

Dear my fresher self

Features 12-13



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Student complaints dismissed by University for submission 'out of time'

Amy Batley
Investigations Editor

"Upon returning home from Cambridge, I was overwhelmed with being persistently made to feel academically and personally inadequate by my former supervisor", Alex* said, about their experiences during the Michaelmas term of their final year.

Two years after the fact, Alex felt ready to submit a formal complaint against their supervisor, secured in knowing that they could submit a complaint with fewer potential implications for their academic career. But when they submitted their complaint, it was branded 'ineligible' for investigation, because the incidents Alex brought forward had happened more than 28 days prior to their raising of the complaint - the time limit of the University complaint procedure.

Alex was told that because they had completed their course "over two years ago", "even the most generous assessment of the timeliness of your complaint suggests that you are significantly out of time".

Yet, Alex's supervisor, the subject of the complaint, still works at Cambridge and continues to supervise students. Alex suggested that their experience

"was not an isolated incident" as several other students had raised concerns which reflected the content of Alex's complaint.

Alex told *Varsity*, "being unable to seek justice for myself and to prevent this from happening to other students, has left me feeling powerless, defeated and utterly disappointed".

Cambridge's complaints procedures have come under immense scrutiny in recent years. A Cambridge graduate is currently suing the University, alleging that university staff pressured her to drop her complaint. Last September, two students spoke to *Varsity* about the bureaucracy involved in taking their complaints to their colleges, and their feeling that they weren't taken seriously.

These previous complaints have tended to focus on the experience of undergraduate students. The testimonies from two students who spoke to *Varsity*, Alex and Taylor*, both former postgraduate students, raises different issues due to the professional, one-on-one relationship that is expected between postgraduate students and their supervisors.

Postgraduate students are often particularly conscious of their academic

Full story page 2-3 ►



▲ An easier class list opt-out system was introduced in 2018 (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Class list opt-outs near 50%, with more women opting out

Charlotte Lillywhite
Deputy Editor

47.3% of students opted out of having their name published on class lists this year, *Varsity* can reveal.

This is a 10.8 percentage point increase from last year, when 36.5% of students opted out of having their marks displayed on notice boards outside Senate House and online.

This year, 6,047 undergraduates and 211 postgraduates out of 13,231 eligible students chose to opt out, according to data obtained by *Varsity* through a Freedom of Information Act request. The opt-out rate was considerably higher for undergraduates, at 49.8%, compared to postgraduates, at 19.2%.

The total proportion of students who have opted out has now risen above the rate at which Oxford decided to abolish class lists in 2009, when around 40% of students chose not to have their results publicised.

Before the introduction of a simple opt-out process last year, Cambridge automatically published students' names with their grades — grouped by classification — in the *Cambridge University Reporter* each year. Now, only those who remain opted into Class Lists have their results published.

This year, women opted out at almost double the rate of men, with 61.5% of women opting out compared to 34.6% of men, a percentage point difference of 26.9. The gender gap in opt-out rates has

Continued on page 8 ►

EDITORIAL

Cambridge, on your own terms

Achievement is something of a buzzword at Cambridge. It goes without saying that results are subject to a great amount of attention here, probably too much. Though sometimes scrutiny is required (see our report on the gender attainment gap in News, pages 8-9, and class list opt-outs, page 1), sometimes we can get caught up in harmful comparisons. And this isn't just confined to academics.

It can feel as though simply being a student isn't enough. That you must always be more, sometimes to the dangerous point at which exhaustion becomes the marker of success. Facing these pressures isn't an easy task, and it certainly isn't one any of us can accomplish alone. This year, and in the future, there will be plenty of people offering support.

In our pages this week, students share the things they wish they'd known in Freshers' Week (Lifestyle, page 22), and the advice they'd offer to their fresher self (Features, pages 12-13). Listen to them. You might not always choose to follow their advice – so many of us don't – but eventually you'll figure out how to navigate Cambridge on your own terms. That's what all of us here are trying to do.

Not everyone's experience of Cambridge is the same. Make sure you listen to what other people have to say, and hear the things they're going through.

Make sure you're heard too, especially when louder voices seek to take up all the air in the room.

Most of us only have three years at this University – whether that's too much or too little is up for debate. However you feel about this, don't spend that time second guessing your place here.

Yes, there's immense pressure to succeed at Cambridge, and we aren't here to tell you not to bother. What we're saying is this: take it at your own pace, prioritise your needs, and strive for success on your own terms.

Maia Wyn Davies & Stephanie Stacey

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News

A 28-day window 'It took me two years to understand how the poor experience at Cambridge affected me'

Varsity investigates student experiences of the decision to change the eligible time for formal student complaints

► Continued from front page

relationships and potential academic careers. A consequence of this is that postgraduate students encounter the difficult question about whether to raise concerns during their time at Cambridge or to wait until graduation. The 28-day timeframe can thus pose an impossible barrier for students making the decision to complain.

Data seen by *Varsity* shows that since the academic year 2014-5, several formal complaints have been rejected because they were submitted after a 28-day deadline.

For the academic year 2014/15, 2 of the 8 submitted cases were rejected as being 'out of time'. For the year 2015/16, this figure stands at 1 of 7 cases. In 2016/17, this figure was again 2 of 8 cases.

Prior to October 2017, the deadline for the submission of a complaint was 'within three months of the matter arising'.

Revisions to the Student Complaints Procedure in October 2017 mean that complaints stipulate that 'complaints should be made within 28 days of the matter arising, or within 28 days of the conclusion of Local Resolution'.

The revised complaints procedure also means that, since October 2017, the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals [OSCCA], the office responsible for student complaints, no longer records why individual cases are deemed ineligible. Therefore, it is no longer possible to identify how many cases are marked as 'ineligible' due to submission after the 28 day time-

frame.

Cambridge follows many other UK universities, including Durham, City University London and UCL, which also have a 28 day limit on complaints.

A 'Local Resolution' is defined as efforts to speak or write to the staff member responsible for the service, action or behaviour being complained about, if this is appropriate. Where it is appropriate, you are expected to attempt Local Resolution as soon as the matter occurs and in any case within 28 days of the matter occurring'.

When completing the complaint form, students are told that 'complaints made after these deadlines will be considered late'.

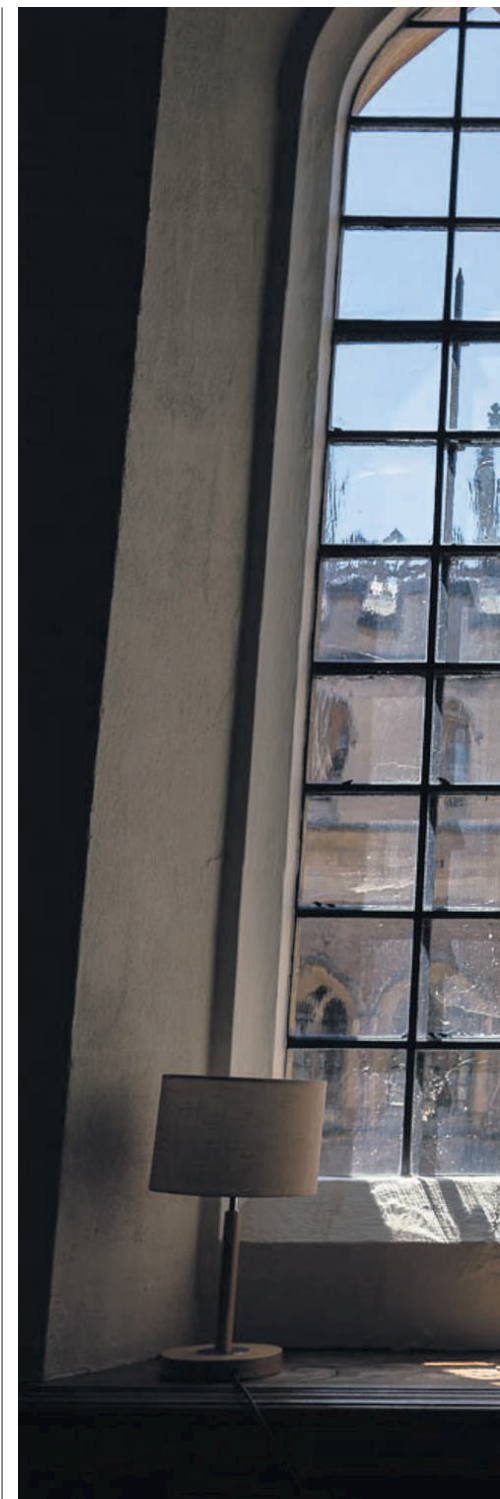
OSCCA explained that the reason for the deadline is because "the 28-day timeframe is in line with best practice from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator".

It is possible for students to provide evidence to explain why their complaints were submitted after the 28 day requirement, "if good evidenced reasons are provided, complaints received outside the 28 day timeframe are accepted and investigated".

Taylor*, another postgraduate student whose complaint and subsequent appeal were both rejected because of the 28-day timeframe, spoke to *Varsity* about their experiences of the complaint procedure.

To ensure the anonymity of the complainants, *Varsity* is not able to report the content of their complaints.

Both students said that the incidents which were included in their complaint negatively impacted the rest of their



▲ The student complaints procedure has faced criticism from pursuing complaints, involves extensive bureaucracy and negative experiences (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

course.

Alex raised their complaint two years after graduating, Taylor raised concerns in the August after events in the former Michaelmas term.

Both students were told that their submitted complaints were ineligible as OSCCA had decided that their complaints were 'out of time'.

Alex added that "feelings of inadequacy meant that I did not try to raise this issue any further due to the low self-esteem which began during my time in Cambridge. It took me two years to understand how the poor experience I had during my studies at the University of Cambridge has affected me".

Taylor did not complain until several months after the initial issue arose for several reasons. They explained that the events had already "disrupted academic work" too much to find time to submit a complaint, whilst also feeling that they had "no energy for [the] draining complaints procedure".

OSCCA told *Varsity* that "evidence accepted for lateness is usually required to be from an independent source – depending on the circumstances that

News



consistent scrutiny, with allegations that the process disincentivises students bureaucracy, and is a retraumatizing process for students who have had traumatic



▲ Several formal complaints have been rejected by the University because they were submitted after the deadline (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

“
Being un-
able to
seek justice
has left
me feeling
powerless,
defeated
and utterly
disappoint-
ed
”

an independent body set up to deal with student complaints.

In response to Alex and Taylor's concerns, a University spokesperson told *Varsity* that the Student Complaints Procedure was revised in 2017 “to ensure that it was clear and transparent for students”.

The spokesperson continued to explain that “the University understands that there are a number of reasons why students are not able to raise complaints within 28 days. Where there is a valid reason for a delay, a complaint will still be investigated”.

In recognition that some students may be concerned about the consequences of raising a formal complaint, this year the University has begun a 6-month pilot of an anonymous reporting programme for postgraduate students.

In an email circulated to postgraduate students at Wolfson College, the pilot programme is described as a way to “raise concerns – anonymously – about situations or conduct” which students “may find troubling”.

The new programme claims to respond to recognition that postgraduate students may encounter “additional barriers” to reporting due to the need for close relationships with specific members of staff.

This programme will allow postgraduate students to provide feedback to College Tutors who will pass information to OSCCA, which will then communicate with the Department.

However, the new system will not have a disciplinary function. A University spokesperson told *Varsity* that “because of the anonymity of the students it will not be able to initiate a formal investigation”.

*Names have been changed to protect anonymity

may be a letter from a medical professional or some other form of factual evidence”.

Taylor was given one week to provide additional evidence after the initial complaint was rejected. They said that the initial rejection was disappointing as they “double-checked every event” included in the complaint to ensure that all important information was included.

Taylor found the complaints procedure “extremely emotionally draining” due to having to successively recall the experiences which underpinned the complaint.

The additional information which Taylor provided in their appeal included correspondence with the uni-

versity advisory bodies, letters from their counsellor, correspondence with their department which detail academic submission extension requests and doctors letters. Despite submitting the additional documentation, their appeal was still rejected.

Alex felt that having to provide evidence from a medical professional to explain the lateness of a complaint was intrusive. Alex said to *Varsity*, “being asked to provide a proof in order to ‘validate’ how this experience has impacted my mental and emotional well-being after graduating felt a bit insensitive.”

Taylor found the process of providing additional information “time-consuming”, especially as they were uncertain about whether their appeal would be successful.

After providing this subsequent evidence to explain late submission, both Alex and Taylor's appeals were still rejected.

As with all complaints which are rejected by OSCCA, Alex and Taylor now have the opportunity to appeal to The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education [OIA]. The OIA is



Number of
complaints
rejected by
the University
between 2014/15-
2016-2017

NEWS

Cambridge's only place of Hindu worship in danger of repossession

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▲ The Indian Community and Culture Association (ROSIE BRADBURY)

NEWS

What happened at Cambridge while students were gone

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SCIENCE

Studying physics at Newnham gave me newfound confidence

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Confronting my family's tradition of child marriage

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Andrea Carlo

Greta Thunberg and the intergenerational divide in activism

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SPORT

What's happening in Michaelmas sport

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News

Cambridge eco-mosque wins award for ‘innovative design’

Chloe Bayliss
Senior News Editor

The new Cambridge Central Mosque, the first purpose-built mosque in Cambridge, has been awarded a major regional planning award at the University Arms in Cambridge, an event attended by over 100 regional planning professionals.

The mosque, which opened earlier this year in March, was declared the winner at the Royal Town Planning Institute's East of England Regional Awards for Planning Excellence 2019. The judges said the project represented “the pinnacle of public involvement, learning and understanding for planning professionals”.

The £23m project, Europe's first eco-mosque, was built with thoughtful environmental consideration. Its website states that “environmental concerns have been paramount in the design”. With natural lighting, vaulted ceilings, efficient heat pumps and rainwater used to flush WCs, the building seeks to combine elegance with environmental consciousness.

The convenor of the judging panel,

David Potter, praised the “innovative design” of the “impressive community facility”. He said that the careful construction and design of the building and its surrounding gardens had resulted in “a building that will become a cultural and physical landmark in the area.”

Trustee of the mosque and Professor of Islamic Studies at Cambridge University, Abdal Hakim Murad, also known as Tim Winter, said that the award was a “very encouraging sign that an often neglected community can produce symbols of real excellence”.

When asked about the significance of excellent design to houses of prayer, he said that these kinds of projects can be “tricky for architects”, as “ego and rampant self-expression are frowned on, and because they have to be serene sanctuaries for so many different kinds of people.”

He added, “Cambridge has always been a showcase of architectural innovation, whether King's chapel or the Sidgwick Site; the city is a kind of national exhibition of old and new design so the mosque, which symbolises the city's global status and multicultural population,

is an important symbolic addition to a very long-standing tradition of adding wonders to the built environment which we all inhabit.”

Designated places of prayer for faiths that are not orientated towards Christianity have been hard to come by in Cambridge. An investigation this year by *Varsity* showed that 19 of 31 Cambridge colleges had no provision for a permanent prayer space independent of a college chapel, and other colleges only offered temporary use of rooms for prayer and meditation.

Hakim Murad said that with “census figures suggesting a Cambridge Muslim population of over five thousand, it became clear that a significant purpose-built mosque was long overdue”. He noted that, since its opening, the building “reaches its capacity of a thousand worshippers every Friday”, and that this only highlights the continued need for more purpose-built houses of prayer for the community.

► **The new Cambridge Central Mosque on Mill Road**

(HASSAN RAJA)



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News

FAST TRACK

Electric trains come to Cambridge

Greater Anglia launched its brand-new fleet of trains last Friday, beginning with the Cambridge-Norwich route, which the managing director described as “one of [their] busiest regional routes”. The company has spent £1.4 billion to replace its old stock of diesel trains with electric or bi-mode models (powered by diesel and electricity). These trains have several new features including more seats, more leg room, air conditioning and more accessible doors for passengers with disabilities.

NACHO AVERAGE LUNCH

Free food giveaway at Tortilla opening

On Friday 4th of October, Cambridge's first branch of Tortilla will be opening its doors after months of construction. The Mexican fast-food chain, which has several restaurants in London as well as Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Bahrain, will soon be setting up shop beside Market Square, next to Paperchase. To celebrate its grand opening, they will be giving away free lunch between 12pm and 2pm on a first come, first serve basis. The chain will be joined by the new branches of Costa and Five Guys on the same street.

SQUAT'S NEW?

Squat toilets arrive in redevelopment

A planning application has been submitted to Cambridge City Council for redevelopment of the Silver Street public toilets. The proposal drew attention due to the inclusion of three new squat toilets. The plans also include the addition of two gender neutral toilets and the renovation of the existing disabled toilet. The Council described the public amenities, built in 1985, as “outdated, costly to maintain and less able to cope with high demand”. Construction will begin in Autumn 2020.

A BRIGHT IDEA

Cambridge celebrates festival of ideas

The Cambridge Festival of Ideas is returning for its 12th consecutive year, running this year between the 14th and 27th of October. The festival will feature hundreds of free events centred around the theme of change, including lectures, panel debates, exhibitions, film screenings and hands-on workshops. The festival was modelled on the successful Cambridge Science Festival, aiming to share the University's knowledge and ideas with the public, but instead celebrates the arts, humanities and social sciences.

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News

Staff strikes, Lucy Cav, and Brexit concerns

What you missed in Toope's annual address

Stephanie Stacey & Maia Wyn Davies
Editors

Content Note: this article contains mention of sexual assault and rape

Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope made his annual address to Senate House on Tuesday, emphasising the significance of Cambridge's status as a "global" institution and highlighting the challenges of continued Brexit uncertainty.

In his half-hour address, Toope touched on several contentious issues, including the prospect of potential strike action over pay and over pensions in the coming term. Other topics, however, such as the controversy surrounding the dismissal of multiple students' sexual misconduct complaints this summer, received little or no mention.

Toope said that he was "troubled" by the imminent prospect of industrial action from staff over pay and pensions at a time which he deemed to be "a critical juncture for the country and for the University."

He noted that the University will "keep exploring options to enhance our staff's

total compensation package" by focusing on staff benefits such as childcare support and housing assistance. When it comes to pensions, a topic which has in recent years been highly contested both within Cambridge and higher education institutions across the country, Toope said that the University "will strive to find creative solutions to reach an agreement leading to a sustainable pensions system," which would be agreeable to employees and employers alike.

One of the University's ambitions for the year, he emphasised, was to be "a place to work where staff are – and feel – trusted and valued."

Toope welcomed the University's new disciplinary procedures, in place from 1st October. Notably, the criminal standard of proof used in student disciplinary proceedings was replaced by the civil standard of proof, to a balance of probabilities. He said that the reformed procedures, which come after years of student-led campaigning, have given the University "the means to better challenge inappropriate behaviour, and the tools to better support complainants."



Toope made no mention of the widely-publicised ruling, made in June, which saw multiple students' complaints of sexual misconduct stopped in their tracks without investigation.

This summer, it was revealed that at least two formal complaints of sexual assault and rape had been dismissed, following a decision made by one chair of the University's Disciplinary Committee to exclude sexual misconduct from the official definition of harassment in disciplinary procedures.

This decision cannot be reversed, and those whose complaints have been dismissed are unable to appeal within University systems.

Since then, the loophole in the disciplinary procedures has been covered in national publications including both the *Guardian* and the *BBC*, with lawyers and women's groups having branded the change 'unlawful'.

A Queens' junior research fellow and barrister has called for an "independent inquiry" into the change, and recent Cambridge graduate Dani Bradford announced in July that she is suing the University for its handling of her sexual misconduct complaint from several years ago.

Meanwhile, although only briefly mentioned by Toope, the University's research-led inquiry into its historic links to the Atlantic slave trade was presented as an example of the University's responsibility to respond "as the world changes".

The inquiry, he said, is not designed to "atone, or to undermine this university's proud history in the abolition movement, but to better understand and acknowledge our own complex, multi-layered past, and how that may affect our future."

While describing a "constant process of change" at Cambridge, Toope discussed the decision made by mature

▲ **Stephen Toope is the current vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge**
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

womens' college Lucy Cavendish to become mixed-gender and admit students from the age of 18 from 2021. This, he said, was "itself an example of the University adapting to meet new social needs".

Toope went on to note the record number of colleges led by women this year, with Trinity College, Jesus College, and St Edmund's College each welcoming their first female heads this term.

No mention was made of the fact that Sonita Alleyne, the new Jesus Master, is the first black head of an Oxbridge college.

Toope repeatedly emphasised the importance of being a "global" institution, specifically highlighting the significance of the European Research Council (ERC) to Cambridge.

He cited the 21 new ERC grants awarded to Cambridge in the past year as an example of how "crucial" this European landscape has been to the University, and expressed concern about the continued "uncertainty" surrounding Brexit which, he said, affects "both current and prospective" students.

Tackling the climate crisis was another issue on which Toope emphasised the importance of a "global" approach, noting that Cambridge is a member of the newly formed Global Universities Alliance on Climate.

Announcing the upcoming formal launch of Cambridge Zero, the University's new programme aiming to respond to the climate crisis and work towards a zero-carbon future, Toope said that the urgency of combating climate change was "underscored this past summer, when staff at our own Botanic Garden reported the highest UK temperature on record".

The University has pledged to fulfil "science-based targets" of committing to 75% decrease in 2015 energy-related carbon emissions by 2030, and cutting their carbon emissions to zero by 2048.

“An example of the University adopting to meet new social needs”

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What's on: A round-up of Cambridge events celebrating this year's Black History Month

Alycia Gaunt
News Correspondent

This year, the beginning of term also marks the start of Black History Month in the UK, and the full programme of lectures, films, discussion panels and exhibitions running in Cambridge is not to be missed. The ability of this period to empower and educate should not be understated, and with that in mind, here are some highlights of the events available in Cambridge.

9am-5pm weekdays (throughout October)

Black Cantabs: History Makers
Fitzwilliam College

Challenging the widely held belief that black British history begins with the Windrush, this exhibition, previously displayed at the Cambridge University Library, celebrates 260 years of Cambridge education for black Cambridge students and graduates from the 1700s to the 21st century. Look out for George Bridgetower, an Afro-European virtuoso violinist who attended Trinity Hall and earned a Bachelor of Music in June

1811.

Monday 14 October, 5.30pm - 6.30pm
Annual Race Equality Lecture: David Lammy MP in Conversation with Gillian Joseph

St John's College Fisher Building

In light of the recent BBC ruling (and subsequent reversal) against Naga Munchetty, this discussion with Sky News broadcaster Gillian Joseph is timely. Topics include: how racism manifests itself in organisations today, the barriers to career opportunities faced by BAME staff and how to overcome them, the lack of BAME role models in senior positions, and how to increase BAME access and representation in leading professions.

Friday 18 October, 7.30pm - 9.30pm

Black History Month Comedy Night
Pembroke College, New Cellars

For some (probably needed) comedic relief as the evenings get darker.

Saturday 19 October, 12pm-6pm (TBC)

Motherland Conference (Cambridge University African Caribbean Society)

The Cambridge Union

With last year's line-up including Stormzy and the Vice-President of Malawi, the Motherland Conference does



▲ David Lammy MP will come to Cambridge on 14th October (DAVID LAMMY MP)

not disappoint. For its second annual event, this year's theme is 'Heritage', and is set to be not just the highlight of Black History Month, but the academic year.

Tuesday 22 October, 7pm - 9pm

Marsha P. Johnson on Film
Gonville and Caius College, Bateman Auditorium

A screening of Tourmaline & Sasha

Wortzel's short film, 'Happy Birthday, Marsha', celebrating trans activist and queer icon Marsha P. Johnson. This will be followed by a critical screening of a documentary featuring archival footage of Marsha, Sylvia Rivera, and other activists.

The Stonewall Uprising, which took place in Greenwich Village, New York,

in June 1969, is generally considered to be a turning point in the history of the LGBTQ+ community. The riots helped to spark a queer revolution both within the United States and around the world, leading to the creation of the gay liberation movement and the first gay pride parade the following year.

Tuesday 22 October, 6pm- 8pm

'Black enough?' Discussing the experiences of diasporans who don't fit the mould

Winstanley Lecture Theatre, Trinity College
Emphasising an issue that is all too often delegated in favour of the bigger challenges that face minorities, Nathania Williams leads this event in discussion with the Cambridge ACS.

Monday 28 October, 2pm-4pm

Taking Up Space: The Black Girl's Manifesto for Change

Cambridge University Library, Milstein Seminar Rooms

Cambridge graduates Chelsea Kwakye and Ore Ogunbiyi will provide a short talk about their first-hand experience of being a minority in a predominantly white institution, before signing copies of their book, *Taking Up Space*, which will be available to purchase.

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Arts subjects see highest class list opt-out rates

► Continued from front page

thus widened since last year, where the percentage point difference was 23.6. Unsurprisingly, then, the three women's colleges had the top three opt-out rates for this year's exams: Newnham had the highest opt-out rate of any college at 70.5%, then Murray Edwards at 66.1% and Lucy Cavendish at 61.2%. The opt-out rate for students whose gender is recorded as 'other' in the University's administrative systems was higher, at 72.7%.

However, only 11 students eligible to opt out are officially listed as such in the University's systems, and this figure therefore may not be representative of the wider body of students who do not identify as either male or female and are eligible to opt out of class lists.

Speaking to *Varsity*, CUSU Women's Officer Kate Litman highlighted the lack of accurate data representing the experiences of non-binary people with regards to exam results: "when non-binary people don't have their gender correctly recorded by the University, we don't have data which accurately reflects their experiences," she said.

She pointed to the necessity of "the demands of the 'Why Gender Neutral?' Campaign for the University to update its administrative systems to include non-binary genders".

Litman noted that "research conducted on the Gender Attainment Gap in 2015 [found] that women are more likely than men to feel uncomfortable in learning environments in Cambridge".

Citing WomCam's 2015 Mind the Gap report, she added that while "far more women than men felt their gender negatively impacted their learning experience — 1 in 5 compared to 1 in 25 [...] this was even higher for students who identified as neither male nor female, with 1 in 2 of these students feeling that



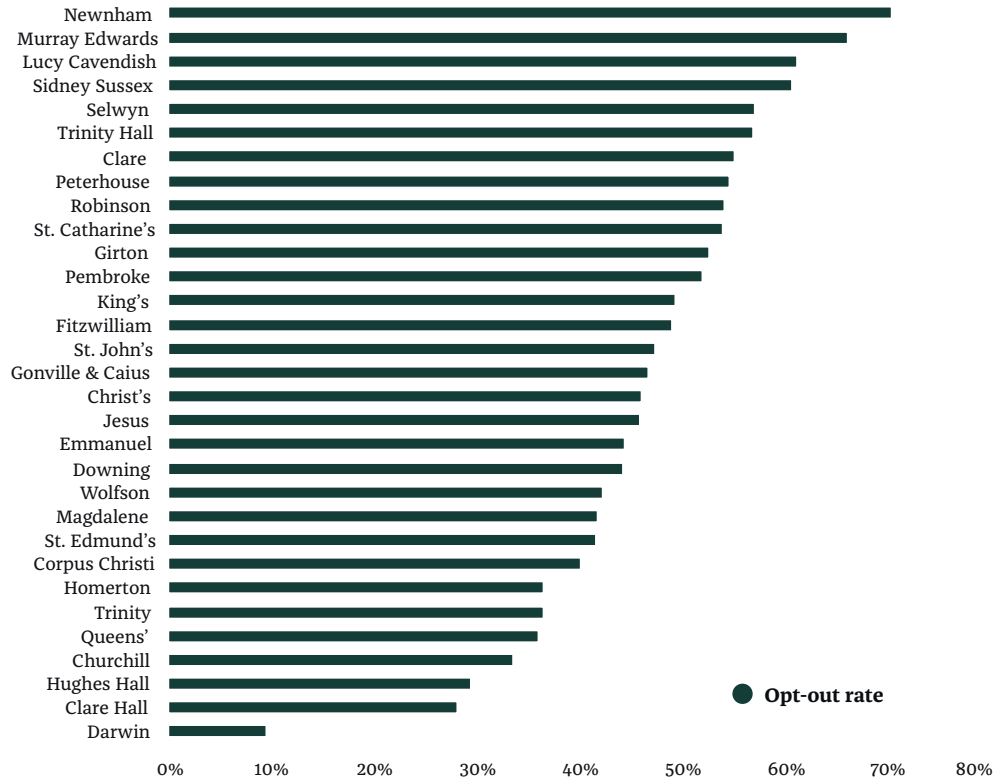
their gender negatively impacted their learning experience".

There were generally higher opt-out rates for arts and humanities subjects compared to the sciences. 82.6% of Archaeology and Land Economy students opted out, followed closely by 78.7% of History and Modern Languages students and 75.1% of HSPS students.

▼ Graphics by Rosie Bradbury

Womens' colleges on top for opt-out rates

Newnham had the highest opt-out rate of any Cambridge college in 2019, of 70.5%



Medical Sciences and Veterinary Sciences had the highest opt-out rates among science students, at 71.0%. The second highest spot was taken by Natural Sciences students, where 48.8% of students opting out. Churchill College, which is committed to offering 70% of its places to STEM students, had the lowest opt-out rate of all the non-mature colleges, at 33.5%.

Second years – who, as freshers, comprised the largest proportion of opt-outs last year – were the most likely to opt out from this year's exams, at a rate of 55.3%. Third years were the second most likely to opt out, with 50.8% choosing this option.

Unlike the previous year where students needed to manually opt-out through CamSIS, students who had opted out from the Class Lists last year were automatically left off the Class Lists this year, unless they manually opted back in.

Freshers still opted out at a higher rate than the previous year's first-year cohort, however, at 42.3%.

In April 2016, *Varsity* revealed that a review of class lists by the General Board of Faculties had recommended that class lists be abolished.

However, Regent House members voted in December of that year to save Class Lists, which followed a referendum launched by campaign group 'Save the Class Lists,' where 55.2% of students voted to keep Class Lists, but with an "easier opt-out process". This easy opt-out process was confirmed in May 2018.

"The benefit of having an opt-out system is that those who want to opt out do, and those who don't want to opt out can still see their results published," a spokesperson for the University said.

◀▶ Class Lists appear outside Senate House and in the Cambridge University Reporter at the end of every academic year (LOUIS ASHWORTH)



Recap: Last year's opt-out stats

2018 was the first year with the simple opt-out via CamSIS. The rate among eligible students was 36.5%, with freshers comprising the highest proportion of opt-outs among any year group. 2,931 female students opted out of the class lists, as compared to 1,745 male students. Arts students were more likely to opt out: over three-fifths of Land Economy and HSPS students choosing to opt out, compared to less than 20% of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, and Mechanical Engineering students.

"We are glad to see that so many students are exercising their right to make this choice through our new opt-out system."

Speaking in support of the abolition of Class Lists, Litman added that the Women's Campaign "believe[s] that education should not be a competition, and that making it one is actively harmful".

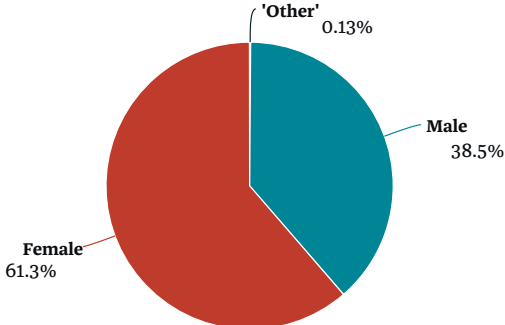
Student Minds Cambridge told *Varsity* that "making the process of opting-out from Class Lists easier and more transparent has played an important role in promoting a less competitive environment at Cambridge".

"Some students can find an overly competitive [environment] detrimental to their mental wellbeing, and we would encourage these students to reach out to some of the student wellbeing provisions offered at the University," they added, pointing to resources including tutors, the Students' Union's Advice Service and GP services. "If you reach out to us, we can try to help direct you to the appropriate resources."

“Education should not be a competition”

Class list opt-outs nearly two-thirds female

61.3% of students who opted out of the class lists were registered as female, compared to a rate of 38.5% for those registered as male



Cambridge's only place of Hindu worship in danger of repossession

Sophie Huskisson
News Correspondent

Cambridge's Indian Community and Culture Association (ICCA) faces uncertainty over their lease of its Victorian-age building, a former library located on Mill Road.

Though the property has been leased to the ICCA free of charge for 20 years, the Council plans to take the association to court, alleging the organisation has not adequately maintained the Grade II listed building.

Speaking to *Varsity*, Trustee Jayantibhai Buhecha of the ICCA described the building as "the only place all Hindus who live in Cambridge and the surrounding area can go to worship."

Both the City and County Councils

“
[This is]
very serious
for all
Hindus in
the area
”



have informed ICCA that they are unable to offer an alternative appropriate place of worship in the area. If the association lose the building, the nearest place of worship would be 40 miles away, in Peterborough.

Buhecha said that the challenges

▲ **Cambridge's Indian Community and Culture Association on Mill Road**

(ROSIE BRADBURY)

they face in finding appropriate places to worship in Cambridge are "very serious for all Hindus in the area."

Cambridgeshire County Council said the ICCA was given responsibility to repair and maintain the building under the tenancy agreement which began in

1999, and the association was aware of the poor condition of the old library when it took it over.

Josh Schumann, chairman of the Council's commercial and investment committee, told the BBC they had "been almost too accommodating" to the community, with the Council, "believing repeated assurances that [the ICCA] will be able to keep the building in good order."

Buhecha said that the Council had been accommodating but "only with meetings." He added: "The council has nothing to offer us as a community, they have no alternative home offer on the table and they still do not know how much it would cost to repair our existing building."

According to ICCA trustee Rajni Padia who spoke to the BBC, the association has spent between £200,000 and £250,000 on upkeep of the Mill Road building since it took over. Padia estimated that around 5,000 Hindus live in Cambridge.

When questioned on the impact losing the building would have on the Hindu student community in Cambridge, he said it would be "equally bad."

"Students who come to study in Cambridge from all over the world were always welcomed to participate in the Temple activities. We always encourage students to join in the weekly prayer service especially the Sunday Arti performed every week."

The ICCA are set to go to court later in October.

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News

Activism, adjustment & overdue library books. What went down in Cambridge this summer?

● *It's been a busy few months for Cambridge, both in the city and the University. Sasi Valaiyapathi brings you the biggest summer stories*

ADJUSTING THE FIELD Cambridge accepts 67 students through adjustment

Cambridge this year accepted 67 students from disadvantaged backgrounds who did not receive an offer after their interview, during its first year of participation in the UCAS Adjustment scheme.

Adjustment allows students who exceed the conditions of their existing offer to look for courses at another university without turning down their original place.

To be considered by Cambridge during the Adjustment period, students had to meet three out of five 'contextual flags' marking disadvantaged backgrounds. Future plans to widen participation include a planned foundation course to be implemented by 2020.

ALANA CUTLAND Thousands raised in memory of Cutland

The family of Alana Cutland, a student at Robinson College who passed away suddenly in August, has raised over £22,000 in her memory.

The funds raised on JustGiving will go partly towards constructing an extra classroom at a school in Madagascar, where Alana was undertaking an internship at the time of her death. Alana's family also plan to launch a bursary at Robinson College for female students, something which they have said Alana "would have thoroughly approved of."

STRIKE WHILE HOT Cambridge joins Global Strike for Climate

Over one thousand university students, schoolchildren and residents took to the streets of Cambridge on September 20th as part of the Global Strike for Climate. The University supported staff members wishing to take part in a 30-minute work stoppage on 20th September in solidarity with climate change protests.

Students closed off sections of King's Parade by staging a 'die-in' protest and set off buzzers to 'sound the alarm' on the climate crisis.

This summer, Cambridge recorded the highest UK temperature on record, with a searing 38 degrees.



▲ Cambridge used Adjustment for the first time (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

GATES-GATE Gates Scholars condemn award to Indian PM Modi

Over 110 Cambridge Gates Scholars and alumni have challenged the Gates Foundation's decision to offer their Global Goalkeeper Award to Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi.

The award was given for Modi's work on improving sanitation in India, but the Scholars' open letter accuses his government of "[a] gross violation of human rights" and calls for the Foundation to "condemn and not reward PM Modi's leadership".

The award may be a topic of student questions during Bill Gates' speech at the Cambridge Union on 7th October.



▲ Christ's topped the Tompkins Table for the 2nd year running (DANIEL GAYNE)

IN THE BAD BOOKS Book returned to UL almost 60 years late

In a formidable display of procrastination, a book has been returned to the Cambridge University Library almost 60 years too late. The book, titled *Cultures and Societies of Africa*, was returned to Gonville and Caius library last week, racking up an eye-watering fine of almost £4,700.

£4,700

The fine racked up by this particular overdue book

"Suffice to say we waived the fine", the UL tweeted, adding that it "must have been a great book – or a very slow reader?" If only all of our library fines could be waived so generously...

FUELLING CHANGE Jesus withdraws direct fossil fuel investments

In September, Jesus College became the most recent college to withdraw its direct investments in the fossil fuel sector, and plans to host an event in November for members of the College to "help develop its responsible investment strategy".

The Jesus Divestment Campaign has stated that they are committed to "[ensuring] the divestment process is complete, ethical and transparent", adding that the college's decision "does not constitute the end of our campaign".

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE Sexual misconduct ruling 'unlawful'

Content Note: This segment contains discussion of sexual misconduct and assault
At least two complaints of sexual assault at Cambridge have been stopped in their tracks by a chair of the University's Disciplinary Committee after a single chair's decision, made earlier this year in June, excluded sexual misconduct from the University's official definition of harassment. This left some students unable to pursue complaints under current regulations. Meanwhile, a former student announced plans to sue the University for their treatment of her complaint several years ago.

On 1st October, reformed procedures came into force which explicitly define sexual misconduct as a breach of student behaviour rules, meaning that future complaints can no longer be dismissed for those reasons given in June. However, complaints about incidents that occurred before this date will still be judged according to the old procedures. Sexual misconduct lawyers called the chair's decision 'unlawful', and a Queens' junior research fellow has called for an independent inquiry into the change.

CHRIST'S ALIVE Christ's once more tops Tompkins Table

In August, the Tompkins Table, which ranks colleges on their undergraduate performance, was published by *Varsity*. Christ's topped the table for the second year running, after last year unseating Trinity and bringing an end to its seven-year reign atop the rankings.

Christ's saw 44.0% of its students awarded first-class degrees in 2019, an almost 7% increase on its performance in this regard last year. This figure is at least double the proportions of students obtaining first-class degrees at seven other Cambridge colleges this year.

Student disciplinary procedures have changed. What does that mean?

In May, the University's decision-making body Regent House voted to accept a series of reforms to the Student Disciplinary Procedures, including to adopt the civil standard of proof, the balance of probabilities, in place of the criminal standard of proof, proof beyond reasonable doubt. These reforms apply from 1st October 2019.

Prior to this, Cambridge was one of only a handful, if not the only, UK university to use the criminal standard of proof in student disciplinary proceedings. CUSU Women's Campaign has campaigned in favour of transitioning to the civil standard of proof for several years, noting that allegations of sexual assault, which often leave little tangible evidence, are highly unlikely to be upheld under proof 'beyond reasonable doubt', with perpetrators therefore less likely to face consequences.

As part of their new reforms, the University also created the position of an Investigating Officer to provide 'specialist knowledge of the complexities of sexual misconduct' during disciplinary proceedings. They have also introduced new training requirements for those tasked with carrying out the University's disciplinary procedures.

Meanwhile, intimate partner abuse and online harassment have been added into the disciplinary framework's definition of 'abusive behaviour'.



▼ Students protest outside King's College (MATTHEW WEBB)

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Features

If I could talk to my fresher self,

I only realised the value of taking breaks from Cambridge at the end of my first year. If you can't spare a weekend, even a day trip can do the trick. For me, the usual destination was London; I have family there, there is lots to do, and the journey is cheap. If you would rather stay in Cambridge, then a day trip to Ely can be really refreshing, or a walk to Coton or Fen Ditton, or maybe fish and chips on the beach in Cromer. These trips are doable in one day, and can restore you for weeks.

In my third year, I really got away; I moved to Egypt for my year abroad. I study Arabic and had always been excited for my third year, especially because I knew that my friends would still be in Cambridge when I returned (they all do MML), but by the end of second year I didn't want to leave Cambridge. I had just solidified long-lasting relationships, and begun last minute ones – sadly, some were with people who were studying other courses and would graduate a year before me.

Ironically, I spent the summer between my second and third years returning to Cambridge every weekend, getting away from London as much as I could. It was magical to be in Cambridge in the summertime outside of term, even though the city was heaving with European teenagers tripping over cyclists on King's Parade. It was no longer a source of stress. Cambridge is both heaven and hell, this was something that became clear by Easter term of first year. By April the weather is beautiful, summer is fast approaching, and the days have grown longer. Exams spoil your plans for a while, but in the end the final term of the year is truly the best one. I also found that people got away the most in the final weeks, preparing for over three months away from the Bridge.

If there was a stitch in time and I could speak to my fresher self, I would

tell her to leave Cambridge more. This isn't ground-breaking guidance, but sometimes it's hard to see when you're dead-set on building a base at university. In the beginning, I would flee back home to Indonesia as soon as term ended. Although this was an escape in itself, it was not unusual for me to spend at least six of the eight weeks of full term cooped up in my room. I always told myself that leaving was a hassle. Sometimes it is, but most of the time it can be really refreshing to leave – even if it's for a walk outside the city centre.

Cambridge is a bubble, a pressure cooker even; if you don't venture out of your comfort zone, then you can grow too attached to it. I grew accustomed to my triangle of comfort during my first two years at Cambridge: King's, Sidgwick Site and the Sainsbury's near Sidney Sussex. Everything I needed was within this area, so why venture out? What feels snug and warm at first grows stale and stuffy by Week Five. The den you've built yourself morphs into a swamp and now you're a giant green ogre wallowing in the filthy pile of laundry you've been putting off washing because your laundry room has only five working machines for hundreds of students.

I visited Cambridge twice during my year abroad, once in March and the second time in June during May Week. Something I noticed during these trips was how trivial the 'Cambridge life' sounded to me after six months away. Even though I was well aware that I myself was once like this, it still made me think, *is this what I sounded like for two whole years?* "My ASOS order hasn't arrived in time for x-themed King's Bunker event," "I don't want to look like I've tried too hard for formal hall," and "That supervision was a bloodbath, I'm quitting university" were all things I said on the regular. Facebook posts on the College JCR page about missing butter

knives, people coughing in the library during exam term, or the Provost's missing cats no longer seemed funny, but a little sad when discussed more than once a week. I know that MML and AMES students often return from their year abroad with their fair share of irritating gap year-esque stories about how their apartment overlooked the Paris skyline or the Great Pyramids, and so on.

My goal for my fourth and final year is to rip apart my triangle of comfort. This time last year, it felt as though I was leaving my whole heart behind in Cambridge, and now I feel a similar way about Cairo. Some perspective is necessary in Cambridge, but I'm looking forward to making the most of the time I have left here. I'm excited to leave campus every now and again, to break free and make a run for it. Sometimes a Great Escape is necessary.

Separation from and fondness for the Bridge may seem like opposite ends of a magnetic pole, but they actually go hand-in-hand. Finding a balance between the two can be tricky, but it's possible. As I think about returning to university and having to relearn the ropes of student life, I'm reminded of a line by Olga Tokarczuk about finding joy in embracing change which I told myself as I left for my year abroad: "change will always be a nobler thing than permanence; that that which

is static will degenerate and decay, turn to ash, while that which is in motion is able to last for all eternity."

Inez Daltrop

When Cambridge feels like a home to me

Gabrielle Brucciani

Right now I'm surrounded by boxes of all shapes and sizes. There's a green bag with all my clothes, a red one with my sheets and pillows, and a white box spilling over with kitchen bric-a-brac. In other words, it's your classic moving-back-to-uni bomb site.

It feels strange going back to Cambridge after having spent the past year in Italy and France. Most of my friends have graduated and it almost feels like I'm having to go through freshers' week all over again. Who will I hang out with?

Will it feel like home? How will I cope with the workload this year? You'd think that after three years of university and having lived in three different countries, I'd be less nervous about moving again.

I don't know what happens to make a place feel like home. I don't know why some places can feel like home and others not, nor why a place can feel like home to one person and not to another. I've thought about it a lot: is it the language? is it the buildings? is it having something to do in that place? is it the

“You'd think that after 3 years, I'd be less nervous about moving again**”**

food? is it the people?

I have several places that I call "home": there's "home home," where my family lives; my boyfriend's house; Cambridge, where I spent the first two years of my degree; and, for the duration of my year abroad, there was also Bologna and Paris. For a while, Paris has been the home-iest of the homes as that's where I was living most recently, and I hope that Cambridge will soon have that title again. My family home in the UK will always be home, but more a home that I return to rather than a home that I stay in. It's confusing

sometimes, but it makes sense to me.

I'm a firm believer that people can have more than one place they call home, and I'm an even stronger believer in the fact that 'home' is more about the people who are there rather than the physical space itself. Paris felt so welcoming when I opened the door of our flat to a note that read "Welcome home Gaby!" written by my flatmate and fellow Cambridge student, Laura, who burst through the door barely twenty minutes later triumphantly brandishing a bottle of wine and smothering me in hugs. A couple of days later,



Feeling like an imposter is a symptom of life here

Siyang Wei explains in their first Varsity Features column why all Cambridge students should consider ourselves imposters — and why that's not such a bad thing

Almost all of my family lives in China. I have a lot of relatives I've never met, and no doubt more I've never even heard of. But if any of them have ever heard of me, they probably know one (and only one) thing about me: I went to the University of Cambridge. If the status of Oxbridge is inordinately high in the UK, the prestige attached to 'elite Western universities' in China extends to virtually mythic proportions.

My parents and grandparents, as a result, do not hesitate to spread the word. Two of the few extended family members I actually vaguely know are my maternal second cousins, who are in their thirties and live in Tianjin, a large coastal city in Northern China; the last time I saw them was in summer 2017, when my mum and I visited for a few days. The younger one, Xiǎoyàn, invited us to her flat to meet her 10-year-old daughter

for the first time. My most vivid and enduring memory of the night, however, is when the conversation inevitably turned to Cambridge. You must have worked so hard, and be so clever, she said, to go to the University of Cambridge, to speak English so well. A very normal, down-to-earth woman, she looked to me as some kind of untouchable genius. My daughter will work hard and study well, but she will never be able to achieve that. I've never felt more like a fraud in my life.

Contrary to what we might assume, we talk about impostor syndrome almost constantly - perhaps, in my opinion, too much.

The concept was first introduced in the 1978 article "The Impostor Phenomenon in High Achieving Women," described as "an internal experience of intellectual phoniness" despite "outstanding academic and professional accomplishments" and "ample objective evidence of superior intellectual functioning."

Like many specific concepts that gain popular resonance, impostor syndrome has become both a lot more and a lot less than its initial definition. More recent research has estimated that around 70% of the population has experiences of 'impostor phenomenon' at some point in their lives, with a particular prevalence among women of colour in academia and other elite institutions.

A Varsity article published in February this year stated that 89 of the 100 surveyed students reported experiencing symptoms of impostor syndrome: "feelings of self-doubt, of not having truly earned your place at university, of being the least able person in a room of geniuses."

Varsity additionally published at least three other articles about impos-

"I've never felt more like a fraud in my life"

tor syndrome last academic year.

I by no means wish to dismiss the feelings of anxiety and insecurity I'm sure many Cambridge students do experience, or to diminish their potential impact on wellbeing. For students who are non-white, women, and/or otherwise marginalised, as well as those who are working class, experiences of stereotype threat, social alienation, and other manifestations of structural exclusion are not trivial. They are commonly cited as factors contributing to impostor phenomenon and a general sense of not 'belonging'.

But perhaps there's something to the wisdom of crowds.

If the supposed impostor phenomenon is so pervasive, and if it can be examined clearly along the lines of oppression and marginalisation, then perhaps it isn't particularly useful to discuss impostor syndrome as an individual problem - or even as a 'problem' at all.

I don't think it's controversial to suggest that Cambridge doesn't necessarily deserve its staggering reputation, and it's pretty well-established that admission and achievement have as much to do with factors such as socioeconomic class, educational privilege, and a cultivated sense of entitlement than any objective measure of 'intelligence' or 'intellect'.

When my cousin told me her daughter would never be able to achieve what I had, it was the only true thing she said; I have absolutely no doubt that, had my parents not moved across the world to make me a British citizen, I would not be a Cambridge student.

I also have no doubt that, had I grown up in China, I probably wouldn't have done very well in the National College Entrance Examination - certainly not well enough to attend one of the top Chinese universities.

I was right to feel like a fraud - not because I specifically do not deserve to be a Cambridge student, but because the elevated reputation of the 'Cambridge student' is itself fraudulent.

When the institution speaks constantly in the language of meritocracy, when we are told we deserve to be here as the 'best and brightest' in the world, it's only natural to doubt your

place when it becomes more and more glaringly obvious that merit and deservingness have little to do with it.

We are all here by force of circumstance - many because class domination seeks to reproduce itself, and some because externalities present themselves in every system.

And if you feel you don't belong here in the hallowed halls of Cambridge, perhaps it's because you're onto something.

The exceptional status of Cambridge (and elite Western universities in general) on the global stage is built on centuries of colonial exploitation and maintained through contemporary imperialist exploitation.

In a just or truly 'meritocratic' world, no halls have the right to be so hallowed.

Impostor syndrome, in this case, is less an issue of individual pathology than a symptom of living (for a time, and in a sense) on the sunny side of inequality.

It's a subconscious recognition of the unjust nature of resource distribution, the fraudulence of Western claims to intellectual exceptionalism, and the arbitrary nature of a position of privilege not deserved through merit but built on historical and enduring lies.

And it's an insight that perhaps comes more easily to working class and other marginalised students - those who have not been raised on the assumption that they should lead the world.

So if you feel like an impostor in a room full of geniuses, remember: you are not a special genius, and neither is anyone else. You shouldn't feel entitled to be here, and neither should anyone else. 'Here' - as a site and a product of exclusion and exploitation - should not exist. Let's get to work on that.

"When we are told we deserve to be here as the 'best and brightest' in the world, it's only natural to doubt your place"

"Bringing my favourite coffee from home, making my mum's version of carbonara"

we set out to Tiger where we spent an embarrassing amount of money buying goodies and knick knacks to make our house feel more like home.

The process of making a place a home is a two-way street. It's about feeling like you belong to a place, like you and others there share something in common to bond and connect over, like you're not an outsider but an insider. But a place becoming home is also about you making your mark on that place: having your favourite cafés or streets, having a regular supermarket,

talking with the neighbours, or putting up decorations in the kitchen and other shared spaces. Bringing my favourite coffee from home, making my mum's version of carbonara, and putting up silly photos of happy times were all little things that made where I lived feel (and smell) familiar.

Ironically, in order to be able to call a place home, I've always needed to have the possibility of leaving that place behind. I went to boarding school and it didn't feel like home for a few reasons, but chief among them was that I didn't

have the freedom to come and go as I pleased (although in retrospect, it was not really surprising that they didn't let a twelve-year-old child just wander off). I was an insider but I felt trapped inside, rather than an outsider who had discovered a sense of attachment to the place to become an insider.

Now, when I'm away, the occasional trip home or phone calls with friends in other places keep me feeling connected with the people I love without feeling like I'm trapped. If you're not in the habit of video calling, start now.

There's nothing nicer than seeing a friendly face.

What makes a home a home is still something that I'm trying to figure out. I think everyone will agree, however, that home is a place where you feel like you belong and where you feel happy and safe.

How a place becomes a home is sometimes a mystery, but personally I believe that it's a mixture of fate and choice: a place will never become home if you don't want it to be, just like you can choose to make anywhere home.

◀ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

Features

Finding a path forward

Inaya Mohmood
discusses navigating
life with anxiety

I only started using the word *anxiety* to describe my condition a couple of years ago. Before then, I didn't know that everything I was experiencing — the panicking, the overthinking, and the constant worrying — came under the umbrella of anxiety. I remember being a child and googling 'why do I worry so much?' on my dad's iPad. I really did just think I was a worrier, and that it was a phase I would naturally grow out of. It was in sixth form, when conversations surrounding mental health began to happen more regularly, that I came to realise that mental illnesses can feel just as debilitating as physical ones.

At Cambridge, I've come across some of the most open-minded and accepting people I've ever met. Many have become my closest friends and trusted allies when it comes to my struggles with mental health. We support each other and accept each other for who we are. But I've also encountered plenty of ignorance as well, and at the moment, I don't always respond to comments or assumptions the way I would like to.

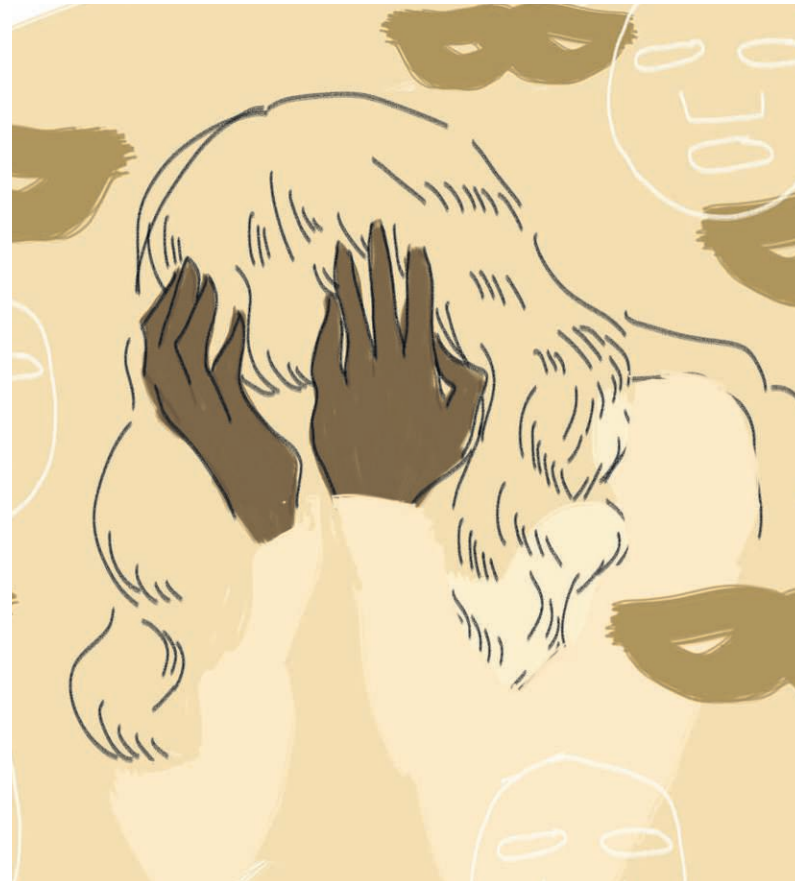
There's more to anxiety than simply

'being shy.' I'm not shy. I'm funny, I'm super awkward, I make bad puns, I laugh at everything, I can't say no to anyone, and it might take a while for me to be myself, but I'm not shy. I would love to be able to walk into a room confidently and strike up a conversation with the first person I run into. Instead, I have to walk in with people I know. I always joke to my friends that I need to feel 'flanked,' but the truth is that I have to feel like I'm blending in. This means that if I don't already know you, it's unlikely I'll talk to you first. Even if you're the friendliest and most approachable person in the room, I'll still find a way to talk myself out of coming up to you.

I'm not using my anxiety as an excuse to get out of going places. I was travelling with a friend recently, and I can't quite remember how exactly it came up in conversation, but they told me that I was just using my anxiety as a 'get out of jail free card' when it came to commitments. I know that they weren't being malicious, and if you haven't ever experienced the crippling hold of anxiety, I can see why perhaps you might not be able to understand life as someone who suffers from it. I know my anxiety is all 'in my head,' but that doesn't make it any less real to me, and remarks that imply I use my anxiety to avoid hanging out and doing stuff with others are invalidating.

Living with anxiety isn't as simple as just 'seeing a therapist' or 'getting counselling.' I've had people give this advice to me before, and I understand that it does seem like a logical suggestion. But I think we put too much emphasis on simply telling people to go 'see a therapist' or 'get counselling' without really considering how, for many, socio-cultural background and personal circumstances might mean that these are not viable, or even helpful, options. For me, the hardest part of seeking professional help is finding a qualified therapist that I am comfortable speaking and opening up to. I wasn't raised in a household or schooled in an environment where mental health could be spoken about openly, and I never had the opportunity while growing up to sit down and have a frank conversation with anyone, whether family or friend, about my anxiety. And to be honest, I'm not sure how ready I'll ever be. For me, opening up to a stranger, especially a stranger who most likely won't understand the cultural nuances of my anxiety, isn't easy.

I am self-aware about my anxiety, and I acknowledge that it's something I'll always have to work on. Whether that's through experimenting with different forms of counselling and therapy, or continuing to practice more spiritual methods like reading the Namaaz and Qur'an is entirely up to me. There is no



“
I'm not shy
”

quick solution to anxiety, and I'm allowed to take as long as I need to figure it out. I might almost be 20 but there's still so much I need to learn and so many ways I can grow, and tackling people's assumptions about me is all part of the process.

▲ Illustration
by Linda Yu for
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GCHQ

Confronting my family's tradition of child marriage

“One particular wedding was, for me, a depressing ordeal. My cousin, the bride, was 15, the same age as me”, writes Sara Dehvari

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of child marriage and mention of statutory rape and pregnancy

I often picture an alternate world where my parents never left Iran. I would have been born and raised there, my life a polar opposite to what it has become. The reality is, I would have been married off years ago, now a mother of two children at least.

It's a frightening thought; one that gives me reason to feel grateful, but also powerlessly burdened. Whilst at home over the vacation, I occasionally hear news of relatives and cousins who were nine or ten years old the last time I saw them, now getting married and birthing children.

Hearing this has brought back a haunting image: a 13-year-old relative, her belly swollen under her dress, boasting an eight month pregnancy. I was 15 at the time, attending my cousin's wedding in Iran. This particular wedding was, for me, a depressing ordeal. My cousin, the bride, was the same age as me. Every young girl surrounding me was either engaged, married, or pregnant.

The first question most women would ask me was “Who is your *naamzad*?”

Naamzad, or fiancé: I didn't initially know what the word meant but it struck me like a slap to the face in every conversation. I replied that I had none, and that in the UK, and indeed in most countries, the marriage laws are different, and rightfully so. I would then follow by declaring that I one day wanted to go to university, a plan that would have been thwarted by marriage. I received responses ranging from shock, disgust, pity, and sometimes longing.

“So when will you get married?” they would ask. “I don't know, maybe I won't. The average age of marriage in the UK at least is around 30, so there's no rush.”

The typical response to this was disturbed laughter followed by “I'll be a great grandmother by then!”

I was shocked, not just by the very practice of marrying young girls to older (sometimes much older) cousins or strangers, but by how the girls themselves reacted. It is true that these marriages were often forced upon the girls against their cries and resistance, but, in my community at least, it was more common for girls to fervently welcome marriage.

My mum, who was married at 14, said she counted down the days until she got



▲ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

“During my time in Iran, I felt alienated as an unmarried 15 year old”

married; only married girls could visit their friends freely or avoid their parents' chores. Though my mum admits her naivety, it made sense: a girl's marriage was her only ticket to any form of recognition by the community.

During my time in Iran I felt alienated as an unmarried 15 year old. My mum received shameless proposals from cousins, asking for her daughter's hand in marriage. My dad was continuously asked why he hadn't wedded me off the moment I 'came of age.'

I confess that after just four weeks I began to feel unnatural. It wasn't surprising to me that girls, who face a lifetime of pressure, grew to measure their self-worth by their marriage prospects. Indeed, this is a fairly common phenomenon in cases of child marriage around the world. Parents often speak of the economic incentive (provided through dowries and the general financial security brought by marriage) and the social concerns of family reputation.

As for my parents' response to these proposals and comments, I saw how difficult it was for them to reconcile the traditions with which they had been raised with the traditions of the world they had escaped to. They defended my right to make the choice for myself. I,

however, attacked them for not going further and denouncing the whole institution of child marriage. It was all well and good protecting their daughter, but what about their nieces and nephews?

In response, they acknowledged that it was complicated. Their singular protests would not tear the very fabric which sealed our society together, especially when the law placed the legal marriage age at 13 for girls and 15 for boys. There was also the added difficulty of confronting their own family and any potential family conflict such protests would bring. To be fair, I did watch my dad's few attempts at denouncement fall on deaf ears: our views were seen as corrupted by Western values, and we were pitied for it.

It's obvious that a lot of it comes down to poverty. Some statistics place 70 percent of the population where my family are based (Sistan and Baluchestan Province) below the poverty line.

The girls there attend school but leave after pregnancy. My cousin, who got married in 2015, told me she wanted to become a doctor and said she would stay in school after marriage. I was awestruck by her intellect; she was much smarter than me at least. I recall desperately urging her on her wedding day to avoid hav-

“During my first year at Cambridge, I would sometimes take in my surroundings and feel guilty”

ing children in the near future. She took my hand and reassured me she wouldn't. A month after we had returned to the UK, my dad told me she was pregnant. She was forced to leave school and has since given birth to a second child.

You hear of the struggle these girls go through in labour. The younger girls have particularly agonising births, and midwives often recount how their small and fragile bodies are not fit to bear the birthing process. Their experiences sometimes end fatally. Then there's the marriage itself. I've heard stories of abusive husbands who, already empowered by their gender, become even more domineering with the naivety and powerlessness of their child wives. Cases of polygamy have also grown among my extended family over the last few months.

That summer visit in 2015 changed me. I worked harder in school and in times of academic hardship I reminded myself of my newfound purpose; I told myself I was trying to achieve what those girls back home didn't have the opportunity to. No woman in my mum's family had been to university. To them it is simply impossible. I have the security of the law in this country, and my parents' support. Any girl there who tried would be alone.

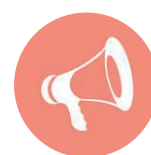
After I got into university, my parents announced it to my family in Iran over the phone. It was a huge deal that I was going to any university, let alone Cambridge.

I hoped that some of the girls I had spoken to in Iran about my aspirations to go to university would hear the news and see that I really did it. The very act of going to university challenged their view of society and I knew it made some of them uncomfortable. Though nothing substantial, I considered this a miniscule success.

During my first year in Cambridge, I would sometimes take in my surroundings and feel guilty. I could have easily been in their position, just as easily as they could have been in mine. I also confess that I sometimes feel ashamed to call myself a feminist when there are injustices being committed against women within my own family in Iran.

I know these guilts are silly and are not my burden to bear, but they are difficult to avoid when I think of my family. What's indisputable is that as I start my second year of university, I will continue to strive to challenge the expectations of the society my family left behind.

Getting into university was only the start of it.



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Opinion



Student support is vital in the ongoing USS strike ballot

Precarity in the higher & further education sector affects students and staff alike

Howard Chae, Rory Kent
& Ben Margolis

The University and College Union (UCU) — which represents supervisors, lecturers, and other academic and academic-related staff at universities nationwide — is currently holding two concurrent ballots on whether to go on strike: one regarding pay and the other regarding pensions. These ballots are just the latest in a series of efforts by workers to stand up and fight back against the wave of marketisation which has been sweeping the higher and further education sector in recent decades. While pay for vice-chancellors and principals continues to grow, staff have faced a real terms pay cut of 21% since 2009. Statistics show that the mean hourly pay for women at Cambridge University is 20% lower than for men, a gender pay gap which is almost twice the sector-wide average of 12%. A 2016 UCU survey in Cambridge found that its members were working a full-time equivalent of 52.8 hours per week, significantly higher than the 42 hours the average worker in the UK clocks in. And precarious employment is more widespread in higher education than in almost any other sector — 53% of staff are currently working on fixed-term or casual contracts.

In addition, workers in higher education are due to face a steep hike in the amount they are expected to contribute to the Universities Superannuation

Scheme (USS), the pension scheme they fund jointly with employers. It was a dispute over proposed changes to the contribution rates of universities and staff that triggered the previous round of strike action, in 2018. The strikes brought university campuses to a standstill and ended when the UCU agreed to set up a joint panel with employers to investigate the dispute. The Report of the USS Joint Expert Panel is widely considered to have vindicated staff and rebuked employers, but its recommendations have so far been largely ignored.

The 2018 strikes saw incredible solidarity between students and staff. Many students refused to cross picket lines, attended rallies to support striking staff, organised daily breakfast runs to the picket lines, set up collaborative learning schemes and held teach-outs to replace missed teaching hours, and wrote and signed open letters and emails of support. A student-led occupation of Old Schools demanding that the Vice-Chancellor take steps to restart negotiations between employers and the UCU successfully pressured him into participating in open meetings where students and staff could hold university management to account. It was an extraordinary opportunity for students and staff to learn from each other, act together for a better and fairer university, and reclaim power from an

opaque corporate management.

In many ways, the 2018 strikes were never just about pensions. The savage cuts to pensions were part of the more long-term and wide-ranging project of turning higher and further education into a profit-driven business, and the strength of the opposition to these cuts demonstrated that students and staff refuse to take the marketisation of universities without putting up a fight. As then-CUSU Education Officer Martha Krish said, the strikes were a “fight for the future of our education system” and the fight over pensions is “the same fight that students have been having about fees, interest rates, extortionate rents and about the lack of funding for graduate study.”

As UCU members vote on whether to go on strike again, it is vital that students stand behind them. Staff working conditions are student learning conditions. When staff are being overworked and underpaid to the point where they are performing an average of three days’ unpaid work per week, students cannot expect their lectures and supervisions to be fruitful. More importantly, in a marketised higher education system where universities must maximise revenue to make up for a lack of government funding, both staff and students suffer. Staff costs are slashed, while students are ripped off with exorbitant tuition fees

▲ One of the current USS ballots concerns staff pensions

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

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Staff working conditions are student learning conditions
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and rents, cannot access adequately-funded mental health services, and are having to compete with each other for ever-smaller amounts of financial support. It is also arguably part of the reason why universities continue to invest their endowments in the fossil fuel industry and the arms trade.

Furthermore, the spiralling costs and deteriorating security and stability of a career in the higher education sector could deter students, especially those from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, from pursuing research and teaching. The ongoing ballots are an opportunity for students and staff to demand that urgent action be taken to open up a profession dominated by middle- and upper-class white men to greater representation from marginalised groups.

Put simply, students should stand with staff not only because it is the right thing to do, but because the fight staff are fighting defends students’ interests as well. The fight against inequality, casualisation, workloads, and pay and pension cuts is the fight for a fairer and better university which prioritises welfare and wellbeing over profit. The UCU’s successful campaign in 2018 to end the History faculty’s use of unpaid teaching by graduate students proves that this future is within our reach, so long as we stand in solidarity with our staff.

Intergenerational mistrust has become part of our everyday language

Our political activism is fuelled by anger and exasperation

“You come to us young people for hope. How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words.” Greta Thunberg’s words at the UN Climate Summit in New York left an auditorium stunned, while simultaneously sending shockwaves around the world. Within a year, the Swedish teenager has become the figurehead of environmental activism. Her UN speech, however, represents much more than this — it has come to symbolise the “war cry” of our generation.

The political upheaval of the last few years has turned today’s younger generation into one of the most outspoken. With the survivors of the Parkland shooting organising the biggest protest on gun control in American history, young people are raising their voice. Now, Thunberg has created a global student movement of unprecedented proportions, with schoolkids striking from the West Coast of America all the way to Karachi, Pakistan.

Thunberg’s recent statements encapsulate the spirit of this new crop of activist movements. A look at the kind of rhetoric used in protests reveals an inter-generational anger and profound mistrust. “We call BS!” — those three words, denouncing the American political system’s ineffective stance on gun control, became Emma González’s rallying call in an unforgettable speech shortly after 17 of her fellow high school students had their lives taken in yet another mass shooting. Likewise, Lara Spirit, Our Future Our Choice’s co-president, laces her articles for *The Guardian* with expressions of condemnation: “Young people won’t forgive those who deny us a vote on this botched Brexit.” Around the world, intergenerational mistrust has become a casual part of everyday language.

In the past, political activism has always been tinged with a certain idealism, a palpable optimistic spirit.

In recent times, however, the language has changed.

Hopefulness has been replaced with jaded exasperation. There is a sense of indignation which now unites our activism. We’ve been through this before; things should have been resolved by now. As Thunberg herself stated, she and her fellow student strikers should be “in school”.

Why do we still

need to be protesting?

Indeed, we can see history receding on itself. The world is in a different place to when it emerged from the ruins of the Second World War, when rusty institutions and societal norms produced a desire for immediate reforms. Rather, we’re seeing all the achievements we’ve acquired, from greater human rights to peace in Europe, come under threat. Likewise, as the accumulated by-products of the industrial revolution have left us facing a climate emergency, we see the US, under Donald Trump’s helm, taking steps backwards. Since young people are the ones who will live with the consequences of such dire political failures, it’s understandable that we’re angry and frustrated.

But anger is not enough — we need to make sure we combine this with action. We’ve certainly managed to get the world talking, but our voter turnout is still painfully lacklustre. In the 2016 US Presidential elections, which saw one of the most dangerous political contenders in post-war Western history run for office, only 50% of Millennials cast their ballot, representing a mere 1% increase from 2012.

The 2018 Mid-terms, by which point the President’s nefarious leadership was well-known, saw a significant youth voter upsurge from those of 2014 (nearly doubling — from 22% to 42%); yet, it once again showed the Millennial and Gen Z electorates lagging considerably behind their older cohorts. This pattern is, sadly, mimicked in numerous elections around the world. We should remember that the same Baby Boomers who produced the revolutionaries of the mid-century later gave us Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, Boris Johnson, the wolves of Wall Street, and the majority of their supporters, voters and enablers. History has shown us quite aptly that a propensity for demanding change on the streets doesn’t always translate to doing the same once inside the institutional walls.

Our generation will soon be inheriting positions of power, passing laws, and leading governments.

Granted, landmark advancements have been made in the last half-century which can’t be ignored, but there’s no denying that the political systems of previous generations have let us down. I — like Thunberg and millions of other young people — feel that kind of anger, an anger we mustn’t abandon, lest we end up repeating the same mistakes of those that we’re ready to admonish.

Andrea Carlo



► Greta Thunberg
(ANDERS HELLBERG)

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Cambridge can't call itself sustainable if divestment is still off the cards



The institution must take much larger steps to combat climate change in the face of imminent ecological collapse

Georgie Newson-
Errey

Earlier this month, a report released by the University Catering Service (UCS) revealed that, by removing beef and lamb from their menus, they have managed to cut carbon emissions by 33%.

The report received extensive and generally positive press coverage, with publications incorporating the decision into a wider narrative of growing sustainability awareness within universities.

The fact that the story garnered media attention is encouraging, as coverage of this sort spreads awareness of the scientific consensus that switching to a plant-based diet is one of the most effective ways of reducing our carbon footprint.

However, beef or no beef, Cambridge cannot claim to be an environmentally friendly institution whilst maintaining its current divestment stance.

Despite the University's promise earlier this year to evaluate said stance, and the fact that multiple colleges – including, most recently, Jesus College – have now committed to withdrawing from the industry, overall progress has been shamefully slow.

The UCS is, of course, only a small component of a large institution. In

But the fact that the University is benefitting from the coverage of the UCS's commendable decision means that the case is reminiscent of many recent examples of so-called 'greenwashing'. Greenwashing can imply mere rhetorical trickery: the labelling of products or decisions as 'sustainable' or 'ethical' when they are, in reality, nothing of the sort.

As the climate crisis occupies a more prominent place in the public consciousness and consumer demand for environmentally-friendly choices increases, we will likely see more and more of this.

The phrase can also, however, refer to the arguably more insidious practice of instigating small-scale projects or minor policy adjustments and then using these changes as a smokescreen for the ecological destruction being wreaked behind the scenes.

As part of their biggest global campaign since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010, BP recently released a series of video ads focusing on their investment in renewable energy sources and charging networks for electric vehicles. These ads are not straight-up fictitious – BP is investing in these areas – but they are misleading with regards to the scale of these endeavours. In

2018, only 2.3% of BP's overall investment went towards low-carbon options, with the remaining 97.7% funding fossil fuel extraction.

Multinational energy companies are not the only corporations who engage in these sorts of PR strategies. This year, multiple cruise lines have announced that they will ban single-use plastic products on their ships, an act that seems laudable until you remember that spending seven days on a cruise ship more than doubles your carbon footprint for that week.

To oppose instances of greenwashing, whether locally or further afield, is not to diminish the importance or potency of more minor sustainable changes. Going meat-free – or banning single-use plastics, or investing small amounts of money in renewables – is a small step, but it is not a futile one. Small steps, however, become problematic in contexts in which much larger steps are possible.

As individuals, cutting out animal products is one of the most effective ways of curtailing our carbon expenditure, but Cambridge is not an individual – it is a powerful institution capable of instigating far more serious changes. Making sustainable food choices is important, but it cannot be enough.

▲ A divestment protest in 2018
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

“It is imperative that institutions like Cambridge lead the way forward in sustainability”

It is important to recognise that there is hard work being done by many academics and students within the University to expand its capacity for positive environmental change, whether via research strategising or activism. This fact makes the University Council's aversion to full divestment even more of an affront.

The UCS's decision should be regarded as a signal – not to the general public that Cambridge is a sustainable institution, but to the University Council that, as the University becomes ever more consciously greener, the issue of divestment becomes ever more prominent.

Hopefully, the next time Cambridge makes headlines for its sustainability initiatives, much more radical changes will be occurring.

Along with full divestment, how about a Goldsmiths-style pledge to go carbon neutral in a matter of years?

The notion might seem idealistic, but, if the carbon crisis is to be averted, these sorts of drastic measures are necessary. In the face of imminent ecological collapse, it is imperative that institutions like Cambridge lead the way forward in sustainability – and that means cutting ties with fossil fuel companies as well as cutting out lamb and beef.

Science

As a woman in physics, Newnham has given me newfound confidence



▲ “Newnham has a long history of paving the way for women in science” (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

*I hope for a day when male teachers don't tell their students, “you'll go far in physics, because you're a girl” — as mine told me, writes **Charlotte Zimmel***

Everyone always feels more confident around people like them. The first thing we do at a party is scan the room for our friends, colleagues or at least a crowd of people who are also awkwardly looking for other awkward people. However, for me, searching around a lecture hall, lab or office for other women in my position has become central to my own personal validation.

Studying at a women's college has meant that I do not have to undergo these gender calculations at every supervision or DoS meeting, and as I reflect on my first two years of Cambridge life, I am astonished by my personal confidence growth. Whilst single sex education is certainly becoming out of vogue, and for mostly good reasons too, I cannot help but wonder about the benefits of higher education with single sex elements in moderation.

Juxtaposing my Newnham experience of course mates, DoSes and supervisors who are all women or non-binary people with my high school experience of be-

“As I reflect on my first two years, I am astonished by my personal growth”

ing the only girl in all of my physics and further maths classes – teachers included – gives me a unique insight into what a difference being surrounded by high powered women makes. The problem of gender diversity in the STEM subjects arises from a complicated tapestry of societal blockades. I truly believe one part of the key to translating my experience to other women and minorities in the sciences is to surround undergraduates with diverse, highly successful people like themselves.

While this ‘affirmative action’ type theory has been well understood for a while by university boards, such as in the USA, a single sex education or institution is another tangible way of pumping academia full of confident and bright women, without losing focus on academic success. If universities want to change their statistics on women and minorities in the sciences, they must start at the undergraduate level by funding a wide range of science societies, talks and events, targeted towards these groups, hiring lecturers from diverse backgrounds and supporting existing minority staff.

It seems to me that the main problem today regarding the lack of gender diversity in scientific academia lies not in getting undergraduates into universities, but in keeping them there. This is a common concept known as the ‘Leaky Pipeline

effect’. The numbers of women drop off almost exponentially through graduate and post-graduate study. While the cause of this trend is the result of a multitude of factors, including the abysmal maternity leave granted to PhD and postdoc students and the financial burden of obtaining higher education qualifications, I believe that generating environments where women and minorities can be surrounded by high powered members of their own communities will change these numbers.

Having undergraduates taught exclusively by women who have succeeded academically despite these above factors can only have positive effects on the prognosis of women in the sciences. More importantly, having prominent academics from minority backgrounds will generate the critical mass of voices for systematic change in the set-up of academic life, which is historically biased against both women and people of colour succeeding. This evokes similar arguments from the wider economic problem of the gender and BME pay gaps.

Women-only environments have been shown to catalyse gender equality in fields where women remain underrepresented or overlooked. From my experience, it is not only innate ability, but also confidence, which allows girls to maximise their potential.

“I hope for a day where I don't have to scan a room for other women, in order to convince I'm not just a quota filler”

Cambridge's Natsci stats

42.4%

Proportion of women accepted to study Natural Sciences in 2018, out of total cohort

3

Number of black students from the UK accepted to Natsci in 2018, out of 430

Surrounding undergraduates with role models and colleagues that have achieved their goals or have similar aspirations in the same social circumstances has a profound effect on the confidence of young people. It allows them to believe that their goals are within reach. Suddenly, you didn't get nominated for an opportunity “because you're a girl” or “because we need more people like you in this field”, but because you competed against people like you and you won fair and square.

Starting a scientific career with supervisors, supervision partners, lecturers and college course mates who look like you creates an environment whereby young women will be less susceptible to internalizing sexism regarding women in the sciences because their own experience proves all kinds of women can, and do, succeed academically. Ultimately, undergraduates will be better able to focus on academic achievement based on ability, and not constantly have to feel as if they are the designated diversity provider.

Newnham as an institution has a long history of paving the way for women in science. These women range from familiar names like Rosalind Franklin, namesakes of Newnham buildings such as Dorothy Garrod, to scores of under-recognised researchers working alongside male scientists across the University from the 1880s onwards. Perhaps now it is time to encourage the teaching of women by women, not from a position of necessity from sexist exclusion, but rather from one of celebration and pride.

I hope for a day where I don't have to scan a room for other women in order to convince myself I am not just a quota-filler. More importantly, I hope future undergraduates don't ever have to think “am I good enough to be here?”. I hope for a day when male physics teachers don't say “you'll go far in physics, because you're a girl” — yes, this happened to me — and I think that day will come sooner if we show undergraduates that women can (and do) thrive at the top of the academic ladder.

Science

Rigging the climate, on purpose

Patrick Ferris explores the ethical and technical challenges of geoengineering

The fight to keep global average temperature increases to 1.5°C, as outlined in the 2015 Paris Agreement, seems like a distant pipe dream for many as across Europe hottest temperature records are being set. The Paris Agreement was further undermined by Donald Trump announcing in 2017 that the US would be leaving the accord, claiming that it was not in the country's economic interest.

In a world where an economy's health is largely accounted for by its GDP, the challenge of introducing pro-environment policies feels impossible considering the reliance of entire industrial sectors on fossil fuels. It appears progress toward a greener world is mostly only possible in areas where investments in infrastructure can support radical changes, such as breakthroughs in electric vehicle technology allowing for France's ban on petrol or diesel cars by 2040. But this cannot be said for many industries.

Many believe we have reached the point where cutting down emissions and pollution is simply not enough and that active efforts in reversing damage are needed. Currently we are emitting greenhouse gases at an ever-increasing rate into our atmosphere. This has the effect of creating a blanket around the world. It allows electromagnetic radiation from the sun in, due to its shorter wavelength. It then hits the Earth and raises its temperature, and the Earth radiates it back towards space but with a much longer wavelength. The blanket of greenhouse gases can absorb longer wavelengths and radiate some of it back to Earth. The net effect is a global increase in average temperature.

Paul Crutzen explored a quite different approach to tackle this problem in his editorial essay, 'Albedo Enhancement by Stratospheric Sulphur Injection'. The Earth's albedo is the ratio of diffusely reflected light to the total incident light on the Earth. The idea of enhancing the



▲ Contrails, icy hazes left by airplanes, have been described by some scientists as 'accidental geoengineering' (NASA/JPL/UCSD/JSC)

Earth's albedo would artificially reduce the amount of radiation reaching the surface, decreasing the amount of energy absorbed by greenhouse gases.

Earth has two major sources of reflection: ice and clouds. Our ice is melting, and this at faster rates, lowering the Earth's albedo. Increasing ice coverage on the Earth would be very difficult. To make matters worse, urban areas also decrease the Earth's albedo due to the reduction in natural reflection and increase in heat-absorbing materials leading to the urban heat island effect. This leaves us with a second, potentially more fruitful option. Clouds are aerosols, a suspension of solid or liquid particles in a gas. Sulphur can be used to form cloud condensation nuclei, that is, the seed from which water in the atmosphere can condense on and then produce clouds. By using these particles in the atmosphere we can increase the likelihood of cloud cover and artificially increase the Earth's albedo.

Paul Crutzen's essay was published in 2006 and now thirteen years later, the

“It is treating the symptoms of the problem, not the root causes”

idea is soon to be trialed. Researchers at Harvard University have developed innovative techniques using calcium carbonate as reflective particles which can be dispersed in the atmosphere to increase the Earth's albedo. The notable difference here is that the previous sulphur-based sunlight reflection was also having a damaging effect on human health and the environment as a pollutant. Blocking more sunlight could help plant growth by reducing heat stress, but may impede the biochemical reactions in photosynthesis. While Harvard's experiment is perhaps the first to be labelled a solar geoengineering

project, there have been other related experiments, like the Eastern Pacific Emitted Aerosol Cloud Experiment, a study which discusses how cargo ships could be seen as carbon neutral given that their smoke could increase the albedo of the clouds enough to offset their contribution of CO₂ to the atmosphere.

What are the next steps for the Harvard experiment? Besides the required research, modelling and calculations, the study faces another challenge to tackle: ethics. Given the technologies' novelty, the scientists involved are concerned by the potential for protests of environmental activists against their research, and thus have formed an advisory panel to oversee this project. Their commitment to scientific ethics from the beginning shows foresight, duty of care and diligence hopefully accelerating the experimentation phase. With this in place, the future for the Stratospheric Controlled Perturbation Experiment (SCoPEx) is full of preliminary testing and modelling to ensure the controllable balloon dispersing the calcium carbonate (or other chemicals) works.

While the SCoPEx project offers hope, it must be said that it is very much treating the symptoms of the problem and not the root causes. Improvements in undoing the damage we have done to the climate should not be an excuse to slow the research and collective effort in battling the causes. As an individual it can seem impossible to have a true impact, but it will be through collective, imperfect action on a large scale that we truly make a difference. Innovative solutions to climate change give me hope, but there is still a long road ahead for all of us.



▲ Lisha Zhong for Varsity



Varsity explains The butterflies in your stomach

Do you know the feeling that being anxious brings about in your gut? The start of term, an important interview, giving a presentation in front of a large crowd... all of these may produce that sensation we often describe as “having butterflies in the stomach”. For some, this can even cause nausea and more serious gastric distress.

Why? Where does this feeling

come from?

This sensation is largely produced by the so-called “fight or flight response”. The autonomic nervous system, i.e. the part of your nervous system that regulates heart rate, blood pressure, and similar functions, all on its own is divided into two main branches, the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches, which mostly oppose each other functionally.

The sympathetic system works to help prepare the body for stressful and dangerous situations by releasing adrenaline and glucose, increasing your heart rate and blood pressure and directing blood away from your digestive tract and towards your skeletal muscles (i.e. the muscles that move you).

The parasympathetic system opposes this and is responsible for the “rest and

◀ What's causing the flutter in your stomach during freshers' week?

(PIXABAY)

digest” response, contributing to feeling tired and sluggish after a meal, as blood vessels around the gastrointestinal tract dilate and allow the smooth muscle of the gut to do its work best.

If you think about this in terms of evolution, it makes a lot of sense: when you have to run away from the proverbial sabre-toothed tiger, you need to have lots of energy available, your heart beating fast, blood flowing through your limbs, ready to sprint away. What you *don't* want, is for large amounts of your blood to be used for digesting the lunch you were just having.

These systems prevail, and while the largest predator we encounter these days may well just be a cow strolling around King's Backs, as opposed to a bloodthirsty sabre-toothed tiger, the things that cause us stress and anxiety

“If you think about it in terms of evolution, it makes a lot of sense”

induce similar physiological effects: digestion is slowed as blood vessels in the gastrointestinal region constrict to increase oxygen and glucose delivery to your muscles, and due to the adrenaline release, your muscles in the abdominal wall contract, further slowing down digestion.

The sudden and drastic reduction of blood throughout the intestinal tract is detected by sensory neurons, creating the feeling that we liken to ‘butterflies’.

So, for freshers arriving in Cambridge for the first time with a familiar fluttering in your gut, take heart in knowing that all you have to do is get through a week of forced introductions, awkward conversations and sticky club nights — no sabre-toothed tigers will be involved.

Vulture



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Lifestyle

Sleeping, socialising and settling in: Our top fresher tips

As freshers move in this week, *Vulture Lifestyle* asks the Varsity team to look back at what they wish they'd known when they arrived in Cambridge as freshers

From being late to Matriculation to experiencing imposter syndrome, Freshers' Week can throw up numerous hurdles. Worry not, as those who have been through it all (and more) offer their top advice for freshers arriving to Cambridge.

Bring some home comforts

Maia Wyn Davies

Between keeping up with a packed freshers' timetable and trying desperately to form new friendships, you won't get very many evenings to yourself in Freshers' Week. But when the buzz subsides and you finally get some down time, you may find that homesickness kicks in — this is when you'll need some home comforts to ground you. Grabbing a battered copy of my favourite book, filling up a water bottle from home, and even throwing on an old hoodie were all little things that made quieter nights feel less lonely. This may mean filling up the car boot a little bit more, but it'll definitely be worth it — and, who knows, maybe after a few terms, maybe even weeks, you'll be able to go without them.

Set an alarm!

Chloe Bayliss

It was my first morning at King's, and I rolled over to the sound of my ringing phone. Adjusting to the fact that I was now a university student, I rolled over and checked the time.

10:30. Matriculation began in the chapel at 10:00.

Two missed calls and a voicemail from the Senior Tutor's assistant gently enquiring if I planned on attending matriculation confirmed my worst fears: I was late on my first day. Jumping out of bed quicker than you could say 'sign up to our mailing list,' I pulled on my clothes and tore across King's front lawn, my unbrushed hair billowing in the wind. As I burst into one of the largest chapels in Europe, the eyes of all my peers turned on me, with fellows and students lining each side of my walk of shame. It was deathly silent, my face was burning, and to top it all off, I nearly crashed into the provost as I took my seat.

The next few months I was referred to as 'the girl who was late to matriculation.'

So my advice to freshers is, for goodness sake, please set an alarm!

Don't be afraid to say 'maybe'

Anna Stephenson

Students get a lot of conflicting advice about making the most of opportunities at uni — I've been told to say 'yes' to everything, to throw myself in at the deep end and try things I never imagined I could. "You only get to do once!" they say. The understandable reaction to this is guidance on learning to say no — to be able to turn things down without guilt or FOMO.

'Yes' and 'no' sound clean and decisive, but I find myself using both as defensive devices, so I don't have to think about what I really want. 'Maybe' is sometimes seen as the flake's 'no', from someone who was always secretly planning on bailing.

In order to be more honest with others and myself, I've been reclaiming the word. Used right, I think it has a proper, respectable and necessary place in every student's life. Give people a 'why,' if applicable, and a reasonable window for letting them know by, and 'maybe' can be just as authoritative and valid a response as its more forceful relations.

Some commitments do require a simple 'yes' or 'no,' but going about pretending I always know exactly what I'll be able to — or comfortable — doing in a week's time as soon as someone asks me is a stressful illusion I'm no longer trying to keep up with.

Venture out to new libraries

Isobel Bickersteth

There's over 100 libraries in Cambridge, yet I spent much of my first year frequenting only two of them. Come second year, however, and I decided to venture out beyond my college and faculty. What I discovered was a simple solution to switch up work habits: especially during exam term, changing libraries is an easy way to break up the monotony of revision. Working somewhere where you don't recognise anyone is also a sure-fire way to improve your focus, free from distractions and the temptation to talk to friends. Oh, and don't neglect the UL (University Library): it may seem imposing, but for arts students in particular it is an invaluable tool.

Get a doorstep

Kiran Khanom

One of the best pieces of advice I was given before Freshers' Week was relatively simple — bring a doorstep. Leaving my door open during the first few weeks of term was a stress-free way to force myself to talk to my neighbours without needing to gather up the courage to knock on their doors constantly and second guess how they might react. Instead, a doorstep meant I had an easy way to signal that I was free and happy to chat.

Ask someone over for tea

Stephanie Stacey

Freshers' week is full of large-scale events in which you'll be surrounded by huge groups of new students all buzzing with the stress and excitement prompted by the move to University. These kinds of events can be amazing but often you can only really start to get to know people in a smaller, quieter environment.

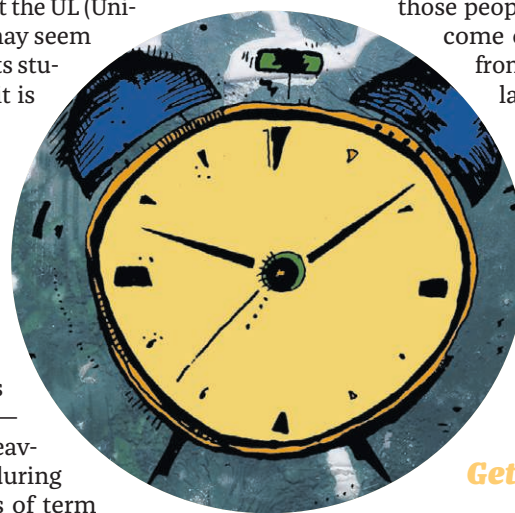
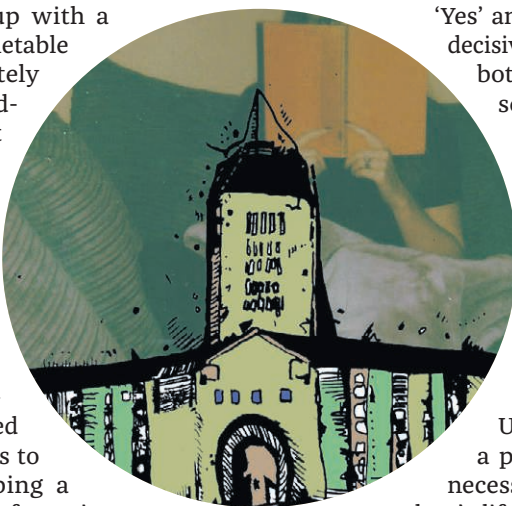
So, ask someone over for a cup of tea. At worst, you'll just have to struggle through a slightly awkward conversation for half an hour, but there's so much to be gained. Some of my best friends at university have been

those people I frantically invited to come over and try something from my (arguably, much too large) collection of tea. It took me far too long to realise that asking someone to hang out with you isn't in any way 'weird' or 'desperate'. And everyone else around you is probably just as eager to make new friends as you are.

Get some sleep!

Lois Wright

Although Cambridge terms are short, they can be really quite tiring — your first term even more so. One of the most important things you can do is make sure you look after yourself, and getting enough sleep is the key here.



“One of the most important things you can do is look after yourself”

▲ “Asking someone to hang out with you isn't 'weird' or 'desperate'” (ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY BELLA BIDDLE)

A beginner's guide to student cooking

Daunted by the prospect of cooking for yourself in Cambridge? **Kristen Han** shares some simple steps to get you started

As Michaelmas term rolls in, many of us are confronted with a problem common to all or most university students — how to make food for ourselves. Now, some of us are content to become regulars of the college halls, and that is a totally viable option. However, there will come a time when you are sick of college hall food or when you begin to crave some home food. For international students, you might end up in a situation where the only way to get a dish (like say sambal prawns and tempeh) is to make it yourself. While not all of this guide will be applicable to every aspect of your cooking experience, I do hope the advice and the recipes may prove helpful to conquer the gyp situation and helping you make edible (and delicious) food.

The first thing to check is whether you have sufficient cooking equipment. Gyms vary wildly across and within colleges. Sometimes you may luck out and find yourself not only with a hob in your kitchen, but even an oven. This enables some interesting pasta bakes for the intrepid (or particularly pasta-bake-loving). With a hob, you can acquire a saucepan or a pot (or perhaps borrow from a friend if you are more of an irregular cook) and set about with the various stir-fries, grilled or fried meats or vegetables, and so forth.

If you reside in colleges where gyms merely have a microwave, then there are two semi-desperate solutions available to you. The

first is to become familiar with microwave recipes (Google and YouTube are helpful) and microwave-safe bowls (ceramic is good, certain types of plastic risky, everything else is not safe). The second is to invest in your own cooking equipment. I have been successful in using a rice cooker to make grilled fish and fry eggs. Meanwhile, a slow-cooker is great for stews, soups, and curries, and is equipment you can leave alone for a bit while you do other things.

Next are ingredients. The supermarket you'll visit will depend on where you live, but for those interested in Asian cuisine, you can't go wrong with the supermarkets on Mill Road, which host various other specialty stores catering to ethnic groups and vegans, and the JiaMart shop on Regent Street. To cook your ingredients, I recommend that you purchase some pantry staples. Pantry staple lists vary and can be adapted to fit your needs.

My pantry generally has basic condiments which range from salt, pepper, some curry powders, and sugar. It'll also hold chicken or vegetable stock powders (a really good addition to soups), along with soya sauce and fish sauce (non-essential but really good for stir fries and grilled fish).

Other helpful items include: Aromatics (garlic and onions), various herbs (you can tailor the exact mix, but if you like bolognese then go with the basil, oregano, bay leaf combination). Make sure you keep some sources of

carbohydrates (dry pasta keeps better, but you can get away with microwaving fresh pasta if the microwave is your only option; rice is good if you can make it, otherwise couscous, instant rice, or other grains work well too).

If it daunts you to select your own vegetables and meats, some helpful tips include to avoid overly soft fruits or wilted browned vegetables, to pick fish that has no strong fishy scent, and meat that is in brighter shades of red and not the brownish-red colour of oxidised blood. When in doubt, Google is your best friend. Moreover, consider that you are most likely to be sharing a gyp fridge with others. Remember to keep track of all the food you have stored away. This will prevent unfortunate incidents like when I left a fish stir-fry in a container behind a housemate's groceries. Unboxing week-old fish stir-fry was a singularly unpleasant experience that I do not want you to experience.

As for basic doable recipes, good examples include pastas, curries, and salads. For pastas, you can boil the pasta in salty water or place the fresh pasta in a container in the micro-

wave in hot salty water and microwave until done (the latter method used in desperation works best with smaller pastas like raviolis). Using store-bought sauces is a good shortcut, and you can customise the sauce with additions like sausage or mushrooms. To do this, either cook them in the saucepan with the sauce or heat them up with the sauce in the microwave and add to the pasta later.

As for curries, you can try to thinly slice potatoes, drizzle some oil and salt and precook in the microwave for about 3 minutes. Then add the curry sauce and other ingredients (like chicken or aubergines) and microwave for about 5-7 minutes.



Check on it frequently and microwave longer if necessary. Salads are even simpler. For a lighter meal, combine washed lettuce, sliced tomatoes or bell peppers, pesto sauce and canned cooked mackerel fish. To bulk this up, you may add rice or pasta.

This is but a small fraction of cooking advice, but I hope that it provides a starting point for your culinary adventures. Good luck, and may homemade food comfort you through the stresses of the weeks ahead.

Film & TV

You're not alone – here's a roundup of fictional students who never get round to, er, studying

Emily Gobet discusses how art imitates life in the best TV about students, or soothes the stress of your own

Welcome to Cambridge! Once you realise that churning out essays and solving problem sheets is not as glamorous as some YouTubers may have led you to believe, you may begin to crave an escape, an outlet to lull your brain into a false sense of satisfaction and peace. Here's a list of top TV shows that feature students, in the sense that they are people who attend a place of academia, but not in the sense that they worry about homework, reading, or faking an interest in finance for Skype interviews.

Dear White People

The show takes place in a very white elite institution fraught with racial tensions between students – imagine that! A funny and original show with a creative structure that pays off.

Elite

Watching *Elite* will make you want to email your tutor to discuss an immediate subject switch to MML. Hailing from Spain, *Elite* is about three working class students who earn scholarships to study at an upper crust institution where everybody is ridiculously wealthy and hot. This may sound familiar to you if you didn't previously attend Westminster or Eton, except *Elite* has murder and Cambridge does not have hot people.

The Politician

Sick of rewatching old Glee song compilations on Youtube? The creators of Glee have gifted us with *The Politician*, a camp House of Cards that provides the excitement of watching a political debate without the cold horror of having to listen to climate change deniers.

The plot is a never ending series of gossip and backstabbing and the characters are armed with a complete lack of self-awareness. The best research for all the hacks out there.

Gossip Girl

An oldie but a goodie. Don't overlook this show just because its main fan-base consists of thirteen year olds who shop at Abercrombie and Fitch. With snappy dialogue and prestigious internships showering upon the undeserving characters at every plot twist, this escapist fantasy will supply your brain with the serotonin boost you need to keep going past Week 5.

How to Get Away with Murder

This embodies the same stressful energy as the Law faculty library, except this is enjoyable

and won't make you feel insecure about your LinkedIn profile.

Scrubs

Featuring young medical students interning at a hospital, *Scrubs* actually does involve students doing work, but its escapist nature lies in the fact that the characters are generally emotionally stable. Lighthearted and low in drama, you might even manage to finish your essays in time if you start this show.

Skam

Set in Norway, *Skam* is the most realistic depiction of teenage life on television. Starring actors who are for once the appropriate age, the show tackles loneliness, homophobia, racism, and a complete disregard for last-minute studying for exams.

Theatre

What's on

Theatre Editors Priya Edwards & Sarah Taylor take a look at what's coming to Cambridge theatre this Michaelmas

As usual, the ADC and Corpus programme opens with three shows returning for home runs following international tours – *Cambridge American Stage Tour: The Comedy of Errors* will show as the ADC main in week 0 (Tuesday 8th – Saturday 12th October), while the *Footlights International Tour Show: Look Alive!* fills the late show slot the same



week – and the *University of Cambridge Central Asian Tour* kicks off the Corpus Playroom programme in week 1 with a production of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*.

Just some of the many productions to look out for this term include *Crouch Touch Pause Engage* (Corpus main, week 2), which takes the story of rugby legend Gareth Thomas as its muse; *How Does It Feel?* (Corpus late, week 8), a night of student writing from LGBT+ perspectives. Other shows to note are *The Convert* (ADC main, week 2), a play with an all-BME cast written by Danai Gurira, and *Rust* (ADC late, week 5), a student written production which won the Derek Award for best new musical at this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival. There is also the ever-popular pantomime in weeks 7 and 8, presented by CUADC and the Footlights.

This Michaelmas also sees the return of the Cambridge Greek Play with *Oedipus*

at Colonus showing from 16th to 19th October. Other venues beyond the ADC include Polly Teale's adaptation of *Jane Eyre* at Robinson Auditorium, and the Cambridge Annual French Play, Moliere's *Le Misanthrope*, in week 7 at Pembroke New Cellars. Meanwhile, Queens' Fitzpatrick Hall hosts the innovative opera *The Last Hotel* towards the end of term.

Our editors are excited about...

Priya: I'm looking forward to all of the classic highlights of Michaelmas; both Panto and the week 4 musical *Chicago* are bound to be really impressive and enjoyable nights at the ADC. However, I am more excited about some of the more experimental work going on this term. *The Last Hotel* is a modern opera, tackling mental health and hopefully pushing the boundaries of what opera is seen to be. *The Convert* marks a shift in ADC programming, with the venue's largest ever BME cast, and I am really hopeful that this will see the continu-

ation of the movement in Cambridge to see more 'non-traditional' narratives.

Sarah: I have to agree with Priya – it is great to see wider narratives in the Cambridge theatre scene! Aside from the farcical adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* which I'm directing in week 4, there are two other shows which interest me particularly this term. I'm curious to see how *The Bloody Chamber* translates the mesmerising (if perverted) quality of Angela Carter's short story to the stage, as one of the three Freshers' Plays this term, and I'm looking forward to watching Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*, which derives from a moment in French history that mirrors and transcends the pivotal tension in Sophocles' original.



The myth of the audition handbook

Trying to crack the Cambridge audition process can seem like an endless cycle of determination and rejection.

Jasmin Thien argues that actors shouldn't always blame themselves.

It is 3 A.M. You lie in bed, half-asleep, the inevitable words flooding your brain: Be confident. Know your performance. Be you. They sprawl in your mind's eye. The curvatures of the Bs and sharpness of the K are burned into you with the blue light of your laptop, which hums ominously an inch from your right hand. Even with your eyes closed you can see the dizzying figure on the screen: 'Tips to ace your audition – 2,880,000 results (0.52 seconds)'. How many articles, blog posts, and forums have you read? You're not sure. You have been frantically devouring everything you can find on the Internet for the past five hours and forty-three minutes. The acting agents, casting directors, voice coaches, that one failed drama school student who resorts to telling other hopeful actors what to do, now that he has given up all hope himself. They rattle off the same doctrines: Confidence. Personality. Practice. Confidence. Individuality. Originality. Practice ...

As you clutch your audition extract outside the formidably closed door of the Corpus Playroom's Small Dressing Room, you run over what you have rehearsed in the past thirty-six hours.

Confidence. You can paint the Cambridge skyline from memory with how much time you have spent walking around town with head high, chin up and back straight – that



"Slowly, it begins to dawn upon you, the more auditions you take part in: you are playing a game of dice" (ALBA NAVARRO ROSALES)

is, you would, if you had time, if you weren't going to be the next Emma Thompson.

Know your stuff. You have learned your audition extract by heart. You have practiced it in front of the mirror (with appropriate gestures, of course, culled from seven of the most widely acclaimed manuals for actors written in the last half-century). You are word and movement perfect. After all, you are going to be the next Stephen Fry.

Personality. You have got that. Oodles of it. Haven't your new corridor friends of ten days said that ...

The door opens. Someone emerges. Another fresher. You eye her with curiosity, wanting to know what your competition is like. Light-brown hair. Brown eyes. You take a deep breath. Confidence. Personality. Know your stuff. You walk in; head high, chin up, back straight.

"Thank you for auditioning for XXX. We were very impressed by the quality of acting we saw and regret to say that we cannot offer you a role in this production. Please do not see this as a comment on your skills ..."

Miserably, you stare at your screen. Why?

Your stomach churns as you realise that the biggest Cambridge production of the year will run without you. Were you not confident enough? Did you not know your performance? Are you so lacking in personality? Slowly, it begins to dawn upon you, the more shows you aim for, the more auditions you take part in: you are playing a game of dice. Not even a six-sided dice, where there is always a decent chance of landing right. Sometimes it is a twenty-four-sided dice, sometimes forty-eight. Sometimes it does not make geometrical, rational, mathematical sense.

Eventually, you realise the following:

- That the song you chose to sing in your audition happens to be the very same one which the director sang in middle school when he messed up the choreography and ripped his trousers before his first crush.

- That you are the sixteenth consecutive person with dark hair and brown eyes to come into the audition room in one afternoon.

- That the interpretation you decided to apply to the script cannot be more different from what the director had in mind (you went for evil genius and he wanted tortured puppet).

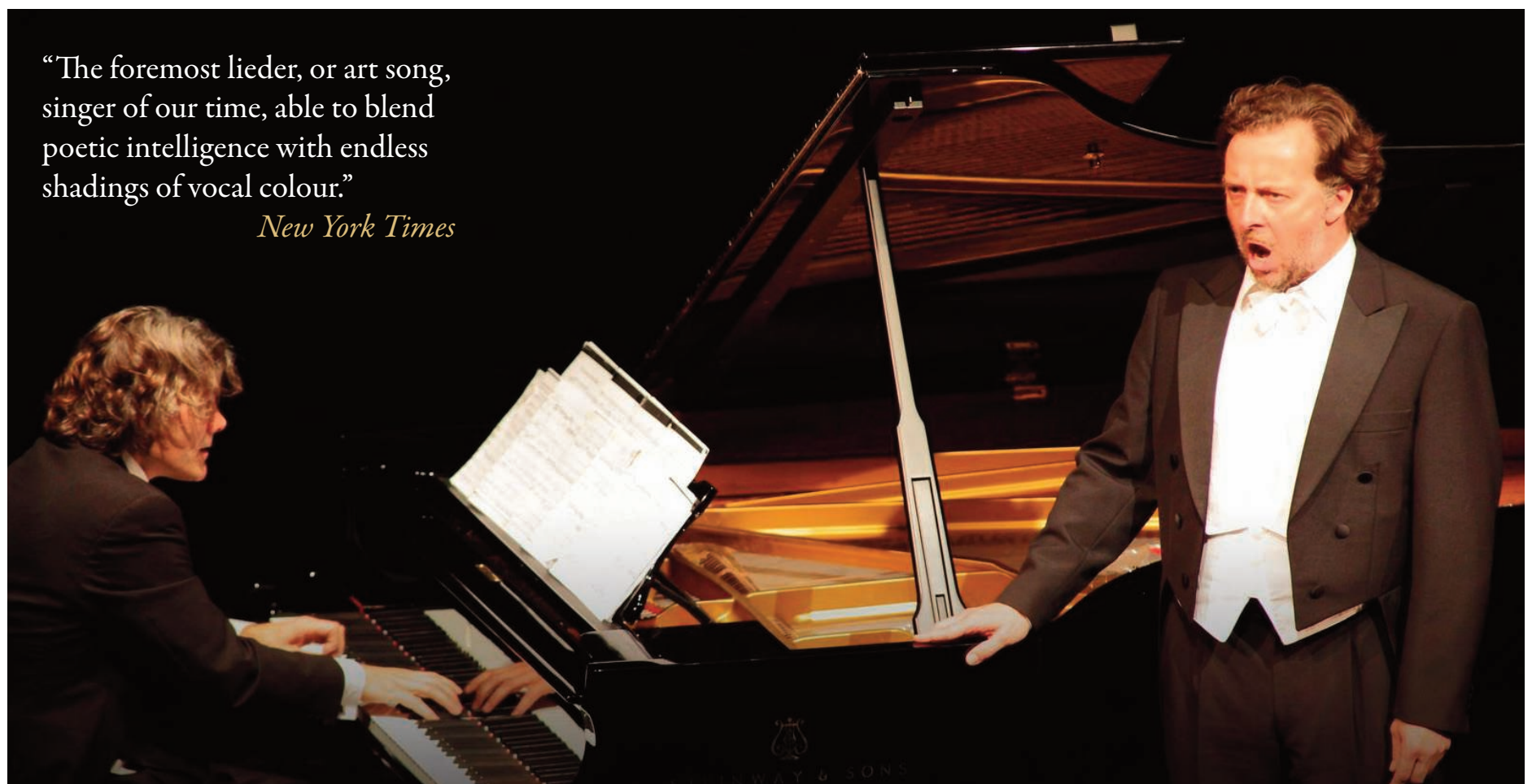
- That you are not light-skinned, and do not speak with a British accent (what even is that, anyway?), and aesthetically you would look out of place in a cast of ten white, freckled Londoners. I mean, theatre is about more than acting. It is a visual art, too.

So, lesson learned. You cannot always control the things that affect whether or not you get a part, no matter how good of an actor you are, no matter how confident or practiced. You heave a huge sigh and close the tabs you have up about acing an audition.

While your fingers hover over the keyboard and the empty address bar blinks before your eyes, instinctively you type in camdram.net. Mechanically, you scroll down the page and click on auditions. *LES MISERABLES IS LOOKING FOR ACTORS!* Your cheeks flush. Your heart beats hard and loud. In an instant you see yourself: Eponine. You simply must go for it. You sign up to a Doodle slot, reach up to your top shelf and take down *Wowing in the Audition Room: An Actor's Handbook*. Smiling, you kick back with your coffee and open the book to Chapter One: Being Confident in Auditions.

CAMERATA MUSICA

CHRISTIAN GERHAHER & GEROLD HUBER



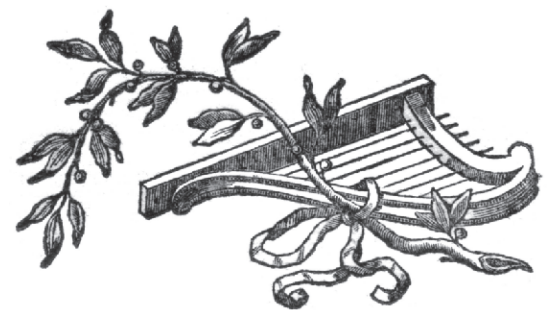
TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2019, 7:30 PM

Mahler, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (1885)

Mahler, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1887-1901)

Mahler, *Kindertotenlieder* (1904)

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Music

Vulture's

FRESHERS' PLAYLIST

by Sam Clarke



It's that time of year again, and Cambridge is buzzing. For the freshers among us, welcome to student life! By the time you read this, you'll probably have unpacked most of your belongings, hung up your fairy lights and maybe even said hello to your neighbours. Over the next few weeks you'll meet scores of people whose names you'll instantly forget and learn about items of cutlery you didn't even know existed.

From punting to porters to pretending to be interested in rowing, it's a time for new experiences, the vast majority of which are enjoyable and exciting (yes, even Cindies has its own charms). However, every 3am Gardies has its morning after, and for every morning after there's a song to perk you up. Here's five of the less glamorous student moments you may find yourself in over the next eight weeks, and a tune to get you through each.

for the early lecture...

Suntoucher
Groove Armada

for the essay crisis...

Why Does Everybody Look The Same
Monks

for the pre-pres
warmup...

Until Then
Feed Me Jacks

for the 2pm lull...

1999 WILDFIRE
BROCKHAMPTON

for the winter
walk home..

**Midnight
Mischief (Tom
Misch remix)**
Jordan Rakei

◀ Tom Misch
(JUSTIN HIGUCHI)



▲ "When I listened to music, it wasn't for my ears only" (ALL PHOTOS BY MARIAM ABDEL-RAZEK)

Soundtrack to my summer

Mariam Abdel-Razek explores the power of the playlist and the songs that defined the summer of 2019

If I have retained one addiction from my teens going into my twenties, it's my strange obsession with playlists. Currently, my number of Spotify playlists stands at an almost depressing 132, because honestly, I can't seem to stop. I can make a playlist for a tube journey, a run, a study session, a wedding, four weddings, a funeral... You name it – I've probably made it.

The thing is, playlists are wonderful. Like photos, those strange things that can prompt a myriad of memories with one snapshot, playlists are, nowadays, how we memorialise ourselves. I've made playlists for journeys and events, but also people and places, and often I've found myself listening to them over to try and recapture something of how I felt the summer after I finished my GCSEs, or tasted my first beer. With that in mind, I've come to look at the playlists that I made this summer with a keenness to think about why I put together the songs I did.

This summer, for all of July and even most of June, I listened to music, mostly, alone – in my room or through headphones or in the shower. Then, in August, I moved to Edinburgh for the month to live in a flat with seven of my friends, and suddenly I didn't know a moment's rest. I barely had time alone at all, let alone a second to plug in my headphones. When I listened to music, it wasn't for my ears only: it was through a speaker, shaking the walls and the high ceiling of our flat's living room.

I became anxious. Like most people, I had playlists that were for me, and playlists that were for public consumption (though there was a good amount of crossover – I don't believe in guilty pleasures), but sometimes neither of them seemed to hit the spot. "I'm

not really in the mood for this song," a friend would say over the sound of Chet Baker's voice. But what if I was, and I was here first? Besides, I thought Chet Baker was cool, kind of. Wasn't jazz back in now, or was that last summer? Or, "I can't concentrate with that in the background." But this is my concentration playlist. How can you not concentrate to a concentration playlist?

As my (very, very fun, for the record) summer wore on, it started to highlight a couple of things to me: firstly, that there was actually no such thing as a people-pleasing song (one person will always hate it), and secondly that, when it came to music, I was probably a bit of a wanker. I was used to controlling the AUX cord and using my speaker at a house party, and to be honest I'd gotten kind of weird about it. Instead, my playlist began to look a little more eclectic. Eventual favourites included:

"Subside", Eloise

The week before I left for Edinburgh was the hottest London summer on record, and Eloise got me through it. Off the back of her spot supporting indie-star-turned-Spotify-darling Bruno Major on his innumerable tours, the singer-songwriter has developed a niche but



strong following, and rounds off her first E.P. with this effortlessly cool expression of a very big crush (if there's such a thing). Guitar layerings, subtle harmonies and a sexy bassline make for perfect poolside listening.

"Happiness", The Pointer Sisters

My knowledge of The Pointer Sisters is about as extensive as anyone's (i.e. not very), but their exhilarating brand of soul is undeniable. I heard this track used in an Edinburgh show that I fell in love with, and I fell in love with the song too. Bonus points for the first 45 seconds – just vocals and a piano – before the beat kicks in.

"Shake It Off", Mariah Carey

Is there any noughties comeback more crucial than that of Mariah Carey? It's forgotten in favour of (a) the similarly-named but far inferior hit by Taylor Swift, and (b) the show-stealing "We Belong Together", found on the same excellent album (2005's *The Emancipation of Mimi*), but this minimalist post-breakup track – production made up almost entirely by sparse chords and seductive backing vocals – was snuck into almost every pres queue by a Mariah Carey super-fan friend of mine, and honestly, I wasn't mad about it.

"boyfriend", Ariana Grande with Social House

Maybe the way Ariana Grande is taking over our lives is a little bit terrifying – I struggle to remember one day this summer where I didn't hear her playing over some kind of public speakers – but hats off to this pitch-perfect

pop, with an almost addictive bridge leading into a simple and insanely catchy hook.

"Lingerie", Lizzo

Lizzo just took a DNA test and she's 100% THAT overplayed bitch. She might be every white person's wet dream to play in a trashy club, but she's also really very good, and this saucy, stripped back number proves it.

"Physical", Olivia Newton-John

I counted this song featuring in at least three sketches I saw at the Fringe, and while I remember them all quite vividly, what I tend to think about when listening to this song is that it's 80s pop at its best: sex, horns, and guitar solos. I also struggle to move past my discovery this summer of the fact that my friend is her third cousin once removed (a distant but crucial relation).

"Don't Go Breaking My Heart", Elton John and Kiki Dee

After watching a friend do an excellent impression of a robot singing it, this triumph of a duet now never fails to put a smile on my face. Not that it wasn't insanely upbeat in the first place – the major key and surprisingly fast BPM make for a song that breaks the scales on happiness and danceability.

"Love Is a Beautiful Thing", Vulfpeck featuring Theo Katzmann and Monica Martin

The ever underrated Vulfpeck, who have attained cult status with funk fans around the globe, deliver a perfectly tender meditation on heartbreak, complete with sorrowful alto sax solo and tinkling Wurlitzer chords. Putting on

this song whilst making dinner in the kitchen was like getting under a blanket on a cold day, and sometimes it was all anyone needed.

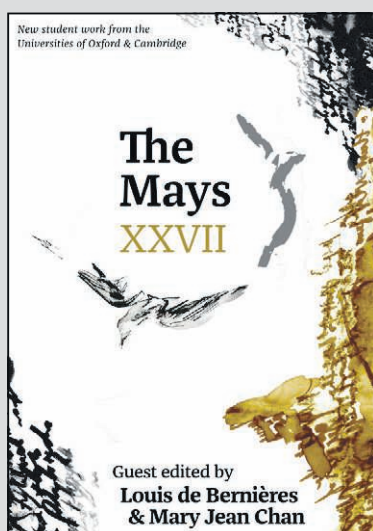
Aside from those seven highlights, my eventual Edinburgh playlist (aptly titled "omg!!!!!! brexit is real and i drink oat milk now") had only twenty-odd more songs on it, surprisingly short for a playlist of mine. But even so, what it lacked in length it made up for in diversity. The sound of my summer ended up being far more joyful and varied than I had expected because it wasn't just my summer

or my sound. Instead, like the voices of my friends when they stumbled into our flat at three in the morning after a silly night out in Bristo Square, different sounds overlapped and mixed over each other. My favourite songs shifted over to make space for more than my usual choices – songs we listened to at pres, songs I heard in shows, songs people asked me to put on, songs my friends sang in the shower. Maybe it made for more eclectic fare, but it fused memory with sound in a way I knew was exactly what playlists are for.



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Fashion

Vulture's top trends from Spring/Summer 2020 Fashion Month

From ruffled collars and puffed sleeves to climate consciousness, our Fashion Editors, **Caterina Bragoli** and **Gabriel Humphreys**, review the highlights of this year's Spring/ Summer 2020 Fashion Month

Fashion month has come and gone in a whirlwind of oversized puffer jackets, ruffled collars and, of all things, Picasso, and has given us an insight into some of the emerging trends for Spring Summer 2020. Here's what we have learned from scrutinising the runways...

Odes to the past

Fashion is, as ever, a contradictory combination of churning innovative and inherently cyclical. This season, though, saw what felt like an unusually large number of shows that alluded to Western fashion history, both recent and distant, alongside those that showed us a vision into an uncertain future.

The trend transcended different cities: Paris and Milan were united as I found myself caught between the 70s and 80s at Celine, Saint Laurent and Versace. Celine's offering felt like a snapshot of the 1975 working woman's wardrobe. While Versace had all the 80s shoulder pads and puffed sleeves you could want, and Saint Laurent trod the line between the two with off-the-shoulder belted jumpsuits.

Meanwhile, in New York, Tom Ford took us to a grungy, 90s, Matrix meets Hunger Games Capitol. A blend of our recent past with our possible future – smokey eyes and long, leather jackets met flowing satin jumpsuits and bright, metallic moulded plastic breast plates. A little bit Xena, Warrior Princess, a little bit punk rock, it felt like not only a love letter to the 90s but a look to our future in a performative and provocative tone.

Jeremy Scott kept us grounded in 80s psychedelic neons, with punchy shoulder pads and tailoring; and Thom Browne came with towering hair to match the corsetry and distinct silhouette of 19th Century glam. The list goes on and on.

In times of uncertainty, we tend to reach back into the past, hoping to cling onto what felt like a more stable time. Our attempts to look into the future are reminders of our continuing love affair with a hyper-futuristic dystopia. In fashion, as in many facets of culture, designers are wrestling with the inescapable turmoil that seems to increasingly govern our lives. By clinging onto the past, and launching into an inspired future, they're willing us to make sense of the present, and providing hope that while things might seem testing, culture offers us the chance to escape and to champion change.

Sustainability

Sustainable fashion is everywhere, and has been for quite some time, proving that the environmentalist movement is going nowhere. In fact, shopping sustainability has

become somewhat of a trend, with countless influencers and designers promoting the importance of ethically sourced materials, and cutting down on the fast-fashion binge-shops. From Dior, to Stella McCartney, this fashion month has been pivotal in the world of sustainability.

Stella McCartney is one of the leading advocates of sustainable fashion, and she made sure to maximise on the opportunity that fashion month presents, gathering as many key fashion figures as she could to give a talk on climate change at the Opera Garnier. She asked the industry the question we all have been itching to know the answer to: "How can we encourage not only the youth – because hopefully, God, hopefully, they feel it and they've got it in them – how can we turn the light on amongst the people who are a bit older?" Stella ensured that sustainability was ingrained on the design floor of her eponymous label, using circles to symbolise the earth, as well as femininity; specifically women who are taking the environmentalist scene by storm at the moment.

Dior's initiative was reflected in the setting of their SS20 runway. We were taken to a mystical wood, with young trees growing from stumps on the ground. Dangling from the branches was the hashtag 'Planting For The Future'. This was most likely Chiuri paying homage to Christian Dior himself, as he was known for having a fascination for all things horticultural. Yet, the sustainability factor certainly surfaced in conjunction. The trees that were placed on the runway were dying trees, sourced from countries like Italy and Germany, that needed rehousing in Paris due to the city's 'subtropical climate'. Chiuri commented that she wanted to alert people to the 'state of the planet', and alert us she did: we consumers of fashion were able to see a physical manifestation of what sustainability really looks like.

Re-examining gender

For many years now, designers have chosen not to show purely 'womenswear' at fashion week, with some even merging their shows entirely. This year has been no exception, with some of the biggest fashion houses, including Gucci, Burberry and Helmut Lang choosing to present menswear on the runway alongside their womenswear collection.

For me, this has always felt like a step in the right direction. Although these moves maintained some of the harmful binary view of gender that has often been present in fashion, the breakdown of such rigid presentations of male and female fashion has to help a shift in the psyche of designers and consumers alike. There is still a lot that gives me, and those others who believe fashion should transcend



▲ "Tom Ford took us to a grungy Matrix meets Hunger Games Capitol" (VOGUE/ALESSANDRO LUCIONI)

gender, a lot of hope.

Delhi-based designer Manish Arora brought a vibrant and glimmering collection to Paris Fashion Week this year, entitled "Love is Love", flagrantly ignoring traditions of gender with drag queens also walking the runway. Even subtler styling details, strongly tailored suits and even trousers on women, that would have been scandalous half a century ago are now accepted without a batted eyelid.

While designers flaunt aesthetics that challenge traditional views of gender on the runway, celebrities and others in the public eye are helping to break down barriers. The famously unconventional Billy Porter has championed dressing that challenges assumptions,

embracing the power of dressing against gender stereotypes to make others uncomfortable and the sense of empowerment that comes along with that. Non-binary actor Ezra Miller has also been lauded by many for stunningly avant-garde and unexpected aesthetic choices on the red carpet and in photoshoots.

Fashion has long been a way to explore and subvert gender roles and expectations - from the first trousers worn by working women, to drag used by queer people throughout history to display and express their identity. And as a culture that prides itself on pushing boundaries, isn't it time to push past the gendered assumptions and practices that in the end just limit and confine us?

Arts

'Illuminating Cambridge Libraries' eases you back to the books

Joanna Neve finds beauty, both old and new, in Sara Rawlinson's photographs of Cambridge libraries

As term comes to a start, what better way to contemplate the return to reading than visiting Sara Rawlinson's solo photography exhibition at the Michaelhouse Centre – it's on the perfect subject matter! Over the course of three years Sara has put together an impressive collection of over 1,800 images of Cambridge libraries, featuring at least one image from each of the 31 college libraries. Her current exhibition focuses on library contents (mostly books of course!) and includes just a minuscule snapshot of her much greater work which will hopefully be exhibited next year.

In the complete series of over 1,800 images, modern libraries stand stark next to older, more historic architecture. The same contrast is present in her upcoming exhibition which seeks to highlight the "features that enable the dissemination and preservation of knowledge". You may find a crusty and tattered looking classic book curated next to a recent publication in plastic film. Some show signs of wear and tear, having been read by hundreds of students over the years. Others have pristine binding, untouched. For a book lover, it's a tantalising way to look at old and new, focusing on their appearance as opposed to smell, which is often the first thing we notice when we open a crisp new book, or a musty older one.

While each and every college library is unique and beautiful in their own right, when looking through a snapshot of Sara's series, the one which really stood out to me was Jesus College's Old Library. Her collection includes a staggering 59 images of this historic building and its contents but my small



▲ An image from the exhibit (SARA RAWLINSON)

glimpse alone revealed it to be a true beauty. Worn in wood, stained glass windows and a bolt entrance – it's everything that comes to mind when you think of a traditional library and the books too are similarly old and classic looking.

By contrast, Wolfson College's Lee Seng Tee Library looks like an oasis of modern elements. Pebbles and finer stones line the staircase and natural light bounces off the glass walls, the opposite to bolted doors and musty smells. Shrubbery and plants liven the place, and a few bright pink chairs lay waiting for their next reader. Everything about this library speaks of youth and the framings, shelves and books speak of a new era too.

So, whether you like photography or not, this is the perfect exhibition to pop down and see during your first week. Muster the courage to finally complete that holiday work by looking at stunning images of some of Cambridge's most iconic looking books, or see if you can notice the small details to spot your own college library among the series.

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Violet
 By VARSITY

Girton officially the worst Oxbridge college, according to the Telegraph

Q

I want to start afresh this year as last year wasn't the best, any advice for turning over a new leaf but keeping my friends from last year?

A

Starting afresh can mean lots of things. It might involve making small changes to your everyday routine, or it could involve making big, life-changing new choices. Start by asking yourself, what didn't you enjoy about last year? If you're aiming to change your working habits or get involved in more societies, just let your friends know - communication is important in all relationships, platonic as well as romantic. Sharing your goals and plans for the upcoming year with your friends can help you stay on track and keep you motivated. Any friend worth having won't resent you for needing a little more time to make the most of Cambridge. If you want to branch out into different friendship groups, consider taking up a new hobby; it's a cliché, but clichés exist for a reason. It's much easier to bond with new people if you have a shared interest.

Making new friends whilst retaining last year's friends is by no means impossible. Just make sure to set aside quality time with your old friends. Remember, you can make a fresh start at any point, so don't panic about getting everything perfect straight away - **Violet's Agony Aunts**



Got questions? Get in touch at violet@varsity.co.uk

New Rules: A guide for men in Newnham Café

Bethan McGinley gives Dua Lipa a run for her money by setting some ground rules for unaccompanied men in the Iris Café

When I think of returning to Newnham for my final year, what springs to mind is the college's café, the Iris. Now don't get me wrong, I love the café. However, what also comes to mind are the 'café boys': unaccompanied men, in Newnham, in broad daylight, bold as brass. Put simply, I don't like it when I'm standing in a very, very long queue and the last mozzarella focaccia has been stolen by one such 'café boy'.

As a new year begins, I'm laying down some New Rules for these café boys.

#1: Leave my booths alone

If you're a lone male who spies an empty booth in the café, stop, drop and roll... far away. There's about a hundred places to sit, you don't need a booth. It's just manspreading on a larger much more sinister level. Stop.

#2: If I look like shit, do not look at me

If you see me, or anyone else, looking a little worse for wear, it's

your solemn duty to look away. Consider me Newnham's Medusa - it won't go well for either of us if I catch you staring whilst I have an existential crisis over my fifth cup of coffee.

#3: In exam term, piss off

Just piss off. Really. There's at least three other cafés on Sidge where your presence isn't a total invasion.

If it's a tad more expensive, don't worry, the good old gender pay gap will see you fairly compensated in no time!

#4: The buttery is off limits

Undaunted by the fact that it's going to cost them an extra £1 for not going to Newnham, or that trying the tilapia (whatever that is) is akin to playing a particularly dangerous game of russian roulette, (with a side of yesterday's veg), some unaccompanied males do indeed persevere. It's a step too far.

So, there you have it, the correct etiquette for Newnham Café. Read and learn it well.

Madeleine Wakeman shares highlights from the Telegraph's hotly anticipated league table

The Telegraph offered students a crucial lifeline last week, publishing their highly anticipated Oxbridge College League Table to help prospective Oxbridge applicants tackle the age-old question, 'Which Oxbridge college should I apply to?' in the most obnoxious way possible. The league table is described as an "exclusive" publication, generously providing readers with an "abundance" of statistics and the "opinions" of a panel of graduates.

Trinity College (Cambridge) is awarded second place in the table, with The Telegraph highlighting the groundbreaking news that the college is "minted" and provides students with the much-needed opportunity to be around "arrogant" peers. Christ's is labelled

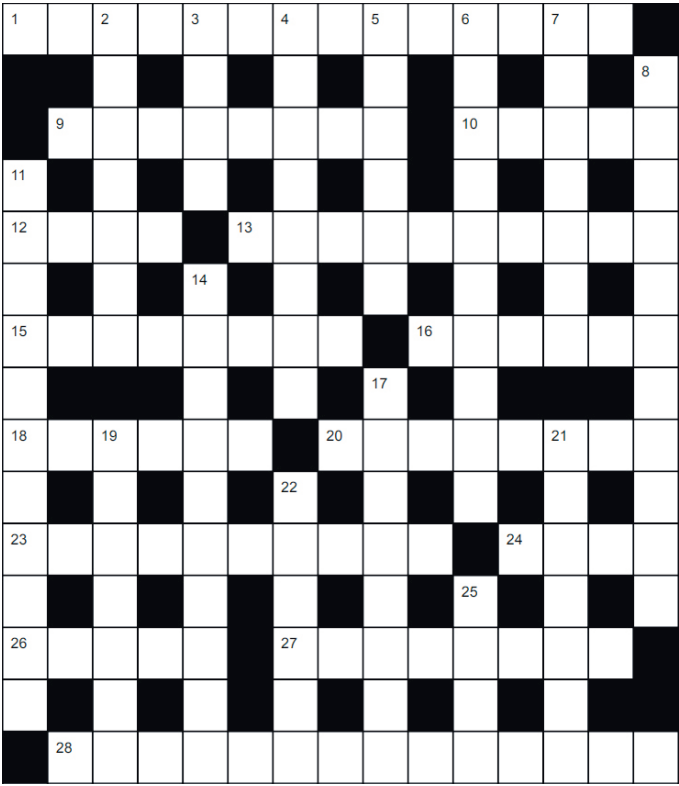
Trinity offers the valuable opportunity to be around "arrogant" peers

as "central" and "intimate"(?) with "motivated" students, while Fitzwilliam is "not showy" and for "less privileged students". Newnham is deemed "for women". Girton came last in the ranking (clearly The Telegraph doesn't like cycling), and Queens' ranked second from the bottom.

The article continues to distinguish between the colleges, notably labelling those which are "archaic", "academic" or "privileged". Politicians are currently debating if the release of this sensitive information should be treated as whistleblowing, and colleges should start frantically making contingency plans in case they don't receive sufficient quantities of applications should they not be considered "privileged" enough.

In the days since publication, rumours have circulated that a fatal error was made, with several Oxford colleges claiming a spot in the top 10 rather than their Cambridge counterparts.

Varsity Cryptic Crossword #1 By Pitt*



*Pitt is a pseudonym

ACROSS

- 1 Cost of something that should be free - but it shouldn't be taken literally (6,2,6)
 9 Toddler, extremely rowdy, is in the firing line? (8)
 10 "Brown, go dance!" (5)
 12 Couple I met from the East (4)
 13 In deep study, spell 'goosey' incorrectly? (10)
 15 Manipulate drug and new alcoholic drink - not quite beer (8)
 16 King in passing scarcity (6)
 18 Stumble over second exam (6)
 20 Brought back every other character from film: chatty, short conservative and regular (8)
 23 Fade back to fourth river college (10)
 24 Sad athlete (4)
 26 Cambridge pub good for a wingman? (5)
 27 Doctor has music in the style of ABBA (8)
 28 Sport's greedy U.S. anchor running (9,5)

DOWN

- 2 To some extent, begins English tea (7)
 3 Bellow sounds rarer than rare (4)
 4 One of eight: Pluto etc. removed (8)
 5 Going north, friend's got cold: sea hazard! (6)
 6 Those with minor roles, not initially agreeable, welcome open outgoing people (10)
 7 Positive attitude you are texting with honesty (7)
 8 Passed through airport security and knocked over (11)
 11 Team, favourites backed, mostly ran and dodged (11)
 14 One trap catches silly Boris: beginning of Yellowhammer creates debauchery (10)
 17 The odds for I, an actor (8)
 19 Number one religious book from East Germany(7)
 21 Method two students briefly use: constant as a snail, perhaps? (7)
 22 Creep, no end of ennui, in Italian river carries nothing for protection against water (6)
 25 Leaders of the states against Russia - and a leader of Russia (4)

Find the answers in next week's edition of Varsity!

What's happening in Michaelmas sport?



Michael Nguyen-Kim gives an overview of some of the highlights of sport this term

A new academic year is upon us, and with it comes a blockbuster Michaelmas term of sport in Cambridge. The first term is often treated as a platform from which teams across the University can gradually establish momentum for

▲ The Varsity match (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S RUGBY TEAM)

the remainder of their seasons, and this year will be no exception.

Some competitors, however, won't have the luxury of slowly building into their seasons as they prepare for important fixtures towards the end of the term, and this includes Varsity contests in no less than three sports.

The headline act, as always, is the rugby Varsity match against Oxford, which this year will be held on Thursday

the 12th of December at Twickenham. This year's match will be the 138th time the two sides have met, with Cambridge leading the all time ledger with 63 wins to 60 (with 14 draws). The Light Blues' are hoping to avenge last year's 38-16 loss to Oxford last year, and will be significantly boosted by the arrival of both the former Australian captain James Horwill and former Springbok Flip van der Merwe. The two second-rowers are both studying for Executive MBAs at Queens' College, and are likely to add some much needed experience and physicality to the Cambridge forward pack.

Also facing off against Oxford this term are the Hares & Hounds (cross country) and the Cambridge University Ski Race Club. The Hares and Hounds will head to Wimbledon Common on the 7th of December, and face an uphill battle after Oxford dominated last year's encounter. The Ski Race club, meanwhile, will be hoping to reprise last year's success in the skiing Varsity, which is held during the Varsity Trip in Val Thorens. Having won the women's title last year, they will no doubt also be aiming to return the men's title back to their trophy cabinet.

Michaelmas also marks the start of the season for many teams competing

in the various College competitions. Football Cuppers begins in the fourth week of term, when Fitzwilliam will commence their quest for a fourth consecutive men's trophy, while Pembroke is the defending champion in the women's competition. Rugby also gets underway with the start of the league, a title which last year's victors, St John's, will be looking to retain.

And finally, there are the many students (mainly freshers) who will begin new sports as novices. The quintessential novice sporting event of the calendar is of course Queens' Ergs, which this year will be held on Sunday the 10th of November. This somewhat bizarre event is usually a college rower's first competition, and consists of crews racing one another on indoor rowing machines. It will be followed as usual by the on-water Emmanuel Sprints and Clare Novices regattas on the 7th Sunday and 8th Saturday of Michaelmas, respectively. On the final Saturday of term is the Fairbairn Cup regatta, which is the most prestigious novice rowing event consisting of a 2.7 kilometre head (time-trial) race. The senior division of the Cup, which is held over 4.3 kilometres and which is closely fought for in its own right, will be held the day after.

The quirky history of Cambridge athletics

Joseph Powell looks at what our athletes can learn from some of Cambridge's more quaint traditions

Cambridge's first foray into athletics proper may well, like its footballing provenance, have been inspired by the great public schools, who were at the time attempting to busy students with the pursuit of sport as a slightly more wholesome pastime than the apparent alternative of killing local wildlife. Students arriving from these institutions perhaps decided their old schoolmasters might have been on to something and carried these new-fangled sports with them.

Much to the disappointment of spectators everywhere, the modern sport has chosen not to stick with some of the mighty tribulations that the inaugural 'University Games' boasted, such as the nostalgic sack race or quaintly titled 'scurry hurdle race'.

Undoubtedly, there are conquests such as those of Asher-Smith and Mahuchikh which can inspire CUAC athletes on to glory. But what could be more inspirational to the next generation of Light Blues than the image of their 1857 archetypes

boldly conquering those gargantuan hurdles equipped with nothing but cricket shoes and a can-do attitude? And what is a 200m sprint gold when one contrasts that against the rapturous feeling that only comes in flying over a solid white line bur-lap sack flailing in the wind? Affixing these rousing images at the forefront of the mind may be exactly what is required to turn the recent tide of Varsity Athletic contests. Since 2017, the club has succumbed to three consecutive defeats, including two at 4-0 margins, despite some valiant individual performances.

To do so may begin to restore some parity in overall record. Despite CUAC's three year head start in formation, since the first meeting in 1864 the current tally stands at 76-61 in favour of the Dark Blues with 7 draws. This is thankfully balanced by a far more flattering state of affairs for the Women's, at 31-13 to Cambridge since the first in 1975, including an unparalleled 12 in a row from 1978 to 1989. For the seconds, CUAC's men's Centipedes trail OUAC's Alverstone 39-29, whilst in women's the Oxford Millipedes lead the Cambridge Alligator's 16-14.

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Michaelmas highlights: Michael Nguyen-Kim rounds up the events of the coming term 31



‘It was the best I’ve ever felt after a rowing race’ Ex-Olympian George Nash on winning the boat race

Finn Ranson

Nash’s work right now may not command quite the same intrigue in conversation. But he was lucky: unlike many top-level athletes, life did not stop after retirement, and for that he is immensely grateful.

“I had been working very part-time from 2013,” he explains. “I [...] got involved with a few projects and felt that I had found something I could move on to. Most athletes find it very difficult to get excited about something after professional sport. I did through blind luck basically.”

Nash was 26 when he rowed his last race for Great Britain at the Rio Olympics and secured his first gold. It was an apt climax to a decade representing GB which included three World Championship golds (2013 and 2015 in the eight; 2014 in the men’s coxless four), two European golds in the four in 2014 and 2016, and an Olympic bronze with childhood friend Will Satch in London 2012.

But Nash might easily have completed another Olympiad. In another world, he would now be in the midst of a gruelling winter training block ahead of Tokyo. Does he hanker after those days at all?

“I would be lying if I said no,” he says.

“One of the things I learnt to love about rowing was having to turn up on the day and compete at your very best against the best in the world knowing that if it didn’t go perfectly you are

throwing away a year or four years of your life. The nervous energy would be through the roof. That intensity gets kind of addictive in a way.”

Though Nash still burns with competitive hunger, it is refreshing how ready he is to admit that the daily rigour of training was difficult, sometimes just too much. “Everything else in your life has to take a back seat,” he puts it. “One of my teammates missed the birth[s] of two of his children for training.”

Nor does Nash affect that kind of flashy masochism athletes can be a little guilty of playing up to. “I had thought if I win the Olympics I’ll call it a day and try something else. I don’t regret that decision. I absolutely loved the sport – still do. But I had a great time at the top and that was enough for me.”

When he crossed the finish line for the last time in Rio – after the wave of nauseating relief – he admits there was only satisfaction that it was all over.

“The [London] Olympics felt like I was just turning up on the day and giving it a whirl,” he explains.

“We’d had a torrid set of training camps leading in. When I came away with a bronze I was completely elated. With Rio we had spent three and a half years training with a kind of military ethos.

“I felt a strong sense of mission accomplished [when we won gold in Rio]. It wasn’t intense elation. It was just like all right, done.” He pauses, catching himself, then chuckles: “That sounds pretty grim actually.”

Nash graduated from St Catherine’s

▲ George Nash represented Cambridge in the Boat Race

(POINTILLIST)

in 2013 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Rowing dominated his student life. Amazingly, Nash spent his first year in the Goldie crew, but he broke into the Blues squad in his second year and starred in three Boat Races in 2010, 2011 and 2013, when he was President of the Boat Club.

“When I arrived at Cambridge I knew I wanted to try as hard as I possibly could to making the Olympic team,” he says.

But Nash’s enterprise came at a cost. He remembers the immense mental strain of balancing a rigorous four-year course with each Boat Race campaign.

“I now regret not putting more into my degree because I find the subject matter that I was falling asleep to at Cambridge hugely engaging,” he laughs.

For all its military rigour, Nash says the leadup to the Rio Games felt like a holiday by comparison. He treasures the people he met and the experiences his time at the University granted him, but, he adds: “I’m really glad I did it all but it’s not something that I really miss. A lot of the time it was on the verge of being too much.”

It becomes clear why when I ask Nash about the Boat Race. Besides all the media attention, the stakes were so high every year simply on a human level.

“It’s very short, it’s very intense and everyone on the team is completely desperate to win and completely desperate to make the boat. Consequently, the environment is always on the edge of blowing up.

To win is a massive release of pent up pressure. Winning in 2010 was awesome.

“
One of my
teammates
missed the
birth[s] of
two of his
children for
training
”

It’s probably the best I’ve ever felt after a rowing race.”

The pendulum of the Boat Race has decidedly swung back in Cambridge’s favour in recent years. Oxford won all four races in 2013, ‘14 and ‘15. But in 2020 Cambridge’s women Blues will be defending their crown for the fourth successive year, and the men for the third after they secured back-to-back victories for the first time since 1999.

Callum Sullivan took gold in the eight at the U23 World Championships this summer, while this year’s president Freddie Davidson won the title in the coxless four. Nash bagged a gold at the same event in 2011, racing in a pair with Oxford counterpart Constantine Louloudis.

“I think Freddie’s one of the best technical oarsmen that have rowed at Cambridge. Probably ever,” Nash said. “And Callum seems to get better and better. He’s a huge asset for the club. Both of them are linchpins.”

The pair have some task living up to Nash’s ability. For better or for worse, the person who was shaped by those 10 years of sacrifice was a supremely accomplished rower befitting of Britain’s decorated four that has seen the likes of Steve Redgrave and James Cracknell. And he has memories that will never leave him.

“That Rio 4 was outstanding,” Nash says, noting one race where they “came within half a second of breaking the world record. For me that was a perfect race. That’s the most proud I’ve ever felt in a boat.”



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SPORTS 07 OCTOBER 2019

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



SPORT FAIR



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