

# Rethinking self care

Running out of boxes to fit myself into

Features 12



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# VARSITY

## 'I had no idea what would happen next' Students who failed Tripos left adrift

**Stephanie Stacey**  
Co-Editor

Cambridge rarely offers second chances. Students who fail Tripos, unless they experienced extenuating circumstances, are generally not permitted to continue studying their course at the University, which is rare among UK higher education institutions in denying the vast majority of students the opportunity to resit Tripos examinations as standard policy.

*Varsity* spoke to two students who, having failed their first year of Tripos at Cambridge, had to leave the University. Both students shared similar stories of confusion throughout the process, and both say that they could have benefited from resits, or similar arrangements, were these made available to them. Neither had expected to fail, but both felt as if, ultimately, the University had given up on them.

On average each year, fewer than one hundred Cambridge students experience exam failure, and of these, many are able to access appeals due to their personal circumstances. As a *Varsity* investiga-

tion revealed in 2018, STEM students and freshers are disproportionately likely to fail their examinations.

"When I found out I had failed, I had no idea what would happen next," says one student, who studied Mathematics at Selwyn College in the academic year of 2017-18, and had to leave the University after failing her first year of Tripos. This student asked to remain anonymous.

She received her results on a Saturday, and having contacted college to discuss her potential next steps, received no response until Monday. "I spent those two days very confused and worried about what my next steps were." When, finally, she received communication from her Tutor, the student was told that she had failed to proceed to second year and would have to leave the University.

She notes that no procedure for failure had been discussed in person, nor was any guidance easily available online.

"If I had mitigating circumstances, I could appeal to continue my studies at Cambridge University, but this would be a lengthy and complicated process, including appeals to my college and my

Full story page 2-3 ►



▲ The Dean of Queens' condemned the racist graffiti (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

## Racist graffiti found in Queens' toilets

**Zac Ntim**  
News Correspondent

"Racist" and "explicit" graffiti was found in a toilet in Queens' College last Wednesday. In an email sent out to students by the Deans of Queens', students were warned that the graffiti was not only against College regulations but was also a criminal offence.

The email also informed the persons responsible that they were wrong to think it was a bit of fun or a joke. Describing the culprits, the email read "you are a racist." A Queens' spokesperson told *Varsity* that: "The College does not tolerate racist language in any form."

Neither the University nor College have responded to questions regarding how this incident is being handled, making it unclear what procedures are being put in place to tackle racism in the future. However, a University spokesperson explained: "We are determined to have the right culture at Cambridge and have put in place a wide-ranging series of initiatives to equip staff and students with the confidence to talk about race and identify and challenge racism whenever they encounter it."

The University has been at the center of several high profile allegations of racism. Last year a Churchill academic Dr Priyamvada Gopal, along with two of her colleagues from the English faculty, refused to supervise King's College

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# EDITORIAL

## Telling our own stories

The University Library’s new exhibit, *Rising Tide: Women at Cambridge* (pages 4-5) is a reminder – should one be required – that Cambridge’s history, and how we can relate to it, is far from simple. That the growth of women at the University is being celebrated is no bad thing, but the fact that Cambridge only allowed women to take full degrees in 1947, the last university in the UK to do so, somewhat undercuts the extent to which we in Cambridge today can take pride in its legacy. This, though, is not to undervalue the contributions of individuals, and women’s colleges in particular, that strove and continue to strive to allow women to achieve equal footing in this university.

Although the photos and artefacts from this exhibit can be displayed neatly in the hallowed halls of the University Library, we shouldn’t forget that progress has not always been, and won’t always be, as linear as it may seem when framed and set on display for all to view. In fact, it’s been pretty messy.

We can’t always make sense of the past. Often, it resonates in our present and complicates our reality. Here in Cambridge, we’re all trying to make sense of our time here, and the conflicts of past and present which exist in our own personal lives, as well as in our university.

Sometimes, both can feel as messy and uncertain as each other.

Putting down stories – of ourselves, of our university, of our relationships – side by side on the page can help us construct our own narratives.

The best way to hear these stories, is through reading students’ own words. On page 10, an anonymous student reflects on dealing with their schizophrenia diagnosis while at Cambridge. On page 12, Inaya Mohmood explores the resonance of Britain’s colonial past in the reality she, and her family, face today. In *Vulture Magazine*, on page 29, Sarah Brady explains how a Studio Ghibli classic helped her come to terms with intermitting while on her year abroad.

But don’t listen to us – just read on.

Maia Wyn Davies & Stephanie Stacey

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# News

# Exam Failure ‘When I found out I’d failed, I had no idea what would happen next.’

*Varsity spoke to two students who had to leave the University after failing their first year of Tripos. Neither was permitted to resit their exams. Neither knew quite what would happen next.*

► Continued from front page

department, and I was discouraged from this option as I was told my chance of success was slim.”

Instead, she says, with remaining at Cambridge being an inviable option, “I was persuaded to move university.”

“I inquired about other options such as changing subject, as I did not want to leave”, but she was offered no such possibility.

At this time of the year, which made it too late to submit a standard UCAS application, she was left with two choices: apply through clearing or take a year out and apply for entry the following year. She opted to apply through clearing because “taking a year out would be a large disruption”, both to her personal life and to her studies, but by July university spaces were already “sparse”.

“Originally, I was told I would be able to go straight into second year at my new university, and that my DoS would help me get into my preferred choice. However, later down the line, it turned out that I had to retake first year, and I would have to apply through UCAS myself.”

She did, however, receive support from her Tutor and Director of Studies with her application, and was ultimately offered a place to study Mathematics with Physics at Warwick University. “It

was not my preferred subject but as I was applying late, the Mathematics course was full.”

Selwyn College did not respond to multiple requests for comment on this student’s experiences.

“Moving university, leaving all my friends and having to start again was extremely hard,” says the student.

“University is more than academics and exam results; we live there, make connections there, become part of societies and student bodies. We build our lives around our university and to take this away from a student has a huge impact on their lives.”

Despite raising concerns about her progress earlier in the year, the student feels she was not offered adequate support. “I struggled academically from term one and, like many new students, suffered from imposter syndrome. Towards the start of the second term, I realised I couldn’t keep up and I was finding the course extremely difficult. Around this

“  
*Cambridge played no role whatsoever in me moving University*  
”



▲ Unless a student has experienced extenuating

time, I sat a mock exam at my college which I failed.”

However, even after failing this mock, as well as talking to figures within college about how she was finding it difficult to cope, the student says that no action was taken. “I received no extra support,” she notes, saying, “I feel like

891

Number of failed examination results recorded between 2007-2017

the mentality was that if you were struggling, you weren’t working hard enough, not that you required extra support.”

“During revision for my exams, I felt like no matter how many hours I studied a day, I couldn’t understand the material, but I felt like I had no one to turn to for support.” Even then, however, although she was “expecting a bad result” and knew her goal of a 2.i was “out of reach” she “was not expecting to fail.”

“Even some of my supervisors were surprised by my mark,” she comments.



# News



g circumstances, they generally cannot resit their exams (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

At the time of receiving her results, had she been offered the opportunity to retake the year in Cambridge, this student would have opted to do so. But now, having studied at Warwick for a year, she feels differently. If given the choice, she says she wouldn't want to return to Cambridge.

Reuben, similarly, was at Cambridge in the academic year of 2017-18, and ultimately failed his first year of Tripos, having studied Mathematics with Physics at Girton College.

He now studies Engineering at Cardiff University.

"Cambridge played no role whatsoever in me moving uni", Reuben told *Varsity*, explaining that he was left largely to his own devices, emailing around to request acceptance at different universities across the country.

“  
I just generally got a feeling  
of ‘well you’ve failed so we  
don’t want you anymore’  
”

"Some wanted me to reapply, some said wait for clearing. I ended up at Cardiff because I could get a place there guaranteed instead of worrying all summer where I'd end up."

Barring filing for extenuating circumstances, Reuben was informed that there were no other options which would enable him to continue his studies at Cambridge. Repeating the year was not made available as an option and, regardless, Reuben felt that he had essentially been told, "There's no point you restarting the year, you'd just fail again."

He disputes this, saying he could've worked harder if given the chance and greater support, but he felt it was clear that Cambridge would not permit him this. "I just generally got a feeling of 'well you've failed so we don't want you anymore.'"

"It was definitely a shock that I failed," says Reuben, although he notes he "was never expecting to do particularly well."

"During the year I had thirds in mocks, but I'd done little to no prep for those so I thought with some preparation before the real exams I could maybe do better, or at least equally well."

"Leading up to the real exams I'd done



▲ Class lists displayed outside Senate House (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

“  
Moving  
university,  
leaving all  
my friends  
and hav-  
ing to start  
again was  
extremely  
hard  
”

“  
I received  
no extra  
support  
”

some practice papers under exam conditions in the library and passed them all, getting around 2.ii/2.i borderline on the ones I was better at, so I was never expecting to do amazingly, but I thought I'd be alright."

"After the exams I knew there were mistakes or things I'd just had a mind blank over but I still was fairly sure I'd pass."

Girton College declined to comment on the case of this individual student, but stated: "The College is committed to providing strong academic and welfare support to all our students." They highlighted sources of support available within the college, including Directors of Studies, Tutors, College nurses, the College Chaplain and the College Counsellor.

"More than 99% of Girton students who sit examinations are successful in progressing to the next year of study."

Speaking to *Varsity* about Cambridge's policy regarding exam failure, a University spokesperson said, "Where students have been impacted in their examinations by extenuating circumstances then there are allowances that can be made. However, in rare cases, where there are no extenuating circumstances and students have been unable to successfully reach the appropriate academic standards, despite the specialist support and study skills available to them, it is unlikely to be in their interest to continue their studies at Cambridge."

"The University of Cambridge encourages the brightest and most talented students from across the world to come and study in a challenging learning environment with world-leading academics." The spokesperson highlighted that sources of support are available through the University's central student services - including the University Counselling Service and Disability Resource Centre - through colleges and through the Students' Unions' Advice Service.

## NEWS

### King's Chaplain to establish 'alternative' student church

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▲ The King's Chaplain (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

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## FEATURES

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▲ Illustration by Lois Wright

## Joe Benton

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### Varsity explains: The Freshers' Week hangover

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### Michaelmas week 2 Preview

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## News

# New UL exhibition celebrates history of women in Cambridge

**Bethan Holloway-Strong**  
News Correspondent

Beginning this week, a four month exhibition celebrating the history of women at the University of Cambridge, featuring “rarely seen” collections, will be on display at the University Library.

Lasting until March 2020, *The Rising Tide: Women at Cambridge* will be on exhibit in the library’s Milstein Exhibition Centre, marking 150 years since the founding of Cambridge’s first women’s college, Girton.

The exhibition includes costumes, letters, portraits and audio-visual material which focuses on the struggle for equal rights in education and the experiences, legacies and hidden labours of women at Cambridge.

It aims to examine the marginalisation and lack of recognition experienced by women throughout Cambridge’s history, including past efforts to keep women out of student societies as well as academic life. It also showcases the campaigns for change and justice which have existed since Girton College became the UK’s first residential university establishment for women in 1869.

Among the artifacts on display are

surviving pieces of eggshells and fireworks, demonstrating the violent reaction to an 1897 vote on whether women should be given degrees.

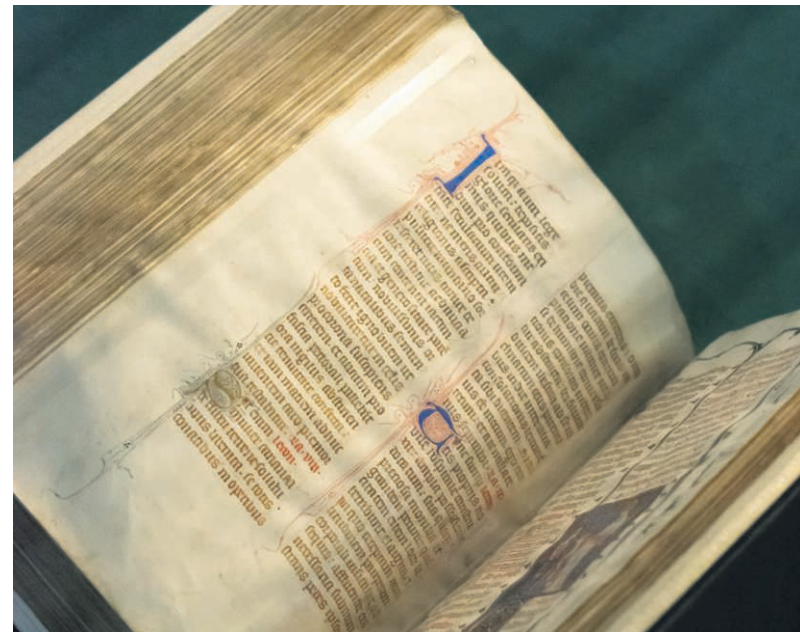
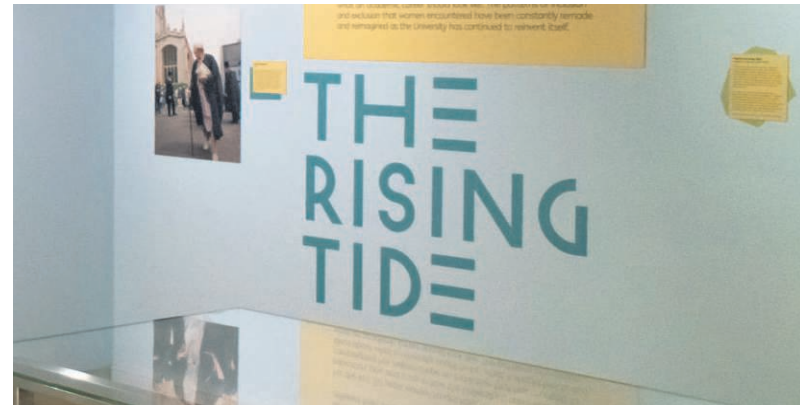
Another highlight is a gown worn by a woman who collected a degree at Trinity College Dublin between 1904 and 1907, unable to receive one at Cambridge, which only began awarding them to women in 1948.

Curated by Dr Lucy Delap and Dr Ben Griffin, *The Rising Tide: Women at Cambridge* aims to showcase the little-known stories of individual women that together make up the full picture of Cambridge’s female population.

Dr Delap said, “Through *The Rising Tide* we hope to illustrate an all-encompassing picture of the incredible fight for gender equality within the University, while portraying the fascinating journeys of some militant, cussed and determined women of our institution too.”

Alongside this exhibition, the UL is displaying 27 portraits of women who have shaped the history of Cambridge. These include the current President of the Supreme Court, Baroness Brenda Hale of Richmond, scientist Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell and new Jesus College Master, Sonita Alleyne, the first Black woman to head an Oxbridge college.

► *The Rising Tide* will be on display until March 2020  
(NIK YAZIKOV)



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CYCLE CHAOS
 Mobikes found in unusual locations

An unidentified prankster(s) is responsible for a series of incidents involving Mobikes across Cambridge, with the distinctive orange bikes turning up in strange places. One was found precariously perched in the branches of a tree, while another was discovered balanced on top of a lamp-post on Mill Road. Mobikes can be hired by anyone via an app, then left whenever the user is finished with them. The perpetrator(s) seems to have taken liberties with this concept!

EMU-SING
 ‘Escaped emu’ spotted in field

The roadside sighting last week of an ‘escaped emu’ in Cambridgeshire, running across a field between Stamford and Uffington, prompted a police hunt for the runaway bird. According to later reports, the bird was identified not as an emu but a rhea. Regardless of its species, the bird is proving to be more trouble than it’s probably worth. As of yet, there are no reports of its recapture. Seemingly, this bird is successfully managing to elude the mighty Cambridgeshire authorities.

ART FOR HIRE
 Kettle’s Yard loans paintings to students

Kettle’s Yard Art Gallery, in north Cambridge, near Magdalene Bridge, has been operating a “loan scheme” for Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin students since it opened in 1957. According to the gallery, no artworks lent to students have been lost or damaged in the entire 62-year period. Students can replace posters in their rooms with artwork from the gallery, which lends over 100 paintings annually to students. Each student can hire one or two pieces for £20/year each.

A NOBEL SURPRISE
 Professor misses Nobel Prize call

Professor Didier Queloz was awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize in Physics, along with two other scientists, for the first-ever discovery of an exoplanet in 1995. The Nobel laureate, however, was not expecting to win the award for a discovery made almost 25 years ago, and subsequently missed the phone call telling him that he was, in fact, one of the winners. He was in a scientific meeting with colleagues at the time, and was in “shock” after being informed of the news by a Cambridge press officer.

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## News

# 'You are a racist' Dean condemns racist graffiti discovered in Queens' College toilet

► Continued from front page

students as part of a boycott over escalating racial profiling by King's porters. This boycott is no longer ongoing.

When contacted for comment by *Varsity*, King's said the issue was "a matter of procedure, not discrimination" and that they "categorically deny that the incident referred to was in any way racist."

Earlier this summer an English PhD student quit the University because of "structural racism" she witnessed during her time at Cambridge.

She cited one specifically troubling incident where a non-Black lecturer repeatedly read out the n-word during class discussions.

A recent investigation by *The Guardian* highlighted the scale of racism at British universities. Responses to Freedom of Information requests sent to 131 universities across the UK showed that Cambridge received the highest number of formal complaints (72) regarding experiences of racism during the 2014-15 academic year.

In response, CUSU's BME Campaign explained: "While it may be of surprise to some that Cambridge University came out of this research badly, the findings mirror the experiences of BME students and staff at this institution."

Students at Goldsmiths University recently concluded a 137-day occupation of Deptford town hall, protesting institutional racism at the university, after students persuaded senior staff to implement a programme to improve support for BME students.

Last year, Cambridge sociological researchers created an independent web-based platform called 'End Everyday Racism' which allows members of the University community to anonymously record and report incidents of racial harassment and discrimination.

The platform monitors reports by creating a data set which can be used to demonstrate how racism is experienced at Cambridge.

► Queens' College, where the racist graffiti was discovered last week

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)



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## University funds new scheme to tackle city 'over-tourism'

Marie Langrishe  
News Correspondent

Over-tourism in Cambridge will be addressed through a new Destination Management Plan (DMP), financially supported by the University of Cambridge.

Led by Visit Cambridge and with funding from the University, Cambridge Business Improvement District (BID), Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, the plan aims to relieve the stress on the city caused by high levels of tourism.

One of the new plan's primary targets will be day-trip visitors, many of whom only make a brief stop in the city en route to Oxford, Stratford and York.

Critics argue that visitor management has been historically fragmented and underfunded, resulting in unsustainable levels of tourism. Cambridge is the only member of the English Historic Cities Group, which includes Bath and Oxford, that does not yet have a DMP.

Emma Thornton, CEO of Visit Cambridge and Beyond, has stated: "it's about delivering a plan to manage tourism in a sustainable way, for Cambridge and the immediate surrounding area."

Cambridge City Council has already given an indication of some policies it would like to implement. In September, council leader Cllr Lewis Herbert mooted the idea of a tourist and coach tax, referencing the strain of coaches arriving



▲ King's Parade  
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

“It's about delivering a plan to manage tourism in a sustainable way”

in volume on Queen's Road.

The Council has also said it would like to see regulation of Airbnb rentals. Cambridge is a popular and growing market for these, but concerns about their impact have been raised. Cllr Katie Thornburrow told the *Cambridge Independent* that they can "have a real impact on the local community."

New attempts to curb the negative effects of tourism, however, will have to be reconciled with other plans to attract more people to the city, such as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. One policy, suggested in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Industrial Strategy, published in July, is to develop tourism in market towns and surrounding villages.



# King's Chaplain plans to establish new 'alternative' student church in Cambridge

**Sasi Valaiyapathi & Dylan Perera**  
News Correspondents

The Revd Andrew Hammond, Chaplain of King's College, is working with students to begin HeartsEase, a new student church set to run during term time.

The Chaplain is known for frequently hosting non-traditional worship sessions at King's, such as Heartspace and Critical Mass, and cites his positive experience with these as one of the reasons that HeartsEase was founded.

Critical Mass, described as "radically alternative", is a service where students sit on the floor of King's Chapel, with their worship accompanied by projections, incense and ambient music. Hammond remarks, "After the last Critical Mass session at King's, someone asked me, 'Why isn't there a church that does something like this?'"

During Heartspace, King's students are welcome to wander the Chapel, lie on the floor, or use the space however they wish as part of reflection and prayer. Hammond is trying to carry a similar 'alternative' style over to HeartsEase to

share with students at other colleges, even describing it as "Critical Mass 2.0". He wants people to go away thinking, "This is something new, but not alien."

"These students told me that they had tried some other student churches, and felt there was a certain set of views and ways of thinking about things that they weren't comfortable with, which I would say represents one way of how the Christian faith exists in the world, but I think there are other ways too."

Explaining the name of the church, Hammond says that the 'Hearts' part relates to "the constant interplay between heart and mind". HeartsEase, he says, connects the two, focusing on feelings as well as ideas and beliefs.

"Quite a lot of people who come to talk to me are looking for some kind of 'ease' in their situation, and there is a great deal of 'ill ease' in the human condition." This is what the 'Ease' in the name refers to: "finding ways of bringing people away from feelings of alienation, confusion, disempowerment."

Ideologically, HeartsEase aims to be a church offering "humble hope" as opposed to "assertive certainty". They try



▲ Revd Hammond led non-traditional worship sessions in King's (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

to steer quite clear of dogmatism and of the belief that there is a "straightforward set of discernable rules", instead talking about faith in a way that allows

worshippers to be more "free-thinking". The Chaplain also describes it as "quite progressive" on many key issues, including gender identity.

Students played an important role in inspiring Hammond through conversations, but as well as this will go on to take up a large part of the running of the new church. While there are certain things that "only a priest can do," he encourages students to give testimonies, lead prayers and conduct readings. He also intends to continually listen to them when it comes to their vision for HeartsEase.

Rachel Bourne, a student centrally involved in the founding of HeartsEase, said, "Looking at the Christian communities for students in the centre of Cambridge we felt like there was something missing - a middle ground, that welcomed people from all different Christian traditions, beliefs, levels of doubt, and backgrounds."

"It's a student-led church in that there is a core group of us who want to use our experiences to create a space for this."

For students who are unsure about whether to attend, the Chaplain offered some simple advice: "Just try it."

The first session of HeartsEase will be this Sunday 20 October at 9pm, at Michaelhouse, Trinity Street.

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# CUSU Council votes to support potential staff strikes

Chloe Bayliss  
Senior News Editor

In the first CUSU Council meeting this academic year on Monday, members voted 36 to 3 in favour of supporting the University and College Union (UCU) ballots demanding higher pay and rejecting an increase in pension contributions.

Members of Cambridge UCU are currently being encouraged to vote in favour of industrial action on the two ballots, with voting closing on October 30th.

The CUSU motion cited the “strong student support” for previous strikes in Lent term 2018. CUSU had organised and participated in several rallies in solidarity with striking lecturers at the time.

The motion noted the obligation of the council to university staff who were also students. It stated that many of the issues at stake in the dispute disproportionately affect postgraduate research students, who are CUSU/GU members.

The vote will ensure CUSU and GU lobby the university to meet UCU’s demands, and if the ballots are successful, they will encourage students to avoid crossing picket lines to attend their lectures whilst making “provisions to mitigate the impact of disruption on CUSU members”.

It also allocated £250 of the Council Free Budget to “actions in support of these ballots and industrial action” such as informative flyers and posters.

The vote is in keeping with the Memorandum of Understanding adopted by the CUSU/GU in October 2018, as the council unanimously voted on the agreement to support the interests of UCU. It stated, “staff working conditions are the conditions in which students learn.”

“A university education is a collaborative relationship between staff and students and each benefits from the advancement of the other’s interest.”



In the meeting, debate over the motion revolved around the potential impact on student welfare and the importance of students showing solidarity with striking staff, and an amendment attempting to replace expressing support for the strike with a more pointed focus on ensuring student welfare failed.

A last minute amendment to the motion proposed by CUSU President, Edward Parker Humphreys will also see CUSU promoting UCU reporting mechanisms for “raising concerns about behaviour on picket lines”.

In February of last year, students spoke to *Varsity* about their inner conflicts on whether to cross the picket line, a decision especially difficult for students with certain disabilities, international students paying high tuition fees, and sciences students with many contact hours and mandatory lab sessions. During the Lent 2018 staff strikes, CUSU Council faced criticism for delaying its vote on whether to support calls for Cambridge to refund students for lost lecture hours.

The motion to support refunds to students was eventually defeated in Easter term 2018. The motion which passed on Monday night made no mention of refunds. Other motions passed at the council included a boycott of the Socialist Workers’ Party (SWP) and other policies were renewed such as support for the ‘Stop the Hate’ campaign, the Support the Truth for Giulio Regeni campaign, and opposition to changes to the Universal bus route.

▲ CUSU Offices (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

## Varsity’s alternative Michaelmas termcard

*From fireworks to cheese, some of the best (free) events in Cambridge this term*

By Chloe Bayliss & Molly Killeen

Week Two	Lee Hall, Wolfson College - October 23rd, 6pm
How do democracies change?	In a time of Brexit, the question ‘is it possible to reinvent how politics is done’ is more relevant than ever. Professor David Runciman will discuss how we can change democracy without undermining it.
Week Three	Peterhouse Parlour - October 24th, 8:30pm
Documenting Slaughter: War Photography in Syria and Libya	Conroy was a photojournalist with Marie Colvin in Libya and Syria, but when a rocket killed Colvin and injured Conroy, he had to escape. Now a prominent campaigner working to expose war crimes in Syria, his talk is not one to miss.
Week Four	Midsummer Common - November 5th, 6pm
Cambridge Live: fireworks and bonfire night	The annual free fireworks display will return to the skies of Cambridge this year, hosted by the city Council with BBC Cambridgeshire presenter Jeremy Sallis as compere.
Week Five	Heffers - November 12th, 6:30pm
A Cheesemonger’s History of the British Isles	“Every cheese tells a story...and each style of cheese reflects the culture of the people who first made it, and their place in history”. There’s nothing like Ned Palmer talking about fromage to cure the week five blue (cheese).
Week Six	Frankopan Hall, Jesus - November 19th, 7:30pm
British Politics in Turmoil	Miranda Green, deputy opinion editor and a regular columnist at the <i>Financial Times</i> visits Cambridge to discuss her journalistic work and the current UK political landscape.
Week Seven	University Library - November 26th, 7:30pm
Love From, Women, Library Late	As part of their new exhibition, the UL has an evening of “live DJs, spoken word performances and an interactive art installation” exploring experiences of women and non-binary people at Cambridge.
Week Eight	Wolfson - November 25th, 6pm
The Nutrition and Cancer Journey	If you haven’t had enough learning by week eight, Professor Elio Riboli of Imperial College London’s talk will explore how important metabolic factors are in looking after our bodies.

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# Cambridge launches first ever ‘Street Aid’ week

Grace Lozinski  
News Correspondent

This week has seen more contactless giving points established across Cambridge as part of the first ever Street Aid week. The money will go to Cambridge Street Aid who hope to raise £2,500 over the course of the week to support 10 people who face uncertainty in their housing.

The charity operates by raising a fund that people can access by applying for grants, and by tapping their credit/debit cards or using their phones, people can donate £3 to this central fund.

Cambridge now has 14 of these contactless donation points, with 8 new ones installed this week. They can be found at Co-op stores such as the one on Histon Road, outside St. Paul’s Church, at the Grand Arcade shopping centre and in the reception of the Guildhall.

In conjunction with the new donation points, various events also took place in Cambridge as part of Street Aid week to raise awareness of homelessness. These included information stalls in Grand Arcade shopping centre and outside the Guildhall.

Commenting on the new Street Aid initiative a representative of the student group Cambridge Homeless Outreach



▲ Cambridge now has 14 contactless points across the city (LUCAS CHEBIB)

Programme (CHOP) said, “Street Aid forms part of ‘broader service’ of homelessness help in Cambridge.”

They encouraged students to “recognise and interact with homeless individuals as individuals...”, citing one of the main causes of homelessness as

“social isolation”.

CHOP also suggested that students can help by volunteering with local charities as they are “experts at dealing with homelessness,” an example being weekly pop up cafes at Wintercomfort where students can volunteer.

“We understand that everyone is different and that what will help people turn a corner in their lives is different”

Since its inception in 2016, Street Aid has given 250 people grants totalling more than £66,000, according to statistics from Cambridge City Council. They are given to individuals who are currently homeless or have been homeless and must go towards something that would assist the individual in staying off the streets.

The individual must also be referred by an organisation that has already assessed their personal circumstances and can confirm that they need financial assistance which is unavailable elsewhere.

The council say that ‘every single penny’ given to Street Aid goes ‘directly’ to grants for individuals.

However, some are critical of the new initiative. One regular volunteer at homeless charities who wishes to remain anonymous said, “there is a

fundamental problem with StreetAid which is that it was set up to stop the public from giving money [directly] to the homeless.”

“Any ‘awareness raising’ going on this Week will probably only increase the stigma associated with being homeless - increasing the idea that all homeless people have a substance abuse problem.”

They also criticised the scheme for creating an “administrative stigma”.

“Homeless individuals need to apply to get a grant. Yet I think this is disturbing as it is a council project. This fits into a broader trend of austerity where benefits are given to claimants not based on need but based on merit.”

In response, Cambridge Street Aid said, “we do not seek to stigmatise people on the streets - quite the opposite. We understand that everyone is different and that what will help people turn a corner in their lives is different.”

“We are an alternative to giving money directly to people on the streets, but we don’t tell people what to do with their money. We have given grants to over 250 people... to help them cover housing costs, find work and improve their mental and physical wellbeing. We don’t look for ‘merit’ from our applicants... if they meet our criteria they can get a grant from us.”

# Inside King’s College’s graduate accommodation chaos

Alycia Gaunt  
News Correspondent

Graduates at King’s College have faced significant disruptions and misinformation regarding their accommodation for this year. In addition to a last-minute revision of college bills, students have been allocated rooms outside of their requested price brackets, at a greater cost.

Due to oversubscription of the cheapest bands, students were instead randomly allocated across the bands. Accommodation at King’s is organised into six rent bands, with Band 1 offering the cheapest rent at £1540.18 per quarter, and Band 6 at £2327.53 per quarter. Incoming graduates were given the option of opting into one of these price bands, according to their individual needs.

One King’s Graduate who wishes to remain anonymous told Varsity that the only control they had in choosing accommodation was the option to request the cheapest band available. “However,” they continued, “as many students opted [for the cheapest room], they randomly allocated more expensive bands.”

“Effectively, we were given no option whatsoever.”

Some of those allocated the more expensive Band 6 accommodation then discovered the accommodation they were paying for was not built yet. Garden Hostel on West Road “is still unfinished, so many of us are living in Wolfson Court (St. John’s overflow accommodation).”

They added, “The wifi at [Wolfson] Court was non-functional when we arrived.”

“In addition to a last-minute revision of college bills, students have been allocated rooms outside of their requested price brackets”



rived.”

Online information about when Garden Hostel will be completed is sparse, but is detailed on the college website as open to students from Autumn 2019. Another King’s graduate, said that the college had given December as the month residents would be able to move, but official information has remained vague.

▲ King’s grads have faced last-minute changes to their accommodation and bills (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Moreover, Wolfson Court accommodation has been described as inadequate for the prices students are being required to pay.

In addition, issues with payment have been ongoing. On October 11th, after college bills were issued to all members of King’s, an email sent from the accommodation officer detailed an added Kitchen Fixed Charge of roughly

£160 to £200 which one graduate said had not been mentioned in the originally quoted rent on their licence agreements.

The email said, “If you are a new student, I am afraid the figure quoted in your welcome letter did not include the Kitchen Fixed Charge or Insurance, as this new charging system had not yet been finalised.” “Therefore the amount outlined in your bill will be higher”.

Despite the college acknowledging the mistake of their omission (claiming that the new charging system had not been finalised), another anonymous King’s source stated, “they only told us about the increase after being asked by students about the rent situation.”

“Otherwise, they probably wouldn’t have told us and we would have been charged more, I guess.”

King’s College was approached for comment but as of yet have not responded. However, the Graduate Admissions Service website states that, “Although many full-time graduates are housed by their Colleges...few Colleges can house all their student members.”

This comes at a time of significantly rising prices of student housing across the UK. Data collected by the National Union of Students has demonstrated that rents accounted for 73% of the maximum student loan last year, compared with 58% in 2011-12.

Rent Strike campaigns, notably beginning in London universities during 2016/17, have held Cut The Rent strikes across UK universities. On Wednesday, students at Murray Edwards organised a banner drop in protest of rent prices at the college.



# Features

## My schizophrenia diagnosis is my greatest secret

An *anonymous student* shares their experience of living with schizophrenia

*Content note: this article contains detailed discussion of schizophrenia*

I first met The Woman one night after turning the lights off and laying down in bed. She stood by me and gave her order: “come”. There are relatively few things I’ve been certain of in my life, but at that moment, I knew that two things were absolutely true. Firstly, that if I followed her, I would die, and secondly, that if I refused, I would die. So I laid very still, closed my eyes, and pretended to be asleep. Perhaps I was just tired, or perhaps I was hallucinating or dreaming.

In the days and months that followed, however, my life was put at risk in ever more bizarre ways that became increasingly difficult to rationalise.

Walking at dusk, I realised I had too many shadows and that at least one of them must be an impostor, drinking from my soul the way a leech saps blood from its prey. Perhaps it was just my anxiety playing tricks on me, but I avoided streetlights anyway, just to be safe.

When choosing a new colour to paint my bedroom walls, I knew that white was the only option. Any other colour would be too loud and would let signals pass through my walls, so that I could be spied on or brainwashed. I closed myself off in my unventilated room and painted for three days, making sure the coats were even and impenetrable. Perhaps the paint fumes in that confined space had messed with my head – my illogical thought processes felt logical at the time, and my newly white walls made me feel safe.

Hushed voices whispered to me constantly, sometimes to narrate my actions and other times to simply repeat nonsense. One voice in particular, Victor, rose above the rest. Victor became my personal companion and a link to a world of demons. He stayed as a shifting mass of lines in the corner of my eye. Looking at him directly would

“Universities will throw options for support at your feet and leave you with the burden of sifting through them”

mean death.

It was not surprising to be diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of 18. The five so-called characteristic symptoms of psychotic disorders are delusions, hallucinations, disorganised speech, grossly disorganised or catatonic behaviour, and ‘negative symptoms’ such as a flattening of emotions. I satisfied between four and five of those symptoms, depending on how they’re assessed. Only two are required for diagnosis.

For the longest time, I lived in staunch denial of my diagnosis. I was led to believe that people with schizophrenia are crazy, dangerous, and violent. Schizophrenics drop out of university, never to complete their degrees. Schizophrenics are unable to care for themselves and must be kept in institutions or group homes. Schizophrenics do not have friends or romantic partners. As someone who is peaceable, university-educated, and living independently with an active social life, I do not fit this image.

This apparent contradiction hindered not only my own acceptance of the diagnosis, but also the treatment and accommodation of it.

“For the longest time, I lived in staunch denial of my diagnosis”

In the eyes of many GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, and university advisors, all schizophrenic patients are unable to lead autonomous lives. As a result, their advice is often aimed towards helping patients live in the relative comfort of supportive communities. They can help their patients learn basic work-readiness skills so that they can transition to living with others with the aid of a carer.

Such programmes are exceptionally valuable to those who need them, but they are also limiting: anyone who successfully reaches this stage of so-called self-reliance and then progresses on to further independence will find themselves cut adrift in a society which works against them. There is effectively no guidance and no one who can provide advice for those of us who are considered “high-functioning” schizophrenics.

I realised shortly after entering therapy that my psychologist and psychiatrist did not have my best interests at heart. Unable to accept the contradiction between my diagnosis and abilities, they unanimously suggested that I take heavy doses of strong anti-psychotic





# Features

medication, drop out of university, and move into a group home. Some variation of this suggestion was repeated on a weekly basis for four years, despite my protests and multiple changes to my mental health team.

I am ashamed to admit that at times I strongly considered taking their advice and broke down when told that I would never be hired by anyone if they discovered my condition and that I could *obviously* never have a career in academia.

I was forced to accept that my mental health team could not meaningfully support me, and that I would have to pay over £100 a week for advice and medication I would immediately discard in order to avoid being sanctioned.

The threat of involuntary hospitalisation was weaponised against me, and any complaint about my situation or the stress of university would be met with the refrain of: “well if it’s so bad, I’ll call a crisis assessment and treatment team and they can put you in the hospital.” I stopped complaining. I was *fine*, university was *fine*. Yes, the voices are still there but they’re *fine* too, and no, there’s no need to worry, and no need to lock me away.

University officials have been more sympathetic, but like many others, they lack understanding of high-functioning schizophrenia, placing the burden on me. Answering a simple question such as “what support do you need from the

“  
*I cannot trust that others will be able or willing to help me during times of need*  
”

university?” is an insurmountable challenge when your psychologist and GP have failed to help you explore your limitations and find methods of coping.

What support do I need? Well, I cannot trust that others will be able or willing to help me during times of need, so I can only ask for flexibility in order to help myself however I see fit at the time. However, the ambiguity of this request only raises more questions: what accommodations do you need for meetings and lectures? What about office spaces? And living arrangements? And food? What should we do if there’s a crisis? “I don’t know” isn’t an acceptable answer, and “leave me alone” doesn’t satisfy many either.

With no one to guide them on what basic support would be helpful, universities will throw options at your feet and leave you with the burden of sifting through them all, trying to decide for yourself whether you’re *really* ill enough to need rest breaks during exams, or if you *really* need someone to take your notes for you in lectures. Take too few accommodations and you may struggle to cope, but take too many and you will feel guilty for taking advantage of the system, even if unintentionally.

By far the thorniest issue with living with high-functioning schizophrenia is to do with disclosure. Who should be made aware of my condition, and how much should they know?

My undergraduate university decided that my diagnosis would not be disclosed to staff, who would only

“  
*I decided that they had forfeited any right to know about my personal life*  
”

be told vague details of the study accommodations I had been granted. My professors were free to make their own assumptions and guesses as to what my condition was, and I was safe in the knowledge that nothing they guessed could ever be as damning as the truth.

During those years, only two teaching staff were ever told about my condition. I bided my time for three years and worked on forming a good impression before I said the word “schizophrenia” to two academics I knew and trusted.

At Cambridge, the arrangement was similar, albeit slightly expanded so that more people were told about my diagnosis and the specifics of it. I can only hope that this will not destroy my career as my psychologist warned me all those years ago.

I initially opted not to tell my friends out of fear. I didn’t know what to say, or when and how to bring it up in conversation. While waiting for the right moment to say something, I heard them make disparaging comments about known schizophrenics on the news, and watched as they speculated that anyone who did violent things was psychotic.

I sat silently as they made jokes about school shooters and schizophrenia, hoping that their new office building wouldn’t be open-plan so that “crazy people like that can’t shoot the place up so easily.” They made these comments while unaware that they were talking about me, and I decided that they had forfeited any right to know about my

personal life.

When they later demanded to know why I was awarded extra time on my exams (just the “right moment” I had wished for earlier), I told them I had anxiety.

Schizophrenia is my greatest secret. Early on, I felt incredibly guilty that others with conditions such as depression were taking to social media to wear their condition with pride and battle the stigma associated with mental illness. I will not join this battle, and neither will most others in my position. The stigma associated with schizophrenia is both real and extreme, and I cannot suggest in good faith to another schizophrenic that they make their condition public, knowing that doing so would likely destroy their life.

We live together in society as your friends, family members, and neighbours, but most of us will never disclose our condition to you.

For those already struggling to get by and make a life for themselves, the expectation of disclosure is an unfair burden often placed on them by those who do not stand to suffer any consequences from that disclosure. I will not set myself on fire so that you may feel warm and fuzzy by the flames.

The decision to disclose a hidden disability may be admirable, but it is a choice that someone must make of their own accord. As with sexuality and gender, not everyone is free to ‘come out’ as disabled, and we must respect everyone’s right to this choice.

◀ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

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## Features

# When self-care becomes self-sabotage

*Olivia Emily discusses how 'treating yourself' can come back to haunt you*

**T**'reat yourself' is a phrase I became very well-acquainted with during my first year at university. Having thousands of pounds in my bank account for the first time in my life appealed to the hedonist in me, the Rebecca Bloomwood shopaholic that had never had the funds to truly blossom. So I got into the habit of buying myself presents at the end of stressful weeks or emotionally-draining conversations with my college counsellor: new trainers to facilitate the spring I wanted in my step; take-aways so I wouldn't have to face the cafeteria; jeans that didn't really fit right and I'd donate out of guilt just a few weeks later.

'It's self-care,' I told my friends as a way of justification if they ever commented on my new purchases. They only laughed in response, the whole concept of 'treating oneself' still somewhat of a meme. The feeling of spending money — getting something new, receiving the perfect gift (even if it's from me to myself) — is unparalleled. I can look in the mirror and like what I see, even if I am just seeing a new dress and not actually seeing myself. But, in my experience, this 'treat yourself' configuration of 'self-care' is as superficial as a plaster



*"I had run out of boxes that I wanted to squeeze myself in"*

when it comes to healing wounds, and it's where 'self-care' starts morphing into self-sabotage. By spending money instead of addressing my problems, I never truly had to face them, meaning I also never dealt with them or found ways to get better.

I've also historically fallen into borderline-destructive 'self-care' habits, like skipping out on social events because I was feeling low, or switching off my

▲ Illustration by Bella Biddle for Varsity

phone because it was making me anxious. While these things do serve as temporary support — and it's good to learn to enjoy your own company — there's a difference between the odd self-care evening alone and isolating yourself. As painful as it sometimes initially was to go to those social events, isolating myself from people who care about me meant I never allowed myself to be helped. It's got a lot to do with self-worth — realising that I'm worthy of other people's time and care is one of the first steps I took in recovery, even if, initially, that only meant talking to my Tutorial Advisor about how I was feeling.

Summers have always been periods of regeneration for me: It's when I start having skin routines again, find a new style, and write endless lists of goals in journals. That is an example of modern self-care — the self-care I've always bought into. But it's damaging to perpetuate the idea that finding new ways to change yourself is equivalent to loving yourself.

This summer, I realised that I'd run out of boxes I wanted to squeeze myself in. How could I be caring for or loving myself if the whole act of 'self-care' involved changing who I had just been for a year? Instead, my self-care has finally morphed into something more constructive: listening to what my mind is telling me, and finding healthier ways to care for myself that didn't somehow involve simultaneously tearing myself down. I wanted to focus on true 'self-care' and building a sense of self-worth to go with it.

'Self-care' is tricky territory to navigate, because it's closely-related to self-love — which still seems a bit bizarre to me in the context of British modesty and self-deprecating humour. I've been trying to check my over-modesty: for example, I now try to say 'thank you' instead of 'sorry' — 'Thank you for bearing with me' instead of 'Sorry I'm such a mess' — or accepting compliments outright rather than deflecting them.

The best forms of self-care are often as simple as changing those small habits, or even just getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising, socialising, and acknowledging how you feel.

The hustle and bustle of a Cambridge term can make even the simplest of things seem difficult, sometimes, so I'm using summer to get into good habits that I'll hopefully be able to transfer to the academic term in Michaelmas. For example, I've found that writing my thoughts down — without worrying about how neat it is, or if it makes sense, or what if someone reads it — helps me to process them.

Until then, the Long Vacation is also the perfect time to get some headspace and reconnect with myself and my needs. Phrases like 'treat yourself' taught me that buying myself things or indulging in an evening alone would make me feel better. Though this is good for short-term relief, the ephemeral joy and relief of spending money can only ever briefly mask the pain and stress I feel; it cannot deal with it properly. True self-care is realising that a new pair of jeans maybe isn't the answer right now.

## Britain's colonial past is alive in our present

*Inaya Mohmood reflects on the enduring legacies of British colonialism in her latest column*

**I**t's so easy for people to say that the past is the past and that we should move on and live solely in the present. For people of colour like myself, this is easier said than done. So many aspects of our identities have been and continue to be constructed by the past. British history, but more specifically its history as a colonising and imperialist power, continues to shape the interactions we have and witness. When so much of your place in this world has already been decided by events of the past, it's not long before you begin to question how in control you are of your future.

Examples of the continuing effects of colonialism on the everyday lives of people of colour aren't always as obvious as people using racist slurs or openly discriminating against us based on our skin colour. Instead, there are much more subtle examples of interactions where race isn't explicitly acknowledged but the power dynamic between white people and people of colour is still firmly in place. An example of this dates back to a couple of years ago, when I was at my grandparents' house.

They had called the plumber in and my grandfather, who would've been around 70 at this point, kept referring to the young white man as 'sir.' Perhaps to some people this means nothing, and is just an example of his impeccable manners. But I know that in some way my grandfather, a man whose parents lived through the British colonisation of the Indian subcontinent and who was himself born during the time of Partition, has somehow internalised the colonial ideologies of the past. They had instilled in him the racial hierarchies of colonialism, and for that reason he believed that in this situation he had a duty to display respect. Whether conscious or not, the power dynamics of the past were affecting the interactions he was having today.

The remnants of the power dynamics instilled by colonialism have also meant that there's this universal idea that people of colour have to always be more accommodating during our interactions with white people. There are a lot of everyday examples of this: for instance, when walking on the same pavement, people of colour are expected to move aside to let white people pass. It's not as explicit as 'There comes a white person. Now we have to move.' It's instead a subconscious reaction to internalised racial power dynamics that have existed unchallenged in British society for decades.

The same expectation for us to be accommodating is seen when people of colour are asked to make their names



▲ Illustration by Alisa Santikarn for Varsity

easier to pronounce or instead to adopt a 'white name'. Take my mother for example. Her birth name is Rakusana but during her entire adult life she's been called 'Roxy.' It's not a difficult name to pronounce, but again, the historically unequal balance of power between people of colour and white people has meant that my mother felt obliged to accommodate British society's cultural illiteracy and go by a name that her parents did not choose and also has zero religious or cultural significance for her.

Beauty standards are another aspect of life that has once again been twisted

*"I've spent so much of my life feeling insecure about the features that I have inherited"*

to exclude people of colour and our own racial features. Small noses are preferred to big ones, straight hair over curly hair, and of course light skin over dark skin. The beauty industry is so Eurocentric that it feeds into the colonial mind set of racial hierarchies and physical differences as determinants of an individual's worth. I've spent so much of my life feeling insecure about the features that I have inherited as a Pakistani woman, that I never questioned who set these 'standards' in the first place.

Maybe I'm wrong for spending so much time thinking about events that happened decades ago, and maybe people are right when they say that I'd be so much happier if I 'got over it' and 'moved on.' But I still feel very deeply the suffering of my ancestors during times like the Partition, and I often feel helpless, since I obviously can't undo what's happened in the past.

We live in a society that refuses to acknowledge the mistakes of the past, and would rather they be kept as a secret shame, never to be spoken about. I'd like to live in a society that recognises how its colonial history continues to shape the experiences of people of colour today, a society that actively works to undo some of these imbalanced power dynamics. A society where my grandfather recognises that, at the age of 70, and having lived through the Partition and worked in Britain for decades, simultaneously providing for his family both here and in Pakistan, it is *him* who deserves to be called 'sir.'



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## Features

# When it's week 3 of term and you can't get out of bed

Don't worry if Cambridge doesn't instantly turn out to be your favourite place in the world, writes

**Laura Lenkiewicz**

*Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of mental health, including depression, substance abuse, and hysteria*

I first arrived at Cambridge on a sunny day in September, just as summer was slowly turning into autumn. The River Cam was glistening, and the narrow streets of the city centre seemed both quaint and charming.

Later in my first term I would be lying down under the trees with my headphones in my ears, desperately trying to silence the throbbing pain in my head and to escape the suffocation of the city centre.

My mother said that Clare looked like a palace, and my dad took a photo of my name painted on the board in front of Staircase X. They were so proud of me, and in that moment, for the first time in my life, I was proud of myself.

I also felt emotionally stable for the first time in a while: I had a support network of friends scattered all over Poland; a boyfriend with whom I was trying out a long-distance relationship; and family who were always eager to chat on the phone or visit me if I needed them to.

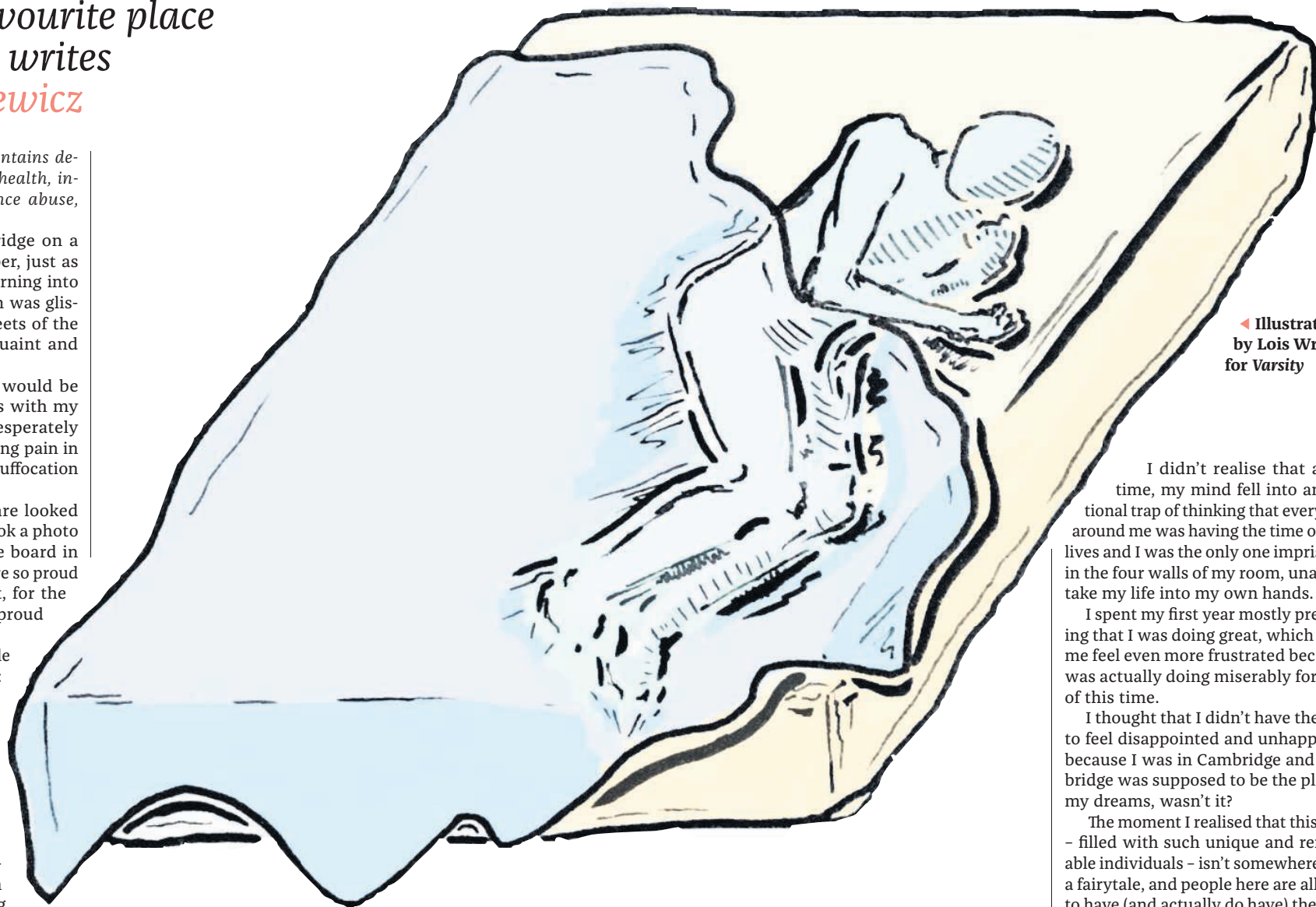
But Poland was still almost 1,000 miles away from England. Instead of helping me feel closer to them, frequent video calls with my family and friends made me feel even more isolated.

I felt that my friends and family were having the times of their lives back in Poland while I was stuck in England. I felt torn apart between the two countries, and I was enjoying myself in neither of them.

And then came my third evening at Cambridge, my first hysteria in my tiny, bleak room. I would later get used to these attacks. My neighbours probably would too.

During my first weekend at Cambridge I came to the conclusion that I would stay in my room and study because I didn't have any friends (though of course, looking back, no one did at that point). During my first year I would spend as many as four consecutive days without talking to anyone.

In the third week of Michaelmas, I woke up on time but, still tired, I went back to sleep and skipped my classes for the first time. I spent my day in bed, reading about five pages of a book I can't remember, and wasted the rest of the



◀ Illustration by Lois Wright for Varsity

“During my first year, I would spend as many as four consecutive days without talking to anyone”

day watching videos on YouTube.

The rest of Michaelmas passed by in a blur of cheap wine and cigarette smoke. I don't remember how many weekend nights I spent on my bathroom floor, my cheek glued to the toilet seat. In fact, I don't remember much from those nights at all, except maybe for the odour of wine, which makes me sick even now.

Over the Christmas break, I promised myself that I would go to the university counselling service the moment I arrived back in Cambridge. I promised myself that I would be the best and the strongest version of myself because I believed that was what I should be aiming for. I wanted to be myself again, to stop feeling so disconnected from everything that was happening around me, to be able to go out with friends and not have to leave early because of my anxiety creeping into every moment of the evening.

But I didn't go to the counselling service in Lent term. I only went there in the second week of Easter term, when I was so numbed by my repetitive spells of hysteria and despair that even the

embarrassment I felt when admitting that I wasn't doing fine didn't seem to matter anymore.

I don't have any sympathy for my former self anymore, nor do I blame others for not answering the phone when I needed them, for being too busy with their own problems, or for using my vulnerability at the time to fill the void they felt.

But I do blame myself for not deciding to talk to a lovely girl who knocked at my door when she heard me cry, or for staying in my room whenever a bigger group from my floor was going out. I blame myself for postponing my visit to the counselling service until the moment I felt that nothing exciting would ever happen again in my life, and nothing on this Earth would ever interest me.

Contrary to how it might seem when you arrive at Cambridge, very few people know what they are doing. The vast majority feel lost and need others almost as much as you do, and are as stressed and anxious about finding new friends as you.

“My mind fell into an irrational trap of thinking that everybody around me was having the time of their lives”

I didn't realise that at the time, my mind fell into an irrational trap of thinking that everybody around me was having the time of their lives and I was the only one imprisoned in the four walls of my room, unable to take my life into my own hands.

I spent my first year mostly pretending that I was doing great, which made me feel even more frustrated because I was actually doing miserably for most of this time.

I thought that I didn't have the right to feel disappointed and unhappy just because I was in Cambridge and Cambridge was supposed to be the place of my dreams, wasn't it?

The moment I realised that this place – filled with such unique and remarkable individuals – isn't somewhere from a fairytale, and people here are allowed to have (and actually do have) the same problems as everybody else, I started to feel better.

Cambridge hasn't met any of my expectations but as soon as I stopped expecting anything from it and stopped pressuring myself to feel constantly happy and fulfilled, I started enjoying my time here.

For most students, just like for me, Cambridge won't instantly become the best place in the world, contrary to the glossy version of university life you hear about during Freshers' Week and in university prospectuses. But the time you spend here has the potential to be one of the most valuable and remarkable times of your life.

Don't let perfectionism ruin this unique time. Don't let your stubbornness and desperation to pretend that you're someone you're not leave you isolated and unhappy.

You haven't come to Cambridge to just get through your degree, you've come here to get out of your room, to embrace the weirdness of this place and all of its people, no matter how unprepared you feel.



# Staying afloat: My first few days at Cambridge

Columnist **Henry Lloyd-Hughes** thinks back on his first week at university

Coming to Cambridge, I had a lot of preconceptions about what it would be like. A place full of posh, rich, public school students – the stereotypical Cambridge, where there's absolutely no place for a northern lad from a state-comprehensive in Sheffield.

But having just finished my first week in this strange environment, I've found that it's not the people I've met that have made me feel out of place, but the pace of life here that has left me out of breath (quite literally).

My time in Cambridge so far has been dominated by a frenzy of freshers' events, from fairs to fun-runs, before being dropped, with no lifeline, into the choppy waters of lectures.

I feel as if I'm playing a game of constant catch-up, that there's always something else that needs doing, arranging, or handing in. I have always been prepared to work hard, and thought that, by making it to Cambridge, I would prove that to myself. But my first week here has made me question where I stand, or if I stand at all.

I feel as if I'm merely treading water in an attempt to stay afloat. Yet, I find some solace in that I don't feel like I'm drowning – not yet, at least. Yes, it's very intense, the workload is already demanding, and I don't think I'll ever get used to actually living here, but the fact is that I've been here for a week and survived. I find in this a sense of accomplishment and achievement, and a feeling that I'm challenging myself academically, socially, and even physically.

I've realised that all aspects of Cambridge are intense. This was after I was innocently coerced into what was advertised as a freshers' five-kilometre *fun-run*, 'open to all.' I enjoy going running every now and then, so I thought, sure, why not. Little did I know what I was getting myself in to.

The first red flag was upon arrival, when I had to register and was given a number. Now, I study History so I don't claim to be a genius with numbers, but I was pretty sure being given a number meant that there was some sort of ranking system in place. The next warning sign was the fact that everybody was stretching, in ways that I had imagined only professional gymnasts could, not your average jogger like me. Then there was the apparel: the start line was a sea of light blue



▲ Amid all the excitement of freshers' week, it's easy to forget that it's also a week of big changes (ROSIE BRADBURY)

“I don't think I'll ever get used to actually living here”

university kit.

I thought I had missed the memo to bring proper sportswear before realising they're obviously club runners – professional athletes, by my standards. When the *fun-run* started, it was clear that I was pretty off the pace, and completely out of my depth.

Nonetheless, I endured and, in all honesty, enjoyed the brutal 5000 metres, clocking in what I thought was a respectable time of 19 minutes and 46 seconds. I attribute this to the competitiveness I possess, which I guess is a trait Cambridge cultivates by fostering an atmosphere where only the fittest can survive (literally).

This sense of overwhelming breathlessness has been reinforced by the intense academic rigour of Cambridge. I know, it's *Cambridge*, supposedly one of the best universities in the world. It's to be expected. But speaking individually with an academic is still something that's utterly alien to me.

Going from classes of 20 or more

“There is a pressure to perform the role of the perfect student”

students in sixth form to one-on-one supervisions is hard to adjust to; I'm intellectually exposed, with nowhere to hide.

As I can't run or hide, this feeling of vulnerability comes to the forefront. There is a pressure to perform the role of the perfect student in this place, to uphold its tradition of excellence, which is something I'm constantly reminded of whenever I wake up in the shadow of King's College Chapel.

My initial reaction to this breathtaking example of late Gothic architecture was how small it made me feel – so obsolete, so unimportant. Yet now I see it as an expectation, something to live up to, a feat of awe-inspiring greatness to which I'm meant to rival.

The comforting and attainable aspirations of my classmates from state school, and the lives of my mates who have honest jobs back home, are the only things overshadowed or hidden. Having been accepted into Cambridge, they see me as 'too smart' for them,

which is difficult to grapple with when I don't feel at all good enough to be here.

Paradoxically, it's when I close my door and escape the relentless academic interrogation of the lecture halls and supervision rooms that I feel the most vulnerable, and the pressure feels the most emotionally intense.

I think it's easy to forget that, with everything else that's been going on, it's been a week of the biggest changes in my life, including living away from home. Something that has been diluted by an endless flood of events. Something that needs time to permeate. Something that surely affects everyone.

As the 'weekend' comes to a close, there is an emotion that is a byproduct of this never-ending intensity: tiredness. The constant work has depleted my energy, although, in fairness, it's also probably because of all those freshers' club nights, not to mention that bloody run.



# Opinion



## Environmental activism has a class problem

Extinction Rebellion stalled London's Jubilee Line early Thursday morning, delaying commuters and placing those with least job security at the most risk

Phoebe Bunt

**E**xtinguishment Rebellion (XR), one of the UK's highest profile environmental protest movements, is something Cambridge students have and might be expected to get behind. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, it has been labelled a "white middle-class ghetto," a hobby for those who can afford to be arrested for civil disobedience in the name of climate catastrophe.

Indeed, it is undeniable that the movement's image and tactics alienate minority groups. Just yesterday morning, protestors with Extinction Rebellion stalled the London Underground's Jubilee Line, delaying commuters during morning rush hour. The protest placed those with the least job security at the most risk for retribution.

A major part of XR's campaign strategy is to 'sacrifice' activists to arrest, with the confidence that the judicial system will be on their side.

In May, an open letter published by 'The Wretched of the Earth' challenged XR to reconsider its principal strategy, one that many black activists feel they cannot adopt. The risk of being discriminated against and criminalised by the police and law bars them from partici-

pation. Meanwhile, white activists can use their privilege to gain attention for the green movement.

Inclusivity and diversity must be paramount to environmental movements to showcase their total rejection of capitalism, racism, sexism and classism – the root causes of climate change. It is concerning that such a recognised climate movement, XR, does not appeal to the communities – migrants, minorities, amongst others – who may be hit the hardest by environmental degradation. Excluding them from mainstream protests blocks the climate justice goal of activism.

True, it is rich elites and corporations who have driven the planet beyond the critical 1.5°C warming threshold, via their exploitation of the world's natural resources. Environmental issues are fundamentally class, as well as race issues.

The trend of sustainable living has become a mainly middle-class preoccupation: parading expensive, reusable Chilly's bottles and plant-based, beeswax wrapped lunches, and marching in London at the weekend. This is all well and good – the middle-class can spare the time, thought and money to

▲ Extinction Rebellion protesters in London  
(ALEXANDER SAVIN/FLICKR)

“White, middle-class activists are placed at the forefront of climate campaigns”

be ethical consumers.

For others, it is not as easy to make such lifestyle changes in the name of environmentalism concerns when they may be living paycheck to paycheck. It is easier for the white middle classes to perform environmental consciousness.

“Broadening the base of the environmental movement is imperative in addressing equality and sustainability issues simultaneously.”

The tendency of the global media to single out white, middle-class activists as ‘trend-setters’ is a limited and white, western-centric view.

For example, the ‘white saviour’ narrative positions white, middle-class activists at the forefront of climate campaigns, like Greta Thunberg. She is a driven, passionate young individual, but undoubtedly privileged: born in a wealthy country to a middle-class family who can afford to support her endeavours.

Frustratingly, it took Greta Thunberg for the United Nations to organise the first youth climate summit. The names of others, who began their public activism long before, are erased by western media: Ridhima Pandley, displaced by

the Uttarakhand floods of 2013, filed a lawsuit against the Indian government for failure to take action against climate change at just nine years old; Aditya Mukarji launched a campaign in March 2018 against use of plastic straws in New Delhi. Those who are most affected by climate change should not be pushed to the edge of conservation efforts; after all, more than 90% of pollution-related deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. As environment and class gradients overlap, social exclusion and health degradation must be addressed simultaneously to achieve a global and inclusive environmental movement.

To remove the stigma of a middle-class climate protest movement, the best thing western media can do is highlight the contributions of local projects and ‘in-situ’ efforts to mitigate real and immediate challenges of climate change.

Scrutinising the mainstream narrative surrounding the environmental movement is imperative in addressing equality and sustainability issues simultaneously. In a climate emergency, the opportunity is there to advance an equitable, habitable planet for all.



# Everyone should learn a second language

**Olivia Halsall**

*Brits should look to the multilingualism of other countries as examples to strive toward. In 2019, 'being bad at languages' isn't an excuse not to try to learn*

“But you're British.” In a quaint hostel in Xiamen, a coastal city dubbed the “Mansion Gate” of China, I've been helping two new French arrivals translate their needs into Chinese Mandarin.

The lack of English language between both parties has been making the process difficult, and it would be cruel not to step in and help. Caught in the act, a passing German soon discovers I'm British only to astutely declare that he's never met a multilingual Brit.

Wanting to refute his seemingly absurd claim, instead I find myself reddening in shame. My parents, and most of my British friends, are monolingual. Their abridged reason is that where English is the world's *lingua franca*, so on the outset there seems no urgent need to learn any additional languages.

The age-old maxim confessed when a Brit is expressing remorse at their poor language skills is conventionally, “but I'm so bad at languages!” As a nation, we do not have the plethora of multilingual exposure and resources that many others take for granted. In 2019, this should no longer be an excuse.

Had I been brought up in Switzerland, I would have grown up surrounded by German, French, Italian, Romansh (and English). Had I been born Chinese, I would have spoken a provincial dialect at home and Chinese Mandarin at school.

Like many countries around the world, had I not been born British, I'd have been pushed to learn English fluently before completing my secondary education. Brits shouldn't look to these nations in awe; the linguistic vibrancy in other countries is simply a way of life, and multilingualism the norm.

The latest data from the European Commission, from 2016, reveals that the percentage of the population aged 25-64 reporting knowing one or more foreign language in the U.K. stands at 34.6%. This statistic rises to 60.1% in France, 78.7% in Germany, and a staggering 96.6% in Sweden. The average across the European Union is 64.6%, which sets us in the U.K. apart not only linguistically, but culturally. The U.K. is staggeringly far behind.

To make matters worse, a 2018 survey report by the British Council on language trends found that “just over a third (34%) of state secondary schools report that leaving the European Union is having a negative impact on language learning, either through student motivation and/or parental attitudes towards the subject”. And yet, in the aftermath of Brexit, there has never been a better time for the U.K. to plunge itself into foreign language learning.

Everyone's account of learning for-



▲ “Spending time in a country that speaks your target language is, in my view, compulsory” (@ELEVATE)

eign languages is unique. I started Chinese Mandarin *ab initio* for my undergraduate degree, alongside maintaining French. I'm hoping to pick up Spanish this year, and either Arabic or Hebrew once I've graduated. Sounds impressive? It's not. Foreign languages require daily maintenance, drive and commitment.

Spending time in a country that speaks your target language is, in my view, compulsory. My undergraduate degree saw me spend a year as an exchange student in Beijing.

Slowly but surely, I would pick up certain mannerisms by observing the way the language manifested itself into people's behaviour. Instead of talking about the weather, I would talk about food. I stopped saying please, thank you and sorry as much. The way I talked became more direct.

The language seemed to have more meaning; a Chinese *chengyu* (a four-character idiom) could convey sentences of significance in English, which couldn't be directly translated.

Aside from (accidentally) developing a thick northern Chinese accent through regularly chatting to Beijing taxi drivers, being totally immersed in a Chinese language environment rapidly enhanced

“The linguistic vibrancy in other countries is simply a way of life, and multilingualism the norm”

my comprehension of China.

My experience with the French language, by comparison, has been more relaxed. Having spent many a summer in France, I've fallen in love with the opinionated nature of its people, the high regard for food and its somewhat satirical humour.

Again, when in France I internalise certain mannerisms and sometimes even find myself dressing differently in an attempt not only to speak French, but to be French.

The benefits of picking up a foreign language are in abundance.

One of the most ubiquitous statistics regurgitated when foreign language learning is mentioned is the delayed onset of dementia: for monolingual adults, the mean age for the first signs of dementia are visible at 71.4 years, and for bilingual and multilingual adults it is 75.5 years.

In addition, currently the U.K. is foregoing economic opportunity in the face of our “linguaphobia”. We must change this.

A report looking into the costs to the UK of language deficiencies as a barrier to engagement in exporting, suggested the gross effect of language barriers for

“The psychological benefits of picking up a foreign language are in abundance”

the U.K. is costing 3.5% of GDP.

The analysis of the report demonstrated that “language difficulties are the largest single contributor to perceived cultural problems, even when information, relationship difficulties, and legal problems are taken into account”.

Cambridge is heavily comprised of international students. The latest data from the University shows that for the 2018/19 academic year, of the 22,693 students admitted, 146 countries were represented.

The University also offers language courses for which some colleges may have available funding. Learning how to say “Hello” in your lab partner's language could ignite your foreign language journey. There are academic benefits as well. History students who learn a second language, for example, then have the ability to conduct research in non-English speaking regions, and draw from non-translated, original texts.

Cambridge students have a plethora of cultural insight at their fingertips; it's time to access that through language if we are to maintain globally competitive in a bilingual world.



# Scrap Cambridge interviews. Randomise admissions instead.

There isn't much proof that Oxbridge's interview process actually works, argues Joe Benton

Joe Benton

It is coming around again to that time of year when the anxiety levels of sixth form students across the country peak as the Oxbridge interview season approaches.

But this interview process, despite having barely changed for decades, has a problem – there's scant evidence that it actually works.

Tens of thousands of students are interviewed as part of their Oxbridge application every year, with the interview process dominating the attention of the university for an entire week each autumn. Yet the amount of high-quality data demonstrating that these interviews are an effective way of telling whether a candidate will succeed at university is pitiful.

While there is some evidence suggesting that pre- and post-interview written assessments do indeed predict degree performance, the evidential basis for the current interview system is extremely weak. In fact, it amounts to little more than a combination of anecdotes, historical precedence and a gut feeling that interviewers generally ought to be good judges of aptitude and character.

What we do have a lot of evidence for, however, is the biases that an interview system can introduce. Numerous studies have observed interviewers judging interviewees that they perceive to be similar to themselves more favour-

ably; whether it's a case of ethnicity, gender, or dialect, when people look or sound like us, it's very hard not to be more sympathetic.

It's perhaps unsurprising then, given the current make-up of academic staff, that we see the same issues of diversity reflected back in admissions statistics year after year.

In 2018, for example, 20 Cambridge courses admitted fewer than three Black students. A total of 35 female students were admitted to Maths, the lowest number in over 15 years. And Robinson College, the college which accepted the smallest proportion of students from the maintained sector, had just 41.3% of its intake from state schools.

And so, we have to ask what our current interview system actually measures. Does it help tease out academic competence over and above any written assessments taken outside of the interview? Or, is the process a skewed, messy compilation of arbitrary and irrelevant signals, such as one's perceived social status, extrovertedness, or performance on the day? The truth is, we really have no idea.

You might begin to wonder then whether we could save a lot of time and a huge amount of resources by just cutting out the interviews altogether and rolling a dice instead. As absurd an idea as this may sound, using a lottery as part of university admissions proc-

esses has been suggested before and even implemented in several countries such as the Netherlands, where until recently applications for degrees such as medicine often included a lottery. In the case of Oxbridge, such a system would likely consist of a set of minimum application standards, based on a combination of public exam results and subject-specific assessments (in effect, "pre-interview tests" without the interview). This would be followed by colleges or the university selecting applicants randomly – potentially weighted to take into account relative performance on the assessments – from this pool to make offers to.

Once you get over the radical-sounding nature of this suggestion, it is not hard to imagine how replacing interviews with a lottery could have other significant benefits beyond simply saving a lot of time and effort.

First and foremost, randomising admissions would guarantee that the cohort of students who receive offers is directly representative of the pool of capable applicants. Compared to an interview system with an almost inherent capacity for personal bias, a lottery, practically by definition, would be completely transparent and treat all applicants equally.

In addition, acknowledging the random component of admissions explicitly would likely lead to students

adopting a more balanced and healthy attitude towards applications.

Instead of encouraging students to "play the system" and engage in endless interview preparation, a lottery system requiring a set of minimum entry standards would continue to offer students a clear benchmark for academic achievement, while also giving students the freedom to switch off at the end of the day and enjoy other activities, knowing that they had done their best.

Of course, there are several arguments against such a lottery system. Key among them is the perception that it contradicts a principle of justice that places should be attributed in a deterministic way to those who are most suitable. However, whether the current system achieves this is another question.

It would also reduce the capacity for human intervention or nuance in the admissions system to take into account exceptional circumstances. Finally, it is of course possible that interviews really are an effective part of the application process and do truly represent applicants accurately.

But until we decide to test these hypotheses properly instead of assuming, we simply don't know. And even if university interviews turn out to be suitable, effective means of candidate selection, we might still learn a thing or two about what really matters in admissions in the process.

“It would likely lead to students adopting a more balanced and healthy attitude”

## Labour's promise to abolish private schools benefits no one, not even state school students

We must consider the pitfalls of Labour's new policy to abolish private schools – especially how it could impact state schools

Saajan Gill

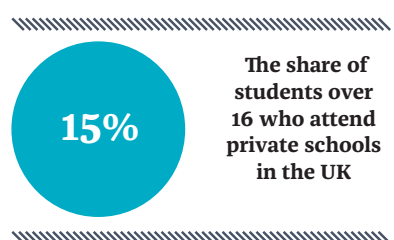
As a product of a state school, the temptation to unabashedly praise Labour's plans to abolish private schools is truly immense. With their pristine brochures, palatial architecture and acceptance-rate-defying university destinations, sometimes I can't help but feel envious towards my privately-educated counterparts.

This bitterness, though understandable (perhaps even inevitable), is no basis from which to adjudicate on an issue that will undoubtedly affect every family in the UK. It seems Labour has done just that. In fact, this is just the latest in a string of specious populist policies pursued by Labour, that, despite warming their own hearts, could backfire. Among these, scrapping tuition fees, the imposition of rent controls and now the abolition of private schools.

The argument is, in short, that private schools ought to be abolished because they produce unequal educational outcomes (relative to state schools), which propagate into adulthood and stratify society into classes founded primarily on the private-state divide. However, it is unclear whether the abolition of private schools will actually end this. For example, wealthier parents will still advantage their children through private tutoring,

language classes, prestigious internships and cultural visits, as is their right.

At present, around 6.5% of British children attend private schools, rising to 15% of students over the age of 16. The absorption of these students into the already fragile, underfunded and understaffed state school system would be extremely detrimental. The repercussions include an estimated £3.5 billion shortfall to maintain the same level of



per-pupil funding, which would either decrease the resources available to all students, or increase the tax burden for the entire country.

Neither route is likely to improve the educational outcomes of state school or private school students. Such a policy could also lead to a worsening of the teacher shortage currently affecting students, as it may lead to fewer graduates entering teaching due to them no longer having the motivation of a large earning

“The ineffectiveness and troubling moral territory this policy enters is extremely worrisome”

potential in the private sector. Although the vast majority of teachers pursue their career with non-financial motivations, financial considerations will always play a part, however small.

The consequences of pursuing such a policy on wider society include the following: the loss of an estimated 300,000 jobs, an associated £4.1 billion in tax revenue, and the human capital that private schools excel at cultivating. One estimate by Oxford Economics predicts that the UK's GDP would have been £73 billion lower in 2017 had private schools ceased to exist in the 1940s.

As part of this policy, Labour has suggested a 'redistribution' of the assets of these private schools. This is a terrible idea. These assets are the results of hundreds of years worth of charitable donations. The forcible seizure of these assets, donated in good faith, is morally corrupt.

Furthermore, the income gained from these monetary assets is frequently used to assist poorer families in affording high-quality private schooling. For example, more than 1,300 schools are constituents of the Independent Schools Council, and together they contribute over £800 million annually to less wealthy families in the form of fee reductions. At Eton College, approximately 20% of students

receive an average fee reduction of 67%, with 90 students attending for free.

This approach is not useful to the state-educated, the privately-educated, or the relations between them. It is also unfavourable for the country as a whole. The state-educated are forced to contend with more strain on their already insufficient resources. The privately-educated lose out on excellent teaching and facilities. Relations between the two groups sour as each comes out of the policy worse for it, and inevitably begins assigning blame.

The ineffectiveness and troubling moral territory this policy enters is extremely worrisome. However, the opportunistic way Labour preys on the frustration experienced by impressionable students studying in state schools is even more harrowing. Instead of fulfilling their responsibility to these children and actually tackling the myriad of issues plaguing state schools, Labour barrels recklessly down a vindictive, emotion-driven path.

This policy does not benefit parents, private schools, and most pressingly, it does not benefit state schools. This policy only helps Labour by buttressing its unearned sense of moral superiority. As far as this policy is concerned, Labour is for itself, not the many or the few.



# Science

## Didier Queloz is hunting for exoplanets in the Milky Way

**Vianca Shah** sat down with Cambridge professor Didier Queloz, just 24 hours after he snagged this year's Nobel Prize in Physics for his research

**T**he evening after Professor Didier Queloz won the most prestigious award in science, I grabbed a chat with him just after he gave a public lecture on his research in West Road Concert Hall.

Professor Didier Queloz, a Cambridge physicist at the Cavendish Laboratory, won 'half' of the the Nobel Prize in Physics last week alongside with Michael Mayor for their work challenging our understanding of the known universe.

The other 'half' of the award honoured work by James Peebles, a Princeton cosmologist whose theoretical contributions have mapped out 13.8 billion years of cosmological history. Both of these areas of research make us question our place in this vast and mysterious universe.

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Professor Queloz predicted there is a chance that humans will be able to discover extraterrestrial life in the next 30 years, saying that he "can't believe that we are the only living entity in the universe."

I ask Queloz about challenging the status quo in scientific thought – on the possibility of life on other planets or potential new pathways of scientific study. He tells me that it is through being able to question and to critically think about existing knowledge that we learn and discover more. Importantly, he says, one must have faith that there is a purpose and meaning to all research done, even that which may not succeed on the first attempt.

Professor Queloz first studied at the University of Geneva, and, at the age of 29, he, along with Michel Mayor, discovered the first planet outside our solar system, an exoplanet orbiting the star 51 Pegasi.

After this discovery they launched a search for more of these exoplanets, continuing to develop new experimental techniques and astronomical instruments that enabled these observations – work for which he won the BBVA Foundation Frontiers Knowledge Award along with Mayor in 2017. To date, more than 4,000 exoplanets have been discovered.

He became a Professor of Astrophysics at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge in 2012, and now heads Cambridge's Exoplanet Research Centre. This team continues to develop

► **Didier Queloz was awarded the Nobel Prize for his discoveries in astrophysics**  
(NASASOLARSYSTEM/YOUTUBE)



“There is a purpose to all research done, even that which may not succeed on the first attempt”

upon his exoplanet research, considering the possibility of finding a habitable – or even habited – planet similar to Earth.

His lecture chronicled his journey to the Nobel Prize, and the physics behind his discoveries.

For a planet with an orbital period and mass similar to that of Jupiter, calculations lead to a 1-4% likelihood in finding the planet. For higher orbital periods this increases to about 5-10% and for a planet like Neptune, is about 30-80%. However, particularly for smaller planets, the interference makes it difficult to receive a stable signal.

Professor Queloz outlined the scale of challenges and difficulties he faced in finding the exoplanet, and how he managed to overcome them.

The discovery of exoplanets is just the beginning – the Terra Hunting experiment focuses on the search for other 'Earths'. Scientists are targeting planets with a mass of about ¼ of the mass of Earth and an orbital period of 50 days to 300 days.

Discussing the scale of these research programmes after his talk, Professor Queloz explained the challenge of forging new paths in scientific research.

The first challenge is to design and develop prototype equipment that is

capable of detecting the data the team hopes to collect. There is then the practical task of putting it all together and making it work. Once the equipment is set up and programmed, vast amounts of measurements will be collected, ready for analysis.

Each data point then needs to be put together to develop a picture of what these results mean – and the implications of any new discoveries on current bodies of research considered, the scientific community and the general public. With his research taking place on the scale of the whole universe and delving into fundamental questions about the possibility of life outside of planet earth, this impact cannot be overstated.

There is currently strong evidence that planets that have a rocky surface like Earth exist, and even some where water have existed. The difficulty however is finding life that then exists on that 'Earth' – and finding out this will require much more extensive research. Perhaps, as Professor Queloz went on to discuss, this life will not evolve in the same way as on Earth.

This kind of research involves many different disciplines, combining skills from biological and physical sciences. He explains that “there is [a greater emphasis] on cross discipline” in the sci-

“I can't believe that we are the only living entity in the universe”

ences, and how this shift from traditionally demarcated disciplines allows new research to happen, beyond disciplinary borders. “When needed there will be the discovery of new disciplines” to account for this and ultimately he explains “its up to us” to do this and make it happen – “society [needs to] act.”

He then discussed the difficulty in confirming his evidence and the challenges of the data he had discovered not fitting current models and theories completely. This highlighted how science is still evolving and changing – which makes the determination and faith that Professor Queloz kept incredibly remarkable.

He's optimistic about getting past all the challenges that there are in the scientific field and promoting this to new researchers and students. Challenging beliefs and ideas pave the way for scientific progress – and his work is an inspiration for the students watching him to follow in his footsteps.

To all students at Cambridge, Professor Queloz's commitment, hard work and dedication is something to aspire to. His research has created a whole new realm of astronomy and physics for current students and researchers to try to work with and understand.

What's Queloz's best advice for aspiring physicists? Just “do what you like.”



## Science

# What do tomato plants have to do with the climate crisis?

**Selin Zeyrek** explains the newest research on climate-proof crops

Climate change is outpacing evolution, and our crops desperately need to keep up. Some plants are able to cope with the increasingly extreme weather conditions, and research is being done to facilitate gene transfer from more resilient plants to important but vulnerable crop species. For example, researchers at Cambridge's Plant Sciences Department are working on engineering rice to use the more efficient form of photosynthesis found in cacti.

A more widely accepted form of crop improvement is selective breeding, which humans have been doing with crops for millennia. The main problem with this method is that it can take decades, by which point the stresses of the environment will have changed again, and so the crop will be lagging behind. A new method is needed that is relatively fast and GMO-compliant.

One solution lies in transposons, the 'jumping genes' first discovered by Barbara McClintock in the 1950s, dismissed as junk DNA until recent decades. Transposons, or transposable elements, are short stretches of DNA that have the ability to copy and paste themselves throughout the genome they inhabit; this is possible because these either include the transposase gene, which carries out the copy-and-paste process of the whole element, or are integrated via an RNA intermediate by reverse transcription. Insertion of a transposon into the

genome can have various effects: it can change the expression level of a gene, it can introduce new or remove functions, or it can have no effect at all. Transposons are credited as the largest generator of genetic diversity in plants, and therefore provide a novel answer to the problem of crop improvement. They are used to grow a large number of plants containing transposons, such as tomatoes, under the conditions required to activate their copy-and-paste mechanism. From a variety of different phenotypes produced, the best-performing ones are selected to continue breeding.

This year, researchers at the Sainsbury Laboratory here in Cambridge have discovered that the *Rider* transposon, previously known to be responsible for altering the colour and shape of tomato fruits, is activated by drought stress. By quantifying the number of *Rider* copies, they found that the genome of drought-stressed plants contained 4.4 times more copies than plants under normal conditions. To further substantiate their claims, they also quantified the number of copies of *Rider* in mutant tomato plants for the production of the main chemical signal for drought stress in plants, ABA. These ABA mutants have reduced copies of *Rider* compared to wild-type plants in stressed conditions, showing that if no drought is detected, then *Rider* is less active.

The newly discovered feature of *Rider*, to be activated by water deprivation, facilitates growing tomato plants under 'positive selection', ie putting them under drought stress to activate the transposon and then selecting the plants that grow the best under those stressful conditions. In addition, *Rider* could be used to generate new pathways of gene control in tomato plants, to better cope with low water levels. This is possible if *Rider* inserts into the region of DNA that controls the expression of a relevant set of genes; the transposon's own control regions are then co-opted to regulate the genes in

question in response to the environment.

The main problem from this point onwards is the stability of the transposon. Once it has inserted itself into the desirable area, its copy-and-paste function must be inactivated so that it remains stable, and does not insert into an unwanted region of the genome. This inactivation can occur naturally. However, this is rare and, more commonly, the transposase gene will be edited by researchers to become non-functional, allowing *Rider* to remain where it is.

Transposons offer many benefits: they can be used to produce improved crop varieties at a much faster rate, because they increase the rate of diversification and so significantly reduce breeding time. They can be used even when the gene control pathway is poorly understood, solving a major problem associated with both selective breeding and gene editing, namely, that the former takes several generations to gain the desired result, and the latter requires an exhaustive understanding of the genes in question, which can take too long to unravel.

The use of transposons is in line with EU regulation on GMOs, since it requires no insertion of genes that are not already in the plant — just activating a jumping gene that naturally resides in its genome.

It is possible that other transposons are also activated by other environmental stresses, which could mean they could be used in other plants to improve responses to the changing climate, as *Rider* does with tomatoes.

The *Rider* transposon project comes in a long line of modern techniques used in biochemistry and crop improvement that originate in nature — this time, to solve the more pressing problem of crop adaptation to the rapidly changing environment.

“The feature allows tomato plants to grow under drought stress”

▲ Illustration by Yan Shi for Varsity



## Varsity explains That Freshers' Week hangover

It's far too early or far too late. You sort of remember what happened in the hours before, but are in too much pain to care. You've got a hangover, and it's not looking pretty. How did you get into this state, again?

Hangovers generally show up as a combination of dehydration, headache, nausea, pain, and are a scourge of Freshers' week (scientific fact, we are told). The biochemistry of this is

“Less active forms of ALDH lead to a larger build up of acetaldehyde”

fairly straightforward: in the liver (and stomach), ethanol is broken down into acetaldehyde by the enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH); this is then further processed to acetate by the enzyme acetaldehyde dehydrogenase (ALDH), largely in the mitochondria, and is eventually used for energy production.

The intermediate product of this reaction, acetaldehyde, is responsible for some of the symptoms associated with hangovers. It is an irritant of the skin and mucous membranes, causing nausea, vomiting, sweats, and headaches. Since the ADH and ALDH enzymes don't work at the same rate, differences in their activities, and the total amount of ethanol to be processed, determine the amount of acetaldehyde build up. Differences in the genes for these enzymes are partly

responsible for differences in the response to alcohol: less active forms of the enzyme lead to a larger build up of acetaldehyde, causing 'flush'.

Ethanol itself has various effects on the body (aside from the obvious). The dehydration that occurs with hangovers, results from ethanol leading to a decreased secretion of antidiuretic hormone. This is a peptide hormone which usually increases the amount of water that is reabsorbed by the kidneys. Reducing it makes you pee more, and thus, become dehydrated. It is not only all the water that you lose that is a problem, but also the electrolytes that go down the drain with it. Some of the gastric discomfort arises from the increased gastric acid production that ethanol causes, irritating the stomach lining. This generally upsets

your stomach, and contributes to the nausea and vomiting.

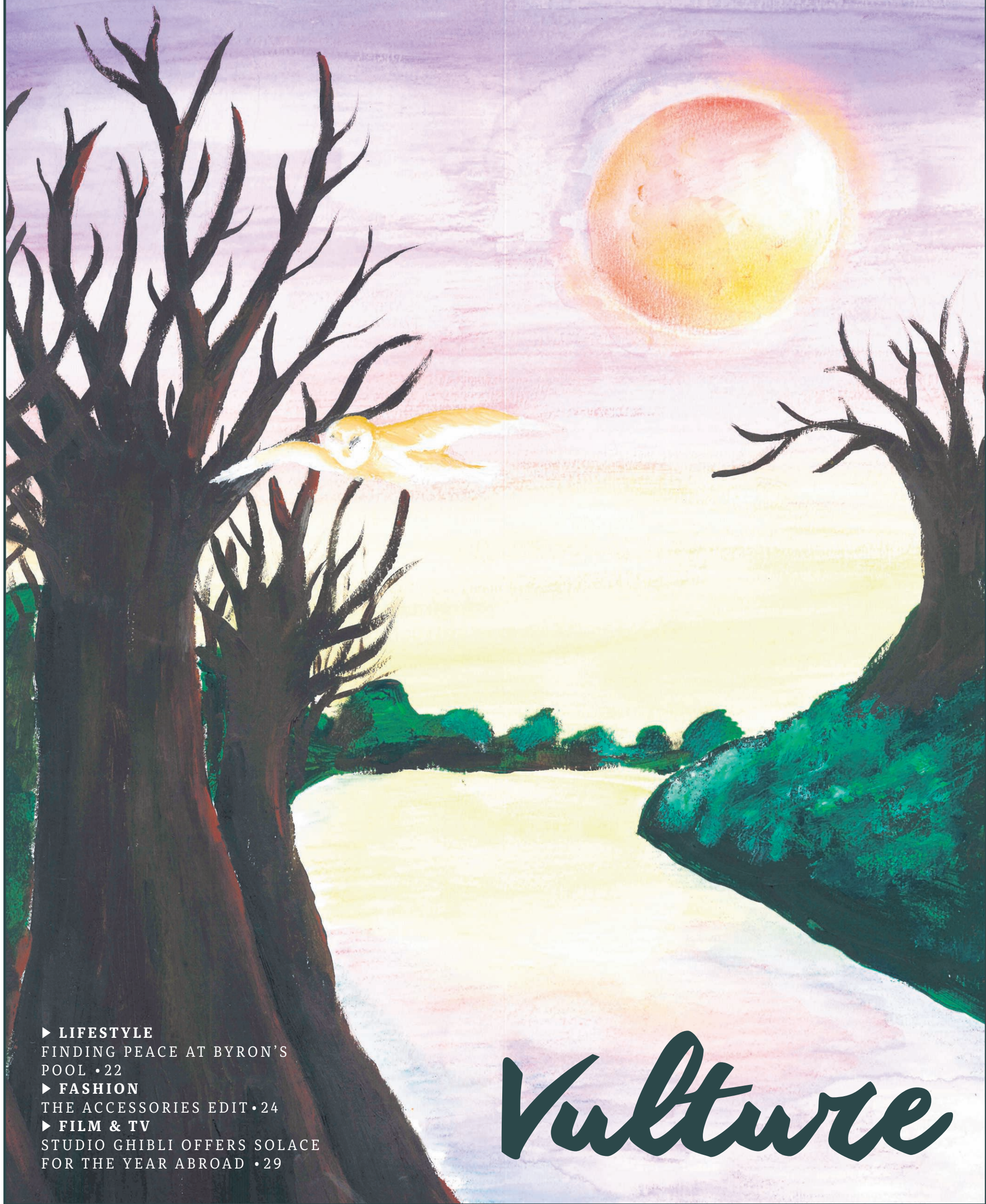
Many alcoholic beverages actually contain some methanol, as a byproduct from the brewing process. The enzymes involved in breaking down ethanol perform the same role with methanol, but only after the ethanol has been fully metabolised, as its affinity is much stronger for ethanol. The problem is that methanol is toxic. It is broken down into formaldehyde, and then into formic acid. Formic acid is part of the irritants some ants spray and causes the sting of nettles, and formaldehyde is used to fix and preserve biological specimens.

So now you know why you woke up feeling like a cat that had been run over. All that's left to say is, drink responsibly, and stay hydrated.

“The problem is that methanol is toxic”



Illustration by Emily Senior



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# Vulture



# Lifestyle

## Byron's pool, a place of unexpected joy

You may not find Lord Byron at Byron's Pool, says **Izzy Dignum**, but you will stumble upon an atmospheric escape from the city, one that you're unlikely to forget any time soon

According to Google Maps, Byron's Pool (where the great Lord Byron himself is rumoured to have skinny-dipped) lies just three miles from the centre of Cambridge, and takes approximately an hour to walk to. I will not swear by these measurements, because although I have actually walked there, I will freely admit that it takes a lot longer if you get distracted by the photo opportunities and the Orchard Tea Rooms, and even longer if you confuse the markings for a boundary fence with those for a footpath. In my defence, it's very difficult when the map on your phone is a blurry photograph of another blurry photocopy. But I digress. Byron's Pool is a beautiful little nature reserve, although not necessarily for the reasons I had initially expected.

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I wanted awe and splendour because it is out of the ordinary  
”

It was the sort of crisp golden afternoon which is wonderful for Instagram photos, but even better for just being outside. Looking at everything around me, I felt like I was constantly gazing through a glass of maple syrup, but the coldness (end of January, afternoon turning to evening, fingers of no more use than a bag of frozen peas) sharpened my thoughts and, luckily for future-me, meant that I could remember the details of that afternoon's journey. Details apparently devoid of any useful information however, because the only directional guidance I can give you is to follow the Cam to Grantchester, maybe cut through the Orchard Tea Rooms, follow the road round and remember, if it looks like someone's garden, it probably is. But I got there, eventually, and found that there's very little Byron, and not exactly anything that I would describe as a pool either.

“  
These tableaux are still in my head, rammed in amongst useless facts  
”

Perhaps it was the season, or the cold, or the fact that we only got there when night was pulling in and the prevailing colour was a mauve grey, dark naked trees silhouetted against the sky and the water. Byron's Pool is actually a weir, far from my vision of a secluded copse with some kind of crystal pool,



▲ “Byron's pool is a beautiful little nature reserve” (INES LETELLIER)

the sort of place where one would be inspired to write about nature and love. Although I'm inclined to blame the weather and time of year – nothing screams poetry like a shoeiful of mud – perhaps it was also my jumping imagination. I wanted awe and splendour because it is out of the ordinary, because it is something to talk about other than weekly essays and the extortionate amount of money I've spent on Deliveroo. But life is not all spangles, and now, nine months after this particular journey, there are bright pinpoints of memory which override the mundane details of the cold and the weir's disappointing greyness.

Being told that the unexpected moments are the most beautiful is probably the equivalent of also being told to 'live, love, laugh'. But every time I've gone for a wander this has

proven true, and Byron's Pool – in spite of the initial anti-climax – continued this trend. I remember catching a glimpse of an owl (my first since leaving home, a flash of white swooping between straight-backed trees. My first sight-

“  
My first sighting of the super-blood-wolf moon in a not-yet-dark sky  
”

ing of the super-blood-wolf moon in a not-yet-dark sky, pale against pale, a companion for

the long walk back. The colours as the sun set; not particularly spectacular, but subtle and muted and soft, perhaps better to show off the trees' gnarls and knuckles. These tableaux are still in my head, rammed in amongst my useless facts and cake recipes.

They are images of beauty, of winter, and remembered over the stresses of term and essay crises.

If you're looking for Byron, you may not necessarily find him at Byron's Pool. Maybe look in his poetry at the UL, which is probably as cold as that winter's afternoon anyway. But for the unexpected, the sightings of birds or the stars or even just a fleeting sense of being away from the city, then at Byron's Pool – unless you get Properly Lost – you can't go far wrong.





# Breathe, and bring awareness to your body

Breathing is not just a biological necessity, but has also been proven to affect levels of anxiety and stress, writes **Charlotte Newman** in her second column on mindfulness

**B**reathing. A task that is fundamental to our very existence, but one that we very rarely even notice. Breathing is what allows us to come back to our bodies, away from our minds. It connects us to the present moment. Watching and becoming aware of how we breathe can help us pause and reconnect with ourselves away from our thoughts and busy lives. There have been numerous studies on the effects of breathing on anxiety, and the ways in which breathing more deeply can aide our mental health. When we are anxious, we often breath



*To be with our physical selves, to feel instead of think*



with our upper chest (so if you were to put a hand on your chest and a hand on your stomach area right now – if your upper hand moves when you breathe then this type of breathing is upper chest). Lower breathing, or deep breathing, promotes calm, and a stillness that allows us to just be.

When we are anxious, we often breathe more quickly and with shorter breaths. If you try counting your breath in and out, the outer breath should be slightly longer than the inner breath (if it's the other way around, this

can increase feelings of anxiety). We may well not realise we are breathing like this when we're reading a book, writing an essay, or even when we are trying to unwind with a tv programme, but if our breath is quickened, physiologically it can increase anxiety

and stress without us even realising. How do we stop? How do we breathe deeply? And how can this help us be still during our daily lives? One of the simplest ways of noticing this is through the hand exercise I mentioned. I still find it useful to have a hand on my abdomen and feel it rise and fall. Using a hand

is also useful in bringing us out of our thoughts – if we are focused on our physical body, on the sensations and actions of deeply breathing out and receiving the next breath that will sustain us – it is much more difficult

for our minds to run away with thoughts about the past and the future. The present moment is all we ever truly have, and we cannot be alive in the present without breathing,

so it is fitting that this is what anchors us, what can slow us down and allow us to find a stillness, a calm, away from our thoughts.

Breathing is often used in meditation practices, but bringing ourselves back through breathing can be done anytime, anywhere and allows us to step back and come back to the present moment. When you notice you're doing upper chest breathing, or having

anxious thoughts about a deadline, try exhaling gently and fully, and then drop your shoulders. We hold so much tension in our upper bodies, and dropping your shoulders while exhaling can help to alleviate this. We

can then receive a new breath and inhale gently through the nose.

Visualisation is also a useful technique in helping to guide us back to the present. Visualise, as you breathe out, a beam of light (it can be any colour) above your head and then feel the next breath pulling the light through your body down to your feet and sinking deeply into the ground.

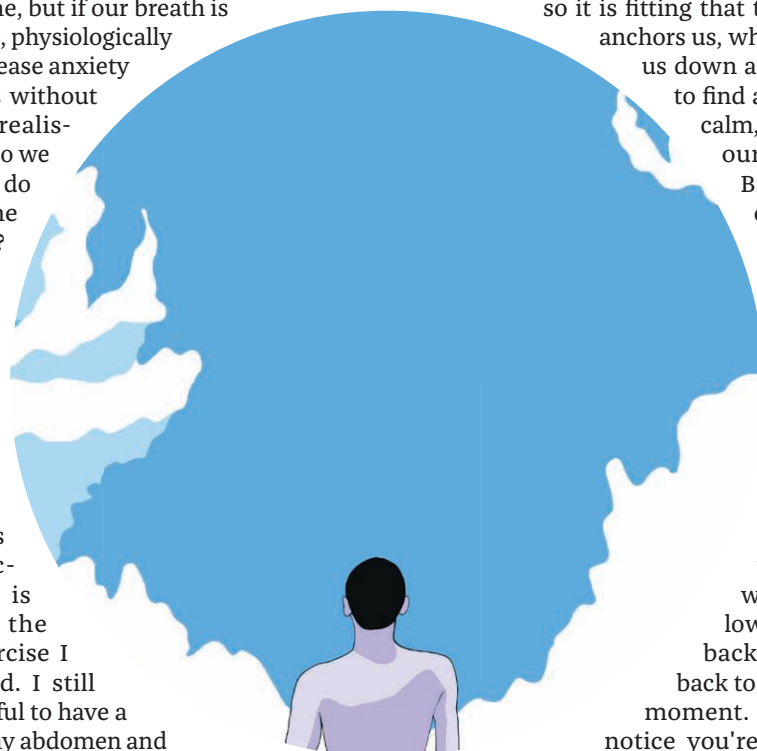


*The present moment is all we ever truly have*



Deep breathing is used in meditation, yoga and tai chi, to name just a few practices – and multiple studies have shown that it reduces stress levels. Physiologically, you will become calmer, and feeling and trying to notice the sensations we experience when we breathe deeply allows us to return to the present moment and to be still. To be with our physical selves, to feel instead of think. It is a starting point that can bring us back to the present, and can be used as the bridge to connect us to the stillness within us that can provide us with peace and calm, that can bring us into this moment, into an awareness of existence that otherwise can remain shut off behind our thoughts.

ILLUSTRATION BY LISHA ZHONG FOR VARSITY



## Indigo Coffee House: pleasant but not spectacular

Though a charming location, the café's food didn't quite hit the spot **Callum Wainstein**

**I**ndigo Coffee House is a charming café tucked away just off King's Parade. Its interior is decorated with comfy chairs, and the collection of foreign money on the walls that seems almost obligatory these days. The ground floor room is small and intimate, but there is a larger upstairs area – when particularly busy the café can get a bit on the uncomfortably hot side. The atmosphere is certainly more a quick meet up with a friend than a big lunch out.

The first sandwich I tried was the Pesto, Mayo, and Chicken Ciabatta. All the constituent parts of the sandwich were pretty good: the pesto had a solid rich flavour, and the tomatoes included in were sweet and fresh; and held up to the robust pesto flavours. Whilst all of this should add up to a good sandwich, it just didn't work in combination. The flavours of mayo and pesto dominated everything else – it was a weird combination that I don't think worked together. Pesto in itself is a strong enough condiment that there is really no need to add mayo to the sandwich,

which just gets in the way of the flavours and produces a muddle. The second, and more successful sandwich, that I tried was the humble Ham and Cheese Toastie. The star of this dish was the mature cheddar, which had a really strong flavour. It also melted very well, positively oozing out of the sandwich. Another big positive was the bread, a paragon of simplicity – the white bread had been nicely pressed and cooked in butter, in such a way that it provided a crunchy counterpoint to the gooey, cheesy interior.

Finally I was advised to try one of the salads, I went for the smoked salmon and lemon. I was happy to see that the acidic dressing had been very well distributed throughout the salad, though I do feel there was a touch of conservatism in having the salad's base components be only lettuce, cucumber, and tomato. Saying this, I did enjoy the cucumber, it's cool flavour was a good balance to the, at times, overwhelming acidity of the dressing and lemon. Another counterpoint to the acidity was the smoked salmon, which I had mixed feelings

on. In small amounts, alongside the salad it provided a nice, smoky, fishy aftertaste, soothing the pallet. However, in too large portions it was too much, as truly great smoked salmon should have a lightness and freshness which was lacking here. Overall the salad wasn't terrible – I happily ate it – but it also was really nothing special. A good meal you should think about weeks after you eat it; this salad will be forgotten by the end of the day.

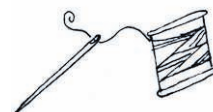
Indigo Coffee House is not a bad place to eat, I should make that clear, but it is also not a particularly exciting one. The food you get will be relatively nice and serviceable, but I have to admit that if I had one take away after the meal, it was probably that I wish I had eaten at the Locker, which offers basically the same sort of food, but better and more interestingly constructed. However, Indigo is pretty cheap; all the food I had worked out at around 13 quid [two sandwiches and a salad]. In any case, its definitely a better shout than patronaging the Café Nero nearby – which is effectively the same price and a lot worse.



▲ Indigo Coffee House (INES LETELLIER)



# Fashion



## Head-to-toe: An accessories edit

As term gets going, indulge yourself with some styled out footwear and headgear as Fashion Editor **Gabriel Humphreys** guides us through his favourites

Freshers have arrived, term has started and that first deadline has already been set. If you're feeling that stress that only retail therapy can alleviate, then treat yourself — accessories are the best and most versatile way to spice up your wardrobe for the new year, and keep things fresh as the nights grow longer and the cold closes in.

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Earth tones have dominated the high street and the runway  
”

Hats were everywhere on the runway this season — Stephen Jones' at Dior were even some of Anna Wintour's favourite accessories of the month — and in my opinion they remain a much underused and undervalued accessory. Want to make a statement? Then slap a say-something hat on and strut down King's Parade.

Meanwhile, the ascendant trend of '70s-leaning silhouettes and garments in both menswear and womenswear has led to models from

New York to Milan stepping out in boots. Boots add height and even drama to an outfit, while being a lot more stable than other heels and a safe enough all-weather option to face the rapidly approaching British winter.

No matter what your personal style, there are myriad options out there, so here are my top picks to get yourself in chic shape for the term ahead.

### Business-ready retro

Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin. With pastel blouses, pussybow sweaters, chunky belts and, above all, the tailored blazer, the working women of the early '80s punched a firm hole in the cultural glass ceiling, and reached out from the small and silver screens to become an example to a generation. Conquering the business world of men became inextricably linked to fashion, and power dressing associated with establishing authority and respect in male-dominated industries. In that spirit, take some inspiration from the golden age of boots and fuel the growing obsession for vintage styling — whether it's '70s-style knee-high kitten heels or a glam platform. The high street and the runway have been dominated by earth tones, so take advantage and grab boots in a warm tan or soft brown.

### Country boy

I feel like I can barely leave the house without spotting a flat cap, but their raging popularity is hardly a novel concept — they've been around in some form since the 14th century, and were inalienably associated with the working-class male wardrobe until their more mainstream exposure in some classic early 2000s fashion moments thanks

to celebrities like Robbie Williams. In recent times though it feels remiss not to attribute their latest surge in popularity on the high street with the worldwide sensation that is *Peaky Blinders*, and they've come to represent a melding of the sartorially refined and a rural edge. Personally I prefer a newsboy cap that brings a bit more Depression-era New York than rural West Country, but to complete the gentleman-farmer look, desert boots are a must, and are also an essential all-rounder. If you're really looking to change it up, channel a little bit of Montana rancher with a wide brim fedora.

### Bratz throwback

Although it might not be the first reference you think of, I defy anyone to reason that Bratz dolls aren't a fashion touchstone. They captured the often unexplainable fashion of the 2000s and, in spite of their wildly unrealistic proportions, they seemed to predict some very real trends. Their “passion for fashion” remains so legendary that it has spawned Instagram accounts who regularly update the dolls' look to match modern trends. Chunky block heels and high shine leather dominate the boots, with wedges and towering platforms for the more adventurous. Hats, however, are the main feature. Shake it up in animal print (almost definitely with matching coat), or don a chicly camp micro mariner's cap and fall back on the unmistakably '90s Chanel-esque plaid or tweed for a kitsch twist.

### Rave hiker realness

Ever wondered what you really should wear to Glastonbury to survive the quagmire and still look the part? Wonder no more, the answer is here. Fashion's predilection for utility wear shows no signs of stopping anytime soon — Spring/Summer men's runways saw a *Mad Max*, post-apocalyptic level of functional-but-aesthetic looks. There's something unendingly alluring about the stark contrast of rugged forms and vivid hues, and many designers broke from streetwear's usual black and

neutrals in a plethora of colourful offerings. Go for a hyper-futurist metallic, or revisit the neon trend in a chunky soled boot, combining utilitarianism and powerful statement block colour. Pair with a beanie or, if you need some more flair, bring in another print or even an iridescent shade.

### Flâneur chic

There is almost no one more effortlessly stylish than Parisians — true sartorial elegance meets sexy nonchalance. This style-consciousness has long been associated with the trope of the flâneur, the idling and image-obsessed loafer, who wanders aimlessly. In spite of its far-from-positive connotations, I feel it must be time to reclaim the term to mean someone who is an acute observer of the everyday, and with it, the power of fashion-conscious dressing. With the last few days of the year still left, grab a straw or wicker hat to truly serve some rustic pre-emptive spring Dior.

### Pitch black glam rocker

Black is universally flattering, and taking it to a glam rock level, with slightly grungy details and the rocking power of a stacked Bowie heel, is bound to stop it being monotonous. There's nothing quite like a black leather boot, it's a high-impact staple that can elevate a tracksuit to a failsafe killer outfit — perfect for looking put together and simultaneously laid back at an early morning DoS meeting. Utility wear in black is a favourite of streetwear brands, so capitalise with a waterproof hat to fight off even the most inclement weather.

▲ Leopard print hat, Yves Salomon; Elkins leather chunky western heel boot, Jeffrey Campbell; Smiley emoji bucket hat, farfetch.com; Dark red lace up chunky block heel boots, New Look; Tweed biker hat, Manokhi (Composite: Gabriel Humphreys)



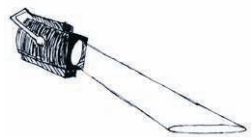
▲ Mariner in brown

check, ASOS Design; Cas-

ket corduroy hat, Yohji Yamamoto;

Reef Road fedora hat, Nick Fouquet; Ankle boots, Tommy Hilfiger (Composite: Gabriel Humphreys)





# Theatre

## Spoilt for choice at the Edinburgh Fringe

**Will Leckie** provides a run-down of the highlights of this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival

*Content note: this article contains discussion of rape.*

This year's Fringe blew me away from start to finish. I spent almost the full month in Edinburgh, and had the pleasure of seeing some exceptional shows. I also put on my own play for the first time, *Bacon*, about the dark and troubled love affair of Francis Bacon and George Dyer. Our incredible team, who brought everything together just in time for the seven-day performance, loved almost every minute of it despite ending the run utterly exhausted and having faced two illness-induced cast changes.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure of performing at Edinburgh is being able to see everyone else's work in such a chaotic, dense setting, alongside your own. The Fringe never sleeps, and you've got to be selective about what you see due to the sheer volume and variety on offer. I primarily attended plays, aside from the dazzling Cambridge Cirque du Slay, which warmly welcomed me onstage as a I blared out A Star is Born's 'Shallow' (apologies to any ears that had to hear this). Next year, I think it's about time I attend with a comedy lover — one able to show me new avenues of the festival!

Choosing a 'favourite' moment is almost as difficult as choosing a least favourite. The festival warmly welcomes everyone and hosts all genres, which is what makes it so rich. Yet browsing through the endless programme can lead to attending some far from inspiring shows, like a somewhat nonsensical adaptation of Camus' *Being and Nothingness*. I was then exposed to an avant-garde and pretentious imagining of Alan Turing and his romance with a computer in *The Heresy Machine*. Yet the Fringe is a place where you can afford to stumble (in theory, despite the extortionate and largely unavoidable venue rent). There is no reason why these shows, or the many others that weren't well received, won't return again in a new and improved form another year.

I watched my fair share of more successful and gripping new writing, too. Ceara Dorman's *Unveiled* was a moving and thought-provoking play about the Magdalene Laundries; her

one-woman piece artfully unpacked the perspectives of different Irish women in these institutions. Gill Mcvey's *A Shadow of Doubt* explored dementia in a nuanced and engaging manner, as the audience was taken on a dark and defenceless trip down memory lane. Paper-Mug Theatre's *A Partnership*, set in a couple's flat, explored the state of two men's monogamous relationship and what this word means for the LGBT+ community today. I was also lucky to see the fringe-veteran William Bryan perform on the last night of the festival with *Fragility of Man*, which told of a lonely journey from boy to manhood rife with rejection, addiction, hope and despair.

Not all the plays I attended dealt in such heavy material however. I attended Coward's *Still Life*, a thoroughly entertaining play and. Despite being sceptical of companies bringing classic plays to the fringe (be it an average *Hamlet* or yet another *Woyzeck*), I loved seeing *Mojo*, Butterworth's dark comedy set in gang-festered Soho. The actors effectively

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Choosing a favourite  
moment is as difficult as  
choosing a least favourite  
”

embraced the entirety of their space, utilising scaffolding and empty seats. The company was thematically creative, as compelling gender swaps highlighted an aggressive, underlying misogyny. On a similar note, I was also treated to Connery's well-paced *Hitman and Her*, where a woman walks into a bar in order to make her husband disappear, albeit not so quietly.

For me, two pieces undoubtedly stood out from an overwhelmingly huge crowd: Nelson's *Letter to Boddah* travelled up from Manchester with a story of two men forgotten by society, who plot to blow up their local Tesco in order to be heard. The chilling dark comedy was utterly captivating.

Cut The Chord's *Endless Second*, produced by Cambridge graduate Josh McClure, prevailed as my favourite play. Two aspiring actors meet on day one of drama school and fall passionately in love. This picturesque tale becomes quietly complicated after

◀ *Bacon at the Fringe* (Will Leckie)

one drunken evening, as communication corrodes and the pair are forced to unpack the complexities of consent.

In this play, rape must be verbalised and confronted head-on. As I left the theatre, still semi-hysterically sobbing, it became even clearer just how important the subject matter really was.

This month was busy. Very busy. It extended, and in some ways, still hasn't ended. I left the Fringe like so many: inspired, and ever-so excited for next year. I'm confident that most of the above shows have immensely successful futures ahead of them and look forward to seeing what forms emerge in the many years to come.

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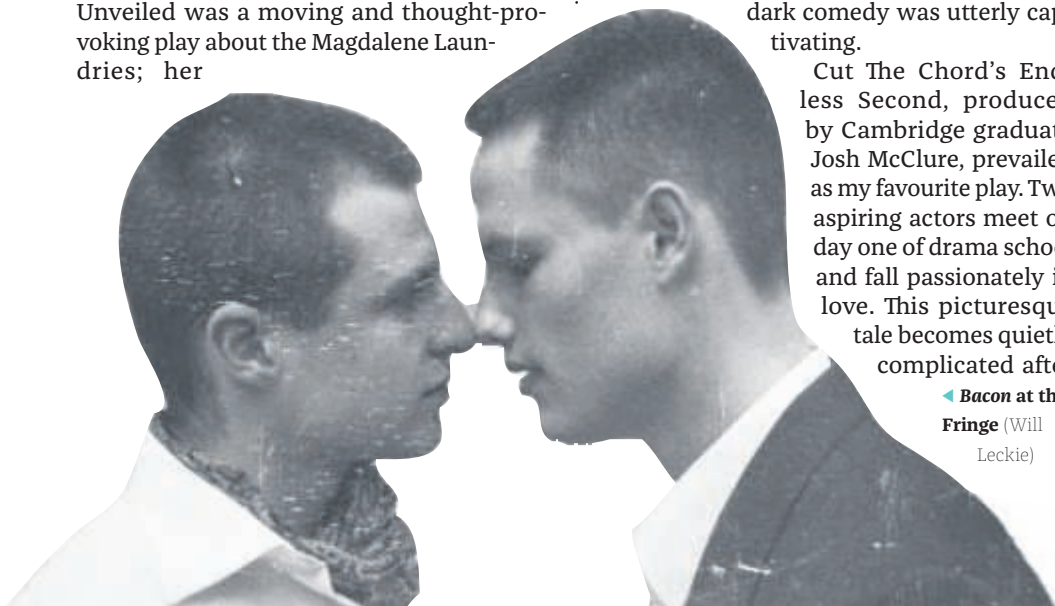


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# Arts

## Short stories from an interrupted childhood

In her second column of term, **Rachel Weatherley** dissects *Sour Heart*, the acclaimed debut collection by Jenny Zhang

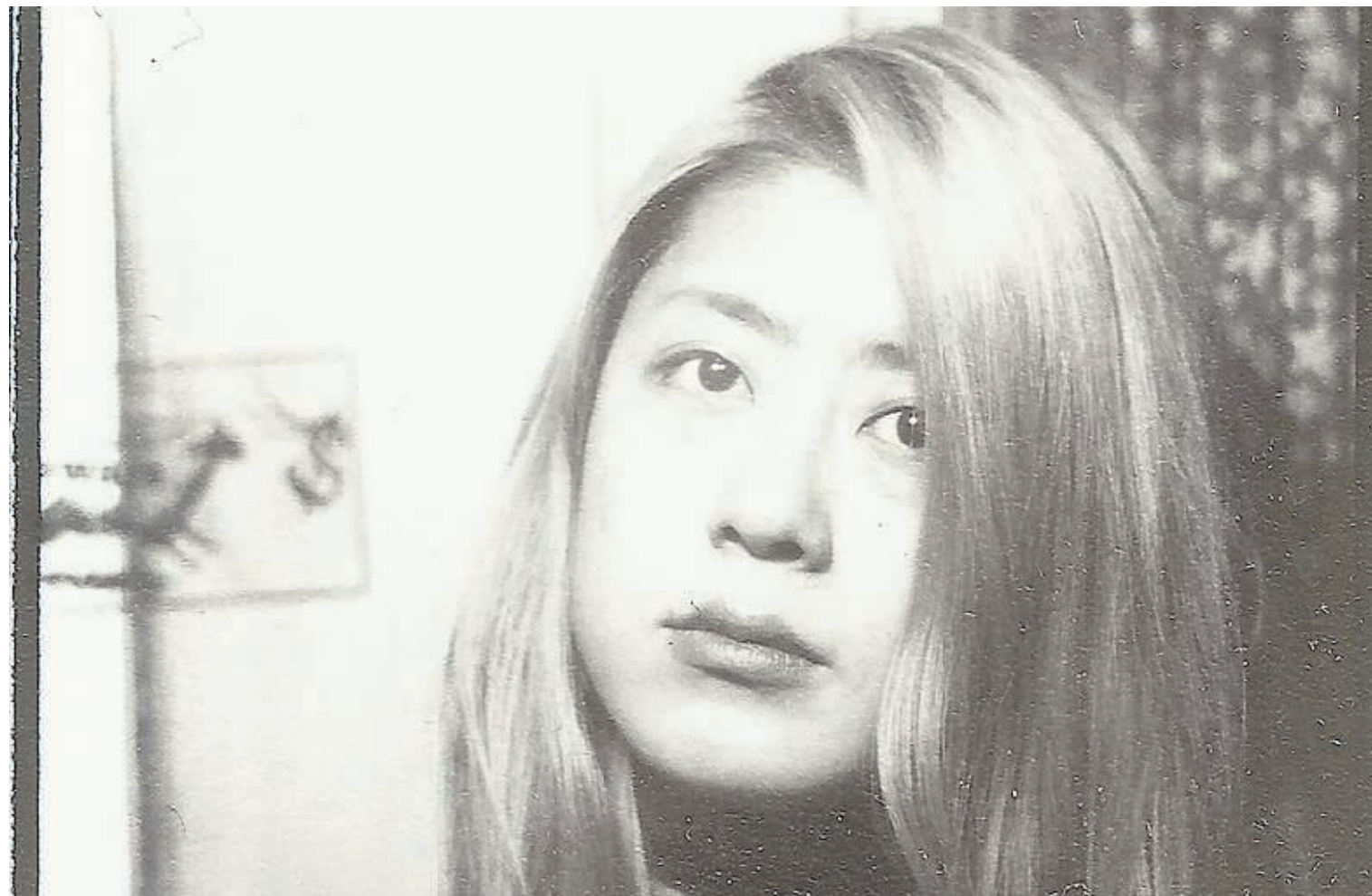
Content Note: this article contains a brief mention of sexual assault.

Jenny Zhang's fiction debut, *Sour Heart*, makes no pretence at protecting the sensibilities of her readership. "Back when my parents and I lived in Bushwick in a building sandwiched between a drug house and another drug house, the only difference being that the dealers in the one drug house were also the users and so more unpredictable..." This is how the first story of the collection, 'We Love You Crispina', begins.

“  
Excruciating incidences are imparted with flippancy  
”

*Sour Heart* is a seven part bildungsroman which retrospectively chronicles the coming-of-age of a group of young Chinese immigrant girls, newly arrived in America and hankering for a world beyond their surroundings. A damp, dilapidated, cockroach-infested tenement block in downtown Manhattan functions as a structural cynosure for a collection which traverses cities, states and continents. These stories are sizeable for the short story form, so may require the dedication of a long weekend before the full force of the academic term kicks in. Though far removed from the Cambridge bubble, the impact of these fables cuts close to the bone from any perspective.

Here, the alluring potential of the American Dream collides head on with its realities: poverty, precarious work, xenophobia and nefarious landlords. Such ordeals mean



▲ In the last ten years, Jenny Zhang has established herself as a prolific poet, essayist and short-story writer (JENNY ZHANG)

these parents clutch onto their children as they teeter on the precipice between pleasure and pain. "Good night," my father said. I tried to steady my breathing in the dark. We whispered our love yous and the next morning, I woke up thinking I was born sad.' One witnesses love's extreme highs – parents paying several months wages so their daughter can attend a philosophy summer school across the country; a father eating the food his daughter can't stop vomiting up – and its extreme lows – a mother is kicked out of a car on a highway after an explosive family argument, her daughter watches from the rear windshield

as she shrinks into the distance.

Zhang completed most of the first drafts during her time at Stanford and Iowa in the mid-to-late noughties. It would be a decade later, after heavy reworking in line with her own changing feelings about her youth, that they would be published. "When writing the stories in *Sour Heart*, I wanted to convey the unreality of childhood, the sweetness and the sourness of being so small, so helpless, and so dependent on adults. We tend to render childhood as purely idyllic and innocent, or totally nightmarish and traumatic, but there's a spectrum of nuance that lies between," said Zhang. The authenticity of Zhang's fictional girlhood is no doubt aided by her disregard for conventional form and grammar. Zhang's fondness for run-on, paragraph long sentences imparts a sense of breathlessness reminiscent of a story excitedly being recounted by a child. What these young narrators lack in reliability, they make up for in mischief and assertiveness. They are often located on the borders – of a new life in a foreign country, of puberty and adolescence, and are attempting to render the numerous alien aspects of their surroundings intelligible.

Such shared trajectories, life experiences and inhabited spaces means these stories have a tendency to run up against the margins of each other. In that sense, the collection feels blurred, kaleidoscopic – which enables us to see not only how the characters imagine themselves, but also how they are imagined by others. One character, Lucy, is convinced of her inherent dynamism and beauty, yet a classmate in another story remembers her briefly and contemptuously as small and inconsequential.

With such playful narration, it comes as no surprise that excruciating incidences are imparted with flippancy. Zhang's characters sometimes commit heinous acts, like in 'The Empty, the Empty, the Empty', which follows a day in the life of Francine, Lucy, and Lucy's cousin Frangie. This story features a harrowing rape scene, orchestrated by children all still in elementary school: clumsy, naive and unaware of the gravity of the situation.

“  
The alluring potential of the American Dream collides head on with its realities  
”

Gruesome perhaps, but it does not feel gratuitous. In interviews, Zhang emphasises her choice of such graphic portrayals of violence and cruelty as a portrayal that 'resists crass moralising' and offers a depiction of the immigrant experience that refuses to pander to the 'good immigrant' stereotype so often expected from minority writers.

Zhang says 'I didn't go to extreme lengths to ensure every character was loveable or even likeable, but I didn't make them monsters either. They are children, after all, who (hopefully) are still allowed the right to make mistakes, learn, and grow.' Centring these voices, and doing it with a generosity that eschews the obvious tropes, is what makes *Sour Heart* a truly worthwhile, and undoubtedly extremely timely, read.



▲ The collection explores immigrants' lives in a New York tenement block (MARCSZARKOWSKI/FLICR)





# Sensual/Virtual, a new theme for the Fitzwilliam

**Peter Hunt** explores the museum's first annual theme, setting a sensational tone for the future

For the past two years, should you have entered through the towering Grecian portico of the Fitzwilliam Museum, you would have perhaps been disappointed. The mighty Corinthian columns on the exterior would have given way to slender metallic poles supporting the scaffolding inside, reflecting the costly restoration project that has taken place to restore the classical grandeur of the Great Gallery.

But those days have now passed and, in a reception that sought to befit the magnificence of this restoration, the Vice-Chancellor, dwarfed by Van Dyke's portrait of Charles I which he stood before, declared the Gallery open. And what more apt theme to fit this richly refurbished gallery, but an exploration of how artists have sought to convey sensory information through virtual media, such as paint or print.

Within the Great Gallery itself, the rural landscapes of Gainsborough sit alongside the pastoral portraits of Stubbs, conveying to the visitor an appreciation of these artists' love for rural society, despite their bucolic world now largely lost under the edifice of time, only accessible to the visitor through such

artistic media.

The theme broadens beyond the traditional forms of artwork with literary 'art' being featured frequently as well, most visibly with an early copy of Shelley's *Adonais* situated in a cabinet adjacent to these painted works of pastoral beauty. In contrast to these, *Adonais* powerfully conveys the deep emotional anguish of Shelley at the death of Keats, and reflects the range of virtual media displayed in the gallery, with this sensual connection between artist and visitor achieved through the stroke of the pen rather than brush.

This theme extends beyond the Great Gallery into other areas of the museum, with other smaller rooms containing works in other media, such as printed nudes by Rembrandt in Gallery XVI, while Gallery VII holds some older works, such as those by the French Baroque artist Nicolas Poussin.

Poussin's artistic method is revealed by the museum's detailed recreation of his 'machine': a wooden cuboidal box with small figurines in it and a small opening through which to view them, rather akin to a nativity scene in a village church. This unusual arrangement enabled Poussin to mentally picture his scenes,



▲ Gallery 3 (FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM)

and better understand how to convey senses of depth, colour and indeed the figures' emotion to the reviewer of his completed work.

I experienced this sense of artistic connection quite unexpectedly, when I had the privilege of attending the exhibition's opening last week, and found myself staring closely at a work by Titian, also held in Gallery VII. As I worked my way along the painting, analysing its skilful minute detail, I noticed an older lady standing quite far behind me, yet still appreciating the same masterpiece. Not wishing to spoil her view, I took some steps back to appreciate the work from afar, and to look at it from her perspective in case there was something that I had missed.

This visitor understood that the painting was not the sole piece of artistic work in the gallery, but that the gallery itself was a masterpiece of architectural art. The classical opulence of the gallery complemented and contrasted aspects of the work, compelling the visitor to view these works of art, however familiar they may be, in a new light and to gain from them a greater appreciation of the senses which they sought to convey.

Well worth a visit.

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# Music



## Vulture's COUNTDOWN TO CAMBRIDGE SOUNDTRACK



by Mollie McCarthy-Evans

As she begins her first term at Cambridge, Mollie McCarthy-Evans shares the playlist that followed her through the Cambridge application process. Her song choices reflect the optimism and doubt of waiting to receive an offer, the tunes serving as a coping mechanism for the fear of rejection.

Upon receiving her offer, the songs reflect her feelings towards her chosen college, and an apprehension towards the Cambridge clubbing scene, having been advised 'If you like Mr Brightside, you'll be fine.'

**High Hopes**  
Panic! At the Disco

**Sissy that walk**  
RuPaul

**Mr Brightside**  
The Killers

**Applause**  
Lady Gaga

**Hung Up**  
Madonna

**Faith**  
George Michael

**Once in Royal David's City**  
The Choir of King's College

**Icarus**  
Bastille

**Money, Money, Money**  
Abba

**Hozier**  
No Plan



▼ INSTAGRAM/BRANDONFLOWERS

## In Ghosteen Nick Cave deftly navigates the landscape of grief

**Leah Thomas** finds Nick Cave's intimate portrayal of grief and healing to be one of his most moving

Although *Ghosteen* is not Nick Cave's first album to be released following the death of his son, Arthur, in 2015, it is the first to explicitly confront the tragedy. In his latest project with the *Bad Seeds*, the king of gothic rock delivers an album that is simultaneously heart-breaking and hopeful as he explores his grief through dreamlike, synth-heavy soundscapes.

Over the course of 11 songs, Cave's grief manifests in a series of haunting, apocalyptically gorgeous landscapes. In *Sun Forest*, he paints a picture of a garden that could be Eden, or heaven. Yet the beauty seen here has a melancholic quality: we see 'burning trees', 'fields of smoke', and 'black butterflies.' We are reminded such a paradise can only be reached through death. It seems that, for Cave, there is hope to be found in the concept of an afterlife, but it is a hope tinged with sorrow.

Acting as a kind of spirit guide as he traverses his thoughts in search of peace is Cave's son, who appears as 'the little white shape dancing at the end of the hall.' The notion that the person who aids him in his navigation of his grief is the very person who he has lost is incredibly poignant. Throughout, there is a sense of the tug between Cave's conflicting wishes to have his son back and to let him go.

We feel the ache of this separation all the more keenly thanks to Cave's unusually subdued vocals. On *Hollywood*, his wavering falsetto suggests barely contained anguish, while the wry tenderness with which he delivers the refrain 'Yeah, I know' on *Night Raid* conveys the bittersweet nature of memory. Half singing, half talking, he adopts an almost conversational tone and, as a result, we become not merely observers, but his companions on this journey.

“  
Nick Cave may not have  
found peace just yet, but  
he has found hope.  
”

If the vast, mythological settings of songs like *Sun Forest* and *Bright Horses* reflect the enormity of grief, it is in the smaller, more intimate scenes that Cave most effectively conveys its inescapable reality. With the titular track, *Ghosteen*, we get a frank depiction of the domesticity of grief. We are drawn right into Cave's home as he zooms in on a single, devastating image, singing: 'You're in the back room washing his clothes / Love's



▲ We are left with the sense that, with *Ghosteen*, we are sharing in a process of rebirth (INSTAGRAM/ NICKCAVEOFFICIAL)

like that, you know.' A mundane act become gut-wrenchingly tragic under the magnifying lens of loss. You can't escape grief when it lives where you live.

Yet the omnipresence of loss is also, curiously, presented as a source of consolation. In the final song of the album, *Hollywood*, we are told the story of Kisa, a grieving mother who seeks help from Buddha. He tells her that her baby will be saved if she can collect a mustard seed from the house where no one has died – but there is no such house. Here, we perhaps see Cave reach a kind of conclusion. Grief may be overwhelming, and complex, but it's an experience we must all endure at some point and that makes it slightly easier to bear. Though his pain is still raw and his quest for healing unfinished, *Ghosteen* ends on a cautiously optimistic note as Cave sings, 'And I'm just waiting now, for peace to come.'

We are left with the sense that, with *Ghosteen*, we are sharing in a process of rebirth. Nick Cave may not have found peace just yet – but he has found hope.





# Film & TV

## Kiki's Delivery Service changed my outlook on the year abroad

The Studio Ghibli classic helped **Sarah Brady** realise that it's okay to feel vulnerable when you're far from home

*Content Note: This article contains a brief mention of street harassment.*

**K**iki's Delivery Service (1989) details a year in the life of Kiki, a headstrong 13-year-old and fledgling witch about to fly the nest – on her mother's broomstick – in an age-old quest for independence and identity. As per tradition, she is to settle in the first witch-deficient town she happens upon and spend a year there, honing her magical abilities.

A childhood favourite of mine, I had almost overlooked its relevance when I stumbled across it a week ago, on a quest for some Ghibli-induced-serotonin.

“Any expectations you have must accommodate growing pains”

For those who've taken Modern and Medieval Languages, the plot will skirt uncomfortably close to the infamous Year Abroad (especially the part about arriving in your chosen country by broom). The film deals with the self-doubt, vulnerability and isolation often experienced by those living abroad and proves to be a cathartic – or at least comforting – watch.

Having recently intermitted whilst on my year abroad and still feeling quite sensitive about the whole thing, it was soothing to hear Kiki's father lovingly reassure her that, should things go awry, she can always return home.

Caught in the bliss of that tender moment, I was unprepared for when Kiki, with all the tact of an average thirteen-year-old, replies: “And come back a failure?” followed by mock-gagging. I winced and turned the film off. It was only once my ego had recovered, several days later, that I returned to finish the film.

Kiki, like many, begins her year a perfectionist. She is eager to prove herself and test her abilities, despite struggling even to fly her broom. Kiki's flying is unsteady at best and dangerous at worst; within minutes of arriving in her town, she causes a multi-car



▲ Kiki seems to soar above her worries – but lands with an undignified bump (YOUTUBE/MADMAN)

pileup and crashes into several pedestrians while hurtling down the pavement. (We've all been there.)

By the end of her first day, her enthusiasm is waning: she hasn't found accommodation or employment, she has experienced street harassment and she has almost been arrested. However, Kiki gets her lucky break when she finds work running an air courier service for a bakery.

After several delivery-related mishaps and even more social ones, Kiki becomes listless and depressed. Her year abroad is falling short of her expectations: she feels like an outsider, her passion has waned since relying on it for income and her black cat, Jiji, has lost the ability to speak. Her despondency manifests as a loss of her magical powers: she can no longer fly. In a fit of despair, she flops face-first onto her bed and stays there, wrapped in a blanket cocoon. Again, we've all been there.

“Vulnerability does not equate to failure”

As ever in times of spiritual crisis, rescue comes in the form of a bohemian woman who lives in the woods: Ursula, a friend of Kiki's. Ursula invites her to spend some time away from the city in her cabin – an offer which Kiki accepts, hoping some time away will cure her inability to fly. (If you do not have access to a log-cabin-owning bohemian, then just call your friends at home, or something). As a remedy, Ursula urges Kiki to take long walks, appreciate the scenery and doze off at noon. Simply put, Ursula encourages

her to enjoy her time alone instead of fretting that she has fallen short of anyone's expectations, emphasising the importance of self-compassion.

“A cathartic – or at least comforting – watch”

In Kiki's Delivery Service, vulnerability does not equate to failure. It can, rather, be an opportunity for introspection and evolution. It is a comforting watch for anyone despairing alone in a foreign country, reminding us that the year abroad is for personal as much as academic growth. Any expectations you have must accommodate growing pains, rather than punishing them.

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# Violet

By Varsity

# In defence of Cambridge’s clubbing scene: a fresher’s perspective

Q

I’m a finalist and I can’t help but feel sad about the fact that it’s my final year - I worry that instead of enjoying the year, I’ll be spending it being sad that I’ll be leaving soon(ish). Any advice on how to get over it?

A

Life beyond Cambridge can be intimidating, especially when you’ve been stuck in the Cambridge bubble for two years (or more!). It’s easier said than done, but remember that you still have a third of your degree left to enjoy. Use this year as an opportunity to join that society you wanted to in your first year, go night punting, or try that random club night. You want to graduate knowing that you’ve taken every opportunity presented to you and you’ve lived your Cambridge life to its fullest. There are a lot of people in the same boat as you, so sharing your worries with your friends could really help.

Try and look at life beyond the ‘bridge as another opportunity to seize with both hands. You’re setting yourself up for another chapter of your life, which will be just as full of new possibilities as the last three years have been. It might be an idea to have something lined up for after you graduate, whether that’s a holiday, an exciting job, or a new city to live in. This will give you something positive in the future to look forward to, rather than focusing on what’s in the past.

Just because you’re leaving Cambridge, it doesn’t mean you’re going to be leaving all your memories and friends behind. It is these things that make Cambridge what it is and it wouldn’t be the same without them, even if you stayed for another three years. Enjoy your last year and look to the future with anticipation, not sadness.



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

Sofia Johanson shares her fresh observations of Cambridge nightlife

With my friends at London universities ridiculing Cambridge clubs for their tacky interiors and themes, and my Bristolian acquaintances mocking the choice of drinks, clientele and music, I find myself determined to defend the clubbing scene in Cambridge.

Music

My initial experience of Vinyl showed me that Abba can be just as at home in a club as RnB. Overall, the music isn’t exactly ‘cool’, but as the people inside aren’t either, it kind of works.

Attire

Literally anything goes... anything. I’ve seen a safari-themed Girton pub crawl decked out in animal masks and every form of leopard print and 35-year-old men clad in full lycra catsuits.

Beverages

As most freshers turned up ab-

solutely smashed from their pre-drinks with 10 people they barely knew, it didn’t seem to matter what the drinks were like, either because people didn’t need them or because they were so far gone that they wouldn’t mind paying £6 for a gin and tonic.

Etiquette

My first night out in Cambridge ended promptly with my companion depositing her dinner over the railing in the smoking area of Cindies and, although this hasn’t been my favourite moment of freshers, we were offered Ubers and chaperoned by about 10 different people we had never met.

Clientele

Initially I thought that medics would be a hard-working, low-key bunch, but how wrong I was. Within 10 minutes a 1st-year medic from Pembroke stumbled up to me and some other future-doctor friends to declare, with weeping eyes, that he’d just completed a suicide shot, amidst conversations about the cadaver they had ‘met’ that morning.

“Literally anything goes... anything.”

# Societies, societies, societies...

Anastasia Dalchanina shares her experiences of finding The One (society to which you actually commit)

I was “one of those” in high school. I took part in every school play, played the trumpet in marching band (I know), scored accidental goals for the girls’ football team and even tried self-defence. You could say I like to keep busy (to the point of near-collapse every week), and I certainly wasn’t planning on changing that at university.

By this point, we’ve all been there. And by there, I mean Parker’s Piece during one of the most exciting, overwhelming times of the year – the Freshers’ Fair.

We’ve all heard the warnings not to sign up to too many societies because we ‘won’t have the time’, which in my experience has evidently proved to be accurate. But I would still recommend trying to exercise all of your different interests as much as you can, no matter how ridiculous they may seem.

Before arriving in Cambridge, I had decided that I was going to be a part of the Assassin’s Guild, a university-wide game in which you are given the names of three people whom you have to ‘kill’ whilst also remembering that you are on

someone else’s hit list.

My enthusiasm was short-lived, however, as I was unceremoniously murdered during pre-drinks one night after being horrifically betrayed by a boy who had kissed and then ghosted me. I received a knock on my door and naturally, when my intoxicated self realised who it was, I was expecting an apology or a declaration of some sort, but instead I found myself soaked, and not in the way I had been expecting. It turned out he had brought my murderer to my door and I had been struck by a water balloon.

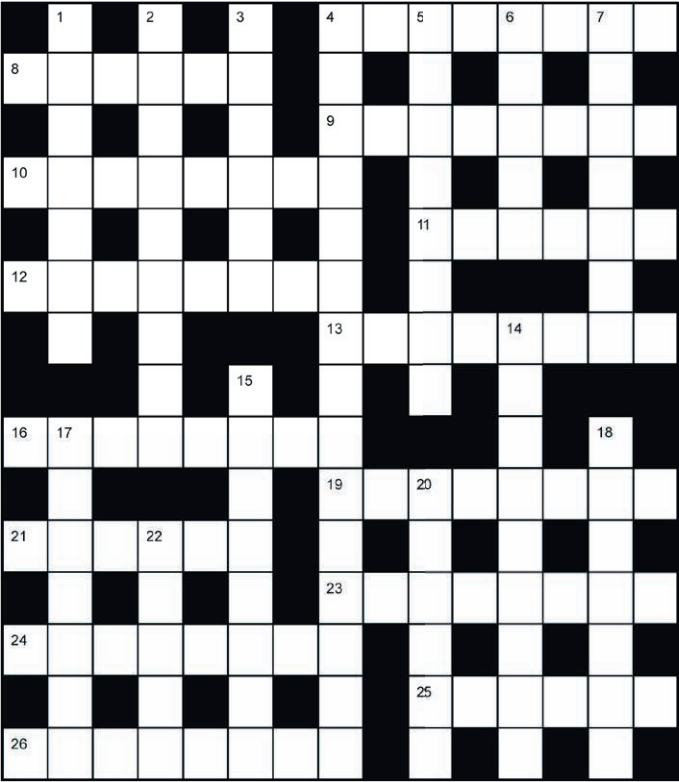
Nevertheless, no matter how many society-related blunders you make, it will all be worth it once you find your ‘thing’. After attending one of their many taster sessions around the University, I joined the Cambridge University Dancesport Team, affectionately known to me now as ‘CUDT’, ‘the dancers’ or ‘the light of my entire life’. I have waltzed and cha cha-ed my way across the country, and earned my half-blue in a sport I would never have seen myself doing just a few short years ago.

The fact that there’s such an inordinate amount of societies in Cambridge means that there is genuinely something for everyone, so go forth and try out anything and everything you can. The Bubble is your oyster.

“The Bubble is your oyster”

# Cryptic Crossword #3

by Pitt\*



ACROSS

- 4 Clark Kent say, or eaglet, drifting (5,3)
- 8 Invent cosmetics (6)
- 9 On edge, like a full bar (8)
- 10 Kind of court for jumpy lawyer? (8)
- 11 Bit of pressure found in sherpa's calf (6)
- 12 Squid caught malaria at sea (8)
- 13 The heartless king hides surprise after absence of journal (8)
- 16 Accident in end of risky F1: on the contrary for little swimmers (8)
- 19 Sweetheart's speed makes a relative stress (8)
- 21 Audible sigh at fifth pasture: ultimately cut through it (6)
- 23 Spice ruined most of drama mock (8)
- 24 Snake trail found annually on the Thames (4,4)
- 25 Country vegetable, new (6)
- 26 Nick one point? So, making a comeback, charge! (8)

DOWN

- 1 Fruit and nuts (7)
- 2 Oddly, Gregory hugs diagram in study (9)
- 3 Fight volunteers from city state (6)
- 4 Insignificant orthopaedic - Anne is mistreated (1,4,2,3,5)
- 5 Throw pans at drunkards (8)
- 6 Regulations game the French (5)
- 7 Secret police jumbled postage (7)
- 14 Advice to thespian gets them in cast (5,1,3)
- 15 Endlessly support traitor amidst fifty-two of the intelligentsia (8)
- 17 Managed to contain extremely chaotic ducks and another animal (7)
- 18 Child taken in by fibs - useful understatement (7)
- 20 Part of diocese is sort of equal? (6)
- 22 Altogether, begin to tease posh dry one (5)

\*Pitt is a pseudonym

Find the answers next week at varsity.co.uk!



# Sports preview, Michaelmas Week 2

**Michael Nguyen-Kim**  
gives a rundown of what  
promises to be a busy week  
in Cambridge sport

It's a big week for Cambridge sport, as the majority of University teams play their first competitive fixtures and the various college sporting leagues start to get into full swing. Here are some of the highlights:

College Football: Trinity v  
Queens, Saturday 19 October,  
1pm, Trinity Old Field

Saturday's clash is a blockbuster affair between two college football powerhouses. Trinity and Queens' finished 2nd and 3rd respectively in the Premier division of the league last year and will be hoping to contend for the title once again. In their path is last year's League and Cuppers champion, Fitzwilliam.

Women's football: Cambridge v  
Loughborough, Wednesday 23  
October, 2pm, Fitzwilliam College  
Playing Fields

### Cambridge's women's football team

start their year next Wednesday by hosting Loughborough at the Fitzwilliam College Playing Fields. Facing off against the undisputed titans of British university sport won't be easy, but the Light Blues' are coming off a solid 2018/19 season in which they won the Varsity match against Oxford 3-1.

Rugby Union: CURUFC Women's v Swansea Women's, Wednesday 23 October, 2pm, Grange Road

Cambridge's women's rugby Blues went great guns last year. After winning the Varsity Match against Oxford, they went on to win the BUCS Midlands 1A Rugby record with an undefeated 9-0 run. They have faced a sterner test this year in the Premier division, with a 41-36 loss in Cardiff in their first match followed by a 17-all draw at Bristol. They will be playing at home again once next Wednesday, hoping to record their first win of the season against Swansea, who are themselves thus far winless.

Netball: Cambridge v Birmingham,  
Wednesday 23 October, 4.30pm,  
University Sports Centre

## The Light Blues take on Birmingham

at the University Sports Centre next Wednesday in another season opener. The netballers endured a tough season last year, having been walloped by Oxford 47-26 in their Varsity fixture as well as a last-placed finish in the BUCS Midlands 1A league in which they did not record a single win. Having been relegated, a new season will bring fresh hope as the players look to improve upon last years' results.

Basketball: Cambridge @ Derby,  
Wednesday 23rd October, 8pm

The men's basketball Blues will open their season in Derby next Wednesday in what promises to an intriguing encounter. Having won promotion last year by virtue of winning the Midlands 2B division, they will undoubtedly be looking to parlay that momentum into further success this season.

Rugby Union: CURUFC Men's @ Trinity College Dublin, Friday 25 October, 7pm

CURUFC's men continue their preparations for the Varsity Match next Friday, making the short hop across the Irish Sea to face Trinity College Dublin. The



**▲ The Women's Football Blues' are one of a number of teams opening their seasons next week** (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

clash represents another chance for star international imports James Horwill and Flip van der Merwe to further press their claims for Blues, having already seen significant playing time in the past two matches.

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**What's on in Week Two?** It's a big week in Cambridge sport, as matches get into full swing **31**



## Women's badminton secure solid victory over Lincoln

**Joseph Powell**  
Sport Reporter

Cambridge University Badminton Club (CUBaC) women's team got off to a blistering start in their first match up of the new season, dropping only one rubber from 8 to triumph over Lincoln 7-1.

Playing on home territory at the University Sports Centre, the Light Blues started confidently. Briony Whitfield secured a 21-3/21-9 victory over Rose Jang - with Whitfield landing several back corner shots to take the first game in rapid time, before demonstrating superior movement around the court to take the second.

In the adjacent match Karen Gao

**▲ Cambridge triumphed over Lincoln**

(JOSEPH POWELL)

played out a much closer encounter with Aileen Cook, in what would be the only blemish on the Cambridge scorecard of the afternoon. Both displayed good judgement in letting shots drift out of bounds but it was Cook who would take the match in two games, displaying good stamina for 21-19 and 21-17 wins.

Doubles followed with Light Blues captain Felicity Coan and Amy Chen, as well as Sylvia Ma and Claire Zhang pairing up against Ellie Thompson and Rachel Capley, and Laura Pellegrini and Capley again respectively. In the former, Coan showed quick reflexes throughout in response to repeated barrages from Lincoln, complimenting Chen's forceful back hand to see the match out in two games, with 21-14 and 21-18 the scores.

“*The final two rubbers witnessed the closest encounter of the session*”

In the latter, Zhang and Ma offered a more consistent and measured display than their opponents to take the set 21-11/21-17, despite some close boundary calls.

Singles then resumed as Whitfield faced off against Cook and Gao played Jang. Whitfield displayed agility characteristic of her afternoons performance, combining this with precise forehand play to take another match in two games, 21-17/21-7.

On the other court, Gao showed no signs of set back from her earlier encounter to land precise shots back of court to take the first 21-9 and the second 21-12.

The final two rubbers witnessed the closest encounter of the session. Ma and Zhang paired up again to take on

Thompson and Capley, narrowly losing the first game 20-22 before recovering to take the final two 21-14/21-19 in the only three game matches of the afternoon.

In the last, Coan and Chen registered another confident performance, barely allowing their opponents to reach double digits. The duo secured victory with scores at 21-11/21-9 to close out a resounding afternoon for the Light Blues, as dominant individual and team performances impart momentum to allow CUBaC to charge head first into the coming season.ww

Cambridge are next in action away to Nottingham Trent in two week's time (30/10/19), whilst Lincoln return back home to face De Montford on the same afternoon.

## Cambridge defeats Oxford 11-6 in fierce table tennis battle

**Posy Putnam**  
Sport Reporter

On Wednesday afternoon, Cambridge University men's table tennis team beat Oxford at the University Sports Centre, winning 11 of the 17 matches played.

The general premise saw four Oxford players and four Cambridge players compete in four rounds of single

matches, before the event finished with one doubles match. Cambridge won 11 singles matches, with Omar Khassal, Aland Chan and Liam Grant winning three apiece, and Vyas Raina winning two. However, they went on to lose the more relaxed final doubles match 0-3.

As the matches ended, the players crowded around to watch the final single match play out, clapping for good shots, but otherwise remaining silently

focused on the games.

The doubles match at the end thus acted as a sort of bonus; Cambridge had already beaten Oxford. Last year, Cambridge finished fifth in the 2018-19 BUCS Midlands League, winning four of their matches, and reached the second round of the Midlands Conference Cup, losing to the eventual runners-up, Warwick University.

However, the Cambridge men have

had more success in the Varsity matches. Their last loss to Oxford occurred in 2003, and they had a five-year streak of 10-0 wins in the years between, and including, 2010 and 2014.

The current all-time standings see Cambridge having won 41 men's first team matches and Oxford only 30, with 5 draws.

The next Cambridge table tennis match is an away match in Leicester.