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Opinion 13



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VARSITY

'The university sector has refused to stick up for its employees'

Ellie Arden
News Correspondent

This week, University staff and students have gathered on picket lines around all the major lecture sites in Cambridge in support of the UCU strike, which will run until the 4th of December in 60 universities nationwide.

At Sidgwick Site, picketers gathered round a brazier as woodsmoke rose high into the air of West Road. A group of students and lecturers learnt songs outside the Faculty of Music, accompanied by an outdoor discussion and reenactment of Pauline Oliveros' 'Sonic Meditations'.

With the support of the likes of Ai Weiwei and Billy Bragg, the daily pickets and rallies have attracted much attention. *Varsity* approached picketers to see

how they feel about the strikes.

Many of the picketers expressed their frustration at the University's neglect of staff welfare. A University teaching officer from the Faculty of Classics said that "wages have been falling, workloads have been rising, we have a gender pay gap which is particularly meaningful - it's 19.6% when the average is 12%, which is appalling. There has been almost no action from the administration...the university sector has completely refused to stick up for its employees."

A lecturer from the History Faculty said that "to sum it up, universities across the country have not been putting money into their staff, even though they've been making quite a lot of money, and this is affecting the quality not only of

Full story pages 2-3 ►



▲ Students and staff have been regularly rallying in solidarity with strikers (JOE COOK)

On the doorstep Canvassing with Cambridge students

Christopher Dorrell
Deputy News Editor
Sasi Valaiyapathi
News Correspondent

As December's general election approaches, activists from different parties have been hitting the streets of Cambridge to secure and win public support for their favoured candidates.

Varsity accompanied both Labour and Liberal Democrat canvassers over the past few weeks to see what a day of door-knocking looks like.

On 10 November, a dozen students were joined by three councillors, an ex-MP and the parliamentary candidate, Rod Cantrill, to try and convince residents of Castle ward to vote Lib Dem. In the 2018 local elections this ward was won by the Lib Dems by just 25 votes,

making it a significant target of the local party's efforts in this election.

Before setting off, Cantrill thanked canvassers for coming out to support him and spoke of the importance of canvassing to a parliamentary campaign. Some of the students present said they attended canvasses nearly every week, and remarked upon the interesting conversations they'd had on people's doorsteps, not just in this election cycle but

also in previous ones.

Students also remarked on the break that canvassing provided from work and university life. Luke Hallam, Chair of the Cambridge University Liberal Association said, "it's always rewarding to break out of the bubble and see the real Cambridge-where people live, their communities. It gives you a new perspective on things."

"You occasionally get invited in for a

cup of tea... People often like talking to young people especially, and it gives a sense that what we are fighting for actually matters, and that people are relying on the Lib Dems to fight for the environment, for Europe, for equal rights and proper funding of our services

"This election feels particularly special and everything is up for grabs.

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EDITORIAL

It's not about the price tag

This week saw the beginning of eight consecutive days of industrial action by the University and College Union (UCU). Across Cambridge, staff and students turned out to the picket lines, both to strike and to show solidarity with those seeking to combat unfair pay and working conditions. (pages 2-5).

At this point in term, when it can feel like you're painfully dragging yourself to meet your final deadlines before Christmas, it can be easy to simply hole up in college and forget all about the wider movements which – whether or not we choose to directly engage with them – will certainly affect us all. In both our News and Features sections this week, students and staff alike discuss their sense of a “moral imperative” in standing up against a higher education sector which, in their words, “refused to stick up” for its staff.

Over the course of this term, as a student-led publication, we've tried to act, even in a small way, as a bridge to facilitate engagement across the student body. We're all busy — that's something you hear a lot in Cambridge. In our very short terms here, it's easy to just think day by day, deadline by deadline. Thinking like this can seem the easiest way to get by, but undeniably runs the risk of allowing seemingly incidental risks to slip past us, potentially spiralling into something insidious.

As you read this newspaper, our final edition of term, we hope it provides you with the opportunity to pause and take stock. Hearing other people's voices – whether at the daily mass rallies in support of striking staff, or on the printed page – is the best way, so we've found, to turn your gaze outwards, and make more meaningful choices for your time here, rather than simply gliding through on autopilot eight weeks at a time.

Listening to people – on the picket line or in the paper – is just as crucial a form of learning as attending your lectures, if not even more so. That's what we've found, at least.

Maia Wyn Davies & Stephanie Stacey

EDITORS Maia Wyn Davies & Stephanie Stacey *editor@varsity.co.uk*
DEPUTY EDITORS Charlotte Lillywhite & Rosie Bradbury *deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk*
MAGAZINE EDITOR Lottie Reeder *magazine@varsity.co.uk*
DEPUTY MAGAZINE EDITORS Miles Ricketts *deputymagazine@varsity.co.uk*
DIGITAL EDITOR Jess Ma *digital@varsity.co.uk*
BUSINESS MANAGER Mark Curtis *business@varsity.co.uk*
NEWS EDITORS Chloe Bayliss & Molly Killeen (Senior); Christopher Dorrell & Marcus McCabe (Deputy) *news@varsity.co.uk*
NEWS CORRESPONDENTS Alycia Gaunt, Bethan Holloway-Strong, Caitlin Smith, Dylan Perera, Eileen Brady, Ellie Arden, Grace Lozinski, Marie Langrishe, Mary Osborne, Mitchell May, Olivia Mustafa, Peter Mumford, Sasi Valaiyapathi, Sophie Huskisson, Victor Jack, Vincent Wang, Zac Ntim
INVESTIGATIONS EDITORS Amy Batley, Inez Daltrop & Sophie Zhang *investigations@varsity.co.uk*
INTERVIEWS EDITORS Conrad Barclay & Joanna Heywood *interviews@varsity.co.uk*
FEATURES EDITORS Howard Chae & Rianna Davis *features@varsity.co.uk*
OPINION EDITORS Oliver Moodie & Olivia Emily (Senior); Alexandra Tsylnitska & Cordelia Sigurdsson (Deputy) *opinion@varsity.co.uk*
SCIENCE EDITORS Marco Oechsner & Jess Sharpe *science@varsity.co.uk*
SPORT EDITORS Michael Nguyen-Kim (Senior); Chloe Henshaw (Deputy) *sport@varsity.co.uk*
VIOLET EDITORS Bethan McGinley, Katy Bennett & Madeleine Wakeman *violet@varsity.co.uk*
ARTS EDITORS Lydia Bunt & Nick Chevis *arts@varsity.co.uk*
FILM & TV EDITORS Anna Stephenson & Miles Ricketts *filmandtv@varsity.co.uk*
MUSIC EDITORS Alex Bolot & Samantha Pinches *music@varsity.co.uk*
FASHION EDITORS Caterina Bragoli & Gabriel Humphreys *fashion@varsity.co.uk*
THEATRE EDITORS Priya Edwards & Sarah Taylor *theatre@varsity.co.uk*
LIFESTYLE EDITOR Kiran Khanom *lifestyle@varsity.co.uk*
SWITCHBOARD PRODUCER Belle George *switchboard@varsity.co.uk*
CHIEF SUB-EDITOR Vivi Monasch *subeditor@varsity.co.uk*
SUB-EDITORS Alice Bergin, Angela Liu, Camille Gontarek, Clara Tuffrey, Daniel Tian, Emma Taylor, George Hill, Hania Bar, Kate Robertshaw, Moby Wells, Olivia Halsall, Sofia Johanson, Ziqi Yan
PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR Ming Kit Wong *photography@varsity.co.uk*
ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR Amber Li *illustration@varsity.co.uk*
VARSOC PRESIDENT Catherine Lally *president@varsity.co.uk*
ASSOCIATE EDITORS Isobel Bickersteth, Joe Cook, Oliver Rhodes & Raphael Korber Hoffman *associate@varsity.co.uk*
VARSIY BOARD Dr Michael Franklin (Chairman), Prof Peter Robinson, Dr Tim Harris, Michael Derringer, Caitlin Smith, Noella Chye, Louis Ashworth, Anna Menin, Daniel Gayne, Ellie Howcroft

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News UCU Strikes

Perspectives from the picket lines

► Continued from front page

our workloads but also of the education that we give to our students.”

A group of PhD students at Sidgwick told *Varsity* that their jobs are “extremely unstable”.

“You are just offered a job via email. You're only paid for the hours that you teach, and that's all left unsaid,” they said. “We pick what courses we'd like to teach on, but then it's not clear how the process goes through to the point where you get an email asking you to teach.”

Even more upsetting is the fact that Colleges acknowledge their underpayment of PhD students. “It was really striking to us on our training as graduate students on ‘how to supervise’ that we were told that it's obviously evident that what we're paid is not a fair compensation for what we do, and that we should just take it as a token of the department's gratitude.” However, the strikers seemed positive about attendance at the pickets. A lecturer said that “there seems to be a lot of support from students and the pickets are really active, so it seems to be going pretty well so far.”

The teaching officer agreed: “We've had a pretty good turn out from both staff and students, and there seems to be a lot of collaborative action with people realising that our interests are very much the same in that we're all trying to work for an education system that operates for everybody”.

PhD students made up a large proportion of the picketers, with one suggesting that “it would be good to see a

lot more staff out supporting. It's been a common complaint across Sidgwick that it's mostly Grad. Students striking when really the focus of the strike should be on the staff”.

When asked what they would say to students who feel they are disadvantaged financially and educationally by the strikes, the teaching officer responded that, “we do this with considerable reluctance. We have tried really, really hard to have serious negotiations.”

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The number of UK universities at which staff are currently striking

“The Union has been very clear about their position’, they said. ‘The Vice Chancellor said that people should be paid more but then doesn't do anything about it, so what are you meant to do?... You have to take a stand at a certain point’.

PhD students responded that seeing teaching time in financial terms is a “short-term way of looking at it. What will really disadvantage students in the long-term is the fact that their lecturers don't have fair working conditions. Their working conditions are their teaching conditions. There's no way they can receive a good education when people are constantly worried about being insecure financially, their mental health is suffering and they don't know whether their future is secure”.

A member of staff from the History Department argued that students



▲ Students and staff rally in support of the ongoing strikes

shouldn't blame financial losses on staff: “it wasn't our decision to charge you this amount of money. I don't think that you should be paying this amount of money in the first place.”

Another member of the History department commented that “when the fees were brought in it was because

Breakfast Club at the pickets: Students bring strikers provisions in support

Ellie Arden
News Correspondent

On a frosty Tuesday morning, students gathered at CUSU to pick up hot drinks and biscuits before dispersing to distribute them to picketers at various sites across Cambridge, as they plan to do every day of the strike.

At the Engineering department, most teaching was unaffected by the strikes. When asked why they were crossing the picket line, one group of students responded by asking what it was.

The picket at the department was crossed by most students on bikes, who took little notice of the small group of staff who held UCU signs and leaflets. Staff on the picket lines seemed grateful for the runners' support, encouraging them to join in with their protesting.

One of the runners, who is an undergraduate English student, told *Varsity* that breakfast runs are “a physical, tangible way” to show solidarity with staff. They said that students have an “ethical imperative” to support the ongoing strikes.

“The staff, who are being economically exploited by the University, are the people who are working with students and give



▲ Picketers hand out leaflets



Joining UCU industrial action (JOE COOK)

Government withdrew from funding Universities. It was a sign of the general marketisation of the sector. I completely sympathise (with students who feel disadvantaged) but that anger should not be directed towards us."

"Turn your anger towards something else," they said. "Write to the Vice Chan-

cellor, write to the University administration wherever you are in this country. If staff aren't paid properly then you're not going to get a good education. We want you to be taught by lecturers who are doing their best work and who are a properly diverse set of people. The picket is a classroom. Don't cross it, join it."



at the Engineering Department (ANDREW HYNES)

us all this amazing teaching... Secondly, it's in our interests as well because the conditions make it really hard for (staff) to give us the education we deserve". They hope that the strikes will help to create a "more egalitarian" University.

An Economics Undergraduate told *Varsity* that their department is "absolutely not" in solidarity with the strikes. "There's no one striking; none of the lecturers, none of the students - it's basically been completely ignored."

"It's important to show solidarity with different departments - like the Engineering department - where they have equally low numbers of support," they said.

CUSU's welfare and rights officer, who helped organize the breakfast runs during the 2018 strikes and was involved in setting them up this year, told *Varsity* that "there are more people going on breakfast runs than last year, and a bigger range of students."

"It's a really good way to show our support for the staff," they said. "It's really cold standing on picket lines, so you can take them coffee, but it's also a chance for students to go and have a chat with the striking staff, find out why they're striking... to engage more rather than just seeing things online."

Freshers react to the strikes

Bethan Holloway-Strong & Mitchell May
News Correspondents

Strike action may be a recent memory for students in third year or higher, but first-years, and many undergraduates and postgraduates alike, are experiencing the impact of industrial action at Cambridge for the first time.

Undergraduates reported receiving varying degrees of information. "We had very little information provided to us except to inform us when the strikes were happening, until about two days before where we were bombarded by emails from the Senior Tutor, CUSU and other members of our college student union," said Rose Sargent, who is studying law at King's.

Iona Fleming, studying MML at Christ's, said that her college JCR had been very supportive of students, and that the JCR have "put together a lot of information in mass emails [about the strikes] and why they're happening, which, as a fresher who's never seen this kind of thing take place, I really appreciate."

Most understood the reasons for the strikes and support the causes, but this has reportedly been hard to put into practice.

James Walkling, a Natural Sciences student at Corpus Christi, said, "I do support the causes the strikes intend to support, although unfortunately I'm obliged to continue going to lectures and entering department buildings otherwise I will miss 16 lectures in total and mandatory labs for my first year."

Sargent expressed similar concerns about missing course content, saying that "the Law Faculty has been utterly unwilling to compromise for students who want to support the strikes and not attend lectures... those of us who support the strikes are considerably disadvantaged in exams as we will be tested on content that we haven't attended lectures on."

The impact of the strikes can be felt acutely by students on shorter degrees.

Amid looming deadlines and PhD applications, one master's student on a one-year course remarked, "although most of my lectures and seminars have been cancelled and I feel the academic support I need during this stressful time is unavailable, none of my frustration is aimed at the staff."

They added, "I hope the root of the problem can be addressed so students can continue to benefit from the education they have worked long and hard to obtain."

Maxime Seguin, who is completing an MPhil in International Relations at Robinson College, shared similar opinions: "If we want motivated teachers, we need to offer them appropriate financial compensation, but also the security [for] long-term planning."

“If we want motivated teachers, we need to offer them appropriate financial compensation, but also the security [for] long-term planning”

NEWS

Prince Andrew resigns as honorary fellow of Hughes Hall

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▲ Prince Andrew (TOBIAS BALDAUF)

FEATURES

As academics, we put up with staggering workloads until we make ourselves sick

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OPINION

Millie Morgan

We need to speak more kindly about our eating habits

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▲ Illustration by Kate Towsey

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What do hiccups have to do with cerebral growth?

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What should I buy for secret santa?

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SPORT

Men's volleyball end the year on a 3-1 high

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News



On the picket lines

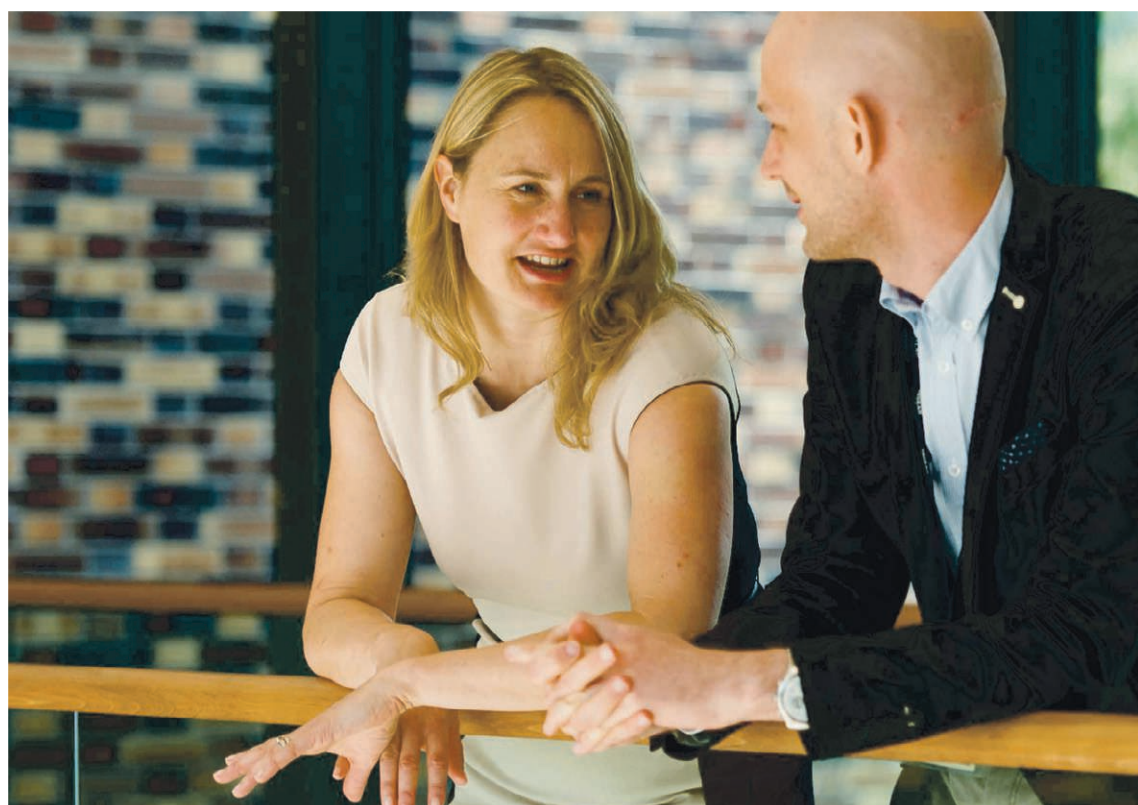
This week, members of University staff have been embarking on the first of 8 days of industrial action over pay and working conditions and rising pension costs. Staff were supported by both students and dogs.

(NIK YAZIKOV & ANDREW HYNES)



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SWANNING AROUND
 Rogue swan causes significant delays

A “confused” swan caused four miles of delays on the A14 on Monday after it entered the westbound carriageway. Cambridgeshire Police and Highways England were both called in to wrangle the wandering waterfowl. Traffic was slow in both directions: Highways England held traffic at Milton roundabout while the opposite direction slowed down in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the culprit. After an hour’s chase, the swan was removed from the road unharmed and was safely relocated.

JO COX MEMORIAL
 John Bercow at Murray Edwards

The former Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon John Bercow MP, was the featured speaker at the Jo Cox Memorial Lecture on Wednesday. The lecture, which took place in Murray Edwards College, marked the third annual lecture in the memorial series for Jo Cox MP, who was murdered by a far-right activist in 2016 while working in her constituency. Tickets for the lecture sold out in minutes, and the price of each ticket went to the Jo Cox Foundation.

HOLY HEIST
 Robinson College Chapel sign stolen

A sign marked as belonging to Robinson College Chapel was spotted in a student kitchen in Churchill College on Monday. The sign advertised a “Music Society Welcome Concert”, inviting readers to “please come in!”. One hopes that the concert did not, in fact, take place in the acoustically-challenged environment of the Churchill kitchen. It is unclear whether this action was indicative of a larger-scale rivalry between the two colleges or simply an isolated incident. The perpetrator of this theft is still unidentified.

BLACK FRIDAY BEVS
 Free drink in Greene King pubs

Greene King pubs in Cambridge are offering a free drink for thirsty Black Friday shoppers. A shopping receipt showing your Black Friday bargain is all you need to claim a free drink. The participating pubs, including the Eagle and the Bath House, will also accept digital receipts from any online shopping sprees. The list of available bevs includes Guinness, Whitley Neill Gin, Jack Daniels with Coca-Cola, and many more Black-Friday-themed drinks.



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Alumnus of Pembroke College



PUBLIC CONSULTATION

You are invited to a public consultation on the future of 104-112 Hills Road, Cambridge, following our first public consultation earlier this year.



Pace Investments, owner and developer of the site, has a vision to create an outstanding and sustainable new Cambridge landmark. The plans would see a dynamic new workplace destination, providing an enlivened public realm with cafés, restaurants and other community and leisure spaces – including the existing Flying Pig pub at its heart. The project team has been working to develop designs in line with the feedback received earlier this year, and we would like to invite the community to come

and give their opinions on these new proposals.

Thursday 5 Dec 2019, 4-7pm
 Saturday 7 Dec 2019, 10am - 2pm

The Lobby, Betjeman House
 104 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 1LQ

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact:
 info@104-112hillsroad.co.uk - or -
 www.104-112hillsroad.co.uk

News

‘Frankly, we should all be furious’ Why are some students crossing picket lines?

Dylan Perera
News Correspondent

“I am mad that my lectures were cancelled. And I am mad that I’ve had to rearrange supervisions and miss lectures to avoid crossing picket lines. And I am mad that I have to cross a picket line in order to not lose marks on an exam [...] But I’m mad at the University that took my money and isn’t treating their staff fairly. I’m mad that the University let it get to the point that the staff felt even the slightest desire to strike.”

Amid ongoing UCU strike regarding working conditions, pay, and pensions, students have had to decide whether or not to cross picket lines to enter University sites. This decision has become a contentious one within the student body over the past week. CUSU was given a mandate to support staff strikes when, in the first CUSU Council meeting of the academic year, JCR and MCR representatives voted 36 to 3 that CUSU support potential strike action. Encouraging students not to cross picket lines was part of the required support.

However, this week and in the days leading up to the strikes, some students voiced their concerns that crossing picket lines could impact the studies and, in particular, the welfare of students. CUSU’s encouragement that students do not cross the picket lines has been subject to strong and outspoken discontent which, although perhaps not truly widespread, has certainly been loud.

Varsity spoke to some of the students who have chosen to cross picket lines about their decision. While the majority of these students expressed support for striking members of staff, they cited reasons ranging from compulsory Tripos requirements and the absence of alternative teaching arrangements, to the cost of their education and the impact of not attending contact hours on their studies.

“Without lecture notes, I am thrown completely into the deep end,” explained law student Madeleine Wakeman. Although many lectures have been cancelled due to the strikes, lectures delivered by academics who are not striking are ongoing. For Wakeman, who has Dyspraxia, lectures are a crucial part of their studies.

“Dyspraxia affects cognition, meaning that sufferers have a slower processing speed and a weaker working memory. In practice, this can make it incredibly difficult to read large volumes of text and often results in spending significant amounts of time re-reading information in order to understand it properly.

“As I find it difficult to process large blocks of text, picking out key points is an impossible task and I’m left mindlessly copying down pages of notes which may or may not (as the case so often seems to be) be relevant.



“This is not only stressful, but a serious detriment to my education.”

Another law student cited tuition fees as the reason they were choosing not to miss ongoing teaching time and cross picket lines: They made this decision “purely because I’m paying for this. It’s nine grand a year, and that’s a lot to give up.”

“I can’t speak for all medics,” said one third-year medic, “but I have a few reasons why I’d choose to cross. One: it’s 100% attendance required. Even if you miss one dissection you are expected to rearrange to go to the other.

“This reason alone is enough to cross, as I don’t want to fail.”

The STEM students that spoke to Varsity all spoke of how few of their contact hours, particularly those which are compulsory, had been cancelled or rearranged due to the strikes.

This is the case for Computer Science student Andrea: “We have some assignments (called ticks) that need to be submitted online and then assessed in person. We can’t miss these ticking sessions because failing to get a tick counts directly against our tripos grade. As far as we know, the strikes don’t cancel or reschedule ticking sessions.

“I feel like assessment should be consistent with teaching - they should either be both affected or none. And while I get that it’s not as easy to cancel [course requirements] as [it is to cancel] lectures, rescheduling would be great to show respect to the striking lecturers.”

Another Computer Science student

“100% attendance is required. This reason alone is enough, as I don’t want to fail”

added: “Two of my ticks take place during the strike. If I don’t attend either, I’ll lose 20 marks on one exam. I can’t afford to do that. So I have to cross the picket line. I’ve been reminded many times that there will likely not be a picket line in front of the actual department - instead it will take place at the entrance to the site - and therefore I will not physically have to cross a picket line... But that’s not the point.”

“I support my lecturers; I don’t want to break a picket line—physical or otherwise.”

This follows a similar trend to the 2018 strikes, where STEM students and faculty members spoke of the disproportionately small impact of industrial action on teaching compared to its impact on the teaching of arts and humanities subjects.

The students who spoke to Varsity shared concerns that their decision to cross the picket lines would incite negative reactions or judgement.

“For someone that deals with anxiety and is feeling quite anxious about missing more than 10 lectures because of the strikes, I feel like I can’t even go to the library to get a book that I may really need because other students or staff think I’m against what they’re doing, when I’m not,” said one geography student.

“There’s basically a sense of shame or negativity associated with someone who might just have to cross [picket lines] because it crucially affects their degree.

“I just think there’s a lack of attention

▲ A student crosses a UCU picket line (ANDREW HYNES)

given to those that may struggle because of what they have to do. They’re made to feel like they should just follow the norm and if they don’t they’ll be seen as unsupportive or just shamed because of what they do and that’s just wrong.”

Wakeman shared this concern: “Crossing a picket line should not be equated with undermining or contravening the strike action. Rather, steps should be taken, where possible, to minimise the anxiety faced by students merely trying to attend lectures.”

“What is important about this, though,” said one Computer Science student, “is where our anger is directed.”

“Quite frankly, I’m really angry that I’ve been put in this position. And I’m angry that I’m paying for an education and not receiving it. We deserve the education we’re paying for! And we should all be demanding it.

“I am mad that my lectures were cancelled. And I am mad that I’ve had to rearrange supervisions and miss lectures to avoid crossing picket lines. And I am mad that I have to cross a picket line in order to not lose marks on an exam.

“I’m mad that when the staff felt the desire to strike, the University couldn’t get their shit together and shape up in order to avoid those strikes.”

“I absolutely have the right to be mad, confused, and frustrated. Frankly, we should all be furious. But importantly, we should know to direct that feeling towards the people who are actually responsible for it: the University, not the striking staff.”

Dispute between Cambridge Zero Carbon and Cambridge Zero intensifies

Marie Langrishe
News Correspondent

Members of Cambridge Zero Carbon Society were covered in green paint this week to protest the launch of Cambridge Zero, the University's new climate change research programme.

In the latest protest action staged by the group, three activists sat cross-legged on King's Parade while another, dressed up as 'Cambridge Zero', poured paint over their heads. Cambridge Zero Carbon described the move as its "own 'greenwashing' action", a reference to the accusation it has levied at the University that the Cambridge Zero programme is simply a "public relations stunt, designed to convince the gullible and divert attention away from the University's continuing link to oil and gas."

On Tuesday, Cambridge University's twitter feed appeared to censor criticism of Cambridge Zero, hiding replies to a promotional tweet it posted.

The society's criticism of Cambridge Zero attracted controversy this week af-



ter an article appeared in the *Guardian*, highlighting some of the concerns it had raised about the research group and focusing in particular on the programme's director, Dr Emily Shuckburgh.

Campaigners objected to links they claimed exist between Dr Emily Shuckburgh and the oil exploration company Schlumberger. Dr Shuckburgh took to Twitter to defend herself, writing that "falsely accusing climate scientists of

▲ Students protest the launch of Cambridge Zero (CAMBRIDGE ZERO CARBON)

links to fossil fuel companies [...] is nasty, perverse and counterproductive."

In a letter to the newspaper following the initial publication of the article, Shuckburgh argued that she was not connected with the fossil fuel industry. She stated her only link to Schlumberger was that, as principal researcher on a project funded by the National Environment Research Council, she had used data from Schlumberger ship surveys

to add to work on fuel efficiency and to academic writings.

Colleagues of Dr Shuckburgh, including academics from Cambridge University and LSE, similarly disparaged the accusations, commenting on her "tireless leadership in climate science" and attacking the claims as "absurd nonsense".

The *Guardian* has since "[removed] unfair implications about her interactions with the fossil fuel industry" from their article and apologised for their original inclusion. Cambridge Zero Carbon Society responded to these criticisms, arguing that the fact that "genuine concerns raised by students" had been met with "vitriol and condescension" demonstrated the University cared "more for its reputation than the product of its actions."

It reiterated its complaints that "the University is yet to divest from fossil fuels", as well as its concerns about the nature of Cambridge's relationship with the BP Institute and Cambridge Zero's focus on "climate repair" and other forms of geoengineering.

Varsity has contacted the University and Cambridge Zero for comment.

Prince Andrew resigns as honorary fellow of Hughes Hall

Grace Lozinski
News Correspondent

Content Note: This article contains mention of child sexual assault and sex trafficking. Prince Andrew resigned his honorary fellowship at Hughes Hall shortly after an open letter criticised his "[failure] to condemn harassment and sexual misconduct".

The open letter – signed by over 150 students, alumni, fellows and staff – called for a review of Prince Andrew's honorary fellowship at Hughes Hall amid his ties to convicted child sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. The letter expressed concerns that Prince Andrew's position was in direct conflict with the College's ethos.

A Hughes Hall spokesperson previously told *Varsity* that the college's Governing Body was set to review Prince Andrew's position – which he has held since May 2018 – on Wednesday 27th November.

However, as of the beginning of this week, Prince Andrew had already resigned. A statement issued on the College's website said: "The President of the

College, Anthony Freeling, has informed the membership that HRH the Duke of York has resigned as an Honorary Fellow of Hughes Hall with immediate effect."

The open letter condemning Hughes Hall's ties to Prince Andrew was launched following a recent BBC interview in which he repeatedly denied child sexual assault allegations levied against him, and defended his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, the financier who died while in prison facing child sex trafficking charges this August.

The interview received widespread backlash from both the public and the media, and the Prince has since announced that he will be stepping back from royal duties. Fallout from the recent interview has included KPMG, Standard Chartered and Barclays all cutting ties with Prince Andrew's business mentoring initiative Pitch@Palace.

As well as resigning his honorary fellowship at Hughes Hall, the Prince has also resigned as chancellor of the University of Huddersfield following student lobbying, and is no longer a patron of the Outward Bound Trust, the English National, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and London Metropolitan University.

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Policy Matrix Where do Cambridge's MP candidates stand on key issues?

Christopher Dorrell & Peter Mumford break down the policies of the MP candidates

				
Daniel Zeichner, Labour	Rod Cantrill, Lib Dems	Russell Perrin, Conservatives	Jeremy Caddick, Greens	Peter Dawe, Brexit Party
On Brexit... Zeichner has always been a strong Europhile. In 2017 he resigned his position from the Shadow Cabinet over Labour's European policy and was for some time a supporter of straight revocation. Now he has moved to a "more measured" position of supporting a 2nd Referendum.	On Brexit... Cantrill is a "passionate European" who sees Brexit as a once-in-a-lifetime challenge. Cantrill supports the Liberal Democrat policy revoking Article 50 if they form a majority government - if they don't, he says he will work with other parties to push for a second referendum	On Brexit... Perrin has said very little about Brexit and has stressed "this election is about more than just Brexit". His party manifesto, however, is intricately connected with the issue. Perrin supports Boris Johnson's Brexit deal.	On Brexit... Like Labour, the Greens support holding a second referendum. Although the Greens are part of a Unite to Remain campaign with the Lib Dems, Caddick has said "there's no chance of Cambridge electing a Leave MP, so it's more of a question of what flavour of Remain people want."	On Brexit... For a Brexit Party candidate, Dawe has said remarkably little about Brexit. The disruption caused by Brexit does however fit neatly with his pledge to "sweep out the people who maintain the status quo" and "change politics for good".
On Homelessness... Zeichner has argued that "banning exploitative zero hours contracts is a key step in our plans" to reduce homelessness. The Labour party has committed to building "one million new genuinely affordable homes over 10 years" and ensuring that every council every year builds or commissions the new homes.	On Homelessness... Cantrill is a trustee of the housing charity Wintercomfort but has said "this shouldn't be falling so heavily on charities. Isn't it a human right?". He hopes to emulate the schemes in Manchester and Birmingham which offer beds to rough sleepers as well as raising the living wage in Cambridge to £10.25.	On Homelessness... Homelessness has not been an issue Perrin has talked about. The Conservative Manifesto commits to "renewing the Affordable Homes Programme" and to ending rough sleeping by expanding the Housing First programme and the Rough Sleeping Initiative.	On Homelessness... The Green party supports the Housing First approach, which is founded on the principle of housing being a basic human right. It also pledges "a widening of the grounds on which councils can offer help to people without a home and the provision of social services once a person is housed."	On Homelessness... Dawe, the self-proclaimed "Cambridge Superhero", has built a homeless shelter underneath the bridge at Elizabeth Way containing ten bedrooms for the most vulnerable people. On a national level the Brexit party plan to relax regulations on building on brownfield land.
On Education... He "opposed the extortionate £9,250 fees that undergraduates are currently charged" and supports Corbyn's policy to abolish tuition fees. He acknowledged in an interview with Varsity that "it's a big expensive pledge" but that "we can't be leaving young people with these huge debts".	On Education... Cantrill is sceptical of the Labour pledge to abolish tuition fees, and instead says he is "comfortable with [the Lib Dem] position, which is some form of graduate tax, with extended maintenance grants." The Lib Dems also argue that their plan to stop Brexit would prevent huge damage to the higher education sector.	On Education... Perrin has argued that "an educated society is a civilised society, and it's important we educate our citizens to a high standard". In particular he is a supporter of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities system. Rather than abolishing tuition fees the Conservatives will "look at the interest rates on loan repayments".	On Education... The Green party will "fully fund every higher education student and scrap undergraduate tuition fees", according to its manifesto. Courses will be offered as "learning experiences" ensuring that "education will be for education's sake". Existing debt will be written off for those who paid tuition fees post-2011.	On Education... The Brexit party promises to abolish student loan interest and the target to push 50% of young people into higher education. More emphasis will be placed on encouraging employers to take on apprentices.
On the Environment... Zeicher has "always been a red-and-green politician" and is Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change. One major achievement of his on the environment has been to convince Labour to scrap the "environmentally damaging" Oxford-Cambridge expressway.	On the Environment... Cantrill's personal proposals are more radical than his party's, such as his support for carbon neutrality by 2030. The party's proposals include taxing frequent flyers, banning single-use plastic, planting 60 million trees each year and generating 80% of electricity from renewables by 2030.	On the Environment... Perrin has criticised the "extreme views" of the other parties who argue that "we need to be sitting in the dark, chewing on a celery stick," arguing that "you don't solve a problem by making living standards worse. You need a strong economy to support projects like nuclear fusion and clean technology, and we've pledged to spend £60 million on planting new trees."	On the Environment... "We have 10 years to change absolutely everything, from the way we produce our energy to how we produce our food," says Caddick. He defends the Green Party's pledge of £1tn over 10 years, arguing that it is less than was made available to the financial system and asking, "How much is the environment worth?"	On the Environment... The environment is Dawe's major area of concern and he has a unique solution: solar pods. "On sunny days it's zero carbon. You don't need to plug it in. If they change the regulation, it can travel safely at 20mph, and can be used by people aged 14 upwards."
On the NHS... Ahead of a likely NHS winter crisis, Zeichner draws attention to local doctors who know "you can't trust Boris Johnson with our NHS, that is why they booed him out of Addenbrooke's". Labour is offering a £26 billion funding boost to stop the winter crisis turning into "an annual event", and a total £40 billion extra in cash terms for the NHS by the year 2024.	On the NHS... Cantrill is a strong supporter of the Lib Dem pledge to invest £11bn in mental health to provide parity with physical healthcare. The party also pledges to raise £7bn a year to be spent on the NHS and social care by raising income tax by 1p on all levels.	On the NHS... Perrin has criticised claims that the Conservatives want to privatise the NHS. In a recent interview with Cambridge News, he said, "if we'd wanted to privatise the NHS, we'd have done it by now...We don't want to privatise it. It needs to be free at the point of use. End of."	On the NHS... Green Party policy on the NHS includes rolling back the privatisation to ensure that all healthcare is publicly provided and funded, including £6bn investment annually until 2024. They also aim to "bring mental health care in line with physical health care and ensure people experiencing mental health crises are supported close to their home and support network."	On the NHS... Dawe aims to solve the elderly care crisis by "building self-funding, self-managed community care villages", similar to the post-apocalyptic bunker he is developing in Norfolk which is being converted into "a self-sufficient community of 1,000 people, so you can sustain the everyday things like a dentist, doctor, butcher, baker."

Getting out the vote with Cambridge's Lib Dem and Labour student canvassers

► Continued from front page

British politics is at a turning point as the two main parties get transformed...This is such a strong motivation to canvas in 2019, and with an NHS winter crisis, the climate emergency, the prospect of Brexit, it's an election with more at stake than any election for a long time."

Another canvasser described the "love of spreading liberalism" as reward enough.

Varsity accompanied Labour activists the following Sunday as they embarked on one of the weekly canvasses run jointly by the university's Labour Club (CULC) and the Constituency Labour Party.

Arran Parry-Davies, CULC co-chair, said, "sometimes we get sent to pretty far out parts of Cambridge, but we always go canvassing in big groups."

"We've been canvassing since well before the election was called - as soon as we had an inkling an election was on the way."

Hollie Wright, also CULC co-chair, has

► Labour canvassers with Daniel Zeichner (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LABOUR CLUB)



been canvassing since her first year at Cambridge. "I think my reasons come from the fear for the seat. It really does matter here if you convince even one person to vote... that's the thought that gets me out of bed on a Sunday morning to campaign! We're slightly more wor-

ried for this election because students won't be here on polling day."

"The reason we're getting so many canvassers out compared to previous years is because people are aware how competitive this seat is this year," Parry-Davies added.

“The love of spreading liberalism”

Another canvasser, a Churchill alumnus who is an active member of the Cambridge Labour Party, spoke to Varsity about the focus of canvassing in the run-up to polling day.

"One of the main purposes of canvassing is to gather polling data. Then on polling day, we're obviously not allowed to campaign near polling stations, but what we can do is increase the voter turnout: we'll send drivers with cars to pick people up and take them to the polls."

"Canvassing can be quite intimidating at first", said Parry-Davies, "but once you've been to one it becomes a lot easier. People always want tips beforehand but the best way to learn about it is to just try it. When someone opens the door, we'll usually start by asking if they have any local or national concerns they'd like to address with us, rather than just asking who they're voting for this year."

"Residents tend to open up more when we do this, and if the issues they bring up align with those that Labour is addressing, we'll then encourage them to consider Labour."



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Features

Amid the chatter, searching for the sound of home

Columnist **Henry Lloyd-Hughes** reflects on being Northern in Cambridge

With a tantalising two week wait until the promised land of a double bed, lie-ins, and home-cooked meals, I've found myself looking back at the last six weeks of my life in Cambridge, which has, in all honesty, felt like at least a year.

With the dust finally settling after the chaotic sandstorm of freshers' week, and transitioning to university life more generally, one thing that has still been circling in my mind is that the more people I meet, the more people from the South I'm introducing myself to. At least from my, admittedly brief, experience so far, Cambridge seems to be saturated with Southerners.

Don't get me wrong – everyone I've met (and I genuinely do mean everyone), has been friendly and down to earth. But starting university is one of the most disruptive episodes in anyone's life.

You are constantly thrust into new social situations and meeting endless amounts of new people. Looking back, I can wholeheartedly say that the constant buzz of spontaneous chatter has been both intensely nerve-racking and tangibly exciting.

However, I have found that amid this crowd of conversation, locating a Northern accent is a hard feat. They are seemingly drowned out by broad 'a's in wrongly pronounced 'ba(r)ths'.

I have found myself lost in interactions where the others are engaged in what is apparently their favourite game: 'lets list all of our mutual friends from north London.' I understand that London is our country's largest city, but from what I've witnessed it has monopolised Cambridge, reflecting an overrepresented population in desperate need of Northern dilution and more general diversity.

Perhaps I've just had to deal with an unfortunately large number of people from London, but seeing three people from the same London school end up in my college friendship group leads me to doubt my experience is an isolated trend.

To me, being the only person from my large sixth-form in Sheffield to get into Cambridge, this seems unfathomable. And it leads me to ask the simple question: why? Is it because students



“I’m not one to take offence if you ‘ave a ‘laff at the way I pronounce things differently”

in the North are discouraged from even applying in the first place?

Whatever the reason, without scrutinising loads of statistics, on a more subjective level I have felt that Cambridge is an environment where Northern representation is lacking.

This may be because there are fewer students from the North who apply to Cambridge, but it's important that those of us who are here raise our voices and make our (far superior) accents heard.

Let's unite under our collective generosity when it comes to buying drinks on nights out because, let's be real, this is never reciprocated by anyone south of Leicester. And let's actively seek ways to increase the number of students from the North applying and being admitted to Cambridge.

It must be said that the students here have been some of the most open-minded and likeable people I've met in

my life (even the Londoners). But in a way, this makes it worse – I need fuel to feed my innate hatred of everything Southern.

Sometimes, I have to take a step back and look at myself whenever I'm enjoying this amazing university and it's endless opportunities a little too much, and remind myself that I'm still 150 miles south of Sheffield – how good can it really be?

My entrenched bias against the South probably isn't aided by the fact that the majority of my mates can hop on a 40-minute train back home for the weekend and see their friends and family. And then they still have the audacity to complain about how long it takes to get across London! I would love to see them on the Northern Rail connection from Grantham to Sheffield – literally makes the tube look like a first-class travel experience.

▲ “Imposter syndrome is something I think we can all relate to”

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

“Locating a Northern accent is a hard feat”

I'm not one to take offence if you 'ave a 'laff at the way I pronounce things differently. After all, I know how hugely tragic it would be to be from the South and think it out of the ordinary to have a chat with a shopkeeper.

But on a more serious note, I think it can add to feelings of self-doubt and otherness. Imposter syndrome is something I think everyone here can relate to in some form, and if you're constantly the butt of jokes that single out the way you speak, and derogatory comments are constantly made about where you're from, then such feelings can intensify.

Reflecting on my first term at university, I can say that I have thoroughly enjoyed it – everything from the people I've met and events I've attended to even the relentless reading and weekly essays. It just pains me that so much of it is down to Southerners who seem to suffocate notions of Northern identity.

Our education, on the (picket) line

Khaled Malachi and Dot Grose Forrester consider students' stake in the fight over our universities

Last week, we spoke with a recent graduate who had participated in the previous UCU strikes in 2018 as a student. Despite finding a job working for the university as a skilled professional, his pay is insufficient and his contract insecure. One thing is crystal clear: partaking in industrial action has instilled in him a readiness to stand up to exploitative bosses. Though picketing is rightly considered politics in action, participating in class struggle provides a *real* education on a fight the vast majority of us will have to face.

Ultimately, we must consider why our lecturers are being forced back into industrial action, shoulder to shoulder with workers in other sectors. We must tackle the cause, as well as the symptoms. In this case, the attacks on pensions, pay, and equality are the product of the marketisation of education and Tory austerity. In turn, these are caused by a moribund capitalist system in crisis, desperately seeking new avenues through which to make a profit.

While it was a pensions dispute that ignited the largest strike in the recent history of higher education in 2018, in its course a myriad of issues came to the fore: marketisation; casualisation of staff; exorbitant student fees; and bloat-



“Lecturers are not striking to spite us”

ed salaries for university management. Over half of academics at universities are on some form of a precarious contract. Staff are already struggling to plan in advance, let alone pay their rent. Our lecturers are not striking to spite us. The staff we have spoken to have

▲ **Pickers outside Senate House on Monday**

(ANDREW HYNES)

been keen to reiterate that they would rather be teaching. Their passion for their field of study is what keeps them here in the face of worsening conditions. An increase in pension contributions is nothing more than an elaborate way to cut pay. Our lecturers are certainly not depriving us of their invaluable knowledge hoping we fail.

In 2018, students demanded compensation for lost contact hours, an argument which is being recycled once more. This is to buy into the language and logic of consumerism. It legitimises the marketisation of higher education and allows management to divide students and staff. We are also hearing that those staff who continue to work are simply exercising their ‘right to work.’ In reality, the right to work is meaningless if it is not also the right to decent work with decent pay and conditions.

There is one thing we can say for sure about the UCU strikes: if this dispute is lost, the race to the bottom in lecturers’ working and living conditions will accelerate and intensify.

If the strike is defeated, universities’ sole purpose will soon be that of a business – creating profit rather than providing a high-quality education. It is vitally important that students support the strike. This is not simply a moral question, but a political one too: Will you fight for your education? Which side are you on? The election of Jo Grady as UCU general secretary earlier this year has been a breath of fresh air for our lecturers. They say that the spirit of struggle has returned. This time, we can be even more ambitious with our aims.

Solidarity with university staff is an

empty slogan if it is not coupled with the action of respecting the picket line. The point is to disrupt, to bring activity to a halt, and this means that we must not enter university sites.

Join your lecturers on the picket line. Donate to the strike fund. Campaign for a socialist Corbyn government. It’s the same fight: a strong UCU strike will only embolden the campaign for Labour. Labour will end the failed free-market experiment in higher education, abolish tuition fees, and bring back maintenance grants. We should use the leverage we have as students to make it known that we stand with our lecturers.

Our vision should not fall short here. Money exists in society to fund decent pensions and free education for all. Billions sit uninvested in banks in the UK. This cash is simply the unpaid wages of the working class. With it, we would be capable of not just sustaining education but improving it a thousandfold. In the hands of the bosses, this wealth sits idle; capitalists have little incentive to invest. Never let anyone tell you that there is no money: the problem is not how much, but who owns it. Unless we confront capitalism itself, we will be reduced to endlessly fighting the various symptoms of this rigged system.

This strike is not ‘just’ about pensions and pay. Our times are characterised by austerity; our standard of living is worse than that of our parents. We will soon inherit the struggle for better pay and conditions. We must link this to a fundamental redistribution of power in society; the fight for a socialist future where we – students and staff – make decisions based on social need, not profit.

My profession is worth protecting

Dr Philip Knox explains why he feels a moral duty to go on strike

By one measure, pay for university employees has fallen by nearly 20% in the past decade. This means that, in real terms, I’m earning four-fifths of what someone doing the same job at the same level would have earned in 2009. I do feel a sense of injustice in that, but then again when I look around at my contemporaries I feel much more fortunate than them – at least I have a secure job.

I see many gifted colleagues trapped in a dismaying cycle of casual work or short-term teaching or research contracts, as their promise is wasted by the grinding experience of insecurity and low pay. What is happening to higher education in the UK? I have not been a lecturer for very long, but in my short career I have seen my own pay tank in real terms, I have seen student fees trebled, and I have seen vice-chancellors’ salaries hit City-banker levels across the country.

It is not difficult to see that these things are related to each other; it seems clear to me this is what happens when you try to run a university like a corporation, as successive governments in this country have been encouraging us to do.

We are all suffering the consequences of this. Workload has increased as onerous government schemes have been introduced in order to produce new rankings and drive competition. It is not unusual for me to stay up until after midnight preparing teaching or marking essays before waking up to get to my emails before 6am and make a dent in the admin before lectures start.

It’s knacker, but because we care about the job and our students, we put up with unreasonable workloads until we make ourselves sick. It is extremely upsetting to have conversations in corridors and offices with admired and respected colleagues who I can see are at the limits of what they can handle. Lecturers bursting into tears behind closed doors is not unheard of – I’ve certainly had days when I felt like it. And I’ve seen students suffering, too, as they become increasingly anxious about life after university when they are saddled with spiralling student debt that is being sold

off to private companies.

We now have two cohorts of undergraduate students who were born in the 2000s, and they are not so much worried about whether they will manage to pay off their debt in their lifetime (most of them won’t), they are worried about whether they will have a planet to live on when they hit their fifties. Meanwhile, the people in their fifties and sixties (and seventies) running the university and colleges drag their feet over divesting their massive endowments from fossil fuel companies. Something is going seriously wrong here.

There is enough to make you angry, and I do get angry, but mostly I feel sad. I feel sad because in many ways I think that my job is wonderful, and the idea that it might be hollowed out over the coming years is extremely depressing. I feel deeply privileged to work with and learn from the students here. It is a job worth protecting, and absolutely worth striking over.

If we start with pensions and pay, we can begin to readjust the balance of universities’ priorities – last year’s strike action, and the solidarity between lecturers and students, gave a sense of what might be achieved.



▲ **Cambridge staff on the picket line at Sidgwick Site** (ANDREW HYNES)

Features

What goes around, comes around



▲ “Attaching myself to some of the memories of my youth forces me to confront that seven years have passed (JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE/YOUTUBE)

As I try to reckon with the reality of my finite existence, I keep listening to old Justin Timberlake hits, writes **Rosie Bradbury**

For the second half of this term, I’ve listened almost exclusively to a Spotify playlist I made called ‘shitty pop’. In particular, Justin Timberlake’s *What Goes Around... Comes Around* and *Cry Me a River*.

It’s Timberlake at his most glorious: frosted tips and low-rise jeans. It’s as if I’m thirteen years old again, listening to the radio in the car. It is, by all accounts, bad music. And I can’t turn it off.

In my third year of Cambridge, I keep reaching for reminders of times long gone: listening to early 2000s hits, absentmindedly watching *Gossip Girl* episodes.

I’ve started making a toasted bagel with butter and cinnamon sugar for breakfast each morning as I did when I was younger (which my friend likened to a recipe for a heart attack).

People often talk about the preemptive nostalgia for Cambridge that hits you in final year, and of the inevitable yearning for university life once you’ve left this place for good.

But nostalgia isn’t material, and often, it’s not clear why an attachment

to some memories feels more real than others.

I don’t yearn to be thirteen again — I don’t think anyone does, really. But I’m still going back to some of the habits I had then, the sounds and tastes which I associate with a period of my life I’m so far distanced from now that it feels like another one entirely.

It’s difficult to pinpoint why I’m feeling this attachment with times long gone by. I think, more than any real love for Justin Timberlake, I’m just looking for some reminder of the familiar.

With an unsettling feeling of not knowing what’s to come, the low-lying, constant uncertainty of what the hell I want my life to look like, I’m taking solace in fleeting glimpses of time gone past.

Much more than when I was an impatient 13 year-old with claustrophobia and big ambitions, I want simplicity again. I want to feel detached from the burden of deciding what I want my life to be, or to look like. It all seems too weighted.

Even though I know that it’s not some formula that I need to solve in the next year, or even in the next five, it feels as if I do. Doors will start to slowly close, after all.

I think most finalists are feeling unsettled right now, even those who already have a fully-formed plan of what they’ll do post-graduation. Life feels constantly, unnervingly, in flux.

I think that I, like many others, feel far more grounded in the person I’ve become than I ever did when I was a

“None of us know when this strange, unsettling, beautiful, little life will be abruptly cut short”

young teenager still adjusting to myself, but there’s still something comforting in returning back to a time where it felt as if my life hadn’t really started yet. Definitely far before the mystical idea of being ‘in your 20s’ was anywhere near reality.

Being in school helps you to forget that your very finite life is going by. But it is. Right now. Blink, and you’ll miss it.

And once graduation happens, as a twenty-something, life will feel very much like it’s underway.

As the newness of your teenage years fade, the path forwards is less certain. There don’t seem to be any easy goal-posts left standing that you can focus on once university’s over.

What do you want your life to be? How do you want the people who know you right now to remember you? What’s important to you about what your 20s look like?

My friend asked me a couple days ago, “If you knew that you would die suddenly in one year, what would you do in the time you had left?” It’s an impossible, paralysing question.

I thought that I would want to do something with my time that felt meaningful, but what would that look like? I’m not sure.

Maybe, though, it’s also a question we should ask ourselves from time to time. Maybe ask it to yourself quietly in your room, as you ground yourself with the music of your early teens blasting from a speaker.

I could get hit by a bus tomorrow,

or in one year’s time. None of us know when this strange, unsettling, beautiful little life will be abruptly cut short. *Every* decision is loaded.

We tend to avoid these questions of the finality of our existence, edging it out of our minds. How would we get anything done otherwise?

It’s so much easier to stay in the present, grounding yourself by the past.

Especially in times when life itself is in flux, I think it’s instinctual to find some way of feeling settled, and, for me, that’s involved reaching for memories of my early adolescent years: a lot of processed sugar, mindless American television, and early 2000s bubblegum pop.

When I feel settled again, maybe I’ll start listening to ‘good’ music again, watching television that doesn’t find a way to grasp onto every trope of American teenage life.

In a way, though, I’m glad I feel unsettled (and, of course, glad for JT). As paralysing as they are, a part of me wants to be asking myself these questions about what I want my life to look like.

Attaching myself to some of the memories of my youth is also forcing me to confront the fact that seven years have gone by.

Time keeps passing, far too quickly. And this strange, unexplained nostalgia for the familiarity of my adolescence is just another reminder that what I’m doing now is shaping this finite life.

So what else do I want from it?

Opinion



We need to break the stigma around STIs

An anonymous student discusses her experience of being diagnosed with chlamydia, and urges students to get STI tested and help to break the stigma

Boy, am I glad that I woke up at 6am to try and get my free express home STI test kit off iCaSH! What a surprise it was to be diagnosed with chlamydia, but what a common thing it is to get, too: a young adult is diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection every four minutes in the UK, and, of all STI diagnoses, 49% are chlamydia.

At this rate, it's weird if you *haven't* had it. I was also one of the up to 70% of women who show no symptoms: no burning when I peed, no weird discharge, no pelvic pain. I was just living my life; now, I look at pictures of myself in my camera roll and think "damn, I really was walking around with an STI for so many months and never knew."

I know exactly how I got chlamydia — I had unprotected sex at a horrible party with someone who I was not in an exclusive, monogamous relationship with. That's generally how it happens, although I did, for a bit, hold on to hope that I had gotten it from my cat, who had feline chlamydial conjunctivitis earlier in the year; that maybe I had petted him and not washed my hands and then petted myself, or something.

Turns out that no, that is not how it works at all. I didn't use a condom, and it was the only time that I had done that, but yeah, I got chlamydia. It only takes one instance of exposure, so always use protection. Don't be silly, protect your willy. Wrap it before you tap it. Use a dental dam, ma'am.

As students in Cambridge, we are extraordinarily lucky to have access to free STI screening kits, free treatment, and free support. I try to be proactive about my sexual health, and I am usually very good at it. I got an intra-uterine device (IUD) fitted as soon as I knew what one was; I can go on long lectures about safe sex; I did my STI test as soon as I got back to Cambridge, mainly because in the area where I live, these things are much less accessible.

While cuts to the NHS have led to a limit in the amount of test kits sent out per day (this is why I needed to get up at 6am to try and order one), the kits are still there for free. The antibiotics I was prescribed were given to me for free. The employees at the clinic let me have a bit of a cry about it and were nothing but friendly and understanding for free. They gave me a big bag of condoms. For free. How incredible is that!

It's extremely important to break the stigma around STIs. Having one doesn't make you dirty or unclean. It's normal,

and it happens, and it's all manageable. In my case, I'm on a strict regimen of one week of medication and no sex, which is basically what it was like when I had glandular fever, so it's all the same in the end.

What's the difference between chlamydia and, say, freshers' flu? It sounds like the beginning of a bad joke, but I mean it. The level of embarrassment and shame should be the same. If anything, chlamydia didn't make me hack my lungs out in lectures.

In my efforts to normalize conversations about sexual health, I've told most of my friends, my sister, my parents — even, in a moment of terribly awkward and deeply hilarious behaviour, an ex-boyfriend — about my diagnosis. I'm very open about it.

The only reason I'm anonymous is because I have a very uncommon name, and I would hate for a potential employer to Google me, find this article, and see that I'm a bad writer. Out of all the people I've told, not a single one has been anything but supportive and loving. Some of my friends have had it, too.

So if you have it, or have had it, you are most certainly not alone. You would probably be surprised by the number of people who you know who have had it, and by the support you'll get. I've mainly written about chlamydia in this article, but if you find out that you have any STI, you have no need to worry (so long as you get it treated, because they can lead to more complicated conditions).

Pretty much all STIs are treatable, including HIV. If, like me, you did the iCaSH test and have an STI, then you will get a phone call informing you about your positive result and the very nice person on the phone will quickly get you an appointment to sort it out. When it comes to telling previous sexual partners about their risk, the clinic will do it for you, completely anonymously, saving you a difficult conversation.

Honestly, the hardest part about an STI diagnosis is cycling all the way down Mill Road — it's so far! — to Lime Tree Clinic. So get tested regularly, talk about it, and help break the stigma.

Cambridge's sexual health clinic is Lime Tree Clinic, at 351 Mill Road, Cambridge, CB1 3DF. The clinic offers appointments made by phone call, and runs drop-in contraception and sexual health session on Mondays between 2pm and 4pm for under 24s.

◀ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

Anonymous student

Opinion

Calls for divestment should not overlook academia's ties to arms manufacturing

As some Cambridge colleges make progress on divestment, we should not forget the University's financial ties with the arms trade

Isobel Duxfield

'Divestment' has been a buzzword across UK universities in recent years. Cambridge, alongside other institutions, have found themselves under pressure to divulge their links with fossil fuel giants and repeal investments in multinationals like Shell and BP. Some colleges are falling over themselves to flaunt their new "sustainable" dealings.

However, universities have been less explicit about their other financial ties with weapons manufacturers. Last year, *Varsity* revealed that Cambridge colleges were investing over £6.5 million in arms companies. Since then, we have heard little on this issue. Investigations earlier this month into Cambridge's research ties with the weapons industry prompts the need to examine the relationship between higher education and military capital.

The love affair between academia and warfare technology is not new. Military funding has transformed the practice and products of scientific research for over a century, propelling much of the progress in computing, geo-science and biological sciences. Microwave technology, GPS and robotics research have all been embroiled in what has been termed the "military-industrial-academic complex", as university research serves armed conflicts.

Since World War One, the UK's investment in military research and develop-

ment has escalated, and today a third of the Ministry of Defence's budget is given over to research and development, over 2% of GDP. As defence spending rises, this relationship is becoming increasingly intimate. Partnering with both state and private military manufacturing, universities – including Cambridge, Oxford and Imperial College London, which, at £15.2 million, receives the most military investment – host multiple projects developing military capacities.

The scope of this relationship is exposed in the report 'Study No More War', which examined 26 universities across the UK, uncovering more than 1,900 military projects worth over £725 million.

This alliance has been augmented by the growing commercialisation of university research. As state funding for engineering has fallen – 46 engineering departments closed between 1994 and 2001 – universities have been encouraged to develop tighter links with industry to maintain streams of income.

This is where arms manufacturing giants like BAE Systems, Rolls Royce and Raytheon step in. Since 2015, fifteen universities with leading engineering departments have pocketed almost £40 million from defence contractors. Cambridge is up there near the top. With almost £7.5 million from Rolls Royce and £1.3 million from BAE, the university received £9.5 million from private arms between 2008 and 2011, far outstripping grants to Oxford.

Our involvement with arms multinationals like BAE and Rolls Royce should be held up to scrutiny. Their humanitarian record is poor at best. With 98% of its sales to military customers, BAE is Europe's largest arms manufacturer, with its weapons systems including Typhoon and Tornado aircraft used in Saudi Arabia's bombing campaign on Yemen, which has targeted civilians "in a widespread and systematic manner," according to the UN. Indeed, Saudi Arabia is one of BAE's most lucrative customers, even when Germany halted weapons exports to the Gulf state, BAE continued its shipments.

Faced with this industry's bloodied activities, we should question the role private arms plays in higher education. When BAE partners with Cambridge for a "Service Alliance" – a project aiming to "meet the changing needs of customers", and contributes £30,000 to a University of Portsmouth project on "understanding the moral component of conflict" – it is time we confronted academia's role in supporting military atrocities.

Weapons manufacturers wield influence across the entire education system. Purporting to champion science and technology among secondary school students, BAE brings their "roadshow" to 400 schools per year, claiming to "inspire young people from all walks of life to pursue STEM." This initiative has been applauded by ex-Secretary for Education, Alan Johnson. Meanwhile, even

more alarmingly, Raytheon (the defence contractor recently awarded \$386 million to produce precision guided bombs) runs a drone building competition for school-aged children.

Recent conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen have exposed the devastating potential of modern warfare. As arms spending rises and preemptive security narratives legitimise the repeal of individual freedoms, our education system must decide how it wishes to participate in this process.

Students themselves, particularly in STEM subjects, will also be forced to confront their involvement in military technology. Indeed, a survey of engineering students revealed almost 90% thought they were likely to encounter ethical issues in their future careers. When arms industries sponsor engineering programmes, co-run courses and offer student placements, it is a moral dilemma for us all. Military funding is an intricate issue (which this short article can only begin to unpick), and is likely to grow more complex in the future. Nonetheless, as national security and anti-terror agendas continue to legitimise horrific acts of violence and repression, the role academia plays in military infrastructure must be held up to public scrutiny.

At present there is a chilling lack of transparency. It is not about simply "divesting" such funding, but questioning how education can construct coalitions for peace, not militarism.

“Our education system must decide how it wishes to participate in this process”

A Jewish case for voting for the Labour Party

The Labour Party must do better on anti-semitism, but it is still the best way forward

Ben Margolis, Aleph Ross & Jon Tabbush

A recent article in the *Jewish Chronicle* claimed to speak on behalf of all Jews in denouncing Corbyn as an antisemite and implying that anyone who votes for him is one, too. On the other hand, Jewish Voice for Labour's 'Briefing for Canvassers' implies that all the concern about antisemitism has been stirred up by the media. Many non-Jews utilise these opposing Jewish voices in political sparring. The conversation has become increasingly polarised, with antisemitism having become one of several political fault lines along which we are told our loyalties should be drawn.

Not only does this notion of loyalty play into tropes about Jewish 'dual loyalty', but it is also characteristic of our political times. Brexit is a case in point – with campaigns like 'Another Europe is Possible' drowned in a sea of voices claiming that the EU was either a corrupt and unsalvageable bureaucracy or completely unimpeachable.

The referendum model itself set us up for a process of polarisation, insinuating that the purest form of democracy was a choice between two camps. There was never room for a critical commitment to Remain. It seems there's equally no room to criticise Corbyn's leadership whilst recognizing that Labour's 2019 manifesto is perhaps the most exciting, left-wing list of policy proposals our generation has ever seen. We don't have to throw the

baby out with the bath-water. In fact, we cannot afford to.

The racist rhetoric that the Home Office has been spouting for years under Conservative government – their commitment to nationalism and the hostile environment – is antithetical to any project committed to opposing antisemitism. Far right groups have always targeted Jews, and Conservative party policy has repeatedly capitulated to this end of the political spectrum. Steve Bannon, a former adviser to President Trump, has combined a long history of antisemitism with growing connections to the Conservative Party. The party's vote against censuring Viktor Orban – the antisemitic, authoritarian Hungarian PM – in the European Parliament follows this trend. A true commitment to the safety of the UK's Jewish community is also a commitment to fighting fascism and the far right in all its forms, which, in our opinion, *must* include a commitment to getting the Tories out – a government that has pandered to these tendencies repeatedly.

Nonetheless, even if many of the attacks launched against Corbyn by the right wing press have been disingenuous and opportunistic, many Jewish members are concerned about their place within the party. Labour has to do better. It has to introduce an independent complaints procedure, separate from the National Executive Committee, and outfit it with substantial resources. It has to

avoid cronyism and make the disciplinary process more transparent. With these changes, the party can begin to rebuild our relationship with the wider community. However, we must also recognise the multitude of different voices among British Jews, and there is a tendency, particularly among non-Jews, to ignore alternative narratives. This was particularly evident in Angela Smith's condemnation of Corbyn attending a Jewdas seder, when she implied that Corbyn was associating with the 'wrong kind of Jews' (i.e. anti-Zionist leftists). It is not enough for non-Jews to only listen to those of us who share their opinions and use their experiences for political benefit.

Labour's commitment to ending the hostile environment for migrants and refugees, and to launching a second referendum (with huge implications for the future of freedom of movement), represents an urgently needed reversal of the racist policies of the Conservative government we have now. This will be more important than ever in the coming decade, when the climate crisis will displace millions.

As Jews, many of our ancestors fled their homes to come to Britain – it would be a betrayal of our history for us to turn our backs on those trying to do the same. More broadly, Jews have been central throughout the history of European left-wing politics: they fought in the Spanish Civil War against Francoism, in the Second World War against Nazism, and

on the streets of Britain against Oswald Mosley. Our history is one of rebellion, of survival in the face of violence. Jews belong on the left as much as anyone else. The British Left in particular owes a great debt to Jewish thinkers – from Hobsbawm, to Miliband, to Laski, we are indispensable.

There are limits to what party politics can change, but Labour's 2019 manifesto is a radical diversion from the New Right consensus we have grown up under: one characterised by brutal austerity, the erosion of worker's rights, and apathy toward the climate crisis. It offers us hope: a Green Industrial Revolution, with an anti-colonial just transition, and a commitment to unionisation throughout; 100,000 council homes a year; and the rebuilding of our public services. The Lib Dems are not a viable alternative. They have no path to an independent majority and have suggested they would be willing to enter "discussions" with the Conservatives to keep them in power, but would not extend this to Corbyn's Labour Party.

A healthy skepticism for the leadership does not change the fact that these are necessary steps in the fight for international justice and *tikkun olam* (healing the world). What's more, a Labour loss would only empower a right-wing Tory party that is *also* guilty of antisemitism. We will be voting Labour on 12th December with pride.

“We will be voting Labour on 12th December with pride”



University culture must recognise the dangers of obsessively ‘clean eating’

Obsessively ‘healthy’ eating must be recognised as the danger that it is

Millie Morgan

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of eating disorders and body image, and mention of suicide.

O orthorexic tendencies (symptoms of obsessive behaviour in pursuit of a healthy diet) – and the bingeing-purging patterns that inevitably follow – are silently becoming a more common part of student life. Eating habits and thinking patterns that can pave the way for a disorder are too frequently being swept under the rug, viewed as normal, unproblematic and sometimes even glorified.

Particularly amongst the perfectionist culture of Cambridge student life, ‘clean eating’ is praised as a marker that you’ve got your life together. But the focus of ‘health’ and ‘wellbeing’ is often a disguise for the true motivation of overly-controlled eating, indicating a much deeper underlying struggle with food and body image. With such a high social density of young, competitively-minded students – with ample opportunity to compare their bodies with other people – unhealthy relationships with body image are amplified, and this can translate into a fear of any food that might prevent them from looking as slim as their peers. Some people begin to restrict their eating in the name of ‘health’ and ‘wellbeing.’

My personal experience with ‘clean eating’ choices were guided by a fear of calories which could not be unlearned, especially with the masses of calorie swaps and hacks cluttering my Instagram explore section. Away from the influence and control of my parents’ eating at home, university gave me the freedom to restrict as I pleased, all the while disguising my insecurities behind a ‘healthy’ lifestyle.

Superficially ‘healthy’ eating is often praised, and considered an example of how ‘together’ someone’s life is, especially if maintained alongside the pressures of a Cambridge workload. With such gratification combined with the obsessively competitive nature of many Cambridge students, it isn’t surprising to see my overly-controlled eating behaviours reflected in my peers.

Orthorexic tendencies often go unnoticed because people don’t acknowledge them as problematic. In reality, orthorexia can be extremely damaging to long term mental health and relationships with food, and the prevalence of Orthorexia is estimated to be 7% for the general population.

However, because orthorexia is not classified as an official eating disorder, it frequently goes undiagnosed and un-

treated, and sufferers remain unaware that their behaviours are unhealthy. In such a high social density as university, this behaviour creates an echo chamber which normalises the assignment of moral weight to food based on its calorie density. The ‘health’ that certain Instagram accounts promise with their low-calorie ‘hacks’ only exacerbates this.

The consequences of restrictive eating in a university environment are severely damaging for mental wellbeing. Orthorexic tendencies often lead to uncontrollable bingeing when ‘bad’ foods (which sufferers endeavour to keep out of their cupboards) become accessible. At university, these situations are not infrequent.

In Cambridge especially, at events like formals or special dinners, we’re encouraged to eat and drink to no end (alcohol consumption itself being difficult to navigate for people who have internalised the calorific value), and social events are often accompanied by a pile of Sainsbury’s snacks. Bingeing is not a question of lack of willpower: it results from restricting one’s body from what it intuitively requires, and assigning guilt towards large quantities of restricted food.

Obsessing over food and feeling guilty

▲ **Illustration by**
Kate Towsey for
Varsity

“We need to speak more kindly about the food we put into our bodies”

about eating the ‘wrong’ things is not natural, yet I often hear my peers say they ‘shouldn’t’ eat certain calorific things, as if this is a normal and healthy attitude towards food.

Orthorexia should be recognised and taken seriously as an eating disorder. It can cause years of mental health issues and body dysmorphic symptoms which result from the restrict-binge cycle. It can give way to disorders that have significant manifestations in physical health.

One in twenty young women has an eating disorder. One in five practices unhealthy dieting, purging and binge-eating patterns. These figures are rising. Anorexia nervosa has the leading mortality rate of all psychiatric diseases. An anorexic person is three times more likely to die by suicide than someone with depression. One in ten starves to death. We need to speak more kindly about the food we put into our bodies. We need to denormalise the use of language which assigns any moral weight or guilt to food. We have to second guess the ‘weight-loss hacks’ we see on Instagram and listen to reliable science-based nutrition. We have to acknowledge the unnaturalness of restrictive eating and teach ourselves a genuinely healthy relationship with food.

Science

What do hiccups have to do with brain development?

Sambhavi Sneha Kumar
explores the origins of hiccups
in cerebral development

Perhaps one of the most intricate processes science can explore is that of the development of an embryo *in utero* to a functional adult. The Roman philosopher Seneca once proposed that a human embryo is simply an 'adult in miniature', faced only with the task of increasing in size. Of course, it is now apparent that this is not the case — the complexity and structure of a newborn baby's organ systems is entirely different to that of the primitive embryo, and continues to change as life progresses. One organ in which this is particularly notable is the brain.

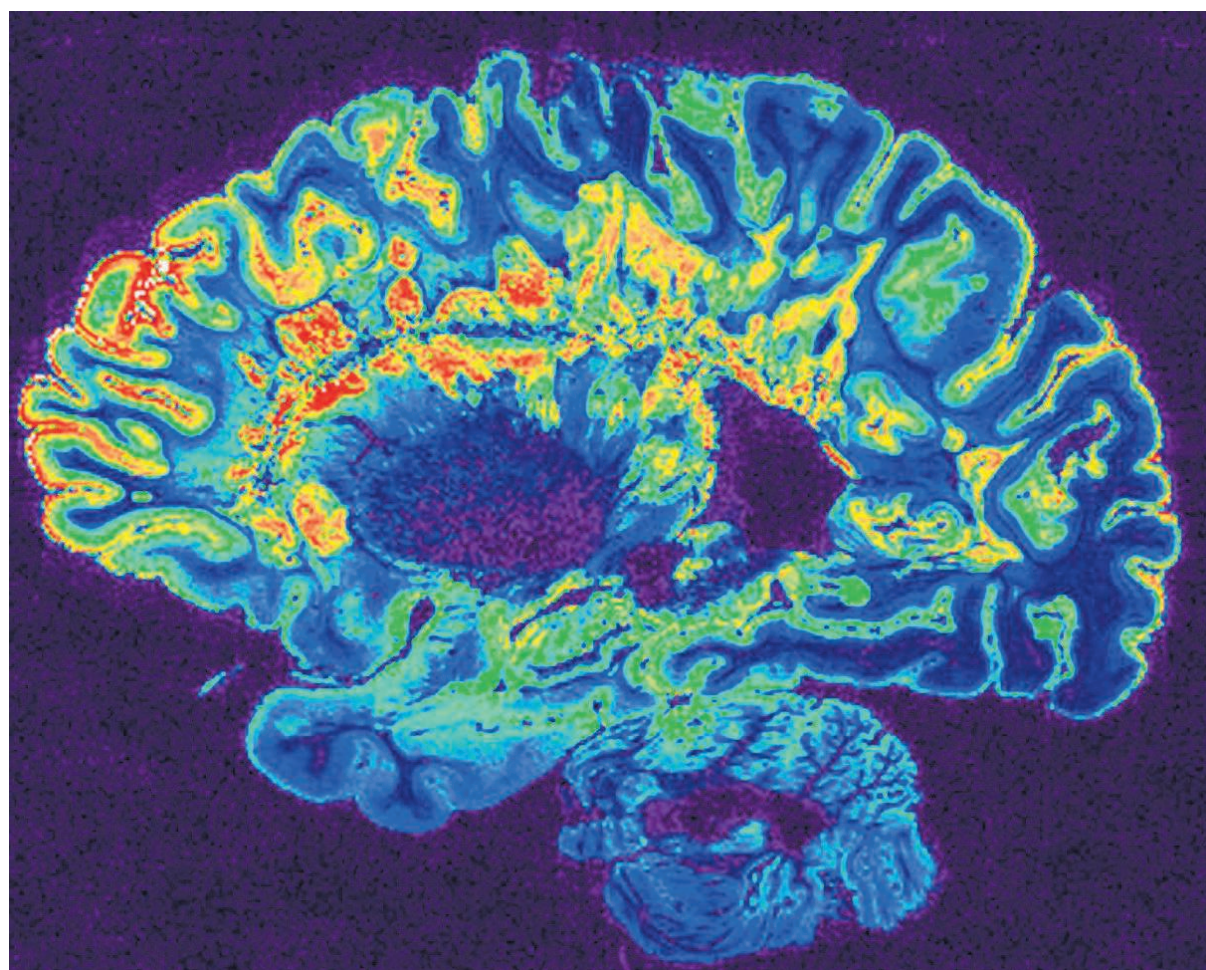
Neuroplasticity is defined as the ability of the brain to form and reorganise connections between its synapses (minute gaps connecting neurons), typically either in response to learning or traumatic injury.

The principle usually invoked to explain this is Hebb's rule, which states that repeated stimulation of a postsynaptic cell by a particular presynaptic cell, increases the firing efficiency of this synapse. While the brain develops its structure before birth, it continues to remodel itself throughout life, notably during the maturation phase of an organism. Neural connections for different brain functions develop sequentially, with the development of sensory pathways in humans peaking at around 4 months of age, language pathways at around 9 months and higher cognitive functions at around 7 years.

Experiments have been carried out to demonstrate that raising animals in deprived environments (for example, darkness, silence or social isolation) can cause defects in brain development and inhibit sensory function. Already in 1978, a study showed that when one eyelid for a kitten was sutured closed, the kitten experienced subsequent vision loss. This prompts the question as to whether it is possible to permanently enhance motor and sensory functioning by changing the stimulating environment of a newborn.

The plasticity of the brain is at its maximum during what are known as 'critical periods', which are maturation times where some crucial experience will have its maximum effect on brain development. If an organism does not undergo the particular experience at the correct time or undergoes it at some later time, the developmental effect may be

“Hiccups are one of the earliest established patterns of activity”



suboptimal. For example, in babies with congenital deafness, a cochlear implant should be placed within the first seven years of life to ensure maximum efficacy. While the end of the critical period does not mean a complete loss of synaptic plasticity, the plasticity becomes more limited to synapses confined within a small area and therefore the effect may be less significant and more difficult to achieve.

There are several examples where neuroplasticity can give rise to different outcomes, ranging from recovery from brain injuries during the time periods surrounding birth to the establishment of essential life functions such as breathing.

While strokes in babies are extremely rare, they can occur, for example due to the formation of abnormal clots. A stroke to one side of the brain has different implications for newborns than for adults due to the increased plasticity of the developing brain.

A stroke affecting the left hemisphere of the brain can lead to long-lasting language defects in adults. In infants however, while there may be transient delays in the production and understanding of

language, normal linguistic development is typically achieved by school age. It has been hypothesised that neuroplasticity can allow for the role of speech and language processing to be shifted to the right side of the brain that was unaffected by the stroke.

Recent research into brain activity pattern using electroencephalograms has implicated that the action of a hiccup may have some evolutionary significance, rather than simply being an involuntary contraction of the diaphragm caused by irritation of the phrenic nerve that supplies it.

Hiccups are one of the earliest established patterns of activity, occurring in the fetus in the uterus as early as nine weeks. The study found that the diaphragm muscles causing the hiccup resulted in two large brainwaves on the electroencephalogram followed by a smaller third brainwave that appeared similar to those caused by an auditory stimulus.

Researchers believe that this could be an example of how processing multi-sensory inputs allows for the development of brain connections — a newborn baby may be able to connect the 'hic' sound of

hiccup with the sensation of diaphragm contraction and be able to subsequently utilise voluntary diaphragm contraction in breathing.

This may be a remnant from amphibian respiration, in which gills are used to gulp air via a similar motor pathway that is used in hiccupping. Interestingly, babies born prematurely tend to be prone to more frequent hiccupping, supporting this theory as a phenomenon that can have its effect throughout life, its role in brain development in the infant stages of life is particularly significant.

Previous research had hypothesised that hiccups evolved as a reflex to aid the clearance of air from the stomach, with air trapped in the stomach of suckling newborns stimulating the sensory nerves in the stomach. This suggestion arises from the fact that apparently only milk-drinking animals actually have hiccups. While the exact mechanisms are not yet fully understood, imaging techniques such as functional MRI and electroencephalograms may shed light on variations in regional function of the brain that arise as a consequence of neuroplasticity.

◀ The brain
remodels itself
throughout life

(GOVIND BHAGAVATHESHWARAN,
DANIEL REICH,
NINDS, NIH)

“Babies born prematurely tend to be prone to more frequent hiccupping”



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Avoiding the super bug era

Rachael Barrett explores the growing problem of antibiotic resistance, and how to avoid amplifying it

According to a report published on 31st October by Public Health England, there are 165 new antibiotic resistant infections every day in England, and even scarier is the fact that there were an estimated 61,000 resistant infections in England last year and this number is on an upward trajectory.

You've got to give it to them — the bacteria are unbelievably creative and can become resistant in all sorts of nifty ways from switching up the antibiotic target, so that it doesn't work anymore, to actually pumping the antibiotic out of the cell or even attacking it with some badass bacterial biochemistry.

It's not a fair world. Bacteria can pass around such resistance mechanisms on their genes (between bacterial species, even) so any resistance developed could

“There were an estimated 61,000 resistant infections in England last year”

spread worldwide and affect anyone. Whatever your own personal antibiotic use, you're still at risk of any infection being resistant.

Hence scientists are warning of a post-antibiotic era (and have been for some time now), in which we would effectively be launched back into the medical dark ages: antibiotics are used to treat everything from minor infections to tuberculosis but are also used in caesarean-sections, alongside cancer treatments and after organ transplants.

One study by the European Centre for Disease Control already attributes 33,000 deaths in 2015 as a result of antibiotic resistant infections.

Scientists in Cambridge are addressing the problem at a macro-level with teams across departments looking at developing new drugs or identifying new bacterial targets for those drugs. This has become increasingly unfavourable (read: unprofitable) in Big Pharma companies.

Research published in Nature Microbiology this summer from an international research team involving Cambridge scientists Dr Ewan Harrison and Dr Mark Holmes discovered

“Please do what it says on the packet”

a combination of drugs which could be used to treat MRSA after identifying crucial mutations in a resistance protein.

Fortunately, the combination of drugs they suggest to treat it are already commonly used so don't have to go through the clinical trial process. This means their re-appropriation in the fight against resistance is within the foreseeable future.

But it's not all about the whitecoats! In the case of antibiotic resistance, what you can't see really can hurt you and preventative methods are just as important in stopping the amplification of an already massive problem.

Without further ado and in honour of the WHO's Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week last week, I'm here to give you all a quick refresher of the dos and don'ts:

1. Don't get antibiotics for your freshers flu. Antibiotics aren't the cure for everything, if your doctor doesn't want to prescribe them there's a reason. Trust in your immune system, your own personal antibiotic (even if its week 5 and it hasn't seen vitamin C in a while).

2. Do what it says on the packet. You

have antibiotics, you have a cut that's looking a bit purulent or who knows what else — please do what it says on the packet, even if you're feeling a million times better after a few days. If you don't you've just cleared the competition away for the remaining bacteria and, in the words of Kelly Clarkson, “what doesn't kill you makes you stronger”.

3. Sharing is not caring. Do not reduce, reuse or recycle your antibiotic prescriptions, which brings me nicely on to...

4. Disposal? Return them to the pharmacy and they'll do it for you.

5. Reduce risk of infections. Please don't make me tell you to wash your hands.

On a similar note, I can't think of a better advert for safe sex than the increasingly global spread of super-gonorrhoea (diagnosed in the UK for the first time this year). Just bring up that fun fact and it'll surely kill the mood.

It's as simple as that. Five relatively common-sense strategies that everyone can do in the face of rising antibiotic resistance. Superbugs are like climate change: if ignored, sooner rather than later they'll come back to haunt us.

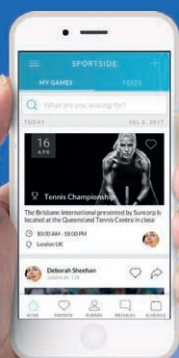


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SPORTSIDE is an amazing new start-up that lets players find their perfect match or club, no matter the sport, skill level, gender or location.

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Illustration by Charley Barnard

Fashion

Couture with a conscience

Fashion Editors **Caterina Bragoli** and **Gabriel Humphreys** talk to the people behind CUCFS's first shoot of the year, as they team up with designer Stacey Downey



Fashion and politics have long enjoyed a close relationship, from vocal protest dressing to breaking norms in acts of gender-rebellion, turning a mirror to contemporary politics whenever it can. So it seems only right that this year's Cambridge University Charity Fashion Show (CUCFS) should be taking on that mantle, starting off with their first photoshoot with designer Stacey Downey.

The theme for this year's show is FLUX, a two-fold concept that hopes to invoke both the material process behind fashion and its status as an art form built on constantly morphing ideas, according to CUCFS President Sophie Weinmann. The committee have also chosen to only showcase ethical and sustainable designers as part of their effort to support wider sustainability and lead by example — a well calculated move as the dubious ethics of fast fashion and untenable production methods become ever clearer.

For their first shoot of the year, Stacey Downey and her FLORICIDE collection were an obvious choice. "For us, FLORICIDE perfectly epitomizes the meaning of this year's theme," says Weinmann. Downey's collection takes aim at the cut flower industry, a massively profitable business that destroys billions of flowers daily, and incurs enormous environmental impacts from their transportation often thousands of miles around the globe. Through her collection, Downey aimed to "capture the destruction of these flowers through a range of creative textile techniques, bold graphics and print design methods."

It feels only fitting that the Downey's FLORICIDE collection was shot at the University's Botanical Gardens, allowing fashion and photography to unite forces in their showcasing of naturalistic elements. The Botanical Gardens has recently announced its Living Collections Strategy, aimed to preserve plant diversity in the wider botanical network, which ties

in perfectly with the sustainable message of both Downey and CUCFS. Photographer Björn Lambrenos plays with plant backdrops saturated in warm sunlight, and uses the powerful

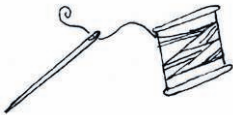
“
Photographer Björn
Lambrenos plays with
plant backdrops saturat-
ed in warm sunlight
”

image of the greenhouse to emphasise the central role of challenging the cut flower industry by preserving nature's beauty.

Garments have often been created for the purpose of furthering a political message, and Stacey Downey's designs continue in that last-

ing tradition. But far from being predictable or conventional, they cut through and grab your attention, with bold and unusual silhouettes. Crinkled leaves and petals layer over designs in morbid yet decadent draping decay, while elsewhere models become entire seed packets, or are emblazoned with "CAUTION" and "FRAGILE" in boxy geometric pesticide suits.

There is a serious message behind them, as well as what you could call a camp edge. "I say I took a humorous approach to my concept," says Downey, but it's never flippant. The inclusion of real face masks and overalls, plus what Downey calls parts of a "military style" make sure we can't forget what we're looking at, even while underlining the absurdity of a multi-billion-dollar industry. This isn't just fashion with a political conscience, but a social one too — ethical, small-scale production and a piercing political message. We, at least, are very excited to see what CUCFS, and Stacey Downey, do next.



“
Far from being predictable or conventional,
they cut through and grab your attention
”



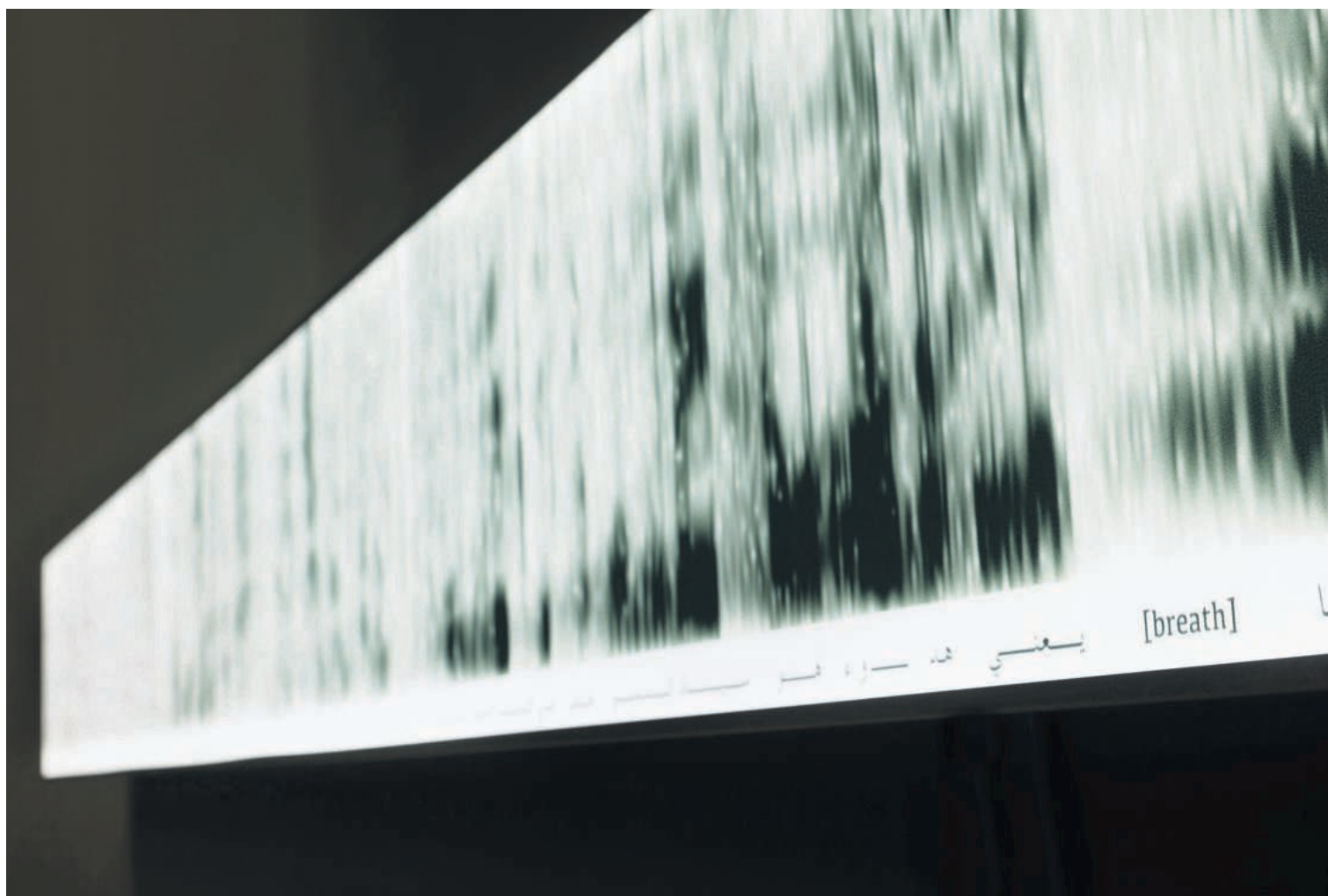
▲ “Downey’s collection takes aim at the cut flower industry, a massively profitable business that destroys billions of flowers daily” (ALL PHOTOS BY BJÖRN LAMBRENOS FOR CUCFS)

Arts



The Turner Prize 2019 has found its ideal winner

Ahead of the Turner Prize announcement on the 3rd December, **Alex Haydn-Williams** reviews the exhibition at the Turner Contemporary and suggests his favourite exhibit



▲ Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *After SFX*, 2018 (TURNER PRIZE 2019 AT TURNER CONTEMPORARY, MARGATE, 2019. PHOTO BY STUART LEECH (4))

Content Note: This article contains mention of torture and other forms of violence.

Every other year, the Turner Prize exhibition, which precedes the announcement of the Prize winner in December, leaves London. In 2019, it's at the Turner Contemporary in Margate, a gallery with a good claim to be the Prize's spiritual home. It's built on the site of the boarding house where JMW Turner himself lodged when he painted the Thanet skies — 'the loveliest in all Europe', he called them. On the grey afternoon at the start of October when I visited, I was, to my surprise, inclined to agree. The expansive view from the gallery's first floor exhibition space over the cold clouds and blue-grey sea is staggeringly beautiful. Though Turner came for the colours, he'd have appreciated a day like this, where monochrome hangs heavy in the air and autumn stretches its bracing fingers.

Which is why it's a surprise that, in his room, Oscar Murillo has decided to cover almost the entire window. A black canvas blocks out the view of the North Sea, with only a small sliver of sea visible in the centre where the fabric has been slit. Faux-naïve papier-mâché figures sit looking at the canvas with tubes hanging out of their chests. They are supposed to represent the automaton-like humans of late capitalism; the symbolism,

though, is simplistic and lacks insight. It's not clear what exactly it's all for. Murillo's conceptual ambitions are exciting, but the end product falls short.

The same is true of Tai Shani's installation in the next gallery, where fleshy biological forms mix with red velvet in what looks like an unfortunate collision between the Old Vic and Mr Blobby. It's supposed to host a performance artwork based on Christine de Pizan's extraordinary fifteenth-century feminist text *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Unfortunately, Shani's piece is only actually being performed

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*Four artists, four rooms,
one prize*
”

twice across the entire duration of the exhibition in Margate, so it's hard to understand it fully: reviewing its artistic achievement would be like looking at a set and trying to assess the actors.

The advantage of the faintly artificial competition format — four artists, four rooms, one prize — is that the artists' practices throw one another into relief. At the Turner, Shani and Murillo's approaches are made to look silly

by Helen Cammock and Lawrence Abu Hamdan's seriousness. Both Cammock and Hamdan don't just allude to political issues: they engage with them.

Video forms the keystone of Cammock's exhibit. In her film *The Long Note* she uses archive footage alongside her own to dig into the monolithic, mostly male history of the Troubles and find the histories hidden below its surface: the women in the protests, the mothers mourning teenage sons, even Bernadette Devlin, the only MP present at the Bloody Sunday march. Cammock, a former social worker, is a talented listener: her interview subjects open up at length and provide in-depth answers. She splices the videos together in a way that demonstrates her innate ear for rhythm.

Cammock's practice is superb, but the most challenging and accomplished part of the Turner exhibition is Lawrence Abu Hamdan's entry. He's a self-described 'private ear', a forensic investigator specialising in cases involving sound. The works exhibited here derive from the experience of one case in particular. After working with Amnesty International to construct a model of the Syrian torture prison Saydnaya, based only on the sounds remembered by escapees, Hamdan became incredibly aware of the limitations of our sonic imagination.

As he explains in two beautifully-shot, cap-

tivating video pieces, projected onto glass in an otherwise dark space, most people's experience of violence is in the cinema, not real life. As a result, we don't know what violence actually sounds like: what we think is a

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*This is pioneering work in
the fields of forensics and
psychology*
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punch is actually the work of a foley artist. A watermelon being cut sounds more like what we think a beheading sounds like than a real beheading does; witnesses in murder trials recall gunshots sounding less like a gunshot, more like a tray dropping. As our memories of new sounds are soon overwritten by a verbal description of them, this sort of comparison, which we use to rationalise the unexpected, becomes the faculty through which the sounds themselves are remembered.

Hamdan, a brilliant storyteller, weaves together examples, from the Oscar Pistorius trial to the murder of Bobby Kennedy, where witnesses describe violence through these comparisons. Throughout, foley sounds clang disconcertingly from speakers hidden around the gallery. It all comes to a shocking conclusion: there's never been a proper scientific study into the veracity and accuracy

“
*Britain has found one of its
most talented young artists*
”

of memories of non-verbal sounds. The verdicts in cases based on memories of sounds are, ironically, unsound. Hamdan's videos are genuinely pioneering work in the fields of forensics and psychology. It's impossible to see them and ever hear in the same way again. Through artistic techniques, Hamdan exposes the biases of the human imagination, and attempts to overcome them and find the truth. Turner would have loved him.

Since the days of Rachel Whiteread's concrete-filled semi and Damien Hirst's cut-open cow, the Turner Prize has been controversial. Recently, it's become political as well. Up until now, the judging panel's decision to nominate 'non-artists' who work to political ends such as Assemble or Forensic Architecture has only added to the controversy. But this year, in the thoughtful, exquisite and undoubtedly political work of Lawrence Abu Hamdan, the modern, activist Turner Prize has found its ideal winner — and Britain has found one of its most talented and important young artists.



Lifestyle

A Room of One's Own A Cantab in Paris

Anna Stephenson talks to Helen Grant about creating her own space on her year abroad



▲ Helen Grant (ALL PHOTOS BY HELEN GRANT)

Living in another country is a source of excitement and anxiety for so many Cambridge students who embark on their year abroad. In amongst a big change of lifestyle, location, and often work, how do you carve out a space for yourself that still feels, in some sense, your own?

French and History student Helen Grant tells *Vulture* about her bustling Paris neighbourhood, living away from her hometown for the first time, and the joy of making time to illustrate.

How does your space here compare to rooms you've had in Cambridge?

I'm at Murray Edwards so I'm most used to irreverent concrete spaceship environments. My room last year was split level but had very little floor space, whereas now I have one small square room and a tiny ensuite bathroom with lots of peculiar buckets that I don't

dare touch.

It's nice being somewhere a little older, and the Marais is much prettier and more happening than Huntingdon Road. I also have my own 'kitchen', which is a novelty, although when I say kitchen I mean there's a metal unit on one wall of my room which has a fridge and a two-ring hob and a microwave.

Why Paris, after living in Cambridge?

It's worth noting that I grew up in Cambridge before I studied at the university, so this is my first time living outside my hometown, let alone my country. I specifically wanted the big city experience, but I'm also finding it good for the soul being somewhere new and free of old memories.

I live above a lively art deco café; I hear people chatting late into the night

Is your room somewhere you spend a lot of time, or somewhere that feels like a stopgap between other places and other things?

For most of the week I'm only here in the evenings. At the weekend I get to see it in daylight, which is nice. It's become a space for me to be creative and hopefully calmer, again most of all during the evenings as I'm not much of a nightlife person.

What things do you keep in your room, to decorate it and make it more your own? Have you tried to use things which remind you of home, or chosen a look and feel for this space which is separate?

My room back in college was, I liked to think, exquisitely decorated with often French-themed art postcards, but now I'm

actually in France I've discovered that my Chat Noir print is essentially just a Keep Calm And Carry On poster. But I get new postcards almost every time I go to a gallery, and I like knowing I'm adding to a collection that I started at home. Plus, I now have my own paintings and drawings to sneak in next to Botticelli.

I also have the obligatory cuddly toys – kiwi bird, mole, duck and ancient cat – and a small selection of English-language books that I didn't feel like I could read during the term time of my foreign languages degree.

How has creating art in your room in Paris been?

I didn't really do any art in my first two years at Cambridge – it didn't feel like something I was allowed to spend time on, so I painted exactly one owl for my college wife when it was her birthday.

I struggle with anxiety and had very erratic work and sleep patterns at uni, so I wanted to use free (gasp!) evenings and weekends around my year abroad internship to do things that made me happy, without the guilt. It's starting to work. I even started up an art Instagram account, but because I tend to work at night and none of my lamps are very bright, my uploads are all a bit murky...

What can you see, hear or smell when you're in your room? And what can you see from it?

My flat's right above a very lively art deco café, so most of the time I can hear people chatting happily downstairs until late into the night. Plus there's a Lutheran church a few doors down and the bells ring every hour, which is very Balzac but also a bit much!

There's a church a few doors down and the bells ring every hour

What do you like most about your room?

I like the artist's garret vibe. And my little table by the window.

What's it like in the general area?

I love my neighbourhood. There are lots of cafés and independent shops, and it's friendly and inclusive – the closest street sign and zebra crossing are pride flags, and it feels bright and busy at nighttime. I step outside my front door and I'm instantly among people having a nice time, which is really good for bouts of agoraphobia, it turns out.

Can a room feel truly 'your own' when you're far from home? Should it?

It does and doesn't feel like my own room. There's more of a sense of using another person's things than at Cambridge. I'm not sure



whether I'm allowed to throw away that old mop.

I also have a broader sense of feeling not quite like I belong in Paris, or like I'm playing at living here without actually doing it. I've watched Amélie too many times, maybe, or read too much Jean Rhys. I walk around thoughtfully and a little gloomily because I feel like that's what young women do in Paris, and I think a little too much about how cinematic the staircase in my building is as I climb it.

But I also feel more peaceful here sometimes, and like I'm living more freely. I like doing my own vacuum cleaning rather than having a bedder. And I'm happy when I put the sofa bed up and put my cloths over it and turn on the lamps. It feels homely.

What makes your room unique? Get in touch with our Lifestyle team with a hundred word pitch at lifestyle@varsity.co.uk.



Lifestyle

Is worrying about waste a waste of time?

Going zero-waste can be hard, says **Jess Molyneux**, but here are some easy first steps to take



▲ "I hit a wall when it comes to zero-waste" (MATTHEW GOLLOP)

No one really thinks of doing the environment a favour by getting a reusable water bottle: it just makes more sense than repeatedly buying disposable plastic bottles. But this is one of the only examples I can think of when it comes to reducing waste which has a positive impact other than the environmental benefit — it's

difficult to avoid packaging in so many of the most innocuous, everyday purchases we make. You can try and buy loose vegetables, or get a keep cup, but it feels impossible to escape waste altogether: when I paid attention this week to every time I threw something in the bin, or bought something which would eventually end up there, I became acutely

aware of just how much potential waste surrounds us. Shampoo bottles, plasters, food wrappers, post-it notes — in spite of my best efforts, my regular bin just manages to fill up at five times the speed of my mixed recycling one.

Part of it is the ease and allure of disposability which busy Cambridge lives and a capitalist economy join forces to create. You need to do so many things on the go, whether it's eating lunch with plastic cutlery or grabbing a take-out coffee between lectures. And a lot of the supposed solutions which we find don't get around the root problem of disposable culture, because they provide compostable or recyclable alternatives which are nevertheless still single-use items.

No zero-waste food store is as convenient as Sainsbury's

It gets even more complicated when you factor in the energy consumption and emissions of certain supposedly more environmentally-friendly materials, such as aluminium cans. There's also the time and money investment which going zero-waste necessarily demands. No zero-waste food store is as convenient as Sainsbury's, and unpackaged and usually organic produce, because not yet mainstream, can be tough on a student budget. Zero-waste options for toiletries, such

as conditioner bars, can be expensive and involve a lot more faff to use.

Most people, with the right labels on their bins, will recycle anything

It can feel depressingly out of our control. Product development has for so long been driven by consumer demand to make life easy for us, such that we now expect things to be readily available and then easily disposed of. So much of the pressure to develop sustainable alternatives must be on brands, but unless there's some responsibility on individuals to opt out of our single-use ways, those changes will be less in the direction of lowering disposability than putting a greener face on it.

Institutions, from supermarkets to Cambridge colleges, can make big changes too. It's about making things ridiculously easy for people: most people, with the right labels on their bins, will recycle anything.

I'm nowhere near living a zero-waste life, but I'm trying to simply consume less. And there are ways we can help one another out: I get high-fives from my whole house after taking my turn on the rota to empty our compost bin. We all need pats on the back — going zero-waste is rarely going to be more convenient choice. But that doesn't mean that we can't all pitch in to make it more manageable by being more conscious of our buying and chucking choices.

Being flexitarian is the best of both of worlds

'Flexitarianism' is an easy & accessible way to reduce your meat intake, says **Olivia Emily**

Arriving in Cambridge last year, I was surprised to discover how many vegetarians were around — animal lovers, but also people who consciously chose to be vegetarian in order to help the planet. I was always a big meat-eater: I like my steak rare, my lamb pink, and my chicken by the bucket-load (preferably a KFC bucket).

But there's a weird kind of peer-pressure to be more socially conscious at university. Seeing my friends opt for the vegan option at caff made me feel guilty for sticking to my meat-lover guns. No one has ever pressured me to change my eating habits, but hearing people talk about the state of the planet — about rallying colleges to divest and introduce meat-free Mondays — made me start questioning my deep-rooted views: why am I still eating meat? Livestock makes up 18% of global greenhouse

gas emissions and is detrimental to the planet in terms of deforestation, land degradation, and excessive water use and pollution. Eating less meat also has health and economic benefits: consuming meat is bad for your health, and a meat-based diet is generally considered to be twice as expensive as a vegetarian one.

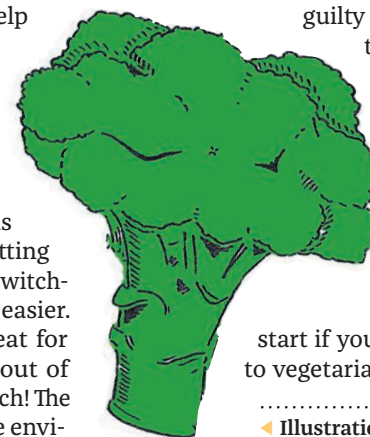
My New Year's resolution was to give up one meat per month. In January, this was pork — I never really liked it, and cured pork (like ham and bacon) is terrible for your health, so it was a good place to start. February was beef — a big one for a steak-lover, but a necessary one for the planet. I gave up lamb in March, and by April had decided to cut out all red meats entirely. While I agree that we shouldn't always feel like we have to label ourselves, as of November, I would call myself a flexitarian: I have a maximum of one meal per day with meat in it and the only meats I

eat are poultry and fish; I check 'vegetarian' as my dietary requirement for events; I avoid dairy products where I can. Whether you're a fully-fledged meat-eater wanting to do better or would call yourself a flexitarian too, there are ways we can help the planet without making huge sacrifices.

A simple step is setting aside certain days or meals as 'meat-free'. I try to have at least one meat-free day a week, and 2 meat-free meals per day. I also found that cutting out one meat at a time made switching into flexitarianism a lot easier. We don't typically have meat for breakfast, so leaving meat out of lunch isn't too much of a stretch! The most damaging meats for the envi-

ronment are beef and lamb, so if you're feeling environmentally conscious, they should be the first to go. Flexitarianism is the best of both worlds. I can live an ethical vegetarian lifestyle (most of the time) without feeling

guilty if I do eat meat. I can pander to the part of me that despises restrictive rules, like not being able to eat meat even if I'm craving it. I can get the health benefits of a diet without red-meat while also satiating my desire for meat with chicken or fish. It's not a perfect diet, but it's an accessible place to start if you don't quite want to commit to vegetarianism just yet.



◀ Illustration by Lois Wright for Varsity



As winter approaches, I am enjoying the melting of night and day

The days may be getting shorter, says **Izzy Dignum**, but now's a perfect time to enjoy the lovely twilight this season offers

Time is now creeping towards December, towards the beginning of a new decade. I have seen too many tweets asking me what I have done since the millennium, reminding me of my inadequacies and my particular skill of fitting a whole digestive in my mouth. All the while, night is falling faster.

I am enjoying the melting of day and night, soft blues and darkness and the quietness that settles. And, because my brain has determined that since I went for walks between the hours of 4PM and 5PM in Easter term, it also thinks that I should continue to do so. Now, however, this time is twilight, meaning that I become rapidly engulfed by the lack of light.

Yet walking this late still makes sense, because I am at my most lethargic in the late afternoon, more likely to languish on my bed like the love-longing Troilus instead of reading about him. I spend my mornings stewing in the library or (occasionally) a lecture theatre, and it is only when I notice the way in which the darkness seeps in that I realise that I need to stop breathing in book dust.

The glossy colours of daytime autumn; too many reds, yellows, blues

So I go out, notice things, and although I used to be terrified of the dark, one of the best times to go out is at dusk itself. It's not dark enough to warrant second-guessing every move, but it is dark enough for a sense of quietness to settle and mist to rise. Autumn is still very much in the air, but her colours are muted and they are mauve-tinted, spectral, gauzy and hazy like a Turner-esque wet dream.

On my last cusp-of-darkness walk, it was indeed twilight (although I'm not sure how enthusiastic I would be if Robert Pattinson came creeping out of the undergrowth). I don't tend to stray too far out of the city when it's dark (I have spent far too many hours watching Midsomer Murders lately), but when I did, I saw my first kingfisher as an electric flash against the muddying night. He was tree-perched at the side of the Cam for an indeterminate amount of time (while I stood and gawped), before fleeting away along the river. I could well have missed him in the glossy colours of daytime autumn; too many reds, yellows, blues, and I look at everything

and nothing.

My attention span is not the best, and I get caught up in my retriever-like enthusiasm for autumn. (Give me the swishy leaves on Sidgwick Avenue! Hot chocolate! Entering the library when it is light and only emerging again in the dark!)

It is easier to see the softness of the city

But in the semi-darkness, when you have to strain to see anything of interest, I need to calm the enthusiasm, because at dusk birds still move quickly and quietly, even if I don't. There is a satisfaction in matching the quietness, in quelling thoughts and allowing the twilight greyness to hang lightly.

Admittedly, I never linger. I've never been keen on the dark; I read too many folk tales and combined with an overactive imagination and a desire to stay safe and not risk falling face-first, I stick to the city when the dark is too overwhelming.

Admittedly, walking in the city is far less interesting – the only animal I've seen is 'Bin Squirrel', who I saw scrambling out of a bin with a whole croissant in his mouth and with whom I share a great affinity – but there is still the moon and stars and the coldness that sweeps in. It is the sense of peace (if temporary) that almost-night brings, the strange feeling of being on the liminal boundary of day and night.

The veil that it drops removes the harshness of artificial lights and concrete

My favourite collection of short stories is in fact called *Light and Twilight*, by Edward Thomas, where he addresses the line between – and significance of – beginnings and endings, subtly and tenderly.

In one story, he writes about 'the grey ribs of a delicate sunset', and it is this soft delicacy to which twilight belongs. The veil that it drops removes the harshness of artificial lights and concrete, it's easier to see the softness of the city and even if for half an hour there is calm. And there's not a vampire in sight.



▲ "Almost-night brings a sense of temporary peace" (SIMON LOCK)

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Theatre

A guide to the Pantomime

As we step into the cold Christmas season, Theatre Editor **Sarah Taylor** takes us through the history and significance of the pantomime, from its origins in mime to modernity

It's officially Panto season! "Oh no it isn't" you may cry, "Oh yes it is" I would retort. "Oh no it isn't!" – and so we would go on, with increasing intensity, until one of us gave up.

If this palaver has left you somewhat confused, then it may be that you have never seen a pantomime. Upon hearing this, the average Brit would probably appear dumbfounded. After all, many of us who have lived in this country since childhood have grown up with this festive phenomenon. For the uninitiated, however, I imagine pantomimes are baffling; isn't it a bit strange that we go to the theatre and are encouraged to heckle the actors, that our enthusiastic participation is not only expected but relied upon?

There are some rules to watching a pantomime: join in no matter how ridiculous, be prepared for things to get riotous, and, most importantly, let yourself have fun. Pantomimes are meant to be silly, so you have to embrace it to enjoy it — there is no room

for shyness or seriousness here. This is perhaps what makes the pantomime so perfect for family viewing; children don't have to contain their excitement, and as they giggle at the slapstick comedy adults giggle at the wordplay, and the fact that they can't explain certain jokes to the little ones.

For me, the yearly trip to the panto was a highlight of the season as a kid; we would go en masse to watch a cast of C-list celebs wreak havoc with a fairy tale. When I first started going I was a child, caught up in the spectacle, but by the time I stopped I was a teenager, desperately pretending to be too cool while trying not to laugh. Some years were fun, some were unforgettable; if you mention Cinderella in my household my mother will almost certainly say "ey, do you remember that year with H from Steps?" (Ian 'H' Watkins may have made his name in a pop band, but we will always think of him as Buttons).

The pantomime wasn't just a family tradition; I have vivid recollections of a touring



▲ The CUADC/Footlights pantomime, *Red Riding Hood* runs in the ADC from 27th November - 7th December (ILLUSTRATION BY ROSIE MUSGRAVE, FACEBOOK.COM/ROSIEMUSGRAVEARTIST)

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pantomime coming to my primary school annually, a particularly strong year being the time they put on Robin Hood. Our ordinary school hall was half-consumed by a large, black screen (delineating the back of the stage) while a young man in green lycra paraded about in front of it, occasionally shooting arrows over our heads, and taking on the evil Sheriff of Nottingham in a final duel so thrilling we squealed at every clash of the swords — cheering on Robin, naturally.

This, in essence, is what makes a good panto: a central conflict between a charming underdog hero and a sinister but powerful villain, culminating in a climactic battle, usually over the fate of the female love interest, in which good defeats evil and our hero gets the girl. It's a caricature, of course, but that's what allows pantomime to be relentlessly light-hearted and shamelessly sentimental. In the familiar arms of such a well-worn plot we feel cosy, and what better way to feel at this time of year?

More than that, though, pantomimes are the perfect vehicle for humour, with innuendo, puns and even topical digs abound. This comic excess is probably a result of the panto's origins in mime, the exaggerated actions now matched with a similarly playful language. Springing from the continental *commedia dell'arte* and English court masques, pantomime was initially a silent form of theatre, and retold stories from classic antiquity. Nowadays, pantomimes retell folk or fairy tales, and often assume their audience's familiarity, not least because they pay little attention to the plot of the original, in favour of exciting and

unlikely events.

Of course, we can expect a 'happily ever after' for the beloved stock characters: the hero, the love interest, the fairy godmother, and the dame. The latter was traditionally a man in drag, playing a matronly role as either excessively camp or incongruously butch; though modern pantos play with cross-gendering in other ways, the dame figure is such a stalwart of pantomime that she is rarely completely eschewed. The other iconic role is the pantomime horse (or equivalent), an animal part blatantly played by two humans. To fit all these types into one tale is a feat, so it isn't surprising that the plot takes many artistic liberties.

If this weren't confusing enough, many pantomimes, such as versions of Aladdin or Jack and the Beanstalk, include characters from other nursery rhymes or stories (such as Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves or 'Jack and Jill'). This mash-up of characters is something the CUADC/Footlights Panto, being student written and, therefore, often aiming for a more original plot, has previously done and, judging by the character list will be doing again this year. It's a smart way of keeping an old form new and, while it does assume a wide knowledge of British folklore, it can allow refreshing creativity in terms of character identity and expectations.

If you've never seen a panto, the CUADC/Footlights productions are usually a fair representation, making them a good place to start. You never know, you may have a revelation like ours over H from Steps. You may be talking about it for years to come.



Music

The power of 'international' music

Maria Calinescu's radio show *Mother-tongue Express* challenges our anglocentric tastes

I've been hosting a weekly term-time radio show on Cam FM for almost a year now. *Mother-tongue Express* plays international music of any genre, and discusses how our experience of music can be affected by not being able to understand the words. I present the influences and life stories of the artists featured, and explore how musicians around the world discover, celebrate, record, and interact with their personal musical heritages. When guests — usually friends who, like myself, have non-British heritage — come on the show, we play and talk about the songs they grew up listening to, and music's cross-cultural and political power.

Over the past year, I've begun to query what the term 'international' even means. My initial understanding was that it referred to music performed in languages other than English, or instrumental music produced by non-British, non-American artists — a geographical and linguistic definition — but recently I've realised that 'international music' is a political category that celebrates all music, regardless of borders or nations.

Every week I love putting together a playlist

for the show and researching the surprising and moving histories and artistic journeys behind each track. One of my favourite discoveries is the California-based record label Awesome Tapes From Africa, which re-issues out-of-print cassettes from African musicians and bands, such as Jess Sah Bi and Peter One's *Our Garden Needs Its Flowers*. This 1985 album of Côte d'Ivoire country ballads is resplendently joyful, its harmonies and message of peace still beautiful and transporting.

When I began the show, I thought that compiling a full hour of international music would be challenging, but even with my initial strict rule of not playing the same artist twice — with the aim of travelling the musical globe as thoroughly as possible — this turned out to be no problem. With the help of friends' and listeners' musical recommendations and through researching the historical influences and collaborators of artists I'd played before, I discovered a beautiful world of songs that span the ages. Music on the show ranges from Mongolian throat singing, the deadpan Eurodance lyrics of Berlin-based duo Easter and the luscious playful layered melodies of Amadou & Mariam, to smooth

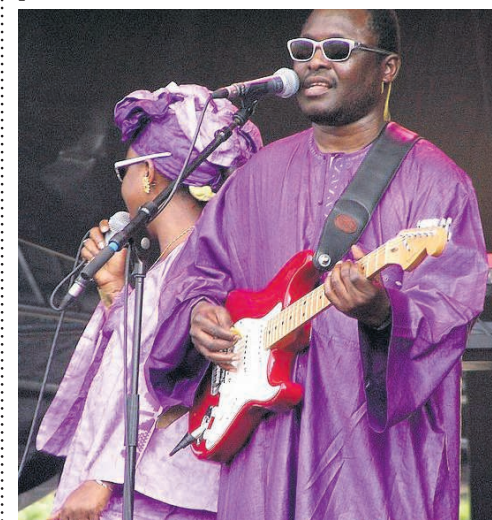
techno from Peggy Gou and soft Romanian folk from Valeriu Sterian.

As a second-generation Romanian immigrant, I'm always excited to learn about the way musicians explore their cultural history. Cuco, a 21-year-old artist from California with Mexican parents, is one of my favourite such artists. Inspired by Chicano rap, which emerged from Mexican communities but was also enjoyed by wider audiences, his music mixes mariachi trumpets and classic Latin bolero melodies with dreamy lo-fi guitar and wistful English and Spanish lyrics that lie somewhere between meme-y and heartfelt.

While his fan base is global, he is aware of being one of a handful of successful young Hispanic musicians in the industry and engages concertedly with Latino communities, for example by playing at Songs for Sanctuary, a concert series that raises money to pay legal fees for undocumented US immigrants. He talks about not having Mexican role models when growing up and his hope that it will become normal for Mexicans to be successful. The way he navigates the — at times disorienting — feeling of belonging to multiple communities helps me think about and value

my own connections to Romania.

Whilst compiling a relaxing and engaging hour of music is a big part of the *Mother-tongue Express*, I also believe that it is a political space that rebels against the anglocentric musical hegemony usually given airtime, and through the show I aim to change people's listening practices.



▲ Amadou & Mariam (WIKICOMMONS/JEROME)

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Film & TV



I'm still Looking For Alaska, since there isn't much to see here

The latest John Green novel to be transported to the screen is let down by a dated and forced script, writes **Lottie Reeder**



▲ The philosophy that carries the book beyond the realms of an enjoyable read is sporadic and forced (TWITTER/MADSCREEN)

“We think we are invincible because we are. We cannot be born and we cannot die. Like all energy we only change shapes, sizes and manifestations.”

Aged fourteen, in my battered paperback, I underlined this. The line, the novel and its author had a profound effect on me. I've thought about it a lot since. It's nearly six years since I read *Looking for Alaska* in 2014, when tumblr was flourishing, insta-poetry was in its early days, and the mainstream success of *The Fault in our Stars* led to the revival of this 2005 John Green novel.

In 2019, interest has shifted. We are now rigorously focused on self-improvement, mindfulness, egalitarian relationships; being healthy is fashionable and encouraged. It seems strange that in a time like this, *Looking for Alaska* has made its long-awaited move to the screen. The timing, that of both the release and the show itself, feels immediately off. The episodes are given dates, and '2005' is unmistakably referenced at every possible point.

Immediately, a sense of uncertainty abounds. Are we meant to view the show as a historical artefact of what it was like to live in 2005? The outfits wouldn't look out of place now. Alaska and Miles, the lead characters, wouldn't look remotely out of place on the Sidgwick site. A few minor changes here and there would make the show timeless, as its philosophical foundation intends it to be. Instead, its insistence on rooting it in a 2005 which looks (with the exception of payphones) a lot like today heightens the

feeling of it being dated.

One positive of this sensation is the soundtrack. I approached the series optimistically, as the first connection between Miles and Alaska played out to 'All these things that I've done', and the first prank is accompanied by Feel Good Inc. Miya Folick's cover of 'I will follow you into the dark', which creates the dream-like quality that precedes the whirlwind climax of the plot. The soundtrack is clearly thought through and carries the weaker moments of the show.

“The protagonists wouldn't look remotely out of place on the Sidgwick Site”

Dividing a book that could easily have been a film into an eight-part show allows for a great amount of creative freedom. This was successfully channelled into the expanded story of the Colonel (Denny Love) and his complicated relationship with his mother. To me, this was the strongest part of the series, the only storyline that truly evoked feeling towards the characters.

The rest of the time was filled with unnecessary pranks and excessive examination of Alaska's 'rattling'. While pranks are integral to the book, they are second to a complex exploration of mental health, trauma and the search

for purpose. In the show, they fill the majority of time that deviates from the original plot, time that could be used to develop the parts of the book that made it resonate so deeply. As the pranks play out and Alaska overreacts to being called a 'rat' by every character in the show, the power of the original novel is lost.

Kristine Froseth embodies the character of Alaska Young well, conveying the impulsive energy that she has in the book. She is let down by the fact that her trauma is overshadowed by Miles' infatuation with her. When living, she takes on an unhealthy Effy-from-Skins 'sad girl' vibe, despite having the capacity to have been rewritten as the powerful thinker that she is. She also deserved more room as a character to explore her trauma.

Generally, the philosophy that carries the book beyond the realms of an enjoyable read is forced. Meaningful lines from the book tumble out of the characters in the midst of superficial dialogue, feeling entirely out of place and cringe-worthy. John Green's characters are there, but his creative touch is lost to a script that fails to cater to a contemporary audience, or do justice to the original.

Since first reading the book, I have waited for the adaptation, seeing it abandoned countless times. There was something eventually settling in the fact that the most touching John Green book would remain untouched in its original format. Despite the delay, the final result has a rushed feeling. With the exception of a strong soundtrack, a few stand-out performances and strong cinematography, *Looking for Alaska* does not offer much in the way of a satisfying adaptation.

Vulture's Bridgemas picks

Ho ho ho! It's that season again inside the Cambridge bubble when we all suspend our collective disbelief, raise our mince pies and celebrate another mid-November. With this in mind, **Jake Boud** gives the rundown of the top Christmas comedy specials.

***The Office* (UK), 'Christmas Special' (BBC, 2003, 2 episodes)**

The Office has that particular brand of dryness that often polarises audiences, but it is undeniable that the show deserves its place in the British comedy canon. Given the number of shows it has influenced (including one particular pale imitation) watching *The Office* is as much educational as it is amusing. Plus, the Christmas special is peculiarly touching.

***Peep Show*, 'Seasonal Beatings' (Channel 4, 2010)**

Admit it: you've seen that scene. Responsible for the phrase 'that wasn't very Christmassy', this episode is authoritative, and even if you don't like *Peep Show*, it's worth watching for that scene. Because it is very, very funny.

***Knowing Me Knowing Yule* (BBC, 1995)**

Why eat turkey at Christmas when you can enjoy a partridge? This show isn't just a festive classic that makes every 'Best Christmas Specials' list - it's a nostalgic ode to one of the best comedy characters ever. In a lovely moment in TV history, Alan's cathartic punching of TV controller Tony Hayers just warms your heart.

***Blackadder's Christmas Carol* (BBC, 1988)**

This episode is on my annual schedule, and it gets better and better with every yearly viewing. If you haven't seen this and you're shrinking slightly at the idea of watching another *A Christmas Carol* adaptation: this one is the last one you will ever need. Rowan Atkinson plays Scrooge with lip-licking perfection; the evil delight with which he lambasts Tiny Tim and gives Baldrick 'a fist' for Christmas is a joy.

***The Worst Christmas of my Life* (BBC, 2006, 3 episodes)**

It's a little-known show, but it earns top place on this list by simple virtue of hilarity. Our protagonist Howard (Ben Miller) has to stay at the house of the in-laws (the incomparable Alison Steadman and Geoffrey Whitehead) over Christmas. In typical Howard fashion, everything goes wrong - including a urination disaster, a mulled wine disaster, and a freak castration disaster. Three episodes of golden character comedy.

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Violet

By VARSITY

Violet’s guide to Secret Santa

Secret Santa can be surprisingly stressful, so here’s a how-to guide by seasoned Secret Santa expert **Sofia Johanson**

Q

I’m struggling with Cambridge’s high-pressured environment and finding it toxic. What can I do?

A

If you feel the atmosphere is toxic, perhaps use one of the multitude of support services available to you, both at college and university level – contact your tutor or your JCR welfare officer(s), talk to your DoS about managing your workload, or make use of the university-wide support services. Try going to the welfare events hosted by many JCRs and university-wide societies. Sometimes, even just talking to a friend can be really helpful, as opening up a conversation about the high pressure environment can be cathartic. The number of high-achieving, hard-working students around you doesn’t help, but if you take a step back you might realise it’s not always as bad as it can feel.

Of course, mental health issues are something different and you should certainly reach out to the appropriate services if you feel your mental health is suffering at any given point. Contact your GP or college counsellor – they’ve helped countless people through similar positions and are likely to have great advice. And although there may still be a long way to go in making sure everyone has equal access to these services, a lot of change has occurred with a much greater emphasis on putting yourself and your health first. The Cambridge environment is always evolving – you could get involved via your JCR or CUSU if you think something really needs to change.

I hope Cambridge gets a little less toxic for you soon!



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

The pressure to get a good gift is always high, but for Secret Santa it’s somehow higher. So if you’re as overwhelmed as I am, then you’re in luck.

The In-Joke Gift

Remember that one time in the Cindies smoking area when they made a hilarious comment about fish? Perfect, go to the market and buy them a whole salmon. Or that running joke that came out of something unspeakable that happened in Freshers’ Week? I won’t go into details, but there’s a reason that I will be giving an obscene amount of socks to my Secret Santa.

The Chocolate Cop-Out

Even this impersonal, universally-appreciated present can be complicated: one girl in my giving group detests Galaxy and another swears that if anyone gives her Cadbury’s she’ll murder them in their sleep. Nonetheless, if you’ve basically never spoken to the person you’re buying for then it’s always a safe bet, as long as you go big. No-one cares if your budget app is weeping and Freddo prices have become extortionate, if you’re putting zero thought into your gift, you have to compensate in quantity.

The Generic Gift (a.k.a. when you don’t know them at all)

So you draw that one person who, out of everyone in the group, you’ve spoken to the least. Hurrah. But you’re still friends. Ish. These are early days. If literally the only thing you know about your person is what they study then resort to subject-related tatt. For example, if you’re unsure what to get that lawyer across the hall, why not a £4 novelty gavel? Can’t go wrong.

The Actually-Thoughtful Gift

Your immediate reaction to seeing that you’ve drawn the name of your closest friend was joy. But then it slowly dawns on you that the pressure is even higher here, as you’re meant to actually know this person relatively well. Prepare to spend the next week pouring over past conversations trying to work out what your supposed “best” friend might actually want.

So there you have it. Those are your options. I hope you all manage to find something vaguely acceptable, and ideally not-too-generic, for the special (or maybe even the not so special) people in your lives.

“
Slowly it
dawns on
you that
you’re
meant to
know this
person well
”

Merry Bridgemas, love Scrooge

Bridgemas isn’t really all it’s crack(er)ed up to be, says
Henry Weighill

On a scale of Santa to Scrooge, I’d say I feel about as Christmassy as the Grinch. In light of this, finding myself suddenly surrounded by tinsel, baubles and boot-leg versions of ‘All I Want for Christmas is You’ hasn’t been pleasant. When all I want to do is buy biscuits at 10.30pm on a Saturday night, the last thing I need is to be reminded of Jesus’ birth, a man more successful than I can ever hope to be.

But before Christmas there comes Bridgemas. Imagine your family festivities at home but with more crying (or possibly less crying, I don’t know how dramatic your yuletides normally are). Whether it’s workload-induced weeping or prompted by the fact that someone has managed to somehow simultaneously under- and overcook the turkey in their student oven, it’s certainly not my personal highlight of the year.

For starters, I hate Secret Santa. The thought of spending hours trawling through Paperchase only to find your present in the bin three days later brings

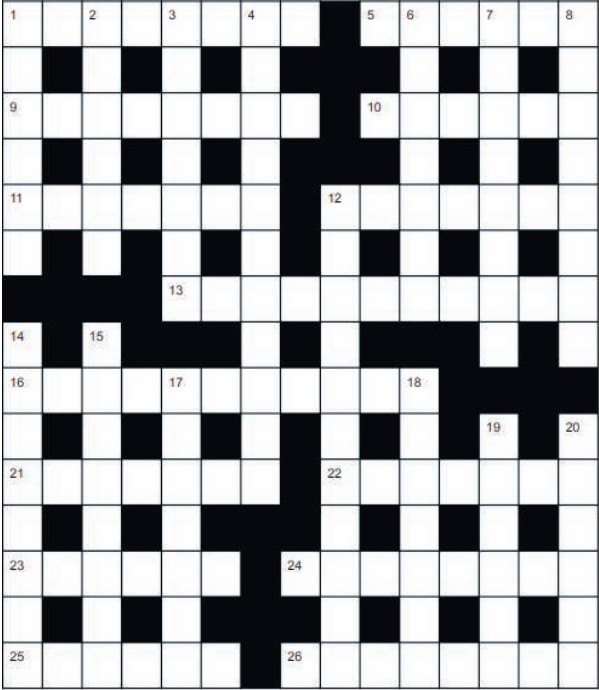
me out in hives. I would know, I’ve had them before. I barely know what I want most of the time and now I have to buy something for someone else? And then sit there, trying not to react as they open the gift up in front of me to see whether they are genuinely satisfied with the Cadbury selection box I bought them.

I have also bought my annual dose of vitamin D tablets which is always a sure sign that 25th December is just around the corner. Looking forward to the next few months of Seasonal Affective Disorder – a.k.a. SAD – that never fails to fit right in with all holiday cheer.

But I guess the real reason that I don’t care that much about Bridgemas is because I like to spend the festive season with my family, sat at home, complaining about who ate all the nice Quality Streets. When I think of Christmas I think of happily bickering with my mum about cleaning up wrapping paper or whether or not I am old enough to decide how many sprouts I have to consume before I get ice cream. Yet in our Cambridge version, none of these things happen, mainly because it would frankly be odd for my friends to tell me how many pars-nips to eat. So I’m sorry Bridgemas, you haven’t convinced me yet.

“
Imagine
your family
festivities at
home, but
with more
crying
”

Cryptic Crossword #6 by Pitt*



ACROSS

- 1 Lime sandwiches? One iron taste to begin with and for a while (8)
- 5 Quiet time in hut from the East - Mariana Trench, perhaps? (6)
- 9 Half bloody, pen carries grand hindrance (8)
- 10 Next, wrapped in articles, wise being (6)
- 11 Given a previous one (1,6)
- 12 Leave, making party arty (4,3)
- 13 Lovelessly, turned train to hilly college (7,4)
- 16 Unsteady moth? (5-6)
- 21 Penniless, eats pies, bananas, piece of cake (7)
- 22 Specimen Tripos appeal cut short (7)
- 23 Gold, say, running state (6)
- 24 Like, roughly 1000kg? Wow! (8)
- 25 Hold seaman (6)
- 26 Engineer parroted eagle, maybe? (8)

DOWN

- 1 Large setter supports scales (6)
- 2 Knocks down defects, by the sound of it (6)
- 3 Finish off date (4,3)
- 4 Splendid, fun enigmatic convertible - not posh (11)
- 6 Monarch briefly between edges of Ely’s river mouth (7)
- 7 Dry American city to support Trump initially - everything backfires (8)
- 8 Southern caff - ancient place to meet your end? (8)
- 12 One who cuts E with shards - I err, wrongly (11)
- 14 Athlete with bum exposed - quite rare (4,4)
- 15 That girl amongst good students is after, for example, something unwanted in an omelette (8)
- 17 Italian instruction - “Doctor, look after model again” (7)
- 18 I am in academic dress initially - suit (8)
- 19 Rush second shot (6)
- 20 Lead involved in quartet heroics (6)

Find the answers online at varsity.co.uk!

*Pitt is a pseudonym

As the year draws to a close, what happened in sport this Michaelmas?

Charlotte Lillywhite offers an overview of Cambridge's performance in sport this Michaelmas term

We can look forward to the final matches of the calendar year with hope, following a successful term of sport for Cambridge alongside improved performances by teams which started out weaker.

Football

Cambridge Women's 1sts have had a brilliant term, encountering only one 2-1 loss to Warwick yesterday. Highlights include a 7-0 victory against Oxford 2nds and beating Leicester 1sts 4-0.

The men's teams have faced more difficulty, however. The 1sts have incurred losses to Nottingham 1sts, Coventry 1sts, Oxford 1sts and Derby 1sts, with only one 2-0 victory against East Anglia 1sts. The 2nds team similarly have only one victory against East Anglia 2nds. Perhaps these defeats will spur the teams

“We can look forward to the final matches of the year”

on next week, with the 1sts team facing Derby 1sts, and the 2nds team playing Oxford 2nds.

Rugby Union

The performance of Cambridge's rugby 1st teams bodes well for the Varsity Match this December. The Women's 1sts have had a fairly smooth run this term, with promising victories against Swansea, Oxford, Sussex and Bristol, and only two losses out of seven games. The Men's 1sts have also had a successful term, with their six victories most recently including a 34-19 victory at Wednesday's Steele-Bodger match.

Netball

Women's 1sts have claimed victory in a series of netball matches this term, including wins against Birmingham 4ths and Loughborough 4ths, with only one loss at 52-46 to Warwick 1sts.

They may add to this success next week when they travel to Bedfordshire to play their 1sts team. The record of the 2nds team may also have changed

in time for their final match against Oxford 2nds, turning from their previous two losses to beat Lincoln 1sts 41-39 in their latest match.

Volleyball

With a shakier record so far this term, the tide may be turning for the Women's 1sts team following their latest 3-1 victory against Bristol 1sts after losing to them at the start of term. Their victory against Oxford 1sts earlier this term may also bode well for their upcoming match against them next year.

The Men's 1sts team seem to have picked up the pace after losing to both Staffordshire 1sts and Derby 1sts in their second and third games of the term, with recent victories against Coventry 1sts and Warwick 1sts to add to their promising start to the term.

Basketball

The Women's 1sts team are set to end the term with an unbeaten record next Wednesday when they play De Montfort 1sts, following victories including a

“Improved performances by teams which started out weaker”

59-29 win against Bedfordshire 1sts and 54-28 against Loughborough 3rds. The 2nds team will be seeking to turn a leaf on their string of losses when they play Cranfield 1sts on Wednesday.

The Men's 1sts teams have had more wavering success this term, with three losses and two victories claimed so far. They may level this on Wednesday however, in their match against Loughborough 2nds.

Lacrosse

With two recent victories against Baths 1sts (14-8) and Bristol 1sts (18-4), the Women's 1sts will be playing their final match of 2019 against Cardiff 1sts. The 2nds team also brought home victory in their most recent matches against UCL 1sts and Bristol 2nds - following three consecutive losses.

With even more success, the Men's 1sts finish the year with an unbeaten record, having claimed victory against Nottingham 4ths, De Montfort 1sts, Oxford 2nds, Warwick 2nds and Oxford Brookes 2nds.

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Michaelmas sport review We take a look back at the sporting highs and lows of the term **31**



Cambridge men's volleyball beat Warwick to end the year on a high

Joseph Powell
Sports Reporter

Cambridge Men's 1sts put on an assured display at the University Sports Centre on Wednesday evening, dispatching the visiting Warwick 1sts 3-1 in a match they never once looked like losing.

The home team started proceedings with a controlled set and spike combination which saw the ball hammered down onto a helpless Warwick front line. The visitors were able to regain a foothold however, with solid defence work at the net from Justas Tamulis making it 5-5 after 10 points.

Having had a fairly patchy season thus far, with 3-0 and 3-2 victories against Oxford Brookes and Coventry mirrored by 3-0 and 3-1 defeats to Staffordshire and Derby, it was important for the Light Blues to sign off the last game of the calendar year with a win. This desire was soon reflected as Cambridge began to make headway. Patient build-up play saw the hosts carve out a 5 point lead to take it to 17-12.

The match was a typically rambunctious affair from the off. Highlights

included renditions of 'Feliz Navidad' when any mistake gifted a point to the chanting team, as well as group performances of the Spider Man theme after a phase of acrobatic play.

Cambridge was made to rue imprecise play at the net in the next few phases, as chance after chance went wanting to bring the visitors level 22-22 in the set's final moments. Composure was regained in the last however, as a forceful spike, an ace and a downward body shot saw the Light Blues take the last three and the first set with it.

The hosts began proceedings again, with a period of lofty aerial play ensuing in which the teams were evenly matched. Tamulus was again an important asset at the net, showing strong arms to take the visitors to a 7-4 lead.

Cambridge was consistent elsewhere however, and was able to peg Warwick back every step of the way. With no team able to carve a significant lead the score climbed to 18-18 in a far more even set than the first. Cambridge was able to break at the last, as an athletic defensive performance from Lucas Boden combined with an offensive consistency

“It was important for the Light Blues to finish the year with a win”

drew several unforced errors from their opponents. The Light Blues finished in style with an ace from the back court to take the second set by a confident margin at 25-20.

Now facing the prospect of heading back to the West Midlands without even a set to their name, the Warwick coach demanded more communication and composure from her players at the interval.

This appeared to get its desired result as the visitors claimed the first few points of the set, but misfortune struck when a tangle at the net saw Warwick 8 go down. He would be unable to continue, and was soon stretched off court by his teammates to awaiting first aid providers.

After a lengthy, stoppage play resumed, with the teams well matched at 10-10. The set began to drift beyond Cambridge from here, however, as a series of unforced errors and relentless unreturned volleys from Warwick saw a five point lead established at 20-15. It didn't get any better for the Light Blues as several attempted spikes only met the net, before an ambitious attempt at

▲ Cambridge's performance bodes well for next term

(JOSEPH POWELL)

a kick return sealed the set at 25-18 to the visitors.

With the chance of a shut out now departed, the Light Blues were keen to ensure their lead didn't dissipate further. Labrunie lodged one such slam into dormant Warwick bodies to take it to 13-10.

The Light Blues, now bolstered by the vocal presence of the Women's 1sts who also later won their game against Bristol 3-1, steamed away to a 21-18 lead.

The visitors began to show a lack of composure, as a routine spike from their Number 6 ended in a mistimed jump which saw the ball trickle into the net. Match point was on the table at 24-21, and Light Blue Max Strammnitz had the last word in forcing a return off a Warwick player at the net and out for the victory.

Cambridge were able to sign off for the festive break in style, and can rest easy from a performance which places them in good stead for next term.

Perhaps fortunately, their next outing offers the away leg of this fixture, as they seek to take a double against Warwick on 15th January.