



# Felix

Keeping the cat free since 1949

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@felixImperial

/FelixImperial

[felix@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:felix@imperial.ac.uk)



issue 1606

May 22nd 2015

## Students stage peaceful protest against arrest of popular homeless book critic



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## BUAV secures review into Home Office investigation of animal abuse at Imperial



### BUAV claim:

- Home Office report has discredited them in media
- Imperial is “misleading the public”
- Sanctions against researchers were “extremely weak”
- “Home Office guilty of foul play”

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## Inside...

### The latest scandal in Game of Thrones



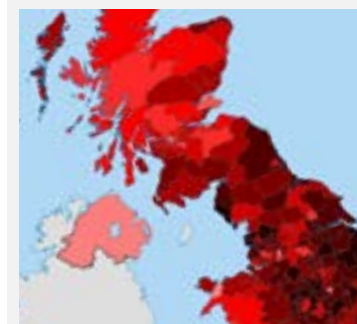
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### Felix asks: where is our petting zoo?



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# This week's issue...

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Felix Editor || Philippa Skett

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## What's on this week:

### Hot Dog Special

All week

Just when you thought there couldn't be any more sausages in FiveSixEight. Prices start from £4.75

### Reynolds Cocktail Club

Friday 22nd May

Reynolds will be transformed into a cocktail lounge with relaxed music and a chilled atmosphere.

### Union Awards

Wednesday 27th May

The deadline for nominations is fast approaching

## “The use of animals in science research is a necessity but should still be treated as a privilege”

This week we're covering the latest developments in the BUAV investigation against Imperial. The BUAV has been granted a judicial review against the Home Office findings, stating that their sanctions weren't too severe. They have also seemingly chucked in a few allegations against Imperial too, just in case we start to think College are off the hook, this time accusing College of “misleading the public” in the care they provide for research animals post surgery.

Imperial's track record in animal testing hasn't been the best, but they seem to be getting it right this time around. After reading their Annual Animal Research Review, and putting the cooperate branding overkill aside, the document does seem to successfully convey just how much time and effort they really are putting into their reform. They've introduced new advisory boards and committees to bring together academics from all departments and hopefully improve the way we use animals in science,



THIS WEEK'S EDITORIAL

and are thinking about the future of animal testing to make sure we don't make the same mistakes again.

Imperial took those BUAV allegations seriously; the use of animals in science research is a necessity but should still be treated as a privilege instead of a right. The use of living animals to further our knowledge, understanding and development of science and medicine is a terrible trade off, and if we could use models, tissues and programs to do it for us we would. Technology

is still developing, but for the time being, we rely on those little mice, fish, ferrets and rabbits to test and refine the drugs that keep us healthy and save our lives.

There will always be casualties in animal testing, and obviously no life is worth more than another, but if we are going to ensure that these animals are to give up theirs to increase the quality of our existence, we need to do everything in our power to ensure the pain is minimal, the suffering is short and the value of the findings from such testing is maximised.

Imperial, despite their flashy websites, blog posts and news stories, seem to have finally got to the root of this ethos, and I have full faith that the judicial review will find Imperial is still doing all it can to ensure animals are kept safe and happy. Good management and guidance will ensure that these values will continue to trickle down into the lab groups and beyond, and hopefully the reputation of Imperial as a science institute will slowly recover.



There is still time to get involved!  
Email felix@imperial.ac.uk

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

Email: felix@imperial.ac.uk  
Tel: 020 7594 8072  
www.felixonline.co.uk

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# News

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

News Editors

Carol Ann Cheah, Cecily Johnson & Kunal Wagle

## Imperial Citizen Science Project expands

### Kunal Wagle finds out what's coming next for Open Air Laboratories

Open Air Laboratories (OPAL), a citizen science project run by Imperial College London, has expanded to cover the entirety of the United Kingdom.

The project, which was initially launched in 2007, is being rolled out across Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland courtesy of a grant from the Big Lottery Fund.

The project's aims are to allow people to engage with nature and environmental issues, provide the health and wellbeing benefits of being outside, and provide a learning experience. It also intends to provide valuable data that helps professional scientists understand the current state of the environment.

The expansion will allow OPAL to launch a new activity on the New Zealand Flat Worm, a species that feeds on the earthworm, which is crucial for soil health. Of the worm, Dr David Slawson, director of OPAL, said, "It is more prevalent in

Northern Ireland and Scotland than it is in England and Wales.

"Generally, most of the pests and diseases tend to come into South-East England and spread northwards. Here's one that might be moving in the opposite direction."

Alys Fowler, who is a gardening columnist for the *Guardian*, said of the project "OPAL is a great way to find out about the nature right on your doorstep – wherever you live in the UK.

"It's really easy to get started; you don't need any previous knowledge or experience and it doesn't matter if you live in the countryside or a city. Best of all, OPAL resources are free and available to download from [www.opalexplornature.org](http://www.opalexplornature.org) right now, so you don't have any excuses not to get involved!"

Over the last eight years OPAL has conducted surveys on topics ranging from earthworms to air pollution. They also have completed surveys on



More than 850,000 people have taken part in the OPAL citizen science project since its inception in 2007.

Photo: Natural History Museum

water and biodiversity (in 2010), and climate and bug counts in 2011.

Dr Slawson said, "This really does increase the number of observations that experts alone would not be able

to make.

"We designed the surveys very carefully, and we did not ask people to do anything that was too complicated.

"For example, when it came to the

tree health survey, we asked people to identify insect pests (not fungal infections) which are easy to identify.

"This offers reassurance about data accuracy."

## Five Imperial researchers elected Academy Fellows

CECILY JOHNSON  
SECTION EDITOR

Five researchers from Imperial College London have been elected to the Fellowship of the Academy of Medical Sciences in recognition of their work in medical science.

Professors Wendy Atkin, Christl Donnelly, Jorge Ferrer, Michael Way and Martin Wilkins will join 39 other new Fellows to be formally admitted in a ceremony this July 2015.

Academy Fellows are recognised for excellence in medical research, and in particular for their innovative application of scientific knowledge, or service to healthcare that is perceived as significant.

Professor Wendy Atkin specialises in Gastrointestinal Epidemiology in the Department of Surgery and Cancer. Her research was key to the development of a new national bowel screening programme.

Christl Donnelly is Professor of Statistical Epidemiology in the MRC Centre for Outbreak Analysis and Modelling, part of the School of



The Academy of Medical Sciences elected a total of 44 new Fellows this year. Photo: Imperial College London

Public Health. Her research is crucial to the study of disease outbreak.

Professor Jorge Ferrer, Head of the Department of Medicine's Epigenomics and Disease Section and Leader of the NIHR Imperial BRC Genetics and Genomics Theme, has made contributions to pancreas regeneration and diabetes research.

Michael Way is a Senior Scientist at the Francis Crick Institute and Professor of Virology in the

Department of Medicine. His work has developed our understanding of how viruses use the cytoskeleton within our cells to spread through the body.

Finally, Head of the Department of Medicine Martin R. Wilkins, a Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, was elected for his research examining new disease treatments through proof-of-concept studies in humans.

## Professor to join Royal Academy

CECILY JOHNSON  
SECTION EDITOR

Professor Erol Gelenbe, a researcher from the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, has been made a Fellow of the Royal Academy, Sciences, Letters and Art of Belgium.

The prestigious society elected just 19 new Fellows this year, including a Nobel Laureate and a Fields Medallist. Professor Gelenbe was recognised for his work in the modelling of computer systems, which inspired several industrial prototypes.

"I am very touched and honoured," said Professor Gelenbe. "The Fellowship is also recognition of an area of research that I pioneered and of my industrial impact, which is very gratifying.

"My family and friends are looking forward to the formal ceremony in Brussels, and I think I will celebrate by having one or two of those famous Belgian beers". The ceremony will take place at the end of May in the Palace of the Academy in Brussels.

Over the past four decades, Professor Gelenbe has been developing programs that test the performance of computer systems, checking whether they respond in a logical and timely manner.

These simulations and mathematical models have been used by telephone companies in early digital switching technologies and in modern mobile telephone signalling.

A number of industrial projects have resulted directly from Professor Gelenbe's research, including the manufacturing process simulation tool FLEXSIM, and the commercial software GNAP/Modline, which is used to optimise processes by predicting the performance of a computer system.

He also pioneered various other communications technologies including the XANTHOS system, the first Ethernet-like fibre optic local area network, which was used in facilities such as nuclear power plants.

Professor Gelenbe's research currently focuses on developing quantum 'nano-networks' which convey information by exploiting the magnetic spin of electrons.

# News

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

News Editors

Carol Ann Cheah, Cecily Johnson & Kunal Wagle

## BUAV to launch judicial review against investigation into allegations of animal a

BUAV also claims Imperial is “misleading the public” over post operative care. **Philippa Skett** reports

The High Court has granted the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) permission to bring a judicial review against the Home Office, in which they are hoping to again confront animal care at Imperial, and also “prove that the Home Office guilty of foul play”.

The BUAV are claiming that the sanctions posed by the Home Office on those at Imperial found to be acting in breach of their animal licence during an investigation to be “extremely weak.”

The BUAV are stating that as a result of an “erroneous” reference in the Home Office report of the investigation, the BUAV has been misrepresented in the media and has suffered from reputational damage as a result.

They are also claiming that “Imperial is misleading the public” about the post-operative care it provides for animals used in research, as outlined in Imperial’s first Annual Animal Research Review, published in March 2014.

The Home Office report, authored by the Animals in Science Regulation Unit, was published back in September 2014, and covered the results of the investigation into Imperial after the BUAV made public allegations about animal mistreatment.

The Home Office report states that: “Over 180 individual allegations, made by the animal rights organisation, of non-compliance were investigated.”

The BUAV are now claiming that they have seen an unpublished table from the Home Office report that establishes that there were only 18 non-compliance allegations investigated, not 180.

With the report finding only 5 cases of non-compliance in total, the BUAV are testifying that Imperial and other animal research advocates

have since capitalised on the “5 out of 180” claim.

They state that this claim being repeated to the media has led to “misrepresentation [that] has caused considerable damage,” to the organisation.

The BUAV have since said to *Felix*: “The BUAV has asked the Home Office to correct the erroneous reference to 180 but it has refused to do so. The correct number is 18.

“As ICL [Imperial College London] is fully aware (because it has the BUAV report), the BUAV made nothing like 180 allegations of non-compliance and the Home Office has declined to detail what it took to be such allegations.

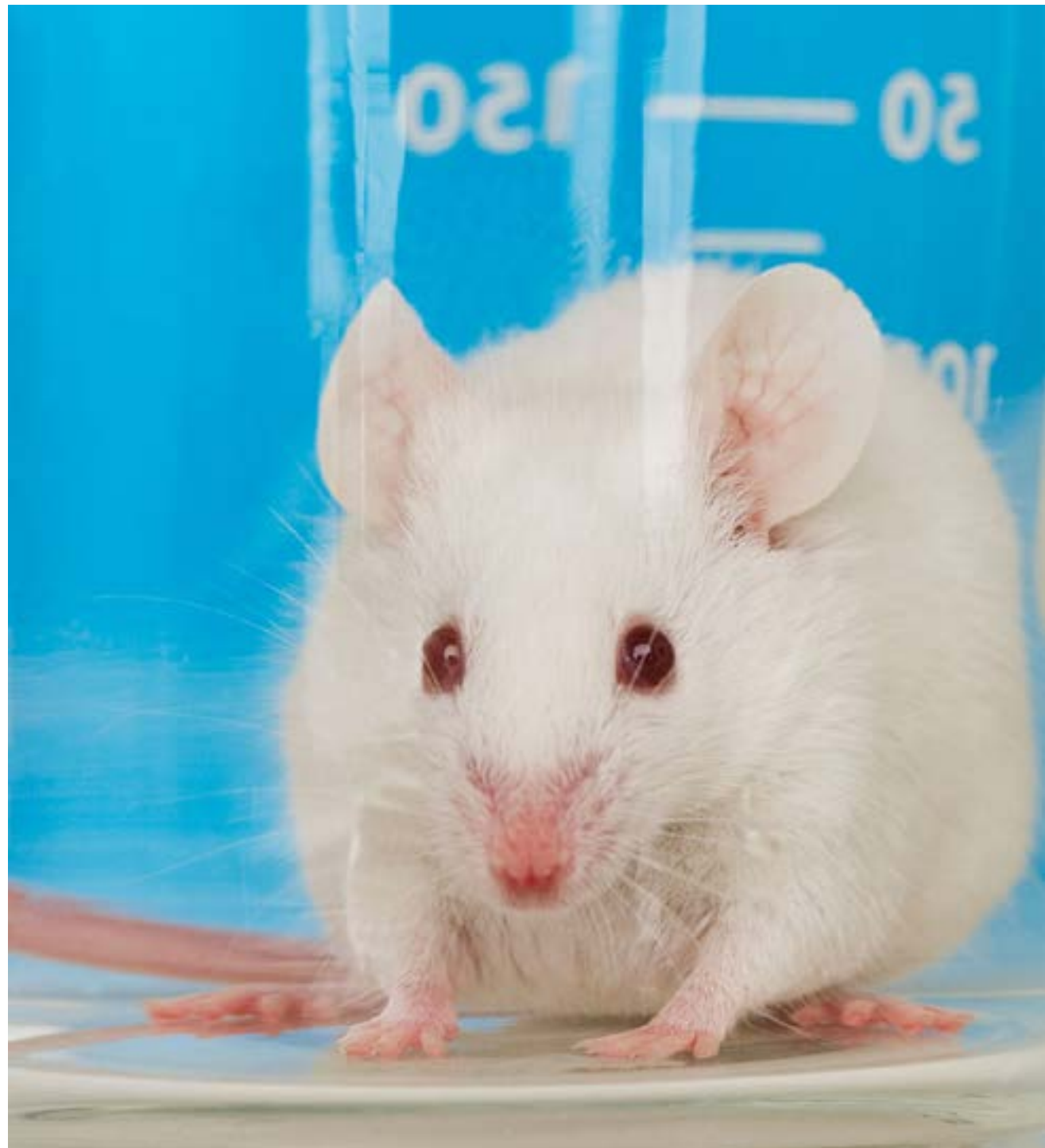
“But the important point is that it is clear that the Home Office only investigated 18 allegations.”

The BUAV had previously released an eight-minute video that they themselves described as “harrowing and disturbing evidence,” and later produced a 71 page report detailing the findings, which was presented to the then Home Office Minister Lord Taylor of Holbeach.

The Home Office concluded in their report upon review of the BUAV material that “nothing was identified to suggest either referral for prosecution or immediate suspension of licences on welfare grounds were merited”.

The BUAV are also criticising Imperial for perceived negligence, stating that there should be staff present at all hours on location after animals have undergone invasive surgery.

However, an Imperial college spokesperson has addressed the issue, stating: “Although there is not a member of care staff present on site 24/7 there is always at least one vet plus five senior animal care staff on call 24/7 to attend to any emergencies outside working hours.



The way that animals are treated by Imperial College has come under intense scrutiny in recent years. Photo: Alamy

“The environmental parameters for the animals are monitored 24 hours a day by computer and will alarm when the parameters fall outside of the Home Office Code of Practice. If a problem occurs both maintenance and CBS staff are contacted by security and where necessary attend site.”

The judicial review is currently on-going. A spokesperson for the Home Office told the Times Higher Education (THE) earlier this week that it would not be appropriate to comment whilst legal procedures are still taking place.

The clash between Imperial and the BUAV started back in April 2013, when The Sunday Times published the findings of a BUAV associate who was working undercover as a research technician.

The reporter had filmed animal research over the course of seven months, which were compiled into an eight minute video released online. The video contained graphic imagery of animal testing procedures, which many found uncomfortable to watch.

Imperial commissioned its own enquiry soon after the BUAV allegations were released. The

investigation was lead by Steve Brown, Director of the MRC Mammalian Genetics Unit at Harwell. The enquiry began in July 2013 and the findings were published the following December (2014).

The Brown investigation found that Imperial lacked “adequate leadership, management, operational, training, supervisory and ethical review standards,” and made thirty-three recommendations to the college for changes to working practices.

Said Brown at the time of the review: “Our investigation identified a number of serious concerns on the

# News

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

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## Home Office abuse at Imperial



conduct, management and oversight of animal research at Imperial College.

“Imperial College is internationally recognised as one of the world’s best research institutes and it is important that this is matched by its standards of animal use and welfare.”

Imperial put into place a number of actions as a result of the Brown review, which included prioritising investment in staffing and leadership and placing more emphasis on refining, reducing, or replacing animal use in research.

They also pledged to recruit a

Director of Biosciences to provide direction in implementing further improvements. These included a reform of the ethical review process for animal research, and a commitment to improving internal and external communication.

BUAV have run various other undercover investigations in the past, some targeting other universities. They recently filmed another video using secret footage of research at Cambridge University, where they are currently using sheep in investigations into Batten’s and Huntington’s disease.

## Imperial’s new governance model:

In January 2014, Imperial put into place a new governance model to oversee animal research taking place across college. These included various operational and advisory groups, such as:

### The Governance Board for Animal Welfare

This oversees the governance model put in place in January, and is chaired by Professor Dermot Kelleher, Vice President (Health). The board met twice in 2014.

### The 3Rs Group

This is an advisory board that was introduced slightly later, in May 2014. The group aims to increase the mentality of “Refine, Reduce and Replace” (3Rs) in animal research. The board is made up of five academic staff and a number of animal technologists and is chaired by Professor Richard Reynolds, Deputy Head of Research in the Division of Brain Sciences.

The board meets every two months and are currently gathering knowledge about how the 3Rs are currently met across college, before looking to share best practices across fields and other organisations too.

### Two new Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies (AWERBs)

All organisations that work with animals must have, by law, an AWERB. AWERBs ensure animals are only used when it is completely necessary to do so, and review all projects that plan to use animals for testing.

Imperial’s own central AWERB is Chaired by Professor Maggie Dallman, and strives to review all project applications personally before they proceed, to ensure they are legally acceptable and conform to best practice. Two more localised AWERBs have been formed to serve other campuses outside of South Kensington.

### Quality Assurance Advisory Group

Chaired by Professor Marina Botto, Director of the Centre for Complement and Inflammation Research, this group provides advice on how new developments in animal research can be assimilated into current

facilities. They organise meetings with project license holders to share best practice.

Designated Room Advisory Group: Rooms containing specialist equipment must meet safety standards set by the Home Office, and this group was formed to provide assistance around the provision of such spaces. The group consists of academics from all faculties.

### Who is the Establishment Licence Holder?

Imperial’s Establishment Licence Holder is currently Professor James Stirling.

Stirling spoke to *Felix* about what his role entails: “As the College’s Establishment Licence Holder I’m responsible for ensuring we comply with all the relevant regulations and requirements in our work with animals.

“Since taking up that role it’s been my privilege to see first-hand how committed we are as a community to excellence in our work with animals.

“Over the past 18 months we have seen a great deal of positive change in our facilities – including a major restructure of the way we govern and support our animal research work.

“We’ve reformed our ethical and welfare review process, introduced a new governance structure and created stronger links between different parts of our animal research community.

“We have strengthened our approaches to finding replacements for animal research, to reducing the number of animals used in experiments and to refining methods to minimise suffering.

“We’ve also committed to communicating with openness and transparency about the animal research we do, and why we do it.

“Students and staff can find out more by visiting the College’s animal research webpages, which have more information on this important work and how it’s done, as does our first ever Animal Research Annual Report.”

### Ensuring openness

Back in May 2014, Imperial was also one of 72 institutions to sign up for the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research, a pledge to help the public understand more about animal research.



Provost James Stirling Photo: Thomas Angus

# News

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

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## Goldsmiths Diversity Officer in race row

**JONATHAN MASTERS**  
NEWS WRITER

A petition has been launched to remove Bahara Mustafa, the current Diversity officer for Goldsmiths University, from her position following a recent tweet featuring the inflammatory hashtag “Kill all white men”. This follows a long line of controversies from Ms Mustafa, the first of which saw her banning certain people from an event that sought opinions on diversifying the Goldsmiths curriculum.

Ms Mustafa posted on the page for the event on Facebook: “Invite loads of BME [Black and Minority Ethnic] Women and non-binary people!! Also, if you’ve been invited and you’re a man and/ or white PLEASE DON’T COME just cos i invited a bunch of people and hope you will be responsible enough to respect this is a BME Women and non-binary event only [sic]”.

The comment resulted in outrage, with the student community at Goldsmiths calling it “laughable” and “patronising beyond belief”. Event organisers later deleted the post and attempted to mitigate with the comment “Allies now welcome!” posted on the Facebook page.

Goldsmiths University were quick to react, stating that “We are proud of our diverse community and do not tolerate any form of oppression, including racism, sexism or any other form of bigotry.”

The Student Union added, “Challenging societal inequality has been at the core of our campaigns and we try to do this pro-actively in our everyday work, so the accusation that we discriminate is one we refute wholeheartedly”.

Ms Mustafa hit back at claims by commenters that her posts had a racist and sexist undertone by refuting the possibility of these structures existing: “I, an ethnic minority woman, cannot be racist or sexist towards white men, because racism and sexism describe structures of privilege based on race and gender.”

“Therefore, women of colour and minority genders cannot be racist or sexist, since we do not stand to benefit from such a system”. She added “Reverse racism and reverse sexism are not real”.

At the time of writing, the petition to expel Ms Mustafa from her position has amassed just over 17,500 signatures, with the petition citing various acts such as the use of the official Union Twitter account to tweet using the hashtag “white trash”,



Diversity Officer Ms Mustafa shown here taking her job very seriously. Photo: Facebook

claiming that it violates several of the Union’s policies when it comes to bigotry and discrimination.

However, in recent days there have been a number of supporters

taking to Twitter to defend Ms Mustafa by using the hashtag “#supportbaharmustafa”. Elle Baeker tweeted her support in stating that it was “not reverse racism to create safe

spaces for BME women” and arguing that the question shouldn’t be “why were white people & men excluded?” but instead “why are safe spaces needed?”.

## International Students boost economy by £2.3 billion

**Kunal Wagle** reports as report recommends migration targets be reclassified

A report by London First has said that overseas students in London alone contribute as much as £2.3 billion to the economy. The report also claims that students from abroad are made to feel “unwelcome”. It goes on to argue that migration targets should be reclassified and students should be given visitor status, and should be allowed to work after graduation.

London First, which is a lobby that represents London businesses and the accountancy firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), also included in its report that the £2.3 billion quoted is after £540 million was taken off for public services, such as the NHS. It is also believed that international students help support as many as 70,000 jobs in the capital, through University fees and their expenditure while in the city.

Speaking on the subject of the students’ migrant status, the report says “They are here for a short time only and by choosing to study in the UK, they are contributing to jobs,

growth and cultural understanding in this country. By classifying them as migrants and including them within the net migration target we are implying they are unwelcome.”

The report goes on to say that the government “should reinstate the automatic option... for international students to work here for a few years

after graduation”. It says that such a policy would be “good for UK universities, good for UK business, and good for Britain’s long-term relations with the global business community”.

Julia Onslow-Cole at PwC said about the report: “While politicians recognise the importance of

international students, there has been considerable debate over their economic value. This is the first study to quantify the benefits of student migration. We need more hard data like this to inform immigration policies and targets.”

Immigration minister James Brokenshire, who took up his position

in 2014, added: “The government will pursue further reforms to tackle abuse while continuing to attract the brightest and the best to our world-class universities.

“The latest figures show this strategy is working – university applications from overseas students are up by 18% since 2010.”



London First argues that international students should be given visitor status. Photo: Imperial College

# News

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

News Editors || Carol Ann Cheah, Cecily Johnson & Kunal Wagle

## Homeless Book Critic evicted from alley by police near Parsons Green

**Philippa Skett** reports as student who prints his reviews leads protests

An Imperial student has reached out to homeless man Mark Burns, 43, by publishing his book reviews online. Mark lives in a tent in the alleyway behind a tube stop, and reads and reviews books given to him by passing commuters.

However it seems that he may not be able to retain his regular reading spot behind Parsons Green station, as police have warned him he must move on or face jail time.

Farah Shair, a second year biochemist who lives near the Parsons Green station, maintains "The Homeless Book Critic" blog, and takes reviews from Mark to post online.

She also types up diary entries and has shed some light on Mark's past, telling his story of how he has ended up on the streets.

Farah told *Felix*: "I noticed Mark sitting behind the station reading on my way to university, and thought it

there.

A BBC report covering Mark featured an interview with Audrey, who was scared Mark would climb over into the garden: "I don't think anyone would be happy with someone at their back door... It's very insecure."

Some of the residents have been repeatedly reporting Mark to the police as a result, often accusing him of anti-social behaviour.

However, Mark said to the BBC: "I think it's a joke considering I don't do anything wrong. I sit here and I read a book I don't give anyone any grief and I make sure I keep the alleyway clean."

He also told the *Big Issue* in an interview published this week: "I think a certain neighbour was saying I'm causing problems, but everyone round here knows I'm not doing that.

I collect up all my stuff and don't leave any rubbish. When the police took me away they asked if those were my books. I said, 'Well, no - they're for everyone.' So I suppose they didn't consider them my belongings."

Mark has been told now that if he stays in the alleyway longer than four hours, he will be arrested.

A quiet demonstration, featuring several students and friends of Farah, took place on Wednesday after Mark was told to move to show support for Mark. Their peaceful protest also made it onto the BBC news, and even attracted support from local celebrity Jamie Lang, a star from the reality television program *Made In Chelsea*.

Jamie told the BBC: "If he's not harassing the local community - which Mark wasn't at all - then why kick him out if he's not abusing anyone? There's just no need for it."

Mark is still in the area, but, without a spot to make camp, he also doesn't have a spot to keep his books. Farah hosts a Facebook page for Mark, and posted to see if anyone in the area knows of a secure location he can set up a new library.

The page has nearly 900 likes and is inundated with comments showing support for Mark. One poster recently commented: "Mark is one of the nicest people I've met in Parsons Green! I'm a local resident and really enjoy chatting with him."

"The builders who gather there are the real problem; urinating and drinking etc. One time, a terrible fight broke out and I felt so scared as they were all huge men, very drunk and I got stuck trying to walk past

them.

"Thankfully, Mark was quietly reading and I knew if something terrible had happened he'd have helped me."

Farah now plans to raise enough money to buy Mark a van, in which he can live, read and hopefully sell books from in the future. Mark also hopes to use the van to travel to other areas of London to provide vital support for those that are also sleeping rough by talking to them, encouraging them to read and highlighting the problems of

being homeless.

Mark, who was born in Hammersmith, has been homeless for three years. After spending some time in Chiswick, he settled into the alleyway behind Parsons Green and has been happily camping and reading there for nearly a year.

Farah concluded: "Some people have asked me why I am only helping one homeless person, and say "Well, there are lots of homeless people in London, why are you not helping those too?"

"Obviously I am aware there are lots of homeless people in the city, but I am only one person and can only do so much.

"Hopefully by sharing Mark's reviews and presenting maybe this other side to him that people may not see, I can challenge preconceptions people may have about the homeless and raise awareness of the problems a lot of homeless people face."

Want to contribute or know more? Visit Mark's Facebook page ([The Homeless Book Critic](#)) for the blog.



**Jamie Lang joined the protests**

Photo: Facebook

was interesting how he always had a book in his hand.

I started talking to him and he is really nice, and I thought it would be a great way to help him out by publishing his reviews online."

However Mark was arrested on Tuesday night for allegedly blocking the public walkway, and spent the night in a cell. His books were taken away and have not been returned to him, and he was left without his tent and sleeping bag overnight before they were returned to him the following morning.

The alleyway is property of TfL, and although those who work at the station have told police he is welcome to stay, residents of the properties overlooking the alleyway are not so happy about Mark setting up camp



**Mark Burns has been warned to move on from his regular reading spot or face jail time.** Photo: Facebook



**Students take part in a quiet demonstration.** Photo: Facebook

# News

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

News Editors

Carol Ann Cheah, Cecily Johnson & Kunal Wagle

## Two Imperial Professors receive awards from the Royal Society of Chemistry

**Philip Kurukgy** looks into the research that earned them the recognition

The Royal Society of Chemistry has recognised two Imperial professors for their world-leading research. Professor Sergei Kazarian from the Department of Chemical Engineering and Professor Elaine Holmes from the Department of Surgery and Cancer have received the awards in the light of new discoveries in the field of concentration measurement, which will improve the effectiveness of pharmaceuticals and medicine.

Professor Kazarian received the Sir George Stokes award. In an interview with *Felix*, he discussed the practical applications of his research, which involves the use of Attenuated Total Reflectance Fourier Transform Infrared (ATR-FTIR) spectroscopy. He described the ability of this technology to reveal “what the eye cannot see”.

Professor Kazarian described the new imaging method as a form of

“Chemical Photography” which relies on the vibrations of chemical bonds and Beer’s Law, allowing scientists to determine the concentration distribution of proteins, lipids and chemicals in human tissue. This is particularly useful in analysing how drug tablets diffuse in the body.

In the past, pharmaceutical companies have had to rely on trial and error to determine the right compositions. The industry is already using this new imaging method to enhance the efficiency of their products by allowing them to predict analytically how unknown compositions behave in the body.

This technology has further applications in forensic science. Professor Kazarian – a Sherlock Holmes fan – was thrilled to see that his research is currently being used by the Home Office to investigate crime scenes. ATR-FTIR spectroscopy allows detectives to predict the age

of a fingerprint, and the sex of the person who left it, by analysing the chemicals present.

Professor Elaine Holmes received this year’s Royal Society of Chemistry Interdisciplinary Award. Her research concerns the chemical mapping of biological samples. Human cells contain thousands of chemicals and have many different concentration profiles. Any changes to those profiles reflects a change of the environment or the health of the subject.

Professor Holmes’ complex modelling of chemicals in the human body has led to a completely new field of statistics within the biological framework of the human body. She described it as “a privilege to work in such an exciting field of study and one that could make a real difference to patients’ lives.

“I feel very lucky to have a job that I love doing. The Royal Society of Chemistry award is indeed an

honour and the recognition of the potential of metabolic phenotyping as a valuable field of research in its

own right highlights the value in the partnership between chemistry and medicine.”



Professor Kazarian with his research group. Photo: Imperial College London



There is still time to get involved!  
Email [felix@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:felix@imperial.ac.uk)



# Comment

comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Comment Editor ||| Tessa Davey

## Why is televised rape so controversial?

*Game of Thrones* doesn't deserve all the hate, argues **Cecily Johnson**

[Spoiler warning: this comment piece contains spoilers for all released episodes of *Game of Thrones*, as well as descriptions of the changes made from its source material, the *A Song of Ice and Fire* book series.]

This week the popular television series *Game of Thrones* courted controversy yet again after featuring a disturbing scene in which fan-favourite character Sansa Stark was raped on her wedding night by her new husband Ramsay Bolton.

'Feminist community' website *The Mary Sue* announced that they would no longer be "promoting" the show, in an article which has been shared tens of thousands of times on social media. Editor-in-chief Jill Pantozzi wrote that "We simply can't bring ourselves to be excited by a product which no longer meets our needs as fans". US Senator Claire McCaskill has called for a boycott of the show, describing the storyline as "disgusting and unacceptable".

So why has this particular scene drawn so much ire? Is it really the worst thing *Game of Thrones* could have done? Over the seasons the show has featured the bodies of men and women flayed alive; the charred corpses of children; a pregnant woman being stabbed in the belly; live crucifixions; the brutal death of a prostitute at the hands of a psychotic boy king; a woman being hunted by a pack of dogs and people wielding crossbows; and one young man's prolonged physical and psychological torture at the hands of another.

But this is a work of fiction. The show is well known for its adult content and themes, and this storyline in particular has been building up for the last few episodes, since Sansa agreed to be married to Ramsay in order to put her in a position where she may somehow seek revenge on the Boltons. The audience had to know that there would be a 'wedding night', and we have seen enough of Ramsay's character to know that it wasn't going to make for pleasant viewing.

The outrage seems to have centred on the fact that this particular event involved a beloved character who many people are rooting for, and that the books' version of this character suffered no such misery. I should probably explain for the non-book readers that 'book Sansa' is safely hidden away in the Eyrie where she was at the start of the season; Ramsay instead marries a Winterfell girl called Jeyne Poole, who is passed off as Arya Stark in the hope of securing

**"Game of Thrones has been quite rightly criticised for its depiction of sexual violence in the past"**



This is not the first time *Game of Thrones* has been criticised for the way it features rape and sexual violence. Photo: HBO

House Bolton's hold on the North.

Played beautifully by Sophie Turner, Sansa has made great leaps in characterisation recently on the show; her fans – and I count myself among them – hope that she is really growing into a strong player of the titular Game. After all she has suffered at the hands of Joffrey it is inspiring to see Sansa taking charge of herself – so to see her spirit beaten down once again in such a brutal fashion is indeed disheartening and deeply disturbing.

But I strongly believe that you can't just cry "but that didn't happen in the books" whenever you take a disliking to a plot line. Novels and television series are very different beasts; this is by no means the first time that the showrunners have combined plotlines and characters from the books in order to streamline the show. The decision to fuse Sansa's story with that of Jeyne Poole can't have been an easy one, but it makes sense from a storytelling point of view.

It would be a waste of a fantastic actress to stash Sansa away in the Eyrie for the remainder of the season, and this plot line gives her the opportunity to directly encounter some of the people responsible for the pain she has been through over the course of the story. That is a fascinating turn of events – but it would be bad storytelling for her to just barely begin maturing as a character and then never have anything bad happen to her ever

**"you can't just cry 'but that didn't happen in the books' whenever you take a disliking to a plot line"**

again. It is realistic for Sansa to experience setbacks in her journey and I for one am excited to see how the character handles herself in this daunting new world.

Some have also accused the showrunners of "[making] that scene about Theon's pain" and not having "the courage to keep the camera on Turner's face"; but had they chosen instead to show the act directly, would they not have been criticised for self-aggrandisement? It's okay to be upset by depictions of rape and sexual violence in the media, and I'm not saying that no one should express those feelings. But I disagree with accusations that the show is "gross, exploitative, and totally out of ideas".

*Game of Thrones* has been quite rightly criticised for its depiction of sexual violence in the past. I was horrified to hear that the showrunners did not feel that they had portrayed a rape in the infamous scene between Cersei and Jaime last season. To feature a scene that ended with a person crying "No," and "stop, don't" as their sexual aggressor stated "I don't care" and not consider it rape was appalling and horrifying.

However, I don't think that getting it spectacularly wrong once before means that *Game of Thrones* should be forced to avoid such material in the future. People don't like to see rape used as a stimulus for plot development, and it's true that this has been done extremely poorly in

many stories over the years. Critics have claimed that Sansa's storyline has been altered only to further that of Theon/Reek, but I am going to wait and see the consequences play out.

The world of *Game of Thrones* has always been, in the words of *A Song of Ice and Fire* author George R. R. Martin, "no darker nor more depraved than our own". Sometimes art makes us uncomfortable when it confronts us with the things that humans have done – and still do – to one other. Whilst I certainly don't want to see sexual violence taken lightly, its depiction in popular culture is both important and sometimes necessary. With appropriate viewer warning I see no reason to avoid telling stories of rape.

*Game of Thrones* has courted controversy before, and I have no doubt that it will do so again before the story draws to a close; but in the words of its creator:

*"Rape and sexual violence have been a part of every war ever fought, from the ancient Sumerians to our present day. To omit them from a narrative centered on war and power would have been fundamentally false and dishonest, and would have undermined one of the themes of the books: that the true horrors of human history derive not from orcs and Dark Lords, but from ourselves. We are the monsters. (And the heroes too). Each of us has within himself the capacity for great good, and great evil."*

–George R. R. Martin

# Comment

comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Comment Editor || Tessa Davey

## Summer Ball Headliner ‘Slap Happy’

An anonymous student asks why the Union hired an unapologetic thug

This year’s Summer Ball headliner was announced a couple of weeks ago, via the somewhat protracted method of a quiz – where the first letter of five somewhat transparently James Bond themed questions allowed students to spell out the artist’s name.

How successful this method of engaging with the notoriously apathetic student body was, I have no idea – I assume buzzwords like ‘interactive’, ‘immersion’ and ‘360-degree storyscaping’ were used in whatever hell hole of a committee dreamt up this particular marketing idea, while other words like ‘maybe just email everyone with the headliner in the subject line so they still find out even though they’ll delete the email along with every other email anyone has ever got from the Union’ were brushed under the tea, coffee and danishes table.

If you haven’t heard from a friend (either because you don’t have any or because you have friends who have better things to talk about – like the socioeconomic state of Syria, or Eurovision or something), or failed to see the rather menacing posters and leaflets littered around FiveSixEight, the headliner for this year’s Summer Ball is the so-called Professor Green.

This seems like a great match. Imperial is a University; Green is apparently a Professor. Green hasn’t been popular since 2010; the Union has no money. Imperial has a history of ethics issues and inviting hate speakers; Green assaulted a Durham student when booked for their Freshers’ Week event. Wait. What?

Let me start again. On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2014, a man slapped a teenager. At the Durham Freshers ball. Whilst performing on stage. With a security guard present to suppress any response. That man has since been contracted for an estimated £10,000 to headline the Imperial Summer Ball. See the problem here?

For some background, you should watch the videos – a quick Google of “Professor Green slaps” will get you two taken from different angles. “That’s what you get if you call me a c\*\*t” shouts the triumphant happy slapper, before segueing smoothly into the presumably rhetorical “Are we going to have a f\*\*\*ing good time tonight or what?” Not so PG after all.

What is most unnerving about this incident is Professor Green’s apparent lack of contrition, telling the Mirror: “I don’t reflect on things like that”. He stated, “If someone abuses you and throws their hand up at your face, then someone says that you hit a fan I’m just like like what fan? It happened. I mean, what’s happened to rock and roll? I don’t understand why it became such a big thing.”

Now whether or not it could be claimed that by hiring Green the Union is implicitly condoning his actions, the question must be asked as to who on earth thought that this was a good idea. It should be noted at this point that the Union, insecure in its own ability to choose and book a ‘big name’ artist and presumably scared of any involvement of students in the Ball’s running since the debacle



Stare into the eyes of a slapper. Photo: allmusic.com

**"Green assaulted a Durham student when booked for their freshers week event."**

of 2011, when general incompetence and unrealistic expectations led to a loss of £120,000 over the course of one badly attended evening, hired an external agency to recommend and book the acts.

The unfortunate thing is that the agency, the Union, and Green’s self inflated sense of importance are right. Whether or not brand ICU will benefit from being linked to an unapologetic thug, Professor Green’s name (and to a lesser extent, face) attached to the summer ball has seen a huge spike in ticket sales, increased last year, and reports of “well excited” freshers.

And what if the incident is repeated at Imperial? One Durham student, “guttured” to have missed the freshers ball, told The Tab Durham that paying almost £40 to attend

would have been “worth it to see a internationally renowned rap artist bitch slap a teenager”.

Whether or not the staff involved in the decision making process that led to booking the so called Professor were aware of the incident leads to two conclusions. Either they knew about the incident; having spent more than 5 minutes researching the person they were spending half a year’s salary on in a single evening and decided that this was something they were ok with, or they do have a moral compass but, failing to have done the initial research and finding out too late, are now unable to back out of the contract. While the reader can draw their own conclusions, past experience would suggest that the simplest explanation here is incompetence.

**"Who on earth thought that this was a good idea?"**

## Your comments on FelixOnline this week

### I think the Liberal Democrats behaved dishonestly and they've got exactly what they deserve

#### Kay:

“- Lib dems totally dishonest to increase tuition fees having said they wouldn’t”

- “But labour did just that”

- “that’s not the issue, we’re talking about the lib dems here” Good try...”

### On continuing to Keep The Cat Free

#### First Year Student:

“While I agree that media censorship should not be allowed, Felix should be more sensitive in how it relays information.

Why was there a need to put that story on the front page, knowing perfectly well that there would be thousands of visitors coming to the College on the weekend? Wouldn’t it be better to delay the news and not jeopardise such an opportunity to promote the College in a large scale?

If your goal is to inform the students, then delaying the story

wouldn’t have mattered as we would be here anyway. And if your goal is to inform the public, well, the story is already out there for them to see.!”

#### Jasper S Menkus:

“@First Year Student: Felix’s job isn’t to do PR for the College. There are enough spinners on campus as it is.”

#### Cecily Johnson:

“@First Year Student: You make some valid points, many of which we’ve discussed in the office. Felix puts a lot of thought into how we present information; we follow best practice media guidelines set out by Samaritans and other sources whenever we cover sensitive stories.

Felix bases our choice of front page story on what is most newsworthy that particular week. The Nordin conviction story was the clear choice, and given that we had been in contact with Comms about the story and they had not raised any concerns we honestly did not expect them to remove the papers from campus.

With regards to your concern about jeopardising the

promotion of College, Felix does not exist to ensure that Imperial’s reputation is protected. We report the news that is most of interest to students; we would not be much of a newspaper if we didn’t do that.

Last week we distributed more than 200 extra papers than normal, so clearly students were very interested in this story. Those students who would not otherwise have picked up the paper were then exposed to 37 other pages of content including Comment, Science, Film and Arts pages.

Personally I feel that Felix’s overall contribution to the Imperial student experience is a very positive one despite the fact that we publish unpleasant stories when they occur, and I stand by Philippa’s decision to publish the story when we did and to put it on the front cover.

### Amazon soon to deliver to Sherfield

#### Computer Suite Hermit:

“Finally, I can live full-time in College and still get packages delivered. What a time to be alive!”

# Features

features.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Features Editor || Cecily Johnson

## Universities and Student Unions employ peculiar methods to relieve exam stress

Cecily Johnson finds out how students are relaxing during the exam period



Students enjoy a few moments away from the stress of revision. Photos: (clockwise from top left) Wynnoa Loreda/Johanna Kaiser/Dan Addison/Middlesex Students Union

Exam season is most definitely upon us, and this year more and more Universities and Student Unions are attempting to reduce students' stress levels with a variety of bizarre initiatives ranging from Puppy Therapy to ball pits.

In an ever-growing trend, students are being encouraged to put down their revision notes and tear themselves away from the computer screen for a short time to relax and de-stress by engaging in these unorthodox activities.

Inflatable playgrounds and bubble wrap popping stations have both featured in recent years at the University of Leicester, alongside the ever-popular petting zoo. Bath Spa expanded their zoo this year to include Shetland Ponies alongside the

regular goats, ducks and baby chicks.

Students at the University of Exeter have had the opportunity to cuddle with tiny micropigs, provided by a local farm. At Royal Holloway, University of London, the Students' Union provided both a petting zoo and regular Puppy Therapy sessions with dogs from Battersea Dogs Home.

Bristol University opened up a puppy-petting centre in partnership with the charity UK Guide Dogs. Over 2000 students applied but just 500 got the chance to take part in the project, inspired by recent research in Japan which suggested that interacting with animals may improve concentration levels and exam performance.

Perhaps they were suffering from cuteness overload at the University of Reading – their Students' Union went

with less conventionally adorable animals, organising a reptile zoo. Hundreds of students turned up to meet and hold the bearded dragons, lizards, tortoises and boa constrictors.

However not all Universities have gone the animal therapy route. The University of Manchester Student Union hosted an entire festival with live music and stalls selling food and vintage clothing. The University of Huddersfield held a de-stressing knitting session, which supported the charity Age UK.

Fitness sessions are also becoming more popular this year, with Durham University offering free Thai boxing classes, while students at Leeds Beckett University got to enjoy skipping and a “reiki taster session”, and Queen Mary University of

London offered an introduction to meditation.

The University of Plymouth Student Union attempted to crowdfund a giant ball pit, capable of entertaining 50 students at a time. Sadly it appears that they were unsuccessful this year, but maybe next exam season they'll secure the funding required to purchase the necessary 50,000 plastic balls.

Meanwhile at Imperial, campus has been pretty quiet after the excitement of ‘Treat Yo’ Self Week’ last term, which was hosted by the Royal College of Science and Royal School of Mines Unions with the support of Imperial College Union. The activities included an obstacle course, free candy floss, yoga sessions and a bouncy castle.

In previous years, our Union has run the wide-reaching campaign ‘Stress Less’, billed as “a whole host of events designed to help you de-stress during the exam and coursework period”. Stress Less events have included masseurs in the Library Café, free yoga lessons, crazy golf, bouncy castles and a petting zoo on the Queen’s Lawn.

Unfortunately in 2013 the organisers came under fire from animal rights activists who spammed the College Facebook page with angry comments. Representatives from the organisation PETA UK wrote a letter of complaint to the College Rector expressing concerns that the petting zoo would “contribute to a cruel cycle of breeding, abandonment and killing”.

THE

# UNION AWARDS



# Nominations now open!

Help someone get the recognition they deserve for their contribution to the Union. Nominations close on Wednesday 27 May.

[imperialcollegeunion.org/unionawards](https://imperialcollegeunion.org/unionawards)



# Tribal warfare on the big screen

Fred Fyles is hooked by a brutal piece of cinema from Ukraine

## THE TRIBE

**Director:** Miroslav Slaboshpitsky

**Screenplay:** Miroslav Slaboshpitsky

**Cast:** Grigoriy Fesenko, Yana Novikova, Rosa Babiy, Alexander Dsiadevich

It's difficult to describe the Ukrainian film *The Tribe* in a way that doesn't make it sound like an 'Elevator Pitch', one of those nebulous phrases taught in business schools that's supposed to ensure a product's marketability. A film set in a school for deaf children, *The Tribe* is conducted entirely through sign language, with no spoken dialogue, no subtitles, and no explanation.

High concept, it may be, but *The Tribe* is far from marketable. It is quite possibly one of the most brutal, gruelling films to come out this year. It also just may be one of the best.

We begin the film by being introduced to Serhiy (Hryhorii Fesenko), arriving at a boarding school for the deaf under a blanket of foul weather that never really lifts, smothering the film in a uniquely Eastern European bleakness.

As time goes on, Serhiy is drawn deeper and deeper into the underground criminal racket that the older students, aided by their woodworking teacher, have organised; the acts depicted in full gruesome detail on screen include prostitution, torture, murder, and possibly human trafficking – although the nature of the production means that nothing is sure.

The director Myroslav Slaboshpitsky throws us into an unforgiving world of misunderstanding and misinterpretation, leaving us to make our own decisions about who is right or wrong.

As the plot becomes more complex, and Serhiy becomes infatuated with Anna (Yana Novikova), the characters' actions become more and more difficult to read, trapped as we are behind a screen of muteness.

Throughout, Slaboshpitsky keeps the camera moving, filming the scenes in a series of long shots that require nerves of steel to sit through, including the most harrowingly graphic abortion scene I've witnessed since Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*.

The fact that such shots were pulled off is testament to both the skill of

**"A series of long shots that require nerves of steel to sit through."**



Actions speak louder than words Photo: Myroslav Slaboshpitsky/Drafthouse Films

Slaboshpitsky, and the discerning eye with which he assembled the cast – mainly amateur deaf actors.

They need no acting classes, no drama degrees; they've spent their lives using facial expression and movements to get their point across, and the physicality of acting is like second nature to them.

There are some obvious reference points within *The Tribe*, chief among them being William Golding's 1954 novel *Lord of the Flies*, which centres around a group of schoolchildren becoming feral, revealing the darkness in man's heart.

But while the experiences of Jack, Ralph, and Piggy were written to underline the fact that mankind is consistently evil, *The Tribe*'s energy comes from the fact that the mainstream audience is consistently alienated.

Taking on the experience of a lifetime of being The Other, the deaf children have turned the tables, and are now holding us at arm's length; our misunderstanding become a locus of resistance through which their anger is expressed.

When viewed in such a way, the plot, which on paper can sound ludicrous, begins to make sense: vilified by the community at large, and shipped off to an enclosed space in which they won't upset our idea of 'normality', the children are using

**"The children are using their deafness as a weapon."**

their deafness as a weapon, resisting any form of polite society, and forging a world in their own image.

That being said, there are moments where the plot points feel somewhat heavy handed, and the facade of realism the film holds up begins to slip: where are the adults at the school?

Surely, when ransacking someone's apartment, there must be some non-deaf people in the vicinity who can hear what's going on?

But such actions only seem to reinforce the strange, dreamlike nature of the film, oppressive in its silence.

I am sure, furthermore, that there will be some who are disgusted by the frank, explicit nature of the film, particularly the abortion scene.

While I am sure there is a case for this criticism, all I will say is this: *The Tribe* is not meant to be an enjoyable film.

Without any idea of when or where the film is set – some clues give things away: the Cyrillic alphabet; the presence of a MacBook – the audience is disengaged from temporal and spatial reality, cast adrift on a wave of alienation.

The removal of any spoken language only deepens this experience, with the lack of any form of musical accompaniment accentuating the silent lives of the

children.

There are occasions when we do see people talking, but they are hidden behind thick glass, tantalisingly out of reach, making the audience long for a point of contact that will never be made.

But the soundtrack to this film is not one of silence. The void that has been created by the loss of language is filled with a vocabulary of inertia: feet squeaking on a newly polished floor; bottles being cracked sickeningly over human skulls; the dull thump of flesh upon flesh.

With our senses amplified, we are able to take in more than ever before, and this intoxication of strange sounds is awesomely gruesome.

A remarkably unique piece of cinema, which defies the conventions of our idea of the medium, *The Tribe* is a complete triumph.

Its sheer power is stunning, crushing the audience into submission, and seemingly vacuuming out all the air in the room.

I haven't been able to stop thinking about it since the first viewing, and I am certain that it is a film that will reward revisits.

Leaving the cinema, thrust into the hustle and bustle of modern London, I am confronted by a cacophony of new sounds, as thoughts of alienation and belonging, violence and brutality, love and life swirl around my head.

# Cannes bannes\* selfies and flats

CECILY JOHNSON  
FILM WRITER

With Hollywood descending onto the red carpets of the 68<sup>th</sup> Cannes International Film Festival, the organisers have stirred up controversy first by banning stars from taking selfies, then reportedly turning women away from screenings because they weren't wearing high heels.

Festival director Thierry Frémaux, who first introduced the 'unofficial' selfie ban at an event last month revealing this year's festival programme, described the practise of selfie-taking as "ridiculous and grotesque" and complained that it "really slows things down".

Frémaux added "You'll never look as ugly as you do in a selfie". Security guards have apparently been instructed to hand out "serious warning[s]", but aren't going so far as to confiscate phones from any rogue selfie-takers.

The festival has also faced backlash after barring women from entering a film screening for not wearing high heels. A group of women were turned away from a screening of Todd Haynes' lesbian romance film *Carol*, according to Screen magazine.

The women, some of whom reportedly cannot wear heels due to medical conditions, were denied entry to the event despite wearing



Emily Blunt in an appearance at Cannes. She could be wearing flats here, I don't know. I just wanted to print a picture of Emily Blunt, to be Blunt\*. Photo: Getty

'smart' rhinestone-studded shoes. The festival declined to comment on the incident, but confirmed that women are obligated to wear high heels to red-carpet screenings.

Asif Kapadia, director of the highly anticipated Amy Winehouse documentary *Amy*, tweeted that his wife had also been turned away from a festival event, though she was "eventually let in".

Film producer Valeria Richter, who has had part of her left foot amputated, also claimed to have been stopped "four times" by staff at the premier for *The Sea of Trees*. She said "We put on the dress and make an

effort to be formal and festive, but to demand heels is not right".

Another Cannes regular stated "I've heard this happening several times now. It's bullshit. Someone I know was turned away for wearing nice flats, nothing you would wear to the beach. They were in their 50s. They told her she could go and buy appropriate shoes and come back".

However, Thierry Frémaux later tweeted "The rumour saying the festival insists on high heels for women on the red carpet is unfounded".

\*Yes, this is a pun. Deal with it. -Ed.

**"You'll never look as ugly as you do in a selfie."**

**"To demand heels is not right."**

# Avengers subtitles 'too literal'

JACK STEADMAN  
SECTION EDITOR

*Age of Ultron* is rapidly approaching a worldwide box office take of one billion US dollars (a touch under £650 million), but that doesn't mean it hasn't encountered its fair share of problems.

Joss Whedon's latest contribution to the Marvel Cinematic Universe has just opened in China, a relative newcomer to the blockbuster film market, and one which Marvel has a record of playing to.

*Iron Man 3* featured scenes that were exclusive to the Chinese version of the film, greatly helping the film's popularity in the country.

*Avengers* has run into some problems with its subtitling, however.

The Hollywood Reporter has the scoop on rumours that the translations for the film are too

literal.

Some of the film's choice lines have been butchered, with Captain America (Chris Evans)'s "You get hurt, hurt 'em back. You get killed... walk it off," turning into the rather more simple "Run fast if someone tries to kill you."

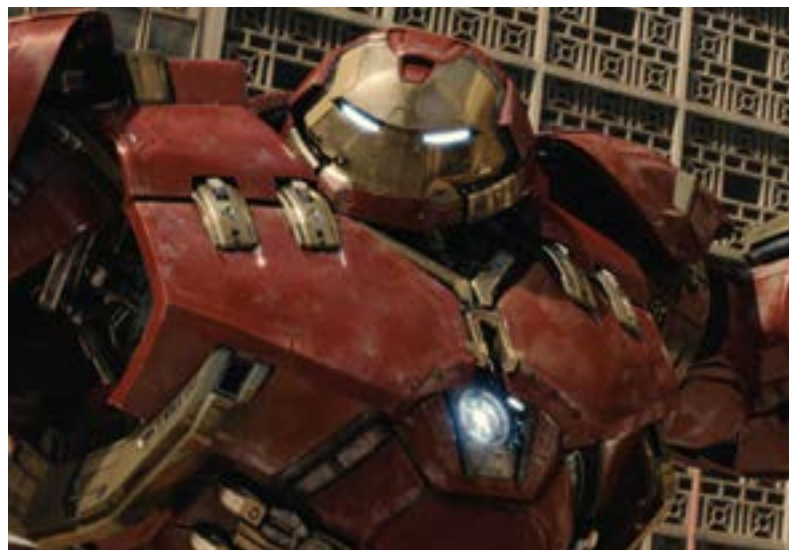
Simpler advice, but less resounding.

The Reporter also references reports from social media of other mangled translations, ranging from "We may not make it out of this" turning into "Let's back off now" all the way through to "son of a bitch" appearing onscreen as "my old, familiar partner."

The faulty translations have apparently caused distress among movie-goers, with some even going so far as to leave the cinema.

The translation was apparently carried out by Liu Dayong, responsible for translations of *The Hobbit: The Battle of Five Armies*, *Avatar* and *Titanic*.

Dayong mentored fellow translator Jia Xiuyan, who may also have been



This is too cool to be sarcastic about. Photo: Joss Whedon/Disney

involved with the *Avengers* subtitling. Xiuyan was responsible for the translations for last year's smash Marvel hit *Guardians of the Galaxy*, which caused similar reactions.

Criticisms of its literalism were common, while the translation of

the film's title also caused some confusion. But then, *Interplanetary Unusual Attacking Team* doesn't make much sense however you spin it.

Some exhibitors in China have reportedly corrected the translation themselves.

## This week at Imperial Cinema



This week, Imperial Cinema are showing an unlikely pairing of *Insurgent*, the next outing in the teenage dystopian franchise that is *Divergent*, and *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, an Academy Award nominated animated film from Studio Ghibli.

First up, *Insurgent*, which takes up where *Divergent* left off, with our heroine Tris Prior on the run from the authoritarian Jeanine and her regime.

She can't hide forever, though, and Tris quickly discovers that Jeanine is up to something which could spell the end for her society.

Next, we have *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, which is based upon the Japanese folk tale *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*.

The story begins with Sanuki, a bamboo cutter, who discovers a girl hidden within a glowing bamboo shoot. Along with his wife, he decides to raise the girl as his own.

As she grows older, Kaguya is given the name "Princess" and attracts suitors – but ultimately, she must face her punishment for the crimes of her past.

*Insurgent* is playing on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May at 18:30 and Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May at 21:10.

*The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* is playing on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May at 20:50 and Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May at 18:30.

Tickets are £3 for members and £4 for non-members.

Doors open around 15 minutes before the start of the film.

To buy membership or to find out more about our showings this term, visit: [imperialcinema.co.uk](http://imperialcinema.co.uk).



# Far-fetched, messed-up and first class

Joshua Renken finds himself entranced by *Mad Max: Fury Road*

## MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

**Director:** George Miller

**Screenplay:** George Miller, Brendan McCarthy and Nico Lathouris

**Cast:** Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron, Nicholas Hoult, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley

*“Has the world fell? Each of us in our own way was broken. It was hard to know who was more crazy; me, or everyone else.”*

Picture the scene. In the distant future, water wars have destroyed society, law and order has broken down and human civilisation has fallen.

“Mad” Max Rockatansky, played by Tom Hardy, is a lone survivor in the arid desert wastelands of Australia. Captured by the ‘War Boys’ – led by King Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne) – Max is designated a universal blood donor and used as a blood bag for the weak War Boy Nux (Nicholas Hoult). Elsewhere, Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron) drives her weaponised War Rig oil tanker to collect gasoline – a resource now far less coveted than water. Furiosa veers her War Rig off the predetermined route in an attempt to escape, alerting King Immortan Joe who realises that his five wives – specially selected for breeding – have also legged it.

Immortan leads his entire fleet of vehicles and War Boys in hot pursuit of Furiosa and his wives. He’s particularly keen on getting his child – who he hopes is a son – out of his favourite wife, played by Rosie Huntington-Whiteley. The casting decisions suggest that *Fury Road* is going to be as terrible as *Transformers*, but mercifully this is not even remotely the case.

That is the set-up. I will not unravel any more of the plot, which is just as well because I don’t think I could continue if I tried. Essentially *Mad Max: Fury Road* is a prison break turned chase action thriller centred on the cooperation of slaves (of different kinds) in a desperate bid for freedom. Or put another way, it’s about a cult leader with the face of a scrotum searching for his desert bitches in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Take your pick.

This film is set in one of the bleakest dystopias in film history, inhabited by tyrannical Aussie mercenaries, Aussie slaves, Tom Hardy and King Immortan – a sadistic overlord who

**“It’s about a cult leader with the face of a scrotum searching for his bitches.”**



Max’s Hannibal Lecter impression wasn’t quite going to plan. Photo: George Miller/Warner Bros.

looks like the lovechild of Peter Jackson’s Sauron and Christopher Nolan’s Bane.

Along the way we meet demented Immortan-worshipping skinheads with full white body paint, who love nothing more than spraying their mouths with a silver elixir from an aerosol can, before dying for their cause in front of ‘witnesses’. This inspired act of martyrdom is all done with the expectation of gaining safe passage through the gates of Valhalla with Immortan.

(I don’t know what Immortan has promised them in Valhalla. Perhaps flexible working hours in the afterlife?)

In this two-hour blaze of spears and fire, there is close to no character development. I still don’t know for sure whether it’s just me, or whether this is what most action films are like, but *Fury Road* seems to offer no insights to the audience about Max, Furiosa or Nux.

Max experiences unexplained visions of children and the elderly, both living and dead, who all seem angry at him. These moments clearly haunt Max, but they are never explored.

*Fury Road* is one of the first films I’ve ever watched with barely any memorable dialogue. The two best lines come from Max, both of which are uttered in the first five minutes of the film.

Despite the pretense and

suggestions of profundity, *Fury Road* is really quite a dumb film. It’s just an excuse for the directors and cinematographers to capture big, vehicular orgies of oil, explosions, death and metal in pornographic detail.

I watched *Mad Max* in 2D, and needed to lie down for the rest of the evening. God knows what it’s like in 3D. Probably life-altering.

You can’t help but be in awe of the imagination of the psychopath/cinematographer that managed to put it all together. In all the warfare there is a crunchy physicality to the sounds of the gunshots, explosions and engines. I can’t quite explain it, but every action by the lead characters are somehow more visceral than in other comparatively bland action films.

Tom Hardy is excellent as Mad Max, playing the primitive survivor – who seems to communicate exclusively in threats – to a T. His previous roles in *The Dark Knight Rises*, *Bronson* and *Warrior* all come together in a glorious exhibition of acting prowess.

Many critics have said that the real star of the film is Charlize Theron, who plays the Oil Rig driver and all round badass Furiosa. *Fury Road* has even been heralded as a ‘feminist film’ that shines a beacon of female empowerment against male oppression. And when you watch it, you can see why.

For the first time ever I think I’m more puzzled after watching this film

than when I first saw the trailer. This might just be because I desperately want to know just what the hell is going on, when really this film is best enjoyed when the viewer accepts the madness of the plot.

Logic is kryptonite to a *Mad Max* audience. So if you do watch this film, and I sincerely hope that you do, don’t even try to follow. You will have lots of questions after watching the trailer. Alas, the film yields little in the way of explanation.

Perhaps the most amazing thing of all about *Mad Max: Fury Road*, however, is that the director George Miller’s last film before creating this towering cinematic masterpiece was, I shit you not, *Happy Feet Two*.

I don’t know what possessed – and I use that word carefully – Miller to create such a spectacular display of noise and nonsense. *Mad Max: Fury Road* occupies a world of blood, fire, sand and oil.

It is a truly mesmerising odyssey likely inspired by a ketamine-induced dream sequence that turned into a really, really bad trip. It really is that bleak. Memorable, certainly. But bleak.

If nothing else, *Mad Max: Fury Road* reminds us that we could be living in a world of naked barbarism, rogue armies, sacrificial cults, sandy wastelands and scarce resources, when in fact we get to live a life of taxes, Sainsbury’s and *Angry Birds*. And for that reason, I absolutely love it.

# Television

television.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Television Editors || Guila Gabrielli & John Park

## A seven season long advertisement for advertising

Giulia Gabrielli reviews *Mad Men's* season finale

As a TV writer, sometimes I find myself in a bit of a predicament. What should I leave for readers to discover, and what should I reveal? The finale of the series *Mad Men* is a perfect example.

As the series that taught all men how to wear a suit, and all women how lucky we are not to live in the 1960s comes to an end, I wonder whether it's enough of an event for me to spoiler, or whether I should hold back on what awaits Mr Donald Draper and colleagues.

Basically, I feel I need to warn you that there will be some spoilers, tough shit.

First of all, what has happened to *Mad Men* in the last year? After a very long break, the show came back eight weeks ago, all 1970s hairdos and bad moustaches.

For most people without a photographic memory, it was almost impossible to get back into the plot without a good recap. Did somebody die at some point?

The show seemed lost, as did its main character and icon Don Draper: forty, recently divorced, and showing a little too many wrinkles around the eyes.

Yeah, his second wife was a bitch (as was his first one for that matter) and yeah he's the misunderstood son of a prostitute/tragic Korean War vet, but we can't help but feel he slightly brought it on himself.

The years of frowns and intense silences have left Don incapable of communicating with other human beings and addicted to most legal, and at times illegal, highs.

In true Jack Kerouac fashion, there's only one thing that can save him: a long trip across the immense landscapes of America. Never mind his children, or work, or friends, this is Don Draper for fuck sake!

Up until the finale, Don's voyage didn't seem like it could have likely brought him the peace he was looking for: getting him robbed, bashed and forcing him to sell most of his possession on the way, ending up stuck in a hippie commune hugging people.

This was all put into perspective in the last three minutes of the show, when inspiration suddenly strikes him, warranting the first real smile of the whole show.

It is revealed that Don Draper is in fact the creator of the phenomenally successful Coca Cola "Hilltop"

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**"In true Jack Kerouac fashion, there's only one thing that can save him."**

---



People! Sitting! Smoking! Excitement! Photo: AMC

commercial: an ending that also turns out to be a massive Coca Cola advert, then. Story of our lives.

And what about the rest of the cast? The authors decided to make these plotlines, surprisingly, a little more predictable, finally satisfying the viewers' requests.

Turns out the two heroes of the show are in fact two heroines: out of the ashes of the booze-fuelled swinging Sixties rise Joan and Peggy.

The two are now the decision makers in the game, after years of acting as glorified secretaries.

The too-sexy-for-her-own-good redhead has had enough of depending on men and decides to put her less apparent skills to good use, creating her own new company, that we are sure will eventually conquer the world.

At McCann Erickson, on the other hand, Peggy has to fight to keep the power she's earned now she's in a big, corporate agency. Thank God she finally has a man and all is good in this black-and-white world, since no woman can really be happy without one.

Of course this is the part of the story that ticks the big romantic kiss box.

Unfortunately, although very sweet, since *Mad Men* had rarely had to rely on such clichés to attract its audiences. In fact, Peggy's modest

surprise at her colleague Stan Rizzo's declaration of love was a bit sickening, considering most viewers were anticipating the scene from his first appearance.

All things considered, no big ending for the show. Who knew, after all, *Mad Men* was really all about advertising? No subtle meaning, no growth.

Of course, the way women are treated may have changed slightly,

but Don is left doing what he does best: inventing jingles and seducing women.

Ultimately *Mad Men's* was a happy ending.

Well, for everyone except for the whole of humanity, spoilt and corrupted by advertising companies who take messages of love and peace and use them to promote carbonated drinks.

But that's another story.




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**"Who knew Mad Men was really all about advertising?"**

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Brooding! Intense! Adjectives! I've never watched *Mad Men*. Photo: AMC



# Fashion

fashion.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Editor || Cécile Borkhataria

## House of Holland

Cécile Borkhataria talks us through Henry Holland's new line of menswear

For all those of you who've waited for this day, it's coming! Henry Holland (pictured right), of House of Holland, has announced that there will be a menswear offering from next month! The new addition to his already successful womenswear collection will be debuted in June's *London Collections: Men*.

So what can you expect from the fashion designer? This fashion follower suspects a runaway from the typical (yet classic) runway look of plaid or herringbone two, three, four or five piece suits. Instead, dream a bit more of glittering metallic, possibly from a constellation of colours. We might even get skirts, we might not!

Who knows what is in store? What we do know is that the collection will surely be a feast for the eyes, a sort of messy orgasm that feels so undoubtedly good we are slain for at

least a couple of days.

Whilst many may freak about the thought of being caught out in one of Holland's more creative pieces, it is important to realise that Holland's clothing seeks to empower in a way many other designers fail to do so. The bold and often striking designs are not for the faint hearted, but those who wear them will know what the clothing exude. Now men, straight or gay, will be able to boost their presence with out of the ordinary looks.

Henry Holland has in the past spoken about a menswear line to accompany the brands womenswear line, which is a star favourite. Miley Cyrus, Rihanna and Holland's very own muse, Nicola Roberts, are often seen wearing clothing from the designer.

We know Holland's main fashion

line may not be to everyone's taste. We all have different styles after all. However, Holland has already gone into accessories. So if you're looking to up your ante and dress to impress without going too over the top and abandoning who you really are, you could opt for a pair of statement sunglasses. You don't even have to wear them on your face. Carrying them like a clutch is the ultimate guide for releasing the cool girl inside.

Whilst we wait, here are some pictures for the ladies who may still need a bit of inspiration for their looks this coming Autumn/Winter season for 2015/2016 (the fashion industry is always one season ahead!)

Note his sensible cool factor, epitomising the "old school" London fashion typique (made up word, but that's how I roll!), but bringing it to the epicentre of fashion today!



Samples from House of Holland's Autumn/Winter Collection. Photos: catwalking

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*Alex Kendall, Imperial College Union President 2010/11.*

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*Leon Vanstone, Aeronautical Engineering, Imperial College London*

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**22 May**

20:00-02:00

Metric & FiveSixEight

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ACTIVITIES SPACES

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## COMING UP!

Date	Event	Time	Location
Friday 22	Cocktails at the h-bar	17:30 - 00:00	h-bar
Friday 22	Reynolds Cocktail Club	17:30 - 00:00	Reynolds
Friday 22	iPop	21:00 - 02:00	Metric
Every Tuesday	Super Quiz	20:00 - 22:00	FiveSixEight
Every Wednesday	CSP Wednesday	19:00 - 01:00	FiveSixEight & Metric
Every Wednesday	Pub Quiz	19:00 - 22:00	Reynolds
Friday 29	Wine Tasting	18:30 - 20:30	h-bar
Friday 29	Reynolds Cocktail Club	17:30 - 00:00	Reynolds
Friday 29	Impulse	20:00 - 02:00	FiveSixEight & Metric

# Swimming and Water Polo: Go!



ing in hard and coming out wet



# Is now the time for electoral reform?

Joshua Renken discusses the case for a change in the voting system, and outlines the possible alternatives

General Election  
Second Placed

The election is over. It was a tightly contested campaign but in the end, the Tories carried the day.

The final tally put the Conservatives on a slim majority, and sent Labour back to the opposition bench for another five years.

The country has moved further to the right, which ironically would bring us closer to Europe, and Miliband will not take the top spot in UK politics.

This election saw the rise of three insurgent parties – the SNP, UKIP and the Green Party. The Scottish Nationalists swept the board in Scotland, winning 56 out of a possible 59 seats and 50% of all the votes north of the border.

But is it fair that half the votes translate to virtually all the representatives?

Whatever your thoughts on UKIP, it's hard to suggest that they only deserve one solitary MP after receiving 3.8 million votes (an eighth of all the ballots cast in the UK).

The Green Party also has just one elected Member of Parliament, despite receiving 1.1 million votes. Two MPs for almost 5 million votes? Is that really fair?

When you look at the average number of votes it took to win each MP, you see that the largest parties do well from our current electoral system.

The SNP received on average 26,000 votes for each of the seats they won on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

The Conservatives received 34,000. Labour received 40,000 per MP elected, and the Liberal Democrats charted up 291,000 votes per MP.

The Greens snagged more than 1,100,000 votes despite only having one MP and UKIP took a staggering 3,800,000 votes, just for Douglas Carswell.

Clearly, the disparities are massive. Ever since we found out the results in the small hours of 8<sup>th</sup> May, people have been debating the merits of a

more proportional voting system.

In fact, electoral reform is one of those rare species of subjects that UKIP and the Greens can actually agree on.

Natalie Bennett and Nigel Farage both agree that first-past-the-post (FPTP) has had its day and is no longer democratic in this new age of multi-party, more continental style politics.

Here, I will outline the pros and cons of our current system, and look at some of the potential alternatives.

The current FPTP system undoubtedly has its flaws, the chief amongst them being that it is not 'perfectly democratic', in this case since the number of seats a party wins in the House of Commons is not directly proportional to the number of people that support them.

But in reality no system of government can be perfectly democratic.

One of FPTP's supposed benefits is that it is more likely than other systems to deliver majority governments. For a long time this statement was, broadly speaking, true. It meant that parties with far less than 50% of the total vote could form stable administrations.

This is because the amount of power has is not directly dependent on the share of the vote your party wins, but rather by the number of seats where your party can win the most votes.

FPTP works quite well in a two-party system, and has produced a century of alternating Labour and Conservative governments.

FPTP also allows constituencies to have a representative that has that area's best interests in mind. However, due to the different socio-economic circumstances in each area, many people around the country find themselves voting in very 'safe' seats, where one party has a disproportionately large amount of support in the area compared to the rest of the UK.

Having safe seats can, and

sometimes does, lead to poor constituency MPs that take their seat for granted and do not work hard to serve their constituents.

But as we move to this new multi-party political landscape, people are beginning to question its merits.

Parties with a sizeable chunk of the popular vote but secure far less parliamentary representation – such as the Lib Dems, the Greens and UKIP – have a vested interest in changing the electoral system, so that the number of seats each party wins is more closely aligned with the number of people voting for them.

FPTP makes a lot of people feel that their vote is wasted, and many feel that they should vote tactically in order to get the lesser of two evils.

So, what are the alternatives?

Well, in the UK we actually had a referendum on electoral reform just four years ago in 2011.

As part of the 2010 coalition agreement between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg negotiated for an Alternative Vote (AV) referendum.

In the AV system, voters can rank the candidates in order of preference instead of only putting an X next to one candidate.

Ballots are initially distributed based on each elector's first preference. If none of the candidates manages to secure more than half of votes cast, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated.

Ballots assigned to the eliminated candidate are recounted and added to the totals of the remaining candidates based on who is ranked next on each ballot. This process continues until one candidate wins by obtaining more than half the votes.

One of the benefits of FPTP is its sheer simplicity. You can explain it in one sentence. "The candidate with the most votes wins the constituency." However, the AV system would ensure that the most agreeable candidate wins, by taking into account which of the candidates a

**“Two MPs for almost 5 million votes? Is that really fair?”**

**“Having safe seats can lead to poor MPs that take their seat for granted.”**

**A map showing the second-placed parties in 2015**

voter would prefer to see representing them after their first choice.

The Conservatives and DUP took the official position for a No vote, while Labour had no official party position. Every other minority party was in favour of the change.

FPTP benefits the two largest parties the most, so there is a large incentive for all the other parties to campaign for electoral reform.

In the recent election, the Conservatives won 51% of the seats in the House of Commons, but secured only 37% of the popular vote. Labour have 36% of the UK's MPs with just over 30% of the vote.

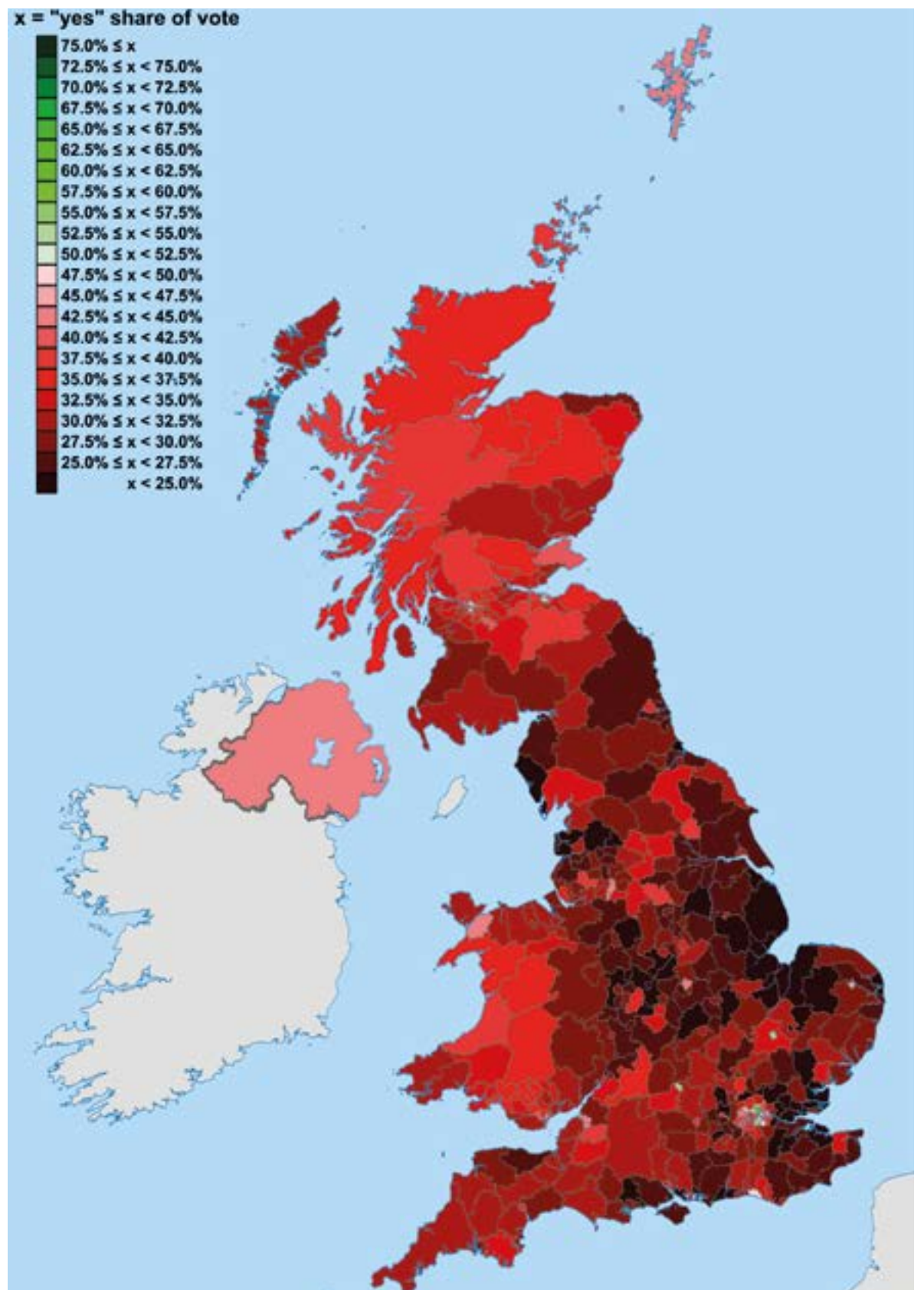
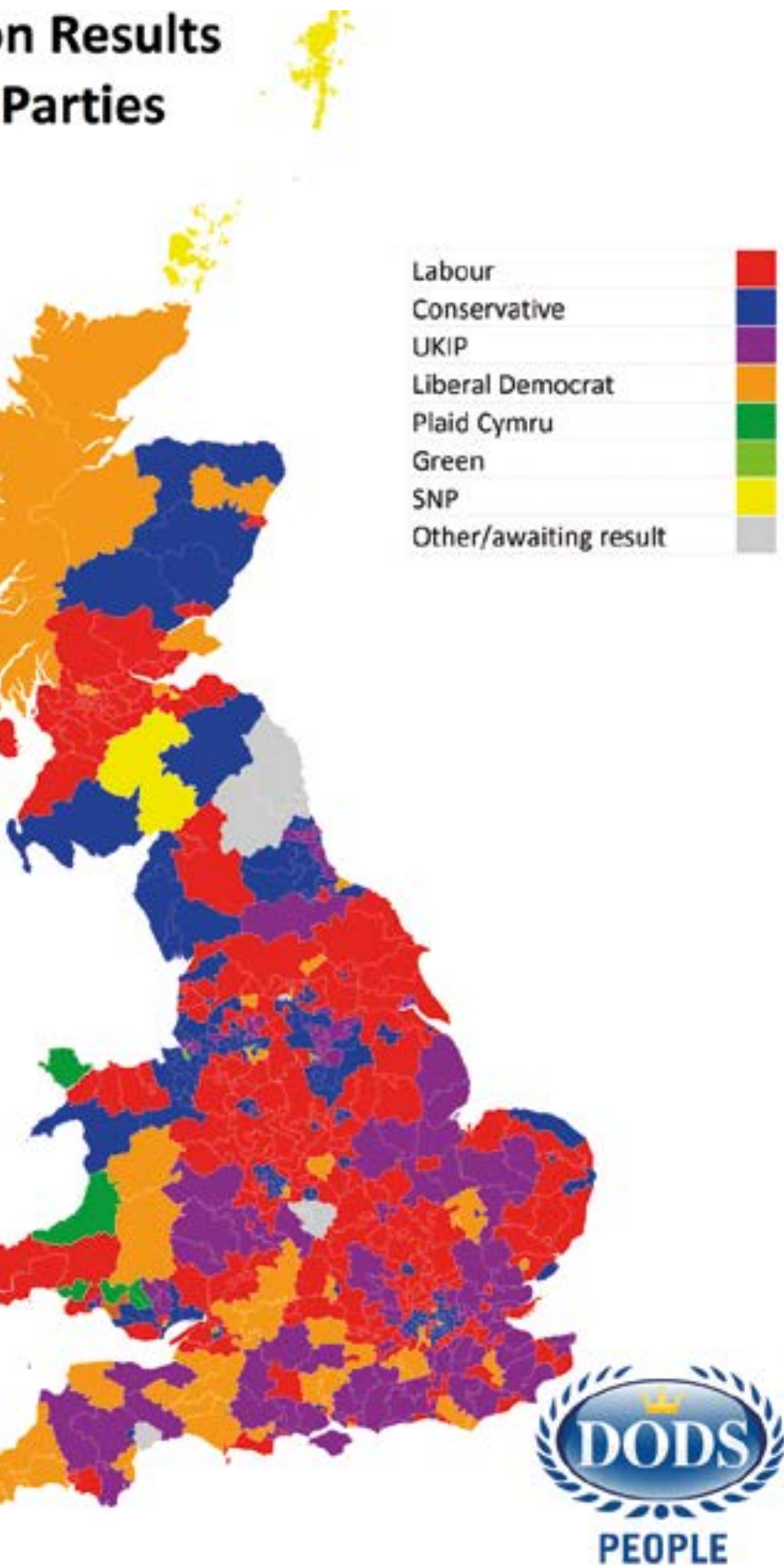
However, turnout was low (just

# Politics

politics.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Politics Editor || Joshua Renken

## 2015 Results by Party



2015 (L), the results of the 2011 AV referendum (R). Image: Dods Monitoring, Nilfanion/Jolly Janner

42% of registered voters) and the “alternative vote” system was rejected with only 32% in favour of change.

AV is not the same as a full-fat proportional representation “PR” system, which would aim to give each party the same proportion of the power in Westminster as indicated by their percentage of the popular vote across the country.

If the parties’ power were determined solely by their national share of the vote, the Tories would have 240 MPs, Labour 200, UKIP more than 80, Lib Dems 50, SNP 30, and Greens 25.

One of the biggest problems here is that, under this system,

**“We have officially moved into a more continental style of politics.”**

Parliamentary representatives would not have the constituency allegiances that they currently do under FPTP. It would also make single party majority governments a thing of the past, as we are very unlikely to see a party win more than half of all the votes any time soon.

The UK would be governed under endless coalitions, such as the one we had in 2010-2015. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does lead to inevitable compromises and disagreements that typically make the administration quite unstable.

However, the last five years of a Conservative led coalition with the Lib Dems has broadly been a success.

The coalition was stable and an economic crisis was averted.

Generally speaking, single party majorities give the government the opportunity to execute their manifestos with conviction, while coalitions can make the public uneasy about backroom negotiations and an unclear mandate.

Personally, I would like to see a single transferable alternative voting system with constituency MPs remaining as our representatives, as this seems to be a reasonable compromise between two of the possible three options.

The best of both worlds. With the increased support for

**The next parliament is set to be one of the most volatile and unstable in our history.**

minority parties the debate about electoral reform is likely to raise its head again, and it is likely that there is far more of an appetite for change now than in 2011.

If we ever made the decision as a country to move to a PR system, such as the one in Germany, we would be ending our nation’s history of single party majorities.

But these changes would make many who currently feel that their vote is wasted in safe seats more likely to participate in our democracy, as any sensible, responsible citizen should.

And that, in my view, can only be a good thing.



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## Arts

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Arts Editors || Fred Fyles &amp; Kamil McClelland

# The RSC's Thoroughly Modern Miller

Jack Steadman can't stop thinking about this powerful production



L-R – Alex Hassell (Biff), Harriet Walter (Linda Loman), Antony Sher (Willy Loman), and Sam Marks (Happy) in the RSC's *Death of a Salesman* Photo: Ellie Kurttz

With 2015 marking the centenary of Arthur Miller's birth, it was inevitable that a fresh crop of revivals of the great American playwright's works would spring up across the theatre world. Last year saw Yael Farber direct a production of *The Crucible*, staged in the round at the **Old Vic** and starring Richard Armitage; Ivo Van Hove brought *A View from the Bridge* back to life in a startlingly minimalist production that moved from the **Young Vic** to the **Wyndham's Theatre** for early 2015; this year, a touring production of *All My Sons* featuring an all-black cast made the rounds, while the **RSC** opened a revival of Miller's most enduringly acclaimed piece, *Death of a Salesman*, at the **Royal Shakespeare Theatre** in Stratford-upon-Avon. That production now transfers to the **Noël Coward Theatre** in the West End proper (replacing *Shakespeare in Love*) for a ten-week run.

The first thing that – naturally – catches your eye when entering the theatre is the set. The interior of a two-storey house squats centre stage, the beams supporting the ground floor visible, as if the whole house had been cut in two. Small and compact, the house is overshadowed by the vast number of identical dwellings that loom over it in an imposing tableau. Rows and rows of terraced flats

define the sides and rear of the stage, some with lights shining through their windows, suggesting a scale far beyond the one measly house we have been granted access to.

There are moments where it can feel like this is a show that has been scaled up for a full-blown West End stage – the decision to use gauze and what appears to be projection, to allow the backdrop to subtly shift in appearance during certain scenes, inevitably leads to moments where the entire thing becomes almost transparent, but it's a forgivable (and understandable) sin. Yes, you can occasionally see the construction holding up the structure, but the play does such a magnificent job of focusing your attention on the actors' performances that it's hard to mind too much.

The discussion of staging proves interesting in the context of the two other West End productions of Miller's plays: *The Crucible*'s set was sparse, enough to evoke the setting and little more, and being in the round meant the actors' performances were being viewed from all angles; *A View from the Bridge* went even further, dropping almost all set entirely in favour of a knee-high glass bench, with audience on three sides. No props beyond a pair of shoes, and yet still utterly absorbing. By comparison, this production of

*Death of a Salesman* is an incredibly straight-forward affair. Where this show gets interesting is the text itself.

The story is that of Willy Loman, a down-on-his-luck, exhausted salesman. Returning home from an abortive sales trip following a near-miss car accident, he discovers his estranged, unsuccessful sons have both come to stay, reuniting their old family unit.

As Willy's mind wanders, he begins to talk to himself, often flashing back to moments in his sons' childhoods, when the world lay at their feet and success seemed certain. It's in these flashbacks that the play is allowed to quietly tug at the rug beneath the audience's feet, as subtle (and the odd unsubtle) lighting changes fire off, and the invisible boundaries of the house – almost all of them imaginary, and defined solely by the actors' performances, never noticed or remarked upon until now – are ignored and trampled all over.

Those flashbacks in particular demand an incredibly strong presence on stage to pull off successfully. The lines between reality and the world inside Willy's head grow increasingly blurry throughout the play, leading with a dread inevitability towards the titular conclusion, and it's to Antony Sher's immense credit that he pulls the whole thing off magnificently. It's a towering performance that

rules the stage, as he inhabits the tortured, exhausted, lost Willy. His accent initially grates, pushing us away from the character, but over time it serves as another aspect to Willy's personality, combining his desperate need to be "well-liked" with his constant pushing away of those around him through his actions and failings.

It's a fine line between feeling empathy with Willy, understanding his struggles, and just feeling sorry for him, which this production occasionally strays over, before immediately course-correcting. It's an intense effort by the cast, who without exception put in excellent performances, not least Alex Hassell and Sam Marks as Willy's sons Biff and Happy. Asked to play grown men one minute, then teenage boys the next, they are given the greatest challenge after Sher, and both tackle it excellently. Hassell's performance is heart-wrenching in the play's closing moments, as he desperately attempts to break through Willy's self-delusions and show him the truth.

In fact, it's the play's closing moments where everything, across the board, comes together to deliver something truly great. This production is long, at two and a half hours (not including the interval) – not nearly as long as *The Crucible*,

which clocked in over three hours, but not as snappy as the one-act *A View from the Bridge* – and the struggle to maintain the tension, the intensity of emotion that the play demands starts to become too much as the end approaches.

But then, as Biff confronts his father one last time, everything abruptly falls into place. The use of a live band, which until this point feels significantly under-used, is fully justified by the trembling, painfully high note that lingers uncomfortably in the air as Willy makes his final decision. The lighting is perfect, the performances are perfect, everything just works. It's a gut-wrenching moment – telegraphed by the title, but still hitting hard.

It takes a long time to reach that point, and while this production is never bad – or even adequate, it's always good – it never quite hits greatness until the big finish. But when it gets there, it explodes, and hovers in the memory for hours, days afterwards.

This is the play that mostly impresses, rather than awes, at first sight, but sticks with you long after the curtain falls. And that, more than anything else, deserves applause.

*Death of a Salesman* is on at the **Noël Coward Theatre** until 18<sup>th</sup> July. Tickets from £10, available online.

# In Conversation: Ian MacNeil

Ian MacNeil is the set designer for *Everyman*, currently on at the **National Theatre**. Directed by Rufus Norris, the new Director of the National, and starring Academy Award-winning Chiwetel Ejiofor, the play runs until 30<sup>th</sup> August. Ian's previous work includes the likes of *Billy Elliot: The Musical*, for which he won the Tony Award for Best Scenic Design of a Musical, and critically acclaimed *An Inspector Calls*, which won an Olivier Award for Best Set Design. Felix Arts' **Jack Steadman** caught up with Ian during the run of *Everyman* for a chat about his work on the show, as well as a look back at his career.

**Jack Steadman: What was your inspiration for the design of *Everyman*?**

Ian MacNeil: We looked at medieval, allegorical drawings and illuminations. They have what looks like an empty drum, with a sheer side to it, sitting in the earth, and then there's a hole that's a pure cylinder. There are figures – people of the world – that are falling into it, but at the same time there are figures that are rising out of it. I guess that's the most important thing.

The other thing is that Carol Ann [Duffy, who adapted *Everyman*] is a poet, obviously, so I thought it would be interesting to make it seem as though there were nothing on stage so that you listened to the poetry.

Because it's set in the present day, we wanted [Everyman] to be a recognisable person. We'd say he was in London, he was wealthy, and he probably worked in Soho. That would explain his friends, and what was it generally feels like. [We wanted] to explain in a subliminal way, not an illustrated way – that was the key thing, to not actually illustrate, but to give the atmosphere,

to make it feel like you're in Soho with beautiful neon light, or street lights, or whatever, in the rain. So it's subliminal, but that's what the floor and the LED screen are trying to feel like.

**JS: Do you feel the design worked in the end?**

IM: Well, one does these things, and one does them as best one can and tries to be clear without words, meaning that audience don't hear you talk about it, they come and look at it. A design's a thing that has to speak without words: not speak, convey atmosphere, make you feel things and be an environment that things can fair enough. So, successful or not, I feel alright about it.

**JS: I thought it was fantastic, I really enjoyed seeing it in action. With regards to the process for *Everyman* – were you involved with Rufus Norris [the director] & Carol Ann from the start?**

IM: I've known Rufus for a very long time, we've done quite a few shows together. It was [originally] a different

**"A design is a thing that has to speak without words, to convey an atmosphere"**



A scene from the National Theatre's current production of *Everyman*, for which Ian MacNeil designed

play, which didn't get delivered, it missed the deadline, so then he chose to do this. He made the decision, and then we were in a meeting ten days later.

For Carol Ann, he gave her this whole thing to do without a particular set of instructions. She did all of it, and then he met her, which I thought was quite a smart thing to do; she could get a draft out, and then there could be a thing to respond to. Then there were two weeks of workshop, separated by a month or so, with actors, where ideas were tested. By the first workshop, we had an idea of the design, which was a bit different from how it now is. For the second workshop, I think we had this design. So I sat in the workshops and watched them choreograph, really, and test some text. And that's quite fun, because you're all working at the same time. There's not a lot one can do oneself, but being there, part of the atmosphere, seeing the choreography and the language of it – I can't say how it helped, but it does, the more you are feeling like you're all trying to do the same piece, the better. That's the danger of these things, you're all trying to do a different piece.

**"It's quite a job, and it involves a lot of trust ... you're all in it together"**

There were quite a few meetings of just me, Rufus and Nicky [Gillibrand], the costume designer. She was at all our meetings. There're times when only costumes are telling you what's going on, and scenery is not, and [it] takes a lot of trust on everybody's part to decide amongst you who has responsibility at any given moment. It's quite a job, and I really enjoy that bit, because it involves a lot of trust, not just people going off on their own and producing an outcome, but you're all together. You can decide what you think about it, but how you manifest it, how you make it understandable to an audience is a lot of work. It's quite vulnerable work, so to have colleagues that you care about and respect and that you can be vulnerable in front of is great.

**JS: So *Everyman* was at the National, how does that compare to other theatres, other shows, even other countries that you've worked in?**

IM: I try and work in theatres that are supportive of the kind of things I just described. I work quite hard to be welcomed in those places, where you don't have to know everything

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arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

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the set Photo: Richard Hubert Smith/National Theatre

spirit of not knowing. At the moment that's my favourite thing. Carol Ann is very much an open person, and I think she enjoyed being with other people. I imagine that writing can be quite isolated – designing can be quite isolated too – so sharing your problems with your colleagues was delightful.

**JS: Definitely. Are you working on anything new at the moment?**

IM: I'm in a similar situation, doing *Medea* [at the Almeida Theatre] – a known, classic text, but it's been adapted by Rachel Cusk, who is a feminist journalist and writer. It's a great idea having her do it, because she has written in a very forthright way about the mixed feelings around being cast in the role of a mother – not being cast in the role of a mother by her children, but by the culture. She's written really well about it, and the way the culture has an opinion on the way a woman might now be perceived now that she is a mother. She's fascinating on it, and she's also written about separation and divorce. Her *Medea* is a really out-there version of it which pulls no punches and is kinda great. It tells you *Medea's* situation is not specific to any period of time, it's going on around you now.

**JS: Brilliant. Do you have a favourite show you've worked on?**

IM: I did a production of *An Inspector Calls* which is now very famous, it's over twenty years old and it's still running. I feel great about that, because it was a particular time where everything came together, in a way that you hope for but is very hard to

achieve. So if I was only allowed to point to one show, I'd probably point to that.

**JS: Have you had a most challenging show to work on?**

IM: I did *Billy Elliot*, and that's a big success, but when you're doing it, it certainly doesn't feel like that. New musicals, even with an experienced story, which that is, are a hell of a job. I'd not done a musical before, even though I quite liked them, and I was with a lot of people who had also not done a musical before. New musicals are difficult, they're extraordinarily difficult, and you're trying to make a machine that delivers pleasure to an audience. Moment to moment, that's very, very precarious. The thing that is assured – that you're trying to create something that gives an audience emotional reassurance – just feels confident as a piece of theatre. That's an extraordinarily hard thing to do, the components can run away from you so easily.

The pitfalls of naff are monumental, the terrain is just loaded with minefields. It's a big hit now, and it's done ten years, and I'm proud of my part in that; but when you're doing it for nigh-on two years, which we were, it sure as hell doesn't feel like it. It's more like a battle. With yourself, with the material, with each other, there's nothing like it. That would be the most challenging, I think, that I've ever done.

**JS: It's a fantastic show, I love it. I've got one more question – any recent shows that you've seen, that you've particularly enjoyed?**

IM: I go on and on about *A View from the Bridge*, Ivo van Hove – did you see it?

**JS: Yeah, I managed to catch it just before it closed.**

IM: I thought it was magical. You saw things that were not there, it was so confident and every component about it was strong and yet it moment-to-moment felt breathtakingly audacious. So to be strong and audacious all the same time, and sort of not have a set, how great is that? It was thrilling.

**JS: It paid off in spades, I think.**

IM: It did, but it's interesting, I think, because those two – that director and that designer – they did *Antigone* at the Barbican, did you see that? Did you think it worked?

**JS: I thought it worked pretty well, I was entranced for a lot of it.**

IM: I was very glad I saw it, but it didn't feel inevitable and assured in the way that *A View from the Bridge* did. So it made me respect that even more, because I realised how difficult and precarious that was. Whereas when you were watching *Antigone* you experience the kind of doubt, you just saw how difficult a thing it is to do. They made it look easy on *A View from the Bridge*. *Antigone* makes you realise it's not at all easy, which made me respect them even more.

Ian's next show, *Medea*, opens at the Almeida from 25<sup>th</sup> September. Directed by Rupert Goold and written by Rachel Cusk.

immediately, you don't have to bluff and pretend you know all the answers in one hit. Like rehearsals, what might feel right today doesn't necessarily right tomorrow; it's kind of evolving – you have to try and work in places where you have the right to change your mind – without driving people mad, obviously! They have deadlines. So, mostly those are the kind of places I work, and I consider that my job – to find those places and make myself work within them – because that's the kind of work I want to do.

For that reason I've pretty much given up on doing opera, because opera needs to have all its information at a certain time which is long before you start rehearsal. I can do it, I have done it, and I've had some great times, but essentially what excites me most at the moment is doing new work where you sort of don't know what it is. You work on it, and then there's an audience, and the audience sort of tells you what it is and then you have a week to make it better. It's exciting to be working with your colleagues not knowing, and to have one of those people be the writer sitting alongside you in the

**"What excites me is doing new work where you sort of don't know what it is"**

**"Rachel Cusk's Medea is a really out-there version which pulls no punches"**



Kate Fleetwood will take on the title role in the Almeida's version of *Medea* this summer Photo: Almeida Theatre

## Arts

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Arts Editors || Fred Fyles &amp; Kamil McClelland

# A fractured take on a fractured world

Jack Steadman has never seen *Carmen*, but that doesn't matter



L-R – the Bull (Bull), Chorus (Viktoria Vizin) and Escamillo (John Light) in the Almeida's *Carmen Disruption*. Photo: Tristram Kenton

Simons Stephens ranks as one of Britain's most prolific playwrights, which makes it no surprise that, fresh off the run of *Birdland* at the Royal Court last summer, he's already back, this time in the Almeida Theatre in the theatre with *Carmen Disruption*, a musing on life, love and loss in an unnamed European city.

As the title suggests, *Carmen Disruption* follows (somewhat loosely, truth be told) the structure of Bizet's opera, using the characters and themes of that work to examine the life of an opera singer, travelling from country to country, always playing the same role – always playing Carmen.

The Singer in question is played wonderfully by Sharon Small, who captures the confusion and loss of identity that sits at the heart of the character.

When you spend every day of your life playing at being someone else – and playing at being one, specific person at that – how do you continue to draw the boundary between their life and yours?

The Singer is in a situation far removed from ordinary people's lives – even from ordinary actor's lives, in fact. Very few people live the way opera singers do, with many singers

simply playing the same role across multiple different productions.

Stephens acknowledges this fact as the inspiration for the entire play, with the work spiralling out of an interview with Rinat Shaham, an internationally-famous mezzo-soprano who has played Carmen more than 400 times.

That unique situation should mean that The Singer is alien to us, so distant that it makes it impossible to truly empathise with her, but therein lies the genius of Stephens' script and Small's performance.

The Singer's weariness, her confusion, all of it, all blends to give something achingly human, speaking to a truth that exists in a world beyond opera.

The other characters allow Stephens to examine different facets of this underlying loneliness, as he manipulates the original character archetypes into something new and exciting.

Carmen becomes a young, handsome male prostitute (with a strong sense of his own looks), played with hilarious bravado by Jack Farthing.

Don Jose, Carmen's love interest in the original, now becomes a female taxi driver (Noma Dumezweni), forced to do one last, suspiciously

criminal job before meeting her long-lost child.

The bullfighter Escamillo is now a high-flying banker-type, played by John Light, with a self-serving criminal bent.

He is the last to be introduced, although he's rapidly the most engaging as his attempts at financial gain threaten to backfire and crush him.

The 'nice girl' Micaela (Katie West) is a student (at what can only be presumed to be a university – the city, and by extension wherever she is studying – goes unnamed throughout) fresh out of a relationship with her sixty three-year-old professor.

This particular situation is referenced from the start, but only becomes clear about two-thirds of the way into the play, at which point it provoked an audible gasp from the audience I was in.

This steady unwinding, with the occasional floor-shaking revelation, is the case for all of the characters, as each are given their own moment to shine.

Carmen's mistreatment at the hands of a client, and his immediate revenge is a weird mixture of comedy and disgust.

There's an unflinching honesty in it

that means you can't look away, as the world Stephens has built draws you in, inexorably.

The play's composition is part of this allure – none of the characters directly interact with each other at any point.

They cross paths in-world – each is referenced in the other's stories, but the closest to a direct interaction is the moment the Singer realises that each of them represents a character from the opera. Or at least, represents that character's archetype.

The whole thing is essentially a series of overlapping monologues, intertwined with bursts of song from the mezzo-soprano Viktoria Vizin as the Chorus, accompanied by two cellists who sit on the side of the stage, in full view of the audience.

Almost all of the music is played by the duo live, with styles ranging from the classical (including, obviously, snatches of *Carmen* itself) to abrasively modern.

It's a bold choice, and one that reaps rewards.

The combination of the cellists and Vizin's soaring voice raises goosebumps, searing itself into your memory instantly.

And all of that is before you get to the set.

The live music may have been a

bold move, but the set is an even bolder one – a literal deconstruction of the environment, of both *Carmen* and the unnamed city.

A bull, presumably the one killed in *Carmen*'s climax, is sprawled centre-stage. All around it, rubble. Bricks, scattered across the space.

The rear wall and wings of the theatre are fully exposed, with the mechanisms of theatre – the lights, the speakers, the cables that run between them, all on completely open display.

It's a stark image, unlike almost any other on London stages. It goes beyond a kind of minimalism, moving from an emptiness to a physically crumbling theatre. At one point, rubble even falls from the ceiling.

This, combined with the music and the performances, which display intense emotion mixed with a disconnected distance – from each other, and from the world at large – is what makes *Carmen Disruption* a truly memorable experience.

The imagery of the show is burnt onto your retinas, the music lingers in your ears, and *Carmen* is truly reborn.

*Carmen Disruption* is at the Almeida Theatre until 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Tickets from £9, available online.

## Arts

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Arts Editors || Fred Fyles &amp; Kamil McClelland

## Do you really care about the NHS?

Jack Steadman definitely does, and so does Michael Wynne

Eileen O'Brien in *Who Cares* at the Royal Court. Photo: theartsdesk

The title of Michael Wynne's latest work, *Who Cares*, is both deliberately provocative and perfectly explanatory of what the audience entering the **Royal Court** have signed themselves up for.

This production for the **Jerwood Theatre Upstairs** is less 'state of the nation' and more 'state of the national health service', a no-holds barred examination of how the NHS has fared, is faring, and will fare under the previous and future governments.

The play poses a series of striking questions, the first of which is nothing to do with the NHS, but is instead "where the hell am I going?"

Ostensibly taking place in the Court's studio theatre, the show actually kicks off by queueing in the alley next to the theatre, between it and the rehearsal/office building located next door.

The doors to the rehearsal building are opened, and each audience member is given a coloured lanyard (most of which mark out audience members as 'patients', curiously) and ushered into a waiting room ripped straight out of a hospital Accident & Emergency department.

A small group of actors occupy seats in the centre of the room, in various states of disarray. Blue curtains, of the same sort that can be found in hospitals across the country, obscure the edges of the room. Double doors

are dotted throughout, with the occasional blurred figure moving behind them.

A cleaner appears from the end of the room, mopping around the clustered audience members. Some move out of the way to allow her to mop the patch of floor they were standing on. It's all a bit awkward. All a bit confusing.

This would be a negative, were it not for the fact it makes the whole thing instantly immersive. It already feels like the entire audience are awkwardly standing in a waiting room, hoping for instructions.

Suddenly, without warning, all hell breaks loose.

Actors appear from all sides, blasting through one set of double doors into the waiting room, only to immediately disappear through another set.

The first speaker is Marjorie, a nurse from Yorkshire, played with real warmth and humanity by Eileen O'Brien. She starts describing her path into the health service, as all around her various characters interject with stories, facts, statistics and more.

Some speak into a microphone at the side of the room, their voice blaring through the tannoy, some address the audience directly, others converse with each other. The whole scene is beautifully orchestrated chaos, and the audience are trapped

in the middle of it. Looking in, but constantly aware that there is more going on behind them. Within just a few minutes, even this tiny room feels like a part of something far larger.

Then, as quickly as it began, the madness stops.

Everyone has disappeared. The lights rise, and the audience are quickly separated into groups.

From here, the promenade part of *Who Cares* really comes into force, as the existence of multiple groups allows for the existence of several short scenes that can all run concurrently, with each group then being guided onto the next.

It can only have been nothing short of a logistical nightmare to work out where everyone should be (and when), a process honed to a fine degree during previews, and it's to the immense credit of everyone involved in the production – from the front of house staff physically guiding the audience members from station to station to the cast themselves, playing multiple roles, often with mere seconds to change ahead of the arrival of an audience – that it all comes together so magnificently.

The production makes use of all of the space available to the Royal Court bar the main theatre – nothing is off-limits here. The stage door becomes just another entrance; the storage locations in the roof of the building turn into an operating theatre.

It's in this operating theatre at the very top of the building that one of the more memorable scenes takes place, as a former Chief Executive of the NHS and an ex-Department of Health National Director discuss the relationship between politicians and the NHS while they dissect a corpse.

Except, in this instance, the 'corpse' is actually one of the dummies seen in classrooms across the country, used to teach pupils basic anatomy. The plastic entrails soon end up everywhere, with one lung even ending up being thrust into an unsuspecting audience member's hands.

The Ex-Exec and former Director leg it, leaving a confused nursing team (and a somewhat startled audience member) to pick up the pieces as the audience are ushered out. A fine metaphor for the NHS, if ever there were one.

From that point onwards, the play begins to deal with two main issues: the inquiry into the Mid-Staffs hospital trust, and the passage of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act.

There's a real sense of anger that runs through these scenes, with some truly heart-breaking testimonies being given as well as detailed, unflinching political analysis.

There's an unswerving sense of realism occupying the whole play, particularly in these scenes, and there's a very good reason for that.

*Who Cares* is based, entirely, on interviews with people across the NHS: With patients, campaigners, cleaners, nurses, students, junior doctors, GPs, consultants, surgeons, Chief Executives, anyone and everyone who has any dealings with the NHS.

Their words are reproduced *verbatim*, reeled off by a talented cast, who imbue each character with a sense of the real person originally speaking the words, even when faced with the unenviable task – as mentioned – of handling multiple roles.

The closing moments of *Who Cares* are unspeakably moving. There's such a visceral sense of pain and anger at what's happening to the NHS that it's impossible not to feel moved, and there are more than a few damning verdicts on the political mishandling of the service as a whole.

It's most fitting, though, that the play ends as it began, with Marjorie addressing the audience directly.

The NHS may be bureaucratic and incomprehensibly sprawling. It may at times feel deeply impersonal, and cold.

But the people who work in it, for it, are humans too, and many (if not all) of them are wonderful human beings who do it because they care.

The personal touch matters. That we receive it even in this facsimile of the NHS is truly marvellous.

# Arts

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Arts Editors || Fred Fyles & Kamil McClelland

## Living it large on Avenue Q

Jack Steadman enjoys this debauched puppet musical far too much

There's not a lot new to be said about *Avenue Q*, on the face of it. Although, inevitably, I'm about to try.

It can be succinctly described as the unholy offspring of *The Muppets*, *Sesame Street* and the real world, blending classic Jim Henson-style puppetry with irreverent humour and adult themes.

There's a vicious streak of satire running through the entire thing, and the use of puppets is just a cutesy smoke-screen for the grown-up, ugly goings-on underneath.

*Avenue Q* is a frank look at life post-education, at the time when you feel like you should really be getting a grip on your life, working a solid career, finding love, settling down, all that jazz. *Avenue Q* sticks two fingers up at that.

Said two-fingered salute commences from the opening song. Newly graduated Princeton (Richard Lowe) appears, sings a few lines about feeling that he could change the world, and then the real thing starts.

Kate Monster (Sarah Harlington) and Brian (Richard Morse) get the ball rolling with 'It Sucks to be Me', which within the space of a few minutes lays out the themes that the rest of the musical will follow.

All this takes place around one, static set – the titular Avenue Q.

A run-down block of houses, it appears deceptively simple, initially looking just like some doors and windows for the cast to enter/exit through or appear in while looking out.

It quickly turns out there's more to it than that. At various points, the fronts of the houses lower down to reveal a miniature interior, acting as a neat background to the goings on that removes the need for complicated scene changes.

There's also a large section that detaches and opens up to become a bar for one scene, adding a greater level of change that originally looked unlikely. Throw in a neatly-lit backdrop (and at least one massive inflatable head that pops up from behind the houses), and it's a clever way to achieve a lot with a little.

Touring productions always have a variety in quality, not least in their set, so it's a genuine treat to see something that's so simple yet functional without any obvious detractors.

The way the cast move around the set is also ingenious, with judicious use of multiple puppets (and an ensemble to operate them) allowing the likes of Trekkie Monster (Stephen Arden) to appear at completely



The Cast of the UK touring production of *Avenue Q*, waiting for a rehearsal to start. Photo: Matt Martin

different ends of the stage within seconds for such musical treats as 'The Internet is for Porn'.

If you didn't already know that was one of the song titles: you're in for a treat. A treat compounded by the likes of 'If You Were Gay', which manages the delicate double act of being slightly offensive and hugely entertaining (while also slyly taking the mickey out of *Sesame Street*'s Bert and Ernie), and 'Everyone's a Little Bit Racist', which manages to be hugely offensive and even more entertaining.

A double win in everyone's book (except, perhaps, the easily offended, who probably shouldn't be here anyway).

Those three songs are easily the musical highlights, although that's a relative term in a musical as strong as this. The songs are all either side-splittingly hilarious or touchingly emotional.

As with almost all musicals, the earlier songs are the strongest (which is where 'Internet', 'Racist' and 'Gay' come in), but the quality doesn't let up for the rest of the show.

'There's a Fine, Fine Line' is a cute Act 1 finale, while 'Schadenfreude' is a merciless mockery of how, despite our pretensions, we all still take significant amounts of pleasure in the misery of others.

*Avenue Q* doesn't really let up

throughout its run-time, taking as many pot-shots at as many targets as it can possibly think of (and then a few more besides), even going so far as to at one point send the cast round, caps literally in hand, to beg a few quid off the audience. And then complain about their pitiful take.

The story does weaken somewhat by the end, relying on some obvious contrivances, but it's all in such good humour (and so patently ridiculous) that the only choice is to accept it, laugh at it, and move on – arguably a good idea for life, truth be told.

There are a few minor flaws – the sound is sometimes a little weak, not always doing the (naturally small, due to the touring nature of this production) band justice, while the use of a couple of video screens detracts from the high production values elsewhere. The screens are tiny, the animation is low quality, and were it not for the fact they're needed for a couple of plot-advancing jokes the show would be better off without them.

Fortunately, the flaws are outweighed by the quality on display elsewhere, not least in the cast.

Every single cast member is flawless, and the hours upon hours (upon hours upon hours) of rehearsal time they must have spent with the puppets has paid off handsomely – the puppets are seamlessly

integrated into the show, with the occasional hand-offs necessitated by having several key roles doubled-up occurring seamlessly, to the point where most of the audience barely even notice.

Honestly, you hardly notice the puppeteers generally – as with the *Muppets*, the puppets are instantly accepted as 'real' without question, and the fact that even here, where there is so clearly someone standing behind the puppet and controlling their every movement, that's still the case is something genuinely magical.

This magic is rounded off by such inspired moments of genius as the Bad Idea Bears, which do exactly what the name suggests, providing some truly terrible ideas with

infectious enthusiasm and adorable appearances.

Quick side-note: to whoever runs the Bad Idea Bears Twitter account (and yes, obviously that exists): you are responsible for the greatest piece of theatre marketing ever.

Credit must also go to whoever's been responsible for ensuring that each theatre, alongside the usual strobe and haze warnings, have been putting up signs warning audiences of 'mild puppet nudity.'

Consider yourselves warned.

*This review is based on the production at the Mercury Theatre, Colchester. Avenue Q is currently at Greenwich Theatre until Sun 26<sup>th</sup> May.*

*Tickets from £20, available online.*



Trekkie Monster (Stephen Arden) Photo: Darren Bell

## Arts

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Arts Editors || Fred Fyles &amp; Kamil McClelland

## A bad case of the Twits

Jack Steadman gets enthused about theatre – just not this play

L-R: Mr Twit (Jason Watkins), Tattooed Fortune-Teller Lady (Christine Entwistle), Mrs Twit (Monica Dolan) in *The Twits*. Photo: Tristram Kenton

Roald Dahl's made a bit of a resurgence of late, with *The Twits* representing the third adaptation of his works for the West End stage in four years.

It follows on from Tim Minchin and Dennis Kelly's musical adaptation of *Matilda*, and Sam Mendes' delivery of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in big-budget, musical form. Enda Walsh's "mischievous" adaptation is therefore the first of the three to not be a musical, perhaps a touch unsurprising

given its home at the **Royal Court**.

It still features its fair share of music, though, and even a spot of singing, so fear not. It's not quite all change in the world of Dahl adaptations.

*The Twits* is a very different book from its fellow adaptees, however. It's a much darker tale, with a pair of genuinely disgusting protagonists in the eponymous Twits.

There's no goody-two-shoes character whose journey the book charts; there's no real sense of hope;

it's all a bit depressing up until the end, really.

There are also no children involved, which – for better or for worse – means there aren't any children on stage in this one. Still plenty in the audience, mind.

The fact that this is an adaptation of a beloved children's book by a beloved children's author naturally means this play is inherently targeted at children, an audience who aren't renowned for their solo theatre-going skills. Or, in fact, for anything much beyond being children and one day growing up.

To that end, the play needs to attract adults too, which leaves it aiming for that somewhat Pixar-esque goal of pleasing young and old alike.

On stage, the results of this need can probably be summarised as "mixed".

*Matilda* succeeds by being uproariously funny – the music and lyrics are by Tim Minchin, for crying out loud – while *Charlie* succeeds by being little short of awe-inspiring. They pumped money into that thing.

*The Twits* lacks both the hilarious songs and the excessive budget, and despite the best efforts of all involved it starts to flounder as a result.

The set design is ingenious, flicking between two main states: inside the Twits' house and outside through the medium of a drawbridge, with its one

real moment of triumph coming late on in the play.

It's very, very cleverly put together, and looks rather impressive, although it lacks the wow-factor that the likes of *Birdland* previously achieved in the same building by simply dunking the entire stage in a water tank.

The cast give it their all to make sure the play succeeds, with the Monkey Dad and Monkey Daughter of the captive family of monkeys (yes, that's a thing in this play) being stand-outs amongst the supporting cast.

Aimee-Ffion Edwards is hugely endearing as the Daughter, while Glyn Pritchard makes immediate efforts to steal the show as the Dad.

The rest of the cast are all game, and throw everything at it – it's just a shame they feel a little let down by the script.

"Mischievously adapted" feels like a grand claim here, as the script veers between the needlessly wordy and desperately trying to be funny, with the majority of the humour coming from the physical rather than the verbal.

It's odd, too – the script itself is far more lively on paper, with some truly ingenious stage directions. Mrs Twit is at one point described as "a one-eyed Scarlett Johansson", for starters.

The lead performances, meanwhile, are truly fantastic to watch – Monica

Dolan and Jason Watkins are spectacular as the Twits, bringing a manic energy to the whole thing.

The stage fizzles whenever they appear on it, and they are responsible for (almost) all of the play's best moments, ranging from a disturbingly rock-and-roll version of 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' to multiple instances of frying-pan based violence.

The theme music (essentially 'twittwitstwitstwits' repeated over frenetic guitar strumming and drum bashing) that accompanies their arrivals soon grates, however.

It's one of the most painfully obvious moments where the play explicitly targets the younger segment of the audience, temporarily alienating the older portion in the process.

It works for the kids, though: I caught at least five separate instances of small children chanting 'twittwitstwitstwits' as the audience made their way out of the theatre.

Exciting for them, less so for their parents. I'd say I pity them, but they did choose to have children.

On a serious note, it's a genuinely brilliant thing that *The Twits* left the children in the theatre as enthused as it did.

Most children's encounters with the theatre consist of a seasonal panto (usually of dubious quality), and then the occasional encounter with Shakespeare (usually of variable quality).

It's vital that children get to see how exciting, visceral, life-affirming and generally essential theatre can be, and so getting them engaged with real theatre is incredibly important.

That's not to say that panto isn't real theatre, it's more that *The Twits* takes place in the **Royal Court**, one of the foremost critically-acclaimed theatres in the country.

Children enjoying and remembering a trip here matters, and hopefully in a few years time, as they start to develop interests in more mature works, they'll come back – and keep coming back, and help keep theatre alive.

More than anything else that takes place in *The Twits*, that enthusiasm it leaves with young children, that enjoyment for the magic of theatre, that's what really counts.

That's the legacy *The Twits* will leave.

But for all that, I just wish it was a better play

*The Twits is on at the Royal Court until 31<sup>st</sup> May. Tickets from £10, available online.*



Mr and Mrs Twit. Photo: Independent

# Arts

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Arts Editors || Fred Fyles & Kamil McClelland

## Zero-hours in an hour and a half

**Jack Steadman** is nowhere near beyond caring at the National

The house lights don't dim at the start of *Beyond Caring*. That's the first thing that went through my head. That, rapidly followed by "hang on, have we even started?"

It's a unique and bold use of the **Temporary Theatre**, and an instantly striking re-opening for the **National's** fourth theatre. Formerly known as The Shed, the Temporary Theatre wasn't even meant to be here anymore.

But here we are, at the start of a new season of innovative and exciting works.

Kicking things off is *Beyond Caring*, originally penned by Alexander Zeldin before undergoing extensive work through workshops with the company.

It tells the story of three zero-hour workers, hired to clean a meat factory alongside a full-time cleaner and a vaguely sociopathic boss.

As a consequence, designer Natasha Jenkins has opted to turn the entire space into the meat factory, with the rows of the audience looking, and feeling, as if they have been simply dropped into the space by some unknown force.

A fridge, a hot-drink-dispensing vending machine and other break-room clutter are visible off towards one of the emergency exits.

On the other side of the room, shelves upon shelves of cleaning equipment sit, looking suspiciously like someone forgot to cover them up before the audience comes in.

The whole space feels like that, honestly. Fluorescent lights dangle from the ceiling, acting as the house lights.

The Temporary Theatre doesn't feel like a theatre at all, it doesn't even feel like a studio space. It feels like a meat factory. It's a masterpiece of minimalist design.

After a few moments of awkward silence, as the front-of-house team close the doors but any actors fail to materialise, one of the emergency exit doors swings open.

A man walks in, collects a book from the messy table that sits in the centre of the room, and leaves again. A door slams. Another awkward pause follows.

The doors swing open again, and a new figure arrives. They look around awkwardly, waiting for something to happen. The doors swing open again. And so on.

*Beyond Caring* has significant balls, that much is already obvious. It's willing to leave the audience dangling, providing them with no explanation or description of what's



**Phil (Sean O'Callaghan) and Grace (Janet Etuk) in *Beyond Caring* at the National Theatre. Photo: timeout**

going on (or even supposed to be going on). All we have is what we see in front of us.

And what we see is brutal. Nothing truly awful happens here. There are no spectacular outbursts of violence. Nobody dies. There isn't a hero, with some unspeakable evil he's destined to confront. None of that.

Instead, there's just an insidious sense of dread, a pervading discomfort that clings to you long after you walk out of the theatre.

The four cleaners, Grace, Susan, Becky and Phil try to make it through each night, leaving as the sun rises.

Through the small hours, they clean the various parts of the factory, under the watchful, slightly malicious eye of Ian.

Of all the characters, Ian's is the hardest to get a grip on. His nastiness isn't always outright cruelty (although it occasionally verges into it), it's more just an absence of caring. He can't empathise with the people he sees as beneath him.

This dynamic proves the main driving force of the play, which is otherwise content to simply let its characters be, and to use their mere existence as a window to examine the nature of zero-hours contracts, and what working on one can do to a person.

It's a fully issue-driven play, to the point where a whiteboard behind the box office records the latest news on zero-hour contracts for all to see, often picking up on various political pledges across the board.

Before, during, and now after an election that saw a Conservative government with little care for the plight of zero-hour workers, *Beyond Caring* could scarcely feel more topical.

Not that this politics is explicitly addressed in the play, mind. Far from it.

This is such a tightly focused piece of work that it doesn't have time to discuss grand ideas, or even the machinations of government – these are people who are focused on surviving.

Their struggles are those of people living from paycheck to paycheck. When two of the girls discover their agency won't be paying them for another week, their world falls apart.

One desperately tries to get a single day off to go and visit her daughter, to no avail.

One attempts to deal with the situation she now finds herself in, forced to work because a government agency hasn't deemed her 'disabled enough' to qualify for disability allowance.

Political promises don't enter into it. All this is sold by the acting. The cast were involved in devising the piece, and it shows, giving their characters a weary, lived-in façade that feels unbearably real.

They have arcs, of sorts, and from that they each have redeeming moments – some of which are enough to make you weep. Or at least, they all do, bar Ian.

He occasionally provides comic relief, occasionally provides a figure of mutual hatred, but he doesn't really change.

He's never truly redeemed, which doesn't do Luke Clarke's performance justice.

This is gut-wrenching stuff, and even though it's so seemingly mundane on the face of it – wages, hours, illness – it matters so much to the characters, just as it matters so much to so many people in this country, in this moment, that it can't help but grip you.

It's impossible to look away, even when you desperately want to, even when you need to.

These people can't escape their situation. Why should you be able to?

*Beyond Caring* is at the Temporary Theatre (National Theatre) until Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Tickets from £15, available online.



**Becky (Victoria Moseley) and Ian (Luke Clarke) Photo: Mark Douet**





No. 1606  
22nd May -  
29th May 2015  
**FREE**

# PRIVATE ICL

## DP (WELFARE) WINS AWARD: “WORST PETTING ZOO EVER”



**INSIDE: BUAV INVESTIGATES “ALSATIAN-SIZED PIGEONS”**

# HANGMAN



**News in Brief:** Editor to Hangman: "Make a Game of Thrones joke and you're fired."

[hangman@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:hangman@imperial.ac.uk)

## Genre redefined in California

The moon landing was watched by over 125 million people and was heralded as one of the greatest achievements of our modern age in both the field of science and of human progress; however compared to Azeem's flute recital - i'm sorry Neil Armstrong- it was the biggest pile of wank known to man.

The story of Azeem Ward will forever be chronicled from twat to twat wearing JD sports tracksuits, owns a spiked-up hair cut, and uses the phrase 'cheeky' to describe their food non-ironically; however until then, Hangman will detail the story as it happened. Azeem Ward had planned to create a facebook event of his senior flute recital at the University of California for a few family and friends to attend at . What he had not foreseen was that it would start a viral craze, predominantly in UK universities, resulting in over 100,000 saying they were going, 50,000 Brits live streaming the flute recital, and even one particularly cheeky lad taking a flight to Santa Barbara.

So flash forward to the 16<sup>th</sup> May, expectations were high: Azeem had promised us Devienne's *Concerto No 7*, Gaubert's *Sonata No 3* and



**Cheeky.** Photo: Youtube

Roitstein's *Flautas*, as well as the more contemporary 'Three Beats for Beatbox Flute' with what promised to be the cheekiest of all flute recitals. Arriving fashionably late, Azeem was wearing a black waistcoat with a striking red shirt, topped off with the finest hat i have seen in all my years (M'lady).

Over the next hour and a half, Azeem bared his soul: he effortlessly glided through despair, joy, love lost, love gained, melancholy, all the while charming the pants off everyone watching (excluding his mum). He enthralled the audience even further by cheekily placing awkwardly long intermissions in between the pieces, making all 50,000 of us gagging for

more.

His devil-may-care shoulder placement of his flute will be what we remember him for in the centuries to come: I have a dream that in the future, everyone will worship a large vaseline monument of Azeem on each May 16th. We will chant the sweet melodious flute beatbox handed down to us by the great Ward, and then feast on the cheekiest Nandos we can produce. Any heretic that has anything lower than medium will be forced to commit seppuku on a sharpened flute, leading to a greater society...

...Oh yeah, so to summarize the flute recital was pretty good if you're into that kinda thing.

## Central Library crush

With exams taking hold in the Central Library, Hangman has been inundated with requests to publish your secret crushes on fellow students.

suite. I liked your music, are you up for making some more with me?

Uptown Funk you Up, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

Handsome guy pulling pennies from keyboards, I was the girl laughing when that guy confronted you for making his computer log off automatically. Drink sometime? You can use your pennies...

Penny Me Anytime, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

Dude trying to kick the pigeons in the Lib Caf: I hate animals too! Meet me for a baked potato tomorrow afternoon?

Not the BUAV

Hot girl sweating in the north-east corner of 5<sup>th</sup> floor, I caught your eye after I punched that guy to get the last copy of Grey's Anatomy. Feel like sweating together?

Hot and Bothered

Gorgeous blonde who smuggled chocolate into the Library in her bra: baby, I could be your Milky Way anytime. Fancy making your Galaxy spin?

More than a Mouthful

Fit bird on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, wanna come check out my anatomy?

Sun's Out, Guns Out

To the trench-coat wearing man on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. I wilted when I saw you, how can you stand the heat? I'd like to see how much heat you can bear in the bedroom...

Hot Under the Collar

Guy with annoyingly loud headphones in the Wolfson

Send your Central Library crushes to [hangman@imperial.ac.uk!](mailto:hangman@imperial.ac.uk)

**News in Brief:** Game of Thrones actually very complicated game of musical chairs.

## HOROSCOPES



ARIES

This week you are attacked by a rabid pigeon. In a fit of pique, you send a photo of the plague of avian rodents to *Felix*, in the hope that they will run a story on it. They put it on the cover of Private ICL. Sucks to be you.



TAURUS

This week, you are the horoscopes writer. You send in this week's horoscopes, only to find Hangman has already written most of them. Enraged, you pen twelve more horoscopes all calling Hangman various unprintable things. Hangman runs his horoscopes instead.



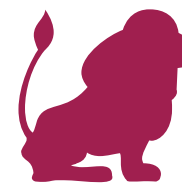
GEMINI

This week, you are an unfortunate reader of the horoscopes. You start to notice a common theme to this week's efforts: a weird tendency towards self-referential meta commentary on the horoscopes. You love it and demand more. Hangman knows these things.



CANCER

This week, you are the BUAV. Someone makes over 180 unfounded allegations against you, that you are forced to defend in court. You win. Sadly for you, they complain to the High Court and win their appeal to make their allegations all over again. What a bunch of whiny gits.



LEO

This week, you are watching *Game of Thrones*. Hangman hasn't watched this week's episode yet, to be honest, so has no idea what's going on here. Hangman feels obliged to say something inflammatory, but to be honest that just feels like effort.



VIRGO

This week, you are a cowardly, anonymous Comment writer. You write an article attacking the Union for their choice of Summer Ball headliner. They find out who you are. You are never heard from again. Nice one.



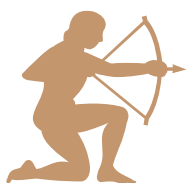
LIBRA

This week, you are Hangman. For reasons best known to yourself, you decide to write the horoscopes yourself this week. The result is so catastrophically terrible you are immediately fired. Makes a change from being fired for "having standards," truth be told.



SCORPIO

This week, you are Hangman and you are forced to change one of your horoscopes by the Editor. You reflect on the depressing irony of your attempts at censorship of your horoscopes writer then being censored yourself. How the tables have turned.



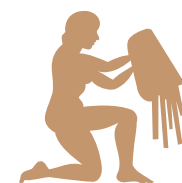
SAGITTARIUS

This week, you are excited to hear that there will be an even greater quantity of sausage in the Union than usual. That's right, there's a hot dog special on in 568 for one night only! Hangman hopes you're excited, because Hangman is excited. Hangman loves sausage.



CAPRICORN

This week, you make a reference to "cheeky Nando's" to your friends from America. If you'd make that joke a week ago, they wouldn't have got it. Thanks, BuzzFeed. You've ruined our sense of superiority over the Yanks. (Someone just told Hangman "we still have beans on toast." Hangman fucking hates beans on toast.)



AQUARIUS

This week, you are a pigeon. An odd man approaches you, puts you in a sack, and now students keep trying to touch you. It's a bit weird and you're not really comfortable with it. Sadly, you're a pigeon, so nobody gives a shit. (Hangman says: bit like being an Imperial student, innit?)



PISCES

This week, you start seeing Chris Kaye everywhere. You even think you see him on the cover of Private ICL. Are you going mad? Who knows? Hangman does, but he's not telling. Hangman enjoys fucking with your mind.

# Blue News

The weekly newsletter of the Faculty Building

## Provost Post of the Week

**Every week, a member of our esteemed Provost board shares their thoughts with our collaborative, cohesive community. This week, we welcome back Al Pologies, Vice Provost (Arbitrary Excuses)!**

Unsurprisingly, Al was unavailable to write his column, as he encountered an unfortunate issue with his computer.

He was able to send us this short extract from what we presume would have been his column!

“LOST MY ID CARD STOP LOCKED OUT OF FACULTY BUILDING STOP SEND HELP IMMEDIATELY STOP OH GOD I THINK THEY FOUND ME STOP YES THE STUDENTS HAVE FOUND ME STOP SEND HELP STOP HELP STOP”

We’re not sure why Al sent his message by telegraph, to be honest!

We knew that technology was lagging behind our high-tech offices here in the Faculty Building, but I don’t think any of us realised that the outside world was that far behind!

It’s almost enough to make you want to never leave the Faculty Building!

Of course, we all know that staying in the Faculty Building is still, sadly, impossible. Even at Imperial we haven’t discovered the secret to surviving without food, which means venturing forth beyond those glorious blue walls.

Of course, we’re looking into the possibility of replacing the old Vice Provost (Student Voice)’s office with a canteen for Faculty Building staff.

After all, if we could introduce the Sixth Floor sleeping pods so successfully (I myself have been known to take the occasional nap there!), why couldn’t we introduce a canteen for our staff?

Soon (timings to be announced shortly), we hope that it will become possible to arrive in the Faculty Building at 8am on a Monday morning, and then stay until it’s time to go home at 5pm on Friday afternoon! How wonderful!

Hello all,

Good morning, good morning, good morning! Welcome to another fine edition of Blue News! I’d love to say it’s our best issue so far, but we’ve had such a fantastic quality of our recent issues that I’m loath to call any one issue ‘the best’.

In fact, I’d like to take the chance to use this issue to highlight just what a wonderful thing Blue News really is. I’m sure you’re all aware of the intense amount of collaboration that goes on behind-the-scenes to make this delightfully informative piece of joy a reality each week, but I felt a full appreciation of the key collaborators was long overdue.

Firstly, this entire project was the brainchild of our gorgeous and incredibly talented Vice Provost (Marketing), Em (Perial), who saw the lack of informative, aesthetically pleasing, well-produced newsletters in the Faculty Building.

Instead of despairing at her inability to receive the weekly goings-on here in the Faculty Building in one simple, easy-to-read (and easy on the eye!) newsletter, Em thought to herself: why don’t I just make one? It’s this kind of blue-sky thinking, can-do attitude that helps Imperial such a world-leading institution.

Without such out-of-the-box thinking, we could never manage to be as successful as we are! I hope you’ll all join me in giving Em our thanks for helping make everyone’s lives here in the Faculty Building so much better than they were in the dull, grey days before Blue News!

Of course, Blue News wouldn’t be possible without the wonderful work of the lovely boys over in Comms, who spend at least thirty minutes each week laying out this wonderful burst of information. Without them, we’d be reduced to having to send you all a boring, unimaginative black-and-white staff briefing email with the latest news and juicy educational tidbits in bullet point form - and we’d have to number each one, too!

So thank you, one and all, for allowing this delightful organ to continue!

Have a productive, cohesive, collaborative and happy day!



### Alice Gast: Thought of the Week

*“This week, I’m sure you’ve heard the malicious rumours with regards to animal testing at Imperial. I’d like to reassure everyone that there are no problems with any animal testing occurring at Imperial, and that everything we do at this world-leading institution is above-board and entirely ethically sound. Although, saying that, I wouldn’t mind doing some unethical tests on those bloody protestors.”*

## What is going on inside the Blue Cube this week

This week’s, we’re all rather tired after the excitement of last week’s celebrations.

### All-Staff Briefing Cancelled

Our weekly staff briefing has been cancelled by the Vice Provost (Arbitrary Excuses) due to the lack of a marquee on Queen’s Lawn.

As ever, we hope that the content in this week’s Blue News will serve to keep you abreast of all the developments that matter to you, our wonderful staff team.

### What Is: BUAV?

Our “Advice on” series has undergone a minor facelift - we’ve listened to your feedback on the series, and after your comments we’ve changed the title to “What Is?”

We haven’t interfered with the content at all (don’t panic!), but we all know the value of a good re-brand. And for just £2 million, we think it’s a remarkably good deal!

The first session of the new-look series promises to be highly useful. We’ll be explaining just who (and what) the BUAV are, and how best to deal with them.

Come along to the Board Room at 2pm on Tuesday to join in the session, and learn all there is to learn about BUAV.

Don’t forget to bring your yoga mat as usual, and green tea will (of course) be provided.

### Writing for Blue News

On Thursday at 10am, we’re running a special course on how you can get involved in Blue News! That’s right, we want your help in creating the esteemed Blue News!

Come along to the Board Room to learn how we put Blue News together, and how you could be the next contributor!

## What is going on outside the Blue Cube this week

The Central Library continues to be off-limits to all staff, due to an uncontained infestation.

The pests have been seen fighting over available computers, marking their territory with overlaid bags, frantically removing textbooks from shelves, and aggressively swearing at the printers.

Steer clear at all costs.

# Puzzles

fsudoku@imperial.ac.uk

Puzzles Editor || Michael Faggetter

## Weekly quiz *ICU Quiz Soc*

### 1) Making Your Science Degree Work For You

What is the name given to an inhibitor that binds to a protein not on the active site but in another region?

### 2) TV and Movies

To which house do Tywin, Tyrion and Cersei belong to?

### 3) Things You Didn't Know

#### Have a Name

What is the name of the white, crescent-shaped bit at the base of the fingernail?

### 4) In the Last Week

Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall have been on a four-day visit to which country?

### 5) Questions About Good Songs

In 'You Can't Always Get What You Want' by *The Rolling Stones*, what does she have in her hand?

### 6) Literature and Written Words

Who is the most famous literary creation of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson?

### 7) World History

1815 was known as the year without a summer, caused by the climate-changing explosion of which Indonesian volcano?

### 8) Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll

To what class of chemicals do drugs such as morphine, heroin, methadone and fentanyl belong to?

### 9) This Day in History

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1455, the First Battle of St Albans was the first engagement in which series of conflicts?

### 10) ...and if you got all the other right, their initials spell out...

Which reptile can come in American or Chinese varieties?

## Suck on these sudokus

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	3	2				6
			4			2
9				5	3	
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## Small Nonobellogram

There are three Nonograms for you to complete this week! Shade in cells according to the numbers at the end of the rows and and columns.

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## Slitherlink

The objective of this logic puzzle is to connect the dots with horizontal and vertical lines to form a single continuous line/loop. In addition, the numbers in the grid indicate the total number of adjacent segments within the loop.

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.	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	.	.	.	.	.





# Clubs and Societies

felix.clubsandsocieties@imperial.ac.uk

C & S Editor || Ben Howitt

## The Shape of the American midwest

Alhasan Al-Habib reviews Dramsoc's latest production

Adam (Sid Sinha) is an insecure student working part-time as a museum security guard, where he meets anarchistic Art student Evelyn (Lucy Luo). After arguing, they begin dating and he introduces his best friends, Jenny (Emmie de Falbe) and Phillip (Joshua Jacob) to her. As their relationship progresses, Adam's behaviour changes and his appearance and confidence improve due to the influences of Evelyn, a transition that does not go unnoticed. He is soon unrecognisable, but when Evelyn presents her thesis for her Master's degree, Adam meets with a shocking revelation.

The Shape of Things (directed by Holly Avins, produced by Peter Griffin) doesn't require much in the way of a set, so Sherfield is an adequate venue, and the climax occurring in a lecture theatre justifies this unorthodox choice of space.

Sinha gives Adam the "bumbling fool" treatment, his nervousness translating into a sort of awkward humour and wit à la Hugh Grant. With good direction this translates into a powerful and meaningful contrast with the otherwise charismatic, controlling and manipulative Evelyn. His performance does occasionally suffer for being slightly forced, however. Acting nervously in a way that seems genuine is difficult, and Sid's performance becomes slightly clumsy when he is asked to do so. Lines occasionally seem over-rehearsed, but his overall performance is very good so this can easily be overseen. "I smell trouble," declares Adam, "which I might not be able to after this," before undergoing cosmetic nasal surgery. It's a line typical of the seriocomic nature of the character, and Sid delivers it with aplomb.

One of the reasons Luo's portrayal of Evelyn works is because of its sharp contrast with Sinha's Adam. Where Adam is funny and charming, Evelyn

is aggressive and spiteful; where Adam is naïve and affectionate, Evelyn is calculated and domineering. She may have a tiny frame but, boosted by her ego, it seems the other characters can only look up to her. At times Evelyn smoulders, Luo producing an authentic seduction of Adam that remains delicate and subtle. "You're cute, I don't like the way you style your hair". She judges him the same way she judges the statue in the opening scene, and it sets the play up well. This play depends on a good actress for Evelyn, so the production is lucky to have Luo.

Jacob's depiction of Phillip was excellent. It is unerring in its realism. A lot of the comedy within the play depends on the perfect execution and delivery of his lines, often in confrontation, and here Josh delivers the goods with poise, timing and all the finesse one might expect of a professional. As such, a clearly noticeable instance of forgetting his lines during the confrontation with Adam is easily overlooked, if a little unsettling. But he contorts every sinew of his face to express the contempt he has for Evelyn, and his accent never drops for even the most poignant of lines. He can be proud of his performance.

De Falbe, a newcomer to DramSoc, enjoys a good introduction to the Stage. She delivers a convincing portrayal of Jenny, whose purpose is to provide the direct antithesis of Evelyn; the contrast in this play is severe, and serves its purpose well. So it's a shame that her delivery of many lines rarely deviates from the monotonous and flat. At one point, after kissing Adam whilst being engaged to his best friend, she states (and states is exactly what she does) "I've wanted to do that for a very long time". It's a sentence that's meant to be overflowing with deep, suppressed emotion, uncorked by a sudden rush of anxiety and fear in the face

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**"it's delivered the same way one might deliver a Domino's Pizza"**

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Evelyn (Lucy Luo) assesses a sculpture in the opening scene. Photo: Facebook

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**"he contorts every sinew of his face"**

---

of the terrifying dilemma she faces. Unfortunately it's delivered the same way one might deliver a Domino's Pizza, that is to say promptly and efficiently but without much in the way of craftsmanship or finesse. This example typifies a performance where the verbal lags behind a very good non-verbal performance. Regardless, she matures and improves as the play progresses. She does the awkward meeting with her ex very well, and

the seduction previously quoted is otherwise actually quite stirring – her shocking lasciviousness actually elicits gasps (and even one cry of "Slut!") from a shocked audience.

Ultimately "The Shape of Things" is a resounding success. Acting that at times touches upon excellence fuses with a direction that is confident and assured, resulting in a sterling accomplishment by the cast and crew. If you missed it, you missed out.

**TEDx**  
ImperialCollege  
x = independently organized TED event

## TEDx at the Vanderbilt

Following last year's TEDxImperialCollege conference at Imperial College, students from Imperial can now look forward to yet another thought-provoking, mind-engaging TEDx conference on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2015. The third TEDxImperialCollege conference will bring you 'ACCELERATE'. This year's theme aims to inspire and encourage young fresh minds - male and female alike - to support women in gaining momentum. You can expect this to be a conference filled with inspiring and great ideas. The event will be held at the beautiful Radisson Blue Vanderbilt Hotel, around the corner from the South

Kensington campus. In the coming weeks, the full list of hand-picked speakers will be released. Tickets will be released very soon, so keep yourself abreast of the latest TEDxImperialCollege updates by visiting the TEDxIC Facebook page. It certainly sounds like a lot of excitement is building up behind the scenes. Make sure you don't miss out on this unique event and on the opportunity to become part of 'ACCELERATE'.

**CORINNA LAMBERTI**  
TEDX IMPERIALCOLLEGE ORGANISER



# An IPL Contract, an autobiography, and a lack of trust: The Kevin Pietersen Saga

Kunal Wagle voices his frustrations at the England Cricket Board

If Andrew Strauss thought he'd have a pleasant honeymoon period in his new Director of Cricket role at the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Kevin Pietersen had other ideas. As Strauss was partaking in his first interview with the media in the role Kevin Pietersen was piling the pressure on, smashing Leicestershire's defenceless bowlers for 355 not out – his highest first class score.

Strauss said that “there is no trust” between Pietersen and the ECB. It's an easy statement to make, and it's certainly true that Pietersen has not been a model employee. In 2012 Pietersen was dropped from the national side after he admitted sending “provocative” text messages to members of the South African team, allegedly about Andrew Strauss himself (although he denied this). A few months later he was allowed back into the side, after a reintegration period.

Pietersen was later sacked from the England side after the 5-0 thumping in the Ashes down under in 2014. His contract was terminated and he became a freelance player, securing deals in the Indian Premier League, the Caribbean Premier League, the t20 Blast and the Big Bash League.

He courted controversy again late last year with the release of his autobiography, which contained revelations about several of his former colleagues, including calling Matt Prior “a Dairylea triangle thinking he's a Brie”. Many thought that any remote chance of Pietersen coming back to the national set up had evaporated with each criticism on those pages.

But then, there was hope.

Incoming ECB Chairman Colin Graves said in a press conference in March that anyone who gets runs in county cricket would be considered for selection. Following two meetings with Graves, Pietersen said, “He has told me he wants the best players playing for England and that there is a clean slate”. A superb century against low calibre opposition in Oxford was followed quickly by the triple ton against Leicestershire. Strauss' decision on Pietersen was being made tougher and tougher.

As Pietersen put the finishing touches on his immense 355 not out, Strauss was only a few miles away at Lord's confirming that he was closing the door on the maverick's selection



Kevin Pietersen walks off the Oval pitch after scoring a career high 355 Photo: Getty Images

for the Ashes summer. It had been expected – numerous papers had carried the news in that morning's press. But that's where my problems start with the board.

The day before Strauss' conference he had had a private meeting with Pietersen. During this meeting Strauss told him exactly what he told the press the following day. But not thirty minutes after the meeting had this information been leaked to the press, and Pietersen denies that it was him.

Granted, he could be lying through his teeth when he says this. But if he isn't, then it isn't the first time the ECB have leaked information the day before a press conference. Every man and his dog knew that Peter Moores (the England coach) was going to be sacked before he did. The same goes for Alistair Cook when he lost the limited overs captaincy late last year. It's not a great trait to have.

There's also the small matter of Strauss' reasoning for not bringing Pietersen back. Citing a lack of trust would suggest that the ECB had little to no interest in bringing Pietersen back into the fold. In fact they aren't even considering him for the rest of the summer. Kevin Pietersen had a contract for the Indian Premier League side Sunrisers Hyderabad that he effectively tore up when he was told that he had a chance to get back into the England team. What was that contract worth? £250,000.

That's right. Kevin Pietersen tore up a £250,000 contract because he had been assured that he still had a shot at an England place. Now it transpires that that it's unlikely that that was ever the case.

The ECB cite a lack of trust, but perhaps they mean that it's not Pietersen they can't trust, it's Pietersen who can't trust them.

They talk about a lack of trust. Yet

Andrew Strauss was perfectly happy to offer Pietersen an advisory role in the limited overs set up. In what world can you not trust someone enough to be in your team, and yet still think they can be with the team on a daily basis? It just doesn't sound quite right.

Don't get me wrong – I think some of the stuff Pietersen did was unacceptable. The “textgate” scandal will always stick in the throat. But we are talking about one of England's greatest ever batsmen. And an England team at the moment that is currently floundering, unable to beat a West Indies team (one that was stripped bare of their top players, who are playing in the IPL).

If it were me I'd have said that at the moment the middle order is the only part of the team that's working, and as a result currently there is no place for Pietersen. But I certainly wouldn't rule anything out. I would

have also said he needs to continue getting runs.

There's a difference between that (which shows that you're still interested and weren't lying about it earlier in the season) and closing the door on someone who could still be valuable to this England squad.

As it stands I don't think he can play for the country again. It would need the board to swallow too much pride.

And so to crucial test series against New Zealand and Australia.

It's seven tests to save Alistair Cook's captaincy. It's seven tests for Andrew Strauss to show that he means business.

Unfortunately I can't see either happening, and we could be in for a long and difficult summer.

At least our players trust each other. I just hope there's not a sponsor's function they're expected to attend.

Or an Ashes series to win.