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VARSITY

Trinity Hall admits 'error' in inviting fellow accused of sexual harassment to student lecture

Rosie Bradbury
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Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of sexual harassment

Trinity Hall admitted that they had "erroneously" invited Peter Hutchinson to a lecture open to undergraduates in 2017 following complaints in 2015 by ten students of verbal sexual harassment, a statement released yesterday has said.

In their timeline of events, the college said that in late 2017, "an invitation was, in error, extended to Dr Hutchinson by the College to attend its annual Milestones Lecture, a public event open to students", in breach of an agreement between the complainants, Hutchinson

and the College that he would not attend any social events with students present.

After his attendance at the lecture, the College Master said that Hutchinson would withdraw permanently from Trinity Hall. However, Hutchinson was able to contest the college's decision for him to withdraw permanently - "as he had been invited (albeit erroneously) by the College".

Because of the mistaken invitation, the College underwent a full independent review. Following the 'erroneous' invitation and subsequent internal review, the College received legal advice and then struck an agreement with Hutchinson.

This agreement was recently voted

News page 8 ►



▲ The BBC reported that a Trinity Hall fellow was 'readmitted' despite sexually harassing 10 students (ANDREW HYNES)

Interview Sonita Alleyne, a historic college master

Zak Coleman

When Sonita Alleyne was announced as the new master of Jesus College earlier this summer, the story made national headlines. The first Black person to occupy such a role, Alleyne's appointment has been celebrated as a signal that the university is serious about efforts to diversify. The hugely successful media

executive's background is undeniably a far-cry from what we have come to expect of those individuals usually selected to lead Oxbridge colleges. Born in Barbados, Alleyne's family settled in the diverse, working-class area of Leytonstone in East London when she was three years old. There, she attended the local comprehensive school, and was one of three students in her year to go on to study at Cambridge.

This is where we begin our conversation, early on a chilly Friday morning ("I've got fresher's flu!", she jokes) at the end of her second week officially as the head of Jesus College.

As it turns out, Sonita Alleyne's first experience of Cambridge was not when she arrived at Fitzwilliam as an undergraduate, but at Jesus. She visited the college she now leads as part of a trip to visit a girl studying there who had

been two years above her in school. "It's great when you see someone who's like you who's there, so that was a real inspiration in terms of me applying", she tells me. I can't help but think that, returning as the college's master more than 30 years later, Sonita Alleyne will be performing this same function on a much larger scale; a signal to people of colour and those from working class backgrounds that Cambridge is a place

for them.

Beginning her undergraduate course in Philosophy in 1985, Alleyne immediately dived into an eclectic mix of extracurricular ventures. In her first year, she was on the Fitz Spring Ball Committee, sang in a band, and was in the Mystical Sciences Club (Tragically, it seems this group no longer exists). She also joined

Full Story pages 2-3 ►

EDITORIAL

So much for breaking the silence

Content Note: This article contains discussion of sexual misconduct
On Saturday, the BBC reported that Trinity Hall had 'readmitted' an Emeritus Fellow accused of sexually harrasing at least ten students. As the week has progressed, students and members of the University, both past and present, have been outspoken in condemning this (News, Page 8). An open letter expressing solidarity with the students affected has already garnered over 1,000 signatures within the space of just five days.

Little has been heard, however, from fellows of the College. Specifically, the silence from members of its governing body is damning.

We understand that the College wishes to keep this situation under control, and is working to minimise the legal ramifications of disclosing certain information. But the real damage has already been done. Last night, the College admitted their "error" in previous handlings of this situation, after they invited the accused Fellow, who had been banned from teaching undergraduates, and from attending events at which they are present, to a student lecture. But still, no apology, or any adequate clarification of the present situation, has been provided. Those members of Trinity Hall who hold the most power remain silent.

This summer, the University was subject to considerable scrutiny regarding the shortcomings of its disciplinary proceedings in the case of incidences of sexual misconduct. Time and time again, we have heard of its commitment to supporting those who have experienced sexual harrasment, yet stories of those let down by the system continue to surface.

This week, yet again, procedures have fallen short. Students have been let down. And yet those with in positions of power remain reluctant to admit wrongdoing, or to speak out about the wrongdoing of their colleagues.

So many instances of sexual misconduct go unreported, often due to lack of faith in the system. At this point, touting out a tired line calling on students to 'break the silence' is laughable, when there is no proof that senior members of the University and its Colleges will hold up their end of the bargain.

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Interviews

Sonita Alleyne, the first Black woman to lead an Oxbridge college, wants to bring Jesus into 2019

Zak Coleman speaks to Sonita Alleyne about Cambridge in the '80s, and her vision for Jesus

► Continued from front page

CUSU as its anti-racism officer. I was curious to know more about her experience of occupying such an overwhelmingly white space as one of a tiny number of black students at Cambridge in the 1980s. Stopping to consider, Alleyne begins by describing the '70s and '80s as a "really, really tough" time in terms of race. She arrived in Cambridge just 4 years after the 1981 Race Riots. 1968, the year Sonita was born, was also the year in which Enoch Powell delivered his infamous *Rivers of Blood* speech, decrying the immigration policies without which Alleyne's family would not have been

able to move to the UK.

I ask whether this context of racial tensions was reflected in her own experience as an undergraduate. Pausing for thought, she says: "it's an interesting one because your experience as an undergraduate is your experience as a black person in any walk of life." Elaborating, Alleyne tells me about an occasion recently when she was speaking to a young black personal trainer at her local gym ("you can say I'm quite svelt!", she jokes) who had left his job as a brick layer because of the racism he experienced. "And that was in the last 6 months," she adds meaningfully. Yet she does not describe an undergraduate experience marred by racism. "I wouldn't look back at my time and say 'oh I had

it much, much worse than anyone else.'" In fact, she's keen to point out the positives, particularly the close friendships she forged amongst the cohort of black students during her time at Cambridge. "Everyone went through it, but what Cambridge did for them has set them up for life. And that's been amazing."

But Sonita's appointment is undeniably part of a real moment of change for the university on the issue of racial inclusion. Following years of student activism and intense criticism of the tiny numbers of black students admitted to the University, this move is, it seems, part of a long-overdue, broader institutional push for greater representation and inclusivity. Indeed, it was followed a few months later by the announcement that this year's intake of black students was up by almost 50% compared to last year, a result of the so-called 'Stormzy effect'.

"I didn't come here thinking, 'hey, I'm gonna be the first,'" she explains. "I went for the role because I really, really like the community of people that are here. I also really like helping people. I think, as I've got older, I realise that my moments of joy are when I help people. And so I like that, I thought 'Ok I can do this all the time. This is really great. It's like every day is Christmas.'" On the question of being 'the first', she says "I don't mind it". She goes on "I think it's very important that the process for appointment was very, very thorough. So I'm very satisfied that through that





process the college got to know me and I got to know the college. They elected me and they voted and I feel like, yeah, I'm the best person for the job...who turned up and applied," she adds with a laugh. And her vision for the college? Alleyne seems to see her role above all as a custodian of Jesus as a community, a theme she returns to throughout our conversation. "It's been 523 years, but for these ten years, I am the guardian of that community spirit...because I think that's what the essence of a college is, whilst you're here." That is not to say that Alleyne is afraid of modernising change in areas where "we haven't caught up with the fact that people in 2019 are living their lives differently."

Does this openness to modernisation extend to some of the central issues of student activism in 2019? I asked Alleyne about the controversy surrounding Jesus's possession of a bronze cockerel statue, Okukor, which was looted from the Benin Empire – now part of Nigeria – in the 19th century. It was only after a sustained student activist campaign in 2016 that the cockerel was removed from display in the college's hall. But, three years on, it is still held in storage. I ask Alleyne how we can justify not immediately repatriating this stolen artefact. "It's very much in my in-tray, after two weeks of being here. It's actually one of the things that came up when I was being interviewed. I know that the college have been very involved in the Benin dialogue

group, which is an international dialogue group working across different museums in Cambridge and Paris and London. And it's the Benin court which is very much involved in that. So we are going to be looking at it. I'm not going to pre-empt any kind of outcome, but we'll be looking at it and there will be a college wide discussion about it."

Another issue we spoke about is the continuing stranglehold of the middle and upper classes on the University's admissions process. I put it to her that even amongst those accepted from state schools, highly selective grammar schools and comprehensives in affluent areas still dominate. "I think quite rightly there's a real emphasis on [recruitment teams] going to look at the most underrepresented areas, the areas with the most deprivation, so there's a real focus on that. We just recently had a strategy day at Jesus looking at that. Our stats are 25% from most underrepresented areas and 20% of home students matriculating at Jesus this year are BAME, so I think that's good." Alleyne argues: "we have a great story to tell...I've been speaking to a lot of the ambassadors and listening to their stories, and it is kind of a perpetuating story because a lot of them came on an access visit and are now here." Yet she is quick to stress: "to me, Cambridge is a bastion of excellence, and I like that. I'm absolutely comfortable with that. I just want to make sure that lots of people

“I didn't come here thinking, 'hey, I'm gonna be the first'”

◀ Jesus College was founded in 1496 (ROSIE BRADBURY)

◀ Alleyne grew up in the working-class area of Leytonstone, in East London (JOE COOK)

have the opportunity to come here...and it links back to your first point around me being the first black head of an Oxbridge college. If it encourages people to think it's accessible, absolutely fine. Good. Please apply."

We end with a series of lighter, quick-fire questions. Peanut butter and fish fingers (not together) are the new Master's go-to comfort foods. When I ask her for an album she loves – music having been a hugely important part of her life and career – she refers to a recent conversation with a grad student, who she told to listen to American Jazz fusion band Mahavishnu Orchestra, while he recommended her National Health. Jokingly telling me "you can say I got most animated in this part of the interview!", she reveals her love for Tom Waits, recommending that I "go in at the early stuff, because it all gets a little bit darker later on in his career. But it's a great insight into a brilliant mind. I do think he's one of the best lyricists. He writes about things and you think, God has he really gone there? It's just glorious genius. I did get most animated when talking about Tom Waits didn't I?" Slightly nervously, I ask her if it's awful that I'd never heard of him. "No it isn't awful! What will be awful is when I see you next time and I go 'Zak, have you listened to Tom Waits?! [and you say no]'. I promise to listen. "I won't do that," she assures me.

On her favourite novel, Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter*, which she reads nearly every year: "it's one of those books where I go back to it and think, did he really say it like that? That's just amazing." She tells me that she's recently taken up oil painting and creative writing, unexpectedly ending with a lesson pretty much every Cambridge student could probably do with remembering: "It's nice when you get to a kind of settled stage. You can do things that you don't have to be good at. It's like, when some people say 'oh I do oil painting' and you assume they're really good at it. I'm not. But I don't care. I really don't care. It's great to not have to worry about being good at something." Amen to that.

We leave her college office and go out into First Court to get a picture in front of the horse statue. As the photographer sets up, Alleyne casually stops a passing second year to check back in with him on an issue that they had clearly been discussing in an earlier conversation. After the photos have been taken and we've said goodbye, she only walks a couple of metres before I see her deep in conversation again, this time with two elderly fellows.

Even writing up this article in the college café, I see her chatting easily to a group of students waiting in line to order a coffee. How has she, barely two weeks in, already managed to establish a relationship with so many college members? Suddenly her emphasis throughout our discussion on nurturing Jesus' "community spirit" doesn't feel wishy-washy at all. Her skill, it seems, lies in an ability to put people at ease, a desire to exist in the thick of college life, not just observe it from on high. Warm and approachable, Alleyne is absolutely free of the heirs and graces we normally associate with those in her position. Having spoken in her luxurious college office, the ivory tower definitely still exists. Its occupant, however, seems to have a refreshing new approach, one that marks her out as a very different kind of master quite as much as her background.

Interviews

NEWS

1 in 4 BME students have faced racial harassment in UK, new report finds

Pages 4-5 ▶



▲ Senate House (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

FEATURES

Grad blues: my sense of loss after graduating from university

Page 12 ▶

How Cambridge's binge drinking culture enabled my alcoholism

Page 14 ▶



▲ Illustration by Lisha Zhong

Georgie Newson-Errey

Inclusive chapel services can provide a community and pastoral care

Page 18 ▶

SCIENCE

Can we prolong human life past the age of 115?

Page 20 ▶

SPORT

The declining influence of Cambridge in international sport

Page 31 ▶

News

'Completely oblivious' Universities unaware of thousands

Dylan Perera
News Correspondent

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of racist abuse, and mention of suicidal feelings

This week, a government equality watchdog published an inquiry into racial harassment in UK publicly funded universities which found that these institutions are seriously underestimating the scale of the issue.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report found a significant disparity between the number of

students experiencing racial harassment, the number of incidents reported to universities, and the number of incidents being recorded by those universities.

A student survey conducted by the EHRC found that an estimated 60,000 students reported complaints about racial harassment in universities across the UK within the first 6 months of last academic year. However, there were only 559 complaints of racial harassment recorded by all 159 of the UK's publicly funded universities over the last three-and-a-half years.

According to Rebecca Hilsenrath, chief executive of the EHRC, the report

shows that universities are "not only out of touch with the extent that [racism] is occurring on their campuses, some are also completely oblivious to the issue".

The EHRC also attempted to quantify the impact of racial harassment, finding that around 1 in 20 students said they left their studies due to racial harassment. Of the students who experienced racial harassment, 8% said they had felt suicidal.

According to the report, one in four BME students said that they had experienced racial harassment. This varied by ethnic group with 29% of black students, 27% of Asian students and 22% of mixed/other students facing harassment because of their race.

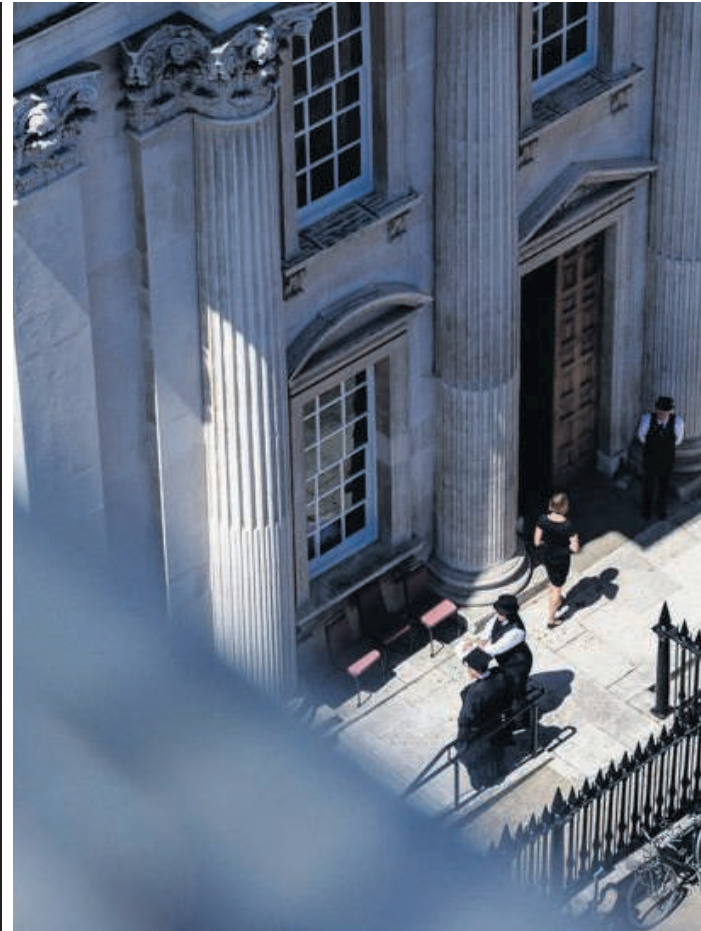
More than half of those harassed said they had experienced "racist name-calling, insults and jokes". Other common forms of harassment included micro-aggressions, being ignored or excluded from conversations or activities and being exposed to racist material. One in five said they were also physically assaulted.

Whilst, in most cases, the harasser was said to be another student, according to the report "a large number said it was their tutor or another academic."

Two-thirds of students who experienced racial harassment, however, did not report it. Some of the main reasons



◀ An estimated 60,000 students reported complaints (LOUIS ASHWORTH)



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of incidents of racial harassment



for this were that they had no confidence the university would address it, they could not judge whether it was serious enough to report, they found it difficult to prove what occurred and they did not even know how to report the incident. Others feared that reporting an incident might affect their education or career.

The report found that 8% of all students surveyed suffered racial harassment. Even if two-thirds of these students didn't report this harassment, that still leaves an average of around 10,000 reports of racial harassment per month across the entire university student population. However, across all publicly funded universities, an average of only 13 formal complaints were recorded per month. When the EHRC surveyed universities, they found that 29% claimed to have received zero complaints of racial harassment from students between the start of the 2015/16 academic year and January 2019.

The EHRC concluded that "universities have an incomplete picture of the scale of racial harassment because of underreporting and informal complaints not being recorded routinely."

The report did encounter some criticism because of its inclusion of racial harassment against white British students. It states, for example, that "9% of White British students had experienced racial harassment since starting the

course." Priyamvada Gopal, a reader in Cambridge's Faculty of English, argued that "Anti-English sentiment in Wales is emphatically not the same as targeting or disadvantaging black people as a vulnerable minority."



**Complaints
recorded in UK
universities over
last 3.5 years**



**Students who
experienced
racial
harassment and
did not report it**

Kehinde Andrews, Professor of Black Studies at Birmingham University, added: "The idea that you could equate the racism experienced by someone who is black, with the experience of a Welsh [person] at an English university demonstrates just how ignorant the authors of the report are. [The report] conflates racism with individual harassment and entirely minimises the racism by including groups who do not experience racial prejudice."

SUSTAINABLY SPOOKY Council tackles pumpkin waste

A scary amount of waste is generated every Halloween around Cambridge as pumpkins are carved but this year, instead of chucking away the remains of your creation, the City Council is urging residents to whip up some culinary magic. All pumpkins sold for carving at Halloween are edible and environmental charity Hubbub suggest a popular Thai pumpkin curry. If you're not that way inclined, however, the Council recommend visiting your local composting site.

TYPED TREASURE Hawking letter valued at £60,000

A rare typed letter by Stephen Hawking about the birth of his daughter and his hunt for gravitational waves is up for auction. Valued at £60,000, the letter, signed "Stephen", is believed to have been typed by the professor himself, and is dated November 10th, 1970, seven years after he was diagnosed with early-onset motor neurone disease. Hawking's physical capabilities deteriorated over time making authentic autographs rare, which explains the estimated cost of the letter.

I'D RATHER BE AT JOHN'S Chaplain to leave King's for St John's

Revd Andrew Hammond, Chaplain at King's College, is to move to St John's. In a letter to members, the Dean of the College explained that the post of Chaplain is a limited tenure and that Andrew will be leave at the end of December. Popular with students, Andrew is known for his non-traditional worship sessions, particularly the "radically alternative" 'Critical Mass'. There will be an interim Chaplain until a permanent appointment is made next September.

WALKING ON EGG SHELLS Shell opts for 'virtual' events after protests

Shell have changed an on-campus 'Get to Know Shell' recruitment event to a 'virtual' format, to be hosted by video link, a week after Cambridge Zero Carbon Society protested two similar recruitment events held at the university by fellow big-oil company, BP. These events, at which protestors carried signs reading "climate crime scene", were held on the same day that the University announced 'Cambridge Zero', a new programme intended to ensure the University adequately responds to climate change.

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News

University Council releases new report on the ‘pros and cons’ of divestment

Molly Killeen
Senior News Editor

The University Council this week published an update on an ongoing report on the advantages and disadvantages of a divestment policy.

The update, published in this week's edition of the University Reporter, says that the University Council, Cambridge's executive governing body, "fully supports the view shared across the University that progress needs to be made on identifying the best ways to deliver a zero-carbon future."

The Council, it continued, is "well aware of the urgency in addressing climate change and in particular the need to move fast in responding to the Grace."

"It is committed to doing this while maintaining an evidence-based approach in keeping with its status as a research institution, and by harnessing the great interest and knowledge already amassed within the collegiate University."

In April of this year the Council was directed to produce the report in order

to examine the "advantages and disadvantages, including the social and political ones, of a policy of divestment from fossil fuels", including estimates of cost, reputational consequences, strategies and an assessment of the "moral acceptability of a University committed to educating future generations, and whose core values include sustainability, benefitting from investments in fossil fuels that threaten that future".

The instruction came after an official motion was signed by more than 300 academics and submitted to Regent House, the University's primary governing body, in March. The open letter was prompted by significant protest of the decision made against full divestment by the Council in June 2018.

The new report is being led by Dr Ellen Quigley, a researcher appointed to initiate work on a part-time basis before the appointment of an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Officer, a new position agreed to on the 2017 recommendation of the Divestment Working Group (DWG).

So far, Dr Quigley's work has involved the coordination of a programme of

“[The Council is] well aware of the urgency in addressing climate change and the need to move fast”

"events, consultations, workshops and seminars" which her interim report says are aiming to "listen, record and synthesise views from across the University on the question of divestment, and on responsible investment more broadly... to educate the various constituencies within the University about responsible investing and...to provide guidance on best practices based on both the academic literature and approaches adopt-

▼ Students protest in favour of divestment
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

ed by other responsible asset owners."

Dr Quigley has recommended that the University join both the Institutional Investors group on Climate Change (IIGC) and the Responsible Investment Network-Universities (RINU). This has been approved by the Council.

The interim report is currently available to University members and the final report will be submitted to the Council by July 2020.



Emmanuel college nurse 'horrified' by transphobic article found in waiting room

Molly Killeen
Senior News Editor

Content Note: this article contains discussion of transphobia
A transphobic Daily Mail article was found posted in the waiting room of Emmanuel's college nurse, according to a tweet posted on Wednesday.

The article was written in 2017 and entitled "I've had it up to here with these gender fascists!". A subsequent tweet by Emmanuel Dean Revd. Jeremy Caddick said the nurse was "horrified" by the article. "She doesn't read the Mail and has no idea how it got there. Needless to say, it isn't there any longer!"

A University spokesperson, speaking on behalf of Emmanuel, told Varsity that the College was made aware of

“[The college condemns] any actions aimed at making [its] students feel unsafe”

the article in an email from a student and it had since been "removed and destroyed."

The College's nurse was "shocked to discover that it had been placed among the medical leaflets", the spokesperson said, and the College has so far been unable to identify who posted the material. According to the Twitter user who posted a picture of the article, "pages of comments" were also attached.

The University spokesperson said that the College "[condemns] any actions aimed at making our students feel unsafe or that seek to undermine our principles of inclusivity and tolerance and will take swift and appropriate action when that occurs." They also asked that anyone with information related to the posting of the article come forward and contact Emmanuel College.

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Cambridge City Council calls on businesses to reduce plastic use

Sophie Huskisson
News Correspondent

Last Tuesday, Cambridge City Council signed up to the Cambridge Plastic Pledge, which encourages every business and organisation in Cambridge to reduce the amount of single-use plastic they use.

The pledge was created by Visit Cambridge and Great Days Out In & Around Cambridge to raise awareness around the amount of single-use plastic used and the dangerous impacts it can have on the environment. Approximately 12 million tonnes of plastic ends up in our oceans every year, harming marine life and food chains. The pledge asks every business and organisation in Cambridge to make one small change this year. They are encouraged to reduce the amount of plastic they consume by either changing how they do something or using an alternative to plastic.

The Council has already taken action. These include supporting the national Refill campaign which aims to provide peo-

ple with free drinking water on the move, ensuring that council buildings and sheltered housing schemes do not use plastic cutlery and replacing single-use cups with reusable cups or glasses in office buildings and community centres. They have also pledged to reduce plastic usage at major events, such as the Cambridge Folk Festival and made it a requirement for hot food and drink traders at the Cambridge Market not to use single use plastics for food and drink that they sell.

In the Council's news release, Cllr Rosy Moore, Executive Councillor for Climate Change, Environmental Services and City Centre, said: "We are in a climate and biodiversity emergency, and it is important that we all look at what we can do to help ease the strain on our planet."

"It is important to ensure that as much as possible of the plastic you do use is recycled in your blue bins."

Plastic reduction efforts have also been undertaken by the University. Through its Green Impact initiative, which was established in 2012-13, it "supports and encourages departments and colleges in reducing their environmental impacts." A



▲ The pledge asks every business and organization in Cambridge to make one small change this year (ARDFERN)

University spokesperson said: "As part of the Green Impact initiative, the University Catering Service (UCS) is addressing plastic use in a number of ways, with the aim of going entirely single-use plastic-free in its 14 cafes."

"Within the wider University, last year's Green Impact initiative saw many departments committing to providing

reusable cups and/or eliminating disposable drinking cups altogether, with many shifting to providing tap water rather than bottled water for meetings."

The UCS measures include using compostable alternatives to plastic cutlery, crockery, plates, takeaway containers, cups and cellophane. Plastic bottles have been phased out, with drinks now sold

in cans, glass, or compostable packaging. Customers are encouraged to use a KeepCup, with a 25p charge for those using disposables. Last year, 13 colleges were awarded with Green Impact prizes for their efforts. In September, the University committed to a 'science based target' of zero carbon emissions from energy use by 2048.

Cambridge also has an Environmental Sustainability Strategy Committee, which provides "strategic oversight" to environmental sustainability." In 2013, this body established an Environmental Policy Review Committee, which took the lead in developing the 'Environmental Sustainability Vision, Policy and Strategy 2015-2020'.

Through the findings of this university-wide review, the committee proposed a roadmap to ensuring that Cambridge is "committed to making a positive impact through outstanding environmental sustainability performance" to match the institution's "multi-century scale of vision" and ensure its progress is "benchmarked against peer institutions nationally and internationally."

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News

Peter Hutchinson's readmittance to Trinity Hall sends shockwaves through Cambridge community



► Continued from front page

on by the Governing Body, comprised of college fellows, and was passed. This resulted in the blanket ban being reversed, permitting Hutchinson to attend certain events.

The BBC reported that they understood the College had been advised Hutchinson "could threaten legal action and there were internal concerns about the impartiality of the process".

The statement said, "The decision to

▲ Trinity Hall has seen significant condemnation this week
(ANDREW HYNES)

accept the agreement was taken by a majority vote in the Governing Body, whose members took the decision after significant debate. "The decision was, we acknowledge, divisive and difficult for many colleagues."

Hutchinson is still barred from teaching, and events where students are present. One woman who previously reported his sexual harassment called the decision to readmit the fellow "a slap in the face".

"One year after graduating, they've snuck him back in."

“It is insulting to pay lip service to supporting survivors”

“They're never getting a single penny from me”

● Who has spoken out against Trinity Hall's decision on Hutchinson?

Chloe Bayliss
Senior News Editor

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of sexual harassment.

Since the news broke on Saturday, over 1,200 students, staff and alumni have signed an open letter condemning the highly-publicised 'readmission' of Trinity Hall Fellow Dr Peter Hutchinson.

The backlash against Trinity Hall has been widespread. Signatories of the open letter include the majority of Trinity Hall's JCR and MCR, and every CUSU sabbatical officer. Four former Women's officers at the college also added their names, alongside multiple former CUSU and GU sabbatical officers, including last year's CUSU president Evie Aspinall.

Current CUSU President - Edward Parker Humphreys - called the readmittance as "an insult to those students brave enough to speak out and it should be reversed immediately."

Alongside those of Trinity Hall, multiple colleges' JCRs and MCRs put their names to the open letter.

CUSU have used their online platforms to encourage students, staff and alumni to sign it. In a statement on their Facebook page, they called the decision "shameful", saying that it is "insulting to pay lip service to supporting survivors, only to quietly allow perpetrators back into the upper echelons of the institution as soon as they think public memory has moved on."

"Trinity Hall must prioritise the safety of its students and make clear that it does not tolerate perpetrators of sexual violence by removing Dr Hutchinson as an Emeritus Fellow."

Online, students - both past and present - have spoken out.

Ellie Pyemont, a victim of unwelcome advances from Hutchinson and part of his trial in 2005, wrote on Twitter: "to those who experienced sexual misconduct whilst @TrinityHallCamb; You have been treated appallingly. I'm sorry that the college ignored red flags & instead appear to have allowed 'acquittal tea parties' in their grounds after he was acquitted of sexually assaulting me in 2005."

In a series of tweets, she detailed her experiences as a witness in the two court cases against Hutchinson. She said that in the first trial, which was ruled a mistrial after a juror allegedly inferred the jury had "made up their mind" and discussed the trial with a family member,

"to Peter Hutchinson's credit, he acted with some dignity". "His defence strategy was not to call me a liar, a fantasist or a provocateuse", she said.

In the second trial, however, when Hutchinson was acquitted, the defence strategy supposedly changed. Pyemont wrote on Twitter: "I was excused [sic] of exaggerating, I was accused of having confused other incidences, I was accused of having led him on... for a day and a half of cross examination".

Criticising the way the college have handled the situation, she continued: "oh my god, the basics, the leadership, the culture, the decision-making, the safeguarding, the integrity, the strategy, so so so much very, very wrong going on @TrinityHallCambno wonder you didn't want to speak to me @TrinHall-Master....".

Other alumni have also spoken out expressing shock and disappointment in their alma mater, suggesting Trinity Hall's dealings with Hutchinson could have an impact on donations received by the college by alumni.

"What the college have done brings shame on them and on Cambridge. If I could withdraw the bursary I would as they are unfit custodians of a charity for women," wrote Pat Chapman-Pincher, who also said her mother's name is on a Trinity Hall bursary for women.

Expressing a similar sentiment, Trinity Hall alumnus Rhiannon said the college could "strike [her] name off the list of potential alumni donors".

"They're never getting a single penny from me".

One postgraduate student, said that the news made her feel "a combination of hopelessness, frustration, and fury".

Dr Emma Chapman, self-proclaimed "exhausted campaigner on sexual misconduct in HE [Higher Education]" from Imperial College London, also published a letter addressed to Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope.

She wrote, "despite the historical autonomy of the colleges, there must be a point when the University is responsible for stamping out anachronistic and sexist behaviours in order to preserve what is good about a semi-autonomous collegiate system." She noted that though automatically given to Hutchinson, the Emeritus status "still retains the perception of an honourable status granted on the basis of an individual's achievements".

"The inference that Dr Hutchinson's actions have been honourable is an astonishing point of view to take."

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Analysis Over 1,200 sign open letter, but will Trinity Hall take action?

● What will the College do in light of the outcry? And was Hutchinson ever actually removed?

Joe Cook
Associate Editor

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of sexual harassment.

Over 1,200 students, alumni and staff have now signed an open letter condemning Trinity Hall for reportedly “readmitting” Dr Peter Hutchinson as an Emeritus Fellow, two years after it was announced that he would be leaving the college following accusations of sexual harassment.

Why was Hutchinson originally removed as a fellow?

Hutchinson had been an MML fellow at Trinity Hall since 1986 and was Vice-Master of the college for a number of years.

In 2006 Hutchinson was taken to court after a former student accused him of indecent assault. According to the *Daily Mail*, Hutchinson “accepted he had probably tried to kiss and touch the woman, despite being rebuffed.” Hutchinson told the *Mail*, “Maybe the gin had gone to my head. It was a stiff one. I think I must have found her irresistible. But I didn’t use force, she’s bigger than me.”

The first trial was halted for legal reasons and Hutchinson was found not guilty at a second trial. He later explained to the *Mail*, “I just cannot understand how something which seemed so trivial was so important to her, and I cannot really see it as a sexual assault.”

At the time a Cambridge spokesman told the *Mail*, “We are pleased the matter has been resolved. Dr Hutchinson has been an outstanding teacher and academic and is extremely well respected by students and staff.”

Later, in 2015, ten Trinity Hall female undergraduates accused Hutchinson of making “unwanted” comments of an “inappropriate sexual and sexist nature” during supervisions in 2014 and 2015.

This led to Hutchinson being banned from teaching undergraduates, and from attending events where undergraduates were present.

Hutchinson released a statement through the University in 2017, apologising for his conduct and saying “I realise these comments were thoughtless, insensitive and caused offence.”

Was he banned from college?

In November 2017, Hutchinson was reported to have breached the sanctions, which had been imposed since 2015, by attending a lecture where undergraduates were present. The College later



released a statement saying: “We can confirm Dr Hutchinson has withdrawn permanently from any further involvement with college affairs, including from his role on the finance committee.”

However this week the BBC reported that he had been “readmitted” into the College, a characterisation that Trinity Hall told *Varsity* was “misleading”.

Instead it appears that rather than Hutchinson being “readmitted”, he actually never left.

Why is Hutchinson still an Emeritus Fellow?

Beyond the confusion over Hutchinson attending the lecture in 2017 where undergraduates were present, there are questions as to the nature of his ongoing relationship with the College in the first place.

Like students and staff, Hutchinson still has an official Cambridge CRSid and is currently listed within the University’s IT system as part of both the “Department of German and Dutch” and “Trinity Hall” groups.

The 2014-15 academic year was the last that Hutchinson was listed as a fellow in the *Cambridge Reporter*, the University’s journal of official business. He was banned from teaching under-

graduates during the same academic year.

However, despite the testimonies of harassment in October 2015, Hutchinson became a Trinity Hall Emeritus Fellow, a title given to fellows at some colleges after retirement.

He automatically became an Emeritus Fellow as, according to section 7.2 of the 2001 Trinity Hall statutes, which governed the College up until 2017, “A Master or Fellow who has attained the age of 60 and has held office for not less than 25 years shall become an Emeritus Fellow from the date he vacates office...”

Since then, the statutes have been updated so that this title is no longer automatically conferred and is only granted where a Master or Fellow has “made an extraordinary contribution to the College, where it is appropriate to retain their involvement in the College...”

Emeritus Fellows are able to dine at the college for free and to attend certain events. Trinity Hall clarified that he will “only attend alumni events by prior agreement with the College.” Their online statement said he will continue to “exercise his dining rights”.

“Rather than Hutchinson being readmitted, he actually never left”

▲ Peter Hutchinson was banned from teaching and contact with students after 10 students reported sexual harassment
(DYLAN SPENCER-DAVIDSON)

Hutchinson’s name was removed from the Trinity Hall website in 2017, but he has never been removed from the official list of Trinity Hall Fellows in the *Cambridge Reporter*, appearing in both the 2017-18 and 2018-19 lists. He was also listed as an Emeritus Fellow in the 2017-18 Trinity Hall Review.

Can Hutchinson’s Emeritus Fellow title be revoked?

Simple answer, yes.

The open letter has called for Trinity Hall to “remove Dr Hutchinson from the position of Emeritus Fellow... and redact the rights of Dr Hutchinson to attend events at College.”

Under both the 2001 and recent 2017 statutes, Trinity Hall can revoke the title of Emeritus Fellow through a vote by the Governing Body. Since Hutchinson was appointed under the old 2001 statutes, the College says it is these that apply to him.

Under these rules a revocation can occur if two thirds half of the Governing Body votes in favour of it. There are no necessary conditions for revoking Emeritus Fellow titles.

The Governing Body who would make any decision on revoking the title is made up of the fellows and master of the college, most of whom have worked alongside Hutchinson for a number of years.

Trinity Hall said the “Governing Body considered all possible options”, when asked if there had been any attempts to officially remove Hutchinson as an Emeritus Professor,

Could Trinity Hall be forced to act?

One potential way the Governing Body could be forced into action would be under pressure from the Charity Commission.

Trinity Hall told *Varsity* that “the College has reported the matter to the Charity Commission as a serious risk in relation to reputational risk.”

All Cambridge colleges are registered charities, and such fall under the regulation of the Charity Commission, who are there to “make sure that charities are accountable, well-run and meet their legal obligations.”

Since the fallout from the Oxfam Haiti scandal in 2017, there has been an increased focus on the actions of charities in relation to safeguarding.

The Commission has released new safeguarding guidelines for trustees, which specifically notes their obligations to ensure “protecting people from harm is central to [the charity’s] culture” and ensure the charity “knows how to spot and handle concerns in a full and open manner.” In Trinity Hall’s case the fellows and Master are the listed trustees responsible for meeting these obligations.

A spokesperson for the Commission told *Varsity*: “Everyone involved in charities has the right to feel safe, and we expect trustees to consider the best interests of their charity - ensuring their safeguarding arrangements protect the charity and their beneficiaries from harm”.

Features

A year ago, my world fell apart. This is how I put it back together.



An *anonymous student* discusses what they learned from intermitting

Content Note: this article contains mentions of suicide and detailed discussion of recovery from depression

So this is it. My last day on intermission before I return to Cambridge to start my third year (for the second time).

After two long years battling depression (and several other catalysing factors not worthy of mention), this time last year my world had fallen apart. Just

one week into Michaelmas Term, I was back at home with no friends, no plans, and no real intention of living much longer.

As I write this, I'm smiling. My beautiful dog is resting his head on my lap and I'm wearing a big cosy autumn jumper. I've just returned from a peaceful walk in the woods and I'm preparing to finish off packing for university; life is good.

This year has been incredibly important for me, and this is down to so many small decisions I made and amazing people I met. I want to share some of what I learned while intermitting in the hope of helping others in a similar position to mines.

First, go get yourself a puppy. Perhaps this isn't the best way to get over a bad break-up, but it definitely isn't the worst. Three days after returning

home, with my parents desperate to help me escape the dark hole I was in, we drove to Suffolk to pick up my gorgeous thirteen-week-old Labrador. I decided to call him Hugo.

When I couldn't see any reason to get out of bed, or reason to survive from one day to the next, I woke up each morning to a bouncing ball of fluff. Hugo was much more than an adorable companion: he provided me with responsibility. No matter how hard it felt, each morning I had to get up, feed Hugo, train him, walk him, and care for him. Don't get me wrong — I spent plenty of time moping about and lying on the sofa binging series after series on Netflix, but this wasn't all I did. I had to structure my day, and I had a newfound sense of purpose.

Going out into my local town was the last thing I wanted to do. I felt very

“
Be patient when finding a therapist
”

insecure about venturing out alone and, frankly, I could not see the point. However, I knew that dogs need to be exposed to a lot of different situations at a young age. So, I left my house and went into town. And then the next day, I did the same. Before I knew it, the baristas at my favourite coffee spot, Hatch, knew us both by name and would come out to greet us whenever we passed by. The market-stall holders would stop us and give Hugo free samples of whichever meat they were cooking that day. The girl working in Oliver Bonas would wave at us from behind the till. For the first time, I felt part of a community.

Next, be patient when finding a therapist. Going to see a therapist, whether for the first time or fortieth time, is a daunting experience. You arrange to see a complete stranger and are expected to reveal all of your deepest and dark-

“
I woke up each morning to a bouncing ball of fluff
”

est secrets to them within the first ten minutes.

All therapists are different. Some just offer a listening ear, allowing you to offload whatever is on your mind; I think of these as expensive friends. Others practice specific therapeutic techniques, like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR).

Having attempted to tackle the NHS waiting list once already, I decided to look at private therapists.

The first therapist I met with invited me to meet her in a small room above a bereavement centre. When I sat down, she smiled but didn't say anything. Thirty minutes later, we were both still sitting there, across the room from each other in comfy-yet-clinical armchairs, and not a single word had been said. I didn't know if it was some sort of test, but it completely threw me off balance and I mirrored her silence. Ten minutes before the end of the session, her expression returned to a natural state and she said, 'I wanted to see how you would react.'

The next therapist I met didn't even have an office. Tapping in the postcode on my phone, I quickly realised that I was driving to a residential street; I was going straight to her house. It only took a couple of pronouns, revealing my sexuality, for her face to drop and an awkward silence to spill into the room.

◀ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

“First, go get yourself a puppy”

At the end of the session, she told me she thought she 'wasn't the therapist for me.'

Fast forward a couple more uneventful yet equally unhelpful meetings, and I'm sat in a room with a new therapist asking me to place Playmobil figures into a sandbox to depict my feelings. I'll admit at this point I grew a little sarcastic, creating complex, analogical scenes where, really, the little man with the sad face would have sufficed.

It wasn't until March when I finally met someone who I got along with and could provide me with support. Without him, I wouldn't be where I am today.

Thirdly, it's important to spend time alone. In the words of Sigrid, you 'don't need no fake friends'. I'm not suggesting that you adopt an exaggerated tone of perfectionism and cut off all of your friends for minor slip-ups (although if someone is bringing you down or not looking out for you, you don't need them).

I'd always done a few things alone. I wouldn't think twice about heading out to local shops alone, or going for a short walk by myself. But when someone suggested I go to the cinema alone, I was thrown into a state of anxiety. I thought about this for a good few weeks before the opportunity arose: I had booked to go and see a film with a friend, who ended up cancelling the night before. Initially I was upset, thinking that I wouldn't be able to attend the screening anymore. But why not? It's perfectly acceptable for me to sit watching a film

in my house alone, and it's acceptable for me to leave my house alone, so why was it that when the two are merged the idea filled me with dread? Reluctantly, I set off for the cinema. An hour later, I was sitting alone in a huge red plush armchair in my local cabaret-style cinema, glass of Malbec in hand, and not an ounce of shame in sight.

Next, be open to making new friends. Initially, when I chose to get back in touch with my GCSE French tutor, it was for the actual purpose of learning French. But with our sessions structured around translating my experiences into French and back again, it didn't take long for her to work out that I was spending a lot of time alone, and wasn't in a good way. Soon we were meeting up for coffee just to catch up and gossip — about my friends, her children, and whatever holidays we had been on most recently.

I also developed a habit of ending my walks with Hugo with a trip to a nearby café. It only took three visits before I was chatting away to some regulars: a yoga teacher, a woman with her newborn baby, and several dog owners.

Until I intermitted, my life had revolved around studying. Grades were all that mattered to me, and everyone I knew in Cambridge felt the same. I had been tricked into thinking that a grade on a piece of paper determined my entire worth.

That all changed once I got a part-time job, out in the real world. The most refreshing thing about it was that

“I'm not leaving any part of that experience behind”

“As I write this, I'm smiling. My beautiful dog is resting his head on my lap.”

I wasn't asked once what my grades were. Nobody cared about that B I got in GCSE Music, or whether I had done whatever five hundred pages of reading I'd been given that week.

It took me too long to realise that my colleagues were some of the most loyal friends I have ever had. I always looked forward to coming into work, and customers always commented that we always looked so happy to be there. I think working in customer service creates a sense of camaraderie between co-workers, as if we're all heading out into battle together.

Leaving a melodramatic message behind in black whiteboard marker on my last day, I genuinely felt like I was leaving a part of myself behind. A few good-luck messages later and I realise that I was wrong; I'm not leaving any part of that experience behind, but taking the memories and those friends with me, into the next chapter of my life.

If you have been affected by any of the content of this article, the following provides support and resources:

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Features

My post-Cambridge blues

Columnist **Jess Lock** reflects on life as a graduate

My body clock is on autopilot. As the evenings get a little shorter, and the mornings a little cooler, I feel the urge to start packing. My yearly migration back to Cambridge is hanging in the air. At least, that's what the past three years have ingrained into my circadian rhythm.

But this time around, I won't be returning to the red brick of Newnham or the portered doors of Kings, and I won't be lugging hordes of books back to the libraries either.

It's only been four months since I've graduated, but already my memory of this place has begun to warp as I nostalgically reminisce about punting, chatting with friends down the corridor and cooking with them, celebrating special occasions at glorious formals, hanging out in beautiful gardens, and basking in post-exam joy.

My gut isn't twisting at the ferocity of the reading list, or the longing for my family — sensations I logically know to have punctuated my termly returns. For the first time since beginning Cambridge, I actually *want* to go back. What a horrible feeling!

What I want, I cannot have, and like a spoilt child, I feel like throwing a very loud tantrum about this.

My days now consist of something different. I've got a job in London, a lovely shared flat, and enough money to eat healthily and still afford the train back to my supportive, welcoming family. I'm fortunate, and I do feel it.

I ostensibly have nothing to mourn. And yet, like so many grads I've spoken to, I feel an unutterable sense of misery. The veneer of an attractive career and the line 'I've made the move to London,' which is so often reciprocated with cooing congratulations, hides a devastating sense of loss that rumbles deep in the pit of my stomach.

If I complain, I feel bitterly ungrateful, so instead self-censor in embarrassed guilt.

But when I'm not complaining, I find myself sitting on the Tube wondering whether it's possible to silently dissolve into the rush hour hubbub, leaving behind a neat stack of clothes on the grubby seat.

The identity I'd curated around academic success (and moreover, an earnest love for the things I'd learnt) has been quickly, quietly dismantled into sharp suits, a nine-to-six job, and a polite telephone manner.

I'm suffering from a severe case of the graduate blues. It seems laughable, something I myself can't help but cringe at. But leaving full-time education for the first time in 17 years has disoriented me more than any careers guide, workshop, or graduation talk could ever have prepared me for.

Perhaps I ought to have anticipated the destabilising shift from short uni-



“The identity I've curated around academic success was quickly dismantled”

versity terms and their days punctuated by naps and endless natter, to daily commutes and pension schemes. I knew both my sleep schedule and my student finances would take a sucker punch when I entered 'the real world,' but I didn't preempt the sharp decline in social interaction.

I didn't expect the big city to be quite so faceless, for phone calls with friends to feel quite so perfunctory, or for my most meaningful interaction in the day to be collecting my bulk-bought toilet

“I expected grad life to deliver structure, and with it, purpose and meaning”

◀ My memory of Cambridge has begun to warp

(ROSIE BRADBURY)

roll from the concierge in my apartment complex.

Gone are the boundless hours of lounging on friends' floors commiserating on our cruel supervisors and regrettable life choices. And gone is the sense that my time is my own.

In my lunch break and the snatches of time I find between waking up before work and going to sleep after it, I feel myself trying to claw each second out into the longest shred of time it can be.

I expected grad life to deliver structure, and with it, purpose and meaning. I've found instead that I'm gasping for the breathing space that my time at Cambridge had allowed me.

I feel isolated, gutted and directionless. I feel guilty and infantile for these feelings.

I feel like I'm making a fuss out of nothing. I feel like I'm coping and then I feel like I'm not coping very well at all. I feel like I can't burden my parents or my friends with these thoughts, thoughts I can't seem to unpick myself.

I feel like what we're told about life after graduating don't match up with reality, and needs to be established. And so the dialogue is opened.

Fleeting, perhaps, and diminutively too, but articulated nonetheless. Though I may feel lonely, I know I'm not alone.

From La Paz, with all my love

Flora Bowen reflects on the 'first week of term' of her year abroad

It was all going so well: I'd started a blog, travelled solo through Chile and Bolivia, and finally settled happily in La Paz. "I'm a Year Abroad success story!" I thought. I'm destined for the eternal espresso sip, the polyglot life: I don't need friends, family, security — all my heart desires is vino by the litre and cultural experiences by the hour.

And then everyone had the audacity to move back to Cambridge, and ruined my life. Suddenly the college group chats are thriving. Suddenly the college powers that be are emailing. Suddenly I start eyeing Skyscanner routes home. There is great excitement over a new ketchup dispenser in Clare Buttery. Even an email from our Head Porter stating that the front gate is still broken brings a tear to my eye. If only I were back in Cambridge, dolloping on condiments in the tranquillity of collegiate companionship.

The past two years have been a glorious period of friendship, and it's these relationships I miss the most: from hysterical gyp conversations at 3 a.m. to ADC trips and Cindies outings, my social life in Cambridge was rich and full of joy

and provided a constant source of pleasure. When applying to Cambridge I had dreamt of such experiences; the people I then met soared beyond any adolescent fantasy in their humour, their company, their loyalty.

In the lead-up to my third year, the daily routines of library and buttery felt tainted by the looming Year Abroad. My excitement to explore South America and France brought lingering melancholy, as I knew I would have to put the life I was currently living on hold. As a student, I am hideously over-excited by everything in the Bubble. I love writing essays, I find supervisions exhilarating, and I've been involved in so many activities: student journalism, the College JCR, student theatre, and much more. And of course, those eternal, glittering nights of Cindies, formals, and May Balls. Removing myself from Cambridge felt like undergoing an amputation.

Of course, I know that such sentimental FOMO is a paranoid idealisation of my life at the university. Should I drop in at a whim, my friends would probably have to excuse themselves five minutes later to go work in the library. A supervisor would note 'not quite' in red ink on an essay, and I'd sober up pretty quickly. My beloved college wife would be in three plays and writing five essays at once, and the group chats would be full of friends cancelling evening plans to read for the

next day's supervision. To top it off, I'd likely find myself stuck next to the socially awkward faculty member at formal hall. Meanwhile, those friends I miss so much might be gazing at the (currently impeccable) Instagram feeds of fellow MML-ers, sleep deprived and overworked, wishing they were anywhere else other than the world of iDiscover.

Remembering this reality helped me to reason a little more with myself, and to enjoy my life again abroad. To lose the familiarity of Cambridge is deeply painful in these first few months of my new adventure, but to have the adventure is valuable beyond measure. The separation is a premature preparation for the adult world that lies beyond, where everyone will disperse and begin those long-awaited lives. What I feel now is a creeping precursor of such uncertainty: that the formal will at last come to an end; that the final supervision will take place; that the tight intimacies formed over the Van of Life too will disband.

Watching Michaelmas start again — as it has done, again and again, for centuries — is like writing a story, creating and recreating the wonderful tale of Cambridge, whose characters work and play the old-established role of a Cambridge student in rapturous academic paradise. Real life is not like that, neither in Cambridge nor outside of it. People worry, fall out, lead



“People worry, fall out, lead imperfect lives”

imperfect lives. Existing now in this real world has brought me to both the fantasy construction of this golden creation, and to the realisation that it does not, cannot exist.

How do you get over FOMO, then? You can't. The grass is always greener, as the useful cliché goes. Life is textured and euphoria can be fleeting. Greedily now I look forward to joining in the best parts of term as I go between continent and country, but I will endeavour to ignore the news that trickles through and resist the idea of perfection belonging to any one place.

▲ La Paz, Bolivia
(FLORA BOWEN)

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Features

Becoming sober: my road to recovery

An *anonymous student* discusses how Cambridge's drinking culture enabled their alcoholism

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of alcoholism. Resources for support and guidance can be found at the bottom of this article.

I ushered in my second year collapsed on the floor of a public bathroom having vanished from matriculation during the dean's speech to vomit. I ended the year sitting no fewer than two of my six exams drunk.

Binge drinking, so entrenched in British culture, walks a tightrope between an amusing anecdote and a cautionary tale. During my time here, the prevalence of alcohol abuse in student life and society at large made it incredibly difficult for me to access support, both from my friends and the university.

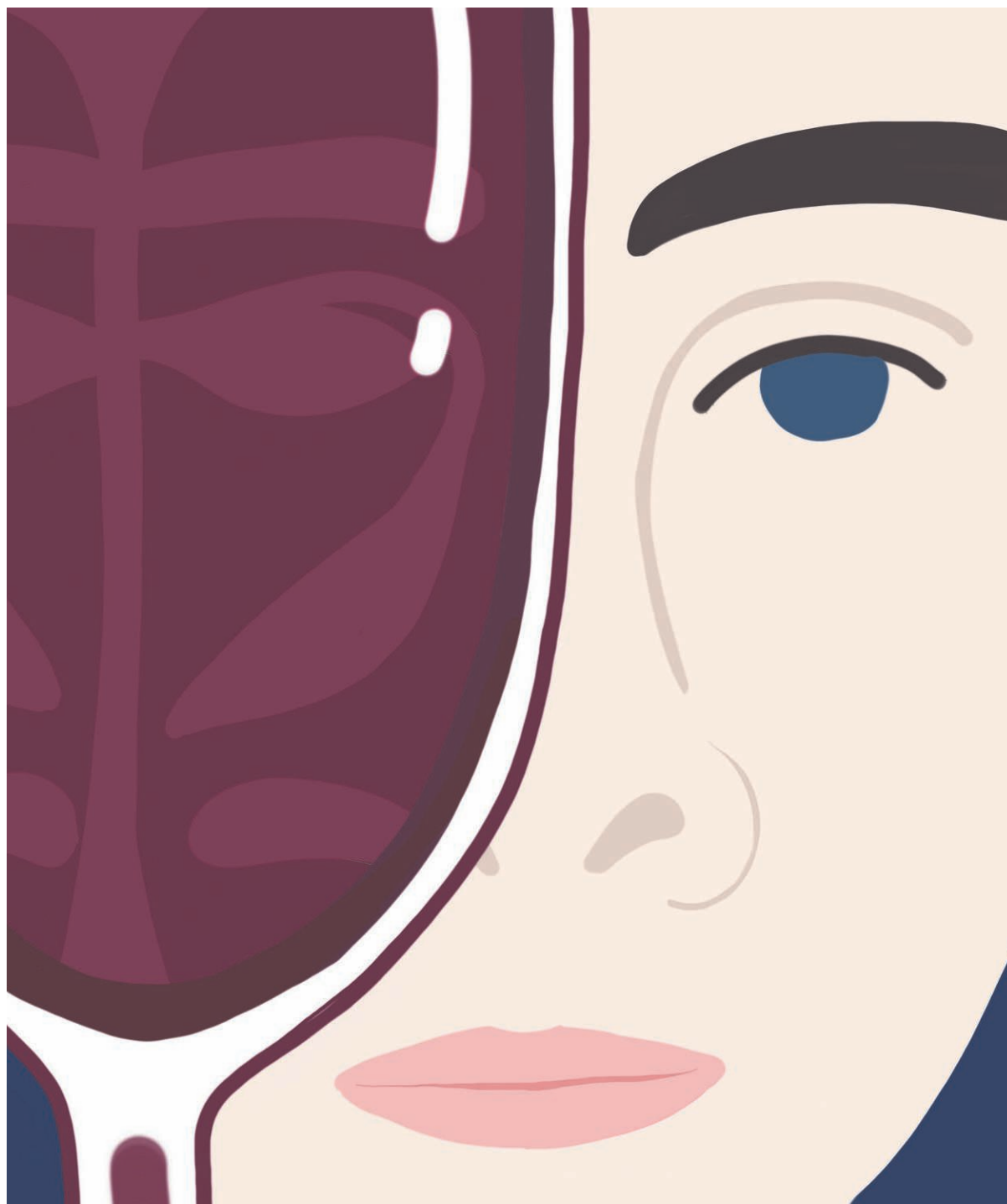
Of all hobbies, drinking is among the more expensive. Any alcoholic worth their salt can point you to the cheapest drink with the highest alcohol content, protest as they might that they haven't done maths since GCSE.

With alcohol being as expensive as it is, those with alcohol dependencies learn to be opportunists: you take it where you can get it. Unfortunately, in Cambridge, there are a lot of places to get it.

Be it squashes, swaps, mixers, may balls, an eccentric academic known to offer red wine during supervisions, the stranger sitting next to you at a formal who foolishly leaves their bottle unattended, or — if you're desperate enough — CUCA's Port and Policy; the well of free wine never seems to run dry in Cambridge.

Even if you manage to resist the free drink (and you'd be a stronger person than I for it), you may well fall victim to Cambridge's pervasive culture of 'working hard and playing hard,' as the saying goes. So endemic is this to university student life that there are well-established traditions dedicated to 'letting off steam' (in other words, binge drinking): C-Sunday, Suicide Sunday, and so on.

If I ever hesitated to order a drink (a rare occurrence), I always had a chorus of well-intentioned friends ready to parrot cheesy lines from *Parks and Recreation* at me, urging me to 'treat myself.' Not only was there ample opportunity to drink, I felt encouraged to do so, absolving me of any guilt or reservations.



“The normalcy of binge drinking at Cambridge made it disturbingly easy to hide in plain sight”

Among the many tell-tale signs of alcoholism, one of the more prominent is secrecy: hiding bottles, being evasive or even hostile to questioning. This was rarely an issue for me. The normalcy of binge drinking at Cambridge made it disturbingly easy to hide in plain sight.

I have a darkened patch of skin on my lower arm — the result of a drunken misadventure making tea in which I poured a just-boiled kettle over myself. Often at parties, the conversation would turn to anecdotes of injuries that were funny retrospectively, and I would show my scar; it was my trump card.

On one occasion after showing it, a girl across the room jumped to her feet and excitedly revealed a similar scar: the result of drunkenly attempting to han-

dle hair straighteners, she said. Another boy, on a different occasion, offhandedly described spending a night in A&E and getting his stomach pumped.

This was a depressingly common occurrence. I would recount a drunken anecdote, only to be met with another which was equally worrying or worse.

I assumed my behaviour was normal or, at the very least, no more a cause for concern than anyone else's. The widespread nature of alcohol abuse both in Cambridge and across the U.K. makes it incredibly difficult to distinguish between the accepted cultural norm of binge-drinking and dependencies that are linked to mental health conditions.

In my second year, I was an anthropomorphic bundle of anxiety symptoms who had recently gained sentence —

“At least twice a week, I would swear off alcohol”

◀ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

only, not enough for me to behave like an actual human being. Sober, I struggled to attend classes, socialise, and eventually to function. Drunk, I could do all of those things and, what's more, I wanted to.

At least twice a week, I would swear off alcohol and, at least three times a week, I would wake up face-down, lying on my bathroom floor. My alcohol dependency took root once I had decided that routinely vomiting for hours a day was more tolerable than sobriety.

So, I began my second year with barely enough self-restraint to stop myself from going to supervisions still-tipsy, and ended it shrugging off the shame of attending yet another exam drunk. I was appalled, but not enough to spark any meaningful change. My inhibitions eroded by cheap alcohol, I went about my life in a haze of mortifying apathy.

There was no one event sobering enough to scare me into recovery. I had no incentive to stop, or even to slow down. The only person affected by my drinking was me and, frankly, I couldn't have cared less about myself.

The change began with those around me: a friend expressing concern, a family member urging me to see my GP, an older student confiding that they too had a troubled relationship with alcohol. Although I am still not yet completely sober, my life is better now that I no longer have to incorporate hangovers into my daily routine.

With exceedingly high levels of stress and mental illness so endemic to student life, it is easy to rationalise the habit of indulging your woes with alcohol — friends and family may even encourage you to do so.

To make matters worse, the normalcy of alcohol abuse in the U.K. means it is difficult for you to tell when your drinking habits have gone from the typical behaviour of a normal young adult to a genuine cause for concern.

After countless injuries and lost time and relationships, I can assure any student curious about the healing effects of alcohol that there are none. Using alcohol as a crutch for stress or mental illness is effectively like giving yourself a second injury to distract from the pain of the first: once sober, there is twice the burden to bear.

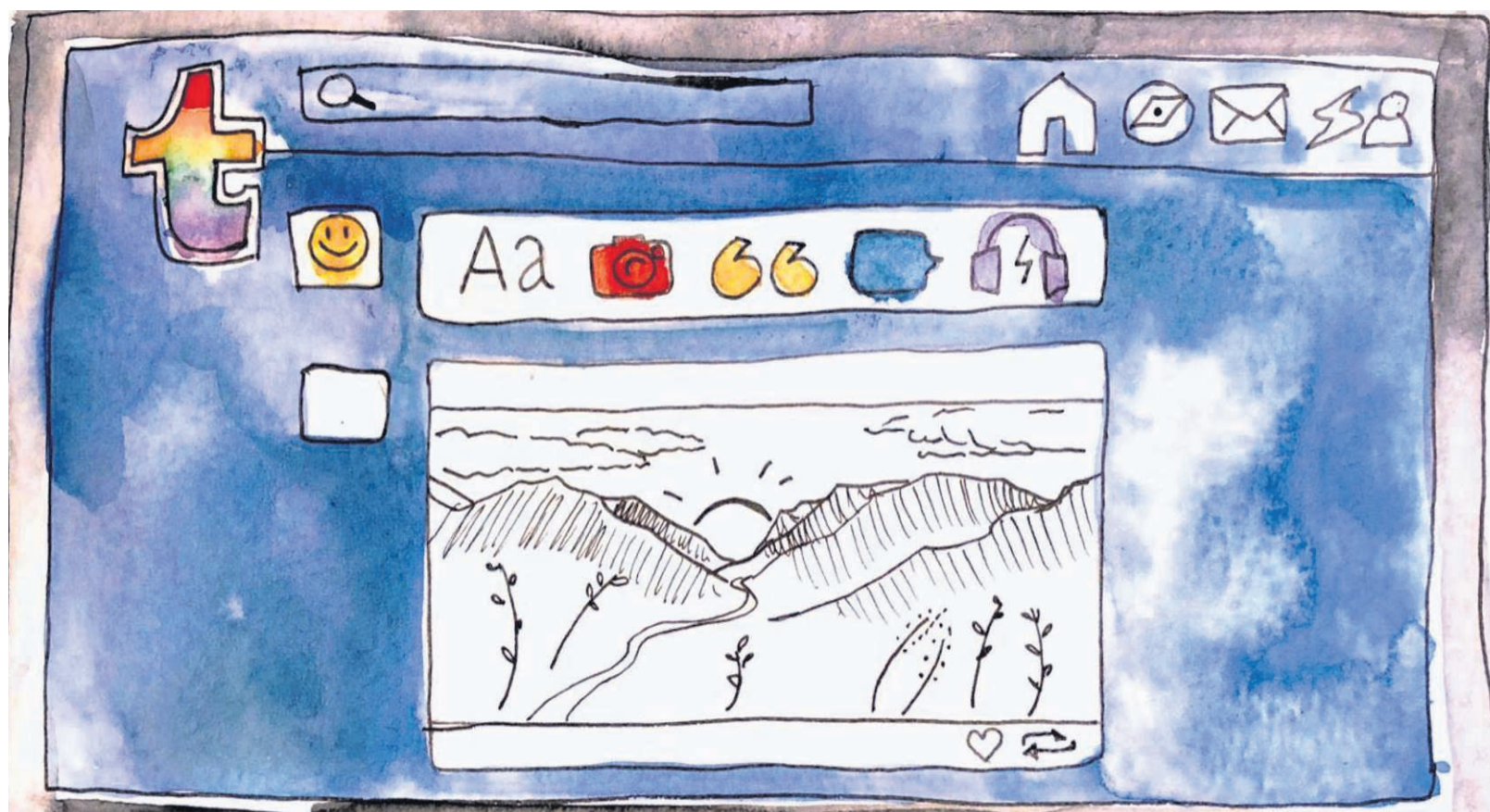
If you are affected by any of the issues raised in this article, the following provide support and resources:

Drinkline, the national alcohol helpline — call 0300 123 1110 (9am to 8pm weekdays, 11am to 4pm weekends);

Drinkchat — visit drinkaware.co.uk/chat-with-an-advisor (9am to 2pm weekdays);

Cambridgeshire Child and Adolescent Substance Use Service (CASUS) — call 01223 214614 (9am to 5pm weekdays).

Is fandom the highest stage of capitalism?



Siyang Wei reflects on fandom as consumer identity

Like many aimlessly passionate and socially stunted teens, I spent a lot of time on Tumblr in the late 2000s and early 2010s. And when I say a lot of time, I do mean a lot - getting back from school, logging on, and not logging off until either I went to sleep at 3am or my mum turned off the WiFi. Although perhaps a little embarrassing to admit, it's also in some way because of Tumblr that I'm now studying Sociology; it was one of the first places I was really able to start reading about and engaging with social issues. Mostly, as a possibly-gay British Chinese fan of sci-fi, fantasy, and other popular media, I wanted a place to belong.

If that sounds cliché, that's because it is; like most clichés, it didn't really come to resemble reality. It turns out that I wasn't any better at making friends online than I was in 'real life', nor did I ever learn how to make softly-lit gifs or photo manipulations or write very good meta. Still, I followed a lot of people who were friends (or at least frequently interacted) with each other, kept up with the major drama, and moved from fandom to fandom as various franchises fell in and out of widespread favour. I listed my interests on my 'About' page, re-blogged the right posts to mark out my positions, and read a lot (a lot) of fanfiction.

Tumblr itself has been dying a long, slow death since about 2015, but fandom as a way of relating to cultural products

and to others has only become more and more normalised. In *Understanding Fandom*, Mark Duffett states that while 'fans' were once "seen as an overly obsessed fraction of the audience," fandom has now become a "central mode of consumption." Communities of particular devotion aren't new, but developments in communications technology have made them more widely accessible than the exclusively-physical fanzines and mailing lists of old. Even in just the past few years of life on the internet, film and TV fandom has migrated from more niche platforms such as LiveJournal and Tumblr into the relative 'open' of Twitter and mainstream media. The consumption of music has followed a similar trajectory, with streaming in particular shaking up the Top 40. As a MIDiA Research report on music marketing put it, "niche is the new mainstream" - and for those in marketing, this is "an asset, not a challenge."

I got a lot out of my engagement with fandom. For one, I've long been enamoured of the power of transformative works to use points of collective cultural reference as a springboard for exploring sexuality, personal trauma, and myriad other issues that generally go unexamined. Relatedly, the fan spaces I've occupied have been dominated overwhelmingly by women, largely by LGBT+ people, and mostly by people slightly older than me; as such, they've often been spaces committed to reading and relating with a distinctly female, queer, and somewhat wiser gaze. And in some parts of fandom, preoccupation with excavating the relationship between fan and cultural product has taught me to read my relationship with

“As a possibly-gay British Chinese fan of sci-fi and other popular media, I wanted a place to belong”

the world more critically. So while I'm delighted that fervid investment is now cool, the media marketing industry also cheerleading this development makes my hackles rise a little.

With fan culture more intense and fragmented, it's easy to read this trajectory in isolation: misogynistic dismissal is on the ebb, while queer fandom's work has paid off and our power is on the rise. At the same time, our pop cultural landscape is also increasingly marked by periodic bursts of reactionary fan backlash against the perception that some franchise or other, long considered the preserve of a 'nerd' fan culture dominated by white men, has sold out to 'SJWs.' The apogee of this movement was 2014's 'Gamergate' and the violent possessiveness over the output of the games industry exercised in relation to the hegemonically white, male 'gamer' fan identity. As parochial and petty as this episode may sound, its reverberations have reached across cultural spacetime.

When researching this piece, I came across an article on Japanese pop culture titled *You Are What You Buy*. The author, Carolyn Stevens, positions fandom as "a rational consumer strategy [...] when considered within the hyper-developed context of a media-saturated, late-capitalist consumer society." Fandom can be understood not as a strange behaviour, but as a natural pleasure-seeking activity focused on "social capital" and "individualised identity building" — especially when "traditional corporate groups such as the family or the workplace no longer offer the same attraction."

Despite our (vast) differences, what the Gamergater and I do share is that we live in a society where, increasingly,

▲ Illustration by Amber Li for Varsity

“Industries don't care about fans beyond what they can be made to pay for”

we are what we buy. This includes what we watch, read, and listen to; the vast and diverse array of merchandise now available for purchase; me, aged 14, and the para-social investments in media objects that constituted my most emotionally fulfilling relationships. 'Loneliness' is the latest watchword of the mental health crisis, but it's clear to me that the hyper-individualist alienation of neoliberal capitalism is its structural cause. The rise of fan-based identity, on the other hand, is another symptom: a sense of consumption-based belonging that can act as a comforting salve on our collective open wound.

Comfort, however, is not the same as healing. The frequently-invoked (pop) culture war framework conjures images of a pitched battle between 'queer fandom' interested in social justice and a reactionary fan identity over the soul of the culture industry. In reality what drives our culture industry is not a soul, but two basic functions of its place in late capitalism: to extract the highest amount of profit, and to keep us entertained and satisfied with the status quo. Media objects are intensely branded forms of consumption that are adept at cultivating a simulacrum of reciprocity. If we are loyal enough, invested enough, feel comfortable enough, we can begin to believe that these cultural products are in some ways for us. Creators and marketers string us along, and we're inevitably betrayed when it turns out they were simply doing what it takes to keep us consuming.

At a very basic level, what the instigators of Gamergate rebelled against was the perceived encroachment of others on (white male) 'gamer identity.' But the increased inclusion of minorities is due less to any liberatory spirit than to the fact that minorities can be consumers now, and it makes financial sense to make us feel comfortable as well. And when exploitative micro-transactions are quickly becoming the dominant model for video game profitability, it's obvious that these industries don't care about fans beyond what they can be made to pay for. On the other hand, neither is the mainstreaming of 'queer fandom' any expression of our power.

This is not to dismiss fandom as useless, but it's dangerous to believe that there's anything fundamentally radical about its spread. I can read all the gay Marvel fanfiction I want (and maybe the actors will acknowledge fan theories with a wink and a nod), but this doesn't change the fact that the franchise is part of Hollywood's long partnership with the Pentagon, exchanging access to resources for final say over the script. The industry's profitable sweet spot lies in our feelings of empowerment, investment, and belonging while not thinking to demand any real power at all. I'm still a passionate fan of many things, but I also know that fan-based cultivation of identity manages the pain of a wound that only political and economic revolution can heal.

Opinion



Despite big promises, little progress has been made to decolonise the English curriculum

Despite the great promises made in light of the decolonise movement, English reading lists remain dominated by white authors

Georgia Ziebart

At my Cambridge interview, I was asked, “what is the one thing human beings have always done?” The answer – one I didn’t know at the time – was simple: humans have always told stories. Based on the Cambridge English syllabus, however, it seems to be primarily white men who tell stories – and perhaps (albeit rarely) some privileged, white women.

The argument that Cambridge needs to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ is not a new one. What is new is that Cambridge now seems to market itself as being on the way to accomplishing this. When I joined Cambridge, the English Faculty Library was plastered with posters and information leaflets about how the English syllabus was in the process of being “decolonised”.

There were articles and reports on the Faculty’s website about the University’s efforts to broaden and diversify the curriculum. It seemed then that the Faculty had been listening.

In reality, tangible changes are barely visible. Two years later, and the aforementioned reports have disappeared from the website entirely. I am ashamed to say that I have not studied even one

non-white author in detail. With hindsight and with more experience of the University, it seems that the Faculty’s promise to “decolonise the curriculum” was just empty words. The decolonise rhetoric has been adopted and appropriated, with little meaningful impact on faculty reading lists.

There are few papers at present which facilitate study outside of a Eurocentric view, for example, the Postcolonial paper, which is optional, and only available in your third year. Having a single optional paper in the curriculum which deviates from the narrow norm is not decolonisation: it is tokenism.

I recognise that ‘postcolonial’ works can, in theory, be studied as part of Paper 7b (which covers the period from 1870-present). But given that the Part I syllabus also makes eight weeks of Shakespeare compulsory, surely at least some of this two-year syllabus could be centred on the voices of non-white writers? At present this is barely an option.

The English Tripos is marketed as flexible and accommodating. The faculty website boasts that such a “broad” structure ensures students “try many things” – referring to the range of gen-

▲ The ‘Divest, Disarm, Decolonise’ rally
(NOELLA CHYE)

“The movement’s rhetoric has been adopted and appropriated”

res we come into contact with. While in theory students may study whatever they choose, in practice, the reality is quite the opposite. The decentralised nature of the University means that what we study often hinges on the choices of individual supervisors.

While studying for one of my papers, I wondered why my supervisor insisted I dedicate separate weeks to Pope, Swift, Defoe, Fielding, and Sterne. I wondered why, in such a broad, varied and complex paper – one which covers nearly two hundred years – we were focusing on a range of white men from similar backgrounds, who ultimately held similar perspectives.

While focusing on white, male authors may make a predominantly white cohort of academics and students feel comfortable or perhaps more intelligent, it cannot be claimed to make a rigorous or comprehensive course. Such narrow reading is sometimes, in fact, simply a reaffirmation of pre-existing biases.

Being white, I am privileged in that the main way the course’s failures affect me is providing a myopic and biased knowledge base. To some of my peers, the University’s failures are far

more insidious. The misrepresentation and side-lining of non-white authors has the potential to perpetuate institutional racism, as well as creating an exclusionary and alienating atmosphere. The University has a responsibility to all of its students to make sure that their voices, and the voices of their history, are heard – not just its white ones.

We must ensure that the Faculty listens to the continuing work of students and members of the University. Sadly, calls for decolonisation, as we have seen, have been too easily swept under the carpet and forgotten.

Cambridge is already a University which is rooted – sometimes appropriately, sometimes not, and sometimes to its own disadvantage – in its own traditions.

The curriculum is one place where it need not be, and should not be. If the University is to continue to claim to provide academic breadth and rigour, its courses need to expand to include non-white voices, rather than perpetuating a biased and inaccurate historical view. This is one place where the University can change, and it’s time those changes finally happen.

Women-only graduate schemes aren't exclusionary, but necessary

Isobel Duxfield

Isobel Duxfield argues that graduate programmes targeted at women remain necessary in today's market

“I object to graduate schemes aimed at women,” remarked the (white male) student standing opposite me. “This type of leg up disadvantages guys like me, who have worked hard and forked out thousands in our pursuit of employment.” I was stunned and, in my astonishment, my retort was far from the Erin Brockovich-style put-down I had envisaged. This statement has, nonetheless, lingered in the back of my mind – we need to understand, and to establish, why supporting women through graduate schemes is critical to gender equality.

Schemes like the Civil Service Fast Stream and Deloitte's graduate training program mould the next generation of business and political leaders, fostering ideas and strategies which steer the direction of our economy, welfare policies and technological innovation. Applications for these graduate schemes are competitive and gruelling; countless people have slaved through multiple rounds of online tests, assessment days and interviews, only to be rejected at the final hurdle.

However, women are systematically underrepresented in new-hires on these schemes. This is not from lack of female talent: indeed, while university courses achieve gender parity, this fails to translate to later recruitment. Engineering, retail and advertising sectors are among the worst offenders. Earlier this year, figures from software company Oleeo revealed that 70% of graduate scheme places in these industries were awarded to men. Law doesn't perform much better, with females accounting for almost 60% of graduates, yet just 42% of hires to major training schemes, a figure which has failed to shift substantially over the last 5 years.

A similar pattern emerges across the arts and media, too. Women make up 60-70% of arts graduates, yet only 30% of professional artists, directors and playwrights are female, and just a quarter of contributors to radio, television and newspaper globally.

This has repercussions for women's economic status. On graduating, women expect to earn almost £4,000 less than their male peers for their first job, according to TUC figures. With initial salaries averaging £25,900, compared to £29,700 for their male counterparts, this does not bode well for female bargaining power.

Women-only graduate schemes and programmes targeted at women endeavour to redress this disparity, and have been championed by several organisations, albeit under mounting pressure from lobby groups. Schemes like PwC and EY's Women in Business aim to



▲ “Securing additional female talent also requires adapting graduate schemes to suit their needs” (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

inspire and support female students seeking an experience in professional services. Academia is also reacting. For example, Prof Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell's £2.3m bursary scheme at the Institute of Physics funds female physics researchers, a field where women account for just 28% of employees.

This is not diversity for diversity's sake. A few more feminine faces amongst the sea of white males in the corporate and political elite is not the goal. As Anne-Marie Aimaifidon, co-founder of Stemettes, an enterprise working to inspire women in science and tech-asserts, “Diversity is important in any industry, diversity of thought leads to innovation.” Indeed, McKinsey & Co has shown that companies with the greatest gender diversity on executive teams are 21% more likely to outperform peers on profitability.

Yet, this liberal feminist ‘add women and stir’ approach is not the solution. PwC and EY's efforts are commendable, but a 3-day vacation program is unlikely to shatter the glass ceiling. When diversity is reduced to a box-ticking exercise, in-

“Structural change also requires renewed dialogue on the value of diversity in the workplace”

dustries fail to nurture and retain female talent and structures do not change. Male bias is present throughout education and vocational training systems, and women must be exposed to a wider range of opportunities before they venture into the world of work.

This approach has been championed by Stemettes. Through mentoring programmes and female only hackathons, the organisation encourages young women to cultivate their expertise during undergraduate study. Similarly, Cambridge's very own ‘Women in Media’ which runs networking events and talks from leading females in their fields, increases students' understanding of the industry, demonstrating how to (putting it crudely) ‘play the game’.

Securing additional female talent also requires adapting graduate schemes to suit their needs. Women do four times more unpaid care work than men, thus flexible working hours may be required to help launch their careers. Far from giving women a ‘leg up’ – as asserted by my learned friend – this is simply adapting to the mountain of unpaid responsi-

bilities assigned to women, even in our ‘enlightened’ age.

This is not to essentialise the female experience. Not all women share the same experience of the job market. Race, ethnicity and class also inhibit access to employment. However, such adaptations are a positive start, shifting the ways we value our workforce and accommodating their needs.

As such, I return to the initial exchange with my fellow student, who feared expanding opportunities for women obstructed his own clutch on the career ladder. This conversation is a sad reminder that such parochial attitudes towards diversity are more commonplace than we care to admit. Structural change also requires renewed dialogue on the value of diversity in the workplace, away from a zero-sum game. How and why we value diversity – not simply gender parity – is an essential conversation, particularly at a university such as Cambridge. Unfortunately, that discussion is way beyond the word limit for this article; perhaps a PhD thesis?

Chapels can be powerful spaces for non-Christians, too

Georgie Newson-Errey reflects on the tranquility chapel life can bring, irrespective of one's religious views

Georgie Newson-Errey

Walking around a college chapel, especially for the first time, can be a surreal and disorienting experience. The weight of history, always an intimidating force in Cambridge, can feel particularly heavy in these hallowed spaces – it's difficult not to imagine the vast hordes of students who have hoped and mourned and marvelled here over the centuries, feeling small and lost amongst these spectres.

I for one remember being completely overwhelmed during my matriculation ceremony, staring up at the immense fanned ceiling in bewilderment and wondering how on earth I had got here. I only awoke from my stupor to wince when my mum, a lifelong atheist, pointedly refused to join in with the Lord's Prayer. Cambridge may once have been an explicitly religious institution, but nowadays many students arrive at the University having spent barely any time inside a church.

For those of us who weren't raised in Christian households and didn't go to schools in which weekly services were a normal component of academic life, having a college chapel can initially seem like just another archaic Cambridge tradition, to be grouped in with gowns, gongs, and extravagant cutlery. For those who feel strongly atheistic, condemn a number of Church practices, or have had negative experiences with Christian institutions in the past, the religious presence in Cambridge can seem intrusive or even insidious.

Andrew Hammond, the King's College chaplain, announced last week that he is planning to establish a new, 'alternative' church, HeartsEase, for students who may feel uncomfortable with some of the more traditional aspects of chapel life in college or Church custom in general. The initiative corroborates the notion that some of the more dogmatic and conservative features of the Church render its message inaccessible or unappealing to a significant number of students, but it also highlights the fact that it is not necessary to wholly or even partially subscribe to a particular belief system to find many aspects of chapel life valuable, affecting, and genuinely therapeutic.

HeartsEase will be modelled on the Thursday Late sessions that Andrew runs during term time, sessions in which the ceremonial atmosphere of the daily mass is replaced with a peaceful informality; incense is burnt, ambient music plays, and students sit or lie on the ground. I have never been religious, but these sessions, which provide brief spells of tranquillity amid the tumult of Cambridge life, have come to mean a lot to me.

To explore why exactly it is that some forms of worship appeal to Christians and non-Christians alike, and why it is so important to keep these spaces accessible for everyone, I asked a number of King's students who attend the Thursday Lates or are otherwise involved in the chapel for their thoughts. Many cited the space itself as intrinsically calming. When your

“It can be hard to find places of respite that are serene without being isolated.”

time is divided between lecture rooms, libraries, bedrooms and pubs, it can be hard to find places of respite that are serene without being isolated. Simultaneously public and private, grandiose and intimate, with a quietness that isn't simply an impetus for producing work, the college chapel can function as such a space. As one student said, “just the scale of it breaks the sometimes stifling routine of Cambridge and work.”

However, the opportunity to spend time in a beautiful building is only part of the appeal. Even though non-Christians may not always agree with the way in which Biblical teachings are applied to the world, hearing these texts read aloud and interpreted is always intriguing and often highly affecting. Forgiveness, acceptance, sacrifice, truth – we may deconstruct these concepts in a distant, academic manner when working or reading, but it can be difficult to engage with them in a way that feels personal and genuine.

During the Thursday Late sessions, these ideas are often be discussed at length without explicit reference to the Christian faith, with Jesus' teachings only being brought in at the end of the sermon. A member of King's choir, who describes himself as a 'total atheist' despite singing in the chapel six days a week, explained that the matters discussed in these sessions are 'as relevant to any non-Christian as they are to a Christian'.

But perhaps the most commonly cited

reason as to why students appreciate having a college chapel, regardless of religion, is the community and pastoral support it provides. For anyone who arrives at King's associating Christianity with intolerance, it is extremely reassuring to know that there are people within the Church who are not only deeply invested in students' wellbeing, but who promote a message that is progressive and inclusive.

The King's LGBT+ officer, who grew up in Spain and says they have always felt alienated by homophobic rhetoric within the Catholic Church, told me that she applied to King's after seeing a photograph of the chaplain accompanied by two drag queens. She described Andrew as a 'symbol of inclusivity' and said that it was 'magical to see how the freshers connect with his much needed message of tolerance every year'.

The King's Chaplain has fostered an atmosphere of accessibility and acceptance, and other college chaplaincies should follow his example. For as long as religious institutions and their representatives occupy a central place in college operations, their role should not be to merely engage in Christian practices or instruct from a Christian perspective.

Instead, college chapels should function as spaces in which students of all belief systems and backgrounds can go in order to reflect, question, meditate, or simply opt out of the chaos of Cambridge life.

Prison should rehabilitate, not reprimand

Olivia Millard discusses the benefits of pursuing rehabilitative reforms in correctional facilities

Olivia Millard

Seventy per cent of prisoners re-offend. This occurs, of course, for a multitude of reasons, but suggests that the prison system is not achieving what it was designed to do: prevent crime.

During a prison sentence, parole seems like light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. But the reality is that it doesn't get much lighter. People are being given sleeping bags upon their release from jail so low are the chances that they will secure housing and employment. In 2010, only 12% of employers surveyed said that they had recently employed somebody with a criminal record.

This pattern is blindingly obvious on a worldwide scale. In 2018, 41% of American prisoners did not hold a high school diploma. These statistics show an undeniable link between the education system and prisoner population, suggesting that the necessary reforms in the prison system would mean uprooting a significant sector of society, which would of course take time.

By mainly focusing on punishment, the British penal system is only addressing the 'effect' element of a 'cause and effect' problem, and there begins the vicious cycle that is caused by reoffending. Prison is actively counterproductive for certain crimes, particularly those which are drug-related, and as prisoners' mental and physical health is suffering because of funding cuts, it's time to use the limited funds available on rehabilitation and resettlement

“Prisons today are nothing like the media present them.”

programmes.

Prior to governmental funding cuts, steps have been made towards improving the education opportunities prisons offer. In 2016, the RAND Corporation in America released a report showing that the pursuit of educational programmes in jail reduced the likelihood of returning to prison by 43%. However, due to funding cuts, the number of people who have achieved A Level grades whilst in prison is now just 10% of what it was 10 years ago.

Last year, as part of the *Learning Together* initiative, I, alongside a dozen first-year French students, visited HMP Whitemoor, a high-security male prison, to discuss French literature with a group of inmates. Founded by Drs Ruth Armstrong and Amy Ludlow, *Learning Together* is prison-based education in the sense of bringing students from outside and within prison together to learn together. Its motto is “Education as the practice of freedom,” and even if physical freedom isn't on the cards, what is offered in terms of mental emancipation is invaluable.

The course was inspiring in ways that we'd never considered beforehand. HMP Whitemoor is a prison which focuses on settlement (helping the convicted make positive use of their sentences) and resettlement (reducing the risk of reoffending), but many of these opportunities are not offered at other prisons.

Despite the circumstantial differ-

ences between the two groups, which became most obvious to me when one Whitemoor student mentioned “I've never seen an iPhone before,” there was a sense of community that was far more overpowering. One inmate referred to the “wider community outside prison” he now feels he belongs to, and talked of the hope “for a future where we will one day re-join the community.” A community represents a support network, vital to thriving on the outside.

It is all too easy for inmates to become “institutionalized” during extended sentences which can only be detrimental to their return to society. Speaking to many people about the course, words like “naïve” and “innocent” frequently come up, as I repeat how welcoming and open the atmosphere was inside, as people initially doubt how discussing medieval French verse with prisoners is beneficial. In my opinion, it is more naïve to consider the concepts of crime and punishment in black and white: the latter does not necessarily prevent the recurrence of the former.

Furthermore, it is important to question the dichotomy between perpetrator and victim: all too often those who have committed crimes are in fact victims themselves of poverty, abuse or addiction. While I acknowledge that a lot of crimes meriting extended sentences do indeed deserve punishment, I maintain that prison is not the correct form of ‘punishment’ for many other

crimes.

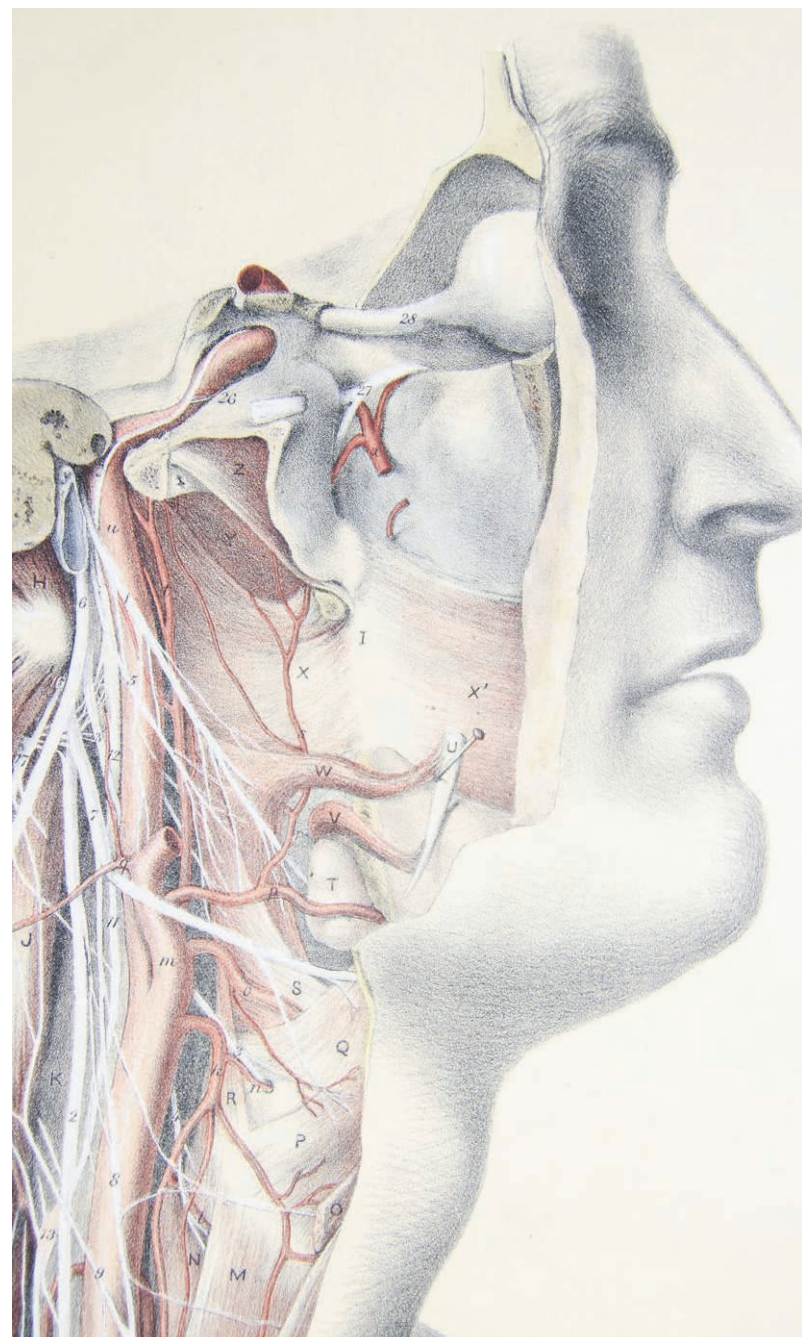
Horace Mann, an American educational reformer, once called education “the great equalizer,” but surely this concept only works if the most vulnerable members of society have access to it. Illiteracy is a serious barrier to re-entry into society.

50% of prisoners have the literacy age of an 11 year old. Limited phone credit and rare visits mean a lot of letter-writing to stay in contact, but not being able to read these letters means a stronger sense of isolation than ever. On a practical level, not being able to fill out menus or read notices detailing what happens on what day in prison hugely exacerbates the day-to-day trials of living in prison, and can also contribute significantly to mental health issues, like depression.

An important step towards understanding the current system is to acknowledge that prisons today are nothing like the media present them. With the combination of education and a more open societal mindset towards prison and resettlement within society, I believe that rates of re-offence would decrease enormously.

Whitemoor is no Shawshank, and there is a definite gap between the way in which the media presents prisons and how prisoners experience them. Britain has the highest incarceration rate in Western Europe, and if it is not benefiting those it is designed to help, surely it is time to change.

Science



My first patient, a human cadaver

Shazia Absar shares her experience of learning human anatomy in the dissection room

Perched on the wooden benches of the anatomy lecture theatre, we were told to reflect on how we might feel when we see a preserved cadaver for the first time, as we would very soon. We were warned that some people feel nauseous, others feel anxious, while some may feel an overwhelming sadness at the thought of the cadaver in front of them having once had a life, a family and people who loved them.

I was certain I would be one of the students who fainted at the mere smell of the preserved bodies and I was hit with the tragic realisation that the first memory that my classmates would have of me would be me crashing to the ground.

Oddly, yet thankfully, this was not the case. Entering the dissection room for the first time was an almost surreal experience for me. It baffled me that I

was currently surrounded by at least 40 cadavers, yet it seemed so normal. Even looking at our donor's face for the first time did not feel disgusting or harrowing at all; rather, the donor almost looked fake, like wax or plastic, but certainly not someone who had once been alive.

Over the course of the year, our donor became both more and less life-like to me. In one sense, as we dissected and examined every part of his body, our donor felt less and less like a man who had once lived and more like almost a mannequin made for our education. But, in another more pertinent sense, our donor was brought to life.

We would see a scar on his leg and wonder how it got there. Did he fall? Had he cut it by accident? Examining his abdomen we found he had a specific embryological abnormality and wondered: did he ever know this?

Throughout the year, we saw things about our donor that many would never have known, including our donor himself, and this, for me at least, felt like a great privilege.

To know that someone, so selflessly, would give their body to a bunch of first-year medical students so that they could learn anatomy, is something I still find baffling.

To care so much about the education of people you do not and will never know that you would choose to leave your body in their hands is something I could never understand, but something for which I am eternally grateful.

People say your donors are your "first patients" and I agree. Every other patient I see in my career will be a variation of the donor I dissected back in my first year of medicine. Every heart will be bigger or smaller than the donor's, every liver will be harder or softer and every anatomical fact I remember will be guided by what I saw during dissection sessions.

In a subject which is often plagued by the idea of having to memorise endless insertions and innervations of even more endless muscles, dissection was a constant reminder that what we learn as first-year medical students will be important for the rest of our careers.

It was an experience that displayed that, despite the looming deadlines and countless essays I was supposed to write that weekend, the course I was doing was an essential and rewarding one, where the lives of real people would one day be in our hands.

Dissection of a human cadaver is a privilege that only a few are able to experience. At undergraduate level, it is essentially limited to only medical students, and more so, only those studying at certain institutions.

Reflecting on my experiences a year later, I have truly come to understand and appreciate the value and importance of the experience that we had twice a week for a year, knowing that I won't forget the lessons I learnt during this time (even if I have already forgotten all the facts).

◀ From Michaelmas term of their first year, Cambridge medics learn human anatomy with human cadavers

(FLICKR/LIVERPOOLHLS)



From the lab The new research on spinal cord injuries

Ashwin Venkatesh

The "central nervous system" delicately orchestrates the complex concerto of our mental and physical faculties, from perception through to action and all the intermediary processes in-between. Such functional sophistication is disturbed in spinal cord injury, which can have devastating short-term and long-term consequences, determined by the level and severity of the injury.

The estimated incidence of spinal cord injury is around 0.5m people annually. The consequences of these injuries cannot be overstated, with people

with spinal cord injury two to five times more likely to die prematurely.

Survivors can face lasting debilitating conditions, including sensory and motor impairments and paraplegia, chronic pain, infections and depression. Rehabilitation therefore requires a multi-faceted approach to maximise functioning, physical & mental wellbeing and community integration. Neurobiologists have started to tackle the challenge of spinal cord injury with research aiming to rebuild the spinal cord. When the central nervous system is injured, it will respond by walling off the injured site with a 'glial scar' and embedding this area with molecules that inhibit regeneration.

Repairing spinal cord injury therefore requires the alteration of regenerative potential. This is being explored through studies which graft supportive glial cells to the injured area and the development of biomaterial polymers which can bridge gaps in the spinal cord.

The most recent advancement in this field has used grafts of neural progenitor cells, which can extend their axons over large distances as they differenti-

◀ **Repairing spinal cord injury requires alteration of regenerative potential**

(PEARSON SCOTT FORESMAN)

ate, while assuming appropriate cell fates (sensory/motor) according to the original spatial blueprint of the spinal cord anatomy. It remains to be seen whether this approach can be extended from animal models to the human paradigm, and how the extent of functional recovery compares with other approaches.

Neuro-engineers have produced brain-machine and neural interfaces that can bypass injured neural areas to restore connectivity. These interfaces are made up of a micro-electrode array implanted in the area of the brain where the command for voluntary movement is generated, the motor cortex. This records neural activity from the brain's surface directly.

The recordings of the brain's activity can then be reverse-engineered to decode the intended movement and programmed to produce desired limb movement, by controlling a robotic arm, or even an 'exoskeleton'. The major advancement of this 65kg robotic exoskeleton suit is the ability to activate all four limbs, whereas previous technologies that could produce movement in only one limb. The study participant trialling the novel exoskeleton

“The complex neural mechanisms that enable us to walk upright are not yet fully understood”

was able to walk a considerable distance: around 145m, taking 480 steps. These technologies still require vigilant laboratory-based monitoring by neurophysiologists and engineers.

Movement capabilities are still relatively basic: walking requires ceiling-mounted support since the complex neural mechanisms that enable us to walk upright have not been fully understood. Testing of the upper limb has also still been limited to simple reaching tasks. These do not yet capture the complexity of fine motor control.

In the future, engineers may be able to produce sustainable, durable, and fully-implantable stimulation systems that eliminate the need to don and doff components, and the development of software algorithms that allow more complex and simultaneous limb movements to be generated. Neurorehabilitation experts have been developing new methods to restore function in the nervous system, by promoting plasticity mechanisms intrinsic to the central nervous system.

Science

Does the human lifespan have a natural limit?

Sambhavi Sneha Kumar considers scientific approaches to prolonging human life

The maximum lifespan of an organism varies significantly between species, ranging from a single day for mayflies, to several hundred years for Greenland sharks. While the goal for most organisms at an evolutionary level is to reproduce, humanity has continuously worked to increase our lifespan.

Life expectancy is used as an indicator of a country's development, as well as a measure of social and scientific progress. A longer life would permit us to spend more time having valuable life experiences, making crucial contributions to our fields of work, potentially helping humanity progress further as a species. Recent medical advances allow us to further pursue this quest.

The average life expectancy in the U.K. is currently around 81 years – significantly higher than the 35 years it was in the 17th century. We now live in an era of diseases of old age, where degenerative disorders such as dementia are dubbed “the biggest health crisis of our time” in many countries. This poses an important question: are our bodies biologically capable of sustaining the lifespans for which we strive, or are we being overly ambitious?

Research into longevity is extremely complex and controversial. We only know of 48 people in history who are confirmed to have lived past 115. It was already hypothesised in 1825 that mortality rates increase exponentially with age, implying that human life expectancy must tend towards a maximum value. A 2016 study claimed that even with a perfectly healthy lifestyle and access to medical interventions when necessary, the natural biological human age limit is approximately 115, with only a few individual outliers, in part due to their genetic architecture. This would imply that regardless of the technology we develop, it should be unable to increase our life expectancy past this limit.

This is a plausible suggestion when we consider ageing on a cellular level. The Hayflick limit refers to the number of times that most cells divide before entering ‘senescence’. Hayflick (currently a University of California, San Francisco Professor of Anatomy at 91 years of age) proposed this theory in the 60s, after finding that a human cell population could only divide between 40 to 60 times in culture before entering senescence.

Elizabeth Blackburn, Carol Greider and Jack Szostak went on to win a Nobel prize in 2009 for their discovery that this correlates with telomeres (repetitive sequences of DNA at the ends of chromosomes which serve to protect them)

► How many of us will live to see our 100th birthday? (TAMMY SUE)



“We only know of 48 people in history who are confirmed to have lived past 115”

being reduced to a critical length, since these shorten after each cell division.

Even if the body did not undergo any other processes of ageing, the accumulation of senescent cells would eventually cause death. Almost all senescent cells either self-destruct or are destroyed by the immune system, though a small number remain and have a strong signalling effect which can lead to chronic inflammation or disruption of nearby tissues and potentially even stimulate surrounding cells to become senescent. These processes are thought to be linked to the development of numerous age-related diseases, including Alzheimer's and Type II diabetes. It appears that regardless of the condition the body is kept in, degenerative conditions will inevitably catch up with everyone.

Recent investigations in Italy which observed the lifespans of over 3,000 individuals over the age of 100 have revealed that annual mortality risks plateau between 100 and 115 at around 50%. This is likely because any age related disorders that were to occur would have set in by this point. As a majority of diseases are associated with increasing age, we need to better understand what is driving ageing. We may be able to, through a mixture of medical, lifestyle, and environmental interventions push our life expectancy up.

But what about going further than, say, 115 years? While the early attempts at extending telomeres (using the enzyme telomerase) caused cells to become can-

cerous, more recent efforts using more controlled delivery systems are more promising at increasing lifespan without the added cancer risk.

Promising results have recently arisen in the form of research carried out by the Spanish National Cancer Centre. The telomeres of mice embryonic stem cells were elongated beyond normal levels, and mice developing from these stem cells were created. These mice had a 12.8% increase in median longevity, and an 8.4% increase in maximum longevity, compared to mice with normal telomere length. The mice also underwent less DNA damage as they aged, and showed lower cholesterol and Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL) levels, as well as improved glucose and insulin tolerance.

Such research demonstrates that it could be possible for us to alter our susceptibility to degenerative ageing effects. Much remains to be discovered at what governs the rate of ageing, and then, whether reductions in the rate of ageing actually translate to longer lifespans, or just to better health along the lifespan.

While many questions remain concerning the upper bound on lifespan, much could be done to increase life expectancy right now. In the last 100 years, the increase in life expectancy can be attributed to factors such as effective immunisation programs, antibiotics and public health initiatives around hygiene and sanitation. While life expectancies may appear to be approaching a plateau, many believe that developments in fields

such as artificial intelligence and genetics could be responsible for our next surge in life expectancy by improving the ways in which we deliver healthcare. Some claim that it does not matter if our bodies degrade if we are able to develop technologies such as prosthesis and bionics.

While extending lifespan may seem like an exciting concept, this may pose additional challenges on both a societal and personal level. For instance, we are already struggling as a planet with overpopulation and its associated consequences, such as carbon emissions. Increased life expectancy has played a role in the development of this problem and may continue to do so.

Many countries have an aging population: individuals aged 65 and older in Japan, for example, make up a quarter of its total population, estimated to increase to a third by 2050. Therefore, the dependency ratio (the proportion of workers to non-workers) creates a need for more efficient social care provision and strategies. Ageing is a natural process, and it may not necessarily be possible to halt the clock. As a species, we seem to have more control over how long we live than many other species do. In modern society, it is becoming increasingly likely that excess of food or age related degenerative disorders will kill us rather than starvation or disease. However, if we do strive to push our life expectancies to new limits, it is vital that we consider the challenges this will pose for our bodies and society.

“Ageing is a natural process, and it may not necessarily be possible to halt the clock”

Vulture



► **LIFESTYLE**
MY PERIOD,
MY PLANET • 24
► **FASHION**
A VR MONA LISA? • 26
► **MUSIC**
BLACK STARS
TO WATCH • 28

Lifestyle

Bloody hell! Periods and the planet

There are many sustainable alternatives to tampons and pads, says **Jess Molyneux**, so why aren't most of the people who menstruate taking them up?

The curse. Code red. Bloody Mary. It's clear from the language that we use to talk about that time of the month that it isn't exactly the highlight of a given four-week cycle. But it's not just our lower abdomens which are calling out for it to stop: with a year's worth of menstrual products, at average use, generating a carbon footprint of 5.26kg, the impact of our periods isn't, funnily enough, very well aligned with Mother Nature.

Cotton, used in both sanitary towels and tampons, is an incredibly resource intensive crop, and the plastic packaging of these sanitary products definitely isn't helping the planet: one sanitary towel contains the same amount of plastic as a supermarket carrier bag. Moreover, people flushing period products rather than disposing of them in sanitary bins contributes to waste pollution in the ocean.

With the recent rise in awareness of the menstrual cup, it seems that the problem might be fast dissolving. Alongside reusable menstrual cups, which are often biodegradable and last for years, options for reduced or zero-waste periods also include renewable disposables. These often use organic cotton, namely from brands such as Natracare, Ohne, and Freda as well as washable period pads and panties, which are better for vaginal

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The impact of our periods isn't very well aligned with Mother Nature
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health too. Companies that produce these environmentally-friendly options often have links with period poverty or environmental charities, so your purchase is doubly ethical. Despite requiring a larger initial investment (menstrual cups, for example, generally cost between £15 and £25), these alternatives end up working out cheaper in the long-run: people who go reusable will tend to spend far less than the £18,000 which represents the estimated lifetime cost of menstruating.

So what's not to love? Why aren't the shops running out of menstrual cups and period pants which don't need to be changed as often as tampons and towels, and have environmental perks to boot? Let's return to those three euphemisms, which I picked from over 5,000 found in a recent study on slang terms for menstruation in 10 different languages: I think there's a clue there. Another clue is in the point about women flushing their sanitary waste. Our language, our period practices, our society, are locked into continual attempts to hide the realities of our bodies. These euphemisms hush up the fact that we're in a bit of



▲ “Why aren't the shops running out of menstrual cups and period pants?” (ILLUSTRATION BY ALISA SANTIKARN FOR VARSITY)

discomfort or quite severe pain, that we're shedding the lining of an internal organ, that we have done and will continue to do so on a regular basis for most of our adult lives.

Whilst there's probably more recognition and sympathy for this inevitable aspect of biology than ever before, the fact that these euphemisms are still so readily available, that people are still flushing waste to avoid the embarrassment of it sticking out of the bin, or simply because no one's ever told them otherwise, are indicators that the taboo around periods is still at large. When the only context in which we talk frankly about menstruation is still often just a single biology lesson or a practical and private mother-daughter conversation, how are we ever going to be able to substantially relate this apparently personal secret to a global, collective crisis which we should all be working to solve? Until we can have these healthy, open, unashamed, and inclusive conversations about periods, we won't be talking about them enough to make the advantages of sustainable options a topic of public interest or discourse.

Our slightly fearful attitude towards and stunted vocabulary of female anatomy isn't

helping either. In a society which would usually rather whisper 'vagina' *Miranda*-style, terms like 'labia' in the description of how to use a menstrual cup are likely to put off or baffle some of their prospective users. In

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A burden of discomfort and pain, compounded by shame, secrecy and taboo
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order to feel able to switch to menstrual cups, people need to be intimate with their own bodies, in ways which I don't think we're really teaching them how to be. They have to be living in an environment where, for example, they're able to boil their menstrual cups on the stove to sterilise them, an action which family members and housemates who would rather avoid the realities of menstruation are still likely to make uncomfortable. They have to not be paralysed by the fear that, on the

first few attempts, they'll spill, which will only be the case once the shame around natural bleeding – still so potently felt by anyone who's ever asked their friends to check them as they walk down the school corridor – has dissipated.

People who menstruate are already shouldering a burden of discomfort and pain compounded by shame, secrecy, and taboo. The planet needs our help, but we must be careful not to levy criticism at individuals for the impact of a natural and healthy bodily process when promoting environmental alternatives. Menstrual cups might be a viable solution to tackling worldwide period poverty, but whilst the initial investment is still coupled with the unfamiliarity, many are likely to feel uncomfortable making the switch. We should be excited about the unique opportunity we have to contribute to the environmental movement with changes which should be small-scale, and yield other benefits like longer wearability, better vaginal health, and long-term financial savings. But, as it stands, there are still barriers which need to come down so that Auntie Flow isn't a curse on either Mother Nature or her children.



Meditate, and bring calm back to yourself

In her latest column on practising mindfulness, **Charlotte Newman** explains the basic principles of meditation, emphasising that there is no correct way to meditate

Meditation has been practised for thousands of years around the world, with many modern forms of meditation rooted in Buddhism or Hinduism (though other religions have also adopted meditation in different forms). Studies show that regular meditation reduces stress and anxiety, and improves wellbeing.

Meditation can seem very alien at first for anyone who has never tried the practice before, but there are many different types and it is about finding the type of meditation that is right for you. There are different and varies



Everyone is on their own path... it takes time to find a meditation that works for you



forms of meditation. These practices all differ slightly but allow us to develop greater awareness of ourselves and help to facilitate emotional calm and clear thinking.

The go-to position people usually imagine when they think of meditation is the lotus pose or semi lotus; you can sit like this if you wish, but for a lot of people it is not comfortable; instead you can sit cross legged, in a chair, lying down – whatever is most comfort-

able for you. Often with meditation we focus on one thing, either something external from the body, for example a candle flame, or something within the body, such as the breath. This helps our minds to focus on the present moment and the exercise.

An important part of meditation is letting go of judgement and allowing thoughts to arise and pass if they occur. It is normal to have thoughts appear in our heads as we meditate (often about deadlines or what we should be doing in this time), but we must be gentle and patient with ourselves. Acceptance is key to meditation. Allowing any thoughts that occur to arise and pass without judging ourselves for 'becoming distracted', we can observe our thoughts and then return our focus back to our breathing or mantra. Meditation is about letting go of control, about accepting



this present moment, and though we focus in order to bring awareness and calm the mind we must be kind to ourselves if we lose that awareness momentarily. Everyone is on their own path and it takes time to find a meditation that works for you and begins to bring you peace.

Particularly in loving kindness meditations, where the purpose is to imagine sending loving kindness and compassion to yourself and others, it is emphasised to just allow thoughts to appear and if they do to acknowledge that and let them pass. You can meditate in silence, along to meditative music, or there are guided meditations that take you slowly through the process. Walking meditation is also a form of meditation that focuses on bringing awareness to every step – to become aware and connected to the earth. When we walk it is

one of the times we are probably most in our thoughts and thinking about tasks to do or where we are having to go to – walking meditation is a way of bringing us into the present and letting go of our thoughts.

There is no right or wrong way to meditate and no set amount of time you should meditate for. Often it is best to start with a short amount of time and work upwards.

It can sometimes feel, particularly at Cam-



There is no right or wrong way to meditate



bridge, that we do not have enough time or that we can be using our time for something 'more useful' – but allowing ourselves to stop, meditate and focus our awareness into the here and now benefits us for the rest of the day and is one of the most useful things we can do. Meditation, in whatever form, is a refuge away from the business of our lives, the business of our thoughts. It is time that is completely for you.

Time to be able to discover who you are beneath the noise, when you allow yourself to just be.

◀ "Discover who you are beneath the noise"

(ILLUSTRATION BY LISHA ZHONG FOR VARSITY)

Tortilla is little more than a soulless chain restaurant

Although cheap, much better burrito options exist elsewhere, says **Callum Wainstein**

Tortilla, the 'San-Francisco' style burrito chain, has recently opened in Cambridge, located just off Market Square. The décor is nice in a sort of soulless chain restaurant way – inoffensive but never a place you'd choose to go to because of the vibe. Nor would I choose to go there for the food.

Starting off was the burrito, which is what Tortilla is known for. I would say on every level the burrito failed: the chicken filling I got was the best part of the burrito, it had an actual bite (something which often pre-cooked chicken at places like this lacks) and hints of a good smoky flavour. The rice, however, was very disappointing – flavour wise it was largely lacking, with only a generic tomato taste, but more problematic was its texture. Good rice in a burrito should have some moistness and congeal together (think of how rice in a paella acts), but here it was far too atomised – I could feel the distinct dry texture of each individual grain with every single bite. The same issue was apparent with the beans,

which were largely just mushy round blobs which stood out and hit against my cheeks. The burrito I got also had, in theory, cheese and chorizo, but these must have been served in such miserly portions as to mark them as effectively absent. This was a shame because I actually located a piece of chorizo which had fallen out of the burrito afterwards, and it was actually pretty solid – good smokiness, a bit of heat, and a lot of fat. All these issues would be problematic in isolation, but made much worse when considered in combination – the hallmark of good burrito is the mouth feel and all the ingredients should combine in such a way that the flavours work together. The opposite happened with this burrito; all the different ingredients were alienated and isolated, less a symphony working together and more a discordant mess.

I also tried the quesadilla, which I found to be much better. It had a good texture: the outside was crunchy, which gave way to an oozy, cheesy interior. Also included were some Pico de Gallo: the raw tomato had a nice sharp

bite and a bit of acidity which works well with the fatty cheese. What really let down the dish was the carnitas (pork): dry and lacking any real flavour beyond generic 'porkiness', with the taste of something that had been cooked a few hours before and had just been sitting around. The quesadilla, combined with the chicken I had in the burrito, could have been a pretty good combination, but in its form I got it, with the pork, I'd stay away.

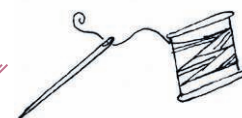
Overall there are positives to Tortilla – namely it's cheap, convenient, and relatively quick. However, literally right outside Tortilla is Market Square, which has a whole selection of food options which are all around the same price (or in some cases cheaper) than Tortilla. To be honest, I really cannot think of a single reason why I'd ever go back to Tortilla of my own volition when within a thirty second walk exists such great options, which are infinitely superior. Go to them, explore the excellent independent food options which exist next door, instead of supporting a soulless and disappointing corporation.



▲ "Nor would I choose to go there for the food"

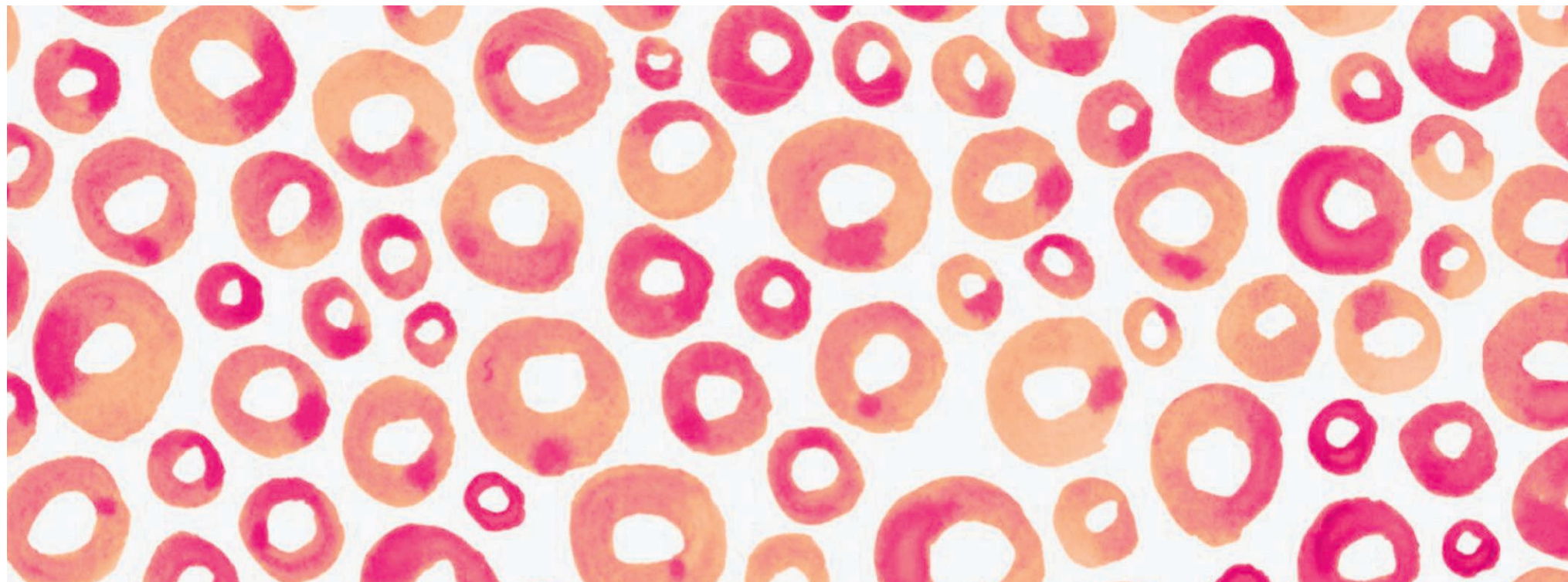
(INSTAGRAM/TORTILLAUK)

Fashion



Breaking the binaries of fashion

Reconciling inflexible expectations and reality can be a lengthy and tricky process, but is one that is absolutely worth it, says *an anonymous student*



▲ “For me, fashion was something that reinforced everything I both was and wasn’t” (ILLUSTRATION BY KATE TOWSEY FOR VARSITY)

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of body dysmorphia and anorexia

Growing up I was always aware that I didn’t quite connect with my body. As I aged, a feeling of “not quite right” developed into a deep hatred of my physicality. Broad shouldered, small waisted, and with a face that treads the lines between the traditionally feminine and masculine, I was an hourglass figure with a V-taper: androgynous, uncategorizable. Unable to fit myself neatly into the well-defined boxes of the masculine or the feminine at what felt like the most basic of levels, I spent most of my teenage years attempting to mould my body into something that I had been trained to believe would be more acceptable, more palatable, less mine.

For me, fashion was something that reinforced everything I both was and wasn’t; I was left crying in changing rooms more times than I really want to admit. I distinctly remember being 16, traipsing a shopping centre for hours, on a desperate search for a suit to wear to college.

Every shop I entered told the same story: my body was just the wrong shape. Stood in one store’s changing room under fluorescent lights, I stared at my reflection. Five, ten, fifteen minutes rolled into one in my own personal purgatory as, dressed in an ill-fitting suit, I picked apart every single part of my body. This wasn’t the first time I had dissected myself, and it wouldn’t be the last. However, it remains the most vivid in my memory because it was at that moment that I promised myself I would change; I wish I could say that meant I would work on my self-esteem, or confidence, or anything non-material at all

really, but sadly it didn’t. To change meant to shrink, because in my mind to shrink meant to fit.

From that moment on, I combined unhealthy habits with an “if my body isn’t visible it doesn’t exist” approach to fashion. Oversized trends became my best friend as I tried to drown myself in layers, hiding every aspect of myself from the outside world in a desperate attempt at “acceptable”.

However, it was also at this point that I began to experiment. Closed off in the safety of my bedroom I would spend hours on my laptop scrolling through page after page of high,

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In cutting the invisible
tape of the fashion binary,
I found myself free
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vintage, and second-hand fashion websites. With each page I imagined a new version of myself. Tuxedo trousers here, a new romantic blouse there. Idea after idea, inspiration after inspiration, I began to dream about the person I could be, each refreshed page a new version of the same frame. For two years I followed this same pattern and it was during this time that, steeped in the ideas of others, imagination and inspiration of my own began to swirl around inside my head and eventually out onto the page. I sketched piece after piece, experimenting with silhouettes from every era: frock coats and flowing gowns jammed

together in eclectic sketchbooks of designs, each piece another combination of the traditionally masculine and feminine.

These dreams and designs remained just that, figments of the most adventurous parts of my mind until I reached university, when, free from my extremely conservative hometown, I first crossed the gender divide in Topshop. Suddenly, clothing styles I long had admired from afar opened up to me, a whole new world of clothing cuts unfurling before my eyes. It wasn’t that I didn’t know they existed – after all, I had been designing with these aspects for years, but this was the first time I saw them as being available to me.

I picked up items that excited me; changing room lights no longer presented scrutiny, instead they illuminated possibilities I had never thought could be mine. Under these lights that had mocked me for years I found clothes that fit. By breaking through the binaries of fashion I had found clothing that made me feel comfortable, collected, and maybe even a little bit... cool? The binaries of “acceptable” and “unacceptable” that I had long held in my head began to unravel.

No longer was my body a freakish object to be contorted into ill-fitting clothing – it was just a body. In cutting the invisible tape of the fashion binary, I found myself free from the cruel constraints I’d placed on my own appearance.

I won’t pretend it was an instant transformation, this was no ‘00s coming-of-age film and I am no Mia Thermopolis, but it was a transformation nonetheless. Topshop marked a turning point for me, heralding in an age of gender non-conformity. It gave me the confidence to begin stitching my androgynous

dreams into a reality.

Trawling various charity shops, second-hand stores, and VSCO girls’ favourite app, Depop, I began to search for unwanted items that fit the person I wanted to become. Some fit straight away, working with my body in all the ways I had spent years hoping they would. Others required small amounts of tailoring, and a few – my favourites – were pieces I ripped and flipped into whole new garments, often spending my evenings patching, recut-

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It facilitated the growth
of a reticent friendship
between my body & mind
”

ting, and dying entire moth-eaten suit jackets into more avant-garde androgynous pieces. Not only had breaking binaries freed me from physical constraints, but also from creative ones. I was no longer someone who fantasised about designing; I was a designer.

Changing my conceptualisation of binary fashion changed my creative abilities, but more than that, it facilitated the growth of a reticent friendship between my body and mind, the cruel criticism I subjected myself to in the past now a relic of my teens.

That is not to say my body and I don’t still have a strained relationship, we do, but no longer is it a relationship marred by a hatred of a figure which is simply not up for negotiation.



Film & TV

Making the most of Halloween in Cambridge

Emily Sandercock's guide to making the most of All Hallows Eve in Cambridge's hallowed halls

During a Halloween party in elementary school, when I was five or six, I saw the costume one of the older kids was wearing, and was horrified for the first time in my life.

In reality, the costume was tame, and so fake-looking that the teachers probably thought no one could be scared by it. It consisted of a plastic axe stuck in the neck of the wearer, with fake blood running down his neck and splattered on his white t-shirt. I spent the rest of the party walking fast in the opposite direction whenever I saw the axe-man approaching.

Still, Halloween is my favorite holiday. It may have inspired one of my first adult thoughts, but now I associate it with childhood. When I think of it, I think of candy and cartoons, and of being allowed to stay up past my bedtime.

In that spirit, I've put together a short list of Halloween recommendations that tries to capture both sides of the holiday, that will let you both ponder your own mortality while also reconnecting you with your youth.

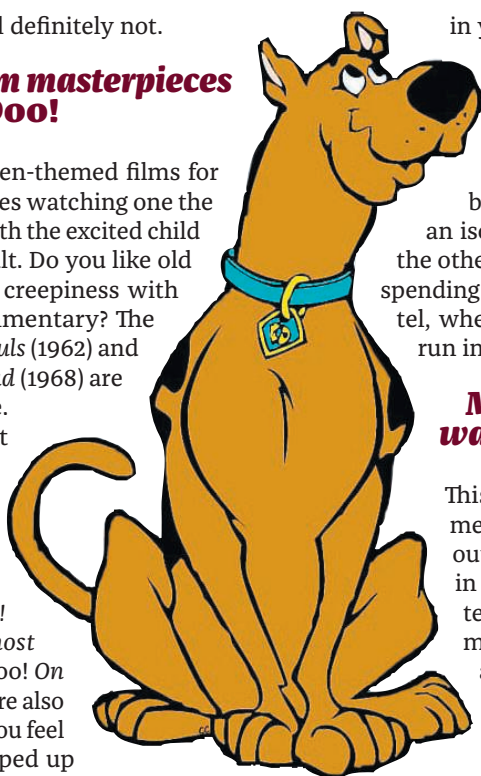
Some of these might remind you of your

childhood. Some will definitely not.

Indulge in film masterpieces like *Scooby Doo!*

There are Halloween-themed films for all tastes, which makes watching one the perfect activity for both the excited child and the spooked adult. Do you like old things? Are you into creepiness with a side of social commentary? The movies *Carnival of Souls* (1962) and *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) are both available online.

Do you just want to watch the most perfect movies, regardless of genre, of all time? The late-nineties masterpieces *Scooby-Doo!* and *the Witch's Ghost* (1999) and *Scooby-Doo! On Zombie Island* (1998) are also available. Or maybe you feel like you've been cooped up



in your room a little too long?

The Cambridge Arts Picturehouse is showing *The Shining* on 28th October. See this classic and be grateful we're in a bustling town rather than on an isolated mountaintop. Or go the other way, and fantasize about spending the winter in an empty hotel, where you will be sure not to run into any tourists at all.

Make your morning walk atmospheric

This is a two-in-one recommendation. Take a walk to the outskirts of Cambridge, either in the direction of Grantchester or Waterbeach. Wait for a misty morning and enjoy the autumn air while listening to some scary stories.

◀ YOUTUBE/WB KIDS

I found a particularly good Spotify playlist for this. It includes a great variety of public-domain scary stories narrated by people like Alfred Hitchcock, Christopher Lee, and Orson Welles. One of them, *The Mezzotint*, a story about a cursed painting us heavily implied to take place in Oxbridge. It will be easy to picture yourself as the protagonist of a Gothic novel while you wander the quiet, chill fields outside of Cambridge, making this the ideal Halloween activity, melding fiction and reality.

Get your Hogwarts on at Halloween Formal Hall (minus the troll in the dungeon)

As an MPhil student with only one year here, this is high on my list of things to do over Halloween. One of my favorite things about the holiday as a kid was going about a normal day, but with a Halloween-themed tint. An ordinary lunch in the school cafeteria, but everyone was dressed like a ghost or a *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle*. An ordinary night in hall, but everyone is wearing devil ears or *Harry Potter* costumes.

Joker is more nuanced than our reactions to it

Though extremely polarising, Joker's goal is to challenge, not incite, argues David Rennie

Content Note: This article contains a brief mention of gun violence and discussion of cinematic representations of mental health

We've always had strong reactions to movies – often justifiably so. But the release of Todd Phillips' loud and ubiquitous *Joker* seems to have touched a particular nerve. Cue a nauseating glut of back and forth articles, Twitter spats, threats of boycott... it's a discourse we're fed up with for good reason: film sparks discourse, and debate is necessary, but something about this maelstrom of tiresome dialogue has the air of something poisonous.

Much like the seething cesspit of Phillips' *Gotham*, the internet is a petri dish fermenting reactionary, aimless debate. You could say the fallout was inevitable with a film of this nature, but it is not guilt-free, nor unprovocative. The seeds are there. Indeed, the protagonist's 'finally, someone understands me!' rings so true it makes you squirm – no wonder it chimes with those dark corners of the internet where anonymity is conducive to incel vitriol.

Most polarising is the seeming validation of its on-screen violence. Prudence and care is understandable, not least because of the tragic precedent in 2012 following the release of *The Dark Knight Rises*, with the Colorado theatre, the scene of the horrific shooting, refusing to screen the film as a result.

The reality, however? This is not a hateful film: it is dirty, grimy and slippery, sure, but its object is to challenge, not to incite. It is certainly a difficult viewing experience, one that keeps you submerged with little reprieve for two hours. An unshakeable grimness pervades the runtime, with a funereal score, a revolving door of misfortune beating down the protagonist and its few moments of levity only adding to the discomfort. The ingredients may be there, but it is not overtly provocative. Instead, it is its lack of subtlety in its analysis of mental health, societal breakdown and the link between them that means it toes perhaps too finely that hazardous line between vindication and vilification.

“
This film seems to have
touched a particular nerve

”
With the political and the filmic so pervasively intertwined, therefore, it becomes exceedingly difficult to view the film on a level of art for art's sake – but is necessary in *Joker's* case, wherein the art is in danger of being drowned out by external noise. On its own cinematic terms, *Joker* proves itself not quite to be the festival-darling masterpiece nor the

shallow mess that many view it as, but rather inhabits a middle ground as a relentlessly disturbing yet effective psychodrama. While not the most subtle or sensitive dissection of mental health, it convinces as a tragedy of isolation, and importantly, as an origin story.

Phillips has put out a teasingly dangerous film, designed to prod and provoke. But as the dust settles, one hopes that slowly this will be disentangled from its noxious fallout and be

appreciated on its own terms. It is material that, yes, carelessly, even recklessly, pushes us to look within, and is perhaps smugly looking back at its impact thinking: point proven.

It is not the film itself, but rather the unpleasant polarised discussion that's built up around it that we should be worried about, and certainly less whether the director of the *Dukes of Hazzard* wants to lead an armed alt-right uprising.

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Arts



How a Virtual Reality Mona Lisa could make art more accessible



▲ “The Louvre is putting on a virtual reality experience”

(ILLUSTRATION BY APOLLINE BÖKKERINK FOR VARSITY)

Esmee Wright explains the benefits of the installation, which allows visitors to enter into the Louvre’s most famous painting

To mark the 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci, the Louvre will be opening a new exhibition dedicated to his works. As part of this, of course, a great deal of focus will be placed on the Louvre’s pride and joy, the *Mona Lisa*. This makes sense, since her beauty was until recently confined to a different room while the Salle des États was being renovated. Visitors to her temporary boudoir complained of crowds, which meant they rarely got more than a glimpse of this surprisingly diminutive masterpiece. Unfortunately, given the painting is only 30 inches tall and has a daily draw estimated at around 30,000 people, the problem doesn’t abate when she is restored to her traditional resting place.

In order to enhance the experience of seeing the *Mona Lisa*, and combat the issue of crowds, the Louvre is putting on a virtual reality experience, ‘Face to face with the *Mona Lisa*’, in conjunction with the exhibition. Set to be held in a small gallery room by the main Leonardo da Vinci exhibition, it will allow visitors to overcome entirely the distance between themselves and the 500 year old painting. They will also be able to learn more

about the painting itself, the process of its creation and conservation, and the identity of the sitter.

“Visitors can overcome the distance between themselves and the 500-year-old painting”

And yet, as always with these sorts of things, the plan has caused controversy. Some art critics, including Didier Rykner, founder of the art journal *La Tribune de l’Art*, have contested the French Ministry of Culture’s decision to spend so much money on virtual reality as an access point to works of art. Rykner makes the reasonable point that certain museums and churches outside of Paris contain important works of art, but remain closed due to staff and funding shortages, while the Ministry is throwing €3m at the virtual reality project.

Yet I fundamentally disagree with the claim that the money should be spent on “buy[ing] three masterpieces that you could give to the museums in France”. The focus on the *Mona Lisa* is a relatively recent obsession, which often causes people to overlook the value of other pieces of art. However, it must be acknowledged that this painting, for better or worse, is one of the first stepping stones most people will take into the art world. They might not be able to tell a Caravaggio from a Klimt, or know what the golden ratio is, but children all across the world will know the *Mona Lisa*’s smile. And this matters so very much.

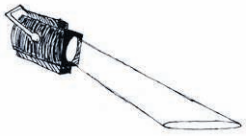
My hometown was not exactly affluent. In high school, I used to help out with youth trips to the Louvre, an eight-hour train journey away. These were children who might never have actually set foot inside even the free art museums in Edinburgh, only a 40-minute bus ride from them. There was always the hope that, in encountering the *Mona Lisa* in the flesh, a few might be inspired to take more of an interest in the arts. Unfortunately, staring at a small dark painting from a distance, with the heads of hundreds of other tourists in the way, never really inspired anyone – we knew the kids were only there for Disneyland. But what if these children had the opportunity to actually interact with the painting, to discover just why people make such a big fuss over it, and, moreover, to encounter all this information within a genuinely cool virtual reality set up? I think we might have had more success.

And it’s not just children who would benefit

from the introduction of virtual reality displays. When the Musée de l’Orangerie opened a VR experience based around Claude Monet’s *Water Lilies* cycle, people of all ages and abilities embraced it, discovering the gardens that inspired the paintings – this is simply not possible for many people to do in reality, for whole swathes of reasons. Programmes like this could allow people with disabilities to interact with artworks in a way that the often inaccessible museum setup has so far prevented.

“Virtual reality programmes like this could allow people with disabilities to interact with artworks”

I am looking forward to this new exhibition. After all, it’s not like we weren’t already looking at the *Mona Lisa* exclusively through our phone screens. What’s a little VR upgrade? Either we embrace the introduction of technology into the art world, and with it, the millions of people previously excluded by the multitudinous gates it has erected, or that world must admit that it simply doesn’t want to let everyone in.



Theatre

Burgerz is a powerful exploration of gender

Iona MacPherson discusses the profound and personal impact of this Fringe triumph

Content Note: This article contains discussion of transphobic violence

Burgerz by Travis Alabanza is a theatre piece that has been on my mind ever since seeing it this year at the Edinburgh Fringe. The piece, which focuses on the reality of being a trans person of colour in the UK, is a striking and profoundly unusual theatre experience.

Burgerz is named in reference to a transphobic attack that Alabanza was subject to a few years ago. A transphobic slur was yelled, and a burger was thrown at them on a busy bridge in London, but no passers-by stopped to say anything. After this, burgers became an obsession for Alabanza, and this theatre piece was born out of that.

The piece is interactive and centres around a conversation between Alabanza and a (specifically requested) straight, cisgender, white male audience member. Throughout the piece, burgers act as a metaphor for the concept of gender, as well as discrimination; in some ways, they could also be seen as a metaphor for freedom. Because the audience member

will be different for each show, each conversation is unique, which makes for an amusing, uncomfortable, gripping, and ultimately powerful experience.

“

It opens up an invaluable dialogue that many audience members would not experience elsewhere

”

The effect *Burgerz* had on me when I saw it is unforgettable. As a queer, black woman, it's one of the only pieces of theatre that has ever allowed me to feel seen in my entirety, via its nuanced performance and acknowledgement of different experiences. However, it was not the discussion, but the audience reactions that had the biggest effect on me emotionally. To be in a theatre, where the main person on stage is

a queer, trans black person, telling their story, is exceptional in itself. Alabanza's monologues about gender identity, racism, and violence were so raw, relentlessly honest and, at times, so angry, that I could almost literally feel their pain - as I believe the rest of the audience could too.

We were a mostly cisgender (myself included) and white audience - there certainly would've been room, and almost expectation, for argument - but instead there was simply an atmosphere of warmth.

person, telling exceptional Alabanza's

In the show I was present for, when Alabanza, almost bitterly, asked the audience member to leave the stage, the man quietly went up to them and shook their hand before departing.

This moment of wordless solidarity and respect was more powerful and more human than any scripted piece of theatre could ever conceptualise.

Burgerz is everything I believe theatre should be. It opens up an invaluable and authentic dialogue that many members of the audience would not experience elsewhere. It is refreshingly genuine, and unrelenting about the pain many queer, trans people of colour go through, but is also beautifully proud and open.

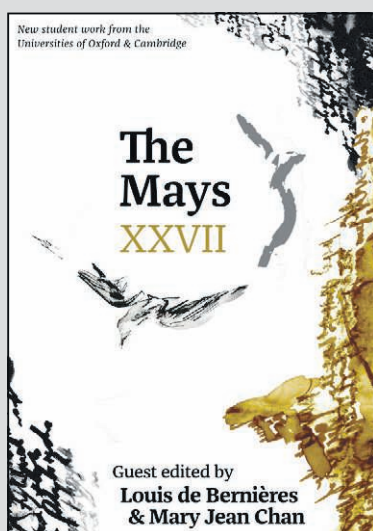
Alabanza has managed to craft a stunningly sincere piece of work, and I urge everyone to see it when it comes to Cambridge on 27th November. There's nothing quite like it.

◀ [INSTAGRAM/@TRAVISALABANZA](https://www.instagram.com/travisalabanza)



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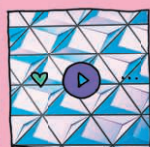
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On Repeat
Made For Varsity
PLAYLIST



Repeat Repeat
Made For Varsity
PLAYLIST



Juggerhaus
Julien Baker, Phoebe Bridgers...
ALBUM



OCTOBER 2019
By Bella Biddle
PLAYLIST

What Do I Tell My Friends?

Bree Runway

My Love

Dr Vades feat. Kamille

Tongue

MNEK

Glitter

Todrick Hall

Want 2

Bronze Avery

Dumbstruck

Ceraadi

Glue

KABBA feat. Bartoven

All Night

Bree Runway

Juice

Lizzo

Black pop stars to watch

Kwaku Gyasi gives his perspective on the exciting new talent taking over the pop industry

Content Note: This article contains brief mention of sexual assault

With every new artist clamouring for attention across social media, it is all too easy to miss the most innovative content that the music industry has to offer – especially as labels are painfully unaware of how to market performers who dare to break boundaries and exceed expectations. This Black History Month, let's look to the future with a shortlist of the brightest black pop stars of tomorrow.

Bree Runway

Bree Runway is one of the most eye-catching artists on the scene right now. Her 2019 EP *Be Runway* spans from trippy electronic numbers to slow jams and her visuals are packed with the hallmarks of great pop videos: looks for days; high-octane choreography; and powerful commentary on topics such as sexual assault and cultural copycats. With a joyful fearlessness and carefully honed aesthetic, watching her star rise as we move into the 2020s should be exciting.

Bronze Avery

Bronze Avery is a Los Angeles-based artist who describes his music as “bedroom sheets meets the dance floor.” He first made waves with an enchanting cover of Rick Astley’s ‘Never Gonna Give You Up’ (yes, that song). Since then, Avery has been releasing a steady stream of dreamy singles, as well as his recent EP *Split*, featuring lo-fi ballad ‘Anybody Else’.

MNEK

It is a grave injustice that a child prodigy who has managed to produce and write for Madonna, Beyoncé and Stormzy has been so underrated, and for so long. MNEK’s distinct sound, with diverse influences from house, R&B, gospel and traditional pop, has been unavoidable on British radio for half a decade. His 2018 debut album *Language* was undoubtedly one of the most cohesive and self-assured pop albums of that year, blending powerhouse vocals with forward-looking production and a hard-earned confidence. ‘Girlfriend’, a tongue-in-cheek ode about a situation many queer men have found themselves in, is a stand-out track reminiscent of a 1999 Destiny’s Child number.

Victoria Monét

A talented singer, songwriter and dancer with an already extensive discography (her lyrics are behind several of friend and collaborator Ariana Grande’s biggest smashes, including ‘thank u, next’ and ‘7 rings’), Victoria Monét has remained somewhat of a hidden hitmaker for a while, only releasing original material occasionally. She showcases playful wordplay on 2019 single ‘Monopoly’ alongside Grande, and her 2018



▲ Bronze Avery (INSTAGRAM/@BRONZEAVERY)

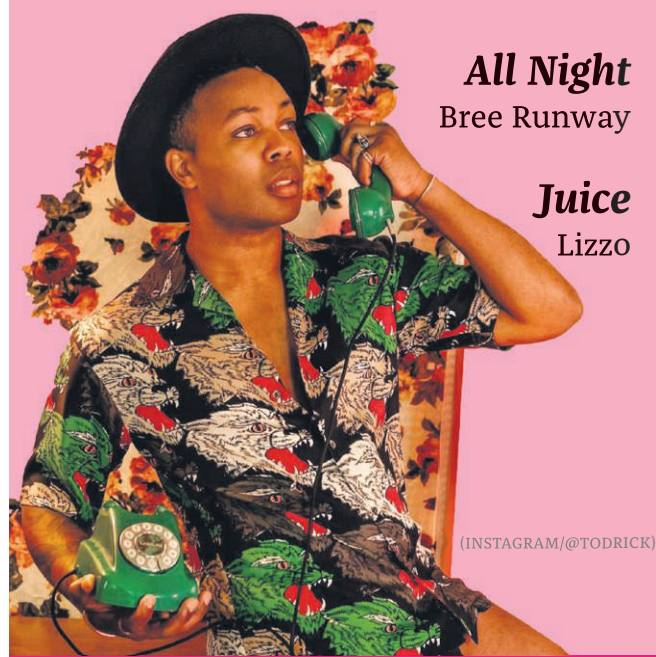
EPs *Life After Love*, Pts. 1 & 2 feature velvety guitar-driven R&B and layered harmonies.

Tayla Parx

Another very prolific artist who has contributed to the discographies of Ariana Grande, Panic! at the Disco and even K-pop girl group Red Velvet, Tayla Parx’s music is as colourful and upbeat as her music videos. With honest lyrics delivered over eccentric beats, influenced by ’80s synthpop and present-day trap, Parx brings the carefree spirit of SoundCloud rappers into the manicured world of modern pop.

Normani

Brought into the public eye by auditioning for *X Factor USA* and landing a spot in pop girl group Fifth Harmony, it took more than a short while for Normani to break out — although it has long been clear that she was itching for the heights of stardom. Her stage presence and gymnastic dance ability have already garnered comparisons to industry giants like Beyoncé and Janet Jackson. Reflective slow jam ‘Waves’ featuring 6LACK won an MTV Video Music Award for Best R&B, and pop giant Max Martin produced her dance-ready summer single ‘Motivation’, whose visual was a glorious homage to videos from the early 2000s. Her highly anticipated debut album is expected to land in 2020.



(INSTAGRAM/@TODRICK)



... & Me: Lana Del Rey

Lara Moran reflects on Lana Del Rey's career so far, her battle for authenticity, and how she has overcome her setbacks

I was twelve years old when *Video Games* was released, and Lana del Rey burst onto the scene with a perfectly formed ballad about love and mundanity. Every time the song played on the radio, I would stop to sit and listen. As with many of her songs, the lyrics look flimsy written out: *Singing in the old bars / Swinging with the old stars / Living for the fame*. It's the classic starlet stuff, but she has a way of tapping into our shared language of cliché that is tense and hypnotic. When she sings the lines, the s-sounds blur together until the bar becomes singular and archetypal.

Lana knows how to play with time, and the songs' magic stems from their implicit layering of past and present. In her world, to be loved is the only thing that matters, but when

“

She taps into our shared language of cliché that is tense and hypnotic

”

she purrs *Well, baby, now you do*, we know the moment is gone – and what is nostalgia if not the tragic realisation that your past boredom was actually happiness?

Looking at reviews of her work published in recent years, the general consensus seems to be that to discuss Lana Del Rey one must first establish between reader and writer a shared understanding of Americana in its various forms, be it Hyannis Port glamour or lip gloss stains on a Pabst Blue Ribbon can. Throughout her career she has embodied almost every imaginable facet of US-mythology and has consistently proven herself to be an artist who works on a level of almost embarrassing exaggeration. Although it is the one that propelled her to fame, *Born to Die* is not the first album Lana del Rey released.

Before swapping 'Ray' for 'Rey', she brought out the full-length album *Lana Del Rey* A.K.A. *Lizzy Grant*, which was pulled from iTunes shortly after it came out. Now easily available on YouTube, it took me an afternoon of searching to be able to torrent it in 2012. Knowledge of Lana's life as Elizabeth Grant was scarce, and after a disastrous SNL performance she was accused of being inauthentic and an industry plant subsidised by her entrepreneur father. The strange quasi-disappearance of her debut didn't help her case,

even though it was thematically very much a prequel to *Born to Die*.

I found Lana's artificiality fascinating. Changing your name and curating a public image were obviously not new tricks in the music industry. Voices defending her would often point to the carefully constructed personae of David Bowie and Bob Dylan, and this line of defence flattered her but always struck me as boring and reductive. What the comparison was meant to highlight was the sexism involved in the backlash against her, which in reality was not nearly as straightforward as that.

It is easy to look back now and identify Lana as one of the original Online Sad Girls. She is a pop star of the internet, who shared with most teenagers a pathological tendency towards self-mythologising.

What her early work did uniquely was present to me and thousands of other girls what it might look like to become a purely aestheticised self, which invariably means to reduce yourself in all the 'right' ways. *Born to Die* and her follow-up *Ultraviolence* are exemplary instances of her stylisation of female pain, which again and again proves to be something beautiful to be marvelled at.

I found the disinterest in feminism she displayed at the time worrying, but also charmingly expressed; in 2014 she told *The FADER* that she cared more about Tesla, SpaceX and "our intergalactic possibilities". Stars – they're nothing like us! Her interpretations of female (in)dependence were widely criticised, but at the same time she felt like the only pop star to lean into bottomless melancholy in such an embarrassingly whole-hearted way.

Elizabeth Grant has long moved on from *Born to Die* and has released four new albums since. She had a tattoo reading 'trust no one' (a reference to her debut album) removed from her finger. I agree with the many people who are calling *Norman Fucking Rockwell!* her most hopeful and overtly political album yet. Recently she made a comment about how she "grew up with Obama", which may be a bizarre thing for any normal 34-year-old to say, but not for her. After years of embodying various tropes and characters, she finally seems to be looking into herself, rather than out.

On *Mariners Apartment Complex* she sings *I'm the board, the lightning, the thunder*, and ends with the resolute assertion *I'm your man*.

Maybe this gradual shift toward inner complexity is what will make all of us grow up in the end.

◀ INSTAGRAM/ LANADELREY



▲ Del Rey's interpretations of female independence have been criticised (HARMONY GERBER)

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Violet

By VARSITY

Six students you'll meet in every seminar – if you're not one of them

Q

How do I spend more time with a guy in a different year doing a different subject? It seems so difficult to pursue romance in the fast-paced bubble of Cambridge life.

A

Firstly, how do you two know each other? Are you friends or just acquaintances who only bump into each other around town or on nights out? Is romance clearly on the cards in both of your eyes, or are you trying to introduce him to the concept? Cambridge is notorious for being ruthlessly busy, but you'll definitely be able to find some free time in both of your timetables.

Ask him for lunch or coffee to catch up; if he has lectures on the Sidgwick Site, you could schedule a library date (get that bread!). After this, you could ask him for a drink or suggest going to a society that you're both interested in - this could be the perfect excuse to spend more time together.

If he's an acquaintance or he's not aware that you're into him, you'll have to be a little more circumspect. Ask a mutual friend to arrange lunch or a coffee with him and then tag along. You could discuss any nights out you're all planning on attending, to scope out where you're likely to bump into him. As you get to know each other better, you might find that it becomes easier to make time for each other. Don't be afraid to shoot your shot - you'll never know if you never try. Good luck!



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

Serena Smith describes the common stereotypes of all student seminars

The mansplainer

Easy to spot – talks slightly above normal volume, answers every question even when he has no idea, will interject whenever a woman tries to make a point. Luckily he's mostly talk and will be disappointed with his middling-to-poor marks – if only he tried listening.

The hyper-organiser

You turned up with a chewed pen and a sheet of paper. They've turned up with a notebook, a laptop, an array of highlighters, and have already made an alarming amount of colour-coded notes. Enough to turn anyone into an anxious wreck. Avoid at all costs.

The King's student

Incredibly edgy – but actually not really because they're just trying to dress like the rest of their edgy mates – and tries to shoe-horn a Marxist reading into literally everything. We get it, you've read the *Communist Manifesto*. We also get that you're vegan, but it's

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We get it,
you've
read the
*Communist
Manifesto*”

probably worth pointing out that the extremely unethically sourced coke you consume every weekend definitely isn't.

The quiet one(s)

We all have the odd seminar or two where we either don't feel like talking or, more likely, literally have no idea what is going on. Usually, however, you'll manage to say one vaguely intelligent thing. But then there are those who come in for an hour every week and never fail to not speak. Impressive, really.

The intimidating one

She's wearing cool clothes, is scarily pretty, and sits right next to the seminar tutor. She seems to know everything. She never messages or replies to your course group chat. Very elusive. She won't talk but when she does, it's *always* better than the drivel you came out with. Cool and aloof but clearly a genius, you can see why she's intimidating.

The only one you actually like

Naturally you only have one seminar friend and you're stuck together like glue the whole time. They can be relied on for a sheet of paper from their shiny new pad when you forget yours. A godsend.

The perils of freshers' flu

Sofia Johanson explores the crippling effects of 'freshers flu'

Throwing the black, silky Cindies wristband into the bin in the early hours of Monday morning was a sad moment for all freshers, marking the end of a week filled with frolicking around Cambridge, cheap white wine and little care about what the next 8 weeks would hold.

More significant was the correlation between me taking off my wristband and contracting freshers' flu. Whether a response to the shock of finally getting more than 4 hours of sleep, or to realising you now actually have to read the books you should have studied throughout August. It's not fun.

Some feel the initial symptoms before Freshers' Week has even ended. I personally felt an impending blocked nose on Sunday night, a factor that made me question whether another night at Life was really necessary.

The really unlucky ones feel the heavy head and sore throat early in the week, some even deciding to miss their first opportunity to spend a Wednesday night at Cindies. A regret they'll never overcome

once they realise how hard it is to get a ticket for the rest of term.

For those who battled through, Monday morning was the moment they realised they had perhaps pushed themselves a little too much. Humanities students powered through as many as three whole contact hours, fuelled by coffee, whilst scientists used matchsticks to keep their eyes open throughout their 12-hour day.

The dejectedness isn't helped by the fact that freshers actually receive work (outrageous). Although we all knew it would come, Freshers' Week allowed us to forget this reality temporarily; the hardest thing we had to do being remembering our next-door-neighbour's name. Sorry, Lewis.

Whether you're being bombarded with essay titles you can't even begin to understand, having to make to-do lists that require two sheets of paper, or desperately trying to type up lecture notes at 100 miles per hour so as not to miss a single word, don't worry, (to quote a classic Hollywood institution) we're all in this together.

Even if all you have right now is imposter syndrome and a snotty nose, then look on the bright side, it can only get better.

Learning to speak 'Cambridge'

Anastasia Dalchanina reflects on her struggle to pick up the language of the Cantab

Considering that English is not my first language, being in the UK was hard enough for a girl who pronounced Leicester as Lei-chester without Magdalene being, bizarrely, pronounced Maud-lin (but only when referring to the college of course!). As an MML-er I now hope to finish Tripos with a fluency in French, Spanish and Cantab.

While new additions to my vocabulary such as DoS, supervision and tutor made perfect sense as words unique to Cambridge academia, what confused me immensely was the need to rename everything else as well. I will never comprehend why autumn, spring and summer term could not be titled as such... doesn't Easter term take place after Easter anyway?

In my first Michaelmas, I didn't attend a single society Freshers' Squash, as I, quite reasonably, assumed that they entailed actually playing squash. The fact that these events did not take place in squash courts was not enough to tip me off (which probably demonstrates just

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I now hope
to finish
Tripos with
a fluency
in French,
Spanish
and
Cantab”

how little I know about squash).

Our terms are not the only thing shortened. Most vocabulary that we learn in Freshers' Week is also then abbreviated. Pidge, plodge, Sidge and supo come to mind. It appears as though, in order to make more time for the monumental amount of work that all Cambridge students seem to have a never-ending supply of, we feel the need to skimp on syllables.

Instead of wasting breath to say the 'Sainsbury's in town' or 'Sainsbury's Local', we opt for 'Mainsbury's', 'Slocal's' and the legendary 'Farawainsbury's'. Acronyms such as JCR are to be expected. However, I only recently discovered that the C stands for 'Combination' and not 'Common' — a shock to the system unlike any other. A combination of what, you might ask? Probably of words we don't understand.

Ultimately, it is a Cambridge student's destiny to never truly know the names of the clubs they frequent ('Ballare' just doesn't have the same ring to it as 'Cindies').

Although learning Cantabrigian colloquialisms may be tedious and perhaps a bit elitist, it soon becomes just another Cambridge quirk, one you can mock among your college friends and show off to visiting ones.

Opinion: The fall of elite Cambridge sport



William Ross and Michael Nguyen-Kim discuss the long-term decline of elite sport in Cambridge

Cambridge University has a wonderfully rich sporting tradition, and a long history of producing elite sportsmen and women. The rugby Varsity Match, for instance, is one of the world's longest-running sports fixtures: over the

▲ The finish of the Boat Race (MICHAEL REEVE)

years, more than 600 players from either Oxford or Cambridge have gained representative international honours.

More recently, however, the University's influence on the international sporting scene has been on the wane. The rugby Varsity Match has changed significantly – it is no longer a showcase for current internationals and a stepping-stone for the stars of the future. Its importance, in elite rugby terms, is minimal – very few players even have

aspirations to play professional rugby nowadays.

There have certainly been honourable exceptions in recent times. For example, Cambridge graduate Zafar Ansari played three Test matches for England in 2016 and former Blues rugby captain Samantha Graham was last year called up to the England Rugby Sevens squad.

But elsewhere, no Cambridge graduate has gone on to play professional football since Steve Palmer, who matriculated in 1986. The University Match at Lord's, previously a three-day first-class fixture that was widely regarded as a staple of the cricketing summer, has been downgraded to a one-day affair.

What, then, are the causes of Cambridge's sporting decline? The first is a general rise in the academic standards of the University. For example, 32% of final-year English Tripos students in 1992 scored a 2:2, compared with just 1% in 2016. As students perhaps work harder (or as the University is increasingly able to choose more academically inclined candidates as a result of greater competition for places), they naturally have less time or inclination to be fully committed to elite sport.

Furthermore, historically, only students from a select set of schools (public schools or grammar schools) would

tend to matriculate at Cambridge. These same schools also tended to place a strong emphasis upon organised team sport. As Cambridge has gradually democratised its admissions process, the number of state school admissions is on the rise. These students are less likely to have had the opportunity to pursue sports at a high level prior to coming to university.

And there is the professionalisation of sport, too. When sport was an amateur pursuit, the fact that someone was an elite athlete did not preclude them from going to university.

Nowadays, the astronomical salaries that are paid to the best athletes, coupled with the establishment of youth academies in the major sports, mean that the most promising young prospects are perhaps being guided straight towards the big leagues from the outset.

The University is primarily an academic institution, and so it is obvious that sports cannot be the main focus. But it is also a community, and sport plays an important role in fostering pride and togetherness.

The fabric of the University relies much upon its history, and the weird and wonderful rituals of Cambridge sport are an often overlooked but necessary part of it.

“Sport plays an important role in fostering pride and togetherness”

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Is Cambridge a home for elite sport? Michael Nguyen-Kim and William Ross give their take 31



Cambridge 4

Loughborough 3

Cambridge footballers edge out Loughborough

Joseph Powell
Sport Reporter

Cambridge started the 2019/20 season in scintillating fashion with a narrow victory at Fitzwilliam Playing Fields, leaving it to the dying minutes to edge out Loughborough 3rds 4-3.

In a high tempo game featuring seven goals, three changes of lead and two wonderful long-range strikes, the Light Blues emerged victorious to stride out of their first Women's Midlands Tier 2 fixture with an important three points.

The game started with Loughborough, coming in on the back of a 3-0 win over Warwick 1s, kicking-off and attacking west to east. Early phases saw the ball reach both penalty areas, with each keeper showing good judgement to shut down any early threats.

Cambridge soon achieved offensive supremacy, with the rapid pace of Number 10 Sophia D'Angelo causing problems for the Loughborough defence. The visitors' defence initially held strong before a Light Blue breakthrough in the 21st minute. Receiving the ball on the right flank, D'Angelo charged into the box and unselfishly fed the ball through to Light Blue 8 Emma McLoughlin, whose initial shot

was obstructed by the diving keeper; however, she was ultimately unable to prevent it from dribbling under her, allowing Cambridge 7 Molly Woods to tap it in for the first goal of the game.

Loughborough nevertheless showed no loss of heart and continued their high-intensity play. The Purples surged into Cambridge territory and fed the ball to Number 10 Abi Todd who was able to get it round Robson for a quick equaliser. A sustained spell of Loughborough possession saw the Light Blue defence regularly drop back in numbers, demonstrating a defensive solidarity that defined their afternoon.

However, this was not enough to prevent Loughborough taking the lead in the 33rd minute as Hannah's good vision and delivery fed the left flank for Number 16 Paula Holguin to shoot, with Robson this time spilling the ball behind and leaving the goal open for a tap-in, despite calls for offside from the Light Blue bench.

Cambridge bounced back with good spells of possession and solid build up play which saw the ball being passed confidently around their third. Patient build up was rewarded in offence as D'Angelo returned a cross to Number 9 Sara Merican who bundled the ball past

▲ **Cambridge took on Loughborough at Fitzwilliam Playing Fields**

(JAMES LEE)

Hannah to draw the score level at 2-2 in the 37th minute.

As the half drew near its conclusion energy remained high, with both teams looking to reclaim a lead once theirs. Cambridge built well but after conceding a throw-in, Loughborough were able to get the ball to their Number 2, Rosy Wodhams, who produced a top class shot from the edge of the area, curling into the top left corner all the way and leaving Robson with no chance to make the game 3-2.

Cambridge began the second half by making the interesting decision to launch the kick-off directly to the Loughborough goalkeeper, but soon won the ball back again for a consistent spell of possession. The Light Blues soon made their first subs of the afternoon, bringing on 17 Jen Atherton for 7 Molly Woods and 6 Ailie Rennie for 8 McLoughlin around the 60 minute mark. The swap proved highly influential, as Rennie promptly launched a delightful dinked ball high over Hannah, bringing the score level again at 3-3.

Shortly after, the game was brought to a halt by the referee in order to provide treatment for Loughborough goalscorer Wodhams, who encountered breathing trouble. Having already used three subs,

Loughborough were forced to play the rest of the encounter with 10 players.

Sensing their moment to strike with a numerical advantage in hand, Cambridge played the remainder of the game largely in Loughborough's final third with numerous threatening balls. Despite some resolute defence, D'Angelo was to have the final word, ultimately receiving the reward for an afternoon of tireless pressure and self-effacing teamwork. A free kick on the edge of the area put the ball on the left flank for the Number 10 to knock the ball beyond Hannah and put the Light Blues back in front for the first time since their initial goal.

Playing now with nothing to lose the Purples threw all ten women forward, causing some late nerves as a cross came to Holguin who was able to make contact but saw the ball narrowly drift wide.

This was to be one of the last phases of the game, as the referee blew for time with the score at 4-3 to loud cheers from a Light Blue side who had left everything out on the pitch and had claimed a deserved 4 points as a result.

Cambridge are next in action against Leicester 1's again at Fitzwilliam Playing Fields on Wednesday 30th October 2pm, whilst Loughborough travel to face Oxford 1s on the same afternoon.

“The high tempo game featured seven goals, three changes of lead, and two long-range strikes”