

Varsity YEARBOOK & REVIEW 2021



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Covers of the year





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Light news of the year

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD Sir David Attenborough films *The Green Planet* at Cambridge University Botanic Gardens

The University's Botanic Gardens were one of two locations used by the BBC for their new series *The Green Planet*, featuring nation-wide heartthrob Sir David Attenborough.

The rescheduled shoot followed strict Covid-19 procedures with a reduced crew wearing masks at all time, and Sir David Attenborough having to mic-up himself. Despite this, according to executive producer Mike Gunton, Sir David was still "on top form" as ever.

Published on 16/10/2020

TANGLED UP IN BLUE Cambridge University Press acquire rights to new writing on Bob Dylan

Marking Bob Dylan's 80th birthday next May a new book exploring his life and work will be published in April next year. Cambridge University Press acquired the rights from the co-editor of the volume Sean Latham, who is also director of the Tulsa University Institute for Bob Dylan Studies.

The book benefits from access to Dylan Archives from the centre. Latham praised the book's assembly of a "stellar cast of the best music writers, rock critics and scholars to look afresh at Dylan."

Published on 16/10/2020

THE KEY TO SUCCESS The science behind *Game of Thrones*' success

Scientists from five UK universities, including the University of Cambridge, came together to reveal the secret of the series' success. The research showed it is due to characters' relatability. The characters reflect human behaviours with great accuracy, encouraging bonding with them. Other researchers revealed that, despite there being over 2000 names in the books, viewers only have to keep track of around 150 characters, the same number the average human brain is capable of computing.

Published on 13/11/2020

GALS OF GEOLOGY Exhibition shows that women 'rock'

The Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences has recently digitised their exhibition looking at women's contribution to and visibility in geological science. Women have been present on geological field trips since the 1880s, although were only admitted to join the Sedgwick club (for geologists) from 1996.

This exhibition focuses on the late nineteenth century right up until the First World War, shining the spotlight on women such as Gertrude Lilian Elles MBE, one of the first female fellows of the Geological Society in 1919, who deposited over 3,700 specimens.

Published on 27/11/2020



CAMBRIDGE PRO-PETS Pet-topia

Coulter's estate agents recently carried out a survey of 50 of the most populated towns and cities in the UK to determine which were the most pet-friendly - with Cambridge making number eight on the list! The ranking was calculated using scores across five categories, including the number of dog friendly restaurants, walking routes, and pet-friendly properties to rent.

While cities such as Southampton and Norwich topped the table, Cambridge still managed to rank one place higher than Oxford.

Published on 12/02/2021

MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY King's College excavate medieval burial ground

An archeological dig at Croft Gardens has unearthed an extensive medieval burial ground. King's College, who plan on building new graduate accommodation at the site, conducted an archeological investigation of the site with a team from Albion Archeology.

They have found over 60 graves, dating mostly from the early Anglo-Saxon period. The burials were furnished with "grave goods including bronze brooches, bead necklaces, glass flasks, weapons, and pottery." King's hope that the carefully excavated graves will provide "rich information about burial habits."

Published on 29/01/2021

MAMMAL AWARENESS Pangolin pal

In order to raise money and awareness about the plight of pangolins, Cambridge student Charles Emogor dressed up as a pangolin and ran for 8 hours straight around Cambridge on Saturday (20/02) - World Pangolin Day. Pangolins are one of the most trafficked mammals in the world due to demand for their meat, and for their scales in alternative medicines.

The eight-hour run was inspired by the number of pangolin species (eight). Emogor is currently studying these small scaly mammals as part of his PhD in the Cambridge Zoology department. He has so far raised \$8605 (24/02) for pangolin conservation efforts in Africa and Asia.

Published on 26/02/2021

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

A rare Roman carving of a giant phallus has been revealed after archaeologists recently reassembled broken pieces of a millstone found during works on the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon between 2017-18. Only four Roman millstones decorated this way have ever been discovered nationwide.

Phallic images were important for the Romans as symbols of "strength and virility." The phallus on the millstone is said to confer protective properties on the millstone and its produce, flour, and highlights the importance of the mill to the local community.

Published on 26/02/2021

Editorial

2020-2021 is a period that will not be forgotten about easily. Lockdowns, social distancing, an online university experience, a mental health crisis, not to mention the many, many friends and loved ones that have been tragically lost. The coronavirus pandemic has affected us all differently, but it has nonetheless affected us all.

From the isolation of 223 students at Homerton College in Michaelmas, to the announcement that Lent term would be carried out entirely remotely (page 14), it has been impossible to escape the coronavirus news cycle in Cambridge this year. Those who remained in the city over the Christmas holidays and during Lent term felt its strange eeriness, thinking only of absent friends while wandering the largely empty cobbled streets, normally so full of students holding coffees or cycling haphazardly around tourists. Meanwhile, those at home had to adapt to studying in frequently challenging environments, only able to dream of the city's beautiful skyline.

But this sometimes infinitely gloomy storyline is precisely what has led us to look outwards, to seek silver linings in an ever-cloudy horizon. We have come to appreciate those precious moments spent with friends and relatives, have laughed as a pet interrupts an online class, have cherished the opportunity to walk in nature. As many of these articles show, it is the often unexpected support we have received from one another that has enabled us to still move forward, even if the world is stationary. Let us hope that we hold on to

these unexpected positives, while taking time to be grateful as restrictions ease.

With Cambridge's colleges and streets slowly awaking from their slumber, those returning to the city or venturing out more freely for the first time have not been kept out of the loop. Regardless of any restrictions, *Varsity* has offered a consistent platform for students to speak to their own experiences, reflect on the challenges of living through a pandemic, and find lighthearted relief in amusing anecdotes. Our Yearbook & Review offers a look back at this year like no other, including highlights from News, Features, Science and Theatre, to name just a few. Finally, learn more about the worlds hidden away behind college gates, as current students give a unique snapshot of every College.

Read about what it's like to attend the university as a care leaver (page 20), and our own Co-Editor's experiences of mental health during the pandemic (page 26). If you prefer something lighter, take a look at our exclusive interview with Wolf Alice (page 52) or the worst colleges to visit according to Tripadvisor (page 37). And make sure to check out our brand new fashion shoot in cooperation with Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts (page 43), as well as an amazing selection of articles on theatre, music, arts and much more.

We hope that you enjoy reading our highlights of the year and wish you a safe and happy summer.

Elizabeth Haigh and Meike Leonard

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University of Cambridge aims to divest from fossil fuels by 2030

Amy Batley

On 01/10, the University announced that the £3.5 billion Cambridge University Endowment Fund (CUF) will be divested from fossil fuels and refocused towards investments in renewable energy. Initially, by December 2020, the University pledged to withdraw investments which have previously been held in conventional energy companies. The University also aims to build up significant investments in renewable energy by 2025 and divest "from all meaningful exposure in fossil fuels by 2030." By 2038, the University aims to "achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions across its entire investment portfolio."

The announcement came sixteen months after the University initially agreed to explore how it could divest its endowments from fossil fuel corporations.

Under the plans announced, there is also a commitment to scrutinise research funding and other donations to ensure that the donor "can demonstrate compatibility with the University's objectives on cutting greenhouse gas emissions before any funding is accepted."

The University's Investment Office will work with Cambridge Zero and the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership to offer external fund managers advice on sustainable finance.

Announcing the plans on 01/10, Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope said: "The University is responding comprehensively to a pressing environmental and moral need for action with an historic announcement that demonstrates our determination to seek solutions to the climate crisis."

In this address, which was live-streamed, Toope stated that the University "will approach with renewed confidence our collaborations with government, in-

dustry and research partners around the world as together we work for a zero carbon future."

Sir David Attenborough, who studied at Clare College and now serves as the honorary patron of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, has described the University's new targets as "hugely encouraging." He added that the plans are "an important contribution towards the restoration of the health of the natural world."

The University's Chief Investment Officer, Tilly Franklin, said: "climate change, ecological destruction, and biodiversity loss present an urgent existential threat... the Investment Office has responded to those threats by pursuing a strategy that aims to support and encourage the global transition to a carbon neutral economy."

The divestment plans only apply to the central University, as Cambridge's colleges are separate legal and financial entities, so are not necessarily invested in the CUF. ●

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A Case Study of Failure: A *Varsity* investigation into Homerton's welfare crisis

William Hunter

Content note: This article contains detailed discussion of mental health issues, suicide, sexual abuse, PTSD and assault. All names of students have been changed to preserve anonymity.

On 12/10, Homerton for Consent published an open letter publicly criticising the “mistrust and mishandling of sexual misconduct and disciplinary complaints” at Homerton College.

The open letter, which received over 100 signatures, stated that “many survivors are currently being ignored by senior staff members when contacting them about sexual misconduct issues including urgent/immediate safety concerns.” The letter also put pressure on the College to make reporting procedures more transparent and widely known. As pressure on the College to reform its welfare policies mounted, *Varsity* spoke to students at Homerton, offering them the chance to share their stories of mishandling and neglect.

Mary reported that in 2019, while attending a College dinner, her supervisor and another male student were engaged in a “graphically sexual conversation” about her and other female students.

Another student had overheard and taken down the contents of the conversation so Mary could make a complaint. She arranged a meeting with the Senior Tutor where she asked about pursuing a formal complaint against the supervisor, but “she promised me he’d been disciplined and dealt with and really discouraged me from making the complaint against him.”

Subsequently, Mary decided against making the complaint. *Varsity* can confirm, however, that this supervisor subsequently received a considerable promotion within their College and Faculty. Furthermore, as Mary told *Varsity*: “he’s now my lecturer for 2 papers this year, one of which is compulsory.”

When Mary brought her complaint against the student who made the inappropriate comments with the member of staff to the Senior Tutor, she found the response to be unsatisfactory and the Senior Tutor’s language highly inappropriate. “She very much from the outset was massively infantilising this guy; saying things like ‘he’s from a very rural upbringing and is very inexperienced.’”

“I definitely think the college procedure is ad hoc, and unclear. In terms of staff, I don’t want to lay it all at Penny Barton’s [the Senior Tutor] door... I think most stu-



dents wouldn’t know the procedure.”

This sentiment contradicts what an anonymous former welfare officer told *Varsity*. They detailed that “college procedure is slow, things have to be ‘by the books.’” There was a “lengthy process that had to be carried out yet [it] sometimes never resulted in a satisfying outcome or solution.”

The combination of a slow bureaucratic system and a lack of transparency often resulted in a dangerous failure to protect the welfare of students at Homerton. “I went to Penny at the start of last term after the end of my abusive relationship, to report my ex for multiple accounts of physical violence against others and intimidation to myself”, Lauren told *Varsity*.

“She told me to write out a complaint form against him and I did, dating all the different episodes of violent behaviour. When I sent it to her, she told me that I needed to address the complaint form to him personally to read and then told me to redact the sexual assault claim I had made against him.”

“During the meeting I told her how I didn’t feel safe within my own College as he had previously come to my room and pounded on the door, waking everyone who lived on my corridor, he knew where I lived and lived nearby. The best she offered me was for us to have scheduled hall and library times meaning I too had to make sacrifices in my daily routine due to what he had done.”

“She told me that she had a contractual duty to make sure that he didn’t fail his degree and could graduate.”

“She offered that I could change college or apply to intermit - it was entirely up to me to make sacrifices as a victim.”

After receiving no help at the level of the College, Lauren brought her complaint to the University where she was told “that as we were both at the same College (me and my abuser) it was up to the College to punish him/sort it out.”

The systemic welfare failings at Homerton were not limited to reporting of sexual misconduct. Students also described how their physical and mental health has been mishandled by the College.

Emma was in her second year when she had approached the College to apply for funding for cooking equipment as she had to prepare her own food due to a pre-existing medical condition. Emma explained her situation and passed on her medical notes to the Tutorial Office, specifying: “please don’t pass these on.” After hearing nothing from the College for a time she was finally told that her notes “had been to the Bursar, and that the Bursar had declined the request.”

Emma’s sensitive medical notes had been passed on against her wishes, with no opportunity to consent to this.

In a follow up meeting with the Senior Tutor, Dr Penny Barton, Emma found the her to be dismissive of her condition. “She really patronised me,” Emma told *Varsity*. “I was crying in her office and she just went back to typing on her laptop.”

The Senior Tutor then told Emma that “you have to cook to eat; that’s life,” and her case was dismissed. The issue, says Emma, is that all applications for disability funding ultimately have to go through the Senior Tutor rather than through a trained professional.

The failings at Homerton also extend to mental health provisions. Services previously handled by the Disability Resource

Centre, including applications for alternative means of assessment, are now handled internally, led by the Senior Tutor.

On the 15th January 2019, Sarah emailed her tutor to discuss applying for alternative means of assessment (AMA). Due to traumatic events during her A levels and in her first year at University, Sarah experienced trauma-induced anxiety triggered by examinations which can cause suicidal thoughts and behaviour. Both her Tutor and Director of Studies agreed that this was sufficient grounds for applying for AMA and her request was forwarded on to the Senior Tutor.

However, Sarah soon encountered the familiar pattern of dismissal and lack of understanding. "I came out of that meeting crying and ended up going home," says Sarah of her first meeting with the Senior Tutor in Lent term. "I told her my deepest trauma and [...] her response was 'everyone has anxiety during the exam season.'"

Sarah also told *Varsity* that she encountered issues that stemmed from misunderstanding of mental health. The Senior Tutor repeatedly insisted that the letter from Sarah's psychotherapist was not sufficient evidence, despite this being from a consultant or specialist as required by the University.

It was only when Sarah arranged a meeting with her DoS, Tutor, Senior Tutor, and DRC advisor that her evidence

was accepted.

The Senior Tutor also insisted that Sarah visit her psychotherapist during term time as a condition for signing the AMA application, despite Sarah telling her that she did not schedule these during term due to the intense psychological toll they took.

It was returning from one of these sessions when Sarah experienced "the worst panic attack of my life." Sarah told *Varsity* that "the only reason for it was her [Dr Barton]. The way she talked to me, the way she made me feel inadequate, the way she completely dismissed me, my anxiety, my diagnoses, my evidence. She just made me feel so worthless."

Responding to Sarah being taken to hospital by ambulance after the attack, the Senior Tutor said via email that "it's a relief to hear that it was something transient" and that she hoped "you are feeling better and able to get on with your studies."

"It is not something transient, it is a harrowing experience that conjured up more suicidal feelings, depression and anxiety. It doesn't just stop there." Sarah told *Varsity*: "it was never about how I felt, it was always about not getting behind."

When contacted by *Varsity* Dr Barton said the following: "Incidents of sexual misconduct are always distressing and can be life-changing, and reporting an incident can itself be deeply painful and difficult."

"As Senior Tutor I apologise that our

processes, and the way they have been applied, have not always inspired the confidence of those who have needed to use them. I am committed to leading extensive action to address these concerns – including action to update my own understanding and language, and to provide victims with the best possible support."

"If the systems in place to protect students who come forward aren't working properly, then this compounds the trauma for victims. I will work closely with the student body to promote a culture of zero tolerance," she added.

A spokesperson for Homerton College further commented: "Senior staff at Homerton have become aware over the past few months of student concern in relation to the reporting of sexual misconduct, and have initiated a process of reviewing the College's procedures and provision of support, and redoubling its efforts to promote a culture of zero tolerance towards sexual misconduct."

They added: "the Senior Tutor and Vice-Principal hosted an Open Meeting for Homerton students last week to promote awareness of Homerton's procedures for reporting sexual misconduct, to update students on recent changes the College has made, and to invite the student body to raise questions or share their perspectives on how Homerton's provision can be as supportive and effective as possible." ●

Cambridge admits a record number of Black UK undergraduates

Gaby Vides

Cambridge welcomed a record 137 UK-based Black undergraduate students as part of the 2020 incoming cohort. The 137 Black freshers represent 4.6% of the total number of UK undergraduates who started at Cambridge this year: a record high.

The intake of Black students this year represents a rise of just over 50% from the 2019-2020 academic year. At the time the 2019 cohort marked a record admission of Black UK undergraduates, with 91 Black students admitted. For the 2019-2020 academic year, the overall number of Black undergraduate students stood at more than 200, while this year there are now more than 300 Black British undergraduates studying at Cambridge.

Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, Professor Graham Virgo, said: "In just three years the number of UK based black undergraduates taking up their place at Cambridge has more than tripled."

However, Virgo stressed: "The University, and Colleges, need to work hard to ensure that once admitted, all students, no

matter what their ethnic background, feel Cambridge is a welcoming place and one in which they can realise their potential and thrive."

Cambridge has been extensively criticised for under-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic communities, as well as wider structural issues of racial inequality within the University. *Varsity* analysis of the 2019-2020 undergraduate admissions data revealed that 18 courses accepted fewer than 3 Black students. Meanwhile the 15.1% application success rate for Black students, while an improvement from 2018, was still below the 21.4% success rate across all ethnic groups.

Virgo praised the "Collegiate University, its students, and partners" who "have been working hard to reach out to potential applicants to encourage them to apply."

Outreach campaigns and activities include the launch of the 'Get in Cambridge' campaign. The video series, published in collaboration with the Cambridge African Caribbean Society (ACS), aims to challenging misconceptions of what Cambridge may be like for students from under-represented backgrounds.

The University has also strengthened its ties with Target Oxbridge, an external programme which helps Black African and Caribbean students by providing mentees with regular support from a recent Black or Minority Ethnicity Oxbridge graduate.

Sharon Mehari, president of the African-Caribbean Society (ACS), welcomed the arrival of even more Black students this year: "This [progress] speaks to the passion of the many individuals, organisations, and institutions who have worked to ensure that Cambridge is a place where black students have their academic ability, creativity, ingenuity and heritage valued."

In the summer prior to this academic year, an open letter by Cambridge Student Union's BME Campaign, which was signed by nearly 5000 students, alumni and members of staff, called on the University and Colleges to improve access, stating "that the 3% proportion of black students that make up the undergraduate student body is inadequate."

The letter also implored the University to "develop initiatives" which recognise that "the application process may hinder the success of Black and BME students." ●

Lord Woolley becomes first Black man to head an Oxbridge College

Cameron White

Lord Simon Woolley of Woodford will replace Professor Geoff Ward as the next Principal of Homerton College on 01/10/2021, marking the first election of a Black man as head of an Oxbridge College, it was announced on 31/03.

Lord Woolley is also the third Black person to be elected as head of an Oxbridge College, with two Black women - Sonita Alleyne as College Master at Jesus College, Cambridge, and Baroness Amos as Master of University College, Oxford - both being appointed since 2019.

Woolley, who grew up on a council estate in Leicester and left school without pursuing A-level studies, returned to education through an access course and gained a BA in Spanish and English Literature at Middlesex University, followed by an MA in Hispanic Studies at Queen Mary University of London.

He is also the Founding Director of Operation Black Vote (OBV), a non-governmental organisation which seeks to ensure "greater racial justice and equality throughout the UK," and "to inspire BME

communities to engage with our public institutions in order to address the persistent race inequalities we face."

Woolley, previously an Equality and Human Rights Commissioner, was appointed by former Prime Minister Theresa May in 2018 to create and lead the UK Government's pioneering Race Disparity Unit. He received a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 2019 and was made a life peer in the House of Lords in December 2019, where he sits as a crossbencher. Woolley holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Westminster.

Lord Woolley said of the appointment: "What a truly great honour to be appointed the next Principal of Homerton College. Its history, from its origins in the East end of London, and its values of inclusion, dynamism and integrity, along with its vision to be a beacon of hope and academic excellence, make this a must-have role [...] I'm excited for the next part of Homerton's journey."

Dr Louise Joy, Vice-Principal of Homerton, added: "We could not be more thrilled to have elected Simon Woolley as our next Principal. Simon's own inspiring story and



his commitment to promoting social justice and nurturing talent across the social spectrum resonates with Homerton's core values. Simon will be a standard-bearer for the aims of the College." ●

University adopts IHRA definition of antisemitism

Gaby Vides

The University of Cambridge adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition on antisemitism in full at a General Board meeting on 04/11.

A University statement described the definition as "useful [...] for understanding how antisemitism manifests itself in our society. It will be used as a test to establish whether behaviour that is in breach of the University's rules is anti-Semitic."

The IHRA definition, a one-paragraph summary of antisemitism with 11 examples, was written in 2016 and has since been adopted by a number of institutions including the UK government.

Examples of contemporary antisemitism under the IHRA definition include "holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel" and "applying double standards by requiring of it [Israel] behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation."

The University has also included clarifications "to ensure that freedom of speech is maintained in the context of discourse about Israel and Palestine, without allowing antisemitism to permeate any debate," as the University details is recommended

by the Home Affairs Select Committee.

The clarifications are: "It is not anti-Semitic to criticise the government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent" and "[i]t is not anti-Semitic to hold the Israeli government to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli government's policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent."

Joel Rosen, External Affairs Officer for Cambridge University's Jewish Society (CUJS), stressed the importance of the inclusion of "all eleven examples specified by the IHRA."

"We trust that this announcement endows colleges, faculties and departments with the clarity and confidence to take robust action to safeguard Jewish students. No Jewish student or member of staff should face the degrading indignity of Antisemitism be it through coded tropes or explicit abuse. CUJS will work with allies across the collegiate university and beyond to challenge prejudice, support victims and fearlessly advocate on their behalf."

Following the University's adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, Cambridge Students' Union passed an emergency motion on 09/11 to support its adop-

tion. The motion notes that CUJS and the National Union of Jewish Students "believe that the IHRA definition of antisemitism is the best mechanism for safeguarding Jewish students from prejudice."

The SU also stated that "it is hurtful and wrong to diminish or deny the lived experiences of Jewish students" and that it will "hold the University to account in implementing a zero-tolerance approach to Antisemitism, using the IHRA definition and all eleven examples."

Ben Margolis, the SU's undergraduate president, stressed that the SU will work to "ensure that this definition is grounded in individual students' lived experiences and reflects the diversity of minority groups and backgrounds that are represented in our membership."

Speaking to *Varsity*, CUJS highlighted that "antisemitic incidents at UK universities rose by 38% year-on-year in the first six months of 2020." They continued: "We have seen multiple examples of antisemitism being dismissed by universities who refuse to adopt this definition. When the definition is not used, it gives the power to those investigating, most often academic staff from the same department, to decide what they believe constitutes antisemitism." ●

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Cambridge responds to election of Joe Biden

Gaby Vides

Students at the University of Cambridge reacted to the declaration of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States (US) on 07/11 following a frantic few days of counting ballots.

Biden won a record number of votes totalling over 75 million, surpassing the previous record held by Barack Obama, while Trump won over 70 million votes.

Biden's victory was secured by flipping key swing states, including Michigan, Wisconsin and, most importantly, Pennsylvania, which provided the 20 votes Biden needed to reach the 270 threshold.

Isabelle, a POLIS MPhil student at Trinity from Boston, told *Varsity*: "The stakes of the election are hard to overstate." She explained how President Trump's first term in office "dismantled democratic norms in the United States, tarnished our country's international image, and fundamentally threatened the rights, lives, and human dignity of people who call the US home."

She stressed that Trump's views on climate change, Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter are "not only flawed, but dangerous. We couldn't afford another four years of his hateful rhetoric and fundamentally misguided policies – and neither can the rest of the globe."

Nate, a Politics PhD student at Kings, also recognised that the "global implications [of the election] are important."

"The absence of US leadership under Trump has catalyzed these fractures and

a return of US normalcy can prove a path forward in building more robust institutions, organizations and norms."

Isabelle stressed: "Biden's win will not resolve all of the problems and injustices in the US, but it will signal a rejection of Trump's hateful attitudes and a turn toward decency and rationality."

Ben Schaffer, who was in New York at the time of the election after completing a History MA at Emmanuel, emphasised that "this was probably the most important election in recent American history... Many of us thought that 2016 was a done deal for Secretary Clinton and woke up devastated after that election, so there was a real sense of obligation and hard work around voting this year."

Meanwhile, Nate told *Varsity* he was relieved Biden won after the "rollercoaster [of] waiting for results". Nate feels Biden "represents a return to stability," but cautioned that "Biden is not necessarily the utopian ideal politician."

Nate's words against any feeling of complacency rang particularly true considering the tone of Trump's departure. Many individuals *Varsity* spoke to indicated their alarm at Trump's election fraud claims, including his statement: "If you count the legal votes I win." Trump has been widely condemned for these unsubstantiated claims, including a false declaration of his victory while millions of votes were still being counted.

Hayley, a third year Linguistics student at Homerton, described the election as "ominous." She highlighted that "the potential worst case scenarios of Trump not conceding show a terrifying insight into the state of America's democratic gaps. It goes without saying that the electoral college system has once again demonstrated itself to be deeply problematic and outdated."

Hayley further detailed her worries about the polarisation and current frag-

mentations within American politics, highlighting that America's political divide "shows no sign of resolving soon, and will continue to cause problems beyond the outcome of the election."

However, Benjamin Studbaker, a PhD student researching economic inequality and democratic theory, told *Varsity* that while "there has been a lot of worrying about authoritarianism" in reality "the president has alienated his officers, intelligence officials, and civil servants." He argued that "most rank and file Republican voters are still strongly committed to the constitution."

He continued: "On the whole, this election is less significant than most people think – the winner will be mired in gridlock and will continue to face the institutional roadblocks that have increasingly stymied presidents for many years."

The presidency was not the only election which took place on 03/11, the entirety of the House and a third of the Senate were also up for re-election. Democrats held onto the House, while it appears that the Republicans will narrowly hold onto the Senate.

Isabelle is "disheartened by the fact that the Democrats will not take control of the Senate, because that means that even if Biden wins, there will still be partisan gridlock that will make it hard for him to push forward his agenda."

Despite the tension surrounding the election, Hayley is hopeful that Biden's victory will "mark the beginning of the end of four years which have been frankly painful to watch, and hopefully the beginning of rights and dignity being restored for millions of Americans."

"Both parties have reckoning to do in the next two years before the midterms," Nate summarised to *Varsity*. ●



Varsity investigates student experiences of online learning

Sam Crawley, Iona Fleming & Cameron White

With the return of students to Cambridge in Michaelmas, a majority of subjects implemented provisions to move most or all of their teaching online in the wake of Covid-19. *Varsity* spoke to both students and student representatives throughout Michaelmas to find out how well teaching functioned.

Student representatives for Land Economy, Economics, Human. Social and Political Sciences (HSPS), Anglo-Saxon Norse and Celtic (ASNaC), English and Music all told *Varsity* that lectures were delivered online. Daniel Quigley, the student rep for Music, said their Faculty offered “some blended lectures and seminars, which are hosted in West Road concert hall, as well as on Zoom” so that students who wish to attend in person may do so.

Some subjects continued in-person supervisions, at the discretion of both the supervisor and the student. These were conducted in accordance with guidelines on social distancing. Andrew Osipov, the student rep for HSPS, explained that he attended face-to-face supervisions because he it “creates a more meaningful interaction and experience.”

Indeed, some students seem to be disappointed with their Department’s lack of face-to-face teaching. Eliza Griffiths, the representative for Land Economy, told *Varsity*: “If anything some students would prefer more supervisions to be in person.”

Some students also had big increases in the size of their supervisions in Michaelmas. “In October we got a message saying that they’ve had to increase group sizes in everything to around four people in each supervision,” one student told *Varsity*. “They increased the group size course to seven or eight people.” Compared to supervision groups of two in previous years, the student commented; “I know the department have tried their best in difficult times but it still feels like a big step away from the small group teaching that the university sells itself on.”

Libraries also made adjustments to the new situation, introducing new click-and-collect systems. Additionally, many key texts were offered online and reading lists were adjusted to accommodate those with limited access to physical books.

Miles Hawksley, student representative for ASNaC, explained how students had also helped in this effort by “collating all lecture notes, essays, lecture material and relevant reading material in a large online cache.”

Online provision of resources has meant that most of the student representatives understand the experience of isolating students to be fairly positive. Andrew Osipov told us that “the largest burden has been the effect on their social lives ... However, for those already accustomed to studying in their rooms during normal term time it has been quite normal.”

“The only inconveniences so far have been if a college has difficulty with delivering food and supplies,” he continued, “or if the student is accustomed to working in different environments,” but he acknowledged that “most students are being much more cautious about covid anyway and I see fewer people in the library than usual.”

The student representative for English, Zachary Aw, who has himself been in isolation, echoed these sentiments, saying that self-isolating students “do not feel any significant disadvantages: English is generally a very self-guided course, and having all lectures recorded ensures that there is little to no disparity between students confined to their rooms or otherwise.” Aw said that the provision of online lectures “allow(s) a lot more freedom.” He continued: “The Faculty have been releasing lectures following the schedule by which they would have been delivered in person originally, so some structure is preserved.”

Farid Aletomeh, the subject rep for Economics, agreed with Aw, telling *Varsity* that the implementation of pre-recorded lectures has resulted in “a massive boost in the efficiency of work and flexibility”.

Osipov echoed this, explaining that some students have been calling for online lectures for years.

However, while praising the increase in flexibility, students have noted communicative issues. “There is no standardised system of captioning for every lecture, and some lectures are completely without captions,” Aw told *Varsity*. “The Faculty has stated that this is due to issues with automatic captioning software being unable to properly discern between different accents/Middle English and so on.”

Aw explained that many students have suffered as lectures are usually key to meeting new people doing the same

course. “The English Faculty Building is also open only for library use, so its social spaces are unavailable.”

On this, Hawksley noted that students found one of the biggest challenges of Michaelmas to be the “loss of departmental social events and spaces.”

“Online contact is efficient and a great alternative that we’re lucky to have, but nothing beats laughing over a cup of tea in the department kitchen.”

“Apart from the loss of a community feeling amongst students due to not being able to attend in-person lectures and feeling less connected through online teaching, communication has largely remained the same,” Aw told *Varsity*, “as students already communicated quite widely online.”

Most Faculties did not put specific pastoral support in place for students struggling with online teaching. Many Directors of Studies provided support, such as those for ASNaC, which Hawksley stated: “have been essential in supporting students with applying for remote study conditions and checking in with individuals to ensure they are settling and coping with the unusual situation. Students feel they can approach staff easily for assistance, as well as to confidently raise any issues. Staff response to email communication has been prompt and thorough in all instances.”

Many students in isolation did not feel that their time isolating put them at a disadvantage. “I went into isolation on the first day of the academic term - not the best way to start a year - and was initially apprehensive about how work and learning would continue,” 2nd year Medicine student Rob Cooper told *Varsity*. “Work and supervisions almost carried on as normal - if anything not being able to leave the house meant I could stay on top of everything at the start of the year and not get behind.”

“For me, two weeks of isolation wasn’t too bad a thing at all, being in a house with a load of mates meant it wasn’t a bad experience and I didn’t feel sidelined or neglected at any point.”

A History student who had also spent time in isolation commented: “The History Faculty were doing most things online anyway and most libraries have been very helpful when it comes to getting books (e.g. letting friends pick them up).”

“Ultimately many students seem to have adapted fairly well, given the circumstances,” Aw summarised. ●



LUCAS MADDALENA

Lent Term entirely remote but Collegiate University remains open

Cameron White, Amy Howell & Gaby Vides

The University and Colleges would remain open for Lent term, however, teaching would take place entirely online for undergraduates and postgraduates, Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope announced on the evening of 06/01.

The “difficult decision” was made for the whole term following government guidance, so as “to avoid uncertainty and disruption in the middle of the term.”

The University still permitted the return of clinical Medical, clinical Veterinary and PGCE students, alongside the exemptions previously listed, including exemptions for those who lack access to study spaces or facilities at home, and health and safety reasons.

Toope acknowledged that “students are facing considerable anxiety and uncertainty as we begin Lent term” and promised that “those students who are currently in Cambridge are being asked to remain in Cambridge, where they can expect to be supported by the University and Colleges.”

Toope’s email further detailed that “international students who are able to change their return travel plans should do so” and that any “students who travel to Cambridge will have to stay in Cambridge for the duration of the national

lockdown.”

Meanwhile Toope encouraged postgraduate research students to work from their out-of-term address if they were able to do so, although “postgraduate research students who need to be in Cambridge for their research projects can return provided this has been discussed and agreed with their College and Department.”

The announcement came following Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s national address on 04/01, which instructed that teaching should take place entirely online until at least mid-February, with the exception of medicine, veterinary medicine, and PGCE students.

Addressing concerns about rent, Toope added that: “Colleges have agreed that rent will only be charged by Colleges to students if they are living in their College accommodation during the national lockdown period instigated by government. Colleges will not charge students who are not able to return to Cambridge as a result of the current government legislation and guidance.”

The news comes shortly after 62,322 cases were reported on 06/01, alongside 1,041 deaths.

This was the second time the University had to adapt to a remote term as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, after moving to the red phase of its Coronavirus response in anticipation of the first UK Lockdown in March 2020. ●



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Preserved butterfly discovered in 385-year-old book at Trinity Hall

Georgina Buckle

A preserved butterfly was found pressed between the pages of the *Theatre of Insects* in March in the Jerwood Library of Trinity Hall college, Cambridge.

The College confirmed in a press release that the insect should have been there since before the book came to be in the Trinity Hall collection in the 1990s. This could date the butterfly's preservation anytime between 1634, when the book was published, up until the 1990s.

The discovery was made by Jenni Lecky-Thompson, Head of Library Services at the College, who found the small, colourful butterfly next to the black inked 17th-century woodcut image of itself.

The book *Theatre of Insects*, or *Insectorum sive Minimorum Animalium Theatrum*, was donated to the College by the family of

former Trinity Hall undergraduate Lawrence Strangman who died in 1980. It was

"While looking through our copy I chanced upon a butterfly (a small tortoiseshell I

think) next to its accompanying image. There is a striking similarity between the woodcut and butterfly, which of course was the intention so that the various species could be identified by the amateur insect enthusiast."

She added that: "It is relatively common to find botanical specimens inside old books, but unusual to find an insect specimen. This one could have been put there by the first owner back in the 17th century, and if so it is amazing that it has survived there for so long."

Contemporaries such as James Petiver, a 17th-century London apothecary writer,

have advised on how to preserve insects, says Lecky-Thompson. Petiver instructed: "Butterflies must be put into your Pocket-Book or any other small printed book as soon as caught." This simple method could preserve insects for hundreds of years. ●



the first book to be published in England exclusively discussing insects, covering the appearance, habits and habitats of what we think of today as insects, as well as arachnids and worms.

Lecky-Thompson said of her discovery:

Forgotten feminist writings discovered in Magdalene College

Ella Shattock

On 08/03 it was revealed that a forgotten collection of books and pamphlets owned by proto-feminist writer Mary Astell had been found in Magdalene College library.

The 47 works had been lost for nearly three centuries amongst the 8,500 books and manuscripts in the Old Library of Magdalene College. They were identified by Catherine Sutherland, Deputy Librarian, in a recent survey of the Old Library holdings, who found their margins covered by Astell's handwritten jottings.

Their annotations reveal Mary Astell's lively and astute insights concerning politics, theology, and the philosophical writings of René Descartes, which track the trajectory of her writing career.

Prior to this discovery, there were few known survivors of Astell's extensive book collection. After her death in 1731, Astell's

library was rumoured to have been left to Magdalen College, Oxford; yet, as the University of Cambridge announced on 08/03 via Twitter, the collection has for all this time been hidden in plain sight at its sister college of the same name.

A writer, philosopher and advocate for female education, Mary Astell is considered to be one of the first English feminists. In 1700, she wrote a radical treatise on marital gender inequality, *Reflections Upon Marriage*, in which she warned female readers that a husband was a "monarch for life."

She also argued for the financing and founding of all-female residential colleges in an attempt to close the vast educational gap between the sexes. In 1709, she followed her own advice by establishing and becoming headmistress of a charity school for girls in Chelsea.

Catherine Sutherland said of her discovery: "Women's book collections from this period are so rare but it is even more

amazing to find one being used to advance a woman's career as a writer."

Mark Goldie, Emeritus Professor of Intellectual History at Cambridge, has called the finding a "bibliographic treasure trove."

He added that: "As a published woman, engaging in polemic, Astell was rare in her time, brave too. Her books reveal a great deal: her reading, her responses, her political and religious commitments, her fluency in French, her grasp of the new philosophy of Descartes, and her engagement with science."

It was an appropriate finding for International Women's Day (08/03). Ruth Perry, a Professor of Literature at MIT and biographer of Mary Astell, wrote that: "Students of feminist history especially will be grateful to Catherine Sutherland and Magdalene College, for recognizing this treasure and for carefully and methodically authenticating and documenting it." ●

Cambridge recognises Trans Day of Visibility

Amy Howell

Members of the Cambridge community came together on 31/03 to mark Transgender Day of Visibility (TDoV).

Wolfson College flew a transgender flag to mark the occasion, and announced the launch of the WCSA (Wolfson College Student Association) Gender Expression Fund, which is “dedicated to reimburs[ing] students who purchase items to make them more comfortable with their gender presentation,” including binders and wigs.

The annual £250 fund, created by the WCSA Welfare Team in collaboration with the College, will give students who apply a maximum of £50 and unused funds will be carried over to the following academic year.

This follows a vote by the Cambridge Student Union (SU) in February which renewed support for the rights of transgender students: under the proposal, the SU will lobby for the creation of a centralised, University-wide Gender Expression Fund. Similar schemes are run by Clare, Selwyn, Girton, Christ’s, Robinson and Jesus Colleges.

Discussing the fund’s announcement, David, a Welfare Rep at Wolfson College, told *Varsity*: “The creation of the fund is thanks to the collaboration and ideas of LGBTQ+ officers across colleges at Cambridge. “It’s important for colleges to take a stand institutionally in light of the wave of transphobia in the UK and internationally, and the creation of the fund is indicative of this commitment, but there is a

lot more that can be done to support LGBTQ+ and other students.”

Students and residents of Cambridge also decorated several public places around the city with stickers with messages of support for transgender and non-binary people. These included messages such as: “trans people welcome here”, “trans lives matter” and “trans women = real women”.

St Edmund’s College also posted a tweet in acknowledgement of TDoV, telling transgender and non-binary members of the College: “We see you, we support you, and we are proud to have you as members of our community.” Emmanuel College also flew the transgender flag on 31/03.

The Trans Students of Cambridge Facebook page, in a post released on 31/03, highlighted that “allyship is a long-term project,” adding “while we welcome the events and attention of the needs of trans people that this day brings, those things don’t have to be cordoned off into a few days of the year.” The post also emphasised the importance of rest for transgender people after “a long and tiring year since Trans Day of Visibility 2020.”

Lucy Saunders, a Welfare Rep on the Cambridge SU LGBTQ+ campaign, told *Varsity*: “On Trans Day of Visibility, while we state to the world that we are always here and always have been, we show so much



AMY HOWELL

more. Today’s celebration is an insight into the fact that we are capable of so much love and so much joy when together as a community. Transness is beautiful; Trans Day of Visibility is our gift to cis people to show that beauty to the rest of the world.”

Meanwhile, the Sedgwick Museum held a two-hour talk entitled “#PrideofCambridge” on 31/03 to celebrate Cambridge’s LGBTQ+ researchers.

During LGBTQ+ History Month in February, the SU launched their Care+ campaign and the Big Cambridge LGBT Survey report, with the Care+ report emphasising that “Trans and Non-Binary (NB) respondents were slightly more likely to feel insecure in their living situation than average. We can confidently say they were also significantly more likely to feel unsafe.” ●

Oxbridge societies launch joint fundraiser for Covid-19 relief in India

Serge Isman

Six student societies from Oxford and Cambridge launched a joint fundraiser on 01/05 aiming to raise £50,000 for Covid relief in India.

Three Oxford societies - the Oxford India Society, Oxford Hindu Society and Oxford South Asian Society - started an initial fundraiser on 28/04 to raise £10,000 in 10 days. When this target was met in under 72 hours, the Oxford societies partnered with the Cambridge University India Society, Cambridge South Asia Forum, and the

Cambridge University Bharatiya Society to create the current campaign.

Anvee Bhutani, President of the Oxford India Society, said in a press release: “It feels surreal to have raised the full amount so quickly and I am very excited about our collaboration.”

At the time, India was experiencing the world’s fastest growing Covid-19 outbreak, registering over 300,000 new cases and 3,000 deaths a day over the week of 26/04, and over 20 million infections in total.

The £10,000 already donated has been donated to four non-governmental organisations working in Maharashtra, Ut-

tar Pradesh, Bengaluru, and Delhi, and the campaign plans to donate to more organisations as further funds are raised.

Arastu Sharma, President of the Cambridge University Bharatiya Society said: “Smaller organisations and volunteers in the rural parts of India are struggling for resources as they see the state healthcare system collapse around them. We at the Cambridge University Bharatiya Society can’t stress enough about the importance of this fundraiser.”

As of 26/05, the joint campaign had raised over £51,000. ●

I am an Uighur who faced China's concentration camps. This is my story.

Victor Jack



MARCUS VALENCE

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of torture, psychological torment and suicide.

In early 2017, life looked bright for 41-year old Omir Bekali. A proud father of three, he had a Tourism degree, a small business and several managerial positions under his belt. He was set to lead the Kazakh delegation to the upcoming international Astana Trade Exposition, an event which typically draws in millions.

But in March, a seemingly innocuous trip to promote the event in Xinjiang, northwest China, would ensure he would never attend.

During a short post-work visit to his family in nearby Turpan, on the morning of the 26th March, policemen showed up at the door to arrest him - beginning a near eight month journey of unending physical and psychological torment.

"They shackled my hands and put black fabric [over] my eyes," Omir says. "I feel my body tremble whenever I remember that moment."

Omir was born to Uighur and Kazakh parents in Xinjiang, a semi-autonomous region in northwestern China. For centuries it has been home to Uighur Muslims, who make up just under half the population and hold a distinctive culture, religion

and language to the country's majority ethnic Han Chinese.

Economic, cultural and religious discrimination against Uighurs had been brewing for decades. But in 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced a new "People's War on Terror" aimed at fighting regional "terrorists" and "separatists", heralding a new era of mass surveillance, gargantuan police presence and skyrocketing arbitrary imprisonments of Uighurs in Xinjiang.

Following his arrest, Omir was thrown into a small police station cell, where he was kept for a week, still with no explanation. He says the room seemed to be built for 12 people, but contained more than 36 others, who, like him, had their arms and legs constantly shackled.

Soon he was transferred to another police station, where he says the authorities subjected him to four "complete" days of torture.

"My feet and my hands were tied up with iron shackles and they beat my hands, they beat my feet ... they beat my back and my stomach," says Omir.

"They put needles in between my nails and my fingers," he adds, "then they put iron sticks into my sexual organs."

Omir says he was put into a "Tiger Chair" for long periods, a metal seat-like contraption which restricts movement.

Police also hung him from the roof of the cell by his wrists so his feet could not touch the floor, and later smashed his knuckles with hammer-like instruments.

"[Those] scars are still there ... whenever I remember those experiences my body shakes."

Omir thinks his job, which lent itself to significant regional travel, had both aroused the suspicion of the authorities and provided them with the perfect excuse to accuse him of terrorist activities.

"I did not confess anything because I hadn't done anything," he says. "Maybe they thought after torture I would just confess something I [had] never done before."

Soon Omir was moved to a nearby, highly-fortified prison camp, spending seven months locked up, still with no access to lawyers, phones with which to contact his family, nor any real explanations for his arrest.

In November 2017, he was transported to his final destination, arriving at one of what China has termed "re-education camps."

Four-metre walls and electrical fences surround the complex, Omir recounts, and armed guards patrol the camp at all times of the day and night.

Inside, there are 40 people to a 16 square-metre room. Prisoners as young

as 15 and as old as 80 are placed into these cramped cells, he says. Occasionally they are moved to larger rooms, but no-one is allowed outside.

Twenty-four hours a day, prisoners are shackled. Iron chains are tied around their necks, fixed to loose iron blocks that Omir says weigh around eight to ten kilograms, forcing prisoners to always be hunched down. He believes this is just one of the ways in which the camps are designed to instill a submissive posture in prisoners vis-a-vis their captors.

"I stayed in that room with lots of different people, some of them are business-people, historians, school professors, writers, singers," recounts Omir, "they speak much better Chinese than Chinese [people] themselves, and they have more money than Chinese themselves: they don't need to be re-educated."

On a typical day at the camp, he says, inmates are woken up at 5 am and given a meagre serving of bread and soup. They are then forced to repeatedly sing songs which praise the Chinese Communist party, stress China's greatness, and show gratitude towards President Xi Jinping personally.

"We sing from when we wake up in the morning 'til lunch and after lunch ... we do nothing else, just eat and praise the Chinese communist party," says Omir.

Prisoners are constantly warned about 48 characteristics considered hostile to the Chinese state, which include growing beards, praying and religious charity-giving, according to Omir. The aim of these drills is clear, he says: "become Han Chinese ... forget your religion, forget your culture."

"[If] you don't listen to them, or cannot recite Mandarin songs, or roll your eyes, or show just a little bit of discontent with this process," he argues, then the guards respond with torture.

As Omir often expressed his discontent with his arrest, he found himself tortured once again. He says he was beaten "half to death" and made to stand facing a wall for twenty-four hours without food or drink on some occasions, put in a Tiger Chair for a day in others, or simply placed into solitary confinement in rooms lined with plastic, intended to avoid suicide risks.

"The Chinese government calls [them] re-education camps. Actually there are no re-education camps - all are concentration camps," he says.

After 20 days, Omir was finally released. His wife had sent endless letters to the UN and Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan, where he was previously naturalised. She had also sat for an interview with Free Asia Radio, all of which pressured two Kazakh Ambassadors to finally visit him and soon after the Chinese authorities to free him.

This is a strikingly different picture to the one China has painted, claiming that the camps provide "vocational training,"

prisoners can leave at any time and operations are scaling down. But a report released last month found China has built almost 400 new camps since 2017, while new testimonies have emerged alleging slave labour, forced sterilisations and organ harvesting taking place inside the camps too.

"Their goal is just to exterminate all Uighurs in one way or another," says Omir. China's labelling of his community as terrorists is a "political game", he stresses, "we are not violent and we are not radical."

In 2019, the European Parliament and US Congress passed laws and resolutions condemning these imprisonments, while in the UK, a cross-party parliamentary group is said to be planning new legislation aimed at addressing the humanitarian crisis.

But when 23 countries issued statements to the UN last year denouncing China's actions, they were met with counter-statements from over 50 - mainly Muslim-majority - nations, who defended China's human rights policies.

Omir says he is heartened to hear about the UK's new proposed legislation, and is "grateful to Britain" for considering it. But he laments the international response.

"I want to make it clear that this Uighur genocide is not just [about] religion ... it's a test for humanity, for the whole world," he says. "I hope the international community takes more drastic actions."

When asked what Cambridge students can do to help, Omir offers straightforward advice.

"Talk to other people or friends and raise awareness so more people realise the severity of the situa-

tion," he says.

Omir stresses that he "hope[s] students can organise more protests, write more news about Uighurs, and raise the awareness of the general public." He also suggests donating to charities such as the Hira Foundation in Turkey, which support orphaned Uighur children separated from their parents.

Ultimately, he argues, students represent "the future" of the world's response to China's policies.

Soon after Omir decided to speak out, he lost all contact with his extended family back in Xinjiang and says he has no idea if they are even alive. After an 18-month legal struggle, he was granted political asylum in the Netherlands, while his wife and children are living safely in Turkey.

"I am not sure in the future if I can get back to a normal life," he says. But for now, he insists he will continue to "always endeavour to expose China's brutality and what is happening in the concentration camps." ●

Many thanks to Gheni, Omir's interpreter, without whom the interview would not have been possible, and who is currently raising funds for his political asylum application in the Netherlands.



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The secret minority: Why care leavers at Cambridge deserve better

Christine Fowler

The University of Cambridge is the rich old man of the applicant dating pool when it comes to finalising UCAS decisions. Cambridge, like any good sugar daddy, promises financial support, opportunities, and a supportive, welcoming environment. Like any young person new to the dating scene, I found it impossible not to fall for the sweet whisperings of empty promises.

For many students, the realisation that these promises are not wholly true is as simple as forgetting about the creepy stranger in their message requests. Yet, for people like me who are care-experienced or estranged from their families, that promise *needs* to be true. Unfortunately, it seems the dream I was promised died when I entered a full-time relationship with the University, leaving me without support.

The University offers great bursaries, but there seems to exist a common misconception that money solves everything. We are viewed as a charity case – an empty bank that needs to be filled – instead of successful individuals that the university should

be proud to represent.

During my first term, I received several emails – and saw many a post on social media – inviting individuals who were part of minorities to group chats, online socials, and talks to raise awareness within the university. Every time I received a new notification, I felt a tingling of excitement, hoping to see my community represented. I hoped to find a corner of Cambridge in which I could share my experiences and feelings with others who would understand the battles I face every day.

But all I found was disappointment – and frustration – that everyone else seemed to be considered and represented. On several outreach residentials before I applied, the University had promised support and a community. Yet all I feel is exclusion, and shame that a massive part of my identity has not been deemed an important enough minority. We must change this.

My first four weeks at university were difficult; I found it hard to become friends with people who had such different lives from mine. After years of being independent and content with being more or less

on my own, several emotions hit me now I was constantly surrounded by living embodiments of the loving parental relationships that I have been deprived of. This was not something I had ever had to manage in quite this way. I wanted to talk to others who understood, and who wouldn't make me feel guilty for being jealous or upset. But with no established community, I was left on my own.

There is some help available. Luckily, I had the confidence to confide in my Director of Studies and to reach out to my college nurse, but it was an anxiety-ridden, embarrassing process of having to re-tell my trauma. I felt like a child crying for attention, when all I really needed was an easily accessible community and representation to avoid going through emotional turmoil when I should have been enjoying a new chapter in my life.

One night, I decided to submit a Camfess to try to find others in my situation. I was surprised by the amount of care-experienced and estranged students at the University, when I had felt like I was the only one. However, it was disheartening that, although there was the Class Act group on Facebook, there seemed to be no effort on the University's part to reach out to us or to represent us as a community. We are forced to find help, support, and a community by ourselves. That we are continuously expected to shoulder this burden ourselves is unjust.

Why should we be left distraught, begging to receive help and support from an institution that has a duty of care to its students? My deepest concern is for others in similar situations who feel unable to reach out, to lay out their vulnerabilities to people they have never met. One wonders how many people are suffering unnecessary mental and emotional pain due to the ignorance of others. It is this ignorance that has caused us to become, and remain, Cambridge's secret minority.

No one has a magic wand to make our lives perfect – but that is not what we are asking for. We want a voice. Representation at University and college levels would provide care-experienced, estranged students with a community in which to share our worries and concerns with others who understand. It would provide a space to raise awareness and defy stereotypes, and give us the voice that we have been denied our whole lives.

The University has the facilities and the ability to provide this. It is time for us to be represented and recognised as equal, no longer the secret minority. We are worthy of support; we are worthy of a community. This is what we were promised, and it is what must be delivered. ●



LEVENTE KOROES

Divide and rule: The government's relentless attack on our civil liberties

Jed Asemota

Content Note: This article contains brief mention of gendered violence and discrimination.

There is something incredibly sinister about the government's proposal for undercover police to be stationed in nightclubs. Considering that this was the reaction to the murder of a young woman - Sarah Everard - by a police officer, it seems like an immensely tone-deaf response, even by this government's standards. Such a measure however fits into a pattern emanating particularly from the Home Office of seeking to take advantage of any opportunity that presents itself to crack down on our civil liberties in Britain.

The assault on our liberties hasn't been direct but rather framed through their infamous 'culture war' lens. One can see for example that the now infamous Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill has been shrouded in rhetoric and measures that frame it as a response to last year's Black Lives Matter protests; threatening 10 year sentences for damaging statues and effectively banning protests outside Parliament. By alluding to last summer's protests, the government are hoping to stoke anger among social conservatives in their voter base as a premise upon which to diminish all of our rights.

The complete disregard that a lot of the country has for the rights of minorities is evident in the fact that Travellers have been talking about the dangers of its measures to criminalise trespass far before the protest and statue elements of the bill came to public attention. The government is banking on such apathy for migrant, minority and activist rights to push through increasingly illiberal police state-style legislation that will affect all of us. Similarly, the precedents set by Shamima Begum's citizenship revocation or even Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's effective abandonment by the foreign office seem to reduce British citizenship to a privilege and its protection to rewards. The government is taking an axe to the rights of its citizens, both at home and abroad.

The Conservative Party as part of their so-called 'War on woke' have dismissed legitimate concerns about civil liberties as liberal moral panic. This has been evident in their barraging of 'activist lawyers' and disparaging of the judicial review process and the Human Rights Act. The government has used this narrative to stop lawyers from delaying deportation flights

and continue Hostile Environment policies that severely clamp down on the rights of migrants in the UK. Whilst they have been framed in the most comical of ways - as a defence against a mythical woke threat looking to undermine 'our way of life' - these moves are inherently dangerous and threaten any notion of Britain as a 'liberal democracy'.

Labour haven't been blameless however in helping to feed into this narrative that human rights and civil liberties are the preserve of metropolitan, liberal elites. Their abstention in votes on the Overseas Operation Bill and the Covert Human Intelligence Sources Bill underlines a failure to stand up for the rule of law and human rights - largely due to concerns about being perceived as soft on crime.

The idea of liberal policies not playing well with the 'Red Wall' block of voters that Labour wants to win back in 2024

indicative of an ideological reluctance to curtail our liberties. 'Freedom-loving' Boris has so far quite effectively been able to distance himself somewhat from the increasingly authoritarian/illiberal actions and words of his Home Secretary.

We however shouldn't be fooled into thinking that Priti Patel is the only Conservative who holds democracy in contempt. The Prime Minister unlawfully prorogued Parliament, evaded the scrutiny of interviews and debates during the last election campaign, and has overseen one of the most patently corrupt programmes of 'contracts for the boys' during the pandemic.

Further to this, Johnson was at the helm of one of the most sustained disinformation campaigns of modern times; making a litany of false claims surrounding Brexit. A movement of dishonesty and graft, which culminated in the 2019 election where 88%



Flicker/TBZ.POTO

have seen the party take a step back from anything that could conceivably fall into Tory 'culture war' framing. This has only changed recently, as the public outrage surrounding the Policing Bill has forced the Party to announce it will be voting against it.

There is a stark irony in death-penalty advocate Priti Patel accusing those standing in her way of being extremists and ideologues whilst advancing some of the most authoritarian legislation the country has seen since Blair's anti-terror bills. There is considerable effort being expended to shield Boris from responsibility for these acts: by attaching them to Priti Patel, they've created a narrative of her as a rogue actor and somewhat unrepresentative of the rest of the government or indeed the Prime Minister.

Throughout the pandemic, Boris' delayed decisions to implement national lockdowns on three occasions have, particularly by the media, been presented as

of adverts run by the Conservative Party were deemed misleading.

His government have also been making inroads on our electoral system; the 2020 Parliamentary Constituencies Act is expected to help the Tory party by about 10 seats by scrapping seats in historically Labour voting areas. What is more, this same Act has nearly doubled the election spending limit, allowing wealthy Tory donors to further increase their stranglehold on British elections. This is before one begins to consider the plans for a Voter ID law that experts warn will disenfranchise poorer people under the pretext of tackling essentially non-existent electoral fraud.

The truth is that our freedom and democracy is under assault from all angles by the government. By framing issues in a divisive manner they are seeking to bring out the worst in the public - banking on a public willing to give up its own civil liberties to fulfil a desire to see minority groups have their rights curtailed. ●



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Illustration by Richard Briggs

Beyond divestment...

Jesus College Climate Justice Campaign

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

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

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

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

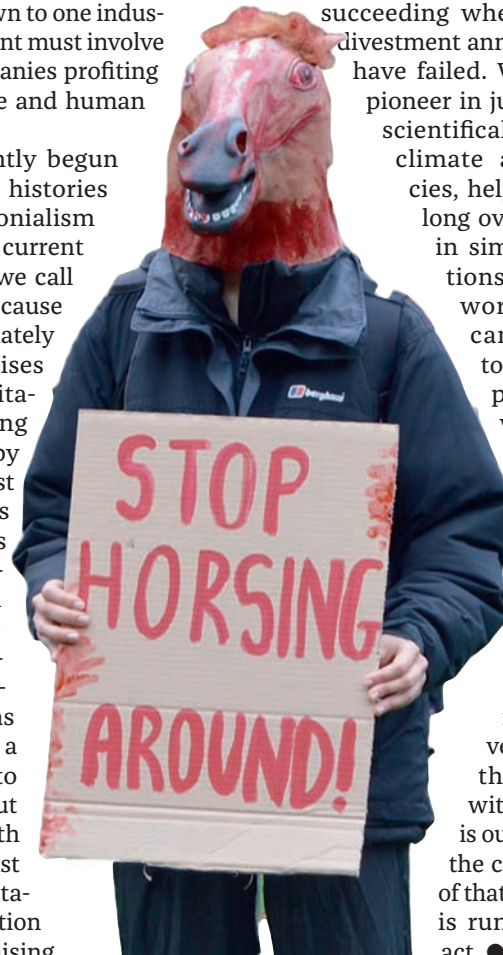
Livestock farming, for instance, accounts for 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions - more than all transportation combined - and is a major driver of deforestation, biodiversity destruction and water contamination. Through just one of the 22 funds in its portfolio, Jesus College is currently investing £37,482.51 in major dairy distributor, Mengniu Dairy Company. When we know that greenhouse gas emissions from just 13 dairy farms equal those of the entire United Kingdom, we cannot afford to exclude companies such as Mengniu Dairy Company from a divestment decision. Indeed, under conventional divestment, Jesus College could sell all £807,000 of its investments in fossil fuel companies, but still maintain its £27,892.12 investment in JP Morgan, the world's worst banker of fossil fuel projects between 2016 and 2021, injecting an eye-watering \$316.735 billion into new fossil fuel extraction projects in this period.

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

Jesus College has rightly begun to recognise the violent histories of enslavement and colonialism out of which much of its current wealth was built. When we call for 'climate justice', it is because the climate crisis is intimately bound up with other crises of inequality and exploitation, reflecting enduring structures of inequality by wreaking havoc on the least responsible communities along lines of race, class and gender. As an institution with enormous wealth partially rooted in these histories - benefitting significantly from the benefaction of slave trader Tobias Rustat - Jesus College has a profound responsibility to frontline communities to put its money where its mouth is and act decisively against the allied forces of exploitation and planetary destruction that it is currently legitimising

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

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



Faith, fasting and flatmates

Rana Rofifah



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

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

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

The beauty of a major world religion

like Islam is that it represents a hugely international array of people from every continent, all over the globe. In a flat of twelve, I found myself living with three other Muslims, bringing a melting pot of backgrounds to the heart of Cambridge. From Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Sudan to Pakistan, we learnt each other's languages, shared food from home, and listened to our experiences growing up in Muslim families across the UK. In spite of our cultural differences, we came together in the more quiescent moments of hectic Cambridge terms: praying, fasting and eating together. While other flatmates stayed up drinking, we retreated to a quiet corner of the flat together, patiently waiting for the buzz of drunken energy to die down. University is inevitably a time of change, but having people who can keep you grounded in values that are important to you can help you choose where you want to make those changes. With these people around you, you can grow in ways that won't compromise on your faith.

I am exceptionally aware of how unconventional my experience as a Muslim student at Cambridge has been. Many students in Cambridge, myself included, continue to be the only Muslim person in certain spaces and lack representation within their colleges, subjects and societies. It would be wrong of me to sugar-coat the Cambridge experience for Muslim students as being without its challenges. Traces of islamophobia can be subtle to some, but

lucid to others. The Student Union's recent survey on islamophobic incidents has made evident that this is a university-wide issue, concerning everyone from students to porters to supervisors and academics. Students continue to be confronted about their beliefs, which at times can provide healthy debates, while others enter the realms of prejudice.

This April and May, Muslims will be observing Ramadan, the holy month in Islam when we fast from dawn to sunset for thirty days. We are encouraged to implement healthy spiritual, social and physical routines. Non-Muslims are often shocked by the commitment to not eat or drink during the day: "you can't even have water?!" is a common response. However, abstaining from food and drink is only one part of established customs during Ramadan; giving to charity and practising patience are also encouraged. This will be a different Ramadan for everyone. For many students, this will be their first Ramadan away from home. Even when surrounded by supportive people, it can be an incredibly challenging month, requiring immense dedication and motivation. Ramadan in the UK often involves late nights and early mornings due to the changing nature of the solar calendar. Waking up at 4 am is not an easy feat, not to mention the added pressures brought by an ongoing pandemic. Despite the hardships, I hope to make the most of a month of gratitude and forgiveness – two of the most important elements that make Ramadan so special.

For the first time, I will be responsible for making Ramadan a beneficial experience not just for myself, but also for the wider Muslim community in Cambridge. In my first two terms I found solace in Muslims outside of those on my floor – particularly with a vibrant group of girls at different colleges around Cambridge. We call each other 'sisters', as is common in Islamic culture. Bringing other Muslim students together at university became my biggest joy and, despite physical restrictions, I felt immediately close to them. The Cambridge University Islamic Society (ISoc) played a huge role in forming these initial connections. Having been elected as ISoc's Student Affairs Officer and Head Sister I am nervous but also tremendously excited to take on a new challenge to deepen my connection with other students from all faiths. Even at Cambridge, you don't have to be the only Muslim in a room. After a little searching, or even by accident, you'll find the right people right at your doorstep. ●

Not a third gender

Atlanta Sawdon Harkavy

Non-binary is a term that barely existed in the public sphere a decade ago. It is an idea, however, which long predates the English language. There are Sumerian tablets and Egyptian hieroglyphs which refer to non-binary genders.

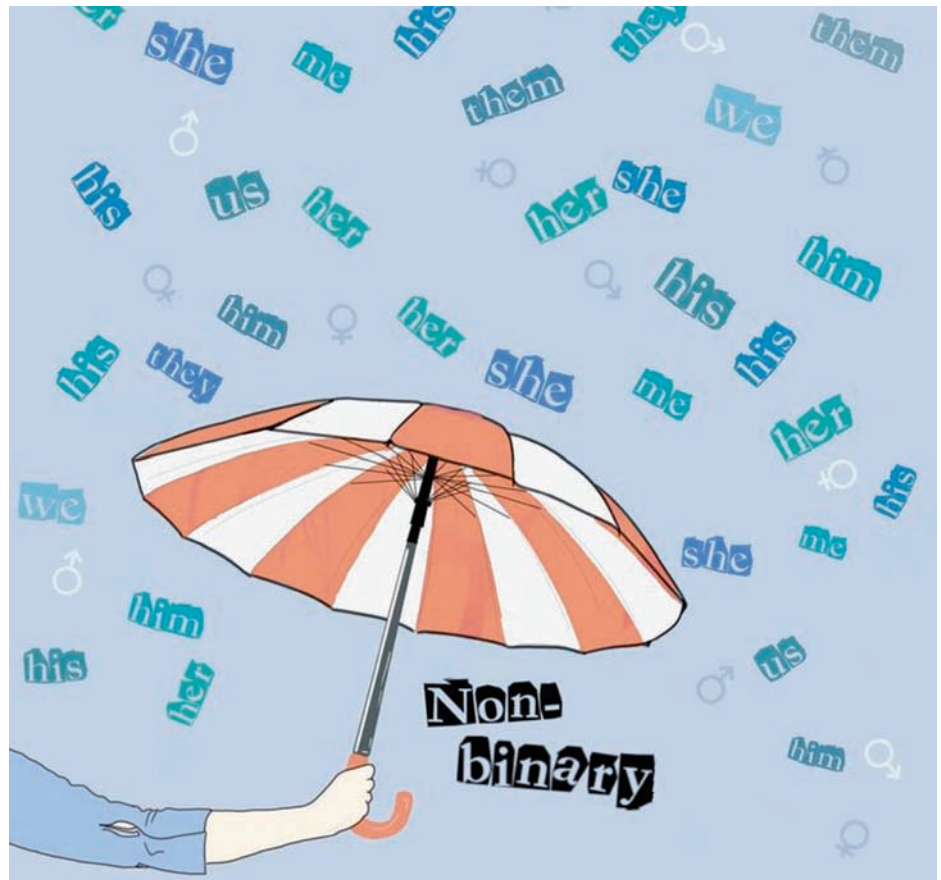
Sadly, it's recent emergence onto the public stage means our language doesn't really have the capacity to describe the living experience of being non-binary. I think this is a big part of the reason why so many people still misunderstand it. Still, I am forever an optimist – so I thought I would try anyway.

The clue really is in the name. To be non-binary means nothing more specific than to exist outside of the binary of 'male' and 'female'. Frequently the discussion around being non-binary assumes that it means being in between these two 'opposites'. Not quite one or the other, but on the spectrum. This is really only a fraction of the truth. Being non-binary means existing anywhere that isn't entirely male or female. It is being outside of the spectrum, in a star, or a circle, or an octagon. If in defining non-binary you are constraining it, you have misunderstood its core, and arguably only, element. There are no rules.

Being non-binary is like being an atheist. You are defined by your absence of a religion, and for someone to ask you if you are more Jewish or more Muslim feels ridiculous, because you are neither of those things. Atheism is not some other religion, there is no collective faith in... anything. Some atheists don't eat pork, and do celebrate Christmas. The distinction is that they choose these things. There is no external force requiring it of them.

There is significance therefore in the fact that non-binary-ness is defined in the negative. There are very few unifying characteristics among all enbies. If being male has masculinity, and being female has femininity, being non-binary has queerness. Truly all that queerness is, and has ever been, is a rejection of any kind of rule, norm, or expectation of your gender and sexuality, and how you present those things.

Non-binary acts as an umbrella term, not a 'third gender'. There are those who identify with it specifically while many others identify with its rejection of a binary system of gender in their own nuanced way. Trans people are non-binary, but still see themselves as belonging primarily to one of the 'traditional' groups. Others identify as agender, meaning they reject the notion of having a gender at all. Some



people's gender is 'lesbian', because for a long time this was the language which most clearly allowed them to reject femaleness. Personally, I just like queer. I find it comfortably ambiguous. It reflects the fact that my own conception of my gender is far from stable, but makes it clear that whoever I am, I belong outside the spectrum.

For me, being non-binary means that I'd rather be called King than Queen, but ideally I'd be a Tsar. It means not preferring any set of pronouns over another. It is wearing skirts, and 'men's' suits, but most commonly, dungarees. For me, being non-binary is freedom from gender. It is freedom to find joy in anything, and to live my life on my own terms.

In spite of this, it is also fear that I will never stop explaining myself. That I am cutting my future off at the knees. It is telling people my pronouns are she/her, because I don't mind them, and that way I don't have to give someone an intro to Judith Butler every time I send an email. It is setting up an online dating account, and selecting non-binary from the drop down menu, and then being forced straight back into the binary and asked whether I would like to be shown to people requesting men or women.

This dilemma is very much at the crux of the matter. People know they should support being non-binary, but they have no idea what it really is, so they fail in their ally-ship. This can be seen in corporations trying to benefit from rainbow capitalism, or even Cambridge's own 'Girl Talk'. It's a wonderful magazine, but it is called girl talk. It defines itself in the feminine, and yet advertises itself as being for and by women and non-binary people. In doing this, it basically says we see 'non-binary' as 'woman-lite'. I sympathise with the instinct to, in a patriarchal society, categorise all non cis male identities as other, and therefore belonging together. But we are beyond Simone de Beauvoir, and if you want to create something for women, you don't need to tag on 'non-binary' just to be politically correct.

This is just my opinion. You could ask a thousand non-binary people to write this, and they would all produce something different. That is the joy of it. If you find yourself identifying with some of this, then have a google. Go for a long walk, and have a hot shower, and a deep think (there isn't anything else to do). If you think this might be you, then welcome, there's room for us all here. And remember, have fun with it. ●

Admitting to Addenbrooke's

Elizabeth Haigh

Content Note: this article contains detailed discussion of mental health conditions and hospitals, as well as brief mention of self-harm.

It was nearing 1 am in Addenbrooke's A&E. The automatic doors slid open and another patient arrived. A young woman, strapped down to a wheelchair, was surrounded by four or five paramedics, nurses and doctors. She was rushed in crying, shouting, thrashing at things that we couldn't see: "get off me!", "leave me alone!". We could still distinctly hear her cries over the general hubbub of the hospital even after she'd been taken into a side room.

"That one's got a fighting spirit," joked a man sitting across from me, in a quip designed to ease the tension created by the presence of someone who looked to be mentally ill. Unlike the others around me, I didn't laugh.

A few minutes later, the woman was wheeled back past us, fully sedated. I'm not sure which version of her I found more upsetting.

While the other patients in the A&E waiting room looked on in a kind of morbid curiosity, I was staring for an entirely different reason. Unbeknownst to the would-be-joker, I had ended up in that waiting room for mental health related reasons. It was the second time that I had been in that exact position this year. I was staring not out of judgement, or a desire to know more. I was staring out of recognition.

Long after the woman had been taken away, I was left with her words, her distress, going round and round in my head. Already in a vulnerable state of mind, I'd sat hunched over, ears covered to drown her out for those few minutes before the sedation kicked in. Once relative quiet was again restored, I realised exactly why I'd felt her cries were so threatening, so unbearable to listen to. They were the exact words that I've often thought myself, that I've wanted to scream when I've been in the throes of my own PTSD-style flashbacks. And I know full well that if someone were to push the right buttons, I would end up exactly like that young woman. Utterly out of control. Unable to distinguish between those trying to harm and those trying to help.

Going to hospital for mental health related reasons is never an enjoyable experience, even if I have always received nothing but kindness and sympathy from



the nurses and doctors with whom I have come into contact. No-one there has ever judged or questioned what brought me to Addenbrooke's doors, even if I've had some less sensitive responses from College staff. Each time, I've left feeling calmer, more stable, and a thousand times safer than when I walked in to begin with. This is both a blessing and a curse: if you were to encounter me the next day you would probably have no idea that anything had happened at all, unless I chose to share with you. And it is this impression of being "on top of things" which is both the most damaging and the most difficult to shed.

Of course, this façade was non-existent each time I entered Addenbrooke's. Covid-19 has made a trip to hospital an almost unrecognisable experience, as on most occasions no-one is allowed to accompany you, contact with others is limited, and the hospital staff's faces are as hidden as our own. But the NHS staff's compassion has not been affected. If anything, I would argue it has increased. They, of all people, have seen how difficult this pandemic is for people from all walks of life. And they understand that if you are already vulnerable, it does not take much to tip you over the edge.

Since this last trip to A&E, I'm more optimistic than the previous times that it will be my last. As I told the doctor as he stitched me up, since returning to Cambridge this term my mood has been on an upward trend. Having a sense of independence, of my own space, and time to spend

thinking and reflecting on my past have all been major factors in helping me feel far more in control than I have in a long time; not to mention the seemingly endless support of my college tutor, counsellor and closest friends. That doesn't mean that I don't still have dangerous moments. It just means that they're less common, and that in general I am much better equipped to deal with them and see them through.

A few years ago, if someone had told me that I would be in this position today, I would not have believed them. I might even have judged my future self, having no idea of the life-changing, scarring events to come. But in an odd way, I am grateful for my struggles with mental health. I know that one day, hopefully soon, I will be through the worst and I will be much stronger because of it. But more importantly, unlike that man in A&E, I know that should I encounter someone like that young woman, someone who clearly needs help and is unable to take care of herself, I will not react with dismissive humour. I will recognise the human being that needs caring for, and do my best to help others understand that. In hindsight, I wish that I'd said something to him to make him realise that his comments and unsubtle ogling weren't just unkind, but actively damaging to others such as myself. That they had the ring of judgement that we all fear. At that moment, I was in no state to do so. But in the future, I hope I can be that voice for other people. ●

Lockdown love letters: Dear Mum

Nick Bartlett

For as long as I can remember, I have always been described in relation to you. There is a photo of you as a child: a white summer dress balloons in the sunshine, your body angled away from the camera. Short, cropped hair falls just below your ears, swinging above your shoulders, white as sugar. I had the same hair as a child. And, I suppose, people saw this as the first of many parallels.

Lockdown was always going to be difficult for you – difficult for anyone, and everyone, but particularly for you. I don't say that in an accusatory way. Hear me out first, Mum! Prior to lockdown, and when I was living at home, I would bump into you each week rushing out the door. A hamper, or box of miscellaneous food packages – jams, brownies, biscuits, cheeses, fruits – obscured the bottom half of your face. "Arnie's Mum is unwell, darling. I'll be back in an hour." And, the next day – "Aunty Ann has bronchitis again, you know how much it knocks her around." Smack. I picked up the bottle of Armaforce – a naturopathic medicine you swear by, placed it in the inside corner of the box and watched you stride out the gate. I marvel at the time and energy you put into the people in your life. It makes sense though; I don't know a more loved person in this world than you.

In the period from August to September – the harshest of the lockdowns in Melbourne – we fought and we made up and we fought. I was working long hours at the time; taking the overnight shifts with Thibault, working from midday one day until early morning the next. I almost always arrived home depleted. Into bed I went. And, bang, went the slam of my door. You found any excuse to knock on my door, to interact with me, or to engage with me during the day. "What's on this morning, darling?" "Darling, just making some tea. Would you like some?" "Do you want to have lunch together, darling? No pressure!"

The little time I had to myself, I wanted to spend alone: not with family, nor friends, or anyone for that matter. "Darling, do you want to go for a walk together?" An exasperated sigh in response – one which I had hoped would be inaudible, but which snaked out of the corner of my mouth, rotated one hundred and eighty degrees and sank its claws into you standing at my bedroom door. After that, there was nothing else I could say to convince you otherwise. "Darling, you know there's never any pressure. I just love spending time with

you." "But Mum, I genuinely want to go for a walk with you; I wouldn't go, if I didn't want to." If I said it with enough conviction, maybe you would believe me.

I hated the guilt I felt because I knew it wasn't a reflection on you, but how do you convey that when rejection is rejection is rejection. "When I get home from work Mum, I just want to be by myself," I said to you after a particularly difficult shift with Thibault. "But I feel pressure from you to hang out." And the look you gave me, made it even worse, because, above all else, you understood. I saw you pushing down your own disappointment, the pain you felt at your son not matching your excitement at the prospect of spending time with one another, and, in its place, you elevated empathy. As always, you managed to put someone else's needs ahead of your own.

Then, there was my departure to university which further compounded the absence of physical interaction in your new lockdown existence. At first, it seemed so far away, an oasis that shimmered in and out of focus, irrelevant so long as it remained on the horizon. But we can't control time: only how we use it. I knew you were bracing for its impact. Though when

it came, there was nothing against which to brace. I was there, and then I wasn't. There was no one to blame, and nothing to be done. The days came and went, and my bed remained empty. If I had been willing, you would have called every day. If it was possible. And, if I had been willing. But you knew that I needed space and freedom, and so you gave it to me.

Every time. Every time, Mum, you find it in yourself to put our needs first. When I left, you cried. And between the tears, you told me how happy you were for me, how excited you were, how this is what I was supposed to do. When I became older, and my personality developed more and more, people stopped comparing us so much on the basis of our physical attributes; instead, they commented on the similarity of our hearts. Though I'm not sure I'm deserving of such a comparison. I don't think anyone is, Mum.

Mum, I am grateful to you for so many reasons and there are too few words to do them justice. Sometimes, I wish you were more selfish, so I could be more selfish and not feel bad about it. But it's not who you are, and I love who you are, and I consider myself the most fortunate son in the world. ●



The doors of perception: LSD sheds light on altered consciousness

Laura Ryan

Research into psychedelics is undoubtedly undergoing a renaissance. Be it Silicon Valley blogs touting the benefits of ‘microdosing’ or the resurgence of New Age lifestyles, these funky drugs have tripped their way back into the public consciousness. Much scientific interest has focussed on the potential use of LSD, psilocybin (the active ingredient in magic mushrooms), and DMT (found in ayahuasca) as therapies for mental health and psychiatric disorders. But the use of neuroimaging techniques to study their effects on healthy brains has opened the door to a whole new type of functional analysis of the human mind. Understanding how neural networks are altered as a result of psychedelic drugs could bring us closer to unlocking one of the greatest scientific mysteries of all time – consciousness itself.

In 2016, it was suggested that the functional complexity of the resting brain approaches the maximum possible given the organ’s structural anatomy. Essentially, this means that because of the way the brain is physically laid out and how the different regions are connected together, it would be impossible for more complex patterns of co-ordinated electrical activity to occur than those which are seen in a resting state. But according to a paper published very recently in the journal *NeuroImage*, this is not the case at all. The study is the result of a collaboration between Cambridge University and the Centre for Psychedelic Research at Imperial College London, and it has shed new light on the neurobiological basis for the mind-altering effects of LSD.

To investigate the effects of LSD on the network activity of the human brain, researchers used functional MRI scans to examine the effects of the drug on healthy participants. Their findings were intriguing; after taking an active dose of LSD, the participant’s brains were in fact capable of an unusual increase in functional complexity, triggering a “profoundly altered state

of consciousness”. Cambridge researcher Andrea Luppi – first author of the paper – explained that this is “largely the opposite of what happens during anaesthesia”.

The increased complexity was a result of an apparent ‘decoupling’ of functional complexity from the structural arrangement of connectivity in the brain – in essence, a ‘freeing’ of the mind from the brain’s usual anatomical constraints. This decoupling effect alters the way that different areas of the brain communicate with each other and coordinate their activity. The widely reported feeling of ego dissolution (or loss of sense of self), that often accompanies an acid trip is a result of this type of abnormal rerouting of brain net-

evolved to behave that way all the time.

But that’s not to say that psychedelics can’t have beneficial effects. The authors of the paper note that their findings echo a central tenet common to many theories of psychedelics from as early as the 19th century: that psychedelic compounds “perturb adaptive mechanisms which normally constrain perception, emotion, cognition, and self-reference”. This leaves the brain free to experience new and unusual patterns of connectivity that transcend those that it has evolved to rely on, opening the door to the profoundly new perspectives reported by many users of psychedelic drugs. Personal insights that can be gained while on a ‘good trip’ are

said to persist long after the acute effects of the drugs have worn off, with advocates reporting they have experienced a permanent expansion of the mind.

It would of course be remiss not to note that in rare instances, psychedelics can provoke serious psychotic reactions, particularly in those with family histories of psychiatric disorders.

The data presented in the paper referred to earlier are not only rele-

vant to our theories of consciousness; they also provide justification for practical approaches for the treatment of mental health disorders like depression and PTSD. Despite previous claims, our brains are capable of states of complexity beyond that which we experience in our daily lives, and when we enhance that complexity – whether that be through psychedelics, pharmacological agents, or other interventions entirely – we can alter a person’s subjective experience of the world.

The number of clinical trials making use of LSD, magic mushrooms, or MDMA for the treatment of psychiatric conditions has shot up over the past decade, and it is clear that these drugs are slowly entering the medical mainstream. Initial results have been fairly astonishing. But with so many regulatory barriers to overcome, it’s a long road ahead for advocates of psychedelic therapies. ●



works. Galaxy brain stuff!

But what does any of this actually mean? Well, an explanation can be provided in the form of an imperfect (but hopefully helpful) analogy. Picture a city like Cambridge, with a highly structured system of roads and cycle lanes connecting its various hubs. Now imagine that one day, all of the usual routes are switched up; busy roads are blocked, quiet lanes become crowded, one-way roads switch direction, and the most intrepid drive cross-country over Parker’s Piece. The physical capacity for these complex and novel routes was always there, but this unusual functional set up just wasn’t the way that the roads were originally planned. And for good reason – while people on an acid trip may find new meaning in the backs of their hands, or feel at one with the universe and all its inhabitants, our species would not have survived very long had our brains

Trust me, I'm a scientist: lessons from the pandemic on public attitudes towards science

Alicia Smith

Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, Hydrated Silica, Sodium Fluoride. Do you know what they are? Would you put them in your mouth? What if I told you that you already do? Probably even twice a day. That's because they are common ingredients in toothpaste. The chances are you only know these scientific terms if you are a specialist in oral hygiene or a toothpaste enthusiast. Every day we put our trust in science to satisfy our basic needs and improve our standards of living, and it is valued as a powerful and positive tool in society. But is our trust in science lost when it is not communicated effectively?

In the current global health crisis, scientific research and its role in decision making and policy change are at the forefront of public discussion and scrutiny. According to the UKRI, although the public has an overall positive attitude towards science and scientists, there is a gap in opinion between people of different social classes and educational groups. However, a 2019 government report indicated that this demographic pattern of mistrust was present before the pandemic began. So what are the causes of such a deep-rooted divide?

The concept of "science capital" may go some way to explaining the gap in trust. Constructed as a tool to better understand why people might feel that science is or isn't for them, high scores in science capital have also been positively correlated with positive views about science. The in-

dex was developed based on survey items that include science-related qualifications, knowledge, and informal science learning. Individuals who score poorly across the range of attributes tend to feel less connected with science.

Low capital may reflect insufficient science outreach rather than public disengagement, with nearly half of individuals agreeing that scientists put too little effort into informing the public. Despite variations in science capital, the global pandemic has been accompanied by a widespread increase in demand for scientific information. For many individuals, major broadcasters such as the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, and Sky, have consistently been the primary source of scientific information. However, a recent study found that younger people are increasingly obtaining health information from social media. This increased news consumption has been accompanied by what the World Health Organisation (WHO) has described as a massive "infodemic" – the rapid spread of misinformation causing mass uncertainty.

While social media could be a force for good in rapidly deploying information, it has created a breeding ground for conspiracy theories, myths and fake news. Research suggests that there is a tendency for homophily within social media networks, where individuals group according to similarities such as age, religion, education and occupation. This has powerful implications for the information received within the social system and is likely to promote and reinforce attitudes that are

hard to shift.

Recently, there has been renewed attention to public attitudes towards vaccines, with the WHO describing vaccine hesitancy as one of the top ten threats to global health. A recent report across 15 countries revealed that only half of the people surveyed would be willing to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Several factors drive the public's mistrust and fuel anti-vaccine movements, including business and financial motives of the vaccine industry, the pressure on biomedical companies to fast-track testing and regulatory approval processes, and unsubstantiated health scares caused by misinformation. Social media giants have come under fire as a result of the eruption of conspiracy narratives.

But while fact-checkers try to discredit claims of a link between 5G masts and COVID-19, and that Vladimir Putin released 500 lions in Moscow to persuade residents to stay indoors, the state of indecision and hesitancy regarding the vaccine uptake cannot entirely be attributed to pervasive misinformation. Concerns regarding the safety and efficacy of the vaccine may indicate that communicators must translate technical information into messages non-expert audiences can interpret.

Over the pandemic, new initiatives have worked to break the fake news circuit and provide a more effective two-way dialogue on scientific issues. Researchers at UCL have been helping to inform the public by providing expert commentary on a range of issues, including what the new variant means for lockdown measures, why the impact of "long COVID" should be considered for students, and the psychology behind panic buying. Taking a different stance, influencers have harnessed the power of social media platforms to counter misinformation. While the WHO has taken to TikTok to reach wider audiences, social media influencers like Joe Rogan and Mark Rober have used their YouTube channels to educate the public around the epidemiology of the virus. The use of social media to communicate messages in comprehensible and humorous ways demonstrates an opportunity to inform the public on scientific issues in a way that traditional sources of information often struggle to do.

Amidst the biggest health emergency of our time, scepticism in science could have grave consequences for public health. Yet the mistrust that is prominent now more than ever may be a symptom of a more inherent problem. With a growing generation glued to their screens, maybe the answer is right before our eyes. ●



(VLAD TCHOMPALOV)

Reasons for hope

Grace Blackshaw, Sambhavi Sneha Kumar and Izavel Lee

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

The rise of youth climate movements around the world

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

In the Philippines, Mitzi Tan became an environmental activist after speaking to indigenous leaders about the harm they had faced in protecting their lands.

As a convenor for Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP), she has organized climate strikes to protest government policies that are harmful to the climate. In Uganda, Vanessa Nakate started organizing strikes after learning about how natural disasters in her country had been worsened by climate change.



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

Greening transport in cities

To many experts and governments, recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic

presents an opportunity to shift policy and infrastructure plans to better tackle climate change. One way that cities around the world have been supporting this “green recovery” is through investing in walking and cycling infrastructure. For example, South



American cities including Bogotá and Lima have opened hundreds of kilometres of temporary cycle lanes to facilitate social distancing on public transport. Milan has similarly reallocated road space — permanently — from cars to cyclists and pedestrians, which is hoped to reduce air pollution in the city as well. Some cities are going even further by attempting to phase out fossil fuel cars. Currently, 74.5% of global CO₂ emissions are from road vehicles, so replacing fossil fuel cars with less carbon intensive vehicles would greatly help the climate.

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e this Earth Day

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

Big wins for the global divestment movement

In contrast to stereotypes that would have us believe “saving the planet” means separating your recycling and avoiding plastic straws, the divestment movement takes on the fossil fuel industry head on. Divestment does this by pushing public organisations to get rid of their unethical investments, in this case, in the fossil fuel industry. Crucially, by doing so, divestment raises awareness of the fact that just 100 fossil fuel companies have contributed 70% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions since 1981.

Originally dismissed as radical and impractical, more than half of UK universities have now committed to fossil fuel divestment. Last October, after five years of tireless campaigning from Cambridge Zero Carbon Society, Cambridge University finally joined their ranks. Despite this, the fight for climate justice at Cambridge University continues with the exciting rise (and success) of college divestment campaigns and a renewed focus on the wider links between the University and the fossil fuel industry.

The divestment movement also extends far beyond universities. Last year,

hundreds of UK churches committed to divestment and the New York State pension fund, valued at over US\$ 226 billion, committed to divest from the riskiest oil and gas companies. The divestment movement is now such a force to be reckoned with that even Shell admits it could have “a material adverse effect” on their business.

Urban farming and environmental justice

When fruits and vegetables come neatly wrapped in plastic on a supermarket shelf, it is all too easy to become

“historical dispossession of land from Black farmers” by raising funds to allow Black farmers to purchase the land they care for.

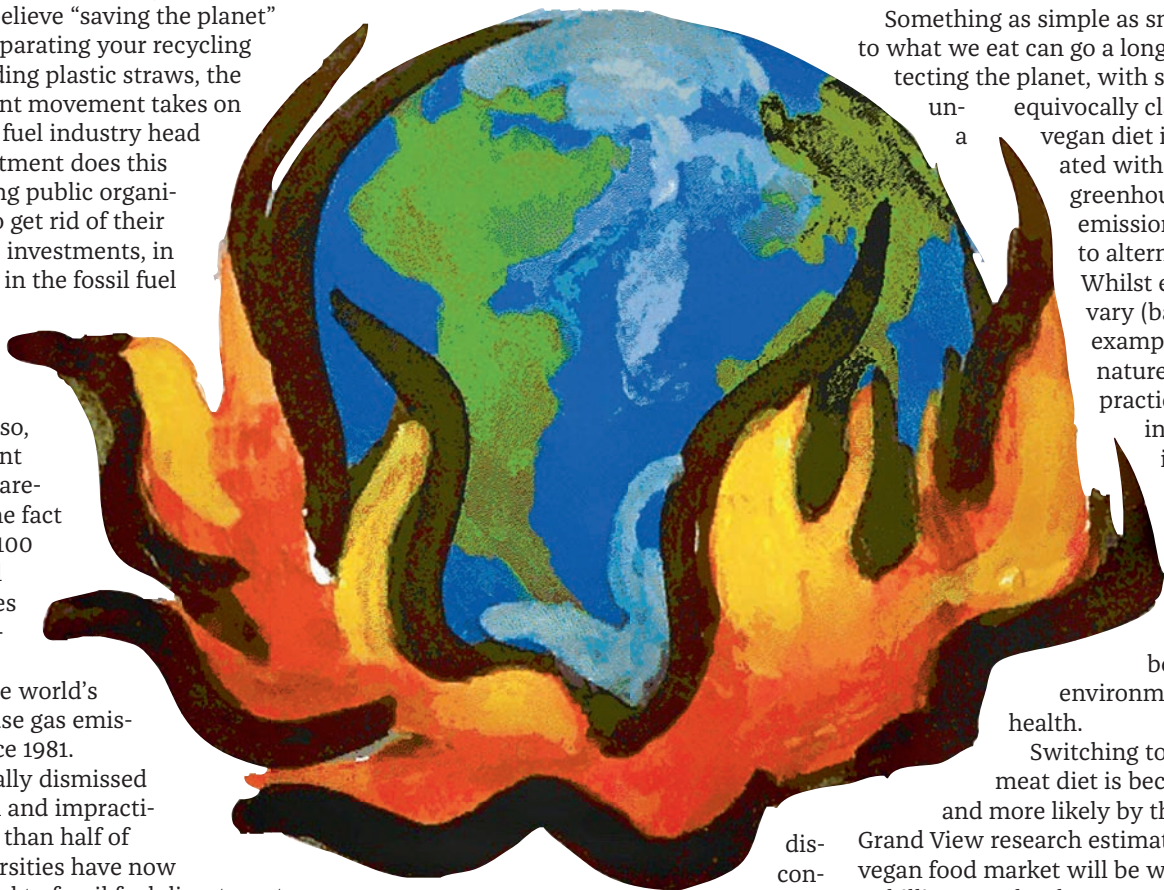
In the UK, BAME communities are 60% less likely to be able to access green space and natural environments than white communities and 1% of the population owns more than 50% of the land in England. One inspiring organisation working to tackle this is Land In Our Names, a Black-led collective committed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

Plant-based diets

Something as simple as small changes to what we eat can go a long way in protecting the planet, with some studies

unequivocally claiming that a vegan diet is associated with decreased greenhouse gas emissions compared to alternatives. Whilst evidence can vary (based on, for example, the exact nature of farming practices involved) incorporating some plant-based foods into our daily routines will likely benefit both the environment and our health.

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



from where our food comes from. To counter this, organisations like Harlem Grown aim to inspire youth to lead healthy and ambitious lives by providing hands-on education in urban farming, sustainability, and nutrition.

Community-led urban farming projects are about much more than just food — they are an important form of resistance against capitalist and colonial systems of land ownership. The Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund addresses the

From a life behind bars to Cambridge

An interview with Christian Austin

Olivia Millard

CN: Brief mention of child-abuse, violence and drug-use

Having spent a total of 10 years in prison, Christian Austin became well-acquainted with the prison officer saying “See you next week!” every time he finished a sentence and left jail. But ultimately he managed to defy these expectations, not just by breaking out of a cycle of crime that had defined most of his life, but by starting at the University of Cambridge at the age of 55. As he tells me his remarkable story of going from “crazy, violent, drug-infested beginnings” to completing an undergraduate degree at Cardiff University – and then an MPhil in Criminology at Cambridge – it’s easy to see why he became a hit in Darwin College Bar (or DarBar, as he fondly remembers it). Each story he tells is characterised by his good humour, honesty and determination.

Christian was born in South West London, but grew up on a council estate in Hampshire following his parents’ divorce. He was raised by his single mother, but not before he had experienced significant physical abuse from his father, who was an alcoholic. With violence a recurring theme throughout his childhood, Christian developed an aggressive streak and this trait inevitably manifested itself in the playground, where he started to get into trouble. Several decades of run-ins with the law began at the age of 6, when he stole a bicycle whilst bunking off school. Between the ages of 12 and 15, Christian spent his time being put in, and subsequently escaping from, various care homes; he estimates having absconded 30 times over a period of 3 years. He laughs as he remembers his escapades, on one occasion making it all the way to the Isle of Wight, but his tone becomes more serious as he recalls passing one of the island’s jails: “we were looking at the prisons knowing that was where we were going, later on.”

From what Christian says, certain parallels emerge between the care homes and the prisons he encountered, not just in terms of the hierarchical environment, but also the individuals inside. As he describes his experiences of witnessing abuse within the care system, specifically the molesting of children by members of staff, Christian

confesses that he was spared this abuse because of his status as the “tough guy.” He acknowledges the irony of being “very lucky” due to his violent nature, suggesting the contradictions at play. This becomes clear too as Christian describes his years in prison, beginning with a sentence at Borstal youth detention centre aged 15. He remarks “in prison I just ended up meeting all the guys I knew from care homes, I stepped straight into a hierarchy and I already had a place there.”

From Borstal, Christian began a 20-year period of going from one prison sentence to another.

Feeling as though he had “all the time in the world,” while inside, he explains the choice that every prisoner is faced with: “You can either sit and stare at the wall every day, for months or years, ’cos no one’s gonna make you do anything, but I just read.

I read, and read, and read.” Beginning with counter-culture books “you know, skinhead culture, Hell’s Angels, etc.” he read everything he could and decided to educate himself, inspired by his mother, moving onto works by Dumas, Hardy and Solzhenitsyn. He covered all the subjects he had missed out on by not attending school, from History and Geography to English Literature and Philosophy.

I ask whether he was among a minority of prisoners who de-

voted as much time to reading, knowing that around 50% of prisoners in the UK have a literacy age of an 11-year-old (coinciding with the age when many children start to play truant). He expresses regret that so many of those incarcerated are “not only prisoners within a brick wall, but also within their own minds, because they don’t have the capacity to read or write.”

It seems that reading while incarcerated is not only in a prisoner’s interests in terms of improving their future prospects by gaining

education, but also as a form of escapism from the monotony of prison life. For Christian, it was also about learning new skills, especially one that would change his life: music.

During his time in care he learnt “a few



bridge University: ustin

tunes” on a piano, but it was whilst he was serving time that he taught himself to read music, from a book. Armed with this theoretical knowledge, he picked up a guitar three years later during a spell in Dartmoor Prison, and started to play. He smiles as he remembers “I wasn’t even able to finish my breakfast before playing a tune!” Music has since played a big part in Christian’s life – he plays the saxophone, the guitar and sings – and music in prisons would later become the subject of his dissertation whilst at Cardiff University.

Having left prison for what would be the last time, aged 35, Christian found himself at a crossroads, and with the futures of his children in mind, he decided to “sort [him] self out.” When leaving prison on previous occasions, he had encountered a “tsunami” of crime and drugs when returning back to his hometown that made it difficult to resist from reoffending. This time, he decided

to move to another city in order to avoid these temptations. He spent 9 months in a rehabilitation centre, and describes enduring a process which “breaks you down [...] until you’re a clean sheet of paper.” He credits the help he received there as a strong source of empowerment in helping him rebuild his life. Following redundancy from his job in construction as a result of the economic crisis of 2008, he decided to apply for university, and secured a place to study music at Cardiff. While researching for his dissertation, he came across an article by a Cambridge criminology professor that particularly resonated with him, and he got in touch with her. On her encouragement, he applied for a place at Cambridge.

I ask Christian whether he was open about his past as an ex-heroin addict and ex-convict once he arrived at Darwin, given the prejudices that these labels unfortu-

nately elicit. He explains that he gradually started to tell people, and laughs as he remembers his “celebrity status”; people saw his past not as something to be ashamed of, but as a measure of his achievement. Christian maintains that his year spent studying at Cambridge was the best year of his life, and he enjoyed it so much that he stayed on an extra year working as a member of the Darwin catering staff.

Since leaving Cambridge, Christian has been busy: he has given a TED Talk, performed with his saxophone, lived in Georgia for a year, sold pizzas, started work as a construction foreman, and begun writing his memoir. At the end of the day, he says, it’s about your own locus of control, whether you want to be the “architect of your own destiny or whether you’re content with being tossed about aimlessly like a cork on the waves.” ●



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Varsity Sports Re

Cameron White

There is no denying that this has been a tough year on all sports, both in and out of Cambridge. For instance, the November lockdown brought with it the suspension of all rowing, with even May Bumps being called off. This was a common theme, as the year saw the cancellation of multiple tournaments and competitions, including college football.

However, Cambridge retained its sense of community and common humanity during these darker times. One such example was the decision by the women's side, initially just the W1 team, at King's Boat Club to cover a million metres in a virtual challenge which would raise money for three homeless Cambridge-based charities: Cambridge Cyrenians, Winter Comfort and Jimmy's Cambridge. Participants in the competition ran, rowed on ergs and cycled, tracking their collective distance via Facebook chats and Strava, covering

291,278 metres in their first week alone.

Also particularly touching was a fundraiser by players at St John's Rugby Club in memory of Sam Fitzsimmons, a former captain at the club (2017/18) who passed away from Ewing's Sarcoma, a rare type of bone cancer, in May 2020. In the final three weeks of Lent term, the Redboys pledged to complete 777 laps of St Legend's pitch by doing backwards bear crawls. This type of crawl is an established punishment for players who arrive late to training, with Zac, the Redboys' Vice-President, explaining to Varsity in an interview back in March that it was important to incorporate club traditions into the fundraiser, given their importance in Sam's life. Another player also commented that the fundraiser "brought life back into [the team] again and couldn't have come at a better time" after pandemic-related disruption to training. The fundraiser has raised over £5,900 (as of 24/05).

But come April, sport was well and truly back in the form of the renowned Varsity Boat Races. After the races had been called off in 2020 amidst the pandemic,

the Cambridge men's side were going into the competition looking to build on their two consecutive victories in 2018 and 2019, while the women's side were hoping to defeat Oxford for the fourth consecutive time. With this year's races held at Ely for only the second time ever, after they were held there in 1944 during the Second World War, Cambridge snatched victories in both the men's 166th and women's 75th races respectively by three-quarters of a length and a single length. This feat was then added to at the end of the month when Goldie won the 56th men's reserve race, and Blondie the 49th women's reserve race, by respectively convincing margins of six and seven lengths. Cambridge women also won the lightweight race by 2.5 lengths in May, although the men's lightweights unfortunately lost out to Oxford. Likewise the Cambridge women's spare pair defeated Oxford, although the Cambridge men's spare pair lost.

Meanwhile Varsity also reported in April that college football would resume from 1st May after a six-month absence, although only the first team cup competi-



review 2020/21



BERNARD TYLER

at Lord's in late May after defeating Oxford (229-4) by four wickets with 218-6. Rain disrupted play for four hours and saw the match reduced from its usual 50-over format to just 29 overs per side, with Cambridge given a reduced target of 215 runs (DLS) to win. However, Oxford thrashed Cambridge in the Varsity T20 matches, achieving 146-4 (20) to Cambridge's 121-7 in the women's fixture, and 103-1 (11.5) to Cambridge's 101-7 (20) in the men's fixture.

So after a year of uncertainty and cancellations, sports are gradually making their return. Upcoming fixtures to look out for include the

tions (Cuppers and Plate) and MCR League were given the green light, with the Shield (second team cup) and Vase (third team cup) abandoned for the 2020/21 season. Varsity has provided weekly summaries of the Cuppers tournament since its resumption, with Fitzwilliam and Homerton progressing to the final. Gonville & Caius also won the Plate competition after convincing victories over Darwin (5-0) in the semi-final and Downing (3-0) in the final.

Footballing fervour was not only contained to the University, as Cambridge United secured automatic promotion to Sky Bet League One after a 3-0 home win against Grimsby Town on the final day, capping off their League Two 2020/21 campaign with 80 points and 24 wins.

In other Varsity matches, Cambridge have also had some recent success in hockey and cricket. The men's hockey team defeated Oxford 5-3 on shuffles at Southgate Hockey Club after a 1-1 draw at full time, with the women's side suffering a narrow 1-0 defeat at the hands of Oxford just before. The men's blues also earned promotion from the Mr Cricket Hockey East Region Premier A to the National League Conference East at the beginning

of May with the 2020/21 season abandoned after just six games played, as standings from the 2019/20 season, in which Cambridge's blues came second, were used to determine the promotion.

As for cricket, the men's side were victorious in the annual Varsity one-day match

Varsity football matches at Oxford City Football Club on Saturday 26th June, the women's one-day cricket match at Wormsley on Monday 28 June, and the Varsity Rugby Matches at Welford Road in Leicester on Sunday 4 July. ●



LEVENTE KOROES

Violet investigates... w

Is social distancing a blessing for the socially disinclined?

Socially disinclined people worldwide have welcomed many aspects of our new socially distanced times, celebrating the end of the hugging epidemic and raising pertinent questions such as: why was jumping up and down to ear-splitting noise in a room packed full of sweaty people *ever* a thing? Having studied this discussion closely however, I realised a different question needed to be asked: is social distancing *really* a blessing for the socially disinclined *or* has it merely recreated old forms of social awkwardness?

As a somewhat socially disinclined person myself, I have analysed this question in more depth.

Social Distancing - Pros and Cons for The Socially Disinclined

Pro:

It is now acceptable to cross the street to avoid people. You are being respectful.

Con:

If there is no escape, you might still end up doing the same awkward dance when you try to go

In past people. fact, it is now more awkward than ever: "Oh sorry, sorry, I'll go left- it's okay, I tested negative on the asymptomatic test last week. Oh dear, maybe I'll go right then, I mean it could have been a false negative, but- ok, left it is, cheers!"

Pro:

The mask has saved us from the struggle of choosing the right smile for the right occasion. Classics such as: the I-have-forgotten-who-you-are smile and the I-should-say-hi-but-you-didn't-say-hi-last-week smile (more upper lip), or more specialised expressions, such as the no-I-didn't-realise-I-hadn't-plugged-

in-my-headphones-thank-you smile, are no longer necessary. Thank God.

Con:

The mask has left a complete state of anarchy in its wake. Should you do the weird wave, the nervous nod, or the bizarre blink when you pass people nowadays? Whatever you choose, it's going to be nasty, brutal and awkward. Best option: walking fast to make sure that the interaction is kept short.

Pro:

Everyone knows Corona spreads through eye contact, so it is now okay to avoid it. (The Porters are clearly stuck in 2019.)

Con:

If you wear glasses a mask you will ly be unable to social inter-

and regular- see. As if action wasn't hard enough before, you now have to rely solely on your hearing (and if it is

too quiet, it probably means that the person you were talking to left or that you should tone down the sarcasm, or both).

Pro:

New opportunities to avoid social situations have opened up. There were breakout rooms? You didn't realise! Also, Zoom social, who? What? Something is clearly wrong with your microphone. And camera. Dunno what. Oh, and on top of that your battery just died, so obviously you need to leave the meeting immediately.

Con:

Nobody buys it. Just launch the meeting and bob your head from side to side until the attention is diverted from you. If you ever want to speak, be prepared to interrupt everybody - that is, if you don't



to fall into want the "No, you go first", "No, you go!" trap.

Pro:

If the person speaking is going on and on, you can zoom out and pin whichever person has the most interesting background. (Make sure to add a nod every once in a while, but be careful: nod too vigorously and you might get asked if there is something you want to add.)

Con:

Unfortunately, there is a risk of hearing your voice catapulted back at you. And as we all know, the only thing worse than hearing yourself speak once, is hearing yourself speak *twice*. All things considered, I think it is safe to say that social distancing isn't really the blessing it is made out to be for the socially disinclined. But, remember the vaccines are coming, so before long it'll be high time to start exercising your face muscles and practising your hugging techniques once more.

On that final note, stay distant everyone!

● Illustration via Unsplash/Dawn Hudson

with Oona Lagercrantz

Which Cambridge Colleges are the worst (according to TripAdvisor)?

With lockdown (hopefully) ending in the near future and (socially distanced) opportunities for exploring Cambridge arising again, many of us will be faced with a new challenge. Namely – after months of isolation – how to know where to visit and where not to?

As a socially distanced fresher, I've barely explored anything besides the confines of my own room, let alone other colleges. Yet after spending (slightly too much) time on TripAdvisor, I feel like I am perfectly placed to provide a guide to the Cambridge Colleges – or rather, the “least desirable” of the bunch. For, as all well-travelled people know, it is only the “terrible” reviews on TripAdvisor that count. Thus, I have ranked the colleges based on how many terrible reviews they currently have, to help spread awareness about where to avoid at all costs!

First place : Trinity: *“Sadly archaic and out of touch”*

Trinity College comes in at first place, way ahead of its peers, with a total of ten terrible reviews. Many of these concerned not being let in at all, or being charged an unreasonable amount after being let in. One of the many victims of the latter, “Soobasoo”, lamented being “charged £3 to look at a grass quad!!!!” and concluded the review with a simple: “Wow.”

Australian “Angela E” and her partner, who didn't feel like paying, recalled how a porter “made a point of

standing almost toe to toe with us, filling our eyeline with his considerable bulk to prevent us seeing the building from the gateway.”

Several reviews described Trinity's “shockingly rude porters,” who indeed appear to have undergone extensive training to increase their unconscious bias.

The most recent terrible review, from December 2019, was written by “Bob & family”, who appreciated the buildings but were left unimpressed by Trinity because “the people who run it are sadly archaic and out of touch of the with the world today – such a shame.”

Shared second place : Homerton, King's, Sidney Sussex and St John's

With six terrible reviews each, these colleges all have some way to go before they reach Trinity, but the reviews are not pretty.

Homerton: *“absolute dump”*

With probably the worst roasting of all, nothing at Homerton escaped the rage of its visitors.

“Jules96,” under the title “Gives ‘Basic’ New Meaning,” wrote: “I would be worried if my kids got rooms here as student digs.”

Going even further – perhaps a little too far – “kano978” called Homerton “absolutely disgusting!!!” and explained that he “recently had to stay in this absolute dump. Room 247 was especially bad.” Kano978 then goes on to make some very

questionable statements about room 247, before concluding: “Homerton, Cambridge and England collectively are a colossal piece of poo on the bottom of my shoe.” Moving on.

King's: *“miserable and ungracious people”*

King's was slammed for lacking proper provisions by many visitors. As “Alfonso M” succinctly put it: “Heaven has no toilets.” To King's credit however, they replied to Alfonso, writing that they were “sorry that the lack of provision of public toilets within the College has had such an impression on you.”

“Visitor090” draws the following conclusion: ‘If this is the institution training the UK's leadership no wonder they are such miserable and ungracious people.’”

People were also apparently outraged by the unfriendly atmosphere and rude staff, bad enough for “Visitor090” to draw the following conclusion: “If this is the institution training the UK's leadership no wonder they are such miserable and ungracious people.”

Sidney Sussex: *“beyond basic”*

Certain visitors at Sidney Sussex were unhappy with everything from “rude phone calls” and “rough and arrogant” porters, to the “inhuman catering staff” who, according to “Grace L”, “delight in ruining the meal times of others.” Grace L ended her review by providing a stark message to read-



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...Violet Investigates

ers: "Seriously, go to any other college in Cambridge."

"MiddleEnglandMan" wrote that he was "expecting the facilities to be basic, but this was beyond basic." Worse yet, "tennis player" described how Sidney Sussex did not provide toast with his scrambled egg, which is frankly shameful.

St John's: *"the ideal venue for minimalist insomniacs on a diet"*

Many people staying here described being unable to sleep and among them is "Tommytoots", who captured the desperation thus: "Kept up all night by constant loud humming. I am writing this at 5.48am on a Bank Holiday. I should be asleep."

Several reviews also concerned the poor food quality and "Trevor R" provided a particularly harsh critique of the Buttery's breakfast that apparently consisted of:

"Cold baked beans, rubber fried eggs, veggie sausages which looked like amputated fingers from a mummy, brittle toast that disintegrated when approached by butter washed down with insipid tea."

Trevor R ended his near 600-word long review by declaring that "St John's Cambridge is the ideal venue for minimalist insomniacs on a diet," and noted that he is "yet to receive ANY reply" from St John's after complaining.

Third place : Churchill: *"mediocre panna cotta"*

With four terrible reviews, Churchill takes the third place, with bad accommodation and food among the primary causes of fury.

"LglEagle" explained: "There was even someone's dirty toenail lying in wait to greet me as I walked through the door of the room. I'm afraid to open the desk drawers, so I won't."

"Lyndawilson1966", who had to endure the "absolutely atrocious food & service" at Churchill, recalls the ordeal like this:

"Main meal returned twice: cold first time & then the duck was so overcooked I couldn't cut it with my knife. Offered a vegetarian option but almost an hour since the first table was served & 10 minutes after everyone else on our table. A lot of people were complaining. We paid almost £50 per head for three small pieces of smoked salmon & a small soup bowl of mediocre panna cotta. To add insult to injury, poured half a cup of coffee & asked if I wanted more!!!!" Half a cup? Disgraceful.

Dishonourable mention: Fitzwilliam: *"unbelievably awful"*

In fourth place, with three notoriously savage terrible reviews, Fitzwilliam deserves mention.

Visitors are especially harsh on its "very dark and dingy" accommodation, and especially the "unbelievably awful en-suite facilities," as "Julia B" put it.

"Fightingsultan" didn't spare the criticisms either, explaining that Fitzwilliam provided "the worst accommodation that

I have stayed in since 1969,"

and elaborating as follows:

"The room was disgusting: the environment dirty. My bed was made twice in nine days. Long Life milk was not refreshed. No biscuits were provided for tea. I had to import two lamps in order to see in the dingy room. There was litter around outside. The kitchens and bathrooms should be closed down. Anyone paying more than £5 for this revolting accommodation needs their head looking at."

Paying £174 a week for my en-suite room in Fitzwilliam, this hit particularly close to home and made me wonder if I should indeed have my head looked at. ●



A Violet Easter Term Checklist

This term was truly like no other as we have slowly witnessed ourselves and those around us adapting to the new circumstances. Remote learning, easing out of lockdown, tempramental weather conditions: we have more or less seen it all.

This term have you...

- Made coffee walks your main form of socialising
- Had drinks on Jesus Green in freezing weather
- Organised a fake club-night with your household
- Got soaked in pub outdoor seating
- Had a supervision whilst still in bed
- Ordered 3+ takeaways in a week
- Dressed up only to get right back into to sweats
- Perfected wasting time
- Made friends you've only ever spoken to on zoom
- Cooked an elaborate meal for the 'restauant feeling'
- Walked to Grantchester on the three sunny days there were
- Sat outside King's with Jack's Gelato
- Taken revision more lightly given the online exams...

...then you've made the most of these few months!



Vulture

Creating in a crisis

Georgina Buckle

Ask any student how they found working from home during lockdown and you will hear a resounding answer: “challenging”. Amidst the imposed isolation last term, we were forced to struggle without the integral resources which facilitate our degrees. But it would be disingenuous to assume that all students had the same learning experience. As a Humanities student, although frustrated by the physical inaccessibility of critical texts, I still had the luck of library books being scanned for me. What happens when what you most need to fulfil your course is not something easily scannable, but instead expensive tools, tubes of paint, or an expansive studio space? For arts students, these things have been made almost impossible to access over lockdown.

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

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

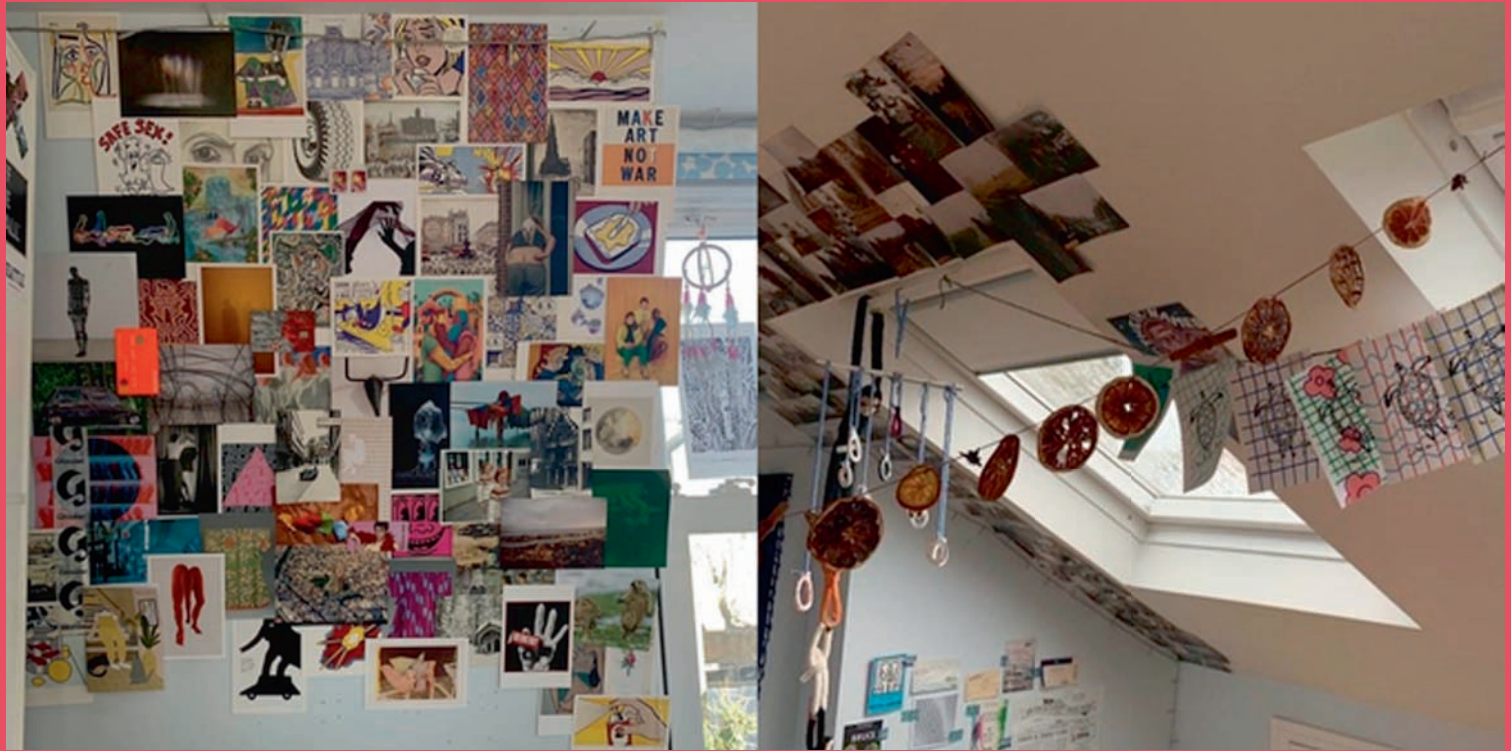
Art allows people the freedom to pursue different avenues of curiosity. This is especially true for foundation and first-year students, with their course intentionally structured to teach a carousel of different mediums. These rotations allow for trial and error, playing with materials that may be unfamiliar, but prove fundamental in shaping one’s artistic trajectory. In theory, this is also a period in which students are taught a variety of ‘hands-on’ skills: having inductions on how to use knitting, sewing, printing machines, trying out dye and ceramic workshops, or makeup technique masterclasses. With the pandemic, none of this has really been possible. Inevitably, it has caused a backlash for students. Ella Duncan (@eddy_ded), a foundation year student at Epsom, asked her tutor how much of her University application should constitute foundation year work: “She said most of it should be. But at the time, I had been at Epsom for six weeks, and I had only done one piece of art.”

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

It has also been immensely detrimental to lose that valued communal studio space in which artists collectively bounce ideas around, offering criticism and advancing each other’s ideas. “Working alongside







▲ Georgia's bedroom / make-shift studio space (GEORGIA SMITH / @GEORGIA.S.ARTT)

other creatively focused people is just something you cannot fake at home or over Zoom," Ella stresses. "In a studio you can turn to the person next to you asking, 'what's wrong with my painting?' and they can immediately tell you. It's a completely inspiring atmosphere."

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

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

Certain words crop up across the interviews: "lost", "demotivated", "uninspired", "stuck", "concerned". But what also resonates across the discussions is how inventive they have been during the pandemic. Windows have become lightboxes that can

be traced on top of. Colourful plastic bags can be cut up and knit. Putting woodchips on your face is the new editorial makeup look. And all you need for printmaking is some stones, old yarn and paint. Artists have gained a new-found appreciation for their surroundings, and for breathing new life into mundane objects. Each of them has adapted through sheer agility.

"I end up having all my work spread up on the floor, taped to my windows, hanging on washing-lines across walls," said Georgia Smith (@georgias.artt), a first-year student of Graphic Communication and Illustration at Loughborough university. Lockdown was the impetus for Georgia to construct her huge "inspiration wall": a collage of paraphernalia from art exhibitions. On the wall, Georgia often refers to things she likes, materials she could use, thinking of what artists to draw inspiration from – it's probably been "the most helpful thing" for sparking new ideas. Georgia's can-do attitude is reflected in her shift of work focus. "The main switch in my work is that it has become much more humour based," she says with a smile. "The world is so depressing right now – I don't want to make anything that's sad or that isn't entertaining. Even just using bright colours, patterns, or being more playful with the concepts – I only want to focus on creating happy work."

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

stamps by pressing flowers."

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

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

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

Varsity X CSVPA



Creative Directing: Lily Maguire and Holly Sewell

Photography: Tilda Butterworth and Rosie Poser

Styling: Madeleine Anderson, Eva Morris, Olivia Rhodes and Oyinkan Akinbolagbe

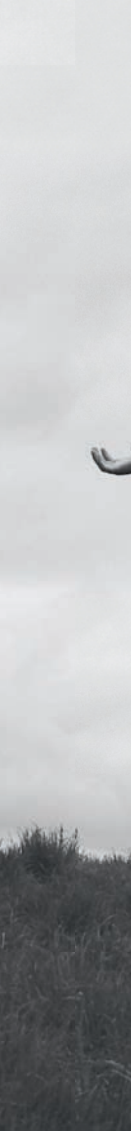
Assisting: Manuela Saenz and Lim Sing Ying

Modelling: Callum MacKenzie Finnigan, Lydia Roberts, Alice Le Coustumer, Excel Ebere, Naphysa Awuah, Maisy Redmayne, Amy Howell, Josh Osman, Niamh Gregg and Lotte Brundle

Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts (CSVPA) Designers:

Lanxin Zhang, Lim Sing Ying, Stephanie Scharer, Sophie Pohn, George Martin, Eva Manolis and Taja Freser

With thanks to Holly Fulton and Zoe Gilbertson at CSVPA



Models from top left to bottom right:
 Naphysa wearing Lim Sing Ying, Niamh
 wearing Eva Manolias, Josh wearing
 George Martin, Callum wearing Lanxin
 Zhang, Maisy wearing Lim Sing Ying,
 Victoria and Amy wearing Stephanie
 Sharer







Models from top left to bottom right:
 Niamh wearing Eva Manolias, Alice and
 Callum wearing Lanxin Zhang, Excel
 and Alice wearing Lanxin Zhang, Lotte
 wearing Taja Freser, Victoria wearing
 Stephanie Sharer, Maisy wearing Lim
 Sing Ying







Models from top left to bottom right:
 Alice and Excel wearing Lanxin Zhang,
 Lydia wearing Lanxin Zhang
Front cover:
 Naphysa wearing Lim Sing Ying

A love letter to Emmanuel College Chapel Choir

Rosie Aylard

When talking to people about my life in Cambridge, the question that comes up the most is: “Why do you sing in Emmanuel Choir if you go to Queens?” This is a very good question, and requires an explanation of Cambridge’s choral scholarship audition process. My decision to apply for a choral scholarship was, in a manner which would foreshadow the majority of my Cambridge life, extremely last-minute. Encouraged by my school’s head of music and my ever-faithful mother, I downloaded the application form just a few days before the deadline. Upon reading the form, I was confused to find that I had to indicate other colleges whose choirs I would be interested in joining. Having no idea of each choir’s reputation, I put down Emmanuel and Clare, simply because I remembered them being pretty and friendly when I looked around Cambridge.

After a very relaxed and welcoming day of auditioning, I received an email from Emmanuel’s director of chapel music, asking if I’d like to be a choral volunteer in their choir. [“Volunteer” just means you’re singing at a different college.] After getting over my slight disappointment that I wouldn’t be singing in my own college’s choir, I soon became excited at the prospect of getting to know another college and its community.

This excitement turned into dread as I arrived in Cambridge and the inevitable imposter syndrome began to convince me that I wouldn’t be good enough for a chapel choir. After my first rehearsal, I was determined to quit. I felt completely out of my depth among so many talented choral singers, who seemed to know exactly what they were doing, confidently sight-reading complicated music and grasping forms of notation, like psalms, which I had never seen before.

Fortunately, a friendly second year spoke to me after the rehearsal, having clearly picked up on the panicked fresher/deer in headlights look on my face, and convinced me that it would get easier. Even more fortunately, she turned out to be right. Still, I began my first term in choir desperately trying not to be heard for fear of making mistakes, but with the encouragement of those around me – one fellow member told me that the worst thing about my voice is that I don’t sing loudly enough – my

confidence began to grow.

Singing in a Cambridge chapel choir was like no musical challenge I had ever tackled before. The standard and dedication of the singers and our director, the varied repertoire ranging from classic canticle settings to original compositions written by members of choir, to acapella arrangements of Mariah Carey’s timeless classic, *All I Want for Christmas is You*. Ploughing through enough music to fill two services a week, the occasional weekend performance of Handel’s *Messiah*, and one performance of Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius* in Hampstead Parish Church, was exhausting but incredibly rewarding. I felt my singing improve

week-on-



week.

In spite of this, what surprised me most was the sense of community. Pre-Covid, we were lucky enough to go to formals every Sunday after evensong, which provided the perfect opportunity to catch up with everyone in choir. With such hectic weekly schedules, free food is often the only way to get people to congregate.

The choir is made up of singers from all across Cambridge, from Girton to Homerton, studying anything from archaeology to medicine. Being able to spend time with new people solely through choir, is truly a blessing. Uncharacteristically for Cambridge, there is no sense of competition between choir members. There are no rankings for who has the biggest range, no grading for how well you can sight-read intervals: everyone is there purely for

the joy of creating music with likeminded singers. I felt this sense of support most strongly when I reluctantly sang my first solo. Leading up to the service, I irritated my neighbours for days as my 12 bars of solo rang through the criminally thin walls of our first-year accommodation. On the first day of rehearsing this piece, my hands were shaking so hard that the sound of paper rustling was almost as loud as the organ accompaniment. I sang the solo, and when I finished, everyone – seeming slightly stunned that I could actually sing loudly – began to clap. That day, I finally felt confident that I was good enough, and I had earned the right to be there.

An equally bizarre and joyful experience is the tradition of choir parties. Anyone who says that rowing is a cult has clearly never been to a choir party. I wish I could write about this experience, but I think to try to put it into words would be to deny their indescribable magic. Besides, some traditions are best kept under a shroud of mystery.

Feeling valued as part of a different college’s community is an immense joy. It is also a huge privilege, as Emma has treated us to amazing formal dinners, and opportunities to sing for some amazing audiences. Even in the ordinary day-to-day, leaving my own college three times a week to go and sing in the Emmanuel chapel provided me with immense solace at times when work was overwhelming, when I felt homesick, or when I had been chained to my desk all weekend. Group singing is hugely beneficial to mental health, something which we can often forget about in the eternally hectic hamster-wheel of a Cambridge term.

I will sing the praises of Emmanuel college chapel choir and the beauty of choral music for years to come, but for now I will end this love letter with some thank yous. To Peter Foggitt, for taking me on as a panicked fresher who could never find her music. To Joe Penny, who agreed to join me in Emma choir having only met me five days earlier and has since made every rehearsal a thousand times more fun. To everyone in Emma Choir, for being the best cheerleaders, musicians, and friends I could have asked for.

If you’re interested in joining a college chapel choir, send an email to the director of chapel music. I’m sure they’ll love to hear from you! ●

Is it time to cancel Beethoven?

James Mitchell

2020 marks the 250th birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827) and, as such, there seems to have been an interminable number of ‘Beethoven 250’ concerts by virtually every classical music organisation imaginable. However, the standard criticisms of Beethoven have also intensified this year, sometimes leading to online stand-offs.

When Vox published an article describing Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* as “a reminder of classical music’s history of exclusion and elitism”, the right-wing media threw up a storm over it and declared it “woke madness”, with even Ben Shapiro offering his own “delicate” response. In light of the recent #MeToo and BLM movements, Beethoven’s symbolic nature as the potentially prototypical ‘pale, male and stale’ composer has become ever more prominent. The feminist musicologist Susan McClary infamously compared the recapitulation in his *Ninth Symphony* to “the throttling murderous rage of a rapist incapable of attaining release”. Is it therefore time to throw the whole man out? If we ‘cancelled’ Beethoven, wouldn’t that eventually result in a more diverse, inclusive and accessible classical music scene?

First, we must look at how things got this way. During the 19th century, rising nationalism in Germany saw an increased focus on Germanic cultural heroes such as Martin Luther, J. S. Bach and of course Beethoven. Beethoven’s 100th birthday anniversary in 1870 saw numerous boasts about German musical superiority, such as from composer and professional butt-munch Richard Wagner.

These narratives only intensified in the 20th century, particularly in the Third Reich. Beethoven’s legacy was perhaps cemented in modern times, however, by the influence of both pre- and post-war musicologists. Donald Francis Tovey, the progenitor of English musicology (and a public figure in his day), along with figures like Theodor Adorno and Carl Dahlhaus, sought the position of both classical music, and particularly Beethoven, as universal in a changing world where Adorno’s ‘light’ music (as opposed to the ‘serious’ nature of classical music) was becoming ever more popular.

Beethoven’s central musical status has grown even into the 21st century. The question: “Was Beethoven Black?” keeps resurfacing over 100 years after being first proposed. He was the most performed

composer in America in 2019-20, with over double the number of performances of Mozart (the second most performed). Being a guaranteed ticket-seller and donor pleaser, he keeps reappearing in concert programmes to the exclusion of other, more diverse composers. In the neo-liberal world, where audiences prefer the familiar, such attitudes to programming are unlikely to change unless there is a mass cultural boycott (i.e. ‘cancelling’) of composers like Beethoven.

Is this therefore the way forward? Well, not really. Notwithstanding that some people actually like Beethoven’s music, the problems classical music faces are more deeply rooted than just a single composer. The nationalist and colonialist appropriation of classical music by Wagner and others, with its attached racism and sexism, is part of its history. More problematic is the argument posed by musicologist Anna Bull: “Classical music requires the exclusionary practices described earlier [in her chapter] in order to demonstrate how it is different from other genres”.

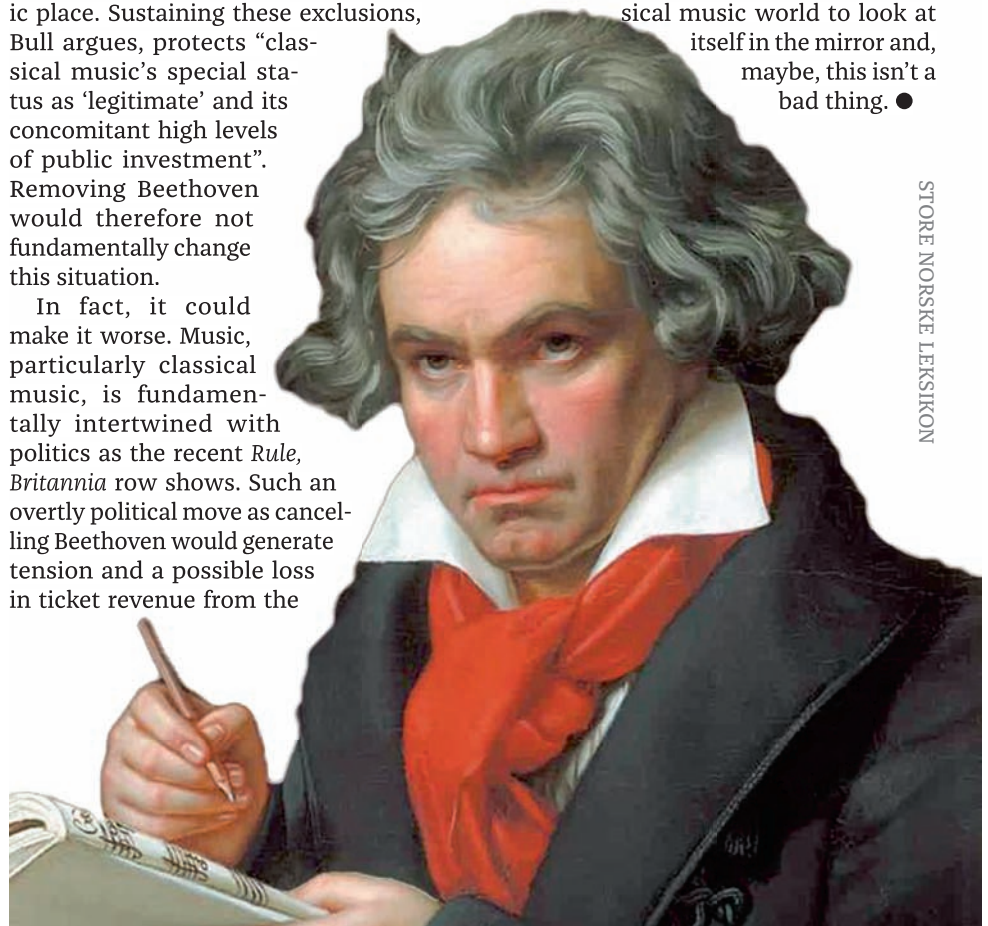
According to Bull’s theory, removing Beethoven from the scene would only result in a different ‘pale, male and stale’ composer (e.g. Mozart) taking his symbolic place. Sustaining these exclusions, Bull argues, protects “classical music’s special status as ‘legitimate’ and its concomitant high levels of public investment”. Removing Beethoven would therefore not fundamentally change this situation.

In fact, it could make it worse. Music, particularly classical music, is fundamentally intertwined with politics as the recent *Rule, Britannia* row shows. Such an overtly political move as cancelling Beethoven would generate tension and a possible loss in ticket revenue from the

right-wing audience (which has happened before with Beethoven). In a world of limited arts funding, with coronavirus having hit classical music hard, any drop in revenue could lead to organisations relying even more on other bankable hits, leading to a greater exclusion of more diverse composers. To cancel Beethoven could potentially work against its intended goal; while this view may be slightly speculative, it must at least be taken into account.

The only real conclusion is that every way forward is problematic. Keeping everything the same also keeps the current problems in place. Decentralising Beethoven, however, could both lead to increased conservatism in programming and exacerbate classical music’s supposed decline, potentially causing young people to lose out on the cultural benefits of it e.g. youth orchestras (in her research, Bull highlights the value of the “classical music ecology”).

There is no straightforward solution to solving these problems without causing other ones. However, perhaps this is unavoidable. A reliance on looking for simple solutions blinds us to the true complexity of the situation. Cancelled or not, Beethoven will continue to force the classical music world to look at itself in the mirror and, maybe, this isn’t a bad thing. ●



STORE NORSKE LEKSIKON

In conversation with **Wolf**

Tilda Butterworth



It has now been over a decade since Wolf Alice began making music together. Initially they were a duo, made up of vocalist, lyricist and guitarist Ellie Rowsell and guitarist Joff Oddie, which soon expanded to include bassist Theo Ellis and drummer Joel Amey. Following a run of EPs, the four-piece released their debut album, *My Love Is Cool*, in 2015, which reached number two in the UK album charts. Their second album, *Visions of a Life* (2017), won the 2018 Mercury Prize.

After this success it must have been daunting to embark on the creation of their next album, with an awareness of the 'third album syndrome' which many bands have been said to suffer from. Listening to *Blue Weekend* (released on June 4th 2021), it is clear that the band have

avoided this completely. The softly spoken verses, grungy guitar riffs, building choruses and insightful lyrics which are typical of a Wolf Alice song are still present, but the band has gone several steps further with this album. The sound of the album wraps around the lyrics, with its newly introduced orchestral elements and layering of voices and instruments. The album feels both vulnerable and powerful, telling of love, heartbreak, disillusionment, rage and liberation. "Extravagance disguised as elegance is boring," Ellie declares in 'Delicious Things', a song which tells the story of an unnerving experience in LA. 'Lipstick On The Glass' has an otherworldly, dangerous feel to it: "The full moon rising but it's me who makes myself mad". 'Smile' is an assertion of the power of sensitivity,

and anger at being patronised and undermined: "I am what I am and I'm good at it, and you don't like me well that isn't fucking relevant". 'The Beach' and 'The Beach II' (the first and final songs on the album) are completely distinct in mood, although both feel deeply nostalgic and tell of profound connections between people. *Blue Weekend* shows a marked transition from the band's earlier songs, which were resolutely not about love – a change which Ellie has said came from a realisation of the role music can play in finding solace and a sense of connection and community. It's still impossible to place Wolf Alice within one genre, but both the sound and lyrics of the album feel more cohesive than ever before.

I've been a fan of Wolf Alice since my

Alice



JORDAN HEMINGWAY

mid-teens, chanting 'Don't Delete The Kisses' at New Year's Eve celebrations and listening to 'You're A Germ' on repeat to psych myself up to do intimidating things. *My Love Is Cool* and *Visions of a Life* have accompanied me through my adolescence and into my twenties, and now *Blue Weekend* has been released at what feels like the perfect moment: shortly before lockdown restrictions lift, and just in time to become the soundtrack to summer. In mid-May, I got to interview Wolf Alice's Theo Ellis and Joff Oddie about the creation of *Blue Weekend* and what they've been doing in the months leading up to its release.

It starts with the usual mild Zoom chaos. They've recently got back from Live at Worthy Farm rehearsals in Glastonbury, the perfectly timed sirens and car horns

in the background immediately signalling that they are indeed in London. Theo joins the call, and then immediately disappears to grab a Snapple. While he's gone, Joff appears. Then the quintessential Zoom awkwardness of everyone saying, "Hi, how are you?" at the same time and thus all muting each other.

We break the ice by talking about the lead up to the album's release, which is finally starting to feel real to them. "That was what I was most scared of," says Theo, "when I realised we were going to be putting it out in the middle of everything being... a bit tricky... but it feels exciting, like we're building up to something." I tell them about my prep for the interview: the full *Blue Weekend* listening experience, which involved borrowing a blue light from my housemate and projecting it onto the ceiling, and then lying on the floor and listening to the album from start to finish. "That's commitment!" Joff says, and Theo follows up with, "That's a proper listen. I usually put it on when I'm cooking or something."

Since the past year of seemingly endless lockdowns have inarguably put us in a place of romanticising the past, I ask Joff and Theo if they think the sound of the album emerged from nostalgia, or if it looks more towards the future. Joff replies that, while of course "circumstance and context have a profound effect on whatever art you're making", the record was written before the pandemic, and recording was done half before and half during. "So we were well on our way, really. Any response triggered by the pandemic would be in regard to the music videos, which we curated after the fact. Thinking about it now, the music videos are very much reminiscent of the days before."

Only three music videos have been released by the day of the interview. The MV for 'The Last Man On Earth' takes place on a beach, while 'Smile' is a distorted, trippy vision of a gig at a pub, and 'No Hard Feelings' consists of dreamy images of pylons, night buses and neon-lit bus stops. I ask if they see the worlds of each video as being connected and forming a greater narrative. "Yeah, budget *Lemonade*," Joff jokes, revealing that there will be eleven music videos, one for each song, which follow the band on a night out. I tell them that the visual element of this album feels particularly coherent and continuous this time, as though it is its own world that is both dreamy and attached to reality, but in a kind of liminal space.

Joff seems pleased. "Thank you! We

worked with a guy called Jordan Hemingway, who is incredible at blurring real and fantasy worlds. It was a real pleasure to work with him. We had a good time, didn't we Theo?"

"He's very talented. I was definitely a fan of him before - we'd watched some stuff he'd made. Initially I thought he was too cool for us... and then it turned out he is too cool for us, but he also wanted to work with us." Wry and self-effacing, the two of them are living up to my expectations.

They clearly had a lot of fun filming the videos, but are there any stand-out memorable moments from the process? "Oh yeah, the whole thing, man! It was fucking amazing," Theo responds enthusiastically. "The director of photography, Molly [Manning Walker], she was incredible. The crew were so good. We were, like, burning a red carpet on a beach outside of Hastings with Ellie singing in front of it on a piano. All this stuff was like, sensory overload, because it had been so long since we'd gone and done anything. Simulating playing in bars and getting in the ocean - well, Ellie getting in the ocean and all of us watching her semi-drown. That was probably not a positive memory, but it was funny."

I remark that watching the music video for 'Smile' was the closest I had been to being inside a pub until May 17th, to which Theo replies, "Oh, good! That's some of the nostalgia we were talking about."

As many people have noted, the lyrics of *Blue Weekend* feel much more personal and autobiographical: 'No Hard Feelings' is a gentle acknowledgement of a bitter-sweet breakup, while Ellie steps out of her comfort zone in 'Feeling Myself' to write about sex and self-love. I ask Joff and Theo how the two of them reacted to the lyrics when Ellie shared them, to which Theo replies, "I don't know if we really had a reaction. We're such a safe space for sharing ideas..." Breaking off to scoff at himself, he continues, "Safe space... it sounds like I'm a community support officer."

Digging deeper, I rephrase the question. When they read the lyrics, could they imagine what they would be as songs? Joff considers this. "It doesn't really work that way," he eventually says. "Ellie doesn't send over, like, a Word document - that would be an interesting and odd way of doing it. Although some people do. The reaction to hearing some of the early stuff that she was doing was that I thought she was... killing it." He nods proudly. "It imbued us with this sense of pressure in a way, because I felt like the songs were so brilliant that if we were unable to render



JORDAN HEMINGWAY

the music around them in a way that supported them, properly, it would be a huge failure. I felt pressure to musically back what she was doing – it felt like if these songs were lost because the music wasn't right, that would be a loss to the world."

I reassure him that they definitely didn't fail, and ask which song was the most enjoyable to compose – I imagine that 'Play the Greatest Hits', the album's punk rock interlude, was a lot of fun. "Play the Greatest Hits' was fun," Theo instantly agrees. "Play the Greatest Hits' is supposed to be fun. It's the most instant and short and snappy, and doesn't take itself too seriously. This album I think is a little bit more... mature... basically, some of the songs were really difficult. I enjoyed the process of just playing the bass for 'How Can I Make It OK' because it was a kind of syncopated rhythm that we haven't really done before that – an 80s-ish poppy vibe. I'm trying to think what else was fun." He briefly considers. "That's enough. That's enough fun for one album."

When asked if they think anything will change about the way the band performs live in the wake of the pandemic, Joff mentions that they've been playing with string sections, and that they've got a new person who they are playing with at the moment: Ryan Malcolm, who used to be in the band Superfood. They're working out how to play the new songs, as well as develop the old songs so that they don't leave them behind or continue playing them the way

they were five or six years ago: "I don't know about putting a new spin on them. It's a case of making them better, filling in the gaps – another person allows you to do that."

When asked if there's a venue they're especially excited to return to, Theo gets particularly animated. "The January tour has got a load of good places. We're playing Plymouth, which we've been threatening to do. Joel has moved to Hastings and we're playing Bexhill-on-Sea, which is near where he now fishes or whatever the fuck he does. And Glasgow! We're spending a bunch of time playing the Barrowlands – that's one of the best crowds in the world. Playing any gig anywhere is going to be amazing... I'll do anything to get out of the house now."

A few months before the interview I listened to Annie Mac's Future Sounds on BBC Radio 1, when Ellie and Theo made some excellent song recommendations (SAULT and HAIM, amongst others), so I wonder which other artists they were listening to while creating the album. "Ellie made a point that she could hear when she was listening to Christine and the Queens, and that it correlates with some of the songs. We're all fans, but Ells is a big fan of them," Theo says. "We've mentioned *Ultraviolence* – one of the best Lana Del Rey records. 'Safe from Heartbreak (if you never fall in love)' took inspiration from The Roches, who Ellie's brother showed us when we were in her garden having

a barbecue. It's very close-stacked harmonies and it's quite a vintage-sounding production, but it's actually from more recently than you think it is." "Joel was listening to a lot of The Chemical Brothers and Soulwax," Joff interjects. Theo nods, and muses, "It's become easier for us to say what we were listening to on this album than any of the others."

In a group of very individual personalities, what's the dynamic within the band? In the absence of the other members of Wolf Alice, Joff and Theo are quick to pick and run with my hypothetical challenge: faced with a minor crisis, what role would each of them take?

"Give us a scenario, let's focus in on this," Joff says excitedly. "Burglary? Alright... a bandit enters the tour bus."

"A hamburger!" Theo exclaims.

"Come to steal our delicious hamburgers."

"Joel would befriend him by accident and then give him all his bank details," Theo decides. "Ellie would be in a blind state of panic. I would potentially get a beer with him... and then I think Joff would have to sort it all out tomorrow."

Isn't there a flaw in this fanciful logic, though? They're not really deterring people from robbing the tour bus if the punishment is getting to be friends or have a beer with Wolf Alice. Theo responds, laughing, that if the burglar has got that far they probably deserve it.

And now the question that I've wanted to hear the answer to for ages: I know that the band name is taken from the title of an Angela Carter short story, but do they remember the exact moment when they figured out that they wanted to use it? It's less profound than I expected, but a nice story nevertheless.

"We needed a name for the Myspace page," Joff says. "Ellie's mum took a book off the shelf which was that collection of stories by Angela Carter and went, 'Wolf Alice, that would be a good band name!'"

But isn't it a name that can easily be misheard. "We've heard 'em all before," says Joff, undaunted. "Sticks and stones."

We briefly talk about the report on the initial findings of the outdoor gig tests – it's no less safe than going shopping, apparently. Theo is incredulous that I've said I miss live music more than the pub... so I wonder where they'll be on the day the album is released.

"Our management are slowly putting in really shit little things to do to try to ruin the day," Theo laughs, "but I'm sure we'll have a glass of champagne... I'm sure by about midnight I'll be sideways somewhere."

Whether you're sideways or on your feet, I hope you're all listening to *Blue Weekend* on June 4th. ●



Rishi Sharma

I was asked to make a playlist of songs which encapsulated the 2020-21 academic year, the definition of which I've stretched slightly (okay, a lot). Here are my picks, with a quick word on each one. Sorry if I missed your favourite song: I'm only human (although it's easy to forget that fact). Hope you enjoy!

'Blinding Lights' – The Weeknd

Kicking this list off is the biggest song of 2020, racking up over 2 billion streams. Despite this, The Weeknd got zero Grammy award nominations. Injustice? I agree.

'Coriolan, Op. 62: Overture' – Ludwig van Beethoven

2020 was the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, with concerts scheduled around the world to mark the event. Some of them were cancelled and some had to adapt to virtual performances, but the circumstances didn't take away from his undeniable genius. It was tough to pick from so many classics (pun intended), but this is a must-listen. Also, check out the article on page 53 about whether we should cancel him.

'Alright' – Kendrick Lamar

This year was marked by huge protests around the world in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Lamar's moving, defiant lyrics on police brutality and the fight for equality made this an anthem for protestors in the mid-2010s, and it remains a fantastic song in its own right.

'Black Parade' – Beyoncé

Staying with the theme of Black pride, Beyoncé's charity single is a celebration of her roots. It was released on Juneteenth – a holiday celebrating the end of slavery in the United States – but it gained even more significance in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

'Love Lockdown' – Kanye West

Whilst I don't think many of us *loved* lockdown, this song is great and it has 'lockdown' in the title, so why not?

'Miami' – Kali Uchis

This song ticks two boxes: it's from Kali's (excellent) 2018 record *Isolation* (a word which I've heard far too much this year) and the guest verse from BIA contains the lyric "I ain't too bougie for corona" (referring to the drink). Basically what I'm saying is that the pandemic was clearly caused by this song.

'WAP' – Cardi B

I don't really think I need to explain this any further. Cardi B teamed up with Megan Thee Stallion for one of the biggest and most popular hits of the year, helped by a viral dance. This list would be severely lacking without this track.

'Drivers License' – Olivia Rodrigo

TikTok had a huge influence on the music of the past year, propelling several artists to superstardom. Olivia Rodrigo's debut single racked up over 700 million streams, and she's only 18. I'm 19. Sometimes I ask myself what on earth I've been doing this whole time.

'Immaterial' – SOPHIE

The hyperpop icon sadly passed away this year at the age of 34. Picking one song from her was difficult given the strength of her discography, but this uplifting banger about being anything you want encapsulates what made her music so great for so many.

'All Caps' – Madvillain

MF DOOM, one half of hip-hop's Madvillain and an incredible solo artist as well, passed away in late 2020. British-born but raised in New York, the masked MC raised the game for underground rappers and also made a huge impact on the mainstream. Another difficult decision to pick just one track given his amazing discography.

'Jump' – Van Halen

The final song of this mini in memoriam section: rock icon Eddie van Halen passed away in late 2020. This song is easily the biggest hit for his band, and they have several: Van Halen's legacy will live long.

'Kyoto' – Phoebe Bridgers

This single was one of the most critically-acclaimed tracks of 2020 – a breakthrough year for Bridgers – and for good reason. Her album, *Punisher*, is truly fantastic.

'XS' – Rina Sawayama

Whether it was campaigning for the right to be recognised as British for the Mercury Prize, or stunning everyone with her flamboyant dress on the red carpet of the BRIT awards in May, pop sensation and Cambridge graduate Rina Sawayama had a huge 2020. In the first half of 2020, she also released an album, which was my personal favourite album of the year. Although her song was released before the academic year, she continued to make headlines all the way through it, so I'm including it.

'Yeh Vaada Raha' – Kishore Kumar

One of the defining features of this year for me was that it was the first one without my granddad, who passed from COVID-19 in April of 2020. His music taste included Bollywood classics and, later, the music of his adopted homeland of the UK. This smooth love duet, the title track of the 1982 movie of the same name, was one of his favourites, and features two of India's most iconic singers of all time: Kishore Kumar and Asha Bhosle. He loved to listen to music with me, and I'm sure he'd have loved to share this song with you, too.

'Kerosene!' – Yves Tumor

I didn't want to end on a sad note, so I'm rounding off this list with my personal favourite song of 2020, which was technically released in the first half of the year. The inclusion of this song here is a reminder of two very simple facts: this is my list, and I make the rules. Tumor absolutely crushes this song with their brilliant instrumentation, and this is probably one of the few genuinely good songs with the lyric "I ain't like them other girls" in it. What more could you ask for? ●

Koyaanisqatsi, or a tale

Isabel Sebode

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

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

The first sequence of the film confronts us with the most radical juxtaposition. From cave paintings to the explosion of Apollo 11 (our vector to the moon), we witness the static stone being overtaken by the momentum of modern life. “Aim for the stars”, the movie could seem to say, yet the subsequent images advocate the antithesis. Only fleeting glimpses of nature fill the screen before man’s intervention expresses itself through power lines and mining trucks. The detonation of an atomic bomb next to a Joshua tree jarringly terminates this sequence, irrevocably fusing nature with human destruction. Both seem equally natural in the desert environment, the explosion sickeningly majestic.

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

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



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

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

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

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

of destruction

uncomfortably confronted with existential questions that force us to answer for ourselves: how did we get here and why do we accept this as our normality? We breathe deeply as we glide over the mountainous landscape and suffocate in the images of city life. Nonetheless, we accept the latter state. Reggio reminds us that this is not normal, for with every impulse of apathy towards this loss of nature, our life becomes increasingly fragile.

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



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



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Deconstructing consent

&

Leeza Isaeva

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of sexual violence.

The portrayal of sexual violence on screen tends to fall into one of two categories. Often sexual assault is trivialised as a plot point, symbolism, or is justified as an attempt to achieve “historical accuracy” (looking at you, *Game of Thrones*). This rarely focuses on the actual trauma of sexual violence on an individual level, or its aftermath, in any meaningful sense. Alternatively, violation of consent is shown within the narrative but not problematised. There’s a troubling history of teen comedy films, such as *Sixteen Candles*, depicting scenes of non-consensual sexual activity, which is to say assault, but don’t acknowledge it as such. All instances tend to revolve around limited understandings of assault: a woman, often white, is violently assaulted by a man.

However, TV shows have been increasingly challenging these ideas and none more so than *I May Destroy You*. Written and directed by, and starring, Michaela Coel, the plot follows young writer Arabella, as she deals with the traumatic reality that she was drugged and assaulted on a night out. Weaving together the storylines of Arabella’s friends, Terry (Weruche Opia) and Kwame (Paapa Essiedu), Coel explores consent beyond the binary of yes/no and focuses on the personal trauma of sexual violence. The show is messy, harrowing, funny, uncomfortable — and unlike anything else on TV.

Having originated from Coel’s own experiences of assault, *I May Destroy You* broadens to deconstruct typical understandings of sexual violence. “So many people have a story around sexual consent,” Coel explains in an interview. The show explores some of the many forms this can take. One scene involves “stealth-ing” — where one partner removes a condom during sex without the consent of the other — which is legally classified as rape under UK law, but is too often disregarded as an act of assault.

In another scene, Terry consents to a threesome on the assumption that it was spontaneous. Her discomfort upon realising that it was planned by her two male partners explores how withholding information affects consent. When Kwame makes a police report about his assault, the officer is visibly uncomfortable and dismisses his case. Kwame had used

Grindr and previously consented within the same sexual encounter, and the police officer’s reaction is indicative of how sexual violence within queer relationships and against men is marginalised.

I May Destroy You is brutally realistic in its portrayal of the aftermath of sexual violence, which rarely makes it onto our screens. Trauma is non-linear and complex. Faced with flashbacks to her assault, Arabella tries to rebuild her life and sense of self through therapy and talking groups, but also through increasing reliance on her online audience and self-destructive tendencies. Like Kwame, Arabella reports her experience to the police. Although her case is taken on, the experience is similarly unsatisfactory. After nine months, the police ask if she would like her belongings back as they are unable to take her case further. Both experiences are representative of the 98.6% of reported rapes in England and Wales which do not make it to court.

Most powerfully, *I May Destroy You* rejects any black and white, moralising judgement. People are complex. Although a survivor of assault herself, Arabella trivialises Kwame’s experiences, not seeing him as vulnerable in the same way. The show treats issues like consent and sexual violence with all the messiness and nuance that they merit. The final episode plays out three potential scenarios of how Arabella’s assault could have ended differently, but it ends on an uncertain note, unwilling to confine trauma and its depth within a mere twelve episodes. The medium of film and TV encourages neat and tidy endings,

heroes and villains. Michaela Coel rejects this unabashedly, ringing true to the reality of sexual violence and trauma.



Yet, it seems there is still progress to be made. Where *I May Destroy You* explores consent with sharp wit and nuance, another of 2020’s huge hits, *Bridgerton*, falls

sexual violence on screen

back into the industry's bad habits in its failure to acknowledge assault. Generally described as a Regency-era *Gossip Girl*,

hailed for its portrayal of female sexual pleasure, one scene shows how sexual boundaries are violated within their relationship.

The Duke had consented to sex with Daphne on the condition of the ever-reliable method of "pulling out". With virtually no sex education, Daphne believed that the Duke was unable to have children. When she suspects he has been misleading her, she tests her theory by continuing to have sex with him while he calls out for her to stop, twice. One of the key elements of consent is that it can be withdrawn at any point: Daphne ignores the Duke's boundaries and withdrawal of consent, making this a clear instance of assault.

What is less clear, however, is whether the writers were aware of this. If anything, Daphne's violation of the Duke's consent is seen as a power move, and the fallout from this scene focuses on her experiences of betrayal. While the show devotes much time to the problem of Daphne's lack of sex ed, the absence of any discussion about how she violates the Duke's boundaries feels glaringly obvious. The Duke withholds information, yet this doesn't excuse Daphne's actions. What could have been a nuanced and powerful discussion about mutual betrayal, the importance of informed consent, and the aftereffects of sexual misconduct within a marriage, never materialises.

This is troubling for many reasons. Sexual

violence within a marriage, or indeed a relationship, is often taken less seriously because of implied previous consent. Marital rape was only criminalised in England

and Wales in 1991. Additionally, as seen in *I May Destroy You*, male survivors of sexual violence face huge stigma in coming forward about their experiences. The conventional sexual assault survivor in public imagination is a woman and *Bridgerton* fails to explore the impact of when that is not the case. Moreover, as Aja Romano points out, Black men are more often scapegoated for sexual violence, marginalising Black male victims of sexual assault.

Alas, in *Bridgerton*, classical music covers of Taylor Swift conquer all, and by the end of the season this scene remains unaddressed. To see Netflix's "biggest series ever" trivialise rape when it doesn't fit the typical understanding of who is affected by sexual violence, is not only disappointing, but contributes to a victim-blaming culture where male survivors of sexual assault are less likely to be taken seriously. With the announcement of a second season, I hope themes of consent and sexual violence are addressed with more nuance in the future.

What links *I May Destroy You* and *Bridgerton*, regardless of their handling of sexual violence on-screen, is their use of intimacy coordinators on set. After the #MeToo movement and the exposure of industry-wide sexual misconduct, an increasing number of film, TV, and theatre productions hire trained intimacy coordinators in order to ensure the safety of actors involved. Among these are *Normal People* and *Sex Education*, both released within the last two years, which have also been praised for normalising vocal consent within relationships and providing models for what this looks like in practice.

The depiction of sexual violence itself varies, but ground-breaking and subversive shows like *I May Destroy You* have brought narratives which don't generalise or simplify the issue of consent to the forefront of media. Portrayals of sexual violence that explore its nuances and complexity rather than being subsumed by plot or symbolism, or indeed ignored altogether, will continue to be vitally important, and their foundations have been laid. ●

This article was written by a member of Loud and Clear, a campaign group working to address issues of sexual assault and harassment within Cambridge, as part of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week (1st-7th February 2021).

Bridgerton focuses on the classic "fake relationship to lovers" trope that plays out between Daphne, a debutante, and Simon, the Duke of Hastings. While the show is



Butoh, a compelling Japanese performance

Dr. Rosa van Hensbergen

Margaux Emmanuel



Butoh is often described as a Japanese dance-theatre form, founded by Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno as part of the Japanese Avant-garde movement – yet its resistance to definition has long fascinated scholars and dancers alike. Dr. Rosa van Hensbergen, Junior Research Fellow at Queens' College Cambridge, began researching butoh whilst in Japan on a Harper-Wood creative writing and travel fellowship, and then on a Daiwa scholarship. She has worked on butoh dance notation, and features in a Keio University FutureLearn course, 'Exploring Japanese Avant-garde Art Through Butoh Dance'. Having taken this course, I decided to contact Rosa van Hensbergen in order to gain more insight into butoh.

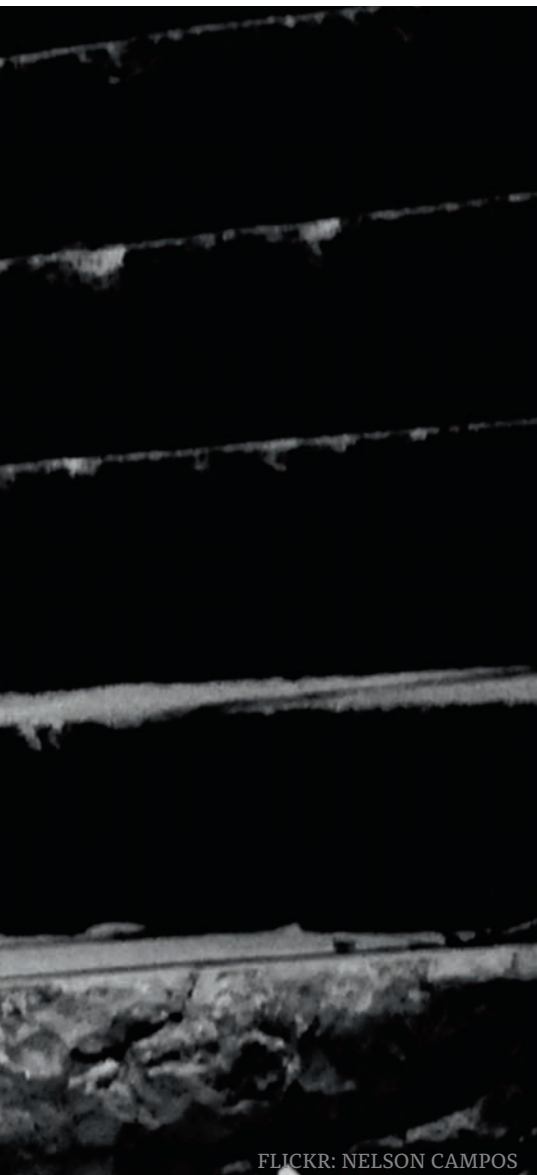
So, what exactly is butoh? van Hensbergen suggests that one of the challenges in defining butoh is knowing what 'butoh'

designates: is it an aesthetic, a method, a historical movement? "Butoh dance has a characteristic look – shaved heads, very little costume, white body makeup – but these elements aren't 'fixed'." van Hensbergen notes how 'butoh' can be "a term used by artists as a means of identifying themselves with one tradition and not another.... Yet there might be a potential tension between artists who have trained for many years but wouldn't call themselves butoh dancers and those who might have taken some workshops and decided that they identify with this art form."

van Hensbergen has been particularly interested in the language butoh uses as notation: "[Butoh] presents the most unusual use of language I've seen in dance... though the dancers very rarely speak on stage. Hijikata would speak live to a dancer in the rehearsal studio, which they would

Butoh dancers tap into experiences they might have had of the natural world

forming art: In conversation with



FLICKR: NELSON CAMPOS

then respond to.” She then gave the example of a story he had told his dancers about someone lying with fungus growing on their back for many years, who sees a girl in the distance. She runs and jumps in this person’s eye. “A rich imaginative world produces the movement.”

Indeed, “Hijikata would speak very fast at his dancers, and they would train their bodies to be responsive to his speech... Language does not only produce an image that you improvise to, but also structures the timing of the movement... This may suggest something about the way in which we process language.” As butoh audiences do not have access to this notation, van Hensbergen also wonders “how legible the interior process [is] to someone watching something structured, but in an elusive way, where you can’t exactly pin down what is structuring it. It actually results

in being incredibly resistant to interpretation.”

van Hensbergen also discussed whether or not butoh should be dubbed a method. “The difficulty in labelling which performances are butoh and which aren’t was produced early on with the two founding figures, Ohno and Hijikata... Divergences between its two founders might be one reason why it is difficult to say ‘this is butoh’... There was no controlling impulse to contain and authorize what could be produced under its sign.” “Ohno was interested in improvisation techniques... whilst Hijikata was more interested in butoh as a choreographic method and performance philosophy.” The dancers taught in Hijikata’s lineage learned butoh as a “repertoire of movements,” whereas “Ohno was more invested in improvisation technologies.” van Hensbergen explained how in workshops, Ohno’s son would invite his dancers to improvise with the image of a flower, or a moon; Ohno’s butoh was more invested in “using your feeling to carry you. Hijikata was more concerned with being carried by the image, by the language, which produced the movement. This may have generated feelings, but it abstracted the emotion: form was what led to the production of feeling.”

Since butoh arose during the post-war period, I wondered how butoh was influenced by the context of the atomic bomb. van Hensbergen answered that “butoh is very much a product of the post-war period... Japan was occupied by America, and so there was a very forceful importing of American culture... This, in tension with the history of nationalism that had led to Japan’s imperial expansion prior to WW2, created a complicated relationship to Japaneseness.” I then asked what she made of Hijikata’s short film *Navel and A-Bomb*, which specifically references this. “It’s difficult to say, because of its aestheticizing... It uses montage techniques to bring together different filmic sequences, and doesn’t really do the interpretative work of narrativising... These surrealist techniques leave some joints unjoined and therefore refuse to commit to particular political positions.”

I also asked what van Hensbergen thought of Hijikata’s relation to the natural world, since the dancer grew up in the rural Akita prefecture. He often drew inspiration from northern Japanese culture, as well as western influences. “[He] brings together memories of the community he grew up in and its landscape.” van Hensbergen describes how she took part in one

Butoh is global...during this last lockdown I’ve taken part in Zoom events in Mexico, Tokyo and South Africa

workshop where they “were invited to see fireflies everywhere which ... you can see in the north of Japan at certain times of the year.” “Dancers tap into experiences they might have had of the natural world.”

She also noted that butoh is very counter-cultural. *Kinjiki*, considered the first butoh performance, takes its name from Yukio Mishima’s book *Forbidden Colours*, which tells the story of a hidden homosexual love. “In his later work, *Revolt of the Body*, Hijikata drew on Artaud’s Heliogabalus, who was known for cross-dressing... Hijikata spent a lot of time with people on social peripheries.” This counter-cultural energy is at odds with the sense of tradition that is very much central to Japanese culture. Butoh artists are “potentially not so worried about where material came from, drawing on what naturally speaks to them. An irreverence for political implications might have been important to their ability to create.”

Finally, I asked whether butoh has stayed local to Japan, to which van Hensbergen answered that “butoh is global... During this last lockdown, I’ve taken part in Zoom events in Mexico, Tokyo and South Africa. The butoh community is definitely internationally connected.”

Butoh might be a complex art form, defying interpretation and definition, but it has travelled across the world, intriguing artists and researchers, and allowing thousands to identify with this fascinating dance-theatre discipline. As van Hensbergen put it, “in order for a form to live, you might have to refrain from containing it.”



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The show can't go on: looking back on a year without live theatre

Emily Moss

Before *Life-As-We-Know-It* was whipped away by the pandemic, one of the last live theatre performances I saw was a revival of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: Perestroika* at the ADC. Accompanying a friend who had read both parts of Kushner's sweeping two-part examination of the lives of queer New Yorkers at the peak of the HIV/AIDS crisis – and was far better informed about the play than me – I was nevertheless excited and intrigued, as I always am before setting foot in a theatre to watch something new. *Angels in America* would transpire to be a suitably fitting play to watch just before a global pandemic; its pervasive sense of doom now feels especially pertinent. Yet this wasn't my strongest memory from my last "typical" live theatre experience before the pandemic, in a proscenium arch theatre with the ADC bar downstairs, buzzing with friends and the famous show-themed cocktails. What I still remember most from that night was the atmosphere of the auditorium itself.

In every live theatre performance, the atmosphere is always ever so slightly, almost imperceptibly, different. This atmosphere always depends on the audience and venue; even if you saw the same performance twice, the atmosphere would still be different because no two audiences are identical. The few moments of silence in the auditorium before the performance begins are perhaps the only uniform feature of the live theatre experience. It's this silence which has led me to describe going to the theatre as a religious experience.

There's a ritual to it, irrespective of the audience or venue: we hold our breath before the curtain rises, a sudden chorus of coughs interrupts the silence, and then suddenly silence reigns again until the curtain lifts to reveal the world in which we're about to lose ourselves. It's an incomparable thrill.

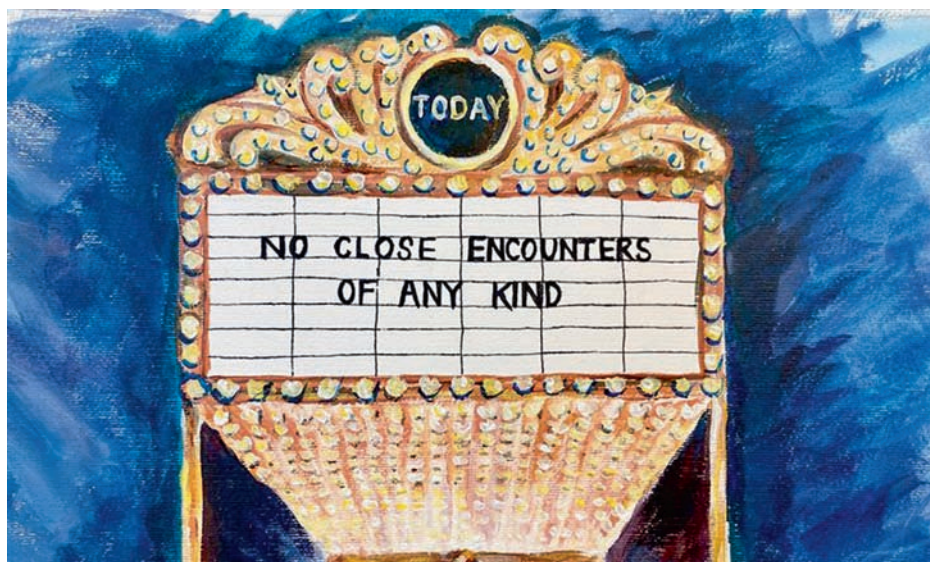
Then, there's the rather *less* dogmatic aspects still integral to any theatre trip. The sounds of other audience members eating their snacks. The snack-eating audience members being told to "shhhh" their noisy munching. The sight of someone poring over the play text whilst watching the performance. The back of your seat being relentlessly pummelled by the impatient feet of a seven year old. The trip to the bar in the interval to talk about the performance with friends – or even strangers – over overpriced drinks. The silences in moments where the audience is so gripped that no one dares to breathe. The applause, sometimes so rapturous that it's like thunder. Viewed nostalgically through the rose-tinted glasses which so many of us have been wearing lately, these experiences, which were always special, have taken on a new sanctity since ceasing to be part of everyday life.

In the earlier optimistic days of lockdown 1.0, I attempted to recreate the "live theatre experience", watching the National Theatre's weekly streams of past productions on YouTube. Although it was wonderful to watch productions I'd never been able to see before, it just wasn't quite the same as sitting in the Olivier at the National. I later watched a live-streamed performance of the Old Vic's *Lungs*, made all the more gripping by the fact that I knew that I was watching it live, but it

still somehow missed the mark. I told myself that all of this "streamed theatre" wasn't worse, it was just different. Yet, when my appetite for streamed theatre rapidly diminished towards the end of last summer – after months spent watching screens rather than stages – it dawned on me that, whether it made me an "unfaithful" theatre lover or not, I'd stopped enjoying watching theatre.

This isn't to say that I no longer enjoy watching *live* theatre. I'm just tired of *streamed* theatre. Streamed theatre – although a brilliant tonic for whenever you're itching to watch something that isn't a film or a Netflix true-crime documentary – isn't theatre as we've always known it. Yes, streamed theatre has done wonders for widening access; thousands of new theatre fans who may not have otherwise attended the theatre have tuned into free streams of past productions from venues like the National Theatre and the Bristol Old Vic. Yet, streamed theatre has only flourished because "The Real Thing" has been impossible in a pandemic. It should unequivocally not be interpreted as an adequate replacement for live theatre. As Thomas Ostermeier, artistic director of Berlin's famous Schaubühne, surmised in a recent interview: "livestreamed theatre is like methadone for heroin addicts: you don't get the same kick as with the real thing." Theatre is, after all, one of only a handful remaining art forms in our industrialised, technology-driven societies where, for a few hours, we won't be staring at screens. Translating it to the screen results in the loss of the atmosphere of the theatre, which is at least fifty per cent of the fun. In an art form where every single performance is totally, utterly unique, this uniqueness must be treasured for what it is.

There's light at the end of this long tunnel, however, with Rishi Sunak's £300m "culture recovery fund" and the scheduled reopening of UK theatres on the horizon, although our theatre landscape has been irrevocably – and in some instances irreparably – altered by the pandemic. But despite the losses our fragile ecosystem has endured of late, I still remain hopeful for the moment when I'll be searching for my seat in an auditorium again, joined by thousands of new theatre fans with whom I'll be watching – yes! – *live* theatre and revelling in its incomparable atmosphere. Whatever struggles the theatre industry faces in future, I know for sure that that almost indescribable experience will never be altered. ●



So, what's next?

Ellie Austin



So, has anyone else here memorised every detail of their time in Cambridge and replayed it a million times throughout lockdown? Anyone else at the point that they've developed a love-hate relationship with their unnecessarily detailed memory? Just me? In case you haven't heard, someone decided to make 2020 based entirely off the 2011 movie 'Contagion', and it's been half a year since we last left Cambridge. Six whole months.

Back then, leaving Cambridge was just waiting until my dad showed up to actually start packing up my entire room, accidentally hitting myself in the face with a picture frame as I carried it out to the car, and eagerly awaiting the much-needed 5 week break whilst reluctantly hugging my soon-to-be-distanced friends goodbye. Covid-19 was but a small pestering fly I was only just starting to notice, a minute ordeal that didn't even stop me going out every night the final week of term.

Yet, suddenly, I found myself momentarily confused as I watched SpongeBob break national lockdown by leaving his house to go to work. I actually had to remind myself that I was watching a twenty-year-old cartoon show, and that sponges probably

can't contract the virus anyway.

At the start of lockdown I was pretty much trying to exist anywhere except the present; either I was locked away in the past attempting to recall every tiny conversation from first year, or I was dreaming of the future, thinking "Oh well, it'll surely all be over by June, right?" Of course, June came. But COVID stayed.

Although peak lockdown brought with it endless news pieces and self-help columns, it's still a tangled mess in my mind that I'm trying to sort out. Luckily for me, I started a diary during lockdown. Unfortunately for me, my diary is of the opinion that nothing should ever be said directly, so we must somehow infer how I was feeling from the short descriptions of my day-to-day life, the various poems I wrote to the spider on my blinds, and a lot of 'abstract' artwork. Perhaps this fragmented way of expressing myself demonstrates the impact of those empty days on my sanity.

The biggest battle for me was grappling with what felt like the weight of eternity - a stark contrast to the blink-and-you-miss-it speed of term time. I found myself engaging in all sorts of weird behaviours to make the massive amount of time I was facing feel more digestible. I printed

out calendars of each month from March to September, stuck it on my wardrobe, and crossed off each day as it passed like a cartoon prisoner. There was one day I remember staring at a clock for an entire hour.

It wasn't until July when lockdown began lifting and I found myself sitting across the garden from my friends that I began to feel human again.

However, what really struck me after facing the eternity of lockdown was this new acute awareness I'd developed of my own presence in a way that only the intense prospect of death was able to achieve before - weirdly, every nice moment just began to feel a little sweeter. At first it was a good joke with a friend, then those box-mix cakes with expired sprinkles on top I made on a bored afternoon, and soon all it took was a pretty cloud. Perhaps I'd finally learnt how to identify when I'm happy in the moment itself, as opposed to within a nostalgic reflection months later.

Somehow, March passed, eventually followed by the infinite April. Then May, June, July, August, and I guess now we're here - in September. Michaelmas term is finally starting to feel real, and we are actually going back. I know it'll be different but even the thought of existing outside my room felt completely out of the question for a while.

If there's anything we can take away from lockdown, it's most certainly that the present matters. Whether it's an empty hour, or an afternoon walk, every second ticks a little slower now; but if there ever was anything we needed at Cambridge, it was time. Next term might find itself lacking in club nights, formals, or even staring at cute boys in lectures, but at least we'll have some more time to process it while it's happening, and in that sense be able to appreciate it all a bit more. Who knows, maybe we'll keep up with those cool weird lockdown hobbies too (the banana bread kind, I mean).

I'm hoping that next term, as opposed to the usual light-speed rush of the Cambridge time zone, we'll take our time - smell the roses - and let the moment linger for just a little longer. All I know is that I can't wait to go back and see my friends again, so while we can't pretend that we aren't living in a world deafened by the buzz of Covid-19, we can at least finally enjoy each others' (socially-distanced and small-grouped) company once more. And for now, I think that's enough. ●

Breakdowns and outbreaks: A very special week 5

Lottie Ludlow, Quaid Forbes & Freddie Lindsey-Coombs

It would be fair to say that we all get that same anticipatory feeling of dread as week five draws near: work begins to pile on, housemates get on your nerves, and your nose is raw (from all the covid tests), but nothing could have prepared us for the storm that hit our accommodation block this week: scabies.

I always thought that there was nothing like that feeling of wanting to get started on an essay, like an itch you have to scratch so it'll go away, and that is a feeling that scabies, I have found, quite literally embodies when it infests you. After self-diagnosing with this crippling affliction, myself and a few other housemates had the thrill of ordering our topical treatment, the anticipation of curing ourselves of 'The Itch' almost moving us to tears. Rubbing it over our nude bodies proved to be a thrilling incidence of intimacy in a time where intimacy is quite literally against the law.

Then again, this was the very sort of closeness that got us into this pickle in the first place. We truly were getting under each other's skin, but we just hadn't realised that in doing so we were facilitating the burrowing of some – actually quite a few – less-welcome guests. It all started with Prosecco Night no.2. Drunkenly stumbling through the pandemic-deserted streets of Cambridge, something in the air was drawing us towards the river's edge. There's just something about looking down at those freezing, dirty waters from Or-gasm Bridge as they scream "I CAN MAKE YOU FEEL SOMETHING", when orgasms seem to be a thing of the past and that liberating fizziness of wine-drunkenness reaches your toes, rendering you numb to the Baltic chill of a February twilight.

On a directly related medical note, scabies is a water-borne disease, so our infestation seems to have been drawn out from the depths of the Cam. Or maybe it was just Trinity poisoning the waters of Cambridge, like a King ramming his moat full of crocodiles. Back at college, we sat in a circle holding hands, downing our glasses and vowing to be best friends for life. This

was the sort of solidarity guaranteed to get us through the week without a breakdown. Little did we know, this was also the sort of solidarity guaranteed to spread our freshly contracted scabies throughout the group. Nobody was safe.

The next week saw an exponential increase in cases of the aforementioned 'Itch.' It strikes often at night. A battalion of scabies bombarding you in the pitch darkness like a cowardly lover. (Anyone who feels personally targeted by this should probably purchase some scabies cream: £10 at Boots). You can't sleep, you can't focus, you're in constant pain, so it's basically like your average period, but you also have to devote a day to laundry and fumigating your bedroom.

What was more exciting even than that whole saga, was having to tell the wider household that no, you don't have Covid, your lovers that no, you don't have an STD (not really), but instead that you inexplicably seem to have contracted some medieval-sounding condition with a name frighteningly similar to rabies. Week five really does hit different when your all-nighter incorporates the activities of a troupe of mites as they bury themselves under your skin and spawn their children into your hands. If it wasn't for them, I'm quite sure I'd be on track for a triple first...

Explaining this to your long-suffering supervisor in an attempt to defend the travesty of an essay you produced in a COVID-19 riddled, post-scabies Britain was possibly the low point of a week always doomed to be hateful. You probably would have done more work for it, you cry, had you not had to devote an entire day to hot washing all your clothes and deep cleaning your bedroom.

Other than that, nothing much else has happened. The geese on the Cam seem vaguely more aggressive than usual, but who can blame them? We have dipped into their territory several times over Lent, desperately trying to spice up our nights in a way that Cindies no longer can. Perhaps Trinity isn't the culprit. Maybe the sca-

bies was an act of revenge for our geese-disturbing shenanigans.

Oh Karma, you sweet Executioner of retribution, why must you hurt us so?

Now cured of this crippling affliction, the group of us who have undergone the treatment are forced to avoid those whose cream is yet to arrive, lest they re-infest us, forcing us to demand compensation from them on the grounds of violation to our physical and mental health. Relations are already strained at a time like this, and a lawsuit would likely cause tensions that would be difficult for us to overcome. That is why this week has also seen an exponential increase in the amount of Just Dance™ that has been performed in the corridors. It's hard to be annoyed at someone who is enthusiastically hip-thrusting in full view of the Porter's Lodge, even if they're simultaneously 'accidentally' knocking into you (to facilitate the mites' abandonment of them in favour of your enticingly bare forearm).

Avoiding scabies does keep things exciting at least, as does bopping to the song "Pump It" by The Black-Eyed Peas, which does a lot to get the heart racing at 3 am, and has connotations reminiscent of the primary reading for my essay this week – the Earl of Rochester's very sexy *A Ramble in St James's Park* – an essay I finished at 5:50 am on the morning it was due. Try following that with a microwaved Sainsbury's apple crumble and you have yourself a freshers' night to remember.

Anyhow, what have we learnt from this Lent Term week five, then? The Cam is apparently riddled with water-borne scabies mites, people are surprisingly willing – under the right circumstances – to shell out £10 for a cream that has to be slathered all over them from head to toe and left for 12 hours, and dancing in the early hours of the morning is the best way to combat the week five blues. Sorry that we finished writing this so late that none of our advice can be applied to your breakdown week until next term. We were very busy, obviously. ●





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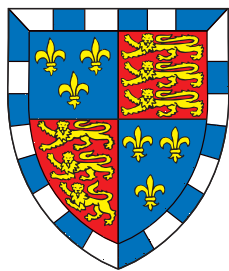
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The Colleges



Christ's

Escaping to the serenity of Christ's from the hustle and bustle of Saturday afternoon on Sidney Street is like dipping into the pool on a sweltering post-exam day. Not that I'd actually know much about that, having only joined the College this year, and as a grad student at that. The arrival of the gorgeous wisteria which crowns the "collegiate university's" only circular lawn (as the porters proudly declared on my first day) seemed to signal that things were getting better. As the world opens up again, Christ's remains the same oasis of calm and community, somewhere that welcomed us when it felt like very few places would. And even though that welcome might have included Perspex screens at matriculation dinner, it meant the world that college made the effort to include us with the 2021 incarnation of that treasured tradition.

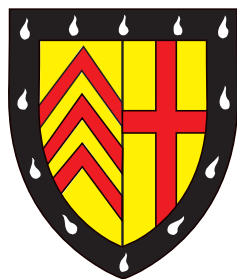
Georgie Moore



Churchill

"Part of the University of Cambridge, Churchill College is an open, progressive and outward-looking centre of excellence. With a world-renowned commitment to academic excellence, Churchill College has some 475 undergraduates, 385 postgraduates, 256 fellows and 160 staff, across a 42-acre parkland campus."

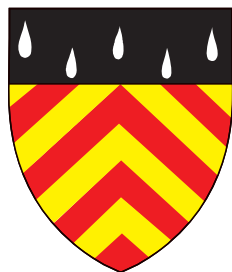
Churchill College website



Clare

Every time I walk across Clare Bridge in the deep of the night and follow the path through the gate into the Narnia-esque lantern-lit avenue through the trees, I thank Selwyn (and Caius the year before) for rejecting me. While I may not get to enjoy Clare's full extravagance during its never-ending building works, at least I know our neighbour King's would've overshadowed us anyway and I can admire its gothic architecture on the way to our tent-cafeteria. I couldn't possibly talk about Clare without mentioning one of our many beloved traditions – a favourite being the myth of the Middle Gate; a feature of Clare Bridge that threatens students who dare to pass through it with a third in their exams, and is most certainly the reason behind our low ranking in the Tompkins table. It is these strange quirks of Clare that make it such a lovely place to live – so, thanks Selwyn!

Ellie Austin



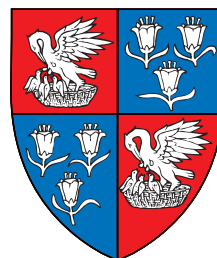
Clare Hall

Most applicants to Clare Hall are drawn to its relaxed atmosphere, non-hierarchical structure and strong community. While we may not have vast gardens that back onto the Cam or heavy oak doors that guard the entrance, and though the pandemic has limited college events,

this year has shown us more than ever the fundamental value in the people who make up a college.

Clare Hallers have worked incredibly hard and enjoyed the benefits of their efforts to bring the college to life and create a supportive community despite this year's hardships. We've also made the most of the events and initiatives organised by students, from outdoor film screenings to our new and growing allotment, as well as those by the College: our first formal of the year sold out in two minutes, and those who matriculated in 2020 look forward to a retrospective ceremony at the end of the year – before graduations!

Noa Leach

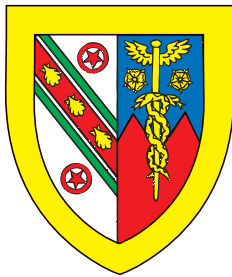


Corpus Christi

While you'd struggle to find a student who wasn't aware of the Corpus clock, it's masochistic inner-workings are less well known. The clock – fittingly contained in the wall of the college library – marks each hour by clanging a literal coffin. Each wooden chime is unapologetically designed to remind Corpuscles of their fleeting mortality.

The alumni behind the Chronophage also happened to invent the modern kettle. Cups of tea (and Downton Abbey's Hugh Bonneville) are its proudest exports. Historically resilient, Corpus survived an anti-Catholic mob assault in 1688 and boasts the world's oldest continually inhabited university accommodation. Though the Cambridge Fire Service recently decided that the 700 year-old Old Court was a fire hazard, a few students remain within its historic walls. Corpus is a quiet heavyweight: peaceful, old, and deeply aesthetic.

Harry Vincent



Darwin

Often undergrads have not heard of Darwin and to be honest we prefer it that way. It was founded in 1964 exclusively for graduate students by Trinity, St John's and Gonville and Caius colleges. It is built around the Darwin family home and the gardens back on to a beautiful part of the river Cam – we have our own islands!

Every year hundreds of new Darwinians flock into the college from around the world. Each bringing their own stories to add to the vibrant community that is Darwin College.

The student run 'Darbar' has become a place of legends in the postgrad community (£1 pints on Mondays) and is a fundamental part of the Darwin experience. Combined with the excellent food from Darwin Kitchens, cosy common areas for

coffee breaks and a charming library overlooking the Cam, Darwin feels like home and I feel extremely privileged to be part of this community.

Akash Das



Downing

'Room to think, space to breathe', the Downing website used to read, in a slogan that became somewhat of a running joke a few years back. The college lies tucked away between a Starbucks and charity shops, difficult to spot from the outside (I walked past it on my way to interviews!), but opens up into a wide, grassy open space once you make it past the library. Though Downing is known for its insularity (sometimes it feels less like 'space to breathe' and more like claustrophobia), it

does offer a beautiful campus complete with its own extravagant theatre, fantastic bar, and a tight-knit community. What to expect on a stroll around the grass: lots of Boaties, ice cream in the sun, and maybe a soccer ball to the head if you're not careful.

Zoë Matt-Williams



Emmanuel

You meet Emmanuel in the Cindies smoking area, his long floppy hair framing his face like a lion's mane. He doesn't seem to mind the super-spreader event. He's telling you about how he's trying to reinvent himself.

"I'm thinking Manny? Manuel?"

"Sure," you say. You've heard his mum still does his laundry for him. "Do you still work at that bar?"

"They knocked it down to make room for some kind of expensive development. I hate gentrification."

You'll have to find a different way to get your free pints, you think.

"So what now?"

"I might join the military."

"The men of green!"

"I guess you could put it that way. Or maybe I'll go to America. My great great grandfather knew John Harvard. You know, Harvard."

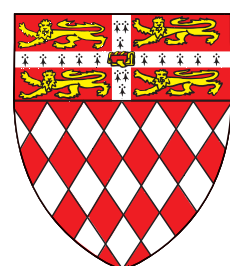
"Cool." You light a cigarette.

"I'd rather you didn't," he says. You blush and stamp it out.

Ah, Emmanuel. He's friendly, gorgeous, well-connected, well-endowed. Suddenly, a vision: three beautiful years together, snowy holidays, fancy dinners, sunny picnics. Your heart flutters like a duck's wings.

He smiles.

Cecilia Yearsley and Solal Bauer



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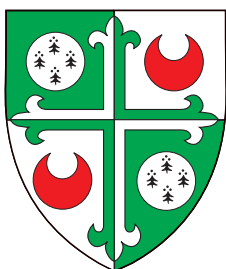
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Fitzwilliam

Fitzwilliam College, or the College where all your dreams come true. That is if your dream is to have massive legs, as cycling up the hill every day will sure help you along the way. But once the cycle is over, Fitz is a veritable haven, filled with smiling friendly faces, and a community unrivalled in Cambridge. From Stuart Douglas welcoming you with open arms at the Plodge, or Adam the barman greeting you with a charming snap of the fingers, Fitz really is the place to be. Oxford Road playing fields, dubbed as Cambridge's home of football, the beautiful chapel, the top of the range art room, squash courts, gym, whatever you love, Fitz is the place for you.

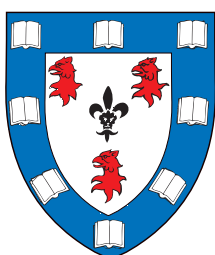
Charlie McLean



Girton

When you ask most people about Girton, the general response is "never been there." This fact is also true of most of the students, who's first meeting with Girton is on their arrival in freshers' week, having been pooled here a few months prior. Yet Girton is not all bad. We have incredibly picturesque grounds, an indoor swimming pool, very lax porters, black squirrels and a mummy. The sense of close-knit community that's so integral to Girton, has been our saving grace during the pandemic. As the first Cambridge women's college, we spend our days looking up to our famous female alumni: Sandi Toksvig, Ariana Huffington, Baroness Hale and Emily Davis. As the furthest out Cambridge college, we spend our evenings being lulled to sleep by the soothing sounds of the A14.

Tilly Palmer



Homerton

There's something reassuring about Homerton being so far out of the city centre. As lovely as the central colleges are to look at, being on the outskirts gives the College a feeling of normality, and some distance from the infamous "Cambridge bubble". As the largest and one of the most diverse colleges, you will not change my mind that it is the most friendly, welcoming and filled with life. Although few outside of Cambridge have yet heard of it, this is another blessing in disguise - not becoming a full college until 2010 means that we largely get to keep the grounds to ourselves, and have no curious tourists to dodge when rushing out of the gates for that supervision in town. Aesthetically pretty, with plenty of grounds to wander, it is the best of both worlds, even if it would have been improved by purchasing a swimming pool instead of *that* painting in our Great Hall. (Wink wink, fellow Homertonians!)

Elizabeth Haigh



Hughes Hall

Initially I was sceptical about studying as an undergraduate in a mature college, but upon my first visit to Hughes Hall all my worries melted away. Studying alongside students undertaking a Masters or PHD was intimidating at first, but I've realised now that it is really eye opening, in all the best ways; It's humbling to be surrounded by students from all around the world who are experts in their respective fields. Being at a 21 years+ college I am fortunate, in that I get the chance to meet people with a lot more life experience than me. Hughes is such a warm and welcoming community and the two year wait before I turned 21 was definitely worth it! We have beautiful blossom trees here that bloom in the spring, and when I see them outside my window I feel grateful to be privileged enough to live at Hughes, and grateful that I get to study at one of Cambridge's friendliest colleges.

Lotte Brundle



Jesus

"I remember when my friends at other colleges used to say "wish I went to Jesus." Now I wish I were at John's..."

JFess



King's

Forget what you've heard about King's despite our majestic appearance (both architecturally and personally) what really matters here is what's on the inside and no I'm not talking about the Gibbs building. The shining light of King's this year has been the grand reopening of the bar. Yes, it's been described as soulless, airport lobby-esque but it was nothing that couldn't be brought to life with the infusion of King's students. Now, when your outside surrounded by those palm trees at 4 o'clock on a Wednesday evening, with the sweet melodies of evensong wafting in the wind, you're no longer in Cambridge but a King's Havana hearing that familiar chitter chatter of a King's student, "this ones on me" you hear another student get lulled into that false sense of financial generosity as in the King's bar everything goes on the Cam card so its easy to lose track of money and time. This generous air extends beyond the bar at King's as everyone here is always on hand to offer whatever someone else may be in search of be that time, a stapler, or some directions.

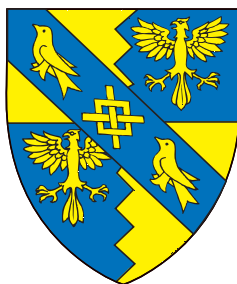
Holly Jones



Lucy Cavendish

“A dynamic, inclusive, global community working together to benefit the world...We educate and inspire future leaders. We tackle the pressing issues of the twenty-first century. We are uniquely committed to building a diverse community of students.”

Lucy Cavendish website



Magdalene

Magdalene College, once a Benedictine hostel, sits on the river just past the noise of the city centre and stretches along the river facing Jesus Green. It is also the place I have been lucky enough to call home for the past few years, much to the annoyance of my parents. I may not be the best qualified to write about Magdalene as I'm currently on my Year Abroad and have been self-righteously eating croissants instead of being in college for the last 9 months. That being said, some distance from the little red brick college tucked behind John's (boo) has really let me home in on what makes it special.

As is often the case when being thrown into an unfamiliar environment, I was initially nervous about who I would go on to share my university experience with. On my interview day I met a fairly unpleasant character from a certain well known public school (I'd never name names, but it rhymes with Beton Follege), who confessed to me that he wanted to see another interviewee cry that day. With these encouraging words in my ear, I walked off to my interview to swiftly find out that my first impressions couldn't have been more wrong. From the fellows and staff I met

that day to my closest friends, I have met some of the most brilliant, intelligent, and kind people during my time at Magdalene, and I don't think that's a one off. A small college with an immense sense of community and a relentless desire to champion any victory big or small, Magdalene has produced, and still does, some outstanding people. From notorious cheese burier Samuel Pepys, to sauce baron Loyd Grossman, Magdalene always comes up with the goods. Magdalene is full of passionate and sparky people, a place where friendships seamlessly span year groups from the get-go. While first court, formal hall, and the chapel are all impressive reminders of the college's academic heritage, my favourite part of college is across the road, and is affectionately called the Village. It makes no sense. The impressive Lutyens building (named after the great architect who designed it) faces Benson O, a building that genuinely looks like the physical manifestation of a 5-year-old's drawing. Add to this some picturesque town houses swallowed from Magdalene Street, the new build Buckingham building which resembles several terraced Normandy beach bunkers, and a stretch of grass lying by the Cam lovingly referred to as the beach and you've got the Village. Much like the Village, Magdalene itself is bizarre but brilliant, a warm, tight-knit community that I wouldn't trade for all the funding at Trinity, or all the edible swan at St John's. Garde Ta Foy.

Arthur Cross



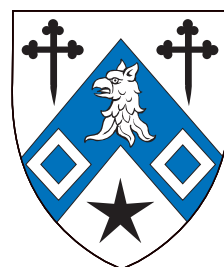
Murray Edwards

I didn't choose to go to medwards. In fact, when I received the email with my acceptance, and realised it was a womxn's college, I cried. "I don't want to be a nun," I sobbed to my brother down the phone, who rightly told me to get over myself. Nevertheless I had my reservations, not just about the college but about Cambridge and its reputation as a whole. I'd applied out of curiosity, but I wasn't sure it was somewhere I could really see myself feeling at home.

Yet from the moment I arrived at medwards I felt strangely at ease. You could walk on the grass. You could pick the flow-

ers. The walls were lined, not with portraits of old white men with dubious links to the slave trade, but colourful, often terrifying, art by female artists. They didn't even have a quad, but a fountain people used to jump into after Sunday life. The best part about medwards, I soon realised, was what existed outside of people's preconceptions. It wasn't "like a girls boarding school," as I heard from students at other colleges too many times to count. There was in fact no one term that could be applied to the group of people here, who are easily among the most varied and interesting I have ever met. As for those who still didn't see beyond the reductive 'girls college' label - well, that was another great part about medwards. "You can only stay until 11pm," we used to tell our more gullible male friends, who would hover awkwardly at the entrance waiting for us to pick them up: "after that porters come round and check under all the beds."

Anna Rainbird-Chill

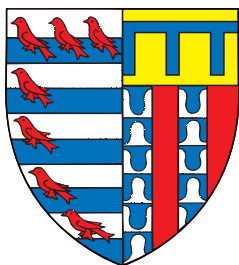


Newnham

People say that after a while the architecture of Cambridge loses its magic, you begin to grow accustomed to the view from King's parade. This is not true of Newnham College. I'm not talking about the buildings, though they are beautiful, but of the college as a space. It is an oasis. And every time I walk into Newnham I remember how lucky I am to have access to it, to watch women move through the hallways with their heads high, powerful and owning their space (It's also always funny to watch men walking awkwardly behind them, trying to navigate through a community where their superiority is not assumed). Newnham is a college created specifically to raise women up, to give them the time and attention that men have received all their lives.

This space doesn't feel normal. And there is a sadness about that. But with each generation graduating from Newnham and doing their part to change the world, maybe one day we'll all grow accustomed to spaces like this. Until then, Newnham will continue to exist as an anomaly, as a feminist utopia.

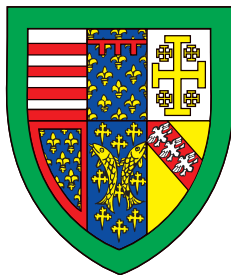
Sam Harding



Peterhouse

Peterhouse prides itself on its outlier status. The smallest and the oldest of the colleges, we've forged a unique identity over the 700 years we've been around. The size (there are only around eighty students a year) is one of my favourite aspects of the college. Where it's easy to just slip into the background at some of the bigger colleges, at Peterhouse I've always felt included. That's been helped enormously by the amazing student body: you get the feeling that people really do care about each other here. Our location is central, but just slightly too far for the noise of King's Parade to reach us, which is an ideal balance. Being the oldest college is also a lot of fun: our hall is The Oldest Secular Building In Europe Still Being Used For Its Original Purpose - a description every Petrean has to learn off by heart.

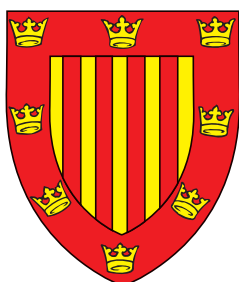
Rishi Sharma



Pembroke

Admittedly, most Valencians this year were at Pembroke for a good time, not a long time. We started off the year hoping to make the most of it and suddenly realised we might end up forgetting what trough's too-busy-to-eat-take-your-food-to-the-JPC chaos felt like. Despite this, 2021 was a year to be remembered at Pembroke, and proved that what we're greatest at is creating an amazing community. Between the newly created Pempreciation, the memes on the JP Instagram and Pem-ories we were never far from some (mostly) wholesome content, to remind us how amazing college life is. And for those of us who were in college, the goody box served as our personal ray of light. We also had our fair share of history-making: Pembroke unveiled a portrait of poet Kamau Braithwaite in Hall, the first portrait of a BME Fellow to be on permanent display, and the open letter coordinated by the Pembroke Climate Justice Campaign influenced college's commitment to full divestment by the end of 2023. Now, in Easter term, things are starting to look much like they did. The Pembroke Players Virgin Smoker was back - albeit on Zoom - with aplomb. And college sport, at times a distant memory this year, is back in full swing. We've made our presence known with a resounding "Yeah Pem!" from our 10 crews on the river and we're back in the Cuppers semi-finals! And despite it being almost over, we've got many things to look forward to, especially for our (soon to not be) freshers who will finally get a taste of what Pembroke has to offer. But for now, let's all agree to never forget what must be sung at the end of every bop - "I'm loving Pembroke instead!"

Margherita Volpato



Queens'

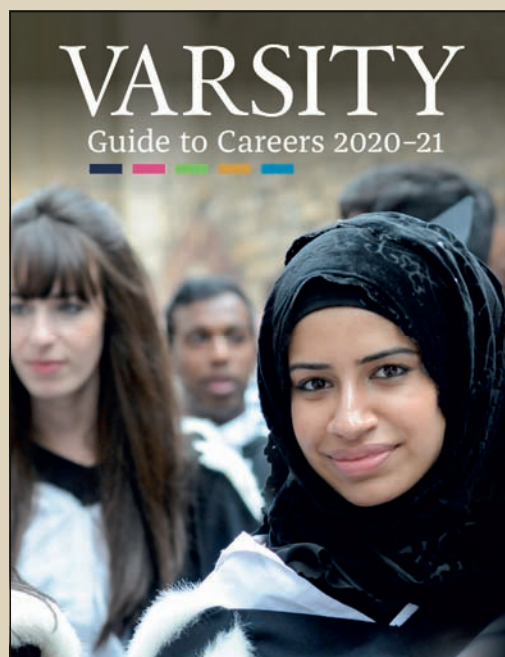
Oh Queens', what an ode I could write to you, but I won't. It's really not that original to put an apostrophe at the end of the word' [sic] see. Perhaps the best way to describe Cambridge's Lib Dem of colleges (on the edge of the centre, and very often forgotten about), is the fact that, as the college will never forget to tell you, we backed the wrong side during the civil war, and that's why you get a lower travel grant.

This being said, generosity can be squeezed from the coffers of this college, from a deeper down than they would care to admit their pockets may stretch, and I for one cannot complain having taken more than my serving of the pie.

I must also admire Queens' economic ingenuity and rapid modernisation, while other colleges remain stuck in the stuffiness of the past, Queens' has modelled its management style on Ryanair, cleverly separating the exorbitant cost of rent from that of gas and electricity, with the simple excuse that Erasmus changed the entire catholic church without electricity, and your last essay/problem sheet was probably sh*t. Modernisation indeed.

In reality Queens' is a community made up not just of architecture more diverse than the Cambridge student population [cite Guardian article], but of the many caring students and staff that constitute

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what it means to be a college. For many of us the medium-height walls of Queens' will be sorely missed.

Gregory Holyoke



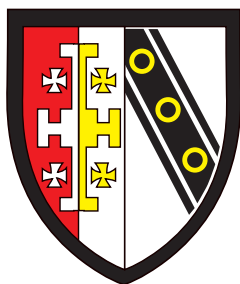
Robinson

Robinson, Robinson, Robinson. A terrible place to bring people if you're entering an architectural award but for charm, friendship and food, Robinson College is the height of sophistication. Known for its devilishly tasty hash browns on a Sunday brunch and the cheapest pint in Cambridge, Robinson also has a reputation for making its students feel like they're in a private school – perfect given 70% of its students hail from such a background.

It'll be sad to not see the era of a new Warden although how he's planning on overcoming the problem of two failed Robinson May Balls remains to be seen. Our crack Senior Management team insisted that their pandemic restrictions were much more relaxed than other colleges but held a firm line at afternoon canoodling which was strongly discouraged in an email about the "quiet period" during exams.

Robinson doesn't have the towering spires of Kings, nor the enchanting traditions of Trinity, nor the pomp of Magdalene, nor the facilities of Newnham, nor the rich history of Corpus Christi, but it does have one thing; the alumnus Nick Clegg who arguably is the most mediocre politician in British political history. Well done, Robinson, you shall be missed by all.

Oliver Harris



Selwyn

Selwyn is full of red bricks and lovely people. It has a small bar with low-hanging lights and a piano drunk Selwynites make the most out of. The dining hall also has a piano, usually the province of a more sober, less inventive crowd of pianists. The brunch food is bad, but that gives Selwynites a common experience of hardship and overcoming they can bond over. Last year, Selwyn's Snowball was a pre-COVID blessing filled with singing, VKs, and mosh pits. Selwyn is fun and welcoming. You'll always bump into someone you know, whether climbing the Cripps staircases, rushing through old courts, or enjoying the gardens – which won't prevent you from going around college in trackies and slides, tightly grasping a cup of Frank's coffee, in true Selwyn fashion. (Lots of love to Frank, the sweetest catering employee and best barista you'll meet in Cambridge).

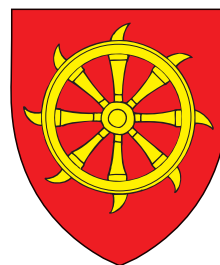
Juliette Gueron-Gabrielle



Sidney Sussex

Sidney Sussex: known by the entirety of Cambridge for its proximity to the city's dealer of wine and hummus and appreciated by Sidneans for its gardens and centrality. This year life in college truly was like no other and marked by various migrations: the college bar moved to the garden (complete with fairy lights and pizza!), Lent moved back home and Blundell students to Cromwell court for showers. The surfacing of Sidfess has been the source of our college community this term, allowing freshers and third years to discuss the various fish goujon synonyms and the communal ice age across college. Yet, our college seems to have yielded acclaim even beyond our humble, wisteria-blossoming walls: our rowing teams have done extraordinarily well, coming back after almost three terms of being on land (and earning some well-deserved rowbridges!). I am sure we will all miss the garden events, the Evensong with strawberries and cream, and the overly frequent, dramatic ****IMPORTANT CATERING NOTICE****, but I am looking forward to seeing what Sidney will surprise us with next year – because in our humble, little college, one can never know.

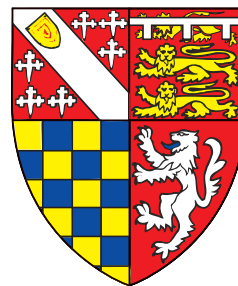
Isabel Sebode



St Catherine's

Despite a tough year, Cambridge's kindest college has risen to the challenge and its students and staff remain as engaged and vibrant as ever. The arrival of the "Catzebo" marquee in our main court was very exciting (or maybe it wasn't and I just need to get out more), as I am sure all of you will have seen on your Trumpington Street travels, with our hall and some accommodation under renovation. There was a naming contest for it, and profound was my sadness when "Tenty McTentface" failed to cut the mustard. With the Catz Gardening Society established to rebuild and replant the recently-discovered old college allotment, accompanied by an Instagram page, as well as the "A Wheely Long Way" initiative which saw students virtually travel over 5,600 km during the November lockdown to raise over £400 for the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Yemen, we've not done bad.

Cameron White



St Edmund's

St Edmund's is often described as the most international and inclusive college in Cambridge. With students from more than 80 different countries, expressions commonly used to describe the college include "warm", "welcoming" and "where's that?"

Life at St Edmunds this year has been, like most other places, difficult. As a mature college with many of our postgrads involved in research degrees, we've had a high proportion of students on-site throughout the year. As a result, there has been a spirit of togetherness and community – right from the first lockdown through this academic year.

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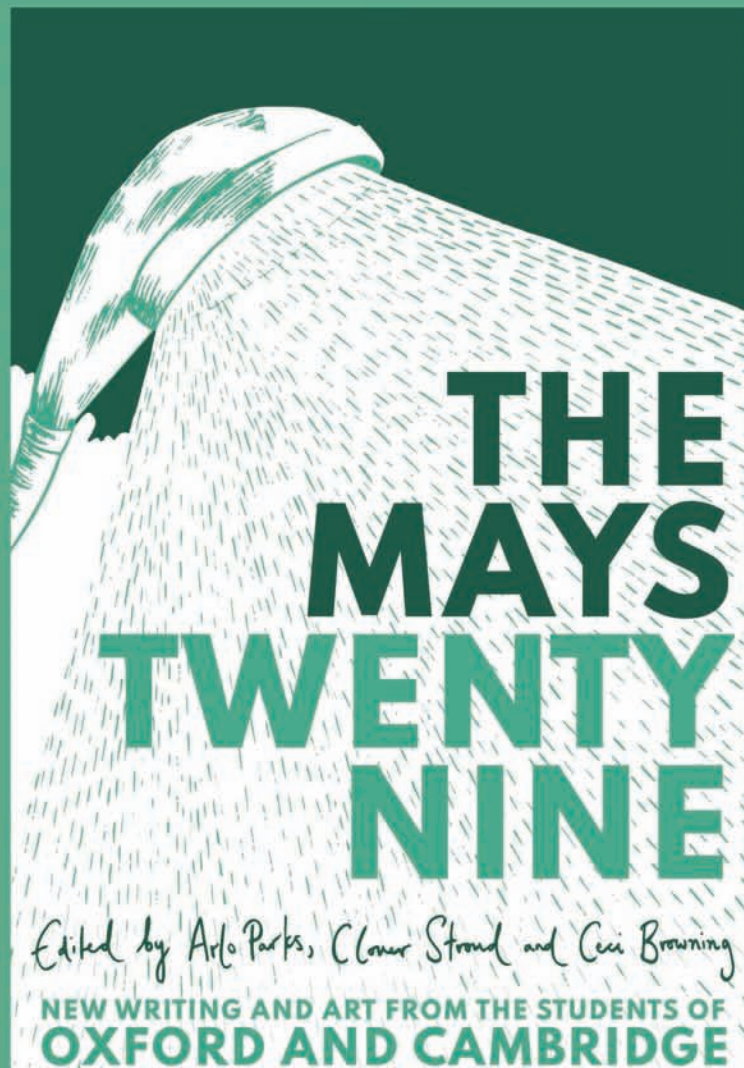
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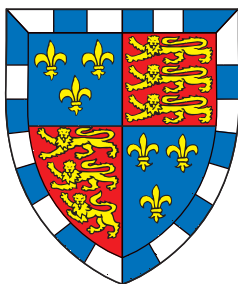
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to adapt to these difficult circumstances. Events have been held in person whenever possible and permissible: highlights include a Halloween murder mystery night and the soothing art of lino printing. Participation in inter-college sports has continued, the boat club, netball, and volleyball teams have all competed admirably whilst keeping in shape over zoom workout sessions. Members of the college released *The Editorial*, a student-run magazine detailing the journey of Cambridge through covid. The Student Academic Conference was conducted (with the inclusions of undergrads for the first time) on Zoom (of course)! A sustainable period scheme was launched with much success.

The last month saw a royal visit from Princess Anne to inaugurate student accommodation at Mount Pleasant Halls. Witnessing half the college standing in gowns, spread six feet apart in the pouring rain, exchanging pleasantries with a member of the royal family was a befitting end to a curious year. Onto the next one!

Arvind Pujari

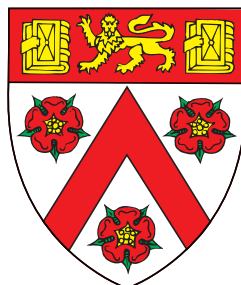


St John's

John's, despite the pandemic's best efforts, continues to be grand and busy and beautiful in all the ways 12 year old me imagined a Cambridge college should be. We also continue to be berated on CamFess in a "god I wish I was there" sort of way, which most of us now read as glowing compliments. The College's social, sports, and arts calendars remain some of the busiest in Cambridge, with an uber-keen and active JCR to match. Our beloved College bar and buttery are getting a re-vamp next year which means everyone has been making the most of the time we have left with them (LBCs flying off the bar like it's freshers all over again). During exam term, library slots have been selling out faster than Wednesday Cindies tickets (gone but never forgotten) but I think this is more a sign of the times rather than a comment on our strange identity crisis of wanting to be the College that's both the smartest and most up for a night out. College has also announced a 'Free Places' scheme that will allow 40 students to study here entirely funded by Johnian support which is something to be really

proud of. Jokes aside, very excellent people and the impressive persistence of our sense of community have truly been the saving grace of an otherwise topsy-turvy year.

Chani Merrell



Trinity

Trinity has a reputation for being a bit of an intimidating place, but less than a day spent in college should convince you that this is very much unfounded. We have a college bar that is best described as a little cramped but cosy, and a college cocktail that is best described as both completely delicious (if a slightly toxic shade of blue) and a fantastic social lubricant. Walking across Great Court genuinely never gets old (I feel like a 17th century Tudor scholar every time), and there's nothing quite like a picnic on the backs with your friends. Sure, I suppose there are a lot of mathmos, but they're a surprisingly fun bunch who form the backbone of our college Ultimate Frisbee society. Ultimately, I'm so glad that I applied to Trinity: without getting too sappy, it's such a beautiful, historic, and exciting place to get to call home!

Miranda Stephenson



Trinity Hall

Henry James once wrote that if he "were called upon to mention the prettiest corner of the world" then he "should draw a thoughtful sigh and point the way to the gardens of Trinity Hall." Nestled between the edifices that line the Cam, Tit Hall (as we lovingly call it) is an unassuming and quaint college, founded in 1350 to educate clergymen after the Black Death. The col-

lege is full of its own quirks: the smallest chapel in Oxbridge, one of the only surviving chain libraries, and perhaps the finest Mannerist painting in Britain. Through its corridors have walked the likes of Stephen Hawking, the playwright J. B. Priestley, and Oscar-winning actress Rachel Weisz. But above all, Trinity Hall is a friendly and welcoming community of students that love nothing more than distinguishing ourselves from the neighbours that stole our name.

Matthew Bessant



Wolfson

Wolfson College is unique in that it only welcomes students from ages twenty and over. This is most likely why it is referred to as a mature college. I laughed when I first heard this, unconvinced of my own emotional age least of all my new friends. And I continued to laugh all the way through my first experience of a Wolfson Howler, the College's auspicious string of comedy shows which attracts both established, and budding, comedians from London as well as from the University itself. In spite of spatial restrictions, the Howler went ahead with its usual energy and excitement. Throughout Michaelmas, Lent and Easter the college leadership creatively engineered a number of COVID-safe events to ensure the community remained in touch. Friday night jazz quickly gained momentum and students in the rooms surrounding the marquees gently tapped their keyboards in time to the keys of the piano. The College continued its commitment to investigating social injustice in the world. The Wolfson Interdisciplinary Research Hubs selected a theme for 2021, Wolfson Explores *Borders, and subsequent debates, exhibitions, forums and performances reflected on a broad, and topical, range of issues from women's movements to racial standing to sex work. The College's close proximity to the meadows quickly turned the convenience of a morning dip in the River Cam into a necessary daily ritual for many Wolfson students. Let's hope the College makes an even bigger splash in 2022.

Nick Bartlett

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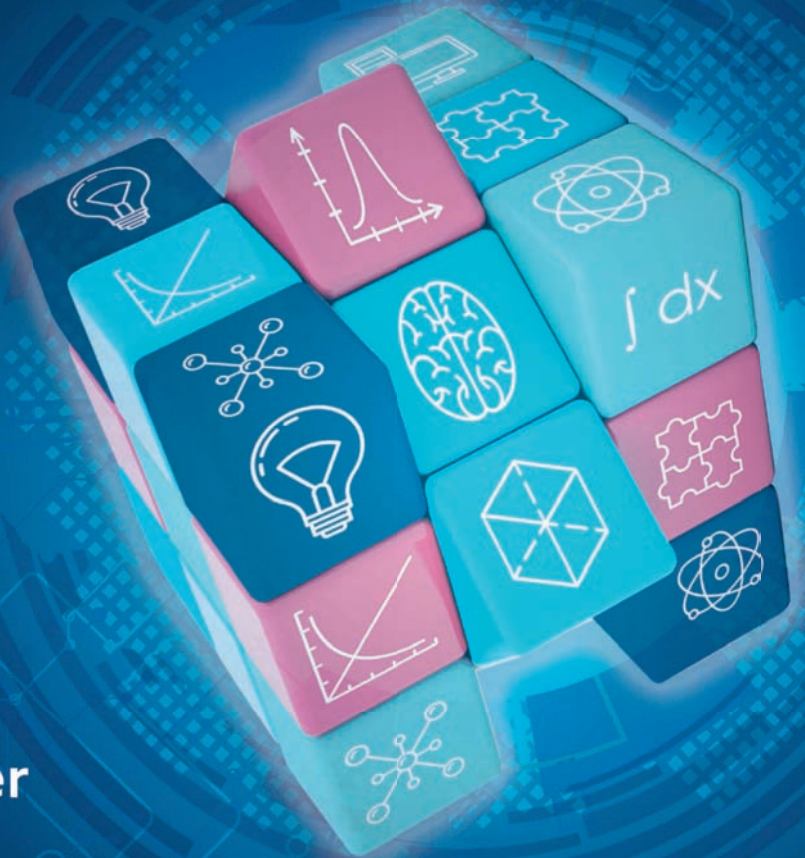
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