



CHANNING

Skipping Out
Spring 2023



Skipping Out

Skeleton



Cover

Cover by *Branwen Bainbridge*

ABOUT SKIPPING OUT

Skipping Out is a pupil-led magazine; it aims to give all students in the Senior School a voice and freedom to express their opinions, passions and interests.

Dear readers,

Welcome to the Spring 2023 issue of 'Skipping Out'. Here, we hope you will find articles to provoke, entertain and enlighten. We took as our inspiration the word, 'skeleton' - something creepy, literal or metaphorical.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Happy reading!

If you would like to write for future issues of Skipping Out, please get in touch with Ms S Beenstock.

Contents

Skullduggery *Imani Mokal-Russell*

Social Skeletons *Madeleine Barrass*

Bone Alone *Maya Grosman*

Trigger Warning *Emily Mullen*

The Empire Builder *Inès Oulevay*

Fracture the rule of law and you break democracy *Maria Kirpichnikova*

Art Attack *Mia Apfel*

Women's Work *Summer Ginvert*

Skullduggery

When Imani Mokal-Russell enjoyed the recent Bowie movie, *Moonage Daydream*, one image stuck in her mind



As an avid David Bowie fan, I very much enjoyed *Moonage Daydream*, the recent avant-garde documentary which included footage of Bowie's interviews, concerts and live appearances. However, as I left the cinema, there was one particular clip that stuck with me: a 1974 performance of a song called *Cracked Actor*. In the song, Bowie takes on the voice of a washed-up former film-star talking to a prostitute. Yet this particular performance sees Bowie singing to a human skull, as Hamlet spoke to Yorick, in one of the most iconic poses of the Western canon.

Often used to represent theatre itself, the image of a young man holding a human skull and staring into empty eye sockets, is still omnipresent in our culture. Something about it captured our collective imagination and shows no signs of loosening its grip. Further inspection of the history of this image, and the psychology of how it fascinates us, reveals what makes the scene in *Hamlet* continually captivating and why Bowie's version is so compelling.

We must begin with the image's origins as a key scene in the most famous play of all time. Hamlet has been haunted, both literally and figuratively, by death. Yet Hamlet's "Alas, poor Yorick" speech in Act 5 Scene 1 is when death is depicted in perhaps the most disturbing way. He addresses the speech as though to the living man, Yorick, but all the while he is deeply aware that all that is left of the beloved jester is an inanimate, empty object, remarking, "Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft." Hamlet reckons not only with the fact that Yorick is gone, but that mortality was always a part of him, made literal by the reminder that even when you kiss the lips of someone living, a skull is hidden yet always present. Earlier in the play, Hamlet confers with his father's ghost, yet this interpretation of what happens after death is starkly different; it suggests that, at least in some instances, death leaves no lingering spirit, but a completely empty husk.

This line is evoked in the TS Eliot poem *Whispers of Immortality*, which begins:

"Webster was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin;
And breastless creatures underground
Leaned backward with a lipless grin."

Describing the morbid preoccupation of Shakespeare's contemporary, John Webster, he leans into the horror factor of death as ever-present within us, the "breastless creatures", describing the way death robs us of any sensuality or emotion. Eliot's reference to Shakespeare, even when describing another writer, encapsulates how Shakespeare's creation has come to represent a confrontation of mortality.

This is not to imply, of course, that Shakespeare invented the concept of a man with a skull representing mortality; for instance, *St. Francis of Assisi* by Jusepe de Ribera, was painted around five years before *Hamlet* was written and depicts the same motif. Towards the end of his life in the 1200s, the portrait's subject, St Francis of Assisi, also became 'much possessed by death', although arguably in a much more wholesome way than macabre Webster. He expressed in a canticle his acceptance of *Sister Death* and often placed a skull on the breakfast table to remind himself and others that death is a natural part of life.

As in *Hamlet*, St Francis confronted death unreservedly and used skulls to represent death as an integral part of life. However, the clearest distinction to be made between this painting and the classic portrayal of Hamlet is that while Hamlet stares at the skull directly, St Francis of Assisi looks up at the heavens, as though distracted by the light of God. This reflects his perspective that faith in God renders death



unimportant, inconsequential and therefore easily accepted. For many, this level of acceptance is unattainable. Meanwhile, Hamlet is often portrayed transfixed on the skull, unable to look away: he must confront death, yet is still afraid.

In an interesting online essay, *A Mirror for Mankind: The Pose of Hamlet with the Skull of Yorick*, Jeffery Alan Triggs discusses

parallels between the image of Hamlet staring at a skull, and the equally ubiquitous motif in art of a woman gazing at her own reflection. Take the *Rokeby Venus* as one historically significant example; both function as a *vanitas*, meaning a reminder of mortality. One reflects the external surface of inherently fleeting beauty, the other the disguised truth of mortality and inevitable decay. The parallel between the skull and mirror also illuminates how looking at a skull represents the fear of our own impending death; the recognition of our own reflection in the skull. In both cases, the reflection is mesmerising, with the subject unable to tear their gaze away.

The art critic John Berger points out that there is often some criticism implied with the depiction of a young woman gazing into a mirror: “You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting *Vanity*, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure.” In contrast, the Yorick image evokes admiration, at the honesty and humility of staring down death in a shockingly direct way.



Perhaps we gravitate towards this image of Hamlet, because it validates the fear of death many of us share, yet reassuringly it portrays death not as a remote and intangible force, but something that can be physically confronted, and, therefore, dealt with.

So where does that put Bowie’s performance of *Cracked Actor*? My initial explanation for the choice was that Bowie was amusingly playing on the line, “Give me your head,” yet the allusion operates on numerous levels and adds depth to what might at first seem a rather crude and abrasive song.

The fact that the speaker is still mentally clinging to his glamorous past as an actor, despite having long-since passed his prime, informs a self-aggrandising casting of himself as Hamlet.

More difficult to pin down, is why he has cast the prostitute in the role of Yorick’s skull; perhaps it reflects how he views her, as a hollow, empty object, onto which he can project his own thoughts and feelings – like the reflections gazed at by all those self-absorbed women. It is ironic that he begs her to, “Crack, baby, crack,” (meaning concede to him) despite he himself being the one who is “cracked” (having conceded to old age) and this is all imbued with an additional layer by the presence of a, literally, cracked skull.

There is a striking paradox here: the actor is using this transaction to remain in denial about his middle-age (he tells the prostitute, or perhaps himself, to “Forget that I’m fifty!”) yet it is expressed through the lens of Hamlet’s frank confrontation of mortality. Perhaps this betrays that the speaker on some level does acknowledge his age, and is aware of the futility of these attempts to regain youth. Such contradiction is present in the lyrics, as the harsh chorus featuring that coarse command to, “Suck, baby, suck!” fades into a pathetically insecure bridge in which the actor beseeches the prostitute to, “Oh, stay, please stay!”. Vanity and humility conflict, with both common strains of the *vanitas* being evoked.

Finally, at the performance’s conclusion, Bowie kisses the skull – on the lips, as it were. It is difficult not to be unnerved when remembering Eliot’s description of, ‘a lipless grin’; evidently, the *Cracked Actor* is one step behind Hamlet, who recognises that his days of kissing Yorick are behind him. If Eliot associates skulls and skeletons with lack of love or sensuality, thus evoking what death robs from us, this disturbing gesture represents the *Cracked Actor*’s lack of comprehension of this boundary between life and death, a rejection of his mortality, as instead of seeing the skull beneath the skin, he instead sees the skull as living, and death as life. On the other hand, this resolution could symbolise him ultimately finding himself on the other side of the conflict with which he has grappled. He is seen as closing the gap between himself and this tangible, reckonable representation of death, and embracing mortality in the most unreserved way, as in the mindset of St Francis of Assisi he comes to view death as a loved one. Either interpretation provides a satisfying, or at least understandable, conclusion to the story.



How much of this allusion is intentional, it is difficult to say. However, to me, Bowie’s use of Hamlet transforms the song into a deeply poignant exploration of human mortality, and as subtext to its more overt commentary on fame and ageing. Of course, this is also a testament to the continued resonance of the image Shakespeare created, that even after four centuries it still has the power to evoke such complicated thought and emotion.

Social Skeletons

They're the bits of life that bind us to one another and, says Madeleine Barrass, make life worth living



Skeletons hold us up. Skeletons support us. Skeletons keep us going.

When thinking of skeletons, we often think literally: a framework of bones in an animal. But we seldom think of what else behaves like a skeleton. You could call a house a skeleton, as without it we aren't able to sleep or feel safe; you could call an education a skeleton, for it is the frame on which your skills will grow when you enter the workforce; you could also call your social network your skeleton - and we all need one of those.

Family and friends are what make somebody, they are the people we let into our social bubbles. You are influenced by them: they tell you what is cool, what success looks like, what to be embarrassed by, but they also reinforce you, like an external skeleton. When you don't have the energy to finish a school day, they'll march you to a lesson or bring you crackers from the lunch hall when you're too busy revising to go to lunch; when you feel like the ugliest being alive, they put you back into a positive place and when you're being unreasonably angry at the universe for no reason and take it out on any living creature who had the misfortune of breathing in your presence, they take none of it to heart. They stick with you.

Despite many of these relationships being slightly dysfunctional, family is also both vital and more complex. Family is one of those things that means something different to every person in the world: yours might be a mother-daughter relationship that you see in the movies, but you might still

despise your sister; or you could be your dad's favourite child and your mum's worst nightmare. All can co-exist.

We've just been through that time of year when family time for most is inevitable; some, like me, dread this - it offers a plethora of almost-estranged relatives, gathering together in one tiny house in the middle of nowhere - in my case, Leicestershire - and awkward interactions with that remote 'uncle' who assumes I'm at university. Gifts have also become a social must. How else can I show my cousin (who I only see once a year) that they're important to me? I wouldn't trade it for the world. While I get my chaotic Christmasses, some get their crazy Rosh Hashanahs, or their larger-than-life Eid celebrations... but we can all agree that these holidays are an important way of maintaining family connections.

Christmas means charity time for many families, which creates a compelling argument for me: why not find some more family? So many people spend their holidays alone, without their social skeleton, isolated in a too-small house, or a too-large nursing home. We all have so much to say, so many experiences, trips and aspirations to talk about: why not share? Everyone has an elderly relative who doesn't get out often, or a neighbour with narrow opportunities to socialise - talk to them! As much as we have to tell them, they have to tell us. Time is short: we need to give them time, and treasure them.

Skeletons hold us up, support us, keep us going - why don't you become part of someone else's social skeleton?

Bone Alone

Maya Grosman considers the skeleton in a more literal sense

Skeletons. The branches of our bodies, the cement holding us together; skull to shoulders, ribs to ankles, bones are scattered everywhere. But are you aware of what goes on beneath the flesh?

It's a known fact that our skeletons are malleable. The pure white you see displayed in museums may seem solid and lifeless, but the bones beneath your flesh are very much alive - in fact, they're pink with blood vessels and they're constantly being broken down and rebuilt. So although each person's skeleton develops based on their DNA, it is tailored to adapt to the unique stresses of their life.

We modern humans have less dense bone in our joints than our ancestors. New research shows that modern human skeletons evolved into their lightly-built form only relatively recently, after the start of the Holocene about 12,000 years ago, and even more recently in some human populations. Additionally, our bodies have decreased in height and weight, we are now smaller-boned than our ancestors were 100,000 years ago. The decrease has been gradual but has been most noticeable in the last 10,000 years.

This led to a range of studies made about how people's bones have adapted to assist their day-to-day life. For example, American chiropractor, David Shahaar made a study of 'Text Neck' a repetitive stress injury to the neck caused by having your head in a forward position for an extended period of time. Intriguingly, the strong men of the Mariana Islands tend to have an extended growth on their skulls. They are thought to have developed this to support their powerful neck and shoulder muscles. The men may have carried heavy weights by suspending them from poles across their shoulders. Shahaar states they will continue to get bigger and bigger, "Imagine if you have stalactites and stalagmites, if no one is bothering them, they will just keep growing."

Ultimately, the captivating abilities of the human skeleton will forever be a mystery.



Trigger warning

Emily Mullen explores a 176-year-old law that deems both shooters guilty when an innocent bystander is caught in crossfire. But this law, known as ‘joint enterprise’, is now mired in racial bias



“One study found that, of young male prisoners serving 15 years or more [for joint enterprise], 38.5% were white and 57.4% were from Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority backgrounds – despite less than 6% of the population being from BAME groups”

Judicial precedent forms the framework of UK common law and is therefore an integral part of the justice system. Principles fall under the body of precedent, however, criticism of courts’ application of certain principles calls into question whether there are those which need to be re-evaluated. The concept of ‘joint enterprise’ is one which has attracted significant controversy.

The principle of ‘joint enterprise’ has been enshrined in UK law since 1846, when Lord Chief Baron Pollock delivered his ruling in the case of *R v Swindall and Osborne*. In this case, two drunken cart drivers were racing one another, and one ran down and killed a pedestrian. Although it was not known which of the two men had struck the victim, both had been encouraging the other and so they were held jointly liable for manslaughter. The court declared that if all members of a group share a common purpose and are acting on a common intention, they must all assume responsibility for the actions of the other members of the group. This case may seem slightly remote in understanding the principle, as it occurred 176 years ago, so it would be prudent to look at a more modern example where the court has applied this principle in reaching a judgement.

In the case of *R v Gnango*, 2011, two men, ‘B’ and Mr Gnango, were shooting at each other across a park in South London. During the course of this exchange, a 26-year-old Polish care worker, Magda Pniewska, was shot and killed. Ballistics confirmed that it was ‘B’ who fired the fatal shot, but ‘B’ was never caught and therefore could not be charged. The 17-year-old Mr Gnango was convicted of murder under the joint enterprise principle at the Old Bailey. Gnango then appealed. After the Court of Appeal attempted to reverse his conviction, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court considered this: where two defendants voluntarily engaged in a fight, both having the *intention* to cause grievous bodily harm, or a fatality to the

other *with knowledge of the reciprocity of these intentions*, what is the other defendant’s liability if one of them mistakenly kills an unrelated victim in the course of the action?

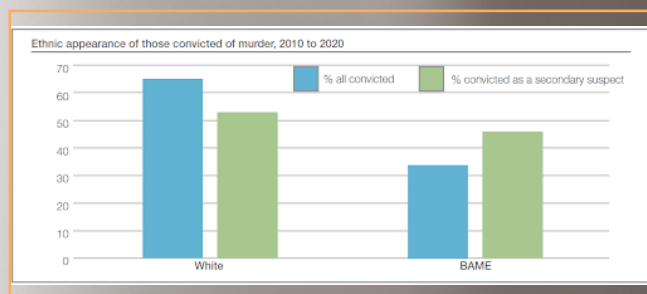
The jury was satisfied that both ‘B’ and Mr Gnango had agreed to the shoot-out and conducted this in a public place. The Supreme Court then ruled that there was therefore foreseeable risk that a bystander would be injured in the way that they intended to cause injury to one another. It was of limited relevance who fired the fatal shot. In this way, the principle was upheld. However, in other cases such as the infamous 1952 Bentley case, the defendant implicated by ‘joint enterprise’ has been at a disadvantage. Derek Bentley was later proved to have a mental age of 11 when he was convicted of the murder of a police officer and sentenced to death. It was actually 16-year-old Christopher Craig who pulled the trigger, but Bentley is alleged to have said, ‘Let him have it’ (the meaning of which was heavily disputed). Although Bentley was posthumously pardoned in 1993, some have argued that ‘joint enterprise’ allows for those who are ‘too morally remote’ from the crime to be indicted.



Additional debates surrounding the principle have arisen in recent years when it emerged that young Black men are much more likely to be convicted under 'joint enterprise' than their White counterparts. According to the campaigning charity, Liberty, the group taking the CPS to court over this matter, 'one study found that, of young male prisoners serving 15 years or more [for joint enterprise], 38.5% were white and 57.4% were from Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority backgrounds – despite less than 6% of the population being from BAME groups.' Liberty asserts that the CPS is breaching its duties under the Equality Act 2010. However, as this case has yet to be concluded, the outcome is unpredictable.

Racial profiling has now been identified as a potential problem with the principle, as guilt may be prematurely and unsubstantially assumed through either deliberate or unconscious bias, leading to a 'joint enterprise' conviction.

In the 2016 case, *R v Jogee*, the Supreme Court concluded that the law of accessorial liability based on the principle of 'joint enterprise' had been 'misinterpreted' for 'over 30 years'. However, critics claim that this ruling has not changed the reality of the principle's use. In fact, convictions have risen in this area and only one has been successfully appealed as of 2021. Zoe Williams of *The Guardian* agrees with the *New York Times*' report that UK 'joint enterprise' convictions have continued as, 'prosecutors have quietly devised strategies to keep bringing joint enterprise cases and winning convictions', thus defeating the purpose of the Supreme Court's ruling, which sets the precedent for the lower courts.



On the other hand, supporters have argued that the principle allows for prosecution of those who may go on to commit such crimes themselves as they had the intent to do so, thus their prosecution prevents future offences. However, this allows for racial profiling to continue under the guise of 'preventing crime'. There is also concern that some evidence used by prosecutions in such trials is being sourced from drug gangs affiliated with the defendants, hindering the reliability of the evidence and thereby potentially disrupting justice.

The principle thus remains a heavily debated issue within the legal community and among those concerned with the problem of racial profiling in the criminal justice system. The question is whether using 'joint enterprise' still serves its original purpose in ensuring justice, or whether it has now become a barrier to it.



The Empire Builder

Inès Oulevay describes how an ancient Roman statue of the Emperor Augustus is in the DNA of all subsequent propaganda



The famous statue of Augustus, found at the Prima Porta, above.

The Roman Empire generated an immense amount of sculpture, churning out portraits of political leaders, heroes and gods. The term 'propaganda' did not arise until the seventeenth century, however, in the Roman Empire, an unknown sculptor crafted what was to become the DNA for propaganda in the Western world - the Prima Porta statue of Emperor Augustus. The statue was discovered in 1863, during archaeological excavations at the Villa of Livia owned by Augustus' third and final wife, in Prima Porta.



This has now become arguably the best-known of all Roman sculptures. Augustus was Rome's first emperor, attributed to an era of Roman peace otherwise known as the 'Pax Romana'. His relatively neutral position in historical records can be attributed to his comparative mellowness when emperor,

especially in his later years as ruler, as well as his tactful and subtle promotional techniques. Augustus' wide-ranging forms of propaganda targeted all realms of Roman society, using art and architecture to appeal to the population, and coinage to infiltrate the lives of the masses. Meanwhile, literature was used to target the educated, male, upper class. This multi-pronged approach allowed Augustus to exert power as the sole ruler and maintain the 'Pax Romana'.

Observing the statue, we are immediately drawn to Augustus' protruding right arm. It extends from the composition and draws our gaze upwards, perhaps with the intention of inspiring admiration from the viewer as we look up to the gods. This suggests that Augustus was addressing his troops, his military power is indicated as he comfortably guides his people with the flick of his hand. The strength and confidence of this elongated limb may represent his wide influence through the control of the Roman Empire and his apparent ease in the role of Supreme Leader. He addresses his subjects directly, dominating and controlling the space and people in front of him. Interestingly, Augustus wears a combination of both armour and a cloak or toga. This combination was more than just a clash of tastes; we see his duality as a leader. He is both level with his people, wearing the characteristic male item of clothing, a toga, and displaying his military presence, wearing intricate armour welded to the shape of his musculature.

On the breastplate of the armour, we see the reason behind this statue's existence: a battle scene depicts how, after decades of defeat against the Parthian people, the Roman



A close-up of Augustus' breastplate

Empire finally triumphed against their enemy in the Augustan era. The Standards (long poles with flags attached to them, not dissimilar to the later lances of the Mediaeval period) represent a handing of power back to the Romans, preparing them for a time of political dominance and victory. We see this literal handing over of power as a small relief on Augustus' chest.

Augustus boasted that he had found Rome a city of brick, but left it a city of marble; this is directly reflected in the medium of the statue - marble - also a symbol of purity, prestige and immortality. Its permanence as a medium shows Augustus' eternal influence, the statue still stands today. The softness and fine grain enables both high detail and textures, which is demonstrated in the depth of the folds of the cloak that Augustus holds and his smooth and carved musculature. This seven foot statue looms over any environment, not far from human size but echoing the grandeur of heroes and gods, which elevates Augustus to almost a divine status. Perhaps for this reason, Augustus is depicted as barefoot, a feature often reserved for gods or heroes, and therefore a visual reminder, encouraging the viewer to see their leader as a divine figure, pulling them to the level of worshippers of 'the god Augustus'. The sense of dynamic forward movement in the statue, shows his comfort and ease as leader. His knees bend in the same direction as his hand points, giving the statue a feeling of life-like movement and realism.

Finally the sharp-eyed will notice a small nude figure at the base of the statue. This is Cupid, the son of the goddess Venus. This reflects Augustus' claimed ancestry to the mythological founder of Rome, Aeneas the son of Venus. Through this, he elevates himself to the status of a god, we see a deep



Mussolini's propagandists were inspired by the Prima Porta to produce this stamp in 1937, linking the contemporary leader to the classical.

connection to the past of the Roman Empire hinting at the way the gods have brought him to this position of authority. Cupid holds onto Augustus for support, his hand raised in adoration of Augustus, both mimicking his pose and accepting his rule. Augustus' face is youthfully depicted, idealised and attractive. On the one hand it could be presented in this way to represent the hope, youth and vitality of the Roman empire. However, many historians believe that it is a nod to the statue of Doryphoros by the sculptor Polykleitos. This statue was deeply appreciated due to its sense of dignity and the ease embodied by the figure. It was most likely chosen to be the framework for his portrait, displaying both authority and his dignified grace and control. This reference to the Greek classical art, would have inspired ideas of Augustus himself bringing back this era of plenty and prosperity.

The combination of ancient Greek classical sculpture and the Roman realistic style, mimics the way historical figures used art from the past to promote their own agendas. These powerful connotations can be seen as recently as World War II. We see Mussolini copy the raised arm position as a salute. He appropriated the image of the Prima Porta, placing it on stamps in a similar way to how Augustus set his face on coinage. In turn, Mussolini intended to align himself with Augustus, similarly gaining influence over popular culture for his own political propaganda; he would line boulevards with copies of the Prima Porta and so frame his own ideology with one centuries old.

Once you can 'read' the Prima Porta, you can see that it is the skeleton, underpinning so much modern propaganda.

Fracture the rule of law and you break democracy

Maria Kirpichnikova looks at how Priti Patel's Nationality and Borders Act breaks international rules to protect human rights



The rule of law, as defined by Lord Bingham, a prominent legal expert, is the concept where “all persons and authorities within the state, whether public or private, should be bound by, and entitled to, the benefit of laws publicly and prospectively promulgated, and publicly administered in the courts”. When upheld fully, it ensures respect of human rights and reduces the risks of corruption.

The rule of law isn't just some lofty legal concept - it really matters. Historically, civilizations that emphasised the rule of law, such as the Roman Republic, thrived, and those who did not, broke down. In the modern day, the idea of social contracts are based on the idea that we are accountable to the law, meaning we can feel safe, protected and hold trust in other members of our society. The rule of law, simply put, is synonymous with fairness, it is the backbone, the skeleton, of our legal systems and constitutions, and, much like the human skeleton, when parts of it are fractured, the whole system is impaired. In this article, I would like to focus on three ways in which Priti Patel, Home Secretary in Prime Minister Boris Johnson's cabinet, abused the rule of law and why this was so detrimental to the functioning of our legal codes.

Let's cast our minds back to April 2022, when Priti Patel's Nationality and Borders Bill received Royal Assent. The stated objectives of the bill are, essentially, to make the asylum system fairer, deter illegal entry to the UK, and remove people with no right to be in the country.

However, the grim reality is that this bill also means that anyone

arriving in the UK by an illegal route, such as by a small boat across the Channel, could have their claim ruled as inadmissible; they may, in addition, receive a jail sentence of up to four years, have no recourse to public funds, and could have their family members barred from joining them.

This does not seem to adhere to the fundamental British value of fairness, does it? The human rights group, Freedom From Torture, is unequivocal. Following 95 pages of legal opinion commissioned by this group, they concluded: “This bill represents the biggest legal assault on international refugee law ever seen in the UK.” The principle at the heart of the bill is the penalisation, both criminally and administratively, of those who arrive by irregular means in the UK to claim asylum. Furthermore, the bill seeks to reverse a number of important decisions of the UK courts, including at the House of Lords and Court of Appeal level, given over the last 20 years. Essentially, this is an absolute reversal of justice.

According to the report by Freedom from Torture, this bill breaches Articles 31 and 33 of the UN Refugee Convention (UNRC) as well as Articles 2,3 and 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This new Act, means that those arriving by “irregular means” such as small boats, will be granted fewer rights, which would be grossly inconsistent with United Nations and the ECHR.

At the very core of this Act, lies a great legal fallacy. The basis for the attack on irregular arrival is that refugees should use safe legal routes. However, there are no safe legal routes. In this country, there is no concept of a ‘refugee visa’. Plans to send those claiming asylum to offshore centres would breach three articles of the ECHR, and three of the articles of the refugee convention, the report said, while plans to “fast-track” cases with an expedited, accelerated appeals process, would risk unfairness under common law as well as Articles 2, 3, 4, 8 and 13 of the ECHR.

The government has reversed the rationale of the refugee convention, which was to introduce a needs-based approach to replace authoritarian-based regimes of the 1930s.

Let's look to the future. Priti Patel has been replaced with our current home secretary, Suella Braverman, who used the words ‘dream’ and ‘obsession’ to describe flights that will take asylum seekers to Rwanda. So there seems to be a running theme of deteriorating respect for upholding the rule of law. As the Secret Barrister claimed: ‘No one in power is willing to defend the rule of law.’ Much of the current policy, as well as previous policy passed under Patel, I believe, undermines the rule of law, endangering the integrity of our values and our social harmony, slowly breaking the skeleton holding together democracy. We ignore this at our peril.

Art attack

The women's rights activists of the last century and the environmental protestors of today, have all turned to art vandalism to draw attention to their causes. Mia Apfel explores the shocking history of vandalising art works in the name of politics



Think of your favourite piece of art. How would you feel if this piece were to be destroyed? Moreover, how would you feel if you knew that this was premeditated? If your response to this would be outrage, you are not alone. Intentional damage of artwork - art vandalism - has brought about negative reactions from the public for centuries. In fact, as violent attacks on art continue to prevail, we are increasingly questioning why people feel they are justified in destroying art pieces which are integral to our culture. From constitutional differences to environmental concerns, famous artworks are increasingly being used to make a point.

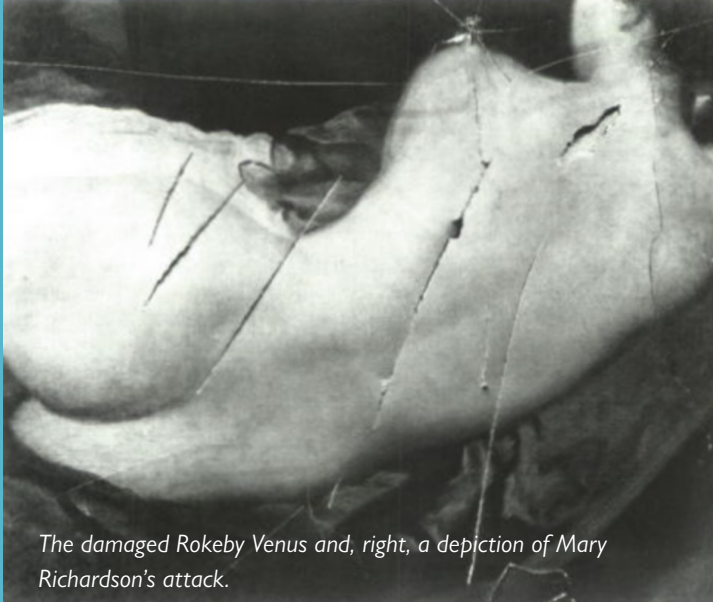
Last October, a stunt carried out by the climate activism group Just Stop Oil, made international headlines. After throwing cans of tomato soup at Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and glueing themselves to gallery walls in protest against fuel poverty, two activists asked onlookers, "What is worth more: art or life?". Their aim was to shock the public and make a point. In fact, so effectively was it made, that others since then have chosen to protest in the same manner. Within the next few weeks, famous pieces ranging from Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* to Monet's *Les Meules* were also attacked with the aim of raising awareness about climate change.

These events seem to have divided the world on whether we should condemn or applaud the protestors' actions. Recent YouGov polls shows that whilst 68 per cent of the UK population have now heard about Just Stop Oil, only 18.1 per cent actually support the campaigns. Yes, these controversial

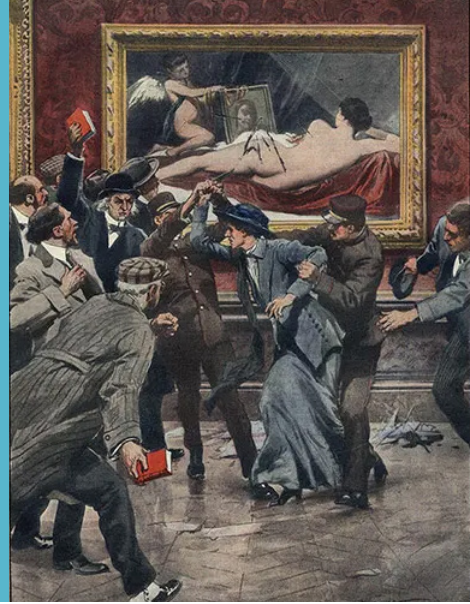
acts have achieved their goals of making people more aware of climate change. However, many seem to question if this is a legitimate way to protest. It seems obvious to support these campaigns, but vandalising irreplaceable pieces of art is still inconsiderate. The protests have a clear aim of upsetting and angering the public, so in some ways they seem to be suggesting that causing distress is the only way to spread an important message. This most definitely is not true; we have seen countless examples of peaceful protests in the past that have been just as, or if not more, successful.

There generally seems to be a lack of logical connection in the protestors' attack which makes their efforts seem counter-productive. Not only does their choice to target museums cause more financial problems, but it also risks alienating the public, as attempting to destroy unique pieces of cultural and historical significance only creates more boundaries and disruption. It seems almost paradoxical to damage something cherished by so many people for the sake of preserving something else that we cherish.

In reality, what might be a radical act in the moment, is not a rational or long-term way to deal with the complex issues with our environment. There is in this way a moral dilemma which the activists have to face; they must choose between cautious actions which are largely ignored, and more extreme, and often violent, actions which attract attention, but create a negative identity for themselves through widespread public disapproval.



The damaged Rokeby Venus and, right, a depiction of Mary Richardson's attack.



Whilst no art has been irreparably damaged by protestors in recent events, that does not mean that pieces have not been damaged in the past, or will not be in the future. What we should be concerned with is the negative precedent these acts set for other members of the public. Alex De Koning, a spokesman for Just Stop Oil, warned that there is a possibility that activists could 'escalate' their attacks and follow in the footsteps of past protestors who, "violently slashed paintings in order to get their message across."

But what motivated art vandalism in the past? Climate change has only become one of the main reasons for protest in this century, yet art vandalism has been tied to larger political strife for many years.

It was around a century ago that Mary Richardson, suffragette and member of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) targeted a painting held at London's National Gallery. Having entered with a butcher's knife hidden in her sleeve, she attacked Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* and got in what she later described as several, "lovely shots", by smashing the protective glass and making numerous large slashes in the painted canvas. Moved to action by the violent arrest of Emmeline Pankhurst on the previous day, who had protested for women's voting rights, Richardson declared that she had, "tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the Government for destroying Mrs Pankhurst, who is the most beautiful character in modern history".

Her attack was not just for political reasons, but to speak out on the aesthetic objectification of female characters in paintings. The *Rokeby Venus* was an ideal piece for the suffragettes to target; it depicts an unknown woman reclining on a bed with her back to the painter. Art critic Rose-Marie Hagen has commented that, "few other paintings celebrate, so aesthetically and alluringly, the reduction of woman to a physical body, to the object of male desire. Venus's face, which might reveal something of her individuality and mind, is blurred in the mirror, while her curving pelvis is placed in the centre of the composition." Richardson later stated in an interview that she disliked, "the way men gaped at it [the painting] all day long". The intention behind her act was clear. By slashing this

symbol of female beauty, Richardson and the other suffragettes had begun to wage war on the cultural objectification of women, a war which is still ongoing today.

However, is this enough to validate such vandalism of a painting that was of historical importance and value? What was already a problematic attack received more negative attention because of Richardson's lack of remorse afterwards. She took such pride in her stunt that people began to refer to her as 'Slasher Mary', a veiled link to the murderer, Jack the Ripper, who had operated twenty five years earlier. It apparently upset the public to see such a timeless piece destroyed on the basis of political and social conflict, especially when the cultural value of art is treated as a contingency to achieve greater goals. Many people feel that this kind of attack has always meant disregarding the fact that a civilization without art would surely be a weakened civilization.

At the heart of this, the protestors' choices to attack objects within cultural institutions, shows the growing power that art has within society. Whilst countries may become more divided on matters of religion or politics, the artworks in museums still prevail as symbols of national identity and social stability. Art helps us communicate, understand and relate to each other as human beings in a way which words cannot. It is for these reasons that it feels so unnatural to justify any protestors' vandalism of art, no matter what they are fighting for. Using art as collateral damage within political protest, to me, feels immoral and illogical. Whether it's throwing soup or wielding a butcher's knife, there is no doubt that violent acts will not solve the problems in our world.

No matter the time period or political aim, we can see that the general intent of art vandals is to cause uproar by disturbing the look or reputation of art people know all too well. Indeed, in some countries, when torn down to the bone, the women's rights activists and environmental campaigners come from the same home. Their inherent goals are the same: to publicly stand up to injustice or issues in our world. Nonetheless, whilst these protestors enable conversations which most definitely need to be talked about, in most circumstances, it feels wrong to justify their destruction of art as the best way to spread a message.



£45,000 PICTURE
HACKED.

NATIONAL GALLERY
OUTRAGE.

SUFFRAGETTE'S CHOPPER.

£10,000 DAMAGE TO THE
ROKEBY VENUS.

SEIZURE OF THE WOMAN.

ART COLLECTIONS
CLOSED.



MARY RICHARDSON and her chopper.

Women's work

Summer Ginvert investigates the American film industry's true origins and finds a surprising truth - women have been the backbone of Hollywood since its earliest days

Hollywood: a world which oozes luxury; where the mafia is romanticised and every hero saves the day. Hollywood promotes a promise that if you work hard enough, if you grit your teeth, you can become the star you dreamt about. To me, the word 'Hollywood' represents exactly that: fame, wealth, and happiness.

If Hollywood were a genuine place, I'd imagine there would be jazz music played non-stop across all its streets, and every time it rained there would be a couple dancing in it under multi-coloured umbrellas. Unfortunately, that Hollywood is fictional. It is a legend that's been created to persuade you into thinking that the film industry is a genuine and conventional workplace, where 'work hard, play hard' is the mantra. I used to imagine that after graduating from university, I'd go straight into working at 20th Century Fox and become an Oscar-winner by the age of 25. The truth is, Hollywood is neither shiny, glamorous, nor fair.

If I asked you who built Hollywood, what would you say? Charlie Chaplin (*Modern Times*), Hitchcock (*Vertigo*, *Psycho*), some other director? There's no shame in it; we've only ever heard the legacies of the men in this industry, after all, over 90 per cent of film historians are men and they're the ones recording the film industry's past. However, in this article I'm going to discuss an alternative narrative as to how Hollywood rose to success: it was down to the women. I'm talking about the women producers, directors, actresses, and many others with only a fragile link to the industry. It is thanks to all of them that Hollywood became the phenomenon that it is now.

The glorious thing about filmmaking is that anyone can do it; all you need is a camera. In the very early 20th century, this concept was the same: women were able to film, produce, and direct because there were no societal rules against it. Film was a new art form with new concepts and visuals, enabling women to briefly meet on a level playing field with men. Alice Guy was considered the only female filmmaker in the late 19th and early 20th century. Her career path began in 1894 when she became a secretary for a camera manufacturing company. She borrowed one of her company's cameras and became familiar with the company's marketing and clients. After gaining interest in the new moving pictures led by the Lumière Brothers, she eventually made around a thousand short films. Her undeniable talent led her to becoming the head of production at a major French film company (Gaumont). After moving to the United States with her husband, she formed the Solax Company. As artistic director, she produced remarkable films and made sufficient profit that within two years of its launch, they were able to invest \$100,000 into technology. Unfortunately, many films made by Alice Guy were later credited to men. 'My sex conspired against me,' she concluded.



Film director Lillian Gish working on the set of 'Remodelling Her Husband', 1920.



Alice Guy on the set of 'The Life of Christ' in France, 1906.

Lois Weber was another female director who outshone her male peers. She became one of the highest-paid directors of the silent film era, earning \$5,000 a week in 1916 (worth around \$136,000 today). Lois Weber began her career with her husband as an actress, but then worked with Universal Studios behind the camera and produced important films on topics such as abortion, alcohol abuse, and drug addiction, leading her to become one of the most successful filmmakers of her time.



Lois Weber photographed in 1925.

It wasn't just in the production sector where women thrived, since most women working in early Hollywood were actors. Now, I'm not going to sugarcoat it, being a female actor in the 1920s was not easy in any way; women often faced abuse, exploitation, and misogyny. Successful actresses were often under the control of powerful men. With that in mind, the same actors were responsible for bringing many people into cinemas and some were able to live successful lives in spite of the trauma they endured at the hands of directors and producers.

One example is Mary Pickford, an actor who often played savvy or innocent girls in romantic movies and who had an extremely successful career. By 1916, she was paid over \$10,000 a week, which was an extraordinary amount for a female actor to earn - the average American man earned around \$750 a year! This is because visually striking women like her brought in big audiences. Having beautiful women in films, with plots often centred around lust and love, was a key factor in attracting audiences (especially male ones) to film screenings.

This leads to my final point: it was the audience who were truly responsible for Hollywood's success and specifically, the *female* audience. The truth is, the rowdy, drunk men who regularly visited cinemas at the weekend, did not generate

sufficient revenue to keep cinemas afloat. They needed the whole family to be there and the only way to do that, was if the women were invested. In 1901 it was estimated that 85 per cent of the patrons in the theatre were women. Surely, if one cultural form of entertainment was so dependent on women, film would have to lean on them too. Soon enough, Hollywood realised the power women had. One film critic wrote in 1926 that the film industry 'must please the women or die'.



Mary Pickford posing for a bank advertisement, circa 1920.

In a strange way (in comparison to the appalling misogyny at the time) women were commonly perceived as morally superior and more sophisticated than men. If the film industry had the support of women, then they would be on the 'morally good' side. There were some women who used these misogynistic labels to their advantage, they promoted family-friendly and joyful films, sometimes even comparing running a cinema to running a home. Clearly, women shaped Hollywood's audience and were crucial in allowing this industry to achieve its highest potential.



Women laughing at Charlie Chaplin's film 'The Great Dictator' in Germany, 1946.

So, what went wrong? Why is it that in 1917 there were eight female directors credited to Universal Studios, but in 2017 there was only one? There are a few answers to this question, but the most probable answer is that people adapted to the new phenomenon of film. During the early 20th century, film was still new - they were in black and white and there was no sound track. As the technology improved, society's views and customs began to become more deeply entrenched in it. During the 1920s, cinema was something of an idyll, people were in awe of seeing moving pictures and were little distracted by the people who made it. As motion pictures and the industry evolved, films created conventions and the men in the industry saw its success and began to take advantage of that. Women began getting smaller budgets for films, less investment, and fewer releases. Directors such as Hitchcock grew in popularity, and companies swiftly shifted to focusing on the men. Between 1949 and 1979, the major film companies had only 0.19% of their films directed by women. The lack of focus on women directors inevitably led to fewer women joining the film industry, as there was an inspiration shortage, director Lexi Alexander said, 'I really thought women didn't want to be directors.'

Hollywood is a rigged game, it always has been, but hopefully it won't always be this way. In this field, perhaps more than any other, there is no even playing field. Hollywood has a history of favouring men and ignoring the women, despite the fact that they depended on them to prosper.

I believe that while Hollywood is not a fair place, it is changing and improving. Following on from the #MeToo movement, there has been a gradual shift in it becoming more inclusive; women are regaining their lead positions as directors, actors, and the many other professions that women initially thrived in when Hollywood was in its earliest days. Reece Witherspoon created a production company named Hello Sunshine to

reclaim female auteurship (this company was worth \$900 million in 2021 and has received over 18 Emmy nominations). What's more, actors such as Keira Knightley have found their voice in condemning the sexism within Hollywood and the filmmaking industry as a whole. Hopefully, there will be a point in the future when society praises the women in Hollywood history as much as they do the men.



Film director Dorothy Arzner on the set of 'Get your Man', 1927.



Mary Pickford (left) and Frances Marion (right), on the set of United Artists in 1920.



CHANNING

Channing
The Bank, Highgate
London N6 5HF

T: 020 8340 2328

info@channing.co.uk
www.channing.co.uk

INDEPENDENT DAY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS AGED 4-18