

Felix



INSIDE

75 years of Silwood Park >p4

ISSUE 1804

FRIDAY 17TH JUNE 2022

Universities forced to declare sources of foreign cash

Credit: Imperial College London



Provost Ian Wamsley (left) and Chinese Science and Technology Minister Wang Zhigang

Sam Lovatt Editor-in-Chief

An amendment to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill made this week will force universities to reveal the source of financial donations and investments from foreign bodies.

Described by *The Times* as a “crack down on undue influence”, any arrangements with a value of over £75,000 will have to be reported to the Office for Students (OfS). The OfS will be able to set conditions on relationships that it sees to represent a conflict of interest and fine universities that do not comply with its ruling. Entities from countries within the academic technology approval scheme, including NATO members and Japan, will be exempt from this ruling.

It is understood that this ruling, if passed, will not apply retrospectively.

In February, *Felix* covered a *The Times* investigation which found that Imperial College has received more funding from Chinese sources, including military universities and private companies, than any other university in the UK, with a total of £55 million since 2015. £5 million of this sum came from companies sanctioned by the US government, who have in recent years taken a more firm stance on China than the UK government.

Chinese telecoms giant Huawei remain the primary funding body for Imperial College’s Venture Catalyst challenge. The College also has £1.77 million invested in Tencent holdings, which *Felix* has found to have filed patents for facial recognition technology which touted improved accuracy on the identification of “minority groups, such as Uighurs... and black people”. The patent also described Uighurs as

Imperial College sixth best university in the world

Sam Lovatt Editor-in-Chief

Imperial College has been ranked 6th best university in the world by the QS World University Rankings for 2023.

This places the College at third place in the UK, behind Cambridge in second place and Oxford in fourth. The College sits in joint sixth with the California Institute of Technology.

The news follows a number of prestigious accolades earned by the

College over the past year. Last autumn the College won the Sunday Times University of the Year award, following its outstanding National Student Survey results and world-leading transition to a hybrid teaching model. More recently, the College excelled in the six-yearly Research Excellence Framework, which found that the College produces a greater proportion of “world-leading” research than any other UK university. The computing department performed

exceptionally well overall, with 93% of research being classes as world-leading and the remaining 7% being classed as “internationally excellent”. Furthermore, the College was awarded a Queen’s Anniversary Prize, bestowed earlier this year, in recognition of the College’s contributions to the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The College was additionally

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EDITORIAL

Children in lockdown

This week it was reported that The Times Education Commission's final report will contain details of the effects of lockdowns on children, and they make for grim reading. Children in reception cannot say their own names or drink from a cup. Some teachers have reported over half of their classes turning up still wearing nappies. Children as old as six have been brought to school in buggies as this provides the path of least resistance to the parents. The question "can I have a drink please?", normally within the vocabulary of a reception age child, will instead say "bot-bot" to tell their teacher they're thirsty. Just a few months after the beginning of the first lockdown, Ofsted had reported that children who had learned how to use cutlery had regressed since schools had been closed. Children are unable to properly understand the emotions of others, and some have hypothesised that the prevalence of masks in public life has stunted their ability to read faces. The difference in these areas between children from poor and well-off backgrounds is stark, and increases hugely with age.

On the other end of the spectrum, 16 year olds from poorer backgrounds are on average 18 months academically behind their richer counterparts, amounting essentially to the entire locked down period being lost education for those less privileged. Not to mention the lack of social development that may rear its head once those in that demographic reach higher education.

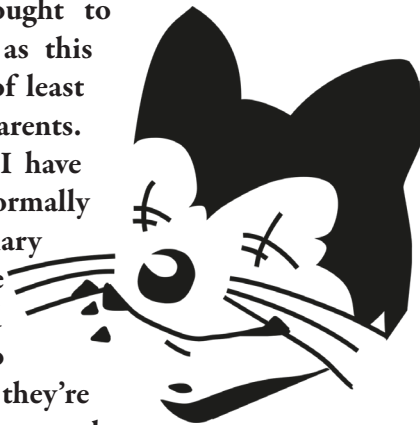
The bitter irony is that children were all but immune to death from covid - excluding extreme circumstances, close to zero children died from the virus.

It is impossible to intuitively weigh these effects against death tolls - how does one balance the stunted development of children who are safe from the virus, against the health risks to the elderly and immunocompromised?

We also don't even really know the effects yet. It would be extremely unscientific to suggest that a band of current children will grow up less developed than their slightly older counterparts, but we don't know.

Children deserve the most praise and repayment for the periods we spent in lockdown. Most spent well over a year sheltering against a virus, that they would barely notice if they caught, for the good of those vulnerable members of society. Too young to vote or properly express their opinions, their needs were widely shoved far down the priorities list by adults taking decisions on their behalves, and in many cases neglecting them because the pandemic was overwhelming for everyone. The trend of pacifying children with iPads that was already on the up skyrocketed, and now some teachers report that children arrive at school with leg muscles so under-developed that they cannot manage the amount of walking required in a normal school day, through being left in front of the TV for so many hours.

Another pandemic will happen, and it may happen in our lifetimes. It is not clear to me what the best path forward in balancing the competing interests of different demographics is, but it is clear that the children's side of the equation was not given nearly enough attention when assessing the effects of lockdowns for covid-19. I hope this is different next time.



This issue was produced thanks to the work of

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Statement of Intent

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

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

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

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

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

Signed by **Sam Lovatt**
Editor-in-Chief

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Credit: Imperial College London

Imperial College and Huawei sign a memorandum of understanding in 2013, during the “golden age” of UK-China relations

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Cracking down

“special”.

The amendment follows several comments from MPs and members of government regarding the influence of the Chinese and Russian states on UK research and innovation.

Conservative MP Alicia Kearns, co-chair of the China Research Group, said “This is a long overdue step towards transparency at our universities. The next stage is for UK universities to stop

signing partnerships that undermine our values and security.”

Tom Tugendhat, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and also co-chair of the China Research Group, has been consistently critical of the links between UK universities and the Chinese state, warning that “Universities should be wary of becoming over-reliant on co-operation with Chinese institutions.”

A source at the Department for Education (DfE) told *The Times* that the amendment gives the OfS “powers to police universities’ financial links

with foreign bodies as they currently have over academic standards.”

The DfE has stressed that the new rules will not negatively impact universities’ abilities to work with partners across the globe.

Near the end of last year, MI6 released a report describing China as the “biggest state-based threat” to UK security.

Following the aforementioned investigation by *The Times*, Chinese international policy specialist Martin Thorley said “The findings appear to demonstrate some sector-wide failings

in terms of checks on donations and research partners”. He added that collaboration on research with clear military applications demonstrated “outright recklessness by the British institutions involved”.

A spokesperson for Imperial College London said: “Imperial conducts no classified research and we have robust relationship review policies and due diligence processes in place, with our commitments to UK national security given the utmost importance.”

Imperial has also drawn criticism in the national media for its relatively high frequency of collaboration between Imperial researchers and Chinese military-linked universities. The *Times*’ investigation also tracked collaborations, and Imperial College came top in this category as well, with 945 papers published in collaboration with Chinese researchers since 2015.

Visiting Researcher in the Shock Physics department, Clive Woodley, recently attracted criticism in the national media for his continued work with Chinese military researchers and for chairing a conference titled “New Material Technology for Ammunition” in Shandong province. His research work has focused on explosive science with Chinese academics linked to the ordnance industry.

In response to the war in Ukraine, Imperial College cut its ties with Russian state majority owned Sberbank near the end of February this year.

...continued from page 1

Sixth in the world

awarded a certificate to recognise its “internationalisation”.

President Alice Gast said on the award “These results reaffirm that Imperial is one of the best universities in the world. Our success is rooted in our global outlook, our diverse community and the spirit of collaboration that runs through everything we do.

“The impact we have on society will always be more important than where we fall on a league table. We excel at teaching and research essential to addressing the global challenges of today and tomorrow. Our successes over the past year - including our outstanding REF

results, our University of the Year Award and our Queen’s Anniversary Prize - are a testament to our commitment to excellence.”

The College has steadily risen through the QS World University rankings, from 9th in 2020, 8th in 2021 and 7th in 2022.

The *Times* Higher Education ranks the College 12th globally, the worst ranking in this league table for the last 12 years. The College places 4th nationally in the *Times*’ university rankings and 7th in *The Guardian*’s national rankings. Within the *Times*’ ranking, whilst research quality and graduate prospects both rank second in the UK, teaching quality is ranked 28th.



Credit: Imperial College London

SCIENCE

Edited by: JAMIE JOHN
CARA BURKE
MAREK COTTINGHAM

Silwood Park's 75th Anniversary

Silwood Park celebrates its 75th anniversary with Imperial College London! Located around 25 miles west of central London, near the village of Sunninghill in Ascot, Berkshire, this 100ha of natural parkland has seen world-leading entomology, pure ecology, and evolution, biodiversity and conservation research

Cara Burke Science Editor



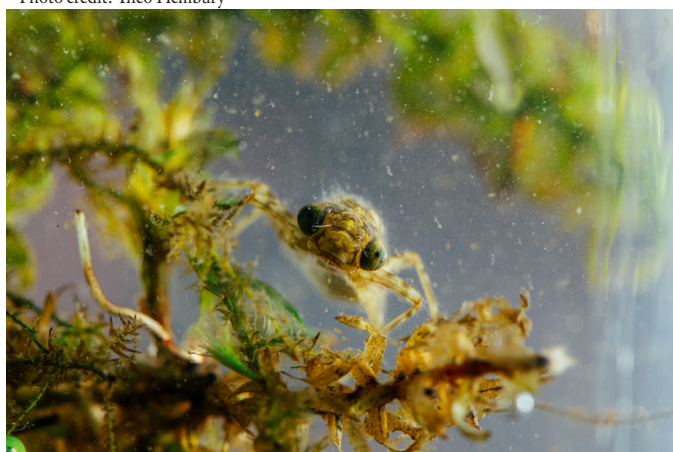
CURRENT RESEARCH AT SILWOOD PARK

Research at Silwood Park spans ecology, evolution, and conservation. Below are just a few examples of the longer-term field studies that Silwood Park has accommodated over the last 75 years. Now, the age of genomics has allowed research at Silwood to span all levels of biological organisation, from genes to ecosystems.

Pound Hill disturbance timing

Seed germination and survival is a key factor to the composition of plant communities. Disturbances to seeds affect the relative abundance of plant species. Established in 1991 by Mick Crawley, this project assesses the effect of timing of cultivation and soil disturbances on grassland biomass and species composition. Different plant communities have resulted from different cultivation treatments, with species abundance increasing with cultivation methods that favours their seedlings most.

Photo credit: Theo Hembury



A fly in one of the pond mesocosms

Pond mesocosms

96 artificial ponds (mesocosms) sit teeming with life. They will help us to assess the impacts of warming, drought and chemical pollution in freshwater systems by studying all levels of biological organisation. In 2018 long-term warming experiments began that match climate projects from 1°C to 8°C warming. Periods of extreme warming designed to mimic sheat waves are applied. In 2019 chemical stressors were added so that the impact of multiple stressors and their interaction could be studied.

Photo credit: Theo Hembury



Rhys Preston-Allen working at the Silwood Park mesocosms

Suction trap

Since 1968, the suction trap at Silwood Park has caught aphids for the study of insect populations. It is one of 16 in the UK used for the Rothamsted Insect Survey. The survey has revealed dramatic changes in the timing of first aphid flights and length of flight season, which could be changing due to climate, and changing aphid ecological and reproductive traits. The trap has to be emptied daily during aphid season (from April to November) and weekly the rest of the year. The largest number of distinct aphid species collection in a trap in a single day was 86, on the 4th June 1974.

Photo credit: Imperial College London, Dan Weill



The suction trap at Silwood Park, standing 12.2m tall

Blue tit phenology

Phenology is the study of the cyclic and seasonal timing of natural phenomena. The rearing of blue tit chicks is synchronised with the peak in abundance of their food: caterpillars. Caterpillar abundance is synchronised with the emergence of oak buds, on which they feed. The timing of these events are being disturbed by changes in climate and environmental cues. As these processes rely on different cues, there can be a mismatch in the phenology of these interacting species. Since 2002, this mismatch has been recorded and studied by investigating oak bud emergence, caterpillar abundance and blue tit chick rearing.

Photo credit: Imperial College London, Thomas Angus



Dr Cristina Banks-Leite peering into one of the blue tit nests

Photo credit: Imperial College London



Caterpillars at Silwood Park

Illustration by Natalie Yu



HISTORY OF RESEARCH AT SILWOOD PARK

Silwood Park joined Imperial College London in 1947. It was secured through the hard work of applied entomologist James Watson Munno. He established the park as a world centre for the study of insect control. The equipment of these early days was inventive and rudimentary: Wellington bomber engine-heaters were



Photo credit: Imperial College London, Dan Weill

Flowers grown in Silwood's greenhouses used to decorate the Royal Albert Hall for the graduation ceremony

transformed into fans by Drs Page and Lubatti to make controlled environment cabinets. Researchers at the International Application Research Centre (IPARC), who made ultra low volume applicators, were affectionately known as "nozzleheads". The arrival of John Kennedy and Tony Lees hugely furthered the centre with their research on insect flight and photoperiodism.

The study of theoretical ecology prospered after the appointment of M. P. Hassell in 1971, and his collaborations with R. M. May and R. M. Anderson, who studied infectious disease modelling and dynamics. Mick Crawley revolutionised plant ecology with field studies and experimental models.

By the 1980s, Silwood Park had started to shift from primarily applied entomology to ecology and evolution. This had begun with insects in the 1950s and 1960s with the work of Dick Southwood and Michael J. Way, who studied insect communities in grasslands, trees, shrubs, and insects in plant succession. In the 1990s, entomology made a bit of a comeback with Austin Burt's work. He wrote about site-specific selfish genes as tools for controlling and genetically engineering populations, which was the origin of Imperial College's current project to eliminate malaria mosquitos.



IT IS WHERE LIFE ON EARTH - ALL OF IT - FINDS A HOME AT IMPERIAL

Professor Armand Leroi

Photo credit: Imperial College London, Thomas Angus



Professor Tom Bell working on microbial communities

FUTURE OF SILWOOD PARK

Professor Armand Leroi, academic lead for the 75th anniversary celebrations, says that Silwood is and will remain strongly engaged in societal problems such as pathogens and climate change. Research is increasingly able to shape life and the environment rather than passively study it, informing policies and technologies that can be implemented for human and environmental protection.

Last year, the Georgina Mace Centre for the Living Planet was launched. This centre is directed by Professor Vincent Savolainen and dedicated to producing science-based solutions to environmental problems.

The Leverhulme Centre for the Holobiont, headed by Professor Tom Bell, is planned for Autumn 2022. This centre will focus on microbial-multicellular relationships.

Photo credit: Imperial College London, Thomas Angus



Dr Marie Russell working on mosquitos to better understand vector-borne diseases

Photo credit: Imperial College London, Thomas Angus

75th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



Silwood Park's 75th anniversary celebrations will include a Georgina Mace Centre Biodiversity Debate, Bugs Birds & Bees family-friendly day of celebration, and Sir Ernst Chain lecture, amongst other exciting events! To find out more about how to get involved in the fun, or learn more about the research and history of Silwood Park, follow this QR code to visit their website!



SCIENCE

The Chinese giant salamander

Wang Guo Staff Writer

Ying-Yang literally translates to “dark and light”. It is one of the most famous symbols in the world representing the balance between two opposite poles: night and day, dark and light, evil and good, and so on. But what many people do not know is the source of inspiration behind this symbol. Surprisingly, Taoists were not inspired ancestral fights between gods or demons, or mythical kings. Instead, their source of inspiration is thought to have been two Chinese giant salamanders entwined with each other, forming a perfect circle in which the mouth of one salamander is chasing the tail of the other. However, the Chinese giant salamander can lay claim to far more than being the inspiration for the Yin-Yang symbol. It is the biggest amphibian in the world, an animal exclusive to China. It is also, unfortunately, a culinary delicacy, a fact that has put this majestic species on the brink of extinction.

The Chinese giant salamander is native to the ponds and streams of Southwest China. It is dark brown with a flat, large body and has a broad head, with small, lidless eyes. The most incredible physical characteristic of the species is its size. Chinese giant salamanders have been known to weigh up to 60kg and to reach almost two metres in length. Fortunately, the Chinese giant salamander is generally harmless for humans. It feeds on a variety of organisms, ranging from insects and worms, to small vertebrates such as frogs and fish. Cases of cannibalism in the Chinese giant salamander have also been reported. Indeed, studies of the food in the stomach of different specimens have found body parts of other Chinese giant salamanders, compounding to around ¼ of the total food content.

The Chinese giant salamander is an extremely territorial animal, with its territory covering around 30m³ of the body of water. The only time that Chinese giant salamanders can cohabit in the same territory is during the mating period. Indeed, cohabiting is one of their courtship displays in order to demonstrate a willingness to reproduce.

Other courtship displays also include activities such as riding or chasing. After copulation, the Chinese giant salamander lays a maximum of 500 eggs. This is much lower than other amphibian species, who usually lay thousands of eggs. When the larvae hatch, they possess external gills to breathe underwater. However, the adult giant salamander loses its gills, instead breathing through its skin. Contrary to many other amphibians that live both in the water and on the land, the Chinese giant salamander is exclusively an aquatic animal, spending its whole life underwater. These animals have incredibly long average lifespans, living around 60 years. There is another similarity between the Chinese giant salamander and humans: the sound. The Chinese giant salamander emits a sound similar to the cry of a child, which is why it is also called (Wáwáyú) in Mandarin Chinese, translated as ‘infant fish’. Sometimes, this creates the impression that a child is crying in the river, deceiving people.

The actions of human beings are putting the Chinese giant salamander,

which has remained largely unchanged for 170 million years, at high risk of extinction. There are several factors which have played a part in this. First, the building of cities, dams, roads and other infrastructures is destroying the native habitat of the Chinese giant salamander. These large animals need a lot of space to supply them with enough food. They are also highly sensitive to pollution. Second, the Chinese giant salamander is considered a delicacy and is employed in Chinese traditional medicine. In the past, consumption levels of the Chinese giant salamander were low because most of the population was poor and hence, could not afford it. However, in modern China, individual wealth has increased significantly, meaning that now, more people can and will pay for a dish of Chinese giant salamander. This has motivated farmers to overharvest salamanders from the wild, shrinking their population.

One potential solution is raising Chinese giant salamanders in captivity. The problem with this is that farmers take the larvae from their natural habitats instead

of breeding Chinese giant salamanders themselves; breeding the salamanders is at present extremely difficult. This only exacerbates the extinction threat, since it reduces the wild population of Chinese giant salamander. Finding a solution to the breeding problem could save the entire species. Thus, more research on the reproductive mechanisms of the Chinese giant salamanders is required. To this end, the ZSL London Zoo is carrying out an important conservation programme to protect the Chinese giant salamander, while collaborating with local communities in China.

To summarise, the Chinese giant salamander is a significant part of the Chinese culture and is also a unique animal. Unfortunately, it is disappearing and we, as humans, are the culprits.

Petr Hamernik/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0



Chinese giant salamander

FRIDAY 17TH JUNE 2022

ARTS

Edited by:
ALEXANDER COHEN
ALEX JACKSON

Cinderella – a sure fire hit to a costly mistake?

Credits: Photo/Tristram Kenton



Rebecca Trehearn as the Queen in Cinderella, now closed, previously at the Gillian Lynne theatre.

Alex Jackson Arts Editor

You would be forgiven for any confusion on when Andrew Lloyd-Webber's *Cinderella* finally opened to audiences on the West End. Webber, having attempted rather unsuccessfully to strong-arm the UK government into an enhanced package of recovery funding for the arts in London, was insistent throughout that the show must go on (even during the pandemic).

When Covid was merely a vaguely eerie backstory on the news, in January 2020 it was announced to great excitement that Emerald Fennell (*Killing Eve*) and David Zippel would collaborate to create a modern version of *Cinderella*. However, by March the show had faced its first delay, with the opening put back to October 2020. Before then, two successive delays to March and then July 2021 dampened expectations that theatre-goers could see the spectacle (now with an original song pre-released) in the year after its planned opening.

It was in June 2021 that Webber had seemingly had enough, insisting that he was to open the show at full capacity and, when asked what he would do if the government were to postpone the Covid reopening, "we will say: 'come to the theatre and arrest us.'" But, that did not happen. After a member of the cast tested positive for Covid the press night was cancelled and *Cin-*

derella forbidden, once again, to go to the ball. It was only by the 18th of August, over a year after its originally scheduled opening, that the show finally opened to critics (receiving some of the best reviews of any new musical and, as Webber would later say, some of the best of his career).

Unfortunately, the Omicron Covid wave put a stop to any Christmas and New Year performances (usually a busy time for the arts), and *Cinderella* was closed again until February 2022.

After only a few months of shows, on the 1st of May this year *Cinderella*'s closure was announced via social media - largely expected to be a long-running fixture of the West End, the costs and impracticalities of running a show during Covid ultimately proved its ruin. Whilst we may be surprised at a distance, some of the cast purportedly only found out of the show's cancellation on Twitter, slamming the show's creators and organisers for the lack of respect at what had been a very trying time for the industry.

In summary, on the closing night, Webber thanks the cast and crew and, in amongst the words extolling the cast, crew and creatives -- wonders if it was not all a costly mistake.

What's coming up? ...and get involved!

OTVETKA by Neda Nezhdana.
Available from the **30th May** on the **Finborough Theatre** YouTube channel.

"This war is not just on territory but inside us all. Cities being bombed, yes, but the brain is bombed even more. Cyber-attacks, fake news, fabricated terrorism, election fraud..."

#VoicesFromUkraine

The Throne by John Goldsmith.
World premiere on the **23rd June** at the **Char-ing Cross Theatre**.

Mary Roscoe and Charlie Condou star in a new comedy by award-winning TV and film screenwriter John Goldsmith.



Photo/Carla Evans

Gloriana by Benjamin Britten.
A very special Jubilee Performance at the **English National Opera** on the **8th December**.

Originally written to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, this concert will be staged this year in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

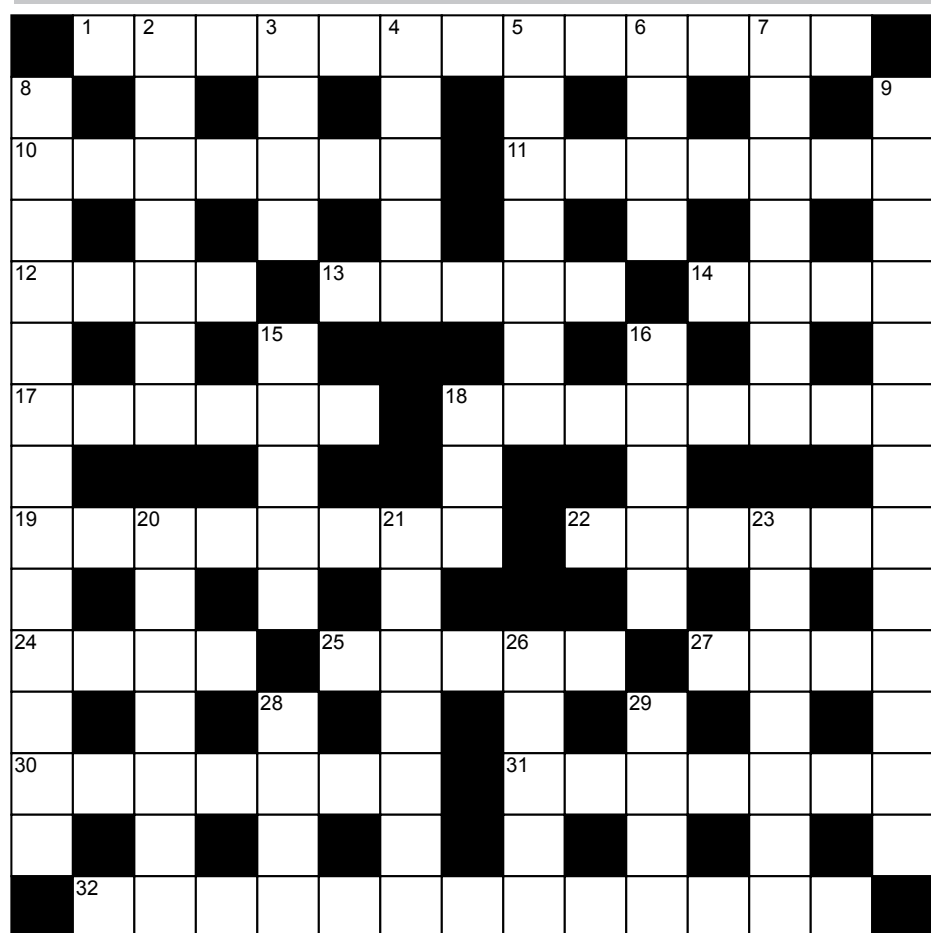


Under 21s come free!
But book early to avoid disappointment.

The Seagull a version by Anya Reiss.
Available from the **29th June** at the **HPT!**

"A young woman is desperate for fame and a way out. A young man is pining after the woman of his dreams. In an isolated home in the countryside where dreams are in tatters, hopes dashed, hearts broken and there is nowhere left to turn, the only option is to turn on each other."

CRYPTIC Crossword Grid



CRYPTIC Crossword Clues

Across

- 1) You beast! When around Bianca, behave right, Gibson! [8 5]
- 10) Aunt Ruth might tell it? [7]
- 11) Ring found in the spiral cluster contains this star. [7]
- 12) It's almost juicy. [4]
- 13) With the end of my sabre, slice up the head of that fiend. [5]
- 14) Ice-cream flavour which occasionally gets scooped out. [4]
- 17) Are you ready to infuriate her? [6]
- 18) The cooler ball dance! [8]
- 19) Beast of Ragnarök without fur coat. [8]
- 22) City put back on the list, I hear. [6]
- 24) They're brewed in-store, funnily enough. [4]
- 25) Did he grab back most of his floater? [5]
- 27) Destitute island has ducks. [4]
- 30) Nothing in the measurements hangs around. [7]
- 31) Throws flights. [5 2]
- 32) Marx's students finding it difficult to learn one of his tenets? [5 8]

Down

- 2) Surprise! Good grades don't shock you to the core. [7]
- 3) He beats the rug outside. [4]
- 4) Singers mad for that fluid. [5]
- 5) Core acidity more anomalous than a fraction. [7]
- 6) The boy could sleep around with ease. [4]
- 7) Organ thereafter made of clay. [7]
- 8) Reciprocate love from the large creature. [8 5]
- 9) Hasty prophecy contrived to leave you getting professional help? [13]
- 15) Ravel composing for the back of the tongue. [5]
- 16) He'd win some! [5]
- 18) Her sound is smooth. [3]
- 20) Connubial joke set up originally to improve a love life. [7]
- 21) First lady found at points in the water hole. [7]
- 23) Solar gold causing excitement. [7]
- 26) Old coin tossed to the reptile. [5]
- 28) Do it up when you're guilty. [4]
- 29) Improvise a means of flight. [4]

REGULAR Crossword Clues

Across

- 1) Stellar collection. [13]
- 10) Not finished. [7]
- 11) Charge. [7]
- 12) Something taboo. [2-2]
- 13) Kick the bucket, so to speak. [5]
- 14) It's unwanted in your inbox. [4]
- 17) Drink, normally milk. [6]
- 18) Southwestern county. [8]
- 19) Interpreter of sacrifice. [8]
- 22) Astronomical distance. [6]
- 24) Force on an airfoil. [4]
- 25) Of dairy products, off. [5]
- 27) Water plant. [4]
- 30) Cocktail garnished with orange peel. [7]
- 31) Word often seen on a poster. [7]
- 32) Aged by the elements. [13]

Down

- 2) Proceeding without intervention. [7]
- 3) Small dagger. [4]
- 4) Willing. [5]
- 5) Tenor Pavarotti. [7]
- 6) Hardwood type. [4]
- 7) Beaked mollusc. [7]
- 8) Eighties eruptor. [5 2 6]
- 9) Cause of existential concern [7 6]
- 15) It might go on your lips. [5]
- 16) Pollinator attractor. [5]
- 18) West End comedy musical. [3]
- 20) One fleeing conflict. [7]
- 21) Wise, learned. [7]
- 23) That of St. Andrew on the Union Jack, for instance. [7]
- 26) Southern African desert. [5]
- 28) Derogatory term for army fanatics. [4]
- 29) UK supermarket. [4]

Reverse cryptic

C: Intend on killing the primary board. [5]

A: PLANK

R: _____

C: An attendee predicted it, I hear. [5]

A: GUEST

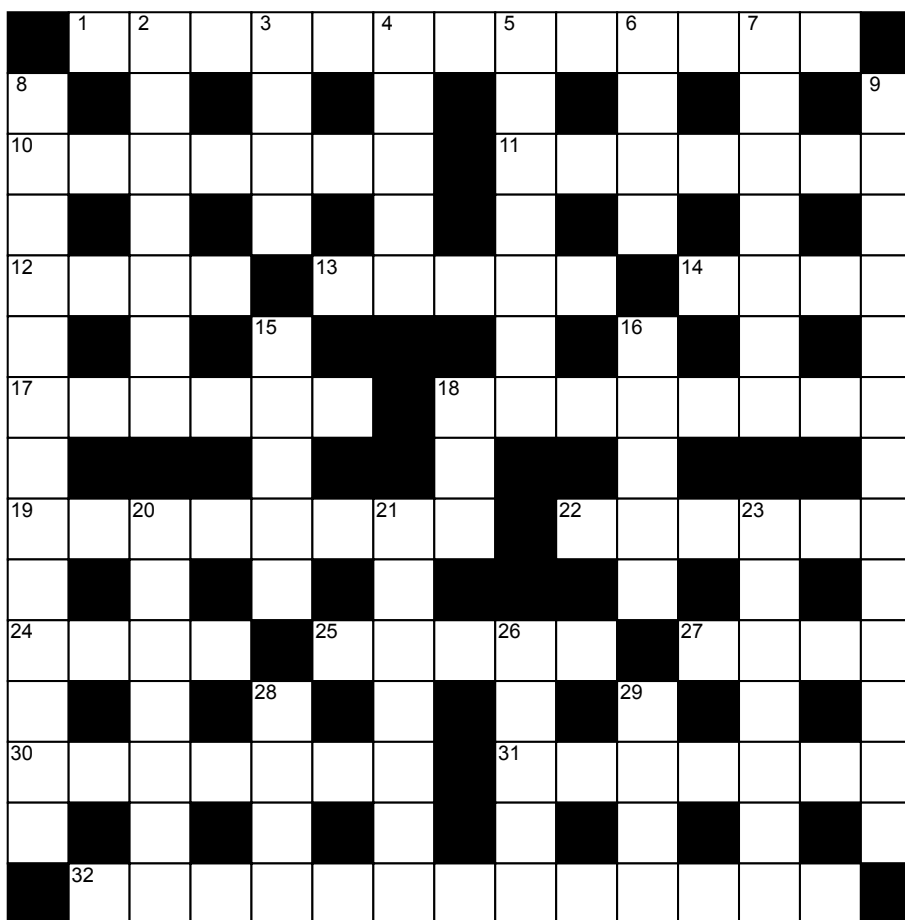
R: _____

C: The Commonwealth, or perhaps just a state in it? [10]

A: QUEENSLAND

R: _____

REGULAR Crossword Grid



Points

Easy and Difficult shikakus

2, 3 pts each

Cryptic Crossword

5 pts

Regular crossword

3 pts

Reverse cryptic

1 pt per word

CATNIP

Government abandons Rwanda deportation plan as deterrent factor lost

At just gone 1am on Wednesday night, Home Secretary Priti Patel found herself sitting in the Home Office, surrounded by empty coffee cups, empty baggies and the empty eyes of special advisers, now just running on fumes. The Rwanda plan had, in its early stages, been absolutely golden. As shown by the Johnson government's continued, soaring popularity ratings, whenever a rough patch is hit, the best thing to do is to announce a policy that appeases a tiny, xenophobic portion of the population and attract almost universal criticism in the press. In terms of this approach, permanently deporting Channel migrants to Rwanda was top bins.

How hair-wrenching it was for the Home Office, then, when UK standards fell to the point that there was no discernible difference between the UK and Rwanda on paper.

Priti glanced up at the whiteboard where all the negatives that had been listed about the central Afri-

can nation had slowly been crossed off over the last few weeks. "Corrupt government" had sort of been put up ironically to begin with, but media coverage of the UK's covid contract procurement, suspicious cessation of MET investigations and the so-called Advisory Board had made it a bit too real, and it was rubbed off.

Everyone thought "shortage of food and basic essentials" was a safe one, but next week's rail strikes look set to leave shelves as barren as the rail tracks themselves.

Somehow, even the "uncomfortably warm climate" point that wasn't even really a serious one anyway has somehow been matched by this week's encroaching heatwave.

Rwandan President Kagame's eagerness towards the plan, which he touted as a solution to the issue of swathes of young men leaving the country, was met with nervous glances from across the Cabinet, as

papers titled 'job vacancy crisis' and '1.3 million empty roles' were hastily hidden away.

The saving grace of the plan was that, just before it was cancelled, the flight was set to carry just four migrants to Rwanda, keeping alive the Tory tradition of sinking eye-watering sums into unpopular projects whilst making cuts to services that help people.

The plan must be kept alive, and a quick WhatsApp to Deputy PM and Justice Secretary Dominic Raab did just that and more. What to do when the plane is grounded by the European Court of Human Rights? We change the law so the UK can ignore the European Court of Human Rights. It was so simple. So unbureaucratic. So sensible. And what's more, it lays excellent precedent for the UK to change the law so it can ignore its *own* laws whenever they cause a spot of bother for the government. With this sort of quick thinking, migrants will be hurtling over to sunny Rwanda in no time.



ARIES

This week you wonder how supermarkets calculate how long each grain has been in power when selling long reign rice



TAURUS

This week you wonder who would win in a cage match between a gladiator, a samurai and a keyboard warrior



GEMINI

This week you run out of toilet paper and have to use a Felix instead



CANCER

This week you take the "phone a friend" lifeline but the only person they can find to call is your mum



LEO

This week your dad finds your buttplug, but you get away with it as the attached fox tail makes him think it's part of a costume



VIRGO

This week a group of toddlers get in your way on Exhibition Road and you flatten them with ease



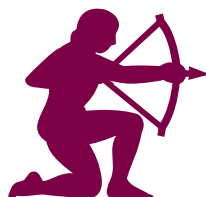
LIBRA

This week you run over your toes with an office chair



SCORPIO

This week you subvert the patriarchy by replacing your flatmate's cornflakes with tampons



SAGITTARIUS

This week you finish your jar of pickles and drink the brine



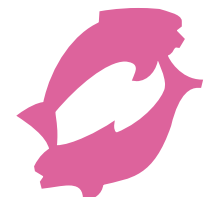
CAPRICORN

This week you learn that one of the largest Conservative donors is named Michael Tory



AQUARIUS

This week you watch an old war film that seems to have been cut way too short. You decide it was abridged too far



PISCES

This week your housemate gets into a relationship with a girl called Brie Fling. You doubt it'll last long

FRIDAY 17TH JUNE 2022

FILM

Edited by: EVA BORRAS
JONAH HEWETT

Film Review

Gangubai Kathiawadi

A new era for Bollywood?

Sachin Wijeyaratnam Film Writer

Recently pushed to Netflix (and perfect as part of a post exam binge), *Gangubai Kathiawadi* is loosely based on the real-life story of a young woman tricked into prostitution from a position of privilege and her rise into power as a madam, political activist and more in Nehru's India.

Set along the backdrop of the streets of Mumbai, this film is filled with sweeping shots and beautiful compositions that director Sanjay Leela Bhansali is famed for. The transition into musical numbers can seem jarring for an unfamiliar audience, but one is quickly overwhelmed by the raw emotion on display in these scenes. Arjit Singh in particular stuns as he always does and Shreya Goshaal's voice is angelic over the film's most intimate romantic scenes. Musical and visual composition have been combined wonderfully to create a treat for any viewer, even one who knows just as little Hindi as myself.

Shantanu Maheshwari deserves credit for his performance as the main romantic lead, displaying emotional vulnerability and range wonderfully. Ajay Devgan in particular steals the show every time he appears as Gangubai's underworld ally Karim Lala, although some of his scenes are a little too comedic and slapstick for my tastes.

But this movie has only one star. Alia Bhatt puts on a magnetic performance as our main character Gangubai, mesmerizing and controlling seemingly throughout the film. This is a challenging role and could have easily fallen flat, but Bhatt tackles it with such fearlessness and fervor, that one cannot help but fall in love with our heroine (or anti-heroine??). As we are taken through different chapters of Gangubai's life, Alia

Bhatt maintains this air of supreme confidence and strength for the majority of her performance, which forms the soul of the film. However, she also beautifully captures the pain of the situation and it is these displays of vulnerability that resonate emotionally with the viewer (or at least it did with this viewer!) and allow us an intimate connection with our protagonist and perhaps an even greater respect for her achievements in the face of adversity. I can only do this performance so much justice in words, but the iconic image above of Gangubai in her sunglasses should give you an idea of the fear and desire she elicits from the men around her, executed well by our lead and her supporting cast.

This characterisation achieves something rarely seen in media across the globe, which is a well-written female anti-hero, one that provokes both sympathy and respect, but is not without its flaws. In some ways, the film glamorises and romanticises the life of Gangubai and shies away from criticising the harsher choices she makes, especially when Gangu's political ambitions are explored in the latter half. Furthermore, the episodic nature of the film prevents a deeper dive into her character development, potentially leaving viewers wanting more.

As the film progresses, we see Gangubai stand up for the rights of the prostitutes and their children, and at the climax Alia Bhatt powerfully delivers a speech which I think any viewer from across the globe could stand to listen to. No matter your view on the world's oldest profession and its morality, this is a reminder that these are human beings still worthy of respect and still rings true with the changing nature of sex work in the modern day.

This is a daring project from SL Bhansali and melds a grittier and darker subject theme with the charm,

Directed by: *Sanjay Leela Bhansali*
Starring: *Alia Bhatt, Arjit Singh, Shreya Goshaal*
Year: 2022



comedy, musical treats and high production value of the classic Bollywood blockbusters. This could easily have felt inauthentic, but thanks to Alia Bhatt's best performance yet, and the respect and sensitivity shown to the subject matter, we get something that delivers on nearly every front. Perhaps we are witnessing a shift in direction from Bollywood, usually more conservative, especially with projects involving its biggest stars. For a global audience unfamiliar with Bollywood or foreign media, I can imagine no better introduction.

Comment

The future of CBBC

Jonah Hewett Film Editor

Last month, BBC director-general Tim Davies announced a several cuts to television programming, including moving BBC Four and CBBC to be online only. This came following an announcement from Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries (possibly the least cultured culture secretary we've ever had) that the licence fee would be frozen for two years.

I can't help but feel a little concerned by the CBBC move in particular. Growing up in the UK, CBBC (the children's BBC) was one of the few children's television channels that was available for free (once you'd paid your licence fee).

CBBC programmes have often offered a lot of educational value as well as entertainment. Beloved classics like *Newsround* are brilliant at introducing children to watching and engaging with the news and the wider world. Then there's *Deadly 60*, a personal favourite, and everybody remembers *Horrible Histories*, without which I think we'd all struggle to name every one of Henry VIII's wives (and much more besides).

You might say, why does it matter whether it's online or not? Most kids are online these days and frequently accessing Youtube and streaming services. And you're probably right. The pandemic, though, recently brought into focus our increasing reliance on digital services - and highlighted the number of families

who struggle to access them. A 2019 report from the Office for National Statistics on the UK's 'digital divide' showed that only 51% of families with a household income between £6000 and £10,000 had access to internet. Clearly, such families might also struggle to pay the TV licence fee of £159, although at £13.25 a month it still comes in below the average monthly broadband cost of £30.30 (according to Glide.co.uk). There's also the consideration that kids might be safer watching a controlled television channel rather than subjected to the various content risks on the internet.

But in the end, maybe I'm just falling victim to a weird cathode-ray nostalgia, and it really doesn't matter. I suppose only time will tell.

BOOKS

Edited by: ZANNA BUCKLAND

Book Review

Terminus: A Book That Could Do Better

Fiyinfoluwa Timothy Books Writer

“The end of the line is just the beginning...”

Peace is in the answer (somewhere, somewhat). And Power™ is the vice. By the end of the self-titled “biopunk psychedelic” or psychedelic-punk thriller, peace—as an idea or literary quality—is lost in the space between the numerous analogies that author Proto Dagg uses to dream up a world of pervasive addiction, which he does soon after awakening from. An event-driven roundtable of action, visions, hallucinations, love interests, more action, and more visions, is what carries *Terminus*, but what it needs to elevate its harder-thought-of thoughts alongside its peers is some literary scaffolding, or a greater sense of its own system.

Terminus is set in a titular city where an addiction to Power (a drug; tangible, and probably trademarked) is abundant and highly prevalent (like an American opioid epidemic). However, Proto Dagg does not spell out the roots and germinations of a true addiction — “I mean, everyone is addicted to something” — that he then goes on to muse about, nearly enough. This philosophising is exemplified by “we all

want something; some just want it more than others”. And thus, at times and in many ways, *Terminus* is far from rooted in true reality, outside of its own ornamental descriptions of life.¹

“Addiction is such an ugly word,” begins a now-infamous energy drink account manager, Power addict, and the YA protagonist Matt. Matt meets the energetic Priya one night at a nightclub peddling Peace (another drug (excessive?); this one not trademarked). And as his designated potential love interest, Priya is written, and fated to entangle him in the typical lengthy antics of any Young Adult novel focused on system subversion, things like war, like revolution, and, of course, like love.

And, largely, he succeeds in doing this. The ‘he’ in question being Proto Dagg; the this however –

his modified, and intermittently elegant, used, tried, and true re-telling of a Hero’s Journey — is somehow both insufficient and overfed, vis-à-vis the guests at the metaphorical table of musings and themes set by him. Themes which include the commodification of change, the genesis of a cult versus the birth of movement, and

“
IT AT LEAST BEARS
THE SWEET FRUIT
OF AMBITION, AND
A SINGULAR VISION

[1] A BRIEF FOOTNOTE: ON THE MATTER OF REALITY

Virginia Woolf does this, Joseph Conrad does this — Sylvia Plath, Flanner O’Connor, Gustave Flaubert, and Enid Blyton have all done this. These are examples of writers I have read in the last ten months, (or, for Enid Blyton, in the last ten years).

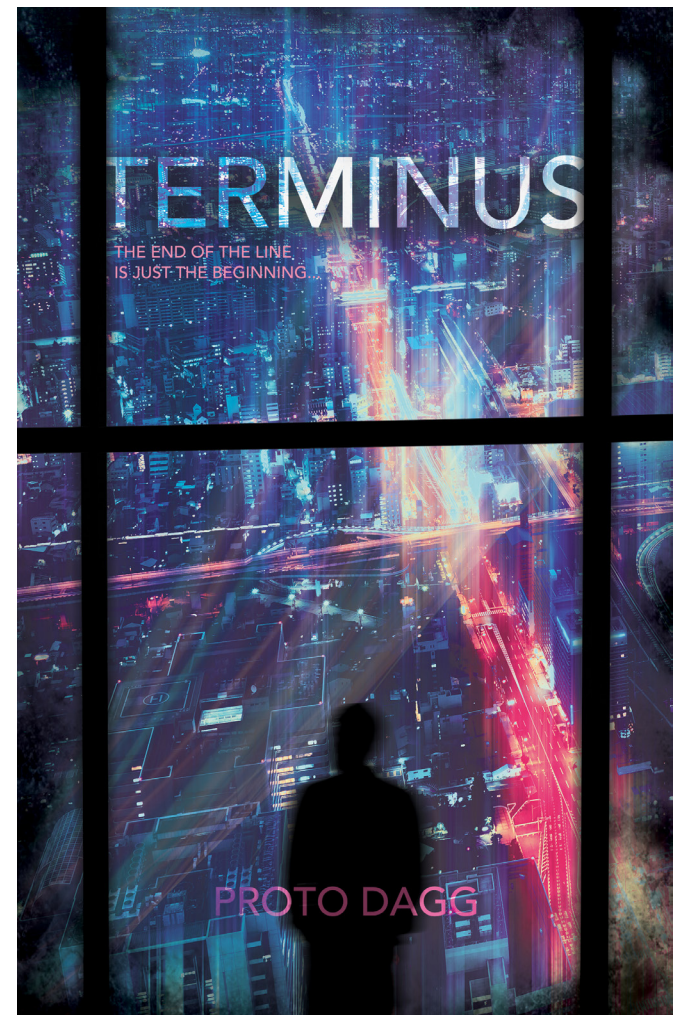
Black identity, both in the physical and social sense, is often used as a prop in literature. It seems in this case that Proto Dagg is keen on utilising imagery from our world - this reality, consisting of religious systems, people, cultures, and places - to create a creased backdrop for the fictional world of *Terminus* with its futuristic cars and hyper-urban buildings.

Take this sentence: “When the drug hit streets, it swept through the city like a tsunami, taking the young and old, black and white, rich and poor.”

There are instances - including the character strange-

ly named “Rasta Man” - when things an author writes are obscured or exposed by the mind that writes them. The specific use of Black people to demonstrate the ubiquitous nature of a drug is unqualified here. I can only hope that some of this rhetoric, which is common to the writers I have previously stated, is down to plain ignorance, a misguided attempt at thought-provokingness, or just poor writing. In *Terminus*, I extend enough grace to (hopefully) believe it is the latter of these three, a symptom of the White gaze that still persists in the field of Literature.

The portrayal of women is a whole other story, and one in which evidence of such in what is a brief footnote, should serve no purpose to embarrass the author. That is not my intention. A work must make a case for itself, alongside personal interpretations. And what



many more of such powerful, but often ineloquently presented, ideas.

It seems *Terminus* is propped up by its storytelling, but weighed down by its inability to tell the story of what actually motivates its characters to act in the ways that they do, or are written to. *Terminus*, in summary, should come with a cautionary label for oncoming readers: “requires patience - and a handful of tolerance - for its zealous intentions”, although it at least bears the sweet fruit of ambition, and a singular vision.

Terminus says, with its many desperate fixations on the female body corrupting its much finer prose, is not encouraging. It is instead unfortunate, a symptom of, this time, a pernicious male gaze.

On the matter of reality, the act of reading feels like walking into an empty room. The depiction of characters is often representative of the lens through which an author writes and sees the world. Sometimes you may walk into a room of what seems like cardboard cut-outs. Sometimes the room feels like there is an organic verisimilitude with which the writer approaches even the tiniest character. It comes down to how the author approaches the world around them, and whether they hold a perspective with or without a common dignity.

FRIDAY 17TH MAY 2022

BOOKS

Book Review

Stone's Fall - An Erudite Mystery

Sam Lovatt Editor-in-Chief

Stone's Fall opens in 1953 Paris, where an aged British reporter is attending a drizzly funeral for a woman he hasn't seen in many years. He is approached by a lawyer, who explains that he is the keeper of a package that was only to be bestowed the reporter upon the woman's death, and so begins a tale of love, murder and espionage.

Written by Iain Pears, *Stone's Fall* is a relatively long novel at 600 pages of small print, and it took me just over a month to read, on and off. I only mention this

“
TAKES THE
READER BACK
IN TIME FROM
1953 TO 1867

The novel takes the reader back in time from 1953 to 1867 through three different perspectives. The accounts

tell the story of the rise and eventual fall of John Stone; munitions magnate and industrial giant, starting at his untimely death and culminating in the formative years of his 20s.

Each part of the story is told from the perspective of a different person. To begin with, a 20-something man who has almost everything to learn about the world, and whose direction in life becomes completely swayed by any forthright woman, seductress or otherwise.

One way in which *Stone's Fall* sets itself apart from other historical fictions is through its inclusion of a female lead who is far more interesting, complicated, and pivotal than any of the male characters. Elizabeth Stone (Lady Ravenscliffe), is introduced as the wife of the recently deceased John at the beginning of the book. Over 20 years his junior, what is initially assumed to be a classic gold-digging relationship expands into an abstruse story that began before Elizabeth was even born.

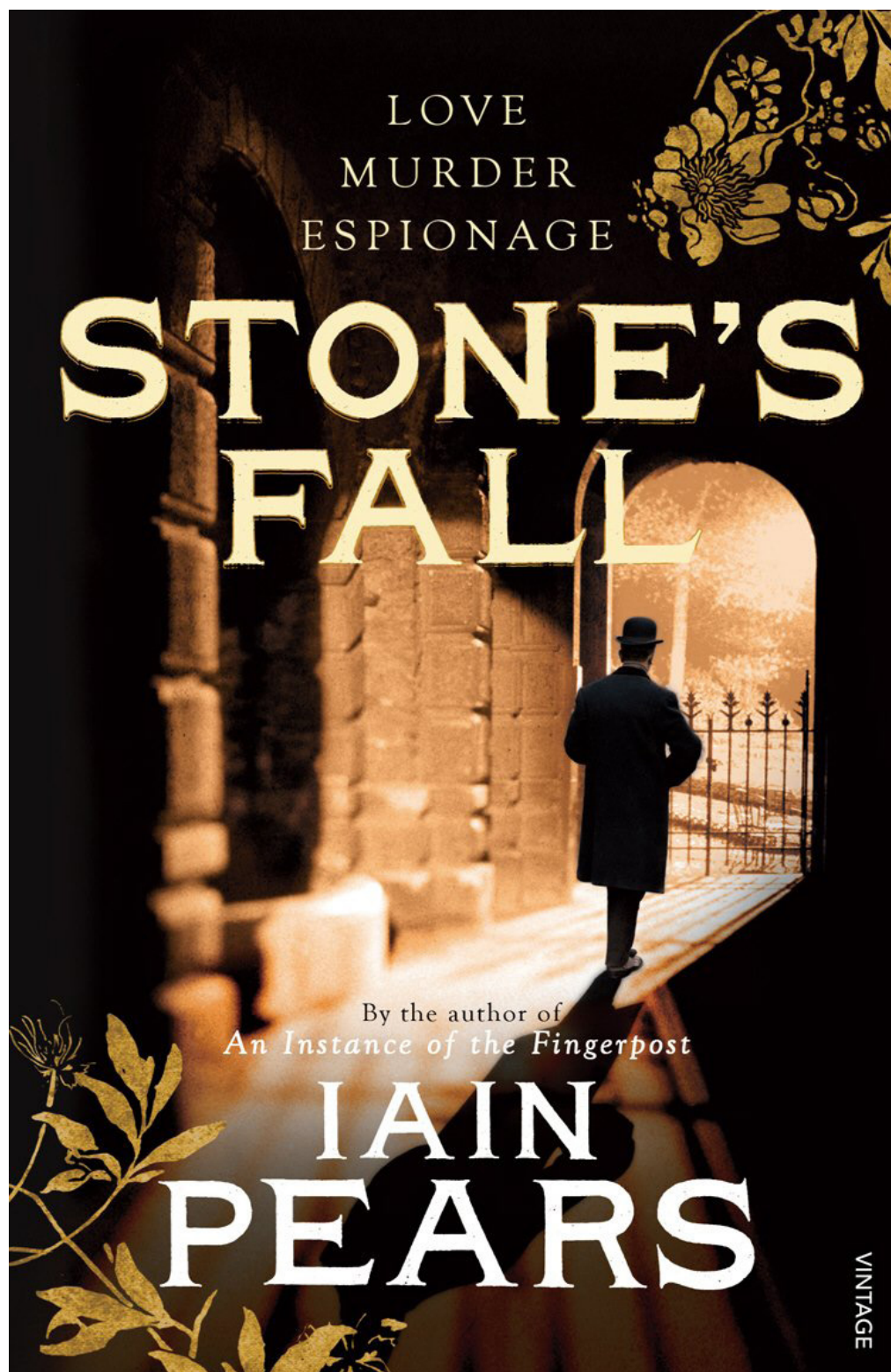
The first lead is *Times* crime reporter Matthew Braddock, who is hired by Lady Ravenscliffe to investigate the death of her husband, which until this point had been ruled unsuspecting by the police. Though Braddock is still relatively green and knows next to nothing about investigative work or the intricate workings of the financial machines that Stone sat at the helm of, it quickly becomes apparent that there is more to Stone's death than meets the eye.

Period details are plastered throughout the novel - financiers express their outrage at the idea of income tax being raised to 5%, rent in London is £1 a week, and the comparative laxity in regulation of the finan-

“
ONE WAY IN WHICH
STONE'S FALL SETS ITSELF
APART FROM OTHER
HISTORICAL FICTIONS
IS THROUGH ITS
INCLUSION OF A FEMALE
LEAD

cial markets in the past is laid bare. Descriptions of the state of London in the early 19th and 20th centuries is enough to make the reader glad that the days of street urchins and ubiquitous vagrancy are (mostly) behind us.

Perhaps a hundred pages before the end, I found myself wondering why Pears had even bothered inverting the order in which events were told, as it didn't seem to add any distinctive traits, and made the story significantly harder to follow. Rest assured, I ate my words by the finale. As with all the best mysteries, when the crucial plot point finally fell into place, the reader finds themselves putting the book down and simply gawping as the revelation sinks in.



FOOD

Restaurant Review

Picante Latino - Ecuadorian Oasis

Written by **Alex Dadswell** Food Writer



Located just a few hundred metres from the more recently opened The Junction Market, Nag's Head Market has been providing a place for vendors to sell their wares for nearly fifty years. Here, in just a few paces, you can go from getting your palms read to gorging yourself on steaming hot pierogi. A more recent addition to the ever-changing array of food stalls, Picante Latino is a small venture, positioned in the heart of the market which sells a range of Ecuadorian dishes alongside other Latin American favourites.

We started with the national dish of Ecuador, an *encebollado* – a fish stew made with tuna, onion, yuca and a variety of spices and herbs. Famed by many as a miraculous hangover cure, I can confirm that a hangover is not necessary to appreciate this warming broth. Light and fragrant, the pickled onions give the bowl an acidity which effectively cuts through the meatiness of the tuna. It was served with fried plantain chips and, interestingly, plain popcorn – both of which



add some texture to the dish. If it isn't already evident from the accompanying photos, the portion size was impressive for the price (£9). This was a bowl which I have little doubt could cure much more severe ailments than a simple hangover.

We also tried the Argentinean style *asado* (£13). The dish consists of steak sliced thinly, completely covered in *chimichurri* (a bright green salsa made of parsley, chilli and garlic) and served alongside rice, yuca and a fresh salad. This one was a firm favourite. Sliced so thin, the steak surprisingly played a supporting role to the *chimichurri*, which was bright and flavoured the accompanying rice. The yuca was also a great addition, providing another blank canvas to cover with the salsa-

covered steak. Steak is often a rich and heavy food, but the combination of the *chimichurri* and the fresh and slightly acidic salad made this dish feel more delicate than it had any right to be.

We were also told to try the *bolón de verde* (literally 'big green ball'). This is a deep-fried ball of green plantain, stuffed with cheese and, in our case, *chicharrones*. It was served alongside that same fresh salad with an acidic red onion bite and a small dish of *ají*, a chilli sauce. The *ají* was thick and didn't have a particularly strong tang, so we quickly covered the *bolón* with every drop. This is pure comfort food, plain and simple, and perfectly scratched that deep-fried itch after such fresh and light dishes.

Due to the intimate nature of the stall - with just a few small tables and chairs to sit at - I was able to chat with the owner and chef, an Ecuadorian woman called Ninfa. Ninfa is clearly loved in the area, with our conversation frequently halted as a passer-by greeted her and she shouted back with a smile. Put simply, it was clear to me in the short time that we spent there that she is one of the most lovely and warm human beings you could hope to meet. The size of the stall is something worth noting - although I'm certain you could use the tables of adjacent stalls, Picante Latino doesn't have seating for a very large group.

Finally, we watched as Ninfa peeled back the corn husk on a *humita* (£2.50). *Humitas* are much like an Ecuadorian version of tamales - although slight variations on *humitas* also exist in many other Andean countries. They consist of fresh corn ground into a paste and combined with cheese, encased in a corn husk, and boiled or steamed - in Ecuador they are often eaten at breakfast. At Picante Latino it was served with another small dish of *ají* and a large mug of black coffee for that authentic breakfast feeling at 6 p.m. Is this not essentially just cornflakes with added chilli? These were simple but delicious, and Ninfa told us that she sells out of them every day.

All this was eaten leisurely whilst sipping a glass of *colada morada* (£2.50) – a vibrant purple drink served hot or cold (in this case cold) made of a selection of fruits and berries, purple corn powder and warming spices such as cinnamon and cloves. This was Christmas in a glass, and I'm sure it tastes even more like distilled festive cheer when warm. The reasonably large chunks of pineapple which filled the glass also made this drink feel quite substantial. Amongst an impressive selection of dishes, this first-time try will definitely stick in my mind.

The same can be said for the *batido de aguacate*



(£2.50) – a tall, muted green glass of avocado milkshake. When this was first recommended to us by our culinary tour guide, I was far from convinced. In reality, it turns out that avocado, milk, and sugar blended together tastes exactly like you would expect – creamy, sweet, and avocado flavoured. If you like avocado as much as I do, you'll enjoy this; if not, it won't win you over.

Picante Latino, tucked away in the small but charming Nag's Head Market, is a true gem of North London. The food was excellent and the prices were very reasonable for the truly impressive portion sizes. The service was also some of the best I've ever had, making us all feel like we could return just to chat with the owner for longer. I would wholeheartedly recommend this spot to anyone passing through the area - just remember to tell Ninfa that I sent you and I'm sure you'll get a warm greeting.



Butternut Squash and Chickpea Stew

FOOD

Recipe - Vegan, vegetarian, halal

Written by **Thomas Fox** Food Writer

At a glance

Simplicity: 8/10 - It will never beat pesto pasta, but a fantastic time-for-taste investment.

Prep Time: 15-25 minutes - How fast can you peel a butternut squash?

Cook Time: 45-60 minutes - But most of that is simmering anyway

Flavour Rating: 8.5/10

Price per portion: £1.10

Unique Selling Point - Marginal time difference to scale up, so you can easily fill your fridge with tupperware that takes 4-5 minutes to reheat and the taste just keeps getting better. Your only limit is your imagination (and pot size).

This recipe for a vegan stew is perfect to make in bulk, either as a meal to prep and refrigerate for busy weeks or to split with your friends (a great way to make evening meals both cheaper and quicker). With butternut squash, chickpeas, and lentils, this stew is bursting with superfoods to boost your protein, vitamins, fibre and iron levels (shout out to all my vegetarian anaemics out there) as well as being low in both fat and salt. Using an impressively short list of spices that you will either find in your kitchen, or are worth picking up for their general use, this dish manages to capture the smells and flavours of a Moroccan street market whilst requiring minimal prep time and effort. It can also be easily adapted from a simple dish using (mostly) kitchen staples to something a bit more bougie.

Prep

1. Peel the butternut squash until all the skin and pale flesh is removed leaving orange flesh only. Cut it in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds then cut the squash into 2-3cm cubes.
2. Dice the onions (Google "Waitrose - How to Dice an Onion" for useful method - advice may be one of the only affordable things Waitrose offers).
3. Roughly chop garlic and cut celery into ½ cm pieces.

Cooking

4. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and fry the onions for a few minutes then add celery, garlic, black pepper, cinnamon and turmeric.
5. After 5 minutes or when the onions are translucent, add tomatoes, chickpeas and lentils and bring to the boil.
6. Add the stock and squash, cover and simmer gently for around 45 minutes or until the squash is tender (but not mush), stirring periodically to avoid sticking.
7. Ten minutes before serving, add the orzo or pasta of your choice and sweetcorn.
8. Add your garnish of choice, serve and enjoy!

The recipe is fantastically flexible and forgiving. Orzo can be replaced with rice, vermicelli or even spaghetti (if you're feeling particularly sacrilegious). Sweet potato can be substituted for squash if you can't find it or don't feel like wrestling with one, with very similar health benefits. Finally, for those on a more relaxed budget, these extra suggestions can change it from kitchen staple to date night special.

Extra Suggestions

- Stewing beef or lamb (50-100g per person) added with the tomatoes. (halal, non-vegan)
- A pinch of saffron will give it an even deeper orange colour.
- A generous splash of red wine while it simmers provides a deep and rich flavour. Recommend anything between £5-8 for cooking with. (vegan, non-halal)
- Some chopped dates sprinkled on top to serve.



Ingredients - Serves 8

- 4 tbsp Oil (veg or olive)
- 4 onions
- 5 cloves of garlic
- 3 celery sticks
- 3 tsp of black pepper
- 4 tsp of turmeric
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 175g red lentils (split or whole)
- 4 tins of chickpeas
- 4 tins of chopped tomatoes
- 2 large or 3 small butternut squash
- 1.2l of veg stock
- 200g of orzo (or other small pasta)
- Half a tin of sweetcorn
- A small handful of fresh parsley, coriander, just something green to garnish

EASY FLATBREADS (to go on the side)

Makes 12

Ingredients:

- 300g Flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp Olive oil
- ~200ml hot water

Method

1. Combine flour, salt, oil and gradually stir in enough water to make a soft, elastic but not sticky dough.
2. Knead on a floured surface for 5-10 minutes and divide into 12 pieces
3. Roll the pieces into very thin disks and cook in a lightly greased frying pan on high heat until the underside has dark brown spots, about 30 a side.

COMMENT

» HAVE AN ARTICLE IN MIND?
EMAIL YOUR IDEA OR PIECE TO:
COMMENT.FELIX@IMPERIAL.AC.UK

Edited by: KHAMA GUNDE

The UK Government Should Phase Out Private Vehicle Ownership

► *As we look to the future, private cars should become a thing of the past.*

Zanna Buckland

Books Editor



The next time you walk along a busy road in London, have a look at the traffic alongside you – not just for road safety, but to observe the kinds of vehicles that are present. At least in South Kensington, the vast majority of those vehicles are likely to be private cars, which begs the question of just how many greenhouse gases (GHGs) are being pumped into London's air at any given moment.

I have a personal vendetta against cars, as I get horrible motion sickness, particularly on long drives. I would gladly take a train or bus over a car any day. But that is beside the point – the real issue here is that of climate change, and specifically the GHG emissions that contribute to it.

For someone from Hong Kong, a city that relies heavily on its public transport system, it is incredible that a city as well-established as London does not have efficient and affordable public transport. Understandably, the infrastructure is much older than many comparable Asian cities, but with the endless rail works carried out at all times in London, one would think the government would invest in a full revamp of the underground system. Hong Kong has its fair share of private vehicles, but public transport is reliable and cheap enough that car owners often opt for taking buses and trains instead.

There are many reasons why people might choose not to utilise London's public transport. First of all, there are the extortionate prices, which put off many students and people from lower income households. This, combined with numerous delays and erratic train timings, makes travelling by private car or foot much more efficient. The weekly train strikes and rail works make the trains and tube unpredictable; a night-

mare for commuters who travel at peak times. Many visitors to London from other parts of the UK will drive into the city rather than pay for an expensive train ticket, adding more vehicles to the already congested roads. This heavy traffic makes buses slower than most other forms of transportation, so that although they are the cheapest mode of transport, they are unfavourable for people who actually want to arrive at their destination on time.

Not only are private cars a big issue, but so is the use of private jets, particu-

comparison, indirect emissions only account for about a sixth of total emissions for trains, coaches, and planes (although planes cause other negative environmental effects). This indicates that the manufacture of private vehicles alone already creates a significant level of emissions.

This leads onto the matter of electric cars and how they contribute to GHG emissions. While fully electric cars do not produce any direct emissions, hybrid models do, and both kinds produce significant levels of indirect emissions. These indirect emissions come from a

especially if the electricity comes from renewable sources, and many countries are introducing electric buses in place of petrol-fuelled ones in an attempt to further reduce the direct emissions produced by public transport.

This would be a feasible solution for the UK if there were not a number of barriers to implementing it. These include the age and costs of public transport's current infrastructure, the fact that many people still need to own a private vehicle for family or work purposes, and how to appropriately dispose of the old vehicles. There are also the socioeconomic implications of banning private cars, in terms of the rights to sell and own particular products. The motor industry is well-established, and many of its customers are used to living with access to their own car. Privately-owned cars and jets could potentially be repurposed into public vehicles such as taxis and short-haul commercial airlines, but the economic viability of this is another major factor against its implementation.

I believe that the UK Government should at least attempt to start phasing out private cars, or to limit and regulate their ownership. While this would be a slow process, it would be highly beneficial for the future of society and the planet. There are so many alternatives – buses, trains, taxis (or Ubers), trams, bicycles – that could be optimised in order to render private cars obsolete. It would also set an example for other developed countries such as the US, Japan, and Germany, which have varying degrees of public transport efficiency, but all have high levels of private car ownership.

This may sound like a drastic measure, but we are living through the most critical period in humanity's history, with seemingly little remorse for the impact we are having on the Earth. Should that not warrant a few drastic measures?

Photo credits: Cheung Yin on Unsplash, Clive Kim on Pexels



Hong Kong road vs London road



larly by the wealthiest 1% of the population and by public figures such as government officials and celebrities. The emissions for private aircraft are not significantly higher than those for commercial flights, but the emissions per person are. The same goes for private cars - one bus emits more CO₂ than one car, but when comparing a full bus to the equivalent number of private cars the bus emits significantly less.

According to the UK Government's 'Transport and Environmental Statistics' for Autumn 2021, indirect emissions (meaning emissions produced from resource extraction, production, and fuel transport) comprise roughly a quarter of private cars' emissions. By

number of different sources; much are from the manufacturing process, as well as importation, waste disposal, and producing the necessary energy to charge the battery. Unless this electricity is sourced purely from renewables, the burning of fossil fuels will contribute further emissions. The manufacture of the rechargeable lithium-ion batteries generally used in these cars is environmentally-damaging too; GHG emissions and water loss occur during the lithium extraction process, and disposal of the batteries creates toxic waste. All this goes to show that even the most environmentally-friendly private vehicles have their drawbacks.

However, electric vehicles are still more energy efficient during operation,