

What should a post-pandemic 'Roaring Twenties' entail?

p. 10



In Conversation with Joe Ansbro

p. 24



► Craig Watson

The Future of Fashion

p. 19

No. 888

Friday 26th February 2021
varsity.co.uk

Cambridge's Independent
Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY

Cambridge SU promotes letting company accused of student exploitation

William Hunter
Investigations Editor
Amy Howell
Senior News Editor

On 18th February the Cambridge Students' Union (SU) Facebook page shared a paid partnership post with UK Student Houses, a company which is also advertised on the SU's website, with the intention of providing "great savings" for students.

The post advertised UK Student Houses, a Cambridge based property letting service which holds over 40 properties throughout Cambridge. UK Student Houses is, however, merely a trading name for Homes For Students Ltd, a company which has received extensive criticism for its business practices via online reviews from former letters.

Homes for Students Ltd is one of the biggest UK student letting agencies, holding 92 properties across 35 UK towns and managing 22,500 beds through their various trading names. Operating under Homes for Students, Prestige Student Living, Essential Student Living, and UK Student Houses, Homes for Students Ltd has rapidly expanded since its incorporation in 2005. The Covid-19 pandemic has not slowed down this expeditious expansion, with the company planning to reach 30,000 beds under its management by the end of 2021 and almost doubling their net assets from 2019 to 2020; going from £2,652,529 to £4,487,619.

However, Homes for Students' success has been blighted by an overwhelming weight of negative reviews which record reports of false advertising, withholding refunds, and taking advantage of students. Many leaving reviews for Homes for Students and Prestige Student Living report that the company has ignored requests for refunds and reimbursement for students who have been unable to move in due to Covid-19 restrictions. One reviewer wrote that Homes for Students had been "completely dismissive of the fact that Durham University asked students to not return to the city unless necessary. They are delaying answering any questions about contract cancellations and refunds in the hopes they will fool everyone into paying their next rent instalment."

Another review for Prestige Student Living, a trade name for Homes for Students Ltd, stated, "I would avoid Prestige at all costs. My son and many of his fellow tenants are currently having a really hard time trying to recover their rent as a result of the Covid lockdown. The landlords and Prestige student living at Renslade House Exeter have steadfastly refused to offer any refund - completely at odds with all other student accommodation."

When approached for comment a spokesperson for the SU told Varsity that "Fundraising through commercial advertising helps the SU supplement its

Full story on page 2 ►



Who's who in Cambridge Students' Union 2021 Elections?

Full story on page 4 (LUCAS MADDALENA)

News

EDITORIAL

Building tomorrow

With Boris' recent announcement, it finally feels like there is an end in sight. Although time has certainly been obscured by our third national lockdown, the prospect of shops, hairdressers, gyms and outdoor hospitality reopening on 12 April in England feels ever approaching and momentous.

And, as we all know, it's largely due to the current success of the UK's vaccination programme, which has seen the roll-out of the Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca vaccines.

As of this week, 700,000 people in the UK have been fully vaccinated. Huge amounts of money is being pumped into boosting the UK's capacity to develop and mass produce vaccines, in itself the cause for some much-needed celebration - regardless of exactly when shops might be reopening.

The huge breakthroughs with vaccines, and their impact on our future, make it abundantly clear that our well-being is vitally dependent on innovation. Innovation is the act of creating new, improved methods and sharp solutions to fatal problems. Arguably, it is the cornerstone of sustaining human life.

In the run-up to restrictions easing, innovation is something to keep in mind. It promises transformation for the better, actively re-structuring and revolutionising: 'What should a post-pandemic 'Roaring Twenties' entail?' (pg. 10) explores exactly what transformations we should be expecting in a new, improved, post-pandemic world.

How, moving forward, will we adapt? Will it be for the better? Our writers ask if the Eurovision song contest will survive in a virtual format (pg. 23) and what will be the cost of innovation in online retail (pg. 19). Our science article 'Cerebral Organoids: Fact and Fiction' (pg. 13) also evaluates risks that come with pushing science forward.

Innovation will always be a weigh-up of gains and losses. But, the process of actively trying to change and improve established methods is what matters. Innovation is the promise of a better tomorrow - one that we are all more than ready for.

All our love,
Georgie and Gaby xx

EDITORS Gaby Vides & Georgina Buckle *editor@varsity.co.uk*

DEPUTY EDITORS Meike Leonard & Elizabeth Haigh *deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk*

MAGAZINE EDITOR Isabel Sebode *magazine@varsity.co.uk*

DEPUTY MAGAZINE EDITOR Esmee Wright *deputymagazine@varsity.co.uk*

DIGITAL EDITORS Minsung Son (Senior); Polly Haythornthwaite (Deputy) *digital@varsity.co.uk*

BUSINESS MANAGER Mark Curtis *business@varsity.co.uk*

NEWS EDITORS Cameron White & Amy Howell (Senior); Luke Hallam, Diana Stoyanova & Alexander Shtyrov (Deputy) *news@varsity.co.uk*

HEADS OF PUBLISHING Alex Leggatt & Zoe Matt-Williams

INVESTIGATIONS EDITORS Tiffany Tsoi, Wiliam Hunter & Ewan Hawkins *investigations@varsity.co.uk*

INTERVIEWS EDITORS Juliette Gueron-Gabrielle & Josef Skrdlik (Senior); Yan-Yi Lee (Deputy) *interviews@varsity.co.uk*

FEATURES EDITORS Nick Barlett & Alfie Eltis (Senior); Isabella Addo & Akshata Kapoor (Deputy) *features@varsity.co.uk*

OPINION EDITORS Linus Uhlig & Jed Asemota (Senior); Lara Brown & Riannon Chaplin (Deputy) *opinion@varsity.co.uk*

SCIENCE EDITORS Sambavi Sneha Kumar & Grace Blackshaw (Senior); Izavel Lee (Deputy) *science@varsity.co.uk*

SPORT EDITORS Jack Wadding & Lucy Patchett

sport@varsity.co.uk

VIOLET EDITOR Lotte Brundle, Alex Castillo-Powell & Nadya Miryanova *violet@varsity.co.uk*

ARTS EDITORS Izzie Glover, Natcha Ruamsanitwong & Karolina Filova *arts@varsity.co.uk*

FILM & TV EDITORS Charlotte Holah & Ellie Etches *filmandtv@varsity.co.uk*

MUSIC EDITORS James Mitchell & Hamish Duncan *music@varsity.co.uk*

FASHION EDITORS Martha French & Lara Zand (Senior); Claire Lee Shenfield *fashion@varsity.co.uk*

THEATRE EDITORS Miranda Stephenson & Emily Moss *theatre@varsity.co.uk*

LIFESTYLE EDITOR Scarlet Rowe & Alexandra Jarvis *lifestyle@varsity.co.uk*

SWITCHBOARD PRODUCERS Eliza Pepper & Amber De Ruyt *switchboard@varsity.co.uk*

DIGITAL TEAM Maria Pointer, Ben Reader, Tomas Vierra-Short, Angharad Williams, Sienna James, Olivia Young, Lucas Maddalena, Jasmine Charles *digital@varsity.co.uk*

HEAD OF ILLUSTRATIONS Odessa Chitty *magazine@varsity.co.uk*

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR Chloe Bond *subeditor@varsity.co.uk*

SUB-EDITORS Nicole Pullinger, Allison Cheung, Emma Hassey, Anamaria Koeva, Rosina Griffiths, Henry Vine, Hania Bar, Kathryn Scott, Lorna Kimmins, Lucia Neirotti, Holly Hodges *subeditor@varsity.co.uk*

VARSOC PRESIDENT Jess Ma *president@varsity.co.uk*

ASSOCIATE EDITORS Olivia Emily, Amy Batley, Joseph Powell, Caterina Bragoli, Gabriel Humphreys, Stephi Stacey, Lottie Reader & Rich Bartlett *associate@varsity.co.uk*

VARSAITY BOARD Dr Michael Franklin (Chairman), Prof Peter Robinson, Dr Tim Harris, Michael Derringer, Caitlin Smith, Noella Chye, Daniel Gayne, Ellie Howcroft

© VARSITY PUBLICATIONS LTD, 2021. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission of the publisher. Varsity, 16 Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RX. Telephone 01223 337575.

Varsity is published by Varsity Publications Ltd. Varsity Publications also publishes *The Mays*. Printed at Iliffe Print Cambridge - Winship Road, Milton, Cambridge CB24 6PP on 42.5gsm newsprint. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. ISSN 1758-4442.

University proposes new housing development on green belt land

Sam Crawley
News Correspondent

The University of Cambridge, along with Corpus Christi College, Downing College, Jesus College and St. John's College, have proposed a large new housing development in the south west of Cambridge.

The four Colleges, together with the University, form the North Barton Road Land Owners Group.

Their proposed development follows a call by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council for landowners to submit suggestions as they consider the future of the local area.

Their plans would see between 2,500 and 2,800 homes built on what is currently green belt land used for farming just south of the University's West Cambridge site.

There has not yet been a formal planning application. A final decision on the development will likely take several years.

Real estate in Cambridge is expensive, with an average house price of around £450,000.

Between October 2008 and September 2009, the University Accommodation Service received 6,780 requests for accommodation, with only 360 University units available.

At least 40% of homes in the devel-



▲ The North West Cambridge development, the University's last major housing project, in 2019 (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

opment would be affordable housing, in accordance with City Council policy. The remaining houses would be used as accommodation for University students and staff, specialist housing for the elderly, or would be sold to the public.

The development would include a new primary school, health centre and public square.

The North Barton Road Land Owners Group has proposed that over 50% of the site would remain as green space, with 49% being retained as green belt.

They have said that "a significant amount of green infrastructure" would be included in the development, in-

“At least 40% of homes in the development would be affordable housing”

cluding parks, sports pitches, green corridors, meadows and wetlands. The project would also involve the "rewilding" of Bin Brook. They argue that the proposed location is "extremely sustainable", easily accessible by foot, bike or public transport.

Speaking to *Cambridgeshire Live*, Jenny Raine, Corpus Christi's bursar, said: "The vision for South West Cambridge is of a high-quality new neighbourhood that will provide the homes Cambridge needs in the most sustainable location."

"The new neighbourhood will also be at the forefront of environmental sustainability, both with respect to the homes that are built and the new, publicly accessible green spaces created."

The group hosted a public webinar on 25th February for residents to speak to the developers and raise questions.

The University is already heavily invested in the housebuilding industry. The North-West Cambridge Development, approved by the City Council in 2013, will involve a total of 3,000 properties, as well as accommodation for 2,000 graduate students.

The development involved the University taking on almost £1 billion in debt, and has attracted criticism for cost overruns, with a possible deficit of £450 million by 2052.

Downing, Jesus, St John's and Corpus Christi were all contacted by Varsity for comment.

► Continued from front cover

revenue and continue to expand its range of support services for students. Cambridge SU advertising services operate to a strict internal policy which is reviewed annually, through student and staff consultation, to ensure it reflects the views of our membership.

"The SU welcomes student feedback on any commercial partners that we work with and will listen to concerns raised and act, where necessary, to revise or cancel any campaign that is deemed inappropriate."

The statement added that the SU had not previously been made aware of the concerns over UK Student Houses, and that the SU will be investigating this instance "to ensure that partnership is consistent with our policy and values."

The Cambridge SU has been approached by Varsity to clarify their advertising policy, but so far has not responded. As such, it is unclear whether this partnership is in violation of their advertising policies or whether it would be permitted.

The Cambridge SU's advertising is managed by an advertising agency SU Network.

SU Network, according to their website, offers "marketing and sponsorship opportunities across multiple university campuses; to Students' Unions, we offer Business Development and Finance support services, and the opportunity to grow and develop the above sales channels."

The company is partnered with several other Student Unions, including those of Surrey, Oxford and Bedfordshire Universities.

Homes for Students Ltd has been approached for comment.

Cambridge SU with UK Student Houses.
Paid partnership ·

With over 40 properties across Cambridge, we know we've got your student accommodation for next year covered! 🏠

All properties are centrally located, perfect for uni campus' and exploring the iconic city! 🇬🇧

- ◆ Central Locations
- ◆ ... See more

UK studenthouses.com™

next year, sorted!

Are you a student searching for that perfect student home in Cambridge? Maybe you're looking for a great house to share with your mates? Well your next student home, is just one click away.

find out more at - ukstudenthouses.com

▲ Pictured above is the SU's advertisement of UK Student Homes (CAMBRIDGE SU/FACEBOOK)

Sidney Sussex's planned rent increase causes controversy



▲ Sidney Sussex is planning to raise rent by 3% for 2021-22 (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Sidney Sussex's financial statements for the 2019-20 academic year highlighted some of the financial impacts of the pandemic for the College. These included: the loss of income from student accommodation and catering fees, cancellation of conferences, the impact on rent from commercial tenants, and the impact on dividends from funds held in equities.

The report placed emphasis on the loss of income from accommodation fees: "income from residences, catering and conferences decreased by a total of £0.835 million (22%) in the year. This is a direct consequence of the pandemic, with virtually no income in the Easter term from student rents and catering, and no conference income from the Easter vacation."

The report also states that the College's net assets have decreased by £8.4 million, from £131.7 million to £123.3 million, over the course of the year, in what the report describes as an "exceptional year" due to the "the COVID-19 pandemic having a significant impact on [the College's] finances."

The College has also reported a loss £9.424 million in investments, compared with a loss of £0.816 million in 2018-19.

This has led the College to defer some maintenance and accommodation projects for the 2020-21 academic year until 2021-22.

Alongside this, trustees have formed a financial recovery working group which is intended to explore ways by which the short and medium-term impacts of the pandemic for the College can be mitigated.

"Forecasts have been prepared [by the working group] for the period to 2023 which have been stress tested based on a number of scenarios and have considered the impact upon the College and its cash resources and unrestricted reserves."

The College's fundraising efforts, which "are primarily directed at raising money from our alumni," were also impacted: "COVID-19 had a significant impact on fundraising and alumni relations at the College between March and June 2020," the report states.

"All face-to-face meetings with donors, as well as all events, were cancelled, the annual (mail) appeal was converted into a donor report," alongside members of the team being placed on furlough.

Sidney Sussex has been contacted for comment.

FEATURES

Starting University in mourning



Page 8 ►

OPINION

How schools can facilitate innovation

Page 11 ►

INTERVIEWS

I am a young person growing up in Yemen's civil war. This is my story.

Page 6 ►

Amy Howell
Senior News Editor

On Wednesday evening (24/02), Sidney Sussex College decided that rent for students would increase by 3%, plus inflation, for the 2021-22 academic year.

An open letter was launched earlier this week opposing the initial proposal of annual 5% rent increases. The letter, signed by 164 students at the time of publication (24/02), also called on the College to "abandon any plans for a rent increase in 2021-22."

Sidney Sussex College Student Union (SSCSU) President, Jake Lowry, told *Varsity* that the decision on Wednesday evening was "a compromise [from] the originally proposed 5%." He added that there was potential for the same 3% increase to be applied in the 2022-23 academic year "if Sidney's rents are in the lowest quartile of all Cambridge College's rents".

"Despite productive discussions lasting several months, unfortunately JCR representatives felt unable to support any of the rent proposals put before Council today."

He added that he was "disappointed with today's outcome, [but] will nonetheless continue to work with and lobby College on this issue."

Currently, first-year students at the College pay between £1,246 and £1,461 in rent charges, plus a termly catering charge of £185.

The open letter highlights the "grave inequalities in the quality of accommodation" across the collegiate University, and that this factor should be considered alongside the College's aim to ensure that rent at Sidney Sussex is "within 5% of the median of all colleges."

The letter deems that "the median [rent across the collegiate University] is an arbitrary target that does not reflect

“The college has decided to completely ignore the voices of its student body”

the relative quality of Sidney accommodation.”

An email to students at the College from Lowry highlighted that proposals were part of "above-inflation rent increases."

Both this email and the open letter also discuss the "end-goal," which refers to the College Council's alleged commitment to discussing whether above-inflation increases would continue at the College, which the letter stated had yet to take place.

The letter expresses sympathy that "the College is facing unprecedented financial difficulty with two remote terms and a complete loss of conferencing activity in the last 12 months," and praises the College's decision to "waiver rent charges for students not in residence and to top up furloughed staff pay to 100%."

It continues: "Despite this, the cost of the pandemic should not be borne by students and decisions around permanent rent increases should be taken independently of the financial impact of the pandemic."

One student at Sidney Sussex, who is also a member of the Rent Strike Campaign, told *Varsity* that "in the midst of a pandemic, the college has decided to completely ignore the voices of its student body by going back the commitment it made last year to consult with us on future increases."

They added that "the college have lost the trust of its community."

The 'Sidney Rent Strike' campaign also voiced their frustrations via Facebook, condemning the proposal as "outrageous" and adding that "instead of listening to students' well researched, valid concerns, college management want to raise rents for freshers who will have already been hit by two years of the economic impacts of the pandemic."

Could you be the next Editor of Varsity?

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

You will lead a team producing online content throughout the term after our 23rd April 2021 print edition and be responsible for producing our 2021 Varsity Review & Yearbook - a circa 60 page A4 glossy magazine.

No previous experience at Varsity is required for the role. All students who are passionate about journalism and have creative direction for the magazine are encouraged to apply.

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

The deadline for applications is midday, Wednesday 10th March 2021.

News

Cambridge Students' Union 2021 Elections: Meet this year's candidates

Amy Howell, Luke Hallam, Alexander Shtyrov, Georgia Goble, Caitlin Farrel, Clare Walsh and Louis Hodgson

SU Elections 2021 Coverage Team

This morning (26/02) will see the campaign begin for this year's Cambridge Students' Union elections, with the election hustings taking place this evening. This is the second year of elections for the recently-combined SU, which was previously split between the Graduate Union and CUSU, and the first year that these have taken place entirely online. As a result, the election hustings are planned to take place via Zoom.

Following this, voting will take place between Monday 1st and Thursday 4th of March, with the results being announced on the evening of the 4th.

Undergraduate President

The role of Undergraduate President, as in previous years, is the most highly-contested in this year's elections with four candidates, compared to five last year.

Allison O'Malley Graham, a final-year Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS) student at Murray Edwards, decided to run for the role because she was "tired of seeing my friends and course

mates stretched thin and struggling to get [...] support," and stated that she does not "want us to go back to 'normal' Cambridge life— [...] I want us to make 'normal' better." She will also focus heavily on fairer college rent, describing it as her "bread and butter."

Amy Bottomley, a double-time 4th-year English student at St John's, has previously worked with SU Class Act Campaign, and described having "seen first hand the struggles of students across the University as a result of their handling of the pandemic." They also aim to address the "disconnect [...] between the University and the SU, but also between the SU and its students."

Ciara Aberdeen, a second-year maths student at Trinity, "feels that the SU hasn't done enough to support students this year," and stated that their "campaign focuses on the failures of the SU this year," citing the controversy over non-essential in-person teaching in October. One of her priorities as President "would be to introduce weekly or fortnightly open meetings, which any Cambridge student can attend, to discuss union activities with the SU executive committee."

Zak Coleman, also a final-year HSPS student at Jesus, told *Varsity* that he feels "frustrated by aspects of the way

the University currently operates which end up unnecessarily harming students' experiences," such as the "unsustainable workloads," and supports the proposal to implement a reading week. He will also promote "common-sense climate action policies" in order to "help secure a sustainable future for our generation."

Postgraduate President

Anjum Nahar is an MPhil student studying English at Murray Edwards. The former co-chair of the CamSU Ethical Affairs team expressed a desire "to honor and extend" the team's work. Her campaign will focus on "fair rent, expanding access to funding, and better mental health resources", and her first priority if elected will be "to lobby the University on behalf of" postgraduates and international students who face disruption to "funding, visas and immigration" as a result of the pandemic.

Jenny Ward George is a third-year PhD engineer. Currently the Peterhouse MCR President, she aims to "ensure postgraduates continue to get proactive, enthusiastic representation going forward from the SU." Her campaign will focus on "Pandemic, Housing & Economics, and Welfare", including "better financial assistance for graduates", "developing minimum standards of care for student-

supervisor relationships" and "a new set of resources for students who have been victims of domestic abuse." Her priority if elected will be to ensure the "the fall-out of Covid-19 [...] is fully investigated from the postgraduate perspective."

Liam Webb is studying an MPhil in Translational Biomedical Research at Trinity Hall. His motivations for running include tackling the "new, unexpected difficulties to members of our community" as a result of Covid-19, and he states "it is easy for PG students to be overlooked during normal times, let alone during a pandemic." His campaign will focus on "increased access to [...] mental health provisions for students" and "ensuring an equality of living costs" between undergraduates and postgraduates, as well as "extra resources on the transition from [undergraduate] to [postgraduate]."

Disabled Students' Officer

With three candidates running for Disabled Students' Officer (DSO), this is one of the more contested roles this year. Last year, current DSO Rensa Gaunt ran unopposed.

Robin Denham's campaign will focus on making sure colleges, faculties, and the University "plan with disabled people in mind from the start", as he believes

students still suffer from "outdated, ableist ways of education and assessment".

Anna Ward wants "to support and cherish the disability community". Anna believes online teaching has been an advantage for disabled students, and does not want "the progress in online teaching and alternative exams to go backwards when face-to-face teaching and assessment become safe again".

Peter Jonathan Lucas is also running for the role and was contacted for comment by *Varsity*.

University Councillor

The role of University Councillor is also a highly-contested role this year with three candidates. Alongside the SU Presidents, the University Councillor is a student member of the University Council.

Candidates include Charli Hendy, a second-year undergraduate studying Archaeology at St. John's, whose campaign will focus on decolonisation and student welfare - including workloads and increased funding for the Disabilities Resource Centre (DRC).

Freddie Poser, who was University Councillor last year, which he describes as an "honour", is a third-year undergraduate computer scientist from Gon-



ETHICALLY SOURCED • PERSONALLY CHOSEN

www.seraphicsphynx.com



ville and Caius and is running for the role for a second time. His campaign will concentrate on fairness and consistency across colleges' Covid-19 response and the proper implementation of divestment.

Peter Jonathan Lucas is also running for the role.

Welfare and Communities Officer

Ewan Hawkins studies HSPS at King's College, and wants to increase funding for the DRC, as well as the University Counselling Service and College support.

Ben Dalitz is an MPhil Classicist at St John's, focusing their campaign on improving welfare problems such as loneliness highlighted by the pandemic, as well as improving access to support services.

Women's Officer

Milo Eyre-Morgan, a third-year Natural Scientist at Newnham, is running uncontested for Women's Officer - this is a change from last year where the role was hotly contested by five candidates. Eyre-Morgan will promote "four key manifesto themes: Work, Safety, Autonomy, and Intersectionality".

BME Officer

Tara Choudhury is running uncontested for BME Officer. Her first priority is to hold the university to account for "surface-level statements and euphemistic acknowledgements of the institutional racism here".

Undergraduate Access, Education and Participation Officer

Zaynab Ahmed is a third-year Classicist at Newnham. She wants outreach that "addresses the specific needs of individual groups", and advocates the continuation of recorded lectures.

Alex Roberts is a third-year Natural Sciences student at Magdalene. His slogan will be, "Accessible, Expanded, and Post-Admissions Access," for a campaign which will promote the use of appropriate online platforms that can support those with "audio processing, attentional, and hearing issues."

Postgraduate Access, Education and Participation Officer

Amelia Jabry is studying an MPhil in Sociology at Lucy Cavendish. Her priority is "to scrap the £70 (soon to be £75) [Cambridge] application fee", and her campaign will promote putting "emphasis on PG welfare", increase "means-tested funding" and to "cover the NHS/Visa fee for international students."

Double Time Officer

Elliot Aitken, a third-year English student at Murray Edwards, is running uncontested for Double Time Officer, who represents the interests of students taking degrees on a part-time basis over a longer period. He plans to "publicise" Double Time as an option for study.

Ewan Hawkins is a member of the Varsity investigations team but has been removed from Varsity's communication channels for the duration of the campaign.

MAMMAL AWARENESS Pangolin pal

In order to raise money and awareness about the plight of pangolins, Cambridge student Charles Emogor dressed up as a pangolin and ran for 8 hours straight around Cambridge on Saturday (20/02) - World Pangolin Day. Pangolins are one of the most trafficked mammals in the world due to demand for their meat, and for their scales in alternative medicines. The eight-hour run was inspired by the number of pangolin species (eight). Egomor is currently studying these small scaly mammals as part of his PhD in the Cambridge Zoology department. He has so far raised \$8605 (24/02).



▲ Charles Emogor ran through the streets of Cambridge last Saturday dressed as a pangolin for charity (RUTH SHARVILLE)

COMMUNITY KITCHEN Squat serves suppers

A community kitchen running in the abandoned Hopbine pub was awarded a 'Volunteer of Cambridge' award by the current Mayor of Cambridge, Councillor Russ McPherson, earlier this month. The 'Cambridge Community Kitchen' has been running from the legal squat on the site of the former pub and has been providing free hot meals for anyone in need in the community twice a week since August 2020, and three times a week since November. Called "The Lockon", the squat is situated close to the Grafton Centre and has been active since just before the first lockdown in March last year.

EDUCATIONAL APP The life of a scientist

A phone game developed by the University of Cambridge which lets players become stem cell research scientists has recently been nominated as the 'Best Educational Game' in the Pocket Gamer Awards for 2021. "Dish Life: The Game" involves navigating lab life from undergraduate student to professor and has been described as "part Sims, part Tamagotchi". Developed by researchers from ReproSoc (Reproductive Sociology Research Group) and the Cambridge Stem Cell Institute, the game aims to provide an insight into life as a stem cell scientist.

A ROMAN PHALLUS You know what they say about big mills...

A rare Roman carving of a giant phallus has been revealed after archaeologists recently reassembled broken pieces of a millstone found during works on the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon between 2017-18. Only four Roman millstones decorated this way have ever been discovered nationwide. Phallic images were important for the Romans as symbols of "strength and virility". The phallus on the millstone is said to confer protective properties on the millstone and its produce, flour, and highlights the importance of the mill to the local community.



YOU MAY ALREADY BE ELIGIBLE
TO QUALIFY AS A U.S. ATTORNEY
BY SITTING FOR THE U.S. BAR EXAM.

BARBRI helps international law graduates pass the New York or California state bar exam to become a qualified U.S. attorney at law.

Visit Barbri-International.com or email internationalenquiries@barbri.com to learn more.



News

Cambridge professor joins NASA scientists searching for past life forms on Mars

Matilda Head
News Correspondent

Professor Nicholas Tosca, from the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Cambridge, is part of a team of scientists at the core of the Mars 2020

Perseverance mission and is the only scientist from the UK to be selected by NASA for a role.

Tosca's role will involve analysing the rock samples that the Perseverance Rover collects from the Jezero Crater upon returning to earth. Using his ex-

pertise in mineralogy, he will be tasked with reconstructing the conditions under which early Martian life may have occurred.

NASA had chosen the landing space of the Jezero Crater due to its history as an ancient lake; it is believed to con-

tain sedimentary rock of over 3.5 billion years old. Analysis of these rocks will contribute to the broader mission of determining the habitability of Mars by looking for biosignatures of past microbial life.

Rock samples from Jezero Crater will

be extracted by the Rover, equipped with a drill to collect small samples, preserving them for collection by a future Mars mission in about ten years. When the rocks are returned from Mars, analysis by Professor Tosca and the Core Science team will mark the first time that humans can study Martian rocks in person.

On being chosen to be one of the first scientists to analyse Martian rock samples on Earth, Tosca said: "The fact that we may actually see these samples and study them, in my own lifetime, is just mind-blowing. When I told my son about it, I think we pretty much both had the same reaction. I kind of felt a five-year-old's excitement in terms of what discoveries this mission might bring, and just that raw curiosity and interest in other worlds that most of us had when we were that age."

He continued: "This mission is the first step towards sending samples back from Mars - we won't fully know how those samples preserve biosignatures until they are back in the lab, but we will be able to use rover instrumentation to select samples we think offer the best chance of preserving evidence of ancient microbial life and the chemical signatures it may have left behind."

Tosca emphasises the significance of such a groundbreaking mission, explaining: "What works so well is how this work dovetails with questions about the origins of life and the workings of climate systems, both on and beyond our home planet. We can ask big questions - but ones that are actually testable with future missions to Mars."

The Perseverance rover landed on Mars on February 18th, after an 8-month long journey to the planet. It is set to spend at least one Mars year (approximately 687 Earth days) on the planet's surface, constructing a complete image of the environmental conditions and assessing the suitability for future crewed missions to Mars through analysis of oxygen production.

NASA has released videos of the landing, showing the final stage of descent. It is hoped the footage from the rover's many cameras will provide feedback for engineers back on earth.

The videos show the release of the parachute, the jettisoning of the heat shield, and touchdown on the planet's surface.

Landing on the planet is notoriously difficult because the thin atmosphere makes it hard for a spacecraft to safely descend onto the surface. NASA is one of four space agencies that have put a craft into orbit around Mars.

The Rover also includes Ingenuity, the Mars Helicopter, which may see NASA achieve the first powered flight on the Red Planet.

Following the successful landing on Thursday (18/02), the Rover sent its first transmissions to NASA headquarters, including the first image from the Jezero crater.

HEC
PARIS

**FIND YOUR
PURPOSE**

**MAKE AN
IMPACT**

#1 BUSINESS
SCHOOL
IN EUROPE

(2019 *Financial Times* ranking)

#2 MASTER IN
MANAGEMENT
WORLDWIDE

(2020 *Financial Times* ranking)

The HEC Paris' Masters programs provide high potential students with an expertise in a wide range of fields. Small class sizes allow for direct contact with world leading practitioners and experts. Delivered entirely in English, our programs are an ideal fit for graduates seeking to kick start their international career.

www.hec.edu/en/master-s-programs
admissionsmasters@hec.fr

Dubai Princess calls on Cambridgeshire Police to relaunch investigation into sister's kidnapping



▲Princess Latifa has urged that a further investigation could help free her sister, Princess Shamsa, who was abducted in 2000 (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Georgia Goble
News Correspondent

The daughter of Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Princess Latifa, who made headlines last week after "hostage" footage of her was released, has urged Cambridgeshire Police to relaunch an investigation into her sister's capture.

The BBC reported that a letter, originally written by Princess Latifa in 2019,

was given to Cambridgeshire Police on Wednesday (24/02), stating that re-investigating the kidnapping of Princess Shamsa could help free her.

Princess Latifa's older sister, Princess Shamsa, who was 18 at the time, was abducted from Cambridge in August 2000 on her father's orders, following her escape from his Longcross Estate in Surrey. She was then transported by helicopter to France, and by private jet to Dubai. She has not been seen in pub-

lic since.

"All I ask of you", writes Latifa, "is to please give attention on her case because it could get her her freedom [...] your help and attention on her case could free her."

She adds: "She has strong links to England [...] she really loves England, all of her fondest memories are of her time there."

Latifa dated the letter February 2018, prior to her escape attempt, so as not to

reveal her communication channel with the outside world from her "jail."

More than two decades after Shamsa's capture, footage of Princess Latifa, who claims to have been held captive by her father since her escape attempt in 2018, was released last week, in which she says that she is being held "hostage" in a "jail villa" and doesn't know if she will "see the sun again".

The footage was recorded in 2019. The United Nations asked the United Arab Emirates on Sunday (21/02) for proof that the princess is alive.

The letter also details the harsh reality Princess Shamsa, now 39, endured after her return to Dubai: "She was kept incommunicado with no release date, trial or charge. She was tortured by getting her feet caned".

Latifa has said that her older sister spent eight years in prison after her abduction in 2000. When she was released in 2008, Latifa was able to see her, and stated: "She had to be led around by her hand. She couldn't open her eyes [...] she was given a bunch of pills to control her. Those pills made her like a zombie."

A kidnap investigation was first launched in 2001 by Cambridgeshire Police, following contact Shamsa made with an immigration lawyer she had

met in London. However, the investigation was limited since officers were prevented from entering Dubai.

Another review was launched in 2020 after the High Court published their 2019 judgment that Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum had orchestrated the abduction of his two daughters and held them in captivity against their will.

Cambridgeshire Police told the BBC that they had received Latifa's letter, which "will be looked at as part of the ongoing review".

The statement added: "This is a very complex and serious matter and as such there are details of the case that it would be inappropriate to discuss publicly."

After the footage of Princess Latifa emerged, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab stated that the case was "deeply troubling" and that the UK would "watch very closely developments on that front".

Princess Shamsa received a western education and was raised partly in Britain.

According to her cousin, Marcus Esabari, who lived with the family in Dubai, Shamsa "wanted to make a difference for women, in the Arab world especially. She wanted to push the boundaries [...] this is when the problems started."

Just arrived!

The Varsity Tote Bag



Just £3.99 plus postage.

All items subject to availability. Above prices exclude postage & packaging. All major credit and debit cards accepted

www.varsity.co.uk/shop

Varsity

The Varsity Trust

If suitable candidates present themselves, the Trustees intend to make awards to students about to graduate, or who are recent graduates, from either the University of Cambridge or ARU who intend to undertake approved training in journalism for 2021/2022.

Trust awards will be tailored to individual circumstances but are normally intended to make a significant contribution to the fees for the training concerned.

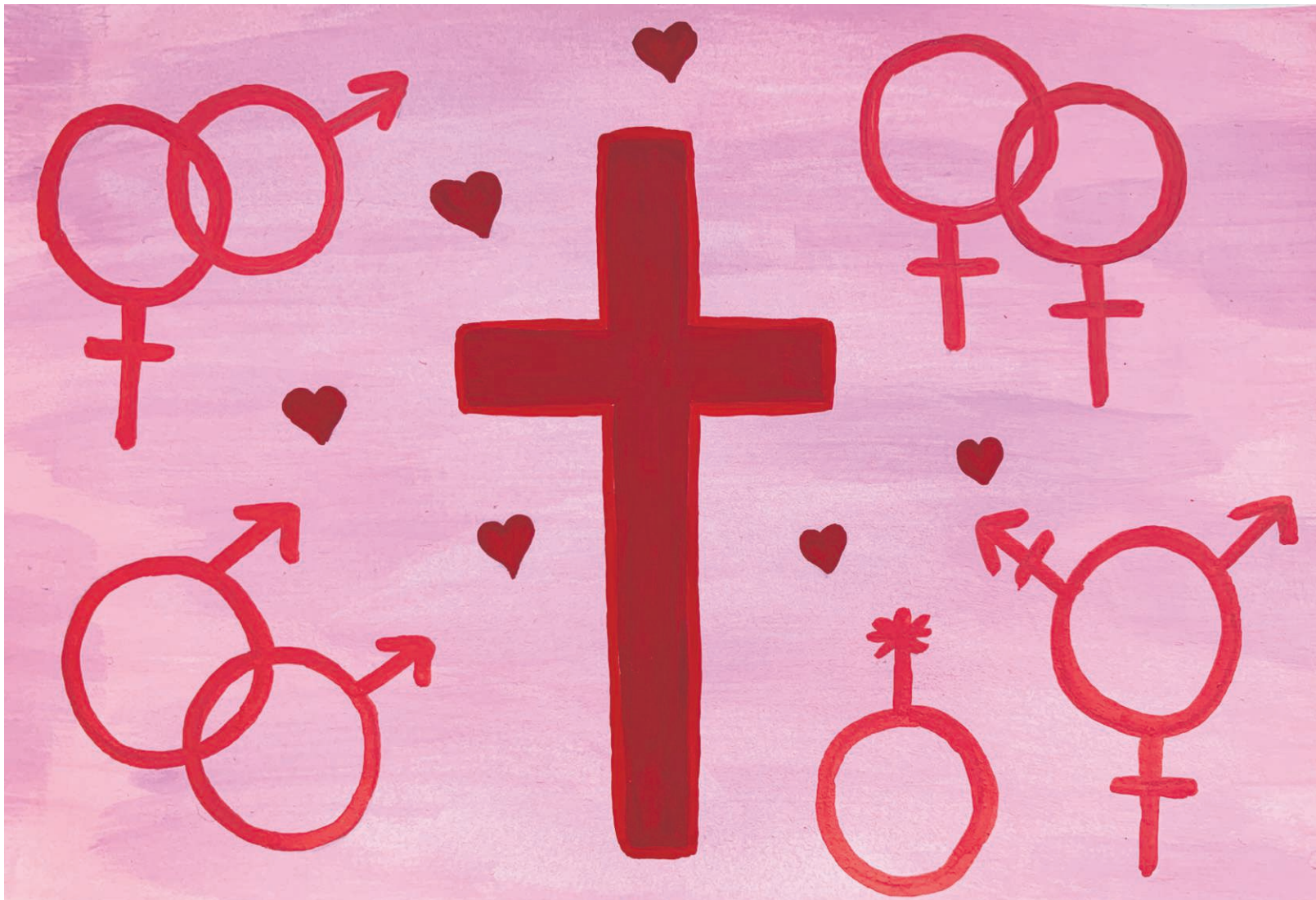
Up to £5,000 is potentially available.

For further information and how to apply visit: www.varsity.co.uk/trust

Features

Abstinence and shame: Sex education in a church school

Nora Redmond shares her experiences of sex education in a Christian girls' school in Ireland



▲ “The education on heterosexual relations was inadequate, but the provisions for LGBTQ+ students were non-existent.” (EDEN KEILY-THURSTAIN)

Content Note: brief mentions of sexual assault and rape

I am sitting in a classroom, being shown a slideshow comprised entirely of repulsive images of STI-infected genitals.

If there's one thing religious schools do quite like no other, it's sex. From sexual health to sexual orientation, much was absent from my education in a religious school. On the leaderboard of sex education, schools which intertwine their religious patronage with the curriculum come crashing to the bottom.

Some may recall their sex ed lessons as consisting of discussions on vital topics such as consent and contraception. But like many others who attended a school under a religious ethos, my experience was quite the contrary.

Sitting in the assembly hall in my Christian all-girls secondary school in Ireland at sixteen years old, I remember anxiously awaiting this dreaded lesson. My expectations for sex education had been formed from television: whether it was Coach Carr defining “urges” in *Mean Girls* or the humiliating speech by Mike O'Donnell preaching “making love” as opposed to having casual sex in *17 Again*,

I had envisioned an hour of avoiding eye contact, stifled giggles, and staring at the floor.

Yet what I was met with still managed to fall below my expectations. There was no talk of sexual safety or respect. Sexual relationships, identity and orientation were all also avoided. Tainted by a

“
Tainted by a
conservative Christian
ethos, our sexual health
education somehow
lacked education of the
basic principles of sex
”

conservative Christian ethos, our sexual health education somehow lacked education of the basic principles of sex.

The word ‘abstinence’ was mentioned more frequently than sex itself. We were given a graphic presentation of a multitude of different genitals which had been infected by STDs. We were then asked what the only truly effective practice

was for preventing such diseases. The answer, of course, was abstinence.

Another memorable quote we took away was, “When you sleep with someone, you're also sleeping with everyone else they've ever slept with.” This was always followed by another round of praise for abstinence. To this day, my blood boils thinking back on this message. Rather than receiving information on appropriate forms of contraception, we were being taught to shame anyone who has had more than one sexual partner.

Given the message of complete prevention, it was not a surprise that there was no advice on what to do if one were to experience an unexpected pregnancy. In a country where abortion had only been introduced in recent months, in the eyes of Christian educators, this was not an option.

I left the school hall shocked, somehow with less knowledge than I had going in. It felt as if the curriculum had not been adapted in decades. By feeding us biased, aged information, they were attempting to reinforce the relationship which an older, more reserved and traditional generation had had with sex. The Irish sex education curriculum should

reflect the now diverse, multi-denominational demographic which it serves. This trickle-down method of educating students, based on Old Testament views, can only result in denying young people a basic knowledge of human sexuality.

Without formal education, students were forced to take matters into their own hands. Many would resort to watching pornography, while others relied on word of mouth (but if you were dependent on your friends for accurate information, it's not much use if they themselves were learning everything from porn).

It wasn't actually until my first week of university that I was properly taught about consent. During my fourteen years of education, consent was never referred to. If it were not for the workshop given by the JCR of my college during Freshers' Week, I may have never received crucial training on the communication involved. Before this, knowledge was simply self-taught. But self-instruction isn't enough. A *Cosmopolitan* guide or an article on *Buzzfeed* is not a sufficient replacement for formal education.

The education on heterosexual relations was inadequate, but the provisions for LGBTQ+ students were non-existent. Being straight was a presumption. Sex-

ual identity and orientation has never been as widely discussed as it is today. Yet with this conservative model, I had many classmates who were left to feel frustrated and even unworthy of their identity. The system had made no attempt to assist them.

The taboo surrounding LGBTQ+ issues was not constrained to the sexual health classroom. In one instance, I was denied permission by the school to hold a Pride event. Another time, our principal stated on national media that Irish schoolgirls wearing trousers was “political correctness gone mad,” and that

“
The taught culture
of silence around sex
carries beyond the
walls of our religious
schools
”

they were “not particularly flattering for young women.”

The taught culture of silence around sex carries beyond the walls of our religious schools. It is unsurprising that young people educated in these institutions would become instilled with the belief that all matters relating to sex and sexuality are strictly private. Recently, critics praised popular television series *Normal People* for its portrayal of sexual consent and responsible communication. Despite this acclamation, many older viewers were appalled by the multitude of sex scenes on national television. They were concerned by the broadcasting of the presence of sex in the lives of two students progressing to university level, citing it to be out of the ordinary. One outraged caller to RTÉ Radio 1, Ireland's national broadcaster, stated the sex scenes were “something you would expect to see in a porno movie.”

The religious model of “sex” education promotes a culture of sexual guilt and shaming. If there was this much rage over two teenagers having consensual sex on national television, then what would a young person who experiences assault or rape do? Gaining the courage to seek help would be unimaginable given the outrage sparked over even scenes of communicative, respectful sex. Teaching generations upon generations an abstinence-only curriculum leaves students facing sexual difficulties of any kind with nobody to turn to. Primarily, if we're not learning about consent, how can we really understand what sexual assault is?

It's time to encourage open discussions about sex and all that comes with it. This starts with education. If there's one thing I learnt from my religious sex education, it's that religion and sex education should be kept far apart.

Starting university in mourning

After the passing of her father, *Lauren DeBruin* explores why returning to Cambridge for Lent Term was the right decision



▲ “College life was the most perfect distraction for me” (IZZY THOMAS)

Whenever I pictured starting university, it was with my parents stressing over how to cram all my inevitably over-packed bags in the boot of our car. It was with me sitting in the backseat attempting to distract myself from my rambling thoughts - Will I find my room? What will my housemates be like? Will they like me? Do I even deserve to be here? It was with my mum welling up at watching her baby leave and my brother being mad that he would have to deal with twice as much of her suffocating love. It was also with my dad. It was with him logically sorting out every practical thing for me to distract from his own fears of whether I would survive on my own.

As you may have guessed my first day did not transpire in this way because my first day of university was about two months after my dad died.

On October 1st, my mum drove me to Cambridge in place of my dad. In addition to all the worries I had expected, I arrived with the anxiety of how I would tell strangers that I had just lost the most important person in the world to me. Not to mention the crushing guilt

“I was so unprepared for losing him that when he was gone all my words went with him”

that I would be leaving my brother to watch my mum’s heart break and know that there was nothing he could do to help.

My dad passed away suddenly in August 2020, exactly a week before results day. It was not of COVID-19, but from acute heart failure. He was such an enormous force it seemed impossible that anything would ever be able to cut him down. I was so unprepared for losing him that when he was gone all my words went with him. As the one who had always been good with words, who dreamed of becoming an actress, and who had just met her offer to study English at Cambridge, I felt it was my duty to speak at my father’s funeral. On the day all I could manage was force out a reading of W.B Yeats’s *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*. I could not utter a single thought or feeling of my own because words would never be enough to sum up a human being’s life, let alone my own father’s.

When October rolled around, the moment I had spent years building up in my head no longer seemed to matter, yet it was starting Cambridge that saved me.

It was my dad who had taken me to my interview and had irritated me by proceeding to give me a mock interrogation during our drive. It was my dad who had bored all his colleagues at work by telling them that his daughter would be going to Cambridge despite my insistence that it had not been confirmed yet! It was my dad who knew more than anyone else that I would meet my offer, despite not being there to see it on results day.

College life was the most perfect distraction for me. I was meeting new people, finding my way around College, around the city, probably drinking too much, and getting to grips with the workload. I did not have the capacity to focus on my grief as well.

Being at College meant that I was not constantly haunted by the emptiness of my home or by the absence of my dad’s voice. Of course, the usual questions about family filled me with dread. Even now I am unsure as to how many of my friends and acquaintances know about my dad.

A particularly memorable moment was when a fellow fresher stated that they “wouldn’t be here if their dad had just died”.

Guilt is one of the most complicated

“But for all its emptiness, college is charged with the expectation of the community returning in thrilling numbers”

elements of grief and although this person’s comment was made unwittingly, it increased my guilt fivefold. I felt guilty leaving my family and actually enjoying myself at university. Above all I felt guilty that it must have appeared as though I did not care about my dad when, in reality, my brain was desperately trying to numb me so that I could just get on with my day. I recognise the un-healthiness of it, but at College I could pretend my dad was still at home and I was the one who had left.

Starting university in the depths of mourning is difficult but returning home is infinitely worse. So when it was announced that Lent Term would be entirely online, I was devastated. The prospect that I would be trapped in a home that no longer felt like one until Easter was unthinkable for me, so I requested to return.

College is empty. The cacophony of the chapel choir, the booming voices of the porters, and the general bustling of over-excited freshers, weary second years, and fretting third years, is not there anymore. But for all its emptiness, College is charged with the expectation of the community returning in thrilling numbers. An expectation of return that is impossible in my house.

Student Sale Now On!

KINGSWAY CYCLES Est. 1978

We are a shop based in the heart of the traditional cycling city of Cambridge. Established in 1978, we are a family run business catering for all your cycling needs.

KINGSWAY CYCLES - WHAT WE OFFER:

- ★ **Great Customer Service** - We don't want to sell you the most expensive cycle, we want to advise you on what bike is suitable for your needs!
- ★ **Great variety** of cycles from **Dawes** and a new exclusive range of **Peugeot** cycles and more.
- ★ We are **Dawes touring bike specialist**, one of the 25 in the country.
- ★ We are also part of the **cycle to work scheme**, so call in for a quotation.
- ★ Cycles **repairs** from small to extensive.
- ★ Cycle **hire** from daily to monthly at **reasonable rates**.

Come in and see us!
Our shop is located at
8 City Road, Cambridge, CB1 1DP

Tel: 01223 355 852 or visit www.kingswaycycles.com for info

LARGE SELECTION OF SECOND HAND BIKES FROM £75.00

Opinion

Cambridge choirs are out of tune with our desire for green recovery, but there is a solution

In light of our renewed focus on the climate during the pandemic, *George Herbert* argues that environmentally friendly travel would go a long way towards ensuring the sustainability of one of Cambridge's best-loved traditions

Support for a 'green recovery' from Covid-19 has been widespread since the early days of the pandemic. At Climate Assembly UK, a citizens' assembly which gathered last summer to discuss Britain's response to the climate crisis, 93% of participants agreed that 'government, employers and/or others' should encourage environmentally-minded lifestyle changes. Similarly, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) highlighted in its May 2020 letter to Boris Johnson the opportunity to normalise positive, emissions-reducing behaviours, 'especially for travel'. We clearly consider individual lifestyle changes to be an important part of any green recovery scenario.

The third national lockdown has stripped bare Cambridge's thriving extracurricular landscape. We students, too, are now presented with a unique opportunity to re-evaluate how we behave. Many of us share the views of the CCC and Climate Assembly: 67% of respondents to a survey aimed at current Cambridge choral scholars, conducted last summer, agreed that choir tours 'must be decarbonised as soon as possible'. Several students stated that they had flown over 30 times with their college choir, whilst one singer reported a staggering 40 flights.

No fewer than 23 of the 26 college choirs in the university's choral awards

booklet advertise the prospect of international touring to potential applicants, despite pledges of divestment and decarbonisation across the university and colleges.

It is clear that we must address our choirs' entrenched, unsustainable habits. Aviation is responsible for around 6% of human-caused global heating, according to environmental group Stay Grounded. This cost is hugely unjust: the Institute for European Environmental Policy reports that only 5-20% of the global population has ever flown. This minority mostly lives in developed countries, yet it is developing countries, where rural populations depend on agriculture, that feel the brunt of these emissions.

Stefan Gössling, a researcher on transport and sustainability at Sweden's Lund and Linnaeus universities, claims there is 'no [individual] human activity that emits as much CO₂ over such a short period of time as aviation'.

Not flying does not mean not touring. It simply means making the most of the many existing land- and sea-based alternatives to air travel. Two thirds of survey respondents would react positively to the news of a celebrated ensemble committing itself to not flying. Although international European rail travel can be more expensive than budget plane tickets, college choirs are in a unique position amongst musical groups; since

they have the backing of largely wealthy institutions – their colleges – finding the cheapest modes of touring is not an imperative. What's more, our choirs' members are not, unlike a large number of freelance professionals, reliant on international touring to put food on the table. Professionally employed staff singers, or 'lay clerks', are paid primarily for their regular activities in college chapels.

The benefits of rail touring go beyond the environment. Margaret Faultless, co-leader of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, recalls that the extra time spent travelling by train to Poland and Hungary during the Orchestra's 'Green Tour' of February 2020 nurtured the ensemble's social as well as musical bonds. "Alongside the exchange of artistic ideas that went on during the train journeys, everyone was contributing far more to the final rehearsals, where normally only a few would feel confident to make suggestions." She added: "The audiences felt special – they appreciated the time we'd invested in reaching the concert halls."

Sustainable alternatives to long-haul tours are, admittedly, harder to find – our choirs regularly visit North America, East Asia and Australia. Although engaging with audiences or other ensembles is often far less rewarding when it happens online, it is questionable whether the acoustic and social benefits of in-person concert-giving really justify the

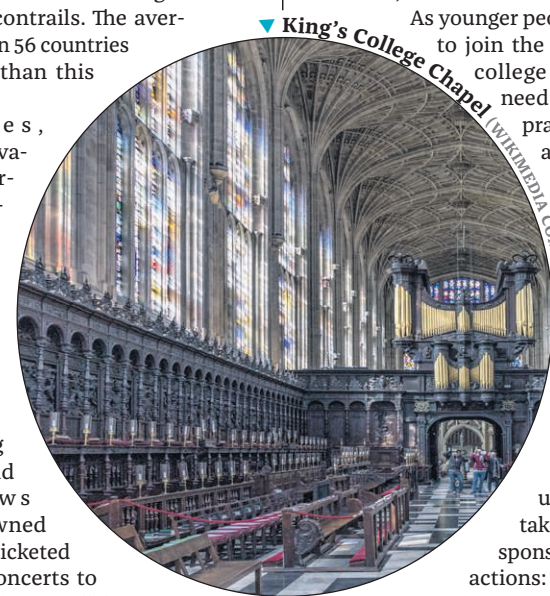
vast emissions they incur. German non-profit Atmosfair calculates that a flight from London to New York results in the emission of about 986 kilograms of carbon dioxide emission per passenger, not including the other harmful gases found in planes' contrails. The average citizen in 56 countries emits less than this per year.

Besides, many innovative, inspiring, and international online projects have emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, ranging from candid interviews with renowned artists and ticketed recorded concerts to cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Some argue that it would be a shame not to spread the British choral tradition around the world. But with the help of the internet, we can easily avoid cultural isolation. The time freed up by avoiding

international flights would also provide invaluable opportunities for choirs to take their music to areas in and around the UK where chances to hear and work with top-quality choirs and conductors are scarce, or non-existent.

As younger people continue to join the ranks of our college choirs, the need to adapt our practices grows, as the meteoric rise of Greta Thunberg and school strikes in 2018 attests. It is vital that choirs and individuals alike recognise the urgent need to take personal responsibility for actions: atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are the highest they have ever been in human history, and the one million years preceding it. The Covid-19 recovery presents a unique, exciting opportunity to change what we do for the better. Let us not waste it.



King's College Chapel (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

What should a post-pandemic 'Roaring Twenties' entail?

Linus Uhlig explores the parallels between the 'Roaring Twenties' of the 20th Century and the prospective post-Covid decade, arguing that social dynamism and euphoria must be coupled with an aim to address the issues preceeding the pandemic

In the midst of a crisis, it's easy to become carried away with notions that life will forever be fundamentally different, and the practices and customs of a time that now seems a distant, hazy memory, will never return. While very few people would contend that life is going to bounce back to its 2019 state anytime soon, the sensationist speculations and predictions of an unrecognisable society that punctuate op-ed sections and newspaper pages will likely prove inaccurate and fall short of the reality of the 2020s.

Covid-19 will undoubtedly cause some important and enduring shifts – lives have been tragically lost, formative years dramatically altered, and progress ground to a halt – but suggestions that handshakes may never return, casual sex and friendly hugging will be merely practices of a time lost, and the future of religion is online seem fundamentally at odds with collectivist human nature and the social experiences that we have all yearned for during our periods of isolation. Although the two decades are

unlikely to be entirely analogous, the post-pandemic fresh slate of the 1920s does not seem dissimilar to the future of this coming decade, and we can certainly learn lessons from the 'Roaring Twenties'.

The 1918 influenza pandemic killed more than 50 million people, eclipsing the death toll of the World War that had recently preceded it. The economic and political landscape of the 1920s was therefore vastly more novel and 'unprecedented' than the prospects of the 2020s. The end of President Trump and finale of the most arduous stages of the Brexit deal process are incomparable to a 20th Century world coming to terms with growing international co-operation, mass enfranchisement, and a new political order following one of the deadliest conflicts humanity had hitherto experienced. Yet what followed was frenzied sociability, impulsive cultural innovation, and the determination to regain the basic freedoms that had been lost since the start of the First World War. If social norms can be regained after a

much longer period of crisis and isolation, is it really realistic to assume a 21st Century pandemic in a far more digitally connected world will bring an end to the customs of two years ago?

The Yale professor and social epidemiologist, Dr Nicholas Christakis, has claimed that "plagues are not new to our species – they're just new to us", meaning it is reasonable to predict a decade of extensive social interaction and societal blossoming. Experts have suggested it's entirely possible that late 2021 and 2022 will see the start of a period of economic dynamism, and those in the arts and fashion industries can supposedly expect years of hedonistic attitudes on the back of a desire to look and stay youthful, mirroring the 1920s.

Still, alongside this desire for liberation and cultural exploration lies the possibility of *laissez-faire* governance, and the desire among many people for limited bureaucracy and reduced political intervention after at least a year's worth of the tightest restrictions on civil liberties during peacetime. The end of

daily Downing Street dialogue, Boris Johnson's bumbling briefings, and Professor Chris Whitty's final "next slide please" will mark an undoubtedly cathartic moment.

However, the yearning for a post-pandemic life, free from stringent restrictions and government influence, must not come at the cost of failing to address the gaping issues that have plagued our society for many more years than Covid-19. The wealth inequalities that existed in the 1920s are not dissimilar to modern injustices and disparities. The World Inequality Database found that the top 0.1% of Brits saw their share of total national wealth double between 1984 and 2013, reaching 9%, and the richest 1% of the population own almost a quarter of UK wealth.

Meanwhile, more than 15 million people in the UK live in poverty, a rise of half a million since the start of the pandemic. In a decade that is likely to see people justifiably dancing away their troubles and seeking much-needed respite from state interference, it is vital that the ap-

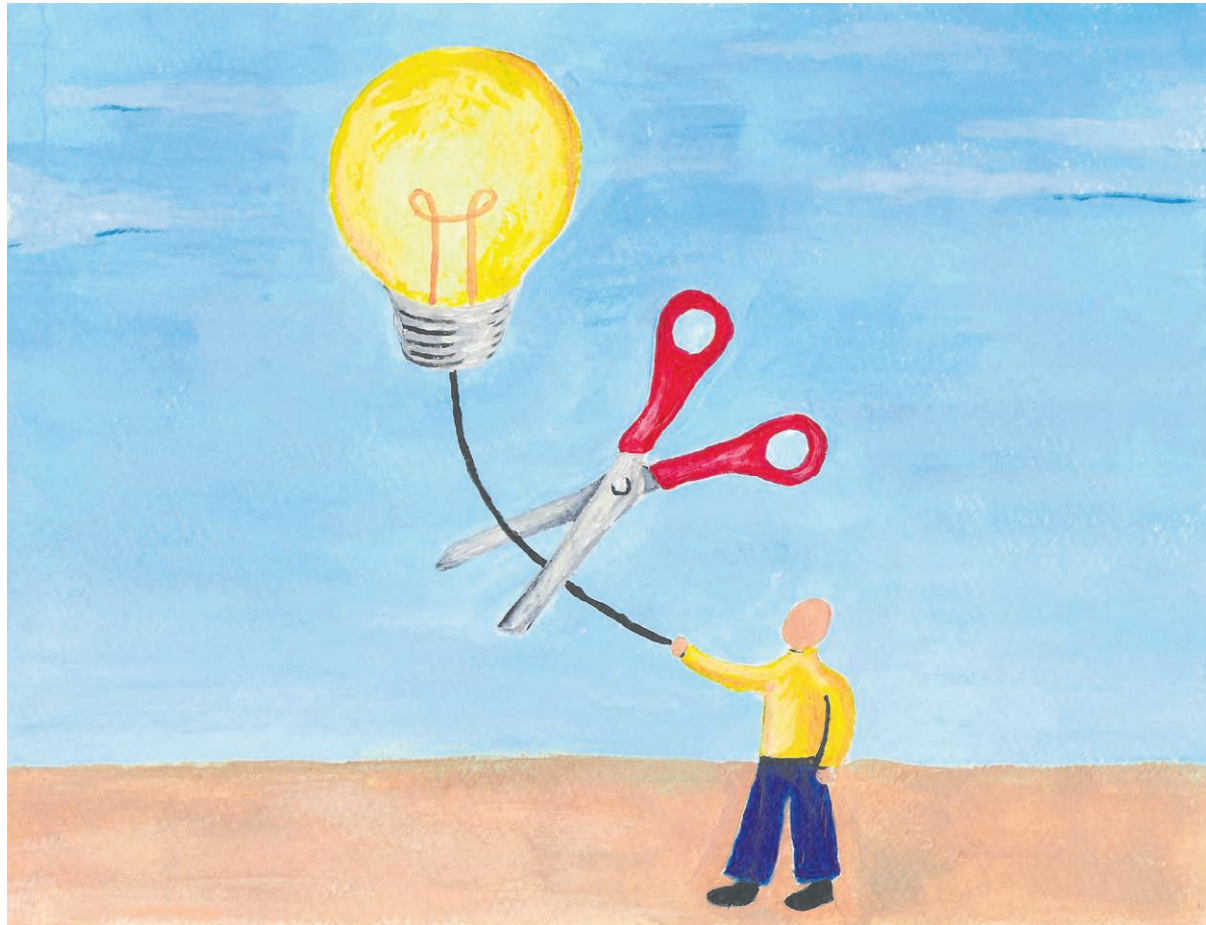
petite for a comprehensive social welfare and redistribution project is not lost in the pursuit of post-pandemic pleasure.

Amidst the ecstasy of the so-called "Roaring Twenties" of a hundred years ago, racial problems were also prevalent, and are still echoed in today's society. The 1920s New York Harlem Renaissance was unfortunately not representative of the prevailing regressive attitudes among the majority of Americans and if 2020 taught us anything, it's that there is an abundance of room for education and improvement in racial equality and the status of minorities.

As vaccination programmes across the world allow a slow return to normality, the jubilation of being able to live freely again will mark an improvement to the lives of us all. It seems likely that there will be a culturally rich and socially vibrant repeat of the "Roaring Twenties." Amongst this euphoria, we have a chance to shape the next decade and take advantage of the socially conscious and collectivist zeitgeist that may emerge. Let's not hold back.

How schools can facilitate innovation - and why we don't often see it

Thomas Breakwell



“Children cannot think and solve problems in art, music, dance, drama and philosophy if they do not have established knowledge”

literature, and philosophy if they do not have established knowledge. Raw talent can only carry us so far.

This is true even in schools that are trying to go against the grain. Let us take the example of School 21 in Newham, London. For some, the school represents a remedy to the sickness inherent in modern education. It is heavily focused on equipping its pupils with 21st century skills, in particular creativity, oracy and learning through group projects and presentations. On the surface, it is Robinson's dream school. Yet even at School 21, even at this bastion of creativity, the stifling traditions of education are apparent. Its 'Head, Heart, Hand' curriculum is fascinating: it starts with subject specialist teachers teaching pupils 'factual knowledge' before allowing them to use their hands to be creative and solve problems.

Robinson was popular for many reasons. One of them was that his words, thoughts, and examples - notably, the dazzling talent of Gillian Lynne - resonated with many who had a shared perception of what intuitively *feels true*: that schools stifle creativity. The truth, in my view, and from my experience as a teacher, is that good schools up and down the country do nothing of the sort. They nurture innovation by giving young people the knowledge they need to be creative - and that is to be celebrated.

Gillian Lynne was a 'problem child.' That's what her school told her mother. Gillian had ants in her pants, she was restless, she was failing school. Her concerned mother took her to the psychologist - if there was a problem, there must be a solution. After observing Gillian in the music room, the psychologist explained that Gillian was an extraordinary dancer. Fast forward in time, and the 'problem child' has not failed as an adult. Gillian, now 92, can reflect upon a stellar career as one of the foremost choreographers of her generation.

This is just one example given by the late Sir Ken Robinson in his famous TED talk 'Do schools kill creativity?' The talk is a YouTube classic. Delivered by an exemplary speaker, it is the most popular TED talk on the site, amassing over 380 million views. Using his classic wit and charm, Robinson lampoons the failures of modern schooling. He describes how schools do not educate young people in creativity - instead, they destroy it. As Robinson provocatively claims, "we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it."

The bold, brash, confident creativity of youth is slowly corrupted by the system's outdated emphasis on drill and kill rote-learning of facts irrelevant to the child. In short, if Gillian had not been so lucky, she would forever have been labelled a failure.

The view that schools stifle innovation and creativity is commonplace, from the shadow education secretary Kate Green's claim that the current curriculum is 'joyless' and 'information heavy' to Coventry South MP Zarah Sultana's call for schools to prioritise 'creativity and critical thinking'. It is easy to see why this view intuitively *feels right*. Certainly, the English Baccalaureate, introduced by Michael Gove and championed by successive education secretaries, suggests a devaluing of creative

subjects. This is further shown by there being fewer Ofsted 'deep dives' in creative subjects compared to English and Mathematics.

Schools secretary Nick Gibb's fondness for traditional teaching methods and a 'knowledge-rich curriculum', coupled with Gavin Williamson's passion for pupils sitting in rows, certainly seems to demonstrate the stifling of creative thinking in English schools. The teacher at the front of the room with 30 pairs of eyes staring back at them is now the norm; I can almost hear Pink Floyd's 'Another Brick in the Wall' starting to play. It is not surprising that modern schooling is often compared to Dickens' school board superintendent, Thomas Gradgrind.

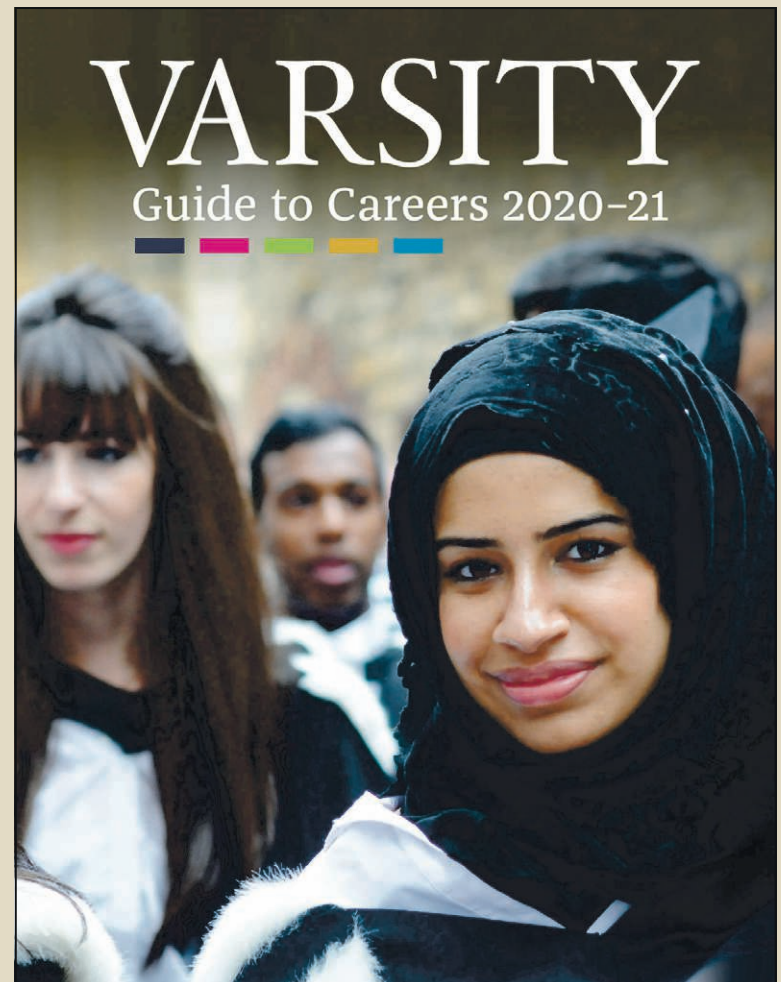
But sometimes intuition is flawed. Robinson was wrong when he argued that teachers actively educate children out of their creative instincts, because he and his admirers have misunderstood what it means to be creative. Robinson's example of Gillian Lynne is a telling one. While he tends to shy away from defining creativity, the example hints at what he deems it to be. For Robinson, creativity is innate, natural - it is to be nurtured rather than nullified by an archaic Victorian school system in which the pursuit of creativity is actively discouraged.

The problem is that the vast majority of schools don't subscribe to this view of creativity. Schools do not stifle innovation - they teach it. Good schools today teach children knowledge which is both relevant to the world around them and outside of their usual spheres of influence, opening up new opportunities to exercise creative skills. What pupils need in order to be creative is knowledge. Picasso and Matisse were only able to transform art because they could paint like the old masters; children cannot creatively think and solve problems in art, music, dance, drama,

▲ The view that schools stifle innovation is commonplace, but the real problem is that we've been defining 'creativity' in the wrong way (IZZY THOMAS)

“The bold, brash, confident creativity of youth is slowly corrupted by the system's outdated emphasis on drill and kill rote-learning”

The Varsity Guide to Careers 2020/2021



If you missed the printed edition you can still download a free copy here: www.varsity.co.uk/paper-edition



Be You, With Us

#WeAreCisco



Software Engineer | Associate Consulting Engineer
Associate Solutions Engineer | Desktop Engineer | Test Engineer

cisco.com/careers

Follow @WeAreCisco



Science

Cerebral Organoids: Fact and Fiction

Laura Ryan explains how these “blobs of neural tissue” have revolutionised neuroscience research, and the critical ethical challenges that they face

Cerebral organoids caused a sensation when they were introduced to the world in 2013 by pioneering Cambridge researcher Dr Madeline Lancaster. Their use has raised some of the most interesting and pressing ethical dilemmas in modern biology, cutting right to the heart of our conceptions of consciousness. But to understand the moral issues, first it's necessary to understand what these tiny blobs of tissue are, and what they are not.

“Cerebral” refers to the cerebral cortex: the outermost layer of neural tissue in the human brain, and the seat of cognition. Thinking, perceiving, language, consciousness itself – they're all reliant on the cerebral cortex.

So what's an organoid? Cerebral organoids are 3D blobs of neural tissue – about the size of a pomegranate seed – grown in the lab from pluripotent stem cells. These cells, which are able to “differentiate” into other cell types, are deposited into a gel for structural support. Over several months, the maturing organoids start to exhibit a diverse array of different types of neurons, and self-organise to form internal structures that mimic those of the human brain. The neurons begin to connect, and even start to spontaneously fire electrical signals.

While it may be hard to believe that these little globules could cause such excitement, their significance is hard to overstate. In many research areas, animal brains are poor substitutes for human ones. They don't develop in the same ways, they aren't as complex, and there are many neurological and psychiatric disorders that we haven't identified in rodents. Until organoids came along, researchers relied on post-mortem human brain samples, which are nigh on impossible to manipulate experimentally, or small 2D populations of neurons kept alive in dishes.

“

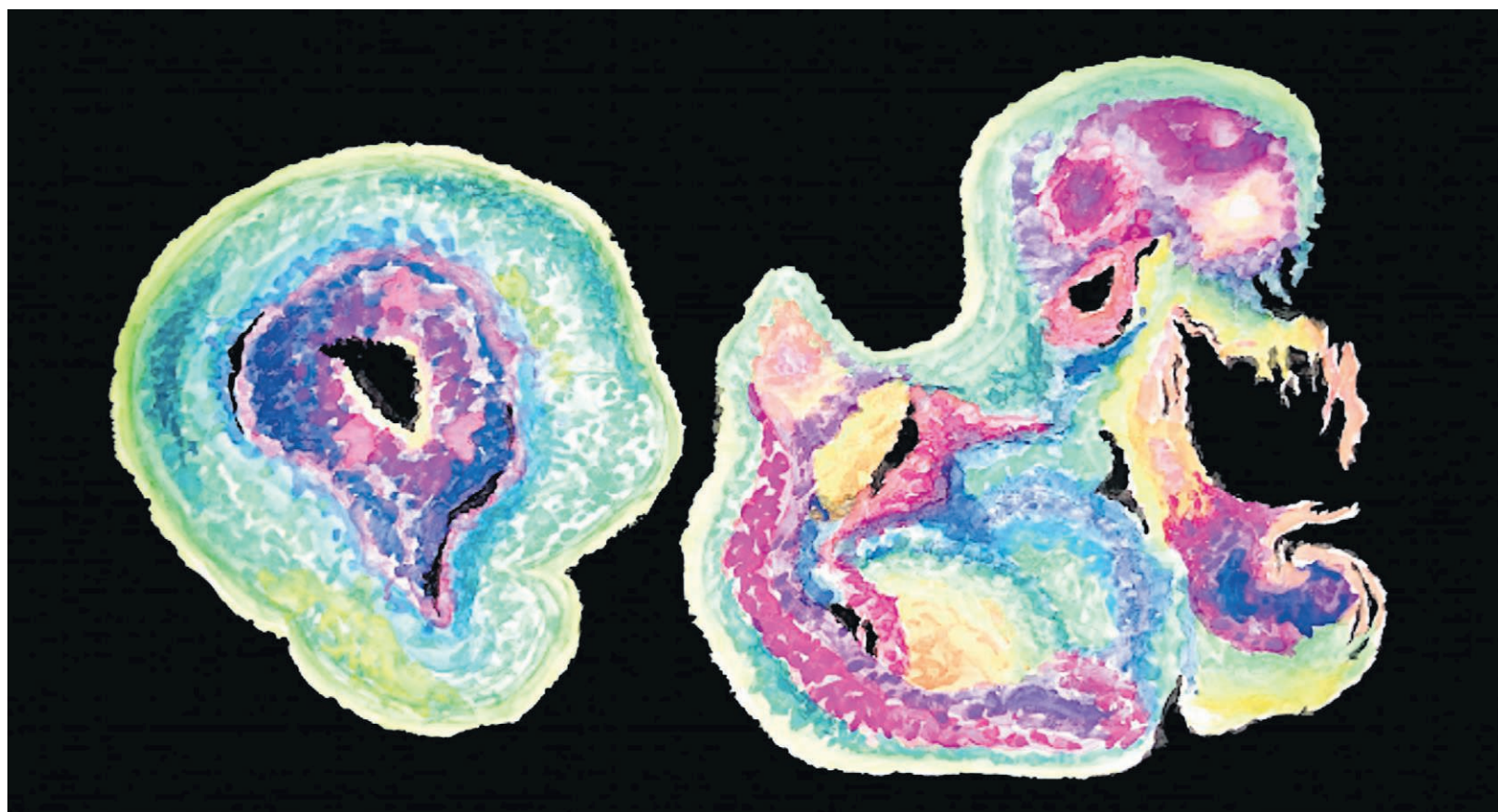
But there is an elephant in the room – is this ethical?

Are the organoids conscious?

Could they be?

”

The advent of cerebral organoids was predicted to revolutionise the field. So have they lived up to the hype? For the most part, yes! Published papers making use of cerebral organoids tackle both diseases associated with brain development (schizophrenia, microcephaly, and autism-spectrum disorders) and also



▲ “Cerebral organoids are 3D blobs of neural tissue – about the size of a pomegranate seed – grown in the lab from pluripotent stem cells.” (LAURA RYAN)

with neurodegeneration (early-onset Alzheimer's).

But it isn't just neurological disorders that researchers are modelling. Watching cerebral organoids develop presents the opportunity to chart healthy human brain development as never before. Recently, CRISPR/Cas9 technology was used to create organoids that mimic the brains of Neanderthals. The cells used to generate the organoids were genetically edited to carry a mutation that distinguished the Neanderthals from our own ancestors. The resulting “Neanderthal” organoids were smaller and more wrinkled than those derived from modern human cells. One author speculated that our variant of the gene affected the way that early humans processed information, as compared to their Neanderthal kin.

But there is an elephant in the room – is this ethical? Are the organoids conscious? Could they be?

There is near total consensus amongst those researchers, ethicists, and philosophers that no, cerebral organoids are not conscious, nor are they imminently likely to be. They are still primitive in nature, even compared to the brains of mice. To speak of “mini-brains” – a phrase often used in the media – is misleading. It understandably conjures an image of thinking (and perhaps suffering) developed minds unnaturally bound

in their gel. A more accurate comparison would be early foetal neural tissue. But that's not to say that the ethical issues surrounding this technology are any less pressing.

Cerebral organoids don't fit into pre-existing regulatory frameworks – neither rising to the level of live subjects like humans or animals, nor consisting of a mere collection of cells. Recognising this blind spot, in 2018 a team of scientists, ethicists, philosophers, and lawyers attempted to get out ahead of the rapidly progressing science and published a letter in the journal *Nature* presenting their concerns. The same year saw a symposium take place at the University of Oxford to build an ethical foundation for future work, with another such initiative in the US.

The first step towards an ethical framework is to define exactly how the organoids are similar, or dissimilar, to human brains, and to investigate the parameters we could use to assess their moral status. We know that the organoids are “functional” in that the neurons are connected, and they're firing. However, organoids lack several essential cell types found in human brains, and don't have a blood supply. It's almost impossible for us to even conceptualise what kind of experience a consciousness with no sensory input could have. The development of the early brain circuitry

upon which the human mind is built is dependent upon the input of stimuli and information.

To investigate, researchers have shifted their focus away from the cellular makeup of organoids, and towards their electrical activity. Consciousness assessments have been adapted from tests that already exist for medical use,

“

The more human the organoids become, the more useful they are

”

for example to measure the brainwaves of comatose patients. One idea from University of California researcher Alysson Muotri is to anaesthetise the organoids to determine whether certain electrical signals disappear. But there's no consensus regarding how to apply these sorts of tests to organoids (which exhibit weak electrical activity), and little agreement on how to interpret the results. Without a unified theory of what consciousness consists of, it will be very difficult to assess. Nonetheless, over the next decade characterisations of organoids' electrical

activity will become more fruitful, and are likely to form the basis for assessments of their status.

What about the future? Bioethicist Insoo Hyun predicted in an online essay that within the next five years we will see the creation of larger organoids with networks of blood vessels, and a greater diversity of brain cell types. Already it has been demonstrated that human organoids can be successfully grafted onto the brains of rodents, which do have functional nervous systems and sensory organs, raising a whole host of additional ethical dilemmas.

Of course, the argument can be made that *not* engaging in research with the potential to alleviate suffering for so many is unethical in itself. Neurosurgeon Donald O'Rourke, who uses organoids in his attempts to combat an aggressive type of brain cancer, explained “I'm dealing with a deadly disease that kills people in 15 months. Here we've developed an advanced diagnostic tool to evaluate in real time what therapies might be beneficial. In my mind, that solves ethical problems.”

So it all comes down to this; the more human the organoids become, the more useful they are. But where's the tipping point, where what we stand to gain is outweighed by what we stand to lose? And how will we know when we've reached it?

Interviews

I am a young person growing up in Yemen's civil war. This is my story.

In the second instalment of our series spotlighting life in humanitarian crises, **Victor Jack** speaks with Yasser Ahmed, a 20-year old Yemeni student who describes the traumas, poverty and declining hope facing young people after six years of civil war

Content note: This article contains graphic mention of injury and war.

Yasser Ahmed is like any other 20-year old. He studies hard at university, hangs out with his friends and enjoys a good cycle. But as far back as he can remember, Yasser has lived under the shadow of civil war, described by the UN as the world's "worst humanitarian crisis".

On New Years Eve, the latest round of explosive shells came raining down on Yemen's capital, Sanaa, thundering down across the city.

"This is Yemen," says Yasser, "we are used to it".

Six years since it began, the country is still reeling from a conflict which has seen more than 18,400 civilians killed, left two-thirds of the population in urgent need of food assistance – and claims the life of one child every 10 minutes due to preventable illnesses.

The struggle between the Houthi rebels – otherwise known as Ansar Allah – and the UN-recognised government led by President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was set in motion by the Arab Spring in 2011. It escalated in 2015 when Saudi Arabia launched an intensive bombing campaign in support of Hadi.

Today, the Hadi coalition presides over South Yemen while Houthis dominate the North, including Sanaa. But the war is largely at a stalemate – with most fighting taking place between groups in the Hadi camp.

The fighting has also grown increasingly complicated as foreign powers including the UAE are increasingly entangled in complex – and sometimes opposing – local alliances.

Yasser was 13 years old when the Houthis took control of Sanaa. While he lost a year of education as the conflict forced schools to shut between 2015-2016, he is now in the first year of his Architecture degree at one of Sanaa's top universities.

“While we were studying, you would hear bombs and suddenly they would stop teaching”

"I cannot say if life was better before 2014 because we were children. But many things were here, like electricity, petrol and gas," he says. "Now sometimes you have to wait for three or four days for water."

Like an estimated 40% of Yemen's population, his family's primary source of income dried up when the conflict began, as his father lost his job in the tourist industry which has imploded.

Yet Yasser admits he is one of the lucky ones.

"Some Yemenis live a tough life, working more than 15 hours [a day], and it's not enough for basic food," he says.

While 13.5mn people in Yemen were faced with severe food shortages last year, Yasser's family is able to purchase food largely due to support from remittances sent by his family in Turkey and the UK.

"There is enough food, but everyone cannot buy it. Only the rich can buy it, while poor people wait for NGOs to give them food."

When the conflict first escalated, Yasser recounts how terrifying everyday life was.

"While we were studying, you would hear bombs and suddenly they would stop teaching", he adds, remembering how students and teachers would then rush to take shelter somewhere in the school building.

"We were scared," he says.

At the most intense point in the Saudi bombing effort in 2016, Yasser remembers losing a classmate. "One of the bombs got him," he says. "They didn't find his whole body – they found only parts, and that was it."

"But now after years in the same war, we've become used to it," Yasser argues. "We don't react anymore."

While life has returned to some degree of normality for Sanaa – and Saudi airstrikes have become scarcer – the war has taken its toll on the futures of young Yemenis. According to the World Bank,



▲ Yasser sits before Sanaa's Old City, a historic centre dating back 2,500 years which has seen sustained damage by airstrikes in Yemen's civil war (YASSER AHMED)

24.5% of 15-24 year olds are unemployed, and Yasser argues the insecurity is pushing young people to emigrate *en masse* to Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

"The opportunities for young people decreased," he says. "Young people in Yemen have their own projects – they are clever, they are smart, they can do many things – our country doesn't own them."

Where young people do find jobs, Yasser says, they are often menial and underpaid – receiving wages of around \$50 a month.

They are also being pushed out by a culture that fails to appreciate or reward young people's ambitions. "They don't value you for the things you are doing," he says, arguing he himself plans to pursue a Master's degree in Turkey.

"[But] if we lose them, we are damaging the city," he admits, emphasising how reliant Sanaa is on the grassroots-community charity work done by its youth. "They should contain the young people".

By now, Yasser argues, Yemenis have almost lost hope for a response from the international community.

"There is no international response," he says, "there is no justice".

Yasser believes Western countries should help rebuild Yemen – infrastructurally and with educational programmes, given the country's huge shortages in necessary professions such as teachers.

Following President Joe Biden's announcement earlier this month that the US would halt arms sales and support to the Saudi war effort, Yasser says he can only "hope" that Washington will follow

“There is no international response ... there is no justice”

through on its promises.

But he admits he struggles to understand how foreign countries – such as France and Canada – continue selling weapons deployed in airstrikes on Yemen. After a brief hiatus last year, the UK government too decided in July to restart selling arms to the Saudi coalition.

"We need help," he says. "Like any normal person I hate weapons and hate people [supplying] them".

Asked how young people at Cambridge can help, Yasser emphasises above all the "need to study the situation" in Yemen.

He also praises the work of international organisations like UNICEF who work on the ground and suggests donating to local charities organising through social media.

Like everywhere, last year was testing for Yemen, as Covid-19 put pressure on its collapsing healthcare system. But 2020 also further sharpened the country's multiple crises, as travel restrictions obstructed international humanitarian work and locust swarms diminished food crops still further.

And while the physical conflict is now largely frozen, insufficient funding is forcing the UN to close more than 30% of its programmes in the country – pushing Yemen to the brink of collapse.

"We hope it will finish and we can return to our normal life," says Yasser, but admits his family is becoming increasingly resigned to the fact this may never happen.

"We are thinking about leaving Yemen, because we cannot lead a normal life".



▲ Map of Yemen (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

Interviews

“Best three years of my life”: Ibz Mo on Cambridge

Juliette Guéron-Gabrielle speaks to YouTuber Ibz Mo about his student experience at Cambridge, StudyTube and online learning in lockdown

Interviewing Ibrahim Mohammed, better known as Ibz Mo, feels like speaking to an older brother. He’s got all the good uni advice, the ‘I’ve been through it stories’, and the relatable comments on college organisation. You would almost forget you’re speaking to a 100+K YouTuber; to the Hackney-born education influencer that seeks to ‘get people from my background to break educational barriers’. We spoke about the best places in Cambridge, access strategies, and his encounter with a stalker.

Ib, you’re currently doing a master’s in education at Oxford. Are you in Oxford at the moment?

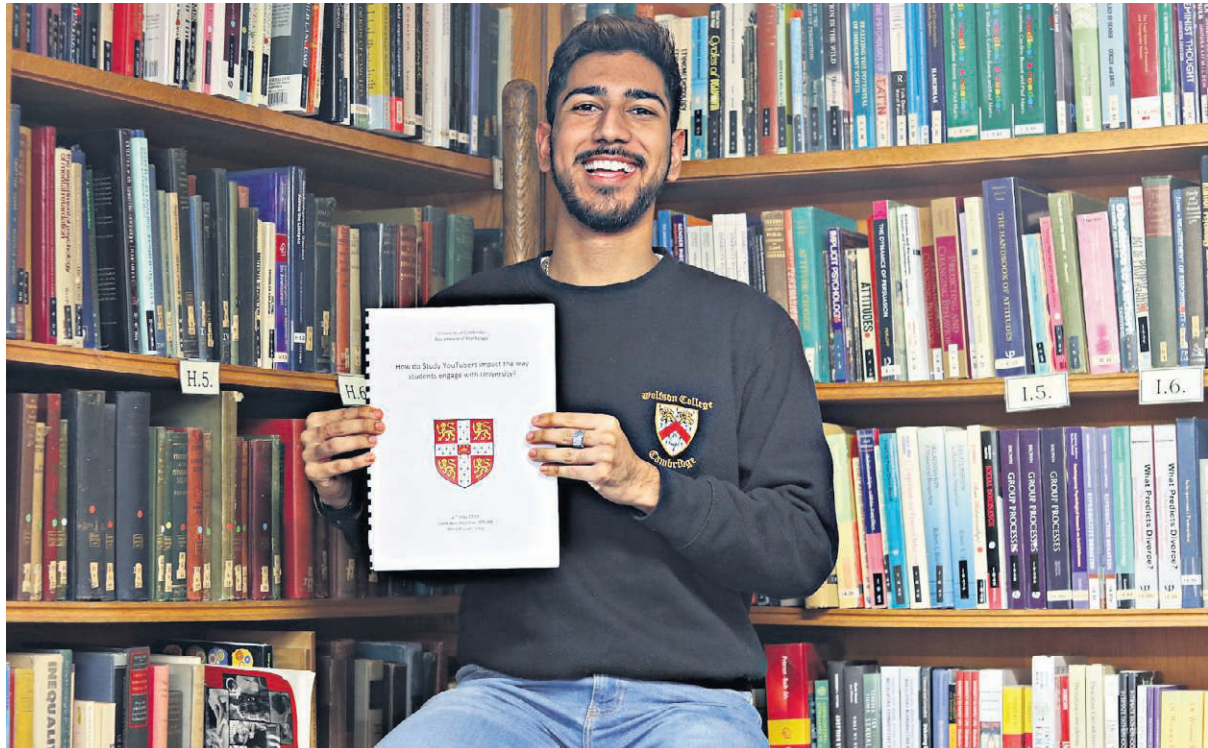
Yeah. Because I moved out when I was eighteen, I’ve been living wherever my University is since then. It’s not too bad. My college is open-ish.

How would you present yourself?

I would say I’m an educational influencer. I try to inspire people to break educational barriers, especially students from disadvantaged backgrounds similar to mine.

You work a lot around access. How can the impact of the pandemic on access be minimized?

The pandemic brought to light a lot of the barriers young people face. It showed having access to a productive environment really is important. Even the small things... Access to a desk, a silent environment. While it was good the pandemic highlighted those issues, the government did not seem to care. The algorithm was absolutely disgusting. Disadvantaged students have been hindered the most by the pandemic. The first six to seven months saw a whole, very negative shift on matters of access and education inequality. And now, with



▲ Ib Mo completed his Cambridge dissertation in 2019, which was titled: ‘How Study YouTubers impact the way students engage with University’ (@IBZMO VIA TWITTER)

these new lockdowns, it’s also been quite bad. Students’ mental health has been all over the place. The government has not planned anything. Right now, they’re still consulting... And they had ten months to consult, to prepare for online learning.

What advice would you give to a student demotivated by months of online learning?

This is a sticky one, because what advice can you give to someone that can’t work from home? I think the rule of 8 is

good advice, though. 8 hours of study, 8 of sleep, and 8 to destress. Also, don’t listen to what I call ‘the productivity police’. It really isn’t the time to be the most productive. Breathe, relax, take things one day at a time.

How did you find the lockdowns?

During the first one, I lived alone in a one-room studio. It was horrible. I was alone for five months. This one is going better. I’m absolutely okay with having things online, because I’m lazy.

How is your master’s in education going?

My work focuses on Oxbridge students that come from free school meal backgrounds. Oxbridge likes to create a narrative around ‘we’re doing good with access because we have x number of students from state schools’. But state school is almost a social construct. Poor people go to private school, rich kids go to state schools... We have very unreliable measurements of what it means to be disadvantaged. I hope my research will be one of the first to look at the free school meal experience. Cambridge has 4% of free school meal students, Oxford just 3%. So that just shows... what the hell is going on?

How can Oxbridge improve the experience of disadvantaged students?

Bursaries are so key. They need to be centralised and increased. Also, a lot of the events in Cambridge cost money. Wavering [costs for] those events is also so key. Then, mentorship. You want to see someone from your background. And not just a college parent with whom some people just end up having sex [laughs].

So why do you want to go into law, and not access?

Oh, because it can get so depressing! And it’s still very white-dominated.

Does it get tiring, to always talk about access?

It’s empowering. At the same time, there is a psychological toll. Because for Cambridge, access is a statistic. For you, it’s your life.

What about YouTube?

One of the best experiences! Now, because I’ve achieved my initial goal (that was to get only one person into Cambridge and not X amount of subscribers), I’m a bit bored.

Did you see YouTube change over the years?

God, yes. When I started it, there was no studytube. And there was no money in YouTube. Now I think a lot of people are doing it just for the money. Some YouTubers are literally lying about how much work they do just to get the clicks. You know, like 24h studying. When I started YouTube, I was blacklisted from a lot of companies and brand sponsorship because I spoke about diversity, about the Muslim community... And now we’re seeing a lot of tokenism. Brands that blacklisted me a few years ago making token diversity statements, because of the BLM movement.

We’re moving to a more digital society. Do you see any potential dangers to that shift?

Well... don’t reveal too much online. In my first year, I had a stalker. They came to Wolfson, found my friend, and asked her where I was. She thought they were my relative, and told them. I told College and they were great about it. I also had a death threat I had to report to the police. It is scary, but like

you said, we are going into a more digital society, so you just have to prepare yourself to it.

Would you say University is always worth it?

What I would say to disadvantaged students is: when you see people online that criticize university, they are often not from our background. Personally, education saved my life.

How did you find the social life in Cambridge?

In six weeks, I had fallen in love with everyone. I took advantage of everything. The only thing I didn’t do was rowing. But I don’t care [laughs].

I agree... Too many early mornings...

Yes... My favourite year was final year. Because my relationship – that was outside Cambridge – ended. So Cambridge was not my problem, but my solution. And that made me fall in love with everyone and everything. 100% best three years of my life.

Favourite place in Cambridge?

Sidgwick. And Mill Road. Regent street. Oxford is so ugly. There is no grass. Cambridge is a hundred times better...

A last thought?

Well... Take advantage of being with the best minds, get them spiralling... And focus on having fun, even in a pandemic. I’m assuming you still have a bubble, those friends you can get closer with. Because when is the next time that you’re going to have relations like these? And when everything resumes, you are going to appreciate it so much.



▲ “Bursaries are so key. They need to be centralised and increased” (@IBZMO VIA TWITTER)



(@IBZMO VIA TWITTER) ►

ILLUSTRATION BY ROSIE CADDY



Vulture

Lifestyle

Walking in Triangles

Anna Stirk talks about the wonders of looking up, and why the sky is a worthy rival to staring at a screen all day

The summer days of the first lockdown seem like a breeze now, almost a year later. The sun was out, the sky was blue, and walks were still an entertaining novelty. The simplicity of that time – it'll all be over by Christmas, at the very latest – stands in complete opposition to the dreary drudgery of

it as a very localised summer holiday.

During the November lockdown and now, in the seemingly interminable third lockdown, it hasn't been quite so enjoyable. Back in Cambridge for Michaelmas term, it was a shock to the system to see hundreds of people on my daily walks instead of the four or five I'd grown used to.

ings on the Cam, and red kites swirling on thermals and diving down into the fields.

I'm also lucky enough to live near the Heathrow flightpath, so watching the planes fly past is an easy distraction – so much so that seeing the Frankfurt-Miami flight at lunchtime was almost a daily ritual by May last year. Add to this the frequent chinooks thudding over in the night from the local RAF base, and looking up at the sky is a worthy rival to staring at a screen all day.

Combining the simple pleasures of the weather with birds and planes, then a moment of sky-gazing can almost be enough to distract from the earth-bound problems. But if I haven't convinced you yet, perhaps the advent of spring might. The days are already stretching out, meaning a sunrise is something to be pursued rather than witnessed automatically. The days are getting longer, the early spring flowers are starting to come up, and birds are singing instead of huddling for warmth.

Next time you go for a walk, try looking up. What you see might just surprise you.

Want to read more about innovation?

Check out...

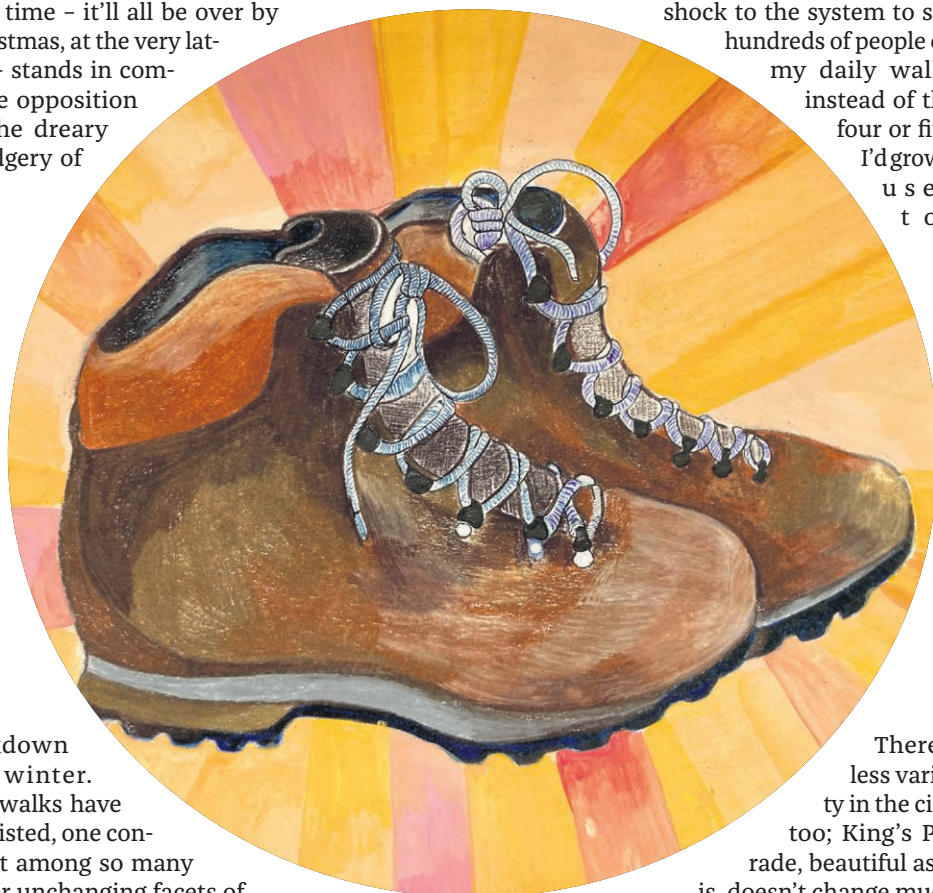
"Not moving forward is not moving back" - Alexandra Jarvis

PICTURE BY LOIS WRIGHT



at varsity.co.uk/lifestyle

ILLUSTRATION BY ODESSA CHITTY



lockdown in winter. The walks have persisted, one constant among so many other unchanging facets of everyday life, but it's clear that they need a little *je ne sais quoi* to keep them interesting.

For me, the retrospectively idyllic nature of last spring and summer was absolutely shaped by the bucolic surroundings in which I found myself. It's hard to think about social distancing and masks and the other paraphernalia associated with the pandemic when you're cycling along country lanes for hours with nobody for company but a few cows. Walking was another new hobby, discovering new routes on roads and in the woods. All in all, I was fortunate enough to be able to treat

The sun was out,
the sky was blue, and
walks were still an
entertaining novelty

There's less variety in the city, too; King's Parade, beautiful as it is, doesn't change much with the seasons, and tramping through the sludge to get to Grantchester Meadows wasn't exactly appealing.

When I returned home for Christmas, the selection of walks available to me was also reduced, thanks to the inclement weather. All the off-road paths are completely impassable due to mud and fallen trees, so the last three months have been characterised by following the same triangular route almost every day. Doing the same circuit in the opposite direction was interesting for about three days before it too became a chore.

In order to rescue my principal lockdown coping mechanism from sinking into the same tedium as practically everything else, I've had to get creative.

Winter is slowly morphing into spring (as much as the snow has been trying to prove otherwise), but the gradual process of daffodils and crocuses poking out of the verge isn't the most captivating thing to watch. Instead – taking my lead from the excellent CBeebies programme 'Come Outside' – I've been looking up more.

As the days and months of a winter in lockdown blur together into a mush worse than the paths through the woods, the sky is a source of constant change. Over the course of a week, it can go from snow to rain to sun, and it fluctuates hour to hour and sometimes minute to minute. The birds, too, play their part, with herons providing a link to morn-



WHY CONSULT WHEN YOU CAN LEAD?

Manage a multi-million pound marketing budget.
Lead a sales business worth £100 million

Omar, Assistant Brand Manager, Tampax



Alumnus of Emmanuel College

Zoe, Sales Manager, Febreze



Alumnus of Robinson College

Rachel, Product Supply Start-Up Leader, Gillette and Old Spice



Alumnus of Pembroke College



Arts

In conversation with 'A Cambridge Diary'

Charlotte Alt talks to Martin Bond, a photographer behind 'A Cambridge Diary', who has taken a picture of Cambridge and published it every day for eleven long years

'A Cambridge Diary is a collection of unremarkable stories that are remarkable in terms of their humanity', says creator Martin Bond. Every day for eleven years, street photographer Martin has taken a picture of Cambridge. A Cambridge Diary captures the intimate and vulnerable but (above all) joyous and beautiful moments of Cambridge and its diverse residents. Nearly four thousand pictures and almost sixty thousand followers later, Martin looks back on the last decade with both pride and incredulity: 'I'm kind of stuck with it. I think if I stopped, I'd probably just burst,' he says.

The project began accidentally in March 2010 when Martin, whilst trying out a new camera lens, captured the moment a painter realised he had dropped paint on his sandwiches. Realising how much the image of Cambridge is dominated by the University, Martin felt that it was important to provide a record of the city and its people outside it.

A Cambridge Diary was only meant to last one year, with Martin uploading a picture to his Facebook page every day. 'After the first year I didn't want to stop,' he explains, 'so I carried on.'

While photographing, Martin always remains on the outside and rarely talks to the people he captures. 'Only if they catch me,' he says. 'I learned to anticipate and trust the spontaneity.' Rather than searching for the perfect spot or the perfect lighting, he looks for small moments, comparing his work to 'going on a human safari, taking people at their most natural.'

A Cambridge Diary is an unusual collection



▲ 18th June 2014 (© 2010-2019 MARTIN BOND)

“
A Cambridge Diary is an unusual collection of the intricacies of Cambridge landscapes, its interesting characters, and human interactions
”



▲ 13th November 2012 (© 2010-2019 MARTIN BOND)

of the intricacies of Cambridge landscapes, its interesting characters, and human interactions. One of his most striking pictures, for example, is of an older lady in a red coat sitting on King's parade, her hands folded; one wonders whether she is praying or simply sitting, worried or just waiting. Others show students laughing, children dancing, stonemasons working. Each picture offers a glimpse into a life, yet without ever intruding.

Having become something of a Cambridge celebrity, Martin finds that often people who have appeared in his pictures come forward to give an insight into their personal stories. Only recently Martin took a picture of a fighter jet visible through a gap in the dark clouds; shortly afterwards he received a message from the pilot flying the plane: 'That has to be the best tagging so far.' Martin's enthusiasm for this aspect of the project is clear: it's about

▼ Tuesday 1st April 2014
(© 2010-2019 MARTIN BOND)



unearthing people's stories and creating a space for engagement. 'It reinforces this sense of community, not just online but in Cambridge, and that is the driving force behind this project,' he says.

His own story is no less interesting. 'I've never had a design for life. There isn't enough time to go through all the things I've done as a job.' Born in Cambridge, Martin left school at fifteen and started working at a surveyor's office; from there he went on to sing in a successful rock band, work in a record store, at a local newspaper, in advertising and as a Yoga teacher. His journey to photography was equally unplanned. While working as a graphic designer, he was invited to a golfing tournament with high-profile guests such as Hugh Grant and Michael McIntyre. The photographer failed to turn up, so Martin spontaneously offered to take the pictures on an old Canon he had borrowed from a friend. From there he began shooting more and more events and was doing less and less graphic design.

Now in his eleventh year of street photography, Martin looks back and admits that 'it hasn't been an overnight success.' It was, in fact, a learning process. Amongst other things, the project involved learning how to interact with vulnerable subjects such as children, the elderly, or the homeless, and dealing with criticism online. 'Anything where there is a hint of vulnerability, people take offence', Martin explains. In particular, he receives criticisms for photographing elderly women



▲ 5th September 2014, a stonemason at St John's College (© 2010-2019 MARTIN BOND)

and children. Not wanting to focus only on the 'pretty things and the attractive people', Martin looks to reflect humans at their most natural: 'if I've seen that vulnerability, I've found it endearing, or moving enough in a caring way to capture.'

As expected, lockdown has been a challenge: 'I'm so frustrated at the moment that there is so little to photograph that I've been taking pictures of cats in windows.' The impact of Covid is noticeable in Martin's pictures; humans are often absent, and Cambridge seems quieter (although no less beautiful). 'Lockdown has revealed the secret beauty of Cambridge to me,' says Martin. It also meant discovering the immediate countryside, particularly the Fens. 'We live in quite a spectacular place – even though it's just flat, the skies are amazing. I've discovered clouds in lockdown,' he laughs. 'I've become a huge fan of clouds.'

'What I love about Cambridge is that it has this amazing rhythm – the University provides a melody to the city.' The arrival of freshers, bumps, May balls, graduations, the 'beautiful hiatus of summer', and then everything starts again. While his project initially focused on the city apart from the University, students now feature more prominently in Martin's photography. 'I miss them. I swear about them sometimes,' he laughs. 'But I really do miss them. There is this vitality with youth, this constant injection with young people – it keeps the city young.'

Sometimes Martin walks for hours to find the perfect picture, sometimes it takes just thirty minutes – but in eleven years he hasn't missed a day. Initially he wanted to stop A Cambridge Diary last year after a full decade of doing the project, but then Covid happened. 'This is not the time to stop taking pictures,' he thought. Now, he doesn't know when – or if – he will stop. Street photography has taught him a lot, and not just as an artist: 'it's taught me to look at things and not to be too quick to judge. I'm hoping it makes me a little more open.' Photography is a way to focus on humanity – 'it reveals more of the world to you.'

© 2010-2019 Martin Bond All rights reserved. All images are the exclusive property of Martin Bond and may not be reproduced without written permission. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook

Fashion

Asos X Topshop: The Future of Fashion Shopping

Olivia Rhodes warns that ASOS' purchase of Arcadia could be the beginning of the end for in-person clothes shopping



▲ ILLUSTRATION BY KERI MCINTYRE

2014. I still remember my first Topshop purchase, and it remains quietly folded at the bottom of a drawer: a white sleeveless top with a Peter Pan collar of crocheted daisies. I remember everything about buying it – it was on the sale rack! An absolute bargain of £8! I proudly carried it to the till and felt like I had finally graduated into the world of ‘grown-up fashion’. After that, many a rainy afternoon in my early teens was spent meticulously perusing the floors of Guildford Topshop, clutching birthday money, a Christmas gift voucher, or even just a few pounds of pocket money with which I’d buy a pair of those frilly ankle socks that were the epitome of school uniform pimping. It’s often hard to know at what point in your life an obsession truly began; it seems hazy, and you can’t remember ‘the time before’. But I can attribute my love of fashion to that time, that place, that brand.

2018. Having a weekend job alongside sixth form meant all my wages went on clothes, and the convenience of online shopping made me a complete ASOS convert. I’d shoot down anyone who said there was just “too much on there” with the reminder of the filter tool, while, as a happy owner of Premier delivery membership, I could go from lusting after something to wearing it in under 24 hours, which proved extremely convenient for party outfit crises. The ASOS app made a home on my phone screen, and became a (very expensive) method of procrastination – something to scroll through on the bus, envisioning what could be if only I had a spare £70 for another new coat, that was probably very similar (but also very different) to one I already owned. My wardrobe steadily grew, and I started to develop a concept of what my individual style actually looked like.

2021. Taking into account my polyamorous relationship with the two brands, it might be expected that the announcement of their amalgamation after ASOS’ £330m purchase of Topshop (and Arcadia affiliates Topman and Miss Selfridge) would be good news for me. But reading about the shift made me realise more than ever how much, and how quickly, fashion shopping is irreversibly changing. Aside from the thousands of jobs that will be lost with the closure of all Topshop stores – including the 5-floor Oxford Street flagship – it truly feels like the beginning of the end of in-person shopping.

The immediacy of online shopping is hugely favourable for the hecticness of contemporary life. It holds advantages that I, like anyone, have benefitted from, but I can’t help but lament the death of future teenagers’ ability to beg their parents to give them a lift into town, so that they and a group of friends could spend hours in curtained cubicles trying on clothes that they don’t yet have money of their own to buy. However naively, I didn’t think that, at 19, my own teenage experiences would already be regenerating.

There is so much to be said for a perambulating perusal through a carefully thought-through store display, an experience that scrolling on a screen cannot emulate. Admittedly that has its advantages; I am eternally grateful for the ‘buy the look’ and ‘similar items’ functions, and back in stock notifications have fixed many a momentary fashion heartbreak. But however much I insisted the massive catalogue of ASOS was easy to navigate at first, I do find it increasingly hard to find exactly what I’m looking for. With the absorption of an exponentially growing number of brands onto the site, I know this will only get harder. If we are beginning to see an end

“

The yellow and black that look out from the screen are like caution tape, a warning that fashion shopping truly is changing forever

”

to shopping physically on the high street, the concept of ‘high street’ fashion must be rapidly changing too. Topshop leaves behind a British high street fashion legacy and I worry it will suffer as it is swept up into ASOS. Frequently making runway trends wearable, affordable and yet still decent quality, Topshop has been such a firm favourite among fashion

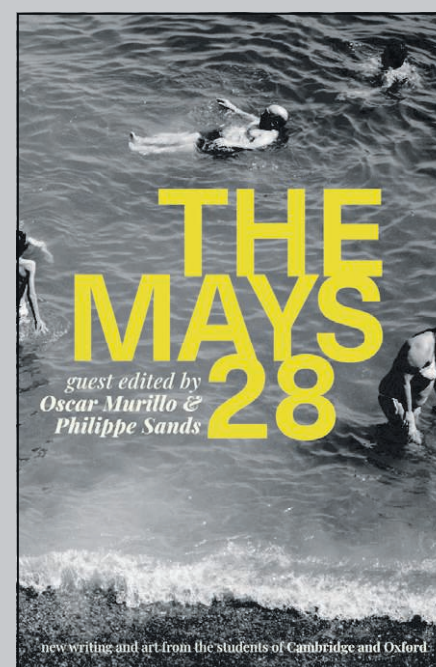
lovers, but nobody can say for sure that it will not get lost in the swaths of clothes we are met with on ASOS.

A visit to the Topshop website now greets you with an excessively cheerful message: “Topshop is now a part of ASOS!”. The exclamation mark is forcefully excited, but that is an emotion I find hard to attribute to this shift. The yellow and black that look out from the screen are like caution tape, a warning that fashion shopping truly is changing forever. Proceed (to ASOS) with caution.



▲ INSTAGRAM/@VISUALWINDOW27

The Mays 28



A book of the best new writing and art from the students of Oxford University & Cambridge University.

Guest editors: Oscar Murillo & Philippe Sands.

On sale in all good book shops and available to order online now:

www.themaysanthology.co.uk/purchase/

Film & TV

Koyaanisqatsi, or a tale of destruction

Vulture Editor *Isabel Sebode* muses on the unsettling beauty of the experimental documentary *Koyaanisqatsi* and the currents of its social commentary



▲ Humans amass, nature recedes (ILLUSTRATION BY EDEN KELLY-THURSTAIN)

Koyaanisqatsi (noun): “Life out of balance”, “Life of moral corruption” (Hopi)

Hypnotising music envelops us as we enter into the world of *Koyaanisqatsi* — a world in which moral corruption and imbalance conduct their tyrannical reign. Godfrey Reggio’s 1982 experimental documentary is no common project, but rather a delicately ambitious exploration of modern life. From nature to industry, the film meanders through modern history and illustrates its estrangement from humankind’s origins. The first of a three-part series (including *Powaqqatsi* (1988) and *Naqoyqatsi* (2002)), this film-collage reinterprets the documentary genre. Instead of familiarising ourselves with the unknown, we watch through a focused lens which slowly paints the everyday as revoltingly absurd.

The first sequence of the film confronts us with the most radical juxtaposition. From cave paintings to the explosion of Apollo 11 (our vector to the moon), we witness the static stone being overtaken by the momentum of modern life. “Aim for the stars”, the movie

“
We feel like voyeurs,
invading a different world
only to realise that this is
our own
”

could seem to say, yet the subsequent images advocate the antithesis. Only fleeting glimpses of nature fill the screen before man’s intervention expresses itself through power lines and mining trucks. The detonation of an atomic bomb next to a Joshua tree jarringly terminates this sequence, irrevocably fusing nature with human destruction. Both seem equally natural in the desert environment, the explosion sickeningly majestic.

Urban life begins dominating the montage as buildings are built and demolished, while humans hurry from one place to another. Consumption of food, entertainment and commodities constitute the central point of the narrative, before close-ups of microchips remind us of the network of streets and buildings we gazed on earlier. The narrative is circular as it concludes with another rocket launch. Its trail of smoke and debris pollutes the air whilst we shift back to the rock art metonymic for an era of life not yet corrupted.

The music comprising the aural tissue of the cinematic collage is composed by Philip Glass and includes deep male vocals rhythmically chanting “Koyaanisqatsi”. This mantra supersedes the various cinematic elements, manifesting the notion that life truly is out

of balance. Like our social reality, the music is deafening. “The Grid”, backdrop to the fast-paced scenes of human transport and digital entertainment, evokes the structured absurdity of Alice’s Wonderland, only here there are no wonders to discover. Instead, crowds of humans migrate in a single direction with Microdata, KFC, and Sony looming over them as they go to fulfil their roles in the tragic farce of our society. As people discover the camera, we feel like voyeurs, invading a different world only to realise that this is our own.

In this world, even the most natural aspects of h u -



ILLUSTRATION BY EDEN KELLY-THURSTAIN

man - ity are rendered artificial. A deep sense of repulsion fills me as I can only stare at humans mindlessly existing in the advertisement-plagued city. Fast food courts are the stage for the fetishisation of mass-produced items, captured by the invasive cinematic lens. We witness the automatised production of jam-filled pastries, sausages and Twinkies — the gluttony almost reeks from the sanitised production lines. Coca-Cola and burgers provide the fuel for modern-day society, which functions through artificiality only to work and produce more.

Reggio does not allow us to engage in mindless consumption. He subverts the documentary genre as no information is being fed to the complacent viewer, who instead needs to mentally labour for a meaning. *Koyaanisqatsi* forces us to slow down. After the claustrophobic experience of the awfully populated streets, the concluding rocket launch offers a moment to catch one’s breath in-between the mania. Even this sensation proves to be anxiety-inducing, as rather than searching for solace in nature, we have found our source of stability in technology. The beauty of the

rocket fire is as grounding as the shots of the landscape, as familiar to the eye.

I suppose I experienced the movie slightly differently. In my naivety, I trusted the humble YouTube link and watched the movie in reverse. For me, the robots disassembled. The cups filled themselves. Society moved backwards, away from where it was so resolutely going. Urban scenes receded, eventually leading us back into the desert landscape. Yet, Reggio did not intend to grant this escape.

We should be uncomfortably confronted with existential questions that force us to answer for ourselves: How did we get here and why do we accept this a s

our normality? We breathe deeply as we glide over the mountainous landscape and suffocate in the images of city life. Nonetheless, we accept the latter state. Reggio reminds us that this is not normal, for with every impulse of apathy towards this loss of nature, our life becomes increasingly fragile.

Now, what is at the core of *Koyaanisqatsi*? Perhaps a guided meditation leading us to discover why our life is unstable and corrupted. Perhaps a depiction of the danger of innovation and its culmination in destruction. Perhaps the goal of estrangement, by which the grinding of machines reveals the threat penetrating into our social structure. Either way, *Koyaanisqatsi* is a theatre of capitalist innovation or, more specifically, its tragedy.

“
Koyaanisqatsi is a theatre
of capitalist innovation, or,
more specifically, its tragedy
”

Why isn't my name good enough?

Priyanka Patel interrogates the naming of Indian characters in Western cinema, considering authenticity and diversity

If there's one facet of my personality that overwhelms all others, it's my obsession with film and television. I was raised on Zee TV serials and Hindi cinema. My teenage years were spent bingeing a frankly alarming number of Western shows and exploring a wide variety of film genres. Over time, my tastes have grown to encompass not just beautifully-made creations, ingenious plots and wonderful characters, but almost anything with cool effects, a bit of melodrama, or even just a great soundtrack (as I've been repeatedly told, I need higher standards). Suffice to say, I've seen a lot.

“
I can think of few
genuine reflections of my
existence as a British-
Indian
”

There are two levels to representation - diverse casting, and diverse characters. Thanks to my love for Bollywood, I've never felt bereft of brown faces on screen. Their stories, however, usually centre around life in India, so naturally I turn to Western media if I want something more relatable. But despite my cinephilia, I can think of precious few genuine reflections of my existence as a British-Indian.

Growing up, I vividly remember adoring the vibrant Rani Chandra in *The Sarah Jane Adventures* and being awestruck by the indomitable Rose Gupta in *M.I. High*. As my interests matured, I saw enough brown actors to keep me satisfied, but became more conscious of how their characters were actually written. I began to notice clear patterns beyond two-dimensionality and stereotyped intelligence, discovering endless ways to critique South-Asian character-writing. What struck me most was the way Indian characters in particular were named.

Blind-casting South-Asian actors in roles without specific cultural backstories doesn't bother me. Like everyone, I was in love with Beck Oliver from *Victorious*, played by Avan Jogia, Himesh Patel's take on Emery Staines in *The Luminaries* last year exceeded my expectations from the book, and Riz Ahmed's recent performance as Ruben Stone in *Sound of Metal* was nothing short of brilliance. But from *Casualty*'s Zoe Hanna to *House*'s Lawrence Kutner, there is a perplexingly recurrent theme of characters with distinctly Western names explicitly described as having (non-Christian) Indian family. Although this is sometimes narratively justified - though the actress playing her is not, *Quantico* lead Alex Parrish is biracial - mostly these names seem

arbitrary, presumably chosen to increase palatability for Western audiences.

The rigidity of Indian naming conventions is diminishing, boosted by growing desires for uniqueness. I'm certainly not disputing the existence of Indian people with Western names, especially within ever-growing diasporas - Mindy Kaling is an obvious example, and Rose Gupta was played by Rachel Petlad-wala. Indeed, for Christian Indians, Anglican names are the norm.

What's strange, however, is the sheer number of characters who fit the pattern. Writers seem averse to ever choosing names of Indian origin, or do so with little care for authenticity. Cece Parekh (*New Girl*), Owen Sharma (*The Haunting of Bly Manor*), Connie Maheswaran (*Stephen Universe*), Kelly Kapoor (*The Office*), and Stephanie Patel (*Suits*) are just a few of countless characters with common Indian surnames but Western forenames. Of course, there are people for whom this is representative, but I doubt that is the main motivation at play. I believe showrunners see an opportunity to claim diversity points whilst still appealing to audiences who (according to them) don't like “difficult” names, rendering their decisions somewhat disingenuous.

“
Showrunners see an
opportunity to claim
diversity points whilst still
appealing to audiences who
don't like “difficult” names.
”

The constant use of such forenames is an insidious reminder of a time when Indians felt pressured into changing their names to fit into Western society. I'm not suggesting we eradicate this trope completely; it would simply be nice to hear some more Indian-origin names thrown around in media discourse. Not all of them have six syllables — there is a plethora of snappy, memorable ones to choose from.

Even worse, sometimes characters have names that simply don't match their heritage. Indian names are highly reflective of one's ancestry, and usually a good indicator of family origin or religion. Clearly this was ignored when creating Dev Shah (*Master of None*), whose name suggests he's probably from a North-Indian Hindu family. Shah's parents, however, hail from Tamil Nadu in South India, and are both practising Muslims. This is baffling considering the show is made by Aziz Ansari, whose own parents are Tamil Muslims. Surely he, of all people, would recognise the importance of accurate naming, especially given the absence of Muslim-Indian characters on screen. Similarly, with both “Kumar” and “Patel” being overwhelmingly used as surnames, Kumar Patel from *Harold*

and Kumar truly is the epitome of laziness. Obviously it's not impossible for people to have such names, but when the majority of Indians choose to follow his-
torical naming conventions even after emigrating, it feels incredibly not bother with



slightest bit of research.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge any well-named characters. The Bhamras of *Bend It Like Beckham* have traditional Sikh names, and although *Never Have I Ever* has its flaws, it did call its Tamil protagonist Devi Vishwakumar. On the other hand, such representation often comes from projects by South-Asian creators. True change is only achieved when enacted across the board. Here, Britain surpasses America; having keenly scoured many British credits over the years, there are a fair few accurately-named British-Indian characters, albeit mostly in small roles, whereas America is woefully lacking.

Getting our names consistently right would be another fantastic step towards genuine representation of Indians in Western media. That said, we've come a long way since the travesty of *The Simpsons*' Apu Nahasapeemapetilon. With a name as basic as Priyanka Patel, I'm sure I'll get to see myself killed off in a low-budget crime drama very soon.

◀ Riz Ahmed (GAGE SKIDMORE)

Shop Varsity!

Our online store, offering a range of *Varsity* branded items is open now!

Pack of Pens: £2.39

Mugs: £4.99

Facemasks: £5.79

T-Shirts: £13.49

Sweatshirts: £17.99

Backpacks: £9.99

Tote Bags: £3.99

Postal print subscriptions are now available too
- get copies of *Varsity* delivered directly to your door worldwide!

All items subject to availability. Above prices exclude postage & packaging. All major credit and debit cards accepted

www.varsity.co.uk/shop

Theatre

StarKid's *Twisted* is the Disney remake we actually needed

Rosie McLeish explores why *Twisted* – StarKid's innovative, satirical take on Disney's *Aladdin* – contains the perfect ingredients for a genuinely fresh 'reimagining' of a Disney classic

Our cinematic overlord and childhood-creator Disney is going through something of a midlife crisis. While it may be putting out some of its finest, most nuanced and gorgeously animated originals (I'm looking at *Moana* and even *Frozen 2* here), it is simultaneously trying to relive the glory days of its renaissance by putting out remake after vanilla remake. I hardly shy away from professing my love for the Magic Kingdom, but I've given up on watching the products of people who believe that 'reimagined' means slightly longer and starring a successful actor who'll bring in the crowds – even if they can't really sing.

Who, then, could possibly be trusted with the remoulding of a classic? I present to you StarKid, the student musical theatre internet phenomenon, whose first production back in 2009, *A Very Potter Musical*, has amassed over 17 million views, and a dedicated fanbase which has funded them through 12 original musicals to date. Their musicals are that fantastic comedic cocktail of hysterically witty and flabbergastingly absurd – what Gen Z call, with utmost love, trash. And this is never put to better use than in their homages; where else could the Sorting Hat get hitched with the Scarf of Sexual Preference? Or Voldemort emerge in his revenant form only to reveal his life-long dream of tap dancing? Or a Horcrux be a Zac Efron poster? I could go on. Playing hard and fast with established and beloved worlds is StarKid's forte, and if anyone could make Disney work for grown-ups (and I use that term liberally), it's them – and they have! *Twisted* is a *Wicked*-style inversion of *Aladdin*, in which the protagonist Ja'far, not a green witch, is actually a hard-working politician who is trying to make the collapsing Magic

story; it exaggerates some aspects, contorts others, all the while completely relying on the audience's familiarity with the tropes of the original. Take *Aladdin*'s seduction song on the magic carpet as an example, 'Take Off Your Clothes'. The song's bolshie sexual overtone would

b e

just met pales to invisibility compared to the opening number, 'Dream a Little Harder', a satire on the Disney classic. It's an idea best summarised in the lines 'If you're good and you're attractive, no need to be proactive; good things will just happen to you!' The song shows the

conflicts with
in the world
which ap-

beginning is so callous, you let your guard down, and your heart is completely exposed to the heart-string tugging – nay, ripping – which it sets you up for. *Twisted* as a Disney adap-

“
Their musicals
are that fantastic
comedic cocktail
of hysterically
witty and
flabbergastingly
absurd
”



▼ Ja'far and other Disney

villains in StarKid's Twisted. (TWITTER/@SATTURANOGETTY)

nothing

without the controversy already surrounding sexual imagery in Disney films. *Twisted* engages with the original *Aladdin*, but also its place in pop culture. In one of the jokes, a direct reference to audience commentary on 'A Whole New World', the sleazy remake *Aladdin* points out all the phallic imagery he can spot in the skyline; desperately trying to get the Princess to subliminally think about sex-jokes aside, I think this skill would make him an excellent English Lit student.

Aside from particular references, I find that it is in *Twisted*'s narrative and musical voices that the loving parody really excels. The music, written by AJ Holmes (who could come into his own once Darren Chris left for *Glee*), so perfectly conjures up that Disney, saccharine, I-can-change-the-world optimism, that it has already established much of the world-building, and so the lyrics can do the damage. The mild self-deprecation of recent years, such as *Frozen*'s mockery of marrying a man you've

appears to be a positive, uplifting place, as it simultaneously (with much profanity) spits on the character for whom this is not an option: the proactive, and attractive-ly challenged, Ja'far.

Here is the genius of the show. Because the

tation does not stop believing in magic – far from it – but the magic is more complicated, and there are more consequences. Ja'far is a self-proclaimed man of optimistic reason, but his long, overwhelming exposure to the cruel world, only heightened by grief, strips him of the hope he has as a young man that he can overturn socioeconomic inequality (the true villain of the piece) and change the world. Many Disney stories are about finding your own identity because they are written about, and for, young people just starting out on their journey. So how could a remake be more effective than by returning to a story of a once-optimistic hero? How could it hurt us more, than to see him lose that identity that Disney tells us is essential? And how much better is it, to see the anti-hero *untwisted*, finding the light, again, at the end of his umpteenth tunnel? That's remoulded magic.

▼ A Very Potter Musical rocketed StarKid musicals into the mainstream (TWITTER/@MA_AILING)



“

Disney is going
through something
of a midlife crisis

”

Kingdom a better place, whilst dealing with grief, heartbreak, and numerous *wacky* side characters.

I think *Twisted* is one of the best examples of a “remake”, because it doesn't just retell the

Music

▼ The raw spectacle of Eurovision has previously been its most compelling feature (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)



Without Mass Spectacle, What is the Eurovision Song Contest?

Amy Moorhouse asks whether the international contest can survive in a virtual format

In May 2009, I discovered a musical Olympics, something which sparked a rather passionate and long-lasting love for that extraordinary spectacle of a show. That particular year Norway won with a song titled *Fairytale*, perhaps fitting for the magical and irresistible excess and escape that Eurovision is for so many. With oceans of lights, fireworks and even the odd flying acrobat, the contest has continued to expand and become ever more extravagant over the past decade. Last year Eurovision fans were bereft, as the pandemic forced the event into its first ever cancellation. With the assistance of some ever so eager and compliant friends, I was forced to host my own Eurovision celebration to fill the void.

However, this year the contest has vowed to return on the 18th May in Rotterdam, albeit in a more limited form.

The organisers of Eurovision released four possible scenarios, which they rather uncreatively named options A, B, C and D. Option A (a completely normal show) was ruled out at the beginning of the month, leaving three possible incarnations of the contest. Option B plans for

“

What atmosphere of magic or joy can be created in an empty arena?

”

a socially distant event with the participants still being present in Rotterdam and a limited audience. Option C prepares for acts to remain in their home countries and compete by performances that will be ‘live-

on-tape’, while the hosts present to a limited crowd in Rotterdam. The last resort is option D – a plan for if the Netherlands are forced to re-enter lockdown – which would involve the show becoming completely virtual.

As of yet, it is not certain which scenario will come to bear, with organisers quoted as being “determined but realistic”. What is known for sure is a packed arena and sea of colourful flags, while very much part of the modern Eurovision experience, will not be taking place this year. This has led some to ask what atmosphere of magic or joy can be created in an empty arena? As well as, perhaps more pertinently, what is Eurovision without its mass spectacle?

To understand the Eurovision Song Contest truly, one must consider its first iteration, held in Switzerland in 1956, when seven nations competed with a live orchestra to be crowned musically victorious. Simple on the surface, but in actuality this was an immense technological and political effort to unite a divided post-war Europe through the means of the new technological marvel: live television! This was a hugely ambitious project to join countries in an international network, which has only expanded over the years to becoming consistently one of the world’s most watched non-sporting events, exemplified by the 182 million people who watched the 2019 show.

The Eurovision Song Contest is a show designed to reflect the Europe of the moment and has always adapted to the challenges it faced, such as at the end of the Cold War. Many newly formed states were created across eastern Europe and thus sought to join the contest; as a result, semi-

finals were introduced to allow for widening participation. While the exterior may have grown ever flashier over 60 years, at the heart

“

At the heart of Eurovision is a message of unity and inclusivity

”

of Eurovision is a message of unity and inclusivity, celebrated for one night through the medium of music. Arguably a message of unity in times of adversity is needed now more than ever.

Therefore, while Eurovision will undoubtedly look different this year, it has already proved its ability to adapt and cater for the moment. Perhaps this year’s contest will offer us a chance to reflect on the origins and purpose of the show.

On the other hand, it may provide a perfect night of escapism. Ultimately, whether the show is the pinnacle of your year or simply a laugh in a time in which joy is in short supply, let us embrace whatever form Eurovision will take.



◀ All scenarios (including option D) would still involve Rotterdam’s Ahoy arena (TWITTER/EUROVISION)

ADVERTISE WITH US.

To advertise in any of our print publications or online, please contact our Business Manager:

VARSLITY

tel : 01223 33 75 75
email: business@varsity.co.uk
web: varsitypublications.co.uk

Sport

From Cambridge Blues to Six Nations: In Conversation with Joe Ansbro

Editor *Gaby Vides* speaks to former Scotland international player Joe Ansbro about his time at Cambridge, playing for his country and coming to terms with a career-ending injury

Wednesday at 8pm must surely be one of the worst times to Zoom someone. You've got that lethargic, mid-week exhaustion, not quite near enough Monday to have that post-weekend buzz nor close enough to Friday to have the excitement of a Saturday lie-in. However, I called Cambridge alumnus and former international rugby player Joe Ansbro on Wednesday at precisely 8pm. Joe's attitude was a refreshing blend of humility, passion and quick-witted humour – the call was exactly the mid-week, lockdown 3.0 pick me up I needed.

Joe graduated from Robinson with a Biological Natural Sciences degree in 2006 before playing for Northampton Saints, London Irish and later in his career, Scotland. Ansbro, by any metric, was a renowned, up-and-coming player – having claimed 11 international caps by the time he was forced to retire in 2012 due to a devastating neck injury.

However, rugby was not a predetermined destiny for Joe, rather he described his family as all being much more heavily involved in football. Despite this, he does feel that being a “frustrated footballer” and having two older brothers was certainly all the preparation he needed to be a success in rugby – or as he wittily remarked: “I was used to contact”.

Having made his way through the English grade system, Joe was aware of the difficult realities of ‘making it’ into the rugby business. Despite some “tenuous offers” to join clubs at the age of 18, Joe considered it a “no-brainer” to go to Cambridge, thinking it

Joe had a ‘light-bulb’ moment where he felt that he could do it – even if many of his friends “thought he was crazy because I was barely in the 21s team at uni”.

Joe began to play rugby more intensely, eventually playing 3 Varsity matches, with two of these matches being Blues. When I asked him how he found the balance of a notoriously intense Natural Sciences degree and training 6 times a week, he described rugby as a “nice foil” for the academic environment. He wryly remarked that he never thought he “was going to set the world on fire academically” anyway but was competent enough to handle the balance.

While feeling “immensely grateful” for his time at University, Joe reminiscently told me that by his final year he was very much “ready to put a full stop” on the Cambridge period of his life. And it was easy enough for Joe to move on; having signed a contract with Northampton in his third year, the club was waiting for him to join.

Despite having signed a contract while still at Cambridge, Joe continued to study as he knew he wanted to “finish University properly”. In hindsight, Joe expressed deep satisfaction with the decision to finish his degree – it was an important life line when looking for alternative careers after his injury.

Joe had also already had an introduction to Northampton, having played a pre-season with them before his final Varsity match: “The pre-season definitely gave me a boost....I got to see and talk to some incredible players. [For] the Varsity match that year, Oxford were the firm favourites, so it did give me a lot more confidence and I was probably a better athlete for it”.

In terms of the mindset fostered by playing Varsity matches, Joe feels they were definitely useful experiences in preparation for professional rugby, as it’s “that double-loaded all or nothing mentality: you’ve got to get picked and then you’ve got to win the game and there is only one opportunity every year”.



▲ Joe Ansbro playing for the Northampton Saints in 2020 (CLAIRE JONES/REDHATPHOTO.COM)

This all-or-nothing attitude continued to characterise Joe's resilient game, playing a combined total of 79 games for Northampton Saints and London Irish as well as 11 international appearances for Scotland. Joe made his international debut in 2009 in a tour around Romania but was only called up to play for Scotland again a year later, in a game against reigning world champions South Africa. Scotland came out with a surprise win, beating South Africa 21-7, and Joe told me the match was a “dream come true”.

Joe always knew that if he was ever going to play professional rugby, “Scotland would always be the goal”. After a couple of Six Nation losses Joe decided to change club in order to develop himself as a player. He told me how he “completely shifted focus. It then became about actually adding a huge amount of value [to the team] and becoming a key player of the team...that's where I was at before my injury: I was looking to become a key player for Scotland”.

With this in mind, Joe signed a three year contract with London Irish. Ultimately, he was only there for two years and only played one season due to injuries. And Joe has certainly had his fair share of injuries.

Throughout our interview he casually peppers the conversation with mentions of a broken rib, slipped disc or the odd concussion – his relatively blasé attitude clearly conveys Joe's commitment to getting ‘stuck in’ and a perception of injury as an inevitable part of the “nature of the beast”.

Although Joe does mention the worrying disconnect between international and club rugby in terms of their attitudes to injury. He recounts how one time

he had to put his foot down; Joe was “concussed flat out and was due to play against Ireland in the Six Nations” and while Scotland's doctor said he couldn't play, his club encouraged him to. He said that even though “no one forced me to play, the fact I had to have that conversation was slightly disconcerting although not surprising.”

And this was certainly not a conversation Joe frequently had, describing himself as a “bit irresponsible” with it taking a broken neck to make him realise he “wasn't going to play rugby again”. The injury occurred during a pre-season match against Munster for London Irish, prematurely ending Joe's career.

Having such high ambitions for his career, I asked Joe how he found coming to terms with the injury. “I always had half a foot out the door with rugby, it helped me stop that pressure turning into stress...so certainly by the time they told me [that] I'd broken my neck I'd made my decision straight away. I made that decision as my recovery started but by the time I was 12 months into my recovery and the halo brace was off, the

concept of running around and playing three dimensional sport was slightly terrifying.” He humourously added: “I think I managed to crash my brother's car trying to do a reverse park, I just couldn't really move properly, so I just thought I can't get on a rugby field like this”.

So what is Joe Ansbro up to now? Well, after looking around to see what he wanted to do and taking the opportunity to spend some much needed time with his family – he tells me rugby is “horrendously anti-social” – Joe is a secondary school biology teacher at Harrow. He entered Harrow in a postgraduate assistant master role seven years ago and has never looked back. While it took Joe about 3 years to “get his brain back going again after rugby, rugby, rugby and too much PlayStation”, he tells me he is now fully immersed in teaching and is “really enjoying it”.

Joe completes his remarkable story by talking about his children and family, reflecting that he has “no regrets” and feels “really lucky”. And if that's not an admirable life philosophy, I don't know what is?



▲ Ansbro played in 2 full Blues Varsity matches during his time at Cambridge (LAFAYETTE/CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY RUGBY UNION FOOTBALL CLUB)



▲ Ansbro playing for Scotland (CRAIG WATSON)

was highly unlikely that he would play professional rugby anyway. Fast-forward a year and Joe was a fresher at Cambridge – far away from the Blues set up and enjoying nights out at Cindies, the Robinson bar and the “incredible places” around town.

Yet seeing that a number of players in Cambridge were playing for England and elsewhere,

Social Media and sport: A lawness world of abuse

Following a concerning recent rise in online abuse, **Damola Odeyemi** considers the personal toll for those on the receiving end and how best to combat it

On Wednesday 28th January, after a surprising 2-1 defeat to Sheffield United, and 9 days later following a 3-3 draw to Everton, the Manchester United defender Axel Tuanzebe was subject to racial abuse on Instagram. This was one of the many cases of black players receiving abuse on social media. Tuanzebe was not the only one. Eddie Nketia, Reece James and many more players have since reported and shown evidence of the abuse they receive on an almost weekly basis. Screenshots of people commenting on their posts with monkey emojis were made public, prompting the Premier League to condemn social media companies for not taking action against racists on their platforms.

These incidents revealed the systemic nature of the abuse directed at black players. Many of them have been dealing with this treatment from the youth level. It can be described as almost 'routine' for black players to be racially abused on social media after bad team performances, while their lighter-skinned counterparts, their teammates, are left relatively unscathed.

In terms of finding a solution to the problem, there is little that the Premier

League can do to protect the players.

When fans were in stadiums, any offenders could be tracked down and punished accordingly. The punishments ranged from lifetime bans, to being sentenced, to time in prison or community service.

Now that the abuse is all online, clubs cannot trace the culprits, who tend to be using anonymous accounts. This is why the Premier League and the FA have approached social media companies to police their own platforms and put an end to this systemic abuse.

This rise in abuse has also been directed towards match officials, most recently regarding two specific decisions made by Lee Mason (VAR referee) and Mike Dean (on-pitch referee) in the space of 5 days. The incidents involved the sending-off of Southampton's Jan Bednarek and West Ham's Tomáš Souček. Highly controversial at the time, the decisions were soon deemed incorrect and overturned. The two incidents, quite rightfully, called into question the use of VAR and the broader issue of our interpretation of the rules of football.

However, what grabbed the headlines was the abuse directed at the referees. Referees are used to abuse, be it from

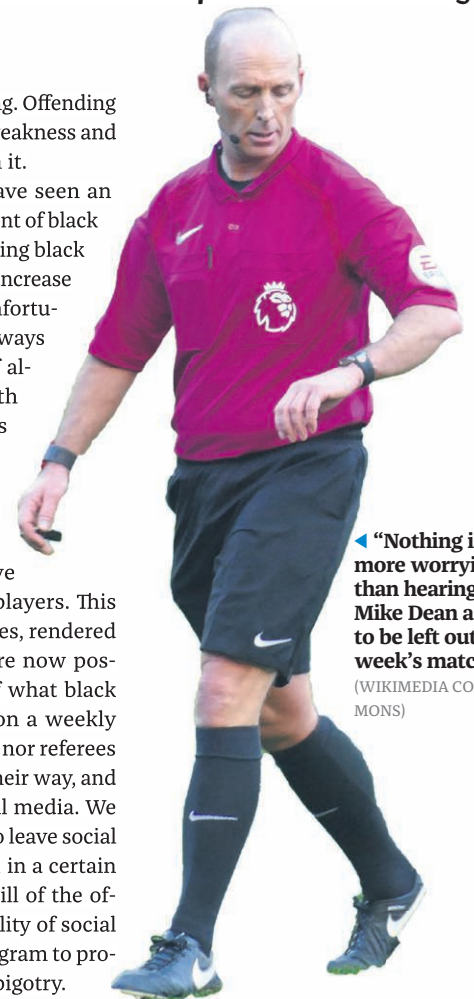
players, managers or fans. But nothing is more worrying than hearing of Mike Dean, the oldest and most experienced referee in the league, asking to be left out of a week's matches as he and his family had received death threats in the days following the overturned decisions. The same applied to Lee Mason, who has now stood down as a Premier League referee.

Most people assumed that VAR would make referees' jobs easier, that it might take uncertainty out of the game. But it has done quite the opposite; their jobs are much more difficult, and VAR has made referees even more of a topic of discussion.

In the lower levels of football, we classify a good referee as one with control and consistency – some give soft fouls, some shout play on, but as long as they are consistent and confident, there is little need to discuss them. However, in elite professional football, gone are the days of referees having total dominance over the proceedings on the pitch; VAR has taken away all of the referee's authority, leaving them vulnerable. Referees' decisions, now under constant scrutiny, can be overturned within minutes. Consequently, they are less confi-

dent in their decision-making. Offending fans recognise any sign of weakness and don't hesitate to pounce on it.

The past few months have seen an upward trend in mistreatment of black players and referees. Regarding black players, this is likely only an increase in cases being reported; unfortunately, black players have always been subject to this sort of alienating treatment. As with much of society, racism is still engrained in the sport and in its fanbase. Social media simply presents a platform for that racism to have more penetrative and damaging effects on players. This is a similar case with referees, rendered vulnerable by VAR; they are now possibly experiencing some of what black players have to live with on a weekly basis. Neither black players nor referees deserve the abuse coming their way, and the common factor is social media. We cannot expect the victims to leave social media to avoid abuse. That, in a certain way, is conceding to the will of the offenders. It is the responsibility of social media companies like Instagram to protect users from abuse and bigotry.



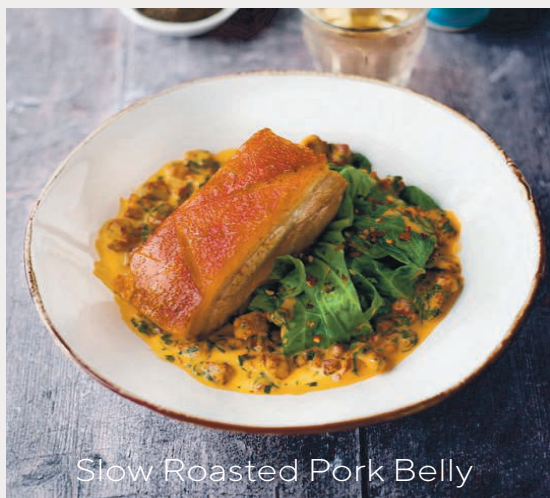
◀ "Nothing is more worrying than hearing of Mike Dean asking to be left out of a week's matches" (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

Prepped

Restaurant inspired meal kits delivered to your door

Prepped Meal Kits and Ready Meals are made from restaurant-quality seasonal ingredients that are fully prepped making it nice and easy for you to cook when you want.

- ✓ No Subscription
- ✓ Same day ordering
- ✓ No hard work
- ✓ Exact portions



Slow Roasted Pork Belly



Goan Fish Curry



Baharat Spiced Cauliflower

GET 30% off your first order with the code **VARSlTY**

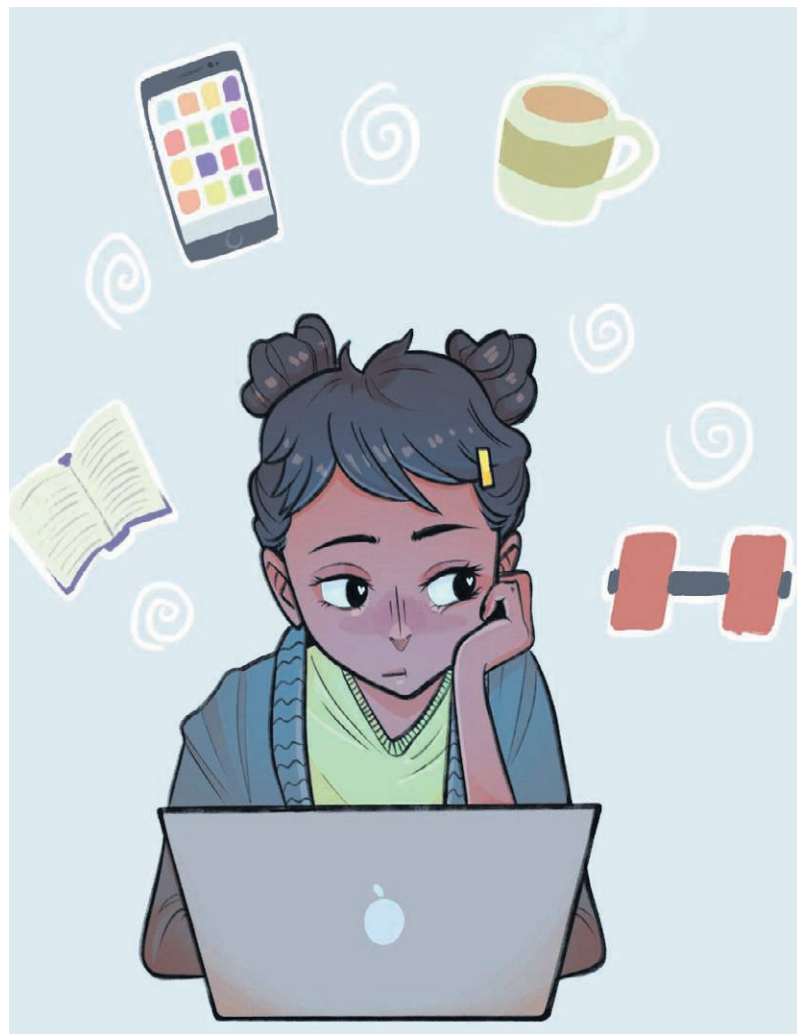
visit www.prepped.life

Violet

By VARSITY

Distraction is on trend, right?

Scarlett Rowe details how she distracts herself from impending university deadlines - that is, other than writing articles for Varsity's Violet, of course



▲ ILLUSTRATION BY KERI MCINTYRE

If you'd have asked year 13 me if I got distracted, I'd have looked at you with a raised eyebrow. Year 13 Scarlet did not get distracted. Undergrad Scarlet's personality, on the other hand, is synonymous with distraction. I blame this transformation primarily on the lockdowns, because then I don't have to take any actual responsibility for the fact that I genuinely procrastinate for more time than I work.

Having to spend most of the day at home, without filling the evenings with fun outings, is something which COVID has flung upon us. And I know I *could* do something wholesome like buy a craft kit or make a clay cup or something but frankly, I do not have the motivation. Sorry for being such a Scrooge for no good reason.

"What do you do to distract yourself, then?" I hear you ask (or not). Great question! I've actually (totally coincidentally, of course) compiled a list of my top distraction methods for you to enjoy ...

Popping to the kitchen

The kitchen is the absolute hub of social life in my house. If I ever need distracting, I pop downstairs under the guise of needing a "quick tea break" and tend to leave guiltily an hour or so later, fully aware that I interpreted the "quick" in "quick tea break" a tad generously. I will usually find at least one of my five siblings there, also searching for an escape from the tyranny of Zoom classes. Added benefits to the kitchen include: an abundance of Yorkshire Tea and heating. My parents won't heat any other rooms

in the house, because we are in Yorkshire and having an Arctic house is some kind of status symbol - don't ask ...

Overall rating: 4.8/5

Walks

Okay, I'm really sorry. I bet you're rolling your eyes having to read yet another person advocating walking as though you'd *never* have thought of such a suggestion by yourself. If it's of any comfort, I know I won't be winning an award for original thinking any time soon. The unfortunate thing is, though, I'm going to have to jump onto the walking bandwagon because COVID doesn't leave me with any other choice. Though my enthusiasm for walking has waned significantly this lockdown, I still enjoy the occasional outing - with a flask of hot chocolate, of course. Though part of me detests walking with a burning passion (I don't think I ever want to see my local park again), I also think that walks, annoyingly, are here to stay. Plus, they are a reminder that other humans exist outside of Instagram's tiny squares, which can only be a good thing.

Overall rating: 4/5

Scrolling on social media

I've kind of given in to the fact that I probably spend too much time online. It doesn't help that I've followed lots of estate agent accounts recently either. My feed is filled with country manors and French palaces that I doubt I'll ever live in. Also, they remind me of the fact that deep down, I just want to have Kevin McCloud's job on *Grand Designs*. Too much

time online can obviously be problematic, but a sprinkling of German castles to fill my evenings doesn't go amiss.

Overall rating: 3.5/5

Workouts

I absolutely detest workouts. I do them anyway, because I've made it my New Year's resolution to do a workout a day, and I'm too stubborn to break it. I always feel better after them, but for their whole duration I just feel pain and misery. I think that my wellbeing is probably improved by doing them, but I actually don't know if they are worth the suffering.

Overall rating: 2.9/5

Reading

I love reading, I really do. Or, at least, I used to. But now my degree has spoiled it for me. I spend all day trying to read about religious sacrifice and actor-network theory (I am a humanities student) so that by the evening I don't want to read a single word ever again. Reading for fun has now become a remnant of the distant past for me, and I'm unsure if these scars induced by reading the course book for HSPS will ever heal.

Overall rating: 4/5

I know that I don't lead the most thrilling life ever. I'm sure other people paraglide for distraction, or set up businesses, or fly to the moon. Alas, I am not one of those people. Gone are the days of filling my time productively - productivity, who is she? Distraction is now the new Vogue. You heard it here first.

Quintessential Questions: An innovative plot-twist

Violet editors *Alex Castillo-Powell*, *Lotte Brundle* and *Nadya Miryanova* come up with some innovative answers, in their second installment of 'Quintessential Questions'

So we've (somehow) stumbled our way through Week 5, effectively tripping over its finishing line while begging our Supervisors for mercy on that essay which may or may not have been due three days ago, but is still yet to be attempted.

After the some-what meagre, initial success of our first edition of 'Quintessential Questions' where we, at Violet, addressed many important universal wonderings, such as: "Which Katy Perry lyric best describes us?", and "What would our respective weapons of choice be, in the event of a Zombie Apocalypse?", we have decided to turn our virile minds to even more pressing questions.

And so, the Violet Team return in all our caffeinated, sleep-deprived and slightly delirious glory to bring you yet more nonsensical content and provide you with the answers to the questions you never thought to ask. Except this time, it's spiced with a flavour of 'innovation'...

Q: If you were Toope for the day, what wacky addition would you introduce to Cambridge life?

Alex: Formal attire must be worn to

“
Favourite invention from a movie? Time travelling car from *Back to the Future*. Alex 2.0 can re-write my essays
”

all Zoom lectures. I spent £50 on a gown just to have it sit in my wardrobe. Where is the justice?!

Nadya: 'Take your Pets to Supervisions Day'. To liven the atmosphere.

Lotte: Students and staff would only be permitted on site on a 'the-floor-is-lava' basis. Any member of the University who wished to enter a faculty building would have to do so by using a method of transport other than their feet. Think of all the bikes you'd see in the library: complete and utter chaos.

Q: Name three of the most bizarre book ideas you've ever had.

Alex: 1. "Climb every mountain": the stories of a mountain goat with a crippling fear of heights, 2. "How to spend more time searching for Netflix films than watching Netflix films": an autobiography, 3. "50 shades of hay": Catherine the Great erotica fan fiction

Nadya: 1. "One Hundred Years of Solitude": a nation in lockdown, 2. "The Call of the Wild" - why my cat demands food at 3am, 3. "How to replace work with tea": the complete and unabridged procrastination guide.

Lotte: 1. "Everything Wrong With My

Family: A Detailed Analysis", 2. "Everything Wrong With My Boyfriend(s) - Past and Present : A Detailed Analysis", 3. "How to Alienate Yourself From Your Loved Ones: A Two-Step Guide."

Q: What's a party trick you'd like to master some day?

Alex: Talking to people.

Nadya: Juggling my commitments.

Lotte: The ability to become intoxicated beyond reason, on demand: an instantaneous Ctrl-Alt-Delete for any undesirable memories of embarrassing social blunders.

Q: If you could have one invention to help you in daily life, what would it be called and what would be its function?

Alex: A clone that would write my thesis for me. It's called "Alex 2.0: 2 fast 2 furious".

Nadya: A time-turner. Essay extension? Never heard of it.

Lotte: 'Robo-swat' - the ultimate revision companion. A multipurpose robot complete with cafetiere, an alarm clock, a 'dictate to type' essay writing function and the ability to automatically email your college tutor a timely 'SOS'.

“
A party trick you'd like to master some day? Juggling my commitments
”

Q: If you were stuck on a desert island, what would you use to escape

Alex: I would call Richard Branson. He probably owns it.

Nadya: A desert island? You mean a holiday abroad?? Pal, I'll grab my sunglasses and swimming costume- I'm going nowhere.

Lotte: I'd likely employ the 'Jack Sparrow Escape Technique' - a raft made out of sea turtles and roped together by my own back hair.

Q: Favourite invention from a movie?

Alex: Time-travelling car from *Back to the Future*. Alex 2.0 can re-write all of my previous essays.

Nadya: Mary Poppins' carpet bag- neat and convenient, but make it stylish.

Lotte: The 'Spray on Shoes' from *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*.

Q: 10 years from now, what future tech do you think will have been created?

Alex: Sentient cutlery that tells you to stop eating so much sugar.

Nadya: Invisibility cloak: the ultimate way to hide from your responsibilities.

Lotte: A 'Grow-your-own-boyfriend' - finally, a time-saving solution to the tedium of dating.