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Remember the fights about the fridge and the attempt to recreate your mother’s chicken casserole with one pan and half a carrot? You are not alone.

Living dolls 20
From artist’s aide to sex toy, the human surrogate has always held a sometimes disturbing fascination. CAM uncovers the strange history of the mannequin.

Profile 26
Doing research on the side of a volcano in North Korea is full of surprises, as Professor Clive Oppenheimer explains.

Reading minds 30
We read. And so we make discoveries, visit far-off lands, inhabit the past, the present, the future. All in the mind’s eye. But how does the brain do it? Lucy Jolin investigates.

Wars of the Word 34
An Anglo-Saxon hagiography of a female saint might not be an obvious cause of clerical controversy. But, as Dr Rosalind Love explains, the Life of Saint Eadburg is not all it seems.
Welcome to the Michaelmas edition of CAM.

As I write this, new students across Cambridge are coming to the realisation that while books nourish the mind, it is hard to think great thoughts with a rumbling stomach. Some, of course, will thrive on Hall fare alone. Some will be sustained by the Van of Life in Market Square or endless sandwiches from Sainsbury’s on Sidney Street. But some intrepid individuals will attempt to cook. You can read about those early efforts in our feature on student cooking on page 14.

Mannequins may not be in need of urgent suppers, but they still possess a strange, compelling animation. On page 20, to mark a major new exhibition at the Fitzwilliam, we explore the history of this far from humble artist’s tool. Elsewhere, on page 30 we investigate the science of reading and on page 34 discover why documents relating to the Anglo-Saxon Saint Eadburg are not all they seem.

Many, many of you have written with tales of exam dream woe. We have thoroughly enjoyed them, and while we have limited space opposite, have published as many as possible on the alumni website alumni.cam.ac.uk/magazine. We are hoping you will be similarly moved to share your student cooking adventures. We can’t wait.

**Mira Katbamna**
(Caius 1995)

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**Exam nightmares**

In the 27 years since I left Cambridge, I have never had a disturbed night caused by exam-related post-traumatic stress disorder. On the other hand I have lost count of the number of times I have woken, terrified, convinced that tomorrow is the first day of the Bumps and our crew has not been able to get out on the water to practise.

**Stefan Kukula** *(Churchill 1984)*

In 1954, a colleague was reading English Literature, which included knowledge of some French works. At his exam, the first question was a text in French which candidates were told to discuss. He studied the text carefully until half-time and then wrote slowly, “This appears to be in a foreign language,” before getting up and walking out. He was awarded a Pass.

**Neil Butter** *(Queens’ 1951)*

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**The best bed in Cambridge**

The article by Thea Hawlin first made me think of the “second best bed” in Carol Ann Duffy’s poem, *Anne Hathaway*, and then of Tony Harrison being put in mind of the action of the bedsprings when making love on hearing the sound of a saw going nearby in *A Kumquat for John Keats*. And then I thought of God knocking in *Batter My Heart* by John Donne. According to Channel 4’s 4Homes website, “You spend a third of your life in bed, so pick one that you love and, most importantly, that loves you.”

**Barnaby Lockyer** *(Emmanuel 1974)*

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**How the bicycle got its spokes**

I enjoyed the article on *How the Bicycle Got its Spokes* (CAM 72). However I think something rather important was overlooked. Andrew Ritchie (Trinity 1965), a modest chap whom I am glad to say is a friend of mine, designed the Brompton folding bicycle and has devoted almost all his working life to perfecting it.

**Henry Scrope** *(Selwyn 1960)*

When my mother Iris (nee McCrea; Newnham 1916) showed me the sights of Cambridge, she was careful to include the gravel paths in Newnham Gardens, where her aunt, Gertrude McCrea (Newnham 1895) had demonstrated to her tutor’s satisfaction that she could not only cycle along the paths, but also dismount without showing her ankles, and so could be permitted to ride into town.

**Rollo Woods** *(Jesus 1947)*

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**May balls**

I do distinctly remember at the King’s 1980 ball being felled by a single blow to the chin by a ticketless squaddie from Bassingbourn Barracks, in black tie (we all were; very un-King’s). Having been wrestled to the ground and firmly sat on by a burly policeman, my assailant promptly threw this weight aside and set off across the back lawn towards the river and into the night, pursued by a police dog and more coppers.

**Henry Faire** *(King’s 1976)*
I was at the infamous King’s May Ball in 1982. Attendance seemingly doubled over the evening as gatecrashers strolled in unopposed. [At breakfast] there were arguments and cries of “Do you know how much we paid to be here?” from genuine guests. In vain, a female member of the Ball Committee pleaded for two queues to be formed; one for paying guests and one for non-paying. I don’t think I ever did get my bacon roll, but it made for a memorable evening.

Bill Cashmore (Downing 1980)

I was surprised to see my photograph in the article about May Balls in CAM. I am the fourth reveller from the left in the post-ball (Downing, 1950) breakfast at The Orchard (still there, I’m pleased to see).

Roger Greene (Downing 1949)

Secret Cambridge

CAM 72 (Secret Cambridge) asserts that Hopkinson had five children. He actually had six. The sixth child, Ellen, married Alfred Ewing, who was referred to in the piece. The article also said that the only memorial to Lina and Alice is their grave. There is a memorial sundial to Alice in the gardens of Newnham College from which she had recently graduated. Lina, too, has a memorial, The Lina Evelyn Hopkinson Scholarship, which is awarded to pupils at Wimbledon High School for English Literature.

Frank King, Fellow of Churchill (Magdalene 1961)

Several readers alerted us to this mistake, – thank you, and apologies. Though we are glad to see you are paying attention.

Don’s diary

Dr Mateja Jamnik is a Senior University Lecturer in the Computer Laboratory.

Working in the area of AI means that I am often asked two things: “You mean artificial insemination?” and “If you are humanising computers, do you think they will take over the world one day?”

After clarifying that I am not in medicine, but working on artificial intelligence in the computer department, I reassure them that in my opinion there is no danger of machine rule any time soon: while we are good at simulating certain very specialised aspects of human cognition, we have no clue how to capture the complexity and richness of the vast interconnections of human activity.

Currently I am thinking about, as a friend of mine puts it, ‘humanising’ computers. Even though I am a lecturer within the Computer Science department, my fascination is not with machines, but with people and how they think and solve problems. I want to capture this human problem-solving ability on computers. Take a look at this so-called ‘mutilated checkerboard’ with two missing diagonal corners.

A famous problem asks: “Can you cover this board with dominoes?” There are many combinations that we could try, but consider this idea: let’s colour our board like a chess board, with the dominoes consisting of one black and one white square.

And now it’s obvious that the board has more black than white squares. But we need them to be the same number, so clearly we will never be able to cover it with dominoes. This is so easy for people to see and understand. But machines can’t really capture such intuitive thinking, yet.

My research aims to discover techniques towards this – I create computer programs that solve mathematical problems with diagrams, just like people do. My thesis is that recreating such a human ability on machines will give us clues about what happens when people think like this. The projects that my students undertake with me are all related to this basic thesis.

Of course, academic life is not just about research: we all must take responsibility for some department administration. For me, this has been particularly fulfilling, as almost 11 years ago I founded a national network for women in computing research called women@CL. In Cambridge, as elsewhere, we suffer from a huge underrepresentation of women in computing. While we can have little influence on how girls are taught scientific subjects at school – where, I think, the problems begin – I feel passionately that it is possible to influence and improve the experiences of women who have chosen to do computer science.

Through women@CL, we make women feel more welcome, better connected and better mentored, by informing, supporting and promoting them. As well as coffees, dinners and technical talks, we organise gaming events, awaydays at our sponsor companies, mini conferences, and team up new and existing members for peer-to-peer mentoring. Most of our events are open to women and men, and I would say that several thousand people have taken part in our events in the last 11 years.

Working as an academic and looking after a family with three young children is manic. So to preserve my sanity, I feel I must take some time to myself, mostly in the evenings and borrowed from my sleep account. I run half-marathons, play tennis and sing in a pop band, but the most memorable moment so far this year was the summer concert of the Cambridge University Musical Society Chorus. We were ready to perform, seated in a jam-packed King’s Chapel, waiting for the soloists and conductor to enter the stage. The Chapel was dead quiet, and for a few magical minutes, we were illuminated by the setting sun, shining through its magnificent stained glass. And I thought to myself: I am so lucky to live, work and play in Cambridge.
1 OCTOBER SPEECH
Vice-Chancellor addresses University

In his annual address on 1 October, the Vice-Chancellor spoke of the University’s obligations to society, quoting Winston Churchill’s declaration that “with greatness comes responsibility”.

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz told the Senate House that “our responsibilities lie deep and wide”. He hailed the University’s involvement in setting up a new primary school and technical college, its strengthened ties with the city and county, and its contribution to local industry. “It is no surprise that Cambridge has been described as a model to other areas of Britain,” he said.

The Vice-Chancellor commended the ability of University research to change lives, citing a new multiple sclerosis therapy that has received government approval. He also stressed the importance of outreach programmes such as Cambridge in Africa.

Sustainable funding was essential to fulfilling the University’s mission, he said, and among its cornerstones was the “generosity and engagement” of donors. “If we are to achieve our shared ambitions – as we must do to live up to our responsibilities to the world – we must develop our ability to attract philanthropic funding now and in the future.”

To read the address, or watch the abridged filmed version, please visit: cam.ac.uk/news/responsibility

Wolfson, the first College to admit both men and women as students and Fellows, celebrates its 50th anniversary next year.

The College was founded in 1965 to cater for graduate students as University College. The University granted the new institution one building – Bredon House – and its grounds between Barton Road and Selwyn Gardens, and provided it with funding to last for 10 years.

The College eventually took its name from the Wolfson Foundation, which in 1972 made a grant of £2m (worth around £23m today). Today, the 1000-plus student body comprises graduate and mature students from around the world.

Anniversary events will take place throughout 2015, including a celebratory weekend on 4 and 5 July – to which all College members are invited – and a public lecture series to be opened by the Chancellor Lord Sainsbury of Turville on 21 January.

Wolfson fellow and Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz will give the closing lecture on 16 December.

President of Wolfson College, Professor Sir Richard Evans, said: “This is a momentous point in the College’s history. We are looking forward to marking it throughout 2015, and to building for the next 50 years.”

wolfson.cam.ac.uk/50
MUSEUMS

Magnetised birds on the move

The freeze-dried lizards are packed, the sloth skeletons have been placed gently into their box and the giant armadillo fossil is gleaming and ready for transportation.

After a busy 16 months, the Museum of Zoology’s spectacular collection is packed up and ready to move into the Museum’s new stores as part of its £17.8m overhaul.

The move has created some unique challenges – and solutions. Faced with moving mounted birds, curators came up with an ingenious method of keeping them steady. Matt Lowe, collections manager, recounts: “Filling in gaps between the birds with tissue didn’t seem adequate enough to avoid damage of our fragile friends. Thankfully, our on-the-ball conservators discovered a remedy, courtesy of the Museum of Norwich.

“Simply, by hot-gluing magnetic discs to the underside of a specimen’s plinth and then placing it in a crate lined with a magnetic sheet, the problem is solved. Several mounted birds can sit, rock-steady and nicely spaced apart.”

The refurbished Museum of Zoology is due to open in the summer of 2016. Lowe added: “It’s hard to imagine what the new space will look like when the refurbishment is complete, but it will undoubtedly be an improvement. It will also be great to look back with nostalgia, remembering that at one time our collections were housed in an enormous wooden shed.”

campaign.cam.ac.uk/giving/zoology

CAMBRIDGE CLUSTER
Boldly go, Enterprise III

Alumni are helping some of Cambridge’s most exciting start-ups flourish – and benefitting from generous tax incentives – thanks to the University’s seed fund scheme. A new fund, the Enterprise Fund III, was launched in August, with the funds destined for around nine companies. Almost half of the investors in its predecessor, the Enterprise Fund II, were alumni. Firms supported in the past include VocalIQ, which is building a platform for voice interfaces, and Cambridge CMOS Sensors, whose mini sensors monitor air quality.

Micro-hotplates designed by Cambridge CMOS Sensors

SPORT

133rd rugby varsity

Every varsity match is a special occasion, but the 133rd meeting of Oxford and Cambridge Universities will have extra meaning this year.

The game on Thursday 11 December is dedicated to commemorating the 55 Blues who fell during the first world war.

This year’s game also has another edge as Oxford strive to win five matches in a row. Hoping to mastermind a Light Blue revival will be former England Counties scrum-half Harry Peck (Homerton 2013) who won his first Blue last season. He follows in the footsteps of his father, Ian, in captaining Cambridge.

Alumni who graduated this year will be eligible for £10 student tickets, both this year and next. The team relies on the support of alumni of all vintages, so come and cheer for the Light Blues.

thevarsamatch.com
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Hemingway’s Cuba
15 nights half board from £1795
A comprehensive tour of the Caribbean’s most intriguing island. Visit historic Havana, colonial Cienfuegos, UNESCO World Heritage site Trinidad, Varadero, Soroc, Santa Clara, Remedios and Viñales Valley. VJV Special Event included – Hemingway’s Haunt.

Discover Jordan
8 nights from £1145
A rewarding tour encompassing Jordan’s many cultural and historical treasures. Explore the Dead Sea, Aqaba, Petra and Amman, visiting Mount Nebo, Madaba, Kerak Castle, ancient Jerash, plus optional excursions to Wadi Rum and Little Petra.

Secret India
14 nights from £1695
Revealing India’s hidden gems, discover the temples and Golden Chariot of Hampi, Mysore palaces, a jungle safari in Bandipur National Park, beautiful hill stations, tea and coffee plantations, a spice trail and board the Nilgiri ‘Toy Train’ from Ooty to Mettupalayam.

‘Ice’ Land of the Northern Lights
3/4 nights from £895/£945
Iceland is well-placed to observe this spectacular highlight. Staying in Reykjavik and the Selfoss area, tour the Golden Circle and visit Vík and ‘the volcano area’. Gullfoss, Geysir, Thingvellir N. P., and the Blue Lagoon. No Single Supplement (ld. dates/availability).

Grand Tour of Indochina
20 nights from £2395
Discover Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, visiting Ho Chi Minh City, Hoi An, Hue, UNESCO site Ha Long Bay, Hanoi, Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Phnom Penh and the fablined temples of Angkor Wat. Enjoy a medley of river cruises, a Baci ceremony and an Apsara dance with dinner.

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New groups in Armenia, Ghana, Sweden and Egypt

Alumni in Ghana, Sweden, Egypt, and now Armenia have access to the ever-expanding global network. The four new groups offer alumni the chance to network, socialise and make new friends. Interested? To get in touch with the Egyptian group, contact Sherif Elnagdy (Clare Hall 2004) at sh.elnagdy@gmail.com and contact Oxonian Emos Ansah at emos.ansah@gmail.com for the Ghanaian Oxford and Cambridge Society. In Sweden, Matthew Webb (Trinity Hall 2005) can be contacted at matthew.webb@cantab.net. Interested alumni can contact the new Armenian group via Aram Mughalyan (Wolfson 2010) at aram.mughalyan@gmail.com for more details.

Unbound upgraded

The alumni travel programme magazine, Unbound, has had a redesign. Featuring easy-to-use icons to navigate trips, the upgraded Unbound puts trip scholars centre stage. And by popular demand, you can now contribute experiences and photographs to a new traveller section. If you don’t receive Unbound and would like to, email us at contact@cam.alumni.ac.uk.

Crossword prize bonanza

For those able to complete our fiendish crossword we have good news: the prizes have increased. The two runners-up will now receive CUP vouchers for £50 while the winner will receive our featured book, plus vouchers to take the prize to £100. Happy word puzzling!

Free Cambridge email

Don’t forget to register for your free University of Cambridge email address with Cantab.net. Once registered, you also have access to a searchable private directory of more than 74,000 members. It is simple for new graduates to migrate their University email account to Cantab.net. Go to alumni.cam.ac.uk/benefits/email-for-life.

A Cambridge Christmas

Looking for the perfect gift for a Cambridge student or graduate? The alumni team may have just the thing. New for this year is the beautiful alumni scarf, made in England and woven in Cambridge blue 100% wool. Bearing the University crest, the scarf costs £33 and is available online or from Ryder & Amies. Maker of bespoke handcrafted jewellery, Eva & Eva, has created a range of quirky alumni charms such as mortar boards, Cambridge bicycles and wise owls – perfect for a personalised bracelet. The range also includes embossed rings and cufflinks. Other merchandise includes luxury engraved pens by Onoto, personalised University satchels from the Cambridge Satchel Company, and silk ties from Ryder & Amies.

Orders must be placed by 3 December to ensure delivery before Christmas. Overseas deadlines and prices may vary.

GIFTS

ALUMNI EXPERIENCE

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alumni.cam.ac.uk/shop
Global Cambridge

Germany

Saturday 28 March 2015
Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science and Humanities

Declare “Ich bin Berliner!” and join the Vice-Chancellor, academics and thinkers from Europe and Cambridge for a day of lectures and panel discussions. On the agenda will be Anglo-European relations across the arts, sciences and technology. Speakers include Professor Sir Richard Evans, Regius Professor of History at Cambridge and President of Wolfson College; Simon McDonald (Pembroke 1979) the British ambassador to Germany; Dean Spielmann, president of the European Court of Human Rights; Nicola Padfield, Master of Fitzwilliam College; Professor Sarah Colvin, Schröder Professor of German; Professor Simon Goldhill from the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), and Dr Julie Smith from the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS).

alumni.cam.ac.uk/Germany15

Global Cambridge: Germany is part of an international series showcasing the work of the University in collaboration with renowned leaders and organisations across the world.

This event will take place in the stunning Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (formerly the Prussian Academy of Sciences) at Gendarmenmarkt in the heart of Berlin. The day will conclude with a reception hosted by the Vice-Chancellor where you can connect with fellow alumni and the speakers.

Check with your College for details of their plans.
Other events

Cambridge Science Festival
9–22 March 2015
Be illuminated at next year’s Cambridge Science Festival, which takes light as its theme.
Inspired by UNESCO, which has designated 2015 International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies, the Festival will feature a range of light-themed events.
Participants will rub shoulders with leading Cambridge scientists and gain an insight into their work. More than 250 events will include lectures, demonstrations and workshops, and the festival is set to welcome more than 35,000 visitors.
cam.ac.uk/science-festival

Cambridge Literary Festival
Various venues, central Cambridge
30 November 2014
The stellar line-up this year includes festival patron Ali Smith, award-winning writer Eimear McBride, former home secretary Alan Johnson, journalist Lynn Barber and sports presenter Clare Balding (Newnham 1990).
cambridgeliteraryfestival.com

Cambridge Union Society Bicentenary Debate
7 February 2015
Michael Howard (Peterhouse 1959), Adair Turner (Caius 1974), Ann Mallalieu (Newnham 1964) and Peter Bazalgette (Fitzwilliam 1973) will square off in the debating chamber at this event to mark 200 years of the Union.
www.cus.org/200th-Anniversary-2015

Britten War Requiem
Ely Cathedral
22 November 2014
The closing concert of the Cambridge Music Festival features Amanda Roocroft (soprano), John Mark Ainsley (tenor) and Neal Davies (bass) performing Britten’s deeply moving War Requiem with Stephen Cleobury conducting. The gathered choirs, orchestras and soloists will perform movements of the Mass for the Dead, interwoven with first world war poetry by Wilfred Owen.
kettlesyard.co.uk

Kettle’s Yard Chamber Concerts Winter 2014
27 November 2014
Clare Hammond, piano – Bach, Scriabin, Sibelius, Lipatti, Beethoven and Chopin.
29 January 2015
Laura van der Heijden (cello) Tom Poster (piano) – Beethoven, Schubert, Fitkin and Poulenc.
kettlesyard.co.uk

Alumni events:
E: events@alumni.cam.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)1223 332288
W: alumni.cam.ac.uk
Mike Gibson MBE (Queens’ 1963) is regarded as one of the greatest rugby union players of all time. While representing Ireland and the British and Irish Lions, he earned 81 caps between 1964 and 1979, while also running his own successful law practice.

Elaina Davis is a final year Geography student who is hoping to forge a career in international development. “But after that I’ll be teaching, I’ve worked with children a lot and I know that it’s what I want to do.”

For Mike Gibson, Q4A was a retreat: a secluded, tranquil space filled with natural light. Tucked away up a flight of stairs, it was a place where he could cut himself off and channel all his mental energy into his work. However, he hastens to add, the room did have another major attraction. “The boiler rooms are down below and that contributed to the heat in winter,” he points out. “The Cambridge weather can be quite severe.”

The big windows and natural light are still there, and they, in turn, made the room equally attractive to its current occupant, Elaina Davis. She’s more likely to be turning the heating down these days “to save money,” but, like Mike, she wanted a place to focus. “I think it’s nice to have a space where, if you want to, you can shut yourself away from it all,” she says. “If I want to go and socialise I can, but I don’t have that intruding all the time. Here, I can shut the door and if anyone knocks, I don’t have to answer!”
Mike nods. “I agree entirely,” he says. “I would play my rugby, have the after-match discussions, then back to the retreat. There was a large door that closed everything off.”

Sport, needless to say, was an integral part of Gibson’s university experience. In fact, he says, high-level sporting prowess sits very comfortably alongside academic qualities.

“The mental side of rugby is more demanding than the physical,” he says. “You can work hard and acquire the physical attributes if necessary. But mistakes are often due to a lapse in concentration, a poor decision, and that’s where the mental side is extremely important. The qualities of commitment and concentration, and the capacity to analyse situations and to make decisions are all very useful in developing academically, and also developing as a person.”

Sport has also played a big part in Elaina’s time at Cambridge. She began rowing in her first year and carried on until Easter this year, until the pressure of Finals meant something had to go. “It’s a sport that lots of people haven’t really done before,” she says. “So you get a lot of novices all trying it out and you’re all in the same boat. Nobody really knows what they’re doing, so it’s a great platform to learn from.”

Elaina’s knick-knacks and photos make the room very much her own, along with a homemade collage of National Geographic covers on the wall by her bed. (“My mum asked me what I was going to do with all my old copies, so I thought I’d go through and choose my favourites. They’re very colourful.”) But Mike is delighted to find that one piece of furniture – a rather imposing oak dresser – still remains from his time.

“And there was a table here – it’s not the same one, but it’s in the same place,” he says. “And a gas fire. I acquired a couple of pictures from the previous occupant, who had abandoned them. They weren’t unpleasant, so I kept them. One was a view of Coventry Cathedral. I didn’t really change anything. I had very basic requirements.”

The view hasn’t changed either: the bicycle sheds outside still stand. Elaina, like Mike, has watched the trees change colour through the seasons, and the occasional sight of the top of a punting pole just visible on the river has also caused her mind to wander.

“That was a distraction,” says Mike. “You’d think: I should be out there…”

Although the room has seen obvious changes – the laptop on the desk has long since superseded the wooden message box that still adorns the door – the attitude that Mike brought with him more than half a century ago is still very much alive today.

“I think Elaina is well-equipped to look after her future,” he says. “She is very much in line with my own life here. There’s a discipline in her life. She can isolate herself when necessary, when work is required, but at the same time achieving a balance. She is very well placed to deal with whatever is ahead.”

Anne O’Neill is reading English Literature at Wolfson College

It may seem an unusual choice, but the best bench in Cambridge, in my opinion, is a weather-worn wooden bench at the corner of Market Street and Sidney Street. It doesn’t look out on gardens or palatial buildings; it is not secluded or quiet (in fact, the main view is mostly dominated by the shop fronts of retailers Next and Jack Wills). But this makes it the perfect place to sit: a straightforward tourist-free zone, where I can idle without fear of featuring in holiday snaps, or being pestered to go punting.

But for me its appeal is more than simply an absence of tourist bustle. Rather, sitting here allows me to appreciate the little details: the faces of the people passing by, oblivious to my nosey stares; the 19th- and early 20th-century buildings now occupied by shops, but still bearing the architectural embellishments – ironwork balconies and windows adorned with pediments – of an earlier time. The bench even invites its own form of musical chairs, as I have never found it empty and, when one person leaves, another comes – almost instantaneously – to take their place.

Anne O’Neill is reading English Literature at Wolfson College

Unlike many grander seats, this is a comfortable spot to park your posterior. It’s perfect for slouching, and free of the awkward slipperiness of its younger compatriots. It’s not a seat of great antiquity, so you don’t have to worry about how to behave: you can munch on the noisiest bag of crisps, or slurp your tea. The best time for visiting the bench is in the early morning, when the air is crisp and the only warmth comes from the sunlight filtering through the leaves of the large ash tree growing in the churchyard behind. At this time of day, the bench seems to possess a curious stillness, almost projecting a force field of calm holding out against a city on its way to work.

I like to take my favourite drink here (a chai tea latte, in case you’re wondering) and read my book. It even has a built-in drinks holder, as the second slat, closest to the back of the bench, dips slightly lower than the others, allowing me to rest my cup securely as I sit and watch the film reel of Cambridge life from the best seat in the house.
to describe the indescribable, he says: “When I first stepped out of Block E onto this beach / I could not record any words at all, / So I chewed two of the orange-flavoured pills / They give us for morale, switched on my Sony / And recorded this.”

“I think that, in one moment, / All the books in Cambridge / Leapt off their shelves, / Spread their wings / And became white flames / And then black ash. / And I am standing on the beach at Cambridge. / You’re a poet, said the Regional Commissioner, / Go out and describe that lot. / The University Library – a little hill of brick-dust. / King’s College Chapel – a dune of stone dust. / The sea is coming closer and closer.”

The bunker off Brooklands Avenue was built between 1953 and 1956 as the Cambridge Regional War Room. One of 12 similar regional sites across the UK, it was designed to protect a regional commissioner and their staff from enemy attack by an atomic bomb.

Almost as soon as they were built, the arms race rendered them redundant, and the system of emergency central government was restructured to counter an even greater threat: the hydrogen bomb. Adding a second, larger bunker in 1963 turned it into a Regional Seat of Government: one of three purpose-built central command Armed Forces Headquarters for post-nuclear Britain.

Although it was never used during the Cold War, the bunker was battled over by developers – keen to bulldoze it when redeveloping the surrounding land for housing – and English Heritage, which wanted to preserve it.

“It clearly expresses its grim function through its Brutalist architectural treatment,” reads the English Heritage Inspector’s report, published in 2000. “It is thus a unique example in Britain of a structure designed to operate in a post-nuclear attack environment where strong architectural consideration has been given to the outward appearance.”

Arguing for the developers, architect Owen Luder (famous for his Brutalist shopping centres in Portsmouth and Gateshead, both of which were demolished between 2004 and 2012), said that far from being a true example of Brutalism, the bunker is “no more than two concrete boxes joined together”.

Grade II listed in 2003, the bunker will at last be used in 2015, more than half a century after it was built. This winter the University will refurbish the 1960s block to provide environmentally controlled storage for the University Library and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. The 1950s block will remain untouched. It is a happier future than that imagined by Mitchell, whose poem concludes:

“But in one moment all the children in Cambridge / Spread their wings / And became white flames / And then black ash. / And the children of America, I suppose. / And the children of Russia, I suppose. / And I am standing on the beach at Cambridge / And I am watching the broad black ocean tide / Bearing on its shoulders its burden of black ashes. / And I am listening to the last words of the sea / As it beats its head against the dying land.”
Remember (almost) poisoning your whole staircase? The fights about fridges and the attempt to recreate your mother’s chicken casserole with one pan and half a carrot? You are not alone.

Words Sarah Woodward
Photos Tim Morris
Namita Panjabi is the co-owner (with her husband) of MW Eat, the London restaurant group that includes Chutney Mary, Veeraswamy, Amaya and Masala Zone.

At home, like most middle-class families in Bombay, we ate what we called ‘English’ food as well as Indian. Coming to Cambridge was the first time I had left India and I discovered English food wasn’t like ours. We had roast chicken with ginger, garlic and cardamom, shepherd’s pie made with masala minced lamb, and there were spices in our bread and butter pudding.
On the other hand, the first time I ate out at the Kohinoor I told my friends it wasn’t Indian food at all, and was not the way Indians ate at home! This ignited a fire in me and the only answer was to start cooking myself, which I had never done. I thought it would be easy and bought pounds of minced lamb and spices, planning to produce wonderful keema kebabs for all my friends. Of course the meat wouldn’t stay on the sticks, so I had to ring up my mother, making a trunk call through the operator. With her recipe I made chicken biryani and soon had all the girls along my corridor chopping garlic and chillies. We’d invite over our men friends, including some Indians who we were convinced would appreciate anything as they were starved of home cooking. Then a male Indian friend from Ahmedabad invited me to dinner in his rooms at St John’s. He had a wonderful dining table and served me a perfect cheese and chilli soufflé. I realised a pile of rice and spiced mince wasn’t going to impress him, so I was quickly back on the phone for a new recipe, the Sindhi seyal gosht, which you slow cook in a sealed pot – ideal for college cooking. Some years later, I married Ranjit Mathrani (Sidney Sussex 1962) and we started Chutney Mary, with support from my sister Camellia Panjabi (Newnham 1961), a successful hotelier and restaurant creator with the Taj Group. Chutney Mary set out to showcase gourmet foods from six or seven regions of India at any one time. It also was the first Indian restaurant to take wine seriously. Between all our restaurants we now serve real Indian food to close to a million customers — and it all started for me in the pantry kitchen in Newnham.
Chicken à la Kia Ora, with boiled rice and sherry, with a starter of tinned Branston flavoured baked beans.
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Nick Lander
(Jesus 1970)

Nick Lander has been the restaurant critic for the Financial Times since 1989.

The facilities at Jesus were pretty restrictive – I remember having one ring. My cooking was mostly toast and brown rice (it was the 1970s), luckily not together. I came from a very loving Jewish home in Manchester where men were simply not expected in the kitchen. My mother sent me a fruitcake regularly which didn’t last long – it made me hugely popular. I ate mostly in Hall, though I made my own breakfast. Now I wish I had taken more advantage of the wine cellar and I know Jancis [wine writer Jancis Robinson, Lander’s wife] feels the same of her time at Oxford. But back then I simply wouldn’t have known what I was being served. It was only when I became a commodity trader in Hong Kong that I started to learn about wine, as knowing your way round a wine list impressed the client.

I had one very good tutor of medieval history who had a wooden leg and a glass eye; we regularly got through a bottle and a half of sherry and then he went off to Hall much more sober than his students. When I ate out with friends it was always at the Corner House on King Street. It was close by, it was cheap, it was filling and it wasn’t Hall. I had been to Greece in the summer of 1970 so I already had an interest in the food of the region. We always ordered moussaka, with chips of course – I think the owner would practically have fallen over if we had eaten anything else.

We didn’t have the choices students have now; I’d encourage them to eat out as a group and share so they can try lots of different dishes. And I would have been most surprised as a student to see what I am doing today.

Some of your worst student recipes

Susan Grossey (New Hall Murray Edwards 1984)
White rice with ketchup
Well, it’s a tomato sauce.

Richard Baron (Selwyn 1977)
Mushroom pasta
Boil macaroni. Tip in mushroom cup-a-soup concentrate. Serve.

Mark Pallis (Hughes Hall 2001)
Chicken à la Kia Ora
Duck à l’orange, juice style.

Anne Westland (Homerton 2009)
Tuna pasta
Largest bag of pasta. Smallest tin of tuna. Add Campbell’s condensed tomato soup. Stir and serve.

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Living dolls

From artist’s aide to sex toy, the human surrogate has always held a sometimes disturbing fascination. Pamela Evans uncovers the strange history of the mannequin.
Child No. 98 was expensive to buy. It had been made in Paris, like other top of the range stuffed lay figures. So in the winter of 1865, the artist John Everett Millais rented it for 15 shillings from Charles Roberson and Co, one of London’s leading suppliers of artists’ tools. He returned it in the summer of the following year and it languished in storage for 50 years.

But Child No. 98 lives on, even though it has never been alive. Its shiny, scratched head and noncommittal gaze can perhaps be glimpsed under the flowing locks and exquisitely toned skin of Millais’ daughters, Carrie and Mary, in the portraits Sleeping and Waking. Children are famously noncompliant sitters: they fidget and complain. They were likely to disturb that white satin bed cover, carefully arranged over a white cotton sheet which, in turn, lies against a little girl’s lacy nightdress. Was Child No. 98 the perfect compromise? An unreal child helping to realise ultra-reality? It is just one of the strange contradictions, projections and desires that swirl around the passive figure of the mannequin.

“Being in the presence of a life-size human surrogate can be both companionable and disturbing,” says Jane Munro, keeper of the Fitzwilliam Museum’s Department of Paintings, Drawings and Prints, director of studies in history of art at Christ’s, and curator of a new exhibition, Silent Partners: Artist and Mannequin from Function to Fetish. (Child No. 98 will be there, acquired as it was by the Hamilton Kerr Institute for the conservation of easel paintings, after Charles Roberson and Co changed hands in 1987.)

“On one level, the mannequin’s life-like appearance and ability to change character – and even ‘mood’ – through its varying poses and gestures invites us to strike up a natural alliance. It prompts us to try to ‘read’ it as we might another human being, but persistently gives little away,” she says. “They are just human enough – but there is an impenetrable barrier that can sometimes disturb us. They are silent and inert, but in at least some cases give the impression of a being in which life is not absent, but in abeyance.”

Mannequins began as tools fashioned from wood, wax or clay: functional objects for artists.
to manipulate and to use to hone their skills, and continue to be used by artists in this way today. Passive, inert and manipulable, over the years the ‘lay figure’ or ‘mannequin’ evolved. The crude approximations of wooden limbs lengthened, smoothed, gained coherence and even movement with the addition of articulated wood, metal and rubber internal chassis, or ‘skeletons’, as they were called. Their bodies became formed with stuffing for muscles and flesh-pink stockinettes for skin: they grew breasts with nipples. Their bald heads grew hair while papier-mâché heads helped their faces smooth and blush. They smiled and frowned and wept, and even moved. The faceless, plain lay figure was no more.

“Just as technological advances enabled mechanics and makers to achieve new levels of realism in the fabrication of mannequins, so too they made it possible to imagine fictional non-beings that resemble us in all but our inconveniently restrictive moral code of behaviour – androids, or more commonly gynoids, capable of unthinking violence and cruelty,” says Munro. “Artists sensitive to this disturbing, liminal quality of the mannequin drew more consciously on the psychological discomfort of the uncertainty they provoked.”

By the mid-19th century, mannequins weren’t content to stay shut up in the studio. From shop windows, paintings, exhibitions, museums, and even the morgue, the faces of mannequins in fashionable Paris looked out on their creators. They had always played many roles, of course, besides being simply drawing aides. As a descendant of the Pulcinella character in the commedia dell’arte, they were ideal figures of fun, wilfully abused as non-people. Now, children desired their ‘fashion dolls’. Others desired the mannequin in very different ways and Paris gained renown as the leading supplier of sex dolls. The fashion mannequin evolved in little more than a generation from being an upholstered human replica to becoming a sleek, abstract artistic creation. Mannequin maker Pierre Imans described himself as a ‘sculptor and ceroplastician’ and gave his incredibly lifelike wax creations names. Even artists lauded as ultra-realists, such as Gustave Courbet and Millais, used mannequins. They were good subjects: they sat still, they didn’t disturb carefully arranged dress folds, or burble on endlessly about battles they had seen. Of course, it was still necessary to disguise that fact. No artist wanted his work to be dismissed as ‘stinking of the mannequin’.

But then something strange happened: the artist’s tool became a fetishised object and an artwork in its own right. The Surrealists, in particular, were fascinated by mannequins. They picked them up on their contradictions: a power to disturb versus an utter compliance, an attempt at reality always remaining slightly unreal. “They developed a special fascination with the display mannequin – a ‘phantom object being’, as Dali called it – that was poised at the interface between fashion, the body and sexual desire,” says Munro.

“Just as they explored the unconscious through automatic writing, drawing and painting techniques,
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so the Surrealists’ use of mannequins can be understood as a reflection on the uncanny processes of mechanisation, eroticisation and commodification. However, mannequins could also form part of a broader reflection on modernity and on the human condition, whether as the alienated and expressionless manichino – a tailor’s dummy, a ‘man without a face’ – in the work of Giorgio de Chirico, or in Sándor Bortnyik’s satirical evocations of modern man and woman in a brave new modernist world.”

Mannequins continue to fascinate artists today – the work of Jake and Dinos Chapman is a case in point. But aside from art, mannequins have permeated popular culture to an extraordinary extent, and each generation breathes new life into their static smiles. The dreamer who falls in love with a mannequin or a doll is a well-worn trope, and often they are a benevolent presence. Pygmalion – the story of a sculptor who carved his ideal woman, Galatea, then saw her come to life through his love – became the basis for My Fair Lady. The cautionary tale of Pinocchio became a Disney classic; 1980s romantic comedy Mannequin saw the Pygmalion story reinvented for the teenage market as a hapless Andrew McCarthy fell for Kim Cattrall’s shop dummy. And it could be argued that the idea has moved into the digital universe: in Spike Jonze’s Her, a hapless (again it is implied that someone who becomes obsessed with a doll is usually lacking in other areas) Joaquin Phoenix falls in love – and has what he considers a deep and profound relationship – with the avatar on his smartphone.

But the flipside of this magical idea – that if the model is compelling enough, it may come to life – is also deeply spooky. Listen (as you can at the Fitzwilliam exhibition) to one of Thomas Edison’s phonographic dolls, an attempt to make the mannequin even more real, and it is not hard to understand why. Edison hoped his creations would be wildly popular. Instead, children were terrified. But this almost-human-but-not-quite presence does not have to be sinister. Throughout the centuries, mannequins have evolved to reflect our dreams, our emotions. They are so much more than Chucky-doll horror-movie schluck, or crude approximations of female sexuality. They are, as Schaffer points out, a blank slate onto which our desires can be projected. And they’re still ever-present, just in new forms.

Today, we confront replicas and avatars of ourselves on a daily basis, in print, on screen and virtually, in computer gaming, holograms and so on. Astonishing developments in robotics and the creation of ‘living dolls’ and ‘reborns’ show that the drive to create ever-closer approximations of what one 19th century mannequin maker called ‘the human machine’ has not diminished. Yet the artist’s mannequin, and its closest kin, the shop window dummy, continue to intrigue us,” says Munro. “I think part of its on-going fascination lies in its resistance to interpretation, but also in its ability to be constantly re-interpreted, and given new identities. Mannequins can be what we want them to be, but remain distinctly, and mutely, themselves.

Fire breather

Conducting scientific research on the side of a volcano in North Korea is full of surprises, says Professor Clive Oppenheimer.

“We’re all breathing in molecules that have been inside the Earth and have come out and been exhaled by a volcano,” says Clive Oppenheimer, Professor of Volcanology in the Department of Geography.

You probably breathe in rather more of those than usual inside Professor Oppenheimer’s airy room at the back of the Geography building on Downing Site. Right now, it’s packed high with rugged wooden boxes with twisted rope handles, the kind you imagine were used by Victorian explorers in Africa, or in the days of Scott and Shackleton. Which is appropriate, because they currently contain bits of Mount Erebus – the great Antarctic cone that is the most southerly active volcano on earth.

Antarctica is one of several places around the globe where Oppenheimer researches volcanic degassing (the release of gases by volcanoes through a variety of different processes) and atmospheric chemistry – but, remarkably, it isn’t the most exotic. In addition to sites in Eritrea, Italy and Iceland, Oppenheimer works on a volcano in North Korea.

Mount Paektu straddles the border between China and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). Its immense caldera is filled with a turquoise lake and its slopes are thick with volcanic pumice.

“About a quarter of the volcano is in North Korea,” Oppenheimer explains, “and the border goes directly across the crater itself. I’ve only been on the Korean side, but you can see many visitors over on the Chinese side, where it’s known as ‘Heavenly Lake’ – it’s a real tourist destination.”

Words Victoria James
Photograph Marcus Ginns
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Paektu occupies a key position in North Korea’s national narrative: Kim Il-sung led the fight against Japanese imperial forces from the volcano’s slopes some 70 years ago. His son Kim Jong-il, official biographies say, was born in a secret military camp there – a nativity foretold by a swallow and marked by a double rainbow.

These days, however, Paektu is as much a source of concern as of celebration for the North Koreans. That’s because around 1,000 years ago, Paektu unleashed one of the biggest eruptions of the past 10,000 years, known as the Millennium Eruption.

And recently, it’s been rumbling again.

“We were amazed at how seriously the North Koreans took the volcanology,” says Oppenheimer, “and how keen they are to build their ability to monitor and forecast future activity [on Paektu].”

It was that concern and interest that prompted the secretive state to extend an invitation to Oppenheimer, which reached him through several channels and contacts. Securing approval, financing and equipment for the project required an even more tortuous set of negotiations.

Finally, with backing from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Richard Lounsbery Foundation in Washington DC, an NGO in Beijing and another in Pyongyang, equipment loans from the Natural Environment Research Council, diplomatic paperwork signed by the Royal Society, and permission from both the British and US government to import scientific equipment to North Korea (which is currently under export sanctions), the project got underway. A small team of three – Oppenheimer, Cambridge research student Kayla Iacovino, and Imperial College London seismologist Dr James Hammond – conducted their first research trip to the isolated country in the summer of 2013.

Oppenheimer was impressed by the expertise and mathematical abilities of the scientists he met in North Korea. “I was surprised how many observatories and pieces of equipment they have: one of them inside the crater itself,” he says. “But because of the isolation they’ve not been attending conferences, haven’t been exposed to the latest techniques or methods of interpreting data. So that’s an expertise we’re hoping to share with them.”

He is gently reticent on his experiences beyond Paektu’s slopes, simply saying that the team is “looked after wonderfully. A lot goes on behind the scenes to make everything possible, including all the important foreign protocol issues”. In fact, it is an NGO, the Pyongyang International Information Center on New Technology and Economy, that effects the primary liaison with the North Korean scientists with whom Oppenheimer collaborates. Most communications were mediated through their interpreters.

But despite the challenges, Oppenheimer is clear on both the scientific and wider benefits of the collaboration: “It’s a good experience, and there’s a lot of interest in what we’re doing from the bigger science-diplomacy angle. We’re hoping to bring several of the Korean scientists to the UK next year to present the findings.”

The need for diplomatic delicacy makes Paektu less accessible to Oppenheimer than his primary research volcano, Mount Erebus, despite the latter’s location in the most hostile continent on Earth: Antarctica.

He’s worked here with the US Antarctic Program every December since 2003, and says that Erebus is, in fact, one of the most welcoming and rewarding of volcanoes. “Because it is covered in ice, you can actually get around it easily on snowmobiles.”

One experiment involved positioning 100 separate sensors, “and on other volcanoes that would be quite laborious, but on Erebus you can just zip around”.

With the nonchalance of a true field scientist, he isn’t much bothered by the temperature, typically around 
\(-2.5^\circ C\) (\(-3^\circ F\)).

“Minus 20 is a hot day and we’d probably be in our T-shirts. Minus 30, we’re starting to say ‘Oh, it’s getting a bit cold.’ But the key thing is the wind. If there’s no wind, it’s gorgeous, and of course you can work as long as you like because it never gets dark at that time of year.”

While the less dedicated among us might quail at the thought of an endless working day, it’s plain that Oppenheimer loves the bleak beauty of ever-changing Erebus.

“There are these ice caves, Alice in Wonderland places with all sorts of crystals,” he says. “Huge hexagonal plates that look like upturned champagne glasses. They change from year to year.”

But his primary passion is the work itself: “The data are spellbinding. I’m sure I’ll never solve everything they contain during my whole career.”

Oppenheimer is a scientist of the invisible – his techniques sample the gaseous emissions of volcanoes, and he is at the forefront of developing new atmospheric sensing techniques and applications. He studies the relationship between this degassing and the eruptive behaviour of volcanoes, and explores both the predictive potential of this data, and also what it tells us about atmospheric composition over time.

On Erebus, for example, no one had noticed that the volcano has a pulse – until Oppenheimer and his team came along.

“The lava goes up and down by one or two metres, rising and falling every 10 minutes,” he explains. “You can’t see it. People had been working there for 30 years and had never seen this pulse, but we could see it in the gas measurements. There’s quite a pronounced change in [gas] composition through this 10-minute cycle, and then we saw the lava level going up and down more or less in sync.

“Occasionally, the lava lake explodes, and when it does, those measurements are very different again. We can measure those explosions, and the gas coming out, every second, 24/7. We’ve seen some extraordinary things.”

The span of time covered by Oppenheimer’s research is vast, looking both into the future, with predictions of future volcanic activity, and into the deep geologic past. But despite the almost unimaginable scale of their existence compared to ours, volcanoes are intimately entwined with human life, he believes.

“I’m interested in that deep time perspective on volcanoes as a resource, because our human ancestors used volcanic rocks in their tool making. And in that part of the world, in Afar [in Africa, where humanity began], which is an extreme desert, the volcanoes are higher up, with more hospitable microclimates, so volcanoes have been magnets for human settlement for a very long time.”

They also, of course, helped provide the very air that we breathe, influencing the composition of the Earth’s atmosphere. So it’s not surprising that we are fascinated by volcanoes, he says.

“There’s a stage, aged six or seven, when you’re either into volcanoes or dinosaurs or both. They’re violent, spectacular, devastating. In many parts of the world people live on them, and they represent their landscape, their resource base – and maybe catastrophes every now and then.”

When major eruptions do happen, the University’s volcanology students and scholars are often among the first on the scene. They were in Iceland within 24 hours of the seismic events and ash cloud of Iceland’s Eyjafjallajökull in 2010, and again during the eruption of Bárðarbunga in 2014.

“We’ve got the capacity to get on a plane within 24 hours. It’s part of the reason for the mess in the office,” Oppenheimer explains with a smile, indicating the crates that crowd around his desk, and the sensing equipment mounted on a tripod in the corner. “We do try to respond rapidly to interesting events.”
We see words, we see pictures. We watch films, create shapes, construct intricate diagrams, sense colours, feel the world fall away. The act of reading is practically universal, yet intensely personal. At its best, so vivid – yet so difficult to describe. What goes on in our heads when we silently read? What's happening when we carry out this apparently simple act of decoding a set of symbols?

It’s not all a mystery: there’s plenty we do know. Since the advent of the MRI scanner, more than 30 years ago, we’ve become used to news stories of how various bits of the brain are seemingly bound up with bits of our consciousness, usually illustrated with a picture of the brain showing the supposed ‘hot spot’, phrenology-style. It would be nice to think that an activity like reading did indeed have its own dedicated spot in our heads, but, naturally, it’s a bit more complicated than that.

Dr Matt Davis is a programme leader in the Hearing, Speech and Language Group at the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit. They do indeed spend a lot of time observing people in MRI scanners and watching areas in their brains light up. But, he says, the ‘where’ in the brain only makes sense in conjunction with the ‘how’. How is it that our brains can make sense of the symbols to recognise words, understand meanings and put together sentences? It’s not one brain area involved, but many.

We read. And so we laugh; we cry. We make discoveries, visit far-off lands, inhabit the past, the present, the future. All in the mind’s eye. But how does the brain do it? Lucy Jolin investigates.
The Butterfly

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“Reading involves visual, memory, language and speech parts of the brain,” Davis points out. “It’s not one part of your brain which is involved with reading, listening or understanding – it’s a whole network. We’re trying to map those processes to understand how those different brain areas work together to support complex tasks like reading.”

Not all of these processes are involved in working out meaning. There are two ways in which we read: lexical and sub-lexical. Sub-lexical reading involves processing words as sequences of letters – breaking down the word ‘cat’, for example, into a sequence of letters, ‘c-a-t’, mapping those letters on to sounds and then putting the sounds together to make a word. This is how we teach children to read. Yet, skilled readers depend much more on a lexical pathway: recognising words as a whole and accessing their meaning more directly.

“Trying to understand how words and meanings are stored in the brain is even more complicated,” says Davis. “With brain imaging, we often see activation of motor or sensory images when reading written words. For example, the motor cortex is involved in controlling movement. In the motor cortex there’s a map of the body – the hands are in one part, the legs are in another part. That map isn’t only active when people move their hands or legs. You can also see activation of the leg area when you read words like ‘kick’ or ‘run’ that refer to leg movements. So, it has been proposed that knowledge of the meanings of words is grounded in the movement system, or the sensory systems (vision, touch, smell, etc) that are involved in experiencing those concepts. Yet, when a politician ‘runs for office’, or someone ‘kicks the bucket’ there’s no literal movement involved. We are still trying to understand how the brain comprehends words, given that so many of them change their meanings in different contexts.”

Try to describe the experience of reading silently and things get a lot more difficult. For a start, we inevitably use the language of the senses – seeing, hearing, tasting. “If I’m reading for myself in a quiet place, then I definitely ‘hear’ the words,” says Bryan Appleyard (King’s 1969), critic, author and special feature writer for The Times. “If have to do a lot of reading which is just for work, either reading books that I’m reviewing or reading stuff on the internet, it’s more rapid and I don’t ‘hear’ it.” He ‘sees’ arguments as structures – the literal ‘shape’ of an argument. “This often makes me completely incomprehensible to other people,” he says. “Once I’ve seen an argument, I see it so clearly that I often can’t explain what it is to other people. It’s just too obvious to me. I can’t see why they can’t see it. It’s frustrating. I’ve never found a way around it.”

Yvonne Salmon, lecturer and preceptor at Corpus, spanning law, English, art history and film, is another for whom reading isn’t just words. She is a synaesthete. When she reads, text becomes interactive, multi-dimensional and multi-sensory where numbers and words spark colours, smells and tastes. Days have different colours, too, but that doesn’t mean that every Monday in Salmon’s world is awash in blue. The colour is something she senses but doesn’t experience. “One day at primary school, I was telling everyone how nice it is that the number seven is a lovely blue-green colour,” she remembers. “I have assumed that everyone saw seven as a colour – which shows how locked in we are with our consciousness. We don’t realise that other people are seeing things, perhaps, in a different way to us.”

Davis describes himself as “voracious. I will eat the words as quickly as I can. That probably means I’m reading more shallonly than someone who will savour the words and read a bit more slowly.”

Indeed, a recent colloquium Eating Words: Texts, Images, Food, hosted by the Centre for Material Texts, delved into the metaphors and materiality surrounding words. “I’m interested in how we recover a material engagement with language that perhaps you lose through speed reading or silent reading,” says Dr Jason Scott-Warren, the Centre’s director. “A lot of poetry is concerned with trying to reawaken a sensory engagement with words – so you’re not just treating the text like a window that you look through. You’re engaging with something which is in itself sort of crunchy and tactile – the words that are in your mouth which can be chewed upon, savoured, swallowed, or spat out.”

Dr James Riley, fellow of English and director of studies at Corpus, hears a ‘neutral voice’. “Unless an author is specifically attempting to convey a particular accent, I tend not to interpret a narrative voice in sonic terms. My reading patterns generally recognise tonal shifts and linguistic ambiguities as the primary sites of meaning in a text. Having said this, when narrative prose offers up passages of exposition – ‘he sat down’, ‘she did this’ – I often find it rather jarring,” he says. “It is as if the traits that have come to characterise the hypothesised ‘speaking voice’ have momentarily disappeared. This doesn’t mean I cease to ‘hear’ a voice but it does highlight the extent to which one can be conscious of a distinct persona created through the use of literary language.”

To add to this complexity, the way we consume words is changing fast: last year, a study of 14,910 young people aged eight to 16 from the National Literacy Trust found that, for the first time, children are reading more on-screen than they are in print. Is the experience of reading different on a Kindle, a desktop, or a phone? There’s always a degree of detachment with any reproduction, points out Scott-Warren. Read the collected works of Elizabethan writers in modern editions, he says, and they are like works of art, framed for admiring contemplation. But if you go back and look at the original printed manuscript or printed editions there are other things going on.

“I was working on a maverick Elizabethan writer called Sir John Harington for my PhD,” Scott-Warren recalls. “He was a godson of Elizabeth I and a failed court poet, someone who was forever trying to climb the greasy pole. He wanted to get a job, a court office that would prop up his status, through his poetic performances. But you only really become aware of that when you go back to the original books. Individual copies are customised for presentation to particular people: they are all carefully targeted productions. He’s deciding who gets to read each book, marking up particular copies in particular ways for particular readers. These are not just words on paper. They are guided missiles which are intended to strike home and blow up in all sorts of colourful ways.”

So texts are not simply transparent bearers of content. The medium is a large part of the message, in terms of both what we take from a text, and how we experience it. Trying to decipher a 16th-century scrawl is obviously far more challenging (and either exclusionary or absorbing, depending on your particular obsession) than reading nine-point Sabon (as you are doing now).

Why is the experience of reading so particular? It is, of course, an unanswerable question, because it’s different for everyone. Perhaps we enter a third space, of neither author nor reader. Perhaps we simply focus on a mental image born of long association. Perhaps, as Appleyard says of Saul Bellow and Vladimir Nabokov, there’s some kind of transformative power in the prose itself. “Once you’re enthralled by those sentences then you are there. It’s happening. The texture of the prose takes you into it.”

Or perhaps all, or none, of these things happen. “The idea of asking what happens when we read is like asking ‘what is consciousness?’,” says Salmon. “It’s a mystery. We construct a text as we read it. And in the process, we deconstruct ourselves.”
WARS OF THE WORD
An Anglo-Saxon hagiography of a female saint might not be an obvious cause of clerical controversy. But as Dr Rosalind Love explains, the Life of Saint Eadburg is not all it seems.

Illustration Adam Simpson
Among the manuscripts in Hereford Cathedral’s chained library is the sole surviving part of a multi-volume collection of Saints’ Lives from the 12th century. Written in Latin, the manuscript’s contents cover November and December feast days and include, among the Church’s widely known saints, a few local heroes, including Edmund, king and martyr, patron of Bury. And tucked in next to St Lucy, for 13 December, is the Life of an obscure female saint, Eadburg, followed by 10 posthumous miracle stories focused on Eadburg’s shrine and holy well at Lyminge in Kent.

Saints’ lives – hagiographies – are a rich source of insight into the early medieval mind. Although reflecting popular beliefs up to a point, the many surviving texts composed in Latin addressed an elite (ie literate) audience. Far from being straightforward wonder tales, miracle accounts in particular often reveal a writer’s propagandist objectives – and, sometimes, his sense of humour.

My questions, then, transcribing Eadburg’s Life and miracles, were less about the miracles themselves and more about the authorship and intent: who wrote this, when, and why? In the 1080s, the location of Eadburg’s body and her very identity were hotly disputed at Canterbury. A community of canons at St Gregory’s Priory claimed that they had fetched her relics from Lyminge church in 1085, along with those of another Anglo-Saxon saint, Mildredh (the 7th-century abbess of Minster-in-Thenet). The monks of St Augustine’s Abbey indignantly retorted that they had since the 1050s possessed the body of Mildredh, for whom they had an especial veneration, and they wondered who Eadburg even was. My first assumption on discovering the text at Hereford was that it must be tied up with this post-Conquest tug-of-war.

We learn about the dispute from a tract by the foremost hagiographer of the day, Goscelin, a monk of St Augustine’s. His peppy Booklet Against the Disputed at Canterbury of Eadburg’s body and her very identity were hotly contested by his fellow chronicler, the canons of St Gregory’s. They accused Goscelin of having faked miracles at Eadburg’s shrine, but the monk of St Augustine’s retorted that they had since the 1050s possessed the body of Mildreth, for whom they had an especial veneration, and they wondered who Eadburg even was. My first assumption on discovering the text at Hereford was that it must be tied up with this post-Conquest tug-of-war.

Vain Usurpers of St Mildreth the Virgin (Libellus contra inanes sanctae virginis Mildrethae usurpatores) dismisses the claims of St Gregory’s. He scoffs at, and – crucially – quotes from, documents which the canons adduced to support their assertions. We already knew that the passages he quotes match up with a Life of Mildreth and Eadburg (without the accompanying miracle-stories) that survives in a 14th-century manuscript and would thus be a later copy of whatever was trumped up at St Gregory’s. But Goscelin’s quotes also match the Hereford Life of Eadburg, copied out perhaps only 50 years after the dispute. With great scorn, but also only too revealingly aware, as a professional hagiographer, of the tricks of the trade, Goscelin exclaimed:

At Lyminge church some St Eadburg is popularly invoked. Yet there is no inscription describing who she was, what her lineage or when she was born, how she lived her life or came to Lyminge. We would have kept quiet about her if those usurpers [the canons at St Gregory’s] had not tried to include our Mildreth with her, like stolen booty, deceiving themselves that both lie side by side, and even putting their names together in the title for the new little pamphlet composed to bolster their fictions. Such a recent author, and one so lacking proof, has no idea what to concoct about her unknown earthly life, other than heaping upon her the commonplace virtues of other saints.

Did Goscelin have the Eadburg miracle stories before him, as well as the Life? Were they composed and put with the Life after 1085, to provide an authenticating backstory for the canons’ newly-acquired relics? Goscelin certainly assumes that their documents are recently cobbled together. To me, too, this seemed the most likely scenario, not least because the years after the Norman Conquest saw an extraordinary burst of Latin texts by authors like Goscelin about earlier Anglo-Saxon saints, many of them women, who, for whatever reasons, hardly figured in the written record before that time.

The Anglo-Saxons were familiar with the lurid tales of the Church’s early martyr-virgins such as Agatha (often shown in medieval iconography carrying, on a plate like jellies, her breasts, cut off by her persecutors) or Agnes (sent to a brothel, then beheaded). And they clearly had their own holy women: the Venerable Bede admiringly commemorated Æthelthryth of Ely (aka Etheldreda or Audrey), who got through two marriages without losing her virginity, and he also mentioned (with slightly less gush, because she was probably not virginal) the wise abbess of Whitby, Hilda. There were undoubtedly many more such women, but while lives of male Anglo-Saxon saints abound, after Bede (who died in 735), there is no known equivalent for England’s female saints for more than 300 years. Hence the late 11th century seemed the probable setting for the Eadburg material.

Goscelin’s criticisms of the Eadburg Life are well founded: its only ‘facts’ are chronological impossibilities betraying the author’s ignorance, put alongside the rather commonplace depiction of...
a devout and prayerful abbess. What about the miracle-stories, though? Goscelin does not quote from them or mention them explicitly, and I rather wonder how he would have judged them if he had.

Let’s leave aside the question of the text’s date for a moment, and consider its attitude towards the supernatural. At first our little collection of stories also appears somewhat commonplace: healings, visions, punishments of blasphemers, the kind of thing churned out by the yard for saints all over medieval Christendom. Yet on closer inspection, several of the miracles are framed in unusual ways.

The writer opens on a disconcerting note:

People ask why the Lord shows the signs of miraculous power through some saints during their lifetimes, but through some He does not… The answer, at least in our opinion, is that He knows the minds that are firm and the characters that are steady. But for those whom He has perceived to be weaker and likely to turn from humility to boasting, He manifests their merit after death. Accordingly, after the blessed virgin Eadburg’s death, He disclosed far and wide what her merit had been.

In-life miracles are for saints whose humility is rock solid: ‘accordingly’, God only allows Eadburg post-mortem miracles – that is, the Almighty considered her too weak to resist pride? Very flattering. Very misogynist? In fairness, this may not have been meant to be as negative as it seems: writers like Augustine suggest that posthumous miracles are better, precisely because they protect a saint from the sin of pride. These comments also cover up another truth, evident from the preceding Life: our author knows so little about Eadburg that he can’t report any miracles she did while alive and prefers, interestingly enough, not to invent any.

The first miracle-story is similarly double-edged. A sick boy in Wessex dreams he will be healed by drinking from St Eadburg’s well. Waking, he asks for this drink, but his father has never heard of a saint by that name (not even a female one, the author adds). Eventually, however, he does recall hearing about an Eadburg while passing through Kent. But, he says, it’s much too far to fetch water from there. The boy is desperate, so his family draws water from the local well but tells him it is from St Eadburg. The faithful lad says the Lord’s Prayer over the cup, signs it with the cross in the name of Christ and Eadburg, drinks and is healed.

The father’s pragmatic approach undercut what we’d imagine ought to be a hagiographer’s important point: that a trip to Lyminge is essential. The attitude assigned to him also seems cynical and doubting: trick the gullible child with plain well water. Albeit with a wry smile, the author means to imply – one supposes – that Eadburg is so powerful that simple invocation of her name by the faithful suffices: she can work at a distance. Just as she can work close at hand to the great disadvantage of faithless persons falsely invoking her, as we learn from the tale of the thief with which we began, a humorous caution against swearing while at stool. Such was the power that those who possessed a set of relics could harness.

And then there is the fifth miracle. For any historian interested in the survival of ancient documents, it plays like a horror movie. We’re shown the Archbishop of Canterbury busy decluttering his office, burning ‘redundant and useless’ charters (important documents which record grants of land or rights). He accidentally sweeps up a charter pertaining to St Eadburg’s Lyminge land holdings, but miraculously it won’t burn, unlike the others. This rehashes the comforting hagiographical trope that something belonging to a saint or to his or her community is wondrously fire resistant. Yet this particular tale is about more than that, and a telling clue, I think, about the institution, possibly even the person, most likely to have had an investment in recording Eadburg’s miracles for reasons beyond simple veneration.

The Anglo-Saxon charters relating to the lands of Lyminge church ended up in the archive of Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury, because after the Lyminge monastery declined, its church came into the Archbishop’s possession. Some of these charters are genuine and early, but others look suspiciously like they were forged or doctored to seem ancient. Our miracle-story works towards the same goal: the Lyminge document resisted the Archbishop’s unintentional attempt to destroy it; clear proof that his title deeds for that land were venerable and somehow special. Not to mention the fact that he controlled a church housing the relics of a powerfully protective miracle working patroness.

My research into these new texts is still work-in-progress, and one avenue I am pursuing is to try matching the author’s ostentatious prose and idiosyncratic lapses in Latin grammar with better known texts already in print. Going with my initial assumptions, I looked to late 11th-century hagiography for comparisons. But the data, to my great surprise, has started to point backwards to an author known only by his initial, ‘B’, used in the opening of his quirky Latin biography of St Dunstan (an Archbishop of Canterbury who died in 988), written in the 990s.

Perhaps B was commissioned to write up Eadburg by one of Dunstan’s successors, and produced a text that is deeply flawed, because of his desperate lack of information about Eadburg, yet profoundly instructive about his attitude towards women’s holiness and how he thought miracles were perceived by his contemporaries. When later deployed at St Gregory’s for another purpose, his work did not stand up to the scrutiny of a more expert hagiographer.

If the match with B holds good – for now only an ‘if’ – then this fascinating text, tucked away at Hereford all those years, will be the only surviving Latin account of a female Anglo-Saxon saint from the period between Bede’s Ecclesiastical History in the 8th century and the Norman Conquest in the 11th. Pretty amazing for a “pamphlet composed to bolster a fiction”.

Dr Rosalind Love is a Reader in Insular Latin, Head of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic and a Fellow of Robinson College.
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This year, the University was awarded funding for a University of Cambridge Primary School in North West Cambridge. Research carried out there will improve understanding of teaching and learning throughout the UK.

With the financial pressures of the economic downturn still evident, it is unlikely that we can look to government for any substantial expansion of research funding. There has been a welcome commitment to capital infrastructure development and we will take advantage of that where possible. Similarly, charities continue to provide valuable resources, as do the European Union and other overseas agencies. However, our academics already exploit these diverse sources – so where can further growth occur?

Philanthropy always has been, and always will be, a cornerstone of the University of Cambridge. Donors share our sense of responsibility and commitment to society. Their generosity and engagement enables us to fulfill our historic purpose. If we are to achieve our shared ambitions – as we must do, to live up to our responsibilities to the world – we must develop our ability to attract philanthropic funding now and in the future.

To finish, let me return to the conclusion of Churchill's speech at Harvard. It was couched in language that would have been instantly meaningful to those from Cambridge who gave their lives in the first world war, and resonates still to our purpose as a University today. I quote: “Let us rise to the full level of our duty and of our opportunity, and let us thank God for the spiritual rewards He has granted for all forms of valiant and faithful service.”
My research is primarily focused on causal theories of gender inequality, public policy, political theory, structural injustice and rights. My latest work has been on the political turn against human rights, potential public policy mechanisms for the enforcement of rights in both national and international settings, and quotas.

On the specific topic of quotas, I, like most people, have mixed feelings. On the one hand, I don’t think the pace of change, if left to voluntarism, will be fast enough to be just – that’s clear from the data – so we need to do something more than raise awareness and hope for the best. On the other hand, the main objections to quotas raise important questions that need serious thought.

The blanket quota is an effective, but blunt, tool when it comes to dealing with inequality. Dr Jude Browne believes a new ‘critical mass marker’ approach may offer a better way forward.

Illustration Satoshi Hashimoto
Much recent attention has focused on the European Commission’s proposal (draft directive COM 614), to place an ‘obligation of means’ on listed companies in EU member states to ensure that at least 40% of non-executive directors or 30% of all directors of each corporate board are female by 2020 – a policy designed to be terminated in 2028. In Norway this sort of quota policy was enforced in 2003 and now 44% of Norwegian corporate board members are women. Several other countries such as France, Italy, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium have followed suit in some sense. However, the UK has argued against it.

Although I think there is a little too much focus on corporate boards and not enough on wider sex segregation patterns, if we look to the top 500 companies of the London Stock Exchange, for example, they provide a stark set of figures to think about. The 2014 Female FTSE report shows that only 21.8% of non-executive directors are women and only 5.9% of executive directors – that’s only 17.4% of directors overall.

The corporate board is an interesting case study for quotas because representation of women (which is often invoked as a good reason for quotas) isn’t particularly relevant to the corporate board context, whereas it is vital in others. For example, there has been a great deal of interesting work done on representation and the composition of certain political bodies and election criteria for legislatures. However, representation is not the only possible justification for ensuring members of certain groups are present. If there are large numbers of suitable female candidates (or indeed any other group) for a particular set of posts or rank, and yet consistently a notably disproportionate number of them fail to make it, then I think we ought to consider action on the grounds that something is going wrong. There is an injustice of some sort – not necessarily intentional but nevertheless an injustice. However, blanket quotas such as those adopted by Norway and proposed by the EU attract fierce opposition.

The principal objections to quota policies can be summarised into three general claims. The first is that quotas will produce selection procedures whereby people are chosen not on merit but rather on the basis of their physical or social characteristics; this in turn is assumed to reduce the talent pool within institutions and their potential to function optimally. The second objection is that affirmative action is a form of compensation that is itself discriminatory and unjust. The third is that affirmative action serves to undermine the achievements of the successful minority who have risen to senior positions on their own merit.

In my work I am interested in the philosophical ideas behind policy debates and I have considered each of these objections with reference to three particularly significant political theorists, Ronald Dworkin, Anne Phillips and Iris Marion Young. Whilst none attempts a specific defence for female quotas for corporate boards, I think they all have something interesting to say about quotas or affirmative action which is useful for consideration of the EU’s proposals: Dworkin’s work on rights and ‘merit candidates’, Phillips’s analysis of meritocracy, and Young’s account of structural injustice. These provide some very persuasive arguments and in some cases can be used as compelling counter arguments to the second and third objections to quotas, namely that quotas are tantamount to ‘unjust compensation’ and serve to ‘undermine non-quota candidates’.

However, none of these three thinkers provides a sufficient solution to the first and most challenging of the three objections in the context of corporate boards, whereby it is vehemently argued that the very best experts are required to run some of the most complex institutions in the world irrespective of any particular physical or social characteristic. Young and Phillips rely on group absence as a justification for interventionist action, while Dworkin groups all those who have suffered prejudice together as requiring remedial action. These approaches, while often important starting positions, in many ways mirror the problems of current policy proposals in that they are not sufficiently nuanced to cater to complex contexts demanding particular skills and experience.

Thinking about how we might move forward, I have developed a new approach to quotas, which I call the Critical Mass Marker approach (CMM) that builds directly on my critique of Dworkin, Phillips and Young and is designed to provide a more proportionate response to particular institutions’ segregation patterns.

CMM is about analysing data in detail, and setting tailored quotas according to the size of certain critical mass markers where appropriate. This sort of approach has considerable advantages over blanket quotas across a whole sector or set of institutions, in that it doesn’t determine a target potentially out of line with the specific pipeline of talent, and so side-steps the most challenging objection to quota policy. It also necessarily addresses segregation patterns throughout an institution, not just the very top level.

There is, of course, a lot more to say about this approach and how it should sit with other policies focused on gender equality, and this term I will present my research in Brussels to the European Institute for Gender Equality and members of the European Parliament and Commission for discussion. It is hugely interesting to combine theoretical work with practical policy application, and I hope that at the very least I can start a new sort of debate on how we might engage with the most stubborn sex segregation patterns.

The Critical Mass Marker approach is designed to provide a more proportionate response to particular institutions’ segregation patterns

Dr Jude Browne is the Jessica and Peter Frankopan Director of the University of Cambridge Centre for Gender Studies and Fellow in Social Sciences, King’s College. For more information see www.gender.cam.ac.uk
Twelve years ago, Professor Patrick Boyde, outgoing holder of the Serena Chair of Italian, was clearing out his books. He passed his younger colleague a fragile, battered novel. “I wonder if you’d like this?” he asked.

It was a rare first edition of Primo Levi’s now classic account of his experiences at Auschwitz, Se questo è un uomo (If This is a Man). First published in 1947, only 2,500 copies of this edition were ever printed. Most are assumed to have been lost in the 1966 Arno River flood that devastated the National Central Library in Florence, where most of those copies were stored.

“It was a lovely gesture,” says Professor Robert Gordon, now himself holder of the Serena Chair and the recipient of Boyde’s gift. “And there’s a bit of mystery behind this book, too. It was given to Boyde in turn by his teacher, Kenelm Foster, a great Cambridge scholar of Dante and Petrarch, and a Dominican friar. Nobody knows how Foster got hold of it – but it must have been very close to its original publication.”

Gordon first encountered Levi’s works on his parents’ bookshelf as a teenager in the 1980s, alongside novels by Umberto Eco and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Yet If This is a Man didn’t grab him from the start. He was far more interested in Levi’s later works such as The Periodic Table, which recounts episodes from Levi’s life as an industrial chemist through the framework of chemical elements. So although Levi was one of the modern Italian writers that inspired Gordon to study modern languages and literature, it wasn’t until years later that he felt ready to return to his first work.

“When I came to choose a topic for PhD research, I remember quite vividly deciding not to follow up Primo Levi, as I was almost too attached to him as a writer,” he says. “He had a real impact on me, intellectually and emotionally. It just felt wrong at that time to turn that into a professional qualification.

“So I chose a different path for my PhD. I would come back to Levi when I felt ready to work on the Holocaust. Seven or eight years later, I made that decision – quite tentatively at first. I felt it would be intensely difficult and traumatic to immerse oneself in writing about the Holocaust, and to think one could have something to say about it on the back of figures as powerful as Levi. When I went back to explore his work in a more systematic way, I realised how everything in his writing and his world derived so powerfully from If This is a Man.”

The book’s impact, says Gordon, lies partly in Levi’s power to reach readers with no direct experience of the Holocaust – an idea Gordon explored in his 2001 book Primo Levi’s Ordinary Virtues: From Testimony to Ethics. Much literature of the Holocaust is opaque, difficult, deliberately incomprehensible, he points out. But Levi is the opposite – a clear-minded, scientifically
trained writer who wants to go through his experience step-by-step and come to some sort of understanding of both the Holocaust and what he went through – even if his ultimate understanding is that there is no simple way to explain it.

And Levi’s evocation of the humanity inside the camp is extraordinarily powerful. “There’s a sense of population – dozens of individuals milling around, of different nationalities and character traits,” says Gordon. “They survive, they don’t survive; they go through terrible decisions. Yet they remain human beings.” One day, Levi finds himself on a work detail, delivering watery, nutrition-free soup. He walks with Pikolo, a French boy who asks him to teach him some Italian words. Levi decides to recite a portion of Dante’s Divine Comedy, which he had learned by heart at school and for which he received a good mark. But after the first few lines, there is “a hole in my memory”. He tries desperately to remember. Then the words come back – “when at last hove up a mountain, grey / With distance, and so lofty and so steep / I had never seen the like on any day…” – and remind him of the mountains near Turin. “Enough, one must go on, these are things that one thinks does not say.”

“And then it all disappears in an instant,” says Gordon. “Because they arrive back at their work detail, with the soup, and everyone desperately tries to get as much food as they can, because they are starving to death. This chapter of the book was cited by one critic as the single piece of writing which he received a good mark. But after the first few lines, there is “a hole in my memory”. He tries desperately to remember. Then the words come back – “when at last hove up a mountain, grey / With distance, and so lofty and so steep / I had never seen the like on any day…” – and remind him of the mountains near Turin. “Enough, one must go on, these are things that one thinks does not say.”

Recent reads

Antonella Sisto, Film Sound in Italy: Listening to the Screen (Palgrave, 2014)

“Film is the visual medium par excellence, but much work in film studies neglects the dimension of sound, which is at least as important. Sisto’s book looks at the politics and aesthetics of sound in Italian film from Fascism to the 1970s.”

RJB Bosworth, Italian Venice: A History (Yale, 2014)

“Venice exists for all of us in a haze of past glories, but Bosworth reminds us how this city has a complicated modern history too, starting from when it became an ‘Italian’ city for the first time in 1866.”

Franco Fortini, The Dogs of the Sinai, trans. Alberto Toscano (Seagull, 2014)

“One of the most sharply contrarian Italian intellectuals reacts to the crisis in the Middle East in 1967, and in the process interrogates his own memories of persecution as a Jew in Fascist Italy.”

Extracurricular

Cambridge Soundtrack

Sara Mohr-Pietsch

Interview: Caroline Roberts

Sara Mohr-Pietsch
(ORCH, Newnham 1998)

48 Preludes and Fugues for the Well-Tempered Clavier by Johann Sebastian Bach

I was in the last year of students to sit a Finals fugue exam before they scrapped it. Our lecturer told us that the best way to learn how to write a fugue was to play through one of Bach’s every day, working through the whole book of 48. I was bit of a mug, so I actually did it. I had this beautiful room with a piano in Clough Hall overlooking the gardens, and I would sight-read a fugue at the keyboard every morning. It’s an extraordinary way to start the day as it clears your head and focuses your mind. I wish I had a piano at home now to carry on the tradition.

Faire is the Heaven, Motet for Double Choir by William Henry Harris

As a choral scholar in Selwyn College Chapel, I sang Evensong three times a week. The Anglican choral tradition is incredibly rich, and this glorious double-choir anthem is one of the pieces I particularly loved. The text, by Edmund Spenser, describes the ascending celestial hierarchy, and the music builds with it. Choral singing is an amazing training in sight-reading and musicianship – you’re often performing new pieces on less than an hour’s rehearsal. I think I learnt as much about music from my time in Chapel as I did from my course. I still sing in church, occasionally, on a Sunday morning with friends in London.

The Complete Birth of the Cool by Miles Davis (Blue Note Records, 1998)

This compilation includes all the Birth of the Cool live and studio sessions from 1948-1949. It came out the year I started at Cambridge and I listened to it over and over in my first year, while drinking lots of black coffee. There are some amazing musicians, like legendary drummer Max Roach. Although some of the tracks are upbeat, the overall feeling is hazy and über-laid back. The first track, Move, is the anthem of cool, and I also love Moon Dreams and Boplicity.
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A sporting life
Triathlon

Words Becky Allen

When we meet in the University Library Will Kirk, captain of the Cambridge University Triathlon Club (CUTriC), is cradling an armful of books on east Africa. Heading into the final year of his History degree, he’s getting a headstart on his dissertation.

“I’m working on independent Tanganyika. My aim is to look at reactions of people on the ground – the European settler community, Indian commercial classes, and the African community – through newspapers, diaries and memoirs,” he explains. “The challenge is that I know very little about Tanganyika.”

And the challenge of excelling at not just one, but three sports, was what attracted Kirk to triathlon. That, and getting sidelined by his school rugby team.

“I played rugby until I was 14, but I wasn’t very good at it. The team dropped me a hint because I had a season as bench warmer and water boy, so I decided it wasn’t for me.”

Television coverage of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing provided the perfect opportunity to window shop for a new sport and, following a short fling with hockey, Kirk settled on triathlon.

Three sports to train for means a packed schedule, with academic work bookended by training every morning and evening. “With 13 to 15 sessions a week, it’s very time consuming. But the variety keeps training interesting, I’m not sure I could just run, swim or cycle every day.”

Bizarrely, Kirk’s bathroom also once figured in his training regime. Unlike other multi-discipline sports, triathlon combines its three elements into a single race, so it pays to practice the transition between the swim and the bike.

“It’s an odd discipline, because you can’t win the race in transition, but you can certainly lose it,” says Kirk. “And it’s a horrible feeling when something goes wrong in transition. You’ve worked really hard on the swim, and as you’re struggling out of a wetsuit everyone streams past you on their bikes and you have to play catch up.”

“It’s something that takes practice,” he adds. “I used to sit in a cold bath at home and then get out and see how quickly I could wrestle out of my wetsuit!”

Triathlons also give him a chance to travel, although his memories are invariably coloured by race results. Despite its scenic setting, Geneva – his first international race – got the thumbs down this year. “The day before I was due to travel I fell off my bike and sprained my wrist. I shouldn’t have raced, but I gave it a go and it was terrible – very painful and I didn’t finish.”

Kirk has fonder memories of London’s Hyde Park, where he finished ninth in the Age-Group World Championships:

“The swim was in the Serpentine and it was quite similar to the London 2012 Olympic course, so that was an added bonus.”

As well as racing, Kirk is keen to grow the club and forge links with its alumni during his captaincy. “We want to put an Oxbridge alumni team together and attract some sponsorship. That would mean we can buy bikes and wetsuits to rent to students who want to try the sport. Racing bikes are expensive – they eat into the student loan a lot – and that cost is the main barrier to entry to the sport.”

An alumni team would help people stay in touch with each other and with Cambridge. “It’s nice to maintain these links, especially as it’s such a social sport,” he says. “Time here goes so quickly. I’m starting my third year at Emma, but in lots of ways I feel like I’ve only just arrived.”
ACROSS
A  Enormous bird in sunless plain, gander’s worried, duck’s occupying rail’s ground (7;6;6)
B  Mother faces mature friend to establish the truth about start of robbery in blown up mint (6;6;6)
C  Fish wife harbouring love, madly fanatical, not about to allure immediately (6;7;8)
D  First to have universal money, our American fellow is backing e.g. greyhound with it (6;6;6)
E  Sketchily learn about German serf hiking laboriously for example to live with heartless turncoat (6;10;6)
F  Leader Heath upset part of Cyprus, Siam, India and United Nations Association (11;8;6)
G  Ecstasy? Last of rockers confused it with black evil, like a skinhead on illicit drug (6;7;6)
H  Donkey to trouble rook in the manner of pig eating young fish (6;5;7)
I  Company with new party rule miscalculated credit – tense in meeting with the French (6;6;6)
J  Special Irish drink wrecked mostly poor vagrant over by gnarled beech (6;10;6)

DOWN
1  Revolutionary old women like Bohemian dances (7)
2  Police pull up in front of main road (6)
3  Etonians struggling with clue explanations (12)
4  Dwelling in partial darkness miles away (5)
5  Idle person second in class (6)
6  Father’s wearing special back protector (7, 2 words)
7  One taken in by kind primate (7)
8  Mutilated northern kite beneath rock pillar (7)
9  University stops teaching dated slow dance music (5)
10  Romeo after whiskey upon whiskey is more sardonic (5)
11  Houses preferred by a building society (7)
12  Pair of dogs cut short (7)
13  Fancy Eleanor having time for love everlasting! (7)
14  Black gold thus elevated a Phrygian peasant (6)
15  Deputy holding Arab off (6)
16  The listener’s vulgar peep (5)
17  William’s mother divides book society heads (5)
18  European’s opposite extremes (5)
19  Trojan bones and clubs (5)

INSTRUCTIONS
Across items consist of three non-overlapping clues without definitions. One answer (not entered in the grid) is thematic and provides definitions of the other two, which are to be entered at the lettered row in an order governed by the thematic answer. Down clues are normal but their answers are to be jumbled before entry. Solvers must complete the grid to reveal four thematic items, symmetrically disposed, thus resolving the single ambiguity.

Solution to CAM 72 Crossword
Emerging Writer by Schadenfreude

Winner: Frances Williams (Newnham 1970)
Runners up: Bill Longley (Jesus 1956) & Philip Clough (Trinity Hall 1966)
Special mention: Martin Hazelton, who submitted an entry in memory of his late father (St Catharine’s 1953), a man who liked crosswords and loved Cambridge. He died the day before CAM 72 arrived.

Instructions are:
ALTER A LETTER IN EVEN ROWS and COMPLETE GRID TO REVEAL SIX TITLES. Geneva and five other works by GB Shaw thus appear in the grid (in bold italics), GB SHAW ‘emerging’ in the isolated squares. Altered letters are shown in red, affected entries being ROSULATE (SOLUTREAN), CARE (TRACE), MIL (LIME) and VIOLA (OLVIA). Other affected answers are 1a DIALS, 12a GRALLAE, 14a STATER, 17a SIEVE, 20a PURITAN, 24a REMAP, 26a LENES, 29a SAUTE, 30a OLENT, 41a GROIN, 47a NONCE, 1d TOASTER, 3d DEViant, 5d ANEMONE, 10d AIDER, 11d SOLENESS, 32d SNOWIER, 39d SINCE.
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