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page 23

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VARSLITY

Cambridge won't rule out use of gagging clauses

Lorna Kimmins
Deputy News Editor

Cambridge is refusing to sign a pledge banning the use of non-disclosure agreements against victims of sexual harassment, despite nearly 50 other UK universities doing so.

The voluntary pledge, backed by Michelle Donelan, the Minister for Universities, and the campaign group Can't Buy My Silence, was launched in January this year.

Universities that are participating, commit to not using the agreements to "silence people" who come forward to raise complaints of sexual harassment, abuse or misconduct, or other forms of harassment and bullying. While Bristol, Manchester and UCL have all signed the pledge, Cambridge and Oxford are yet to add their names.

While a tweet from Can't Buy My Silence on January 19 suggested that Cambridge supported the initiative, *Varsity* has learned that the University never signed the pledge.

The University put out a statement later that day to "clarify its position" on the use of NDAs, saying: "NDAs should not be used to prevent individuals from reporting sexual misconduct or to cover up inappropriate behaviour and the University of Cambridge will never use them for these purposes. However, in exceptional circumstances a degree of confidentiality may be to the benefit of all parties."

Julie Macfarlane, co-founder of Can't Buy My Silence with Zelda Perkins, has been negotiating with Cambridge over

the pledge. She said: "We have had a constructive conversation, but there is still reluctance to commit to not using NDAs at any stage of the misconduct complaints process and assuring Cambridge students (and staff) that bringing a complaint will not lead to them being silenced."

"Allowing a broad discretion - 'wobble room' for 'exceptions' - leaves the same problems in place; discouragement from bringing forward a complaint about misconduct, or accepting a gag. More concerning, this discussion seems to be a low priority for Cambridge and not something the University is taking seriously enough."

Oxford's similar resistance came under criticism following a recent article in *The Times* revealing that an Oxford college, Lady Margaret Hall, warned a student not to speak to the media after she reported that she had been raped by a fellow student.

According to *The Times*, the College later announced that it would sign the anti-NDA pledge, but it has yet to appear on the list of signatories.

Ben Dalitz, the Cambridge SU welfare and community officer, said they were "deeply concerned" by the University's decision not to sign the pledge.

"We have been attempting to raise the issue of NDAs with the University's senior management since January when the pledge was launched."

"The use of Non-Disclosure Agreements to cover up harassment and misconduct contributes to a culture of silence and erasure surrounding sexual

Story continued on page 2 ►



Catz student sends £6k of equipment to Ukraine

Read about Danny Mykhaylyuk's story on page 3 ►

News

EDITORIAL

Goodbye for now

Time truly does fly when you're having fun. We're not sure that we ever really expected to end up here, but, either way, we're incredibly grateful for where we've landed. The last few months have been thrilling, to say the least, and as we look towards our finals and whatever the future may hold in store – it's also time for us to bid farewell to *Varsity*.

Our term as Editors has been a tumultuous one, and it's fair to say that it has never been boring. Our news pages have seen everything from attempted election rigging and leaked emails, to hot tubs and student bouncers. Less enjoyable, but much more important, have been the allegations of racism within the Divinity Faculty, and the misogynistic and homophobic speeches at Port & Policy.

In this week's issue – our final issue of the academic year – we've got our usual menu of journalistic delights for you to savour. You can take a glimpse at Cambridge through the

eyes of a cancer patient in Features; consider contemporary fitness culture in Opinion; or travel further afield with Interviews, where we speak to a student who has enlisted to fight in Ukraine.

If you're more of a Vulture-lover, fear not, we've plenty of treats in store for you too: find lust with a Bridgerton season two review in Film & TV; consider heartbreak through the culinary arts in Lifestyle; or fall in love with the beauty of the Varsity X CUCFS shoot in Fashion.

Lastly, we'd like to say the biggest thank you to our wonderful team of editors, writers, photographers, illustrators, and podcast producers, without whom none of this would have been possible. A special thanks goes the angels who made up our executive team this term. Finally, to Lotte and Juliette, we wish you nothing but the best for Easter term!

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‘Impossibly’ high UK uni fees put off international students

Lorna Kimmins
Deputy News Editor

A Spanish non-profit which advises students applying to top universities has said that “impossibly high post-Brexit tuition fees” mean they are now “actively discouraging” their students from applying to UK institutions, including Cambridge.

Last week, representatives from the Aditus Program - which has reportedly helped students secure offers for Harvard, Princeton and Cambridge - wrote to the vice-chancellor, Professor Stephen Toope, and the pro-vice-chancellor for education, Graham Virgo, to inform them that they would be “ceasing to support students applying to UK universities and are actively discouraging them from doing so.”

The letter, drafted by Cambridge alumnus Alonso Campos and current Cambridge PhD student Jesús Arjona (both of whom work with Aditus) goes on to say that the organisation “set out to be hopeful” after Brexit, referring to “productive conversations” with the University’s admissions office - but

that increased tuition fees for EU students has meant that they “have seen students who get in and cannot afford their degrees.”

Students from the European Union used to be eligible for the same tuition fees as ‘Home’ students. They were also eligible to access student loans from the UK government.

However, due to Brexit, students from EU countries are now considered ‘International’ students, meaning they pay higher fees, and are unable to access government loans.

An international student starting an English or Economics degree at Cambridge in October can expect to pay £23,340 per year, while fresher medics will pay £60,942.

International students are also expected to pay annual college fee ranging from £9,500 to £10,939, as well as paying for living costs.

Campos and Arjona suggest that the high costs make it almost impossible for their students to study in Cambridge, saying that the “vast, vast majority of Spanish families cannot afford the £40k yearly price tag”.

One Aditus student who received an

offer this year to study Mathematics, was reportedly forced to decline due to financial concerns.

Campos and Arjona acknowledged that there is some help available for international students via sources such as the Cambridge Trust and external charities, but they told *Varsity* that most of these only cover part of the costs of studying.

Arjona said that things are “slowly getting better” at Cambridge, saying that the help offered by the Cambridge Trust and bursaries for international students on offer at Trinity are “very welcome”, but that this only covers a “small fraction” of the thousands of potential international candidates.

Campos told *Varsity* that this situation “is not even the University’s fault necessarily. They are being forced to charge these tuition fees by the government”.

Reflecting on ways to make things easier for international students, Campos added: “I would say the best thing [Cambridge] could do is actually lobby the government because they are the ones who are in the best position to do so.”

‘Brutal’ 12% interest rate hike for grads

Aoife Petrie
Deputy News Editor

Students are set for a rough 12% hike in the interest rates on student loans unless the government intervenes, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has said.

Even though the current rate is 1.5%, the majority of recent graduates in England and Wales are going to be charged 9% from September due to a rise in the retail price index, which the interest rates are based on.

Higher-earning graduates, according to IFS, will be the most directly affected by the increase, with some having to pay up to £3,000 more if the government does not intervene.

Zaynab Ahmed, the current undergraduate access, education and participation officer for the SU told *Varsity* of

her dismay at the news. “Once again,” she said, “the Government has put money before young people.

“The skyrocketing student loan interest will act as a further access barrier to higher education; not only will it dissuade underrepresented students from applying to university, but it will detrimentally affect the lowest-earning graduates.”

According to Ahmed, education “should be a right, not a privilege”, though she claims this is impossible while the Government “continues to treat students as cash cows.”

This will probably not even be the last of the changes to the interest rate, an economist at the IFS, Ben Waltmann, said.

Unless the government changes the way that student loan interest is de-

cided, there will continue to be “wild swings” over the next three years of the interest rate.

There is “no good economic reason for this”, he said, as the interest rates “should be low and stable, reflecting the government’s own cost of borrowing”. Urging the government to intervene, they need to “adjust the way the interest rate cap operates to avoid a significant spike in September.”

The National Union of Students have labelled the increases “brutal” as it would most likely “add thousands of pounds to graduate loans at a time when many were struggling.”

With college rent also set to increase over the coming months, one Cambridge student said it represents “yet another barrier to participation in higher education”.

The university will not sign the pledge against NDAs, but will not use them as cover ups

Continued from front page ►

‘gagging clauses’ and slow, opaque procedures that take place behind closed doors to evade accountability for the sexual violence and racism that exist at these institutions.”

When contacted for comment, a University spokesperson told *Varsity* that: “the University of Cambridge will never use Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) to prevent individuals from reporting sexual misconduct or to cover up inap-

propriate behaviour.

The University considers the safety and wellbeing of members of its community to be of paramount importance and supports the right of complainants to take the matter to the police or other regulatory agencies and warn others about proven perpetrators of abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

“There are, however, rare occasions when non-disclosure agreements, made as part of the settlement of a dispute, can benefit all parties to it.

Where a complainant genuinely wishes a settlement agreement to contain an NDA, its terms are clear and the complainant has received independent legal advice about its effect, the parties should be free to reach a settlement on this basis. The University is unable to give a commitment that could be interpreted as preventing the use of NDAs in this sort of situation, however infrequently it may arise.”

Ticketing scandal rocks India society

India society will investigate whether non-members unfairly bought cheaper tickets to events reserved for members only.

The extent of the loss to the society is currently unknown, but is believed to cover at least a couple of hundred pounds that has been lost at events over the past several months.

While sometimes member tickets prices are only a couple of pounds cheaper, for larger events like the “Bollywood Bridgemas” and garden party, this can rise to nearly £10.

The society’s ticketing system relies on trust: no one on committee takes responsibility for checking whether people are purchasing the correct ticket. The alleged regular offenders, if found guilty, will have to repay the society any lost cash.

The second year Catz student sending thousands of pounds worth of equipment to Ukraine

Eleanor Mann
News correspondent

Danny Mykhaylyuk talks to me from an Austrian hotel housing Ukrainian refugees. A shy girl waves to me and a group of elderly women excitedly bid me “Hello!” as we begin our conversation – the camaraderie he has with the people he’s helping is clear.

Danny is a second-year Ukrainian student at St Catharine’s College studying Chinese. He moved to the UK aged 14, attending Eton College before Cambridge. Since Russia invaded Ukraine on the 24th February, the 20 year-old has not stopped in his efforts to help his country while studying.

From raising roughly £1,500 through a social fundraiser at a vegan cafe, sending over £6,000 worth of medical supplies and military equipment to the frontline, speaking at vigils on King’s Parade, and teaching Chinese to Ukrainian children as part of a project to distract children from war, Danny’s action seems to be the only source of stability in his life right now.

But how does he do all this from Cambridge while studying for his degree? He explains that he’d attend his lessons in the morning, spend the afternoon receiving orders, go to the shop to pick them up, then study in the evening while keeping an eye on the news. Most missiles and rockets would hit at night.

“Waking up not knowing if your house is still standing is the most terrifying thing in the world”, he says. “The first thing is fight or flight: you have to take care of your immediate family, make sure they’re safe. I was running on virtually no sleep.”

Danny’s priorities have changed rapidly. “Initially I wanted to live a normal life, have a family, have a nice career. Now I want to rebuild my country.”

When we spoke two weeks ago (8/4), reports emerged of the killing of 57 civilians in Kramatorsk station. I ask what keeps him going in the face of such news. He pauses. The alternative of not doing anything confounds him. “If I’m not doing this, then what am I doing?...If I can save the lives of people my age, there’s nothing better I can do.”

Despite Danny’s tireless efforts, he continues to struggle with the guilt of not going to fight as some of his peers have.

“I’m 20, able-bodied, and it’s what you do; you go and defend your country. Then I realised a) I’m untrained and b) If I get shot on the second day I’m not



“What keeps me going is the guys who put everything on the line for their country” (DANNY KHAYLYUK) ▼

A day in the life	Checklist
“Wake up, update Kyiv news and prepare for lessons. Attend lessons in the morning (somewhat sporadically), and simultaneously make/receive calls from friends and family members, make sure home isn’t obliterated. Visit Nick at the Army surplus shop, assess inventory, call Ukrainian suppliers, take orders. Load van with goods, or return to College, have lunch. Go to a demonstration on King’s Parade, call home. Have dinner, attempt work, whilst updating rocket alerts. More news, admin and planning.”	£6,000 worth military and medical supplies, including: 10 helmets 14 Northern Ireland plated bullet proof vests £1,500 raised through vegan cafe fundraiser £7,000 personally raised from donors

going to be of any use.”

As those fleeing Ukraine nears five million, Danny has turned his focus to finding safe housing for refugee families. He reminds those in the UK looking to house Ukrainian refugees under the government’s Homes for Ukraine scheme that “these are people who have just come back from war” and that “perfect Ukrainians don’t exist.”

His list of touching stories is endless. From his musically gifted friend who learnt the Ukrainian national anthem, to his college wife who often drove him to the shop to pick up supplies, and to the Ukrainian child who asked if he’d continue teaching him Chinese after the

war ended.

Danny jokes that teaching the Ukrainian kids was more nerve-racking than his Cambridge interview because he felt he had “a genuine responsibility for these kids.” But the most terrifying moment came when he had to kit out a Ukrainian lorry driver joining the frontline. “His life was in some ways in my hands.”

The kit is effective. A video he got sent shows “some Ukrainian guys shooting at it with a kalashnikov and it wasn’t going through. This is bizarre – I’m more excited by body armour not getting pierced than by a round of four jägerbombs at Revs.” He laughs. “The priorities have



changed massively.”

After being called away twice, he emphasises his desire to continue his efforts alongside his degree at Cambridge for the foreseeable future, and tells me of his pride for his country as well as his grief.

“I’m horrified and I’m hurt, but what keeps me going is the guys who put everything on the line for their country.”

“The whole of Ukraine hangs on to this notion that we will win, we will prevail. And we will rebuild what we’ve lost.”

For those wishing to donate to Danny’s fundraiser, he asks you to send money to his PayPal: danmiha@icloud.com. All money donated will be sent to Ukrainians in Poland.

Theology don: Dutch PM criticised anti-gay law because he doesn’t have kids

Jacob Freedland
Senior News Editor

Lorna Kimmmins
Deputy News Editor

The Dutch prime minister criticised Hungary’s anti-LGBT law because “he has no children”, a Cambridge Theology don has suggested.

Speaking to Hungarian magazine *Mandiner* at the end of March (30/3), Dr James Orr said he was “shocked” at Mark Rutte’s suggestion that Hungary should not be in the EU due to the legislation,

and argued that because “a significant proportion of the current EU leaders are childless”, they “do not even understand why child protection is important.”

Last July, Rutte said that “Hungary has no business being in the EU anymore” after their parliament passed legislation banning the “display or promotion” of homosexuality or gen-



◀ **Dutch PM Mark Rutte opposes Orbán’s anti gay law (PIXABAY)**

der change in TV and films for under 18s.

Orr went on to say that the family and religious communities are “like the stem cells of European societies”, “should not be put under pressure in the name of any political ideology.”

When asked about whether the state should “set limits” on gender identity, Dr Orr replied: “I don’t think the state should provide a legal option or help for a teenager to have surgical interventions. We shouldn’t allow activists to have a big impact on children, they are playing with fire.”

Reacting to the interview, a source within the Divinity faculty said that Dr

Orr’s comments “lack both ethical probity and intellectual rigour.”

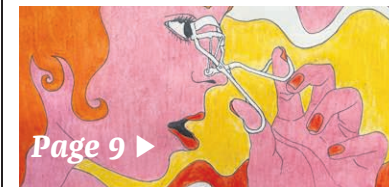
“In towing Orbán’s line that children are in danger from representations of happy gay and trans people, he endorses the grotesque, historic conflation of homosexuality and paedophilia. Meanwhile, the suggestion that only people with children are qualified for public office is straightforwardly a fascist dog whistle.”

“Baseless arguments like this refute any pretence that Professor Orr is invested in rigorous academic debate.”

Varsity has contacted Dr James Orr for comment.

FEATURES

Why I curl my eye-lashes before bed



Page 9 ▶

OPINION

How sex fuels the French far right

Page 12 ▶



SCIENCE

Are binaural beats just another wellness fad?

Page 15 ▶



INTERVIEWS

‘It was a choice between going to Ukraine or forgetting a part of my identity’

Page 17 ▶

LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle recommends: Cambridge Market

Page 20 ▶



ARTS

National Poetry Competition winner Eric Yip

Page 24 ▶



MUSIC

The rise and CRASH of Charli XCX

Page 28 ▶

FILM & TV

The best Film and TV villains of all time

Page 27 ▶



SPORT

Cambridge rowers fare well at GB Trials

Page 32 ▶



News

The Tories are in crisis nationally: will

Fergal Jeffreys

Deputy News Editor

Students will get a chance to vote for Cambridge City Council at the local elections on Thursday May 5.

Fourteen of the 42 seats on the council are up for election, three of them in wards with a large student presence.

The council currently has a Labour majority of 17 with the Liberal Democrats their main opposition. Eight seats out of the contested 14 are currently held by Labour.

Can I still register to vote? The deadline for registering to vote has passed - if you are currently not registered, you won't be able to vote.

Where do I vote? The address of your polling station is written on your poll card. You can also check online by looking up your postcode.

Which students are standing? Seven current students are standing for election - Sam Carling and Hollie Wright for Labour, Peter McLaughlin for the Liberal Democrats, Sam Hunt and James Appiah for the Conservatives, and Dan Kittmer and Eddie Wilkinson for the Greens.

Wright and Hunt are both running in Market ward; Carling is running in West Chesterton; McLaughlin is running in Abbey; Appiah is running in Castle; Kittmer is running in King's Hedges; Wilkinson is running in Petersfield. No student has been elected to the council in recent years.

Meet the students running to be your next local councillor

Hollie Wright
Labour



I'm running in Market - if you're in Christ's, Emma, Sidney, Downing, Peterhouse, Pembroke, Corpus or Jesus - I'm your candidate! I'm really keen that student representation on the Council becomes a reality. Having spent my last 3 years in the city centre, it's increasingly obvious that inequality is rife here in Cambridge. I've also seen how students feel voiceless wider city politics. I have three main priorities for Market: focusing on making the city centre safer with increased lighting provisions and safety networks, pushing for a net-zero city by 2030, and tackling homelessness with an increase in the council's community grant scheme."

Dan Kittmer
Greens



Green councillors are at the forefront of opposing the Labour-led council's endless growth agenda, which has worsened inequality in Cambridge and put further pressure on the vulnerable river Cam. I want to join them, opposing decisions hurting the residents of disadvantaged wards like King's Hedges and promoting inclusive legislation, including a ban on conversion "therapy" in Cambridge. Greens will act seriously on the climate emergency, divesting Council funds, creating a clean air zone in the city and maximising the reach of sustainable housing retrofitting. In my spare time I am also a keen musician and co-secretary of Cambridge University Ceilidh Band.

Sam Carling
Labour



I believe passionately that young people deserve representation in local government, but nationwide we have very little of that and as a result the issues that affect us aren't properly addressed.

I want to work on housing policy, and help young people that study or grow up in Cambridge to afford to live here afterwards, should they choose to. I plan to join the City Council's continuing efforts to address the climate crisis, achieving net zero by 2030, and continue the work to reduce poverty and inequality in our city.

I also hope to build bridges between the City and University Governance through working on the University Council, which I join in July.

Peter McLaughlin
Liberal Democrats



I'm running for city council because I believe Cambridge is a wonderful city that's been held back from its full potential by years of poor local government. We have a major housing shortage, pushing rents up to eye-watering levels and contributing to a homelessness epidemic; yet the Labour-led city council can't even properly look after the tenants in its existing council housing. Meanwhile, the Tory government is doing nothing to tackle a cost-of-living crisis that is only worsening, pushing more and more people into poverty in Cambridge and throughout the country. [...]

Fun fact: Before I came to university, I worked as a gymnastics coach.



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Labour voters come out in full force?



▲ Labour activists out campaigning in Newnham ward (CAMERON HOLLOWAY)

Labour failing city, say Lib Dems

Fergal Jeffreys
Deputy News Editor

Campaigning for Cambridge City Council elections on Thursday 5 May is under-way. So what's at stake and who's going to win?

The city council has been dominated by the Labour Party since 2014. In the last local elections they received 41% of the vote compared to 26% from the Liberal Democrats. They're defending eight seats and hope to make gains of a further six seats to consolidate their hold. Though this election won't determine control of the council, it will offer an indication of whether voters agree with the council's current direction.

Labour's manifesto for the local election outlines four pledges - achieving a net zero council by 2030, tackling poverty and inequality, building new sustainable council houses and reducing homelessness, and responding to national issues - cuts to local council and providing for those affected by the pandemic.

Leader of the Council Anna Smith says Labour says that the various challenges facing voters - cost of living, climate emergency, and pandemic recovery - have to be considered "in the context of a shambolic Tory government which

seems to have little to offer to our city"

Labour's main opponents are the Liberal Democrats, who held a majority from 2000 - 2012, while Labour was in national government.

The Lib Dem manifesto is critical of Labour's record, saying that the party has a "tendency to talk the city down and turn it on itself" and that they've "brought little new thinking or vision for the city". The manifesto claims that Labour has left ordinary people behind. The Lib Dems promise to promote new investment in housing at sub market rent, higher quality social housing, a more transparent public decision making process, and a simplified structure for local government.

The local Conservatives are a minority presence, with the party last having a councillor in 2015. It hasn't released a manifesto for the past two years.

The Cambridge Green Party is not defending any wards in the city this year. While it is hoping to build on its current two seats, gains look unlikely. The local party hasn't yet released its manifesto.

National issues will almost certainly play a role in voters' decisions at the polls next week - both Labour and the Lib Dems have positioned themselves against the Conservative government's cuts to local authorities and its recent run of scandals.

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News

Disabled students overcharged for accessible rooms

A *Varsity* investigation has found that colleges are routinely charging extra for accessible rooms, despite legal obligations to meet access needs

Esmé Kenney
Deputy News Editor

Colleges routinely overcharge disabled students for rooms meeting their needs, and do not allow them to live with their friends, a *Varsity* investigation has found.

Should a disabled student require a more expensive room because it meets their access needs, colleges are legally obligated to cover any additional costs. However, colleges have not always made students aware of this.

One disabled student from Emmanuel repeatedly had to correct their college bills. In their first year, the College continued to try and charge them the full price of an ensuite room, and only backed down when the student told them that it was covered by the 2010 Equalities Act.

They said: "It's very much a bad faith thing that they don't inform."

"This is a legal obligation they are fulfilling and they're making us feel like we shouldn't be asking for it, and it's an act of good will on their part to accommodate us."

Whilst most colleges allow students to ballot with their friends, disabled students who require certain facilities are usually excluded from the ballot so they can choose a room that meets their access needs.

However, there have been instances where students have been given the choice of joining the ballot and living with friends, or being guaranteed a room that meets their access requirements.

One anonymous Sidney Sussex student was told that they could either have a tutorial room and not be guaranteed a room with friends, or join the normal ballot.

"I felt forced to choose between my physical and mental health. I ended up in the normal ballot and even though my access needs have changed, that choice meant I couldn't have access to a tutorial room this year either."

When requested for comment, Sidney Sussex stated: "Like all Colleges, we recognise the challenge of meeting the accommodation needs and preferences of our students, particularly those with disabilities. We strive to work responsibly and constructively with students

to find workable solutions."

This issue is not unique to any one college. A disabled student at Murray Edwards requested to choose a room that met their access needs with a friend, after it emerged in an undergraduate liaison meeting that two disabled students were given special permission to ballot with a friend last year.

They were told by the college accommodation services that they would prefer the student to join the ballot, and then they would fit the room with the necessary access requirements later. The student described feeling as though they were deemed "not disabled enough" to choose a room with a friend.

When contacted for comment, Murray Edwards confirmed to *Varsity* that two students who were exempt from the ballot for disability reasons had been allowed to name a friend to ballot with them "in order to meet the specific requirements of the students with access needs."

"The room ballot aims to achieve a fair allocation of rooms for all students. We encourage all students with access needs to discuss their requirements with

us, so that we can make every effort to accommodate their requests without disadvantaging others unfairly."

The Disabilities Officer for Medwards, Lizzie Shaw, said that colleges should allow all disabled students to ballot with one friend.

She said: "Whilst it is great that some colleges will let students ballot with a friend, not extending this to all disabled students within a college means that others can feel 'not disabled enough' to get this reasonable adjustment."

"I found it very daunting as I came to Cambridge not knowing who I'd be living with. Being able to live with just one friend would really help the isolating experience many disabled students have."

The anonymous student from Emmanuel added that the nature of the collegiate system makes it more difficult to enforce a consistent policy towards disabled students.

"There is nuance, there are things that are good, but it's still far harder than it needs to be for disabled students, and it still relies on a lot of self-advocation." Emmanuel College was contacted for comment.

Analysis: What's the law on accessible accommodation?

Colleges are legally obliged to charge an "average room cost" to students who require a more expensive room because it meets their access needs. For instance, if a student requires an ensuite room because of their disability, the college is supposed to cover the additional costs.

This is guaranteed under Section 20 of the Equality Act 2010, which states that anyone who has a duty to "make reasonable adjustments" for disabled people is not entitled to make them pay any of the costs for these adjustments. Yet colleges have not always made disabled students aware of this, meaning that many of those who require a more expensive room for access reasons end up being overcharged.

Medwards JCR Disabilities Officer Lizzie Shaw said that it "would make a huge difference" if colleges were more upfront...Being a disabled student is exhausting in itself, never mind the huge admin burden...Many students, particularly those in their first year" are unaware of this legal obligation.

When asked whether they made their students aware of this law, the colleges contacted by *Varsity* did not provide any comment.

Apply to be the next President of the Varsity Society

Applications are now open for election to the office of President of VarSoc, the Varsity Student Society. The President is responsible for running our student society, organising social events for the team and will play a major role in the selection of the paper's Editors in the next academic year.

Any current member of the Society may stand for election. They must be proposed by a person who is, or has been, Editor or Deputy Editor of the paper and seconded by another member of Section Editor or higher status.

Please email president@varsity.co.uk to apply, for further information.

Nominations close at 5pm 10th June 2022. The election will be held the following week.

www.varsity.co.uk



Could you be the next Editor of Varsity?

Applications to be *Varsity's* Editor for Michaelmas 2022 will open shortly open. Please keep an eye on our website for further information on how to apply.

You will lead a team producing online content from your handover in early September and also produce regular print editions throughout full term. No previous experience at *Varsity* is required for the role. All students who are passionate about journalism and news reporting, have clear a editorial vision for the newspaper, a high level of expertise with Adobe InDesign and an eye for layout and design are encouraged to apply.

Please direct questions to the VarSoc President at president@varsity.co.uk or the Editors at editor@varsity.co.uk

The deadline for applications is midday, Wednesday 8th June 2022. Interviews will take place on the morning of Monday 13th June 2022.



Three-quarters of May Ball food should be veggie, insist eco-society

Fergal Jeffreys
Deputy News Editor

Three-quarters of food served at May Balls should be vegetarian, new guidance from an environmental society has said.

The scheme, organised by the Cambridge University Environmental Consulting Society, gives “accreditation” to May Week events who comply with their guidelines.

Events receive a bronze, silver, gold

or platinum award based on the percentage of environmental goals they achieve. Those who succeed in 20-34% will gain a bronze, while events which reach 65-100% will gain a platinum.

Along with ensuring that three-quarters of food is vegetarian – a minimum requirement for committees to receive a bronze – committees should ensure that 30% of food, and 60% of entertainment, is sourced locally.

Guests should also be encouraged to offset their carbon emissions produced by getting to the ball by using a carbon

footprint calculator.

Organisers should also pursue “generic event branding”, removing specific dates, titles and themes, so objects like glassware and cutlery can be reused.

It is said a majority of colleges are participating in the scheme.

The scheme originated in 2016 but involved 20 colleges by 2019. Aoife Blanchard, that year’s organiser, said she was “surprised” that the initiative was only just gaining traction, but was hopeful in that May Ball “presidents do seem quite keen [and] the impetus is there”.

Prof. Jordan Peterson gifted ‘enormous slab of meat’ for Cambridge talk

Jacob Freedland
Senior News Editor

Controversial Canadian psychology professor Jordan Peterson was given an “enormous slab of meat” and a rare, first edition copy of Charles Darwin’s 1871 *The Descent of Man* for giving a talk at Cambridge last term (23/11).

In a recently released YouTube video, Cambridge Divinity faculty’s Professor Arif Ahmed thanked Peterson, and said his invitation marked “the close of a disgraceful chapter in the history of this University”.

After presenting Peterson with Darwin’s theory of sexual selection, which can fetch up to nearly £6k per copy, Ahmed quipped that “as well as mental food, you need real food. So in addition, we’ve got an enormous slab of meat”, a reference to Peterson’s claim that a meat-only diet helped cure his depression.

The stunt was greeted by laughter from the packed out Lady Mitchell Hall where Peterson was hosted. In his closing speech, Ahmed claimed the event as a “victory”.

Peterson had been disinvited from Cambridge in 2019 when photos emerged of him posing next to a man

wearing a T-shirt reading: “I am a proud Islamophobe”. At the time, Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope said the professor’s “casual endorsement” by association was “antithetical” to the work of the Faculty of Divinity. Nevertheless, Peterson was re-invited in Michaelmas 2021 to attend a series of lectures and seminars.

“For too long”, Ahmed said, “we have laboured under the absurd idea that words are a form of oppression or that speech is a way of perpetuating harm when the opposite is true: words are an instrument of liberation, and speech is an alternative to harm.

“And it was under those false ideas... that the University cancelled that invitation. Not because of anything he said, not even because of anything he thought, but because of somebody he stood next to”.

Soon after Peterson’s spell in Cambridge, revelations of an alleged right-wing network of academics sparked discontent within the Divinity faculty, leading the self-proclaimed “Divine Dissenters” to call on the University to investigate potential “grooming” and “radicalisation” of students, citing accusations that they have been recruiting interns to work for billionaire Peter Thiel.

Former Cambridge journo Chris Mason appointed as BBC political editor

Jack Evans
News correspondent

Former student journalist and Christ’s College alumnus Chris Mason has been appointed as the BBC’s political editor – one of the top media jobs in Britain.

The former Geography student said he learnt his trade by working in student newspapers, radio, and television during his time in Cambridge.

Speaking on a podcast, Mason said he started university knowing he wanted to be a journalist, meaning “ratcheting up” experience was “as important” as his degree.

“Journalism is a passion led industry. They are as interested in your demonstrable enthusiasm as your academic record. I regarded [the journalism] as being as important as the formal work side”. That’s what, he said, would give him the best chance of getting a traineeship at a broadcaster.

Mason was born in Yorkshire and has been vocal about his love for the Dales, saying that they gave him a “sense of belonging and identity”. He is still subscribed to the local newspaper. His career in

the BBC began at BBC Newcastle, and he has since covered politics in various roles, including two years spent in Brussels as the Europe correspondent. He will be stepping down from his current job as host of Radio 4 program “Any Questions” this summer.

The position was the source of controversy during Laura Kuenssberg’s tenure. Her impartiality was questioned multiple times, including when Dominic Cummings named her as his only regular media contact. Similar challenges were levelled at another possible candidate, Emily Maitlis.

One senior political journalist said that the BBC was struggling to decide whether to appoint a journalist who would break stories and a “wise statesman who is good at analysing events”.

It is understood that Mason is “seen internally as a safe pair of hands”.

The response from other journalists has been positive. The interim director of the BBC said “Chris has been an exceptional correspondent in an extraordinary time for British politics” with “calm, incisive analysis and [a]

signature candid style”.

Paul Brand, the UK editor for Sky News, tweeted his congratulations to “one of the best in British broadcasting”, continuing that he would be “an absolute asset to the BBC in this role.”

In a statement, Mason said it would be a “tremendous privilege to take on what, for me, is the most extraordinary job in British broadcasting and journalism” and that he would be following “giants like Laura [Kuenssberg], Nick [Robinson] and Andrew [Marr] with a smattering of trepidation and a shedload of excitement and enthusiasm”.

He also said the role was “something I’d never even dared dream of.”

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OF OTHERS
AGAINST THEIR
WILL?”



- Peter Peckard, 1788

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News

Cambridge eighth best night out, says study

Though not known for its nightclubs, Cambridge has been ranked the eighth best city for a night out in the UK in a new study by a security company, 'Get Licensed'.

Cambridge somehow made the top ten with a score of 6.46 – ahead of Oxford in 11th scoring a meagre 6.24. The company came to the surprising conclusion by comparing safety arrangements, drink costs, and the number of venues per 100,000 people. When only safety was considered, Cambridge came in fifth.

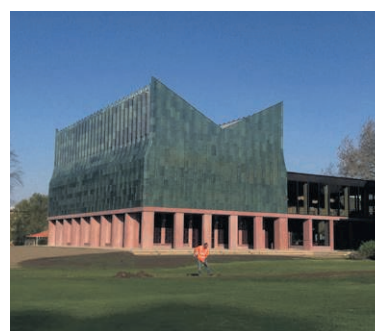
However, safety has been a contentious issue at Cambridge's clubs. Last month (12/3), students from Reclaim the Night marched in protest at the rise in spiking incidents and violence against women, which sparked nationwide boycotts last year. The Cambridge City Council also met in March this year to discuss spiking in response to 43 police reports of drink spiking in 2021.

The study gave York the number one spot, with Telford and Warrington taking second and third place respectively.

Homerton's new dining hall is completed

The wait is over for Homertonians as their new hall served its first meals on Tuesday (19/04). Built to reduce pressure on the Victorian Great Hall, servery, and kitchens, the new hall was designed to be an "exemplar of modern sustainable design" and "respect, match and indeed exceed the Great Hall for presence and atmosphere". The college's catering facilities were last updated in 1996.

The £8.2M project was designed by Southwark-based architecture firm Feilden Fowles.



▲ "An Arts and Crafts building for the 21st Century" (VARSITY)

A Cambridge man's marathon fundraiser for his baby niece

Twelve years ago, doctors gave Stephen Hider's newborn niece just 24 hours to live. Isla-Rose had been diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy, a condition where the heart cannot pump blood properly. She defied the odds to live to nine months old.

Hider, a 39 year-old is running a marathon a day for 35 days in her memory – the distance separating Land's End and John O'Groats. Since setting off on March 28, Hider has raised over £1,800 for the British Heart Foundation, a charity that his family have supported since their loss.

"I thought I'd do something big to raise money and awareness for an amazing charity," he said.

"Trying to run the length of the country by doing a marathon every day seemed like an appropriately crazy challenge. I will be telling myself that it's just a small challenge compared to the hurdles that my beautiful niece overcame."

Logging into Raven for a lifetime



▲ One former student's permanent tribute to Raven (VARSITY)

Cambridge vicars and rabbis invited to join local iftar meal

With Easter, Passover, and Ramadan coinciding this year, local Christian and Jewish faith leaders were invited to Cambridge Mosque last Saturday evening (16/4) to join the Muslim community breaking the fast.

Reverend Devin Maclachlan of Great St Mary's, the University Church, and Dr Rachel Berkson of Beth Shalom Reform Synagogue were among those attending the community iftar, which was open to all regardless of religious belief. Sejad Mekic, the Mosque's head imam, said that he was "really honoured to welcome so many people to tell them that fasting is all about abstaining and self-discipline", and wished to "congratulate all different members of our communities who have come together here to celebrate our diversity".

Cambridge Central Mosque is Europe's first eco-mosque, with zero net carbon emissions when in use. It was shortlisted for the 2021 Stirling Prize, the UK's most prestigious architecture award.



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Features

Why I curl my eyelashes before bed

Tabitha Chopping considers the complexity and ultimate fallacy of choice feminism



It was during lockdown that I purchased Florence Given's *Women Don't Owe You Pretty*. A friend had shared a trendy, hot-pink, feminist infographic on their story and, admittedly, my first thought was God, wouldn't that book look good on my bedside table. It was a thought that surely would have made Florence herself cringe. Nevertheless, I entered my card details and, sure enough, three days later I snapped a photo of the book alongside a matching pink and yellow coffee cup to post to Instagram.

Did I read the book? Of course I did — I might have bought it solely for aesthetic purposes, but as an English student, I can't always afford to be that vapid. It was as though Given's voice was scolding me, and specifically me, from beyond those funky pink sketches and from the little epigrammatic (or rather Instagrammatic) bursts of choice-feminist quotes that I incarcerated within a strip of pastel purple highlighter. I was ashamed.

Given was urging me that my 'invasive, expensive, time-consuming and at times painful beauty rituals' were transforming me into an object and 'men don't respect objects'. All the while, I was embellishing her pages with pastel highlighters and setting them alongside decorative flowers and skin-care products. Women might not owe you pretty, but Given had provided me with a cover pretty enough to adorn my bedroom and accessorise my social media self. I had transformed the book itself into another beauty ritual.

I didn't need a wake-up call from Given, however; Margaret Atwood had already provided me with a glaring, jolting one. Atwood forced me to look in the mirror and see 'the ever-present watcher peer-

ing through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head.' Atwood taught me that 'you are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur.'

I already knew that threading my eyebrows, paying for haircuts that made my male friends gasp when I told them the price, waxing, shaving, putting on makeup (the list goes on) was excruciating. I already knew that I woke up every day like Euphoria's Cassie, up at 4 a.m. to perform the ritual of making myself presentable and palatable in the privacy of my room. Cassie's little ritual seems like a preparation for a showcase, the backstage makeover that antici-

What about that gaze that peers from within?

pates the onstage performance. Yet, it is the application, the preparation, the ritual itself that is the performance. I already know I do these things to myself to become palatable to the outside gaze. So why, then, Atwood seemed to beg me to consider, do I curl my eyelashes before going to sleep?

It doesn't aid their growth, it doesn't help them fit the Western beauty standard of thick, luscious eyelashes, and the curl is gone by the morning. I used to think it was just for me, so I could lay there before my sleep and feel, in those few solitary moments, pretty. Atwood taught me that none of these rituals, none of these procedures, will ever be just for me. Sure, they might follow the choice-feminist line of thinking that we don't wear lipstick to impress

the men we see every day, we don't curl our hair to be appealing to that insidious male gaze, peering from outside. But what about the gaze that peers from within? What about the patriarchal eye embedded so deeply into every feminine-identifying person that always guides those choices?

Given isn't entirely blind to this prospect. She accepts that it is 'easier' when we follow the rules, make ourselves palatable. She also acknowledges that, for marginalised women, the performance of femininity isn't always a 'choice' but 'often an act of survival'. She knows, mercifully, that 'being able to grow out my body hair is, in fact, a privilege'. Given's apparent solidarity with trans women and women of colour crumbles a little, however, in the face of the book's allegations of plagiarism, as Chidera Eggerue claims that Giv-

en stole the creative ideas of black women, her own ideas, in fact, and begs the question 'when can black women just have things without people copying?'

The performance of femininity as an act of survival might be one of the only times Given hits

The only real 'choice' in choice feminism... is palatability or death

the acrylic nail on the head. In pop culture, we are increasingly seeing women letting themselves be raw and real in their frustration at this performance, but unable to let it go. Mitski Mayawaki, in her song 'Brand New City', turns to the morbid realisation that 'if I gave up on being pretty, I wouldn't know how to be alive.' Phoebe Waller-Bridge's Flea-

bag breaks down in tears in front of a man she barely knows and yells: 'I know that my body, as it is now, really is the only thing I have left, and when that gets old and unfuckable I may as well just kill it'. The only real 'choice' in choice feminism, for these women at least, is palatability or death. I will curl my eyelashes before I sleep to please the voyeur, or I will die. At one time in history, we might have been called melodramatic, or hysterical, to see the rejection of these performative rituals as fatal. It is, by no means, to say that all women feel this way. It is also by no means to suggest that it is fatal to not adhere to patriarchal beauty standards. It is only to say that choice feminism is an impossible fallacy, and might only be a way to justify the patriarchal gaze and to stuff it further down the throats of feminine-identifying people, to internalise it more and more. Women Don't Owe You Pretty has been returned to its decorative spot on my nightstand after writing this; for now, at least, I think that is where it will stay.

▲ ESME KENNEY



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Features

What 'the nod' means for Cambridge's black students

Nodding is more than just a gesture, according to **Ayomide Akande**: he breaks down the cultural significance of 'the nod' for black communities in spaces where they are the minority

I remember how I first met two of my closest friends at Cambridge. We all partook in a joint bridging course for our colleges; I sat by myself, not knowing anyone else in the lecture theatre as we waited for the rest of the participants. When these two black boys walked in, I immediately made eye contact with one of them, and we both nodded at each other before they went to sit with their group. Once the talk was done, we met at the bottom of the theatre and within minutes we were laughing like we had been friends for years. I always found it interesting that without saying a word to one another, our friendship had started from that initial silent recognition of one another as being the same through our black heritage and sharing a unique position as a minority in such a prestigious institution.

It's not just a nod. As a black man, I have first-hand experience of the nod. I'm not merely talking about the associated gesture,

but more so the symbolism behind it. For me, the act of walking in the street, making eye contact with a fellow member of the black community and nodding, smiling, or simply showing a small gesture of solidarity was a normal part of life. Indeed, it was something I paid no mind to initially — until I reflected upon it. Why do I nod or smile at other black members occupying the same space,

and why do I expect them to smile or nod back? And why would I subconsciously assume they were out of touch with their blackness when they didn't return the gesture, or even wilfully ignored it?

Growing up in Southeast London, I was used to being in racially diverse settings. At the same time, my experience in a grammar school gave me some prior experience of being a minority in spaces, and it was there I learned how

people tend to cluster and stick together. Upon reflection, I realised that all my closest friends were black boys with similar interests to me. I found myself wondering if I would have had the same friendship

“Why would I subconsciously assume they were out of touch with their blackness?”

group if our school had a greater black population.

When I arrived at university, I found that old habits die hard and that once again, most of my close connections were with black students with similar interests. While I had not consciously and deliberately chosen

to be friends with people of similar backgrounds, it was a factor that inevitably played a factor in my university experience.

Admittedly, this is a phenomenon that I have experienced more so with black men such as myself, yet with other black members of society, there is a level of recognition, nonetheless. This was not something I witnessed as much during the 18 and a half or so years that I lived in Southeast London, as there were fewer moments where I found myself in white-dominated spaces. It was something I only noticed once I came to Cambridge. Nevertheless, in those few instances where I did find myself in a similar position, I always instinctively looked for and approached the other black members of that space in order to form a connection. I found my efforts were always returned with equal energy.

So why? Why does this happen? For me, it is indicative of an empirical sense of community, established through our shared heritage and resultant experiences and struggles. As black people in an institution where we make up one of the greatest racial minorities, it is important and significant to see people who look like us around town, to remind and reassure us of our capabilities and fend off imposter syndrome. Even before I had applied to Cambridge, my biggest concern was not the academic pressures, but whether I would be able to find those I could relate to on a deeper level. I was worried I wouldn't find “my people”.

Luckily for me, I was able to discover this community through the Afro-Caribbean society, the study of my subject and random encounters on the street or in social spaces. And while the ensuing friendships and connections I have made have been strengthened through the similar passions I share with people and the good memories we have made, all of this is rooted in the foundation

“I was worried I wouldn't find 'my people'”

of our shared blackness. More specifically, this community requires nothing more than a shared racial identity within what is traditionally an elitist, white space, to exist and flourish.

Ultimately, what does “The Nod” signify? A mutual understanding that “We made it”. We made it to one of the best universities in the world. For us, Cambridge is not simply a university education, it is an opportunity to finally steer the pathways of our families and communities in another direction. Not only does it reflect this message, but also the message that our presence here will encourage future generations of black students to apply and study here until we are no longer considered a minority, but rather normality.



Cambridge through the eyes of a cancer patient

Moby Wells shares his newfound appreciation for the present and the inherent value of each day

Rows of chairs, eyes glued forward, hushed whispers, and periodic speech from the front. If not for the “controlled area X-ray” signs or the milky after-taste from my morning's Allopurinol this could be a lecture room on any ordinary day.

My lecture room for the day, however, is not in the Seeley. It is in the X-ray department. The subject is my health, and I do not need to take notes. This is not the first time I have been in this room, and the ease with which I have adapted to (or accepted) my new situation gives me

“The constant fear of what could be is meaningless in the face of health uncertainties”

“a warm feeling inside. A few weeks ago I was in this very room, awaiting an X-ray which I thought at the time

would dispel the marginal possibility of cancer and prove I had a lingering viral infection. Weeks have past, chemotherapy has started and my life has changed - it was not a virus. “Hodgkin Lymphoma, Stage 2”.

I am not, by nature, a calm person. Three years into my degree, supervisions continue to turn my stomach. Throughout my life I have been dogged by two words: “What if?” What if I forget my textbook? What if I fail my exam? What if I disappoint them?

These insidious questions, and countless more like them, pushed me through school to Cambridge.

Now, with everything thrown into chaos, I feel more content with myself than I ever have before. This change of circumstances has demonstrated to me that the constant fear of what could be is meaningless in the face of health uncertainties. I can relax and be pushed along by the tide of medication, cycles of chemotherapy, and new medical jargon.

Our lives are structured by milestones. So far, for most of us here, they have been exams: SATs, GCSEs, A-Levels, Prelims, and Finals. These milestones hang like millstones, and continue as we chase the job, the

house, the perfect family. Once my cancer is beaten it is natural that I will continue to worry about these issues but it has shown me the value

“The balance between health and illness is fragile. It is an bank account where overdraft could be a day away”

of thinking about the day. Incessant deadlines had rendered this unit of time largely meaningless to me. Every strange Cambridge week would be spent looking to the next week, the term ticking over in chunks of reading and writing, until the bliss of holiday.

Every day counts. It should not be seen only as a step toward tomorrow, a day should be seen as valu-

able in itself. Don't put off that thing you have been scared to do. The balance between health and illness is fragile. It is a bank account where overdraft could be a day away.

The process of cancer treatment itself involves risks (cheerfully the consultant told me I have less than a 1% chance of death from the chemotherapy!). Chemo renders the body extremely vulnerable to infection, and the injections I take to raise my white blood cell count could cause excruciating bone pain. One evening I could feel fine and the next I could be taken to hospital at risk of neutropenic sepsis. Everyone has a health balance —thankfully most are less precarious than mine.

The three nights on the C9 cancer ward at Addenbrookes made me feel restless. My room's window onto the beauty of the Gog Magog hills seemed to taunt me. I would spend hours standing at the window staring out at people going about their business. Nine floors up I might as well have been in a plane. When I was given the option to walk to my biopsy instead of a wheelchair I jumped at the

chance, and when I was finally discharged I had a new appreciation for the cold English weather as I stood thoroughly under-dressed outside the hospital.

Every day deserves your attention. The looming shadow of exams is returning again and libraries will be full to capacity. Your health balance does not go away, so take a walk, meet friends, go out and live. Put yourself first.

I sit in the X-ray waiting room at peace. My hands do not shake.





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Opinion

A ban excluding trans people is no ban at all

As the government pursues a ban on conversion therapy, **Jake Mustard** discusses the consequences for those excluded from the bill's protection

Ever since Conservative ministers first began insisting that they intended to ban LGBT+ conversion therapy, they have had a hard time making anyone truly believe them. After four years of their signature “dither and delay”, it was on Trans Day of Visibility that this government revealed not one U-turn, but two! Plans to ban conversion therapy were, at first, scrapped altogether. Only a few hours later, they revised their stance: new plans would still ban attempts to alter someone's sexuality, but not their gender identity. Trans people were to be excluded from the promises first made to them in 2018.

“This latest disappointment feels as outrageous as it does depressingly predictable”

This latest disappointment feels as outrageous as it does depressingly predictable. Studies have shown that 20% of trans people have been pressured to access services to change their gender identity. After endless periods of consultations, the government should be well aware of the extent of the mental health crisis within the trans community. There is a wide consensus that conversion therapy is corruptive to the mental health of its recipients, which the government also claims to recognise, and to neglect trans people from protection against this practice is shameful and illogical.

With that said, a move like this should not have come as a surprise. At every turn, the government has dragged their heels in the pursuit of a ban, choosing to make promises and order consultations instead of committing to legislative action. Years of hesitating and consulting have successfully teased out opposition from various groups, almost as though the government were looking for a reason to backtrack on their own proposals. Having found this opposition in gender critical feminists and religious groups, the government were ready, as the Pe-

ter Tatchell Foundation put it, “to throw trans people under the bus”.

If the government's passion on the issue of conversion therapy came from an appreciation of the long-term mental suffering of its victims, they would never have considered separating the practice between the gay and trans communities. The fundamental harm and motivation in gay and trans conversion therapy is the same — if the government sees one as worth legislating against, how can the other not be equally necessary?

The only conclusion is that Johnson only cares about LGBT+ issues when they fit with his electoral arithmetic. Which groups within the LGBT+ community are big enough to be worth appeasing and which are small enough to be electorally insignificant? By the government's math, there are enough potential ‘LGB’ voters to make their issues pertinent. The ‘T’, on the other hand, are outweighed by the radical feminists and religious groups whose votes this government covet. The government's decision is rooted in politics, not in principle.

This latest U-turn should put an end to the Conservative Party's ill-fitting masquerade as the party of LGBT+ rights. The Conservative leadership are the first to tout their title as the supposed “party of gay marriage”. They neglect to mention their status as the party of Section 28; the party of opposition to the Gender Recognition Act's reform; and the party of a leader who refers to gay people as “tank-topped bum-bos”. Now, the party of the continued legalisation of conversion therapy can be added to that list. When the Conservative Party has the genuine opportunity to meet their claims of being “global leaders” on LGBT+ issues, they flounder.

The government's retreat is surely influenced by backlash from religious groups, including the signatories of Cambridge's Christian leaders in an open letter on conversion therapy. Gender critics have suggested that a ban would restrict therapists in discussing a patient's gender identity. Of course, a legal ban on conversion therapy would have to be well and precisely worded, as all laws should be. There are a broad scope of legitimate discussions to be had with a patient about gender dysphoria which are clearly distinct from trying to ‘convert’ their gender.

Difficulties in wording this distinction are not sufficient to support a practice which — by the accounts of this government, the NHS and

“The only conclusion is that Johnson only cares about LGBT+ issues when they fit with his electoral arithmetic”

conversion therapy's victims — is damaging and abhorrent.

With this government unwilling to stand up for trans rights, the door is open for opposition parties to make a clear and undaunted stand with the whole of the LGBT+ community. The Labour Party have so far struggled to assert a clear stance on trans issues, but these latest developments strengthen the moral imperative to make up for the Conservative Party's failings. The Conservative Party filled their consultation report with the claim “Our proposals are universal and protect everyone”. Trans lives

rely on this promise being made a reality.



How sex fuels the

An **anonymous student** unpacks the connection between far-right politics in France, with an eye on the

In colonial times, Islamic civilisation was viewed by French orientalist as excitingly decadent and extravagantly degenerate. The Muslim world, to them, was a place of glamour, extreme licentiousness, and sexual promise, where beautiful and scantily-clad women lounged with iced drinks and hookahs in perfumed palace gardens, to be visited by lustful Muslim men.

Today, the issue of Islam is central to political discourse in the French Presidential election. At first glance, it appears in the context of a lofty intellectual question on civilisation: how should new arrivals to French society compose themselves?

The French believe that to enter into their society is to elegantly assimilate, to be a citizen equal to everyone else in a universal and Enlightened civilisation. This particular civilisation has little time for Islam, a tradition it sees as backwards, illiberal, and un-European. For Muslims in France, the condition for entry into French society is that they must shed visible signs of their Muslimness.

Yet many of these Muslims, seeing Islam as a divinely revealed truth, are reluctant to let go of such a crucial component of their being. Most also have roots in places that were, until recently, ruled by the French (who hardly attempted to fit in gracefully as colonisers) and so they feel that they have the right to participate in discussions about what Frenchness is. Most people in France disagree.

The struggle to assimilate Muslims is thus a hot topic in the French Republic today, and the far-right ap-

dramatic inquisition into Muslim civil society. Under his rule, over 700 Muslim organisations have been shut down, including Islamic schools, mosques, and Muslim

“Much of the French debate around Islam hinges on a fanatical obsession with undressing Muslim women”

businesses. Nearly 50,000 Euros have been seized from Muslims. All mosques, meanwhile, have been strong-armed into signing a Charter of Principles pledging to support secularism and refrain from taking

The project to assimilate Muslims into the vaunted liberté, égalité, and fraternité of French civilisation has proved authoritarian, discriminatory, and divisive. As Stephen Clarke writes of the supposed values of the French Revolution, ‘the reality was more like Tyranny, Megalomania and Fratricide.’

However, the startling ferocity of the national discourse on Islam, which has boosted the far right, is explained not by concern over secularism and Enlightenment, but by something more fundamentally human: sex. Consider

“This particular civilisation has little time for Islam, a tradition it sees as backwards, illiberal, and un-European”

proach commands significant support. Candidates in the Presidential election have gone to extreme lengths to demonstrate their commitment to dealing with the ‘Muslim problem’: the traditional far-right candidate, Marine Le Pen, meanwhile, has long campaigned for a crackdown on Muslims and migrants.

Macron himself has presided over a



e French far right

ction between orientalist sexual fantasies and
second round of France's presidential election

that France has banned the veil in public and the headscarf in schools. It is outrageous, bien pensant opinion holds, that many Muslim women wish not to be seen by men. They want to go swimming in women-only environments? Barbaric – men should be able to watch and swim with them too, the government has decided. Much of the French debate about Islam hinges on a fanatical obsession with undressing Muslim women.

This obsession with men being allowed to see Muslim women stretches back to the colonial era. Imperial domination was intimately tied to a frenzied attempt to expose Algeria's women to the eyes of French men. During the brutal French-Algerian war (1954-62) French settlers even held bizarre unveiling ceremonies for Muslim women.

Edward Said explained how orientalist described the East 'as a fertile, its as fertile, it s

main symbols the sensual woman, the harem, and the despotic – but curiously attractive – ruler'. It was a place where 'one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in

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That colonial sexual fantasism is alive and kicking in French discourse today
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Europe'.

That colonial sexual fanatism is alive and kicking in popular French discourse today. It is coupled with a widespread fear that Muslim fertility spells the end of the white majority in France. This stems from the 'Great Replacement' theory, which was invented by Renaud Camus, a cartoonish figure who lives in a fourteenth-century castle and writes screeds on aesthetic fascism.

Many white French people thus fear that they may soon cease to be a majority in France. Reducing immigration would combat this trend, the logic follows, as would pressuring Muslims to assimilate; they would then be more likely to enter into romantic relationships outside of their own communities.

This concern over demographics explains the remarkable salience of the 'Muslim question' in France today.

There is a dramatic urgency to discussions on the topic; right-wing icon Marion Maréchal believes that “for the French it is a vital question, they feel it in their flesh, a vital threat that gives them anxiety.”

The far right in France, ultimately, are not promoting a careful, considered debate about French nationhood and social cohesion. Their impassioned war on Islam hinges upon a desire to see French Muslim women with their hair uncovered and an extreme anxiety over Muslim reproduction rates. No wonder, then, that French Islamophobia is so startlingly and terrifyingly visceral – it is about sex.



Online learning was a disaster

Sam Hudson argues that the University's continued pursuit of online learning is a callous attempt to cut costs at the expense of a proper education

After a long winter, spring has truly awoken. Not only are the blossoms out but the masks are off, lateral flows are in the bin, and, most importantly, jabs are in arms. The pandemic is all but over.

Yet Toope and the University's higher ups seemingly haven't gotten the message. Over the course of both Lent and Michaelmas, when case numbers were even lower than they currently are, I can count the number of in-person practicals I had on both hands, and the state of lectures wasn't much better either. While a number of lectures were in-person, online lectures were still taking place, creating a mish-mash that made the adoption of a structured and consistent routine virtually impossible. And the strikes made this problem even worse.

I will concede that certain restrictions on in-person activities were a necessary evil throughout 2020 and early 2021. However, from the very beginning of my time here, the University has pursued a ham-fisted approach. Before I even set foot in Cambridge, the University announced that all face-to-face lectures would be shifted online

lethargy, because if it were, the University would not be expending the effort to trial cumbersome online exam systems next term.

Despite it being clear that the threat posed by Covid-19 is now minimal, the University is pressing ahead to push most first and second year exams online. Curiously, most (though not all) third and fourth year exams have been spared this treatment. It seems the only rationale for this discrepancy is that it is part of a wider plan to eventually move all exams online permanently.

Indeed, much of the material we have received regarding online exams stresses the “many advantages” of the new Inspira platform. But quite frankly, no matter how much marketing material the University attempts to shove down our throats, there is no reality in which online exams are a suitable replacement for those happening in-person.

The entirely unnecessary efforts to move exam proctoring online has resulted in the Orwellian mess that the Inspira platform is. Even the cumbersome photo ID check required before taking any exams on the platform is rather tame compared to having your every move monitored through your webcam. Both this enormous hassle and egregious invasion of privacy could easily be avoided if we simply sat exams in-person.

And this is the true disaster of online learning. The University leadership have deluded themselves that online learning can *actually* be a suitable replacement for – and in some cases better than – its in-person counterpart. They believe over the pandemic they saw the future and it worked. But it never really did.

From the few morsels of in-person learning I've enjoyed, I've come to realise what we were deprived of last year and what the University continues to deprive many of us of. In my first ever in-person lab session at the start of this year, I was introduced to someone who I have since maintained a good friendship with. And through them I have been introduced to a completely different group of people who I now also

count among my friends. If you extrapolate this across the whole university, you realise the monumental calamity that continuing online learning has been. It is not only the potential friendships that have been lost, but business ventures, research projects, and even love. Societal development depends on us being able to have these chance encounters with peo-

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There is no reality in which online exams are a suitable replacement for those happening in-person
”

ple that have shared interests – and it is this that the University has sociopathically stifled.

The social and academic spheres, then, are not as separate as the mandarins in-charge would like to think. But even if we leave social considerations to the side, it is still entirely delusional to believe that online learning delivers teaching as effectively as the in-person alternative. Watching some poor graduate lab assistant awkwardly explain how to use a vacuum desiccator at 2x speed never was and never will be equivalent to using one yourself.

For many universities, including Cambridge, the shift online has been very convenient. It has allowed them to trim the additional costs associated with teaching STEM subjects, which generally exceed tuition fees, and then make further cuts across the board. There is a great irony that Toope and his colleagues like to speak about preserving “academic rigour”, but in their pursuit of meticulously balanced budgets they have become themselves the main threat to what they wish to preserve.

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It is clear that this inaction is not simple bureaucratic lethargy
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for the entirety of the academic year. Not a single other Russell Group university pursued a policy so extreme. And while we were reassured that this policy would not affect practicals or supervisions, every scheduled practical I had last year was moved online.

Three vaccinations later, and the situation is still not much different for us Natscis. It is clear that this inaction is not simple bureaucratic



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Opinion

Are we hitting the gym, or is the gym hitting us?

In the final instalment of her column, **Maia Livne** takes a look at contemporary fitness culture, and argues that we are treating our bodies as a resource to be exploited, and neglecting the more essential pleasures of movement

Gym culture is in full bloom. By 2021, over 15% of the UK population held a gym membership, without counting all the invisible gym-goers working out in public gyms, booking personal training sessions, or forming their own deconstructed gyms at home. Unsurprisingly, the largest demographic of gym-members are 18-34 years old. Young adults are the most exposed to gym fever, through campus culture and especially through social media, as our phones flashing pictures of our six-packed friends, and TikTok tutorials narrate the newly-minted myths of gym bros and ‘that girls’. This may not necessarily seem like a bad thing – exercise is healthy for both body and mind – but upon a closer look it seems like gyms have managed to undermine at least the latter virtue. Being ‘fit’ has extended its cultural significance way beyond muscle mass and cardio, seeming essential these days for a high sexual and social stock value. A ‘fit’ person is fit for society, able to fit into the right clothes, fit to endure physical pain, and to overcome challenges. As we associate usually inherited socio-economic status with hard work, so do we associate the usually genetically-determined physical form with gym meritocracy. So when and why did we start paying for the pleasure of running around like a caged hamster for three to five hours a week?

Exercise has long been seen as part of a healthy life, even back in ancient Greece. Going to the gym and especially bodybuilding, however, were long considered extreme activities for people who were not professional sportsmen (this a bit after ancient Greece). The modern person may be in possession of a sparkly gym card, but they probably move a lot less organically than their predecessors. Cars, planes, buses, and trains all await to transport us, and many physically-demanding domestic activities have long been handed over to our electronic assistants. This is not at all an inherently negative process, yet undeniably one of its outcomes is that movement has slowly evaporated from everyday life and materialised back into concentrated, dense sessions of physical activity, whose intensity may be more harmful. As we treat our planet, so do we treat our bodies – extracting the utmost from the now and outweighing the protection of the future. Walking for three hours would probably be better for your knees than running 5k, but who has the time to walk for three hours? As shown by all the 5-minute Victoria’s-secret-abs-guaranteed tutorials on YouTube, movement has fallen into the capitalist craze of productivity.

Capitalism’s clasp on sports has also dismantled its social aspect, transmuting its comradeship into competition. Yes, competition was

often a part of sports in the past, yet many sports – football, basketball, or dance balls – were also built on collaboration and socialisation. Gym friends, in contrast, make you feel less community-committed and more socially observed. Who attends the gym more? Who looks red and sweaty? The gym community sees it all. The peer pressure pushes you to keep working out, else, God forbid, you might have to try and cancel your membership (admitting to the gym secretary you are a failure). Lonely, competitive, productive, and costly – the gym may encapsulate the capitalist cultural experience. This may be the reason why in 1973 the Soviet Union’s Sports Committee condemned bodybuilding, claiming it promoted “egotistic love and ‘bourgeois’ dandified culture of the body”. They may have been optimistic, as said “egoistic love” seems to have developed into an industry of self-loathing, as we obsessively try to forge different bodies.

No, you might say, we do it alone because we do this for ourselves. Capitalism makes us thrive; we don’t need any atrophied communist muscles. And that might be the worst lie of the fitness industry – that it is all “for yourself”. This lie is essential for the double-edged nature of a phe-



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shakes in order to be the hottest version of ourselves, ready for display in the human market. As customers we think we have unlocked the key to happiness; wellness has never been more packed and prepared for use: put your body on off for eight hours of sleep-charge, pour eight glasses of water into your body for clarity and revivification, and since you probably spend your time stuck at a desk, try to

let your body move excessively for three to five hours a week and burn your accumulated non-productive calories and restlessness.

The wellness shopping trip leaves us less well and more well-presented. In the first season of *Black Mirror*, the second episode linked reality-fame chasing with enslavement to the treadmill. In a sense, we are all attempting to work out right now to have the body of a supermodel or a film star. As everyone needs to be a boss-innovator, everyone also needs to be a perfected sex symbol. Working out evokes intimate sensations of dopamine and sweat, of the naked body forming under the clothes. In the late fifties, Lotte Berk, the founder one of the earliest modern studios, coined her catchphrase “If you can’t tuck, you can’t fuck”. Today, people seem to have embraced this mantra so deeply they content themselves with tucking well. In a world defined by a youth sex drought – we are met with a fitness flood. This is probably connected: exercise releases the desired dopamine and makes us seem sexually desirable, which is of course way more important than actually being sexually active. Lonely anonymous sex idols running on our treadmills, we have lost much of the fun, socialisation, and creativity movement has to offer. This spring cleaning might just be the best time to bid your gym card adieu.

Cashing in on Cambridge

Also writing her final column of term, **Laura Solomon** discusses the complexities experienced by bursary recipients

The ‘Cambridge Bursary’ is a lifesaver. It offers not just financial security, but comfort, bridging the gap between SFE’s maintenance loan and what it takes to lead a student’s life. For many, the bursary represents much more than a thousand (or so) extra every term. No strings attached. The Cambridge Bursary Scheme represents the opportunity for students to whom Cambridge seems a world away to step a bit closer and to feel a bit more at home at Cambridge.

It allows us a sense of freedom — dependence even — a tantalising taste of the blanket of financial security that a university

degree is supposed to secure you.

But fundamentally, the bursary also represents a lack. You need the bursary when your peers do not. The bursary, for many, is just another indication that your income, that your background, isn’t sufficient. The cries of ‘you’re so lucky!’, although understandable if someone falls just over the household income of £62,215 needed to qualify, seem short-sighted and ignorant. Fortune is being born into financial and familial security, to private schooling and tutoring.

The anxiety may still be there, an itch that persists as you walk through the aisles of ‘Mainsburys’, clenching your wallet as you scan the aisles, comparing which pasta is cheapest per 100g. Financial anxiety is not just ‘living like a student’, but a legacy of financial troubles and a telltale sign that you haven’t always

had access to the Cambridge bursary. There lingers a feeling of scrimping, saving, counting and tallying, a fear that

one minute you’ll turn around and Cambridge, the security, the future jobs and financial stability will be wrenched from your grasp. You can’t hold tightly enough onto it. The bursary goes far, but perhaps falls just short of making you feel like you actually belong here and, if anything, ever will.

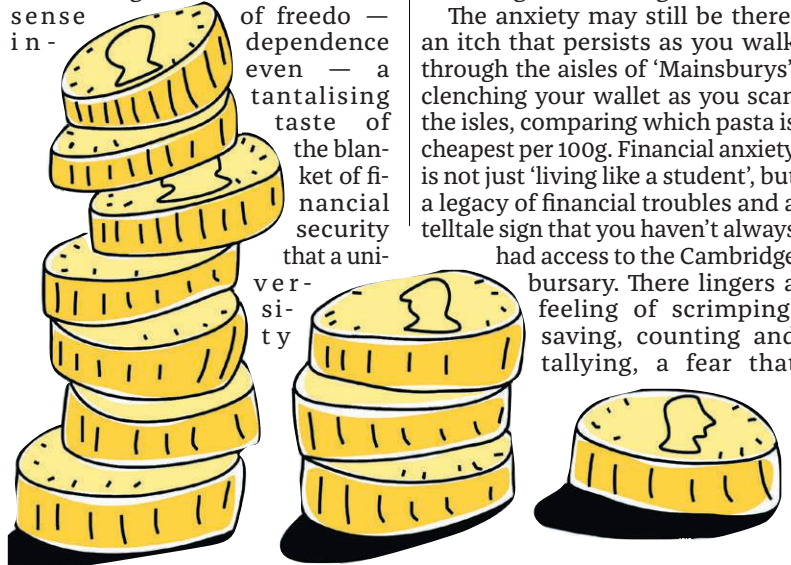
On a more general note, however, the bursary is not a universal experience and I doubt that any two people’s relationships with it are the same. The fact is that everyone here has a different financial situation, whether your parents pay your rent, your tuition or your day to day living (or nothing at all). The economics of student life too often become a source of shame, in either direction. There is on one side the path on which your parents still support you and with it the concern that you are not truly living the student life, still dependent on them. The construction of shame alongside privilege should be met with transparency and mutual openness. It only becomes shameful in a refusal to acknowledge it. At an institution where we are contractually obliged to remain unemployed, it feels as if where our money comes from, how we have ‘earned’ it, is as important as our education.

Attitudes to money, though, re-

main a fascinating part of Cambridge culture. There are those who spend and those who attempt to save, foreseeing a jobless future in an unemployable climate. Yet, the most surprising part to me? Attitudes to money, although related, have no necessary mutuality with your real financial position. It is a cultural attitude. Of squirrelling or splurging, doing whichever makes you feel more comfortable in an environment where wealth seems the defining factor. Our personal financial positions form the backbone of our sphere as they determine relationships and inform friendships. Attitudes towards money manifest in so many aspects of social life. Remembering someone hasn’t paid you back but being afraid to ask lest you be perceived as stingy or the anxiety from paying for a round: money shapes and paralyses. It induces fear but also a sense of safety when you see the bursary arrive in your account at the beginning of term. The monetisation of our education system itself (thanks Blair) has also introduced new dynamics. Strikes and the pandemic have caused many to ask for more transparency (and refunds) in regards to how our tuition is used. Students are entering the world of debt based on the promise and poten-

tial of future financial security. Our experience certainly seems more financially wise than other universities, with access to supervisors and leading academics — to some degree at least, it feels like we are getting our money’s worth. Tuition fees are meant to make us appreciate our education, but I see them as more anxiety inspiring, cultivating a resentment towards our Directors of Studies for not giving us better supervisors and breeding animosity if we feel our education is not delivering what it promised. This, I have found, not only feeds my current money anxiety but future concern for potential employment, pressure cooking every contact hour I have to ensure I am getting my ‘money’s worth’.

From the bursary to tuition fees, university life seems to be moulded around bank balances, whether your’s or your parents. But it is not just the reality of those figures, it is attitudes, customs and values. It is anxiety and furrowed brows, judgement or a pit in the stomach that will shape your experience. Whether it be stories of debt or familial dependency, every financial situation is worth being open about. Sharing is caring and healing money anxiety is only going to happen through the formation of dialogue.



Science

Are binaural beats just another wellness fad?

Science Editor **Julia Dabrowska** explains the research behind the auditory illusion

Maybe you've tried listening to alpha beats to boost your concentration when working on that essay or chill out to delta beats when falling asleep. Or maybe, you've never heard of binaural beats at all and think I'm just talking about random Greek letters...

Binaural beats, as the name suggests, are an auditory illusion wherein two slightly different frequencies of sound are played into each ear (so you must be listening through headphones for this to work!). Your brain then perceives the volume of the tune to oscillate at a fixed rate – a beat. The frequency of the beat is the same as the difference between the two frequencies, which can be higher (such as gamma, in the range of 38-100Hz) or lower (such as delta – usually 0.5-3Hz).

This phenomenon is due to a brain region called the superior olivary complex – in addition to allowing us to identify the direction

of incoming sounds, synchronise neural activity from different brain regions into 'brainwaves' (a process called entrainment). Brainwaves occur when many neurons fire together with the same rhythm and are measurable using EEG, a technique in which electrodes are placed on the scalp to record electrical signals.

Brainwaves are associated with different emotional or cognitive functions – for example, delta waves are considered beneficial in inducing a sleepy or meditative state, alpha waves are associated with working memory and thought nation, while beta waves are associated with active problem solving and concentration. Interestingly, brainwaves of the highest frequency, gamma waves, are poorly understood by scientists, who hypothesise that they are involved in active consciousness, peak cognitive

functioning, and self-awareness.

So, where do binaural beats come in? Essentially, listening to binaural beats is hypothesised to tune your brain to, and increase the strength of certain brainwaves, subsequently enhancing or suppressing the associated cognitive and emotional functions.

When listened to while studying, they improve long- and short-term memory and attention while helping to strengthen neurological connections. Other benefits include improving sleeping habits or ease into entering a meditative state. However, despite no definite medical evidence supporting their clinical benefits, some studies advocate their use for the treatment of anxiety or stress-related disorders as an addition to conventional treatments; with reports of increased quality of life, decreased stress, or decreased

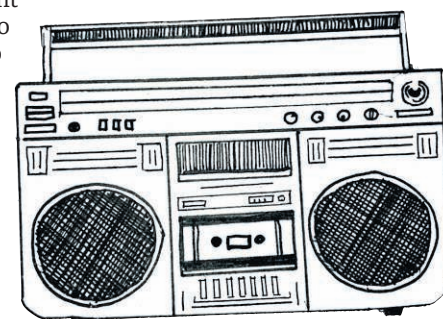
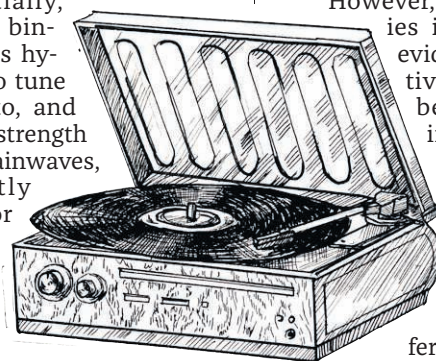
preoperative anxiety in patients due to receive generalised anaesthesia.

However, despite the studies in favour, general evidence on the effectiveness of binaural beats is currently inconclusive: multiple studies found that binaural beat therapy does not affect brain activity or emotional stimulation. The effects may differ between individuals, and scientists add that more experimental studies are required, focusing on understanding the processes behind entrainment – as well as how they translate to our actual behaviours. It is also important to note that while entrainment is used for communicating thoughts, emotions, and processing in healthy adults, it is also involved in disorders such as epilepsy. When epileptic patients' brains become entrained to a certain frequency of flashing lights, this leads to overstimulation

and seizures..

Nonetheless, others report that despite the positive effect possibly being due to placebo, it may still prove useful. It is also a therapy that can be self-administered with no training, so it is an easy option to try alongside other medical treatments.

Ultimately, while some may find listening to weird sounds irritating or unproductive, there is no evidence of any adverse effects; so if you are feeling stressed, want to better your concentration, or fall asleep more easily, why not try putting on a pre-made Spotify playlist. There's no harm in trying – just don't be disappointed if it doesn't work.



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How AI is revolutionising drug design

Shazia Absar explains how artificial intelligence can be used in drug discovery

Imagine you wanted to design a drug for a new disease, ‘Disease X’, about which little is known. Imagine then that you have a machine that could use all the available data in the world about Disease X to identify a potential mechanism of disease and use this to predict which molecules within this mechanism could make suitable targets for drugs against the disease. Then, a machine would virtually design a drug targeting these optimal molecules, building it bit by bit and continuously checking with the target’s structure to ensure activity at the desired binding site. Once the drug was “built”, it could then be synthesised and, following various rounds of in vitro, in vivo, and clinical testing to validate its efficacy, the drug could be used in clinical practice.

Although a machine like this does not yet exist, advocates of artificial intelligence (AI) propose that AI has the potential to revolutionise drug design, turning this imaginary scenario — at least in part — into a reality.

Despite still being in its primitive stage, AI has become one of the key themes when talking about the future of the pharmaceutical sector and drug design. Many new pharmaceutical companies are focusing on AI to guide their technology and design processes, and sev-

eral have produced molecules that have progressed to clinical trials. The first of these companies was ExScientia, a global AI-native pharma-tech company, who announced in January 2020 that its drug DSP-1181, a 5-HT1a agonist for OCD, was entering clinical trials. The exploratory research phase for DSP-1181 was less than 12 months, compared to the average of five years using traditional drug design processes. Just 11 months later, ExScientia announced that EXS21546, an A2a receptor antagonist that could be used to treat cancers, had also been developed.

In addition to these new AI-centred companies, long-established pharmaceutical companies have also formed partnerships with AI firms. Just a couple weeks ago, GlaxoSmithKline and AI-enabled pathology company PathAI announced a multi-year drug discovery partnership, illustrating the widespread recognition of the value AI can provide in drug design.

But how does AI currently contribute? While it is not yet at the level of our imaginary machine described before, it can be used to increase the efficiency of drug design when layered into the traditional approach by reducing the

time required for drug design, improving success rates and allowing cheaper discovery. Specifically, AI can be used to predict molecular dynamics and conduct “virtual screening” of drug molecules (i.e., computationally fitting molecules into protein structures to see if they fit). This reduces the costs of running expensive physical experiments and allows researchers to pre-select leads for which drugs are most likely to be effective, as well as predicting their off-target effects or toxicity.

Furthermore, AI can be used to identify new drug targets and binding sites on known targets, allowing the design of medicines which better interact with the target molecules. For example, the protein TYK2, a member of the JAK family of proteins, is an important molecular target for drugs treating various diseases.

However, drugs that target TYK2 tend to also react with multiple members of the wider protein family, leading to many side effects and safety concerns with using these drugs. AI-enabled drug discovery recently identified a new mechanism of targeting TYK2 which appears to be at least 20-fold more selective for TYK2, offering a potential solution. Once the drug has been designed, AI can mine literature and internal data to predict optimal synthetic routes for its production, further reducing the costs and time required for the process.

The uses of AI in the pharmaceutical sector extend beyond merely the design of novel drugs; it can also be used to identify drugs that could be repurposed to treat new diseases. In January 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic swept the globe, scientists at BenevolentAI,

an AI-driven pharmaceutical company, attempted to use AI to find a

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The worry is what
may happen if
these algorithms
fall into the wrong
hands and used
against humanity
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drug that could help patients becoming ill and dying of the disease.

Using the limited knowledge available on the virus, they set their algorithm to search over 50 million journal articles and within just four days, the algorithm identified baricitinib, a drug usually used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, as a strong contender. Two years later, its efficacy in treating COVID has been validated and the UK’s RECOVERY trial, a national study of treatments for COVID-19, found baricitinib to sig-

nificantly reduce deaths. The World Health Organisation also now strongly recommends the use of baricitinib for severe COVID-19.

However, the development of AI algorithms to aid drug design is not without its risks. As we become better at treating disease and creating drugs that are both effective and non-toxic, the worry is what may happen if these algorithms fall into the wrong hands, are reversed, and used against humanity. A team working at Collaborations Pharmaceuticals investigated the possibility of this and the potential danger if this were to happen.

Using the same algorithms which are usually used to predict and avoid toxicity in their drugs, they explored how the algorithm could be reversed to design toxic molecules. The algorithm was trained with an initial set of molecules and left to determine how to make the molecules increasingly deadly. Within just six hours, the model had designed 40,000 potential killer molecules, some of which were known chemical warfare agents and others of which scored higher for lethality than any currently known agents. Therefore, while AI is, and will, continue revolutionising drug design, allowing the creation of more effective drugs both quicker and cheaper than traditional design processes, it is important that steps are taken to ensure these algorithms are not exploited to cause harm.



▲ WENGANG ZHAI

▲ ROBERTO SORIN

The C-word across the animal world

Lucie Gourmet explores what other species can teach us about cancer biology with Professor Elizabeth Murchinson

Contrary to our anthropomorphic view, cancer is not a disease specific to humans. In fact, cancer has been suggested to originate from the transition of unicellularity to multicellularity, the latter being viewed as an evolutionary process that is reliant on intercellular cooperation. This atavism hypothesis of cancer suggests that cancer cells lose their multicellular identity by activating the expression of genes belonging to unicellular organisms, becoming more ‘selfish’ in the process and failing to function for the overall well-being of the organism. However, there are many limitations regarding this theory. For example, unlike single-cell organisms, a tumour cannot survive without its host and thus behaves rather like a parasite.

Cancer is a complex pathology characterised by various levels of heterogeneity: cells within the same tumour can have different mutations, giving rise to different morphology, biochemistry and

physiology. Every cancer is unique and is challenging to characterise as multiple factors are involved, such as the type of tissue affected and the species concerned. Cancer affects almost every multicellular organism on the tree of life, manifesting in slightly different ways across these species. Cancer-like phenomena involving abnormal proliferation have even been reported in fungi and bacteria. Furthermore, more complex manifestations of cancer involving invasion or metastasis were seen in plants, red algae and molluscs. It is also important to note that some organisms displaying complex multicellularity such as comb jellies and acorn worms have no cases of cancer.

Even with these varying incidences across a diverse range of species, we can identify common hallmarks of cancer — such as resisting cell death, evading growth suppressors, enabling replicative immortality, and inducing angiogenesis.

I interviewed Prof Elizabeth

Murchinson, who works on comparative oncology in Cambridge. She explained that cancers, whether in humans or animals, are due to the accumulation of mutations in a cell’s DNA over time. These genetic changes can be the result of exposure to carcinogens or defects in DNA damage repair, and despite the different causes, they are subject to the same evolutionary processes: positive selection (where the mutation acquired provides a cell with a fitness advantage) and genetic drift (where the presence of a mutation in a population of cells increases by chance). Because the processes underlying cancer are the same in animals, working on model organisms is essential for developing cancer treatments. One such animal is a marsupial known as the Tasmanian devil, in which tumours as so similar to human tumours that human anti-cancer drugs could potentially be applied for their treatment. However, there is one major difference: tumours in Tasmanian devils are

transmissible!

There are only three transmissible cancers which simply rely on the direct transfer of cells. These naturally occurring examples affect dogs, soft-shell clams, and Tasmanian devils. In the latter case, devil facial tumour disease (DFTD) can be passed during fights via biting. There are two independently evolved transmissible cancers affecting Tasmanian devils: DFT1 (in 1996 in north-eastern Tasmania) and DFT2 (in 2014 in south-eastern Tasmania). This incredible discovery has many implications. Notably, transmissible cancers occur more frequently than expected, and are thus a great danger for the Tasmanian devil population.

Transmissible cancers can also be seen in dogs, where canine transmissible venereal tumour (CTVT) is the oldest and most prolific cancer lineage known. These tumours are composed of cells from the original dog in which the cancer appeared 6,000 years ago in Asia. CTVT spread quickly around the globe through

sexual contact but for a long-time mutations have been accumulating randomly without increasing the aggressiveness of cells.

In a certain sense, it seems like this cancer in dogs was domesticated by adapting to its environment for such a long period. This gave rise to a new strategy for treating cancer called adaptive therapy, which is based on giving drugs intermittently to avoid resistance due to a single treatment. This way, the tumour is kept small and stable instead of causing additional damage. Overall, this proves that we can learn more about cancer than we may expect by focusing on other models than ourselves.

We have much left to learn in the field of cancer biology. As our understanding improves, our capacity to treat and manage patients will cancer will likely improve in tandem. Lessons learnt from other species may well pave the way for new advances in this crucially important field.

Interviews

'It was a choice between going to Ukraine or forgetting a part of my identity'

Rosie Smart-Knight spoke to biology student Nikolai Nizalov on his decision to return to Ukraine to fight

I called Nikolai Nizalov on a Sunday afternoon from my bedroom, not entirely sure what to expect from our conversation. I definitely didn't anticipate being greeted by the familiar sounds of domestic activity. Nikolai was, he later explained, back in the United Kingdom for a week organising supplies, finding a car, and fundraising for his unit.

When asked if there was any direction he wanted the article to take, Nikolai responded: "My fundraiser, because it's my unit that I'm raising money for."

Nikolai, a first-year biology student at St Catharine's College left for his childhood home, Ukraine, during Lent term. He drove supplies such as tourniquets, body armour, and helmets from the UK to the Ukrainian-Polish border. He told me his personal best was 19 hours and 20 minutes for the over 1,000 mile trip, which he has made three times now.

I asked Nikolai if the decision to return to Ukraine was a difficult one. He'd

known for several weeks before the conflict officially began that, if anything were to happen, he would go to help.

"You do have to have that conversation [with] yourself, asking what you would do if stuff actually happened."

It wasn't a difficult decision. "It would either mean that I would have to completely cut out that part of me that is Ukrainian, or do what I have to do. Then I'll be able to look my friends in the eye when I see them after the war." He shared that both friends and family are currently fighting the Russian invasion. His uncle is a surgeon in Kyiv, who he has been able to stay in regular contact with.

Nikolai is currently training with a small volunteer drone unit of nine multi-role fighters. For his unit, Nikolai says he's a "medic/drone-pilot/driver," and is thankful he has found somewhere that he is "really useful." He has completed a condensed medical course, equipping him to deal with scenarios he's likely to encounter, and is in the process of training to be a drone pilot.

His unit has the capacity to operate ten heavy-lifting drones, all of which can carry humanitarian cargo like donor blood and medication into areas that are closed to aid efforts, such as the besieged city of Mariupol. However, currently the unit has only built two drones due to funding restraints. Nikolai explained that, to fully equip the unit, they have to raise £150,000. Each drone costs around £6,000, not including

thermal vision, and each unit has to provide their own armour, uniform, and weaponry.

Nikolai has yet to shoot a gun, and will have to equip himself and train with one before the unit is sent on an active mission.

The most direct way of helping is donations and fundraisers, whether its sharing mine or asking other peo-

"I'll be able to look my friends in the eye when I see them after the war"

ple to donate to it. NATO is dragging its feet, and unless you have a plane, donations mean we can buy necessary items and parts to assemble needed equipment." So far Nikolai has managed to raise £8,000 for his unit. He aims to raise £150,000.

Some of his unit, like Nikolai, are university students in their early twenties. Nikolai, who matriculated in 2020, said he is working to ensure he doesn't have to intermit again, and plans to take his exams from a safe location. St Catharine's have been supportive of his decision to continue his studies remotely alongside his duties in Ukraine. The college master, Professor Mark Welland, called him after learning of his decision, to offer advice based on his own military experience.

Nikolai has also applied to the University for emergency funding. "When the war started I emptied my bank account. When I had to buy myself protective equip-

ment, I maxed out my overdraft."

For Nikolai and his unit, their first active mission is in just one week, putting pressure on the unit to raise enough money for the protective equipment as well as the drones essential to their operations and effectiveness.

The unit doesn't know where they will be sent, or what they will be required to do: "We're only getting deployed in one week, and these days things change in terms of hours, not weeks."

Nikolai informs me that the reality of the war, while shocking to all those following the news, is far worse than the UK media is willing to show: "Some Ukrainian outlets show videos of children dying. It's fair enough that the UK public doesn't want to see that on daytime television, but it's also what is happening."

Since I spoke to him, Nikolai has returned to Lviv, in the west of Ukraine. The city is currently expe-

riencing heavy bombardments from the Russian military. For me, it felt so alien to be interviewing some-

"When the war started I emptied my bank account"

one my own age about the situation so matter-of-factly. However, for Nikolai, this has been his reality for the past month and a half. The same day he returned Ukraine with a car loaded with essential supplies and equipment, I returned to Cambridge with books and plants in tow. For those wishing to donate to Nikolai's fundraiser, he asks you send money to his PayPal: nnizalov@gmail.com.



▲ The first-year student is continuing his studies remotely
NIKOLAI NIZALOV

Be the next Junior Treasurer or Secretary of VarSoc

Nominations to be the Varsity Society's (VarSoc) next Junior Treasurer and Secretary are now open.

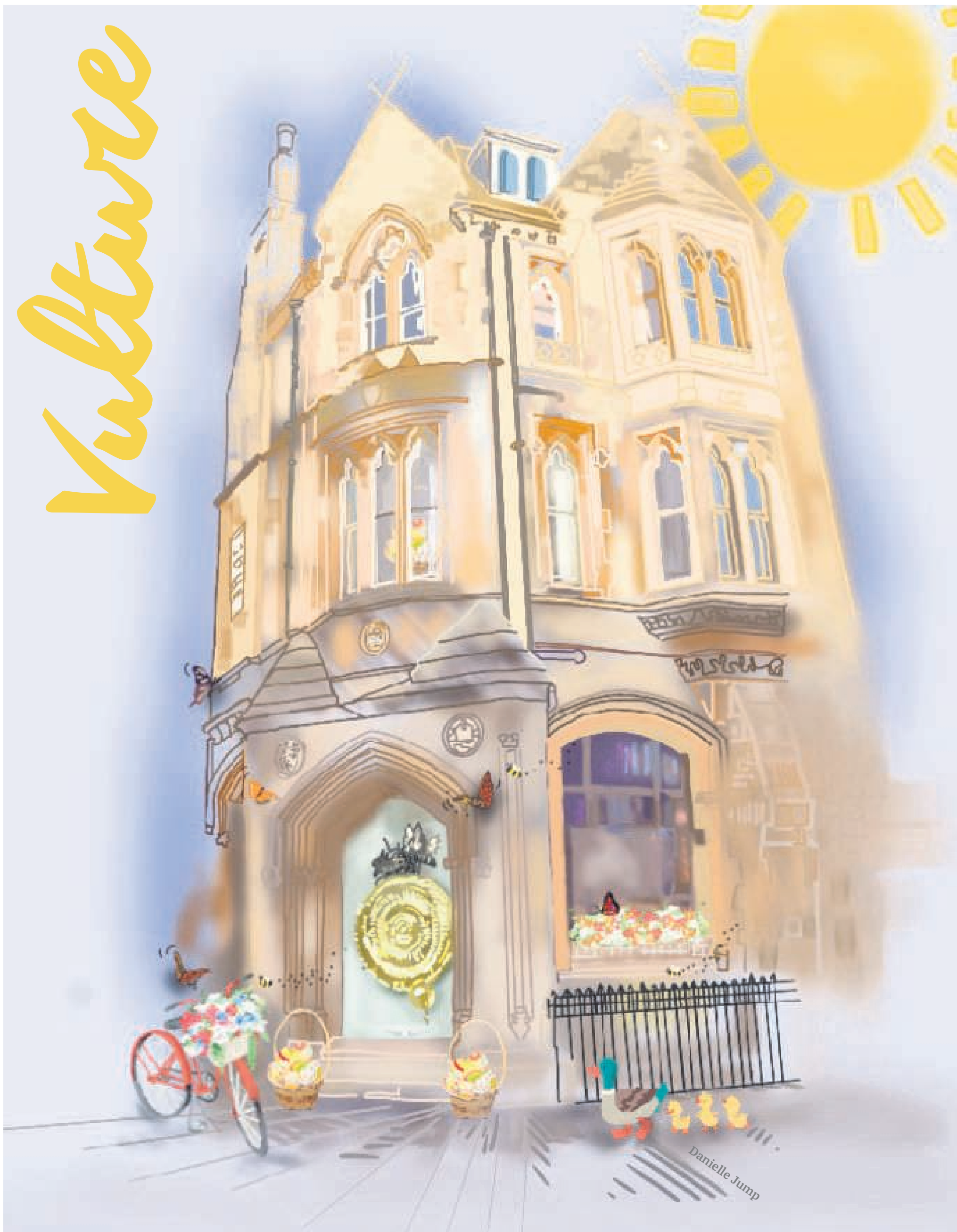
Upon election, the positions will be held for the next academic year.

Please email president@varsity.co.uk for further information.

Nominations close at 5pm 10th June 2022. The election will be held the following week.

www.varsity.co.uk

Vulture



Danielle Jump

Lifestyle

Reclaiming food after heartbreak

Who gets custody of the babka? Lifestyle Editor **Charmaine Au-Yeung** talks about breakups and reclaiming shared culinary loves after heartbreak

Content Note: Brief discussion of disordered eating and breakups.

Phone the doctor when your foodie child doesn't want to eat. When I was sick – like, really ill with fevers that sent me into another plane of existence – mom would know that when I lost my appetite, it was time to take me to hospital. She calls me wai sik mao: her gluttonous cat. I've never had a problem with feeding myself, even on days at university where I sat in bed staring at a wall, working through the throbbing pangs of the worst hangovers, or contemplating friend-

“When we're in the kitchen together, it's like we're doing a little dance, and everything is in sync”

ships lost, or wondering how on earth my fresher's flu ever got this bad.

Food has always been an integral part of my life. It is how I socialise and how I destress. Really, I can't imagine life without it – that's most of the reason why I've always been self-catered throughout my student life. I think it comes from my upbringing; it's a trope that Asian parents don't say 'I love you', but they'll cut fruit up for you every evening. They'll carve apples meticulously until they resemble swans, hearts, and any other whimsical object that is decidedly not a fruit.

In that same mode, it became so easy for me to express love for my friends by whipping up bibimbaps, Buddha bowls, and eight-course Lunar New Year meals. I make macaroni and cheese, weighing in to the size of a small toddler, for potlucks. I'm at my happiest when I'm in a kitchen, preparing a complex, multi-course meal for a whole day. But simply eating food is not enough – in my spare time, I watch and read about people making food: Binging with Babish, J. Kenji López-Alt, Ethan Chlebowski, Salt Fat Acid Heat, and Chef's Table. It's little surprise, then, that when friendships turn into something more, food obviously becomes the primary way I express romantic love.

My ex loves to cook and bake. One of the first things I made for them was a bloomer, with probably the best ear I've ever actually scored on a loaf of bread. Afterwards, they surprised me with babka on my doorstep, a

gesture that touched me so deeply because nobody ever bakes for me. Over time, I introduced them to cabbage, spices rubbed between the leaves, and roasted in an oven until it blisters and crackles. I taught them the best way to make scrambled eggs, and the joys of putting chilli oil and sauce on everything. In return, they taught me to enjoy marmite; that the secret to any risotto is constant stirring and a mountain of cheese and butter; and that Tangfastics are actually quite nice. They gave me the courage to run a pop-up bagel micro-bakery over the summer, after I finished my undergraduate degree and had time to kill. Heck, we even had a little tradition going, making filled bagels for ourselves and our friends whenever we decided to go munro-bagging. When we're in the kitchen together, it's like we're doing a little dance, and everything is in sync. We know exactly what needs doing, and we're able to conjure feasts so easily.

After we broke up, I cried spreading marmite onto my toast. It had been a few days since we parted, and I felt sad and empty in the way that you do when such a big part of your life is gone. Worst of all, nothing looked appetising. I ate out of necessity. All I could stomach the day after we broke up was half a frittata from my college's butternut;

“This is me, reclaiming our foods, enjoying them again, because damn – we made tasty food”

I was hungry, so I ate, but I wasn't really enjoying it, so I stopped. I could probably make a better frittata, anyway, at home. In fact, I had definitely made one in the last year, back when I was with-

Eating had formed such an integral part of my life with them that the idea of eating alone, let alone eating our meals, felt incomprehensible. A few months have now passed. I'm lucky – my appetite is back, and the pain and sadness has subsided. When I step into the kitchen, I put on good music, I sing, and sometimes I make our meals. This is me, reclaiming our foods, enjoying them again, because damn – we made tasty food. It would be criminal if I never got to eat it again. I look back fondly on the time I spent with them, with gratitude for all that they taught me. The foods they shared have become part of my life. In that way, this is small consolation. I'll always carry part of their love in the things that I do.



Lifestyle recommends: Cam

Lifestyle's Lent term editors recommend a few haunts for you

Jianbing - Charmaine
When I'm homesick and can't be bothered to cook, I head to the jianbing stall across the road from M&S. Jianbing is a classic, northern Chinese breakfast: crepes filled with egg, your protein of choice, scallions, hoisin, crispy wonton, and lettuce. It also comes with hot sauce. I get extra hot, but I've been told that their medium is quite spicy. If you have room, also get their liang mian: wheat noodles tossed in a tahini sauce.

Gyros - Nadya
A classic, traditional Greek dish, the gyros from market square are a guaranteed success. Made with meat on the inside and elegantly served in a pita bread – complemented by tomato, feta cheese, potatoes, onions, and tzatziki sauce – the dish is both authentic and affordable, making it a perfect student choice!

Bird Thai Noodle - Emaan
I've been here so many times now that I've forgotten it was only at the beginning of Lent that a fellow editor brought me here. Boasting a range of authentic Thai food, I'd argue it's by far one of the best food spots in Cambridge – and, better yet, is also

Produce - Charmaine

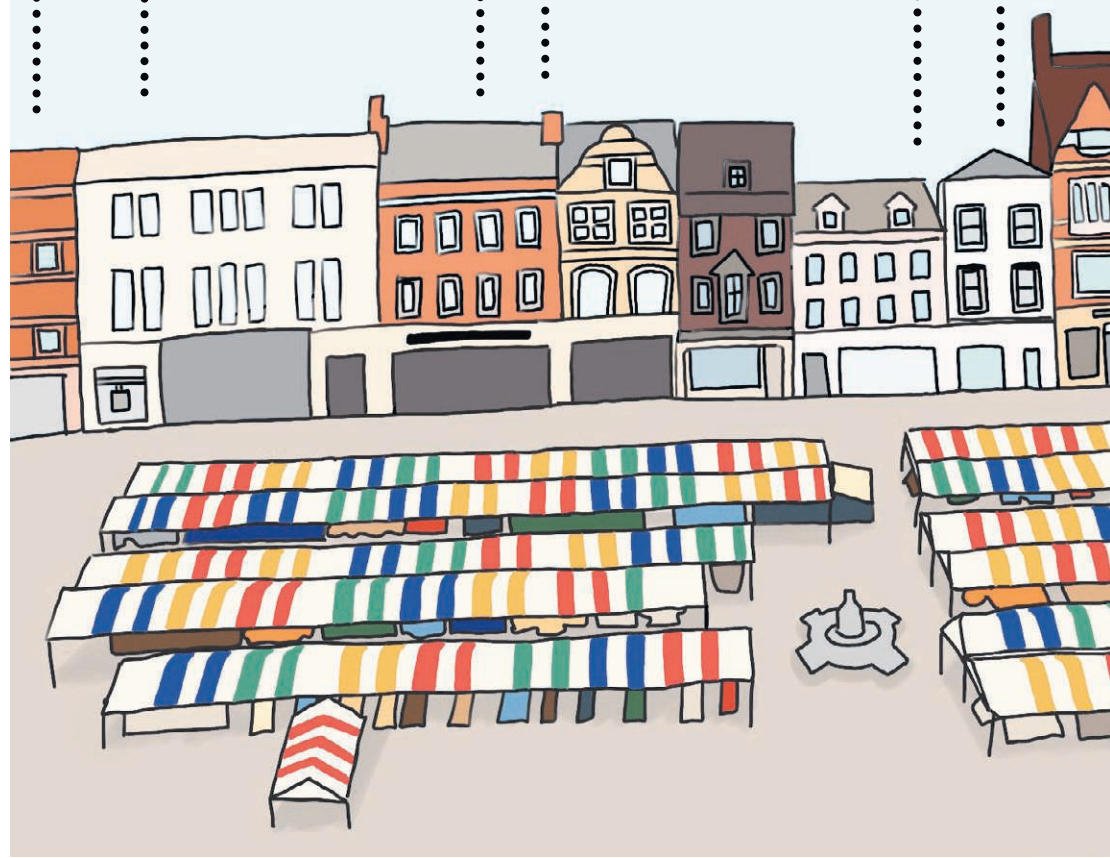
Shop seasonally! Not only is it better for the environment, but excellent produce is grown around Cambridgeshire – perfect for your weekly grocery haul. A couple of different stalls sell fruit and veg, so have a wander. Current favourite purchases are artichokes, purple kale, beetroots, oyster mushrooms, parsnips, leeks, and squash. Flowers are also cheap at the moment.

Merguez - Rosina

Sometimes the task of choosing what you want to eat when you get to the market can seem impossible. For me, the magical solution to these decision-making difficulties is the Merguez stall – it never disappoints! I find that the lamb merguez wrap with the full selection of spiced and pickled sides is perfect for any occasion, whether you're taking a much-needed break from work, recovering from a big night, or having a little celebration.

Africfood - Charmaine

Charming, lovely, and always eager to chat to students, Sugar also serves a solid array of Nigerian food every day. I usually get the veggie mix – jollof rice, stewed yams, plantains, braised beans, and chilli sauce – but other people have recommended her goat and spinach stew.



bridge Market

our next visit to Market Square!

Malaysian - Charmaine

This is a real favourite of Cambridge. At peak lunch hours, the line extends half-way down their section of the market. And for good reason - fresh, wok-fried, Southeast Asian food is really hard to beat. Come bearing cash, and get the nasi lemak: Malaysia's national dish of pandan and coconut rice, sambal, fried eggs, and protein. My supervisor also tells me that if you wait until they close and ask nicely, they can fry up a whole fish for you.

King of Wraps - Emaan

Another affordable spot, with some of the most lovely people working behind the stall. Whether you're getting the falafel wrap, the halloumi wrap, or the chicken harissa wrap - you can't go wrong. Better yet, the stall has a loyalty card scheme, like most coffee shops, which gets you a free wrap every once in a while...

Smoothies - Nadya

The fruit and juice stand boasts a wonderful array of refreshing and delicious smoothies — an ideal complement to the warm summer days ahead of us! I would highly recommend the mango and passion fruit smoothie, its sweet and tropical flavour is not one to be missed.



AskVulture:

How do I prepare for exam term?

Lifestyle editor
Rosina Griffiths
offers her
advice for
remaining calm
in the face of
looming
exams



your calendar and you've got it sorted.

When you're doing all this scheduling, make sure that you're setting aside time for breaks. You can make dinner plans as well as essay plans. You're working hard and you deserve a treat! Making an effort to get away from your desk and socialise will offer you a much needed reminder that there is life beyond your exams.

Try not to worry if you're feeling as though you can't switch off, and you're constantly finding yourself talking about your

work with your friends. Discussing your ideas in a more fun context might help you to remember that you did once actually like your subject.

Of course, you may not always feel up to having to talk to actual humans after a long day of staring at your notes. While you have a bit of time before term begins, it is definitely worth working out what it is that relaxes you. You may not feel up to chatting in the evening, but perhaps you will feel like cooking, knitting, painting, dancing, singing, running

“
You can make dinner plans as well as essay plans. You're working hard and you deserve a treat!
”

— whatever floats your boat. You might feel more relaxed already, knowing that you've made the effort to set up moments of calm before the panic of term even begins.

So, it's time to go and make whatever preparations you feel are necessary. Remember that once your exams are over, this will be a term full of fun and that you have so much to look forward to. Good luck!

"The holidays are flying by and I can no longer pretend that my exams are a long way off! I'm already feeling very stressed and I'm worried that it will only get worse. Do you have any advice for how I can feel more calm and prepared?"

It's got to that point when exams can no longer be ignored. Wherever they're at in their education, students across the country are starting to feel the pressure of this coming term. It's perhaps particularly daunting this year, as it's been such a long time since exam terms could happen with any hint of 'normality'. That being said, the first thing I want to do is to reassure you that you have *absolutely* got this.

Something that we can all be guilty of is setting our exams up as a huge, looming point in our future — unfortunately, this doesn't help.

“
Something that we can all be guilty of is setting our exams up as a huge, looming point in our future
”

Get those dates in your diary so that you know what you're doing and when, but then put them to the back of your mind. Organisation is vital, but you can break things down and take everything a week at a time. Allow yourself to focus on what you need to do in a particular week without worrying about what's coming next; you know that whatever it is in

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Arts

'If you need to say something, you will', says poetry competition winner Eric Yip

Famke Veenstra-Ashmore speaks to National Poetry Competition winner Eric Yip about his experiences writing poetry in Cambridge

Eric Yip is a nineteen-year-old economics student from Hong Kong. Until recently, poetry for Eric was a private hobby, but having become the youngest ever winner of the National Poetry Competition, he has suddenly found himself, and his writing, under the national spotlight. This impressive achievement has made national headlines, but has also excited the arts scene on a local scale. His winning poem, 'Fricatives' is evocative, engaging, and wholly impactful, and available to read with thanks to Eric at the end of this article. I spoke to him about this whirlwind experience, as well as his practice, influences, and his experience in Cambridge as an international, multilingual student.

When did you begin writing poetry? Has it been a life-long practice, or something that you've picked up recently?

I started writing poetry two to three years ago, and at first I was very bad. Support for creative writing in English was non-existent at my secondary school in Hong Kong, so poetry was a private hobby that I told very few people about. It wasn't until I began reading contemporary poetry that I saw visible improvement. I keep dozens of notes on my phone where I scribble down images and ideas. Occasionally those ideas coalesce into a poem, and very rarely, a good poem.

What kinds of things do you find yourself drawn to the most in your writing?

I'm quite interested in language and its fraught relationship with us, how we put so much faith in a flawed vessel to hold our deepest feelings. I'm thinking of the quote by Edmond Jabès: "Always in a foreign country, the poet uses poetry as an interpreter." Themes like family, vulnerability, queer-ness, and diaspora appear in my writing, but to be honest, I'm not exactly sure why I'm drawn towards these things. I suspect no one really knows why they write what they write, other than the fact that our minds latch on to stories and experiences dear to us,

and hence poetry becomes a way of unfurling the sail that carries us towards some semblance of clarity.

How do you think students at Cambridge may react or respond to your poem? Do you think it will resonate with particular groups?

I hope people like it (or at least find it interesting enough to talk about)! I've received messages from Cambridge students over the past few days telling me that they resonated with the poem, which makes me very happy. A lot of students at Cambridge, myself included, may feel a bit out of place here. You're painfully conscious of the desire to fit in, and there are artefacts that remind you of the intimidating history of Cambridge (or "elite education" in general) and how you weren't given a space in that history. The poem does play a bit off those feelings, so I'm glad people found solace in that.

How did you come across the National Poetry Competition? What were your motivations, expectations, and reaction to the outcome?

I had just arrived in the UK and thought of submitting my poems somewhere, so I Googled "UK poetry competitions", and the NPC was the first one that popped up. I had absolutely zero expectations. I was more motivated by the fact that the judges would read my poems, and I thought that was cool enough to warrant a submission. To say I was shocked would be an understatement. Receiving the call from The Poetry Society was one of the most bizarre moments of my life, and it took me days for the full weight of it to set in.

As the competition's youngest ever winner, how do you feel that your age has impacted your perspective, especially as a student here in Cambridge?

To be honest it's quite daunting! I always feel like I haven't read enough or know too little, so there's this constant voice in my head telling me not to make a fool of myself. I think I'm in the stage of my life where I'm forced to think big and take a swing at the perennial questions of life. Nineteen is the age where you start to have this introspective gaze at your childhood ("Did all of that really happen?"). Being in the UK has also brought my attention to issues such as class, colonialism, and sexuality, as well as how those subjects relate to my personal experiences.

Content Note: sexually explicit language

Fricatives

To speak English properly, Mrs. Lee said, you must learn the difference between three and free. Three men escaped from Alcatraz in a rubber raft and drowned on their way to Angel Island. Hear the difference? Try this: you fought your way into existence. Better. Look at this picture. Fresh yellow grains beaten till their seeds spill. That's threshing. That's submission. You must learn to submit before you can learn. You must be given a voice before you can speak. Nobody wants to listen to a spectacled boy with a Hong Kong accent. You will have to leave this city, these dark furrows stuffed full with ancestral bones. Know that death is thorough. You will speak of bruised bodies skinnier than yours, force the pen past batons and blood, call it fresh material for writing. Now they're paying attention. You're lucky enough to care about how the tongue moves, the seven types of fricatives, the articulatory function of teeth sans survival. You will receive a good education abroad and make your parents proud. You will take a stranger's cock in your mouth in the piss-slick stall of that dingy Cantonese restaurant you love and taste where you came from, what you were made of all along. Put some work into it, he growls. C'mon, give me some bite. Your mother visits one October, tells you how everyone speaks differently here, more proper. You smile, nod, bring her to your favourite restaurant, order dim sum in English. They're releasing the students arrested five years ago. Just a tad more soy sauce please, thank you. The television replays yesterday on repeat. The teapots are refilled. You spoon served rice into your mouth, this perfect rice. Steamed, perfect, white.

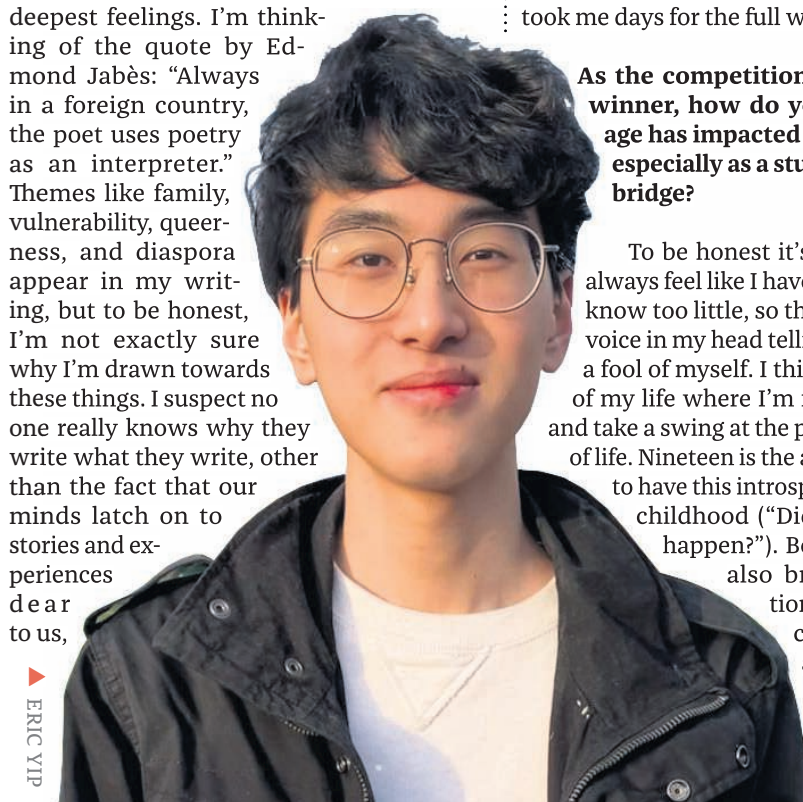
How do you find your life in Cambridge and the arts scene here intersects with your writing?

Cambridge is a fantastic place for students interested in writing or the arts. The zine scene here is bubbling with life, and it was fun submitting poems to Notes, BAIT Magazine, and The Mays. Cambridge was the first place where I could meet other enjoyers of poetry, and it gave me the confidence necessary to look out for more opportunities. Also the bookstores here are a godsend! On the other hand, I imagine the ghosts of Milton and Byron must be secretly judging the merits of every poet in Cambridge.

What advice or guidance would you give

to other young poets, in Cambridge especially those from similar backgrounds?

As someone relatively new to poetry, I don't think I'm in a position to offer any advice, so I'll pass down some lessons I'm still trying to learn. One thing I've realised is you should never be apologetic about your background. Understand tradition, but don't buckle under it. For those writing in second languages, your multilingualism is a gift and will provide you with a massive pool of ideas. And reach out to others in the writing community! I only found out about the Young Poets Network recently and regret not having done so earlier. Most of all, you can never read or write enough. Nothing is unimportant. If you need to say something, you will.



ERIC YIP

Fashion

Childsplay: Varsity X CUCFS

Creative Director **Lily Maguire** and Photographer **Nana Ama Konadu Otuo** spotlight nine designers featuring in the Cambridge University Charity Fashion Show on Thursday 5th May

Instead of getting dressed, it's playing dress-up. This year's theme for the Cambridge University Charity Fashion Show is **CHILDSPLAY**: a spirit of experimentation and the construction of identities which remains constant throughout our lives, albeit manifesting itself in a multitude of different ways. This is a dynamic process of exploration which Creative Director Sayma Sultana and Fashion Director Lily Maguire have sought to explore in three stages through the innovative designs of Somin Park, Yu You, Zhenwei Wang, Uliana Nekrasova, Paloma Silversved, Zein NG, Xuejin Liu, Amber Pickup and Redress Laboratory. The first life stage is surrealist and dreamlike, when identities are inchoate yet unrestrained by binaries in their naiveté. The second stage of young adulthood is rebellious in its neon garishness. The third and final stage brings maturity, but in no way a dampening of this experimental spirit: after phases of negotiation and renegotiation, identities blossom into their most dynamic and daring forms. The Cambridge University Charity Fashion Show is on Thursday, the 5th of May at the Fitzwilliam Museum, with final release tickets out Saturday.



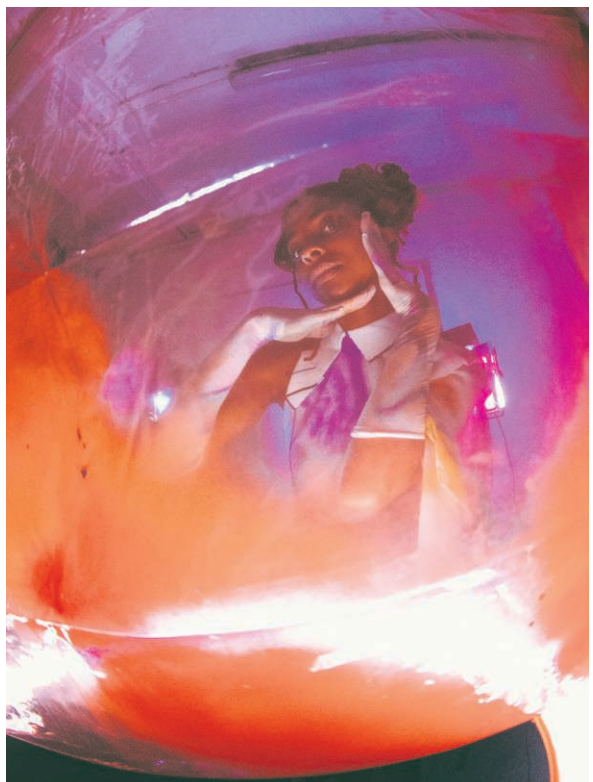
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CHILDSPLAY / Varsity X CUCFS





CHILDSPLAY

Creative Directing: CUCFS Fashion Director Lily Maguire. Photography: Nana Ama Konadu Otuo @amakotuophotography and see 'CHILDSPLAY by Fin' at varsity.co.uk/arts for photography by Fin Scott @officialfinscott

Styling and Assisting: CUCFS President Sana Khullar, CUCFS Creative Director Sayma Sultana, Anna Chan, Freya Beard, Giovanna Goulart, Madeleine Fisher, Matthew Cavallini

Modelling: Abbey Fawcett, Alex Levy, Charlotte Hodson, Danielle Wright, Edoardo Chidichimo, Georgia Hui, Henry Rocha, Imani Bailey, Izzi Denby-Jones, Jaden Tsui, Maisy Redmayne, Marisse Cato, Nabhia Ahmed, Nibs Morgan, Savanna Patel, Sanah Kashyap

Thanks to: Oyinate Adegbite, May Hussain, Tito Molokwu, Jack Dhillon, Henry Rocha, Yossy Olufidiye and Bianka Baranova for helping collect and transport looks from London to Cambridge



Film & TV

Our top film and television villains

If you've ever wondered who the most delightfully diabolical and masterfully malevolent villains across the film and television world are, you've come to the right place

Mr Burns from *The Simpsons*

Mr Burns from *The Simpsons* (1989-present) must go down as one of TV's greatest ever villains. Sitting upon hordes of money while his nuclear power plant falls apart, poisoning the local area and only functioning because he bribes local safety inspectors, Mr Burns is avarice incarnate. However, it is his emotional and physical weaknesses that make him such an interesting character, an almost pathetic rendering of 'The Man'. The only thing he hates more than a union is being without his teddy bear Bobo. This wild juxtaposition is what makes him so... as he would say... excellent...

excellent...



Available to watch on: Disney+
Lewis Andrews - Theatre Editor

Kilgrave from *Jessica Jones*

Is there anything David Tennant can't do? My pick for top TV villain is his character Kilgrave, from Marvel's series *Jessica Jones* (2015-19). Sycophantic-romantic-gone-psycho, Kilgrave as a villain deserves a 5-star rating for all round 'evilness': he is quite literally awful. What makes him such an exceptional villain, however, is the charisma and empathy with which Tennant plays him. He is terrible and does terrible things — don't get me wrong — and yet he carries the series, as his love-hate (but mostly hate) tension with lead Jessica Jones (Krysten Ritter) crackles excitingly across the screen. That, and you could also go as far as saying that he doesn't need his super villain power of mind-control when he looks that good in an all purple suit...

Available to watch on: Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+
Lotte Brundle - Vulture Editor

Judge Claude Frollo from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*

Despite its fairly forgotten legacy, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) boasts a brilliantly evil antagonist. Frollo's menacing nature lies in the fact that he is not a queer-coded outcast, much like all the other Disney villains. Instead, he is the face of authority itself. You can keep your 'Be Prepared' and 'Poor Unfortunate Souls' because 'Hellfire' is the pièce de résistance of Disney villain songs, and it takes Victor Hugo's novel to a new dimension. As the triumphant bell ringing switches into the minor key, Frollo questions his Christianity and victim-blames Esmeralda for seducing him while giant, hooded figures chant "mea culpa". It's excessively heavy, but it teaches children that the leaders of society are not always as righteous as they may seem.

Available to watch on: Disney+
Catrin Osborne - Film & TV Editor

Ursula from *The Little Mermaid*

There is something utterly bombastic and camp in Ursula, the glamorous, tentacular under-water villain of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* (1989). She's a bodacious baddy who, in her quest to get even with the man who stole her kingdom from her, uses every trick in the book in order to get her way, including, but not limited to, "Body language". Not afraid to exploit the male gaze for her own gain, Ursula is definitely the animated villain and aquatic girlboss that's stolen my heart. This interpretation of her, however, does make me wonder why villains are so frequently made not only camp, but also given purple as their signature colour? Maybe we should be asking why animated Disney villains in particular are so often queer-coded, and what this tells us about the traits Disney characterized as 'evil'...

Available to watch on Disney+
Lotte Brundle - Vulture Editor

The Varsity Guide to Careers 2021/2022

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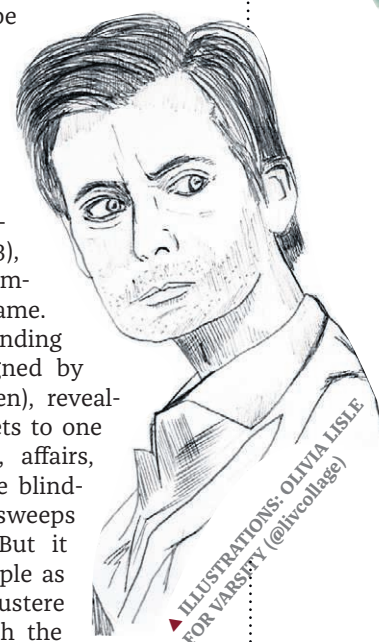
Guide to Careers 2021-22



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The village of Saint-Robin from *Le Corbeau*

What could possibly be better than one classically evil villain? Multiple classically evil villains. This is exactly what you get with each one of the dastardly villagers in *Le Corbeau* (1943), none of whom are completely free from blame. Someone has been sending poison-pen letters signed by 'le Corbeau' (the Raven), revealing the villagers' secrets to one another — abortions, affairs, cancer diagnoses... The blinding light of suspicion sweeps over every suspect. But it could never be as simple as the first suspect: an austere nurse pursued through the streets by an angry mob, her black habit flapping like the wings of a raven. Slowly, the village's anger mounts along with threats of reprisals to a bloody climax. A five-foot-something mother slays the Raven before stalking off down a sunlit street, dressed in yet another raven-esque black dress. Hypocritical, moralising and mistrustful, the villagers are the epitome of the villain in us all.



ILLUSTRATIONS: OLIVIA LISLE
FOR VARSITY (@lrvicollage)

Available to watch on: Amazon Prime Video
Nadia Sorabji Stewart - Film & TV Editor



NETFLIX / BRIDGERTON

Less sex, more sensibility: *Bridgerton* season two

In her review of *Bridgerton*'s latest season, Film & TV Editor **Catrin Osborne** notes that there are notably fewer raunchy scenes than in the first installment of the Regency drama

This article contains spoilers for the show

This viewer seldom admits it, but *Bridgerton* is my guiltiest pleasure. As a former English Literature student, I acknowledge that it is the TV version of the Walmart to Jane Austen's Chanel. However, I believe *Bridgerton*'s cheap and cheerful tone is its greatest success and what makes it so irresistible when you simply want to turn off your brain for an hour.

In most aspects, the second season improves on the first; the plot actually feels cohesive, and the leads' characterisation is far stronger (fortunately there were no morally questionable scenes like in the first season — I'm looking at you Daphne Bridgerton). We are treated to a classic slow-burn enemies to lovers narrative arc with all the quintessential moments, from sultry stares to forced embraces. Moreover, the twist of Anthony (Jonathan Bailey) being betrothed to the wrong sister adds intriguing familial jeopardy.

Kate (Simone Ashley) is an enticing female lead and her sisterly dynamic with Edwina (Charithra Chandran) emulates that of *The Taming of the Shrew* — or the (in my opinion) far superior *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999).

One of the season's greatest strengths lies in its world-building. This time around we get to see interesting storylines for so many more characters, lining up a plethora of possibilities for seasons to come. In its *Gossip Girl*-inspired vein, a substantial amount of the season is spent on the Lady Whistledown narrative, showing an insight into Penelope's (Nicola Coughlan) thoughts behind merely those expressed by her pen. Additionally, this plot allows a greater pondering of the Regency era's feminist politics; everyone's fan favourite Eloise (Claudia Jessie) has many a social justice warrior rant, and Kate voices far more thoughts than Daphne ever did. It's utterly on-the-nose but at least the writers are trying.

The producers also took advantage of the nineteenth-century setting with scenes set at the races, at frequent balls and on

hunting trips, as well as alluding to Lord Byron and Mary Wollstonecraft. *Bridgerton* is always visually enticing, showcasing Britain's finest stately homes and an abundance of flowers. To complement its anachronistic tone, the season treated us to more classical arrangements of pop music, from Madonna to Miley Cyrus. The costuming wasn't quite to the standard of other historical media such as *Emma* (2020), yet the

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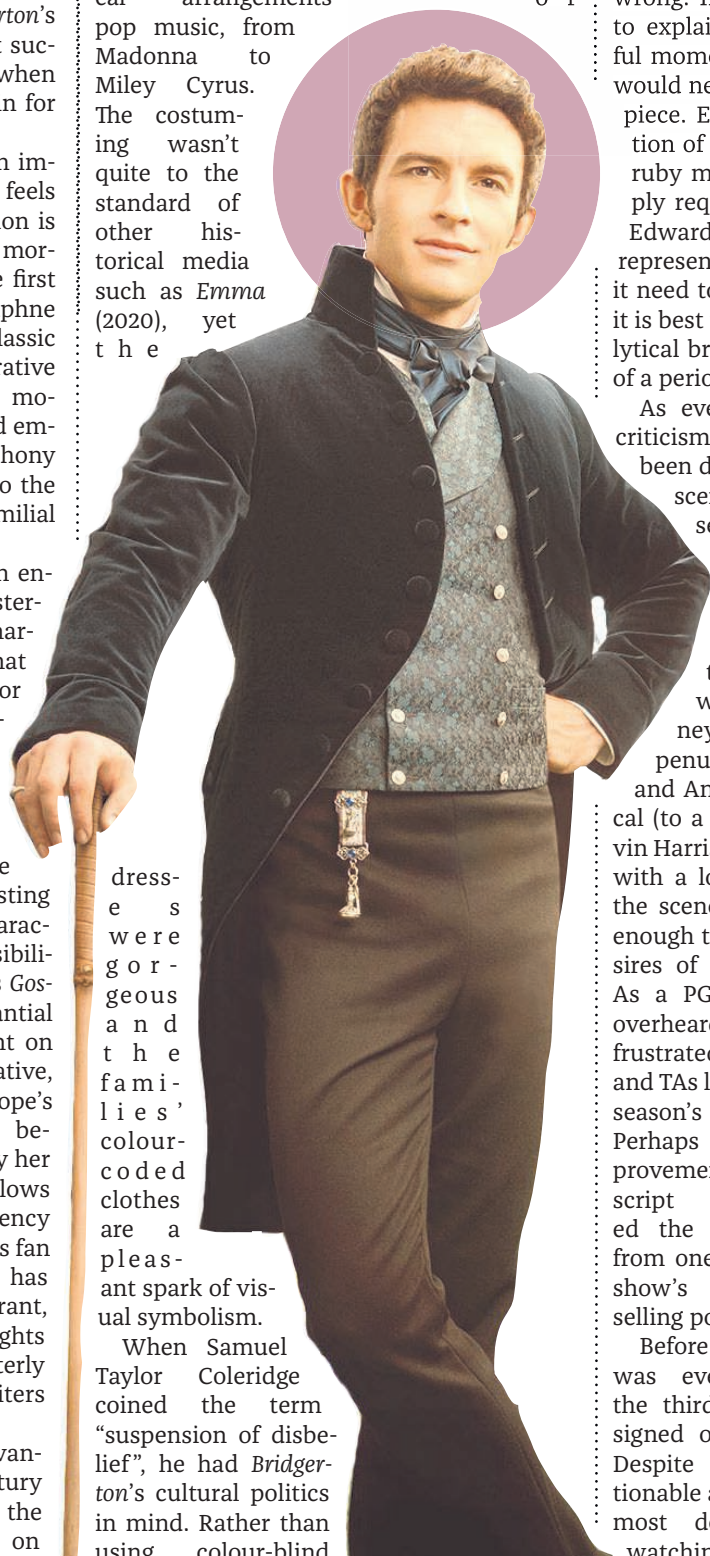
When Samuel Taylor Coleridge coined the term "suspension of disbelief", he had *Bridgerton*'s cultural politics in mind. Rather than using colour-blind

casting, the show seems to exist in an alternative universe where Regency Britain was far more diverse and racial barriers did not exist. As a white viewer, it is not my place to decide whether this is right or wrong. The second season does not attempt to explain it but again has many wonderful moments of cultural representation that would never be found in your regular period piece. Every now and then there's a mention of empire, from imported peacocks to ruby mines in "the Americas", which simply requires you to forget your reading of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and revel in the representation. It makes no sense, but does it need to? As many Tweets have suggested, it is best to watch *Bridgerton* without an analytical brain and just enjoy seeing the rarity of a period piece that isn't entirely white.

As ever, *Bridgerton* has been met with criticism. In a turn of events, this has been directed at the lack of NSFW scenes rather than the first season's branding by many as 'softcore porn'. In this season, the leads almost kiss so many times that you'd think you were watching a Disney Channel film. In the penultimate episode, Kate and Anthony finally get physical (to a classical rendition of Calvin Harris of course!) Under wisteria with a lot of slow-motion shots, the scene is satisfying, but not enough to sedate the desires of its viewership. As a PGCE student, I overheard a group of frustrated teachers and TAs lamenting the season's purification. Perhaps the improvement of the script detracted the writers from one of the show's biggest selling points.

Before this season was even conceived, the third was already signed off by Netflix. Despite all its questionable aspects, I will most definitely be watching what's to

come,
so here's
to hopefully
more technicolour
costumes,
classicalised
pop, plot cohesion for
the Austen-lovers,
and hanky panky
for the mums.



Music



Varsity's Spring Playlist

The Varsity Music Team have put together the perfect soundtrack for this spring!

A playlist of chilled out tunes and the early summer bops for sunny spring picnics... scan the link above to enjoy!

Upcoming Releases

The Music Editors have also selected the most hotly anticipated albums dropping over the next month for you to love... or loathe!

Skinty Fia by Fontaines D.C. releasing on the 22nd April

Two Ribbons by Let's Eat Grandma releasing later this month after pushing back the date from 8th April

WE by Arcade Fire releasing on the 6th May

Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers by Kendrick Lamar... possibly the album with the most hype releasing 13th May. Kendrick fans, prepare yourself!

The rise and CRASH of Charli XCX

Joe Bray explores the abnormal journey of pop sensation Charli XCX following the release of her sixth studio album

On March 18th, Charli XCX released her sixth studio album *CRASH*. To understand the significance and journey of this relatively straightforward pop album, knowledge of the trajectory of Charlotte Emma Aitchison's career is crucial.

Aitchison is an atypical figure, a household name and a left-field pop icon. Charli signed a record deal in 2010, and became famous for 'I Love It', her collaboration with Icona Pop, which reached the Top 10 in Europe. In 2013, she released her debut album, *True Romance*, before featuring on the double Grammy-nominated Iggy Azalea song 'Fancy' in 2014. This was a significant year for her, as she also released the infamous Billboard top ten hit 'Boom Clap'. After the mostly familiar trajectory of her pop star beginnings, Charli XCX began to break the rules.

Charli released the EP *Vroom Vroom* in 2016, which divided fans and challenged her reputation as a pop singer. This EP is where the tensions with Charli's label, Atlantic Records, became significant. From half-hearted promotion to the repeated, and then permanent, delay to an album fans titled *XCX World*, there has been consistent tension. In 2017, the difficulty with her album roll-out led to her releasing two critically and fan-acclaimed 'mixtapes'. She has since

“Hyperpop [...] solidified her loyal fanbase”

confessed that these were essentially a way of her releasing music without worrying about formalities. The results were the experimental and acclaimed Number 1 *Angel* and Pop 2 — hyperpop that solidified her loyal fanbase.

When she released her 2019 album, Charli, the single 'Gone' had a noticeably strange absent rhyme: "I feel so unstable, fucking hate these people". XCX later confirmed that the original line was "I feel so unstable, fucking hate my label". Charli's fraught relationship

“I feel so unstable, fucking hate my label”

with her label is to this day both hidden and explicit; a love-hate relationship that at times



Gomez's 'Same Old Love', and Shawn Mendes and Camilla Cabello's collab 'Señorita'. This takes us to the unapologetic 'sell-out' *CRASH*, which the opening track admits is a gamble: "I don't know if I'll be coming back to life again / All or nothing, burn in hell or go up heaven

“CRASH feels like an extended metaphor for her entire career”

sent, yeah”.

Charli XCX's first ever UK number 1 album, *CRASH* reached a staggering 7th on the US Billboard 200. It also peaked at number 1 in Australia and Ireland, and had 31.5k sales in the US, her largest first-week sales ever. As well as being the second biggest weekly debut by a female album in 2022 on Spotify, the singles have also performed well; 'Beg For You', for example, peaked at 24 on the UK official charts. On Metacritic, *CRASH* achieved 79, and a user score of 8.6. These numbers are similar to her other releases, and *CRASH* has garnered more critical attention and praise than *Sucker*, *True Romance*, and *Vroom Vroom*. It is up to each fan to decide if they enjoy the music of this era, but it is hard to deny Charli XCX has reached some outstanding numbers with *CRASH*.

Charli entered the charts singing "I crashed my car into a bridge". It feels utterly deliberate that she is ending her major label deal, again,

seemed to lack the love.

The vision of her new era, *CRASH*, was to embrace the benefits of a major label release fully. The final album on her contract, she planned to leave loudly. The opening lyrics of the title track exemplify this: "I'm about to crash into the water / Gonna take you with me / I'm high voltage, self-destructive / End it all so legendary".

Charli is a hit-maker, which her label seemed desperate to promote. Despite her more experimental music, Charli XCX is no stranger to the mainstream. During her lockdown album how i'm feeling now, she collaboratively wrote the songs with fans. After sharing some lyrics, and having fans troll her, she reminded them that "I've got platinum songs, you don't know what you're talking about". She has been involved in other hit tracks, such as Selena

“Charli is not afraid to take risks”

with a crash. Indeed, *CRASH* feels like an extended metaphor for her entire career. Charli is not afraid to take risks. Aside from being one of the most cohesive pop albums of the year, *CRASH* is another example of Aitchison refusing to follow the rules, an impressive addition to a decade long discography.

BE INSPIRED

by your surroundings



Designed by Sir Robert Smirke, the architect responsible for the British Museum, the Club's impressive façade illuminates Pall Mall. Inside, a burgeoning social scene sees a host of diverse events take place each month, including Cocktail Making Masterclasses, Wine Tastings and Themed Dinners, as well as visits from highly distinguished speakers, including politicians, authors, ambassadors and academics. Members needing somewhere quieter can seek inspiration in the Club's impressive library – home to nearly 20,000 volumes – or head to its dedicated business area.

For details on membership or a tour of the Club house, please visit
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OXFORD AND
CAMBRIDGE
— CLUB —

Theatre

What's on

Cambridge theatre doesn't stop for exam term. **Theatre Editor Lewis Andrews** takes a look through what's coming up!

Flow- A Documentary Short Film, 12:00, 25th April, The Heong Gallery, Downing College

A short film that seeks to visualise emotions and senses using paints and imagery.

We Go Down With the Ship, 16:00, 28th-29th April, Homerton College Studio

A student-written piece that responds to the climate emergency. It merges 'verbatim scenes' with its own satirical dialogue, and also draws on physical movement sequences, poetry and philosophy.

The Importance of Being Earnest, 19:00, 29th-10th April, Christ's Chapel

This timeless classic is being put on in a unique space. Who can resist the wit of ol' Wilde?

Scratch Night, 20:00, 2nd May, Blue Moon

A night of original work, in the hope of raising money to take *When We Were Normal* by Maddie Lynes to the Edinburgh Fringe. Always good to support fellow 'thesps' in their endeavours!

Public House 5, 19:30, 3rd May, The Portland Arms

A one-time performance consisting of anonymous sexual assault/harassment testimonies, all of which are by Cambridge students and alumni. It aims to be an annual addressing of the issue of sexual violence, and 50% of the proceeds raised will be donated to Cambridge Rape Crisis.

The Son, 19:45, 3rd-7th May, ADC Theatre

The Guardian call Florian Zeller 'the most exciting playwright of our time'. Why not put the theory to the test, by seeing this portrayal of teenage depression and divorce?

However Belligerent the Cactus, 21:30, 3rd-7th May, Corpus Playroom

The title alone seems interesting! This piece explores life's performativity, and therefore what it means to be authentic.

Blue Workers: The Musical!, 23:00, 4th-6th May, ADC Theatre

An ode to the backstage workers, who shall no doubt get their deserved praise in this original musical.

Garry Bonds' Balanced Breakfasts, 19:00, 3rd-7th May, Corpus Playroom

A brand-new comedy drama, which asks what you would sacrifice to be the best. Baseball knowledge is not required, but fear of ghosts may be a problem...

All's well that ends wet

Theatre Editor **Bethan Holloway-Strong** presents a brief history of the aquatic dramatic

BEN NICHOLSON ▲

I am slightly obsessed with water. As anyone who's talked to me for longer than five minutes knows, I grew up on the west coast of Australia and spent most of my childhood in the sea, in the pool, or delighting in drought-quenching rains. I'm not tempted to swim in the Cam – the signs about sewage have slightly put me off – so I've indulged my obsession with my English degree. My final dissertation explores swimming pools in contemporary American coming-of-age literature, and it was in the depths of re-drafting this dissertation that I attended *Singin' in the Rain* at the ADC last term. I was spellbound by the real water that poured from the rafters and, judging by the delighted gasps around me, the rest of the audience was too.

What is it about water onstage that is so captivating? Humans have been mixing theatre and water since Roman times, when staged naval battles, called naumachia, entertained thousands. The performers, usually prisoners of war or condemned criminals, actually died in these demonstrations, making them a rather bloody affair. Since they were mostly conducted in purpose-dug outdoor basins, though, I'm sure they weren't hard to clean up. Luckily, by the 19th century, aquatic theatre had lost the death factor. The Sadler's Wells Theatre on the outskirts of London staged the first "aqua drama", which eventually became popular in France and the United States too.

Ulpiano Checa's 1894 painting gives a glimpse into the first aquatic performances, the naumachia.

The theatre installed a water tank over the entire stage to perform recreated naval battles. Audiences loved it, with enthusiastic viewers even jumping into the tank to see if the water was real. These interruptions mean the water in the tank, although drained and refilled every three weeks, became filthy. Since each refilling took twelve men twelve hours to complete, the practice wasn't sustainable, and when audiences began to thin thanks to the weariness of the Napoleonic Wars, the tanks were removed.

Although pumping techniques have evolved since the Archimedes wheel used in Sadler's Wells, water still presents a considerable technical challenge for modern set designers. In 2016, Beowulf Boritt was nominated for a Tony for his set design for Roundabout Theatre Company's *Thérèse Raquin*, which included a river that was deep enough to row a boat in.

A leak could be disastrous, prompting him to meticulously install a triple-layered base to the pool. Although this prevented a leak, the pool did spill over once, temporarily flooding the trap room. The water also created a slip hazard for the actors. All in all, it seems quite dangerous. So why do productions keep using it?

As I've discovered in my dissertation research, water holds universal spiritual significance. Associated with purification, birth, and life itself, water is a sacred substance that must be treated with respect. It makes sense that we'd want to see it onstage in representations of life; indeed, actress Vanessa Redgrave said that "theatre is as essential to civilisation as safe, pure water". What happens when water undermines theatre, though? Boritt confessed that he thought long and hard about how to ensure the audience never saw the bottom of the river, lest it "lose all the magic", and according to writer Natasha Tripney, water on stage can "feel gimmicky". Its spiritual and emotional significance doesn't make water immune to looking ridiculous.

There is something undeniably magical, though, about seeing real water on stage, however "gimmicky" it may be. Everything that happens on stage is, by definition, not real, so to see something so tangible is a pleasant, and confronting, surprise. It's no wonder those audience members jumped into the tanks at Sadler's Wells. I, too, found myself examining the umbrellas of the cast of *Singin' in the Rain*, almost not believing that the drops were really wet. Seeing real water on stage brings a moving immediacy to the audience members, making the emotional impact of any waterlogged scenes that much more powerful.

Theatre, like water, is transcendent. It aims to bring new experiences and emotions to viewers: to make the audience question their relationships with each other, the world, and art, to push the boundaries of the possible. And what better way to push boundaries than to bring the danger and bliss of water to the stage? It confronts the audience with states of being other than their own, both literal and figurative; as Saoirse Ronan's Lady Macbeth lay dying in a still pool in Yael Farber's 2021 production, she seemed to almost be dissolving. In a time where water levels mark a march towards climate disaster that sometimes seems inevitable, water has more of a place in art than ever before – although I'm very glad I'm not the technical director that has to orchestrate it.

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“Water holds universal spiritual significance... {it} is a sacred substance that must be treated with respect”

“Water confronts the audience with states of being other than their own”

Sport

Cambridge rowers fare well at GB trials in Caversham

Liam Kline
Senior Sport Editor

With the thrill of this year's Boat Race now settled after two weeks away from the Tideway, a healthy handful of Cambridge University Boat Club (CUBC) athletes dipped their oars into the Redgrave Pinsent Rowing Lake last Sunday (17/4) for the invitational GB April Trials.

The meet, located in Caversham, Oxfordshire, was the final chance for GB rowers to battle it out for spots at this summer's World Rowing Championships.

Glancing back to mid-February, Cambridge's rowers enjoyed success at the GB Open Trial. Tom George and Oliver Wynne-Griffith were the fastest boat of the day in the Senior Men's Pair, and Imogen Grant dominated the Lightweight Women's Single.

In the U23 categories, Matthew Edge took a comfortable win in the Lightweight Single, while Luca Ferraro and Oliver Parish won the Men's Pair.

This time out, Grant and Edge were

unfortunately absent, with the former and the latter having to withdraw from racing after the time trial on Friday (16/4).

After topping their semi-final clash, George and Wynne-Griffith placed second in the final of the Senior Men's Pair, falling to Matthew Aldridge and Joshua Bugajski of Oxford Brookes University Boat Club, who they managed to beat in the previous round.

In the second final of the Men's Pair, Ferraro and Parish placed sixth, leaving them 12th overall and the second-fastest U23 pair. Portsmouth and Sykes, fresh from winning the 76th Women's Boat Race, went into the weekend hoping to build on their February form. They came ninth overall, making Portsmouth the fifth-fastest U23 athlete in women's sweep.

This year's World Rowing Championships will take place from 18th to 25th September in Račice, Czech Republic, while the U23 event will be held on 25th to 30th July in Varese, Italy.



▲ Tom George (left) and Oliver Wynne-Griffith (right) are one of the fastest pairs in Britain (PETER HOGAN / @peterhoganmedia)

The EFL is a mess: it should look to Spain for inspiration

In the wake of Derby County's relegation earlier this week, Deputy Sport Editor **Tom Bullivant** criticises the English Football League structure and argues in favour of Europe adopting La Liga rules on spending

Tom Bullivant
Deputy Sports Editor

Last Monday (18/4) saw Derby County relegated to the third tier of English football for the first time since 1986. Derby find themselves in this predicament thanks to years of trying to cheat the system with poor financial management at the hands of ex-owner Mel Morris. Everybody knows that. Everybody also knows that, in a few years time, there will be another club like Derby County, and a few years later another.

Spending in the English Football League (EFL), particularly the Championship, is by and large recklessly unsustainable and is just getting worse. Clubs are risking it all for the windfall moment of reaching the Premier League and, when only three of 24 teams make the top flight each season, there are inevitable losers.

Derby are the latest in a line of teams that includes Sheffield Wednesday and Wigan to have faced financial ruin. With overspending and running on losses becoming a common occurrence in the EFL, with the Premier League and France's Ligue 1 starting to be dominated by state-backed, mega-spending clubs, and teams in Italian divisions regularly folding over the past 20 to 30 years, many footballing leagues should be looking for an example of how to operate sustainably. They should be looking towards Spain.

La Liga's Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules, which cover Spain's top two divisions, are far stricter and more effective than those 'imposed' by UEFA and many domestic leagues. A brief summary: in

Spain, the league sets each team a different squad-cost limit, limiting the money spent both on transfers and staff wages, including non-playing staff. This is set before the summer transfer window in order to prevent any unsustainable or anti-competitive spending before it can

“
The [Spanish] rules also prevent uber-wealthy owners pumping money into clubs from their own pockets
”

even take place, unlike in the rest of Europe. This limit is calculated looking at a range of factors, from clubs' prospective earnings, to past profits and losses, overheads, earnings, investments, and savings. The league employs a number of accountants to draw these figures up, and when a club signs a player and attempts to register them with the league's 'La Liga Manager' software, the signing must be first deemed economically viable by the league before they can be registered.

Barcelona's debacle in their failure to register players last year was a good example of the league putting these rules into practice, enforcing responsible spending. What's more, the rules also

prevent uber-wealthy owners pumping money into clubs from their own pockets, stopping state-backed clubs like the Man Citys or PSGs from dominating. In addition, this prevents any risk of clubs folding if the owners suddenly decide to sell up. It is a fundamentally sustainable model.

These rules were implemented in 2013 after a pattern that could easily emerge in the English Championship. In the five years before the rule change, more than 20 teams had experienced financial difficulties and the very structure of the Spanish football pyramid was in jeopardy. Players went on strike and some of Spain's biggest clubs, Real Betis, Valencia CF, Deportivo de La Coruña, and Racing Santander to name a few, were in serious danger of disappearing. But the new rules were soon put into effect and Spanish football is far, far healthier today as a result.

Since 2013, no clubs have ceased to exist, no players have gone on strike, and there have been no Spanish Derby Countys. Admittedly, some clubs have faced financial difficulties. Malaga is a notable example after their ex-owner racked up plenty of pre-2013 debt. Still, they remain in Spain's second division and in contention to return to the top. What's more, these rules have made the quality of Spanish football better and the league a more attractive investment opportunity. There is obviously irony in calling Spanish football competitive when Barcelona and Real Madrid have won in 60 of the league's 90 years of existence, but there is real truth to the statement. The rules have only been in

place for nine years, so the smaller teams have had little opportunity to implement business models capable of dethroning the grand old men of Spanish football, but there has been change nevertheless.

Granted, Spanish football is not perfect, but many of its faults are not those of its enhanced FFP. Even still, the league's rules have come under criticism, particularly last summer when Barcelona were unable to register several players and ultimately Lionel Messi left for PSG.

“
Other leagues must adopt similar measures to Spain in order to curb the growing exodus of historic clubs from the top divisions to the pyramid's lower levels
”

Yet these criticisms were misdirected. Spanish FFP rules in fact saved Barcelona from running up even higher losses and encountering far bigger problems down the line. It was Barcelona's crazy wages and transfer fees and lack of foresight that saw Messi leave, not La Liga.

You may wish to blame last April's

European Super League stunt, when Atlético Madrid, Barcelona, and Real Madrid faced the chance of injecting unlimited money into their teams, on the spending restrictions. But don't. Instead, blame the arrogant and out of touch leaders of the clubs who were seduced by bankers selling them a dream. Spanish FFP acts to block exactly this happening, creating a level playing field and supporting the footballing ecosystem these clubs tried to shaft.

Other leagues must adopt similar measures to Spain in order to curb the growing exodus of historic clubs from the top divisions to the pyramid's lower levels. In Italy, it is a given that, after most seasons, one or two sides will cease to exist, or will be relegated to third-division Serie C thanks to money trouble. In other countries, financial doping is widespread and unsustainable. UEFA's FFP rules fall woefully short of requirements. When you punish a club after it has broken spending rules with a fine, the fine is just tax on the overspend and an insufficient deterrent for clubs with deep pockets like Man City and PSG.

What about Derby then, England's latest fatality of financial hardship? Derby are simply victims of the culture they contribute to. With no rule changes in the EFL, or at least stricter implementation of the rules that currently exist, more and more clubs will run at losses trying to reach the Premier League, and more will face financial ruin. The Championship is sometimes described as the most unpredictable league in the world. Maybe its members should shock us yet again and follow in the footsteps of La Liga.



HASSAN ESUFALLY

Seven marathons, seven continents, one industrial fridge-freezer: meet Hassan Esufally

Alexander Grantham
Staff Writer

When the moderator at the Cambridge Union's talk with Bear Grylls opened up questions to the floor, the hand that shot up first was that of Hassan Esufally, a Masters student at the Judge Business School in Cambridge. Esufally wanted to ask his childhood hero how he could follow in Bear's footsteps and make a financially sustainable career out of being a professional adventurer. It's an understandable question; after all, who hasn't felt inspired to get off the sofa and climb a tree, swim in a river, or chow down on a maggot after binge-watching a few episodes of *Man vs. Wild* or *The Island*? Unlike most armchair adventurers, however, Hassan's dream of emulating Grylls and completing the Explorer's Grand Slam (climbing the highest peak in every continent and skiing to both the North and South Pole) seems the natural next step for a man who became the first Sri Lankan in history to run a marathon in every single continent. Yes, including Antarctica.

I sat down with Esufally in an upstairs room at the Cambridge Union just one week after Grylls' visit. He does not look like what one would expect of an 'adventurer', trading khakis for a suit and tie and with no sign at all of an unruly Wim Hof-esque beard. But as Esufally lists his many remarkable achievements - taking his running shoes through the African Savannah, the Antarctic ice sheets, and the Andean mountains of the Inca Trail to name a few - there is a hint of the sheer willpower and determi-

nation that would spur someone on to do such feats behind his easy-going exterior.

We reminisce about his first marathon, completed when still an undergraduate student in Melbourne less than a decade ago. "My friends just laughed and said you're never going to be able to do it," he recalls, "but I said 'you know what guys, I'm going to try it and prove you wrong and do it anyway'." Three months later, as he crossed the finish line, he became instantly addicted to the

"I wanted to do something amazing for my country and raise awareness that Sri Lanka could be a country where people can follow their dreams"

"feeling of achievement, satisfaction, and accomplishment" that comes with completion of the 42.195km race. From there in Melbourne, the idea of joining the exclusive 7 Continents Marathon Club (comprising 388 members as of the end of 2021) was then born.

So, what spurred this desire? Esufally explains: "I wanted to do something amazing for my country and raise awareness that Sri Lanka could

be a country where people can follow their dreams. I wanted Sri Lanka's profile to be raised in other areas, not just cricket." There is also a fundraising aspect to Esufally's feats, raising money for underprivileged children through UNICEF Sri Lanka when participating in the Ironman challenge (a 3.86 km swim, 180 km bike, and 42.2km full marathon in a 17-hour time limit), as well as for victims of the Boston Marathon bombings when completing the same marathon in the USA.

Then there is the support of his wife, Esufally's "biggest supporter and biggest fan" who waits for him at every finish line. I remind him of his friends' doubts before his first marathon and ask whether the desire to prove people wrong is a contributing factor: "It's about proving yourself right more than proving people wrong."

"I am someone who is big into visualisation and goal setting," claims Esufally, as he remembers the five goals he set himself for the five years following his graduation from Melbourne: to marry the girl of his dreams, get his dream job, achieve dual Sri-Lankan-Australian citizenship, complete an Ironman, and become the first Sri Lankan in history to run a marathon on every continent. He completed all five half a year early. "I was imagining myself crossing the finish line in Antarctica with a Sri Lankan flag in my room back in Sri Lanka, and it happened. I think that if you genuinely believe in those universal laws, you can manifest anything you want into reality. But you have to put in the work as well, I think that is one of the formulas for success."

Esufally's advice to young people who want to do amazing things? "You need to work hard, you need to be per-

sistent, you need to write down your goals, you need to have the bravery and courage to say it out loud sometimes." These aren't groundbreaking revelations, indeed, many of them sound like they could have been ripped straight out of a fortune cookie. However, they take on much added weight when coming from someone who has run a marathon in Antarctica, as opposed to a tech bro telling you how he managed to double his investment in Dogecoin and is now

"[I put my treadmill] inside an ice-blast refrigerator and ran on it in minus-20 degrees, wearing all the clothes I would take with me to Antarctica"

expanding his NFT portfolio.

On the subject of Antarctica, one doesn't need to be a geographer to know that it's cold. Very cold. Minus-25 degrees of cold in fact. Sri Lanka on the other hand is hot. 30-degrees worth of hot to be precise. Esufally laughs: "Bit of a temperature difference, 55 degrees, give or take." The logical next question is how on earth can you train for an ice marathon in a tropical climate, to which Esufally

replies with a grin: "I actually found this factory owner in Sri Lanka, put my treadmill in the back of my jeep, drove to the factory, then put it inside an ice-blast refrigerator and ran on it in minus-20 degrees, wearing all the clothes I would take with me to Antarctica." He adds: "It actually went viral back home"; said with the self-awareness one can only achieve after having spent months, lycra clad, running on a treadmill in an industrial fridge.

Fridges aside, the road has not always been smooth for Esufally. He recalls how he twisted his ankle halfway through the Inca Trail, a trail that traditionally takes three nights and four days to walk, with runners given a time limit of 14 hours to complete what is considered the hardest marathon in the world. When asked why it is so difficult, Esufally opens up a Pandora's box of non-ideal running conditions: "You're starting in complete darkness at 4am, you're running through the Amazon rainforest so your clothes get wet, you can get lost from the track, and there's obviously altitude to deal with. It's difficult to breathe and, coming from Sri Lanka where there's no altitude, it's not easy."

It's at this point that the interview wraps up. Esufally needs to run, he's off to Morocco for a bit of training in the desert in preparation for the next things on his hitlist - the World Marathon Majors and summiting Mt. Kilimanjaro. Before we part, he slips in the fact that he's writing a self-help book about the lessons he's learned. If there's one thing Esufally's story teaches us: when life seems like an uphill marathon, zip up your parka, open that fridge door, and keep on running.