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Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY

Report finds Jesus College invests minimum £5.15m in 'worst-offending global exploiters'

Ewan Hawkins

Investigations Editor

Clare Walsh & Caitlin Farrel

News Correspondents

A new report by members of the Jesus College Climate Justice Campaign (JCCJC), has revealed that a minimum total of £5.15 million is invested by the College per year into "absolute worst-offending global exploiters and polluters". As of October 2019, Jesus indirectly invested £807,705.77 into fossil fuel companies, including major investments to fossil fuel giants such as Shell and BP.

According to the report, released on Wednesday (21/04), Jesus invests a further £4 million into a range of other companies engaged "in ecologically and socially destructive practices".

The report, compiled after a four-month investigation by JCCJC, details the College's investments and their ecological impacts, before making three recommendations. As a minimum, the campaign calls on the College to broaden the scope of their divestment decisions to include divestment from all major drivers of climate change, as well as companies with histories of worker violations and human rights abuses.

The College's investments and assets are currently managed by Cazenove Capital, which comes under the umbrella of asset management company Schroders. The campaign's second demand is that Jesus College leave this asset manager,

due in part to what they consider Schroders' "abysmal" voting record on climate and social resolutions.

The report also recommends that in future the College's investments focus on sustainability and stable returns, transitioning away from public equity investments towards "Gold Standard Green Bonds", bonds which are accredited for their commitment to reducing emissions by the Gold Standard Foundation.

Jesus College holds investments in companies which themselves fund fossil fuel companies, including Barclays and HSBC. The College invests over £1 million in the financial services company Allianz, which the report estimates equates to a £53,000 investment in the fossil fuel industry.

In the report and their press release, the campaign asserts that divestment, while a good first step, ultimately does not go far enough to make investments more ethical. They urge colleges that have announced divestment to address all indirect investment and take a broader definition of environmentally and socially harmful practices which should not be funded.

If Jesus College takes up the recommendations made by the report, it will be the first college to extend its divestment program to cover removing investment from all forms of environmental damage and pollution. The report thus offers a

Full story on page 2 ►



▲ The report, authored by members of the Jesus College Climate Justice Campaign, examines Jesus College's indirect investments (LUCAS MADDALENA)

Local elections 2021: Cambridge prepares for the polls

Cameron White & Amy Howell

Senior News Editors

Cambridge residents are preparing to vote in several local elections next month, after the UK government postponed the local elections last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

With elections taking place in 143 councils across England and approximately 28 million people voting for around 4,650 positions of power across the country, *Varsity* takes a closer look at the candidates for Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Mayoral Election.

City Council

The elections for Cambridge City Council will take place across all 14 of the city's wards, with all 42 council seats up for election due to changes in ward boundaries.

Each ward is represented by three councillors. The candidate earning the most votes serves a three-year term, the candidate with the second-highest number of votes serves a two-year term, and the candidate with the third-highest number serves for a year. The terms of office have been reduced by a year due to the postponement of these elections

Full story on page 4 ►

News

EDITORIAL

Enjoying the everyday

In a year of so many divestment victories, it is easy to perceive divestment as the end goal of climate activism. However, a report by members of Jesus College Climate Justice Campaign this week (pg. 1) underscored the importance of widening our activism to include issues of social inequality and racial justice. By solely targeting the fossil fuel industry, divestment misses the full complexity of the climate catastrophe. Universities, colleges and other institutions should not merely be rubber stamped following divestment; rather, we should demand a more thorough and proactive approach. We should use our collective voice (pg. 15), building upon the work of current youth activists (pg. 17), to call for radical and structural reform.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of these issues, and as we make our way through this term, remember not to stretch yourself too thin. Be kind to yourself. For many of us, this will be our first “serious” exam season. It can feel difficult to manage the stress that exams bring, but we hope that, in reading this edition, you will be reminded that life exists - even thrives - outside of studies and exams. Whether it’s walking down King’s Parade in your brand new flares (pg. 24), or making cocktails (pg. 22), take time to appreciate all that Cambridge has to offer (see our cultural preview on pg. 30 for more!)

There will always be work to do, so why don’t you make the most of the Easter term whilst it’s here? Lounge in the sunshine, spend time with friends - oh, and kick back to read the latest copy of *Varsity*.

We feel honoured to have shared your stories, opinions and insights - it’s been a privilege. Thank you for being a part of this with us.

Georgie and Gaby xx
Friday 23rd April 2021

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Murray Edwards receives £2m donation in honour of Auschwitz Survivor

Louis Hodgson

News Correspondent

Murray Edwards College has announced that it has received a £2 million donation from the John Browne Charitable Trust - the largest donation that the College has received since 2008.

The College will use the donation to obtain a new building, which will provide student accommodation, as well as teaching and conference spaces. The building will be named the Paula Browne House, honouring the mother of Lord John Browne, who founded the trust over twenty years ago. Paula Browne was a Hungarian Auschwitz survivor, who moved to Cambridge with her family in 1955. During the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, she joined a network of people in the UK who provided refuge to those fleeing Hungary.

In a recent press release, the College described Paula Browne as an “exceptional woman” whose actions left a

“big impression” on her son, Lord John Browne.

Browne commented: “My mother was an uncommon woman who cared enormously about granting women equal access to opportunity - because it was something that was denied to her.”

He added that his mother “would have been so pleased to be associated in this way with Murray Edwards [...] It is a special college, part of an extraordinary University, to which I owe a great deal.”

It said it will use the new building to help further support their students, with a particular focus on helping those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Dame Barbara Stocking, President of Murray Edwards College, said: “On behalf of the College, I would like to offer our sincerest thanks to the John Browne Charitable Trust for their extremely generous donation.

“Murray Edwards is currently limited in the accommodation it can provide students, and the spaces it can offer for

“
My mother was an uncommon woman who cared enormously about granting women equal access to opportunity”
”



▲ The £2 million donation is the largest single gift to the College since 2008 (VARSITY)

► Continued from front page

potential widening of the scope of the University’s approach to divestment.

“Divestment is not good enough,” stated co-writer of the report, Harvey Brown, adding: “the College has a £46 million private investment portfolio and it’s currently using it to legitimise industries which are destroying the planet and exploiting its people.”

One section titled “Divestment as a Financial Imperative” outlines the campaign members’ argument that full divestment is not only ethically preferable but financially advantageous in the long term too.

They assert that, with future governments expected to introduce legislation to limit fossil fuel usage in order to mitigate increasing global temperatures, fossil fuel companies will decrease in value in the coming years.

“It is no longer a question of if fossil fuel companies will have to cease operating. It is a question of *when*.”

With regard to the campaign’s proposal that Jesus leave Cazenove Capital, the report claims that Schroders has a “record of climate ambivalence”

The report says: “If we are to become a sustainability pioneer, leading the way on the effective, bold climate action that institutions across the world must begin to engage in, we should at the very least invest our money through fund managers which have a ‘best-in-class’ record on climate action.”

The report’s second proposal asks the college to consider investing in options which contribute positively to the environment and climate. They recommend the college use “Gold Standard Green Bonds”. The report describes these as “actively positive, sustainability-driven wealth management options which have a far more directly positive impact on communities and the planet - as well as providing stable returns.”

A spokesperson for Jesus College told *Varsity* that they recognise the urgency of climate change, and described the College’s recent work on “a comprehensive set of new policies since before the start of the pandemic”, stating that fellows, students and staff have been involved in developing a brand-new “Sustainability Strategy” as well as a new “Responsible Investment Policy”,

“
It is no longer a question of if fossil fuel companies will have to cease operating. It is a question of when”
”

teaching and learning. This gift will enable us to change all that.”

Stocking further stated that the gift will allow the College to “educate more outstanding young women, particularly those from backgrounds that have been traditionally underrepresented at Cambridge.”

The trust’s donation preserves its long-standing relationship with Murray Edwards, to which it has donated over £200,000 since 2005 to fund the Paula Browne Scholarships. The scholarships are awarded annually, typically to students from Eastern European countries who demonstrate “exceptional potential” but require financial support.

The John Browne Charitable Trust states on their website that “universities and other higher education institutions are one of the most powerful tools at our disposal to enable social mobility.”

The trust was founded 20 years ago, to help fund causes associated with Lord Browne’s life as an “engineer, businessman, patron of the arts, and son of a Holocaust survivor.”

Since it was established, it has distributed over £2 million in five key areas: the natural environment, engineering, higher education, visual and performing arts, and human rights.

Speaking to the Jewish Chronicle in 2013, Lord Browne said his mother “didn’t approve of looking backwards”.

“Until about a year before she died, she really didn’t talk about it. I think that was pretty well in common with many survivors. The future was the point. We had to learn from the past, but not dwell in it,” he said.

Lord Browne has a particular affinity with Murray Edwards after forging a friendship with Anne Lonsdale, former President of the College, through his work with the University. They both shared passions for gender equality, the environment and climate change.

which is due to be released “in the next few months.”

The statement continued: “We always welcome engagement and ideas from members of the College as we seek to make a positive impact; some of the authors of the Climate Justice Campaign’s report have made contributions to our plans through consultations, Committee meetings and written submissions.” The spokesperson added that the College is also making a difference through its “operations, estate and wider holdings”.

“We have been improving our sustainability for almost a decade and in the last year we have launched a huge number of initiatives, from free plant milk in our cafe to investing in a fully sustainable ground source heat pump for our kitchen project. We look forward to sharing our ambitions later this term.”

In 2019, Jesus committed to divest from its direct investments in fossil fuel companies.

The report follows a peaceful ‘die-in’ protest on Jesus’s First Court by members of JCCJC in October 2020, as well as the University’s commitment to fully divest its £3.5 billion Endowment Fund (CUEF) by 2030.

College redundancies reveal impact of pandemic on non-academic staff



▲ Queens' College offered voluntary redundancies to 16 of its staff members (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Amy Howell
Senior News Editor
Luke Hallam
Deputy News Editor

Over 120 staff from across the University's colleges, academic schools and non-academic institutions have faced redundancy or the non-renewal of fixed contracts since the beginning of March, data obtained through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests revealed.

Meanwhile, the number of non-academic staff at several colleges has decreased by up to 30 workers, while changes to overall staffing numbers at other colleges was in single figures or remained unchanged.

Among the 126 members of staff across the University (excluding those directly employed by colleges), 91 have not had fixed contracts renewed and 32 have been made redundant. The University employs over 6,000 non-academic staff members across the six academic schools which encompass all the faculties at the University.

When approached for comment on these statistics, a University spokesperson told *Varsity*: "The University of Cambridge has done everything in its power to support our more than 12,500 staff during the pandemic. The proportion of contracts that have ended over the past year, including fixed-term contracts, has remained low and consistent with previous years."

Data shows that redundancies have varied across University departments. While many departments and faculties made no redundancies over the past year, the School of Biological Sciences did not renew 18 contracts, while 24 of the 32 redundancies implemented across University faculties were linked to the School.

These figures exclude redundancies made as a result of fixed-term contracts coming to an end. A total of 91 additional staff have not had their fixed-term contracts renewed over the past year, including 21 "non-school" staff not working in academic departments.

In September, a *Varsity* investigation reported that Downing College planned to make 27 staff redundant. Data from FOIs show that Downing followed through with 25 of these redundancies,

including five voluntary redundancies. Downing's non-academic workforce decreased from 185 to 150 between March of 2020 and 2021. Sixteen of these were former housekeeping staff, and a further 9 worked in catering.

While it is the University's policy that they will attempt to redeploy staff facing redundancy, only one staff member at Downing stayed on in a different role.

Housekeeping staff were similarly affected at Sidney Sussex College, where all 12 of the redundancies made affected this group of staff.

Queens' College also received particular attention in 2020 for their planned redundancies for the beginning of the 2020-21 academic year, with 32 planned compulsory redundancies.

In a statement released in September, the College stated that "no compulsory redundancies [were] required [and that] sixteen members of staff [had] requested voluntary redundancy with a financial package, [while] staff in some of the operating departments have agreed to some reduced hours of working."

The updated FOI results for Queens' College demonstrate that 16 staff members faced voluntary redundancies, while a small number of contracts were not renewed.

The Cambridge University Justice 4 Workers Campaign told *Varsity*: "The colleges should be dipping into their significant reserves to deal with the cost of the pandemic, not passing those costs onto their lowest paid workers through redundancies [...] Many workers, who haven't been made redundant, are still forced into precarity by low wages, casual contracts and a lack of unionisation."

Meanwhile, Cambridge Students' Union (SU) told *Varsity* that the treatment of workers during the pandemic was "shameful": "It has become clear that irrespective of different employment practices across the collegiate University, there is one consistent standard; low pay and poor working conditions."

"Despite a number of colleges paying a living wage, many continue to fall far below a basic and dignified income, with it being those on casual contracts most likely to be denied a fair wage."

"The job losses we have seen over the past year are just a symptom of the collegiate University's consistent mismanagement, underpayment and casualisation of its non-academic staff."

Despite college and faculty-specific redundancies, the figures show that the University has not reached the "worst-case scenario" of "generalised redun-

“The figures show that the University has not reached the ‘worst-case scenario’ of ‘generalised redundancies’”

dancies" outlined by Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope in an email sent to staff in May 2020 about the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

In January of this year, the University's Board of Scrutiny reported that despite the pandemic "the University's income streams are more robust than previously thought", and that "the measurable direct net financial impact on the Chest so far seems to have been more or less negligible".

Addressing working conditions earlier this year, the Cambridge Student Union (SU) and Cambridge University and Colleges Union (UCU) released a statement saying: "It is shocking that the lowest paid staff in this University have been forced to shoulder the financial burden of this crisis, while the highest paid have been allowed to make a choice about their financial contributions to the University's pandemic response."

More recently, the UCU and SU also launched the Justice4CollegeSupervisors campaign, which calls for amendments to the supervision pay rate to "reflect the full number of hours spent on class preparation", and "employment contracts for casualised teachers who supervise undergraduates for colleges."

Sidney Sussex, King's, Downing, Clare, Corpus Christi Colleges and the School of Biological Sciences did not respond to *Varsity's* request for comment.

FEATURES

Fasting, Friends and Faith



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OPINION

Neurodiversity and Representation



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Apply to be the next President of Varsity Society

Applications are now open for President of Varsity Society in 2021-2022. The President of VarSoc will be responsible for organising social events for the team and selecting upcoming Editors.

Any VarSoc member may run for the role with the nomination of a current student who is a former Editor-in-Chief of Varsity, and seconded by a student who has been an Editor-in-chief/Associate Editor/Section Editor at Varsity.

Please email the current President Jess Ma at president@varsity.co.uk for any inquiries.

VARSLTY

Apply by 5pm on Friday
7th May.
An election will be held
the following week.



News

► Continued from front page

from last May.

The council, which is responsible for managing local public services such as schools and libraries, has tended to return a Labour majority with the Liberal Democrats closely behind in recent years.

For instance, Labour won eight seats in the last Cambridge City Council election in 2019, achieving 34% of the vote share, while the Liberal Democrats won seven seats, but enjoyed a higher proportion of the vote at 35%.

Meanwhile Labour and Co-operative won one seat (3%), with the Greens and Conservatives gaining 15% and 9% of the vote share respectively.

This year, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Green Party and the Conservative Party are fielding candidates in all wards.

The Labour manifesto calls for ‘One Cambridge Fair for All’, and is centred on four pledges: tackling poverty, inequality and promoting food justice, a net-zero council and addressing climate/biodiversity emergencies, building a new generation of council homes to reduce homelessness, and delivering essential services “in the face of Tory Government cuts”.

Cambridge University Labour Club (CULC) told *Varsity* that Labour is “the party most serious about achieving net-zero carbon emissions, reducing poverty, funding our public services and tackling homelessness”.

Alice Gilderdale, a student running for Labour in Market Ward, told *Varsity* that her “priority is supporting Cambridge’s aim to be a carbon net-zero city, while pushing for further environmental protections targets and commitments.”

Similarly, Arran Parry-Davies, who is running in Trumpington, emphasised that his “priority is reducing levels of child poverty in Cambridge and supporting families navigating to the new system of Universal Credit.”

The Liberal Democrats are promoting nine policy areas “for a greener and fairer

Cambridge”. Policies include a “commitment to roadmap carbon emissions to zero, a focus on future house-building at North East Cambridge and Marshalls Airfield, a multi-disciplinary task force to address addictions and mental ill-health and a new rough sleeping charter to engage city-wide support and understanding”.

Cosmo Lupton, a student running for the Liberal Democrats in Petersfield Ward, drew attention to government figures from last year which suggested that one in nine council homes in Cambridge is considered unfit to live in.

Lupton told *Varsity* that this is “a disgrace and stain on our city”, and that he is running because he believes “this moment, as we emerge from the pandemic, offers an opportunity for a fresh start for Cambridge.”

The importance of student engagement was echoed by a range of Liberal Democrat and Green student candidates contacted by *Varsity*.

Laura Ryan, Chair of Cambridge University Liberals and candidate for Romsey Ward, stressed the importance of student engagement, underlining the “huge potential for a real shake up” with every city council seat in contention.

She added that she “want[s] students to make the most of this opportunity to shape their city.”

Eddie Wilkinson, a student representing the Green Party, is also running for a seat in Petersfield.

Speaking to *Varsity*, he argued: “Local and national government are dragging their feet on [climate and biodiversity emergencies]”. Wilkinson explained that he is standing to “give people an opportunity to vote against politics as usual”, and to “have progressive and environmentally-conscious officials in all decision-making positions to help make the best decisions for our collective future.”

In 2019, the Liberal Democrats came second and the Green Party third in Petersfield, both behind Labour.

Phoebe Pickering, former Chair of the Cambridge University Conserva-



▲ Liberal Democrat candidate for Petersfield, Cosmo Lupton, canvassing ahead of the election (LUCAS MADDALENA)

tive Association (CUCA), is standing in Market Ward, where the Conservatives earned just 6% of the vote share in 2019. Pickering told *Varsity* that she wishes “to protect the good people of Market Ward from the double-pronged scourge of socialism and pot holes”, adding that she will “of course, day 1 in office [...] dismantle the King’s Parade barriers with [her] bare hands.”

CUCA additionally told *Varsity* that Conservative councillors can “send a clear message that chaotic two-party politics on the city council is failing our community”, adding that while “it’s easy as students to feel like local elections aren’t about us [...] Local government plays an important role [...] in ensuring students of all backgrounds feel safe in our city at night.”

Varsity estimates that at least fifteen Liberal Democrats running in the city council elections, as well as three Labour candidates, two Green candidates and one Conservative, are current students at the University.

County Council

While students make up a sizeable proportion of the City Council election candidates, only one student, Phoebe Pickering, is aiming to hold a seat on the County Council, again representing the Conservative party in the Market Ward.

Pickering will run against three other candidates: Nichola Elliot, Nick Gay, and Yemi Anofokhai, representing the Greens, Labour, and Liberal Democrats respectively. The seat has been held by Liberal Democrat Councillor Nichola Harrison since 2017.

Unlike the City Council, which is dominated by Liberal Democrat and Labour councillors, the political make-up of the County Council is strongly Conservative, with 34 of 60 Councillors aligning themselves with the Conservatives, 16 with the Liberal Democrats and six with Labour since the 2017 elections.

Police Commissioner

Four candidates are running for Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC): Nicky Massey (Labour), Susan Melancy Morris (Reform UK - formerly the Brexit Party), Rupert William George Moss-Eccardt (Liberal Democrat), and Darry Andrew Preston (Conservative). Due to the postponement of last year’s election, the winner will serve a three-year rather than a four-year term.

In responses recently given to the *Cambridge Independent*, Preston explained he would make it his priority to reduce crime by recruiting “many more

police officers”, provide safer roads by “crack[ing] down on speeding to reduce accidents” and fight organised crime by “catching the very worst criminals”.

Meanwhile Massey would also prioritise road safety, while also committing to “supporting a real link between all survivors [of domestic abuse] and support services, including support for male survivors.”

Moss-Eccardt summarised his priorities as cutting crime “through liberal approaches that work”, establishing local police priorities, and policing with “integrity, consent and without discrimination.”

Morris outlines her manifesto priorities as tackling “crime against the self-employed and small local business”, getting “constables back on the beat” and clarifying “the relations and boundaries within the justice system to establish accountability.”

Mayoral

Meanwhile, there are three hopefuls in the Mayoral elections, one of whom will oversee the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Labour representative Nik Johnson, previously district councillor for St Neots East, worked as a children’s doctor for 14 years. Liberal Democrat Aidan Van de Weyer is the outgoing deputy leader of the South Cambridgeshire District Council. Meanwhile Conservative James Palmer, elected Mayor in 2017, is hoping to be elected for a second term in the role.

All four sets of elections will take place on May 6th.



▲ Eddie Wilkinson, Green Party candidate in Petersfield ward, speaking to potential voters prior to the election (EDDIE WILKINSON)

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News

Students and staff launch campaign against proposed Endowment Supervisory Fund Body



▲ Around 75 emails were sent to members of Regent House in protest against the proposed Endowment Fund Supervisory Body (AMY HOWELL)

Ewan Hawkins
Investigations Editor
Georgia Goble
News Correspondent

An email drive event organised by the Cambridge Students' Union (SU) and Cambridge Zero Carbon Society took place on Tuesday night (20/04) to protest changes to the democratic governance

of the University's investments.

The proposed changes would shift governance of the Cambridge University Endowment Fund (CUEF) from 20 student and staff members elected on the University Council to a new Endowment Fund Supervisory Body (EFSB).

The EFSB would consist of six individuals, all required to have "adequate relevant professional experience in fi-

nance", excluding nearly all students and staff within the University.

Three members would be drawn from the University Council, with the rest coming from external institutions.

Currently, the elected staff members of University Council have authority over the management of the CUEF.

The CUEF is the University's £3.5 billion endowment which is then invested through fund managers, with the income supporting research, education and development across the University.

The SU estimates that during the email drive 75 emails were sent to members of Regent House, the University's governing body, encouraging them to vote against the proposal.

"Staff and students will lose access to the democratic channels", the email drive's Facebook page states, "through which they are able to hold the University accountable for its uses of the Endowment Fund - including ties to the fossil fuel and arms industry."

The SU's blog claims that the University "has attempted to remove the oversight of student representatives and drastically reduce the influence of staff over their investment policy".

The blog continues: "We need as many academics as possible to vote in the ballot and reject the proposal to establish an Endowment Fund Supervisory Body. As

this is a proposal that will detrimentally reduce the accountability of the CUEF to university members, we believe that university members should have their say about whether they think it should be implemented."

"The original Council decision to approve this proposal was shifty and underhand", the blog adds, "clearly designed to shut out the staff and students who have fought so hard to hold the University and its investments to account. If a supervisory body is to be established, it should have proper representation from the staff and students who fundamentally make up this university."

"We are fighting against the University's consistent attempts to shut us out and for a democratic university in which staff and students are meaningfully involved in decision-making and financial oversight."

The proposal was originally passed by the University Council and subsequently published in the Reporter in December 2020, alongside a note of dissent expressing opposition to the proposal from three Council members.

The note of dissent was heavily critical of the policy, branding the proposed EFSB "a quasi-autonomous entity populated entirely by self-anointing members who have 'relevant professional experience in finance'".

In a Regent House discussion in February 2021, other members of academic staff similarly expressed concerns, with Professor Gillian R. Evans commenting that the proposal posed a "risk of governance-drift away from the supervision of the University's governing body, the Regent House."

Following this, a coalition of staff and students including Cambridge SU, Cambridge UCU and Cambridge Zero Carbon have forced this decision to be brought to a vote in Regent House - which will take place from 19th-29th April.

The coalition is encouraging Regent House members to vote against the proposal and effectively bring it to a halt.

In an online statement, they collectively stated that "this proposal would effectively exclude all student and staff representatives from the governance of the [CUEF], making the University's investment decisions significantly less democratic and transparent."

The coalition adds, "the strong backlash to the proposal necessitates a re-starting of the process which fully involves the views of the whole University Community."

Cambridge UCU commented, "The EFSB cedes control of CUEF to 'investment professionals' who, experience suggests, have extremely conservative looking views on ethical investing. The

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EFSB will act as an intermediary or buffer that will be able to deflect such expressed wishes of the broader University.”

“The Vice Chancellor will be powerless to fulfil any commitments that he has made on divestment - such commitments therefore will be no more than empty promises. The proposal therefore undermines the democratic processes of the Collegiate University.”

Cambridge Zero Carbon added: “the representation of students and academics on University Council has been fundamental to the fight for divestment.”

“This restructuring was originally proposed in an underhand way without input from University members who will be directly disempowered as a result. If this is implemented, it will be much more difficult for staff and students to hold the University and its investments to account.”

They added, “while the vote was accepted by the University in late February, the University refused to publish its Legal Advice stating ‘legal privilege.’”

Following pressure from members of Regent House, the written legal advice was finally made accessible to members of the University in mid-March.

In the flysheets published alongside the link for Regent House members to vote, Professor Graham Allen, current elected Chair of the University’s Board of Scrutiny, argued that some of the grounds for the legal advice “appear weak and based more in theory than in reality.”

A University spokesperson told *Varsity*: “It is misleading to suggest that the creation of the EFSB diminishes any of

the University’s existing control over its investments in the CUEF. It does not. The University can continue to express its preferences and may redeem its investments from the CUEF if it wishes to do so, like any of the other investors in the CUEF, which include Colleges, educational trusts and donors.”

They added: “The new supervisory body simply enables effective management of conflicts of interest arising as a result of the University being both majority investor and corporate trustee, and its establishment brings management of the Fund squarely into line with current Financial Conduct Authority rules governing the fair treatment of all investors in funds which manage assets for multiple investors.”

Meanwhile a CUEF spokesperson told *Varsity*: “Since the Council’s response to the Divestment Working Group’s report in 2018, the £3.6 billion Cambridge University Endowment Fund has created a publicly available website that provides updated information on its activities, published three publicly available Annual Reports, hired a sustainable investments officer, withdrawn its investments with conventional energy-focused public equity managers as well as announced its aims to ramp up investments in renewable energy by 2025, divest from all meaningful direct and indirect investments in fossil fuels by 2030, and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions across its entire portfolio by 2038.”

A second email drive event is due to take place next Thursday (29/04).

Voting for the proposal will close on April 29th.

SCIENCE

The origins of life

The University of Cambridge has launched a new research initiative to answer questions about life in the universe. The Cambridge Initiative for Planetary Science and Life in the Universe will bring together physicists, chemists, biologists, mathematicians, and earth scientists, in what the Head of the School of the Physical Sciences calls “a radically new approach” to answering fundamental questions.

The initiative will focus on: identifying the chemical pathways to the origins of life; characterising the cradle of prebiotic chemistry and life; and discovering and characterising habitable exoplanets and biosignature.



▲ The location of a new restaurant and an unfortunate acronym (AMY HOWELL/ ROGUE PRINT COMPANY)

MARKET

New Market Restaurant

Cambridge City Council has received plans for a new restaurant business at 12 Market Hill, neighbouring Marks and Spencer. The plans include refurbishment of the Grade-II listed building formerly the site of restaurant Don Pasquale. ‘Market House’ will offer a restaurant, bar, cafe, tea rooms, private dining and cookery school across several floors of the building.

In the planning documents, the applicants prioritise preserving the historic elements of the building and focus on aesthetic plans for the site. The application also includes provision to build a disabled WC on the ground floor to improve access.

HISTORY

Wolfson recognition

Dr Helen McCarthy, a History fellow at St John’s College, has been shortlisted for the Wolfson History Prize for her new book *Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood*, which was published in April 2020.

The judges described it as a “stylish, lively account” of the struggles of working motherhood which “displays a deeply-felt respect for the subject’s significance”.

The Wolfson Prize is the UK’s largest prize for historical writing, and the prize money totals £60,000, with £40,000 being awarded to the winner and £4000 being awarded to each of the other five writers on the shortlist of six.

TWITTER

A sticky situation

A curated clothing company posted a viral tweet on Tuesday (20/04) about an order received from ‘Cambridge University Mountaineering’. Matt from Rogue Print Company posted a picture of a box of shirts they had been left following a “miscommunication”. The tweet received over 1400 retweets and 5300 ‘likes’ by Wednesday (21/04) afternoon.

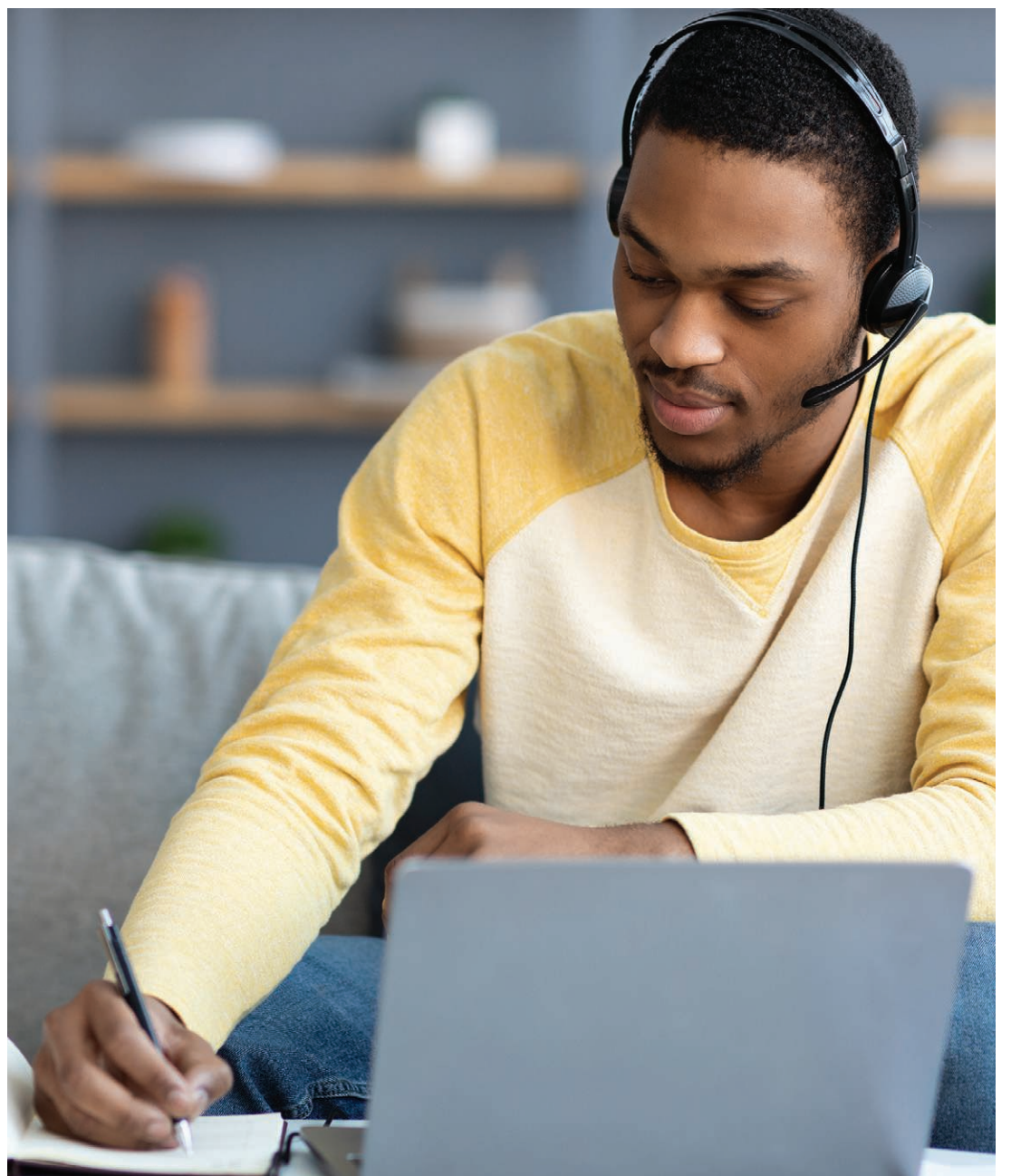
The shirts, which the company is reselling online, are a mixture of ringer and baseball T-shirts. They are a plain black-and-white design branded with the unfortunate acronym: “CUM”. The company spent the afternoon posting memes about the incident.



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News

Plans scrapped for temporary phone mast on Jesus Green

Cameron White
Senior News Editor

Plans to erect a 30-metre tall phone mast beside the tennis courts on Jesus Green have been scrapped.

Waldron Telecom had applied for

the plot through the council's planning website in December 2020 on behalf of the EE and Three phone networks.

The plot was intended to provide a temporary location for the mast for a maximum period of twelve months.

Their existing mast, located at Park

Street Car Park, is set to be dismantled during the demolition of the car park in autumn of this year. The demolition is making way for a five-storey hotel and 225-space underground public car park.

However, this proposal sparked con-

troversy when local Liberal Democrats published a petition entitled 'Stop the Jesus Green Mast' in February, which expressed concerns that the mast and its accompanying equipment would "visually scar one of the city's most iconic and well-used open spaces". The

petition reached 2,207 signatures as of 23/04.

Following local opposition from councillors and other groups, a planning application was submitted for an alternative temporary relocation atop Bridge House at 13-14 Round Church Street.

Friends of Jesus Green Pool, The Park Street Residents Association and the Jesus Green Association, were among groups arguing that the relocation of the mast would go against the biodiversity and conservation tenets of their Green Flag Award, an accreditation for well-managed parks and green spaces.

Rory MacGregor, chair of The Park Street Residents Association, said: "The council's own hotel development could easily accommodate new telecoms equipment... Why spoil Jesus Green and place it next to Park Street Primary School playing fields?"

After an initial application was made to temporarily implement the antenna at Bridge House in May last year and rejected in November, the council has now accepted the application, meaning that considerations are no longer underway for a mast on Jesus Green.

Both Labour and Liberal Democrat Councillors have lauded the decision.

Katie Thornburrow, Labour Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, told *Varsity*: "This will be a great relief to local residents and everyone who makes use of this important open space [Jesus Green]."

"It also shows the planning system working effectively [...] The planning department have done what we hoped they would, and I'm grateful to the team for their rapid and thorough assessment."

She continued: "We have always been totally opposed to relocating the mast onto Jesus Green or any of the Council's common land, and I'm delighted that we've been able to find an alternative."

"Thank you especially to the Park Street Residents Association for all their work on this too, and to all who signed petitions to make sure that Cambridge residents' voices were heard loud and clear."

Meanwhile, Councillor Katie Porrer, on behalf of Liberal Democrat councillors, welcomed the U-turn from the council to approve the application at Bridge House.

She told *Varsity*: "It is a tribute to all those city residents who campaigned so hard to avert the phone mast being erected on the Jesus Green tennis courts, which would have been a truly outrageous outcome."

She continued that the Labour council "still must co-operate to ensure the new antenna can be installed before they start their car park demolition. This has shaken trust in the council as custodian of our public open spaces and it does now need to examine how tunnel-vision in its role as developer led to such an inversion of priorities and such a close shave."

The mast's 5G potential, as listed in a '5G and Future Technology' document from Cambridge Shared Planning, means it will be placed high on the roof of Bridge House because of the "far more complex radio requirement."

In contrast to the scrapped 30-metre ground-level mast on Jesus Green, the height of Bridge House will only be extended by 6.05 metres under the new plan.

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Jesus College warns residents of possible eviction over flag and poster displays in accommodation



▲ The instructions were in line with Jesus' license agreement (AURELIO PETRUCCI)

Cameron White
Senior News Editor

Students residing at Jesus College have been instructed to remove all internally or externally displayed flags, banners or posters from their accommodation in an email sent on Tuesday (20/04), stating that failure to do so carries risk of eviction.

The email in question, according to a screenshot on Twitter, appears to be a development from an email sent by the College's Head Porter on 1 March asking all students to remove all banners and flags from windows and buildings, with a deadline of 24 March set for this in an email by the Domestic Bursar on 19 March.

Aurelio Petrucci, a third-year philosophy student and former JCR President of the College, was provided with an extended deadline to remove a Labour party poster until yesterday (22/04), stating that the College will otherwise "take further action if you fail to put right the breach, which could ultimately result in the Licence agreement being terminated in line with Clause 6.1."

Petrucci questioned the email, calling on the College via Twitter "to reconsider this immediately, and apologise, and I can only hope that they start to listen to the student union [Cambridge SU] and stop trying to curtail our right

to free speech and free expression of our identities." Petrucci added via Twitter that the ability "to criticise institutions", as well as to "express one's identity are the core features of British academia, now being trampled by coercion and threats of homelessness/eviction by a Cambridge College. This is hugely significant and we should fight it al [sic] the way!"

Petrucci told *Varsity* that Jesus have "add[ed] to the stress and anxiety that students are already feeling about the pandemic and their exams by threatening to evict students for exercising their basic right to self-expression."

He continued: "while it is morally reprehensible for the leadership to threaten eviction for the exercise of our basic rights to freedom of expression, it would be even more outrageous for them to actually evict students who refuse to remove their posters. I will not be removing my posters/bunting and I just can't see them taking action against students who aren't harming anyone by their actions".

A spokesperson for Jesus College told *Varsity* that these rules are "a long-standing clause in our license agreement", and that they "encourage all community members to express themselves and their views, as long as it doesn't break their license agreement or the law."

The statement continued: "We have informed students that we will run an in-depth consultation this term with students, Fellows and staff about the most inventive and creative ways to enable this in College for the benefit of the whole community."

This is not the first time that Jesus College have asked students to remove flags. Last month, an email sent out by the College's leadership asked students to remove pride flags, along with all other flags and banners, as LGBT+ History Month came to an end.

This caused uproar at the time, with Joe Shaughnessy, a PhD student at the College, saying that as a queer student at the College, it left "a sour taste in [his] mouth that taking down LGBTQ+ flags is on anyone's agenda full stop - let alone during a pandemic where college support is otherwise largely not forthcoming apparently because of strapped time and resources."

Jesus defended their decision at the time, claiming that they allowed students to display pride flags during February by "waiv[ing] the section of a standard room license agreement which prohibits any flags to be flown for safety and maintenance reasons", and that they were "supportive of LGBT+ History Month" and support "other LGBT+ events and initiatives throughout the year."

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Features

ADHD, the pandemic and me

After being diagnosed at 21, **Lotte Brundle** reflects on her experience with ADHD

Have you ever seen the film *The Mask*? It stars Jim Carrey in a story about an ordinary man who finds a mysterious mask which turns him into a hyperactive caricature of his former self. When wearing the mask, Carrey's character becomes brighter and faster than before. I ask because, for me, it is a useful metaphor to describe how living with ADHD can feel.

For many years of my life, I've thought that the way I think is unique. It's hard to write that without sounding self-important, but let me explain.

I had been struggling to focus on university work ever since joining in October. When reading, normal words turned wiggly, evolved, and became completely new ones: 'organism' became 'orgasm', 'beetle', became 'bottle', and so on and so forth. It made close-reading supervisions remarkably difficult and unexplainably amusing, much to the bewilderment of my classmates. It was my Director of Studies who first suggested I might have an undiagnosed learning difficulty.

Being diagnosed late at the age of 21, over zoom, and during the pandemic, was an unusual experience. It was like something clicked deep inside my brain. An "A-ha!" moment. A "Phew!" moment. But equally, a "What next?" moment. The pandemic is a weird time for anything significant to happen. It's hard to put into practice all the changes you hope will manage the 'symptoms' when there is no opportunity to exercise them in normal life.

When describing how ADHD manifests in me personally, it's easy to be unconvincing. At times it's hard to tell where the ADHD ends and traits unique to my personality begin, I guess because it's an intertwining of the two. ADHD accentuates my natural traits – like Jim Carrey's character in *The Mask*.

Instead of being a little introspective, I am deeply, almost painfully nostalgic. Instead of being worried, I am at times horror-movie anxious. Instead of being pleased, I am frequently abnormally euphoric. This, I later found out, is called

► **And, is that a bee buzzing in the distance, or is it just in my head?** (ILLUSTRATION BY ELLIE WILSON)

“*Maybe then, a better way to describe ADHD is simply an exaggerated form of the shared human condition*”

emotional dysregulation: a common trait in neurodiverse people. It can lead to experiencing very high 'highs' and very low 'lows'. Emotions can become vivid and tangible. Sometimes, I can almost taste them.

Having ADHD can mean that it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

On my first date, the boy I liked tried to give me a hug. It was too much to process, so I crossed my arms in an X shape in front of my chest. Being oversensitive to stimulation is another way ADHD can manifest itself. When I had my first kiss I laughed and laughed – the intimacy was peculiar to a hysterical extent. It's a bit like being really, really ticklish. Needless to say, it's caused problems in my personal life.

I would describe myself as having a very 'fast' brain. My mind is often busy with 'big ideas', vast unrealistic plans for the future, or deep dissections of vividly relived moments from the past. It hates living in the present.

Before a diagnosis, it's easy to question yourself, especially if you have a neurodiverse brain that manifests itself subtly. I read a book that explained it as akin to having a chimp in your brain. Accurate. The speed and velocity of thoughts are sometimes overpowering. I am vividly aware of distractions: the buzz, buzz, buzz of a bee; the drip, drip, drip of a leaky tap; the omnipresent moan of the dishwasher. Time too is an interesting issue. I often feel I've wasted it. "The day is gone!" I frequently bemoan at 2pm, if I feel I haven't yet 'achieved enough'.

I was offered treatment to suppress these impulses. I can only speak for myself. Medication is great and works wonders for some people with neurodiversity, but I dislike the idea. The ADHD part of my brain is what sparks my creative side. It's the part that wakes the chimp

up at 3am with an all-consuming urge to write a screenplay, paint a picture or organise my sock drawer. Yes, it may also be the driving force behind why I talk too quickly, say things without thinking them through, and blurt out something that, in hindsight, was better left unspoken.

It is a blessing and a curse.

Why was I late? Why am I tired? Why couldn't I hug my first date back? Why did I thoughtlessly, painfully upset some of my oldest friends? It is hard to explain.

And it would be all too easy to fall into the trap of using my ADHD as an excuse. The chimp and I are intertwined, but it's wrong to point and place the sole blame on him. He's just a chimp, after all.

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, but it is so much more than that. It is a cacophony of quirks, habits and impulses that mani-

“*Instead of being a little introspective, I am deeply, almost painfully nostalgic*”

fest differently from person to person. I find it curious that some people with neurodiversity are referred to as 'sufferers', because I am not 'disabled' by my neurodiversity, I feel enabled by it. Enabled to think differently, solve problems with strange new solutions and love passionately and yes – feel anger, sadness, and shame passionately too. Maybe then, a better way to describe ADHD is simply an exaggerated form of the shared human condition.

Now, I wonder whether it's time to organise my sock draw again? Or write a poem? And, is that a bee buzzing in the distance, or is it just in my head?



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Features

Fasting, Friends and Faith



Rana Rofifah

Throughout my life, I've become used to being the only Muslim in a room. Growing up in the suburban outskirts of cities, it was normal for me to be the only person wearing a headscarf in a classroom, office, shop or train station. Despite not being surrounded by people who shared my faith in day-to-day spaces, I always searched hard to find strong and empowering Muslim pockets within the sea of British suburbia. The mosque became my refuge. It was a place where people of all races came together to worship God; it was somewhere we prayed, played and made friendships to last a lifetime.

Starting at Cambridge as a 'Covid Fresher' after a miserably uneventful gap year, I was happy to simply be able to experience somewhere new, especially after months of being stuck in my childhood bedroom. I was excited to meet new people who came from anywhere and everywhere, expecting a diverse group of people. Yet even at Cambridge, I was the only fresher at my college who wore the hijab (commonly used to describe the Islamic head covering for women). This wasn't a problem - as it was something I was used to and had become normal. Once again, it felt like I was the only Muslim in the room.

But, to my surprise, I found friendship bound by faith right at my doorstep - in my next-door neighbours and

flatmates, to be precise.

The beauty of a major world religion like Islam is that it represents a hugely international array of people from every continent, all over the globe. In a flat of twelve, I found myself living with three other Muslims, bringing a melting pot of backgrounds to the heart of Cambridge. From Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Sudan to Pakistan, we learnt each other's languages, shared food from home and listened to our experiences growing up in Muslim families across the UK.

In spite of our cultural differences, we came together in the more quiet moments of hectic Cambridge terms: praying, fasting and eating together. While other flatmates stayed up drinking, we retreated to a quiet corner of the flat together, patiently waiting for the buzz of drunken energy to die down. University is inevitably a time of change, but having people who can keep you grounded in values that are important to you can help you choose where you want to make those changes.

With these people around you, you can grow in ways that won't compromise your faith. I am exceptionally aware of how unconventional my experience as a Muslim student at Cambridge has been. Many students in Cambridge, myself included, continue to be the only Muslim person in certain spaces and lack representation within their colleges, subjects and societies. It

would be wrong of me to sugar-coat the Cambridge experience for Muslim students as without its challenges. Traces of islamophobia can be subtle to some, but lucid to others. The Student Union's recent survey on islamophobic incidents has made evident that this is a university-wide issue, concerning everyone from students, to porters, to supervisors and academics. Students continue to be confronted about their beliefs, which at times can provide healthy debates, while others enter the realms of prejudice.

This April and May, Muslims will be observing Ramadan, the holy month in Islam when we fast from dawn to sunset for thirty days. We are encouraged to implement healthy spiritual, social and physical routines. Non-Muslims are often shocked by the commitment to not eat or drink during the day: "you can't even have water?!" is a common response. However, abstaining from food and drink is only one part of established customs during Ramadan; giving to charity and practising patience are also encouraged. This will be a different Ramadan for everyone. For many students, this will be their first Ramadan away from home.

Even when surrounded by supportive people, it can be an incredibly challenging month, requiring immense dedication and motivation. Ramadan in the UK often involves late nights and early mornings due to the

▲ **"This April and May, Muslims will be observing Ramadan, the holy month in Islam when we fast from dawn to sunset for thirty days."** (ILLUSTRATION BY JULIET BABINSKY)

“Even at Cambridge, you don't have to be the only Muslim in the room”

changing nature of the solar calendar. Waking up at 4 a.m. is not an easy feat, not to mention the added pressures brought on by an ongoing pandemic. Despite the hardships, I hope to make the most of a month of gratitude and forgiveness - two of the most important elements that make Ramadan so special.

For the first time, I will not just be responsible for making Ramadan a beneficial experience for myself, but for the wider Muslim community in Cambridge. In my first two terms I found solace in Muslims outside of those on my floor - particularly with a vibrant group of girls at different colleges around Cambridge. We call each other 'sisters', as is common in Islamic culture. Bringing other Muslim students together at university became my biggest joy and, despite physical restrictions, I felt immediately close to them.

The Cambridge University Islamic Society (ISoc) played a huge role in forming these initial connections. Having been recently elected as ISoc's Student Affairs Officer and Head Sister I am nervous, but tremendously excited to take on a new challenge to deepen my connection with other students from all faiths. Even at Cambridge, you don't have to be the only Muslim in a room. After a little searching, or even by accident, you'll find the right people right at your doorstep.

Eating disorders come in all shapes and sizes



someone has all the characteristically identifiable traits of anorexia but their weight remains within a 'normal' range. My form of atypical anorexia also included occasional periods of bulimia and binge eating.

Rather than taking comfort in my diagnosis I found it only made my condition more uncertain, perpetuating the anxieties around my weight that my eating disorder sought to solve. I was confused: this is not what I was told an eating disorder looked like. I felt like I was doing an eating disorder 'wrong', that somehow because of my bulimia and binge eating tendencies my eating disorder wasn't legitimate. Even now there is strange shame in admitting to my experiences of these less spoken about aspects of eating disorders.

While we are certainly engaging in more important conversations around eating disorders, we still have a long way to go to bring to the fore the diverse realities of this mental illness.

I always imagined someone with an eating disorder as being like a walking skeleton; their skin literally slouching off their bones, their face aghast and their hair patchy and dishevelled. This picture of eating disorders was reinforced by my school's narratives and medical professionals I encountered: overly focused on the physical, visible, aspects of eating disorders. And while there is certainly a set of individuals whose experience of an eating disorder is that of pure starvation, and I in no way intend to discount this experience,

there is also a significant proportion of eating disorder sufferers who don't fit neatly into this archetypal understanding - myself included.

These narratives, which almost exclusively centre around anorexia and the extreme thinness associated with it, often close off any acknowledgement that eating disorders exist across a spectrum.

Without framing eating disorders as a non-linear continuum or a never-ending kaleidoscope of difference, there is a danger of actively stifling understandings of how eating disorders develop. There is no prescribed way to have an eating disorder, yet weight requirements for what constitutes an eating disorder continue to be used, preventing many of those suffering from receiving much-needed help.

A recent report by the Women and Equalities Committee has in fact called for the use of Body Mass Index - a measure of weight and height used to calculate a 'healthy' weight - in diagnosing eating disorders to be scrapped. With a surge in the number of individuals suffering from eating disorders during the pandemic, it is urgent that we stop medicalised definitions denying people treatment that they desperately need.

Looking back on the journey of my eating disorder, it's hard to believe I couldn't see my self-inflicted deterioration. While there are still days I really struggle, I'm trying and learning to be kind to myself. Recognising the legitimacy of my disorder was the first step.

Varsity Editor Gaby Vides reflects on her experience of atypical anorexia nervosa and the importance of not internalising pre-determined ideas surrounding eating disorders

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of eating disorders.

I refused to admit I had an eating disorder. No, this isn't really true: I couldn't see I had an eating disorder. Far from it, I considered myself the image of health, truly believing there was nothing wrong with me. I still don't really know why this is. I think it's in part that the logic of an eating disorder becomes so all-consuming. Deceit becomes a part of your life. Going out with friends at lunch and only buying a small pot of cucumber is put down to having a big breakfast, returning home for dinner and only eating rice cakes is explained as a result of having a big lunch.

When you're in the clutches of an eating disorder these spirals of hunger and 'getting away with it' become bizarrely addictive. Your focus is so fine-tuned to your eating habits that the irrationality of starving yourself becomes rational.

Having attended an all-girls school for sixth form, we frequently had talks on the dangers of eating disorders. I was no stranger to valuable dialogues on body image, self-care and healthy

eating. Yet these talks failed to convey the variety of manifestations an eating disorder can take.

I had grown up in a community where many of my friends had eating disorders, or even more insidiously disordered eating and orthorexic tendencies. These subtle patterns of irregular and infrequent eating were pervasive; close friends would often force each other to 'split a muffin' or they wouldn't eat it or have a small salad for lunch because they drank too much over the weekend. This behaviour was often neatly packaged and excused under the guise of veganism, vegetarianism or the latest fad diet.

At the time, we were too young and blissfully naive to label these disordered behaviours as eating disorders - with hindsight, I can appreciate that noticeably disordered behaviour was brushed off because these friends were 'still eating three meals a day' or just 'didn't like the options available'.

These obsessions over food and cycles of guilt about eating the 'wrong' thing are not healthy. I'm sure for a lot of individuals this sort of dieting behaviour fades away with age, but for too many it was certainly the gateway to diagnosable disorders or unresolved eating issues.

Only my boyfriend managed to notice my eating disorder, even when I didn't. He encouraged me to go to the GP, where, after having a check-up, I was told to immediately go to hospital to have my bloods taken and to check I had not inflicted any long-term harm on myself. Even after this whirlwind day, routine check ups, therapy, and a diagnosis of atypical anorexia nervosa, I held on to the delusion that my disorder wasn't really *that* bad. I took the 'atypical' aspect of my diagnosis as proof of this. Atypical anorexia nervosa is a type of eating disorder in which

▲ "Close friends would often force each other to 'split a muffin' or they wouldn't eat it"

(ILLUSTRATION BY JULIET BABINSKY)

“These obsessions over food and cycles of guilt about eating the ‘wrong’ thing are not healthy”



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Opinion

The media has neurodiversity wrong. We must rethink representation.

Ellie Wilson
and Miranda
Stephenson

If we asked you to sit back and think of an autistic character, who would it be? Sheldon Cooper, right? Someone like that. Skinny, white, and definitely male. Highly intelligent in a mathematical kind of way – and anyone who loves STEM that much has got to be asexual. He is always ready with a sassy dismissal of any situation which might call for social skills, a characteristic which is played for laughs.

There's no disputing that Sheldon was the most popular character in *The Big Bang Theory*, so much so that actor Jim Parsons' exit from the show effectively brought it to its end. But it's equally undeniable that everyone's favourite socially-awkward scientist falls into every autistic trope in the book.

Like a child who doesn't quite understand the grown-up world yet, Sheldon gets away with things that other characters cannot. He is misogynistic, telling one female character that she should abandon her work with high-energy particles in favour of 'laundry and child-bearing'. In another episode, 'The Champagne Reflection', he ostensibly films a tribute to George Washington Carver whilst made-up in blackface. Although individual characters might point out that this is an issue, Sheldon's problematic behaviour is rarely directly addressed. Because after all, he's autistic. He can't help it – right?

The fact is that there is nothing inevitable about Sheldon's behaviour. Autism does not automatically make people unaccountable for their actions; it does not inevitably lead to social blindness, offensive comments and an uncaring attitude towards others. Anyone is capable of insensitive behaviour, whether they are neurodiverse or not. To wave away misogynistic comments or racism is to imply that autism is little more than an explanation for bad behaviour; it reinforces stereotypes and isolates neurodiverse people from their identity, sometimes leading to a rejection of a diagnosis that could help their mental wellbeing.

Autistic people can be highly sociable and empathetic; they can struggle academically and long for relationships. There is no single autistic poster child fighting the good fight for media representation, because there is simply no possible way one character could represent the numerous iterations in which autism can present itself.

Perhaps, in a way, it is Sheldon's pop-

ularity that is the problem.

'Representation' in the media has become something of a tick-box exercise. If a show plans on appealing to the widest masses, it needs a black character, a gay character, a neurodiverse character, and so on and so on ad infinitum. What seems to matter less is the amount of research which goes into building said minority characters: in the case of neurodiverse characters, there's a tendency to follow the popular, proven, Shelodonic model, churning out savant after savant without any attempt to represent autism in any more nuanced light. Unfortunately, even when an effort is made to show other faces of autism – Sia's 2021 film *Music* focuses on a non-verbal girl – research proves just as jaw-gnashingly minimal.

Music met backlash for Maddie Ziegler's portrayal of an autistic protagonist: a performance which proved to be a soulless, offensive mockery of certain autistic behaviours. The debate surrounding the film largely focused on whether or not a neurotypical actor should ever play a neurodivergent character. But, even had an autistic actress taken on the role, having one presentation of autism does not give you a universal understanding of every other autistic person's experience. An autistic lead actress would never have magically absolved the film of its deeply problematic core.

Music is a shaky, bait-y tower with foundations of shallow research, advocating the use of potentially lethal prone restraint and substituting garishly cartoonish dance-breaks for real reflection on the autistic main character's inner world. If anything, an autistic lead actress might have been taken as tacit neurodivergent approval for such a dangerous and inaccurate portrayal of autism. Without the basis of a properly researched character, the casting of an autistic actress would have done more harm than good.

Nor is it just autism that suffers from endemic pigeon-holing and misrepresentation. Other neurodiversities are often glossed over, or even treated as 'cute'. They're trivial, something that anyone can 'have a bit of', as if you can select the symptoms of your neurodiversity from a carefully curated list – but only the nice ones. Glee's Emma Pillsbury springs to mind as a borderline hate-crime in cutesy pastel clothing, whose obsessive-compulsive rituals (that is to say, daintily polishing the grapes in her lunchbox) magically dissolve once she starts dating the charismatic Spanish teacher, Will Schuster.

These trivialising media stereotypes of neurodivergent behaviour seem to ooze into the real world: surely we have all heard someone loudly announce, "Wow, I am so OCD!" while lining up the pencils

on their desk, not thinking twice about it. Meanwhile, the disruptive, hyperactive boy who used to throw rubbers at your primary school teacher is often the only presentation anyone can see of ADHD. "He'll grow out of it," the teaching assistant says, "It's just boys being boys." She doesn't know to add that ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder which affects females as well as males, spanning from childhood into old age; ADHD is a condition rarely featured in the media at all.

But perhaps ADHD should thank its lucky stars that it hasn't yet gone the way of OCD, appropriated for innumerate charming slogans which poke fun at neurodiversity. In a particularly vivid example from early secondary school, a friend of ours bought a shirt that advertised her 'Obsessive Cumberbatch Disorder.'

The popularity of these one-dimensional, non-representative and often offensive portrayals of neurodiversity can lead to dismissal or lack of understanding of the various ways in which these conditions present themselves. Outcomes of neurodiversity are exactly as you would expect: diverse. As such, when the media slaps a hollow-eyed, mass-produced rendition of a neurodiverse character into a movie, calls it 'representation' and sits smugly waiting for awards season to roll around, such characters are no more than paper-thin exploitations of the stigma and stereotypes attached to neurodiversity.

Currently, the best examples of neurodiverse characters are those without 'autistic' or 'ADHD' or 'OCD' tossed into the character description for the actor to interpret. When it comes to perfecting a well-rounded neurodiverse character, these descriptions are essentially useless on their own and make it far too easy to fall into common tropes. This is why characters who inadvertently come across as neurodiverse without the baggage which currently accompanies the label – such as Eddie Redmayne in *Fantastic Beasts* – are far more effective and relatable than those which scream 'representation' in name alone.

Indeed, as the masses take up the battle cry of "Representation!", it is worth asking ourselves whether the current state of 'representation' will build anything more than a higher platform for harmful stereotypes and stigma surrounding neurodiversity. Rather than regurgitating badly researched tropes, the media can benefit the neurodivergent community most by expanding the range of its neurodiverse narratives – for when an empathetic autistic woman can sit up alongside Sheldon Cooper in the television halls of fame, we'll know that real progress has been made at last.

Colleges must go further than divestment

Jesus College Climate Campaign

£5.15 million. That's over a million pounds more than the total tuition fees paid to Jesus College each year. It's also the amount that the College currently invests in some of the global economy's absolute worst-offending exploiters and polluters. In our new report, the Jesus College Climate Justice Campaign has found that the College invests more than £807,000 in major fossil fuel giants alone, including substantial investments in both BP and Shell. These investments are shocking enough. But they're just the tip of the iceberg.

Our investigation into the College's privately managed investments uncovered at least a further £4 million invested in other deeply unethical industries which are devastating our planetary life support systems and exploiting many of the world's most vulnerable communities along the way. This includes companies with extensive, well documented records of human rights violations and exploitation of workers in their supply chain, like Samsung, Amazon and BAE systems, as well as a whole host of industries engaged in other processes driving climate breakdown, from biodiversity destruction to mass animal agriculture.

We also uncovered substantial investments by Jesus College in major fossil fuel funders, ignoring the increasingly desperate pleas of scientists and frontline communities alike by pumping billions each year into new fossil fuel extraction projects. What is most concerning about these findings is the fact that conventional fossil fuel divestment policies would allow the vast majority of these investments to remain within Jesus College's portfolio.

Fossil fuel companies are of course critical drivers of climate breakdown,

with an enormous carbon footprint associated with their core business model. But to focus a divestment decision narrowly on the exclusion of these companies alone, as many other Colleges have done, is to let so many of the industries involved in accelerating ecological breakdown off the hook. We must go further. On the most basic level, to deal with a problem requires a full analysis of its scope. Divestment in the name of sustainable and responsible investment principles therefore cannot ignore the catastrophic ecological and social harms associated with many of Jesus College's non-fossil fuel holdings.

Livestock farming, for instance, accounts for 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions - more than all transportation combined - and is a major driver of deforestation, biodiversity destruction and water contamination. Through just one of the 22 funds in its portfolio, Jesus College is currently investing £37,482.51 in major dairy distributor, Mengniu Dairy Company. When we know that greenhouse gas emissions from just

13 dairy farms equal those of the entire United Kingdom, we cannot afford to exclude companies such as Mengniu Dairy Company from a divestment decision. Indeed, under conventional divestment, Jesus College could sell all £807,000 of its investments in fossil fuel companies, but still maintain its £27,892.12 investment in JP Morgan, the world's worst banker of fossil fuel projects between 2016 and 2021, injecting an eye-watering \$316.735 billion into new fossil fuel extraction projects in this period.

With Jesus College in the process of developing a new Responsible Investment Policy, we are making this intervention to urge them not to make the mistake of reducing climate breakdown to one industry. 'Responsible' investment must involve cutting ties with all companies profiting off of climate catastrophe and human suffering.

Jesus College has rightly begun to recognise the violent histories of enslavement and colonialism out of which much of its current wealth was built.

When we call for 'climate justice', it is because the climate crisis is intimately bound up with other crises of inequality and exploitation, reflecting enduring structures of inequality by wreaking havoc on the least responsible communities along lines of race, class and gender. As an institution with enormous wealth partially rooted in these histories - benefiting significantly from the benefaction of slave trader Tobias Rustat - Jesus



“We are making this intervention to urge them not to make the mistake of reducing climate breakdown to one industry”

◀ JESUS COLLEGE CLIMATE JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

College has a profound responsibility to frontline communities to put its money where its mouth is and act decisively against the allied forces of exploitation and planetary destruction that it is currently legitimising through its investments. We must understand reckoning with our colonial legacy not just as a matter of reflecting on our history, but also demanding that we urgently address the racialised effects of our current investment portfolio. Divestment is just the beginning of a much broader reckoning with our complicity in global systems of inequality and exploitation. It is not enough simply to divest from a far too narrowly defined set of big-name fossil fuel companies. All this does is remove the College from direct complicity with some of the worst drivers of the problem. In order for Jesus College to begin to make reparations for this complicity and become a positive actor in the fight for a more just and liveable world, much more is required. We need to actively invest in sustainable, community-based projects, going beyond the narrow lens of short-term profitability, viewing ecological and social harms as disqualifying factors in investment decisions, not uncomfortable realities you hope no one will mention.

Our new Responsible Investment Policy has the opportunity to live up to its name, succeeding where previous divestment announcements have failed. We can be a pioneer in justice-based, scientifically coherent climate action policies, helping to spur long overdue action in similar institutions across the world. Or we can continue to bankroll the problem, investing in fossil fuel's major funders, and failing to engage in the human suffering that many of our non-fossil fuel investments line their pockets with. The choice is ours, and so are the consequences of that choice. Time is running out to act.

Finding our voice: Why young people must be louder

Ethan MacDonald

February 1355, the Feast of Saint Scholastica: an Oxford undergrad drinking at the Swindlestock pub complains to the landlord about the quality of his port (an event now inconceivable). The landlord, who was also the then Mayor of Oxford, replies with 'saucy language,' vexing the undergrad so much that he launches the shoddy port at his head. A large melee ensues and the familiar cries of 'havoc!' 'Smyte fast!' and 'Give god knocks!' abound. Soon, the City and University churches' bells are swung, summoning people to arms throughout the city and county. In the ensuing riot, a cleric is scalped.

Looking back at tales like these, it's easy to applaud ourselves over how far we've come since 1355; for instance, I doubt I'd assault any mayor, even if he served me the worst damned port. But, as we slowly return to normal life, and outside gatherings are allowed again, it might be worth asking ourselves what we can learn from that passionate undergrad in the pub seven hundred years ago. Indeed, the relative inertia of today's student body as a whole - and I accept that I am a part of the problem - offers

“Our values simply are not theirs - and yet we broadly just accept what they're doing to us without telling them how we feel”

a sad contrast with those indignant 14th Century scholars. Needless to say, we should absolutely reject violence, but it does nettle a bit that those Medieval students would bring anarchy to Oxford over some port, yet we can't, en masse, devote more of our time to peaceful picketing.

At the moment, we have a government that often seems as though it's of a different species to most students, and yet collectively we're quite resigned about that. Admittedly, I socialise in left-wing circles, but I've yet to meet a student who, after considering all that's wrong with the country right now, would snap their fingers like the PM and exclaim: 'I know what to do, I'll expand our nuclear arsenal!' Neither have I met a student who supports the Policing and Crime Bill. Nor do I know a student who, like the Home Secretary, opposes gay marriage, supports the death penalty, and seems to think punishing asylum seekers is more important than the impending climate apocalypse. On such profound issues, our values simply are not theirs - not by a long way - and yet we broadly just accept what they're doing to us without telling them how strongly we feel.

Yes, over the past year, we've certainly

seen glimmers of dissent at government apathy peeking through the blanket of lockdown. In the summer, there were the BLM protests; last month, we saw the 'Reclaim the Streets' gatherings; earlier this month in Bristol, there were also 'Kill the Bill' demonstrations. However, I worry that these movements are starting to look like flashes in the pan.

They're like small fringe movements, through which the many of us who want change merely express our upset vicariously. Thus, when these pop-up protests fade away, the government can publish a report claiming that racism, say, was all a bad dream or that climate change will go away soon - they absolutely promise! - and so we should all pat ourselves on the back.

As long as we remain content with letting a small band of others do the complaining for us, the widespread sense of injustice felt by our generation will slip under the radar. In fact, on a less abstract note, I would bet good money that if we were just a bit louder, the Government wouldn't have waited till the eleventh hour at every juncture to make decisions concerning students - and that we'd be getting some of our tuition fees back.

As it is, we've been so quiet that, right now, anyone in England can legally go and get a tattoo or have their palm read by a mystic, but we can't go see our lecturers face-to-face, despite having paid vast sums of money for the privilege. We are being ignored and cheated out of thousands of pounds and yet there are tumbleweeds bouncing through the town squares where we should be peacefully protesting.

So let's put our feet down. As lockdown is lifted, we should learn from all this injustice and refuse to be quiet anymore. If we want our tuition fees back, we should demand them back. If we think that racism still exists, that women are more valuable than statues, or that climate change is a pressing issue, we should be crying it in the streets. We really need to tap into the passion felt by that undergrad at the pub, seven hundred years ago, and give at least some of our time to going on peaceful marches and demonstrations through our towns and in Westminster. We should make our presence known and our voices impossible to ignore. We have been served some god awful port as students in the 2020s and we're damned if we're drinking it.

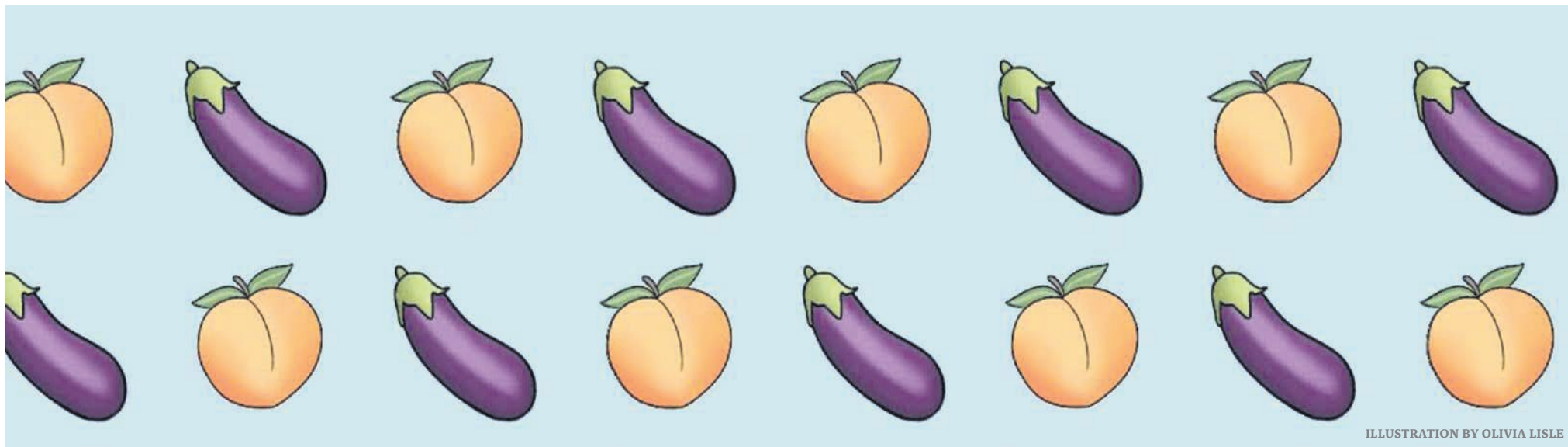


ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVIA LISLE

It's time to talk about sex

Deputy Editor **Elizabeth Haigh** argues that the pandemic has exposed, and exacerbated, the need for us to have free and open conversations about sex

Content Note: This article contains discussion of consent, and brief mention of rape and sexual harassment.

Sex. Let's face it, the UK is not exactly known for its openness on the topic. The British are infamously prudish when it comes to sex and relationships, topping a 2020 survey of 12 European countries in terms of our reluctance to discuss our sex lives. Sex and nudity remain embarrassing,

taboo subjects, generally discussed only behind locked doors and in lowered voices in awkward sex-education classes, or after a lot of drinks.

A PowerPoint presentation of STIs and a teacher-led demonstration of how to put on a condom does not exactly enamour a classroom full of teenagers to feel sex-positive. Instead, it furthers embarrassment and restricts discussion of sex to cold practicalities, such as how

not to get pregnant. And if you happen to be a member of the LGBT+ community, you can forget sex education altogether. The UK may have ruled that sex and relationship education must be LGBT+ inclusive from September 2020, but the pandemic means that almost none of these lessons have yet taken place. Many young people thus enter the world of relationships with only a basic knowledge of contraceptives and STIs, and, if they

are fortunate enough to have fairly open parents or guardians, an awkward family conversation or two for reference.

This is not enough. Sex happens in many different forms, between straight couples, gay couples, queer couples, alone. It happens between young people, old people, and everybody in between. A couple might only have sex after a year or more of dating, or immediately after they meet. But these nuances are all lost in the quiet, clinical way in which sex is discussed in the UK.

Refusing to talk about sex outside of the classroom not only makes young people's first relationships confusing, even terrifying, but actively increases sex-shaming. While being infected with a cold virus is not in the least bit embarrassing, catching chlamydia, HIV or any other STI is still highly stigmatised. It is often assumed that only those who "sleep around" will catch such infections.

The fact that phrases like this still exist and carry such negative connotations in our vernacular proves the point perfectly: according to society, having sex outside of an exclusive relationship is sordid and inexcusable. Sex is only acceptable in a tried and tested formula: in private, between two people in an established relationship, between a man and a woman. All forms of sex that take place outside of this heteronormative formula are hidden away and looked down upon. In short, sex is silenced, and pleasure is punished.

The pandemic has only reinforced this trend; the UK's multiple lockdowns have effectively imposed a sex ban on those not living with a significant other. This policy is outdated in the extreme: the idea that sex should only be allowed between cohabiting individuals echoes archaic traditions of no sex before marriage, and completely undermines sex positivity. But it also means that the government has effectively enforced abstinence upon swathes of society, mainly the young, who must now prepare themselves to re-enter the dating game for the first time in over a year, and possibly far longer depending on personal circumstances.

So, now more than ever it is vital that we talk about sex - how to have it safely, and how to recognise if something is wrong. Sexual health services have been decimated by the pandemic, with 54% of clinics closing completely during the first lockdown as staff and resources were

reallocated to other areas of the NHS.

According to a PHE report, in 2019 468,342 diagnoses of STIs were made in England alone. The same report states that local sexual health services "need to be made available to the general population", highlighting the struggle to find and access such services even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. It confirms that early detection and partner notification could drastically reduce the number of infections, something which is currently hindered by the stigmas surrounding STIs.

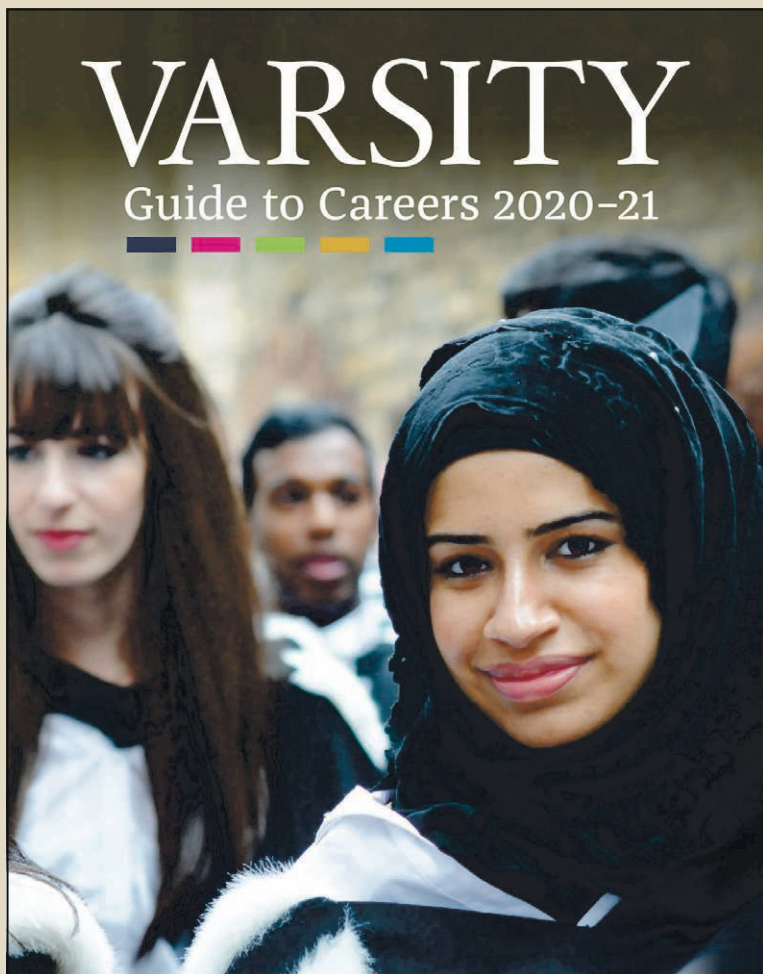
As sexual health services get up and running again, we have a unique opportunity to educate ourselves about the symptoms of STIs and how to recognise them. Equally, there is the chance to improve the perception of sexual health services within the UK and fund them as the essential service that they are, rather than viewing them as a place of shame and fallen morality.

As the sex ban is lifted, it is also essential to have serious conversations about consent. Last month a survey revealed that 97% of UK women have been sexually harassed. Rape culture is clearly still pervasive in UK society, and until discussion of sex is normalised, education on consent will continue to be neglected.

Platitudes such as "no means no" and the facetious, if well-meaning, "cup of tea" video are useless if not backed up by more serious conversations about how to ensure your sexual partner is consenting, that they feel safe and are fully in control of themselves. If we want to prevent rape and create a society in which sexual harassment is not the norm, we need to emphasise the importance of sexual communication and respect.

As the UK once more begins its journey out of lockdown, to quote Salt-N-Pepa, let's talk about sex. Let's talk about all the good things: love, desire, pleasure, orgasms. Let's address consent, STIs, and the need to reform and modernise sex education. Conversations about sex shouldn't reinforce taboos of secrecy or brand sex as any one particular thing, but teach young and old alike that sex can happen exactly as you want it to, when you want it to, as long as you are respecting your partner(s). Will it be easy? Of course not. Will it be awkward? Probably. But that's why we need to start now, to create change as soon as possible. Let's talk about sex.

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

“Let's address consent, STIs, and the need to reform and modernise sex education”

Science

Reasons for hope this Earth Day

To celebrate Earth Day, Science Editors **Grace Blackshaw**, **Sambhavi Sneha Kumar** and **Izavel Lee** walk us through the climate stories that inspire them

When it comes to the climate crisis, it is all too easy to despair but, in amongst the gloom, there are also countless sources of inspiration, tales of people from all over the world coming together to tackle the greatest challenge facing our planet. This Earth Day, we decided to take a step back and reflect on some of the amazing climate stories that give us reason for hope.

The rise of youth climate movements around the world

While environmental activism among young people is not a recent phenomenon, the media attention and political influence commanded by these movements has arguably been greater than ever before. In particular, activists in the global south have been critical to the climate change fight, as developing countries will be facing the worst impacts of climate change.

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Youth movements have been able to harness social media, speak candidly, and recognize the interconnection between climate and justice

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In the Philippines, Mitzi Tan became an environmental activist after speaking to indigenous leaders about the harm they had faced in protecting their lands. As a convenor for Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP), she has organized climate strikes to protest government policies that are harmful to the climate. In Uganda, Vanessa Nakate started organizing strikes after learning about how natural disasters in her

country had been worsened by climate change.

Today, youth movements have been able to harness social media, speak candidly, and recognize the interconnection between climate and justice — messaging that could lead to key social and political victories. A long-running survey of US adults found increasing concern for climate issues and youth strikers have been endorsed by the UN Secretary General. There remains hope that youth activism could lead to more systemic, concrete changes.

Greening transport in cities

To many experts and governments, recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to shift policy and infrastructure plans to better tackle climate change. One way that cities around the world have been supporting this “green recovery” is through investing in walking and cycling infrastructure. For example, South American cities including Bogotá and Lima have opened hundreds of kilometres of temporary cycle lanes to facilitate social distancing on public transport. Milan has similarly reallocated road space — permanently — from cars to cyclists and pedestrians, which is hoped to reduce air pollution in the city as well.

Some cities are going even further by attempting to phase out fossil fuel cars. Currently, 74.5% of global CO2 emissions are from road vehicles, so replacing fos-

sil fuel cars with less carbon intensive vehicles would greatly help the climate. New York City has committed to having 20% of cars be electric by 2025, and Singapore plans to phase out all petrol vehicles by 2040, creating 28,000 charging points for electric cars at the same time. As improvements in lithium-ion batteries and electric vehicle investment continue, we could see a significant drop in transport emissions in the coming decades.

Big wins for the global divestment movement

In contrast to stereotypes that would have us believe “saving the planet” means separating your recycling and avoiding plastic straws, the divestment movement takes on the fossil fuel industry head on. Divestment does this by pushing public organisations to get rid of their unethical investments, in this case, in the fossil fuel industry.

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Just 100 fossil fuel companies have contributed 70% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions since 1981

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Crucially, by doing so, divestment raises awareness of the fact that just 100 fossil fuel companies have contributed 70% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions since 1981.

Originally dismissed as radical and impractical, more of UK ties have now committed to fossil fuel divestment. Last October, after five years of tireless campaigning from Cambridge

Zero Carbon Society, Cambridge University finally joined their ranks. Despite this, the fight for climate justice at Cambridge University continues with the exciting rise (and success) of college divestment campaigns and a renewed focus on the wider links between the University and the fossil fuel industry.

The divestment movement also extends far beyond

The Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund addresses the “historical dispossession of land from Black farmers” by raising funds to allow Black farmers to purchase the land they care for.

In the UK, BAME communities are 60% less likely to be able to access green space and natural environments than white communities and 1% of the population owns more than 50% of the land in England. One inspiring organisation working to tackle this is Land In Our Names, a Black-led collective committed to connecting land and climate justice to racial justice.

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In the UK, BAME communities are 60% less likely to be able to access green space

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Plant-based diets

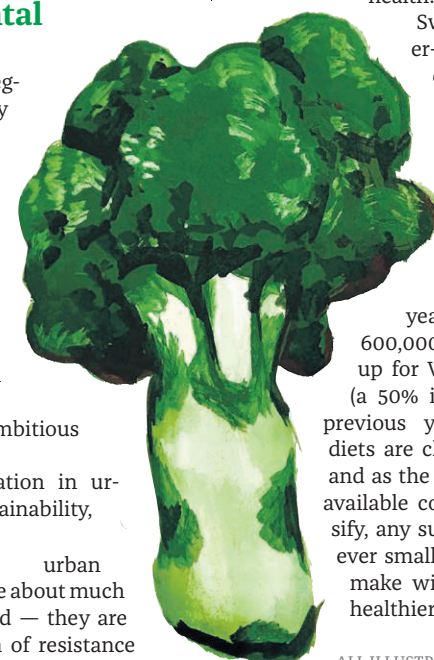
Something as simple as small changes to what we eat can go a long way in protecting the planet, with some studies unequivocally claiming that a vegan diet is associated with decreased greenhouse gas emissions compared to alternatives. Whilst evidence can vary (based on, for example, the exact nature of farming practices involved) incorporating some plant-based foods into our daily routines will likely benefit both the environment and our health.

Switching to a lower-meat diet is becoming more and more likely by the year, with Grand View research estimating that the vegan food market will be worth nearly 25 billion USD by the year 2025 and almost 600,000 people signing up for Veganuary in 2021 (a 50% increase from the previous year). Plant-based diets are clearly on the rise, and as the range of products available continues to diversify, any substitutions (however small!) that people can make will contribute to a healthier body and planet.

Urban farming and environmental justice

When fruits and vegetables come neatly wrapped in plastic on a supermarket shelf, it is all too easy to become disconnected from where our food comes from. To counter this, organisations like Harlem Grown aim to inspire youth to lead healthy and ambitious lives by providing hands-on education in urban farming, sustainability, and nutrition.

Community-led urban farming projects are about much more than just food — they are an important form of resistance against capitalist and colonial systems of land ownership.



ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY BILIANA TCHAVDAROVA TODOROVA.

Interviews

André Aciman: “From the age of 14 to 20 all I did was read. And fall in love”

Juliette Gueron-Gabrielle talks with acclaimed author of Call Me By Your Name about his love of literature, writing insecurities, and watching his work transform into a major motion picture

“Most of my essays start with something personal. I try to find where the reader and me are going to connect; what geographical coordinates we have in common. This is also how I enter into dialogue with a movie or a book. I look for that something about me that has been manifested in an author’s work. Then I answer them in my work. And hope they will answer back again.”

André Aciman, the author of *Call Me by Your Name* (CMBYN), is sitting in front of an overflowing bookshelf. His tone is soothing, his sentences are precise. He predicts the death of scholarship – “scholarship might be already defunct but could go on for a century or so”. Literary scholarship misses that “something essentially human” artworks have. “Mediocre artists only talk to us about how to become a better human or become more civil. Those are noble prospects. But that is not what I am interested in.”

When asked why he chose to study and teach literature, he says that nothing else interested him. “From the age of fourteen to twenty, all I did was read. And fall in love. But it never worked. I used books to stay in a room and close the shutters. Then I would not have to look outside at my part of Rome, which I hated. I was reading *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *The Brothers Karamazov*. I would be in Russia really, just pretending to be in Italy.”

“Superficial, episodic things define our link with places. When I am in Rome, I am in the best place on earth. But I am not in love with Rome. I was put in a lovely hotel in London recently. I loved London because of that. How superficial is that?”

André Aciman seems like the kind of person that likes to enjoy life – but never stops questioning it either. In the same way, the characters of *CMBYN* and *Find Me* are insiders, happy multicultural elites,

still hurt by the passing of time and struggling with life’s ephemeral relationships.

“The reason I wrote *Find Me* was that I was on a train. Next to me stood a beautiful woman, with a dog. She told me to hold the dog while she was going to the bathroom. Something was going on between us. Then, she left. So, I wrote about that.” *Find Me* tells the story of the love story between Elio’s father and Miranda, a young woman he meets on a train. It is filled with poetic lost opportunities, years lived without purpose, that find a resolution in love and the birth of a new child.

“I wish I could be excited when I start a new book. I am more excited when I have a new friendship. When I am invited to dinner with a group of friends – before COVID at least. I get excited about parties. Not about my work. I am a fundamentally insecure writer.”

When I tell André Aciman I would not have guessed that, he lists the manifestations of this insecurity in his writing. “If I were confident, I would write shorter sentences. I would be more factual, use ‘maybe’ less. Those are all ways of retracting what I am saying. In *CMBYN*, Elio goes to Oliver’s bedroom and sees a towel under the door. He knows why it is there, but he never says it. I never say it”. I imagine him in his New York University classroom, pointing out the signs of hesitant writing in the great novels of the past. It is impressive to see him levy his capacity of literary analysis against his own writing.

The movie made from *CMBYN*, starring Timothée Chalamet and seeped in the light of the Italian countryside, brought André Aciman to the mainstream.

“It is a wonderful feeling to watch one’s words being transformed into a movie. I told the producers they were free to do what they wanted. The only thing I

changed, was to strike down a scene where the parents were talking about Elio and Oliver’s relationship. I wanted the audience to know the father knew about them only in the scene where he discusses it with Elio, at the end of the movie. If not, it was anti-climactic.”

Oliver is an assistant to Elio’s father, a professor; the age difference means their relationship, and Elio’s sexual awakening, take place in the secrecy of the villa where Elio, his parents and Oliver are spending the summer.

Of the multilingual set of the movie, André Aciman says it “felt like being back in Egypt – where my mother tongue was French, but we spoke Greek, Italian, Arabic at home. So, I was very happy on set.” André Aciman was born to a Jewish family in Egypt, who eventually had to leave in 1965 because the Israeli-Arab wars were making it dangerous for his family to stay. “Now, I am always invited to Egypt. But I don’t feel secure enough to return”.

From his study, Aciman looks at me with a smile and says he is “going to speak to me about the rooftop in return” – the rooftop where I read his book, that I mentioned in my contact email. “That rooftop has something to do with me, since you wrote to me about it. So I am speaking to you about it in return”. This seems akin to his vision of art as a

long conversation between humans, and artworks as mirrors of our own selves, “intrinsically human” productions that cannot be explained by scholarship. This will to “speak back” to people about their experiences, could also explain the sense of nostalgia-tainted comfort that one gets from reading *CMBYN* and *Find Me*.

▼ Aciman speaks about his work during the “National Book Festival Presents” series (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

“Superficial, episodic things define our link with places”

▼ André Aciman is the author of *Call Me by Your Name* (SHUTTERSTOCK)

“I get excited about parties. Not about my work. I am a fundamentally insecure writer”



ILLUSTRATION BY EDEN KEILY-THURSTAIN

Vulture



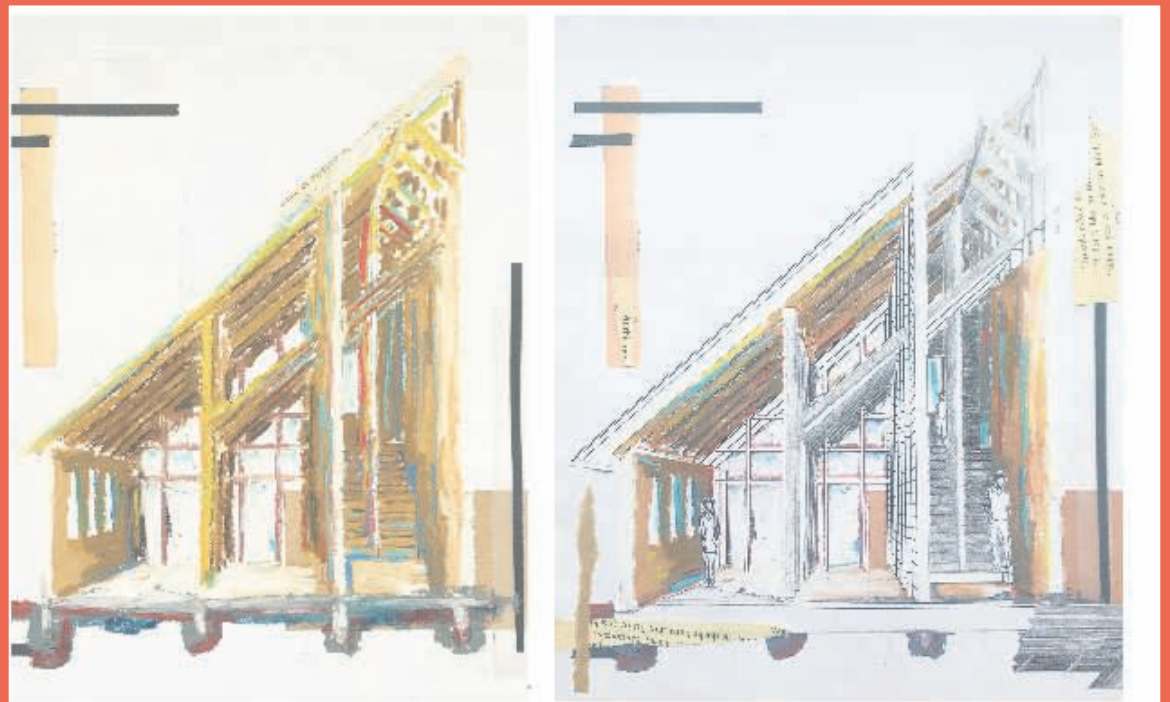
Arts

Creating in a crisis

From zero studio space to minimal materials, it has never been more difficult for student artists. But what have they learnt? Varsity Editor **Georgina Buckle** investigates.

Ask any student how they found working from home during lockdown and you will hear a resounding answer: “challenging”. Amidst the imposed isolation last term, we were forced to struggle without the integral resources which facilitate our degrees. But it would be disingenuous to assume that all students had the same learning experience. As a Humanities student, although frustrated by the physical inaccessibility of critical texts, I still had the luck of library books being scanned for me. What happens when what you most need to fulfil

▼ ‘I AM IN TRAINING’ BY ELLA DUNCAN @EDDY_DED, ARCHITECTURAL SKETCHES BY HANNAH BACK @ARCHARTBYHANNA, MAKEUP LOOKS AND PHOTOS BY HANNA FEE FRIEDRICH @HANNAFRIEDRICH, TEXTILES BY JODIE WAGNER @KNITME_BABY, COLLAGE AND B&W ILLUSTRATION BY GEORGIA SMITH @GEORGIA.S.ARTT)

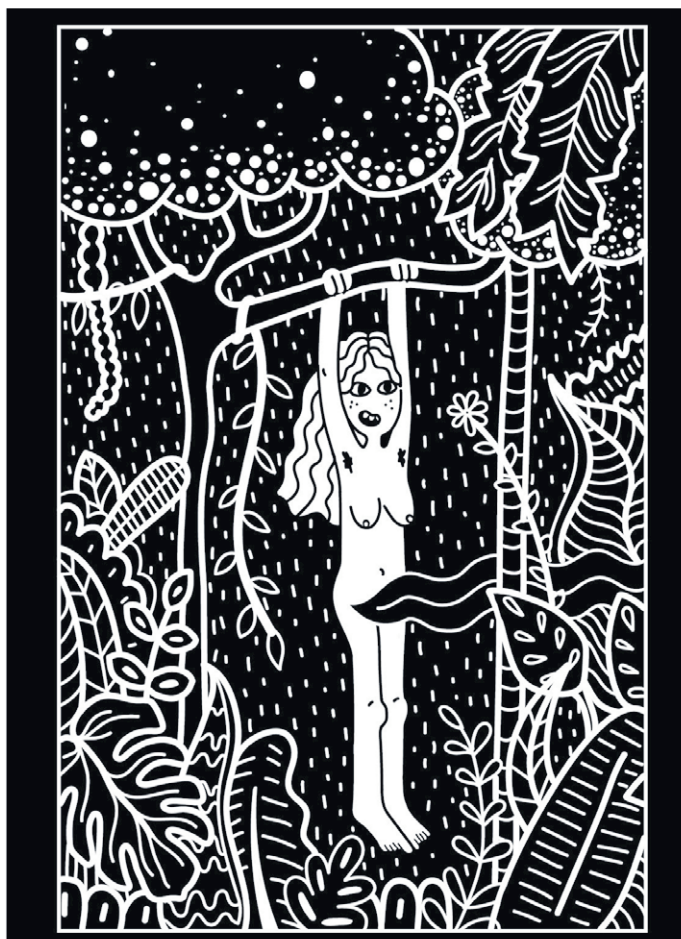


your course is not something easily scannable, but instead expensive tools, tubes of paint, or an expansive studio space? For arts students, these things have been made almost impossible to access over lockdown.

This disparity between subjects led me to speak to five arts students about their experience of producing work from home. Artists have often made a virtue of limitations. Picasso famously said “if I don’t have red, I use blue” and the early abstract expressionists in 1940s New York would experiment with house paints as they were much cheaper - and available in much larger quantities - than expensive artist quality oil paints. Lockdown has certainly been the ultimate test to what one can make with severely reduced resources, and I was keen to find out how it had stretched the creative abilities of these artists.

Hannah Back (@archartbyhannah), a second-year architecture student here at Cambridge, argues that there wasn’t that same ability to experiment as freely as before lockdown, when she could easily access the university-provided materials. ‘You can’t just quickly order a pack of something. Or if you do, you think ‘I must use it all’ because I’ve spent money. When materials are just there, you can fiddle around with them and suddenly they actually become something.’

Art allows people the freedom to pursue different avenues of curiosity. This is especially true for foundation and first-year students, with their course intentionally structured to teach a carousel of different mediums. These rotations allow for trial and error, playing with materials that may be unfamiliar, but prove fundamental in shaping one’s artistic trajectory. In theory, this is also a period in which students are taught a variety of ‘hands-on’ skills:



having inductions on how to use knitting, sewing, printing machines, trying out dye and ceramic workshops, or makeup technique masterclasses. With the pandemic, none of this has really been possible. Inevitably, it has caused a backlash for students. Ella Duncan (@eddy_ded), a foundation year student at Epsom, asked her tutor how much of her University application should constitute foundation year work: 'She said most of it should be. But at the time, I had been at Epsom for six weeks, and I had only done one piece of art.'

One of the biggest difficulties has been the absence of studio space. Jodie Wagner, a first-year student of BA Textile Design at University of the Arts London, emphasised that 'things start to get messy, so it was difficult to feel free at home. My room is quite small, and so I work downstairs at the dining table, which isn't huge. I have to eat on it, I have to clear things away, I have to organise my time much more stringently.' Bedrooms haven't been conducive to fruitful work for most students, but for artists there is an added problem: they physically need a space to make a mess. As Ella says, 'A studio is a place where you don't care what happens to it, you just care about what you make in it.'

It has also been immensely detrimental to lose that valued communal studio space in which artists collectively bounce ideas around, offering criticism and advancing each other's ideas. 'Working alongside other creatively focused people is just something you cannot fake at home or over Zoom,' Ella stresses. 'In a studio you can turn to the person next to you asking, 'what's wrong with my painting?' and they can immediately tell you. It's a completely inspiring atmosphere.'

However, for Hanna

studying Hair and Makeup at University of the Arts London. Like most arts degrees it's an expensive course – having to purchase your entire makeup kit and potentially hair heads too – with an especially uncertain future. Working from home in Berlin last term, Hanna had only a fraction of her kit and no access to hair heads, preventing her from learning and practicing most of her hair unit. Several of her peers felt forced to drop out, a decision that Hanna has even considered herself. 'Everybody has felt a much higher level of anxiety over the last few months, being scared about what to do with the course,' Hanna tells me.

Is she worried about the future? 'Yes, one hundred percent.' Students pay large sums to learn techniques which necessitate face-to-face contact, so it's understandable they have had some low moments. 'I've just been exposed to so much less,' says Architecture student Hannah. 'I don't feel nearly as proud of my work currently as I would like and I feel like I'm not as confident in my own skills.'

Certain words crop up across the interviews: 'lost', 'demotivated', 'uninspired', 'stuck', 'concerned'. But what also resonates across the discussions is how inventive they have been during the pandemic. Windows have become lightboxes that can be traced on top of. Colourful plastic bags can be cut up and knit. Putting woodchips on your face is the new editorial makeup look. And all you need for printmaking is some stones, old yarn and paint. Artists have gained a new-found appreciation for their surroundings, and for breathing new life into mundane objects. Each of them has adapted through sheer agility.

'I end up having all my work spread up on the floor, taped to my windows, hanging on washing-lines across walls,' said Georgia Smith (@georgias.artt), a first-year student of Graphic Communication and Illustration at Loughborough university. Lockdown was the impetus for Georgia to construct her huge 'inspiration wall': a collage of paraphernalia from art exhibitions. On the wall, Georgia of-



ten refers to things she likes, materials she could use, thinking of what artists to draw inspiration from – it's probably been 'the most helpful thing' for sparking new ideas. Georgia's 'can-do' attitude is reflected in her shift of work focus. 'The main switch in my work is that it has become much more humour based,' she says with a smile. 'The world is so depressing right

now – I don't want to make anything that's sad or that isn't entertaining. Even just using bright colours, patterns, or being more playful with the concepts – I only want to focus on creating happy work.'

Meanwhile, Hanna's resourcefulness has led her to more sustainable solutions. 'I got more environmentally friendly. I feel very bad always buying more plastic, but because I didn't have many materials with me I just started creating my own pigments out of plants. I also started looking more at nature for prompts, creating my own stamps by pressing flowers.'

Financially, creatively, and mentally, lockdown has been taxing for artists, but it has not come without some benefits. Physically producing work from home has shown students' families their degrees in a new light, now having a greater appreciation for its scope and intensity. Some have even become involved in the creative process. There has also been a vast transformation in how students present their work to tutors, developing new verbal skills to translate their work's physicality through a PDF file or Zoom call. Architecture relies on a high level of tactility in examining measurements and design, and thus Hannah has learned to 'construct much more of a narrative, journeying people through the spaces' of her product. 'It's improved the way in which I can speak about my work,' she says. 'The tutor receives the work 2-dimensionally through the screen, so I really have to create the 3D picture with my words.'

In light of constraints, arts students have not only

developed new modes of communication through which to understand their work, but have been forced to utterly rethink their creative output. Is it not a key component of Art to follow the pace of society's change, and yet provide new ways of navigating it?

During the first lockdown Hanna was stranded in the countryside with only one lipstick and one concealer to use for all her projects. Cue panic. Now, she tells me: 'I've become such a good problem solver. I've been stuck at home for a whole year with minimal materials – I can survive everything.'



Fee Friedrich
@hannaffriedrich 'the biggest problem was coping mentally.' Hanna is a second-year,

Lifestyle



Cocktails, Mocktails and More

Members of the Varsity team give a couple of their recipes and invaluable insights into the world of cocktails and their alcohol-free alternative, giving you the perfect opportunity for a night in. Why not give one (or a couple) a try?

▼ ILLUSTRATIONS BY ODESSA CHITTY

The Varsity team gives their wisdom on the exciting world of cocktails and mocktails to suit any taste and occasion. Whether you're looking for something quick and easy, or are feeling slightly more adventurous, there should be something here for you to welcome the warmer months!

ISABEL SEBODE: A Margarita

Sitting outside a bar during the summer, drinking frozen margaritas after a day of work has always been how I imagined my future. Now, in uni accommodation without any fancy equipment that could possibly blend ice, a normal margarita will have to make do. Nonetheless, I love to spice these up by adding different fruits or fruit juice (frozen raspberries, pineapple juice, cranberry juice – you get the idea).

For two cocktails:

- 2 shots of tequila
- 2 shots of triple sec
- 2 shots of lime juice
- However much fruit juice you want
- a tiny bit of sugar syrup!
- add some crushed ice

Enjoy!

ALEX JARVIS: A Virgin Mojito

My extensive experience as mocktail expert at the bar during my week at the Peak scout camp has set me up in good stead for this moment – my go-to cocktail of choice is often a virgin mojito (or now, many years on, perhaps even a proper one).

To make the non-alcoholic version, you need nothing more than sugar and mint leaves, which you muddle (smush them until they're nicely mixed in) together in the bottom of the glass or in a bowl before transferring it across. Add ice, lime juice and ginger beer

(the spicier the better) to each glass, along with the mint and sugar, and you're well set. The friendlier alcoholic version is really similar; this time, though, mix the lime juice along with the sugar and mint. Add that to a glass with some ice, and top with white rum. I tend to go with my heart on the quantities, but the BBC recommends 60ml. Top up with soda water or, for a kick, ginger beer. It's very easy to drink a couple of these, so be warned! Change it up between alcoholic and non-alcoholic every once in a while; the mint and ginger beer makes this a tasty mocktail for any occasion.

A quick, (not so) pro-tip: if you're going all-out and using a shaker, remember not to add carbonated drinks at this stage. It has to be said.

CHARLOTTE HOLAH: The French 75

I first came across this cocktail in preparation for New Year's Eve, determined that I would enjoy the night despite spending it with my family for the first time in years. Unsurprisingly, this one comes from Tik-Tok, but a quick Google tells me this cocktail is actually over 100 years old! Like most things that look fancier than they are, it comes from France, and since December it's become one of my favourite drinks.

- 30ml gin
- 15ml lemon
- 15ml sugar
- Ice to shake
- Sparkling wine to top

Simply add 30ml of your favourite gin (I use pink to make the cocktail extra glamorous), 15ml of lemon juice and 15ml of sugar syrup (just dissolve sugar in hot water in a 2:1 ratio) to a cocktail shaker then shake with ice. When it's all combined, pour the pink mixture into a champagne flute and top off with a sparkling wine of your choice! (The cheapest Sainsbury's own cava usually works for me). It's a sweet cocktail, but the lemon balances out the sugar and it's unnervingly

easy to drink quite a few of these in a night. Enjoy, but don't say I didn't warn you!

YAN-YI LEE: A Taste of the Far East in Cocktails

Margaritas, Mojitos, Cuba Libres, Sidecars, Sex on the Beach - It isn't difficult to realize that the main cocktails on bar menus today originate from the West. So does the East have anything to contribute to the f a s t -

evolv-
i n g
world of
cocktails?

Absolutely! Unconventional as it may seem, a mixture of teas and herbs native to East Asia gives a liqueur-based cocktail a whole new personality! Those who have oolong tea lying on their shelves should try these delicious drinks with the 'building' method (no shaking – just pop the ice into a highball glass, add ingredients in order, and stir gently):

Cassis oolong:
45 ml cassis liqueur
120 ml oolong tea.

Shoyojurin:
45 ml green tea
liqueur + 120 ml oolong tea.
(Come to think of it, green tea liqueur

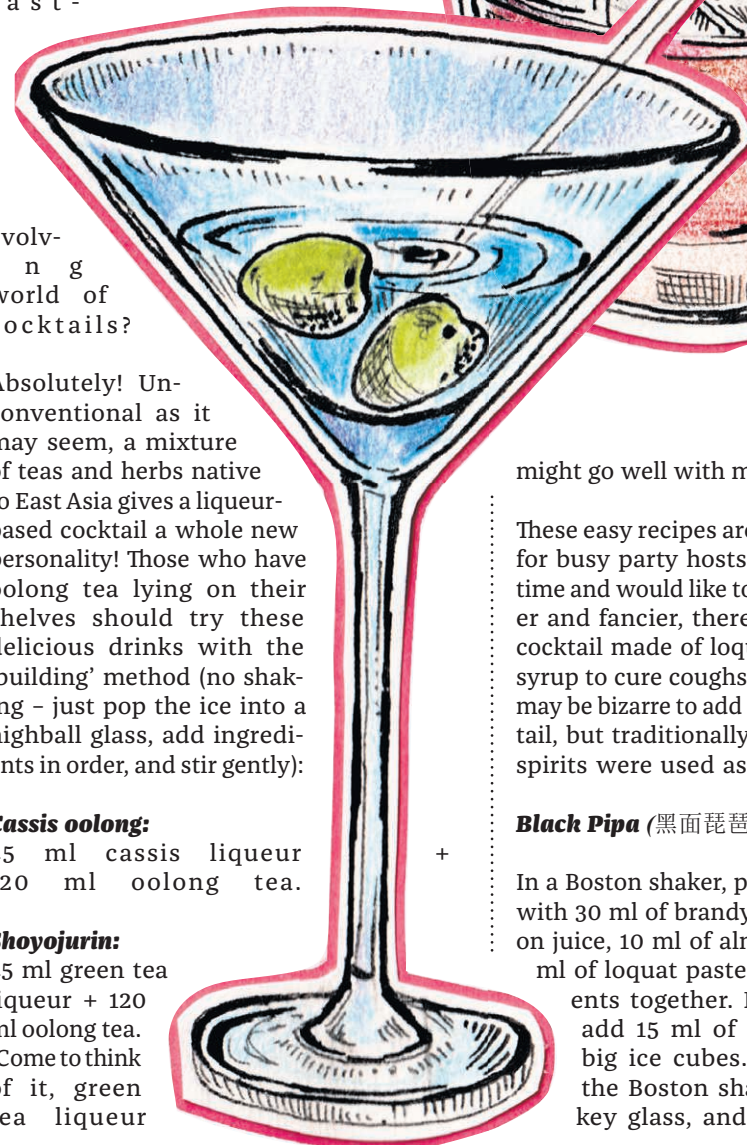


might go well with mulberry tea as well).

These easy recipes are an absolute delight for busy party hosts! If you've got more time and would like to try something harder and fancier, there is always the bold cocktail made of loquat paste – a typical syrup to cure coughs in East Asia (sure, it may be bizarre to add medicine into a cocktail, but traditionally absinthe and other spirits were used as medicine as well!):

Black Pipa (黑面琵琶):

In a Boston shaker, put in some ice along with 30 ml of brandy, 15 ml of fresh lemon juice, 10 ml of almond liqueur and 12 ml of loquat paste. Shake the ingredients together. In a whiskey glass, add 15 ml of ginger liqueur and big ice cubes. Filter all that's in the Boston shaker into the whiskey glass, and there you have it!



Music

The dichotomy of Kid Cudi's Cobain-inspired dress

Caterina Bragoli discusses the differing perspectives on Kid Cudi and Virgil Abloh's transgressive statement as seen on SNL

Kid Cudi is a rapper notorious for his transgression and ability to not only break the mould, but burst through it in a dazzling array of vision and honesty.

In a move well-calculated to promote both his latest release, *Man on the Moon III: The Chosen*, and his burgeoning collaboration with Off-White legend Virgil Abloh, Cudi took to the SNL stage to perform his song 'Sad People'. While fans expected Cudi's usual streetwear-inspired attire, what graced the audience's eyes was both unexpected and artistically visionary. A full-length white gown, adorned with a brightly-coloured floral pattern, even featuring a bodice to truly emulate a typically-feminine silhouette. In a song that advocates for introspection and persevering through the oftentimes challenging journey of finding yourself, breaking free from all fashion constraints is definitely felicitous.

Not only was his donning of such an outrageously bold garment paying homage to Nirvana's angsty and non-conforming frontman Kurt Cobain - who has inspired a great deal of Cudi's music, and was even sampled on 2018 release 'Cudi Montage' - but it displayed the far-reaching impact of our contemporary climate's refusal to adhere to gendered stereotypes and boundaries. While Cobain may have taken a similar stance in 1993 when he modelled a dress on the cover of *Face* magazine, Cudi has reignited the flame. It's a typically Cudi-esque move: Virgil Abloh commented that "It's Cudi knocking on your television screen saying, 'Hey! Be yourself.'" This is a

mantra well-loved by Cudi, and is a point of compassion for his devoted fans. Utter self-acceptance, with no room for judgement: this perfectly pertains to Cudi's entire catalogue.

Not without controversy, Cudi's performance attire has sparked waves of criticism, particularly across the LGBTQ+ community. As summarised by model and activist Munroe Bergdorf, it is amazing to see "cis gender straight men embracing femininity through fashion", however Cudi's position means he "won't face nearly as much hatred or the physical danger that visibly queer folk will when they do the exact same thing". This sentiment undoubtedly rings true: Cudi's celebrated position affords him the status and ability to be lauded as revolutionary and heroic, which in turn undermines the long-standing culture and fashion historically and continually embraced by the LGBTQ+ community. This double-standard is one that needs addressing: how can he enjoy the privilege of the internet extolling him, while the basic right of safety remains out of reach for so many who choose to express themselves in this way not just one novel time, but every single day?

However, a broader effort to curb systemic gender norms in fashion is coming to fruition, and Virgil Abloh himself is keen to play an intrinsic part, using his Off-White brand to facilitate such awareness and change. In fact, Abloh is keen to alter the intrinsic link between masculinity and suits, instead replacing the latter with the choice to sport classically feminine silhouettes, whether dresses or skirts. Abloh noted to GQ that "Gender norms and racial

freedoms are amongst the most important things in society that need to be updated. As a fashion designer, moments like this let me know that there is space for intellect and risk for the sake of expanding space". Abloh certainly has the means to improve upon these factors: with a brand as successful and extensive as Off-White, and with such a cult following, he can go where no designer has gone before. It prompts us as consumers to also question such rigid boundaries and our means to overcome them, whether through unisex collections or runways.

It is fundamental for Abloh to acknowledge that the "risk" he and Cudi are taking is a genuinely threatening risk for members of the LGBTQ+ community, and a more mindful approach to the rhapsodising of Kid Cudi is vital in instigating a wave of change. Acknowledging the roots of this mode of dressing is crucial. Although, Abloh's overarching

belief that "the beauty about now, is our generation, piece by piece, can dismantle norms" is an enduring one, and one that must be acted on. Cudi, in this way, has taken a bold stance, and at least has put his celebrity to good use. Ultimately, Cudi's musical mission of inclusivity, advocating the importance of recognising mental health and substance abuse problems, places him in good stead to be ushering in a period of radical change.



◀ (TWITTER/KIDCUDI)



▲ Kurt Cobain performing in a dress in the 1990's (TWITTER/PIGSANDPLANS)

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Fashion

Spring Revival

*Outfit inspirations
that will put a spring
in your step this
Easter Term*



As students are slowly trickling back into Cambridge, the city is finally rejuvenating in its usual vibrancy and spirit; the streets, quiet for months, are now filled with people. Back in university accommodation and reunited with friends, there are so many occasions to go outside and revel in the sunshine. Whether that be a picnic on Jesus Green, a pint in a pub garden or the resolution that this term you will finally rent a punt – we are back outside and ready to show ourselves to the world.

With this shoot we want to encourage you to embrace all those looks that have been hiding in your closet for the past weeks, whether that be the new pair of trousers you impulsively bought to escape the lockdown dreariness or the fancy look you've been planning to wear for formals – the possibilities are endless. Recent years have shown fashion trends being recycled, allowing us to see 90s jeans next to 80s jumpers on the streets. Just as wide-leg trousers have made their come-back, film photog-

raphy is experiencing some new-found appreciation. This shoot combines analogue with digital to reflect these cultural trends – rapid, digital photography alongside carefully crafted film prints.

We hope that the multitude of colours and combinations will offer inspiration for your looks, whether that be preppy chic or slick streetwear, opting for a striking monochrome look versus pops of clashing colours, or even flaunting that new frilled collar cardigan. Why not grace the streets with what we would usually only preserve for special occasions?

Creative Directors: Georgina Buckle, Isabel Sebode
Photographer: Tilda Butterworth

Models: Sawen Ali, Isobel Bruce, Simrhan Khetani, Lily Maguire, Ollie Miller, Henry Rocha, Joni Wildman

With special thanks to Scholar's Punting for chauffeuring us on their brand-new punt model, 'Typhoon', for our shoot (@scholarspunting)

All social distancing guidelines were observed during the shoot.





▲ PHOTOGRAPHY BY TILDA BUTTERWORTH



*a season of
reunions and
rediscoveries*



Film & TV

How to Become a Film Snob in 7 Days

Maddy Fisher reviews four cult favourites in her bid to become versed in the language of the “film bro”

I would never describe myself as a film expert, gravitating instead towards light and easily digestible flicks, particularly in this year of global doom. I never really knew where to start, put off by the breadth and technical mystique of classic film. Crucially though, I have avoided making classic film my personality as I’m worried it would make me unbearable. Many of you must share the experience of having a “film bro” stand over you at a party sneering: “What do you mean you haven’t seen *Pulp Fiction* / *Fight Club* / [insert niche French black-and-white-film]?”

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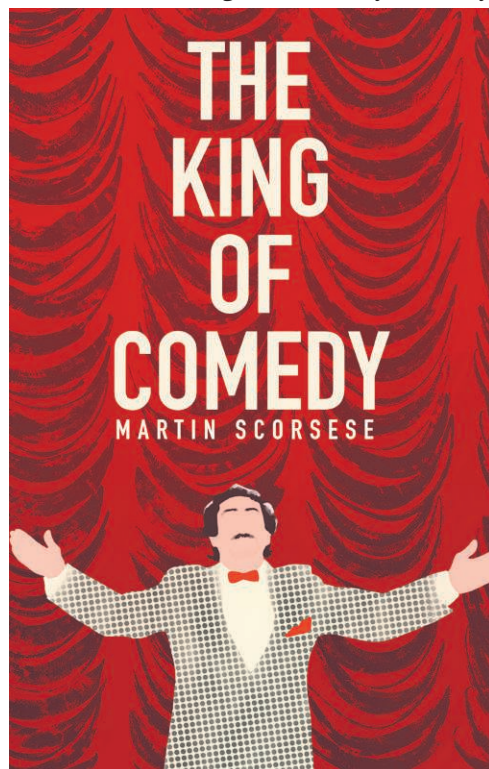
I have avoided making classic film my personality as I’m worried it would make me unbearable

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Yet, in an effort to broaden my cultural horizons over the Easter holidays, I, on a whim, got a free trial of MUBI and screened some of its top-rated films. By the end of the week, I hoped that not only would I enjoy these renowned films, but that I could shun any oncoming superiority complex.

The King of Comedy (dir. Martin Scorsese)

I wanted to begin with a nice rom-com to ease my way in, but unfortunately MUBI didn’t have any of the light-hearted pith I usually enjoy, so I was forced to dive into the deep end with the big Scorsese. Here were some thoughts I jotted down whilst watching: “Why are the opening credits to classic films so long?”, “And why so many



opening scenes in taxis?”, “God I’m jealous of the female stalker’s fabulous mullet”. Unsubstantial ramblings perhaps, but, for me, *The King of Comedy* was an enjoyable take on the American infatuation with fame. I wish the female accomplice, Masha, had received more airtime, as her sexual obsession with talk show host Jerry Langford was, for me at least, more interesting than protagonist Rupert Pupkin’s comedy career ambitions. I knew I hadn’t quite been indoctrinated to the classic film cult when I skipped past the ending credits to see if there was a Marvel-esque Easter egg. Alas there was not, and I could rest easy in the knowledge that I am no film buff yet.

Portrait of a Lady on Fire (dir. Céline Sciamma)

My first introduction to this film was through my TikTok For You Page, which described it primarily in terms of lesbian longing and frantic cello music, a half accurate summary, as the film was mostly void of any music, an artistic choice I thought might bore me. Yet, once I’d got over initial tenuous musings, such as the resemblance between Héloïse and Billie Eilish (this might be just me) and that maybe the French just are sexier (probably not just me), I was enthralled. Every shot was so well-considered, and the dialogue felt poetic but never grandiose. The line “do all lovers feel as though they’re inventing

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Look at me, I’m starting to sound like a film columnist already!

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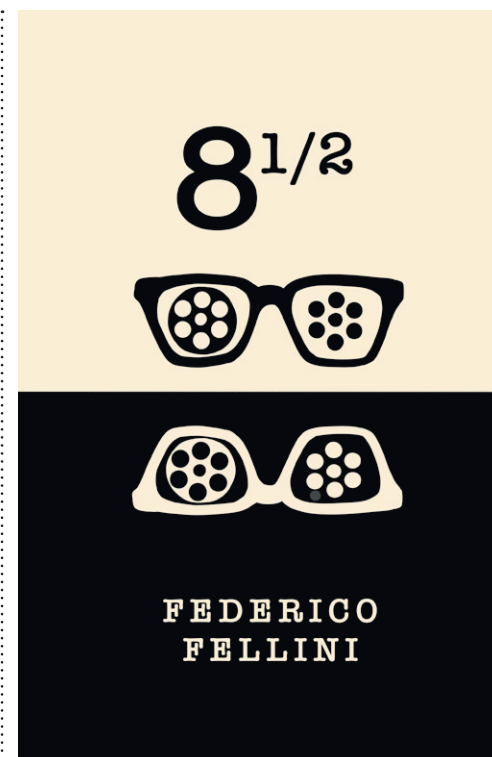
something?” particularly stayed with me, a reflection on the transgressive yet intimate relationships that well-done queer cinema can portray. It was refreshing to see a film solely explore relationships between women, providing relief from the overdone classic film nexus of male genius and insanity, a trope I hope loses its dominance. Look at me, I’m starting to sound like a film columnist already!

Fight Club (dir. David Fincher)

To balance this intimate portrayal of the female experience, we move to perhaps its opposite, a film hinging on the premise that sometimes men just really want to fight. It is quite embarrassing that I’d put off watching the hallmark that is *Fight Club* for so long but, in my defence, I have always been quite averse to on-screen violence. Indeed, *Fight Club* had a lot of violence, along with a whole host of acclaimed film techniques — the epic twist, unreliable narrator, breaking the fourth wall, etc. Whereas Sciamma was generous in her long gazes, Fincher provides an assault on the senses. Humour provided relief, as I’d internalised that all esteemed films had to have purely serious dialogue. However, I spent much of this film confused and baulking at the sight of blood and animal fat. Unfortunately, this has rather reinforced my preconception that classic film is not really meant to be comprehensible, relaxing, or relatable, but rather marvelled at from a distance.

8 1/2 (dir. Federico Fellini)

I thought I’d challenge myself for the fi-



nal film of the week with something that really ticks all the film buff boxes: a black-and-white, subtitled, Italian, 1960s film about filmmaking (very meta, I know). And believe me, I really tried to enjoy the next two-and-a-half-hour surrealist insight into the directorial process. Despite recognising the beauty and ambition of it all, I just could not keep up with its crazed apparitions, and the only commentary I could blunder to my Dad sitting next to me was an appreciation for the striking makeup. What made things worse was reading the countless MUBI user reviews describing the film as “flawless” and a “masterpiece”, reigniting insecurities about my imposter status amongst arty crowds. Fortunately, my Dad similarly described the film as “bonkers” (and not in a good way), leaving me with the comfort that perhaps my poor taste is inherited.

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I challenge any film newbies to take on the film snob at their own game.

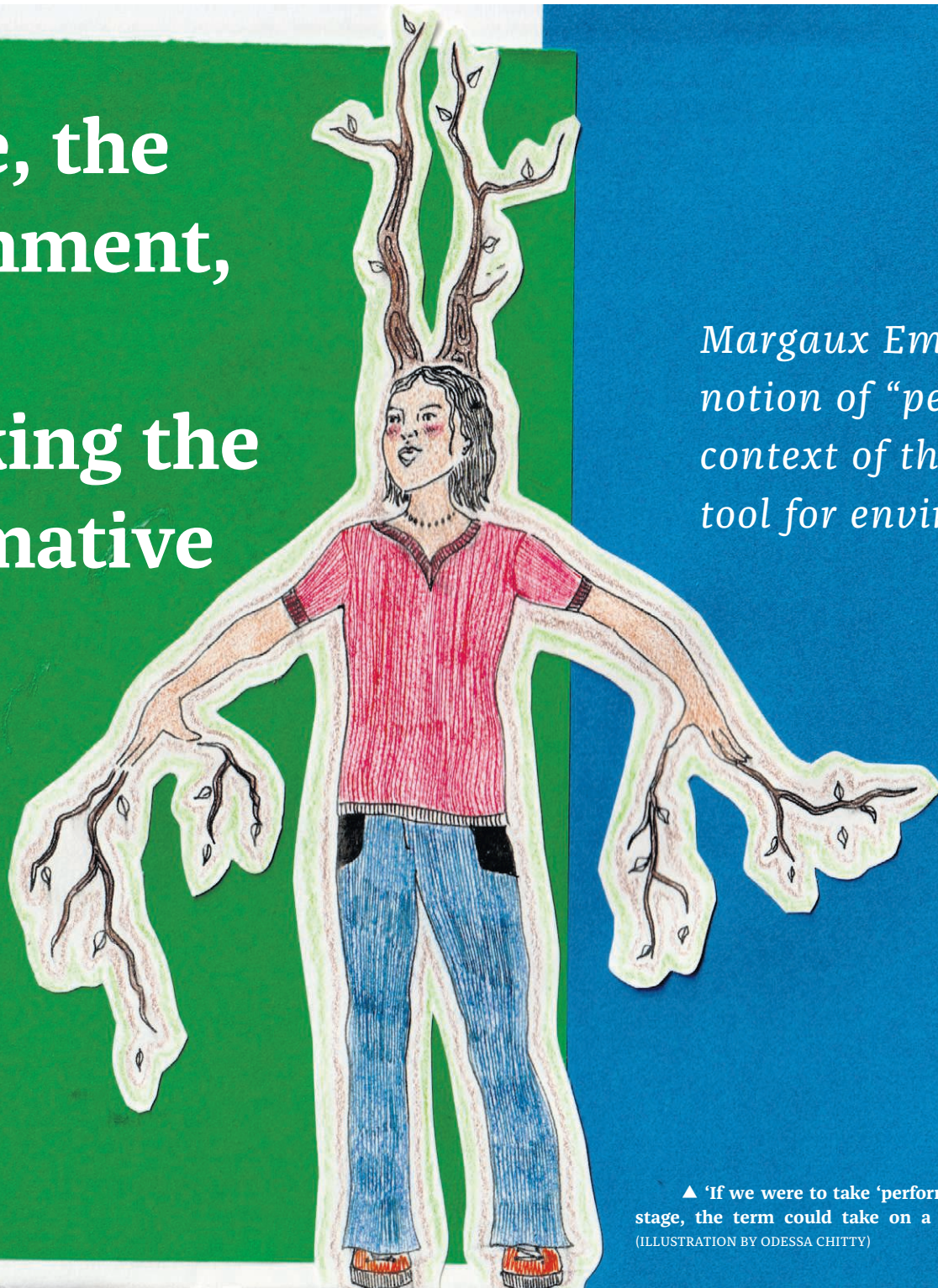
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My week of film exploration has been an enriching ride. I didn’t love every film, but simply having an opinion is a constructive outcome, regardless of whether this opinion is widely shared. Indeed, what is described as a “good” or “classic” film is frequently chosen by the same group of “experts”, resulting in a rather select list (read: starkly white and male). As such, the film cult could benefit with being broadened, and so I challenge any film newbies to purge reservations about being uncultured and take on the film snob at their own game.

Theatre

Theatre, the environment, and rethinking the performative

Margaux Emmanuel explores the notion of “performativity” in the context of theatre being used as a tool for environmental activism



▲ 'If we were to take 'performative activism' to the stage, the term could take on a whole new meaning.'
(ILLUSTRATION BY ODESSA CHITTY)

Performative environmentalism is a problematic societal phenomenon, corresponding to the known dictum that 'words don't equate actions'. It can be argued that all social movements are initially spurred by some form of performativity, but this must be used as an incentive to action, and not as the action itself.

However, the term 'performative' takes on different connotations when considering theatrical, and not a purely social, performance. The world of the theatrical, in its endless richness and ability to reflect the tensions of society through an artistic prism, contains both the sense of 'incentive' in its capacity to move and shock, as well as the capacity of providing a rich reflexion and reconsideration of the panoply of social and environmental phenomena that surround us, especially in our relation and responsibility towards them.

On the level of the narrative, there are a myriad of works of literature that reflect either the tensions of a capitalist model of nature as an inexhaustible storehouse, as well as the impending threat of environmental catastrophe. Steve Waters' *The Contingency Plan* for instance alerts us to the relevance of rising sea levels in Antarctica to the U.K.,

or Wallace Shawn's disturbing *Grasses of a Thousand Colors* portrays scientific genetic modification gone too far through the veil of humour and unsettling erotica.

However, as powerful as the storytelling valence of the theatrical performance is, the bodily presence and enactment of these issues is what constitutes these works' strength. There is a difference between a novel on environmental issues, and a play on environmental issues to the extent that it becomes a 'meta-action' – it enacts the step differentiating action from the performative and simply constative written word.

In a different sense is Richard Schechner's 1960s movement of 'environmental theatre', as in the striving for an enhanced awareness of the 'environment' of the text, in a way that is close to Brechtian theatre.

Schechner demonstrated this with works such as *Makbeth* and *Dionysus in 69*. Even though he did not employ the term 'environmental' as synonymous to 'nature', we can use this theoretical model as an indicator of the heightened consciousness which the theatrical 'environment' engenders – whether that be that of the fictional setting or extending this setting in terms of its insertion into a wider social context.

The visual aspect of theatre is its strength, as well as the principal factor that differentiates it from other literary or artistic forms. This visuality also encompasses another theatrical idiosyncrasy : bodily presence. Seeing a theatrical performance is viewing *bodies* on stage, creating a strong sense of bodily awareness. There are many specific theatrical practices that utilise corporal self-consciousness. For example, Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, an interactive theatrical form elaborated in the 1970s in Brazil, is a theatrical concept born in the context of dictatorial oppression. This functions as a theory that concentrates on the duality of the creation of dramatic meaning through the engagement of the spectator as well as, of course, the actor, blurring the lines between the both of them.

The activity of the Theatre of the Oppressed that is particularly apposite when considering activism and, more specifically, green activism, is the concept of image-theatre, which is an activity where one actor acts as a 'sculptor' and, without using language, will 'mold' the other participants' bodily expressions, creating a corporal dialogue centered around a common theme. If we were to transpose this theory to an environmental theme, per-

formatively engaging the body in a discussion concerning the ecological crisis could be a way for us to understand our implication in this through the use of concrete, physical symbolism, and also with the corrective aspect of the 'sculptor's' role. The theme could, for example, be 'deforestation' and one group of actors could act as trees and the other as saws.

Considering theories such as The Theatre of the Oppressed and the aforementioned image-theatre would be a key technique where 'performative activism' takes on a different, positive meaning. This could especially be useful with children in schools in order to raise awareness in an interactive, pedagogical way, and also to jolt us all into action, creating a sense of urgency in the body itself. The dialogue and stage directions of a play aren't speech acts; they themselves constitute the alerted body navigating a world that demands action. If we were to take 'performative activism' to the stage and develop it, the term 'performative environmentalism' could take on a whole new set of connotative meanings.

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Vulture's Easter 2021 Cultural Preview

With exam term arriving and the world opening up once more, read our cultural cheat sheet for the best events and exhibitions of the term



▲ Summer is coming and so is the student theatre! (VARSITY)

Museums

Fitzwilliam Museum
The Fitzwilliam Museum is opening its doors from the 18th May with an exhibition that is as relevant as ever: 'Human Touch', which explores 'making art, leaving traces'. Curated by Elenor Ling and Suzanne Reynolds, the exhibition focuses on the centrality of touch in our cultural sphere.

Kettle's Yard

On the 29th April, 13th March and 3rd June you can attend the online event series 'Grassroots: Artmaking and Political Struggle', looking at 'art, activism and

political organising in Britain during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s'.

From the official reopening date of 19th May, Kettle's Yard cafe and galleries will reopen, free with a booked ticket. The 'Alfred Wallis Rediscovered' exhibition will be extended until the 20th June, a must-see if you are missing seeing the sea.

Galerie V

A new gallery is opening on St John's Street, at the end of May and they are looking for young artist contributions! Whether you want to get your art out there or see up-

footing in the world of online theatre, but as the world opens up again don't miss your chance to see these productions, and give these deserving actors more than just a virtual round of applause.

12th May: Footlights, *Growing Pains* - ADC Online (Week 2)

An hour of sketch comedy looking at the freaky foibles of growth and change, family dynamics and sourdough starters.

23rd May: *Public House 4* - The Town and Gown Theatre (Week 4)

Public House is the annual performance by the Old Vag Club, focusing on anonymous testimonies of sexual assault and harassment from Cambridge students and alumni.

24th May: *Permanent Marker* - Corpus Playroom (Week 4)

A student-written, one-person play, this original creation explores the effect of trauma and an imperfect memory.

27th May 2021 - Sat 29th May 2021: *The Passion* - Corpus Playroom

An original piece of student writing, *The Passion* looks at the reconciliation of an ex-university couple over a single afternoon, and the darker motives behind them.

19th June 2021: CUMTS Gala Night 2021: *A Wild, Wild Party* (Week 7)

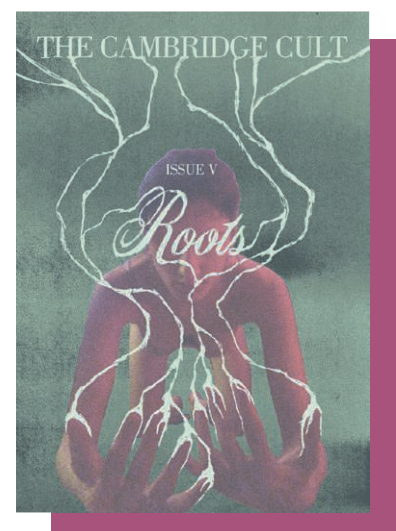
For one night only, CUMTS brings you an evening of pure musical theatre decadence, accompanied by a full orchestra and performing all the classics of musical theatre.

27th June 2021: *Little Shop of Horrors* - ADC Theatre (May Week)

Round off your exam term with this classic dark humour musical about a "Mean Green Mother From Outer Space".

ADC Theatre pop-up, 16th to 26th June
Receiving the Cultural Recovery Fund has allowed the ADC to put on a show outside of the Fitzwilliam Museum this summer. Students from the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University will direct and perform an as-yet unchosen piece.

Cambridge Shorts, 21st June to 22nd June
With the Round Church as a venue, the Cambridge Shorts are putting on their annual showcase of the best student short film makers. Addressing social issues and showcasing the artistry of cinematography, these films are bound to impress.



▲ (THE CAMBRIDGE CULT)

and-coming artists, it will certainly be somewhere to keep an eye on.

Zines

Get creative from your room and write for one of Cambridge's many zines (or just get ready for one of the launch parties at the end of term!)

Although the dates for the *Notes* exam term edition, *Footnotes*, have yet to be released, that just means plenty of time to get brainstorming.

BAIT will be announcing a theme and opening submissions in the mid Easter term.

The Cambridge Cult, home of all things chaotic, has their submission deadline on the 27th May (theme to be revealed soon)

Theatre

The Cambridge theatre scene worked hard to find its



▼ (TWITTER/FITZWILLIAMMUSEUM_UK)

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Violet

By VARSITY

POV: you're interviewing Matt Hancock...



I knock twice on the Health Secretary's door.

"Come in," he beckons. "Have a seat."

I glance around the room, noticing Union Jack flagpoles flanking the desk's every corner, covering every angle in case a surprise patriotic selfie is needed. I offer my hand and am met with a limp, clammy, lifeless shake from the Health Secretary. I get out my notebook.

"Okay, so, firstly, let's start with the beginning of the pandemic. Was the government prepared for the start of the health crisis? Do you think there was a clear strategy in place?"

The Health Secretary lets out a small laugh of derision.

"Was there a strategy in place? I'll have you know that I watched *Contagion* twice in the early days of the pandemic. That's right. While Italy and Spain were floundering about, we were in meticulous preparation mode."

"You do know that film is fictional, right?" I ask.

"You can learn a lot from it. Bats are evil, Matt Damon is fantastic, and in the end, Laurence Fishburne will save the day ..."

"To be honest, I fell asleep towards the end." He yawns.

"Shall we move on?" I ask.

"What do you have to say about accusations that PPE contracts were awarded to friends of the government with little experience in the healthcare industry?"

"Whaaat? I've literally *never* heard that before." Hancock starts nervously peeling the label off his Evian water bottle.

"Didn't you award your neighbour a medical contract over Whatsapp?"

Hancock dodges the question and picks his silent phone up from the table.

"Hello, yes. Health Secretary, here." He pretends to listen intently on the phone when, to his dismay, it suddenly rings in his hand. He jumps and the phone fumbles to the ground. He looks up and smiles.

"Aren't you going to answer that?" I ask.

"It's probably just Cummings. He prank calls me from time to time ... Anyway, you were asking about how we managed to do such a great job with the whole vaccine thing."

"No, I was..."

"Well, you see after watching *Contagion* for the second time, I realised that those vaccines are actually quite important, so we gave a bunch of money to pharmaceutical companies and said, 'make that juice, baby,' or something to that effect."

"Actually, I was asking about the PPE contracts. Is it true you awarded a £250 million contract to a US jewellery company?"

Beads of sweat drip down Hancock's temple, his clammy hands gripping the sides of the desk.

"I don't know where you've been reading these things, haha." He laughs nervously, pressing a button on his desk. "Suzanne, can we get some more water in here!" he shouts at his secretary through the intercom.

I press ahead with my questions.

"I'm just struggling to understand why you awarded contracts to these companies. I'm sure you can explain. Did the Florida-based jewellery-makers moonlight as medical equipment specialists?"

▲ (ILLUSTRATION BY LOUISE KNIGHT)

"Shhhh ...'
Hancock puts his finger to my lips.
'British ingenuity. Write that down'
"

Violet Editor **Alex Castillo** grills the Health Secretary on the government's handling of the pandemic, and discusses the influence of the movie *Contagion*

"Have you noticed our beautiful flags?" Hancock gestures towards the Union Jacks behind me. While my back is turned, he grabs a small plastic bottle of liquid from behind his desk and squirts the liquid into his eyes. I turn back around to find the Health Secretary slumped over his desk, letting his tears drip onto the polished wood.

"It's just been such a hard time for me and my team. You have no idea! Look ..." he gestures to his eyes, "Real tears! But we've come so far and we're nearly at the finish line thanks to British ingenuity!"

"Isn't AstraZeneca also Swedish?" I ask.

"Shhhh ..." Hancock puts his finger to my lips. "British ingenuity. Write that down," he says, as the tears evaporate from his eyelids and he fixes his eyes on mine.

"Does the government have any indication on when students will be able to return to university?"

"The official government advice is that students will definitely be able to not un-return in the post-Easter rotation of the Earth." Hancock replies.

"I'll have you know that I watched *Contagion* twice in the early days of the pandemic"

"Could the government be more specific?"

"You know, you journalists are all the same." His eyes begin to sharpen. "You attack the government during a time of national crisis. You question our every move. You unpatriotic son of a ..."

Hancock's secretary walks in with a jug of water.

"Ah, thank you, Suzanne. What was I saying? Oh, yes, did I tell you we're moving treasury officials to Leeds? 'We love the North.' Write that down," he commands.

"Well, I think that's all we have time for," he tells me.

"But I was promised thirty minutes?"

Hancock grabs my notebook and pen off the desk. 'Best government eva,' he writes at the bottom of the page.

"There you go. You can print that. Interview over."

He stands up and starts dragging my wheelie chair out of the room.

"Have a nice day." Hancock beams as he kicks me wheeling down the corridor.

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Sport

Catching up with CUBC's Charlie Marcus

Jack Wadding

My Teams call with Charlie, Cambridge Men's Team's cox for the recent Boat Race, took place nine days after Cambridge's double win, however this didn't seem to be too much of an issue. He recounted the day with a clarity that made it seem like he'd just come off the boat. Such was the significance of victory.

Q: How nervous were you on the day?

A: I thought I'd be really nervous but we were all saying in the run up to the race that we were all quite surprised that none of us were feeling very nervous. We were all feeling quite chilled out, I think partly because the race was at Ely, which was more familiar territory for us. On the start line, my 6-man, Ollie Parish was still joking with me and I remember saying 'never change'. You can see on the video, Drew [Taylor] is kind of smiling and I think we were still pretty chilled there. I just had to get the job right and make sure I was pointed exactly where I wanted to be.

Q: Did you have a plan from the start?

A: Yeah, we had quite a detailed plan all along the course. There weren't many markers but we found some and we made some up as we went along. We imagined in the fourth kilometre that there were imaginary rocks at every 250[m] because our coach is a big fan of the book *Touching the Void*. In that, the person who's fallen down the crevasse just has to crawl to the next rock. We also didn't expect what happened to happen; we thought Oxford would be pretty fast out of the blocks. Most of us thought they'd lead us so it was a pleasant surprise to be up after a couple of minutes.

Q: Have you re-watched the footage and what did you make of the comments on your steering?

A: I have. I think most of it was pretty accurate. There were a couple of things I disagreed with that they were saying but fundamentally, on the day, there wasn't much stream at all so being in the middle didn't really help. But what did make a big difference was that there was a crosswind coming from the left.

What I actually said on the finish line wasn't 100% accurate: it was right but the amount that I gave wasn't. So, because it's sheltered on the left side, as far over as you can be that way, you just go faster, so the entire time I was just trying to be left as much as possible. I think I did that fairly well. I also had to balance in the fact that you can get disquali-

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I didn't ever think I was in danger of being disqualified, but it was close

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▼ (BEN TUFNELL)



fied if there's contact.

Q: Were you concerned about the number of warnings you were given?

A: I was very aware I was being warned. But because the crews were running very parallel, you can be very, very close without any touching happening. And because there's no bends, you can be really far over. We also discussed it before. After we lost the toss, I spoke with Rob and we came away with the decision that we were going to get warned a lot. So, there was a conversation before we got on the water and Rob said: "just so you know, expect to hear 'Cambridge!' a lot during this race". So, I didn't ever think I was in danger of being disqualified, but it was close.

Q: How did it feel to be so close to getting clear water between you and Oxford?

A: Actually, I think for two or three strokes there was a touch of open. I mean, it felt pretty good. Although, there was never a point where I felt like I could say to my crew, "ok, we can really go now and kill the race". I always knew that we had to have quite a lot of respect for Oxford. It's quite a big risk to try and kill the race, because if you don't do it, you're in quite a lot of trouble. That's the main difference between

tween the Tideway and Ely as well; when you're on the Tideway, you can just kill it straight away, because if you can take the inside of their bends then that's worth a lot. But because it was a straight-line course, the chances of a crew coming back from that distance is much greater.

Q: Were you aware of the obstacle during the race?

A: Yeah, that was not a particularly enjoyable bit of the race, to be honest. I saw the obstacle as soon as [Sarah] said it. I just remember I heard her tone change completely. I remember just thinking move as little as possible because I didn't want to slow the boat down at all. I was also really hoping that Oxford would clear [the reeds] because I really didn't want to restart the race. I think we still would have won, had the race restarted, but we had a very good start.

Q: What were the "emotional calls" that Callum said motivated the boat to the finish line?

A: I can say some of them, I don't think I can say all of them. The main one was that we wanted to do it for the Goldie guys. We wanted to do it for the guys in the reserve boats who weren't able to race. Breaking it up into 250 to 250, it was like, fifteen strokes for these people. We're an unbelievably close group of friends at CUBC and while they weren't there, it was 100% a team effort. The race was won by far more than the nine of us. The other thing was that we wanted to make Callum Sullivan go his whole time in Cambridge without losing a Boat Race, which is quite a cool thing to do. He won Goldie in his first year and he's won two Blue Boats.

Q: How did it feel when you crossed the line?

▲ **The Cambridge Men's Team celebrates their win** (BEN TUFNELL)

“

I think for a lot of us, maybe because it's been such a weird year, it just sort of dawned on us that this was the Boat Race and we'd just won it

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A: It was pretty cool. It was pretty nice. I just didn't really believe it almost. I think for a lot of us, maybe because it's been such a weird year, it just sort of dawned on us that this was the Boat Race and we'd all just won it. The Boat Race is the most watched bit of rowing that goes on globally. More people watch the Boat Race than watch the Olympic finals, so it was so surreal that we had done it.

A lot of us weren't the type of people that usually win this race: we hadn't always been stars the whole of our rowing career. We always believed we could do it, but so many others said that we couldn't. It was incredible. I remember, Seb, in 3-seat said, with 100m to go, with absolute disbelief: "we're going to win the Boat Race". I can't really describe what it was like to cross the finish line. It was amazing.

Q: How was your swim in the Ouse?

A: Oh, it was so cold. Oh my god, I went in the Thames two years ago when I won Isis-Goldie and the Thames is a lot warmer. I remember being thrown in and having to stay still for five seconds because I had cold water shock. But I went really high – there's a picture of me above head height, which was pretty fun. But it was worse for the guys that jumped in because half the guys still had their masks on, which sucked onto their faces and they said it felt like being waterboarded.

Q: What did you do to celebrate?

A: There wasn't a huge amount we could do because of COVID but there were some big bottles of Chapel Down going around. The people we really wanted to celebrate with were the other squad mates and all our alumni who are really supportive of us. But hopefully we'll be able to do that later on in the year.

