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# VARSITY

## Peter Hutchinson remains MML Emeritus Reader despite sexual harassment claims

Joe Cook  
Associate Editor

*Content Note: this article contains discussion of sexual harassment*

Dr Peter Hutchinson, a former Fellow of Trinity Hall, remains an Emeritus Reader of Modern German Studies despite widely publicised allegations of sexual harassment made against him.

Hutchinson, who was part of the MML Faculty from 1974 and was a Reader from 2002 to 2011, was conferred this title automatically when he reached retirement age in the 2011-12 academic year, as is stipulated by the University statutes.

Until Thursday morning, after being

contacted by Varsity, Hutchinson was listed on the MML Faculty website as an Emeritus Reader. Hutchinson said he was "very disappointed" that the University had removed him from the site and questioned the legitimacy of this action.

A spokesperson for the University did not comment on the removal of Hutchinson from the site but said that "Dr Hutchinson is no longer a member of the Faculty and plays no role within it."

The title of Emeritus Reader is a symbolic one "without statutory duties or powers". However, MML students and

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### ▲ Three waves of strikes in three years

Full story on page 8 (YINUO MENG)

## Campaigning begins for roles in new Student Union

Sophie Huskisson  
Senior News Editor

It's that time of the year again. Yesterday saw campaigning begin for the first year of the new 'Cambridge Student Union' (SU), which was previously two separate bodies: CUSU and the GU.

This year, there will be two co-presidents of the SU, one for undergraduate

ates and one for postgraduates. There are five candidates running for the undergraduate presidential role, the highest number in the last two years, with two candidates last year, and three in 2018. In contrast, two candidates are competing for the graduate presidential role, a decrease from three last year and the year before that.

In total, 17 students are competing for the eight full-time sabbatical officer

roles, which run for 54 weeks and are paid positions, as well as for the University Councillor, this election season. Voting opens this Monday, 2nd March, and will close at 5pm on Thursday, 5th March.

Alongside the two co-presidential roles, candidates will be competing for six other sabbatical officer roles, including separate undergraduate and postgraduate roles for Access, Education and

Participation.

Out of the six non-presidential sabbatical roles, five – both undergraduate and postgraduate Access, Education and Participation, BME officer, Welfare & Community Officer, Disabled Student's Officer – will be uncontested.

The role of Women's Officer is as popular as the undergraduate President, with five students competing for it.

There will also be a vote on the sab-

batical role of University Councillor. This position is not a full-time one and is being contested by two candidates this year.

Varsity spoke to the presidential candidates about what their campaigns are focused on.

Matt Alderton, a third year historian at Magdalene, is likely to be preferred

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## News

# Who's who in New-SU? Meet the 2020 Cambridge SU presidential candidates

► Continued from front page

by students who feel disassociated from CUSU, especially as a result of the collegiate system. Alderton's manifesto begins with a memorable alliterative, "Devolve and Depoliticise", which strongly asserts the central points of his campaign.

Alderton pledges to increase the powers of the J/MCRs "by changing the voting structure of Council, and reducing the pay of the SU executive." Alderton told *Varsity* that "[his] campaign focuses on reforming the ineffective and unrepresentative nature of the present SU by depoliticising it and devolving powers to the J/MCRs."

Also a third year historian, but this time at Robinson, Ben Margolis has made the biggest variety of pledges in his manifesto, from pursuing a fossil fuel- and arms-free university, to limiting rent increases to inflation level.

Margolis told *Varsity* that he is most focused on his education policy which "comes as an overall package to improve Cambridge education for all students—two vital aspects of that are pursuing a week 5 reading week to reduce workloads, and implementing a staff appointment safeguarding framework across colleges that puts the safety of students first."

Henry Wright, a third year computer-science student at Homerton, has a catchy and varied manifesto. Under the three pledges used as headings, "do more", "listen better", and "talk less",

“  
This is the  
first year  
of the new  
'Cambridge  
Student  
Union',  
which was  
previosuly  
two separate  
bodies: CUSU  
and the GU  
”

Wright promises to reform sexual harassment policies by working with JCRs. As well as on a college level, Wright pledges to work with ARU Students' Union to launch an anonymous portal to better understand incidents of all types of abuse that go on in and around Cambridge.

Wright's ingenious hashtag "#Swipe-Wright", emulating dating app Tinder's "swipe right" approval, takes centre stage of his manifesto. Wright pledges to create a new website to make navigating the SU clearer and to make it clear what services the SU provide. His concise and punchy manifesto is sure to echo his promises of clarity.

Second year HSPS student at Girton, Rusty Smith, told *Varsity*: "It's time for a change." Smith's campaign is focused on the "great opportunity to revitalise the Union", following the recent joining of the undergraduate and postgraduate unions. "The new SU has to be much more visible to students, and the best way to do that is to bring in an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit."

Smith's manifesto sets his proposed policies into three clear sections: Access, Communication, and Accountability. Under these subheadings, a clear vision to run a "large-scale re-brand and marketing campaign" prevails, with multiple pledges mentioning advertising, marketing, and visibility. If successful, Smith will take a year out from his studies to serve as president.

Perhaps the joker of the pack is first year historian, Amira Nandhla, who told *Varsity* that she "decided to run for a bet". Her manifesto, with no photos or details of past experience, is a sole list of 19 pledges, including in first place, "Abolish CUSU", and in second place, "Focus on student issues." Alongside these, Nandhla demands to "Nationalise Mainsbury's and Van of Life" and that "RAG blind date is a legally binding contract and pairs are obligated to get married."

Nandhla said that "essentially this entire campaign is a way of surveying the student body of Cambridge in order to see how engaged they actually are with CUSU and if they care at all." If successful in her campaign, Nandhla said she would likely continue with her degree at the same time as the full-time, paid presidential role, exhibiting her level of commitment to the role.

Alderton, Smith, and Wright all have previous presidential experience. Alderton, with the most, has served as Vice-President of Magdalene JCR and President of the University's History society. Wright has also served as Vice-President, on his JCR at Homerton. Smith has served as the Co-President of the University's Advertising and Marketing society.

Margolis and Smith have both served as faculty board representatives of the History faculty. Overall, Margolis taken the most innovative action over his time at Cambridge, being the core organiser for both the Robinson Living Wage and Cut the Rent campaigns.

Both of the candidates running for the postgraduate presidential role are PhD candidates. Aastha Dahal has just completed her Viva for her PhD in Crimi-



▲ Candidates for undergraduate president: (from left) Henry Wright, Matt Alderton, Ben Margolis, Amira Nandhla & Rusty Smith (COMPOSITE BY STEPHANIE STACEY)

nology at St Edmund's. In her manifesto, Dahal says "Student welfare is the core philosophy guiding my platform". Dahal is aiming to foster financial stability for graduate students, including mandatory coverage of visa fees and NHS surcharges.

Dahal's manifesto is clear and direct, with her policies all structurally connected to one another. Dahal told *Varsity* it's impossible to pick a single main policy, however her main focus is student mental health "especially as the university is faced with a mental health crisis among its graduate students." As well as focusing on graduate students, Dahal wants to ensure knowledge-sharing between the SU, J/MCRs and different student groups, such as those involved in Decolonisation, Demilitarisation, and Divestment campaigns.

Luisa A. Deragon Garcia is also competing for the graduate presidential role. Deragon is a fourth year PhD student in Biological Sciences at Girton. Deragon is also driven by mental health issues in her campaign. The most important policy for her is determining clear rights and responsibilities for students and supervisors.

Deragon's manifesto is emotive and passionate, referencing the personal issues she has had with supervisors. Given this, Deragon pledges to "help create a healthy work/social life balance... [and] Identifying and understanding current, prevailing issues graduate students face." She told *Varsity* that "I'm not saying I'll solve them, but I promise to fight for students' rights as hard as I did for my PhD."

Dahal, who is a lawyer by training, has a huge amount of experience, including two graduate degrees at Cambridge. At the University, Dahal was Vice-President of St Edmund's, as is now a Graduate Union employee. As



◀ Candidates for postgraduate president: Aastha Dahal (left) & Luisa Deragon (right) (COMPOSITE BY STEPHANIE STACEY)

well as this, Dahal headed an NGO with over 500 students representing all law schools in Nepal.

Deragon has experience working as the Admissions and Outreach Officer, and is currently part of the IT & Marketing team for Shaping Horizons – Summit & Action Programme, an initiative that gathered young leaders and world leaders to discuss issues related to science, policy and innovation. As well as this, Deragon mentions the personal experience she has had with university services, including the International Student Office, the Counselling Service, and the Disability Resource Centre, as she herself is dyslexic.

Cambridge-SU elections will continue using the Single Transferable Vote system, following that of CUSU elections previously.

Re-open Nominations (RON) will also be a candidate in all elections.

The full manifestos of each candidate were published yesterday morning on the Cambridge SU website.

A referendum to vote on merging the separate undergraduate and postgraduate unions together took place in Michaelmas 2019, which saw 2,272 votes in favour of the motion.

CUSU elections last year saw hot competition as all roles were contested, with the role of Disabled Students' Officer seeing competition for the first time since its creation.

Presidential candidates Edward Parker Humphreys and Shadab Ahmed channelled their soft power to charm potential voters - with Parker Humphreys rolling out a Mean Girls-themed version of 'Thank you, next' and Ahmed serenading the public with a rendition of Niall Horan's 'Slow Hands', titled 'Safe Hands' for the extra security oomph.

Last year's hustings saw intense contestation between the GU Presidential candidates on graduate students' sense of belonging with CUSU and the possibility of increasing the number of graduate students.

Competition for the role of Education Officer was one of the fiercest competition among the sabbatical roles, with candidates Howard Chae and Ali Hyde emphasising what sets them apart from each other during hustings, demonstrating their distinct approaches to the role.

Howard Chae is a member of the *Varsity* team but has been removed from all of *Varsity's* communication channels for the duration of the campaign.

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# Peter Hutchinson is still an MML Emeritus Reader, despite sexual harassment claims

► Continued from front page

Content Note: this article contains discussion of sexual harassment.

alumni have called for the Faculty to review the decision in light of the sexual harassment accusations against Hutchinson. When questioned on the message this sent to students, a spokesperson for the University said: "The Faculty and University take all issues related to sexual misconduct and harassment extremely seriously."

In 2015, Hutchinson stopped teaching at Trinity Hall following ten complaints from students accusing him of sexual harassment in relation to "inappropriate sexual and sexist comments". According to the BBC, one complainant said Hutchinson asked if they "ever had any love bites?" during a seminar and, while discussing a dominatrix in a book, asked a female student: "Does that turn you on?"

Hutchinson rejects the allegations of harassment and said comments he made were rhetorical questions asked "mainly during supervisions when we were

"I hope this decision is now subject to scrutiny"

discussing texts with a difficult sexual content." He says he "regularly used humour to lighten the situation" and used the questions to encourage students to "assess their personal response to the work... in order to assess how successful the author has been".

Varsity understands that around 13 days after the Master of Trinity Hall met Hutchinson to discuss these allegations a decision was made by the Business Committee of the University Council, the University's top decision making body, to change the statutes in relation to Emeritus Professors and Readers.

This decision, which was recorded in the Reporter, amended the statutes to make clear that Emeritus Professors and Readers are "without statutory duties or powers" and the title "is retained on an honorary basis, rather than a new title granted."

The University did not respond to a request for comment on whether the decision was made in relation to the complaints about Dr Hutchinson, who at that time was a Emeritus Reader.

It also recently emerged in an investi-

gation by Tortoise Media that Hutchinson wrote an erotic novel about students in the same year, set at a fictitious Oxford college and following a first year student named "Peter".

Hutchinson argues the book should not be taken too seriously and speaking to Tortoise said, "Does the novel speak to a particular view of undergraduate women which is troubling in a teacher? I suppose that some might say so, but this is fiction, not life... an author very rarely thinks the same way as his main character."

Previously, in 2005, Hutchinson faced trial after a former student accused him of sexual assault. After an initial mistrial, he was acquitted of all charges, an event which was marked by a party at Trinity Hall.

Ellie Pyemont, who made this complaint, said it was "disappointing to see that the MML faculty have not reviewed Peter Hutchinson's Emeritus Reader status" and that it was "at odds with #BreakingtheSilence on sexual misconduct."

"He's notched up a charge and ultimate acquittal for sexual assault, ten student complaints of sexual harassment, and self-published an erotic novel featuring undergraduates - what else do they need?" Hutchinson confirmed to Varsity that he still holds the position of Emeritus Reader and said he saw "no valid reason to resign this title."

"I resigned from Trinity Hall partly for reasons of health, partly to save the College from a difficult situation. In the light of recent events, that resignation achieved very little", he explained, referencing his resignation as Emeritus Fellow in November and the recent fall-out at Trinity Hall following the Tortoise investigation.

He also said he had not been on Sidgwick Site in several years and while he believed his Emeritus Readership gave him the right to access the MML Faculty and Library, he has "never exercised this right and [is] unlikely to do so."

"There are no specific benefits conveyed by the title. I have been to the occasional Christmas dinner organised by the Department of German (for which I had to pay, of course), but I was not invited last year." However, there have been calls for the MML faculty to remove Hutchinson's title.

Tiffany Page, Cambridge Sociology lecturer and co-founder of the 1752 Group, which lobbies to end sexual misconduct at universities, called on the the MML faculty "to address why Dr Hutchinson remains an Emeritus Reader, and his affiliation to the faculty."

"Either giving an individual emeritus status or allowing them to remain affiliated to a department sends a clear message to students, both current and future, and staff that his behaviour is acceptable, or, equally as problematic, that MML has not even considered its impact."

Emma Hart, who graduated from Trinity Hall in 1999, also called on the Faculty to take action: "I hope this decision is now subject to scrutiny and potential review." The University and the MML faculty have been contacted for comment.

"I see no valid reason to resign this title"



## Could you be the next Editor of Varsity?

Applications to be Varsity's Editor for Easter Term are now open. Please check out our website for further information on how to apply.

You will lead a team producing online content throughout the term after our 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020 print edition and be responsible for producing our new for 2020, Varsity Review & Yearbook - a circa 60 page A4 glossy magazine, which will replace our customary 'May Week' newspaper edition and be published on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

No previous experience at Varsity is required for the role. All students who are passionate about journalism, have creative direction for the new magazine, coupled with a high level of expertise with Adobe InDesign and an eye for layout and design are encouraged to apply.

Direct questions to the Varsoc President at president@varsity.co.uk, or the Editors at editor@varsity.co.uk.

The deadline for applications is midday, Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Interviews will take place on the morning of Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

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Varsity sums up Trinity Hall Controversy

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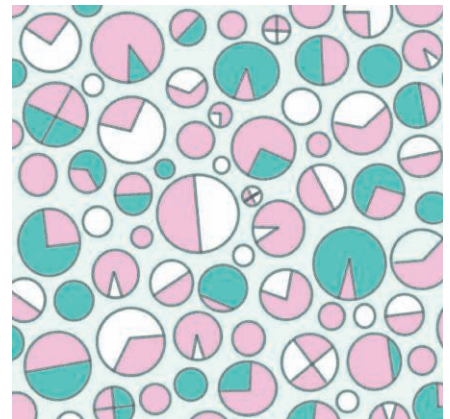
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## News

# Huawei accused of ‘reputation laundering’ after funding a Jesus College study

Beatriz Valero de Urquía  
News Correspondent

Huawei, a Chinese technology multinational, has been accused of “reputation laundering” after it was discovered that the company funded a Cambridge University College study.

The study, published two weeks ago, focuses on global governance reforms in communications and technology, with contributors from academia, politics, and business. Huawei is the only company with more than one contributor in the paper.

This white paper was a result of a conference held last October at Jesus College as part of its China-UK Global Issues Dialogue Centre, funded by a research grant given by Huawei. The conference was attended by representatives from technological firms including Huawei but also Google, Facebook, Alibaba, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the ITU,

and OECD.

The study claims that the grant “was accepted under an agreement between the parties to uphold the principle of academic freedom, and act to encourage and support open and free inquiry and dialogue in research collaborations.”

One of the propositions of the study used Huawei as a model: “For example, to stimulate competitors, all intellectual property associated with 5G has been made freely available by the CEO of Huawei, making this a fruitful time to be a European technology company working on these issues.”

An acknowledgement that various countries “have blocked Huawei, citing intelligence concerns” but stated that “there is currently no independent institution able to adjudicate whether these concerns are valid.” was included in the report.

However, Bob Seely, a Tory on the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, told *The Times* that the arrangement “looks like reputation laundering”. Moreover, Matthew Henderson,

of the Henry Jackson Society, commented that “It is deeply disturbing that Huawei has been able to buy itself a publication endorsed by Cambridge University”.

A Jesus College spokesperson told *Varsity*: “We work with a range of international partners to support research and innovation, maintaining robust academic freedom at all times.”

“Jesus College Cambridge and Huawei have a two-year research and innovation agreement, exploring global telecommunications and technology development. The China-UK Global Issues Dialogue Centre owns all research results; Huawei cannot veto the publication of views, research findings or conclusions.”

The China-UK Global Issues Dialogue Centre says on their website that it is “committed to promoting active dialogue between academics, policy makers and business people around major issues we face in the world today and tomorrow, and in which China has an increasingly

important interest”.

Last week, it was announced that the London School of Economics approved a three-year project in the development of 5G technology funded by Huawei. *OpenDemocracy* had access to internal documents that showed that the university was to receive £105,000 from the Chinese company to fund this research.

Labour MP Chris Bryant criticised this decision in a conversation with *openDemocracy*: “Chinese companies are deliberately seeking well-respected UK universities to launder their reputation”.

In November 2017, BT and Huawei announced a 5-year initiative with the aim of establishing a joint research and collaboration group at the University of Cambridge.

Professor Stephen Toope, Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cambridge, commented on this project saying: “By working with BT and Huawei we will be able to demonstrate that the insights delivered through our research have a broad impact.”

This group was going to be backed by up to £25 million in funding and contributions over the following five years and their research would focus on issues regarding “photonics, digital and access network infrastructure and media technologies alongside work aimed at enhancing the societal impact of communications technologies”.

Last year, Oxford University announced that it would suspend donations from Huawei, after accusations that China was using its ties to “subvert” academic institutions. Other universities such as Stanford University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) shortly made similar announcements.

Professor Anthony Glees, head of the Centre for Security and Intelligence Studies at the University of Buckingham, told *The Telegraph* that companies like Huawei’s of “buying reputations and influence” and stressed that donations needed to be “regulated and ethically sound”.

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# Cambridge's work on coronavirus vaccine advancing 'very quickly', says academic

**Victor Jack**  
Senior News Editor

A Cambridge postdoctoral scientist who is part of the University's efforts to develop a vaccine for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has said that work is "already well under way", but noted that a current lack of funding was hindering faster progress.

Rebecca Kingsley, affiliated to Cambridge's Infectious Diseases Interdisciplinary Research Centre, is part of Cambridge's team leading development of a vaccine. She argued that their work is currently focusing on "the design and pre-clinical phase of vaccine testing".

The news has come as the number of confirmed cases in the UK rose to 16 as of Thursday afternoon, while Italy – Europe's worst affected country – has seen case numbers rise well above 500. Public Health England (PHE) and Cambridge colleges have also stepped up their advice, recommending self-isolation to all those travelling from Iran, and certain areas in both Northern Italy and South Korea even if not displaying symptoms.

In the US, pharmaceutical company

Novavax has also begun testing a vaccine on animal models, while American biotechnology giant Gilead has started human trials for its antiviral drug, Remdesivir.

"Coronaviruses are known to be difficult to develop vaccines against," Kingsley told *Varsity*. She said that "previous experimental coronavirus vaccines have caused side effects in pre-clinical studies, making lung disease worse and were abandoned before human clinical trials began."

However, Kingsley explained that the team is "us[ing] innovative technologies to avoid the problem by selecting specific coronavirus proteins that will be incorporated in the vaccine and will trigger the human immune system to produce the important and focussed antibody responses that we need to protect us against the virus."

Kingsley added that the researchers, also including Head of University's Laboratory of Viral Zoonotics Professor Jonathan Heeney, have "a strong working relationship" with PHE. After initial testing in Cambridge, the vaccine will be sent for its final stage of pre-clinical testing at PHE.

But both Kingsley nor Heeney were

cautious to give estimates of exact timings for when human trials will begin, as their primary objective was focused first and foremost "on the safety of the vaccine".

According to Kingsley, the UK government has earmarked £20 million in funding for COVID-19 vaccine research.

However, recipients of the funds have not been announced. Kingsley stressed that only with more funding will the team be able to "continue progressing through the production of the vaccine to the required regulatory standards and then into the first human clinical trial."

"An increase in funding allows for an increase in resources and this would enable us to speed up the workflow in the lab", she said.

"We are already moving very quickly and with an increase in manpower we can move even faster."

Kingsley also emphasised that though "there is no doubt that we need to take this outbreak seriously and public health measures to prevent the spread of the disease are of utmost importance," there is "no sense in panicking."

## BIRDS-EYE VIEW

### TV could help birds live longer

According to a new study by the University, birds can learn which foods to avoid by watching videos of other birds do the same. After watching birds' reaction to good-tasting and bad-tasting food in marked packets, fewer Blue Tits and Great Tits chose to eat when presented with food from the bad-tasting packets. By watching others, birds can learn safely which prey are best to eat. The findings may help increase the survival rates of birds.

## BISCUIT BOOKMARK

### Crumbling biccie found in rare book

Librarians at the UL Special Collections found a half-eaten chocolate chip biscuit functioning as a bookmark in a rare Tudor volume of Augustine dating from the 16th century. The manuscript was given to the University by a grammar school in 1970. Restorers have removed the decaying biscuit but unfortunately it has left behind a greasy stain. It is thought that a grammar schoolboy may be the culprit, having accidentally dropped his snack in the book and forgotten about it.

## CAMBRIDGE CARBON CLEAR

### Emissions could reduce by 90%

Researchers from the University are working with the county council to identify the best ways for Cambridgeshire to reach the UK's recently adopted net zero emissions target by 2050. Their strategy for achieving this goal involves the full electrification of almost all vehicles, full decarbonisation of the nation grid and large-scale investment in public transport. A 90% reduction in Cambridgeshire's county-level emissions is possible by 2050 if their policies are taken up.

## FROG FATALITIES

### Cambridgeshire toads in peril

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Amphibian and Reptile Group is working to make life less hazardous for Cambridgeshire's toad population. Their creative initiatives include toad patrols, installing new toad signs and custom-made toad ladders placed in drains to prevent toads from getting stuck and drowning. Over the past 30 years, the population of common toads has declined by almost 70% across the UK with East Anglia being one of the most affected areas.



# LATES

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V I R T U A L



## News

# Trinity Hall investigation fallout continues

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*Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of sexual harassment and assault and disciplinary proceedings concerning these issues.*

Pressure has been mounting on Trinity Hall since last week's publication of an investigation by *Tortoise Media* into alleged mishandling of sexual assault complaints by senior members of college staff. In the latest development, an open letter has been published urging the

college to "restore faith in its policies and structures".

Signed by more than 210 current and former students of Trinity Hall, the letter is addressed to the College's Governing Body and says it is intended to "voice our concerns and demand reform in light of the alleged misconduct and mismanagement outlined in [the] *Tortoise Media* article."

"We have suffered a serious loss of trust in the senior management of the college, due to the institutional failings of procedure and mishandling of complaints," the signatories continue.

Within days of the *Tortoise* article's publica-

tion, CUSU demanded the Revd Canon Dr Jeremy Morris's resignation as Master of Trinity Hall and University Councillor. This was reiterated in an open letter by the CUSU Women's Campaign which called for all colleges to recognise that they "are inadequately equipped to handle cases of sexual misconduct" and to commit to a "centralised disciplinary procedure for cases of sexual misconduct" based on the findings and recommendations of the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints, and Appeals (OSCCA). It has been signed by more than 840 current and former students.

Last Friday, Trinity Hall announced that both Morris and Dr William O'Reilly had agreed to temporarily withdraw from their respective positions duties within the College, "pending [its] further consideration of recent events." O'Reilly was the Acting Senior Tutor at Trinity Hall who oversaw the disciplinary procedure at the centre of the *Tortoise* article and who has also been accused of sexual assault by a student.

This was followed by Morris's temporary withdrawal from his position on the University Council and the resignation of Vice Master and Acting Master Dr Nick Bamos on Tuesday. Bamos, who chaired the committee tasked with adjudicating upon the 2018 case covered by *Tortoise*, explained that he was "mindful of the current issues surrounding the College which will require careful leadership to resolve."

"Under the circumstances I do not feel that the best interests of the College will be served with me in the role," he continued.

Trinity Hall's Governing Body will meet in the week of 2nd March "to elect a new Vice Master to assume the duties of Acting Master in accordance with College Statutes and Ordinances, pending further investigation of events."

At the present moment, it is not clear how long Morris and O'Reilly will be stepping back from their various posts for. With regards to their respective college duties, Trinity Hall stated that "[t]his will be until the College, in accordance with its Ordinances and the time frames available to it, can consult further."

On Monday, students and staff at the History Faculty were notified by Faculty Chair Professor Alexandra Walsham that O'Reilly had "voluntarily stepped back from his Faculty teaching," and that the field-trips to Central Europe he runs as part of his Part II papers for undergraduate students had been cancelled.

The History Faculty will be meeting with student representatives next Monday to discuss an open letter signed by more than 300 current and former students, which demanded the suspension of O'Reilly from his teaching duties in the Faculty "pending further investigation of the allegations against him, in the interests of the safety of students and staff."

The letter criticises the Faculty Chair for asking students to "refrain from discussing the matter with the press or on social media" the details of the *Tortoise Media* article, and argued that the Faculty was "actively contributing to a broader culture of silence and fear, where both students and staff alike are discouraged from speaking out about sexual abuse and misconduct"

Commenting on Walsham's subsequent apology and announcement of a meeting with student representatives, undergraduate representative Owen Dowling told *Varsity* that he will be pushing for an open meeting "where students can express their concerns [...] and

ensure that all future responses to this situation are transparent, accountable, and put the welfare of students and staff first."

In an open letter to Morris which was published by *Varsity*, the parent of a student whose complaint of sexual assault was allegedly mishandled by Trinity Hall called on the Master to resign for his failure to "[make] the safeguarding of the young people under your care your most important priority." A separate statement by the three former students whose sexual assault cases were the subject of the *Tortoise Media* investigation demanded the replacement of the College's current leadership with "fellows without conflicts of interest" and an "external, independent, and transparent investigation" into both the "specific cases raised by the article and [...] the wider culture and management of the College."

Last Tuesday, Morris announced that Trinity Hall's Governing Body will review policies and procedures on governance, "to consider any improvements to the executive processes of the College" and "Disciplinary, Harassment, and other associated processes to [...] to give reassurance to students, staff and alumni that any specific claims or complaints we receive are thoroughly and carefully handled, in accordance with best practice."

The following evening, Trinity Hall announced at an open meeting between senior staff and students that it had set up a panel of "unconflicted Fellows" to investigate the issues raised in the *Tortoise Media* article and report its interim findings to the Governing Body in the first week of March. Students at the open meeting, however, expressed concerns about the membership of this panel, particularly the involvement of Junior Bursar Glen Sharp. The JCR committee later agreed in a meeting that Sharp should not "should not sit on [the] panel," as he was "too involved" in the College's past mishandling of the complaints," according to meeting minutes seen by *Varsity*.

The open letter from students published this week demands that the College takes "six essential steps" to restore this trust, each of which was discussed and approved at an open meeting attended by more than 80 students on Monday. These demands include an externally-led investigation into "both the events specified in the *Tortoise Media* article and historical cases of alleged sexual misconduct at the College."

The letter specifies that such an investigation "must be executed by a body independent of the University with expertise in sexual misconduct cases and procedures," and that Drs Morris and O'Reilly resign from their current positions within Trinity Hall and be replaced by "people completely unrelated to the matters raised in the *Tortoise Media* article" in the event that they are found by this proposed panel to have "mishandled their duties."

It also demands that "the findings of any external investigation [...] be made available to the Trinity Hall membership, to ensure full transparency and accountability," and that minuted discussions of "any matters related to these events" at meetings of the College's Governing Body be made publicly disclosable.

The letter also calls for Trinity Hall to reform its disciplinary policies and procedures for cases of alleged sexual misconduct and in the meantime, refer all cases to the OSCCA. It states that these reforms should follow the recommendations of the proposed independent investigators and the CUSU Women's Campaign, which recently released its own list of demands.



### Recap: The Tortoise Investigation

On 18th February *Tortoise Media* published a lengthy article detailing the disciplinary process which followed reports by multiple women of sexual assault by another student. The article outlines how the Acting Senior Tutor in charge of overseeing the process, Dr William O'Reilly, was said to have a 'close relationship' with the student against whom the complaints were made, 'D'. According to *Tortoise's* investigation 'D' had specifically requested to have Dr O'Reilly as his personal tutor in 2017 and both were part of the same secretive dining club.

To consider whether disciplinary action should be taken, a 'Junior Member's Committee' (JMC) was convened, made up of three academics and chaired by the college's Vice Master, Nick Bamos. During these proceedings, 'D' called O'Reilly as a witness. The Senior Tutor used his time in front of the JMC to accuse Dr Nicholas Guyatt, then an academic at Trinity Hall and the tutor supporting those making the complaints, of having unfairly guided and encouraged the women in formally reporting their assaults to the college.

The JMC ultimately concluded that it couldn't "on the balance of probabilities, conclude whether these acts happened", but suspended and initiated an investigation into Guyatt, who was exonerated in 2019 by an external lawyer called in to establish the facts. Despite this, Guyatt's pose at Trinity Hall was not renewed and he has since moved to Jesus College.

*Tortoise* also revealed that two months before the disciplinary proceedings on this case began, O'Reilly himself had been accused of sexual assault by another student at the college.

While O'Reilly was not made aware of the complaint against him until October 2018, at which point he voluntarily attended a police interview after which no further action was taken, Trinity Hall's master, the Revd Canon Dr Jeremy Morris had known about the allegation for a prior five months. During this time he allowed O'Reilly to remain in his post as Acting Senior Tutor, refraining from investigating the allegation or taking any 'preventative' action.

During this time, O'Reilly continued to oversee the disciplinary proceedings concerning the case against 'D'.

▲ Trinity Hall Flag (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

## RADLEY



### Mathematics – Graduate Assistant

September 2020

Radley College seeks to appoint a Mathematics Graduate Assistant to work at the school for the academic year 2020-21. The position is designed to give a recent graduate in Mathematics (or in a Maths related subject) the opportunity to gain experience of teaching Maths to 13-18 year olds. It is extremely likely that a full-time post will be available in September 2021.

You will teach a reduced workload – about 12-15 forty-minute periods per week. We will give the necessary training and also provide the opportunity for lesson observation. The person we hope to appoint will be an enthusiast for Mathematics, who is considering a career in teaching. Being a boarding school there is also plenty of opportunity for the willing candidate to involve themselves in the extra-curricular life of the College

In addition to a salary and an excellent working environment, the College will seek to provide accommodation and meals during term time are free. More information on the role can be found at <https://www.radley.org.uk/about-radley/employment/teaching-vacancies>.

Deadline for applications is 2 March 2020.

Radley College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

## RADLEY



### Economics – Graduate Assistant

September 2020

Radley College seeks to appoint an Economics Graduate Assistant to work at the school for the academic year 2020-21. The position is designed to give a recent graduate in Economics the opportunity to gain experience of teaching Economics to the Lower Sixth Form pupils. It is very possible that a full-time post will be available in September 2021.

You will teach a reduced workload – about 20 forty-minute periods per week. We will give the necessary training and also provide the opportunity for lesson observation. The person we hope to appoint will be an enthusiast for Economics, who is considering a career in teaching.

Being a full-time boarding school there is also plenty of opportunity for the willing candidate to involve themselves in the extra-curricular life of the College.

In addition to a salary and an excellent working environment, the College will seek to provide accommodation and meals during term time are free. More information on the role can be found at <https://www.radley.org.uk/about-radley/employment/teaching-vacancies>.

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# Postgraduate application fee criticised as ‘significant barrier’ to improving access

**Louis Mian**  
News Correspondent

The £65 application fee for postgraduate courses at the University has come under increasing criticism, with the Graduate Union President, Alessandro Ceccarelli, describing it as “a significant barrier to fair access to study at Cambridge”.

Raised from £50 in 2018, the fee has been seen as a potential deterrent to talented students applying to the University.

These concerns follow calls for Oxford University to abandon their postgraduate application charge which has been branded “elitist and arrogant” by an academic. A resolution to phase out the fee will come before Oxford’s governing body next month.

Many universities, such as Cardiff, Exeter, and York, do not levy an application fee, whilst others charge significantly lower rates. The University of Glasgow, for instance, makes postgraduate applicants pay £25 and this fee is not charged for every course.

Some universities, however, do have



◀The fee was raised from £50 to £65 in 2018 (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

higher application fees than Cambridge, with Oxford charging £75 and applications for certain courses at UCL costing as much as £150.

Through UCAS, an undergraduate application costs £20, or £25 for multiple applications up to a maximum of five.

A University Spokesperson told *Varsity*, “To deliver an effective service we need to levy an application fee, just as other universities do, and UCAS does for undergraduates.”

“We are mindful of the obstacle this may create for some applicants, and so have expanded our application fee waiver scheme.”

“We are committed to widening participation at postgraduate level and have appointed an officer to take forward this work,” they continued.

The application fee is waived for students who, within the last four years, have been in receipt of full state support for maintenance, as an undergraduate student.

Asylum seekers and those with refugee status also qualify for the waiver, as do applicants from countries included on the UN’s list of Least Developed Countries, the World Bank’s list of Low Income Countries, and the OECD’s list of countries in receipt of Overseas Development Aid.

If somebody applies for more than one course at the University, they are charged for each of their applications. The only exception to this is if they are applying to the Graduate School of Life Sciences, which enables three applications to be submitted with a single £65 fee.

The application fee is not waived under any other circumstance and is charged to students already at the University.

Speaking to *Varsity*, GU President Ceccarelli explained, “Over the last two years, the Graduate Union has helped to limit proposed rises in the application fee and has worked with the Graduate Admissions Office to expand the system of fee waivers.”

“There is still a lot of work to do,” he added.

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## News

# Back to the picket lines: Cambridge's 3 waves of strikes in 3 years

Sophie Huskisson, Jess Ma, Zac Ntim & Gaby Vides

The University and College Union (UCU), which represents around 110,000 staff working at universities across the UK, is currently well under way in its third wave of strikes over the past three academic years. *Varsity* has spoken to members of Cambridge UCU to trace staff demands from 2018 up until now, as well as changes in the dispute nationally.

### February – March 2018 strikes: The Pensions Dispute

Beginning in February 2018, the UCU undertook 14 days of escalating industrial action at 65 universities across the UK to challenge proposed plans by Universities UK (UUK) which would see 'defined benefit' pension schemes for university staff on incomes under £55,000 replaced by 'defined contribution' pension schemes.

This would have meant that instead of providing a guaranteed income upon retirement, the value of pensions would depend on returns from underlying investments. UCU cited analysis that defined contribution schemes could potentially leave a typical lecturer almost £10,000 a year worse off in retirement.

The UUK made a new proposal in March 2018, which included the introduction of a 'Joint Expert Panel' (JEP) to assess any future transition to 'defined contribution' pension funds. Professor Clément Mouhout, a mathematician at King's and then-member of Cambridge UCU's industrial action committee, told *Varsity* that between the Lent 2018 and the Michaelmas 2019 strikes, the JEP examined the valuation of the pension scheme and how to resolve the conflict. He said that UCU was "sad to report however that the two reports produced by this panel have been ignored by the employers and the managers of the pension fund."

### What is the Joint Expert Panel?

The Joint Expert Panel (JEP) comprises six members, three appointed by UUK and three from UCU. The chairperson is independent: Joanne Segers OBE, who took up the role in May 2018.

While the JEP deliberated, the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), one of the largest higher education pension schemes, announced that, as the legal deadline for addressing the pension fund's deficit had passed, it would raise both staff and employer contributions to maintain the scheme's benefits, in line with statutory procedure. The proposed raises would be introduced over a year; rising from the status quo staff contribution of 8% to 8.8% in April 2019 and 10.4% in October.

A review was released by the JEP in September 2018, criticising the mechanism of valuation recommending adjustment of the methodology and data used in the 2017 valuation of the USS scheme. UCU supported the recommendations of the Joint Expert Panel, like UUK, whereas USS which wouldn't accept the recommendations in full. UCU in June 2019 warned USS institutions of industrial action later in 2019 if they did not rule out benefit cuts or contribution increases, and outlined a timetable for balloting on



▲ Members of Cambridge UCU on the picket lines in November 2019 (ANDREW HYNES)

USS pensions for September 2019.

### November 2019: Strikes for pay equality, and pensions again

November 2019 saw eight days of UCU industrial action.

The key difference between this round of strikes and those in 2018 was the inclusion of action against unfair pay and inequality in addition to pensions.

In April 2018, following a round of negotiations in which UCU demanded pay uplifts for employees, the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA) proposed a 1.7% pay increase, raising this offer to 2% in May. This figure was not consistent with the rate of inflation, translating as a real terms wage cut for employees.

Since then, several ballots on strike action over unfair pay and pay inequality have failed to surpass the 50% turnout required by the Trade Union Act 2016. These strikes were further prompted after the chair of the Joint Negotiating Committee backed new proposals which would have increased members' personal contributions to their USS pensions. UCU had demanded a cap on staff contributions at 8% of salaries.

Another two ballots opened in September 2019; one demanding higher pay and equality, and the second rejecting an increase in pension contributions. In October, the results were announced, with national turnout reaching 53%. Cambridge saw a turnout of 57%, of which

80% voted in favour of strike action.

Cambridge UCU announced last week that, following the November strikes, the HR Committee at the University have agreed to consider the transfer of hourly paid teachers to employment contracts, along with a review of around 700 fixed-term contracts in roles of an ongoing nature, to identify who staff that could be transferred from fixed-term to open-ended roles.

Lorena Gazzotti, Cambridge UCU anti-casualisation officer, described this as "a huge win" in their campaign to support casualised staff at the University: "A year ago none of this would have been possible."

### February – March 2020: Largest education strikes in modern times

In the current wave of strikes, staff at 74 universities across the UK, nine more than in 2018, are undertaking 14 days of industrial action staggered across February and March. Although this marks the third large-scale round of industrial action at UK universities in the past three years, UCU have said that support from staff and students remains "solid".

This time, UCU is focusing on the sustainability of the USS, on rising costs for staff members, and on failures to make significant improvements on pay, equality, casualisation and workloads.

The current industrial action aims to pressure employers to work with UCU in campaigning for the USS to accept

the findings of the Joint Expert Panel. Member contributions to the scheme are set to rise even further to 11% in 2021 unless an alternative agreement can be reached in the 2020 valuation.

Susanne Hakenbeck, a Senior Lecturer in Historical Archaeology and member of Cambridge UCU, told *Varsity*: "Aside from more branches taking part this time, this new round of strikes is not fundamentally different from the strikes in Michaelmas 2019. The current mandate for industrial action is live from November to April (6 months). Unfortunately, negotiations did not lead to an offer that UCU could accept, so the union has decided to up the pressure with a new round of strike days."

### Cambridge UCU cites 'hurdle of communication'

Cambridge UCU have said that they face challenges of communication with the University establishment which other regional branches of UCU do not.

In January, Cambridge UCU (CUCU) made three specific demands to the University. First, for the University to officially recognise their union, second, to give a public statement calling on UUK and the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA) for a new pensions offer, and third, to hold an open meeting.

Recognising Cambridge UCU would mean that, as a union, it would have more input in the University's decision

making processes, and more direct involvement in negotiations.

Susanne Hakenbeck, a Senior Lecturer in Historical Archaeology and member of Cambridge UCU, told *Varsity*: "Since CUCU is not recognised by the University, we don't have a regular flow of communication with the University management, as is the case at other universities where UCU is recognised."

"This makes it difficult for us to make our voices heard. Thursday's Open Meeting with the Vice Chancellor shows that management is much more receptive to listen to students' concerns than to those of staff. We are very grateful to CUCU for inviting us along to this event."

### How has student support varied since 2018?

As with this round of strikes, and the enduring support of student campaigners, including Cambridge Defend Education and Cambridge Zero Carbon, the first wave saw support from some student groups and mounting pressure at the University level. There was a five-day occupation of Old Schools, with student occupiers leaving after Toope agreed to an open meeting, and that striking academics would not be expected to reschedule teaching time without pay.

In 2018, CUCU Council voted on whether to support a motion calling for reimbursement to students affected by missed contact hours. The issue split many supportive of the strike: some claimed that any calls for reimbursement reinforced the 'marketisation' of higher education while others, including several Cambridge UCU members, argued that calls for refunds would make the strike more disruptive, and therefore more effective. However, the motion was rejected.

Last week, a motion "to increase the effectiveness of strike action" was proposed by a current undergraduate SU presidential candidate, Henry Wright, which aimed to "get the University to listen in the only way they actually do which is to hurt them financially", and that strike refunds were a policy of anti-marketisation "since it shows a huge negative of their approach to pricing of education as fees".

He argued that the 2020 strikes was evidence that "the first round wasn't effective enough in getting senior uni management to change their mind."

It was rejected after opposition from attendees, including from Ben Margolis, also an undergraduate SU presidential candidate, who argued that fee refunds would feed "into the logic of marketisation", and he pointed out that "fee refunds were not necessary in 2018 for the university and UUK to make significant concessions in negotiations".

It is notable now that some JCRs have changed their tone since the first round of strikes in 2018, although they still maintain that they support staff in their decision to strike. For example, Christ's JCR said it "believes that it is fundamentally the individual choice of students whether to, and how to, support staff. No student should feel at all uncomfortable if they decide to cross a picket line – you are fully entitled to cross the line and nobody should intimidate you as a result."



# It's 'new-SU', but why is engagement with student politics so low?

**Oliver Rhodes and Sam Crawley**  
Associate Editor and News Correspondent

Campaigning for the 'new-SU' elections has just begun. For the first time on Monday, students will take to the polls to elect sabbatical officers to a new and combined Student Union, with two Co-Presidents to represent undergraduates and postgraduates included among the range of new roles.

Yet the incoming bombardment of campaign material on social media and flyering at Sidgwick belies a profound engagement problem with University-wide student politics. Only 3,009 students – 13.5% of the voting population of students – participated in the vote to merge the former CUSU and Graduate Union (GU) late last year. The National Union of Students (NUS) election, which sends 6 delegates to represent the University, achieved a turnout of only 7.1%.

Data gathered by *Varsity* shows that, on average, turnout to CUSU elections has stood at 18.7% over the past six years. Turnouts for GU elections are lower, averaging just 5.1% across both Presidential and Executive Committee elections over the past five years.

Lacklustre engagement in student politics, and the chronic sense of misrepresentation which it fosters among students, is nothing new. However Edward Parker-Humphreys, current President of CUSU, is hopeful that a combined Student Union will help simplify the message to voters. "We'll have more resources and be more able to spread the workload throughout the team, which will hopefully free up more time for sabbatical officers to be out in Cambridge engaging students," he says.

One problem with previous CUSU elections was that most postgraduates were simply unaware they could vote. A breakdown of turnout at last year's elections shows that undergraduates were five times more likely to vote than postgraduates. "Now that we're voting for one SU, we'll hopefully have more postgraduate voting", remarks Parker-Humphreys.

Students nonetheless prefer to keep their politics local. Data obtained from electoral archives for 16 Junior Combination Rooms (JCRs) shows an average participation rate of 39.4% for JCR committee elections over the past five years.\* Smaller colleges tend to have much higher participation rates than larger colleges. Peterhouse, which averages around 270 students, recorded a 64.8% turnout at the most recent election.

Among postgraduate MCRs, turnout is lower but, at an average of 23.2% over the past five years, still four times higher than for GU elections.

"It's always going to be harder at a collegiate university", says CUSU President, Edward Parker-Humphreys. "But it's worth knowing that we do a lot better than other collegiate universities." Oxford University's Student Union held leadership elections earlier this month in which just 12.9% of eligible students voted.

Institutional change, however, will do little to improve perceptions among the student body. Questions about represen-



▲ CUSU elections hustings in 2018 (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

tation and accountability remain hot on the agenda following a succession of high-profile media incidents involving CUSU.

Earlier this month controversy surrounded the NUS delegate elections after a winning candidate was refused a position on the delegation. Though the decision was repealed, the Elections Committee stated that the incident had "highlighted significant issues in relation to how the decisions made by the Elections Committee are communicated to the wider student body in a clear and transparent manner."

This followed media controversy over a recent motion to ban firearms at CUSU-related events which was significantly altered after vocal opposition from student societies.

Capitalising on these recent incidents, the Cambridge Union Society last week debated a motion entitled "This House Believes CUSU does not represent Students". Of the 85 who attended, 53 voted in favour of the motion, with 23 against.

Speaking to *Varsity* after the debate, a third-year undergraduate from St Catherine's College explains why he feels that CUSU does not represent students: "CUSU is overly politicized, it is detached from tangible, practical student issues."

*Varsity* also reached out to current and former JCR Presidents to hear what they thought about the issue. What emerged was a clear sense of alienation from the operations of CUSU.

"Most people in Downing are entirely ambivalent about CUSU. It doesn't come on their radar until CUSU does something that irritates them a little bit", says Cam O'Connor, outgoing president of Downing JCR. "My opinion is that CUSU should be almost entirely about providing services to, and lobbying for, students" and "turn away from inconsequential political issues", especially national politics.

Tim d'Aboville, the newly elected co-president of St John's JCR, describes the relationship between students and CUSU as "basically non-existent, besides the Freshers' Fair at the beginning of the year". He says that "we don't do much with CUSU as a JCR. I think the only thing we

do get from them are their condoms and their voting system."

Two colleges, Gonville & Caius and Corpus Christi, are currently disaffiliated from CUSU. Their JCRs are not represented at Council, though their colleges still pay an annual levy to CUSU after rule changes last year.

Corpus has held a referendum to re-affiliate every year since its departure, but in last year's vote, 67% of Corpus students opted to remain dis-affiliated. This represents a reduced majority from previous years, however the presence of the CUSU President at each year's debate on the issue is yet to persuade students.

"I know the work sabbatical officers do behind the scenes is excellent", says Dominic Bielby, Corpus' current JCR President, citing recent contributions to faculties and education boards. "But I feel they obscure their role, and at times misunderstand what their role should be, when they take on a partisan political voice".

College loyalties die hard, and the SU's ability to win over JCRs will be critical to its future success. A healthy turnout at Jesus College – alma mater of Parker-Humphreys – helped ensure his victory last year. However other colleges need more persuasion. Last year, Robinson voted in a referendum to stay in CUSU, but by a margin of just 51% to 49%.

That requires some input from JCRs themselves, whose representatives act as key intermediaries between students and University-wide organisations. One MPhil student at the Cambridge Union debate remarks that, while their college committee "may attend CUSU Council, they never tell us anything about that goes on".

But that also means the experiences of JCR Presidents can have a large impact on student perceptions. This includes how they relay their experiences at CUSU Council, where all affiliated colleges are entitled to send two representatives to propose and debate CUSU policy. Convincing students that CUSU Council motions

are debated fairly – and that sabbatical officers do not overstretch their influence – will be a key challenge for future sabb teams.

Students' perceptions about representation this year will also rest on the range of candidates that choose to stand this year. In the past, CUSU has struggled to ensure contested races. The 2017 elections saw five out of six sabb officers elected unopposed and one position attract no candidates at all.

Parker-Humphreys hopes "as many candidates as possible" will run this year, noting that last year's elections saw all positions contested for the first time in over a decade. "As we go forward and have more contested and better publicised elections, that turnout will creep up over time."

The perception of student union politics is a long-standing problem which is unlikely to change overnight. The job of this year's candidates, and the team of sabbatical officers who are elected, will be to convince students that 'new-SU' is not just the same old.

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# Features

## Finding time to read for pleasure in Cambridge

For as long as I can remember, I have always had a book on the go. And, since the age of seven, when I was first able to independently tackle a novel, reading has held a special place in my life. It is an activity that I associate with relaxation, whether pacing through chunks of text whilst lazing on a beach on holiday or reading a quick chapter before going to sleep at night. There is also something magically soothing about sinking into a good book whilst in the bath, allowing you to temporarily escape from the stress of the real world.

At fifteen, I started working in a local independent bookshop which, for me, was a haven. Unlike eBooks or audiobooks, I've always felt a strange sort of emotional attachment to physical books; the smell, the knowledge that a story is your possession, and the pleasure of browsing physical copies will always make me happy.

Unsurprisingly, my reading patterns changed drastically when I started university. Swamped with reading lists, I was quite overwhelmed by the realisation that the majority of my time was now to be spent with my head in a book, although not necessarily a book that I would personally pick from a shelf. That's not to say that I never enjoy academic material. I enjoy my course and, every now and again, have the experience of reading some seriously inspiring text. My routine, however, has buckled under the pressure of academia.

It's no secret that time is a precious thing in Cambridge; I was hardly expecting to spend hours indulging in the latest publications with a cup of tea in hand. Yet, I rarely manage to even squeeze in a chapter of a novel in the evenings, since I'll either be working (still), spending time with friends, or winding down with the aid of Netflix. The concepts of both time and reading for pleasure are somewhat ambivalent within the Cambridge bubble.

Humanities students are particularly affected by this issue. We have



(ILLUSTRATION BY JAKOB WERBROUCK FOR VARSITY)

no choice but to spend most of our days reading, and it is relentless. Not only does this take time, but it takes its toll on levels of motiva-

*Mind constantly in academic overdrive, **Helena Heaton** discusses her struggle to wind down and read for pleasure in Cambridge*

tion and concentration. I consider myself as having a pretty strong ability to focus on tasks for a long period of time, yet I regularly find myself having to return to the start of a page, having read it without absorbing a single word.

After a day spent working, head craned over my desk, it is very unlikely that I reach for another book in search of relaxation. As a result, the notion of reading for pleasure seriously dwindles. Not only does reading require concentration, but it is an independent activity.

At home, I valued the alone time that came with reading – at Cambridge, it can become rather isolating.

I've seen far too many Camfesses regarding loneliness than can be justified and feel that reading for pleasure arguably takes a role reversal when applied to uni life, as

“Instead of naturally sinking into a book, it can sometimes feel like the brain is in overdrive”

lack of social engagement is undoubtedly detrimental to mental and emotional health. After a reading day, everyone needs to step out of the library or their room and have a good old chat.

Not only has university changed my patterns of reading, but it has changed the way I read. Through my degree, I have had close reading and critical thinking instilled in my approach to literature, so much so that it is difficult to pick up a book lightly. This is positive because it increases the intellectual benefits of reading: being able to 'read between the lines' enables access to the interesting theoretical aspects of books and reveals the big questions that it takes into consideration, which could otherwise be overlooked.

On the other hand, being unable to break out of this habit has the danger of making pleasurable reading feel like work. Instead of naturally sinking into a book, it can sometimes feel like the brain is in overdrive, constantly trying to glean intellectual substance. I believe, though, that this is manageable, and that it only takes the right mindset for it to become a benefit.

The biggest influence that my life at Cambridge has had on my attitude to reading is that I now appreciate reading for pleasure so much more. Now halfway through my degree, I have come to accept that reading for pleasure is reserved for the holidays, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. This way, I can set aside those hefty classics for a time when I can truly immerse myself in the experience of storytelling. This summer, I am determined to tick *Les Misérables* off my list.





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## Features

# To all the girls I hated...

**Mattie O'Callaghan** writes an open letter to her peers from school, discussing the struggles she faced at an all-girls school

*Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of eating disorders, mental health and body image.*



**T**o all the girls I hated in school... You're incredible. I was so jealous of how much better you pretended to cope with being in an all-girls' grammar school - how you could perfect the smile, the make up and the outfit for it. I was so in awe that you and I became the target for my pain.

The all-girls system created such a competitively driven spirit that I lost my confidence, I disconnected from myself and others, I hid an eating disorder, I hated everything, and eventually, I left. Now that I have healed and reconnected, I understand, I emphasise, I apologize, and I love.

I write this to send love to the girls that were trying so hard to be liked, to eat less, to speak to all the boys, just to be 'cool'. I hated you because I was trying so hard as well, but only one of us could be better. I'm sorry I judged you so harshly - we were all struggling.

I send love to the girls who got drunk, hooked up with people they didn't like, and did things they didn't really want to do; the girls who hid any part of their actual desires and sexuality; the girls who couldn't say no, or who didn't know how to. It's always ok to say no, create boundaries and safe spaces - we will not judge you for whatever choices you make with your body.

I send so much love to those who judged and hated me too. If only we spoke and realised we didn't need salad diets to impress each other and realised how our suffering was shared. I'm so sorry that we had to compare ourselves and be competitive about everything. It

*“I send love to all of the women still suffering from the expectations and self-hatred they impose on themselves and each other”*

is devastating that we wanted connection, but ultimately that we drove each other so far away with our cliques and hurtful gossiping. I love you and wish we could have been friends instead of enemies.

I'm sorry to those I judged or de-ranked as 'less pretty' or 'less cool.' This wasn't true. I couldn't know my worth unless I compared it to being better than others. You guys were - and still are - amazing: for your strong sense of identity,

warming honesty and passion for whatever you loved.

I was jealous of your authenticity and connection. I thought ignoring you or being 'too cool' to be your

friend would make me feel better. It didn't. I love you for all your strength.

I am grateful to the girls who didn't hate me even when I hated myself; the girls who made coming to school worth it. They spoke to me about my diet-induced, infrequent periods, making

*“I hated you because I was trying so hard as well”*

▲ *“The all-girls system created such a competitively driven spirit...”*

(WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

everything feel less scary. I send love to the girls who have continued to support me and show me the incredible power and positivity of friendships.

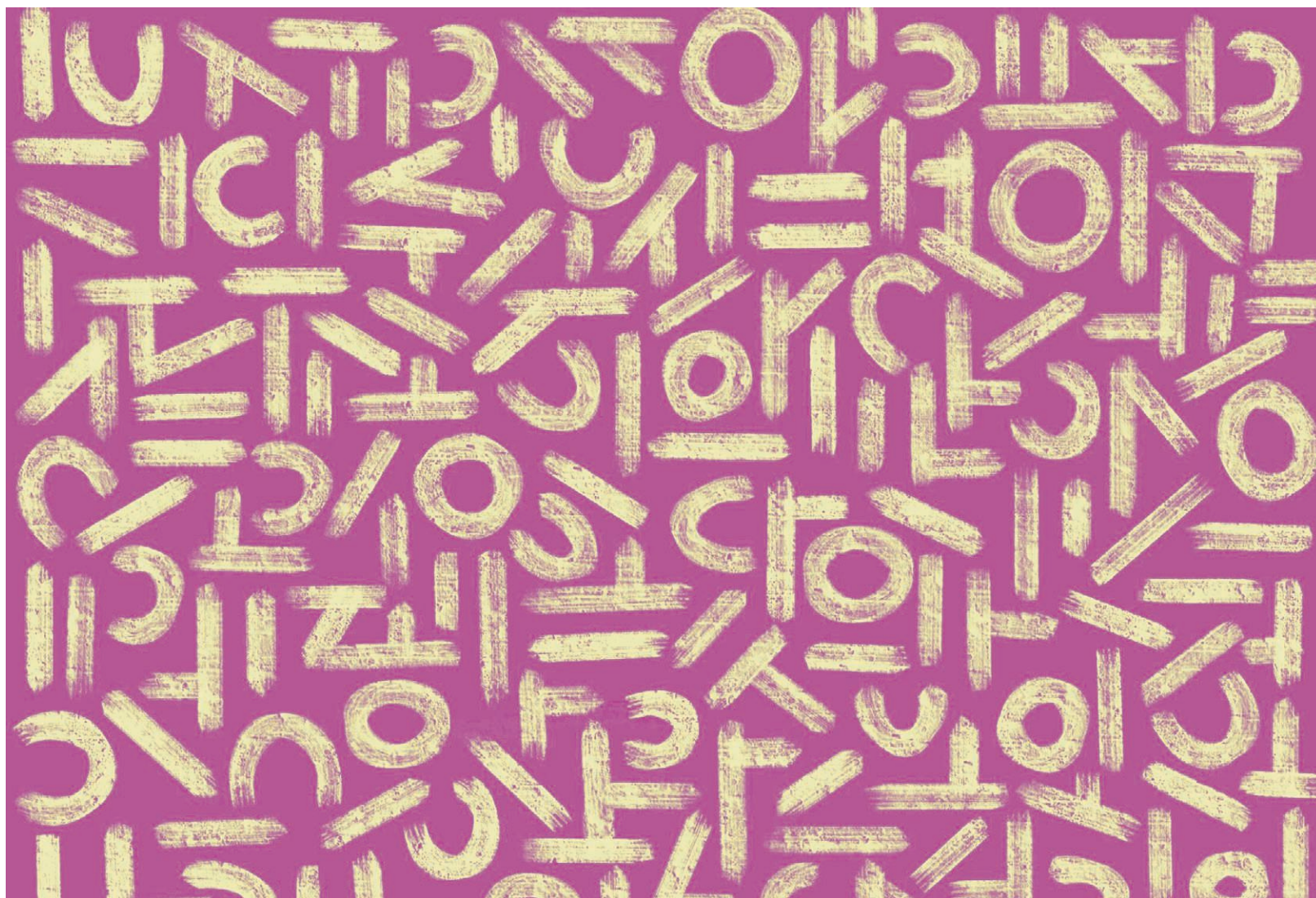
I send so much love to myself, a girl who hated her body and her mind. A girl who created a regime so strict and hid from all her feelings just so she could feel worthy. I send love to the girl who made me punish myself for eating pizza by doing four minute planks. I send love to the girl who didn't believe she could do anything except make herself smaller. I send love to the girl who traded her love of dance and performance for constant injury and muscle ache just so she could measure her worth in numbers.

I send love to all of the women still suffering from the expectations and self-hatred that they impose on themselves and each other. I send love to speaking out and apologising. I am so sorry for treating you so badly. I am sorry for treating myself badly.

I take accountability to care for myself, to be soft in the pain, and to realise what love is. If you feel the same, let me know. If you don't, I send you love too. Being at Girton - a college with such a female legacy - I've learnt that feminism is not about getting women to the top, getting them to compete, or to work harder than ever. It's about giving people of all genders the space to find their passions, to support each other in whatever that is and at whatever level, with empathy.



# Translating the untranslatable



**Cecily Fasham**

*writes about the trickiness of translation, how it relates to religion, and how she keeps falling in love with the untranslatable*

▲ 'Untranslatable words are a paradox in that sense' (ILLUSTRATION BY KATE TOWSEY FOR VARSITY)

There's a certain glamour about untranslatability. Words like *hygge*, *zeitgeist* or *flâneur* (to name a few) have become buzzwords denoting particular aesthetics. They are apparently 'untranslatable', expressing concepts so peculiar to their own culture that there is no equivalent in other languages, and so they have come into English untranslated (though probably horribly mispronounced).

The fascination is that these words give names to concepts that are somehow simultaneously alien or indescribable, and intensely familiar – who hasn't experienced *schadenfreude* (German: pleasure deriving from other people's misfortune) or seen *komorebi* (木漏れ日 – which, according to the internet, is the Japanese word for sunlight filtering through trees)? Often, untranslatable words also offer ideas which are beautiful or thoughtful: my personal favourite is the Swedish *smultronställe*, a 'wild-strawberry place', which is a special, secret place that you must only visit with someone you really love (according to the Eva Ibbotson Young Adult romance novel, *Magic Flutes*, which I obsessed over as a teenager, at least). Untranslatable words give us ways of naming things that we might never otherwise have been able to quite put our finger on or adequately describe.

"Moments like this are why we love our languages."

Untranslatable words are a paradox in that sense. On the one hand, they seem to show us how much we all experience the same things; we meet these words in other languages and think, 'oh, there's a word for this thing that I feel – it's not just me'. But, at the same time, they demonstrate the rifts between people caused by languages, the gaps between my English-language comprehension of the world and the understanding of someone who speaks a different language. Untranslatable words are moments when the impossibility of perfect, fluid translation crystallises. You cannot convey all the meaning.

In spite of its impossibility, I still see translation as a necessity. For me, as a Christian, this is theologically rooted:

language barriers are a result of a fallen world; languages are designed to separate us – to curb our arrogance in thinking we could set ourselves up against God, as we did when we built the tower of Babel (Genesis 11) and God introduced languages as a source of confusion amongst humanity.

But my God is also a God of translation. The first act of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was an act of translation: the disciples came out into the

streets and proclaimed the good news of Jesus, and everyone heard them speak in their own language. As a protestant, Biblical translation – the ability to encounter the Word of God in my own language – is fundamental to my faith. People died during the Reformation so that I can hear God speak my own language. Translation projects remain a form of missionary work: my church, Holy Trinity Cambridge, supports a member of the church who works in Tanzania to translate the Bible into local languages, so people there can meet God in their own language. I have to believe that through God – through the work of the Holy Spirit – trustworthy translation is possible. After all, as Jesus himself said (though referring to salvation rather than translation): 'with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'

"Untranslatable words are what make you fall inescapably in love with a language, and what keep you pursuing it."

On a secular level, being able to share astonishing concepts only found in other languages with monoglot readers who would never otherwise encounter them is the dream. Difficult as it is, it's what we do translation for.

Kate Briggs writes eloquently in *This Little Art*, her book on translation, about the frustration and fascination of untranslatable moments. One thread of the book is about the correspondence between the 20th century French novelist, André Gide,

and his English translator, Dorothy Bussy. In the letters, it's clear that Bussy is in love with Gide. Her direct-indirect expression of this is to write, 'Je vous aime, cela sonne mieux en français.' Briggs writes, 'I love you, it sounds better in French (would be the obvious – the only? – translation). But the vous. It is striking and important: what it is to make a declaration of love with a formal 'you'.'

It might take a whole book to express what here is expressed in such 'small compaction of language', she explains: 'I could write something for you on this moment, of this moment, but I'm not sure I'd call it a translation.' It's a moment that stops the translator in her tracks, but it's also part of why this exchange is so interesting, so electric. Moments like this are why we love our languages.

For me, the word is 'trover'. It's a word from medieval Insular French (the French spoken in Britain after the Norman conquest). According to the Anglo-Norman dictionary, it means 'to compose' or 'to invent' (usually in writing), but it also means to find, seek, meet with, come across, and is the origin of the Modern French 'trouver', to find. As I keep telling everyone, it's almost as if everything were already written, somewhere, somehow, and writing is somehow just finding some part of a thing that already exists.

I met this word, *trover*, while working on a set-text for translation in the Post-Conquest paper of the English tripos. For the exam, I'd have had to translate it as 'find' or

“  
Moments like this  
are why we love  
our languages  
”

'write', depending on context. But to do that felt like such a loss; I've been obsessing over it for so long that it's become a pinpoint of my thinking. I'm planning to do a third year dissertation on the play I met it in, in large part because of it.

My fascination with impossible, untranslatable words like this is what has kept me studying Insular French, despite it being an objectively hideous language. Think French, but someone's put it through a washing machine and tumble dryer on the wrong settings; it's peppered with k's and z's, all the syllables are pronounced, and you can speak it in whatever accent you like.

These things are like that. Untranslatable words are what make you fall inescapably in love with a language, and what keep you pursuing it. They're total nightmares for translators, but trying to translate them reveals the shadow-work at play in particular words. They show us what learning other languages is about, why we keep doing it, trying to translate, because you can't get the same intricacy of understanding if you never reach beyond the limits of your language.



## Features

## Pressing pause on Cambridge

**Matilda Head** thinks about the amazing memories made when we take a moment to pause Cambridge

**B**ack in November, Varsity published an article about how time moves differently in this strange Harry Potter town, and I couldn't agree more. As a first-year student, the most prominent thing during Michaelmas was just how fast the time went. Yet, at the same time, a few hours could feel like days.

Even now, looking back over Michaelmas, I'm struck by how much happened in Freshers', and the following first few weeks. Weekly trips to Wednesday Cindies all blur into one, alongside lectures and supervisions, because life is just so fast paced that it's quite literally unfathomable that we cram so much into each disorienting Thursday to Wednesday week.

What's even scarier is the fact that time seems to be going even faster this term. We have just passed the halfway point of the academic year, and yet it feels like I've achieved nothing. Of course, Cambridge's infamous eight-week terms don't help. Whether you're a NatSci with nine-to-five days, or a humanities student with seven books to

“Time outside of contact hours or essay writing is like gold dust”

read in two days, the work is intense, and crammed haphazardly into such a short period.

When you're living life essay deadline to essay deadline, time escapes you. But, with the lead up to university filled with promises of it being 'the best time in your life,' there's an increasingly intrusive nagging feeling that I need to slow down, and enjoy time outside of academia.

Unfortunately, I am a master procrastinator. Just earlier today, one of my flatmates had to actually confiscate my laptop and phone to force me to get on with my reading, as I had spent the whole day re-watching *The Good Place*... for the third time.

However, all this procrastination comes with an unwelcome by-product, whenever I'm not working, there's a constant nagging feeling that what I really *should* be doing is making progress on an essay, or finishing my supervision reading.

This raises the question, in such a high-pressured environment, is it ever possible to truly switch off from your



▲ 'A walk or cycle to King's Parade or Market Square can be a lovely reminder of what a beautiful place we study at' (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

## Public Consultation

You are invited to the third public consultation on the future of 104-112 Hills Road, Cambridge, following our previous two public consultations last year.



Thursday 12 March 2020, 4-7pm  
Saturday 14 March 2020, 10am-2pm

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

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact us at:

info@104-112hillsroad.co.uk - or -  
www.104-112hillsroad.co.uk

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 offering with cafés, restaurants and other community and leisure spaces – including the existing Flying Pig pub at its heart. Following consultation to date, the project team has been working to develop the designs in line with the feedback received, and we would like to invite the community to come and view the proposals ahead of submission later this year. The project team will be on hand to answer any questions.

PRODUCED BY THE PACE INVESTMENTS PROJECT TEAM FEBRUARY 2020

degree – to press the metaphorical pause button?

The rules on 'keeping term' are a reminder that, unlike peers at other universities, we can't just easily pop home for a weekend. On top of that, our distinct lack of a reading week means that the eight-week term is truly relentless, with the infamous Week Five Blues often acting as a kick when you're down.

Time outside of contact hours or essay writing is like gold dust, but it's during these breaks that the most entertaining things tend to happen – when the funniest memories are made through late night YouTube spirals with your flatmate, and drinking too much cheap wine at formals. These are the moments that need to be maximised to perpetuate the cheesy 'uni days are the best days of your life' mantra.

I have yet to meet anyone at Cambridge who would be willing to agree to a three-hour break, or a day off work. My friends and I have been saying, practically since Freshers', that we should go punting, but it's impossible to get everyone to concede to time away from work. However, it's pretty much a daily occurrence that a five-minute tea break turns into two hours, and suddenly it's dinner time, and you spend another hour at hall.

These are the moments when you can enjoy a pause. The loneliness of working away in your room or the library can all merge into one if you've had a work-heavy week, but friends will

“Is it ever possible to truly switch off from your degree - to press the metaphorical pause button?”

more than likely be in the exact same position.

Recently, my friends and I have become slightly addicted to trivia games and chamomile tea, which is such a nice way to de-stress. In the past ten days, we have spent a shameful number of hours sitting around the table in our gyp desperately trying to guess the link between various random answers in games of *Linkee*. Whilst this does sound very tame for student life, it's important that in such a fast-paced environment, you have something to do in the evenings – aside from essay writing or going clubbing.

Of course, you don't have to be with friends to press pause on the hustle and bustle of Cambridge life. Simply watching Netflix for a few hours can be both a good reward for doing however much work you've achieved that day, or just some time to take for yourself.

Getting out of your room can help to detach from a working mindset; a walk or cycle to King's Parade or Market Square can be a lovely reminder of what a beautiful place we study at, and a quick break from the academic side of uni.

The one thing I can be sure of at Cambridge is that time does pass in a different way here, and pressing pause on the academics is necessary: for self-care, and to create the memories that we'll (hopefully) fondly look back on when Wednesday Cindies and May Balls are a thing of the past.



# Visiting Extinction Rebellion's roadblock



▲ '...their methods reminded me of how things were done back home' (STEPHANIE STACEY)

It was on a whim that I visited Extinction Rebellion's (XR) roadblock on Saturday morning. Until that day, I had never paid much attention to Extinction Rebellion. None of my friends were involved with it; more to the point, their roadblock did not interfere with my daily commute to Sidgwick Site.

My interest was only piqued after I saw Trinity College's lawn, which was torn up earlier in the week by XR activists. The pristine-green grass, which had been cultivated by generations of gardeners, was scarred with holes and dug-up soil. Visitors shook their heads as they walked past it. I decided I had to find out more. How did British protesters stack up with my own experiences in Hong Kong?

Sauntering down Trumpington Street, I was greeted with a wall of barriers and traffic cones. Large banners displayed XR's slogans ('Climate Justice is Social Justice!'). Looking at their roadblock, I was reminded of Occupy Central, when thousands of pro-democracy protesters shut down Hong Kong's financial centre in 2014. A battalion of protesters had set up a vast enclosure of tents, which in turn was defended by barricades bristling with defences. Student-volunteers set up stations dedicated for studying and revision; they also went around the site, picking up rubbish and organising

“Looking at their roadblock, I was reminded of Occupy Central...”

recycling.

By contrast, XR's roadblock was manned, at most, by two-dozen people. It was much smaller than Occupy Central, and much less impressive. I told myself that XR should be judged by the merits of their cause, and not by the number of supporters they commanded.

I also had to remind myself to slip out of old habits of thinking. The 2019 Hong Kong protests had instilled in me a sense of paranoia: the threat of violence had always loomed. This was why I could not help but cast a critical eye over XR's blockade. Their roadblock, built around a roundabout, was vulnerable to attack from three directions. The flimsy barriers would be no good against a police charge. None of the volunteers seemed very alert to potential threats.

I had to remind myself that I was in Cambridge, not Hong Kong. There were no water cannons, no rubber bullets, and no tear gas. Unsuspecting protesters will not be ambushed by the riot police. If anything, the two constables hovering around the roadblock seemed rather bored. The protesters did not seem any livelier.

Still, XR's activists were quick to answer my questions. They explained to me that their movement was highly decentralised, communicating over social media and the Internet. Smaller 'affinity

groups' took charge in local protests. I felt like I was on familiar territory – their methods reminded me of how things were done back home.

They also told me that over a hundred people, all from different parts of the country, had travelled to Cambridge to help them set up their roadblock. 'Where have they all gone?', I asked, thinking about my earlier concerns. As it turns out, most of the activists went home after helping out. Numbers then dwindled from one 100 to 50; from 50, to 30. By the time I visited, only a few remnants of the original occupying force were left. Most of the tents were empty, and clusters of mosquitoes buzzed around the site.

XR were right when they limited their roadblock to one week – they would not have lasted much longer than that.

Despite their fading momentum, many of the activists were perked up when they found out I was from Hong Kong. They wanted to make common cause. 'Us lot, we protesters, we need to stick together, eh?'

There certainly were many similarities. For one, both protest movements have had to deal with fair-weather friends. Apparently, many angry Cambridgeshire residents withdrew their support from XR after having their commute delayed. This was exactly what happened in Hong Kong ('I used

“Despite our differences, I could not help but see myself in the activists I was talking to”

'How did British protestors stack up with my own experiences in Hong Kong?' asks **Issac Fung**, as he considers the recent Extinction Rebellion roadblock

to support democracy, but now your protests are making me late for work!'). Both movements have also had to deal with the bickering and splintering of internal factions.

The principle of unity, or 'no-splitting', was something which all protest movements must struggle to sustain. Despite our differences, I could not help but see myself in the activists I was talking to. Protestors around the world, regardless of what they believe in, are united by the solidarity of opposition.

It was this solidarity of opposition which stopped me from leaping to conclusions. At a recent Cambridge University Conservative Association (CUCA) meeting, I heard the historian Andrew Roberts describe XR as 'smug' and 'self-satisfied'. If I had never protested in Hong Kong, I would have agreed with him on the spot. But the activists I talked to at the roadblock were very reasonable. They seemed vulnerable, sympathetic – human.

I do not think I will come to agree with the aims of Extinction Rebellion any time soon. But I've learnt that I shared much more in common with them than I previously thought. My morning at the roadblock was a first step in finding that elusive common ground with the 'opposition'. Not all political disagreements need to be fought out on the slopes of a barricade.



# Opinion

## All we are asking for is to feel safe

**Chloe Newbold** argues that Cambridge has continually failed its students who are victims of sexual violence, and that the University needs to do more to centre student welfare at the heart of such cases



▲ The University has been criticised by students and alumni for its handling of allegations of sexual violence

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Content Note: This article contains discussion of sexual violence

This has been the year that I stopped feeling safe on campus. It's hard to explain the all-pervading discomfort I experience as a victim of sexual misconduct in my everyday life at this University: sitting in lecture halls that have been open to misogynistic rape apologists such as Justice for Men and Boys (otherwise known as 'J4MB', who have shared posts including '13 reasons why women lie about being raped' and a video 'The glorious rise of men who won't date feminists' on their website); borrowing books from my departmental library after receiving an email calling for silence on the accusation of sexual assault against a faculty member; opening my reading lists and lecture notes without any prior knowledge of the potentially triggering content I could find inside.

Over the past five years, there have been some positive steps taken within

Cambridge, such as the introduction of a Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor at UCS, Amy O'Leary, and an 'Investigating Officer' role in University complaints proceedings with experience of the complexities of sexual misconduct. However, The University of Cambridge – and many of its colleges – have proven on numerous occasions that they do not prioritise the welfare of victims. Throughout my three years at Cambridge, I have witnessed in the student press a continuous cycle of discontent at the failings of the University to adequately investigate and act on reports of sexual misconduct. The recent *Tortoise* investigation into the handling of allegations at Trinity Hall isn't an isolated event, but is part of a longer narrative that has seen the institutionally embedded cynicism and suspicion with which victims are treated.

An email received by myself and other students within the History faculty last week asked students to respect the rights of the accused Dr O'Reilly to his privacy. The only concern for victims was found in a few links

to support websites added to the bottom of the email – a mere afterthought. This email at once communicated a lack of attention to student welfare and sent a wider message that we will not be taken seriously when making the difficult decision to report instances of inappropriate behaviour.

Despite years of campaigning by student activists, and in particular by the CUSU Women's Campaign, Cambridge is still unwilling to commit to *truly* breaking the silence. The University was willing to accept praise for the decision of Regent House to reform the Disciplinary Procedure standards of proof to "the balance of probabilities" last July, forgetting their years of inaction on calls for change. While this may have been a hard-fought victory for student campaigners, within the wider context of higher education, this was Cambridge taking a step which had been made years ago by most other British higher education institutions.

Cambridge has consistently dragged its feet when it comes to supporting the voices of those brave enough to report instances of

sexual misconduct. This made it shocking – but hardly surprising – when it emerged months later that, due to reforms in the definition of 'harassment' planned to take place in October, that any sexual assault prior to this date would not be subject to investigation. Again, Cambridge seemed unwilling to listen.

It is difficult to explain the personal trauma associated with an act of sexual assault, a feeling that you do not belong in your body, a permanent sense of threat that can be difficult to shake. It's a feeling that can return frequently, even in the absence of any immediate danger or physical threat. This feeling returned for many of us last year when we discovered that the University was allowing an event to be held by a so-called men's rights group entitled 'Justice for Men and Boys' on University property. Failing to listen to us wasn't enough, they were now providing a platform to a group that openly expressed contempt and ridicule toward women and non-binary people that had suffered sexual assault.

Nothing was more symbolic of the University's attitude than standing outside with my fellow protestors while this group of vile rape apologists were sat warmly inside Mill Lane lecture halls. In that moment, campus became for me what I am sure it had become for many other victims: a place where I no longer felt safe.

But this sense of insecurity stems not merely from the failure of our institutions, but it is embedded within a wider culture that enables sexual violations. Coming to University having already experienced the dark side of sexual violence, I was shocked to find that 'consent' was an issue squeezed into a 60 minute session in Fresher's Week. The only other times that I would hear this word uttered would be in the student press or in online support groups following from incidents of sexual assault. Nobody seemed to be aware of how the complaints procedures worked within each college, reflecting a culture of passivity that acted as if sexual misconduct was not an issue within our University.

Refusal to acknowledge these issues is also predominant in our lecture content. At points during my second year of study, the everyday act of opening a book or attending a lecture became an uncomfortable – and often traumatic – experience. Most departmental reading lists and lectures fail to include content warnings for potentially triggering themes, meaning that, as students, we may be forced to listen to content related to sexual violence and misogyny that can bring up past memories.

In an environment so heavily focused on academic excellence, the entrance of this insecurity into my working life became almost unmanageable. Instead of providing us with adequate notice, we are expected to sit in silence in lecture halls and libraries, surrounded by people, and attempt to hold back our tears.

No voice can speak for the numerous students that have been negatively impacted by recent events on campus; we all process trauma, often in extremely complex and personal ways. But one thing that we can all agree on is

that this University must take fundamental and radical steps to regain the trust of its students and many staff members.

Senior members of the University, college's and department that have treated victims with cynicism and disregard owe an apology to those that have taken the brave step to speak up about their experiences. Whilst the 'Breaking the Silence' campaign signifies a zero tolerance, it should be reiterated clearly and publicly that there is zero tolerance for sexual misdemeanours on campus, no matter the identity of the victim or the perpetrator, and the actions of the University must match this. Platforms must not be offered to groups that actively disregard the rights of victims. Consent education must be an ongoing process that is built into the very foundation of our academic institutions, incorporated in a fashion that enables honest discussions while protecting the welfare of students.

All we are asking for is to feel safe.

“  
Cambridge has consistently dragged its feet when it comes to supporting the voices of those brave enough to report instances of sexual misconduct  
”



# Clare's refusal to fly the LGBT+ flag speaks nothing but intolerance

The decision taken by some colleges to not fly the LGBT+ pride flag is a powerful statement of intolerance

Jack Durand

Throughout Cambridge, Pride flags are flying in celebration of LGBT+ History Month, including at Old Schools for the first time this year. However, not all of Cambridge's colleges have done the same. An email was released over the weekend by the Union of Clare Students (Clare College's JCR), reporting the logic as set out to them by the Senior Tutor for refusing to display the flag.

The first explanation was that the Porters dislike using the flagpole. Seriously. Fortunately, this argument appears to have broken down in the meeting itself after students offered to raise the flag themselves. The distaste of college personnel for flagpoles is an absurd attempt to rationalise their failure to stand in solidarity not only with the LGBT+ community, but also with the overwhelming majority of University students, colleges and other bodies.

Moving on from pole-hating Porters, the issue of diversity was raised: that everyone flying the flag fails to reflect the pride movement and LGBT+ History Month as a celebration of the individual expression of one's sexuality and gender identity. True, these are core tenets of the movement, but they provide no cause for refusing to raise the flag.

Oddly, the college is employing here the same logic upon which the design of the rainbow flag was based: across a diverse spectrum, be it of colour, gender or sexuality, members of the LGBT+ community stand together. The flag's designer, Gilbert Baker, articulated this very point in his memoirs, saying of the 'battle for equal rights' that 'this was our new revolution: a tribal, individualistic and collective vision. It deserved a new symbol.' Being an individual is not the same as being alone, and it is this collective ethos, not any diversity of expression, that colleges are undermining in refusing to fly the flag.

Aside from any theoretical notion of what the Pride flag truly represents, it's somewhat unclear how the college's suggested compromise of rainbow bunting was more materially diverse than a rainbow flag. Sure, none of the other colleges, to my knowledge, have erected bunting for the month, but for good reason. The flag is not only a celebration of individuality, it is also designed to be highly visible. This was Baker's vision: 'Our job as gay people was to come out, to be visible, to live in the truth, as I say, to get out of the lie. A flag really fit that mission, because that's a way of proclaiming your visibility or saying, "This is who I am!"'

Clare's position seems to misunderstand what the flag actually means: a flag flying from the top of every college exclaims that Cambridge is a place where diversity and individuality is celebrated by all, or at least it should be.

Maybe it is the visibility of the flag as an expression of support and tolerance that is so troubling to the college's senior staff? The crux of their argument was that the college doesn't object to the Pride flag in particular, but flags in general. Clare, like many other colleges, typically flies only the college flag and, when required, the Union flag. In practical terms, as the college suggested by way of example, this likely amounts to little more than the routine rejection of national flags for patron saints' days. This would be much more convincing if the ethos of the pride flag weren't so radically different from that of, say, St George's Cross.

The rainbow flag opposes exclusion rather than fostering it. It seeks to represent a global community based on acceptance and celebration of one another's differences. National flags represent communities, yes, but they do so in oppositional terms, placing a nationalist dividing-line between 'us' and 'them' where the Pride flag does not. It's curious

that the college has fewer concerns over the Union flag and its links to Britain's imperial past than over a symbol of unqualified inclusivity.

This dubious logic seems to speak less to an unwillingness to celebrate the LGBT+ community and its history than to a reluctance to make a visible and official political statement of support. Concerns over the official nature of flying a Pride flag from a college's main flagpole have arisen in the past. In 2018, St John's raised the flag over their boathouse and Queens' draped it over the Mathematical Bridge, while Trinity and Trinity Hall displayed it in their JCRs. Clare opted to use their back gate. Similarly, this year, many will have noted Trinity's use of a temporary short-pole on their front lawn, something the Clare Student Union suggested as a compromise, but to no avail.

If these colleges are anxious not to take a political stance, they have failed miserably. With nearly all colleges, many departments and an increasing number of University sites raising the pride flag, those that refuse to do so are making an overt statement of intolerance. They are deviating from a norm backed by enormous student support, and must justify their position. As we have seen, their reasoning is, to be generous, weak.

"If these colleges are anxious not to take a political stance, they have failed miserably"

## The Varsity Trust

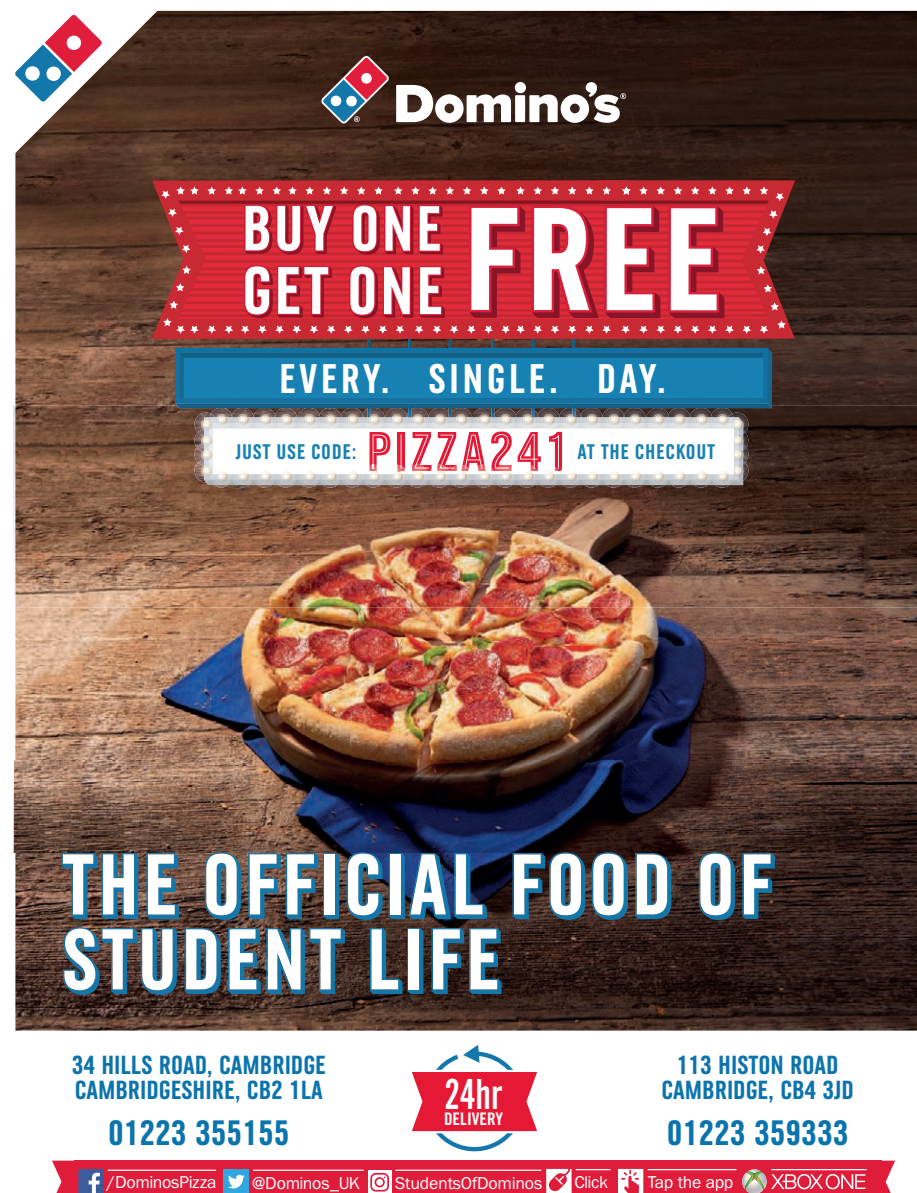
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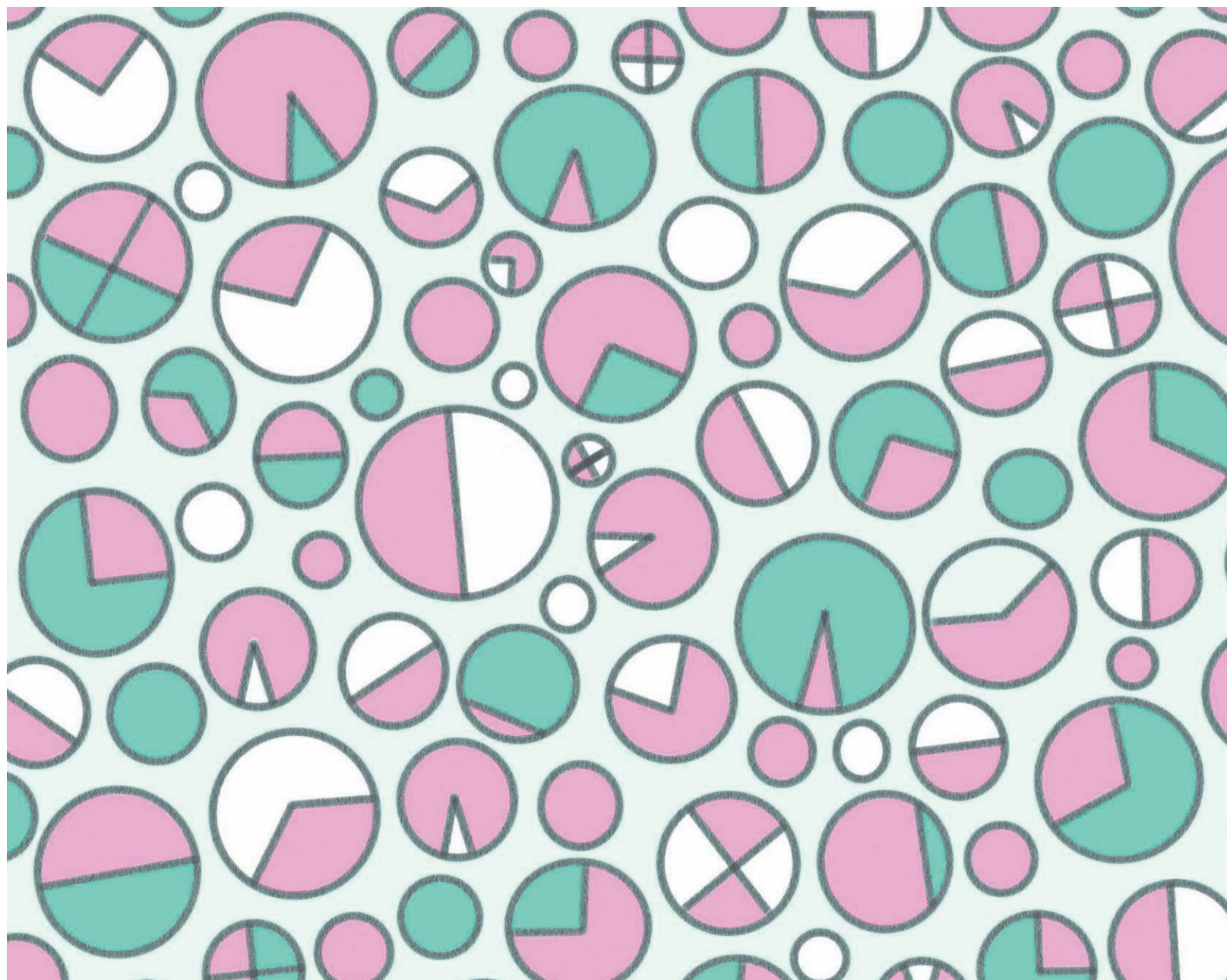
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## Opinion

# The face of feminism today



**Isobel Duxfield** reflects on whether gender-based quotas and virtue signalling really address feminist issues in the media and entertainment industry

American actor, Natalie Portman, made headlines earlier this month for calling out gender discrimination at the Oscars. Her dress, embroidered with the names of female directors who were passed over for prizes, denounced the academy for its failure to reward female talent.

However, it wasn't so much what her dress did that caught attention, but rather what it didn't do. Activist and actress, Rose McGowan branded Portman's outfit hypocritical. McGowan has since apologised for her remarks; nevertheless, her accusation that Portman paid "lip service" to anti-sexism advocacy raises a fundamental question for the media industry in 2020. In a sector plagued by sexual harassment scandals, where women account for a fraction of professionals, if Portman is a "fraud", what does feminism actually look like?

For many, increasing female representation is the first step. Award season is always an interesting time to reflect

▲ "A feminist media industry is more than gender quotas and equal pay."

(ILLUSTRATION BY KATE TOWSEY FOR VARSITY)

“A feminist media industry not only calls out this misogyny but carves new discourses”

on gender ratios. Portman's motion is not the first, the Oscars have repeatedly been utilised as a forum for calling out lack of female faces. Last February, Director Ridley Scott and actress, Frances McDormand both decried the absence of female voices behind the camera, while Brie Larson condemned the over-representation of white males on review panels.

Hollywood's red carpets are indicative of the gender imbalance pervading the global media industry. When it comes to gender parity in front of – and behind – the camera, the statistics speak for themselves. Women account for only one quarter of television and radio professionals, and under 10% of directors, with BAME women making up merely 1.5% of all key personnel. Meanwhile, in news and journalism, females are the focus of only 10% of news stories and comprise just 20% of experts or spokespeople interviewed. In 2020, these figures are disgraceful.

Many major news and media outlets have launched initiatives to rectify this

“As we approach International Women's Day, we reflect on the face of contemporary feminism”

disparity. The BBC's 50:50 Project has challenged teams across the organisation to ensure 50% of contributors in news, current affairs and topical programmes are female. The scheme has seen much success, with 74% of programmes hitting this target. Simultaneously, growth of non-profits – such as Women in Film and Television, and indeed Cambridge's own Women in Media (WiM) – have proved driving forces behind gender equality, providing research, advocacy, education and support for female-identifying screen industry practitioners.

However, parity is not equality. Women entering the industry face a fight for equal pay and career progression. In the UK alone, female media professionals earn 17.4% less than their male colleagues. This is a trend brought to bear by the exposure of the BBC's gender pay gap in 2017, which revealed all top seven earners were male, with the highest-paid female receiving less than a quarter than her male counterpart, Chris Evans.

The ensuing ugly skirmish over equal pay – which saw the resignation of China Editor Carrie Gracie, followed by Radio 4's You and Yours presenter Winifred Robinson prohibited from hosting a programme about gender pay after publicly supporting Gracie – exposed the deep inequity at the broadcasting corporation. The BBC flaunts its female contributors; but it seems less eager to pay them. Feminist? Not quite.

A feminist media industry is more than gender quotas and equal pay. Work produced, directed or presented by women are not automatically feminist. Instead, a feminist media challenges and subverts the devastating stereotypes of women peddled by our film and broadcasting industry. The media has systematically sexualised, domesticated and degraded women, disregarding their professional identities and achievements. From television shows like *Married at First Sight* (where female participants have publicly been called “sluts” and “C\*\*\*s”), to Fox News host, Tucker Carlson's on air description of women as “primitive” and “like dogs”, discrimination is endemic.

This has been a critical issue for women of colour. Black women's representation on screen has ignored the depth and complexity of their real-world experiences. As Oscar-winning actress Viola Davis articulated eloquently, black female characters have been systematically marginalised and essentialised in film. The same is true in television. Reality dating programs including *Love Island* and *The Bachelor* have perpetuated racialised politics of female desirability, with the latter facing a law suit for racial discrimination.

A feminist media industry not only calls out this misogyny but carves new discourses. It challenges cultures of toxic masculinity and institutes constructive dialogues around issues including paternity leave and women's sport, as well as more taboo subjects like menstruation and the menopause.

Podcasts have become an interesting platform for this. *The Guilty Feminist*, hosted by Deborah Frances-White, provides a supportive forum for discussing the realities of feminism – exploring the big topics, whilst confessing the hypocrisies and fears that undermine our lofty principles. In a similar vein, *Take it From Her*, a podcast run by Cambridge students, aims to open up debates around contemporary gender equality concerns, garnering opinions from leading female professionals.

“Women need to be heard,” said Sally Patterson, co-founder of *Take it From Her*. “This is particularly pertinent for women of colour, those from the LGBTQ+ community and disabled women, who are so often left out of the mainstream narrative.”

As we approach International Women's Day, we reflect on the face of contemporary feminism. Who can be a feminist and what constitutes feminist action is avidly contested. Natalie Portman's protest was a reminder that the media industry is still failing women. However, in 2020, gender quotas won't cut it. A feminist media is one which speaks of women, for women, in their own voices.



# Ghosting may seem insignificant, but it can have damaging effects

While no one is obliged to entertain anyone they don't wish to, ghosting is never the solution

Oliver Cope

Every year, RAG Blind Date proves to be one of the most popular student charity initiatives, this year raising just over £10,600.

A welcome respite from the quotidian stresses of Cambridge student life, Blind Date provides an opportunity to meet someone from a different social circle, with a potential new friendship or romantic interest up for grabs.

However, each year the event issues a quite sinister reminder; that despite its charitable aims, students are continuously subjected to 'ghosting' from their blind pairing.

Most of us are familiar with the idea of 'ghosting' or 'blinking', referring to the act of ignoring someone else's attempts at communication, often by leaving said communication attempts unread. Given how much of our lives are now spent on our phones, we would be remiss to ignore how the motivations and consequences of ghosting have altered the way we communicate with each other. The phenomenon is not uncommon, with a 2016 survey by dating site, *Plenty of Fish*, reporting that around 80% of millennials aged 18-33 had experienced ghosting.

As Oliver Burkeman put it for *The Guardian*, "In the old days, instant replies were either obligatory (as in face-to-face conversation) or impossible (as in snail mail). Now, though, we've hopelessly confused the two. So when no reply is forthcoming, we've no idea what to think". Burkeman highlights here the irri-

tation of *not knowing*, and it goes without saying that, for even the most mentally stable individual, this completely avoidable situation can induce anxiety.

When the issue is transposed onto the conversation surrounding Blind Date, the impact becomes even more significant.

Whereas going for a drink with someone is usually attached with a set of preconceptions, Blind Date tends to be universally accepted as a harmless endeavour, with most of the first dates being the last.

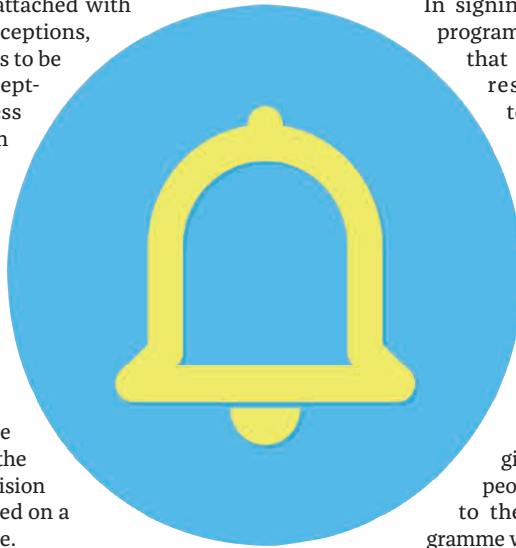
Set against this context, ghosting one's pair tends to imply that they looked so awful, even a 30 minute coffee is out of the question - a decision often made based on a Facebook profile.

While the implication is perhaps unavoidable, there may be other reasons for why people feel they have to ghost. It may be that personal anxieties make it difficult to face messaging the pairing, particularly if to say they would rather not go on the date. It can often feel like less damage is being caused by send-

ing nothing as opposed to sending rejection, and the other party can justify the ghosting with 'perhaps they didn't see the message request.' Moreover, there may be complications with a recent relationship, and ghosting can seem to be an easier way of dealing with the situation than direct honesty.

In signing up to the programme, it's true that there isn't a responsibility to go on the date. However, there is still a social and moral responsibility to the other person; they are expecting a response, given that both people signed up to the same programme with the same initial expectation of going on the date.

Whilst no individual should feel pressured to go on a date that they are feeling uncomfortable or anxious about, it is equally sinister to leave the pairing in online suspense. There are a range of alternatives to a romantic drink, be it a



“It can often feel like less damage is being caused by sending nothing as opposed to sending rejection”

friendly coffee, or simply asking the rep if they could sort another pairing. The notion that it is acceptable to blank a message is deeply flawed, and generally stems from a certain kind of self righteousness; students sat around laughing at the Facebook profile of their RAG Blind Date who they are deciding to ignore is inherently toxic.

Furthermore, it is easy to lose sight of the principle purpose of the event; to raise money for charity. There is a sad irony in the knowledge that one of RAG's 2018-19 chosen charities was *Mind*, a charity dedicated to helping those with mental health problems, and yet some of the behaviour surrounding RAG Blind Date is so blatantly disrespectful and belittling of the mental disposition of others. By no means is it a step too far to suggest that ignoring a message from a RAG blind date could directly induce anxiety and damage self-esteem.

For all the bizarreness of Cambridge students, there is an incredible array of wonderful and interesting people out there. RAG Blind Date provides a unique opportunity to meet someone interesting outside of what might be your usual social circles, while supporting some brilliant charities. As easy as it is to ignore a message from a pairing if they don't initially seem your type, such a small gesture can have such a damaging effect, and getting out of one's comfort zone to meet someone new is something we should all be able to take joy from.

# Why is Dave's BRIT Awards performance so controversial?

Racism is so endemic in today's society that calling it out has become a topic of debate

Jack Durand

The 2020 BRIT Awards provided a platform for Dave, winner of best British album for 'Psychodrama', to highlight a series of acute political issues: from Grenfell to Windrush to the treatment of Meghan Markle in the press. Most controversial, though, was the accusation he levelled against Boris Johnson, labelling him a 'real racist' in an extended performance of his song, *Black*. These claims have proved divisive, encountering unadulterated praise from some as a watershed moment in British music and politics, and outrage from others.

One recurring criticism of Dave's political message is that it is simply boring, an uncontroversial statement designed to earn the adulation of the 'Guardianista market'. Albeit in softer terms, this point is raised even by those who agreed with him, and not altogether unreasonably. Dave didn't say anything that we don't already know, nor did he frame it in a new light. Johnson's references to African children as 'flag-waving piccaninnies' with 'watermelon smiles' or 'AIDS-ridden choristers' have been revisited time and time again. His prejudices have been freely available in print since 2004, smuggled under a flimsy cover of political satire in his novel, *Seventy-Two Virgins*. How could anyone hope to discern Johnson's authorial voice in the fictive world of Roger Barlow, a hapless and messy-haired

bicycle-riding MP on a mission to foil an Islamist plot against Parliament?

We know where Johnson stands, and it hasn't remotely hampered his electoral success or credibility. This isn't even the first time that the issue has been raised on the BRIT Awards stage, echoing Stormzy's criticisms of Theresa May last year, as well as performances from Skepta in 2017 and Kanye West in 2015. However, no matter how many times it has been argued in the past, this is a matter that bears repeating as long as people - be they Priti Patel or the denizens of Twitter - continue to defend Johnson. His racist remarks cannot be dismissed as the gaffes of a lovable buffoon, and they should raise serious concerns over the nature of Conservative policy.

There is a pervasive idea that Johnson is not, as Dave alleges, a 'real racist', because he does not materially or politically discriminate against people of colour. In the wake of the BRIT performance, LBC celebrated Nick Ferrari tying a caller in knots, unable to offer any example of Johnson putting forward a racist policy. Perhaps the Windrush scandal, the continuation of deportation flights and May's 'hostile environment' policy, touched upon by Dave in his much-discussed verse, comes to mind - or maybe the recent hire of an outspoken advocate of eugenics.

A draft conclusion of the delayed Windrush review found the Home Office 'institutionally racist,' a term that appears notably in the 1999 inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence by the Metropolitan Police. The Home Office is attempting to water down these judgments in review. This is not to mention that one of the few policies in Johnson's 2019 manifesto sought the criminalisation of traveller communities, an ugly expression of anti-ziganist bigotry. While Johnson may not have personally conceived these policies, he is responsible for unapologetically overseeing their implementation and refusing to oppose them. Regardless of your opinion of the Windrush report, questions as to whether or not there are any tangible examples of Johnson's racism in policy ignore a more insidious threat. The presence of a politically acceptable face of unrepentant racism at the head of government has enormous potential for harm beyond its policy implications.

'Racism' is a word that defies nuance. It is an absolute. To be racist is to be utterly indefensible, and critics could likely benefit from an extended vocabulary that isn't stretched to cover everything from microaggressions to apartheid states and the Ku Klux Klan. While Johnson does not belong to this latter extreme, he is more than happy to project a normalised

“Dave didn't say anything that we don't already know, nor did he frame it in a new light”

image of 'acceptable' racism and weaponise prejudice for political advantage. He is a 'real racist'. This is not a statement that ought to be controversial. The evidence speaks overwhelmingly to Johnson's character and beliefs, and the fact that it seems to have been met with indifference from the electorate is disturbing. Why Dave's words proved contentious is a matter for speculation: partisan allegiance in some cases, perhaps bigotry in others.

A long-standing feeling of political correctness gone mad, and 'woke' intolerance seems to be at play - that allegations of racism tarnish the accused too indiscriminately and are too frequently applied to perceived minor indiscretions. Dave's words on this point are some of his most powerful, asking why he should be 'grateful' that society is more equal than it once was: 'the least racist is still racist'. Dave was not alone on the BRIT Awards stage in denouncing institutional racism within the British government: Tyler, the Creator, hit out at Theresa May for his five-year ban over lyrics that supposedly incited hatred. Artists like Tyler and Dave are right to make use of the BRIT Awards for as long as their comments provoke the same hateful vitriol they are accused of spreading and people like Boris Johnson occupy positions of power.



# Science

## Taking steps in the right direction: decolonising the Sciences in the HPS department

*Charlotte Zimmel and Ellie Aris explore how the decolonisation movement should be applied to science subjects at Cambridge*

Once walked by famous figures such as James Clerk-Maxwell, Ernest Rutherford and J.J. Thomson, the halls of the old Cavendish Laboratories are now home to Cambridge University's History and Philosophy of Science Department. In the very same rooms where the electron was discovered some 130 years before, we are now beginning to reconstruct our conception of science by moving away from a series of celebrated individuals, and towards an acknowledgement of the deep colonial roots of what we now call 'science.'

Whilst the romanticised argument for a science built by western icons is somewhat convincing, it lacks an appreciation for the darker forces of exploitation, industry and imperialism. By situating the history of science and medicine within its colonial roots, we are now able to address the current of untold stories and unseen perspectives of non-western voices. Such is the aim of the 'Decolonising the Sciences' movement.

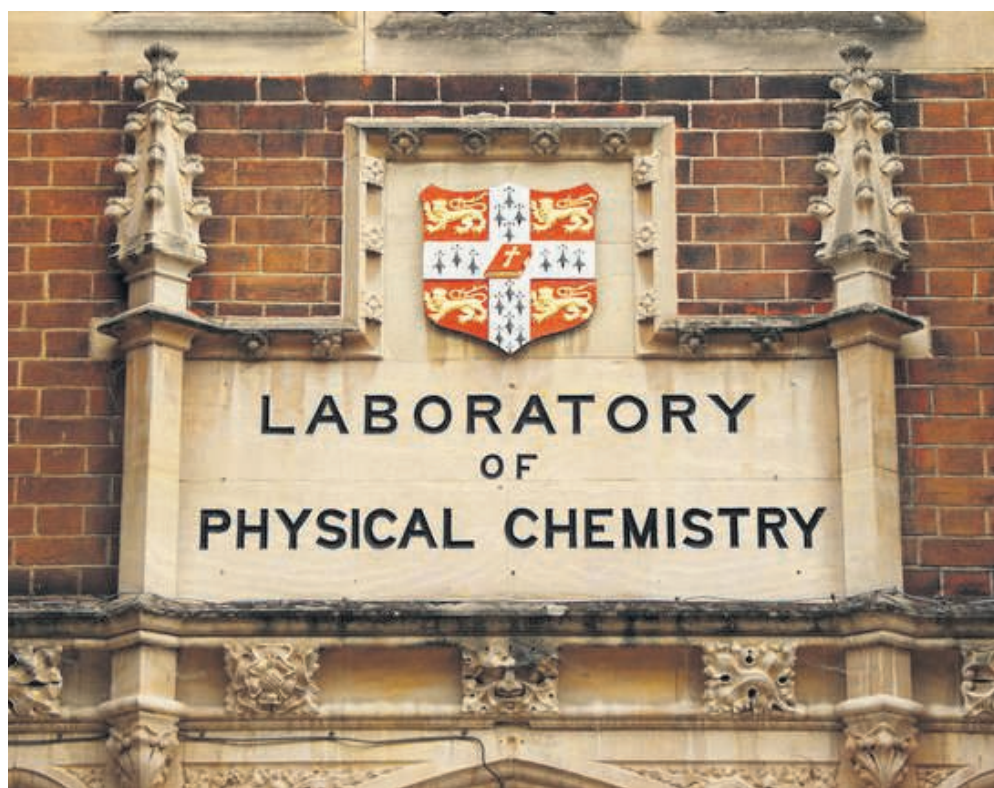
We might have lost some of the undergraduate physics students at this point, but this is exactly the problem. Since science is perceived to be the most important way in which modern knowledge is produced, it is thus one of the most crucial disciplines in need of a new, decolonised approach.

'Decolonisation' has become a cultural and academic buzzword, manifesting as an ambition, a strategy for critique, and a perspective we should all be aiming to take. Broadly speaking, the movement challenges the way we think about the impact of European colonisation on global cultural infrastructures. It strives to recognize the systems of oppression that have been made implicit in our methods of knowledge production, and to break them down.

The HPS department facilitates the only undergraduate courses available to students taking Science Tripos' which actually provide the tools scientists so desperately need to decolonise their disciplines. It invites a meta-study of science; an analysis of how theories and methods are constructed and inevitably situated within broader social, political and economic contexts. As a result, the engagement of this department with decolonial sentiments is essential for the reconstruction of science from the bottom up.

### The roots of the problem

The decolonisation movement rests on the view that Western science should



not be thought of as the sole basis of human logic. It should not be considered as a standard to which other traditions of knowledge are to be compared. This necessarily involves reconstructing indigenous and other non-western knowledge systems as equal to Euro-localised traditions. Essentially, scientific decolonists aim to challenge the conception that modern science was born with the British Empire, despite the fact that what we learn today under the title 'science' has its precise origins in this period. The science we are taught to accept as dogma today is a colonised science.

With this in mind, it is important to appreciate that there is no straight line from a colonised science to a decolonised one. There are many different avenues to explore when pursuing this path depending on which dimension of 'colonisation' we choose to tackle: Geographical? Ideological? Thematic? Here, we present a 'food for thought' introduction to some of the strategies on the table for decolonising HPS, and for thinking more generally about what we believe should constitute a 'science'.

### The problem with the problem

It is one thing to proclaim that all of modern science is colonial. It is an entirely different matter to display and change this narrative. We were invited to a department open meeting, hosted by Rory Kent, a PhD student passion-

ate about decolonisation, where a range of practical decolonial strategies were debated.

The first to be suggested was diversifying the geographical locations taught in the course to 'de-Euro centralise' the study of science, and help reconstruct knowledge from various indigenous populations. Increasing the breadth of knowledge systems studied is an approach that has already been in place for some time.

Dr. Richard Staley, a lecturer and research fellow at the department, highlighted HPS's 'commitment to diversifying its teaching.' Dr. Mary Brazelton also teaches courses on the modern history of East Asian Science, allowing undergraduate science students to recognise that there have always been other important systems of scientific knowledge production outside of Europe.

However, it seems unsustainable to spread the course thinly over the whole globe. Making a conscious effort to include some localities over others adds yet another dimension of complexity to the issue at stake. This necessitates a complicated trade-off between breadth and depth that stands at the forefront of discussion surrounding the restructuring of curricula to highlight decolonial sentiments.

In terms of increased depth, another suggestion has been to organise the course thematically. Introducing different themes, such as instruments, or the use of calculation, to bring together dif-

“It is clear that the ethically dubious origins of much of what we call 'science' today are shielded from us as students and as scientists”

ferent scientific traditions would permit the drawing of parallels between the production of science in a range of localities and backgrounds.

This would debunk the myth that science was produced in Europe and then diffused globally. Treating scientific traditions not as universal truths but as the expression of different themes would allow for the safe comparison of knowledge created at different times and places, without the implication that one is superior.

Moreover, it was suggested that the inclusion of 'bad works' in the curriculum (predominantly Eurocentric and racially motivated pieces of literature) would allow students to recognise what is 'bad' scientific reasoning. Comparing 'bad works' with contemporary approaches permits aspiring scientists to understand first hand how scientific literature should not look.

### Should we colonise the sciences before decolonising them?

A most intriguing proposal was suggested by Professor Simon Schaffer, who argued that it was first important to colonise the sciences before decolonisation could take place. In other words, it is necessary to encourage those entering scientific disciplines to engage critically with the dogmas they are taught to take for granted. Decolonising the sciences will begin and end with a re-evaluation of how science is taught – both in HPS and beyond – by integrating the themes explored here into mainstream curricula. As Dr Staley put it, 'understanding the significance of scientific involvement in colonisation is central to many of the issues important in decolonising different fields'.

It is clear that the ethically dubious origins of much of what we call 'science' today are shielded from us as students and as scientists. It seems intuitive that the first step in decolonising the sciences is to remove the wool from our eyes by learning how to critically question what is dogma and what is constructed. Surely, this is the first step in the right direction.

The meta study of science provided by HPS is crucial for this very reason. It provides an 'insider-outsider' perspective on what occurs in science. Through studying the history of what we call 'science', it can be 'colonised' by permitting scientists to understand their discipline's interaction with imperial geopolitics. Only then can we enter a new stage of decolonial science by consciously throwing off the yolk of science's past.

▲ 'The HPS department facilitates the only undergraduate courses ... which actually provide the tools scientists so desperately need to decolonise their disciplines' (GEOGRAPH)



# The regulation of AI in a post-Brexit world

With the rapid development of technology outpacing regulation, **Rosamund Powell** discusses the future of AI policy in Britain and abroad

A new whitepaper released by the European Commission on 19th February has set the terms for the future of AI regulation in the EU. But, with a post-Brexit UK on the hunt for ways to strike out alone, it is by no means clear that similar strategies will be adopted on this side of the channel. In fact, while the UK is likely to continue following European rules (as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)), some have suggested that we may choose to diverge on the strategies set out in this new paper, developing a separate approach in the realm of artificial intelligence.

As of May 2019, a total of 42 countries, including both the UK and US, have signed up to the OECD principles on the regulation of AI. These can provide some global unity but they are non-binding and leave room for a degree of divergence. While Trump's US focuses on fostering innovation, other countries are taking a more ethics-driven approach. The merits and ambiguities of the EU paper and the possible advantages of divergence therefore need to be addressed as the UK approaches a significant fork in the road.

Headlines have focused on the omission of a ban on facial recognition from the paper, suggesting that the EU are tak-

ing a rather laidback stance. This example stands out particularly pointedly as a draft of the same document, leaked in January, was more stringent. Many therefore see the whitepaper as a move by the EU to weaken regulation.

In the case of facial recognition, people worry about governments' use of it leading both to bias and to potential breaches of privacy. There are serious real-world impacts of identifying the wrong person and it causes distress to all involved. These consequences can also weigh disproportionately on minorities, as the data used to train the algorithms rarely matches up to a goal of diversity.

There is a reason the press has seized on this one algorithm rather than focusing on strategies as a whole. Firstly, it has been in the news before, with Google's old version of the technology making headlines for racism when it labelled black people as gorillas. Secondly, this single technology continues to combine many of our most intuitive fears over AI as it faces accusations of undermining privacy and transparency, as well as being associated with discrimination against minorities. The failure of the EU to ban facial recognition has therefore led to disappointment for many.

But much more is at stake here, and it

is essential to look beyond facial recognition and our most intuitive fears. Debates over the proper place for regulation in the digital realm are in their infancy, and a clear, universal and ethically sound strategy is yet to be found. With development of the technologies themselves accelerating rapidly, it has already become necessary for governments to have some form of legal strategy on artificial intelligence and its potential threats. Many governments are not ready for this.

Before the UK decides whether to head in a different direction, it is worth exploring EU plans in more depth and whether they truly address our pressing fears over issues on AI, bias and privacy. In particular, is this regulatory and investment-oriented approach really going to protect us from very real risks, or will it simply facilitate increased profits for multinational corporations?

Beyond facial recognition, the paper deals with all "high risk" technologies. Itself a questionable strategy, this lets many potentially dangerous actions fly under the radar, receiving little attention. For example, the requirement of "human oversight" is to be applied differentially, depending on the stated risk of the technology. Only in such cases will human approval be required for the output of the

algorithm to be released. With no clear distinguishing feature of these algorithms, such a strategy risks being inapplicable to a huge number of potentially dangerous technologies. More thought is needed to create a precise definition of "high risk".

Despite this, many of the paper's key commitments demonstrate an understanding of the issues at play. For example, choosing a clear strategy on who is accountable for the actions of these artificially intelligent beings should be an EU priority. However, with the limited detail provided in the whitepaper, it is difficult to see how far the EU will go in applying these strategies. Of course, these are not intended to be fully fleshed out policies and so details cannot be expected. But with issues such as transparency and fairness, stating a commitment to the principle is easy. More information is needed to give meaning to the statements.

The case of diversity and fairness can be used to demonstrate the complexity of issues at play. The EU focuses on issues arising "from the use of data without correcting possible bias" but provide less detail as to how such bias can be corrected for. We live in a world where raw data is inevitably biased and certain groups are hyper visible in the data while others are invisible. A number of strategies have

been proposed for the mitigation of bias, from the introduction of protected classes which would prevent predictions made on race and gender to the creation of unbiased data through experiments. Different strategies not only differ in cost but in the accuracy of results. Sometimes, bias cannot be removed without decreasing accuracy, and it is these tricky cases that have not been addressed by the EU.

This move to think about issues such as non-discrimination in AI by the EU should be welcomed, but we must wait to see whether these strategies can truly get to grips with the complex issues at play. The flip-flop over facial recognition, and the backdown over a proposed ban show how difficult it is to apply these principles to concrete cases. Regulators have quite a task on their hands if they are to develop this document into concrete policies applicable to real world uses of technology.

In the meantime, there is plenty of time for the UK to diverge from this and come up with our own set of rules in the digital sphere. Ultimately, the big challenges will come when we get to addressing the nitty gritty aspects of implementation and translating broad principles - such as "transparency" - to the rapidly developing world of AI.

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## Interviews

# Me Too's Tarana Burke: 'This movement is built on the back of everyday survivors'

Interviews Editor **Georgina Buckle** talks to activist Tarana Burke about reclaiming space with the words 'me too'

Entering the room to meet Tarana Burke, I am immediately made aware of her poised and commanding presence. Radiating a sense of self-assurance whilst surrounded by an entourage of men, Burke cuts a powerful figure. This impression is made deeper when hearing Burke's sharp and eloquent speech, both through our interview and later in her Cambridge Union talk.

It should come as no surprise that a woman who has founded a global talking point regarding sexual assault will be surrounded by a team, duly accompanying her on talks across the world. As Burke mentions in her Union talk, she was speaking in a college in Canada a few weeks past. The 'me too' movement has had a long timeline since Burke's coinage of the phrase on Myspace in 2006, where she initially used the phrase on the social networking app to encourage survivor empowerment. Despite the term 'me too' first being used by Burke in 2006, it is still very much propagated in the media. The demand for Burke to give talks across the world demonstrates a rightly continued interest in a phrase that has become somewhat of a 'buzzword' with its frequent media attention and use.

Burke's founding of the phrase is often less reported. The typical association of the 'me too' movement was its launch into mainstream media in 2017, when #MeToo went viral after a group of Hollywood women stepped forward with sexual assault allegations against the then-famed director Harvey Weinstein. But what Burke wants to assert is that the crux of the movement's viral peak was the public. 'What made the hashtag go viral was everyday people who got the courage to come forward and say me too', Burke stresses. 'There's a way that we erase the fact that this movement is built on the back of everyday survivors. Those survivors were you and me, our cousins, our mothers.'

With all the people that came forward to tell their stories in mind, Burke is wholehearted in saying she wasn't surprised that the phrase 'me too' became viral. 'I knew what the breadth and depth of the effect of sexual violence was around the world and the hashtag allowed people to get this information. If it was ever to take off, this would be the result because there's too many of us.'

Whilst the 'me too' movement is still living off this viral energy from 2017, there's a feeling that this mainstream media attention has diverted away from the roots of the phrase. Certainly, I entered the conversation with one idea of 'me too', and left enlightened by Burke's deconstruction of the term. Thinking back to 2006, her purpose for the phrase was to 'create space'. 'It's declarative, right?' Burke intently explains. 'Once you say it you give permission for other people to say it. And there were no spaces where



▲ Tarana Burke discussing survivor strength at the Union (CANDICE ZHANG/CAMBRIDGE UNION)

people could even say it. Creating that kind of space where people could talk about, think about, explore what it means to be a survivor.'

During Burke's Union talk, she opens up more about the origins of the phrase. Having experienced sexual assault both as a child and a teenager Burke was left isolated to any form of help to become 'whole' again. Her low-income, working-class roots are also crucial to address, with the financial disparity between survivors leading to vast inequalities in the support available to them. What Burke seriously highlights in addition to this is that of the limited support available to black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in comparison to their white counterparts. A fundamental principle of Burke's activism is placing women of colour as the centre focus for her work, arguing that prioritising support of these marginalised groups is necessary. Thinking back to her younger self's thought process, Burke becomes impassionate: 'it felt unfair that I couldn't have [happiness] and other people could. Was it because I'm poor? Because I can't afford therapy? Why can't I have what other people have?'

It is this isolation – survivors left alone with no guidance toward healing – that the very phrase 'me too' seeks to counteract. Burke recalls a story regarding the phrase's foundation: a girl came to her within a youth group and shared her own story of sexual assault, which drew many similarities to Burke's experience. Although she had encouraged survivors to share their

“What is lost amidst this noise is the fact that the phrase ('me too') is there to reclaim space”

experiences and trust her, when it finally happened Burke recalls feeling as if she had been 'hit by a tonne of bricks'. At that moment, Burke offered as much verbal support as she could, except the sharing of her own story. This poignant moment weighs heavily on Burke's conscience, after realising that perhaps the only thing she should have said to make a difference was simply: 'it happened to me too'.

This was a moment of realisation for me. The noise of the mainstream media has propelled the phrase into the limelight and has inevitably warped it into something 'clickable', its purpose and effect sometimes unclear. This has garnered attention since 2017. From backlashes branding the movement as 'totalitarian' and its sparking unsubstantiated accusations against men, to the association of it being part of the women's movement, Burke denies them all. What is lost amidst this noise is the fact that the phrase is there to reclaim space, partly through the knowledge you are not alone. It is for survivors to say that 'we might have had different experiences happen, but the feelings of trauma we can recognise in each other.' More than that, it doesn't just have to be spoken to another person. Burke is aware that she is vocal about her 'me too' for all the people who cannot speak or choose not to. There is immeasurable power within these words just by acknowledging them. 'You can say it in your pillow, think it, whisper it to yourself', Burke says movingly. 'It's about getting it out of

“It's not just men who need these conversations...we all have to share [responsibility]”

your body and not just about telling the whole world, and that's solidarity too.'

Burke frequently refers to how we all need 'spaces' to enter into a safe dialogue concerning sexual assault and abuse. Where there is room, it is vital that these conversations are happening in order to dismantle a pervasive rape culture. Pressed about her response to individuals stuck in their criticisms against the movement, Burke laughs, 'it's lazy.' 'If you have the space to hear, then we can have a conversation... For the people who may come in with that idea and then hear something and think 'that's not what I thought' – that's somebody that I want to continue to have a conversation with.' Burke is adamant in saying that it's not just men who need these conversations: 'Women are sexist, women propagate misogyny, so we all have to share [responsibility]'. It is these dialogues which carry the power to build community and bring people onto the side of the movement: for allies and advocates to bring an end to sexual violence.

With continued open dialogues and acknowledgement of the harm caused by sexual assault, there is hope for survivors and allies to reclaim more of their space in the world. This acknowledgement, both within ourselves and with others, can begin with Burke's phrase. As she aptly says, 'me too can be the conversational starter, or it can be the whole conversation.' ●





# vulture.

Illustration by  
Lisha Zhong

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# FILM & TV

## Uncut Gems: stylish, stirring, Oscar-snubbed

In Josh and Benny Safdie's latest work, *Alex Harrison* finds glimpses of genius



▲ Adam Sandler is stellar as the troubled jeweller Howard Ratner (TWITTER/@VARIETY)

If, somehow, I still had any lingering respect for the Oscars, this has been totally snuffed out by the Academy's decision to overlook Adam Sandler for a best actor nomination, with voters allegedly not considering his brand as a popular comedian 'Oscar-worthy'. Without wishing to litigate the merits (or lack thereof) of Sandler's back catalogue, it is undeniable that without his central performance as Howard Ratner, a Jewish New York jeweller trapped in a spiral of his gambling addiction, *Uncut Gems* would not exist in any recognisable form.

The film, the fifth feature from directors Josh and Benny Safdie, is centred on his acquisition of the titular uncut gem, a 'lucky' Ethiopian black opal. Howard attempts to sell it to the basketball player Kevin Garnett in order to pay off his gambling debts. While the premise might sound farcical, the film ultimately plays out as a grand tragedy as the tightening net of debt, addiction, and bad decisions threatens to consume Howard, watching his finances and personal life collapse around him in pursuit of 'the win'.

Howard appears to experience life as a series of borderline unconnected sketches, with little ability to maintain cognitive permanence between events. While in Sandler's comedies this is a comedic device to keep the jokes flowing, here its effect is overwhelmingly tragic. Both towards his debts and in his relationships with his wife (Idina Menzel) and lover (Julia Fox), Howard persistently makes inadvertently dreadful decisions, even

when this goes far beyond what anyone could consider rational. There are various points in the film at which his balance sheet is barely positive, and he's able to walk away with his lover if he wants to – yet he has an all-consuming addiction.

Sandler's performance encompasses this mixture of childlike naivety and adolescent posturing, and he harnesses his comedic talents for embodying an outwardly ridiculous character to play the tragic anti-hero Howard.

“  
Even a character as foolish and callous as Howard deserves our love and sympathy  
”

Critics have debated whether Howard is to be viewed empathetically, but I feel the answer is obvious. Even a character as foolish and callous as Howard deserves our love and sympathy, as per the Safdies' principle of radical humanist filmmaking. It is an inversion of the classic sports movie 'plucky underdog' trope; the Safdies here highlight

that, in the underbelly of the inspirational against-the-odds story, there can be a deeply tragic narrative of somebody who won't give up when they really should.

No less significant is the directors' decision to continue their collaboration with composer Daniel Lopatin for the film's score. Lopa-

“  
The Safdies have transitioned further from being just 'ones to watch'  
”

tin is widely credited as being an originator of the 'vaporwave' musical movement and aesthetic style in his album *Eccojams Vol.1*. It's an expression of tainted nostalgia that is one of the most recognisable aspects of late 2010's internet culture. His peculiar blend of cool, electronic minimalism, choral chanting, and anxiety-inducing repeated tape loops add an unnerving backdrop to the quieter scenes in the film, and a vicious intensity to the dramatic scenes. This film lacks a UK cinematic release: the effect of some of the glorious soundscapes, generally consisting of three shouted conversations at once on top of the ominous synths, is somewhat dampened without the full force of surround sound. The choices of non-original music for the soundtrack are also inspired, with songs from Billy Joel's *The Stranger*, Gigi D'Agostino's *L'amour toujours*, and a haunting electronic arrangement of Haydn's 'Symphony No.88 in G Major' underlining key scenes in a triumphal post-boomer milieu that neatly encapsulates the tragedy of Howard as the prototypical

vaporwave character: desperately grasping to reclaim a life that may or may not have ever existed.

In a wonderfully sweet video made with the Criterion Collection DVD label, Josh Safdie casually refers to De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* as the greatest ever film, and perhaps the Safdies are the true modern heirs to the neo-realist movement. More so than any other director claiming inspiration from De Sica, the Safdies seem to have understood that the lynchpin to realistic human drama is a direct, materialist anxiety. They not only capture the figurative sense of being trapped in a dire situation, but also the feeling that the only way to get out is through risky snap decisions – even as defiance of logical consequence continues to make the situation worse.

Even though *Uncut Gems* opts for a slightly more elliptical and epic structure than the strict real-time attack of *Good Time*, the constant onslaught of deals, scams, and creditors is somehow even more oppressive, and at times recalls the vulnerable, apocalyptic tone of Mike Leigh's *Naked*. The directors have realised that one doesn't need to be trapped in the kitchen sink to speak to human fears and vulnerability. Their use of vivid, highly saturated 35mm colour compositions as a narrative tool bestow a vigour that defies the modern fashion for moody slowcore, washed out palettes, and mumbled dialogue.

Having now made two relatively mainstream independent films with A-list actors and received both critical plaudits and popular success, while maintaining and developing their distinctive style and artistic integrity, it is justified to say that the Safdies have transitioned further from being just 'ones to watch'. With the majority of their career still ahead of them, one can but hardly wait to see where their profoundly humanist, post-neorealist style, rooted in direct material anxiety, will take them next. ●

▼ Sandler triumphed at The Film Independent Spirit Awards 2020 (TWITTER/@HIGHSNOBIETY)





# THEATRE

## Meet Bread, the theatre company fighting for diversity in Cambridge

**Shruti Sharma** speaks to the people behind Bread Theatre Company about their past, present, and future efforts to make Cambridge Theatre more diverse



▲ The Bread theatre company launch (JENDAYI RUKIYA AKANKE)

Representation in Theatre is all-encompassing; it applies to casting selections, acting and directing roles, and choices of plays and playwrights, whether it be on stage in Cambridge, or UK-wide. However, BAME representation in UK theatre, both on and off stage, is still rare as reported by the Arts Council (Arts Council England: Analysis of Theatre in England, 2016). Rather than adopt solutions whereby minority students find themselves invited to increase diversity rather than being able to take space, Ananya Mishra and Suchitra Sebastian founded the newly minted Bread Theatre and Film Company to be a fresh voice for representation in Cambridge. Bread aims to use new narratives to transform existing artistic spaces, its name taken from a poem by Salvadorian poet Roques Dalton: “I believe the world is beautiful and that poetry, like bread, is for everyone.”

I first encountered Bread when I attend-

ed their first production (supported by the Marlowe Society and ETG), an adaptation of Abhishek Majumdar’s *Djinns of Eidgah* in the Corpus Playroom. A composition on the military occupation in Kashmir, the performance gave life to the stories of the marginalized civilians in the embattled territory. As an avid local theatregoer, this was the first time I had seen a production and cast so rich in cultural and ethnic diversity. The *Varsity* review for their play made it clear that a fresh representative voice in the performing arts was both welcome and needed: “This is tragic and haunting theatre characterised by a richness and captivating quality throughout [...] Given that all but one of this play’s cast are actors of an ethnic minority background, it does beg the question why Cambridge theatre casts are still overwhelmingly white. This is a loss for the casts, directors and audiences, but most importantly the actors themselves!”

Bread was launched in June 2019 at The

“We aim to create productions of professional calibre in cities across the UK, focusing on cutting edge theatre techniques, experimental forms, and innovative writing”

Lab, Cambridge, in a joyous celebration of taking space, performing spoken word, Hip Hop, Jazz, sketches, and more to a jam-packed audience of students, academics, and Cambridge residents. I spoke to

Ananya Mishra, Suchitra Sebastian, and Bread’s current president Shameera Lin on their stories of founding Bread, as well as their current endeavours.

### How did Bread come about?

“Bread’s work builds on four-year-old efforts to change the face of Cambridge theatre. Student productions of Shakespeare with an all-BAME cast started despite criticism, and are now a mainstay supported by the Marlowe Society. This year saw the largest ever black cast on the ADC stage in a production of Danai Gurira’s *The Convert*, a production that was unanimously praised for the Zimbabwean history it brought to the stage.” Bread Theatre and Film Company wants to catalyse this slow murmur of connecting voices into a movement.

### What are your ambitions for this year?

“We aim to create productions of professional calibre in cities across the UK, focusing on cutting edge theatre techniques, experimental forms, and innovative writing.” In the aim of exploring more experimental forms of theatre and making the stage accessible to overlooked performers and playwrights, Bread’s programming includes a series of workshops known as Bread Labs (hosted at The Lab, in collaboration with Jason Mellad – a Cambridge alumnus, and Bread’s first patron), that bring industry theatre professionals to Cambridge. This term’s Bread Labs include the first BAME director at the National Theatre, Jatinder Verma.

“Though we love staging our own work, we are also involved in ADC pitching panels to actively affect decision-making to select which plays to stage at the ADC and Corpus Playroom”. This has helped to bring eight BAME-focussed shows to the ADC and Corpus Playroom just in Lent term 2020, in comparison to just three such performances over the entirety of Cambridge theatre history prior to 2019. “These productions grapple with lesser-known narratives from a variety of performance traditions, bringing new writing and less familiar playwrights into focus.” Bread’s efforts have been warmly and enthusiastically received by the community, bringing in fresh faces to auditions and drawing new audiences to the theatre. ●



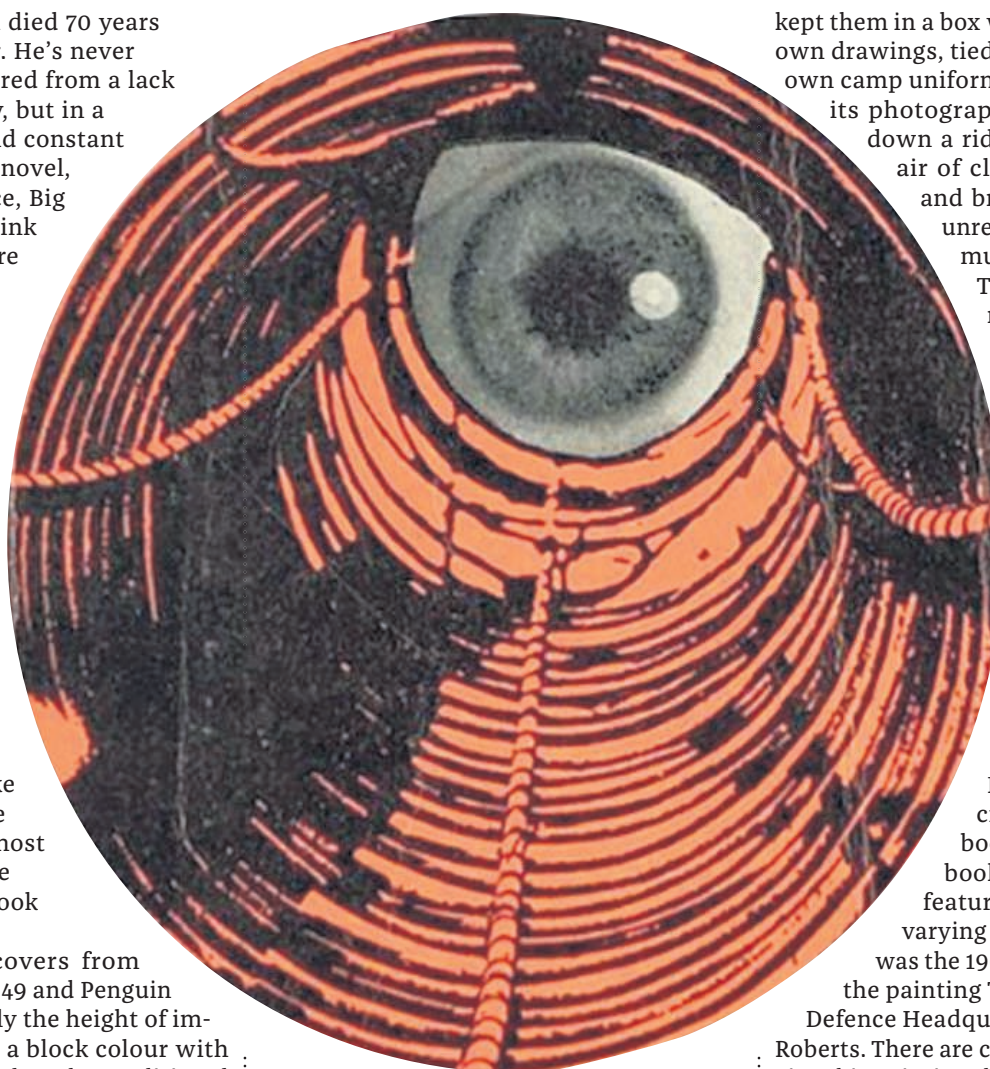
## ARTS

## The evolving image of Big Brother

On the anniversary of Orwell's death, **Esmee Wright** tracks the changing reception of his classic novel *1984* through its cover art

George Orwell died 70 years ago this year. He's never exactly suffered from a lack of popularity, but in a world of fake news and constant surveillance, his final novel, with its Thought Police, Big Brother, and doublethink has never seemed more relevant. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was first published in the year before his death and thus will be out of copyright early next year. This will no doubt be followed by an explosion of retellings and reimaginings for our present day. However, before bracing for the inevitable horror of the capitalist market taking on George Orwell, now seems like a good time to explore the artistic ventures most closely linked with the novel currently: the book covers themselves.

The first edition covers from Secker & Warburg in 1949 and Penguin in 1954 were not exactly the height of imagination - the former a block colour with a word art font, the other the traditional image for Penguin's 'six pence novels'. This latter series was once described by Orwell himself as "splendid value for sixpence, so splendid that if other publishers had any sense they would combine against them and suppress them". Part of the reason for this paucity in price was indeed the simplicity of the orange-white-orange print of the books covers. Although pleasingly



▲ "Big Brother is watching you" (INSTAGRAM/THEFIRSTVINTAGE)

uniform, this look did little to inform and inspire the reader about the actual contents of the book at first glance.

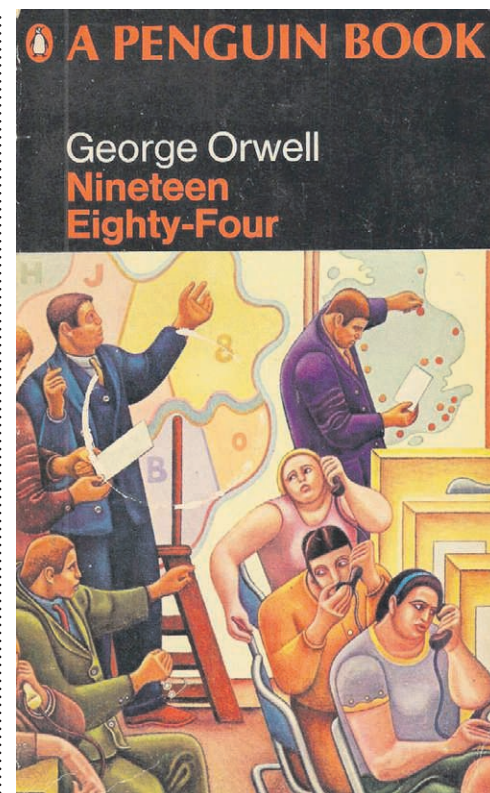
By 1962 Penguin was looking to modernise, and so Penguin founder Allen Lane hired Germano Facetti to be the new Art Director. Facetti's first move was to change the format of the cover, using a design made by Polish Freelancer Romek Marber, which became known as the Marber grid. Its simple ruled style meant that title, author and price could all be displayed neatly, with room on the cover for an image inspired by the contents of the book.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* was actually the first science-fiction title to be printed in this fashion. The image itself might be rather of its time in its use of collage and colour, but Facetti's personal history alone makes it a starting image well worth considering. Unknown to most of his colleagues, Facetti had spent his teenage years as a committed anti-fascist in Italy, and was deported to the Austrian concentration camp of Mauthausen in 1943, aged only 17. When the camp was liberated, he collected photographs left behind by the camp guards and

kept them in a box with camp plans and his own drawings, tied shut with scraps of his own camp uniform. This book cover, with its photographed eye staring eerily down a ridged tunnel conveys an air of claustrophobic menace, and bridges the gap between unreal and unnervingly real, much like the novel itself.

The eye has become a motif for covers of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; it features in some form in the 1983 edition, both editions in 2003 and in 2008 as well as in the 2009 Marion Deuchars version. Staring out at us, it conveys the horror of constant surveillance. The book is, literally, always watching us.

However, not all images used for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have been created expressly for the book; four versions of the book published by Penguin feature artwork by artists of varying style and fame. The first was the 1966 edition, which shows the painting *The Control Room, Civil Defence Headquarters (1942)* by William Roberts. There are certainly elements which give this painting the air of an office in Oceania - the oddly ironed-out appearance lent to the figures by Roberts' cubist style, the boundary maps on the wall with de-personalised numbers in place of names. The painting, like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, takes for its subject the ideal of social planning. Unlike the many openly menacing covers, here the bright colours and almost cuddly figures hint at the pleasant lies behind

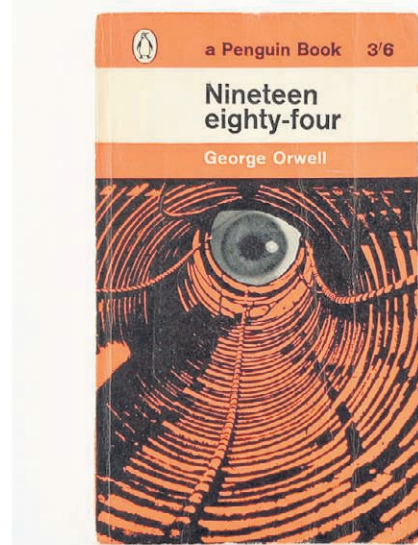


▲ The 1966 edition features William Roberts' deceptively bright *The Control Room, Civil Defence Headquarters (1942)* (TWITTER/SEANJCOSTELLO)

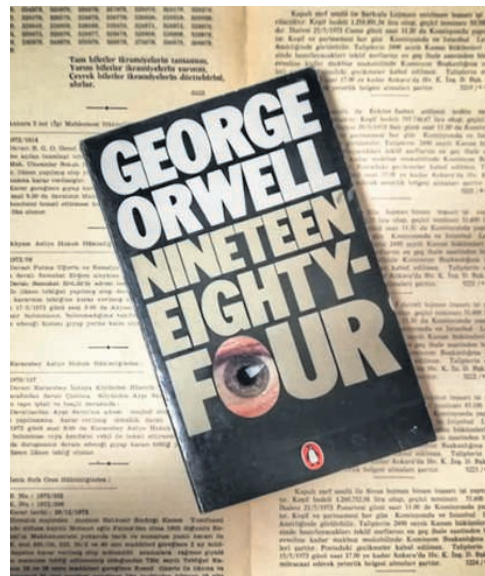
which a totalitarian state might hide its more nefarious aspects.

The 2000 edition also focuses on an office scene; one which is still not outright threatening, but certainly contains elements of distinct unease. Stephen Conroy's *Abstract Painting (1992)* depicts a man in a grey suit, stood by a phone and three clocks, all showing different times. This scene is disrupted by an ominous shadow, obscuring the man's face and darkening the cover - a different, but no less effective way to suggest the underlying horror in this aggressively normal world. The 2019 edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* appeared with *Self Portrait (1976)* by Francis Bacon. Once more the features are obscured but rather than shadow, it is by colour and distortion, hallmarks of Bacon's technique. Equally, the Bacon association affects which aspect of the book arrives at the forefront of the reader's mind. Rather than the monolithic horror of Big Brother, Bacon's portrait of mental distress evokes the subtler psychological torture of living within such a brutal society; men are not machines here but shattered creatures.

I can only hope - probably in vain - that in future people will feel less of an intense kinship with this 70 year-old novel. Yet even if we achieve such a rosy future, I am certain that the covers of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will continue to inspire, and to encourage new and novel readings of the story each time readers encounter it. ●



▲ (INSTAGRAM/THEFIRSTVINTAGE)



▲ (INSTAGRAM/UYGARSAAHAF)



# Sharpening Perceptions is art uncovered

This small exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum whets one's appetite but doesn't always strike home, writes **Stephanie Stacey**

Old paintings can often seem pretty boring. I realise that this might not be a particularly promising outlook to have when setting out to review an exhibition featuring a whole range of old paintings, but Sharpening Perceptions peels back layers of paint – sometimes quite literally – to reveal the interesting features and processes hidden underneath.

The exhibition's concept is fairly straightforward, presenting old, somewhat faded, original masterpieces alongside new copies, in various stages of completion, made by art conservation students at the Fitzwilliam Museum's Hamilton Kerr Institute. These copies are made with the goal of examining the original artist's tools and techniques. When working to conserve or restore a painting, and equally when visiting this exhibition, it's important to draw attention primarily to the processes behind a painting's construction, not simply to the aesthetics of the final product.

In a single-room exhibition, Sharpening Perceptions sees celebrated works of art stripped down to their nitty gritty details: the pencil marks sketched out behind an elaborate still life, the individual pigmented powders offering vibrant splashes of colour to a several hundred year-old portrait, and the intermediate layers of paint making up a gloomy skyline. Daniela Leonard's 2009 copy of Dirck van Delen's 1628 painting Interior of a Church, offers a particularly direct representation of the various stages that go into constructing a masterpiece. Her work consists of six separate strips representing the original painting in various stages of its development, from the initial background wash and pencil sketches to the final layers of paint.

Each pair of paintings is accompanied by a detailed recipe of the pigments and materials used, with the student conservators having gone to great lengths to replicate the exact tools used by the original artists. Perhaps it's just because I know a whole lot more about cooking than I do about art, but these 'pigment recipes' were a standout feature of the exhibition. Upon entering the exhibition, Spike Bucklow's 1993 copy of Jan van Os's Vase of Flowers is immediately eye-catching thanks to its pastel vibrancy. This half-finished re-creation far outshines the original, which has seen its colours fade somewhat over the past couple of centuries.

Despite all this, the exhibition certainly isn't without its flaws. The dim lighting of the room, presumably for preservation purposes, can be forgiven, but the chaos of the layout remains a barrier to complete enjoyment. Essentially, the exhibition seems lacking in any real order, gathering artworks dating from Ancient Egypt alongside some from just a couple of centuries ago, without any apparent attempt at thematic or chronological organisation. In a single-room exhibition, it shouldn't be such a challenge to orient yourself.

“Sharpening Perceptions offers the rare chance to see timeless paintings broken down into their raw materials and processes, and put back together by skilled conservators”

Nevertheless, Sharpening Perceptions is worth a visit if you want to get an inside look on art. Some people – young children especially, who haven't yet figured out that damaging other people's possessions isn't a very popular pastime – feel compelled to tear things apart in order to figure out how they work. This, it goes without saying, doesn't tend to go down very well in art galleries, but a visit to Sharpening Perceptions offers the rare chance to see timeless paintings broken down into their raw materials and processes, and put back together by skilled student conservators.

Sharpening Perceptions shows us art deconstructed. Sure, the exhibition may not be sufficiently ordered or detailed to impress a conservation expert or art historian (despite the clear skill of the student conservators whose work is on display) but, for the uninitiated, it's certainly an engaging whistle-stop tour of art conservation.

Sharpening Perceptions is open until Sunday 17th May at the Fitzwilliam Museum. ●



▲ (SPIKE BUCKLOW, COPY OF JAN VAN OS, FLOWERS AND FRUIT; JAN VAN OS, FLOWERS AND FRUIT; COMPOSITE: DAMIAN WALSH)

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**FASHION****Street Style: Seeing double**

On her wanderings around Cambridge, **Isabella Martin** documents the stylish pairings found on our streets



In all those American high school movies, have you ever noticed that each “clique” dresses the same? The skater boys, the “mean girls,” the jocks, the nerds... There’s no escaping the fact that the way we dress can form a large part of our identity, and visually associates us with our friends. The first thing someone sees about you is what you are wearing and what you look like: you have the power to externally manifest your identity by seizing your style.

There is no doubt that we are influenced by those who surround us, and so friendship and style are linked hand in hand. I’m sure I’m not the only one who’s noticed that I’ve started dressing like my mum or like my best friends. As we know, imitation is the greatest form of flattery.

In these images, I wanted to capture this comfort and joy which comes with being at ease with your surroundings: wearing clothes that make you feel confident and around friends who relax you. On my wanderings around Cambridge, I wanted to capture that blissful happiness and most importantly sense of safety and security you feel when you are totally at ease with those around you. This, I think, is so intrinsically linked to style and the way you dress: dressing how you feel comfortable can give you a great sense of power and self-assurance.

The clothes are important in these images, but what I really want to convey is how the people feel: there’s no denying that you can feel it when someone exudes a certain aura, a glow, a certain ease within themselves. And that, I think, can be the power of clothes: to release this most natural part of yourself.

**CHARLOTTE AND EMILY**

Charlotte studies French and Italian at Newnham. Emily studies Philosophy at Trinity. Charlotte and Emily have been friends for 5 months.

Charlotte’s aspirational alter ego would be Liza Minelli in Cabaret, but realistically it would be Dewey Finn from School of Rock.

Emily is currently obsessively listening to Grace Jones’ “Pull up to the Bumper”

Charlotte wears trousers stolen from her last chef job, a jacket from Cambridge kilo sale, Doc Martens, and her mum’s necklace from the 80s.

Emily wears a jacket from Beyond Retro, trousers from a thrift store, and Doc Martens from eBay.





FRANK AND SCARLETT

Frank studies Spanish and Italian at Trinity. Scarlett studies History and Spanish at Pembroke.

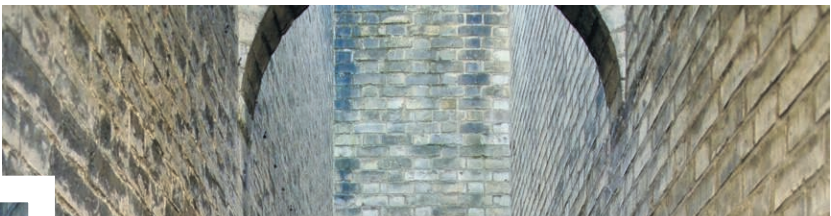
Frank and Scarlett have been friends for 2 years.

Scarlett's last meal would be beans on toast. Frank hasn't washed his hair since 1993.

Frank wears a Carhartt jacket and Joseph trousers.

Scarlett wears a vintage suede jacket from Portobello Market, and a headband which she bought in Havana, Cuba.

“  
There's no escaping the fact that the way we  
dress can form a large part of our identity  
”



LUDO AND ALAYO

Ludo studies History of Art at Trinity Hall. Alayo studies History of Art at Gonville & Caius.

Ludo and Alayo have been friends for one and a half years.

Alayo wears H&M earrings, a vintage leather jacket, and trousers from Chazza Shopping. (Chazza Shopping is a pop-up clothes re-sale run by a second year architect at Gonville & Caius.)

Ludo wears Rick Owens boots, Raey jumper, and a dress stolen from his mum.





“  
On my wanderings around Cambridge, I wanted to capture that blissful happiness and most importantly sense of safety and security you feel when you are totally at ease with those around you  
”



#### APOLLINE AND CHRISTINA

Apple studies History of Art at Trinity Hall. Christina studies Philosophy at Trinity Hall. Apple and Christina have been friends for one year.

Apple and Christina first met whilst painting a sun God inspired by Egyptian murals, for the set design of a play.

Apple wears her friend Chater's vintage suede jacket, Primark hat, corset from Chazza B Shopping,

Christina wears a headband made by a friend, Claire's Accessories hair clips, M&S slip dress.

“  
The clothes are important in these images, but what I really want to convey is how the people feel: there's no denying that you can feel it when someone exudes a certain aura, a glow, a certain ease within themselves  
”



#### TOM AND LILY

Tom studies History of Art at Gonville & Caius. Lily studies History of Art at St. Johns.

Tom and Lily have been going out for nearly two and a half years.

They met when Lily climbed through a fence to get into the History of Art department, and the first person she saw was Tom, “that boy in navy.”

Tom wears a his grandpa's coat, YMC jumper, Universal Works trousers, Doc Martens.

Lily wears an Arket shirt, Paloma Wool trousers, Vagabond boots, and a Four Seasons coat.



# LIFESTYLE

## Hidden gems for the weary student

*Maya Yousif* gives her alternatives to the slightly over-visited classic Cambridge haunts

When we think of iconic places in Cambridge, classic images of the grandiose Kings Chapel, cosy Fitzbillies, and the idyllic Bridge of Sighs tend to spring to mind. But after too many Chelsea buns and too many Instagram pics of the river Cam all taken from the same angle, it's fair to say that even these gorgeous sights can become slightly tedious. It's easy to feel as though we've seen it all and we're a bit (I daresay) slightly bored of what Cam has to offer. Admittedly I've had many a hushed conversation with fellow city natives where we've uttered the fateful words 'but what is there actually to do here?'

But Cambridge is littered with hidden gems unbeknownst to tourists and freshers: quiet corners of bookshops,

pubs, picturesque views, and cafés. After four long years here, I've narrowed it down to some of my favourites.

### G David Bookseller

I am absolutely obsessed with this place. If, like me, you find independent bookshops an absolute haven, then G David Bookseller is a must visit. Established in 1896, it's situated right off of Kings Parade. Its store front is so unassuming that one could easily be forgiven for missing it entirely. It's home to a whole host of literary genres but its antiquarian section is truly special. This is the perfect place to spend an hour or so in escape from your faculty library, or just to rekindle a love of books.



▲ (INSTAGRAM/ XUYINN7)

Number theory

Probability

Numerical analysis

Integer factorisation

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## Hot Numbers Gwydir Street

Think you know hot numbers? Think again! This gorgeous branch is located in a former Victorian brewery on Gwydir Street just off of Mill Road. It's slightly bigger than the Trumpington branch and has a really excellent food menu (defo try the homemade focaccia – it's divine.) It's the perfect place for spending a lazy afternoon reading and drinking really good coffee. They also host gig nights – so if you're tired of the Wednesday Cindies playlist it's defo worth visiting to dip your toe into the vibrant local music scene.

▼ [INSTAGRAM/HOTNUMBERSCOFFEE](#)



## The Petersfield Pub

Okay this is literally everything you could want in a pub, and possibly more (the Platonic Form of a Pub, if you will). Think cosy atmosphere, fairy lights in the garden, board games, and a fantastic Sunday Roast. They also offer a Saturday brunch with bottomless prosecco, need I say more?

▼ [INSTAGRAM/THE\\_PETERSFIELD](#)



▲ [TWITTER/KELLEYGREEN2013](#)

## Castle Mound

Castle mound is an incredibly special place. Although it's literally just a hill between Magdalene and Medwards, it rewards climbers with beautiful, picturesque, and expansive city views. If you want a spot for a lazy/boozy picnic this Easter, I'd recommend foregoing the well-trodden Laundress Green in favour of this ex-Norman castle.



▲ [INSTAGRAM/OCEANPOND](#)

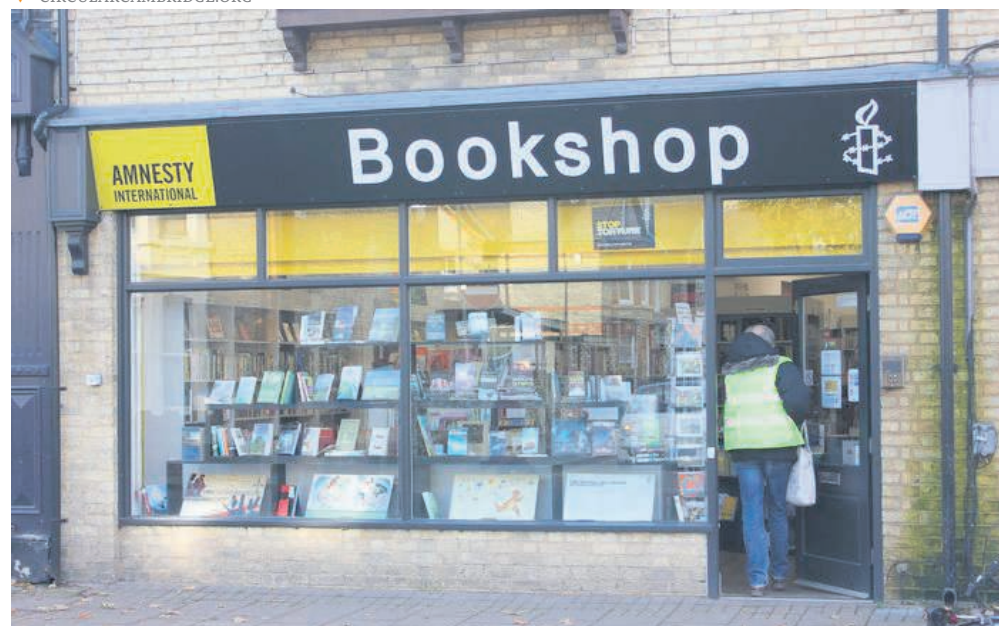
## Relevant Records

I know, I know – another Mill Road haunt (it's really not that far, promise!) Relevant Records is an uber-cool coffee shop and vinyl emporium. Set up in 2014 by a music and coffee loving husband and wife duo, this place is genuinely well worth checking out. It has a Shoreditch-esque feel to it, making it the perfect antidote to feelings of claustrophobia and stress that seem to permeate the city centre around week 5. It also stays open in the evenings and sells delicious cocktails with a fab 2 4 1 deal!

## Amnesty International Bookshop

For those looking for a more contemporary literary escape rather than an Antiquarian one – the Amnesty International Bookshop by Parker's Piece is really great. They have such a fantastic collection of fiction and non-fiction (and hold a surprising number of new publications) which are sold really cheaply. And of course, profits go to a really great cause.

▼ [CIRCULARCAMBRIDGE.ORG](#)



## Hodson's Folly

Hodson's Folly can be found around on the cycle from Homerton to Sidgwick through the Coe Fens. Though it isn't listed, it's known as a Building of Local Interest. The Folly was built in around 1897 and sits in a small gated plot of land by the river. It's an idyllic spot for picnicking, swimming, and watching the sunset in warmer weather

▼ [TWITTER/CAMCITCO](#)



“

*It's easy to feel as though we've seen it all, and feel a bit (I daresay) bored of what Cam has to offer*

”

“

*Cambridge is full of hidden gems: quiet corners and stunning views*

”



## MUSIC

## LGBTQ artists to watch this decade

As LGBTQ History Month comes to a close, **Kwaku Gyasi** looks to the LGBTQ artists of the future

Content note: This article contains mention of LGBTQ violence

The influence of artists from the LGBTQ community on popular music is great but also hard to quantify, especially because for much of music history, pressures put on entertainers has kept them in the closet, either to sell a family-friendly normativity or to maintain their safety. But in recent times, several artists are making waves, and even breaking into the mainstream, who feel emboldened to reflect our experiences in the work and proudly represent their community. As LGBTQ History Month draws to a close, it feels like an appropriate time to look to the future and consider the brightest queer and trans stars the music industry has to offer.

“  
Shea Diamond offers a perspective sorely needed in an industry which so often lacks substance  
”

For an artist who was adored by the legendary Prince, a notoriously discerning artist, it is a crying shame that **Janelle Monáe** isn't seen as the icon she is, a decade into her career. Her most recent offering *Dirty Computer*, accompanied with a visual she dubs an “emotion picture”, received universal acclaim upon release and a Grammy nomination for Album of the Year. The common thread running through her work is her penchant for concept albums, her exploration of Afrofuturism in her aesthetic and visuals and the broad range of musical influences, including funk, soul, gospel and dance-ready pop. In addition to her stellar discography, she holds undeniable power as a proud and visible Black, pansexual and non-binary performer.

Shea Diamond offers a perspective sorely needed in an industry which

so often lacks substance. With a deep, full tone to her voice and a sound rooted in soul, the singer addresses a vast range of topics in her lyrics, including the beauty of dark skin, a longing for a fairer world and her life before she began a career in music. In her very first single she recites, “There’s an outcast in everybody’s life, and I am her,” reflecting on the ways that our society marginalises her and other Black, trans women, singing with gravitas and duly-earned conviction. While she hasn’t released anything new since last summer, her music is available to stream and purchase on all major platforms. London-based artist **Rina Sawayama** is an eye-catching artist who also happens to be a Cambridge graduate. Influenced by 2000s-era rhythmic pop, her delicate yet agile voice is often stacked in airy harmonies which float over saccharine synths in much of her work. With fan-favourite single and music video “Cherry” the artist announced her bisexuality to her audience and extols the virtues of self-love, complete with expressive choreography and a soaring chorus. More recently, Sawayama released the nu-metal number “STFU!”, aimed at casual bigots who refuse to pipe down, as the lead single of her upcoming debut album *RINA* coming out this April.

“  
Karnage Kills is a force to watch, especially as other artists like him make room for themselves in the hypermasculine world of UK hip-hop  
”

The next artist has been drawing attention in his London hometown for a few years now, but hasn’t yet gained the widespread visibility he deserves. **Karnage Kills** is a trailblazer within grime as a fearless femme gay rapper. With throat-cutting bars which drip

with self-assurance and conviction, and a deft ability to flow over a variety of genres, the Grime Barbie is a force to watch, especially as other artists like him make room for themselves in the hypermasculine world of UK hip-hop. Among my personal favourites are the perennial “Hoe Diaries”, a summery hit reminiscent of the ‘90s where he runs down a list of his filthiest escapades, and new track “Vibes”, a chilled yet confident party tune. His mixtape *Game Over, Vol. 1* dropped earlier this month and is available to stream on Spotify and SoundCloud.

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Los Angeles native **Syd** can only be described as a hidden gem. Former lead vocalist of Grammy-nominated neo-soul band. Her timeless song “Body” is a strong contender for one of the greatest slow jams of the 21st century. She also lent her vocals to KAYTRANADA’s shimmering hit “You’re the One”, a queer dance floor anthem if there ever was one. The singer has confirmed a new solo album will arrive in the near future, and in the meantime, her debut effort *Fin* still sets her apart as an artist to watch, her warm voice floating over intimate bedroom R&B and slinking trap beats.

As the drag queen with the most Instagram followers in the world, surpassing even legends established for decades, it is surprising that many beyond Latin America are still unaware of **Pablo Vittar**. Her 2017 Carnival hit “K.O.” has already surpassed 350 million YouTube views, a remarkable feat in a country with alarmingly high rates of anti-LGBTQ violence. Her music blends traditional sounds from the Brazilian north-east from where she hails, with from trans-Atlantic future pop, which makes for anthems rooted in the summery horns and upbeat rhythms of Brazil but marked with a keen ear for global trends. Those plugged into the pop scene might have already noticed her collaborations with artists such as cupcakKe, Charli XCX and Diplo. At the tail end of last year, she released a four-track teaser EP featuring songs in Portuguese, Spanish and English, the second part of which is due this year.

◀ INSTAGRAM/JANELLEMONAE



# Violet

By VARSITY

## Adventures in validating apps

We need to stop swiping in our search for self-worth, writes **Rachel Imrie**

Whether done in a flash of drunken confidence or induced into action by a pint of ice cream and an ill-advised late-night rom-com marathon, the decision to join 'the apps' is almost always a fateful one.

Like every first time, the first time you decide to bare your soul via a witty one-line bio and relinquish yourself to the unfettered rejection of total strangers is always a deeply personal experience, one bound to be retold to future generations. One day, grandchildren will gather round the fire to hear of this early 21st century rite of passage, listening intently to grandma's various exploits with 'Joe - 6ft 2 if it matters' and 'Craig - Promise I'm not just a boring STEM student'. Grandma will sigh and say that Craig's admission was all for nought. Because he was just a boring STEM student. They always are.

When I say 'the apps', I do of course mean 'the app', Tinder. By now we're all familiar with its particular eccentricities, having abandoned what little concern we may have once had for our self-esteem and human decency upon downloading the beloved and bewitching little app. Whilst we previously might have thought it cruel to pass judgement over our fellow creatures with a callous flick of the thumb, or to

“Tinder's a konami code where the only Easter Eggs you can unlock are stilted small talk and the occasional trip to Spoons”

spontaneously decide to stop talking to someone in the middle of a light-hearted conversation, it's all now part of the game. And, indeed, it is a game.

Blue? Right. Snapchat filter? Yikes, left. Dated your best mate? Hard left. Right. Right. Left. Oh, I know him from my lectures! Right. It's a match! Brief dopamine high. Quickly realise that you've now created an unassailable awkwardness which means you can never make eye contact with him again. Shrug. Carry on. Left. Left. Left.

Tinder's a Konami Code where the only Easter Eggs you can unlock are stilted small talk and the occasional trip to Spoons. And that's only if you get to the really advanced levels.

If you do finally manage to 'complete' Tinder, there are other options. Bumble, and the more recent entry into the rather dismal scene, Hinge, both claim to be geared more towards actual relationships. Each allow you to apply various filters, like height and political affiliation, to find more appropriate matches. Who would have thought that applying the logic of ASOS sale shopping would be the key to uncovering my diamond in the rough?

Dating apps, no matter their individual marketing gimmicks and peculiarities, all offer their users a number of common benefits. Although there's always

“One day, grandchildren will gather round the fire to hear this 21st century rite of passage”



▲ Dating apps offer little more than a temporary ego boost (FLICKR)

the potential for a lasting relationship, at university at least, this is a story so rarely told that we know only how to tell it in either the ethereal imagery of fairy tales or the hushed whispers of hearsay.

Instead, it is the benefits which are much more easily accessed and exploited which we come to expect from our intermittent engagement with our apps: the endless stream of nearby singletons, the convenient access to company, and, most importantly, a sense of our own worth and attractiveness which is both tangible and measurable.

Whilst the short-term satisfaction of discovering that this attractive person finds us attractive is appealing, the feeling evidently does not last. If it did,

we may actually take pause from our swiping and invest some time into messaging that person. Instead, we remind ourselves that they need only find us attractive enough to move their thumb incrementally to the right over the left, that we ought to just uncover more matches to accumulate more self-worth coins - better that than face the rejection of them not messaging us back. With dating apps, more is always more.

Most of us have a somewhat unhealthy relationship with our apps and we know it. So, if dating apps are a game, perhaps the final boss is not attaining marital bliss as we might have previously thought, but overcoming our insatiable appetite for validation.

## It is time to give it up for our beloved bedders

**Sofia Johanson** leads us through some of the interesting encounters the most cherished of our staff members face when we are far from looking our best

For most of us, having someone come into your room on a daily or weekly basis to clean your room is a bit of a shock. How do you act around your bedder? Polite and formal or easy-going and friendly? How do you respond to their odd quirks? How do you apologise when your room resembles a WW2 bomb-site?

Fear not! The following anecdotes will make you realise whatever you do, or however you act, your bedder would prefer your stuttering awkwardness to what one bedder, let's call her Daniella, has to deal with.

Introducing her charges:

### Bio-hazard boy

He has the best room in college. So, it was only natural that, from Freshers' Week, every single pres would be hosted by him - which, as you can imagine, has had rather extreme consequences.

“As you can imagine, the smell, mist of sweat and unidentifiable substances don't make for pretty viewing at 9 am in the morning”

Both the sofa and the carpet have been 'redecorated' by various individuals who felt their dinner had got a little too comfortable in their stomachs. Rather than throwing away any remaining empty bottles of wine, vodka and whiskey (each to their own), the occupant decided to collect them, accumulating 74 so far.

His affectionate nickname has its origins in the two bio-hazard kits that were lovingly given to him by the porters in an effort to make some kind of improvement to his living situation. They were largely unsuccessful. As you can imagine, the smell, mist of sweat and unidentifiable substances don't make for pretty viewing at 9 am in the morning - nor does its occupant, who prefers not to shower after a night-out.

### Failed Acrobat

Next door to Bio-Hazard Boy lives this legend, who vastly over-estimated his agility on the stairs when some-

“[Bedders are] the most courageous, resilient work-force out there”

what inebriated. One five-hour trip to Addenbrooke's later and his shattered elbow and fractured and dislocated shoulder were wrapped up in a sling and he was unable to move from his bed. The occupant, in so much pain and setting up permanent residence on his mattress, had to urinate in a vase next to his bed. He was greeted a few hours later by his bedder who, a term and a half in, was hardly taken aback by this sight.

As an apology for the unbecoming nature of his person and his room, Failed Acrobat penned a poem to his bedder, including the line "thank you for keeping all our secrets". Their bond has never been tighter.

### Curtains

Across from Failed Acrobat sits one room the bedder does not dread. Its occupant feels panging guilt at the position she is placed in every Monday and Thursday morning as the boys fail to make themselves

or their surroundings in any way presentable. A beaming, apologetic smile is plastered on his face whenever she is around, and he makes triple the effort to ensure that Daniella has at least one charge who is vaguely sentient.

His greatest effort in preventing her pain came earlier this term, when Bio Hazard Boy succeeded in blocking their communal toilet and Curtains spent hours using washing up liquid and brute force in order to undo the damage, so that Daniella would not be greeted by such a terrifying sight.

So, there are those who make us cringe at their ineptitude and make us feel glad that we have not fallen into such situations (or down two flights of stairs), but there are beacons like Curtains who we should try and emulate in picking up the slack of our less considerate neighbours.

Overall, everyone agrees - bedders are the most courageous, resilient, and tolerant work force out there.



# Tiddlywinks Varsity flicks into action

Former Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club (CUTwC) President, **Zach Bond**, spills his cup on this year's Varsity

**O**n the afternoon of the 29th of February, Cambridge and Oxford go head to head in the only sports fixture worth talking about – Tiddlywinks.

But what is Tiddlywinks? Many students have never heard of this noble sport or seem to think it is some sort of Cambridge joke, but they would be far from the truth.

The modern game of Tiddlywinks was first invented in Christ's College on January 16th 1955. From humble beginnings the game became highly popular with as many as 37 Universities competing during the 60s for the "Silver Wink" trophy which was established by HRH Prince Philip.

The Oxford University Tiddlywinks Society (OTS) has recently been re-founded in 2019, its establishment followed CUTwS by three years, in 1958. As such, Tiddlywinks can resume its place amongst the Varsity pantheon.

The game is played on a 6ft by 3ft

felt mat on a table. Players start at each corner and take it in turns to fire a wink (a thin plastic counter) at a small pot in the centre of the mat. To motivate the winks a larger, thicker disk called a squidger is used in a swift and continuous motion. Players often have a range of squidgers which they use for different shots. Many players though will play most shots with their favourite squidger which they will have, undoubtedly, shaped and polished to achieve their own preferred edge.

Though the aim of the game is to get the winks into the pot (with a highly satisfying "plink" noise), the invention of the squop (a wink covered by an enemy wink) rule (rule 8.2 in the official English Tiddlywinks Association rules) has resulted in a game of fierce area control, the position of guards and other tactics to prevent winks from being squopped and therefore immobilised by the opponents. Tiddlywinks has evolved to become a sport where

skill and strategy are equally important but one which anyone can take part in.

Since 1959 the Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club (CUTwC) has played the Oxford University Tiddlywinks Society (OUTS) for the Varsity Cup. The team this year has a considerable reputation to uphold – CUTwC has only lost 5 times in total.

The team consists of 4 pairs of players who each play against the 4 pairs on the Oxford team. The points scored in each game are summed to give the final score (there are 7 points available in each game). The team with the most points then returns home to eternal Tiddlywink glory.

Absolutely enthralled by the above? Of course you are. Join the convoy and get yourselves along to Wadham College on the 29th! You'll be in for quite the show.

For more information see: [www.cutwc.org](http://www.cutwc.org)



▲ Cambridge's 2020 Varsity Squad: Left to Right – Top: Alexei Newton, Patrick Moore, Edward Green, Marc Mills, Zach Bond. Lower: Edward Brown, Sophie Brawn, Molly Birch. (MEGAN VAUGHAN)

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# Sport

## Former world champion Zoe Cunningham on the pedagogical power of backgammon

*Joseph Powell sits down with the Trinity alumnus to discuss teaching the game, Monte Carlo, and octopus banquets with David Cameron*



▲ Zoe Cunningham: managing director, actor and backgammon champion (ZOE CUNNINGHAM)

**Z**oe Cunningham is a real renaissance woman. When we meet on a cold Friday afternoon in London (a day after the General Election and its roller-coaster all night coverage, which she sensibly didn't bother with), she's on her lunch break from a day working at home in her capacity as a managing director of a software firm, where's she's been since graduating from Cambridge.

This is, however, only one of a broad collection of hats she wears. When she's not software-ing, she's acting, when she's not acting, she's producing, and when she's not producing she's writing. Despite this, it is another pursuit entirely I meet with her to discuss today.

Ten years back, Zoe was mingling with the Bond villains and billionaires of Monte Carlo at the 2010 World Backgammon Championship. "It looks very glamorous from the outside", she says of the tournament venue, "but you're just in some big room in a hotel with lots of boards so it really just feels like a school hall".

Setting was to prove no distraction, however. After multiple days of play Zoe was able to channel her mind - and her dice - to return to the UK with the World Women's Title, a sizeable trophy and a slightly less sizeable prize for her efforts.

For any unaware, backgammon is a millennia old board game which sees players race counters round a board - as determined by the rolling of dice - in an attempt to be the first to 'bear off', or remove all of their counters.

"The women's tournament was much smaller than the main competition and

I got lucky to get through the draw". As she states, however, backgammon, as a dice based pursuit, constitutes a game of 50% skill and 50% luck, thus as such, the emergence of good fortune is always a possibility.

She describes the final that secured her eternal Backgammon glory to me in what sounds like it could be a scene from any of the most gripping sporting epics. Having ably sidestepped the competition all over the 'school hall', she found herself in the final up against the wife of one of the main mixed gender competitions leading participants. Playing to seven points, her opponent managed to establish a six point lead at 6-0 leaving Zoe staring down the wrong end of a whitewash.

That was, however, until the psychological battle shifted in her favour. "You see it in all sports and particularly in those like snooker for example, when you're about to win and all those thoughts start going through your head you actually play worse".

Particularly so when external agents start helping the opposition. The aforementioned husband, clearly valuing his backgammon acumen above his wife's, opted to make his thoughts known on the game when his side was on the verge of winning.

"He obviously felt this moral imperative not to help her but he kept walking over and tutting or nodding at all of her moves". This was a sure fire recipe for a 'psyche out', and after losing several points Zoe witnessed the start of a 'tilt' in her opponent, a term most frequently used in poker to describe frustration at how the game has gone and a resulting anger which results in a player operating more emo-

tionally and less rationally.

Before long, the cracks started to show and the points tumbled with them. From the edge of glory, her opponent went on to lose seven points without reply and Zoe walked away victorious and into the backgammon history books. As well as receiving the prize, she now occupies a position few other Cantabs have reached as a former world champion of her discipline.

And yet it is a status that few in Cambridge and in the wider country would likely recognise her for. Backgammon does not enjoy the same standing in the UK as it does in those countries geographically closer to its origins, such as Iran, Turkey or Lebanon. Further afield, Japan and Ukraine have recently contributed world champions, and Denmark, Zoe informs me, now has a burgeoning backgammon scene as the result of a Carlsberg pro-

“  
I think backgammon is even more beneficial because it revolves around managing probability, risk and reward  
”

motion which saw branded boards sent to pubs across the land.

I ask why it seems this lag exists, asking if a sense of inaccessibility surrounds the game whose rules and scoring are sometimes seen as alien to UK crowds. "It's just like anything, until you have someone to show you how

to play it you won't pick it up".

For her, this came during her time at Trinity, where she and her sci-fi/board game-loving peers spent most evenings hunched over one game or another in the corner of a pub.

For many players of a new generation however, this familiarisation has come through online videos and computer programmes which have bought this millennia old game through 21st century media.

It's exactly amongst this next generation that she sees the game holding the most potential for. "There's a great organisation called Chess in Schools for Communities and chess teaches some really useful skills", she says, careful not to denigrate another member of this ever so tightly knit board game community. "But I think backgammon is even more beneficial because it revolves around managing probability, risk and reward".

It's a convincing argument. While ambitious parents, keen to give their kids an initial push in life, have long looked to the perhaps more outwardly intellectual game of chess, backgammon can offer practice in the management of unknowns and external forces invaluable in any business, she says.

"You can also pick it up much quicker as it's essentially like Ludo when you first play", a comparison which provides me with fond flashbacks to the 'popping' dice of my childhood set. "And in chess you will always lose to a stronger player, whereas in backgammon luck means you always have a chance".

One important aspect of backgammon's DNA complicates this task however. Much like Poker the

game is most frequently oriented around gambling, but when the game is played without any kind of wager it's players and processes function quite differently.

"When you play for money every point matters, and as soon as you don't have that, accumulating lots of points means very little". This can be countered by a modest wager of the gold bullion of children's currency, some sweets, in order to ensure minds are focused.

These considerations are however no longer at the top of Zoe's to-do-list. After a fateful reassessment of what she was doing and what she wanted to be doing at age 35, she threw herself into her childhood passion of performing. Fast forward to now, and after numerous screen performances and shows, the latter of which frequently involved her booking a venue herself and filling in the blanks later ("If you book something you're committed and you no longer have the choice not to do it"), she now looks forward to a busy 2020 which will include a run at the Edinburgh fringe and two feature film releases as both producer and actor.

In this realm, she's keen to emphasise the importance of building connections and networking (on which she's quite literally written the book, 'Networking Know-How'). "Work breeds work, so when you're working you meet more people and you're able to get more work again in the future", skills presumably honed away from a backgammon environment she describes as frequently terse and ill-tempered.

Before we part (and before I try and leech some of her wisdom through some speedy games of backgammon on her iPad at my insistence, in which I unsurprisingly fail to register a point) I ask her about one of the quirkiest aspects on what is an already eclectic CV. What was it like flying to China as part of a trade delegation led by then PM David Cameron as part of her software work?

"I didn't really get the chance to speak to David that much amidst many people sucking up to him" she says, evoking an image one can visualise without struggle. "But I did get to share in the experience of a six course Chinese delicacy buffet of pickled octopus and squid". On this resplendent image we head our separate ways.

Alas, one for my next backgammon lesson, perhaps.