

## MUSE: Alice Diop, from the outside looking inside

Rosie Bailey (*she/her*) looks at France's Oscar frontrunner

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## The state of crypto in 2023: past, present, and future?

Alexandre Hornstein (*he/him*) questions the place of crypto in 2023

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# Nouse

Est. 1964

No. 503

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## Arson reports on campus

Hannah Boyle (*she/her*)  
DEPUTY EDITOR

A NOUSE FREEDOM of Information request has revealed that from January 2020 to October 2022, there have been four incidents which have been internally recorded as arson involving property owned by the University of York.

The first instance internally recorded as arson took place on 4 March 2022 at the Spring Lane Building, located on Campus West, at 21:01.

The first of the following three incidents took place on 9 July 2022 at 21:39 in Derwent J Block, while the further two incidents both took place on 12 July 2022 in Derwent L Block at 17:50 and 18:55 respectively.

In response a University Spokesperson said:

“Our security team conduct regular, high visibility patrols across campus, in addition to the University’s CCTV network.

“Criminal behaviour, such as arson, vandalism and graffiti, will not be tolerated and we are in regular contact with North Yorkshire Police, who may investigate and prosecute cases.

“Many of our buildings are listed and enjoyed by students, staff and the wider community and we ask anyone with any information about any inappropriate or criminal behaviour to contact our security team.”



UCU Strikes: Students out in support of staff choosing to strike in November over pay and pensions. In February and March there will be 18 days of action

## On campus accommodation website overwhelmed in minutes causing chaos

“The whole experience was in disarray”: Nouse speaks to students and parents of students who failed to get University accommodation

Alanah Hammond (*she/her*)  
NEWS EDITOR

THE BOOKING SYSTEM for continuing students who wanted to live on campus in the 2023/24 academic year opened on 9 January at midday. Yet, within seven minutes the website became overwhelmed with almost 1,400 applications being submitted, leaving many students without accommodation for the next academic year.

The University emailed all students on the morning of Monday 9 January warning, “Whilst we have significantly increased the number of rooms available to returning students this year, University managed accommodation is not guaranteed to continuing students”.

University accommodation is so

popular because it offers some of the cheapest student accommodation in York, with options available in Bands One to Four, including some £99-a-week rooms. It also only runs for 40 or 44-week contracts, meaning that students who are not in York over the summer are not paying for an empty room.

However, with such popularity the system became overwhelmed. The University of York emailed all students on 16 January confirming, “Last week the campus accommodation booking system opened for current students and saw unprecedented demand for the service. Unfortunately, the system crashed and had to be closed to any further bookings.”

Nouse spoke to second year English Literature student Jaylee Welsh who

tried to get returner’s accommodation on 9 January but couldn’t secure housing because the system became overwhelmed. Jaylee explained, “With the cost of living and inflation rising incredulous amounts, myself and my partner opted that university accommodation was the only way fit to move forward as neither of us can physically live this way – even now it’s hard enough to make ends meet, where we often go without food sometimes.”

In their initial email on 9 January, the University advised students to “book early” because the “demand for these rooms is very high”. Yet, Jaylee explained to Nouse that in spite of their punctuality, they were “faced with issues from the very beginning”. They explained, “The links sent to us via email

would not work, or if they did and we managed to get onto the page there were system errors proving it impossible to proceed with the applications.”

After struggling to access the website, Jaylee explained that they called the Accommodations Services line where they were then told to “leave it until tomorrow” and that any applications going through this morning “shall be cancelled tomorrow”. Jaylee explained that with this advice, they left the website and returned to it, “not even three hours later”, and found that “applications had now closed”. Jaylee further told Nouse “We’re now panicking that we can’t afford a roof over our head and are now stuck worrying about our final year of university. We as students should be anxious about our exams

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Best beard anyone?

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## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



# Getting through February with Nouse



### Gracie Daw (she/her)

Welcome to *Nouse* #503, thank you for picking up a copy across campus. As I am writing this, I hope we have broken our curse for distributing our papers in the rain; so far this academic year, we have been jumping over puddles and getting splashed by buses trying to get our papers to you.

This university term has never been my favourite: even when I was at school, I seemed to find it just a bit more stressful than all the others. So, despite my unease about this term, I hope that it is going okay for everyone else.

At the very least, reading this edition will (hopefully) take your mind off it for a bit!

Our News section covers the most important issues for students at the moment, specifically the rise in rent prices that will see so many students being priced out of York. We also include some more light-hearted pieces such as an interview with a familiar face to many, Felix Wahlberg, who has likely taken your picture on a night out.

Another important feature of this term are the upcoming YUSU elections which will see the Sabbatical and Part-time Officers for the 2023/24 academic year elected. It is an important time for students to raise their voices about the issues which face them daily and given the rise in the cost of living, which is affecting us all, it is sure to be a key issue within all candidates’ manifestos.

Whilst the elections showcase the brilliant candidates running to be YUSU Officers, they also highlight the amazing media outlets on campus. We will not be providing the most up-to-date coverage this year, so make sure to pick up a copy of *York Vision* and tune into *URY* and *YSTV* to hear all the news.

In *Nouse* #503, we have also become more York-based in our coverage, particularly within our Politics and Business sections. Politics features two articles showing how mainstream politics can affect campus. The first is on how the pressure on the NHS is being felt by student nurses and doctors, training to go into the NHS. The second is on the role of students within local campaigns and is worth a read if you are intrigued by how a political

party works on a local level.

In the Business section, we have decided to focus on York’s local businesses, trying to understand how they have benefitted from the Christmas market and have been affected by train strikes. This is something which is echoed beautifully in *Muse* as Shoot’s double-page spread photographs some of incredible local businesses in York.

Science and Comment have also been influenced by *Muse* this edition with an article in our Science section about how *Interstellar* has helped to bring science to the mainstream. In Comment, there is an article about antisemitism in the new *Harry Potter* game which is highly worth a read.

As always in Comment, we have featured a range of articles, and opinions. My favourite is a piece on the experience of a mixed-race person at York which I highly recommend reading.

I cannot forget Sport: we have caught up with University rugby and netball for you as well as speaking to Franki Riley about her experience so far this academic year being the York Sport Union President.

There are always opportunities for getting involved with *Nouse*, don’t let it being mid-year dissuade you. We are always looking for new writers with new perspectives, so if you fancy giving writing a go, join our Facebook group ‘*Nouse* writers’ for all the most up to date information.

We are not limited to writers though, so if you fancy picking up a camera, drawing a cartoon or helping with our technical requirements, please get in touch with us at [editor@nouse.co.uk](mailto:editor@nouse.co.uk).

We are currently planning our content for Roses, the sports competition between York and Lancaster which this year will be held in York so if you fancy getting involved with covering it, check out page 15 and let us know.

This edition would not be possible without every person who is listed as a member of our team below. Thanks to them, we have words and images on pages, rather than just printing 48 blank pages.

Keep an eye on our social media to find out where you can join us celebrating having put this together!

Thank you for reading, we really appreciate it, and enjoy the rest of term. Maybe this year will prove to me that spring term isn’t so bad afterall.

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, writers, publishers, or advertisers. Contact [editor@nouse.co.uk](mailto:editor@nouse.co.uk) with letters, praise and complaints.

<b>EDITOR</b> Gracie Daw	Tom Layton	Josh Rutland	Elena Savvas
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			Corynne Ryan

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# COMMENT

Are private or on campus halls better?

P. 16



IMAGE: BLANDINE LE CAIN

# YUSU make progress on 'Bustice' Ecosia on campus PCs

**Nadia Sayed** (she/her)  
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

AFTER ENCOURAGING STUDENTS to have their say on the University's bus service, First Bus, YUSU have had a "huge win," with changes already being actioned following the University's consultation with First Bus.

Firstly, First Bus have installed USB charging ports, which are located on the back of passenger seats, meaning students can charge their electronic devices while they commute to and from the University.

There will also now be four additional priority seats on both the 66 and 67 buses. The additional seating means there will be a total of 11 priority seats, rising to 15 when wheelchair spaces are not in use, making buses more accessible for passengers with disabilities.

Changes to both the 66 and 67, which are free to board between both Campus West and Campus East, have been put into place.

Both services do require a ticket to be purchased for students wishing to continue their journey into the city centre where both buses terminate at

York Railway Station.

The 'Bustice' campaign originated after frustration towards York's bus service began to surface in 2019. The campaign's agenda has been to resolve the service's inefficiencies both for students and the local community.

In 2019, *Nouse* reported "The appeal of the #Bustice campaign is widespread, with residents and students alike being affected by ongoing transport issues in York."

Due to students' reliance on this service, YUSU have decided to act upon both the negative and the positive feedback that students have provided, with particular interests in resolving students' concerns about the First Bus service. Although YUSU is still working with First Bus to improve their services on Campus, changes have already been made.

Since making changes to the service, First Bus have also agreed with YUSU to increase the accuracy of the bus GPS systems.

Abbie Lenton, a second year student at the University, told *Nouse* that "A lot of the time the buses come too early or too late and so you have to ei-

ther rush to get on, or wait around for ages in the cold."

Therefore, better tracking systems and more frequent updates on the bus stop display boards are set to increase accuracy in bus timetabling and service.

Furthermore, Hannah Nimmo reported that YUSU are actively working with First Bus to improve "the regularity of buses so that they show up when they are supposed to."

"We are trying to work out how to get the message across to students if buses are not going to show up." Hannah also stated that this concern was exacerbated by the fact that "the need for buses this year, especially, has intensified a lot."

Further improvements to the First Bus services on campus are being discussed and include the potential provision of additional bus stop signage and shelters at each bus stop on campus, potentially adding to the student experience. Other matters have been disclosed by students through the open consultation, which has been ongoing since the start of last term (September 2022) which closed Friday 20 January 2023.

**Gracie Daw** (she/her)  
EDITOR

ON 17 JANUARY 2023, all desktop computers in classrooms across the University campus had their default search engine changed from Google to Ecosia.

Ecosia is a free browser extension and search engine which uses its profits to plant trees across the world, making it more environmentally friendly. Profits are made through advertising income, which is boosted based on the number of searches.

At the time of writing, they have planted over 166 million trees at over 13,000 planting sites across the world and the browser is currently being used by over 20 million active users.

Two students, Antonia and Louis, have campaigned for the change, choosing to make campus more environmentally friendly. They have framed it as a small change which, if instituted across campus PCs, could make a significant difference.

YUSU have assured students that it will not affect the G Suite which the University uses and that all those ser-

vices are available in the same way as before.

It is also possible to change the search engine back to Google from Ecosia if students prefer.

YUSU President Pierrick Roger said that: "The Ecosia search engine, unlike Google which the University previously used, does not use its ad revenues for profit. Instead, these are used to fund reforestation and afforestation projects."

"This is in line with both the University's Sustainability Strategy, but also my ambitions for a greener Union and campus. Although tree planting projects can sometimes be problematic, I am convinced that Ecosia's radically transparent policies which allow for live tracking of all tree planting and require local community buy-in for all projects will guarantee that we are funding real and impactful carbon sinks through our thousands of searches."

One student remarked that "I like Ecosia, I have used it on my phone and laptop for years so I am really excited that they have implemented this small change on campus which is an easy and simple way to make a difference."

# Nouse interviews nightclub photographer, Felix Wahlberg

**Chris Stapleton** (he/him)  
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

AS UNIVERSITY LIFE resumes following the Winter break, and students flock back to York's nightlife post exams, *Nouse* sat down with nightclub photographer and University of York student Felix Wahlberg.

Felix has been working as a nightclub photographer since Freshers' week last year. He has been interested in photography, he said, "starting when I was five, or something... going out with my mum with a little film camera, mooching around the garden."

From this, he went along to pursue A-Level photography before "in my leave of absence I started working at a landscaping company... which I quickly fell out of love" with.

In his free time Felix would still practise his hobby of photography, going out to "nearby café squares and, what happened is, I was just bringing my camera along, taking a few photos of people".

Felix then "noticed actually that with a lot of people I was taking these photos, and then next thing you know it was on their Facebook profile page".

When Felix realised his work was gaining interest, "what I started doing was I would sit outside, take photos, and share around on Facebook and just put a watermark on it.

"I was charging £5 for a digital download but then for each one, £1 of that was going to Whiteknights Yorkshire Blood Bikes", a Yorkshire based charity made up of volunteer motorcyclists who transport blood samples and medication to the NHS free-of-charge.

Following this, he found his way into the YorPartyNetwork through a mutual friend and recognition for his prior work.

From there, Felix describes that "what it was actually was Freshers' last year, and because I knew I was going to be doing the nightclub stuff, I was actually pretty keen to get out and do a bit of practice before doing my first paid job."

For this reason Felix began networking: "I was going around and messaged and just asked if it's alright if I could take my camera to this club night and take some photos for Langwith", who messaged the club asking if they could bring a photographer.

Doing this job at Sunday Revs, Felix "met Edward Matthews, who previously did all the nightlife stuff and then he basically took me under his wing, and then so that's really what kickstarted everything". Felix stated that he got "quite lucky" in "coming along at a time where [Matthews] was looking to get out of things".

When asked about his connection to and relationship with the individual clubs within York, Felix explained that

he is self-employed working with both York Parties and Illuminati, on UoY and YSJ club nights.

He also works with individual clubs such as Kuda and Club Salvation in house to provide photography when they are open. He has had previous experience with Popworld and Flares, who have since undergone a "change in policy".

Felix's work is not only limited to York, however, extending to places such as Sheffield's Leadmill and Leeds' PRYZM, whilst he also works from 3-5am in Doncaster every Saturday.

The most visually stunning, according to Felix, would be Kuda, particularly praising the club's lighting. Felix then followed this up with Flares' "lovely" Wednesday night crowd and the outside element of Sunday Revs.

Personally, however, Felix gave Club Salvation the crown for which club he would personally enjoy on a night out due to its "huge" set up and thus the inevitability of "bumping into mates".

Following questions about his personal opinions, Felix described the "close knit" nature of all who work in the York nightlife industry, and his unique position of knowing everyone through his work at the different clubs.

He noted that he has a "different perspective" on door staff to many students, saying that "some of the com-

plaints can be quite unfounded".

Felix also acknowledges that not everyone is perfect, however, and has even had to report door staff himself on occasion.

Despite this, Felix reaffirms the view that door staff are not "aggressive" and do "care a lot about the image they give off", extending this praise also to the owner of Club Salvation.

Felix works "every night of the week, seven nights a week and then most nights my average each night is around two hours a night, but then Saturday night for example I do five hours that night between four different venues."

These anti-social hours tend to pay well, as compensated by the clubs, due to Felix's ability to set his own rates through self-employment.

This would also be due in part to the high demand for his job, with Felix noting how "a lot of people can take photos, but I'd say the secret sauce really is the edit".

As much as this element of the job has its positives, it can often lead to issues regarding work/life balance. To help with this, "what I've actually started doing at the moment is I've got some people on board helping me out now".

The goal for this term, Felix states, is to "get a little bit more balance, because as much as I love it... it's quite useful just having someone else on

board who can help out". On occasion, "what they'll do is they'll photograph the actual event for me and then the following day I'll then edit it for them".

All of the kit however is owned by Felix himself and "fully insured", even possessing "back-ups of everything" in case a "camera breaks down right at the first venue", or if "an aggressive person were to come along and smash everything."

He explains that if this were the case, it could be "potentially two, three, four venues that I'm letting down". Furthermore, due to Felix's self-employment, if this were to happen the clubs would have no responsibility over any damage endured by his kit.

However, thankfully, an incident such as this has not yet been the case.

Felix also details the stresses which can emerge from the work, particularly upon a New Year's Eve on which both Club Salvation and Kuda wanted pictures at midnight, and the worries of letting either one down. This stress has even resulted in him taking the "200 mile commute" from his home city to York during the Christmas holidays, to do work for the clubs.

Overall, despite the occasional difficulties in maintaining a work/life balance such as making 200 mile commutes, Felix expresses a love of his time working with the clubs of York, joking of an "addiction" to the job.

## Voting ID Push

Following the legislative passing of the Elections Act 2022, residents of York are now required to show forms of ID in order to vote in person. As a result, the City of York Council have been urging residents to get the right ID so they can vote in the upcoming local council elections on 4 May later this year. This reflects the actions of councils across the county.

## Teenage Mental Health

Results from a citywide survey of secondary school children across the city have led to the formation of preventative support measures commissioned by the city council. The support will be led by York Mind for 12-15 year olds, supplementing their existing service aimed at 16-25 year olds. This will help anyone in need of face-to-face support between the ages of 12 and 25.

## Congestion Charge Rejection

York Labour leader, Claire Douglas, rejected the idea of congestion charges. Many UK cities have adopted congestion charges to aid the environment, cutting pollution and carbon emissions. Douglas commented that congestion charges are "certainly not on Labour's agenda for running the city", siding with the views of both the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives.

## Local Business Pressure

Businesses in Yorkshire are preparing for severe financial difficulties as new highs of inflation and spiking energy costs run the risk of worsening economic prospects for the year ahead. In Q4 2022, 35,000 companies were hit with early stage financial problems, for example having county court judgments of less than £5,000 served against them.

## Minster 'Colour and Light' show

From 10 to 23 February, the Minster will be lit up in a free light show, titled 'Colour and Light' set up by York BID. The show will be on every evening from 6-9pm and will be free to viewers with no booking required. The lights are on an eight minute loop and are intended to bring elements of the heritage of the building into the digital age.

# Accommodation “in disarray”

▶▶▶ Continued from front

and deadlines, not whether we can find a roof over our heads and afford food on the table.”

They added, “The whole experience was in disarray and was not managed correctly in the slightest and we are both very disappointed and concerned about welfare needs being met from the university.”

In a Facebook post on 9 January, the University of York notified its followers that the new campus accommodation was live. The post has now stacked up over 85 comments from both students and parents of students expressing their difficulty and grievances in getting accommodation as the site was overwhelmed by demand.

In response, the University of York commented on the Facebook post, “At present, all of the available rooms for continuing students have been booked. Based on feedback from last year, we significantly increased the number of rooms available to continuing students for the 2023/24 academic year. Unfortunately, demand has been far higher than even we were expecting, and we have had to close the booking system whilst we work through the applications we have already received.”

*Nouse* got in touch with parent Bethan Lewis who has a son in his first year and commented on the University Facebook post. Bethan explained that her son had exams in the morning that the accommodation went live but still managed to get back to his room to get onto the site for 11:30am. In spite of the website “constantly ‘crashing’”, they managed to get through and secure a room. Yet, they never got a confirmation email, so Bethan’s son didn’t suc-

cessfully get accommodation.

Bethan explained her disappointment to *Nouse*: “We chose this university for a number of reasons but one strong reason was the student support offered. As a first year and his mum we felt totally unprepared for the securing of accommodation for the next year and certainly didn’t expect this to have to start just over a month after they had moved in and started their studies.”

She added, “The website booking system was not fit for purpose and I understand the university had allocated more rooms this year than ever before but they provided a false assurance they had plenty to then see the total collapse at 12 midday when an extraordinary number of people attempted to access the system all at once.”

Shazz Evans also commented on the University of York’s Facebook page as her son Matthew Evans struggled to get accommodation. *Nouse* spoke to returning student Matthew who explained that he did manage to get accommodation but it didn’t reflect any of his preferences.

Matthew expressed his frustration to *Nouse* stating, “I logged onto the site at 12 noon when the accommodation application opened and booked a Band Two Anne Lister en-suite room that went through at 12:02pm. I have since been given a Derwent Band Three shared bathroom – how could all the rooms disappear within two minutes?” Matthew concluded, “I think it’s appalling that when you apply at 12:02pm you get something completely different: a different band and a different room type (en-suite to shared bathroom).”

In November 2022, the University of York published their “University approach to student accommodation in York” which detailed what the Univer-

sity is doing to deal with the current issues around availability and cost of student accommodation in York. This report detailed how the housing issue has been “discussed at the highest level at the University”.

Indeed, a paper has been presented to the University Executive Board (UEB) detailing the University’s new Residential Accommodation Strategy (RAS) 2022-2027. The strategy outlines the University’s overall vision for accommodation over the next five years. The strategy states that it covers “The possibility of building more accommodation on campus”, “continuing with nomination agreements with purpose built student accommodation providers in the city” and “exploring working with York St John University on increasing provision in the city”.

While waiting for the strategy to be implemented, anyone struggling with housing issues is encouraged to book an appointment with the University of York’s Student Housing Advisor, Stephen Cameron.

In response to *Nouse*, a University spokesperson said “The difficulties which some students experienced with in the booking system were as a result of rooms selling out extremely quickly, and not as a result of the system crashing. We know finding the right place to live is a huge part of university life, and there is unprecedented demand for rooms at the moment.

“We understand that students who were unable to secure a room will be disappointed, and perhaps concerned about finding alternative accommodation. We have put in place additional support to help and we urge students to visit the Accommodation pages on our website for more information and guidance.”

# Local Plan debated

Gracie Daw (she/her)  
EDITOR

THE CITY OF York Council are considering a new Local Plan for the city which will “provide a framework to guide development and protect the quality of the city’s unique historic, natural and built environment, determining how York develops over the next 15 years and beyond.”

The Local Plan was initially submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 25 May 2018 and has since been subject to various consultations and adjustments before it enters its final phase this month.

There will be a consultation on final modifications in February and March, after which the final plan will be submitted to the inspectorate for approval.

The aims of the Local Plan are to create and protect a permanent green belt, support the creation of 18,000 homes, including over 4,000 new affordable homes.

Based upon a quantification of the proportion of affordable houses that could be built by 2033, the council has set a target of 45 percent.

The plan will also support new transport infrastructure investment, create up to six new schools, provide more opportunities for employment sites, support the expansion of the University of York, invest in brownfield sites and provide the policies needed to reflect climate change ambition.

The Local Plan, if approved, will be the first plan that the city has had in over 60 years.

Councillor Nigel Ayre, the Executive Member for Finance, with responsibility for the Local Plan said that:

“This is a robust and sound plan, which will ensure York is able to deliver the housing, jobs, growth and facilities our city needs, whilst also protecting the city’s unique character, green belt and natural beauty.”

The City of York Council have also shared a draft Community Infrastructure Levy which is a charge that local authorities can raise on new developments in their area and can be used to support key infrastructure delivery.

It would allow for greater flexibility than existing (S106) agreements to choose which infrastructure projects will be funded to deliver the Local Plan. S106 agreements are open to negotiation, whereas the Community Infrastructure Levy would provide developers with greater clarity as it is non-negotiable.

This move is designed to help support development across the city of York.

The last draft Local Plan for the city of York was in 2005 for management development purposes.

As is legally mandated, this Local Plan has to be reviewed and updated at regular intervals in order to ensure the continued quality of York’s unique historic, natural and built environment. Unlike many cities, York has the added challenge of development in a historic city.

Councillor Ayre added that “With the Local Plan now entering its final stage, it’s crucial we create the right approach to delivering the homes and business space set out in the plan.

“The Community Infrastructure Levy will enable us to deliver the right infrastructure for the local community alongside the new homes that York needs to support our city growing in a sustainable way.”

# Finding Your York gets mixed reviews from leaders

James Clay (he/him)  
NEWS EDITOR

AFTER THE DECISION to cancel Refreshers Fair, which is usually held in the second week of the spring term, YUSU re-introduced ‘Finding Your York’. First established in September 2022, the scheme aimed to help societies advertise taster events for potential new members.

These events were meant to showcase a typical activity that any given society would run on a regular basis. It was intended that it would provide a centralised space for student groups to advertise their activities, making it easier for students to find an activity they might be interested in and for groups to recruit new members.

Running between 16 and 29 January, the campaign was re-introduced following the successful implementation of it at the start of this academic year. These events were advertised on social media and on a YUSU webpage dedicated to Finding Your York.

Despite the opportunity for societies to reach a wider audience, as of 22 January, only eight societies had successfully applied to have events advertised.

After running a Writer’s Workshop, which was advertised through this scheme, Tegan Steward, Chair of the

Comedy Society, commented that: “the ‘Finding your York’ status given to our workshop made very little difference to it. Most of our usual group showed up, with nobody saying they had found the workshop through the scheme. We ran the workshop like we would any other, and while the scheme was unobtrusive, it also had virtually no impact.”

Recollecting her experience as a first year student, she went on to say that “Refreshers gave me an opportunity to remind me of what I loved about the societies I was in, and also expand my knowledge and awareness of other groups and societies.

“Now, in my third year, and as Chair of ComedySoc, I believe this new ‘Finding your York’ scheme has gone overwhelmingly unnoticed and been exceptionally undermarketed, with little change to recruiting new members and no awareness of the scheme by current members. Involvement from YUSU in curating the scheme and helping societies get the most out of it was entirely absent, and the scrapping of Refreshers has been a huge loss.”

Rohan Ashar, Activities Officer, has responded to this saying that “The ‘Finding Your York’ scheme and webpage has been advertised consistently (almost every day) on YUSU’s main social media channels, included in various email communications to over

20,000 students, and featured on campus screens throughout the last couple of weeks. We’ve been very clear that we’re offering this campaign on top of student groups’ own marketing and it’s not a replacement for that. I think that criticising an entire scheme on the basis of one workshop is unfair and I object to the statement regarding YUSU’s involvement because we are the ones who created it as well as made sure groups became aware of the option to use the resource. Events such as the Volunteering & RAG Fair that have formed part of Finding Your York were successful and received good engagement!

“In terms of not doing a ‘Refreshers’ this year, the main objective was to adopt a more inclusive approach than the connotations of labelling events ‘Refreshers’ evokes. Also, as a Students’ Union, we inevitably have limited capacity and we believed that organising a big Refreshers Fair that has historically received low turnout would not be the best use of our and more importantly, student group committees’ time, and that students could find lots of value in directly trying out groups’ activities. We decided on running this scheme after listening to the thoughts of student leaders about what they wanted at the start of this term and therefore had their interests at the forefront of our minds.

“We realise that we made a sig-

nificant change on this occasion and are always open to feedback when we attempt new schemes – we know that projects like ‘Finding Your York’ have room for further development! I encourage student leaders to contact us directly so that we can have productive discussions about understanding how we should support them more in the future.”

YUSU RAG Officer, Ellen Rintoul, echoed the positive comments about the RAG and Volunteering Fair saying it “went really well, we had lots of attendees and lots of people getting really excited about the opportunities available and lots of people signing themselves up!”

She added that “Lots of people found out about the events through the Instagram pages (for YUSU, Volunteering and RAG) as well as the Finding Your York pages...I would say the pages are effective!”

Some leaders found that poor weather affected turnout to their sessions, with the President of UoY Football Club, who ran a taster session through Finding Your York, commenting that: “The event went okay but, unfortunately, we expected more new people to turn up at the GIAG session. We think it was mostly the weather as we were aware of a few people who should have come but did not because it was

very foggy and freezing at the time.”

In response, Rohan Ashar, Activities Officer said: “The Finding Your York scheme was initially set up ahead of Freshers’ 2022 to promote student groups’ taster sessions and welcome/introductory events.

“Our ambition behind doing a further ‘Finding Your York’ campaign this month has been to focus on Societies, Volunteering Projects, and Sports Clubs as we want to show students that they can join most groups and activities at any point in the academic year and they haven’t missed out if they didn’t partake in things during Freshers’ and last term.

“We also believe that students will now (at the beginning of 2nd term) find it more valuable to actually try out an activity, meet people in a specific environment, and directly discover whether they might enjoy it rather than attend another big fair and vaguely see or discuss what’s on offer again. Essentially, the best way to ‘Find Your York’ is through experience!

“Additionally, from a resources and time perspective for our student group committees themselves, YUSU providing the ‘Finding Your York’ platform seems a more efficient method by which they’re able to demonstrate their activities and effectively connect with potential new members.”

# Nouse interviews Wellbeing Officer Hannah Nimmo

**Nadia Sayed** (she/her)  
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

AFTER THE ANNUAL YUSU elections, Hannah Nimmo was elected to the role of Community and Wellbeing Officer at the University of York in July 2022.

Before becoming a Sabbatical Officer at the University, Hannah was actively involved in ensuring the provision of student wellbeing whilst she was a student herself – she was Vice-President of Community and Wellbeing for Constantine College Student Association (CCSA), the college she was a part of when studying for her undergraduate degree in Psychology. Hannah was also a Student Ambassador for the University from November 2020 to July 2022.

During an interview with *Nouse*, Hannah revealed some of her highlights of being YUSU Community and Wellbeing Officer so far, seven months into her term. “It’s always really hard to pick highlights as the whole thing has been a highlight. I’ve absolutely loved doing this job.”

However she said she found “support from students” is particularly encouraging, especially knowing she has had “a positive impact on their University experience.”

Hannah also told *Nouse* that she was proud of the progress that YUSU has made regarding the changes that have been made to the University’s First Bus service.

Hannah commented “the additional seating has been a massive win” highlighting “the University of York is one of the first universities to introduce additional priority seating on their buses.”

Furthermore, Hannah identified that “there is a massive group of students who rely on the buses, especially to get between the two campuses, so accessibility of travel is really important.”

Especially due to the “layout of the University being across two campuses with many students living along the bus routes.”

There are still improvements that can be made to the First Bus service, which Hannah reported YUSU are actively working on. These include improving “the regularity of buses to ensure that they show up when they are supposed to.”

“We are trying to work out how to get the message across to students if buses are not going to show up.” Hannah also stated that this concern was exacerbated by the fact that “the need for buses this year, especially, has intensi-

fied a lot.”

Hannah went on to speak about her enjoyment of the role. “Everything we do as a Sabb (Sabbatical Officer) is for the student’s benefit, so to see that paying off is really important to me.”

She also said that she particularly enjoyed getting to do more “collaborative campaigning” this term, alongside her fellow Sabbatical Officers: YUSU President Pierrick Roger, Activities Officer Rohan Ashar, Academic Officer Deb Dey, and York Sport Union President Franki Riley.

Following her acceptance of the role in July 2022, Hannah took to Instagram, posting her main manifesto priorities, which included ensuring “all student voices are heard.”

When asked if she had come across any challenges in achieving this goal, Hannah replied that a main challenge she faced was gaining enough “student engagement.”

“A traditional challenge for most student unions is that they require student engagement.” Hannah continued to state “It worries me there might be a cohort of students suffering in silence and have something they would like to say, but are too scared to say it.”

“When students work with us, we can do something about the issues

they have.” Hannah was also keen to acknowledge the trust involved for students to put their voices forward and she welcomed students to open up to her or the other Sabbs about any concerns.

Additionally, when addressing challenges she has faced within the role, Hannah pointed out that the University’s requirements for “wider consultation has slowed down the process” for achieving change.

She continued, joking that she had adopted the name “Consultation Queen” due to the vast amount of consultations she has opened since being elected.

Another major motivation for Hannah has been responding to student’s need for support as a consequence of the ongoing cost of living crisis.

According to the Office for National Statistics, (ONS) the average rate of inflation for December 2022 was “9.2 percent.” As a result, YUSU has worked with the University to initiate schemes to help students deal with the rising costs, especially through providing them access to cheap meals in on-campus dining spaces.

Hannah stated “We wanted to provide students with a sociable space” so that they don’t “miss out on the univer-

sity experience.”

For example, Hannah has been a part of setting up the 40p Beans on Toast Scheme, which is available to students at Courtyard. Hannah also stated YUSU were looking to introduce 40p jacket potatoes at Glasshouse on Campus East.

She also hopes to introduce a third scheme: an afternoon or evening food option at the Kitchen in Alcuin. Hannah told *Nouse* this would mean “student’s will be able get three meals in one day, for less than £1.50”

*Nouse* also asked Hannah if she had any advice for students currently having to adjust to changes in exam conditions from online to in-person, given the adjustments to examinations this academic year.

Hannah commented she too was “amongst the students who did their exams in person during first year,” but had to adapt to the “shift of exams to online,” as a result of Covid-19.

Her advice to all students sitting exams was “don’t panic and try to plan out your time.” She further advised a “good nights sleep” and to leave “plenty of time to commute to uni before your exams start.”

Hannah is contactable on email at [h.nimmo@yusu.org](mailto:h.nimmo@yusu.org)

## BAME pay gap at York in top five

**James Clay** (he/him)  
NEWS EDITOR

EARLIER THIS YEAR, it was found that the University of York has the fifth largest BAME pay gap across all UK universities. The data collected does not account for the job titles of staff surveyed, suggesting that BAME staff disproportionately fill lower paid roles to their counterparts.

Last March, the University of York Gender and Ethnicity pay gap report found that BAME staff, regardless of gender, get paid 14.8 percent less than their white counterparts. It was found that on average black women are paid 41.5 percent less than their white male colleagues. King’s College London was found to have the most extreme ethnicity pay gap, with a difference of 19.1 percent between white and non-white staff. Data also showed that about two-thirds of Russell Group universities have ethnic pay gaps.

Jo Grady, the general secretary of the University and College Union, commented that: “It should shame every single Russell Group vice chancellor that black women are paid up to 41 percent less than white men [at York].”

“Universities are sites of mass inequality and there are huge pay gaps when it comes to race, gender and disability.”

In order to tackle pay inequality amongst higher education staff, the University of York plays a leading role in the Yorkshire Consortium for Equality in Doctoral Education (YCEDE). This organisation aims to increase regional access to graduate and postgraduate research, helping a wider variety of individuals get into academia as a profession.

The five universities within YCEDE have suggested bespoke mentoring and support with more PhD scholarships

and reform to the admissions process.

Working alongside Leeds and Sheffield, the University of York has established the White Rose in Leadership scheme to support more BAME academic staff throughout their career. Its intentions are to increase diversity in senior posts across the sector by giving career development opportunities to those on a leadership trajectory. It is focused on those individuals who are hoping to advance into senior positions in the next two to three years.

These findings on pay inequality come as York welcomes its seventh Chancellor, Dr Heather Melville, who has had a career championing diversity within the world of business and finance. It is also worth noting that the University of York was established as an academic institution with public good firmly at the heart of how it functions in society.

YUSU BAME Officer, Emilia Chambers, commented: “I believe that the lack of BAME representation within our teaching body has a serious effect on us all as students: the by-product of

such underrepresentation is an environment which conditions us to expect academic positions to be filled customarily by white people.

“This misconception is harmful to all, but especially to BAME students interested in pursuing careers in academia, who may struggle to envision themselves in these roles, due to the current lack of representation.”

In response, a University spokesperson said: “We of course offer pay equality to everyone doing the same level of work, as we have a legal and moral obligation to do so.

“Whilst we do not have equal pay issues, our report does demonstrate we need to work hard on our ethnicity pay gap, which means we need to work hard on equalising representation – and diversity – at all levels.

“As a community, we have an absolute commitment to addressing racial inequality and have chosen to report on our ethnicity pay gap to acknowledge where we need to make progress, and hold ourselves accountable for bringing about the changes we need to make.”



IMAGE: BEN JORDAN

## Jorvik Viking Festival

**Gracie Daw** (she/her)  
EDITOR

FROM 11 TO 19 February, York will host the annual Jorvik Viking Festival. It sees the city host a range of Norse events celebrating York’s heritage.

The events will happen across the city in various locations such as the JORVIK Viking Centre, Barley Hall, the Merchant Adventurers Hall and Parliament Street. It coincides with half-term for school students across York, meaning that there are daily events planned for children.

There is something for everyone across the weekend. This includes free storytelling and weaponry shows every day in St Helen’s Square and a Viking Encampment in Parliament Street throughout the week which is where you can see the trades and crafts that the Vikings in Jorvik would have had.

It is possible to try traditional Viking crafts such as tablet weaving, nålebinding and Trichinopoly. Tablet weaving is a decorative textile craft.

At sessions teaching nålebinding, a Norse method of knitting with one needle, participants will learn how to make Viking hats and socks. Finally, Trichinopoly is a type of Viking wire weaving where participants will learn how to make a bracelet.

For those who want to sample Viking food and drink, there are events to try mead, which is a traditional honey-based drink with both cultural and historical significance.

On 15 February, the JORVIK Viking Centre will be hosting the Helen Thirza Addyman Lecture 2023 titled ‘Silver, Slaves and Yorkshire? With Jonathan Shepard’.

It will discuss long-distance trade in the ninth and tenth centuries through the riverways of Rus, modern day Ukraine and Russia, which facili-

tated trade between the Baltic Rim and Baghdad.

It will touch on JORVIK’s Trade with the East loan from the British Museum to assess what the silver that has been found around Scandinavia and the British Isles was traded for and how Yorkshire fits into that picture. It is also possible to attend the lecture virtually.

There are a few competitions featuring in the Viking festival, such as the Best Beard competition on 11 February which encourages everyone to participate either with a home-grown or homemade beard.

The Strongest Viking competition, on 18 February, will feature hammer-holding, leg-wrestling and hand-to-hand combat.

Also on 18 February is the march to Coppergate, which will see hundreds of Viking warriors striding through the city from Dean’s Park, behind the York Minster.

Recommended viewing spots for the march are College Green, near York Minster, St Helen’s Square, Parliament Street and The Coppergate Centre.

One of the highlights of the festival is the Jolabot Feast on the first night which is hosted at the Merchant Adventurers Hall. It promises to include “delicious fare and [raising] your glass to the Gods”.

Throughout the week, there are a range of events being held across the city which cater to all interests and ages ensuring fun for all.

The finale for the week is the Battle Spectacular in the ‘Land of Darkness’ which will see the tale of Ibn Fadlan told, who was the Arabic witness to the might of the Vikings. It has vivid accounts of strength, ferocity and bravery and will be paired with fire displays and soundscapes.

More information can be found at [www.jorvikvikingfestival.co.uk](http://www.jorvikvikingfestival.co.uk)

# Rent prices increase by 27 percent Govt £15 million fund

**Alanah Hammond** (*she/her*)  
NEWS EDITOR

IN A RECENT survey of 30 students, *Nouse* has found that the rent prices in York for student houses are increasing by an average of 27 percent for the 2023/24 academic year in comparison to the 2022/23 academic year.

The data collected reflects student houses in York, which have their bills included, in popular student areas such as Badger Hill, Tang Hall and houses in the vicinity of Hull Road. The data also reflect rental prices for the same house in the next academic year.

The survey found that the highest rent increase was a 42 percent increase which was for a student property located off of Hull Road.

*Nouse* spoke to second year History student Ellie Cape who currently lives in this property where rent has increased exponentially. Ellie explained her thoughts on the current student housing crisis stating, "I think the prices are extortionate for what we're paying for and when you compare it to other university houses in other cities you realise how overpriced they are. My friend in Newcastle, for example, is paying £100 a week for a house the same size as mine next year."

More students shared similar experiences with *Nouse*. Olly Hilton, a third year Theatre student, described how the renting crisis is "impossible for students in a cost of living crisis". Olly added, "I need to hold down two jobs to afford rent alongside my degree."

Second year English and History student Ryan Whitely expressed his concerns over the housing crisis to *Nouse*.

He explained, "It's becoming almost impossible to find affordable housing. After paying rent, this term I was left with just £67 out of my student finance payment, which is the maximum entitlement, to pay for ten weeks of living costs."

Ryan added, "Next year my rent will rise by £40 per week and will be a longer contract, not by our choice, making our annual rent cost jump from £6600 to £9500 – almost a 50 percent increase."

"As a six bedroom shared house, the landlord will receive £18,000 more in rent costs out of myself and my flat-mates next year, on top of the £39,000 per year we currently pay, and this is not the landlord's only student let" Ryan concluded, adding, "We all are struggling and rapidly running out of options."

Similar sentiments were expressed by third year English Literature student Katy Leverett, who will graduate next year: "I just feel very bad for everyone who has to find private accommodation for next year. If I had to do another year [with these new rent prices], I would not be able to afford to live and likely would have to drop out of university."

In particular, Kayla Vicente, a first year Theatre student, drew attention to the rent increase in popular student area Badger Hill. She explained, "The price increase on Badger Hill has made it almost impossible to live closer to the university in that area."

"My rent would've gone up by £40 a week which is unsustainable for me despite also having two part-time jobs alongside my degree".

Kayla told *Nouse* how she has had

to move further away from campus in order to be able to actually afford the rent and bill prices and will live in York St John Accommodation next year. Kayla added, "It's roughly £50 cheaper to be further away from the University than being closer."

"Of course this means I have further to travel to campus which worries me about bus prices or waking up a lot earlier than I would need to".

Current masters students are also facing the impact of the renting crisis but have the added pressure of a lack of maintenance loans from Student Finance England (SFE).

*Nouse* spoke to Master's student Ryan Winterbottom who explained, "Student finance hasn't gone up with inflation which means that, though my rent isn't ridiculously expensive, they are harder to pay. If rent is to stay the same, or increase, the student finance we receive likewise needs to go up."

Ryan concluded by adding, "As a Master's student there isn't a maintenance loan, rather you get a flat fee. This means that to survive I have to work two night shifts per week to cover my expenses and complete my study."

Indeed, the Government and SFE recently announced just a 2.8 percent increase in the level of student maintenance loans in the 2023/24 academic year. This uplift falls well short of the current rate of inflation, which stands at 10.7 percent. Added with rent increases averaging 27 percent, it is clear that students will suffer.

With so many student grievances, *Nouse* also wanted to hear the perspective of York's renting crisis from a local landlord. They wished to remain anonymous, but they own several York student properties and have been a landlord for over three decades.

*Nouse* asked the landlord's thoughts on the increase in rent, up to 27 percent, on York student properties. They responded, "This will be the biggest increase there ever has been in rent. In previous years, there has been minimal changes from year to year, so this is a very big exception. I've not known anything like it in the time I've been a landlord".

The landlord who spoke to *Nouse* has been in the business for over three decades and so these prices being the highest they have ever seen shows the severity of the renting situation that students now face.

Indeed, data from Stripe Property Group shows the demand in York for student property. They found that "the University of York is the most in demand university within the UK when it comes to student rental accommodation."

They added, "Currently across the YO10 postcode, no less than 75 percent of all Purpose Built Student Accommodation rental stock listed on the market has already been snapped up by students" as of 23 January. *Nouse* also asked what the landlord believed was the most influential reason for why the demand for accommodation in York is so very high.

They explained, "one of the biggest reasons is because in 2012 York City Council introduced a regulation called 'Article 4' which restricts the permitted development rights of a normal dwelling house." This has the effect of capping the available supply of shared housing.

The landlord listed the more obvious reasons for the rent increase including energy prices soaring, borrowing costs increasing and also the restricted supply and the increased demand situation with the amount of university students growing disproportionately to the amount of student properties that exist and are being built.

For example, the landlord drew attention to how "in recent years when accommodation has been short, people have had to live in places like Hull and travel to York and University which has been ridiculous."

*Nouse* also spoke to the University of York's Student Housing Advisor, Stephen Cameron, about the renting crisis that students are now facing.

*Nouse* asked Stephen whether he thought the University recognises the crisis that students are facing. Stephen replied, "I think my new role is testament to this acknowledgement as the University previously didn't have any support for housing within the private sector, only for accommodation service".

He continued, adding, "The student renting crisis is a national issue. A lot of people think that York is alone in this issue but it's really not. Everyone is in the same boat with rent prices higher than we ever thought they would be."

*Nouse* asked Stephen what his new role involves. He explained that he offers help and advice with "finding accommodation, dealing with disputes with housemates and landlords, contract checking, and just any housing-related advice."

Stephen concluded, stating "I want to empower [all students] with knowledge and the knowledge of your rights, particularly with landlords and letting agents. It's very easy for landlords and letting agents to take advantage of students, so I want to relieve any anxiety."

In an email from the University of York's Vice-Chancellor Charlie Jeffery on 16 January, he reassured students about the cost of living crisis which has impacted the student renting crisis.

Jeffery said, "Looking ahead to the next academic year, we have agreed with our Students' Unions to provide further cost of living support for those living off campus during 2023/24. We are working with the Students' Unions to finalise what this support will look like and we will let you know more as soon as this has been agreed."

*Nouse* also spoke to Pierrick Roger, YUSU President at the University of York about the University's plans to support students, with the expected increase in rents for the academic year.

Pierrick responded "In the short term, we will provide at least some rent relief through University finance. To do this, we're working with the University to set up a Rent Support Fund for immediate distribution in the 2023/24 academic year."

"Additionally, we have successfully lobbied for the doubling of rooms available to returners' on campus as these rooms are now cheaper than private rooms."

"We also want to ensure these rent pressures are meaningfully softened long term though. YUSU is working to bring partners together from the University, the Landlords' Association and the York City Council to set up a UNIPOL housing charity to introduce regulation to the private rents market."

**Nadia Sayed** (*she/her*)  
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

THE GOVERNMENT HAS announced an additional £15 million 'Hardship Fund' will be distributed amongst UK universities, in order to provide financial aid to students, as a consequence of the ongoing cost of living crisis.

According to the official government website, the fund will be in addition to the "£261 million that the government has already provided to the Office for Students (OfS) for the 2022/23 academic year..."

The additional funding comes at a time when thousands of students, across the UK, have been put under further pressure to juggle both academic studies and their finances. Students have been especially impacted by the rise in rent and accommodation fees, along with basic commodities, so making ends meet is increasingly difficult.

Along with the additional funding, the Government has also announced that there will be a freeze on tuition fees for the next two years. These fees currently sit at a maximum of £9,250 for each academic year.

In an interview with *Nouse*, Community and Wellbeing Officer at the University Hannah Nimmo, stated the additional funding "acknowledges that students are in need of cost of living support." She also said that she hoped the £15 million "is the first of more support, which will push individual university agendas forward on the cost of living."

However, Hannah was concerned that "when you break down the £15 million to every university student in the UK, it only equates to roughly £7

per student. So, there is a lot more investment that needs to go into student support, to help with the cost of living crisis."

Nevertheless, Hannah was keen to acknowledge the University's work so far in terms of aiding students through the cost of living crisis and stated the University "is working with YUSU to do a lot more."

For example, the University of York has already given out financial aid to help students during the cost of living crisis, through household energy grants of £150 per student household. The criteria for these grants is listed on the University website and is as follows: it must be an all-student household, the household must be within the City of York Council boundaries or within a radius of the University of 40 miles for full time students and 60 miles for part time students, the household is exempt from Council Tax, utility bills are not included in the rent, all students must be registered and in active study, must not have received a previous award towards their energy bills and students who are distance learning or studying online are not eligible.

The household energy grant is non-repayable and students can still apply through the University's cost of living hub page (provided they meet the above criteria).

When asked if she had any advice for students, Hannah replied "if you are eligible for financial aid, take it. Don't be scared or ashamed to take support and remember you are not alone if you are struggling."

For further information on how to access financial support as a student, please visit the University of York website and search their cost of living hub.

## Care bags from YUSU

**Chris Stapleton** (*he/him*)  
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

KEEN-EYED VIEWERS may have noticed YUSU's Instagram and TikTok accounts advertising a selection of free 'Keep Your Cool' wellbeing packs alongside a free hot water bottle during the Common Assessment Period.

The packs themselves included a hot water bottle, alcohol-free gin, tea and biscuits, a series of recommended study playlists, mindfulness tips, a motivational sticker vegan pesto, and a signposting guide.

Each of the items within these bags also comes with a thoughtful purpose according to Hannah's Instagram account.

The hot water bottle tackles the cost of living crisis, the vegan pesto to encourage Veganuary, the alcohol-free gin to aid any Dry January efforts, the tea and biscuits to remind students to take a break, the playlists and mindfulness for self-care, the sticker for fun, and finally the signposting guide as a typical 'YUSU Wellbeing' characteristic.

The care packs were part of a wider effort by YUSU Sabbatical Officers to support and promote the mental and physical wellbeing of all students across campus. During the YUSU election campaign last year, mental health was a major issue.

These advertisements feature

both YUSU's Activities Officer, Rohan Ashar, and Wellbeing Officer, Hannah Nimmo, parodying the now banned TikTok account 'Wakey Wines', who went viral for their Wakefield set videos.

The viral TikToks would feature customers travelling from all around Britain to the 'Wakefield Wines Limited' store, usually to purchase Prime, the drink partially owned and heavily marketed by influencers KSI and Logan Paul.

The reason the TikToks went viral, however, was not the drinks themselves, but the extortionate amount which customers would pay for them, stirring up controversy, with prices reaching up to £100 per bottle.

In their fame, the store accumulated a series of catch phrases such as "Bingo Bingo Gala Bingo", and "Abdul come closer, Abdul come back", which soon became as much of a staple of the videos as the extreme prices.

In their video, Rohan and Hannah parody the infamous account by captioning how "Much like Prime our well-being bags are in high demand", as well as mimicking the typical dialogue exchange found in the original TikToks, even to the extent of shouting the "Bingo Bingo Gala Bingo" catchphrase.

Unlike Wakey Wines, however, Rohan and Hannah made sure to emphasise that these wellbeing packs were indeed free and could be found near the entrance of the library.

# Dr Heather Melville becomes York's seventh Chancellor

**James Clay** (he/him)  
NEWS EDITOR

IN A CEREMONY held in Central Hall on Wednesday 18 January, Dr Heather Melville became the University of York's seventh Chancellor since its founding in 1963. This ceremony also saw the conferment of honorary degrees to Dame Alison Rose and actor Colin Salmon.

In his opening address, Vice-Chancellor Charlie Jeffrey welcomed the new Chancellor, while recognising the decades of work she has done in promoting women and people of colour in the world of business, finance and professional services.

He described her as an "outstanding individual" who could inspire with her passion for driving transformational change. Dr Heather Melville was awarded an OBE in 2017 for her services to gender equality.

While the role of Chancellor is typically that of a symbolic figurehead, Dr Melville made it very clear that she did not want to be limited by the traditional constraints upon the role of a Chancellor.

During the ceremony, Charlie Jeffrey reinforced the importance of driving the inclusion agenda in everything

the University of York does as an academic institution set up for the public good. Dr Melville stressed that she would draw on her insight to empower the educational experience at the university, while creating an institution with no attainment gaps. Upon finishing her acceptance speech, she received a standing ovation from the audience.

Charlie Jeffrey compared the position of Chancellor to that of a monarch within a constitutional monarchy. He described the power and responsibilities of the chancellor as a "less tangible but nonetheless vital" part of university life.

He even went as far as to describe Dr Melville's position as a "dignified part" of the university, compared to the "grubby" work of the Vice-Chancellor and University executive board.

Having received the degree of Doctor of the University honoris causa, Dame Alison Rose spoke about her work as the Chief Executive of NatWest Group plc, amongst many other positions of responsibility within the world of finance. She put emphasis on the importance of tackling climate change, promoting diversity within business and spurring on meaningful change through the power of learning. In 2023, she received her Damehood

for services to the financial sector, in part because she became the first woman to lead a major UK lender as Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group.

For his work as an actor and as a social activist, Colin Salmon also received the degree of Doctor of the University honoris causa. He has played a number of significant and varied roles throughout his life, particularly noticeable was his role as M's Chief of Staff during the Pierce Brosnan era of *James Bond* films.

Aside from his acting work, he is an ambassador of The Prince's Trust and a patron of both the African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust and the Richard House Children's Hospice. While accepting the degree, he urged the audience to "speak beauty, speak truth but always walk with dignity." He believed that "no child should be left behind" and that diversity could be found in his way of life.

Working alongside professors within the Department of English and Related Literature, the University commissioned two poems about the inauguration. To bring the congregation to a conclusion, these poems were read out by authors Chloe Turner and Emily Thorington, both current students.

Heads of academic departments, senior members of the University management and the recipients were led in at the start in a procession, led by the Mace Bearer. Present at the inauguration were staff, students and an array of special guests, which included *Game of Thrones* actor and Honorary Graduan Mark Addy.

At points of intermission throughout the congregation student choir,

The 24, provided musical entertainment by singing acapella versions of 'Timor et Tremor' and 'The World is Changed'. The University Jazz Orchestra also provided two musical interludes, treating attendees to renditions of Ray Charles' 'Georgia on my Mind' and Glenn Miller's 'In the Mood'. Both ensembles were met with high praise from those who attended the congregation.



IMAGE: UNIVERSITY OF YORK

## GSA pass no confidence motion in Higher Ed Partners

**Alanah Hammond** (she/her)  
NEWS EDITOR

ON 12 JANUARY 2023 the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) passed a motion of no confidence in Higher Ed Partners (HEP), the third party who are responsible for the marketing, recruitment and student support functions of the University of York's online postgraduate courses.

The GSA aims to call on the University to cease working with Higher Ed Partners as soon as possible and to request a review on their partnership. Ten people voted on the GSA Council which consists of Sabbatical Officers and Part-Time Officers. Out of the ten Councillors who voted, nine people voted in favour while one voted to abstain.

The University provides 13 part-time online taught postgraduate courses in partnership with HEP but, in particular, the GSA's vote of no confidence was impacted by the mis-sold Msc Computer Science course refunds which *Nouse* reported on last March.

In this fiasco, an Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education report dated 4 February 2022 verified that students had been mis-sold the course and justified the refund for students. Complaints included oversubscribed courses and misleading marketing in the course description.

*Nouse* has used direct evidence from this recent motion of no confidence and has also spoken to the GSA's Online Student Officer about their experience with Higher Ed Partners.

The motion of no confidence explicitly calls attention to issues with enrolled students' data. The motion describes, "there have been reports from students about the data HEP holds not being kept up to date, and examples of emails and phone calls sent by them to students exceeding the level expected

by the contact strategy agreed with the University."

In further detail, the motion explained that, "student reps have identified 12 incidents of inappropriate processing of personal data by HEP in an 11-week period during 2022". Within the motion, it also details HEP's response to these data issues. They explained that their "data quality is operating beyond 99.5 percent" and they "believe this is within reasonable tolerances of what can be expected of a business of this scale".

*Nouse* asked the GSA's Online Student Officer to explain examples of such data breaches. They explained, "students who are enrolled on modules are still getting reminders from HEP to enrol, so suggesting that students haven't paid their tuition fees, because the data hasn't moved from the University. Students are opting out of marketing emails and then HEP are opting them back in."

They explained that although the University insisted that these aren't sales calls but admin reminders, the persistent emails and phone calls felt like sales.

They added, "But HEP are actively recruiting telesales people - if [the emails and phone calls] are not sales, why are HEP recruiting telesales? It is for sales."

Indeed, the motion also highlights this same sentiment, describing how "HEP has advertised vacancies for 'Inbound and Outbound Telesales Representatives', which includes answering questions about courses, meeting sales targets and facilitating future sales".

The motion describes such "aggressive and persistent sales tactics" as "predatory", "valuing of income over outcomes takes the marketisation of Higher Education to an uncomfortable extreme". Thus, GSA claims that such tactics "must be resisted, not only on

principle but also on a practical basis".

The University and HEP responded that "Higher Ed Partners and the University of York take data protection very seriously and we both adhere to the highest industry standards. Students raised a small number of concerns with us in June 2022 and as a result we have made improvements to our systems and data quality processes. If any student has any concerns about how their data is processed we would encourage them to get in touch with their Student Success Coordinator."

*Nouse* asked the GSA's Online Student Officer about their thoughts on HEP's marketing. They explained, "The number of students they get signed up by not giving full information about the course is quite shocking really." This lack of information, they explained, made students alike interpret for themselves what the course would be: "flexible". Yet, the GSA's Online Student Officer explained that "although the course is flexible, if you time your modules wrong, it will extend your course date, and so tuition, by up to 16 months, which doesn't come through in the marketing".

Indeed, the motion of no confidence draws attention to this same point, describing, "The publicly accessible marketing material has not drawn attention to the potential for an unusually long course extension of 16 months, which is incongruous to the other marketing statements of 'on your own terms' and 'without putting your life on hold'. This was highlighted by the OIA as an area of concern."

The motion also highlights the interpretative lack of information: "HEP drip-feeds information to potential applicants using a sales funnel model. Whilst this is common in other sectors, it is not usual in Higher Education and conflicts with the CMA guidance."

*Nouse* asked the GSA's Online Stu-

dent Officer about their own experience with their expectations of the course based on its marketing. They explained, "I thought there would be more practical activities with the frequent use of the word 'skills' in the marketing material". They added, "I also thought there would be more contact with staff but there isn't any synchronist communication with them unless you're a course rep."

The University and HEP responded to this saying that "We have been working closely with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and, following a review of the marketing material, we have significantly revised the programme webpages in response. Our programmes and webpages are regularly reviewed. If any student has any concerns about their course we would encourage them to get in touch."

The GSA's Online Student Officer highlighted particular moments of frustration when it took up to a week, on an eight-week course, to get an answer to a question posted on the message board. They added, "Some of the responses from tutors have been pretty bad. For example, with one tutor, we thought they might have been a robot because the only thing they responded to the questions we asked was 'read the textbook'."

The GSA's Online Student Officer did defend the university, however, using the example of the MSc Computer Science course. They explained, "The course is trying to be all things to all people. The University can't support that, especially with the workload and the fact that the University hasn't been able to cope with the number of students."

They concluded by stating, HEP are "one of the most irritating organisations [they] have dealt with" and that HEP's influence on the course has led to personal feelings of "regret" about

taking their course.

To conclude the motion, GSA states "we have no confidence in Higher Ed Partners" and believe "The University would be better able to manage the online taught postgraduate courses without the involvement of Higher Ed Partners".

The GSA therefore want to "call on the University to cease working with Higher Ed Partners as soon as possible" and "express disappointment at the University's handling of the partnership and the effect it has had on students and staff", as well as "request a review is carried out to ensure the worst effects of this venture can be avoided by the University in the future".

*Nouse* asked the GSA's Online Student Officer to comment on what resolution they personally wanted from this vote of no confidence. They explained, "the desired outcome would be for the University to take more control of the courses. York staff want to change things in the right way but pushing things to an outsider organisation makes things harder to manage."

A spokesperson for the University said:

"We are proud of our strategic partnership with Higher Ed Partners, which has opened up routes into education across the world and created opportunities for students whose work and family commitments might otherwise prevent them from engaging in studying.

"Our commitment to online learning aligns strongly with our principles of widening access, environmental sustainability and internationalism - all linked to being a University for public good. More than 600 students have graduated from across all of the programmes so far, testimony to the success of the partnership, but more importantly to the commitment and motivation of our students."

# President of new Whisky Soc Pres talks to *Nouse*

**James Clay** (he/him)  
NEWS EDITOR

FITTINGLY SAT IN a corner of The Rose and Crown, *Nouse* interviewed Dan Wheeler, the founding President of the newly-ratified Whisky Society.

We talked about a number of different things but particularly the unexpected opportunities that one can get

out of whisky, his love of the drink and the importance of promoting niche interests on the University of York campus.

I began by asking him what the basic idea behind the Whisky Society is and what members can get out of it.

Dan described the society as a means “to bring people together who enjoy whisky.” It is “to show people that there is a massive history behind it and that they can get a career out of it, as

well as investment opportunities and how they can develop their pallet.”

In terms of regular activities, the society plans to hold weekly or fortnightly tasting sessions where society members can “sit down and share notes” while learning about the history and industry of the drink.

For the future, Dan plans to put society funds towards “holding our own micro festival, with whisky from around different parts of Scotland.” This would probably take place at an independent York-based venue or on campus.

Since starting university two-and-a-half years ago to study Business and Management, Dan began working at The Whisky Shop on Coppergate.

It was his experience here that allowed him to develop a connection with York Whisky Club, who have proposed joint events between themselves and the University of York Whisky Society in the coming months.

Although no concrete plans have been confirmed yet, the idea is to hold “a competition with proper whisky companies coming to join us” while “contrasting between the tastes of younger people and older people.”

Dan described how the whisky market “is quite saturated towards the older generations” however “during Covid-19, a lot of people got onto whisky because they had nothing to do.”

He hoped to contribute to “a new spirit” as “it is fun when our generation talks to older generations.”

Given that most whisky drinkers belong to the older generation, Dan

spoke about how “in general, all of the companies are very open to taking on students”.

This is primarily through work experience and graduate positions as distillers, ambassadors and sales staff for the companies which is something Dan is hopeful the new society will help support.

He commented: “if you can put in the effort to email around, there are always opportunities.”

He went on to explain the fact that “you can network in so many different ways” through whisky. Dan sees the establishment of the Whisky Society as something that might foster networking events with external individuals and organisations, supporting members into the world of work.

A career within the whisky industry is something that Dan is seriously considering for himself, given the opportunities he has already been offered.

On whisky generally, Dan spoke about his “strong feeling towards it”, describing it as “a family thing” for him, but he believed that many people are introduced to the drink through recommendations from friends.

He went on to say that “once you taste one good whisky, you want to develop your palate after that.”

In the interview, I addressed the possible financial restrictions that such a society may incur given the high cost of whisky as a drink.

Accepting that “it could put some people off”, he was confident that the society could accommodate all stu-

dents interested, given the varied supply of cheaper whiskies available.

He was also confident that, given whisky tasting is not about consuming excessive amounts of alcohol, the individual costs of participation will be relatively low.

He also mentioned one of the perks of the society, the fact that society members can get 20 percent off any bottle at The Whisky Shop in York.

As a new society on campus, Dan spoke about his attempts to “beef up our Instagram account”, alongside producing promotional videos and flyers across campus.

He will be taking inspiration from the equivalent society at the University of Edinburgh, one of the few student-led whisky societies in the UK.

Given that only a small number of students actively drink whisky, Dan urged anybody with a niche interest at the University to “share it through your passion.”

He commented that: “I’d recommend to people just put it all out there and share your passions. This is why I enjoy it.” Over the past years, he noted how “a lot of people have started drinking whisky after seeing my Instagram.”

Rounding off the interview, Dan finished by saying that: “I would have liked to have started it earlier on.”

Adding that “I saw there wasn’t a whisky society and I’ve spoken to enough people on campus to know others drink whisky. I want to bring like-minded individuals together and share a hobby.”



IMAGE: WHISKY SOCIETY

# York Nightline: “we’ll listen, not lecture” 8pm to 8am

**Nightline Volunteers**  
NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

YORK NIGHTLINE IS a listening service run by students for students at the University of York and York St John.

Even though our ‘on shift’ volunteers are completely anonymous, students may have heard about Nightline from our stalls at freshers and volunteering fairs, department or college newsletters... or perhaps they only know of our mascot, Kevin the Cow.

Although many may know us, they might not know exactly what we do, or even how we came to be.

The first Nightline started at Essex University in 1970. They set up their student-run confidential listening service so that students could receive support at night, when most other support services are closed.

On seeing the success of such a fantastic initiative, two years later York set up our Nightline for students at the University of York and York St John University. We have now been open for 51 years, even throughout the Covid-19 lockdowns. There are other Nightlines across Britain and overseas in France, Germany, Canada and the USA.

All volunteers complete an initial training before they do any shifts, with this knowledge being regularly revised through refresher training sessions. Our parent organisation, the Nightline Association, regularly funds research and supports all Nightlines across the world.

This is to provide the best and most up-to-date policies and procedures, en-

suring a high standard of service.

Our motto “we’ll listen, not lecture” goes hand-in-hand with our three NONS. Firstly, we’re Non-judgemental: a volunteer will always be neutral. They are never opinionated or hold judgement towards a caller or what they tell us. Non-Directive: the caller has control over where the conversation goes. We never lead the conversation down a particular route. Thirdly we’re Non-Assumptive: volunteers will never assume anything about the caller or conversation’s content.

York Nightline is for everyone and so we have multiple ways for students to get in contact; telephone calls (01904 323735), Instant Messaging (link on our website), e-mail (listening@york.nightline.ac.uk) and (in non-Covid times) visits (our flat is in Grimston house near Vanbrugh information centre).

We also have volunteering opportunities for everyone. Come to one of our termly taster sessions where we explain what it’s like to be a volunteer and answer any questions you may have.

Another aspect of Nightline is our free supply service. In non-Covid times, we could give supplies to students visiting our Grimston flat. However, while we are closed for visits, the best way to receive supplies is by calling us (on the phone, via IM or email). All we need is your name and college. Then your chosen products will be delivered to your College reception, even if you live off-campus.

Some supplies we provide include condoms, dental dams, pads, tampons, pregnancy tests, chlamydia tests and

anti-spiking bottle toppers. We also offer up-to-date information on subjects from housing to takeaway numbers, as well as sites to other support and information services offered by the University of York and York St John. This can be found on our website or we can offer this information during a call.

We rely greatly on our Instagram to communicate externally (@yorknightline). Here, we post information related to mental health awareness and messages from the Nightline Association. Our daily posts inform our followers of when services are open and advertise our termly taster sessions.

It’s also the best place to keep up with Kevin the Cow’s adventures – recently he was helping out at the ‘All Should Eat’s Period Run’ and the University Boxing ‘Fight Night’.

Make sure to come and see him at our upcoming fundraising Bingo event with York Student Minds in week 9 this term!

Everyone, whether they are volunteers, freshers, returners, undergraduates or postgraduates loves Kevin.

This is one of the many things we speak about with our alumni members i.e. volunteers who have graduated and so no longer do shifts or retain anonymity.

When asked about her experience, Amy (who graduated in 2021) said though it was “daunting” at first, “I could not be more proud of my decision to join Nightline. It will forever be some of my best memories of university.”

Advertising our service regularly, we have our public faces, such as Al (a current Master’s student) who said

“Even though I joined during the pandemic, I’ve never had such a wholesome and rewarding experience than what I have shared with my fellow volunteers.”

All above information and more is on our website @www.yorknightline.org.uk

Phone: Open 8pm to 8am – 01904 323735

Email: Open 24/7 – listening@york.nightline.ac.uk

Instant Messenger: Open 8pm to 8am – the link is on our website.



IMAGE: NIGHTLINE





# COMMENT



IMAGE: MAYA UPMACIS

## Stop asking me 'what' I am – it's dehumanising

People of colour don't owe anyone an autobiographical account of where they're "really" from

**Maya Upmacis**  
(she/her)



Can I just ask, what are you? This was a real question I was confronted with, and it was not asked as a philosophical musing on questions of identity and the self. It is a question asked in response to, or even arguably in retaliation to, the olive-toned colour of my skin and noticeable lack of eurocentric features.

But, because I believe that this question is asked without malice, I instinctively respond with a desperate need to be understood and to belong. So, I take a deep breath and mentally prepare to copy and paste the same script I use every time someone ponders my appearance:

"Well, I was born in England but my mum moved from India when she was three but she's technically British. My Dad is from Latvia so he's Eastern European white which makes me" ... etcetera, etcetera.

It's not simple or satisfying enough to say "I was born here".

What they don't understand is that the use of 'what' is dehumanising.

The question feels like their attempt to group my complex cultural identity into neat racial strata, as if I can't belong in either. Resultantly, the familiar feeling of 'otherness' and alienation leaks into the group dynamic and spawns within myself. Suddenly, the question can be translated to "What is that?". But, if critical thought was calculated for, they would know that I can equally identify with both in different ways.

It is a reductive question. It blurs the definitions of race, ethnicity, nationality and culture, all of which are attributed to unique experiences and are terms that have their own divisions in sociological academic literature. For example, I am mixed race. My ethnicity is White and Asian but my nationality is British. I grew up surrounded by Eastern European and English culture and I am more in touch with these areas of my social identity. There are elements of South Asian culture that are not as prevalent in my life, but it is this side which physically distinguishes me as an 'other' (which doesn't necessarily need to be viewed negatively). Asking me to explain my identity in objectifying, holistic terms of 'what' creates obstacles in my building a 'sense of belonging'. I must balance appeasing the expectations of both or more conflicting cultures I identify with whilst navigating

my own identity in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality and culture, which, as established, are so often misconstrued by the Western majority. Asking what I am attempts to pluralize my social identity and diminishes my individual complexity.

There are many variations of the dreaded 'What are you?' question that so many mixed-race individuals and people of colour are bombarded with. When I went to the hairdresser in York for the first time, minutes after sitting down in the salon chair, the hairdresser instigated conversation by asking "So, where are you from originally?" Although more innocuously phrased, the fact it was her first segue into conversation – in combination with the term 'originally', which conjures notions of 'foreignness' – naturally took me aback.

During Freshers' Week, my twin sister, who is much darker in complexion than I am, was asked an oh so carefully constructed question: "What type of black are you?" She was rightfully astounded and didn't attempt to break down the multitude of microaggressions compressed into a six-word question. Albeit, the copious amounts of alcohol she had to drink that night didn't help, but mostly because it is an exhausting and repetitive procedure for her, and many alike, to educate

the flaws in their ignorance and, quite frankly, not her responsibility. In reality, a white person does not typically approach another white individual with the question "What type of white are you?" So why is there a need to push for this information? It feels like an attempt to allocate who belongs where.

One high profile case of this occurred not so long ago. On 29 November, Ngozi Fulani, owner of a charity called Sistah Space, which aims to aid African and Caribbean domestic abuse victims, attended a royal reception at Buckingham Palace as part of the Global 16 Days campaign.

After the event, Fulani tweeted a transcript of her conversation with Lady Hussey (Lady of the Household) which entailed Lady Hussey repeatedly asking Fulani where she was "really" from despite Fulani asserting her British nationality. To me, this epitomises the ignorance present at an institutional level. Lady Hussey resigned as the Lady of the Household and apologised. In my opinion, this highlights an open mindedness to challenge unconscious biases; an attitude which should be encouraged.

I recognise there's an intrinsic human desire to want to learn a person's background and to connect. So, how do I ask? I agree with Rakishitha Arni

Ravishankar's excellent article: 'What's Wrong with Asking: 'Where are you from?' that it depends on when and how you are asking. Ravishankar spoke to Harvard colleagues who have had similar experiences and underscored the importance of asking in an appropriate setting, such as whilst talking to a friend, as opposed to during formal settings like work. Secondly, how you ask is important. As established, asking in a pushy tone can come across as objectifying and crude but, oftentimes, people such as myself will tell you their background if asked correctly and sensitively. In Ravishankar's interviews, Maria Ortega makes a good point:

*"The tone, the facial expressions, and the follow-up questions — all of that tells me what this person really wants to know" / "For instance, you wouldn't just ask a colleague if they have kids," she says. "But, in a conversation, if they mention or talk about their kids, then you can build a conversation from there."*

Now, when I am faced with the question: "What are you?" I remind myself that I do not owe anyone the autobiography of my identity, especially if it's preceded by what feels like child-like prodding and being gawked at. But, if the question is worded correctly and in an appropriate conversational context, no, I do not mind you asking.



# EDITOR'S OPINION

## The time for resolutions?

Sonny Garside  
(he/him)



"My penis was oscillating between extremely sensitive and borderline traumatised. The last place I wanted to be was..." Strange, how did this get here? Sorry, I've been doing some ghost-writing; it must've got in my *Nouse* folder by mistake. It's for an autobiography of some sort. Harry, I think his name is, lives in California. Anyway, I don't expect much will come of it.

Right, now that all that's out of the way, welcome back to Comment! You might remember that in my last Editor's Opinion, I hailed September "the month for resolution". Well, like a herd of errant wildebeest, I am going to trample all over my previous mantra in order to tell you that January is, in fact, the real month for resolution. Yes, I know it's now February, but please let me eke out the resolution schtick just a bit longer. These Editor's Opinions aren't easy, you know.

Resolutions come in all shapes and sizes. You may want to make a monumental change to your life, like my contact in California did. While wilfully divulging the most intimate details of your life and emblazoning it across 416 pages may appear to be an act of unparalleled self-destruction, it's his resolution, not ours. Who are we to judge? If you want to have a family that loves you, however, your resolution might be smaller, such as finally joining *Nouse*. Your big change, even, could be a steadfast desire not to change (read Hannah's Comment in Brief on page 14 for more on this). Resolutions are simply about ensuring that we live our lives in such a way most conducive to long-term health and happiness. Whatever that may be, whether it involves change or not, I hope you find it in the upcoming year.

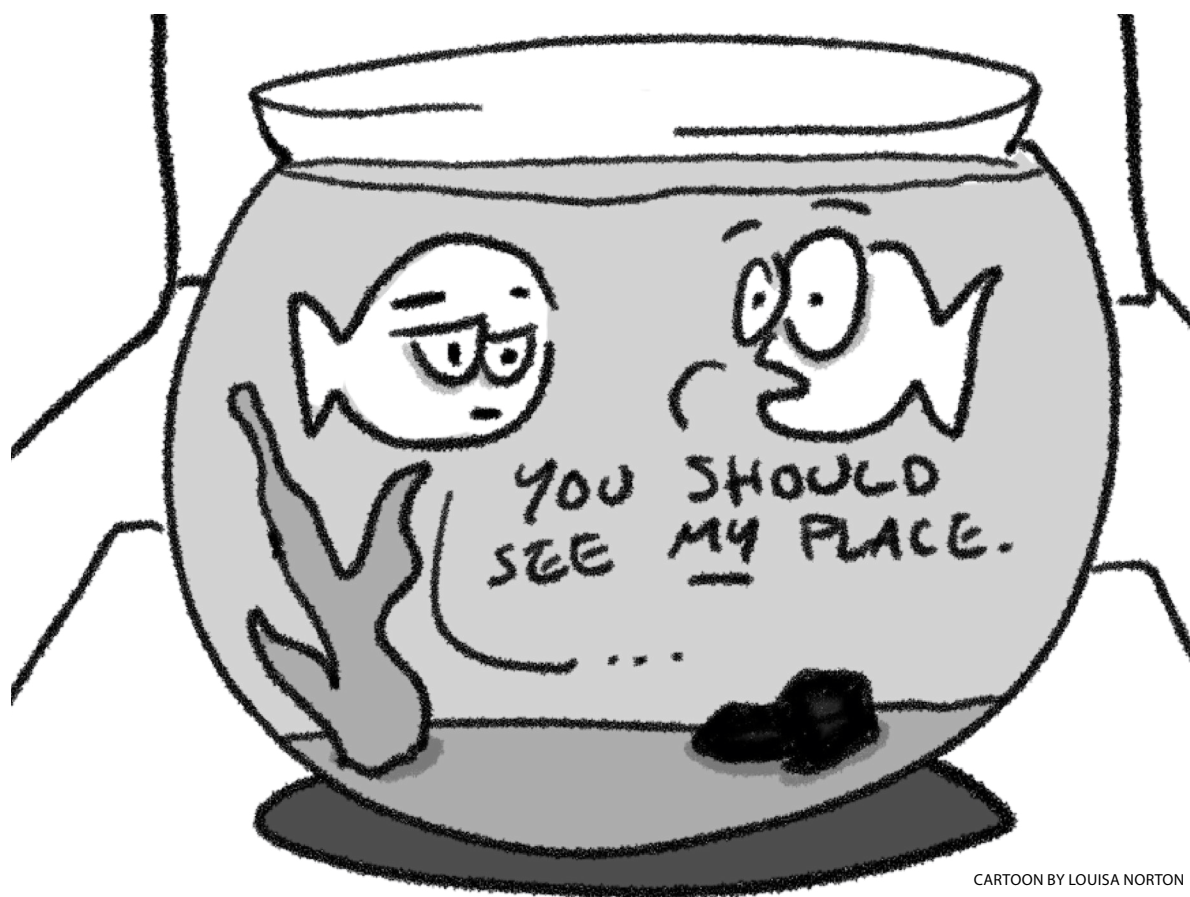
*Nouse* #503 also marks the midpoint of my tenure as Comment Editor.

Clearly the irrevocable passage of time has provoked some anxieties amongst the Comment team, as we scabble with increased desperation to find something, anything, which will memorialise us as trailblazers. Suggestions have abounded: will a name change ensure we are remembered? What if we call it 'Think' instead? Will 'Chat' sound better? We've considered overhauling the section entirely, introducing new features like a gossip column and a dating section. Ostensibly these would be to attract a 'new audience', but in reality, it'd be to secure our legacies. Time is running out.

You'll be glad to know that none of these alterations were approved in time for this edition. However, the desire to change all the time often belies what we're already good at. The way for this section to find long-term health and happiness is to do what we do best: give a platform for students to voice their opinions and share their stories. That is what you'll find in this section.

In this issue, our writers bravely tackle the injustices that still prevail in society. Maya passionately discloses her experience dealing with the "What are you?" question, Shannon discusses how the pandemic must force us to reevaluate society's systemic ableism, while Tasha condemns the upcoming *Hogwarts Legacy* video game for perpetuating antisemitic tropes. We also focus on different aspects of health and nutrition: Daisy explores the merits of Veganuary, while Henry argues against the toxic 'Gym Bro' culture. In these pages, you will also see articles on topics as varied as the student rent crisis, maths until 18 and decolonising the curriculum. Stay until the end to see Nadia and Hannah go head-to-head in this edition's Clash of Comments.

I'd like to end by thanking Gracie and Hannah for their constant support and, of course, to Raphael, Juliette, and Ethan for making the Comment section such a pleasure to be a part of. Without change, I still think we've put together a section to be proud of, enjoy reading!



CARTOON BY LOUISA NORTON

# Student rents are catastrophic

## Building new homes is the only way we can solve the crisis

Ethan Reuter  
(he/him)



Students are lazy, notoriously so. You know it, I know it, and I've seemingly single-handedly made it my mission to enlighten my seminar tutors of this. The lesser spotted university undergrad has an incredible ability to procrastinate in all areas of life. We've all seen the washing up left around the kitchen; some of you I'm sure, may've even had a hand in its creation. There's the reading left until seconds before the seminar begins and the complete lack of organisation skills in all other aspects of life. For a lucky few students, life doesn't lurch from personal disaster to upcoming deadline, and as much as we'd love to know your secret, our own failings get in the way. The chaotic shambles of university life rears its head for one task above all: finding a house, and doing so in a timely manner. Some of us can't find the will to live, most of us can't find the right temperature to cook a pizza, and so how can all of us be expected to find a house in an orderly fashion?

It appears, dear reader, we've stumbled into the initial problem: finding a house at the best of times. This year, as you might've guessed, isn't the best of times. It actually looks like the worst of times, with house price jumps being rather painful for most, and completely unaffordable for others. Specifically looking at the numbers, the unfortunate detail, 53 percent of students are struggling to afford rent across the UK, 79 percent worry about the cost of bills, and the price of student accommodation has risen by 61 percent in the last decade. To put that into context, over the decade inflation is 40 percent and house

prices have risen 53 percent. It's a fantastic help for landlords, less so for the impoverished university student. Certain students face the very real danger of being priced out of accommodation completely. Student housing has always been in vastly greater demand than supply, but with colleges already filled, those on tighter budgets are left with a rapidly diminishing range of options.

To give a flavour of the mood – and in the vain hope of writing *Nouse's* future gossip column – I'll paraphrase an unnamed friend, who mentioned either a divine miracle will be involved or they're moving back in with their parents. In a different city. These sentiments are echoed when speaking to others who joke "it's probably easier for me to quit university altogether than find a house on a budget". As is ever the case, housing arrangements fall through and future flatmates fight but now most just can't afford it anymore. I fear one thing will remain certain; some students will be left out in the cold. I cannot express eloquently in words, especially not words that are able to be printed in such a respectable newspaper, how much first-hand damage price hikes cause for students, nor how unjustified this seems to those with even a vague belief in the idea of equality of opportunity and the meritocracy.

This crisis, unfortunately, isn't unique: Durham notably gave it their best shot, with Durham students queuing up last term for anywhere up to 14 hours outside of housing agents, but that doesn't mean the problem isn't predictable and fixable. The underlying cause of the issue stems from two different failures: a lack of houses across the UK generally, and a rise in interest rates. Naturally, interest rates affect monthly mortgage repayments, and so, landlords must pay more money for their second houses. In turn, the students must deal with the

cost by increased rents, rather than the landlords. Secondly, there's the lack of housing in the UK, as successive governments have made it much more difficult to build houses in many areas. This creates an undersupply of houses and leads to increased prices. To actually achieve a genuinely affordable housing system, both inside and outside of student life, requires a vast increase in the number of houses built. This will not only reduce inequality, it will increase growth and bring student rental prices to a truly reasonable level.

Explaining the problem to those outside of university circles appears as difficult as getting my friends to understand the concept of using the library, or the joys of Salt & Pepper at 4am. My frustration at the lack of communication isn't a singular case either, as the President of Universities UK highlights, students are "becoming the forgotten group in the cost of living crisis." Students themselves are being forced to pick up the tab, not only when they're in the pub, but also in the house. For an example of being forgotten, look no further than the real change in maintenance loans being, and get ready for this one, -7.2 percent. Yes I know, lovely isn't it. It seems that bottle service in Revs will once again be limited to a select few. Maybe next year I suppose. Behind the protestations and sarcasm, there are obvious reasons for such hikes. However, such a crisis is stressful and worrying for all, and, if you couldn't tell, it doesn't make it any less infuriating. Let me leave you, painfully, with this, as the most worrying dynamic: there's the potential to create a genuine and long lasting impact on our future success. We shouldn't allow ourselves to reach the point where the price of university becomes unattainable despite apparent academic attainment, and this is exactly the path we're heading towards.



Cartoon by Louisa Norton

# Ableism and the pandemic: What have we learned?

## We must work to build a society more accessible and fair to disabled people

**Shannon Reed**  
(she/her)



On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation formally declared the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic, prompting the World's governments to form strategies often shaped by ableist assumptions and rhetoric. 'Ableism' refers to the discrimination of people with disabilities in favour of those who are 'able-bodied'. During the pandemic, the rhetoric around 'the vulnerable' further isolated the disabled community, with one prevalent example being the portrayal of Covid-19 as an illness that only kills the elderly and the disabled. Whilst people with disabilities were three times as likely to die of Covid-19 than their able-bodied peers in 2020, this misconception prompted carelessness in the abled community and contributed to a disregard for the health of the wider populace.

Now in the early spring of 2023, ableism continues to permeate a society still recovering from the devastation of the pandemic, prompting us to ask: what have we learned about ableism?

Firstly, remote working is possible, but not always perceived as prof-

itable. The mass introduction of remote working in 2020 ignited a pivotal change in workplace culture, expanding accessibility and supporting a more inclusive workforce. People with disabilities faced unprecedented employment opportunities, with employers providing more flexible working hours and expectations than the 'normal' nine-to-five. Considering that disabled employees are "legally protected" against discrimination under the UK Equality Act 2010, you may ask: why had employers not provided such accessibility before?

The answer may well lie in the systemic ableism permeating modern British society, or perhaps in the so-called "hustle culture" that frequently promotes productivity above the health and well-being of individual workers. One ableist misconception in the workplace is the perception that disabled people are "less productive" than their able-bodied peers, and the ignorance of able-bodied

employers to the barriers they face in gaining reasonable adjustments or accessible work. Throughout the pandemic, employers provided accessible working adjustments, including remote and flexible working, to accommodate employees on a global scale. As a disabled student, I am frequently left feeling exhausted following my requests for 'reasonable adjustments', whether it be in full-time work or full-time education. The pandemic highlighted to me a double standard between the disabled community and our able-bodied peers in creating accessible working and learning environments.

The risk of illness and loss of life by Covid-19 may have disproportionately affected the disabled community during the pandemic, but it was arguably our portrayal as 'expendable' that was most fatal. People with disabilities account for 22 percent of the UK population, with 14.6 million people declaring a disability in a 2020-2021 Government survey. During the pandemic, marginalised groups experienced more

significant health vulnerabilities due to the 'necropolitical' ideology that underpinned the responses of the world's governments and health organisations. The theory of 'necropolitics' describes how social and political power may be used to dictate which people can live and which can die. The abrupt nature of the pandemic may have contributed to our acceptance of the 'necropolitical' idea that some lives were more grievable than others, thus enabling the 'sacrifice' of the lives of the 'most vulnerable'. In the UK, this was most prevalent in our public health system, which prioritised healthy, able-bodied people over the disabled. Hospitals were even encouraged to prioritise patients who had the best chance of recovery when rationing health supplies. This systemic belief of disabled people as expendable was exacerbated by the pandemic, with the government perpetuating this sentiment within their Covid-19 policies.

Arguably, the most notable example of this belief in the UK was the response to Covid-19 outbreaks in healthcare institutions such as care homes, which became Covid-19 'hot-spots' during the pandemic. The incarceration of the disabled is often justified as the best means to centralise the provision of essential aid and care for these communities. Several studies have found a disproportionate number of excess deaths affected care homes in

the UK during the pandemic. According to the latest figures, over 45,000 people have died of a Covid-19-related death in care homes in England and Wales since January 2020, accounting for over 16 percent of total care home deaths. Could reform of our social and public healthcare systems prevent future deaths?

An enquiry by the Welsh Government into the disabled experience of the pandemic has revealed how disabled people experienced medical discrimination, a decline in basic human rights, and limited access to social care. It is suggested that whilst unconscious bias and systemic ableism are undisputed adversaries to the welfare of disabled people, disabled representation in decision-making roles could greatly prevent such marginalisation. The marginalisation of disabled people echoed through various types of communication throughout the pandemic, with the government and individuals alike deeming their lives as expendable. Consequently, disabled people are dependent on the voices of their able-bodied peers to not only protect their value in society but their right to live. The injustices forced upon the disabled community before and during the pandemic may not have occurred if we respected, elevated and listened to the voices of one of the most vulnerable groups in society.



IMAGE: LEO REYNOLDS

# Veganuary: self-gratifying or inspiring change?

## Jumping head-first into veganism isn't easy, but it might do long-term good

**Daisy Couture**  
(she/her)



I am not a vegan. I have never, unless we count the occasional absent-minded swiping of a 'Plant Kitchen' sandwich off the supermarket shelf instead of a ham one, entertained the thought of turning vegan. In fact, I think I would be hard pressed to name more than a couple of 'real-life' vegans, even since arriving at university. I doubt that my position is solitary – recent YouGov research claims that between only 2-3 percent of the UK population practise veganism. Yet, despite the paltry figures, 'Veganuary' never fails to rear its leafy head.

A portmanteau that has found its way into several official dictionary definitions in recent years, Veganuary is pretty self-explanatory. For the month of January, people are encouraged to ditch their usual diets and follow a plant-based regime. But why? January, otherwise known as the month of the 'new year, new me' mantra, gives birth every so often to a host of feel-good campaigns; Dry January's younger sibling, Veganuary, is no different. But, whilst Dry January's intentions are steeped in genuine concern – an earnest attempt at cutting down on alcohol consumption and the risks that come along with it – can the same be said of Veganuary?

Is substituting meat and dairy for plant-based products, especially over such a fleeting span of time, really as beneficial as we are led to believe?

On the one hand, it could be argued that the scheme is little more than a month-long advertisement of veganism, a temporary crutch that allows people to feel good about themselves following Christmas. Figures from The Official Veganuary 2022 Participant Survey revealed that 64 percent of the 32,522 respondents had no intention of carrying their newfound veganism into February. The same survey found that 45 percent failed to maintain a vegan diet throughout January, suggesting a large number were taking a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the challenge. Considering this, is there any wonder that the long-term benefits of Veganuary are called into question?

Additionally, it would be dismissive of me to not mention here the age-old argument that the vegan diet isn't a massively healthy one. Whilst this logic has largely been debunked, not least by the sheer amount of perfectly nutritious plant-based substitutes out there nowadays, there

is some suggestion that veganism may be something best learned, rather than thrown head-first, into. Switching suddenly to a vegan diet, as Veganuary urges, can cause an array of issues such as bloating, headaches, sleep problems and low energy that can persist for up to two months. For those experiencing such symptoms for the duration of the challenge, it may be quite discouraging, especially – in the face of the push for continued veganism.

However, this seems to be the point where evidence ceases to denounce Veganuary. It can hardly be contested that introducing healthier alternatives for fatty products such as cheese, butter and milk to your diet will do your body much harm. Of the respondents,

49

percent saw improvements to their energy levels, 48 percent saw improvements to their mood and exactly half reported improvements in their overall health. In fact, of the 76 percent that claimed they would attempt a vegan diet in the future, 20 percent chalked their reasoning up to improved health. If those who resolved to one day try their hand at full-time veganism stuck with it, they would likely see a whole host of health benefits as time wore on.

A longitudinal study conducted by EPIC-Oxford found that, over the course of eighteen years, those following vegan and vegetarian diets were at lower risk of heart disease, diabetes and kidney stones than their meat-eating counterparts. This would, of course, mean pushing through the initial unpleasant, albeit temporary, symptoms associated with turning vegan suddenly and with little warning. Despite the majority deciding that February would see them return to their previous diets, Veganuary appears to act for many as a gateway into more permanent, if only potential, veganism.

If the proposed health benefits aren't enough, it should be noted that Veganuary poses less awkwardness than most people tend to assume. Over the

years, I have heard countless friends and family members falling prey to an anti-Veganuary mindset – that it would be too difficult, they wouldn't enjoy vegan food, that they'd miss chocolate too much, and so on and so forth. However, it may be a case of not knocking it until you try it – 20 percent of those likely to attempt a more full-time vegan approach stated that their main reason was finding it easier than expected.

This shouldn't really be surprising; in recent years, more and more restaurants, cafes and supermarkets have begun to make changes in order to accommodate those following vegan diets. It has reached a point where most supermarkets boast specified vegan sections, whilst you'd struggle to find a cafe menu that didn't offer at least a couple of vegan-friendly dishes. Not only this, but vegan food is nicer now than ever before – many substitutes, including chicken-based dishes, chocolate, and yoghurt, are manufactured to taste so close to the 'real' thing that it can be difficult to tell them apart.

Is Veganuary, then, little more than a month-long advertising campaign, or is it inspiring future change from within? It all depends upon how you choose to participate. A look at the figures suggests that, yes, Veganuary is a worthwhile cause that inspires more people than it discourages to attempt more permanent veganism, an endeavour good for the mind, body and planet. Will I be participating in Veganuary 2024? ... Maybe. We'll see.



IMAGE: DAVID MONNIAUX



# Gym Bro culture: Eating disorders repackaged

## 'Fitspiration' can create and perpetuate obsessive and disordered eating for everyone

Henry Gee  
(he/him)



**CONTENT WARNING:** this article contains reference to disordered eating

I was looking through Instagram Reels recently (I don't like TikTok but am more than happy to watch the exact same content weeks later and reposted by someone else) and happened across a cooking tutorial by a very muscled man.

Yet, instead of just showing the ingredients, preparation time, and methods, he also talked about the number of calories and grams of protein per serving. The recipe was for four servings. Something with chicken. Ideal for meal prep and your macros, whatever that means.

I moved on, not thinking much of it, but then came across a similar video, with a similar looking man, that had a similar recipe, that was similarly suited to meal prep. It got me thinking – if they looked like they did, and cooked like that, and I looked like me, and cooked like I do; clearly, they knew something I didn't. It seems ridiculous, but part of me began to feel angry and ashamed that I didn't look like that.

Preparing food ahead of time is nothing new. For as long as there has been decent, reliable home refrigeration, there has been tupperware filled with cooked meats, vegetables, and

stews; batch cooked food just waiting to be eaten. Even the idea of preparing entire meals ahead of time isn't novel. People are always looking for ways to make home cooking easier and more affordable.

If you deliberately cook a lot of soup, and freeze most of it – that's meal prep. If you make a sandwich to take with you to the library the next day – that's meal prep. If you drink an entire bottle of whisky so you can be drunk the next day – that...that's a problem...you should seek help for that. But the point is, having certain meals ready to go, for your convenience, just makes sense. Most of us do it without thinking.

However, the type of meal prepping that these 'gym bro' influencers are promoting is not this. It involves specifically portioning out most, if not all, of your week's meals. Every food item is carefully weighed.

drastically alter and ruin your long-term goals. Meal prepping is important because it allows you to focus on what matters; lifting weights and trying to attain your ideal body. Less time eating, more time exercising. It's what those muscled men online told you would help make you look like them.

The NHS website says that "spending a lot of time worrying about your weight and body shape", "exercising too much", and "having very strict habits or routines around food" are potential symptoms of an eating disorder. I think the similarities to the type of meal prepping and bodily aspirations 'body-builder' influences promote are clear.

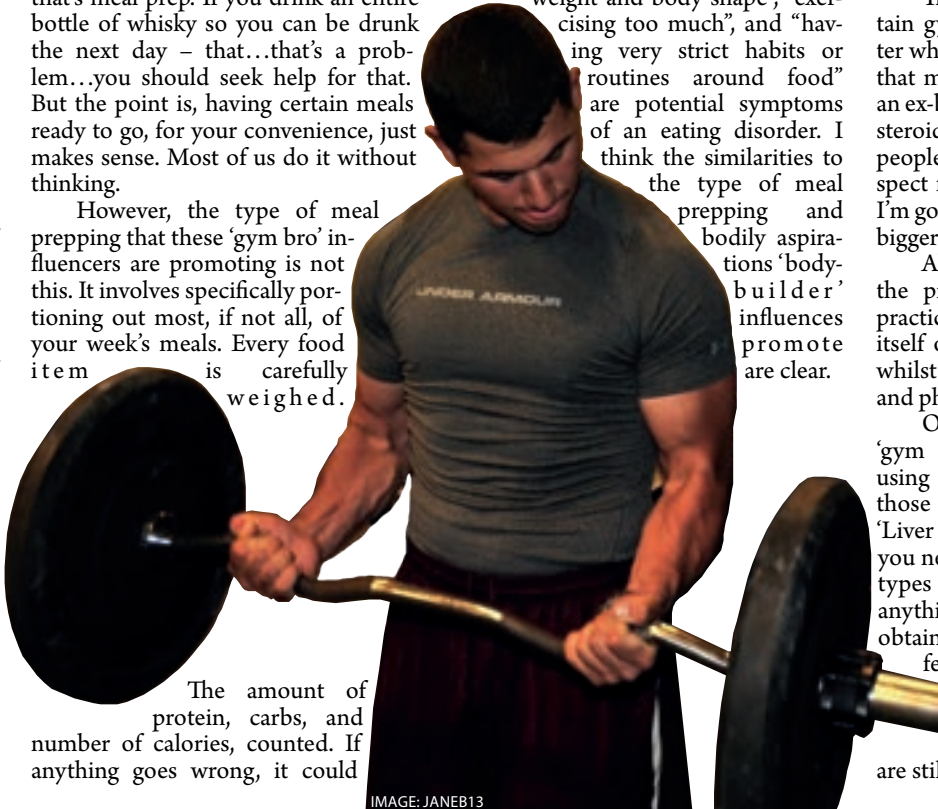


IMAGE: JANE13

The amount of protein, carbs, and number of calories, counted. If anything goes wrong, it could

However, such practices are often not seen as promoting disordered eating because they are legitimised under the guise of fitness, self-improvement, and goal-oriented attainment. How can they be harmful if you get to look like this at the end? How can you have a problem when you're working on yourself? How can you have an eating disorder when you're gaining muscle?

There is also a feeling within certain gym cultures that it doesn't matter what you do, the end physique is all that matters. Talking to *The Guardian*, an ex-body builder said that after taking steroids, and looking notably bigger, people within the gym had "more respect for [me]...I thought, heck yeah, I'm going to take more so I can get even bigger".

Although not specifically about the promotion of disordered eating practices, it belies a culture that prides itself on the pursuit of the superficial whilst overlooking unhealthy mental and physical attitudes.

On a quick side note, I really hate 'gym bro' influencers who admit to using steroids, either from the off, or those who get found out (\*cough\* 'Liver King' \*cough\*). Admitting that you need steroids to attain these body-types doesn't suddenly absolve you of anything. You're still promoting an unobtainable body-type, and you're still feeding a toxic culture that is negatively affecting people's physical and mental health.

Because eating disorders are still mostly associated with women,

many of the men who experience them go unrecognised and undiagnosed. Simply put, a lot of the advice and understanding of symptoms doesn't align with how most men experience them, further explaining their acceptance within 'gym bro' culture.

Whilst research into the experience of men with eating disorders is limited, it does suggest that the number of men experiencing symptoms is rising. Symptoms tended to exhibit as obsessive behaviours around calorie counting and the amount of protein in foods. Most men also experienced some form of muscle dysmorphia (the belief that their muscles are too small and therefore feel a compulsive need to make them larger). These mirror the meal prep practices promoted by 'gym bro' influencers, as well as the internalised inadequacies they embody.

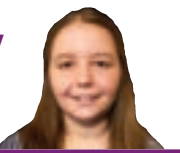
Sadly, the people who are promoting these harmful practices don't seem to care. They're either simply saying what they were told, and they've internalised any of the negative side-effects as merely part of the 'rise and grind' mentality; or they're just parroting whatever trend they've seen online in the pursuit of relevancy and likes.

Frankly, I think social media companies should be doing more to regulate this kind of content. Inaction is not a neutral position. Guidelines need to be clearer. The longer they wait, the more men will get caught in a vicious cycle of positive affirmation for negative practices. It may seem trivial; it's not for the people affected by it.

# Rishi, show your workings out for extra maths

## Hannah Carley explores why Sunak's new policy proposal won't improve maths education

Hannah Carley  
(she/her)



We are living in a time of extreme crisis. Inflation is high, families can't afford to put food on the table, the NHS is struggling and more strikes are being announced each day. What, above all else, can provide the solution to our myriad of struggles? Wherein lies the solutions that we need?

Mathematics. This is what can make things better. Or at least, it is what can in the eyes of our Prime Minister. Rishi Sunak's wonderful flagship policy proposal for 2023 is for all students in England to study maths until the age of 18.

It's underwhelming to say the least. On a surface level, it's difficult to see how more maths is going to benefit the next generation when the same generation seems likely to face so many more pressing issues in the future. It's a huge insult to those on strike at the moment that our Prime Minister seemingly cares more about students learning about algebra than he does about helping working people with their finances. It might be worth making sure people will have

enough money in the future before you teach them how to manage it.

Lack of priorities aside, this proposal also fails to add up. Having students in schools studying maths until eighteen in any form will undeniably require more maths classes to accommodate them. However, an ongoing teacher shortage means that almost half of secondary schools are already using non-specialist teachers for maths lessons. Extending the presence of the subject will only make things worse. Poor funding for post-16 education, especially for non-A-Level pathways, only serves to increase the challenge.

The policy still fails to deal with the mathematics attainment gap seen already in England. Educational char-

ity Teach First estimates that a child from a disadvantaged background is 18 months behind on average when they take their GCSEs. Making everyone study mathematics for longer does nothing to rectify educational inequality and will not support students who have already fallen behind.

If Rishi Sunak truly wants to fix maths education in this country, then a couple of extra years of classes is comparable to sticking a plaster on a gaping wound.

So, all in all, I don't see this policy having the effects Rishi Sunak intends it to. Ironically though, I am the kind of person you'd think would be all for it. Despite now being a PPE student, maths was one of my greatest strengths at school. I successfully studied both maths and further

maths to A-level. On paper, I should be all for Rishi's pet project.

But here's the thing: I studied maths because I enjoyed it. I lived for the challenge, and was excited to pair the interest with humanities at A-Level. Not everyone is, or ever should be like me, and that is arguably what this policy forgets.

I concede that this policy won't force everyone to take A-Level maths. Yet regardless of that fact, it is set to potentially become the only compulsory subject for students in England after GCSEs. English or humanities will not get the same treatment. Why is it fair to expect students who find maths difficult and have no interest in STEM careers to take the subject for longer, when we don't expect the same for those who struggle with reading or writing?

STEM subjects are important, and will undoubtedly play a growing role in our future economy. But making young people who are disillusioned with maths study it for longer is unfair and will only increase their dislike. Our education system is based on gradual specialisation. However, the announcement means that maths is the only subject to get special treatment.

Again, we are seeing our government place STEM on a pedestal, devaluing other pathways. It's undeniably de-

moralising for those people who wish to pursue the arts and humanities, and could even have a negative impact on a student's mental health and self worth.

Even more simply, people will succeed in what they love and enjoy. They won't find success, though, when they are unmotivated and disengaged. We need to inspire young people to pursue maths and science so that they have the ambition and drive to succeed. The answer isn't to force them to spend longer on a subject they have no interest in – certainly not in a way that sends a message to other subjects.

Perhaps resources would be more wisely spent on specialist teachers so that students would receive a higher quality maths education at a younger age. Or in diversifying our STEM curriculum to be more inclusive. Maybe we just need to listen to teachers who have been striking and support them, so they can better support the next generation of engineers, accountants and data analysts.

There are so many things we could do to support maths education in England, but what I do believe is that all of them are better options than this.

So Rishi, if you really want this policy to come to fruition, you had better show your working out. Right now, however, I would grade you an F.

IMAGE: MARCO VERCH

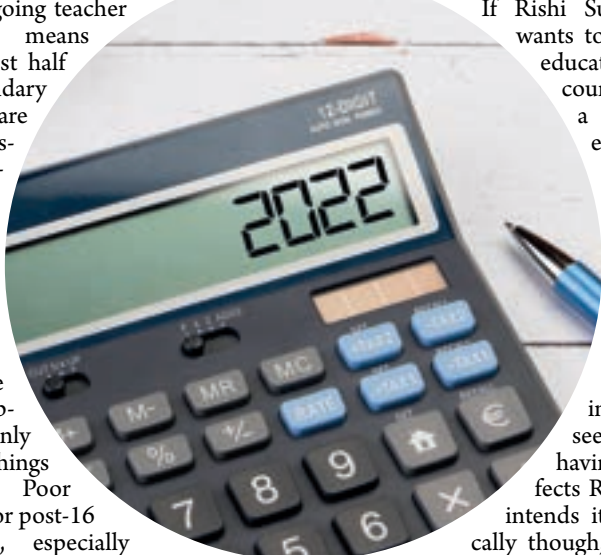




IMAGE: ELIEDION

## Hogwarts Legacy controversy

Can we separate art from artist in an age of antisemitism?

Tasha Acres  
(she/her)



**CONTENT WARNING:** this article contains references to transphobia and antisemitism

Growing up is one of the worst feelings in the world. Especially when you discover that one of the most prevalent fictional worlds of your childhood, once imbued with magic, friendship and adventure, has been corrupted with foundational hate and ignorance. What was once a chance for comforting escapism has now morphed into an uncontrollable critical analysis of the harmful and vilifying stereotypes that plague everything affiliated with it. J.K. Rowling has not only ruined *Harry Potter* for me, but for many thousands of young people who have grown up with her highly influential children's series, especially those who have been directly harmed as a result of her actions.

If this is news to you, I envy your Twitter-less lifestyle.

The *Harry Potter* series hosts a plethora of concerning tropes and ideas, from naming token POC characters ignorantly and offensively, to broader political ideologies such as the house-elves' slavery (yes, Hermione does campaign for SPEW, but she is relentlessly mocked for it, told that she was being ridiculous as the elves seemed to 'enjoy' it, and ultimately fails; that J.K. Rowling writes the house-elves as taking offence to Hermione's efforts must be unsettling for others too, right?)

Most recently, more discussions addressing antisemitism in *Harry Potter* have surfaced, following excite-

ment from many online due to the release of *Hogwarts Legacy*.

Rowling's goblins feature in the first *Harry Potter* book. Depicted as working at Gringotts Wizarding Bank and tasked with secretly looking after wizards' money, they are described as having long, hooked noses and plenty more stereotypical features besides. Even wizards are wary of them, emphasised in the film when Hagrid says that they are "clever as they come... but not the most friendly of beasts." In a recent episode of his podcast, Jon Stewart points out that, as a Jewish man, this stereotype was glaringly obvious to him in the cinema, describing this image of goblins as a direct copy of a piece of antisemitic propaganda from World War II. While Stewart maintains that he is not accusing Rowling of being antisemitic, I believe that it's important to recognise the danger of this perpetuation – even if it is unconscious – of antisemitic caricatures by people with an influential platform. They are repulsive stereotypes, originating from hatred, and in failing to progress beyond them, society has remained stagnant.

Now, we turn to *Hogwarts Legacy*. The premise of the narrative is that of a war between wizards and goblins: the "Goblin Rebellion." They are an oppressed minority, rebelling for rights, but you as the player... are fighting against them? Situating goblins as the antagonists of the story further adds to the Wizarding World's antisemitic history. As a result, some gamers are prepared to boycott the game to avoid Rowling acquiring royalties. Some, on the other hand, are more encouraged to buy the game after the discourse began. However, reading their comments has led me to conclude that this largely stemmed from a dislike of being told

what to do, rather than a celebration of the game's treatment of minorities.

One such minority is the transgender community, and specifically trans women. Rowling has made several tweets that indicate her alignment with TERF ideology, as well as having made considerable donations to anti-LGBTQ+ organisations and maintaining relationships with the late Magdalen Berns. Those wishing to boycott hope that there will be less money spent on the restriction of basic human rights, especially in light of Rowling's tweet, in response to being asked how she feels about losing a large chunk of her audience, that "I read my most recent royalty cheques and find the pain goes away pretty quickly." Not only that, but the lead designer of the game quit the project for sympathising with GamerGate, a hugely misogynistic campaign.

To purchase the game is to be aligned with the dangerous ideology behind it

To purchase this game is to be aligned with the dangerous ideology hidden behind it. Some believe that pirating the game fits better with their morals, however in doing so, you are still being entertained by the very stereotypes you wished to condemn. Before learning about the details of this game, I was really looking forward to it: its features are innovative and inclusive, and the sheer size was so appealing to me. But for me, it'd be immoral to buy it with the knowledge of the harm it perpetuates.

## Decolonising the curriculum isn't as scary as it sounds

Raphael Henry  
(he/him)



**CONTENT WARNING:** this article contains reference to slavery and racism

The *Times* recently ran a poll on its website, posing the question "should universities remove slavers' names from their campuses?" I honestly don't know why, but I had genuine hope for humanity as I clicked 'reveal result'. What do you think the results were? Would you be terribly shocked to discover that 87 percent of the 5,000 votes said "no, keep the slavers' names"? In hindsight, me neither. Let's not make any hasty judgements though: there's a genuine conversation to be had over whether removing slavers' names risks airbrushing our colonial history, sweeping Britain's dark deeds under the rug. Maybe these *Times* readers are in fact stalwart defenders against this dangerous possibility?

Curious, I scrolled down to the comments. My mistake became clear when I immediately encountered a comment praising "the civilising influence the British Empire had" on Africa. Just below, another commenter was complaining that ethnic minorities are now "colonising the UK" right back. I closed the tab. "That's enough for today," I thought, loading up *The Guardian* homepage to cleanse my soul with some righteous anger; there was something about the UK Climate Minister, Graham Stuart, accepting donations from fossil fuel companies. Perfect.

But I just couldn't stop thinking about the poll. Why does it so bother *The Times*, as well as *Times* readers, that universities are engaging in the dialogue surrounding these social issues? Over the past eight years, the winds of change have been slowly but surely nudging universities towards 'decolonising' their curriculums and campuses. This process has a lot to do with diversity: for countless decades, universities had primarily concerned themselves with a pretty limited range of material.

Our cultural history is, by-and-large, a history of marginalisation: minority voices, which should have been commonplace, are instead the exceptions to the rule; and an incredible amount of weight has been placed on the shoulders of those exceptions. In my entire school education, I was taught about exactly one black writer (Olaudah Equiano). The British Empire transported three million slaves across the Atlantic, but only has room for one in its school curriculum.

So, the first part of decolonising the curriculum is diversity: bringing in voices that haven't been heard historically. The second part is adding some context to what is already there. For instance, take Immanuel Kant. Probably one of the most famous philosophers out there, his musings on morality have exasperated (and occasionally tortured) generations of philosophy students, myself included. The man produced seminal works of philosophy whilst never once leaving the

walls of the tiny German city he lived in. He is, and will remain, a hugely influential figure in moral philosophy. But he also constructed a hierarchy of the races – placing white people at the top, of course. His influential position as a renowned scholar, according to the research group Black Central Europe, means that "he bears considerable responsibility for amplifying abhorrent stereotypes developed first by slaveowners in the Caribbean."

No one is saying that Kant should be thrown out of the philosophical canon, and no longer studied because his views (at least in his earlier life) were explicitly racist. But his racist views are pretty important context for his philosophical work – the two are inseparable.

Nigel Biggar, an Oxford professor and "free speech champion" is one of a number of academics on the front lines of the 'culture wars', lobbing explosive comments over the metaphorical no man's land. He has argued that decolonisation is anti-"reason, scientific method and the liberal values of tolerance and free speech", and that authors such as Jane Austen and Chaucer are disappearing from curriculums.

Well, Professor Biggar can rest easy today, because I've done a bit of research for him. The professor will, I'm sure, be delighted to hear that University of York English Literature undergrads do in fact study Chaucer and Jane Austen – but also Toni Morrison, Tayeb Salih, and Ralph Ellison. You can study medieval *lais* alongside works that tackle homophobia; Shakespeare alongside European New Cinema; Renaissance writers, Romantic writers, and Modernist writers, but also feminist writers, race writers, and, yes, writers who wish to dissect the legacy of British colonialism.

Professor Biggar claims that the harms of the British Empire are casting an "imaginary guilt" over us, yet he was born just five years after India became a republic, following nearly two centuries of British exploitation. The fact that he thinks we have no ownership over this legacy is astounding to me. Us university students are, of course, living in a post-colonial period. It would be easy to say that we are completely removed from the harms that Britain committed in the past. I understand how unfair it can feel, I really do: how can we be guilty of crimes that happened before we were even born? But decolonising the curriculum isn't designed to place guilt and blame on students, and it is definitely not designed to 'get rid of all the classics'. Decolonisation isn't about completely destroying the established canon of writers, it's about trying to create a modicum of balance.

Our curriculum should reflect the wonderful and diverse world that we live in, both the good and the bad. None of our history should be swept under the rug, or airbrushed out of existence. Equally, no one from a minority background should come to university and feel that the only 'legitimate creators of knowledge' are white men.

And finally, no one – and I mean *no one* – should read the comments under a *Times* article. It was a truly depressing experience.

# CLASH OF COMMENTS

## ON CAMPUS

**Hannah Boyle**  
(she/her)



Remember the day that I moved into my on-campus accommodation in my first year – despite being late September, the weather was warm and I was excited to move into my flat for the first time. Surrounded by the greenery of Campus East, my flat was on the ground floor – perfect for spotting all of the thousand rabbits which congregated on the grass several times a day.

This view of nature was only one of the many benefits of living on campus that I discovered, and while I appreciate not everyone had the same nature opportunities as we did, the perks that come with campus couldn't be clearer. It can be an initially scary experience, particularly if you move in with some perfect strangers, but all round – campus for the win.

Convenience is at the heart of campus living, and the short distance between your bed and all the amenities can't be overlooked. Having the library, study spaces and your teaching all within a short distance works massively in your favour, sometimes providing that extra motivation to go to your 9am seminar when you know it's only five minutes away.

Campus accommodation may be lacking the personality that comes with a student house, or the amenities that come with private student accommodation, you can't get away from the convenience of being able to roll out of bed one minute, and into your seminar the next. What could be easier?

Furthermore, campus-based accommodation is often relatively easy and stress free. Living in university accommodation means you don't have to worry about interactions with a landlord who may or may not be willing to fix the shower that has broken for the third time, the oven that doesn't cook anything or the tap that won't stop dripping; a benefit you rarely see while living there, but becomes clear when you move into a house and any form of maintenance has the potential to become a battle.

The most practical, and I'll admit, potentially boring, benefit to living on campus has to be the easy-access bus routes that everyone takes for granted. While you can argue there are issues with reliability, having a dedicated bus route from door to door is vital – and never appreciated until

## Are private or on-campus halls better?

you move away from campus and have to carry your weekly shop home by hand every week, or trudge in the rain to the train station as no bus passes in the vicinity of your house.

Campus boasts many bars and cafes, and if you live on campus you're never far away from one. Whether you're wanting a quick coffee with your flatmates, or really want to join that sports social one Wednesday night, the venues on campus have you covered. Who wouldn't want to have an easy social space on your doorstep?

And the next day, if that night out hits you a bit too hard, you're also in close proximity to all the shops and amenities you need, with shops close to both Campus West and East. Can't be bothered to cook while you exist in a

**Nadia Sayed**  
(she/her)



Picture this: a small cramped room with very little space to put all the miscellaneous stuff your parents told you not to bring from home but that you brought anyway; the wonky shelves that look like they're going to fall on you each time you shut your creaky door; a dirty kitchen; and, last but not least, the smelly bathroom you share with five others. That, ladies and gentlemen, is an image of the harsh reality of living in on-campus accommodation. By no means will this be everyone's experience of living on campus, but I have definitely heard a few horror stories not too dissimilar. Luckily I've never had to deal with any of that, as since first year, I've lived in private halls and here's why you should consider doing the same...

Firstly, probably the most beneficial factor of living in private halls is the centrality you have to the city centre. Being an English Literature student, I have plenty of free reading time, so being

## PRIVATE HALLS

close to town is perfect for me – I can get into town in under ten minutes.

This is great as I get to enjoy wandering past York Minister and exploring lots of York's independent coffee shops. On-campus, there are only so many places you can go to grab a coffee and study, without it getting extremely mundane. A lot of students I know who lived on campus during their first year never bothered to leave the uni bubble there, which I think is quite a shame. After all, you chose York to explore the beautiful city, along with its great university.

As private halls are located away from uni, it also means that after a long day of working in the library or attending seminars, you can pack up your things and leave campus, coming home to a different, more relaxed space. Although many students enjoy the convenience of being able to roll out of bed and straight into their lectures, there is a great sense of comfort in being able to leave behind the academic environment at the end of the day.

Living off campus is also great if you aren't particularly keen on being surrounded by excitable freshers who just want to party all of the time. This usually results in the unmerciful freshers flu which seems to linger until the depths of second term. For the more introverted, private halls are perfect as you have no pressure to go out and you can always use the excuse of living off campus to escape any peer-pressure. I certainly did!

Another fantastic thing about private halls is that you only have to share your space with the other residents, rather than with herds of uni students. Most rooms also have plenty of storage space to put all of those things you brought up 'just in case you needed them, but that you have never used and probably never will - it's nice to have the space for them anyway.

Most of the rooms also come with en-suites, which I have to say, is one of the best perks for me personally. For some, sharing a bathroom isn't a huge concern and some people find it bearable, however, I like things clean and tidy. Plus, knowing I can have a shower whenever I like, without having to wait for anyone, is great. I won't go too much into detail, but you also know that any mess in the bathroom is yours... Believe me, I've heard some horror stories about this too!

Overall if you're able to pay a bit extra and commute to and from uni, then private halls are definitely worth it.

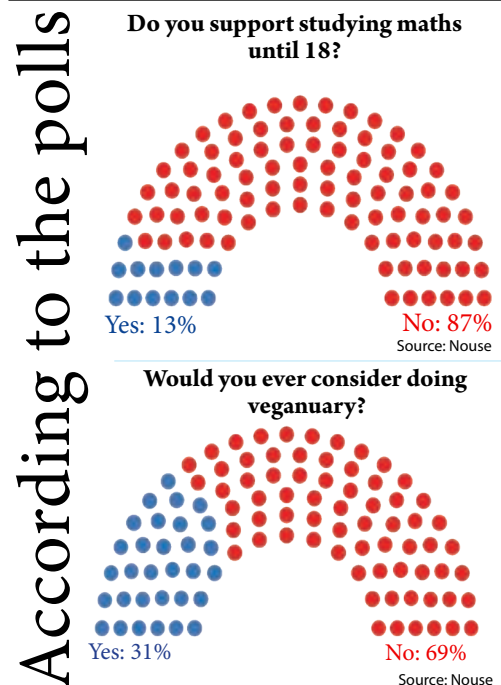
Also, you can enjoy wandering around the beautiful city centre more frequently and have your own space, away from the overwhelming uni bubble. What's not to love?



IMAGE: ANNIE WATSON

hang-over haze? Food options are never far away, whether you want to take advantage of Courtyard's menu or seek shelter in the Roger Kirk Cafe for some well deserved caffeine – all the options are there for the taking.

Anyone living on campus should definitely appreciate the benefits while you can. Never again will you have such easy access to everything within moments – and if you move away from it, you'll be missing the convenience of a simple bus ride into town.



## Comment in brief...

**"SAVE EASTER EGGS FOR EASTER"**

I genuinely think there's nothing worse than walking into your local Tesco Express on New Year's Day to the sight of Creme Egg boxes piled high on a plinth. With so much chocolate left over from Christmas to plough my way through January, why on earth would I want to add some Creme Eggs into the mix? Don't get me wrong, I love a Creme Egg, but please don't shove them in my face until at least March, when the Christmas sugar rush has come to an end.



(she/her)  
**Katy Leverett**

**"GLASSHOUSE, PLEASE JUST NO"**

I loathe Glasshouse with such religious zeal to power a crusade to Constantinople. Glasshouse appears solely to be a smorgasbord of self-loathing. I live in Langwith and so must deal with the horrific music, but also with the monstrous eye sore waking up. I pity those who have taken leave of their senses and gone, and my poor tutors when I can't finish their reading. Next time I'll say Harry Styles and a tinnitus-inducing beat drop distracted me.



(he/him)  
**Ethan Reuter**

**"NEW YEAR, THE SAME OLD ME"**

Every year loads of people commit to New Years resolutions which never end up lasting beyond the beginning of February. However, they are only ever abandoned after making you miserable for the first few weeks of the new year. Shouldn't we be using the new year to invest in what makes you happy instead? This year, for 2023, I am more than happy to say new year, same old me.



(she/her)  
**Hannah Boyle**

# MUSE.



## 'GOD SAVE THE QUEEN': A TRIBUTE TO VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

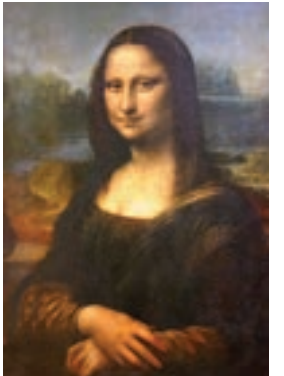
MUSE CELEBRATES  
OVER 34 YEARS OF  
REACTIONARY PUNK  
FASHION

FEATURES

- M4** **Eleni Morgan** explores heteronormative commercialism on Valentine's Day
- M5** **Orla McAndrew** examines the forgotten life and legacy of Ancient Greek poet, Sappho
- M8** **Alfie Flowers** discusses the world of astrology and its relevance today
- M16** **Emily Warner** shares the invisible challenges faced daily by those with diabetes

ARTS

- M6** **Camila Hernández** explores motherhood, migration and loss in Vuong's *Time is a Mother*
- Elena Savvas** reflects on Jeanette Winterson's novel *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*
- M7** **Emily Warner** questions whether the world-renowned Mona Lisa is worthy of her popularity
- Dora Gawn-Hopkins** reviews the new West End adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*



6

FASHION & SHOOT

- M9** **Grace Bannister** remembers the Queen of British Fashion and Philanthropic Activist, Vivienne Westwood
- James Clay** reflects on the fashion in his family and explores why we should cherish traditional styles
- M10 & 11** **Shoot:** Independent Local Businesses



MUSIC

- M12** **Ellie Harrington** argues the case for 2023 being the year of the female solo artist
- Alfie Sansom** recalls one of the 90s' most revered Indie excursions
- M13** **Niamh Kitson** explores the rise of the girl band everybody should add to their playlists
- Ellen Morris** discusses how music creates ambience in the new Netflix hit mystery film



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FILM & TV

- M14** **Ben Jordan** examines the satirical worlds of Verhoeven
- M15** **Marcus Fairweather** takes us back to the 1940s with their exploration of Powell and Pressburger
- Rosie Bailey** looks at France's Oscar frontrunner, Alice Diop



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GAMING

- M17** **Tasha Acres** discusses the prevalence and the dangers of crunch culture for game developers
- Elijah Ryan** examines some classic games that are available now for many Nintendo Switch users

16

TRAVEL

- M18** **Megan Stoker** and **Florence Head** take a dip into some of North Yorkshire's finest waters



18

FOOD & DRINK

- M19** **Emma McGreevy** offers her advice on breaking up with diet culture and it's expectations this New year
- Megan Stoker** and **Katy Leverett** discuss the benefits of slow cookers for students



19

CREATIVE WRITING

- M20** **Poetry:** *Intimacy, Straight Edged and Loneliness*, **Lucy Kent**  
*Little Miss Prindle*, **Alfie Sansom**  
*Feminine Fruits*, **Evie Banks**  
*People Watching*, **Heather Gosling**  
*Women's Work*, **Corynne Ryan**
- Prose:**  
*The Unwelcome Friend*, **Cameron Bennett**

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# “SINCE BECOMING VEGAN, I HAVE FOUND MYSELF BECOMING FAR MORE ADVENTUROUS WITH FOOD AND STAPLES IN MY DIET, MEALS I NEVER WOULD HAVE HAD A FEW YEARS AGO.”

**CHARLOTTE LEGRAND (SHE/HER)** TALKS TO ALEX FROM THE VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN SOCIETY ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VEGAN MOVEMENT IN YORK

During my weekly Aldi shop, I couldn't help but notice the middle aisle stacked high with the bright green packaging of their new vegan range. Piles of plant-based burgers, ice cream, sausages, and chocolate that I later saw shoppers raving about on *TikTok*. With students at the forefront of the meatless movement, I wasn't surprised to see Aldi's shelves wiped out by my next visit – clearly, there's a growing demand for plant-based eating on a budget. To find out more about how veganism has hit students at York, I talked to Vegetarian and Vegan Society member Alex about how he thinks veganism has changed throughout his time at University and how VegSoc is embracing this change.

**How would you describe the aims and ethos of VegSoc to our readers?**

While I think the public perception of veganism is still very much focused on diet, it is important to understand that the majority of people choose a vegan lifestyle for ethical reasons. When I moved from vegetarianism to veganism, I remember feeling isolated because I knew no one who shared my views. However, when I first went to a Vegetarian and Vegan Society event, I met many new people with whom I could discuss such things. So for me, the primary aim of VegSoc is always going to be to provide a friendly space for like-minded people to come and make new friends.

**Have you seen a rise in the popularity of plant-based diets among students throughout your time at York?**

Statistically, the number of people who follow a plant-based diet has increased, but what has been more interesting to me is the increase in support for plant-based options from non-vegans.

**Following on from that, would you say campaigns such as Veganuary and Meat Free Monday have helped to lessen meat consumption?**

The original Veganuary campaign challenged people to try and maintain a vegan lifestyle for a month, focusing on the ethical factors of veganism. It has since evolved due to its corporate adoption, where the focus is less on the ethical aspects of veganism and more on the dietary aspects. There is no doubt that the new Veganuary is helping reduce overall meat

consumption, but I can't help but feel like it is diluting the underlying message. Despite this, the huge amounts of resources put into advertising Veganuary are definitely helping boost the positive perception of veganism.

**How do you find fitting a plant-based diet into a student budget?**

As an avid cook, I find a plant-based diet very affordable. I can, however, see why it could be perceived as more expensive. Plant-based substitutes can be expensive and if you're solely adapting meat-based recipes, the cost can add up. Still, I have found myself becoming far more adventurous with food and staples in my diet, containing that I



would never have had just a few years ago. It is also worth pointing out that the cheap stuff is getting really good – Lidl, Aldi, and Iceland have some decent substitutes at very reasonable prices.

**Do you have any favourite cruelty-free eats around York to recommend to readers starting their vegan journey?**

There are a few great vegan restaurants and eateries around York. The Orchid is an Asian fusion restaurant that never fails to hit the spot, and Döner Summer has a great selection of fast foods. There are a few shops that are great for some of the harder to find ingredients, such as Tullivers, Alligator Wholefoods, and The Nut Shop. As for other good places to find vegan products, discount stores such as

Home Bargains and B&M shouldn't be underestimated.

**What changes would you like to see around campus to promote more sustainable choices in students?**

Overall, the changes that I have seen in the campus cafes and shops have been positive. There are substantially more choices available. I think the only issue that I have come across around campus is unclear labelling; it would be great, for example, if the drinks behind the bars or the snacks in the vending machines could be labelled.

**How can anyone interested get involved in VegSoc?**

If you are interested in VegSoc, please come along to one of our events – everyone is welcome! Events are announced via email or posted to our Instagram, @uoyvegsoc. Recent events have included themed movie nights, bar crawls, formals and potlucks.

My chat with Alex really opened my eyes to the reasoning behind the switch to veganism, showing that it's so much more than just a dietary choice! Although sometimes lost in today's marketing whirlwind, ethics are still at the core of the decision to cut out meat. Therefore, supermarket ranges such as Aldi's make it easier and more affordable for students to align these ethics with their eating habits. The future of vegan and vegetarian foods looks just as exciting, featuring potato milk and avocado oil guaranteed to intrigue vegans and non-vegans alike!

I found it so interesting that the Vegetarian and Vegan Society is more than a place to share food recommendations and recipes; it has become a community for like-minded students to come together as part of a wider movement towards ethical change. With two million Brits participating in Veganuary by the end of last month, the society's future looks bright, as does the global plant-based movement. York, in particular, holds a rich vegan scene – rated as the 5th most vegan-friendly city in the UK. VegSoc's "vegan guide to York" (found on their Instagram) illustrates the diversity of the city's vegan options really well, with over 30 takeaways, cafes, restaurants, and bars providing a vast range of meatless options all around the city!

## DEPUTY EDITOR'S NOTE



**CHARIS HORSLEY**

2023: SAME OLD OR CHANGING TIMES?

Slightly late, but Happy New Year from the *MUSE* editors! With this print edition falling bang in the middle of exam season, Katy and I would like to thank everyone for their hard work in this tight turnaround. As always, the dedication is consistently impressive and much appreciated by all of the senior team. Our first edition of 2023 sets the scene, focusing on a wealth of current and juicy topics. The Arts editors take a look at the latest census statistics for the LGBTQ+ and religious population, reading results in light of Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*. Intriguing questions are raised now that, for the first time ever, our Christian population has dropped below 50 percent. *Muse's* Fashion pays tribute to the recent death of Vivienne Westwood, the revolutionary fashion designer known for her punk and reactionary styles.

Leaving the previous year behind, Channel 4 hosted the documentary, *2022: The Year From Space*, narrated by David Harewood, reviewing the year through international space station shots. The footage has revealed remarkable patterns and observations, such as the movements of Russia's gradual invasion, temporary festivals cropping up in America and mass deforestation in Brazil. Worth a watch if you get a spare moment.

Now in 2023, we have reached the destination of 1923's predictions, including a range of guesses which are intriguing to compare. Many have been realised today, such as "watch-size radio telephones will keep everybody in communication", hitting the nail on the head with mobile devices and Apple wrist watches. Scarily the prediction that "the war of 2023 will naturally be a wireless war," thanks to "wireless telephony, sight, heat, power and writing" feels like a threat looming out from the gloom of the year ahead, especially with Russia and Ukraine moving ever closer to an out of hand conflict.

Moving towards lighter topics, those in 1923 also predicted widespread beauty; so many beautiful people that we would no longer have need for beauty contests. Perhaps not apparent in as many words, yet with social media filters and online catfishing, perhaps this is not so far fetched. Laughably, one anthropologist studying masculine and feminine trends predicted men would be curling their hair and women would 'probably' shave their heads by 2023. Outrageous.

Does this prompt us to consider predictions for 2123? What will future generations look like in light of our current climate crisis and progression towards social inclusivity? And what is it we can do to help funnel and mould our future's shape? This print edition looks ahead to the upcoming year; with the Music writers discussing new rising artists such as Flo and Raye, and Food and Drink tell us why diet culture should disintegrate over the year. As always, we encourage online articles throughout the term, so new writers, do get in touch and start writing!

### IMAGE CREDITS

Cover: UK in France

Left (top to bottom):

Dennis Jarvis, BNTailor, IMDB, IMDB,

Florence Head, Maksim Goncharenko

Right: Gloria



# BE MY VALENTINE: CONSUMERIST LOVE AND ITS CELEBRATION

ELENI MORGAN (SHE/HER) EXPLORES HETERONORMATIVE COMMERCIALISM ON THIS DAY AND ITS ORIGINS

When I think about Valentine's Day, what comes to mind are heart-shaped chocolates, bouquets of roses, secret exchanges of cards "from your Valentine", and slightly repetitive gift giving. These are the rituals we have come to know (but maybe not love) and associate with the annual celebration of St Valentine's Day. With this, however, comes a perpetually rising commercialisation and heteronormative bias under the surface. To investigate this day's origins and development is to find that it has transformed our idea of love and romantic connection into something material and exclusive, enforcing the heterosexual relationship dynamic as the mainly recognised form of love. How has this day of 'love' become so exclusively associated with heteronormativity? And what effect has this had on the queer population? This is what I set out to investigate further.

The origins of this romantic celebration lie in Christian theology and ancient Roman history with many varying legends associated with the holiday's beginning. Some believe it originated from a pagan festival called Lupercalia, largely as it was celebrated annually on 15 February, the day following Valentine's Day. This was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman God of Agriculture, during which Roman priests (members of the Luperci) would gather at a cave to sacrifice a goat for fertility and a dog for purification in honour of the founders of Rome: Romulus, and Remus. According to legend, they would take to the streets, slapping women and the crop fields with the goat hide, as it was believed to make both the women and the crops more fertile. Even this one origin story for the day is evidence of its innately heterosexual bias that would surround this day in years to come, with the festival often ending in marriage between man and woman. Bachelors of the city would pick out a name from an urn in which young women had placed their names, having to be paired with said woman for the year who they often ended up marrying. This festival, however, was deemed 'un-Christian' by the end of the fifth century, after which it was moved to 14 February (named then as 'St Valentine's Feast Day') to Christianise it, and so may be the origin story for romantic celebration on this day.

Other Christian origin stories of this day have somewhat darker roots, and some believe it was made to honour one of three Christian mar-

death, with more matrimonial roots that make it the celebration of love that we know now.

Another legend concerning St Valentine rather suggests that whilst in prison, he fell in love with his jailer's daughter, allegedly having written her the first valentine letter (ending with the words, "from your Valentine") and instead aligning the day with its more explicitly romantic roots, perhaps forming the tradition of secret letter-writing and exchanging that is so familiar to us now. While these legends do seem to have a somewhat heterosexual bias in line with their culture, their ambiguous nature is not enough to blame them entirely for the day's heteronormative leaning and consequent queer exclusion. They do, however, lay the foundations for its later heteronormative partiality.

The day only came to be appreciated in all its romantic glory during the Middle Ages, with Geoffrey Chaucer as the first person to record Valentine's Day in his

their first Valentine's Day card in 1913. This was a key development in its commercialisation that consequently brought heteronormativity and the celebration of straight romance into it: gift cards, even today, still depict cisgender, straight couples, and romantic messages from him to her (often in the traditional blue and pink fonts to assign gender) that are evidence of this continuity and effect of consumer culture on heteronormative assumptions. If you walk into a card store, the options for LGBTQIA+ couples remain disappointingly slim.

In recent decades, with the rise of more virtual (and thus accessible) Valentine's Day marketing, companies have attempted to cater to the larger population and widen the commercialisation of this day: this has inevitably led to a catering primarily towards heterosexual couples (as the 'traditional' representation

of love that remains in our current society, believed as that which most people

And so, with the repetitive marketing of these gender-exclusive products year-in year-out comes not only the assumption that heterosexuality is the default, 'expected' sexual orientation, but also sends damaging messages to those in the queer community that they are, after all, not part of this celebration of love; that their love is inva-

“ Celebrating love on this day has become synonymous with celebrating gender norms

lid, lesser than that of their heterosexual peers. And this can have extremely damaging effects on those struggling to accept themselves and their identity, especially in light of LGBTQIA+ month this February.

Further examples in our modern-day society of binary love and its call for celebration on this day as a cause of capitalist, money-hungry corporations can be found in the commercials and TV advertisements used to promote it. The most notable of these was a mini-romance drama in 2004, titled *Le Film*, made to promote the iconic Chanel no. 5 perfume in the early noughties. I don't even need to describe it for you to already imagine its basis: a romantic, sultry setting in which a man and woman gaze passionately toward one another, the 'film' following their love story and ending unsurprisingly with the marketing of the perfume. This notion of love as exclusively hetero-oriented, and that which is used so frequently (as in this commercial) to advertise Valentine's Day and the idea of romantic gift giving, emphasises this day not only as a cause of how 'traditional' tropes of love become exclusively commercialised for the benefits of capitalist corporations, but also in doing so furthers the idea of its exclusion of queer and other non-conforming notions of love.

To this day, commercialism is an integral part of the holiday, perhaps owing to its intriguing origin stories and people's love for celebrating love itself, or simply as an excuse for capitalist companies to benefit from its popularity. With the expansion of the celebration of the holiday across the world that has arisen from growth in popularity and technology, its connection to 'consumer culture' has been extremely significant in its increased heterosexual partiality. The idea of celebrating love on this day has become synonymous with celebrating gender norms, with restricted and largely traditional ideas of what love should look like through its marketing developments over the last few centuries.

Thus, as a day which celebrates heteronormativity, in which people seeking to celebrate non-heterosexual love are side-lined by its overtly binary marketing, it can often feel exclusive. And so, with the overt commercialisation of heterosexual love purely as a way for industries to generate mass profit, does this representation of love as a commodity stay true to its romantic past? And, if not, do queer people want to be included in a type of love that seems artificial, as our society and economy advances?

celebrated poem 'Parliament of Foules' (1375), after which written valentines began to be recorded. With the rise in popularity of this excuse to get romantic in the subsequent centuries, together with Britain's Industrial Revolution that massively expanded technology and mass production of goods across the Western world, came a revitalised love for this romantic tradition and its ever so mystical roots. The origins and developments of its marketing began from the 17th century onwards, as in 1714 when Charles II of Sweden began to communicate with his lovers with flowers, by assigning a different message to each type. This tradition (allegedly) associated love and romance with the red rose, a cause of its later commercialisation into the heteronormative ritual of women being gifted roses on this day.

A further example of the origins of the day's commercialisation is evident further with the spread of the Valentine's Day card. In the mid 19th century, cards were brought across the Atlantic and rapidly gained popularity in America, after which the company Hallmark produced

can 're-late' to). As such, it has spurred on a representation of monogamous and heterosexual love on this day that is normalised and accepted as the default; consequently failing to accommodate queer couples and other, more underrepresented, types of love. Think for example of the perfume advertisements that so often show exchanges of love and desire between a man and a woman (as I will later explore), valentine's cards and excessively commercialised gifts for "him" and "her" only ... and I could go on. Also important is the way in which these advertisements and marketing messages imply that it is a day for women to be pampered, to receive gifts given from their male counterparts: with the ideas of gifts catered toward their stereotypically 'female interests' (think of spa days, makeup freebies and bath bombs, for example) – though many women may appreciate said gifts – still comes a further exclusion of people too who don't necessarily identify with and take pleasure in this traditional notion of femininity and these objects of female enjoyment.



IMAGE: MICHELLE LEMAN

“ Sends damaging messages to those in the queer community ... that their love is invalid

tyrs named St. Valentine. One St Valentine was a priest in the third century of Rome who opposed Emperor Claudius II's outlawing of marriage for young men, in favour of them being recruited to the army. The priest, who nevertheless continued to perform such marriages for young couples, was executed in consequence. Some believe that this day originated as a commemoration of his

# LGBTQIA+ HISTORY MONTH: LITERATURE, LOVE AND LESBOS

ORLA MCANDREW (SHE/HER) EXAMINES THE FORGOTTEN LIFE AND LEGACY OF ANCIENT GREEK POET SAPPHO

This February marks the 18th year of the UK's annual LGBTQIA+ history month. It was founded in the UK by the charity School's OUT shortly after the abolishment of Section 28 in 2003. Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act stated that a local authority "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship". Although this Act was abolished many years ago, what has been left in its wake is a gap in most people's knowledge about the LGBTQIA+ community and its rich history. This lack of representation is not only be damaging for LGBTQIA+ rights, but also for the sense of worth and belonging for those in the community themselves.

During a recent conversation with a friend I found myself unsure of what I knew about my identity. In particular, where did we get the word lesbian? I've had my own personal journey with my sexuality and deciding what label felt like me. Labels of course, aren't everything and not everyone needs one, but for me, I needed one. Which is why coming out as a lesbian was so life changing. Therefore, when I was asked about the origins of lesbianism, and origins of the word lesbian, it was embarrassing not knowing the answer. So I took to Google, and Google took me to my girl Sappho.

Sappho (spelt Psappho in her native Aeolic dialect), was estimated to be born in around 620 BC and was from the Island of Lesbos. Not much is known about her early life apart from the fact that she had brothers who are referenced in some of her work.

Although many women in ancient Greece were expected to marry and live in accordance with customs of their city, it is believed that Sappho's wealth made it easier for her to live as she pleased. Not only that, women were held in high esteem in Lesbos, which allowed Sappho to focus on her writing... and she wrote a lot! Her work was incredibly popular, she was known as the 'Poetess' just as Homer was known as the 'Poet'. Furthermore, Plato regarded her as the 'tenth muse'. She was a beloved lyric poet.

However, the content of her work may be surprising for a woman of that time, because she wrote about the love she felt for other

own boarding school to help the young girls of Lesbos study eloquence in order to elevate their future prospects for marriage. Although this also, could have been done by her protégé Damophilia, that is the joy when looking back at the ancient times — the air of mystery. It is Sappho's place of birth Lesbos that links with the word lesbian. In fact lesbian once meant "one from Lesbos" but because of her fame and the content of her work, lesbian changed to mean "a woman who prefers her own sex". The modern day meaning we all know today!

Another Greek poet Anacreon writing after Sappho, wrote about the women of Lesbos, "not that girl - she's the other kind, / one from Lesbos. Disdainfully, / nose turned up at my silver hair, / she makes eyes at the ladies." This piece of work shows how well known the women of Lesbos became for their love for other women, and the openness with which

Sappho? Her legacy is indeed out there, it just takes great searching to find it. It is believed that her work was first written down in Lesbos, either during her lifetime or after, as her work would have been performed out loud, accompanied by a Lyre. It was then Athenian book publishers who produced copies of lesbian poetry. Following this Alexandrian scholars published an edition of Sappho's poetry. According to legend, in 1073 Pope Gregory VII ordered that all of Sappho's work be burnt in Rome and Constantinople. Although it was unlikely to be on the direct orders of the Pope, Sappho's work was destroyed by the church because of its content. Content which was deemed to be dangerous to women and to society as a whole. Even after those who came across her work or later records of it tried to explain away her feelings and relationships as strong female friendships or that she wasn't really a lesbian.

This is a huge loss to

different things to different people. However, it is known to be more of an intention towards attraction, attraction that is not focused on a specific gender identity and more about the personality of a potential partner. The term Sapphic started being used in the late 1800s after a few scrolls of her poems were discovered, however at this time it only referred to women who love other women. In the 1950s the term

Why then do we not learn anything about Sappho? Her legacy is out there

Sapphic grew in popularity, and as the time progressed the meaning began to change. Nowadays with the help of *TikTok*, and the LGBTQIA+ community online, Sapphic has once again gained popularity.

I often refer to Sappho as 'my girl sappho', and during my research for this piece, that sentiment has grown even stronger. Sappho has turned from a woman shrouded in the mystery of the past to a woman who feels real and modern. Her words jump off the page with such strength of emotions that it is almost impossible to feel as if you don't know her. Sappho is an icon, in ancient Greece she had statues and coins in her honour.

Most recently pieces of her work were discovered in 2004 and 2014 to huge fanfare and celebration. The discovery of these fragments means that there is still hope that we can uncover more of her work, especially as she grows in popularity.

The best and only way that seems appropriate to end this piece is with the words of Sappho herself, fragment 31 (translated by Mariangela Labate). So enjoy this piece about love and loss, about the devastating impact hiding love can have on a person.

He seems very similar to the gods  
That man who sits in front of you  
And listens to you speaking  
And smiles softly;  
And suddenly my heart throbs.  
When I glance at you,  
I can no longer speak,  
My tongue is broken and  
A subtle flame is creeping into my skin,  
My eyes can see nothing more,  
My ears are buzzing,  
Drops of sweat are oozing,  
My whole body is trembling.  
I become greener than grass  
And I feel as if I were dead  
But everything must be tolerated, because  
... a poor man....

This LGBTQ+ history month let us remember and celebrate Sappho for everything she has done and everything her legacy continues to give us. Who knows, maybe in a few years more fragments of her work will be found, but for now let's enjoy the ones that we are lucky to still have.



IMAGE: JOSIAH LEWIS

She wrote about the love she felt for other women — around 10,000 lines of it

women — around 10,000 lines of it (sadly only 650 survive today). Fragment 38 is possibly her most famous piece of work, in which she writes about the physical pain of love and longing. The mere presence of the one she loves sends her into a crisis which is something I think we can all relate to.

Some believe that Sappho established her

that love was expressed.

This openness is refreshing, especially when there are other periods in history where women have been forced to hide their love for another. The diaries of Anne Lister were written in code to hide her relationships with other women. Even today, TV shows that depict lesbian relationships such as *First Kill* (2022), *Gentleman Jack* (2019-2022), *Warrior Nun* (2020-2022) and many more often end up cancelled after one or two seasons, erasing any form of lesbian representation. The type of representation that Sappho herself championed.

It was that lack of representation which made coming out so much harder for me. I grew up on a steady diet of Disney princess films, then rom-coms and *Say Yes to the Dress*. A steady diet that without my notice, ingrained a heteronormative ideal within my brain. It was this that was the pattern of thinking that was the hardest and most emotionally challenging to undo.

Why then do we not learn anything about

both history and the LGBTQIA+ community, history's potential first lesbian silenced by men in power because they were afraid of something they couldn't understand. Not understanding something is a feeling I believe is shared by many people in the LGBTQIA+ community. I think I always knew I was a lesbian, I just needed time to let go of the idealised image I had of my future and in a strange way I needed to grieve that, before I was ready to come out. However, that fear and unwillingness to understand is something that is wholly inexcusable, and unfortunately still prevalent today. Which is why knowing about Sappho, her work and her life is so important.

Sappho changed the meaning of the word lesbian and also gave us the word Sapphic! Sapphic has two meanings, the first being (fairly obvious), in relation to the poetess Sappho. The second is not used as commonly and differs from lesbian. Sapphic is used as an umbrella term that includes lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, trans femmes, mascs, nonbinary folks and cis women. Sapphic like many identities can mean

# POETRY COLLECTION REVIEW: 'TIME IS A MOTHER', OCEAN VUONG

CAMILA HERNÁNDEZ (SHE/HER) EXPLORES MOTHERHOOD, MIGRATION AND LOSS IN VUONG'S 'TIME IS A MOTHER'

*Time Is A Mother* is a bittersweet journey of collection and dispersion, ebbing from networks of impressions, psychogeographies and colonial wounds to the tangible pleasure of soaking in art. In an extensive homage to motherhood and migration, Vuong's second collection of poems firmly establishes itself in the novelist's archive of sensory work as an accumulation of loss, intersectional identities, and love. Acting both as a garden and a minefield, language in *Time* simultaneously works to fossilise sadness, rapture, and the state of being incongruous. Here,

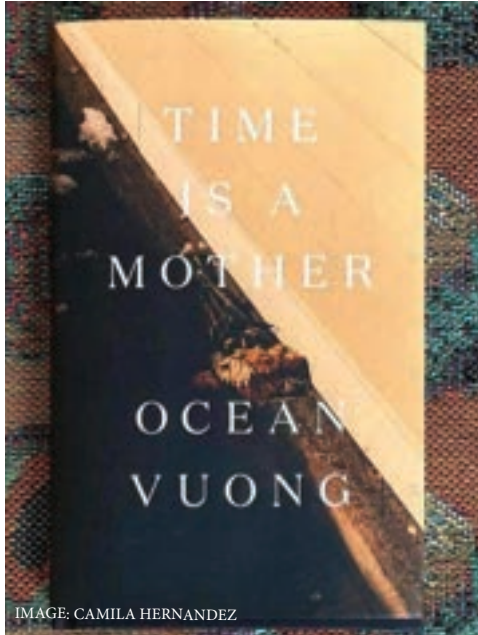


IMAGE: CAMILA HERNANDEZ

Vuong explores the aftermath of his mother's passing and the duality that her memory leaves behind; the duality of agonising grief and a love that wells up, overflows, renders itself arid, then aches to return, to nurture again like rainfall. The wish to conserve memory, against the necessity to move forward. The way time is healing like a mother. The way you are marching forward for yourself but not someone you loved.

In a pre-release interview, Vuong had this to say about his own work:

"Every time I finish a book, I am filled with regrets. [...] It doesn't mean that I'm not proud of what I've written – however fleeting pride might be – but only that I wish it could be more, that it could enact the mind's myriad changes in real-time.

But this time, I feel absurdly happy, content, utterly empty and full all at once. For whatever strange and ungodly reason, I don't doubt this book's place in the world the same way I have doubted my own selfhood in it."

Indeed, Vuong has successfully crafted a space for freely expressed failures, whether they be those of the queer body, masculinity, or any preordained versions of identity demanded by societal pressures and standards. In the evocative poem, 'Not Even This' the poet laments:

"Because everyone knows yellow pain, pressed into American letters, turns to gold. / Our sorrow Midas-touched. Napalm with a rainbow afterglow."

As a painter articulates their interpretation of the external world through a syntax of shapes and hues, Vuong traces the textures of deep feeling, remembrance and anticipation through the

sublime vehicle of language. As you read poems like 'Dear Rose,' where Vuong compassionately discusses his deceased mother's journey as an immigrant from Vietnam to the US, the condensed line structure and lack of full stops evoke a breathlessness that infuses its subject with life. Flying gunshots, dead bodies, Wonder Bread soaked in condensed milk, and the fermentation of fish are just a few of the vivid images that he uses to fill the poem. These snapshots capture the memory of his mother as he seeks a method for survival, for archival victory:

"you bought me pencils reader I could / not speak so I wrote myself into / silence where I stood waiting for you mom / to read me do you read me now?"

Ultimately, Vuong looks to embrace self-reflection. While reflecting on the death of his mother, he is also thinking about the ways language and writing guide and enrich the grieving process. The poet sets out to examine what it means to write about loss and the psychological underpinnings of what stifles him. In the concluding stanza of 'Dear Rose,' he observes:

"bullets salvaged / & exiled by art mom my art these corpses / I lay side by side on the page to tell you / our present tense was not too late."

For Vuong, writing itself becomes a means to extending life and bestowing the speaker with a semblance of immortality. Use of the present tense implies that his mother still lives. His words are lifeless, but when others read them, they – along with his mother – come to life.

At its most potent, Vuong's grief turns into chromatic staves, into language that spills out in linear, sometimes crashing, notes:

"Then it came to me, my life. I remembered my life / the way an axe handle, mid-swing, remembers the tree. / & I was free."

('Woodworking At the End of the World')

“**“** Vuong's grief turns into chromatic staves, into language that spills out into something linear

In an evocative passage from 'Nothing,' Vuong provides an existentialist framework to his yoking together of intimacy and distance, of ever-presence and dissolution, almost in conversation with himself:

"But to live like a bullet, to touch people with such intention. To be born going one way, toward everything live. To walk into a world you never asked for and choose a place where your wanting ends..."

Vuong's questioning of the self, acknowledges that the fractures of grief remain as a blueprint of both hope and despair, charring the page, leaving a smoke that remains past the close of the book: "which part of war do we owe this knowledge?"

# BOOK REVIEW: 'ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT', WINTERSON

ELENA SAVVAS (SHE/THEY) OBSERVES CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN LESBIANISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE NOVEL

On January 6 2023, the Gender and Sexuality results of the 2021 Census were released. Despite the lack of diversity included in the survey on sexuality – the only options given were heterosexual, 'gay/lesbian', bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and queer – its results proved an insightful cultural moment at the start of the New Year. Out of those who completed the Census, 1.54 percent identified as gay or lesbian, approximately 1.51 percent as bisexual or pansexual, 0.06 percent as asexual and 0.03 percent as queer. One might say that these fractions do not

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Jeanette Winterson is a visionary beyond the Biblical definition

seem as monumental as I am stressing at face value, perhaps due to the 7.5 percent that chose not to disclose their identities on the survey. However, it is the reality of the hundreds-of-thousands of people that have 'come out' in the name of archival statistics that I am astounded by. 2021 was the first year that gathered statistics on gender identity and sexuality, and its results have proven the existence of a community that is not going anywhere.

The Census also revealed other interesting statistics. Perhaps most notably, especially in news

coverage, the survey showed that less than half of the population of England and Wales identify as Christian. This is a particularly important moment for data analysis in the UK, as the last Census in 2011, revealed 59.3 percent of the population to be Christian. This statistic sits between a number of others, evidencing the growth of the country's religious diversity: for example, the percentage of those identifying as Muslim moved from 4.9 percent to 6.5 percent, and Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism all saw a rise in numbers. However, according to *The Guardian*, it is the drop in numbers for Christianity that I am most intrigued by, especially as the 46.2 percent is teetering near to the 37.2 percent of those who ticked the box for 'no religion'.

Receiving this news after Christmastime seemed particularly provocative, especially as the self-assigned 'gay cousin' around the yule-table. After much pondering, I found myself gravitating towards my copy of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson. Originally published in 1985, the book follows the story of Jeanette, a lesbian girl growing up in an evangelist Pentecostal community in Lancashire, whose experiences – and name – are based on the author's own upbringing.

The book is divided into eight sections named after the first eight books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. It was the perfect book to pick up again when contemplating my identity as a lesbian in a country that has only just changed from being over 50 percent Christian. In her narrative, Jeanette's character uses Biblical stories and parallels to navigate her confusion about her identity.



IMAGE: ELENA SAVVAS

Winterson re-constructs Old Testament rhetoric from commanding one towards Christianity, to re-directing Jeanette towards her lesbianism. Dr Amy Benson Brown claims this as a "revisionary engagement with the Bible", arguing Jeanette as a visionary beyond its biblical definition.

The novel reconfigures the Bible in various ways, forming itself as a hermeneutical tale as Jeanette finds herself attempting to interpret signs and messages in the world around her, leading to her sexual discovery. Winterson subverts the use of biblical training as an exhaustive, intran-

sigent means of religious conversion, or a means of conversion therapy, by showing the child's use of religious education to further separate herself from her mother's religious conservatism. Jeanette's character does take on a conversion – moving from doubt, to crisis, to epiphany, and to salvation – yet not in the way one might expect. This subversion of dogma is still powerful today, as queer people have found themselves grappling with dogmatic legislation that continues to oppress and hegemonize our identities; most recently this has included Rishi Sunak's blocking of Scotland's gender recognition legislation.

I cannot help but wish that Jeanette could see where we are now, to see that one's lesbianism and Christian faith can intersect, and that, in light of the Census, 'lesbian' is as much of an important identifier as 'Christian' is. However, Dr Kevin Guyan, LGBTQ+ data expert and Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow, has urged that the Census' landmark figures must now be used to benefit queer communities, stating that "the data will not, on its own, address issues negatively impacting many LGBTQ+ people, such as the cost-of-living crisis, access to healthcare and affordable housing" and that the results "must be understood as the first step in a longer project of change." Perhaps, in the modern day, as we still wait for said "project of change" to begin, we can hope these results will eventually help children that have had similar upbringings to young Jeanette, and to Winterson herself.

In an interview with book reviewer critic 'Bakchormeeboy', Winterson herself has stated "we have to go on standing up for human rights, equality under the law to live and to love."

# IS DA VINCI'S MASTERPIECE, THE MONA LISA, WORTH THE HYPE?

EMILY WARNER (SHE/HER) QUESTIONS IF THE WORLD-RENOWNED 'MONA LISA' IS WORTHY OF HER POPULARITY

When I tell people I went to the Louvre this holiday, one inevitable question rears its head; "What did you think of the *Mona Lisa*?" I must have had this conversation with every member of my extended family during the Christmas period and by New Year's Day, I was tired of recounting the experience. My unenthusiastic response, "it was a bit disappointing actually", generated gasps of shock and dismay. How dare I slander the *Mona Lisa*'s good name? I ask in response, why are we so obsessed with this painting?

When you first enter the Louvre, there's no need to worry about finding it. Every tourist may as well be holding a neon sign that says 'this way'; follow them and you'll find yourself at the *Mona Lisa*. Well, not quite at the *Mona Lisa*, but at the back of a long line of people queueing to see her. Her enigmatic smile is smug, as she surveys the queue from her bulletproof box. People zig-zag their way towards her like disgruntled Ryanair customers at the baggage drop-off, jostling for a photo. When you finally reach the front, you must withstand the glares of those waiting while you take your picture, only to find that you've captured half the *Mona Lisa* and half of someone's head. It is only after being rapidly ushered from the melee and towards the exit sign by museum workers that you realise you forgot to even look at the painting.

So, why is the *Mona Lisa* popular? Painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the early 16th century, the picture is a technical masterpiece of the Italian Renaissance. Da Vinci broke from the Florentine tradition of outlining a painting, by applying a technique known as *sfumato*. This involved painting "without lines or borders, in the manner

of smoke or beyond the picture plane", imperceptibly blending colours together so the transitions between them vanished. As a result, the painting takes on an uncanny liveliness and ethereality. However, Da Vinci was not alone in using the *sfumato* technique. It was employed by Giorgione, Correggio and Raphael (none of whom have a ten mile long queue in front of them!).

Da Vinci also painted her with the eye of a scientist, achieving perfect proportions and naturalism. He used aerial perspective to create the illusion of depth and an imaginary, mystical background. However, the Louvre is not lacking in artistic mastery. Opposite the *Mona Lisa*, staring at the back of the tourist's iPhones, is *The Wedding Feast at Cana* by Paolo Veronese. A stunning, expansive painting that becomes an underappreciated backdrop to the *Mona Lisa*. Numberless other artworks deserving of respect populate the Louvre; *The Winged Victory of Samothrace*, *The Venus de Milo*, *The Coronation of Napoleon* and many more.

So, if not for its technique, then why has the *Mona Lisa* been so revered? Perhaps it is the mys-

tery surrounding the painting. The *Mona Lisa* is thought to depict Lisa del Giocondo, the wife of a Florentine merchant but several alternative theories have circulated. Some say it is an imaginary woman, a combination of women or even a self-portrait, and her maddening smile reveals nothing.

Additionally, the painting gained fame when it was stolen in 1911. Suspects ranged from the avant-garde poet and playwright Guillaume Apollinaire to Pablo Picasso but when the painting was recovered over two years later, the real culprit turned out to be Vincenzo Perugia, an Italian petty criminal. He mistakenly believed that the *Mona Lisa* had been stolen from Florence by Napoleon and needed returning to its rightful home. In doing so, he solidified its fame in France where the painting has hung ever since.

However, there are hundreds of intriguing stories behind art and often, violence, seduction and mystery reside between every brushstroke. Arguably, the *Mona Lisa*'s fame is not in her artistry or her history but simply because society says so. Her face has been imitated and reproduced

endlessly by other artists such as Andy Warhol, Marcel Duchamp and Banksy. Thanks to meme culture and modern technology she has now been digitised and social media teems with iterations of the same, mysterious face. The *Mona Lisa* is everywhere; she is a presence so dominating and so encompassing that the original painting seems to wither in comparison to its reputation.

Most people who see the *Mona Lisa* do not appreciate the skill required to produce it. They are more interested in the selfie they take with her (that they then caption with "I saw the *Mona Lisa*" when it should say "I turned my back on the *Mona Lisa* while someone took a photo of me"). When I was there, the woman in front of me seemed to spend hours posing for a picture, as her long-suffering boyfriend tried to capture one she wouldn't reject. Furthermore, in comparison to the overwhelming attention it garners and its prevalence online, the real *Mona Lisa* is small and rather uninspiring (sorry to any fans). Trapped behind glass with a fence and a steel case, some of the radiance cannot help but be sapped from the *Mona Lisa*. She is slowly ageing in her bulletproof box yet we continue to idealise her; when will the *Mona Lisa* get a break from the weight of a thousand eyes?

This painting undeniably depicts artistic talent, an unsettling aliveness and anatomical beauty. Yet so do many other pieces of art. My advice would be, don't avoid the *Mona Lisa*; she does not deserve to be shunned, vandalised, or derided, but if you ever find yourself in that long queue in the Louvre, turn around and look at the other paintings in the room.



IMAGE: DENNIS JARVIS

# THEATRE REVIEW: 'ORLANDO', CELEBRATING FLUIDITY AND LOVE

DORA GAWN-HOPKINS (SHE/HER) REVIEWS THE NEW WEST END ADAPTATION OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S 'ORLANDO'

Adapted from Virginia Woolf's groundbreaking 1928 novel, the new West End production of *Orlando* is infused with the same radiant freedom towards gender identity and love that the author sought to exude. With a diverse cast of 11 actors, only one being a man, nine actors play identically dressed Virginia Woolfs who narrate Orlando's time-travelling and gender-shifting life; with a few of the 'Woolfs' multi-rolling as different characters whom her protagonist encounters.

Emma Corrin, known mostly for their powerful portrayal of Lady Diana, Princess of Wales in *The Crown*, plays Orlando. They've spoken widely about the significance of this opportunity, due to their identification as non-binary and queer, in addition to the "cathartic and empowering" (*The Guardian*) effect they hope it will have on audiences.

Corrin delivers a vivacious performance, whether through the witticisms, triumphant exultations of love, identity and self-love, or the more intense moments these may require - all of which echo Woolf's prose beautifully. Writer Neil Bartlett, who adapted the novel, further references Shakespeare, Pope, Kander and Ebb, as well as Woolf's lover and dedicatee of the text, Vita Sackville-West. Indeed, *Orlando*'s potential reading as a biography in part of Sackville-West has been researched greatly, and both women championed the notion of fluid gender-identities. This inclusion of Sackville-West's writing thus coincides with the largely tender and celebratory tone which runs throughout. The emphasis on the exploration of Orlando's identity is key to this.

The 'Woolfs' offer different perspectives on

every chapter in the protagonist's development, and are in constant conversation with them, as all try to discover what it is Orlando wants in life and who they are. Deborah Findlay, known for many great roles across stage and screen, most recently starring in the BBC's *The Split*, plays Orlando's equally spirited maid and care-giver, Mrs Grimsditch. Mrs Grimsditch adds her own insights to Orlando's narrative, often wittily but notably poignantly. Her unwavering love for them and desire for their happiness shines throughout.

The show promotes the universal power of self-exploration

The set design is similarly effervescent. Though mostly minimalist, it transforms the stage each time a new aspect of Orlando's life is ventured into. The dry ice, lighting and sound shifts, and bold scene changes allow for more dramatic moments, sometimes humorously. The question which the 'Woolfs' ask of Orlando that opens the play, "Who do you love?", returns in the climactic ending. Yet, this time it's asked in a supportive way, with Mrs Grimsditch asking too, as though they believe Orlando knows the answer since having explored their sense of self; they just have to reach a little further. Corrin eventually answers sincerely and with a beam of satisfaction: "I love Orlando".

The effect by which the back wall then shifts to reveal a second stage in a glowing vast block of white light, towards which Orlando walks, entrenches our understanding of the character having accepted the fluidity of their identity, and who they love.

They have reached a stage of self-love which allows them to venture forth into the rest of their ever-shifting journey. This lasting image of light and acceptance underlines the atmosphere the play evokes. As an audience member, you feel you are in a safe, inclusive space, where questions of identity and love can be played with, and from which the looming presence of social norms is shut out. The excitingly ever-moving production therefore mirrors Woolf's experimental modernist prose, in which the stream-of-consciousness of Orlando's character was crucial, as it is here.

Michael Grandage expresses his concerns about current rises in anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes and his hopes for this adaptation to speak to younger audiences, particularly in encouraging their fight against oppression. A huge part of this belief manifests in the theatre company's (named after Grandage) selling of 10,000 tickets for £10 each, in an effort to attract as many young people as possible to come and watch. As Grandage states: "I think the moment that this young generation starts to realise it might actually be happening will be the

start of an uprising the likes of which we've never seen before. Because they are not going to give up the freedoms they rightly enjoy, after a lot of fights involving a lot of us over many years. Neither are we, by the way, but what a wonderful, powerful voice." (*The Guardian*). This captures not only the important resonances the show holds for younger generations, but also, the universal power of self-exploration and queer love which it promotes.

I felt an additional moving response to the play's close. Whilst the future for Orlando is boundless in freedoms of possibility, Woolf's fate was of course tragically the polar opposite. She

took her own life in 1941, which the various incarnations of the author poignantly reveals to both Orlando and Mrs Grimsditch, when asked. However, their commitment to their protagonist's happiness does not end, as they encourage a final act of self-acceptance which Orlando achieves, as Woolf desired in her novel. Symbolically,

this reminds us of the oppressions which so many LGBTQ+ people face, such as abuse to the point of being overwhelmed as Woolf was, as well as that contemporary, more accepting attitudes must be celebrated and defended at all costs.

*Orlando* will run at the Garrick Theatre in the West End, London until 25 February.



IMAGE: DORA GAWN-HOPKINS

# ASTROLOGICAL HISTORY: A LOOK TO THE STARS

ALFIE FLOWERS (HE/THEY) DISCUSSES THE WORLD OF ASTROLOGY AND ITS REVELANCE TODAY

After a long tiring day, you sit down and begin your nightly scroll through *TikTok*, *Twitter*, or any social media that helps you to unwind. As time passes by, the scrolling continues, and you might come across someone discussing how the planet Mercury has entered retrograde.

"Gatorade has a new flavour called mercury?" you ask yourself.

The more you listen and more you understand, you begin to realise this person is a student of the stars, someone who is able to discern the present by studying the planets. You have stumbled upon the topic of astrology, and it is

“Astrology is a science in itself and contains an illuminating body of knowledge

fascinating.

Nowadays, most people know a little about astrology. You may have been asked about your big three or have found yourself downloading apps like *CoStar* or *Daily Horoscopes* to understand your zodiac chart or receive information about how your day will go by relating your chart to the alignment of planets. As well as this, there is a large growing movement of astrology on social media bringing in new mediums through which to discuss astrology. This present-day boom of astrology through social media has given it space to breathe and grow in a modern setting, with new students wanting to learn every day; but what is it? Who started it and what does it actually mean? Sit back, and allow this article to immerse you in everything astrology.

"Astrology is a science in itself and contains an illuminating body of knowledge. It taught me many things and I am greatly indebted to it."

This quote may well have been from an Ancient Greek philosopher who studied astrology at the height of the Greek movement, or a modern-day astrologer who has studied it deeply; in actuality, the words of Albert Einstein grants a clear insight into the great use of astrology. The study of astrology is how planetary movements influence life on both a mundane and large-scale level. Astrology can be broken down to a deeply personal influence in which the alignment of planets at the time of your birth can determine

your life from day one. Your sun sign most commonly explains your ego; your moon sign covers your emotions and your ascendant sign signifies your social personality. Whilst these 'big three' are typically the most well-known, each planet in the solar system has a sign associated with them. For example, the planet Mars represents your aggression and ambition; whatever sign is within Mars at the time of your birth will determine how you translate this aggression and ambition into your life. This is only a small use of astrology; it can also be used for an understanding of everyday life and day to day activities depending on what signs planets are in that very moment. For example, if Venus were to be in Leo, that may be a good time for adventures in romance for people. The topics presented are only a minuetia of an understanding of astrology, but even in these small instances the usefulness and encapsulating nature of it can be seen. However, where did this study come from and how did it get to where it is now?

The roots of astrology can be found in Ancient Mesopotamia and the wild myths of their society. The story goes that the God Marduk defeated a great evil and used the blood and remains of the

monster to create the solar system. From this, it was seen that the celestial bodies above us were innately divine and could be used to predict future events. If a specific star was seen in the East, this may define a period of time where trade deals may be disrupted – this now would translate to losing your Tesco Clubcard if Venus was in retrograde.

Astrology grew and began to seep its way into the society of Ancient Greece. Astronomers and astrologers became unanimous, and the practice of calculating what signs planets were

the planets defined the energies of the houses. Inadvertently, the Ancient Greeks caused a chain of events that would inspire apps like *CoStar*, or horoscopes on the backend of a newspaper.

Time continued on, civilisations grew and died, ancient knowledge was lost or destroyed yet astrology was able to continue on. Many have recently referred to astrology as a 'Gen Z thing' or a 'pandemic trend' but astrology has been used in historical settings long before the recent social media boom. The Tudor Era saw the popular works of astrologer John Dee. He used the stars to best determine the date of Elizabeth I coronation to predict a long and fruitful reign. The 1980s saw First Lady

Nancy Reagan hire a personal astrologer, Joan Quigley, to help the Reagan Administration with timings of policy and press conferences to ensure a successful administration. Time and time again through-

out history, astrology has been at each and every turn, yet the question of why astrology has been able to continue arises. What draws humans to seek further knowledge beyond our own understanding?

To answer this question, let us take a look at the Covid-19 pandemic and the astrology surrounding it. Years before the pandemic, astrologers were able to predict the start of an Earthly change. At the start of 2020, Pluto (which is still considered a planet to astrologers), the planet of death and trauma, was in conjunction (meaning in unification with) with Saturn, the planet of stability and authority. This conjunction was in the sign of Capricorn which astrologer Richard Tarnas described as representing a period of "cycles of crisis and contraction" characterised by a collective human experience of disaster and hardship. This conjunction has allegedly been previously seen in times of hardship, (from the Cold War conflict to the rise of the AIDS virus) and astrologers were able to discern the suffering of people. Yet, as well as astrology sometimes being an omen of doom, practices of astrology can provide some escape for people. For example, the idea that if the start of a pandemic can be predicted, so can the end.



IMAGE: FELIX MITTERMEIER



IMAGE: CUTE CALENDAR



IMAGE: MIRIAM ESPACIO

“It's no wonder there has been such a resurgence in this field

provide a deeper insight into why astrology has been able to continue throughout the generations; I think Chris was best able to describe why astrology has stuck around and what it means: "Astrology gives people a greater sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, partially helping them to discover their purpose. It has continued to persist and thrive for centuries because there is something about it that speaks to the human condition on such a profound level that transcends generational and cultural differences."

So, whether astrology is used to gain deeper insight into your life, or simply provide fruitful conversations with friends over whose sign is the best, there is absolutely no signs of it slowing down. Astrology has shown its uses to the modern world, and it's here to stay.

# 'GOD SAVE THE QUEEN': A TRIBUTE TO VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

GRACE BANNISTER (SHE/HER) REMEMBERS THE QUEEN OF BRITISH FASHION AND PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVIST, VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

Vivienne Westwood: a household name; but why? Almost everyone knows the name 'Vivienne Westwood'; some know her fashion journey but all should know her activism and philanthropism.

The recent death of the 81 year old British fashion designer has encouraged fashionistas and journalists alike to reflect on her iconic fashion journey. From her early career as a primary school teacher, Westwood entered the world of fashion during her second marriage to Malcolm McLaren, injecting the fashion industry with her self-assuredness and dedication to her morals. Although initially ridiculed for her fashion-forward styles, particularly within men's fashion, Westwood's visions are now modelled by some of the biggest stars of our time, including Harry Styles. With all this considered, it is abundantly clear that Vivienne Westwood has left her mark upon the fashion industry, having been twice crowned British designer of the year. In recent years her anarchist, androgynous designs have gained new reverence from the younger generation.

However, upon considering how to best eulogise the life of Vivienne Westwood, I realised that a commemoration in

cluding only her best red carpet looks would be doing her a serious disservice. Not only the Queen of British Fashion, Westwood successfully and continually dedicated her platform to campaign for the issues closest to her heart.

Thus, I believe, Westwood's unwavering perseverance to staying true to herself and her values, both within and outside of the fashion realm, is what we should remember her for. Her ability to integrate the passions in her life through facilitating the promotion of serious global issues, such as climate change, through A-list celebrities and models on the red carpet is truly applaudable. She displayed continued resilience and courage both in the fashion and political world. Whilst it could have potentially threat-

ened her platform and career, she never compromised her insistence to light the issues spot-she cared about.

"Tomorrow is too late". That is the belief at the heart of the Vivienne foundation, a Non Government Organisation established by Westwood herself to campaign for global issues. I feel

that this is particularly resonant with the current global and political climate, and is certainly fitting to the four issues the foundation is dedicated to: war, climate change, human rights and capitalism. Westwood's active role within the foundation, campaigning for the release of Julian Assange in addition to her role as patron to Reprieve

(a foundation focused on helping those who have had their human rights breached

by the government), are just some of the ways in which Vivienne Westwood has used her platform to demand action from governments globally.

Even recently, a YouTube video uploaded by the Vivienne Foundation in November 2022, sees Westwood condemn governments for their lack of action adhering to the pledges set out and agreed upon during COP26. Westwood argued that "the only way to halt climate change is to work with governments", but that this is "impossible" as "governments are the problem". Later in the video, Westwood stayed true to her no-nonsense approach, exposing the lack of government fidelity to pledges made to help preserve rainforests in the Congo, which are now being auctioned to oil companies. Furthermore, Westwood argued for the protection of indigenous communities

who, as a result of capitalism and this land sale, are being forcibly removed from their land. Westwood states that there is a culture within capitalism and wider global government of "live today, die tomorrow". She has mirrored her message of climate urgency in her runways – a brilliant example of how she foregrounded political messaging in her designs.

Westwood's message is one of urgency and condemnation, but also of hope and immediate action. In another video uploaded by the Vivienne Foundation entitled 'No Man's Land', she pleads for government intervention and "world cooperation."

Therefore, perhaps now when you hear the name Vivienne Westwood, you'll think of more than just her fashion, Maybe you will think of her bravery, resilience and determination to make the world fairer and more sustainable for all.



# MAKING THE ARGUMENT FOR INTERGENERATIONAL FASHION

JAMES CLAY (HE/HIM) REFLECTS ON THE FASHION IN HIS FAMILY AND EXPLORES WHY WE SHOULD CHERISH TRADITIONAL STYLES

A few years ago, one of my teachers described me as 'fourteen going on forty'. As perplexed as I was then, I've now come to realise that there may have been some truth to that statement, at least in regard to clothing. Since leaving school, one and a half years ago, I've noticed that I'm increasingly dressing more and more like my father. I doubt this is necessarily intentional. It is in no way an attempt to venerate his style nor is it an attempt to superficially become him as a man. As far as I can tell, it happened either accidentally or subconsciously. I look up to and admire many things about my father, I always have, however I wouldn't necessarily have said his clothing would have been one of those things.

For me, it is chequered shirts, knitted jumpers and a complete abstention from the wearing of trainers when not playing sport or working out. I don't care if they demand high maintenance or if they are seen as nerdy by others but brown leather shoes just look so good. If I take chequered shirts for example, some of my collection I have bought brand new, some from charity shops and one or two have passed from my dad's wardrobe to mine. I will confess that under a loose definition of stealing, one may have been discretely stolen as well. That being said, I think I have been forgiven as the shirt wasn't having much wear out of it

previously anyway.

Geneticists have made substantial progress in the study of DNA and genetic inheritance but they are yet to find a gene dedicated to clothing. I live in hope that one day such a gene shall be discovered, however I am highly dubious this day will come. Wouldn't it be great if the type of jeans that you wear is determined by a genotype. For those of us who do dress like our parents, it must be because of something that happened during the nurturing stage of our upbringing. My parents never attempted to socialise or hypnotise me into resembling a budget minor royal lounging on holiday, it just happened naturally.

You should never feel inhibited by the dominant clothing styles of the day. There is no shame or embarrassment in dressing like one's mother or father. The best styles out there are those that will naturally be the product of a long and twisting process, often incorporating the gems of previous generations, whilst learning from the mistakes of the past as well. That being said, if you are afflicted by a bad case of mummy or daddy issues then perhaps you don't dress like them.

On a note of practicality, your parent's closet is accessible and can act as a bountiful supply of clothing substitutes. Although this isn't the case for everybody, typically you are usually of a similar size and stature to one of your parents so it is possible that something that they own would fit. In an emergency, just take a dive into your parent's closet and go search

for something appropriate and desirable. If parents were to know beforehand that their clothing would pass from one generation to another, I think it would be highly likely that they would take more care of their apparel. After all, it is traditional for women to wear the wedding dress that their mother and potentially grandmother, wore. Why not extend this idea to regular day-to-day clothing as well?

They say that mothers always know best. This isn't necessarily the case all of the time however, when it comes to clothing, there may be some truth to the expression. Rebelling against your parents may give you a short term kick of satisfaction but it may pass and before you know it, you will be looking at your reflection in the mirror and seeing one of your parents. If this fate is inevitable then why wait, just accept it and make the most of who you were born to become. We can't escape the perennial circle of life, nor should we ever attempt to. True happiness may come with self-realisation and freedom but humans are naturally creatures of habit and inherit an awful lot of characteristics from their ancestry anyway.

From the perspective of religious and ethnic minorities in this country, special cultures and traditions die out

when one generation collectively decides to promote conformity in the face of social pressure.

The rich fabric of Britain's multicultural society can be preserved and protected but only when high street retailers and online mega brands are rejected. If you belong to a religious or ethnic minority in this country, you should feel proud of your heritage and the clothing which has characterised that culture over the past decades.

I may be naive to believe that anybody will listen to this final point but I would go as far as to say that what we should really be doing is looking towards our grandparents generation for fashion inspiration. My paternal grandfather was a dignified RAF veteran who was proud to have lived the life he led.

This was reflected in the clothing he wore and the way in which he presented himself. He wouldn't have been seen dead in ripped jeans and a hoodie. Call me snobbish or a prude but when I see a pensioner do their weekly supermarket shop wearing a suit and tie, I am left with a deep sense of regret that the people of my generation have abandoned smartness and dignity for sartorial flimflam.



# YORK'S INDEPENDENT SHOPS

PHOTOGRAPHER: IZA BIENKOWSKA (SHE/HER)



Atmospheric shop specialising in hand-made natural scented candles and other home fragrances



Shop specialising in all things cat-themed, from clothing to jewellery



Card and gift shop that has you covered for every occasion

York is a city with lots of small businesses that never fail to amaze their visitors. We present to you a selection of the most interesting, original and beautiful independent shops in the city, both popular and lesser known (but not less attractive!). Who knows, maybe you'll find a new shop to visit next time you're in town!



Cosy shop offering all kinds of teddies, from bears to dinosaurs



Handcrafted Polish pottery, from small decorations to full tableware



Family-run art gallery selling paints and prints of various different artists





A unique home and gift shop in York, offering everything from rugs through ceramics to jewellery



Family-run business specialising in Indian spices and cooking ingredients



Little bakehouse at Walmgate selling great cakes, bread and award-winning Yorkshire coffee



Family-run café (with three themed dining rooms) and a unique boutique store



Little food shop offering fresh veg and fruit, olive oils, baked goods and more



Gift shop on the Shambles with little souvenirs for every occasion



Little bookshop focused on selling fantasy, science-fiction and LGBTQIA+ books

# RAYE: AN UPCOMING NEW R&B POP ARTIST TO LOVE THIS YEAR

ELLIE HARRINGTON (SHE/HER) ARGUES THE CASE FOR 2023 BEING THE YEAR OF THE FEMALE SOLO ARTIST, RAYE

**CONTENT WARNING:** This article contains references to sexual assault and eating disorders.

Music in 2022 was set in the backdrop of TikTok and its ability to send a short snippet of a song into popularity. Songs such as ‘Sunroof’ by Nicky Youre are from artists who were yet to be successful before their songs found their way onto the popular video app. This trend is not looking to stop, with the next music hit on TikTok being ‘Escapism.’ by Raye and 070 Shake, which at the time of writing has 123 million listens on Spotify, and is Raye’s first song to be number 1 in the UK top 40 and her first song in the Billboard top 100. Many may have already heard of Raye, as the Tooting-born singer and songwriter who has been creating music since 2015 with much success featuring in and writing electronic dance songs, such as ‘You Don’t Own Me’ by Jax Jones.

Raye, her real name Rachel Agatha Keen, grew up in South-East London. She expressed her musical talent from a young age in her church’s gospel choir, going on to attend the infamous BRIT School at 14, although she dropped out two years later. Talking to the BBC later, she felt

her creativity was being “confined despite learning an extensive amount.” Musically she draws inspiration from artists that were played in the family home; the classic soul and jazz maestros of the ‘40s and ‘50s like Nina Simone, Ella Fitzgerald, and Nat King Cole inspiring her R&B and Jazz fusion. Since then, Raye learned how to professionally write studio songs and became popular as a singer in many club collaborations. She is also very well known for her signature neo-R&B and radio wave style, with obvious inspirations from Bella Hadid to Mugler, establishing herself as a well-known name for her fashion. However, during this time, Raye was describing the lack of recognition for the

work she put into such songs, saying in an interview with NME, “people knew my songs but they didn’t know me” and feeling as though she was a “rent-a-verse.” It’s clear during these years Raye became disenfranchised by the music industry, despite acquiring nine Top 40 songs and writing for big names such as Charli XCX, Rita Ora and Beyoncé. According to Raye, she had an 11-track album in her signature R&B style ready. Still, once she entered her con-

tract with Polydor it was solely about the hits, and her album became the last project in a long queue of collaborations. For seven years Raye continued to make music but the majority of the songs released are with male DJs such as Rudimental, Martin Solveig and Jack Jones.

Despite making a mini album titled *Euphoric Sad Songs*, Polydor still wanted Raye to fit into the ‘classic pop mould’ which she felt she could not evolve within and was often sidelined by other, mainly male, artists. After seven long years of Raye being tied to her contract, she tweeted “I have been on a 4 ALBUM RECORD DEAL since 2014 !!! And haven’t been allowed to put out one album. ALL I CARE ABOUT is the music. I’m sick of being slept on and I’m sick of being in pain about it this is not business to me this so personal.” Soon after this impassioned Tweet Raye announced that she had separated with Polydor, leaving her to make her own music as an independent female artist. While she announced on

Twitter and Instagram that she had split with Polydor saying, “I am very grateful to them for giving me a graceful smooth exit to start my next chapter as an artist,” Polydor also made a statement declaring the split was very “amicable.” Although aware of the difficulties of being an independent artist in a music world run by labels, Raye felt free to express her feelings and opinions through her new music, which has focused very heavily on her

experience of misogyny in the music industry. In her first song, released independently in August, ‘Hard Out Here,’ the lyrics depict her anger from the experiences of the past years saying, “all the white men CEOs, fuck your privilege” and ex-

“ Raye felt free to express her feelings and opinions through her new music

pressing that she will “bounce back.” Raye has certainly done this with her song ‘Escapism’, an R&B pop anthem, and finally got her well-deserved number 1, filming an emotional thank you to TikTok, and announcing her upcoming album for February 2023 – *21st Century Blues*. Raye has described the album as a mixture of soul, blues, R&B and pop, explaining that the album is a very personal project covering topics like her experiences with sexual assault, eating disorders and her feelings towards the British political system. Touring is also a big part of Raye’s 2023, not only touring her own album in February, but also supporting Lewis Capaldi on his anticipated arena tour.

Despite everything Raye has had to contend with within the music industry, her solo career has only just begun, and it’s clear Raye will likely be the artist of 2023.



IMAGE: LAURA STANLEY



IMAGE: STIKYWORK

# THE LASTING GENIUS OF NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL’S JEFF MANGUM

ALFIE SANSOM (HE/HIM) RECALLS ONE OF THE 90S MOST REVERED INDIE EXCURSIONS ON ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY

**CONTENT WARNING:** This article contains references to suicide.

Every music listener is born like a blank canvas. As they learn to walk, gargle their emotions through their toothless mouths, the world around them splatters its paint on to their empty paintings. If their parents listen to soul music, then they will grow up with an affinity for such sounds, this embedded preference stained as peripheral specks from their childhood.

Later, as a teenager, they decide what all this paint makes them: a metalhead, a jazz-lover, an avant-garde auteur. Some might feel rebellious, have a wider music taste than their upbringing suggests, listening to hip-hop with a Marc Bolan t-shirt, as though they were doing English GCSE wearing a lab coat. By their twenties, most canvases will remain untouched; people grow stubborn with age, shielded by nostalgia. Yet certain albums always make an impression, turn someone’s masterpiece of taste into an unfinished wreck.

*In The Aeroplane Over The Sea* has just this effect. It’s the perfect blend of opacity and transparency, innocence

and perversion, feeling and distance. Jeff Mangum, lead singer and songwriter of Neutral Milk Hotel, populates this stretch of sonic mastery with a variety of strange characters, as well as being famously inspired by Anne Frank’s diary. He was said to be so grief-stricken at her tragedy that he cried for three days, and dreamed constantly about saving her from her fate. Thus, he spins the strings of love, youth and innocence amongst his lyrics, referring not just to Frank herself, but more generally to children (such as the conjoined twins of ‘Two-Headed Boy’). It’s an optimistic view on being young, finding yourself and keeping hold of love; perhaps, it’s the normal childhood Mangum hoped to impose upon the Anne Frank in his dreams.

And yet, despite the innocence injected by Mangum, his work is littered by lude and uncomfortable images; domestic fights, the emergence of sexuality in children, alcoholism and suicide; two-headed boys being stuck in jars; semen staining the mountain tops.

To just list them is to do them a disservice, however, and would be a purposeful attempt to misrepresent them. These

are the images of life, some metaphorical, but all building to the greater picture of the album. He describes them as bluntly and nonchalantly as a child would see them, twisting this naivety in a world of violence and discord. The album is chiefly about love and youth, but the context in which such love and youth resides is cruel, harsh and unforgiving. Mangum’s contradictory lyrics exhibit this brilliantly.

The track list flows in unison, writhing as one fuzzy beast in the band’s fantastical world of touching folk. Although it would remove the project’s nuance to describe it as a ‘concept album’, *In The Aeroplane* certainly has a cohesion which binds the album into a tight work. Stories continue throughout multi-part songs – ‘King of Carrot Flowers Pt. 1, 2 & 3’; ‘Two-Headed Boy Pt. 1 & 2’ – and help to reinforce this album’s familiarity. Alongside the constant mentions of family members, Neutral Milk Hotel make you feel a nostalgia and comfort that precious few can.

The sound and style of this album is rooted

in folk, and yet cannot be defined in such simple terms. It twists between brass licks of psychedelia and carnivalesque jazz. With layers of fuzz, parading horns and acoustic guitars, Neutral Milk Hotel maintain a sense of hope and buoyancy despite the difficult subject matter. Mangum’s vocals oscillate between an intimate mumble, an impassioned ramble and a wistful tune, endearing in their honesty. More unique instruments were also used in the recording of the album: winding between Mangum’s words are singing saws, particularly through the title track; the zanzithophone, flugelhorn, uilleann pipes and white noise also appear. Jason Ankeny of AllMusic describes the album’s sound as that of a “marching band on an acid trip”, but I hardly think they could have the same vim and vigour as Mangum’s troop.

And now, 25 years later, this profound collection is firmly rooted in the canon of music. It is an indie touchstone, and one of the best albums of the ‘90s. Most crucially, it is now myth. It is Neutral Milk Hotel’s last album, and the sudden cult popularity of it pushed Jeff Mangum into a reclusive lifestyle. How often does an album have such power of sentiment, such a cohesion throughout while hanging by an abstract thread? There will always be a space for *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea* on someone’s canvas. It could be the first splutter of acrylic, or the final stroke, and this album would still make a mark.



IMAGE: BRETT JORDAN



IMAGE: THE DELI NEW ENGLAND

# WHY EVERYBODY SHOULD BE TALKING ABOUT FLO THIS YEAR

**NIAMH KITSON (SHE/HER)** EXPLORES THE RISE OF THE GIRL BAND EVERYBODY SHOULD ADD TO THEIR PLAYLISTS

After winning the esteemed Brit Rising Star award and BBC's Sound of 2023, this undoubtedly seems to be Flo's year. The London-based three-piece, comprised of Stella Quaresma, Jorja Douglas and Renée Downer, took the music industry by storm in 2022, releasing their first single in March, followed by their debut EP *The Lead* just fourth months later.

To the outside world, it may seem as though Flo have suddenly burst onto the scene, but a lot of behind-the-scenes work went into curating last year's break-through. After signing to Island Records, the band spent two years perfecting their sound, taking influences from the music of their childhood, before they eventually released their debut single 'Cardboard Box', produced by MNEK. Opening aptly with "I got a confession / I don't think I want you anymore," this tune was instantly a classic: a self-assured, empowering break-up anthem that you cannot help but want to move to. Following the success of their first single,

It feels like they have come to fruition at just the right time

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there was much to be expected from *The Lead*, and it didn't disappoint. At five tracks long, it is short and sweet but truly exemplifies the band's talent and identity. Alongside 'Cardboard Box', there are

four other songs, 'Immature', 'Summertime', 'Feature Me' and 'Another Guy (Acoustic)'. 'Immature' is centred around a lover who does not communicate and leaves their partner feeling unfulfilled. This tune combines gentle guitar plucking with more produced elements; MNEK's influence can certainly be felt. Next, is 'Summertime', which, as its title would suggest, is an ultimate feel-good, summer anthem for chilling on the beach and listening to,

while also continuing Flo's speciality of female empowerment. The title of the EP is taken from the soulful and sensual 'Feature Me' ("Touch on me, get on your knees / I'll take the lead"). The standout of this track is the harmonies during the chorus alongside the subtle whistle notes at the end of the song. Slowing it down for the end of the EP is 'Another Guy (Acoustic)'. Stripping back the production, the girls' vocal prowess is centre stage – and it shines.

More recently, the trio released 'Not My Job' as part of an extended version of *The Lead*. Building on the foundations of the original EP, this track feels like it really encapsulates Flo's brand. It

begins with the girls harmonising their name before bursting into a R&B beat, reminiscent of the 1990s – comparisons can quickly be drawn to Destiny's Child. However, there still remains a contemporary element throughout. Their latest single 'Losing You' shows that they are truly going from strength to strength. Stella Quaresma sings "Losing you was easier than I thought it'd be," demonstrating that the girls really have perfected the art of a break-up anthem.

Despite their 90s-inspired R&B sound, Flo are the epitome of Gen Z artists. The Happi Remix to 'Cardboard Box' went viral,

amassing over 1.2 million views on TikTok, and even getting its own dance. Not only this, but they have a huge social media following: 222,000 followers on Instagram, 87,000 followers on Twitter and 326,000 followers on TikTok, including fans such as SZA, Lauren Jaregui and Kehlani. Unsurprisingly, the band maintain a strong connection with their fanbase through social media and have won multiple fan-voted awards, such as MTV

Push UK.

There is something fresh and playful about Flo. The band clearly have a desire to be creative with their sound and push it in different directions, including through creating acoustic versions of their songs and working with different art-

Flo have arrived on the scene with a bang and are here to stay

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ists. Not only have they collaborated with Happi, but they have also featured on a remixed version of 'Hide and Seek' by Stormzy. Their creativity also extends into their music videos. Documenting a trip to Greece, the video for 'Summertime' is irresistibly fun and personal: it feels as though we are on the girls' holiday with them.

Flo's potential this year is limitless; there will be no doubt more music, more fans, more shows, and more hype. It feels as though they have come into fruition at just the right time, providing the UK with a much-needed girl group. The trio have already sold out two shows in London and Manchester in March and April respectively, and fans are hoping for more tour dates to be announced. There also remains the prospect of their highly anticipated debut album which, if their early material is anything to go by, should be both nostalgic and refreshing. Flo have arrived on the scene with a bang and are definitely here to stay.



IMAGE: VISHNUR NAIR

# EXPLORING MUSIC IN 'GLASS ONION: A KNIVES OUT MYSTERY'

**ELLEN MORRIS (SHE/HER)** DISCUSSES HOW MUSIC CREATES AMBIENCE IN THE NEW NETFLIX HIT MYSTERY FILM

The sequel 'whodunit' movie, *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* hit 273.2 million hours watched in its first 24 days of

Netflix release. If you have not seen this movie, I suggest going and watching it now before I spoil it for you. This is your final warning! Released on 23 December 2022, it was a highly strategic time to get the family together for a movie in light of the festive period. On Christmas Eve, I gathered with my family, our eyes glued to the screen, (with the exception of pausing it to grab another drink) immersed in wondering what could happen next. The break gave time for discussion, creating new subplots and predicting who the traitor was; we concluded that our far-fetched ideas could even have made a more thrilling movie. Someone get us in touch with Rian Johnson! But regardless, with such an entrancing film, the music must have been on par – right? Right!

The first scene of the movie began with 'Fugue in G Minor, BWV 578', by John Sebastian Bach and performed by Tat'jana Petrovna Nikolaeva. The first character, played by Kathryn Hahn, was introduced to this slow classical score, whilst she stressfully rushed to prepare for her CNN interview. The music remained unchanged until she was notified of the anonymous invitation which queued the line, "It's from Miles." The piano im-

mediately fell off-key, and ceased. This choice imminently signified to us that Miles was going to be the villain!

Our first meeting with this ominous Miles (played by Edward Norton) begins contrastingly to how we all imagined him to be; he serenades the newcomers to his island with the sweet and serene sound of 'Blackbird' by The Beatles on his acoustic guitar.

This song was an incredible choice for his introduction, setting the tone for the rest of the movie. Paul McCartney originally wrote this song not about a blackbird, but "from me to a black woman" during the civil rights movement; he said in Barry Mile's *Many Years From Now*, "Let me encourage you to keep trying, to keep your faith; there is hope."

If you have seen the film, you will know it centres around a black woman, Andi Brand, impersonated by her revealed twin Helen (both played by Janelle Monáe). Helen is seeking justice for Andi whom she knows was murdered by someone on the island. It is then ironic that Miles is later revealed to be the murderer, and even more ironic that Andi received justice in the end. His short performance of McCartney's fingerpicking string-style song, subtly foreshadows how he has already, and is about, to pull some strings on the island. The encouraging song of Black hope is twisted to

one that emerges as conniving on a second watch, yet appears to be significant in the finale of justice for Andi.

Delving further into the use of 'Blackbird', McCartney revealed in 2005 that the chords were influenced by a piece by Bach. This carefully links to the opening of the movie and the continued use of Bach throughout different scenes. Bach and McCartney have a clear effect on the plot of the movie. Discussing this, it is difficult to ignore the significance of The Beatles' song 'Glass Onion'; hey, that's the name of the movie! It plays as the credits roll, whilst we have just viewed the downfall (to say the least) of Miles' own glass onion, and the chaos between the characters. The layers of Miles' glass onion were peeled back to reveal his true nature; although it was transparent all along – from the moment the smooth piano flunked in the very first minute.

This merges fluently with the aim of the song, written by John Lennon, to express how fans read too deeply into their lyrics; they are multi-layered, however the meaning of the lyrics are as clear as

There is not always need for hidden meanings, everything can be how it appears

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they seem. There is not always need for hidden meanings, everything can be how it appears. During said 'downfall', 'Mona Lisa' by Nat King Cole begins to play; Andi is running in slow-motion, racing against Miles to stop her from attempting to burn the *Mona Lisa* – unsuccessfully. The *Mona Lisa* symbolises Miles' vast power through continuous capitalist exploitation of the people whom he called his friends. All you can hear is Nat King Cole's rhythmic chorus celebrating the *Mona Lisa's* beauty, while a contrasting sight of Miles' silent screams sync with the song to make it appear that he is wailing her name. A vicarious rush of triumph is fuelled by this scene's music choice, although alternatively a sense of dread as you watch the infamous painting curl up and burn. It feels like you could cry along to the song too, with Miles.

*Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* was an enthralling watch with symbolic music that attached new meanings to the viewing experience, and I definitely will be watching it again – I hope you do too!



IMAGE: IMDB

OUR EDITORS RECOMMEND:  
THEIR FAVOURITE  
DIRECTORS

KEN LOACH

This British social realist director will make you cry angry tears and hate the government.



IMAGE: IMDB

WONG KAR-WAI

Fall in love with the cinema of Hong Kong's melancholic maestro.

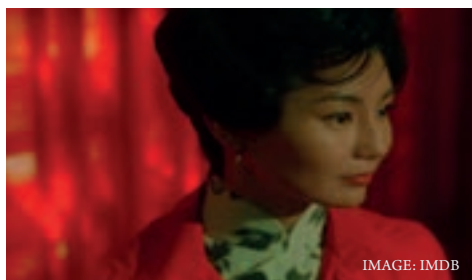


IMAGE: IMDB

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

Known as the 'Master of Suspense' for a reason, Hitchcock's six decades of cinema are truly breathtaking.



IMAGE: IMDB

AKIRA KUROSAWA

Kurosawa helped to introduce Japanese cinema to the West and remains one of its most celebrated directors to this day.



IMAGE: IMDB

CLAIRE DENIS

The idiosyncratic vision of this French director distinguishes her as one of the best of her generation.



IMAGE: IMDB

PAUL VERHOEVEN: SCI-FI AND FUTURISTIC IRONY  
BEN JORDAN (HE/HIM) EXAMINES THE SATIRICAL WORLDS OF VERHOEVEN

Both of my parents are British, so when I found out I was part Dutch a few years ago, I took a perverse pride in this new and exciting part of my heritage. Ever since I have felt a cosmopolitan connection towards the Netherlands, so much so that I felt ashamed to have never watched a film by perhaps its most famous director, Paul Verhoeven. His most famous, *RoboCop* (1987), has been written about before here at *Nouse*, so I decided to dedicate this piece to a discussion of his approach to sci-fi and satire throughout his filmography, with a particular focus on *RoboCop*, *Total Recall* (1990), and *Starship Troopers* (1997).

I usually never bother to write about a film I don't like. For one, I don't find it to be an especially fulfilling exercise. It's often an easy case to argue, and when I do write, I prefer it to be about a film that feels like it will reward the time I have spent thinking about it. One recent exception to this rule came back in November when I went to see *Crimes of the Future* (2022). I hated it, and ended up having a heated debate about it on the way back. I got so riled up and passionate about my dislike of the film that I decided to go home and write a scathing review of it out of spite. Even the most stoic reviewer can only take so much, and there are times when I dislike a film so much that I feel compelled to write a review about it. *Starship Troopers* is one such case.

Much like *The Last Jedi* (2017), the critical discourse on *Starship Troopers* tends to be divided between the circlejerk of people who 'get it' and the philistines who take its fascism at face value. Its apologists paint *Starship Troopers* as some kind of misunderstood masterpiece that can only be appreciated by those with a keen eye for satire. If you don't like it, you clearly just didn't 'get it'. In spite of this, it isn't exactly hard to 'get' what *Starship Troopers* is going for. Its satire is relatively superficial, and though I do struggle to see how viewers in the 90s interpreted it otherwise I am not exactly sympathetic towards the false dichotomy that its fans impose.

*Starship Troopers* is set in the 23rd century, and tells the tale of a conflict between colonial space marines and a race of interstellar insects. It attempts to satirise the colonial undertones of American foreign policy and the propaganda machine that riles its citizens up into jingoism by depicting a fascist society of space marines – but its satire is so unabashedly brazen and almost unbearable. Verhoeven is clearly sympathetic towards his protagonists and intersperses their teen drama with scenes of intergalactic conflict. There is a love triangle that is so generic and tacky that it puts *Twilight* franchise to shame. By the end of the film I cared so little about any of the characters that I felt bad for the insects.

I respect the intention behind it, but when viewed through the cynical lens of the 21st century



IMAGE: IMDB

*Starship Troopers* comes across as exceedingly cheesy. It has a schlocky B-movie feel to it that fans will tell you is a transgressive middle finger to the studio system, but in reality is just a result of the fact that the film is barely put together. Plus, it looks incredibly ugly in the way that only CGI from the late 90s can. It all added up to a distasteful experience that I was not eager to repeat, though some deprived part of me felt compelled to watch more of Verhoeven's work. In the weeks after watching *Starship Troopers* I ultimately ended up doing so.

Flash forward two weeks, a couple of friends and I boot up an old copy of *RoboCop*, Verhoeven's 1987 cult classic about a Detroit police officer who is gunned down in the line of duty and revived as the titular RoboCop. Unlike *Starship Troopers*, the satire here actually has some nuance to it. *RoboCop* is an incisive critique of consumer capitalism and the corporations that drive it. The streets of Detroit are rampant with crime and the city hands control of the police department to a set of corrupt executives. RoboCop is created in an attempt to clean up the streets so the executives can proceed with their plan to create a new city outside Detroit. Though RoboCop distributes justice, his cocaine-addled creators are only motivated by profit. It's like *American Psycho* (2000) if Patrick Bateman had control of a renegade android.

Like *American Psycho*, *RoboCop* can also be viewed as a critique of the economic policies of Ronald Reagan. Throughout *RoboCop*, Verhoeven criticises these policies and the toxic corporate culture that they exacerbate. He intersperses satirical news segments into the narrative, where the reporters present horrific tragedies in a deadpan tone; a technique that he reused in *Starship Troopers*. Though most of these tragedies are attributable to technology, they often involve an

element of human error, evincing how it is ultimately the corrupt corporate executives who are responsible.

The release of *Total Recall* in 1990 marked a return to sci-fi for Verhoeven after a three year absence. The satire in *Total Recall* is not as clear as in *RoboCop* or *Starship Troopers*, but like in his other works Verhoeven takes a critical stance against capitalism and colonialism. *Total Recall* follows a construction worker who receives implanted memories of a secret mission on Mars. The planet has been taken over by the executive of a mining company who has a monopoly on the air supply. Like *RoboCop* before it, *Total Recall* is a takedown of the corporate ambition of corrupt executives. Verhoeven turns his sardonic eye from Detroit to Mars and depicts the consequences of the free market capitalism espoused by Reagan and his cronies. The Mars of *Total Recall* is hedonistic and apathetic, a clear consequence of the insatiable appetite of the capitalists who run it. The twists and turns of its plot keep us dependent on Verhoeven as he feeds us misinformation about the past of our protagonist. Just like how the media in the film presents an image of Mars as a prime holiday destination, and paints the oppressed rebels as terrorists.

So why does Verhoeven's satire work in some cases and not others? Perhaps it is because both *RoboCop* and *Total Recall* have a clear target to their satire. The ideological stance of the antagonists is clear in both films, and their narratives are structured in such a way as to pit the protagonists against them. But in *Starship Troopers* there is no clear target. Whilst Verhoeven is clearly airing out his grievances with Reagan in both *RoboCop* and *Total Recall*, his intentions are ultimately not as clear in *Starship Troopers*. Perhaps this is because its satire is mixed up in the mess that is American foreign policy, or perhaps this is attributable to a misstep on the part of its director. *Starship Troopers* clearly encourages its audience to see the insects as the antagonists. Perhaps this is why audiences at the time failed to recognise that Verhoeven was satirising the protagonists all along.

Though *Starship Troopers* is not quite the misunderstood masterpiece that its fans paint it as, it still makes for an interesting case study in satire. Few films have missed the mark quite so far upon their release, or have been subject to such a favourable critical reappraisal in the years since. For fans of sci-fi and satire there is certainly a compelling case to say that no one blends these two disparate genres quite like Paul Verhoeven. Even though I ultimately did not like *Starship Troopers*, it is a divisive film for a reason, and since watching *RoboCop* and *Total Recall* I have become more open to the possibility that there is merit to it that I simply did not appreciate on this watch. Perhaps the fans are right after all.



IMAGE: ORION PICTURES

# POWELL AND PRESSBURGER: BRITISH CINEMA AT ITS MOST MAGICAL

MARCUS FAIRWEATHER (HE/HIM) TAKES US BACK TO THE 1940S WITH HIS EXPLORATION OF THIS DUO

The 1940s, in the context of the history of Anglo-American cinema can be viewed through two lenses; on one hand, it was a decade of innovation, of pioneering camerawork and filmmaking possibilities the likes of which had never been seen before. On the other hand, it was a period scarred by war, both hot and cold, and the spectre of looming conflict was a critical ingredient in some of the decade's most accomplished films. Because of the dominance of studio executives and the puritanical 'Hays' Motion Picture Production Code, many directors were obliged to toe the line to avoid trouble from the censors (especially when addressing any issues likely to cause controversy), often creating a stifling environment for artistic creativity. However, in spite of the imposed limits, this did not mean that black and white moral homogeneity was the universal norm. Sticking out like a sore thumb, amidst the monochrome drabness of the outside world, there existed a filmmaking duo who over the course of eight years created a series of films that while often surreal and daringly inventive in their techniques, were at heart sweepingly romantic and life-affirming. The filmmaking duo in question was comprised of two Englishmen called Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger.

To pin down Powell and Pressburger's trademark style seems at first to be an impossible task, because of how they refused to confine themselves to one form of cinematic expression. At the height of their powers, they were constantly genre-hopping from war epic such as *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) to fantasy-romance with *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) to psycho-sexual religious drama like *Black Narcissus* (1947). In spite of the diverse nature of their filmography,

there are several reliable tropes that keep resurfacing to remind the viewer that each movie has their directorial fingerprints all over it. First and most obviously, Powell and Pressburger shot a number of their films in vibrant technicolour, something many of their contemporaries were reluctant to do, not least because of the expense involved. One of the most visually striking examples of colour being utilised to its full potential is contained in the psychedelic ballet sequence in *The Red Shoes* (1948). The narrative plunges into the interiority of the film's heroine Vicky Page and the line between reality and imagination are increasingly distorted. The feverish bursts of colour-keeping in time with Vicky's struggle to control the rhythm of her red shoes are a tragic foretaste of what is to come. The effect produced is one that is bizarre, yet utterly mesmerising. If Powell and Pressburger intended to convey a sense of realism in their films, then the lurid photography could be seen out of place at best and self-indulgent eye candy at worst. However, due to their long-running flirtations with the fantasy genre, as well as their preoccupation with larger-than-life characters and ideas, the use of technicolour is an invaluable feature of Powell and Pressburger's filmography, both aesthetically and thematically.

Another staple of Powell and Pressburger's films is their gentle, yet at times mocking sense of humour. For proof look no further than *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, at once an ode to perceived vanished British cultural values and a searing critique of them in a time that they have become largely obsolete. The opening scene, where a group of soldiers burst into a Turkish bath on a training exercise much to the chagrin of the comically old-fashioned protagonist, Major-General

Clive-Wynne Candy ignoring his outraged protests that "War starts at midnight!". Candy is endearing in his steadfast adherence to a code of honour but he is also laughable; a figure of fun for failing to realise that the changing nature of war means that it is no longer possible to play by gentleman's rules. This criticism of the British army, however faint, was enough to incur the wrath of Winston Churchill who did his best to suppress the film before its release and prevent its distribution worldwide. Fortunately for us, his efforts were unsuccessful.

This conveniently leads us on to the third and in my mind most important feature of Powell and

Pressburger's filmography which is a refusal to sacrifice their filmmaking vision to appease mainstream morality. While some films have arguably aged more gracefully than others through quirky characters, scripts and sumptuous cinematic techniques. At their best, they explored controversial issues in a way that wasn't anchored in a specific historical framework or genre but in a way that was bold, visionary and sometimes, as is the case of *A Matter of Life and Death*, cosmic in scale. Powell and Pressburger may not be to everyone's taste, but once seen, they won't be forgotten in a hurry.



IMAGE: THE CRITERION COLLECTION

# ALICE DIOP: FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING INSIDE

ROSIE BAILEY (SHE/HER) LOOKS AT FRANCE'S OSCAR FRONTRUNNER

This year, Alice Diop's film *Saint Omer* (2022) was selected by France as its submission for Best International Feature Film at the Oscars. Not only is this exciting because it is Diop's first fictional feature film, but it also makes Diop the first Black woman to ever represent France in the Oscar race.

Diop has had an interesting career so far, primarily as a documentary filmmaker. Her work focuses on those in French society that she believes are disregarded. With her background in sociology, Diop is fascinated by the relationship between cinema and society.

Although *Saint Omer* is not out in the UK yet, critics have commented that this courtroom drama is an incredible interrogation of the fine line between fact and fiction or the realities that we create for ourselves and

others. Diop's expertise as a documentary filmmaker is incredibly valuable in understanding her new film. As her career continues to progress, the brilliance of her earlier work should not be ignored.

Diop is the daughter of Senegalese immigrants and was raised near Paris. Her life experiences heavily influence the issues she illustrates, often focussing on the cultural diversity of France and its often omitted class disparity. In fact, Diop's first ever film called *La Tour du monde* (2005) was a study of the street she spent most of her childhood on.

Yet it was in 2011 with the release of her first full length documentary, *Danton's Death*, that Diop revealed herself as a unique new voice in French cinema. It follows Diop's childhood friend Steve over the three years he spends studying acting at a drama school. Steve grew up on the same housing project as Diop but finds that despite his position at a prestigious school, it doesn't diminish the preconceived image people have of him as someone from the 'wrong side of the tracks'.

Diop does not influence Steve throughout filming, instead leaving

him to make his own observations about his experiences. Soon however, he realises that the school only seems interested in him playing stereotypical 'Black' roles. The film is not just about racial prejudice in the creative industry, it is also an exploration into the effect these prejudices have on one's own identity and ambition. Steve was even prevented from playing the roles he wanted to play, such as Georges Danton (a hero of the French Revolution), because of his race.

What Diop wanted to do with the film was eliminate stereotypes rather than reinforce them. Steve's experiences are reflective of something much larger within society. The assumptions people make based on race or class are much deeper than mere microaggressions. They create the belief that certain people cannot be more than what they are perceived as being. Diop said herself, as a filmmaker working in a meritocracy, that it is not enough to simply 'want' something, one must also 'feel accepted'.

After the success of *Danton's Death*, Diop made two films in 2016: *Towards Tenderness* and *On Call*. *Towards Tenderness* explores the effects patriarchal ideas of love

and relationships have on young men and women in France, especially with differing cultural perspectives. Whereas *On Call* provides an insight into a consulting office of Avicenne Hospital that delivers medical care for immigrants.

*On Call* saw Diop begin to experiment more with her approach to filmmaking, as the camera stays still for the entire film. The only movement that occurs is by the patients themselves. It serves as a subtle reminder to her audience that the simplicity of staying in one place is a small but overlooked liberty.

Her 2021 film *We* accumulates years of research and observation. The film's title even suggesting a collective assembly of ideas. It's a love letter to the communities she grew up with and displays the beauty in them that is rarely represented.

It isn't merely the subjects that Diop chooses to cover that make her such an interesting filmmaker. It is the way in which she presents them too. The razor sharp editing, astute narration and care brought to her work sets her apart, as not only one of the most auspicious voices in global cinema right now, but one of the most important.



IMAGE: IMDB

# THE HIDDEN DAILY STRUGGLES: LIVING WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

EMILY WARNER (SHE/HER) DISCUSSES THE INVISIBLE CHALLENGES FACED DAILY BY THOSE LIVING WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

I have been accused, by almost everyone in my life, of being indecisive. I will be the first to willingly admit this fact; the Netflix homepage is a nightmare of potential options, choosing a restaurant is approached with the caution of a life or death decision and the worst moment of my year is when the optional modules list for next year is released. However, I recently concluded that I am not actually indecisive, but simply fatigued by decision-making. Having had type one diabetes since the age of five means that every moment of my day is a decision; from what to eat, how much insulin I should give myself, when to sleep, when to exercise and what to carry with me. It is a 24-hour job and making a mistake could be fatal. You can quickly see why mundane, everyday decisions become an effort. You can see why it's sometimes nice if someone else chooses where we eat.

Having diabetes is not a recent event in my life. In fact, this April I will reach my 15-year anniversary of being diagnosed (my 'diaversary' if you will, a horrible phrase coined by diabetic Instagram influencers who post about their fabulous blood sugar control). If there is one thing I have learnt during this time, it's that there is nothing predictable about the disease.

“ On the outside, it's easy to look 'normal'... to look like you're coping, to assume that it's not so bad after all

The constant need for decision-making is testament to the body's continual state of change, which can make some of the everyday tasks you take for granted much more difficult. The other challenge is the fact that diabetes is an invisible disability; on the outside, it's easy to look 'normal' (not that there is such a thing), to look like you're coping, to assume that it's not so bad after all. I like to call this the 'duck effect'; on the outside I might seem to nonchalantly glide my way through life, all the while frantically paddling underneath (in the form of many tearful phone calls with my doctor). Hopefully, this article can enlighten you to some of the hidden struggles of the everyday.

Picture this. It's a sunny day, you've been stuck in lectures all morning and you think to yourself 'I might go on a walk'. Then, you just go. Ok, maybe you put your shoes on first, and then maybe it starts raining because we do live in England and you decide to grab a coat but, the point is, the only major decision is whether to walk out of your front door or not. When I look out the window and think 'I might go on a walk', a chain reaction of questions descend,

worse than my mother when I come home late from a night out. "Do I need to eat something to prevent my sugar from dropping?", "Do I need to reduce my basal insulin rate?", "How much sugar should I carry with me?", "Is my phone charged in case I need to call for help while I am out?", "What is my insulin on board?"; some of these questions you won't understand and that's exactly my point. You don't need to. Eventually the question arises, "is it really worth the effort of going on a walk?" and often the answer is a resounding no. On the rare occasions when I do decide to walk, half an hour later I usually wind up on a bench with a low blood sugar, feeling tired, shaky and dizzy.

It's easy to romanticise sitting on a bench, watching the world pass by, but trust me, there is nothing glamorous about doing this while downing a litre of orange juice and trying not to pass out. Or, even worse, groping my way along the shelves of Tesco looking for something sugary because I didn't bring enough juice with me from home. If you think this sounds bad, imagine what a

de-  
bacle  
DofE  
w a s  
when I de-  
cided to do that.  
Seventy-five per-  
cent of my rucksack was  
crammed full of snacks and I had to  
pretend not to notice the rest of my  
group roll their eyes when we had  
to stop every ten minutes for me  
to check my blood sugar. Not  
even I wanted to be in the  
same group as me.  
Now let's turn to  
an even simpler activ-  
ity: sleeping. For this, you  
might need some back-  
ground information. The  
pancreas constantly gives us  
a supply of insulin which is  
just enough to keep our blood  
sugar levels balanced, but this  
amount changes throughout the day  
and depending on the person. Someone  
with diabetes has to figure out their own basal  
rate and if we get it wrong then it's goodbye to a

restful night of sleep and hello to hourly alarms (sorry to my flatmates). You can imagine the frustration of this when trying to sleep early in anticipation of a 9am lecture, only to be awake half an hour later taking sugar or adjusting my insulin.

That inconvenience is incomparable, however, to my run-in with campus security last year. It was a normal night and I was sleeping soundly (or as soundly as possible in my prison-esque James College bed), when my blood sugar dropped; I woke up, drank some orange juice and waited for it to come up again. I wish my story ended there.

Instead, I made a fatal mistake; I called my mother. She requested that I phone her back when my blood sugar returned to the normal range; "Ye a h, ye a h, yeah", I

explanation (often to someone who doesn't speak English), a full-body search and some suspicious glances from fellow passengers. Once, I found myself on my hands and knees, crawling beneath the security barrier to avoid the metal detector – there was, they told me, no other way through. Furthermore, for a period of time I kept my insulin pump in my bra, and you can imagine the painfully awkward rummage to find that when the staff asked to see it. I promise, I'm not about to whip a bomb out from between my boobs! Although that could generate some pretty funny newspaper headlines...

The challenge doesn't end when I reach my destination. My first plan of action in a new country is to find sugar; in particular, glucose tablets (to prevent my blood sugar levels dropping). Apparently though, these don't exist in Barcelona where I spent my summer doing a teaching course. On one particularly desperate day, I trailed around seven pharmacies in search of glucose tablets, pathetically asking for "glucosa?" in every one. I even enlisted the help of my new friends, who I had met on the same teaching course, which led to a hilarious encounter involving recommendations to look in nutrition shops and bike stores in order to find something that I need to stay alive.

As comical as these scenarios might seem retrospectively, in the moment they can be scary

“ Once I found myself on my hands and knees, crawling beneath the security barrier to avoid the metal detector – there was, they told me, no other way through

and uncomfortable. They require decisiveness that often goes unseen. Sometimes, my life feels like a catalogue of numbers, and my future is defined by what those numbers are. It can be isolating too; nobody around me is qualified to make these choices, nobody can share the responsibility and nobody realises how difficult it is most of the time. I could easily be consumed by this, but that is a choice too; a choice between feeling bitter, despondent and hopeless or accepting it and continuing to find ways to live and enjoy living. I wake up every morning and choose to feel grateful for who I am, a person who has been shaped by her illness and enriched by the struggles she's faced. I am not defined by my diabetes but it is an integral part of me. Choosing happiness despite it, is a decision I don't find hard to make.

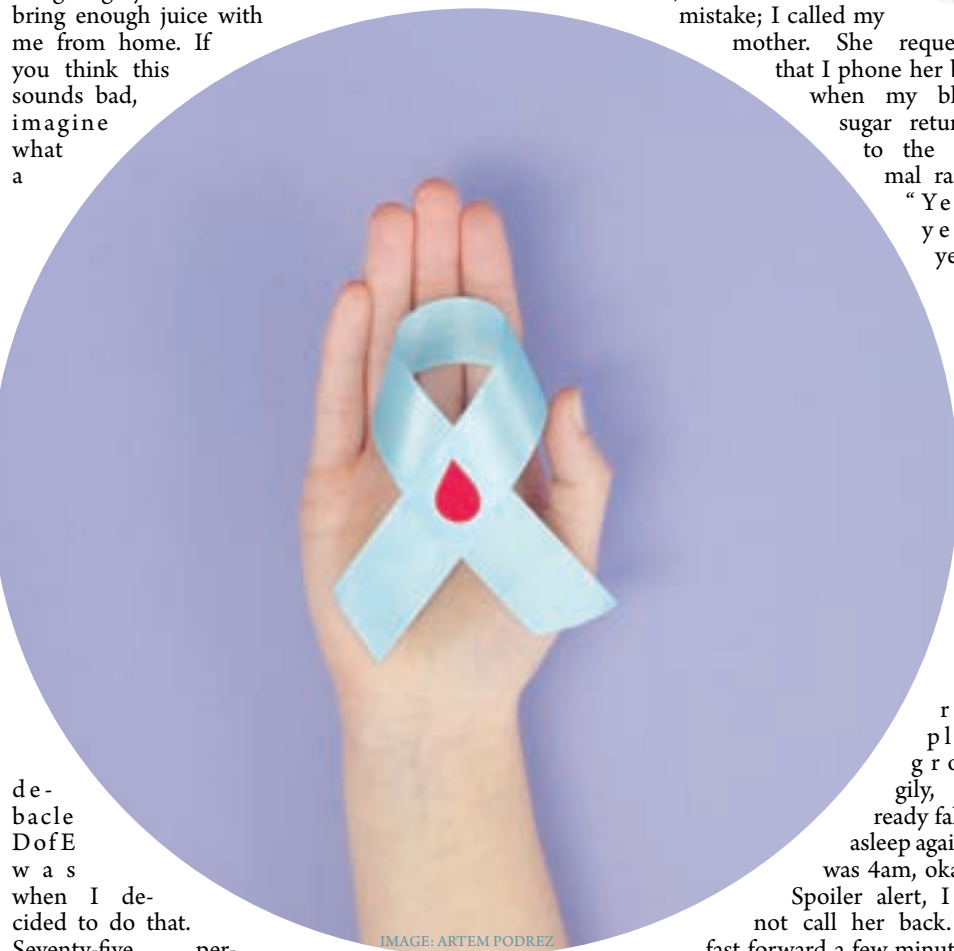


IMAGE: ARTEM PODREZ



IMAGE: POLINA TASHKILEVITCH



IMAGE: ARTEM PODREZ

r e -  
plied  
grog-  
gily, al-  
ready falling  
asleep again (it  
was 4am, okay!).  
Spoiler alert, I did  
not call her back. So,  
fast forward a few minutes, I  
had security knocking on my door  
asking for 'Laura' (my surname is Warner and  
clearly something got lost in translation) and  
preparing themselves to perform CPR. Once  
again, sorry to my flatmates for yet another late  
night disturbance.

This list would not be complete without mentioning travel. Airport security isn't an enjoyable experience for most. The frantic ten seconds of unpacking laptops and liquids while trying not to let all your underwear spill out is a stress-inducing endeavour. Then you have to sidle through a metal detector, schooling your face into neutrality and trying not to look guilty, before another mad rush to shove everything back into your bag; all that careful packing of the week before in disarray. Imagine doing this with needles, insulin, and an insulin pump that cannot pass through a metal detector. Not looking guilty suddenly becomes a lot harder. For me, airport security inevitably brings an awkward

# CRUNCH CULTURE'S LOOMING THREAT TO THE GAMING INDUSTRY

TASHA ACRES (SHE/HER) DISCUSSES THE PREVALENCE AND THE DANGERS OF CRUNCH CULTURE FOR GAMES DEVELOPERS

In December 2020, one of the most anticipated games of the year was released after three consecutive delays. And yet, when *Cyberpunk 2077* was launched on players' consoles around the world, they discovered countless bugs and issues that made gameplay unbearable. From typos on signs to physics-defying vehicles, this reveal could be seen as embarrassing from a studio that had previously developed the award-winning *Witcher* series. These delays pushed workers at CD Projekt Red into several crunch periods which, according to Polygon, included six-day weeks when CDPR previously promised against the practice. Before we even scratch the surface

Crunch has been too normalised in the gaming industry, [...] by AAA studios

of toxic workplaces within the gaming industry, we have evidence that crunching cannot always promise a high quality game.

Crunch has been too normalised in the gaming industry, particularly by Triple-A Studios, but also with the less famous developers of free-to-play games, whose software is dependent on a constant stream of new content, leading to hours of overtime to ensure deadlines are met. While the issue was first highlighted through an anonymous letter known as the "EA Spouse Letter" in

2004, it certainly remains significant to this day: the development of *Red Dead Redemption 2* reportedly led to 100+ hour weeks, and *Hogwarts Legacy* is also experiencing delays. The game was originally set to have been released in 2021, its release date for the PlayStation 5, Xbox Series S and X, and PC is February 10, 2023, while the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One is now April 4, 2023. *The Last of Us: Part II* also experienced major delays upon release, and while the game was technically outstanding, many fans questioned the structure of the narrative, as if the delay and subsequent crunch had been used to rehash the game altogether. Although *Red Dead Redemption 2* received excellent reviews, indicating that its crunch period was potentially useful for the game, for *Cyberpunk 2077* and *The Last of Us II*, the reception may not be wholly positive.

Imagine being shackled to your desk for twelve hours a day, racing to complete a task that your colleague is waiting on so that they can complete their own task and avoid being chastised. Imagine deadlines closing in, so fast and unforgiving, that you aren't able to eat dinner in fear of missing them. And throughout it all, you aren't being compensated for your effort and time. *IGN* reported that Todd Howard, director of *Bethesda*, believes that every game "deserves" some crunch at the end. Additionally, *Naughty Dog's* perfectionist approach to its projects means that while the games they release are artistically outstanding, the workers behind each masterpiece are devastatingly overworked, leading to mass departures from the company due to burnout. It isn't a surprise, then, that the issue of crunch culture is now being addressed and analysed more often by media outlets. However, this doesn't mean that games are extraordinary because they have been



IMAGE: CD PROJEKT RED PRESS KIT

crunched.

*Ubisoft* claim that they avoided crunch culture with their 2018 release of *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*. Their awareness of the issue presents an admirable example to the rest of the industry: in a Game Developer interview, Patrick Klaus expressed his consideration of the risks of crunch culture, understanding that "[the studio] risk[s] disengaging" their team, and they "will simply not get the best out of those talents if [they're] forcing them to work insane hours in a crunch." Of course, the almost annual release of games in the *Assassin's Creed* franchise is a different discussion altogether, but it's impressive that despite this rapid turnaround, staff such as Klaus can declare that they have avoided crunch periods.

Is there a way to decrease the prevalence of

crunch culture? Is it possible that we as consumers can express more concern for the wellbeing of artists and programmers rather than an earlier release date? A precedent has already been set by games such as *The Outer Worlds* and *Fallout: New Vegas* to prove that crunch culture isn't necessary in the first place, as both were outstanding games that are still praised to this day. Unionisation is a solution that workers are gravitating towards: a group called *Game Workers Unite* is at the forefront of the campaign. However, as this is only a recent development, it is unclear how far along this path the gaming industry is. If video games continue to become more expansive and expensive without compensating its developers fairly, the future of the game industry becomes uncertain as workers may begin to wonder; is it all worth it?

## 16-BIT JOY: LOOKING BACK TO THE SUPER NINTENDO'S LIBRARY

ELIJAH RYAN (HE/HIM) EXAMINES SOME CLASSIC GAMES THAT ARE AVAILABLE NOW FOR MANY NINTENDO SWITCH USERS

Nintendo Switch Online is the Switch's online gaming service. With it comes many benefits, including the ability to play games online and access to the *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe* DLC tracks. However, a less used feature is the access to many classic games on the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) and Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES).

While the NES was revolutionary, most of its games are incredibly dated and are only worth playing as a sort of glance into history at popular franchises and where they began. Many games on *Nintendo's* second home console in the West, the SNES, fall into a similar category of being of historical interest. This includes the origins of beloved franchises such as *Star Fox*, *F-Zero*, *Donkey Kong Country*, and of course, *Mario Kart*. However, the SNES also features a handful of games that genuinely hold up today and are still excellent games that may even compete in quality with the latest releases of their respective franchises.

Here, I examine a few of these games.

***Super Mario World (1990):***

*Super Mario World* takes all of the charm and creative platforming of the NES games and leaves behind the clunky controls and awkward platforming. The controls are smooth and so much fun to use. The 16-bit graphics look wonderful even today. While future 2D Mario games have technically much better graphics, they don't compare to some of the beautiful examples of art design found in this game. The soundtrack is catchy and compliments the visuals perfectly. Furthermore, the game is just so well designed. There are a ton of very smartly constructed levels that are a joy to play. It is quality platforming that hasn't aged a day.

***Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island (1995):***

Despite this game's title implying it is a continuation of *Super Mario World*, it is actually a prequel as well as being a completely different sort of game altogether. It also spawned an entire separate series of games. Instead of playing as Mario or Luigi, this game lets you take control of various Yoshis who have to protect Baby Mario and save Baby Luigi from captivity. The game is a radical departure from *Super Mario World* and plays completely differently from its predecessor. Yoshi can swallow enemies, spit them back out or digest them, turn them into eggs and then throw those eggs at enemies. It seems like such

a random idea for a game, but that kind of creativity and charm permeate throughout and have made the game incredibly popular. There are so many different fun levels that are a blast to play and actually quite satisfying to complete. Like its predecessor, this game looks gorgeous. The game's art style never gets too cutesy, but always maintains a sense of whimsy and adventure.

***The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past (1991):***

This game was the first time the potential of the *Zelda* series was fully realised. While the simple 2D graphics are a big step down from the utter beauty of 2017's *Breath of the Wild*, the visuals are still artfully constructed. There is also a sense of personality in this game lacking from some other *Zelda* entries. And once you get used to playing a 2D *Zelda*, which is admittedly a difficulty at first, the game has a lot to offer. The overworld is a joy to explore and there are several side quests and side characters that are fun to interact with. The dungeons are also wonderfully constructed. The puzzles are often merciless but very satisfying to complete on your own, though there is no shame in looking at walkthroughs for help.

***Super Metroid (1994):***

*Super Metroid* is a sci-fi game set in space that follows the adventures of bounty hunter, Samus

Aaron, as she explores the depths of the lair of an evil space pirate whilst trying to rescue the innocent, yet dangerous creature she has befriended. The game begins with Samus

having a very limited amount of abilities but, as the game progresses, she powers up more

and more and is able to explore more of the labyrinthine map. The gameplay is always engaging. The slow buildup of abilities and power make the combat rewarding. The game is dripping with an incredibly unsettling and eerie atmosphere. Part of that is due to the soundtrack which is perfect. There are a

lot of low, droning notes that are meant to blend in with the sound effects and ambient noise of the game. The music feels like part of the locations you are in. Speaking of locations, this game also has some of the most impressive visuals in any game ever. The game makes up for technical limitations with an artfully designed world that never fails to haunt. The cumulative effect of all of the wonderful components is a truly special game that is emotionally investing and constantly satisfying.

I understand the reluctance to try out SNES games. Many of them seem dated at first glance. However, once you look past the inferiority of the some of the graphics, you will be blessed with some amazing games with wonderful visuals, evocative music, and timeless gameplay.



IMAGE: NINTENDO EAD PRESS KIT



IMAGE: IGDB

## EDITOR'S PICKS

Here are some of our personal favourite items and accessories we use when we take on the wild waters. Whether you're going for a leisurely swim in the sun or a cold plunge in the early hours – trust us, you don't want to be without some of these!



IMAGE: DIPSEA UK

### DIPSEA UK ROBE

A favourite of mine is the towel-lined changing robe from DIPSEA UK. Waterproof, wind proof and a cosy hood – ideal after a chilly swim in the outdoors. It comes in different colours with pockets for your belongings. Designed by York student, Millicent Houlton during lockdown – this small business is one

to watch out for!

### CROCS

As well as wearing around the garden, Crocs are a brilliant (and fashionable) accessory to wear to your swim. Crocs are able to protect your feet from any sharp rocks or muddy banks which you may come across. Since they are lightweight, easy to slip on and off and can attach to your bag, they are ideal for swimming.

### WILDPACES TOW FLOAT

This highly vibrant, bright orange towfloat helps increase visibility and has handles on the side for more support, should you need it. Holding a double inner chamber, this towfloat has plenty of room for your belongings as well as extra added buoyancy for floatation. It has an adjustable waist strap so it can float alongside you as you embark on your wild water journey.

### DOCK & BAY TOWELS

As seen on *Dragon's Den*, these stripe fanatic friends launched a business inspired by their travelling experience. Their expansion of brightly coloured beach towels, hair wraps and ponchos, which are lightweight and compact, are ideal. With all of their products being 100 per cent recycled and in biodegradable packaging, this is perfect for your wild swimming adventure. They even have a towel just for your dog, and our favourite selling point: student discount!

Florence Head (She/her)

# WILD SWIMMING: THE PERFECT OUTDOOR ACTIVITY?

FLORENCE HEAD AND MEGAN STOKER TAKE A DIP INTO SOME OF NORTH ENGLAND'S FINEST WATERS

Wild swimming is a fascinating way of keeping fit, with growing popularity throughout the UK. With gorgeous landscapes surrounding us, from the seaside to the heights of the Yorkshire Dales, and the lake district just a couple of hours away; with proper preparation and awareness, wild swimming is a fantastic activity.

Wild water swimming is one of the more exciting practices of cold water therapy. The benefits can come by taking a cold shower or submerging in a plunge pool, however we much prefer this method. As a long standing health trend, wild water swimming creates an intense dopamine boost as it releases serotonin into your bloodstream – an instant mood booster for all ages! It even has health benefits as it lowers your heart rate and reduces inflammation.

Alongside an increasing number of published books and blogs, social groups and depictions on social media are gaining traction. From TV shows like *Wild Swimming with Alice Roberts* which first aired in 2010 to BBC Scotland's *Jules' and Greg's Wild Swim* airing in 2023, it demonstrates the way in which the concept of wild swimming has remained locked in our captivation. Whilst this article showcases a multitude of fantastic wild swimming locations that are popular in the wild swimming community. It is immensely important to understand and be aware of the dangers that lie just beneath the surface. Especially as responsibility for personal safety is upon yourself and personal judgement in these kinds of situations are a powerful tool.

Outdoor swimming comes with plenty of risks, from being wary of water quality and avoiding marshy, stagnated waters; it is best to stick to well known, well documented waters that are rated either A or B by the Environment Agency. A fantastic resource for avoiding polluted water is the rather mind-opening webpage by The Rivers Trust which monitors all sewage spills across England and Wales.

Before you go swimming make sure to check out our key pieces of advice. These are little things you may not think of but are essential to know. You should always be careful of currents, if you get into a rough spot these can take you into deeper water and be disorientating. More so, cold water shock and strong, fast moving undercurrents are a real threat and if you're swimming in the sea, so is the tide.

Always plan where you are going to exit the water before you get in – whether there's a steep bank to scramble up or an easy jetty to hoist yourself on to. Try to go with a group of people or a friend – it's a great experience to share but also good in case you get into any

trouble and need some help. You should always start slow, let your body adjust to the temperature and stay near the shoreline until you have built up your confidence. Make sure you check the water quality before you go; the water may contain dangerous blue-green algae and other bacteria which can cause you to be ill. Hopefully this one's a given, but try to not swallow any of the water, too! Also make sure to stay clear of other water users like fishermen, boats and marine life which you may not want to disturb.

Dressing for the activity and being well prepared is a definite. A few must-haves when embarking on a wild water swimming adventure include: any type of water shoes (this can include crocs!), a swimsuit – depending on the time of the year a wetsuit may be best, a dry robe – our favourite is the one from Dipsea UK, drinks and snacks, a woolly hat and a tow float (as mentioned in our sidebar!). They are great for safe-keeping your valuables, making sure others can see you, holding onto in case you need a rest within the water and are able to attach to your waist so your hands are free.

For further in depth information on wild swimming, look towards valuable resources such as The Rivers Trust website or the Wild Swim Scotland blog which contains detailed information and instructions on swimming safely. However, The Outdoor Society website is also incredibly comprehensive and



IMAGE: STEPHEN RUFFLES

covers a vast range of topics to really get to grips with being safe in water. There is an app called ACTiO by the National Open Water Association (NOWCA) that is apparently free to download and a way of accessing swim sites across Britain. NOWCA also has some unlocked, free quizzes on wild swimming safety and cold water awareness to really test your newfound (or even established) knowledge.

We find most wild water swimming spots through Facebook groups. The ones which are great for York and the surrounding areas are: York Swimmers, Wild Swimming – North England and The Dales Dippers. These are great places to meet fellow like-minded people, find out the best places for a swim, ask for any advice and even see what wild swimming events are going on.

Pool Bridge Farm is a brilliant and very close spot to the University. As well as being popular amongst fishermen, it is also a campsite. There are changing facilities and a cafe to use from Thursday to Sunday. Surrounded by wildlife and a wood-fired sauna on the shore, there are so many reasons to try this lake.

A short train ride away lies the Knaresborough Lido. Located on a short corner on the River Nidd, looking up at the Knaresborough Viaduct, this is a swimmer's dream (especially with The Watermill Cafe next door). Located



IMAGE: FLORENCE HEAD

between two weirs, it is quite shallow, so perfect for any beginners who fancy a day trip – be careful as the rocks can become quite slippery.

Allerthorpe Lake offers all sorts of various activities including: kayaking, an aqua park, paddleboarding, canoeing, pedalos and of course wild water swimming. They host events such as charity swims, triathlons and lots others throughout the year. Only a twenty minute drive away from York and with various bus routes, it is a great day out with your friends.

Janet's Foss is a firm favourite within the wild water swimming community. A short woodland walk from Malham village and the famous 'Harry Potter' Malham Cove, a waterfall with a hidden plunge pool lies beneath. A little over an hour's drive from York, this place is definitely worth a visit if you find yourself in the Yorkshire Dales.

Bolton Abbey is also a stunning place, not too far from Skipton and certainly not to miss. Whilst one should be aware of the rocky river and stay well away from the strid, having a swim around the abbey and its stepping stones is a great experience. A popular place for swimmers, it would be a beautiful thing to experience when the weather gets warmer.

Whilst Kisdon force can be a trying place to get to and would definitely require a car, it is a fantastic little place to take a dip on the River Swale before or after heading for a walk. Set in stunning natural landscape, Kisdon force takes a change from the openness around it. Instead, enclosed around trees, it makes a perfect nook to relax as a beginner swimmer. It isn't too deep at all and is far more suited for relaxation in the water than an active swim.

Heading further west by a couple of hours and overlooking Grasmere, you can get a real flavour of Wordsworthian paradise from Easedale Tarn. Whilst from Grasmere it is a bit of a trek, the walk is certainly worth it. A large tarn (more simply a lake) is set between the hills, it's known to be a great place to swim. There are plenty of trains which head towards the Lake District. Bowness is a fantastic place to stay with many B&Bs and camping spots as well as bus services that head to many of the popular tourist spots like Grasmere. From Bowness on Windermere to Grasmere it is only a 49 minute journey on the 599 bus.

Another Cumbrian location, Buttermere with its expansive views, is a place of natural beauty. It is a landscape where you can get some lengths in and truly experience wild swimming in its glory. As well as the expansive lake and dramatic hills, set further back from the lake is a natural infinity pool. Whilst being a super exciting addition to Buttermere, we can only imagine how wonderful it would be to relax after an exhilarating swim.



IMAGE: MILLICENT HOULTON



# TACKLING THE PRESSURES OF DIET CULTURE THIS NEW YEAR

EMMA MCGREEVY (SHE/HER) OFFERS HER ADVICE FOR BREAKING UP WITH DIET CULTURE AND IT'S EXPECTATIONS

Happy new year! For most, a New Year comes with a new set of resolutions. 'Finder's' recent survey found that "58 percent of the UK population will make a New Year's resolution in 2023" which equates "to 30 million British adults." Although resolutions can be positive and a productive way to start the new year, one of the negatives that a large proportion of the population faces is expectations from diet culture. January is the prime time for diet companies to advertise their newest products in order to capitalise on such expectations that are propelled onto us through social media and generational prejudices. They are so ingrained that often the decision to put 'lose weight' or 'get into shape' onto our New Year Resolutions list is second nature. This should not be the case. Intuitive eating dietitian and author of 'Anti-diet' and the 'Wellness trap' Christy Harrison stated that 'weight cycling' (periods of weight loss and regain, also known as 'yo-yo dieting'), "have negative mental and physical-health effects", being linked to "binge-eating, higher mortality, loss of muscle tissue, diabetes". Harrison believes that "weight cycling is likely to pose a serious threat to the well-being of millions of people (especially those who are trying to lose weight)."

Diet culture imposed upon us by the media

thrives on personal insecurities and societal pressures that force people into following new 'fads' and subscribing to the most 'in' way to look. One minute we are told 'tiny waists' and 'big bums' are in, the next it's a horrific article in the *New York Post* stating "Bye-bye booty: heroin chic is back". It is impossible to live up to the standards the media endorse and so this January, if you're considering trying the newest form of dieting, take back your freedom and hop off the diet train. Obviously, that's a lot easier said than done. It's hard to move away from diet culture especially if it has been an impactful factor in your life. We are faced with dieting messages from all corners of our lives and so it's not always as easy as saying you no longer care about them. This article is to help you on your journey to saying no and meaning no. Below are some thoughts and tips to help you face the new year pressures and to kick diet coercion messages out of your life for good.

## Curate your perfect Instagram, TikTok and Twitter feeds:

There's no doubt, social media is one of the best ways to stay in contact with friends and family. We are living in a time where it has never been easier to reconnect with people and make new connections all over the world. However, social media is also

one of the worst places for being bombarded with unrealistic expectations of what you and your life should look like. To try and combat this, take some time to go through your following list and unfollow any page that isn't bringing you joy and positive messages. Some of my favourite positivity influencers are Megan Jayne Crabbe, Kelvin Davis, Jameela Jamil and Wearefeelgoodclub.

## Do Veganuary for the right reasons:

According to the 'Veganuary' website, taking part in Veganuary can be a great way to do our part in "better protecting animals, reduce the impact on our planet (climate breakdown, deforestation, pollution, and wildlife decimation) and improve our health". These three reasons are all very important and so if you are doing or have done Veganuary then brilliant. However, there is a stigma and negative message surrounding Veganism from diet culture that encourages it as a form of weight loss. If this is your main reason for doing Veganuary, it may not be the best option for you. Check out our features piece on Veganuary to find out tips and tricks for doing it the right way.

## Movement:

Exploring different forms of movement and

working out what makes you feel good is liberating. No longer feeling tied to the treadmill and instead taking a dance class, yoga class, home pilates, rock climbing, swimming - or whatever it is that makes you happy - is an incredible feeling. Moving your body should be a stress reliever, not something you dread. Take some time this January to try new forms of movement and allow yourself the space to give anything a go. I highly recommend Yoga with Adrienne on YouTube if you are interested in yoga for all levels.

## Feel good foods:

Instead of focusing on cutting out certain foods, find those that make your body feel good and give you energy. Scientist Tim Spector believes that "diversity is crucial to warding off infections, combating age-related diseases, and maintaining a healthy weight." As well as this, avoid labelling foods as 'good' and 'bad'. Intuitively eating and having all types of food in moderation is the key to a happy, healthy lifestyle. It may take some time to get used to, but once you start trusting your body and its queues again you will be free to live your authentic self.

Although it may be tricky at first and a bit out of your comfort zone, taking the steps to ending your relationship with diet culture is freeing. Remember food is fuel and part of some of life's best experiences. Don't let some silly money-hungry diet companies hold you back from enjoying life to the fullest.



IMAGE: MAKSIM GONCHARENOK



IMAGE: SOLOD\_SHA

# SLOW COOKERS: THE STUDENT ALTERNATIVE TO THE AIR FRYER

MEGAN STOKER (SHE/HER) AND KATY LEVERETT (SHE/HER) DISCUSS THE BENEFITS OF SLOW COOKERS FOR STUDENTS

As we know, renting is getting pretty expensive, and as energy costs soar in this coming year it's becoming increasingly important to cut down costs where we can. Sometimes an investment can reward us tenfold, especially if it means we can turn off the oven and save just that bit more on our energy bills. For some, that may be a blender, soup maker or air fryer, but there is one appliance that for us is the clear champion for students: the slow cooker. Admittedly, it may seem like a strange purchase, but we're absolutely loving it. It's super easy for meal prepping as you can leave it on all day whilst at university, so if you have a busy schedule you don't have to eat a nutritionally deficient meal from the Co-op. They're also incredibly energy efficient, meaning that the energy bill will be that little bit less. Slow cookers can be used to bulk cook meals, so you can eat one portion and freeze the rest. Most slow cookers range in prices from £15 upwards and can be found in varying sizes depending on your needs

- for an appliance, they are also fairly inexpensive.

Unlike other kitchen appliances, the slow cooker does not limit you to just cooking one type of food. You can make curries, stew, soup, rice and even cakes! If you struggle to find the time to cook, but want the experience of a home-cooked meal, then the slow cooker is definitely an investment for you: for now and beyond university. Below, we've listed some of our favourite recipes we've tried and tested in our own slow cookers, which we've found incredibly cost-efficient, time efficient, and most importantly, delicious.

## BBQ shredded chicken:

This is such a versatile thing to make because it can be incorporated into multiple dishes, a sandwich, a wrap, or having a salad or veggies on the side with a jacket potato. And it has 4 basic ingredients (but this doesn't stop you from being a little creative!).

4 chicken thighs, 5 tbsp of BBQ sauce (but it's up to you how much you use as long as it's not dry), pinch of salt and pepper, 1 tsp of smoked

paprika, 2 garlic cloves (diced), 1 onion, 1 bell pepper (optional), and 1 tsp of brown sugar (optional).

Chop onions into thin strips and sauté until golden. Add this to the pot alongside the rest of the ingredients.

Stir to incorporate all the ingredients and evenly coat the chicken. Add a splash of water if too thick, but be wary because slow cookers retain heat and steam.

Turn the slow cooker to the high setting and cook for a minimum of 2 ½ hours. The chicken is fully cooked around this time. It'll be soft and easy to shred. If you're making this in the morning, cooking on low until your return is also an option.

## Beef Stew:

Beef stew is a fab way of keeping warm in the winter and meal prepping. For ease and affordability, a packet seasoning works fabulously. More so, you can use any legumes you want to clear out the fridge. A top tip is to not put in potatoes if you're going to freeze some portions for later because it makes them oddly gelatinous.

Basic ingredients to just chuck in the pot for four portions are: 1 ½ onion, 2 carrots, ¼ cab-

bage, a generous handful of peas, ¼ Swede or large turnip, and 250g of lean beef (seal in a pan before adding).

Leave in the slow cooker for around 5 hours to tenderise the meat and then enjoy with some mashed potatoes or roasties! You could change this up and use sausages or chicken instead if you don't like beef.

## 5 Bean Chilli:

This recipe is super flavourful and equally as easy to make for around 6 decent portions! Simply use: 2 cans of mixed beans (drain), 1 can of kidney beans, 1 onion, 1 cans of tomatoes, 2 tsp tomato puree, 2 tsp minced garlic. You can also use a chilli spice packet, but it's also super easy to make your own! For example: 2 tps cumin, 2 tps smoked paprika, 1 tps of chilli flakes (or add for desired spice levels)

## Chunky veg soup:

This recipe is vegan-friendly: just put in any vegetables you have with some veg stock, and seasoning of your choice into the pot and voilà! You can use potatoes for this

recipe to make it more satiating, then serve with buttered bread - or even in the last 20 minutes, add a couple of tablespoons of parboiled or pre-cooked rice to warm it in the soup. This isn't a recipe I would freeze.

I like to use: 2 carrots, 1 parsnip, 3 small potatoes, 1 onion, and 1 vegetable stock cube.



IMAGE: JO ZIMNY PHOTOS



IMAGE: YOUR BEST DISH

## EDITOR'S PICKS

**Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed by Men** by **Caroline Criado Perez** is a 2019 research based book that explores the myriad of ways women are 'invisible' in life. Criado Perez exposes the gender data gap, and how our world is largely built for men, and not women. From medical research, urban planning, technology and media, Criado Perez uses case studies, stories and research to show the extent to which biased data systematically excludes women.

**Northanger Abbey** by **Jane Austen** is of Austen's lesser known works. *Northanger Abbey* follows the story of Catherine Morland as she navigates her way through Regency society. Obsessed with Gothic novels, Catherine allows her imagination to bleed into her reality as she visits the home of her suitor, Tilney, at Northanger Abbey. The novel is among Austen's best: for any fan of *Bridgerton*, or Austen's other works, it is a must-read.

# THE UNWELCOME FRIEND

EVIE REES (SHE/HER)

It was a warm night, and the bar was busy. In the corner of the dimly lit room, a boy was playing velvety jazz, the rings on his slender fingers glinted in the soft lamp light as they flashed across the keys. An indistinct mumble of voices cushioned the room, the sound broken only by occasional laughter.

Francis was sitting on a table in the far corner, pushed up against the wall. His hand clutched a tumbler of amber liquid as his knee danced to the rhythm of the night. He barely glanced over when someone took the adjacent seat.

"I wondered when you'd arrive," he said as a way of greeting.

"I must say, I'm surprised to see you waiting," the other replied.

The figure was curious in appearance, clad head to toe in a brown suit with a hat tipped low over his eyes.

"I've long forgotten to be afraid of you," Francis sighed.

At his words, Death lifted his head revealing the hollows of his eyes, a pleased smirk fixed on his face.

"Would you like a drink?" Francis asked.

"I don't drink on the job," Death replied as he looked around the shadowy room with interest. "It's a strange place to meet me."

"It's as good a place as any."

The two sat in quiet companionship while they

listened to the soft music. Death stretched out in his seat as Francis continued to drink.

"How long have I got?" He asked.

"We won't leave until you're ready," Death replied, crossing his ankles.

An open door brought in the night air, balmy and sweet. Francis wistfully inhaled the smell of summer rain, and a pleased shiver teased his spine. He let a tear streak down his cheek as Death watched him with satisfaction.

"Do you see now that without me, there is nothing?" Death asked. "The first frost of winter, the waning moon, the sting of cold rain – what do they matter if you know they cannot be lost? I am the unwelcome essential of life."

Francis nodded once as he tipped his head back to gaze at the ceiling, exhaling softly.

"Will I see her again where I'm going?", he asked suddenly.

"That's something I can't tell you," Death replied as he smiled and checked his wristwatch.

The piano stopped.

Francis drained his glass and pulled his weary body from the seat.

"I'm ready," he declared, offering an outstretched hand.



IMAGE: HANSUAN\_FAB-REGAS

WANT TO WRITE FOR US? EMAIL:  
heather.gosling@nouse.co.uk  
corynne.ryan@nouse.co.uk

## INTIMACY

LUCY KENT (SHE/HER)

I used to not understand intimacy, my dear. Why did people care? Why was that touch so important to some, but death to others? Was it as trivial as sex, a one time action?

But here we are, by the fireplace, a book in one hand my other snaking through your hair, playing with each strand. You are talking, but we both know neither of us is really listening. We are comfortable in each other's presence. Your head in my lap, hands trying to grab my book to give even more of my attention. You never had to do that; you captivated all of it.

Thank you for teaching me what intimacy truly is.

## STRAIGHT EDGED

LUCY KENT (SHE/HER)

Have you ever noticed that straight lines never seem perfectly straight? It's the same with quiet; quiet isn't always silent, it has a slight imperfection. This should be wrong, like the bass guitar playing the highest pitch. But it's not, it's acceptable. Not optimal, but acceptable.

And then you realise that an infinity of straight lines fit in a circle.

## LONELINESS

LUCY KENT (SHE/HER)

I'm standing in the corner of a crowded bar, at a party where I know three, maybe four, people at most. There's a drink in my hand, some concoction handed to me in one of those red cups you see in teen movies.

Everyone else is dancing, having the best time in the world, and then there's me. Stood with my cup, scanning the room for someone I vaguely know, or at least someone I've had a conversation with.

No one. Damn. Just me and a room of complete strangers. The makeup I've painted on my face is like a meticulous mask that strangely makes me blend in far better than the stupid cup in my hand. How is it that I can be surrounded by so many, yet feel so alone?

I keep checking the door, then my phone, then the door again. It's maybe in that second, or maybe the next, I finally realise how the loneliness sets in.

## LITTLE MISS PRINDLE

ALFIE SANSOM (HE/HIM)

At the start of the day, a trip to the pub: A strip of dried blubber in each finger of glove, Leather and dry, she smiles with thin lips, Rotten-log teeth and a thick, stinking mist. Swollen feet in cute shoes, rubber soles on some scum-Stained carpet like writhing, swelling, beer-soaked grubs. An empty brick phone smeared by red and brown, And down and down and down, she looks Like a hag cast out by the coven of muck, Through sad, dry pins in sockets of the skull, Plenty thoughts drip out, over which she can mull, And waste away, into dust on the tongue, Of someone, laughing, far too young.

## FEMININE FRUITS

EVIE BANKS (SHE/HER)

fig trees in the heat  
browning  
beaten  
supple and sweet;  
surrendered  
withering  
going going  
gone

the fruit can be eaten fresh off the tree

the sugared tears seep  
pour  
weep  
dropping their leaves in a mauve heap  
decaying purples cry  
mourn  
and morph into the dark brown  
the dying marsh  
of pruned promises

the fruit can be eaten fresh off the tree

boiled  
and jellied  
and shut into jars  
– the lids clamp in seasonal disdain  
well-trained  
and drained  
and catering to every strain  
fresh  
dried or processed  
they serve  
again, and again

the fruit can be eaten fresh off the tree

maybe you'd like a wasting fruit  
a regal carcass of superlative seeds

a performative producer  
the mother of the deep  
restricted by the once  
Nurturing grains of the growth  
as the tree shrinks in submission

the fruit can be eaten fresh off the tree

take the  
scateurs  
and a pruning saw  
heave  
decapitate  
and delay  
deny the bloom  
so the leaves may fall again

maybe you'd like to be  
the first one to not discard it  
take the fig  
out of date  
unripe

unwanted  
or leave them dormant until the  
spring  
rotting  
churning  
the seed spilling  
castrating  
yet flowing  
feeding the fertile hisses of the  
deep

count the ways you can help yourself  
How the figs can help you

the fruit can be eaten fresh off the tree  
or however you'd like really  
*A helpful note:  
this isn't about figs*

## PEOPLE WATCHING

HEATHER GOSLING

A young couple on an escalator,  
arms wrapped around each other,  
like entangled vines.

An old couple walking by  
holding hands,  
always and forever, together.

A baby smiles and waves  
directly at me,  
and suddenly I comprehend.

I am not watching  
a mere play, or show  
of others' lives,

But this is our world  
of exchanging hellos  
and tearful goodbyes.

Saying "I love you",  
and hearing it back.  
So much love and hope

Exist all around us.



IMAGE: OPENCLIPART-VECTORS

## WOMEN'S WORK

CORYNNE RYAN

Damp dishes in the sink,  
black mould on the curtains,  
tan crumbs on the floor.  
Dirty laundry in the closet,  
empty bottles by the door.

I sit to do my work,  
Women's Work.

Red broly on the bed,  
white cobwebs in the corner,  
dark dust on the window.  
Grey ash in the fireplace,  
dry vase of dead primrose.

I sit to do my work,  
Women's Work.

Letters to write,  
words I must fill.  
Pages of ink,  
that is my skill.

I sit to do my work,  
Women's Work.

I write and erase,  
creating something new.  
To find a perfect phrase  
is what I must do.

I sit to do my work,  
Women's Work.

I build things of beauty,  
with each my brain swirls.  
What a wonderful thing,  
a changing world.

I sit to do my work,  
Women's Work.

# WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

## ROSES 2023

### WANT TO BE INVOLVED WITH ROSES 2023?

Being involved with Roses is not limited to sport! Campus media will be covering the weekend of sport and providing all of the most important updates.

At *Nouse* we have a range of ways to be involved from being a sports reporter, sub-editor, writing some build-up pieces or capturing content for social media.

There are also opportunities to get involved with other campus media including radio and TV.

If you are interested in getting involved, email [editor@nouse.co.uk](mailto:editor@nouse.co.uk)

### FOLLOW US

@yorknouse on all social media platforms to get all of our updates

### BUY OUR MEMBERSHIP

Our membership is £7 and can be purchased on the YUSU website. You'll need this to write and edit

### WRITE FOR US

Join our Facebook group, *Nouse* Writers, to see current opportunities or pitch your idea to an Editor

### WANT TO BE BEHIND THE SCENES?

We have non-writing roles too like tech, design or photography. Email [editor@nouse.co.uk](mailto:editor@nouse.co.uk) for more info

### COME TO OUR EVENTS

We host a range of events throughout the year. See what we have upcoming and come along

### ANY QUESTIONS?

Email [editor@nouse.co.uk](mailto:editor@nouse.co.uk) with any questions about *Nouse* or how to get involved

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DEPUTY  
MUSE EDITOR

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**HANNAH**  
ADMINISTRATION  
DIRECTOR



# NHS under “intolerable and unsustainable” pressure

**Ceri Hughes** (she/her)  
POLITICS CORRESPONDENT

THE NATIONAL HEALTH Service has been subject to years of mounting pressure as several factors work cumulatively to push Britain’s healthcare system harder than ever. The key issues facing the NHS are its inability to discharge recovered patients, the increasing number of emergency attendants, the inadequacy of mental health provision, and major understaffing of medical professionals. These factors have had severe consequences on the quality of patient treatment and the health of our NHS workers. The head of the NHS has warned that the health system is under more ‘extreme pressure’ than it was at the height of the pandemic. The British Medical Association (BMA) claims that the demand on the NHS is intolerable and unsustainable.

As a student nurse at the University of York, India Shearer observes the demanding and emotionally exhausting environment and states that the “People working within the NHS are at breaking point”. India further claims that the rising number of patients waiting to be discharged has turned the

corridors into a temporary emergency department.

On 15 December 2022, Britain witnessed a major walkout of nurses. The Royal College of Nursing declared that further industrial action will take place in February. NHS providers have expressed concern over the strikes and have urged the government and unions to begin negotiations. The strikes have proved disruptive and exacerbate the existing pressure that bears down on Britain’s health system. The cost-of-living crisis and below-inflation pay awards have led to wide-scale frustration among nurses, and industrial action is symptomatic of a stressed workforce.

Nouse spoke to Dr Mike Parker, Associate Professor of Emergency Nursing at the University of York, who explained the effect this will have on Student nurses, “There will be extra pressure on students, working in demanding conditions without the full team”. Dr Parker was clear that nursing students will still be under supervision by a qualified nurse but warns that “learning during a time of national strike will not be as fruitful”.

An increasing shortfall of medical professionals, particularly nurses

and doctors, has had hazardous effects. The NHS faces the largest staffing catastrophe in its 74-year history, and patients risk waiting up to 24 hours for emergency care. Concerns surrounding staffing continue to grow as nursing applications to UCAS drop 25 percent nationally. This presents an issue for the NHS since university nursing students are part of the government’s workforce planning.

The BMA has declared that the number of doctors per 1,000 people is insufficient, with an average doctor-to-patient ratio of 2.9 for every 1,000. This falls below the OECD EU average of 3.7.

The NHS is existing in the spectre of Covid-19, already severely overstretched from the damage of the pandemic. The BMA states the condition of the health system has led to poor retention of NHS staff as mental health issues have become the highest reported cause of employee loss.

University professionals have raised concerns following Downing Street’s failure to rule out using student nurses to ease staff shortages. Dr Parker, comments on this, “Students attend hospital placement as a learning experience, they are not qualified with the

knowledge and expertise to look after patients.” Dr Parker was adamant that students should not ‘back-fill’ a registrant workforce, claiming that is not in the “public interest”.

In York, pressure on emergency departments has required extraordinary action. There have been more than 1,000 people attending the emergency department a day. Stephen Eames, the Chief Executive of the Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (HCP) responds to this by stating “we are working together, as partners in health and care, across the Humber and North Yorkshire to address some of the key challenges in our system.” Eames commits to prioritise a recruitment drive across health and social care and extra dis-

charge rounds to ensure patients are not in the hospital any longer than necessary.

The York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has received positive responses despite the demanding environment. An anonymous neurology patient left a rewarding review stating, “I saw a team that was under an immense workload and pressure, however, the professionalism, respect, and compassion shown towards patients in this busy department was exemplary”.

India further expanded on the toll NHS pressure is having on student nurses like herself. “We are burnt out. Working 12 hours in the hospital wards under the current circumstances is exhausting. Staff shortages are pushing students into situations that we are underqualified for.” Dr Parker commends student nurses for their “sterling job” and says they ought to be highly rewarded. He urges nursing students or any medics to reach out for support if they are struggling in these critical times.



IMAGE: ANDREW PARSONS

# Political violence in Brazil symbolises broader change

**Lydia Chowdhury** (she/her)  
POLITICS CORRESPONDENT

LAST MONTH SAW Brazil’s Bolsonaroistas rampage through the presidential palace and the Brazilian congress in protest of Lula’s nascent presidency. The attempted coup to reject President Lula smeared the new year with violence and outrage from both sides. The resulting violence devastated the presidential Palácio da Alvorada (“Palace of the Dawn”), leaving Brazil stunned as the sun set on the unprecedented scenes.

8 January marked the biggest threat to the Brazilian electoral system since the 1980s. Jair Bolsonaro, former President of Brazil, had won the adoration of many conservative Brazilians with his populist, polarising rhetoric. Bolsonaro claimed, “I always dreamed of liberating Brazil from the nefarious ideology of the left”, whilst visiting former US President Donald Trump at the White House in March 2019.

His far-right loyalists vandalised the palace; slashing presidential portraits, urinating in offices and adding their own graffiti to historical art. Swarms of mobs clad in the Brazilian flag were filmed inside, overrunning

what should be the most secure building in Brazil. The question is who orchestrated the coup, and how?

An investigation resulted in 300 arrests and the removal of 40 troops guarding the presidential palace. President Lula pronounced distrust in the military as well as launching an investigation on Jair Bolsonaro’s involvement. No evidence supporting his direct involvement has been found.

As revolt echoes through the Americas, Brasilia’s political dissonance is tainted by an unnerving sense of déjà vu. Capitol Hill, two years ago, almost to the day, amassed an indignant storming mob protesting Trump’s expiring presidency. Trump, like Bolsonaro, left a trailing blaze of flames and violence in his presidential wake.

The scrambling rabble of Trump loyalists surging into the Capitol sporting the distinct Trump-red MAGA hats, military gear, and the United States and confederate battle flags. The dystopian event was engineered by the far-right, neo-fascist militia group ‘The Proud Boys’.

The Capitol Hill riots resulted in the deaths of five people; officers and civilians.

The thread that sinews these parallel events is not the rage of right-wing

allegiants, but a particular political strategy implemented by their figurehead: populism.

Populism is defined by an antagonistic relationship between the ‘people’ and the elite. The problem here lies in the use of the term ‘people’ as sacrosanct and absolute. Logic dictates that those in power cannot truthfully declare that they are for ‘the people’: there will always be people in opposition. Populist rhetoric can illegitimize alternative views and the romantic idea of a ‘chosen people’ versus the rest of the world can quickly sour. Recent events have demonstrated this. ‘Good’ versus ‘bad’ is alluring in its simplicity but can have catastrophic side effects.

However, conservative Brazilian Bolsonaroistas and right-wing American Trumpists aren’t the only people swayed by populist rhetoric.

Former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has relied on a populist idealisation of ‘virtue’ to help legitimise his policy positions. One doesn’t have to look too far back

to remember videos with beams of glowing neon lights raking through the cramped crowds of Glastonbury festival goers in 2018: an undulating sea of heads all chanting to the tune of Seven Nation Army, “Oh, Jeremy Corbyn”.

At a conference held in Salford, 2019, Corbyn declared: “Labour would never try to silence parliament, but we don’t believe democracy stops there. We want to expand democracy, not restrict it.”

Corbyn’s strategies have produced much discourse and debate over whether they are truly populist. Indeed, the term populism has become ubiquitous, so much so, the Guardian’s word of the year in 2016 was “populism”. Corbyn has been called a classic populist leader while others disagree for the most part, agreeing that he

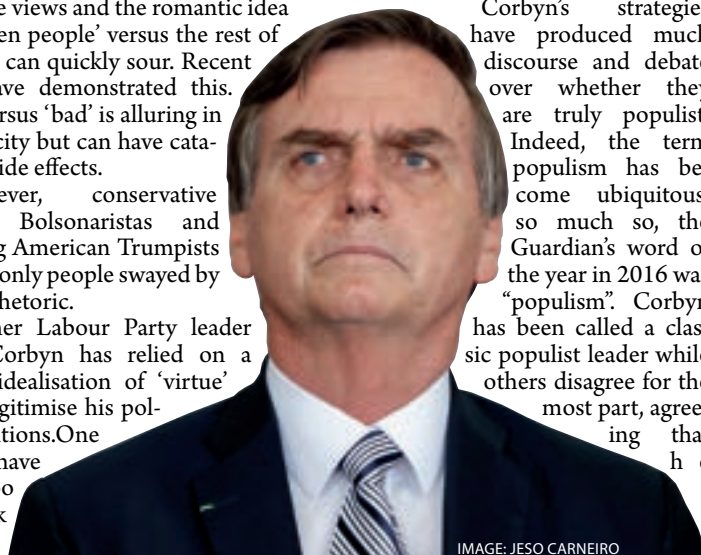


IMAGE: JESO CARNEIRO

sometimes implemented populist strategies. It is hard to categorise given that the definition of populism is not clear-cut.

Nevertheless, figureheads such as Trump and Bolsonaro have been more consensually agreed as playing around with populist politics. India’s Prime Minister Modi has often been grouped into this category although Indian populism differs from American and Latin American politics due to Hindu nationalism.

Hindu nationalism is at the core of Prime Minister Modi’s politics which ties Hinduism inextricably to Indian culture and nationality. This renders minorities, such as Muslims, second-class citizens. Modi’s further instilling of Hindu nationalism has been advantageous for him in executing his populist policies.

Now the storm has cleared in Brasilia, President Lula has cracked down on deforestation with a renewed zeal and expressed desire to reduce the number of starving people. Thus, Brazil’s government is, in some senses, stronger and more secure than before.

Billionaire Donald Trump’s instatement as president for the people perhaps captures the zeitgeist of our political era.

## GLOBAL



## POLITICS

### COP15 Summit

COP15 took place in Montreal, Canada from 7 to 19 December 2022. Separate from COP27, COP15 focused on preserving biodiversity. Participating nations resolved to conserve at least 30 percent of the world’s natural areas, greater environmental transparency from large companies, and protect key environmental areas like rainforests and coral reefs. - *Lena Mazel*

### Afghan women’s education

Since the Taliban’s return in 2021, women’s education has been increasingly restricted in Afghanistan. In December 2022, an indefinite ban was imposed on higher education for women leading to protests in Kabul. Women had already been banned from parks, gyms, and public baths in November. The UN and other countries have condemned this action. - *Maddie Shone*

### Zimbabwe’s brain drain

President Mnangagwa’s Health Services Bill, which limits health workers’ rights to strike, comes at a time in which their Health Services Board has said there is a looming migration crisis; 4,000 workers have left since 2021, and 20 percent of Zimbabwe’s total healthcare force has migrated to England. There is a 54 percent shortage of labour in healthcare. - *Grace Plant*

### Czech presidential election

The first round of the Czech election was extremely close, with a 0.4 percent vote difference between the top two candidates. Petr Pavel, a retired general, was expected to gain more support from those who voted for liberal-minded losing candidates than his populist opponent, Andrej Babiš. Pavel won 57.6 percent of the vote. - *Delyth Michael*

# Rising interest rates destabilise UK housing market

**Lena Mazel** (she/her)  
POLITICS CORRESPONDENT

EXPERTS HAVE PREDICTED a 'cooling' housing market in 2023, with high inflation and rising mortgage rates dampening the unprecedented demand seen last year. Beyond mortgage rates and inflation, cost of living concerns, market instability, and financial uncertainty after August's mini-budget could also cause buyers to hold off. At the same time, rental prices are predicted to rise further in 2023, including in York. As some University of York students have already seen, high demand can also cause long wait times and difficulty finding rented accommodation.

In late 2022, the home buying market already showed a notable decrease in house prices and an increase in mortgage rates. This caused economists to predict further price falls in 2023. According to a Guardian report from late December, house prices dropped by 2.3 percent between October and November 2022, the biggest drop since October 2008. In December, the Bank of England (BoE) raised the base rate to 3.5 percent — the highest rate in 14 years. Economists predict that the BoE will raise interest rates from 3.5 percent

to about 4.75 percent in response to inflation. This could reverse some of the significant price gains seen in recent years, with house prices up 12.6 percent in the year to October 2022 and the average property costing £296,000 compared to £231,000 in January 2020.

Rising interest rates have generated fears over a potential housing market crash, however predictions remain modest. Nationwide estimates a potential average fall in housing prices of 5 percent while Lloyds Bank forecasts a fall of 8 percent. While these predictions do not account for regional variations, nor the sale of more unique properties which are harder to accurately value, it offers an insight into the year ahead.

In November, Ben Hudson of York-based Hudson and Moody noted a "slower, more cautious market following the last two years of mayhem. However, back to normality, and by traditional standards in the run up to Christmas, no real difference to normal."

High interest rates have meant more first-time buyers are waiting to buy, keeping them in the rental market and causing rental prices to increase, making it even more difficult to find

rented accommodation. Average UK rental prices increased by 4.2 percent in 2022, according to a report from the Office of National Statistics. England's private rental rates increased by 4.1 percent, while Yorkshire average rates increased by about 4.2 percent.

Rentals in the Yorkshire region followed the overall pattern of high demand. In the November UK Residential Market Survey report, Alex McNeil of Bramleys observed "Hardly any vacant



stock and low level of churn," and Simon Kayman of Property Services In Yorkshire predicted that "Lettings will remain strong as people can't afford their homes. The problem is some landlords will get greedy and then rents may not get paid if a tenant's situation changes." In December, Ben Hudson commented, "The market continues to be busy, but supply issues are starting to ease as more short term lets return to the market."

In some cities, the proliferation of short-term holiday rentals can impact housing supply. York has recently been discussing adding restrictions to short term holiday accommodation like Airbnb. Amidst a near-quadrupling of holiday lets in the past four years, the City of York Council is considering requiring planning permission for owners to convert homes to holiday lets. But while York Labour's housing spokesman, Cllr Michael Pavlovic suggested that short-term holiday lets create "a reduction in the amount of ordinary rental properties available for York residents," the

council report found that at just 2.18 percent of York's housing stock, it was difficult to provide a clear link between holiday lets and increased rental prices.

For some students in York, finding rented accommodation can prove incredibly stressful. Alex, a second-year PhD in Physics, says demand for housing made finding rented accommodation difficult this year. She lives in private rented accommodation with two flatmates. "We really struggled to find housing because everywhere we tried to book a viewing would just be taken within a few days of being put on the website," she says. "I lived with my brother for two months while we were looking for a place and they were both having to work from their family homes which wasn't ideal." Alex and her flatmates will continue to rent next year, and their rent has increased from £1,300 to £1,395 pcm split three ways.

The University of York has taken steps to mitigate the impacts of the cost of living crisis, including a cost of living online hub and a £150 household energy grant. In response to housing issues, the university also has a 'dedicated in-house housing specialist,' Stephen Cameron, based in the Student Hub and contactable via self-referral form.

# Party politics on the ground: a local perspective

**Max Abdulgani** (he/him)  
DEPUTY POLITICS EDITOR

FOR POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, campaigning is considered the bedrock of assessing public opinion on party political narratives, public messaging impact, as well as an aspect of the manifestation of democratic representation itself. Engagement on such a basic level with voters on the ground helps to maintain an active understanding of the issues of the day that dominate local and national politics and is used by activists and politicians across the nation. It is true to say that whilst the methods for campaigning have gradually changed over time, such as the development of more efficient data-driven technologies, the ideas around it have largely remained the same. The substance of campaigning usually involves leaflet distribution and in many cases doorstep conversations to determine voter issues and voting intention.

On a local level, York has a very active campaigning infrastructure involving a variety of political party representation. Caleb Pell, a University of York student and Liberal Democrat activist said: "Trust is so important in politics. Whilst campaigning can seem

daunting, I find that most people appreciate the time taken to engage with them." As a pluralistic city in terms of parties in power, York is one of a kind. The constituency of York Central has a Labour MP (Rachael Maskell), whilst the constituency of York Outer has a Conservative MP (Julian Sturdy). Both constituencies are dominated by a council administration led by the Liberal Democrats combined in a coalition agreement with the Green Party. Whilst this can mean wide representation at an electoral level for lots of voters, it also has the tendency to create hostilities between all parties and increase the level of competition.

Campaigning can often involve party political animosity on local concerns. Examples include the ongoing blue badge ban in the city centre and the issue of reaching Net Zero by 2030; a commitment that York Council is not currently on target to meet according to Labour.

On a national level, however, circumstances are more complicated. The Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party have an informal non-aggression pact and have concentrated their political attacks towards the governing Conservative Party. At the next general election, various prospects including

tactical voting in marginal seats have been discussed to oust sitting Conservative MPs. In seats such as York Outer, many are calling for the backing of a single progressive candidate as opposed to splitting the vote with numerous anti-Conservative candidates. This is an ongoing debate amongst self-proclaimed progressive parties.

A common doorstep rumour is that political parties 'only show up at election time' when they are desperately seeking votes. The reality is very different. Candidates are selected for a seat 2-3 years out from an election, and the infrastructure to help their campaign is developed by a dedicated team of volunteers and activists contributing to the cause. Most parties campaign several times on a weekly



IMAGE: ANNA BAXTER

basis depending on ward priorities. Parties can't win elections in constituencies without a lengthy process of canvassing and party material distribution, as well as wider community campaigns to boost the reputation of parties and their image in public discourse. Two recent and prominent examples in York across the city are the struggle to keep New Earswick bowling club open, and the major refurbishment of Clifton Library.

Earning respect for a political party is no easy task, and involves as much apolitical campaigning as it does political campaigning. For most voters, party political alignment is not a primary consideration. Instead, there are various local issues that dominate communities, to which parties tailor their priorities. In Haxby, that might be the proposed railway de-

velopment. In Earswick, the outer ring road. In Guildhall, vehicle emission reductions. In Hull Road, student housing affordability and access. On the subject of campaigning, Anna Baxter, a University of York student and Labour Party candidate for Hull Road ward said: "Campaigning helps me to have a broader understanding of issues that voters face that can vary. For example, in some of York's surrounding villages with an older populace, issues such as the blue badge ban come up constantly. This has definitely made me more aware of how inaccessible York City Centre is for those who are disabled and vulnerable."

Political activism is not simply limited to leafleting and doorknocking, but the bulk of an election campaign is taken up with both tasks. Canvassing teaches activists that no amount of voter engagement is too much, that parties should never take for granted politics on the ground when making decisions at a representative level, and that listening to people is the best form of determining local issues and deciding which to prioritise. Regardless of alignment or affiliation, it is crucial to consider these lessons when conducting a campaign. After all, passion for a campaign is passion for a cause.



## LEFT WING RIGHT WING

Thoughts from the Politics Editor  
Josh Rutland (he/him)

PRIME MINISTER RISHI Sunak's first speech of 2023 saw a bold announcement – plans for all pupils in England to study maths up to the age of 18. This came as a surprise, not least to experts in the education sector who

claimed they hadn't been consulted on the proposal, but also to commentators who expected a greater emphasis on arguably more pressing matters such as the NHS. Indeed there appeared to be little appetite for curriculum reform in

the broader political context.

Yet the Prime Minister qualified his plans, expressing that just half of all 16–19-year-olds currently study maths in an economy which is increasingly underpinned by data and quantitative analysis. The proposal quickly attracted criticism, most notably from the Association of School and College Leaders who, in a statement, described it as "another meaningless policy gimmick". This wasn't quite the endearment the

Government would have hoped for.

However, there is merit to the idea, even if the exact proposal can be found in a 2011 report commissioned by David Cameron and Michael Gove. The UK economy is undeniably experiencing an accelerated shift towards tertiary and quaternary sector jobs, placing a particular focus on STEM skills.

At present, 20 percent of the UK workforce is employed in science roles, while in cities such as Cambridge the

number is closer to 45 percent. STEM jobs have previously been predicted to grow at double the rate of other occupations, so the Prime Minister's plans seem perfectly valid.

Even if the pledge does not obligate 17- and 18-year-olds to study maths as a formal A-Level qualification, improving the skillset and adaptability of future generations can only be positive in the face of a changing labour market and global competition.

# A vital industry hits perilous waters as tensions rise

**Louise Cresswell** (she/her)  
DEPUTY BUSINESS EDITOR

IT IS NO secret that industry is still feeling the ripples of the Covid-19 pandemic, but nowhere is this more salient than in the market for advanced semiconductors. They've proved a hot topic amongst economists and the general public alike, exemplified by Chris Miller's 'Chip War' winning the *Financial Times*' prize for the best business read of 2022.

Semiconductors are necessary components in producing the majority of appliances, cars, and electronics, and over the course of the pandemic, semiconductor plants – most of which are located in South Korea and Taiwan – were forced to close over concerns about the spread of Covid-19 among employees. At the same time, global demand for electronics shot up as additional home appliances were required for those working from home. This already difficult supply constriction, concurrent with a boom in demand, was worsened by draughts in Taiwan limiting the supply of the ultrapure water necessary for semiconductor production.

In light of ever-heightening tensions between China and Taiwan, a race toward manufacturing self-sufficiency within Europe, and unprecedented industry-intervening legislation from the Biden administration, what appears

on the surface to be a rather dry topic has evolved. The semiconductor crisis underpins a new era of hostile geopolitics and backlash to the previously sacrosanct concept of 'new growth theory', which professes the feasibility of endless economic expansion.

China and Taiwan have been in dispute over Taiwan's legitimacy as a sovereign state since the end of World War Two, but tensions reached new highs after Nancy Pelosi, then Speaker of the US House of Representatives, visited Taiwan in August 2022. In response to what the Chinese government viewed as a de-facto legitimisation of sovereign Taiwan on the part of the US, China has flown missiles over the island, as well as repeatedly sailing ships around the coastline.

If, in the coming year, China's war games progress to a full invasion of Taiwan, this will have huge implications on the global ability to produce electronic goods. It is estimated that US GDP could be cut by approximately 5-10 percent due to the further restrictions in semiconductor circulation that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would incur, before even considering the huge economic ramifications of a global conflict that the US and much of Western Europe have agreed they'd be compelled to involve themselves in. China themselves are not exempt from the consequences of a semiconductor fallout, having not developed enough of their own infrastructure to rival Taiwan's

ability to produce advanced semiconductors, and are now investing heavily in the electronics industry with hopes of amending this precarious position. An array of nations have also rushed to build semiconductor fabrication plants, capitalising on the opportunity to take over the semiconductor market that any conflict between Taiwan and China would present. In Europe, Germany has invested more than 3 billion Euros into the country's electronics sector, focusing on semiconductor production. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz professes this is a crucial step in achieving self-sufficiency for the European Union, and pivotal in preventing foreign conflicts from destabilising the European economy. This target has risen rapidly up the agenda in light of the fallout from the Russian gas crisis.

In contrast, the British government waited two years to publish its semiconductor strategy, which critics have argued has been rather lacklustre in its vision for transforming the UK's position in the industry. The UK's involvement in semiconductor production is currently focused on designing new technologies, which does not offer either the profit potential or business certainty that end-to-end manufacturing would. However, ministers have recently been working to repatriate semiconductor facilities in Wales that were owned by Chinese companies.

The US still stands as the country best positioned to disrupt

the semiconductor market. Incumbent President Joe Biden closely followed the CHIPS Act in August of last year – which funnelled 52 billion USD solely into semiconductor production – with the Inflation Reduction Act that committed to channelling 738 billion USD into clean energy projects that depend heavily on continuous semiconductor availability, particularly where electric vehicles are concerned. The US political establishment maintains that alleviating the semiconductor shortage is inextricable from tackling inflation.

The current political landscape suggests 2023 will likely be the year that the semiconductor

industry leaders have suggested may befall the UK if Sunak does not act soon.

What is particularly clear from this situation is its similarity to the European gas crisis, not only in highlighting our failure to future-proof ourselves from predictable supply constrictions, but in a transnational reluctance to think of climate-friendly solutions. The semiconductor crisis presented us with a unique opportunity to build toward a circular economy, where new devices are constructed with components from yesteryear, and offered a different route to decarbonising transport by favouring our second-hand car industry.

2022 saw the unrecycled e-waste on earth surpass 347 million metric tonnes.

Only time will tell if the current semiconductor crisis could pale in comparison to the consequences of landfills full of non-biodegradable electronic waste.

short- a g e comes to a h e a d . S o m e countries will emerge from this crisis richer and in stronger geopolitical positions, while others will reap the consequences of a missed investment opportunity: a fate that in-

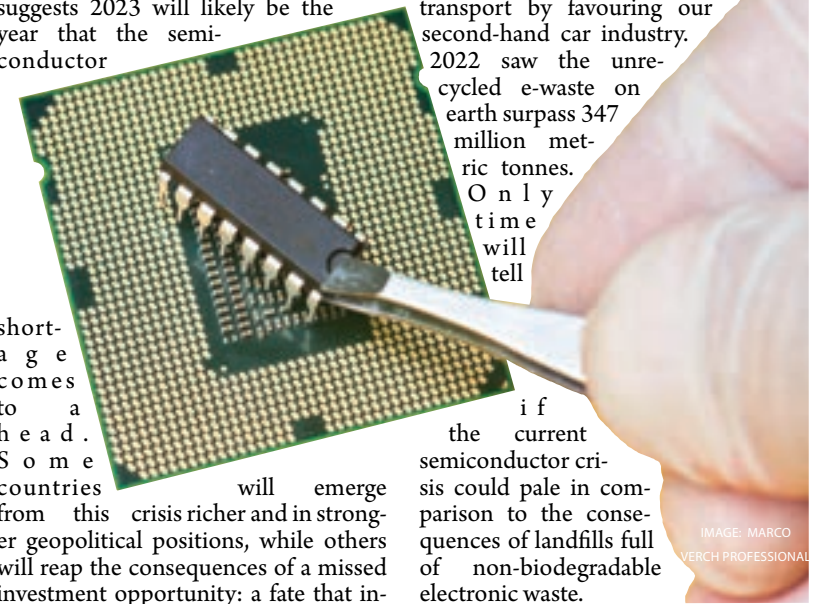


IMAGE: MARCO VERCH PROFESSIONAL

# The state of crypto in 2023: past, present, and future?

**Alexandre Hornstein** (he/him)  
BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT

IN 2022, CRYPTPO seemed to be the future. Funding from investors was piling in, high profile celebrity endorsements and a bullish market made crypto appear in place to revolutionise finance. However, as it currently stands, trust in crypto has imploded and regulators across the globe are placing it under scrutiny. Originally valued at 3 trillion USD at the start of 2022, the crypto industry fell to just under 1 billion USD by the year's end. The trigger for this crisis was the collapse of the Terra blockchain.

Central to the Terra blockchain are two coins, UST and LUNA. UST was a stablecoin tied to the US dollar, with one UST pegged to one US dollar. LUNA however was a normal crypto coin, with its value determined by market forces. The idea behind Terra was that UST would keep its peg to the US dollar through the backing of LUNA, and the Terra blockchain would regulate the amount of UST and LUNA coins in circulation to ensure this. If UST coins were burnt, then the algorithm would produce more LUNA, and vice versa.

Terra would encourage UST adoption through the Anchor Protocol, a savings scheme that promised users a 20 percent interest rate. These interest rates, combined with the perceived safety of stablecoins saw a surge of UST in circulation, with 15 billion USD-worth in the Anchor Protocol and 18

billion USD-worth in total circulation. LUNA was seemingly playing its part, with the coin reaching a peak valuation of 119 dollars per coin in April 2022. Yet by the end of May 2022, LUNA

**FTX seemed the real deal... yet it turned out to all be a mirage.**

would crash to less than a penny.

Many expressed concerns regarding Terra's structure – particularly how it had the potential to facilitate a death spiral. Despite the founders' confidence and the acquisition of reserve capital to retain UST's dollar valuation, it proved insufficient. A swap of 85 million UST on 7 May 2022 saw users rushing to 'burn' (swap) their UST for LUNA. For every UST coin burnt, more LUNA was produced by the algorithm, resulting in the death spiral of LUNA's value and the Terra blockchain. Within five days, UST would fall below the dollar valuation twice, LUNA would crash to less than a penny, and the Terra blockchain would halt. The damage would amount to 45 billion USD, causing widespread anger and dismay.

This collapse resulted in a loss of confidence across the crypto space.

Bitcoin and Ether, the two most used crypto currencies, fell by 60 and 30 percent in value respectively. Numerous crypto hedge funds and crypto exchanges became insolvent in the following two months. Three Arrows Capital, a crypto hedge fund that managed over 18 billion dollars' worth of crypto assets, defaulted on loans and declared bankruptcy on 1 July 2022, in part due to what was once a holding of 559.6 million USD-worth of LUNA falling to a value of 670.45 USD. Celcius, a crypto lending company managing over 10 billion in assets, also halted operations during the summer due to

the fall in many other coins' value. Yet pinning the collapse of these crypto projects solely on the plummeting values of Bitcoin and Ether following the Terra blockchain crash obscures a common trend of malpractice and criminal activity within the crypto space.

Do Kwon, one of the co-founders of the Terra blockchain, is on the run from South Korean authorities and Interpol for breaches in common mar-

ket laws. The founders of Three Arrows Capital are also on the run, with current whereabouts unknown. Alex Mashinsky, the founder of Celcius, a self proclaimed modern day Robin Hood, rug-pulled his customers and is currently being charged on fraud by the New York attorney General Letitia Jones. Yet, the most damning example occurred later that year with FTX.

FTX seemed the real deal. Since 2019, it had grown to be the second largest crypto exchange and its valuation peaked at 32 billion USD.

Yet it turned out to all be a mirage, for leaks on 2 November 2022 revealed that Alameda Research, a sister firm specialising in trading crypto, was covering its lack of liquidity through FTT tokens. A bank run on FTX occurred and the firm filed for bankruptcy nine days later. More information revealed that FTX had used customer funds for high-risk trades through Alameda without customer knowledge. Co-founder of FTX Gary Wang, and Alameda Research CEO Caroline Ellison have both pleaded guilty, whilst Sam Bankman-

Fried is to stand trial in October accused of conducting one the largest cases of fraud in world history.

Supporters of crypto might highlight more positive news, such as greater adoption of crypto currencies in many countries, especially Brazil and El Salvador. Yet, when most crypto coins have lost over 60 percent of their value within a year, it feels like faint praise. When crypto's supposed benefits of transparency and decentralisation turned out respectively to be a lie and a catastrophic weakness, regulators now feel obliged to step in. Currently, the regulation of crypto and stable coins is due to head to the UK parliament, whilst the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Treasury Department in the US have also pushed for further regulation, calls reinforced by recent news concerning the arrest of the Russian owner of Bitzlatto, a Hong Kong crypto exchange, which served as a hub for money laundering and illicit trades. 2023 will likely feature further regulation, and a further reduction in crypto value could be on the way. Even the crypto exchanges that survived collapse have either walked back on outrageous promises, such as Crypto.com reversing previously offered benefits, or have lingering concerns, such as Binance and its links to Bitzlatto.

To win back public trust in crypto's potential following the collapse, projects must embrace all the positives associated with this means of doing finance: decentralisation and transparency.



IMAGE: JERNEJ FURMAN

# Local businesses and the Christmas market

**Oliver Peter Smith** (he/him)  
DEPUTY BUSINESS EDITOR

FOR MOST BUSINESSES, December is the most important month in the financial calendar. Hoards of shoppers can be found in city markets and shopping centres, which in turn creates valuable profits for business owners and major corporations. In fact, according to the British Retail Consortium (BRC), British households spend up to £800 over Christmas, making the festive season worth up to £42 billion to the UK economy. Moreover, this spending is more important than ever. After a torrid two years of Covid-19 restrictions, local businesses are looking to get back on their feet.

If any city is to be a great case study for local business, it's York. According to the *York Press*, York had 11,911 businesses in the city and was ranked as the second-best city in the UK for small business in 2020. This creates numerous benefits for the city, but most significantly of all, it creates a remarkable amount of footfall in the centre of York. This footfall sees a massive increase over November and December thanks to the Christmas market, leading to significantly higher sales in and around the area.

The York Christmas markets, also known as the St Nicholas fair, has been running since 1992, making it a renowned staple of Christmas celebrations in York. In fact, in 2018, it was voted the best Christmas market in the country by the Association of British Market Authorities, and its success attracts thousands of people to York every year. Hundreds of small businesses can be found at the Christmas market, many from York itself, and many from around North Yorkshire, making it remarkably important to the local economy. I've set out to discover the impact of the Christmas markets on local business by interviewing the very people who run them.

Avorium opened in November of 2021 in York, with a shop located on Colliergate. Founded by three siblings, Avorium sells workplace stationery, such as pens, notepads, mugs, and more, which can also be found on their online website. Its location is perfect to capture high footfall, situated just one street over from the Shambles. The importance of Colliergate's high footfall was duly noted by Tom, one of the three siblings who run Avorium, when I approached him for an interview with

*Nouse*. Tom went on to say that much of Avorium's performance is "driven by footfall" and that a "busy York means busy streets". It is no secret that the Christmas market heavily increases footfall in York, making the months of November and December remarkably important to local business.

When speaking to Tom, I was told that November and December have been, by far, the most successful months of the year for Avorium. This is likely to also be the case with most other local businesses in York. According to MakeitYork, 71 percent of visitors were influenced to come to York based on the Christmas market, with 3-in-10 people coming for the Christmas market alone. The importance of this to the footfall in York cannot be understated, alongside its importance to businesses such as Tom's.

9

**The number of months it took Avorium to make the money back from the Christmas market application**

Further studies have emphasised the importance of city Christmas markets elsewhere, with the findings being relatable to York, too. According to a report written by the Local Government Association, "case study areas indicated that almost all people surveyed in their own independent surveys on customers visiting the Christmas market made additional purchases elsewhere in the town centre".

The report went on to say that "in most venues there was a reported boost for shops and cafes close to the Christmas markets with many cafes having queues throughout the day, and car parking income also received a significant boost." For shops such as Avorium, located just two streets away from York's Christmas market, the impact is substantial, and may be essential to the survival of the classic British High Street.

However, Avorium don't only have a shop on Colliergate; they also ran a stall at the Christmas markets themselves. When asked about the application procedure, Tom talked of a rigorous process. "Generally, you have to start thinking about the Christmas

markets as soon as the new year begins", with Tom going on to say that official applications begin around March, with a high price tag.

In fact, it took Avorium around nine months to make the money back from the application process in March of 2022. Thankfully, however, the Christmas market proved to be profitable for the shop, and even more important for increasing brand recognition. Moreover, the high price tag for running a stall at the Christmas market isn't the only obstacle for small business owners. Staffing the stall required logistical efforts, with Avorium managing both their shop and the stall with just four employees.

Shops who sell at the Christmas market, such as Avorium, benefit from plenty of repeat customers. Tom talked of customers visiting the shop on Colliergate after making purchases at their stall, but more so, many repeat customers also visited their online website. Repeat customers are an excellent way for a small business to build a sustainable customer base and a stable revenue stream, meaning the York Christmas markets are of huge importance to the local economy, both during winter, and the period following.

Furthermore, Avorium isn't the only shop located next to the Christmas markets whilst also choosing to run a stall. York Gin was founded in 2016, although they officially began trading in 2018. Located just opposite the Shambles, York Gin sells a variety of different gins, glasses, and even placemats. I spoke to Emma, the co-founder of York Gin, to build on my interview with Avorium and to discover more about the impact of the Christmas markets on local businesses in York.

As is the same for most business ventures, risk is always present

Most importantly of all, I wanted to know about the direct benefits of running a stall at the Christmas markets to York Gin. When asked about this, Emma mentioned the ability to employ more people, increasing turnover, and increasing brand awareness. Just as mentioned by Tom, Emma also talked of two people being required to run the stall, and that the Christmas period is enormously important to the business. It is also important to note that the main benefit of running a stall at the Christmas market is not necessarily the increased revenue, with Emma saying that "revenue levels from the stall are not make or break", but increased brand recognition. According to MakeitYork, there were over 140 pieces of media coverage at the Christmas market with a combined reach of over 19 million people.

However, Emma also spoke of the risks of running a stall at the Christmas market. As any student at the University of York can imagine, the weather in York can be unreliable. A bad spell of weather can seriously impact the number of



people attending the Christmas market, and so too the number of people purchasing products. Even more significantly, Emma spoke of the "risks posed by industrial action" and its potential to block access for thousands of people across the country to York. While many of the Christmas market's visitors come from in and around North Yorkshire, many come from afar, whether that be a train journey from Liverpool, Manchester, or even London. Therefore, the high price tag for running a stall at the Christmas market does not always guarantee great profits and success. As is the same for most business ventures, risk is always present.

Interviewing Tom and Emma was incredibly interesting, not only for the sake of discovering the impact of the Christmas market on local businesses in York, but also because of the opportunity to learn about the intense and rigid planning needed to prepare for the winter months. It was clear to me that local businesses heavily value the Christmas market in York, treating it as an opportunity to increase their brand recognition to the thousands of people who visit, increase annual revenues by capitalising on huge levels of footfall, and employing more people.

It is important to be reminded, however, of the risks. A hefty price tag, the dangers of industrial action, and the ever-present threat of bad weather can derail plans with ease. Moreover, the Christmas market in York is facing criticism. The BBC have reported that councillors have been told to expect changes for the 2023 Christmas market after the head of community safety at the council, Jane Mowat, expressed concerns about overcrowding.

Large volumes of people struggled to fit into Parliament Street during this year's Christmas market, making it an unpleasant experience for those visiting at peak times.

Mrs Mowat said that "I have absolutely no doubt that the level of crowds within the Christmas markets this year will be picked up by the safety advisory group", and that "I would anticipate that that will probably result in some redesigning around the actual market itself, the spaces between the cabins, the exit and entry points and some of those issues."

## Week in Numbers

A digest of the most important figures to know this week:



99.5%

The percentage of the UK's borrowing in proportion to GDP. Public expenditure remained high in response to the cost of living crisis.



0.1%

The rate at which the UK economy grew in November 2022. Support given to UK households enabled consumer spending to stay strong.



£295,000

The current UK average house price. Rising interest rates and slowdown in economic activity have caused prices to fall from their covid peak.



£1.2m

The amount that the average taxpayer born in 1956 will receive in benefits, despite that average taxpayer only contributing £940,000.

HM TREASURY: ROBIN SONES  
WALLET: MARCOVERCH PROFESSIONAL  
HOUSE: UNISON  
COINS: COLLINS & HOY



**Science in Short**
**Rapid disappearance of stars**

A recently published study out of the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences has shown the night sky to be brightening faster than previously thought. Using a methodology where amateur stargazers could record the number of visible stars from their location in a particular constellation, it was found that visibility has fallen by 7-10 percent per year due to increasing light pollution. This can negatively impact the biological clocks of migratory birds and lead to biodiversity loss.

**Development of medical AI**

Google's Deepmind research group has built the most advanced AI yet for medical diagnostics. Named Med-PaLM, the chatbot searches through multiple medical databases to answer queries more accurately than a standard google search. Though not yet at the level of competency of human clinicians, the "large language model" has improved on its predecessors with a 93 percent accurate response rate as judged by a medical panel. The AI's most common pitfalls were "inappropriate or incorrect content of responses", "incorrect retrieval of information" and "proof of incorrect reasoning", trailing human scores by around 15 percent.

**Nuclear fusion breakthrough**

Scientists at the National Ignition Facility in Livermore, California have achieved a key result in the quest for sustainable nuclear fusion power generation. For the first time, more energy was released from the fuel than was used to ignite it. Using 192 of the world's most powerful lasers to compress a 2mm frozen fuel pellet to initiate the fusion of two hydrogen atoms into helium, NIF achieved about a 50-percent energy gain. While lasers are unlikely to be the solution to fusion electricity generation due to their inefficiency, this experiment confirms a required result for the next generation of candidate reactors.

**Marine compounds fight virus**

Compounds that can effectively combat Covid-19 have been discovered in sea sponges and marine bacteria. Twenty-six compounds were proven to reduce viral infections in human lung cells entirely, after being soaked in solutions from each compound. Further testing demonstrated three compounds that specifically combatted the Delta and Omicron variants, raising hopes for its potential to fight against future variants that may arise.

# Interstellar: uniting time, gravity, and love

**Ethan Attwood** (he/him)

SCIENCE EDITOR

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S 2014 space epic *Interstellar* has become somewhat divisive. Lauded for the scale, creativity and beauty of its visuals and score, some find the attempt to balance an electrifying tale of conquering distant worlds to save humanity with a far smaller-scale drama of love, hope and sacrifice to fall short of fulfilling either's promise. Regardless of the film's quality, it made a novel attempt to visualise astrophysical wonders for a billion-dollar audience. Luckily, there was a narrative theme available to the filmmakers that unites spacefaring, astrophysics, and the love, hope and destiny of *Interstellar's* characters: time. Next, they needed a physics consultant.

Kip Thorne was trained at CalTech

and Princeton. His trophy cabinet contains a litany of physics' most prestigious awards, culminating in a 2017 Nobel Prize. A close friend of Stephen Hawking and Carl Sagan, they shared a passion for scientific communication. Hawking's book *A Brief History of Time* has topped international bestseller lists. Sagan narrated the 1980 television series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, a documentary which remains one of the most-watched programmes in American history. Kip Thorne instead set his sights on the big screen and became a consultant for the film industry.

Working closely with director Christopher Nolan and his screenwriting brother Jonathan, Thorne described the principles behind several plot devices used in the film. He also detailed mathematical relationships used by the visual effects designers to create

some of the most realistic depictions of black holes ever to appear on film. Various psychedelic-yet-real astrophysical structures play a central role, and have profound consequences for the characters. Minor spoilers will follow.

Black holes were once found only in theory, but have since been confirmed and even photographed. The latter is especially impressive considering how they affect light, which has profoundly altered our understanding of gravity. Not only useful for dropping apples on famous scientists' heads, the mysteries of gravity continue to wreak havoc with physical models. The scientists in *Interstellar* grapple with its effects as a central plot point, but why is it such a problem when its actions can be seen so clearly in the macroscopic world?

Firstly, gravity is weak. Compared to the other fundamental forces of nature, such as those governing electricity, temperature and atoms, it is so weak that its mechanism can't be explained with the same physics. This has led to theories that gravity leaks energy into other dimensions (something alluded to by Matthew McConaughey's Cooper). Secondly, stars and planets have been observed to bend light, an effect named the gravitational lens. Light, aptly named as it is, has no mass, so under Newton's classical theory it shouldn't be affected by gravity. Albert Einstein eventually explained this by suggesting that massive objects actually bend the fabric of space around them, and what we observe as gravity is really just objects or light taking the shortest path along this distorted surface. This can be thought of like a bowling ball sitting

on a bed sheet – anything placed near it will roll toward the heavy ball.

Black holes are regions of space where gravity is so strong that not even light can escape their pull. A boundary called the event horizon marks the point past which nothing can escape. Any mass approaching it will be torn to shreds by massive gravitational forces in a process known as "spaghettification" or the "noodle effect". Black holes are visible only by the eerie glowing halos of orbiting light and gases which have not yet passed the event horizon.

Gravity has one final perplexing effect. The protagonists in *Interstellar* are forced to view time as a finite resource because their experience of it is running faster than their families back on Earth, an effect known as relativistic time dilation.

When gravity distorts space, it's really distorting spacetime, a term made necessary by the discovery that time, as the nominal fourth dimension, is inseparable from the three dimensions of space in which we move. For fundamental physical laws to remain consistent when space distorts, time must distort as well. So if you enter a very high gravitational field (or move at very high speed), time passes slower for you than someone stationary on Earth. Hypothetically then, a parent could end up younger than their children.

*Interstellar* is a celebration of how the selfless pursuit of science and exploration can save the world. It's also a commentary on how impossible selflessness can be in the face of love, and how that motivation may be exactly what saviours need to do something incredible.

IMAGE: PARAMOUNT PICTURES



## Advanced hydrogels for wound dressings?

**Emily Jones** (she/her)

SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT

THINK OF A time when you injured yourself – maybe you grazed your knee on the concrete, or burned your hand grasping a still-hot baking tray. A first aider would cover your injury with a dressing. However, what often happens is, as the body attempts to heal, the gauze dries out and gets stuck to the newly forming scab. This means when it's time for fresh dressing, the new skin cells are (often painfully) removed and the vulnerable flesh is once again exposed to the elements. This makes gauze and other currently available barrier-type wound dressings somewhat counterproductive in helping to heal.

Now, imagine a future where a child comes home from school after a graze on the knee or elbow, but this time, their wound has been treated with a skin-like sheet produced by bacterial cell cultures. A group at the University of Wolverhampton, led by Dr. Abhishek Gupta, has been making this a reality through investigating the use of cellulose hydrogels as wound coverings.

Hydrogels are long protein chains which have hydrophilic properties, meaning they can bond to water-based liquids. This arises from their electrically-charged groups, held in a 3D structure by crosslinks between ions or hydrogen. This means hydrogels are non-adhesive – and therefore are easy to remove – and are designed to apply

intensive moisture to the wound, which expedites the healing process and causes a therapeutic soothing and cooling effect.

The bacteria which produce these hydrogels are known as *Gluconacetobacter xylinus*, the most effective known producer of bacterial cellulose – a strong structural material also found in plant cell walls. Changing the size and shape of the vessel containing the bacterial culture allows researchers to create tailor-made dressings in suitable shapes for the patient's body and wound. Due to their 3D network structure, these dressings can be loaded with active ingredients to further aid healing. The Wolverhampton group has been exploring the loading of curcumin and silver into the fibrous cellulose structure. Curcumin is a naturally occurring bioactive compound found in turmeric, famed for its anti-inflammatory benefits, while silver is a well-known antimicrobial agent.

Together, these ingredients can massively boost the hydrogel's already impressive healing power; researchers have shown that this combination can fight off three of the most common infection-causing germs – *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Candida auris*.

Ring-shaped sugars called cyclodextrins were used to increase the solubility of curcumin, so these molecules can travel via the moist hydrogel barrier directly to the site of the wound and

prevent infection.

To obtain increased control over the release of silver, a two-part system was created within the structure involving two key compounds: silver zeolites and silver nitrate. Zeolites are effective cage-like holders for a therapeutic agent, which have various pore sizes and structures, suiting them to contain different molecules. Silver nitrate is commonly used to effectively cauterise burns by forming a barrier to infection.

Hydrogels, along with all the previously described benefits, can also be formulated to have a stimuli-responsive release system. Earlier studies investigated the use of poly(2-hydroxyethyl methacrylate), a gel first used in soft

contact lenses, which can selectively form bonds with a photo-active, nitrogen-based molecule. In other words, shining a light on this dressing induces the release of antimicrobials, making an antiseptic that could be controlled by light – even by the torch on your phone.

Whether these innovative solutions will be on the market anytime soon remains uncertain, but they do give us a glimpse of a future for our NHS where chronic wounds, such as those in patients with diabetes which would otherwise be considered for amputation, could instead be successfully and economically treated to prevent further complications, improving patient outcomes and NHS efficiency.



IMAGE: MARCO VERCH



# Shadow of 1998 Wakefield report still looms over vaccines

**Freya Milwain** (she/her)  
SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT

IN 1998, ANDREW Wakefield published a report in respected medical journal *The Lancet*, alleging a causal link between the MMR vaccine and regressive autism in children.

Subsequently, it was uncovered that the study was unethically executed and relied on manipulated and false data, and in 2010 it was retracted by the journal. However, 25 years later, it still affects the perception of vaccines and is a driving force in the continuing anti-vaccine movement.

The report documented a case series that investigated only 12 children, and contained a multitude of issues. Much of the data reported had been manipulated, for example the time periods between exposure to the vaccine and the onset of symptoms of a behavioural disorder was changed in several of the children studied, and three out of the nine children reported to have autism were in fact never diagnosed. Subsequent attempts to replicate the results by large-scale studies failed.

Wakefield stood to profit significantly from products predicted to surge in popularity if the safety of the vaccine was called into question, such as self testing kits and the single-dose

measles vaccine. This provides motivation for bias against the MMR vaccine when carrying out the case series, which was unknown to *The Lancet* at the time of publication. For this reason, in 2004, the journal acknowledged that it shouldn't have published the report due to this conflict of interest.

Due to the procedures involved with such a damning action, it took 12 years for *The Lancet* to fully retract the report, leaving a lasting impact on public perception of vaccine safety. MMR vaccine uptake fell in the following years to well below the necessary level of 94 percent for herd immunity. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the percentage of the UK population receiving a vaccination against measles fell from 91 percent in 1997 to 81 percent in 2004. The uptake of other vaccines has continued to fall in recent years.

Wakefield was stricken from the UK medical register in 2010, however even without his status of credibility, he continues to campaign against the use of the MMR vaccine. When the report was released, he advocated for the use of separate vaccines for measles, mumps and rubella, but in recent years has turned toward other vaccine conspiracies.

While discredited, he continues

to profit from the controversy surrounding his report, including by writing, producing and directing 2016's *Vaxxed: From Cover-Up to Catastrophe* which alleged that the Centre for Disease Control concealed data, proving a link between vaccines and autism. The documentary was withdrawn from the Tribeca film festival after public outrage.

Scepticism towards vaccines became a pressing issue during the Covid-19 pandemic. As of January 2023, over two years from the beginning of the vaccine rollout in the UK, only around 75 percent of the eligible population are fully vaccinated according to the WHO. The USA is lower still, at less than 70 percent. It is unknown what threshold must be met for herd immunity to Covid, but with new strains cropping up it seems unlikely that it will disappear at the current level of uptake.

Covid vaccines are treated with particular suspicion due to the speed with which they were created and tested. The MMR vaccine was introduced in 1988, 10 years before Wakefield's report, and the fact that it was accepted at the time suggests a lack of certainty in approval procedures.

However, Wakefield did not invent scepticism of vaccines – the anti-vaccine movement has a long history,



IMAGE: LISA FERDINANDO

going back to the creation of a primitive smallpox inoculation in 1796. It was made compulsory in 1853 to immense controversy, and resulted in the forming of organisations such as the Anti-Vaccine League. Despite opposition, the rollout was a success, and smallpox was officially declared eradicated in 1980 by the World Health Assembly – to this day, the only disease to be eliminated purely by the use of vaccines.

General scepticism towards medical institutions may be partially moti-

vated by some of the other high-profile errors and controversies that have occurred historically. The Thalidomide infant-mortality tragedy in the 1950s and the Tuskegee experiments, which only ended in 1972, reduced faith in the medical industry and cultivated public resentment. While the medical industry has improved in recent years, a long history of scientific missteps and malfeasance is difficult to escape. Vaccines in particular may remain a polarising issue for years to come.

# Cholera returns to Haiti after three years, affecting children

**Shannon Reed** (she/her)  
SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT

IN DECEMBER 2022, the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced that Haiti is experiencing a resurgence of cholera after declaring it cholera-free just ten months prior.

Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal illness, caused by infection with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*, that frequently contaminates food and water when sanitary conditions are substandard. As with many conditions, this has a disproportionate impact on the developing world.

The extremely virulent disease is endemic in many countries but caused an unforeseen humanitarian crisis in Haiti following a devastating earthquake in 2010. This displaced over one million people, further reinforcing the crisis as stress on sanitary facilities

mounted.

The outbreak started in October 2010 and saw 820,000 confirmed cases and 10,000 deaths in Haiti alone, making it the largest cholera epidemic in a single country in recent history.

Despite being extremely virulent, a *Vibrio cholerae* infection can easily be treated through prompt administration with an Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) and can be prevented with an oral vaccine, though without these measures, morbidity is high.

The most recent report from the WHO suggests that 86 percent of reported cases in Haiti have been hospitalised as of 13 December 2022, indicating a swift response by the Haitian public health authorities. This encouraging development may be due to the lessons learnt from the 2010 crisis.

Many patients infected with cholera do not experience symptoms;

however, *Vibrio cholerae* will persist in human waste for up to ten days post-infection and potentially cause infection to others if the sanitation systems and hygiene of the affected population are inadequate.

Humanitarian crises such as natural disasters or political instability, both of which have affected Haiti in the last decade, can markedly increase the risk of cholera transmission. As such, the WHO has previously co-operated with national governments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to provide a multi-sectoral approach. This is suspected to be the most effective strategy, with different groups specialising in different vectors of attacking the epidemic. Whilst the picture of the current outbreak is still developing, cases are being reported in major population centres Port-au-Prince and Cité Soleil. Both regions are experiencing extreme poverty and political chaos amidst a recent gang-fuelled blockade on its major port.

Evidently, the timing of this outbreak is poor. According to the WHO, the ongoing humanitarian crises affecting the region have contributed to the internal displacement of over 24,000 people. Haiti's political and socio-economic insecurity will further complicate the response of the public health system and international aid charities that seek to import supplies (such as the 1.17 million cholera vaccines received in December 2022). More supplies are on the way, but logistical roadblocks take time to overcome.

The catastrophic earthquake that devastated Haiti in January 2010 caused around 220,000 deaths, according to United Nations (UN) figures, with the epicentre being just 25km away from Port-au-Prince. In the months that followed, millions of people were ren-



IMAGE: KENDRA HELMER

dered homeless and vulnerable to looting and violence, and then to cholera following the contamination of the Artibonite river with faecal matter. An end to the previous outbreak was achieved through the comprehensive provision of water sanitation, education on good hygiene practices, vaccination of children, and decontamination of water sources.

Early data on the current outbreak (evaluating admissions to a cholera treatment centre in downtown Port-au-Prince) suggests that this resurgent strain may disproportionately affect young children, with a median patient age of 12 years in 2022 compared to 24 in 2010. This is due to their less well-developed immune systems and tendency to come into contact with contaminated water.

Emergency response activities have begun, involving a collaboration between the WHO, the Haiti Ministry of Public Health and humanitarian de-

rivatives of the UN. As of December 2022, there are 70 cholera treatment centres (CTCs) throughout Haiti, with essential medical supplies such as ORS provided by WHO.

Surveillance of the outbreak and risk communication with the citizenry is also critical to its management. Thus, the WHO has provided training on rapid diagnosis in the CTCs, as well as safe transportation of samples to laboratories via the UN.

Nearby territories such as the Dominican Republic are expected to receive support from the aforementioned NGOs to strengthen their resources in case of cholera outbreaks within their own borders.

With the combination of a coordinated response from multiple organisations and knowledge acquired from the previous catastrophe, it is hoped that this outbreak can help avoid replicating the devastating loss of life of its predecessor.



IMAGE: IOM HAITI

- Is university working out for you?
- Is it affordable?
- What should (and should not) be on the curriculum?
- What are your prospects for the future?



- Professor Leo McCann of the University of York is conducting an academic research project about the nature and purpose of UK university education.
- Please help by completing and sharing this 20-minute online survey.
- Please scan the QR code or use this link:
- <https://tinyurl.com/4xpy8hdr>

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Nouse  Est. 1964 stands with Ukraine

# Something on your mind?

Nightline COVID-19 Update

We're still here to **listen**, not lecture.

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Follow our social media for opening times.



## EDITOR'S COMMENT

**Jack Bleksley** (he/him)  
SPORT EDITOR



It brings me great pleasure to introduce you to the sports section of *Nouse* #503. Juggling dissertations and exams, the team have worked hard to bring you this issue and have produced some interesting, insightful and informative articles.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Henry Gee on his promotion from Deputy Sport Editor to Sport Editor. When he looks back on his time at university in the future, I'm sure this will be a highlight. In addition, welcome to Evie Winter who has joined the team as Deputy Sport Editor. However, there is still one more Deputy Editor spot on the team, so if you fancy it drop us an email at [sport@nouse.co.uk](mailto:sport@nouse.co.uk). You won't regret it!

In recent years, I have often found myself becoming despondent with sport. The ever increasing commercialisation, disregard for 'real' fans who bother to turn up to matches have made me question whether I still care. I feel that sport is becoming merely a tool to ram more adverts down us or to promote despotic regimes. American owners of clubs wanting to move Premier League games to the US

highlights how football is no longer about the true fan. As with all sports now, the bottom line is most important.

Then things like the World Cup final happen. That game was one of the best I have ever watched. The joy and anguish it brought to millions could never be replicated by any Hollywood studio. This is why we still bother with it. It's those special moments it brings us. A last minute try, a stunning catch or watching an athlete become a legend. So for the time being I will continue to battle that cognitive dissonance and spend my money on tickets to my beloved QPR, cricket matches at the Oval and over-priced pints in the ground.

In this issue we have articles on Cristiano Ronaldo's move to Saudi Arabia, a match report by Evie on York 3s Netball as well as Henry's match report on the University's Women's Rugby Union 2s. As you may have already seen on the back page, Henry also has a piece on 'Turn up and play', a uni initiative to get more students into sport without the huge costs. I highly recommend it if you need a laugh or two.

That's all from me folks, best of luck with the rest of term two and I'll see you for Roses coverage in a couple of month's time.

Kind regards,  
Jack

## NOUSE STAT ZONE

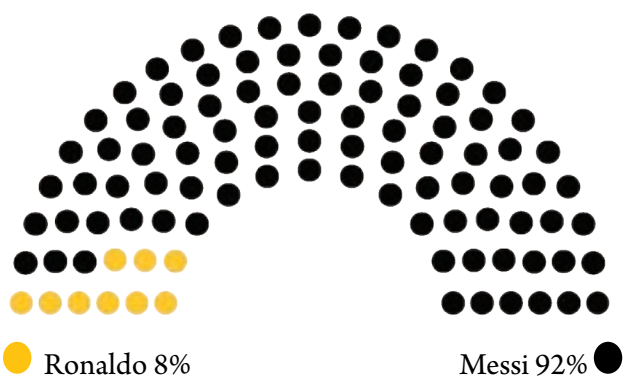
**10** Number of Australian Open men's singles finals Novak Djokovic has been in – the most of any player

**11 hrs** The longest tennis match ever – over twice as long as Andy Murray's recent match at the Australian Open

**13** Italy have won only 13 matches in the Six Nations since joining in 2000. Their most recent was a 22-21 victory against Wales last year

**1974** The year in which the only ever draw in the annual Roses Tournament occurred

### POLL: Who is the GOAT in the Men's football?



## An Interview with: Franki Riley

*Nouse Sport* sat down with the York Sport Union President to talk about Roses, transgender participation, and which sport deserves to be banished

**Jack Bleksley** (he/him)  
SPORT EDITOR

**What is your favourite thing about sport at the University of York?**

Probably the sense of community. All the friendships that you make. So many of the people that I still interact with, even though they've left uni and even if they're not local, has been because of sport; and I've never felt so supported by a community than I have through sport and some of the strongest connections that are made.

That bond with your teammates, you win together, you lose together, it creates these really strong relationships with people. It's the memories of it; you don't remember the game but you remember the people and the celebrating together. It gives you this feeling of being unstoppable but it's the people around you that make it that way.

**If, for the rest of your life, you could only spectate one sport, play one sport and banish a sport off the face of the earth, what would they be?**

American football to spectate. My boyfriend plays American football and until this year I hadn't really seen much American football and I have to be honest, if I remember back to first year and I saw the weird tunnel thing, I was like "What the hell?" But now having seen it, knowing how much goes on in such a short space of time, it's so exciting and I love it.

To play, it would have to be rugby because that is my sport. I absolutely love it and the community aspect of it is brilliant.

One sport to banish... Oh my God. Is there a sport we don't have at university, so I don't upset anyone? What's a really scary sport? Oh, absolutely no disrespect to them, but the thought of caving and potholing, it scares me. I'm quite claustrophobic, so that's a sport I could just never do.

I wouldn't want to completely banish it but it's not for me I could never do it.

**Which campus' sports facilities do you prefer?**

Most of my memories have been at West Campus, so I think I would say West Campus.

I like West Campus gym a lot for my needs. I used to really not like it before we did our refurb, but now we've had this amazing refurb it looks absolutely brilliant. We have a ridiculous

amount of squat racks and you're never normally waiting for equipment.

So many of my memories are tied to 22 Acres. My last game on those pitches is going to be very emotional. One of our best facilities has got to be the athletics track. There are not that many unis that have an athletics track to that standard on their campus and it's such an underused facility and it doesn't get much attention a lot of the time.

**Has there been any progress in the consultation to improve the inclusivity of transgender and non-binary people in sports at York?**

Yes. We've met with two college teams that are merging. James women's and men's football are becoming James football.

My sport committee and I are working on drafting an accessibility and inclusion in sport policy as we speak. I've been doing a lot of research around other policies that exist at other unis and other student's unions. NGB guidance, BUCS guidance and then how can we actually use that and try and create more inclusive cultures here, understanding that a lot of the rules when you get into competition are very exclusive, which is making it very challenging.

I'm going to be starting to have initial conversations with our gendered clubs very soon, to start having conversations around whether they want to work together more on things.

It all has to be quite light touch to start with to see where people's feelings are with that. I don't think we'll be in a position where clubs are going to completely re-ratify as a whole new club this year, but there's very important conversations to start a new long term view of sport in the future.

My sport committee are also working to put together a series of guides and resources for transgender and non-binary students. We know that we don't do very well on having gender inclusive facilities and changing spaces. I don't want to be making excuses but the buildings were built in the sixties and the agenda wasn't where it is now. We are now struggling with limited space and figuring out how we can provide for everyone.

There's a lot going on but there's a lot of research and guidance and policy stuff that takes some time, but we're getting there and definitely taking really big steps forward.

**Roses is coming up soon, with York looking to overturn what hap-**

**pened last year, how are preparations going for Roses?**

Very, very well. There's some exciting announcements coming. The easiest way to describe Roses this year is that there's quite a lot of out of the box thinking with regards to how Roses is running. It's very exciting and it's very nerve-wracking.

Bearing in mind last year, there's a lot of work that we should be doing in preparing competitors for Roses. We need to make sure we are preparing students well enough to go into what is often a very high pressure environment, especially at home when there is going to be a lot of home crowds, so we are thinking about how we can get students hyped up and ready and excited but also feeling prepared to go into it.

It's starting to come together very well.

**What is your proudest achievement as President?**

In July last year, I was able to secure just under £25,000 of funding from the University for accessible sports equipment. For a union of our size and the sports budget we're given, it's a significant amount of money.

I'm about to launch a consultation alongside the Disabled Student's Network and Disabled Student's Officer, Freya, that is asking what people want to see. We want to see if students would like us to invest in aiming our current clubs more accessible, or providing specific spaces for them.

That was one of the days where I was actually improving people's lives because there is a whole cohort of students that cannot access sport that are now going to be able to.

We're going to start a really cool pilot project in term three in accessible sport week where we're hoping to launch a lot of this stuff.

**If there was one thing you could change at the drop of a hat at York Sport, what would it be?**

More 3G pitches. We are at the point of really struggling to fit everything in. A huge part of that is because everything goes on on facilities that are very weather dependent.

If our pitches get churned up too much, we can't put stuff on there. We can't train late at night because they're not floodlit. We are working on that, and things are slowly moving forwards.

If I could have it at the drop of a hat I absolutely would because that would solve a lot of problems for a lot of clubs.

# Ronaldo to Al Nassr: Legacy and Sporting Greed

“He must ensure he remains an icon of the beautiful game, as opposed to a totem of sporting greed”

**Gregor Brindle** (he/him)  
SPORT CORRESPONDENT

RONALDO HAS A WAY of grabbing the headlines like no one else. Despite Messi's World Cup triumph in December, the footballing world has been transfixed by the news that Ronaldo has decided to sign for the Saudi club, Al Nassr.

The 38-year-old will be on a reported salary of £177 million a year, making Ronaldo the highest paid footballer ever. It's a transfer emblematic of the state of modern football which is growing more detached from reality by the day.

Based on average attendances, Ronaldo is joining a club just under the stature of League Two's Stockport County. Averaging just 8,121 supporters per home game, in a stadium that can seat 25,000.

Financially the move is unviable, and such attendance figures reveal that the transfer is perhaps not intended for a domestic fan base; although it will certainly boost attendances.

In this surreal dystopia, Ronaldo has ceased to be a footballer in the traditional sense and is more a celebrity. He is one of the few individuals who commands more fans than the club that employs them.

Al Nassr know they are not paying for the world's best footballer in Ronaldo, but rather the world's biggest influ-

encer. Ronaldo's influence was immediately felt upon his arrival, as Al Nassr's Instagram followers rose from 800,000 to 5 million almost overnight. It now stands at 12.4 million and counting.

Amnesty International has called out the transfer as part of a wider campaign of sports washing by the Saudi State. They attempt to create a sanitised image of the country for international consumption, by using big brands and names to gain goodwill.

In this way, the Ronaldo online presence is more important than his performances on the pitch.

Ronaldo's decision to join Al Nassr has sparked a debate about his legacy. Speaking in a now infamous interview in December, Piers Morgan mused that “it comes back to my gut feeling about you, that if it was just about money, you'd be in Saudi Arabia earning a King's ransom”, to which Ronaldo enthusiastically agreed.

Just weeks later, Ronaldo was in Riyadh giving his first press conference for his new club!

However, this is not the first-time football's finest have cashed in for one last big money move.

Even as far back as the 1970s the likes of Pele and George Best made headlines with moves to the USA. More recently, the MLS has seen some greats of European football with Pirlo, David Beckham, Thierry Henry, and Wayne Rooney to name but a few.

Most controversially in 2016, a

then 25-year-old Oscar, shocked fans by leaving Chelsea for Shanghai Shenhua. Oscar's new contract tripled the already substantial wage he was on at Chelsea.

## Ronaldo has ceased to be a footballer [...] and is more a celebrity

Speaking to COPA90 in 2017, he cited growing up in poverty and the desire to provide for his family as influencing his decision. After all, a footballer's career is short and unforgiving. An ill-fated injury could bring an end to it, and with little other qualifications, many footballers struggle after retirement.

Despite earning a staggering amount at Chelsea, the financial security offered by the move is tough to ignore. If put in Oscar's situation, I wonder how many of us would decide differently.

Yet the Ronaldo transfer is more than just a pay rise, and Ronaldo is more than just a footballer; he can

make millions from social media and brand sponsorships. In 2016 he signed a lifetime contract with Nike worth \$1 Billion. Money should be no object to Ronaldo.

Of greater value than his contract is Ronaldo's brand image and his legacy. Choosing a Saudi club over other alternatives reveals Ronaldo to be concerned with little more than self-interest.

Football prides itself on being an inclusive sport, yet Ronaldo has decided to live, play and be the face of football in a nation where the rights of women, migrants and the LGBTQIA+ community range from minimal to none.

Whilst other elite leagues are attempting to create

an inclusive atmosphere in football, we should not overlook the fact that Ronaldo has chosen to be the face of football in the place where homosexuality may bring the death penalty.

On the pitch, Ronaldo's sporting legacy is assured. He will go down in history as one of the greatest footballers to ever play.

Off the pitch however will be determined by his actions from here on. Whilst it is hard to criticise his decision to cash in on one last big move, he should be careful about how he wants to be seen going forwards.

Ronaldo must consider his fans, of every ethnicity, religion and sexuality going forwards, and most importantly not sacrifice what football represents, to the highest bidder.

Ronaldo must ensure he remains an icon of the beautiful game, as opposed to a totem of sporting greed.



IMAGE: LUDOVIC PÉRON

# Are we quick to unfairly overlook 'older' players?

“We oftentimes write off older players, blinded by their age, without properly appreciating their skills”

**Jack Bleksley** (he/him)  
SPORT EDITOR

IN SPORT, THERE is arguably no more treasured a commodity than youth. A talented youngster bursting on the scene, will often be surrounded by a torrent of media speculation, such as Emma Raducanu or Jude Bellingham for example. However, does this fixation on youth mean that we oftentimes write off older players, blinded by their age, without properly appreciating their skillset?

A few weeks ago, 35-year-old Andy Murray competed in the Australian Open with his first round win against Thanasi Kokkinakis lasting a mammoth five hours and 45 minutes. This is an impressive feat for any athlete and a true test of their endurance. There was something that bugged me though, as I scrolled through the Twittersphere. Time and time again, sports journalists with blue ticks (if that means anything anymore) were constantly referring to Andy Murray's age as if it was miraculous that a 35-year-old could play a match of that length at such an old age. How did Murray's 35-year-old body put up with it? Is he alien? At 35, he should be sat at home collecting his state pension, surely?

A similar phenomenon occurred when Manchester United signed a then

36-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo. A huge amount of the media reaction was centred around Ronaldo's age, asking whether he would be able to perform well in the Premier League at his age, ignoring the fact that he had scored 36 goals in 44 appearances in all competitions for Juventus the season before, including 29 Serie A goals making him the



IMAGE: EDWIN MARTINEZ

league's top scorer.

My point is this: those of us who love sport all too often write off players because of their age. We let the fact that a sportsperson's age starts with a three cloud our judgement when deciding if they are still a good player.

If a 21 year old player had achieved what Ronaldo did in Serie A the season before he joined Manchester United, English football media would have gone crazy that such a talented player was coming to the Premier League. But because Ronaldo was 36, there were doubts that he was too old to make it in the world's 'toughest' league.

I'm not denying that most players are past their best at the age of 30. In most sports, players experience their physical peak in their mid-to-late twenties. There is also the argument that a lot of players have lost that 'hunger' that is needed to be successful at the top level. This may be true for average players, but 'greats' can succeed long into their thirties. However, just because players might be past their best, doesn't mean that they aren't still exceptional athletes

who are capable of competing and succeeding at the highest level.

## We let the fact a sportsperson's age starts with a three cloud our judgement

Serena Williams won ten of her 23 singles titles in her thirties, arguably reaching her peak dominance in 2014-15 at the age of 33. LeBron James recently turned 38 years old and yet is still regarded as one of the best players in the NBA. Tiger Woods completed the comeback-to-end-all-comebacks when he won the 2019 Masters Tournament at the age of 43. Don't forget Ronaldo's 'Greatest of All Time' rival, Lionel Messi, who won the World Cup at age 35 a few months ago. So many top athletes can achieve greatness at ages that many sports fans would consider geriatric.

There is also a flip side to this situation that we find ourselves in. Our obsession with youth doesn't only cloud our judgement of older players, but younger players too. If a young player

impresses, there is often a media frenzy where phrases like 'future GOAT' and 'one-to-watch' get thrown about at will. This is normally not healthy, and can often lead to an inflated impression of the athlete's actual ability or cause the athlete to get lost in the hype.

Take footballer Ravel Morrison, for example. Once hailed by none other than Sir Alex Ferguson as the “best he had seen at that age”. Morrison now plays his football in the MLS for D.C. United. Not the great heights that he was once tipped for (apologies to any MLS fans reading). Said to have been a nightmare to manage, this is a case of a player who certainly let the hype get to his head.

A youth prodigy like Emma Raducanu or Jude Bellingham is an exciting prospect. What will they achieve? How good will they be? It's nice to ponder these questions and hypothesise. It is also incredibly important to plan for the future through youth players. But the truth is, in sport we also have to think about the here and now. There are so many great athletes who continue to show us their mastery of their sport well into their thirties and even forties.

As students in our late teens and early twenties these years seem way off. But as our parents and even some lecturers will tell us, thirty isn't even that old. Maybe those of us in sport should listen to them.

## Sport News in Brief

**'It's all our responsibility' relay race**

The York Sport Union is hosting a relay race to raise awareness of sexual violence in sports. The race will take place on the 11 February. The race will be made up of members of different sports clubs across campus. Turn up to help raise awareness and engagement in the fight against sexual violence in sports.

**Uni of York Boat Club win Crew of the Year**

The University of York Boat Club's Senior Men's Four have won British Rowing's 2022 University Crew of Year. British Rowing stated "This crew overcame all sorts of obstacles to produce a fine set of results last season including the club's best ever position at BUCS and a top four finish at Marlow Regatta."

**Kouhyar extends contract with York City**

York City fans can breathe a sigh of relief as their favourite 'crowd-pleasing' player extends his contract. Following the scramble to find a manager last year, new appointee, David Webb is elated in Kouhyar's choice to extend his contract. An instant loss of the fan-favourite player would not have been ideal for the start of Webb's York City career!

**Lowering of legal tackle height faces backlash**

The RFU is set to ban tackles above the waist for amateurs starting next year. This comes after 55 amateur players started a class-action lawsuit alleging they're not properly protected from permanent brain injuries. But the move has also sparked controversy, with a vote of no confidence potentially on the cards against the governing board. The rule may also be introduced into the professional game.

**York MP urges school to halt sport plan**

Rachell Maskell, Labour MP for York Central, has urged public school St. Peter's to withdraw its plans for new hockey pitches, stating the effects it would have on flooding and congestion in the area.

# Disappointing York side lose at home

## Anger from York fans after dismal display against mid-table Maidenhead

**Jack Bleksley** (he/him)  
SPORT EDITOR

	York City FC	1
	Maidenhead	2

THE YORK CITY fans showed their discontent with both manager and chairman following a lacklustre performance from an out of form City side.

Going into Saturday's match both sides were in desperate need of some league form. York had won only twice in 14 league matches and Maidenhead were winless in seven.

York made four changes to their starting lineup from their 2-0 defeat to Oldham in the week. The most notable being in goal as recently recalled Ryan Whitley replaced Ethan Ross after Ross suffered a head injury against Oldham.

Within the first minute York had a chance when Ryan Fallowfield put Shaqai Forde through on goal but a Maidenhead defender was there to meet Forde in the six yard box. Forde was making his fourth appearance for the Minstermen after joining on loan from Watford in December. The 18-year-old scored a hat-trick on debut against Maidstone earlier on in the month but hasn't found the net since.

Maidenhead came close in the eleventh minute after Ryan Whitley failed to claim a stray ball in his area leading to a shot from Reece Smith that was cleared off the line by York defender Ryan Fallowfield. Fallowfield was involved again at the other end soon after

when he scuffed his shot wide and over the bar.

Neither team could get the advantage in midfield in the first half, with possession changing frequently. It looked as though the two sets of defenders were playing some sort of heading drill with each other as neither team was passing fluidly.

Frustration was building amongst the York fans. Although clearly attempting to create from the back, York's defenders were lethargic and showed little creativity. Lenell John-Lewis and Shaqai Forde were making darting runs but the York defence did not possess the same level of urgency as their forwards.

What York did create, unsurprisingly came from long balls over the top of the Maidenhead defence. John-Lewis managed to control one of these deliveries but opposition keeper Alexis Andre Jr. was there to make a decent save to his left.

In the 38th minute of the match Maidstone opened the scoring and went one-nil up. Reece Smith picked the ball up near the halfway line and made an impressive 30 yard run before squeezing the ball through to Ashley Nathaniel-George who turned the ball into the back of the net to put his side ahead. York City might as well have sent the Maidenhead forwards an invite as they put up very little resistance to the run of Smith. It was a soft goal for the York men to concede and the fans let the coaching staff know with chants of "you don't know what you're doing."

York's best chance of the half came one minute into additional time of the first half when John-Lewis shrugged off a Maidenhead defender on the edge of

the box and struck a bouncing ball just wide of the far post.

Similarly to the first half, York had a chance early in the second half when Olly Dyson's ball into the box found an unmarked Shaqai Forde who could only head the ball straight into the goalkeeper's hands.

Cardiff loanee, Ollie Tanner, was making his first start for the Minstermen but failed to have any impact on the game. In the space of two minutes in the second half he squandered two chances by firing the ball over the bar. The second chance came after some smooth link-up play from Forde and John-Lewis but Tanner really should have done better.

In the 59th minute Maidenhead doubled their lead. They were awarded an indirect freekick just inside the 18 yard box after a backpass from York. The freekick was taken and, wrongfooted by a deflection, the York keeper could do nothing to stop it hitting the back of the net. The goal eventually went down as Cole Kpekawa's although originally being credited to Charlee Adams.

The York fan's were angered again when manager David Webb subbed off defensive-minded midfielder Dan Pybus for forward Manny Duku to bolster York's attack. This substitution was made more confusing by the fact that in the 82nd minute midfielder Patrick McLaughlin was brought on for attacker Tanner, when York were searching for a goal. Many at the LNER felt that Webb had got the substitutions wrong.

There was a glimmer of hope for York when captain Lenell John-Lewis poked the ball into the back of the net after Manny Duku beautifully controlled a long ball in the Maidenhead

box. With fifteen minutes left York had finally found that spark that they had been looking for all afternoon.

It wasn't to be for the home side who, despite a valiant attempt, could not muster any clear chances thanks to a regimented Maidenhead defence.

Another defeat for York City means that they have only won two of their last fifteen league matches.

Speaking to BBC York after the match, David Webb said: "We just weren't good enough. We started really slow. We never really got going until probably halfway through the second half. The tempo wasn't there. We gave away a soft goal, we let someone run from the halfway line. We just weren't good enough."

Throughout the game fans chanted "we want Hendo out." York City chairman and 51 percent shareholder, Glen Henderson, has become hugely unpopular amongst York fans after the sacking of fan favourite manager John Askey in November. The supporter's trust, who own the other 49 percent of the club, has said they have lost confidence in Henderson.

When asked about fan upset Webb replied "I don't blame any one of the fans for voicing their disappointment at the game because we were angry and disappointed so they had every right to."

A tired display from York on Saturday leaves them fifteenth in the table, seven points above the relegation zone. They will be desperate to stay up after all their hard work getting promoted last season. If they are to stay in this league, Webb needs to reinvigorate his side, who looked exhausted and disheartened after yet another defeat.

# First football match

## York RLFC Season

**Evie Winter** (she/her)  
DEPUTY SPORT EDITOR

MY FIRST IMPRESSION was the journey to the stadium – I stepped on the bus and it instantly flooded with excitable older men and their equally excited children. That was nice – was football more of a wholesome bonding experience than I had initially thought?

I arrived at the stadium just in time for kickoff and noticed that about ten seconds into the game, a player (Fallowfield, 22) already had mud stained shorts – what a curious mystery.

The game began and it all started to make sense. This would be a game of players throwing themselves across the pitch, sliding and diving to maintain precious possession of the ball that seemed quite a challenge.

In the thirty-eighth minute Maidenhead scored a goal. It was gentle, seeming to amble into the net. Apparently it wasn't meant to go in, but it seemed the York goalie had gone somewhere and the ball slyly crept in behind his back. In the following minute there was a shift in the feel of the game, York felt more desperate, and so they upped the aggression.

Another part of the game that I found fascinating was how the ball spent so much time in the air – the pitch was redundant for a good chunk of time. Headers were a well-used de-

fence for all players on the field – used too frequently, there is some cause for concern medically. Jack told me it's because both teams struggle to maintain possession of the ball – forcing loopy passes and head bounces.

There were also many, many injuries on the field – Maidenhead seeming to be the target. In the additional time of the first half, there was a dramatic fall from the Maidenhead team. A man in agony, head in hands, rolling around – he might not make it. Alas, his luck changes as the magic hands of the physio takes him for a walk across the pitch, and the player bounces up and continues, healed. The sixtieth minute, Maidenhead scored again off a free kick, unfortunate for York City. The crowd boomed and yelled obscenities at Maidenhead – chants aimed at the Chairman of York City – sitting mere stalls away from us.

In the seventy-fifth Minute, York scored and the crowd went wild, forgetting any and all hard feelings towards the struggling team in that glorious moment. I liked that about the game, there was instant support for whenever York did anything well.

Overall, the game was fun. Some of the rules were lost on me I will admit, but it felt good to be in an environment where people were united and emotionally invested into their team – I look forward to going to another.

**Jack Bleksley** (he/him)  
SPORT EDITOR

YORK'S PROFESSIONAL MEN'S Rugby League team are seeking promotion this season after making the play-offs last season.

A positive pre-season has seen the Knights beat League One side Doncaster, as well as fellow Championship team, Batley Bulldogs.



Against Doncaster, York had to come from behind to eventually win 12-28, scoring 20 unanswered points in the second half with Liam Harris starting with two tries and two conversions.

Their match against Batley was originally going to be held at the LNER Community Stadium. However, due to a frozen pitch, it was instead held at York St. John's Sports Park behind closed doors. York came away victorious with a comfortable 48-12 win against the 2022 Championship Grand Finalists.

Speaking on the York RLFC YouTube channel, Knights Head Coach Andrew Henderson was cautious to read too much into pre-season results stating: "I don't ever get ahead of ourselves through pre-season. [...] You can't read into them, there's a lot of variables within those games in terms of interchanges et cetera. But for me as a coach I'm just looking at the key things we've been working on in pre-season."

# Heavy defeat for Women's Rugby Union 2XV

**Henry Gee** (he/him)  
SPORT EDITOR

	York 2s	5
	Leeds 2s	27

IT WAS A thoroughly miserable afternoon as the University of York's Women's Rugby Union 2XV played the Leeds University 2XV on 25 January in their first match of the term.

For most of the first half the skies were grey and the rain was heavy. When the rain did eventually stop for the second, the wind picked up. Unfortunately for York, the final result couldn't brighten dampened spirits.

In conditions like these, greater emphasis is placed on the forwards;

keep the ball in hand and off the ground, so it doesn't get wet and hard to handle. And for the first 25 minutes or so, both sides were evenly matched on this front. Most of the play was centred in the middle of the pitch, with neither side able to consistently capitalise on line breaks. At this stage, it was becoming increasingly clear that any try was likely to come from a breakaway.

Frustratingly, such a break did occur, but from Leeds. Their full back coming up into the back line, giving them the extra player, was then able to overwhelm and weave through the York defence. Although she was eventually brought down, York couldn't organise quick enough, and Leeds' scrum-half was able to score, going over from the back of a ruck.

After this, the momentum was definitely with Leeds for the rest of the half, who never really left York's 22. That being said, the effort and intensity

of York's defence was incredible. Leeds went very close multiple times, even being held up on the line.

Towards the end of this period of constant Leeds attack, York finally won the ball back on their own line, and even managed to push Leeds all the way back to the half way line.

But once again, a breakaway run, this time by the Leeds fly-half from

about 15 metres out, ended in another try.

There was consolation however, and York were rewarded for their hard work when winger Adelaja scored a try after picking up the ball well within Leeds' half, and produced an incredible run, skilfully bobbing and weaving through two tackles. It was wonderful to watch.



IMAGE: TOM LAYTON

By the second half, it was clear that York were tired. It had been a tough half, and strong defence takes its toll. Leeds ended up putting a further three tries past York. Their forwards were just that bit stronger. Their number eight had an especially good match, often getting over the gain line and handling the ball well. They ultimately proved too much for York.

That being said, York never let up their intensity and dedication. The distribution from captain Jackson at scrum-half was always excellent, Williams and Cox-Kersley (prop and flanker respectively) made some bruising runs, and Riley at full-back always looked dangerous whenever the ball was in her hands.

The result was not what they would have wanted from such a spirited performance. But it does suggest that despite the rain and grey clouds, there is a bright future ahead for this team.

## Roses 2023: back in York after four years

**Henry Gee** (he/him)  
SPORT EDITOR

GET READY TO dust off your favourite piece of University of York merch, buy yourself some cheap, white face paint, and refind your patriotic voice – Roses 2023 is just around the corner. This time... they're on our turf!

This year's tournament officially starts on Wednesday 19 April, with Equestrian, followed by Athletics and Rowing on Saturday 22 April.

The main bulk of the tournament will be held on the weekend of the Early May Bank Holiday, Friday to Sunday, 28-30 April.

It'll be your chance to see a whole host of sports, from handball to football, and pole to pool.

It's the first time in nearly four years that Roses will be held in York, after cancellations due to Covid-19.

There was a 'Virtual Roses' in 2020, which had a focus on at home sports. The event saw over £4300 raised in support of the NHS.

Optics for 2023 are good; the last time Roses was held in York we beat Lancaster convincingly. In fact, York haven't lost a home Roses in nearly 40 years.

Overall wins are very even, York having won 28 and Lancaster 27. Lancaster will be looking to try and go level. But given that neither university has won away from home since York in 2008 (before that it was York 2002, and before that it was York again in 1992), such a feat seems un-

likely.

However, last year's tournament, held in Lancaster, was a bit of a white-wash. York lost 102 points to Lancaster's 241. That's a difference of 139; the widest gap in Roses history.

Could this be the year that Lancaster finally win again on York soil? Many of York's competitors will go into this Roses with vivid memories of last year's defeat; hopefully these can spur them on to victory.

The tournament originated in 1965, when then Vice-Chancellor of York, Lord James of Rusholme (the namesake of James College), proposed the idea of a boat race between the two newly established universities.

In consultation with students, this idea was expanded to a full five-day event featuring a host of sports, including tug-of-war, which is sadly no longer included.

Now a days, Roses is the jewel in the crown of the York Uni sport calendar. It brings all parts of the university together. Lecturers and students, Derwent and James, Campus East and West. Many alumni will also return to York to cheer on their old university.

Nouse will be reporting extensively over the weekend with exciting plans already in place for dynamic coverage of a wide range of sports. Keep an eye out!



Can York reclaim The Carter James Trophy, or will Lancaster repeat last year and cause a major upset? This year promises to be an exciting Roses, with a few special surprises soon to be announced.

So, get ready to find your voice, and let's turn roses white!

#RosesAreWhite.

## UYNC 3s at top of their game

**Evie Winter** (she/her)  
DEPUTY SPORT EDITOR

	York 3s	47
	Northumbria	33

UYNC 3S FACED an initially intimidating challenge from Northumbria University, who were at the top of the BUCS league.

The first quarter started nervously from both teams - UYNC unsure of what to expect from Northumbria, currently residing at the top of the league. A missed shot from York, on their centre pass, resulted in an immediate opportunity for Northumbria to bring the ball into their attacking third - creating panic on court - Northumbria proving themselves as worthy opposition.

Quick turnovers of centre passes for York - alongside strong defence meant that Northumbria was finding it difficult to bridge the growing goal difference. York GD (Harris) made a beautiful interception, giving York the opportunity for a relaxed passing order all the way to the GS (Borlos), securing a lead for York.

Towards the end of the first quarter, Northumbria was feeling the pressure and started to ramp up the aggression, creating an exciting battle in the shooting third.

Passes back and forth between the WA (Forsdick) and C (Lauder), meant that communication and flawless footwork would prove imperative to create an opportunity for the shooters to maintain their strong lead.

The final minute of the quarter tested York's ability to remain level-headed. Their relaxed play throughout the court was true testament to this and they conceded no goals in this fast-paced part of the quarter. The first quarter concluded in a strong 14-7 lead for UYNC.

The second quarter started with a determined Northumbria, hoping to level the score in this quarter with their renewed energy. They were off to a strong start, proving there was no room

for complacency in the UYNC defence.

However, the quarter soon took a turn as York's defensive third tightened their marking and increased pressure on the attack. York's Harris (GD), Broscumb (GK) and Lauder (WD) worked as a cohesive unit in the defensive third, forcing a series of long balls from Northumbria. York did not hesitate to take advantage of this, and chased down the ball soon to be delivered to the shooters.

The result of the second quarter was 24-13 to UYNC.

The third quarter: teams reorganised, revitalised and newly inspired by a healthy ten minute pep-talk from captains.

Once again, Northumbria proved their position at the top of the league table, with a noisy start, making excellent interceptions and intimidating goals scored.

However, York picked up their pace and managed to break a Northumbria centre pass, allowing them to breathe a sigh of relief. Later in the quarter York WD (Arevelo) made an impressive interception of a Northumbria centre pass - despite being double marked!

The York GA (Meyers) had a standout performance in this quarter, always making herself available for the drive by the post, showing off the intricacy of her footwork in the limited area of the shooting circle.

UYNC maintained their lead throughout the quarter, and it concluded with a 37-22 score to York.

The final quarter concluded in a confident win for UYNC, as they continued at the same level of intensity, not allowing fatigue to affect their strong lead. Aggression from players remained high - at the cost of some obstructions - but this offered further opportunity for pressure to mount on the Northumbria team.

The quarter concluded with a high standard of shooting from both GS and GA, combined with an impressive amount of communication and support from centre-court and defensive players, allowing for a convincing win for UYNC.

The scoreboard read 47-33 to York at the end of the final quarter - York 3s made the decisive win against the team at the top of the league! This was an exciting game and the whole team should be very proud, hopefully filled with confidence moving forward in the tournament.



IMAGE: BEN JORDAN

## Interview with: Franki Riley

Nouse Sport speaks to the  
York Sport Union President  
P.24



## Ronaldo's transfer

Gregor Brindle discusses Cristiano  
Ronaldo's lucrative move to  
Saudi Arabia, highlighting the ef-  
fect of greed in football  
P.25



## York Rugby League

Pre-season has been and gone.  
Jack Bleksley previews York's  
chances in both the Men's and  
Women's Rugby League  
P.27



# SPORT



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Tuesday 7 February 2023

## Women's Rugby 2s vs. Leeds

A dedicated display of determina-  
tion from York 2s, the wet weather  
unable to dampen spirits. Match  
report on P.27



# Try a new sport with the 'Turn Up and Play' sessions

New interest piqued? Henry Gee attends a 'Turn up and Play' Volleyball session for a new, supportive and volunteer lead fitness experience

**Henry Gee** (*he/him*)  
SPORT EDITOR

I saw an inspiring quote online that I'd like to share – "Every year you make a resolution to change yourself. This year, make a resolution to be yourself". It was anonymous, presumably because whoever wrote it was chased out of town immediately after they said it – the message asinine, the turn of phrase pretentious. Yet it did, however briefly, give me pause for thought.

I've always liked to think that I was fairly good at being myself. But lately, it seemed that being myself was beginning to resemble simply not caring about myself. I was unfit, unmotivated, and un-whatever-I-naively-thought-I-was. So, against the advice of an anonymous internet idiot, this year I made a resolution to change myself in order to better be myself.

I went onto the YUSU website, looking to see if there was anything on offer that I would not only be interested

in, but suited my less-than-ideal sporting prowess. And whaddayaknow, a University that contributed £5 million to a new sports centre, did in fact offer a sporting thing that piqued my interest.

"Turn Up and Play Sessions". Free, beginner-friendly, volunteer-led sports sessions held every week. A chance to get fit, learn a new sport, and meet people, without having to pay £320 a year for membership. I could have chosen from the likes of football (but I haven't acted in a long time), futsal (just sounds like a 6-year-old failing to say football), or touch rugby (lawsuits pending). Instead, I chose volleyball, a sport I have never played, and didn't even know the University offered. Admittedly, I am not a very good barometer for knowing what sports things the University offers. The sessions are every Friday in Arena 2 at whatever the sports centre on West is called. I went along to the first one of this term (20 January).

I am the first to arrive. I took it really well, only freaking out and having

to call my girlfriend to calm me down once. Quite proud of myself, actually. I tend to not be the most graceful when entering new spaces, so to not bail after freaking out was a genuine indicator that I was serious about wanting to get fit and make a permanent change. Slowly, people begin to filter in. No one really making eye contact, a lot of crossed arms, a lot of comfort fidgeting. About twelve people eventually turn up. We're given an introductory speech that highlights what these sessions will be about.

Above all else, the prevailing message was one of fun. Yes, you're here to learn a skill. Yes, you're here to get some exercise. But if you're not having fun, then in some regards they've failed at what these sessions are ultimately supposed to be about. As it turned out, the volunteers have been running these sessions since the beginning of the year, meaning I was one of only two people who hadn't ever played it before. We were given our own little corner of Arena 2, and taught the basics whilst

everyone else began hitting volleyballs at each other.

Volleyball is essentially made up of three things: digging, setting, and smashing. Digging is what I would think of as the classic volleyball pose, hands interlocked, elbows locked together, breasts plumped. The volleyball is supposed to hit you on the forearms, so we practised getting into the position and consistently hitting the ball straight up and down. Totally didn't hurt one bit.

Smashing is where, well, you, like...smash. I don't know how else to...that's it. Setting is the soft, pushed lay-up so that someone else can smash the volleyball. You have to pretend you're part of the Illuminati with your hands, and simply push the volleyball straight upwards.

Watching the volleyball leave and fall, all in perfect perspective from your face, staring upwards. The rafters fade away, only the volleyball, leaving and falling. Hypnotised. I snap out of it when I miss and get smacked square in

the face.

Anyway, all this culminated in a 6 vs 6 match, rotating positions every couple of sets. No one was especially great; the volleyball very rarely got over the net (that thing is a lot taller in person!). But every time someone would almost get to it over, or a little rally would miraculously happen, everyone claps. Everyone gives, and is given, words of encouragement.

The support from everyone, participant or volunteer, was amazing. I'm terrible at remembering people's names, but I wish I could because everyone was really lovely. It's clear that every volunteer is doing it because they love the sport and want others to feel even a fraction of that love.

Was I terrible, yes. Will I go again, absolutely. I felt great after, my mood massively elevated. I made a resolution to change myself, and feel so much better for it. I hope I can sustain that. Seems that anonymous exile was wrong. I am really sore though.