

Who Do They Think They Are? Americans on America



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In this issue...

ON THE COVER.....

World opinion has been polarized with regards to the United States since the beginning of the Iraq War in March of 2003. **GOWN** asks Cambridge graduate students from America what they think about themselves and each other.

ALSO.....

Letter from the Editor 4

Academic Review 5
Read what Cambridge graduates students are up to in the research world.

Cover Story 12
American students talk about perceptions and world opinion

Careers 19
What Postdocs do

Arts and Culture 18
New Arts Centre in Colchester

A review of hot cocktail bars in Cambridge for you and your Valentine's sweetie

Travel to Riga

Sports 25
Balls, Boats, and Pucks

Humour 30
Get Gown and Dirty



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From the Editor

Killing the Goose (softly)

In October 2004, Dr Reid, Senior Tutor at St-John's, circulated a Consultation Paper to Bursars, Senior Tutors and Heads of Houses asking for comments about the potential introduction of differential college fees for graduate students. The paper focuses on the need for new sources of income for Colleges. The proposed scheme would involve Overseas and EU students paying higher College fees than Home students, to reflect the differential funding in University fees.

What makes foreign students liable to higher fees? What do Colleges provide to the foreign student that it doesn't offer to the Home student? Foreign students should be seen as assets that bring an international perspective to a leading University, as opposed to being cash cows.

The Consultation paper discusses the pros and cons of the introduction of the new system, but it does not mention why Colleges need more money from graduate students. After all, most graduate students do not know how their College fees are spent. Graduate student numbers in Cambridge are on the increase but few colleges provide the necessary facilities to cope with the numbers. In the late 90s, a large number of colleges were able to provide accommodation to their graduate students throughout the length of their course; only a handful does so now. Much housing is now used for first-year graduate accommodation, or undergraduates. This publication does not aim to create a divide between the graduate and undergraduate communities of Cambridge; both communities however pay College fees and both should receive similar benefits.

The Consultation paper also points out that Oxford Colleges do not operate the differential fee system. Anyone familiar with Oxford Colleges will know that at Oxford, colleges tend to provide a more supportive environment for graduate students than the average Cambridge College. In addition to an academic adviser, Oxford graduates have a college adviser who meets them regularly. The Colleges also have annual graduate collections, during which graduate students meet the Head of House, the graduate tutor and the college adviser to discuss academic progress and welfare, and often a report written to the college by the academic supervisor. MCRs are well-funded and graduate tutors make themselves available. This may provide a functional example for Cambridge to follow.

In the current issue of GOWN, we meet American students to discuss the re-election of George Bush and the war on Iraq. Our contributors from India, China and Pakistan bring an international outlook on their studies at Cambridge. The participation of grads in University Sports is also reported.

Do get involved and let us know what you think about the magazine and articles. Visit us online at <www.gownmagazine.com>.

Arnaud Bonnet
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Dhiraj Murthy

For those of you who are new to this column, I am a second year PhD student in SPS on fieldwork in Delhi. My dissertation is on ethnic identity formation within a musical subculture in Delhi and London. After completing Hindi language training in the foothills of the Himalayas (the subject of my last column), I have moved down to the urban chaos that is Delhi. Luckily, I managed to find a nice and clean flat (I miss the ease of College provided accommodation!) that's close to a great Uni and two cafés - for all my cappuccino and pastry needs!

Sitting in front of my laptop, armed with a requisite cup of coffee, I began to think what I should talk about in my second 'Letter from India'.

Delhi is such a fascinating city in many ways; ideas ranging from discussing its café or club culture to researching at libraries that are mosquito infested and only use card catalogues began to bombard me. In the end, I thought I would write about one day of my fieldwork here.

17/01/2005

It had taken me a fortnight to schedule an interview with Arun¹, an electronic music DJ and co-owner of a fashionable clothing and accessories store. His store in Gurgaon, a trendy city just outside of Delhi, had just opened recently and, as could be expected, he was busy as a bee. Before making the journey, I was waiting to hear back from Karan, a friend of mine, who was helping me with some technical aspects

of the interview. He wasn't sure if he could get a car, so I lay in wait, wondering whether I would have to engage in the cumbersome art of bargaining with a taxiwalla. Thankfully, he was able to borrow his girlfriend's car and I met him at his flat, a homely place filled with travel books of India, countless empty bottles of whisky and rum that were huge (4 litres each), and a BBQ on the roof terrace that had, through the years, provided grilled treats at many a party. After him and a mutual friend, Iqbal, had a nicotine fix, we set off to hire a professional microphone for the day - a task that seemed simple enough.

When we arrived, the owner of the hire shop began to vet me; he decided that, as I had never done business with him before, he would require a deposit of £130 in cash. I had not anticipated this as, back home, a credit card guarantee was all that one needed to hire equipment. I pleaded with the owner to take down my credit card details and make a copy of my ID as a guarantee as I never walk around Delhi with such a fat wad of cash in my wallet. His

response was unwieldy; he responded that in India credit cards and ID's can be easily faked with a minimal amount of connections and money. Iqbal intervened; he told the owner that we could be trusted with his precious kit as Iqbal, in a previous project, had hired equipment from the shop. Despite his good intentions, I was unprepared for what happened next. The owner shot back at Iqbal that the project mentioned had not settled their bill! Great! In the end, I suggested that we hire one of the shop's audio technicians to come along with us in lieu of the cash deposit. This was agreed on and we set off to Gurgaon.

After braving an hour of traffic, we arrived in Gurgaon, a city that is almost exclusively composed of modern malls and elegant high-rise buildings. The multitude of malls is so staggering that many of them are side by side or directly across from each other. As I craned my neck to catch Gurgaon's architectures, my mobile rang yet again.

Arun had already called several times during the course of the morning to

postpone the interview. However, this time, he said he would be a couple of hours late. As his shop was in a mall, we thought we would kill time by becoming mall-rats for a couple of hours. After parking on a dusty stretch close to the mall (soon to be converted into an official car park), I gazed at what lay before me – huge cineplex, brand new Pizza Hut (which has been immensely popular in India), and shop after shop. We entered this consumers' Mecca, replete with a smart glass fronted lift, two bars, and cafés. Up the escalators we went and indulged ourselves with South Indian thalis and tea in the food court until my interviewee arrived.

Arun escorted us into his shop – full of club wear to kitsch bits and bobs (lava lamp, beer can turned into a clock, etc.). A CD player was connected and the shop was filled with bossy electronic music, drawing several inquisitive punters to enter. (It should be said that most shops in Delhi, if they have any music at all, play pop or Bollywood music.) I started the interview questions and learned that Arun was trained in drama and dance

and worked as a professional dancer prior to becoming a DJ. He is well travelled (and sourced some of his goods through visits to Thailand), a Hindu who married a Muslim airline stewardess (whom he met when she approached him at the DJ booth), and an avid clubber. The hour and a half interview was extremely interesting and provided me insights not only into his life, but also the electronic music scene in Delhi (a recent, but vibrant subculture). After the interview, Iqbal skinned a joint in the shop's changing room and he, Karan, and Arun got stoned in the mall's underground car park (after they tried unsuccessfully to get to the roof terrace). As I watched them light up, I realised that we would be hitting rush-hour now - a true nightmare. They were relaxing and I was getting my lungs ready to endure the noxious fumes one had to inhale as traffic slowly crawled into and away from Delhi, as this is shaadi (marriage) season and a lot of venues are on the main road we would soon be navigating.

¹ All names have been changed to maintain privacy

Memories Never End

On a lovely sunny afternoon in October 2004, my friends Andy, Jess, David and I sat in Martin's Café, on Trumpington Street. It was my last day at the Architecture Department. The next day I would be going home to Shanghai to start my working life. It was a typical farewell gathering of classmates and good friends – with laughter, fond reminiscing and a farewell card. I still remember Jess's joke about an architect and a dentist which ever made us a big laughter. It was a sweet moment for me. I was pleased to bid farewell to my classmates at Martin's Café against the background of the Department building outside the window.

Two months later I received an email from Ming, my best friend and previous flat mate at Downing, in which she told me that the University would possibly announce the closure of the Department of

Architecture in January this year. I was completely shocked and could not ignore the news. I wrote to Jess, asking her if it was true. Her reply in one sentence: "This time it's no joke---we've been fighting!" That sunny afternoon at Martin's Café flashed through my mind. All the memories of my department during my one-year stint came back to me, turning from vague to vivid, like a film developing in the mind.

I remember the productive conversations with Koen, my supervisor, about sustainable design in China. I remember the kindly smile of Mrs. Marion, the Department Secretary. She is the only secretary I know who can remember every fresher's name after one encounter. I remember the high prices of printing and photocopying in the Department even as the speed of computers was annoyingly slow. I remember the chilly morning at 2 a.m. when David and I rode our bicycles

back from Martin Center to Downing and St. John's with a mixture of exhaustion and excitement, the day we finally finished our design project. I remember Andy and I discussing how to arrange an impressive presentation of Martin Center during the annual department exhibition.

I remember the day that Ming invited me and a friend, Karen, for tea at her place. We searched the must-see movies of Cambridge Movie Festival. I excitedly shouted out "My Architect!" when I read the programme, and Ming literally jumped in fright! I remember the extraordinarily intense feeling of pride at that moment of being an architect, the same feeling as I get being a member of the University.

"This time it was no joke---we've been fighting!" as Jess said. For me, I will fight for the memories that began the day I landed at Cambridge and seemed to have ended the day I said goodbye to my classmates at Martin's Café. But no... memories never end.

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Nation-Speak: Language, Identity and Education in Pakistan

Afia Aslam, an MPhil student in Politics, Democracy and Education at the Faculty of Education discusses the influence of language, identity and education on her home country, Pakistan

Kazi (1987) has argued that two types of nation-states emerged in the Third World during the post-war era: nations with history and nations without history. Nations with history were established culturally homogeneous units when they were granted independence by colonial powers. Nations without history, on the other hand, were newly created entities, established as federations by the membership of two or more nations with history. After independence, the task of nations with history was state-building; the nations without history had the double task of nation-building and state-building.¹ The most common way of achieving this was by uniting the heterogeneous populations of a nation-state under the banner of a common 'national identity'. Most Third World authoritarian bureaucratic elites have tried to use rhetoric about 'homogenous national communities' to discourage identification with any collectivity other than

the nation-state.² An obvious location for such projects has been national education systems. In many Third World countries, therefore, the entire educational system is intimately connected to political manoeuvring among political parties, the bureaucracy and other societal forces.³

According to Kazi's definition, Pakistan would be described as a nation without history. Centuries of population influx into the region and politically motivated (and sometimes, it would seem, quite arbitrary) drawing of regional boundaries during British colonial rule have resulted in a diverse and fragmented ethnic arrangement. Today, ethnic groups roughly correspond to the four provinces of the country. Each of the major ethnic groups has its own language, which tends to be the principal way they define themselves. There is no one language common to all or even most Pakistanis. Urdu is the national language and is used in most

State schools, at the lower levels of administration, in the media and in all the major cities of the country, but only about 7.6% of the population comprises of Urdu-speakers.⁴ English is limited to a small minority, consisting of the political and economic elite, and is the 'language of the domains of power' (the upper echelons of administration, judiciary, military and commerce).⁵

Faced with the difficult task of commanding national unity with such an extraordinarily diverse socio-cultural heritage, successive governments have tried to create a common identity using two main tools: religion and language. This article will focus on language, but it is impossible to get a full picture of the situation without briefly touching upon the role of religion in formulating a national identity.

Religion, Identity and
the Pakistani State

The general objectives of the National Education Policy of 1976 effectively sum up the Pakistani State's stand on a unified national identity:

1. Ensuring the preservation, promotion and practice of the basic *ideology of Pakistan* and making it a code of *individual and national life*.
2. Building up *national cohesion* through education and by promoting social and cultural harmony compatible with our basic ideology.⁶

The 'Ideology of Pakistan' is based on the Two-Nation Theory – the proposition put forward in pre-partition India that the Hindus and the Muslims were two separate nations, and so should be able to live in separate homelands. At the time, this united the Muslims into a strong pressure group and forced the hand of the British into partitioning the subcontinent in 1947. Since then, the State has continued to use the Pakistani identity = Muslim identity formula in all realms, especially the educational, to sustain a concept of nationhood based on religion. By invoking the 'Ideology of Pakistan' to portray Muslims as a monolithic group, the State has ensured that being a Muslim becomes simultaneously an individual *and* a collective identity, one that transcends all class, race,

ethnic and even national boundaries. Being Muslims, Pakistanis are made aware of the irreconcilable differences between them and the Hindu majority in India, inter-provincial similarities within Pakistan, and membership of an international brotherhood or *Ummah* of Muslims.

The Politics of Language and National Identity

The State's attempts at forging a national identity have been inextricably connected with language policy and politics. Urdu as the national language, and compulsory medium of instruction from secondary level onwards, is meant to reinforce the Muslim identity because of its strong roots in the Muslim (elite) culture of the subcontinent, where the intellectual push for Pakistan came from.⁷ Urdu has therefore been used as a symbolic tool of Muslim integration by all the governments since independence, with an emphasis on Islamic content in Urdu curricula and textbooks.⁸ As a 1994 national curriculum document claimed, a student being taught Urdu should:

1. Know that *national culture is not local culture* or local customs, but it means the culture *whose principles have been determined by Islam*.⁹

To understand the impact of language policy, though, its role in serving the interests of the State and the ruling elite must be kept in mind. Historical circumstances since independence indicate that there were powerful political reasons for the hegemony of Urdu. After Partition, around 6 million largely Urdu-speaking Muslim migrants (called *muhajirs*) came to Pakistan and were settled mostly in Karachi and Sindh, where they received tremendous official patronage and were allotted several important government posts.¹⁰ According to Rahman, this 'elevated the status of Urdu vis-à-vis the other local languages of Pakistan and created the valorisation of the urban, Urdu-using culture and a corresponding devaluation of indigenous vernacular-using rural cultures'.¹¹

At the same time, there was also a bias towards English in the armed forces (which were frequently ruling the country) and in a specific portion of the educated cultural elite. The *muhajirs* formed a close alliance with the Punjabi elite, who controlled not only the armed forces, but also much of the bureaucratic apparatus inherited from the British.¹² Thus both the material and the discursive means of production were covered by this alliance of Urdu and English speakers.

In the meantime, the major provincial languages (Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi and Pashto) were going through a process of 'ghettoisation' as they became increasingly irrelevant for securing employment, particularly in the government.¹³ This led to criticism that the State's 'covert' policy was to use Urdu to integrate the masses and perpetuate their position in the lower social and economic strata, while English was allowed to remain the language of the ruling elite.¹⁴

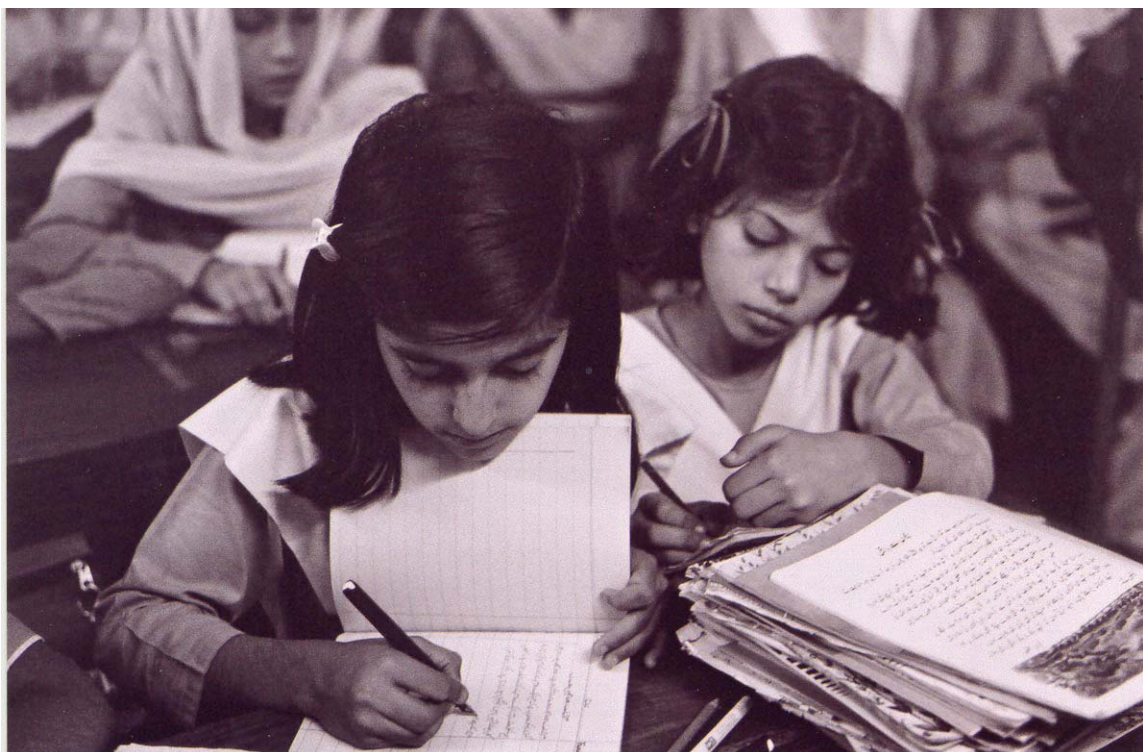
As could be expected, this situation became a source of resentment for the ethnic and provincial groups.¹⁵ In East Bengal, particularly, the 'language issue' spun out of control very quickly, resulting in language riots and loss of civilian life.¹⁶ Ultimately the

language movement became the central banner around which East Bengal's separatist movement organised itself. In West Pakistan, the province of Sindh was worst hit by the antagonism between the dominant groups and the ethnic groups. The *muhajirs*, proud of their urban Mughal Urdu-speaking culture, resisted all attempts at learning Sindhi, which led to violent riots in the cities of Sindh in 1971.¹⁷

The Politics of Language and Ethnic Identity

Why has the task of making a common national identity 'work' through language been so fraught with difficulty and uncertainty? In multi-lingual societies like Pakistan, the privileging of one language over others and the resultant

stigmatisation of the dominated languages can make native language speakers feel culturally, politically and economically disempowered.¹⁸ The ethnic groups in Pakistan, especially, take language as the essence of their identity, as if it were extended kinship, blood or substance.¹⁹ In addition to this, as several observers have pointed out, ethnic activists in Pakistan have used the identity-language nexus to put pressure on the State to redress perceived economic, social and political inequalities that have been causing a feeling of relative deprivation among the provinces.²⁰ The motivation behind resurrection of ethnic, language-based identities has therefore been just as related to economic factors as it has to ideological factors.



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The State, unfortunately, has been unable to show sufficient political will to address these issues in any meaningful manner. Instead, language has been used as a sort of 'political football', with the government consistently playing to political constituencies.²¹ National unity (a positive concept implying political consensus based on participatory governance) has time and again been interpreted as national cohesion or integration, and the State has focused on achieving this latter goal, to a large part by using rhetoric and sermonising through all discourse mediums available to it. The common reaction of the State and the dominant groups in Pakistan has been to label language activists and ethno-nationalists as enemies of the nation, who are trying to subvert noble national aims to achieve their own short-sighted, unpatriotic goals.²² To get a sense of the sheer bitterness felt by ethnic groups, however, one need only to turn to this verse written in 1972 by Raees Amrohvi, a Sindhi politician-like migrant and a poet:

"Urdu ka janaaza barri dhoom say niklay" (May the funeral of Urdu take place with much fanfare).²³

In celebrating the symbolic death of Urdu, Amrohvi actually made a passionate

wish for the death of a system that perpetuates injustice and inequality..

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WHO DO THEY THINK THEY ARE?

Americans on
America

Since the beginning of the second Gulf War with Iraq on 19 March 2003, world opinion has polarised regarding the American people. The outcome of the November elections would lead the world to believe that Americans have spoken in favour of Bush, the war, and the neo-conservative foreign policy. However, another voice of the American people, a voice muffled by thousands of miles of ocean is trying to get out and have its say. American graduate students at Cambridge speak to **Megan Meredith Lobay-Dan Lockton**, and **Alex-James Painter** about the way they think they are perceived by the world and how they perceive themselves.

In May and June of 2003, soon after the beginning of the war in Iraq, the BBC and broadcasting corporations from ten other countries joined forces to survey and discuss their nations' relationship to the U.S.A. A number of questions covering such diverse subjects as politics, culture, military, and economics were answered by ordinary people across all participating nations. Their answers reveal a number of complex issues governing world opinion about on of the world's mightiest superpowers. However, the general trend, as reported in the 16 June 2003 edition of BBC news online, was that the world was angry at America. Nearly 57% of the respondents had an unfavourable opinion of George Bush, rising to 60% when American respondents were discounted.

Those discounted respondents were not American living in America, shielded from the rest of the world by a powerful army and two oceans, they were the Americans studying, working, and living abroad. The number of Americans living abroad in 2003 was estimated at nearly six million by Dr. Taylor E. Dark III, in an essay published in October 2003 while Dark was associate dean in the Graduate School of American Studies at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan and posted on USAbroad.net in December of 2003. The number in Britain alone was estimated at nearly 230,000. Of these 230,000, 537 graduates and undergraduates were studying at Cambridge in August of 2004 according The University Reporter special issue on student numbers. A year and a half on from the BBC survey, GOWN speaks to American graduate students at Cambridge to find out how they view America, how

they think the world views America, and how they think America needs to face the future.

DO YOU THINK WORLD OPINION HAS SHIFTED FURTHER AWAY FROM AMERICA SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE IRAQ WAR?

The students interviewed seemed to all feel that opinion had shifted against America, but on differing levels and for differing reasons. Morag, taking a balanced approach, says, "I'm not sure how much it has really shifted. I think there was a lot of anti-American sentiment preceding the war in the aftermath of September 11th. Of course the prolonged aggression, the continued unrest in the area, and the prisoner abuses in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay have done nothing to improve American international relations". Shelia believes that it is more worrying not that general opinion has shifted more against America as a whole, but that opinion is now regarding the American people themselves more unfavourably.

Three other students felt very strongly that the world was viewing America through eyes of anger and disgust. "I think the invasion of Iraq has caused many intelligent people across the globe to view the American Government, its actions, and its foreign policy, with increased scepticism and suspicion," writes Dave from California. Sarah, from Maine is even more unequivocal about the issue.

"There's a sense of hatred in the air", she recounts. "We managed to eliminate 50+ years (i.e., post WWII) of goodwill in a matter of days. I work in Egypt, and a dear friend of mine told me 'Sarah I want to hate you but I can't.' Jessica simply says, "Yes most definitely, we are

not trusted and are seen as impulsive bullies."

Speaking to American students living abroad reveals a sharply polarised (to the left) position on current American policies in the rest of the world. It does seem that the majority of Americans studying in Cambridge are not generally enamoured of their country's current administration.

HOW DO YOU THINK LIVING ABROAD GIVES YOU A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE FROM THOSE STILL LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES?

Aaron Duesenberg* from Chicago, studying at the Judge Institute, believes the reasons boil down to open-mindedness: the sort of person who is willing to travel half-way around the world to study and experience other cultures is also more likely to be a Democrat—"by definition", as he puts it.

"Once you see that there are other ways of running a country, other cultural values and other points of view, you become less sure that the US has it right. That dissatisfaction with the status quo is usually what leads you away from the isolationism that the Republican viewpoint normally seems to support."

We put it to him that it's a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation: is he saying that people 'turn into' Democrats once they have more world experience, or that they only go to study abroad in the first place because of an inherent predisposition in their mind-set?

"A bit of both," he answers. "They're kind of co-requisites. But don't get me wrong, I know quite a few Republican kids that have gone all over the place to study. Those who enjoy it the most, though, are usually the ones that—while they

may not actually vote Democrat—are fully aware of the limitations in the Republican viewpoint, just as with the less well defined areas of Democrat policy. So maybe what I'm saying is that more open-minded people tend to be Democrats. But I guess I would say that."

Sarah from Maine put the issue a bit more bluntly: "Those of us here are intelligent, well-travelled and well-read. The majority of Americans are not. You do the math".

The American media and its perceived bias towards the Bush administration and neo-conservative political stance has been blamed by many students as the reason why the American people are so unmoved by world opinion. We spoke to a group of Americans studying in the Archaeology department about how they believed their views on world affairs differed from those Americans still in the U.S. In most instances, students cited the differences in American and British/International media as the root of their differing opinion from that of Americans at home. David, from California believes that this exposure to different opinions within the media has encouraged his anti-Bush stance from the beginning of the war:

"Because I am living in another country, I have access to different media and am exposed to a different set of opinions than those living in the U.S. I am adamantly (and have been from the start) against the monumental mistake which was the invasion of Iraq: the utter predictability of the flow of events (i.e. no weapons of mass destruction and the ongoing mass destruction since invasion) was, from the get-go, so obviously the likely result of such an undertaking

that only fools or those who are delusional can continue to support its inception. In this regard, the re-election of Bush stands as a stark reminder to the power of delusion as we circle the sun yet again on our ever spinning globe."

Jessica also feels that the influence of the media within the US has had a negative effect upon the American people's abilities to distinguish fact from propaganda. "I believe living outside of the US gives me an opportunity to see the war in a less biased way", she says, "as there is a lot of pressure in the US when it comes to opinions on the war. I think American pride gets in the way of people seeing things clearly within the US. The American media also has a huge detrimental effect on how people think about issues outside of America particularly in the fear category. I am probably more open-minded about opinions on not only the war but worldwide issues and don't let my sense of pride and protection (i.e. fear) get in the way in interpreting events globally."

One student from a staunchly liberal American family sees her family as very well-versed in the news media and social sciences in general, but, she admits that, "[while] they are adamantly against the administration's war in Iraq and the war on terror, they do feel that certain factors are willing and probably ready to strike at American targets whenever, wherever. The constant barrage of media and governmental coverage and warnings take their toll on even the most wary and this, while not surprising, has been most noticeable to me".

HAVE YOU NOTICES ANY CHANGES IN THE WAY YOU HAVE BEEN PERSONALLY REGARDED IN BRITAIN

AND ELSEWHERE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR?

The surprisingly commonly held perception that individual Americans will be personally held to blame for the Iraq conflict leads to additional unease—embarrassment even. The British habit of apologising for everything, whether or not it's our fault, has not quite rubbed off onto them yet, but there is certainly some paranoia (perhaps justified) that the rest of the world hates America, and by implication, Americans. Although most students we talked to did not feel as though they, personally, had been treated as though they were to blame, the stories they relate reveal what borders on an identity crisis. These students feel as though they should defend themselves and their nation against attack that may or may not be directed at them. Sheila, from Illinois, says, "I know I appear more apologetic to close colleagues and I personally take steps not to be obtrusively "American". She continues, "however, in general I do feel most Britons and Europeans (Spanish particularly) are able to differentiate from the government/masses and individuals, thus I do not feel that sentiment towards me particularly has shifted, especially among European colleagues." Jessica as well says that she often has a "...tendency to keep my American background quiet and try to blend in so that I might not be a target for anti-American hostility..."

Jeff Rockwell*, from Boston, recalls going into Burger King on St Andrew's Street in October. "The guy looked at me and said suspiciously, "You American? Which way you gonna vote?" I answered "Kerry," and he said "That's OK then" and got on with my order. I wonder what he'd

have done to the burger if I'd said Bush."

"Nowadays if someone asks me that question, I just tell 'em I don't vote. Though it's difficult to fake apathy, it can be a whole lot safer."

Another Archaeology student mentioned that, "Of course, people make all sorts of assumptions based on my accent, all over the place. Not much I can do, but it's hard being hated when you yourself despise everything the US has come to represent."

However, all the students concede that they have not been the target of direct hostility in Cambridge, and that most of their colleagues and friends understand the difference between them and the American Government. Morag, a PhD student originally from Canada, but now an American citizen says, "I haven't noticed anything personally, but you often overhear conversations

where Americans are dismissed as being stupid and ill-educated about foreign affairs and the situation in Iraq." David also noticed that hostility towards Americans was more 'conversational' noting that, "the topic of conversation is more frequently directed towards the incredible apparent stupidity of George Bush and the utter amazement to people here that he was re-elected."

However, this hostility is more complex within the American community itself in Cambridge. One student told us of a couple of Bush-supporting Cambridge students who booked a TV room at a college for a 'private function' on Election Night last November. The couple wanted to sit and watch the coverage in peace without any interruptions from Kerry supporters who'd been "making their lives a misery" all term up to that point. There is perhaps a reverse

bias amongst ex-pats towards those in line with the neo-conservatism which in some way mirrors that which the majority of students feel they would experience at home.

There are, of course, some more clashes of ideology than Cambridge's American student community bears—the 'American stereotype' is multi-faceted but the perception is usually a gung-ho, brash character, though perhaps justifiably confident. Whether that confidence takes a knock when confronted with so many anti-Bush (and often implicitly or explicitly anti-American) jokes is unclear. Certainly many Americans seem to laugh along at the satire in a way that the British probably wouldn't if they were the targets.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BRITISH? During the War with Iraq, Britain was America's staunchest ally in the 'Coalition of the

Protesters march on London in 2003



Photo by Dan Lockton 2003

Willing' despite vast protest across the nation. What effect did the war have on British opinion of Americans?

"I think that the British are beginning to truly understand the power that Christian fundamentalism and conservatism exerts in the politics of the United States" (Dave).

"Well seeing as Blair is the lapdog of Bush, the British can't say too much, but I can imagine most folks are getting a right chuckle over what's happening stateside. Once upon a time, the Brits lost an empire, and now it's our turn" (Sarah).

"I think that general British population is resentful that they have been dragged into the war due to the relationship between Blair and Bush" (Morag).

"I think we have always been regarded with some general amusement by the British, and perhaps it is not so much the British who think of us differently, but the European community on the whole. I don't know too many who would befriend an American outright and usually get the comment in the order of "You are the only American I would be friends with" (Jessica).

"I think Britons have really been troubled by the perceived (via the media and our government) unmitigated arrogance mixed with gleeful and deliberate ignorance of the American people (or maybe that is just my opinion)" (Sheila).

A NEW AMERICA FOR THE FUTURE?

It is clear from the numerous surveys, books, films, articles, and interviews above that world opinion has been shifting away

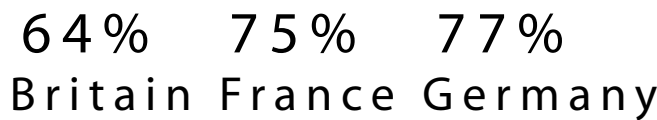
from America steadily since the beginning of the war and perhaps before. Seen through the eyes of Americans abroad, the situation in America is very dire indeed. But how can America hope to recover its image as a bastion of hope and democracy for the rest of the world? Can it recover this image at all? Or is it a moot point? Is the world moving away from the ideal of democracy, instead associating the word with bullying, torture, and oppression; the very associations which democracy seeks to eliminate from the human condition. The beginning, in the eyes of Americans at Cambridge, would be a move away from interventionist policies in the Middle East. "[the Americans] need to leave Iraq

end, is the removal of George Bush and the neo-conservatives from the reigns of power. "I think that re-electing George Bush is international relations disaster," writes Morag. "Before the election, other countries were willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the American public: "George Bush is making all of the policy decisions; the American people haven't spoken etc..." But now they have and their position is clear; a majority support George Bush and the War in Iraq."

"It's too late to get rid of Bush (what did The Guardian say, "How can 59 million people be so DUMB"), and I doubt he'll do anything but continue to murder innocent Iraqis and send our poor soldiers off to die for oil. And it is far too late to improve our reputation. We're finished in the Middle East," says Sarah. Dave as well lays the blame with Bush, stating that a good start would be to impeach George Bush. However, he also expands to include other arenas of world politics in which America could

stand to improve its reputation such as, "...diligent work on reducing harm to the environment and working with the global community in regards to human rights would further improve relations. Ending capital punishment [as well]." Whilst public opinion in the United States is still quite equivocal on the even of Bush's second inauguration, with the most recent New York Times opinion poll putting him uncomfortably at 50%, the student at Cambridge University seem less divided in their opinions. For the ex-patriot American students in Cambridge, the future is now, and each has their own forceful ideas about how America can repair its image. What that image will be of, we simply cannot yet know.

Percentage who disagree that the US will have a positive impact on the world.



(source: The Guardian, January 20, 2005)

and stop trying to impose their "type" of democracy on the rest of the world," says Morag. Jessica agrees, stating that, "The U.S. needs to take a step backwards in world manipulation and domination, let countries chose for themselves how to run and do things, don't impose American-styled democracy everywhere because it doesn't work everywhere." Sheila would like to see the government "[stop] responding to any perceived or constructed threat with automatic and arbitrary violence. A shift towards more tolerance and less stereotyping across the board of government and their supporters is desperately needed within the U.S. itself. We are actually moving away from this trend I fear."

Dave, Sarah and Morag believe the beginning, and perhaps the

Postdocs of Cambridge: Yes, Virginia, there is Life After the PhD

Thinking about an academic career? Want to try for a postdoc? **Philip Gardner** and **Catherine Howell** describe the issues confronting young researchers in Cambridge, and decide that life does exist after the PhD.

If you're coming to the end of the long slog that is the PhD, no doubt you're starting to think about life after study. Maybe you're contemplating leaving academia altogether, and heading for the City, the "Big Brother" house, or a bar-tending job in Barbados. But if the siren call of research has not yet lost its spell, consider this: every year, hundreds of Cambridge PhDs prolong life in this fair city by means of a postdoc. You could be one of them: read on, and decide for yourself.

There are more than 2500 postdocs working within the University of Cambridge and its associated colleges. Estimates suggest that this massive body of people currently outnumber permanent staff by two to one and are increasing at a rate of 6% per year, which would far outstrip the growth of the rest of the University! This plethora of young, enthusiastic researchers striving to succeed is one of the University's greatest resources. All the more remarkable, then, that their numbers are but an estimate, and that there are no centralised records of exactly who and where these people are.

Confusion reigns as to the exact status and role of postdocs within the University. Are we staff members? Are we entitled to vote on how the University is run? It all depends who you ask... Our diversity of job titles doesn't help: a postdoc could be anything from a "Research Associate" to

a "Postdoctoral Fellow". Such inconsistencies in titles are not a superficial problem. They directly affect salary, status, and access to benefits. The University's Contract Research Staff Working Group, in conjunction with Staff Development and Personnel, is working to address these issues and to ensure that Cambridge postdocs receive benefits equal to those of established staff members.

In April 2001, eight postdocs joined forces with Rob Wallach, a Senior Member of King's College, recognising the need for a representative body to make this group more cohesive. They founded Postdocs of Cambridge (PdOC) as an umbrella organisation to represent all research staff with a doctorate who were neither tenured fellows nor lecturers. All those who fell under this description would automatically become members of PdOC.

A voluntary committee was formed to collaborate with the administration of the University and Colleges. PdOC now runs a system of Departmental and Faculty representatives, a Web site, and a weekly email bulletin. We have instigated a number of initiatives in career development, staff working conditions, and College affiliation. We also advise postdocs on how to achieve membership of the University's governing body, the Regent House. We now have representatives on committees in the Personnel Division and the Careers Service, the Contract Research Staff Working Group, and the University Centre User Group. All of these interactions have been highly productive, with the University proving itself very willing to listen. Let us hope the University

is able also to address the major hurdle affecting recruitment and retention of the best and brightest young academics: the low salaries (currently hovering just above the national average wage).

If you're interested, but are worried that postdoc life means being stuck out in the lab, there is always the option to teach. Contrary to popular belief, many postdocs do teach students, in both supervisions and practical classes. As the casualisation of the workforce bites deeper into UK universities, Cambridge not excepted, postdocs' significant contribution to teaching excellence—and to the maintenance of our unique supervisions system—will become ever more important.

PdOC encourages all colleges to accept postdocs as affiliate or full members. Our sister University, Oxford, is relatively advanced in this area and we are keeping a close eye on the different ways that Oxford colleges are welcoming postdocs into their communities. In Cambridge, colleges such as Wolfson, Kings', and St Edmunds' are leading the way.

To encourage cross-academic links and a diverse social group, PdOC has introduced a weekly evening meeting in the Granta Bar, at the University Centre. The success of our 2004 Christmas Party, held in Sauce Bar, convinced us that the support is there for us to re-launch a regular calendar of social events. Get in touch, or come along to one of our meetings, if you have a suggestion for us or if you have any questions about postdoc life.

Further information:
soc-pdoc-committee@lists.cam.ac.uk
www.cam.ac.uk/societies/pdoc



CAMBRIDGE will soon be a short hop, skip and jump from a new £16.5 million centre for the arts and architecture. DAVID GROCOTT discovers that the fair town of Colchester is about to assert itself as the rising-star of arts in the east.

At an architect's office in Manhattan, a series of drawings are being pawed over, scribbled across and generally squeezed through the mangle of the design process. The office in question is that of Raphael Viñoly Architects; the drawings are of a building that is set to revolutionise the arts in East Anglia.

Architecture students will not need to be told of Viñoly's credentials. The charismatic, silver-haired Argentine was famously fêted to rebuild the World Trade Centre, only to be equally famously gazumped at the last minute by Daniel Liebeskind. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that in the wake of this volte-face by the American developers, Viñoly set his sights on Europe. A satellite office has been already established in London and the Viñoly machine has been tasked with setting out its stall in the UK.

This has coincided, almost preternaturally, with the final stages of a decade-old plan to build a major facility for the arts in Colchester. A mere hour's drive from Cantabrigia and both London and Stansted, the town

known for soldiers, Romans and little else, is finally flexing its aged (or should that read experienced?) muscles and attempting to stage something of a renaissance. This new building for those contemporary art darlings, *firstsite*, will form the core of a massive redevelopment of the east-end of the town.

From their existing headquarters in a Georgian town house, *firstsite* have steadily established themselves as unlikely leading lights in this country's contemporary arts scene. Already punching well above their weight, the organisation has already convinced a number of backers to separate themselves from not insubstantial sums of money. Multi-million pound financing from the Arts Council (£5 million), the East of England Development Agency (£5 million), Essex County Council (£2.5 million), Essex University (£1 million) and Colchester Borough Council (£1.5 million) is in place. The plans have now been released and are awaiting planning permission so it looks to be *all systems go!* for the scheme, the intention being to open Viñoly's masterpiece by the end of 2007.

The project inevitably faces increased public scrutiny in the wake of the failure of the arts complex at Walsall and the similar disaster at Sheffield. In addition, some may have heard of local discord from some quarters, at the

scheme's supposed imposition on the town. Colchester's Liberal MP, in particular, appears at the vanguard of this opposition, arguing for better use of resources. However, this contention is parochial and misses the point of this as yet unnamed facility and it is in the context of these reality checks for arts in the UK that the project should be viewed.

And to do that, it is important to look at the details; at time of going to press, the final designs were still to be unveiled but it appears Viñoly's vision for Colchester will centre around a large, golden, crescent-shaped structure on the current site of the town's windswept bus station. The design of the innovative, foundation-less building has been, in part, enforced by sensitive archaeology beneath the site. The need within the edifice for gallery areas, an auditorium, a restaurant and an education facility, will be translated into spaces through the centre of the building.

It is exciting and not a little bizarre to walk along the high street of this market town and consider that decisions now being made in Manhattan may affect its future. If you have never heard of Colchester, prepare to - construction is due to begin in September.

For more information visit the website: www.firstsite.uk.net

In the effervescent arena that is Cambridge's live music scene, *PETE UM* is somewhat of a face to be reckoned with. Innovative, avant-garde compositions which make the listener sit up and think or a bloke with a mini-disc player? *PAUL SIMMONDS* goes in search of an answer.



Tell me a bit about yourself.

A bit? I'm male, tall, shy, bit of a silly streak...I once shot myself in the foot...

How did you start making music?

I was in a band at first, being the appalling singer. When the band split I couldn't play any instruments, so I bought a computer, and have been mucking around with it, when it's not mucking me around, in my bedroom ever since.

How would you describe your music?

A hateful question. My stuff varies quite a bit, but I suppose much of it could be described as a kind of rhythmic collage of unidentifiable sounds with a miserable bloke singing something badly that you don't understand over the top. Somehow, it all just works!

What are you listening to at the moment?

The noisy fan on my PC, generally. Like a lot of folk, my music tastes are diverse. I'm most likely to be found listening to something forbiddingly

obscure and if I'm not, it's because I'm listening to Billy Idol or something stupid like that. I'm very snobbish about music, but I think that people who don't like pop are sad and desperate individuals.

What do you think of the current music scene in Cambridge?

Which one is that, ha-ha! Well, I'm probably shamefully out of touch and there are loads of brilliant young guitar bands that I haven't bothered to go and see. I'm mainly down with the electronic music scene in Cambridge, such as it is. I would like to big up my chums at Bad Timing at this point for fighting against the current in this regard.

What was the best thing to happen to you in 2004?

I've had a crappy year, to be honest, but good things have happened. I finally made it onto vinyl, for one, and I got to support a musical hero of mine - Damo Suzuki (of Can fame - Ed.). I also had some really good gigs, and in Giraffe (my new CD) I've finally done something that

I'm genuinely chuffed with.

Do you have any tips for people wanting to get into making or performing music?

If you are racked with doubt about your abilities it probably means you have more to offer than some self-confident chucklehead who thinks they know exactly what they're doing. Don't hang about, I would say. With regards to making music - the most important bit of kit is your ears, so you don't need the latest version of the software / classic amp / analogue synth or whatever. The first stuff I did on my own was with two tape decks. Mind you, it was rubbish.

What was the oddest thing to happen to you in 2004?

Being mildly physically assaulted at the Strawberry Fair / cheating at a Christian pub quiz / doing a gig in a tree / having a rib broken by a falling person. Details of all these bizarre incidents can be found in the diary section of my website: www.umbusiness.co.uk.

What have you recently released or will you be releasing soon?

My most recent release is the 5-track clear-vinyl / free mini-postcard Africa Is A Fridge 7" on Strange Lights records. My most recent CD-Rs are Giraffe and Giraffe Outtakes. They're £6 each and people can email me for details or buy them at gigs.

Where can people come and listen to you soon or where can they find out more?

There's always www.umbusiness.co.uk which has gig listings and also features a diary section where I ramble inconclusively about stuff. I don't play locally as much as I used to, but if I do it's most likely at a Bad Timing night at The Portland Arms (129 Chesterton Road) or an Upgrade & Afterlife night at CB2 (5-7 Norfolk Street).

Shaken and Stirred

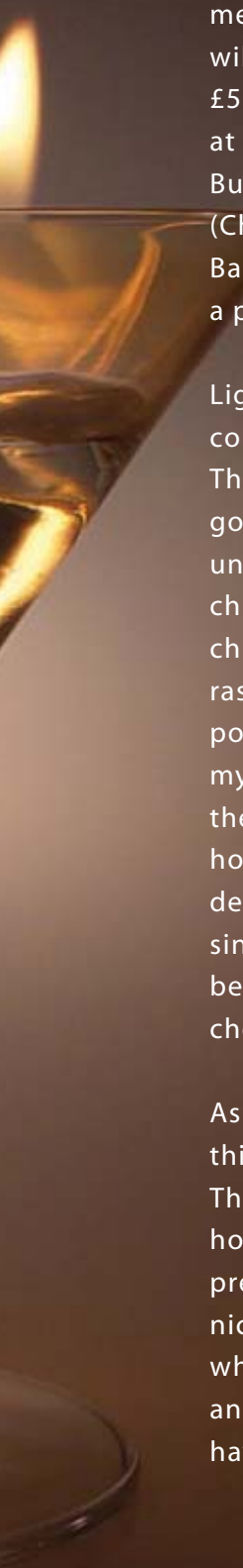
Arts and Culture

At this time of year, with love in the air and valentines cards blocking up your college pigeonhole (or not, as the case may be) what better way to treat the person of your dreams (or drown your sorrows) than to get outside of a few tasty cocktails? **PAUL SIMMONDS** explores the classier side of getting tipsy in Cambridge.

If you are looking for a sophisticated, yet relaxed venue at which to charm that special someone, you might struggle to better the *Light Bar and Restaurant* (66 Regent Street). Its unusual, yet strangely relaxing décor hits you as soon as you walk in: the entire place is illuminated solely with red light. This is echoed by the large, red, padded seating downstairs and there is comfortable dark-brown leather seating throughout

the rest of the bar, including large sofas upstairs.

The drinks menu is extensive and focuses mainly on cocktails and premium spirits; however, there is also a good wine list and a choice of some more unusual beers including Hahn from Australia. The highly knowledgeable bar staff are, thankfully, more than happy to talk you what might otherwise be the rather daunting task of actually



choosing something from the huge range of cocktails. In the end I plumped for a Wyborowa Blackberry Sling which was delicious and did exactly what it said on the tin. I followed this with a classic Manhattan, accurately described in the menu as 'perfect'. Cocktails will set you back about £5.50 and shooters come in at around £3.00. The Peanut Butter and Jelly shooter (Chambord, Frangelico and Baileys) is definitely worth a pop!

Light also offers a comprehensive food menu. The burgers are extremely good and come served on unusual wooden platters: chips don't come any chunkier than these little rascals. Although not in possession of a sweet tooth myself, I am assured that the frozen berries with hot, white-chocolate sauce dessert is the best thing since, um, sliced frozen berries with hot, white-chocolate sauce.

As the evening progresses, things become more upbeat. The DJs playing funky house and soul are actually pretty good and play a nice selection of tunes to which dancing is certainly an option. Late-comers may have to pay a cover charge

on some nights but there is a late licence to make up for it. If you want top-quality drinks, good food and something to have a move to, all under one roof, then Light Bar might be just the ticket.

If live music with a jazz-tinge is more your thing, then *La Raza* might be more up your street (The Basement, 4-6 Rose Crescent). With different jazz-styles each night of the week, this is the place to come if you want to impress that special someone with your in-depth knowledge of Max Roach's crazy off-beat syncopation and Ornette Coleman's free-jazz approach.

A rather steep flight of stairs (which promise to cause you even more problems on your way out) takes you down into the basement. It is a comfortably dark and tastefully decorated bar and, perhaps surprisingly for a venue of its kind, it has a large no-smoking area. Again, dark-brown leather seats predominate, set around large, low tables covered in tea-lights.

Cocktails here start at around the £6.95 mark and the comprehensive menu covers most of the

major classics, including a good range of Martini- and Champagne-based drinks. One drink which particularly stood out was the Basil Grande, a mixture of strawberries, basil leaves, Grand Marnier and Stolli, which, although it sounds like it perhaps shouldn't, tastes amazing.

La Raza is perennially busy, attracting suit-clad office workers and student jazz aficionados alike. As a result, those arriving later on might struggle to find somewhere to sit. *La Raza* is also open late and there is often a cover charge of a few pounds to pay. All in all, with some of the best live music in Cambridge, *La Raza* is a relaxing but vibrant place to spend an evening. However, that won't be the only thing you'll be spending; so for those more impecunious of us who still want a regular jazz-fix, my recommendation would be *The Elm Tree* (42 Orchard Street), which has live jazz nights on Sunday, Monday and Thursday nights.

Ha! Ha! Bar & Canteen (*The Blue Boar*, 17 Trinity Street) is a slightly more down-to-earth but friendly venue. More of a pub-type bar than high-class cocktail lounge, it will cater for most

people's needs on a night out. The cocktail selection is less extensive than at the previous two establishments but the several beers on tap offer an alternative to those less au fait with fruit-based drinks!

Cocktails start at around £5.00 and most of the usual suspects are in evidence; in particular, the Brazilian carnival-drink Caipirinha, which is always a good choice to kick off a night. Some of the long cocktails are also available as £9.00 jugs – ideally suited to sharing (or very thirsty people), and there is also a good selection of shooters for £3.00, including the deceptively good Lemon Meringue made from Limoncello, Cointreau and fresh cream.

In keeping with the relaxed atmosphere of the bar, the décor is comfortable, with the ubiquitous wood floors and brown leather seating. The comfy armchairs closest to the door make for a cosy drink around low tables, whereas table service is offered in the raised area past the bar, which is more suited to dining.

A good, canteen-style menu offers everything from egg and chips, to huge plates of nachos to share. The cocktail

menu also features an offer of mussels and chips for two with two bottles of Stella for £9.95, which could get a fairly relaxed date nicely underway. It is an atmosphere ideally suited to a quiet recovery session on a Sunday morning with a large selection of newspapers and coffee. Ha! Ha! Might be better for a few cocktails or beers with a group of friends, rather than that hot date where you want to impress. Nevertheless it is a great place in which to while away an evening.

Rather tucked away, across the river from Magdalene College, the *Riverside Bar* (Quayside, off Bridge Street) is a small, but perfectly formed cocktail bar. You enter via a rather unprepossessing staircase, somewhat reminiscent of a block of flats. However once you reach the top you enter a smart, dimly lit bar, split into two levels with a spiral staircase between them. With wooden floors, candles on tables, exposed brick-work and, yes, brown leather seating, it fits what seems to be the mould for all Cambridge cocktail bars, but is a stylish and relaxed space.

The drinks menu here is extensive and cocktails come top of the bill, at

around £5.00. There are many old favourites such as the Singapore Sling, as well as some classics with a twist: why not try an Elderflower Martini or a Blueberry Collins, blueberries being, I am told, the healthiest fruit in the world! Continuing this fruity theme, the Carol Channing (raspberry and champagne) and the Batida (raspberry and coconut) also caught the eye. The wine list is also impressive and features a personal favourite, the D'Arenberg Grenache for around £15.00.

When we visited, the bar was rather empty but this could be conducive to a quiet tête a tête. Certainly the amorous red glow from the soft lighting could help get those passions rising. Rather less romantic, but something which should be mentioned for curiosity value only, is perhaps the world's smallest Gents. The *Riverside* can be hired out for private functions and would make an ideal party venue. As it is though, it would make an ideal setting for a quiet drink with someone special.

For those of you looking for slightly more unusual European break than the now almost obligatory trips to Barcelona or Prague, then a visit to the Latvian capital of Riga could offer the solution. ASTRIDA GRIGULIS takes us on a journey around the highlights of this beautiful city.

Before the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent independence of Latvia, a visit to its capital, Riga, would have involved acts of bribery, a diet of



EU- Riga!!

meat, meat and more meat, and a complementary bodyguard (read spy). Fast-forward fifteen years, and although Eighties bleached hair and high heels are still in abundance, there is a new and rather exciting addition to the streets of Riga: a great number of tourists. Riga has flourished since its independence and recent interest in the city has raised comparisons with the recent

popularity of Prague. With its splendid architecture, cheap beer, and energetic nightlife, Riga has plenty to offer to both stag-night devotees and interested intellectuals alike. Once referred to as the Paris of the east, stunning quarters such as the flamboyant Art Nouveau district (one of Europe's finest) and the main tourist centre of the historic Old Town (VecRiga) make this the largest and

most cosmopolitan city in the Baltic States.

With cheap flights¹ and a short journey time from London, Riga makes an unorthodox yet rewarding weekend break. Eating out is incredibly inexpensive, and every taste is catered for. However, as there are few ethnic minorities in Latvia, 'foreign food' will often be subject to a Latvian interpretation, with liberal

sprinklings of the much-loved herb dill making Japanese noodles not so Japanese. Riga has a charming café culture. A favourite of mine is the vintage Gustav chocolate shop, which has the most deliciously thick hot chocolate and is more often than not inhabited entirely by women!

The attractive thing about Riga's nightlife is that bars and clubs are never exclusively touristy or for Latvians. In most places, tourists and locals mingle happily. However, if Russian techno is your thing, then there are many places where you can mix solely with Russians (if you like). The best places are usually in Old Town, where the next bar is just a stones throw away. Other parts of Riga have also, more recently, started developing into great night spots rivalling Old Town, such as the area around Stabu Iela. Hip spots include Pukvedim Nevieni Neraksta (Peldu 26/28), an offbeat bar frequented by the fashionably 'dressed-down', the Orange Bar (Jana Seta 5), and Spalvas Par Gaisu (Grecinieku 8). The Depo (Vaļu 32) is a great spot to observe Latvian angst youth and listen to unusual Latvian rock and indie bands. For an authentic Latvian musical experience, Cetri Balti Krekli (Vecpilsētas Iela 12) is also worth a visit.

Latvia is famed for its music and art, and cultural activities are incredibly important to Latvians, who have tried to preserve it

throughout the many years of foreign occupation. Everyone gets involved in the traditional dancing and practically every Latvian resident will sing in a choir at some point. There is a spectacular abundance of museums and art galleries, including the **State Museum of Fine Arts** (K. Valdemāra 10a) and the haunting and eye-opening Occupation Museum of Latvia (Strelnieku Laukums 1).

Latvia is famed for its flowers and flower giving. Every restaurant, bar and café has a stash of vases, ready for the influx of flower-laden customers. The Central market (Centrālā Tirgus) is rammed with flower stalls (and is also a great place to pick up black market goods...).

Transport is cheap and convenient in Riga, and it is easy to orientate yourself on foot. The statuesque Freedom Monument (Brīvības Pieminēklis) stands proudly on the main street (Brīvības Iela), next to the opera house, canal and sprawling parks. During Soviet occupation, the monument was off limits and so became the focal point for the Latvian independence movement when it was submerged with flowers in a defiant protest. Riga straddles the wide Daugava River and although most tourist attractions are found on the Old Town side, Par Daugava, or 'over the river' is worth exploring. There is even a secret little beach on the side of the riverbank.

Although, during summer 'the beach' is frequented by fat Russian mamas in their underwear, it is worth a visit as it can be a very surreal experience, swimming and sunbathing in the shadow of Riga's main bridge (Vansu Tilts), whilst buses and cars whiz by!

A trip outside of the confines of Riga is also recommended. The marvellous Ethnographic Museum (Latvijas Etnogrāfiskais Brīvības Muzejs) holds within its large estate authentic examples of historic Latvian architecture. You can walk for hours in the pine forests, and explore the buildings, meeting 'traditional' craftsmen from the four areas of Latvia (Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Zemgale and Latgale).

Now is a great time to visit the effervescent and changing Riga. Entry into the EU last May has catalysed Latvia's current economic success and the capital is fast developing into an important destination for businesses and tourists alike. As a result, modern developments and skyscrapers are appearing in abundance. However, Riga's beauty, vibrant culture and fascinating history mean that the city will always have charm. It will be interesting to see how Riga fares in its most recent invasion and occupation: by the holidaymaker.

¹ Ryan Air have now set up a service, Air Baltic and British Airways also have competitive prices.

Boat Race Preview

Hugo Mallinson

For many people this time of year is all about staying inside, wearing two sweaters and filling all the gaps in our windowsills with newspaper. But this coldest and usually bleakest part of the Winter also sees 20 men from the University Boat Club stumbling down to the river at 6 every morning. As you read this, they and their coaches are beginning the final preparations for the Boat Race against Oxford. Each team will field two 9-man crews, one "Blue" boat and one reserve crew, which will race 4 and 1/4 miles on the Thames from Putney Bridge to Mortlake on March 27th.

The squad have been training 11 times a week since mid-September, and most of them were in serious training before that. The race they train for is almost 20 minutes long and while it takes strength, it also requires great endurance, which can only come from long, frequent training sessions. 2 practices per week will be spent doing this work indoors on rowing machines, two more indoor sessions will be weight lifting and strength exercises, and the remaining eight practices will be spent combining this brute work with skilled technical practice rowing

in boats in Ely, where the club keeps a boathouse.

This all sounds pretty bleak for many people; it's hard to sell 35 hours a week for one 20 minute race, but it's precisely this ratio which makes the Boat Race so appealing to the athletes. Three things make it unique: it is more than 3 times longer than the Olympic and Internationally-contested distance for rowing, it is raced in a head-to-head format, on a river with a tricky current, and with no lanes or markers of any kind to separate the crews and prevent interference, and it is between two crews who race only once, and rarely have any solid idea of how good their opponents are.

Unlike a sprint race like the 100m, where getting to the line first is all-important, the Boat Race is as much a battle of wills as one of strength. After the initial sprinting at the start the crews settle into a rhythm which will sustain them for the rest of the race. Even non-rowers can tell the easy motion of a well-practiced crew swinging together. Once in this rhythm, they can begin to fence with the other crew by sprinting a little ahead, trying to bluff the other crew into making their move too

hard or too fast and not leaving enough strength for the end. The bends in the course mean that a crew apparently behind can take back two-thirds of a boat length on the other crew without changing speed at all. The changes in the advantage can be the death of a nervous crew, and the savior of a tenacious one. The long training, the narrow focus on a single event, and the months spent in close quarters create an enormous amount of energy, and in order to be successful the crews must channel it correctly toward their goals. So much pressure can bind a team together or blow it apart.

Anyone who has met a rower probably knows how a casual conversation can quickly devolve into an incomprehensible mire of phraseology and Byzantine explanations. Rowers can become obsessive about their sport, and this happens for the simple reason that the sport is not complex. The single action is repeated without variation. All one has to do to be successful in rowing is to perform this action perfectly, without variation, in exact time with 7 other people. Like any concentration on the very simple, this can lead to alarming complexities. In order

to make sense of the sport, some rowers think about it constantly (while others ignore it completely). This elegance makes rowing popular with the makers of kitsch inspirational posters, but also with personalities which are driven to hard work in many fields, including academics. While it is often claimed rowing is at odds or even incompatible with study, for many people it provides a great balance to and a welcome relief from a heavy academic workload. Of the thirteen people who rowed in the two previous races, 6 are completing PhDs.

This year promises more hard work and great results; the squad has already seen some of its best individual performances in recent years, and along with some new rowers back from the Olympics and International competition should be well prepared for Oxford's much-hyped international imports. The official crew will be announced a few weeks before the race, but they will race the Polish national team over the last weekend in February in the first of two tune-up races in London. On race day, if you don't feel like being one of the 400,000 people who crowd the banks and pubs to watch in person, the race will be broadcast live on ITV and on the Internet at www.theboatrace.org.

A Rather Different Ball Game

Jamie Muir Wood is President of the Cambridge University Lacrosse Club, and a PhD student in Materials Science. He explains what lacrosse is all about.

Lacrosse has been played by women in Cambridge since 1812, with the formation of a men's team in 1882 and the inception of the men's Oxford versus Cambridge Varsity lacrosse match in 1903. Since then, Cambridge have won 35 and drawn 4 of the 87 meets – the failure to win since 1993 has been blamed on the large number of lacrosse playing North American Rhodes scholars attending Oxford, but this year's team hope to end Oxford's winning streak!

For the uninitiated, lacrosse is the national sport of Canada and evolved from a Native American war game into the formalised (but still violent) game that it is today. Ten men face each other on a field roughly the same size as a rugby field, armed with sticks with nets on the end and protected by helmets, gloves and, in some cases, elbow guards,

shoulder pads and/or rib pads. Lacrosse sticks come in three fishing net-style shapes – midfielders and attackers play with a four foot long stick, while defenders play with a six foot long stick, harder to control but more useful for defending the goal. Goalkeeping sticks are slightly longer than those used by midfielders, and have a much larger net area, making it easier to stop the ball.

The idea of the game is to propel the ball, a small sphere of rubber, into the opposition's goal, a six foot square opening guarded by an inadequately protected goalkeeper, with more balls than sense. This is done by either running with the ball in your net, avoiding tackles, or by passing the ball through the air from player to player and finally shooting into the net. In common with ice-hockey, the ball can be carried behind the goal, although contrary to popular belief, the boundaries of a men's lacrosse pitch are limited to a marked rectangle.

Known as the fastest ball game on two feet, the ball can travel from one end of the field to the other in a matter of seconds, resulting in a goal. The sport is also full-contact, and anybody within nine feet of the ball is considered fair game – it is wise to keep the ball in your stick for as little time as possible to avoid being thrown to the ground by an opponent.

At the start of the match, and after each goal, rather than one team starting with the ball, a 'face-off' occurs. In a face-off, the ball is placed on the ground between the sticks of two players at the centre of the pitch and, on the whistle, they fight for it aided by their team mates. As well as this slightly unusual starting procedure, there are a number of complicated offside rules and after a shot on goal, whichever team has a player nearest the ball when it leaves the field, gains possession.

This season the Cambridge team are doing particularly well. In an East of England tournament, held in Hitchin in November, Cambridge were unbeaten. In the league, they have only lost one match in nine, which was against Bath City who are sitting top of



the division above them. In the cup, Cambridge recently beat their league rivals Walcountian Blues 2 9-7 in an extremely exciting fixture. They will now face either Canterbury or Northampton in the semi-finals, both of whom they defeated in the league by more than twenty goals, and so are almost guaranteed a spot in the cup final in March.

The squad currently has around thirty undergraduate, graduate and post-doctorate members from a range of colleges and trains four times a week during the Michaelmas and Lent terms. Matches are played on a Saturday either at home, at St John's College pitches or away around the South of England and Wales.

If you are interested in playing or learning to play lacrosse, please e-mail this year's men's captain, Meng

Wang (mw323@cam.ac.uk) or the club President, Jamie Muir Wood (ajm98@cam.ac.uk): the club accepts players of all abilities. The club relies on the involvement of experienced players both for coaching and to enable them to win fixtures – many of our most valuable players in recent years have been graduates from overseas or who learnt to play lacrosse during their first degree at Cambridge. Further information about the Cambridge University Lacrosse Club, including fixtures, results and training times can be found on our website, <http://www.srcf.ucam.org/culc>.

This year's Varsity match will take place on Saturday the 5th of March on Parker's Piece. Your support would be most welcome for what should be one of the closest Varsity fixtures in recent years...

Put it on Ice: CU Women's Ice Hockey

It's 11 PM on Sunday at the Peterborough ice rink, and an excited group of men and women are just heading out the door to their bus, carrying sticks, kit bags, and rucksacks. They won't be back in Cambridge until after midnight, and will be too keyed up after exercise to sleep until 1 AM, but who can worry about lectures and work the next day when ice hockey beckons?

The players who train at Peterborough each Sunday are on the CU Women's Ice Hockey Club (CUWIHC) and their brother team, the men's seconds' / non-student team, the Eskimos. The women's team is composed mainly of

students who learned to play after coming to Cambridge, though it also contains a smattering of experienced players, mainly foreign imports. Post-graduates comprise about two-thirds of the team, perhaps because of the sports' appeal to nationals of countries where "hockey" describes a game played with a puck.

Even the management of CUWIHC is largely postgraduate, with five of six committee members working towards PhDs or part-time PhDs. I, for example, am co-president of the team, and I am in the third year of my PhD in chemistry. Helping run CUWIHC while doing thesis re-

search requires excellent time management skills, flexibility in scheduling work and training, and (ideally!) office- or labmates who don't mind seeing stacks of hockey sticks in the corner. It is not for the faint of heart, but none of the CUWIHC committee members would sacrifice her role on the team to gain a bit more time for the work—or the pub. For me, the team goalie, there is something thrilling about watching a shooter bear down on me in

goal and stopping her shot that makes even the most mundane administrative work worthwhile.

This year, for the first time ever, we organized a training trip to Finland. Our sponsor, Cambridge University Press, helped us spend a full week of practice at the Finnish Sports Institute,

a sports paradise in the middle of snowy Finnish Lakeland. We carried our kit bags across snow and ice, on public buses and airplanes to arrive in what was apparently a

pilgrimage site for cross-country skiers. We stayed in cabins overlooking a frozen, snow-covered lake only a few hundred yards from the ice rink. We turned ourselves over to the mercies of a class of students studying for degrees in coaching, and began to train.

Over the course of six days, we spent twenty-one hours on the ice and about the same amount of time in the gym. We chased pucks and rubber balls, learned to dive, kick, and pivot on skates, and took hundreds of shots against the boards. We learned to position ourselves prop-

CU Women's Ice Hockey Schedule

Sunday 13th Feb v. Peterborough, faceoff 8.30 PM

Friday 18th Feb at Streatham, faceoff 11.00 PM

Saturday 26th Feb at Coventry, faceoff 10.45pm

Sunday 6th March, Varsity Match v. Oxford at Milton Keynes, faceoff 9.00 PM

(transportation provided from Cambridge)

For further information email the CUWIHC committee at cuwihc@srcf.ucam.org

or check out the website at

<http://www.srcf.ucam.org/cuwihc>



erly, to pass to our teammates, and about the weaknesses of the goalie's stance. When we weren't on ice, our coaches had us running in the snow, picking each other up in a bizarre form of weight training, doing flexibility exercises (in which we knelt down while holding four foot sticks), or listening to our coaches teach us about how to develop an annual training plan. All of our coaches seemed to have experience at the national or professional level, and they made the program amazing for us by being consistently understanding and approachable.

The entire week of hard work, discipline, and cold paid off in one perfect hour on the last day

The Cambridge Women's Ice Hockey Team pose for a photo in Finland

in Finland. The sun came out, the snow was beautiful, and we skated outdoors on a gorgeous ice rink. The feeling of freedom that comes from effortless skating and the feeling of power that comes with shooting a beautiful goal were magnified enormously in the clear air. All of us, despite our pain and fatigue, felt our commitment to ice hockey reaffirmed.

Upon return to prosaic England, the team's focus changed to the Varsity Match on March 6th. Like most Cambridge University teams, CUWIBC plays against their Oxford counterpart annu-

ally in the biggest game of the year. While Oxford have won almost every one of the past twenty Varsity Matches, Finland promises to give us the advantage this year. We can never hope to match Oxford's weekly training schedule (they have a rink in the centre of town), but we have proved that we are a committed team of fit women, and with that, we are ready to defeat the dark scum.

by Robin Stien

Gown *and* Dirty

by Megan Meredith-Lobay

Graduate fashion and fussiness through the ages



Sitting down to dinner recently at my most revered college I noticed about half-way through the meal that I had been dragging the long sleeve of my M.A. gown in some kind of whitish sauce. Having successfully salvaged my dignity by surreptitiously wiping said sleeve off with the table cloth, I began to wonder why it was that I was wearing such an item of clothing that anywhere out of context would seem like a bad attempt at a Batman costume.

Determined to learn the truth, I journeyed to the depths of the Ministry of Truth, the UL to some, in order to seek out the answers from the definitive collection, *Cambridge Academic Dress* by George Shaw. Unfortunately, this volume is currently AWOL from its post in the Rare Books room, so the following discussion of graduate fashions through the ages

is drawn from varying sources and websites dedicated to the curiosities of Cambridge such as the Burgon Society for the History of Academic Dress (www.burgon.org.uk) and the Queen's College webstie. I made up everything else.

Our acadmical dress is one of the oldest traditions in the university, hailing from the long robes worn by the clerics who were the first students nearly 800 years ago. Long, somber robes were all the rage for your educated man-about- village in the 13th century.

The follow quote from Univer- sity regulations, circa 1560, courtesy Queen's College website, indicates how seriously dress was taken:

'gownes, first not to be of any Stoffe but cloth, secondly not to be faced with silke of playne Taffitoy untuffed, Sarcenet, Silke Grogram futher than the collar and halfe yarde downe the brest, only MAs, LLBs, MBs and upward, and no hoodes to be worne abroade in the towne to be lyned with sylke excepte for Doctors and STBs being heads of houses and the orators, thirdly gownes not to be made of any other fashion but that commonly called the Priest's gowne, or else of the fashion of the playne Turkey gowne with the round falling cope and the Trunke gowne sleeves etc not of any colour but black"

Though initially worn closed in front, from the 1470s on academic gowns began to become lighter and more open. As the years went by they became more and more

"That no scholler shall weare any Bari- lled Hosen, any great Ruffs, and clocks with wings etc"
-1560 University regulation

elaborate, being then lined with silks and furs. At this time the mortar board began to develop from the Tudor cap called the biretta. However, things started getting out of hand by the middle of the seventeenth century when someone complained that:

Certain Disorders in Cambridge ... the Clericall Habit appointed for Students [is] generally neglected" ... undergraduates wearing ... "the new fashioned gowns of any colour whatsoever, blew or green, or red or mixt" ... and their other garments ... "light and gay [with] round rusti Caps, if they wear any at all" ... "fair Roses upon the Shoe, long frizled haire upon the head, broad spread bands upon the Shoulders, and long large Merchants Ruffs about the neck, with fayre feminine Cuffs at the wrist"

Unusual references to student dress appear in various statutes and regulations throughout the next four centuries, mostly dealing with untidy or long hair, which was obviously considered a mortal sin by the university. Such was the offence, that a man in 1560 caught with gaingly locks was fined "under payne of 6s 8d."

An amusing regulation for St. John's and Trinity Colleges in 1812 reads, "that students appearing in Hall or Chapel in pantaloons or trousers should



Modern graduates sit in rank defiance of tradition

be considered absent." This naturally begs the question, "what were they wearing underneath all those robes?"

Fortunately for those of us studying today, academic dress has been limited to formal university occasions. The regulation that all students had to wear their gowns in town after dusk was repealed in the 1960s because it made students an easy target for assault. But why, at the end of all this, do the M.A. gowns have the crazy, long sleeves whilst the undergraduates have the open, bell-shaped sleeve? Judging from experience at undergraduate formal halls, it is to discourage them from nicking the cutlery. However, the truth lies, of course, with fashion. At one time the M.A. arm hole, as

it were, was at the bottom of the long sleeve rather than half way up as it is today. This was because it would appear that more luxurious fabric had gone into its construction.

So next time you are sitting in Hall draped in your best Potter-esque finery wondering how long it would take your second-hand polyester robe to burst into all-consuming flames if you accidentally dripped a over-sized sleeve into one of the candles just remember; someone just like you, wearing a cheap robe just like you, sitting at maybe the same table hundreds of years ago, was probably wondering the same thing.

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