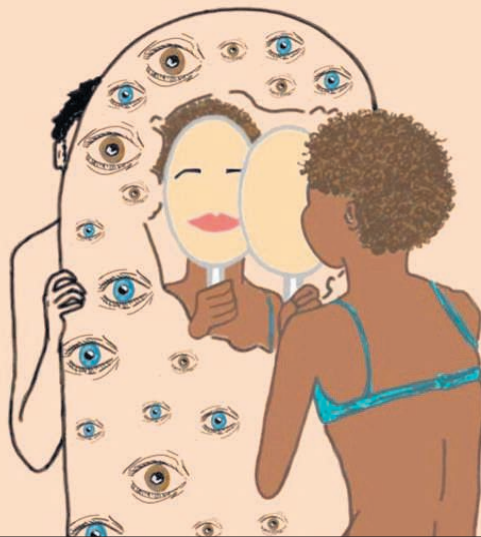


A Black remedy to the male gaze

Slowly, I stopped seeing my blackness as a barrier to feeling beautiful

Features 10



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VARSITY

Jesus donor in the dock

Lorna Kimmins
Deputy News Editor

A consistory court hearing on the removal of a Tobias Rustat memorial opened in Jesus College Chapel on Wednesday (02/02).

Rustat, a patron of the college, was a longstanding investor in several slave trading companies including the Royal African Company (RAC).

Jesus College proposed to relocate the memorial in November 2020, following a recommendation from the College's Legacy of Slavery Working Party (LSWP).

The proposal was met with opposition from descendants of Rustat, as well as alumni of the College.

Students calling for the removal of the memorial gathered outside the chapel on both days of the hearing so far, bearing banners such as "churches are made of people, not objects".

The first day of hearings was dominated by debate over whether removing the memorial from the chapel was to erase Rustat's name while continuing to benefit from his philanthropy.

In their opening statement, the petitioners argued that removing the memorial would contextualise rather than erase who Rustat was, noting that Jesus did not plan on removing a window displaying Rustat's coat of arms from the College dining hall.

When Chaplain Reverend James Crockford took the stand, chief oppositioner Justin Gau asked why, if students were able to contextualise the image of Jesus Christ on the crucifix ("a dead and tortured man") in the chapel, it would not be possible to contextualise Rustat's life there too.

Reverend Crockford said that the issue was with the size and "centrality"

of the memorial, explaining: "If it was a small memorial, individuals could choose to engage with it or not... To enter or exit the chapel, any undergraduate would have to face the memorial".

The opposition also raised Jesus's links with China.

Gau asked Dr Véronique Mottier, Jesus Fellow and Chair of the Legacy of Slavery Working Party, about contemporary slavery in China and how much the College had received from China; Mottier was unsure.

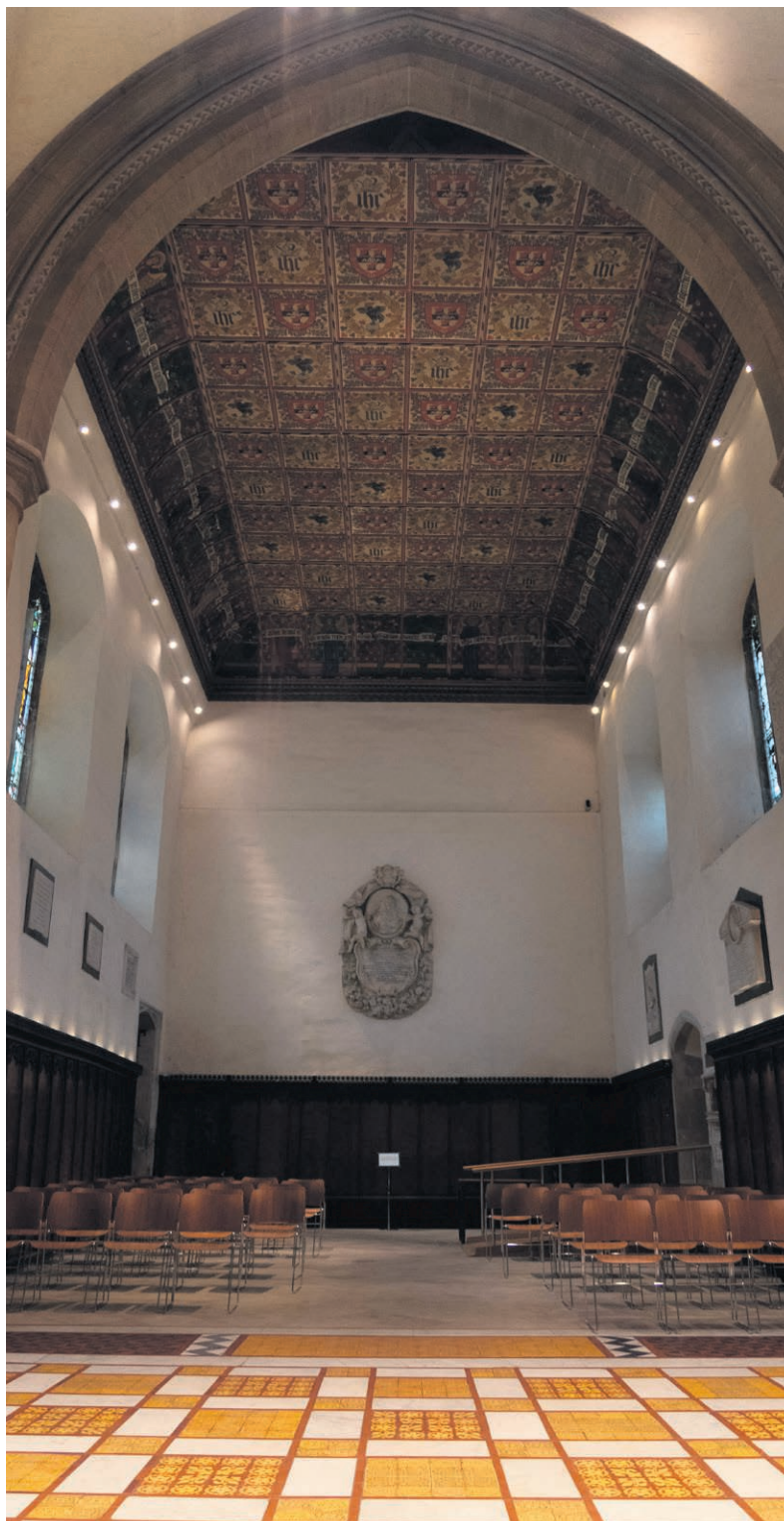
College Master Sonita Alleyne was also asked about the links between Jesus and China; when asked by Gau whether she would denounce the PRC, Alleyne said that "the situation in Xinjiang should concern us... [but] these issues are being conflated together." She also said that since she became Master of the College, there had been "no substantive monies coming in from China or Chinese organisations."

The discussions also considered students' views on the memorial. Alleyne said that taking the memorial out "would remove a barrier for students looking to this space, a religious space, for worship."

On day 2 of the hearing, Jesus College architect Paul Vonberg was questioned about the positioning of the memorial and whether moving it would depreciate its artistic value.

Gau raised concerns that moving the memorial would mean it may not be possible to place it in a position of height, as it currently is in the chapel. Vonberg disagreed that it was necessary to place it at a height, saying: "As an architect, I can say that if you put something high, you are asking people

Story continued page 7 ►



▲ The Rustat memorial in Jesus College Chapel (TIMUR RAKHIMOV)

Uni has no will to demilitarise, says campaign

Aoife Petrie
Deputy News Editor

The Demilitarise Cambridge Campaign have accused Cambridge University of having the power, but not the will, to divest from companies that profit off wars and violence.

At the Divestment Town Hall open meeting earlier this week (31/01), the Chief Investment Officer of the Cambridge University Endowment Fund (CUEF), Tilly Franklin, and the Senior Associate and Sustainable Investments Officer, Honor Fell, responded to questions about its sustainability programme.

When asked why Cambridge University continues to profit off the "violence and destruction of wars", and if the University plans to review their divestment from "controversial industries", Franklin answered: "The individual investment decisions are made by our third party fund managers so we don't have discretion over individual investment decisions".

Franklin continued: "If we had any ethical concerns about any of the companies that they invested in we would bring them up straight away and if they weren't addressed then we would be able to withdraw the university's capital from those funds".

The campaign claimed this statement "confirms that if the university saw a problem with investing in arms, they could simply withdraw their capital from the funds involved".

The inaction of the University was described by the campaign as "an insult to all the communities whose lives have been brutalised by imperial aggression and war".

In the view of Demilitarise Cambridge, "militarisation is baked into the climate crisis, imperial aggression is both motivated and fueled by the extraction of fossil fuels and natural resources. To say you will divest from one but not the other is to misunderstand the climate crisis."

Varsity contacted the University for comment.

News

EDITORIAL

Only week three?

If you're anything as tired as us, you'll be in disbelief that it's not week five already. Lent term's short days don't allow much sunlight into the lives of the Cambridge student, unless they're brave or stupid enough to be up at the crack of dawn to row.

But what has brought sunlight into our lives has been the incredible spirit of the *Varsity* team, who have pulled together yet another incredible print edition this week, even if they've had to sacrifice their sunlit hours - or moonlit ones - to our basement office in order to do so. However, the days are getting longer, and there's a lot of hope around the corner.

Despite the emerging light, these past few weeks have also provided some darkness. Our reporters and writers have wrongly been the subject of online attacks, accusing them of doing little more than their jobs - or indeed, jobs they didn't do.

But with Valentine's Day around the corner, we're here to give you all you need to know, whether you're single or taken. On page 20 you'll find our recommendations for the best things to do in Cambridge, flick to 28 for our film recommendations, and take a look at 27 for the music team's top tracks for a romantic evening. And as pride flags fly across Cambridge, we wish all our readers a very happy LGBTQ+ month.

If you're not looking for love but want to be in the know about the hottest topics, we've got you covered. On page 10 we'll be looking at the myth of the father figure, on 14 we'll hear from a student on Jesus College's trial of donor and slave trader, Tobias Rustat, and on page 18, you'll hear what it's like to be married to a political prisoner.

So whether you're happily single or cosily cuffed, going out tonight (like Emaan) or suffering from (like Beth), we wish you a wonderful February and hope you enjoy this week's paper!

Emaan and Beth

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Caius Bar drunk dry: students deplete stocks on day one

Juliette Kendal
News Correspondent

As a result of a hugely successful opening, Caius Bar was forced to temporarily close after completely running out of stock.

The bar opened on Thursday after an effort from the Gonville and Caius Student Union (GCSU). It has not been permanently open since the summer of 2019. Initially, the bar shut due to renovations in Caius' Old Court and then, later, due to staff shortages.

The Caius Undergraduate Food and Bar Representative, Natalia Emsley, told *Varsity* she first enquired into the possibility of opening the Bar in Easter 2021, when most Covid restrictions had been lifted. However, at the start of Michaelmas 2021, Caius faced understaffing issues, meaning they were unable to open the bar.

Emsley proposed the idea of a student-staffed bar, with much support from the Caius undergraduate body. In a survey sent to Caius undergraduates 99.3% of responders were in favour of a student-run bar, and 46.1% said they would be interested in doing paid work at the bar.

With support from the College, Caius Bar opened last Thursday (27/01). It is student run and is open four nights a week. The bar's launch was an enormous success, as one student described the atmosphere as "buzzing". The bar, according to a student, "was so packed you couldn't find a seat." The launch was so successful that the bar completely ran out of stock, forcing it to close on Sunday (30/01).

However, students will be pleased to know that the bar reopened on Wednesday (02/02), so don't cancel your 'Caius Praius' plans just yet!

Iconic bookshop faces the unknown

Heffer's bookshop, the Trinity Street institution and purveyor of many a student's textbooks, faces an uncertain future as its owner, Blackwell's, went up for sale on Tuesday (01/02). Heffer's has been trading since 1876, while family-owned Blackwell's opened in Oxford in 1879, and is the UK's largest independent bookseller. Potential buyers include retail titan Waterstones.

Paxo slams lacklustre Trinity performance

Trinity's glittering record of three University Challenge titles counted for little on Monday night (31/1) as they crashed out to Edinburgh in the quarter-finals. The Caledonians dominated, racing off to a commanding 80-point lead by half-time. When the Trinitarians finally got an answer right, presenter Jeremy Paxman couldn't resist a cheeky jibe: "You're awake. Good!"

Catz announces new programme to support domestic abuse survivors

Tiffany Tsoi
News Correspondent

Content note: This article contains discussion of domestic abuse.

St Catharine's College has announced its plans to launch a new support programme for survivors of domestic abuse, building on its existing partnership with Cambridge Women's Aid.

The college will host a Survivor's Conference, where 30 survivors will share their experiences with each other and advise local service providers on how to improve support.

In addition to this, the Ask Me Community Ambassador Scheme, an online scheme organised by Cambridge Women's Aid, has organised training schemes to St Catharine's students and staff to educate them on how to respond to and support survivors. Chief Executive Officer at Cambridge

Women's Aid, Angie Stewart, said: "We've been on a remarkable journey with St Catharine's and I am delighted that we will be strengthening our connection in the months ahead for the benefit of survivors in the Cambridge area."

This follows the success of another initiative organised by St Catharine's and Cambridge Women's Aid, which provided 1,456 nights of free accommodation to 23 women and children escaping domestic abuse in 2020.

The temporary initiative was made possible by rooms left vacant due to the pandemic, and the Monday Charitable Trust supported costs by donating £50,000.

The Monday Charitable Trust has confirmed that it will provide a grant of £114,287 over the next 3 years to support this new programme. This will include covering the cost of the survivors conference and the training schemes.

The conference is scheduled for late 2022, at which point the college will have opened a new suite of meeting spaces, which are currently being constructed on Trumpington Street.

Angie Stewart said that she was "confident" that the location of the conference would ensure that survivors of domestic abuse would feel "safe".

"Using the same venue as prestigious academic conferences demonstrates to our survivors that they are valued and deserve to be heard."

Master of St Catharine's, Professor Sir Mark Welland said: "I am proud that our expanded partnership with Cambridge Women's Aid will continue to improve the support available to survivors of domestic abuse in the Cambridge area."

"I encourage our students, staff and Fellows to seize the opportunities that we'll be providing to understand more about domestic abuse and how to respond to survivors."



▲ The Pride flag flying over Selwyn (left) and Peterhouse (centre), and the Progress Pride flag over Girton (right), to mark LGBT History Month (SELWY COLLEGE JCR, MICHAEL PRITCHARD - PETERHOUSE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, © GIRTON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE (UK))

Faith in outer space...



(NASA HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE/FICKR, CATHOLIC CHURCH ENGLAND AND WALES/FICKR)

The Pope would welcome an alien if they visited Earth - but that's beside the point, a Cambridge theologian argues

Fergal Jeffreys
Deputy News Editor

In an interview with *Varsity*, Dr Andrew Davison said, "Pope Francis has an enviable reputation for warmth and generosity so I think he would probably [greet an alien] warmly and generously. He is also on the record saying he would be happy to baptise an alien."

"There's a question about whether that's the right response because some Christian traditions think baptism is mainly about forgiving sins - why should we think life elsewhere has necessarily made bad choices?"

"Even if you believe in revelation, religion has a biological and cultural

specificity so I don't think there's any particular reason why the pope would need to make the alien into a Christian."

Davison discussed the new Cambridge research centre funded by a £10 million grant from the Leverhulme Trust. The Leverhulme Centre for Life in the Universe, opening later this year, will explore the "nature and extent of life in the universe" across the next ten years.

"What's really interesting about the centre is that arts and humanities have been part of the picture right from the very beginning. The scientists working there have been really generous in thinking about how philosophers, people working with literature and theologians could have value in helping them study

the universe."

"It is my job in the arts and humanities brief to consider how our philosophical traditions, religious, traditions literary traditions can help us to think in a fresh way about concepts like origins, pathways and cradles of life"

The Corpus theologian, who took part in a NASA sponsored programme in Princeton, talked about how discovering other life in the universe would neither vindicate believers or atheists.

"An interesting study by Ted Peters found that people from a range of religions would take the news that aliens existed in their stride. This has been a theological discussion since 1450 and believers tend to be unperturbed whenever the suggestion comes up."

"Atheism and any religion are very diverse tents - you'd get different atheistic responses and different religious responses. There are plenty of atheists who would say 'ha gotcha, god can't be real', and plenty [of believers] who would say 'this is wonderful thing for me to talk to me about to my muslim neighbour and see what we can find to agree on.'"

"I'm really interested in the idea that this can be a topic for mutual respect and understanding - not necessarily a reason to convert one another. I think there's no one answer, people will seize upon it as a way to inflate things and other people will seize upon it to have conversations."

Dr Davison's new book, "Astrobiology and Christian Doctrine" will be published later this year.

Problems arise over year abroad scheme

Christopher Dorrell
Investigations Editor

It has been just over a year since the government's departure from Erasmus+ and the establishment of the replacement Turing Scheme.

While failing to provide funding for students coming to the UK, as Erasmus+ did, the Turing Scheme aims to provide funding for UK students to travel to countries across the world rather than just the EU.

In addition, the Turing Scheme will "target students from disadvantaged backgrounds and areas which did not previously have many students benefiting from Erasmus+."

However, students from Cambridge have faced many difficulties with the Turing Scheme. They questioned its claims to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Dr James Illingworth, Chair of the University Council of Modern Languages Year Abroad Special Interest Group, told *Varsity* that "In 2020 the UK received €144.25m from Erasmus+, of which €87.6m went to Higher Education. Turing provided £98.531m of which £67m went to Higher Education."

Turing Scheme funding given to Higher Education this year has been supplemented by leftover Erasmus+ in many universities, including Cambridge. In the

future, these funds will not be available.

This means that certain proposals, such as paid internships, no longer receive funding.

This raises some questions as to whether the Scheme is able to truly target students from disadvantaged backgrounds since paid internships are often not sufficient to cover students' cost of living.

One student on a year abroad in Paris said that "it doesn't really make sense to not fund students undertaking an internship on the basis of them earning a salary. Evidently 3.90 euros an hour (the rate in France) does not amount to a salary and cannot possibly cover one's living costs."

Another noted that "most interns I know in Paris are making 3,90-4,12EUR an hour."

One student, on a British Council assistantship in Spain, told *Varsity* that they were unable to receive funding from the Turing Scheme because they are "workers" in the government's eyes.

They said: "the reality is that we only get paid for twelve hours a week, so once rent and other expenses have been paid, there surely cannot be the same proportion of disposable money available as there would have been to past students."

"While a year abroad entails many life lessons, it should above all be about cultural immersion and discov-

ery, which are in turn facilitated by the mobility enabled by additional financial support, rather than making ends meet."

In addition to the problems raised by having less money to divide between more applicants, departure from Erasmus+ also imposed administrative costs related to the UK's departure from the EU.

Dr Illingworth noted that "the Turing Scheme only covers additional costs generated by the UK's withdrawal from the EU for those with the lowest household income. Obviously these costs did not exist under Erasmus+."

Another of the main concerns has been delays in funding from the Turing Scheme.

While most students on their Year Abroad in Modern and Medieval Languages are using up remaining funds from Erasmus+, students from the Law Faculty have mostly transitioned to the Turing Scheme already.

However, there have been lengthy delays in the funding process.

One law student on a year abroad in the Netherlands was informed on 11th August that the University's application for Turing Scheme funding had been successful, and that "we would be receiving monthly grants as a result."

"This", they continued, "was one of the main reasons why I felt comfortable going on my year abroad."

However, it was not until 7th De-

cember that the funds finally arrived in a lump sum.

Another student from the law faculty commented that "I arrived in France on the 2nd September 2021 and only received an invitation to complete an online form for Turing funding on the 2nd November."

"The money eventually arrived on the 3rd December 2021. Given that I arrived on the 2nd September, at that point I had spent 3 months in France without any of the Turing funding."

Dr Illingworth raised concerns that these problems may only be exacerbated for the 2022/23 round due to Capita taking on operational responsibility for the Turing Scheme in March of this year.

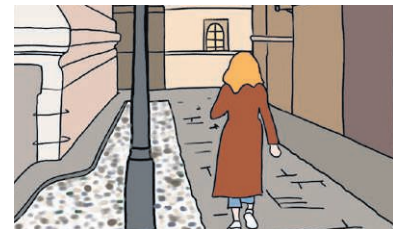
The same concerns were raised in the House of Lords by Baroness Blower, who claimed that "removing the Turing scheme from the British Council, which has a global reach and reputation, is questionable. Awarding it to Capita, whose list of public sector failures in England is extensive, is frankly incredible."

Looking forward, Dr Illingworth said that although funding has been committed for Turing for a further three years, "there is a concern that without an increase in the upper budget Turing cannot make up the difference for language exchanges, now that all institutions have used up their Erasmus+ funding."

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News

Trinity May Ball workers paid living wage after dispute

Eleanor Mann
News Correspondent

Trinity College has changed its rates of pay for its May Ball workers from the current UK minimum wage to the living wage.

Until Monday (31/01), Trinity's May Ball Committee was the only College to offer its May Ball workers under 20 the UK minimum wage (£6.83 per hour) and not the UK's living wage (£9.18 per hour).

In an email to its hired workers, Trinity May Ball committee's Personnel Officer, Bijou Kaye, stated that "After having a discussion with the rest of the committee at our latest meeting, we have decided to revise our pay rates."

The change comes following a shift in the budget to address "concerns about our payment of minimum wage for workers under 21 at our Ball."

Trinity College's Class Act Officer, Owen Kearney, said: "I think for a May Ball that is one of the most expensive in Cambridge they should be able to pay at least the living wage," adding "I'm glad they've changed their mind. Albeit only after pressure."

Famously the richest college in Cambridge, with assets totalling £1.34bn in 2018, Trinity is renowned for its lavish May Balls, with past guests including Russell Kane, Pixie Lott and the Vengaboys.

It therefore came as a surprise to many that their pay for May Ball workers was

over 25% lower than the UK's current living wage and far behind rates of pay for other, less wealthy, colleges.

In an interview with *Varsity*, Claudia Feng, President of Trinity May Ball, stated that the decision to upgrade the rate of pay "wasn't about external pressure at all" and that "it was something we were thinking about doing for the last few years...we just realized we hadn't updated it."

May Balls at the University of Cambridge take place at the end of each academic year following exams, and are black tie events that take place during 'May Week', the last week of Easter term.

Trinity May Ball is renowned for being one of the most expensive events in the calendar, with a two-person ticket costing £410 in 2018. St John's were the only other College to also charge over £200 per head- despite tickets for other colleges' costing typically half the price, such as Clare's, which charged £75 per ticket in 2016.

This year's 156th May Ball will take place at Trinity on the 20th June, with three ticket options available: Standard, VIP or Dining. Trinity are offering reduced tickets for students on a Cambridge bursary of £330 for an internal double ticket rather than £375, although students will need to provide evidence of this to the Trinity May Ball committee.

'The conversation didn't flow': applicants on online interviews

Eleanor Mann
News Correspondent

The Cambridge applicant in 2022 looks very different to their 2019 equivalent: they have not sat GCSEs, were unable to do work experience and have lost significant proportions of their A-level syllabus. For two years in a row, Cambridge University decided to hold its interviews online, dividing public opinion over the benefits of holding them in person.

Varsity asked three students about their experience of online interviews this year, and the impact of Zoom-based communication on the outcome of their application.

"Jack Smith" (who requested to be referred to using a false name) felt that despite being more confident discussing his subject online, he would have felt more connected with the University and invested in his application had he been able to visit. Although he did admit that "wearing a white school shirt with off-camera tracksuit bottoms in my living room was an advantage more than anything."

Another interviewee who applied for Maths felt that "the conversation didn't flow as easily as it might have" and that "people are easier to read in person and it would've been nice to be

in the college itself."

Hanane Zidani, aged 17, who applied to read Law, found the opposite, arguing that online interviews got rid of distractions. She said: "I would have overthought other aspects of the interview that are less important like how to dress and my body language and their body language...I was able to focus more on what I was saying and how I said it because that was the only thing that they could judge."

Jack believed that online interviews acted as a leveler for state school students, stating: "Online interviews may have helped reduce the private-state school gap. I imagine private school applicants are more familiar with the architecture of the colleges than state school applicants and the comfort and familiarity of being interviewed in your own home may, to some extent, redress this balance."

In a statement released before the interviews took place, the University claimed that "no student will be disadvantaged" by the decision to hold interviews virtually, and that applicants seemed "more relaxed" online compared to in-person interviews.

State school applicants to the University received a record number of acceptances last year, with 72% of those receiving offers coming from the maintained sector, up from 70.6% in 2020.

This compares to state school students receiving just over 68% of Oxford's offers for the 2021 cycle, up from 62.3% in 2019.

Oxford also made the decision to hold their interviews online for the second year in a row and chose to use Microsoft Teams, whilst Cambridge used platforms Zoom and Whereby to communicate.

Emma Gladwin, who applied to read Law at Oxford, felt that online interviews posed a number of disadvantages- not only technical: "I believe it was more difficult to portray myself naturally online and, therefore, it was difficult to create a connection and an honest impression."

Fears over the reliability of technology also added to the stressfulness of her experience; "The stress of setting up the interview, being allocated a room, and the constant fear of loss of connection, put me on edge throughout the entire experience."

All of our respondents regretted not being able to visit the college itself, with Emma saying that ultimately: "To be able to stay there, eat food in the Hall, and, in a way, pretend to be a student for a few days would have been incredible. Whilst I am thankful for the interview experience, I cannot hide that I am jealous of the previous applicants."

Statistics on this year's applicants are expected to be released in the Autumn.



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We need U! Inside the campaign to bring buses to Girton and Homerton

Fergal Jeffreys
Deputy News Editor

There's a cruel irony that the two colleges with the worst transport links in Cambridge are Girton and Homerton. Despite being the furthest away, the University-sponsored bus route - known as the U-Bus or Universal bus - stops several miles short of either and the alternative comes at a less regular time. While this provides the usual fodder for Camfess authors, that it takes nearly an hour to walk back from central Cambridge to ei-

ther college has serious implications for students' safety and wellbeing. A recently launched campaign to extend the University bus route - Project U - seems so obvious a demand to appear belated. Indeed, students have been arguing for better access to Girton and Homerton for the past decade. The story of how students have been left waiting for the U-Bus is one of lessons learnt and forgotten, and how the university can wait longer.

Leading Project U on the Girton side is JCR Vice President (VP) Harry Goolnik. We meet at Girton following

a blustery cycle at the same time as a college taxi arrives to carry a student into town. This happens regularly, Harry tells me, when students get injured or have a disability, and can't do the nearly hour-long walk. Every few years a Girton student transfers to a more central college. In 2015 Tottenham MP David Lammy highlighted the case of Azhir, an autistic student who 'began to feel utterly alone' at Homerton due to limited transport. Girton and Homerton are regularly used as a shorthand for 'inaccessible', Harry says, but "there's an institutional neglect which reinforces these stereotypes". "The whole name is 'Universal' bus, the Whippet (bus company) site says it's meant to cater for everyone - but it doesn't. We don't have a basic provision of services."

Students have been campaigning for better access long before the U-Bus was introduced. In 2016, Homerton students unsuccessfully produced a petition to prevent the University from diverting the Uni4 bus route away from the College. The following year, a new contract was signed between the University and Whippet, replacing the Uni4 bus with the U-Bus. That this service failed to include Gir-

ton or Homerton in its route did not go unnoticed by students who pressured the University Planning and Resource Committee (PRC) for amendments to the line. This culminated in a meeting with Pro-Vice Chancellor Graham Virgo in 2020, where an agreement allegedly reached to include student concerns when the contract was up for renewal. A vote was scheduled to take place on amendments to the route where Girton and Homerton might be added. Then the pandemic happened. The contract renewal was delayed until 2023 and the campaign lost its momentum.

Heather Hawkins, Harry's predecessor as VP at Girton and one of the students who met Virgo in 2020, thinks that the delay was in keeping with the University's attitude towards the campaign. "First it was one year, then it was another, they would reference a lack of money but in that same meeting where they postponed it, they approved the spending of millions on other options. The amendment which included every college was deemed the most financially viable by their own data. They don't care and were waiting for outrage to subside so they didn't have to do anything."

Heather became VP at the end of Michaelmas in her first year, a move



▲ Girton JCR Vice-President Harry Goolnik (ROSIE POSER)

which puts her in the unusual position of having worked on the campaign, and still be at Cambridge. Now in her third year, she continues to be frustrated by the lack of progress. "The thing the PRC and the University body don't seem to get is that a three-year delay for them might be absolutely nothing, but for us that's an entire degree. What's being skimmed over is that they literally have a legal requirement to provide access which they're not meeting. Something has to change and I do generally believe that without Covid it would have gone through that meeting, it was the most favourable. I think Covid was their first excuse."



Rough-sleeper jailed for assaulting woman

Jacob Freedland
Senior News Editor

A homeless man who harassed students and residents for money has been jailed.

Jason Allum, 35, was sentenced to six months last Monday (24/1). He pleaded guilty to common assault, using threatening behaviour to cause alarm or distress and begging in a public place.

His last offence involved punching one woman, knocking another to the ground and hitting a man on the back when they refused to give him any money.

One student remembers Allum's attack on the woman. He told *Varsity*: "I was walking up Castle St. when I saw Mr. Allum, panicked, running toward me. He stopped very briefly to ask me for money, but I declined as I had no change. When I reached the top of the hill, I saw the woman who Mr. Allum had punched, winded and hunched over, clearly shocked and in pain. I and a few others waited for emergency services to arrive to help her but thankfully she recovered all ok by the time they arrived."

Allum was sentenced to a year in prison in March 2020 after he breached an order not to beg in Cambridge.

He had been given an ASBO (anti social behaviour order) in 2012 not to beg in the city centre, especially around cash machines. But between



▲ Jason Allum
CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE

“His last offence involved punching one woman, knocking another to the ground and hitting a man on the back when they refused to give him any money”

20 February and 5 March 2020, he was caught breaching it six times near the Cambridge Science Park, St Andrew's Street, Fitzroy Street and King's Hedges Road.

According to *Cambridgeshire Live*, he also intimidated a vulnerable adult in Nuns Way, blocked a member of the public outside a shop in Chesterton Road and became abusive to members of the public outside Cambridge Regional College.

City centre Sergeant Kevin Misik told *Cambridgeshire Live*: "Allum is a prolific, aggressive beggar operating in Cambridge city. He has subjected many innocent people to frenzied attacks because they've refused to hand over any money. His behaviour is often frightening and violent and the sentence reflects the seriousness of his actions."

"We're working with businesses, Cambridge Business Against Crime and CCTV operators to ensure Cambridge city is a safe and pleasant place for people to visit."

Eleanor Bacchus, from the Cambridge city neighbourhood team, stated: "We hope this [sentencing] will provide some respite for the people who have been affected by Allum's behaviour. However, we recognise that this isn't a long term solution and will continue to work with partner agencies to try and resolve some of the underlying problems that are driving this behaviour to prevent re-offending upon his release from prison."



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News

SU trustees to decide whether to ditch controversial voting system

Tommy Castellani
News Correspondent

Cambridge SU's trustee board are deciding on whether to ditch their current voting platform, following concerns raised by members of the Student Council.

The Council voted (24/01) in favour of a motion that recommended the current voting system used in SU and most JCR elections be abandoned in favour of the 'basic online ballot' system (BOB). The BOB system was used in all elections before CUSU and the GU merged in July 2020.

SU trustees are to decide whether to implement the recommendation and are expected to deliver a statement at the next Student Council meeting on Monday (07/02).

According to the motion, the current outsourced system has "not been well received", with complaints focusing on its transparency and accessibility. Nine college JCRs have chosen to abandon it in their elections.

SU Returning Officer Artem Khovanov explained that "the new system relies on SU staff counting the votes manu-

ally which could lead to miscounting or human error". He says that the old BOB system was much more transparent because it sent voters a code, with which they could verify their vote against a list of anonymised votes to ensure that their ballot was cast correctly.

The new system has also faced criticism for being less user friendly; Artem described the webpage as "difficult to find" and said that users "struggle to work out how to register a vote". He suggested that second preference votes were also being lost as a result of confusion over the system's workings and people not understanding the single transferable vote system.

He suggested that these complexities may be a factor in low voter turnout. Turnout was 20.88% in the 2020 Cambridge SU elections, which represents a decrease from 22.2% the year before, when the old system was used.

Former Fitzwilliam JCR President Joshan Parmar explained why he chose not to use the SU's system when organising the College's elections in November. He claimed it lacks "transparency flexibility and usability, all of which are

crucial to running an election". He believes the old system best accounts for unexpected situations that may arise, such as "when there are ties" and "when the candidates in an election change".

Cambridge SU told *Varsity* that while they acknowledge the "important issues" the motion raises, they have "absolute confidence in their ability to conduct fair elections using the current system with the safeguards provided by the student Democracy Committee".

The Democracy Committee members told *Varsity* "I wish we were on the old, much more open system". Whether trustees will implement their recommendation is still unclear.

What are the problems with the current system?

- **Reliability:** tallying votes by hand can lead to miscounts
- **Transparency:** it is impossible to verify your vote
- **Complexity:** confusion over the single transferrable vote system

Medwards JCR calls for speakers to stop discussing fertility

Esmé Kenney
Deputy News Editor

The Murray Edwards JCR have called for talks at the college to be more "student-led", after a speaker at the half-way hall for 3rd years briefly discussed fertility.

Dr Catherine Aitken, who is part of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, was invited to speak at the halfway hall two weeks ago (18/1). The event was meant to take place last year, but was delayed due to the pandemic.

The discussion of fertility at the event sparked some controversy amongst students.

A recent Queerbridge said: "I'm honestly disgusted by the agenda this college seems to be pushing and it's as thoughtless as it is ridiculous. Can you imagine a speaker going into John's and telling all the men that they need to raise kids to be worthy of life?"

This comes after the controversy caused by Medwards President Dorothy Byrne's comments on fertility last October. Byrne said that she wanted to talk "openly about fertility" and hoped that raising awareness of this would "empower" young women.

The Sunday Times went on to report that the college would be holding "fertility seminars". Although the President has since denied that fertility seminars would take place, the anonymous post said that the experience at the halfway hall "felt like the first fertility class."

The post also highlighted how this focus on fertility alienates queer women, non-binary people and men, echoing the criticisms that Byrne faced for her comments last October.

In response to the Queerbridge, the JCR Women's officer Cat Parry assured students that the JCR had "contacted

college to ensure that future speakers (for example at the second year's halfway hall) will not be speaking on reproductive health."

The JCR have also requested that "content notes" may be added to future talks if necessary, and have said that they "are currently discussing ways to make the second year's talk more student-led with the senior tutor."

Speaking to *Varsity*, Cat Parry said that "it was not so much the content of the talk that was alarming, but rather that an Obstetrics and Gynaecology specialist was chosen for the third years' halfway hall."

"In light of the concerns regarding the (ultimately false) claims about reproductive workshops in October, the choice seemed provocative and has (unsurprisingly) upset some members of the student body who feel the college is pushing a reproductive agenda."

"The JCR is currently working with the Senior Tutor in the hopes that the halfway hall for the current second years will be more student-led and given in a Q&A format."

Dorothy Byrne previously told *Varsity* that speakers "talk about a range of subjects relevant to their professional background and personal history and different formats are used."

The speaker at the halfway hall for second year students will be the award-winning screenwriter and producer, Sarah Phelps, who was once a student at the college.

Byrne highlighted that she "will be in conversation with students based on their questions", and that the talk will be "led by a student."

The next halfway hall will take place on 18th February.

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Nick Griffin spotted at Blues Boxing match

Jacob Freedland
Senior News Editor

Nick Griffin, a nationalist politician and boxing Blue attended the "town vs. gown" fight last Sunday (30/1), prompting boos and hisses from attendees.

The Downing alumnus was not invited, but had bought a general admission ticket.

Griffin led the far-right British National Party (BNP) from 1999 till 2014 when he was expelled. He was convicted of distributing material to incite racial hatred in 1998, and has been accused of Holocaust denial - reportedly referring to the Holocaust as the "Holohoax."

According to attendees, "things were openly hostile towards him." He received hisses and boos in the lobby area during half-time and in-between fights, and faced disagreement from students who take issue with his views.

According to one guest: "He was quite keen to be characterised as anti-

▼ Griffin wore a Blues blazer to the match (VARSAITY)



Muslim (specifically anti-Wahhabism) rather than anti-immigration; throughout our conversation he very much adopted the line that he thought it was too late to clamp down on immigration and prevent multiculturalism now and that we just needed to get on with it, but get much harsher regarding Saudi money and influence over British mosques.

"When challenged on his proposition that the English are second class citizens in their own country, he struggled to define what he meant by the English, and repeated the example that it would be much easier to get permission for an Eid parade than a St. George's day one."

A CUABC spokesperson said: "Details of the event were sent out via the club alumni mailing list. Tickets were publicly available to all club alumni."

The "town vs. gown" match involves the University team fighting boxers from in and around Cambridge, but despite their best efforts, the Blues lost 5-10 at the sold-out West Road Concert Hall.

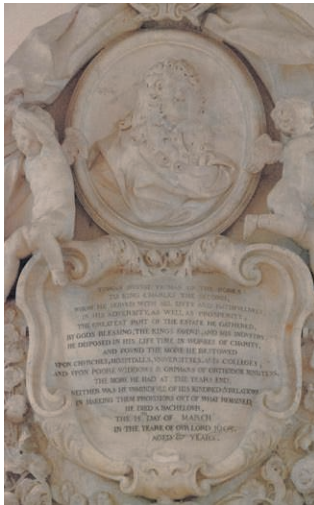
Story continued from front page ►

to revere it". The opposition also asked whether the move from a grade I listed building to East house would be "a significant depreciation of an object of high artistic value", with which Vonberg disagreed.

The hearing then considered whether relocating the memorial would be disrespectful, given that Rustat is buried nearby.

The architect suggested that his burial place could be more broadly defined as "Jesus College, Cambridge" - a suggestion which the opposition disagreed with.

Accountant and Jesus alumnus Andrew Sutton, opposed to the removal of the memorial, was then called to witness. The proposition asked whether he was sensitive to the fact that many members of the College community were made to feel uncomfortable by the memorial. Sutton said he found this "very sad", but that it would be possible to contextualise the memorial in its current location.



▲ The Rustat Memorial in Jesus College Chapel (Varsity)

Sutton expressed concerns about the "cloud of disinformation" that he says "still hangs" above any discussion of Rustat's life, saying that "informed, quiet, and rational discussion" was needed. Sutton said that after researching his finances, he came to the conclusion that Rustat made little money from his investments in the RAC.

The next witness, Dr Roger Bowdler, spoke about the heritage importance of the memorial, saying that removing it could harm its significance, and that the number of memorials in the chapel was "fairly sparse" compared to similar spaces.

Mr Hill asked Dr Bowdler if "any resulting public benefit, including pastoral well-being, opportunities for mission and putting the church to viable uses that are consistent with its role as a place of worship, outweigh the harm?"

The witness responded that whilst he understood Mr Hill's points about pastoral concerns, he was merely performing the duty of compiling a "heritage building report," as had been asked to do.

Hughes Hall to give staff awareness training on spiking

Rosie Smart-Knight
Investigations Editor

Content Note: This article contains discussion of spiking and sexual harassment

Hughes Hall will give staff, students and security guards "awareness training" on spiking and sexual harassment.

The move was part of an investigation released this week (31/1) launched following reports of spiking at a college bop last term (26/11), where three students said they had been spiked.

According to the college, no official complaints were filed.

The report stated that the Bursar had carried out an initial investigation looking into how the college had prepared the bop, and how the event itself was managed.

Though the police initially investigated the event, they have since closed the case and no further action will be taken.

The college has, instead, focused on staff failings, such as pre-event arrangement and planning, and has looked into preventative measures against future re-occurrences.

At the time of the bop, the college came under fire for failing to remove a student who had been identified as harassing female students. They were also

criticised, more generally, for failing to ensure student safety at the in-college event.

The college listed three areas they are working on changing to improve student safety. These alterations include: a revised set of protocols to be developed that covers all bops and similar events, awareness training for staff, security personnel and students, and a term-by-term schedule of all bops and other student events to be agreed in advance.

Hughes Hall have an on-going suspension of all college bops until the recommended changes have been successfully implemented.

An undergraduate student at Hughes Hall, Lotte Brundle, set up a petition calling for staff training following the events of the bop. In relation to the new measures, Brundle commented she is "really heartened by the college's response."

She continued that "Staff and students who work at the bar, and those on our MCR have been undergoing training on how to identify and combat 'bystanding' and sexual harassment. Working at the college bar, it has been clear to see that the college are taking active steps to help prevent incidents like these in the future."

Not-so-late bloomers

A study led by Cambridge Geography Professor Ulf Büntgen has found plants are flowering a month earlier than normal. Researchers analysed 420,000 recorded dates of first flowering for more than 400 species, dating back to 1793. They found that the average date for first blooms was 12 May up to 1986, but since then the date has been pushed forward to 16 April. In 2019, the most recent year included, spring arrived 42 days earlier than the pre-1986 average. "The results are truly alarming", Büntgen said - "When plants flower too early, a late frost can kill them", but even more seriously, there is a risk of "ecological mismatch", when plants and hibernating or migrating insects, birds, and other wildlife are no longer synchronised.

John's housing gets green light from Council

Cambridge City Council approved plans presented by St John's College to build 39 townhouses, after concerns over who will use the 245 new rooms were allayed. The college had originally planned to set aside 125 rooms for academic staff, but councillors insisted that the Wilberforce Road development should be used by students primarily. The plans have been given the green light on condition that a minimum of 213 rooms be reserved for students.

Analysis Why is Tobias Rustat on trial?

This week a consistory court is hearing on the removal of a memorial to Tobias Rustat in Jesus College Chapel, writes Fergal Jeffreys. The college petitioned the diocese to have the memorial relocated to a "place of learning".

Who is Tobias Rustat?

Tobias Rustat was a patron of Jesus College in the seventeenth century who had investments in several slave trading companies, including the Royal African Company (RAC). Investors at the time were aware of their involvement in the shipping of enslaved people across the Atlantic Ocean. Rustat commissioned a memorial to himself in the chapel while he was a major college donor.

Why is Jesus College seeking to remove the memorial?

Jesus College established a Legacy of Slavery Working Party (LSWP) in 2019, aligning with the Universities announcement of an inquiry into historical links to slavery. This involved eight academics, two student representatives and the College archivist. Among their recommendations were: returning a Benin Bronze statue of a cockerel and moving the Rustat memorial into an expanded College Archive, where it can be better contextualised.

Why does the college need permission to move the memorial?

Since the chapel is a grade I listed ecclesiastical building, any change has

to go through a Church of England (CofE) consistory court. Jesus College petitioned the Diocese of Ely last year, proposing that the memorial be moved. In 2019, the CofE announced they would review thousands of monuments in churches and cathedrals which contain historical reference to slavery. Though administered at a local level, the guidance set out said that ignoring contested heritage is not an option.

Who is opposing this move?

Objection to the removal comes from the Rustat Memorial Group, 70 alumni represented by barrister Justin Gau. Rustat's descendants have argued that the RAC was not the source of the money donated to the college and undergraduates are misinformed about the patron.

What does this case mean for the Universities historical links to slavery?

Though the Rustat case is brought before an Anglican church court, students have been crucial in pressuring the college to act and would likely feel empowered to demand further action from the university. Also mentioned in court was the college's links to China and its human rights abuses. Students have previously expressed concerns over the apparent contradiction between the college's working group on historical slavery and its modern analogue. In 2020 the college accepted £200,000 from a Chinese government agency and £155,000 from Huawei.

The Mays Call for submissions!



The Mays Anthology is delighted to announce that submissions for our 30th edition are open.

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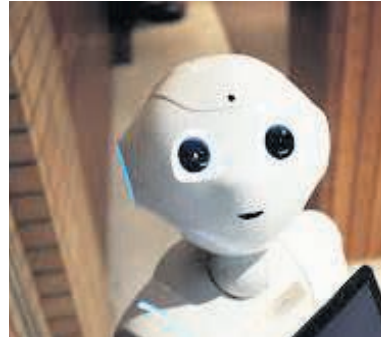
For more details see www.themaysanthology.co.uk/submissions/ or email: mays-editor@varsity.co.uk

News

Tax hike for grads

Graduates will face higher repayments on their student loans next year after the government's "tax rise by stealth", according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies. Universities minister Michelle Donelan announced last Friday (28/01) that the minimum undergraduate student loan repayment threshold will be frozen by 2022-23. Analysis from the IFS reveals that for a graduate earning £30,000 a year, the freeze would result in an in-

crease of £113 in student loan repayments in the next tax year. They say the government "can only expect to save around £600 million per cohort of university students", while a longer freeze could result in "a much lower cost for the taxpayer" and a "much higher burden on graduates" than they expected when taking out the loans. The freeze will apply to graduates who studied at UK universities from 2012.



▲ Robots are being used to fight modern slavery (NEGATIVE SPACE)

AI against slavery

Cambridge has invested in artificial intelligence technology which can alert companies to risks of modern slavery, according to the Cambridge Enterprise annual review. Versd AI, created by University-based researchers Simon Baker and Pascal Wichmann, can analyse "millions of documents" to identify possible supply chain concerns and "help companies comply with modern slavery legislation."

Living milk cells

Living cells found in breast milk could help future cancer research, Cambridge scientists have found. Researchers from the Wellcome-MRC Cambridge Stem Cell Institute (CSCI) and the University's Department of Pharmacology have found that cells found in milk are alive. The discovery means that scientists now have an easier way to collect living breast cells, which could aid future research into breast health.



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Baroness Hale studied Law at Girton (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

Hale comes home

Former Supreme Court Justice Baroness Brenda Hale has been appointed Yorke Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Law Faculty. Baroness Hale studied Law at Girton, going on to become a member of the Court of Appeal in 1999 and President of the United Kingdom Supreme Court in 2013. Baroness Hale became a public figure two years ago when the Supreme Court judged Prime Minister Boris Johnson's decision to prorogue parliament unlawful.

The Maypole reopens

Beloved pub The Maypole has reopened after having been forced to close for eight days. The Portugal Place local had been shut from 10 to 18 January due to construction work on Park Street car park next door. The pub's covered courtyard area had to be taken down by developers, but has now been reconstructed: owner Vincent Catiglione told The Cambridge Independent that the "brand new decking" looks "wonderful".

Male cancer research

Gene mutations linked to breast and ovarian cancer in women also increase men's risk of developing prostate cancer, according to Cambridge researchers. The research shows that, for men who carry the BRCA2 mutation, the risk of developing prostate cancer by the time they are 80 is twice that of non-carriers. It is hoped that the discovery will allow high-risk individuals to get screened for cancer earlier.

Offer against the odds: 4A*'s in A&E

A teenager who sat her A-Level exams a year early while fighting for her life in hospital has been offered a place to study chemical engineering at Emmanuel College. Tejal Paliya, who achieved 4A* grades, sat her exams in a hospital room after contracting sepsis in March 2021. In an interview with Cambridgeshire Live she said, "Ever since I can remember, I've wanted to be an engineer"

Features

Moving on without them

Columnist **Hannah Gillott** explores the uniquely paradoxical experience of starting university alongside the difficulties of grief

At home, my mother still lived beside me. I wore clothes she had washed, ate with cutlery she had once made aeroplane into my mouth, and walked on floors which her size 4 heels used to clack over, her hands had cleaned, and were left coated in a quantity of dust she would never have tolerated. In Cambridge, I now share my days and nights with friends she never met, kiss men she has never passed judgement on, and walk through cobbled streets her heels had never known. To continue to live a life absent of my mother was one thing; to move into a new phase of that same life without her, I have found, is something entirely apart. Novel and painfully adult experiences serve as a stark reminder of my loss - now that I know she will not meet my first boyfriend, it feels all the more real that she will never cheer as I graduate, nor wipe her tears with the same hand that holds a parsimoniously filled glass of champagne at my wedding dress fitting. Whether or not these happen outside of coming-of-age films will have to

be something my friends discover for me. Although I knew she could never have walked through the front door at home, it is embarrassing to admit that the fact she would not know which

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During nights
spent doubled
over laughing
... an uninvited
guest sits quietly
in the corner
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door upon which to knock at university has brought me such anguish.

Alongside this, university life is washed with a subtle undertone of guilt. During nights spent doubled over laughing, or fuzzy evenings punctuated

by a smashed wine glass and survived by a coating of sticky residue on the JCR floor, an uninvited guest sits quietly in the corner, watching me with a tempered, knowing disdain. Mostly, the gate-crasher goes unnoticed, but now and then their whispers of afternoons sat in a sterile hospital room, nights passed sleepless, and mornings marred by dread remind me that while I find myself lifted by effervescent joy, I leave behind someone in the earth below. Other times, I am acutely aware that in my absence, our family at home of three has shrunk to two (or four if you were to count the cats, and the fact that I normally do is telling in itself). When my brother flies the nest next year, my dad's wry jokes about rattling around an empty home will ring unpleasantly true.

There is of course no doubt that my mother would want me to live the life I find myself lucky enough to be leading, yet I cannot help but feel each joyous, stressful, wonderfully Cambridge minute that passes without her in my thoughts wrests her from my grasp. Her face is beginning to blur at the edges, and her voice comes and goes, her vo-

cabulary shrinking as mine is forcibly increased by erudite supervisors - and my never ending Spanish Quizlets. Most noticeably, upon my arrival in

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A term spent joyously and freely,
unshackled by
any self-imposed
obligation to pre-
serve her
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college her death was known only to me, leaving me with the conundrum of how, and when, to announce it. Seemingly simple, those who have had to inform hapless friends of a family tragedy will be aware of the intricate

choices I found myself making in my body language, lexicon, and timing - the latter sometimes comedic, if I was in a mood to embarrass others and indulge myself. Following the lead of friends announcing a new boyfriend online, I went for the 'soft-launch'. Emulating the subtle art of increasingly obvious Instagram stories, I led with the past tense, then responded to questions about my parents with a pointed 'my dad...', and finally, sealing the deal like a change of Facebook relationship status, dropped whichever euphemism I had settled on that day.

Although painful and paradoxical, to keep my mother alive at university has been to announce her dead. She hated tattoos, so even a tasteful physical testament to her life is off the cards, and, existing in Cambridge only in the colour of my hair, the way I laugh, and my memory, there are few testaments I can offer her. A life well lived. Her legacy and words shared, not hidden. Most counterintuitively of all, a term spent joyously and freely, unshackled by any self-imposed obligation to preserve her, her space, and the daughter she knew.

Woman's woman in a man's world

Alessandra Rey writes a love letter to her female relationships

A monument to an epiphany I landed on was comprehending the gravity and inexplicable significance women have on my life in the most remarkable and astoundingly positive way. It dawned on me so colossally, I took a step back and thoroughly meditated and reflected upon just how extraordinary women and women's relationships are with one another. In a world that still perpetuates female-specified "bitchiness" "cattiness", hostility and competition, I so adamantly wanted to write a love letter to women and express the impact that female relationships have made on me. Female support, love, care, friendship and solidarity, feels to me, an unparalleled sacred inviolability. I will forever

maintain my overpowering, unconditional love and admiration for my mum. A woman who has combated many troublesome and distressing times, challenges and adversities of her own, I am so lucky to have been raised by such a phenomenal woman. Being raised by a young single mother and having a burdensome to later terminated relationship with your father, you witness your mother's role, despite the monolithic demands, go constantly underappreciated. My mum juggled so many pressures in far-from-ideal

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My female
friendships have
unequivocally
formed who I
am
”

circumstances and continued to have the most caring, empathetic and kind heart. My mum has unflinchingly listened, cared and supported me. She is my best friend and my lighthouse of safety, warmth and encouragement. My mum has taught me the power of listening, selflessness, forgiveness, resilience, vulnerability and understanding and I hope that I have adopted even a fraction of those traits. When I felt like I couldn't escape life's beleaguement, my mum did everything to ameliorate my pain and has always put

my happiness first and I am so lucky to have grown up with such a role model.

My female friendships have unequivocally formed who I am. I encountered bullying from girls and boys and the stereotypical "bitchiness" but I will resolutely stand behind knowing that boys can be just as "bitchy" "catty" "gossipy", etc. and that it is not gender specific. Having moved from six different schools, mixed and same-sex, I believe these descriptors are never only or exacerbated female traits. I was blessed with someone that bolstered, listened and aided my pain, who I had known since age four. I felt so unworthy, targeted and misunderstood but to know someone who you have grown up alongside, presenting such kindness and support, is unparalleled. Natalie taught me the profundity of loyalty, trust, solidarity. I met my friend Lucie at 14, who I never fail to laugh with, share everything with and am constantly taken aback by her immense heart, gracious and thoughtful nature. It was my mum, Natalie and Lucie who inspired me and showed me uncompromising kindness, that pulled me out of the dark hole when I was a shell of myself.

After leaving school, I met a phenomenal woman, Caleigh. She is my guidepost and my inspiration and represents to me astonishing wisdom, concern, conscientiousness and compassion. I felt as though we led, in many ways, mirrored lives and meeting her was a healing force, to know someone who understood me to my core.

Continued online



▼ HANNAH CASTLE

A Black remedy to the male gaze

Features

For staff writer **Zoe Olawore**, Cambridge has been an unexpected place to find a 'solution' to the male gaze, as she shares how the Black community at university has helped her to slowly overcome it

The male gaze is inescapable. So deeply embedded in a woman's identity. "Even pretending you aren't catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy", Margaret Atwood once famously said.

I would always hear the male gaze being discussed as something everlasting within feminist spaces, leaving me apathetic. However, I initially did not realise how heavily underlined the male gaze was by racism. And so, confronting internalised racism was a step towards decentering the male gaze.

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I was hyperaware of my differences

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Growing up in a racially monolithic area in Essex, my ideas of beauty were narrow. I saw beauty as akin to whiteness and such a belief was only exacerbated by my time spent in school. Despite going to an all-girls school, I was still overly concerned with appealing to the male gaze. Being one of the few black girls in my grammar school, I was hyperaware of my differences. Consequently, every month I would lather a relaxer on my hair even though this meant my scalp was burnt. My hair is an integral part of my identity: I saw, and still see, my hair and my appearance as two heavily interconnected elements. Because I treated my hair as the axis upon which beauty would rest, this was the first 'problem' I wanted to deal with: my hair being

coarse and short. And when I eventually stopped relaxing my hair, this was not some sort of revolutionary act. I had simply taken to my mum's threats that I would be bald by my wedding day.

Apps like Tik Tok only made my discomfort grow. Before I was on 'Black Tiktok' (thank God for that) my For You page was overcrowded with videos of white women who had gone viral for their appearance. Although the general attitude towards race at this time was unconsciously post-racial, I noticed the general trends in what appearances were deemed favourable. This was white or white-passing skin, type 1-2 hair, and thin noses. The male gaze was white and favoured what looked white.

When getting ready to move to university, I only expected my feelings to get worse. Before October, I spent hours researching different ways to do make-up, and spent hundreds of pounds - dismissing my Mum's shouting - because I felt obliged to do the most to feel pretty in a white space like Cambridge. I felt like I was running a race where everyone else was at the starting line and I, being behind them, had to compensate.

But more recently, it dawned on me that perhaps this was not a race I had to compete in. This may be idealistic of me, but perhaps the male gaze is an experience every woman is equally subject to. Nonetheless, I began to imagine a reality where I actively refused to participate in the fight to feel beautiful amidst structures that naturally disadvantaged me.

A few weeks into my first term these imaginings began to materialise. The obsession that I had with the male gaze dramatically decreased. My feel-

ings of liberation, though small, did not stem from an individual effort. It did not decrease by spending more hours on my hair or more time on my makeup. Rather, it was through the time I spent with my own community.

My struggle with the male gaze could not be individualised when I was up against issues that are systemic.

Quite naturally, I spent time with other black people in and outside my college perhaps to avoid feeling like an outsider in Cambridge. Surrounding myself with other black women, in particular, felt like a form of self-representation. By seeing 'myself' more and more I began to feel more comfortable in my own skin. Similarly, being around black people who were assured about their appearances made me realise I had no reason not to be. Slowly

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I stopped seeing my blackness as a barrier to feeling beautiful

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I stopped seeing my blackness as a barrier to feeling beautiful: my curvy nose, darker skin, and thicker hair were not parts of myself that deserved my hate. Nor did I engage in some sort of artificial praise of my features: I just started to see parts of my body as normal since I saw them all around me.

But all of this is not to purport that I am now completely comfortable with

myself. Eurocentrism and the male gaze is not something that can be escaped by having a diverse friendship group. Similarly, I cannot act as if my community does not perpetuate a beauty standard of its own, a standard charged by colourism and texturism. Nonetheless, I am proud of the progress that has been made.

Cambridge was the last place I

had expected to find a 'solution' for the male gaze. While liberation from racist notions of beauty by myself was impossible and a 'male fantasy' itself, my remedy could be found within my community. Surrounding myself with other black people - particularly black women - has given me an environment where I can be comfortable with my appearance rather than degrade it.



TIFFNEY WAIT

The myth of the 'father figure'

Zakariyya Ali shares his experiences of being raised in a single-parent household

My parents divorced when I was very young. Since the age of a few months old, I was raised by a single mum. I have tried to avoid bringing up the topic of my father throughout my life — not because of any inherent feelings of embarrassment or sadness, but because it would always seem

the dampen the mood the second that I mentioned it. "I'm sorry to hear that", was the near-automatic response. "Nah, it's not that deep", I would

reassure those awkwardly seeking to console me for something I was not very bothered about. As an only child raised by a single mum, I would often make up stories about how my dad was working elsewhere when the inevitable question of 'what does your dad do?' came up. I'd write Father's Day cards steeped in blue and covered in sketches of footballs, only to leave the masterpiece to decay at the bottom of my backpack. Despite not feeling any sense of deprivation or psychological malaise because of being a child of a single-parent home, there nevertheless persisted a sense of stig-

ma around the fact that I never did fit the archetypal, nuclear familial model which a lot of my friends shared. I was constantly told by my peers, distant relatives and quasi-scientists that I needed a "father figure", that it was essential to my development. Whatever that means. I repeatedly asked myself why this individual was so necessary for allowing me to grow into a fully-fledged, law-abiding citizen, with a squeaky clean criminal record and no signs of delinquency. What was so repulsive about being raised by a woman? I never felt impaired in any way, nor did I see myself at some implicit advantage. And yet the stigma persisted.

Jay-Z, in his autobiography Decoded, described his fatherless upbringing as a 'gift', stating that 'we got to pick and choose the ancestors who would inspire the world we were go-

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What was so repulsive about being raised by a woman?

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ing to make for ourselves'. Brushing away the imaginary concept of the 'father figure', I similarly took inspiration from the lives and accomplishments of

individuals like Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, and even former football manager Arsene Wenger. whom I would religiously watch guide my beloved Arsenal to sporting success on a weekly basis. Equally so, I sought advice on how to navigate the world as a young lad from a plethora of individuals, both male and female, thus forming somewhat of my own 'father figure' out of an eclectic mix of varied perspectives, lived experiences, and worldviews. I quickly learned that there was no single blueprint to growing up, nor was there some omniscient male figure that was necessary for my development.

I was also extremely lucky to have an environment that did not lead me down a negative path. My boxing coach, teachers, friends, and of course my mother, all played a role in shaping who I am today, such that I never felt any sense of deprivation as a result of my fatherless upbringing. Just like Jay-Z, I had the unique gift of being able to 'pick and choose' whose principles I would internalise, and whose counsel I would seek.

There is a distinct scene from The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air that many will be familiar with. In the episode 'Papa's Got a Brand New Excuse', Will Smith comes to grips with the loss of his absentee father for a second time, embracing Uncle Phil in a heart-warming moment as he cries out: 'how come he don't want me?'. Will Smith, whose

parents also divorced, was rumoured to have improvised that entire scene, leaving the audience, of a normally laughter-provoking sitcom, entirely

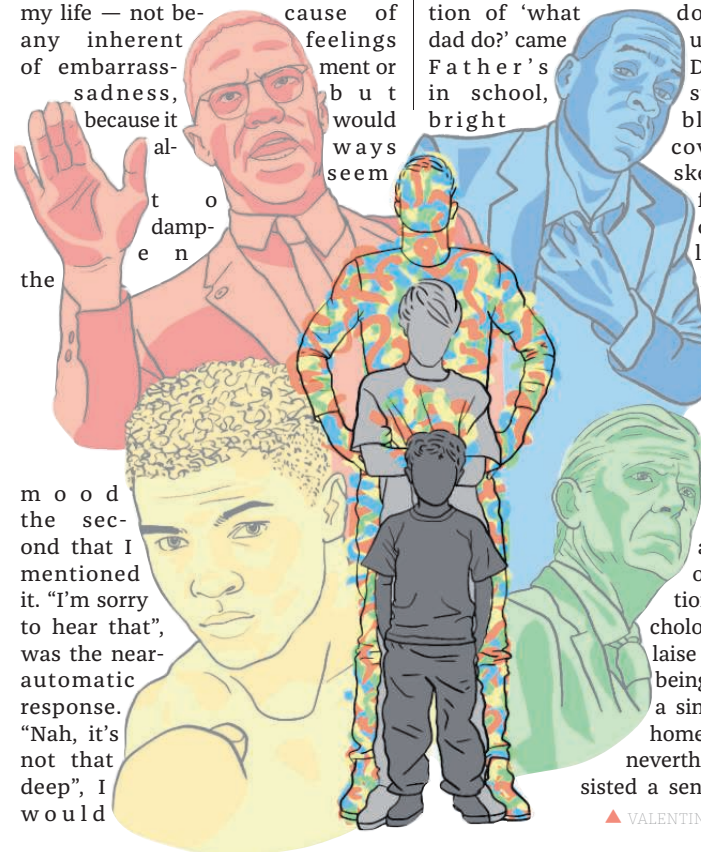
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Success has no definitive background

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silent. Throughout the entire show, it is Uncle Phil who takes on the role as the 'father figure', and not the character of Will Smith's biological father. Much like Uncle Phil, who is equally able to rule with discipline and show unconditional love to his nephew, I am lucky to have a supporting corner in my mother who is there to play 'mum' and 'dad' when necessary, whatever those terms mean in reality. There is no number one familial model for psychological and material success, and I have spent my life coming to terms with this fundamental fact.

What people like Jay-Z, Will Smith, Adele, or Barack Obama demonstrate is that success has no definitive background, that it simply does not require a mythical father figure, and — most importantly — that it is crucial for us to be proud of our 'anomalous' upbringings, regardless of what others may think.



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Opinion

Are the 'dating app dons' just the tip of the iceberg?

In light of the recent scandal, columnist **Maia Livne** explores the negative impacts of Tinder, both in Cambridge and in our society as a whole, especially its commodification of human intimacy

Content note: this article contains mentions of spiking, and discussion of rape culture and sexual assault

Can one really have it all? Probably not, especially if all includes both a post at the University of Cambridge and a thriving 18-year-old-seeking Tinder account. Yet where do we draw the line? Some students believe "Academics being on Tinder undermines the trust students place not only in the staff, but in the institution itself". But, to be fair, academics are allowed to be lonely and desperate, and crossing the lawns may not be so worth it if you have to stomp on those grass blades all by yourself. People have social media accounts - as is their right. They are often criticised for the content they share but that does not mean that once you receive authority over others you are required to dedicate your time to your Goodreads fans alone.

Tinder creates the illusion that intimacy is a product

Dons shouldn't set their age-span to one that overlaps with most students - yet that is not strictly speaking illegal. Some of the teaching staff at Cambridge are fresh out of uni themselves, and if a 25-year-old met a 19-year-old at a bar and hooked up with them, we might not like it but it is not inherently wrong. The main issues arise when you state openly that you are a staff member of the University, or when students state openly that they are students. Especially in a place like Cambridge where one can easily make that assumption about most of the 18-to-22-year-olds.

While staff should completely be held accountable for that, we should note how the format of Tinder flattens people into flickering photos through which one can swipe quickly, ignoring pieces of information that could less easily be swiped away in a live conversation. And it is way easier to say that you are dom and kinky to your phone screen, ignoring that it will soon be on the screens of many teenagers, than it is to say it out loud. Of course, University staff should be aware of those things and should be held accountable, yet they are part of the larger phenomenon of how Tinder is distorting our sex lives.

Social media has required us to de-tangle human personality and distil each

component, bottling them for commercial use: Twitter-witty, Insta-pretty. Unfortunately, most people are not professionally equipped to be all of those things on all of these platforms, and the way to clout is usually scattered with shattered horrors of cringe. Maintaining your own miniature panorama is a full-time job, as the fact that celebrities pay people to do it for them proves. If Kendall Jenner is not trusted with her own Instagram, why should mediocre 30-year-old men be handed a weapon as deadly as Tinder freely? Not only are people usually more awkward and blunt on social media, it usually doesn't even work. We are attracted to people who interest us in many layers, and no shirtless-fish-holding picture can generate the same effect. While all online personas deform the personality, sometimes even for the better, Tinder creates the most jarring dissonance by taking the most intimate part of us and demanding we create a calling card for it. People enter Tinder for intimacy, and what is less intimate than an ever-shuffling deck of cards with strangers' faces on them?

Tinder creates the illusion that intimacy is a product. You don't necessarily pay, but you browse the catalogue as you flick through Netflix or Deliveroo, believing there must be the perfect entertainment for you somewhere. Much like my high school self, the app does not distinguish between the arts of chemistry and geography. Sex, love or even friendship are never ten miles away. They are five drinks away, two days of talking away, five-years-three-fights-and-one-cat-away. Relationships always get built and the process, even if it lasts a night, is always an essential part of it.

When we see intimacy as just the obvious outcome, we start seeing sex as something to which we are entitled. And any obstacle - such as meeting the person beforehand, mapping out the circumstances, and

even consent - becomes a cumbersome obstacle in the way of a fun night. As we are surrounded by cases of spiking on campus, on college grounds and even on

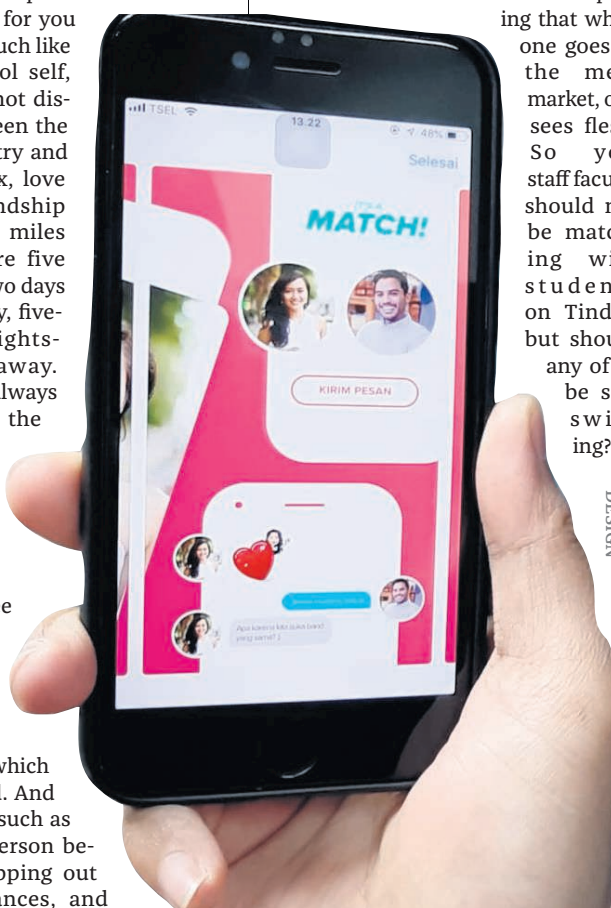
What is less intimate than an ever-shuffling deck of cards with strangers' faces on them?

Varsity trips - we have to trace back how people's approach to sex gets so distorted that the other person's consciousness is seen as a threat to the main goal. That is absolutely not to say that people who have Tinder support rape culture in any way, but to say that Tinder as an app promotes the idea of sex as an act that is available and detached from organic chemistry and communication.

Tinder has clearly not cured the world's sex drought, but rather oversaturated it with uncomfortable intimate reveals. It is not surprising that when

one goes to the meat market, one sees flesh. So yes, staff faculty should not be matching with students on Tinder; but should any of us be still swiping?

YOGAS
DESIGN



Partygate is good for

Deputy Opinion Editor **Hugh Jones** argues the recent criticisms

In recent weeks, it has become fashionable to suggest that "partygate" has undermined our democratic processes. Even Sajid Javid, the Health Secretary, and someone who is supposed to downplay the government's mis-

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Johnson seems to have thought that conventions are the optional extras of government

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steps, acknowledged that "Of course things like this damage our democracy".

I, however, am not quite convinced that this is true. Or rather, the English student in me cannot resist nit-picking Javid's exact word choice, and what it implies. To say that partygate has damaged our democracy is to suggest either that our democracy was better before the scandal broke, which seems wholly implausible (bad things aren't bad just because the public find out about them), or that the parties themselves were damaging, which is probably what Javid, and the various other commentators making a similar point, meant. Nonetheless, this formulation, while more reasonable, still strikes me as flawed.

Partygate, at its most fundamental, represents a violation of the rules which govern our political system. This sounds very bad until you realise that the Johnson ministry has been riding rough-shod over these rules since Boris first moved into Number 10. In his two-and-a-half

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That they almost certainly broke lockdown rules is hardly surprising

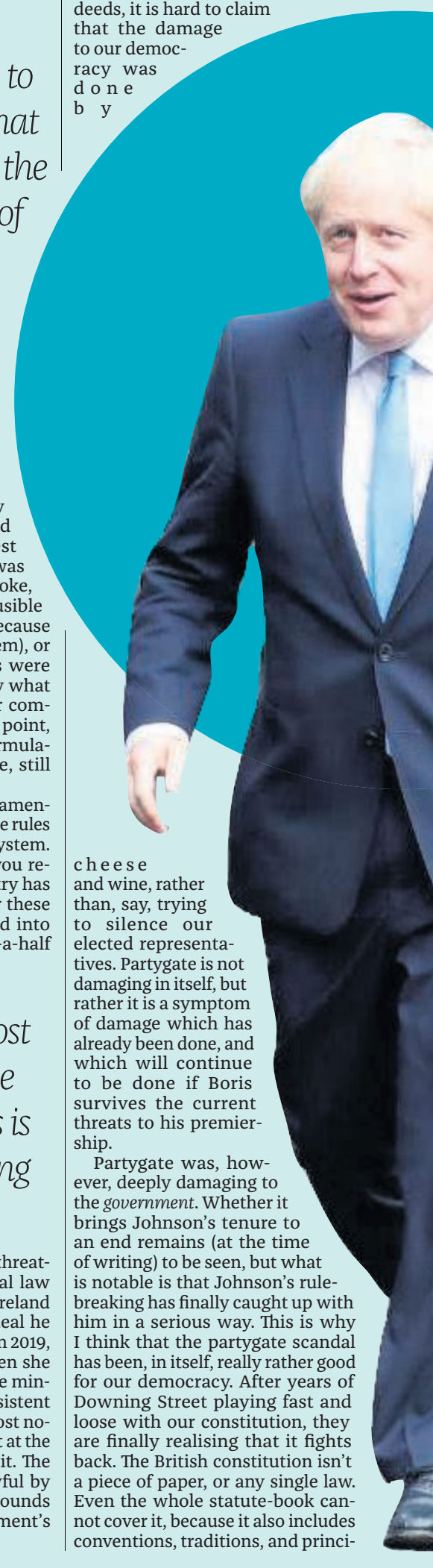
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years in office, Johnson has threatened to violate international law over conditions in Northern Ireland created by the very Brexit deal he successfully campaigned on in 2019, refused to fire Priti Patel when she was found to have broken the ministerial code, and shown consistent disrespect for Parliament, most notably by seeking to prorogue it at the height of tensions over Brexit. The move was later ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court on the grounds that it had frustrated Parliament's constitutional role.

Given that Johnson, and various members of his government, have been willing to undermine the constitution so blatantly, that they almost certainly broke lockdown rules is hardly surprising. In fact, in the context of Johnson's other misdeeds, it is hard to claim that the damage to our democracy was done by

cheese and wine, rather than, say, trying to silence our elected representatives. Partygate is not damaging in itself, but rather it is a symptom of damage which has already been done, and which will continue to be done if Boris survives the current threats to his premiership.

Partygate was, however, deeply damaging to the government. Whether it brings Johnson's tenure to an end remains (at the time of writing) to be seen, but what is notable is that Johnson's rule-breaking has finally caught up with him in a serious way. This is why I think that the partygate scandal has been, in itself, really rather good for our democracy. After years of Downing Street playing fast and loose with our constitution, they are finally realising that it fights back. The British constitution isn't a piece of paper, or any single law. Even the whole statute-book cannot cover it, because it also includes conventions, traditions, and princi-



for our democracy

m of the government has helped reinforce our democracy

ples. Throughout his time in office, Johnson has cared about these the least. Courts, and ultimately the police, in extremis, can and will enforce legislation. But Johnson seems to have thought that conventions – like firing ministers who break the ministerial code – are the optional extras of government, vague bits of rhetoric and idealism to be occasionally employed in sound-bites, but to be ignored if they prevent the slightest bit of friction to his policies.

What Johnson is now learning is that conventions and principles exist for a reason, and that even the most powerful person in the country neglects them at their peril. In this country we have the freedom of speech and of the press, they are written into the fabric of our democracy, and no matter how much Boris bashes the BBC and the right

What is notable is that Johnson's rule breaking has finally caught up with him in a serious way

to protest, people will make use of these freedoms if they feel moved to do so.

“ Partygate is not damaging in itself, but rather it is a symptom of damage which has already been done ”

When the partygate scandal broke, suddenly a very substantial number of people felt very moved indeed. Boris has been mercilessly caricatured, mocked, and disparaged in every sphere of public life; from social media to the high street, via I'm A Celebrity, Britons have not just been speaking truth to power. We as a nation have been pointing and laughing at the most powerful man in the country, who has been unable to do anything about it. Moreover, our institutions have been taking advantage of Johnson's weakness to reassert their independence and to win important battles

“ Boris has been mercilessly caricatured ”

for the principles he has neglected or undermined – most notably when the House of Lords gutted the Government's authoritarian police and crime bill. Even the Cabinet Office inquiry under Sue Gray seems to have fought back against the threats to accountability posed by the Met's ill-considered decision to not only investigate the allegations criminally, but to request that the Gray report be redacted in the process. By issuing an utterly scathing “update”, she struck a blow for responsible government – and underscored the importance of independent institutions. That any of this is necessary is obviously a problem in itself. But as Hong Kong's free press crumbles under Xi Jinping's jackboot, Russia continues to imprison dissidents, and protests are crushed with tanks in Kazakhstan, the fact that all of us are free to call our Prime Minister an incompetent, spineless, shamelessly grasping and deeply corrupt man who is hopelessly out of his depth, is really quite a beautiful thing indeed, and if partygate has encouraged us to do so then, well, I'll drink to that.

▲ UK GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

A loss of the arts is a loss for everyone

In devaluing the arts, modern culture fails to recognise their importance to human flourishing, argues **Famke Veenstra-Ashmore**

In recent years, there has been a systemic reduction in attention, funding, and worth allocated to the Arts sector, stretching from a primary school level to the world of work. Government endorsed, the absence of value placed in sectors such as dance, fine arts, and creative industries has increased exponentially alongside the emphasis on STEM pathways.

Exacerbated by the pandemic, arts have struggled to cope with claims against their economic worth and the misleading notion that they do nothing to advance society. Yet as a population, we are relying more and more

Knowing this, why is participation in the arts constantly criticised and often seen as frivolous? Even art produced or pursued from a purely recreational standpoint is essential; how would we spend our free time if not for television, film, reading? Even hobbies that we may not necessarily frame as artistic require some form of reliance on creativity: sports, cooking, social media.

Indeed, if art had no social or institutional utility, its defence is still inherently valid. Art for art's sake is a timeless debate, but in our current culture and society, its purpose as escapism or even just a hobby offers inherent value, even without the other functions it provides. The more we undervalue and underfund the people and industries which facilitate the protection of these common hobbies, the less accessible they become. As far as the creative industry is



Now facing a third bout of disruption by Omicron, the outlook on the future of the arts' presence is fairly bleak. In order to prevent further loss in the arts, the way in which we discuss the desirability and importance of the various industries needs to change. An overall undervaluing of the arts in public consciousness has led to the lack of participation from students in these subjects, something that should scare us. Political discourse about the purpose of art, whilst important, is leading to the curation of a negative image, not serving as the best encouragement of young and up-and-coming creatives.

Like an endangered language, what ensures the survival



on the escapism and freedom that arts provides. Our attitude towards the sector is self-destructive and incongruous with what we widely accept as human values.

The freedom of expression is closely coded in our arts industries; what other sector provides us with the chance to manifest our ideas creatively, argue for the things we care about in resonant ways, and bring communities together around a unifying theme? Arts are essential not only to the individual, but to society as a whole. Even the commercial value behind the arts is scrutinised, when behind every logo is an artist and behind every digital recording is a production crew. We receive our news in the way that we do because of copywriters, illustrators, and editors, all of whom fulfil a creative role.

Through consumption of media, the very knowledge that we receive from the world around us is filtered through many different creative lenses. Without even the very basic structures provided by the arts, society is unable to function. Given what we risk losing in neglect of creative industries, there is no doubt that they must be defended.

concerned, money is the ultimate tool – we have



seen how throughout the pandemic, a loss of sales or funding has depleted music venues, made theatre near impossible to produce, and forced youth engagement programmes to close or reduce their scope.

of a cultural artefact is the people who participate in it. If participation fails, the industry will be unable to sustain itself. Whilst of course people will always naturally be drawn to the arts, if creative pursuits continue to be actively discouraged, devalued, and undermined, their accessibility and impact may continue to wane overtime. This will amount not only to a loss for arts itself, but to a loss for everyone.

▲ PAULINE MOROY & MIHAI SURDU

Lessons from Chile

Eric Williams discusses the recent elections in Chile, detailing the upheaval of political life after Gabriel Boric's win

Gabriel Boric's sweeping victory in the second round of Chile's presidential election last month marks a historic moment for Latin America. As the culmination of a two-year-long wave of protests and civil unrest under the billionaire President Sebastian Pinera, the leftist's triumph has underlined the power of popular mobilisation grounded in solidarity.

Although Boric is credited with the phrase "if Chile was the cradle of neoliberalism, it will also be its grave", the saying grew to prominence as the rallying cry of the country's protest movement, which began in October 2019. In reaction to increased Metro fares, a coordinated campaign by secondary school students to help passengers dodge turnstiles in Santiago developed into the largest social mobilisation in the nation's history, with over a million taking to the streets against privatisation, high costs-of-living and inequality. It is this movement, emerging from the ground up, that has brought profound transformations to Chile's political landscape, with the economic legacy of Pinochet and post-democratic transition years under serious threat.

Almost five decades after the US-backed military coup against the democratically elected socialist President Salvador Allende, the country has become the most unequal in Latin America. The Pinochet regime's fusion of authoritarianism and economic liberalisation enacted a policy set focusing on export-led growth, the dismantling of unions and all forms of popular organisation, coupled with the privatisation of social security and public assets. Whilst foreign capital and the nation's wealthiest experienced massive benefits, deepening inequality saw working Chileans facing insecurity, with healthcare bills, expensive education fees, and the lack of adequate pensions and a functioning social safety net holding families under the constant threat of poverty. This has remained a permanent feature of Chile's political economy since the transition to democracy in 1990. Last year, over fifty per cent of Chile's employed population earned insufficient income to keep their families above the official poverty line. It is this tradition that the protest movement has challenged.

The very up of the Dignidad that brought Boric to power emphasises the novelty of the moment in Chilean politics. Apruebo Dignidad has united the oppositional left into a broad alliance including the powerful progressive Frente Amplio and the Communist Party, a merging of forces the type of which has not seen power since Allende's Unidad Popular (UP). It is this kind of broad alliance amongst serious left-wing forces, fuelled by momentum from grassroots organisers, that has brought such a pivotal opportunity for change to Chile – epitomised in the Constitutional Convention. Granted as the Pinera administration's attempt at pacifying the 2019 protests, the plebiscite on whether to redraft the Pinochet-era national constitution was forced into

being by popular mobilisation.

The historic process was capitalised upon by the Chilean people; the approval of the Constitutional Convention by 78% of the vote last year, followed by the failure of the right-wing coalition to achieve the critical 1/3 of representatives to veto proposed laws has left the potential for constitutionally enshrined social rights on issues that will affect the role of the state and the nation's private property regime. An approach embracing external pressure from popular mobilization, accompanied by internal alliances between Frente Amplio, the Communist Party, indigenous representatives and the independent left of feminist and environmentalist representatives may be able to pull the remaining votes needed from the centre-left to write ground-breaking socio-economic transformations permanently into the country's constitution.

Whether Boric's administration will harness the broad popular movements responsible for his victory once in power remains to be seen. In response to the threat of capital flight, Boric's cabinet appointments last week, such as the governor of the central bank and former head of the World Bank's Governance Global Practice, Mario Marcel, as Finance Minister, suggests that his administration plans to push for economic stability by reassuring investors. This is understandable and has precedent in previous left-wing Latin American pink tide governments, such as Lula's cautious first term in early 2000's Brazil. Just as the marked presence of traditional centre-left and independent technocrats in his cabinet reflects the necessary compromises that come with a split Parliament, Marcel's appointment indicates the power that capital holds over the Chilean economy. Given the constraints of a divided Congress and an economy where foreign outflows since the nationwide protests have

accelerated to 9% of GDP, it would not be surprising if a path to social transformation were paved with trade-offs.

The crucial opportunity for major transformation lies in the constitutional convention, dominated by left-wing forces. If the solidarity-driven popular politics that brought Boric to power are embraced, the new constitution can bring profound improvements to millions of Chileans' lives. However, the appointment of Antonia Urrejola as Foreign Minister, who worked for the US-dominated Organization of American States (OAS), which was implicated in contributing to the 2019 coup against Evo Morales in Bolivia, demonstrates a definite tendency to distance the new government from other existing projects in Latin America's new pink tide. Uncertainty over the direction the new administration will take remains.

Rustat and Jesus' unholy alliance

Columnist **Samuel Rubinstein** argues the furore surrounding the removal of Rustat's plaque by Jesus is a useful distraction for Jesus' Chinese philanthropists

If I am ever so vain as to commission an enormous monument in my image, I hope the sculptor will be more generous to my appearance than the studio of Grinling Gibbons was to Tobias Rustat's. Wigs admittedly do not endear themselves to the modern eye, and neither do doughy cherubim; but the marble Rustat who adorns the mediaeval wall of Jesus College's chapel is more flabby-faced than the gaunter Rustat preserved for us in a portrait by Godfrey Kneller. This latter work used to hang over the Senior Combination Room, peering over the fellows as they munched and chuntered, but no longer. Then the "Rustat Conferences", so christened as recently as 2009, were unimaginatively renamed the "Jesus College Conferences" in 2020. The College is currently trying to rid itself of its most conspicuous remnant of Rustat-mania; but this is proving a trickier task.

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The College has received £200,000 from the Chinese government
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"He is a very simple, ignorant, but honest and loyal creature", wrote John Evelyn of Tobias Rustat. Modern appraisals are less charitable. At the heart of the controversy is an abominable fact about Rustat's life: his involvement in the Royal African Company, whose primary business was the Atlantic slave-trade. Rustat also served the RAC as its Assistant for three single-year terms, in 1676, 1679, and 1680.

It is quite understandable that this blot on his reputation should, in the opinion of the College authorities, outweigh the philanthropy for which he is commemorated: a £2000 donation, which established a scholarship at Jesus for orphans. But two hurdles stand in their way: firstly, a horde of Jesus alumni, whose nostalgia for their undergraduate days appears to be bound up with this particular plaque in its particular location; and secondly, the diocese of Ely, which enjoys a measure of jurisdiction over the chapel. So the matter has been taken to consistory court.

If the College is permitted by the diocese to move the plaque to a place "where it can be understood in its full context", I won't be sorry to see it go. As a Jew, I object to human representations in places of worship; as a Whig, I have no wish to celebrate men who spent their careers brownnosing Stuart kings; and as an opponent of moral relativism, I have no problem applying my moral convictions to the past.

But anathematising historical figures often smacks of empty sanctimony – especially when its intention is to present grave moral evil as the sole preserve of a benighted past. In our day, as in Rustat's, ethical considerations can easily be swatted away, especially when there's money involved. In the last few years, amidst their 'racial reckoning', Jesus College has accepted £155,000 from Huawei, the company that supports China's mass surveillance of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The College has also received £200,000 from the Chinese government. Jesus houses Cambridge's China Centre, a reputation-



launderer for the Chinese Communist Party, whose director, Prof. Peter Nolan, is infamous for his attempts to shut down discussions about the cultural genocide of the Uyghurs.

The College has much to thank Rustat for – and not just his donation. The plaque that he vainly commissioned has, in recent years, done the College a great service, functioning as a sponge to soak up student rage. The bigwigs can sleep sound at night: it's far easier for them to do penance for the sins of their forebears than answer questions about how the College fills its coffers *today*. The Jesus alumni who are campaigning against the removal of the plaque argue that "it

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And just as the Rustat debate has absorbed the energy of well-meaning students, so will it distract much of the right-wing media
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should remain in its present position as a testament to the folly and evil of the past"; and it stands to tell us something about the folly and evil of the present, too.

And just as the Rustat debate has absorbed the energy of well-meaning

▲ ZENG LIANSONG & MEG BYROM

students, so will it distract much of the right-wing media, who naturally rush to Rustat's defence. The question of Jesus College's finances *in the present day* is, ironically enough, one on which left-wing students and right-wing journalists could feasibly combine forces. These two camps seldom align, and when they do – as in their contempt for the Cambridge Union last term – it tends to be for radically different reasons. But here arises the possibility of real co-operation: picture Charles Moore and Zak Coleman campaigning together against China's stranglehold over this University, entering into a holy alliance to exorcise its spectre. For now, however, the two camps fight, as ever they must, and as they will so long as Rustat remains at issue – so long as the debate turns on Jesus's finances in the seventeenth-century, instead of Jesus's finances today. The College must be thrilled.

But, for the time being, pity our poor Jesus don. He eats his sumptuous China-funded meal amidst the splendour of his China-funded temporary hall; and, while sipping his China-funded wine, his mind is suddenly and spontaneously towed across the vast expanse of Eurasia, all the way eastwards to Xinjiang and Tibet and Hong Kong. His conscience pricked, his appetite vanquished, he scurries for his College chapel, where he prostrates himself before his God. And then, as he falls before the altar, he feels the gaze of Tobias Rustat piercing the back of his head. He turns around to meet this seventeenth-century glare with his own, and he stares into that chubby face, and into its blank marble eyes: eyes which know, all too well, the cruelties that men will inflict upon others in their tireless pursuit of wealth.

An ode to Voi

Senior Opinion Editor **Sam Hudson** argues that until E-scooter regulations are relaxed, Vois are best a-Voi-ded

It is unfortunate that I and the other Trinity Hall second years are exiled up the hill to Wychfield, a far cry from the cushy, central location that the freshers enjoy but will never appreciate until they too suffer the same exile. It was even more unfortunate that my bike was stolen two weeks ago after an ill-advised night near Parker's Piece. Faced with the long, half-hour walk to lectures, I had to seek alternatives. Remembering my broadly positive experiences with electric scooters in Hamburg and Providence, Rhode Island, I elected to try out Voi's offering.

This was a mistake.

Vois were first deployed onto Cambridge's streets back in August 2020. The move came with much fanfare, with Conservative then-Mayor James Palmer claiming that Vois had "the potential to revolutionise travel". Lofty claims indeed, but two years on, the fruits of revolution are yet to ripen. Instead, James Palmer, like any good vanguard, was devoured by his "revolution", losing his mayorship in a humiliating election result last year. Not even his unbelievably narcissistic choice to stick his name on every Voi in Cambridge and Peterborough could save him.

It's hardly surprising that Palmer and Cambridge Conservatives were so vociferous in their support for Vois. Much like with Brexit, "Leveling Up," or any other of the Conservative's pet gimmicks, they might make for good soundbites – but reality eventually catches up.

Vois are perhaps the most infuriating mode of transport I have ever used. From the nannyish policing of parking and speed limits, to the unnecessary ID verification process, Voi sells you freedom but gives you tyranny – a very apt parallel with the current Conservative party. This is not even mentioning the frequent mechanical and software problems I have encountered even the best by Voi put me on the road rage. Surprisingly capped at 10 mph. I am humiliated most of bike. This worse Street hit

ute, I have the privilege of being overtaken by brisk walkers. An agonising number of minutes later, I reach the end of both King's Parade and Slow Zone oppression.

The final nail in the coffin for the Voi comes while riding down Silver Street. Annoyingly I must go right past the Varsity offices, past even Queens' to a parking zone by Darwin. Here the Voi overlords demand I take a picture of the parked Voi, levying a £5 fine for "poor photo quality", increasing up to £25 for "bad parking". Apparently, I used up my 2 warnings by accidentally taking blurry photos. Finally then, I must shuffle back the way I came across Silver Street bridge to the office. So honestly, just get a bike.

Much of the nannying comes directly from Westminster itself rather than Cambridge County Council or Voi's chic offices in Stockholm. Cambridge was fortunate enough to be listed as an E-scooter "trial" area where rental E-scooters are decriminalised. Bizarrely though, it is still illegal across all of the UK to operate personal E-scooters on public land. And predictably, the Met enforced this entirely victimless crime with glee, seizing 500 scooters in just a week last year.

The problems with Vois seem to be uniquely British. My previous experiences with E-scooters in the US and Germany were unmarred by any of these problems. You had the freedom and flexibility to park them anywhere and your speed was not arbitrarily restricted. In some ways the UK's restrictions may seem common sense. Stories of pavements being littered by parked E-scooters were common during the their early years. This alongside the reports of rider deaths, such as that of Emily Hartridge, compelled the government to clarify that E-scooters are "powered transporters" and hence illegal on roads under the Road Traffic Act 1988. However, in all these cases it is not E-scooters at fault – but the car. If we banned cars from city centres, pavements could be much larger, rather than pushing pedestrians to the margins as is currently the case. Larger pavements would make E-scooter "littering" a non-issue and when, according to American statistics, 80% of fatal E-scooter accidents involve cars, it would solve most safety concerns too.

So, former Mayor Palmer, if you wanted a transport revolution, you should've banned cars from Cambridge. But much like your Conservative comrades; the same comrades who after over a decade of pointless deliberation cancelled the Eastern leg of HS2, denying the North investment it desperately needs, you are utterly spineless. Revolution requires risk and radicalism, not tacky orange toys.

Air pollution affects us all

Columnist **Christina Okafor** highlights the seriousness of air pollution

Sitting outside at home, blue skies surround me – the perfect winter's day. The birds sing. The leaves of the trees rustle. Traffic buzzes and hums – car horns, ambulance sirens, and low-flying planes. I look up and white trails scatter the sky. For lots of us, the natural and unnatural parts of the environment have always been one. In the suburbs of east London, I'm constantly surrounded by the background noise of traffic.

Living in central Cambridge, we're removed from the visible constant pollution faced by many. The centre of town has low traffic, bikes are encouraged and there is an abundance of green spaces. People walk or Voi – a need for a car is near non-existent. In stark contrast, a couple of weeks ago, Londoners were warned to limit their outdoor exercise when pollution levels were set to soar. The Government UK Air website forecasted a rare episode of "very high" pollution ranked ten out of ten for potential harm, the first such incident since March 2018. People with lung or heart problems were advised to avoid strenuous physical activity while healthy people were told they should "reduce physical exertion, particularly outdoors".

Air pollution has been decried by the World Health Organisation as the "silent killer": it can harm every organ in your body, acutely as well as chronically. Cancer, asthma, obesity, and dementia have all been linked to air pollution impacts. Air pollution harms future generations before they're even born. Fertility is reduced and rates of miscarriage are increased by toxic air. Babies are also more likely to be born with low birthweights.

In the UK, air pollution is the largest environmental risk to public health. The first death from air pollution in the UK was announced in April 2021: a 9-year-old girl, Ella Kissi-Debrah. She had severe asthma and died in 2013 after being exposed to high levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter pollution, largely from traffic emissions.

Air pollution is by no means a great equaliser. It is a magnifier of inequality. Like all health problems, certain communities are disproportionately affected. People from socially and economically dis-

advantaged backgrounds, such as ethnic minorities and migrant communities, are exposed to higher levels of air pollution and are hardest hit by the long-term health effects. Air pollution disproportionately affects Black mothers; US studies found Black mothers were at a greater risk of preterm births as a result of exposure to air pollutants. Similar studies have yet to be carried out in the UK. Ella Kissi-Debrah was a young Black girl. In London, schools with the highest percentage of non-white pupils have higher than average levels of nitrous oxides. Air pollution will only heighten health inequalities within the UK.

Air pollution is something that I think about frequently when I'm at home. In Cambridge, you can often forget about these problems. However, once many students graduate and flee to their consultancy job, living in Clapham or other built-up areas, they need to be conscious of the impact air pollution has on the health of the local population.

We all know there are things we can do on an individual level to cut down air pollution: walk more, use public transport, don't drive around cities in SUVs. However, it's important to look at this neoliberal ideology with suspicion. Sure, don't eat meat and don't take £4.99 flights, but these systemic problems will not be resolved through changes to individual actions. Ultimately, what we need is government policies to

reduce air pollution, while also improving and building sustainable travel infrastructure.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has recently announced plans to introduce a "clean air charge", where drivers could pay £2 to drive a petrol or diesel car in London. However, at the same time vital night tube services have been squeezed into non-existence and travel prices are steeply rising. Targeting individual drivers may discourage some, but will mostly impact the least well-off drivers, rather than the wealthiest SUV drivers where a £2 daily charge won't make a dent in their pocket. As students, luckily everything we need is a walk or cycle away. However, if you need to travel around Cambridgeshire, buses are often unreliable, and it'll work out quicker and cheaper to drive. The focus needs to be on building better public transport systems that provide affordable travel throughout the day and night, while simultaneously providing a safe environment for those who work on them.

This problem is not just a London problem, or a Cambridge one. It's a global problem where the actions of the world's richest, which in Cambridge we are a part of, impact the world's poorest communities. If the pandemic has given us anything, it's given us the potential to imagine another possible world. We just need to ensure that this vision prioritises people most disadvantaged.

VARSlTY

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Science

Food for thought: Can different cultural diets strengthen brain health?

Yan-Yi Lee explores the potential link between diet and dementia, arguing that different cultures' eating habits may be protective against neurological disorders later in life

The neurodegenerative epidemic we see today has summoned extensive collaborative efforts from various fields of science. A continuously absent cure has paved the way for interdisciplinary researchers to think out of the box; in the case of dementia specifically, a pivotal move is understanding how certain lifestyles and non-pharmacological interventions may either defer its diagnosis or lessen its effects. Factors at stake typically involve cognitive training, exercise, neurostimulation, sleep therapy, and diet, with the final one being perhaps the most widely discussed in the public community, which is understandable; food, after all, is life.

Nutritionists have therefore been busy exploring the helpfulness of food in slowing down the process of cognitive

decline. The interest often lies beyond particular food items ('antioxidants in berries can fight off detrimental free radicals during the brain's ageing process') and in cultural diets in a more general sense. We may suspect that this curiosity stems from a transnational perspective, as spotlights cast on cultures that seem to do particularly well on any specific health dimension. It is only natural to wonder why, for example, the rate of Alzheimer's disease is multiple times more prevalent in America than in India. The extent to which diet plays a role in forming these differences also piques the interest of many.

Among population studies on food intake, the most frequently discussed is the Mediterranean diet, which, as many are aware, is characterised by legumes, fruits, moderate consumption of fish, dairy, wine, and multiple splashes of ol-

ive oil rich in healthy monounsaturated fat. While the Mediterranean diet is studied for its relation to physical health in general, scholars have also been fixating on its role in fostering brain health. In meta-analyses, an observation that emerged was that constant adherence to a Mediterranean diet constitutes a top factor in protection against Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline. Intriguing findings also appear eastward. Laboratory studies have found that curcumin, an ingredient often found in Indian cuisine, inhibits the building-up of harmful beta amyloids (i.e., proteins responsible for the formation of Alzheimer's disease). Studies even discover that curcumin is much more efficient in performing this than other drugs used to treat dementia. Further, it is found in clinical trials that ginseng (a plant widely consumed in China) can potentially improve cognitive functions even in Alzheimer's disease patients if prescribed with 4.5 grams daily. These studies seem to suggest that (cultural) variety is not only the spice of life, but also it is the fuel that puts the brakes on the neuronal decline – at least to a certain degree.

In this ongoing discussion of food and dementia, there are a few caveats to heed. Firstly, nutritional research does come with its limitations (a fact that is less emphasised in public science journalism); it isn't possible to fully control participants' diets on a long-term basis, and causal relations between food and health are challenging to pinpoint with clarity. Secondly, we ought to exercise extra caution when interpreting the results of population studies of diet and brain health, considering the other societal factors that may play a role. For instance, the low incidence rates of Alzheimer's in India may be at-



tributed not only to their cuisines, but a considerable part of their population is actively bilingual and more exposed to opportunities to stimulate cognitive functions throughout their lives. Thirdly, a critical aspect to discuss is the limited knowledge about dementia at present. Dementia itself is an incredibly complex disease, with each of its subtypes (Alzheimer's, frontotemporal, vascular, Lewy bodies) stemming from different pathologies and affecting various parts of the brain. We have reason to suspect, for example, that foods regulating blood pressure and cholesterol may play a more significant role in vascular dementia (as it involves the cardiovascular system) than,

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It is encouraging to see how the excitement of having exotic foods may come with... extra benefit[s]
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Cultural variety is not only the spice of life, but it is also the fuel that puts the brakes on neuronal decline
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say, frontotemporal dementia (caused by abnormal protein folding in the frontal parts of the brain).

We may never be able to truly unravel in precise detail the extent to which diet plays a part in deferring dementia symptoms or lessening the effects of it; however, it isn't naive to work more carefully towards a stronger appreciation of how diets may work concerning other non-pharmacological interventions in deferring or treating dementia. In any case, it is encouraging to see how the excitement of having exotic foods in our current day may come with the extra benefit of having a more diverse, brain-beneficial repertoire of nutrients. It is truly exciting how this line of studies will unfold.

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Plants may be key to future space missions

Ben White introduces Veggie, a system designed to grow fresh produce onboard the International Space Station



▲ A Zinnia flower grown onboard the ISS in Veggie floats through the US's Destiny Lab NASA

Confinement indoors with a looming sense that the world outside the window is desolate, isolated, and dangerous is, for many of us, an unfortunate novelty of the pandemic. However, for astronauts, this is the daily reality. 408 kilometres above Earth, a crew of up to seven astronauts on board the International Space Station (ISS) are confined to a living and working space that is a little larger than a six-bedroom house.

During the pandemic, there was a large increase in the number of people taking up gardening and buying houseplants to alleviate the stresses of indoor isolation, with many even starting to produce a small portion of their own food. Interestingly, NASA has been using a similar approach to help provision astronauts onboard the ISS for several years. Moreover, many mission planners believe that growing plants onboard spacecraft, or on future outposts on the Moon and Mars, will be vital for the success of manned space missions in years to come.

Currently, in order to ensure astronauts are kept properly fed, the ISS is almost entirely reliant on resupply missions from Earth, mostly prepared in near-sterile conditions. With resupplies only arriving every two months, this food is mostly designed to have a long shelf life. Not only does fresh produce only keep for a short period, it also takes up a lot of valuable weight and space in resupply spacecraft. As such, fresh food is typically a rare treat that is eaten within a few days of arrival. However, since 2014, NASA has been successfully broadening astronauts' diets by growing fresh crop plants onboard the ISS – enter a system called 'Veggie'.

In Veggie, plants are grown inside specialised Kevlar pillows: inside each pillow, water is wicked through by a growth mat (much like the liquid moving through a lateral flow test) to ensure that all plants are watered evenly in zero G. These pillows are then housed in collapsible plastic 'bellows' that further protect the growing plants and allow for greater control of growth conditions such as light. Additionally, plants are grown under red LEDs as scientists

found this encourages them to grow more similarly to those we are used to on Earth while in zero G conditions. Initially, growth pillows delivered to the ISS already contained seeds that had been pre-planted on Earth, but more recent experiments involve using a special film to plant seeds in orbit – bringing the system one step closer to self-sufficiency.

So how has this been received? A big part of Veggie's success has been due to its simplicity. The system is designed to work in the ambient conditions of the

to Earth. The look, feel, taste, and smell all remind us of life on Earth,' explains NASA astronaut Mike Hopkins, 'and that connection is good for our mental health.'

While Veggie is a long way away from catering to the full dietary needs of the entire ISS crew, it still is a significant step towards long-term self-sustaining space missions. Future manned trips to the Moon and Mars will have to be less reliant on resupplies (the shortest transit time to Mars is around 7 months!), so any way of providing astronauts with fresh and nutritious food may go a long way to ensuring their success.

Potential benefits to crew morale also cannot be understated – particularly for long missions. Astronauts on future Artemis missions to the Moon, some of which may extend up to two months, as well as potential Mars missions, will be expected to perform under stressful, dangerous, and isolating conditions, and so any method of improving their mental health will go a long way to delivering success.

As we continue to explore our solar system, it seems our little green friends may be key allies more than we thought.

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These plants
are a connection
to Earth
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ISS, and its relative lack of mechanical parts and collapsible nature means it can maximise plant growth while taking up minimal space. Since its installation, Veggie has been used to grow several crops, including lettuce, mustard, cabbage, and kale. These were chosen for their relative ease to grow in zero G, high nutrient content, and, importantly, their taste. A NASA outreach programme that ended in 2018 even saw high school students run experiments that helped select Pak Choi and 'Dragoon' lettuce as new crops to grow on the ISS.

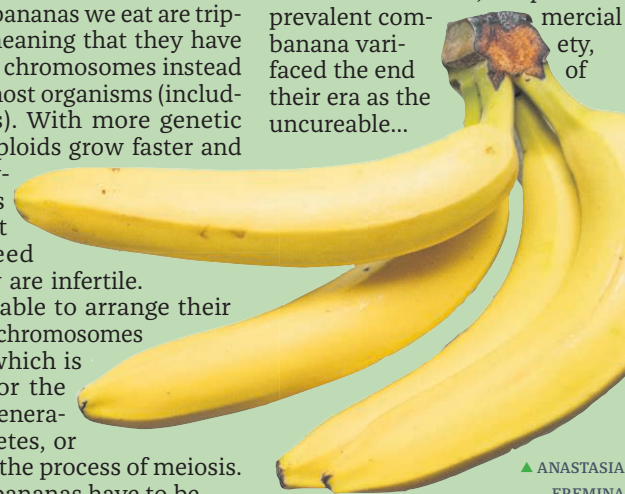
As well as providing food, the plants grown onboard have had another considerable benefit: many astronauts found that working with plants led to a notable improvement in their mental wellbeing. The increased variety in their diets, as well as a more pleasurable eating experience from the taste, texture, and aroma of fresh produce, helped improve their mental health. Additionally, astronauts found that simply having the plants growing on the station was a source of happiness. 'These plants are a connection

Can we save bananas from extinction?

In this edition of **Cambridge Spotlight**, **Hayoung Choi** explores the research happening on this particular issue

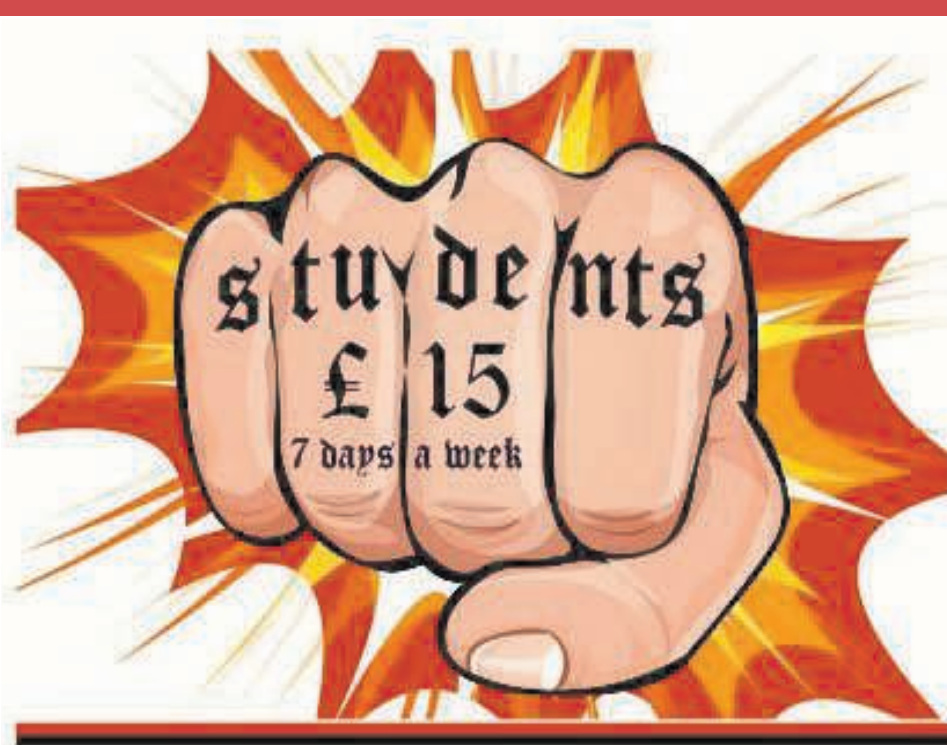
Bitting into the white, soft flesh of banana, you may easily notice that a banana has no seeds. That may not be surprising, since that was always how a banana was to you, but for bananas, no seeds mean an existential risk – which is not the first one they have faced in their seedless history. The bananas we eat are triploids (3n), meaning that they have three sets of chromosomes instead of two like most organisms (including humans). With more genetic material, triploids grow faster and larger, leaving humans abundant flesh to feed on, but they are infertile. They are unable to arrange their three sets of chromosomes into pairs, which is necessary for the successful generation of gametes, or sex cells, by the process of meiosis. As a result, bananas have to be asexually propagated by a bulb

or rhizome, pieces of the mother plant bearing the same genetic code. The banana you had three months ago is basically the same organism as the banana you have now. So, a disease fatal to any individual banana has the potential to become a disastrous pandemic. Gros Michel, the previous prevalent commercial banana variety, faced the end of their era as the uncureable...



▲ ANASTASIA EREMINA

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Interviews

Richard Ratcliffe on campaigning for wife Nazanin's safe return from Iran

Marion Willingham speaks to Richard Ratcliffe about the arduous and uncertain process of disentangling his family life from global politics

This is Richard Ratcliffe's take on the almost 6-year-long detainment of his wife Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in Iran: "It's a game of chess between two states. We get to see part of it – part of it we don't get to see – but it's not personal." For Richard, of course, not to mention their seven-year-old daughter Gabriella, Nazanin's detainment couldn't be more personal.

Nazanin is one of a number of British-Iranian citizens whose safe return to the UK is dependent on the British government paying a £400 million debt which it has owed to Iran since the 1970s. "Typically ransom means getting money that's not yours, whereas this is Iran's money – there's no ambiguity around it," Richard explains. This was determined in a court of international arbitration and is acknowledged by numerous high-ranking MPs, including Boris Johnson. "The government will sometimes try to claim the moral high ground," Richard says. "We can't be seen to encourage hostage-taking, so we can't pay it. Well, with respect, you *not* paying it is what's provoking that."

I ask Richard if he thinks the debt and the hostages are being used for bargaining power in the nuclear talks between western powers and Iran: "I think ... yes," he says. "International politics operates at many levels. We were taken following the signing of the nuclear deal. That would have been partly because relations were thawing – be-

cause all these pots of money were coming back – and actually, partly because the Revolutionary Guard were worried about losing control, so were asserting their power. You move on five years, Trump comes in, tries to rip it all up, and now we've got the Biden administration cautiously seeing whether they can revive the nuclear talks – with the UK and Europe generally wanting that to happen. I think it's arguable

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It's a game of
chess between
two states
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that Iran has used all the hostages as bargaining chips in relation to that enterprise – nuclear peace, which for them, is about ending sanctions and getting their money back."

Richard laments the entanglement of individuals like Nazanin in such complex international affairs, hinting at the British-Iranian-American prisoner swap last year, which was reported to have broken down hours before its completion. "It's quite an unpalatable transaction, to say: 'OK have your money back,

so we can have this person,' but it's quite simple, whereas a much more complicated multilateral deal means there are more stakeholders with their own priorities, so I think it's made more complicated." Not only is it more complicated, but "dangerous". "At the moment we've had a different worry, in that the nuclear talks might get somewhere, they might not. They might all fall apart. And actually, if they fall apart, it could shift from talking to each other to shouting and threatening to throw stones at each other. In which case, we won't worry about being a chess piece – we'll worry about being a human shield."

The biggest obstacle faced by Richard and the other families is the murkiness surrounding either governments' intentions. Last year Richard's MP was told she wasn't allowed to mention the debt in parliament. "All of us are looking at a shadow plane – we see part of it, and part we don't. We're trying to make sense of it. It's groping around in the dark half the time." As a result, when I ask what Richard's next steps are, he offers: "I don't know" would be the official line, and probably the private one. We've got a series of sessions with other families in the next few weeks where we'll talk through where we think things have got to in Vienna [where the nuclear talks are taking place] and what makes sense to try and do over the next few months, but I've got no idea."

What's more, Richard has been campaigning for Nazanin's return for a very long time. He has staged two hunger strikes, first at the Embassy of Iran, and then at the UK Foreign Office. His petition has over 3.7 million signatures. "We've been going for a long time. That's attritional, both in terms of our energy and

ability to campaign creatively, but also in terms of people's compassion, interest and attention. There's only so many times you can go on television and say: 'Nazanin's really sad to be in prison.' Something like a hunger strike is fairly extreme; you can't keep doing them because, again, they lose their currency. And

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It could shift from
talking to each
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also I have to say," Richard laughs, "as a middle-aged man I can't keep doing them, it's quite hard."

A sense of the emotional impact of such a lengthy and uncertain campaign emerges when I mention the recent release of British Council employee Aras Amiri. "It's great news for Aras and her family," Rich-

ard says, "but it's definitely double-edged for Nazanin, because Aras and Nazanin were in the cells together, they were good pals. She's from North London as well – she's quite similar. She went back on holiday for a week and got picked up, but she got picked up after Nazanin. And you kind of think there should be a queue, right? We've done longer, so we should go first – but that's not how it works. So it's been a bit tough for Nazanin." There is also a hint at the burden on Richard himself, as he adds: "Her family stayed a lot quieter, but we can't go back now."

We return to the metaphorical chess game. "On that chessboard, we're probably one of the back row pieces, we'll stay until later. We're seeing the pawns being moved around. Being a back row piece keeps you safer, but it also means there's more inertia on what happens." It is clear Richard is desperate for the relevant authorities in both Britain and Iran to put an end to this inertia, saying: "There's absolutely a moral hazard issue around how you challenge and disincentivise hostage-taking, but I don't think doing nothing and waiting for the other side to be reasonable – which is essentially UK policy – does anything other than put more of a burden on the families."

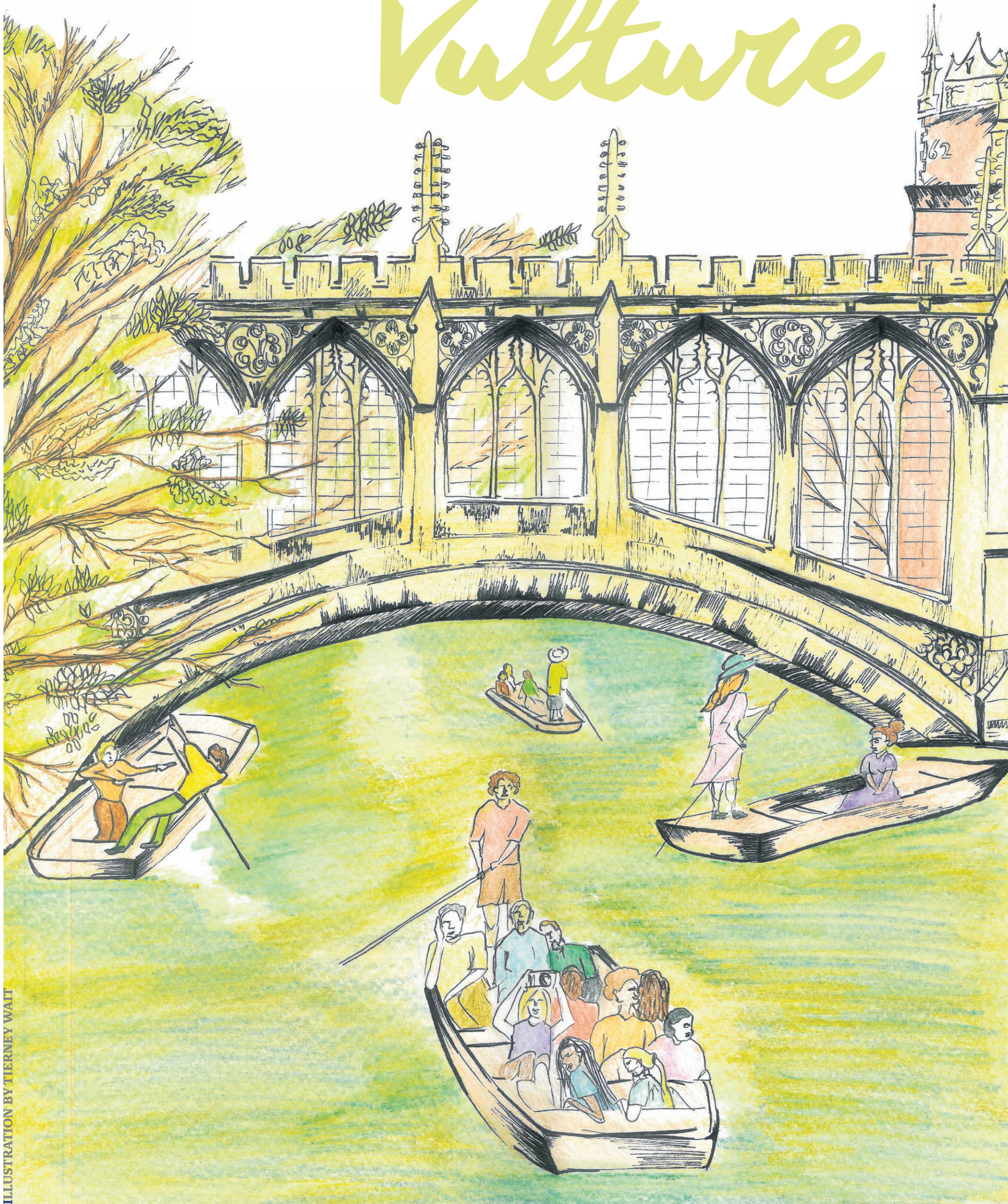


▲ RICHARD RATCLIFFE / ELIZABETH STYLES

▼ NAZANIN AND RICHARD RATCLIFFE / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Vulture



Lifestyle

Let's talk about sex

Columnist **Ceci Browning** writes how real sex is so much more awkward than its representations in pop culture

Let's be honest. Real sex is not like sex in Hollywood films. Sex in real life is something else. It's embarrassing. And if we're pretending that it's always going to be like it is in films, then we are just gearing up to be let down.

In films, there is no foreplay, no variety, no mess. Hourglass-shaped woman looks at square-jawed man with her come-to-bed eyes and before you know it, the pair of them are fully naked, doing it on top of the covers, with candles lit and slow jazz playing. Films also give us the expectation that orgasms will happen for both people at the same time, every time. Drumroll. Cymbals. Applause. In real life, orgasms often happen one after the other, with a few minutes of conscious effort in between. Sometimes, orgasms just don't happen at all. People often have to learn how, and this is something that takes time and practice. It is not just an on/off switch.

The other thing about Hollywood sex is that it happens everywhere. Not only are orgasms loud and mutual, they can be achieved in any location, at any time. This is also a myth. Shower sex? Slippery. Sex in a park? Itchy. Sex in a toilet cubicle? Not that sexy. I won't deny that it's exciting having sex in wild places, in empty fields or under the blankets on a plane over the Atlantic, but it is never as easy or as comfortable as on a flat horizontal surface,

“Why are we so embarrassed? Why do we not talk about what it feels like?”

especially because, wherever it takes place, it's never completely mess-free.

For some reason, none of this is ever discussed. We look at the ground. We shuffle our feet.

We use elegant euphemisms to avoid the terms that actually refer to what it is that we're trying to talk about, the points we are trying to make. Lots of young people have lots of sex lots of the time, so why is it so rare that anybody actu-

ally shares their real experiences? Why are we so embarrassed? Why do we not talk about what it feels like? And I don't mean what it feels like, I mean what it is to live it, what it means to have real sex, something distinct from what we see in films. Why are we not sharing the reality of our relationships? Why are we not helping each other, sharing our stories, which are all likely to be equally embarrassing? Why do we feel more vulnerable discussing sex than actually doing it?

Let's talk.

Real sex is messy. Real sex involves trying to quickly peel off tight jeans or failing to undo the clasp of a bra with one hand. Real sex involves the 'are you on the pill?' conversation, to ensure there's no risk of becoming parents earlier than planned. Real sex involves the

“Sometimes, orgasms just don't happen at all”

awkward twenty seconds where one person rips open the little square packet and silently concentrates on putting the condom on the right way. Real sex involves women that are on their period for five of every 28 days and put down a towel so they don't bleed all over their bedsheets. Real sex involves dashing to the toilet afterwards to have a wee. Real sex sometimes doesn't even involve sex, if a guy has had too much to drink and can't get it up, or if one of the variety of other things that might go wrong does.

How will we ever know that this is what real sex looks like if we never talk about it? My friends and I talk about sex, but only really to the extent that I'll tell them if a particular person was amazing in bed, or worse, if they were wildly disappointing. I go into the intimate details occasionally, but only if asked. We're all doing it, we're all having slip ups and accidents and incidents, so why can't we

talk about it? Why can't we admit that sex in real life is great, but that it does not always fit the shape we expect it to, that it is great in ways other than what 'great' is usually thought to involve?

If we communicate properly with each other – particularly with our partners, but also with our friends – our expectations will be managed. Then, we will expect sex to be real sex, not film sex, and we will be more fulfilled. We will know that, actually, we are doing it right. In fact, sex might actually get better, for all of us, and who can argue with that?

◀ Tara Chernus

10 Cambridge date ideas to spice up your Valentine's Day

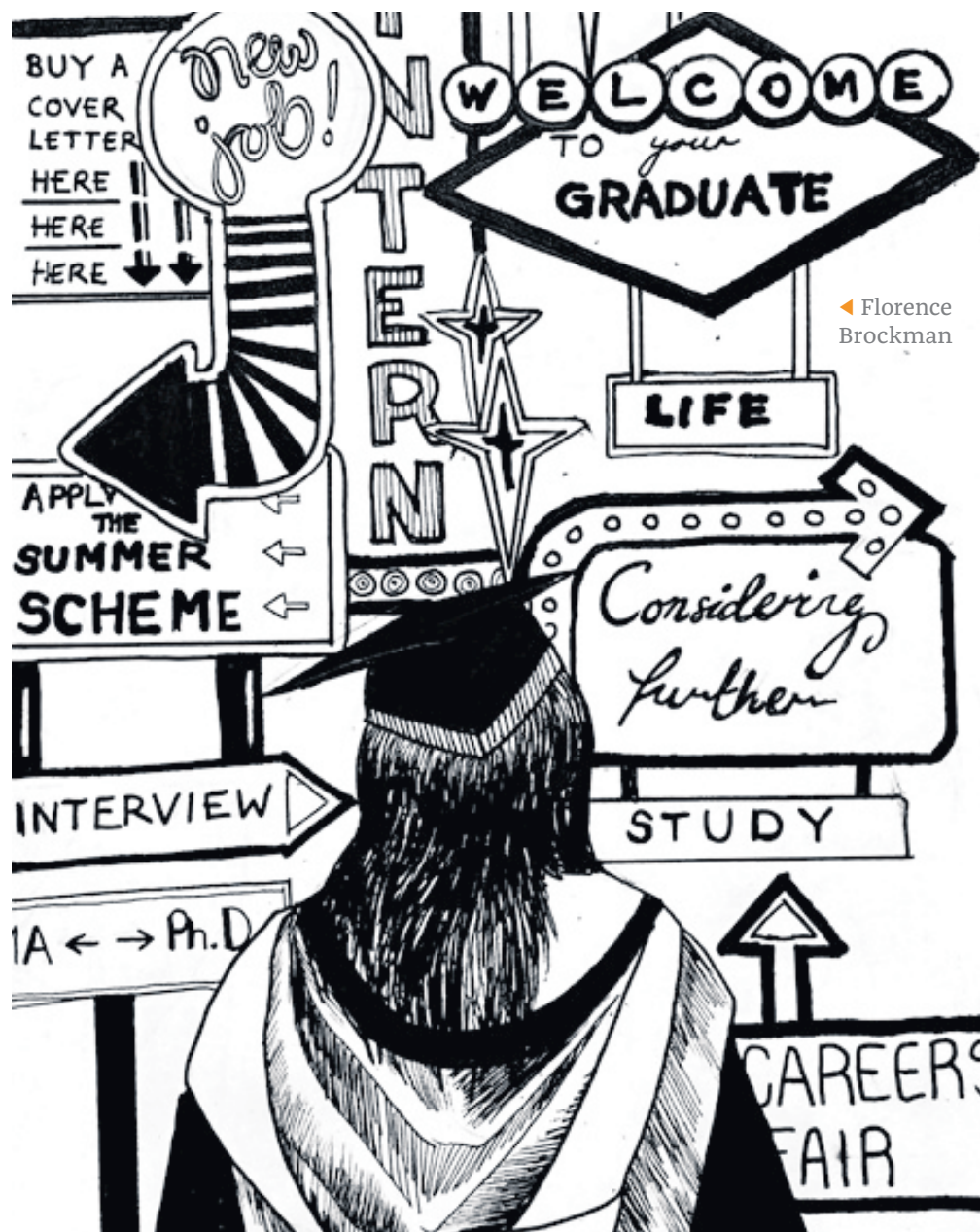
Lifestyle Editor **Nadya Miryanova** gives some alternative Cambridge date ideas for this Valentine's

Tired of punting? Seen every plant in the Botanic Gardens? Looking for new, original date ideas but just can't seem to pick out the right one? Fear not, as Lifestyle is here to help you this Valentine's Day with 10 alternative ideas for university dates – whether you're revelling in the romance, smashing it solo, or celebrating with friends.



AskVulture: How do I face the future?

Mimaansa Ghildiyal is here to reassure you that you're not alone in worrying about what happens next



◀ Florence Brockman

table question: "what next?" Therefore, I'd like to reassure you that you aren't isolated in your worries about the future. No two people are the same, and everyone is paving their own path to their future goals. It's important to figure this out at your own pace, and if you haven't quite got there yet then that is very

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Not over-planning means that you've allowed yourself the chance to be spontaneous, and the flexibility to change your mind
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much okay.

There are tasks you can fit into your weekly routine that'll help you to start planning future endeavours. I recommend creating a small list of the aspects you're particularly worried or unsure about. By writing this all out, you can then set yourself some tasks which might help you work out what to do next. This might involve talking to a friend, or peers at your faculty. I've always found it helpful to share my thoughts with people; they often have knowledge and suggestions on useful areas

that I might not have been aware of before! Remember that you can always reach out to college or faculty staff for guidance as well.

You could try allocating regular one- or two-hour time slots to give yourself a dedicated space to research internship programmes/jobs/whatever it is that you might want to learn more about. Sticking to a routine like this will help provide some structure to your plans and hopefully allow you to feel like you've got a better grip on the direction in which you might be headed!

Although I've been advising you on how you can try to feel more in control, the most important thing that you can take away from all of this is that you certainly don't need to have every next step and future activity planned out. I know it's rather scary not knowing what happens next, but I can tell you that not over-planning means that you've allowed yourself the chance to be spontaneous, and the flexibility to change your mind! If you set aside some time to think about and explore what you might like to do, then I can assure you that you'll start to feel prepared very soon! Best of luck!

Do you have a question for AskVulture? Submit it anonymously on the website — Please note that if your submission gets selected, we will publish it as part of an article on Varsity Lifestyle, possibly with some edits for clarity.

"With the start of the new year I've been thinking a lot about the future recently, and it's left me feeling overwhelmed. Everyone seems to have made plans for the summer and for life after university and I'm worried about being left behind. How can I feel more prepared and in control?"

You've probably heard this before, but I'll tell you again anyway ... it's very normal to feel overwhelmed and uncertain about your future. It goes without saying that being a student at Cambridge sits hand-in-hand with constant deadlines and busyness; it's common that you might not have had much time to think too deeply about what your next steps might be. On the flip side, there will be many people who do have something figured out, and we love that for them ... but I'll get to that later.

For now, I'd like to point out that not knowing which exact career path to pick or which summer internship to apply for is okay. Rather than ignoring it altogether, being a little nervous but actively thinking about what you'd like to do after university is a favourable attitude to have! You're in a position to be proactive: to start working towards what it is that you might want to do.

Whichever stage you're at, it'll always be

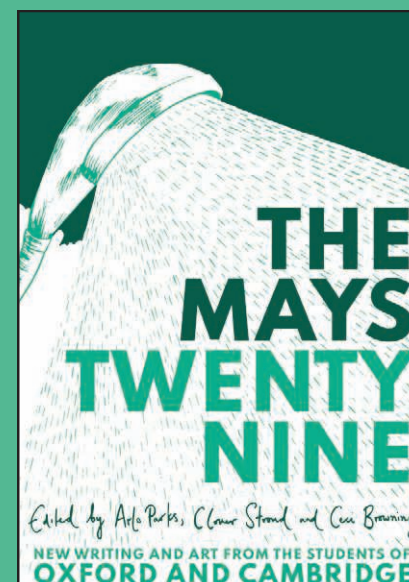
too easy to compare yourself to others. Our university is filled with high achievers, many of whom have their short- and long-term goals pretty much figured out. I want to remind you that it's important not to compare yourself to those around you. Although it may seem like everyone knows exactly what they'd like to do, it's useful to remember that you probably just haven't seen the moments where they too have felt overwhelmed by the future.

Realistically, we can't always have everything planned out, and we (some more than others) certainly feel the weight of the inevi-

“
I want to remind you that it's important not to compare yourself to those around you.
”

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Arts

'Samurai: History and Legacy' at the University Library

Staff writer **Zoe Turoff** reviews the UL's latest exhibition which features Japanese archival material and charts the history of samurai

▼ TWITTER / THEUL

Tucked away in a basement room of the University Library, highlights from the UL's extensive collection of Japanese manuscripts and woodblock-printed books show a side of the samurai rarely portrayed in popular media today. Originally derived from the word 'suburau', meaning 'to serve', the term 'samurai' evolved to refer to those who held positions of authority in the household of nobility. Today, its meaning has been transformed even further, as modern depictions like the Japanese epic *Seven Samurai* (1954) or Tom Cruise's *The Last Samurai* (2003) paint a picture of a violent, warmongering people. "However," says curator Dr Kristin Williams, "the imagery we usually see is as much legend and mythology as it is history." Instead, she wants visitors to "question their assumptions about Japan while they explore and examine the rare books and objects in the exhibition. We may think of weaponry and armour when we think of samurai, but there was far, far more to their story."

The beginning of the exhibition traces the origins of the samurai in twelfth century Japan. At this time, a shift in power from the imperial court in Heian (now Kyōto) to the shogunate (military government) in Kamakura, facilitated by a series of violent rebellions, led to the emergence of legendary tales of heroism and tragedy. One prominent figure, whose story features in various

manuscripts throughout the exhibition, was Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-1189), younger brother of the first Kamakura shogun. Far from the modern image of the fierce and vicious warrior, Yoshitsune appears here as a tragic hero, engaging in the gentler arts of the samurai. In a reproduction of an illustration of Yoshitsune *kunkō zue*, we see his musical side: he sits in the garden of a young maiden, who falls in love with him while he plays an instrument that resembles a harp or zither.

An appreciation of music was part of a wider cultural context of the samurai, which was guided by Buddhist practice. In the *Yuishinken kadensho*, a master passes down the secrets of flower arranging to a disciple. Accompanying illustrations show how flow-

▼ TWITTER / THEUL

ers should be arranged on Buddhist altars.

In the 1870s, the foundation of a modern army in Japan rendered the samurai obsolete. But Dr Chris Burgess, Head of Exhibitions and Public Programmes at Cambridge University Library, explains how their legacies lived on: "Centuries of complex history were collapsed into the sort of memorable images of the samurai that we're all so familiar with today." Despite these stereotypes, Dr Burgess hopes this exhibition will encourage visitors "to examine, through the extraordinary books, manuscripts, and objects on display from our collections just what kind of samurai is revealed to us."

Perhaps the most unexpected kinds are those that don't conform to dominant gender stereotypes often associated with these strong, "macho" warriors. Women, too, were part of the samurai class, and often trained in martial arts for the purpose of protecting their families. Stories centred around female protagonists feature heavily in this exhibition: the *Honchō Jōkan* (mirror of women of our land), for example, is a counterpart to biographies of male military generals, such as the *Honchō hyakushōden* (biographies of a hundred generals from our country) displayed nearby.

This particular manuscript is opened to an illustration of a young woman in the midst of a brutal act of revenge: the artist has portrayed the moment she stabs Sadamitsu Kyūzaemon, who murdered her brother when he refused to offer his sister as Kyūzaemon's bride. This unbridled feminine strength is echoed elsewhere in the story of Tomoe Gozen, in the *Heike monogatari*: the manuscript reads, "with her lovely white skin and long hair, Tomoe had enchanting looks. An archer of rare strength, a powerful warrior, and on foot or on horseback a swordsman to face any demon or god, she was a fighter to stand alone against a thousand."

The dim lighting of the UL's Milstein Exhibition Centre protects the objects against light damage, but also adds a sense of drama to the illustrated folios of the objects on display - many of which have never before been seen by the public eye. One of the

“Centuries of complex history were collapsed into the sort of memorable images of the samurai”



first displays centres on the *Azuma kagami* ("Mirror of the East"), one of the first Japanese books in Britain upon its arrival in 1626. This volume, which was originally misidentified as a Chinese manuscript and bound upside down, provided the foundation for one of the world's most important collections of Japanese literature outside Japan when it entered the Cambridge University Library in 1715.

Now, it goes on display for the first time alongside samurai helmets, a whimsical volume of cats dressed as Edo-period warriors, the strikingly beautiful Buddhist text, *Lotus Sutra* (or *Myōhō rengekyō*) and even a book of manga (drawings) by the famous Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai. Curator Dr Kristin Williams admits, "the hardest thing about curating this exhibition was choosing only 60 objects from a total collection of more than 130,000 Japanese items!" This free exhibition is running from January 22 to May 28, 2022 and can be found in the University Library.



Three poems on belief, chaos, and the body

Arts Editor **Priyanka Voruganti** reflects on self-proclaiming messiahs, fallen saints and the strangeness of suburbia in three new poems

Doomsday

Two times this year it had been her. Shift-shattered all the known embers on Earth. She had plucked each individual rosary bead from its stem, placed them in acetone for renewal. It was terribly exhausting work, the upkeep of it all. She was the person who donned high priestess gear and went cajoling on Hollywood Boulevard. In the grainy late-night ads, the ones paid for by small or dying companies, the ones with lawyers advertising hair gel and orange veneer, there were prayers said. She knew the mysticism of the every-day, traced the Latin in seagull screams. Now, a quietude settled upon the city, and no one seemed to be interested in the pamphlets she had to offer. When nothing was happening was when something was wrong. The physics of it all seamlessly organized within the arena of her brain during the pitch black night, when medieval orders could be

“

*Shift-shattered all the known
embers on Earth*

”

elucidated through the paint thinning of the walls, or astronomical end-dates were deduced within the shuteye of her leaky faucet. She liked when things finally made sense, in this way. When outside was scary, unknowable, nonsensical, and doused with a kind of realism so precise, cartoon-ish, even: that was when dark became safe. It was in the dark where she could coax chaos, something knowable, the shadows on the ceiling undulating with such familiarity, utterly rational, and completely hers. It was here that she embraced and knew who she was, knew that she was destined, chosen, even, for something very important.

living in parentheses

angelic breakdowns from two-story terraces: the break and fury of something half-born, something half-felt, an entire colossal being splayed out on your backyard. who's to say that we're not living in parentheses, that this fallen saint isn't actually doused in universe-dust and early organism. the tube man outside the car dealership is air-dancing, buoyant, free—the inflatable organs inside his papery skin jittery and alive, properly moving to whatever pop ballad is blaring from the car radio. we took a tally of what fell from the sky today: some nuts and bolts, candy wrappers, snake skin, and this. next to your bike by the pavement, sprinkler whirring wet onto its silky skin—a centaur, a monops, no, an Unclassified One,



guts and intestinal fluid seeping toward your front porch. today we witnessed something so dead it has become other. what if we enshrined it in plaster, posted it up next to the living room fireplace like a stuffed deer head, but greater? or maybe we could sew it back together, return it to glory, and then perhaps station it next to the American flag at your mailbox, fill its body with air through a vacuum that we seal to its belly, and let it fly once again, like a tube man, our very own personal saint, one that ebbs and flows to our whims and adheres to our personal music choices, one that dances with ferocity, its skin slipping off with each sway, telling everyone on the block that we've found the answer to all of our questions.

Contorting, Compressing, Etc.

It's like that moment in *Get Out* where once sunken, the guy sinks deeper. I used

to marvel at those Japanese soda bottles with pearly glass balls, the balls you pop

down with the soft of your thumb. Lower going lower, essentially. I am not sure if this

is a medical problem or a uteral one, the caving in on myself. Chest cavity contorted,

compressed to create space outward. It's about taking up space. Dad used to find me

hiding in the oddest places, the bottom of the laundry shoot (on days where clean clothes

lined our closets), the shed by the pool (barren for years, unused, dirty), Mom's bedroom.

Mom was gone by then. (That room was a void.) I felt in these spaces a kind of blending

in with the landscape a taking up of minimal space, negative space, compressing, contort

ing my body to fit inside the belly of the grand piano, willing my parts to go numb, *these legs*

are tuning pins arms brass strings ankles and such. Still. Then, in the late morning, someone

would come sit on the warm leathered seat, twiddle their hands over the shiny white keys,

Grandma or Brother or someone. An eruption of vibration ensued, and I felt everything in

side of me buzz. I laughed, filled my entire body with air, separated from piano, stepping

out of belly, emerging. It was always a shock to remember how tall I was, what the

ground felt like, that I was something 3D. I felt it so sharply while watching the piano play

itself. I felt everything then, there, standing there. I felt everything and realized that the piano felt nothing, that you don't ache.

◀ ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEN ZOMBORY-MOLDOVAN

NEW ZINES ON THE SCENE

SYMPOSIUM

Symposium is the Divinity Society's publication looking for poems, prose, essays, and art under the theme of 'light and dark'

SCREEVE

Screeve, Cambridge's first queer multimedia platform, aims to create a space for the queer students of Cambridge to share their experiences and showcase talent

DISPATCHES

Dispatches is a new Cambridge zine interested in featuring creative non-fiction prose articles

FLY ZINE

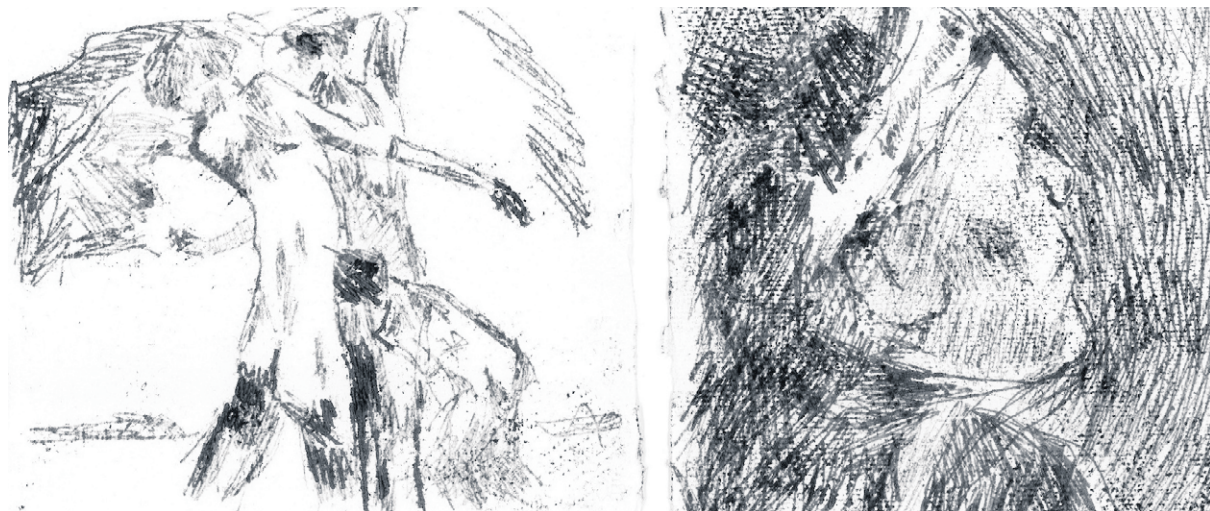
FLY is the network and forum for female and non-binary women of colour, and has opened submissions for their next print edition under the theme of 'work'

NEFARIOUS

Nefarious is Cambridge's own "little yellow zine", looking for creative work which encompasses all things "shocking, interesting, fun and absolutely mad"

LUNALAE

This beautifully designed zine made its debut with pieces under the theme 'dreams & nightmares'



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Fashion

Remembering Thierry Mugler

Staff Writer **Kasia Truscott** pays tribute to the titan of the 80s and 90s runway, looking back on some of his greatest moments in fashion

January 23rd 2022, will forever be remembered as a day that shook the world of fashion to its core, as the death of Manfred Thierry Mugler was announced.

The visionary French designer, whose remarkable career helped define nearly two decades of fashion, was revealed to have sadly passed away via Instagram on Monday. Known for his visually daring runway shows and bold, iconic pieces such as the motorcycle corset of Mugler Spring/Summer '92 and the Venus dress of Autumn/Winter '95 — re-worn by Cardi B



▲ TWITTER / VONLUX

at the 2019 Grammy's — Mugler's audacious eccentricity was one-of-a-kind. His charisma and creativity left a statement on the runway whose presence will be sorely missed.

Born in Strasbourg on 21st December 1948, Mugler trained as a ballet dancer at the Rhin Opera for much of his adolescence, before moving to Paris in his twenties to found his first collection, Café de Paris, in 1973. One year later, he founded the eponymous label that shot him to mainstream fame in the 1980s. His dramatically cinched silhouettes and sci-fi visions captured the heat and fluidity of self-expression,



▲ TWITTER / 2MAYAZ

flouting gender norms left, right and centre. Though Mugler retired from the label in 2002, he continued creating custom pieces for the likes of Lady Gaga, Kim Kardashian and Beyoncé. In honour of his profound influence on high-fashion, Varsity looks back at some of Mugler's greatest achievements — which helped enshrine his legacy as a fashion titan.

Connie Fleming for Spring/Summer '92

The really beautiful thing about Mugler's artistic vision was that his runways fostered a genuine space to celebrate diversity, and allow it to flourish. In 1992, Connie Fleming, a Black transgender female artist, walked for Mugler's Spring/Summer '92 collection as the ultimate high-fashion cowgirl. She donned a dramatic pair of bedazzled chaps, a matching corset and, of course, a bejewelled cowboy hat. Unapologetically sexy in its transcendent glamour, somehow I wouldn't be surprised if this was a number replicated by the costume designers for HBO's Euphoria.

Haute Couture Spring/Summer '98

If this daring take on the little black dress looks familiar, it's because Megan Fox brought it back to life at the 2021 Billboard Music Awards. Her slight alterations, opting for a mesh skirt as opposed to the high slit, nonetheless illustrate Mu-

gler's generational appeal and his innovative thinking. If anything, this dress was the blue-

“Mugler's audacious eccentricity was one-of-a-kind”

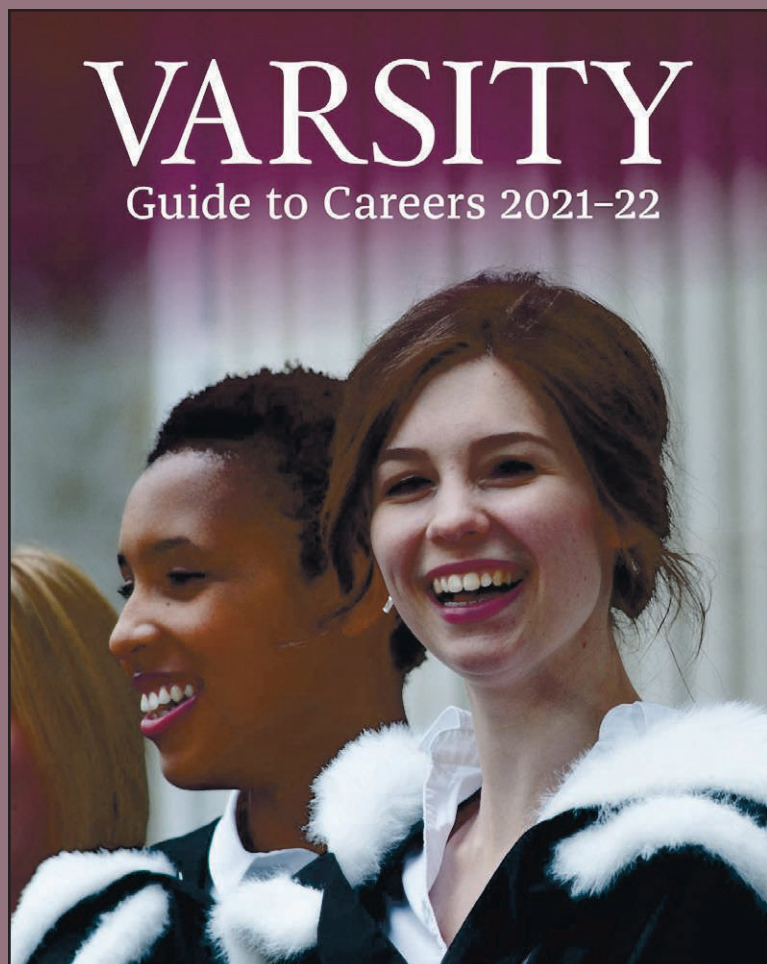
print for barely-there red carpet attire, injecting futuristic sensuality into the classic LBD that was sure to appeal to the likes of fashion-forward celebrities such as Megan Fox and Bella Hadid.

Kim Kardashian at the 2019 Met Gala

Undoubtedly one of his best career highlights, Mugler briefly emerged from retirement to work with Kim Kardashian to create her incredible custom gown for the 2019 Met Gala, leaving the world utterly stunned. An abundance of beaded crystals atop the impeccably cinched latex fabric created the perfect illusion of dripping water — as if the reality star had stepped right out of the ocean and onto the red carpet. Mugler's show-stopping number arguably left Kim at the top of the Gala's best-dressed list; his status as a great with a talent to continuously surprise will no doubt be missed but never forgotten.

▲ TWITTER / KIMKARDASHIAN

The Varsity Guide to Careers 2021/2022



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

May the Air Force 1 be with you

Sarah Adegbite explores the history of Air Force 1's and its politics in a gentrified fashion world



▲ TWITTER / VETSHIRTUM

It was the summer before uni. I was fresh out of school, basking in the June sunshine with no work to do, no applications to submit, and no deadlines to meet... but I had one pressing concern: purchasing a new pair of trainers. Vans, Chuck Taylors and Reeboks had all come and gone without satisfying my demands, and I was beginning to despair. And then, like a light shining from the starry night above with angels singing, my blessed Nike Air Force 1s descended from the sky.

Almost 40 years ago, the Nike Air Force 1s were only a thought in the mind of a man. That man was Bruce Kilgore, a Nike designer who set himself the challenge of creating a basketball shoe that was new, radical, and would line store shelves for years to come. Its silhouette is sleek, comfortable in any size, the design-

“It is not only the streets being gentrified, but the shoes we use to walk on them”

signed to maximise grip on the basketball court. The result was the Air Force 1, launched in 1982: a white high-top sneaker with grey trim, gum soles, and a breathable toe.

I've loved my Air Forces ever since I got them, but reading about the history and legacy of the shoe ignited something deeper within me. AF1s have an urban history, nicknamed 'Uptowns' for their popularity among the inner-city teenagers of Harlem, and if not for its hardcore fans in Baltimore, the shoe might not have been resurrected in the mid-1980s. Fashion held hands with

the music industry, and rap songs like Nelly's Air Force Ones, featuring Kyjuan, Ali, and Murphy Lee became a hit, repackaging and popularising the shoe for the new early-aughts generation. In fact, AF1s have had mentions in a number of top songs, most notably Classic (Better Than I've Ever Been), a collaboration between Kanye West, Rakim, Nas & KRS-One. The power of these rappers' words – predominantly inner-city black men – became influential in a society, like today's, with trends determined by celebrity approval. Their word was so powerful, and the shoe so popular, that Nike employed strategies to maximise hype and profit like limiting supply to the shoe and releasing stock to selected stores.

In fact, my sum-

mer purchase was AF1s with a black Nike swish rather than the classic all-whites – apparently there was a shortage (according to the JD sports manager).

Ultimately, I think it is the urban history of the shoe that makes it so popular among the London youth of today. Not only does it go with every outfit, but with every personality, so that even in the passing of time and transposition of place – it represents an American-born but culturally translatable image of the 'hustler', the 'rapper', the kid on the 'streets'. This American image of pristine Air Force 1s has been translated onto the city streets: every London teenager knows they'll be rinsed by their friends for having a pair of creased and dirty AF1s.

But this is not the end of the story. It speaks directly to the politics of fashion – that it is not only the streets being gentrified, but the

simplicity of the shoe are unparalleled. In the music of Nelly and Kanye West, AF1s are specifically a hustler's shoe, but that same music is globalising, and so is the shoe. A basketball shoe named after the US president's private plane – a symbol of wealth, power, and exclusivity – became a shoe for the masses.

There is much more to say about the history of the shoe – the rise of personalisation with NikeiD, promotion using basketball stars, or interpretations by Bape and Off White – but ultimately this is an ode to the universal charm of a simple pair of white sneakers. If I could only wear one pair of shoes for the rest of my life, it would without a doubt have to be my low all-white Air Force 1s. Not only are they the perfect sneaker – combining style with comfort and unbeatable versatility – but they are a sneaker for all and a sneaker with a story. Perhaps the

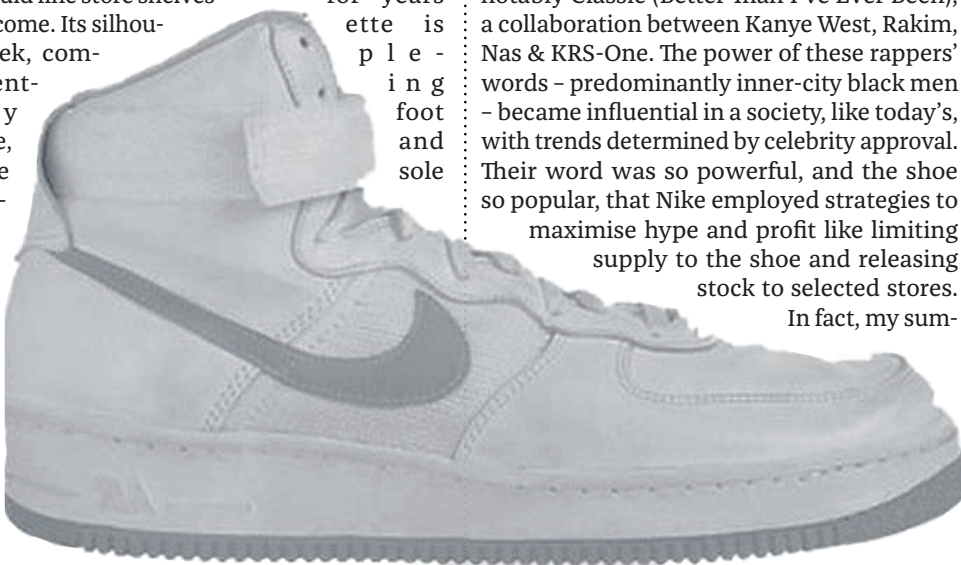
“No matter the origin or connotation, the comfort, style, and simplicity of the shoe are unparalleled”



shoes we use to walk on them. You'll see AF1s on a South London 'roadman' one day, and a Chelsea yummy mummy the next. And so, the question is: how did a basketball shoe originally seen on Harlem youth turn into a classic sneaker that cuts across London class divides? We could posit this as an example of the appropriation of typically working-class fashion, but this seems to only be one part of the narrative. Perhaps – at least in the case of the AF1 – it's as simple as this – no matter the origin or connotation, the comfort, style, and

only downfall is how easy it is for them to end up looking battered, but even that conveys a sense of adventure: every creased toe is an expedition, every dirty lace a decision. We may think our fashion choices only say something about who we are now, but no matter how new your Air Force 1s, how bright white the laces or uncreased the fabric, they still carry decades of history – music concerts, design templates, basketball games, and inner-city battles – all laid out upon the soles of your feet.

▲ TWITTER / SIREDDIEC



Music

Getting better: Alt-J on their album and upcoming tour

Music Editor **Felix Asare** interviews Alt-J pianist and vocalist, Gus Unger-Hamilton, to discuss their album 'The Dream', upcoming US and UK tour, and being a musician during the pandemic and Brexit

Four years on from their previous release 'Reduxer' – a remix album of 'Relaxer' (2017) – Alt-J are returning with their new album 'The Dream'. Gus describes it as an “armchair traveller’s album”, stemming from their time in London when travel was heavily restricted by the pandemic. As the title suggests, the destination is America (underpinned by the tracks ‘Chicago’ and ‘Philadelphia’) which the band almost view as their second home. Despite their longstanding relationship with the country, the album itself reflects a change in direction, which they also feel is a central aspect of their musical identity. “It’s a step forward,” Gus tells me, “ultimately our identity is based on being experimental and difficult to characterise, so we’re hoping the album will feel quite unexpected whilst also satisfying our fans. The one thing I feel like they want from us is to keep changing and keep evolving, and I think that message is clear even from our first album: we can’t stay the same, that wouldn’t be Alt-J.”

“
The one thing I feel like
they want from us is
to keep changing and
keep evolving
”

Discussing their musical backgrounds and how this influenced the album, Gus reveals the somewhat unexpected chemistry he has with lead singer and guitarist, Joe Newman. After meeting at Leeds University (along with drummer (Thom Sonny Green) Gus describes their

▼ GEORGE MUNCEY



connection as “ex-choirboy meets boy who grew up listening to James Taylor and produces some harmony magic”, having previously been a chorister at Ely Cathedral. Contrastingly, Joe’s musical upbringing stemmed from his father, who was a singer-songwriter in Southampton, but the combination of styles proved to be a winning formula, resulting in the band’s wide-spread success over the last

decade – most notably winning the 2012 Mercury Prize with their debut album ‘An Awesome Wave’.

‘The Dream’ is due to be released on 11th February, with three singles ‘Get Better’, ‘U&ME’, and ‘Hard Drive Gold’ already available. Released towards the end of last year, ‘Get Better’ offers a message of hope in response to the difficult times we have all experienced as of late. “I think this is going to be bigger than 9/11” Gus recalls telling the rest of the band with a sense of foreboding, as we hurtled towards the first lockdown in March 2020. “I think it’s definitely the biggest news lived probably the biggest

since World War II. We’d normally shy away from current affairs in our music, but this single is very much alluding to the pandemic and frontline workers.” The sentiment of a brighter fu-

ture is key to the whole album, with the intention behind this song in particular being to make people feel good again. He goes on to explain: “We really wanted to spread the message that hopefully good times are just around the corner after a really difficult two years.”

The new album is coupled with an upcoming tour around the UK and then to America, which will mark the band’s return after a similar tour in 2018. When I asked about going back, Gus reflects: “It’s become quite a complex thing to be a lover of America, I think we’ve all taken a look at the country and thought: ‘What’s going on here?’”. Comparing this feeling in 2018 to now, Gus shares his cautious optimism at the thought of ‘America post-Trump’, but how, overall, he and the band are “just excited to be touring again” in the wake of the pandemic.

After hearing about their complicated love affair with America, I asked for their perspective on the somewhat comparable relationship between Britain and the EU, post-Brexit.

“
We wanted to spread
the message that hope-
fully good times are
just around the corner
”

“We’re fortunate as we’re slightly protected from the real headaches of it, having such a great team supporting us. But I think it’s a massive shame that the up-and-coming bands are really going to suffer the most. When we started out all you needed was a car and enough money for petrol, so now needing a work permit and a visa, and all the other paperwork... It’s going to be so damaging for the grassroots.” Although this has been heavily reported in the news, Gus went on to discuss the often-overlooked impact on the crews supporting the bands, especially whilst also having to contend with the effects of the pandemic. “My crew are some of my closest friends in the world, and the impact on them

has meant working on building sites, or as delivery drivers to keep a roof over their heads in some cases. You know, before all this if you booked a show in Manila, barring a hurricane or some other act of God, you knew you’d be playing in Manila in nine months’ time. Now we just have no idea.” This uncertainty has been worsened by the government’s handling of the arts both in relation to Brexit, and the pandemic. When I mentioned this, Gus replied: “I think unfortunately the government tends to take our cultural scene for granted; they’re pleased to show it off and flap it around when it suits them, but then they’re not really willing to help in any meaningful way. There were some provisions made available during the pandemic, but only after much noise and complaint was made by the sector.” Despite this, he remains hopeful of a future return to Europe: “We will always



consider ourselves a European band and we love touring the EU – being in Paris one day, Berlin the next, then off to Vienna, it’s very exciting, whereas parts of the UK can just feel a bit same-y. I’m just grateful that we were around in a time before Brexit, when we could take full advantage of it.”

Overall, Gus makes it clear to me that the message of ‘Get Better’ is central to the album, but also to the band’s view of music as a whole. “In the past few years, things have completely fallen off a cliff, but I do cling to my faith that people fundamentally want to gather together, to hear music, watch music, and to have shared experiences”, a part of our lives which has been radically altered for the nearly two years now. He ends by telling me, “I really believe that getting out of your front door is where real life begins. That’s why I love touring, seeing other bands and meeting new people, rather than just being stuck in the narrow tunnels of an online world. We’re not ready to all just live in the metaverse yet... I hope.”

▲ ROSIE MATHESON

Varsity Music Team's Valentine's Day playlists

Music Editor **Josh Osman** shares the team's selection of songs to suit everyone's musical needs this Valentine's Day

A widely celebrated cultural phenomenon, Valentine's Day is a day that some look forward to, and some dread. Thankfully, the Varsity Music Team have done what we do best and curated two playlists that *should* cater to everyone's Valentine's moods.

The Love Playlist

Filled with delightfully romantic songs about being smitten by another person and falling in love, made for those who are excited and engulfed by the spirit and wonder of Valentine's Day. Here are some highlights:

“
An impeccable
choice for the hope-
less romantics
”

Don't Delete the Kisses Wolf Alice

Quite possibly one of the most charmingly innocent songs I've ever heard, perfectly capturing the gentle yet enchanting process of falling in love with someone, Wolf Alice's 2017 single is a song that could send a gentle warmth through the coldest of hearts. With soft spoken-word verses and a chorus that was simply made to scream along to, this synth-heavy, ethereal banger sets a high bar for modern saccharine love songs.

A Dream With a Baseball Player - Faye Webster

Sometimes romanticising impossible relationships and pining over strangers is better than something realistic... right? Well, Faye Webster's catchy, witty song is certainly enough to make you feel that way!

Written during the pandemic, it tells the story of how Webster has created an imaginary love story with a celebrating, while also poking fun at herself for the ridiculousness of the whole situation. An impeccable choice for the hopeless romantics out

there!

God Only Knows The Beach Boys

This one needs no introduction. If you didn't know it before you saw *Love Actually* for the first time, you were *really* missing out. 'God Only Knows' is the definitive love song. Filled with exaggeration and devotion, as well as being a complete earworm, this instant feel-good classic is the piece that completes every playlist of love songs. And for those of us who aren't feeling quite so lovestruck this Valentine's Day, we've also got you covered. Introducing...

The Anti-Love Playlist

A collection of songs ranging in emotion, recounting broken relationships and anger.

I Bet On Losing Dogs - Mitski

Can any artist truly capture the feelings of utter dejection and the resignation to sadness as Mitski? I thought not. Blunt and bleak, she sings with her airy voice about misplaced hope and believing in something she knows is doomed. Flawlessly conveying a longing for any form of connection at an emotional low point, no song is better than 'I Bet On Losing Dogs' for the 'me-time' of a stay-in Valentine's Day.

Kill V. Maim - Grimes

Right, so you're finished with sadness. It gets boring after a while. Fortunately, Grimes's 'Kill V. Maim' is a rage-fuelled, dynamic electropop masterpiece with the power to inject an obscene amount of energy and confidence into any

listener. No matter how many times she tries to convince us that it's about gender-bending mafia vampires, it's clear that she created a fantastic headbang-friendly song with a poignant message about society's tendency to excuse deplorable male behaviour.

Night Shift Lucy Dacus

After wallowing then releasing your wrath, you're left in a strange place in the middle of the two. Where do you go? 'Night Shift' by

VARSLITY'S VALENTINE'S PLAYLISTS

Listen to the Varsity Music Team's love and anti-love playlists on Spotify by scanning either of the codes below:



Lucy Dacus: the cathartic, bitter yet reflective solution. The song follows Dacus through her stories of trying to move on from a past lover, recounting sweet moments and moments of despair. Eventually, she reaches an intense, belted conclusion - she simply never has to see this person again.

Hopeful-
ly



this taster of the two playlists has given you an idea of what to expect. Which-ever one you'll be listening to February 14th, Varsity wishes you a Happy Valentine's Day!

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Film & TV

Portrait of a Lady on Fire (2019)

When Marianne (Noémie Merlant) is commissioned to paint the betrothed Héloïse (Adèle Haenel), the pair become entwined in a doomed, yet dazzling, romance. Lengthy gazes, a modest cast and a poignant use of Vivaldi's 'Summer' are just some of the features that make Céline Sciamma's period piece such an absorbing viewing experience.

Moulin Rouge! (2001)

Follow penniless Christian (Ewan McGregor) as he falls in love with Paris' Bohemian aura during the Fin de Siècle, captured by Satine (Nicole Kidman), the star of the Moulin Rouge. As is characteristic of Baz Luhrmann's oeuvre, *Moulin Rouge!* is as subtle as its character names and utterly camp in every way — Jim Broadbent's rendition of 'Like a Virgin' is exactly what Sontag envisioned.

Catrin Osborne

If Beale Street Could Talk (2019)

Childhood sweethearts Tish (Kiki Layne) and Fonny (Stephan James) navigate their romance amidst familial conflicts, teenage pregnancy and Fonny's wrongful imprisonment. It is not the easiest watch but the actors' intimate portrayals craft a couple that you can't help but fall in love with.

About Time (2013)

When Tim (Domhnall Gleeson) inherits his father's power to time travel, he enters a long and loving relationship with Mary (Rachel McAdams). Rather than wasting time on the sci-fi elements, *About Time* focuses on the intimacy of the couple's love told through the intriguing plot device of Tim's time-travelling powers.

FLICKR/MARCO VERCH PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

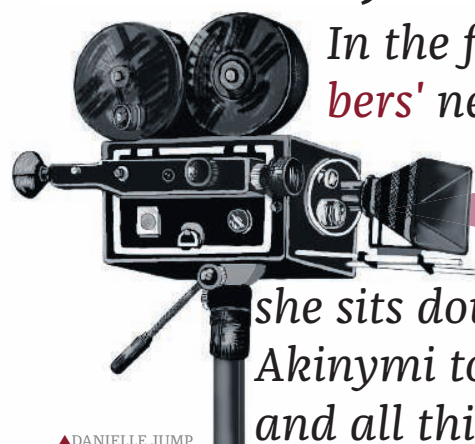
Varsity's Valentine's films

Obsession, cinema and 'Ferret'

In the first part of **Katie Chambers'** new column,

Lights, Cam-era, Action!

she sits down with Mojola Akinymi to discuss her latest project and all things Cambridge film



▲ DANIELLE JUMP

Mojola Akinymi, an English finalist at Jesus, is a writer and director of films and plays in Cambridge. After a long hiatus, *Ferret*, her latest film, is finally in editing, in preparation for its first screenings and upcoming film festivals. Mojola wrote the screenplay in October 2020, but wasn't able to start filming until November 2021 due to Covid restrictions.

"*Ferret* is about obsession," Mojola summarises. Reflecting excitedly on films like *Heathers* (1988), *Gone Girl* (2014) and *The Favourite* (2018), Mojola tells me how it's from these films that the inspiration for *Ferret* was born. There's something about "wanting to be the object of desire, and the willingness to do anything to be it" that Mojola finds "really effective." She's particularly interested in exploring this trait in female protagonists. Like the women in these films, the women in *Ferret* go to extreme, unsettling lengths to get what they want, but we "root for them" even as we are shocked by their behavior. When a film makes you painfully aware of an oppressive patriarchal superstructure, we agree, viewers can find themselves forgiving the individual female characters of even the most cardinal of interpersonal crimes. We talk about this effect at work in a group of films that is becoming known as the #goodforher canon (Mojola recommends *Us* (2019), *Knives Out* (2019) and *The Invisible Man* (2020)).

Another thing all these films have in common is that they are - even in all their darkness - very funny; indeed, Mojola classifies *Ferret* "a black comedy." When I ask about the comic element to this obsession narrative, she tells me that it is not only an effective tool to exacerbate even the most horrible of moments, but a directorial skill she really admires. "It's easy to make someone scared or upset," she says, "but it's much harder to make them laugh."

Ferret is far from Mojola's first foray as either a director, writer or filmmaker. Her CV of work in Cambridge alone is remarkable, so I'm surprised when she says that she didn't know she wanted to be a filmmaker until she got to Cambridge. Mojola identifies a talk in her very first term at Cambridge as a major turning point. "It was James McCarthy, speaking about how he became a screenwriter. He made it sound so doable. I spoke to him afterwards, and he said I should write a screenplay. I was like 'Oh my god.' So I wrote something."

Two years later, Mojola has worked

with Watersprite, completed a course at the British Film Academy, and won the 2021 Other Brother Studio's Film Fund, which is helping to fund *Ferret*. "It's so exciting that film in Cambridge is becoming more established. Filming *Ferret* was an enormous team effort, including "eight actors and maybe twenty-five extras." She recalls a scene filmed in the Maypole where thirty of her friends fell silent to listen to her direction. "It was terrifying! I started short-circuiting and told everyone to keep talking. I've never had that level of authority before." She's passionate about combating the idea that "to be a proper director you have to be loud and aggressive. It's about being a born leader, and about having a vision [that makes] people want to work with you to create it."

This synthesis of leadership and teamwork is important, Mojola explains, in a filming process that is complex and, at times, stressful. Not only is it reliant on technical equipment, but "you're filming completely out of sequence, depending on location and people's availability. The first scene of *Ferret* we [shot] is three quarters of the way through the film!" She goes on to talk about the difficulties filming in Cambridge posed: "[sometimes people don't] want direct references to [the place] in the film." But she finds positives in setting the film in the city. After all, she says, "that's kind of the point: *Ferret* is a story that could be set anywhere."

Mojola's full of advice for aspiring filmmakers in Cambridge. "Get involved with Watersprite." She then talks about more tangible ways to get involved with film, such as the CUFA - especially their Fresh2Film initiative - and the 'Film at Jesus' short film challenges. "Write as much as you can [as well]," she continues, "stuff that you can make... something that's feasible for you to create. It's all well and good writing a Hollywood blockbuster, but who's going to be able to see it? A screenplay is very liminal, it doesn't mean anything unless it's made into something."

"Knowing how to write a screenplay in the right format is so easy to learn." She recommends YouTube channels like StudioBinder and Masterclass. "Watch the hell out of those videos. Learning the language, like 'pan', 'zoom' and 'tilt', and learning things like the fact that one page of a screenplay equates to about a minute of screen time, will make it much easier to make a shot list, which is the next stage." of advice is "Make stuff for a reason, stuff that speaks to you."

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Theatre

Spring Awakening: Why angsty teens + rock = success

Charmaine Au-Yeung discusses what makes Spring Awakening an enduring hit

Content Note: This article contains references to abuse and sex in theatrical productions

Objectively-speaking, it's totally f*cked that a censored 1891 German play about sex would a.) be adapted into a musical, and b.) actually become a classic hit. Centred around a group of children at the precipice of adulthood, the musical does not shy away from heavy themes. Wendla, a young girl confused by her own growing body, starts off the musical proclaiming that her mother gave her 'no way to handle things' - including a straight answer about where babies come from. Her mother's unwillingness to tell all leaves her vulnerable, particularly at the hands of Melchior, a boy frustrated by his school's conservative values. Melchior's best friend, Moritz, struggles with nightmares of a woman's legs, and his 'deepening conviction that some dark part of his destiny may lie there between them'; when he is propositioned by an old childhood friend, Ilse, it only causes him more angst. Ilse, and another friend, Martha, are abused and betrayed by their parents, the people who *should* be there for them.

Spring Awakening's rock score certainly does its job of expressing the angsty cries of a generation frustrated with their parents. Electric guitars are the background to belty, angry numbers, like 'Mama Who Bore Me' and 'The B***h of Living', but fade into the shadows with weepy strings and piano in dark and impactful moments for the characters, including 'The Dark I Know Well' and 'Those You've Known'. The music, cleverly written by Duncan Sheik and Steven Slater, doesn't just consist of toe-tappy, satisfying-to-belt numbers that do the rounds in musical theatre karaoke nights (been there), it also made big stars out of the then-teenage cast. Lea Michele went on to find fame in *Glee*; Jonathan Groff

on television and in numerous other Broadway productions, including *Hamilton*; Lili Cooper in *Spongebob*; and, of course, John Gallagher Jr. with the Tony Award for Best Supporting Actor in a Musical. 15 years on, and *Spring Awakening* remains as popular as ever; now well into their thirties, the original Broadway cast held a one-night-only reunion last November and, of course, it sold out.

This popularity extends beyond professional theatre, with *Spring Awakening* also regularly making waves in amateur theatre circles, including mine. I played Ilse in St Andrews in March 2020, the week before lockdown was announced. Whilst reading news of a growing global crisis backstage put a damper on things, being in the production was still something like a dream come true - and, quite frankly, it was cathartic to jump around stage screaming that we were all 'Totally F*cked'.

Growing up, I was always a big theatre kid; but when I first listened to *Spring Awakening's* cast recording in Year 10, it blew my mind to find a musical about people my age asking adults to cut the crap. It certainly subverts the image of musicals as happy escapism. Indeed, it's so beloved because of its dark themes, its timelessness, and its ability to speak to the present even though its original story was written more than a century ago.

Spring Awakening is the ideal sandbox musical. The original Broadway set was deliberately designed to look fairly barebones, both to encourage other productions to make the musical their own and to allow the musical to speak to multiple social issues, past and present, including ones not touched on by the original.

The Deaf West production on Broadway, for example, emphasises the distinction between hearing and non-hearing individuals through the miscommunications the actors have in the plot. The new production at the Almeida in London also brings in references to XR and BLM; hearing the actors sing 'blah blah blah' hearkens back to Greta Thunberg's speech at COP26. In the

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It blew my mind to find a musical about people my age asking adults to cut the crap

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production I was involved in, our directors gave us shirts to wear for the final number, 'Song of Purple Summer', emblazoned with the logos of mental health charities. Their rationale was whilst the musical can be depressing, there is hope at the end. The characters have learned a lot, and will go on to better each other in the places where their parents failed them. That message of hope, even in spite of the darkness, is something that sticks.

Right: Charmaine in *Spring Awakening*. Right: Photo from the production Photos/ Mag-



Four types of annoying Cambridge theatre kids

If you're really into theatre, you probably have a personality. And sometimes that's a bad thing, argues **Georgina Hayward**

Director Dave

You might catch him rushing along King's Parade, but don't ask him to stick around and chat. He's got, like, four shows rehearsing at the moment. And they're all on in the next three days. No, he doesn't have time to walk like a normal person. He has to *power walk* to the ADC because Dick Whittington's cat dropped out and now they have to re-block the whole first act. No, he doesn't have time for lunch. He'll just shove a Nature Valley bar in his mouth and then run. Oh, and he's never at his college. Really. There's a cardboard box under the Corpus Playroom dressing room table with a towel and a beret in it. I'm pretty sure he sleeps there.

O Romeo

Let's face it - he's a pretty good actor. But he played the lead once in Michaelmas term and now he thinks he's a gift to God's green earth. He'll always be the last one to learn his lines out of the main cast because he's, you know. Pretty cool. He looks at himself in the dressing room mirrors a



lot. Look, we're not saying he's untalented. Did he play the lead in every production back home? Yes. Was he also one of the only two male actors in the company? Also yes. And the other one was twelve. Just keeping it real, man.

Sally Overshare

Yeah, Sally, we know that Stanislavsky said that you should tap into your own memories and traumas to create a character. Emotional realism is cool. We admire that you're dedicated to the craft. No, we don't need to hear about the time your mother told you about her affair over Christmas port. Rehearsal warm-up is not the place to come clean about your relationship issues, either. Theatre is great, but it's not therapy. Exercise your demons on *Cambridge Nightline* like everyone else, Sally. Please.

Artaud girl

Screams a lot.

◀ MAXPIXEL.COM

What's on this fortnight

Looking for something to watch this fortnight? Lotte Brundle looks at what's coming up in Cambridge Theatre over the next two weeks:

Tue 1 - Sat 5 February 7:45pm
ADC THEATRE
AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

Tue 1 - Sat 5 February 7:00pm
CORPUS PLAYROOM
PARTITION
The story of "The greatest Indian mathematician of all time" according to the ADC's website.

Tue 1 - Sat 5 February 9:30pm
CORPUS PLAYROOM
THE SPITEFUL LANDSMAN

Wed 2 - Sat 5 February 11:00pm
ADC THEATRE
FOOTLIGHTS PRESENTS: HEAVEN AND HELL
Here's hoping for a night of devilish laughs, and hopefully not comedic purgatory...

Tue 8 - Sat 12 February 7:00pm
CORPUS PLAYROOM
LOVE ALL

Tue 8 - Sat 12 February 7:45pm
ADC THEATRE
RENT
If you're a fan of toe-tapping tunes about the infamous 'struggling artist' then this amateur production of the classic musical is for you!

Tue 8 - Sat 12 February 9:30pm
CORPUS PLAYROOM
THE COVEN

Wed 9 - Sat 12 February 11:00pm
ADC THEATRE
LONG NIGHTS IN PARADISE
An original student play about tragedy and madness - much like the average Cambridge students' daily academic experience.

Tue 15 - Sat 19 February 7:00pm
CORPUS PLAYROOM
THE CALLIGRAPHER

Sport



▲ CURUFC led for the majority of the clash, at one point commanding a 60-0 lead (Katie E. Kaspersen)

'Gown' smash 'Town' 65-7 in rugby union

Joseph Hill
Sports Correspondent

Cambridge University Rugby Union Football Club (CURUFC) came out on top against Cambridge Rugby Union Football Club (RUFC) in the 'Town' vs. 'Gown' local derby, storming to a 65-7 victory at Grange Road on Wednesday evening (02/02).

Last time out, captain Charlie Watson's side fell to a 14-5 defeat at the hands of Bishop Stortford Blues, meaning that CURUFC were in search of their first win of the new year.

Turning to the action under the Grange Road lights, opening signs of promise that prevailed from both outfits were ultimately punctuated by several sloppy handling errors.

Despite Town's hard-hitting defence, Gown had the better of the first ten minutes, with Montesino Jones piling over in the corner. Alex King missed the extras, thus making the score 5-0 to the home side.

It was only a matter of minutes before the Gown would extend their lead, as several phases of free-flowing rugby culminated in Scotland under-20 international Archie Smeaton beating four men to score before King added the extras, this time around from the tee.

Town almost hit back instantly, but Owain Collard was denied by a brilliant tackle from King before stern defence stemmed the away side's tide. Max Loveridge, deputising at 10 in the absence of Jamie Benson, marshalled the back line well both in defence and attack.

Gown's reward came in the 32nd minute, with scrum-half Charles Favell spotting an overlap on the blindside before captain and flanker Stephen Leonard

showcased a display of footwork normally reserved for the flashiest of backs, dotting down under the posts to give King an easy conversion.

The hosts' fourth score of the evening came shortly afterwards, as Sam Odu was given a clear path to the tryline from the breakdown by the Town defence. King again slotted the conversion to make it 26-0.

The score remained unchanged until the referee's whistle blew, sending both sides in with the Light Blues firmly in the driving seat.

Gown came out after the break with no signs of letting up, and sustained pressure from the Light Blues allowed Leonard to add his second try of the evening. King's kick went narrowly wide from a tight angle to leave things at 31-0.

Less than a minute after the restart, Loveridge got the try his performance deserved, shrugging off the visibly fatigued Town defence to score under the posts and King subsequently making no mistake this time.

After the disruption caused by several injuries to RUFC's players, Zac Bischoff broke through again before prop Max Pettit almost ran it on from the forty-yard line to the delight of the home crowd. A shrewd cross-kick, though, allowed replacement Ikechi Mere, on the pitch for a matter of minutes, to finish well in the corner.

Once again, Town were unable to cope with sustained Gown pressure, as Angus Peters drove over from close range after several phases. King's kick rebounded off the post to delay the half-century of points, leaving the score at 48-0.

The Light Blues continued their free-scoring form soon after, Smeaton doubling his tally to add the Gown's ninth

try of the night. A clever kick from replacement fly-half Cam Millen was latched onto by substitute Demi Obembe to score under the posts, King slotting his fifth conversion of the night to extend the home side's lead to 60 points.

Disappointingly for Gown, hooker Corey Lewis capitalised on a lapse in concentration to ruin any chance of a clean sheet, with Scott Lloyd adding the extras to give Town some form of consolation.

Their new-found confidence was soon knocked back, however, by yet another Cambridge score, as another close-range try extended the score to 65-7, on which the clash ended.

Varsity Player of the Match: Zac Bischoff (CURUFC)

Further analysis and confirmed lineups can be found at varsity.co.uk/sport.

Netball Blues on top

Liam Kline
Senior Sports Editor

Cambridge University Ladies Netball Club (CULNC) defeated second-placed Nottingham 2 at the University Sports Centre on Wednesday afternoon (02/02), winning by a score of 53-32.

With Cambridge's Rachel Mercer taking the first centre pass and getting the game underway, the home side rocketed into an early lead through the fruitful attacking play of front pairing Zoë Starbuck and Clodagh Bottomley, with a particularly great battle taking shape between Bottomley and the Nottingham goal-keeper.

After five minutes on the clock, Cambridge found themselves 5-1 up, putting in a far more aggressive performance than last time out against Worcester 2.

Nottingham were markedly adopting a more high-risk style of passing than Cambridge, but the Blues were managing to nail the basics and get bodies in and around the goal circle to feed Starbuck and Bottomley. A great lob pass from captain Millie Quayle to Bottomley made it 12-7 with just two minutes left of a quar-

ter that eventually ended 14-8.

An unchanged Blues side continued to get the better of their opponent, with Bottomley doing well against a lively goal-keeper and often managing to get the roll on her. At the other end, Blues goal-keeper Fenna Agnew and wing-defence Tabbie Brough were keeping the away shooters at bay.

With the score reading 24-13 at the halfway point of the second quarter, Bottomley was playing with a smile on her face and deservedly so. Her prolific shooting was supported well by Starbuck's efficiency in the circle, making for a dynamic pair that ultimately overwhelmed the Nottingham defenders.

30-16 posted itself on the scoreboard come the half-time buzzer, with the Blues stretching a comfortable lead thanks to the hot hand of Bottomley and multiple dimes of Quayle and Mercer.

Coming out of the break, Nottingham shuffled various players around in search of a solution, but to little avail. Continued dominance from Bottomley under the net saw the Blues push their advantage out to 37-18 with ten minutes left in the third.

As Cambridge flirted with maintain-

ing their 20-point lead in the time just before the buzzer, Cambridge went into the final period 45-26 to the good.

The fourth quarter proved more of the same from Quayle's side, with Agnew taking a well-earned rest on the bench. Bottomley broke 50 for her side with little time left on the clock and the game soon ended at 53-32.

Varsity MVP: Millie Quayle

Further analysis and confirmed lineups can be found at varsity.co.uk/sport.

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Sport

‘Never forget’: safe-standing trial is a reckoning with football’s past

As safe-standing is slowly incorporated into stadiums around the UK, **Nick Stuart** revisits a darker time for English football, when standing was the norm and hooliganism was rife, and argues we should celebrate standing but always with one eye on the past



▲ Brentford's Griffin Park was one of only two stadiums in the top two divisions of English football to retain terracing until its demolition in 2020 (Gareth Williams/Flickr)

At around 9.30pm on the 29th of December, Chelsea are hanging on to a 1-0 lead against Brighton at Stamford Bridge. With Brighton applying pressure in the closing stages, Marc Cucurella's request for the ball back from a Chelsea fan is rebuffed, as he throws the ball as far as he can into the East Stand. For the next minute and a half, Stamford Bridge erupts in derisive jeers as the ball is chucked around by Chelsea fans before the Brighton bench finally loses patience and seeks out a new ball for Cucurella. Just moments later, the Bridge faithful is stunned to silence as Edouard Mendy is rooted to the spot by, of all people, former Gooner Danny Welbeck's arcing header.

Chelsea's title hopes were all but extinguished, Brighton had scored their first ever goal at Stamford Bridge and all Chelsea fans present, myself included, were left with egg on our faces. In the circumstances, Chelsea fans might be forgiven for forgetting the wider significance of the occasion as they steamed out onto the Fulham Road in their droves, but their hurt pride pales in comparison with the fact that night was the last time, possibly ever, that an all-seater fixture would be played at Stamford Bridge. In the next match against Liverpool, fans were legally allowed to stand at The Bridge for the first

time in the Premier League since 1993.

Anyone who has been in the Matthew Harding Lower Stand and its equivalents in stadia around the country might shrug their shoulders at this announcement. Fans have always stood for the entirety of matches despite the law, and are largely left alone by stewards for it. The practical merits of safe standing in design-

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The practical merits of safe standing in designated sections of stadia are hardly up for debate
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nated sections of stadia are hardly up for debate. It is widely regarded that if fans do choose to stand for the entire game, it is more dangerous not to have metal bars in front of them. Nearly every club in all the major divisions of European football has at least a portion of its stadium as a standing terrace. Moreover, the plans English football has for safe standing

are carefully thought out, and conservative compared to the rest of Europe. For example, a ratio of 1 to 1 for the capacity of all seated stands to standing will be used, compared to a multiplier as high as 1.8 in some countries across Europe.

It all doesn't add up though. Why has something which most fans agree about, that makes sense from a safety point of view, and is widely in place across all other major leagues in Europe, only now being implemented? To answer this question, as even the most casual football fan will be aware, is to revisit the horrific trauma of the Hillsborough disaster, and the violent rupture in the identity of English football it brought about.

Long before Boris Johnson and 'partygate', football hooliganism in the 1980s was seen as the embarrassment of Britain. Several scandals through the decade had greatly tarnished the reputation of British football fans abroad. This culminated in the banning of English football clubs in European competitions for five years after the Heysel Stadium Disaster of 1985, in which Liverpool fans charged at Juventus fans, causing a crush in the terraces that killed 39 Juve supporters. The pride and glory of 1966 had faded into a distant memory, and the language of violence, exclusion, and tribalism had taken its place in the eyes of the public.

With Britain firmly under the iron grip of Thatcherism by this point, the government took the firm view of 'something

had to be done.' Thatcher's solutions, one of which was called "Goalies against Hoolies" which aimed to use the "more articulate goalkeepers, who are often first in line of hooligan fire" to speak out against fan violence, were further proof of how woefully out of touch she was with working class Britons. That her six-point plan for the future of English football was pitched on April's Fools Day of 1985 is apt. The introduction of metal fencing to segregate fans, later partially responsible for the Hillsborough tragedy, was another product of governmental pressure on football clubs to deal with hooliganism. Nevertheless, football's internal division was only a microcosm of a nation, perhaps more divided than it ever had been, in the era of Thatcherism. Football hooliganism was entangled in the social fabric of 1980s Britain, and its roots ran far deeper than Thatcher's heavy handed, intolerant approach to dealing with it might suggest.

English football was on its knees in 1989. Then Hillsborough happened. The facts of the tragedy are well known: 97 Liverpool fans, the most recent of the victims dying last year, tragically lost their lives as thousands of fans were crushed against the perimeter fence of the Leppings Lane stand.

How does one react to such an unspeakably shocking tragedy? Responses pointed the finger of blame in various directions, often unjustly towards the Liverpool fans, but the simple truth is no explanation will ever suffice in alleviating the weight of the tragedy on the victims' families, Liverpool F.C, and the football community as a whole. It leaves a gaping, uncrossable void in the history of English football.

Nevertheless, the public wanted concrete answers, which the Taylor Report sought to provide. The main conclusions of the report were actually that standing at football stadiums was not inherently unsafe, but that police misconduct and perimeter fences were the main contributors to the disaster. Affirmative action, however, and palpable change needed to be seen by the people, and rather than blame the authorities for their management of the crowds, a scapegoat could be found by the outlawing of standing at all football stadiums in the top two divisions, which pointed the finger at the fans. Perimeter fences were removed too, and the policing of crowds thoroughly re-strategized.

It became a ground zero for English football. The English game was, quite literally, liberated from its cage and, like the liver bird depicted on Liverpool's badge, the newly branded Premier League rose from the ashes of catastrophe. The growth of English football since has been nothing short of remarkable as the Premier League has developed into a multi-billion-pound corporation, and the leading football brand in the world. For the large part, football stadiums have become a safe place for families and fans of all ethnicities, sexual orientation, and beliefs. Many speak with reason about the worrying consequences of the exponential commodification of football clubs, leaving working class fans behind, and there is much merit to these concerns. We can, however, also say with certainty that football stadia are immensely safer, more accepting spaces than they were in

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Long before Boris Johnson and 'partygate', football hooliganism in the 1980s was seen as the embarrassment of Britain
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the darkest days of the 1980s. That we can bring back the terraces without the need to keep fans apart in metal cages, speaks volumes to this.

It is with pride that I think we should view the reinstatement of standing in English football stadiums, but always with one eye on the legacy of the past. As racism and bad behaviour starts to creep back into the game, after a record year for football related arrests, the cages of football's dark days should remind us that football stadia are a space for unity, not division. Overall, the English game is in an immensely better position now than it was in the 1980s, though like the banner soaring through the Anfield sky read on the 30th anniversary of Hillsborough, we must 'Never Forget'.