

Felix

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“behaviour was aggressive and intimidating” - Bullying report published

Sam Lovatt Editor-in-Chief

Imperial College has published a redacted version of the infamous 2020 bullying inquiry, shared with the College community shortly before the wider public.

A decision, made by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) on January 19th, stated that the public interest of publication of the report outweighed privacy concerns of some of those involved. The ICO added that the privacy of those who had given evidence was paramount to disclosing the full report. As such, a version of the report with all details that could lead to the identification of witnesses redacted was published.

The report makes it clear that at least one other person who was accused of bullying and/or harassment has had their details completely redacted. This is seemingly because no allegation against them was upheld.

The report gives unprecedented insight into the behaviours of Alice and Muir prior to, and at the beginning of, the pandemic. A clear distinction is made between the behaviours of Alice and Muir, with Muir's conduct being recorded as notably worse. This is highlighted in the conclusions of the report: "I consider that in those parts of the College considered in this report and at the most senior level,



EDITORIAL

Student Loans

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As the Editor of Felix I earn almost bang on the student loan repayment threshold, which is £2,274 a month minus income tax, national insurance etc. (I have no issue with the student body knowing my salary, I'm pretty sure you could even find it out yourself if you look around on the Union website. P.s, the President and Deputy Presidents get about £5,000 a year more).

This salary is met with significantly different responses, depending on the context of the conversation.

One might go:

"Oh, you're Editor job is full time, how much do you earn?"

"£27,500-ish"

"Fucking hell, that's so good".

And they're right, it is.

But then switch the context to student loan repayments:

"The repayment cap is being frozen at £27,500-ish which will squeeze graduates EVEN harder!"

"Fuck sake, classic Tories".

"[The freeze will place] a much higher burden on graduates than they thought they had signed up for when they took out their loans" chimes in the IFS.

Firstly, this last comment largely un-true, as up until 2018 the repayment threshold was a considerably less generous £21,000. And secondly, even if it was true, it's still an outstanding deal. As you'll note from the News story on this, four out of five graduates never pay back their loan, meaning a proportion of

the cost to them of going to university is shouldered by the taxpayer. The value of your "debt" as a graduate has no effect on how much you pay back, which is not the case for almost every other type of loan. For example, as Martin Lewis puts it, if the tuition fee cap rose to £1 million a year, and you

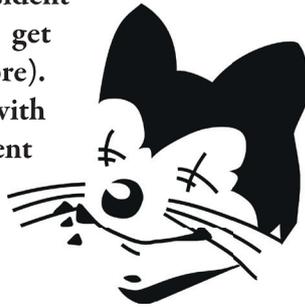
had accrued a £3 million debt by the end of your bachelors, you would still only pay back 9% of everything you earn over the threshold. This, obviously, is massive step forward in terms of equity, as those who come

from poorer backgrounds and

have taken out loans totalling close to £70,000 pay back the same amount per payslip as those from richer families who may only have loans to the value of £27,000 or even less.

Furthermore, there is the value imparted by most degrees on their recipients. I would not have this job had I not come to university, and graduate vs non-graduate earnings across the country reflect the clear benefit that a degree has on salary expectations. That being said, graduate-filled roles also largely benefit the economy and the country as a whole, leaving the Augar report panel to the conclusion that "the cost of post-18 education should be shared between taxpayers, employers and learners".

This freeze does represent a real-terms cut to a graduate's pay packet, but it is a tiny one, and one they can probably afford due to their statistically higher salaries in the first place. What's more, the threshold is so far above the living wage that it's almost offensive to talk about childless, single people (which new graduates largely are) on around £30,000 a year as if they're the crux of this whole "squeeze" matter anyway.



Statement of Intent

At Felix we believe that it is always in the interest of the students to know. Transparency in the workings of the College and the work of your student representatives is key. Therefore I, the Felix Editor, on behalf of the team promise that:

We will, to the best of our ability, tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

We will keep your confidence and will only publish something you say to us if you have explicitly said that we can.

We will work to expose unfairness and discrimination in all forms that it takes at the College .

We will treat fairly any article sent to us, regardless of point of view, and do our best to work with you to prepare it for publication.

Signed by Sam Lovatt
Editor-in Chief

Felix Office
Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road
London, SW7 2BB

Tel: 020 79548072
Email: felix@ic.ac.uk

felixonline.co.uk
@feliximperial

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Bullying report...

there is a culture of making disparaging comments about, undermining and excluding others (AG and MS). There are behaviours that cross the line between strong management and bullying (MS only), aggressive behaviours (MS only) and the use of inappropriate and offensive language (MS only)".

Alice Gast

Alice was found to have undermined at least one person "both personally and professionally".

She is also found to have treated at least one person in a way that is "belittling and undermining". Her actions have led to one accuser suffering "from lack of sleep and weight loss".

The investigator notes that Alice "did not deliberately treat [REDACTED] in an adverse manner", but that she lacked insight into the consequences of her actions.

Her actions which the investigator considered particularly serious have been redacted, other than that she prevented someone from doing their job at the beginning of the pandemic, apparently by excluding them and not dealing with issues of poor performance in an appropriate manner.

Further instances looked at in the report show Alice's "adverse, abrupt and unempathetic treatment of members of staff", however it is concluded that these did not amount to bullying, rather that they were "one-off incidents which... had only a transient impact on the individuals involved".

The Plight of Sanderson

One of the most crucial revelations from the report is that there is a notable difference in the behaviour of Alice and Muir.

Muir comes out of the report significantly worse off than Alice. His behaviour is described as undermining, condescending, offensive, aggressive, intimidating, distressing, disparaging, excluding, disrespectful, humiliating and abhorrent.

Whilst the main reason for the report was to judge whether Alice and Muir had

in fact bullied other members of staff, the report highlights the facts that Muir was dismissive of complaints against other members of staff and held the opinions of students in very low regard.

On the matter of bringing a paper on responsible investment to College Council, which we can assume had the backing of some students, the report describes "MS being dismissive and saying that he could just 'fold his arms and wait for the students to graduate'".

On dismissing complaints against other staff members, the report says "It is troubling in this day and age that one of the most senior employees at an institution like Imperial College should think that a comment made by a senior employee referring to a 'one-armed black lesbian' should be treated as a joke". The College added a note to say that this comment was made by an ex-member of staff.

On another matter, which involved a grievance so strong that the offending party had offered to resign, Muir suggested that the complainant and offender go for lunch in order to "iron it out".

He is also quoted as having used the phrase "leaving the plantation", though there is no context to this.

In strange contrast, the report notes "I was impressed by the many positive things said about" Muir.

Culture

It is very difficult to read the report as a whole due to the massive amount of redacted detail. Points made in the reasoning appear at many times contradictory to the conclusions stated. Despite a conclusion of the report being "my findings do not enable me to conclude that there is a culture of bullying at the College", it is added that "AG and MS have created or contributed to a culture which involves and tolerates favouritism, exclusion, the making of disparaging comments about others and at times a lack of respect for others".

"the College demands and assumes excellence but is less good at rewarding and recognising excellence"

The report highlights that in some aspects the College suffers from a culture of disparaging behaviour, as



Credit: Imperial College London

opposed to acts solely committed by Alice and Muir. One example highlighted in the report is "It was striking that within hours of MS (Muir) saying that [REDACTED] should "grow a backbone", [REDACTED] was commenting that [REDACTED] had "not shown a lot of backbone", emulating behaviours demonstrated by MS."

Several comments made to the investigator suggest favouritism based on personal preference of the senior leadership rather than competency in their role. On nominating members of a group referred to as 'Silver' in the report, it was said that "the selection was not entirely objective. There was no very satisfactory explanation for the selection of individuals that was made".

There was also concern raised over the distribution of power within the College's leadership. The report describes Muir as 'de facto COO' as well as CFO, and adds that "I have referred to the perceived problem of power being centred in two or three individuals at the College and the exclusion from the decision-making process of those who should be included in the interests of good governance".

"At the most senior level of the College, there is a culture of making disparaging comments about others who are absent and tolerating the making of such comments by others"

Imperial College Union said "Alongside the specific incidents of bullying referred to, the report paints a picture of a culture at the top of the institution without empathy, in which exclusion and disrespect are practiced and

encouraged by the most senior leaders. There will be many reading this report who see reflections of their own experiences, and who will rightly connect the most negative aspects of the culture throughout the College



NEWS

with the poor example demonstrated by its leadership. Many will also question whether it is worth disclosing their own experiences through a formal complaint, when severe cases of mistreatment do not have more significant consequences.

Last year, the Union Council formally called for the resignation of President Alice Gast and Chief Financial Officer Muir Sanderson over the confirmed bullying incidents. Today's report shows clearly why their position remains untenable."

The culture change initiatives that have progressed over the last year, such as Imperial Together, are valuable and genuinely well-meaning. The Union will continue to support these fully. But many

Sam Lovatt Editor-in-Chief

Universities minister Michelle Donelan announced on Friday that the student loan repayment threshold would remain as it is now for the 2022/23 academic year, rather than rising to account for inflation.

The statement comes at a time where inflation rates are at a 30-year high of 5.4%, with some experts predicting they will rise above 7% by the end of the year.

Donelan's statement was made via a written statement on the UK Parliament website, and added that the interest rate thresholds will also remain the same for the 22/23 academic year.

In 2018, Theresa May's government

Student loan repayment threshold frozen

raised the repayment threshold for plan 2 (everyone who began their undergraduate degree post-2012) from a £21,000 per year salary to £25,000 a year, and this figure has increased since by roughly £750 per year. The threshold currently stands at £27,295 per year and may have been expected to rise to

Donelan also said "It is now more crucial than ever that higher education is underpinned by just and sustainable finance and funding arrangements, and that the system provides value for money for all of society at a time of rising costs".

She added that tuition fee caps would remain frozen at £9,250, for the fifth year in a row.

Students from a poor background who pay home fees can currently accrue up to £21,632 in "debt" each year, which will be paid back at a rate of 9% of everything earned over the threshold.

Donelan said "Maintaining the repayment threshold at its current level, alongside the ongoing freeze in fees, will help to ensure the sustainability of the student loans system, while keeping higher education open to everyone who has the ability and the ambition to benefit from it, including the most disadvantaged."

Senior research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies said the move represented "a tax rise by stealth".

Many critics highlighted the additional pressure this real-terms reduction in the repayment threshold would put on middle-earning graduates, highlighting rising food prices and the expectation of household fuel bill caps rising to around £2,000 in April.

According to the Times Higher Education, ministers are keen to reduce the salary threshold at which student begin to pay back their loans to around £22,000 per year. Apparently, four out of five graduates never pay back their full loans and the "debt" is wiped after 30 years, meaning it is shouldered by the taxpayer.

The government is predicted to "save around £600 million per cohort of university students".

The government is soon expected to issue a response to the "Review of post-18 education and funding" (or colloquially the "Augar report", so named after the chair of the panel who conducted the review, Dr Philip Augar), a 216 page look at the state of higher educational funding in England, published in 2019.

One of the recommendations of

this report is "freezing the repayment threshold" so that "more graduates... repay their loans in full over their lifetimes". They also add that "misunderstanding is high" and that more needs to be done in communicating what 'student debt' really means.

Among the report's other recommendations are "addressing higher education funding", where the panel suggests that "generous and undirected" funding has led to an over-supply of unnecessary courses at "great cost to the taxpayer". It also recommends that tuition fees be capped at £7,500 per student and that more taxpayer funding is directed, as grants, to disadvantaged students.



Letter to the Editor

Dear sir,

It seems my fears have been realised as the controversy engulfing America has finally arrived at the doorstep of my institution. After several other misguided acts of iconoclasm, Imperial proposes to subject Thomas H. Huxley to damnatio memoriae by removing his bust and renaming the Huxley building.

By all accounts Imperial could not have hoped for a more virtuous founding figure. I won't enumerate Huxley's achievements here, as others have done a better job of that than I could, but I would highlight his support of working-class boys like me (who are the least well represented group at English universities).

If the college wishes to apply a retrospective moral standard to its benefactors then all past patrons will soon be gone (taking what little visible history the college has with them), as will any potential future benefactors. For what moneyed alumnus would wish to donate to the college when there is a risk that opinions that are seemingly fashionable today – like racial quotas, to pick a pertinent example – are deemed untenable in 20 or 100 years?

Or perhaps Imperial is more relaxed about the moral standing of its current contributors. I don't recall the college returning any money to Gary Tanaka, and it is inexplicable that the president Alice Gast still holds her position after the public acknowledgement of the culture of bullying that is rotting away the heart of the college, and has been known about since at least 2014 following the death of Prof. Stefan Grimm.

'Huxley' is, of course, a term of derision – but not because of the man, because of the building. Constructed during the austerity of the 1970s (an austerity that might return if the college continues its current moral panic) and taking the name of its predecessor (now the Henry Cole wing of the V&A), the Huxley building fails on just about any standard of quality you can name: space, light, heating, circulation, acoustics, legibility, accessibility, aesthetics. Even after years of partial renovation it remains a comically dire building.

So if Imperial wishes to substantively improve the conditions of its students and faculty, I propose three simple steps: fire the president, demolish the building, and keep the name.

- Daniel Sykes (*Computing*, 2010)

The ageist nature of technology

► *There is a growing need for computer and phone interfaces which account for the needs of the elderly population*

Anusha Narayan Science Writer

In 2019, 1 in 11 were over the age of 65. By 2050, this statistic is expected to have increased to one in six. The world's elderly population is growing exponentially, and the shifting demographics have progressively led to more and more people being left out of the modern world. The reason for this? Technology. Many of us have had the experience of teaching elderly relatives how to send a text or how to watch video on YouTube. The difficulties that they face with technology are seldom caused by their unwillingness to learn, but due to the inability to comprehend the complex task of using technological devices. The industry usually excludes 9% of the population before a product even hits the shelves, simply because using the device is far too complicated. To produce truly accessible products, companies must give users the time and aid necessary for them to come to grips with the technology they do not recognise.

Think about how you place a WhatsApp video call. For most of us, this action has become second nature. A few months ago, however, I was teaching my grandmother, and I realized how complicated it is: open WhatsApp, then go to Calls, then to the little green button that means contacts, then scroll and find the person you want to call, then press the little camera icon. This alone is a long-winded process, but it becomes more onerous when you have called the person before, then different again when you've messaged them before. I only ended up teaching her the first version; the rest would only create more confusion. Nevertheless, this little episode made something clear to me: all the shortcuts that exist to make using a device easier accomplish their function for many, but there is still a significant proportion for whom such shortcuts only create further complications.

Rote learning is one of the most effective methods of learning, whereby

a person learns the steps of a process by continually repeating them until memorised. This is particularly true for the present generation of the elderly population, whose own education had its foundations in rote learning. Therefore, it is no surprise that this will be how they can best learn how to use technology: repeating the actions over and over until they are firmly ingrained. However, much as the physical body declines in old age, so does the ability to memorise information. 40% of over 65s suffer from age-related memory issues. While they are not always as severe as Alzheimer's or dementia, a person's ability to remember information is nevertheless impacted. In order to remember the process, it will take the elderly user far more than simply one attempt. However, most devices only provide instruction once, and only for the device itself. Apps provide no aid at all. If tech companies do wish to open their products up to everybody, they must be able to aid the users for as long as they need it.

There is a simple alternative to the problems caused by memorisation of a method: having a written method. This is exactly how I taught my grandmother the process of making WhatsApp calls; I wrote out each step and she carried a little piece of paper with her until she could remember it. So, while this is an obvious alternative, it poses its own problems. With 49.6% of elderly people suffering from arthritis, writing out a method on a piece of paper is almost impossible. The only clear solution to this is to have somebody else write it out for them, which, for

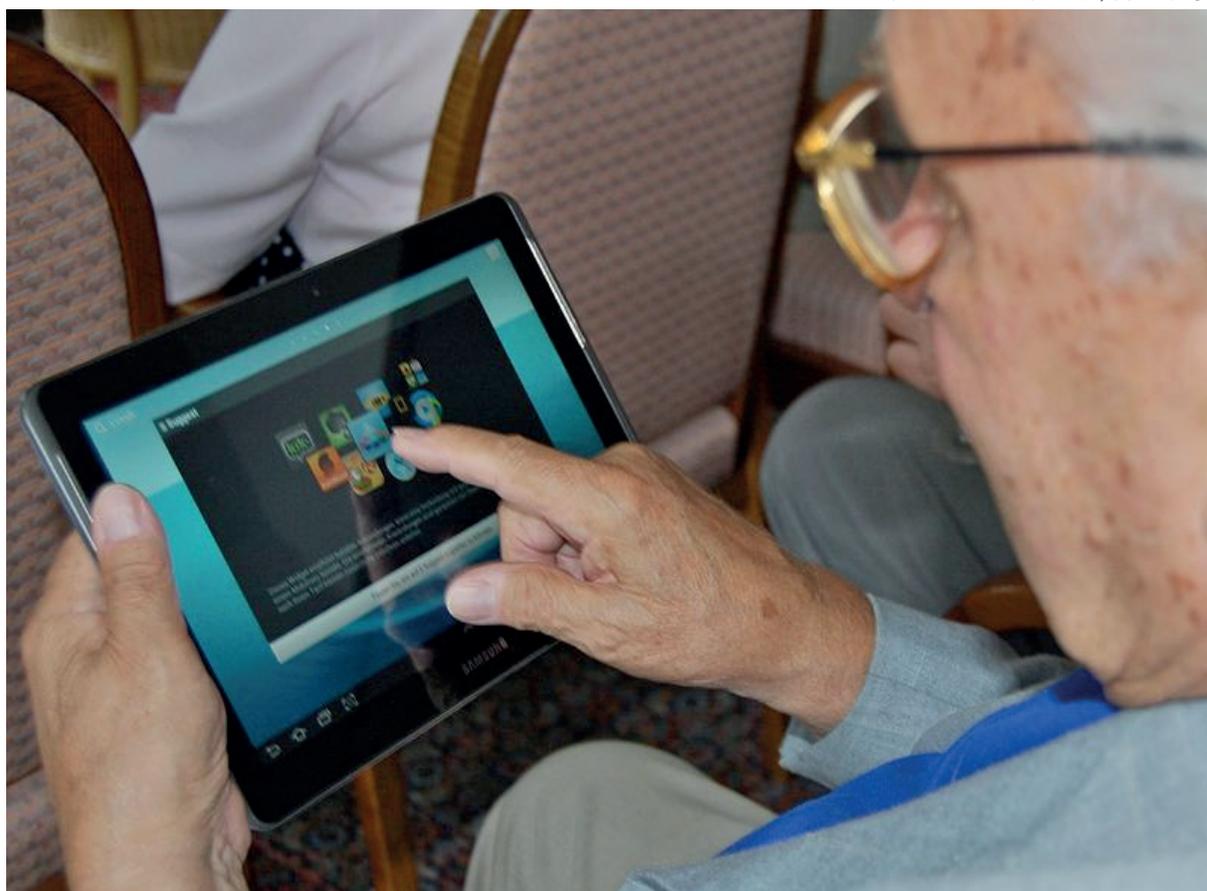
many, is not an option. There were 3.3 million people over 70 years old living alone in 2019 in the UK, a figure which only increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. While charities such as Age UK have programmes in which volunteers become "tech buddies", this is not nearly as far-reaching as it needs to be. The best solutions which can help the elderly to get to grips with technology are available to only a very slim part of the population.

Many people, especially of my generation, will believe that this is only a problem for now; the elderly people of today did not grow up with technology, whereas we did. While this appears to be a solid argument, there are holes in it. The phenomenon of feature creep (the tendency of products to become more complicated over) means that the technology that will exist in 2080 will bear little resemblance to what we know now, ensuring that we will be just as confused as the current generation. It is easy to think that this problem will take care of itself, but it would be a mistake

of the industry to go on without changing—the issue of accessibility will not be resolved without careful consideration and design

What is the solution to this problem then? Devices need to constantly be giving user's options for the next move, thus providing them with aid for as long as they need. The lack of accessibility for elderly people cannot simply be solved by having larger text – though this is still essential. Devices need to give constant assistance to the user. But how this assistance takes place can only be decided once elderly users have been carefully observed, to see exactly how they use and prefer to use a device. Young users are frequently observed to ensure that they have the best experience of technology (with valid reason; they are the primary consumers) but it is time for tech companies to consider their whole market. Until then, technology will not be truly accessible to all.

Credit: Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA-3.0



SCIENCE

We are killing the cure for cancer

► *Marine invertebrates may hold the key to developing effective cancer treatments, but we are reducing their populations*

Wang Guo Science Writer

Cancer is still a very hard disease to cure despite the current extensive research being carried out to investigate it from different angles. Around 60% of cancer drugs have a natural origin. Many of these come from marine invertebrates, which have huge biochemical diversity. So, there are potentially more anti-cancer chemicals to be discovered in these organisms. The reason why the chemicals of marine invertebrates can destroy malignant cells is that these chemicals have cytotoxic properties (i.e. are toxic for cells). This evolved through natural selection. Marine invertebrates live in environments infested with pathogenic microorganisms such as fungi and bacteria that they need to continually fight. Some marine invertebrates like sea cucumbers do not have protective exoskeletons, so they are more exposed to these pathogens. Sea cucumbers have thus been forced to develop and improve their biochemical arsenal.

Undoubtedly, the sea cucumber is the marine invertebrate with the largest potential for the discovery of cancer treatments due to the genetic diversity of these “plant-like” animals. They are rich in various molecules that are not produced in the human body and are very hard to synthesise in laboratories. Chemicals such as frondoside A and triterpene glycosides, have already shown promising results when tested on a large array of human cell lines. These compounds have proven to have anti-tumoral and anti-oxidant properties, amongst others. For this reason, sea cucumbers have been a delicacy in Asian civilisations for centuries, and are often termed the “ginseng of the sea” (ginseng is a plant root with many healing properties).

Fronodoside A has growing relevance in the fight against cancer. This very complex molecule is extracted from the sea cucumber *Cucumaria frondosa*. Research with mice has shown that frondoside A is effective in curing both lung and pancreatic cancers. In addition, the

dosed-frondoside A mice attained more protection against bacterial infection, as well as increasing activity in macrophages. These are immune cells that “eat” harmful agents such as bacteria or cancer cells. The applications of frondoside A in breast and hormonal-related cancers is also under study. There are four core effects of frondoside A that make it such a good anti-cancer agent. First, it inhibits cell division, which is key in stopping the growth of tumours because cancer is essentially the uncontrolled division of dysfunctional cells. Second, it simultaneously activates apoptosis, which is the programmed death of cells that have suffered DNA damage or been invaded by pathogens, in order to avoid infecting the surrounding cells. Third, it prevents the spread of cancer cells to other tissues and organs of the body. Fourth, as malignant tumours grow very fast, they need higher supplies of food and oxygen. Consequently, they start forming blood vessels that connect with the main bloodstream to uptake more nutrients. This process is called angiogenesis and frondoside A precisely inhibits it, causing the starva-

tion of the malignant tumours. All in all, frondoside A is capable of preventing the further development of cancer cells and killing them directly.

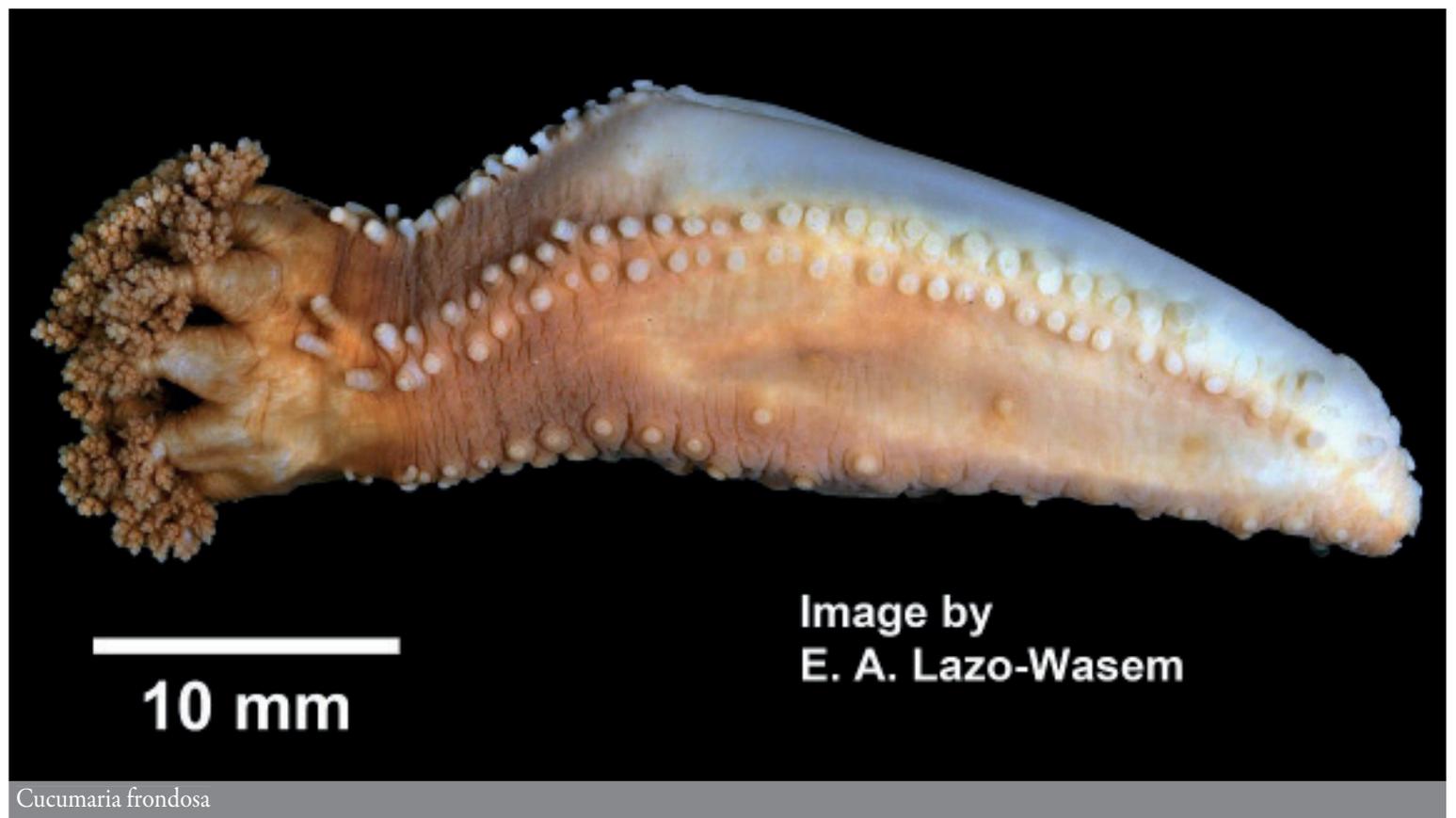
Another “Holy Grail” of natural anti-cancer agents are triterpene glycosides which are synthesised, again, by sea cucumbers. They have cytotoxic properties that are effective against fungi, bacteria, and other living cells. Sea cucumbers employ these chemical compounds both to deter predators and to attack pathogens. Triterpene glycosides create channels in cell membranes that alter the internal chemical composition of the cell, causing its death. Several investigations conducted in rodents have demonstrated that triterpene glycosides are able to diminish tumour growth and spread.

However, there are two main disadvantages to using sea cucumbers’ chemicals for cancer treatment. Firstly, frondoside A is hard to test in clinical trials with humans because the chemical compound is inactive if ingested orally. The other methods of administration are intravenous and abdominal, which activate frondoside A but are more

invasive and therefore require a precise calculation of the doses and a thorough risk assessment. Secondly, the increasing usage of anti-cancer drugs from sea cucumber might drive these animals to the brink of extinction. Not only are their populations diminishing due to fishing, but climate change is destroying their natural habitats. From a pharmaceutical point of view, investing in cancer drugs derived from sea cucumbers is not sustainable in the long-term unless we can synthesise the chemical compounds artificially. However, chemical compounds like frondoside A are extremely difficult to synthesise because of their size and chemical bonds.

In conclusion, cancer is a dire disease with no definitive cure despite the decades of research dedicated to it. The solution could be in the amazing biochemical diversity of marine life, which has already given positive results in cancer treatment. However, human activity is putting our oceans in danger, alongside the cure for cancer.

Credit: Wikimedia Commons (Eric A. Lazo-Wasem), CC0 1.0



Cucumaria frondosa

Science Spotlight

A forest's fungi

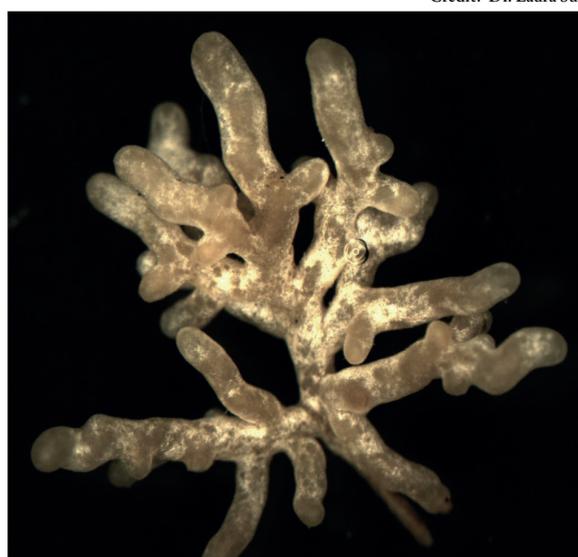
with Professor Martin Bidartondo

Cara Burke Science Editor

There are multiple types of mycorrhizal fungi. These fungi share the common characteristic of forming key symbiotic (beneficial) relationships with plants to provide them with nutrients and water in exchange for carbon in the form of sugars. Professor Bidartondo has worked on a huge variety of mycorrhizal fungi, from the common arbuscular mycorrhizae to orchid mycorrhizae, ectomycorrhizae, and even the mycorrhiza-like associations of bryophytes (not fungi but liverworts, hornworts, and mosses). His current research is focusing

on the functions and ecology of ectomycorrhizal fungi, which form relationships with the large, woody trees that make up our forests. With increasing pressure to preserve and regrow forests for carbon sequestration, the ectomycorrhizal fungi that determine their health will need special focus. This fungi has long been ignored by conservationists and ecologists, and therefore by policymakers, but their condition has profound effects on the health of a forest. Professor Bidartondo's new paper looks at the tipping points of ectomycorrhizal fungi. "Tipping point" refers to the

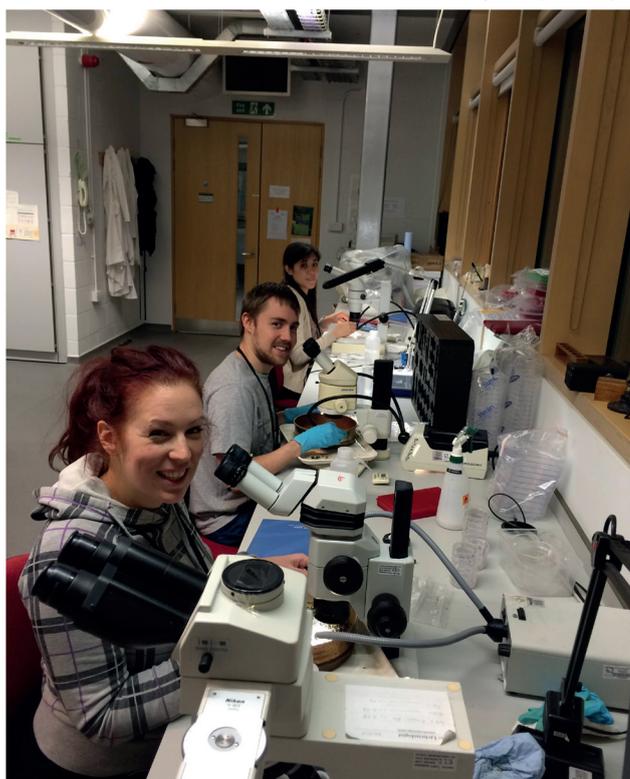
point at which some environmental change that is detrimental to the fungi's survival reaches a threshold; beyond which it causes major impacts that are tricky to reverse. If ectomycorrhizae's health is compromised, there could be devastating consequences for the trees they form symbiotic relationships with. These consequences will directly affect key functions that impact human wellbeing. For the sake of carbon sequestration and mitigating climate change, mycorrhizal fungi will need specific attention and research. Luckily, it is increasingly being recognised that to protect plants, you have to protect the fungi that support them.



Ectomycorrhiza of oak and the matt bolette

Credit: Dr. Laura Suz

Credit: Dr. Laura Suz



What could be under those microscopes?

This week in Science...

FROM IMPERIAL...

Insights into lateral flow efficiency and COVID-19 progression

The first study to monitor a full course of COVID-19 has been published. 36 healthy, young participants with no immunity were exposed to COVID-19. The team found that for those infected, their symptoms started to develop very rapidly, an average of 42 hours after exposure. The infection first appears in the throat, but by the time the infection peaks after five days it is significantly more abundant in the nose. LFTs were found to be a reliable indicator of whether the infectious virus is present, and they predicted that twice-weekly rapid tests would allow diagnosis before 70-80% if enough virus was generated during the course of infection. Future research will include monitoring the participants for long-term effects, and determining why 18 of them did not become infected.

Disparities in the treatment of rare high cholesterol disorder

Researchers have found that Homozygous Familial Hypercholesterolaemia (HoFH) is not as well-treated in low- and middle-income countries compared to those in high-income countries. The disease affects around 1 in every 300,000 people and causes very high levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL) from birth. Although people in low- and middle-income countries were diagnosed an average of 6 years before people in high-income countries, only around 24% of them received additional cholesterol-lowering combination treatments compared with 66%, and only 3% had safe cholesterol levels, compared to 21%. They had cardiovascular events, which include heart attack and stroke, at an average age of 25 compared to 37.

FROM AROUND THE WORLD...

Blooming heck! Spring flowers now flowering one month earlier due to climate change, study finds

A study of data from Nature's Calendar, a citizen science project by the Woodland Trust, has found that flowers are blooming nearly a month earlier than they were prior to the mid-1980s, as a result of climate change. The study looked at nearly 420,000 observations of the first flowering dates of hundreds of plants, examining data from the years 1753 to 2019. In order to examine the impact of climate, the researchers split the dataset into two periods: pre-1986, and post-1986. They found that, on average, the first flowering time occurred 26 days earlier in the post-1986 period than it did before then. A strong correlation was found between first flowering time and the average monthly temperature in the first four months of the year. Comparing the post-1986 period to the 1950-1986 period, this average temperature was found to have risen by 1.1°C. "If it's warmer, it's an earlier onset. If it's cooler, it's a later one," said Professor Ulf Büntgen, the lead researcher and Professor of Environmental Systems Analysis (ESA) at the University of Cambridge. The earlier flowering time could have a negative impact on wildlife, such as bees, which depend upon plants flowering at specific times of the year.

ARTS

A NUMBER AT THE OLD VIC
 REVIEWED BY LOUIS JABURI
 HOW MANY COPIES OF ME
 ARE THERE? page 9

Edited by:
 ALEXANDER COHEN
 ALEX JACKSON
 BOXUAN ZHANG

Theatre

Time flies

The Glow



Where? Royal Court Theatre
When? Until 5th March 2022
How much? Tickets from £12

Reviewed by **Alexander Cohen** Arts Editor

The Glow is a lockdown play, not in the sense that it is about people staying hidden away in their homes, but rather it is about time, and how delicate our perception of it can be. Alistair McDowall's new play at the Royal Court cannot be captured by a single genre. With a story that unravels across history and space, *The Glow* borrows from almost every genre imaginable: some mind-bending sci-fi from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, some heartfelt melodrama, some M.R. James ghost stories. The final product is more a meditation on life, death, and humanity than a straight narrative play; but that is what makes it so enthralling.

Beginning with a Victorian spiritualist attempting to use an anonymous woman as a medium to conduct a séance, we learn that there is far more than meets the eye to Ria Zmitrowicz's unnamed protagonist. Simple yet striking lighting, sometimes just from an onstage candle wielded by the supercilious spiritualist Mrs Lyall (effortlessly played by Rakie Ayola), gives the first act an eerie aura that echoes classic paranormal horror

Credits: Photo/ Manuel Harlan



Tadhg Murphy in *The Glow* at the Royal Court Theatre.



Ria Zmitrowicz, Rakie Ayola, and Fisayo Akinade in *The Glow* at the Royal Court Theatre.

stories. But the unnamed protagonist is not just a medium: she is literally beyond time — a concept that the second act goes on to explore. As the horror elements dissipate, philosophy and sci-fi fill its place. Without giving too much away we see the unnamed protagonist navigate relationships with a variety of historical characters who illuminate the spectrum of human emotions. Some are jealous of her ability and want to harvest it for their own. Some want to help her. Sometimes she is outcast as an outsider. Sometimes she is welcomed.

Despite the metaphysical density of the story, McDowall's writing is unpretentious, always placing something unutterably human at the centre of his dialogue; he brings touching vivacity to each character no matter if they are a dark age warlord, or a single mother; slowly feeding his audience clues to keep the play engaging. The complexity of the concepts McDowall explores is also made easier to digest by a delightfully boisterous Fisayo Akinade who multi-roles as Mrs Lyall's disgrun-

tled teenage son, and a paranormal researcher, amongst other characters. He gives each of his characters an effervescent charm that complements Zmitrowicz's more reserved unnamed protagonist. Their interactions are a testament to the combination of Vicky Featherstone's masterful directing and McDowall's highly perceptive and emotionally charged writing.

As society slowly emerges from Covid we are now beginning to reflect on what the last two years has done to our collective consciousness. Many reported how their sense of time passing had become distorted. It felt as if years had passed and simultaneously no time at all. 2021 was an indistinct blur of a year. What if this experience was inverted? What if there was someone who was immortal? What would their experience of time feel like? *The Glow* not only provides an answer, but invites us to reflect on the last two years, and come to terms with it. Alistair McDowall has delivered a perfect play for 2022, the year we (hopefully) return to normality.

Applications for the Blyth Arts Fellowship are open now — Deadline: 10th March 2020!

The Blyth Arts Fellowship aims to develop a fine art practice at Imperial by supporting student artists (eligibility criteria excludes final year students).

The winner of the fellowship will receive four one-hour 1:1 mentoring sessions with a professional artist, a materials bursary of £500, as well as membership to the Tate and access to Blyth Drawing evening classes.



Scan to find out more,
 and apply!

Theatre

How many copies of me are there?

Credits: Photo/ Manuel Harlan

A Number

★★★★★

Where? *The Old Vic***When?** *Until 19th March 2022***How much?** *From £12*Reviewed by **Louis Jaburi** Arts Writer

When Caryl Churchill's *A Number* premiered around 20 years ago, it was poking into the heated debate about cloning (remember Dolly the sheep?). Technological progress at rapid speed raises novel legal, moral, ethical questions that never seem to have an easy answer. They force us to rethink values that we may have, until now, believed to be fundamental or constant. Who is allowed to create a cloned human? Who is responsible for it? Does someone have the right to not get cloned? When Bernard 2 (Paapa Essiedu) is told that there are multiple copies of him; he confronts his other self, and his father Salter (Lennie James), with these kinds of convoluted thoughts. As the play proceeds we see more of Bernard, well, other copies of Bernard 2: an eclectic collection of personalities.

In all honesty, the discussion on cloning itself seemed a bit outdated. Nowadays we have a plethora of technological utopias & dystopias to draw from; and Churchill's world felt a little estranged from that to me. Nonetheless, many motives do still find their place in our current times. For example, as each "copy" lives

Paapa Essiedu and Lennie James in *A Number* at The Old Vic.

their own life, with their own struggles; they develop their own personality. This inevitably begs the question: To what degree do our genetics determine who we are? What exactly does it mean when my DNA test tells me I am disposed to have sleeping issues?

However, what really captivated me was how this modern technology-laden setting is able to trigger a conflict about one of the most basic human relationships — that between a parent and a child. At the end of the day, this play is about an ageing father confronted with his own mistakes and dubious choices. It is about a grown-up son who despises his father and yet has no other choice than to fight to get his recognition. This

is about a human bond, a fragile and volatile thing, but deeply rooted. Independent of when or where we live, this narrative feels very relatable and accessible.

While such heavy subjects are accompanied with violent themes in this play, there were many times when I found both the audience and myself laughing; moments that worked to lighten the mood and make the play far more digestible. This is no doubt a testament to the direction (Lyndsey Turner) and the cast did a wonderful job of capturing the appropriate atmosphere. So then: If you find yourself in the mood for a play, one that will leave you with many questions, but which nevertheless incorporates a peculiar charm, give this a go!

Exhibition

Being Human in the 21st Century

Being Human

★★★★

Where? *The Wellcome Collection***When?** *Permanent Collection***How much?** *Free when booked*Reviewed by **Rachel Rajan George** Arts Writer

Being Human explores the modern complexities of the human condition. The exhibition is a journey through four aspects of the human experience — Genetics, Minds & Bodies, Infection, and Environmental Breakdown.

An artwork titled '*Stranger Visions*' first caught my attention. It features a 3D portrait of a man's face. Heather Dewey-Hagborg developed the physical attributes of the man by collecting genetic data from discarded cigarette butts, hair and chewing gum. It is no secret that genetic sequencing holds the promise of detecting the cause of medical conditions. It was equally amazing and disturbing to experience how realistic the

features of the portrait were.

The exhibition does not shy away from exploring the human body's fragility and susceptibility to infection, viruses, and bacteria. The exhibit, '*Blood Objects*' by Basse Stittgen features three units of HIV-positive blood, plasticised and cast into circles. The volume of blood in each unit is equal to the amount of blood that is typically given in a donation. Handsets are also available for visitors to hear the story of each donor shining a light on the emotional element to help me reflect on the despair that HIV-positive people face when they experience social exclusion. While modern medical technology aids our understanding of infection, human welfare and dignity need to accompany any medical diagnosis.

In view of increasing water stress, Allie Wist predicts our future desperation for water through the exhibit, '*Recipe for Potable Water*'. Untreated water is placed in a glass bowl, with its open surface wrapped with a cling-film and set in place with a block of concrete. These materials were retrieved from an area struck by Hurricane

Sandy in 2012, a harrowing reminder of how precious clean water is, and how even the most civilised society is at the mercy of the forces of nature.

The highlight of the exhibition is '*Refugee Astronaut III*' by Yinka Shonibare CBE. The colourful model is made from fibreglass and cotton textiles. The astronaut has collected his belongings and stored them in a net, mimicking a haphazardly arranged haversack, a striking reminder of our sometimes hubristic attitude towards climate change. As the air on earth becomes unbreathable, the astronaut wears a helmet with breathing tubes. Consequently, we too may end up in a dire situation where the moon or Mars beckon as our only refuge.

Our society has progressed by leaps and bounds with enhanced medical knowledge and increased access to sophisticated technology. However, we are threatened by the possibility that these innovations that we pride ourselves on may perish due to the environmental consequences that we have reaped. It is never pleasant to be confronted by the troubling reality of '*Being Human*' in the 21st century.

ENVIRONMENT

Edited by: MONAMI MIYAMOTO
MARIE MORI
MONIKA YARDONOVA
JACK CRIBB

Scrapping green energy policies has added £2.5 billion to UK energy bills

View online here!



Jack Cribb Environment Editor

In analysis done by investigative policy-focused website Carbon Brief, it has been found that the last ten years of cutting progressive energy policies have added around £2.5bn to energy bills in the UK. These findings have come about alongside a rise in the energy price cap, which will increase energy bills by nearly 50% - a change set to occur in April.

In the last decade, the Conservative Government has done much to stall the move towards greener energy policy. The potential changes that have been scrapped include getting rid of the zero-carbon homes standard, limiting access to energy efficiency subsidies, and banning onshore wind projects (a ban that began to be lifted in 2020).

This news comes alongside a huge increase in the price of gas in the UK—from a ten-year low of £13.18 in June 2020, to £201.09 in November 2021. Gas prices have been relatively stable over the last ten years, with slight peaks and troughs. One such peak was in March 2013, which was met with promises by then-Labour leader Ed Miliband to cap gas prices if he were to win the next election. At the same time, the Sun was reporting on the then-prime minister David Cameron as promising to “get rid of the green crap”.

To ease this steep rise in the cost of energy, the government is considering cutting VAT on energy bills and further cuts to energy efficiency policies. However, this is shortsighted, and represents the same kind of thinking that has been utilised over the last ten years—thinking that has arguably brought about such steep increases in cost alongside ensuring UK targets regarding climate are harder to meet.

One of the most harmful problems these price increases cause is the upward

trend of families being put under what is known as ‘fuel stress’—a term that describes families that are spending at least 10% of their overall budget on energy bills. One think tank, the Resolution Foundation, predicted that when the energy price cap changes in April, the number of families suffering from fuel stress will triple almost overnight to 6.3 million.

So the question is, would bills be lower if the ‘green crap’ had been kept? The data is pretty clear; yes. Even though maintaining climate policies comes at a worthwhile price, Carbon Brief’s analysis states that savings made would have translated into £40 reductions for households under today’s price cap. Business and industry too would have benefited, with savings of up to £1bn.

These savings would have come from many different locations. For example, if the government hadn’t scrapped the zero-carbon homes standard, most cavity walls and lofts would now be insulated, increasing energy efficiency and reducing prices. Onshore wind CfDs (Contracts for Difference - a type of subsidy in which the contractual partner is paid for deviations from a

specific reference price point), had there not been a four-year ban, would represent a net saving on energy bills.

The increase in the UK energy price

“
THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES SUFFERING FROM FUEL STRESS WILL TRIPLE ALMOST OVERNIGHT

cap is being driven by the sharp increase in wholesale gas prices around the world. The distribution of fuel stress because of this is not uniform, with levels projected to be highest in the north-east, and 33% of households suffering. 38% of pensioner households will also find themselves struggling to cope, with almost half of over-65s stating they will have to heat their homes less, according to the charity Age UK.

In analysis by Uswitch, the energy

price cap is set to rise from £1,277 in November 2021 to £1,897 in April—a 48% increase. The market researcher, Cornwall Insight, further predicts that the cap may rise again, hitting over £2,000 in October this year.

Many ask: what can be done to lower the bill? Well, there are schemes running currently, such as the Warm Home Discount, the Winter Fuel Payment, and the Cold Weather Payment. However, these are not long-lasting solutions, and rather deal with the symptoms of political inadequacy, rather than the underlying infrastructural problems.

The UK government needs to better address its attitude towards green energy policy if we want both warmer homes and a greener climate, as the energy cost savings that could have come with green energy policies in place are simply being converted to higher bills today. Fortunately, we are living in a world where ‘green crap’—both in terms of policy and technological change—could be utilised to make our lives easier, cleaner, and less expensive.

Nicholas Doherty, Unsplash



‘Green crap’ that would have saved us money...

PUZZLES

Nonogram #2

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WHAT HAPPENED...

... in this issue's year (1791)



Artistic interlude:



By Aim Kumpusiri

THE HEADLINES THIS WEEK...

EIC posioned by Russian spies – may return next week?

UK approves 5th vaccine... one more and you get a booster free!

Chinatown moves to rebrand as Lunartown in protest of erasure

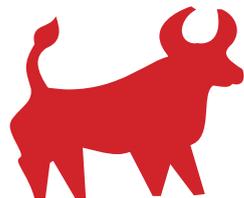
Students suspected of living in the library amidst rising prices - not yet found

Imperial bullying report released - AG, MS, [.] not guilty.



ARIES

This week you learn that being a jerk really gets you places



TAURUS

This week your supervisor has to confirm your project on homogenous spaces will not lead to evil (or harm humans).



GEMINI

This week you almost get run over by a cyclist. Twice.



CANCER

Cases are not the only spikes around as your roommate discovers hair gel



LEO

This week the vegan EIC somehow gets food poisoning. Help.



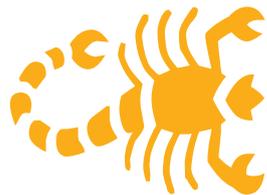
VIRGO

This week you resort to studying in the JCR as the library has gotten too loud.



LIBRA

This week your Valentine's day plans come together as your lecturer starts discussing strikes. Thank you pension cuts!



SCORPIO

This week you realise the chief copyeditor has literally pulled off a coup of the paper.



SAGITTARIUS

This week, you become the class joke.



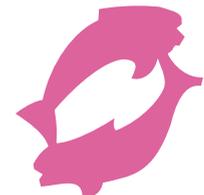
CAPRICORN

This week you failed all tests except one. Your COVID one.



AQUARIUS

This week



PISCES

This week you fight antibiotic resistance by sucking the mud off the soles of your shoes



Watch Party
13/02/22
568/Metric

Multiple Screens

Half-Time Raffle

Food Until 1am

Drinks Until 3am

Tickets

£3 Entry

£7 Entry+Drink Voucher

Buy tickets here:



Your Union



LGBTQ+ History Month 2022

LGBTQ+ History Month is a celebration of equality and acceptance. It's an opportunity to educate ourselves and those around us on the community's history and progression, highlighting the individuals and groups who have been pioneers in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights.

We are celebrating this year's LGBTQ+ History Month with a programme of events, developed in partnership with your LGBTQ+ Officer. Join us at a range of events and activities taking place from now until the end of February, including networking, career panels, film screenings, social activities, drag events with Golly Trolley (we're so excited about this one!) and more.

Events are open to all students, whether you identify as LGBTQ+ or an ally to the community. You can find the full programme on our website.

Talk to us

Being at university can be hard and sometimes you just need to talk to someone who listens, who is impartial and who is not judging you.

The Union's Advice Centre is a free, confidential, non-judgemental and independent service for all students studying at Imperial College. If you are experiencing a problem with your course, your halls or you are looking to make a complaint against the College or the Union - the Advice Centre is here to help.

If we are unable to advise you with your query, we can point you in the right direction. Our Advice Counsellors can signpost you to the relevant service or organisation.

Unfortunately the Advice Centre is running a limited service and is not taking phone or virtual appointments at the moment. Please email the centre at advice@imperial.ac.uk and the centre will let you know if they can support you.

Imperial College
London



Reflect on your experiences
Gain the Imperial Award

Gain the Imperial Award

Most of us will get a great degree from Imperial - but you can stand out with the Imperial Award. It's a scheme open to all students, which encourages self-reflection and personal development throughout your time at Imperial.

The Award is recognised on your College transcript and is a great way to enhance your development, help you become more rounded, and stand out to employers.

To find out more about the Imperial Award, please visit imperial.ac.uk/student/imperial-award

Accessories

Bags - Bags - Coats - Caps - Hats

imperialshop.co.uk

Your Union



DESIGN AND BUILD CHALLENGE FROM TRAINS IN THE UK Friday 4 FEBRUARY 2023 | 12:00 | Union Building (Building 10000)

Join us for an inspiring talk by Imperial Alumni Dave Hoston, who is currently the chief mechanical engineer at Hitachi. As a pioneer in low emission trains for the UK, Hitachi has developed a range of multi-mode operated trains that run with overhead lines, third-rail, batteries or even hydrogen.

imperialcollegeunion.org/whats-on/events/10000



VISIT SIR JOHN SCOTT'S MUSEUM IN Sunday 5 FEBRUARY 2023 | 15:00 | 19 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London

History Society will be visiting Sir John Scott's Museum in Holborn on Sunday 5th of February at 3:45 PM.

We will meet at Holborn station at 3:30 PM. It is just a 2 minute walk from there to the museum.

imperialcollegeunion.org/whats-on/events/10004



IMPERIAL CINEMA: SUPERMAN & MATRIX Wednesday 8 FEBRUARY 2023 | 19:00 | Union Concert Hall (Great Building)

We're bringing you not just one awesome film, but two AND with English subtitles! You don't need membership to come to any Imperial Cinema screenings, just buy a ticket online or in CASH on the door. You can come for one of the films or for both. It's up to you! Double bill ticket price is £8 or each individual film is £5.

imperialcollegeunion.org/whats-on/events/10008

LGBTQ+ History Month
1 FEBRUARY - 31 MARCH

Prag Aerobics with Dolly Trolley

DANCE AEROBICS WITH DOLLY TROLLEY Tuesday 14 FEBRUARY 2023 | 19:00 | Activity Space 1 (Great Building)

A fun event where drag queen Dolly Trolley will come on campus and deliver a 45 min aerobics session full of fun, cheeky music and moves!

imperialcollegeunion.org/whats-on/events/10009

More info & events: imperialcollegeunion.org/whats-on

MUSIC

Edited by: ROSIE MILLNS
TARA PAL CHAUDHURI
JOE RIORDAN

ALBUM OF THE WEEK: *THE OVERLOAD* BY YARD ACT

LEEDS-BASED POST
PUNK OUTFIT
YARD ACT HAVE
BROKEN INTO THE
MAINSTREAM WITH
THEIR DEBUT ALBUM
THE OVERLOAD.



AFTER A TENSE CHART RACE INVOLVING
EVERYTHING FROM SUMMONING CIRCLES
TO CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT THE ALBUM
ENDED UP AT NUMBER 2, NARROWLY
MISSING OUT ON THE TOP SPOT.

Single of the Week

"Silly Boy" by Lynks

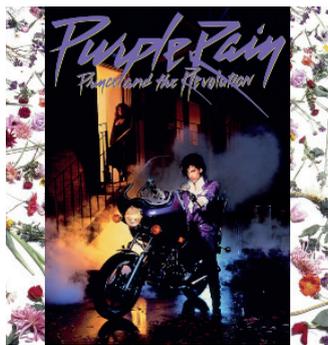
Lynks revealed "I wrote 'Silly Boy' when I was really fucking pissed off with one very specific man... he represented every entitled, space-absorbing, toxic straight man I had ever met."



The anger that the track is built on attacks this toxic masculinity – "the kind of man who snaps his fingers at bartenders ... with the toxic confidence that comes from never being told that his point of view might not be valid", Lynks said. The track kills this toxic confidence flips it on its head, and just for good measure stamps it into the ground to end it for good.

TODAY IN MUSIC HISTORY

IMAGINE, IT'S 2007, YOU'RE IN FLORIDA AT THE SUPERBOWL AND ITS TIPPING IT DOWN. WHAT POSSIBLY COULD MAKE THE DAY BETTER? PRINCE



PERFORMING 'PURPLE RAIN' IN THE RAIN SHOULD OBVIOUSLY BE YOUR ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION. ALONG WITH COVERS OF QUEEN, BOB DYLAN AND MORE, PRINCE TOOK HIS PLACE IN SUPERBOWL HISTORY 15 YEARS AGO TODAY.

Gig Reviews

Open Mic 2: Surely You Know The Words To "All Of Me"?

Written by **Tara Pal Chaudhuri** Music Editor

A review of Live Music Society's second Open Mic Night

If there's anything I can promise, it's that my account of the second Open Mic event to grace the Union this year will be very little like the first. I can't promise, however, that the members of Live Music Society will respond favourably to this article. So, as a preface, I'd like to say that I still highly encourage you to attend these events, support Imperial's bands, the members of LMS who work so hard to put these together, and the staff at the Union who cater to boozy students seated at the time of the event.

There's a reason I hesitate to call these students "audience members"; I don't think they really intended to be there during the performance. And I can't blame them. Metric had the same royal blue club environment, picnic bench set-up, and screen behind the stage displaying what looked like Excel bar graphs having a seizure (or as Yunke eloquently put it – a malfunctioning 2005 Tetris game). Last thing you'd expect is an LMS event promising relaxing acoustics and the classic wide-eyed guitar player and stool combo. Yes, there was more space than before (which is a definite plus point because relaxing acoustics and unhappy security guards present an incongruent duo). But I must admit it was a bit of a let-down for those of us who came for our dose of vibey folk-pop.

The night began with an unexpected hip-hop/rap act. Although it was hard to discern what the performer was saying in the middle of the chaos (thanks to the accidental "audience members"), anyone with ears could tell he was definitely skilled. He set up his backing track on a MacBook and placed it on a nest of wires before he began his performance. Some verses were slow and measured while some were sped through with impressive clarity. The interjection of a comedic sequence involving a virtual assistant's voiceover telling him his fly was open derailed the act a bit, but who knows? It may have received a laugh or two if anyone could hear him.

A performance of Bastille's "Pompeii" invited just a little more audience engagement, but was still generally inaudible. This improved when an initially timid vocal performance of Sam Smith's "Lay Me Down"

crescendod as the singer became more confident. However, it peaked when LMS crowd favourite Man Ho, the local Mandopop tribute artist, channelled Jay Chou's romantic "Qin Hua Ci" (or "Blue and White Porcelain") while daintily holding a rose.

Another surprising performance was Pralaya, Imperial's own prog metal band, who sang their favourites with only an acoustic guitar and cajón (a Peruvian box you sit and drum on). This included a toned down version of Foo Fighters' "Everlong" – a highly evocative song when sung with genuine emotion. And if there's anything I've learnt about Pralaya, having watched them for months now, it's that they're heavily invested in their love of metal (a genre I'm not a fan of but can definitely still appreciate).

As I'd come to realise, I judge these nights against a set of standards that don't really stay the same through the performance. Sure, they begin with judging 'talent',

Credit photo: Tara Pal Chaudhuri

'skill', 'passion' and all that musical mumbo jumbo. Ultimately, they end with how much fun we're having as both audience members and performers. Are we enjoying the music? Is my little notebook where I write about each performance finally shut and stuffed into a bag somewhere? These are things that tell me I had a good time.

But tonight answered those

questions differently compared to when I normally attend these events. Some impromptu performances of "Closer" and "All of Me" reminded me it was getting late and I had a bed to sleep on. I wondered why the singers (a broad definition of the word) needed to pull out lyrics to the most overplayed pop songs in music history. In fact, most LMS events actually steer relatively clear of this redundancy to a certain degree. But something about tonight didn't feel like an LMS event. The audience made performers feel alienated because they would only get a cheer if their song was incredibly mainstream. The event felt more like an advertisement for noisy, attention-seeking friend groups, than actual performances. While this seems quite harmless, it could have been a major deal breaker for first-time performers – and after all, that's the point of an open mic night.



View online here!



Open Mic Night at Metric

BOOKS

Edited by: ZANNA BUCKLAND

Author Review

Fighting Franz Kafka

*Book: Metamorphosis and Other Stories**Author: Franz Kafka (English translation by Michael Hoffman)*

Fiyinfoluwa Timothy Oladipo Books Writer

Anything is Kafkaesque if it—?

Is exasperating. À la the joys and lows of being at Imperial, it makes sense to take Kafkaesque to mean the impending terror that arises from our myriad of deadlines; or the ungodly, yet unescapable troika of coffee, sleep deprivation, and nine-a.m. lectures; or the District Line at evening rush hour (or even having to wait longer than 5 minutes for a train). ‘Kafkaesque’ becomes, for us, a word to describe the in-between tedium that seems to exist most of the time, placed between the two crescendos of panic and study that come with each exam season.

Search online, and expect the short and esoteric but unhelpful definition: “characteristic or reminiscent of the oppressive or nightmarish qualities of Franz Kafka’s fictional world.”

But the most excellent candidate in the *Department of Explaining Kafka While Evading Franz Kafka* comes from an hour of Netflix, where the word appears as the title of Season 3, Episode 9 of the show *Breaking Bad*, and then appears within its dialogue as a gag. Against its Albuquerque, New Mexico backdrop, it would turn out that drug-dealing is in fact a mundane ordeal of ledger sheets and corporate secrets, which the agitated Jesse Pinkman sees as “totally Kafkaesque —majorly!”

The word stands on the precipice of being relegated as a mere synonym for things that are off-putting, or peculiar, or sardonic, or frankly just strange — which, when put together, are all technically true of the word. From the Michael Hofmann-translated copy of *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, a collection of the bodies of work of the Czech-born Franz Kafka, *The Judgement*, as fiction, reads upfront as off-putting; *Absent-Minded Window Gazing* as peculiar; *Resolutions* as sardonic; and *Eleven Sons* as strange. Yet in any of these examples he is never just one, or all of these qualities at once. Kafka’s essence touches on capricious, in the way he —

in ten or in a thousand words — construes prose that is capable of poking at life’s fabric, delivering stories that are plainly poignant, or laugh-out-loud hilarious, both, or boldly neither.

And in truth, the perfect portrait of him and all things Kafkaesque does not lie merely in the text, but in the questions that he conjures up, via his storytelling, for the mind to dwell on. Consider *Metamorphosis*, his most renowned work, where Kafka begins with a simple central question:

If tomorrow morning you woke up as a cockroach — what then?

The notorious tale of a travelling salesman-turned-vermin (depending on the from-German translation) is as much about the situational comedy of Gregor Samsa having to manage six limbs as it is the manner in which his world first collapses, and subsequently rebuilds, albeit around him. Suddenly the absurd premise of the story goes from asking ‘How does one eat breakfast with mandibles?’ to ‘How does the world adapt to misfortune, and if it cannot, how quickly does it then move on?’

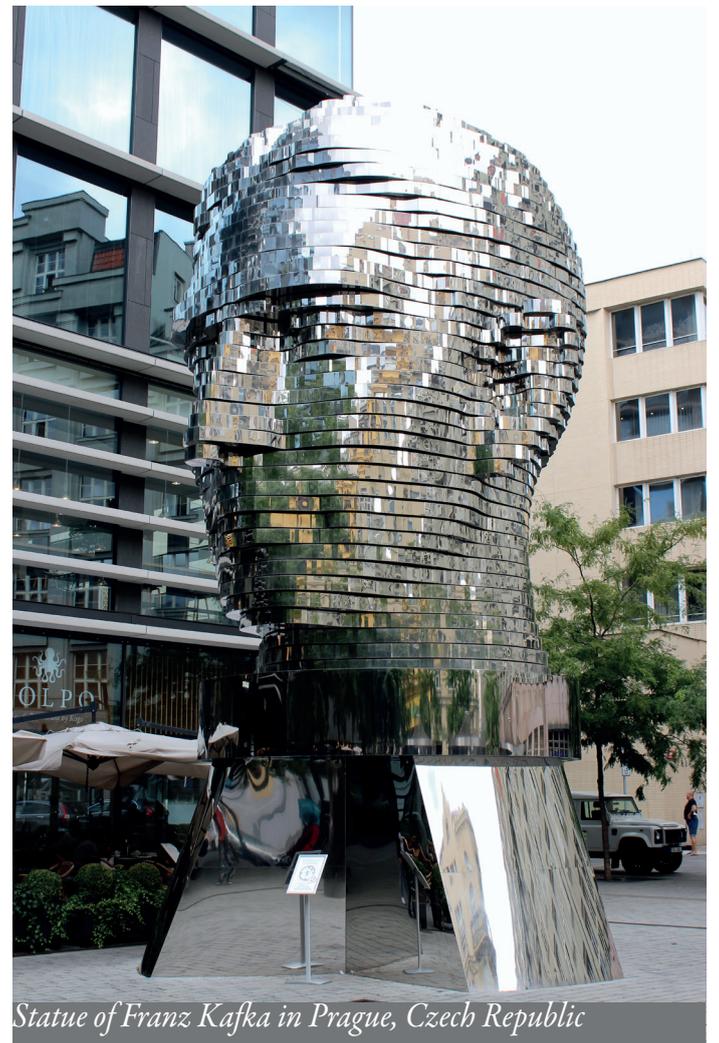
Similarly, the double billing of *Unmasking of a Confidence Trickster* and *The Stoker* both take on the utter nakedness that is moving to another country, asking us ‘How on earth do we as people build trust?’ and ‘What exactly is that trust is composed of?’. The paths of the protagonists in both these titles are marked and marred by mad-cap encounters with eccentric characters that all feel London-adjacent, but Kafka busies himself with foraging into the

“

KAFKAESQUE: OFF-PUTTING, OR PECULIAR, OR SARDONIC, OR FRANKLY JUST STRANGE

“

KAFKA SHINES BRIGHTEST AS A SKETCH ARTIST OF LIFE



Statue of Franz Kafka in Prague, Czech Republic

relatable strangeness, beauty, and unexpectedness in the experience of moving countries.

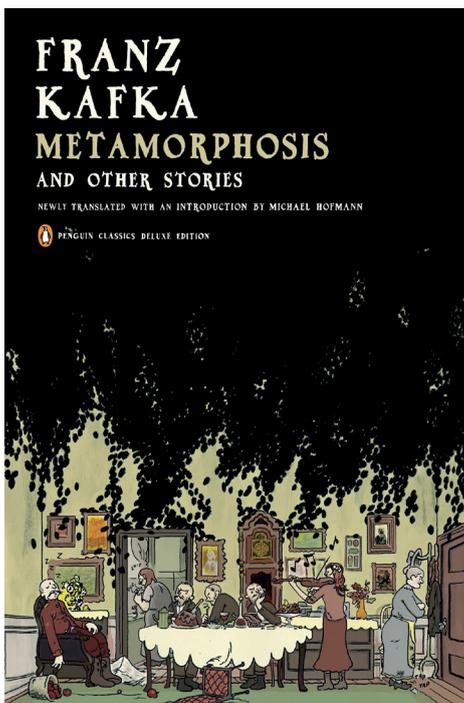
However, Kafka shines brightest as a sketch artist of life.

Trees is just 45 words long. Yet, with a setting reminiscent of Hyde Park, he is able to illustrate trees as metaphors for the sometimes sound, sometimes unsound nature of our minds, and questions when, if ever, we can know people are okay.

Therefore, the temptation to see Kafka’s work only for its melancholia is always present. In *Resolutions*, which holds equal punch and almost equal brevity as the aforementioned *Trees*, another nameless protagonist remarks on the nature of life within the context of the many challenges it presents. They seemingly offer a philosophical correction to Newton’s First motion — “So

Credit: Tamar (@tamarhellinga) on Unsplash

BOOKS



perhaps the best resource is to meet everything passively, to make yourself an inert mass..." – deciding for themselves that an object at rest does not just stay at rest – "...and, if you feel that you are being carried away, not to let

yourself be lured into taking a single unnecessary step." – but should rather aspire to forever stay at rest. This thread of limitation and futility runs through many of his stories, eventually creating a portrayal of Kafka as only gravitating towards things we cannot know or cannot do.

However, for all its hopelessness, speckled with humour, the more of Kafka one experiences the more one realises that beyond the wild narratives, at the core of all his stories is indeed the heart, intelligence, and curiosity with which his characters engage with the fictional worlds they are put in. They win. They often lose. But when Franz Kafka takes a part of the world and deconstructs it, he tasks the reader with navigating it alongside himself and the characters, figuring out how to make sense of it along the way. And so, if a thing is Kafkaesque, it would seem to desire to be fought.

Metamorphosis does not just leave us with a grotesque turning point, but instead paints the details of the struggles of Gregor Samsa's life in the days and months afterwards. In *The Stoker*, the protagonist – Karl Rossman – loses his luggage upon arriving in America, but soon sees himself thrown willingly into the politics of the only place he knows in an otherwise entirely foreign land: the ship that brought him there. And finally, in stories such as *Trees* and *Resolutions*, the deft construction of all these thoughts and questions for us to ponder suggests that Kafka aims to challenge us, as readers, to be willing to wrestle with them. Because, after all, it seems that Kafka places himself right there in the fight with us.

Credit: Alex Nemo Hanse (@thefoolies) on Unsplash

Book Review

Becoming

Akshara Chandrashekar Books Writer

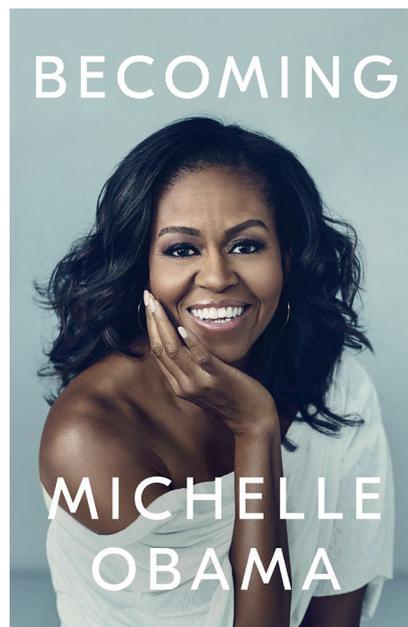
*To the woman who stood strong
Through the obstacles that seemed to throng
Their way to her, obstructing her path,
She calmly faced their wrath
And emerged victorious in the conquest,
Keeping her only quest
In mind, because she knew she would only rest
When people would be treated as one,
When people felt confident in their powers,
When they tower
Over their mistakes, their pain,
As though their stories of success have only begun.
Because she has fought it all, the prejudice, the ruckus,
To prove to the entire universe,
That in the poem about her life,
She is the most important verse,
And is always much more than the FLOTUS.*

Michelle Obama: an enigma. A woman who may have lived a simple, ordinary life; but breathed and lived dreams. A woman who questioned stereotypes and strove to prove her society wrong by persevering towards her goals without hesitation. A woman who knew she wanted her identity to comprise the intelligent and independent person she aimed to be.

"Becoming" is a memoir that discusses her inspiring journey, how she finds herself through each stage of her life and her belief that every phase of life involves continuous evolution and learning. Three phases of her life

have been delineated in the book; Becoming Me, Becoming Us, and Becoming More, where she details her life stretching from her childhood up to the end of the Presidential term. I was able to visualise her entire journey as though I had travelled through all the platforms of life alongside her, armed with a suitcase brimming with inspiration and insight.

The writing style that Michelle Obama has adopted is phenomenal. Obama describes herself in the book as not much of a writer, but I was astounded at this, because I could hardly believe my eyes. She can make you experience a whole concoction of emotions in a matter of seconds! I laughed at recollections of children calling her a "kinda tall lady" and smiled through accounts of cute, hilarious moments between her and former President, Mr. Obama. I genuinely found myself laying the book down and crying at the passing of her grandfather, father, and best friend,



A fan carrying Michelle Obama's book 'Becoming'

who all meant the entire world to her. My empathy got the better of me with her narrative of the pressures and flip sides of being First Lady, and how privacy became almost unheard of. The ambitious side of me trembled when she wrote about how she fought tooth and nail to shatter the glass ceiling and break every racial and gender stereotype she had ever heard. She went on to become the proud recipient of two Ivy League degrees and secure the job of her dreams in the very building that she looked at with starry eyes as a child.

And yet, despite her multitude of achievements, she chooses to stay grounded and remember the lessons that her humble childhood life taught her. She constantly recalls her best friend's vivacious spirit, her piano lessons with her aunt, and the importance of hard work that her simple parents had taught her and attempts to maintain a low-key lifestyle whenever possible. The ostentatious lifestyle of the White House never deterred her from having long chats with the staff or ensuring that her children made their own beds every morning. This simply teaches us that it is essential to look beyond just ourselves and BECOME MORE by giving back to the society that has been infinitely benevolent to us.

I would happily recommend this wonderful memoir to anybody, and I guarantee that you will not be able to put the book down as you skim through the beautiful words that Michelle Obama has penned in an effort to inspire us all.

Book Article

Why Do Scientists Do Science?

Book: *The Unnatural Nature of Science*

Author: Lewis Wolpert

Runtian Wu Books Writer

Why do scientists do science? Are they self-interested people seeking to print their names into history books, or are they selfless heroes hoping to better the world without seeking rewards?

At Imperial, many of us will choose the career of ‘scientist’. From what we learned as young children, scientists from Galileo seeking

to understand the rules of gravity to Darwin trying to explain the evolution of species are always portrayed as being at the frontiers of humankind’s progress. But as we step into this field and follow in the footsteps of those scientific giants, we will gradually realise this seldom-

mentioned fact: “science is a largely anonymous process”. As stated in the book, few scientists will be recognised for their work, and only a limited proportion of those few notable scientists will continue to be remembered over generations. We will also gradually realise the unfair fact that scientists generally don’t earn much money, which partly explains why so many potential physicists, chemists, and biologists eventually choose to be bankers. So why should some of us still aim to be scientists, when the rewards seem few and far between?

The book starts with the comparison between “common sense” and scientific thinking, of which the latter is often considered “counter-intuitive and unexpected” for non-trained minds; an example being “the natural state for an object is to move at a constant speed—not, as most of us think, to be stationary”. The opening chapter introduces one of the most interesting questions in the book: why don’t common people understand science?

It’s interesting to see the author argue that most “useful” tasks in our daily life do not need knowledge of science - riding a bike, for example, doesn’t require understanding of Newton’s Laws.

The following chapters introduced some even more interesting topics. In *Technology is not Science* and *Thales’s Leap: West and East*, the author explains why

science emerged in Europe not in other civilisations. The discussion in these two chapters reminds me of a book called *Science, the Endless Frontier* by Vannevar Bush; a collection of letters presented to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt that is believed to lay the foundation for the prosperity of science in America after World War II. One of the main themes of the letters

is the distinction between technology and science, and the call for stronger support of basic research. The difference in emphasis on science and technology from country to country underlies the disparities in scientific development from historical times up to present day. Technology, such as the development of such products as cell phones, air-conditioners, and cars, often has a direct impact on people’s lives, while science seemingly has nothing to do with daily life: for example, the identification of an important protein that connects endoplasmic reticulum to the plasma membrane of *Arabidopsis thaliana* under biotic stress seems to have no connection with agriculture. That’s why

many societies value technology over science, which often requires a huge amount of investment while seldom catering to real practical needs. But, as this book points out, great leaps in technology often rely on the gradual accumulation of scientific knowledge.

Later chapters of the book focus on elements of science such as creativity, competition, cooperation, and philosophy. It’s interesting to find out that even accomplished scientists, such as Nobel Laureate Dr Roger Wolcott Sperry, must contest so hard to get papers published ahead of others in their field, and how scientists have to balance intense competition with the need for cooperation. This book serves as a valuable reference point for a scientist’s life for people seeking a career in

science.

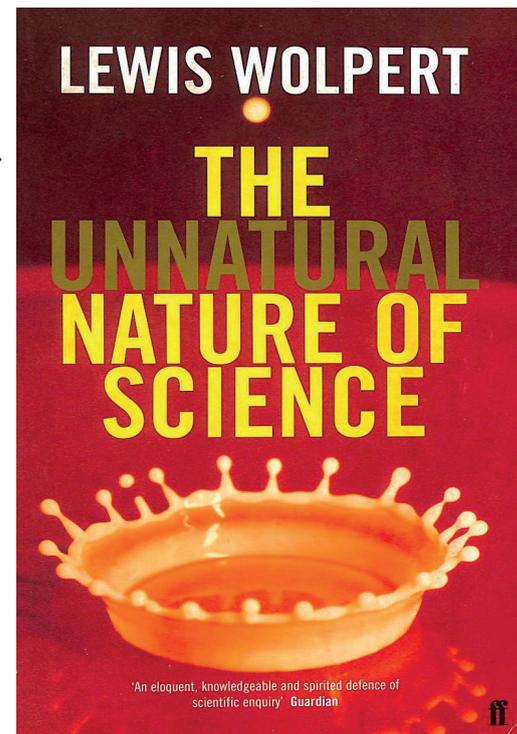
The narrative style of the book is highly critical. Though countless quotations from exceptional scientists and philosophers were cited, few survived the fierce

attacks of the author. It may seem that the author’s ideas are incompatible and at odds with each other, but through reading the ceaseless arguments, the reader will gradually understand the critical nature of science and subconsciously try to refute the author in the way the author criticises other people. I believe this to be one of the aims the author hoped readers to achieve through reading this book.

Even for non-scientists, reading the book will help to correct their misunderstandings of science and inspire them to think more scientifically. Readers will be surprised to discover how headlines may mislead the public, and how unsubstantiated data can be arbitrarily interpreted in ways that influence our lives, especially in cases such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Science can be quite uncomfortable to live with – at least for some people. It offers no hope for an afterlife, it tolerates no magic, and it doesn’t tell us how to live. But there is no good reason to believe...that scientific understanding creates a ‘dry and sterile world’ by apparently removing all mystery...and science itself can be very beautiful.”

- Lewis Wolpert

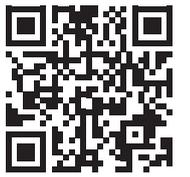


FOOD

Edited by: **BENCAN YALCIN**

Restaurant Review

Cafe Kitsune - A French & Japanese Fusion



★★★★

Price range: £££

Signature dishes: Egg Sando & Paris-Brest

Style: Casual

Reviewed by **Bencan Yalcin** Food Editor

For today's column I am going to run with the Japanese theme from last week but with a little twist. Instead of a full fledged restaurant like last week, I will be taking you to a café called Café Kitsuné. Café Kitsuné is a stylish spot in Belgravia that has quite the boutique feeling in the air, it's around a 16-minute bus journey from Imperial College – so it's perfect to attend if you have a few hours to spare in the afternoon by yourself or with some friends. The café serves a fusion of French & Japanese confectionery, coffee and cocktails and has its grass roots all the way back to Tokyo, Japan.

Café Kitsuné is one of the four café/restaurants available in the Pantechnicon venue which combines both Nordic and Japanese cultures together. It's located on the first and second floor of the building. The first floor is mainly for ordering and paying, with a joint outdoor seating used by all establishments within the building. The first floor is also connected to Pantechnicon's own store with the second floor for seating. The interior is also very chic and clean to suit the location it is in and lights are dimmed throughout the floors, making it feel comfy and warm during a cold afternoon. Although, the dim lights do make it hard to take an aesthetically pleasing picture which could be an issue if you're looking to take nice pictures.

Café Kitsuné has a variety of popular dishes that they serve, although it is a café with a larger selection of drinks rather than food. The Japanese style sandwiches (sandos) are amongst the most popular dishes served, notably the Chicken Katsu & Egg Sando. They also serve breakfast (after 8:30am) and evening (after 5pm) special dishes as well, with the sandos only being avail-

Photo credits: Melis Efecan



Egg Sando



Hazelnut, Bannana & Yuzu Paris-Brest on the left and the seasonal dessert Mont Blanc on the right

able after 12pm.

For drinks they serve a range of beverages, ready for whatever mood you're in. This could be your typical non-alcoholic beverage that is either hot or cold, such as: coffee, teas & infusions or cold pressed juices like orange & sea buckthorn and their speciality cold drinks like iced matcha latte or iced yuzu & honey. Although a café, they also serve alcohol such as sake, wine, beer and cocktails to name a few.

We began our Café Kitsuné tasting session by ordering the Egg and Chicken Katsu Sando which was served in a cute brown Café Kitsuné logo box. The sandwiches were served with the crusts cut out, and the slices were thick, holding the contents of the sando's nicely together.

Just from the first glance of the egg sando, the sandwich looked soft and fluffy, with each slice coming with half a soft boiled egg inside as well. The eggs are served cold and flavourwise, the sando is quite standard and plain. The mayonnaise and egg were quite obviously the only components in the sandwich, but this wasn't necessarily a bad thing; I enjoyed each bite due to the fullness. All in all, for the price (£7.00), even despite the lack of flavour, I wouldn't say I was disappointed.

You're not only paying for the taste but the presentation of the sando itself. The next sando we got was the Chicken Katsu Sando and being an avid katsu curry fan, I was really looking forward to what the Chicken Katsu Sando is about. When I set my eyes on the sando, I saw what my life could have been after a single bite, I had very high hopes for it - could have opened my third eye. With all this excitement built up I went for my first bite. I then understood what the sandwich was about in its entirety. I found it very standard and potentially even a bit disappointing given the price tag that came along with it (£9.00). The sandwich bread was nice and spongy holding everything together and the chicken katsu was very thick and coated with a sweet sauce and iceberg lettuce on top. However, I expected the sandwich to be hot and freshly made, but it was apparent that that wasn't the case. Since the sandwich wasn't freshly prepared, I found the breast dry and the combination of the bread with it did not help the situation - which could have been avoided if it was freshly made when ordered. Furthermore, there was not enough sauce provided for the amount of chicken and bread that came along with it. All in all, I found the sandwich standard and quite dry and I did not think the £9 price

Photo credits: Bencan Yalcin

Photo credits: Bencan Yalcin



Tuna Tataki Niçoise Salad

tag which accompanied it was appropriate.

The Tuna Tataki Niçoise Salad was probably the most expensive salad I've bought, listed for £14. Just from the price tag, I was interested to see what was so special about it. It was served in a medium-sized box, with a handful of greens, tomatoes, edamame and a few green olives as a base, alongside slices of tuna. It was the first time I've ever seen tuna which looked like that. I even questioned if it was meat instead due to the raw appearance of the tuna. Surprisingly however, the tuna was incredibly tender and very enjoyable to eat. The combination of the tuna tataki with the soy sauce went well. It was clear that they had tried to make up for the meagre tuna portion provided with a big base of greens, and I was quite disappointed with this. Regardless I would recommend it, just bear in mind you'll be paying for a big chunk of edamame with only a bit of tuna on the side.

For our dessert, we ordered the Hazelnut, Banana & Yuzu Paris-Brest and the seasonal Mont Blanc (I'm not sure this is still being served at Café Kitsuné by the time this column is published). We'll first start off with the Hazelnut, Banana and Yuzu Paris Brest, which is a type of French pâtisserie. I can tell you right off the bat, that it was my favourite dessert out of the two. The banana crème mousseline was sweet, but not too sweet

and the taste of banana wasn't overpowering either. The crème was carefully placed in between choux pastry topped off with golden hazelnuts and finally with icing sugar. The pastry wasn't tough and crumbled nicely in my mouth, and the combination of the banana crème mousseline paired with the choux pastry went very well

Photo credits: Bencan Yalcin



Inside the Hazelnut, Banana & Yuzu Brest

together. This would definitely go well with some tea that Café Kitsuné serves.

Our final dessert was Mont Blanc, which is named after the famous French mountain, due to the mountain-like shape of the dessert. The Mont Blanc is made from a chestnut outer layer with a crème and citrusy lemon core, nicely packed inside. The bottom layer was made out of biscuit, adding a nice change of texture. For the festive season, droplets of 'snow' made from meringue were placed over the Mont Blanc dessert. However in all honesty, the taste was underwhelming in comparison to the combination of flavours the Paris-Brest had. This is not to say that the dessert was bad, but as I didn't know the dessert prior to ordering, I had a different idea of what it would taste like. Overall the taste was quite bland despite the citrusy core. The chestnut outer layer was decent on its own, so I defi-

nately think it carried the dessert.

To summarise, I found the store to be very charming and pretty both inside and outside. However, the inside was quite small so coming in a group of 3-4, we were at the very limit of what a table can hold, with the most ideal number being 1-2. Besides the size of the store, the food there is interesting and is worth trying out - especially the Egg Sando and the Paris-Brest. If you feel like you want to order the other dishes we ate, please do, just know they weren't my favourite and I personally wouldn't order it again if I were to go. I hadn't mentioned this until now but the service was poor and definitely needs to be improved. We waited too long for our order to not only be served but also taken. I would recommend just paying at the counter on the first floor rather than waiting for someone to collect your order, as you may be waiting a while. Don't forget to check out the Pantechon store when you visit as they have very pretty and interesting items being sold which I won't spoil for you!

Photo credits: Bencan Yalcin



A look inside the Mont Blanc

WRITE FOR FOOD!

If the article above has got you interested in writing about delicious restaurants or you simply want to share your own food recipes, please email us at:

food.felix@imperial.ac.uk

SPORT

The City Varsity: ICL vs LSE

Georgina Hagger Womens rugby
Billy Draper-Barr Mens rugby

We are pleased to announce The City Varsity V Event is happening on 5th of March 2022 at Rosslyn Park. Imperial College Union Men's and Women's rugby clubs face London School of Economics' Men's and Women's rugby clubs in THE BIGGEST RUGBY CLASH OF THE YEAR. The City Varsity is an exhibition rugby match between Imperial College London and London School of Economics, held annually at the world-class facilities of Rosslyn Park RFC. It is a completely student-led initiative, and aims to remain an event created by students, for students. It has proven to be a great success in previous years with hundreds of spectators attending to witness both men's and women's game and the trophies - JP Morgan Shield and the Rees Rawlings Cup – being awarded. Started in 2017 to support Matt Hampson foundation, the event proved most popular among the students of both Imperial and LSE, attracting almost 1000 spectators every year. Despite the absence of TCV in 2021 due to the pandemic, we are reactivating it in 2022.

Previous Scores (Women's Game):

- TCV I (2017): LSE 20-5 ICL
- TCV II (2018): LSE 24-12 ICL
- TCV III (2019): LSE 12-5 ICL
- TCV IV (2020): ICL 31-17 LSE

Previous Scores (Men's Game):

- TCV I (2017): LSE 17-10 ICL
- TCV II (2018): LSE 17-2 ICL
- TCV III (2019): LSE 37-22 ICL
- TCV IV (2020): ICL 24-12 LSE

With Imperial defending the title that took the two clubs three matches to finally earn, everything is on the line at this year's event. You do not want to miss the on-pitch rugby flair of the top London rugby teams in BUCS and the off-pitch atmosphere of 1000 fans cheering on their university teams. For the mens squad the importance of this event is clear. For ICURFC 1XV, with 35 points after 8 games this season representing 'Imperial Men's 2s', this squad of 'skilled seniors' and 'freshers with flare' have brought intelligent back moves and hard-hitting forward discipline

to their game. A glimpse into their undefeated season so far: 90-5 against King's College London, 88-5 against Kent, and 36-0 against Canterbury CC. Imperial Men's are arriving to this varsity match with their heads high after a great season but also with their heads still screwed on; LSE will be their toughest opposition yet. Playing in the South Eastern Tier 3 league, LSE Men's 1 sit second on the table with 21 points, winning 4 out of the 6 games played. Wins have seen scores of 50-0 against Surrey, 27-10 against Brighton, as well as LSE beating Imperial Medics 1XV

“**VARSITY IS THE MOST EXCITING MATCH OF THE YEAR FOR IMPERIAL WOMEN'S RUGBY!**”



The boys getting down and dirty together



The women celebrate their 2020 victory over LSE

17-7 in the South Eastern Conference. In response, Imperial Men's are many weeks into a rigorous routine to develop individual player and team skills in attack, defence, evasion and footwork, handling and passing, as well as tackling. ICURFC have support from top tier coaches, but at Rosslyn Park, on the 5th of March, to play for the 'Rees Rawlings Trophy', WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT. The Imperial crowd's cheers and chants must be heard through West London on this night of battle. We need fans, family, and friends to motivate us to work as hard as we can on the pitch as we want to retain the trophy for you, for our university, and for the trophy's main purpose: to drink VKs out of it on Metric dancefloor at The City Varsity afterparty. For the womens squad the importance of this event is clear. Varsity is the most exciting match of the year for Imperial Women's Rugby! I think what makes it so special is being able to invite friends and family to come and support us, which really brings a special energy to the game. I think it's also a really great game for our new players to realise how much they've grown during their first season of rugby and it's amazing to be able to see the confidence they've gained in such a short time. It's the game where everyone brings their all to the match, leaving it all on the pitch. After our first City Varsity win 2 years ago, I'm so excited to see how we play this year. We've grown so close as a team this season, and I can't wait to see some great whole

team tries to end such a successful season for us! We have been undefeated so far this season, currently sitting at the top of South Eastern Tier 3 league: 105-0 against Queen Mary and 48-15 against Reading as well as scoring 48-10 against Kingston in the Women's South Eastern Conference Cup. We now have some weeks of intense training to be prepared to take on LSE at Varsity. We'd love to see lots of people come to see our match, to help us with our club ambition of raising the profile of Women's Rugby! Buy your tickets now on FIXR!!

Schedule of Events, 05/03/2022, Rosslyn Park:

- 5pm: Gates Open
- 5pm-6:30pm: Women's Match
- 6:45pm-8:15pm: Men's Match
- 8:20pm: Award Ceremony
- 9pm-Late: Afterparty

