



THE ARROW

ISSUE NO. 120

Contents



Our production,
“As you like it”
put on and run
by our students.

Meet the team.....Page 3

Entertainment

“The Spook’s Apprentice”, by Joseph Delaney.....Page 5

How relevant is the Western Literature canon today?.....Page 5

World order- Dr H. Kissinger.....Page 6

Solange—”When I Get Home”Page 7

Mortal Engines.....Page 7

Book Review: Native Son.....Page 9

Speed Review: Us.....Page 9

Bohemian Rhapsody: A forgettable film about an unforgettable
band.....Page 10

Sports

How beautiful is the beautiful game.....Page 11

Science

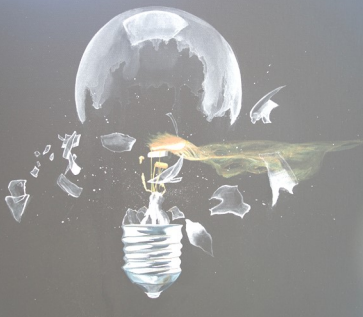
Doctors in distress because of the NHS.....Page 13

Is charging the solution for combating non-urgent A&E vis-
its?.....Page 15

Biotechnology: The Face of Tomorrow.....Page 16

School life

10 Things I Wish I Had Known In Year 7.....Page 17



Art by Ivy
Wang

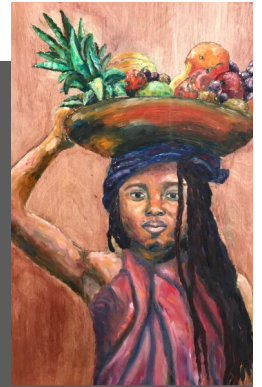
Contents

Creative entries:

5 ways of looking at a forest.....	Page 17
Short story: As I Fall.	Page 18
Short story: The Day My Mum Invented A Portal.....	Page 19
Short story.....	Page 21

Politics

Women and Power.....	Page 23
Don't burn our future.....	Page 25
Votes at 16: Let our voices be heard.....	Page 27
Are those who fail to learn from history really condemned to repeat it?.....	Page 29
Some voices matter more than others: we have not “had enough of experts”.....	Page 31



Art by Britney Laryea



Image by Paulina



From left to right: Yusuf, Kalyani, Rena, Chaandni, Kayleigh, Dillan and Humam.

Hello, we are the 2019 editorial team for the Arrow!

From designing the pages to editing the articles and writing our own, we put this edition together almost entirely independently with the help of willing writers (contributors). It took us a little over 6 months (since the beginning of the academic year), and although we definitely struggled with some areas, it was a thoroughly fulfilling process we delighted in undertaking.

Dillan:

This year's Arrow wonderfully captures the diversity of interests that students at Owens pursue beyond the school curriculum from politics to science. Literature to music, it has been a pleasure to showcase the work of those who contributed.

Chaandni:

Being a part of the Arrow's editorial team has been an amazing experience and I am proud to showcase the achievements and talents that our school holds within our magazine's pages. It has been really enjoyable putting the Arrow together and we hope that the readers enjoy it too!

Humam:

Having the privilege of reading so much on a vast range of topics, and simply being a part of the Arrow Team, has been a very fulfilling experience. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's edition!

Kalyani:

I feel honoured and privileged to be part of this year's Arrow editorial team. The enthusiasm of this school and its community is reflected in the diversity and creativity of this magazine which encompasses a wide range of articles, stories, poems and reviews.

Rena:

Hello, thank you for choosing to read the arrow 2019 edition :). Personally, I found that the planning took longer, but once we got into the flow of collecting articles and starting on the design, it became easier. Something I really enjoyed was going over the articles, as I got to see the high level of skill everyone had!



Kayleigh:

I thoroughly enjoyed working with this team of amazing people to produce the arrow! I worked mainly on the design with Rena but I also wrote an article. Although it was a lot of work to put together seeing it completed and to see people reading it makes it all worth it. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Yusuf:

My role in the Arrow was above all enjoyable and educative; editing articles taught me the inescapable power of rhetoric even in simple essays, whilst making for an excellent excuse to thoroughly critique and engage with an eclectic range of ideas. Of all the articles, my favourites were *Women & Power* (a natural addition to Mary Beard's great work) and *Votes at 16*, which I can easily imagine being spoken in the Commons by the great thespian that the author is.

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Book review: “The Spook’s Apprentice”

By Liam Buchgraber 7LZS

“The Spook’s Apprentice” is about a boy, aged 12, who is the 7th son of a 7th son, who is destined to protect the county from the mysterious darkness. He goes through rough obstacles on his journey of travel, and when the spook (the current protector of the county) goes away

to stop a wild gang of malevolent witches, the boy faces great danger. The part I most enjoyed was when a witch called Mother Malkin became so powerful that she could possess anyone’s body, and the boy could not trust anyone, not even his own family.

great read after Harry Potter. I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys fantasy, action and/or mysterious books.

My rating: ★★★★★

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this book, a

How relevant is the western literature canon today?

By Kayleigh Wootten

The literary canon is a selection of books chosen over the years that are deemed to be worthy of study. After reading a book from the canon, students are said to have a world-wide view of the issues and ideas presented in that book, but as time changes, are the books still eye opening and do they still present students with a “worldwide view”?

The first books to be put into the literary canon, were all written by white, middle aged rich men. Arguably it can be said that reading these books won’t give you a well-rounded view of society because they are all written from the point of view of very similar people. Over the years a wider range of books have been added to the canon including books written by people other than just white men. These books are studied at GCSE and A level across the country, this means that we are teaching students that the only issues and challenges faced in life are the ones mentioned by these rich, upper class men.

During the recent exam changes, Michael Gove also said that students should only be reading books written by English writers, and that books from other places would be quickly removed from the curriculum- whether they are in the literary canon or not. He said that 80% of the books being studied at GCSE would be written by English authors. This only highlights the importance of our canon and why we need such a variety of books in there. How do we expect students to be well rounded and well educated if they are only taught about beliefs and issues in their own country?

I’m not saying that the books in the canon are worthless and that we should stop studying them, they were put in the canon for a reason. They will be passed from generation to generation because of the way they deal with eternal ideas and concepts, such as human emotions. They have become an important part of our society and our history because they have passed the test of time and are still relevant and relatable to people now. But we live in an ever-changing society, each day new science and technology discoveries are being made and new communities forming, why is our literature not changing with it?

Many books written in the 21st century not only cover the same emotions and issues as many of the books currently in the canon, which include books by William Shakespeare and Charlotte Bronte but they also meet- if not exceed — the quality of these books when compared to the three characteristics of books in the literary canon; complexity within the plot, subject matter- issues discussed must be relevant for a long time in the future, language- it must be aesthetically pleasing to read.

To conclude, yes, the literary canon is a very important part of western history and the books in it are very worthy of study because they are written incredibly well, and students can learn from the language and structural techniques so that they will one day be able to produce something as complex and beautiful as Shakespeare’s plays. However, it is also important that we update our canon to ensure that it is in fact a worldwide view that we get from reading these amazing books and our students continue to grow and develop in a way that encourages individuality and creativity. Students need to be educated about other cultures and beliefs as well as flawless writing techniques and the only way to ensure that this happens is to expand our literary canon.



“We live in an everchanging society, each day new science and technology discoveries are being made... why is our literature not changing with it?”

World Order— Dr. H. Kissinger Review

By Yusuf Story

As the proud owner of a Salvador Allende shirt, I don't have the warmest feelings for Dr Kissinger — the former US secretary of state and geopolitical maverick — who seems to be whispering in the ear of every world leader, as well as simultaneously lurking behind the scenes and appearing at the forefront of every major summit between the powers of the world. Case in point, Kissinger yet again found himself in Helsinki, this time playing the role of the mediator between Russia and the United States. Kissinger's extraordinary power and influence over U.S foreign policy, especially throughout the tinpot dictatorships and proxy wars of the Cold War, have led to numerous calls for the prosecution of Kissinger "for war crimes, for crimes against humanity, and for offenses against common or customary or international law, including conspiracy to commit murder, kidnap, and torture". I think these accusations are indeed legitimate and Kissinger should be made to face his past, in particular, those events he had influence over before and after office. Whether he is an actual war criminal is another matter, as Niall Ferguson correctly pointed out "nearly all the secretaries of state ...nearly all the presidents have taken similar actions".

Regardless, I don't think we should let this distract us from Kissinger's sheer brilliance when it comes to geopolitics. Throughout *World Order*, Kissinger cuts through the murky and obfuscated world of relations between sovereign states, shining a light on the underlying realities and premises governing countries foreign policy and the 'order' of the regions they inhabit. The book spans over 2000 years and gives this treatment to almost every past or present conflict zone on earth, as well as examining the nations that inhabit these regions, their motivations and individual concepts of world order. Kissinger truly believes the only way to make smart foreign policy decisions and achieve a harmonious world order that works for all participants, is by examining the past and the underlying beliefs of countries. I would have to agree. An example of the contrasting concepts of world order presented by Kissinger is Westphalian Sovereignty. Whilst Westphalian Sovereignty and the idea of non-involvement in neighbouring countries is triumphed in Europe and across the West, in the Middle East it was — and in some respects still is — utterly foreign and even heretical; being in direct conflict with the Quranic mission to unite all of the world as a single political unit: Dar al-Islam or the "House of Islam". Of particular relevance to the A-level history course is the chapter on the European balance of power system. Balance of power is the idea that the security of nations and the greater region is enhanced when no single state is powerful enough to dominate the others, and thus economic, political and military power is equally distributed across a number of nations. If one nation does become excessively more powerful than the rest (e.g. Napoleon's France, Nicholas I's Russia the Kaiser's Germany), then a coalition of other nations (e.g. that of Austria, Prussia, Russia and Great Britain during the Napoleonic wars) will ally, banding together to stop this common enemy which threatens to seriously upset the European balance of power, if not annexe most of Europe itself. Preservation of the European balance of power was the main British

foreign policy aim n since at least the seventeenth century, and led to England's reputation as the 'world's policeman'. Specifically, England desired to prevent the creation of a single universal monarchy in Europe and achieved this through an ever-shifting web of alliances, and when necessary military interventions to stop the likes of Napoleon, Louis XV and Nicholas I of Russia. Through such a policy, it was ensured that no country would be able to seriously challenge Britain's naval and mercantile supremacy which the Empire depended on.

The reason for my belief in the importance of the balance of power system to our course is that I would argue it has only ever been overcome by one man in European history; Bismarck. Furthermore, it was the very concept and belief in the balance of power system across Europe that meant Bismarck's project of a German Empire was sisyphian from the very beginning. Germany has always held a strategic position; separating France and Southern Europe from the behemoth that's Russia, and before the 1871 unification, the German states that occupied this land acted as a buffer between the two powers. Too weak and divided to invade either France or Russia, but strong enough to unite together and repel an attack by either nation, the German states played a key role in maintaining the balance of power in Europe. However, when Bismarck unified these states into a single German nation state for the first time in history, he placed Prussia at the head of a united Germany in the centre of an entirely new system of order. In the words of Disraeli: "the balance of power had been entirely destroyed" and it was a "greater political event than the French revolution". What emerged after this unification was a single nation strong enough to defeat each neighbour individually, if not all simultaneously. Bismarck managed to prevent the ruin of the Empire through the cultivation of a dizzying series of overlapping and partly conflicting alliances. This wouldn't last long. Following Bismarck's fall from grace with the Kaiser these alliances and treaties soon collapsed, and quickly a "cauchemar des coalitions" formed, leading to the allied powers of France, Germany, Russia and the UK declaring war on the German Empire in 1914, partly to re-establish the European balance of power and prevent Germany evolving into a supremely powerful hegemony.

All of this is expressed eloquently and clearly by Kissinger who goes into immense detail explaining the foundations upon which the European countries and their political ideologies were built, showing the reader how these ideologies and beliefs — for better or worse — helped sway foreign policy and dictate history. And all of this is contained in only a single chapter, as the book continues across the continents and into the future, predicting the unique challenges that will be faced as a result of cyber technology and the effects it will surely have in continuing to shape the **world order**.

Solange — “When I Get Home”

By Raphael Gaete

Is it a jam, or is it a song? This difficult and necessary question troubles even the most well-established artists in the RnB music industry. Sometimes the question is merely part of an observation, the outcome of which takes little to nothing away from the enjoyment of the music. A significant proportion of Frank Ocean’s ‘Blonde’, for instance, is meandering and playful balladry; lacking in a traditional verse-chorus structure—it’s also regarded as one of the best albums of this decade. Being experimental and free in an approach to a record, then, is no bad thing.

On the other side of the fence, however, sits music that is so fleeting that it becomes stagnant, with Solange Knowles’ ‘When I Get Home’ an unfortunate example. The album is one continuous stream of sounds, which ebbs and flows at points, but never really does much to break out of its shell.

As one track flows into another almost seamlessly, it is difficult to pick out highlights. ‘Almeda’, where Solange celebrates her ‘black faith’ with the help of Atlanta rapper Playboi Carti, is a contender. Again, the song makes little sense when taken out of context—indeed, it leaks into the first few seconds of the following track, as if the boundary between the two songs is somehow semi-permeable. The other side of this partition, ‘Time (is)’, happens to be quite beautiful, with the song featuring lethargic jazzy piano riffs as an accompaniment to Solange’s repeated message: ‘You’ve gotta know’.

And undoubtedly, the sonics of the record can be brilliant. Musical ideas on tracks such as ‘Down With The Clique’ or ‘Way To The Show’ are wonderful, but after a minute or so Solange seemingly loses her way a little—she is often quite happy to stretch an idea out past breaking point rather than progress its sound. As a jam or an ambient vibe this would be passable, but for a full length album it tends to get a little tedious. ‘Jerrod’ in particular is much too bare to last over three minutes—the eventual transition into the next song is a welcome relief from the formless space of uncertainty created by the track.

It was always going to be difficult to follow up such an important album as ‘A Seat At The Table’ with something of a similar calibre. ‘When I Get Home’ is an easy, satisfying listen, and the cohesion of the songs are commendable. However, it simply contains too many tracks with too little going on to be considered on par with her previous record. The sounds and musical ideas were there for something special to be created, but Solange missed the mark.

Album rating: 6/10



Art by Rena Hoshino

Mortal Engines

By Ben Mansfield

Written by Philip Reeve, *Mortal Engines* is the first book in the breath-taking four-part series regarding a post apocalyptic world in which Europe is filled with Traction cities: huge behemoth settlements on caterpillars and wheels. London, far from one of the largest predators, has been forced to leave old Britain in search of food, i.e. other Traction cities.

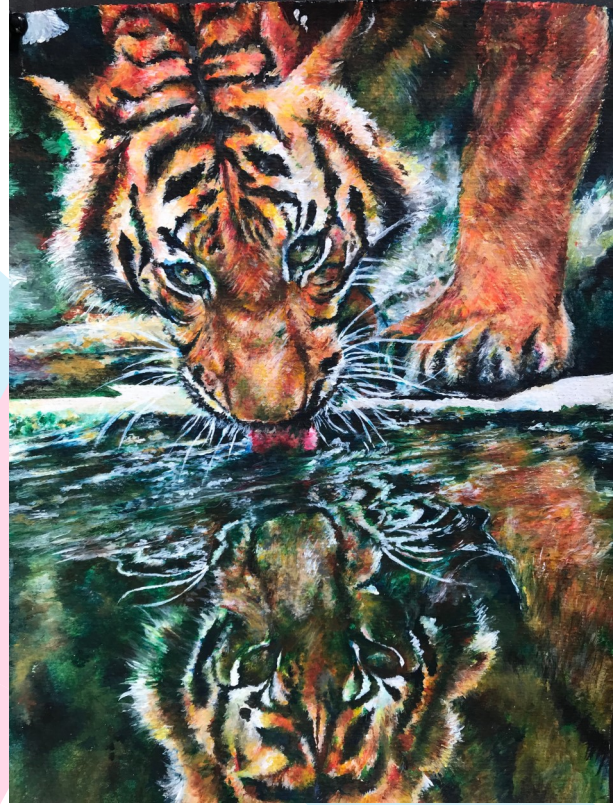
The first book follows the adventures of Tom Natsworthy, a Londoner thrust into the outside world. While the concept of the storyline may

be difficult to understand, it soon begins to pull you in with the alluring characters, unexpected twists and incredible sense of adventure.

I really enjoyed this book, and despite its strange setting, it is one of the most intriguing books I have ever read.

A definite must for any fantasy fans.

My rating: ★★★★★



Art by Lauren Britan, Riya Myanger and Rudi Wilmshurst

Native Son: A Raw Look Into Oppression

By Harry Brooks

Readers typically root for the protagonist of the story to defy their social boundaries and stereotypes; we yearn for Romeo to live 'happily ever after' with Juliet despite his family's disapproval, we admire Elizabeth Bennet for refusing to marry for convenience. Hence, one might have hoped that the first bestselling black writer in America had produced an inspirational central character, who obtains the 'American Dream' through morally acceptable means and does not become the "jungle beast" he is expected to inevitably embody. To the dismay of many, Wright created an undeniably flawed protagonist.

Wright's exposé on the psychological impacts of oppression presents the demise of Bigger Thomas, a black man trapped in poverty on the South Side of Chicago. After gaining a job as a chauffeur for the rich and white Dalton family, he accidentally kills the youthful and forward-thinking Mary Dalton and attempts desperately to avoid a discovery of his involvement in her disappearance.

Initially, I felt inclined to feel pathos towards Bigger, due to his unjust circumstances that greatly limited his future e.g. his lack of education. Yet the increasingly abhorrent and unscrupulous crimes that he commits throughout the novel conflicted my sympathies and evoked a sense of utter disappointment in him.

On reflection, I appreciated that Bigger's indiscriminate and overwhelming hatred towards all white people had been ingrained by the racism inflicted on him since birth, thus impacting his reaction to these crimes. While initially numb to any feelings of remorse, he also develops a peculiar liberating sense of satisfaction from sucking the life out of Mary. It is understandable that the abnormal benevolence displayed by Mary and her communist boyfriend, Jan, would overwhelmingly disorientate him: "How on earth could he learn not to say *yessuh and yessum to white people in one night when had been saying it all his life long?*"

While Bigger's actions are, at the least, questionable, the tragedy lies in his absolute destiny for failure. 'Native Son' is a distressing read but a crucial comment on the unforgiving nature of 1930s America. Literature has an immense responsibility to expose such brutal realities of society. Progression is merely hindered without it.

Speed Review: Us

By Rena Hoshino

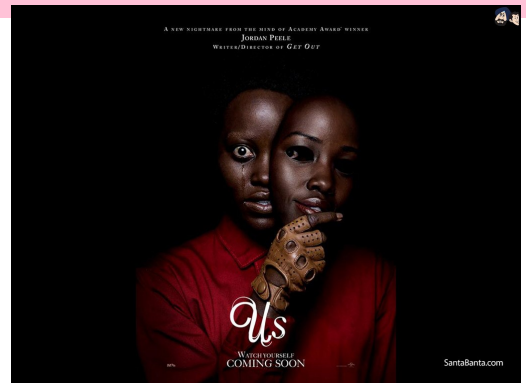
At first glance, *Us* is a movie about a home invasion— but by doppelgängers of the main characters. Standing ominously outside the holiday home of the family, the counterparts remain motionless, almost waiting for a reaction before striking and breaking into the home at an alarmingly fast pace. Tension is built up through the confrontation between Red and Adelaide Wilson (both played by Lupita Nyong'o), as well as the interactions between Gabe Wilson (played by Winston Duke), Zora Wilson (played by Shahadi Wright Joseph), Jason Wilson (played by Evan Alex) and their darker twins. The cinematography of the film is diverse, the lighting allows the movie to allude rather than to outright state, and with an amazingly talented cast which take on 2 roles -physically representing the good and bad- it proves itself worthy of the viewer's attention.

On the surface level, *Us* comes across as a simple psychological horror. Filled with visual and audio jump scares, just the right amount of gore, and the comedic one-liners one would expect from Peele, it takes the audience on a rollercoaster of emotions. The plot itself is intriguing, and the physical contrasts between the original people and the slightly more unhinged versions of them can be analysed as the rejection of the darker sides of yourself leading to unhealthy outlets. But just as with *Get Out*, this movie is also used as a commentary on society: to ignore the minorities of society is to hold back progress— however, to integrate and give the same opportunities to everyone is to offer them the freedom to choose good or bad. Instead the untethered have to resort to immoral actions to make themselves heard, and forcibly take the experience from people who have lived in privilege everyday.

However, it does lack a sense of finality, and instead leaves us with a ton of questions—What will happen now that the tethered have taken over? Are they just going to return to normality and create a new society out of the ashes of the old? Will the family ever find out the truth about Adelaide?

Perhaps Peele wanted to bring forward the idea of the character's lives continuing even after the camera is turned off; it certainly leaves the audience wondering.

My rating: ★★★★★☆



Bohemian Rhapsody: A forgettable film for an unforgettable band

By Binarie Balasuriya

As an avid Queen enthusiast, I must admit I had high expectations for this film. I believe it had the potential to educate the world about Queen's great rise to fame much more than it did- especially with the original Queen members, lead guitarist Brian May and drummer Roger Taylor, overseeing the making of the biopic.

Firstly, there were parts of the film that simply happened too quickly. The beginning for instance- we open with Mercury, who, still using his birth name, Farrokh Bulsara, is working as a baggage handler at Heathrow Airport. Not long after this, he meets a student rock band called Smile, just after their lead singer has quit, and within minutes, he has taken that place, renamed himself Freddie Mercury, the band Queen, and suddenly, they're touring the U.S.!

A particular scene in this film that just didn't sit well with me from the outset was the scene in which Freddie admits his sexuality to Mary Austin, his partner from 1970-76. In the emotional scene, Mercury (played by Rami Malek) looks his lover in the eyes and says, "I think I'm bisexual." But Mary, (Lucy Boynton) staring right back at him, in almost pity, says, "Freddie. You're gay." At first glance, this scene makes it look almost as though the film is trying to erase the singer's bisexuality, which may seem shocking, especially now that we live in a world where relationships between the same sexes has gradually become accepted by a lot more people than it had in the 70s. But, as a matter of fact, this is how the conversation between the two actually went, so the film must be commended for its accuracy in that scene compared with the flaws made elsewhere in the biopic. Furthermore, it must be said, that Mercury was, in actual fact, notoriously very secretive about his personal life, including the details regarding his sexuality and his health during his AIDS diagnosis. He wanted the public to concentrate on Queen's music and refused to have his identity defined by this one part of him. So, although it would have been nice to have a scene that made his sexuality more explicit, the way the film presented this makes sure that there isn't too much attention drawn away from the story- which, in a way, is what Freddie would have wanted: not to be remembered for his sexual identity but for his music. His art.

On top of this, just before Queen's biggest performance yet at Live Aid, Mercury reveals that he has AIDS to his bandmates. Whilst this is a moving moment and a powerful way to build up to the final performance of the film, it's completely inaccurate. According to, Jim Hutton, Mercury's partner from 1985 to his death in 1991, Freddie was diagnosed in April 1987- two years after the Live Aid performance. I feel this incorrect timeline is disrespectful to Freddie and the millions of people who have suffered and died from AIDS. It makes the film seem almost as though all the key parts of Freddie's life have been crammed into this 2-hour piece, and the order changed to give it a happy ending, but it could have been done

differently. Freddie Mercury, even after being diagnosed with AIDS, grew stronger on the inside, despite growing weaker on the outside and as Roger Taylor said in the "Queen: Days of our Lives" documentary (2011), Freddie "was determined to work right up to the last minute". And that is exactly what he did. This perseverance to continue his work even with his health deteriorating, is a quality of Mercury that isn't given as much time in the film as it deserves. Queen didn't stop producing hits after Freddie was diagnosed. They kept going until the time came for their lead singer to leave us.

And I believe this strength of both Freddie as an individual, and Queen altogether, deserved to be shown in the film.

And to still give the film its happy ending, perhaps they could have even included footage of Queen's most famous hits still being played today, around the world, and bringing people closer together through music that everyone can sing along to.

Having said that, I feel that the Live Aid performance almost makes it all worth the wait- it was a memorable performance by Freddie Mercury in 1985, and is almost equally as memorable by Rami Malek, whose performance was what stood out to me most from the rest of the film. His portrayal of Freddie Mercury was phenomenal, winning him an Oscar, a BAFTA and a Golden Globe award, all being for Best Actor, which I believe was well-deserved. He embodied the lead singer's inimitable personality flawlessly down to the smallest gesture. Towards the end of the film, particularly during Queen's Live Aid performance, he is almost indistinguishable from Mercury. It was almost as though the legend himself had been brought back to life right before us.

So, would I recommend *Bohemian Rhapsody*? Yes and no. If you're looking for an accurate story of Queen and their lead man, Freddie Mercury's life, I wouldn't call this the most reliable source, but, then again, it's also a movie- one with a killer soundtrack that's hard not to love. So, in short, barring the errors in the timeline and the hasty beginning, whatever you thought of the rest of the film, in the end, *Bohemian Rhapsody* will rock you.

My rating: ★★☆☆☆



How beautiful is the beautiful game?

By Daniel Hitch

For centuries, people have been kicking sphere-shaped objects around fields in an attempt to enjoy themselves. Around the year 1860, these people decided to create an official set of rules so that their pastime became somewhat more organised, which led to the formation of competitive football teams in the subsequent decades. Another hundred years down the line, British reporter Stuart Hall popularised the phrase “The Beautiful Game”, which he used to describe the play of one of these teams - Manchester City. The idea of playing beautiful football has captured the imagination of millions of football fans worldwide, becoming the cornerstone of many team’s philosophies, some even debating whether they would rather see their team play glorious football or compromise this for a duller and less attractive style that brings success and trophies. However, in light of recent events surrounding the much-loved game of football, I have come to question how beautiful the beautiful game really is.

First of all, for something to be beautiful by definition it must somehow please the senses. However, beauty is entirely subjective. It can be moments of exceptional skill or talent; Lionel Messi dribbling through a packed midfield or Sergio Ramos sweeping across and stealing the ball away from the attacker, but beauty could also be a moment of passion and excitement on a muddy pitch on a cold and wet Sunday morning in Hertfordshire. In my eyes, Kevin De Bruyne splitting the defence with a perfectly weighted through ball is just as stunning as a goalmouth scramble with defenders throwing themselves between the ball and the gaping net while attackers struggle to thunder the ball through the sea of bodies. The magic of these moments is why we return again and again to watch the game, in hope of witnessing a moment of beauty we could never have anticipated or even dreamt of beforehand.

My Grandad, however, argues that for a truly “beautiful game”, we surely need 22 players of exquisite skill producing mesmerising and effective football for 90 minutes — this rarely happens. If this is so hard to create then have we never actually seen a beautiful game of football? Of course not, but I think most people would agree with me when I say that the best games occur when some of the best players are pitted against each other. A player from the Premier League is more likely to produce a moment of beauty than a player from League Two, but that doesn’t mean the latter isn’t capable of doing so. All teams follow the same rules as “The Beautiful Game”, but the abilities of the players who are less able to produce magic and the coaches who can interpret the game inversely to the tactical greats can detract from the subjectively beautiful side of football. This therefore means that only the best teams can enjoy the riches obtained from astronomical television deals, as supporters are more enticed to watch the best teams play.

However, ask any dedicated supporter from these “lesser” clubs, and I imagine they wouldn’t trade their Saturday afternoon experience standing beneath a small wooden shelter, in support of their local team, for the glitz and glamour of a 50,000-seater stadium in the Premier League. I recently went a game between Welwyn Garden City and Coleshill Town with an attendance of just 96; the visiting team having travelled around 3 hours from the West Midlands. After equalising to make the score 2-2, the Coleshill Town players went over and celebrated with their trio of travelling fans - who looked absolutely ecstatic in the corner. The goal was, to put it bluntly, unskilled and almost hideous, but that moment was beautiful.



Due to the subjective nature of beauty, two people can experience the same event with contradictory levels of pleasure. I can watch Eden Hazard score a fantastic 85th minute winner to knock Liverpool out of the cup and describe the experience as beautiful, whereas the Liverpool fan beside me would find the goal was horrific and dreadful. Our judgement as to what is beautiful in football is often clouded by the colour of the shirt worn by the player. Fans are so passionate about their team, which can be beautiful during occurrences such as the spine-tingling renditions of “You’ll Never Walk Alone” sung by Liverpool fans and the displays of huge “Tifos” (large choreographed displays such as banners) erected by Real Madrid’s Ultras Sur.





However, this passion and craving for victory can manifest itself into hostility and hatred towards rivals, and often bubbles over to develop a situation far from beautiful. Take the 2015 matchup between Buenos Aires sides Boca Juniors and River Plate in the knockout stages of the Copa Libertadores. With their side 45 minutes from defeat and exit from the tournament, Boca fans made a hole in the protective tunnel so that they could direct homemade tear gas at the River Plate players, sending four to hospital with burns to their skin and eyes. Unfortunately, the remainder of the match, and the footballing spectacle it would have produced, had to be abandoned and Boca were thrown out of the competition. The

fans' desire to win (or their fear of defeat), may begin to explain these terrible acts, so does winning mean too much?

When defeat does come, it is met with uncontrollable rage; according to *Salvemos al Futbol*, there have been 300 "soccer-related deaths" in South America. Incidents in Europe are usually tame in comparison to this, but it isn't uncommon to hear of fatal fights between opposing hooligans involving dangerous flares and explosives. Can we really justify calling football the beautiful game when it means that people are hurt and killed?

In defence of this, let us remember the summer of 2018 when the England side, led by Gareth Southgate, became national heroes as they reached the semi-finals of the World Cup, equalling their best finish since the infamous side of 1966. The whole country was brought together and united in their support; the everyday troubles and conflicts were briefly forgotten, as the nation bathed in a feast of football. For those few weeks, England was truly a beautiful place to be and the cause of this was football; albeit the football being played itself was frankly quite mundane.

Now we move forward to the 8th of December 2018, when one of the key members of England's World Cup squad, Raheem Sterling, was racially abused by a small section of Chelsea fans in the front row at Stamford Bridge. This was same player that had valiantly represented our country at the World Cup, just months earlier, and the same player who received unjust negative attention from the media all tournament long. The game, which should have been a beautiful day for Chelsea fans, as they beat reigning champions Manchester City 2-0, was turned into an embarrassment, as their notoriously racist nature made the headlines once again. This is not the first time Chelsea fans have been the culprits of racism: in 2015 a group of supporters were convicted of pushing a black commuter off a Paris Metro train chanting "We're racist, we're racist, and that's the way we like it"; and just 5 days after the Sterling incident they were convicted of anti-Semitic chanting regarding their rivals Spurs during a Europa League game in Hungary.

Although racism in football has come a long way since the days when it was a revelation to find one black player in a Premier League starting line-up, there is still clear evidence that racism hasn't disappeared, and continues to stain our beautiful game.

Football is sometimes described as a "universal language", people of all backgrounds, religions and races across the globe come together to play. Everybody understands the rules of the game, which provides a common ground for all fans, even if the dialects they speak are different. One of my most beautiful football experiences was when my brother and I were able to play alongside Spaniards in the Canary Islands. Their voices made no sense to us, but we could understand their shouts for the ball, their decisions in possession and share their unparalleled joy when scoring.

Despite the terrible moments that happen within football, as far as I'm concerned, the beauty outshines the ugliness a hundred times over. Not only the excitement provided by magnificent athletes on the field, but the connections football can create off the field are unrivalled by anything else in modern-day society. Sport is fantastic, and we must make sure it stays beautiful no matter happens to our world.



Doctors in Distress because of the NHS

By Katie Scott

Medical school lasts five years — sometimes even six. A degree in medicine is arguably one of the most difficult to obtain. There is a huge amount of content — students must memorise the entire anatomy of the human body, as well as understand how each organ system, nerve and type of specialised cell works and how it may malfunction — and that is only by the end of the second year. Those who show no interest in studying medicine often find it impossible to comprehend why someone would subject themselves to such an intense university course, and to an even more demanding job. Increasingly, those with medical degrees are beginning to question why they do what they do.

The issue is not the medicine. It is the NHS. Medicine is a fascinating field. It is so complex and diverse, that there truly is something for everyone. There is a huge range of jobs and careers available, from psychiatry to cancer research to cardiothoracic surgery. It can be difficult to understand how, even after being presented with such a large range of options, many doctors still end up quitting medicine altogether.

Someone who devoted many years of their life and many thousands of pounds to getting a medical degree, would not give up lightly the life they dreamed of. To leave the field they once so desperately wanted to work in, would be one of the hardest decisions they were ever forced to make.

The main issues are these: doctors are overstretched, underpaid, exhausted, stressed, misunderstood and underappreciated. Some of the negative aspects of the job are difficult to avoid: patients dying, anxiety, patients' or families' reactions — whether they are angry, sad or do not understand. However, many problems could be fixed, and are caused, by the National Health Service.

In his painfully honest book “This is Going to Hurt”, Adam Kay, a former obstetrics and gynaecology registrar, describes his experience of working for the NHS and what led him to make the decision to quit medicine altogether. He describes many instances where, despite his shift ending at a reasonable time, he was forced to stay several hours late, due to emergency patients or understaffing. This is very common, due to the unpredictable nature of medicine, and cannot be solely blamed on the NHS. However, the fact that doctors are paid not based on how much medicine they actually practice, or the amount of time they spend working, but based on a set schedule of hours of work, is due to the NHS. Doctors work much longer hours than is moral or frankly healthy. Not only do they essentially devote their life to their job, but they are also paid an embarrassing amount, compared to how much they deserve — not just based on the time they put in, but also the nature of their work.

Kay also describes numerous occasions where people have had to make three- or even four-way swaps to get a few hours off for their own wedding ceremony. From his own experience, Kay recounts having no choice, but to return from abroad in the middle of a two week holiday, as there was no-one available to cover his shift, despite everything being agreed many months in advance.

One could argue that the NHS just does not have the money to recruit new doctors, or pay current ones more, which I am sure is partially true. However, one must also consider the fact, that if doctors were paid based on how much time they spent working, then it would suggest that the government condones the inhumane amount of time doctors are forced to work.

According to an article in *The Times* from March 2018: “More than half of junior doctors finishing basic training last year did not continue on an NHS career path. In 2011, 71 per cent of doctors completing the two-year foundation programme entered training to become GPs or hospital specialists. By 2017 this had fallen to 43 per cent.”

Many people hold the view that NHS doctors are highly paid, based on consultants' salaries (the most a consultant can be paid — with bonuses — is £180,000 a year). However, becoming a consultant takes between 7 and 13 years of working as a junior doctor. During this period, a junior doctor earns below £40,000 a year on average.

To conclude, the NHS must change. If things continue as they are now, the number of doctors, as well as that of healthcare staff in general, will fall dangerously low. Students are being and continue to be, deterred from entering into a career in medicine. Not only could this have potentially disastrous consequences for the health of the nation, but people with remarkable aptitude for the field of medicine, will have their skills wasted, as they spend their lives in a different career. People are dying. They are dying as a direct consequence of the institution that is commonly referred to as ‘the closest thing Britain has to a national religion’.



Art by Nicole Okpokiri and Halimah Hussain

Is charging the solution for combating non-urgent A&E visits?

By Amber Khan

The fact that our national health service is under mounting pressure has been well documented; chronic underfunding and staffing shortages along with an ever-rising demand threaten the ability of the NHS to deliver on the fundamentals, principally quality of care and patient safety.

This has presented the question - is it time to introduce charges?

It should be noted, firstly, that charges already do exist within the NHS, and that this is, and has for a long time, been an ongoing discussion. Since its founding in 1948, charges for prescriptions, for example, have been introduced, abolished and reintroduced repeatedly. More recently, there have been suggestions of establishing charges across various areas, from lifestyle-induced complications to missed hospital appointments. However, a predominant focus has been on accident and emergency services.

In 2014, a survey carried out by doctors.net.uk asked its members how best to ease the burden faced by A&E facilities, and one third of the respondents were in favour of charging patients up to £10 for visits deemed unnecessary. This went on to spark a debate within the healthcare community. Those in support argue that we have reached a point at which the principal of free healthcare is being abused. People with minor complaints are turning to already overstretched A&E services as an immediate alternative to waiting for a GP consultation, costing the NHS an average of up to 4.5 times more per appointment.

“This government are committed to maintaining and delivering that vital four-hour commitment to patients, but since it was announced in 2000, there are nearly 9 million more visits to our A&Es, up to 30% of which NHS England estimates do not need to be made, and the tide is continuing to rise.” – Jeremy Hunt, January 2017

In theory, the introduced charges would be small and nonetheless immensely effective in encouraging a more considerate and responsible use of healthcare services, allowing for A&E resources to be focused on those in urgent need.

What is more, this system is something already proven to be successful, operating in a number of developed countries around the world, from Sweden to Australia, as well as much closer to home in the British Channel Islands.

On the other hand, most are strongly opposed to the idea of any charges being implemented. How can it be justified to refuse some of the most vulnerable members of society access to basic healthcare? The whole con-

cept of the evident economic discrimination-which introducing charges would indirectly advocate- thoroughly undercuts the very core values and principles of which the NHS was founded upon: *“That it [access to NHS services] be based on clinical need, not ability to pay”*
- nhs.uk

Furthermore, this system would not only deem A&E facilities inaccessible for those unable to pay, but also deter those able yet unwilling, an addition which would only be detrimental when many, at present, are already somewhat resistant to seeking any help in the first place.

Even the potential financial gain is less inviting than it may seem at first glance; the risk of the administrations and funding involved in setting up and maintaining such a system ultimately becomes the real waste of NHS resources and therefore renders it counterproductive.

Overall, it is undeniably clear that something must be done. Changes must be made if the pressure on A&E services is to be eased, however it seems that introducing charges, whilst having some advantages, is most certainly not the best way forwards.

Instead, a solution could lie in putting a greater emphasis on schemes, such as the NHS choose well scheme, which places a focus on increasing public awareness and educating the community in how to better choose the appropriate healthcare system for their condition. Helping people to make better and more informed judgements will ensure that A&E is always accessible for those who need it.

“The NHS is one of the best and most cost-effective health services in the world. It is universally admired as a just institution: none of us has to face the financial burdens of illness alone. However, it is also a system under increasing pressure.”

– BMA council report, March 2018



Biotechnology: The Face of Tomorrow

By Chaandni Balachandran

Throughout pop culture history, the ‘future’ has been portrayed as fantastical and full of wild inventions, plucked from the roots of our imagination. Flying cars, time travel and alien invasion are just a few of the things that come to mind when one thinks of futuristic life. The future will inevitably hold unimaginable innovations and new inventions which — as life-changing as they may be — will not be as drastic and whimsical as we think. The majority of these ‘wild inventions’ will take place in a subtler form — in the form of medicine.

Since the technological and digital revolutions, modern medicine and healthcare have been completely reshaped and a multitude of new opportunities has been opened up to us.

Making prosthetic limbs using plaster cast is a very effective process; however, the majority of amputees (predominantly in developing countries) do not have easy access to a trained prosthetist and those that do, usually can’t afford it.

A cheaper alternative and solution to this problem is: to print them.

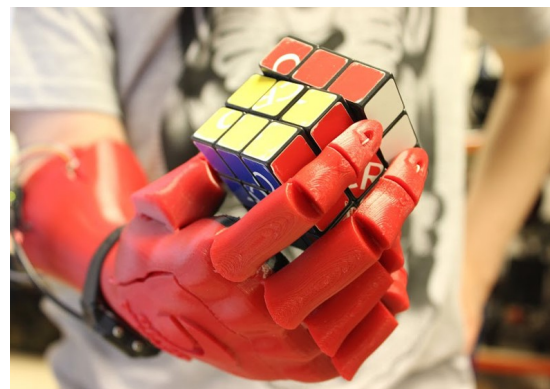
Organisations such as ‘Open Bionics’ and ‘e-NABLE’ are dedicated to the revolutionising of prosthetics and are changing lives for the better with their 3-D printed limbs. They provide amputees with the opportunity to make their lives easier for a much more affordable price. ‘Open Bionics’ manufactures their bionic hands by 3-D scanning the wearer’s residual limb through a phone camera, which creates the design for the prosthetic limb using 3-D modelling software. The hand, socket and the rest of the mechanical components of the hand are then 3-D printed. Sensors placed on the wearer’s muscles enable an electrical signal to be sent out from the joint that allows the hand to move specific areas of muscle when flexed. At \$1200, ‘Open Bionics’ 3-D printed hand is 30 times cheaper than other alternatives, making it far more accessible and affordable to the general public. Similarly, ‘e-NABLE’ uses a 3-D file as the basis for its design and the 3-D printer uses the coordinates supplied by this file to print the limb out. On average, a hand from ‘e-NABLE’ can cost as little as \$65 and whilst the functioning of these hands are limited in comparison with injected moulded prosthetics, they are extremely useful as ‘transition prosthetics’. These can be used as starting points for other prosthetists to create customised prosthetics and are also good options for people with reduced access to healthcare.

As I mentioned before, I do not think that the future will be quite what was depicted in the movie ‘Back to the Future II’ — in terms of hover boards and self-tying shoelaces — however the film was right about the future’s increased use of robots. In years to come, the prescriptions given to us by our doctors and general practitioners may be distributed by ‘ATM-like robots’; remotely controlled by providers or algorithms to ensure that we are given the right doses at the right times. This would ensure that patients are taking their medication as instructed.

But it doesn’t stop there. Robots are now participating in caring for patients face-to-face. ‘Veebot’ is a phlebotomist robot founded by a group of engineers from Stanford University that claims that it can draw blood faster and safer than any human phlebotomist can. The robot does this through image analysis that matches the view of the camera in the robot with a model of vein anatomy, enabling the robot to pick the best vein to draw blood from and subsequently do so.

Furthermore, robots are increasingly being programmed to be physical therapy coaches — spurring on patients and motivating them to stick to their exercise regimes. Robots such as ‘Veebot’ and physical therapy robots fit into their own category of ‘rehabilitation robots’ which essentially sense and monitor human movement and positioning. They then use the information they have gleaned to interact with patients and the environment. The use of these bots in physical therapy promotes individualised and tailored treatments to a degree that may be otherwise unachievable through a human physical therapist. Bots like these are incredibly useful in helping stroke victims walk and rebuilding their posture as well as helping patients with severe mobility problems. Although this is not the flashy type of robot we see in movies - made from clunky rectangular chunks of metal with hyper-computerised voices - rehabilitation robots have become a vital part of modern medicine and make up some of the frontiers of biotechnology and modern medicine.

The world as we know it is rapidly changing around us, faster than we could even begin to comprehend. Medicine, technology and digital equipment are combining forces to permanently revolutionise the landscape of healthcare. From mobile phone apps that can diagnose cancer to face transplants, biotechnology is a sector of science that is growing exponentially and that is going to become a vital part of our lives in years to come. The inventions I have mentioned above are both wild and fantastical and were completely unimaginable even 20 years ago. The scientific discoveries and innovations that the future holds are going to be even more extraordinary than they are today and at this rate, I’d be surprised if we didn’t have flying cars in a few years.



5 Ways Of Looking At A Forest

I

Home to creatures all around,
Overhead and underground

II

A great army clad in bark,
Their standards waving in the
wind

III

Branches grasping for sunlight,
Struggling for the open sky

IV

Indistinct whispers all around,
Leading travellers off the path

V

Roots dug deep into time,
Steadfast to all man's changes.

—David Nendick



10 things I wish I had known in year 7

By Kalyani Ganeshruban

Hi, I'm Kalyani and as a sixth former, I think it's fair to say I've been at Owens for a while so I'd like to impart some wisdom that I have accumulated over these long, long years...

- Firstly, please don't feel the need to buy the school rucksack. You can if you want but if you have your eye on a jazzier school bag, go for it. While we're at it, girls, don't buy the P.E shorts. You will never wear them. And indoor and outdoor trainers? They're the same thing. Please don't waste your money.
- This may seem obvious but only carry the exercise books you need for that day. Books for other subjects you can keep at home or in your locker. You're not a pack mule :)
- Your locker is your best friend. It *will prevent future back pain*.
- **JOIN AS MANY CLUBS AS YOU CAN.** It's a really good way to meet and make new friends outside of your class. Whether you're an Olympian level netballer, novice at chess or utter beginner in the art of pottery, most clubs cater to all levels, especially in year 7. It's harder to join a club later on. If you try and get involved in the school community, you'll feel more comfortable at school in general.
- If you lend a hairband in P.E you will:
 - ⇒ Gain a new friend
 - ⇒ Never see that hairband ever again
- Don't be scared that you'll miss the bus after school. You have 10 minutes before they leave. That's more than enough time; even for your small legs.
 - Having said that, 10 minutes is more than enough time to walk *straight there*. *Not to go to the toilet and go to your locker and chat with your newfound friends and then leisurely make your way to the buses. In this case you will miss the bus. Speaking from experience here kids.*
 - **BE YOURSELF.** There's no way I can say this in a non-cliché way but hey, it's a cliché for a reason. Being yourself is the best way to make genuine friends for life. Don't try and be cool to impress people you don't even like. Frankly, no one is cool in year 7.
 - Don't compare yourself to others. Whether it's marks or looks or personalities etc. It's just not worth it.
 - Please don't worry about topic tests, half-terms or end of years that you will be doing in year 7. Try your best but don't stress too much about them. Honestly, in the grand scheme of life, they're pretty inconsequential. But you know, still work and stuff.
 - Friendship circles change and evolve. As the year progresses you will meet different people, get along great with some and fall out with others. These changes may feel scary "but every little things, gonna be alright" - Bob Marley.

And most importantly; **ENJOY YOURSELVES.** Secondary school really broadens your horizons. You become much more independent and can now take part in so many exciting clubs and events. Remember that everyone else is in the same boat as you and are feeling exactly the way you are. Now, there's only one last thing to say...

Welcome to Owens.

Short story competition winners

A Note From the Team:

Thank you everyone for all your amazing entries! It was very difficult to decide on a winner and we loved reading all of your stories. Well done everyone!

1st place: As I Fall.

By Aidan Mitchell 7L

I think it's a mirage at first. A sick hallucination of my own creation, torturing me with release. I ignore it. After all this time in this god forsaken cave, I don't need to feel the crushing disappointment when the door disappears, just out of reach. No, not a door. It looks like a portal, a glimpse into another realm, if you believe in that fantasy mumbo-jumbo. I sit up and walk away, or at least I try to. My feet are glued to the spot. I can't move or look away from the passage. A small voice speaks up in my brain, telling me to go in. I start to panic. Have I finally lost it? Has my brain abandoned hope and is guiding me to my demise? I won't move, I tell myself. I won't move from this spot. Wild horses couldn't drag me through that door, I think to myself.

And then I walk through.

I don't know why I did it. My legs simply moved of their own accord. I instantly realized that this was no trick of the mind, no mad dream. A dream cannot fill your nose with smells, wrap your heart with warmth, or cover your eyes with beauty. I walked forward, no longer questioning my desires. I stand in silent awe at the wondrous marvel presented to me. I breathe in it, enjoying the humid air on my filthy back. I smile. I have found my happy place.

The days merge into weeks, which merge into months. I give myself in to the island, accepting the gifts it gives me in the form of water and food. I lose track of time. My body now relies on the island. Any hope of escape is obliterated. This is my life now, and I love it. I gave into it and found sweet bliss. Or at least, that is what I tell myself.

I don't know how long it has been since the thoughts first started. They came from a dark place in my mind, the place I used to live before I joined the island. They scream at me constantly, demanding my attention, asking me questions. Questions that challenge my happiness. Things like the desire to know what the island is, what it is feeding me, when should I leave and return to the outside world. They consume me, breaking me down, destroying me mentally. And I realize I am trapped. Mentally, by my brain, a twisted and horrible monster of which I am stuck in, endlessly running through, trying to escape, and physically, by the island's horrible maze like design. I am corrupted and broken. A shell of my former self until I can't stand it.

I snap. Snap like an elastic band. I run, try to escape, try to get out of this nightmare while only furthering my suffering. I scream at the top of my lungs, trying to see if anyone else is here whilst only further defining my loneliness. I climb up the rock trying to find the portal but realizing that I'm lost. I reach the top of the rock, looking around for escape, while only then realising the escape I have been searching for is in front of me.

I jump, leaping off the rock, while I laugh with the realisation.

It won't be the fall that kills me. I have been falling since I first entered that cave. And survived. It won't be the landing that kills me. I landed on this island. And survived. It will be my brain that kills me. I listened to it. And died.

So I laugh on my way down, laugh as I leave this hell, laugh

as
I
fall.



2nd place: The Day My Mum Invented A Portal

By Athina Micheal 8J

“Brian!”

Shaken awake roughly I awoke to find my mum standing over me. Every crease and mark in her face was highlighted, heavy bags and bruising beneath her eyes. Her hair was pushed up in clumps and her nail varnish was chipped and cracked.

Rubbing my eyes, I slid out of bed, blinking rapidly in the light. “What time is-”. Before I could finish, mum placed a firm hand round my wrist and yanked me out of my bedroom, almost pulling my arm out of its socket. Wincing in pain, my eyes widened as she crouched down and faced me.

“Honey” she started, her voice shaking. “You know that my job hasn’t always been the most honest. And some people don’t like that”. She tried to hide it but I noticed her eyes twitched and she glanced towards the window. The blind was drawn.

Pulling and twisting myself out of her grip, I ran to the window, my heart drumming in my chest. “Brian, no!” yelled mum, running towards me. Lifting the blind, I reeled back in shock, falling to the ground, in a daze.

People. Hundreds of them. People waving guns, flaming torches, knives, axes.

Struggling to breathe, I stumbled back from the window, falling into my mother’s grip. “They.... They want you.” I said dumbly, staring at the blinds.

“THERE’S THE BOY!” a voice yelled, and there was a sudden cheer. Gasping I turned to face my mother. A tear rolled down her cheek. “Brian, go to the basement, *go no. Don’t look back. Don’t ever look back. Go in the furthest room. You will find something. It will help you.*”

The door was starting to shake, splinters of wood collecting on the welcome mat below. I could hear heavy thumps, rowdy cheers and yelling.

“Mum what-”

“Brian, mummy is telling you to *go now*”

Tears pouring down my cheeks I gripped her arm. “No. I’m not leaving you mum. Please!” There was a sudden noise, as a large crack appeared on the front door.

“Brian, go!” mum screamed, shoving me in the back. “I need to face them on my own.”

“When will you come and get me?” I sobbed, staring into her eyes.

Biting her nail she glanced away, deep pain and hurt visible in her eyes.

BANG

The door fell to the ground.

“GO!” mum bellowed, showing me. “Run as fast as you can honey and don’t-”

There was a sudden breeze of wind past my ear, and a sudden stinging pain. “Aah!” I yelled, bringing my hand to my ear, feeling a graze.

I stared at mum. But she wasn’t staring at me. She was holding something on her head.

In her head.

An arrow.

The door fell to the ground.

Dazed, she placed a hand to her head. Bringing it back she gasped, seeing blood drip around her on the floor, staining the floor a deep red. Suddenly she keeled over and vomited a mixture of blood and bile, clutching her stomach in agony. Like a piece of paper she crumpled up onto the floor, her eyes wide and blank, surrounded in a deep, oozing pool of scarlet.

My world slowed down. All I could hear was my screams ringing in my ears, saliva spraying from my mouth.

“MUM!” I screamed dropping to my knees. “MUM MUMMUM!” holding her hand I screamed and sobbed, shaking my head in agony. “Come back, please come back” I gasped, tears mixing with the blood on the floor. Putting my head on her chest, I gasped and shook, tears streaming down my cheeks.

“There’s the brat!” A six foot man came rushing towards me, black leather gloved hands outstretched, a gun slung behind his back.

I should have run but I was frozen in my bubble of just me and mum.

“LEAVE US ALONE!” I screamed, trembling as I clutched my mum’s hand. “LEAVE US-”

With a roar, he grappled me and I rolled over and over with a thump. Bringing his gun out he smiled a horrible smile, pointing the barrel at my temple. “This is for my mum,” he announced, even though I had no idea what he was talking about.

Jerking my knee up, I kneed him in the groin. With a groan he keeled over sideways, moaning in agony. Taking this chance, I ran, gasping for breath, I tumbled down the stone basement stairs, landing on my ankle. Wincing, I limped to the door at the furthest end, hearing their screams right behind me. Swinging open the door, I limped in, my throat sandpaper.

The room was empty. With a cry of anger, I fell to my knees, clutching my hair and moaning.

Wait.

I dared to peek through my fingers. This time I noticed a beige, musty cover obscuring the large object in the corner of the old basement. Pulling the cover, I gasped.

A shimmering pink object surrounded by polished sea lanterns gleamed back at me. Gasping, I stroked the surface, mind swimming with a thousand questions. I gasped as my hands went through the surface. Pulling it back in shock, I sunk to my knees, dumbfounded.

It was a portal.

Without warning a beautiful soft-skinned hand came through, grabbing my scrawny wrists. A face peeked through, giggling. It was a beautiful... fairy, with cascading golden locks and deep blue dancing eyes. With a click of its fingers I gasped as I saw a world within the portal. A world with a deep blue sky, shimmering lakes, blossoming fruit trees and tamed tigers riding alongside humans. My breath came in short, shaking, sharp gasps.

Giggling at my shocked expression, the fairy tightened her grip and pulled me in.



Art by Nicole Di

3rd Place:

By Ewan Connolly, Year 9

She remained still, focusing intently, staring straight ahead. A shiver ran down her spine as she stood motionless past the portal. What had happened? Before it looked dazzling and contained a kaleidoscope of colours. In truth, it was the opposite. The leaden clouds gathered like ghosts and cold drops of rain struck the back of her neck. The face of the moon, contorted into a mocking stare, only emitted despair and misery. Gloomy mist rolled in, obscuring what lay beyond. Blurs of ravens and scurrying rats rushed past her, now alerted by her presence. Her dad's voice was in her head, warning her not to go in. She remembered, long before these dark days, her father's warning to avoid the portal. "It's full of diseased rats" he'd say in a mock pirate voice.

How she loved that pretence. That warm memory of her father sustained through these dreadful hours. The disease had descended upon the small town only days ago. It had killed indiscriminately. Almost everyone it had touched had died a gruesome death and a handful of those who were spared death had become insane- murderous and bloodthirsty. Only a few seemed immune to this plague.

The cold rain drops chilled her and brought her back to the land of the 'living'. She looked around: still safe, no sign of *it following her through yet. The skeletal, weeping, dying trees were bent towards the ground as if reaching out with spindly hands to grasp one of the jagged, grey rocks to bar the entrance. She shifted her weight, determined to walk further, but paused. A momentary pause which could have been passed for nothing; yet she knew at the back of her mind, in the tiniest crevice of her mind that she had to carry on. Or that thing would catch up to her. She stepped through further and watched as the impenetrable darkness enveloped her and dissolved her shadow.*

The sense of claustrophobia threatened to overpower what calm she had left. Solitude squeezed. She let her eyes adjust to the gloom. Then slowly and uncertainly she inched forward away from the entrance and deeper into the depths of the cave. The only sounds that met her straining ears were (other than the occasional shuffle of her boots) the flapping of bats and the water going 'drip, drop, drip, drop.' Tentatively, she reached out her hand to feel where the cave was leading and failed to see it in front of her face. She stumbled blindly into a field of stones, falling onto the unforgiving rocky floor. Holding her bruised knees, she began to sob uncontrollably, and despair seeped into her heart.

She brushed herself down; her face and hands were dark with dirt from the cave floor, she heard a shuffle behind her. Her brain told her to run but her fear was obstinate and forced her to look up. There stood a grotesque abomination. His eyes blind, totally white, his head moving left and right searching for sound like a bird of prey. She did not move. She made no sound.

The monster stayed searching, for an eternity, and then slowly turned around and limped away from her. The sole survivor stayed where she was for hours. She did not move. She did not speak. She was afraid to breathe. Only as she walked back to the entrance of the portal and back to the world she knew did warmth begin to reduce her despair.



Art by Nicole Di

BREWERS' HALL

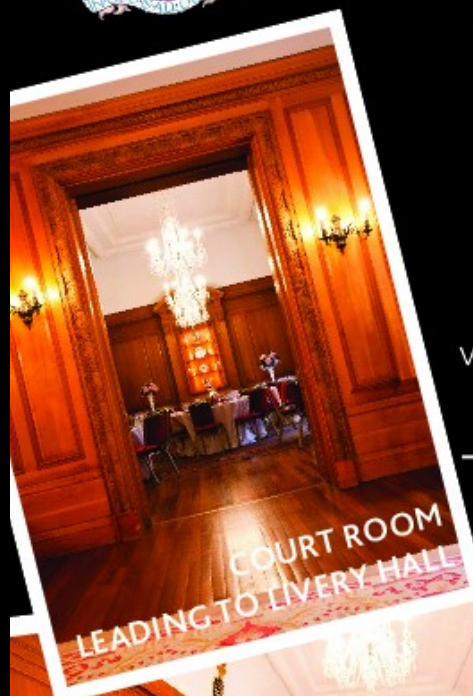
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Matilda and Theresa: How we respond to female leadership

By Alice Wood

Whatever your opinion of Theresa May and her politics, in our society, today objecting to her leadership of our country as Prime Minister on the grounds of her gender is considered unacceptable. However, in the past female leaders faced a difficult battle against traditional perceptions of women as weak and submissive as they tried to make their authority felt. An example of this is the 12th century leader the Empress Matilda, who, despite being the legitimate heir to the throne, had to fight for her crown against her cousin Stephen. Today, she is still left off the list of monarchs of England. The sexism Matilda faced still exists on a more subtle level, and although May is not exactly a great feminist icon of our time (look up the treatment of women in Yarl's Wood detention centre during her time as Home Secretary) this shouldn't discount that she has been treated differently to leading male politicians.

The Empress Matilda (or Maud/Maude) was born in 1102; the only legitimate child of Henry I to survive until adulthood. At the age of eleven she married the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry V (ruler of roughly what is now Germany) as part of a political alliance between the Emperor and her father. After her husband's death in 1125 she returned to England and in 1127 Henry I forced all of the English nobility to take an oath recognising Matilda as his sole heiress. However, when Henry died in 1137, Matilda was in Normandy with her new husband Geoffrey of Anjou, and her cousin Stephen of Blois immediately usurped the throne. With the backing of her influential half-brother Robert of Gloucester, Matilda launched a military campaign to win back the crown in 1139, triggering the beginning of a civil war. In 1141 Stephen was captured and Matilda effectively controlled the country, however she struggled to be accepted as queen and never managed to hold a coronation. Stephen was released later that year and fighting continued until 1147. However, after Stephen's death in 1154, Matilda's son Henry became king and Matilda became one of his chief advisors, succeeding through her son to achieve the power she had been denied in her own right.

As a female ruler in a country with no precedent for female leadership, Matilda was a victim of the strong gender stereotypes entrenched in English society. For deciding to take decisive action against Stephen, who had usurped the throne and broken the oath he had sworn acknowledging her as heir, she was seen as aggressive and unwomanly, and for attempting to rule in her own right, like so many men before her, she was perceived as arrogant. The chronicler John of Hexham claims that Matilda, 'elated by woman's levity, assumed a majestic haughtiness of demeanour, and so she provoked the nobles by arrogant denunciations'. Matilda faced an impossible situation — as a monarch, she was expected to exert her authority decisively, but as a woman, this led her to be considered arrogant, unnatural and ultimately unfit to rule. It is notable that as the consort of Henry V, she was popular in Germany and became known as 'the good Matilda', showing that these negative descriptions of her only emerged when she became a queen regnant rather than a queen consort.

Nearly 900 years later, England, as part of the UK, now has another female leader in Theresa May. Although nobody has fought a war to keep her out of politics - yet- she still faces disadvantage due to her gender. When she became Prime Minister in 2016, many headlines focused on her gender rather than her political aims or views; the Metro's response to the narrowing down of the Conservative leadership contest to May and Andrea Leadsom was 'Woman back in No 10'. May has also been reduced to her fashion choices (kitten heels), with disembodied pictures of her shoes used to announce her becoming PM on major news networks such as Sky News. No male leader would be reduced to their shoe choices, and this presentation of her takes public attention away from her policies, preventing her politics from being scrutinised rather than her appearance. This focus on May's more trivial choices also creates the impression that female politicians are less serious than male ones, reminiscent of how easily Matilda's claim to be queen was swept aside by Stephen. This is not to say that no progress has been made since Matilda's time — as PM May is able to exercise power without being seen as unwomanly or aggressive, however her gender does take attention away from what she does with her power.



A theme that seems relevant to both women and their time in power is motherhood. For Matilda, exercising power in her son Henry II's name was the only way she could exert it without challenge and criticism. Her epitaph declared that she was 'greatest by motherhood', showing that for a long time her major contribution to history was considered to be her son rather than her own actions and rule in England. Matilda acted as regent for Henry in Normandy (still part of England at the time), whilst also returning to England to serve in his Great Council in 1155. She acted as one of Henry's principal advisors, corresponding with him frequently and helping to shape his foreign policy: she was instrumental in forming an alliance with the Holy Roman Empire, her links to Germany from her time as empress coming in useful. In contrast, when Theresa May's rival in the Conservative leadership contest Andrea Leadsom suggested that she would be a better Prime Minister as a mother, this triggered outrage, showing that today the idea that predominantly only women with (male) children can become powerful has been challenged, and Leadsom stepping down from the contest a few days later suggests that this statement strongly impacted her chances of becoming a leader.

Overall, the responses to Matilda during her time in power show us that attitudes towards female leadership have greatly improved since the 12th century, with a current female leader exercising power without successful contest (at the time of writing), and objections to her are based on politics (especially her Brexit deal) rather than her gender. However, May is treated differently to male leaders, as the press coverage of her victory in the leadership campaign shows, demonstrating that although progress has been made, we still have some way to go before women in power are treated equally to men in the same positions.



Art by Nicole Di and Annie Clarke

Don't Burn Our Future

By Rosemary George

On the 15th of February, a strike was carried out at Parliament Square - thousands of students from more than 60 different British cities walked out of their lessons to meet and fight against climate change.

The movement began with 16-year old Swedish student Greta Thunberg, who on 20 August 2018 decided not to attend school until the 2018 Swedish General Election on 9 September after heat waves and wildfires in Sweden. She approached the Swedish Government with demands that they reduce carbon emissions as per the Paris Agreement. She protested by sitting outside the Riksdag during school hours, with a sign that read "*Skolstrejk för klimatet*" (*school strike for the climate*). *This protest sparked inspiration in school students to strike against climate change.*

I was in the midst of the organisation of our protest in Biology, when students were explaining to my teacher that they wouldn't be in school the next day due to this. In response, my teacher asked "why are you sacrificing your education to participate in something you have no control over?". And I completely understood why she asked that question; as the youngest generation we often find ourselves worrying about causes that we will have to deal with as adults, yet we have no power to make change where it is needed. The cardboard signs from students cry out to our country's leaders 'Don't burn our future.' Thunberg however contradicts this; she is unable to vote, she has no capital to invest, and she lacks a position of formal power to alter the course of global markets. She does however have her voice, and the will to make it heard, and she influences many other young adults to acknowledge and utilize this.

The situation at hand is that we have to take critical action in very little time to prevent irreversible damage to our planet - fact is we have less than two years until we are past the point of no return, and we are unable to fix our mistakes. Thunberg believes one of the most important components of change is being informed from a young age; she states that she was eight years old when she realised that climate change is man-made. "Some people, some companies, some decision-makers in particular, have known exactly what priceless values they have been sacrificing to continue making unimaginable amounts of money." She argues against the idea that climate change is a complex issue, saying that "Either we prevent temperatures from rising above 1.5 degrees (Celsius), or we don't. Either we avoid chain reaction of unravelling ecosystems, or we don't. That's as black or white as it gets. Now we all have a choice: we can either create transformational action or continue with business as usual and fail."

I contacted several of the pupils from our school about their take on the importance of the march, despite themselves being too young to vote. One student (Emilia McGeedy, 12EF) responded: "I think it's important to protest *because we can't vote. It's the only way to make our voices heard, about something that will affect us more than almost everyone who can vote.*"

Another wrote back to me (Luca Fero, 12EF) with: "Climate change will impact us forever, and it's much more important to walk out of school rather than on a regular Saturday. It means a lot to us to walk out of our GCSE and A-Level lessons, but this is a big issue - we don't have another planet. The government constantly talk about how the youth aren't involved in politics. The fact that so many people showed up to this protest showed our involvement. I felt it was so important for me to go out and show we are engaged, we do still care about politics. People will keep saying we are disengaged with politics and unless we walk out, people will start to believe it."

Emphasis should be put on how little time we have left to fix a potentially catastrophic problem. Striking from school not only comes with sacrifice but also fear, that thousands of us have to step out of school and onto the streets just for the government to wake up and acknowledge the problem. Diminishing the stigma around the youth and politics is key; our voices will be the significant push needed to steer ourselves away from the path we are headed down.



Photos courtesy of UKSCN

Votes at 16: let our voices be heard

By Emily Littlejohn

Democracy is rule of the majority. What's emerged in our system is tyranny of the elderly; thanks to an ageing population which is living longer, voters aged 70+ represent an increasing section of the electorate, vastly outnumbering voters in the 18-24 age bracket. As such conservative ideologies like those held by the majority of elderly populations across Europe, are being given an inbuilt advantage as they can always outvote the young.

How can this be called 'Democratic'? Despite the attitudes of society as a whole becoming more liberal and tolerant, with the recent rise in nationalism and the politics of fear we see in the likes of Brexit and Trump, those values are under attack. Hence now, more than ever, 16-year-olds need the vote, to not only make our democratic system fairer, but to finally include a necessary voice into politics.

The age old saying of "they're not mature or responsible enough to vote" has been used for generations to suppress the voice of minorities in Britain; first the middle class, then workers, then women and now the adolescents of this country. But what in every scenario the government fails to understand, and fails to then learn, is that political maturity does not come before achieving the vote. It's not, as was once believed, a trait beholden only by men and nor is it equally a 'capability' suddenly acquired on the stroke of midnight on your 18th birthday. Political awareness comes when one is enfranchised, as shown in the Scottish referendum, with 73% of 16-17 year-olds surveyed by the Democratic Audit saying that being given the vote increased their knowledge of politics. Additionally, the common belief of youth disengagement from politics was also disproved, with 75% of 16-17 year-olds turning up to vote, suggesting a strong interest in politics; it was this success that caused the Scottish government to subsequently allow them to vote in local elections.

That said, while Scotland may have recognised the necessity of the youth in the electorate, this is not the case in the rest of the UK. There is a real need for the perspective of 16 and 17 year-olds in politics because we are being directly affected on a daily basis by many of today's key social issues and so it follows that we ought to have some say in them. The truth is that currently politicians don't need to appease nor listen to us because addressing our concerns won't help them stay in power. If we were given the vote, maybe something would then be done to properly tackle issues surrounding mental illness, drug abuse, bullying and teenage stress at school. Maybe the government would take notice of the roughly 200 teenage deaths through drugs, stabbings and suicides recorded last year and finally introduce some compulsory education in school around these subjects, instead of comfortably hiding behind the taboos of society as they have done for generations. We have problems too, and they are not going to be solved when they are being fundamentally ignored by our government.

However, it's not only ignorance in government that is to blame here, it's a societal issue as well: when I posed this question to my parents, expecting them to warmly welcome the idea of others my age being given a voice, I was met instead with my father saying "you simply don't have the experience to vote at your age." This perception needs to be overcome. Surely voting does not require vast amounts of "experience" as it is an expression of one's political opinion based on the current events in the world. If anything, it provides an argument for why we should be given the vote; because we can vote without the prejudice of the past.



Art by Emily Littlejohn

Unlike the 54% of those 65+ in America who voted for Trump primarily because, according to a survey conducted by the University of Pennsylvania, they “felt threatened by change” as “white people might soon become a minority,” the youth would be able to vote based primarily on the society of today, not the outdated society of the past, providing both a fresh opinion and a new perspective on politics.

Another tiresome stereotype of teens is our alleged indolence and indifference which often provides yet another barrier in the way of political representation. The general feeling of the public is that we care more about what Kim Kardashian is doing right now than the state of the country, or that we simply lie around all day bingeing the newest Netflix shows. Even though the Scottish experience, fuelled by the Brexit and climate debates, already shows a high level of engagement among the youth and begins to contradict this, it would still be unreasonable to suggest all teenagers are interested in politics. However, those that are not wouldn't take the time actually to register and go to the polling stations, therefore why should the vast majority of us that want a voice be ignored and unrepresented in government because of a small minority who isn't engaged?

And though it could be argued that waiting two more years to vote is not that long, and that the country has bigger issues to deal with right now, while waiting I, along with all the others my age, have watched as this country make mistake after mistake without being able to do anything to stop it. How is it just that 16-year-olds are trusted with the responsibility of sexual consent, marriage and fighting for their country, but not in how it is run? The journalist Terry Barnes argued against votes at 16 because we should “let kids be kids”, but how is dying for our country or having sex a ‘childlike’ activity? 16 and 17 year-olds are constantly exposed to adult problems, to which we both want and need solutions, because the truth is that at 16 you're not a ‘kid’ anymore, and if the law already recognises our ability to take responsibility for such mature issues, this should be equally extended into politics. How can we call ourselves a democracy when those who need the vote are denied it? This is not a small issue that frustrated children are complaining about, this issue is about the values of society and democracy. This is about allowing our voices to finally be heard.



Art by Maya Kotecha

Are those who fail to learn from history *really* condemned to repeat it?

By Neve Mayes

The applicability of history to today's society has been a source of constant debate. From the Ancient Grecian philosophers Socrates and Plato, to the modern influential politicians Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln, to preeminent scientists such as Stephen Hawking, the relevance of history has been discussed throughout society. The urgency of the answer to this much-debated question is even more potent than before; with President Donald Trump's imminent plans to build a wall in Mexico serving as a sharp reminder of the Berlin Wall, it seems that the inevitable trajectory of history is to repeat itself. Does this mean that we have not learnt any lessons from the past?

With this year marking the 74th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, the killing of approximately eleven million people under the Nazi regime, the horrors of the Holocaust remain fresh in the minds of people and nations across the world. The phrase 'Never Again' has become associated with the suffering of the Holocaust, declaring with outrage that the genocide is firmly rooted in the past and that nothing of the sort has a position in today's society. This suggests that we have learnt from the horrors of the past; the Holocaust was so horrific that we cannot conceive ourselves capable of causing anything that resembles it. However, the promise of 'Never Again' has already been broken. Firstly, in Bangladesh in 1971 when around three million Hindus were murdered in three months by the Pakistani government. Pakistani President General Yahya Khan is recorded to have said 'Kill three million of them...and the rest will eat out of our hands'. Yet despite this, the Pakistani perpetrators of the war crimes have never been held on trial. Secondly, the Cambodian genocide 1975-1979, in which an attempt at social engineering carried out under the Khmer Rouge regime, led by communist dictator Pol Pot, resulted in the systematic murder of almost a third of the entire Cambodian population. People were simply killed for wearing glasses or speaking a foreign language. Thirdly, the Rwandan genocide in 1994 where the Hutu tribe killed eight-hundred thousand tutsis in just a hundred days. Thus, it is evident that saying 'Never Again' is not enough when it comes to learning from tragic historical events. Rather, to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past, we must be constantly vigilant and actively prevent them from happening again. Indeed, the passivity of human action has led history to repeat itself: The lack of US intervention in Cambodia and the failure of the United Nations to take action in Rwanda permitted genocides to occur again and again.

Despite genocides taking place after the Holocaust, the fact that none of these have taken place in Europe raises the question whether we can learn from historical mistakes if we are directly involved in them. There has not been a genocide in Europe since 1945 and the emphasis on 'remembrance' in society reflects the desire that such events will never take place again. However, the burgeoning of prejudice in the West today, evident in the rise of radical political parties, says otherwise. Openly Neo-Nazi parties like Golden Dawn won 8% of vote in the 2018 Greek election. Meanwhile in Austria the Freedom Party won 32% of the vote and has been successful in passing legislation allowing police to confiscate migrants phones and cash. Furthermore, in 2014 the hashtags #Hitlerwasright and #HappybirthdayHitler trended worldwide. Anti-Semitism is still present in society, despite the immense suffering of Jews in World War Two. Close to home Jeremy Corbyn is battling accusations that he has allowed anti-Semitism to infiltrate the Labour Party. Over 50% of British Jews feel more threatened by anti-Semitism than previously in their lifetimes, with a poll carried out by the Guardian indicating that almost a third of Jews in the UK are considering emigrating out of safety concerns. The memories of the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in America that claimed eleven Jewish lives remains raw, having taken place just months ago. This attack came after a nationally published survey that highlighted an alarming lack of knowledge of the Holocaust in America, despite the country having participated in World War Two and liberated a number of concentration camps. This suggests that education about the past to subsequent generations is vital to ensuring history is not repeated for the worse. These are a stark reminder of the endurance of prejudice, even in countries directly impacted by tragedies of the past. The continued growth in prominence of radical beliefs within Europe hints at the inevitability of recurrence of history without intentional change: if we fail to learn we may allow an event such as the Holocaust happen again. Winston Churchill claimed that 'those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it'.

The ability for history to teach us lessons has been demonstrated time and again. One of the most prominent examples was how the mistakes of the Treaty of Versailles influenced the shape of the settlement after World War Two. Despite the intentions of the Treaty of Versailles being to ensure peace, many modern historians claim that it was an influential factor in causing World War Two. The treaty forced Germany to assume full responsibility for the war, took away land comprising 48% of its iron production and forced payment of reparations worth one hundred thousand tonnes of gold (\$33bn). Consequently, this led to hyperinflation and soaring levels of unemployment in post-war Germany.

People sought refuge from this in Hitler's Nazi Party which drew on notions of national pride and used the reparations as a source of propaganda to obtain support. When it came to the settlement of terms after World War Two, it is commonly believed that the previous mistakes were learnt from. Both Britain and France were keen to limit the punishment so as not to recreate a climate in which World War III could emerge. As a result, the post-war peace settlement allowed Germany to pay approximately ten billion dollars less in reparations ensuring that Germany was not economically crippled. Additionally, unlike the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was given representation in the peace conferences. This suggests that we have been able to learn by analysing past events, the evidence for this being that there hasn't been a world war since.

There is a further perspective to consider; English historian A.J.P Taylor argues that 'we learn from past mistakes only to make new ones'. With this viewpoint in mind, it can be observed that whilst the Allies succeeded in preventing a third world war, a new kind of war, the Cold War, was set in motion. American-Soviet relations were shown to break down in the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences in 1945 surrounding the scale of reparations forced upon Germany. Stalin wanted much heavier compensation for the loss of twenty million Russian lives than Presidents Truman and Roosevelt, causing conflict between the superpowers and this developed into the Cold War. The Cold War was to pose a serious threat, with tensions reaching a climax at the Cuban Missile Crisis, the closest mankind has come to nuclear war. Therefore, whilst history is able to teach us lessons, it is clear that there will always be new obstacles to overcome.

In conclusion, there is no denying the ability of history to teach us lessons but whether we are able to learn from it is another question. In a society that seems to be increasingly stressing the importance of STEM subjects we must ensure that the vitality of studying history is not ignored. The link between lack of education and the recent Jewish massacre in America emphasises the importance of studying history; only by learning from the past, can we improve the future. When we strive to learn from history we tend to scrutinise past events; during the peace settlement of World War Two there was great acknowledgment of the adverse effects of the Treaty of Versailles. However, it is evident that when making these crucial decisions we must not only look back but, in order to obtain the best possible outcome, we must also consider the potential consequences of our actions. By not looking forward we risk being blind to the potential consequences of our actions. We cannot contemplate the past and the future as isolated events; they are not mutually exclusive. It is only with both that we can truly learn.



Art by Oliver Zhao and Nicole Di

Some voices matter more than others: we have not “had enough of experts”

By Joe Loveday

“Britons have had enough of experts.”

It may seem like nearly a lifetime ago that Britain voted to leave the European Union, but this famous quote from Michael Gove is as relevant now as it was in 2016. After being presented with a very comprehensive list of significant individuals and institutions who opposed the Brexit campaign, Gove asserted that the British public had “had enough of experts”, also saying: “I’m not asking the public to trust me. I’m asking them to trust themselves”.

It is of course easy to regard this comment (as the interviewer did) with scorn and incredulity, to dismiss it as merely another fatuous, headline-grabbing faux pas from one of our many inept politicians. But I personally am finding myself more and more inclined to believe that perhaps Gove was onto something. Is it possible that there is, in fact, a growing anti-expert trend, not just in the UK, but in the US as well? Trump’s inauguration speech in 2017 is quite illuminating; comments such as “transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the people” and “what truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people” seem particularly suggestive. Even the recent calls for a second referendum on the Brexit deal could be argued to point to this same issue. It would seem that there’s an increasingly widespread belief that people have had enough of deferring to experts; people can decide for themselves.

Gove, of course, framed this increased distrust in experts as a good thing, arguing that the experts supporting the remain campaign had “vested financial interest.” He also accused EU institutions - of which many of the aforementioned experts were a part - of being “elitist” (the inherent irony here appeared to be lost on him). As you may have deduced from the title, I feel strongly that not only is this distrust in experts not a good thing, it is also very irresponsible, and frankly, dangerous.

To examine the issues that can arise from an increased disregard for expertise, it is first important to clarify what is meant by the term “expert”. While the precise wording might vary between dictionaries, an expert can be defined simply as someone who has a great degree of knowledge or skill in a particular area. As a society, we naturally have ways of formally recognising expertise - key examples include degrees, diplomas, PhDs and professorships. So far it may look as though I’m stating the obvious. And yet these statements are the beginning of the reason why expert knowledge is so important.

To put it simply, if you are dealing with an issue of any complexity (such as Brexit), it is important to listen to experts because the chances are that they know more about that issue than you do. If you have a medical problem, you consult a doctor; if your car breaks down, you consult a mechanic; if you need a haircut, you consult a hairdresser/barber (delete as applicable based on level of vanity and socio-economic group).

Naturally, it’s important to emphasise that expert opinions should only be given additional weight when the issue is inside the remit of their expertise - in much the same way that you wouldn’t consult a mechanic if you had an ear infection, you shouldn’t prioritise the opinion of an economic advisor on issues regarding, for example, human rights. It’s a matter of weighting arguments according to their source, whether you are a government minister, an MP, or merely a voter. Admittedly, even experts will likely be subject to their own political or ideological biases, particularly concerning issues as controversial as Brexit. It is therefore important to look at not just at the credentials, but the politics of any vocal public figure and weight their views accordingly - essentially just employing the same skills used to answer the source utility questions in GCSE History.

I am very much aware at this point that I run the risk of being accused of elitism. It certainly seems an obvious criticism of my pro-expert stance - surely it’s elitist to weight opinions and statements according to the academic accolades of those who say them? Michael Gove certainly thought so. But the mistake he (and many others) have made, is to equate privilege with expertise. The two are not synonymous. Admittedly, privilege is often strongly correlated with expertise (a situation arguably partly the fault of Gove’s government) but being privileged doesn’t automatically make someone an expert, it just means that they are far more likely to receive a good education and therefore have an opportunity to specialise academically.

Equally, expertise is not the same as academia. Here, I feel compelled to quote the popular sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*: while discussing romantic relationships with Penny, Sheldon Cooper says “I have a Master’s degree and two doctorates; the things I should know, I do know”. Penny replies: “I know more about dating than you, and if you were as smart as you think you are, you would listen to me”. Sheldon may be drowning in academic accolades, but when it comes to dating, it is his unacademic neighbour who is the expert. When I say we should give more weight to the views of experts, I do not mean we should place all decision-making power in the hands of a privileged, well-educated elite, I simply mean that we should be more influenced in our own opinions and decision-making by the views of those who are specialists in the area in question; whether being a specialist means having an advanced degree or having first-hand experience of knife crime in South London should not make any difference.

However, despite my unashamedly pro-expertise stance, I will concede, somewhat reluctantly that there is a risk associated with placing too much trust in experts. I will concede, even more reluctantly, that Michael Gove actually outlined this risk quite well in the phrase “vested, financial interest”. Obviously, in the context of the interview, that comment was incredibly misleading and one-sided; there were people with vested interests on both sides of the campaign, just as there were people who believed they were acting in the interests of the UK as a whole. But as a general comment on the issue of our trust in experts, it makes a valid point. The danger of offering up all our trust to experts, particularly in the world of politics and economics, is that there is a propensity for a selective usage of data and methodology. Put simply, in any instance when someone has an ulterior motive for promoting something, be it a political opinion, a scientific theory or a form of medical treatment, it is in their interest to present the argument in a biased way.

This is a particularly big issue in economics, which is often presented as a science but can also be very subjective. In a given scenario, two completely different courses of action, backed by two completely different economic models, could be argued to be favourable. It’s easy for me to say (as I did earlier) that we should examine the political biases of experts, but that is often very difficult to do, given how often economists present what can ultimately only be their opinion as scientific fact, and given how often data is misrepresented in televised debates and in the media generally. So surely we have arrived at a paradox. How can a person place their trust in, and at the same time be sceptical of, an expert? Unfortunately there is no easy solution to this problem. Fortunately however, there are still ways of addressing it.

One of the most obvious (and one I am a strong advocate for) is education. Making it easier for more people to gain access to a high-quality education (and also encouraging and enabling more schools to offer political education at A-Level) would make it harder for the government to so easily misrepresent statistics, or give too one-sided an argument. So many of the misleading arguments and statistics surrounding the Brexit debates only succeeded in manipulating people because the level of understanding of the subject matter was so low. I’m not, of course, suggesting that everyone needs to become an expert on EU law. Often just doing, for example, a research project at school can be enough to provide people with the skills needed to fact-check claims. Of course, if we really want to live in a more enlightened age, the government need to keep up their end of the bargain. Tighter regulations governing statistics use, more data being made readily available online and perhaps even more judicial involvement in instances where data has been fabricated could all be beneficial.

To conclude; some voices do matter more than others, and it is vitally important that we, the people, listen to experts. But at the same time, the government has a responsibility to ensure that knowledge and expertise are not precious bubbles of academia concentrated in the hands of a wealthy elite, but universal resources which as many people as possible are given the chance to share in. As a society, we must both welcome and scrutinise our experts. It isn’t a paradox. It’s just yet another problem that the government needs to solve.



Art by Eleni Apostoli and Adele Alsters



