as having the potential to raise concerns due to the link to the Ministry of Defence.

It contained plans for a "targeted communications effort" to mitigate the potential reputational risks of the programme, which would emphasise "the positive impact of the University's involvement in the programme".

The proposal was also approved by the Committee on Benefactions, External and Legal Affairs (CBELA), which scrutinises funding for ethical and reputational risks.

Student activist groups Cambridge Defend Education and Demilitarise Cambridge commented: "It is no surprise that Cambridge sought to keep its potential involvement in [the programme] secret, nor that it was so worried about potential damage to its reputation."

They also "urge[d] University authorities to clarify the nature of their involvement with this tender process and explain the extent of their pre-existing links with both the MoD and Frazer Nash."

### How Cambridge would have implemented the programme

If selected, documents showed the programme in Cambridge would have been set up in a new centre for research, called the Centre for Strategic Futures.

The General Board of the Faculties consists of the vice-chancellor as chair, heads and deputy heads of the University's six schools, four members appointed by the University's primary decision-making body — University Council — and two student representatives.

The Heads of the School of Arts & Humanities, and School of Humanities and Social Sciences, were noted to be supportive during the General Board meeting.

In discussions, the Head of the School of Clinical Medicine, Professor Patrick Henry Maxwell, voiced support for the proposal. He claimed that the research – which the MoD said was designed to deliver a "skilled and capable workforce equipped ... to meet Defence requirements" – could contribute to supporting students' mental health.

The HSSRC programme is estimated to provide Cambridge researchers with £20m for research projects. The University would also receive £6.9m in funding to administer and develop the HSSRC programme. Cambridge also estimated that as prime contractor, it would be in a better position to compete for research funding worth £42m. It would total £69m paid over four years, with the possibility of an additional three years, subject to review.

The programme would be managed initially by Professor Steven Connor, director of the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), and supported by six academics.

Prime contractors for the programme would be responsible for delivering human, social and behavioural sciences research, and "building and maintaining a robust supplier network."

One academic spoke to *Varsity* about the proposals on the condition of anonymity. They said: "The University should not be involved in secretive military [...] programmes, especially not without proper democratic consultation of staff and students.

"Contracts of this sort restrict academic freedom by imposing projects and ideological parameters, and most often include confidentiality clauses on the results."

# Delays and high prices: Long-term contraceptives in Cambridge

▶ Continued from front page

weeks for the initial consultation in Michaelmas Term, the backlog of bookings for fittings meant she had to wait until Lent Term to have the IUD fitted.

Emily Loud, Communications Specialist for the Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust, which runs sexual health services such as the Lime Tree Clinic in Cambridge, said to *Varsity* that they were aware of the difficulty of making time for contraception-related appointments and "are looking for other ways to make LARC [long acting reversible contraception] even easier to access", including receiving the contraceptive injection or implant in one visit rather than multiple.

Currently in Cambridgeshire, "iCaSH [integrated contraception and sexual health] fits most patients requesting an IUD for regular contraception within 3-4 weeks, but often sooner."

She added that "copper intrauterine devices for emergency contraception will nearly always be fitted within 5 days. Most implants will be fitted when the patient attends an appointment, which is usually arranged within two weeks of contacting us."

GP practices in Cambridge similarly reported a backlog for IUD fittings. A representative from Newnham Walk GP surgery told *Varsity* "we like patients to see a doctor to discuss the procedure and take some swabs before we book them into our IUD clinic, which is usually one morning a week."

They added that "the IUD clinics tend to fill up because we have a big student population", saying that patients usually had to wait several weeks for an available appointment.

Working hours additionally constrict the availability of contraception to students, with all GP practices in the city centre closed on Saturdays and Sundays, and the Lime Tree clinic closed on Sundays and only open from 9am to 12 noon on Saturdays. This Saturday clinic is appointment-only for contraception and does not cater to walk-ins.

Loud added that LARC is "an effective form of contraception that should be available to all who need it."

Access to emergency contraception was found to be particularly difficult for some students, with factors including cost and availability complicating students' access to the 'morning after' pill.

The NHS website states that the morning after pill can be obtained free of charge from contraception clinics, Brook centres, some pharmacies, most sexual health clinics, most NHS walk-in centres and minor injuries units, most GP surgeries and some A&E departments.

> "*Long acting reversible contraception should be available to all who need it*"

It also states that the morning after pill can be bought from most pharmacies. The two types of pill, Levonelle and ellaOne, can be bought for approximately £25 and £35 respectively.

GPs can prescribe emergency contraception to patients registered at their practice. However, students cannot be registered with a GP practice simultaneously at home and at university, creating difficulties for students who wish to seek preventative or emergency contraception in Cambridge without giving up their registration at their home GP practice.

This means that some students are limited to visiting a pharmacy to obtain the pill, where it is possible that they will be charged.

One first-year student spoke to *Varsity* about how they had to buy emergency contraception from Superdrug due to not being registered with a GP in Cambridge. She said the £30 she had to pay for the pill at a pharmacy really put her "out of pocket" and "added hugely to the stress of worrying about having had unprotected sex".

Superdrug, one distributor of the morning after pill in Cambridge, sells four brands of emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) ranging in price between £13.45 and £33.25.

Speaking about the cost of the ECP, one of the pharmacists at Superdrug on Sidney Street told *Varsity*: "If the pharmacist that has accreditation is working in the pharmacy we can give it for free. If the pharmacist is not in the store then, we can't."

"We give them the option if they want to pay, or to come another day. So it depends if they need it now and if they are happy to pay. If not, they can go to another place." They added that their store had only one pharmacist who was accredited.

Other pharmacies in Cambridge also said that getting a free morning after pill depended on whether an accredited pharmacist happened to be in, or how busy the pharmacy was.

A manager of the Boots branch on Petty Cury told *Varsity* the morning after pill "can be free, or sometimes they do charge depending on the situation."

"It depends whether the pharmacist is accredited or not and how busy we are – it depends if we have a pharmacist available who can do it."

The manager did not know how commonly people were given the pill for free or not, or how many of their pharmacists could were accredited to give it out for free following consultation.

The pharmacist at Janks N K pharmacy in the Newnham area of Cambridge told *Varsity* the emergency contraceptive pill could be bought over the counter for a fee, or could sometimes be given for free depending on how busy they were that day.

"For emergency contraceptive hormones we can do an interview if we are not busy, but if I'm really busy and I'm on my own then I can't do it."

The access to other types of contraception, such as male and female condoms, is relatively easy compared to long acting reversible contraception and emergency contraception, as CUSU provides a variety of condoms, dental dams, female condoms, lubes and pregnancy tests which welfare reps then distribute in colleges.

It seems that long acting reversible contraception and emergency contraception, however, has a long way to go.

Speaking to *Varsity*, the Newnham College JCR welfare rep said "CUSU runs a great service providing contraception to welfare officers to distribute among their own colleges, however different colleges take different approaches to how they do this."

"Newnham's anonymous request form is a great way to make sure everyone has easy access to anything they need without feeling under pressure in any way."


▲ **Cambridge students have easier access to condoms than long-acting or emergency contraceptives** (BELLE GEORGE)

News

# Montreal Square demolition confirmed

**Chloe Bayliss**
Senior News Correspondent

The Cambridge Housing Society (CHS) announced on 4th February its decision to go ahead with hotly protested redevelopment plans for Montreal Square. They will demolish and replace "the current 18 homes with 45 new affordable and energy-efficient homes".

This decision comes after months of protesting from residents, some of whom have lived in Montreal Square for over 40 years. Their campaign has so far received the support of a range of groups, including the student activist group CDE (Cambridge Defend Education).

The CHS Chief Executive said in a press release that despite the protests, after having conversations with residents it is "the Board's obligation is to balance residents' concerns with the wider social benefit that a redevelopment could provide through more new affordable homes".

"Through careful consideration of the design plans and an extensive support package in place for residents, we believe we will be able to address the majority of residents' concerns."

Residents forced to leave their homes will receive a £6,300 home loss repayment. CHS will help to move residents in and out and will reimburse any extra rent costs during the time that temporary accommodation is required. All residents are to be offered one of the new homes built, at no extra cost above what they are already paying.

In response to the news, Andy Smith of the Montreal Square Residents' Association said that though "the mood is very low at the moment" the "fight still goes on", with residents planning to protest the decision.

# The price discrepancies in halfway halls across Cambridge

◀ **Formal hall at St John's, where halfway hall is free for students** (WIKIMEDIA/RNT20)

**Elizabeth Haigh**
Deputy News Editor
**Kiran Khanom**
Senior News Editor

'Halfway hall' dinners vary starkly in price across Cambridge colleges, with some offering them for free, while one charges over £40.

Halfway hall celebrates the midpoint of most undergraduate degree courses, taking place halfway through Lent Term each year. All second-year undergraduate students are invited to a formal meal at their respective college, normally along with academics and fellows.

Halfway hall is organised by the college itself at most colleges, with some being organised by the JCR. At Newnham, JCR officers organise the evening, while at Pembroke, although some help is given by the College, they do not directly organise the formal.

However, while some colleges offer the evening to their students for free, others charge students a wide range of prices. Jesus College charges all undergraduates £42.50 for the meal with drinks included, and £35 for the meal without drinks. Meanwhile, Queen's College charges £28 and Gonville and Caius £21.95.

Other colleges charge more modest prices, with Churchill and Newnham charging around £12. However, with many colleges not charging students, and some, such as Emmanuel, including free wine, college pricing choices face criticism.

Jesus College in particular has seen criticism of the price of its halfway hall: one anonymous Jesuan told *Varsity* that the price is "not reasonable, but obviously just typical for Cambridge", adding that "the price of this formal has added an element of wealth and privilege into an already fraught situation".

The student cited May Balls as another costly social activity, but argued that "at least with May Balls there are always many people not going to each one, but with halfway hall it seems like the thing to do if you are properly integrated into your college."

They added: "It [halfway hall] is not an easy thing to opt out of, as you feel like you are not properly part of the year if you don't go."

"A lot of people who said they could not afford it, have now just bought tickets anyway, which is pretty depressing, because they have been made to choose between financial pressure and social pressure."

The student further expressed frustration over the arrangement, saying that they believe the College "has a system of prioritising formals and conferences over the student body", which has caused "a lot of dissatisfaction" among the student body, despite the pastoral system trying "very hard" to improve welfare for students.

Another student, however, said that even though the price is "a bit controversial", they "don't actually mind the price given that we get matriculation and graduation dinner for free". The student commented that they are "so lucky to have a chance to experience Cambridge life" and that while those who struggled financially "should be helped out", "the rest of us don't have much to complain about it when you put things into perspective".

Jesus halfway hall does now have a scheme to assist those on Cambridge Bursaries following petitions to the college from Jesus College Student Union (JCSU). The college provides discounted tickets for those who receive bursaries, although the President and Vice-President of JCSU told *Varsity* that "the JCSU believe that Halfway Hall is too expensive and are looking for ways to reduce the overall cost for students next year."

*Varsity* has reached out to Jesus College for comment.

# Scheme for more sustainable May Balls garners widespread college support

**Victor Jack**
Senior News Correspondent

An accreditation scheme encouraging more sustainable May Balls has gathered support from 17 of the 26 colleges holding a ball this year, with a further seven committing to a sustainability pledge.

The project, titled "Sustain-a-ball", is led by the Cambridge University Environmental Consulting Society and envisions a new "Sustainability Officer" on each May Ball committee to adopt sustainable measures for the accreditation scheme.

The accreditation scheme ranks balls from bronze to platinum depending on the criteria fulfilled, ranging from using compostable toilets to LED efficient lighting. It also offers colleges the chance to sign the non-binding Sustainability Pledge, which requires them to read a one-page document of recommendations and promise to consider "environmental awareness and sustainable thinking" in their organisation.

▲ **St John's May Ball is not accredited under the scheme** (SIMON LOCK)

This scheme comes amidst a surge of related criticism on May Balls for widening inequalities and the waste they produce. Cambridge MP David Zeichner has signed a petition deeming May Balls as "extremely wasteful". The petition has also similarly called for committee positions for Green Officers.

John's and Wolfson are the only colleges who have refused to participate both in the pledge and the scheme, at the time of writing.

The scheme is designed to be "realistic", insisted project coordinator Aoife Blanchard.

Colleges need not appoint an entirely new committee member but can add responsibilities to an existing one and can achieve 'platinum' accreditation in only fulfilling 65% of criteria.

Blanchard argues that "it doesn't make any sense – the environmentally friendly option tends to be more economical and often more socially sustainable as well". The scheme provides suggestions for potentially cheaper measures such as using locally sourced food companies.

Sustain-a-Ball also offers the opportunity for colleges to sustainably share resources such as umbrellas and carpeting, providing another money-saving incentive.

The idea originated from the appointment of two sustainability officers at Clare May Ball in 2016, which also went fully carbon neutral last year. 2019 has seen a remarkable widening of support for the scheme, which went from have four participating colleges last year to 20 this year.

Blanchard was "surprised" this initiative is only gaining traction now, but is hopeful in that May Ball "presidents do seem quite keen [and] the impetus is there".

The St John's May Ball committee said: "Everyone at the St John's May Ball committee is dedicated to improving the environmental sustainability of our event. To this end, we have a committee member for Green, as well as an additional committee member who is on the Cambridge University Environmental Consultancy committee.

"The St John's May Ball traditionally has a secret theme until the night and so many details of the ball are kept secret until the night. Whilst we do not prioritise secrecy over sustainability, this means we cannot share those [details] with the Sustain-a-ball campaign for accreditation and so cannot be part of the scheme."

The Wolfson College May Ball committee has been reached for comment.

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News

# Senior Labour councillors call on Robinson to act on housing and pay

**Charlotte Lillywhite**
Senior News Correspondent

Senior Labour Party Cambridge Councillors have called on Robinson College to contribute to helping tackle the city's affordable housing crisis by letting out homes under their ownership to low-paid members of college staff.

Robinson owns several properties in Romsey Terrace, based just off Mill Road, which were previously let to students, but have lain empty for several years.

Councillor Richard Johnson, executive councillor for housing on the Labour-controlled Cambridge City Council, said that officers from the Council's Empty Homes Team have for several months been discussing with the College how they could bring these empty homes back into use.

He continued: "My understanding is that they are currently refurbishing these properties, and wish to sell them on the open market.

"I suggest a better approach would be for them to be let out, preferably at below-market-rent levels, to members of their lowest paid staff."

Johnson added that it is time Cambridge colleges "showed more leadership and made more of an active contribution in working alongside us in addressing the city's twin problems of low pay and the lack of affordable housing - problems which extend far beyond the university 'bubble.'"

> *"A world class university needs a world class attitude to its staff"*

This comes after the recent release of the Taylor's Table, a study compiled by students Joe Cook and Abdullah Shah, which ranks Cambridge colleges based on their treatment of their lowest paid employees.

Robinson came last, with 58.7% of non-academic or administrative staff paid below £8.75 per hour, representing 128 employees.

The College also had the joint-third lowest hourly wage, alongside Clare and Magdalene, at £7.38.

Over the past five years Labour have been working to boost the supply of affordable homes in Cambridge, with the City Council completing nearly 250 new council homes since 2014, and advancing plans to build an additional 535 council homes by 2022.

The Council set up a Housing Company to purchase and manage 'intermediate' housing at submarket rents, and in the last three years has helped bring 100 empty homes back into use.

Councillor Anna Smith, executive councillor for communities and ward councillor for Romsey, said that Cambridge colleges should "follow the example of the University itself and pay all [their] staff at least the Real Living Wage of £9 an hour.

"When there is such a high demand in Romsey, and across Cambridge, for housing, it is simply unacceptable that potential homes have been lying empty for so long". Smith "welcome[s] the assurances that these properties will be made available soon, and hope that Robinson chooses to rent them at an affordable rate to its lowest paid workers."

▲ **Robinson placed last in the recent Taylor's Table**
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

For Smith, "a world class university needs a world class attitude to its staff."

The City Council have, as part of its vision of 'One Cambridge Fair for All', also invested in efforts to increase the number of employers that pay the Real Living Wage of £9 an hour as determined by the Living Wage Foundation. In 2018, the University of Cambridge sought accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation however this does not apply to individual colleges. At present, only Queens' College is an accredited Living Wage employer.

*Varsity* has reached out to Robinson College for comment.

# Cambridge student Peter Biar Ajak 'detained in hellhole' and potentially faces death penalty

**Katy Bennett**
Senior News Correspondent

The lawyer of Peter Biar Ajak, Jared Genser, has told the BBC that Peter Biar Ajak is being "arbitrarily detained in a modern-day hellhole in clear violation of his rights under international law". He also said that charges being considered by the Sudanese government include treason and terrorism, both of which carry the death penalty.

Peter Biar Ajak, 35, has been detained without charge in South Sudan since his arrest at Juba Airport in July last year by South Sudan's National Security Service. He is currently studying for a PhD at Cambridge University.

Ajak has been a vocal critic of the regime, tweeting on 4 July 2018, less than a month before his arrest: "We must stop thinking that the so-called leaders will bring peace #SouthSudan. We, the great people of #southsudan, must organize ourselves to bring about the peace we deserve!"

Genser told the BBC that the government decided to target him for arrest "because he was being a very effective critic".

Ajak had returned to South Sudan, which is in the midst of a civil war, to attend a youth forum organised by the Red Army Foundation, which was created by former child soldiers seeking to address social issues in South Sudan.

Ajak fled Sudan as a child refugee during the Second Sudanese Civil War and was offered asylum in the US when he was 16. He was granted a scholarship to study a PhD at Cambridge in 2013.

Last week, Congresswoman Madeleine Dean highlighted Mr Ajak's plight in the United States House of Representatives, stating that she "knew Peter as a brilliant student and leader" while teaching at La Salle University.

A Cambridge University representative said to *Varsity*: "The University remains deeply concerned about Peter's welfare and his access to legal representation and the violation of his rights in accordance with the Constitution of South Sudan, which guarantees all South Sudanese people liberty and security of person, due process, and freedom of expression and association."

On 4 September 2018, Cambridge University Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope wrote a letter to the President of the Republic of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit.

It stated that the University "call[s] on the government to either release Peter Biar Ajak, or to bring charges against him in a timely manner in accordance with the rule of law and to grant him access to a lawyer."

> *"Somebody like him needs to be on the front line fighting for freedom, democracy and human rights"*

Genser told the BBC: "Somebody like him needs to be on the front lines fighting for freedom, democracy and human rights – not arbitrarily detained in a modern-day hellhole in clear violation of his rights under international law and for crimes he did not commit."

International human rights organisation Amnesty International has taken up Mr Ajak's cause.

Seif Magango, Amnesty International's deputy regional director for East Africa, said that his ongoing detention without charge was "absurd" and in breach of South Sudan's own constitution and international law.

He told the BBC that "South Sudanese authorities must either release him so he can rejoin his wife and children who miss him dearly, or charge him with an offence recognised under international law."

A petition to release Mr Ajak, which has collected over 80,000 signatures. It states that "Peter has always kept his focus on South Sudan and his hope for a peaceful future for his country". The petition describes Mr Ajak as "a youth advocate for peace and a friend and inspiration to many who know him around the world".

▲ **Ajak has been a vocal critic of the South Sudanese government**
(BROOKINGS INSTITUTION/ YOUTUBE)

The petition states that "more pressure is needed to show South Sudan government that the best option it has is to immediately release Peter", adding that "Peter's arrest comes amid a worrying trend in arbitrary detentions due to a crackdown on freedom of expression by the South Sudanese government."

It concludes with an appeal that "Peter has a wife and two young children. We are asking for him to be released and allowed home to his family."

# Family linked with US opioid crisis has funding links with Cambridge

**Jess Ma**
Senior News Editor
**Diana Stoyanova**
Senior News Correspondent

**Multiple departments, including the Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry have received funding from the family**
(FLICKR: DAVID J MORGAN)

The Sackler family, currently facing an ongoing lawsuit having been accused of fuelling the opioid crisis in the United States, has previously funded multiple lectures, PhD studentships, and scholarships, which still exist across multiple departments in Cambridge, as well as a college.

Last Sunday, photographer and activist Nan Goldin staged a protest against the acceptance of donations from the Sackler family at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, which features the Sackler Centre for Arts Education.

Brothers Raymond, Mortimer and Arthur Sackler created the company Purdue Pharma, which invented the drug OxyContin, in 1996. OxyContin is considered to be the root of the opioid addiction crisis in the United States.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, as of January 2019, on average every single day over 130 people in the United States die after overdosing on opioids.

The US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that the total "economic burden" of prescription opioid misuse alone in the United States stands at $78.5 billion per year

The Sackler family has been accused of deceiving the public and medical profession of the negative side effects of OxyContin, and is being sued on multiple fronts.

It has also been sued in the past: in 2015, it settled a $24 million lawsuit with the state of Kentucky, though it did not admit any wrongdoing. In 2017, the state of Ohio led a lawsuit against five major pharmaceutical companies, including Purdue Pharma, for false advertising and understating the addictive effects of these drugs.

The Sackler family's Cambridge connections include sponsorship from the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation, which funded an annual lecture series, under the foundation's name, at the Institute of Astronomy, the Department of Archaeology, and the Department of Medicine.

It has previously made donations to fund PhD studentships in the departments of Psychiatry, Physics and Medicine.

The Dr. Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation funded a 2016 joint research programme on the interoceptive abilities of finance traders.

Cambridge participated in this programme, along with the University of Sussex and Queensland University of Technology in Australia.

A University spokesperson told *Varsity* that the University's Committee on Benefactions and External and Legal Affairs (CBELA) "fully verifies donations",

Meanwhile, the committee "continues to review engagements using all available information, including any new information that has emerged."

The spokesperson added that the University has not received any donations from the Sackler Foundation since 2015.

In 2013, the foundation funded a non-stipendiary research fellowship at Christ's College for up to two years.

The programme was offered to postdoctoral researchers working in Chemistry or Applied Mathematics.

Two Sackler Lecture Theatres currently exist in Cambridge: one at the the Institute of Astronomy and the other at the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research. The Sackler family were also one of the many donors that made the construction of the Maxwell Centre possible in 2015.

As well as Cambridge, the Sackler family have made donations to Oxford University, as well as many prominent universities in the United States, including Harvard and Princeton, and a variety of museums and galleries, including the Tate Modern, the British Museum and the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

Dr. James Barrett, Deputy Director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, which holds the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Distinguished Lecture in Archaeology in honour of Professor Norman Hammond, told *Varsity* that the Department is "aware of the emerging and on-going situation [of the opioid crisis] through press coverage".

He added that they "are concerned in any situation that may negatively affect human wellbeing".

He also said that the Department is "keeping in touch with the Central University, wishing to react responsibly".

He confirmed to *Varsity* that the Department of Archeology is not anticipating any new donations from the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation.

Christ's College and the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research did not respond to *Varsity*'s request for comment.

# Toope second-highest paid vice-chancellor in UK

**Molly Killeen**
Senior News Correspondent

A newly published report has revealed Cambridge's Vice-Chancellor to be the second highest paid head of a university in England.

Data released by the Office for Students (OfS), the government's higher education regulator, sheds light on the basic salaries of, and total remunerations paid to, heads of such institutions across the country. The OfS was formed in January 2018 and the report compares figures from the 2017-18 period with those from 2016-17.

In 2017-18, Vice-chancellor Stephen Toope earned a basic salary of £431,000, a significant increase from the £343,000 paid the previous year to his predecessor, Leszek Borysiewicz, whose role Toope assumed in October 2017. This increase saw Cambridge jump from eleventh to second place in the rankings of highest paid head, coming in just behind the University of Bath.

Toope's total remunerations were £492,000, a figure which included £49,000 attributed to the costs of accommodation and utilities, relocation expenses, private healthcare, tax consultancy services and personal flight travel.

This figure was also an increase from the previous year's, which came in at £379,000, and again precipitated a leap up for Cambridge in the rankings highest paid head, moving the University from 20th place in 2016-17, to joint seventh in 2017-18.

Responding to these figures, a University Spokesperson told *Varsity*: "The Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University is one of the most significant roles in world academia. The University has an annual income of more than £2 billion, around 16,000 staff and 150 faculties and departments".

The spokesperson added that the University's Remuneration Committee set the current Vice-Chancellor's remuneration package prior to his appointment and "after a detailed analysis of comparable salaries in the UK, North America and Australia."

The report also outlines pay ratios, showing the relationship between the remuneration of the head of the provider and that of all other employees. This year marked the first time that providers had been required to report this information to the OfS. Toope, the report shows, earned 11.3 times the median basic salary of all other university employees in 2017-18, and received 12.4 times the median remuneration. On this count, universities were ranked according to which institutions paid their heads the greatest amounts compared to the median amount paid to all other employees.

> *"The stark disparities in pay across the University must question what its true values are when staff and students are struggling financially while senior officials get huge pay rises"*

**Toope earned a basic salary of £431,000 in 2017-18**
(MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)

Here, Cambridge came in fifth in terms of basic salary and fourth in terms of total remunerations.

In response to the report, CUSU President Evie Aspinall said "The stark disparities in pay across the University are unacceptable and the University must question what its true values are when staff and students are struggling financially while senior officials get huge pay rises" and urged the University to "reassess its priorities".

The news comes in the wake of the release of the 'Taylor's Table', which ranks Cambridge Colleges based on their wage and employment practices and has drawn attention to the treatment of the university's lowest paid workers.

On this matter, a University Spokesperson said, "The University is working to improve the pay of its lowest paid staff. In 2018 the University took the decision to become an Accredited Living Wage employer. In the Vice-Chancellor's address to the University in October 2018, he recognized that high living costs are disproportionately felt by those at the lower end of the pay scale, and stated that the University was looking at adopting a minimum rate of payment for University employees that goes beyond the Accredited Living Wage."

Across England, the report notes, the majority of heads of higher education providers have received an increase in basic salary or total remuneration or both between 2016-17 and 2017-18, with just 13 providers reporting a reduction in the basic salary of their head, and another 18 reporting no increase. The OfS states that there is evidence that "at least some" higher education providers are demonstrating pay restraint.

Where it is a "matter of public interest", the report concludes, the transparency which the data lends to the issue will "help providers' remuneration committees and governing bodies to benchmark more effectively. It will also help staff and students push for changes in a provider's approach to remuneration where it is out of step with stakeholders' expectations."

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# Features

# The lost tongue

*Khadija Tahir explores her complex relationship with English and Urdu, alongside the historical and social associations of each language*

◂ **Illustration by Kate Towsey for *Varsity***

Language has dominated my life ever since I can remember, as it probably does for most people. It isn't merely a means of communication, of getting your ideas across and a tool to share opinions; for me, it was the foundational basis of a community. My Pakistani identity, which constantly went through conflicts and contradictions, wasn't bound solely by my mother tongue, Urdu, but also English.

From school curriculums to street signs, Pakistani society has openly embraced a language that was once imposed on them, and which invalidated, not only their power to communicate and express, but also their native literature, culture and academia. English, seen to be more of a weapon than a language in the colony, has now become an integral part of the post-partition generations. The importance of being fluent and polished in a language that is no longer even considered foreign, is stressed repeatedly. My teachers preferred an 'international' accent, which I was forced to develop, and my peers automatically associated English with intellectual superiority, and used it repeatedly to stress points and arguments, these were instances that I dismissed as being completely normal. Having no regard for Urdu, barely using it in everyday life, and having no knowledge of the art such a language produced was an outlook shared by many.

In the past, language was used to divide and rule the diverse communities in the colonies, and this pattern repeats itself in modern Pakistan. Feeling less comfortable in my own language, I built barriers between me and those who still retained their native tongue. In other words, I distanced myself from my own country, despite having been born and raised there.

I was handed Dickens' novels before being able to read Mumtaz Mufti's short stories, and I was reading Plath before Ghalib. I had created playlists filled with American and British music and had completely lost track of the up and coming Urdu artists. I felt nothing towards Pakistan except for this deeply-embedded desire to leave it. Blinded by visions of the American Dream and the supposed 'cultural superiority' of Europe, I failed to acknowledge the beauties of Pakistan, specifically Lahore, and of the language that carries the pain, the violence, the recovery, the development and the constant struggle the country has faced. I dismissed my country completely by partially, and at times, completely abandoning Urdu.

September 2018 was when I was told to focus on one language that would 'open doors for me' and 'guarantee me success', rather than half-heartedly juggling two languages. Coming to Cambridge I did not expect to grow closer to something I had undermined for the past eighteen years. During Michaelmas, I was less home-sick and more language-sick. I found it odd not hearing the occasional Urdu word uttered by my friends, or the speedy Urdu instructions given to little kids on the street. I remember looking at the Urdu newspaper alongside the English ones in the morning, the latter which only my father read. It took 18 years and about 5,000 miles of distance from Pakistan, for me to acknowledge the importance of my mother-tongue.

> *"During Michaelmas, I was less home-sick, more language-sick"*

> *"A language which carries with it the painful past of such a beloved country"*

I opened up different websites, and spent time every week just reading simple prose, trying to read the curvature of the letters fluently enough to form words rather than syllables. It began embarrassingly. I was not able to read simple words such as غروز (gharoor, worried). It was tempting to dismiss the Urdu, and return to the comfortable English language, I had always spoken, read, and listened to through the various mediums it was available to me in. But, I also knew that any further distance would be a loss of my 'Pakistani-ness', which I wasn't willing to lose in a country I wasn't comfortable calling 'home' yet. So I persevered.

After three months, through improving my Urdu reading, I was exposed to the subversive literature of writers narrating their experiences in both colonial and post-colonial Pakistan. I read اولاد (Aulaad, Children), one of the first stories by Pakistani short story writer Saadat Hassan Manto, which focused on the unrealistic, yet straining pressures faced by women all over the world, to bear children and satisfy everyone but themselves. This dark commentary on South Asian society aligned with opinions and criticisms I held.

Despite enjoying Saki and other such writers growing up, it wasn't until I had read اولاد that I had held up a mirror to my own self and my own society, improving my grasp of the social structures in Pakistan and the impact that they had on women who didn't have the privilege of escaping to institutions such as Cambridge.

In my time at Cambridge, I began to appreciate the beauty of both Urdu and English, and the honour of being able to have access to both. Despite the complicated relationship Pakistan has with English, it is difficult to dismiss a language which exerts immense influence on a global platform.

Where I went wrong, and where most Pakistanis unfortunately still do, was neglecting the importance of our native tongue, a language which carries with it the painful past of such a beloved country. Urdu is a means of accepting our colonial past, and to a rebuilding of the culture that such a past had blurred.

It is about regaining what was taken away from us and using language as a bridge to close the gap we have established as a nation, between our own country and us.

Features

# Talking trauma at Cambridge

Illustration by Christina O'Brien for *Varsity*

*Reflecting on his experiences of childhood trauma, Thinesh Pathmaraja discusses the importance of breaking taboos and talking about the past*

*Content note: this article contains detailed discussion of trauma and abuse*

I experienced abuse growing up. I was brought up the child of a refugee in a single parent, non-English speaking, working class household. I fled home aged 16, and I am currently estranged from my family. I'd be lying if I said my childhood trauma doesn't affect me daily.

It could be when catching up with a close friend. When saying goodbye, as she leans over and kisses me on the forehead, I become confused and flinch, anticipating violence. When I'm with someone I really like, as they come close to give me a hug, once again, I flinch. I squeeze my eyelids shut and spin my head away - preparing myself for a punch as I hold my breath. It takes a few seconds to remember that I'm with someone I trust, and that everything's fine.

It can be hard to talk about my past experiences. There is certainly a taboo around trauma and childhood trauma, in particular, is very difficult to talk about here at Cambridge. The silence can be heavy and stifling. Many students have grown up loved, cared for and safeguarded by the adults around them. I'm glad most students have loving families, but it can mean that those with abusive or neglectful parents are forgotten. This gap in experience can be tricky to bridge when I discuss my own situation. It doesn't help that Cambridge isn't very intersectional; It's uncommon to find minority students who identify with more than one minority group. Belonging to intersecting minority groups means you have even less in common with most other students, and these divisions of identity can make the weight of taboo even stronger.

> *"My father was devoted, desperate for me to have the bright future he had been denied"*

Being a minority at Cambridge in many ways led me to preferentially trust other people's judgements when it comes to what's best for me. I have always been proud of everything I have achieved and am not ashamed of my circumstances. However, I have often been discouraged from discussing my past by well-meaning people. There seems to be a consensus that it is best kept hidden and despite desiring openness, I followed this advice. In hindsight, I should have taken a leap and opened up, instead of conceding to Cambridge's social norms. If I hid every tabooed experience in my life, it would mean hiding away a lot of what makes me who I am. I'd like to break the pattern of taboo and share some of my own experiences. In my memory, it started one day when I was with my mother, aged about 5. I was a quiet boy, and rarely misbehaved. I must have made a mess in the living room, and my mother was angry.

My mum isn't around anymore, but in my early memories she was incredibly affectionate and sweet. When I was about four, and she fell ill, things began to slowly change. Once cheerful and sociable, she grew moody and sulky. Where she used to greet me with a 'singsongy "Thiiii—nesh", she would eventually hardly acknowledge me. When she died, she was a shell of herself. Her brain tumour had eaten away a lot of her personality. An awareness of her health has allowed me to colour some of my more difficult memories with a more hopeful view. Had she been well, perhaps things would have been different.

But on that day, I remember how she threw my plastic mug across the room at me. Perhaps she didn't expect to hit me, but it was thrown with so much force that I could hear it coming through the air. It hit me right between the eyes. I was in shock. She was surprised, but did not understand the significance of what she had done. This was one of the first times I began to feel unsafe in my parents' company. In time, things got worse, but this beginning is unforgettable. Today, I am sickened that anybody could treat a person, a child that way. Perhaps my mother thought she would toughen me up and prepare me for life in a tricky neighbourhood. Indeed, in my parents' childhood in Sri Lanka, teachers and parents would commonly use physical punishment. Britain in the same period was not a world apart, but I believe social violence is more endemic and severe in countries with a colonial history.

In any case, the sight and sound of the cup hitting my nose did not seem to disturb my mother. That yellow plastic cup was once my favourite, from which I would drink soya milk before bed. From that day onwards, I no longer cherished it, or felt protective of it. In fact, it disappears from my memories thereafter.

Threats and violence like this were integral to the way I was raised. They were used to stop me from doing things, such as throwing tantrums, lying, or 'misbehaving' (a term which could be twisted into referring to almost anything at all). At other times it could be completely unprovoked – regardless of my actions. On one occasion, an episode was triggered by a parent sitting on a table and spilling water. Other times, it would be used as punishment for my resistance, for simply being myself, or for not joining in with the oppression of another family member.

This parenting style was common in our neighbourhood (Edmonton, North London), and therefore normalised to me. It never occurred to me that I could report the abuse, for example, to my school. At a younger age, I failed to realise that the abuse wasn't in my best interests – I accepted the reasoning that it was disciplining me despite the cost it came at. Once I became a teenager, I feared the repercussions of reporting such crime: Firstly, the punishments I would receive for 'betraying' my family and secondly, the ostracisation from a local community (who may be unaware of the entire situation) for betraying family. Where did this parenting approach come from? I believe it has roots in the violence in Sri Lanka's history, and indeed in its present day. Sri Lanka has been colonised 3 times in the last 500 years – by Portugal, the Netherlands, then Britain. The many genocides in this period were followed by ethnic cleansing of Tamils and other minorities. My father grew up in this environment, around people being abducted in white vans – not to be seen again. His own brother was one such. He and his surviving brother hid in another city, before fleeing the country, never to see their parents again.

When you grow up in an environment of normalised murder and injustice, it is not hard to see how violence could take root in your behaviours. Many young Tamils joined resistance groups, fighting back directly in the name of survival. I am impressed that my father was able to move on, and to become a mostly loving parent. He was devoted, desperate for me to have the bright future he had been denied. He taught me maths daily, and we would play football in the park. Football will always ignite warm memories of playing with him. While neither his English, nor my Tamil, permitted much eloquence of conversation, through football, it was as though we could communicate seamlessly.

Like most children, I believed my parents were the greatest and wisest people alive. I always trusted my dad to know best for me. Now I know that nobody is perfect, and that a history of unresolved trauma can corrupt the best of intentions. Eventually, the police became involved with the violence in our household, and I moved out to escape the situation. This was how I eventually found myself in a youth homeless shelter at 17, in the midst of my A Levels. With my mind now significantly less preoccupied with concerns over my physical safety I was able to finally buckle down with school and after just over a year I left to read Medicine at Cambridge.

Talking about my backgrounds at one of our last meetings, my social worker advised, "Other people, particularly the really privileged students, won't understand and may try and use what they know against you". We had been close. I will never forget the way she shed a tear, like proud mother. She had my interests at heart. However, looking back, I challenge this advice. 'Don't tell anyone until you're sure you're ready' might have been better. I'm glad I didn't open up prematurely, and nor was I ever teased about my past. But concealing heavy secrets can have disastrous long-term consequences for mental health.

Opening up is by no means simple, and when I speak about childhood trauma, I am often met with incorrect assumptions. When I confided in one friend that I had not spoken to a parent for 3 years, they suggested "I should patch things up with them and apologise for my wrongdoings because the relationship with such close family is really important. We all make mistakes when we're young." I did not want to get in touch, as cutting contact was a decision which protected my personal safety and mental space. Worst still, the advice to 'apologise for my wrongdoings' suggests I hold responsibility for the abuse I received. In reality, I only ever responded to the violence with fear, silence and avoidance. If you have a friend who is going through something like this, it can be tough knowing how to support them. Empathising with a survivor of childhood trauma and pretending to know what it's like are very different things; you shouldn't need to pretend to understand what it is like to be in their shoes to be supporting. I believe that only by talking about trauma can we break taboos and educate prejudice.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that this article shouldn't be published, that I'm committing social suicide. Perhaps you think I'm breaking social rules or reducing myself to my traumas. But I want to express myself, and I want to begin a productive conversation about abuse and its inescapable daily reminders. I want to spread understanding, and above all, I want survivors to feel vindicated: to know that it's okay to speak about trauma.

Features

# Imposter syndrome, the elephant in the room

*Eliane Thoma-Stemmet finds that imposter syndrome is a more widespread issue than we realise*

Imposter syndrome is never a very popular accessory to carry around. It's an admission of vulnerability, something to never be disclosed – so, as a general rule, we don't.

Whilst the term 'imposter syndrome' is often shunned in conversation, an overwhelming majority of university students bear the weight of it on a daily basis. Of the 100 people I surveyed this week, 89 said they had felt imposter syndrome's symptoms: feelings of self-doubt, of not truly having earned your place at university, of being the least able person in a room of geniuses.

These reactions, though, don't evidence disparity between you and those you see as the Einsteins. In truth, even the original Albert's intelligence could not convince Einstein himself of his intellectual worth. Furthermore, increasing numbers of successful individuals have come forward to express feeling like a phoney –amongst them are Kate Winslet, Emma Watson and Maya Angelou. Even Michelle Obama has spoken of her experience of imposter syndrome as something that 'never goes away'.

If all these figures of success to whom we look for inspiration are telling the same story as applies to us, there cannot be much correlation between feelings of inadequacy and real-life inadequacy. We can't all be imposters. A fourth-year MML student summed it up perfectly: 'if everybody's feeling that way, it annuls the problem, because if everybody feels like they don't belong, then everybody does belong'.

Imposter syndrome is not Cambridge specific, nor university specific. A 2017 survey found a third of millennials to be suffering under its weight, and in my survey of students, 14% of participants were "constantly" affected by imposter syndrome, whilst 38% felt like imposters "fairly regularly". Why we don't think the issue is so prevalent could be down to 'pluralistic ignorance': doubting ourselves privately but believing we are alone in our self-doubt.

CEO and founder of Interact, Lou Solomon, who has suffered under imposter syndrome her whole working life, has described the feeling as having snuck in through the back door to life's theatre and constantly looking over your shoulder for the bouncer who will imminently kick you out. It can seem so obvious that everybody else is progressing more quickly, smoothly and confidently that we forget to acknowledge that it's impossible to really know how hard other people are working, what they're compromising on and when they underperformed. Conversation is key, yet over 30% of students I surveyed who felt like imposters "constantly" had never voiced this to anyone – in the case of those who felt imposter syndrome "fairly regularly", the percentage rose to 80%.

> *"Whilst the term 'imposter syndrome' is often shunned... the overwhelming majority of university sutdents bear the weight of it"*

Is this an issue affecting marginalised groups to a particularly great extent, especially here at Cambridge? Speaking to Emily Claytor, women's officer at Emmanuel College Students' Union, she expressed her impression that women have a"tendency to assume that what you're saying doesn't have value" which is "specifically linked to, as a woman, feeling that you have to really be giving all the time and presenting something that is perfect." All-male, all-white reading lists can give the impression that "being female is an accessory to the default" – no doubt imposter syndrome would creep in for marginalised groups excluded from the canon when these reading lists only reinforce feelings of not quite being part of the mainstream and belonging.

It's important to emphasise nonetheless that imposter syndrome is a very pervasive villain – men may be less likely to suffer from imposter syndrome but they are also much less likely to discuss it if they do. In the face of impossibly demanding male stereotypes, requiring confidence and concealing expressions of vulnerability, these realities should not be surprising. Claytor expressed regret that a "hyperawareness" of other students' opinions of you meant telling those students a "scary vulnerable feeling" just "doesn't correlate" for many students.

Considering how widespread the problem is, it also begs the question of what the university is doing to help students. However, the degree of agency the University can exert can appear discouragingly slim, as remedying imposter syndrome requires the initial brave step of the individual student communicating their feelings to another person. But perhaps knowing that there is a large chance your conversation partner will empathise with what you're saying and experiencing might make that step a little less daunting.

Even so, universities do hold power over their students, with which comes responsibility. I asked Cambridge University students what they thought of the scholars' ballot still employed at Christ's, Corpus Christi, Gonville and Caius and several other colleges, by which students achieving first-class or high 2.1 exam results are given priority choice for their room allocations. One student commented that "there is so much pressure already to do well in exams from Directors of Studies, family, peers and self motivation that I just don't feel extra pressure needs to be added on from ridiculous things like accommodation" when "there are definitely other ways to reward people for achieving well". Another added, "Encouraging elitism within an elite university that already places pressure on students is so alarmingly unhelpful and out of place that it's a wonder everyone doesn't have some sort of complete mental break."

> *"The power of communication cannot be overstated"*

Overall, however, 42% of students I surveyed did believe that their university had shown awareness of imposter syndrome and made efforts to help students combat it. This is a step in the right direction, but there is more work to be done. For example, the publication of class lists. Some argue that publishing class lists are a healthy incentive for students to perform, but it seems to me that every student who has earned their place here, has not done so without breaking a sweat – they know how to work hard – and so the detrimental impact of an overcompetitive environment on mental health far outweighs any motivational benefits.

More students still feel constantly impacted by imposter syndrome (14%) than students who have never been affected by it (11%), this is a subject that needs to stay within discussion. Every positive step is a cause for celebration, but when feelings of self doubt have become a normality for the overwhelming majority of the student body, its clearer than ever that if you feel intellectually inferior to your peers, chances are they're just as intimidated by you as you are by them. Something so relentlessly irrational most definitely doesn't deserve your worries. But when the rational is hard to reach, someone to talk to might be easier to find. The power of communication cannot be overstated.

Features

# Rethinking solitude

## *Being alone need not be lonely, says Aisha Niazi*

Thoughts, transpired by the tapping of keys, from libraries, bedrooms and coffee shops. These are the moments essays and calculations are completed, in between the manic rush of students attempting not to spill their coffee on the way to lectures. In the world of academia, this paints a glamorous image. You listen to the ideas of intellectuals before settling into a comfortable solitude to consider your own. However, an undiscussed side effect of Cambridge, can be a certain loneliness that creeps upon those stuck in the bubble.

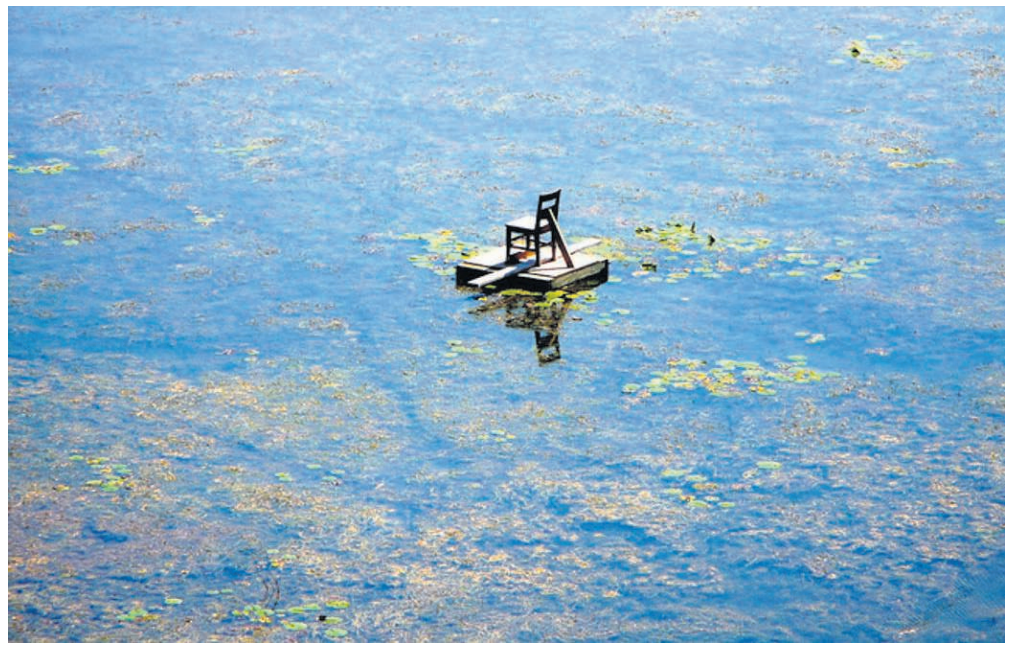
I have always been a natural introvert, taking solace in moments alone. Coming to Cambridge, I still loved company, but I needed a balance between other people's and my own; I was content in this routine. So, it struck me as particularly strange when, a few weeks into first term, I ended the days feeling alone. I had been more social than ever before, meeting someone new in every moment, spending the days exploring Cambridge with different people and the nights dancing in clubs. It began as new and exciting, yet once I settled into this routine I found myself confined to small talk, and constantly facing guilt of feeling I was not doing enough work, because there is always more work that can be done. I was not as content alone; I was so caught up in routine that I lost connection both to myself and others in the process.

> *"Not all time can be spent alone, yet we must work to normalise a genuine, comfortable solitude"*

The image of a tortured academic, creative only in solitude, is one I always associated with Cambridge, and greatly over-romanticised. Little wisdom is gained without leaving a desk and leading a fulfilling life. It is not enough simply to spend time reading the words of others; even introverts need a social life.

The loneliness I felt was a confusing thing to me, as I had continuous interaction most days – chatting to familiar faces on the way to lectures, supervisions and library sessions. However, the common saying that quality beats quantity applies here; many casual conversations on a regular basis do little to build connection – in fact they can enshrine small talk in daily routine, until it becomes an obligation. Sometimes we should leave the library early, call our friends and spend the evening chatting in someone's room. I know these evenings always left me more satisfied than a night out. A late trip to the pub or a walk along the river with friendly company is often necessary in order to connect with those around you, who are often just as lonely as you are.

Lifelines – resources such as Nightline – can be fantastic resources, and sometimes loneliness can be chronic and indicative of an underlying condition. In this case, a chat to a therapist or with a support group can be so important. However, articles focused only on promoting these things can alienate those readers that do not fully relate to them. They never appealed to me. I craved a different solution. But loneliness cannot be solved only through friendship either. Learning to listen attentively to people's thoughts can build quality connections that help immensely, yet, as with anything, change must first come from the individual. There must be balance; not all time can be spent alone, yet we must work to normalise a genuine, comfortable solitude. Long walks exploring Cambridge, trips to benches in Jesus Green, and mindfulness are all key to becoming content in those moments that we spend alone. Often, we are so caught up in imminent deadlines that we forget life also has a deadline. Work can be incredibly fulfilling when balanced with thought about your values and interests, so that mental health and personal development are not neglected.



▲ **Aisha Niazi encourages us to find joy in solitude** (SYLVIA SCHADE)

After some time, I have realised there is no end to the workload here, so I've decided I should focus on the topics that truly inspire passion in me. It is vital that we make the most of our degrees, working hard, but not to the point of exhaustion – there is so much else to be gained from university life. Take time alone; whether it be to do a sport, to take long walks or even just to listen to music. I now make sure to leave my room at least once a day, even when it is tempting to stay cooped up reading books. I will always have deadlines, but I will not always be in Cambridge, so I take time to explore the city and call upon friends in the evenings. Learn one of life's best lessons: that to be alone need not always be lonely, when paired with connection to others.

*If you have been affected by any of the issues discussed in this article, please consider reaching out to support services, such as* Nightline (01223744444)

# How perfectionism fuelled my eating disorder

## *Cordelia Sigurdsson discusses the dangers of her impossible need for perfection*

*Content note: this article contains detailed discussion of eating disorders*

I display all the symptoms: I despise losing to the point I refuse to play board games, the thought of failing my A-Levels made me feel physically sick and knowing I should have done something I didn't will keep me awake and thinking at night. I am a self-confessed perfectionist.

I don't think you can be a perfectionist and not also be scared to fail: the two come hand in hand – if you fail, surely you are no longer "perfect." I know many of you reading this will also see yourself, at least partly, in this description.

When I was a child I would always begin a new sheet of paper if I had to cross out one word on the previous sheet – because the first just didn't look *neat enough.* If I'm not the best at something, I would much rather give up than having to suffer carrying on at a below average level. I used to play a large amount of netball; if my team lost on a Sunday it would ruin my entire week.

I revised for my A-Levels for weeks upon weeks because I couldn't bear not to be the best. I refuse to play board games anymore because in all honesty I'm not especially good at them, and I just can't bear to lose. If I'm not the best at something, I automatically dislike it. This isn't me being *big headed*, rather it is the nature of the perfectionist who seeks obsessively to triumph in whatever they do.

These examples are soul destroying for a perfectionist because it means suddenly that you are not the best at something: someone else, somewhere, has figured it out – so why can't I?

This little voice in your head may be pushy and unforgivingly motivational but, equally, it will eat you from the inside out when something goes wrong, whenever you fail or think that you might. In fact, the risk of failure is entirely overestimated; but still we see its possibility in every endeavour we pursue. I have come to call this little unforgiving voice my greatest strength and yet also my greatest weakness. I have always admired those amongst my friends who seem, at least on the surface, entirely unaffected by life – no up or down, be it big or small, seems to have an obvious impact on them. In comparison, when I reached a stage in my life when I actually did feel like I was failing, it showed in an incredibly obvious way.

> *"I have, since this time, learnt how to fight against these feelings"*

I suffered with anorexia, an illness that I am entirely convinced was linked to perfectionism and my consequent fear of failure. I was absolutely petrified of failing my GCSEs, of choosing a sixth form, of losing friends, and of growing up and not being successful. Food became the only thing I felt I could really control. I was referred as a hospital outpatient where, as they questioned me on my personality, eating habits and health, they asked: "Would you describe yourself as a perfectionist?"

I remember nodding solemnly, and they returned, "Ah, of course, they all are, bet you hate losing as well."

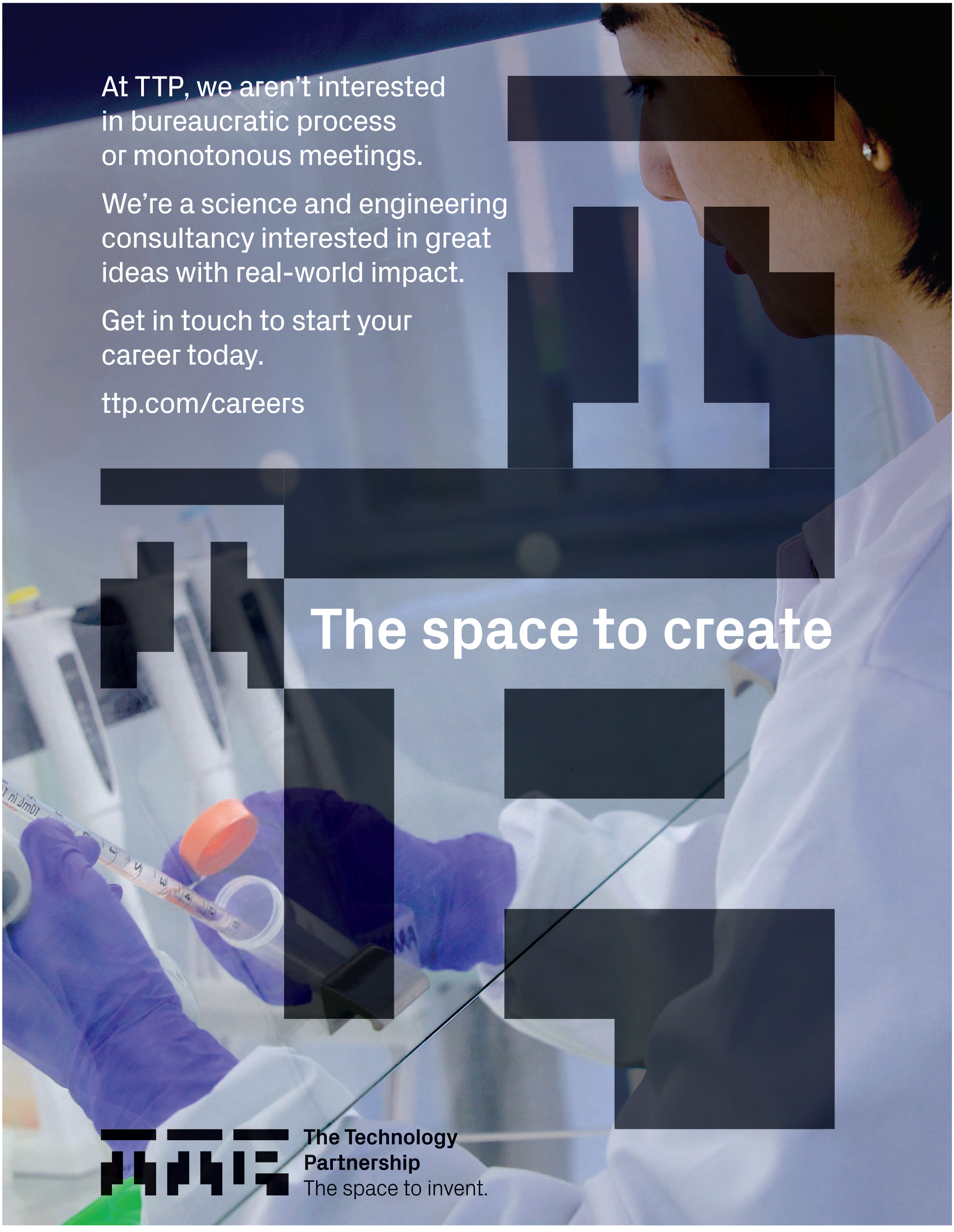
This, then, is why I claim perfectionism to be a strength of mine and yet also my greatest weakness. It has pushed me into good grades and a good university but the overwhelming fear of failure and the fragility of the perfect persona is forever present and sometimes it is so overwhelming that it physically hurts. For me, this was through food, for others it can emerge in a whole host of different ways.

> *"I have always admired those amongst my friends who seem entirely unaffected by life"*

I have, since this time, learnt how to fight against these feelings, started to figure out how to fail and how not to punish myself for it. In other words, my eating disorder recovery was not just about gaining weight and being healthy again – it was about learning that failure is a part of life and perfection is a goal that nobody will reach.

I know I am still learning how to couple this perfectionist ambition and fear of failure with being my own best friend, yet I would never live without it. This little voice, which constantly shrieks for perfection has got me to exactly where I want to be in life; I wouldn't be at Cambridge without it. This is a battle I know I will have to live with probably all my life, but I, like so many others, am learning how this voice can be changed. Not being good at one thing, even a silly children's board game, does not mean that you should punish yourself, or respect yourself any less.

*If you have been affected by any of the content of this article,* B-eat Eating Disorders *provides useful information and resources (0808 801 0677).*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# Opinion

# We shouldn't wait for coping to become struggling before acting

## Cait Findlay

*Some are left out of discussions about mental health at Cambridge: those who appear to be 'coping'*

Over the last few weeks, the University has been holding discussions on its mental health and wellbeing strategy. In my time at Cambridge, I've noticed that the discourse around mental health among students and staff focuses on a dichotomy of 'struggling' and 'coping' as if these are two discrete states of being, rather than a continuum of overlapping categories. This attitude reveals that there are people who are frequently left out of considerations about mental health: those who appear to be 'coping'. Attitudes to mental health need to be holistic, considering not only those who are in the most obvious need of help, but also those students who appear to be breezing through their degrees.

In the intense work environment at Cambridge, where the cycle of weekly work can feel like an intellectual hamster-wheel, it is easily assumed that only those students who seem to fall behind are 'struggling'. However, we cannot ignore that there are students who appear to be meeting the metric of success on the surface – submitting essays on time every week, partaking in multiple extra-curricular activities, etc. – but who are only just managing to keep their heads above water. We need increased awareness and a proactive approach to the many facets of mental health, especially those which are less immediately visible. Services need to prevent the damage before it is done: they need to be forward-looking rather than reparative in aspect.

Current understanding of wellbeing in Cambridge (and beyond) does not recognise that we all have mental health. Instead, mental health is frequently conflated with mental illness. The two are intimately connected, but students can suffer from poor mental health without necessarily having a diagnosable condition. Some students may not even be aware of the fluctuating internal environment which informs how they feel on a day-to-day basis. Others have 'invisible' symptoms which allow them to appear high-functioning while still feeling the effects of mental illness. We shouldn't wait for people to stop 'coping' and start 'struggling' before considering their mental health – you can be ticking every academic box and still feel sub-par. If students force themselves to work despite feeling sub-optimal, they may suffer in the long term. The cumulative effect of short, work-dense terms at Cambridge can lead to burnout, a condition from which over half a million people in the UK suffer. The symptoms can include exhaustion and frustration – all feelings which can be worked through, to an extent, but at an emotional and psychological cost. We shouldn't wait for students who appear to be shining to burn out before offering them support.

> *"Meeting an arbitrary metric of success or 'coping' does not equate to feeling happy and healthy"*

In a recent tweet, Dr Kathy Christofidou said "I wish university mental health weeks were more about providing mandatory training to supervisors and academics on how to manage and help their students through difficult times and less about getting people to do yoga." It's important to note that things like yoga and puppy therapy aren't proper substitutes for addressing the reality of mental health issues. Such schemes get a lot of interest, and can definitely be short-term pick-me-ups, but do little to address the everyday realities of mental health peaks and troughs. As Dr Christofidou suggests, they should be add-ons to a pre-existing structure that addresses the fact that mental health exists on a spectrum for all students, not merely those who access mental health services.

A key facet to changing strategies for wellbeing at Cambridge has to recognise that meeting an arbitrary metric of success or 'coping' does not equate to feeling happy and healthy. The workload at Cambridge is very heavy, yet some people manage it and thrive, while others manage it and suffer. More should be done to alleviate pressure where possible, starting by fostering healthy attitudes to work. Libraries should not be open for 24 hours, since that implies that any available hour (even time which could be spent sleeping) should be put towards work. Supervisions should be held, as much as is possible, in reasonable working hours – that is, between 9am and 5pm on weekdays. Supervisors and staff should develop a more nuanced approach to learning which recognises that pumping out essays is not effective nor practical for everyone. Faculty guidelines must change to acknowledge that.

Rebuilding the scaffold of academic work would contribute towards a healthier environment for all, regardless of whether they appear to be meeting Cambridge's metric of 'coping'. We should foster open dialogue about what constitutes a difficult time, the fact that some students can 'manage' more than others without conveying visible signs of 'struggling', and that being able to complete assigned tasks does not preclude the possibility that something is bubbling under the surface.

Opinion

# Colleges must be pushed to uphold their duty of care to non-academic staff

*We must stand with non-academic staff*

**Howard Chae & Edward Parker Humphreys**

Hoping to press "colleges to reflect on their social responsibility", student campaigners last week launched a 'league table', ranking colleges on the basis of how they treat their lowest paid workers. The worst offender was Robinson College, where nearly 60 percent of non-academic staff are paid below the Living Wage, despite its master receiving an annual salary of £92,951 (more than the head of any other college).

With just one college currently accredited by the Living Wage Foundation, the table confirms what many students had already known to be the case: the wages of bedders, caterers, cleaners, and other non-academic staff do not reflect the hard work they do.

The payment of the Living Wage, which is currently set at £9.00 per hour, is the bare minimum any worker needs to cover the cost of living in one of the most expensive cities in the UK. The fact that colleges do not pay their housekeeping and catering staff fairly is irresponsible when we consider Cambridge's status as the most unequal city in the UK.

> *"The fact that colleges do not pay their housekeeping and catering staff fairly is irresponsible"*

The average house price in Cambridge is £439,60 and the University continues to invest their wealth in real estate and flashy property developments.

Meanwhile, it was revealed earlier this month that the number of homeless people sleeping rough on Cambridge streets grew between 2017 and 2018, despite falling nationwide. We believe that Colleges have a social responsibility to serve the communities in which they are so deeply embedded, and paying staff the living wage is the most basic step towards fulfilling this responsibility. As the UCU ballots lecturers and supervisors on whether to go on strike over universities' failure to tackle the gender pay gap, the burden of ensuring that our colleges are liveable spaces is also a gendered issue

The working conditions of housekeeping and catering staff should be everyone's concern. Their work enables students to go about our day-to-day lives with relative ease, helping to support our education.

While it's easy to take empty bins, clean kitchens and waiter service at formal hall for granted, it's worth remembering that Cambridge is a rarity in terms of the domestic support that students get. Having somebody to clean up after you is a luxury which the vast majority of working adults, let alone students, are unable to enjoy.

What's more, the work undertaken by non-academic staff can often be a thankless task. One bedder at Emmanuel described having to clean a constantly messy kitchen as "building a machine only to see someone else smash it up." There can be a huge amount of unpaid emotional labour involved as well, with some bedders comparing their role to that of a 'surrogate mum'; looking out for the general wellbeing of students and dealing first-hand with welfare issues.

Yet while the work of catering and housekeeping staff in colleges is crucial for students and the smooth running of the University's colleges, their pay runs the risk of undervaluing their labour. Colleges which spend extortionate amounts on free wine and academic prizes are falling short when it comes to the financial situation of their most essential staff. Bursars continue to "invest in the wrong things", as one bedder put it.

It is important that we encourage colleges to uphold their duty of care to workers. But it is equally important that we do this in a spirit of solidarity, and with a constant recognition of our own relative privilege. This means organising *with* workers rather than on behalf of them, such as by encouraging and facilitating unionising to help them get their voices heard. It also means not limiting ourselves to pressing colleges to commit to Living Wage accreditation, but also pushing for better working conditions and more secure contracts.

Whether colleges live up to the legacy of the league table's namesake — Dr Sedley Taylor, who in 1907 offered £500 to Cambridge Borough Council to pay for the dental inspection of every child at a council-funded school — will depend on our ability to stand with staff and collectively demand meaningful change.

Opinion

# Divestment is a distraction from our real efforts on climate change

*Professor Dame Donald, who served as chair of the Divestment Working Group, shares her thoughts on Cambridge's divestment debate*

**Professor Dame Athene Donald**

What should the University, including all its members, be doing in the face of the existential crisis that is climate change? Is divestment the right solution? Should it be the only thing that is done? The Divestment Working Group that I chaired considered these questions during much of the academic year 2017-18 and reported to Council last spring.

The issues of 'conflicts of interest', which have just surfaced after all this time – although they were publicly reported on the website throughout our work – are a diversion from what should be the real focus for everyone: ensuring the collective work across the university, and the lifestyles we each choose to live, contribute to reduce carbon emissions.

Let me first consider the 'charges' against Simon Redfern, charges which are not supported by the evidence and which are simply a distraction. Simon was not in receipt of money from BHP. As head of a department putting together a bid to government for capital funding, he was in discussion with BHP and this fact was brought up at one of our meetings. Because the money did not 'exist' – and nor was the bid successful – it could only be regarded as a 'potential' conflict of interest at some future date and hence it did not fit on the register of 'actual' interests, nor was it regarded as sufficiently concrete to need minuting. But that does not mean it was hidden from any of the other DWG members, who could have insisted on adopting a different position.

For completion, and for readers who are unfamiliar with BHP, they are an Australian-based mining company, not a fossil fuel company in the normal sense of the word. I talked to a senior representative of BHP as part of the evidence-gathering sessions and they stressed that only about 5% of the coal they mined was burned; their main focus was on 'metallurgical' coal, stuff that is used in steel production, for instance, a fact that may not be obvious from recent discussions.

Secondly, let me turn to the issue of divestment itself. It is a simple message to get behind, and I understand why many feel the fossil fuel companies are the source of all our problems. Nevertheless I believe there are far more constructive and positive things to do, which require all of us to act and support them. The fossil fuel companies are supplying the oil and gas our current economy and lifestyles require. Hence how we live, the research we do and the choices we make should be targets for our action.

The fossil fuel companies from which we took evidence I believe are sincere in their goals of changing their own strategies, both towards more efficient energy production and use, but also to sustainable sources of energy. They also have to satisfy shareholders in what they do. Shareholders are therefore powerful. They can – and should – put pressure on the companies to move in the right direction much faster. If we divest – even from funds (since the University has essentially no direct holdings in fossil fuel companies) – we lose that ability. The DWG recommendation was that the University joined one of the institutional groupings which exert growing pressure on fund managers, who in turn put that pressure on the companies. The sooner we add our voice to those debates the better. Walking away – as the divestment movement demands – removes our power.

> "*Walking away – as the divestment movement demands – removes our power*"

Our world-class scientists are part of the solution to finding innovative solutions to energy production, storage and use as well as to developing technologies that work for carbon capture and storage. The oil companies – as they have said repeatedly and publicly – need our input if they are to solve the manifest problems. Turning our research backs on them will not remove the issues we face. That does not mean we have to do 'what they tell us'. They don't set the research agenda or tie scientists' hands: the BP Institute was set up with BP's capital but the research agenda belongs to the scientists within it.

Policy has a key role to play here. Our evidence sessions highlighted the importance of putting a price on carbon emissions, to reflect the damage they do to the climate and to provide incentives to expedite the transition away from fossil fuels. Those involved in policy discussions should be stressing the crucial need to establish an international consensus to achieve this aim. We, in the University, could introduce our own local scheme to effect behavioural change.

A single focus on action targeting divestment loses sight of the bigger picture. It is incumbent on all of us to consider how we live. Is that flight really necessary? What would it cost to pay for the damage caused by my comfortable Cambridge life? What am I going to do to pay that debt? How can I use what I have learned in this University to help? We should be collectively fighting for a better world by using every means available to us. The time for such action is certainly now.

*Professor Dame Athene Donald DBE FRS chaired the Divestment Working Group (DWG). Dame Athene is Professor of Experimental Physics, Master of Churchill College and a Fellow of the Royal Society.*

# We must open dialogues that bridge differences in order to create change

*Oliver Moodie argues that we should approach student activism with the same sycrentism of* Utrus Horas *by engaging in collaborative conversation*

**Oliver Moodie**

(*Accompanying Piece: Orchestra Baobab – Utrus Horas*)

Creating dialogue on contentious issues is difficult – creating change is even harder. After writing an article about my experience of racism at Cambridge last term, I found myself wondering how to make the ripples of student activism reverberate for longer and reach beyond my small pond of exposure.

For individuals to write an article elucidating their personal struggle, or institutions to release a statement condemning inappropriate activities is certainly a step in the right direction; however, it is not enough. Behind every article and every corroborating declaration is a group with a story to tell, which we would be remiss to limit to ink on a page.

It may seem ironic that I'm writing an article about the limited utility of writing an article, but hear me out. Powerful penmanship is a fantastic tool for starting communication, especially around taboo or stigmatised subjects, but it must always only be a start. If change across the entire face of our environment is desired, conversation must be used to broaden the scope of discussion. Nevertheless, simple dialogue in itself is not sufficient. The conversations being had at the moment can feel isolated or esoteric, appealing repeatedly to the same people, who are already sympathetic to the ideas being pushed forward. So many important discussions are held at FemSoc events, but who is attending? Who is clicking on a link to an article about climate change? The comfort of discourse with like-minded individuals provides a space where personal experiences are validated, which is important, but is it sufficient in proselytising a new audience, or is it guilty of attempting to persuade the persuaded? Preaching to the converted in discussion forums, as is common, does little for changing current social climate.

> "*The fact that colleges do not pay their housekeeping and catering staff fairly is irresponsible*"

So, what is the solution? I think it's exquisitely illustrated by Orchestra Baobab's *Utrus Horas*. This Senegalese outfit was formed in the 70s in Dakar. It contains at minimum a saxophonist, guitarist, vocalist, timbalero and rhythm section. Their Afro-Cuban-folk amalgamation is a masterclass in cross-cultural communication, fusing son Cubano, Wolof and Mandé musical traditions from Cuba, Senegal and Mali, respectively. The eclectic song opens with rolling arpeggios on a guitar accompanied by a Cuban drum. The call is answered by a meandering trumpet which introduces the elegiac lyrics sung in a Portuguese creole, adopting slang phrases and proverbs from across the ethnosphere. The land of sonorous pleasures painted by the song conjures up images of a smoky bar with cigars and single-barrel rum. This is a presentation of Cuban and African cultures finding common ground through artistic expression. The group effortlessly depicts the musical syncretism I believe must be translated into our approach to change within the student body.

I completely respect and understand the need for closed groups at University. Forums like FLY and CUSU LGBT+ have done amazing work for culturing a sense of self-esteem and identity for people who feel underrepresented or marginalised. However, if we want change, we must open the conversation to those who are not directly affected by our own personal adversities. Open conversations have the potential to bridge the gap between impassioned individuals and the layperson, who doesn't necessarily understand every personal strife viscerally.

I have been educated by friends on issues ranging from identity crises in the Tamil community to Western ideology-driven miscegenation plaguing diasporic South Americans. These are issues that I am not intimately acquainted with, but they need to be discussed. If we cannot learn to communicate across our own borders, change will surely be slow to come. As individuals, we are a smorgasbord of privileges and challenges. Conversations that cause us cognitive dissonance should not be shirked away from, but probed sensitively, not necessarily at formal debates, but in a conversation while the kettle is boiling.

We must also understand that questions some may consider ignorant will inevitably be asked, but in order to change perceptions they must first be addressed, and no one should be berated for trying to erode their own misconceptions or naivety. Scorn serves no purpose but to cement the barriers segregating individuals and worsen the disconnect. A coalition of tolerance is a two-way street: we all have the right to be heard.

In order to be paragons of change, we must grasp every opportunity to open dialogues across differences - men shouldn't feel afraid to talk about feminism and LGBT+ activism needn't be limited to those with that specific identity. Support should not be levied solely on the basis of relatability; much like *Utrus Horas*, comprehension of each other's lives through collaborative dialogue, be it musical or verbal, can produce fruitful results for our society as a whole. This can be difficult, I know, because, ignorance more frequently begets confidence than it does knowledge, but it is a necessary enterprise all the same. The message to take away, then, is that the starting point for change is honest conversations with sincerity, openness and inclusivity at their heart, concerning topics affecting individuals from all different walks of life.

# vulture



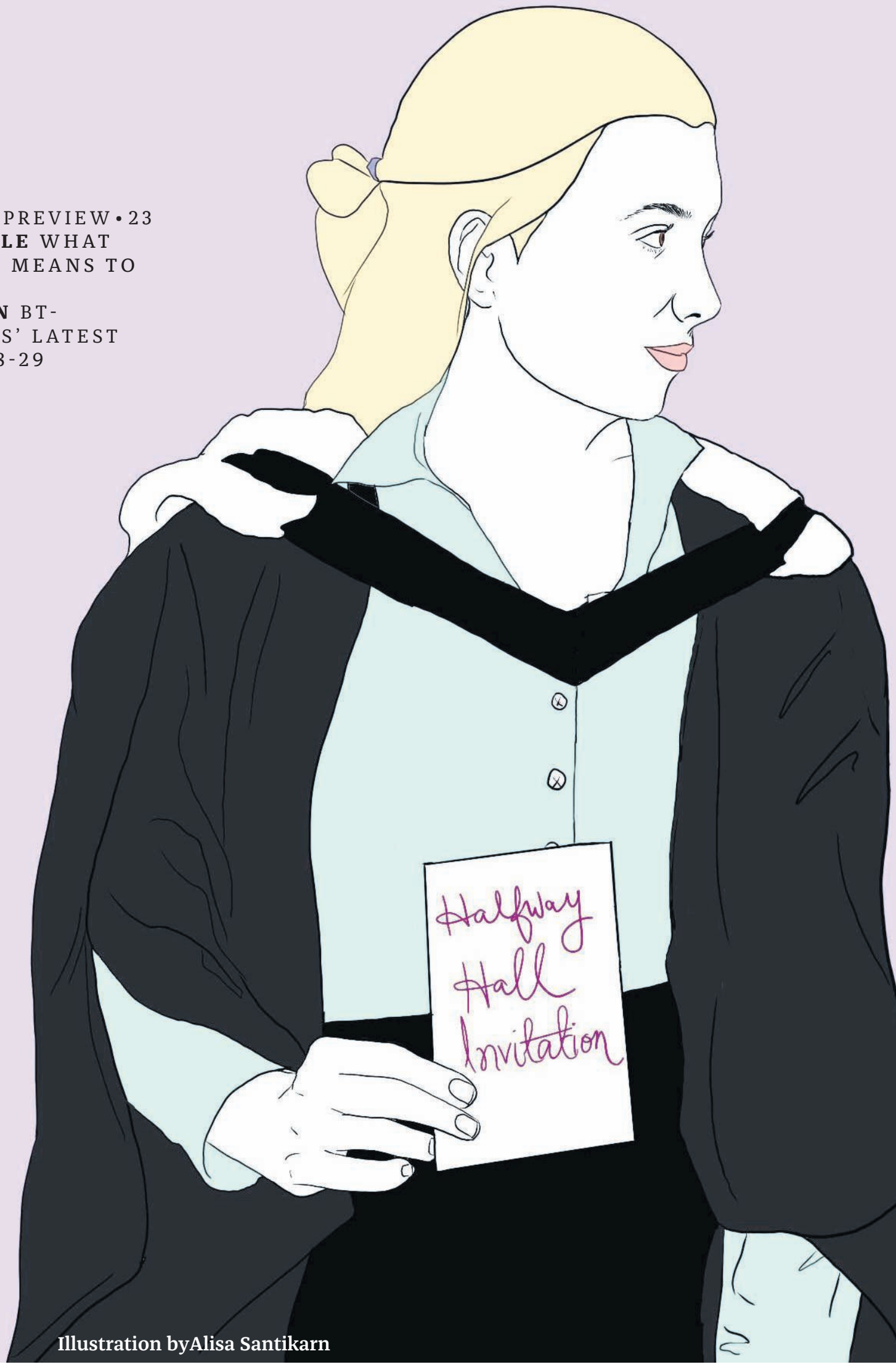



Illustration byAlisa Santikarn

# The Japanese House interview: ‘I'm hard to pin down’

## The rising star of indie-pop talks to **Alice French** about music-making, supporting The 1975, and her upcoming album

▲ **Amber Bain, the creative force behind The Japanese House** (IAN CHEEK PRESS)

“I’m in a constant crisis because I love my dog, but I also worry that I might be keeping him prisoner” muses Amber Bain, the brilliant brains and voice behind The Japanese House. Amber is speaking to me on the phone from her studio in Oxfordshire on a sunny January morning with her dogs wrestling in the background, ahead of the release of her highly-anticipated debut album, *Good at Falling*, on March 1st. The Japanese House’s dreamy electro-pop has captured the hearts of many, including myself, since her first EP came out in 2015. She describes her music style as “hard to pin down,” but says that it’s “a mixture of depressing lyrics and hopeful chord progressions,” with most of her songs based around relationships and love. According to Amber, *Good at Falling* involves a wide range of styles and moods, so there’s bound to be something to tickle everyone’s fancy.

When asked what she’d like a listener to take away from the new album, Amber says that once she’s released a record, she largely loses control of how it’s perceived. “There’s always that battle between wanting the listener to interpret a song how I intended, and allowing them to interpret it personally,” she says. “I don’t think I’d be a songwriter if I didn’t want to say something, but sometimes the more intent you put into a song, the more it takes away from its honesty.” However, the overall aim of the album is to illicit “that weird nostalgic feeling you get when you go back to a place you haven’t seen in a long time,” which is certainly the vibe one gets from the two singles already released, 'Lilo' and 'Follow My Girl'.

*Good at Falling* features only one song from The Japanese House’s earlier EPs: 'I Saw You in a Dream', which Amber wrote during a very emotionally difficult time following the death of a friend. “The only thing I have is my perspective of things,” she says humbly, but this perspective makes for a wonderfully beautiful song, the album version of which is set to be even more dreamlike, as it’s been re-produced acoustically.

While 'I Saw You in a Dream' is high on the list, Amber’s favourite song to perform live is 'Clean', which she admits is probably the most-played song in her music library (it’s mine too). She puts this down to the fact that “I can’t relate to any music more than my own.” However, when I tell her that 'Clean' is my go-to musical remedy for stress, she says that she can never listen to music when she’s feeling under pressure or experiencing strong emotions: “when I’m feeling an emotion, if anything more gets put on top of it, I’m a goner.”

> “*Focus on making good and different music, rather than just trying to replicate the work of artists you love*”

The Japanese House first stepped into the spotlight when supporting The 1975 on tour a few years ago, and Amber admits that “I probably owe the boys a lot.” The 1975’s Matty Healy actually sings on her song Faraway from the upcoming album, and she’s worked closely with the band on writing and production.

According to Amber, The 1975 are “hilarious, and very kind,” and she says she’d always be open to collaborating with them more. However, although the band’s influence on Amber’s music can be seen in some of her more electronic singles, her ethereal vocals and fantastic song writing skills set her apart.

When I ask her to disclose her best piece of advice for musicians when starting out, Amber maintains that being authentic is the most important thing. “Focus on making good and different music, rather than just trying to replicate the work of artists you love,” she implores. The key is to “make music that sounds like nothing else.” Wise words, and you’d be wiser still to listen to them; The Japanese House is arguably one of the most exciting names in British music this year.

Good at Falling *is out on 1st March*

## **vulture** tunes: The best of 2019 so far

The Great Pixley Train Robbery
***Cass McCombs***

Red Bull & Hennessy
***Jenny Lewis***

Seconds
***LCD Soundsystem***

Clean
***The Japanese House***

Sweet Little Lite
***Nils Frahm***

Under The Tallest Arch
***Daniel Avery***

# *The Mays*: sitting down with the editors

**Kyoka Hadano** sits down with the co-editors of this year's copy of *The Mays* to discuss their vision for the twenty-seventh edition


▼ **The Mays anthology annually showcases and celebrates new student creative talent at Oxford and Cambridge.** (LOIS WRIGHT)

*The Mays* anthology annually showcases and celebrates new student creative talent at Oxford and Cambridge. Since its creation in 1992 by three friends at Cambridge, the publication has always been edited and largely run by a team of students across the two universities. I sit down with Elizabeth Huang and Eimear Ni Chathail, co-editors of this year's anthology, over a cup of tea one evening to discuss this year's anthology and their opinions on art and the creative scene in Cambridge.

*The Mays* has a uniquely broader scope than most other student publications - transporting student writing and artwork from the desks of college rooms to a national audience. Its volumes are delivered across the UK and are found upon shelves of major bookstores and the desks of every major literary agent. "We even ended up in Finland last year!" says Eimear with a laugh. Guest editors, prominent authors, poets or artists such as Jeanette Winterson, Philip Pullman and Seamus Heaney, also take part in the selection process and contribute a preface to the anthology.

Both editors embrace how this visibility encourages new student writing and art to be more open to the wider public. "It's another way to get new student writing read", says Eimear, who raises the example of Zadie Smith, whose career was launched by literary agencies taking notice of her short story in the 1997 collection. "Being published in an anthology could also inspire people to become more confident in themselves and encourage them to send out more submissions, be more creative".

The anthology's prestigious history and public profile has its benefits, but can equally intimidate, especially for those who have never been published before. However, while *The Mays* takes itself seriously as a publication, it definitely does not seek to seem elitist – aiming instead to "to give a platform for people's talent to be shown", regardless of prior experience. Stressing that "you don't need to do an arts degree to be creative", they also bring to attention to how *The Mays* encourages a lot of people studying seemingly non-creative subjects, such as STEM, to tune into their artistic talents as a welcome relief from their work. Elizabeth, a third-year lawyer, found that while "there aren't many opportunities for creative work within my degree, it has been really exciting to be involved in the creative scene here at Cambridge through publications such as *The Mays*".

Eimear and Elizabeth are aiming for "a more diverse Mays' this year – in relation to contributors" backgrounds as well as expanding the range of content they accept. This year's *The Mays* will be published as a digital anthology as well as a paper copy, in order to showcase a diversity of art in multimedia formats, such as video art or sound art, transcending the limitations of the printed format.

Another potential new element of this year's anthology comprises reflections of people involved in creative projects around Cambridge in general. "There are loads of zines in Cambridge, a lot of exciting student written theatre going on and art exhibitions that have really exploded over the past few years", explains Elizabeth. "There is a lot of stuff going on and it would be nice to record that". They identify an archival quality in *The Mays* as an annually released publication, being "like a record of student writing and student art that took place within that year".

A new approach will be taken concerning the arts element of the anthology. Submissions will be featured not as stand-alone pieces, as had been done in previous years, but as a selection of images of people's work accompanied by a blurb where the artist can write a little about their practice. The aim is to present "mini portfolios within the anthology", to prevent the risk of art "just becoming decoration, which does not do justice to the artist". These changes are facilitated by the new role of an arts editor within *The Mays* team.

> *"There are loads of zines in Cambridge, a lot of exciting student written theatre going on and art exhibitions that have really exploded over the past few years"*

Stemming from the arts theme, Elizabeth draws attention to the physical copy of *The Mays* as "an aesthetic object", where creatives have also been involved through designing the cover and setting fonts. While the digital anthology offers new opportunities, there is still "something powerful about having a material object in your hand in which you know so much labour has been involved to create". Printed copies of *The Mays* have also enabled direct connection with readers - Eimear talks of how "it was lovely to sell past copies in the English Faculty because it was a chance to meet and engage with so many people who are interested in *The Mays* and being creative". This dynamic between paper and digital, tradition and the modern, age-old prestige and new student writing, is a central one to *The Mays*. Even in submissions, Eimear points out the beauty of a well-written sonnet and that "sometimes, being very traditional can be very interesting". Good art does not necessarily have to be overtly radical or consciously edgy - "we love everything, that's the message", they summarise. "We encourage well done things, whatever they are".

The Mays *welcomes submissions by midnight on 20th February 2019.*

# From Cambridge comedy to a career in stand-up: Chatting with Ahir Shah

▲ **Ahir Shah on the BBC's Live At the Apollo**
(BBC//YOUTUBE)

## Hasan Al-Habib interviews ex-student Ahir Shah about writing comedy and his latest show, *Duffer*

Interviewing Ahir Shah, there's a temptation to simply ask: How? Of course, student stand-up comedians at Cambridge often have no prior experience and face their own challenges trying to establish themselves in what is arguably the UK's (if not the world's) best student comedy scene. But there's always that thought in the back of your head: could I ever be good enough to do this for real? How will I know, and what do I need to do in order to try? Why not ask someone who has, I thought. Ahir Shah is certainly qualified to advise.

After reading PPS at Clare, directing the Footlights Spring Revue and graduating in 2012, he tells he me applied for a master's degree but was rejected because, in his words: "my application was effectively an acrostic poem that said I'm not ready for the real world yet, please help me". His latest show, *Duffer*, debuted at the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe Festival and enjoyed a sell-out run which earned him his second consecutive nomination for Best Show at the Edinburgh Comedy Awards. He's currently on tour and brings the show to the Cambridge Junction on Friday 8th February. But how did he make that decision that every performer in Cambridge theatre and comedy struggles with at some point: can I really justify turning down a more orthodox, financially stable career for a passion like acting or comedy, loaded with far more risk?

"It's difficult. To go into stand-up requires a degree of self-delusion, so it's then difficult to ask the people interested to be realists". Shah adds that "No one cares if you didn't get the shiny grad scheme straight away" and that "you don't want it to be something you regret not trying". He tempers his pep talk with a dose of caution: "Equally, know when to fold".

Folding is clearly the last thing on Shah's mind, however, and so it should be. I saw his previous show, *Control*, at the Cambridge Junction last year and enjoyed it immensely. His latest, *Duffer*, represents a marked difference in its content. *Control* was filled with incisive political comedy, equally disparaging of figures and ideas from the left and right, but Shah tells me that *Duffer* is a far more introspective affair.

"I wouldn't even describe it as a political comedy show," he says. "This is a human story, rather than 'this is why I'm very angry with the world', which is much more what [*Control*] was about."

Was this a concerted effort to make a clean break between shows, I ask.

"Partly, but what you end up writing about ends up being defined by what you've been thinking about at that time. For the 2017 show, I was very much thinking about Trump and Brexit and the political backsliding that seemed to be happening across the world, whereas in the leadup to the 2018 show, what I was thinking about was, and what the show is based around, was a trip I took to India and a few family members dying after being severely ill."

"I was thinking about my own future and mental health, and it became much more inward-looking and about family."

Shah is, understandably, wary of his comedy ever being typecast.

"I don't want it to be like, this is the politics guy. It's more, as human beings, we will always be varied in what we're thinking about and what defines us at given points of time. And [*Duffer*] is just an exploration of that particular point in time for me."

Most Cambridge stand-ups are used to tight five or ten-minute sets, and the idea of writing a whole show can be intimidating. I ask if he starts with an overarching narrative or theme, or with the jokes themselves.

"The answer is both. There was one particular story that I wanted to tell [in *Duffer*], and I tried to make sure the other things in there fit in with that." He adds: "other times you write seemingly disparate things and hope something cohesive will come through," and that "a combination of inspiration and desperation will make you realise everything hung together in a beautiful way."

Arts students will be encouraged by Shah's analogy for show construction: "As with writing anything, five or ten-minute sets or an essay, you need a beginning, middle and end. The skill isn't particularly different, it's more the practice of being able to do it over a longer stretch of time." I'm pushed for time, so I ask one final question. Canadian comic Norm Macdonald once remarked that the perfect joke is one where the setup and punchline are exactly the same, giving the following example:

"Julia Roberts told reporters this week that her marriage to Lyle Lovett has been over for some time," he says, as a picture of the country singer's asymmetrical face appeared behind him. "The key moment, she said, came when she realized that she was Julia Roberts, and that she was married to Lyle Lovett".

I recount this to Shah and ask him what his perfect joke would be like. He's impressed, clearly not for the first time, by Macdonald's wit: "That's really nice. My perfect joke would be one told with the style and cadence of Norm Macdonald, and written by Norm Macdonald". It feels appropriate that we should end our interview on a tribute to a living comedy legend. It may very well be that one day, Ahir Shah joins him.

# The role of the reviewer

Sarah Robertson

The theatre is saturated with the excited chatter of spectators, blissfully dislocated within the anticipation of entertainment. Discreetly, I find my open seat, demarcated by a sheet of printer paper: "reserved for reviewer".

The performance commences, and I engage, yet simultaneously engrossed in my flurry of scribblings into an open notebook, as to not forget ephemeral details: visuals, apt descriptors, or memorable lines, those well-executed, and those, well, not so much. At the concluding applause, the rooms is imbued with a shared warmth, performers and audience members having, in a sense, created something in tandem.

Such is the job of the theatre critic: a phrase that when uttered might strike fear (or probably, rather, annoyance) into the hearts of creatives everywhere. In the space of performance, it's a dislocated role, not an element of the creation of the art, nor the generic spectator, there strictly to be entertained.

Yet despite the isolated nature of the role, the critic still remains integral to the theatrical experience. The role of the theatre critic is multifaceted, and overall, characterised by the love of the art form, attempting to inspire audiences to see outstanding works, and perhaps, conversely, steer watchers away from the lacklustre.

The role of the reviewer does, of course, differ between the student and professional spheres. Upon writing a review, at any level, it is important to acknowledge the scale and resources that might affect the product of performance. The reviewer shouldn't be a menacing figure – being inordinately critical without being constructive is useless for all parties involved.

Approaching student theatre with a such a lens is crucial. Though a professional reviewer might blast a commercial production, for, in essence, its misuse of bounds of monetary resources and experienced talent, a student production, even as a finished product, is an amalgamation of works in progress, and should be held to such a standard. Yet being overly forgiving and thus untruthful isn't fair, either.

The student review should then exist in the space between the lenient and the biting, in order to fulfil its fundamental task of assisting in the improvement of the theatre it speaks on, working as a sort of collaborator to the creative process.

In the student context, a reviewer is just as much in training as the theatre practitioner. As performers and creatives are improving their craft with each production, similarly, critics work to improve their writing and artistic eye. It is unrealistic to expect finesse from either side, as both are in the midst of constant development.

However, the critic should be expected to uphold the same commitment to a high standard of creative ability as those involved in the production itself. In the Cambridge setting, with a plethora of performances put on each week, a review might make the difference of whether one decides to see a show at all. It's important, then, for reviews to be crafted with care. The critic's judgemental eye should be a coalescence of both journalistic skill of presentation as well as a level of experiential and academic knowledge regarding the artistic form critiqued. This might be unrealistic, initially, but these aspects are gained over time, both through training and also in duty and respect to the production.

A central feature of the review process in the context of Cambridge theatre is star ratings, which are used regularly as a prelude to the review itself. Of course, there are pros and cons: unstarred reviews can come across as indecisive, bouncing too freely between the positive and the negative. With stars, there's an element of imprecision, being blunt in deciding the quality of a production. However, contrarily, using stars promotes the need to be extremely opinionated – audiences want to read a damning one-star review, or a glowing five-star one, less interested in the tepid neutrality of a three-star designation.

Stars, as a concept, promote the generalisation of shows into broad categories, when of course not all four-star shows were designated as such for the same reasons. And of course, the use of stars could negate the need for reviews altogether, with readers only using stars to base their judgement.

This brings into question whether reviews are necessary at all, when five filled-in bubbles might yield similar results. Can it be said that theatre and the review might exist as a sort of chicken-and-egg scenario, where one cannot exist without the other?

Of course, theatre can certainly exist without the review, and oppositely, the review inherently depends on a subject for its creation. But a review, I argue, strengthens theatre through the creation of a level of expectation – to continue to create not only commercially successful theatre (read: the plethora of film-turned-stage musicals like *Frozen* and *Pretty Woman* on Broadway), but to push creatives, students and professionals alike to make not just enjoyable but stimulating, thoughtful, and objectively good pieces of art for audiences to find and digest. With the review holding the creatives accountable, audiences are given an advocate, a voice to push theatre in invigorating and challenging directions.

And of course, an audience shouldn't be told what to feel – a review is just one person's opinion. No matter what a critic might say, it always will remain in the hands of a reader whether to act on it or not.

# Exercise, anxiety and me

## For **Eve Hodgson**, exercise was a lifeline in recovering from anxiety

*Content note: This article contains discussion of weight loss and anxiety*

I used to run, and I used to hate it. It was too hard to breathe consistently and too cold to feel as if I'd worked up a sweat. I felt was really bad at it – forty-five minutes in a hilly area was not a realistic start-point when I'd basically only exercised in PE and netball practice before. I'd be so tired and so unsatisfied that I'd lie down and put biscuits in me as a reward as soon as I got home, thus undoing all my hard (half-) work.

So, I stopped. I lost weight in the summer after my GCSEs through no work or fault of my own, and kept losing weight throughout sixth form. I never had any need to exercise, mostly because I was frequently too nervous to eat anything significant. I was at my absolute slimmest and absolute most anxious when I first came to Cambridge.

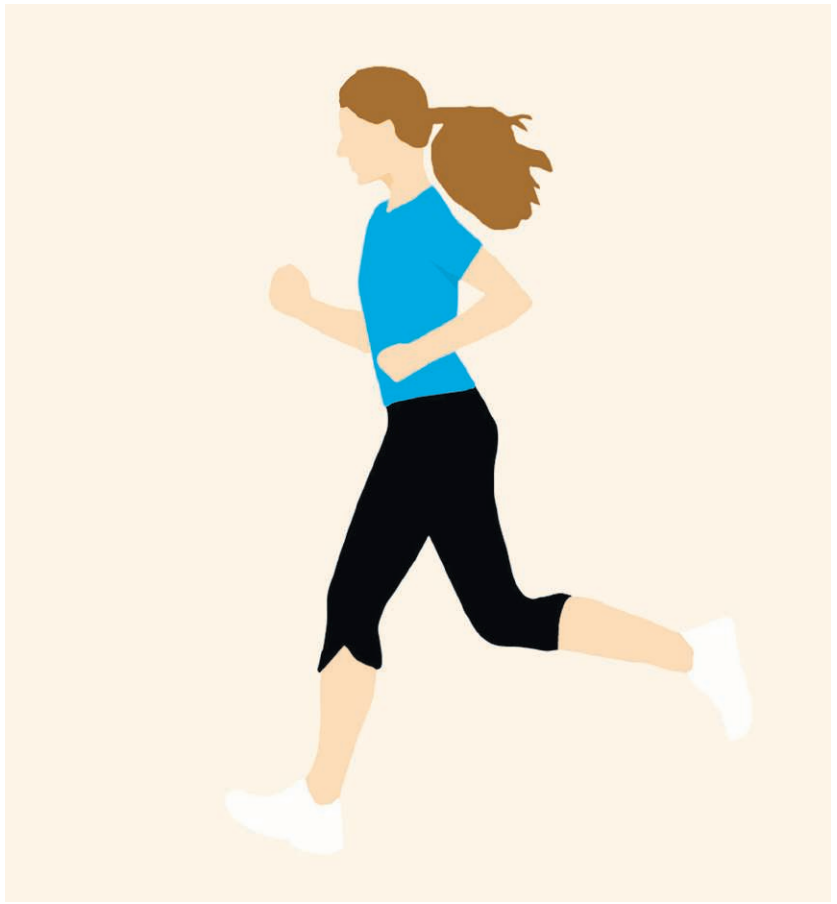
> "*Exercise lets my brain switch off*"

Anxiousness was at one time the reason I was able to get through the day on unhealthily small amounts of food, but has now become the reason I can exercise. I go to the gym every day.

My anxiety – and I can only speak for mine – is a kind of nervous energy. Panic attacks were always a distinctly physical thing. They felt muscular and twitchy and I'd often jitter. The sensation of motion – rolling a glass between my palms, physically getting up and pacing – could often ease, if not end, a panic attack. I haven't had an extreme panic attack in a long time, but as third year wears on, anxiety is naturally setting in, and sometimes more irrationally escalating.

Going to the gym at a more or less fixed time every day is my way of nipping a panic attack in the bud, because, soon, there will be a point where I'm fine again – or, if not fine, at least occupied. The gap between my current state of panic and the point where it will end gets smaller and smaller the more frequently I work out. A schedule I would have once thought of as unrealistic and impossible has become necessary for my wellbeing.

It distracts me from work for a fixed amount of time, so I am (in theory) sharper and more focused when I come back to it. I'm eating better – it feels like a cliché, but my body feels cleaner. I am sleeping better: I don't really drink caffeine anymore and I'm physically exhausted when I get into bed. Mostly, I am too busy and too tired to be anxious or sad. Mine tends to hit when I have empty hours. My brain can spiral. It used to keep me up for hours most nights during my worst periods.



▲ **Exercise proved a powerful outlet for the author** (PIXABAY)

It took me a long time to figure out what kind of exercise works for me. For most of my time at uni, I've just played college netball once or twice a week. Last term, I tried to go back to running – going in the morning for an extremely short run round the river every other day. It was too easy to cop out, especially as it never felt like I was missing much by skipping it anyway.

> "*It is invigorating, and it makes you feel strong*"

The gym however is indoors. Plus it's free and there's a huge variety of stuff to do. If you do a humanities subject you can afford to go when it's empty in the middle of the day, especially useful if you're self-conscious starting out. You have the space and time and equipment to work out how you like moving best, and the absolute luxury of being able to switch it up whenever you get bored. Exercise makes me feel as though I've earned my tiredness, it lets my brain switch off, and I genuinely feel a huge sense of triumph when I finish.

For the last two weeks, I've split workouts between cross-trainers, rowing machines, and exercise bikes. Today, I spent forty minutes on a treadmill, running my first continuous 5k, and I loved it (move over, Mo Farah). Exercise makes me feel as though I've earned my tiredness, it lets my brain switch off, and I genuinely feel a huge sense of triumph when I finish.

I feel genuinely very obtuse for not taking the advice of every single medical professional who advised me to exercise as a way to stop feeling low or tense. It is invigorating, and it makes you feel strong. You have achieved something, your body has achieved something, and you have proven to yourself that you are capable of taking at least tiny steps towards caring for yourself.

# Ticking through my to-do list at halfway hall

**Enia Phocas** contemplates how it feels to be halfway through her degree


What does it mean to be halfway through your degree? This was the question which floated into my mind when I received the email inviting me to my college's Halfway Hall during the winter break. And now that Halfway Hall has come, I feel myself still pondering this question: am I supposed to feel like I have gained in life experience, knowledge of English literary history and cooking skills?

I struggle with the idea that progress of this kind should be quantifiable. Yes, I could estimate the number of books I have taken out of the library, or the amount of people I've met, the number of times I went out, or when I have enjoyed myself in a supervision, but I feel this would somewhat miss the point. My time at university has been far more than the sum of individual experiences or arbitrary statistics to catalogue them.

I wondered if there *was* a way to evidence the progress an event like Halfway Hall implies, even if it was just for myself. And then I remembered. You see, since I received my acceptance letter, I have been unconsciously formulating a mental list of all the things I wanted to do during my three years here, my 'Cambridge To-Do List'. Some things are, naturally, rather touristy things, like going punting and climbing up Great St. Mary's Church. Others are more Cambridge-specific, such as the formal challenge (with only three colleges done, I will really need to up the pace if I want to get round the remaining twenty-eight), or getting college married. And some are entirely personal: getting my laundry done *before* it was completely necessary; showing my mum the UL; reading Sylvia Path's diaries about doing the tragedy paper.

Although it will be impossible for me to know if I am halfway through this list, as I have never written it down, thinking back on the things I have already done has been a surprisingly moving experience. If I *had* written it down, one of the first items on the list would have naturally been to make friends. And ever since I asked my neighbour to help me set up eduroam and the conversation started flowing, I have been able to tick that one off. However, in some ways, this is also something that can never truly be 'complete'; there are always new connections to be made and new friendships to form.

A more personal aim was to read James Joyce's *Ulysses,* which I had wanted to do ever since I was in sixth form, having just discovered the delights of literary modernism. Within my first term here I had not only read the work, but written an essay on it – my sixteen-year-old self never would have believed it possible.

Something that definitely had been on my list for a long time was going to May Ball. It was both everything I had imagined it would be, and somehow more magical than I had anticipated – I spent much of the evening in a happy trance, floating in the wonderland that was my transformed college.

There have been smaller moments of personal joy too: going to the UL by myself was particularly exciting (and more than a little stressful); my first cheesy chips made me wish I had tried them sooner; I remember my very first lecture (on Childhood in the Victorian novel) was utterly delightful.

So, as I stand on this precipice between past and future time, between the first half of my degree and the second, I have given much thought to what should be added to the list. Without doubt, I would like to pursue my own academic interests more, now that I have grown in understanding about what sort of literature and authors I enjoy.

Simply contemplating this made me realise how much I have learnt over the last year and a half, as well as recognising an increased confidence in my own judgements to shape my learning.

With my first set of 'real' exams coming up this Easter, I am also looking forward to ticking off going to Grantchester as another item on my list, especially as I deliberately prolonged going there so that I could enjoy it as a post-exams treat. I guess you could say that I'll also be ticking off my first Cambridge exam term, but I personally prefer to keep the list fun and relatively frivolous, a distraction from more serious concerns.

Of course there are many other things I could add: Mill Lane Winter Fair, Compline in Chapel, or the annual Fashion Show, I could go on. But whilst I think that many good things have come from 'The List', equally, some of my favourite memories have come from entirely spontaneous situations: conversations in the gyp; coming out of a formal greeted by the sight of snow; a midnight walk.

Perhaps what I have realised most from this first half of my university experience is how quickly the time has gone; I would like to live in the moment as much as I can for my remaining time here, and maybe tick off a few more things from the list.

◀ **"I would like to live in the moment as much as I can for my reamining time here."**

(ILLUSTRATION BY ALISA SANTIKARN FOR VARSITY)

# ‘Insanely beautiful’ in fragile chiffon behind the scenes with CUCFS

Fashion Editors **Cie Jen Wong** and **Helena Baron** go backstage and talk to the creative team behind the final photo shoot in the run up to the Cambridge University Charity Fashion Show

As we walk into the green room (also known as Sidney Sussex JCR) we are instantly hit by an atmosphere of bustling creativity: makeup is strewn across a table as two artists giggle with the models, while those waiting their turn scroll through Instagram or zealously get on with some work. Alexandra Sive, the president of CUCFS, calmly weaves her way between people, chaperoning new arrivals, stopping to chat with Rosy Sida, creative director, as they eagerly plan next moves with Moran Arwas, the graduate designer whose collection they are preparing to shoot. Elle Curzon, fashion director and vice-president Eleanor Swire, are already on location, setting up with photographer Sarika Datta.

This is the final photo-shoot in the run-up to the Cambridge University Charity Fashion Show 2019, which is now just under a month away on the 8th of March. With the shoot consisting of exclusively menswear, it soon becomes clear that, as Sida put it, “there’s nothing quite like” this collection, which is both “insanely beautiful” and, in Arwas’ own words “slightly weird [...] and slightly feminine”. When probed a bit further about the inspiration behind this playful, delicate and yet raw collection, Arwas cites everything from “skate subcultures” to “some very weird, American stuff” David Lynch films and an exploration of “oddness” and the “unexpected”. The result is “middle America trash” re-imagined in pastel pink chiffons, high-shine baby blue vinyl, and soft neutrals. “It’s supposed to make you feel uncomfortable,” Arwas explains, “and it’s also supposed to be a bit surreal.” It is precisely this exploration of ‘oddness’ that caught the eye of both Sida and Sive. “Who would think to put vinyl in baby blue and then make a trucker jacket out of it?” the President effuses: “It’s kind of a triple flip, you go through this fabric that’s almost fetish, and it’s made delicate by this colour, and then the shape is a skater, workwear-style jacket that you’d think would be in denim.”

The final photo-shoot in the CUCFS venture into a more maximalist approach than in previous years. The collection may at first glance seem to distance itself from previous photoshoots (which have included collections such as a baroque-heavy shoot at the Fitzwilliam Museum). While the other collections have seemed at first to fit the ‘maximalist’ aesthetic that the CUCFS has been leaning towards this year, it takes a more analytical eye to find the nuanced details of the pieces. Sive is quick to gush about what makes this particular collection so special. “The shapes are quite minimalist, but then you have these details on them,” she explains, “like the ruching and the layered use of chiffon – there are so many different textures too, It fits in with the other collections because even when the silhouettes seem minimalist, the garments are still so full of detail.” The collection moreover offers “an exciting contrast to many of the designers,” Swire elaborates, noting the dramatic contrast it embodies in its “distinctly urban feel” rendered in “earthy and sky tones.”

So what is the impact of this collection? It seems hard to deny that it highlights a gender-fluid, fun and fantastical approach to fashion. Arwas is, of course, a woman designing for men, something she claims was a deliberate choice so as to “come up with weirder ideas” than when designing womenswear. She enjoys blending softer, more effeminate details with the more masculine shapes of the clothing, loving that“it shows that there is a female designer behind the clothes” and the freedom that comes with working in what she calls “a territory that wasn’t mine”. Gently pushing the boundaries of received norms certainly seems to be a running thread in the tapestry of the shoot’s concept: Men wearing makeup? “I think it’s cool, if you want to wear makeup, wear makeup,” affirms Lottie Marie Mccrindell, one of the makeup artists for the shoot; “there’s no difference at all between [working with] a guy and a girl,” her colleague Clara Balon happily chimes in, “I’m looking at the face, I’m taking into account the bone structure and the makeup that I am creating.”

This shoot is evidently shaping up to be one of spectacle, inspiration and innovation, both in front and behind the camera. “I think we’ve found that the more unexpected things happen, the shoots get better. We’re just going to play with it; we’re excited,” Sida explains, a feeling clearly shared by all in the now buzzing room. An easy giddiness hangs over the room as the models slip into their given looks. And there’s something almost poetic about seeing a 6ft, broad-shouldered man manoeuvre himself into a fragile chiffon crop top.

But the magic doesn’t stop with this photoshoot. The designs in their totality will be

**▲▼ Who would think to put a trucker jacket in baby blue vinyl? It's kind of a triple flip.** (SARIKA DATTA)

▲ **Creative director Rosy Sida had models play around with sculptural positions.** (SARIKA DATTA)

> *“fashion has the ability to evoke feeling and whole worlds when you look at a collection”*

showcased next month during the main show, which is set to be nothing short of “spectacular” according to Sive, who explains her decision to move into Guild Hall from the Corn Exchange: “It is going to be very theatrical,” both in setting and content. As for the designs, though they might not be the most wearable, it is the “ability of fashion to evoke feeling and whole worlds when you look at a collection,” that remains at the forefront of the President’s mind. The very idea of dreaming, Sida adds, is intrinsic to the designs, with each piece “made by hand - it’s not made en masse, you can’t buy it” which makes platforming the collection “really really special” in her mind. Curzon was in full agreement, adding that “Moran was one of the first designers we signed for the show and her work set an incredibly high standard. (...) It is also very encouraging to know that the designs I have been staring at on Instagram for 9 months look even more sensational in real life.”

The show that Sive and her team have planned is meant to make the audience feel and believe in the vast potential for creativity in all its shapes and forms. The belief in creating a show that sparks and inspires those watching is seen strongly in Sida, who remarks that “there are lots of creative people out there who don’t indulge in art because they don’t think that it is a worthwhile pursuit, which is wrong.” Swire agrees, adding, “I think many students in Cambridge play down their enjoyment of fashion, but they shouldn’t. The 8th March is not only International Women’s Day, but also an opportunity to bring fashion into discussion in Cambridge, whilst raising money for Solidaritee.” Judging by the direction of the show and the enthusiasm emanating from all those involved, it seems that the show will be one for the books: an evening to stimulate the artistry of all those who see it, and one which will push the boundaries that we’ve set for ourselves.

# Why we all need some more *Sex Education*

The exceptional new Netflix series everyone is talking about. **David Rennie** disucusses *Sex Education*

*Developed by Laurie NunnStarring Asa Butterfield, Gillian Anderson, Ncuti GatwaCurrently available on Netflix*

"It's my vagina." In a surely timeless sequence, the pupils of Moordale Secondary School stand up one by one and claim the explicit image circulating online as their own, whether boy or girl, to the headmaster's (Alistair Petrie) mounting frustration ("it cannot be *all* your vaginas"). Only this series could make such a daft comic scene as this so poignant: it builds and swells until you're practically punching the air in solidarity, as each student stands up for the victim of body-shaming in a call to arms of teenage empowerment and positivity.

Nothing better captures the emboldening, bravura, yet sweet-natured spirit of Netflix's latest original offering, created by Laurie Nunn. Bolstered by empathetic performances from a supremely-talented cast lead by Asa Butterfield, *Sex Education* traverses the platitudes of teenage sexual awakening and growth while showing a depth of understanding and sensitivity unmatched almost anywhere else. Our hero, 16 year-old Otis (Butterfield), repressed by a debilitating social and sexual awkwardness as well as his prying sex therapist mother (a glorious Gillian Anderson), discovers an uncanny ability to solve his fellow teens' bedroom issues. He sets up a paid clinic in the school alongside rebellious outcast Maeve Wiley (Emma Mackey) as complex – and horny – dramas of adolescence unfold around them.

The show sets itself apart with a bold and unique aesthetic quality, a stylised presentation comprising a 70s/80s-infused soundtrack coupled with retro set and costume design, laced with the tropes of high-school Americana. The seemingly anachronistic design and unclear time setting has been the focus of much of the show's social media chatter, but this presentation is key to its intent – the series as a superficial package becomes eminently appealing and watchable, calling to that nostalgic need embedded in popular consciousness. Shot in high contrast, the show is a burst of colour that takes on a fantasy element and a universal quality that establishes an instant connection to the viewer.

Yet the series's strength lies in the ease with which it carries itself off – *Sex Education* arrives with subdued fanfare, funny and gently subversive, and leaves in the final episode on a touching and similarly lowkey note, packing an emotional wallop but making no claims to self-importance in its core message. But it's what is packed in between that makes the biggest impact. Each story arc grows organically, crucially lacking the condescension of other works of its ilk, building layer upon layer of emotional complexity and, certainly in the case of Maeve's difficult storyline, distress.

In this light, it is staggering to think that much of the young cast are relative screen debutants. Mackey shows an astonishing range as Maeve, bearing on her shoulders some of the series's weightier themes, while also delivering its sharpest wit. Able support is found in fellow newcomers Connor Swindells and Kedar Williams-Stirling, whose plotlines, as 'bully' Adam and athlete Jackson, take on unforeseen gravity beyond their superficial character moulds. Gillian Anderson brings the acting gravitas, providing an effective counterpoint to Otis's bumbling angst and some of the show's funniest lines (not least her mistakenly asking the plumber his earliest memory of his scrotum).

However, Ncuti Gatwa as faithful best friend Eric is a triumph, threatening to steal the show from under the nose of acting royalty. With only two minor credits to his name before this, Gatwa announces himself stunningly with an assured and gutsy performance, in a storyline of awakening identity and self-love that probes some dark and harrowing corners on the way.

*Sex Education* doesn't just break down barriers and taboos, it emphatically bulldozers a whole spectrum of them, tackling urgent themes in an ambitious yet unassuming way. Where most pop culture would either shy away or confront with the emotional subtlety of a sledgehammer, anxiety, same-sex parenting, racial identity, drug abuse, body-shaming, and sexuality are highlighted here with a warmly humorous touch. In perhaps its strongest and most affecting instalment, abortion is addressed head-on in the show's signature style ("nothing says Happy Abortion like a bouquet"), an emotive sucker punch that manages to be hilarious, sweet, and devastating all at once. Which, really, is how all teen drama should be.

The series delivers a surge of adolescent empowerment regardless of identity or sexuality and a simultaneous arm around the shoulder to those who feel unrepresented or disillusioned, embodied by Eric's arc. Continuing Netflix's fiercely-hot streak of original in-house production, it is no understatement to say that *Sex Education* is the most unpatronising and honest portrayal of adolescent life in recent popular culture. The series is so effective and so well-executed it becomes necessary viewing, demanding to be seen by this or any generation.

# Portrait of an Artist

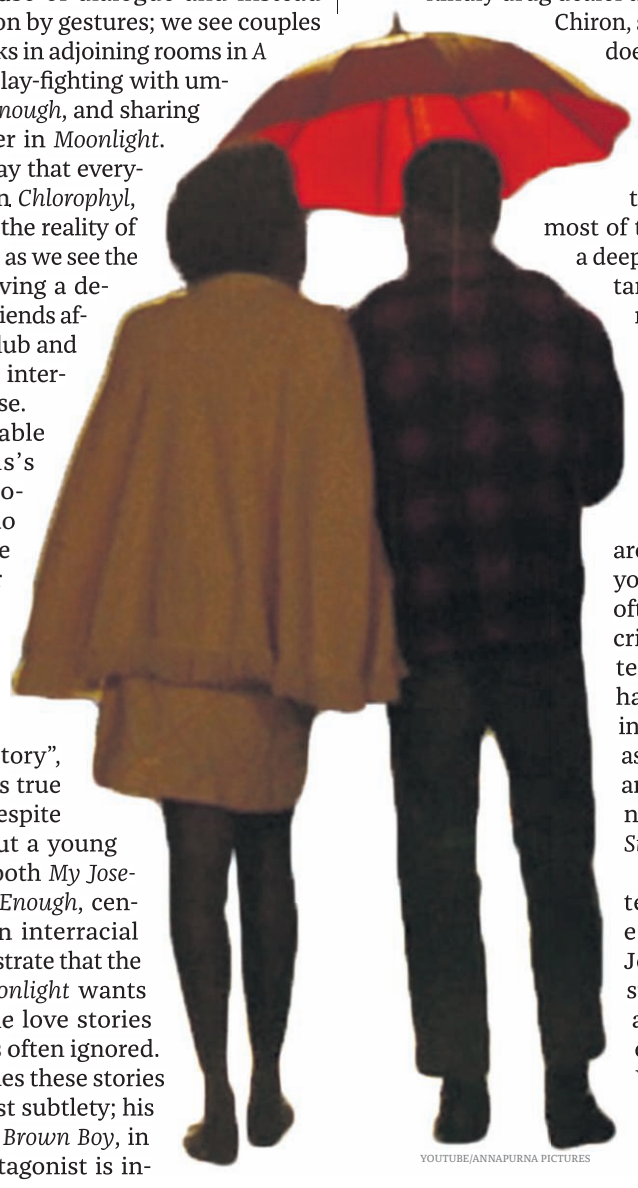
**Orla Horan** explores an array of the work of filmmaker, Barry Jenkins

I usually live by the logic that you can never get too much of a good thing, be it cheesy chips, ASOS next day delivery, or Gemma Collins-related content. That is until I saw *Moonlight*, directed by Barry Jenkins, this time two years ago and realised that some things are good enough for once in a lifetime. I distinctly remember sitting in the cinema in stunned silence as the credits were rolling, my (small) brain struggling to comprehend how a film which charts the coming-of-age of Chiron managed to be so understated yet utterly mesmerising.

Although I have technically stayed true to my word and kept *Moonlight* as a perfect one-off experience, I have cheated somewhat by watching all of Jenkins's short films in the interim. They reveal that all the hallmarks of his distinctive approach to filmmaking have been present and correct since circa 2003 when Jenkins produced his first short, *My Josephine*, about a young Arab-American couple who own a launderette and wash flags for free in post-9/11 US.

Indeed, running through Jenkins's entire oeuvre is the theme of love – not the fairytale version but the real deal, as demonstrated in *A Young Couple*: "Of course I like you, I just don't like you when you're being annoying." Jenkins's take on love is always grounded, making little use of dialogue and instead showing passion by gestures; we see couples working at desks in adjoining rooms in *A Young Couple*, play-fighting with umbrellas in *Tall Enough*, and sharing a meal together in *Moonlight*. That is not to say that everything is rosy. In *Chlorophyl*, Jenkins shows the reality of unrequited love as we see the protagonist having a debrief with her friends after going to a club and seeing her love interest someone else.

It is undeniable that Jenkins's focus is on romances that do not often make it to the silver screen; he has described his latest film, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, as a "black love story", and the same is true of *Moonlight*. Despite not being about a young black couple, both *My Josephine* and *Tall Enough*, centred around an interracial couple, demonstrate that the director of *Moonlight* wants to spotlight the love stories Hollywood has often ignored. Jenkins broaches these stories with the utmost subtlety; his efforts in *Little Brown Boy*, in which the protagonist is involved in a shooting, and his nuanced presentation of Juan (Mahershala Ali) in *Moonlight*, a kindly drug dealer and father figure to Chiron, shows that Jenkins does not deal in black-and-white characterisation.



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You do not have to look hard to find that behind most of these narratives is a deeper social commentary. This is perhaps most obvious in *Moonlight* since it shows those who reap the rewards of drug addiction and those who pay the price for their addiction. We are also shown how young black men are often treated by the criminal justice system, whether they have actually been involved in a crime, as in *Little Brown Boy*, and when they have not, as in *If Beale Street Could Talk*.

There is also technical consistency throughout Jenkins's career, such as his choppy and colourful cinematography. In *A Young Couple*, the camera angles are often cropped tightly around faces, cutting out abruptly and changing focus as we watch the real-life pair simply exist together. We see a similarly punctuated approach to transitions in *My Josephine*, where shots change abruptly as the couple carry out their various tasks. That Jenkins admits to being inspired in part by the transitions in Nigella Lawson's cooking programmes only enhances my appreciation for his work.

Jenkins also makes consistent use of changing focus as shots accentuate the features of the young couple only to blur them as they dance in the launderette in *My Josephine* and embrace each other in *A Young Couple*. In the former, most of the footage is tinted with green-blue hues due to a happy accident in production. It does not seem like a coincidence that Jenkins, who has a long-term working relationship with cinematographer James Laxton, was emboldened to use colour so artfully in *Moonlight* – a particularly striking example being the scene in which Chiron is yelled at by his mother (Naomie Harris) whilst bathed in pink light.

Whenever you are in awe of an artist, be it Van Gogh, Plath, or Bowie, there is something incredibly satisfying about looking at their entire body of work and tracing their progression.

For the artists themselves, their early works are the foundation on which later success is built; it is no coincidence that Jenkins has remarked that his favourite film is *My Josephine*, and that it was an experience more lifechanging for him than his Oscar win. This is why it so important not only to engage with short films made by now-successful filmmakers such as Jenkins, but also to support those who are rising stars.

The Watersprite International Student Film Festival, which showcases short films from around the world, held in Cambridge from 7-10 March is a chance to do just that.

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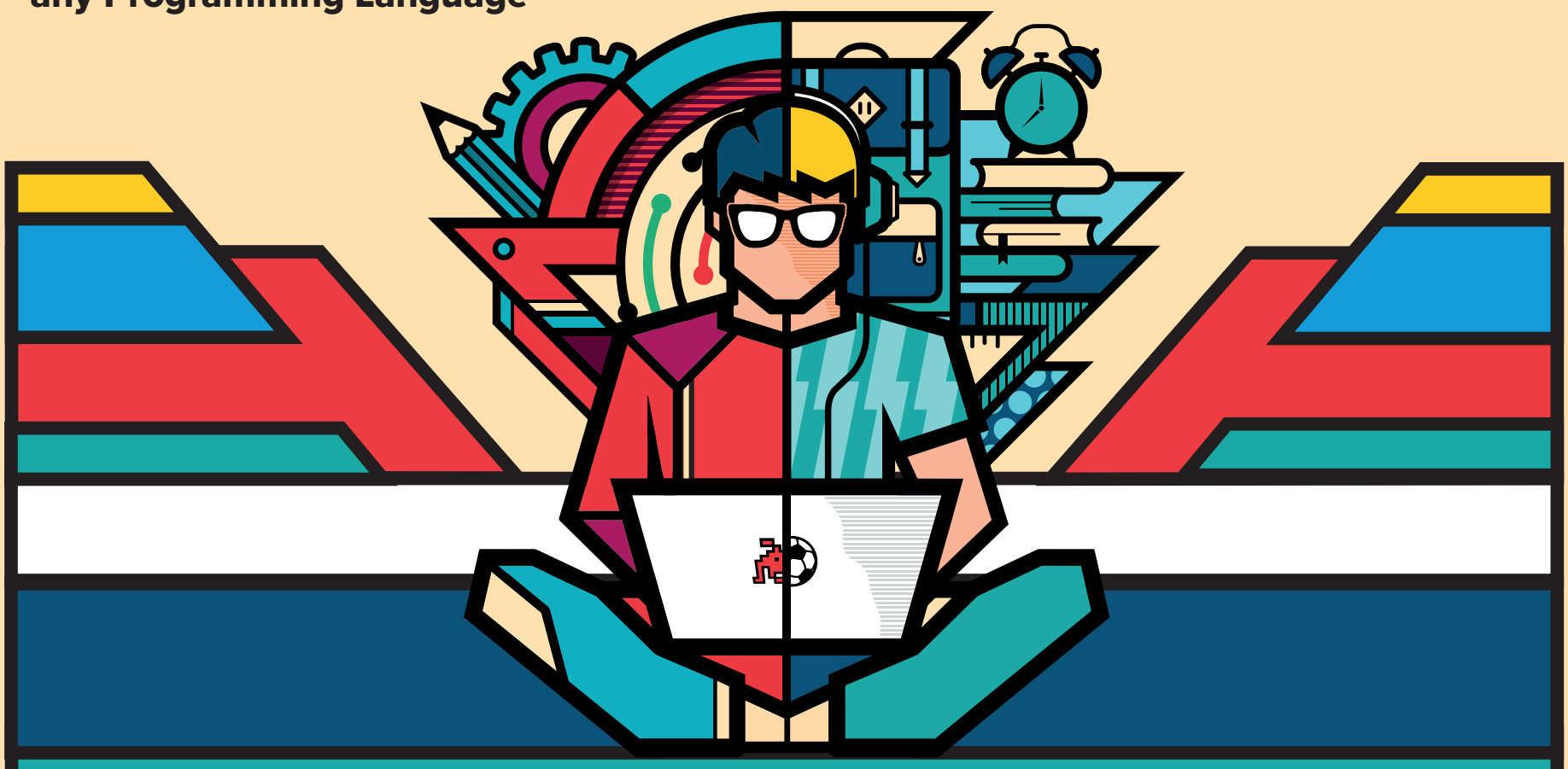

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# Science

## The trials and triumphs of Cambridge's first female scientists

▲ **Women were not permitted to use the University's science facilities** (NEWNHAM COLLEGE)

*Thea Elvin explores the unprecented opportunity that Newnham's Old Labs offered women to study science*

For many years, studying science at Cambridge offered a vastly different experience for men and women, and indeed to those studying science at other red brick universities. Women studying at these newly founded institutions were enrolling at the same time as their male counterparts, whereas at Oxbridge they were aliens in a system firmly rooted in tradition.

A turning point in the acceptance of women at the University came with the creation of college science laboratories. Although these institutions were segregated and, as an anonymous female student stated in 1913, a constant reminder of "the fact they are not merely students but also female ones", their foundation was a leap forward in scientific equality at Cambridge.

Built in 1879 "a respectful distance" from the residential buildings, Newnham's Old Labs were originally intended for the study of chemistry, but for five years were used to study a variety of scientific disciplines when women were denied access to all the main University labs. Despite winning this hard fought liberty, the space in which women carried out their experiments and studied practical science was by no means ideal. One student in 1880 recalls "raw days in the laboratory, barely tempered by a little grate fire in one corner". Equipment and chemicals, now easily taken for granted, were difficult for the Newnham scientists to obtain, having to be bought or borrowed under "the strictest economy".

Work in the Old Labs was not all hardship though and, as many undergraduates find today, it was the demonstrators who helped instigate a fascination with science in their students. One such demonstrator was Ida Freund, who taught chemistry in the Old Labs for almost 30 years. Instantly recognisable not only for her strong Austrian accent and wooden leg (she had lost her leg in a cycling accident), she was famed for her "special study" classes, held before Tripos exams, which involved a periodic table made from cupcakes and chocolates depicting famous chemists.

As the University gradually moved towards gender equality, so women's opportunities grew. In 1881, women were allowed to sit Tripos exams and the need for more space in which to study practical elements of the course led to the creation of the Balfour Biological Laboratory in an abandoned chapel in Downing Place. The laboratory was campaigned for and funded by Emily Davis and Eleanor Sidgwick (née Balfour), and used by Newnham and Girton. A student of 1909 remembers carrying out practical work here and in the Newnham Old Labs during her first year, joining male students in the University Chemical Laboratory in her second year and, by third year, working closely alongside twelve male counterparts and laboratory staff in the Physiological Laboratory.

> *"For many women, this was their first experience of practical science"*

By the end of the first world war, women were well integrated into the main University science laboratories and Newnham's Old Labs were no longer required for teaching purposes. Today they are used as a music and drama space, with one fume hood left in the entrance to serve as a reminder of their past.

For many of the women who undertook study in the Old Labs, this was their first experience of practical science. The freedom to carry out their own scientific experiments represented huge progress towards equality in science and holds an important place in Cambridge's scientific history. Above all, in allowing women a place to practice science, the Old Labs opened up a world of wonder for many young female scientists, as is summed up by a Newnhamite of 1880: "Chemistry is great fun and I did some splendid experiments".


▲ **The Old Labs are in Newnham's gardens** (STEPHANIE STACEY)

# ‘If food waste were a country…’

*Sophie Cook confronts the social and environmental consequences of the current food waste crisis*

‘If food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases after China and the USA.’ Hearing global statistics on this scale, I often find the figures so incomprehensible that it’s all too easy to remain shamefully unaffected by them. But the next one really got my attention: ‘Food that is never eaten accounts for 25% of all global fresh water consumption’. I had to know more - surely that couldn’t be correct?

Over the last few years, food waste has definitely been climbing the ranks on our social radar. Hugh Fearnley-Wittingstall’s *War on Waste* documentary vilified supermarkets for their stringent rejections of so-called ‘wonky veg’ and their disposal of out-of-date produce. But I was shocked to find that in the UK, 70% of post-farm gate food waste actually happens at home. In a study by the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP), it was found that in the UK, we use an area the size of Wales to produce food and drink that ends up going to waste. What’s more, the average UK family throws away 22% of their weekly shop – costing them around £800 per year! Globally, the picture is even worse. It’s estimated that over one third of all food produced worldwide goes to waste. That’s equivalent to a land mass the size of China being used to grow food that is never eaten! This results in enormous market inefficiency and an estimated annual loss of $984bn.

Aside from economic absurdity, there are also shocking social implications of our food waste habit. The Food Aid Foundation estimates that 800 million people go to bed hungry every night. That’s 1 in every 9 people on earth. But all of these people could be fed on less than a quarter of the food wasted by the USA and Europe each year. This is not an issue we can detach ourselves from either – over one million people in the UK used a food bank last year and 40 million Americans are living in food poverty.

You could be forgiven for thinking that when you chuck food in the bin, it’s a short-term use of landfill space which will quickly decompose. While food does biodegrade much faster than synthetic materials like plastic, it still exacts a significant environmental cost. Anoxic landfill conditions mean food waste is broken down by methanogenic microbes, generating methane – a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide. The FAO estimate that food waste is responsible for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

While these stats are all very depressing and rather hard to relate to, the good news is that since so much of this goes on in our own homes, we can all do something about it. Food sharing forums are experiencing explosive growth as public awareness increases. OLIO, a popular food sharing app, now boasts over 700,000 users across 48 countries. Local initiatives like our own college food sharing forums are also growing and demonstrate public willingness to change. At the end of the day, who doesn’t love free food?

Sadly, in the UK we waste the meat of 120 million chickens each year. We also throw away 20 million slices of bread and 900,000 bananas daily! Simple lifestyle changes really can make a difference. Our hectic Cambridge lives may not be the most conducive to rigorous meal planning, nor our tiny fridges facilitative of food preservation. However, there is no excuse for not sharing food within our community. Many ‘OLIOers’ express concerns about whether other people will actually want their leftovers; but research has found that over 50% of listings are claimed within two hours of posting! Whatever you have going, there will always be a better home for it than in the bin.

▲ **The average UK family throws away 22% of their weekly shop** (PHOTO BY DEL BARRETT ON UNSPLASH)

## *Varsity explains*
## How does Bitcoin work?

**Joseph Krol**

Bitcoin, blockchain: both are buzzwords, often peddled as heralds of a new finance. Their impact is great, but not total – pound, dollar, euro no doubt shall circulate for decades.

Nevertheless, the problem that Bitcoin was intended to solve began with a disenchantment with conventional banks. The traditional financial system relies to a great extent on all users trusting some third party to mediate the exchange, both to confirm that the payment was made as intended and to confirm that both participants have the money they purport to. For many years, cryptographers had been looking for a way in which this middleman could be removed from the transaction, in part to reduce this reliance on trust. However, there was a central issue, known as the ‘double-spending problem’ – essentially, when digital currencies are used in a system without a central authority, how can one ensure that the same digital token isn’t used twice?

It proved rather difficult to solve; the first practical solution was published in late 2008 in a paper on a cryptography messageboard, credited only to a shadowy, pseudonymous figure under the name of Satoshi Nakamoto. (They left their project around 2010; their actual identity is still completely unknown, despite inordinate amounts of speculation.) Two months later, Nakamoto launched Bitcoin as a practical currency.

The protocol behind Bitcoin is centred on the ‘blockchain’, a public record of transactions made using the currency. Each time an exchange takes place, a message – say, “Alice sends Bob one bitcoin” – is broadcast, and checked through the network against the records to avoid the possibility of double-spending. Every ten minutes or so, the transactions are grouped together into a single ‘block’, which is then added to the blockchain. However, it’s clearly important that the creation of the block is correct, and there are no central authorities to do this. Nakamoto’s ingenious idea was to open up the block creation process to public competition, with accuracy being ensured through a ‘proof-of-work’ system. In a broad sense, the bitcoin ‘miners’ race to solve a certain mathematical problem, whose answer is then included in the block. The problem is set up such that the answer can be almost immediately checked, but the actual determination of the answer takes a relatively vast amount of time. This is taken as proof that the process has been carried out correctly, and the block is then incorporated into the overall chain. For their troubles, the user who created the block receives a payment in Bitcoin. There is hence a double-function to the process: both the maintenance of the public transaction record, and the introduction of new Bitcoins into the economy (up to a long-term limit of 21 million).

> *“This makes it almost impossible to carry out fraud”*

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

Science

# An app a day keeps the doctor away?

*The future of healthcare looks digital – **Anjali Jayasekera** asks whether we should welcome this*

It may feel like there is no pie that corporate giants such as Apple and Google do not have a finger in, so their present interest in healthcare should probably not surprise us. A number of tech firms are seeking to bring medical services on to a digital platform, while others are developing digital therapeutics ('digiceuticals') and new diagnostic techniques, with the help of artificial intelligence. Though exciting, these developments must be treated with caution to ensure their safety and medical accuracy.

The recommended number of daily consultations for GPs, according to the European Union of General Practitioners (UEMO), is 25, yet a survey of 900 GPs in 2017 reported this figure in reality stands at 41.5, and in some cases up to 70 consultations. Not only does this create an unhealthy working environment for doctors, it also increases the risk to patients by exacerbating the potential for human error. Lightening the workload while targeting patient care is obviously critical. DeepMind, a branch of Alphabet (the parent company of Google) is seeking a somewhat unorthodox solution: it has provided an app called 'Streams' to four UK hospitals, which monitors patient data and sends an instant alert to a clinician if acute kidney injury (an indication of patient deterioration) is detected. It organises patient information to present the most relevant first so that nurses can quickly develop a picture of the patient's state.

By saving nurses and clinicians up to two hours of work, the app improves prognosis and gives professionals more time to see their patients, or take a much needed break. However, the app has been met with some criticism. The initial agreement between DeepMind and the Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust did not provide adequate protection of patient data and had to be severely revised, while the storage platform used by DeepMind to house the 1.6 million patient data records was found to have 11 minor vulnerabilities. At the heart of these new technologies is the struggle to strike a balance between keeping patient data confidential and gaining access to as much data as possible to increase the predictive capacity of algorithms.

Apple, in collaboration with the Stanford University School of Medicine, launched the Apple Health Study in November 2017. Here, an individual's heart rate and rhythm are measured via a sensor in their Apple Watch, and monitored for irregularities, or arrhythmias. If any are found, a notification alerts the participant and they are offered a free video consultation with one of the clinicians taking part in the study. Should they be required, a free ECG path may be sent to the individual to further track their health. By frequently monitoring individuals and giving them easy access to a healthcare professional, the study may increase the chances of discovering an incipient arrhythmia such as atrial fibrillation, which is one of the main risk factors associated with stroke.

Apple is also applying this idea to complex, chronic diseases such as Parkinson's disease (PD). The symptoms of PD vary between individuals, and without frequent specialist appointments its progression can be difficult to track. However, an app called mPower, developed by Sage BioNetworks in collaboration with Apple's ResearchKit requires the user to complete three tasks or surveys a day, providing a closer analysis of symptom progression in the hope that by understanding their frequency and variation, a treatment to control this variation can be manufactured.

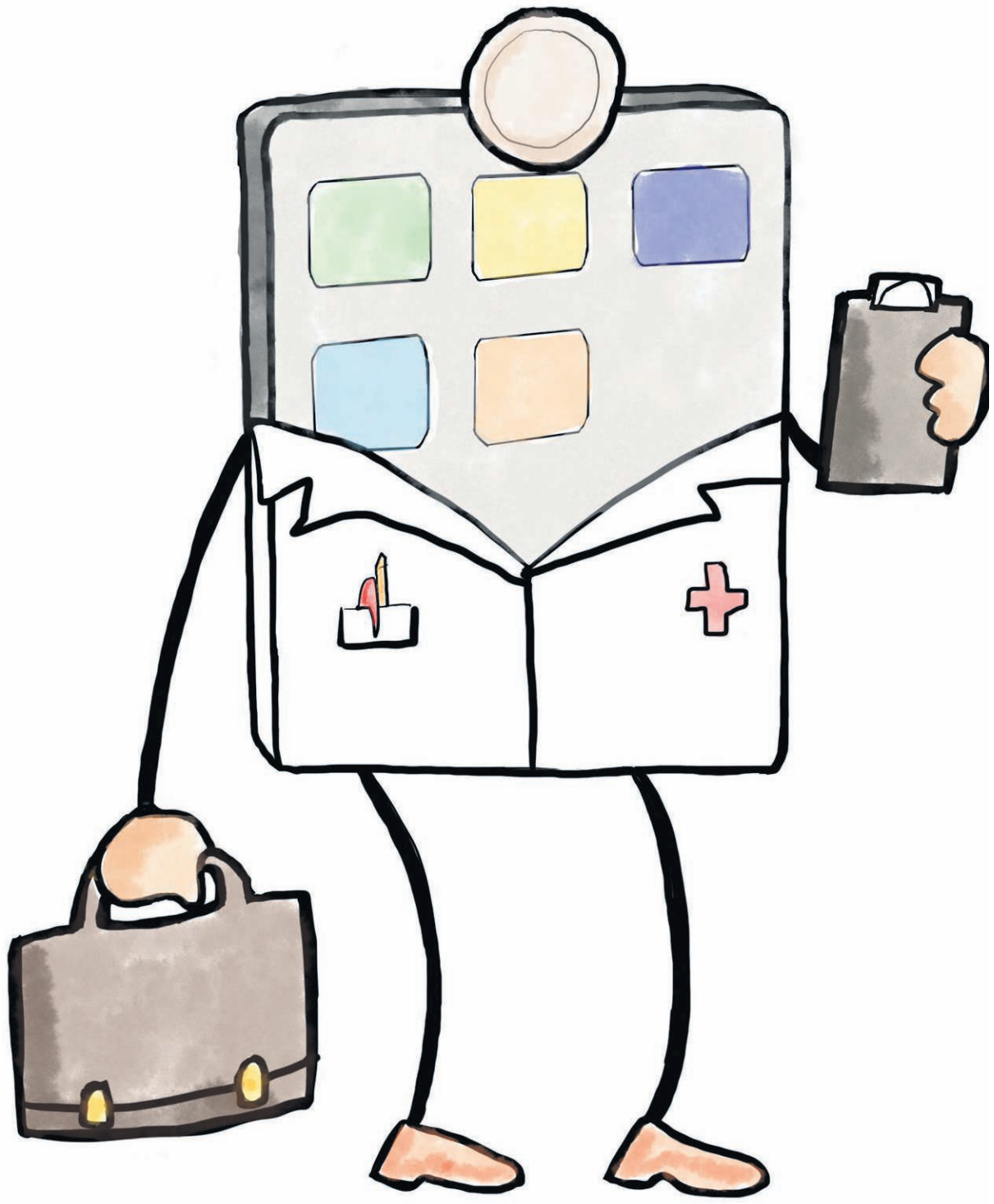
Digital health provider Babylon uses an AI chatbot to deliver medical advice to users via text messages, and may recommend an appointment with a GP either via a video call or a face to face appointment. The AI chatbot was created by inputting millions of data points from doctors and scientists to best match symptoms and background information to possible conditions. The underlying algorithm analyses the contents of the client's messages, matches them to medical terminology and uses the latest medical literature to predict new relationships between diagnoses and treatments, and symptoms and outcomes. From this it can draw a reliable link between a symptom and outcome, despite the billions of possible combinations of symptoms, risk factors and diseases. However, the accuracy of this algorithm has not been independently supported by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). Babylon claimed the chatbot to have equal accuracy to its human counterparts, scoring 81% on the final exam required for membership to the RCGP, but this could not be verified by the RCGP as they had not provided the questions, pointing out that while the service might be able to give an accurate diagnosis during a test, in a clinical setting a range of factors, such as emotional impact and situation, must be considered before delivering diagnoses, a task which currently only a human physician can accomplish.

The interest in digitalising therapeutics has led to the production of 'digiceuticals.' Akili Interactive has developed a video game which presents individuals suffering from ADHD with stimuli that activate areas of the brain exhibiting deficiencies, using adaptive algorithms to provide personalised care to improve attention and memory. Products targeting symptoms are also in development, such as self-stabilising cutlery for those with PD and exosuits to assist mobility, however clients may be unwilling to trust a video game or an app over a pill prescribed by their doctor. Until some solid regulations are in place, it is likely that the public will remain skeptical towards such treatments.

> *"The digitalisation of medicine is underway"*

These developments are exciting and more than a little daunting in a society already concerned with the amount of time spent on digital devices. Their benefit to health may be met with suspicion both from the public and professional domain. That said, technology's potential to lower the risk of medical error and provide easily accessible healthcare is huge.

The digitalisation of medicine is underway, but whether it can be successfully intergrated into society remains to be seen.



**▼ Illustration by Jakob Werbrouck for *Varsity***

# Opinion: Wilfried Zaha has every right to call out abuse

*Freya Lewis argues that we must challenge the racism and hypermasculinity so commonplace in football*

I have never enjoyed seeing football players sent off, particularly when I believe the perpetrator is innocent and the flash of red uncalled for, as was the case for young black winger Wilfried Zaha. During a game against Premier League rivals, Southampton, Zaha received two yellow cards for improper conduct – first for aggression and then for sarcastically clapping the referee's decision. He was subsequently sent off, the jeering of rival fans following him down the tunnel. In itself, this is fairly ordinary: a player loses his temper and is duly punished. However, recently I have been sensing more disturbing undercurrents in the way Zaha has been treated. Deciphering these undercurrents involves delving into the toxic culture that is entrenched in football – a culture of performative masculinity and intrinsic racism.

Despite being someone who comes from a football-obsessed family, I cannot help but be hesitant to truly immerse myself into the culture which surrounds it. The very things that make football culture such a positive thing also tarnish it. The collective mentality of supporters often seems to manifest itself in unhealthy ways, specifically in aggressive rivalries and the virulent abuse of 'rival' players.

As his career has progressed, Wilfried Zaha has been a particular victim of this. He has been labelled with a plethora of offensive and unfair charges: being a cheat, a diver and having an attitude problem are all characteristics that some have attributed to him. He is clearly targeted by opposition fans, who boo when he so much as touches the ball, and Watford striker Troy Deeney admitted that players "take turns in kicking him" on *BBC Radio Five Live*. The racial abuse he receives also makes explicit another dimension to what Zaha faces. Too often, we see young black players like Zaha (Sterling and Pogba are more high profile examples) disparaged by the footballing world for their 'attitude' or their personal lives. Negative stereotypes of black men, and what seems to be fear of them prospering in football, lies at the root of the criticism Zaha faces.

In the case of Wilfried Zaha, tensions have spiralled on two occasions already this season: as well as his recent dismissal against Southampton, he claimed he would need to have his "leg broken" for someone to be punished for fouling him, after a horror tackle by Etienne Capoue. What bothers me in particular is the reaction of those in the profession – namely football pundits. In the wake of these incidents, Zaha has been told to "grow up", called "idiotic" for reacting to abuse, and advised to take being targeted as "a sign of respect". This is irresponsible at best and downright dangerous at worse. In an age where we are rightly trying to raise awareness and sensitivity around men's mental health, surely we should be considering the emotional and psychological toll perpetual abuse has on young players, instead of reverting to 'man up'. Ignoring the racial dimension of Zaha's abuse is wilful ignorance.

How badly does Zaha need to be treated before those with a platform stop pathologizing the problem and blaming the victim? Football players are people and deserve compassion – no matter how good at dribbling they are. My hope is that this transcends the hypermasculine masquerades that permeate football culture, but as it stands young black players like Zaha continue to bear that burden for us all.

> *"Deciphering these undercurrents involves delving into the toxic culture that is entrenched in football"*

**Scrutinising football culture:** Freya Lewis examines the toxic treatment of black male footballers 35


▲ Substitute Kosi Nwuba scored a controversial equaliser as CUAFC salvaged a late 1-1 draw in a fiercely-contested encounter with BUCS Midlands 1a frontrunners, the University of Derby (BEN PHILLIPS)

# Rugby Blues dominate in 46-0 win against Leicester

**Michael Nguyen-Kim**
Sport Reporter

The CURUFC Women's team have further cemented their position as the best women's university rugby team in the region, all but securing the BUCS Midlands 1A Conference title in a 46-0 win over the University of Leicester on Wednesday afternoon.

Their win, which puts them 15 points clear at the top of the table with two games to play, was their eighth conference victory of the season, all of which were achieved with a bonus point.

Cambridge scored eight tries to zero in a clinical performance underpinned by strong set pieces and a dominant forward pack. The game featured seven individual try-scorers, with outside-centre Lara Gibson nabbing a double. This is the fifth time this year they have kept the opposition scoreless. he game was characterised by a flurry of scoring at the end of each half, with two tries scored in the final five minutes of the first half, and three in the final ten minutes of the second-half.

The brute physicality of Cambridge' forward pack was ever apparent, restricting Leicester's forward momentum and enabling easy passage down the field when Cambridge was in possession. The margin would surely have been even greater were it not for some basic handling errors in the first half and a pedestrian performance with the boot, with only three out of eight tries converted.

The early momentum lay with Cambridge, however. After locking Leicester in their own 22 after the kick-off, the Light Blues struck first. A line-out at the 22 was followed by a sweeping movement to the left side, the ball passing deftly amongst the backs before the home team touched down to open the scoring. The remainder of the first half was a tale of struggle. Cambridge's defensive pressure and dominance at the breakdown prohibited Leicester from making regular gains. Incredibly, at no point during the match did the visitors enter Cambridge's 22.

Unfortunately, a lack of discipline from the home team prevented them from fully capitalising on their opponents' offensive struggles. Too often, poor distribution and handling errors gave Leicester possession just as an attack was building momentum. The early penalty count was also lopsidedly against the hosts, although they were let off by Leicester's failure to find touch from the ensuing kick on at least three separate occasions.

> "*This is the fifth time this year they have kept the opposition scoreless*"

Despite playing less than perfect rugby, Cambridge went into half-time with a 20-0 lead. The ever-threatening Hannah Vandersluis scored in the 12th minute following a slick rightwards movement off a scrum on the 22, while a bullocking run by Emily Pratt saw her touch down beside the posts in the 29th. The bonus point was secured after the first-half siren, with Bryony Warnock-Horn scoring in the left corner after a dominant passage of play by the forwards.

The second-half saw a much more polished performance by the hosts. Their physical superiority coupled with some slick ball handling meant they were a threat whenever they had the ball. Leicester's predicament was cemented just after half-time, when Pratt shrugged off a tackle and set off down the ground.

With no-one but the fullback between her and the try-line, the No 8 squared her eyes and lowered her shoulders, poleaxing the defender with impeccable timing. The latter ended up sprawled across the grass, a poignant representation of her team's capitulation. Four more tries followed, with long-range efforts by Gibson and Schneemen padding the margin in the dying minutes.

The result leaves Cambridge on the verge of clinching the BUCS Midlands 1A competition for the second year in a row, with the second-placed University of Worcester having only a mathematical chance of catching up to the Light Blues. Cambridge lead Worcester by 15 points at the top of the table, which means that Worcester require a bonus point victory (five points) in each of their three remaining games, as well as Cambridge losses in their two remaining games by more than seven points each, to draw level. Assuming this were to happen, Worcester would take out the title due to their superior points differential (+501 versus Cambridge's +361).

Following their BUCS Trophy quarter-final at Cardiff Metropolitan University next Wednesday, Cambridge's two remaining conference games are both on the road. They visit the University of Nottingham on the 27th of February, before finishing their season at Worcester in a potentially title-deciding encounter.

**Cambridge (1-15):** Elgar, Pierce, Orriss, Taylor, Schneemen, Hoshizaki, F Shuttleworth, Pratt, Marks [c], Clark, Samuel, Bradshaw, Gibson, Warnock-Horn, Vandersluis. **Replacements:** Wilkinson, House, Spruzen, Prowling, J Shuttleworth, Holt, Osborne

**Leicester (1-15):** Butcher [c], Kruszewska, Wells, Dudson, Holland, Hoffman, Booth, Shakespeare, Dixon, Howell, Iliffe, May, Noble, Wilkinson, Iavarone. **Replacements:** Salmons, Gunn, King, Willems, Tucker

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