

Rebecca Gower



Leaving the comfort zone: the terror of life beyond University

I went home for a few days at Easter to give myself some respite from essays and the like. (Not that I particularly needed any time off; my will to work ran out at some point in the second week of the holiday, around the time that I realised I had no idea what I was even meant to be writing an essay about. Still, hopefully it'll never be marked because of the AUT strike, and I can claim that it was, in fact, my masterpiece, and I was robbed of a first class mark.)

Anyway, home was nice enough, except for the fact that I felt as if I had been drugged. All I wanted to do during the day was sleep, and that's basically what I did. In between various naps, however, I saw various members of my family, all of whom said the same thing to me: that they couldn't believe that this was it for me, that three years of university are nearly up and I'm about to be cast out into the world.

Well, I can't believe it either. For a start, I'm not nearly ready to say goodbye to the library. Somehow it has transformed into my favourite place on campus: I get up in the morning and I just feel irresistibly drawn towards it, despite the fact that it takes me forty minutes to traipse there from my house. I've even managed to get over my dislike of the growing number of over-affectionate couples (though I will take this opportunity to point out that nobody – really, nobody – is interested in how much you love each other, or wants to see a graphic demonstration of that love), and mobile phone users.

It's got to the point where I'm pretty upset that term is starting,

because this means that the library will be busy again with fresh faced youngsters, and I prefer it when there are only a select few people to be found there.

Hopefully I'll be able to bid the library a fond farewell when the time comes, though, as I am actually going to be working in a library next year. It won't be the same, obviously, but it'll be comforting nonetheless. But there are so many other things involved in leaving university that I'm just not prepared for.

For example: this year, the washing machine in my house has launched a concerted campaign against me by ripping holes in many of my clothes. (I did suspect that this vendetta was, in fact, sabotage on the part of my housemates, but lately the washer has turned on them too. Even I'm not paranoid enough to think they'd destroy their own clothes to make me buy better ones.)

After being initially devastated – one of my favourite jumpers in the world, which has probably been in my family for generations, was effectively shredded to pieces – I took the attitude that it was probably okay to keep wearing them. I won't be able to do that once I'm in paid employment as I will have to try to look vaguely presentable. I feel exhausted just typing that idea, let alone putting it into practice.

Once I've got a job, I won't be able to go shopping in the middle of the week; I'll have to go on Saturday, and try to suppress all murderous thoughts towards the thousands of people who always appear to be milling around aimlessly. I won't be able to stay up until four in the morning, and get



The library is a haven for those that appreciate a quiet campus

up at midday. (Not that I've done that since first year, in fairness. Who could be bothered? You unflinchingly feel awful when you eventually wake up, and it throws your sleeping patterns out completely.)

I won't be able to spend hours reading about *Prison Break* and *Green Wing* on the internet when

I'm supposed to be working, or to continue in my attempts to bring up the fifty percent mark on my spider solitaire victory rate. All this, and I'll be forced to be doing something that actually involves using my brain, from nine to five every day. I don't know how I'm going to cope.

And, of course, I'm not going

to have any friends, and this is the main reason why I'm so horrified at the thought of leaving York. Back in the heady days of first year, I was okay: not only was I considerably less set in my ways then (eighteen feels like decades ago, seriously), but nobody else knew anyone either, so most people were actually trying to be friendly. What ever mistakes you made, you'd get away with them, because people just forgot.

Now, though, I'm off to Cambridge. I don't know anyone there, and I have nobody to live with. So, I have two options. I can live alone, which is expensive but rather tempting. "You'd never talk to anyone, ever. You'd spend every evening alone," pointed out one person helpfully. "Yes, fine, but I could ... I don't know, go to evening classes or something," I lied. Or else, I can go and live in a house with a load of people that I won't know at all, and that's probably what's going to happen.

It'll be a disaster. Over the past three years, any social skills I might once have had have been eroded away, and I reckon I'm almost totally incapable now of creating a good impression on anyone. More to the point, I'm too lazy to want to try: making yourself come across as funny and pleasant enough, rather than overwhelmingly neurotic, is just too much hard work. I mean, goodness knows, my housemates at the moment have enough to put up with from me.

Don't take my word for it; in the purposes of research, I asked one of them what was bad about living with me. "Oh, you're not so bad," she said cheerfully. But then, after a slight pause: "Actually..." She proceeded to list (at length) things that annoy her, some of them reasonable enough (I rant a lot), others questionable (apparently, I'm not adventurous enough as a cook, and this is a really negative quality).

All this, and I always look as if I'm scowling. I'm not – laughably enough, that's just the way my face falls – but it's not exactly endearing. And these are my supposed friends – people who actually like me. What on earth am I going to do when confronted with people who don't know me, but have to live with me regardless? I'm doomed, I tell you.

Sshh! How to give birth like a Scientologist

A couple of days before writing this, Katie Holmes gave birth to a baby girl, named Suri (apparently it's Hebrew for 'princess', or something similarly pretentious).

I must say, I don't think Suri Cruise is a brilliant name; it doesn't really sound right, rather like Moses Martin, the other celebrity baby of the moment. Anyway,

there's been an immense fuss in the media about Ms Holmes's labour: there were a load of rumours that, due to Scientology's practice of silent birth, Tom Cruise had bought his fiancée a dummy, in order that the baby wouldn't hear any screaming as she entered the world.

Cruise has stated that it's all nonsense, and that Scientology has

been grossly misrepresented. Good on him, I say; L. Ron Hubbard (tragically deceased), the founder of Scientology, sounds like just the kind of spiritual leader the world needs.

After all, his son stated in 1983 that his father was "only interested in money, sex, booze, and drugs" as well as revealing "99% of what my father ever wrote

or said about himself is totally untrue." Indeed, three years earlier, Hubbard was quoted in Reader's Digest as saying, "If a man really wants to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start his own religion." I'm not quite sure how comments like this can be misrepresented; but then, I'm just one of the uninitiated. You carry on bearing the torch of truth, Tom.