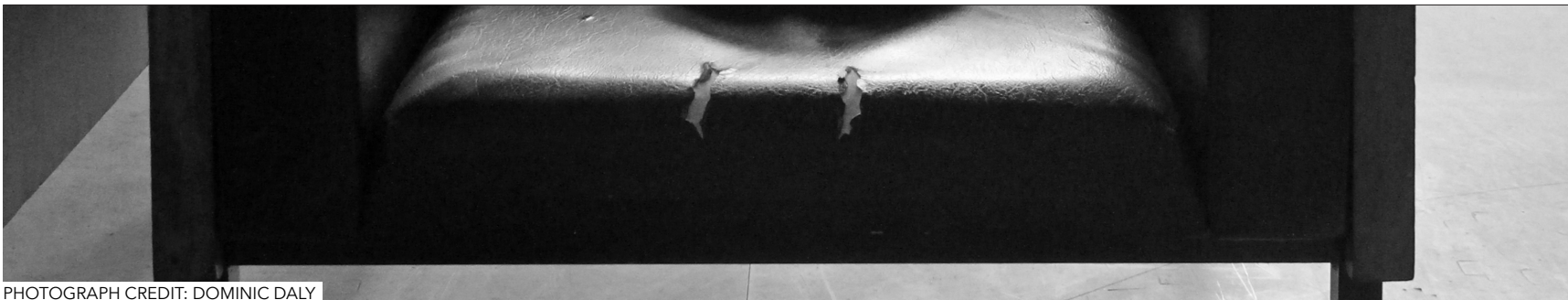


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A DIFFERENT KIND OF COVID SPIKE: UCD STUDENTS NOTE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN ANTI-ASIAN RACISM SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.

ANDREA ANDRES

SINCE the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, there has been a marked increase in incidents of anti-Asian racism, in Ireland and around the world. Speaking to *The University Observer*, Asian students across UCD have relayed their experiences of and reaction to racism they have encountered since the outbreak of Covid-19.

"In February [2020], I experienced some hatred from some students on campus in Belfield. They called us 'Coronavirus'. They accused us of carrying the virus and called us 'stinky Asian'. That's the first time I've experienced anti-Asian racism," recounted Student A, who asked to remain anonymous.

"The second time was when I went to Dacey's on Valentine's Day. We tried to get a cab back home at the gate of the club and there was a woman, I'm not sure where she was from but her accent [was] not an Irish accent. She started calling us the carrier of the virus. We almost got into a fight with her. The security guard had to separate us".

Student B, who also wished to be anonymous, recalled walking along the River Liffey when someone "called [them] 'Coronavirus', but [they] just ignored him and didn't want to generate any conflict," they said. "I just felt that man was rude and ignorant".

Yuxi Wei, a MSc Digital Marketing student in the Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School remembers an incident with a woman

who looked "seventy or eighty years old." This woman "muttered a very long sentence when I went by, with an unfriendly look. I knew she was complaining about me."

"I asked her what she said, she didn't admit she was talking to me. I asked her what she said again, I just wanted to know if it [was] about Covid 19 and [that] I'm from China, or just because I'm an Asian. She ran away and let me leave her alone. I wore a mask and didn't stand by her, but I knew it's probably because of Covid," Wei added.

The experiences recounted are part of a bigger wave of worldwide anti-Asian racism. According to the Irish Examiner, the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) reported sixty coronavirus-related racist incidents in the first four months of 2020. The director of INAR, Shane O'Curry, estimated that eighty percent of incidents were not reported, posing "huge under-reporting."

Memet Uludag, spokesperson for the organization United Against Racism, said of the under-reporting: "If you ask me 'What is the percentage? What is the ratio?', it's very difficult to even say because many of the people who are victims of racism are finding it very difficult to come out and bring it to the public arena because it is an attack. You're trying to figure out what the hell just happened to you just on the bus, in your workplace. You're considering your privacy, your homelife, your hometown, your own safety."

In August of last year two Chinese men in their twenties, Arthur Ma

and Martin Hong, were verbally and physically assaulted in a racist incident in Cork. Later that month, Xuedan (Shirley) Xiong was pushed into the Royal Canal in Dublin by a group of youths. The Irish Sun reported at the time that 'they shouted phrases such as "Chinese noodles" and "fried noodles" at her'

Another student who asked to be anonymous, Student C, felt that: "The association of any Asian-looking person, regardless of ethnicity, with Covid as a monolith has made us an easy and acceptable target. We are a minority, but an even smaller minority than some other demographics and even then we are highly localised into our own circles for our own protection, so we're never a "real" problem."

"White Irish allies also dominate spaces and organisations seeking and claiming justice (...) and while that's usually due to simple demographics, the fact that we aren't taken seriously until a white Irish voice repeats what we've been saying is infuriating," he added.

When asked whether they reported the incidents that occurred to them and whether they were aware of any resources to aid them in these scenarios, Student A, Student B, and Wei all chose not to report the incidents they experienced and were not aware of any such resources. "I didn't report. I just told my friends what happened to me and told them to be careful. I didn't know that there was any place for us to report hate crime. Also, those people are just random students on campus or some people who hang out in the club, I

didn't know any detailed information about those people," said Student A. Student B opted not to report because "[they] really don't mind. Just told some friends to be careful."

Student C did not recount any coronavirus-related racism, but has experienced prejudice. "Even before Covid, I've been called slurs and harassed on the streets, and have had bottles thrown at me from moving cars." They have chosen not to report any incidents because: "No matter the institution, be it Gardaí, university or ministry, bureaucracy in this country seems geared specifically to fatigue the people it serves into giving up. The police don't care about sexual abuse or racism against their own citizens. Why would they care if it affects us?"

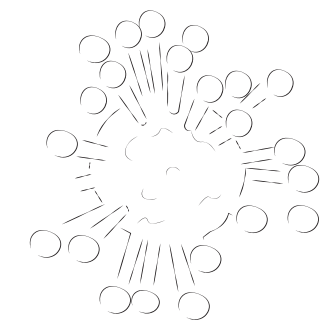
"Racial discrimination usually occurs when a person is walking. I can't catch him [or] her when I encounter these things and say 'Come here and follow me, I will sue you for racial discrimination,'" said Wei.

Student A felt "really upset" with their experiences of anti-Asian racism in Ireland. "We heard really good things about people here, we heard they're friendly, they're welcoming to international students that come here and study, but then we experienced this and that made us really upset." "After everything that happened, I just feel like we are not welcome by a lot of people in a lot of countries, especially in Western countries. I personally won't go to town or some sensitive area in Dublin

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THE UCD STUDENTS' UNION ELECTION SPECIAL

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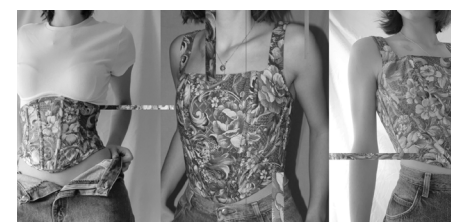
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COVERAGE, INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS INSIDE



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(CONTINUED. A DIFFERENT KIND OF COVID SPIKE: UCD STUDENTS NOTE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN ANTI-ASIAN RACISM SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.)

alone, I would always make sure I have some friends to go with me to keep myself safe.”

Wei echoes Student A’s sentiment and describes feeling “disappointed”. “My friends who have lived in Ireland told me the anti-Asian situation before the virus was not as serious as now. But now I feel it’s really a very serious phenomenon in Ireland,” she said.

Coronavirus-related racism isn’t confined to ordinary students. Hazel Chu, the current Lord Mayor of Dublin has openly shared her experiences of racism and has experienced a spate of racist attacks directed during her tenure. Speaking to the University Observer, she said she “definitely [had not] seen [coronavirus-related racism] before”, adding: “There’s only been sporadic racism across the board, but it’s never specifically targeted at Asians.”

PROTECTIONS FOR STUDENT RENTERS DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS HAVE BEEN EXTENDED.

MICHAEL BERGIN

PROTECTIONS put in place for student renters who have been disaffected financially by the Covid-19 pandemic have been extended until the 12th of July.

The protections had been due to expire on the 12th of April. However, due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic, and current 5km travel restrictions, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Daraigh O’Brien TD, has sought cabinet approval for an extension to these measures. Included in the protections are a moratorium on evictions and rent increases for tenants who have faced financial difficulties and rent arrears as a result of the pandemic. In addition, rent increases for those receiving the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) or payments from the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme have been banned.

Landlords will still be able to serve a valid notice of termination for tenants who have fallen into rent arrears, once having given 28 days’ notice to the tenant. However, the tenant in this case will not have to leave their accommodation until after the 12th of July, and must be given 90 days’ notice. Those not included in the

The Lord Mayor described how, in the last month, she has received handwritten notes with “[You’re] a bitch” scrawled all over it”, and received jokes online describing how her “car is about to blow up.” “I’ve had people make sexual references to my three and a half year old daughter,” she added.

“A friend of mine who does algorithms and data analysis did a model”, Chu continues, “he realized from that, just affecting our politicians’ Twitter, Irish politicians on average get six percent of abuse, the high profile ones get ten percent, and I get fifteen percent. You get really, really thick skin and have to move on with it because the whole point is people don’t want you in the office if you don’t look like them and don’t have the same skin colour as them and they don’t think it’s normal. The only thing is to try and persevere otherwise there will be no one in the office that will be different.”

As for confronting the problem of anti-Asian racism, Wei felt that “the solutions should be the racial

education from childhood, and the related legislation should be improved.” Chu concurs: “There needs to be a proactive approach as well in education-how do we talk about racism in our classrooms, how do we talk about it in our schools, in colleges.” But she also spoke of “hate speech legislation coming along the way” and “talking about how to reform the platform for reporting hate speech and hate crimes.”

“Any kind of social justice movement should have the affected party front and centre,” Student C said. “However, for the Asian minority and diaspora, not only are we usually avoidant of local politics, for safety but also, largely, because it’s tradition to be, we’re not loud enough as is. There is simply no incentive to stick one’s head out because we aren’t even listened to without white voices supporting us.”

“Outside of relatively few and comparatively loud left-leaning organisations and people, Ireland as a whole needs to come to terms with its racism against Asian, black, Mincéir and other minorities,” they add.



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: SINEAD MOHAN

cross-party bill on student rent protections put forward to the Dáil by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), which UCDSU has not been affiliated with since 2013, commending them for their work. Power said that

“Organizations of ancillary nature, community groups, all sections of society need to build a campaign in their communities, in their workplaces, in their societies that not only comes into the defense of the victim, but also we are also setting the mark and say ‘we will not allow racism of our communities,’” Uludag said.

Student A hopes that “we can see more support from white people to know that they are staying with us and know this kind of action is not acceptable.”

CAO SHOWS INCREASE IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENCE COURSE POPULARITY

HELOISE ROBINSON

CAO applications this year have revealed a larger number of applicants than usual choosing to pursue third-level education, and in doing so, veered towards science and environment-focused courses.

CAO applications have reached 79,176 this year, rising an additional 6,203 applicants from last year. The CAO has reported that as of their most recent data, UCD has had almost 10,000 first-choice applications, a rise of 16% on last year, and Trinity College Dublin has received nearly 23,000, up 32% compared to last year.

The highest increase in applications has been to environmental courses, where there has been a record 70% increase in first-choice applications. First choice preference for journalism has also increased by 58%, after it had been decreasing steadily for the past few years. Overall, science-based courses have received a significant amount of interest; medicine rose by 25%, and biology sciences rose by 21% compared to last year. Most applications for third-level education were in the area of health, business, nursing, and arts.

Other popular choices were hygiene and occupational health which has risen by 43%, social sciences which rose by 27% and pharmacy which rose by 26%. Arts has risen by 11%, following a decline in previous years. Transport services received the highest decline in popularity at 44%, in comparison to last year when the subject recorded the largest increase, at 89%.

There has also been a 20% increase in mature student applications, which The Irish Times reported may be as a result of the pandemic. 8,727 people over 23 applied for the CAO. There was also an increase in those applying via the Disability Access Route to Education, with 7,839 applicants in total. Furthermore, this year has seen a record number of international applications. British applications to Irish colleges have risen by over a quarter. In addition to this, European applicants increased by almost 140%.

The Irish Times reported that UCD deemed the CAO increase of 16% in first preference application as a “significant anomaly”. The University registered its most significant increase in radiography (188%), which was followed by sustainability (124%). Architecture also saw a significant rise at 59%, and several healthcare courses such as mental health nursing at 86% and midwifery at 46%.

Deputy President and Registrar of UCD, Professor Mark Rogers told The Irish Times that there is “an expected demographic increase in the number of school leavers at Leaving Certificate level”, however, he deemed the overall increase in CAO applications “more complex”. He cited factors such as Brexit, an increase of students from previous years applying to the CAO, and a “higher expectation of better results” as possible reasons for the increase.



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: DOMINIC DALY

SUSI SCHEME TO BE REVIEWED

HEATHER SLEVIN

MINISTER Simon Harris announced plans to review the current Student Grant Scheme in December 2020, with the opening of public consultation for the purpose of the review on March 12th.

The grant scheme, known as Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), is the sole authority responsible for the awarding of student grants and has been running for nine years. The review will re-examine the rate of maintenance grants currently in place, the upper-income thresholds for applying students, taking into account the number of dependents in the home, as well as the availability of grants for both students in part-time education and post-graduates, and will consider how Ireland compares to other jurisdictions.

With this announcement, the public consultation would allow students to have their say on the “future

direction of the SUSI scheme”, according to Minister Harris. Previously, students applying to the grant have been evaluated in terms of their annual Household Income, with an upper threshold that takes into account the number of dependents in the house providing the cut-off for certain applicants. The review of the scheme comes after the tremulous effects of Covid-19. With an extra €20m secured in funding in the 2021 budget for the grant scheme, there are hopes that the grant may be made available to more students, adding to the more than 77,500 students who availed of the grant in the 2020/21 academic year.

The review is seen as an opportunity to plan for improvements in the application process. With the effects of Covid-19 and the ongoing economic crisis, the public consultation calls for students to relay their experiences and help improve the availability of the grant nationwide. The review will have to take into



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: DOMINIC DALY

consideration the long-term effects of Covid-19 to give students the chance to avail of third-level education in the future. There is a possibility that there will be an increase in the value of the grant, which would benefit many students living far from the colleges and universities they wish to attend. In addition, with the extra funding secured in this year’s budget, the review

could mean a re-evaluation of the upper threshold, which currently leaves many families cut off from the financial support available.

The public consultation will remain open until April 16, with the final report being presented in Autumn 2021.

AFSAI CONTEST UCD ENGLISH MODULE

AOIFE ROONEY

On March 4th, the African Scholars Association of Ireland (AFSAI) addressed an open letter to the UCD School of English Drama and Film to contest the module ENG32569 Writing Black: African American Literature and Racial Consciousness.

The letter argued that the way in which the module was designed “invokes the history of the exploitation of Black suffering for personal and institutional gain and profit, as well as the unacknowledged appropriation of Black scholarship”. The letter also accused UCD of showing “bias in their hiring.” The AFSAI suggested that the School was “careless of its Black community of workers and students” in their choice to position a white scholar in a teaching role of one of the two modules in the School focused on Black experience.

Head of the School Professor John Brannigan stated in response to these claims that the “School has been actively engaged in a process of decolonising and diversifying our curriculum.” He also called for

retractions and corrections made in the letter about the hiring practices. In a letter addressed to the AFSAI, Professor Brannigan postulates that a claim made by the group regarding a white academic in a teaching role for a module on Black writing was untrue. He states that they were an existing member of staff, and were not hired with the contested module in mind. Professor Brannigan also said that the claim was “not only disrespectful to the module coordinator, but also impugns the reputation of the university.” Dr Ebon Joseph, Chairperson of the AFSAI, responded to this statement by clarifying that “the issue is not about a singular coordinator, but about “the system in the University and school which facilitates such programmes.”

The response from the organisation reiterates that it is not enough to teach students about Black suffering and experience through literature, but that it should be taught by Black scholars. Dr Joseph argues that Black students, students of colour and White students benefit from having Black lecturers and people of

colour empowered and teaching them about Blackness or race consciousness.” This comes nearly a year after UCD voiced their support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Professor Brannigan said that the module was offered in an “expression of alliance and solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and more broadly with anti-racism.”

The AFSAI suggested ways in which UCD can begin to address the issues as stated in their letter. Among them was the recommendation to require staff to complete annual training covering “diversity, equity and inclusion.” They also think that the University should have an equality audit commissioned by an independent body. Foremost, the group argued that UCD should invest resources into the development of modules that aim to topple racial stereotypes and prejudices, and that these seminars should be “mandatory for all incoming students.”

In a letter to Dr Joseph from President Andrew Deeks, he admitted that while UCD is “not yet fully addressing” the recommendations made by the AFSAI, he notes the establishment of a Race and Ethnic Equality Working Group in 2020, who are currently developing a University Level Race and Ethnicity Action Plan. They are aiming to speak to students and find out more about their experiences with race and intersectionality.

When asked how UCD might approach the teaching of anti-racism in third-level, Dr Joseph believes that it is the role of the University to platform qualified, Black scholars and that there is an obligation on universities to “empower Black lecturers who have the expertise to develop materials and teach anti-racism courses.” On the importance of this situation, Dr Joseph reminds the university that “It is a privilege to read about racism while others live that experience.”

USI SURVEY REVEALS STUDENTS BELIEVE IRISH SHOULD REMAIN COMPULSORY.

NICOLA KENNY

A majority of third-level students think Irish should remain as a compulsory subject up to Leaving Certificate level.

A report on the teaching of Irish in schools, carried out by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and published on March 10th, 2021, has considered students’ attitudes towards Irish language education and examined the current curriculum’s effectiveness in achieving language fluency.

The report results reflect a strong interest in Irish language learning among students, with 67% of those surveyed expressing the view that Irish should remain compulsory across primary and secondary level education. 26% believe it should be mandatory until the junior certificate level, while only 7% said it should be optional throughout.

The report also shows support from students for Irish-medium education, with 70% of all respondents saying they would send their children to Gaelscoileanna (Irish Language Schools.)

While the survey results show a high level of support for Irish language learning, evidence from the report suggests that many students favour reform to the

current syllabus.

81% of students said that despite demand, the most significant emphasis in their education was on reading and writing over the spoken language. 54% stated that no emphasis was placed on teaching Irish as a living language beyond the classroom setting, in contrast to the 21% who said they were encouraged to speak or use Irish outside of class.

Overall, only 21% of students surveyed said they spoke fluent Irish. 41% said they were reasonably fluent, 30% stated that they could string a few sentences together, and 7% said they had no fluency.

Reflecting on the findings, USI Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and author of the Report, Clíodhna ní Dhúfaigh, said: “There must be greater emphasis placed on speaking the language as part of the curriculum and on Irish as a living language outside of the education system.”

“This report shows a high demand for Irish-medium education at both primary and secondary level, and this demand needs to be met in the Irish school system. It is no surprise that students who had Irish as a spoken language in the classroom got greater enjoyment out

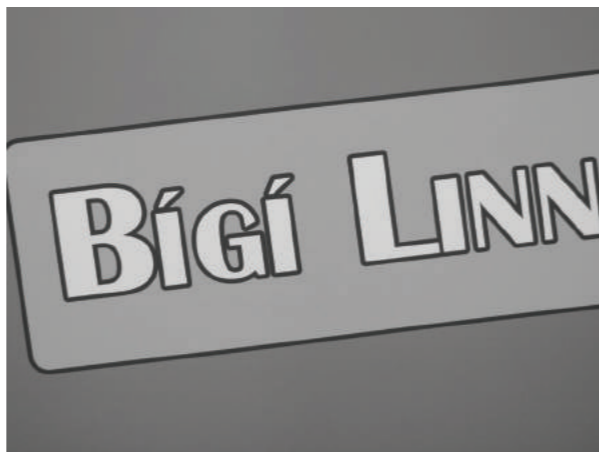
of the course, and that needs to be encouraged,” she explained.

Tadhg Ó Maoldhomhnaigh, UCDSU Irish Language Officer, described how UCDSU entirely agrees with the results from the Report on the *Teaching of Irish* published by USI. “It comes as no surprise that students across the country enjoy learning Irish and wish to see it remain a compulsory subject but are unhappy with the current curricular approach in our secondary level schools.”

However, Ó Maoldhomhnaigh outlined how the Union believes that “this problem is not limited to secondary level education but in fact stems from primary level education”.

“Students should not come out of 14 years of education anything less than fluent in Irish. While it is true that 50% of the current Irish Leaving Certificate is awarded on oral and aural skills, it is obvious that this system is not working and that exercises such as reading a poem and rote-learning 20 Sraith Pictiúr do not work in achieving fluency” he said.

In addition, he stated that “UCDSU would like to extend its unreserved support to USI and Conradh



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: SINEAD MOHAN

na Gaeilge in any future campaigns to overhaul the present Irish curriculum in the education system across all levels.”

1539 students took part in the survey carried out by USI between October 2018 and January 2019 and promoted by Students’ Unions, na Cumainn Ghaelacha, and Conradh na Gaeilge.

THE UCD School of History is failing in their gender equality aims in the area of staffing.

With the departure of Associate Professor Lindsey Eamer-Byrne from the UCD School of History, the department now has only two remaining female academics at this level. There are four Associate Professors roles held by men in the School, which means that there are currently two male Associate Professors for every one female. This is not in line with the School of History’s commitment to their pursuance of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. While there has been the appointment of several women within the School of History in recent years, it has not extended to Professor and Full Professor level.

Assistant Professor Mark Jones from the School of History

spoke of the measures the school was taking in their attempts to address the problem. He credits the Head of the School, William Mulligan for much of the progress. This includes the work done in coordination with the Athena Swan Award, of which 16 schools across UCD, including the School of History, are recipients of the Bronze Award. As part of the work on equality that would qualify a school for this award, the Head of the School has reformed the promotions process, and Professor Jones argues that “it will take time for this progress to be reflected in promotions to senior levels.” He also maintains that the situation in UCD is largely more forthright than other universities in the State.

On a college-wide level, lack of childcare support for staff is

also a problem. In the 2016 Higher Education Authority (HEA) report on gender equality in universities, 50% of respondents named ‘childcare provisions and supports as being of critical importance’. Childcare is an issue that disproportionately affects female employees, and can often act as a barrier to employment, so the opening of a creche for staff would have a positive impact on female staff and academics. Associate Professor Jones clarifies that the university is aware of the issues surrounding childcare and that the “current university equality plan may have some concrete proposals in place to address them, including eventually the provision of a new creche.”

Despite the departure of one of the few female academics at senior level leaving UCD, and the current male to female ratio

among staff not in favour of gender equality, Professor Jones suggests that while progress is slow, it is being made, and takes responsibility for the need to be a part of the discussion on how to address the issue. “We (staff members) continue to have robust discussions on how to accelerate that progress best.”

UCDSU CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION INTO PROFESSOR DOLORES CAHILL

NATHAN YOUNG

UCDSU has called for Professor Dolores Cahill of the UCD School of Medicine to be investigated under Statute 28 of the Universities Act, 1997.

In a press statement sent on Friday 19th March, UCDSU President Conor Anderson stated: “Dolores Cahill has been propagating medically-inaccurate conspiracy theories in service of a far-right political agenda throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, her words are far-reaching. Professor Cahill has amassed a huge following and exerts considerable influence over the general public who do not realise she is not an expert in virology, epidemiology, or public health.

“Cahill is using her role in UCD to position herself as an expert voice to the anti-mask, anti-lockdown far right. Many people have justifiably been duped into believing that Cahill is an expert in the field due to her links to the UCD School of Medicine and they therefore believe her position warrants listening to. It is of the utmost importance that we as a University explain to the public that Prof. Cahill has no expertise in the area of public health or virology, and we do have qualified experts in this area in UCD. If you require accurate scientific information on viruses, please listen to Professors in the National Virus Reference Laboratory or the Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases. Dolores Cahill does not have the expertise to inform

you on Covid-19 and is merely telling you her political ideas and none of it is based on scientific research by the UCD School of Medicine.

“As President of UCD Students’ Union, and in light of Cahill’s continued escalation of rhetoric that endangers public health, I have written to the head of the UCD School of Medicine and the head of UCD Human Resources to request that Prof. Cahill be investigated under Statute 28 of the Universities Act 1997. This statute defines gross misconduct, in part, as “deliberate disregard for health and safety precautions likely to endanger another person.” Given Cahill’s disregard for public health advice and her continued rhetoric that is putting the lives of ordinary people in danger, all while using her role in UCD, I believe this warrants investigation by the University”.

Anderson first stated that he was working with UCD medicine students on the issue of Dolores Cahill and misinformation during the Union Council of the 15th of February. His report presented to Council that night stated that he had “held a town hall between myself, student reps from the school of medicine, SU executive officers, and academics to discuss the issue of Covid-19 misinformation and how to address that issue through student action, specifically as it pertains to Prof. Dolores Cahill”.

It is understood that the escalation to a public calling for an investigation is a result of Professor Cahill’s involvement in the organising of an anti-lockdown event in Herbert park on St. Patrick’s day. During her address to the crowd, Cahill made numerous false claims regarding Covid-19 restrictions and public health guidelines. She stated children wearing masks would “never reach their IQ and job potential because their brains are starved of oxygen”, and claimed that “the reason that globalists are putting down the masks is that oxygen-deprived people are easier to manipulate”.

It was revealed later that Friday that An Garda Síochána were carrying out an investigation following an alleged party in breach of lockdown rules in an Athy Castle owned by Professor Cahill. While the Gardaí do not comment on private addresses, a spokesperson from the Garda Press Office said in a statement; “An Garda Síochána is carrying out enquiries into an alleged breach of Public Health Regulations at a property in Athy [on] Wednesday 17 March 2021”.

“The Health Act 1947 (Section 31A-Temporary Restrictions) (Covid-19) (No.10) Regulations 2020, as amended, are currently in force.

“Where Gardaí identify potential breaches of the

public health regulations a file is prepared for the DPP in each case or a Fixed Payment Notice is issued where appropriate.

“Regulation 8, places restriction on persons organising events. This is a penal regulation.

“Gardaí in Kildare did stop a number of motorists [on Wednesday] evening who were making non-essential journeys. A number of FPNs will be issued as a result. A breach of public health regulations for travel without a ‘reasonable excuse’ can be enforced by a €100 Fixed Payment Notice.”

In a rare response to a press query, Professor Cahill told *The Journal* that her response was “No comment”.

OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM NEEDS SUPPORT.

DANIEL BOLAND

The IMO announced this week that up to 600 doctors may leave the health system by July. Daniel Boland asks what can be done to retain doctors and to keep our healthcare system from collapsing?

THE story of Irish doctors going to work abroad is not a new one. As a medical student working in any given Irish hospital, it is more likely than not that the doctor you are working under will regale you with unsolicited tales of their glory days in Australia. Indeed, in 2012 a report commissioned by Fine Gael found that 65.5% of final-year medical students at the time planned to leave the country. This does not tell the full story, of course. A fair chunk of that 65.5% did indeed leave the country to spend a few years adventuring and having new experiences; experiences of both being on another continent and of working in a healthcare system that was not creaking on the brink of collapse. For most, it was a temporary measure while the country was in the grips of recessionary cuts. So, in what is termed circular migration, many doctors emigrated for a while before eventually returning home to Ireland. But as time has gone on and the recession faded into the past, hopes for improvement have died. In short, this is an old problem, however, the Irish Medical Organisation's (IMO) recent announcement is a warning that it is reaching critical mass.

There are both push and pull factors that influence where doctors go. Pull factors attract doctors, and include higher wages, lower-stress jobs, access to specialist training programmes, and opportunities to participate in interesting research. We can do little to influence the pull factors that other countries offer, as tempting as it might be to send a crack team of HSE spies to sabotage all the MRI machines in Adelaide. What Ireland can do is reduce the push factors. These are the things that make it undesirable to work here. Anecdotally, understaffing and overworking arise as the major issues that push people to breaking point. As part of their statement on the up to 600 non-consultant hospital doctors potentially leaving the country this summer, the IMO referred to 'long working hours and

chronic manpower problems'. In 2018 there were 349 unfilled consultant jobs. A detailed study of doctor migration between 2008 and 2018, from which this article draws many of its conclusions, confirmed that a major draw of Irish-trained medics to Australia was the reputation for "good working conditions for health workers and good staffing levels".

Doctors are only one part of Ireland's healthcare machine. Nurses have similar workplace problems that equally need to be addressed. So too do allied health professionals and all the general support staff that help hospitals to run. Fundamentally, the HSE needs to value its workers. Certain hospitals are well-staffed and do not suffer from overworking problems, but they are the exception rather than the rule. A vicious circle is created where a poor work environment leads to workers leaving. This creates staff shortages which leads to an even worse work environment and more vacancies. Indeed, the work shortages are tied. Doctors are incapable of functioning without nursing support, while nurses spend ages chasing down doctors. It all leads to overtime, stress and unhappiness.

Covid has created a difficult situation for the HSE. Healthcare systems will never have enough money at the best of times. Improvements in patient care are always possible. Therefore, the age-old economic question arises of getting the best value out of the money that you have. 2021's HSE Budget saw an increase of 21% or €3.5 billion, half of which was for non-Covid services. There are many worthy ways for that money to be spent. But in a healthcare system that is repeatedly referred to as in crisis, no overarching plans have been made to attempt to break the cycle of manpower shortages.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020, then-Taioseach Leo Varadkar announced the creation

of 300 additional jobs for medical interns. Intern in this context is a rather confusing term, but rather than being the person doing the coffee run, these interns are qualified doctors in their first year of work after graduation. Interns perform a huge amount of medical work in a hospital setting; ordering bloods, inserting cannulas, writing up prescriptions, filling in charts and discharge letters, doing patient rounds, and most crucially flagging their more senior colleagues when a patient deteriorates. So as the first wave of Covid hit and great uncertainty lay ahead, it was decided to offer intern jobs to all medical graduates from Irish universities. This was widely well-received. The more doctors the better during a pandemic, after all. This recruitment drive was not the usual state of affairs. The number of intern posts available before 2020 was tied to the number of CAO places in medicine. CAO applicants are prioritised in the allocation system, guaranteeing jobs for all Irish graduates. What this meant was that every year before last, a large number of international graduates from Irish universities did not receive job offers.

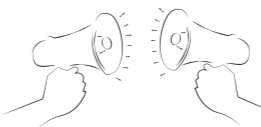
This year, the HSE's National Doctors Training and Planning Unit says it plans to bring intern places back down to ~750 from ~1100 last year. The money saved by this cut would be around €12 million. The rationale given is that last year was a time of exceptional circumstances and that the hiring decision was political. The arguments that have been made in favour of this position have centred around a lack of funding and concern around the training capacity of the HSE. There may be some weight to these arguments, but a single statistic does a significant amount to refute them. In 2019, before the job numbers were temporarily increased, 33% of interns worked more than 60 hours a week. This figure shows that the problem of understaffing and overworking is something doctors deal with from the very beginning of their careers. This is what drives the culture of emigration.

The underlying problem that is highlighted by this is a failure to treat the wellbeing of staff as a priority.

An ongoing intercollegiate student-led campaign under the hashtag KeepOurDoctors is hoping to reverse the decision to roll back the job numbers. The students in question have lived and studied in Ireland for the last four to six years. Previously, it has been much lamented that 'the emigration of doctors is eroding return on recent state investment in basic medical training in Ireland'. This statement is on the basis that the quality of all medical educations in certain countries is not up at the level of that in Ireland. And as Irish graduates leave, more and more places are filled by internationally trained doctors who may have poorer training. It should be noted in the case of the above-mentioned intern jobs, that the students hoping to remain in Ireland may be of international origin but are Irish-trained.

The Irish healthcare system has a vast number of multifaceted issues that need to be addressed, ranging from waiting lists to trolleys to the handling of the still-ongoing pandemic. But one part of the solution is in a systemic response towards valuing the staff currently employed, by listening to their needs, improving their working environment, and striving to retain them. Hiring 300 doctors who want to stay and work in Ireland is a step in the right direction.

HEAD TO HEAD



IS IT TIME TO HALT URBAN SPRAWL AND START TO BUILD UPWARDS OR SHOULD WE PRESERVE THE CURRENT DUBLIN SKYLINE?

AAKRITI SOOD AND JOSEPH KAVANAGH

FOR

AAKRITI SOOD

DUBLIN is one of the most popular destinations for firms moving from London since the talks of Brexit first commenced. Studies indicate Dublin will be able to attract more than 280,000 people by the year 2031. The city needs to anticipate this migration but with the ongoing housing crisis in the city, Dublin is increasingly becoming a less desirable place to live in. Only 6% of the Georgian Dublin on the south side is residential. To combat the abandonment of Dublin, the city needs to let go of its conservative planning, increase the density by building mixed-use developments within the existing fabric, and build up to sustain its growth and future.

Dublin has only a little history of height. Liberty Hall and O'Connell Bridge house date back to the 1960s and can hardly be called skyscrapers by today's standards; measuring 60 meters and 40 meters respectively. Since then, the buildings built in the city have been between six to eight storeys tall. The current tallest building in Dublin is the Capital Dock tower, completed in 2018, stands at 79 meters tall. Dublin falls 30% behind in building heights to other European capitals like Amsterdam, Stockholm and Paris which are viewed as exemplars of cultural preservation in European low rise cities.

Since 2019, when new planning guidelines lifted the restrictive maximum heights in the city, debates for and against high rise in Dublin have increased exponentially. The developers call the planning authorities too conservative, and the planning authorities criticise high rise for being out of proportion with the scale of the city. High rise buildings have more often than not have been met with resistance. Gherkin in London was highly controversial all through its planning phase, but since its completion in 2003, it has become one of the most recognisable landmarks and examples of contemporary architecture in London.

Ireland is notorious for its suburban sprawl. This uncoordinated growth in the countryside, the expansion of community without the concern for its consequences is not a sustainable methodology for growth.

Urban sprawl increases land loss in the countryside, which is disruptive to the native flora and fauna and creates instability in biodiversity. Ireland has a beautiful natural landscape that has been the source of inspiration for many artists through history, and has attracted people from all over the world and must be protected. From an environmental perspective, the climate crisis is far more impending than it has ever been, the impervious infrastructure on the natural landscape causes irreversible damage and increases the risk of flooding through runoff. Low-density single-use dwellings have an average life of forty years, which is half the lifespan of an average person. The greenhouse gasses emitted in the construction process are roughly 20% of all carbon emissions in the world. Suburban dwellings are an inefficient utilisation of resources. Therefore a dwelling in a suburban sprawl is neither economically nor environmentally sustainable.

Covid-19 has highlighted and accelerated the need for and planning of good density neighbourhoods within the city. Failure of the Ballymun Project used is a misleading argument against high rise; the homes built were that of good quality but like many other estates built around the world at the time were 100% public housing, erected off a roundabout - a dead end. The scheme was doomed to fail as amenities were not developed for a long time and the maintenance was neglected by the City Council. Dublin is capable of accommodating pockets of socially inclusive, high rise and high-quality developments that can enhance the cityscape and quality of life. The success of a city densification strategy requires the collaboration of all city stakeholders. High rise structures cannot be built in a vacuum, urban landscape and placemaking need to become the focus in order to develop and densify Dublin sustainably.

REBUTTAL YES

JOSEPH KAVANAGH

MY colleagues' argument is an incredibly persuasive business plan. It has the language and arguments that the multinationals and developers adore! All those tantalising ideas of 15-minute cities and the perfect work-life balance. I do wonder though if these are not unlike the ideas sold to us about suburbia in the previous century?

Perhaps it would be worth mentioning how Dublin's Planning Authorities have made alterations to what they define as "residential" development. A blurred definition of what long term leases are has allowed developers of new high-rise projects to bend the rules and construct hotels and student accommodation. Under the new guidelines of the planning authorities, these short-term rentals are considered "residential" development. Does anyone believe all those student residences in Dublin were the result of student-led campaigns? I think not. You are looking at beds for the wealthy internationals, so our Universities can shake them down for their high fees. My colleague talks about densifying the city, but what happens when you densify it with temporary citizens? What sort of city do you get? It may not become a 15-minute city, but a one-night-stand city.

Furthermore, given the lack of adequate public infrastructure, sprawl increases car dependency, and in turn greenhouse gas emissions, with every household. Increased travel time to and from a suburban house has a significant connection to health ailments like obesity and hypertension. Within cities, research from a variety of countries has shown that denser metropolitan areas with a greater mix of land use and improved public transportation use fewer cars than less density suburban and exurban residential areas. Studies indicate that city dwellers in London and Paris produce half the amount of greenhouse gasses than their suburban counterparts.

Not only environmentally, but suburban sprawl is also not socially sustainable. Sprawl erodes quality of life; compact neighbourhoods foster casual encounters among the residents, while sprawl with the increased privatisation of space in gated communities and fenced backyards creates barriers. Many sprawl developments' relative homogeneity may reinforce class and racial divides by residential segregation. Commercial, social and residential infrastructure are usually single-use facilities and are zoned and segregated from one another with open space, infrastructure, or other. As a result, the locations where people live, work, shop, and play are often far apart, to the point where walking, public transportation, and bicycling are impractical, necessitating the use of a vehicle for all of these activities.

Many urban theorists including Jacobs and Plater-Zyberk have affirmed time and again that walkability between workplace, recreation spaces, and commercial facilities is an essential component for a successful balanced urban life. Hyper-proximity in urban living is becoming the focus of urban planning in many cities in Europe, in the 15-minute neighbourhoods in Paris and Barcelona (all your everyday needs are accessible within a 15-minute walk), and in the 20-minute neighbourhood in Melbourne. Dublin needs to follow suit to ensure a new lease of life.

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Of course, it is all well and good to say save our Georgian streets and features and protect structures, but no one can deny the country needs more homes. We are in the grips of a housing crisis that the state has not seen before and the amount of stock that needs to be delivered in the next number of years is on a level that would make any government quiver in fear. So where will people live if not in sky-high soulless glass towers? The answer to me is clear and has become ever more obvious in the last year under the current global pandemic. The word that has been thrown around since the 70s, decentralisation, holds the answer in my opinion. Decentralisation, for any of you who do not know, is the idea of moving certain parts of government bodies outside of the capital city, to spread them around the urban centres of the island. This has of course happened,

AGAINST

JOSEPH KAVANAGH

GLOBALISATION has its perks, don't get me wrong, but it has driven planning authorities, developers, and employers to try and blur the cultural differences between cities across the world. Cities become varying versions of one another, with architecture, retail chains and other urban features copy and pasted into urban centres across the globe (I am looking at you, "I heart Amsterdam" sign). The aim of this is to make cities more familiar to the ever-moving, nomadic multinational worker. Firms such as Google do not want to send their workers into culture-shock when moving from city to city. The result is a skyline that is beginning to repeat itself across the planet. Some city authorities are keeping a handful of features to make sure cultural and national identity is not lost completely, or maybe their tourist boards are making sure there is something for the influencers to take a photo of for Instagram?

What makes Dublin so unique you may ask? Why should its skyline be preserved? Dublin is one of the British Isles' Georgian cities. It is in good company with places such as Bath and Edinburgh also falling into this category. One cannot deny that the Georgian features have been knocked and chipped away during the last two centuries. However, it continues to retain quite a number of these features. Urban squares such as Fitzwilliam Square and St. Stephen's Green are very much present and valued by the people of Dublin. Other iconic buildings such as Leinster House date from this period. These features are what make it unique and give the city its personality. You must remember at the time, Georgian Dublin was the second city of the British Empire. Dublin was one of the busiest ports in Europe, an epicentre of commerce and culture. Of course, as we know this began to decline, but the buildings echo a time of great prosperity for the city. The Georgian terraces and streets are in themselves interesting, while appearing to be uniform at first glance, on further inspection you see that houses vary in height and window size etc. This is down to them being built in groups of twos or threes, and it gives what should be a very uniform street a language of a patchwork quilt. To replicate the glass towers of the world make it feel like any other place in the world and would thus lead to the capital losing its cultural identity.

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REBUTTAL NO

AAKRITI SOOD

BOTH sides have pointed out the need for more homes for the rising population. My colleague has pointed out several architectural monuments in the city and yes of course these buildings have stood the test of time and what are we without our history? But the city extends beyond the historic core; the Docklands, areas around George's Quay, Heuston and Connolly lie within the city centre but would be no threat to the visual character of the Georgian core. These areas are capable of accommodating high rise structures, adding contemporary landmarks, and can become positive additions to the existing skyline of the city.

Where the soullessness of high rise structure is concerned, there is no denying the fact that commuter towns with their hours and hours of travel time, fenced off dwellings can also become a lonely and isolating experience. Humans are instinctively social beings and cities have always been the nucleus of civilisation. Since the ancient Greek Agoras, civic centres that served as the city's athletic, cultural, business, social, spiritual, and political hub, and facilitated people to come together and share their common interests with others. One of the most influential urban theorists, Lewis Mumford, wrote that cities are "a product of earth ... a fact of

with the State Examinations Commission being based in Athlone as well as various other examples. Some were successful, but most were not. I feel it is time to try this again, but the difference this time is the apparent use of remote working.

Something that is worth mentioning is the new RTE show "Cheap Irish Houses", in which the presenter shows potential buyers affordable homes located in areas around the country that are underpopulated. This program highlights the presence of homes that are left derelict in areas or towns that are crying out for rehabilitation. My point is, that at one point this island had a population of around 8 million, and while a lot of people lived in poverty and in small tenement farms, they did live somewhere. Connacht went from having a population of 1.5 million before the famine to just over half a million in 2016. This statistic resonates with the underpopulation of this region and that there is a real opportunity to spread our people into these underpopulated areas. With high-speed internet and infrastructure, these places can come alive once again and take the pressure off the city of Dublin. This in turn would make it more achievable to preserve the city's skyline.

While I acknowledge the need to build, it does not mean we need to continue to build on top or around Dublin. We must protect our urban landscape and its identity. In doing this we can also revitalise our rural towns and villages. This would have dual benefits, revitalising the economies of these areas while being a more sustainable move. The use of existing structures is one of the most basic things we can do for the environment. Sending concrete and steel into the sky consumes energy during construction phases, but also in the production of building materials. It is all about balance in my opinion. We can house our citizens and minimise environmental impacts while also protecting our cities skyline.

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nature ... man's method of expression." Cities have always drawn people back, and the pandemic hiccup will be the same.

Decentralisation is a term that looks good on paper but the waves of mass migration seen in the last century have already littered the country with a number of ghost estates. Decentralisation may work in cities in other parts of the world which have become too large to function, but in the case of Dublin, a good density is required to aim towards economic and environmental sustainability. We need to learn from the ghost towns of America to protect the Irish landscape from the soulless, unplanned sprawl and bring people back into Dublin before the core of this historic city becomes hollow.

HAVE WE REALLY REPEALED THE 8TH?

SOPHIE LINNANE

Two Years on from the Repeal the 8th vote, Sophie Linnane asks whether the vote has had any real lasting effects or was it purely symbolic?

IT may have taken decades of grass-root campaigns, two elections, and public condemnation from both the United Nations Human Rights Commission and the UN Committee Against Torture, but in May of 2018, the people of Ireland voted to repeal the 8th Amendment. After years of struggle, that some had been involved in for decades, the women of Ireland were granted autonomy over their own bodies - we were finally given the right to choose. With one of the largest voter turnout rates in the history of the state, the people of Ireland voted overwhelmingly to grant abortion rights to women. With a yes vote of 66.4%, the voice of the people was crystal clear. Change had come. A once deeply conservative, largely Roman Catholic country, which only a couple of decades before had voted to give equal rights of life to the mother and the fetus, was beginning to shift. Almost despite itself, a more modern country was emerging, one with more liberal values and one which valued protecting the rights of all its citizens.

Ireland has come a long way in a relatively short period of time. It has moved from having some of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, from serving as the poster child for Pro-Life campaigners all over the world, to a country that by popular vote has legalised a woman's right to choose. But, while progress has been made, and most certainly should be praised, there are still concerns. Many are calling for immediate improvement within the legislation, over fears that the health and safety of women is still under threat. So as the country approaches the three-year anniversary of the historic result, it's time to both look back and reflect on what has been achieved, and also to examine where the legislation still needs to be improved upon, to best determine how the country can fulfil the voters' wishes: to make abortions accessible, safe and legal to the women of Ireland.

On the 1st of January 2019 The Healthy (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 was signed into law. Since then, clear and obvious improvements are visible, especially when you examine the number of women who are now receiving abortion care within the Republic of Ireland. Before abortion was legalized, it was reported that up to 9 people were travelling to the UK to terminate their pregnancies every single day. The numbers travelling have dropped significantly since then, and while the exact abortion figures for 2020 are not yet available, we know that over 6500 people accessed abortion services within Ireland in 2019.

Another major success for the Pro-Choice campaign is that all of these abortion services are free, as long as procedures are carried out within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The World Health Organisation (WHO) highlights such costs on its list of barriers to accessing safe abortions. Also, while doctors and other medical practitioners are allowed to refuse to provide abortion services themselves, the legislation requires that they provide a referral to a doctor or a facility that will. All this means that, in theory, a woman will always be able to access abortion within the country, as long as they have

the time and resources to do so. We have come a long way.

However, major improvements still need to be made. Despite the landmark 2018 vote and the overwhelming support for a women's right to choose, serious issues surrounding the new abortion laws have been highlighted.

Problems have arisen around the practical issue of accessibility, with campaigners criticising the often-turbulent journey to obtaining the healthcare needed. Due to the "conscientious objection" clause within the bill, which allows medical practitioners the right to not carry out abortions, many women have faced hurdles in their pursuit of a termination. This has proved to be a barrier, particularly for women in rural Ireland. Of the 19 maternity hospitals in the Republic, only 10 actually provide abortion services. And, of these 10, 3 are located in Dublin. Recently, Kilkenny came under particular criticism when all of their OBGYNs and consultants failed to sign on to provide terminations. While under the legislation these doctors are required to provide referrals to other practitioners who will provide the service, this can still lead to people being unable to access abortion services. This issue can be particularly problematic for women when you also take into account the mandatory three-day waiting period and the 12-week limit for procedures to take place. The three-day wait period is a particular issue for those who may not have the resources to travel, which in turn will impact their ability to obtain the service elsewhere. WHO criticises both "conscientious objection" and "unnecessary requirements, such as mandatory waiting periods" as barriers to accessing safe abortions. This is an issue with which abortion rights campaigners have particular qualms, and many believe it both endangers the lives of pregnant women and threatens their bodily autonomy.

The language used throughout the Bill has also been heavily criticised. Even prior to the signing into law of abortion rights, many had drawn attention to the problems that would arise due to some of the terminology employed. The Abortion Rights campaign groups have noted how the term "risk of serious harm to health", which is used in the Bill, actually has no real medical standing, and for many, the ambiguity in the language is of serious concern. It is feared that this will not only cause undue stress to pregnant women but could ultimately endanger their lives. Amnesty International has also criticised the term, and have deemed the threshold that many adhere to in regard to "serious harm" as yet another barrier, and one that is likely still forcing pregnant women out of the country to obtain the healthcare they need.

Others have called for safety exclusions zones around hospitals to be written into law. Many people have described the abuse they have endured or witnessed outside facilities that offer the service. In 2020 Simon Harris, the Minister for Health at the time, heavily criticised



PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: LAOISE TARRANT

"Despite the landmark 2018 vote and the overwhelming support for a women's right to choose, serious issues surrounding the new abortion laws have been highlighted."

pro-life campaigners who were picketing outside clinics and maternity hospitals. Harris blasted them in the media, condemning the "appalling" behaviour. These particular events led to a renewed call for the inclusion of safe exclusion zones outside of hospitals, but as of yet, these have not been implemented.

When Savita Halappanavar died in October 2012, the debate around Ireland's abortion laws was once again dragged into the public sphere. Savita died of severe sepsis as a direct result of being denied an

emergency termination. Despite doctors agreeing that a miscarriage was inevitable and pleas from both Savita and her husband, she was not given the medication which could have helped to induce her miscarriage and which ultimately could have saved her life. For many, her tragic and untimely death marked a significant shift in the conversation around abortion - Ground Zero, if you like. Ireland has come a long way since this heart-breaking event. The shift in public opinion and the writing into law of a woman's right to choose are both major steps in the right direction. But, to truly protect the women of Ireland, the continued presence of barriers to safe healthcare needs to be examined rigorously. As we approach the three-year anniversary of that historic vote we must, as a society, review what is still to be done.

PERIOD POVERTY IN THE IRISH STATE

AOIFE ROONEY

With reports of between 53,000 and 85,000 women in Ireland affected by period poverty, Aoife Rooney examines this issue.

THE issue of period poverty has previously been a matter that Western countries were not particularly concerned about. However, in recent years, the issue of equitable access to period products has entered mainstream media, and more people are being made aware of the extent of how many people are affected. In a joint report by the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, period poverty is defined as “inadequate access to menstrual hygiene, including period products, washing and waste management facilities and education”.

Experiencing period poverty is not limited to this definition, and can also include social and community isolation as a direct result of one’s period. This can be seen in an example of a young person missing school or a social event due to the side effects of their period. This can extend to abdominal pains, of which non-access to pain relief would also constitute period poverty. The issue of period poverty is being estimated to affect between 53,000 and 85,000 women in the State according to the report. The minimum estimated annual cost of period products for one person is €121.

In February, the Department of Health published a discussion paper entitled *Period Poverty in Ireland, National Strategy for Women and Girls*, a document which encompassed findings of the factors that contribute to period poverty in Ireland and addressed those most affected. The report referenced a Plan International survey which found that “50% of girls aged 12-19 reported occasional experience of period poverty”. While this can be attributed to the inability to afford products, it is also largely because of the shame and embarrassment associated with periods, in this age group particularly. Humiliation and discomfort discussing a period are largely evident among younger women and girls, with “nearly 60% of young women

and girls reporting shame and embarrassment about their period, with over 80% uncomfortable discussing periods with their father or a teacher”. This discomfort in having conversations about periods can lead to other issues. It may mean there is a lack of access to period products as a direct result of being unable to ask.

Oireachtas motions on period poverty date as far back as 2019, as calls were made on the government ensure access to a range of “free, adequate, safe and suitable sanitary products and comprehensive, objective menstrual education information be distributed through all public buildings”. This would include, hospitals, schools and universities, homeless services and direct provision centres. If this was to come into force, it would address a large amount of period poverty in the country. While this tackles the main roadblocks most women face in accessing period products, it does not cater to those who may not have access to such buildings, namely younger girls, who might not be at school, and those who live rurally. It also fails to address those who may be in controlling and abusive relationships, and those who may not be able to leave their residence to access these products or have access to the funds to purchase them. This motion has yet to be made into law, so these proposals are merely hypothetical at the moment.

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman, wrote to direct provision centres in recent weeks to request that they provide sanitary products to those living in direct provision free of charge. Dublin City Council also announced that they aim to provide funding of €100,000 to expand on an initiative to have access to period products in all of their buildings. On the topic of several similar bills being drafted on the same topic, Claire Hunt, founder of Homeless Period Ireland (HPI), believes that “[period poverty] is a non-contentious issue, there should be cross-party solidarity.”

An Irish initiative led by University of Limerick students, Anytime of the Month, is spreading awareness on issues related to period poverty in an attempt to destigmatize periods. They are running seminars for businesses to educate employees on the stigma associated with menstruation, a factor contributing to period poverty. They also surveyed 250 women and were able to conclude that “college students are disproportionately affected by period poverty”. Of their sample, 35% said that they struggled to finance period products and 75% said that they have worn period products over the recommended four hours due to lack of access to these products.

While girls and women in second and third-level education are unequivocally suffering the effects of period poverty, those who are homeless, in direct provision, dealing with addiction and victims of domestic violence are also suffering the cost of the inability to access menstruation hygiene products. The estimated number of homeless women who may be experiencing period poverty is 2,591. Coolmine, a charity working with those dealing with substance addiction, notes that “clients with active addiction problems will have difficulties prioritising healthcare needs over substance use”. If legislation on the issue were passed, it would negate the need for a choice being made whether or not a woman will get through her period with the assistance of period products.

Other groups encountering issues in accessing products to enable safe and hygienic menstruation are Traveller and Roma women. It is reported that members of these groups are “among the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in Ireland”. The inability to access period products stems from a large thread of prejudice, people in these groups often face issues in accessing rental accommodation, healthcare, employment and education. Specifically, Roma women are disadvantaged

in their ability to access government supports such as Job Seekers Allowance, public housing or Child Benefit, as they may be unable to provide documentation confirming their right to reside. This then overtly affects their ability to purchase hygiene products they may need during their period.

Sustainability is also an issue that needs to be accounted for with regard to period poverty. HPI founder Claire Hunt was also involved in research culminating in the 2019 Department of Health report that asked: “when the period poverty motion does pass was that they provide plastic-free products”. While she said that “I would hope the government will look at sustainable options”, there is an understanding that sustainable products, for example, period cups or underwear, are not feasible options for women HPI assist. Many women do not have regular access to hot water and washing machines, and some have a preference for pads. Miss Hunt also clarified that for many women who are victims of trauma, period cups are not a suitable option.

The issue of period poverty in the State is a wide-reaching one that will necessitate specific considerations of all groups of women to address the problem. While the passing of legislation that would entitle people who menstruate the access to a wide range of free period products is a positive change, Hunt reiterates that “it shouldn’t be seen as something amazing or radical, the fact that we have to fight for this change in 2021 is really frustrating.”

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE AN INFLUENCER

DOIREANN DE COURCY MAC DONNELL

Sitting down the Mandy Maher of The Platform, Doireann de Courcy Mac Donnell asks all things content-creation and how the world has gone online.

LAUNCHING a business a year into a global pandemic is no mean feat, but successful businesswoman, Mandy Maher, knows where things are going. Maher launched the influencer agency The Platform on Friday, March 5th 2021. As described on their website, The Platform is designed to allow “brands to engage with social media influencers and content creators”. From the moment it launched on Instagram, The Platform already had a significant number of famous faces and brands associated with its page. At the time of publication, the agency already had twenty-five clients listed on their social media page and website;

“The Platform is a sister agency to Catwalk Modelling Agency. We represent influencers and content creators for social media sites, which predominantly would be Instagram. Yes, we do Facebook and we will definitely be hitting-in on the TikTok area, but it is predominantly Instagram influencers really”.

Maher is best known for her Catwalk Modelling Agency and has over twenty years experience in the modelling industry. As part of Catwalk, Maher has worked with everything from fashion shows and promotional events, to photoshoots and bridal fairs, and she features regularly on Virgin Media’s Ireland AM as a stylist.

“The fashion industry got such a hammering in the last twelve months, and it’s going to continue for another year, pretty much. Regarding Catwalk Modelling, we have pretty much wrote-off this year for work. Yes, we will do certain things, we’re still legally allowed to do digital shoots on a one-to-one basis in order for businesses to stay alive, so we can continue those. But regarding doing any events or anything, until the hospitality industry opens up and until numbers can get back to some normality, we’ve written-off that. This is really where your influencer business is coming in because so many people are on their phones and they’re really following these people.

“For brands, this is just a new way of advertising. When they’re sitting down with their marketing department, their budgets now are for so many radio campaigns, so many newspaper campaigns, but now the big thing is social media [...] which will obviously fall under the umbrella of influencers and content creators. That’s where it’s going, this is only the tip of the iceberg I believe”.

Featuring influencers who cover everything from food and fashion, to home and fitness, the platform offers a wide array of influencers to follow, and from a business point of view, to collaborate with: “What we do is that we effectively will deal with everything to do with brands. Say, for example, a brand could contact me about working with a particular influencer, and what we do then is that we decide, ok working out a package for them that they want to promote.

“The influencers [...] actually have on the books right now for me myself are ones that I have been doing research on for the last couple of months, really, before I launched - and it’s people from all walks of life, whether its fashion, whether it’s food, whether it’s home living and interior, fitness. What we’re trying to do is bring a diversity of different influencers that are on their social media pages so the regular person who’s watching at home can actually see what’s going on in regard to their brands, and what promotions are going on.

“But”, she emphasises, “what’s important is that they stay true to their followers, so that they’re not promoting something they know in heart and soul that they don’t believe in the product, or it’s putting on a jumper and they know in their heart and soul that they would not wear that jumper. So they need to stay true to who they actually are, because we are adamant on that”.

As our social media feeds have been saturated with content-creators, it is worth asking whether or not this can be considered a sustainable career choice. ‘Influencing’ appears to have become a full-time job, and Maher agrees that this time last year she would have been sceptical;

“I can actually tell you if you said that to me a year ago, I probably wouldn’t have believed it as much as I do know. Probably because we’re all living in a world of everything being so fast, no one really took a step back and actually looked at what’s happening and what’s going on. But more so, since the pandemic hit last March 2020, I would say it is imperative for every business to survive that they need to have an online presence, without a doubt. We’re not going backwards now, this is going to be our future. The last year would definitely have zoned in on that, because the bulk of us have been at home. So what do you do? The bulk of us have been on our phones all the time, and checking through what’s going on through social media outlets, whatever it is, but this is the way forward [...] It’s going to get bigger”.

In a society where services are becoming increasingly difficult to be appropriately remunerated for, I ask whether this revitalised bartering system of goods in exchange for promotion is difficult to capitalise on, and make money? For instance, you get sent a self-tanning lotion - how does that translate into paying for your rent?

“This is where I come in”, Maher explained. “A lot of influencers have been exploited, and [...] people are contacting them to promote their brands and they’re

“A lot of influencers have been exploited, and [...] people are contacting them to promote their brands and they’re getting nothing for it. Effectively now it has got to the stage that this is their business, so there are a lot of influencers - even some of the ones we have on our books - this is their full-time job.”



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: MANDY MAHER

getting nothing for it. Effectively now it has got to the stage that this is their business, so there are a lot of influencers - even some of the ones we have on our books - this is their full-time job.

“Effectively how it translates, if a client [or] a brand is looking to get promoted, they have to pay for it. That’s the way it’s gone. This is another form of advertising. Instead of going your traditional route of being your radio, or tv ad, or your newspaper, it’s now your online advertising, and it’s being done by people who have tried out these products. It’s being done by the ordinary person at home, so for argument’s sake you take the likes of Bellamianta Tan, these influencers are physically trying on that tan. And they’re telling their followers, yes I really recommend this, it sits really well, it’s really easy to apply, whatever. If they don’t believe in it, they’re not going to promote it. Well they shouldn’t promote it! Their followers are following them because they believe in them”.

Switching off from work and the right to disconnect has become an increasing problem for many people around the world with the move from the traditional workplace, to the desk at home. Switching off from social media is perhaps even more difficult. I ask Maher about when you can decide to switch off;

“Absolutely. Even myself, [...] there were times when I thought there were never enough hours in the day. But I put myself in front of the camera during the past year as well, I have been one of those people who have come in front of the camera - which I never would have been before - but I would say nobody realises how time-consuming it is. It is horrendously time-consuming. It’s actually more time consuming than what it would be for the regular person going to work from nine to five, because it is non-stop.

“But a balanced life is vital. But you need to be able to treat it as if you’re going to work everyday. So you know if you have got a particular brand you need to promote, you might set aside four or five hours tomorrow for it, do what you need to get done - whether it’s photographs or videos content, whatever it is - and then you know you’re finished at four or five a clock in the day and you’re ready to go home and do the family thing, do whatever you usually do in the evening, whether it’s exercise, or going to cinema - hopefully we will be getting back there again! - that kind of thing. It is important, it can actually suck you in and take over your life, which is not healthy”.

Another issue which even the most sporadic of social media-users faces is what to show, and what to keep off the timeline. When this concern is coupled with your main source of income, and external pressures from collaborators or business agreements, this line becomes even more difficult to draw. While many parents choose not to show their children on their feed, there a significant number of well-known content creators who have their family front-and-centre, and some who even drive revenue and collaborations as a parent. As the main negotiator between influencer and brand, I ask Maher how involved The Platform is when decided how much the client needs to be willing to show;

“Each influencer is very different. Obviously we only opened up this side of our business last Friday (March 5th), so it is a very new road for me[...] Each of our influencers I have spoken to individually, I have a photograph of the influencers around my office, because I am now getting to know them. It probably

wouldn’t be as personal as it would be with my models, initially anyway, because I don’t know them. So they’re completely new to me as well, but I very much have asked them then in regards to do they want to show their family? I know for me, I don’t put my kids on my pages. I don’t do many home photos, or things from home with regards to my page because I know it’s not really where I want to go. For me, I like to be able to switch off, and home’s home and it’s separate from work. Where there are others who want to live the route of having their family involved, and it’s a very personal choice, I think. It’s really down to each individual influencer”.

If you follow Maher’s social media accounts, you would be aware that she has only recently begun to step in front of the camera herself. I ask her if she has experienced the impact of trolling and how The Platform reacts to such negativity;

“I would say to them, have their page, number one, staying true to who they are. For example, I would say to any influencer, you can’t be a master of everything. You need to be a master of something. There’s no point having a page in fashion and skincare and beauty really would come under one umbrella because usually it does), but there’s no point in her also being the mother in the kitchen doing amazing cooking, and ‘watch my new recipes coming’, because you can’t do everything. Or now let’s forget that and talk about wallpaper today. So I would say to any influencer they need to target what they actually want, what they feel they’re good in, and what they feel followers of their page will like.

“It is horrendously time-consuming. It’s actually more time consuming than what it would be for the regular person going to work from nine to five, because it is non-stop...you need to be able to treat it as if you’re going to work everyday... it can actually suck you in and take over your life, which is not healthy”.

“Absolutely. It’s huge. It’s very hard. When you’re in the public eye, you have to be able to take it. There are always going to be people that love you, and people that just don’t like you, and that’s fine, that’s life, that’s reality. But anyone that trolls people, really to me they have nothing else to do with their time, and if someone

PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE INTERNSHIPS PROGRESS DESPITE DISRUPTIONS

HANNAH WOODS

Students from the Dairy Business, Food and Agribusiness Management, Animal & Crop Production and Animal Science courses gave Hannah Woods an insight into the progress of their PWE, the effects of lockdown on their current plans and their future hopes.

THIRD year is a personal milestone for the Agricultural Science students of UCD. It allows undergraduates the opportunity to learn in a practical way, make connections, and develop their career path for after college, be it on the farm, in industry, or in research. The pandemic has not only changed Professional Work Experience (PWE) plans but has made the planning process arduous and disheartening for many.

Dathal Kent is a Cork native studying Food & Agribusiness Management (FAM). UCD has allowed Kent to make serious strides in becoming heavily involved in all activities Ag Soc related, from being a member of the winning Great Agri-Food Debate team last year to running for the society position of Treasurer. “Having suffered the blow in September that we were not going to be returning to on-campus classes for the first semester, my thoughts immediately turned to placement and the unknowns surrounding it”. Like many FAM students, Kent hoped to go abroad not only travel, but gain experience, and get as much as he could out of PWE. When college came around last Autumn the stress of going online again was compounded with the burden of finding “a suitable placement at what was such a difficult time for companies”.

After a series of virtual interviews, Kent got a promising placement with Interchem Ireland Ltd. “I started virtually in mid-January due to the tightening of cCovid restrictions, but this did not dampen my enthusiasm”. Through a series of orientations, group calls, and individual meetings, Kent was quickly introduced to the company’s products, giving him an unparalleled look into the enterprise, where he has found himself working in all sections of the business; from sales calls, to logistics and market research. “It is a market that really interests me and the fact that I am getting trained by experts in their field on products and animal care will be a real asset to me in the future”, where he looks forward to taking on larger roles within the company and experiencing more of this very rewarding work. Looking towards the future, Kent is not too concerned about the effects of the pandemic on the college experience. “We were all in the same boat and I think companies will look to how we dealt with the problems that were presented to us and how we adapted accordingly”.

Aoife Quinn hails from a dry stock farm in Castleconnor Co. Sligo, where online learning and the freedom of being at home has only allowed her to devote more time to the expansion of her own Lleyn flock. “Growing up surrounded by animals and working on the home farm from a young age has not only given me the initiative and drive to work hard, but has allowed me to flourish in the UCD animal science course”. The challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic have not put a dampener on Quinn’s drive and focus. She sees the animal science degree programme as hands-on, and as an opportunity “to get away from the laptop

and to forget about Covid for a little while”. Placement during Covid hasn’t allowed Quinn to follow her dream of going to New Zealand for a month, but she looks forward to the future and the possibilities of a longer stint abroad perhaps. Having previously gone to Iceland and experienced a unique robotic dairying system, she was more than happy to work closer to home.

Currently working with a 300 head Holstein herd in Enniscrone, Quinn will move onto the Kennedys of Aclare, whose system is based on stabiliser cattle. This innovative farm is not only carbon neutral but also a part of the Devenish lighthouse farming programme. Quinn is excited to see and learn from this experience but also see what she can bring back to her own farm. Animal science students must do the four main animal enterprises of dairy, beef, pigs and sheep. Quinn plans to continue to Boguees’ of Cavan to a large sow unit and having little experience with pigs she is still excited for the opportunity.

“Anyone can go out on placement but if you want to do it properly, you must learn and see as much as you can. You have to pick your placements wisely” says Quinn, who is most looking forward to her 6-week internship with Teagasc Athenry’s Research farm. Quinn looks to the future with great optimism for a return to campus in September and into the future to travel, work and continue her studies, but for now, is happy to keep “taking everything as it comes”.

Undoubtedly, Dairy Business students have experienced the greatest impact on their PWE from the pandemic. Cavan man Donal O’Gorman explained the difficulties many like him find themselves in. “Being a dairy business student one of the most attractive aspects of the course was the option to do PWE abroad. The vast majority of the class were planning on going to New Zealand for six months where the adventure of getting abroad with a group of friends would’ve been something else and it was definitely very disappointing not having the opportunity to go”. O’Gorman luckily found a placement with Woodtown Jerseys in Meath, a split calving system milking 450 pedigree Jerseys. With that said, however, O’Gorman explained the difficulties of finding PWE here at home. “The timing of our placement is planned so that we get to New Zealand for the calving and breeding season. As the seasons are switched in Ireland it meant that for most dairy herds, the calving and breeding seasons were over so workloads had slackened off”. Looking towards the future, O’Gorman hopes for his long-awaited trip to New Zealand to make up for what he missed, but for now, is looking forward to getting back to Dublin in September along with the rest of his class; “it is hard to see it being the way it was before, but all we can do is make the most of it”.

Sean McGreal from Kiltimagh Co. Mayo is a driven Animal & Crop Production (ACP) student whose impressive line-up for PWE leaves no rock unturned



PHOTOGRAPHED ABOVE: SEAN MCGREAL



PHOTOGRAPHED ABOVE: DONAL O’GORMAN



PHOTOGRAPHED ABOVE: AOIFE QUINN



PHOTOGRAPHED ABOVE: DATHAL KENT

within the agricultural sector. Doing a PLC before starting in UCD “concreted [his] belief in doing the agricultural science course and pursuing a career within the agri-food industry”. Beginning placement in January, McGreal first went to the O’Connor’s family farm in Dunganar Co. Waterford, where they run a fully indoor TMR system of 550 Holstein Friesian herd milking in a 60 bail Milfos rotary. After 6 weeks of familiarizing himself with dairying, McGreal moved onto sheep where he is currently working for a lowland sheep farmer in Roscommon who has 150 ewes lambing indoors. Having only previous experience with beef and tillage, Mc Greal has found new interests within the ag sector, especially in relation to sheep and dairy. His experience and expertise he has gained from these farmers “has certainly expanded my horizons and exceeded my expectations”.

In having to experience all areas of practical agriculture, McGreal is planning on going closer to home for pigs to John Sheridan. A fully integrated piggy sees 5000 pigs in total with 500 breeding sows. From here, McGreal plans to go to Martin Joyce’s Leinster Livestock in Granard, Co. Longford. Joyce runs many different enterprises, mainly sourcing high-quality cattle for beef finishers and top quality suckler herds all the while holding an esteemed health status on the farm. This calf to store unit is the starting point for quality beef sold in his own shops in Dublin.

GAEILGE

SEACHTAIN NA GAEILGE & FEACHTAS COMHARTHAÍOCHTA AONTAS NA MAC LÉINN

SHANE MACDOMHNAILL

I rith Seachtain na Gaeilge, chuir Aontas na Mac Léinn UCD tús le feachtas chun comharthaíocht dhá-theangach a chuir timpeall campas ha n-ollscoile. Tuariscíonn Shane MacDomhnaill faoin bhfeachtas seo.

CAD is Seachtain na Gaeilge ann? De réir snag-ie, is féile idirnáisiúnta Ghaeilge í Seachtain na Gaeilge, atá ar an gceiliúradh is mó dár dteanga agus dár gcutlúr dúchais a bhíonn ar siúl in Éirinn agus in go leor tíortha eile gach bliain. Is modh léiriúcháin í an féile chun ár gcutlúr a chuir in aird ós comhair an domhain ach, níos tábhachtaí fós, ós comhair muid féin. Ró-mhínic in Éireann a léirítear dimhneas d’ár gcutlúr féin. Tugann Seachtain na Gaeilge deas dúinn an ómós cuí a léiriú don teanga agus don chultúr.

Ritheadh Seachtain na Gaeilge UCD idir an 1ú-7ú Márta. Cuireadh iliomad imeacht ar siúl chun an seachtain a lionadh le siamsaíocht Ghaelach. Tráthanna gceiste, oíche scannáin, díospóireachtaí, agus ciorcal cainte le muintir Chhólaiste na Tríonóide, fiú a bhí ar siúl. Is léir go bhfuil dearcachtaí faoi leith caithe i dtreo Aontas na Mac Léinn agus i dtreo An Chumann Gaelach agus iad ag déanamh obair na gcapall chun an seachtain seo a chuir ar siúl. Is léir go mbráitheann preab-Ghaeltachtaí agus a ltheith linn - imeachtaí a cuirfeadh go mór leis an bhféile dá mbeadh siad ceadaithe.

Agus tús curtha le Seachtain na Gaeilge, sheol Aontas na Mac Léinn UCD feachtas nua. Aídhm na feachtas seo ná chun comharthaí dhá-theangach a chuir timpeall campas an chhólaiste. Faoi láthair, níl dóthan comharthaí

dhá-theangach le feiceáil timpeall UCD, agus tá sé i gceist ag an tAontas é sin a réiteach. Tá uirlis nua ar-line curtha ar fáil chun an fhadhb seo a réiteach inar féidir an tAontas a chuir ar an eolas faoi comharthaíocht nach gcomhlíonann dlíthe maidir leis an dá-theangacht timpeall an champas. I leith an bhfeachtas seo, tá feachtas greamáin ar intinn ag an SU a rith chun ard a tharraingt i dtreo na ceiste seo. Maidir leis an bhfeachtas seo, dúirt Ruairí Power, Oifigeach na bhFeachtaisá agus Leas-Uachtarán an Aontais:

“Tá uirlis tuairiscithe forbartha ag an foireann SU maidir le comharthaíocht neamhchomhlíontach. Mar institiúid phoiblí, tá freagracht ar UCD a bhéith comhlíontach le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003. Ní mór comharthaí ar an gcampas a thaispeáint i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla agus scrúcháin comhionann a thabhairt dóibh. Is dhóigh linn go bhfuil sé seo tábhachtach chun inlfeitheacht na teanga a chur chun cinn ar an gcampas.

“Go minic, ní tharlaíonn sé seo i UCD. Bhuaileamar le foireann na Seirbhísí Easáit chun an cheist seo a phlé, agus tá a fhios againn go bhfuil siad ag obair chun comhlíonadh comharthaíochta níos fearr a chur chun cinn agus muid ag dul ar aghaidh.

“Tá an uirlis seo forbartha againn ionas gur feidrir linn oibriúil le seirbhísí easaith lena chinntiú go seasfar



GRIANGRAF LE BUÍOCHAS DO SINEAD MOHAN

le acht na dteangacha oifigiúla go hiomlán agus gur áit fháilteach é UCD do chainteoirí Gaeilge. Tá feachtas greamáin sna saothair chun aird a tharraingt ar chomharthaíocht Béarla amháin.

“Reachtáil ár n-Oifigeach Tadhg roinnt imeachtaí le linn SnaG agus bhíomar an-sásta leis an gcaoi a ndeachaigh siad. Níl aon ghanntanas mac léinn atá páiseanta faoin teanga a chur chun cinn agus ag dul ar aghaidh obreoidh an SU chun Gaeilge a ionchorpú inár n-imeachtaí agus inár gcumarsáid lasmuigh de Seachtain na Gaeilge.”

AN GHAELIGE DOMSA

MOLLIE NÍ DHUBHÁIN

Tuariscíonn Mollie Ní Dhubháin faoin gaol atá aici leis an teanga agus faoin poitéinseal atá ann don teanga amach anseo.

Cad a chiallaíonn Gaeilge domsa? Is ceist chasta í sin. Ar ndóigh, is cúis mhór bróid dom go labhraím an teanga náisiúnta agus go bhfuilfíni lofa sa Gaeilge mar is í an t-aon teanga líofa eile atá agam, rud atá beagánin buartha mar déanamh stádeilí ar an bhFrancis mar chuid de mo cheim, ach sin scéal eile ar fad!

Ní raibh an Ghaeilge rud éigin a d’fhás mé suas le. Níor rugadh mé leis an nGaeilge. Mhúin máthair cúpla abairt dom mar shampla “go raibh maith agat”, “Dia dhuit”, “oíche mhaithe” agus na huimhreacha a haon go dtí a deich, ach chun na firmne a rá, níor aimsigh mé mo ghrá ná mo mheas ar an teanga álainn seo go dtí aois níos déanaí. D’fhás mé suas le cara darbh ainm Caoimhe agus chuaigh sí chuig Gaeilcoil agus ba mhínica labhair a clann gaeilge sa bhaile. Chuir an tallann agus an paisean seo i leith teanga eile éad orm mar ba bhréál liom a bheith líofa. Bhí mé spreagtha chun Gaeilge a fhoghlaim agus chun Gaeilge a labhairt timpeall na tíre. De ghnáth, theastaigh ó thromlach na paistí na crainn is aird a threapadh ach mise, bhí mé ag iarraidh teanga nua a fhoghlaim, aisteach, tá a fhios agam. Ach, is duine iomaíoch mé agus mar sin bhí sé cosúil le comórtas chun an teanga seo a fhoghlaim chomh tapaidh agus a bhí mé in ann. Dá bhrí sin, bhí an Ghaeilge ina ábhar spéisúil dom ó aois óg agus d’fhás an paisean agus an bród.

SEANFHOCAIL NA H-IRISE

SHANE MACDOMHNAILL



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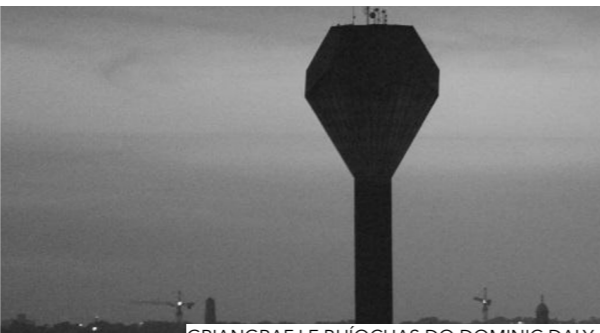
“ Beatha teanga í a labhairt. ”

(*ba-ha / tang-a / ee / a / law-ort*)

The life of a language is to speak it.

1. Ní leor seachtain nó dhó i rith na bliana chun lasar na Gaeilge a iompar. Is gá go dtabharfaidh gach éinne an Ghaeilge a thabhairt faoina gcúram féin. Labhair an teanga inniú, cibé caighdeán atá ionat.

ollscoile na hÉireann, sa Ghaeltacht, i gcrúinnithe cumann agus ansin gheobhaibh mé daoine leis an paisean céanna ar an tsráid, i mbialanna, ar na meáin shóisialta, i dtíortha eile ar mian leor comhrá a bheith acu. Mar sin, labhraím Gaeilge chun a thaispeáint go bhfuil grá na teanga ag cainteoirí gaeilge i ngach áit. Uaireanta is aithreacha iad ag múineadh dá gcuid páistí “Dia dul!” nó uaireanta is muinteoirí gaeilge nó daoine sa Gaeiltacht ag labhairt Gaeilge go líofa. Ansin, léirímid go bhfuil an Ghaeilge beo agus folláin.



GRIANGRAF LE BUÍOCHAS DO DOMINIC DALY

í a labhairt. Mhúin mé níos mó den teanga do máthair le go bhféadfaimis comhrá gairid a bheith againn foinair laethanta. Agus tá post páirtaimseartha agam anois mar theagascóir Gaeilge. Mar sin, d’fhéadfadh duine a rá gur chothaigh an Gaeiltacht mo mheas ar gaeilgeoirí agus spreag sé saol a mbeadh ról lámac ag an nGaeilge ann.

Mar dhuine fásta, bíonn Gaeilge ag taisteal liom gach áit a dtéim. D’úsáid mé é le carlae thar lear, beagnach mar theanga rúnda nach bhfuil an pleisúir agat í a labhairt. D’úsáid mé é i mo shaoil laethúil le cairde. Agus déanam é seo chun a thaispeáint go bhfaighidh mé gaeilgeoirí i ngach áit atá ag iarraidh comhrá a dhéanamh agus i ngach áit tá Gaeilgeoir eile. Gheobhaidh mé gaelgoirí sochaithe

SCHOOL OF AG WOMEN ALUMNI REMAIN TO THE FORE

CIARA RYAN

The recent International Women’s Day celebrations have given students a chance to reflect on the role of women graduates in shaping our respective fields of study. The careers of some of most successful and influential female graduates of the UCD School of Agriculture are described by Ciara Ryan.

WITH International Women’s Day Monday 8th March 2021 fresh in memory, it seems only fitting that a piece exploring some of the many influential women who have walked their paths before us in UCD be celebrated. This year, the Ag Soc helped to celebrate the occasion by running both a photo competition highlighting the role of current students in the food and agriculture sector, as well as inviting alumni to speak of their experiences. The photo competition and alumni videos were posted across Instagram and Twitter in the lead up to International Women’s Day. The list of UCD Ag Science alumni who have made a significant impact on the world is truly staggering.

A suitable place to start is at the beginning with the first female graduate to pass through UCD’s Bachelor of Agricultural Science in Agricultural Economics in 1980 - Mairead McGuinness. Since then, Mairead’s career has varied both a varied and exceptional. She began working in media where she worked on shows such as ‘Ear to the Ground’, she also joined the ‘Irish Farmer’s Journal’ team, and rose to editor of the ‘Irish Independent’ farming supplement. Mairead then moved from the world of journalism to a career in politics, where she was elected as an MEP in 2004. Here she worked on the Agriculture Committee, helping to draft CAP reforms. She was elected as First Vice-President of the European Parliament in 2014, a position she was subsequently re-elected to. The latest achievement to be added to her belt is her appointment as Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Markets Union.

Another formidable alummus of the UCD School of Agriculture is Caroline Keeling, CEO of Keelings since 2013. Caroline has built up the Irish owned business by increasing its profits by 50% through an expansion in operations to service markets in the UK, continental

Europe and Asia. Many within the agri-food processing, marketing and retail sectors would acknowledge her efforts and as one of Ireland’s greatest businesswomen, an accolade recognised with the award she received from IMAGE in 2013. As well as having 2,000 staff employed, Caroline is also active as an Ambassador for The Women’s Fund for Ireland, a Bord Bia Board Member, Chair of the Horticulture Board of Bord Bia, Chair of Dublin Action Plan for Jobs Implementation Committee, board member of the Ifrah Foundation, and a member of the Export Trade Council. A formidable CV for a woman of any educational background indeed.

Those who are familiar with the Agricultural Science Association (ASA), will instantaneously think of the name Anne-Marie Butler on hearing the organisation mentioned, she is the current President of the association. The prestigious role is one offered to only the most successful individuals in Irish agricultural circles. Butler completed a PhD focused on ‘Design and Evaluation of Optimal Dairy Systems’ after her undergraduate years in Belfield. She has also lectured for several years in UCD before moving onto her current role as Senior Agricultural Manager with Ulster Bank.

The final feature woman of this article is Karina Pierce. Pierce studied both as an undergraduate and completed a PhD in animal nutrition in UCD. She has worked as an animal nutritionist for Brett Brothers, as well as lecturing in Dairy Production in UCD. Pierce was also president of the ASA in 2011/12. Her academic ability was further recognised when she received one of the prestigious Nuffield Scholarships. Her most recent appointment as Senior Development Advisor at Enterprise Ireland is no surprise for this driven woman with the wide range of skills she possesses required for the position.



PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: SINEAD MOHAN

Although this article only chronicles four female graduates of UCD, the list could continue much longer. Videos of many of the women who took part in the International Women’s Day celebrations are still available on the AgSoc social media. There are many alumni who have had diverse and influential careers in

the world of food, agriculture and other avenues such as politics, human fertility and banking. These women will continue to be beacons of inspiration for both future and current UCD Food and Agriculture students, who in turn seek to make their own mark on the world.

STUDENTS WEIGH IN ON COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY REFORM

NOEL BARDON

Ongoing reform of CAP is a hotly debated topic amongst producers and industry stakeholders, with the agricultural community of Belfield as keen as any to give their assessment of developments in the talks. With the tea-room closed and lecture halls empty, Noel Bardon reports on some of views held by students and faculty on the future of CAP post-2022

The current reform discussions of the 2020-2022 CAP extension period have seen agri-environmental concerns come to the fore, with farming seen as a partial cause, unmistakable victim, and possible solution to the GHG driven challenges of climate change. Other sustainability concerns surrounding agriculture in Europe which also have come to prominence in discussions include key areas of water quality, biodiversity, and reducing pressures on areas of ecological or archaeological sensitivity.

Policymakers have long been signalling that taxpayers are becoming unwilling to fund larger, commercial-scale enterprises through the CAP scheme and that decreases in the annual CAP budget are inevitable. Many producers are hopeful that such cuts in funding will be geared towards these larger landowners, enacted through decreased payment ceilings, with family farms and small-scale producers insulated from the cutbacks. However, agreement on these policy issues is far off, with farmers likely to remain in the limbo for another while on the many details of future schemes. With the broad policy directions established by Brussels, preliminary indications reveal a CAP of reduced system inputs, consumer-orientated production, and an expansion of environmental measures. With these points in mind, two UCD students weighed in on the Irish perspective of proposed reforms from their experience in Irish agriculture.

Fourth year UCD Food & Agribusiness Management student Tadhg Murtagh stressed the need for sustainably funded agri-environmental schemes to keep dry stock

“Many producers who have overlooked previous agri-environmental schemes, such as AEOS or GLAS, may be convinced to subscribe to the new REPS through financial necessity”

farms operational. “It is the reality, with current beef prices, that agri-environmental schemes are necessary for the economic survival of family beef and sheep enterprises, particularly around the Midlands and West”. The Longford native noted the differences in enterprise dependence on income support by sector with “The only enterprise profitable at a reasonable scale for the family farm would be dairying”, also stressing that: “Dairy is not suited to the land type or off-farm job situations of many around Longford. Agri-environmental schemes are a win-win for these farmers and the environment”.

Speaking on the relative ease with which further environmental measures in the new environmental schemes could be introduced at producer level, Murtagh believed the planting of hedges and the ecological enhancement of marginal, unproductive areas of land to be the measures most likely to be adopted in the Border, Midland and Western region (BMW). On the contrary, reductions in fertiliser and herbicide usage, as stipulated by the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, are likely to be the “most problematic options on a practical level for farmers”, according to Murtagh’s experience of the family farm’s beef operation – typical of those in the area. The outcome of such policies is, in the student’s view, a reduction in stocking rates right across the country. These reductions may not be forced through as a result of changes to the Nitrates Directive or the maximum stocking rates of schemes per se, but rather an “inevitable consequence” of the input constraints.

Murtagh also noted that a feeling is prevailing, as of late, within elements of the financial services sector in which he worked over his three-year Professional Work Experience (PWE), that the debt burden of expanded dairy enterprises may become heavier than anticipated. Many producers who have overlooked previous agri-environmental schemes, such as AEOS or GLAS, may be convinced to subscribe to the new REPS through financial necessity, should a downturn in milk price interfere with their ability to repay borrowings.

Fourth-year Dairy Business student John Mahon gave his thoughts on the subject, as someone with a knowledge of agricultural production systems outside of the EU. Mahon spent six months of 2019 on placement in New Zealand. Over his PWE, he worked on an 800 cow dairy unit on the South Island and alongside agricultural consultants in AgFirst NZ on the country’s North Island. Speaking on the broad topic of producer payments, Mahon remarked on a belief for the “potential for the elimination of payments to producers



PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: SINEAD MOHAN

in the distant future”, referring to the elimination of farm payments in NZ. Such moves would take time however and require “existing subsidies incentivise and promote sustainable farm practices, showing farmers that management decisions can drive profitability” he added.

Mahon voiced concerns that; “as a dry stock farmer, heavily involved in the dairy industry, I think land entitlements have distorted land leasing prices and are potentially limiting the introduction of new young, skilled personnel to both sectors of the industry.” The extent of this capitalisation of farm supports into increased land prices is a highly contested point at policy level. Many, like Mahon, believe supports are hindering the ability of younger, potentially more efficient and environmentally conscious farmers to access the resources needed to begin farming themselves, primarily land. The introduction of an early retirement scheme in the new CAP may be an option at national level, but tightened payment eligibility criteria on “active farming” may ease land supply pressures somewhat, at EU level. “I do not believe increasing entitlement values for enterprises with lower returns than dairy will increase the long-term sustainability of these sectors. However, I do accept the entitlement system does require substantial change and such change could possibly benefit young farmers” he added.

Speaking on industry driven change, Mahon commented; “The potential for milk processors to reward investment in environmentalism is also something I would not rule out, looking to the future”. The movement of industry ahead of policy could strengthen the resilience of the sector, as producers change practice pro-emptively, rather than in reaction to legislation.

Dr David Stead, head of Agribusiness in UCD, highlighted an often overlooked inclusion of many reform proposal documents; “A particular feature of this set of CAP reform proposals is the greater flexibility given to individual Member States. Thus, many of the decisions on the challenging policy issues will be made in Dublin, not Brussels”. Some political commentators have voiced reluctance, however, to grant such liberties to member states pursuing policies seen as “un-European” or “illiberal”, with the latter a self-description of one of these divergent central-European leaders. The autonomy would allow for region-specific solutions to Union-wide problems to be enacted in a manner that helps to avoid conflict at producer level. Safeguards must accompany this flexibility for the allocation of CAP funding by member states, to avoid the diversion of resources into oligarchical structures and faux schemes in such regimes.

REPRESENTATION AND SPACE: AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR LORRAINE HANLON

JADE NORTON

Jade Norton, in conversation with Professor Lorraine Hanlon, discusses her work with the European Space Agency, her current research, and thoughts on women's representation in physics.

PROFESSOR Lorraine Hanlon is a lecturer and researcher in the UCD School of Physics. She graduated with a Bachelors and Masters in Experimental Physics before going on to work for the European Space Agency (ESA). Hanlon touched on many topics during our interview including the research that she does on gamma-ray bursts using the Integral satellite, as well as her thoughts on gender in physics and corporate sponsorship of space.

Hanlon got involved with the ESA after moving to the Netherlands to complete a research fellowship. Her passion for physics was there from day one but it was not until her masters, that she got involved in space projects and "...got really excited about the connection between physics and space exploration". Her work with ESA continues to this day alongside her lecturing in the School of Physics.

Hanlon also works as the lead professor in Ireland's first satellite EIRSAT-1. Ireland's membership in the ESA allows Irish students to have advanced opportunities in space research and EIRSAT-1 is a small cube satellite that allows for a deeper understanding of a full satellite in a shorter timeline, requiring fewer resources. There is a huge academic and economic potential when a country engages in space activity and "CubeSats are a brilliant way for students to get involved in the space business".

ESA contains innumerable opportunities for space-oriented people with classic departments in engineering, physics, materials, robotics, structures, and deployable mechanisms such as batteries or solar panels. Hanlon anecdotally mentioned how, during her time in European Space Research and Technology Centre, she used to walk past a door labelled Battery Testing Division and wonder "What on Earth they did there?" when in fact Earth was not the focus of the department at all, as even in space the biggest rockets and smallest satellites need batteries to power them.

There are eight sites across Europe under the

“The problem of having space owned by a couple of mega-rice individuals is undeniably dangerous as Hanlon is convinced that “space should be openly accessible democratised access and should not be in the hands of a few individuals to control who can go to space.”

umbrella of ESA, with copious numbers of other institutions working to enhance scientific knowledge on additional projects. To any interested student, Hanlon impresses that whatever you are interested in doing, it will be facilitated by the facility that you go to, as each focuses on a particular area and you do not need to know everything before you start. In the end, you may "focus on a narrow area but it is one that you find very interesting". She also mentions that there is ESA Academy that provides training for students who are interested in space which deals with systems engineering, space communication and even space with law.

Physics is a very male-dominated subject and for female students, it can come across as an intimidating environment to branch into. As a highly esteemed female physicist in industry and academia, Hanlon

welcomes change to this stereotype but admits that "the pace of change has just not been fast enough" and she has not seen much of a change in the hierarchy during the 30 years that she has been in the industry. She notes that there is a "23-25% female participation in physics and space but there is a big widening of the gap again at senior levels".

The dynamics of female life often cause a dropout in the transition from early career to senior where Hanlon states that: "we lose qualified, capable people - women, because career needs are not met". The one-size-fits-all expectation goes against reality and is not viable if you want more women in the workforce. "You have to acknowledge that there are certain times that [women] are not going to be able to work for family reasons... and we don't recognise those kinds of breaks as essential for work-life balance". She does note that many major employers such as ESA have taken this into account and have realised that these issues have to be addressed.

"Progress has been slow but finally it's looks like corporates and big agencies like ESA have realised that they have to do more and do better and do it faster"

Covid has provided a unique situation that has forced much of our work back home but even this has not helped women in some regards as "evidence has shown that it is worse for women working from home because the burden of childcare at home has fallen on [some] women". A lot of this is based on societal expectation and a "this is how it has always been done" mentality, which is difficult to go against, but this is an issue that is prevalent across the workforce and not just in physics.

Despite the recent lockdowns, Hanlon's research has not been overwhelmingly affected, as her research uses data from the Integral satellite which is a large ESA gamma-ray satellite. There was an interesting discovery in April which kept a lot of the scientific research going over the lockdowns, as the data had already been generated and it was a matter of analysing it.

She has also been involved in a study for a new ESA mission called Theseus which is projected to fly in 2032, provided it wins a launch slot. "It will detect gamma ray bursts from the very early universe and allow us to look at some of the very first stars in the universe by using gamma ray bursts to pinpoint where they are". The competitor mission will go to Venus and the decision for this will be made in June. These satellites will then be launched from the ESA space launch site in French Guyana.

Hanlon has worked on the Integral mission since her Master's days and since it was launched in 2002 - making it already 17 years old. The new Theseus mission is not set to be launched until 2032 and with these long-term missions comes a long-time commitment which Hanlon does not seem to mind as the passion for her subject is evident in my talks with her.

When asked about her opinion of the media-heavy space corporations coming in the future she said; "I worry that the regulation and oversight of mega constellations that SpaceX want to build is very lax. As what these companies are doing is ahead of where the regulations are and this may destroy the view of the night sky". We have to think of dark skies as a commodity and resource that have to be protected as their loss would also have an impact on radiofrequency. The problem of having space owned by a couple of mega-rice individuals is undeniably dangerous as Hanlon is convinced that "space should be openly accessible democratised access and should not be in the hands of a few individuals to control who can go to space".

THE EU'S BIO-DEFENSE PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMME: THE HERA INCUBATOR

JANA JOHA

Preparedness for the further is essential at a time when new and more transmissible strains of the coronavirus are emerging and spreading rapidly. Jana Joha looks at the EU's HERA Incubator that will provide the EU with a biodefense preparedness program.

The European Commission has launched the 'HERA incubator', a European bio-defence preparedness programme that hopes to address the looming threat of Coronavirus variants. This plan aims to monitor future variants in addition to allowing researchers to collaborate and fast-track the development of future vaccines. The Commission unveiled their plan on Wednesday the 17th of February, promising to work with researchers, biotech companies, manufacturers and public authorities both in the EU and around the world to detect and prevent the spread of new variants. The EU has pledged €30 million from Horizon 2020 and €120 million from Horizon Europe.

This plan comes at a time when new and more transmissible strains of the Coronavirus are emerging and spreading rapidly. European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, warned that we are seeing "more and more cases of COVID-19 linked to variants". New variants are already present in Europe and in various other parts of the world. Some of these variants appear to be more transmissible, with the potential of becoming dominant strains. They even have the potential to reduce the efficacy of vaccines. The Commission recognises that this is a real threat and anticipates that there will be a future need for preparedness. It has launched the 'HERA incubator' in order to address this potential. At a press conference, President Ursula von der Leyen explained that "the pandemic has shown us three things: we have to act early, we have to invest at large scale, we have to partner up. This is why we are proposing 'HERA incubator' now".

The EU hopes to bring together researchers, biotech companies, manufacturers, regulators and public authorities to monitor variants, exchange data and cooperate on adapting vaccines. The plan will focus on detecting, analysing and adapting to new variants, speeding up regulatory approval, and providing guidance on data requirements. They also plan to facilitate the certification of new or repurposed manufacturing infrastructures and support the rapid mass production of adapted or novel vaccines. Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner for Health and

“The growing threat of new Coronavirus variants looms over every government around the world. Now more than ever we need to stay ahead of this virus”

AIR POLLUTION AND COVID-19 LINKED BY UCD RESEARCHER

ORLAITH DOHERTY

Orlaith Doherty investigates what UCD's Professor Francesco Pilla study on air pollution changes over lockdown has yielded and how we can keep our fundamental right to clean air a reality

“This also suggests that the controlled motorization traffic pollution and limiting of other unsustainable human activities could be the most effective ways of improving the air quality of cities.”

The World Health Organisation (WHO) in their 'Ambient Air Pollution' report in 2016 reported that air pollution is a major cause of premature death and illness worldwide. The most critical air pollutants are particulate matter (PM), ozone (O3), nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and sulfur dioxide (SO2). These chemicals are emitted largely through motorized transport, burning of fossil fuels for home heating, and industrial emissions. However, PM is generally considered the main player in air pollution.

PM can come in the form of 'PM 10' or 'PM 2.5'. The numbers represented the size of the particles in the air, with PM 10 particles being 10 microns or micrometres or greater in diameter and PM 2.5 being 2.5 microns or less in diameter. The WHO considers PM 2.5 to be the most hazardous air pollutant to human health as the inhalation of very small particles into the lungs can penetrate and accumulate in lung tissue where it can enter the bloodstream, creating risk for heart, lung disease, and stroke. It has been linked to the causation of asthma in the developing respiratory systems of children as well as exacerbating other respiratory conditions, such as cystic fibrosis.

“President Ursula von der Leyen explained that “the pandemic has shown us three things: we have to act early, we have to invest at large scale, we have to partner up. This is why we are proposing ‘HERA incubator’ now”.

Food Safety, stated that we need to "have fully future adapted vaccines to be approved as quickly as possible through streamlined and predictable procedures, procedures that also allow citizens to feel safe and to build up trust in public health matters".

The funding provided by Horizon 2020, which is a programme that funds research, technological development, and innovation, will support various different research projects and investments. This funding will help to establish a new EU-wide vaccine trial network called VACCCELERATE in order to improve the tracking and analysis of virus variants. This initiative will support the rapid establishment of a clinical research network that will span 21 countries. €12 million has already been allocated and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) plans to work closely with the initiative.

Ireland is one of the 21 countries that is participating in VACCCELERATE. The Irish partners are University College Dublin (UCD) and the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) which will be led from UCD by Infectious Diseases expert Professor Paddy Mallon, director of UCD Centre for Experimental Pathogen Host Research (CEPHR) and consultant at St. Vincent's University Hospital's Infectious Diseases department. The main aim of VACCCELERATE is to help determine the safety and efficacy of vaccines in priority groups such as the elderly, pregnant women and children and to assess the efficacy of vaccines for new variants.

The VACCCELERATE initiative will also allow for better and more efficient sharing of data and collaboration. It will enable harmonised data collection and open data sharing and pooling for stronger and faster analysis by reinforcing and supporting the European COVID-19 Data Platform which launched in April 2020 with the goal to provide an open, trusted, and scalable European and global environment for rapid collection

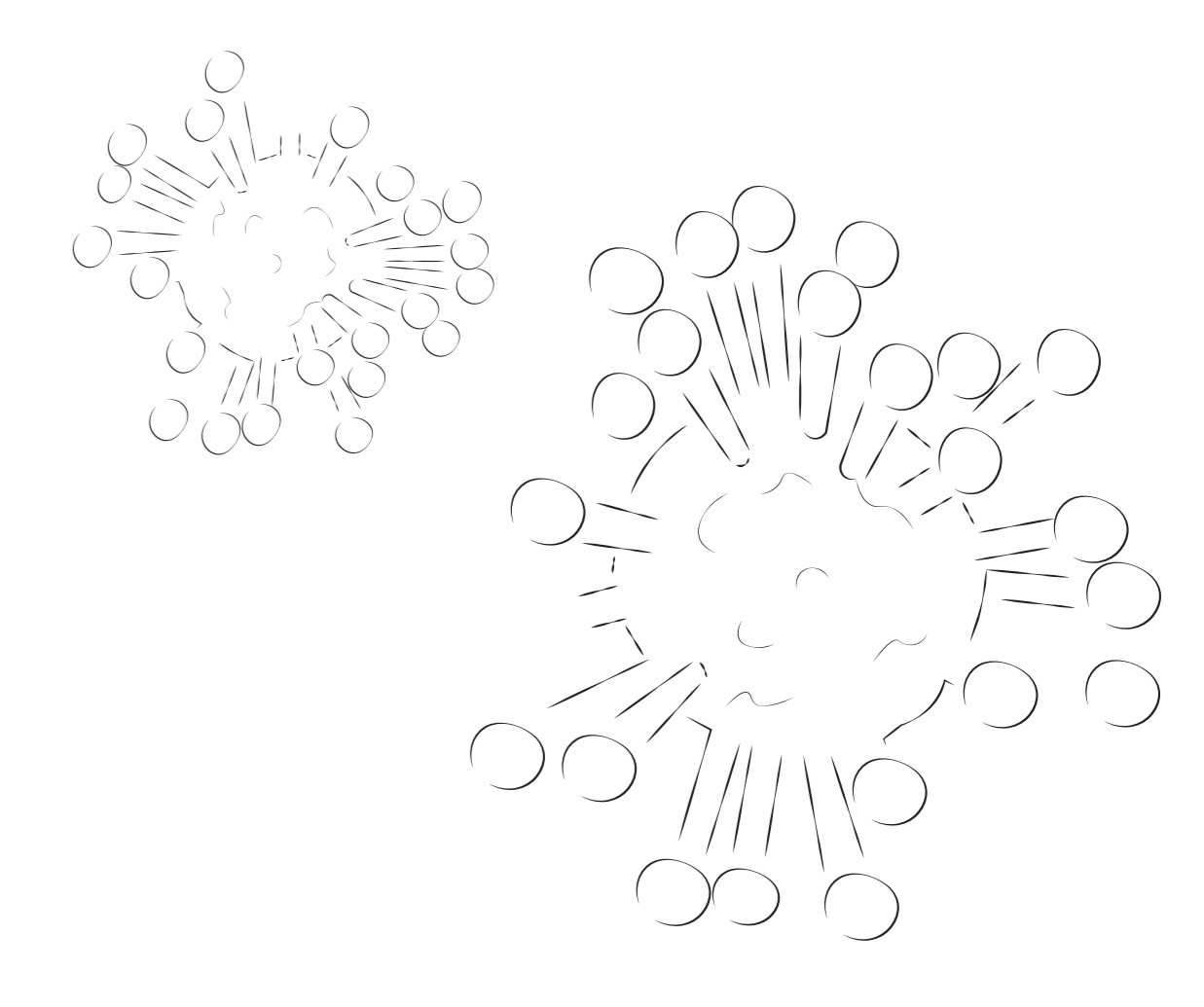


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: LAOISE TARRANT

and sharing of data. Professor Peter Doran, who is the director of UCD Clinical Research Centre and Associate Dean of Research, Innovation and Impact at UCD School of Medicine, believes that "The VACCCELERATE project represents a unique mobilisation of European research strength in basic and clinical research" and that "the establishment of this programme will put European science at the leading edge of new vaccine development and testing".

The HERA incubator programme will also adapt existing Advance Purchase Agreements (APA) in the hopes of speeding up regulatory approval of vaccines, data packages and new/repurposed manufacturing infrastructures as well as supporting the production of adapted or novel COVID-19 vaccines. Advance Purchase Agreements help address new variants but predicted while also being more prepared than ever before for future pandemics. Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth strongly believes that: "Through our joint efforts, we will better understand, diagnose and eventually overpower the pandemic."

programme is called the HERA incubator as HERA will focus on putting in place long term structures for risk modelling, threat assessment and surveillance. "The HERA incubator is really the precursor and strong nucleus for the future European health emergency preparedness and response authority" - Kyriakides.

The growing threat of new coronavirus variants looms over every government around the world. Now more than ever we need to stay ahead of this virus. Continued collaboration and teamwork between scientists, biotech companies, governments and ordinary people will be the thing that will get us through this crisis sooner. The European Union shares these beliefs and is determined to achieve those goals. Through the launching of the HERA incubator, we may perhaps finally get ahead and emerge from this global pandemic sooner than predicted while also being more prepared than ever before for future pandemics. Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth strongly believes that: "Through our joint efforts, we will better understand, diagnose and eventually overpower the pandemic."

THE FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE

ELLEN NUGENT

Bumblebees are a key pollinator group whose long-term decline has been associated with changes in crop fertilisation that could impact food cultivation. Ellen Nugent discusses UCD's Dr Dara Stanley's study, ecology, and what they need to survive.

The humble bumblebee is a staple of art, media and children's literature. Bumblebees, Genus *Bombas*, encompass around 250 species distributed throughout the Northern hemisphere and are considered one of the most important and efficient pollinating insects. Ireland is home to 15 species of True Bumblebees and 6 species of Cuckoo Bumblebees. These species have an interesting dynamic as the cuckoo bumblebee species take over a true bumblebee's hive, kill the queen, and enslave her workers to care for the cuckoo bumblebee's young.

Bumblebees are, unfortunately, a declining species - climate change, intensive agricultural practices, and land development have all affected bumblebee numbers. Fortunately, not all the genus of bumblebees are critically endangered yet, as each species declines at a different rate. These rates are affected by a wide host of factors; from nesting behaviour to the length of their tongues!

The Great Yellow Bumblebee (*Bombus Distinguendus*) is the rarest of Ireland's true bumblebees. It's a rather mysterious bee with very little known about its habits and habitats. UCD lecturer Dr Dara Stanley has recently authored a paper researching and collecting information about the Great Yellow Bumblebee. The paper investigated different habitats, plants visited by the bees, and the place of *Bombus Distinguendus* among Ireland's bumblebee populations. The study also collected information on these populations, which can be used in conservation strategies.

Bumblebees are seen throughout Ireland, but they live and thrive in specific sites, and need specific plants from which to harvest nectar and pollen. Stanley's research investigated four primary types of habitat: coastland grassland areas, grasslands rich in flora and fauna (species-rich), urban environments, and roadside verges. *Bombus distinguendus* was found only in grassland sites, although it has inhabited many different habitat types in the past - it is thought that agricultural modification of habitats has resulted in their widespread decline. *Bombus distinguendus* also showed a preference for plants such as Red Clover, Common Knapweed and Kidney Vetch.

These habitat and foraging preferences are common in Irish bumblebee species, with some small variations. This, unfortunately, can result in depleted resources for bumblebees - if all species inhabit the same areas and forage from the same plants, competition increases dramatically. Roadside verges and urban areas often support less bumblebee diversity, as they cannot provide for the specific requirements of rarer species.

Conservation of Ireland's bumblebee species, and bumblebees as a whole, is critical. Bumblebees are highly efficient collectors of pollen and have been proven to assist in the pollination of both significant crop species, and wild fauna in Northern Hemisphere countries. Insect pollination of crop species within the EU has been valued at estimates of 14 million euros, with a significant percentage of these insects represented by bumblebees. Bumblebee species are also vital to Irish ecosystems, as pollinators, prey, and

“The conservation strategy of rewilding and reducing land use is highly effective but is rarely a strategy as it is often economically and time-consuming....These grasslands, unfortunately, are not efficient for agricultural activities - bumblebees do not do well in single-crop fields or grazing land with limited numbers of grass species”.



PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: SINÉAD MOHAN

as hosts to parasites and microorganisms. Stanley's paper discusses methods of conservation for the Great Yellow Bumblebee specifically, but these conservation methods can benefit bumblebees, and Irish ecosystems, as a whole.

The conservation strategy of rewilding and reducing land use is highly effective but is rarely a strategy as it is often economically and time-consuming. Rarer bumblebee species such as *Bombus distinguendus* thrive in species-rich, minimally processed grasslands. These grasslands, unfortunately, are not efficient for agricultural activities - bumblebees do not do well in single-crop fields or grazing land with limited numbers of grass species. Ireland has recently seen a move from the use of hay towards the use of silage for animal feed - this further reduces crop diversity, and results in a lack of forage species preferred and sometimes required by bumblebee species. The use of pesticides or herbicides reduces the possibility of these areas supporting bumblebee populations even more.

Urban and roadside habitats are more easily established and maintained than grassland habitats. Their success as a habitat is almost entirely dependent on human intervention: roadside habitats that are trimmed during foraging season cannot support bumblebees, but group-lead initiatives like the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan can lead to well-established and diverse habitat areas. Plans such as these are effective, but their usefulness to different species of

“Bumblebees are, unfortunately, a declining species - climate change, intensive agricultural practices, and land development have all affected bumblebee numbers.”

bumblebees can be vastly improved if they are linked to even more diverse habitats such as grasslands, especially if the grassland is minimally processed for agriculture, which can facilitate the creation of 'habitat corridors'. Bumblebees have a very small foraging radius, and will not generally fly more than 1km from their nest - this means that rarer species with specific habitat requirements are unable to benefit from urban or roadside habitats if they are not in immediate range of their habitat. Creating corridors would allow these bees to establish hives closer to more easily established habitats, and somewhat reduce the need for rewilding agricultural land.

The decline of bumblebee populations is worrying, amidst a global trend of species decline, but hope remains for the conservation and growth of these insects. Urban and roadside habitat creation and ensuring that grassland areas with rare bumblebee populations are protected is a vital first step in stopping the decline in bumblebee numbers. Conservation initiatives and Agri-Environment schemes will be vital for educating and increasing interest in Ireland's agricultural populations. Increasing bumblebee populations is entirely possible with the introduction of habitat corridors and restricted processing of land would do wonders for the survival of Ireland's endangered bumblebees, and its bumblebee population alongside our populations of flora and fauna that are dependent on these habitats on the whole.

LAW AND POLITICS

THE POLITICS OF VACCINATIONS

AOIFE ROONEY

Aoife Rooney reflects on the global vaccination effort.

THE first COVID-19 vaccine was administered in early December 2020. A conversation surrounding vaccine distribution quickly ensued after the brief sigh of relief when it was reported that vaccine developments had achieved approval. Large-scale vaccination of vulnerable groups was rolled out in many countries including the United States, China, and the United Kingdom. Months later, 121 countries have implemented vaccine rollout. While there is much conversation about the speed of vaccination in Western countries, there are full continents that are only recently getting access to vaccines.

While over 70 countries have yet to receive any vaccinations, those in low-income countries are particularly struggling. In Africa, countries are facing challenges in implementing the effective rollout of a vaccine to their citizens. The large populations of many of these countries, as well as the lack of necessary infrastructure and support from wealthier countries, means that many will be some of the last to see large-scale immunisation. As of March 12th, for every 100 people on the continent of Africa, only 0.48 of them have had at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This is in stark comparison to the United States, where the same measure currently sits at 31.98 vaccinated for every 100 people.

Experts have been well aware that an event such as a pandemic would shed a harsh light on the political and economic inequalities of countries with higher rates of poverty. To address this problem, the World Health Organisation (WHO) developed the COVAX initiative. It is a vaccine-accessibility scheme, aimed at ensuring the equal distribution of Covid vaccines is accessible in

a timely manner to all people, not just those fortunate enough to live in countries whose governments can afford to bid for vaccines.

The main reason there is an issue with lower-income countries gaining access to vaccines is that the competition for vaccinations among governments was fuelled by their ability to wage more funding to secure as many doses as possible. This was a roadblock that countries, such as Sudan and Venezuela among many others, could not possibly get around. The COVAX pillar is coordinated by Gavi (The Vaccine Alliance), the WHO and Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), and aims to provide equitable access to vaccine candidates, but also to support the research and manufacturing of vaccines. As stated by Gavi, “the initial aim is to have 2 billion doses available by the end of 2021.” COVAX is already responsible for the administration of much of the vaccinations across countries in the Global South. Despite this, the first COVAX vaccines in Africa were only beginning to be administered in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire on March 1st. While other countries have been steadily administering vaccines since December, this is still a positive development. Without the COVAX initiative, many of the countries that have started to see immobilisation of vaccines would still be unable to access this healthcare due to lack of funding. US President Joe Biden is to announce a contribution of \$4 billion to COVAX, according to the White House.

French President Emmanuel Macron has also addressed the issue of the widening equity gap between wealthy and poor countries in his call to the



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: FLICKR, DOD PHOTO BY NAVY PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II

US and Europe to “urgently send up to 5% of their coronavirus vaccines to developing nations”. It has been reported that in the frenzy of countries trying to purchase the necessary amounts of vaccinations, some are hoarding the availabilities. Both Canada and the UK have ordered more vaccines than necessary to immunise their respective populations.

While the continent of Africa is where the overall lack of access to vaccines is most prevalent, there is also severe inequity in South American countries. To look at the continent as a whole, it has only vaccinated 4.98

people out of every 100. It has a population of 430.4 million. Similarly, the European Union has a population of 444.9 million, yet has vaccinated 10.98 people for every 100. Paraguay is one country, in particular, that is suffering the cost of lack of access to vaccines and healthcare infrastructure with only 7,579 people immunised, despite a population of over 7 million.

One of the other factors that contribute to this inequity is access to specific vaccines. For example, the ability to administer the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is entirely contingent on the country having access to the freezers needed to maintain them and the infrastructure to keep the freezers going. While it is reported that the vaccine can now be stored at a higher temperature, it is only one of the many challenges that countries that are not in a position to ensure they can purchase vaccines are up against.

The COVAX initiative is seemingly the only chance poorer countries have of attempting to kickstart immunisation. The project is heavily reliant on the contribution of resources by wealthier countries. In order to effectively vaccinate the populations of lower-income countries, and in doing so address the global vaccination attempt, support must be given by wealthier Western countries to close the equity gap that has vastly widened in the past year.

WHO IS ALEXEI NAVALNY?

MÉABH DE COURCY MAC DONNELL

Méabh de Courcy Mac Donnell considers whether Alexei Navalny is a symbol of Russian liberalisation or a unifying force for extremist elements

DUBBED “the man Vladimir Putin fears most”, attention and interest surrounding Alexei Navalny continues to grow. Initially a member of the social-liberal “Yakablo” party, it was not until 2007 that Navalny established his National Russian Liberation Movement (NAROD) which he aligned with two nationalist groups. Navalny’s following grew quickly, though his presence remained mainly online. His blog attacked the alleged corruption of many state-owned Russian corporations. One mechanism used by Navalny to highlight state misconduct was to become a minority shareholder in their agencies and use his membership within the company to question any dubious financing.

Following a series of protests and arrests in the years 2011-2013, Navalny’s name became more mainstream in Russia. Navalny was protesting the parliamentary elections, alleging widespread electoral fraud, when he was arrested and sentenced to 15 days imprisonment. This garnered him widespread attention, which led commentators to call the prosecution “a political mistake”. Anti-Putin rallies, followed by short periods of detention and imprisonment, seemed to be Navalny’s trend for a time. He later faced more serious allegations of fraud and embezzlement, though these were widely believed to be attempts to damage his reputation.

In 2013 Navalny ran in the Moscow mayoral election, performing better than expected against the then-mayor, Sergey Sobyanin. During the election campaign, however, he was sentenced to 5 years in prison for the fraud and embezzlement charges that had been levied

against him. The conviction was later annulled after the European Convention on Human Rights ruled Navalny’s right to a fair trial had been violated. Navalny received 27% of the vote, higher than some forecasts but in line with his own campaign offices’ projections. This was seen as a massive success given his lack of access to traditional forms of media and state TV. Nonetheless, Navalny denounced the results and claimed they were illegitimate on account of an unfair election. Sobyanin’s office refused to recount the results.

Navalny continued to push the boundaries, announcing his presidential bid in 2016. He immediately came under pressure from state forces and supporters: his 2013 sentence of fraud and embezzlement was repeated, he was attacked with acid which resulted in eye injuries, he was arrested and jailed for a number of days following rallies, and the Central Electoral Commission banned him from running on account of his corruption conviction. This ban sparked several protests; 257 people were arrested while calling for a boycott of the election, while 1600 people were arrested prior to Putin’s inauguration.

Navalny dominated global headlines in August 2020 when he was attacked by a nerve agent while on a flight to Moscow. Following an emergency landing and initial hospital treatment in Omsk, Navalny was transferred to Berlin where it was confirmed that the poison came from the same family of nerve agents as those used to attack Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the UK. It further emerged that the nerve agent had been smeared in

“*Opposition leader, anti-corruption activist and lawyer, it seems that this growing figure is the force to combat Putin. But emerging controversies are beginning to cloud his hero image*”

Navalny’s underwear, causing underpants to become a social media meme in Russia, and Navalny to nickname Putin “Vladimir the Underpants Poisoner”.

Opposition leader, anti-corruption activist and lawyer, it seems that this growing figure is the force to combat Putin. But emerging controversies are beginning to cloud his hero image. Navalny has made a number of xenophobic comments in the past, which for the most part he has never denied or clarified. Old videos show Navalny calling Muslim militants cockroaches who must be exterminated. In another, he claims he will deport non-White immigrants from Central Asia. He has used racial slurs to refer to Georgians in the context of

Russo-Georgian war. (This comment he has apologised for). He seems to support the annexation of Crimea, saying he would not return it to Ukraine should he become president. In light of this attitude, in February 2021 Amnesty International revoked Navalny’s “prisoner of conscience” status, though they still advocated for his release. In an explanation given by the organization, they stated that they could no longer afford Navalny this status as his past comments reached a level of hate speech that “constitutes incitement to discrimination, violence, or hostility”.

Although it has been said that Navalny’s approach to immigrants and foreign nationals have “softened” in recent years, it is also clear that Navalny’s nationalistic tendencies are a cause for concern. Who makes up his support base? Liberals who want to fight corruption in the country or xenophobic nationalists who see a sympathetic leader? Supporters of Navalny argue that these debates play into the hands of the Kremlin, who use his old statements on a regular basis to allege he is a fascist. But it is hard to argue that these are not valid questions to raise.

So who is Alexei Navalny? The best hope for the liberalisation of Russia? Or a unifying force for Russia’s extremist elements?

THE FAR RIGHT IN IRELAND

GRACE DONNELLAN

In the aftermath of last month’s protests, Grace Donnellan discusses her opinion of the rise of the far right in Ireland

UNTIL recently, many would have argued that the rise of far-right politics, which has been prevalent in both Europe and the US, as well as the conspiracy theories that often accompany this ascent, had not yet reached Ireland. However, the anti-lockdown and anti-mask movements that have gained popularity over the past few months and are intrinsically linked with this form of politics have shown that Ireland has not escaped the proliferation of the far right.

This was clearly evidenced at the anti-lockdown protests in Dublin at the end of February. Two women interviewed at the protests shared their beliefs that babies in Ireland were being killed and harvested for “adrenochrome” to keep RTE celebrities “looking young”. While many may laugh off comments like these, they are examples of the importation of far-right QAnon style conspiracy theories to Ireland. This issue with misinformation and conspiracy theories deserves to be taken seriously. The baseless theory surrounding QAnon is centred on an anonymous, allegedly high-ranking government official known as Q who posted information regarding a ‘deep state’ working against Donald Trump when he was president, with ties to satanism and child sex trafficking. It is linked to white supremacy, neo-Nazism, anti-Semitism and violence against minorities. In the US, QAnon has crept into mainstream politics, with people associated with the movement believed to be involved in the Capitol riots and Marjorie Taylor Greene, a believer of Q, being elected to Congress. Much evidence shows that once people fall down rabbit holes related to these conspiracy theories and misinformation, it is very hard to change their mind. Prevention would appear

to be the best cure. There is a need for vigilance with regards to their prevalence here in Ireland, and it is important not to dismiss them as ridiculous and without consequence.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created an environment for these conspiracy theories to proliferate. In Ireland, elements of these theories seem to have been adopted by anti-lockdown and anti-5G groups. Individuals mistrustful of the government, those with anti-vaccination sympathies and even simply those exasperated with a year in lockdown, have been targets of right-wing recruiters. Fringe right wing political parties such as the Irish Freedom Party and The National Party have also benefited from this spread of misinformation. At a rally held in August, similar to the recent protests, Dolores Cahill, chair of the Irish Freedom Party and Professor in the UCD School of Medicine, was given an audience.

Some of these Irish anti-lockdown protests have descended into violence. LGBT+ campaigner Izzy Kamikaze was attacked while counter-protesting an anti-face mask rally in September, while protestors launched fireworks at the Gardai in February.

One major problem regarding the far right in Ireland is the lack of understanding surrounding it. In March, Billy Kelleher, a Fianna Fáil MEP, tweeted that “there is no difference between the far right and Q, extreme left”. This kind of rhetoric displays a profound lack of political understanding. It is also harmful as it downplays the seriousness of the threat the far right pose by comparing it to a non-existent ‘extreme left’. In

reality the far right and the far left share very few similarities. This horseshoe theory of politics can be appealing to centrist politicians as it allows them to discredit the left, which would act against their interests if in power, and simultaneously disavow any complicity they have in the far right movement. In October 2019, Kelleher was absent from a vote on enhancing protections for refugees crossing the Mediterranean.

UNBOXING THE BUSINESS OF BOXES

DEESHA GUPTA

Deesha Gupta examines the newly reinvigorated business of subscription delivery services.

There has been a growing trend among people to subscribe to some sort of a subscription service, even more so during the pandemic. This could be a direct outcome of either the initial supply scare in early 2020 or just a new, but expensive, method of lifting gloomy moods associated with quarantine. A burst of joy upon seeing cardboard boxes is not uncommon since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak. The number of home deliveries has significantly gone up, and so too have the subscription boxes. According to Royal Mail Group, 27.4% of Britons signed up for subscription boxes in February 2019 and this number has increased exponentially ever since. In fact, in a survey by *CouponFollow* involving more than a thousand Americans, at least 1 in 5 had acquired a subscription service at some point during lockdown to get products delivered directly to their doorstep.

But subscription services have been around for some time, and the coronavirus outbreak seems to be just one of the accelerators of this already booming business. According to the *Shopify Blog*, the e-commerce subscription market is projected to reach \$473 billion by 2025, up from \$15 billion in 2019. Even before the pandemic, subscription boxes were increasing in popularity, and according to *Statista*, the industry had already reached \$10 billion in value in 2018.

Subscription boxes are no longer limited to magazines or newspapers. They are available in almost all the categories of retail; from customised beauty products to meal prep, fancy stationery to clothing picked by a stylist. This peaking craze can very well be attributed to many reasons, the most prominent of which is convenience. Before the lockdown subscription boxes brought with them monthly ease and comfort. Post-lockdown, they will be considered a life-saver during the busiest days of the office, when you simply cannot afford the time to go to a store but can afford a subscription service. Because most of the boxes are often curated by the companies themselves based on the customer’s preferences, they tend to find it hassle-free, seamless and flexible. And of course, they get an added advantage of skipping a trip to the store and the decision fatigue that comes along with it.

While the growth was slow earlier, the lockdown gave the industry an unexpected boost. As the pandemic progressed, so did the paranoia among the general population regarding the availability of essential goods (which apparently led to real-life hunger games over rolls of toilet paper), and so consumers started looking into alternative routes to obtain their daily necessities. The subscription boxes promised timely and regular delivery, making them a reliable source of shopping.

Some subscription boxes also gained popularity because they guaranteed to keep the occupants of the house occupied. People working at home have a lot of free time on their hands and boxes such as those containing craft items or pre-packaged ingredients for meals serve as great activities for family engagement and bonding. They ensure a sense of normalcy in a time when it is such a desperately short supply. Additionally, a lot of people just prefer to treat themselves to such subscription services to get a monthly dose of dopamine. These feel-good

‘BUY NOW, PAY LATER’: THE NEXT DIGITAL FINANCING REVOLUTION

RORY CLARKE

Rory Clarke analyses the emerging ‘Buy Now, Pay Later’ industry to see whether its prescient potential stands up to scrutiny.

THE ‘Buy Now, Pay Later’ (BNPL) industry has grown from the ‘seeds’ of the credit card industry, watered by evolving attitudes towards digital financing. The job BNPL aims to do, its key value proposition, is simple: to enable users to buy products immediately and pay for them in instalments, without any extra interest being accrued. The product fills an ‘opportunity gap’, originating from the evolution of consumer purchasing trends. At a practical level, these services are often integrated into an e-retailer’s website and appear as a payment option at checkout. Two key players, Afterpay and Klarna, will be used throughout this piece as key examples of the burgeoning industry.

This type of system has several significant advantages for both end-users and retail partners and merchants. The service allows end-customers flexibility in managing their payments without requiring them to apply for a loan, pay additional fees, or provide extensive personal information which might cause delays and frustrate their buying experience.

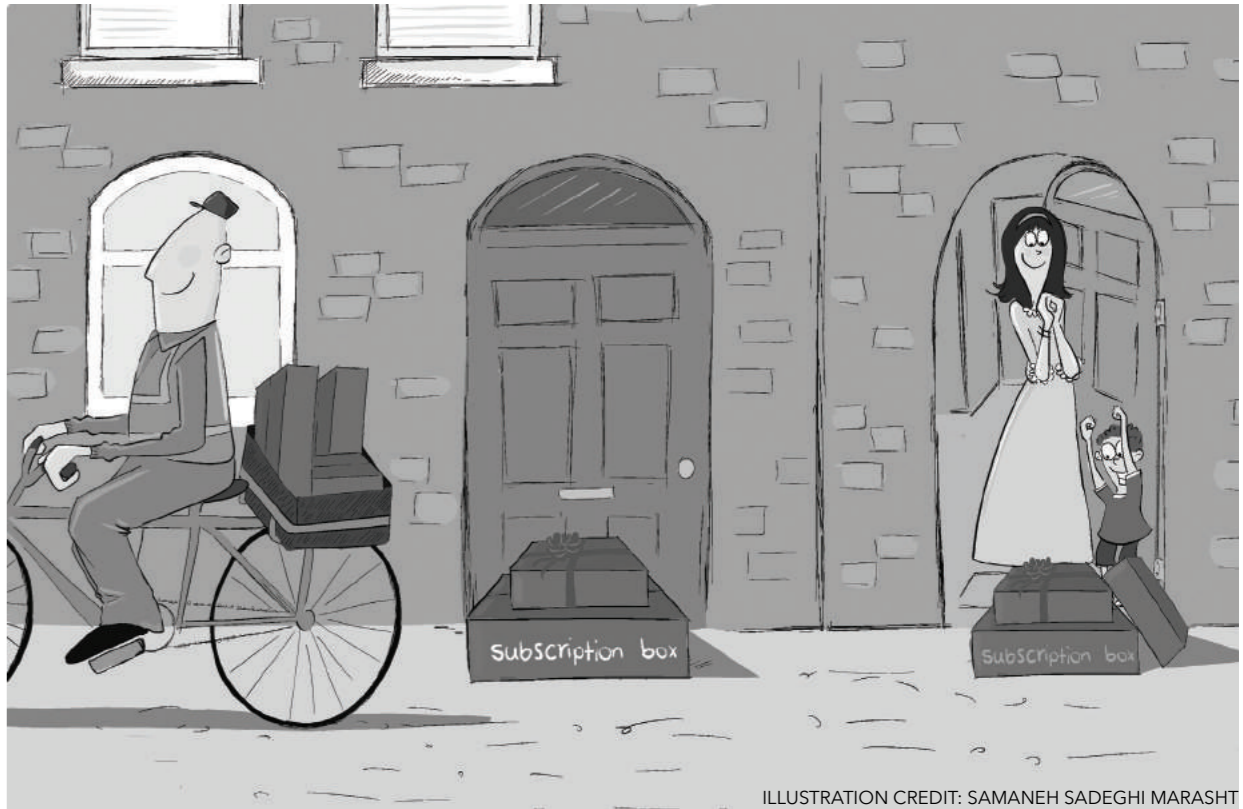
The targeted segment is those in short-term financial pain. Interestingly, this category is naturally two-fold - ‘actual’ and ‘soft’ - both of which BNPL accommodates. Firstly, they aim to enable customers who would have actually been financially unable to purchase a product/service to do so, with the cost spread more manageably over fortnightly payments. Secondly, they aim to soothe the conscience of reluctant, impulsive or ashamed customers who (whilst able to buy-upfront) can more readily accept a ‘spread-out’ an instalment payment pattern, rather than a larger up-front payment.

Marketing campaigns emphasising instant gratification can take advantage of these users’ characteristics. Some BNPL firms operate by partnering directly with ‘retail merchant clients’ (RMCs), who pay merchant fees in return for the provision of services to their customers. These merchant fees are a combination of a flat rate fee per transaction, and a percentage based on the value of the underlying sale. The service is beneficial to retailers as it allows them to capture the business of customers who might require, or simply value, the flexibility afforded by the service. However, arguably more useful are those BNPL services that can be used anywhere and in any shop e.g. regardless of whether the financing BNPL has a formal partnership with them.

Klarna, a Swedish company, and (arguably) the market leader, is one such firm. Unlike Afterpay, it is a ‘pay anywhere’ firm - which allows more consumers to realise the service’s benefits. Indeed, a significant aspect of credit systems’ convenience moves from their ubiquitous acceptance by merchants (or lack thereof).

BNPL solves the current purchasing dissatisfaction of certain (likely younger) consumers who are unable or unwilling to get formal financial credit, which can be associated with middle-age and conventionality. Indeed, over 50% of Afterpay’s customers are reported to be aged between 18-34. It provides the convenience & ease which credit cards can lack. Consumers are

“*They ensure a sense of normalcy in a time when that is in such desperately short supply.*”



and worth the ridiculously high fee.

“*A burst of joy upon seeing cardboard boxes is not uncommon since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak.*”

Although many of these organisations are not well established, and in the start-up phase, they still have managed to gain immense popularity through novel digital marketing strategies such as shout-outs by celebrities and social media influencers. Papergang is one service that is quite trending among the stationery-fanatics. The brand packages cute and aesthetic stationery- from rulers to notebooks, clips and tape, it has it all. Stitch Fix aims to help the fashionably-challenged, by delivering curated outfits for their customers each month. It also enables them to create customisable looks according to their body type, with input from professional stylists. *Blue Apron* is another famous service for all you out there who love to cook, but only when they have all the necessary ingredients and a detailed recipe to follow. This service offers pre-measured food ingredients with elaborate instructions to create just about any dish in the kitchen.

One of the reasons why so many subscription companies have popped up over the years is because their direct-to-consumer business model is relatively simple. The consumer signs up to either receive a collection of products, or their preferred items from a certain percentage of subscriber fee is given to the supplier, often taking the form of ‘per unit, per minute or per click sale’ based on the number of subscribers, time or amount of service/product used. The process works smoother when the company is producing the goods in-house. But usually, because most companies

The company on the other hand contracts out the production to manufacturers or suppliers and ensures that a steady production of the goods is available. A certain percentage of subscriber fee is given to the supplier, often taking the form of ‘per unit, per minute or per click sale’ based on the number of subscribers, time or amount of service/product used. The process works smoother when the company is producing the goods in-house. But usually, because most companies

source the products from other manufacturers, the prices of these boxes can often be quite high.

In an interview with *Retail Gazette*, Adobe’s commercial business director Brian Green agreed that this strategy is effective as it ensures a strong revenue stream when subscribers pay every month, which allows for better forecasting of the financials. He also added that they increase stock predictability, and help retailers remove the cost of aged stock. The biggest hurdle these companies face is creating boxes that create continuous engagement with the customers. With new companies coming up every year, each organisation needs to ensure that whatever they create is unique,

I suspect the subscription box model is here to stay, but it will have to convey continued value to the customers if it doesn’t want to fade in the long term.

attracted to the service’s simplicity. Unlike many alternatives, you do not need to understand financial jargon, battle with variable interest rates, or accept the inevitability of fees. The simple instalment option, with a stated fee for lateness, is readily understood. In the words of Anthony Eisen, Afterpay’s CEO, one of its greatest assets is that is not “a chocolate box of different sorts of...options”.

BNPL usage is expected to double between now and 2024. Whilst still accounting for less than 5% of overall payments, the pace of growth is impressive. Moreover, general dissatisfaction with traditional banking and financing practices makes it sustainable with shifts towards digital alternatives more prevalent. For standard debit card services, Revolut recently acquired its 1 millionth Irish user. If a digital credit alternative was more readily available, some of those digitally-inclined users would likely take it up as well.

Furthermore, banking practices have historically been ‘sticky’ - customers stay permanently with institutions they opened accounts with as young adults. We have already seen how BNPL demographics skew young. If these firms can execute the promise they trade on and entrench themselves in the day-to-day financing of these groups, the segment is primed for long-term, sustainable growth. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic “accelerated structural changes” in moving closer to digital solutions and online retail, prompting the *Financial Times*’ editorial board to ‘bid farewell’ to conventional bricks and mortar establishments in a recent opinion piece.

The industry has been essential for keeping up economic activity during the pandemic with BNPL platforms facilitating an estimated \$20-\$25 billion in transactions in the US last year. The UK BNPL market

is now worth £2.7 billion (\$3.7 billion) and has had 5 million users since the start of the pandemic.

However, the reliance on automated technologies has the potential to be a fatal flaw in some BNPL services. Indeed, some, notably Afterpay, do not conduct manual credit checks on consumers. If systems are not properly optimised, firms risk refusing viable end-customers and accepting non-viable ones. The automation of this system raises the risk-level in this regard, as revenues may be lost, or significant bad debts accrued, without the knowledge of the company. This flaw exposes companies to more than mere financial damage; reputational damage from over-extended customers struggling to meet payments, and the damage caused to customers themselves, are distinct risks to the business. This is particularly concerning for BNPL’s young customer-base, who generally have less financial literacy and self-discipline. In this regard, it is worth noting that an Australian Senate Inquiry voiced concern over a reported 1 in 6 young Afterpay customers being in debt. This has led to widespread calls for the industry to be brought under the regulation of the Financial Conduct Authority (in the UK) and similar consumer protection bodies across the world. This would align the BNPL industry with the standard (and heavily regulated) general consumer finance industry.

The BNPL industry is not a fad or a phase, but a sustainable and serious financing tool, particularly for the digitally native. It is an attractive and feasible digital solution to short term financial pain which many consumers are willing to take a chance on. Once they do, they become product advocates and promote it through word-of-mouth. Much like Revolut, which has now topped 1.2 million Irish users, there is space for the digitally native at least, to adopt BNPL to the extent that it “would be a surprise to find someone who isn’t signed up”.

SU ELECTIONS

GAVIN CASSELLS



COVID -19 has shown us that in real-world politics making it easier to vote increases voter participation. This is of course helped by culture wars driving demand to vote and intense messaging driving information (of varying quality). Last April, the 2020 Student Sabbatical elections were held online, which at least in theory, is a very easy way to vote. Turnout was very poor, however, somewhere around 1,200 total votes out of a potential electorate of 32,000. Turnout in Sabbatical Elections is never staggeringly high, but this represented something of a nadir in student voting participation.

This March 31st and April 1st the voting is again online, and I expect (but hope to be wrong) that voter participation is not going to be huge this year either. This is mostly due to no particularly divisive issues to vote on. However, you can help push up this number by immediately registering to vote at vote.ucdsu.ie registration and voting on one of those days. Whilst on the website, try and familiarise yourself with the candidates that you will be voting on.

My suspicion is that many of the votes will be Johnny Nobody's harassed mates badgered into voting for Johnny, also voting for candidates in other races about which they know very little. I suspect this because this is the situation I found myself in last year. My Johnny Nobody, having urged me to register previously, called me up on voting day to remind me to vote and so dutifully I went in to do so. But I was asked to vote on other candidates too, and I made some snap judgements, often based on the layout of their manifesto and their general presentation (A word of advice to the candidates, work hard on making sure that any information presented to a last-minute voter in this fashion is your absolute best self, and not some dodgy angled Snapchat of an over-detailed manifesto). This low information voting is not uncommon in SU elections with lots of effort around voting day being focussed on getting people who know little or nothing to vote for your candidate or your issue.

There is also something off about students who will no longer be in college voting for candidates in these elections, as they are voting for a choice that will not affect them. And of course, incoming students will not get to vote at all on these choices that could be very important for them. I have already highlighted how little many voters know about the candidates so there is little advantage to this situation. And let us not forget that students voted on increases in the Student Levy in 2019 for students in 2024 to face. That was an absolute failure of democracy and should never be allowed to happen again.

I think I have a partial solution to some of these problems. I think that at least some part of the Sabbatical Elections should be held in October, after the start of the college year.

First years do not yet know if they will ever need the Student Union and so may be more motivated to find out about it. They will also be less burdened with

BREAST CANCER IS AN ISSUE FOR ALL WOMEN

CÍARA DEMPSEY

MOTHER'S Day is an interesting time of year for me. I appreciate the sentiment of other people, who post semi-sanctioned tweets about being sensitive on Mother's Day to those of us who are card-carrying members of the Dead Mam Club. I weirdly admire my fellow members of the club, who post heartfelt tributes to their deceased mothers. I watch all of this from a distance. My Mam died when I was ten years old, and Mother's Day is a weirdly numbing day of the year for me. It usually passes by without much note.

Except for this year, when I found myself naked from the waist up, getting ultrasound gunk rubbed on my tits, in the same exact hospital where my Mam underwent most of her breast cancer treatment. The sheer irony of spending Mother's Day getting checked to see if my breasts would be the death of me, just as they were for my Mam, was equal parts traumatic and absurd.

So, although I usually steer clear of social media on Mother's Day, I joined in this year. I joined in particularly to voice my support for People Before Profit (PBP) TD Gino Kenny's proposed motion, as a PBP member, on improved breast cancer screening, particularly for young women.

Gino's motion proposes publicly funded and run breast cancer screening programmes for all women from age forty, a revision of the criteria for access to genetic testing, guaranteed immediate access to diagnostics services for

assignments and course matters and they will be paying more attention to everything in their new surroundings. This should a) increase participation, b) increase voter knowledge, the first year and each year going forward, and c) reduce the obvious democratic deficit.

Of course, I understand that an incoming sabbatical team will want the summer to organise, and that sabbatical officers will want to take a year off of their studies that handily fits into the standard academic calendar, and that change isn't costless, this would likely require constitutional change and that can be difficult to organise. However, I would counter that it does not need to be the whole or even many of the sabbatical team and if the Student Union cannot find a sabbatical position that needs less preparation time, they could consider creating a new one.

Maybe you could get some of the advantages by just making more of the class rep elections, especially the first-year ones, but I think it would be better to have something more substantive, and better prepared than your average first-year class rep candidate to vote on. Maybe a part-time Sabbatical Officer position that has an express focus on first years and their problems. Maybe it's an election that is only open to first-years to vote on. The idea is to introduce the first years to student politics as quickly and as cleanly as possible and to give them a significant voice as early in their college career as possible. First-year can be a very tough time and feeling like more of a stakeholder in the Students' Union may encourage a struggling student to seek help there.

Sometimes I think about disappointment and how it's become the false equivalence of gratitude. Those situations where we can be disturbed by a particular outcome but don't allow it to linger too much because 'we have so much to be grateful for' or because 'it could've been worse'. I think that's a false equivalence. It's reductionist and does not allow for the nuanced array of feelings we experience. I think positive thoughts don't have to be a cognitive disservice. They can exist in their own right and not as a shield.

Sometimes acknowledging some uncomfortable emotions can be essential to detect other uplifting emotions. Emotions hardly exist in isolation, they exist in a myriad of other things. That's why I think telling people not to simply not 'be', in relation to emotions, doesn't give account for so many other factors. How does one react to injustice or pain? Stoicism is not a realistic expectation nor is it the more intellectual option but it somehow is treated as if it is.

I wouldn't enter the realm of extremism or advocate for people to act out harmful or dangerous thoughts based on supposed emotions. I'm just more interested in how we interact with unpleasant feelings. I've heard jealousy described as a harmful emotion and I agree. I think it can be harmful because of the effect

young women at risk of breast cancer, and access to a triple assessment for young women who present with possible breast cancer.

It's the inclusion of young women in the proposed motion that really stood out to me. My mother was thirty years old when she was diagnosed. She died by thirty-three. She fought for her diagnoses for years; her GP dismissed her concerns entirely. Eventually, she found herself on the waitlist for a breast screening. My Mam had an administration job in the hospital and not long after her appointment was made, a matron rang her work number to chastise her - to put it kindly - for taking up an appointment in the clinic that she didn't need. Admittedly, dying is an impressive way of saying I-told-you-so, but every day I carry around the weight of knowing that an earlier diagnosis might have saved her life.

I have been told by every doctor I have ever seen that I'm severely high-risk. I went to my GP in November, explained I was having increased pain and she sent me to get checked. It took four months until I was seen, they gave me an ultrasound, checked my existing fibroadenoma (which, for those of you who have not had their breasts medically fondled, are benign lumps in the breast, common in young women. I think I have about eight, at last count) and told me I'm probably fine and to wait for a phone call. Of the several doctors I have seen over the years, some have been condescending, insisting that I'm too young to worry. Others have been kindly and considerate - and still insisted

UGLY FEELINGS

ADESEWA AWOBADEJO



JOY. Fear. Panic. Excitement. Emotions are a fundamental part of our lives. Be it in the peaceful streams of happiness or the raging currents of anger, they are felt and experienced. I'm really curious as to how we react to emotions in ourselves and in other people. What are the feelings that we deem permissible in ourselves? What are the emotions that might intimidate us in other people? What are the emotions we seek after and the very ones we shun?

It's easy to shy away from the more unpleasant emotions and perhaps not have the language for them. However, it's one thing to shy away from ugly feelings and it's another thing to completely deny them. We can pretend they don't exist and omit them from conversations but I don't believe that that makes them less poignant. I think most people can relate to being told they shouldn't be jealous or angry or any of the emotions that would paint one to be immoral or a bad person. I think we have the impression that some emotions are completely evil and bare no moral serving and I don't know if I agree.

I personally hate the feeling of anger. It's a really taxing and consuming emotion but I think anger can manifest itself in various forms for many people. It isn't always visible, or explosive. It doesn't have to be an engulfing wave captivating anything in its immediacy. Sometimes it can be indistinguishable and or a still wave - indistinguishable to others but causing an impact nonetheless. I think anger in all its forms, like every emotion, should be treated with caution yet still acknowledged as an emotion and not treated as a litmus test for maturity or morality. I don't think it should be demonised either.

Sometimes I think about disappointment and how it's become the false equivalence of gratitude. Those situations where we can be disturbed by a particular outcome but don't allow it to linger too much because 'we have so much to be grateful for' or because 'it could've been worse'. I think that's a false equivalence. It's reductionist and does not allow for the nuanced array of feelings we experience. I think positive thoughts don't have to be a cognitive disservice. They can exist in their own right and not as a shield.

Sometimes acknowledging some uncomfortable emotions can be essential to detect other uplifting emotions. Emotions hardly exist in isolation, they exist in a myriad of other things. That's why I think telling people not to simply not 'be', in relation to emotions, doesn't give account for so many other factors. How does one react to injustice or pain? Stoicism is not a realistic expectation nor is it the more intellectual option but it somehow is treated as if it is.

I wouldn't enter the realm of extremism or advocate for people to act out harmful or dangerous thoughts based on supposed emotions. I'm just more interested in how we interact with unpleasant feelings. I've heard jealousy described as a harmful emotion and I agree. I think it can be harmful because of the effect

I'm too young to worry. I sat in a hospital room last week, while a nurse stressed to me how high risk I am; how I need to limit my caffeine or smoking or stress and be really careful...and then handed me a leaflet instructing me to get regular checks from when I'm forty-five. My Mam's ghost of thirty-three years old is sitting on my shoulder and laughing. I'm trying, like my Mam did, to be proactive. I'm demanding to be seen and to be taken seriously, and it feels utterly pointless.

Mammograms are not effective on younger women, due to the density of the younger breast tissue. This dense breast tissue, in conjunction with how common fibroadenoma are in young women, makes self-checks very difficult to effectively perform. While I appreciate that I have been afforded the opportunity for an ultrasound, it is a limited mode of screening. There is no process or routine for me; I'll just wait another year and tell my GP I'm in pain, and then wait four, or five, or seven months and go through the whole process again. The proposed PBP motion allows for access to a triple assessment for young women who present with possible breast cancer. The thought of not just having a singular test, of having a testing that is vigorous and accessible and actually considers young women would take such a weight off my chest (because that's where my tits are).

Globally, statistics are increasingly indicating that there needs to be further consideration of young women. Early

it can have, but perhaps jealousy can be used to our effect when we recognise the emotion and become more self-aware of our actions when it is present. In one instance this emotion, like hidden weeds, can be detrimental yet can also bud into flowers. It doesn't have to be a twisted and diabolical thing. Rather than being consumed and imagining the downfall of others, similar to disappointment, jealousy can be a motivator to work harder and to strive for better outcomes.

There are healthy ways to channel emotions. I don't think they need to be channelled in a destructive way. I don't think outbursts are the answer but I think people are allowed to feel natural emotions. People can learn how to deal and communicate with these emotions but not without acknowledging them or feeling shame because of them. I think it would make more sense to sit with the unpleasant emotion and see what it's teaching you. Sometimes emotions don't teach us anything, there is no hidden message and that's fine too - we can still see where the currents bring us or what the weeds grow into.

I love how nature is a perfect balance of imperfection. The ugly and absurd elements exist in tandem with the beautiful and everything in between. Nature presents an effortlessly balanced ecosystem. I wonder if we can find a more congruent balance in expressing our emotions and welcoming those of others.

It would be interesting to see what would happen at SU council if they did an MCQ at the end to determine who was paying attention.

Yours etc.
Hugh Dooley, News Editor, College Tribune

Dear Editor,

Michael Tuohy (opinion piece, University Observer, March 2nd) rather bizarrely tried to put the blame for the rise of the far right in Ireland on parties of the political centre and journalists. He made the outlandish claim, "Recent governments have done nothing bit encourage the rise of the Far Right in Ireland..."

He is correct that we are seeing small fringe groups emerging that spout conspiracy theories and some dangerous far-right theories. There is a responsibility on all in public life to challenge this extremism. But these fringe groups are deeply anti-establishment and like Mr Tuohy in his article, spend much of their time abusing Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Greens and the Labour Party. Members of all four of these parties have spoken out loudly against extremism, against fake news and online conspiracy theories, and in full support of the Gardaí when members of the force have been confronted with abuse and violence by small groups who have little respect for the State.

The rise of the anti-mask, anti-5g, conspiracy theorists of the far right has been facilitated in most instances by social media. The slow pace of the tech companies to address the spread of fake news and providing platforms to disinformation has been concerning. But questions also need to be asked of those who fuelled those conspiracy theorists, who spread the fake news and platformed them.

Gemma O'Doherty has been a leading proponent of a range of conspiracy theories for a number of years and this has culminated in her latest dangerous campaigns against Covid restrictions as well as engaging in racist and homophobic activity. Ms. O'Doherty sought to run for President of Ireland in November, 2018. She failed to secure a nomination and in a number of tweets, complained about Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael blocking her opportunities to contest. I know in the case of Fianna Fáil, this was because we viewed some of her opinions as dangerous and unsuitable for a potential occupant of Áras an Uachtaráin : the party did facilitate a number of independents to contest. The former journalist though was a regular speaker at Sinn Féin events and she was endorsed by a number of left wing politicians.

Among those who endorsed her was Sinn Féin Kildare North TD, Reads Cronin, who last year was also reprimanded by her party for a series of anti-Semitic and racist tweets. Two other Sinn Féin TDs, Martin Browne from Tipperary and Patricia Ryan from Kildare

EDITORIAL

There are two stories that have in the past week gained a large amount of coverage from the media and have been touched on in the pages of this paper, that need to be considered in connection with one another. The first is St. Patrick's Day anti-lockdown protests across the country, and the second is the 'Stop Asian Hate' hashtag which has been trending on social media after 8 people, 6 of whom were of Korean descent, were murdered in a mass shooting in Atlanta, USA. The hashtag has helped to shed at least some light on the vast amount of racial bigotry faced by Asian people, and not just at the hands of evil gunmen.

The common thread is that both racism towards, and mistrust of, Asians, and opposition to Covid public health measures are being used by the far-right to gain political power and influence. As is highlighted in Andrea Andres' cover

investigation, Covid's origin in China has sparked a huge amount of racism. This ignorance has been capitalised upon by Far Right actors. They are using claims that China attempted to "cover-up" the virus. Some are promoting conspiracy theories about Covid being a bio-weapon. More still have taken to the racist accusation the "weird diet" of Chinese people is to blame, as if pork, beef, or chicken meat could never be connected to a pandemic.

As for the Covid denial, it is obvious that outfits like the National Party and the Irish Freedom Party (chaired by UCD's own Dolores Cahill) have taken the fear, neglect, and desperation many people are enduring during the rolling lockdowns and are weaponising it into a mobilising force against not just pandemic restrictions, but also immigrants, LGBTQ rights, and a plethora of

communities whose influence can be attributed to "Globalists". While lockdown has been difficult for many of us, and there are important political questions about what could have been done better and what should be done going forward, the use of this situation to capitalise on bigotry, stupidity, and hate must be strongly opposed.

We at the University Observer stand against racism, lies, ignorance, and all forms of bigotry, and are perturbed by the hate and stupidity gaining traction at the moment.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir/Madam,

Reading your article 'UCDSU should debate more motions' (16/02/21), I was reminded of a moment in the most recent student council session which highlighted the issue depressingly well.

The chair of SU council noticed that a class representative had their virtual hand raised. Excitedly, Torris asked whether this student had something to contribute to the rather timid "discussion".

Much to the chagrin of the class representative in question they were forced to admit that they were not paying attention and believed there was a vote taking place.

While a solitary class rep sleeping at their post is hardly newsworthy, it points to the attitudinal issue of voting for every motion no matter what. That said class rep was voting 'aye' without knowing what was at stake is concerning to say the least.

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Yours etc.
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Dear [Editor],

Are RTÉ operating an agent or political provocateur agenda to avoid answering the following questions: 1. What has happened the money they got from the purchase of part of its lands at Montrose? and 2. Why are its top broadcasters still earning near to half a million euros a year? Come on government, lets have an enquiry into all of this immediately.

Yours faithfully,

Edward Mahon, Roebuck Castle.

Letters, corrections, and clarifications pertaining to articles published in this newspaper and online are welcomed and encouraged. Letters should be addressed to: The Editor, University Observer, UCD Student Centre, Belfield, Dublin 4. Correspondence may be sent to editor@universityobserver.ie



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A NEARLY-SERIOUS LEAGUE OF IRELAND SEASON PREVIEW

RONÁN DALY

Ronán Daly takes a light-hearted look at the upcoming season for the Premier Division, looking at the off-season developments and future perspectives of each club



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: EDDIE LENNON

DOMESTIC football returned with the President's Cup on the 12th of March between Shamrock Rovers and Dundalk, with the Louth Club winning the annual curtain-raiser for the 3rd time in the last 6 years on penalties. A hotly contested 1-1 draw saw Rovers defender Liam Scales' score a Bergkampsque goal and Dundalk new boy Sonni Nattestad score and receive a red card. On top of the Faroe Islands international's red card, there were also 6 yellow cards in a game that was supposed to be a friendly, showing early on that these two are ready to continue the rivalry which has gripped Irish football fans for the last two seasons. With the league season commencing on the 19th of March, let's take a look at the 10 teams competing in this year's LOI.

Shamrock Rovers
Whether Dundalk fans like to admit it or not, Shamrock Rovers are the Champions of Ireland (even if it was a shortened season). When Rovers weren't busy losing what many Hoops faithfuls saw as God's gift to the world, Jack Byrne, they were raiding both local and title rivals for their best players. 2019 PFAI young player of the year Danny Mandriou switched north for south Dublin joining from Bohs and Dundalk duo Sean Hoare and Sean Gannon also make the switch to Tallaght stadium. Rovers may have lost their firepower in midfield by losing both Byrne and Aaron McEneff, but Stephen Bradley's men are still the side to beat this season.

Prediction: 1st

Bohemian FC

"The hipsters" of domestic football have had quite the resurgence under Keith Long, and their 2nd place finish last season was their highest in a decade. While their fans like to think of themselves as 'the big club', they lost the highly rated Mandriou to Rovers, following Dylan Watts and Roberto Lopes who have made the same switch from north to south in previous years. They also have to contend without 2020 PFAI young player of the year, Danny Grant, who made the switch

to Huddersfield. Keith Long has more than proven his ability to cope with big losses. Despite some of these difficult results, Bohs are still one of the most exciting teams in the league who will no doubt be a joy to watch again this season.

Prediction: 3rd

Dundalk FC

The Lilywhites have dominated Irish football for 7 years now, winning 5 titles in the last 7 seasons. Chairman Bill Hulsizer seems to have had the strange revelation that the best way to win the title back off Rovers is to let two of your best players join them. However, the appointment of footballing director Jim Magilton seems to have steadied some of the off-field turmoil at Oriel Park. The FAI cup winners have looked outside of Ireland in the off-season, bringing in 8 new players, from 7 different counties and 6 of which have never played in the league before. Promising signs from their President's Cup win show the Louth side aren't quite ready to relinquish control on Irish football just yet.

Prediction: 2nd

Sligo Rovers

The surprise package of last year's LOI campaign was that Liam Buckley's men manage to secure a 4th place finish and European football while playing some attractive football along the way. They seem to have this weird complex where they think that anyone else in the league knows that their full name is Sligo Rovers and not just Sligo, even trying to convince Shamrock Rovers fans that they are the "real rovers". Sligo have some of the most promising young players in the league in Ed McGinty and John Mahon and their star striker Romeo Parkes has returned after a year absence from the Showgrounds and they'll be looking to build on a successful 2020 campaign.

Prediction: 5th

Waterford FC

A team that looked full of promise after they finished 4th in 2018 having been promoted the previous season. Losing out on a European spot on the final day last season and having their 2019 European adventures cancelled because they seemingly forgot they were actually a new club formed in 2017 and therefore could not get a European license yet have hurt the club. What was previously a well-funded squad with a lot of promise now looks like one of the most mediocre squads in the league. Veterans Daryl and Brian Murphy should add some experience to the team, but it could be a tricky campaign for the only club left representing Munster in the premier division.

Prediction: 9th (stay up via play-off)

St Patricks Athletic

Stephen O'Donnell's first full season in management can best be described as mediocre after a 6th place finish last season. The former Dundalk captain has adopted a transfer policy of signing all his old mates that he used to play with in Oriel park, with John Mountney and Paddy Barrett joining Pats after Robbie Benson had linked up with his old midfield partner the year before. On paper O'Donnell has put together a really solid group of players with the likes of Chris Forrester and Lee Desmond also in the squad. If he can get them to be as good on grass it could be an enjoyable season for Pats fans.

Prediction: 4th

Derry City

After a brilliant campaign in 2019 that saw Derry finish 4th and qualify for Europe, 2020's 7th place finish brought the Candystripes back down to earth. Usually, even when things are bad on Bogside, they can rely on the league cup which they have won a record number of times to lift spirits. However, the FAI felt it was best to try to make lockdown as miserable as possible for Derry fans by cancelling last year's competition. Fan-favourite David Parkhouse has returned after a successful loan spell in 2019, and they've also added Daniel Lafferty from Rovers and Will Patching from Dundalk to the ranks. If Declan Devine gets them playing the energetic football they played in 2019 Derry could easily go for a top 4 spot once again.

Prediction: 6th

Finn Harps

While those of us who are fans of Ireland's domestic league miss the matchday experience, you would be hard-pressed to find many of us who miss a 3-hour minimum bus journey to Ballybofey for an 8 pm kick-off in early March or October. Ollie Horgan is usually the first person to downplay Harps chances of survival every season but when it comes to relegation dogfights, there are very few managers in the country who are as experienced. Harps stayed up via the play-offs in 2019 and overtook Shelbourne on the final day of last to finish 8th, keeping Harps up without needing a play-off. They've kept hold of a majority of the players who kept them up last year and you'd fancy them to be a stubborn outfit once again this season.

Prediction: 7th

Drogheda United

Newly promoted Drogheda have had to contend with their noisy neighbours dominating Irish football for the last 7 years. A 3-year absence from the league,

suffering play-off heartbreak twice in the process, has seen manager Tim Clancy build a solid squad of both young and experienced players. They still use the Lourdes hospital's wi-fi, and much like Oriel park their ground is stuck in the '80s but they'll be looking to avoid relegation for the first time in 3 premier division campaigns. Tim Clancy has developed a squad more than capable of doing so, with exciting young players such as Conor Kane and David Odumosu as well as adding experienced players like Dane Massey, Gary Deegan and Dinny Corcoran.

Prediction: 8th

Longford Town

Longford only managed a 4th place finish in last year's first division but that didn't stop Daire Doyle's team from winning promotion via the play-offs. Incredibly, Longford have got 5 Aaron's in their squad for the upcoming season, despite there being no evidence to prove that having so many Aarons will help their survival chances. Predicting Longford to head straight back to the first division isn't a comment on the quality of their squad, they have a number of high-calibre players like Aodh Dervin, Robert Manley and Lee Steacy, whom a number of premier division clubs have tried to sign in recent seasons. One of the Aarons is highly rated youngster Aaron Bolger who is on loan from Cardiff City. Inexperience may cost Longford in the end but there is still quality in this squad.

Prediction: 10th

MEYLER OPTIMISTIC AHEAD OF UCD A.F.C SEASON OPENER

CAHAL MCAULEY

Cahal McAuley speaks to UCD Manager Andy Meyler ahead of the Students' campaign opener at home against Athlone



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: CHRISTINE COFFEY

"We have a good group, we have ambition to at least do what we did last year so we'll see where that takes us."

UCD Association Football Club will begin their Airtricity League First Division campaign at the UCD Bowl against Athlone Town on March 26th, as the students look to return to the Premier Division at the second time of asking. UCD finished in third place last season as their campaign culminated in a devastating extra-time defeat against Longford Town in the play-offs last October.

The students face a difficult task to launch a similar promotion push in the coming season, as they will

compete in a strong first division line-up which includes League of Ireland heavyweights Cork City and Shelbourne, who drop down from the Premier Division.

UCD AFC has had mixed results in pre-season with a 2-1 win over newly-promoted Premier Division Longford Town, followed by a 3-3 draw with Bray Wanderers, and 2-0 defeats against Shamrock Rovers, Bohemians, and St. Patrick's Athletic; respectable score-lines against some of the strongest teams in the country.

UCD boss Andy Meyler has been satisfied with what he's seen in the pre-season campaign as he prepares to lead the students into his second First Division campaign as manager. "Overall, very satisfied but pre-season is pre-season it's about getting shape and tactics, it's all about these things. You're not too worried about the results in the games particularly."

It's been a busy off-season in terms of transfers at the Bowl with four new arrivals to the squad. The students have brought in defender Sam Todd from Finn Harps, and midfielders Donal Higgins from Galway United, Adam Lennon from Athlone Town, and Sean Brennan on loan from Southampton.

Although UCD AFC has reinforced the squad with new players, they have also lost a wealth of experience with the departures of long-serving centre-half Josh

"It's a strong league, stronger than last year. There's three full-time teams in the First Division, I'm not sure if that's ever happened before so we'll see where we go."

Collins, who has signed for Waterford FC, and striker Yoyo Mahdy who has been snapped up by Shelbourne.

Sam Todd has looked a capable replacement for Collins in the heart of the UCD defence, but the students may struggle without the attacking threat of Mahdy who scored 36 goals during his time with the club and left at ninth place on the club's all-time goalscoring charts. Mahdy and Colm Whelan formed a devastating partnership in last season's campaign as they netted 30 of UCD's 44 league goals. However, Meyler is confident that the rest of the team can replace the goals lost by this departure.

"I want all of us to step up and fill the gap. We probably didn't get enough goals from certain quarters of the team last year. We certainly didn't get goals from set-pieces and we'll look to improve on that, but we'll also look to improve on the return from our midfield players and our full-backs that got in attacking situations last year."

"We defend as a team and we attack as a team, so a player here or there won't make any difference to our structure." UCD ended last season as the most dangerous attacking team in the league but were hampered by one of the leakiest defences in the division, shipping 29 goals, one more than eighth-placed Shamrock Rovers II.

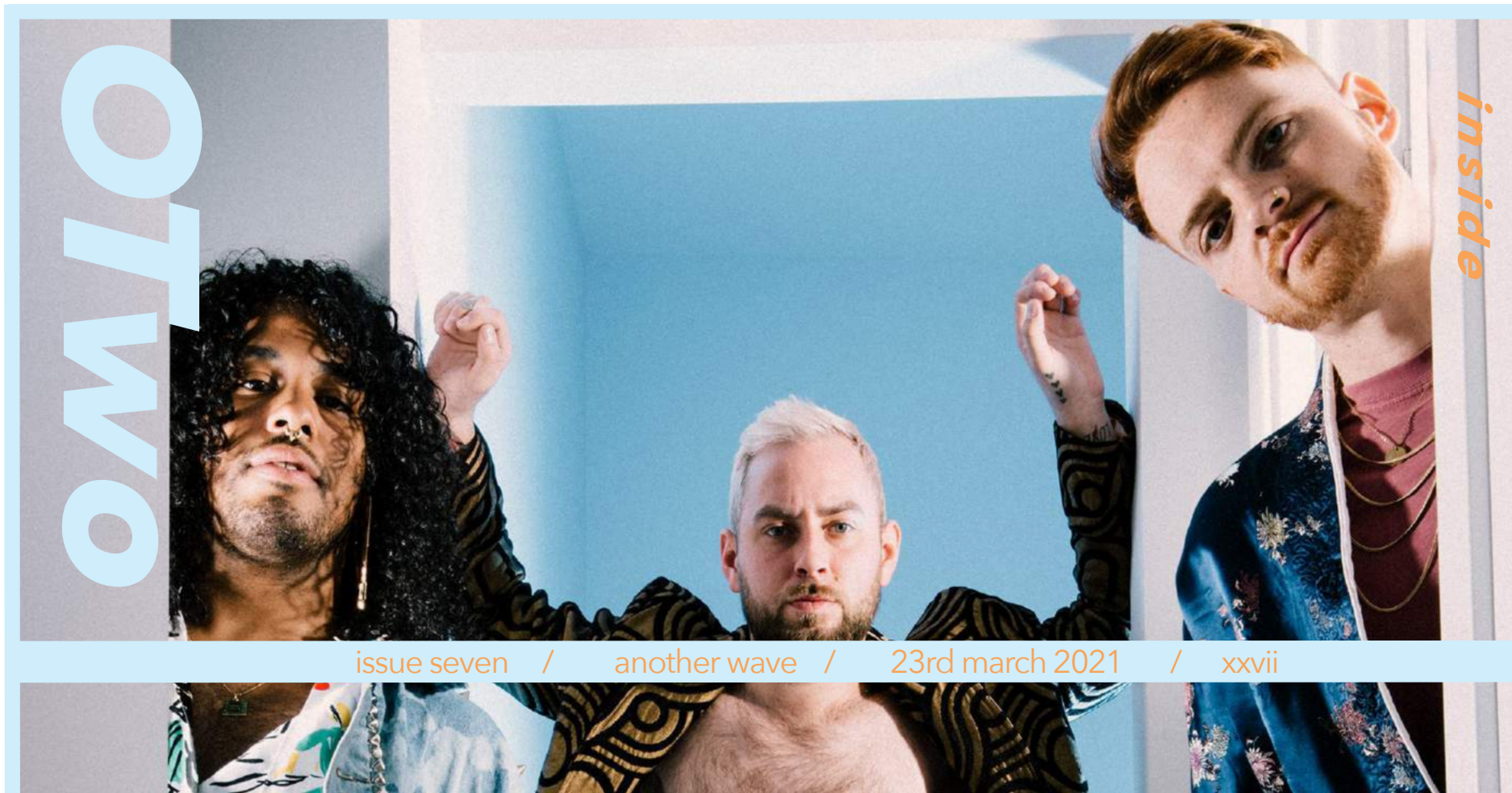
The students will struggle to compete for promotion if this problem is not addressed, something which Meyler acknowledges; "I think we need to find a better balance to the play between defence and attack, we need to concede less goals obviously and we've been working on that in pre-season about where those goals come from last year. The defensive side is the focus for us."

It will be a difficult task to tighten up at the back and replace the goals of Mahdy, but if the students have been able to work on these sufficiently in pre-season, they certainly have the quality to challenge for promotion once again.

Meyler recognises the quality of this season's competition but believes that qualifying for the playoffs for a second successive season is a realistic goal to set. "First of all, the aim is at least to get into the play-offs and after that promotion."

"It's a strong league, stronger than last year. There's three full-time teams in the First Division, I'm not sure if that's ever happened before so we'll see where we go."

"We have a good group, we have ambition to at least do what we did last year so we'll see where that takes us."



Letter from the editor

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Pictured Above // Band members Skyler

Acord, Josh Manuel, & Tyler Carter from ISSUES

Credit // ISSUES

OTwo Interviews

Skyler Acord from ISSUES

Isabella Ambrosio

Isabella Ambrosio sits down to dissect ISSUES's new instrumental release, 'Beautiful Oblivion' with bassist Skyler Acord.

"That second opening band has... issues," my stepmom had commented when leaving the House of Blues in Chicago in 2013, poking fun at their name. The headliner for the show had been Sleeping with Sirens, with ISSUES as one of the openers.

I remember looking over and laughing, "Yeah, but they're good issues."

"Alright, Bella, whatever floats your boat."

Since 2013, ISSUES has gone on to take the hard rock scene by storm, offering a blend of R&B, jazz and metalcore, with a keen focus on genre-bending that's focal to their identity. Their uniqueness served them well, winning awards such as Artist of the Year in 2015 at the Alternative Press Music Awards (AMPAs) and winning Skyler Acord the award for Best Bassist in 2016 at the APMA's. Their 2016 release 'Headspace' peaked at #1 on the US Billboard Alternative and US Billboard Hard Rock charts. They've toured extensively, put out cutting edge music and have remained unbelievably respectable in recent controversies.

ISSUES released 'Beautiful Oblivion' in 2019, an album full of hard riffs, funky basslines and instrumental breaks with great vocals. But after a controversy in 2020, vocalist Tyler Carter was kicked out from the band and ISSUES rereleased 'Beautiful Oblivion' as an instrumental. There were no vocals on the album, and it showed ISSUES in a brand-new light. Their neo-funk, R&B influences radiated through the release, connecting hardcore choruses with melodic verses. The entire album felt cohesive and nothing felt overdone or repetitive. It was entirely stripped and mixed to be heard as an instrumental, and it was done incredibly well.

Skyler Acord entered the Zoom meeting room with a genuine smile and a bass in his lap. The conversation was ridiculously easy at first - he was inquisitive of why I had an American accent instead of an Irish one. He wanted to know about me, my degree, how I ended up in Ireland. It felt like I was talking to an old friend, small questions being asked back and forth, including how I started listening to ISSUES. I later wonder if my candidness and willingness to answer his questions influenced the way he answered mine. He had plenty to say, so I jumped into the questions after a ten-minute conversation about life with him.

I queried why ISSUES decided to release an instrumental album in a music scene where lyrics are considered to be vital to the song. "ISSUES is kind of a funny band" Acord responded, "Because I feel like most bands have a primary songwriter. And everybody kind of follows suit - so somebody will write the bass, somebody will write the drum part, somebody will write the guitar part, and somebody will be writing the songs with a co writer. But the way ISSUES writes is super collaborative, and I don't mean the band just writes the instrumentals all together and then Tyler [Carter] will throw his stuff on it. We all wrote completely integrated together. So, I would have an idea on the guitar part, AJ [Rebollo] would have an idea on the drum part, maybe [Carter] would have an idea on the drum part because he was a drummer. We would all have plenty to say about the vocals. It made sense because of a couple things: it made sense because we've always wanted to do an instrumental release because we align ourselves with the progressive community, a lot of our fans don't, but musically those are the bands we like and look up to. So, it made sense because they do that, and the instrumental is so important. Also, with losing [Carter], and in such a mysterious way... one way to protect the legacy from all of that controversy was to put out this instrumental thing we're all so proud of... It kind of made me feel good about ISSUES again."

This prompted me to ask about ISSUES and their roots. I asked where their neo-soul, funk, and djent influences came from, and whether said influences were implemented consciously. Acord kept telling me, 'great question', before easily sliding into the answer; "It was conscious. My brother, who many ISSUES fans know as Scout, and in the producer world, many people know him as Lophiile. He's not in the band, but he's my twin brother so he's always involved. Like I'll text him, 'bro, help me'... The whole thing was his idea. So, Tyler [Carter], after Woe, Is Me dissolved, went up to [Lophiile] and was like,

"So, now when someone plays a low, bendy one-string riff, it's like 'oh, that sounds nu-metal' as opposed to like 'that sounds like those bands that used to mix jazz, death metal', you know what I'm saying?"

'bro, we should start a band. What's poppin' now?'. And [Lophiile] at the point was like, 'currently, I like R&B, R&B vocals, melodic hardcore and djent'. So, the EP was an experiment to mix those styles in different ways. The self-titled was a manifestation of our favourite examples of the EP.

"The EP was literally every song we had at that point. There was no throw-away tracks. Everything that had been written had been released on the EP. I came in a little bit late for that, so I didn't have a whole lot of input on the writing, but I did play bass on it. I always say I'm a day one member, even if I wasn't official," he laughs. "So, yeah, it was a conscious decision and it ended up sounding cool. And it kind of developed into a true fusion. 'Cause I think there's a big difference in the fusion genre: say like, a jazz song with some rock elements versus fusion jazz, which is jazz and rock truly fusion-ed into its own thing. Same with nu-metal. For years, nu-metal, like early Slipknot stuff had like a weird hip-hop part, into a death metal part, into a jazz part, but it was technically 'nu-metal'. But it took years for it to turn into its own thing. So, now when someone plays a low, bendy one-string riff, it's like 'oh, that sounds nu-metal' as opposed to like 'that sounds like those bands that used to mix jazz, death metal', you know what I'm saying? So, that was our ultimate goal with 'Beautiful Oblivion', and I think it's the closest we've ever gotten to a true fusion. Because it's not necessarily that there's an R&B part and there's like a djent part, instead there's like an R&B riff."

From there, I mentioned that ISSUES songs are catchy, yet very riff heavy. And I asked him for the thought process behind that. He looks down at his bass before answering; "Actually, a funny story, the whole EP was based on solo Tyler Carter's material. Like, 'Love, Sex, Riot' was a pretty good song, over a really awful beat, same with like, 'Her Monologue'. Like these were all really crappy, early dubstep like," he then proceeds to imitate the sound, making me laugh, "Like really awful beats, cause [Carter] didn't really know who he was as an artist, but he wanted to write songs. So, he was just writing songs with anything he could. And basically, what we did was we took the vocals and ripped it off of the beat, so all we had was the vocals."

"In the computer software, you literally have a single track with the vocals. And then you build out the song under it, literally under it. So, you can have the vocal playing while you're writing the riff. So basically, that was the formula of the whole EP and the best songs on our self-titled, so the songs all of our fans like, 'Mad at Myself' and I want to say, my favourite, 'Tears on the Runway' and 'Never Lose Your Flames', even though it was a pop-punk-y thing. All of them were Tyler Carter solo songs that we just flipped into ISSUES songs. And 'Beautiful Oblivion' was basically, 'okay, all of our best and favourite songs were written that way. Why don't we just do the whole album like that?' So, we wrote the top lines to be as catchy of a pop song as possible, and then arranged the riffs."

This led me to my next question, wondering what the songwriting process usually looks like for ISSUES. Acord had a smile on his face as he recalled the beginnings of 'Beautiful Oblivion'. "How 'Beautiful Oblivion' started actually... initially, no one was sure of where we were

going to go. And I just had a vision to do the R&B thing a lot heavier, like a lot more R&B stuff and neo-soul since we had started thinking about [the album] in 2015. And 'To Pimp a Butterfly' [by Kendrick Lamar] was about to come out and the climate was very neo-soul, which I was super stoked about since that's what I grew up on.

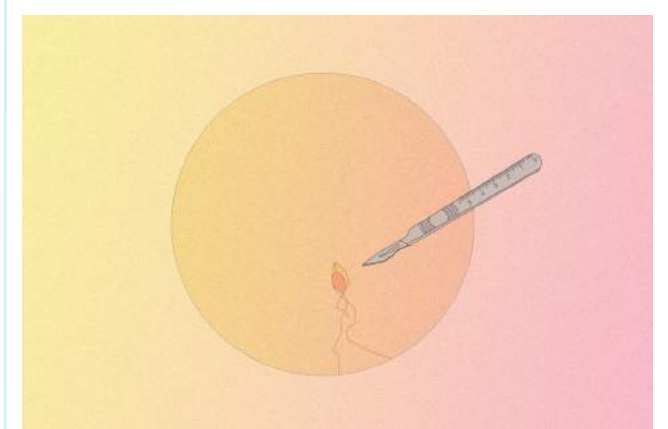
"I flew to LA and had a bunch of initial writing sessions where I would make beats and write songs with writers who were way better than me and they were all R&B people. So, this woman Ivana [Nwokike] from this group VanJess (a Nigerian-American R&B group), was one of them. We wrote 'No Problem' together, well, mostly her" he chuckles. "And this other guy, Jesse Boykins III, what a name, very elegant - so we wrote 'Here's to You' together. And those two initially looked nothing like the final product. So, it was just R&B beats. Like, in 'No Problem', it has that piano loop, right? So, basically, the verse with the bass, the piano, and the programmed drums - that was originally just the entire song. And she [Nwokike] wrote the entire song over that. And that's the best example of it, really. You can hear it, as the song goes on, all of the stupid ideas I had like, 'let's throw a riff here' or 'let's do this' or whatever, and it unfolds as if it were writing itself," he practically giggles this time. "And 'Here's to You', same idea, except the loop was way weirder, it was just like the intro, the weird harpsichord thing for four minutes straight, and then we riffed it and arranged it. So, it takes a lot of imagination when you hear early ISSUES demos."

At the time of the interview in November 2020, America had been dealing with mass protests due to police brutality incidents since the beginning of 2020. 'Blue Wall', from their 2016 release *Headspace*, addresses the police brutality occurring at the time. I had asked what the recent events had meant to him as an artist who had written the song four years beforehand and have it be just as relevant now, if not more. "Well, honestly, all of the stuff that happened from George Floyd on, everyone was just stuck in their house, forced to look at it. That's the difference. The nature of his death is no different than the stuff that has been happening for uh" - he jokingly checks an imaginary watch on his wrist - "400 years, or so. So, I guess the most surprising thing to me, was the fact that frankly, white people cared. And to put out a song that was directly addressing it, I guess four years before it became relevant to white people. It kind of framed how the paradigm had shifted, because when we had put that song out, it was not a popular opinion to have, and people were mad..."

Acord and I begin to discuss the history and evolution of genres. "The one thing I've noticed is every genre has a cultural lifespan... I think rock has been so complacent for so long that an idea like that is basically going to fight, not necessarily the rock scene, but the mainstream white culture at large. So, that's why it didn't get received very well. And now, after a few years, mainstream white culture has shifted because it's hard to ignore the George Floyd thing, right? And even though none of this is surprising for me, I've been watching, every time it's happened, it's never felt any different than George Floyd... One of the biggest takeaways, personally, from putting that song out in 2016 is the fact that, obviously me, and Tyler [Carter], Michael [Bohn] and the rest of the band have gone through so much, good and bad, and one of the things I will always be thankful for from them, is backing up the coloured folk in the band and being down to do that song... 'Black and blue don't get along/ Blue just wants them dead and gone' - that's me, just putting that out there."

"Their hearts weren't as connected to that issue, as obviously me or AJ, who see it every day and relate empathetically naturally to the victims. And that's something that white people aren't naturally going to have, because they don't experience it. And what they did, that I think any white person could do, is listen. That's all anybody has to do... They listened and they trusted enough to put that song out, and I will always be thankful for them for believing in the vision. Because they hold the microphone. And the fans that did latch onto that song and did appreciate it, I definitely appreciate them, big time. Because there was definitely a big backlash among the rock community. So, if they didn't stick up for us, it kind of would have been a bummer. Basically, what happened was it created a discourse. I think that people that disagreed with that song's message didn't understand that there were people in the rock scene that had a different view, and it kind of shattered their bubble a little bit and it shocked them that there were people who were a part of this scene to have a conversation with in the comment sections. And then hopefully, because repetition makes something real, so down the line, when George Floyd happened, they're going to be paying a little more attention."

We chatted about his origins with playing bass and it became clear to me why ISSUES is as successful as they are. They're filled with passionate musicians with an impeccable attention to detail who aren't afraid to push boundaries when it comes to genre and the music they put out. Skyler Acord's openness and candidness about all aspects of ISSUES was something to admire, and it brings a brand new meaning to an already impeccable instrumental album.



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1500s Court to Bridgerton

Sinead Keating

Perhaps it's women reclaiming a historically restricting undergarment and making it "fetch", or maybe it's merely a Tiktok trend, regardless, Sinead Keating looks at the history of the corset and how it has come to be outerwear in 2021.

The corset has been making headlines recently thanks to Bridgerton, a regency era drama and one of the most popular shows on Netflix last year. It spawned the 'Regency-core' trend on TikTok. Online searches for corsets and elbow-length gloves have spiked as the trend aims to recreate the clothes, hair and makeup of the time in a modern way, like wearing a corset with jeans. The corset has been on the rise in recent years - in 2019 Kim Kardashian made headlines for her extreme hourglass figure at the Met Gala that she achieved using a tight corset. The role the corset has played has evolved hugely over the centuries.

The first popular form of a corset originated in Italy and was introduced by Catherine de Medici to the French Courts in the 16th century, where it took hold. Named 'stays', it was a funnel-shaped undergarment that gave women the appearance of a straight, smooth torso with breasts pushed up to create a contrasting roundness at the top. This silhouette complimented the wide cone-shaped skirts of the time, but the primary purpose of stays was to support the bust and improve women's posture. It restricted bending at the waist by causing the wearer to hold their back straight. It did not cause breathing discomfort and is largely considered by historians to have been comfortable and supportive to wear. In the later sixteenth century, whalebone was introduced.

Whalebone stays were more rigid than earlier fabric stays, allowing them to be laced tighter and as such, a desire for a smaller waist began to emerge. This was halted by the empire waistline coming into fashion in the 1790s, where the skirt begins right below the bust and flows straight past the waist.

The corset re-emerged thirty years later as the empire line faded, just before Queen Victoria took the British throne. During this time the industrial revolution allowed for the mass production of clothing, the corset included. Women in all aspects of society were able to access a corset, be it bought or homemade. The Victorian corset was an hourglass shape rather than the straight-edged cone of earlier centuries. Spirals of steel held the shape and a busk became a popular way to fasten the corset rather than lacing. The busk is a thin, straight piece of steel with hooks on one side and holes on the other, not unlike a modern bra clasp.

The early Victorian corset was worn with large shoulders and cushioned hips in dresses to emphasise the hourglass shape and draw attention to the small waist. As larger shoulders went out of style, corsets were tied tighter to continue achieving the same definitive shape. A tiny waist was seen as desirable by men when choosing a wife, so women aimed to appear ever slimmer. The wearing of very tight corsets, known as 'tightlacing' became popular in the 1840s, giving women tiny waists at the expense of discomfort and severely restricted breathing capacities. The rise in religious morality in the late 19th century spawned arguments against tightlacing. Vocal men described corsets as a dangerous evil- "promoting promiscuous views of female bodies and superficial dalliance into fashion whims." They promoted the idea that tight corsets would bend the ribcage and rearrange internal organs, potentially causing weakness and damaging fertility. Female expression in fashion was discouraged by the voices of 'moral decency' which denounced the claims of the beauty, health and good posture brought by corsets as pure vanity.

Tightlacing declined in use and in 1873 the early feminist Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward wrote "Burn up the corsets! ...and heave a sigh of relief, for your emancipation I assure you, from this moment has begun". Despite her writings,

the corset remained the norm until the early 20th century, when women began to wear the girdle. Unlike a corset that focuses on compressing the waist, a girdle flattens the hips, achieving the straighter figure of the time. Mary Phelps Jacobs patented the first bra in 1917 which could be worn with a girdle on the lower torso, reducing the need to wear a corset for support. Now with more practical and comfortable garments available to offer support and shaping, the corset fell out of favour. A shortage of steel due to World Wars I and II led to women being asked not to buy corsets. After WWII the availability of metal led to the underwired bra, rather than a resurgence in the corset, although many older women still wore corsets.

Feminists and civil rights advocates launched the Women's Liberation movement with a protest at the Miss America pageant in 1968. Central to the protest was a bin painted to read "freedom trash can" into which they threw bras, corsets, girdles and other 'feminine' items. They described these as "instruments of female torture" that were enforcing femininity. The protest received worldwide attention and the burning of bras was an icon attributed to the movement. Carol Hanisch, one of the organisers of the protest, commented "I often say that if they had called us 'girdle burners', every woman in America would have run to join us". This implied that the media chose to focus on the casting-aside of the much-appreciated bra as opposed to the more uncomfortable and restrictive garments like girdles and corsets in order to prevent women from being drawn to support the movement. Parallels were drawn between the women at this protest and Vietnam war protesters who burned that draft cards, which gave weight to the movement.

Over time, the bra became the daily undergarment of choice and girdles morphed into the contemporary shapewear often saved for occasions. From the 1960s, corsets were largely confined to fetish fashion, with occasional appearances in high fashion. The rise of the internet allowed for niche fashion trends like the corset to grow among cosplayers, boudoir models and people interested in historical fashion. The huge popularity of period dramas has brought the Victorian hourglass corset back into the mainstream, this time as an item worn by choice by people who balance the values of comfort and unrestricted movement with appearances and style.

Above: *Emily Elizabeth*
 Model: *Emily Elizabeth*
 Photographs: *Emily Elizabeth*
 Stylist: *Emily Elizabeth Sewing*
 Photo Editor: *Nurina Iman Nizam*

Emily Elizabeth Sewing

Ellie McCreanor

Emily is a UK based designer who is driven by recycling and reusing second hand and vintage materials in her pieces. She has been sewing from a young age and has recently started making her corsets and selling them on her Depop @emilyash02 and her Etsy shop Emily Elizabeth Sewing. She plans on furthering her brand with sustainability in mind whilst studying textiles and fashion at University.

The Masked World: James Merry

Ellen Duggan

Ellen Duggan unravels the beauty and importance of James Merry's work.

As our relationships with masks continue to evolve and personalise a year into lockdown, one artist appears to have tackled their efficiency at hiding for the purposes of protection, yet revealing ourselves and our contexts in familiar ways.

James Merry is a 41-year-old embroidery artist and is currently Bjork's Co-Creative Director. He became popular through his hand embroidery on the logos of popular 90's sports clothing brands - interweaving brands such as Champion, Nike, Reebok and Fila with flora inspired by the Icelandic countryside, where he now resides. Of this process, Merry speaks about taking brands emblematic of urban environments and 'fertilising' them, emphasising with every stitch the sharp metaphor of mass-produced, industrial items of clothing instilled with the fertility of nature.

It appears that there is a moral to all of James Merry's work, which centres around our own attention: where it gravitates naturally and what we inclined to recognise due to its perceived societal importance. Upon first inspection of his reworked sportswear, the logo is familiar, clearly defined, and is where our attention may centre. However, slowly but surely, the moss delicately stitched atop the brand name comes clearly into view and the embroidered flowers rear their heads. Of this process, Merry states:

"The concept works precisely because of the socially constructed connotation it subverts: the perceived 'femininity' around anything floral or embroidered, which clashes with the mass-produced machine-made corporate logos".

His mask pieces, keeping with the central morality of his work, draw attention purposefully away from the centre of the face using a variety of fabrics. He achieves this through hand moulded and embroidered silicone perched on the wearer's forehead, or neon thread looped through the front teeth. It is never instantly visible where exactly Merry's masks fit onto the head, where they begin and the face ends, as it is never initially identifiable where precisely his inspiration heralds from. Much of his work appears as an exo-skeleton, or in Bjork's case at FJI rock festival, 2017, external vocal cords embroidered onto pleated tulle.

Merry studied Ancient Greek at Oxford University, an academic period in his life which he describes as a 'detour' from his current occupation. Coming from a family in which his mother is an artist and his father a vicar, it is easy to see the marriage of the merits of these occupations within Merry's work: the artistic nature to which he rebuilds the traditionally conservative and domestic associations with embroidery, with the devout dedication he applies to each of his handmade pieces, evident in his much spoken about sleepless nights in hotel rooms on tour with Bjork, stitching together his latest wearable creation for her next performance. When Tilda Swinton commissioned Merry to create a mask for her appearance at the Venice Film festival, he submerged himself in the history of the Venetian mask - creating a gold, handheld creation that gently warps and bends around her hand.

Art that may be worn and performed in, translating the internal into the language of the external audience - but which is also highly functional in allowing artists to be present yet slightly protected from the saturation of the camera flash- has never been so pivotally important, nor so beautiful.

Women and the fashion industry

Ellie McCreanor

The fashion industry is changing into a safer more accessible space for all women. Ellie McCreanor explores the issues in the industry that have led to this change and the women that are implementing them.

Some of the most iconic people in fashion are women, from Donatella Versace to Kate Moss. However, in recent years we have seen a move away from a fashion world of size zero models and weekly trends. Light has been shed on the lack of diversity and size inclusion within the industry, along with sexual harassment and abuse at the hands of photographers and those in positions of power. In an industry where only fourteen percent of fifty major brands are run by a female executive, regardless of its main market being women, women are now reclaiming their space and transforming it into a more inclusive and safe space to empower and embrace women.

The fashion industry has, for years, idealised the size zero body and the "nothing tastes as good as skinny feels" mentality. The Victoria's Secret fashion show was an event that truly glorified this notion, with models partaking in intense, low-calorie diets in preparation. The influence of this could be seen across the internet as videos began popping up everywhere with titles like "I Tried The Victoria Secret Model Diet And It BROKE ME". Victoria's Secret is not the sole culprit of this kind of behaviour. The idea of skinny as a main western beauty standard is embedded deep in the fashion industry. Though, this is starting to change. The women leading this change are women like Tess Holiday with her #effyourbeautystandards and

Nyome Nicholas, to name a couple.

In the summer of 2020, Instagram removed pictures of Nyome from its platform, claiming they breached its nudity policy. Nyome called them out for this as not only a black woman but as a plus-size black woman, providing comparisons with other images of thin, white women showing more flesh that were not removed. This, as a result, not only ignited an entire movement but changed Instagram's nudity policy in favour of larger bodies and black bodies. Furthermore, in January of this year, she was the cover girl for GlamourUK. Successes like this, however big or small, are huge wins for the body positivity movement in fashion. Ten years ago, Nyome would not have graced the cover of any UK fashion magazine.

Sexual misconduct is another major issue within the fashion industry that has come to light in recent years. The #MeToo movement in 2017 started a much-needed conversation about sexual assault in Hollywood and it would become clear that this applied to more than just the movie scene. The movement sparked large companies to make changes within their workforces, including Condé Nast, the publisher of Vogue. When allegations emerged about the sexual misconduct of photographers Mario Testino, Bruce Weber and Terry Richardson they issued a statement saying "In light of these allegations, we will not be commissioning any new work with them for the foreseeable future." The #MeToo movement has been a major step in the right direction to weed out sexual predators from the industry making it a safer space for everyone. The fashion industry clearly has a ways to go as five years of positive change is not enough to undo a lifetime of discrimination and misconduct. However, the changes are being made for, and by, women.

travel

The world from your bedroom

Nicola Kenny

Nicola Kenny discusses how she has expanded her world in the past year and offers escapism suggestions during current restrictions.

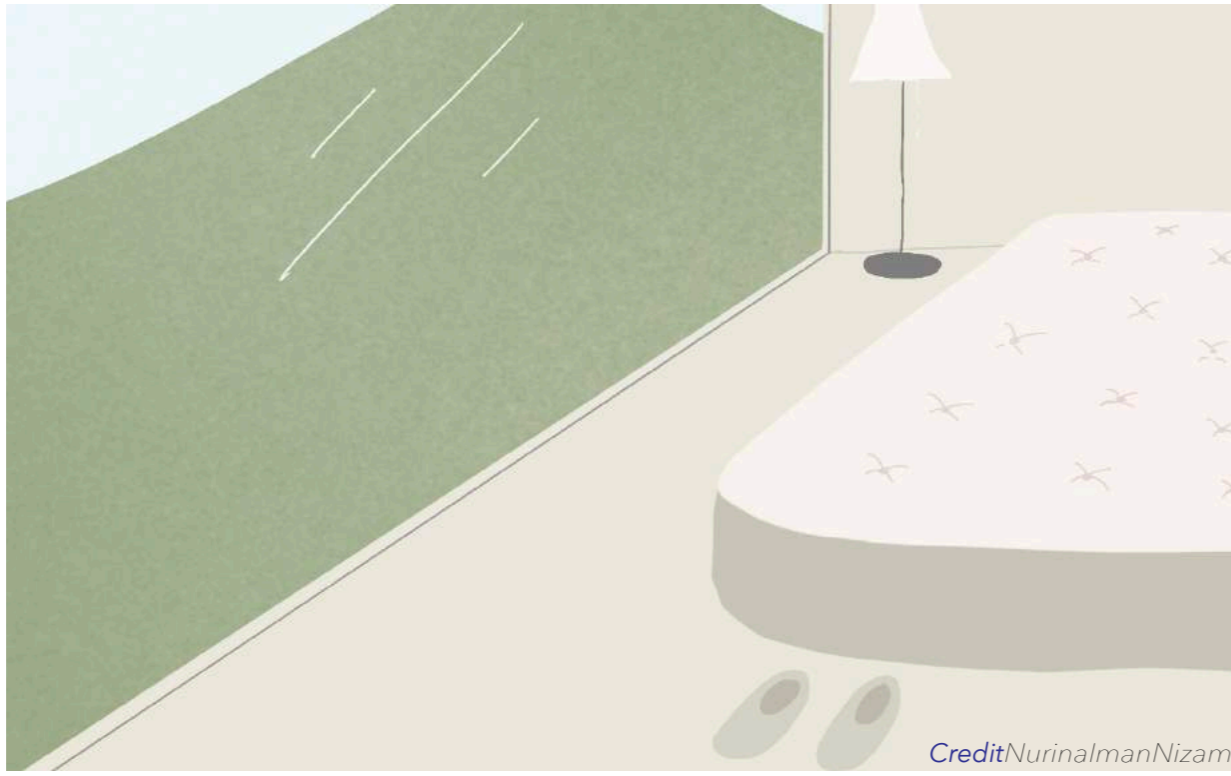
The Pandemic continues. And so too does our desire to travel and experience the world once again. As vaccines roll out, we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. But how do we quench our need for adventure and wanderlust in the waiting months? How can we find ways to connect with other people and cultures?

Escape with words

Travelling has opened me up to new ideas, people, and places. It has drawn me into unfamiliar territories of the mind. During the pandemic, reading has provided me with a similar sense of relief and escape. Reading is an adventure from the moment you pick up a text, sparking conversations and inspiring ideas. Reading transports us to new and exciting places.

There is a fantastic selection of Irish travel writers, namely Manchan Magan and Rostia Boland, who describe their thrilling global adventures in evocative and colourful detail. Reading Magan's *Truck Fever* and Boland's *Elsewhere*, we become a part of the extraordinary journeys they have taken across the world throughout their lives. Exploring different cultures and societies, their writings reflect how the experiences we have on our travels and the people we meet along the way can dramatically shape the course of our lives.

See the *Quirt* International Festival of Literature from the 21st to the 25th of April for further escape and inspiration. This festival aims to celebrate and shine a spotlight on national and international literary talent. Hear from different voices at home and abroad that will be sure to lift and excite



Visualise

For me, photographs highlight the magic of every day and allow us to discover and delve into alternative worlds. Take a journey to the mountains of Northern Albania or across the Atlantic Ocean by looking at young Irish photographers' work in *Point51* magazine. This is a new independent print magazine exploring essential contemporary issues in Europe. Working with people worldwide, their visually arresting images offer something unique and appealing during this time.

Flavours feed the mind and soul, and should be celebrated and explored as we wait out the coming months. There is a delicious and diverse offering of student-friendly recipes online from Irish Cooks such as Donal Skehan. Skehan's food reflects the time he has taken over his career to travel and find inspiration. His 'You can do it' approach on his website and YouTube channel is precisely the kind of encouragement we need during this time. Equally, The Happy Pear brothers have a brilliant collection of cookbooks, inspired by their adventures and international café team. These can be purchased online from Irish retailers.

Taste the world...

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Pick up unusual ingredients from your local supermarket's global shelves and organise a cultural feast with your flatmates or family. Bring the joy back into your kitchen by cooking together while dancing to complementary music. Make it an occasion that will carry you away to the places you desire to visit.

...and watch something afterwards

Screen media's immersive quality has provided me with the pleasure of adventure and delightful escapism during the pandemic. Transport yourself to the West every Sunday night by watching *North America with Simon Reeve* on the RTE player. In this series, explorer Reeve travels the entire length of the Americas from Alaska to Costa Rica while learning about contemporary social and political issues, experiences epic landscapes and meet fascinating people along the way.

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Vaccine passports and you

Anna Blackburn

Anna Blackburn discusses the history of vaccine passports and why many countries are beginning to consider them essential for safe travel and tourism.

“What most people don't know is that vaccine passports are not a new idea”

It has been a long time since most people have left their country of residence or even their 5km, and unfortunately the wait is not yet over. With the limited number of vaccinations across the EU and globally, local and international travel restrictions persist. However, officials in Europe are proposing the implementation of a 'vaccine passport' to international travel requirements as a means of alleviating these restrictions somewhat. As a result, there may yet be a chance to travel abroad this summer.

The vaccine passport would allow for a gradual reopening of tourist opportunities to help European economies get back on their feet. Tourism in Europe is a hundred billion euro industry, bringing in over €750 million annually and funding more than 14 million jobs. With the pandemic at large over the last year, these numbers have fallen drastically, and the possibility of vaccine passports offers a way to start rebuilding these industries.

What is a vaccine passport? It is proof that an individual has received the full dose of a COVID-19 vaccination, whether that be the Pfizer, BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca, or the recently approved Johnson & Johnson vaccine. It would also likely include other necessary medical information, such as recent Covid test results and any possible underlying health conditions. Many private companies are in the process of developing mobile apps, such as the CommonPass, IATA Travel Pass, and the IBM Digital Health Pass. As well as these, EU President Ursula von der Leyen said that the EU would propose their own 'Digital Green Pass' next month. These digital health passport applications aim to make country-specific vaccination documents, which would have been previously distributed as paper certificates, more easily accessible and internationally recognized.

The vaccine passport would give Europeans the



opportunity to travel this summer, but there is much debate surrounding the viability of this plan. Many people are raising questions about ethical concerns, specifically regarding individual rights such as the privacy and freedom of choice involved in making this documentation a requirement of international travel. Several airlines have already begun the process of checking passengers for proof of vaccination or Covid-19. Emirates (an airline group based in the United Arab Emirates) was the first to introduce rapid blood testing for Covid-19 prior to allowing passengers to board flights. Qantas Airways in Australia has said they plan to start requiring proof of vaccination as a prerequisite for flying with the company. While these airlines, as privately-owned companies, have the right to practice these safety measures, many feel that it is infringing upon their individual rights, just as the vaccine passports would.

What most people don't know is that vaccine passports are not a new idea. The standard passports we use today became a requirement of international travel during the First World War as a way to protect countries' borders. With the Spanish Flu pandemic raging across Europe, governments realised that the passport was not enough to keep people safe. As a result, the League of Nations added health requirements to international travel in 1925, stating that transport should 'be carried out in the conditions most favourable to public health'. Vaccination requirements have been in place for many years. Countries around the world require vaccinations for diseases such as Malaria, Polio, Yellow Fever, Rabies and even Measles on arrival.

As globalisation continues to expand, countries have not only the right but the responsibility to protect their citizens. The Covid-19 pandemic has had long-lasting effects on everything in our lives, from major widespread

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...and watch something afterwards

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There is no shortage of immersive foreign language films to watch as part of this year's Oscar celebrations. Open your mind to provocative ideas and culture and engage with favourites such as Danish film *DRUK* or Tunisian film *The Man who sold his skin*. These films and many others are available through MUBI, an online streaming platform focussing on classic and arthouse cinema. An exceptional student rate is available and worth looking into considering the quality of the foreign language films available.

Or catch up on online events

During the last few months, I have been amazed at how Ireland's cultural centres have found new ways to adapt and produce work that reflects the diversity in Irish culture and society today. Of note is the third edition of *Dear Ireland*, a series of three-minute postcards from underrepresented voices in Irish society, hosted online by The Abbey Theatre. This latest edition asks the question: 'What does it feel like to be you, right now, in Ireland?' Featuring a superb range of voices, including the Discovery Gospel Choir, Talltu Theatre Company and the Africa Centre, this series offers new angles and perspectives on Irish society and culture today.

The Project Arts Centre have made similar efforts in recent months to provide its audience with new ideas and culture. In February, they hosted SPOTLIGHT: Eire to the world, a collaborative, creative and interactive project focusing on highlighting artists of black heritage in Ireland. The film, available on YouTube, shows live performance, spoken word, acting, podcasts, and fashion from a diverse set of voices from different cultures and backgrounds.

Listen

Audio is an imaginative medium that brings us to faraway places. In the last year, I have found that by closing my eyes and listening, I can connect with something greater than myself. *Outlook* from the BBC World Service brings you extraordinary, first-person stories from around the world, with recent episodes transporting listeners to places like Egypt, Cameroon, and New York. These stories are, at once, expressive and enlightening. Equally, RTE's *The Documentary* One podcast features stories that connect us with the broader world as told through the Irish lens.

Additionally, tuning into music offers a fantastic sense of escape. Streaming platforms have become places of great discovery and cultural diversion. In the dark of night, escape your 5km by popping on your headphones and dancing to the widening beat and rhythm.

As we wait for our next great escape, feed your mind with what is available to you at home. Encourage and maintain your curiosity and sense of wonder for our incredibly diverse world. Soon enough, we will be able to embrace the outside once again. What a joy that will be.

food & drink

Childhood Treats

Imagine you're eight years old again. You're standing in the door of the shop, and you have a crisp five euro note clutched in your sweetly little paw. Your eye ranges intently over the glittering array of sweets, crisps and minerals. How are you going to spend this windfall? Watermelon slices? Jelly snakes? Curly-wurleys? Rancheros? Sophie Finn, Andrew Nolan and Nathan Young indulge us with their sweet sweet nostalgia.



The Gobstopper

Sophie Finn

My favourite childhood sweets were gobstoppers, the giant multi-coloured ones that cost €1.50 in town. They were the OBSESSION of me and my sisters. Not because of the taste (I actually recall believing they tasted slightly of chalk), but because they literally lasted FOREVER. Growing up in the middle of nowhere means you learned to be crafty with resources. We had it timed perfectly. We could make a gobstopper last 2 and a half weeks, or whenever the next time our mother would bring us to do the shopping.

My eight-year-old self and my two older sisters would eagerly await the day we went to town and our mam would say the magical words 'you can get something from the shop'. My oldest sister would be given the crisp €5 note, and we would race to the nearest newsagents. We would then spend as much time as we could (undoubtedly receiving several suspicious looks from the shop assistant) surveying the different sweets and imagining the amazing combinations we would buy when we were old and rich. Finally, we would settle on the predetermined traditional one gobstopper each (I always always wanted a pick n mix, but every time my sisters convinced me of what an extravagant waste of money that would be, pick n mix being extortion by another name). We would then spend the following weeks in a state of extreme contentedness, with jaws painfully strained and a chalky taste in the mouth.

Being a child of the recession, this bliss couldn't last. Eventually, the day came when my mother decided this lavish habit could not continue and we were downgraded to... one gobstopper... between three... "gag". We were understandably in extreme and bitter shock. Much fighting ensued, with my eldest sister arguing it was a violation of the rights of the child, my middle sister crying, and I in what could only be described as a state of bereavement. Eventually, we resigned ourselves to the reality and went home, staring mournfully at our one measly gobstopper.

Upon returning home, my middle sister, obviously overcome with the shock, mutinously grabbed the gobstopper and sprinted to her room, where she therein attempted to eat the entire thing. I still vividly remember her huddled in a corner gnawing at the massive globe. Unsurprisingly this did not end well, within 5 minutes we heard screams and she had chipped an incisor. We were never allowed a gobstopper again.

Cupboard Love: Coriander

Doireann de Courcy Mac Donnell

Doireann de Courcy Mac Donnell introduces us to Uncle Johnny's Moroccan tagine.

For years I have judged coriander. It was overpowering, it was overdone, it tastes like soap. I listened to friends and subconsciously took on the opinions of others. But I will hold up my hands and say, I made a mistake, I judged without knowing, and for that, I apologise, my pungent friend. And as part of that apology, little green leaf, I am writing you an entire article.

Coriander, or *coriandrum sativum*, as Google would inform me, is a herb used in cuisines from all over the world. Known as cilantro in parts of America, it can be used fresh, with its flat green leaf and long stalks, dried, or as a seed. It is sublime in a tomato salsa, the opening flourish of an aromatic curry, or the perfect finish to your Mexican madness. I emphatically believe that any dish it touches, it enhances (though, as I write this I wonder will I receive a strongly worded letter informing me this article should be entered under the "unpopular opinions" on

Don't Forget to Cite Your Sauces

Sophie Tevlin

Sophie Tevlin is freshening up your cupboards with condiments.

Who here is getting really bloody tired of their own cooking? It just never ends - the same stale boring standbys, the same washing-up afterwards, the same stodgy takeaways... I have the solution, and it is to have sauces and condiments on hand that instantly take your meals from a 4/10 to an 8/10. Magic elixirs that work as a salad dressing, on a stir-fry or fried rice, instant noodles, as a sandwich relish, on ice-cream in a pinch... etc etc. So here I have a recommendation for a condiment and a recipe for a sauce, and both I can promise are very far from boring and stale - about as far from boring and stale as you could get! If Jamie Oliver was standing on the North Pole and you were standing on the South.

First, the condiment. Laganna chilli oil with dried fermented black beans, chilli flakes, and Sichuan pepper. It is intensely savoury, spicy, crunchy - it tingles and dances on the tongue. I am obsessed with it. I have eaten it on

Andrew Nolan

There's a reason why "like a kid in a candy shop" is a phrase. It's hard to think of a feeling like it - being given the stray fiver and an abundance of freedom meant you were leaving that shop with full pockets and a happy head.

I feel that growing up in Ireland there are a few staples that I immediately remember (I'm not entirely sure why *The Bear* in the *Big Blue House* got its own make of crisps, but sure look you'll hear no complaints from me). For me, the safest bet would have always been bonbons. The act of walking out of school on a Friday, doing some awful mental maths to gauge how far the wandering 50c coin I found could run me, was biblical.

The routine was strict, though. There was never a mixed bag, no matter how much I was kindly given. If I had a euro, I'd get one euro's worth, so on, so forth. Just to clarify, that would be one euro of *blue* bonbons. I'm not sure what happened in the lives of some people that led them to prefer strawberry, but all I can do is offer my sincerest apologies.

Honourable mentions must also go to the sweet Kinder Pingui, the teeth-wrecking Wham Bar, and Spar's own 40c can of American Cola. These aside, there's always a soft spot for discontinued treats that no longer bless Centra shelves. Now, sometimes they are pulled for a very good reason (this is your reminder that the Tayto chocolate bar was, in fact, a thing. May God forgive us for that one), but more often than not we're left grieving for what once was. Accomplished Irish Historian *Meditations for the Anxious Mind* recently posted an Instagram video that unlocked the memory of Moro bars. Yes, okay, you can still buy Boost bars, but they just feel off. It's just not the same.

This one is entirely personal, so think of this as a one-way therapy session: was the blackcurrant flavour of Lucozade a fever dream I had? There was legitimately nothing I would rather have after school than one of these bad boys. Nobody outside of my friend group at school ever remembers it, though. And no, before you suggest it, mixing Ribena and 7-up doesn't replicate it. Though I guess I'll have to do. Until Lucozade reps answer one of my 800 queries, that is.

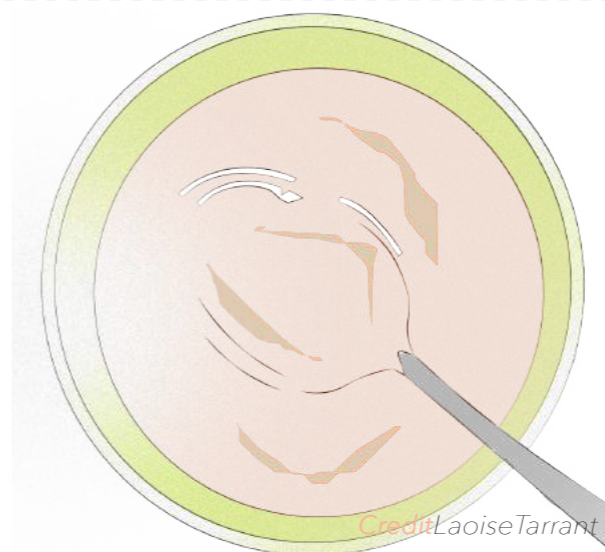
But blue bonbon, my heart is yours.

“I was worried the mint and tomato would be bitter (and weird) enemies as opposed to friends.”

the following page. Coriander hater, you are wrong and a plebeian).

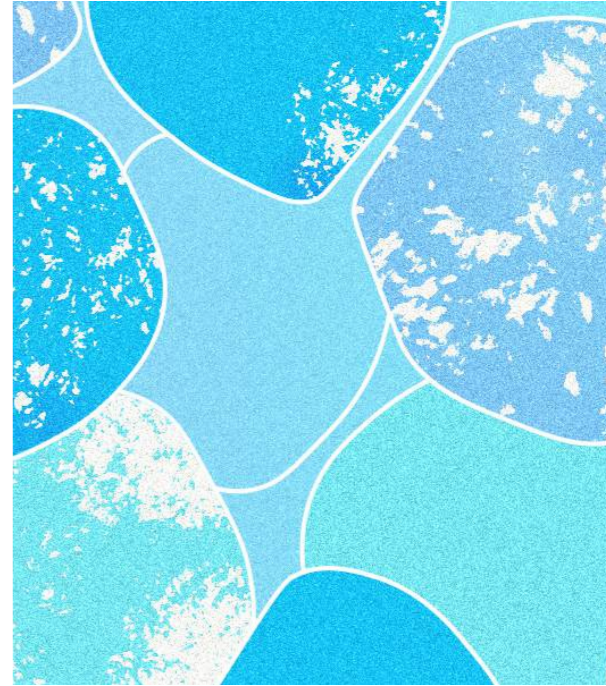
My latest dalliance with the herb was in a Moroccan bean dish. This tagine is a staple of my Uncle Johnny's kitchen. I can confidently say that he is the best chef I know, and having spent time in Mexico, Africa and all over, his understanding of food and flavour is second to none. With lockdown restrictions depriving me of his cooking for the best part of a year now, I decided to take matters into my own hands.

According to the (proper) recipe, for this dish you will need a tin of haricot beans (I used broad beans because that's what was in the press), 2-3 tablespoons of ghee (I used a spray oil and a bitta butter), 2 finely chopped onions, 4 cloves of garlic, 2 red deseeded chillies, 2 teaspoons of sugar, 2 teaspoons of harissa, 2 cans of



everything from fried eggs to matcha ice-cream. Even the way it looks on the plate delights me, a splash of bright orange like going on holiday. I never thought anything would knock Zacusca off the top spot as queen of the condiments (and MY HEART) but here I am, just a woman standing in front of a jar of chilli oil, asking it to continue being available in most Asian groceries and online stockists.

Oh! On to the sauce! Making your own sauces at home, as opposed to paying silly money for a small jar of something that won't taste as good and fresh, is dead easy. You just



Blue Bon-Bons (and treats we have lost)

Nathan Young

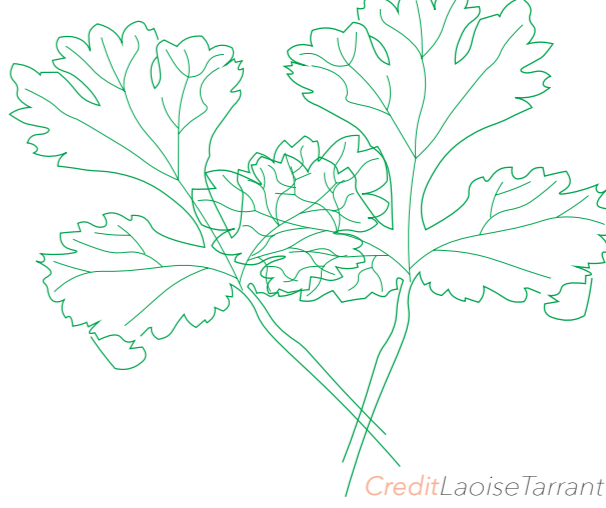
Looking back, there is something sinister about ice cream vans, although we didn't think it at the time. Just as a clown's makeup lands them in the uncanny valley, the music from those vans is almost happy, almost what joy is supposed to sound like. Unlike clown however, the ice cream vans fulfil their promise. They bring ice cream to the children.

Growing up in a small village in Offaly, the ice cream van was relatively rare. The local corner store did sell ice lollies and Cornettos, and my parents would buy tubs of ice cream to serve as dessert after Sunday dinners, but these are not the same. Not that I didn't like ice cream from a tub, but it always seemed unfair to refer to that food, which was simply 'nice', by the same name as the rare delicacy of soft-serve ice cream, the kind that only came from a van.

The village I grew up in was far too small to justify regular visits from the ice cream van. He would occasionally visit on a sunny weekend morning, presumably planning on spending the afternoon in a busy town near the playground. Most of us would be inside, watching television or playing with toys, when we heard the sound of the music. This was one occasion where the stranger in a van promising treats was to be believed. Having hassled our parents for change or raided our money boxes, we ran out to be at the front of the queue. Strawberry sauce and flakes were extra, but we all coughed up for them.

The other time soft-serve was available was when we went to the seaside in the summer. Having grandparents in Wexford and Cornwall, most summers were traditional seaside affairs, complete with fish 'n' chips, sandcastles, donkey rides, and, of course, cones of soft and sweet ice cream.

I don't get soft-serve ice cream much nowadays, despite living in a city where it's available in almost every McDonald's or Supermac's branch. Much like how one would probably not want a Christmas dinner served on a sunny morning in place of breakfast, a large part of the experience of the ice cream cone is time and place. My flatmates and I spent one summer in Clare, next to the seaside. One day early on, we got ourselves a round of cones. It wasn't as soft or as scrumptious as I remembered it being. It was actually rather sickly. Though, the memories it brought back made me appreciate it.



chopped tomatoes, a bunch of fresh parsley, a bunch of fresh coriander, and, a bunch of fresh mint.

Mint? I mean intellectually I understand that mint is a staple in Moroccan dishes and my head said 'okkk', my heart said 'tread with caution!'. I was worried the mint and tomato would be bitter (and weird) enemies as opposed to friends. But, as it turned out, the mint was exactly what the dish needed. Every day is a school day.

As you would expect, you begin with the oil/butter/ghee,

need to understand the bones of a dish - the basic flavour components and what they do, and any techniques used. Then you can start riffing. In this instance, it helps to think of this sauce as similar to a salad dressing. To make salad dressing, you need something salty, something oily, and something acidic. Now oil and water are naturally incompatible, which means that five minutes after you've mixed them together they're going to separate again. That means you also need something to emulsify the other ingredients - that is, to make them stay together when they really want to be apart, like a tactful manager soothing the egos of a band of quarrelling rockstars. In mayonnaise, it's mustard. In Bon Appetit's Green Sauce No.4, (Google it, trust me) it's tahini and white miso. In your parents' marriage, it's societal pressure and blind habit. (Maureen, you can do so much better. Call me?)

The earthy base, emulsifier and oil of this particular sauce is going to be about three heaped tablespoons of peanut butter. You might be used to thinking of peanut butter as sweet, but the good-quality ones are 100% peanut and work equally as well in savoury dishes. In Southeast Asian cuisine, peanut sauce is a usual accompaniment to grilled chicken skewers (satay), and that's what I've based this recipe on. It pairs well with rice and noodle dishes, and it's punchy and bright and intense and eyes-wideningly tasty. Add the peanut butter to the jug of your blender, and then add:

The Salt: a good glug of soy sauce and a good glug of fish sauce. The more complex and umami the salts, the better the flavour. If you left out the fish sauce, this would



Ice Cream Cones

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Job in some onions, garlic, chilli and sautéed. Once they begin to colour, it's time for the sprinkle of sugar, the harissa and the drained beans. Add the tomatoes and a little water to ensure the beans are submerged, and cook until it begins to boil. Once it's bubbling you can reduce the heat and leave to simmer for thirty minutes. Sprinkle your tagine with herbs, salt and pepper and let it simmer for a further ten minutes, and voilà.

I served this with boiled baby potatoes, though as far as I'm aware this dish is traditionally served as is, or with chunks of bread. In my uncle's rendition, he usually adds diced meat and some fruit, so I also added lamb (after the onions and garlic) and apricots (at the end, when simmering). Prunes do the job too. I made the stew in the morning and let it sit, and I think the flavour was better for it. It was delicious. Not as good as Johnny's - he makes his own harissa. It's quite easy to make and you do reap the rewards of making it fresh, I used a little jar though - but my version was still pretty damn tasty. Give it a go.

PS - Since you're going to the effort of sourcing all these fresh herbs - which aren't extortionate anymore and you can find them in all supermarkets really - you're going to want to use them. I would recommend using the remaining parsley and coriander for Chimichurri Burgers. You can put the mint to good use in a Mojito. Waste not want not. Thank me later.

be vegan. But it also wouldn't be as nice.

The Acid: a splash of rice vinegar (cider vinegar if you don't have it) and the juice of a lime. I'll add lemon juice if I have one handy - combining a few acids makes your finished concoction bright and punchy - but don't leave the lime out either. Fish sauce, coriander and lime juice is a dynamic combination, as you'll know if you've ever had good pho.

To that, you're going to add about three peeled garlic cloves (you don't have to grate them if you use the blender, which is easily the best thing about this recipe), and a knob of peeled ginger (ditto. To peel ginger, scrape it with a teaspoon), a teaspoon of onion, and a sheaf of fresh coriander, stalks and all. Save a few leaves for a garnish and blend it all together, adding as much warm water as you need to get a smooth runny consistency. Taste, and add more of whatever you think it needs. That's it! The process is basically: 1) put ingredients in blender 2) press button. It'll probably take you less time than it took to read this (Aw hell, a gal's gotta fill a page out somehow!) The peanut sauce will keep for a few days in the fridge. Sauté a bag of pre-chopped stir-fry veg in a wok, boil some rice noodles and an egg or two - I do this in the same pot, though I have a dim feeling you're not supposed to. Drizzle your sauce over the top and you have lunch in ten minutes. Just keep in mind that the pungent kick of the raw garlic, while extremely delicious, might mean you have to wear a mask inside the house as well.

staff writes Unpopular Opinions

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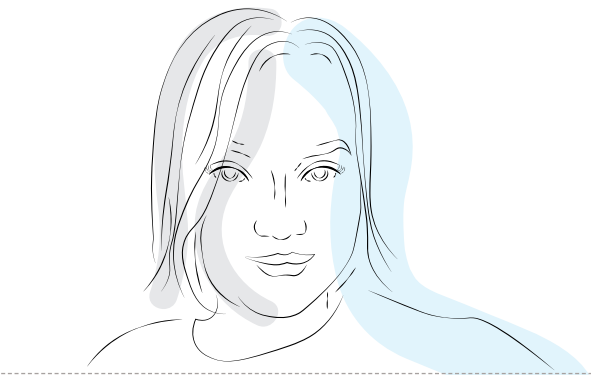


Andrew Nolan
Star Wars has always sucked

(This is more aimed at those who make it a mission to gatekeep everything that isn't the original trilogy of movies. Yes you.) There's this notion that Star Wars turned awful at some point during the late '90s and almost everything from that point onwards is sacrilegious. Which is fair enough, you're more than allowed to think that - I just differ in that I think the original three movies suck as well.

These fans seem to hate the newer instalments' writing, but the one thing that everyone seems to forget is that the first three movies have some dreadful lines in there, too. I've had this argument with friends a lot, and even though I'm a big fan of movies myself, I get so much enjoyment from seeing how angry people get defending them.

My personal favourite story of this is when I tried to tell a friend that Star Wars is for nostalgia merchants and that while there's a lot to enjoy (which I do), they're not exactly good films. To which, my friend got a little bit emotional about how much the movies meant to him, and how seeing Disney butcher the franchise made him feel genuinely down. Seizing an opportunity, I told him that one day more people will remember Rey from the Disney movies than Luke Skywalker from the originals and that we weren't the audience anymore. I then told him to stop crying over laser swords. He did not react well. I'll leave out the expletives.



Sinéad Keating
Brown clothes aren't nice

My wardrobe is a good mix of black and colourful clothes. I'm partial to a nice white, cream, beige or grey neutral piece but one colour I just don't do is brown. I'd extend my distaste for the colour to clothes other people wear as well as my own. I'd normally say your body your choice, but when it comes to clothing, brown clothes cross the line. Muddy ground, dog poop, bare trees, and dull winter days are not vibes I want to stir up.

Coming from a family of redheads, I've heard the argument that anything along a scale of mustard to brown tones suits their colouring, but I genuinely don't see brown as a flattering colour on anyone. A grandad's brown corduroy, a school uniform's awful brown jumper, 'good' brown shoes... get rid of them all. There are so many nicer natural tones and colours to bring a bit of joy or sophistication to your look without succumbing to brown!

I see Zara trying hard, aligning their website with a Vogue photoshoot, but no cool cut, shape or pose can distract from the fact that brown clothes are simply lacking. Brown leather is outdated but the worst of all is brown velvet... and I say that passionately as a lover of velvet. There's nothing a brown garment accomplishes that another colour can't do better, which is why I am quite comfortable in my blanket statement that brown clothes just aren't nice.



Ellen Duggan
Living near the city centre does not make you cool.

I truly could not tell you how many times I have sat back and listened to a mid-twenty-year-old male tell me precisely how long it takes him, down to the nanosecond, to amble into town. Given the fact it has been mere centuries since I have conversed, face-to-face, with anyone other than my housemates, there is a possibility I may take artistic licence with this example of said conversation topic.

Me: So...where do you live?

Man: Aw boy! I'm actually based in Phibsborough for the time being. Honestly like, I cannot imagine living anywhere else in the world. It's the epitome of like, Times Square in my eyes, not to get too 'grandiose' here, ha ha ha! Like if I was asked to count every cent I have saved on public transport since moving here, I would literally be loaded. LOADED. So like, it takes me about 10 minutes to walk into town and that's like a 'stop and smell the flowers pace', you know what I mean? Like if...god forbid...I am on my scooter we are talking like 6 minutes. It's so quick it's basically time travel like. Ha ha ha!

You would think, given the short distance that this individual is trying to explain, that a short monologue would be favoured. But no. You would be wrong.

Living close to town does not make you a hero. It does not make you cooler than my Baldoyle based lifestyle. No one wants to hear you speak at length about how long it takes you to get to Boojum on a unicycle at 2am from a smoking area. Please, leave us alone and purchase a diary in which to vent.



Nathan Young
I will never "Let people enjoy things"

Letting people enjoy things is a nice thing to do. If people enjoy things, it makes them happy, at least for the time they spend with said thing. Unfortunately for these people, I don't care. It is simply untrue that it doesn't affect me. Other people's tastes affect culture. If I am to share the streets with bronzies and 30-year-old Hufflepuffs, then I reserve the right to at least give out about it.

If cinema-goers only want Disney films, then money will only be put into making those films. If only trash music gets downloaded, then only trash music will be played in the pubs I want to drink in. And this is all before we actually look at what media consumption does to the mind. Do the philistines not realise that Harry Potter fans can vote?

Like fast food, there is nothing wrong with liking some garbage media, but if someone told you they only ate nuggies and tendies you would be right to look at them with pity and disdain. I also like some trash media. The difference is that it's not the only thing I consume, and I don't take it personally when someone mocks it.

The bad news for me, but good news for those I'm attacking, is that I'm nobody. No matter how many times I say things that are right about whatever trash the mainstream has fallen in love with, it's still everywhere. If someone's ability to enjoy the mulch Marvel are feeding them is dependent on my approval, then the problem is deeper than I can help with.

Soapbox

Knitting doesn't make me a granny.

E. Keogh

I'm a very creative person. I've been knitting and crocheting for as long as I can remember. My Mam's friend taught me when I was about 8 to do it properly, and my love of my crafts has only grown with age. When my Nanny heard about my hobbies, she dug out her bag of hooks and needles for me to have, and she showed me all the jumpers and hats she had made over the years. I made hats for my roles in my primary school - my favourite had to be the iconic red hat from Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory. When teachers found out I could knit and crochet, they were really surprised that a young "lad" like myself could knit. So why was that so surprising? It stuck with me nonetheless that interest in such crafts wasn't normal for a boy.

Even in the scouts, a place I thought was relatively judgement-free, knitting was almost a taboo subject. There was a badge for it so, of course, I went for it! I had to give a presentation on it and bring a few pieces I had made. Then came the questions. "Isn't knitting for nannies", "knitting is for girls", "you're a boy, why do you knit, isn't it girly".

In my all-boys secondary school, I was terrified of other boys finding out I could knit and crochet, I never wore any of the hats or scarves I made until I was outed in second year, and then I was targeted as a result. All the slurs you could imagine, being called a granny, the whole lot. So why is there such an opposition to boys knitting? Getting work experience in a knitting shop was a dream come true, but it was only after an awkward interview where I had to defend my knowledge about crafts, that was still met with scepticism even after I had demonstrated my know-how, that I got a placement.

In university, I realised I was Nonbinary, so the whole boy-who-knitted thing died out, yet people still associate knitting with grannies and aul ones. One of the phrases I noticed popping up more and more commonly was

"knitting and crocheting explains the whole nonbinary thing, like its a telltale sign of being queer". Is it? Why is knitting a sign or a trait of being feminine or not straight? Sure, I turned out to be queer, but why is it accepted almost universally by people as this hobby you can only do if you're anything but straight, cisgender, and manly?

Anyone can knit and crochet, it only has these associations because over the years the ill-defined position that men have to take is to separate gender roles into what a man can and can't do. Being able to do a craft like knitting and crochet should be something to be proud of - it's not easy memorising stitches and being able to keep your tension in a piece. So, why don't we start recognising these crafts as something anyone can do, no matter your gender, sexuality, or without assuming that someone who does them "obviously" fits predefined criteria instead of acknowledging that no matter what I am, I can crochet a sick looking Baby Yoda. Another critique of these crafts is its slow and boring, but I ask the question; Who has 15 Baby Yodas? The person who can crochet, me.



Credit: LaoiseTarrant

Staff recommends Unsung fictional character

E. Keogh - Sydney Novak

For me, it has to be Sydney Novak from Netflix's I am Not Ok With This (2020). She was the representation I desperately needed as a teen, and that many teens still need today. Netflix didn't market the series very well, and because of Covid, this show and many others were cancelled due to "budgetary constraints"

Sydney Novak is one of only a handful of characters that is actually portrayed by a teen the character's age. Sydney is a 17-year-old trying to find her way in the world, cultivating her powers, while also trying to be a normal teen. With the help of her friends Stanley and Dina, Sydney navigates being a poor, queer teenager in a boring town in Pittsburgh.

The superpowers part isn't relatable, sadly, but being a queer teen in a small community with only a couple of friends definitely is. Sydney, as all teenagers do, points out all faults she perceives in herself. I am not okay with this demonstrates to teenagers that they're not alone in struggling to become young adults. It's definitely a comfort show for me, the characters feel so authentic, and they deal with issues in a constructive way, rather than being portrayed as gorgeous mid-20-year-old actors with no problems.

Along with Sydney giving viewers representation, and being authentic, she's also a badass queer superhero with telekinesis. Unfortunately, as mentioned, the show was cancelled, and fans were left with a massive cliffhanger. It's unlikely that we'll get a season 3 due to Netflix's decision, and alas, Sydney will continue to be the unsung hero truly appreciated by few.

Cahal Mc Auley - Chewbacca

In a franchise with a pantheon of characters as rich as that of Star Wars, there are bound to be a few characters who don't receive the recognition they deserve. The standout one, however, is surely the long-suffering Chewbacca, who's contributions are underappreciated in not just one but two trilogies.

It all began back in A New Hope where even after infiltrating the Death Star and returning to save Luke and the rebellion as a whole, Chewbacca doesn't receive a medal, even when Luke and Han do.

A reasonably plausible explanation has been given that Chewbacca refused a medal as Wookiees do not like to receive material rewards for deeds done.

This is undone in The Rise of Skywalker, however, as what reward does Chewbacca receive for being overlooked for a second trilogy? The very same medal that he should have been awarded for saving everyone the first time around.

The plight of Chewbacca is summed up in The Force Awakens where soon after seeing his best friend of several decades be impaled by his own son, the grieving Chewie is roundly ignored by Leia she runs to hug Rey, someone she has never met before.

Though a beloved and valued character, Chewbacca surely deserves better than this, and in an era where every second character seems to be getting a spin-off film or show, we can only hope that our favourite Wookiee can finally take centre stage at some point in the future.

Liam Ferguson - War Machine

A character I feel is criminally underrated is James "War Machine" Rhodes (also known as Rhodey) from the MCU. Rhodey, played by the always delightful Don Cheadle is often tossed aside as a simple Iron-Man clone, but he's so much more than that.

Rhodey is the only character to have suffered any real consequences from the team breaking squabble that occurred in Captain America: Civil War, getting paralysed from the waist down. He offhandedly mentions this in Infinity War as he now is only able to walk using mechanical braces, but without any kind of apology from his team members who caused this, he takes it on the chin because he is a champ. He's Marvel's only disabled Avenger and gets no credit for continuing the save the world despite this.

On top of this, Don Cheadle is great. He has amazing comedic timing and an elegant presence on screen, often landing some of the best jokes in these movies. He's a genuinely great character that just is barely given the time of day in the public conscience or the movies themselves. Luckily, he is set to star in his own Disney Plus series, Armour Wars, sometime in 2022 so hopefully this will properly allow the potential of Rhodey to shine as Don Cheadle is able to absolutely go off and steal every scene in his own show.

Doireann de Courcy Mac Donnell - William Thacker's friends

Notting Hill has to be one of the best rom-coms going. First released in 1999 (the golden age of the rom-com in my humble opinion), it stands the test of time. To be perfectly honest, the "rom" part of the rom-com is so not the reason to watch this. Starring Julia Roberts as Anna Scott, the misunderstood beautiful Hollywood superstar, and Hugh Grant in his classic foppish, boy-next-door, quietly-I'm actually really sexy-type as William Thacker, from the outset, you know where we're going.

However. Go Tobann. Until. A stellar diversion from the overplayed whirlwind romance appears in the form of a dinner with William's friends. The friends are presented as a group of pretty standard people; with problems, and embarrassments, and normal characteristics. Eating dinner with people I like and hanging out afterwards, letting the food and liquid accompaniment envelop you in a food coma, is my favourite thing to do and it's here where the movie excels. It is pleasant, and funny, and poignant, and in a haze of the usual romcom headache and long looks and lust, it is a welcome intervention. It feels human.

The unsung characters of the movie are really the entire ensemble cast (here's bizarre housemate Spike's shoutout). Notting Hill is cheesy, and predictable, and oh so unrealistic, and if the film were to be made today it undoubtedly would look very different. But don't let your takeaway from the movie be the classic (and bleugh) "I'm just a girl standing in front of a boy" but its spot-on portrayal of dinner and a couple of glorni with good pals.

AGONY AUNT



Hello! My name is Joanne Joanne - drag legend, eleven-time Grammy winner, full-time resident of the tunnels in the Newman Building. This is the first instalment of what will be OTwo's best ever Agony Aunt column - that's right, the good people at The University Observer saw the way 2020 has gone, thought about who can be there as a light in the dark for the struggling students of UCD, and settled on a twenty-year-old drag queen from the backarse of County Wicklow. I'm as delighted as you are! I'll be answering your questions on love, sex, college or anything else via submissions in my Tipbox - do send your questions in! Nothing is too weird! I am incredibly nosy!

"Dear Agony Aunt, I really need to get out of my parent's house and I have an essential job that will let me travel, but if I were to move I could only afford to move in with my ex-boyfriend.

It's been a while since we dated and we both get along as friends, but I don't know if I should put myself in a situation where I could make things uncomfortable for both of us because I just want to live independently. What should I do?

Conflicted in the George"

iEscandelo! I will be the first to admit that I don't have a lot of experience with actually moving out - all of my drag things are either in my childhood bedroom or hidden in plastic bags in the spare room. Every day, I live in fear that my parents will find them.

I get the financial insecurity, I really do - but I really don't think moving in with your ex is a good idea. I don't think it matters how well ye get along as friends if you ultimately want to live independently - if you have a feeling it might be awkward, you're probably right. Not to be plugging a Facebook group in a college newspaper in 2021, but there's this group I'm a member of called Queer Housing Dublin LGBTQ+ - I can only assume that's relevant to someone called Conflicted in the George. It's updated pretty regularly and it's a good way to find places to live where you know for a fact your roommates or housemates will not be homophobic. We all love a bit of conflict, but I would pass on living with a homophobe.

If there's really no other option, let me know and I will personally move in with you and your ex. I won't be paying rent and I will not contribute in any meaningful way, but I know good telenovela drama when I see it.

"Dear Joanne Joanne, Should I pay for Disney+ or continue to stream by...other means?

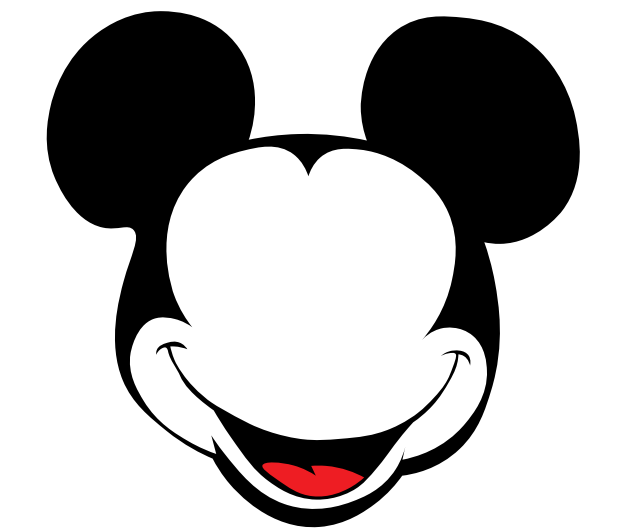
I am really poor in fairness.

Thanks"

Other means, bro. I've never had Disney+ specifically - technically, I've never knowingly bought a subscription to any streaming platform. The only time I have was when I forgot that my month's free trial of Shudder was up and I woke up to sixty euro missing from my bank account. Normally, this doesn't happen to me - I've been using my friend's Netflix account since the start of first year. (Hi Carla!)

I don't know what these ~ other means ~ of streaming are, and for legal reasons, I cannot condone piracy in a student newspaper - but I will say that Disney+'s business practices feel a bit suspicious. I saw something on Twitter the other day about a so-called "experiment" they were doing where they charge already-paying subscribers an extra thirty quid to watch their newest movie a few months earlier. Thirty quid! The cheek! The nerve! The gall! The audacity! I know very little about Disney+ but I do know that I love a bargain - and that does not sound like one. Either share an account with someone else or be ready to make a whole load of email addresses to get those free trials.

That's all from me this time! I got a lot of submissions for this issue - more than I could answer in one go - but if your question wasn't answered this time don't let that stop you from sending them in! If you would like to ask for my advice, you can find the link to my Tipbox on the UO's "Contact Us" page and their social media pages. You can find me (and the link to the Tipbox) on Instagram at @joannesquared, and you can catch me on Saturdays downstairs in the Newman Building eating a Petit Filous in the corner between 4 and 5am.



Credit: LaoiseTarrant