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Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY

Cambridge commemorates fifth anniversary of Giulio Regeni's murder

Cameron White
Senior News Editor
Georgia Goble
News Correspondent

Content note: This article contains a brief mention of torture

The Cambridge community has this week commemorated Giulio Regeni following the fifth anniversary of his murder in Egypt.

In a statement from the University, Giulio is remembered as an “outward-looking scholar, brimming with intelligence, curiosity and compassion” who showed “commitment to human rights, to his parents and wider family.”

A virtual vigil was held for Regeni over Zoom on Sunday night (24/01), organised by Amnesty International Cambridge City Group (AICCG) and Cambridge UCU, and featuring statements from Vicky Blake, National President of the University and College Union (UCU), Daniel Zeichner, Labour MP for Cambridge, and Debora Singer, Amnesty International's Country Coordinator for Egypt.

Regeni was a doctoral student at Girton College who moved to Cairo in September 2015 to conduct research for a thesis on the Egyptian economy

and independent trade unions in the country.

The University's commemorative statement was released by Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Toope on Monday (25/01), describing Regeni's death as a “tragedy” and an “unbearable blow to his family and friends”.

“It horrified his university colleagues in Cambridge, Cairo, and across the global academic community. It was also an assault on the principle of academic freedom that underpins the work of all universities, and which Giulio embodied”, the statement continues.

The statement, which has so far received over 700 signatures from students and staff alike (as of 26/01), emphasises the ongoing need to “defend the principle of academic freedom”. It states that “the liberty to pursue independent research is a cornerstone of global scholarship” and that academics “should never be at risk of harm for following their intellectual curiosity, for collecting original data, or for seeking evidence to verify or challenge ideas.”

The statement adds that the signatories are “deeply troubled” by an “increasingly overt pattern” of “in-

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▲ Vigils have been held to commemorate Regeni since his murder in 2016 (ALISDARE HICKSON/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

USS retains investment in fossil fuels

Luke Hallam
Deputy News Editor

The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) retains substantial investments in oil and gas companies, despite a significant fall in the value of fossil fuel stocks

as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the start of 2020, the USS had direct investments in fossil fuels worth over £1 billion.

The scheme provides pensions for over 450,000 members working in higher education across the country, including

at the University of Cambridge.

According to information available on the USS website, the scheme had investments worth £86.35 million in Royal Dutch Shell Ltd. and £106.71 million in India-based Reliance Industries as of 30th September 2020.

Only figures for the USS' top 100 public investments are publicly available. In February 2020, there were a total of nine oil and gas companies in the list of top 100 investments. Shell and Reliance are the only companies that have not since dropped out of the list.

According to figures seen by Varsity, in February 2020 the investments in Shell were worth £498 million. Investments in oil and gas companies which have since fallen out of the top 100 include

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News

EDITORIAL

Prioritising Progress

The start of 2021 didn't exactly feel like a step forward. Although none of us expected the global situation to be patched up by the transition into the New Year, there was undeniably a glint of hope for some return to normality. The sharply rising COVID-cases, and loss of another Cambridge term, has proved that we still have a long way to go. Undoubtedly this period will continue to be, for everyone, staff and students alike, incredibly difficult: attempting to keep-up with the Cambridge workload, whilst our lives are marred by grief, social isolation and uncertainty, is not an easy feat.

It would also be disingenuous to pretend that we are all experiencing the same lockdown 3.0. The fallacy of the Cambridge bubble has certainly been exposed; the pandemic has only exacerbated existing inequalities, as those from marginalised and vulnerable backgrounds continue to face disproportionate burdens. The University and Departments must acknowledge these disparities and students' frustrations by pro-actively adopting some form of 'no detriment' policy.

However, despite all the challenges ahead, we should not write off 2021. In this issue, we want to highlight that even when our lives feel so stagnant, change can be forged. Take a look at our news stories, such as St Catharine's College raising over £12,000 in donations from 2020 May Ball ticket holders (pg. 6), or Target Oxbridge widening their reach to help 71 Black students gain Oxbridge offers (pg. 3). Progress is being, and must continue to, be made.

This progress must also be turned inward: take time away from your desk and be kind to yourself. This issue is an ode to returning to whatever gives you comfort: having a cosy chat with British actor Thomas Brodie-Sangster (pg. 14-15), watching *Bridgerton* (pg. 22) or reflecting on our favourite cultural pieces (pg. 21 and pg. 23).

During the coming months, we hope that Varsity will provide a small solace every fortnight - know that we are always here for you to come back to.

Georgie and Gaby xx

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▲ The University this week released a commemorative statement on Regeni which defended academic freedom (ASIAECICA/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

► Continued from front page

-timidation towards scholars and their scholarship”, referencing the arrest and detention in Cairo of Patrick Zaky, a postgraduate student from the University of Bologna, who was a researcher on gender and human rights.

The statement also references Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marchal, two French academics who were arrested in Iran and have been detained for more than 6 months, having lost a bid to be released on bail in December, as well as Kameel Ahmady, an anthropologist also arrested and sentenced in Iran.

The Guardian reported at the time of his death that Regeni had left his flat near Behoos metro station to visit a friend, and subsequently disappeared on 25th January 2016. His body was found nine days later in a ditch close to a desert highway between Cairo and Alexandria, displaying signs of torture, including broken ribs. An autopsy later revealed he had suffered from a brain haemorrhage.

Egyptian police initially claimed that Regeni died in a car accident, with contemporary media speculating that he had become entangled in a police raid against demonstrations marking the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Egyptian Revolution on 25th January 2011. However, Italian prosecutors in December 2020 charged four members of Egypt's national security agency for Regeni's murder and kidnapping.

The University “welcomed” the announcement late last year that Italian prosecutors had charged four Egyptian officials with Regeni's murder, but laments that they are still “far from knowing what happened to Giulio five years ago - and why.”

However, last month, Egypt's public prosecutor Hamada al-Sawy cleared the

four security officials - Tariq Saber, Athar Kamel Mohamed Ibrahim, Capt Uhsam Helmi and Maj Magdi Ibrahim Abdelal Sharif - charged by Italian authorities. An article from newspaper *Egypt Today* claimed that the charges were “the outcome of wrong deductions that do not align with reason or international criminal standards.”

The University statement concludes: “on the anniversary of his disappearance, we continue to stand alongside Giulio's family and friends in demanding truth and justice. We also stand, more firmly than ever, with a global academic community united in its call for academic freedom without fear of persecution.”

Blake spoke as the vigil's first external speaker, saying that the UCU “demand[s] justice for Giulio and for all of Egypt's disappeared”, and that the “pursuit of truth and justice for all is central to the mission of the trade union movement.”

Referencing a campaign in 2018 by UCU members at the Universities of Liverpool and Cambridge which saw the University of Liverpool scrap its plans to build a new branch in Egypt, for fear of “reputational damage”, Blake welcomed collaboration between UCU and Egyptian academic colleagues, but stressed that “we will not collude in any institutionalised effort to hide human rights abuses.”

Zeichner then followed on from Blake. He drew attention to an Adjournment Debate held by Rushanara Ali, Labour MP for Bethnal Green and Bow, in the House of Commons on 8th December 2020, which focussed on the arrest of human rights advocates in Egypt.

Zeichner said in the vigil that he “pressed ministers [...] to press hard to get the truth for Giulio” in an intervention during the Debate, and was pleased with the Minister's response. He added, however, that he was disheartened to

see, in a debate held on an Egyptian trade treaty with the UK weeks later, that the “Minister's response was much less impressive and was profoundly disappointing” when asked about making trade deals with Egypt as a country known for human rights abuses.

Zeichner argued that the UK should “use [its] influence to get to the truth about cases like [Regeni's murder].”

Singer then spoke, claiming that over the past year 50 people have died in Egyptian prisons and around 100,000 imprisoned - “most of them simply for speaking up for human rights.”

Singer also announced that Amnesty International would be releasing a report which highlights that “there's huge overcrowding” in Egypt's prisons, claiming that there are double the amount of prisoners to prison capacity.

She concluded her segment by suggesting that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has concerns over the image of Egypt abroad, saying that “this gives us hope that actions like this vigil now and continued campaigning can make a difference, so that people in Egypt can speak their minds without fear.”

A minute's silence was then observed by all participants on the Zoom vigil.

The commemoration of Regeni by those from Cambridge comes as *Euronews* reported this week (25/01) that the Regeni family had submitted a complaint to the Rome Public Prosecutor's Office over the sale of arms between Italy and Egypt. After Italy and Egypt agreed an arms deal estimated at £960m last June, the complaint accuses the Italian government of violating Italian law which “forbids the transfer of weapons to countries involved in a conflict or when it is known that human rights and humanitarian law violations are perpetuated.”

“We continue to stand alongside Giulio's family and friends in demanding truth and justice”

Target Oxbridge helps 71 Black students gain Oxbridge offers for 2021



▲ The number of offers made to Target Oxbridge students equals the record 71 offers made in last year's admission cycle, despite the pandemic (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Cameron White
Senior News Editor

Target Oxbridge has announced that it has helped 71 Black students earn Oxbridge offers for the 2021/22 academic year, with 34 offers made from the University of Oxford and 37 from the University of Cambridge.

The Target Oxbridge programme, which was created and is run by the diversity recruitment specialist and for-profit social enterprise Rare, aims to increase the representation of Black African students and those with Caribbean heritage at Oxford and Cambridge, usually by organising visits and holding in-person subject sessions with academics at the universities.

However, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, Target Oxbridge moved its programme online for the 2020/21 admissions cycle by hosting a series of

webinars, which included Q&A sessions with Target Oxbridge alumni currently studying at Oxbridge, lectures and seminars from Oxbridge academics, and information sessions with the admissions and outreach teams from each of the universities.

In spite of the pandemic, the programme has succeeded with its online provision, equalling its 2019/20 record of 71 students gaining an Oxbridge offer, with this year's numbers seeing an application to offer rate of over 40%.

Target Oxbridge now aims to double the support it offers to this year's Year 12 students, who will be applying in the 2021/22 admissions cycle, through the launch of Target Oxbridge Digital. This will see an additional 160 students benefit from online support and bring the total number of students supported by the programme to 320.

Isaac Diarrassouba, one of the 37

Black students from Target Oxbridge to receive an offer from Cambridge, was offered a place to study Computer Science at St John's College in 2021/22, and highlighted the importance of a maths masterclass and mentoring support offered by the programme in their application process.

"Target Oxbridge has been the single biggest help to my application. I found the maths masterclass [...] to be particularly useful as the feedback I received really helped me to address my weak points and I found the questions we were tackling to be extremely engaging", they said. "Without [Target Oxbridge] I would not have received an offer [,] I am extremely thankful for their help."

Diarrassouba added: "Applying for Target Oxbridge has changed my life and I hope it continues to do the same to [the] lives of others."

Meanwhile Rare's Senior Manager

for Schools and Universities, and Target Oxbridge founder Naomi Kellman, paid tribute to students' perseverance and the adaptation of the programme to the pandemic.

"I am absolutely delighted that over 70 Target Oxbridge students have received Oxbridge offers this year [...] I was concerned about the impact the pandemic would have on our students' ability to apply to university [but] I have been blown away by the hard work and resilience of our students and am very pleased that they have secured such success", she added.

Jon Beard, Director of the Cambridge Admissions Officer, also praised the achievement of students in gaining an offer in "extraordinarily different times", adding that "this is testament to the students' ability and we are delighted that the Target Oxbridge programme has been able to support them as they plan their futures."

Reacting to Target Oxbridge's announcement, Cambridge SU's BME Officer told *Varsity* that "these results highlight the importance of targeted programmes of support for underrepresented groups, and would not have been possible without the dedication of students and student societies such as ACS [Cambridge University African Caribbean Society]."

They added that they "hope the University builds on these successes by working with Cambridge SU to better support student-led access projects and expanding its widening participation priorities to include post-admissions support and access at the post-graduate level, for example."

Target Oxbridge's achievement in this admissions cycle follows Cambridge's admission of a record number of 137 UK-based Black undergraduate students last year, making up 4.6% of the 2020/21 cohort.

► Continued from front page

a combined £234 million in US-based companies Pioneer Natural Resources and EOG Resources, and £110 million in Sweden-based Lundin Petroleum.

When asked to explain the decrease in the value of USS investments in oil and gas companies leading up to September 2020, a USS spokesperson told *Varsity*: "The global stockmarket was heavily affected by the pandemic with oil and gas stocks specifically being hit by the impact of lockdowns and travel bans in many parts of the world."

The spokesperson said the USS does "not exclude oil or gas companies" from its investments. But they pointed to the fact that in June the USS committed to divesting from companies involved in tobacco manufacturing, thermal coal mining, and the production of controversial weapons within two years.

"We believe that climate change will have a profound impact on society and on the value of investment portfolios," the spokesperson continued.

They added that instead of ruling out investments in coal and gas, "we would rather seek to influence those who, at a regulatory or corporate level, are playing a critical role in bringing about a

lower carbon economy."

The spokesperson noted that the USS is part of the Climate Action 100 Group, which has successfully pressured Shell to pledge to become a net-zero emitter by 2050.

However, members of the campaign to Divest USS have repeatedly accused the USS of voting against shareholder motions to encourage fossil fuel companies to divest.

In June 2020, Professor William Spence of Queen Mary University wrote that "documents on the USS website itself show that in every single motion relating to climate change at Shell AGMs since 2010, the USS has voted with the company."

Meanwhile, in a letter seen by *Varsity*, Professor Paul Kinnersley of Cardiff University wrote to Dame Katharine Barker, the USS Chair, upon her appointment in January 2020, that the USS "has not made a clear commitment to avoid investment in high carbon activities in the future and has voted repeatedly against shareholder motions at the AGM pressing Shell to comply with the Paris Agreement."

Professor Kinnersley told *Varsity* that there is "no evidence" to suggest that the USS has adopted an ethical invest-

ment policy regarding oil and gas. He said: "I think students should be making a big noise about USS's investments in fossil fuels as it is your fees that fund the staff pensions ... if these funds are accelerating climate change then it is also the students who will suffer the consequences."

The Cambridge SU's Ethical Affairs campaign told *Varsity*: "We disagree with staff pensions being used to fund the destructive and ecocidal fossil fuel industry and stand in solidarity with staff and students fighting to divest the USS. While the University of Cambridge divestment [pledge in October 2020] was a welcome (but long overdue) step in the right direction, we urge the University to lobby against USS investment in fossil fuels."

They continued: "The climate justice themed day in the last round of UCU strikes is evidence that the fight for fair pensions and for climate justice go hand in hand. Our University must not exploit its staff or the planet, which is why we also call for the protection of staff pensions (alongside better pay and fair working conditions) which we believe can be achieved without USS investment in fossil fuels."

Elsewhere, the University of Bristol

issued a joint statement with Bristol UCU and the University of Bristol's Students' Union in February 2020 calling for the USS to divest.

The letter argued that: "USS' current investments in fossil fuel companies are supporting activities that pose a material risk to our planet. This element of USS' investment strategy appears to be contrary to the USS Trustees' claim that the 'scheme is run on a sustainable basis'."

A University of Cambridge spokesperson told *Varsity*: "it is for the trustee of the USS (and any other trust-based pension scheme) to determine the investment policy for the scheme."

Between 2018 and 2020, staff and students in Cambridge engaged in successive rounds of strike action in protest against increases in employee pension contributions and controversial valuations of the USS.

In 2019, Trinity College announced that it would leave the USS in favour of administering its own pensions scheme, a move which was widely condemned by staff, unions, and students.

Varsity has contacted Cambridge UCU for comment.

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News

The winners of tripos-hopping

Amy Howell
Senior News Editor
Iona Fleming
News Correspondent

An investigation by *Varsity* into student subject transfers has found that Management Studies was the most popular subject to transfer into, followed by Natural Sciences, while Engineering lost the largest number of students.

According to data obtained by *Varsity*, 668 successful subject transfers were made between October 2017 and June 2020.

The transfer process requires students to approach their tutor or Director of Studies (DoS) to discuss their options. Their tutor or Director of Studies can then contact the Director of Studies in the other subject to proceed with the transfer.

Deputy Editor Meike Leonard, who switched from Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (AMES) to History and Politics after her first year, called her experience “straightforward,” but added that it would have been “less stressful” if “switching courses was better advertised.”

This data investigation follows on

from a 2018 investigation by *Varsity* which found that Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS) was the most popular subject for student subject transfers between October 2006 and June 2017.

According to the data, Management Studies is the most popular subject for students to transfer into, with 115 transfers into the subject between 2017 and 2020, compared to just 2 transfers out. Management Studies is only offered as a Part II course, meaning students can apply to transfer in after two or three years of studying another subject.

Meanwhile, Engineering lost the largest number of students over the three year period, with 111 transfers out and 32 transfers in, giving the subject an overall change in the number of students of -79, compared to +113 for Management studies.

HSPS - which was hailed as the “biggest winner in subject transfers” in the 2018 *Varsity* investigation, gaining 67 students overall between October 2013 and June 2017 - gained 36 students overall, with 31 transfers out and 67 transfers into the tripos. As a result, it retains its title as the most popular humanities subject to transfer into.

Other popular subjects for students to transfer into included Natural Sciences, which had 106 transfers in compared to 64 transfers out. Manufacturing Engineering saw 94 transfers in and three transfers out.

Engineering to Manufacturing Engineering was the most popular subject transfer combination, with 91 transfers, followed by Mathematics to Natural Sciences, with 40 transfers.

Meanwhile, some subjects saw very little change in their overall numbers: both Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion (TRPR) and History and Modern Languages (HML) gained as many students as they lost through the student transfer process. TRPR lost and

gained one student, and HML also lost and gained four students.

In total, 48 students transferred out of Mathematics and 25 transferred in. However, transfers from Mathematics to humanities subjects such as Modern and Medieval Languages (MML) and Music were very low, with one transfer into each.

While most students transfer between closely related subjects, there have been some cases of students switching between very different courses. Combinations include transfers from History of Art to Natural Sciences, Maths to MML and Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic (ASNaC) to Management Studies.

“I had a really positive experience of

▼ This follows on analysis of 2006-17 data by *Varsity* in 2018 (LOUIS ASHWORTH)



+ 113
MANAGEMENT STUDIES

+ 91
MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING

+ 42
NATURAL SCIENCES

+ 36
HSPS

▲ The four subjects with the highest overall change in student numbers.



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“ I think it’s slightly absurd that students are expected to know what they want to study for 3-4 years of their lives at the age of 17 ”

changing tripos at Christ’s,” Arran Parry-Davies, who transferred from Education to HSPS in 2019, told *Varsity*. “I approached my DoS and tutor in Lent term and it was all sorted out very quickly and I was given a chance to talk it through with the DoS of the subject I was intending to switch to.”

“I’ve heard stories from other colleges of tripos changes being a lot more challenging and I think greater transparency and consistency between colleges is really needed in the future,” Parry-Davies told *Varsity*.

AMES had 33 transfers out of the subject, and only one transfer into the tripos. Meanwhile, History and Politics gained 11 students and lost seven.

Leonard recalled being set a politics

essay and attending a supervision before being permitted to transfer courses. She was also required to submit a history essay written during her first year.

“Overall all parties were very kind and helpful... I know some of my friends who have also switched courses have had a more difficult time with it, and I definitely think my college (Murray Edwards) is partly responsible for how smooth it was.”

“I think it’s slightly absurd that students are expected to know what they want to study for 3-4 years of their lives at the age of 17,” Leonard said. “I obviously didn’t, and it was only through quite a lot of effort [and] investigating on my part that I was able to begin the process at all.”

ARCHAEOLOGY King’s College excavate medieval burial ground

An archeological dig at Croft Gardens has unearthed an extensive medieval burial ground. King’s College, who plan on building new graduate accommodation at the site, conducted an archeological investigation of the site with a team from Albion Archeology. They have found over 60 graves, dating mostly from the early Anglo-Saxon period (c. 400–650 CE). The burials were furnished with “grave goods including bronze brooches, bead necklaces, glass flasks, weapons, and pottery.” King’s hope that the carefully excavated graves will provide “rich information about burial habits.”



▲ An archaeological dig at King’s College has uncovered a medieval burial ground (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

RESEARCH Is Social distancing enough?

Recent research has suggested that social distancing measures are “inadequate” without good ventilation and protective face masks. Researchers from the University of Cambridge and Imperial College London have used mathematical models to quantify the role of ventilation in different indoor spaces. According to the researchers, in poorly ventilated areas, the accumulation of small droplets expelled through prolonged talking is more likely to spread the virus than through coughing. The tool is “now a requirement for any higher-risk spaces at the University.”

CAMBRIDGE New festival to celebrate University’s research

The University of Cambridge have announced that the brand new Cambridge Festival is set to take place between 26 March and 4 April this year. The Festival, which is replacing the Cambridge Science Festival and the Cambridge Festival of Ideas, will be completely free! It will have four themes: Society, Health, Environment and Explore. With over 350 events including panel discussions and film premieres, the topics of the Festival will aim to cover Cambridge research across these four themes. It will offer activities for families to try at home.

MEDIA Netflix and Cambridge University combine forces

Netflix researchers have reportedly searched the Cambridge University Library archives for their new series, *Surviving Death*. Netflix explored the archives of the Society for Physical Research (SPR), which was founded in 1882 by academics who wanted to investigate the idea of psychic activity scientifically. The SPR was a popular society, with notable members such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Their archives are extensive, containing items which the society believed to be evidence of psychic activity. The Netflix series aims to explore the question of an afterlife with an unbiased stance.

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Interviews: 11th and 12th February 2021

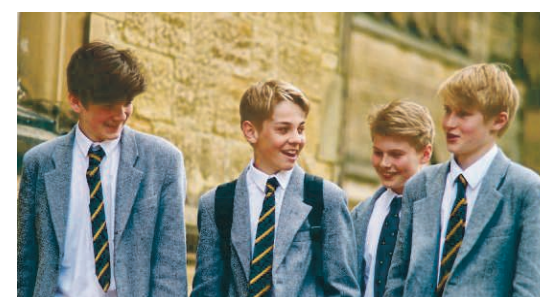
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Tonbridge School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure & Barring Service.



News

St Catharine's raises over £12,000 from 2020 May Ball ticket holders

Cameron White
Senior News Editor
Jolyn Koh
News Correspondent

St Catharine's College announced on its website (20/01) that they have suc-

cessfully raised a total of £12,237.75 from donations made by ticket holders who where due to attend its cancelled 2020 May Ball.

The biennial event, and all May Balls and June Events across Cambridge, were cancelled and postponed due to public

health regulations imposed in the earlier stages of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Through the combined efforts of the College's May Ball Committee, JCR, MCR and management, ticket holders could either obtain a full reimbursement, or donate the partial or full price of their

ticket. Donations were collected from a total of 227 ticket holders, with eleven individuals choosing to donate their refunds entirely.

Last year's cancellations and postponements saw the emergence of the student-led initiative, The Big MAC,

which worked with the University, The May Ball Presidents' Committee and Cambridge RAG to collect May Ball ticket refunds for donations to two charities: The Cambridge Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (CSER), a research centre at the University of Cambridge studying extinction-level threat, and Addenbrooke's Charitable Trust, a charity supporting innovation and improvement in patient care across Addenbrooke's and the Rosie hospitals.

The Big MAC Appeal chose the two charities based on a survey issued to 200 Cambridge students, who indicated a preference for donations of proceeds to "Covid-related, co-benefit and local charit[ies]". Hence, fundraising proceeds will support ongoing research at the CSER, of which includes the study of pandemics.

Proceeds will also help improve Addenbrooke's response capacity during Covid-19 with the purchase of equipment for its Intensive Care Units and in improving support for hospital staff.

According to a counter on its website, the Appeal raised £24,000 (as of 25/01/21).

A spokesperson for the 2021 Pembroke May Ball Committee told *Varsity* that the College raised £6,415.25 through donations to the Big MAC Appeal.

In addition to CSER and Addenbrooke's Charitable Trust, St Catharine's College has also donated proceeds to two other charities: Jimmy's Cambridge, which seeks to provide aid for individuals experiencing homelessness, and Sahabat Anak, which aims to increase education access to disadvantaged children in Indonesia.

In a College statement, Alex Denny, May Ball President, commented: "The Committee is absolutely delighted to be able to support four charities that are especially important at the moment: whether tackling homelessness, improving access to education or responding to Covid-19, the work of these charities make a huge difference. We cannot thank our ticket holders enough for their kindness."

Helen Hayward, Operations Director and May Ball Fellow, also thanked "the patience and ongoing support of ticket holders" in the online statement.

Between 27th April and 3rd September 2020, the College partnered with Cambridge Women's Aid, a charity that supports domestic abuse survivors, in order to provide a total of 1,456 nights of accommodation for 23 women and children escaping domestic violence over the summer.

The College's JCR also undertook its '#AWheelyLongWay' challenge recently, which saw students travel a combined distance of 5,000 kilometres and raise £385 for the Yemen Crisis Appeal organised by CARE International.

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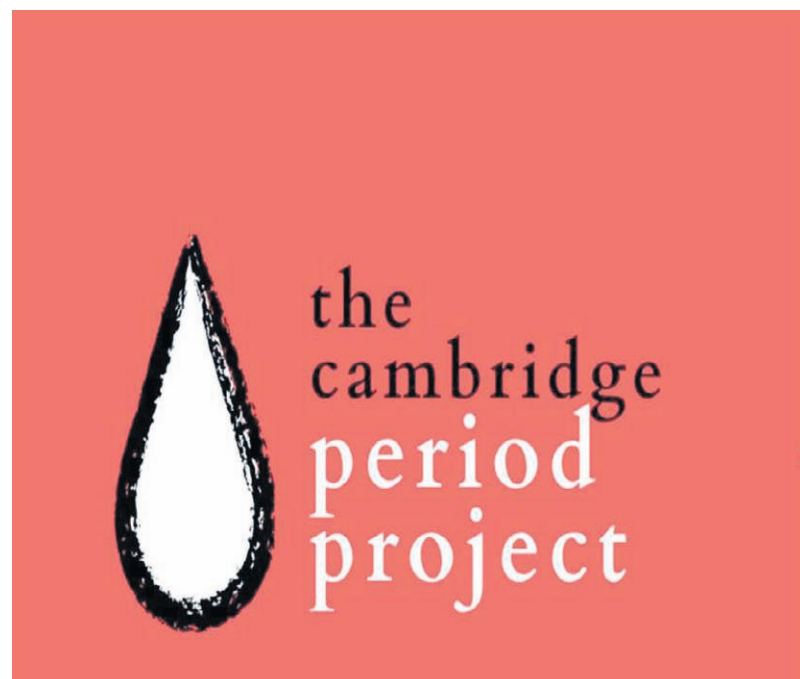
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Bloody poor access: Open letter demands free menstrual products across University



▲ A survey of 630 students from all 31 colleges found that over half of respondents were unaware of any free menstrual products available to them (THE CAMBRIDGE PERIOD PROJECT)

Gaby Vides
Editor

The Cambridge Period Project and SU Women's Campaign last night (28/01) released an open letter calling on the Collegiate University to "take action to ensure fair access to menstrual products for all Cambridge students."

The open letter is addressed to Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope as well as the Heads of the 31 colleges.

In addition to the open letter, the Project and SU Women's Campaign will be submitting a paper to the University's Student Wellbeing Committee, calling for free menstrual products in all faculty and department toilets and writing a bid for the College Levies Panel to obtain funding for a central SU menstrual product scheme.

Chloe Newbold, the Students' Union Women's Officer, explained to *Varsity* the reason for this two-pronged approach as an attempt to resolve the "current inconsistencies across colleges and the burden placed on college women's officers in running these schemes."

Citing the UK government's scheme of providing free period products to students in all English primary and secondary schools, the letter calls on the Collegiate University to, like Scottish universities, provide free period products in their toilets.

The letter makes four demands: firstly, that free menstrual products are provided freely in the toilets of college buildings; that free menstrual products are available in the toilets of university departments and faculty buildings; that free menstrual products are accessible in toilets for all genders and lastly, that free single-use menstrual products are available that have a minimal environmental impact.

The letter follows the Project's col-

lection of data on Cambridge students' access to menstrual products. The Project conducted surveys of 630 students, across all 31 colleges, as well as surveying JCR and MCR women and welfare representatives.

The Project attributes the difficulty in accessing products or knowledge of the products to the "poor implementation of existing schemes". The Project also emphasised to *Varsity* the "huge variability" in the budget for, and method of provision of, free menstrual products.

In their survey of JCR and MCR officers, it was found that budgets vary year-on-year, tending to range from £50 to £2,000 on an annual basis.

The survey of students found that 51.6% of respondents find purchasing period products to be a financial burden, with 12.5% of respondents experiencing this burden persistently.

Addressing this financial burden, the open letter states that "given the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, now it is more important than ever to support those suffering from period poverty. Nobody should ever be forced to decide between buying menstrual products or buying food and other necessities."

While the survey found that 85% of colleges provide free menstrual products to their students, only 44.9% of respondents to the Project's survey felt these products were accessible or knew at all about the availability of them. This means over half of students were unaware of the availability of free menstrual products in their college.

In some colleges, the Project found that "free menstrual products are kept in locked cupboards or need to be requested from porters", stressing that these "methods of delivery are outdated, perpetuate the massive stigma surrounding menstruation and do not adequately

support menstruating students."

Highlighting the detrimental effects lack of access to menstrual products has on the physical and mental wellbeing of women, as well as their life opportunities, the letter states: "By failing to support its students in accessing free menstrual products, the University and 31 colleges are failing to live up to their wider efforts to encourage accessibility and wider participation in higher education."

The letter continues: "Without access to menstrual products, students will find themselves unable to fully take advantage of all the opportunities available in Cambridge. Further steps must be taken on period poverty in order to foster optimal learning environments and promote student wellbeing."

The SU Women's Officer emphasised to *Varsity* that the Students' Union will continue to "push for consistent provisions for all menstruating students, and greatly welcome any efforts for greater access to menstrual products both in Cambridge and the wider community."

She continued to stress that the University "must absolutely respond to the points raised in our open letter and consider menstrual provision central to their efforts to creating a barrier-free education for all students."

The Cambridge Period Project, established by the Students for Global Health's Sexual & Reproductive Health Subcommittee, was launched last week to seek to reduce the risks of period poverty both for Cambridge students and the local community.

Lydia Seed, co-chair of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Subcommittee, told *Varsity* that she wanted to start the Project after conducting surveys of JCR and MCR officers.

These surveys made her realise that a "'period postcode lottery' exists within our University whereby the level of support provided for students who menstruate varies immensely across the colleges."

The Subcommittee

"A period postcode lottery exists within our University whereby the level of support provided for students who menstruate varies immensely."

tee furthered that "having a period is not a choice. Menstrual products are essential for 50% of the population. Period poverty is detrimental to people's physical health, mental health and wellbeing, and overall life opportunities. We hope to bring about meaningful action within our university and the local community to support people who menstruate and reduce period poverty in Cambridge."

A survey conducted last year by Plan International found that 3 in 10 women between the ages of 14 and 21 had issues either affording or accessing sanitary wear in lockdown with over half of these women reporting to having used toilet paper as an alternative to period products.

Meanwhile, Blood Good Period, a charity which supplies free period products to those in need, urged students in November to write to their vice-chancellors to highlight the issue of period poverty among students.

The University was contacted for comment.

Features

My Judaism, the Holocaust and the collective power of remembrance

Varsity Editor **Gaby Vides** marks this year's Holocaust Memorial Day with an urgent call for remembrance, exploring her own family history and the continued prevalence of antisemitism



▲ My aunt visited Ninth Fort near Kaunas – the site of the largest massacre of Lithuanian Jews in the Holocaust. (MICHELLE DIGE)

Content note: Detailed discussion of the Holocaust, genocide and mass murder

Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption,” are the words that guide your exit as you leave Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem. Remembrance has always been a central facet of the Jewish faith: On Pesach we remember the persecution of the Jews in Egypt, during Chanukah we light the candles to remember the miracle of the oil and we are even reminded in the Torah to remember Shabbat.

This Wednesday marked Holocaust Memorial Day, a day of remembrance for the millions of individuals who were persecuted during the Holocaust as well as those lost in other, more recent, genocides. In the immediate aftermath of World War Two, against the backdrop of gas chambers, concentration camps and ghettos, the true horrors of the Holocaust, and unchecked antisemitism, were exposed. Jews, turning to the power of collective memory, made a plea to current and future generations: Remember.

Every year my family lights a candle, reciting the name of a young Jewish child who was murdered by the Nazis. While reading the names, I would imagine these children, their families and their life before the Holocaust.

When I was 11 years old, the name I read out was of Dina – she died in a concentration camp when she was 11. The intangibility of the scale of Nazi persecution was made acutely simple

when reciting these names – I could vividly imagine Dina with braids in her hair, helping her mother to cook in the kitchen of their house in Lodz. The day before I too had baked a chocolate cake with my mother from my great grandmother Lida's recipe book. The cookbook was put together by the Jewish community living then in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – my family, alongside many other Jews in Bulawayo at the time, had worked in the Kapulski bakery in Lithuania and the cookbook was a means to maintain their connection with this past. The lines connecting Dina and I were merely a few generations; our shared identity as young Jewish girls mediating this time.

Dina was born the same year as my grandfather, or Morfar as we called him. My Morfar is considered one of the lucky ones: He survived. My great grandmother left Lithuania with three small children in 1938. My great grandfather had left a year earlier to South Africa in order to make money to send back to the family so they could afford to travel with the necessary documents to conceal their Jewish identities. Lida had used essentially all their money to ensure the family could flee Lithuania before the Nazis arrived; they took trains through Poland, Germany, France and then a boat to the UK. Along their journey, her documents, and falsified Christian identity, were scrutinised numerous times by the Nazis. My Morfar was unable to speak for the entirety of this three-week journey, as any possibility that they were heard talking in Yiddish could mean being discovered and arrested.

After arriving in the UK, Lida discovered that the last boat to South Africa had already set sail and the family was stranded for a year. In the meantime, my great grandpa had been told the boat had sunk and no one had survived. My Morfar eventually made it to South Africa in 1940 and was united with his father.

If my great grandparents had not managed to leave Lithuania, my grandfather's fate would have been very similar to Dina's. Ultimately almost 95% of Lithuania's Jewish population were exterminated over the course of the Nazi's three-year occupation – more than 40 members of my grandfather's extended family being among this unimaginable destitution of life. Most of my family either died early on in the ghettos, were taken to Stutthof concentration camp in Poland or were murdered at Ninth Fort

near Kaunas – the site of the largest massacre of Lithuanian Jews in the Holocaust.

My grandfather never spoke about the Holocaust; perhaps he was too traumatised, or maybe he simply wanted to forget. My mum only has faint memories of an aunt who suffered from PTSD – she was smuggled out of the Kaunas ghetto in a potato sack early on in the Nazi's occupation of Lithuania.

My grandfather passed away nearly 10 years ago and with him small stories of our family during the genocide were also lost. It was only through writing this article and speaking to my own aunt who has travelled through Lithuania, tracing our family's movements during the war, that I was told these personal stories of annihilation and murder.

As we lose the generation who witnessed the unprecedented atrocities of the Shoah first-hand, we do not have the luxury of being complacent. With the intensification of 'fake news' and conspiracy theories in recent years, the poison of Holocaust denial continues to spread and gain legitimacy – a survey released last year on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz revealed that over half of American's were unaware that 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust.

We must remember that antisemitism is insidious until it is not.

Remembering is not a passive, nostalgic activity in Judaism; collective memory is fundamental to our survival. And as Jews, there is a lot to remember. We have been persecuted throughout history. Simultaneously, we have been the omnipotent, manipulating puppeteer, controlling the levers of power through our capitalist zealotry, and the 'inferior race', a backward, untrustworthy people seeking to corrupt society. These antisemitic tropes, with deep historical roots in Medieval Europe, helped to precipitate the horrors of the Holocaust, and to be clear, have

not disappeared since.

Throughout my teenage years, I've borne witness to new, as well as very old expressions of antisemitism: Comments on Facebook pages calling for Jews to return to gas chambers; a teacher insinuating my sister was stingy because of her faith; neo-Nazis chanting "Jews will not replace us" in Charlottesville, and then the President of the United States saying this group included 'very fine people'; Jeremy Corbyn denouncing the EHRC report on Labour antisemitism, claiming that the party's antisemitism problem was "dramatically overstated for political reasons", thus continuing to deny Jews our right in defining our own experiences of antisemitism – the list could go on and on.

“We must remember that antisemitism is insidious until it is not.”

For me, the Holocaust is profoundly personal: It is my family's history, it is my faith's history and it is my own history. There is a strange sense of foreboding in remembering the Holocaust – the final solution was intended to be just that: Final. Hitler intended to destroy all Jewry; if successful, myself, my family and my Jewish friends were targets of this eradication.

Antisemitism has its claws deeply fastened in our society. Jews are scared – we are telling you antisemitism is anything but vanquished.

So, this Holocaust Memorial Day, I urge you to listen to us – and for Dina, for my grandfather, for all Jews lost and all Jews living, please remember.



◀ My grandfather passed away nearly ten years ago and with him small stories of our family during the genocide were also lost. (GABY VIDES)

Reflections on the Cam

Anna Stirk describes the personal significance of Hodson's Folly, a place where she found peace and quiet in the midst of the chaos of Cambridge



▲ "I would sit by the river or perch on the windowsill of the folly" (ROSIE CADDY)

I first found Hodson's Folly in Sheep's Green as a fresher, seeking a place of calm and quiet during the frenetic first few weeks of term. Just a few hundred metres from Fen Causeway and Trumpington Street, this abandoned old concrete structure feels a world away from the Cambridge bubble and all its attendant stresses. The Cam flows by slowly, a few people might walk along the path on the opposite bank of the river, but it's rare to see anyone else in Hodson's Folly itself, separated as it is from Sheep's Green by a bramble-covered brick wall.

When I moved to Cambridge in October 2019, I was prepared for the academic challenges I would face. However, I did not expect to struggle so much with the city aspect of life at university. The village where my home is has four street-lights and one shop, and my dislocation to this urban area made me feel that, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, flowers are as common at home as people are in Cambridge, if not more so.

It wasn't a sense of isolation, exactly - more a feeling of constant tension, or being hemmed in. Cambridge is beautiful, but it's a very different kind of beauty to what I was used to. Doing circuits of Parker's Piece doesn't provide the same freedom as an hour's walk through the woods without seeing anyone, to put it lightly.

This left me seeking somewhere that could remind me of home, where sheep congregate at the bottom of the garden and vehicles clank over cattle grids all day. Obviously, there was nowhere in Cambridge which perfectly replicated the sights and the sounds of home, but Sheep's Green came the closest. I would sit by the river or perch on the windowsill of the folly, listening to music and

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trying to block out the noise of the city at my back. It wasn't the same, but it helped enormously to pretend that I was at home, away from the hustle and bustle of Cambridge and all its expectations and pressures.

In my first two terms at Cambridge, walking to Sheep's Green and sitting in the folly for a few minutes of peace was a luxury. By Michaelmas 2020, it became a necessity.

We all grew accustomed to the routine of daily walks during the first lockdown, but the November period of confinement meant that outdoor exercise took on a new social importance. I walked round Coe Fen and Sheep's Green countless times last term, with a rotating cast of companions. Bringing new people to this place, 'introducing' them to it, felt like sharing a fundamental part of my life in Cambridge. After several outings with one friend, we started bringing Trivial Pursuit questions with us because the surroundings had lost almost all novelty.

Despite this newfound social role of the folly, I continued to return to Sheep's Green and the folly by myself, sitting and watching the water drift past when the merry-go-round of the Cambridge existence became too much. Having a retreat from it all, a reminder that there's more to life than deadlines and COVID tests and Zoom meetings, was essential in this period of unwanted isolation. On one particularly miserable day, I went to the folly and sat on the sill of an empty window for an hour. It was a cold, grey day, with the sun half-set by the time I left the house to seek refuge. For that one restorative hour, I watched a line of ducks swim past, their movements sending little waves rippling across the water, while the autumn leaves fell onto

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the steadily swaying river.

This stretch of the Cam is not solely somewhere to which I withdraw in times of angst. At the very end of Michaelmas term, a friend and I made the spontaneous decision to go swimming in the Cam - specifically the Paradise Local Nature Reserve section, just upstream from Hodson's Folly. About ten minutes after her final supervision of term, we made our way to the river and, telling ourselves firmly that we were not regretting our decision, jumped in.

Of course, it was freezing - what else would you expect from Cambridge in December? - but, with the right attitude, it was refreshing, even enjoyable. This was one of the last memories I have from Michaelmas 2020, and one of the best of the entire term. With Lent term online and Easter looking uncertain, I'm glad I took the time to commemorate Sheep's Green and the folly. University is about the people you meet, but it's also the places you discover.

I mentioned before that Sheep's Green was like a piece of home in Cambridge during my first year. Since spending significantly more time at home, where the sight of fields and cows is mundane rather than reassuring, I have missed the folly and what it represents. Surrounded by nature, it is easy to find a similar river or stream, but not so simple to imbue it with the same significance.

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Opinion

Big Tech vs. Free Speech: the Republicans will be fine, but democracy might not be

Toby Mayhew

In an unprecedented move, most major social media sites, including Twitter and Facebook, have removed Donald Trump from their platforms after he made a series of statements encouraging the storming of the Capitol. This divisive decision has prompted wider discussion about the politicisation of Big Tech, and the impact this has on our everyday lives – and our democracy. Whilst many have praised the ban, others, including Ted Cruz and Devin Nunes, have used their own large platforms to complain about the silencing of Republican voices. We are now once again embroiled in an age-old debate: where should we draw the line between free speech and hate speech?

Freedom of speech is one of our most fundamental democratic rights. But we must be clear that this freedom does not extend to inciting violence. Trump's statement "If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore" clearly encouraged the violence that occurred on 6th January and added fuel to the fire of his pre-existing hateful comments and misinformation, which have caused many to wonder why his account wasn't banned before.

In fact, by using his freedom of speech in this way, Trump has limited that of

those who want to criticise him but fear the mob whipped up into a frenzy by his words. Many members of Congress outspoken against Trump, such as Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, have described fearing for their lives on the day of the attack; indeed, five people died. One person's right to 'freedom of speech' should not supersede another's right to life.

Of course, to state the obvious, social media sites are private companies and so, just as the Louvre isn't suppressing our freedom of expression by not displaying our Year 5 artwork, Twitter has no requirement to keep us on its platform if we contravene its rules. Alex Jones' account was permanently suspended in 2018, and Twitter has intervened regarding Donald Trump Jr's account in the past, temporarily suspending him for spreading misinformation about coronavirus. Banning Trump is not a deliberate deviation intended to suffocate the Republicans, but a move consistent with the site's previous actions and terms of service.

To my mind, there is no question that Trump deserves to have been banned – I am simply surprised it actually happened. The crackdown on anti-Semitic and white supremacist accounts that has accompanied this decision could

and should have been implemented years ago: in Germany, in order to comply with anti-hate speech laws, Twitter already has policies dedicated to weeding out such accounts. The site previously had a policy of keeping elected officials on the platform due to 'public interest', yet only now, at the end of Trump's time in office, has Big Tech shown itself willing to properly commit to recognising what 'public interest' really means.

Those who mourn the politicisation of Big Tech seem to ignore that it has been inherently political since its inception. Let us not forget that much of the organisation and misinformation behind the attack on the Capitol took place on these sites. Most social media companies have come under fire for the human prejudice hard-wired into their algorithms; YouTube has been shown to enable far right radicalisation in Brazil. Time and time again, we have seen how Big Tech is inextricably linked to politics precisely due to the massive impact it has on our lives, and in a business model where clicks generate revenue, doing nothing would simply highlight the fact that until now these companies have facilitated – and relied upon – this uptick in radicalisation. Is it surprising the former President was allowed free

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One person's right to 'freedom of speech' should not supersede another's right to life
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rein for so long?

Trump's ban was deserved. However, it is deeply concerning that a handful of companies with such a dubious record on these issues can choose whom they banish from what has become not only a soapbox, but an insight into the world around us. Rather than demonstrating the "first they came for the white supremacists" tale that is currently being spun, this is symptomatic of the greater issue of the power a small number of underregulated businesses can wield over our democracy. A step in the right direction would be to adopt a German-style approach to crime legislation, setting out clearly what constitutes an offence and its punishment, so that this power is removed from the hands of unaccountable corporations.

It is now painfully clear that Donald Trump's access to large platforms on which he can spread misinformation and undermine faith in democratic processes has caused far more harm than good – yet we should not give Big Tech a carte blanche over deciding the parameters of public discourse. Only once we accept that social media has always been heavily politicised will we be able to limit the negative impact it has on our democracy.

Trinity's academic outreach scheme is an example to follow and to further

Linus Uhlig

“I don't think that's for me, Miss.” “I'm not sure if I belong there, Sir.” These were common responses to suggestions of applying to Oxbridge at my rural comprehensive school. Frankly, the mere mention of the words 'Oxford' or 'Cambridge' were often met with scepticism, seen as an unachievable academic milieu where people in tweed suits cycle between libraries and swan about in halls drinking port, their conversation leaping from classical music to theories about ancient civilisations and philosophical concepts. In other words, as a peer at school put it, these universities are “places for Prime Ministers and poshos, not for people like us.”

As someone who is neither of these and fortunately has not felt out of place at Cambridge – although I acknowledge that some students do – I know this assumption could not be further from the truth, yet I understand and sympathise entirely with why it was uttered.

This week, Trinity College announced the launch of a scheme by its outreach team to support Year 12 students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds by providing student mentors to assist with academic confidence and gaps in knowledge caused by the pandemic. In an article published on Trin-

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Colleges must be proactive and use their resources to reach out to everyone
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ity's website, the Outreach Coordinator who devised the programme, Jon Datta, said, “We expect the scheme to break down barriers, both real and perceived, to selective universities.” This announcement has been widely welcomed and is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. As someone who attended a Year 12 Humanities Residential at Trinity with a fair degree of scepticism and nervousness, I am aware of just how useful these schemes can be.

Many GCSE and A level students who attend such residential or take part in outreach schemes find them incredibly fulfilling. I heard other students at school who visited Downing claim that it was one of the first times they felt that they were in a room full of like-minded people. Outreach schemes and residential trips provide students with the confidence and the impetus to consider an application to one of the world's most prestigious universities, and open many young people's eyes to the wide-ranging opportunities that come with attending. They really are that valuable.

Therefore, all colleges must do more to attract a broader range of applicants. Access schemes, summer schools, and headline-grabbing announcements of an increasingly broad demographic are unquestionably positive moves, but the

real work is done on the ground and in schools.

When I arrived at Cambridge, I was surprised to hear that so many schools across the country had assemblies on applying to Oxbridge, and it was not until joining the sixth form college in my nearest city that I experienced anyone from Oxford or Cambridge come in to talk about applying. I asked many of my school friends if they knew which was our designated regional outreach Oxbridge college. The answer: a resounding no. Whilst anecdotal, I don't think this would be an uncommon theme in comprehensives across the nation. Oxford and Cambridge do not exactly struggle when it comes to funding for projects, so why not invest more time and resources into schemes that make all students feel wanted, and Oxbridge seem a realistic and achievable destination?

Of course, this is not something that can be changed overnight, or even from one year of applications to another. A recent report showed that a majority of schools that educate the 20% most privileged students in the country have at least one “university adviser” always on hand to provide support for applying to the most prestigious universities. It is therefore unsurprising that a small group of schools continue to dominate

Oxbridge admissions and, whilst the percentage of state school students continues to rise each year, there is still a proportional imbalance.

These pre-university disparities are difficult to alleviate. What is needed, therefore, is a broad demographic to take up places thanks to wide outreach across the UK, with the use of greater presence in schools and access weekends in under-represented areas, to connect with more students and give them the confidence to apply.

Oxbridge becomes a less daunting and more accessible place if someone you know has been or currently attends, and this is the long-term impact of outreach schemes. In fact, shocked by the lack of red chinos and suede shoulder-padded jackets, school friends remarked on just how surprisingly normal everyone was when they visited, and were now more receptive to the idea of Oxbridge.

Trinity's mentoring is unquestionably a scheme that should be replicated, an example to follow. Yet we might not reap the rewards of greater access for years. So, until we do, colleges must be proactive and use their resources to reach out to everyone in order to eradicate the aforementioned retort of, “I don't think that's for me, Miss.”

COVID-1984?

Erin Gerrity argues that we cannot simply turn a blind eye to the potential danger that the pandemic restrictions pose to our democratic freedoms



China has claimed great victory in its handling of the pandemic, having used strict measures to maintain low infection rates. The restrictive measures introduced by democratic leaders across the globe may have been more effective at curbing infection rates if they had been implemented in a more authoritarian manner, as they were in New Zealand with rapid closing of borders and mandatory “managed isolation” in hotels.

The coronavirus pandemic has triggered debates about whether a correlation exists between political regime and efficacy of pandemic management, with particular concerns being raised for fragile democracies. Last April, sixteen member states of the European Union released a diplomatic statement stating their concerns about the risk of violations to democracy and fundamental freedoms during the pandemic. Despite the risk to countries led by unstable democratic governments being quickly recognised, a study published in December by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) reported that around 60% of countries across the world have introduced measures during the pandemic that “infringe on democratic principles”.

Although the threat to democracy in the UK is low, it is essential to acknowledge the potentially dangerous precedent that we have set in passing our coronavirus legislation with so little scrutiny; the Coronavirus Act 2020 was fast-tracked through parliament in just four sitting days. The extent of the additional power that this act gives the government may surprise the few that take the time to research them. For instance, the act permits the extension of time limits for the retention of fingerprints and DNA samples. Most of this legislation only ceases to be valid after two years – a significant period of time – and the continued operation of the act is only available for review every six months.

Despite UK citizens being in the fortunate position of relative safety from true infringements upon their human rights (no, your right to a haircut doesn't count), it is essential to be aware of and discuss the valid concerns about the extra powers given to the government. We must acknowledge the limits this places on freedom, so that we can protect our own liberties and that of people living in countries with less stable governments.

With the UK's daily coronavirus infection rates consistently surpassing 50,000 cases and death tolls sadly skyrocketing, the announcement of a third national lockdown did not come as a surprise to most people. Lockdown 3.0 means a return of the stay at home order. When the first measures of this kind were introduced last March, headlines were hit with images of covid-sceptics at protests, demanding haircuts and claiming “fear is the real virus!” In spite of how ridiculous these stories seem, it is important to recognise that the pandemic has raised valid concerns about the level of control that governments are able to exercise.

Here in England, the law prohibited 18 million people from celebrating Christmas with their loved ones. It is currently illegal to let anyone enter your household or to leave it for non-essential reasons. Neighbours are calling the police on one another to report restriction breaches.

Undoubtedly, it is crucial at present that we protect the NHS, save lives and reduce infection rates so that restrictions can be lifted once again – but it is also important to discuss the dangers associated with the implementation of highly restrictive measures upon the public.

The emergency powers granted to the government in the Coronavirus Act 2020 are not without precedent. They follow in the footsteps of the Defence of the Realm Act 1914 and the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1939, both of which authorised the government to do whatever it believed necessary to win the world wars.

We can find interesting parallels between the public attitude to restrictive measures during the pandemic and during wartime. Initially, the need for enhanced security and control over areas vital to the war effort was supported but, as the war went on, the public became

increasingly frustrated by the more trivial rules, such as limited pub opening times and strength of drinks on offer. It appears that we may be facing a similar situation today.

During our first national lockdown, there was a very cohesive, British sense of ‘getting through it together’; complete compliance with restrictive measures was reported to be as high as 69%. As the pandemic progressed, however, there seemed to be an increasing discontent with the heavy restrictions being enforced, as well as exasperation with the rules that seemed inconsequential, such as one hour of exercise per day or the 10pm curfew on pubs and restaurants. By the end of the second lockdown, there had been a drop in complete compliance with lockdown measures to as low as 46%.

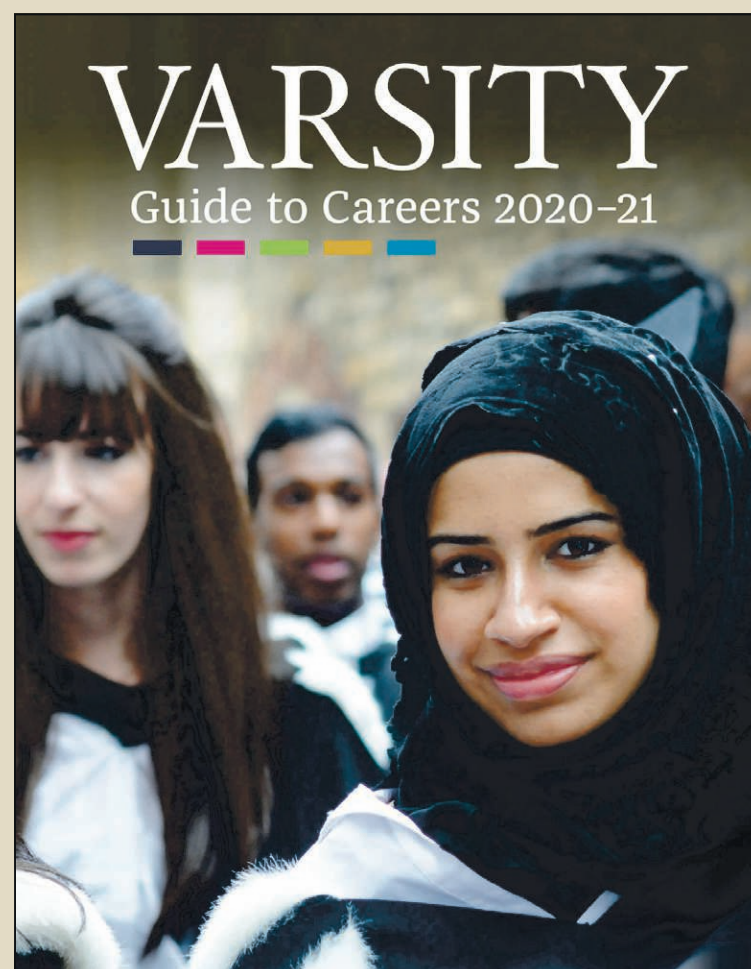
Now, as we are confronted with a third imposition, the government must strike a crucial balance between the implementation of strict regulations to reduce infection rates and the protection of the basic, personal freedoms of the public. It is important for the government to remember that success in reducing infection rates depends on public cooperation. It appears that thus far this may have been taken for granted. The UK government's approach to enforcement has been rather laissez-faire; quarantine following travel and isolation following contact with an infected person have always been self-implemented. What's more is the government has consistently put in place measures that they have no intention of enforcing, like the rule restricting us to only dining out at restaurants with members of our household – *how were restaurants expected to enforce this?*

Our relaxed enforcement approach is in stark contrast with a number of countries at the opposite end of the political spectrum, like autocratic China.

▲ A prominent minority have opposed to the government's restrictive measures, their concerns about freedom shouldn't be dismissed out of hand (STEVE EASON / FLIKR)

“It is crucial at present that we protect the NHS, save lives and reduce infection rates so that restrictions can be lifted once again”

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Science

▼ The Vera C. Rubin Observatory at twilight. (RUBIN OBSERVATORY/NSF/AURA)



Science you should know about in 2021

Science Editors **Grace Blackshaw**, **Sambhavi Sneha Kumar** and **Izavel Lee** discuss some of the most important science stories to keep an eye out for this year.

While the Covid-19 pandemic will likely continue to dominate headlines this year, other major scientific developments are also expected to take place in 2021.

Simonyi Survey Telescope

The James Webb Space Telescope will be launching to much fanfare later this year, but another important telescope is due to see “first light” in 2021 as well – the Simonyi Survey Telescope. Unlike the Webb telescope, which is an infrared telescope, the Simonyi telescope is an optical telescope, meaning that it mainly gathers visible light. Currently being built in Chile, the Simonyi telescope will conduct the 10-year Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST), which will provide astronomers with the data to answer a variety of questions on dark energy, asteroid trajectory, the formation of the Milky Way, and more. What’s unique about this telescope is that it contains a novel three-mirror design that will give it an “exceptionally” wide field of view, allowing it to survey the entire sky in just three nights. The survey will produce a huge amount of data – tens of terabytes every night, which will present a major challenge for data storage and processing.

New guidelines for stem cell research

The International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) announced in June last year that new guidelines for stem cell research will be released in early 2021. The revisions aim to address ethical issues surrounding embryo models, organoids, chimeras, genome editing, and cell therapy. The past year saw advancements in the creation of embryo models and brain organoids, and scientists have previously raised concerns about creating organoids that may become sentient or feel pain. New guidelines could help researchers win grants from state-funded institutions that may be reluctant to approve embryoid research. The new guidelines could also provide support for research that would require embryos older than 14 days, which is currently banned in many countries. The UK’s Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act includes this rule, but it is unclear whether the law’s definition of an embryo will extend to embryoids as well.

An important year for the climate

Five years ago, representatives from 196 countries gathered in Le Bourget, near Paris, and voted to adopt the Paris Agreement. In doing so, the vast majority of the world committed to trying to limit global warming to 2°C (ideally 1.5°C) compared to pre-industrial levels by the end of the century. As things currently stand, we are not on track to do this. Fortunately, this isn’t the end of the story – under the terms of the Paris Agreement, countries agreed to come back every five years, review their targets and make them more ambitious. This was supposed to happen in Glasgow in November 2020 at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26). However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this conference was postponed to November 2021. On a positive note, one notable attendee will be US President Joe Biden, who moved to reinstate the US in the Paris Agreement on his first day in the Oval Office. In other good climate news, China, the biggest carbon dioxide emitter globally, recently announced that they would be carbon neutral by 2060. Naturally, more still needs to be done, but initial indications suggest 2021 could be an important year for climate action.

Key steps towards nuclear fusion grid electricity

The Joint European Torus (JET), the world’s largest fusion reactor, is set to make important steps in its aim of generating considerable amounts of fusion power this year. Nuclear fusion has been the promising but elusive goal of many scientists since Arthur Eddington first suggested hydrogen-helium fusion could be the primary source of stellar energy in 1920. By the 1940s, scientists had already begun working on how to exploit the process for practical energy generation. In 1997, the JET got closer to this goal than anything before or since when it was fed a potent mix of the hydrogen isotopes deuterium and tritium (D-T), and produced 16MW of power for a few seconds. In 2021, following a recent update, the JET will use the same fuel mix for the first time since 1997. Scientists are optimistic that they will be able to produce similar levels of power but for a longer time. At the same time, ITER is currently under construction and is set to replace the JET as the largest fusion reactor in the world.

Smartphone connected pacemaker devices

As our lives begin to become progressively more dependent on technology, it is unsurprising that many treatment strategies in healthcare, including the management of pathologies related to the cardiovascular system, are continuously evolving. A pacemaker is a device fitted to maintain the normal contractile rhythm of the heart. However, despite being fitted in a significant number of patients (more than 40,000 people in England in 2010 alone had a new pacemaker

fitted), there is a discontinuity between the device and the patient – for example, many may lack an understanding of how the device works. Bluetooth-enabled pacemakers aim to rectify this.

Used alongside a mobile application, these devices allow patients to access a greater range of data (such as pacemaker battery level, physical activity and general device information), which will likely help patients to feel more involved in their care and alleviate some anxiety or concerns they may have. Indeed, it has been demonstrated by one study that pa-

tients utilising a mobile app connected to their pacemaker were more likely to follow their recommended pacemaker monitoring schedule than those using traditional bedside monitors. Particularly as COVID-19 continues to place challenges on healthcare services, leading to increased reliance on digital delivery of care, the importance of patients correctly following self-monitoring schedules is crucial. Giving patients easier and more convenient access to their data via mobile apps may be of critical importance in the future.

“Initial indications suggest 2021 could be an important year for climate action.”



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Interviews

CONVERSATION LAB: Featuring Thomas Brodie-Sangster

Varsity Editor, **Georgina Buckle**, chats with British actor Thomas Brodie-Sangster about anything and everything: from *The Queen's Gambit*, to house design, and even roast chicken

Laughter's important and we shouldn't take ourselves too seriously," quips Thomas Brodie-Sangster. What strikes me about Sangster, who stars in Netflix's recent smash hit, *The Queen's Gambit*, is his relaxed, wry sense of humour. Our conversation is peppered with his witty remarks, and I get the impression of a laid-back, yet whip-sharp individual. Sangster is so refreshingly level-headed that he might just be the perfect person to speak to in the middle of the third national lockdown. "My life was very fast before this all happened" he says, "so I think it's good that we've all slowed down a bit."

Throughout the interview he's calm and collected, his demeanour reflected by the understated chic of his style. Zooming me from his minimalist bedroom, he's dressed in a black crewneck, hair swept neatly to one side, the only noticeable adornment I can see is a small, tasteful gold earring. Sangster's whole presence is suffused with a classic British sophistication, and there is also a playful mischief there, at times reinforced by a subtle raised eyebrow.

You might remember Sangster as sweet little Sam in *Love Actually*. Or, perhaps you recognise him as Simon from family-favourite comedy *Nanny McPhee*. These classic 2000s British films have cemented him as a distinguishable, and beloved, face in many households. And whilst the fanbase Sangster garnered as a child star loyally persists, it's safe to say his career has vastly evolved since then. Now, his IMDB page boasts the likes of *Game of Thrones*, *Star Wars*, *The Maze Runner Trilogy*, and (more recently) *The Queen's Gambit*.

In *The Queen's Gambit*, Sangster delivers a cracking performance as Benny Watts: an arrogant, uber-smart chess prodigy. Writer and director Scott Frank asked Sangster personally to be involved, and he immediately said yes

“I was responsible for bringing a bit of fun-ness to the set, purely because of what Benny is like”

without knowing what it was about. Having worked together previously on Scott's show *Godless*, Sangster trusted him as an 'amazing storyteller', and this crucial bond between actor and director is what I am keen to explore first.

Georgina Buckle: What specific qualities in a director make you passionate to work with them?

Thomas Brodie-Sangster: I always think it's a hard job. You've got to be the person to bring everything together. You've got to be easy-going. You can't be too stringent. Great directors trust in the fact that they've got the crew that's perfect for the job, and then let them have a bit of freedom to do what they want – that's how you get the most out of it. The best directors actually let you go quite far, and then reel you back in. They give you time to experiment with going a little beyond certain edges, experimenting with different ideas and bouncing off of other actors. Then they reel you back in and begin shaping it and moulding it – they make the scene a bit of them and a bit of you. So, it's a sharing, a give and take, all the while keeping an uplifting, positive, carefree attitude on set. It's important to not let things become too serious.

GB: Was this the case with *The Queen's Gambit*?

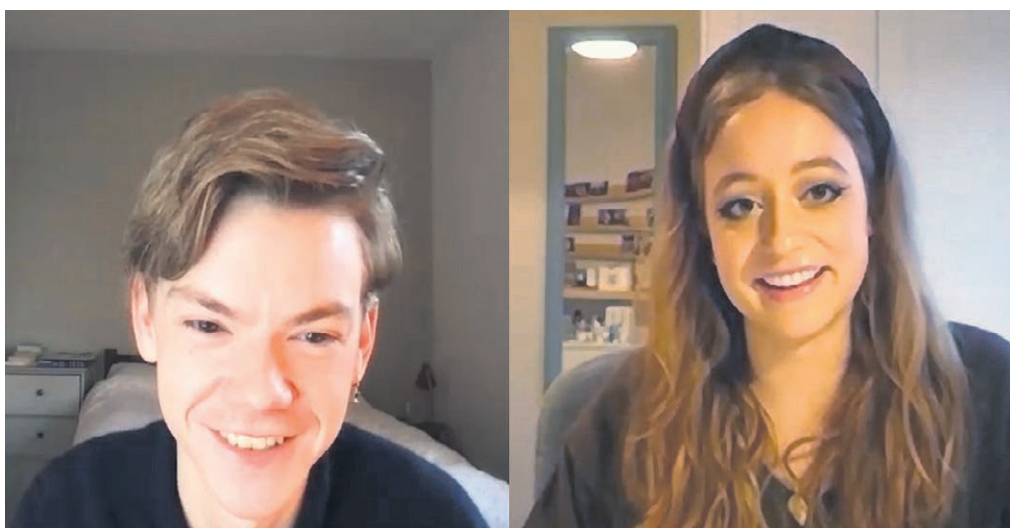
TBS: Absolutely. I've worked with Scott beforehand, so we already had a chemistry going. I think he trusted me a lot to go and have fun with Benny, because the part I played for him previously [in *Godless*] was also quite a cocky, arrogant, self-indulgent character. It isn't very me at all, and isn't what I usually get cast as, so I had great fun doing that. Scott trusted me to do that again quite easily. I suppose I was responsible for bringing a bit of fun-ness to the set, purely because of what my character [Benny Watts] is like.

GB: Benny's character certainly has a



▲ Sangster delivers a cracking performance as Benny Watts: an arrogant, uber-smart chess prodigy (TWITTER/@ScreenReblogs)

▼ Thomas and Georgina chatting over Zoom



“The best directors let you go quite far, and then reel you back in”

multitude of quirks: the moustache, the accent, the hat, the style, the swagger, the knife... He's a big personality. How much say did you get in the character work for that?

TBS: A lot of it was there in the writing already, which makes such a big difference, and Scott had loads of details: it was his idea to have the hat, to have the facial hair, the knife. They're all little things that don't actually amount to anything in the story. There's no reason why he has a knife, or a hat, and the facial hair isn't remarked upon, but it's just little character details which make the audience think 'why do they have this, or wear this?' You realise it's got nothing to do with the story, but it also makes you realise that they are real people. You do that when you meet someone new: can't

help but analyse them a little bit, try and work out all the little details in how they choose to hold themselves. I did get to pick which hat, knife and coat we used though. It was me, Scott, the costume designer and props department – it was a collaboration.

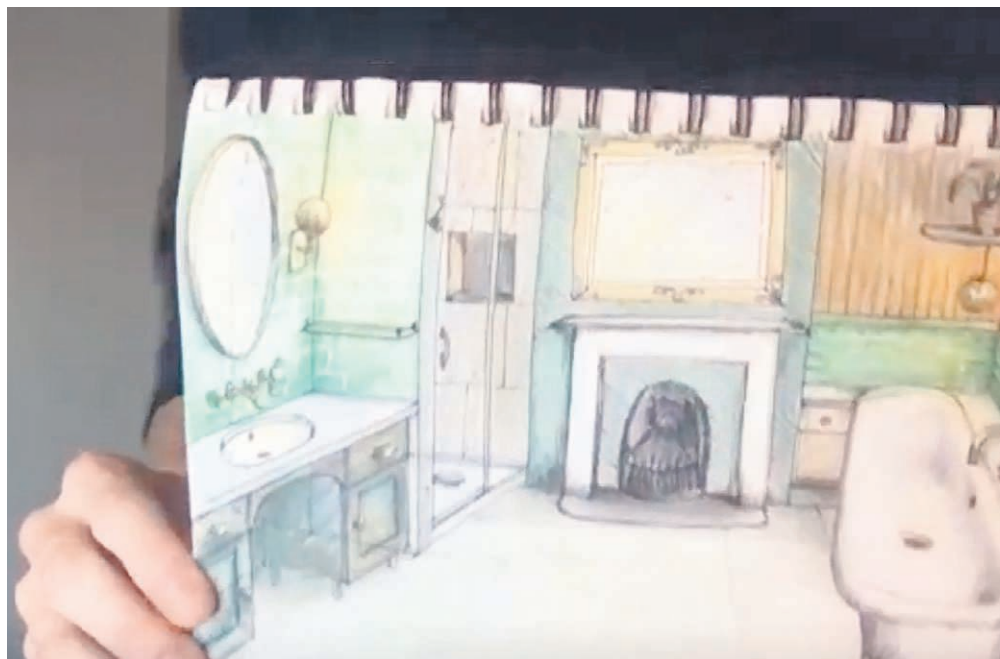
GB: Was there any specific accessory that you saw and thought 'I need to have that' for filming?

TBS: Yeah, Benny's lighter. They had twenty different old Ronson Zippo lighters, and we all got to pick one which suited our character the most. Beth's one was the coolest, though. A little Ronson with black and white checkers on it, all inlaid, like a chessboard.

GB: What do you think Benny's Zippo lighter said about him?

TBS: It's flash and cool and cocky and

Interviews



▲ “I get to go home and do loads of sketches to visualise what it will be like for me”

it flicks and chinks and is noisy – a bit like a gun. It explodes into life and gives unnecessarily big flame. So, I think that suited him.

GB: How much did you get into character in the run-up to filming? Was it a case of being Benny from morning to night, round the house with mates, on your phone to your mum..?

TBS: I wouldn't say I'm your classic method actor at all. But the first thing I do is start compiling a playlist on Spotify, of all old 60s music, to try and figure out what music he'd listen to in his little New York apartment. That point in NY was an amazing time for music, all underground. That was the first thing I did: just sat and listened to quite a bit of music, even cooking, cleaning, around the house... To get into the period a bit, it helps quite a lot.

GB: I'm sure there'd be some Stones on that playlist...

TBS: Yeah, a few Rolling Stones. I put some The Modern Lovers on there too, which is a bit dirty and a bit dirty, because Benny is a bit rough, a bit dirty... Also, the odd Kinks. Jimi Hendrix was on there too.

GB: I know that Scott altered the scenes between Benny and Beth once he had seen the set design for Benny's apartment. Were there any other changes that you had to respond to during the course of production?

TBS: Yeah definitely, and that's always quite fun. It's important to keep yourself open to change - it keeps you on your toes. It keeps you inspired and interested in the day. It wasn't particularly hard or challenging to adapt either. I trusted Scott hugely, so it was great fun. There were a few scenes which got cut: one is a gambling scene where Beth comes along and gets annoyed that she just gets drunk in the corner whilst Benny is gambling with his friends. It would have added a little more to the ambience of that little studio apartment that he's got.

GB: Were there any favourite scenes to film?

TBS: There was a scene where I got to drive an old 60s Beate, I really enjoyed doing that. I basically only got to pull-up, as the rest was all on green screen, but I got to chuck it into first, move it along and put the brakes on... I nearly rear-ended a 1967 Mustang – I didn't realise old brakes just don't work. Also, anything in my apartment because it's just such a cool set piece. All of those chess magazines with my face everywhere on them – I love how Benny just collects

“It's important to keep yourself open to change - it keeps you on your toes”

these magazines with his face on them, lined up so people who visit his apartment can see. I meant to keep some of those magazines actually!

GB: You're a man of eclectic interests: acting, painting, building, guitars, cars. At the moment you're designing your new house, and I was wondering: what's your vision for the house?

TBS: I've been sketching and doing drawings – trying to work out what colours would fit, what bathroom taps I might want to choose. [Pulls out a sketchpad from the side of his bed]. It's a little old Victorian house so I want it to be slightly modern but keeping in-line with the house. It's fun, I get to speak about steel beams and choose where I want the doors. It's very exciting – the first time I've ever done anything like this.

GB: A bit like having a baby.

TBS: Yeah, it is. I get to go home and do loads of sketches to visualise what it will be like for me. I try to do sketches for most of the rooms, the ones where I think it might be hard to demonstrate what character I want it to have. I keep sketching it out because I want the rooms to all feel like 'me'.

GB: Is there a specific room you think will be your favourite?

TBS: The kitchen, I love to cook! It's the hub of the home. I'd love to have a big cooker and just get cooking.

GB: On the topic of food, are there any dishes you would recommend to a uni student? I'm thinking relatively low cost, few ingredients, but a big pay-off.

TBS: Well, I think a roast chicken is always good. It feeds quite a lot of people, and you just chuck it into the oven, chop up some onions as a bed underneath it, bit of salt, bit of pepper - everyone likes a chicken. And everyone should be able to do a roast chicken.

GB: In my experience, there are too many ways a chicken can go wrong, trust me.

TBS: I don't think there are though! You just cook it for an hour and it's done. But if not that, there's always eggs – they are a classic.

GB: That's true. What have you learnt in these last few months in lockdown?

TBS: To just be a bit more patient, with other people and myself. There's no point being frustrated because everyone in the world is in the same situation. Sometimes, it's hard to feel like you're reaching your full potential because you're stuck a bit – but the nice thing to know is that everyone else is in the same boat.

GB: In practice, how's it going?

TBS: So far... It's okay. When I woke up this morning I was a bit... [he makes the gesture of fist-clenching grumpiness]. I had to go for a walk, grab some food, enjoy the sun, watch some birds, and then I was alright again.

Chatting with Tom is effortless, and I've almost forgotten that he was the actor that my friends were swooning over when I told them I was interviewing him. His willingness to engage makes conversation bounce back-and-forth, even, at one point, with our going on a very unrelated tangent about how bucket hats are coming back into fashion. At the risk of testing the patience he's learnt, I ask if he would be willing to end on a quick-fire question round and, in-keeping with how gracious he's been so far, he agrees.

10 Quick-fire questions

GB: Three words to describe yourself?

TBS: Calm, intrigued, stubborn.

GB: Most outrageous lockdown purchase?

TBS: [laughs] There's been a few. I bought myself a camping knife, for... camping in London, if I'd ever do that? I bought this nice, good-sized little knife: it's made in America, it's got a nice wooden handle, good quality steel... I know I'm just trying to justify it to myself. I think I got it's because I was missing my Benny Watts knife.

GB: Dream character to play?

TBS: Some kind of baddie, someone with a real sinister edge. A real twisted psychopath.

GB: Last spontaneous thing that you did?

TBS: Bought a knife?

GB: Any quirky habits?

TBS: I like to tinker in my shed and build stuff. Constantly working on multiple projects that never seem to get finished: a bit of a bass guitar, then I'll start stripping a carburettor.

“I just like floating around the good old-boy pubs”

TBS: [laughs] Well it used to be a really dirty pub called The Old Dispensary, which is just a very naughty pub. But I stopped going there a few years ago. The Windmill in Brixton is fun. I just like floating around the good old-boy pubs, some local cockney.

GB: First destination you're travelling to when the pandemic is over?

TBS: It probably will be a pub to go get a nice, fresh pint of Guinness. But in terms of travel, I might pop over to France to visit my sister. Or maybe a long drive through England up into Scotland.

GB: A song on the soundtrack to your life?

TBS: 'Something' by The Beatles. No, actually – Queen, 'I'm In Love With My Car'. I mean, I'd hope it would be a long soundtrack for a long life.

GB: What's one thing you'd like to have achieved by the end of 2021?

TBS: A finished house and to be back on a motorbike. I haven't gotten any riding in for a year, because one bike doesn't work and the other one got stolen. I've missed it for my mind, it's a good release. So, back on a bike and back in a house!

▼ “I'd like to play someone with a real sinister edge” (left to right)

(TWITTER/
@thesangsterpics)



ILLUSTRATION BY ELLIE WILSON

Vulture

Renewal Renewal Renewal

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Lifestyle

An Ode to Being Directionless

Lifestyle columnist **Ellie Austin** questions whether 'productivity' and happiness go hand in hand after all

When my DoS asked me how I spend my free time outside of work, I wasn't really sure what to say. Sitting in a circle in his living room with my coursemates while his toddler competed with the dog for our attention, I hear tales from my peers about the wonderfully productive ways they've managed to integrate themselves in Cambridge. From captaining sport clubs to heading obscure society committees, it seems everybody is up to *something*. My turn soon arrived, and the only thing I could think to mention was a recent viewing of *'The Room'* I'd attended at a college film soc event. To tell the truth, it was just as an excuse to explore an unknown college and get to throw plastic spoons at a screen with some pals. This answer didn't seem to be what my DoS was

looking for, and it wasn't until that moment that I realised quite how unproductive I felt in comparison to my peers; or rather, how 'unsuccessful' I was at university.

Being someone who never really found an extracurricular that stuck as a kid, I came to university as a bit of a blank slate. I've always been someone that tries something for a little bit, only to quickly give it up as I move onto whatever captures my fancy next. Past examples include: the embroidery habit I picked up in lockdown, the tap dancing lessons I took when I was 7, and the 6 hour training session I attended at the university canoe club before coming far too close to death-by-drowning during a slip-deck test. After that rather unfortunate experience, I immediately abandoned the £40 year-membership I'd invested in. And trust me when I say: this list is far from exhaustive. It covers only a fraction of all my desperate attempts to find a hobby over my 20 years of existence- let alone the past year and a half at university.

The problem with listing things as above is that it definitely contributes towards my impostor syndrome. In a place like Cambridge, it's hard to ignore that feeling that you're constantly trying to catch up with everyone else, and while I admire my friends for their talents and interests, it's easy to feel left behind when you haven't found your own passions to focus on.



ILLUSTRATION BY ODESAY CHITTY

But then again, the people I'm comparing myself to have likely been engaged in their hobbies for most of their childhoods. For instance, it makes sense to captain a football team when you've been

looking for a passion, or maybe I'm going about it in the wrong way. Or, maybe

I don't need to occupy a particular 'niche' in Cambridge in order

to fit in. What if doing whatever seems fun to me in the moment is exactly what I'm supposed to do? In this way, I can find whatever it is that makes me tick, and it'll all just work itself out in the end. Right?

There isn't a checklist for confirming you've 'experienced Cambridge', so there's no way to tell if you're doing it 'right'. Sure, maybe founding a zine or convincing Dua Lipa to talk at the Cambridge Union sounds more impressive than spending your evening peeling off bottle labels to collect for your friend's pinboard rubbish colour wheel (don't ask), but I guess that isn't really the point. Perhaps just trying things out here and there for the heck of it and surviving your way through university without being kicked out is enough to qualify.

So, while I'm trying to focus this year on embracing a more directionless existence, that doesn't mean ditching any attempts to follow whatever seems to pique my interest. If anything, it means the opposite; I'm still looking for hobbies, but I'm trying to take the pressure off this time. If I want to write an article detailing all my thought rambles, despite being a STEM student and having absolutely no right to jump into the world of journalism, then so be it. If I want to operate cameras to see ADC shows in-person for free, then fab. I don't need to dedicate my life to journalism or the thespian scene in order to enjoy taking part. Nothing needs to make sense and there's no pressure to do anything, so I guess the only thing left is to just have fun. Having said that, I'm still not sure how I could have explained that to my DoS.

At the end of the day, though, as long as I pass my degree and make it out with some fond memories, then it wasn't all for nothing.

Illustration by Biliana Tchavdarova Todorova

Ask Vulture.

"How do I keep my relationship fresh during lockdown?"

Ask Vulture Columnist **Amber**:

What I discovered over lockdown was that the postal system is actually quite groovy! You can get funky stamps; you can decorate envelopes and boxes with all kinds of glitter and crap, and you can send pretty much anything! (Top tip: tea bags fit into small envelopes like a treat). In a time of headaches from too many hours spent on a laptop and that awful checking of social media, it is no wonder that all of our relationships with people are slightly more strained than before. It is hard to make someone feel special and missed through a text or call (although it can definitely help!) and the repetition of texting can make things seem dull - what on earth do you have to say these days? I think for romantic relationships (and friendships too!) surprising one another is key, and what's better than sending the person something physical in the post! It shows them that you are still thinking about them and missing them, even when you're not on your phone.

Some inspiration:

- Good old fashioned letters (make sure to jazz them up with colourful doodles or use coloured paper for that extra something)
- A book you think they'll like and write a little note about why you've chosen it
- A postcard from a place you want to go to when this is all over
- A candle/bathbomb/ anything that makes them think of you when they're using it

It's important to keep the relationship a real thing - something that exists beyond Facebook messenger. You truly don't know happiness until you see a bright pink sparkly envelope on your doormat.

playing since you were 5; but less so when you're picking it up for the first time as an unfit 19 year old who hasn't seen a football since she was 5.

I haven't even really stopped myself to ask if these are hobbies I'm actually interested in, or if I just want one for the sake of having one.

In fact, isn't doing 'unproductive' things like showing up to Astronomy Soc talks just to leave early to steal the free donuts (please forgive me for this) one of the things that actually allow me to enjoy university? Perhaps I'm wrong to



Music

The Genre of 2021: A Journey through the UK's Alternative Hip Hop Scene

Sharleen Opia explores UK rap and how it could be the genre of the future



▲ The UK Underground scene overcomes many of the stereotypes of mainstream rap (ROSIE CADDY FOR VARSITY)

The UK chill rap scene has almost become the antithesis of the mainstream UK rap scene, swapping heavy beats and memorable choruses with a meditative, soft and atmospheric sound. Refreshingly different, the genre also disregards the heavily autotuned, rhythmically afro-derivative and melodically bashment-inspired sounds of artists such as J Hus, NSG and Not3s and instead finds inspiration from the more easygoing sounds of jazz and RnB.

The genre has been described as 'lo-fi Rap', 'Jazz Rap' and 'Underground'. 'Underground' music exists outside of, or in opposition to, mainstream popular music and, similarly, the lo-fi genre (or 'bedroom music') emerged as a concept during the rise of home-recorded music, as a consequence of the technological revolution. It created a wave of independent artists who crafted their own unique sound, aiding in the deconstruction of the historically elitist nature of the music industry.

Within the underground scene, artists are able to avoid rap stereotypes; their momentary existence outside of the music industrial complex allows them to emphasise sound, focus less on marketability and build individual personas outside of the caricature-like personalities, often pressured onto rappers. Thus, the scene has become a safe space for artists to find freedom and expression outside of gender norms, racial stereotypes and the contemporary neoliberal appropriation of the arts. In the UK underground scene I was exposed to frank discussions on mental health, nuanced discourse on 'hood politics' and unapologetically queer bops, which contrast the often unashamedly homophobic UK

rap scene.

Underground artists are able to delay the inevitable commodification of their art. Creating music with the direct intention of

In the UK underground scene I was exposed to frank discussions on mental health, nuanced discourse on 'hood politics' and unapologetically queer bops, which contrast the often unashamedly homophobic UK rap scene.

making money turns one's art into currency, and within contemporary society, the commodification of art is inevitable. However, the delay between capital accumulation and the creative process that smaller artists experience, allows a level of distance and mental separation between the two. Making money remains a hypothetical aim and mentally, the focus is on the immediate goal of making art for art's sake. The solace of this process, in my opinion, is reflected in the quality of music created by underground artists. A lot of mainstream music comprises of the temporarily prevalent sound and the charts can often become a monolith of almost identical

auditory experiences; this lessens the intimate nature of the relationship between artist and consumer, as artists try to magnetise audiences into streaming rather than experiencing their music.

Ayrtn, one of the artists headlining the UK chill rap scene, lyrically leaps from syllable to syllable in his tracks, on top of mellow, jazz-derivative samples. He creates a uniquely atmospheric sound, juxtaposed by his lively, cheeky and faithfully London vocals. His new project 'Ghost...' boasts hypnotising instrumentals and he has personally cited nature as aesthetic inspiration; his beats feel like a journey through lush greenery. In the comical interlude 'Skit Uno', he proves this by seamlessly transitioning his beats into an ambient soundscape of nature sounds, forming the background of a conversation that could have been overheard on the London Underground. Thus, as an artist, Ayrtn unites the natural and the urban to create the sublime euphony that is his unique sound.

Lause the Cat, whose tracks I could only describe as Shakespearean-adjacent storytelling, has not released music in two years and yet remains extremely influential on the scene. His music reads like literature; he incorporates an extended feline metaphor in his name to preserve his anonymity and in his songs to create folkloric narratives. He has created a microcosm within the genre, a fantasy world that

transcends his music and forms part of his artistic identity. He weaponises anonymity in order to actively remove himself from the cult of celebrity and, instead, embody his art. His most popular song 'Redstripe Rhapsody' integrates sound bites of real life, creating a surround sound experience akin to an audiobook. The song narrates a story of a group of friends chilling in a park – a generally mundane activity – yet his storytelling is laced with intertextual references to Othello and the Bible, coupled with vivid sensory and natural imagery that transports listeners to another realm. Lause begins the song with the gentle introduction of layers of instrumentals and throughout the song constantly unravels and rebuilds these layers, creating a sense of timelessness through both instrumentation and storytelling.

The temporary state of invisibility when being an alternative, 'underground' artist has been transcended by rappers such as Loyle Carner (who has amassed 2 million monthly

The charts can often become a monolith of almost identical auditory experiences; this lessens the intimate nature of the relationship between artist and consumer

listeners on Spotify), and many more artists from the scene are gradually rising to mainstream. Other notable names include the Elevation Mediation collective from West London, which includes some of the main artists from the scene: Finn Foxell, P-rallel, Lord Apex, Xav and Louis Culture. They have performed a concert for the famous 'Boiler Room' online music platform, whose YouTube channel has 3 million followers. The scene is ever-growing and artists have even been featured in the popular Spotify playlists 'Jazz Rap' and 'Mellow Bars'. In 2021, it could be the genre to flow straight into all our playlists, offering us the perfect sound to enter the year with immaculately soothing vibes.



◀ Lause the Cat is one artist involved in the UK's alternative hip-hop scene (TWITTER/LAUSSE THE CAT)

Spotify Unwrapped

Sam Benatar reflects on the impact of a musician who accompanied him throughout the tumult of 2020

The arrival of the new year is a prime opportunity for self-reflection; to celebrate the past year, and to make resolutions for the next. During a year as challenging for us all as 2020 was, with its disappointing lack of opportunity to do very much, many of us found respite in music. Indeed, music has played such an important role this past year, that it has become a valuable part of our new-year reflection, not just as something which we did, but as something with which we really engaged.

While 2020 brought for me an array of new albums from my favourite bands, there was one artist in particular who was central to my year in music: Frank Turner.

For those unfamiliar, Turner is a folk-punk singer originating from Hampshire, whose songs focus on relationships, mental health, and politics, among other issues.

Initially drawn in during early August by

the conspicuously titled "Thatcher Fucked the Kids", I was captivated by the song's mix of iconoclastic anger with intelligent discussion. Listening then to the wonderful 2006 EP *Campfire Punkrock*, upon which this song originally appeared, I heard repeated back at me many of the sentiments that I had felt over the course of the lockdown.

Beyond the cathartic pleasure of such egocentrically relatable songs as "This Town Ain't Big Enough for the One of Me" and "I Really Don't Care What You Did on Your Gap Year", the work's unity of self-reflection with self-celebration showed me guidance through the difficulties of lockdown, and set some sort of stability against a year otherwise lacking.

Turner's lyrical path, with its personal, political, and philosophical struggles mapped out across a twenty-year career, has been both elucidating and inspiring for me over the past few months. His desire for self-improvement

is evident in much of his song writing, particularly the aptly titled "Redemption", and can be traced through his discography, allowing the listener an insight into his issues. Indeed, hearing Turner identify his problems has encouraged me to think about how the same issues have impacted me; hearing him work through them has encouraged me to strive for my own improvement and seeing him turn them into profound artwork is a constant inspiration for me to express myself creatively, at a time when this has been difficult.

However, the benefits of musical reflections are not limited to that intended by the artist. As Turner sings in "Try This At Home", 'there's no such thing as rock stars, there's just people who play music' – and these people are flawed, as are we all. Some of Turner's earlier lyrics read as potentially problematic – 'she's not as pretty as she thinks she is, just picture her after she's had kids' in "Reasons Not to Be an Idiot", for example – and his attitude towards religion in "Glory Hallelujah" is perhaps less accepting than I would strive to maintain, but these imperfections, as long as we can recognise them, can help us to work on ourselves.

Turner does redeem these mistakes of the past, though: recent live performances of "Reasons Not to Be an Idiot" feature edited lyrics, and his latest album, *No Man's Land*, was dedicated entirely to appreciating a number of often-unappreciated female historical figures. This recent work, including representations of Egyptian feminist leader Huda Sha'arawi in "The Lioness", Byzantine poet Kassia in "The Hymn of Kassiani", and the wife of William Blake, Catherine Blake, in the Carol Ann Duffy style "I Believed You, William Blake", is among Turner's most powerful song writing, and is testament to the value of personal reflection and the growth that can come from it.

For me, a look back at 2020 is a look back at a newfound musical obsession, but also at continued intellectual stimulation and personal growth during a time when these felt so unattainable. It is the music of Frank Turner which has helped me to these places. Regardless of the particular artists which encourage these processes in each of us, it is important to appreciate them, and reassuring to have them by our side as we enter a new year shrouded in uncertainty and anxiety.



▲ Frank Turner performing with his band, the Sleeping Souls. (NICOLAS PADOVANI)

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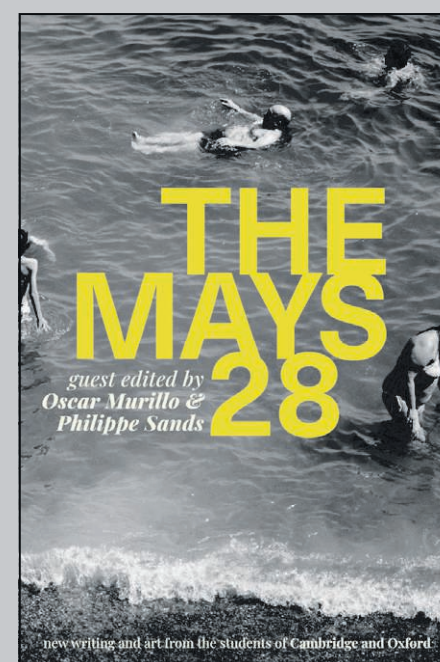
A Conversation With Corporal Nym

From Shakespeare With Love

Earl Dean Lilly, Jr.

A Modern Corporal Nym, explains: why Uncle Sam's Capitol has mostly NW Avenues; why a German-American was appointed C-in-C of Allied Forces in Europe in WW2; what are the origins of Uncle Sam's White Five Pointed Star and the Red Star of Communism; the Code of the Craft - the Pole Lease Ship of State; the works of R. Wagner and others having forecasted the course of the Animal Ark of the Western World for the 20th Century; why the Allies were deliberately negligent in enforcing the Treaty of Versailles to ensure a WW2! Shakespeare today?

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Fashion

Hair: What's it for?

Holly Sewell considers the conventions associated with hair and the ways in which individuals and communities have used it as an

The role of hair in fashion is fraught with politics, repression and potential. In the last hundred years we have seen a myriad of hair-related conventions pass through the canon, often failing to address nuances of gender and race. As a result, scalp, facial and body hair alike (or lack thereof) have each become symbols of traditional femininity or masculinity in a way that makes it impossible to find self-expression without making a grand statement.

Towards the end of the 1910s, the Flapper era was dawning. With it came boyish, sleeveless dresses with dropped waists that embodied a rebellion against women's fashion of the past. Despite the accompanying '20s bob echoing this move towards masculinity (see Josephine Baker for some bob artistry), the Flapper dress had some less liberating consequences for hair as well. The sudden exposure of female armpits gave the razor company Gillette an entirely new market; very quickly, shaven skin was the norm. This proved to be far more enduring than the emblematic bob cut, and whilst head hair continued to undergo new trends every decade, body hair conventions were fairly static for the next fifty years. It wasn't until the emergence of second-wave feminism and the Hippie

movement in the '70s that the politics of shaving became a more mainstream discussion.

In 1972, the first full issue of Ms. Magazine was published, featuring an article entitled "Body Hair: The Last Frontier" by Harriet Lyons and Rebecca Rosenblatt. Hard-line feminists of

“
Can keratin be
considered a means
of creativity as
general as denim or
leather?
”

the time often took the approach that insisted upon natural body hair as a display of allegiance, as is conveyed in the article. Although this succeeded in promoting body positivity in some sense, it has left hair (particularly body hair) entrenched in stigma. Since the '70s there has undoubtedly been progress – but to what extent? And how much further can we go? Can keratin be considered a means of creativity as general as denim or leather?

Many drag artists are at the forefront of this intersection between the sociology of hair and its potential for fresh perspective in fashion. An industry which has traditionally been perceived as men masquerading as women, it is increasingly self-described as the perform-

“
...hair as an
expression of
diversity in all
aspects of
humanity
”

ance of gender. As was put by the now internationally-known drag queen Crystal, “I don't do drag to impersonate a woman, I do it to expose the fragility of masculinity. Keeping my body hair lets people know that I'm consciously rejecting my 'masculinity' in fa-

vour of something else.”

This blurring of lines is being adopted by a growing number of performers and outside of drag, its main proponents are still within the LGBTQ+ community. Non-binary writer and activist Alok Vaid-Menon explains: “not removing [their] body hair isn't a passive action, it's an active decision that requires constant justification amidst total & complete denigration”. There exists an innate connection between the appreciation of hair and the appreciation of gender-nonconforming (often particularly transfeminine) people – which is part of what makes such an acceptance vital for the progression of society.

Embracing non-scalp hair as natural is only the beginning; the idea that it can be used as a medium of art is still foreign to most of us. For instance, the relationship between hair and cultural identity provides scope for powerful creative discussion. London based designer Alix Bizet explores this interaction in her project “Hair Matter(s)”, by moulding her pieces (three jackets and associated head-pieces made from human hair) to empower specific models. Her garments epitomise the reclamation of identity, as she exaggerates each person's hair such that they can, quite literally, wear it with pride; it demands to be looked at, and is clearly a visible extension of their individuality. Whilst she draws inspiration from her own experience with hair in connection with her culture, in her work this is broadened to the idea of hair as an expression of diversity in all aspects of humanity.

In recent years, hair (in all its forms) has been edging its way into the spotlight. London Fashion Week 2020 saw the non-binary indie fashion label Art School defy all expectations of smooth-skinned runway models by actually gelling a model's chest hair to spell out their brand name. Iconic. Such successful examples of body hair being warped to make an intelligent, impactful statement are disappointingly few and far between – but



◀ TWITTER/WONDERLAND-MAG



▲ ILLUSTRATION BY JULIET BABINSKY

Arts

Kiki, Foujita, and Reclining Nude

Audrey Lee explores the intoxicating rendering of Kiki de Montparnasse in Foujita's *Nu couché à la toile de Jouy* and the pervasion of her shadowy body today



▲ **Ethereal: Foujita's *Nu couché à la toile de Jouy*** (© Fondation Foujita / Adagp, Paris Photograph credit : Eric Emo/Parisi-enne de Photographie)

When considering the muse in art, Kiki de Montparnasse comes to mind at once – if not immediately by name, then as the subconscious representative of beauty and society in early 20th century artistic modernism, her image being ubiquitous within the oeuvres of so many celebrated artists of the time. Having been the lover of Man Ray, the subject of his seminal 1926 photographic works *Black and White* and *Ingre's Violon*, the likeness after which Pablo Gargallo's 1928 ormolu bust was cast, and the sitter in some of Moise Kisling's most recognisable portraits, Kiki's influence on the trajectory of creative life in 1920s Paris is tacit and familiar. Less examined, however, is her enduring representation in the work of French-Japanese painter Tsuguharu Foujita, whose portraits of Kiki are situated at a unique cross-cultural juncture of painterly style and gaze.

Revisiting *Nu couché à la toile de Jouy* (1922), I am struck by Foujita's transferal of traditional Japanese ink painting techniques onto the classical subject of the reclined nude. Its composition speaks to a history of European boudoir painting – Trutat's *Reclining Bacchante*, Titian's *Venus of Ubrino*, Manet's *Olympia*. This aesthetic conversation results in various formal sensitivities, but interestingly also the ability to capture a beauty that I now find myself reading as androgynous, ageless, and ambiguous.

Formally, Kiki's pale body almost disappears into the fabric of the work: features of her pearlescent torso slip into the liquid-like bedcovers, physical contours are only discerned by a small tuft of black hair, and outer curvatures are outlined only by a shadow the width of an incision. How does inspecting the image of one model over time stir considerations about self-image now, where an abundance of

perception has gained a new remoteness? There is a weighted distance that feels eternally captured in *Nu couché*, and, now more than ever, I find comfort in interrogating the suspended space between sitter and artist, the implied air between operative hand and documented body. I wonder what I see of myself there; pallid, idle, in undeservedly romanticised solitude, in Kiki's likeness. Foujita noted the oriental features that made her a compelling subject, complicating gaze and objectification as presumed through the lens of a western canon. Formative to my understanding of 'seeing' in art was the doctrine John Berger outlines in *Ways of Seeing*: "Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at". This fundamental dynamic between Foujita and Kiki – between creator and muse – cannot be denied either. Some degree of interjection is always possible, however, through the eyes of an ever-changing viewer.

Being one of Foujita's first paintings drawn from a live model, this moment of artistic development is perhaps to thank for the work's intuitive energy. Its effect is poetic, yet perhaps more pertinent to current times than one expects, embodying a stoicism, quietness, and palpable juxtaposition between inertness and inspection. The bed is framed by a stiff curtain of sepia and white *toile de jouy*, painted in a decorative 18th century style which delineates an alcove recessing into Sumi ink-like blackness. Sometime in

April, I too lay naked in a bed in the dark, and when reading another timely op-ed about isolation and losing sense of one's body – "Now that my body is alone, it is dissected. It lives only in images, in pieces" – felt overwhelmed with a dissociation from my corporeal identity. In *Nu Couché*, the surface quality of paint across Kiki's body is milky and gossamer; amorphous, it supplants human flesh with an unclear weight, at one glance voluminous and pillowy, then as flat and light as rice paper, all synchronously alluding to the heavy smoothness of marble. Her torso is that of a young girl or a man or the unblemished surface of rested dough, her bellybutton is an apparition. All fades. What is left is continually evocative.

We have seen Kiki in many ways, yet she still manages to inspire interpretation. Echo is the word that keeps coming to mind when I consider *Nu Couché*, as though there is a circulation of observation between us that bypasses Foujita entirely, despite his artistry being the literal means of her image's existence. Behind the distinctive ghostly cast of Foujita's work and Kiki's enigmatic portrayal was a glaze of powders, chalk, and oil; a mixture that

the artist kept secret, rendering the outcome as elusive as its production. Today, beyond the canvas, the constant re-articulation of our own image via a seemingly unending whirlpool of reflection – from mirror to laptop to window silhouette, from dysmorphically flipped selfie to final black phone-screen glint – recalls something of the extensive journey of the muse too. Perhaps the point of revisiting a long loved painting of a revered subject is simply this: to know that it is possible to appear differently, for an image to welcome new understanding, for things to still change.

“

Now more than ever I find comfort in interrogating the suspended space between sitter and artist.

”

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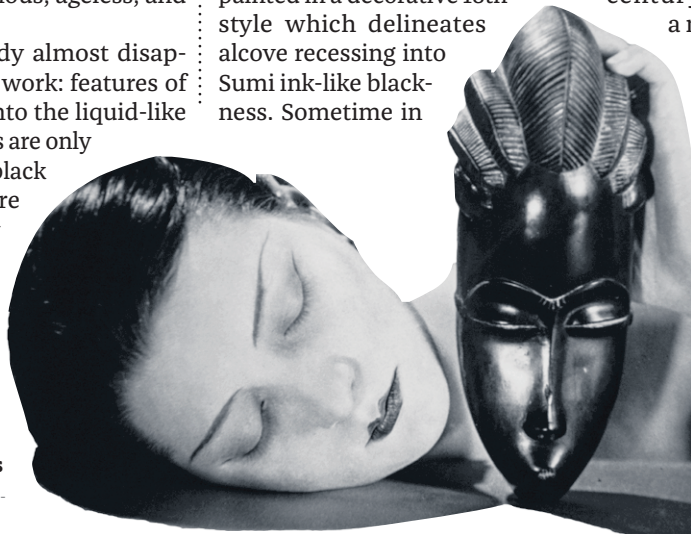
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► **Kiki in Man Ray's *Black and White*** (WIKI-MEDIACOMMONS)



Film & TV

Review Take 2: Bridgerton

In the debut of Film & TV's new double-review feature, **Rosie Aylard** and **Rosie Dixon** digest Netflix's hit period drama, adapted from the novels of US romance writer, Julia Quinn.

When Desire Meets Duty

Bridgerton's Regency London is consumed by the current season's 'marriage market', where aristocratic families prepare their eligible daughters to compete for a suitable match. Yet the true competition, argues Rosie Dixon, exists between what each character longs for and what they must settle for, between their desires and their responsibilities in the rigidly defined Regency society.

Central to the series is the entanglement between Daphne Bridgerton (Phoebe Dynevor), the "diamond" of the season, who desires a love marriage, and Simon Basset, the Duke of Hastings (Regé-Jean Page), a man staunch in his desire to never marry. Initially, neither claims to want the other, but agree that a temporary union serves both their long-term hopes and current responsibilities. The magnetism of this onscreen pairing comes from their slow-burning desires. These build from the tentative placement of Simon's hand on Daphne's back as they dance — a delicate touch in the ball's wide-shot whimsical gran-

deur, to the fast-paced, sexually passionate montage — a more explicit display of their desire.

What the people of the town desire is scandal, quenched by the *Gossip Girl*-style, rumour-soaked exposés of the incognito Lady Whistledown (voiced by the appropriately

“*Bridgerton succeeds in the sweeping scale of the characters' emotional journeys: dramatic, if a little extreme, and always orchestrated by desire*”

ineffable Julie Andrews). They report on and accompany the events of each episode, revealing the conflicting realities of desire and

responsibility in the community. The inquisitive Eloise Bridgerton (Claudia Jessie) and the stern Queen Charlotte (Golda Rosheuvel) make an unexpected pair. They share an insatiable longing to uncover Lady Whistledown's identity, while the relationship of Anthony Bridgerton (Jonathan Bailey) and Siena Rosso (Sabrina Bartlett) continually fluctuates as their attraction stands at odds with their responsibilities. *Bridgerton* succeeds in the sweeping scale of the characters' emotional journeys: dramatic, if a little extreme, and always orchestrated by desire.

If historical accuracy is what you desire, the series will disappoint. *Bridgerton*, however, never promised a factually precise depiction of the Regency period. We trade a truthful historical account for the fulfilment of our most extraordinary stylistic desires: an excessively lavish and ever-changing wardrobe (designed by Ellen Mirojnick), a surprisingly fitting soundtrack of modern songs recreated as classical pieces, and filming locations as swooningly magnificent as Bath's Royal Crescent and London's Lancaster House. The series remains in the realm of the fictional, and



▲ Phoebe Dynevor and Regé-Jean Page as Daphne Bridgerton and Simon Basset

(TWITTER/NAIRGRSILVA)

though the basic romantic premise is nothing new, it is certainly vibrant. *Bridgerton* is a fanciful and flamboyant reimagining of the old.

Considering Lady Whistledown's observational pondering: "What is more fragile than the human heart?", if what your heart desires is an immersive watch, defined by its heightened extravagance, then it will undoubtedly be fulfilled by viewing this Shondaland original series: *Bridgerton*. **Rosie Dixon**

A Period Drama for Modern Britain?

The colour-blind casting of *Bridgerton* is the series' most striking feature, followed by its attempts to apply a feminist lacquer to the gender politics of upper-class 19th-century British society. Rosie Aylard interrogates *Bridgerton*'s treatment of women and people of colour, asking how far the series can truly be called progressive.

Having actors of colour appear in a period drama set in 19th-century Britain is a rarity, let alone seeing Black actors take on central roles. While some viewers and critics see this as an asset to *Bridgerton*, others criticise the way in which race is — or, rather, isn't — addressed in the narrative. For many, the diverse cast makes the show more familiar, as it is far more representative of British society today, similar to the idea behind the diverse *Hamilton* cast.

In *Bridgerton*, Black actors are cast in the roles of main characters as



Lady Danbury, the Duke of Hastings, and the Queen herself.

However, many critics have pointed out that it is not enough to simply have a diverse cast if the issue of race is never addressed. This is where *Bridgerton* falls short. The only attempt to address race in the show takes the form of a slightly stilted conversation between Lady Danbury and the Duke of Hastings. In it, she explains to Simon (and indeed the audience) that people of colour have only been accepted into society since the King fell in love with a Black woman, and married her. Not only does this perpetuate a harmful myth that love can somehow conquer racism, but it also raises an issue which has been picked up on by many Black critics. They note that, in *Bridgerton*, interracial love is acceptable, but there

▲ Golda Rosheuvel as Queen Charlotte (TWITTER/DECIDER)

is no representation of Black love on-screen. Whether the crew will engage more meaningfully with the idea of representation in future series of the show waits to be seen.

Bridgerton also tries to be progressive in its approach to gender. The lack of a strong patriarch in any of the central families exposes the superficiality of gender-based power structures. Throughout the narrative, it is the women who have the most narrative depth. In the *Bridgerton* family, Daphne, Eloise and Lady Bridgerton are the true leaders, proving themselves far more capable than Anthony, Benedict and Colin, who fade into the background negotiating their own romantic trials and tribulations. In the Featherington family, Lady Featherington, Penelope, and

Marina are the epicentre of all activity. Lord Featherington contributes nothing to his family but financial ruin, and meets a suitably anti-climactic end.

Nevertheless, this "feminist retelling" is lacking in certain areas. Daphne, rather than embodying the 21st century heroine, remains the perfect 19th-century woman: looking for a husband, wearing beautiful gowns, and doing exactly as she is told. While the production crew may have sought to give her some agency through several graphic sex scenes, she still falls under the trope of the adoring wife who wants to change the ways of her devious and elusive husband. However, Daphne is balanced out by her sister, Eloise, who would

“*In Bridgerton, interracial love is acceptable, but there is no representation of Black love on-screen*”

rather read books and run through fields than swan around at balls trying to attract a match. Considering that it is almost impossible to put a feminist spin on a show all about finding husbands and marrying well, *Bridgerton* takes a decent shot at it. Ultimately, it is the female characters who carry the narrative entirely on their shoulders, leaving the men trailing behind.

Rosie Aylard



▲ Penelope Featherington (Nicola Coughlan) and Eloise Bridgerton (Claudia Jessie) (TWITTER/SHONDALAND)

Theatre

Why Moulin Rouge is the perfect, campy, lockdown blues-buster

Baz Luhrmann's flamboyant hit is a kick in the face to pretentious film-critics – and the lockdown blues, writes *Genevieve Badia-Aylin*

Never before had a musical so delighted in the flamboyant, the kitsch, the tragic and the melodramatic as Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge*, wrapped in showgirl feathers and stinking of absinthe: a wonderful antithesis to the theatre elite. *Jesus Christ Superstar* may have tried, *Little Shop of Horrors* might have come close, but seldom had a production been so deserving of iconic status, so worthy of a bedazzled Crown of Camp – and its audience knew it. Soon enough, it gained cult-like status; moviegoers were in awe of the bastardised pop songs, the flagrant disregard for minimalism, and its diamond-encrusted disdain for the snobbery of 'high art' or gritty drama. By the end of 2001, it was divisively named 'Best Film of the Year'. As one Guardian reviewer put it: 'it [was] as if a jeroboam of champagne [had] been shaken up far too much and then uncorked in our faces.' Take that as you will.

In the last few weeks before the first lockdown, back when a 'national emergency' still sounded ridiculous and we all, so foolishly, hoped that it'd all be over by Christmas (alas, pandemics don't tend to happen like that), I crashed on the sofa and watched as one of my best friends placed that fateful red DVD into the player, as if for the first time. I was still reeling from the shock of an offer from Cambridge, frenziedly worrying about how I was going to get the grades, and, to be honest, slightly sick from the pressure of it all. The sound of sirens, formerly a rare occurrence in rural East Sussex, were beginning to pass by my window with an alarming frequency. I started to avoid the news. A remnant from

my internet-consumed adolescence, the warnings of horror movies and video games were beginning to ricochet in my head; I was constantly reminded of dystopian futures, zombie apocalypses, and the first person shooters that I was so ridiculously

bad at...

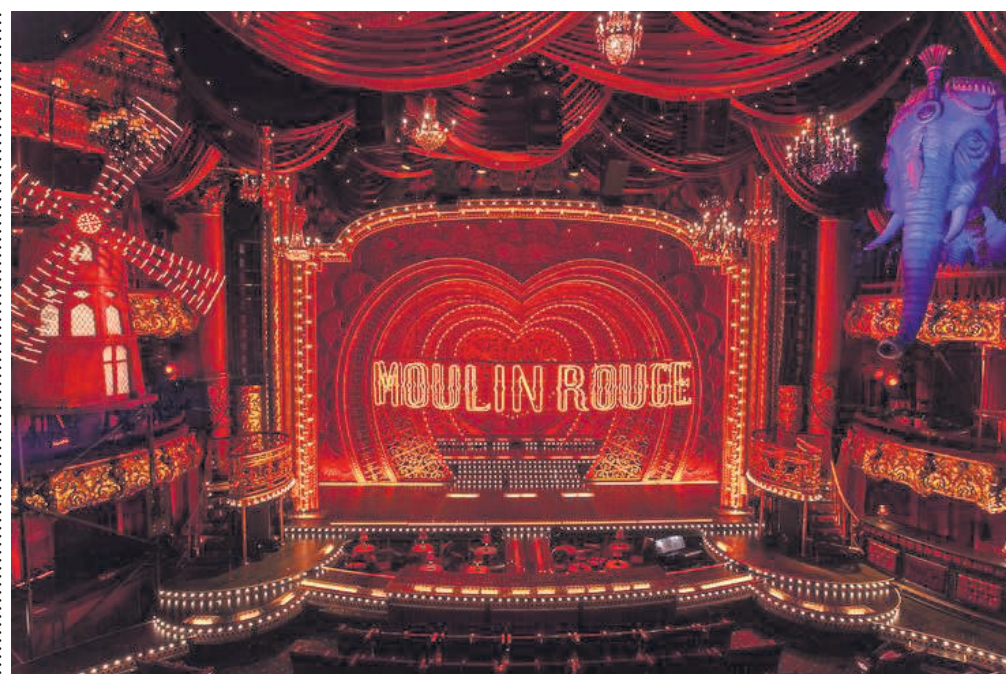
Yet when those titles rolled, everything faded to black.

With a crash and a flourish, the last showy remnants of 19th Century Paris exploded on screen, David Bowie's elegiac tones seeping into the frame with the melancholy of a Byronic love poem; the camera, cascading downwards, spiralled into the underworld of Montmartre. Stage lights dazzled. Can-can dancers squealed. Jim Broadbent ran around a dining table wrapped in a bedsheet, singing a disturbingly salacious rendition of Madonna's 'Like a Virgin'. And in that two-hour long epic of two ill-fated lovers – Nicole Kidman's Satine tragic, Ewan McGregor's Christian hopelessly Keatsian – the chaos outside fell away, and I sang along to every word. It was the cure for the itch.

I spent those next few weeks alternating between the movie soundtrack and its 2019 Broadway counterpart (performed with a fabulously-cast Aaron Tveit), watching from my bedroom as the world fell apart around me. Though the pandemic raged on outside my window, every time that I pressed play I lost myself in that fantastical world of decadent dance halls and star-crossed lovers; the dark shadow of 'unprecedented times' dissolved into a cloud of sequins and 90s pop.

I've always been a sucker for musicals. As a kid, my mother would rush me to her amateur theatre rehearsals every Thursday, setting me down in the back of an empty Methodist church as a motley crew of pensioners, teenagers and office-workers-turned-thespians bustled together, warming up their voices and fanning themselves with music sheets. I'd watch from beside the lectern, half-listening, half-engrossed in a copy of the latest Percy Jackson, as my mum set the pace, choreographing each idle pair of feet to *Oklahoma*, *Godspell*, *Copacabana*, *Crazy for You*... all with a rolling, furious fervour. In those moments, the

real world
became
irrel-
evant –



▲ *Moulin Rouge's* Broadway set is just as sequin-studded as Baz Luhrmann's film

(LESMMISGIRL/PINTREST)

“Seldom had a production been so deserving of iconic status, so worthy of a bedazzled Crown of Camp”

◀ *Moulin Rouge* is based on a real French cabaret club which opened in Paris in 1889

(UNSPLASH)

gone were the worries of work and school, rent and unpaid mortgages, all exchanged for love of the music. The drama. The *unreality*.

Good musicals make you sing. Great ones make you feel. *Moulin Rouge* is undoubtedly a great one. I don't know where I'd be without its kitschy setlist or unabashed flamboyancy; the way it's so shameless, so cheesy, so... human. So what if it's a little camp? A little over the top? In a time where everything is being made darker and grittier, remade and rebooted with an edge that would make My Chemical Romance jealous, why should we have to focus on the worst in life? Why must everything be 'realistic'? Why can't we just enjoy things?

I love this musical because it wants you to have fun. It refuses to take itself seriously, and cares nothing for the blistering opinion of a pretentious film critic. It also has a scathingly accurate commentary of class relations if you're interested in that sort of analysis, but to be honest, you'll probably be too caught up in the sequins to care. Listening to those songs, relishing their Luhrmann-esque spectacle, is more than just an escape from reality. *Moulin Rouge* is a show of defiance – come what may.



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Nonsensical New Year's Resolutions



▲ "New Year = new me, a fresh start and all that" (IZZY THOMAS)

Nadya Miryanova

Let's face it, we've all been there – sitting down in January with a brand new notebook* (*a scrap piece of paper found on the floor), and writing a set of new year resolutions. New year = new me, a fresh start and all that.

With the arrival of a new decade, I shamelessly lived up to that cliché – after all, what better time was there to start planning? I could turn over a new leaf, finally put behind the procrastination of the previous year, and renew my ambitions. It was a chance to move forward and I felt like nothing could stop me.

Alexa, play Naive by the Kooks.

Yes, as you've probably gathered, there was rather a lot in 2020 that could stop me – and none of my plans went vaguely the way I imagined. In fact, I stumbled across my crumpled list of old resolutions the other day and they were so unbelievably full of nonsense that they gave my supervision essays a run for their money.

Without further ado, I present you with my list of nonsensical New Year's resolutions:

1) Have more new experiences and travel more

Ah yes, let's start with the most unrealistic one.

You know, I'm really not sure how naive little me thought my second year at

“I'd drag any willing member of my household for walks”

Cambridge would be conducive to 'new experiences' and 'travelling' in the first place, but here we are. I'm always one for optimism, but I don't think I could have gone more wrong if I tried.

Unless you count me travelling to the United States of the bath and toilet while making the frequent trek to the capital of the house (AKA the kitchen), I think it's safe to say that this resolution has not been accomplished. In term time, there were days where the furthest I travelled was to the other end of my room – maybe the corridor, or even my college library, if I was feeling adventurous. The Tier Four life and January lockdown haven't exactly improved the situation. On the plus side, my cat's never been happier.

2) Establish a good routine

HA! Good one.

I commend anyone who has stuck to a good routine throughout all *three* lockdowns. After being in the same place for so long you'd think I'd have figured out something vaguely resembling a timetable. Think again!

Time and time again, I found myself confronted by the same old lie – TODAY will be the day where I wake up at 7am and replicate the lifestyle of a health guru.

That same TODAY was really the day where I'd roll out of bed at 11am, stay in my dressing gown until three in the

afternoon, and spend half the day eating snacks rather than doing my work.

A particular highlight came during a lockdown essay crisis, when I'd confused myself so much that I forgot which question I was even answering. I decided to go downstairs for a bit of inspiration, and that is the story of how my mum found me sitting cross-legged and eating a banana in the kitchen at two o'clock in the morning. She wasn't very impressed.

3) Do more exercise

Strangely enough, this one's quite a mixed bag. Though the first lockdown mostly meant being stuck inside, the fact that we only had one token walk meant my family insisted on consistency. Every afternoon at three o'clock, we marched out to the local park whilst listening to BoJo's broadcast, and walked a few laps around it. My Dad (un)fortunately got a Fitbit this year, so anything under 10,000 steps is basically a crime.

I suppose this motivated me to get outside a bit more last term, meaning I'd drag any willing members of my household for walks at various hours of the day (2am walk? I think so). I even went running at the beginning of Michaelmas to clear my head after a particularly troublesome essay crisis. I looked an absolute state (frazzled hair, no makeup, a fine shade of exhaustion under my eyes), but Homerton is very remote from the town

centre, so it was bound to be peaceful and uninterrupted.

Surprise!

As I was running down to Midsummer Common, my former Music co-editor sprinted past me. After wondering how anyone could physically maintain that pace without collapsing, I proceeded to trip over my shoelaces and pause at the traffic lights. I then continued my field route and passed someone who looked suspiciously like my translation supervisor. Having run a small circle past the bridge, I realised that yes, this was in fact my supervisor, since I passed him *again* while he was speaking French on the phone.

Running slightly faster as if chased by my own paranoia, I continued uninterrupted for the grand total of five minutes until I bumped into some people from my course and stopped to say hi (why does this always happen when I'm hot and sweaty and have a stitch??).

And just when I thought I'd reached my limit of accidental encounters upon returning to the traffic lights, my DIRECTOR OF STUDIES cycled up right next to me with his baby son in the back seat.

I was very much *the deer in headlights*.

On the way back, I bumped into my friend and recounted my eventful run. Incidentally, that was one of my last runs in Michaelmas – I've been introduced to dance workouts and haven't looked back since.

4) Eat healthier

This one's also a bit of a mix. My mum is very into healthy eating, so when I'm at home, my diet is filled with all things fruit and veg, chickpeas, quinoa, you name it. But I'm also the sort of person who won't turn down chocolate, lemonade, pizza...you can probably see where this is going. At university, there were (many) days where I ate more cheese than vegetables and scoffed more cookies than I care to admit. I guess it's all about balance.

5) Drink more water

Nope. My family is still convinced that I was a camel in my past life, though you won't catch me drinking 40 gallons of water in one go. I've tried to stay hydrated, but often I just forget. My partner even got me a big water bottle as a form of encouragement, but what generally happens is: I fill it up, take a few sips and then.... it sits on my desk and stares at me for the rest of the week. Oops.

Verdict

Ultimately, I think I always knew that a new year wouldn't equal a new me, but perhaps this isn't a bad thing. At the end of the day, things don't always go the way you imagine, but hey-ho, keep making those resolutions and see where they get you. Who knows, maybe they'll provide inspiration and, if not, they might be a laugh to reflect upon. After all, hindsight is a weird and wonderful thing.

Violet

By VARSITY

Baby, there's COVID outside: recreating the magic of Lent term at home

Alex Castillo-Powell



▲ Formal hall - at home? (IZZY THOMAS)

With Lent Term now in full swing, many of us will likely struggle with the bizarre experience of spending the whole two months at home. Having spent half of Michaelmas term (or Autumn term, as it's known to muggles) at home, I've already got a good grasp of just how weird it is attending university in the bedroom of your family home surrounded by edgy posters you thought were cool as a 15-year-old, but can't take down now because then you'd have to admit that you're an adult.

You agonised over whether you should spend another lockdown in your

bedroom scrolling through memes on Facebook, or in your bedroom scrolling through memes on Facebook but with free food and better heating. You opted for the latter (free food obvs), and now you're wondering how you can have the "Cambridge experience" from your very own bedroom in South London. Is it possible? Can the magic of a mid-sized ancient city with a lot of churches and a big Wetherspoons really be transported anywhere else?

Step One: After being home for a few days, it may be tempting to walk around in your pyjamas and forget that you might own other clothes, but if you want to have the real university experi-

ence, then you need to show off your fresh Cambridge merch at every opportunity. Your family might laugh at you when you show up to dinner in a gown or when you refuse to take off your college tie, but really, they're just burning with envy that they can't wear a college puffer jacket when they shower in the mornings. Warning: if you scream "my precious!" every time someone tries to touch your college scarf then you may have gone too far.

Step Two: Just because you're at home doesn't mean you can let your social life go to waste. The next step is to create a JCR or MCR to organise socials. Appoint yourself president and plaster the walls with posters notifying your family of the first bop of term. You may be slightly limited in what to serve at the party, as you don't want to see your parents drunk, and you will have to enforce 2m social distancing at all times, which may be difficult in the garden shed. Your family might not appreciate you ruining "Bake-Off night" to throw a party in the shed, but they can voice their concerns at the next JCR committee meeting.

Step Three: Make sure you keep up the lingo. Once you start speaking Italian, you soon imagine that you're on a beautiful beach in Sicily waiting for Giuseppe to come back with the Ferrari. The same logic applies to Cantabrigian. Keep speaking the language and you'll soon find yourself on King's Parade wondering how many of the tourists are morally dubious tier-crossers getting their final selfies in before sneaking back onto the train to King's Cross. In order

“It may take a while for your parents to get used to being called 'bedders', but it's all part of the experience”

to fully immerse yourself, you'll need to teach your family members the language as well. The next time your mum tells you to come to the kitchen for dinner, you need to set her straight: "Actually, mama, it's the trough. Next time leave a message in my pidge." It may take a while for your parents to get used to being called "bedders", but it's all part of the experience.

Step Four: If there's one thing that encapsulates the magic of Cambridge, it's punting. Don't ask me why pushing a long metal stick through six inches of mud on a rainy day is elegant and historical; it just is. It may be difficult to think of ways to carry on this magic in your family home, but you don't get far in Cambridge by quitting. Grab an abandoned bathtub off the street, drag it to your front garden, find a long stick or fallen branch and push yourself across the mud while smiling at envious on-lookers. You will need to wear a boater hat at all times otherwise your neighbours will laugh at you for being criminally under-dressed. If you do find that a crowd has gathered on the street, then use this as an opportunity to give them a history lesson. "Did you know that Lord Byron kept a bear in my garden shed?" (You may need to bend the truth to keep them interested.)

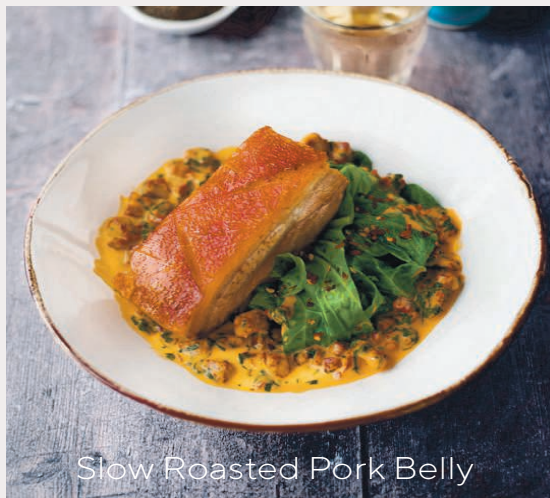
If, after all these steps, your neighbours haven't yet pelted you with bits of fruit and veg, and your family haven't kicked you out, then voilà, you can enjoy the rest of the year knowing you haven't missed out on a single thing.

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Sport

The language of racism and unconscious bias in football

Reflecting on an important year for both sport and society, [Damola Odeyemi](#) explains the influence of sporting language on how we perceive race in football



▲ Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang: just one of many modern footballers to be subjected to explicit acts of racism (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

2020 was a year of racial reckoning. Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the summer of 2020 brought issues of racial injustice and inequality to the forefront of people's minds. Society as a whole, and the institutions by which it is held up, had to come to terms with both their history and the current adversities facing people of colour. Football, one of the biggest aspects of our culture, and a huge influence on society, had its own reckoning. In football we are all too familiar with seeing racism from fans. These tend to be purposeful, vindictive misdeeds. What happens when the waters are muddied, when these misdeemeanours are much less explicit, done by accident, or between professionals of the sport itself?

European football is one of the most multicultural industries in the world. The English Premier League is the most diverse of the lot: 350 out of the 559 registered players in the English topflight (62.6%) are foreign players. Different cultures have varying thresholds for what is seen as offensive. In recent years, we have seen some of these cultural differences brought to light in the form of the language that players use, sparking a discussion about the way players are educated about race.

In December of last year, the Uruguayan international and Manchester United striker, Edinson Cavani was punished for a controversial Instagram post. This post came shortly after Manchester United's 3-2 win over Southampton in which he scored the equaliser and winning goal.

The caption involved the use of the Spanish word 'negrito' which literally translates to little black man. This word was used in response to a friend congratulating him on his victory: "gracias negrito". The player was immediately called up on this, and he issued the following statement:

"The message I posted after the game on Sunday was intended as an affectionate greeting to a friend, thanking him for his congratulations after the game. The last thing I wanted to do was cause offence to anyone. I am completely opposed to racism and deleted the message as soon as it was explained that it could be interpreted differently. I would like to sincerely apologise for this".

The Uruguayan, fined £100,000, given a three-match ban, and forced to enrol in an educational programme, accepted his punishment without complaint or an appeal. Within the current societal context of the Black Lives Matter movement, this punishment is purposefully a harsh one. This acts as a deterrent, urging players to pay attention to what they post, even if it's something that comes naturally to them in their native tongues.

The question many ask is the sociolinguistic one, about the use of the word 'negrito'; the cultural significance of its meaning, whether it is racially insensitive, or whether the player had any racist intent. Maybe the question we should be asking is why incidents like this occur in the first place. Some of the blame certainly lies with the clubs. Much like in a conventional workplace, all employees need to be educated on the way they should conduct themselves, and on the things that could be taken as offensive in the society in which they are employed. Players are employed by their clubs, and on that account, they should be given unconscious bias training, in addition to their media training.

The incident involving Edinson Cavani could perhaps be put down to a failure of media training. The Premier League puts on a show about taking a firm stance against racism and discrimination but maybe not enough is being done behind this display. Taking the knee before kick-off is a great performative act. But maybe that's all it is – performative. Players should be given unconscious bias training as a matter of employment procedure, rather than simply as a punishment, in the case of Cavani. The issues of unconscious bias stemming from cultural differences might be most distinct when focusing on international players. However, it is sometimes the less obvi-

ous aspects of the sport that are most pervasive and have the greatest effect on a wider, societal scale.

A paper published in July 2020 by the Danish data sciences firm, Run Repeat, showed quantifiable racial bias in football commentary. The data revealed the biases in the way commentators describe black and dark-skinned players compared to their lighter-skinned counterparts. The study looked at a total of 80 matches from four of the top European leagues; Premier League, La Liga, Serie A and Ligue 1. The key findings of the study gave numerical and statistical proof of unconscious bias in football commentary by specifically looking at praise and criticism in different contexts such as power, speed, intelligence, hard work etc.

The researchers found that on footballing intelligence, 62.6% of praise was directed towards players of a lighter skin tone, and 63.3% of criticism was directed to players of a darker skin tone. With regards to quality, this disparity was even greater, with 67.57% of criticism targeted at darker-skinned players. Looking at the more granular level and the linguistics of commentary, the study found that on the subject of power, commentators were 6.59 times more likely to be referring to a darker-skinned player. The multiplicative factor was 3.38 when talking about speed. This is exemplified by commentators disproportionately using words such as 'aggressive', 'pacey', 'a beast', when describing and even praising black players.

The research showed that darker-skinned players receive an overwhelming number of comments about their physical and athletic abilities. The only categories for which lighter-skinned players proportionally received fewer comments were speed, power, form and versatility. Darker-skinned players received fewer comments for the other variables, those being hard-work, quality, intelligence, leadership and background. The researchers showed that darker-skinned players are less likely to be praised for their skill or intelligence, and more likely to be singled out for their appearance. Black players are too often reduced to objects of pace and power, rather than natural skill, intelligence or finesse. Darker-skinned players are more likely to be criticised

as a whole and most specifically when referring to intelligence and quality. There is no evidence to show that darker-skinned players are any less talented than their lighter-skinned teammates. Only the unconscious bias of the commentators can explain the conclusions of the study.

Why is this study such a revelation? Why are these findings so important?

Commentators play a significant role in the way a viewer or listener experiences a sport; this applies for all sports. They are viewed as the expert eye into the activity, to bring the observer closer to the action. They allow the viewer to have a more in-depth experience, to not just be entertained, but be educated by what they are seeing such that they go away with a greater understanding. Commentators open our eyes.

As consumers of sport, we wholeheartedly trust them. We hand over the work of analysis to the commentators; we leave them to decode any intricacies and relay it to us in a way we can understand. To put it simply, commentators make professional sport accessible. It is this level of influence they have over huge audiences that makes these findings by Run Repeat pertinent. The biases that commentators have will precipitate into the public understanding of the sport. If players of colour are referred to mainly for their athletic abilities, their pace, power and aggression, then this will certainly influence the public perception of these players.

What is most worrying is the fact a large European audience is being exposed to a brand of commentary in which darker-skinned players are criticised more. If commentators do not appreciate certain darker-skinned players for their in-game intelligence, some of this sentiment will be taken up unconsciously by listeners. Football's influences run deep in society. Our unconscious biases are reinforced by the commentary we listen to. It is fair to say that the wider societal effects of this will not be so easily quantifiable.



◀ In December last year, Edinson Cavani was punished for a controversial Instagram post (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)