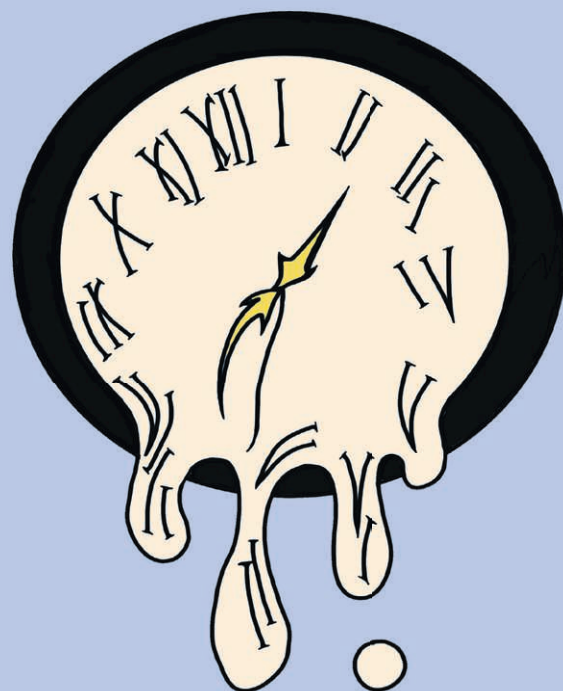


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No. 867

Wednesday 19th June 2019  
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# VARSLITY

## ‘Arrogant and uncollegial’: academics on Trinity’s USS withdrawal

**Chloe Bayliss**  
Deputy News Editor

“If Trinity will not support the wider academic community, the academic community has a duty to return the compliment”, said University Councillor Dr Jason Scott-Warren, speaking of the College’s recent decision to exit the USS. “What Trinity has done is to turn its back on cooperativity in favour of self-interest,” remarked Professor Richard Farndale.

Earlier this term, Trinity College made the landmark decision to exit the national pensions scheme for higher education employees, the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), a decision dubbed “Trexit”. Trinity academics who were previously part of this scheme will “become members of new pensions arrangements administered by the College, providing the same benefits as [the USS]”.

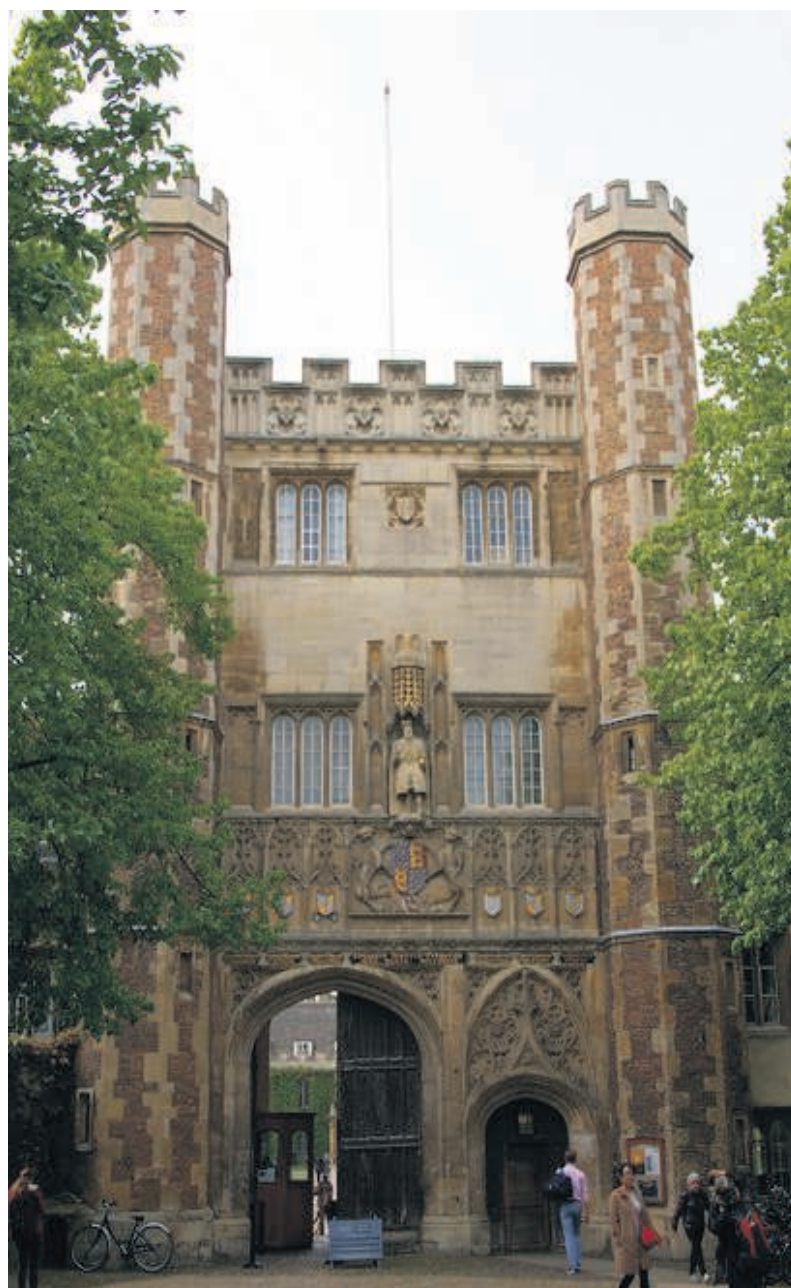
This decision has the potential to destabilise the entire pensions scheme, impacting staff nationwide. A senior USS official has told employers that the pensions scheme will be placed on “negative

watch” following Trinity’s withdrawal. If, following Trinity’s exit, a second sizable employer chooses to exit the scheme, official advisors say that the scheme’s overall rating of financial stability would be downgraded from ‘strong’ to ‘tending to strong’.

At the time of writing, over 450 Cambridge academics have pledged to withdraw all labour from Trinity College in protest of their decision, including supervisions for Trinity students. *Varsity* reached out to some of these academics to hear their views on Trinity’s actions, and on the potential impact of their boycott.

Trinity’s decision to leave the USS was motivated by the risk of less financially robust higher education institutions in the scheme collapsing, which could leave wealthier institutions, such as Trinity, taking up the shortfall. Several academics expressed frustration at this motivation, describing the small risk associated with the USS in a range of creative manners. Dr Waseem Yaqoob, Cambridge UCU Branch Secretary, described the likelihood of such a situation

Full story page 2-3 ►



▲ Academics have spoken out against Trinity’s decision to leave the national higher education pensions scheme: the USS (CHRISTOPHER HILTON/GEOGRAPH)

## Possible ‘failures of disclosure’ made by Noah Carl, report finds

**Rosie Bradbury**  
News Correspondent

The full report of one of St. Edmund’s investigations into the appointment of controversial research fellow Dr Noah Carl has revealed new details around his appointment process, including that a senior Eddie’s fellow has suggested there were “potential failures of disclosure” of Carl’s academic papers and of his participation in the London Conference on Intelligence — a secret eugenics conference held in past years at UCL.

The review, led by retired Lord Justice of Appeal Sir Patrick Elias, has argued that despite Carl’s non-disclosure, there was “no material failure on [his] part”, as there is no legal duty for job applicants “to disclose information which might undermine his application”.

However, the senior fellow has suggested that Carl’s omission of these details was an attempt to “downplay their existence”.

Furthermore the report, submitted to the college’s governing body and obtained by *Varsity* through a Freedom of Information Act request, has recommended that they adopt a policy of “making full disclosure an express

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Finalists share their reflections on Cambridge



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Student drug users are complicit in the trade’s abuses

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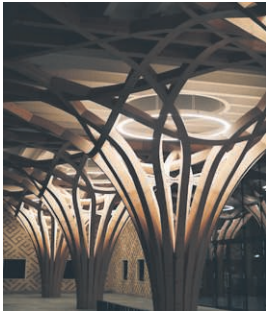
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Churches, chapels and mosques: the religious architecture of Cambridge



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# Academics on Trexit ‘Retreating to our own well-funded ivory tower’

**Chloe Bayliss** speaks to some of the academics withholding all labour, including supervisions from Trinity in light of the College’s recent decision, dubbed Trexit, to exit the USS

▶ Continued from front page

arising as “akin to that of an asteroid landing on the Great Gate”. Professor Richard Farndale, meanwhile, compared the probability “to that of a lightning bolt striking a specific individual on a Thursday in June at noon”.

Even Trinity itself referred to the risk as “remote” in an official statement.

For some, this boycott marks the latest step in “resisting shifts in the higher education sector in which the wealthiest institutions win out by focusing narrowly on self-interest”, as Dr Tyler Denmead asserted.

Many academics expressed a belief that Trinity has betrayed the University com-

munity by withdrawing from the USS, consequently ostracising itself through its own actions. Professor Nick Gay, a member of the department of biochemistry, described the College’s decision as “stupid, arrogant, self-serving and uncollegial”.

Looking beyond Cambridge, many also argued that Trinity has betrayed the higher education sector at large, letting down the many other institutions which are members of the USS. Yaqoob argued that to leave the scheme is to go against

the “interests of university staff and students all over the country”. Similarly, PhD Candidate Luke Hawksbee remarked that Cambridge colleges must recognise their responsibility to other higher education institutions, rather than “retreating to our own well-funded ivory tower at the expense of less fortunate colleagues and their students”.

The importance of collaborative approaches in higher education was frequently highlighted among the responses. As Professor Richard Farndale asserted: “We come to a university because we understand that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

Many academics expressed further outrage at the £30m sum which Trinity will pay in order to leave the pensions scheme. Lee-Six commented that academics cannot “stand by and watch Trinity squander millions of pounds on the one hand, and threaten the stability and well-being of a sector already in grave decline, on the other”. Yaqoob remarked that he hoped the new incoming Trinity Master would “recognise that there are

May 19th

Documents leaked to Varsity reveal that Trinity College Council voted to exit the USS, costing the College an expected £30m

May 22nd

An open letter is created and circulated, with academics pledging to withhold all labour from Trinity.

May 24th

Trinity confirms its exit from the USS, triggering the beginning of the boycott. Jo Grady, UCU General Secretary-elect, calls on Trinity fellows to ask College Council to reverse its decision.

May 30th

Academics rally outside Trinity Great Gate in opposition to the College Council’s decision to withdraw from USS. Meanwhile, following a new student-led open letter, the College holds an open meeting.

May 31st

Trinity formally withdraws from the USS, according to an official College statement.

June 5th

Protestors gather once more outside Trinity Great Gate in opposition to the USS withdrawal.



# News



many, many better and more prudent things for the college to be spending £30m on than a decision that will ruin long standing relationships with Cambridge academics for no good reason".

Farndale noted that there are "not many bodies that can afford to throw away £30 million so lightly", describing Trinity's decision as both "contemptuous and unnecessary".

As a result of the boycott, students at Trinity may no longer be able to receive specialist teaching in certain subject ar-

▲ Academics protest outside Trinity  
(ROSIE BRADBURY)

eas. Responding to concerns about the potential consequences of this, Professor Sarah Colvin remarked: "Think about the many other students across Cambridge and the UK who might not be able to be supervised by specialists in their subjects in future because the academic teaching profession has stopped looking attractive." A strong theme in many of the responses was a belief that Trinity's decision is indicative of increasing marketisation within higher education. Many academics frequently reiterated

that, although some "deeply regret" the potential impact on Trinity students, this issue should not be framed as staff acting against students, but rather in the interest of protecting the entire higher education sector from increasing marketisation.

Several academics affirmed that they did not take the decision to boycott Trinity, and Trinity students, lightly, but consider their protest action to be of the utmost importance. As Dr Leo Mellor noted: "boycotts, like strikes, are effec-

tive because people are inconvenienced - and institutions thus have to realise that their actions have consequences."

Richard Farndale went as far as to assert that the college is inviting "detri- ment upon its own students" by choos- ing to withdraw from the national pen- sions scheme. Another academic, who wished to remain anonymous, explained that "students will be better served by an institution that treats its staff well and an education sector not governed by profit margins." In a similar vein, several academics noted that students should be considered "fellow scholars" and not "customers to be satisfied".

Trinity College did not respond to Varsity's request for comment.

When asked what Trinity students can do in response to the boycott, vari- ous different suggestions were offered. Many academics encouraged students to sign the open letter currently in cir- culation, and to get in touch with senior members of the College demanding a reversal of their decision. Meanwhile, some called for more extreme action, with one PhD student suggesting an "oc- cupation of the college financial office" and "walk-outs from all college staff". Farndale proposed that students "ask for a proportion of their tuition fees to be refunded".

Some remain hopeful that their boy- cott may prompt Trinity to overturn their decision: according to Yaqoob, a Special College Meeting, demanded by Trinity academics, is set to be held on June 21st, and he believes that there is a "good chance" the move to exit the USS will be overturned in this meeting.

But should this not occur, Scott- Warren anticipates "an intensification of action", potentially leading to "a per- manent rift between Trinity College and the wider University community."

“  
We come to  
a university  
because we  
understand  
that the  
whole is  
greater than  
the sum of  
its parts  
”

## Write for Varsity in Michaelmas term

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## News

# Fifteen colleges to cooperate with slavery inquiry

Jess Ma  
Senior News Correspondent

Amid increasing calls for college involvement in the University's formal inquiry into its historic links to the slave trade, fifteen colleges have confirmed that they will be cooperating, either through granting researchers archival access or facilitating college-based research.

Of the University's thirty-one colleges, eighteen colleges responded to *Varsity*'s request for confirmation of their involvement in the two-year academic inquiry which seeks to evaluate the University's material and intellectual histories in relation to its contribution to, and the benefit it drew from, the Atlantic slave trade.

Fifteen colleges have confirmed that they will be opening their archives to the two post-doctoral researchers appointed to conduct the inquiry over the next two years. These were Clare Hall, Churchill, Downing, King's, Magdalene, Murray Edwards, Newnham, Pembroke, Queens', Selwyn, Sidney Sussex, St. Catharine's, Trinity, Trinity Hall and Wolfson.

Further to this, King's, St Catharine's, Downing and Queens' have announced plans for college-based research into their ties to the slave trade.

King's was the first to announce this, stating that it will "specifically encourage research by the College's own stu-

“  
If there are  
any links, we  
are keen to  
discover and  
acknowledge  
them  
”

dents into the College's past connections, financial and intellectual, with slave trading, slavery, and abolition." The College also plans to encourage student-led research on "contemporary forms of labour coercion".

A report summarising these findings will be produced in October 2021, after which the College will decide whether further steps should be taken.

A spokesperson for St. Catharine's told *Varsity* that the College's plans include funding research bursaries for students, who will work in collaboration with library staff and the College's archivist. This research will be compiled in the form of a report, to be presented to the College in Michaelmas term.

Queens' will also be undertaking its own research, but a spokesperson told *Varsity* that they plan to share any findings from this research with the University-wide project. Downing similarly stated that they will share any findings from their own inquiry with the University, adding that "If there are any links, we are keen to discover and acknowledge them."

Despite not launching full inquiries, five other colleges have carried out other forms of independent research in response to the main University inquiry.

Although not carrying out an inquiry of its own, Pembroke has appointed a new archivist, "thereby facilitating re-

search into possible links with the slave trade". The archivist will "communicate relevant material" to the University's Legacies of Slavery inquiry.

Sidney Sussex, Churchill and Homerton all indicated that they had undertaken initial research into their links to slavery, but had found none so far, and do not plan to launch full inquiries.

A spokesperson for Homerton told *Varsity* that this gave reason to assume that the College "has had no association with the slave trade". They further highlighted the College's involvement in the abolition movement, stating that Homerton was "since its inception a part of the dissenting movement" through its connections to the prominent abolitionists John Pye-Smith and Samuel Morley.

Along similar lines, Magdalene informed *Varsity* that the College have begun work on an independent research project focusing on the abolitionist Peter Peckard, who was Master of Magdalene from 1781 until his death in 1797.

Magdalene have yet to make a formal decision about whether to get involved with the University inquiry, but its Master, Rowan Williams, told *Varsity* that initial discussions are "sympathetic" to a full collaboration and it is likely that their archives will be opened.

Fitzwilliam, where the chair of the Legacies of Slavery Inquiry, Professor

“  
[The college  
was] since  
its inception  
a part of the  
dissenting  
movement  
”

Martin Millett, is a fellow, similarly stated that it is currently looking into how best to cooperate with the inquiry.

Despite opening their archives to the inquiry, Selwyn, Murray Edwards, Churchill, Clare Hall and Wolfson all considered it unlikely they would contribute significantly, as they were established after the legal abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in 1833.

Neither Darwin nor St. Edmund's stated that they would be cooperating with the inquiry, similarly citing the timeframe in which they were established. Homerton also told *Varsity* that it had no current plans to cooperate with the inquiry as it had not been "approached" by the University.

A spokesperson from Murray Edwards College expressed concern about the methodology of the inquiry, although it will be opening its archives. In particular, they argued that the "parameters of the inquiry and the scope of 'coerced labour'" needed to be more firmly established, and without this "the impact of its findings will be limited".

Thirteen colleges did not respond to multiple *Varsity* requests for comment on their cooperation, although King's issued an independent statement. These were St John's, Gonville & Caius, Peterhouse, King's, Jesus, Christ's, Clare, Corpus Christi, Emmanuel, Robinson, Girton, Hughes Hall, and Lucy Cavendish.



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# Newnham reduces planned rent increase

**Cait Findlay**  
Senior News Correspondent

Following marked backlash to a proposed 2.7% rent hike for current first-year undergraduates, Newnham College Council has confirmed a 0.5% rent reduction for first-years holding a termly licence, and a 2.2% increase for those holding a continuous licence, to be implemented at the beginning of the 2019-20 academic year.

These changes will see all first- and second-year students at Newnham paying £155 per week in rent next year, regardless of licence length.

This means that current first-year students holding a continuous licence will see an increase of £3.35 from their current weekly rent of £151.65, and those with termly licences, currently £155.85 per week, will see a marginal decrease of 85p a week.

The College will also introduce automatic flat rate college rent bursaries for all those in receipt of the Cambridge Bursary, which would decrease the weekly rent for its recipients by £20. This would mean that eligible students would no longer have to apply to the College for rent bursaries, which would instead be credited automatically.

The College informed *Varsity* that it estimates the rent bursaries will cost the College approximately £60,000 in

2019-20, while a further £170,000 has been earmarked to provide discretionary support to both home and international students in need of additional support.

There will be no increase in rent for the College's current second- and returning third-year students, who already pay marginally lower rents than the College's current first-year students. Their rent will remain fixed at £149.68 per week for a termly licence (30 weeks) and £145.65 per week for a continuous licence (38 weeks).

In February, the announcement of plans to increase rent by 2.7% for all current first-year students was met with fierce backlash from Newnham students and Newnham Cut the Rent campaign (CTR), with a banner-drop staged on the College's offer-holder day in February in protest of the proposal. One banner, dropped outside the Porters' Lodge, read 'Rent is a feminist issue'.

Speaking to *Varsity*, a spokesperson for Newnham CTR said the group is "really pleased to see that student concerns have been listened to by the college and represented by the JCR, who did amazing work negotiating on this."

An open meeting between students and senior members of the College was organised last term by the JCR committee following mounting concerns around rent. Students shared their concerns and queries with the College Principal Dame

Carol Black, the then-Bursar Donald Hearn, and Accountant Graham Gale.

The spokesperson for Newnham CTR continued: "In the current climate we think this is truly a good first step towards fairer rent. We'd like to see this conversation continuing, with the College constantly reassessing how it can improve accommodation standards and reduce rent, especially for those who are tightest pinched" currently.

Speaking on the changes to rent subsidies, they noted that this was "a really good move."

"We would encourage the bursar to look at how this bursary can take into account students' financial situations in a more nuanced way.

"That's not to undermine what a fantastic first step this is, we are viewing this as a win."

In recent years, student dissatisfaction regarding rent at Newnham has been consistently high. The 2017-18 Big Cambridge Survey reported that just 2% of Newnham students believed that their rent was "fair", and in January, 60% of respondents to a survey conducted by Newnham CTR did not feel that the price of their rent was equal to the standard of their accommodation.

Student cut the rent campaigns have been launched at other colleges at the University including Robinson and Murray Edwards.

## WILD FITZ MEMBERS

### New hedgehog additions to Fitz

Fitzwilliam College has welcomed two new members, Jasper and Gerda. The spiky duo are nocturnal and most active in the summer, just like most Cambridge students. However, they are unlikely to attend lectures or supervisions for one very important reason - they are hedgehogs. The pair have been treated at Sherpeth Wildlife Park but are now well enough to be released into the wilds of Fitzwilliam College. It is hoped that more will follow in their wake over the next year, so Fitz members may want to watch their step.

## SHATTERING NEWS

### Shop window smashed thrice

Homeware shop Ark, on Peas Hill, has had its window smashed for the third time in the past month by the same man. A handbag was used to break the glass in the first time, on the second, he used a tool and on the third, he threw a brick. Michael Hartlep has pleaded guilty and now faces 12 weeks in prison for the three charges. As nothing was stolen from the shop on any of the occasions, the police believe that Hartlep simply wants to go to prison.

## BME MYTH-BUSTERS

### University launches YouTube campaign

The University of Cambridge has released a YouTube series aimed at encouraging more BME applications to Cambridge. The 'Get in Cambridge' campaign is fronted by Youtuber and Robinson alumna, Courtney Daniella. On June 6th, it was announced that the proportion of BME students at Cambridge had reached a peak of 23.5%, but they are underrepresented in undergraduate intakes, with only 2.4% being black compared to the national figure of 3.4%. Daniella features in a 26-part series showcasing BME undergraduates.

## BACK TO BACK BACH

### 'Bach-a-thon' a resounding success

On the 17th June, schoolchildren paired with organists at Pembroke College Chapel to perform the complete organ works of J. S. Bach for an uninterrupted 24 hours. This was the third annual 'Bach-a-Thon', organised by the Choirs of Pembroke College. The feat of endurance was not just a fun event for Bach devotees, but a charitable enterprise, raising funds for the Muze Trust which supports musical education in Zambia and promotes the country's heritage.

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## News

# ‘It takes over your life, every day, every minute’ Evie Aspinall reflects on her year at CUSU

*The outgoing CUSU President speaks to **Maia Wyn Davies** about the all-consuming nature of the job, feeling the need to prove yourself, and navigating media scrutiny*

**Maia Wyn Davies**  
Senior News Editor

Asked to give an insight into her time as CUSU President, Evie Aspinall pauses, reminding herself under her breath: “Careful words.”

As Aspinall nears the end of her tenure as President of Cambridge University Students’ Union, we sit down to discuss a year of structural reform, intense national media scrutiny, and of grappling with a sense that she had something to prove.

“Loads of people were like ‘can she do it?’” Aspinall recalls the anxious weeks leading up to her first day as President. Positioning herself as the ‘outsider’ candidate during the 2018 Lent elections, where she ran against a prominent figure in student activism in Siyang Wei, and a familiar CUSU face and student conservative in Connor MacDonald, Aspinall came to the role with the least direct experience of CUSU of the three candidates.

“I thought ‘well, actually, I’ve done lots of things that *aren’t* CUSU: I’ve been a women’s officer, I was president of like four societies in my last year. I know what I’m doing; I can do this.”

But the skeptical response to her election, Aspinall notes, was as though people were simply wondering “‘Will she get it?’”

So, too, was the Pembroke HSPS graduate concerned about what her fellow sabbatical officers - many of whom had gained prominence within student activism and organising - would think about her. “At the start, I thought ‘Oh my goodness — they’re going to hate me.’”

This anxiety quickly dissolved. “I met with a few of them informally beforehand and was like ‘they’re fine’, and they were like, ‘she’s fine actually’.

“Elections blow everything up, and the more you talk to them, the more you realise you agree on things.” Now, she describes the outgoing sabbatical team as good friends.

But the pressures persisted throughout the year, and this not in small part due to what Aspinall perceives to be the unique position of Cambridge in the national British consciousness, as well as the political nature of the student body.

When asked whether being the SU President at Cambridge is different to being an SU President elsewhere, she responds without missing a beat: “Definitely.”

This year, CUSU has repeatedly been

subject to national media attention, with various decisions and statements spun into ‘debates’ surrounding ‘snowflake students’, a term used derisively to refer to the supposedly hyper-sensitive student population.

“It’s almost like no matter what you say, they want to come for you. And by the end of it you’re like, ‘whatever, this isn’t personal’. It feeds their narrative, it makes sense to them.

“But it’s hard, and I think other students’ unions don’t always get the same scrutiny, although they do get a lot. Students’ unions are the epitome of ‘student snowflakes’: they tend to be quite left wing, they tend to be political, they tend to care about student welfare, stuff that you can now say is ‘snowflakey’.”

“You also have a very active student body in Cambridge that’s very political,” she remarks positively, “so [they] will always want you to take a stance on something — there is so much pressure to take a stance — but the moment you take a political stance, you then have the backlash which comes with that.”

“But it’s one of those things: You put yourself in the public eye, you have to be prepared to deal with it. Maybe you’re not quite as ready for it as you’re expecting, but - yeah.”

These moments of media attention were the hardest moments of her tenure, and not simply due to the personal toll they took.

“You don’t actually have a chance to counter the narrative, so you just have to sit and wade the tide until it’s over. It’s also just really annoying because it’s a distraction”.

Being rendered “completely useless, and not doing what you want to do” when dealing with media attention, Aspinall notes, was particularly challenging.

A further challenge Aspinall highlights is the short tenure of a year held by the CUSU President, which she deems “nowhere near” enough time in which to carry out the role. She explains that while sabbatical teams can certainly “get the ball rolling” on the changes they wish to enact, implementing changes at a University level is “the slowest thing in the entire universe.”

“Everything takes years and years and years and years - and it’s so frustrating, because you’re like ‘oh, I’m going to do this thing’, but you know it’s not going to happen for like seven years.”

“Everything has about fifty committees,” she notes exasperatedly, later going on to name Card Committee - “the

“*The moment you take a political stance, then you have the backlash that comes with that*”



committee is just for your CAMcards” - as one of the many committees on which she has sat this year.

For this reason, she says that some of the things she is proudest of having achieved this year are still yet to come to fruition.

“That’s the thing - the stuff we do, you can’t see, because it’s in committees. And even stuff that’s happening now, it’s like, ‘oh my god, this is so exciting and I know it’s going to be great, but students don’t know about it, and when they *do* find out about it it’ll be when it’s implemented in two years.”

Working on the University’s mental health strategy, bringing college inequality under the remit of the Student Support Initiative, and kickstarting the provision of easily-accessible and transparent bursary information across colleges are among the work Aspinall is most proud of, and would want her year at CUSU to be remembered for.

“But the thing is, I don’t know how [students] will remember it. [...] Ideally, if they knew what we were doing - college stuff, mental health stuff - I think we’ve genuinely made some really big steps in those areas.”

She admits that, perhaps for this reason, she struggled to switch off from the job after the working day had finished. “Cutting off after five is important, but it’s hard because I know students don’t work to those hours and I don’t want to be seen to not be doing my job.”

“That’s what you worry about. You’re

▲ **Aspinall positioned herself as the ‘outsider’ candidate** (OLIVER RHODES)

like ‘oh, people think I’m not doing anything.’”

More immediate change has been possible at the college level, which Aspinall views as a key improvement made by this year’s sabb team.

“The best thing we’ve done is engage more with JCRs and MCRs [...] They have more support than ever, they get on with CUSU, they feedback to us and we feedback to them, which empowers them in a way they weren’t before.”

She cites the coordination across colleges of opposing submitting welfare data to the Office for Students [OfS] under the Prevent duty earlier this year as an example of the value of engaging colleges.

“We were able to lobby, and multiple colleges didn’t do what they were supposed to because we informed JCRs who then informed colleges. That caused all sorts of a shitshow - we still get shit at committees for it [...] because the OfS got really annoyed”.

“But that’s fine - that was the point.”

The job, Aspinall reflects, has been “more stressful than [she] could have ever imagined. It takes over your entire life. Everything you do, every day, every minute.”

“It’s a lot, but it is really good and I’m glad I’ve done it.

“It’s really nice to have an actual job where you’re making a difference, and you’re you’re like ‘actually, I care about what I’m doing.’ So it’s been really good — just tiring.”

“At the start I thought, ‘oh my goodness, they’re going to hate me’”

“We still get a lot of shit for that - but that was the point”

“It’s almost like no matter what you say, they want to come for you”



# CUSU accounts show larger deficit than previous year

**Catherine Lally**  
Associate Editor

The audited CUSU accounts for the 2017-2018 academic year have highlighted a loss of £10,868 – more than £4,000 greater than the losses made in the academic year ending in June 2017, but significantly lower than initially expected, as the students' union continues to pursue financial health.

Its total income of nearly £749,000 in June 2018 marked a decline from around £785,000 in 2017, although CUSU spending for the year was also down by more than £31,000. CUSU has made an overall loss since 2015 through a major decline in commercial activities. Losses since the 2014-2015 academic year are now likely to reach around £140,000.

Last year's losses of £6,836 were actually seen as a boon for CUSU, given initial losses were forecast at £140,000 in that year's budget. Meanwhile, for the 2017-2018 academic year, expected losses were set at £75,000 – markedly higher than the £10,868 noted in the Charity Commission documents.

In comment to *Varsity*, CUSU President Evie Aspinall said: "In 2017 the Union made a shift to move away from print publications contracts as they were

no longer generating the level of income that we had come to rely on in previous years," and added that as a result, CUSU had "planned for a significant loss and budgeted to see a £75,000 deficit for the financial year 2017-18."

"It was always the plan to replace this income with other commercial sources and especially to grow our digital advertising business over the next three years. It is due to the excellent work of our business team that we are ahead of schedule in the growth of our income from digital advertising and we [were] able to deliver [a] much lower deficit of just under £11,000."

Aspinall further explained: "We also saw a smaller than budgeted income from our shared activities with the Graduate Union, mainly due to the re-organisation of our reception and shared staff resources, which meant that we received roughly £10,000 less than we had predicted from the GU."

The vast majority of CUSU's income last year came from donations, which rose by more than £13,000 to over £400,000. Income from charitable activities grew by more than £14,000 over the course of the year. However, this was also a result of more than £9,000 in income from the Sexual Health Service – which was not

counted as a charitable activity in 2017. Aspinall noted that it had "previously... been counted as income to our shop and then the expenditure for the sexual health supplies had been put against the shop income," so "in order to correctly allocate this as grant income the funds (and expenditure) have been moved to charitable activities. The remaining increase in charitable income is due to cost of living and inflationary increases to our grants." SUAS also brought in more than £5,000 in 2018 as opposed to 2017.

CUSU's balance sheet was looking hopeful for CUSU this particular academic year, with boosted funding of £80,000 from the central University, estimated to bring 2018-2019 losses to just under £3,000. In March, the proposed budget

for the 2019-2020 academic year saw a proposed £5,522 surplus – the first in recent years. CUSU has also benefited from a shift away from JCR and MCR contributions, previously set at £6.67 for undergraduates and £3.30 for graduate students, and has moved towards a college levy system. This means that colleges with JCRs disaffiliated from CUSU,

notably Gonville & Caius and Corpus Christi, will not be able to avoid financial contributions to CUSU.

Aspinall said that "now we have moved to a levies funding model we expect our financial performance to continue to improve with near enough break even expected for 2018-19 and 2019-20."

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## A new union? The CUSU/GU merger, explained

**Maia Wyn Davies**  
Senior News Editor

Proposals for a single students' union to represent both undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University were first presented to students at both CUSU and GU Councils in early May. A draft proposal for this new union, which will seek to achieve parity in undergraduate and postgraduate representation, included a new sabbatical team structure which would see the union run by eight sabbatical officers, rather than the six present CUSU officers.

CUSU currently represents both undergraduate and postgraduate students at Cambridge, while the GU represents postgraduate students alone. Discussions concerning merging the two unions were prompted by a GU survey, conducted over the Easter vacation, which revealed a poignant sense among the postgraduate community that CUSU and the GU did not represent them, and that they did not understand the various systems of representation and support available to them.

On 13th May, proposals for a single union were presented to the two Councils, followed by a three-week student consultation period. The proposals included two co-presidents, a full-time BME sabbatical officer, two access and education officers, and one welfare and communities officer,

as well as some of CUSU's existing sabbatical officers. The student consultation period turned out majority support for these proposals as a whole among both undergraduate and postgraduate students, with particular support for a BME officer. Respondents were critical of introducing two access and education officers, which would replace the separate roles, currently on the CUSU sabbatical team, of access and funding officer and education officer.

Last week, CUSU Council voted to pass over ongoing work on the merger to the new sabbatical team, with student consultation to continue over the Summer in the hopes of presenting a new draft proposal to CUSU and GU Councils at the beginning of Michaelmas. One member of the incoming sabbatical team voted against this move.

"Now that it is going forward, even if there have been policy differences previously, it will require all of the incoming sabbatical team to work together to find the best solution," said incoming CUSU President Edward Parker Humphreys. Parker Humphreys, who is set to head up an all-white sabbatical team next year, also expressed his support for introducing a full-time BME sabbatical role.

"Even though it's not something we campaigned on, we've been mandated to do it, and I think we all recognise as sabbatical officers that we are ultimately accountable to CUSU Council".

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## News

# One year on Cambridge's BME counsellor initiative

**Charlotte Lillywhite**  
Senior News Editor

The University hailed the first year of its introduction of allowing students to make appointments with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) counsellors as a “total success”: Geraldine Dufour, the head of the University Counselling Service, expressed confidence that “with three BME permanent counsellors in the service now, waiting to see a specific BME counsellor has not been an issue”.

Established last year under the leadership of Micha Frazer-Carroll, psychology graduate and at the time CUSU Welfare and Rights Officer, the University noted that thirteen requests had been made to see a BME counsellor so far.

Frazer-Carroll pushed for the programme after circulating a CUSU/GU survey on mental health amongst BME students last year, which found that 79% of respondents felt that they’d “benefit” from seeing a BME counsellor if given the option.

Talking to *Varsity*, Frazer-Carroll noted that “speaking to someone who has experience of racism and racialisation can put students at ease, decrease time spent explaining things, and lower the likelihood of being re-traumatised by racism in the therapeutic setting”.

The BME students *Varsity* spoke to concurred with this view, describing how a lack of cultural understanding was a key issue encountered when speaking to white counsellors, and having to explain specific racialised experiences could be “exhausting”.

“Mental health manifests differently in white and black people”, said one student,



▲ The new Student Services Centre, where the UCS is now based (SIR CAM/UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)

and this comes with a “stigma, as white people don’t understand”. Frazer-Carroll similarly cited “a lack of understanding of the impact of race on mental health” as a key reason for the programme.

Dufour acknowledged this, stating that the introduction of BME counsellors “offers students understanding of [the] ‘cultural context of issues’”.

But most of the students *Varsity* reached out to had not heard of the scheme – only three out of eighteen students to whom we reached out knew what it was. One student, previously unaware of the programme, told *Varsity* that they choose to receive counselling

in London rather than at University, feeling that requesting a counsellor from the UCS was too much of a risk.

When queried on low student awareness of the scheme, a spokesperson for the University stated that the University “recognises the importance of raising the visibility of the BME counselling service”. Responding to *Varsity*’s further questions regarding problems cited by BME students and recent statistics on their mental health, they said: “the University’s priority is our students’ welfare and we are committed to listening to their experiences”.

When Frazer-Carroll announced the

decision to enable students to request BME counsellors last year, she described the programme as a “vital first step” in understanding the need for and providing intersectional mental health support at the University, after a “long and difficult” process to push for this representation.

But, speaking to *Varsity* last year, she emphasised that there was “still some way to go in terms of support for BME students”. Writing in the *Guardian*, she added: “the same groups will continue to slip through the cracks if our services do not respond to the social and political climates that they are inextricably intertwined with”.

A year later, this was echoed by the BME students who spoke to *Varsity*, one of whom felt that the “systems that are supposed to help us... aren’t doing it”.

In their statement to *Varsity*, a University spokesperson pointed to the more recent launch of other initiatives, including the University Diversity Fund, which has so far received applications for 50 projects from Cambridge staff and students. The spokesperson stated that this “forms part of a wider strategy and supports work that is already under way. Speaking to *Varsity* last week however, another student warned: “even if your mental health is tick-tock you’re pretty isolated [as a BME student]... coming here was a shock,” and added that feelings of “not being good enough” are “reinforced in every single space you’re in”. Another student cited constant microaggressions as triggering “anxious and depressive episodes”.

This is reflected in the fact that the 2018 CUSU Big Cambridge Survey (BCS) found that 79% of black students disagreed that Cambridge is “a positive place

to live and study”, while 52% reported experiencing “racially prejudiced attitudes” during their time here.

Last year, a BME open mic event hosted by Newnham and Robinson’s JCR BME officers was “forcibly shut down by the Bar staff upon receiving complaints by white students”, according to an on-line statement by FLY, Cambridge’s network for BME women and non-binary people.

BME students are also disproportionately affected by wider issues such as the University’s Prevent strategy, which has been campaigned against by student organisations such as Decolonise Cambridge and FLY, alongside college BME Officers. Alongside these struggles, BME students told *Varsity* that the onus is “always” on people of colour to seek out their own help, to the extent that students have had to “become each other’s counsellors”.

Despite this, the students *Varsity* spoke to emphasised the strength of support they have received from the BME community in Cambridge, and celebrated the ongoing efforts of the CUSU BME Campaign to establish a BME forum on mental health and to create the position of a BME Disability and Mental Health Officer next year.

Affirming the joy of being “shameless and unapologetic”, they stated that they are committed to “making space[s]” where this is possible “for themselves”. But students cautioned that these “conversations [are] only going on in a limited group of people” and “everyone is so tired”. Students emphasised the work being undertaken to further the understanding of the “critical intersection” between race and mental health.

# Senior Eddie’s fellow suggested Noah Carl sought to ‘downplay’ certain research papers, review finds

► Continued from front page

requirement” of research fellow applicants.

The report also found that Carl was the only short-listed candidate to have his work assessed by one academic external to the Nominations Committee — while all other candidates had two assessors — due to one potential assessor not having responded to the college’s request. Also detailed are several actions which members of the Committee had not been obligated to take, but which were available to them during the appointment process and which would have revealed the nature of Carl’s past work and connections. Listed on Carl’s CV was a link to his personal blog, where several posts draw direct attention to his published articles on *OpenPsych*, which have been criticised by academics and students as “ethically suspect and methodologically flawed”.

Furthermore according to the review, “only one of the fellows on the Nominations Committee had googled Dr Carl but he did not turn up anything which caused him concern”. However, a *New*

*Statesman* article, published “over two weeks before Dr Carl’s interview”, had “specifically [drawn] attention to the fact that Dr Carl had been a participant” at the London Conference on Intelligence.

The Elias report also notes that “it is obvious, even a cursory reading of some of [Carl’s] papers, that many are racist and Islamophobic and that the methodology is inadequate and often confuses correlation and causation”, and that googling Carl would have revealed his links with the London Conference on Intelligence and controversial blogger Emil Kirkegaard.

The report concluded that no senior staff in college “acted negligently or without due diligence” in selecting Carl, rejecting concerns by students and academics that “the appointment process for this fellowship was not carried out with the degree of academic rigour, diligence and respect for principles of equality and diversity that we would expect.”

Members of St Edmund’s CR took their concerns to the college about Carl’s work attempting to link race, criminality, and IQ in November, and an open letter condemning Carl’s appointment has



▲ A peaceful protest against the appointment of research fellow Noah Carl, held in late January (HASSAN RAJA)

been signed by over 586 academics. The college commissioned two investigations into Dr Carl — the findings of which led to the firing of Noah Carl in late April.

Citing personal data protections, the college has not released a redacted version of the internal investigation chaired by Emeritus Fellow Professor Michael Herrtage which looked into Carl’s research and connections, and which concluded a “poor scholarship of this problematic body of Dr Carl’s work”, according to a statement by the college.

*Varsity* has contacted Dr Noah Carl for comment on the findings of the report.

Despite the report’s conclusion that there was no negligence by the college, it has recommended several changes to the college’s hiring procedures, including that the Nominations Committee google the chosen or shortlisted candidates, establish links with the relevant university department or faculty of the fellow, and make full disclosure by candidates “an express requirement”.

In a statement to *Varsity*, a spokesperson for the college said: “The College has accepted the Elias report and is conducting a review in accordance with the recommendations.”



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## News

# Locked Out: The twelve colleges kicking students out on the night of their May Ball

- Many colleges bar students from their accommodation on the night of their May Ball
- *Varsity* has found that this disproportionately affects disabled and lower income students

Amy Batley  
Investigations Editor

A *Varsity* investigation has found that students who either do not want to or are unable to attend their college May Ball or June Event face difficulties when restricted from their college accommodation while the event takes place. Concerns have been raised by both students with disabilities and those who feel that May Ball tickets are unaffordable.

Freedom of Information requests submitted by *Varsity* have found that 12 colleges will prevent some, if not all, students who live in on-site accommodation from accessing their college room on the night of their college May Ball or June event this May Week.

Corpus Christi, Darwin, Downing, Emmanuel, Gonville & Caius, Jesus, Magdalene, Pembroke, Peterhouse, Sidney Sussex, Trinity and Trinity Hall all require at least some students, if not all, living on-site to vacate their rooms on the evening of the College's May Ball or June event.

The number of students required to vacate their college accommodation varies between colleges. Whilst Sidney Sussex requires only 9 students to vacate, 350 students will be restricted from accessing their accommodation on the night of Emmanuel May Ball.

On the afternoon prior to the event, students at Emmanuel, Magdalene and Sidney Sussex will be restricted from their accommodation as early as noon. Return times the following morning range from 3am at Trinity Hall to 6am at Emmanuel, Jesus and Magdalene.

Only Pembroke and Gonville & Caius do not restrict access for students who are not attending the event. These colleges justify access restrictions for students who are attending as necessary to create an "element of surprise when they walk into the College". The other colleges provide various explanations for restricting students who do not attend the event. A spokesperson for Peterhouse claimed that restrictions are necessary "to ensure that the Ball isn't gate-crashed by students who have not paid to attend, which would be unfair to those who have."

At Sidney Sussex, access restrictions are justified as necessary in order to ensure that nobody under the age of 18 can attend, whilst also preventing the event from exceeding capacity. A spokesperson at Jesus explained that trying to prevent access for people without a ticket creates health and safety concerns. This "necessitates [that] the external doors of each staircase are locked down, preventing access into and out of the area. As such there are health and safety considerations, as the building would need to be evacuated in case of fire"

Of the colleges which restrict access to accommodation, only Jesus and Pembroke make explicit reference to the May Ball or June event in accommodation contracts.

Despite some colleges restricting access to accommodation for up to 18 hours, none of the colleges provide any financial reimbursement.

An undergraduate student at Jesus criticised the lack of compensation offered by their college. The student, who claims that "it's horrible to turf people out of their homes just for a party", previously slept on a friend's floor during the May Ball that they did not wish to attend because it was "overly expensive".

The student proposed that "the College should offer enough money to pay for a good hotel so that students can choose to take the money and go somewhere else".

Four colleges- Darwin, Downing, Jesus and Trinity Hall- propose that they have either previously provided support for students who need to alternative accommodation for the night, or are willing to if needed at a future event.

Two colleges - Queens' and Selwyn - require residents to temporarily leave their accommodation in the afternoon on the day of the event for a 'security sweep', after which they can return. A Queens' student whose accommodation is located where the security sweep takes place, described the process as 'a complete nuisance'. The student questioned if there was not an easier way to for the College to prepare which does not give students only two hours to get ready for the event.

350

**Emma students were restricted from accessing their rooms**

6am

**When students at Emma, Jesus, and Magdalene are allowed to return to their rooms**

Of the colleges which will hold a May Ball or June Event this year, six - Clare, Homerton, Hughes Hall, Kings, St. John's and Wolfson - will not restrict students from accessing their on-site accommodation. These colleges explained that restrictions were unnecessary because the size of the college or location of event entertainment means that the events can be held without restricting access.

A part-time undergraduate student at Emmanuel College explains that accommodation restrictions during May Balls can create particular difficulties for disabled students. This May Week is the first year the student will not be attending Emmanuel May Ball. As a wheelchair



▲ Fireworks at St John's May Ball (SIMON LOCK)

user, they are uncertain about finding accommodation which is suitable for their needs. The student explains that they has also had problems in previous years when they have attended May Ball. As a wheelchair user, the college policy that rooms are to be vacated at noon on the day of the Ball creates difficulties. Not only does it mean that the student must carry their belongings needed for the Ball for the afternoon, but finding an accessible place to get ready is also difficult as many colleges don't have accommodation which is suitable for their needs. In the student's first year, this meant that they "had to crawl up some stairs to get ready at a friend's and it was painful". In subsequent years, special arrangements have been made with Emmanuel college and May Ball organisers to allow the student to stay in their college accommodation to get ready for the Ball.

However, movement around college remained restricted which meant that the student and their guest could not go outside freely and were locked inside their accommodation for 8 hours. When they did wish to leave, the student had to wait for the porters, who were preoccupied with the May Ball set up, to unlock the doors. Emmanuel College did not respond to *Varsity's* request for comment on this case.

Accommodation restrictions have also caused problems for students with mental health issues. One student spoke of not being allowed back into college accommodation despite suffering from a mental health episode, triggered by their post-traumatic stress disorder, during the May Ball. The student felt that they had to leave, yet college insisted that they must remain off-campus until the ball was over. The student, in a vulnerable state, spent the remaining hours on the streets.

Another student told *Varsity* that having to find alternative accommodation for the night triggered their pre-existing anxiety.

“  
Only Jesus  
and  
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June Event  
in accom-  
modation  
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”

CUSU Disabled Students' Officer, Emrys Travis, said it was "shameful" for many colleges to "deprioritise the students who pay to live in their college rooms, and to whom they have a duty of care, in favour of overinflated security concerns about events that many students cannot afford to attend".

"Colleges urgently need to address this issue; students have a right to stay in the rooms they pay for, without being locked inside them".

They explained that the issue of May Ball accommodation is "particularly problematic for disabled students, especially those who are mobility impaired and those who are neurodivergent and/or have mental health conditions". For students with mental health conditions "being forced out of your own space can be an even more stressful experience for them than for non-disabled students".

Concern has also been raised about accommodation restrictions in relation to the affordability of the events. Although several colleges have begun to offer bursary tickets for their May Ball or June Event, some students still perceive the events to be overpriced and exclusive. This year, a May Ball or June Event ticket costs between £85 at Trinity Hall to £345 for a pair of tickets at Trinity College, if bought by a Trinity student.

Vice President of Class Act, Colin Kaljee, told *Varsity* that "students from lower income backgrounds face not only being barred from these events due to their financial situation... but the additional stress and stigma of being either removed from college or confined to their rooms". Kaljee added that locking students into their rooms results in "isolating and confining students away from their friends for no reason other than their financial background". To address these issues, Class Act suggests that colleges "offer discounted tickets to students from low income households and commit to finding suitable off-campus accommodation for students who do not wish to attend May Balls."



# Helen Thompson: Academics don't have some privilege in democratic politics

Jess Ma  
Interviews Editor

**A**part from academic journals and books, it is easy to find Professor Helen Thompson's name on blog posts and magazine bylines, and of course on the *Talking Politics* podcast, giving timely commentaries on the most pressing issues of the day, whether Brexit, Tory leadership elections or EU relations. However her knowledge in the field goes beyond theories and hindsight: you can see it in the flair and academic attention to detail which she brings to public discourse.

Sitting down with Professor Thompson in her office amidst portraits of political thinkers and books on economics, *Varsity* discussed the role of academics in the public sphere, the dangers of holding onto the academic hat, and how recent democratic tensions have affected public discussion.

Professor Thompson is frank about her interactions with the media, chuckling that she fundamentally writes those magazine commentaries "because [she] was asked". Nonetheless, she finds that she enjoys writing them: "I think it's a way of trying to get out of the sometimes limiting academic discourse of politics. You can get caught up in the theoretical language – it can be a bit divorced from real world politics". To her, writing timely commentary pieces is an alternative way to pursue her academic interests. "I've sort of been able to say something that might be more pertinent to the political situation in real time, than if you were writing about it in an academic sense several years after it has happened."

Thompson is certainly aware of her social responsibility as an academic. "I definitely think that academics do have some responsibility, in a subject like politics, to engage in the public sphere," though she recognises that different subjects entail different forms of public engagement. Thompson also recognises that "it is important at the same time that academics recognise that they can still have their positions challenged". She argues that the identity of an academic should not be "some sort of label" as an expert which "in some sense insulates you from people telling you that you've got it wrong, including people who may well not come at it with all the knowledge you hope an academic would bring to the issue".

The notion of the humble academic is, apparently, something of a novelty in democratic politics. Professor Thompson identifies that a key characteristic of representative democracies for a long time has been that "somehow there is more value to be attached to [an] educated person's opinions than it to [a] non-educated person's opinions", pointing out that individuals affiliated with a university could get two votes, in both a university constituency and their home constituency, until 1948. She strongly objects to this: "I'm quite strongly of the view that academics don't have some privilege in democratic politics." Professor Thompson continues that this notion "is just completely at odds with what democratic politics is in this time and place."

The difference between academics discussing politics in their comfort zone

*“It is important that at the same time academics recognise that they can still have their positions challenged”*



▲ Professor Helen Thompson is Deputy Head of the School of the Humanities and Social Sciences (JESS MA)

and participating in the public sphere is a "rough and tumble aspect", Professor Thompson points out. Contested political issues academics have been asked to contribute to, with Brexit as a prominent example, cannot be solved by the linear approach offered by academic knowledge: "simply saying 'if you know this, you will think that'".

"It's not that knowledge hasn't got [a] part to play but we've got to be clear about the question of what's at stake." In the public sphere, making an argument can be a political act with its own implications, not to mention the endless tension between clashing values and judgements, and the muddled landscape resulting from this. Knowledge may be able to comb the loose ends of the discourse, but public discussion is an entirely different landscape from detached academic hindsight. There is a need to get to the crux of the conflict amidst torrents of different views and entangled judgements in the "rough and tumble" real world of politics, it seems. "Even if you are trying to engage in a well-informed way, there is going to be some politics around that too".

With the complexity present in public political discourse, Professor Thompson cautions that an academic's status can be misleading. "If you try and participate in the public sphere as an academic and think that you will be provided with some insulation because you are an academic and you are supposed to know more than other people, then it's not like that." Perhaps there is a need to rethink the impact of academics' contribution in public participation, as Professor Thompson continues, "what academic analysis can do is to show how complicated things can be and that is a

good thing, but I think that it's not like academics can provide some resolution on contested political questions."

Does this illuminate the potential limit of knowledge on real-life political problems? Value choices emerge as the Gordian knot in Professor Thompson's take. Using the example of whether representative democracy is more important than participatory democracy, Professor Thompson illustrates that in attempting to argue for one over the other, even though valuable novel contributions can be made, one cannot resolve the question of which is better. "Knowledge can end up shaping what you think about it but it doesn't actually resolve the choice," Professor Thompson said. "Politics involve choices, and these choices will be contested by different groups and different people [who] can reasonably disagree about what the better choice is, and they can reasonably disagree even if they share the same political end."

For Professor Thompson, both the ends and the means in politics can be contested. Grounding this notion in the recent political climate, Professor Thompson argued that "I think one of the things that has happened in democratic politics in Europe and North America over the last five years has been the realisation that issues many people came to the conclusion had been in some sense depoliticised or no longer contestable, have turned out to be pretty contestable. That is in part why we have the political difficulty in democratic politics we have seen in recent years."

Differences in approaches to politics manifest itself as an "inescapable tension" of democratic politics, in Professor Thompson's view. Discourse in the public sphere entails numerous possibilities

*“What academic analysis can do is show how complicated things can be”*

for different opinions and views, with the fact that "everybody can say some pretty ill-informed things about politics, regardless of who they are." Since everyone is equal with the democratic vote, "different ways of thinking about what democratic politics is" seems to be an "inescapable tension" in democratic politics. Elaborating with the issue of central bank independence, Professor Thompson points out that democratic politics produces a series of shifts that are "a bit cyclical", as public opinion shifts away from desiring economic expertise in the running of central banks toward a rejection of the managerial consequences of technical expertise. "I suspect that it's an ongoing tension that has to be lived with, and that trying to get some balance between the claims so they don't swing too far in each direction is the way to avoid the excess of both positions," she concluded.

As more and more academics engage with public discourse through various media, perhaps it is worth re-thinking what academics can offer to the murky, fast-paced, and raucous realm of "real world politics" and the field of discourse that comes with it. Knowledge and academic detachment are certainly valuable in shining a light through the whirlwind of ever-updating news and comments, but as Professor Thompson has emphasised throughout the interview, academics are not, and should not be sacrosanct in public participation. Politics is not a problem waiting to be solved by achieving the correct approach, it is perhaps a ball of tangled yarn that rolls on with all its knots, at times leaving a single trail inviting detangling, or swallowing itself entirely - but it will roll on, despite attempts to dismantle it.



# Features

## For when the memories of my Cambridge years fade

*In time, I'll read my diary back and ache without specifics for a world I think I missed, writes Joseph Krol*

I am unusual, I suspect, among Cambridge students in that I have kept, with a fair fidelity, a diary of my time here. It is not, of course, from the traditional mould – this city is at its heart so predictable in its unpredictability, so chaotic in its demands of life, that to solemnly sit down each evening and make a record of the day is the preserve of those with far more discipline than I can muster – and so I scribble down memoranda, brief at best, during term, and recompile them months on during vacations (which always invite reflection so naturally). The history that results, then, can be slightly ‘off’, slightly hollow, never quite authentic – at times, indeed, not quite true, being at its heart the past filtered through the past.

And so I have before me some two hundred thousand words, a thick novel's-worth of ramblings, digressions, half-processed invective, tedious minutiae, absurd vignettes; hours that stretch on for pages, weeks dismissed in a paragraph – all lumbering over the years from fervour, to misery, to detachedness, with this succession of voices which are recognisably *mine* without being *me*.

Quite why I persist with this project, whose lines are already crammed with people accentuated beyond their importance and are still devoid of so many great moments, I do not know. No doubt a clichéd horror at the fading of my memory plays a great part, but so does the idler's love of playing at writing one's own history. To look at my own past, to pick out a drunken mishap or an offhand comment, and retrospectively elevate it to the status of a critical juncture, to the dawning of an era I could never have seen at the time: I know it is mostly nonsense, for no true life could have a structure so easily discernible, and yet I keep at these flights of fancy, in that vague, illusory and yet necessary hope that by coming to terms with my past I might do a better job of the present.

Thoughts like this, of reminiscences and hypotheticals, are inextricably linked to regret. I think of regret as coming in two distinct forms, of ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ regret: the former being the regret that one *did* do something, the



▲ “In Cambridge, the most mutable of cities, it can seem that almost any folly can be absorbed by the stonework” (DANIEL GAYNE)

“*I shall keep on at my diaries, recording such shades of events as I recall from these dying weeks*”

latter that one did not. In Cambridge, this most mutable of cities, it can seem that almost any folly can be absorbed by the stonework; the pace here is so rapid that no-one will care about anything one does within one year, and no-one will remember it within three. Whatever ‘positive’ regret is amassed, then, can dissolve remarkably quickly; faster, it sometimes seems, than it would anywhere else.

And yet this fact in itself makes the ‘negative’ regret only harsher. To know, as almost all of us do, that this is a unique time in one's life, being the last, drawn-out meeting between the freedom of action and the freedom from – or the feeling of freedom from – consequences, and to know also that one has not made the most of the opportunity: together these trivial truths can be crippling. One can put it off through first year, it all keeping the aura of a beginning; in second year it is a little harder, but still one does not *feel* old; even in third year it is surprising how much grief one can tune out. But eventually it comes to us all: one starts to think of endings, and there rises a squeak in certain smaller cogs of memory (trivial matters, perhaps

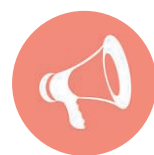
that on certain evenings I should have talked more or talked less, have come across as chattier or calmer, as neither raving lunatic nor stoic dullard) which at first can each easily be silenced – and yet if these build up, they merge, the noise transforms from a thousand small sources into one wide front, sounding loudly so that one can do nothing but look back at it, and so that one has to be careful that the whole system does not seize up.

Ah, you might say, this is all too overblown, too dramatic, for anyone but the truly neurotic; and most likely you are quite right. But who here can honestly say that they regret nothing? The chances that one picked just the right extracurriculars, fell in with the perfect set of friends, is, after all, almost nil; the number of forks in any of our paths is too large to enumerate, and who can know that they ever pick the better road? In this light it seems so overwhelming that to ignore it would be the only sensible answer; and yet to neglect the past's lessons in their entirety would hardly be satisfying either.

Then I might try for a middle way; but it need hardly be said that Cambridge is

no place for mediums. Perhaps in time, through loss of detail, these years will reduce to halcyon days which never quite ring true. But for now, if we are to make anything of the experience, I doubt there is much to be done beyond the obvious: to know that we have not lived life to the fullest, and to keep going anyway. I do not mean to say that such an action is always elegant or heroic; I would struggle to claim that, in the moment, it is always strictly ‘good’. And yet it is necessary, in that it seems the only option available to us.

And so I shall keep on at my diaries, recording such shades of events as I recall from these dying weeks. In time I shall read them back; think of the moments described, and too of those which are absent; ache without specifics for a world I think I missed, a world which I will admit I never could have created. And yet in all these thoughts, in all this swirling nonsense, the only implicit core is that it – whatever ‘it’ might be – is done, sealed off, finished yet incomplete. In the face of a city which so hastens to forget us, then, we have one method by which to endure – to regret, and to know our regrets.



**Are you a Cambridge finalist?**

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# Attempting to heal my relationship with time

*I have learnt to let go of the impulse to fill every moment at Cambridge productively, writes Jonathan Chan*

Roll over as the alarm goes off to see daylight filtering through the curtains; ever since the sun started rising at 6 am, it has become difficult to ascertain whether I've overslept. I put the kettle on and settle by my desk, eyes peering into the foliage beyond my windowsill and Bible opened to the book of Isaiah. The quiet ritual of morning tea and scripture reading has brought a fluency to the days, a familiarity that helps to steady the scattered mind and reorient it toward the things that I hold most important: a sense of communion with the divine, a confronting of anxieties for the day that lies ahead, a prayer to be led in love to those around me. Perhaps it is ironic that this daily rhythm only took shape in the midst of exam term, once the humdrum of relentless academic and extracurricular activity came to a rest.

The poet and philosopher John O'Donohue articulates the belief that stress is a perverted relationship to time. He states, "rather than being a subject of your own time, you have become its target and victim, and time has become routine. So at the end of the day, you probably haven't had a true moment for yourself." It is this unforgiving cycle of busyness that had come to characterise most of my first two years at Cambridge: early morning exercise, lectures, supervisions, meetings, rehearsals, performances, essays, edits, drinks, and a stumbling back to bed at the end of each day. A part of me felt beleaguered by the desire to maximise my use of the time that had been allotted each term, a desire to uphold varying commitments to schoolwork and broader community life. I made cursory attempts to pencil in a reflection in my journal each evening before I slept but eventually found myself falling behind on an activity meant to stir a restful introspection.

While the prospect of burning out always lingered dangerously close by, as the twitching of my eyelids served to constantly remind me, it was only falling physically ill that forced me to slow down by the end of Lent. Upon recovering, it remained apparent that I hadn't quite embraced an ethos of rest. I fastidiously filled up my schedule with friends to visit, books to read, and exam material to prepare. I'd had a preemptive moment of panic upon realising that I didn't quite feel prepared for the cunning questions



*“The prospect of burning out always lingered dangerously close by”*

the English Tripos would hurl my way. I needed to figure out coherent methods of shaping my study material and needed to read more plays and poems if my mind was to be at ease. It was only at a Christian conference in Wales, a week and a half before the resumption of term, that I was slapped across the face during a talk:

“Your work ethic is rubbish if you have no rest ethic.”

The Christian faith instructs a model of work and rest that I had always nursed at the back of my mind but never taken to heart: for every six days of work, one day should be set aside for rest. It is a principle to be guarded jealously— not out of selfishness, but out of recognition that the human body has physical and spiritual needs that need to be addressed in order for it to keep going.

The relentlessness of a Cambridge term makes this difficult to adhere to. My experience as an English student has shown that the number of literary works that needs to be read and essays that need to be written effectively compress many more days' worth of work into an arbitrary eight-week cycle. The mechanistic quality of being trained to read and write quickly inhibits opportunities to relish the texts that are set before us. Rather, it cultivates a masochistic sense of achievement at having completed the

exhausting task of keeping up with deadlines. I'd come to bear some resignation that, save for a complete overhaul of the structure of the Cambridge academic year and a reduction of the weightage of written exams, there would be little prospect for change. The cognitive dissonance of my time in the army seemed to resurge: of resenting a system, but also wanting to thrive in it.

Coming back to Easter term, I was struck the notion that there can be no work without rest, and that rest is not a negation of any sort of activity. It is a principle reiterated in the book of Hebrews, to “make every effort to enter God's rest”. And so, I decided to make a conscious effort to be disciplined with rest and to take one day a week off to do things that I found nourishing and to lay my work aside. I remained tentative, obstinately insisting to myself that replying to emails did not constitute work, nor did arranging the format of my notes.

Eventually, I learned to let go of the anxiety that governed the impulse to fill every moment productively. It was a return to the command in Exodus that echoed in my mind: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” I sought to rediscover the things that I found nourishing— reading books unrelated to my degree, making time for friends in a way that did not feel encumbered

▲ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

by time, walking around my neighbourhood, and spending time in prayer and reflection with God.

The pragmatic side of me was insistent that this was to ensure I would not burn out during exams, but that was a thought I had to learn to lay aside. The perverted relationship I had come to have with time was something I needed to learn to work through if I was to find a healthier way of getting through the years.

The 14th-century mystic Meister Eckhart once wrote that “There is a place in the soul that neither time, nor space, nor no created thing can touch”. O'Donohue insists that the intention of prayer, spirituality, and love is now and again to visit that inner kind of sanctuary that Eckhart describes.

The process of prayer is gradual but slow, one that demands the discipline to press into the silence and to still the whirrings of the mind and the flesh.

For me, it is a return to God, a discerning of His voice that provides the assurance that one is loved and known, wholly and intimately.

As I learned to sit in stillness each day, and to persist in that stillness each week, my gaze sharpening into the blue edges of the clouds and waxy contours of the leaves, I found the intensity of my academic anxieties begin to recede. They remained in a far more manageable place thereafter.

*“I was struck by the notion that there can be no work without rest”*



## Features

# “I wasn’t born a woman of colour”

*tan ning-sang*  
writes on her  
decision to leave  
Cambridge

*Content note: This article contains discussion of racial trauma, anxiety, depression, mania, and other symptoms of mental illness and recovery.*

**M**y life is not on pause. I’ve intermitted, yes, but my life is not on pause. Complicated as it was to get the correct psychiatric diagnoses and apply for the correct university allowances, the choice to intermit was not just a mental health thing – though the diagnosis of bipolar disorder and subsequent ‘she needs time to adjust on medication’ doctor’s note is the official reason for my intermission. Given that intermission required my deportation, it’s also a visa thing, a university administration thing, an access to services thing. Yet, still there are other factors, much more difficult to substantiate, related to my decision to intermit and eventually quit: it being a race thing, a gender thing, a migration thing, a trauma thing, a self-alienation thing. It is to these factors that I turn.

Specifically, I want to describe the personal, social, and psychological consequences of the process by which I, a foreigner who was part of the racial majority in my non-white majority home environment of Hong Kong, became racialised as a ‘woman of colour’ in white-majority environments. For I was not born a woman of colour, I *became* a woman of colour upon migration from Global South to Global North; and it has been a deeply confusing and troubling process to undergo.

Racialisation happened for me first in California, when I was an undergraduate. I had a hard time relating to other students because I knew virtually nothing about the context in which I was living – about systemic racism, sexual or reproductive politics, incarceration, immigration, or education systems. I had to start learning about slavery and black America, about capitalism, about the model minority myth, and so on. And of course, after you understand the depth of injustice stacked against non-white bodies in America, if like me your politics weren’t progressive to begin with, they certainly were by the time that you graduated.

But it’s not just a set of abstract political beliefs that change. It is change of self-perception, within oneself as self-regard and within society as political actor. In Hong Kong, I was raised self-assured because my racial, economic, and educational background put me in the ruling class. Acknowledging the rampant racism against black and brown bodies in Hong Kong, because the city is 90% ethnically Chinese, I could reliably expect to see people who looked like myself in every rung of society. California had a markedly different community of relations, one in which I was in the minority. That required me to dislodge my Hong Kong conception of self and, given my body, learn to position myself as ‘woman of colour’.

Yet, there is no sign warning that in the process of figuring out how to

▲ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

exist as a woman of colour in a white and male privileging society, you *have* to change – and it is traumatic change. I find Hong Kong-born cultural critic Rey Chow’s description of compulsory self-debasement particularly helpful in providing me with language to articulate this traumatic process. Chow writes in *Not a Native Speaker*, “With the unleashing of the name comes the obligatory realisation that something... has been addressed and called into existence” – in my case, the label ‘woman of colour’. For me, this “*compulsory ‘self’-recognition*” as ‘woman of colour’ meant inexorably accepting “the laying-out of a trajectory of self-recognition from which the possibility of self-regard (or self-respect) has, nonetheless, been removed in advance”: one can only be or become oneself by “being/becoming less, by being/becoming diminished.” I do not yet possess the words to describe the cognitive dissonance and existential angst that results from working incredibly hard in secondary school to gain admission into elite overseas universities, only to be forced to accept a self-debasing trajectory – both in terms of self-understanding and as a socio-political agent – in which I have no choice but to view myself and act as inferior, in which I have no choice but to actively unlearn any notion of self-regard or self-respect I previously held.

For learning to become a woman of colour is learning that you and your story don’t exist. It is – on days when primary school children run up to you pulling their eyes taut, bowing profusely while scream-

ing ‘Konichiwa’ – trying to take pride in ‘your history’ as a person of colour, in the legacies of Gandhi, Fanon, Mandela, and Martin Luther King Jr., only to realise that history discarded their wives as nobodies. It is similarly trying to locate yourself in the women’s movement, only to find that white women sidelined women of colour. It is someone in college calling you racist because you’re the one who talks about experiencing racism. It is scavenging libraries and finding no books by anyone who looks like you or who shares your background, the library telling you that the postcolonial book you’re requesting ‘does not appear to be on the course list’. It is having white or male editors tell you that they’re not qualified to edit your writing, leaving you alone to articulate things that no one has articulated before. It is being reminded over and over again: you don’t belong here, you’re not good enough – and if you insist you are, we can’t and won’t help you.

When I tried to be brave and be a woman of colour who sought institutional change in this repository of British elitism, I was struck down before I could even really begin. Around the end of strikes in April 2018 when there was mounting interest but insufficient institutional direction in doing decolonisation work, my anxiety spiraled out of control. Elected as the inaugural BME Campaign Education Officer, I was responsible for the exorbitant task of centralising decolonisation efforts. But within the first week on the job, a right-wing newspaper reported on a closed document we were

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I write  
because I  
need to find  
words for  
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working on, publishing my name without my consent. I was terrified and did not leave my room for days. Not long after, I resigned as Education Officer for that and other mental health concerns.

Being a student here, academic work was never the most challenging aspect – existing was. Self-alienation is not a matter of choice, it is a matter of survival. Above even the manic-depressive episodes, it was the continual nagging, every minute of every day, of counting the cost – how much of myself do I need to castrate, how much am I willing to castrate, to align myself with the interests of whiteness and patriarchy that so vehemently go against the interests of my own being, just so I can survive here? – that is the most excruciating and exhausting part of being here. As Patricia Hill Collins wrote in *Black Feminist Thought*, “Much of my formal academic training has been designed to show me that I must alienate myself from my communities, my family, and even my own self in order to produce credible intellectual work.”

Chow describes how compulsory self-alienation and further self-debasement is a social phenomenon inflicted upon coloured bodies in white-majority societies, drawing upon Fanon’s experience as a black man encountering white civilisation: “The black man is not named as nothing. Rather, he is given a place in the community of relations as performed by the name; he is hailed as *some* thing – dirt, negro, [the n-word].” Yet for a woman of colour, the situation is arguably more existentially dire, for we are

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## Features

named as something less than nothing: we are shadow, non-existent, written out of history, faced with the abyss. I do not wish to appropriate the experience of black women, as I recognise the relative privilege I hold as someone of East Asian heritage, but I have found that what Audre Lorde famously wrote in *A Litany for Survival* still resonates: “We were never meant to survive.”

In case I have not been explicit enough, let me be clear: Cambridge is invariably a white supremacist, misogynist place. No matter how progressive or leftist its individual members may be or how progressive or leftist the institution may turn, its interests remain allied with a tradition of whiteness and patriarchy. A place does not have to elect an alt-right leader to be ‘certified’ as white supremacist and misogynist. Racism and sexism are not to be understood in terms of individual or corporate acts or attitudes – they are structural, historic, embedded. To succeed as a Cambridge student requires one to ally with the interests of whiteness and patriarchy. For women of colour, the cost of this alliance is nothing short of complete destruction of any meaningful, positive conception of self. And it is in large part because I will no longer bare this cost of compulsorily self-alienation and self-debasement that I have chosen to intermit and subsequently quit. I’ve quit, yes, but it’s not a life on pause thing

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*Women of colour are shadow, non-existent, written out of history*  
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– it’s a choosing life thing.

When I say I ‘choose life’, I mean that I choose to prioritise my and others’ wellbeing and to do the personal and political work necessary to make such a state of being well within myself and for others around me possible. This is hard work. It demands patience, persistence, confusion, and failure to carefully disentangle each need, to identify and trial possible solutions, to evaluate the success and sustainability of each solution. I’ve learned that some wellbeing needs are more urgent than others. My mania, anxiety attacks, depression, and psychosis required immediate psychiatric attention that I could only access in Cambridge. But as those psychiatric symptoms fade and my needs as a woman of colour resurface, I find my interactions with mental health professionals – all of whom were white middle class except for the BME counselor at UCS whom I explicitly requested – unknowingly exacerbating my needs as a woman of colour. To meet those needs, I need to go somewhere that encourages feminist, decolonial knowledge production – in other words, I must leave Cambridge.

Yet even as I have chosen to leave, I know it will get asked: what could be done to make things better? Part of the trouble with Cambridge is that there are virtually no institutional structures or paid positions to support minority stu-

dents. There are few internal pockets of resistance, such as a physical and staffed BME, Queer, or Women’s Resource Centre similar to the Disability Resource Centre, that would both help decolonise the broader university and provide a space-within-a-space where minority students can take a break from allying themselves with a self-objectifying gaze. These spaces existed where I studied in California, a school of only 1,600 students. In contrast, the incredibly few BME staff in Cambridge are assigned the extra burden of being ‘race champions’; teaching remains horrifically Eurocentric because the discourse on (post-)colonialism, decolonisation, and reparations in this country is itself woefully underdeveloped. Insofar as Cambridge continues to pride itself on tradition – 800 years of excluding women and people of colour – it will need much, much more than a Legacy of Slavery Inquiry or the appointment of a black female Master of Jesus College to become a place that does not perpetuate white and male privilege.

But to be honest, instigating institutional change is not why I write – I am not particularly interested in labouring for a system that is actively invalidating my existence. As Kenyan ‘ex’-academic Keguro Macharia wrote about his process of racialisation as a black man in America, “I [am] tired of performing a psychic labor that [leaves] me too exhausted to

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*I am not particularly interested in labouring for a system that is actively invalidating my existence*  
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do anything except go home, crawl into bed, try to recover, and prepare for the next series of assaults.”

Perhaps selfishly, I write because I need to find words for my story, if even just for myself. I write because I need to know that my story has value. I write because I need the depression, anxiety, daily existential crises of disassociation, of disorientation to be seen, validated, understood. But as Hannah Gadsby said in her one-woman Netflix show *Nanette*, “I just don’t have the strength to take care of my story anymore.” I am tired, incredibly tired, of occupying this body in this society. I have little energy to do more than write these words for myself. I do not have concrete solutions to the various problems posed in this essay. All I can do is leave you with the confusion and anguish that is the ongoing, unwritten script of my story. As Hannah Gadsby concluded, “All I can ask is just please help me take care of my story.”

Help me take care of my story by being vulnerable, opening yourself up to the fullness of humanity in yourself and in one another. Help me take care of my story by listening, with more than your guilt impulse to act immediately upon encountering injustice. Help me take care of my story by treating yourself better, by choosing life instead. Help me take care of my story, and let me help take care of yours.

# Going wireless Freeing myself from a bra

## Steph Christenson explains why she goes bra-less

The first lesson I received upon joining a feminist society at school was that bras were never really burned. Our most vocal member (the term ‘leader’ just seemed inappropriate at the time) related how bras only ever caught fire by accident as part of a ‘Freedom Trash Can’ at a Pageant Protest in 1968. I remember their evident fear of appearing radical and diverging from a central, widely-appealing ideal. It struck me as being more harmful than the label itself. As I’ve started caring less about acquiring such a misappropriated ‘radical’ repute, I find myself shifting towards abandoning my bras to a dark corner of my closet, where I imagine they’ll eventually wither away under a little mound of dust. And I would gladly see them go up in smoke, as I’ve discovered a braless existence to be infinitely more enjoyable than any other.

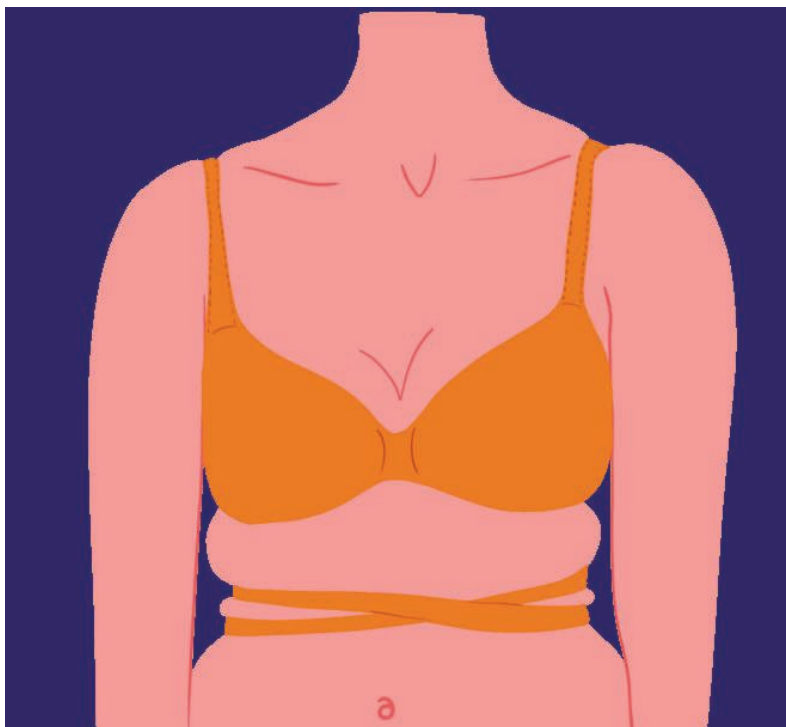
Whether it’s a t-shirt, a triangle, a plunge, or any other, a bra is always – in my experience – somewhat disagreeable. I’m told time and time again that I simply need to find the ‘right bra’, as if I’m Bridget Jones, needlessly cynical and about to stumble into the perfect cups any minute. I’ve searched far and wide for such a soulmate, trying those without padding, without wires, without straps. Yet I’ve never managed to escape the necessary transfer of a hefty load to an unhappy pair of shoulders or ribs, neither of which appreciate the extra weight, and even express their dissatis-

faction in back pain and blisters every now and then.

To claim this is the experience of every woman or that it’s even always mine would be ludicrous, especially as its so dependent on individual activity and anatomy. Were it not for my largely sedentary lifestyle incorporating only occasional sprints (for which an arm across the chest usually works just as well), I’m sure I’d have an entirely different outlook.

But without denying the varying experiences of others, one example of discomfort alone ought to negate the social norm. It proves that there are some who don’t lovingly cherish their brassieres. Of course I’m not quite selfish enough to believe I should never shoulder discomfort for a broader social benefit, but to endure such discomfort just to humour what is essentially an irrational fear of female nipples seems an unfair trade.

Even taking comfort out of the equation, I prefer the look without. The moulded cup ideal achieved through bras seems to me almost as archaic as the tiny waist ideal achieved through corsets. Both were once aspirational, but abstractly – and painfully – so. Whose idea was it that a breast ought to be a perfectly formed cup-shape in the first place? Without a bra, the natural shape of a breast is far from the obvious choice for a beaker of sorts. More realistic representations of the body beneath seem beautiful in their honesty, but also in the real value they have in compliments. My Swedish blood may of course be seeping into my thoughts such an appreciation of all things nude, but having reflected on the matter for a little while, it’s a conviction that’s become unshakeable.



▲ Illustration by Alisa Santikarn for Varsity

And that ought to be the point. This isn’t a tentative ‘perhaps’. It’s my firm belief that I look better without them. In fact, if I learnt anything from a prolonged are-girls’-skirts-too-short debate at school, it’s an appreciation of the ease with which such discussions can entitle male students to openly stare at and discuss the disruption posed by girls’ legs, and the ease with which girls can dissolve into this narrative where the interests of men are the primary concern. If we don’t decide for ourselves, it will be decided for us.

The little-acknowledged truth in this ‘distraction’ argument though is that interest predates distraction. The

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*More realistic representations of the body beneath seem beautiful in their honesty*  
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romantically interested brain is relentless and will busy itself with a subject within a radius of multiple miles. Just the knowledge that a potential squeeze is in the same densely populated room is enough to send any romantically interested brain into a frenzy, bra or no-bra. Without interest, the changing of social norms poses only a short term distraction, and so what? Bronze must have shocked the stone age. Such is history. At some point intelligence prevails and improves, and humanity moves on.

This is usually the point at which I get accused of advocating a double standard. I’m often asked how might I feel surrounded by men in cycling shorts. But the parallel is weak. Were it a social norm for men to squash their genitalia into a moulded cup, exposing and even pushing up the top half, but never alluding to the real shape, then I’d be inclined to listen a little more carefully. That being said, I’m sure the shift from tight trousers around town to cycling shorts wouldn’t take too much getting used to anyway.

So while my lifestyle remains largely desk-bound, I will start to toss unendurable undergarments aside. And while I would never advocate a blind adoption of my ideals, I do hope others will similarly question such a norm that I would deem archaic. It’s always easier to absorb what is customary rather than think of a different way for ourselves. And it’s always easier to giggle rather than confront uncomfortable situations. Still, to let someone else dictate your experience is to disappear. And such a disappearance simply to soothe those anxiously quivering at the prospect of a natural breast shape is an injustice no woman deserves.





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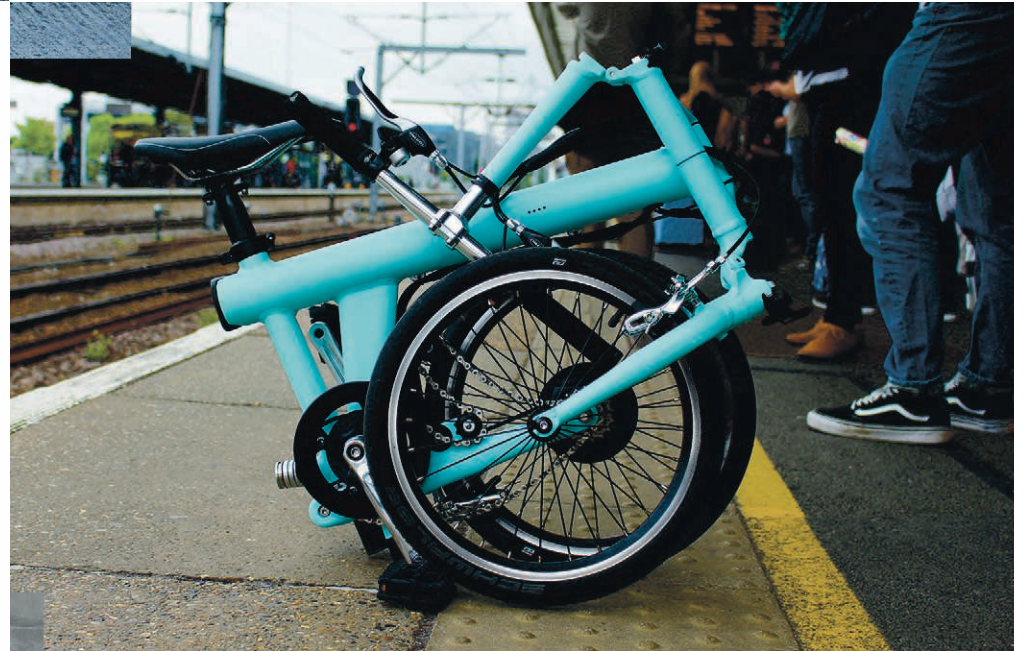
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# Opinion



## Student drug users are complicit in the drug trade's abuses

*Student drug users must acknowledge their role in perpetuating the exploitation of vulnerable people*

**Rachel Bourne**

I let down one of Kings' (not unfounded) stereotype miserably – I have never taken illegal drugs. As a result I risk coming across as a 'holier than thou' moralist. It is not my intention to be vindictive, judgemental or patronising. The ethics surrounding illegal drug use creates a 'cognitive dissonance', particularly among ambitious young people with aspirations to make the world a better place. To deal with our discomfort, as with many issues, we push the consequences of our actions away. It is easier, nicer this way. However, if we want to start caring about the abuse of some of the most vulnerable in this university town, this is no longer an option. Yes, the end of the exploitation of people involved in the drug industry in the UK will not come until drugs are decriminalised. But until this change comes, drug users remain complicit in a system of abuses.

We must scrutinise these consequences in all areas of their lives, regardless of how uncomfortable it is. It is widely known that the drug industry is problematic. From the blood on cocaine from South America, heroin from Afghanistan, ketamine from India and China, the drug industry is responsible for the physical, sexual and psychological abuse of thousands of some of the most vulnerable people across the globe. Within the UK, too, exploitation is beginning to be recognised; the term 'blood cannabis' is used to refer to the growing share of cannabis on the market produced by children and vulnerable adults trafficked from the Global South. Another area of the UK drug industry that relies on modern slavery is the so-

called 'county lines'. Yet few people are aware of the extent to which they operate within our university city.

'County lines' are operations in major UK cities where dealers seek new markets outside urban hubs, such as Cambridge, using burner phones (or 'lines'). It is estimated that there are over a thousand county lines operating in the UK, with some lines making more than £800,000 per year.

These operations are so lucrative because a reliance on forced labour means that city based dealers keep the vast majority of profits. Those trafficking the drugs are the most vulnerable in society; children recruited from care homes, special educational needs schools and pupil referral units, as well as adults with learning disabilities and mental health problems. These people are recruited with promises of drugs, money or status, and controlled using physical, emotional and sexual violence.

Cambridge is a hotspot for such exploitation, with 25 county lines being actively investigated by the police as of March this year. The scale of abuse is not yet fully understood, but the picture that is beginning to emerge is harrowing.

For example, last July, a man was murdered in Cambridge as a result of turf warfare between county line dealers. In January, police detained a 13 year old boy working for Bedford-based county lines who had been placed in a house of drug addicts in Cambridge. In February, after raiding a house in Cherry Hinton of a woman involved in county lines, police found empty drug wrappings and crack pipes among toys in her nine year old son's bedroom.

The handful of such cases which have been emotively reported in local and national news barely scratch the surface of the problem of drug related exploitation in our city: in March, in a report about county lines and related abuses, Cambridge county council identified 158 children as at risk from sexual exploitation and 64 from criminal exploitation. To put this into perspective, the population of children at risk of exploitation as a result of the drug trade in Cambridge is greater than the combined undergraduate population of St Edmunds.

Why don't students know about this? It is true that the poverty of the town rarely penetrates the vacuum of privilege in which the university exists. However, the problem is more complicated than simply ignorance caused by this socio-economic divide. Acknowledging these problems requires Cambridge students to acknowledge their complicity in a system of abuse.

The children and vulnerable adults supplying drugs in Cambridge are meeting a demand. We can't continue to shy away from the fact that this demand comes, in part, from Cambridge students. Whilst the largest proportion of drugs moving along county lines are heroin and crack cocaine, drugs regularly used by some students such as powdered cocaine, MDMA, cannabis, amphetamines and spice are also commonly distributed in this way. The social scenes of those in gowns are fed by the exploitation of the most vulnerable in the town.

As alluded to, the heart of this problem lies in the UK laws. The ethical issues with the global drug trade would be significantly reduced if drugs were

▲ (UNSPLASH/  
BANTER SNAPS)

decriminalised. In Portugal, decriminalising drugs reduced the negative impact of drug use on society by reducing harm for drug users, support people struggling with substance misuse and the problems caused by drug related crime.

If the UK government were serious about tackling drug related problems, they would follow the advice of the Royal Society of Physicians and the Royal Society of Public Health and adopt the same policy.

Yet, this is sidestepping the issue of personal moral responsibility. UK drug laws need to change, and those with an interest in tackling drug related exploitation and abuses need to push for this. However, until this change comes, individual drug users remain complicit in a system of oppression.

We have choices about how we treat ourselves, and choices about how we treat others. No matter how much we want to pretend otherwise, with drugs these two issues are not separate. The decision to take drugs or not implicates not just yourself, but dozens of people caught in a long chain of exploitation, starting with vulnerable people we live alongside in our city, and traveling across the globe.

Your night of euphoria this week may cost you £40 a gram, but it has cost other people in Cambridge an awful lot more.

If you have concerns about any of the issues raised in this article, the following organisations can provide support:

**NSPCC:** a charity working to safeguard children

**Talk to Frank:** a drug education service which provides confidential advice.

“Individual drug users remain complicit in a system of oppression”



## Opinion

# No more tears for Theresa May

The Prime Minister brought her resignation upon herself through self-inflicted personal and policy mistakes

Louis Helsby

Despite the tearful announcement of her intention to resign as Prime Minister on the 7th June, Theresa May deserves no pity: her entire sorry predicament is due to no one but herself. Upon ascending to the pinnacle of British politics after a coronation by the Conservative Party, Theresa May faced a country fraught with challenges, yet May herself was in an excellent position politically: with a Commons majority and an outpouring of goodwill with high personal ratings, she had the ideal opportunity for any politician seeking to make significant and lasting changes that would put their name in the history books.

But Theresa May will not be remembered for her achievements. I cannot think of any, and neither could she in her departing salvo. Instead, self-inflicted calamity – compounded by delay and filibustering when faced with difficult issues – concealed in a coat of tough-talk will be etched into the memory of her premiership.

The Britain May inherited from David Cameron was deeply divided by age cohort, economic status, region and social values, having been pummelled by six years of public service cuts and wage stagnation. Furthermore, the country was, constitutionally, very fragile. A divisive referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 was followed immediately by Cameron's slapdash approach to the complex problem of the West Lothian, or the English, question. The collapse of the power sharing executive in Northern

Ireland raised serious questions about the future direction of the peace process, and the biggest concern of all was what a vote to Leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum actually meant and what the UK's new relationship with the EU would be.

However, Prime Ministers are seldom defined by the circumstances they inherit but rather by what they leave behind. David Cameron was able to defeat Ed Miliband's Labour Party in 2015 largely by exaggerating the extent of the country's economic recovery through reference to the fiscal position in 2010. Infamously, he waved around a note on stage during a Question Time special, written by former Labour DWP Secretary, Liam Byrne, saying: 'Sorry, there is no money left!' May, though, cannot perform this same trick: the same circumstances and the same societal divisions that led to the Brexit vote, the "burning injustices" she said would be her government's mission to address, have not gone away but have, if anything, worsened.

The list of Theresa May's failings is long. The decision to delay triggering Article 50 to the 29th March 2017 allowed nearly a year to define Britain's negotiating strategy, yet even now it is unclear what the UK's position was or is. Infamously, May opportunistically called a general election and then ran a presidential-style campaign where Conservative Parliamentary candidates were rebranded as 'Theresa May's Team'. May simply did not have the charisma to succeed in such a campaign. The loss of

“  
May faced  
a country  
fraught  
with  
challenges  
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the Tories Commons majority not only forced her to hand over £1 billion to the DUP to save her government, but also left her personal authority hanging by a shoestring.

Even after that disastrous election, the failings kept coming. Her response to the Grenfell Tower disaster was seen as aloof, only meeting survivors following intense media pressure. She added a perception of cowardice to this increasingly toxic mix of character traits by allowing Amber Rudd to take the blame for her actions as Home Secretary, that led to the Windrush Scandal.

Her most serious failing though was that after the rejection of her withdrawal agreement by 230 votes, the biggest defeat for a government bill in UK parliamentary history, May prioritised her own premiership above all else. By thinking she could bully Parliament into passing her deal, she in fact wasted precious time lying low in the Downing Street Bunker whilst the country faced the looming threat of a No Deal Brexit - a threat which is still lying dormant and will re-emerge later this year to make for a particularly frightening Halloween.

Given this continued litany of failure, the only possible way of salvaging something of a legacy for Theresa May and her Conservative allies has been to try and shift the blame. Indeed, this is exactly what May and her loyalists have done. After the first failure of the withdrawal agreement, the EU negotiators were blamed for refusing to make the Northern Ireland backstop a temporary

rather than a permanent arrangement, despite the UK requesting this arrangement during the negotiations in order to avoid a hard border in Ireland. Her own MPs were next on the blame list, specifically those members of the European Research Group who voted against the withdrawal agreement.

Finally, after a seven hour cabinet meeting in which the only decision reached was to politely ask Jeremy Corbyn to rescue her, the Labour Party felt the wrath for the sorry position May was in. The following six weeks of desperately last-minute, cross-party negotiation was May's last chance of achieving her government's one policy, its only purpose. Considering that the negotiations had been a risk for Corbyn, with loud calls in the Labour Party for him to leave May to her fate, it is hard not to conclude that she let this last chance slip away.

Seeking achievements worthy of a legacy for her statement announcing her intended departure, May could only mention compromise not being a dirty word and highlight that she was the UK's second female prime minister. Whilst the first point was ironic to say the least, the fact that she is a woman should endear a collective shrug of the shoulders. The sheer vacuity of the statement, intended to summarise three years of government, was brutal. The contents of it though, or absence thereof, have been entirely her own doing. It is no wonder Theresa May departed in tears, but there is no reason to share them with her.

# Mo Salah: A symbol of inclusion in a world of exclusion

Liverpool FC forward Mo Salah provides an example of how footballers can mobilise and become mobilised as positive forces in football culture

Kate Robertshaw

As an individual who is outwardly disinterested in football, I found myself on Sunday June 2nd surrounded by 750,000 ecstatic football fans. While visiting a friend in Liverpool for the weekend I couldn't help but see the parade celebrating Liverpool's victory in the Champions League final. A sea of red swarmed the streets of the city, as people from all walks of life joined to cheer on the victorious team, continuing their celebrations from the night before.

When the parade commenced and the bus full of footballers passed, the stirrings of the crowd rose to roars. I, too, was caught up in the excitement at seeing these individuals, as I was swept up in the frenzy of adoration for them. The contagious elation made me consider the stance of these football players, as they were praised with such force and treated as if semi-divine.

The history of football is intrinsically linked with its traditionally white, heterosexual male supporters, with its foundation being in 19th century England. Its potency in society has raised its players to the status of gods amongst men, and with this privilege comes also the privileging of certain characteristics.

Toxic masculinity is very much still

prominent in the world of football. It comes as no surprise that there is no openly homosexual man in the Premier League, and while women's football is beginning to gain precedence in mainstream culture, their salary of £18,000 per year is minuscule compared to the average annual player salary of a male in the Premier League of £2.6 million.

In the world of sport, the notion of and stereotypes associated with male superiority come to light in the form of the promotion of aggression and repression of emotion. Footballers have traditionally succumbed to such stereotypes, with numerous high-profile players making headlines as a result of cheating scandals, fights and verbal abuse. The degradation of women and displays of physical prowess have therefore been built into some people's perception of what it means to be a man, thus reinforcing and perpetuating the stereotypes of toxic masculinity.

Some fans, too, have participated in the perpetuation of this toxic culture. Both victories and losses are often coupled with displays of violence from fans. Following England's victory against Sweden in the 2018 World Cup, supporters took to vandalising Ikeas to celebrate. In Porto recently, ahead of England's game against the Neth-

erlands, fans hurled glass bottles and harassed locals, prompting riot police to the scene. Such scenes of football hooliganism have long been, and continue to be, a sub-culture of the sport and a breeding ground for toxic masculinity.

Yet the idolisation of football also has the power to bring about the opposite effects. Mo Salah, since his arrival at Liverpool in June 2017, has become an extremely important figure. His rise to football stardom, including his winning the Premier League golden boot in both of his campaigns, as well as scoring the opening goal in the recent Champions League triumph, has highlighted him as a prominent figure both in the club and in the city as a whole.

However, Salah has become a role model not only as a footballer, but as a Muslim. He has never been shy about his beliefs and has often used football as a platform to exhibit his faith. His goal celebration involves performing sujud, the Islamic act of prostration to God, while Liverpool fans' chants for him are 'if he scores another few than I'll be Muslim too' and 'gift from Allah'.

Salah, through his peacefulness and openness, has humanized religion and infused it into mainstream culture, exposing it to people who would otherwise not see such displays of faith.

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A future  
in which  
football is  
a peaceful,  
safe place  
for  
everyone  
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This led Stanford University to conduct research concerning Salah's effect on Muslim culture and Liverpool. The results found an 18.9% drop in anti-Muslim hate crimes on Merseyside since Salah signed for Liverpool. No other offence had an equivalent decrease in the same period, while anti-Muslim tweets by Liverpool fans and Islamophobia online halved compared to other major Premier League clubs.

In light of these statistics, football in the city of Liverpool seems to be transforming, not into a medium for lewd and aggressive behaviour, but into a common, unifying force in which everyone has a place.

That Sunday demonstrated this, as the crowds filling the streets of Liverpool were not a reflection of this culture of football hooliganism, but a united body of people. Families, couples, friends of all varieties joined in a harmonious celebration against the backdrop of one of England's most diverse cities.

Liverpool football club hence represents a glimpse of the progressive power football possesses. The impact of Salah's presence and the unification of the city perhaps demonstrate the future of football, a future in which football is a peaceful, safe place for everyone, not just for the white, heterosexual male.



# vulture

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Illustration by Kate Towsey





▲ Look #1 (ALEXANDRA SIVE)

# The vulture Guide to May Week Dressing



▲ Look #2 (ALAYO AKINKUGBE)



▲ Look #4 (JADE FRANKS)



▲ Look #3 (NATHANIA WILLIAMS)

## Caterina Bragoli & Lottie McCrindell

The weeks of mounting anticipation are finally over, because May Week has arrived! After the painful stretch of essay-ing or exam-ing, the opportunity to enjoy a stress-free week in Cambridge seems long overdue. When it comes to the Balls, there are long-standing traditions that can't be overlooked: the oftentimes archaic 'black/white tie' dress code can feel slightly claustrophobic.

You may feel as though you want to shun the floor-length gown or the standard monochromatic tuxedo for something more current, diverse and nonconformist. It can also feel indulgent, spending (sometimes considerable) amounts of money on outfits that you will wear once, maybe twice a year (or just the once). Exhibited below are examples of both: a desire to embrace Cambridge tradition, and also to head in a new direction and craft a unique May Ball aesthetic, that won't necessarily break the bank.

### Look #1

This dress is an amazing approach to sustainable shopping: bought from Reformation (a sustainable store), this dress has been produced ethically. What's more, Alex and her friends are doing a dress swap, which is a great way to make your spending worthwhile, and to prevent excessive consumerism. This classic red silhouette is timeless and elegant, so if you opt for a dress like this, you will be left with a wardrobe staple that will undoubtedly last the test of time!

### Look #2

Green has been a central colour on runways this season (especially with the emergence of the neon trend), therefore opting for a striking green like this is a way to ensure a fashion-forward approach to May Week outfits! Sat on the right, the backless silhouette of Alayo's vivid green satin dress makes it even more elegant, with the tiny straps and cowl neckline paying homage to the 90s slip dress, while Diane also stuns in the colour.



**Look #3**

This dress was custom-made, which (if within your budget) is a great way to feel your most confident: after all, you can choose to accentuate whatever you want to, and play up your favourite features. The simplicity of the bodice is contrasted by the intricately-crafted and eye-catching skirt, composed of hundreds of flowers, which creates something that you could easily encounter on any runway. Something that's bespoke is always a way to make your May Ball outfit that much more special and sentimental.

**Look #4**

Shopping from charity shops like Oxfam is a perfect way to ensure a sustainable approach to May Week, and shopping in general. The detailing on this dress is beautiful: the eye-grabbing mesh flowers on the bodice makes the dress distinctive, and so does its electric blue colour. Pairing a dress like this with a slicked-back bun allows the strapless neckline to really stand out, allowing the dress to have the moment it deserves.

**Look #5**

Cerian proves that defying convention is a great thing: why stick to dresses when you can rock a power suit like this? Featuring a metallic jacquard, this suit captures attention, ensuring you can't be missed in a sea of dresses. If you feel as though you want to shun tradition but don't know how, a vibrant and eclectic suit can be the perfect option. You can of course tailor the suit to your preferences: why not try a blouse and cigarette trouser combination? You never have to venture solely down one path when crafting your May Ball outfit. This offers something more subtly subdued and still unorthodox.



▲ Look #5 (CERIAN CRASKE)

**Look #6**

Taking inspiration from the Dior corset dresses, Valentine crafted her own dress, which is both highly creative and also a perfect example of a sustainable approach to May Week. Featuring a sheer overlay, this dress blends elements of the classic with elements of the unique, allowing for both longevity and experimentation. Knowing that you're undoubtedly going to be the only one wearing your bespoke dress is surely a comforting thought when attempting to find something unique on the highstreet: of course, dress making isn't for everyone, but even altering your dress in slight ways (whether shortening the hem or removing the sleeves) will create something completely individual.

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You never  
have to  
venture  
solely down  
one path  
when  
crafting your  
May Ball  
outfit  
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▲ Look #6 (VALENTINE KIM)

# An inquiry into library behaviour

## Flora Bowen delves into the murky depths of the library at times of peak stress

Nature blossoms: in the light, expansive months of summer, golden days unfold in a haze of sparkling wine spritzers, velvet-soft lawns, and the slow rise and fall of the sun. March-born lambs gambol, children cartwheel, newly-elected MEPs sunbathe on Brussels concrete.

And we find ourselves, in the full bloom of our prime and youth, in the confines of Cambridge's 110 libraries. We force ourselves, gently perspiring, into these damp enclosures, confronted not by pollen, midges, or sunburnt European representatives, but by bookshelves, fellow students, and - worst of all - ourselves.

It is in the bowels and entrails of these sacred institutions that we examine the very worst of the sickly - library-creatures. To sit in a library - whether it be the college, faculty, or (send help!) the UL, is to be hopelessly thrust into the sweaty grasp of the Cambridge student body.

People become ill, and yet have the au-

dacity to remain in public life. Phlegm and splutter spurt from hayfeverish nostrils and clogged-up throats: make sure to enter the plague doctor on speed dial when entering the Sidgwick Site!

People make noise. It is, I assume, fascinating for medical students to observe the astonishing scope of sound the body can make, when the student in question has taken as their mission the alienation and anger of every single library dweller, without speaking a single word. A tight-lipped girl shuffles and reshuffles her papers with all the fretful force of a hippo taking its first steps.

A boy stretches every tendon and toenail across the furthest reaches of the communal desk, papers and books lifted to reveal cocksure, privately-educated limbs. Irritable lips, smacking open to let sharp exhalations of breath, ricochet across the library walls, ensuring it's not just one's therapist who is subjected to one's imprudently vented anger.

Worst still are those who are actually doing the work. Self-care tip no.1: never, ever, intrude upon the domain of the Law Fac library, for here be dragons - the fetal barristers, solicitors and judges of tomorrow. Legend has it that if you listen closely, you can hear the clink of pound coins as they type. I've had to distance myself from one close college friend due to her fear-inducing ability to focus on Classical Civilisation: the page scalded by the ferocity of her pen, the body clenched at the edge of the seat, the eyes gleaming with

brilliance. Every glance at her stimulates a reassessment of the gulfs and valleys of my own gaping stupidity.

Similarly, I have renounced the sweet embrace of my former home, the MML library. Too many other people doing my degree better than me I think, as I squint (with little or no attempt at hiding my snooping) at their work. How do you know the French for antediluvian? When were we supposed to learn that tense? What wonderful sentences are you making from the Spanish language? Leave it alone, and butcher it in shame, as I do! Friendships developed in lectures, classes, and Thursday 3pm squash and biscuits, are sacrificed to library warfare, sweet white lambs offered to assuage the demands of Cambridge libraries in exam term.

As a student of French, existentialist philosophy teaches us that we are ultimately alone. For all the sniffing and sighing and sprawling of the souls around us, our lives are defined by the solitude and finitude of our godless beings. When I drink my 7th cup of tea in the morning; when I scuttle along to the library; when I sit there, I am alone in my solitude.

The great thing about being eternally alone in your solitude is that it allows you to indulge in a lot of quality me-time. And so, over the course of my reflections, I've stared into the abyss of my soul and found that the most irritating person in the library

is myself. My restlessness. My growing addiction to caffeine. My inability to conjugate the imperfect subjunctive, imperfect as I am. I may scorn others, but truly the cauldron of my simmering resentment is stirred only by my own hand. The petty irritations of the library and library-dwellers fade away, their coughing and twitching but a distant sound in the ether. Faced by the frustration of my procrastination, I stare into the abyss of my own soul and it is there that exists the most profound exasperation of those hot and sticky library afternoons.

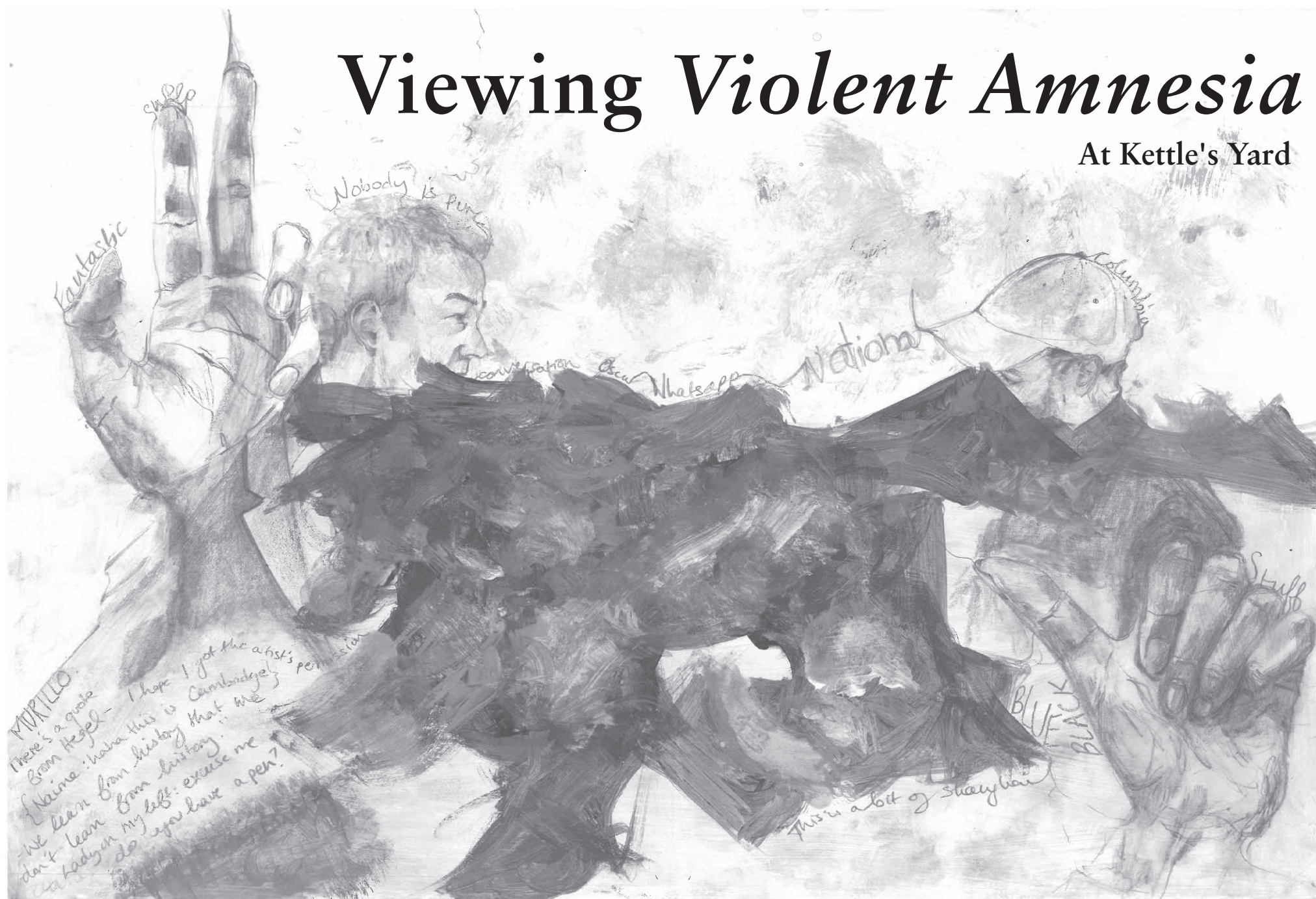


▲ Trinity's Hall's library (SIMON LOCK)



# Viewing *Violent Amnesia*

At Kettle's Yard



▲ Varsity illustrator **Apolline Bokkeriink** was struck by curator Andrew Nairne's hand gestures; the scratches and smudges across the canvases; the way the words and images shared between speakers were stitched together like artist Oscar Murillo stitches together cultural tapestries.

## An inside look at Curation at the Courtauld

**Esmee Wright**  
talks to Cambridge  
alumna Anna  
McGee about her  
curation course  
at the Courtauld  
Institute

For Anna McGee, learning to be a curator was the clear next step after finishing her History of Art degree at Cambridge last year. The Courtauld Institute's Curating the Art Museum MA programme appealed because of its focus on the practical aspects of curation, including a group-organised exhibition.

The eleven curators-in-training started without even a title. Their only brief was to use works from the Arts Council Collection, a collection created with the aim of acquiring works of successful artists early in their career, predicting (and even stimulating) their success. Instead of finding a theme to fit the art they picked or vice versa, they developed both in parallel. Starting with a vague focus

on 'dialogue', they looked at various works, including 'Measures of Distance,' 1988, by Turner Prize nominee Mona Hatoum, a 15-minute film in which letters written in Arabic are shown superimposed over images of the artist's mother showering. The letters represent the communication maintained by the artist and her mother after being separated by the Lebanese Civil War. Recordings of conversations in Arabic between the two discussing her mother's feelings and sexuality, as well as her husband's objections, are interspersed with the artist reading the letters aloud in English. More than just dialogue, the group realised that many of the works they were looking at tied together conversation between generations, on a personal and a historical level. Measures of Distance is more than a conversation between a mother and daughter; it charts traumatic events and cultural histories.

Once the group had decided on twelve artists, they began the long process of streamlining. Each time the theme changed, they went back to the Arts Council Collection catalogues and found different artworks. It was a long process of group meetings and brainstorming ideas, as well as trips to the 'secret location' in London where the Arts Council Collection paintings are held. In many ways it was more difficult than the organisation of an exhibition

in a 'normal' gallery would be; eleven cooks with eleven visions for one broth. Dividing responsibilities helped. Anna was in charge of budgeting, perhaps not the most interesting job at first blush, but an increasingly central role in artistic decision-making. Even Alice Strang, Senior Curator at the National Galleries of Scotland, pointed to budgeting as a key skill in her talk at Cambridge in February this year. And, although the artwork for this exhibition

was provided by the Arts Council Collection, keeping down costs proved interesting. Moving art is a tricky business, and with the Arts Council Collection's sculptures being transported from their storage location in York-

shire, coordinating and paying for it could become difficult.

It was during the installation itself that Anna felt she learnt the most about what it meant to be a curator; that was when all the little things that hadn't been problems in their

brainstorms appeared. The importance of lighting became apparent. For conservation reasons, photographs cannot be subjected to the same light intensity as oil paintings. In the first room, this meant the windows on the door had to be blacked out -

potentially affecting footfall by giving the impression that the exhibition was closed.

There were positives to learning how to set up an exhibit in a real space, especially one with as rich a history as Somerset House. Once







◀ Left to right: *The End and the Beginning* (1996) by Kathy Prendergast; the group's exhibition at Somerset House; *Plantain Drop* (2014) by Appau Jnr Boakye-Yiadom. Opposite: *Measures of Distance* (1988) by Mona Hatoum

the home of the General Register Office, these buildings had recorded the births, marriages and deaths for the whole of England, a wealth of family ties which the curators-in-training were able to draw on in the second room.

In the centre of this room lies a knitted figure, titled 'Baba Deep Thing by Mum', by Glasgow-based artist Hardeep Pandhal. The figure represents 18th-century Sikh martyr Baba Deep Singh who, according to accounts, continued to fight against Afghan soldiers after being beheaded, head in one hand and a knife in the other. Pandhal's mother used to tell her son this story when he was a child, and 'Baba Deep Thing' is a collaborative work between the artist, who knitted the head and knife, and his mother, who knitted the body.

Pandhal's mother speaks little English, and Pandhal speaks little Punjabi, so it is through knitting that mother and son bond and share their heritage. Baba Deep is a beautiful symbol of the ties between a family, against generational and language barriers.

Despite awful weather, the exhibition has been deservedly popular. In place of a feedback wall, so often de rigeur in museums and galleries these days, the curators use the space to ask viewers how they connect to other generations. This has yet to be defaced by the unsavoury (read: phallic) drawings prophesied by gallery professionals. People engage with the question in fascinating ways: one visitor writes mathematical formulae they hope to pass down, another sketches a family

“

*People engage with the exhibition question wall in fascinating ways: one visitor writes mathematical formulae they hope to pass down, another sketches a family tree*

”

tree. Others share anecdotes about how they have noticed themselves turning into their parents.

The exhibition is about dialogue, between artists, between generations, between individuals and historical events. The interactive wall encapsulates this perfectly as it encourages visitors to enter that dialogue. As the artworks speak to the viewer, the viewer has space to reply.

*Generations: Connecting Across Time and Place* is on at Somerset House, East Wing Galleries, and runs until the 4th of July 2019.

◀ The Courtauld Institute



## MAGDALENE COLLEGE PETER PECKARD ESSAY PRIZE

Magdalene College invites submissions for its annual

### Peter Peckard Memorial Prize

worth

**£1000!**

*“Is it ever right to make slaves of others against their will?”*

– Peter Peckard, 1788

**Essay brief:** Essay (or equivalent) on human exploitation in the world today & the actions needed to eliminate it.

**Essay criteria:** Essays must be between 6000-10000 words, written in English & submitted electronically. Collective entries by a University or College Society & essays produced for undergraduate degrees are welcomed.

**Prize: £1000**

Closing date: 10.07.19

For further information please visit:

[www.magd.cam.ac.uk/peter-peckard-memorial-prize](http://www.magd.cam.ac.uk/peter-peckard-memorial-prize)



*Out of the Third World* is a chronicle of travails and grit against adversity faced by Ashok, a shy 18-year old student from Tanzania, East Africa, to gain admission to a British medical school in 1968 under the backdrop of the apocalyptic-sounding speech dubbed “The Rivers of Blood,” delivered by Enoch Powell, a prominent British politician, on April 20, 1968.

The 284-page book is riveting and exhilarating. If you think you've seen and heard everything, then you may not have until you've read this book!

The writer is an alumnus of Trinity Hall.

Available on Amazon as eBook and paperback.



# ...& Me: Bon Iver

Continuing our series on personal connections with music, **Lottie Reeder** reflects on the band that have been the constant soundtrack to her life

I remember hearing it for the first time with great clarity. I was so confused; it was the first time I'd heard music sound like this. Like many, 'Skinny Love' was my introduction. There was something about the tinny guitar and ethereal falsetto vocals that captivated me. I felt like I was watching myself listen to the song, it carried me through the emotions so effectively, the roughness of Justin Vernon's vocals at the climatic points struck me. I am forever thankful that I listened to *For Emma, Forever Ago* for the first time in the winter, the way it is meant to be heard. Even listening to it on a summer's day, it radiates a cold hollowness that transports you straight back.

Their second album became my permanent background music. It was perfectly easy to get lost in and fittingly accompanied the period of disillusionment during secondary school. Vividly, I still see myself sat in a cold science lab, flicking through a chemistry textbook that meant nothing to me, with the albums on.

At this point, I noticed how frequently they were used in film and TV. Bon Iver epitomise my interest in music and visual culture, always providing the perfect cinematic accompaniment. 'Woods' is used perfectly in the second generation of *Skins*, 'Beach Baby' features in my favourite rom-com *Stuck in Love* and the first season of *Chuck* uses a variety of songs from *For Emma, Forever Ago* to accompany moments of convincing emotion amongst comedy. 'Roslyn' (with St Vincent) was used in *Twilight*, *New Moon* and captures the hollowness of loss. When I lost my grandmother last year, 'Roslyn' was on all the time. Whilst it accompanied the loss of a lover in *Twilight*, the feeling of life stopping whilst the world carries on around you is in that song.

“It was the first time I'd heard music sound like this”

Vernon released the third Bon Iver album, *22, A Million* in my first year of sixth form. I was shocked by it, as it was such a contrast to his previous body of work, yet it was met by a period of clarity. I became able to listen to electronic music – it was so exciting to me. It marked a shift in my taste, as synth-pop replaced indie as my genre of choice.

I saw Bon Iver at Hammersmith, a year after the release of *22, A Million*. It was mid-week, mid-March and I really didn't feel like going, knowing I had to get up for sixth form



▲ Bon Iver have recently returned with two new singles from their upcoming album (@BONIVER)

the next day. Thinking I'd probably regret it in the long run, I went anyway. For the past years, I had listened to them passively, as if they were the personal soundtrack to the everyday. This was the first time I had ever listened to them actively.

I was utterly transfixed. I'd never seen or felt anything like that before. I couldn't speak, or sing. To this day, it gives me shivers thinking about the performance, as if it were an out of body experience. Vernon opened the show solo, illuminated by a single spotlight, and performed 'Woods'. It was immersive performance in a way I had never seen before. He closed with a solo performance of 'Skinny Love' acoustically.

Whilst it was the first song I'd heard, 'Wash', 'Blindsided' and 'Blood Bank' had developed much stronger attachments for me and I was never particularly phased by it. He began fiddling around on the guitar, before unexpectedly transitioning into the opening chords of 'Skinny Love'. For some reason, still unknown to me, that transition made my stomach lurch and there were tears for the entire song. It was as if someone had projected the footage of my entire teenage years in front of me for four minutes. It was utterly bizarre. It's not unlike me to find the music emotional, but to experience such a moving moment, out of nowhere, was otherworldly.

They are my go-to band in every way. They accompany my study, exercise, sleep. When people ask me who my favourite band are, they became the answer following the Apollo show. This weekend, I was at All Points East when they announced their new album, and

aired their first two singles. 'Hey, Ma' and 'U (Man Like)' are the satisfying combination of their previous styles. Whilst performing to 40,000 people in a field will never top 3,500 in a theatre, the volume and body of sound was captivating and their performance of 'Blood Bank' and 'Creature Fear' were exceptional.

Usually, I am attracted to the spectacle of performance, whether it be movement, visuals or charisma. Bon Iver do not exhibit any of that, but Vernon is an artist that I think is a privilege to see perform. The music is everything, and for me to be entirely satisfied by that makes them extremely special.



▲ Bon Iver live in Stockholm, 2011 (DANIELJORDAHL/FICKR)

## vulture's May Week Playlist

The *Vulture* team bring you the tracks that will be accompanying their May Week celebrations



Ultralife  
**Oh Wonder**

Hey, Ma  
**Bon Iver**

What I Need (feat. Kehlani)  
**Hayley Kiyoko**

Starships  
**Nicki Minaj**

Enter Galactic (Love Connection Part I)  
**Kid Cudi**

Alright  
**Supergrass**

Talk It Out  
**Kali Claire**

Can't Let Go  
**Earth, Wind & Fire**

If it Feels Good (Then It Must Be)  
**Leon Bridges**

E.Coli (feat. Earl Sweatshirt)  
**The Alchemist**

Truth Hurts  
**Lizzo**

▲ Lizzo live in 2017 (TREEFORT MUSIC FEST/FICKR)



# The invisibility of the black teen on film

Film & TV Editor **Gerline Ndombasi** takes a look back at the development of the coming-of-age genre during the 2010s

With the current rise of the NCCU (Noah Centineo Cinematic Universe) on Netflix and the increasing complexity and authenticity behind the characterisation of female leads, this decade has seen the coming-of-age genre continue to solidify its position as a noteworthy film category. Audience and critics alike were captivated by Barry Jenkins' *Moonlight* (2016) akin to Greta Gerwig's directorial debut, *Lady Bird* (2017). The enchantment of bildungsroman films lies in the ability of these stories to transport us back to that age of vulnerability and sudden change but equally, be reassuring for those of us still experiencing it. However, the verisimilitude of these teen films cannot be upheld if black teens remain invisible on-screen. Contrary to Hollywood's belief, the white adolescent experience is not universal.

The coming-of-age films released thus far this year have already foregrounded the invisibility of the black teen. The preci-

sion in Bo Burnham's depiction of Generation Z in *Eighth Grade* left in me awe. The recurring quip from the infamous LeBron James Vine in the background echoed my own secondary school experience, forcing me to reminisce buried memories of the jovial atmosphere of my morning registration. Yet, it was the lead's, thirteen-year old Kayla, opening monologue that cemented Burnham's brilliance. Kayla awkwardly remarking, 'I lot of people like call me quiet or shy or whatever. But I'm not quiet [...] It's not that I'm scared to talk, it's just that I don't want to,' for her YouTube video on self-confidence articulated what I never could. I was left completely distraught five minutes into the film. However, in spite of Burnham's skill in capturing the nuances of the life of an anxious teen amidst the Digital Age, there was still a massive disconnect in my ability to fully resonate with the hopes and dreams of a white teenager in a white suburban town. But that is exactly what most coming-of-age films depict, just a continuous stream of teen films romanticising the mundanity of white suburban life.

This formulaic recipe is even evident in Olivia Wilde's *Booksmart* where aca-

demic overachievers, Amy and Molly, embrace a wild night of stereotypical teenage hedonism before graduating. Though I admire the presence of new or lesser-known actors in a cast, the lack of diversity was really to be expected at this point. I was disheartened to see how the film set-up Eduardo Franco and Nico Hiraga's characters, Theo and Tanner, to act as juvenile foils to Molly's headstrong nature, remaining in the background for the larger part of the film. Austin Crute's acting skills were truly wasted in the film with Wilde positioning Alan as an almost forgettable role. But guess what *Booksmart*, *Paper Towns* (2015), *American Honey* (2016) and *Me, Earl and the Dying Girl* (2015) have in common? There's only a single black teen in a starring role — arguably, tokenistic at most.

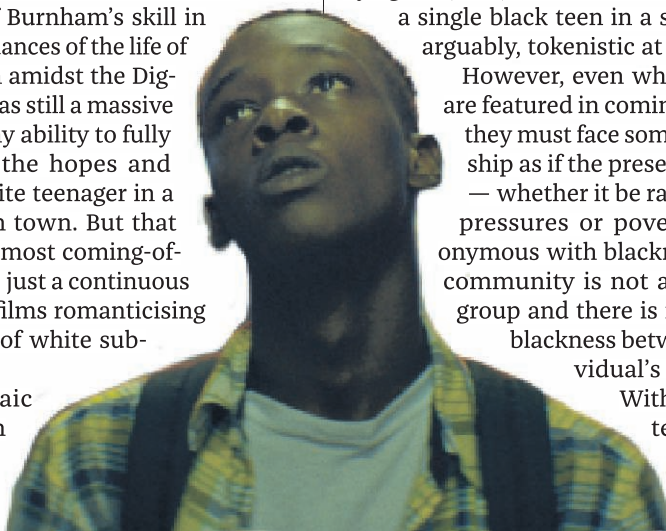
However, even when black teens are featured in coming-of-age films, they must face some form of hardship as if the presence of struggle — whether it be racism, financial pressures or poverty — is synonymous with blackness. The black community is not a homogenous group and there is no disparity in blackness between each individual's circumstance.

With making black teens more visible on the silver screen, there comes the task of deconstruct-

ing the narrow, preconceived notions of blackness. This will enable us to freely depict black teens as being capable of leading normal lives beyond Hollywood tragedies.

Beyond the ocean of white-centric coming-of-age films, there exists a number of teen films that feature a cast dominated by black actors, from the Kenyan film *Rafiki* (2018) to French film *Girlhood* (2014) as well as *Dope* (2015), *Pariah* (2011) and *Jinn* (2018). Nevertheless, the limited theatrical releases of most of these films speaks volumes of the lack of confidence studios hold for the profitability of black-centred films. Thus, even as the film industry continues to diversify the genre, my greatest hope is that film studios and distribution companies hold greater faith in consumer demand for black coming-of-age films and adopt larger marketing campaigns to promote them.

As much as we all revelled in the phenomenal critical success of *Moonlight* — having garnered the award for Best Supporting Actor, Best Adapted Screenplay and becoming the first LGBTQ film to win Best Picture at the 89th Academy Awards — I, alongside many others, hope the film's triumph was not merely an anomaly in film history, but will help catalyse a wave of coming-of-age films that centre a range of young black voices. As we approach a new decade, the promise of black leads in coming-of-age films remains alive as a new generation of filmmakers take reign of the industry with the slow deterioration of gate-keeping. But if Hollywood won't do it, give me a couple of years to make it happen.



▲2016's *Moonlight* remains an outlier (@TEDTALKS)



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# Staging a protest



▲ "Theatre, like every art form, will always be politically charged, but perhaps its potential for disruption is confined to the space it creates" ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA YU FOR VARSITY

## Georgie Newson-Errey takes a wide look at the relationship between theatre and praxis

Poetry, Auden famously remarked, makes nothing happen. Can the same be said of theatre? Instinctively, the comparison feels inapt – poetry, at least at its most conventional, is static, private, and ambiguous, whereas drama is dynamic, spontaneous, and transitional. If theatre necessitates one form of action, could it then precipitate another? Can we meaningfully regard the form as a potential mode of political praxis?

Theatre possesses an almost unique ability to capture, situate and circulate subversive views, perhaps due to its potential for what Keats termed 'negative capability' and literary scholar Emma Smith refers to as 'permissive gappiness' – the adaptability that allows a text to invoke oppositional beliefs simultaneously and circle ideas without explicitly addressing them. The 'suspension of disbelief' that theatre requires is also a manufacturing of belief – belief in an alternative reality or imagined future that might otherwise be impossible to envision. But simulating subversion is not the same as generating change, and the difference between capturing discontent and containing

it is far from distinct.

Marx – the paradigmatic example of a praxis-focused political thinker – respected some playwrights immensely, but was attuned to this issue; although Shakespeare is referenced on numerous occasions throughout *Capital*, the texts are used as illustrative tools rather than held up as revolutionary stratagems in and of themselves. Theatre, like every art form, will always be politically charged, but perhaps its potential for disruption is confined to the spaces it creates.

However, protest has always had a performative dimension – communal rallying, public speaking, civil disobedience, and even some forms of political violence can function as essentially theatrical acts. Extinction Rebellion's recent naked protest in the House of Commons – in which they stripped down, displaying the provocative slogans that were painted over their torsos, and chanted in unison – was reminiscent of the feminist performance art of the sixties and seventies, whilst the 'milkshaking' of prominent alt-lite figures has produced scenes that wouldn't seem out of place in a farcical Elizabethan satire. Can we regard such acts as forms of theatre? Or is what marks them out as protest, rather than art, precisely the attempt to operate as vehicles of change, to 'make something happen'?

Numerous theatrical practitioners of the twentieth century dedicated their careers to proving that the distinction between art and protest was misguided. Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed' used techniques such

as 'forum theatre' – in which audience members could intervene in and propose solutions to the injustices enacted before them – and 'invisible theatre' – in which performances were staged in public spaces and disguised as genuine spontaneous interactions – to blur the boundaries between real and performed oppression, forcing audiences to construct answers instead of merely asking questions.

Brecht, perhaps the most famous political dramatist, recognised that if theatrical spectacle can function as praxis, it can also function as propaganda, consolidating the dominant ideology rather than challenging it. Brecht's 'epic theatre' was conceived of as an antidote to the hypnotic, escapist, bourgeoisie theatre scene, using alienating, anti-cathartic techniques to 'arouse', rather than 'wear down', an audience's capacity for action.

But it is dubious as to whether the methods of such practitioners, though highly instrumental in shaping dramatic theory, continue to exert a palpable influence on the theatre being performed in Britain today. It could be argued that, in an age of 'fake news', reality television, and perpetual surveillance, social existence feels increasingly dominated by spectacle, and that, consequently, theatre is now simply the condition of – rather than a means of challenging – political discourse. It may also be the case that the form, along with other artistic media, is suffering from a condition that theorist Mark Fisher described as 'hauntology': an inability to conceive of alternative political realities, and a subsequent

reliance on the ideas and aesthetics of the past. But probably the most obvious issue with regards to the political relevance of contemporary theatre is that 'theatre' as an abstract principle – a principle that incorporates all forms of performance and protest – refers to something very different to theatre as a cultural institution.

Despite extensive efforts to make performances more accessible, theatre in the UK is still widely perceived as an essentially elitist art form, and the expensiveness and location of most big but non-commercial theatres does nothing to assuage this view. Whilst many provocative, pertinent plays have been staged in recent years – Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson's *The Jungle*, for example, or Nina Raine's *Consent* – their audiences have been generally limited to the select few who can afford to see them, and it is doubtful as to whether most spectators – likely upper-middle-class, metropolitan, artsy liberals – will come away feeling ideologically challenged or inspired to take more direct forms of action.

This is an issue that pertains to the Cambridge theatre scene too. Arguably, the inaccessibility of Cambridge theatre, symptomatic as it is of a wider problem, isn't something that the scene can – or should be expected to – tackle. However, if dramatists do wish to incorporate theatre into student politics or maximise the political impact of their shows, it is imperative to try to reach audiences who may otherwise regard theatre as an insular or exclusive institution.



# In praise of Cambridge's religious architecture

With the opening of the new Cambridge Central Mosque, Henry Coleman reflects on the architecture which has reflected Cambridge's development throughout the years

Religious buildings in Cambridge rarely fit the descriptor 'unassuming.' Everywhere else a chapel implies a small, subsidiary building, perhaps attached to a larger church or intended for private use; here a chapel means an ornate behemoth like King's. The skyline is clustered with spires and towers, college chapels and city churches alike, and even buildings designed centuries after those attention-grabbing features were current have inherited a surprising amount of their showiness. The brutalist chapel at Churchill may not have the finely carved wood of older college chapels, but it is indisputably an imposing and powerful presence.

It is in this context that the new mosque on Mill Road seems surprisingly unassuming, at least on the exterior. It is set back from the road, and cloaked by a beautifully peaceful garden; while there is a magnificent golden dome, it is impossible to see from the front. At first glance this is a far cry from the grandiosity of Cambridge's older religious buildings, and it certainly has a different atmosphere to many of the city's revered medieval and baroque churches – there aren't many college chapels with benches outside happily used by young families, for instance.

However, there's actually a lot that the picture-postcard chapels, the intensely divisive twentieth-century spaces and the new mosque all have in common. They offer an optimistic message on human frailty: no matter our flaws, we can still collaborate to create something unique and long-lasting. I'm not religious, and places of worship in Cambridge obviously have significance and meaning for others which they can't for me, but I think it is in this sentiment that I can find at least a spiritual sanctuary in these buildings. Take King's College Chapel: such an iconic sight that it's easy to imagine it dropped out of the sky in one piece. Of course, it's nothing like that in reality, as a glance along the side façade will tell you: the decoration stops abruptly about a third of the way along, when the college and its royal patrons simply ran out of money. It's that kind of detail which makes monuments like King's feel powerful to me, because it's that kind of detail that makes them human.

The fact that its creation took so much time and attention, so many hands and such a fortuitous accident all feels like a living rebuke to the pervasive idea of solitary genius. Cambridge's anonymous church-builders are testament to the fact that the things that last aren't just made by great men (and the people credited with this usually are men) acting alone. Instead, the spaces where I can find genuine spiritual meaning are the ones where people working together, often centuries apart, were able to respond to actual human



▲ ▼ The Cambridge Central Mosque on Mill Road (HASSAN RAJA)



needs. The most basic, like space or light, are often the hardest to put into practice.

In Cambridge of all places this feels vital for religious buildings because they do actually play a part in our daily lives. At their best, these buildings can elevate our daily life into something quieter, more beautiful, and more interesting, whether as a place of rest or as a source of wonder. For me, if not for everyone, this applies just as much to religious buildings from the 20th century; Robinson's chapel doesn't speak the language of medieval churches, but it's no less powerful for it. Indeed, the space provides a dramatic frame for the dazzling stained glass, made in an irregular and jagged shape. This isn't false or artificial perfection; it's an attempt to engage with the spiritual that recognizes that, ultimately, our attempts to do so are always a little doomed. But there can be beauty in simply trying.

The deep greens of Robinson's stained glass are a nice reminder of the fact that the natural world continues to exist beyond our lives, and that we can find meaning in its beauty as well. This is the guiding principle for the Mill Road Mosque, which is defined by a forest of wooden pillars in every room. They curve and twist like any natural form does, and the skylights at the top bathe the room in light. Once again, the practical matters in living spiritually: this building runs on green energy, and reuses its own water. The collaboration of the architects, the interior designer Keith Critchlow, the garden designer Emma Clark, and the mosque trust has clearly born fruit in this warm, open, inviting, and subtle building. There is a poignancy in this; David Marks, one of the architects behind the design, died in 2017, before he could see its fruition. A remarkable legacy to leave behind, and one I think that, like its medieval predecessors, could bring meaning and awe for generations to come.



# Science

## Abandoning towns as waters rise

**Tom Spencer** explores the problem of abandonment as necessary response to climate change

The threat of flooding is increasing for coastal communities in the UK and around the world. "In some places, the scale of the threat may be so significant that recovery will not always be the best long term solution. In these instances, we will help communities to move out of harm's way," said Emma Boyd, chair of the Environment Agency (EA), in May this year.

She was announcing a new approach the EA would take for a world of increasing risk: with 4°C of global heating we will need both resilience and protection. This requires using a range of tools to increase the ability of communities to adapt to and recover from flooding and coastal erosion. These tools include traditional measures such as flood walls and levees, natural flood management solutions such as leaky dams and silt traps, and equipping communities to rebuild in safer houses after flooding. The last item on this list of potential tools is "moving people to new places", also referred to as "managed realignment". This means abandonment, a concept unthinkable in the UK as a response to flooding a few decades ago.

In fact, abandonment had been almost completely absent from the national conversation on flood management until March 2018 when it was brought up in a speech by Sir James Bevan, chief executive of the Environment Agency: "Some argue that it would be cheaper and safer to move the houses and the people than to carry on defending them where they are. I'm not saying we should do that: I know how important place and community are to people. I am saying we should be prepared to have the debate."

For some communities around the world the stage of debate has passed: abandonment has happened or is happening. As we prepare to have the debate ourselves, it is worth considering the stories of Valmeyer, Illinois, and Newtok, Alaska.

In 1993, Valmeyer was a town of 900 perched on the Mississippi river. It had a strong sense of community and a long history going back to the early 19th century. Valmeyer had dealt with floods throughout the first half of the 20th century, but since 1947 the town had been protected by a levee built by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The problem with levees – flood walls built parallel to the riverbank – is that rather than mitigate risk, they displace it. When the river is high enough to finally breach the levee, the resultant flood is far bigger than it would have been without the levee.

This is only compounded by the false sense of security a levee gives to developers and homeowners building on the floodplain. This is just what happened when the levee was breached in August

of 1993: floodwaters engulfed the town and reached the second story of some houses – a level that far exceeded anyone's memory of the floods of the 1940s, and a level higher than any town officials had planned for.

The sense of loss was immense. Many citizens couldn't face returning to their damaged or destroyed houses. It was clear that the risk of remaining in Valmeyer was too high. Some considered letting the federal government buy their properties through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) buyout program and leaving the town for good. The mayor of Valmeyer, Dennis Knobloch, knew that there was only one way to protect his citizens from future flooding while keeping the town together. They had to abandon the town and build a New Valmeyer out of harm's way.



▲ Increasing temperatures will require new flood management strategies

(GETTY IMAGES)

The citizens of Valmeyer were central to planning the move from the beginning. While Knobloch liaised with FEMA to secure funding, seven citizen's committees were set up to work with engineers, architects, and city planners to design their new town. New Valmeyer was built less than two miles away on the hill behind the old town, and the current limits encompass both the new town and the remnants of the old. It cost the state and federal governments over \$40 million to buyout the damaged properties and build the infrastructure, housing and services for the new town.

The population of Valmeyer has since increased to 1,200 and many citizens are grateful for the wealth of public services relocation has brought them. Brand new schools, a gym, and new emergency services are some of them. But for most citizens of New Valmeyer, modern houses and schools aren't going to replace the memories and history swept away. Trauma from the flood still afflicts many

of them, and their sense of loss isn't likely to fade for decades or more.

In 1983, almost 10 years before the flood washed Valmeyer away, the town of Newtok, Alaska, conducted their first assessment of erosion rates on the Ninglick river. The report concluded that at current rates community structures would be endangered by 2013 at the latest and that "relocating Newtok would likely be less expensive than trying to hold back the Ninglick River."

Newtok, is a tribe of 350 Yupik Eskimos whose ancestors have lived in the Nelson Island region for over 2,000 years. In 1958 they were forcibly settled on the Newtok river by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, whose site placement for the school was determined only by how far the construction barge could navigate up the river. In 1983 the town of Newtok, conducted their first assess-

“  
Our societies are not yet equipped to deal with slow moving disasters  
”

structure to start the process, including a quarry with an access road, housing for construction workers, a water source, and a community centre. Much of this was achieved thanks to Congress giving an extraordinary \$15 million to Newtok in the 2018 federal budget, significantly increasing on the \$23 million Newtok has already raised from federal and state agencies but falling far short of the estimated \$130 million it will take to complete the move.

There are a number of major barriers that Newtok has faced in raising funds so far. Neither federal nor state policies are designed to manage slow-moving disasters, and housing grant or infrastructure providers are either hesitant or unable to support such towns.

For example, in 2016, a formal disaster declaration submitted to FEMA was denied because it was not for a singular event such as a hurricane, an earthquake, or a major flood. All this means Newtok has had to patch together funding from anywhere they can, struggling to convince numerous government agencies to give them the tens of millions of dollars they need to survive.

With the money from Congress, it looks like the relocation is going to go ahead, meaning the people of Newtok have reason to be hopeful again. But this one-off endowment does not come close to covering the full costs and does nothing to address the eleven other indigenous Alaskan villages that are in the process of relocating due to climate breakdown.

As with almost all indigenous communities, historical injustice put Newtok in danger. Meanwhile, their geographical isolation inflated the price tag of relocation beyond what they could raise without direct Congressional support. But it was the structure of existing policy that cost Newtok a generation between identifying the problem and addressing it. Valmeyer demonstrates that abandonment and relocation can be done in a quick and managed way, but only when responding to singular events such as one-off floods.

Our societies are not yet equipped to deal with slow-moving disasters: not just permafrost thaw and coastal erosion, but sea level rise, drought, and environmental degradation too.

All these threats are set to increase with continued climate breakdown, and abandonment of towns will have to happen again and again to protect communities. Hopefully, no British coastal towns will have to be abandoned even in the highest global heating scenarios. With the right tools to increase resilience and mitigate risk, we might be able to avoid replaying Newtok on the north Norfolk coast. But in the event that communities do have to relocate to avoid harm, it should be clear that having the right policy framework will not only save decades of time and millions of pounds but, preserve the dignity of communities whose places are becoming unliveable.

“  
They had to abandon the town and build a New Valmeyer out of harm's way  
”



# Beyond the bubble Weighing up health inequalities in Cambridgeshire



▲Fenland is one of the most unequal areas in the UK (GRAPHIC NODE/UNSPLASH)

**Orla Woodward** considers the disparities in health beyond Cambridge city centre

Living, working and studying in Cambridge, with its extensive biomedical research facilities and thriving academic population, it could be easy to assume that Cambridgeshire does not suffer the same health inequalities faced by much of the UK.

Cambridgeshire as a region does have relatively good health outcomes – yet those who venture outside of the historic Cambridge city centre will find a different story. Over 30% of people in Cambridgeshire, equating to more than 200,000 individuals, have a long-term health condition, many of whom live in the most-deprived districts in the county.

According to Public Health England (PHE), people living in areas such as these can expect to die at an age eight years younger than those in the least-deprived areas. This means that many people in the poorest regions of England won't even reach their 75th birthday, while those in richer regions can enjoy life well into their 80s.

Avoidable deaths, those which are preventable and treatable, are also four times higher in the most-deprived re-

gions of the UK, where people can spend nearly a third of their lives in ill health.

The World Health Organisation defined the right to health as a fundamental human right in 1946. This was further recognised in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), of which the UK is a signatory. The UK is therefore bound by international law to protect the right to health. Despite this, a major discordance in health outcomes between the rich and the poor can still be observed across the UK.

One of these districts is the Northernmost region of Cambridgeshire, Fenland. Multiple measures of ill health are significantly worse in Fenland than both Cambridgeshire and England as a whole. There are approximately 130 avoidable deaths per 100,000 people per year in Fenland compared to 90 per 100,000 in Cambridge city.

Many of these deaths are due to chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, but alcohol misuse and smoking are also shortening the lives of people in Fenland where life expectancy is significantly lower than the national average. Levels of obesity are particularly high at 17% of the population, compared to the estimated 10% for England as a whole.

“Children are struggling to achieve a basic level of education and health”

Emotional wellbeing is also a concern, with people in Fenland reported to be the most unhappy in the UK receiving an average happiness score of 6.7 compared to the UK average of 7.52, as based on a survey by the Office for National Statistics.

Health and deprivation are inextricably linked. It is, therefore, unsurprising that Fenland is the most deprived district in Cambridgeshire, with overall levels of deprivation higher even than the UK average. This is reflected by the fact that 20% of children live in poverty and only 50% of pupils achieve 5 A\*-C GCSEs. Poor education is intertwined with poor health, and this is exemplified in the increased levels of child obesity and mental health disorders in Fenland.

Considering the wealth of knowledge and expertise in Cambridge, it is shocking to think that just 25 miles north of the city, children are struggling to achieve a basic level of education and health.

So, what, if anything, is being done to improve health outcomes in Fenland? Three years ago, Cambridgeshire County Council and Care Network Cambridge implemented the Healthy Fenland Fund. This initiative consists of a small grants fund, with a total of £825,000 over five years, and a community development team working to enable small community groups to develop projects and ac-

“Short-term investment leads to long-term benefit”

tivities aimed at improving physical and mental health in Fenland.

More than 100 groups have been supported thus far, with over 1,500 people reporting improvements in physical, mental and emotional wellbeing since participating in a community group. The Healthy Fenland Fund has also strengthened community confidence with 74% of the groups going on to be self-sufficient after receiving initial support. These figures demonstrate that, when it comes to improving health and wellbeing for all, short-term investment leads to long-term benefit. In this way, small-scale local schemes should be supported and promoted by local councils and the government if we are to improve health and tackle health inequality across the UK.

A myriad of social, cultural and economic factors influence health outcomes, all of which need to be acknowledged and tackled to reduce inequalities in health. With such a highly developed economy and one of the best healthcare systems in the world, it is appalling that disparities in health should exist based on socioeconomic status in the UK.

In Cambridge, perhaps it is time we recognised these inequalities across Cambridgeshire, and support councils, charities and local people to ensure everyone has the opportunity for a long and healthy life.



# ‘I was scared of being judged’: fresher musings on a year of sport

On a mission to connect with his own sporting experiences, Sports Editor **Michael Nguyen-Kim** asked fellow freshers about their experiences in the University sport scene

Coming to Cambridge, I adopted a targeted approach when it came to sport. I was tempted to try out many different activities, but in the end I opted for one particular sport - rowing.

For many other freshers, however, the choice to engage in sport wasn't so straightforward. With so many sports to choose from, and so many other commitments on our time, it can be difficult to decide how to integrate sport into our lives.

So I embarked on a journey to speak to fellow freshers to gain a better understanding of what impacted their sporting choices in their first year of university, and what they would have done differently given another chance. Here's what I found.

One of the great forces that stops people from realising their dreams is the fear of humiliation - especially in sport. Ella\*, who studies Law, considered taking up rowing at the start of Michaelmas. Being of slight build, she thought she could make a good fist of learning to be a cox. Her enthusiasm quickly waned, however.

"I came to the boat club reception and it all seemed really masculine, which sort of put me off," she said. "I was [also] scared of screwing up or making a mistake, because that's humiliating."

A year's worth of wisdom has, however, given her a fresh perspective on her aspirations. "Sure it can be humiliating when you make a mistake but mistakes are always going to happen...you just have to be able to deal with it."

Although still slightly apprehensive about the growing pains of adjusting to a new sport, Ella has decided that she will take the plunge and sign up for rowing next year. She considers herself fortunate to have realised the impact that fear had on her at a relatively early stage in her university life.

"It's definitely better that I've realised now instead of finishing my degree and regretting not having done stuff."

The difficult academic environment coupled with the intensity of eight-week terms means that students here have less time to devote to sport than at other universities.

Many are clearly unwilling to sacrifice their academic performance for the sake of sport. CJ\* began rowing as a novice in Michaelmas. His involve-

ment was influenced by academic considerations from the outset, signing up for the third novice boat because it had the fewest weekly outings. He dropped rowing altogether in Easter term, citing the need to do well in his exams: "I really want to get a first, and I'm not willing to let rowing get in the way of that... there are not enough hours in the day".

Others, however, tell me how sport has actually benefited their academic performance. Alex, a fresher at Trinity, is a former competitive long-distance runner who still tries to go for a jog every day, usually towards Grantchester or another nearby village. As far as he's concerned, a healthy body equals a healthy mind: "It feels so good after [going for a run]...your mind is just refreshed."

Growing up in Australia, I was involuntarily exposed to a steady diet of cricket, football, rugby and, of course, Aussie rules. I loved watching my heroes on TV and religiously scanned the back pages every morning as soon as the paper arrived on the doorstep.

Although I had a go at most of the above sports at one point or another, I never became much good at any of them. One reason was the fact that I switched sports too often - wanting to try as many sports as possible, I never really gave myself time to develop expertise in any particular one.

Another problem was my lack of physical gifts. I was always a fairly small kid, which put me at an immediate disadvantage in almost any sport I cared to play.

Finally, my parents never valued sport in the same way they valued study, and I was conditioned to view sport as an 'optional extra' in life as opposed to an integral part of it.

When I arrived at Cambridge I was determined to specialise in one sport rather than spreading my efforts too thin. I deliberately chose a particular one (rowing) and stuck to it. Even in unpleasant moments (6am wakeups in the freezing dark at the beginning of Lent spring to mind), I persisted as I knew there would be no other way to improve. To compensate for my lack of size, I adopted a weights and cardio training program over the breaks, which I had never done before in my life.

For me, first year allowed me to correct some of the mistakes I had previously made in my approach to sport. I am now fitter than I have ever been and



“I really want to get a first, and I’m not willing to let rowing get in the way of that”

feel a genuine sense of belonging with the teammates in my crew.

However in my explorations for this piece, I noticed an interesting trend - most of the freshers I spoke to who were involved in sport were rowers, most of whom had signed up for the first time at the beginning of University. Are freshers being unduly influenced by rowing's hegemony?

The recent May Bumps races involved over 1500 competitors, or around 10% of the total student population. Scores of freshers, including myself, take up rowing instead of other sports in part because of the generous exposure of rowing and its connection with our preconceptions of Cambridge. Most boat clubs hold events during Freshers' Week in which first-years are encouraged to sign up. In my case, I was offered a token to exchange for a drink at the bar in return for putting my name down for a tubbing session.

Yet one of the most common attractions of rowing from those I interviewed was the sense of camaraderie that came from the sport's especially high intake. I found that learning a complete new sport alongside so many different people enabled me to forge a unique bond with other rowers, as we could relate to one another's experiences and struggles throughout those dark mornings.

Most of the reasons people give me

▲ **Running away from Cambridge can serve to kill two birds with one stone**

(MICHAEL NGUYEN-KIM)

“I came to the boat club reception and it all seemed really masculine, which sort of put me off”

for doing sport are obvious; common refrains include a desire to “get fit”, or to “meet new people”. However I can't help but feel that underneath these platitudes their passion stems from something more fundamental.

My friend Sam, who rediscovered his love for motorsport at Cambridge, lights up when I ask him about his upcoming karting races. Sam signed up for the Automobile Club at the Freshers' Fair and has been regularly competing in races around the country since Michaelmas. His one wish when he graduates is to get a job that will earn enough to enable him to spend his weekends racing. Sam's enthusiasm for motorsport cannot be fully explained through its social or physical benefits. He simply enjoys driving cars. It is a passion that will stay with him for life.

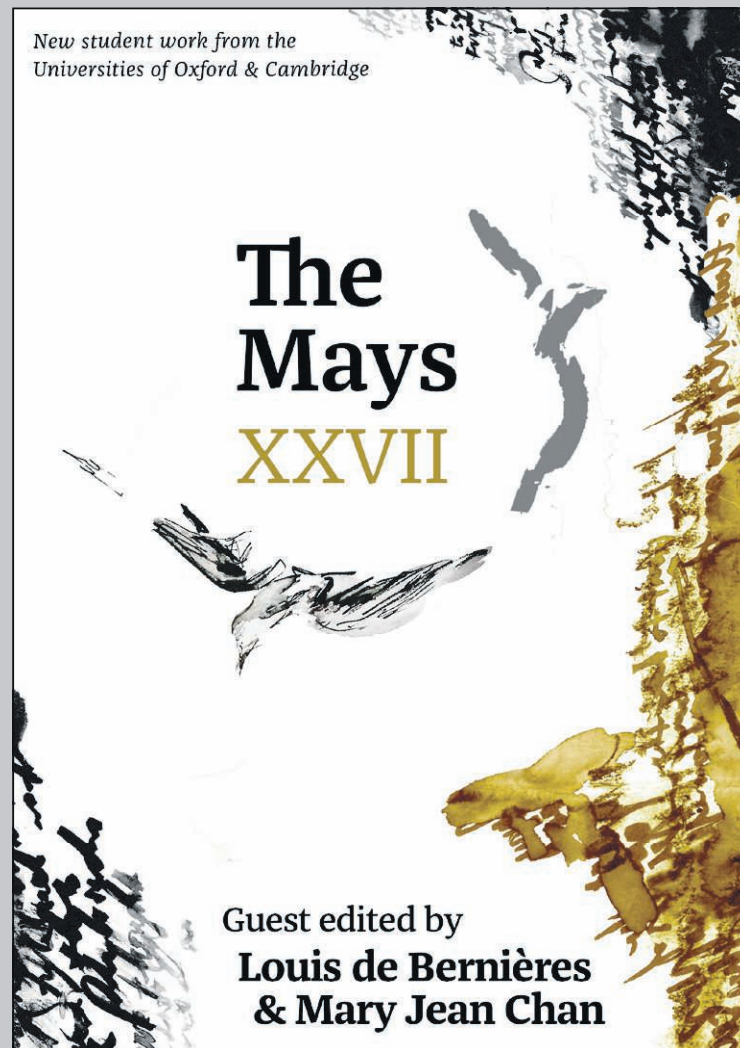
The final person I interview, another rower, encapsulates this passion with ease. Despite studying a demanding degree with many contact hours and being involved in multiple extra-curricular pursuits, she finds the time to row multiple times each week and spent a term in her college's W1 crew, despite only having started rowing at University. Like Sam, she would like to continue her sport of choice into her adult years. When I ask her why she rows, she smiles gently. “I just love it”, she says.

\*Some names have been changed



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# 'I was scared of being judged': Michael Nguyen-Kim on freshers' sporting experiences 30



## Caius and Newnham claim May Headships

**Oliver Rhodes**  
Deputy Editor

May Bumps 2019 concluded on Saturday with Caius M1 and Newnham W1 at the head of the river, repeating their success in the Lent Bumps to displace respective rivals Lady Margaret M1 and Jesus W1.

Over four days of riveting competition on the congested river Cam, 91 men's crews and 77 women's crews competed over 11 divisions, involving over 1500 competitors and hundreds more cycling alongside as coaches, marshals and supporters.

Hundreds of students and locals congregated at the Plough Pub and along the riverbank to watch the action unfold, in spite of some light showers and strong breezes.

The top men's division, dominated for the past three years by St. John's Lady Margaret Boat Club (LMBC), saw Caius Boat Club M1 (CBC) progress from its 4th-place starting position to the Head of the river, displacing Pembroke, Clare and LMBC over the course of the first three days before ensuring victory with a row-over on Saturday.

Downing, Peterhouse and Magdalene also made gains, the latter advancing from 5th to 2nd position on the river courtesy of an overbump on day one – the highest overbump to take place in Bumps history – and a bump against LMBC on Saturday.

For the women, Thursday was the day to remember in what was other-

wise a fairly steady campaign at the top end of the division, with only Downing W1 dropping out of the top 5. That day witnessed Newnham Boat Club W1 (NBC), tipped for success alongside CBC following their victory in Lent, displace Jesus W1, who ended the week in second position after two years at the top. Newnham, Jesus and Emmanuel all retained their spots in the top 3.

The lower divisions, characterised by much greater differences in ability, saw some dramatic turns in fortune. St. Edmund's W2 crew, sitting at the top of the fifth division at the start of the competition, were bumped out by Corpus W2 on Thursday only to return with vengeance on Friday, triple overbumping to advance past 6 other crews and into

the next division.

Reflecting a particularly turbulent year for the men's league, 14 of the 91 competing crews achieved 'blades' for bumping ahead each day, and 8 crews were awarded 'spoons' for being bumped down each day. In the women's league, 4 crews were awarded 'blades' and 6 were awarded 'spoons'.

Mismanaged starts and misguided steering resulted in some spectacular collisions between crews and with the riverbank, as has come to be expected of any Bumps season. Homerton's M1 crew in Friday's second men's division were forced to row home without their bow four after damaging their hull in a riverbank crash at First Post Corner. Friday's women's second division also

saw a sharp collision between a stationary Downing W2 crew and an incoming Selwyn W1 crew on Plough Reach which resulted in a £50 fine for the Selwyn crew.

Cambridge University Combined Boat Clubs (CUCBC), which organises the races, levied 19 fines against crews for dangerous conduct on the river, amounting to £545.

In all, over 100 fines, amounting to £2890, were levied against crews for violations of CUCBC regulations, including 3 for early celebrations and 8 for public urination. Controversy ensued on the first day of racing when James Cracknell, who rowed for the victorious Light Blues in April's Boat Race and was competing for Peterhouse M1 over the week,

was fined for public urination on a van owned by CUCBC.

Some clubs will leave this year's races with fonder memories than others. Notable will be Peterhouse M1, star-studded with three Blues crewmembers, having 'blades' stolen from them on day three by a stubbornly quick Emmanuel crew; Emmanuel, along with Magdalene, showed positive progress from the vast majority of their crews in multiple divisions.

The Pegasus Cup, awarded to the club with the best overall performance in Bumps, was awarded to Clare Hall. The Michell Cup, awarded by CUCBC for the best overall performance throughout the year's competitions, went to Caius.

The Henley Royal Regatta in July is next for many of the top crews.

▲ Pembroke M2 bump St. Edmund's M1 on the third day of racing (OLIVER RHODES)  
▼ Fitzwilliam's M2 crew crashing into Jesus M3 (GEORGIO DIVITINI)



Selwyn W2 and Downing W2 in Friday's second division. OLIVER RHODES ▼

