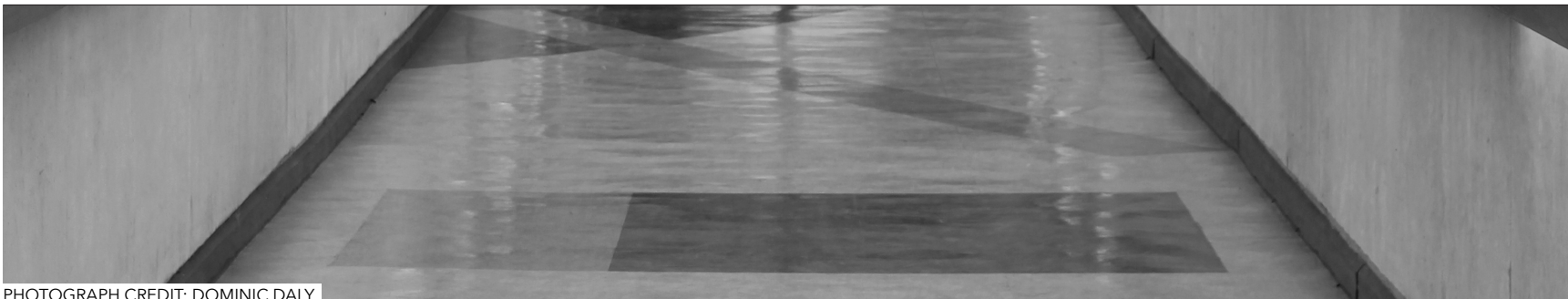


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PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: DOMINIC DALY

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UCD SOCIOLOGY LECTURER RECEIVES "TORRENT OF COMPLAINTS" OVER LACK OF CLASS TIME AND "RUDE" MANNER TO STUDENTS

AOIFE ROONEY

UCD Sociology lecturer Dr Paul Stokes is under investigation after the school received complaints from several students citing that Dr Stokes was not giving lectures and was being 'rude to students' over email communication.

The module in question, SOC30510: Sociology in the Wild, is a core component for final-year students studying Sociology. Dr Stokes, who has been a lecturer in the School of Sociology since 1996, is also listed as the module coordinator of another third-year module within the school, SOC30040: Governance in Society.

The initial complaint was made by students on February 8, after the module "started three weeks late," and thus far the class has only received "two actual lectures." According to one student, the complaint has made its way through the first stage of the official complaint process. Another student said that upon hearing that there were complaints, Dr Stokes said that the class were "suffering from group autism". Students have reported that there have been several instances where Dr Stokes has employed an inappropriate tone when addressing the class.

Dr Stokes sent an email to the class,

wherein he addressed the issues voiced to the school, referring to the "torrent of complaints" he had received. There was a decision made to open a hotline where students were free to call within a specified hour time period to discuss any issues they might be encountering. Dr Stokes said that this decision was made as a result of the "shit storm this has brought down on me personally". The same email was concluded by Dr Stokes discouraging students from availing of the service, stating that he was "look[ing] forward to hearing from as few of you as possible".

The head of the School of Sociology, Associate Professor Iarlaith Watson, a listed tutor for the module, told The University Observer that the query had been passed onto UR (University Relations). It has been over eight weeks since the initial complaint was submitted, and students have noted that the issue has yet to be resolved, and that there was a group complaint meeting on March 23, with no solution being offered.

When asked by *The University Observer* how the school is handling the complaint, a student said: "They basically have acknowledged it and just essentially told us to get on with it". They also said that the "School of Sociology just brush it under the rug." As stated on the UCD Student

Engagement, Conduct, Complaints and Appeals page, students are assured that they should "feel free to raise concerns, express dissatisfaction and seek resolution to any problems encountered." While students are encouraged to direct complaints to those at a school level, which would be Associate Professor Watson in this case, a student said that while the School of Sociology was "made aware, but offered no help."

With regard to a student voicing a complaint, it should be raised at a local level first, and in order to submit a formal complaint at University level, it must be done within 15 days of the issue occurring. UCD has stated that they "endeavour to respond to formal complaints within 30 working days". This time has elapsed for the students who complained about Dr Stokes, and they have not yet received a resolution nor an indication as to when this resolution is likely. Faculty are also advised when dealing with students issues to "treat complainants courteously and professionally" and to "offer an apology, where appropriate."

On the module information page, there is no indication of what the course will cover, the module description is currently "Wild things." The only information students have access to before registration is the proposed time where the lecture would

take place, which is suggested at twice a week. Students received an email from Dr Stokes "saying to read a few pages from his book as a replacement for a lecture". Out of a potential 20 lectures so far this semester, students have received two. There was also an instance wherein Dr Stokes threatened students who shared recordings of lectures, saying that they would be "breaking the terms of service with UCD and [would] get in a lot of trouble."

Students have been notified that their GPA will not suffer as a result of the module, and are still expected to do a 2,500 word final essay, despite not having received the submission date. On the lack of clarity, a student said that they are expected to submit an essay for "a course that we haven't been taught", and that "if UCD do nothing I think it'll be a disgrace especially given the way he has treated students."

All students wished to remain anonymous, one expressing their anxiety over Dr Stokes being aware of vocality on the issue, for the fear that "he targets me because of it"

Dr Stokes did not respond to a request for comment.

UCD RECEIVES GREEN LIGHT FOR EXPANSION PLANS DESPITE APPEALS

SOPHIE FINN

UCD has been granted planning permission from An Bord Pleanála for several major developments, including the new structure at the N11 entrance.

The permission was granted following the rejection of an appeal from local resident Daniel Brennan against the original decision to grant planning permission to UCD by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

The planning permission allows for a €180m development, as part of UCD's 'future campus' project. The development will create 22,500sq m of new teaching and learning facilities, along with increased research spaces. The future campus plan relates to the entire 133-hectare site of the Belfield campus and envisages construction of 154,100sq m to accommodate 2,000 extra students by 2025.

Planning permission had already been granted for a new UCD Centre for Creative Learning, along with another building - the Centre for Future Learning at the N11 entrance. The landmark entrance building - the Centre for Creative Learning - is a €48m structure. UCD held a competition in 2018 to design the masterplan for the future of the campus, and included in this competition was the entrance building.

Stephen Holl Architects, an American

architectural firm won the competition to design the building. Holl's design is inspired by the Joycean "principles of stream of consciousness thinking" and the "geometrics of the Giants Causeway". The L-shaped building comprises three octagonal towers up to 50 metres in height, tilted at an angle. A café will be housed on the ground floor of the building, along with a library, an outdoor terrace and spaces for practical skills such as woodworking. The back of the building holds an auditorium designed for lectures. The tallest tower will also include an exhibition, The UCD Experience. The entire building has been designed with a sustainable approach, green roofs and solar panels feature heavily in the plans.

The latest ruling gives approval for landscaping works, the destruction of several small buildings, the construction of the new entrance plaza and an alteration of the road's inside UCD. This approval clears the final obstacles for UCD's expansion plans and enables the beginning of phase 1 of the future campus plan.

An Bord Pleanála granted the application for planning permission as they believed the works were an appropriate form of development regarding UCD's Strategic Campus Development Plan 2016-2026, whilst also not causing any significant impacts to residential amenities, the character of the area, pedestrian and traffic safety, or the

environment. The board did require UCD to carry out a bat roost inspection before any felling of trees and imposed a car parking space limit of 3,600 to ensure UCD did not surpass its own guidelines created in Campus Travel Plan 2016-2026 and in the interest of sustainable transport.

Daniel Brennan, the local resident whose appeal against the construction failed, was against the construction under 11 grounds of appeal. These grounds included the lack of an environmental impact assessment, which he argued UCD was avoiding by seeking planning permission for smaller parts of the future campus plan separately. He argued the environmental impact assessment was necessary for several reasons, such as the removal of 177 trees. The resident also argued allowing the continued growth of the university runs contrary to the national objective of balanced regional development by maintaining Dublin's dominant position in the economy.

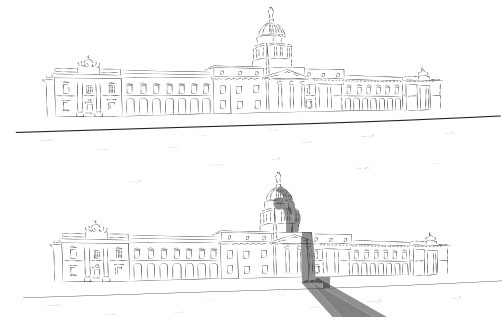
Brennan further argued the building was not environmentally sustainable, due to increased car spaces, the choice of material and the felling of trees. He further contended that the architectural design was unsuitable, describing the leaning towers as a "modern folly" due to their "minimal practical use" and "primarily ornamental" purpose. Brennan described the connection of the building to

Joyce as "very minor, obscure and esoteric", undeserving of the "extremely large, costly and environmentally unsustainable towers". The resident also appealed on the grounds of the impact of the construction on visual amenity. He outlined that UCD did not make any attempt to consult nearby residents regarding the construction; "A good residential neighbour would consult their neighbours before planning a minor extension, never min 154,000 sq m of new buildings with towers of up to 48.88m".

The University Observer spoke with UCD Post-Graduate Workers Alliance (PGWA) on the matter. PGWA is a coalition of UCD PhD students and teaching staff concerned with their working conditions. A representative for the group stated, "together with other student groups UCD PGWA has repeatedly criticised UCD for acting more as a real estate investor than an educational institution." PGWA outlined that "In 2019 we had the revelation that President Deeks sanctioned €7.5 million for his new offices, which represented an increase of €1 million on the initial estimate. Now we have this vanity project that will see €48 million squandered on another infrastructural project."

The group further stated that although they

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ARD-FHEIS CHONRADH
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"are not against investment in infrastructure on campus," they believe "any investment must benefit staff and students. Such investment must also not mean that staff and students are squeezed elsewhere. Unfortunately, this is exactly what is happening". The representative

continued, "last year, UCD decided to increase rents for student accommodation on campus by 4% over the next three years. Meanwhile, tutors and demonstrators are still paid a measly €1 per essay. With Postgraduate wages remaining frozen since 2011 and

the cost of living rising, these splurges on construction projects by Deeks and his crew are deeply wrong and will not go unchallenged."

In the UCD development plan, President Deeks outlined that the

plan "focuses on providing the physical infrastructure necessary to achieve the University's mission in terms of state-of-the-art education, research and innovation, student residences, sports, recreation and support facilities."

HEA REPORT REVEALS UP TO 80% DROPOUT RATES IN STEM COURSES

AOIFE ROONEY

THE Higher Education Authority (HEA) has published a report which found that amongst those studying for degrees in engineering and largely STEM subjects are seeing non-completion rates of 70% on average, with up to 80% of a year group not completing their degrees.

Computing had a non-completion rate of 55% across level 6,7, and 8 NFQ (National Framework of Qualification) education settings. UCD data showed that students undertaking computing/engineering courses presented a non-completion rate of 52%. While this is lower than the national average, UCD is the university of choice for the 'majority of students from D4 (58% of students) and D6 (45% of students) postcodes'. These students have a statistically higher chance of achieving high Leaving Certificate points, so comparatively, this number is high.

Non-completion rates were highest for level 6 courses, with 37% of students not graduating, and lowest for level 8 courses

18% of students not graduating. Education saw the highest completion rate at 91%, followed by health and welfare. The report, which gathered data over a ten-year period, focused on graduates from the 2007/08 cohorts. The findings also showed that completion rates tended to be lower in Institutes of Technology at 74%, 83% for universities, and significantly higher for colleges, at 94% of students graduating.

As was established with the collection of the data, a student's class background is cited as playing a pivotal role in their ability to attend and complete university, the report finding that "socioeconomic and family background are viewed as among the most important factors influencing student success." The type of school the student attended also had a considerable impact on not only third-level attendance, but completion rates. Students who attended a DEIS school had a completion rate of 65%, whereas students who completed their second-level education at a fee-paying school had a completion rate of 76%.

Findings also confirmed that students from disadvantaged areas perform just as well as those from traditionally affluent locations, despite many affluent areas within Dublin specifically being better equipped, with often prohibitive fee-paying schools that show a larger majority of their students progressing onto university year on year.

Female students are ten percent more likely to complete their degree than male course mates, with 81% receiving degrees. There are also significant gaps noted amongst the correlation between completion rates and Leaving Certificate points achieved. Of those who obtained between 505 and 550 points, only 6.2% did not complete degrees, whereas those who scored between 205 and 250 saw a non-completion rate of 50.9%. The average number of points achieved by students who completed degrees was 412, and those who were considered non-completion obtained on average 336 points.

The data establishes Irish students confidently among OECD neighbours as consistently high performers across third-level on a whole. Despite this, Higher Education Authority CEO Paul O'Toole does not understate the challenges and issues that have been highlighted as a result of the report. O'Toole spoke of the worrying non-completion numbers within STEM subjects: "there remains an issue among certain cohorts, particularly for those studying computing and engineering." He also credited the work of the HEA and the positive effect the data could potentially have on the education sector "by enriching our understanding of the challenges, this report will inform our strategic dialogue with institutions and will ultimately help improve the quality of the student experience."

UCDSU REINTRODUCES AT-HOME STI TESTING KITS

KERRI PENDER

AT the end of March, the UCDSU announced that at-home self-testing STI kits would be available for all students.

The service provider, SH:24 assures that the service is completely discrete and that any order that comes through them will be processed privately and free of charge. At present, the service is available to any student currently residing in Dublin, Kerry or Cork, with a minimum of 200 home test kits being available each day. The service comes as part of a new pilot project, which aims to assess how online services can help support people's sexual health. The service will be in place for 6 weeks, ending on Sunday the 9th of May, after which it will be evaluated.

UCDSU released the announcement via Twitter on the 26th of March: "HSE Home Testing STI kits are coming back. From next Monday the 29th, you can order your home STI test kit from SH24.ie". UCDSU has credited the Social Democrats Co-Leader, Roisin Shortall, for her involvement in introducing the service.

On-campus medical consultations have been unavailable since the 24th of December 2020, and are currently unavailable due to the ongoing coronavirus restrictions. STI testing also falls into this bracket. At present, UCD health services offer an online phone consultation with a doctor or nurse. These consultations are limited and appointments must be booked in advance.

SH:24's home testing kits are available to order after an online assessment is completed to determine what kit you will need. The kit will be supplied in a plain, letterbox-friendly package and will include a return envelope to enclose your completed test in. The home-testing kits will be available for the following conditions; chlamydia, gonorrhoea, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, syphilis and HIV.

While students are not encouraged to engage in sexual activities whilst in the midst of a global pandemic, this service is being promoted by UCDSU to ensure that if a student makes that decision, they will have access to free, safe and discrete resources to aid their sexual health.

To find out more about the service provided by SH:24 you can visit their website at sh24.ie

SIMON HARRIS CRITICISES THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

SEÁN BAKER



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: LAOISE TARRANT

SIMON Harris, Minister for Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, has criticised Ireland's third-level education sector, describing it as "elitist". Harris wants to introduce a fully integrated system that caters for all students.

Speaking at the annual Teachers Union of Ireland conference, Harris said he believes that the current third-level system is flawed, stating there is a "mountain of work to do" in the sector. Harris said the lack of an integrated system has led to several problems, such as skills shortages, inequality and high drop-out rates.

Harris outlined that the third-level system places huge pressure on students. He believes the points system has gotten out of control and in turn, has placed a significant amount of stress and pressure on students; "It has almost allowed an elitist mindset to emerge which defines success in some people's mind on where you went to college rather than what you want to do in life and how best to get to that point".

The Minister further stated that funding for higher and further education has been "ducked and dodged for far too long". Harris stated that the new department will seek to rectify the funding issue. The department expects to receive a final report in the coming months and Harris stated that he does not "intend to be dusting it or seeking a shelf to stick it on". Harris stated that

he is against the mindset of doing "a little bit each year" contrary to some of his fellow ministers who believe in this incremental change, "when it comes to reforming third-level this is not an option". Harris further stated that although funding has been improved in recent years, it is still not at the level required.

Harris also spoke strongly about the lack of basic skills among adults in areas such as literacy. "We live in a country where despite our success and relative prosperity, one in eight adults cannot read or write". Harris also highlighted the lack of numeracy and digital skills stating that one in two adults lack basic digital skills. The Minister outlined his belief that does not get spoken about enough in this country and felt that these issues "don't fit into the narrative we like to portray". Harris intends to "shout from the rooftops about it", and stated that "Covid has shone a very bright light on inequality and we must respond", further outlining that these people cannot be left behind.

Harris confirmed that his department hopes to introduce pilot schemes for rapid Covid-19 testing across Irish colleges, along with aiming to introduce 10,000 new apprenticeships each year by 2025.

The announcements from Harris come three weeks after the initial launch of his three-year plan for his department, where he shared his belief that undergraduate education should be free.

PLANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION NEAR UCD FACE PUBLIC BACKLASH AND MINISTERIAL OBJECTIONS

SHANE LYNCH



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: SINEAD MOHAN

THE plans for the development of student accommodation near UCD by Colbeam Ltd. has hit a roadblock in the form of public objection and ministerial opposition.

The proposed development by Colbeam Ltd. would see the construction of a student accommodation complex that would comprise of 698 beds across eight blocks. Over 60 residents in the area of the planned construction have lodged complaints against the

development. Josepha Madigan TD and Catherine Martin TD, who are both TDs for the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown constituency echoed the concerns of their constituents about the planned development, due to take place approximately 850m from UCD on a site at Our Lady's Grove, Goatstown. They have both made submissions to An Bord Pleanála in regards to the matter.

Concerns have been raised about the size and density

of the planned construction by Martin. Martin has highlighted that the density and height of the proposed development are in excess of what is permitted in the current Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown development plan. She stated that she was making her submission as a locally elected representative of the Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown constituency.

Josepha Madigan, also a TD for the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown constituency, told the board that she and her constituents were not objecting to the construction of student accommodation merely for the sake of objecting to it. She outlined that members of the community are asking that the development benefit both "new and existing" communities mutually. She was afraid that the development by Colbeam Ltd. would not deliver this shared benefit. Madigan has also requested for the board to consider whether there is scope for the development of affordable residential units along with a reduced number of students.

Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, consultants for Colbeam, told the appeals board that the site is suitable for the development of student accommodation given its proximity to UCD. The consultants informed the board that Colbeam was committed to delivering high-quality student accommodation. They said that Colbeam Ltd. was developing the accommodation

complex to meet the demands for improved student accommodation and to alleviate the chronic shortage of appropriately located student bed spaces in Dublin. They also assured the board that they were committed to protecting the integrity of the local amenity alongside the development.

A verdict on the application is due in June.

RESULTS OF USI ELECTIONS

SOPHIE FINN

THE Union of Student in Ireland (USI) executive team has been selected for the year 2021-2022.

The USI congress was held over Zoom and livestreamed on Facebook. Delegates voted online for the new Executive team, and several policies and motions. Five of the ten executive roles were contested races, but there were no more than two candidates in any race.

Former NUIG SU President and USI Vice President for

Welfare Clare Austick has been elected as USI President, replacing President Lorna Fitzpatrick. Beth O'Reilly (UCC SU) is the new Vice President for Campaigns, replacing Craig McHugh. Megan O'Connor (TCD SU) won the contested race against Eimear Curtin for Vice President for Academic Affairs, replacing Kevin McStravock. Somhairle Brennan (IADT SU) is the new Vice President for Welfare, replacing Clare Austick. Bukky Adebawale (Maynooth SU) won the contested race against Luke Daly for Vice President for Equality and Citizenship,

replacing Marie Lyons.

Victor O'Loughlin (GMIT SU) is the new Vice President for the BMW Region, replacing Gary Tobin. John Fortune (WIT SU) won the contested race against Nuttawud Nutchanat for Vice President for the Southern Region, replacing Ciara Kealy. Caoimhe O'Carroll (DCU SU) won the contested race against Caelainn Kerrigan for the role of Vice President for the Dublin Region, replacing Megan O'Neill. Muireann Ni Corcraín (TCD SU) won the

UCD CONFESSIONS CLOSES FOR BUSINESS

SOPHIE FINN

POPULAR Twitter page 'UCD Confessionz' has announced its decision not to continue running the account.

The account had a strong following among UCD students and had been active since 2019. The page allowed anonymous submissions to be published through its account using the Curiouscat social network. Several posts received attention for causing controversy, including posts expressing sexual interest with named officers of UCDSU.

The *University Observer* spoke to an administrator of the popular account regarding the reasons behind the account closure. The administrator outlined how the team "kinda stopped posting due to lack of interest." They further stated that they "found it to be quite fun to actually build up the page, but once we gained a lot of followers that enjoyment faded. And also confession accounts just breed toxicity and drama".

Speaking on some of the issues they encountered as administrator, they outlined "we don't like it when people are

upset about the confessions being posted. One problem we ran into was where if we got a confession with someone's name in it, we weren't sure if we should censor it or not. [Some] people love the attention of having their name be in a confession, while others don't, and there's no real way to keep everyone happy."

The administrator outlined that "the biggest reason" for discontinuing the accounts was that they "think that we should all just focus on ourselves and our own lives. We're pretty reserved people and it kind of contradicted our values to be doing this page". The administrator outlined that although they "enjoyed building the page and interacting with our 300-400 followers at the time" as the page grew "it was harder to interact with replies and stuff". The administrator further said their favourite part of running the page was "seeing people come together in these hard times and being able to socialise or just find new friends to talk to... I think that's a really nice thing to see!".

Since the closure of the account, a new page 'ConfessionUCD' has entered the scene in an attempt to fill the void left by UCD Confessionz.



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: SINEAD MOHAN

THE 2020-2021 STUDENTS' UNION ROUND UP.

DOIREANN DE COURCY MAC DONNELL



Speaking to Conor Anderson, outgoing UCDSU President, Rauri Power, current Welfare Officer and Incoming President for 2021/2022, Leighton Gray, outgoing Campaign & Engagements Officer, Carla Gummerson, returning Graduate Officer, and Sarah Michalek, returning Entertainment Officer, *The University Observer* asked about their reflections on the year for the Students' Union - the highs, lows, and what they know now.

What was the highlight of the year?

Carla Gummerson: For me particularly it would be being able to give out the PhD conference funds; it has been a huge highlight... Particularly for my role, it has been really great to be able to hand out... The free vending machines for period products, I'm very excited about that.

Rauri Power: I would say the nursing and midwifery video... It's still a live issue, and there's going to be a focus on that next year to get that bursary increased to accurately reflect the contribution being made. I really like the direct platforming of students. I think that was quite nice.

Leighton Gray: I think I would be the same, with the Graduate Entry Medicine (GEM) fees freeze. It was a real big thing for us as well, especially Conor.

Conor Anderson: I mean the entire campaign around GEMs was my favourite bit.

Sarah Michalek: I think the whole year was a massive learning point, just with online events they were all different. I knew more each time we did it. I think the highlight was maybe the first year quiz series because it was successful and it was my attempt at trying to get people to actually talk to each other and meet each other online. I think overall I enjoyed trying to figure out the logistics of everything.

With previous Sabbatical experience, how important did Anderson find the year as Graduate Officer when taking on the role of UCDSU President?

Anderson: Massive. [...] If I could wave a wand and mandate that all Sabbatical terms were two years with no consequences I would. I cannot overstate how much benefit I got from already having a year. Just the fact that I knew all the staff, that I was aware of the power structure within the university... the first year as a Sabbatical Officer, the learning curve is a vertical wall... The typical lifecycle of a Sabbatical Officer is you spend the entire first term learning the ropes, and then you have, maybe, two months in the second term to actually get anything done - which is an excellent

recipe for Sabbatical Officers never getting anything done because the university operates on a much longer time scale. The university operates on the scale of two to five years, and we're these little mayfly creatures with single-year terms... We come in mid-way through a project. We come in after the project starts and we leave before the project is done. And then it's completely out of our hands, and it's all in the hands of UMT and Academic Council. But they have different agendas than we do. You can see that €48 million edifice that's being planned. That's their agenda, that's what's being focused on.

Do the roles within the Students' Union work well?

Anderson: I think the roles work. It's a strength and a weakness because it depends who ends up in the role. But I think a strength... is that... you get to make the role what you want... I was allowed to focus almost entirely on this rabble-rousing, pseudo-labour organising: town halls meetings, getting students to write letters to their schools, and focussing on [the] grassroots. That was my idea. Obviously, each role does have constitutional delimiters, but I think the roles work.

Gray: I suppose with mine; technically, constitutionally, social media isn't part of my role but it has taken most of my time, and that's partially because of Covid. I do think in a normal year it wouldn't work as well, just because all the campaigns have become social media focussed, more or less, so I could combine the two. I do know that some of the permanent staff are hoping to maybe have a [designated] social media person so that it's not just the C&E Officer. That being said, I do think it's worked for me because I have been able to support everyone else's campaigns and be [...] a little supportive person in the background that knows stuff about campaigns and can support wherever it's needed. I think generally it's been grand, but it's just sorting out the social media aspect because it does take up a lot of time.

Michalek: The ENTS role, which was obviously reintroduced recently, I think it's great... it is necessary to have an ENTS Sabbat and an ENTS staff member? Absolutely... I also think the ENTS forum is a great thing, it's another way to get students who are more into events, giving them an opportunity to get involved as well. Overall it's putting on events from a student's point of view. Obviously I wouldn't have had an entire year online [as a student]. I would have had half a year online, and in general being able to connect with students on that level, because I know what it's like. I think it's good.

Gummerson: For me, I think there's a huge necessity for a Graduate Officer. I think if there was no Graduate Officer role, and this was to land on the Education Officer, I don't think that role

would be able to handle it, their role is so in-depth anyway with the undergrads. I think it met every expectation I had because I got into this to help students and that kind of was my main focus. I knew casework was going to be 70%, if not more, of the work that I do. I love my job, hence why I re-ran for it, and I think it definitely fits in with everyone else and the role is fit for purpose.

Power: I would agree with Carla to a large extent. [Welfare] at times, can feel like it's a role I would like not to exist because you're in place for when something has gone wrong. The workload at times can be quite exhausting. You do have quite a lot of things within your remit, it's kind of an all-encompassing role... For example, sexual harassment was a big thing this year, particular with Dr Ní Shuilleabháin at the beginning of the year. Part of what I'd like to do is to limit the remit of the Welfare Officer. It's really positive as part of the Dignity and Respect review, there's talk of getting in a designated unit to look at that. So that's what we need to have - targeted interventionism from the university side of it, so that the supports are in place and you don't need a Welfare Officer to fill the stopgap. It's the same with accommodation, dodgy landlords, things like that. I think there's a need for more systemic reforms to negate the need for one, but I think there will be a need for one for quite a while. I think it's functional, it's just a lot of work, and it's a bit stressful.

For personal reasons, Hannah Byson has been unable to work during the past trimester as Education Officer. The absence of an Education Officer has meant that this casework was shared among other Sabbatical members. How has the Union found this?

Gummerson: We've been grand (she laughs). We've been doing well I think, we've pulled it out of the bag really with one person down. I think myself, Conor and Rauri, wherever fits, wherever it aligns within our role [we share it]... All the emails get sent to [the Education] email, and that gets then disseminated through us all. The Education role would sometimes get some Welfare questions within it, which would pertain to Rauri really. My job is the same thing, other than for Graduates, so it really aligns with it. I think we've done the best that we could. It has been a little bit more difficult because there has been more work on us, but I think we've been doing a [good] job in this regard.

Anderson: That's it!

Power: I would have looked at the library part if, Carla has been doing great work on SUSI and academic supports. We have had to break it up. It has been challenging - workload wise - there's no question on that. But I think we've got through it largely unscathed at a time when there's a lot of queries coming in, particularly when things have been moving online. Disability and Access, because that was quite a big focus of Hannah's this year, there have been issues coming up with lecture recordings and things like that. There's a lot of casework to be managed on it. I think we have gotten through it fairly alright.

How well has the Students' Union coped with the lack of a Housing Officer?

Gummerson: I'll come in because I feel very strongly about this area. I think we are definitely lacking. I really feel we need an Accommodation Officer, it's something we have spoken about at length, in more recent weeks even. That's simply to do with a lot of the private accommodation [that] we don't have any hold over. It's fine for Res, we can try battle with management, which they actually were very flexible this year with us. I just think when it comes to the PRTB and private landlords, it gets messy. It gets messy, particularly for international students. This year we would have seen a lot of international students go home and be stuck with contracts that they can't get out of because they paid for the whole year. I feel, anyway, we have felt the loss of not having a Housing Officer.

Power: It was a disaster. Absolute disaster. It all came in September. At one stage everything was just blowing up. Things

contested race against Grián Ní Dhaímhín for the role of Vice President for Gaelige, replacing Clíodhna Ní Dhufhaigh. Jenna Barry (LIT SU) is the new Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs, replacing Adam Clarke. Ellen Fearon is still NUS-USI President.

For me as well, I had to learn to put on online events that are more engaging, and cater them more to what students actually want, and what is most doable and sought after. The ENTs online ball was pretty much one of the first things I did. It was good that I got to collaborate with other Entertainments Officers because I don't think that's been done very often. But it was a case of 'oh, here, go watch this DJ on your screen for two hours'. We tried to make it engaging but we couldn't even all be presenting it because we couldn't be in the same room. I think it was the case that people just had to accept this is how it is, and I'm going to put on events to the best of my ability with the restrictions in place.

Anderson: I mean the bizarre thing is that I almost feel that we had better engagement this year politically than we did last year. Certainly we had a bigger win than we ever had last year. I honestly don't know how much of that is down to what we were trying to do. The big [on-campus rent] campaign we ran last year was a doomed campaign. There was no way we were going to do it. It's UCD. What we were campaigning for then was never going to happen, no matter how hard we tried. But the campaign we did this year was evidently much more achievable because they were asking for a fees-freeze, which is different from money back - and UCD is never going to give money back. The focus last year was very much on the top-down, where the plan, we're going to have a big protest, we're going to try to do an action, we're going to paint a banner... versus my strategy which was just meet with students in terms of their class and see if they can get twenty people to come, and see if they can get fifty names on a letter. I don't know what that kind of engagement would have looked like in a normal year, but in terms of the number of students that came to me, and who I had conversations with, talking about getting politically engaged - I mean we had letters sent by science students, business students, medical students, we had students in res interested. And keep in mind we had students like politics students which weren't materialised. Science students wrote a letter and then it fell through because they're in their Masters year. Business students were really fantastic, but their demand was never going to happen because they were asking for a refund - you have to weigh [up] what you're asking with, how many people you have, what your leverage is. The GEMs were the most involved and the longest-running campaign, so they were the most successful. We had nothing like that engagement last year. There's an element of that [which] is [that] a lot more students were pissed off at UCD this year than they were last year. Trying to mobilise students around the [on-campus] rent [last year] - most students aren't paying rent at UCD. A lot of the students who are the base of the Students' Union aren't paying rent at UCD, and a lot of the students who come to us are in financial difficulty, and if you're in financial difficulty, I'm sorry to say you're not living on-campus with rents what they are. It was more difficult to mobilise people [then]. But then you have all the people emailing me about the student levy. People are pissed-off, because it's obviously unfair. I think it's a bit of both. **It's a strategic difference, I think, that drove some of the engagement we had politically, but it's also just a material difference because everyone's pissed-off. Everyone's mad.**

The way they're described, many of the meetings that the UCDSU attend and take part in seem like a foregone conclusion. So then, where are the decisions being made? Who is making them? Where is the nitty-gritty happening? Who is pulling the strings behind the scenes?

Anderson: UMT.

Power: Even sometimes I feel it is a select few members of the UMT. When there's something that you're in agreement with management on - one example of this is the University For All initiative. That's universally positive, we've got great time for that initiative... I actually put in very little effort and emailed one or two people, and said 'look, we'd love to get more in the new buildings on campus' - because that's endorsed by the UMT, it's no problem. It's just so easy to get that kind of structural change done, and when it's even a minor, minor thing that would be of tangible benefit to students, if there are any reservations from management, you're strung along, you go through SEG, you go through everything. Realistically it comes down to two or three people that decide how everything is managed. If you're not in their good books, or don't go about things in a way that they appreciate, you're pretty much finished and you can get nothing done. Conor was saying he doesn't put in the effort on GA. Conor speaks very well on GA. But I will be someone who wastes a lot of time in advance reading through all the papers and preparing a really good long spiel, but it doesn't matter.

How would the UCDSU rate their lobbying efforts with GA and other boards, and their correspondence with UCD management?

Anderson: Zero, but I didn't try. As far as I'm concerned GA is a rubber-stamping body and we go on there to put on a little song and dance for management. It is a non-factor as far as I'm concerned. The amount of time and effort it would take to really effectively utilise GA versus the reward we would see - we would have to spend a huge amount of time on it, do a huge amount of research, do a ton of lobbying with individuals, and the reward would be nothing as far as I can tell, because I have never seen anything get voted down at GA. Nothing ever gets called for a vote! UMT, Management, Deeks, the Registrar etcetera etcetera just bring their plans, do their presentations, and then everyone sorta goes 'yeah, ok, cool, sounds good'. And this gets less true the lower down you go to subgroups, like the Student Experience Group (SEG), the education groups, some of the Academic Council subcommittees, where there is actual debate and you do see policy being pushed through. But again, our terms [as Sabbats] are too short. We don't have the experience, we don't have the background, we don't have the time. If we want to also do all the other student-facing lobbying, and then you add events into that, we don't have the time to effectively research and plan. We can maybe get a couple of good submissions going, but even then, they are kind of like 'oh look, well done, good job, cute little submission', and then we're gone! The working group is formed in May, and all of us are out by that point.

Gray: I don't sit on a lot of boards because the C&E role doesn't, but I have been talking to the Dean of Students about a submission, and he suggested that it should go to SEG, [and] SEG was the end of March. So it took 4 months to get into SEG, and they were late so they gave me even less time to speak, and when I did [I] got a bunch of people speaking over me, because they decided they knew better, even though I was talking about a trans issue. That was annoying. They let me speak at the end and I [explained] 'you're wrong, this is the issue', and they were

like 'alright [shrugs shoulders], see ya!'. It's very frustrating. I can't imagine being in meetings like that all the time. And even though those are the very few interactions I've had with people like that, Mark Rogers has been not effective. I think he walked out in the meeting I was in'.

Anderson: I made him storm out!

Power: Well he did say he had to go...

Gray: He did say he had to go, but he stormed out.

Anderson: He left in a huff. I will also say, I respect Mark Rogers. I think he's a great academic. I think he's a decent guy and I like him a lot. We just represent opposing sides. On September 24th of last year, we had an emergency meeting with Mark Rogers and the three deans, Barbara, Maria and Jason, where they told us UCD was going fully online... It was the Friday before the first day of term... They told us this... and then I was like 'I don't know what to say, I told you this was going to happen', I described this as the nightmare scenario. It's in print from two months ago, when I said the lockdown would not allow happen is for students to come from abroad, do their quarantine and then go directly into the teeth of another lockdown'. And basically [what was said] was 'I was hoping we could have a productive conversation, but I see some people just want to keep bringing up the past' and he left the meeting.

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Anderson: And then they cut him off it's like that old joke. People always say to use the proper channels because they control them. They're confident they won't work. UCD is not democratic at all. It's top-down. **UMT control everything, they make all the decisions, and also, by the way, staff feel this too. It's not just students - it's academics, it's staff.** They're the exact same way we are. They're less able to openly condescend to academic staff in venues like GA, but they just blow them off the same way they do to us. What management do is they do a lot of "consultation", basically surveying. It's focus-grouping basically. None of it is on any kind of binding basis... UMT meets once every two weeks! GA meets however many times a year. UMT is meeting every other week and having strategic discussions with people at the highest level of management, and then these groups that are supposedly in charge of these things meet twice a year, four times a year, and those are the only times that we, as Sabbats, get in to try make some kind of presentation. And it's treated like some kind of consultative process. Even the Covid-19 group I sit on - it's the Covid-19 Consultation Committee. It's not binding! We're not voting on anything. We're not passing any kind of resolution. It's just to get feedback, 'see what people think', and they just do whatever they want to do! They're under no obligation to take those opinions into consideration.

What's the biggest disappointment of the year?

Michalek: Not being in person. Not being in person and not being able to fulfil expectations that were set. For me anyways that was it, not being able to facilitate people meeting each other and just having the craic, and not being able to feel like part of a community I suppose. We obviously did our best online, but even after Council every second Monday we'd be going to the Clubhouse... Even the Happy Pear, I was so excited for that. And it was still great, and it was still very engaged with but it just would have had so much more oomph in person.

Gray: I'm kind of the same. A lot of my campaign was 'let's just throw ourselves into protests and sit-ins' and that was all gone,

essentially my campaign for running was gone by the time I was voted in. And yes we adapted, and it's been grand, but it has been a shame not to be able to utilise the people power that we have been seeing this year in a face-to-face way. We're the same as students, we do feel really disconnected. It's a shame - nothing we can do - but it's a bit lonely and disappointing.

Anderson: For me, it's definitely [that] in February I hit a wall. The Nursing video came out and, basically, I hit a wall and lost all my energy, and the Smurfit campaign fizzled, and that's a big disappointment to me... I really wish I could have kept the energy up more for the Smurfit students because they were the second campaign to coalesce after the GEMs, and it just didn't quite come together the way the GEMs did, and I feel if I could have worked a little harder, or been a little more active or vocal, then maybe it could have. That for me is the biggest bummer. Other campaigns came together and fizzled, but that was the biggest.

Power: I would definitely say it was the figures at the beginning of the year was probably the thing that set me off the most. They put out the speculative figures of how much people would be back on campus - the forty to sixty per cent. That was very stressful. It was a few weeks of back and forth between ourselves and management, a few weeks of writing letters to the Registrar trying to get clarity on it. I think we were very vindicated in what we did, trying to see is this the reality, are students going to be caught out? We were dogged in our communications... I thought we went about it properly. It was unfortunate, it pitted us very quickly against management at the beginning of the year. But the consequences of it were so severe. The whole time I'm inside Residential meetings with students who are getting fined, and it's not the Estate Service's fault - they're lonely, they're meeting up in small groups outside. This has a huge impact financially. **There are so many students feeling completely lied to. And they were lied to.**

Anderson: Yes, they were.

Power: And of course we will maintain good relationships, and we'll move past this going forward next year, **we can't see a repeat of this. It was really frustrating that despite the efforts of ourselves, from academic staff, that it just had such a detrimental impact on students that lasted the whole way through the year. I found that difficult. It didn't matter how much work we did, how much we tried to advocate for students, it just happened anyway.**

Gummerson: They're kind of similar to my one - a bit of a mix with the Smurfit students and I suppose particularly because such a high amount of them are international students. They were brought over here under false pretences essentially, and have been left to study in a room for the whole year with no thought at all for them, about what they're going through. For myself, not being able to be down on campus was quite difficult and was a big disappointment. But I think that disappointment could have been eased a little bit if the students weren't there. A lot of them would have went home at Christmas. The pressure and stress that would have put them under - that was very difficult for me... I felt a bit useless. How do we help? What do we do? Again Ruairi would have had a good few Res meetings from that cohort and it was really tough. You're sitting there, and you're nearly in agreement with the student - they're just trying to make a friend - and it happened that two or three of them were in the room and the RAs caught them. I suppose and then they were brought up. **You've put socially-stunned students into isolation essentially in a different country, and then expected them to thrive? That was a big disappointment for me, and not being able to do very much for them.**

Did the Sabbatical team enjoy the year?

Gummerson: I think it's clear for me - I wouldn't have re-run if I didn't like it. Of course, look, it's hard. There are parts of it that are hard. I have gained so much personally though - from my own personal skills to some great friends, and learning as well. I've just loved helping students. I love seeing students getting their cases sorted. I thrive off that - they're small little things that you just think are going to be difficult to get sorted and then it gets sorted like this [as she clicks her fingers], and the student is de-stressed and it all goes well. It is difficult... I would be on quite a few [committees and boards] and for me, that is something that I struggle with because I believe in student partnership. It's something that I feel when it works, it works well... But yeah, I love my job, I love everything about it - even the difficult days. Conor made it look so good! [laughs]

What is your advice for the new members of the Sabbat team?

Anderson: My advice is to take all your cues from the students. Do what they want you to do, and if you're doing what the students want you to do, and you're campaigning for the things they're asking you to campaign for, they'll be with you all the way... It feels so good to help people who are interested in organising to help themselves.

Gray: I think the biggest advice would be finding the balance between relaying the reality of campaigns to students... I think it's important to find a good balance in explaining how campaigns work, in terms of time and numbers... If you communicate how these things work effectively, you might get less people because they're less disillusioned, but you will get the people who will actually do the work with you, and get stuff done.

Anderson: I mean obviously I ran again - I love this stupid job, and I love this stupid Union. The hardest thing about this year is that the wins didn't feel like wins. We had a number of really solid media days, the wins with the GEMs, the rush of the campaigns, everything in the media in September/October, we had the Dolores Cahill thing... but as soon as I would get off the phone, I'm just here at my laptop. In a regular year we'd go out to the Clubhouse, we'd go out to celebrate, we'd do something, so that

was really hard. If this was a normal year, with the amount of stuff we accomplished, that would have been so much fun and so energizing. But even with all of that, even though it was kind of a bummer, and isolating, and feels very disconnected, I would do this again if I could do it again.

Michalek: I definitely loved the role, even though it was a massive challenge. There was a lot of learning about myself - what I'm able to do and what I'm not able to do. It was also, genuinely, working with a really great team... I'm only delighted some are re-elected! Even when I'd put on these events, when some weren't very well attended I'd feel really bad, but I'd get random little messages off students; 'that was a really nice event', 'that was a good competition, I appreciated that', or 'yesterday someone messaged me 'I finally got around to going to exam supports' and it made my little heart so happy. Things like that really do build you... I suppose it was also a sense of purpose. Despite being disappointed knowing I wouldn't be able to do a lot on campus, it was still this sense of purpose [that] I still want people to be able to meet each other, I still want people to have something to go to, to be entertained, and I mean, in all fairness to us, I think we have put on substantially more events than any of the other SUs that I know of. It gives you a sense of fulfilment, despite the struggle, it's really rewarding.

Power: I found it grand. There were parts of it I really enjoyed - I'm a bit of a policy nerd so I like being able to see that kind of stuff progress. One thing I'm really excited [about] for next year is we started that mental health forum. I really want to try to get a fully costed development plan... But I [did] find [that] it is stressful. For every half the day you're having great craic, and you've lovely co-workers, and you're able to help people, that's brilliant, but it can really get you run down. Like Conor was saying, you can hit a wall at times. It has been mixed. I'm hoping next year will be, not easier, but more interactive so you're not going cracked by yourself. Mixed, but I definitely would resonate with a lot of what Carla said in terms of seeing a student get sorted out. That makes it worthwhile.

Gray: I'm obviously the only person who didn't re-run, but that being said I've been in the Union the longest out of anyone here. This is my fifth year in the Union and I think it's just coming up to my time to finish and move on. I suppose I've had a slightly different experience to everyone else. I have been very open on our social media about having Borderline, so the highs were pretty high, and the lows were pretty low. I loved interacting with students, I loved when campaigns went well, I love that a bunch of trans kids - that are actually adults but are babies to me - came to me and spoke to me, and felt represented in the Union for the first time and that they had someone to go to, which I think is one of the biggest things for me. I loved when meetings were going well, and stuff was going places, and campaigns went well, and students felt empowered. But, at the same time, the social media felt really difficult. Conor and Ruairi will probably know this the best, where I would be in floods sometimes over the messages we would get. Like the BDSM, we got death threats, and then we posted something about menstrual hygiene [that] said 'open to anyone who menstruates'. A lot of TERFs attacked me personally and assaulted my identity. Especially when we were doing a bit more with MAS in semester one, there was a lot of people pulling the whole 'what aboutery'. It's very difficult as a campaigner person and as an activist to get the ugly side of people pushed forward to you all the time, which is why, possibly, having an actual social media person might be beneficial. Maybe it's just a Covid thing, everyone's so at home, and so frustrated, but really it has not been good for my mental health, in the way social media is. I'm hoping next year Danyl won't have to be as on the social media as I was. Apart from the social media part, I really loved working with these guys. I loved working with nice students. It was nice to get things done. But I do think my time at the SU - it's probably a good way to close it.

NATHAN YOUNG

Nathan Young examines some of the difficulties around academic freedom and free speech that opponents of Dolores Cahill will have to address.

The case against Dolores Cahill is, at this stage, pretty obvious to anyone paying attention. She has at least helped with organising mass rallies against the Covid-19 lockdown, and allegedly hosted a party in her castle in Athy. At her rallies, she has made more and more bonkers claims, most recently and notably that the wearing of masks in childhood will lead to a low IQ. On top of that, she has attached herself to a dodgy 'Travel Freedom Alliance' called Freedom Airway & Freedom Travel Alliance (FAFTA), whose acronym sounds like it should be the scourge of small farmers in Latin America, and whose response to being questioned on lies on their website is to subtly change the text without ever

replying to the journalist. This is not her only weird business venture directly related to anti-lockdown politics, either.

Cahill's tenure as chair of the laughable yet grotesque Irish Freedom Party (IFP) saw a grand total of no seats being won by the party, despite contesting local and national elections. Even the larger anti-lockdown voices in Irish Public life have avoided association with the professor, presumably over some inclination that people claiming mask usage damages the IQ are talking tripe, and that people who warn of "globalists" are the ideological bedfellows of Alex Jones and David Icke. Even when a good conspiracy theory needs to be voiced, it's best not to say the quiet part loud, after all.

What is less obvious than Cahill's inherent danger to public safety and basic decency, are the potential landmines around academic freedom and free speech for academics that could trigger, if her position in the School of Medicine were targeted. The question may not, and is not, a clear cut case of censorship versus free expression, however, the concerns for the right of the lone academic and dissident are clearly central to this conversation.

First, a distinction. Academic freedom and freedom of expression are related but different concepts. Academic freedom is generally understood to address purely the scope of what can be questioned and researched in an academic context. If Professor Cahill were, for example, to find it difficult to research the effects of masks on IQ because UCD branded masks were a lucrative trade and her seniors in the School of Medicine didn't want to damage that revenue, that would be an attack on academic freedom. Academic freedom does not grant one the right to espouse bull at a rally, because that is not an academic setting.

The far more nebulous concept of free speech is a harder one to work around. While it is either profoundly stupid or unspeakably callous to oppose lockdowns in a global and dangerous pandemic, as Cahill does, her right to protest against them is equal to any other person's right to peaceful protest. No serious model of political rights could possibly depend on the right to protest but only if the protest were for a "good" cause. If the powers that be thought the cause were good, surely they would have at least begun to resolve the issue and ended the need for a protest? People on the liberal left have also taken to the streets during the pandemic, including Black Lives Matter protesters and Debenhams Picketers, but to the extent that either

THE PROPOSED FRENCH HIJAB LEGISLATION CORRODES WOMEN'S AUTONOMY

CAOILFHINN HEGARTY

In the wake of the French senates recent vote, *Caoilfhinn Hegarty* questions the motivations and consequences of a ban on minors wearing the hijab in public

The French Republic does not hold records on the religious affiliations of her inhabitants, in accordance with the secular ideal of "laïcité" which delegates religion squarely to the private domain and decrees that it be absolutely separate from the state. You will find no hint of it on a French census form. In spite of this, that France

"As early as 1989 a pair of sisters, along with one of their schoolmates, were expelled from collège Gabriel-Havez for wearing the "Islamic scarf""

is home to one of Europe's largest Islamic communities is well known, not least due to the passionate and public struggle being waged over the right for French Muslim women to wear the hijab publicly.

This is not a fresh battleground. As early as 1989 a pair of sisters, along with one of their schoolmates, were expelled from *collège Gabriel-Havez* for wearing the "Islamic scarf". In 1994, a government memorandum specified the hijab as one of the ostentatious displays of personal faith which were to be banned from public establishments such as schools. Since the harrowing events of the 2015 Bataclan terror attack, the spotlight trained on public displays of Islamic identity has only burned brighter, accelerating the path to the French senate's vote on the March 13th in favour of outlawing minors from wearing the hijab in public spaces. In order to come into effect, it will need to be confirmed by the National Assembly, leaving a gap of opportunity for opponents that they are loudly filling.

BEWARE OF A THREAT TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM

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as their workforce's most attractive option for a better life and profit by their manpower, but do not validate them as French until they have conformed to your taste. Not even if they were born and raised there.

The debate surrounding women's right to don the hijab smacks particularly of the colonial "civilising mission", with a hefty side-servicing of hypocrisy. One of the main arguments in favour of the ban, apart from upholding laïcité, asserts that the hijab is essentially anti-feminist.

"Maintain overseas colonies, grow rich off their resources, violently suppress rebellions, deliberately destabilize them, then present yourself as their workforce's most attractive option for a better life and profit by their manpower, but do not validate them as French until they have conformed to your taste".

This dignity must obviously and crucially be ensured for those women in France who are pressured or threatened by family or community members to wear the hijab against their will, and must be part of a larger effort to combat violence against women, however, there is no reason to believe that this law will be any more successful than France's previous attempts to combat religious extremism. If anything, it presents the perfect excuse for fundamentalists to keep vulnerable girls out of the public eye.

France aspires to be a country wherein freedom and equality is guaranteed and believes the total separation of religion from every aspect of public life as a cornerstone of this effort. However, Muslim women deserve the liberty to go covered or uncovered as they please, whether they are getting an education, joining the workforce, or out enjoying themselves on one of France's public holidays. Six of which are Catholic feast days.

The irony of this is that Muslim women who wish to wear the hijab are repeatedly shouted down whenever they

express their opinion, and dismissed as unqualified to make this decision for themselves. If we are to accept that it is wrong for countries such as Iran to force the wearing of the hijab in public (and it unequivocally is), then it is equally wrong for France to force the removal of it. Both mandates stem from an impulse to police women's dress due to a fear that the choices they make about which parts of their bodies to show presents a moral danger to the nation. If this new law passes the National Assembly, all French girls under the age of eighteen will have had their ability to dress freely in accordance with their desires undermined. It is a bizarre lapse in logic that the French government can accept that girls from the age of sixteen are capable of consenting to sex, but this ability to make decisions about their bodies magically evaporates when it comes to religious dress. French girls, girls everywhere, deserve the dignity of being able to assert their bodily autonomy in full.

This dignity must obviously and crucially be ensured for those women in France who are pressured or threatened by family or community members to wear the hijab against their will, and must be part of a larger effort to combat violence against women, however, there is no reason to believe that this law will be any more successful than France's previous attempts to combat religious extremism. If anything, it presents the perfect excuse for fundamentalists to keep vulnerable girls out of the public eye.

France aspires to be a country wherein freedom and equality is guaranteed and believes the total separation of religion from every aspect of public life as a cornerstone of this effort. However, Muslim women deserve the liberty to go covered or uncovered as they please, whether they are getting an education, joining the workforce, or out enjoying themselves on one of France's public holidays. Six of which are Catholic feast days.

The irony of this is that Muslim women who wish to wear the hijab are repeatedly shouted down whenever they

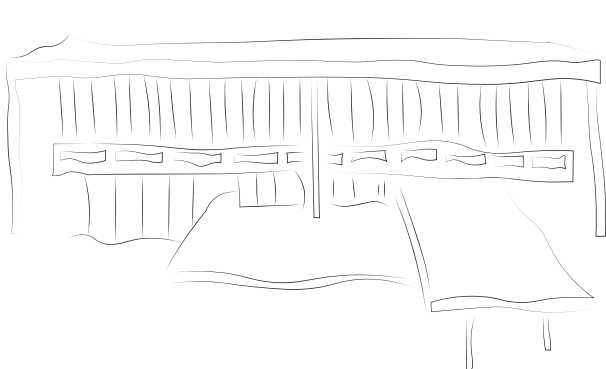
COMMENT

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".

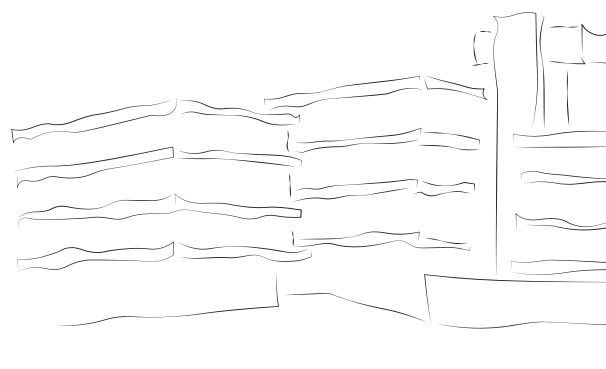
The issue with this line of attack is that it openly links Cahill's politics, and not a singular demonstrable harm, apart from her agenda. If this line of reasoning is used to reprimand Cahill, it may have a damaging effect on other politically active academics whose politics may be far less dangerous to students, but far more worrisome for UCD's coffers. With precedence set around "damaging" political activity, an excuse can be found. This is all without even having addressed what martyrdom may do to her influence, given that her right-wing links have, again, been inextricably linked to the demanded investigation.

On a side note, UCDSU appears to be claiming victory for Dolores Cahill's resignation from the Chair of the IFP. Her resignation did come just mere days after Anderson wrote to the heads of the UCD School of Medicine and of UCD Human Resources looking for an investigation into Cahill. Meanwhile, there are online forums and pages where members of the small but growing far-right are predicting, or sometimes hoping, that Cahill will soon take on a new role, possibly in a new party. The most popular among these predictions is that she and fellow crackpot Ben Gilroy will soon announce a new party. The question for UCDSU is not so much about whether there is evidence that this is a result of their calls (there isn't), but whether this would be a victory at all. To treat the chair of the IFP as an important position is to treat the IFP as something other than a cesspit of demagoguery, stupidity, and bigotry. With any luck, Cahill's resignation is connected to a bitter division over something inane, and whatever new project she embarks on serves only to make her side more impotent. For now, it's too early to tell.

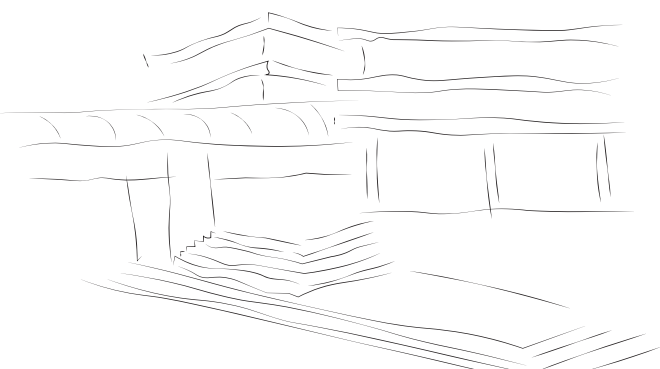
Cahill has acted with blatant disregard for the concept of truth in her lying speeches, with contempt for the rest of society in the alleged hosting organising of a party in her castle in Athy, and in opposition to reason itself with her mad claims about Natural Law. A solid case against her as a lecturer on the simple grounds that she is reckless could easily be made. To be clear: Cahill being discredited in the eyes of potential followers and removed from authority over students would be a good thing, but if done clumsily will arm UCD with a disciplinary precedence too good to disarm.



THE RESTAURANT BUILDING



THE NEWMAN BUILDING



THE TIERNEY BUILDING

COMMENT

WHAT HAVE WE ONLINE-LEARNED?

SHANE LYNCH

UCD will hopefully be back to in-person learning from September, so *Shane Lynch* asks what we have learned in our time Online and what from this time can we bring into everyday learning.

THE Covid-19 pandemic arrived on our shores over a year ago now. The advent of this vicious virus brought about many words that we would become accustomed to; masks, social distancing, sanitiser... and online learning. Online learning was alien to the vast majority of students when it became a necessity in the wake of Covid. As a student who was completing my final year in St. Joseph's Secondary School in Drogheda, I was perplexed at the suggestion that we were to complete the Leaving Cert curriculum via means of "online learning". Armed with little more than a mobile phone and a few copies, I persevered at my own peril. "Sure, it'll only be until Easter", they said. "We'll get back in once this all blows over", they said. One year later, here we are, still learning online, only that my trusty mobile phone has been replaced by a laptop and Google Classroom has been replaced by Brightspace. This story may be familiar to some, and a bit different to others, but whether you're a first-year, or whether you're doing a PhD, we're all on this online learning boat navigating through choppy Covid-19 waters.

Apart from the academic lessons that we may have learnt via the means of online learning, we have learnt other important lessons from this unusual experience. We have been made to reconsider how we think about the delivery of education and how we approach everyday learning going forward. The experience of online learning has been fraught with difficulties and it is unsustainable for the long term. However, there may be some benefits, albeit a few, from this period that we would like to keep once we get back on campus. Love it or hate it, there are valuable lessons to be learnt from online learning and those lessons should help us navigate the way forward with insight.

Brightspace is the virtual learning software that we (should) all know by now. If you're not familiar with Brightspace, think of it as Marmite, you either love it or hate it, but you have to accept its existence. Lecturers and module coordinators alike have been using Brightspace to deliver classes, upload course-related content, make lecture slides and recordings available, provide a platform to upload assignments, and all that jazz. The

"The advent of online learning has highlighted, and even exacerbated, socio-economic inequalities between students. There hasn't been equal access to education for all students during the pandemic. The conditions in which some students have engaged in online learning are vastly different to the conditions of other students; inequalities in access to adequate technology, inequalities in access to the UCD campus to use library services, and even inequalities in relation to desk space".

continued use of Brightspace may enhance the everyday learning experience by supplementing it. I believe that it would be very helpful for many students if there was easy access to recordings of lectures, lecture slides and course-related readings via the means of Brightspace to complement the everyday learning experience. This could give students much-needed access and flexibility where needed.

We have learnt as a student body that social contact is key to our wellbeing. Humans are social animals and this has not been magically changed in the age of Covid- 19. Socialisation is a fundamental part of being human, sure any sociologist could tell you that. Student community is as important now as it has ever been and we must commend those who have tried to maintain some sort of social cohesion between students in such unorthodox times via such unorthodox means. It is important that we maintain a student community in the post-pandemic world. There's a lot to be said for in-person socialising and it took a pandemic to realise that we should never take the existence of a student community for granted. There needs to be a concerted effort by those concerned to orchestrate ways in which the incoming first years and current first years can make friends, and to make sure that we as a student body leave no one student behind. Despite the murmurs of some that online learning may be the way forward, this is not the case, simply because online learning does not compensate for the physical and social conditions that allow us as students to truly prosper and grow as human beings. To put it bluntly, an all-online learning approach may turn some of us into docile, unsociable robots.

The advent of online learning has highlighted, and even exacerbated, socio-economic inequalities between students. There hasn't been equal access to education for all students during the pandemic. The conditions in which some students have engaged in online learning are vastly different to the conditions of other students; inequalities in access to adequate technology, inequalities in access to the UCD campus to use library services, and even inequalities in relation to desk space. Whether you're a student who uses a re-con

laptop at their cramped kitchen table, or a student who uses the latest MacPro in their spacious specific study space, I think we can all agree that there's a damning division between those who can access and prosper, and those who can barely connect and struggle, when it comes to education. There's also burning questions in relation to the sustainability of the current regime of tuition fees, Student Centre levies and student contributions. Many students have been priced out of going to university in the first place because of these financial blockades. We really need to have a good hard look at the current for-profit business models of Irish universities and decide whether or not this is the best way forward. I think it would be a good start if we had a Minister for Higher Education who is in favour of expanding university access and is against pricing many students out of accessing a third-level education. There should also be an expansion of student supports so more students can thrive and not merely survive when it comes to third-level education.

The experience of online learning has given us time to reconsider how we approach conventional learning by giving us all a heavy dosage of the unorthodox. Some of our values may have shifted and some of our values may have remained intact. We have learnt many lessons whether that be academically or in relation to how we approach everyday learning. I believe that the lessons we have learnt during this time have led us to reconsider the best way forward to enhance the experience of all students. We have learnt the importance of embracing the social animal that lives inside all of us as humans. We may also use this time to think about the best way forward for higher education institutions and state bodies when it comes to creating fairer and more equitable conditions for those who want to study in Ireland. Online learning may have been an enjoyable experience for some and an excruciating experience for others, but the lessons we have learnt from this experience are priceless when we look at how we want to improve everyday learning in universities across the country when we get back on to campus.

DUBLIN - AN ENDANGERED CITY.

DOIREANN DE COURCY MAC DONNELL

In conversation with Frank McDonald, *Doireann de Courcy Mac Donnell* looks at the demolition of our city and emphasises the need for action, and fast!

Stop, Dublin!

The city is still salvageable but it won't be for much longer if the scourge of developers, and money, and poor planning, continue to tear holes in and pock-mark our city. The city needs saving not just for its heritage, history and buildings, but the city needs saving for its people. Plans for sky-scraping green-wall apartment blocks (costing thousands upon thousands to build per unit) are not plans for the benefit of Dubliners. They are plans for capital gain. No matter how you mask it, through buzz-words or the pretty graphics, the only benefit of building random skyscrapers across the city of Dublin is the benefit to the developer's pocket. These schemes do not have an understanding of and empathy for the city and its people.

Dublin has been ripped apart since the affluence and capitalist ambitions of the Haughey years. This trend has continued for decades, and the destruction has been largely ignored. Georgian terraces and streets were bulldozed to make way for concrete and steel. Frank McDonald, environmentalist, urbanist, and, most importantly, Dubliner, wrote *The Destruction of Dublin* which charted the demolition of our beautiful, complex city, and the disregard for public space. The book blatantly laid bare the assaults that were being committed against the city. Yet still, they happened. Streets and spaces and views were demolished as a result of greed and ambition for profit.

The Destruction of Dublin is almost a difficult read, watching completely avoidable demolition of the character and heritage of the ancient city unfold. However, the one mollifying factor about the construction that happened during that period (and up until recently) was that developments largely respected the established height-line of the city. Now we are beginning to see planning permission being granted for monstrously tall towers, plonked around the city and country.

I am not opposed to building up. There is a severe shortage of affordable housing in the city, and generations of building outwards have resulted in communities further and further from services and life, which can be unpleasant, sprawling, and even isolated. Dublin city needs re-population. However, a few 'landmark' residential towers, at an extortionate cost to build and then to occupy, are absolutely not the way to solve the city housing shortage. Dublin is beautiful, historic and nuanced. It is unique and interesting and a wonderful city to know and live in. But it is being sold out for profit. Now more than ever (and as a result of the pandemic) we understand the importance of walkable cities, pleasant outdoor spaces, safe streets. Many cities across Europe - Paris, Amsterdam, Prague - succeed in marrying modernity and a rich city culture, without the destruction that Dublin faces.

"The city needs saving not just for its heritage, history and buildings, but the city needs saving for its people."

Our city is both underpopulated and suffering from a severe shortage of affordable accommodation. The core is congested with traffic, and few urban spaces invite the city residents to 'be' in the city, as opposed to passing through it when necessary. Undoubtedly, Dublin needs fixing, but the tangled web of bureaucracy makes it difficult to understand where to even begin.

"I think that a number of things have to change. I suppose the [one of the] significant pieces of legislation that were introduced in recent years [was] the building height guidelines, which are mandatory on local authorities to adopt and which promote the whole idea of high rise buildings under the guides of that height equates with density - which isn't necessarily true.

"When [Johnny Ronan] bought that site on Northwall Quay, along with Colony Capital for 180 million euro in 2019, that was based on the presumption that the building height guidelines would take precedence over Dublin City Council's democratically adopted planning scheme for the Docklands area... The idea that the developers who own those sites should be allowed to make a quantum leap in heights is just outrageous compared to what's already been built. It's disproportionate, and the result would be almost surreal by comparison to what has already been built in the Docklands.

"I agree that we need to have a higher density residential development in Dublin, and on brownfield sites... in the inner city that need to be developed. But I don't see anything wrong with development for buildings in five to eight storey heights, which retains the human scale of the city, rather than, you know, seventeen, and nineteen, and twenty-four story towers - which is what is now being proposed in various places. And then culminating in the outrageous proposal in the two-Manhattan scale towers ... on Northwall Quay... you've got a forty-one story tower, and a forty-five story tower!"

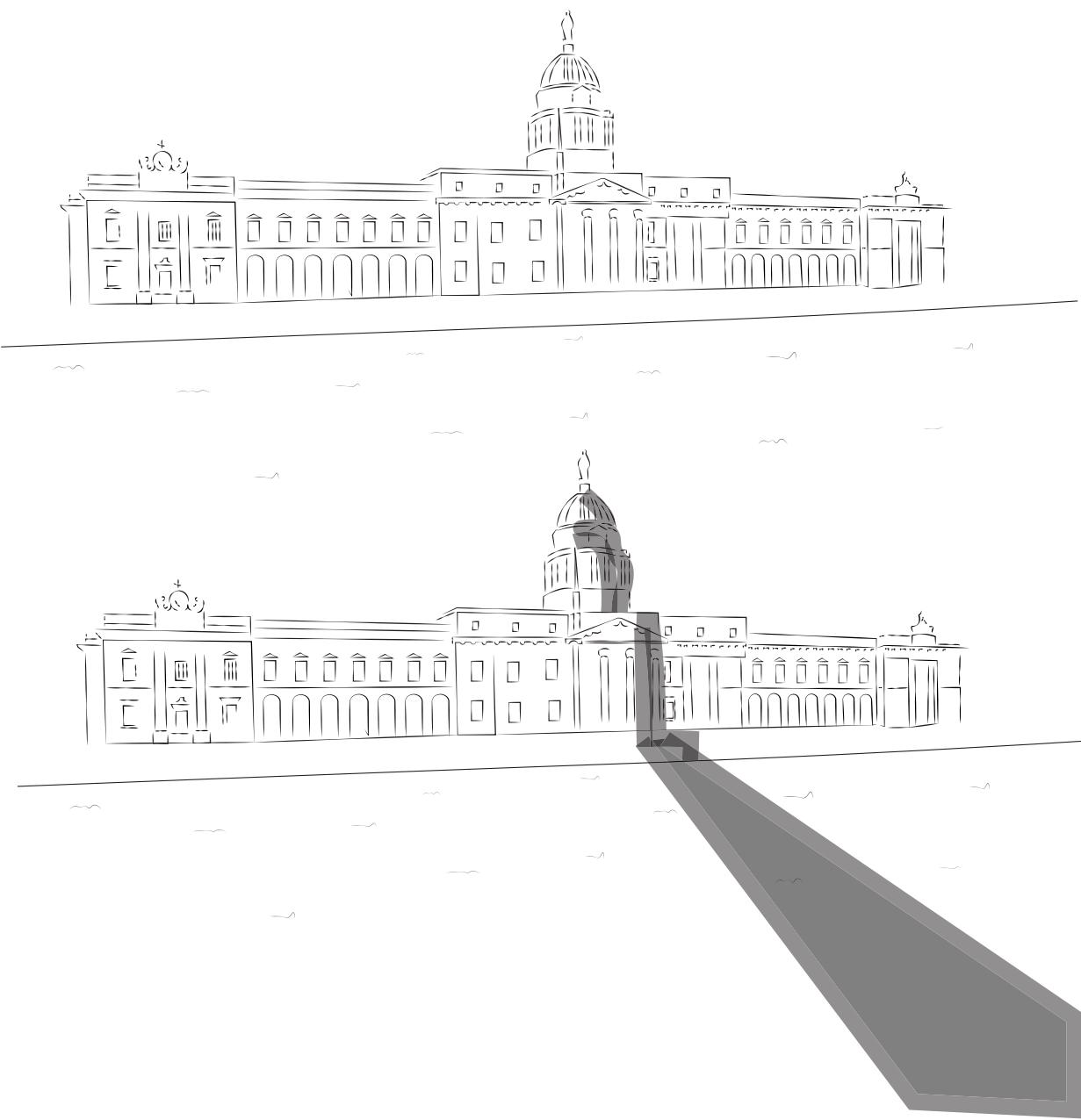


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: LAOISE TARRANT

a quick-fix to the housing shortage across the country. However, in reality, the legislation introduced to give the board these new powers has only served developers, not the people.

"The idea that this is a fast track route to provide new housing is simply untrue, it hasn't worked out like that" McDonald explains. "And in a lot of cases, developers are using it to increase the value of their landholdings. So it's like an elaborate land value exercise. And then when you look at BTR schemes that have been completed, and are available for letting, like Capital Dock, nearly half of the apartments in Capital Dock are still vacant, two years after that tower was completed in January 2019, [the prices are] just too high for the market to bear. So you have to ask yourself - what on earth is going on? That all of these things are being encouraged, and allowed and permitted?"

With regards to how these things are being permitted, An Bord Pleanála is a conglomeration of former planners, members of the Department of Housing and Planning, a former president of the RIAI... But, unlike Dublin City Council, members of An Bord Pleanála are not democratically elected; they're basically faceless

down apartment design standards to facilitate BTR schemes.... I think that is up-ending the whole idea of proper planning and sustainable development, which is meant to be the core objective of the whole planning system."

Unfortunately, people don't seem to care. "They just aren't interested, which is tragic. Because they're going to inherit the city that's being created now, and also, they're facing, it seems to me, a life of paying rent, you know, rather than owning homes of their own". Dublin city and county has universities with excellent Schools of Architecture, programmes for planning and development, courses in Urban Design. Why then do students not care, or more so not even know, about what's happening in their environs?

Speaking with McDonald, we also discussed the development of College Green, the scourge of the co-living schemes rearing their ugly heads across the city, the Dublin Central scheme on Upper O'Connell Street, the apartment and hotel proposal for the residential Goatstown, the Hendrons' site on Dominick Street. At the end of the day, the destruction of our city is not because people aren't interested enough; plenty are. Many of these schemes have had many objections lodged against them. The fact is, when it comes to Dublin, money matters more.

To save the city we need to make more submissions and objections, become more engaged, more vocal, unignorable. But mostly, Dublin City Council, An Bord Pleanála, Department of Planning, developers need to stop and consider the impact of their actions.

We need to save our city, before it's beyond repair.

"At the end of the day, the destruction of our city is not because people aren't interested enough; plenty are. Many of these schemes have had many objections lodged against them. The fact is, when it comes to Dublin, money matters more."

people. And yet, when it comes to Strategic Housing Development (SHD) applications, for example on the North Wall Quay project, pre-planning discussions take place with the board's planning inspectors... And all of those discussions took place behind closed doors".

"There's a huge democratic deficit in planning as a result of Ministerial guidelines. The whole SHD process... relying on things like the building height guidelines - which encourage greater heights - and on the dumbled-

THE HYPOCRISY OF HOTEL QUARANTINE

NESSA DENIHAN

Recently a family returning to Ireland from abroad received major attention surrounding their complaints of Hotel Quarantine. *Nessa Denihan* asks if there's an air of hypocrisy concerning the attention they got when compared to those in Direct Provision.

THE issue of mandatory quarantining has long been a thorn in the side of the Irish government. Theoretically, all persons who have been overseas in the 14 days prior to entering Ireland are required to quarantine but it is fair to say that this requirement has been ignored by many. Furthermore, it is challenging for the authorities to police compliance with a measure that largely relies on public buy-in.

For a long time, the government appeared to adopt a rather light-touch approach which seemed to overestimate the level of cooperation on the part of those travelling into the state. After the disastrous public health situation in January which the government found itself in, criticism on this issue seemed to rise in tandem with coronavirus cases in Ireland. It was evident that the government had to act more decisively to regain

quarantine is presumably intended to act as a deterrent factor.

Michelle O'Dowd, her husband and their three children were required to spend 12 days in quarantine at the Crown Plaza Hotel after arriving in Ireland from Australia via Dubai. At the time of their arrival, Dubai was on the list of 33 high-risk countries. O'Dowd has spoken to several news outlets about her shock at the conditions in the hotel quarantine. She contended that neither the airport nor the hotel staff observed best practice and that the hotel room provided for her family was inappropriate, particularly for her young children. The family was later upgraded to a suite.

When this story broke online, it sparked heated debate on social media. Journalist with the *Irish Times*, Mark Paul, described the situation in which the family found themselves in as 'disproportionate' and 'obscene'. In response, others claimed that such fervent defence of those required to quarantine was itself unnecessary. Complaints about the discomfort or inconvenience associated with hotel quarantining seem to pale in comparison to the overcrowded and inhumane conditions in Direct Provision centres in which asylum seekers can spend several years or the often-substandard emergency accommodation provided for the thousands of homeless people in Ireland.

It was undoubtedly stressful for O'Dowd and her family to organise their quarantine at relatively short notice and was certainly unfortunate that one of the children spent her birthday in a cramped hotel room. However, it seems utterly disingenuous for individuals like Paul to use emotionally charged language like 'disproportionate' and 'obscene' in this context. When one considers that those in mandatory hotel quarantine will only be quarantined for a maximum of 14 days, in relatively comfortable accommodation and being served decent fare, it seems disingenuous to describe the situation as being akin to some sort of temporary incarceration. O'Dowd was given a platform and her voice elevated in a manner that would not usually be done for marginalised individuals like asylum seekers. It is also unlikely that these people's request for upgraded accommodation would be granted.

O'Dowd stated that 'it was the lack of space for our physical and mental health and my children's health that tipped me over the edge'. Our contemporary understanding of wellbeing, both mental and physical, has come on by leaps and bounds. Recent surveys indicate that many Irish people have experienced heightened levels of stress, anxiety and isolation since the pandemic began. This distress would of course be compounded if you lived in particularly unsuitable or unsafe conditions. Direct provision began as an interim

measure over two decades ago. The problems with the system are well-documented, and it has been widely condemned for stripping residents of their dignity and imposing a form of learned helplessness upon them. Suicidal ideation is common among residents. It should also come as no surprise that overcrowded Direct Provision centres have been hotbeds for Covid-19.

Although many activists and NGOs have campaigned tirelessly to raise awareness about the degrading nature of the direct provision system, there has been continued political inertia on this front. However, a White Paper published in February 2021 outlines the government's two-stage plan to replace the Direct Provision system with an international protection system over the next four years. During the first phase, anticipated to take four months, six reception and integration centres will be established under state ownership and operated by non-for-profit organisations. This can be interpreted as a response to those who criticised the government for outsourcing the operation of such centres to private

open a bank account and an Irish drivers' licences. In phase two, applicants whose protection claims are still being processed will be offered own-door or own-room accommodation in the community. This is proposed as an attempt to provide more privacy and independence than the current system. Rent will be means-tested. Civil society organisations have generally welcomed the proposals but seem to be withholding judgement until more substantial steps are taken towards their implementation.

It is often said that today's news is tomorrow's fish and chips' paper. Though it may soon be forgotten, this affair has demonstrated that there is a degree of cognitive dissonance among certain sectors of Irish society. It is disappointing but unsurprising that the family in question were given substantial media attention when asylum seekers are ignored, silenced, and disempowered by a system that has been allowed to remain in place for far too long.

Although a Covid-free Ireland seems like a mirage in the distant future, we cannot and should not equate temporary (and generally proportionate) interference with individual rights with the plight of some of the most marginalised in Irish society. O'Dowd raises a valid point that many can circumvent the requirement to quarantine in a hotel by organising their itinerary in such a way as to avoid travelling through so-called 'Red List' countries. A more coherent policy must be articulated by the Department of Health to rectify this issue, but ultimately robust mandatory quarantining should be one of the many tools in the government's arsenal to tackle the ongoing public health situation.

"we cannot and should not equate temporary (and generally proportionate) interference with individual rights with the plight of some of the most marginalised in Irish society".

contractors. These private entities are currently profiting from their involvement in centres that are run in such a way that exacerbates the suffering of residents.

It is reported that the new system will be better capable of catering to the needs of the most vulnerable. Those applying for protection will be assisted in integrating into Ireland from their arrival as health, housing, education, and employment supports are said to be at the core of the system. After six months, applicants will be entitled to seek paid work and provided information on how to

COMMENT

FEATURES

REFORMING SEXUAL OFFENCES LAW IN IRELAND

GRACE DONNELLAN

In light of solicitor *Sarah Grace*'s recent open letter to the Minister for Justice, Grace Donnellan examines proposed reforms to Ireland's sexual offences law.

MANY were shocked when during a Cork rape trial, the defence barrister held up the complainant's underwear from the night of the alleged rape and said "does the evidence out-rule the possibility that she was attracted to the defendant and was open to meeting someone and being with someone? You have to look at the way she was dressed". Protests erupted across the country as people were shocked this act of victim-blaming occurred within a courtroom. The case received international attention. The Belfast Trial led to similar outrage as the complainant had every detail of her night picked apart in the courtroom. During the trial, her underwear was passed around for the jury to examine and the defence counsel cited her lack of physical resistance as evidence of consent.

While these cases shocked the public and caught national attention, the practices that garnered such outrage are well known to those who have had to go through the legal system regarding a sexual offence.

"While these cases shocked the public and caught national attention, the practices that garnered such outrage are well known to those who have had to go through the legal system regarding a sexual offence."

One such woman is solicitor Sarah Grace. Grace was the victim of a physical and sexual attack in her home in 2019. After her experience with the legal system concerning this, she has written an open letter to the Minister for Justice with several suggested reforms of the law and court practice regarding sexual offences.

The reforms suggested by Grace are: ending the disclosure of notes from victims' private therapy sessions during the trial, the default use of screens, allowing legal representation for victims, amending the definition of rape, introducing Rape Shield Laws, improved barrister training and greater victim anonymity.

Speaking to *The University Observer*, Noeline Blackwell, Chief Executive Officer of the Rape Crisis Centre, says "the issues raised by Sarah Grace in her clear and comprehensive letter to the Minister for Justice all refer to how she, as a victim of crime was treated in the criminal trial of the man who attacked her. She has spoken for many victims giving evidence who can be re-traumatised through feeling humiliated, disrespected and that they themselves are the person on trial."

Commenting on the letter Blackwell continues "we very much welcome the proposed reforms...These will go some way towards adjusting a trial system which is not suited to hearing testimony in crimes of intimate violence. The issues she raised... are all valid examples of how our court system was not designed to hear sexual offence cases and needs urgent reform."

Grace considers the purpose of disclosing intimate therapy notes in a trial as "largely (if not exclusively) to discredit the victim". The prospect of this disclosure may prevent victims from pursuing legal action and thus acts as a barrier to justice for many victims. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 can be used to compel the disclosure of counselling records without the consent of the victim. This procedure is applicable only in criminal trials where there are sexual offences. Grace proposes that the victim should be able to give evidence by default via a screen or video link. She states that it was a huge stress for her to obtain approval to appear in court via a screen, continuing; "I do not believe I would have been physically or mentally capable to give proper evidence without the screen, which would have denied both the judge and jury evidence to carry out justice."

Speaking to *The University Observer*, Deirdre Healy, Director of the UCD Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice and Associate Professor at the Sutherland School of Law, says; "The current system can act as a significant barrier to justice for victims of sexual

violence....Research shows that victims report higher levels of satisfaction when they receive regular updates about their cases, have access to holistic and multi-disciplinary services, and are treated with sensitivity, respect and compassion. Victims of sexual violence can also benefit from additional supports at the trial stage (for instance, being allowed to give evidence via video-link)." Echoing Blackwell she continues "these supports are particularly important given that some victims have likened the trial process to a 'second victimisation'."

Healy also says that; "A particular concern is that victims of sexual violence rarely report such crimes to the police. The Rape and Justice in Ireland study found that victims were often reluctant to report to police due to fears about the legal process. It is therefore important to address barriers to reporting alongside any reforms of the legal process to increase victims' faith in the system. In addition, victim advocates could help to protect the rights of victims and ensure their needs are met, as experiences in other countries have shown."

Grace argues that victims should be allowed legal representation in order to properly prepare for trial. Other European countries, such as France and Belgium, have provided for general rights to legal representation and research has shown the cross-examination process there to be less hostile to the victim as a result. In Ireland, the 1995 Civil Legal Aid Act allows limited legal representation for complainants but does not extend to advocacy rights. The 2001 Sex Offenders Act states that the complainant can have access to a legally aided barrister to argue on her behalf where the accused seeks to bring forward "sexual history" evidence. This representation is limited to evidence which many activists believe should not be allowed in court at all. In fact, Grace proposes a Rape Shield Law be introduced which would exclude a rape or sexual violence victim's past sexual behaviour as evidence in trial, such as is the case in Australia.

Grace contends that the current 'section 4' definition of rape should be amended to include all non-consensual penetration. While the 2017 Criminal Law Act first introduced a statutory definition of consent, it is apparent that this definition is not comprehensive enough. As well as the issue raised by Grace, the current

definition requires that the prosecution not only prove lack of consent, but also prove the 'mens rea', or mental state of the accused, beyond reasonable doubt. If the accused believed there was consent they do not have this mens rea. This has created a standard that is very hard to reach.

Grace also writes that improved training for barristers should be introduced in order to target "unacceptable and disrespectful behaviour adopted by defence lawyers when cross-examining a sexual violence survivor". Finally, she has called for greater victim anonymity. Technically in Ireland the complainant's identity is kept anonymous. Nonetheless, the rise of social media has made this much more difficult to police. Additionally, Grace wrote that she was "personally identified through articles published in the media despite not being named". She proposes that victims be "consulted in advance on which facts of the case can identify them, and which parts of the Victim Impact Statement they do not want publicly reported on." However, this would not solve problems stemming from social media.

It is apparent that our criminal justice system was not created to handle sexual offences in a compassionate manner. Healy says "I think a victim-oriented and rights-based approach is essential for dealing with sexual violence cases in Ireland. At their best, such approaches have the potential to help victims navigate the legal process, get justice, and recover from the harm done to them. However, it is important to ensure that any reforms are evidence-based, properly resourced and holistic in nature to ensure that victims' experiences at all stages of the legal process - including the reporting stage - are addressed. When reforms are implemented carefully, and with due consideration to all stakeholders including defendants, a victim-centred approach can benefit all concerned." It is vital that no one is left behind when amending our current laws and court practice, we must listen to victims, like Grace, as our legal system moves forward.

WHAT DO THE NEWCOMERS THINK OF PROFESSOR CAHILL?

NATHAN YOUNG

With Professor Dolores Cahill making headlines, *Nathan Young* asks prospective medicine students how, if at all, the controversies around misinformation and free speech have affected their choice of University.

DURING the Covid-19 Pandemic, UCD Professor Dolores Cahill has become a prominent figure in anti-lockdown circles. She has featured in a widely discredited documentary *The New Normal*, attached herself to a company selling holidays with the explicit purpose of challenging lockdowns and travel bans initiated in response to the current pandemic, and organised a protest in Herbert Park against restrictions on St Patrick's Day. Her position in the UCD School of Medicine has raised more than a few eyebrows, with supporters claiming that it shows her expertise on health issues, and detractors pointing out her blatant falsehoods; such as linking mask-wearing in youth to low IQ. UCDSU recently called publicly for an HR investigation into Professor Cahill for endangering others with her organising of a protest. UCDSU has also been hosting town hall meetings over the past year with medicine students who feel she does not represent the school well.

The reputation of the school is important to many people; prospective employers, UCD medicine graduates both nationally and internationally, and other institutions that conduct research, for example. One group whose opinion can have a huge impact on UCD in a very short period of time, however, is prospective students. *The University Observer* spoke to several students considering studying medicine in Ireland next year, both through the graduate entry system and straight out of secondary school. Students interviewed have chosen to remain anonymous.

Speaking to *The University Observer*, one student, 'Mary', said "I believe [Professor Cahill] would affect my decision to study medicine at UCD because of what she was saying at the protest about children not wearing a mask because their brain will be starved of oxygen, and if she believes that and thinks that and she's teaching then she could be teaching a lot of misinformation". Mary is not alone. Another student, 'Mark', agreed with Mary's points, saying "It definitely made me more weary of the course and who my lecturers would be. It definitely made me do a deeper dive of what the course content was. Normally you would just look at the CAQ and at the course content on the website, but once she said something like that [linking masks to IQ]...that was kind of terrifying. Introducing that as a lecture to first years could give a lot of misinformation. She did say

"The Students' Union having to do this is kind of ridiculous, I feel like UCD should have stepped up and said no. They[UCD] should have stopped her right there"

many untrue things and unsubstantiated things". He described the lack of action against Professor Cahill by the school as "a bit ridiculous".

However, some of the students who were perturbed by Professor Cahill's comments were at least somewhat reassured when they researched other lecturers in UCD. Mark said of his research "I found most of them mock her, they are not great fans. John Gilmore, one of the lecturers there...he was mocking her that she shouldn't be spreading unsubstantiated claims". John Gilmore is an Assistant Professor in the UCD School of Nursing, and last month he told *The Irish Times* that medical academics had a "responsibility around public health", and that "It is concerning that people are getting a lot of misinformation and disinformation ... I believe the science provided by NPHE".

For Mark, "UCD is the closest and most easiest option", and it is still his first preference. He said if another college were as affordable "I would have changed from UCD then", but that his second option, RCSI, "is way more expensive, because they don't offer as great HEI support, and also it's in the city centre so it's just way more expensive". He stated, "If I had the choice I would not choose UCD".

'Jane' disagrees. According to her, "Obviously I would be basing it on the calibre of the education I would be hoping to receive at the end of the degree. If it were a consort of academics associated with the college that could sway a decision, I don't think what an individual expressed, away from the university,



would sway my decision. I was reassured after UCD came out after she had made those claims and said she's not teaching this semester and they respect that she has academic freedom to express her views outside campus regardless of her role on the campus". Jane does not believe Professor Cahill's expression of views has yet impacted her ability to perform her duties although says it is "unusual to see somebody so educated expressing views that are so [different] to what NPHE and HSE guidelines are".

Jane also stated that if she met a student who chose to avoid UCD over Professor Cahill she stated "I would definitely debate them. From a biased perspective, I did Psychology in UCD so I know the college well and can look past one lecturer...I would encourage them to look at the broader influence of UCD and what it's achieved". When asked about how international employers may view a UCD medicine degree in light of Professor Cahill's infamy, Jane stated: "I think there's other factors, like your experience and your clinical skills that they would look at, rather than just one individual".

The free speech angle is a contentious one. UCDSU president Conor Anderson cited Professor Cahill's "propagating [of] medically-inaccurate conspiracy theories in service of a far-right political agenda" as UCDSU's reason to call for an investigation into her under the universities act. It is understood that several academics who would consider themselves opponents politically of Professor Cahill's views have been cautious of setting a precedence that weakens academic and

speech freedoms for others on campus. The students' takes on this topic were also in contention. Jane stated "Unless her expression of views is hampering with her duties in her position in UCD I don't think you have any need to take action or reprimand because you don't want to go out looking for people to lose their jobs. She's done incredible research in translational medicine". Mark took the 'free speech is not freedom from consequences' stance, saying; "she was allowed her free speech but it was damaging in nature. This is just to discredit her from what she said because even UCD stepped back from what she said". Unlike Jane, he is in favour of Professor Cahill losing her job. He is also a supporter of UCDSU's calls for an investigation, saying: "The Students' Union having to do this is kind of ridiculous, I feel like UCD should have stepped up and said no. They[UCD] should have stopped her right there"

With no public response from UCD to UCDSU's calls for an investigation into Professor Cahill, the debate around free speech and academics freedom is set to continue. Students, even those who are engaged on the issue and cautious of Professor Cahill, are nevertheless looking at a myriad of other factors in their choices, but while they may still choose to attend UCD, they don't want that to be seen as an endorsement of Cahill herself. For others, it's a non-issue. The real test will be several months from now when they are themselves students in the UCD School of Medicine.

THE PROBLEMS WITH THE STAMP 1G VISA.

ANDREA ANDRES

Andrea Andres investigates the non-EEA visa and the difficulties that come with it.

STUDENT X didn't anticipate job hunting to be this difficult. "I got an interview through a referral and apart from the assessment, nothing is coming up and I was wondering what was the problem. Is it the visa status or other issues?"

"The interview went on for almost two hours. I did amazingly well. It was a technical interview so all the questions they were asking me, technology-wise, I was able to answer them pretty well", they said. "There were four other people who got the referral as well from that same person and all of them got a rejection from the company in a week or so. But they took 20 to 25 days to reply to me so I was hoping for good news. When they called me, 'Yeah, you were in consideration for a long time, but we found someone with a better visa status and availability'".

"The lack of working rights for the spouse or partners also puts an "onus" and "undue stress" on the PhD student "who is more than likely living off a stipend of less than €20,000, and has to provide for both of them".

Student X's story is not an uncommon tale among non-EEA (European and Economic Area) students holding a Stamp 1G visa. According to the Department of Justice, the Stamp 1G visa allows non-EEA students to "remain in Ireland after their studies" for the purposes of looking for a job and applying for one of three permits: a general employment permit, a critical skills employment permit, or a research hosting agreement. Students who have completed their Bachelor's degree in Ireland are granted 12 months, while those who completed their Master's degree are granted 24 months.

Student X admits that their experience with rejection due to their visa status has discouraged them in their job search. They said: "I lost a lot of motivation because there was nothing better that I could do in the interview

and the preparation for it. It wasn't like I messed up the interview or something".

Aaditya Shah, a UCD graduate, recounts a 'funny' incident where he took 45 minutes of his time to fill in an application form for a job. "After applying within less than 45 minutes I got a rejection because of my Stamp 1G visa".

He continued: "Generally speaking, I was not aware that my visa status might bring some challenges that would differentiate us from other candidates". Shah also pointed out "that the opportunities for the market before Covid were quite open, there was no much discrimination". However, he describes how there is fierce competition due to many laid off by the squeeze caused by the pandemic. "Most of the job descriptions during 2020 did not permit Stamp 1G to be able to apply for the role. And even if we applied, we were rejected. That was a difficult phase", Shah added.

Neither Shah nor Student X knew of any resources that could help them with navigating the job market with a Stamp 1G visa. Student X described it as "a very grey area." "It's not something I can exactly get help with", they said.

Since March 2019, the Stamp 1G visa has allowed the spouses or partners of PhD students doing research in Ireland to work full-time, provided that the PhD student has a hosting agreement with the university. A hosting agreement is "essentially a contract between the student and the university where they will be treated and paid like the employees of the university", described Carla Gummerson, Graduate Officer for the UCD Students' Union. However, the partners and spouses cannot avail of the Stamp 1G visa and are relegated to a Stamp 3 visa. They cannot work or own a business under Stamp 3.

"It looks like the government has done something in 2019, but they haven't really. It's kind of a tick the box", she added. "The only people that will be able to avail of that will be employees of the university. So, non-EU employees that have been employed and which would most likely be like a postdoc researcher."

The plight of spouses and partners of PhD students first came to the attention of Gummerson after talks with the University of Limerick (UL). Despite no PhD students in UCD coming forward to Gummerson, PhD students were coming forward in UL. "I knew when they reached out to us that if it's happening there, it's



definitely happening here. It's just maybe hasn't been spoken about". The root cause of the problem is the refusal of universities to allow hosting agreements with PhD students; "they don't want PhD students to be seen as employees, even though they work the very same way as staff do and do the very same roles the staff do."

"It wouldn't benefit the college because they would have to provide [better rights and a higher salary] to employees. But I suppose that does help students that don't have a hosting agreement", she continued.

The lack of working rights for the spouse or partners also puts an "onus" and "undue stress" on the PhD student "who is more than likely living off a stipend of less than €20,000, and has to provide for both of them. They have to have living costs, so they have to if you're here on a visa, you have to have their own living costs, which is €7000 for a Stamp 3. And that, again, has to come from the students. So they have to find that money every year and for their spouse".

What Gummerson "would prefer is that [PhD students] didn't have to provide", and that "the stipend was for them and for their own living costs and that the

person that comes with them would be able to work and that way could provide for themselves here and be productive members of society. Most spouses are probably sitting at home doing nothing, isolated"

As for solutions for the predicament of these partners and spouses of PhD students, "What the university could do is start allowing PhDs to have hosting agreements. That would really help. But I can't foresee that happening simply because they'll be seen as employees then. And it's not something I don't think the university wants. And because I know that's the biggest fight that PhDs students have."

However, the UCDSU and other student unions across Ireland are collaborating on a letter "to Simon Harris. We're hoping that if we kind of disseminate the issues of PhD students a little bit that you could attack them in a smaller arena and you might get a little bit of change. And what we would hope to see from that will be that these students and their spouses particularly would have the right to work when they come here".

HOMEGROWN HOLIDAYS

AOIFE ROONEY

Aoife Rooney looks at how the Irish tourism industry has re-orientated itself to promoting the staycation

IRELAND has always been a popular holiday destination for overseas visitors, with the country boasting friendly residents, breathtaking scenery, and a relatively accessible location from a global perspective. For over a year there have been essentially no international tourists entering the country, with the industry attempting to survive solely on what Irish residents contributed through at-home holidays. The rise of the 'staycation' is a trend among Irish holidaymakers that was a well-established industry long before international restrictions put a halt to foreign travel over the past year. Irish residents choosing to holiday within the country is not a novel concept, especially seeing as there is no shortage of destinations throughout the country for them to tour, the mass marketing and advertising campaigns surrounding this specific type of holiday has only been seen in the past ten years. While there is a specified target market of the population who do choose the holiday within the country, the hasty and unexpected decision to make unnecessary travel unsustainable for tourists meant

that last summer saw an unanticipated spike in those choosing to holiday within the Republic of Ireland. While this is a welcomed interest in Irish tourism, the industry, like so many others, is currently suffering the severe consequences of Covid-19 related restrictions.

Fáilte Ireland is the organisation responsible for the marketing and development of tourism options to potential international visitors. They have had to shift their business model to cater to the fact that the country has not welcomed foreign tourists on the expected scale for over twelve months. Their sister company, Tourism Ireland, has launched a social media campaign entitled #FillYourHeartWithIreland, the aim of which is to keep Ireland at the forefront in the minds of potential tourists, with the organisation confident that "North America will provide the greatest opportunities in 2021." Currently, all of the organisation's usual promotional activity is on hold, but they are steadfast in keeping "Ireland 'top of mind' with prospective international visitors - until the time is right for them to visit". The choice has been made to restart whatever form of marketing Tourism Ireland can produce and distribute, with the hope that it will encourage international cohorts to choose Ireland as their holiday destination. Tourism Ireland cited that research indicates the importance of maintaining this awareness of destinations long before travel is realistic. They explain that people are planning for the potential break in restrictions that would facilitate a holiday and "consumers are considering now where they will travel to on their first post-pandemic trip."

The choice has been made to promote the country at this time because doing so "will ensure that we are in the best possible place to immediately start converting business for Irish tourism operators when the time is right". This is being noted as an important factor in the road to the "successful recovery for Irish tourism." It is recorded that only 4 million international tourists visited Ireland in 2020, down from 11.2 million in 2019, accounting for a contribution of €5.8 million to the economy. Fáilte Ireland noted that they were on track to surpass 2019 figures, based on travel in the first three months of 2020 alone.

Within the state, Irish residents were able to avail of all the country has to offer to tourists, with just under 30% of residents enjoying a holiday in Ireland. Although, the influx of this type of holidaymaker did mean that businesses who survive off the tourism industry have

"Beauty spots and outdoor activities will continue to be focal points of marketing campaigns, partly down to the fact that so many indoor amenities were closed due to restrictions, but also because there always is a significant emphasis put on what the Irish landscape has to offer"

had to adapt to the changed needs of their visitors. Neil Faulkner from Sligo Tourism noted that the "main difference between domestic tourists and international is a shorter stay."

Despite the welcomed increase of domestic tourism, it has been an aspect of the industry that has been marketed for many years. Discover Ireland, a subsidiary of Fáilte Ireland, has been developing and promoting the Irish holiday in a way that encourages residents to explore other parts of the country they may be unfamiliar with. They have several popular campaigns covering various sections of the country in a way that makes it easy to plan a holiday in these destinations. For example, Discover Ireland are responsible for the development of the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands programmes. The Wild Atlantic Way, which extends from "the Inishowen Peninsula in Donegal to Kinsale in Cork", has proven to be a very

successful project since its launch, promoting travel along the West coast of the country and taking the hassle out of finding accommodation and activities, their website covering all bases.

As of 2019, the tourism industry was responsible for approximately 325,000 jobs. With tourism being one of the most negatively affected industries over the past year, this is undoubtedly much lower now, but any contribution Irish tourists can make to the industry is valuable, especially given that many of the businesses within the industry are considered small businesses, such as restaurants, B&Bs and pubs.

Along with a shift in marketing and promotion amongst tourism companies, there was also a notable trend in the activities and amenities that were pushed for Irish tourists last summer, and will likely be continued into this summer season. Beauty spots and outdoor activities will continue to be focal points of marketing campaigns, partly down to the fact that so many indoor amenities were closed due to restrictions, but also because there always is a significant emphasis put on what the Irish landscape has to offer. This sentiment aligns with the digital marketing campaign that was developed by Sligo Tourism, their strategy "focused on the outdoors, out-door activities for families and great escapades (young people with good disposable incomes looking for adventure)."

While tourism has been set aside by many as a pressing issue, it cannot be understated the contribution the sector makes not only to GDP on a national scale, but to the thousands of small businesses who usually attribute most of their revenue to seasonal tourists.



JOIN
THE UNIVERSITY OBSERVER
EDITORIAL TEAM FOR
VOLUME XXVIII

APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR POSITIONS ON THE EDITORIAL TEAM OF THE UNIVERSITY OBSERVER FOR THE UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022.

EDITOR

The Position:

We are seeking an Editor, with a good sense of what makes an interesting angle to a story, to juggle all the moving parts of publications. You will plan, coordinate, review and edit content. The successful candidate will be able to decide which ideas should be pursued and which should get dropped in order to meet quality and accuracy standards. The goal is to provide exceptional, informative and engaging content.

Key Responsibilities:

The Editor of the University Observer is responsible for all aspects of print and online media which include;

The editorial direction and management, the publication and distribution of the Observer.

Coordination of online or print publishing cycle and management of content areas

Set publication standards and establish goals and expectations

Suggest stories and generate headline ideas in alignment with targeted audience's preferences

Supervision of the newspaper's editorial team, writers and reporters.

Oversee layout (artwork, design, photography) and check content for accuracy and errors

Proofread, edit and improve stories or pieces

Recruit for internal appointments (with the exception of the Deputy Editor and the Designer).

Cooperate and liaise with designers, photographers, advertising reps, writers, artists etc

Adhere fully to all provisions of relevant legislation and with the Code of Conduct of the Press Council of Ireland and ethical guidelines.

Meet all deadlines and budget requirements

Applicants for this position will be tasked with producing 8 editions of the *University Observer* and 2 Special Editions within the academic year. The position will include working alternate weekends and occasional unsocial hours.

The University Observer is editorially independent from the UCD Students' Union, as enshrined in the Unions' constitution.

DEPUTY EDITOR

The Position:

We are seeking a Deputy Editor who will work closely with the Editor to assist in sourcing, selecting, writing, commissioning and editing news stories and ensuring it is accurate, legally sound and published in a timely way.

The Deputy Editor will be involved in all matters concerning the management, publication, content and distribution of print and online media. The Deputy Editor will be responsible for ensuring a regular stream of exclusive news, analysis and content, and will deputise for the Editor as required.

Deputy Editor Key Responsibilities:

The Deputy Editor of the University Observer is responsible for

Supervising and managing the daily work of writers and reporters.

Distribution of materials to section editors and reporters and coordination of work among them.

Redrafting and checking materials and ensuring the linguistic integrity.

Unifying the Observers editorial policy.

Formulating appropriate titles that are consistent with the Observer's editorial policy.

To check the validity and accuracy of content.

Assist with appointments for internal appointments (with the exception of the Deputy Editor and the Designer).

Cooperate and liaise with designers, photographers, advertising reps, writers, artists etc

Adhere fully to all provisions of relevant legislation and with the Code of Conduct of the Press Council of Ireland and ethical guidelines.

Meet all deadlines and budget requirements

REQUIREMENTS

Previous experience within journalism

Strong writing/editing/proofreading skills and an excellent portfolio

Hands on experience with MS Office and InDesign, Photoshop or other publishing tools

Proven familiarity with search engine optimisation and social media best practices

Excellent written skills in English

An eye for detail along with critical thinking

Prioritising and multitasking

The position includes working alternate weekends and may include occasional unsocial hours.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE:

Short-listing of candidates will apply.

Applicants are only permitted to enter this competition individually. Joint applications will not be accepted.

Canvassing members of the interview panel is prohibited and may result in candidate's application being disqualified

Training will be offered to successful candidates.

Applicants should make it clear in their cover letter whether or not they would like to be considered for the role of Deputy Editor as well as Editor.

Applications should not exceed 5,000 words.

CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF ALL APPLICATIONS IS 5.00PM, ON MAY 1ST, 2021.

FURTHER ENQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO
DOIREANN DE COURCY MAC DONNELL
AT
EDITOR@UNIVERSITYOBSERVER.IE,
DURING OFFICE HOURS.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL

UCD COME THIRD IN ONLINE GREAT AGRI-FOOD DEBATE

NOEL BARDON

In the sixth year of the competition, students debate issues of plastics, agriculture, food and the environment. Noel Bardon reports.

SIX UCD School of Agriculture & Food Science students represented the college in the restructured online Great Agri-Food Debate. Each team participated in only one debate, which was adjudicated by a panel of judges, and the teams were ranked according to their combined scores. WIT opposed UCD's motion, 'plastic is not the enemy of our blue planet'. The team ranked third out of the six competitors with team member Ciara Fox awarded the Best Speaker award for UCD's debate.

The online Great Agri-Food Debate provides six teams from across Ireland and Wales the opportunity to express their thoughts on a range of motions relevant to agriculture, the environment, and food. The event, sponsored by Dawn Meats and McDonalds, is in its sixth year, with WIT clenching the title after three vigorous bouts of debating between competing institutions. The incumbent UCD School of Agriculture & Food Science team came third and Antrim's CAFRE took second place.

Competing against the UCD team were teams from the University of Aberystwyth, the University of Limerick, the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise, the Dundalk Institute of Technology and the Waterford Institute of Technology. This year saw an institution outside of the island of Ireland take part in the event for the first time since its inception in 2016. Niall Browne, CEO of Dawn Meats, welcomed Aberystwyth's participation as "adding a new perspective to proceedings".

The competition was restructured to allow for the event to proceed online, in lieu of the traditional live

"The whole experience was a great opportunity to put yourself out there. We were forced to think outside the box and come up with our own ideas from the research"

competition format. The UCD team faced-off against UL on a motion regarding the impact of plastics on the environment on Tuesday, March 23rd, with the debate then broadcast via YouTube on Wednesday, March 31st. This restructuring of the event only allowed for four of the team members to speak on the motion, with supporting research positions appointed to the remaining team members. In previous years, each team member had the opportunity to speak over the course of the weekend. The four team speakers were Roisin Scully, Ciara Byers, Ciara Fox, and Maria Wall. The research was carried

out by students Thomas Howlett and Michael Dever.

The teams were then ranked in accordance with the scores delivered by the judging panel which included representatives from DAFM, Dawn Meats, McDonald's UK & Ireland, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Bord Bia and the UK's AHDB. UCD won their debate with UL but failed to score high enough to clinch the title for what would have been a fifth time.

Other motions debated were 'lab grown meats will not replace traditional livestock farming systems' and 'the livestock sector can meet the requirements for net zero', both highly topical issues for Irish agri-food production.

This UCD team was chosen after interested students participated in debating heats held on the 16th and 23rd of February. The hopeful candidates were divided into two teams to debate the same motions that were to be debated in the actual competition. Following the team selection, varying modes of online communication were used to enable the team to remain in contact through the course of their research and preparation. The team worked late nights and early mornings to ensure preparation did not clash with the presentation of course material, as the team was drawn from differing year groups and degree programmes.

Internet connectivity issues were reported by some team members throughout the preparation period, with a team member from Cavan being particularly affected by the technical difficulties. These experiences highlight the

necessity of high-speed internet connectivity to remote study and working environments throughout the country.

Speaking on the experience of the UCD competitors, team captain Roisin Scully commented on the opportunity presented to contestants in preparing for the debate to "break from the online learning that has become the new norm". Although the move online may have removed some of the social elements of the event, Scully made known the team's enjoyment of meeting a diverse array of students and industry figures over the course of the competition. Also adding to the allure of participating in the competition was the "social media buzz" which showcased team members to potential future employers in the weeks leading up to the debates. Social media played an important role in this year's competition with each of the third level team's institutions updating students on details of the competition throughout the debates.

The teams not only gained enlightening insights into the motions that were researched for the competition, the team captain observed, but bettered their public speaking and presentation skills, "Even though I was talking to a computer, it felt the same as if I was at the top of a lecture hall or on a stage". Support was provided to the team by the Head of Rural Development in the School of Agriculture Dr Karen Keaveney and Programme Director Irene Rose.

CONSERVATION WAS THE FOCUS OF FARM WALK AND TALK 2021

HANNAH WOODS

Hannah Woods reports on the Agri Aware annual week of talks and events about the agri-food industry, the issues faced, and their move online.

Agri Aware held its annual Farm Walk and Talk event online with a series of informative videos, delivered by figures from within the agri-food industry. The key focus of this year's Farm Walk and Talk was environmental conservation, which plays in tandem with the current Leaving Certificate Ag Science students' project of the agricultural practices that support conservation of the environment.

Agri Aware is a body that works to create awareness at a national level of the value agriculture and farming has to the country and its consumers, as well as the role farmers play as stewards of the environment. The organisation brings to the public the high standard of animal welfare maintained on Irish farms, allowing the public to gain an insight into the way farms work and also the process of how locally produced Irish food comes to sit on the shelves of supermarkets across the country.

Agri Aware's Farm Walk and Talk week was taken online this year due to Covid-19 public health and safety guidelines. The event had previously showcased Irish agriculture in a practical light, with talks taking place in Teagasc colleges and research farms across the country over which leading agri-food experts gave talks and features on the important topics facing Irish agriculture. These were topics of importance for both the farmer and the consumer. This initiative run by Agri Aware does not only improve the baseline level of interaction between consumers and Irish farmers, but also helps educate and encourage the youth coming up through the education system that have an interest in agriculture, both on the practical and theoretical elements of the sector.

The twelve-part video series was shot in Kildalton Agricultural College in Kilkenny and features expert Teagasc staff giving in-depth talks and demonstrations. The topics of the talks ranged from grassland management to farm health and safety

and the emergence of antimicrobial resistance. The consumer was engaged through talks on the beef and sheep production systems used in Ireland; along with explainers on dairy breeding and the crop production cycle of winter barley grown in Irish soils.

Videos not only give in-depth discussions on the overall systems of production, but also the ways in which farmers can enhance environmental conservation and improve the sustainability of farming practices. Agri Aware chairperson, Alan Jagoe explains the events' importance, to "showcase the many positive environmental practices Irish farmers are implementing every day on their farms". Not only this, but also how it can be easily improved in some cases and become a continuation of the efforts put in by farmers across the country to boost environmental efforts of conservation.

A look into the content of the video series shows the role agriculture is playing in climate change as well as how farmers can help improve and enhance their efforts facing environmental conservation. Martin Rafic of Kildalton College speaks of how "Agriculture (at 35%) is a major contributor [to] the total greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland", whereby this could be a major obstacle in the path to increasing the size of the national dairy herd. With numbers slowly increasing year on year following the removal of milk quotas, this is something policymakers must be mindful of. Research into the amount of methane being produced and how this can be reduced will be an important part of the solution to this environmental issue.

Events such as the Farm Walk and Talk not only provide a useful learning tool for Leaving Certificate agricultural science students this year who would lack the practical insights into Irish agriculture while studying from home for the past few months, but also

"The Agri Aware initiative looks to educate and engage the consumer on the Irish system for food production, its efficacy and simply shows how the food we eat is grown, produced and processed in order to reach shops, fit for consumption."

consumers who are the reason the market for Irish produce is so substantial. However, consumers fall short in their knowledge with regards to how the products they buy and consume end up on the shop shelf. Some consumers disregard farming practices used day to day on Irish farms and take the options provided by alternative production systems used around the globe as the main source of their food. From intensive indoor



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: SINEAD MOHAN

animal production systems, veal production and the stigma surrounding the dairy industry, the consumer today is fed information regarding agricultural production systems from all parts of the world.

UCDSU CO-HOSTS 'FOOD JUSTICE AND IRISH AGRICULTURE' WEEK

NATHAN YOUNG

Nathan Young looks back on the Irish Agriculture week, and speaks to event organisers about some of the challenges addressed.

UCDSU and several student societies hosted a Food Justice and Irish Agriculture Week, addressing issues of sustainability and food justice. The events took place in week 8 of the trimester and saw the Agricultural Science, Amnesty, Horticulture, and World Aid societies, as well as ECO UCD and UCDSU, collaborate to run daily events including workshops, film nights, and public conversations.

UCDSU's Agriculture, Food & Vet College Officer, Lucy Reid, and Environmental Campaigns Coordinator, Morna Henehan, were both heavily involved in organising the week, with Reid telling *The University Observer*: "I reached out to Morna [Henehan] very early on and I realised we had common ground where we stood. Through that communication we developed an idea of what kind of information we would like to share. At first it was going to be just a single workshop, but with everything being online we thought we would split it up [across the week]."

Discussing the engagement of the week, Reid stated that "We're very proud of how the week went, and we think it was a success considering the Zoom fatigue of the general student body... Engagement for a week 8 project we thought was very good". She also stated: "There was definitely a mixed body of students with different environmental interests... Predominantly women, which was cool... There was an eco-feminism angle that definitely came from there which was really exciting". Events had up to 40 sign-ups.

"There are so many people in the Irish sector and in UCD ag science who are doing amazing work in relation to sustainability"

Some events were also organised collaboratively with external organisations. One such event was a talk hosted on Instagram Live with Louise Fitzgerald of SHARECITY, a project that "uses a collaborative and trans-disciplinary approach to assess the practice and sustainability potential of city-based food sharing economies". There was also a workshop with Birr Community Growery and Cloughjordan Eco Village on permaculture, sustainable land use, and farming innovation.

On working with external organisations, Reid stated "It was lovely. There is a relationship with Cloughjordan

Eco Village from Horticulture Society already, I'm actually from just outside Cloughjordan so I knew the set up there, and the other speaker was somebody who I had gone to one of his workshops before on permaculture and forestry and community agriculture, so they were very willing to get involved when I mentioned the topic. They were really excited to be able to work with students and bring it to a new group". Henehan added that Sharecity is "A really cool project all about food sharing in the urban environment, and championing local food production and small scale farmers, and all the ripple effects of that such as reducing emissions".

"I really wanted to integrate a climate justice message, and because we were all online I figured a more educational approach would be most effective", said Henehan. Reid also highlighted that "An important aspect of our speakers was that they were all experts in their field, so it was really credible information, because we wanted the take away to be 'okay, that's fact'...so working with professors, and people working hands on in the field of sustainable agriculture was fantastic".

Addressing what she described as "The elephant in the room" of Agribusiness vs environmentalism, Henehan told *The University Observer*: "Do you think there is a conflict between Agribusiness and sustainability? Yes, 100%. That's why we ran the week, because we [Henehan and Reid] are both very interested in that and it is a sector that drastically needs to change. There are so many people in the Irish sector and in UCD Ag

Science who are doing amazing work in relation to sustainability". Reid added: "A really successful point of this week was the trans-disciplinary nature of it. Of having a cross from many different schools and streams in the different schools, and having lecturers and professors. [Henehan is] right to address the elephant in the room, but it's a bit naive to suggest that students in UCD aren't actively learning and actively applying sustainable practices and ecology. It's very core to all of us at the moment, asking 'how do we move forward? What will we do as graduates in policy making, in carbon efficiency, in food systems and food justice?'"

Both Reid and Henehan would like to see the event repeated in some way in future.

PERSEVERANCE TO MARS

JADE NORTON

Jade Norton journeys from the first flight of the surface of Earth to the next steps humans may take on Mars, looking at the latest updates from the Perseverance Mars rover and its new technological advancements.

“Ingenuity is the first of its kind on Mars and as such it brought with it a piece of flight history, attached to a small cable beneath Ingenuity’s solar panel is a tiny swatch of fabric from the Wright brother first flight”

ON July 30th 2020 the Perseverance rover was launched with a final landing of Mars in February 2021. Its destination was the Jezero Crater which it hopes to explore further. It is designed to create a better understanding of the geology of Mars and to seek signs of ancient life. Perseverance left Earth fully fitted with equipment that allows it to analyse and gather Martian rock and soil samples that will be collected for its future return. This the fifth rover to have landed on Mars and the first to have an additional Mars helicopter attached. This drone-like structure called Ingenuity has the sole mission of demonstrating the ability of powered flight in the thin atmosphere of Mars.

The length of the helicopter’s mission will be 30-Martian-days and it will attempt to test a new method of deployment to detach from the main rover, as well as

assessment of if its solar-powered technology function and sole survival abilities in the extreme -90 degree C evening temperatures of the Jezero Crater. There are no scientific instruments on Ingenuity but if successful it will herald new technological possibilities for Mars exploration.

Exploration of the surface of Mars began with the first Mars rover, Sojourner, which landed in 1997 and proved that it was possible to navigate the surface of Mars. The Perseverance rover has built on knowledge from all previous missions and it will collect samples and leave them on the surface for further collection but as of yet, no samples have been returned to Earth from Mars. There are future plans for collaboration between NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) which could increase the possibility of sample return and to human missions. The ExoMars mission will be the first European rover and has a 2022 launch date but unlike Perseverance will only have onboard analysis equipment similar to the Curiosity rover.

Ingenuity is the first of its kind on Mars, and as such, it brought with it a piece of flight history. Attached to a small cable beneath Ingenuity’s solar panel is a tiny swatch of fabric from the Wright brother’s first flight. A swatch of fabric from the same plane was also brought along on the Apollo 11 mission in 1969, as well as a small splinter of wood from the Wright Flyer. Although humans have yet to step foot on Mars, having the ability to traverse the planet with flight brings about huge opportunity.

The Wright brothers were the first people to achieve flight with an object heavier than air as balloons and airships did exist before this but they were the first to create a self-guided and marginally controlled aircraft. They used the information on aerodynamics available to them by Sir Georg Cayley and their engineering skills to create an aircraft powered by an engine and propeller that lasted for 12 seconds and covered 120ft.

In comparison, the Perseverance rover travelled just approximately 471 million kilometres to get to Mars which took 7 months, an incomprehensible distance for the Wrights brother Flyer, but it was their curiosity that paved the road to this future. Ingenuity will mirror the first tentative steps of the Wright’s brother’s first test flight as it will first hover 10 ft above the surface for 10 seconds and if successful will pave the way for future Mars habitation.

Humans took their first venture into the sky in 1903,

“The privatisation of space-travel may herald the first human mission to Mars as a commercial expedition rather than a scientific venture.”

their second step outside of our planet in 1969 and now humanity is planning its steps onto new planets. The race towards the first person on Mars has no definite schedule according to NASA and government-owned sources, but there is a possibility it will happen in the near future if you look at many of the privately-owned space companies.

STEAM ART COLLABORATION: REUNITING ART AND SCIENCE

JADE NORTON

Art and science were once indistinguishable concepts but over the 19th century, a cultural divide has separated the two. *Jade Norton* discusses how the SFI STEAM Art Collaboration can bridge the gap between them and inspire a new generation.

ART and science are often seen as two separate subjects in the modern age, but historically they were found to be inexplicably but irrevocably combined media, with art literally mirroring nature and thus science. The beauty of art is often unknowingly enhanced through patterns seen or created from math and science. Common concepts seen in art, such as the golden ratio and symmetry, are not usually obvious at first glance but are found in many pieces before these concepts were even formally defined.

Humans find a certain beauty in art that can be partially explained with math or science - regardless of whether the viewer understands the concept. The art can also be an expression of a scientific idea or even a direct visual translation of a complicated topic. Art is frequently used to express scientific topics as it creates a medium that is easily accessible.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) has recently launched the STEAM Art Collaboration, an initiative that aims to inspire and engage the public with commissions that “unite the disciplines of art and science”. Five artists were selected, and they worked in collaboration with researchers from five SFI Research Centres; APC Microbiome, CONNECT, iCRAG, Lero and FutureNeuro to create their artworks. The artworks interpret the complex scientific work of the researchers in a visual or physical artistic medium. The work is not purely explanatory in nature, rather, it aims to inspire and engage the viewer with the research.

Ed Devane created a musical gyroscope to represent the various quantum states of research being underdone in the CONNECT Research Centre; which includes modelling of the quantum properties such as teleportation and superposition of photons. The work is a representation of the research proposed by Jerry Horgan and Dr Deirdre Kilbane which looks at using the quantum property of superposition to enhance the communication networks of nanosatellites such as CubeSats.x

Lero is an SFI Research Centre for Software and contains the work of Dr Martin Mullins which focussed on artificial intelligence. The artist, Peter Nash, drew inspiration from this research to create a ‘Machine’s Eye View’, which uses recycled materials to build an immersive physical world from the viewpoint of a self-driving car. This provides an environment to explore the philosophical moralities that AI should be equipped with or allowed to develop.

‘Cairbleadh’, is a VR 3D animated film created by 1iing, or Luing Heaney, that drew on influences from the exploratory marine research done by Eoghan Daly, Mark Coughlan and Andrew Trafford, part of iCRAG SFI Research Centre for Applied Geosciences. The film uses deep-sea images taken by the researchers and blends the images with sound to create a speculative environment of life in the deep-sea world.

The FutureNeuro SFI Research Centre for Chronic and Rare Neurological Diseases is a collaborative effort that works to study the brain and its functions. David Beattie used the specific influence of epilepsy and neural activity from the work of Dr Katherine Benson, Dr Cristina Ruedell Reschke, and Dr Susan Byrne to create a structural video installation series of photographs

“SFI has recently launched the STEAM Art Collaboration which is an initiative that aims to inspire and engage the public with commissions that “unite the disciplines of art and science.””

and an interactive web interface that shows the hyper-connectedness of the brain. The researchers hope his work will inspire questions about the connectivity of the brain and how that links to the world around it.

Shevaun Doherty worked with APC Microbiome Ireland and from the research of Dr Cormac Gahan, Principle Investigator at APC, to create a visual and artistic interpretation of the PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) process that has become a common phrase as it is used for Covid-19 tests. The artist provided a step-by-step creative process, with inspiration from the sea and the artwork of Ernst Haeckel, to transform the complexities of DNA replication in a visually appealing and digestible way.

The complex and in-depth research carried out in Ireland was used to create a diverse array of artworks using a variety of mediums. Traditionally art and science have been seen as two separate disciplines but there are myriad examples of the combinations of the two throughout history. Many of the first scientists used detailed visual descriptions of their work as records rather than solely relying on the written word with notable examples seen in the drawings Leonardo da Vinci and Santiago Ramón y Cajal.

The separation of art and science has fluctuated over the centuries, with the Renaissance being the Western peak of their combination and this has since declined during the 19th century - which incidentally coincides



PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: LOISIE TARRANT

“The separation of art and science has fluctuated over the centuries with the Renaissance being the Western peak of their combination and this has since declined during the 19th century which incidentally coincides with the coining of the term ‘scientist’ ”

with the coining of the term ‘scientist’. The separation of art and science is a superficial one in the modern age and is perpetuated by an artificial divide in our society. Bridging the gap between the two intertwined concepts may revitalise some of the traditional sciences and make science more widely accessible by improving the communication of ideas and access to natural concepts.

The exhibition of the STEAM Art Collaboration will be shown virtually to the public and to primary schools. This is part of the STEAM initiative Ireland which launched in 2017 and aims to close the boundaries between art and science. The focus of primary schools also tries to bring the world of science and art together for young students to increase engagement and understanding of both topics. The stereotypical models of careers in science and in art have been perpetuated as separate and initiatives such as this hope to break these moulds by providing accessible visualisation of them combined to inspire and engage the further generation.

UCD’S NEW STRATEGY FOR INNOVATION

JANA JOHA

Jana Joha outlines UCD’s new strategy for innovation and the importance of emphasizing progression to help advance scientific communities

“This new strategy will emphasise excellence and impact with the aim of investing in people and providing a culture and environment that supports them and allows them to achieve. ”

UCD has just launched ‘Shaping the Future’, a new strategy for research, innovation and impact until 2024. The launching of ‘Shaping the Future’ follows another strategy for 2020-2024 called ‘Rising to the Future’ launched by Professor Andrew J. O’Shea, President of UCD. ‘Rising to the Future’ is based around four main themes: Creating a sustainable global society, Building a healthy world, Empowering humanity, and Transforming through digital technology. The main objective of ‘Shaping the Future’ is to increase the quality, quantity, and impact of UCD’s research and innovation in the hopes of making a real change both nationally and globally. Professor Orla Feely, UCD Vice-President for Research and Innovation and Impact explained that “this strategy outlines how UCD will build on our success to date in order to produce excellent and impactful research innovation that makes a real difference in areas of national and global need”.

This new strategy will emphasise excellence and impact, with the aim of investing in people and providing a culture and environment that supports them and allows them to achieve. Under this strategy, excellence will be at the core of all research, scholarship and innovation in UCD. This will be achieved in four

main ways: promoting excellence within and across disciplines, seeking out and developing partnerships with international research and industry leaders, building on a foundation of demonstrable excellence, and through growing and showcasing areas of strength, scale and global relevance. UCD promises to ensure that their understanding of excellence across all disciplines will reflect best international practice and that it is supported and encouraged within the university. They aim to support greater international collaboration as an institution but also at the level of individual researchers and research groups. They also aim to collaborate and partner with industry leaders, smaller ambitious companies, government bodies, entrepreneurs and investors, as well as cultural and societal organisations that share in UCD’s commitment to research and excellence.

By expanding their network of external collaborators, advisors and investors to identify and support breakthrough innovation projects, they hope to build on their foundation of demonstrable excellence. They plan to expand their academic staff through new recruitment mechanisms with the goal to increase and showcase the areas of strength, scale and global relevance. Through these steps and actions, UCD will put an emphasis on excellence which will help achieve the main objectives. Excellence will be measured by the success of their spin-outs and spin-ins attracting investment and scaling, in how well innovative products and services created by UCD expertise and inventions are adopted, and in the value they bring to public policy and professional practice.

The strategy’s second emphasis is on impact. UCD promises to deliver real impact through research and innovation in various different sectors including culture, society, the economy, public policy, health and the environment. They hope to do this in four main ways: by supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; investing in major initiatives and facilities, leading partnerships to achieve breakthrough impact, and to deliver real benefits to students. Researchers and innovators in UCD have made impactful contributions towards helping us fight against COVID-19. Examples include Dr Colin Keogh, an engineer who was recently awarded the Irish Research Council Impact Award for his response to the global ventilator shortage, and Dr Denis Shields, Professor of Clinical Bioinformatics, who was part of an international team of scientists who helped pave the way for the development of anti-COVID drugs. Their work has contributed to our fight against COVID and through this new strategy, UCD

“I look forward to continuing to work with the UCD research and innovation community as we look to building a brighter future together” - Harris TD.

hopes to further support and continue important and impactful research and innovation. Simon Harris TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science noted that; “During the last year UCD researchers across many disciplines have demonstrated the importance of research and scientific evidence in tackling the coronavirus pandemic”.

However, another main aim of this strategy is to invest in people while also providing a culture and environment that supports them. UCD believes that excellence and impact can be achieved through supporting faculty, researchers and professional support staff and in cultivating a culture and environment that values people and their work. Under this new strategy, equality, diversity and inclusion will be at the heart of everything they do. Faculty, researchers and support staff will benefit from development programmes and will be supported to focus on excellence through UCD’s systems of workload allocation, sabbaticals and academic recognition. Through their practices and policies they promise to continue to build a positive and proactive culture of integrity, dignity and respect in research and to deliver training and supports that will exemplify best practice and enable success. Not only will

CLINICAL PLACEMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

AELA O’FLYNN

While most students have been attending the University of Youtube, a small minority of healthcare students have returned to in-person clinical teaching. *Aela O’Flynn*, in discussion with students across a number of healthcare courses, explores the challenges of clinical placement during a pandemic.

FOR tens of thousands of students across Ireland and beyond, the classrooms and lecture halls of the past year have been bedrooms, kitchens and attics. However, for a small minority of students, in-person classes have continued, with all the opportunities, experiences - and risks - that entails.

Medical, midwifery, nursing, radiography, and physiotherapy students are all currently in hospitals, doing their usual clinical placements, but even within those complementary disciplines, their experiences are very different. As a fourth-year medical student, about to take my first steps in scrubs, I really have no idea what to expect from clinical placement. The experiences in this piece come directly from personal interviews of current UCD nursing, physio, and medical students who have done their clinical placement during the pandemic.

Medical and physio students were predominantly kept off the wards during the first wave of the pandemic. Ongoing placements were paused, planned placements were cancelled, and, much like the rest of the university, their learning resumed online. However, nursing and midwifery students had a very different experience, with back to back 12-hour shifts and little-to-no autonomy over the hours or location of their placement. This was not new though, and has been commonplace since long before Covid. However, when this is coupled with constant direct contact with Covid patients since the first wave, this has meant that many

“Many students now on clinical placement have not experienced the pre-Covid alternative, and have nothing to compare to the current situation”

student nurses and midwives have become frontline workers. The provision of compensation for these responsibilities is therefore, and has been, a topic of worthwhile and necessary discussion.

A lot has changed over the past 12 months, and most students have now made a full return to clinical teaching. And I ask, how has placement changed since March 2020? Students generally agree that the level of practical teaching on clinical sites has been maintained as much as could be expected. Though it is relevant to note that many students currently on clinical placement have not experienced the pre-Covid alternative, and are without comparison, to some extent, it appears that the usual lottery applies. If the healthcare team you are assigned to is extremely busy, or simply less equipped to deal with students, you probably won’t benefit a huge amount from your time in hospital. If the team is highly interactive, there are plenty of patients to see, and you are an enthusiastic participant on the team, there is much more to gain.

The number of patients available to interact with is an interesting consideration and important for placement. This can vary widely between types of placements and the number of Covid cases at any given time in any given hospital. For students being kept away from

Covid patients, the wards are often much quieter, with far fewer patients to see. Teams busy with Covid patients, such as Emergency Departments, however, have often had to refuse students due to the sheer number of patients and the risk of infection. Medical students describe doctors who were assigned to teach them being redeployed to Covid wards at short notice, or being switched from one team to another at the last minute due to crowding in their original ward or department. While most students are given the option not to see a patient who has a confirmed or suspected Covid diagnosis, a smaller number of students have been deployed onto Covid-specific wards to learn. Prior to vaccinations, these students were extremely vulnerable, and cases of Covid were reported amongst this cohort. As vaccines are administered and the risk decreases, more students are now being assigned to Covid wards, but they are grateful to have the protection of a vaccine.

Vaccination was a key concern for students in every healthcare course. The HSE has now informed the School of Medicine that students must have begun the vaccination process prior to entering clinical sites. While

this garner a culture and environment of excellence and impact nationally, but internationally UCD also hopes to continue working with organisations such as Universitas 21, the Worldwide Universities Network, and CESAER, as well as Horizon Europe and the European Union to further grow their international success in research and innovation.

This strategy with its bold ambitions comes at a time of great uncertainty and crisis. Now more than ever we need more research and innovation to get us through this pandemic as well as address global issues and problems that we face now and will face in the near future. ‘Rising to the Future’ and ‘Shaping the Future’ outline how UCD plans to rise to this challenge. Feely explained that “the period of this strategy will be one of great disruption, but we can act to shape the future through the excellent and impactful work of UCD’s vibrant research and innovation community”.

Climate change, the pandemic, sustainable energy, habitat loss, and ageing are all global problems that need solving. If we ever hope to find solutions it is important that research and innovation are prioritised and appreciated. The future of science depends on it. Without funding, support, or strategic planning we may never be able to create new technologies, new methods, or new inventions to improve our quality of life and help solve global issues. Not only do we benefit but future generations will too, and perhaps one day thank us for it. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we continue to support and nurture research and innovation so that we all together can ‘shape the future’ for the better. “I look forward to continuing to work with the UCD research and innovation community as we look to building a brighter future together” - Harris TD.

“Some level of stress is unavoidable in student life, but the strain on the healthcare system transfers directly to the shoulders of the students learning within it”

To observe and assist in the care of real patients, and to be taught skills by healthcare professionals in a clinical setting, is a privilege that healthcare students do not take lightly. We feel lucky to learn in person while other students remain exclusively online. But the pandemic has complicated clinical learning, in more ways than one, and for some more than others. Learning is no longer just about physical or theoretical, or that of our parents, siblings, grandparents, flatmates or partners. Is that really so much to ask?

IS THE RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE UNDER THREAT?

GRACE DONNELLAN

Grace Donnellan analyses the restrictions on the right to assemble across Europe.

OVER the past number of weeks, protests have broken out across the UK regarding the proposed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. Currently, the police in the UK can only restrict a protest if it could cause “serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community”. The Bill will increase police powers regarding protests, allowing police to impose start and finish times, set noise limits and apply these rules to a demonstration of just one person. Failure to cooperate with police instructions regarding your protest could lead to a fine of up to £2,500. Failure to follow restrictions a protestor “ought” to have known about will also become a crime. The Bill also contains an offence of ‘intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance’. This is intended to prevent protestors employing tactics such as occupying public spaces and gluing themselves to windows. In a particularly extreme provision, damage to memorials, such as statues, could lead to up to ten years in prison.

The Bill also includes stricter sentencing laws for sexual and violent offenders and increased anti-terrorism provisions. UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has described it as a “very sensible package of measures”. However, the measures seem intent on impeding individuals’ right to assemble. Police chiefs were frustrated that they could not do more to curtail the large Extinction Rebellion (XR) protests in 2019. Home Secretary, Priti Patel, a driving force behind the current Bill, described XR protestors as “so-called eco crusaders turned criminals” and Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests as “dreadful”. A government spokesperson stated that the “restrictions were a response to ‘increasingly disruptive tactics’ used in recent years by protestors. Civil liberties activists

have condemned the Bill as impeding on the right to protest and handing too much discretionary power to the police. Within Parliament, the Labour Party have opposed the Bill, accusing the Conservative Party of attempting to rush through legislation.

The right to assemble in Ireland is protected by the Irish Constitution. Throughout the pandemic, peaceful protests have occurred in Ireland. Nonetheless, protesting is currently prohibited under health restrictions as it is not deemed an essential reason for travel under the 1947 Health Act. This is a fact politicians and officials have been reluctant to acknowledge. The Gardaí have arrested a number of individuals in relation to recent protests. Some have argued that even during a pandemic, the right to protest is one that cannot be entirely removed. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties has called for protesting to be added to the list of reasons for essential travel. It suggested this could include guidelines on numbers allowed to be present and mask-wearing. Studies conducted in the US have shown that last summer’s BLM protests did not cause an increase in coronavirus cases. However, others contend that as protests are fundamentally an act of disobedience, any rules implemented by organisers may not be followed.

The right to assemble peacefully is often considered one of the foundations of democracy. It is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights has reiterated that it is a fundamental right in a democratic society. Restrictions on this right are only applicable in very limited circumstances and must be proportionate.

And yet, laws inhibiting this right have become

“Over the past year legislation has been passed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, criminalising mass gatherings and travel. While this has been deemed necessary in the context of protecting public health, as we slowly get back to normality, governments may attempt to solidify this pandemic related legislation to assert their control over populations.”

increasingly prevalent across Europe. In 2015, Spain adopted a law on citizens’ safety which brought in the possibility of administrative sanctions and fines for certain actions in the context of an assembly. These included minor disruptions in an assembly, resisting or disobeying police officers and assemblies taking place in the vicinity of an elected body. Despite a long history of protest, assemblies in France are often met with force, rubber bullets and tear gas from the police. In 2019 France amended its legislation to include restrictions on the right to assembly. The legislation allows administrative, rather than judicial, authorities to issue protest bans against individuals that they consider to be a serious threat to public order. It also features additional control measures and heavy sanctions.

Despite restrictions imposed by various governments, people continue to protest. In January, tens of thousands took to the streets in France to protest proposed legislation that would ban the filming of police activity. Over the past few weeks Kill the Bill protests have continuously occurred across the UK. These demonstrations show how important many consider the right to assemble to be.

During the past year, legislation has been passed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, criminalising mass gatherings and travel. While this has been deemed necessary in the context of protecting public health, as we slowly get back to normality, governments may attempt to solidify this pandemic related legislation to assert their control over populations. This interferes with democratic norms. In order to protect our democracy, we must ensure adequate protection of our right to assemble.

THE FUTURE OF THE GREEN PARTY

CHARLOTTE WALDRON

After a series of controversies, Charlotte Waldron shares her analysis on where the Green Party is headed.

THE battle to define the future of the Green Party is on. Catherine Martin is seeking to portray herself as the person to lead the party into the post-pandemic world. She has emerged from the backlash regarding the decision to enter the current government coalition relatively unscathed. Only time will tell whether her astute political moves are enough to outmanoeuvre current leader, Eamon Ryan, and successfully lead a united Green Party.

The foundations of the current Green Party rift lie in the decision to enter the coalition government. The formation of ‘Just Transition Greens’, an affiliate group of the party, directly resulted from the discontent that arose out of this decision. The founders of the group felt the party leaders violated principles of climate justice in forming a partnership with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. The group views ‘climate justice’, the merging of the environmental agenda with social justice policies such as worker’s rights and public housing, as the only way forward and were outraged when the Programme for Government did not include effective engagement with these issues.

The Canada-EU Trade Agreement (CETA) has worsened the existing rift. The deal contains a provision for the establishment of an Investor Court System, which would provide a mechanism for corporations to sue the Irish state over regulatory decisions that adversely impact their profits. The Green’s decision to support the government in ratifying this deal in Ireland has proved to be a bone of contention, with



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: LAOISE TARRANT

Ryan supporting ratification while others such as Neasa Hourigan staunchly opposing it. The party had previously voted to oppose CETA while in opposition, arguing it would make the Government less likely to

implement effective environmental policy. Fearing lack of support, the decision on ratifying CETA has been deferred pending a review.

Deputy Leader Catherine Martin has proven herself to be an astute political player during this rocky period. She has successfully worked with leader, Eamon Ryan, in government while distancing herself from him on contentious issues such as CETA. She is said to have raised concerns about the CETA deal in December, as coalition partners tried to force the deal through the Dáil. Her support of the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Hazel Chu in her run as an independent candidate for a Seanad by-election, in defiance of Ryan’s leadership, is the latest indication that Martin is moving away from Ryan. The Chu scandal has drawn clear battle lines and exposed the deep divisions that exist in the party. Chu, along with others such as Hourigan and Costelloe, have grown frustrated with Ryan’s leadership and his cosiness with the other coalition leaders.

The events of recent weeks paint a clearer picture regarding the future of the Green Party. It is increasingly likely that Martin will launch a new leadership bid on the back of this current upheaval in the party. When asked directly on this Week in Politics, Martin denied this and indicated that she is supporting Chu because she has always supported women in politics. While this may be one aspect of her support for Chu, it is difficult to believe that she will not benefit from this particular political move. The media frenzy caused by the Chu scandal has completely overshadowed the introduction

of the Climate Action Bill, a key legislative win for Ryan.

However, if Martin successfully challenges Ryan’s leadership and continues to remain in the coalition partnership alongside Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, she has a difficult task ahead in uniting the Party.

The formation of ‘Just Transition Greens’ is an indication that many Greens would like to see the party move to the left and marry climate change policy with social justice. Martin has given some indication that she agrees with a more left-leaning approach. In the concession speech she gave upon losing to Ryan last summer, she indicated that the Programme for Government will be judged “not by the words written on each page but by the implementation of, and whether or not we succeed in building a fairer and greener society”.

In the longer term, CETA represents the greatest challenge for the leader of the Green Party, whoever that may be. It is an issue that has evoked the passions of outspoken party members such as Hourigan and Costelloe already. It cuts right to the core of the identity of the Green Party and fundamentally defines who they are. It provokes many questions: Do they still want to adopt a centrist position in Irish politics? Are their members willing to compromise on issues such as CETA that cut to the core of the Green’s environmental and social beliefs? Or are they redefining themselves as a more left-leaning party, as the ‘Just Transition Greens’ group proposes? Only time will tell.

already a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) within the Parliament while The League are currently in the Identity and Democracy (ID) group. With this latest announcement, it appears that the preference may be to use one of these already established Eurosceptic groups as their alliance’s vehicle for change.

At the meeting, Salvini spoke of a “path which begins today and which will continue in several stages in different European capitals, expanding the group”. Additional members of the alliance could potentially include the French populist party National Rally led by Marine Le Pen which is also currently a member of the ID group with 23 MEPs.

Nationalist and right-wing parties have tried and failed to unify their forces within Europe for a long time partly due to clashing national interests and big differences in views on relations with external parties such as Russia. However, the Budapest meeting is the strongest indicator yet that the splintered far-right is starting to unite behind an alternative vision of the EU. The trio will meet again in May either in Warsaw or Rome to continue their talks with the exact date depending on the coronavirus situation.

It is still unclear what shape the new political alliance will take with the three allies holding back from revealing any firm details. For the time being, they will not create a new political group within the European Parliament using the 64 seats which their parties currently hold together. The Polish party, Law and Justice, are

THE RISE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

RORY CLARKE

Rory Clarke examines and interrogates the rising popularity of alternative dispute resolution practices.

AT some point in most of our careers, we will have a dispute with our employer. Traditionally, in unionised workforces, the union manages the dispute. However, as unions fade, alternative dispute resolution practices have emerged as a counterbalance, with new and engaging practices of practical dispute resolution and compromise, without necessitating harshness or termination.

Several key differences distinguish ADR and conventional dispute resolution (“CDR”). This piece examines some of these, with the unions’ roles deliberately excluded. However, the choice between CDR and ADR is non-binary; ADR supplements and corrects CDR’s inherent harshness, rather than supplanting it.

Approach

ADR avoids reducing conflicts to absolute and objective terms, for example, who is ‘correct’. Unlike most CDR systems, common ADR tools (mediation/facilitation/interest-based-bargaining) rely primarily on interest-based resolutions, resorting to the exercise or assertion of absolute power or rights only where absolutely necessary. Both the process and ultimate resolution seek such reconciliation, with universally workable and acceptable solutions. ADR professionals are expressly trained to capitalise on and leverage moments of agreement and mutual recognition within negotiations with the neutral aid they provide consistently perceived as fair and satisfactory.

ADR recognises that businesses’ true problem is not always the conflict itself, but that the conflict occurred. Thus, how it is dealt with is as important as that it is dealt with. Humans (and primates) react negatively to perceived procedural unfairness, even where outcomes are objectively satisfying. Consider pay; even where total pay increases, if achieved unsatisfactorily, without explicitly listening to employees’ interests, practical benefits from this expense is minimised. Objectively ‘better’ outcomes will not realise potentials if not achieved through systems reconciling and ‘linking’ the concerned interests. Parties should meaningfully engage, with resulting expectations clearly explained.

If resolution systems address conflict with ‘procedural justice’, conflict can actually enhance, rather than undermine, employees’ organisational commitment. ADR recognises this broader realisation, that employment relations cannot be managed solely by reference to actual outcomes. Conversely, CDR’s emphasis on power/rights-based solutions objectively ‘solve’ conflicts, without considering practical consequences for workplace relations.

Informality

Both systems prefer managing conflict at line-level. Such informal resolution avoids hardening adversarial positions and needlessly including 3rd parties/other staff in alien problems. However, the effectiveness of their informal procedures sets the two systems apart.

Whilst ADR is more informal and iterative, CDR is rigid and routinised. With ADR, parties use multiple different methods to further resolutions. Conversely, if entry-level processes (informal conversation or similar) fail in CDR, the next step is quite “a step”. A formal complaint

“alternative dispute resolution practices have emerged as a counterbalance, with new and engaging practices of practical dispute resolution and compromise, without necessitating harshness or termination.”

prompts investigations, potential appeals, and external references, with attendant professional and personal consequences. Even so, such external references are the norm in CDR. The ‘narcoctic effect’ explains how this norm is habitually and mindlessly conformed to. The ‘chilling effect’ describes the superficiality characterising engagement in early CDR procedures, as parties manipulate their positions in anticipation of ‘inevitable’ external references. The net effect is to make informal resolution all-the-harder.

Employers are affected too; with well-defined, readily available State resolution services, internal investment is harder to justify. However, whilst this ‘institutional incentive’ has no direct cost, deeper analyses reveal its true costliness.

Conflict resolution design can also be a ‘powerful learning method’ to improve organisational practices. Whilst ADR’s effective informality promotes this, power-based systems often suppress useful information. Employees are discouraged from exposing non-functioning business aspects through taking disputes. CDR’s formality often struggles to distinguish between ‘business problems’ and ‘problem workers’.

Effective informality (more common in ADR) is coherent with workplaces that are less adversarial in spirit, but where greater opportunity for adversary arises, given the quantitative increase in employment rights. Employees may want to assert neglected rights without creating conflict. However, evidence suggests this line-level priority has not yet adequately penetrated, with only 50% of line managers confident in conflict management. Training is required to develop managers’ framing and communication skills, under either system, to maintain balance between approachability and authority.

Routinisation

ADR is less routinised than CDR. However, common follow-on descriptions of ADR as less professionalised is not necessarily accurate. Firstly, ADR professionals numbers are consistently increasing. Secondly, and substantively, informal, disparate approaches are, to a degree, inherent in ADR, rather than indicating flawed implementations of it.

ADR is not linear as CDR is; its variety and multi-directionality have seen it described as a ‘continuum’, rather than a strict process. ADR could be accused of ‘throwing mud at the wall’, knowing that, eventually, something will ‘stick’. However, whilst not incorrect to characterise ADR’s development as often ‘ad-hoc’ or ‘unstrategic’, the criticism this metaphor implies is grounded in the flawed assumption that there is only ‘one wall’ for all employees.

Instead, ADR recognises each employee’s uniqueness, with different approaches to conflict - for instance, what sticks to ‘their wall’ may not necessarily stick to others’. With resolution offerings across a continuum, with consistent ‘loopbacks’, ADR aims to be more effective, by facilitating approaches suiting individual employees. ADR reflects the greater trend towards bottom-up employee relations, with employees inputting towards the psychological contracts binding them to workplaces. Individual aims and objectives are more easily incorporated, with mismatches more easily addressed through various informal ADR options - before they fester and become real problems.

This explains the increasingly prevalent ‘incremental’ style of ADR development; HR professionals with

‘evolutionary’ focusses gradually centralise and embed strategies that (empirically) suit most employees, without jettisoning processes favoured by (often significant) minorities.

Internalisation

As indicated, these systems differ in their prioritising, explicitly (by structure) or implicitly (by routinisation), of in-house resolution. Near-inevitably, the causal result of opening formal CDR disputes is their eventual reference to 3rd parties. Such is the final terminal on a linear route, with only lip-service paid to intervening stops. Conversely, ADR has numerous exits, roundabouts and loops to redirect complaints to other internal mechanisms. Moreover, although postponed wherever possible, even when ADR uses power/rights-based resolutions, they are often internalised.

Advantages of internal, private dispute resolution include promptness, the involvement of specialised arbitrators and process controls. Moreover, proceedings, and their outcomes, are private. Although scope exists to abuse such private arrangements, if procedurally just, they are far more effective than external equivalents. ‘Locking employees in’ to internal resolution schemes avoids long delays, heavy damages and increased costs.

Costs

The processes’ ‘conflict costs’ are arguably different. ADR potentially generates more *manifest* costs, for example, ‘transaction’ costs of lost productivity and HRM/ADR design time and costs. However, the CDR’s hidden conflict costs are likely to be disproportionately higher. Implemented successfully, ADR partially avoids reduced organisational commitment (interests are reconciled and employment relationships repaired); reputational damage (conflict-resolution is internalised), and conflict recurrence (resolutions satisfying both parties should endure).

This supposition is borne out; many organisations find that expanding into broader mechanisms of collaborative conflict management actually reduces overall costs. Although solving conflict is costly - and ADR does encourage expressing grievances/conflict - it is even more costly not to solve it.

There are myriad differences between ADR and CDR. ADR is more informal, more likely to reconcile, rather than fracture functional relationships, and fundamentally, it costs less. Many ADR critics point to its often reactive and improvised implementation. However, while few institutional incentives exist to invest in ADR, only firms with attentive HRM will institute it strategically. Nevertheless, even with ad-hoc provision comes utility; the essence of ADR being that, in fact, and practice, an alternative resolution exists for every dispute.

“ADR recognises that businesses’ true problem is not always the conflict itself, but that the conflict occurred. Thus, how it is dealt with is as important as that it is dealt with.”

THE VIRTUES OF VIRTUAL INTERNSHIPS

AOIFE ROONEY

As a second summer of virtual internships gets underway, Aoife Rooney examines how they compare to their in-person counterparts.

“there is a distinct power imbalance that has allowed for the abuse of students’ willingness to obtain summer experience”

INTERNSHIPS are in theory, a mutually beneficial concept for both employer and student. In an ideal world, they allow students the chance to get involved with large companies who often have more work than employees to do it, whilst simultaneously facilitating on-site learning, networking, and the development of practical skills that can only be exercised outside of a classroom. The benefits for the company are equally as attractive - the ability to access students who are willing and enthusiastic about any form of work they can get their hands on, with the added bonus of not having to pay competitive wages - most interns being happy with the legal minimum. They also have the first pick of graduates who show potential to be hired.

While this is the blueprint of a fairly symbiotic relationship between students and employers, there is a distinct power imbalance that has allowed for the abuse of students’ willingness to obtain summer experience. This is seen through no payment being offered to many interns across multiple industries offering summer placements. While there does seem to be some change in the norm over the past few years, with many companies now paying interns and offering perks such as free meals at work, not paying interns is definitely not yet a thing of the past.

Throwing Covid-19 into this scenario should tend to favour the intern. Last summer, most industry internships were carried out virtually, if at all, with the same set-up likely for this coming season. For many students, the glamour and allure of an internship are often less about gaining experience and making contacts, and more about the fact that they can now put the experience on their CV. For a lot of interns, the work they are doing throughout their stint with a company is nothing close to what they envisage their careers looking like, so despite so many providing no money for often menial labour, the name attached to competitive coveted internships is payment enough to get through the summer.

Covid-19 left companies reeling in their decision whether or not to continue internship programmes. Those who continued hosting programmes were left having to totally restructure their schemes to cater to a virtual intake. This has many benefits to students, not least that it removes the geographical barrier many Irish students face when looking at their options. It is unrealistic for most to hope to move to another country, for a duration of possibly three months, to work full-time at an internship where they are likely not even being compensated. This is a major win for students and recent graduates, as unless you are hoping to apply for an internship in one of Dublin’s consulting firms or something in engineering and technology, there is very little choice. More often than not, students of Arts, Humanities and Social Science courses are poorly catered to and underrepresented in the offerings of summer internships and placement schemes. This is a direct disadvantage students from these faculties face when it comes to searching for employment, so the ability to apply to roles on an international, even national level seems to make it fairer for all students to access experience.

Most participating Dublin companies such as Google, Microsoft, Facebook, PwC, EY and many larger law firms are continuing with the 2021 cohort of interns

in a virtual capacity. For companies such as Microsoft and PwC where so much of the advertising surrounding these placements rely heavily on company culture and the socialising aspect among interns, they are fighting an uphill battle in their ability to deliver this.

One final year student who was in the 2020 intern cohort of a large consulting firm in Dublin felt that they had ‘missed out’. The at-distance factor of the internship impeded their ability to meet people and develop relationships; “you can’t build a good quality network.” While companies have little control over government restrictions pertaining to attendance at offices, students have a modest expectation of being able to cultivate relationships with both employees or mentors and other interns. This is arguably as important as the work aspect and is what many companies rely heavily upon when attempting to attract students. Having said this, the work is the crux of why companies even consider investing in internship programmes, so a roadblock or hindrance to students being able to prove their use is a real issue for companies.

For companies that require a lot of practical learning and work, internships become difficult to execute. This problem was likely encountered by many firms last summer, a contributing factor as to why some have made the choice to skip them this year, possibly proving to be more work than reward. The UCD student who spoke to *The University Observer* corroborated this trend, saying that they: “missed out on the practical side of things, you couldn’t really see what was going on and jump in and get involved.” Many interns have had to adopt a bystander mentality, as opposed to the active one in physical attendance. The hope would be that companies will have learnt from mistakes made last summer and will come up with tools to engage and connect with interns for the benefit of both parties.

It is undoubtedly difficult for a student to attempt to complete an internship from the same seat where they

spent the year attending lectures and interviewing for positions. There is, however, an argument that being self-motivated enough to work totally independently is valuable in itself, as an employer can trust that they can get tasks completed without the watchful eye of a superior. While there are ways to digitally track an employee doing work, current students are at an advantage over those who graduated even five years previous. They are already versed in online and remote working and by the point of hiring can probably work to a high level of efficiency from home. All of these things are attractive qualities in an intern, as it shows that they have a track record of completing projects without the constant need for motivation.

While the fact that interns are not tied to one geographic location makes the application opportunity and process somewhat more equitable, there are equally external factors that can seriously hinder a student’s ability to work productively from home. Students living rurally with poor Wi-Fi coverage are not in control of their access to fast internet, which might negatively affect their attendance at their internship, or negate it altogether. In the same vein is equal access to a laptop or computer for eight hours a day, and a quiet room from which to work. For people affected by these work necessities, the office is by far an ideal choice. While this problem also extends to college, there may be supports in place there, whereas in finding an internship, a company may be unwilling to provide a laptop, for example, an unfair disadvantage that in other years has not been an issue.

While students are lucky to get internship spots, employers are equally so in a student’s commitment to their company. Despite restrictions, both students and companies have a lot to offer and there is the potential for a host of successful internships over the summer months, once students’ expectations are realistic and employers have invested resources in the attempt to cater to the new normal.

GAEILGE

ARD-FHEIS CHONRADH NA GAEILGE: NÍOS MÓ GHAELOIDEACHAS AG TEASTÁIL

ZOE NIC SHIOMMOÍN

Tuarascionn *Zoe Nic Shiommóin* faoin rún maidir le Ghaelscoilíocht a tháinig chun cinn ag Ard-Fheis Chonradh na Gaeilge



ÍOMHA LE BUÍOCHAS DO DOMINIC DALY

CÚPLA seachtain ó shin, i mí Márta bhí Seachtain na Gaeilge ar siúl. Is féile idirnáisiúnta Ghaeilge í Seachtain na Gaeilge, bíonn an fhéile ar siúl chuile bhliain ón gcéad lá go dtí an seachtú lá deag de Márta. I rith na seachtaine, mar is gnách, bhí an-chaint faoi thabacht an Ghaeilge inár sochaí agus is léir go bhfuil an Ghaeloideachas nó an t-oidéachas trí mheán na Gaeilge ag dul ó neart go neart. Sa bhliain acadúil 2019-2020, de réir Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, bhí 49,822 daltaí i 294 bunscoileanna timpeall an oileáin agus 15,784 daltaí i 75 iar-bunscoileanna láil Gaeilge chomh maith. Is léir go bhfuil tuismitheoirí in Éirinn sona sásta oidéachas dátheangach a fháil dá bpáistí, de réir dealraimh is iomaí buntáistí a bhaineann leis an t-oidéachas dátheangach, ‘lítearhacht agus aird níos fearr’ ina measc.

Ach tar éis scoile an bhfuil dóthain déanta ag na hollscoileanna in Éirinn chun oidéachais trí Ghaeilge a

chuir ar fáil? Creideann an Cumann Gaelach i gCOBÁC nach bhfuil dóthain modúil i gcoláistí 3ú leibhéal trí mheán na Gaeilge, taobh amuigh den Ghaeilge féin mar ábhar. Chuaigh Annie Ní Shíocháin, reachtaire an Cumann Gaelsaigh i mBlíana, go dtí Ard Fheis Chonradh na Gaeilge ar líne i mí Feabhra, chun tacaíocht a fháil faoi fhadhb seo. Chuir an Cumann an rún seo isteach.

‘Éilíonn an Ard-Fheis go rachadh an Conradh i mbun feachtas le brú a chur ar Choláistí 3ú Leibhéal modúil a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge, taobh amuigh de mhodúil Gaeilge féin.

Ag caint le Annie Ní Shíocháin mhínigh sí bunús an rún don *University Observer*: “Labhraimear mar choiste agus smaoinimear cén sort rún a sheolfaidh muid chuig Conradh na Gaeilge. Ar ár gcoiste tá réimse leathan de chúrsaí atá bainteach againn, ach tá rud amháin a nascann muid le chéile: An Ghaeilge. Tá sé aisteach,

nach bhfuil, san ollscoil is mó in Éirinn agus ní féidir leat ach na modúil atá dírithe ar theanga na Gaeilge a dhéanamh.”

Níl modúil as Gaeilge neamhghnách in ollscoileanna, is féidir leat an chéim ‘Gnó agus Gaeilge’ a dhéanamh trí ‘Ghaeilge in Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliatha, tá an chéim sin múnithe as Gaeilge amháin. Agus i gCorcaigh, i gColáiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, sa chéim Dlí le Gaeilge bíonn chuid de na modúil dlíthúil trí mheán na Gaeilge, mar shampla ‘Dlí Bunreachtúil’. Mar mhac léinn Dlí le Gaeilge tá díoma ar Ní Shíocháin nach bhfuil modúil ina cúrsa ar fáil as Gaeilge do Dhlí “mise le mo chéim, Dlí le Gaeilge, an rud a dhéanaimid atá bainteach leis an dlí ná aistriúchán dlíthúil”.

Le hollscoileanna eile ar fud na tíre ag déanamh a seacht ndícheall chun an Ghaeilge a fhorbairt i saol acadúil, an mbeadh na modúil sin ráithiúil i gCOBÁC? Déarfadh Ní Shíocháin go mbeadh. “Tá an-chuid Gaeilgeoirí i mBaile Átha Cliath agus an-chuid gaelcholaistí freisin, agus tá sé chomh tábhachtach freisin do dhaoine as ceantracha gaeltachta, mar tá an-chuid dóibh i gCOBÁC. Feicimid sin leis an scéim cónaithe atá againn ar an gcampas agus leis an gcumann freisin. Tá suim ag daoine sa Ghaeilge ach níl suim ag achán duine céim a bhaint amach i dteanga na gaeilge agus sin an t-aon rud gur féidir leo a dhéanamh.”

Amach anseo an bhfeicimid feabhsú maidir leis na modúil atá ar fáil trí Ghaeilge? Tá suim ag gcoiste an gcummain sa rún dar le Ní Shíocháin, cé nach mbeidh sí i gceannas ar an gcumann sa todhchaí, tá sí dóchasach go leanfaidh an smaoineamh ar aghaidh. “Níl stopfaidh an smaoineamh ag an Ard Fheis, tá sé mar intinn ag an gcumann gaelach an rún seo a phlé leis na hiarrathoirí ar an aontas nuair atá siad ag na hustingis, agus a rá leo go bhfuil an cumann chun brú a chur fiú muna bhfuil an deis againn i mBlíana, an bhliain seo chugainn cinnte.”

Ach an bhfuil an smaoineamh seo indéanta don ollscoil? An bhfuil na leachtóirí agus teagascóirí le Gaeilge againn sna scoileanna éagsúla? Is léir go bhfuil dar le Ní Shíocháin, “Tá an-chuid [leachtóirí le Gaeilge], suim ar bord tacaíocht de Ghaeilge de COBÁC agus tá duine ansin ó gach scoil agus Gaeilge ceart lófa acu.” Anuas ar sin, tá an Oifigach na Gaeilge don bhliain acadúil nua, Louise Ní Mhathúna, ag iarraidh an rogha

modúil trí Ghaeilge a leathnú chomh maith dar leis a forógra “Ag cur tús le cainteanna faoi theagasc modúil trí mheán na Gaeilge i réimse leathan disciplíní.”

Is léir go bhfuil bearna againn i gCOBÁC maidir le modúil trí mheán na Gaeilge, mar mhodúil roghnacha do Ghaeilgeoirí taobh amuigh de Scoil na Gaeilge, agus dar le Ní Shíocháin bheadh sé tabhachtach go mbeadh an rogha ag daoine, go háirithe na daoine a thagann as gaelcholaistí agus tá na hábhair uilig déanta acu as gaeilge go dtí seo. “Modúil bunúsacha, más rud é go ndéana tú gnó don ardteist bheadh saghas tuiscint agat ar chuntasíocht agus eacnamaíocht bunúsacha, agus mar sin beidh tú lán ábalta. Bheadh sé iontach an deis a thabhairt do dhaoine, aon mhac léinn, ní hamháin mic léinn gaeilge, triail a bhaint as ábhar eile trí mheán na Gaeilge chomh maith. An méid sin daoine a ghlacann páirt sna modúil as Gaeilge mar mhodúil roghnacha ó chúrsanna eile b’fheidir bainteach leis an gcumann nó ag déanamh an modúil sin toisc go bhfuil suim acu sa Ghaeilge, is féidir le haon teagascóir a rá leat go bhfuil daoine ó gach scoil ina rang agus déanamh sin mar mhodúil roghnacha. Dá rud é go mbeadh an deis acu rudaí ina gcúrsaí féin a staidéar orthu trí mheán na Gaeilge bheadh sé sin ar fheabhas agus sin an príomh faith gur tharla an rún seo.”

Is léir go bhfuil an Ghaeilge ag dul ó neart go neart inár sochaí, tá athbheochan beag ag tarlú go háirithe ar na meáin shóisialta ach tá bóthar fada romhainn ó thaobh na hollscoileanna fós.

Rinne *The University Observer* iarracht a bheith i dteagmháil le seirbhísí eastáit COBÁC faoin rún seo ach níl freagair againn fós.

HARPY



DEEKS SEEKS REMOVAL OF POOR STUDENTS FROM UCD BECAUSE THEY MAKE HIM FEEL “UNCOMFORTABLE”.

FRANCIS STEAMY-SESHINGTON

THE notoriously frugal president Deeks has admitted he has sought to remove poor students from UCD in an interview conducted with the Harpy at Deeks’ castle. As rain pelted and lightning struck the watchtower of Deeks’ castle, the President laughed as he unveiled the numerous underhand ways he has attempted to exclude poor students from Higher Education.

“It’s quite simple really” admitted Deeks rubbing his hands together, “it all starts with the most basic of

human needs; food! By charging 10 euro for Aramark prison food we make an enormous profit and hopefully,” he said crossing fingers and grinning with eyes wide open, “dissuade any of the great-unwashed from coming to UCD.”

However, Deeks admits that charging astronomical prices for food you wouldn’t feed to the farm animals on a petting zoo visit to UCD, is not enough in itself to say shoo-shoo to the poor. “The astronomical fees and

student levy not only discourage the poor and make their lives 100 times more difficult but they also pay for beautiful new buildings, buildings which will be a testament to my bent falice.”

“But it’s not just about keeping poor students out of Higher Education and making it as difficult as possible for them to stay in when they get there, God no!” stated Deeks. “I also have no appetite to work with the poor, our Postgraduate research salaries are designed so

that only the privileged can truly afford to occupy these posts.”

Deeks had this final message for the poor students of UCD, “you better run, you better take cover.”

SARAH MICHALEK ELECTED UCD DRUG KINGPIN

ERNEST RIMMINGTON

UCDSU Entertainments Officer Sarah Michalek has been elected to run UCDSU’s Students Supporting Drugs and Parties (SSDP) for the second year running. She was the sole candidate after a series of potential challengers disappeared in the weeks before nominations closed.

Speaking to supporters at a secret victory rally in a shebeen, Michalek stated that the turning of the *Entstagram* into a platform for selling ecstasy, ketamine, and other synthetic drugs was imminent; “I think I could like maybe mobilise shop staff to deliver envelopes of drugs around campus? That would be pretty cool”

“I would like to thank my voters, the REDACTED family, bent Gardai, and Tom for all their little favours” she added.

Despite winning by a landslide, there was controversy early in the campaign when the *United Dry-Shites Campaigning Group* took issue with Michalek’s slogan of “I will literally sell crack to teenagers and you can’t stop me”. It is understood by The Harpy that this campaign failed due to the insufferable dweebiness of the campaign’s spokesperson. One insider told a Harpy reporter “No one in a University wants to discuss the slippery slope, or how it will ruin your future if an employer knows you let your hair down at a party”.

The College Tribune ran a poll before the election which suggested that Michalek was in danger of losing her seat, however it has since been realised by their co-editors that students who are cool enough to like drugs are too cool to participate in polls.

Speaking about the allegations of her newfound mob connection, and being linked to the disappeared would-be challengers, Michalek stated “Some people know what’s good for them and some people don’t”.

It is understood that Estate Services are no longer pursuing a policy of preventing drug dealing on campus after reporters witnessed this really cool. Goodfellas/ heist film montage of security and administrative staff receiving bribes and a monologue explaining all the connections.

The Minister for Justice last year stated that drug use on campus was “a serious problem”, and that “ending the war on drugs requires far too much courage, so we’re just gonna keep pretending current policy isn’t an abject

failure that allows organised crime constant revenue. It’s not like voters ever hold my party accountable for literally anything anyway”.

The Minister for Justice last year stated that drug use on campus was “a serious problem”, and that “ending the war on drugs requires far too much courage, so we’re just gonna keep pretending current policy isn’t an abject

MÍÚSÁID NA MEÁIN SHÓISIALTA: CÉN FÁTH GUR MAITH LINN TEIPEANNA A FHEICEÁIL?

SHANE MACDOMHNAILL

Tuarascionn *Shane MacDomhnaill* faoin cáineadh ar figiúirí i mbéal an phobail thar na meáin sóisialta, agus cén fáth gur maith linn a fheiceáil nach n-éiríonn le daoine.



ÍOMHA LE BUÍOCHAS DO SINEAD MOHAN

Ó am go chéile, titeann sraith eachtraí ghruama amach a tharangaíonn ard ar na nithe is measa d’ár saol sa tír seo. Le blian anuas, tá scanal na dTíthe Máithreacha is Leanai mar ceann de na eachtraí is measa atá feicthe againn le fada an lá. Uaireanta, áfach, ní bhíonn gach rud chomh soiléir sin. Le roinnt seachtain anuas tá poitínseal na h-uafáis a mhaireann ar na meáin cumarsáide feicthe againn. Dé Domhnach seo chaite, mar shampla, tháinig scéal Callum Robinson - imreoir sacar d’fhoireann náisiúnta na hÉireann - chun cinn nuair a rinneadh

teachtaireachtaí chiníoch a sheoladh chuige i ndiaidh dó dhá cúl a aimsiú in aghaidh Chelsea. Bíonn imreoirí ar nós Robinson ag streachailt in éadan an chiníochas ar a leithidí de Twitter agus Instagram gach uile lá. Oslaicíonn sé seo ceist na mheáin shóisialta ar an iomlán chomh maith.

Le roinnt seachtain anuas, tá roinnt samplaí eile den míúsáid seo tarlaíthe. Ar an 18ú Márta, d’impigh Dr. Ronan Glynn ar muintir na tíre beagáinín níos mó a dhéanamh chun scaipeadh Covid-19 a sheachaint; “If every

individual can do just that little bit more over the next few weeks we will stop another wave,” a dúirt sé. Gearrhóg fise 30 soicind a bhí ann, roinnte ag RTE. Chonaic breis is milliún duine é ar Twitter. Ina dhiaidh bhí na mílte duine ag tabhairt drochíde do Glynn ar Twitter. Tuigim gur toradh é seo den frustachas atá thart maidir leis an dianghlásáil, ach ní polaitéoir é Glynn. Tharla sé seo cé nach raibh sé ach ag iarraidh cúraim a spreagadh; is dochtúir é, ag deireadh an lae.

I ndiaidh na cluichí sacar idirnáisiúnta is déanaí, inar chaill Éire in aghaidh an tSeirbia agus Lucsamburg, tháinig eachtra ghránna eile chun cinn. Ar dtús, rinneadh slad iomlán ar Mark Travers, an cúl báire, i ndiaidh dó bótúin a dhéanamh i rith dara chúl na Seirbia. Fear óg, ar aois bliain is fiche atá sé, agus bhí na céadta duine ag déanamh slad iomlán ar ar-line, agus ag déanamh díbeail ar sna teachtaireachtaí seo ionas go bhfeicfeadh sé iad. Chomh maith le sin, cáineadh Stephen Kenny go géar tar éis na cluichí, le méid sách mór daoine ag iarraidh go gcaillfeadh sé a phost. Nílím ag rá nach féidir bainisteoir na h-Éireann a cháineadh i ndiaidh dó dhá cluiche a chailleadh - a mhalairt an scéal. Ach nuair a fheictear an oiread imreoirí atá tar éis bheith in easnaimh le bliain anuas, agus freisin go bhfuil Kenny ag iarraidh stíl imirthe níos comhaimseartha a spreagadh i measc na asláithreachtaí seo, an féidir a mhaíomh go cothrom gur cheart dó a phost a chailleadh?

Treisiónn sé seo tréith chomórta a fheictear in Éireann, atá formhéadaithe ag na meáin shóisialta toisc go bhfuil guth ag gach éinne timpeall na seacht bparóistí; is breá linn post iontach deacair - dodhéanta, fiú - a thabhairt do dhuine éigin, agus na cosa a ghearradh futhú nuair nach n-éiríonn leo láithreach. Is é an meoin paróisteach céanna a stiúránn muid thíos na bóithre mícheart arís is arís eile. Is breá linn a fheiceáil go bhfuil daoine eile ag teipeadh - ligeann sé dúinn údar a thabhairt ar na fáthanna nar

bhacamar ár gcuid a dhéanamh. Na daoine a deirann ‘d’fhéadfaínn é sin a dhéanamh go héasca’, ar cheistigh tú riamh cén fáth nach bhfuil sé déanta acu go fóill? Dearg san aghaidh a théann siad, agus abairtí ghairid, ghonta á thabhairt acu mar freagra. Tá mórán mícheart le sochaí na Stáit Aontaithe Mheiriceá, ach rud amháin atá i gceart sa sochaí acu ná go bhfuil sé daingnithe sa síceolaíocht acu deiseanna a ghilacadh, agus dul sa tseans. Ar fáth éigin, a mhalart atá i gceist anseo. Tá focal sa Ghearmáinis do beagnach gach rud; is ea *Schadenfreude* ná an pléasúr a bhaintear ó mí-ádh duine éigin eile. Tá ionadh orm nach bhfuil focal cuí don mhóthúcháin sin sa Ghaeilge, nuair a smaoinítear faoi cé chomh chomórta is a bhfuil sé anseo.

Tá sé thar am dúinn athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar a bhfuil tábhachtach dúinn. In aimsir na mheáin shóisialta, tá deis anois ag na nithe agus na h-eilimintí is measa dár síceolaíocht teacht chun cinn. Tréimhse machnaimh é an paindéim ar feadh a lán daoine; i leith a sli beatha, a caiteamh aimsire agus mórán eile. B’fhearr machnamh a dhéanamh ar cén fáth go ndéanann muid an saghas seo cáineadh agus slad orthu siúd nach n-éiríonn leo go fóirfe san méid atá á dhéanamh acu. B’fhearr machnamh a dhéanamh chomh maith ar an sli in n-úsáideann muid na meáin shóisialta ar nós Twitter agus Instagram. Deirtear le linn na paindéime gur ar a scáth a chéile a mhairimid - tá sé thar am dúinn é sin a ghilacadh go dáiríre.

Practice makes perfect

1. Is deis í an paindéim chun scil éigin atá ar intinn agat a fhoghlaim nó a fheabhsú. Ní thioctfaidh an máistreacht in aon réimse gan an taithí an scil sin a chleachtadh. Is smaoineamh maith é deis na paindéime a úsáid chun do scil, cibé scil atá ann, a fheabhsú.

SEANFHOCAIL NA H-IRISE

SHANE MACDOMHNAILL

“Taithí a dhéanamh máistreacht ”

(tah-ee / a / yayn-in / mosh-truckt)

AT LEAST TWO SIDES:
STUDENT UNION POWER

GAVIN CASSELLS

A friend of mine writes a great newsletter called *Gentle Decline*. It presupposes that as a society we will be unable to tackle climate change and that we must prepare for the inevitable bleaker future that will be a consequence of our inaction. If they are right, environmentalism, as it is mostly practised today, is just a tax on the behaviour of good actors, whether they be individuals, companies or governments.

Making pro-environment choices is still something that many people want to do to make themselves feel better, maybe just less guilty. If people recycle, well at least they are not making the world worse as much as those that do not. Of course, how much recycling is doing to help with the problem of global warming is very much up for debate. Recycling, when left to the moderately informed individual, is often done poorly and has historically exploited foreign countries who have just dumped much of it into their landfill instead of ours. There have been plenty of reports recently on how the recycling system in various countries is falling apart because more and more companies are extracting the valuable parts of goods before it gets to recyclers, and so recyclers are just glorified dumping grounds for many materials. Global crisis has also played a role. The fall in the oil prices due to Covid-19 has led to the price of virgin plastics falling, which makes recycled plastics less economically viable.

More than ever, we need to move away from individual actions nibbling at the edges of the problem and take massive state-wide action that will inevitably hurt but will involve everyone and so will achieve the scale required and will be fairer. But how do we make this happen when the people who should care the most, environmentally conscious voters, feel free to vote for parties who do not deliver green policies.

We are treating the environment as if it is just another charity. People make contributions to the cause to make themselves feel good, or to look good in front of others. But the environment is not just another charity, it is as important as Health and Education, areas in which governments take big roles. The Irish government has been particularly slow to do its part, only just rolling out the lowest possible carbon tax to meet its international obligations. It has a history of kicking the can down the road on environmental issues.

When you think about the environment and the rate of government action you should be mad. If making small changes yourself is making you feel better about the situation is that really that useful? Yes, we can practice good policy at home and attempt to lead by example, but individual action will not get us where we want to go, we need to demand that action is taken at scale by all large actors but especially by governments. I watched a report by the economist that claimed that airlines were willing to pay more for biofuels, up to 50% more, but not up to 300% more which is what they currently cost. Airlines could be contributing up to 22% to the world's carbon emissions by 2050, so there is a lot of pressure on the industry to go green. However, politicians are not aggressively pursuing the kind of carbon taxes that would make companies consider lower carbon alternatives favourably.

There are issues around carbon taxes that worry poverty experts, but these can be addressed through welfare systems. Some proposals suggest that everyone should get a yearly carbon tax dividend which is, importantly, not tied to your energy consumption, so that the net effect of the tax should be low, and the incentives to reduce carbon production remain.

RIOTS IN THE NORTH - APRIL 2021

ELLIE MCCREANOR

A friend asked me last week what was going on in the North. I had to Google it. I knew that kids were throwing petrol bombs, I knew about Bobby Storey's funeral and the border in the Irish Sea, I knew it was Easter weekend. But still, I had to Google it. When my friend asked what was going on in the North, it was big news to him. But to me, and most people in the North, periods of violent outbursts are somewhat normal. Nothing compared to the peak of the Troubles but they do still happen. It's not unusual for your daily routine to be disrupted by a bomb scare. However, this outburst has lasted longer than previous occasions and as I look more closely at the reasons for it and arguments against it, this time seems different.

Nationalists and Republicans in Northern Ireland have felt a loss of identity since the country's formation. Many in these communities feel that Ireland should be one country united and that our connection to the UK removes them from their Irish roots. On the other side, Unionists and Loyalists, in comparison, exist in a more privileged position in the North as they are loyal to Great Britain and cherish the connection with GB as it is their identity and culture. Many in this community voted to leave the EU in Brexit due to identifying as British. However, Brexit has resulted in a customs border in the Irish Sea. The alternative to this was a land border which would have only inflamed dissident



Similarly, the impact of carbon taxes on prices concerns many. However, these price signals are important. Airline travel should be more expensive as long as it is a high carbon producer, it's the price signal that reduces consumption. In some countries people have started flight shaming, forming demonstrations at airports, but a much better way for governments to tackle the pollution of aircraft would be to make sure that the airline ticket includes the price of that damage - that is what carbon taxes are for, they are meant to dissuade people from taking the environment harming action in the first place.

I know many of you are going stir crazy in this lockdown and are saving for foreign trips when things open again. Take a moment to consider how one flight undoes years of good environmentalist behaviour. If you are thinking, 'well I've done well for a few years, I deserve this flight', this is what economists refer to as moral accounting, good behaviour can lead to bad actions. What we need is to take that choice away. The government should take aggressive action that prices in the costs of environmental damage into our everyday lives so that we are all incentivised to make pro-environment decisions.

INTERSECTIONS THAT
DON'T CROSS NEATLY

ADESEWA AWOBADEJO

I grew up in church, and for the most part it was this amazing community of people. It wasn't just Sunday services; it was the after service, the choir rehearsals on Friday evenings after school. It was having a solid support system, but still, it was much more than that. I found something that wasn't fleeting, something substantial. Something much bigger than myself and something I didn't have the language for. I think the word is 'faith'. This thing made sense sometimes and sometimes it didn't.

"I don't believe it anymore". These words echo through my head at least once a month, a week, a day. The temptation to divest from and deconstruct everything I once held close arises. "Was everything I knew and held close just a figment of my imagination, was it a lie?" But it's still too compelling to just abandon.

People are leaving though. People I grew up with, people like me. Most of the time it isn't out of their own volition, they are being betrayed and forced out of a place they once called home. I remember a friend told me she didn't think that Black people should be Christians and at the time it was such a weird statement. She meant it in the sense that it would be a betrayal to all the black people who had died at the hands of Christianity weaponized and all the broken nations still recovering from the wars religion has caused and from colonization. I know that the Quakers were instrumental in the abolition of slavery - I've looked up people like John Wesley, I've memorised all the counter-arguments. But you just can't explain away the church's involvement in slavery nor can you sugarcoat it.

Racism is everywhere, there are traces of it ingrained into so many things in ways I don't have the capacity to fully understand. And as much as the modern church tries to move away from its past, there's a whole history that's been ignored and disowned, forgetting the very violence exerted on people in the name of their god. Even now, I'm confused as to why people in the church are apathetic towards racism. My friend and I spent the whole summer trying to decide if Christianity was the 'white man's religion'. One option was that it is, the second option was that it isn't, we laboriously settled for the latter, still too compelling to forfeit.

I think the church's role and involvement in endangering queer lives is understated. I keep trying to separate my version of Christianity, but that does nothing but invalidate people like me. It's not something I can do, not when queer people are asked to give an account for why and how and why they should exist, or when people are told to explain their humanity or beg for their rights. How bizarre it is to place people at the mercy of those who deem them as unlovable or a threat? Why is that even allowed? The fact is queer people have been treated horribly and still are inside and outside of the church, and my heart grieves for them. Especially when it comes to the treatment of queer people in the church. The worst part is that I think people forget that there are gay people seated right in the pews, even if they never say a word.

Especially if they never say a word, they grow up thinking they have to hide who they are. We grow up thinking that we have to hide who we are, living in fear and shame. Why is self-hatred the safer option? And again there's this sort of apathy from those who argue that they don't perpetuate these things. By apathy I mean silence, they're just quiet, which is almost worse.

I know people that have had to make the hard choice between their race and their faith or even their sexuality



or their faith. I know because I'm one of these people. This is the problem with intersectionality that no one ever talks about. The intersections never cross neatly. The lines don't fold quietly on top of each other. They butt into one another and block the way for any to move freely. But the intricacies of our existence shouldn't be denied, they shouldn't have to be defended. No one should have to find a part of themselves that is more disposable. Even though conflicting identities may say "pick me", the cost of leaving behind one part of our identities to 'accept' another is too high. Even though these parts of ourselves may split off they still somehow exist as a full identity. It's not about which part can be forsaken or what part can be tucked away, so I refuse to choose.

It takes courage and self-acceptance to exist in the midst of these intersections but it's an interesting place where people can actually enjoy the intersections, if they dare. I feel like I'm writing something into existence for queer people, for black people, for Christians who wrestle with their faith but mainly for myself.

EDITORIAL

THE merit of running a student newspaper for an empty campus was called into question this year. However, we at *The University Observer* stuck with our idea that there is an imperative to hold the university to account. While the campus itself was quiet, life at UCD was not. There are so many people across the colleges and at home who are doing brilliant, thoughtful work. However, this year, *The University Observer* also came out and reported on the least pleasant sides of campus.

We *The University Observer* had to take a stand and say that we reject the callous treatment of students by University management for financial gain. We reject Anti-Asian hatred and racism across our campus. We reject that our University is a place in which harassment, assault and violence can exist. We reject that a university education is only available to those who can afford it.

As has been iterated in our editorials over the past volume, we at *The University Observer* stand with the students. We stand with those who have become isolated, leaving home in hope for an education and enriching life at UCD. We stand with those struggling to make ends meet. We stand with the women who were treated so poorly at the hands of the university and state. We stand with all trying to make the University a better place.

Cathifimid, muintir na hOllscoile, tacaíocht nach bhfuil ar fáil ón gcoláiste a thabhairt dá chéile. Tá sé de dualgais againn a bheith cineálta.

And so the final issue is upon us. In a year in which everyone stayed put, we at *The University Observer* have done our best to entertain, inform and bring the most important news stories to students and

staff, to our readers, wherever they may be. We could not have done this without our dedicated and talented team of writers, illustrators, photographers, videographers, podcasters - the entire UO group.

We wish all our team, readers and fellow students the very best of luck in their end-of-term assessments. Now is the time for us to look forward to a reopened and rejuvenated country. We are hopeful for brighter days, meeting together again. We at *The University Observer* thank you for being us for the past year, and look forward to being with you once more for Volume XXVIII.

Stay safe, keep well.

TALLEYRAND

CHARLES MAURICE DE TALLEYRAND-
PÉRIGORD

And for the final time this year, What ho my saucy youths!

For my final column, before I venture forth across the continent for a summer of adultery and fornication, I feel I must make my views on certain cretins known.

Beginning with the person I care least about, Que Sarah Sérá has decided that drug use is a light-hearted topic to sloganise. It is not. It is a deeply serious passion that I implore you to join in with. That said, I'm sure the poor dear is just confused, having been gaslit into believing her boyfriend is good at 'banter'.

Andy-Pandy has successfully conducted a whole year as El Presidente by twicking students into doing his job for him, while sitting on his behind in his bedwomb and enjoying taking credit for it all. Bravo! What a marvellous thing it is to fool the student populace into believing you will stand up and fight for the downtrodden, when daddy-Deeksy is putting money on your cwedit cawd ewevey weeksy.

Not once did I spy Straighton Gray smile until when they knew that they were finally rid of the hell-hole that is this union. I am glad to see Gummydumb return for another year. It is lonely, being the oldest historical figure on campus, so it will be good sport making fun of her for being that.

I wish I could say I would miss my favourite balding bogger Ruairi but, alas, he has decided to return and plague my life once more with spreadsheets, workery, and skin so thin he cares about subtweets. Nevermind, I will make up for my sorrow in seeing his face week in week out by knowing I can report on all his doings. Beware my lovely ginger.

The newcomers are yet to take office, and yet they are already annoying me too.

Comrade Darryl, having lost last year's election to a hole in the air, is back purely by dint of not having any opponents. UCDSU's adaptation of democratic centralism and rejecting of "socialism in one SU" are sure to decrease engagement like never before!

Since when did politics become so dull? At least with the incoming Education Officer, anything kind of action at all will give me fodder for my column as opposed to the sheer-nothingness.

And the last of the newcomers, an American. Students with their pathetic poorly brains and whining boring problems and will have a taste of their own medicine when they're told everything can be remedied when they 'talk about their feelings' with. In my day, we didn't talk about our feelings. We had it out on the sports field, or with a small animal, or a woman.



I myself was angry when the College Tripeune moved online this year, now I might actually have to go out and purchase toilet roll. Speaking of turds, Conor the Capitalist tried to move onto something better, but in failing that he made something so much worse. He is also a member of an amusing ethnic minority, like an Italian or something.

The two sorry excuses of editors for this rag did such a shoddy job this year that they couldn't even spot misdeameanour in their own staff if it sat on them. They haven't even bothered to uncover any delicious scandal, leaving that solemn duty to myself. It is I, and I alone, who has been left holding this god-forsaken university to account to me. Good riddance I say.

The only people in this whole college worth a damn are esteemed professors Cahill and Deeks. Between them they have upset all the right people, fooled all the worst people into liking them, and had fun doing it! That is how one should handle power.

I am not looking forward to the onslaught of drivelling, blubbering youths once again puncturing my late-summer peace in September. Let us join our hands with UMT and pray for another student-less year.

Now I clink my flute and bid you adieu for one final time,

So long, fuckers!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Letters, corrections, and clarifications
pertaining to articles published in this
newspaper and online are welcomed
and encouraged.*

*Letters should be addressed to:
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EURO 2020- BRINGING FANS BACK TO FOOTBALL

RONÁN DALY

Ronán Daly takes a look ahead at a European Championship that will be unlike any previous iterations of the competition, and considers the motivations behind the return of football fans to stadia across the continent.



THE 2021 edition of the European Championships (still keeping the brand-name Euro 2020) was one of the many sporting events that fell victim to the global pandemic last year. The 60th anniversary, and 16th edition of Europe's summer celebration of football, was set to take place in 12 host cities to mark the event. It is somewhat ironic that the tournament which was supposed to be a continent-wide festival of football is now taking place during a time where many people can't travel outside their country, after 18 months of football fans being locked out of stadiums. Both in spite of and because of the backdrop of the pandemic, this summer's tournament could be the light at the end of the tunnel.

UEFA has said that they plan for each host city to have at least some fans in the stadiums and had set an original deadline of April 7th for host cities to confirm whether or not they will be able to host some supporters. A final decision from UEFA will take place on April 19th, when an executive committee will meet on the matter. UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has said that each host city must have fans at their games,

“One of the host cities most at risk of being dropped from the ballot is Dublin... still in the midst of its longest and most severe lockdown.... This would mean having 12,500 people in attendance at each of the 4 games [putting] Dublin’s chances of hosting their games in doubt as NPHEt haven’t been able to guarantee that Ireland’s situation will improve greatly by the April 19th [UEFA] deadline”.

meaning that should a city not be able to accommodate even a diluted version of the crowd regularly in attendance at these games, they risk being dropped from the tournament roster altogether. Some host cities such as London, Glasgow and Rome have confirmed they will have fans, however, for others they must make the decision whether or not their national Covid situation warrants thousands of people congregating for a game of football.

One of the host cities most at risk of being dropped from the ballot is Dublin, where Ireland is still in the midst of its longest and most severe lockdown. FAI Chief executive Jonathan Hill has said they are committed to hosting their 4 games in the Aviva stadium. However the April 19th deadline is looming, and UEFA has set a minimum 25% capacity for stadiums hosting games. This would mean having 12,500 people in attendance at each of the 4 games. This puts Dublin's chances of hosting their games in doubt as NPHEt haven't been able to guarantee that Ireland's situation will improve greatly by the April 19th deadline. There could be some leeway given for the fact the tournament isn't going to take place until June, which gives the government a further 2 months to reduce numbers and vaccinate more people. The long-awaited easing of restrictions scheduled for April 26th may improve Dublin's chances of hosting their games.

The debate of whether fans should be allowed back into stadiums has been ongoing for a number of months now. While the Euros might be used as a way to signal a continent of football fans returning to the game they love, it still raises serious questions about the necessity of these public health risks. The 12 host countries are Azerbaijan, Denmark, England, Germany, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Ireland, Scotland, Romania, Russia, Scotland and Spain. Of these only Hungary and the UK have over 10% of their population vaccinated. On the surface these are low numbers for some countries, Russia and Azerbaijan for example are only reporting about 4% of their populations vaccinated. These percentages mainly make up the oldest and most vulnerable members of society and with another 2 months before the tournament there is hope these numbers would rise significantly and the thought of hosting games would pose a lesser threat to public health.

England has offered to host the tournament in its entirety, but UEFA seems set on the continent-wide

tournament that has been planned since it was first suggested by Michel Platini in 2012. Of course, public health should be the main priority, but with the number of vulnerable people vaccinated growing everyday fans should be hopeful that UEFA's plans to bring football back to Europe and if all goes to plan it could be the light at the end of the tunnel for many football fans. In Ireland, it will be a nervy few weeks for the FAI to see if they get the approval of NPHEt and the Irish government to open the Aviva stadium in some capacity for the tournament. Even though the Republic of Ireland isn't one of the 24 countries that will be competing at this summer's tournament, it could still be a needed boost for the neutral Irish football fans who might be lucky enough to get to a game.

This will bring about further debate, with inter-county GAA returning at the end of April and Provincial and All-Ireland championships to take place over the summer there will surely be pressure put on the government to allow fans to return to GAA grounds around the country as well. There was uproar among the GAA community when League Of Ireland football was allowed to return before Inter-County GAA, fans being allowed to games between 2 foreign teams would likely see GAA fans look for similar allowances on attendances.

Regardless of whether or not Dublin makes the deadline, Euro 2020 will be going ahead this year. If all goes according to plan it could be the catalyst for football fans returning to grounds for the start of domestic campaigns around Europe that will begin in late August. It will also provide entertaining viewing for Irish football fans, even if we don't get to see our side in action. While it won't be the same as tournaments gone by where we can go to crowded pubs and enjoy the summer tournament atmosphere, we can hope that by June we can at least enjoy Europe's elite battling it out in the company of our friends.

FOOTBALL AT THE CROSSROADS: IS A BOYCOTT OF QATAR 2022

CAHAL MCAULEY

Against the backdrop of reprehensible human rights violations and exploitation of migrant workers in Qatar, Cahal McAuley gives a summary of the current standing around the world on the boycott option as a means of protesting the country's hosting of one of the largest sporting events in the world.

“Qatar abolished the kafala system in name in December 2016, however, the exit permits and limitations on workers’ ability to change jobs remained, and the previously prohibited but widespread practice of confiscating workers’ passports was made legal by a new loophole meaning that the reforms potentially worsened the situation of workers in the country instead of improving it”.

THE dust has now settled on the first round of qualifying fixtures on the road to the 2022 Qatar World Cup, but as well as the commencement of preparations for the competition on the pitch, tentative protests have begun against the tournament due to take place in the small Gulf state next winter. Countries like Norway, Germany, and the Netherlands have donned t-shirts in protest of human rights abuses through the exploitation of migrant workers in Qatar but are these gestures enough amid rising calls for a boycott of one of the world's biggest sporting events?

Scrutiny surrounding FIFA and the Qatari government's handling of the situation has increased dramatically since a recent Guardian article revealed that over 6,500 workers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have died in Qatar since the country was awarded hosting rights in 2010. The total number of migrant deaths is significantly higher as it does not include workers from countries such as the Philippines and Kenya, who also supply a large number of labourers for the Qatari workforce.

The Qatari government has claimed that the number of deaths is proportional to the size of the migrant workforce in the country but the lack of transparency and frequency of ‘natural causes’ as a reason for

death amongst a young workforce has drawn fierce criticism from human rights groups and trade union confederations. 80% of the deaths of Indian workers were classed as ‘natural’, leaving thousands of families seeking answers as to why their healthy fathers, husbands, and sons had suddenly died.

The increased attention being given to the plight of migrant workers has prompted Norway to lead the protest against the tournament, with Eliteserien club Tromsø IL being the first to call for an all-out boycott of the competition. The German and Dutch national teams joined the Norwegians in wearing t-shirts with slogans such as ‘football supports change’, a good starting gesture but unlikely to prompt any serious result if not backed up by further action. The German and Dutch FAs have both stated that they are not in favour of a boycott as they believe their presence in Qatar next winter will help put a spotlight on the situation of workers and prompt reform more effectively than a boycott could. There are merits to this argument, but it seems rather like taking the easy way out, as federations are seen to be conscious of the abuses occurring in Qatar without having to take any significant measures themselves.

With the tournament less than two years away, pressure is naturally building on FIFA and Qatar to take action to protect workers, but this comes after a decade of human rights violations and dire working conditions in preparation for the World Cup.

For most of its recent construction boom, Qatar has enforced the kafala system; a sponsorship system used to monitor migrant workers, leaving their employers as their sponsors, and in charge of their legal and visa status. The system allowed for the easy exploitation of workers by their employers as migrants couldn't change jobs or leave the country without permission - in a system not dissimilar to the indentured servitude employed in early British colonies. The system has been called modern-day slavery as workers unfamiliar with the language and customs of Qatar became easy prey for exploitative and abusive employers. Qatar abolished the kafala system in name in December 2016, however, the exit permits and limitations on workers’ ability to change jobs remained, and the previously prohibited but widespread practice of confiscating workers’ passports was made legal by a new loophole meaning that the reforms potentially worsened the situation of workers in the country instead of improving it.

The absolute failure of Qatar in protecting its migrant labourers, who make up nearly 94% of the country's workforce, was outlined in the International Trade Union Confederation's 2018 global rights index, which placed the country in rating five: ‘No guarantee of rights’. It seems unfathomable that FIFA could award their biggest tournament to a nation with such glaring disregard for human rights and labour practices, but after a decade of relative apathy, the football community, at last, seems to be waking up to the important issues at hand. As international interest in Qatar continued to increase, the country finally enacted significant reform in January 2020, scrapping the exit visa requirement and allowing workers to change jobs without their employer's permission. The reforms also instituted a minimum wage from 2021 and increased the penalties imposed on employers who withhold wages.

These changes give some credibility to the German and Dutch FA's argument that the publicity of the World Cup can bring positive change to Qatar, but a strategy for improving the lot of labourers in the world's most exploitative countries shouldn't involve rewarding these nations with one of sport's most lucrative events. While such potentially transformative laws are encouraging, their impact will only be as significant as the will to enforce them and they come after many years of profiting from exploited workers. The new laws were reflected in the ITUC's 2020 global rights index which placed Qatar one rating better off than they had been in 2018. However, the fact that Qatar moving into rating four - ‘systematic violations of rights’ - was considered an improvement puts the entire situation into perspective.

The recent surge in protests against the tournament has prompted criticisms of the international calls for a boycott with many highlighting the absence of similar outrage in matters relating to Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain, owned by royalty from the United Arab Emirates and Qatar respectively, or the awarding of the World Cup to Russia and the United States, countries with less than perfect human rights records themselves. These arguments are valid, but the line has to be drawn somewhere and, in an era where footballers are increasingly using their platform to draw attention to social and political issues, such opposition to human rights violations are to be expected and welcomed.

“FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said that Qatar 2022 will be the most beautiful World Cup ever held, but its staging on the backs of thousands of dead migrant workers in an absolute monarchy where homosexuality remains illegal paints a very different image of the tournament that is fast approaching”.

German international Joshua Kimmich has said that calls for a boycott are ten years too late, he is right of course but a defeatist attitude such as this will do little to help those in Qatar or prompt change in how FIFA awards future iterations of the tournament. Former World Cup winner Toni Kroos has openly criticised the holding of the tournament to Qatar and tried to draw attention to some of the abuses against workers in the country, a very significant statement for such a high-profile player to make, however, it seems unfair for players to be the ones coming under the most pressure to call for change.

The World Cup is a stage that few players ever reach, and for those that do make it to a tournament, it is usually a once in a lifetime experience. Players did not vote for the World Cup to be held in Qatar in 2010 and to look at a team like high-flying Armenia and expect them to come out in opposition to what could be the pinnacle of their professional lives seems a huge sacrifice to ask. Responsibility for taking on FIFA and Qatar should fall to international federations rather than players themselves and the best-case scenario would be the assurance of significant and sustained change without a boycott. This, however, is looking increasingly like the only option to force action from FIFA as their silence on the matter remains deafening. New rules in the voting process for the World Cup host nation prohibit countries with poor human rights records from winning the chance to stage the competition but there is little reason to believe FIFA will change their approach unless they are held to account on Qatar now.

The Norwegian FA will host their AGM on 20 June where they could be the first country to vote for a boycott of Qatar 2022. Of course, no one wants to be the first federation to openly defy FIFA but if someone gets the ball rolling, countries will be more likely to follow suit.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said that Qatar 2022 will be the most beautiful World Cup ever held, but its staging on the backs of thousands of dead migrant workers in an absolute monarchy where homosexuality remains illegal paints a very different image of the tournament that is fast approaching. As sport fans, we all look forward to the World Cup every four years, but surely even the most iconic events cannot come at such a grave cost.



Should we save the Poolbeg Stacks?

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Classic novels - as relevant as ever

//

Why are some films so bad they're good?

//

Rage quit: Wii Sports

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Unpopular opinions

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Pictured Above // Declan O'Rourke

Credit // Lawrence Watson

OTwo Interviews

Declan O'Rourke

Doireann de Courcy Mac Donnell

Doireann de Courcy Mac Donnell interviews singer-songwriter Declan O'Rourke about creativity, inspiration, and his new record, *Arrivals*.

Declan O'Rourke released *Arrivals* on Friday, April 9th. A 10-song LP, the album is stripped-back, interesting and beautiful. O'Rourke is a neighbour of my family home in Kinvara, a small seaside village in South Galway. O'Rourke lives on the edge of the karst landscape of the Burren, on a peninsula touching the Atlantic Ocean - the perfect place to see the stars, skies, and seas he writes about.

"I don't know, I just feel the instinct to do it" he answers, when I ask 'why do you write?' "It's become kind of a habit and a place that I like to go... It's a good question, I'm just trying to figure out why... over years and years of doing it, it's become something instinctual... If you ask me why I started, I don't know. I mean, I've always felt from a very early age, since I can remember, and I think wanting to be an artist.... I just loved the idea of expressing yourself through something beautiful, and I don't know what else is beyond it - maybe just some kind of desire to be approved of, or something you'd have to ask Freud about"

I find it interesting to think about and ask why we create. During the past year, as part of *The University Observer*, and *OTwo* in particular I have talked to artists, and musicians, and thinkers about why we make. What is it about the act of creation that inspires us? I have decided that I like the idea that we don't really know, that it's a compulsion, almost.

"I've got a cousin who's an artist and we've been talking back and forth a little bit, and talking to each other... I suppose maybe not about why we do it, but how it has affected our lives and what is art, you know. I don't think we've come up with any definitive answers, but it's very enjoyable to discuss it and I think that is the honest answer. It's almost like a spiritual centering or something, you know?"

"I have a series of cards on my desk here, and [...] you pull out one every now and again and each one has a little bit of wisdom on them. One of them said 'creativity is a spiritual practise - it's not something we try and perfect, it's something that we do'... I think it's true - you turn up everyday and do it because you enjoy it, like a 24/7 hobby. If you did it just based on the success you're hoping to achieve on the other end, which is a totally separate thing, I don't think you would do it, or do it as well, you know. I like the idea that it's just something we do to feel in touch with ourselves".

For me, with the theories and thinking about art and the urge to make, comes the idea of creating or conjuring beauty. I ask O'Rourke if he feels pressure to make something beautiful?

"No. No, I don't think so. I write for myself first - if I don't like it, no-one else gets to hear it... You write and you try to create something beautiful because you enjoy it, ...you instinctively set out to capture, you know, if you have a certain emotion that you want to share with other people. Your job is to try and paint that for them, and put it in kind of a musical vehicle, and you'll know if you've done it".

My question about the creation of beauty was one that I was most intrigued to ask O'Rourke. I find it difficult to call a movie, or book, painting, building or song 'my favourite'. To categorise something as worthy of more recognition than anything you have experienced implies that its resonance with you goes beyond all else - almost other-worldly. To be so struck by a piece of art, something fabricated, crafted and created, is an extraordinary experience. It wells up inside you like emotion and stays with you long after your first encounter. I have only experienced it sporadically.

O'Rourke released 'Galileo' in 2004, and the song is just beautiful. It is soft and thoughtful and real. To have such an impact, it makes me wonder, can beauty be fabricated? Or is it all the hard work that goes into every record, but with a stroke of something more - genius, luck, love... I'm not sure. Can you try to make beauty? Is it tangible, predictable? Do you know while on this journey that you have something there?

"Thank you for the compliment... I can only speak from personal experience, but every time you finish a song, you know, if I've worked really hard on it, and the one you're working on is the one you're most excited about. The other ones, they're all fine, you've done them... it's actually the thrill of it... I've described it like being on the back of a horse or something, you know it's when you're in the flow and you know, creating it. When it's over it's kind of a little bit

"I've always loved it when you find a room or a stairwell, or something in a house or a building [where] the sound is really lovely and pure... There's nothing like [those] spaces... I think they've been a lesson to me because [when] you're in a space like that, the more you add or the louder you play, the less you hear. It gets too busy and you drown out the purity... I've always looked forward to the time when I make a stripped-down record".

underwhelming and sad, and you want to get to the next one.

"I was very excited about Galileo when I wrote it, but it was one song of many along the chain. I do remember, and sometimes I see it as a mark of a good song, is if I get a Eureka moment, or the gears shift or twist when I'm writing it and I discover something, or you figure out how you want to end it... you do a kind of mental kind of fist-pump or 'whoop', you get very excited.

"I remember in the middle of writing that I had the [chorus written] and I sat on it for weeks and I really liked it but I just kept thinking about it over and over. I kept saying 'who would be saying this?... I [was] working in a house with my dad and we were renovating a house in Rathgar I think, and there was a library in the house. I picked up a book anyways, at lunchtime, and it was called *Galileo's daughter*. I only got to read a page or two but... I just thought 'wow, I'd love to write something about him.' And so, when I was thinking about this chorus and waiting, and one day it just clicked... I realised he could be saying it from the point of view of trying to understand it. And when that clicked in my brain I was very excited. I felt like something had happened, and the patience had paid off waiting for it".

In *Arrivals*, as in his other records, O'Rourke sings of cosmology, of gods and stars and the sky. I ask O'Rourke if he believes in 'more'?

"No. I don't really, no. I mean, like everyone else in Ireland, I was raised that way... I think more now that there was a great comfort in being spiritual in a religious way when I was young, but at a certain point in my life, all of the pieces didn't add up. But you know, that's my own belief. And I try not to be reprimanding or something of anybody else's beliefs... I think as much as religion is responsible for so much bad in the world, there are teachings in almost every spiritual doctrine and discipline that you can take as beautiful lessons. I believe in not just subscribing to one, but taking the good from whatever you can"

Prayer was something that I thought about through the album - not in a religious sense, but the idea of being hopeful and reflective. Music in a way has that rhythm and that ritual, even structurally, with a chorus and learned repetition. I muse aloud over this thought and ask; what is prayer?

"I like where you're going... I think that's very valid. I think prayer is a kind of meditation and that's why it works for people, regardless of what's behind it or not. And I think songs are the same - anything that you annunciate and repeat over and over is kind of a mantra and an affirmation.

And so it becomes functional in the same way.. if you pour your hopes into something like that. And I firmly believe that this record, in many ways, was me figuring out what I wanted from my life at this point in time through song, and interestingly it kind of manifested after that, you know because I said it aloud, so I'm very happy about that".

I ask what comes first - the poetry, or music? To me, for *Arrivals*, when you remove the music, it becomes a collection of poems.

"I hope so! And I would hope that somehow they're not dependent on each other. [But] of course [they are] to some extent. [I] like to think I'm very deliberate and very fastidious or something, about the words, and they have to be able to stand up on their own. So I like the idea that they could be poems, if you took the music away. But if it was just that I don't know if I would do it, if I wasn't putting it in a song. I'm not sure"

In O'Rourke's music, there is a strong understanding of when to add and when to flourish and when to hold-back. Particularly in this record, I feel that because of the restraint and almost the simplification (and I mean this in a good way) shown, it shows more bravery or courage in deciding when to flourish.

"It's the first time in seven records, you know, it's the first time I've actually stripped it down... You know, most of the year round it would be just me onstage... I'm very comfortable in the space of just myself... I've always loved it when you find a room or a stairwell, or something in a house or a building and the sound is really lovely and pure. It can be any place, you know, but you just find like, sacred spaces - not like a big church or something, [but] a room that is really warm, and sends a sound back to you that has a nice little echo. There's nothing like that space... I think they've been a lesson to me because [when] you're in a space like that, the more you add or the louder you play, the less you hear. It gets too busy and you drown out the purity... I've always looked forward to the time when I make a stripped-down record.

"In the studio I succumb to the temptation to add things that I couldn't do on my own. But I have to give a huge amount of credit to Paul Weller for that aspect of it as well, because you know, when I approached him to make the record [...] we both agreed that the songs were leaning in that direction. But I had almost gotten too comfortable with the idea of it just being me, and maybe him challenging me in terms of some of the arrangements, or what was a good performance or not - he introduced the idea of subtle textures, he described them as little colours, brushstrokes, you know, things that could be unobtrusive. I didn't know that they could be unobtrusive. If you had just a guy and a guitar, and halfway through the song you introduce something out of nowhere, and then take it out. To me that sounded like it wouldn't work, but I was shocked at how well it worked and how much it complemented everything.... And so, he's got to get the credit for that in terms of your question"

I add that 'brushstrokes' is a nice way to put it, because it doesn't influence the overall sense of *Arrivals*, it just adds another soft layer. I ask O'Rourke should listeners be pedantic in their listening - is the order of the album important to him?

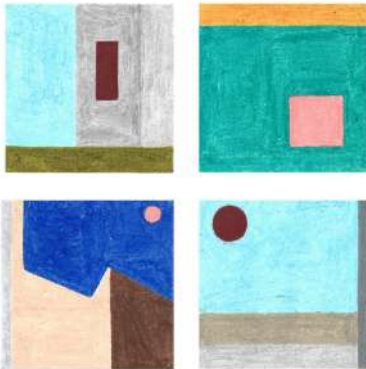
"Oh listen, everytime you make a record, yeah you absolutely labour and, I don't know, torture yourself over things like that... In the way that artists are obsessive, you tend to have huge magnifying glasses on while you're inside. And that's your job, you know, because nobody else is ever going to look at it so deeply"

"We did labour over it, between Paul and myself in this case... It was quite nice because he had the idea of the absolute old-school way of thinking I suppose - he was making suggestions from the very beginning in terms of vinyl. [One] of the first things he suggested was 'I think that should be the end of side one, or the start of side two' you know, and I was like 'oh brilliant' you know, because my last three or four records have all been on vinyl and that's the big thing you're excited about - so you know, it feels more artistic somehow.

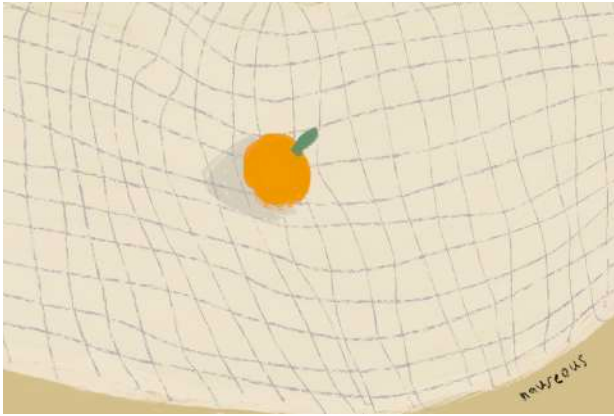
"We went around the houses a few times on this, and we certainly didn't argue but we debated on various things and tried to convince each other if we agreed or disagreed about the placement of a certain song. [You've] got to test it everytime, it's not a theory and you just go 'I think that'll work there, grand'. Like if you put a slow song on directly after a fast song, it can feel much slower than it actually is, because it's all about your perspective coming into it and even what key goes with which one, and you can't have two together that have a similar beat and what have you. It's all about a journey, but lyrically I felt the first three songs, when I listened to them in order, were a perfect kind of self-portrait of my life right now".

Arrivals tells stories of the good and the desperate, but also stories of the simple and the quiet. It is a wonderful LP and I look forward to the day when we can come together to hear it live, in person.

Arrivals Livestream Launch from the Abbey Theatre is taking place at 8pm Wed 14th April.



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Editors

Howyas all,
Welcome back for the OTwo series finale! The time we have spent putting these issues out has flown in – it's crazy to think that this is number eight. Time flies when you're glued to your computer 26 hours a day, doesn't it? Though I have to say we've absolutely loved releasing these pieces every month. It's been a pleasure, and we hope you have enjoyed reading them too! We do still have one issue for you, and we hope that there's something here to keep you buzzing through the busy coming weeks (or to use as a total distraction – we'd take that as a compliment)

The sun is back out, the days are longer, and the parks are filling up. That can only mean one thing – Exam Season is coming!

Typical, isn't it? We've been crying for a bit of brighter days, and only when we've put 400 essays or lab reports on the back burner does the sun decide to show. I always act surprised at the revelation, as if the sacrificing of students' wellbeing to the Sun Gods isn't a yearly Irish tradition at this point. Sure look, don't let that stop you from enjoying yourself. Do your readings in the sun, tattoo the words 'grand stretch in the evening' across your forehead, show up to your classes three vodkas deep* – it's your summer for the love of God, do what ya want!

*this is what we refer to as a joke – we take no responsibility for any potential disciplinarys. Just be cute about it, yeah?

As we band together to thank daylight savings, canal-side spaces and glimmering forecasts of sun from Met Eireann, us as co-editors would be remiss in not thanking every individual who has contributed to OTwo this year. Whether your support has taken the form of a writer, reader, or someone who merely uses our stacked issues as coffee coasters on your ikea desk on which you balance endless rounds of maxwell house coffee at 3am, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for engaging in whatever way you can during times in which this activity alone can feel like climbing Kilimanjaro in heels.

The rumours that we are nothing if not consistent here at the Observer are true, and we shall consolidate that by really going forward with that Kilimanjaro metaphor. Gird your loins.

Finding pleasure, during a year in which we have been surrounded and overwhelmed by time, can feel impossible to reach towards, the journey towards contentment this year has felt for many like a difficult task. But by flicking through OTwo may you realise that the ugliest architecture has its own strange intentions of beauty, that a truly terrible film has its points of awe inspiring mischief and that the contents of your dusty kitchen cupboard are nothing to laugh at.

There is joy around the corner for us all, no matter how big or small.

Thank you and peace out,
Andy and Ellen



peak of the week

Bob Ross

Andrew Nolan

I have to be upfront with you – when I started writing these, the only certainty I had was that one piece would have to be on Bob Ross. I revisited his show, *The Joy of Painting* a fair amount during the first lockdown. I'm not exactly much of an artist myself, but watching Ross paint away with a tone as soothing as his is television's version of comfort food. Just try to be stressed while watching a couple of episodes. I'd bet good money that it isn't possible.

Before starting *The Joy of Painting*, Bob Ross served in the military where he was a Drill Sergeant. To the surprise of most, he was quite strict in this role and was fairly hard on his peers (which means yes, he has actually raised his voice at one point in time. Shocking, I know). He would paint during his lunch break, hence how he was able to finish a piece so quickly during the show. Eventually, he grew tired of being mean for a living, and, with art sales now outweighing his military salary, he retired from his position. Ross would then go on to start *The Joy of Painting* in 1983, which ended after a run of 403 episodes.

Soft-spoken on screen, he was known to be a kind man away from the cameras too. In his spare time, he would rescue wild animals and help to raise, or rehabilitate them back to health. The most famous of which possible being Peapod the Pocket Squirrel, which appeared in numerous episodes of the show. During his youth, he had a woodwork related accident that saw him lose a finger. When recording, he would hide it under his palette as to not scare any of the children watching. He was quite conscious of those watching him each week – after being approached by a fan who loved art, but could never paint due to his colour-blindness, he dedicated an episode to a painting done entirely in greyscale.

Whether you're an avid art fan or otherwise, Bob Ross' calming demeanour is a must-see for anyone needing a bout of relaxation.

Cancer

Be wary this season, Cancer. You've tried so hard to keep your self in check, don't let one tiny slip up be the end of your hard work. Trust all the habits that you've been building on. They'll hold strong, and so will you, Cancer.

Leo

My friendships are keeping you afloat, Leo. You need time to reconfigure where you're planning on going. Don't be afraid to let your mane down ROAR.

Virgo

Virgo, your health needs to be prioritised! You've selflessly been putting everyone else's needs before your own, and it's taking its toll on you as of late. The signs are on that

Libra

This month, Libra, you've been blessed by the planets with productivity. You'll find yourself working at an unprecedented pace – you'll barely recognise the person in the mirror! You might even get a chance to finish that unfinished painting you've been working on for the past decade.

Scorpio

My Plutonian angel, this month may bring expansion to an extent you never quite imagined. Although 'rut' maybe your go-to statement on your existence at the moment, transform your language and the rest will follow.

Sagittarius

Dear sag, your adventures grow wilder this month as you ease into self-love. Take yourself by the hand and lead yourself on your own adventure.

Mystic Mittens

Capricorn

My darling water goat, although moving upwards may be your movement of choice, this month's experiment may be familiar with your love language, you should try translating that language into your daily life. You might attract the person you've been looking for all along.

Aquarius

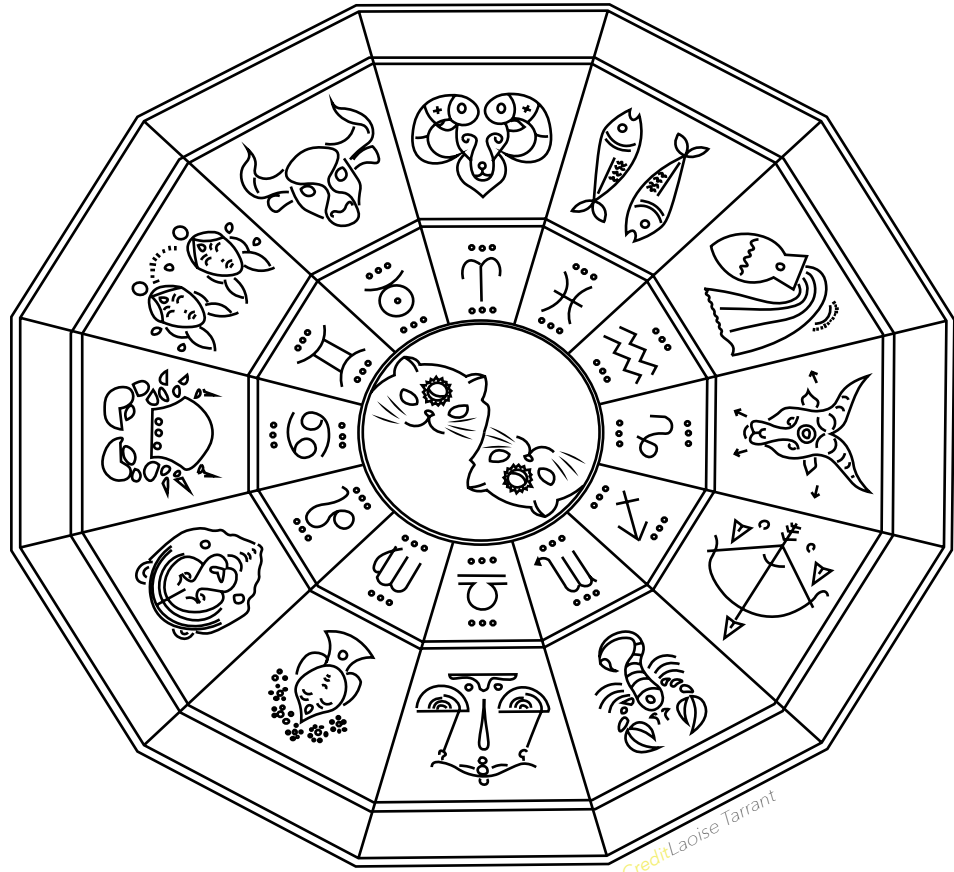
Relationships are on the horizon for you, Aquarius. If you are familiar with your love language, you should try translating that language into your daily life. You might attract the person you've been looking for all along.

Pisces

Sweet Pisces, grow up. Throw out the Birkenstocks, stop reading Murakami in Blessington basin, waiting for someone to walk up to your bench and enquire after your Aran sweater. Change how you seek communication- this is your challenge!

Aries

Dear ram, aggressive is not always the answer, though it may be the means to peace. Go slowly into the night of conversation this month, a fight is rarely as fulfilling as it may feel!



Gemini

Gemini! Stop the self-doubt! You are receiving far more fortune than you believe you are. Open your eyes and your heart will follow. Be open to new opportunities!

Taurus

Your new adventures are on unfolding, Taurus. The excitement hasn't settled in yet, but your stars are aligning. Bide your time, dear Taurus, you are coping better than you think. Mystic Mittens bids you adieu, Taurus, go forth and prosper.

art & architecture

Why is Contemporary Art worth so much?

Aakriti Sood

Aakriti Sood delves into the world of the super-rich to understand why Contemporary Art has become one of the ultimate luxury goods.

I can't be the only one who has walked into an art gallery and looked at a piece of work that has left me completely dumbstruck. Contemporary art galleries all over the world have pieces that sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars and leave the masses stunned. It is easy to understand why a Picasso might sell for millions; the simple economics of supply and demand applies, there are only a few pieces available and auctioneers are willing to spend large sums of money for investment and to be added into the historic narrative of the piece. But contemporary art by definition is made by artists who are living among us, so what makes these pieces fetch the skyrocketing prices? Who sets these prices? Who deems a piece worthy of recognition over another? What makes contemporary art worthy of its status?

To understand the present relevance of contemporary art, it is important to understand the evolution from works of Michelangelo to Jackson Pollock to the contemporaries such as Jeff Koons. After centuries of artists aiming to perfect how to capture a moment in time, towards the end of the nineteenth century the availability of cameras became mainstream, and analogue art started to move towards capturing more than what the naked eye could see. This gave rise to impressionism in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the first shift towards modern art. Photography thus became the impetus for the development and mainstream rise of modern art. Here the art, free of the formality to depict the world in its state perfectly, started to become a medium of personal expression. The artist could add their own interpretation of the world or make commentary on the cultural, social and political spheres around them, engaging the audience with the artist's dialogue.

The valuation of work shifted in the same way in the modern movement in the twentieth century. For contemporary art, the valuation depends more upon the transformational value, the value of the expression, than the transactional



Should we save the Poolbeg Stacks?

Aoife Rooney

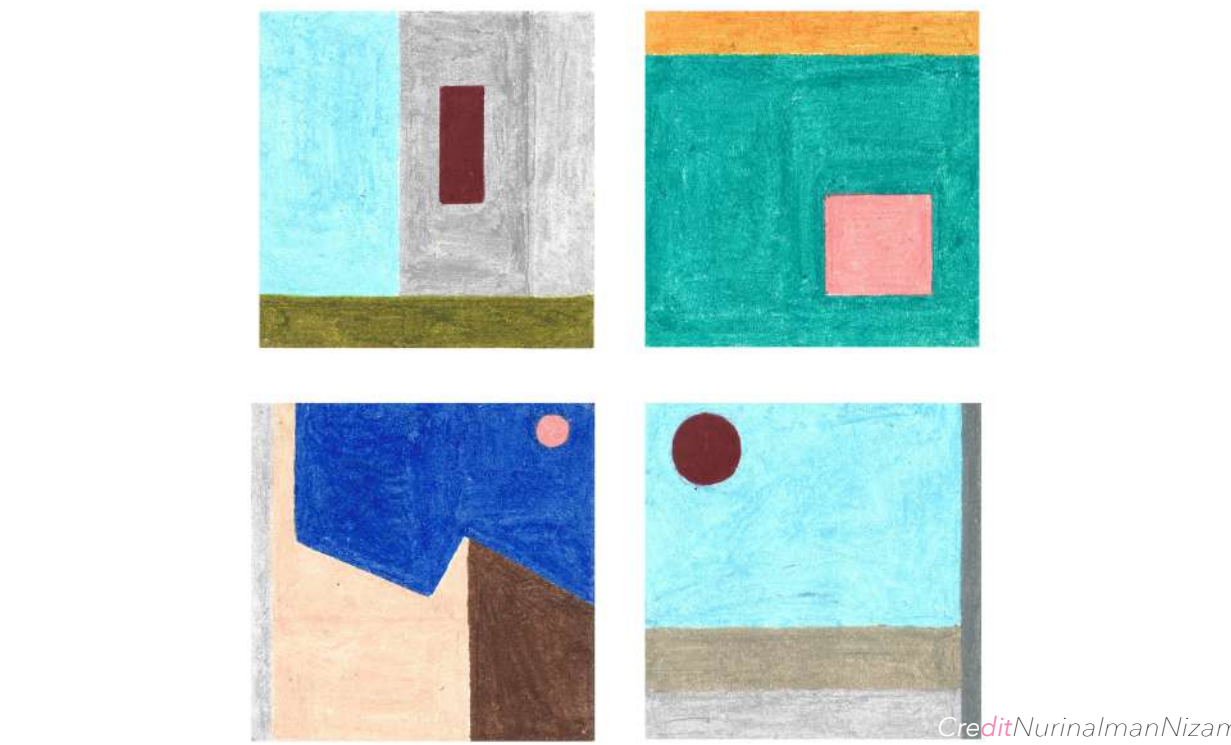
Aoife Rooney takes us through the history of the Poolbeg Stacks and makes a case for their conservation.

An 'ugly' UCD building explained: the New Centre for Creative Design

Sinead Keating

In the final installment of the ugly-UCD series, Sinéad Keating makes a case for why Stephen Holl's new Centre for Creative Design isn't really that ugly

In 2018 UCD held a competition to design a masterplan for the future vision of the Belfield campus. In the centre of this plan, by the Stillorgan Road main entrance, would be the Centre for Creative Design. UCD wanted this to be a landmark building at the entrance, and a landmark they got. The winning design by American firm Steven Holl Architects proposes a masterplan of blocks and grassy quads and a tall geometric Centre for Creative Design. Holl stated that his inspiration (which has been criticised by some as somewhat clichéd or cheesy) comes from James Joyce's Ulysses, the UCD water tower and the octagonal stone columns of the Giant's Causeway. The building's form is what many would describe as ugly, or perhaps confusing, but looking beyond first appearances it is an improvement to the current buildings housing the School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy.



“For contemporary art, the valuation depends more upon the transformational value, the value of the expression, than the transactional value”

Credit: Nurinalman Nizam

But the question still remains of who defines the worth of contemporary art. The value of art can become a minefield to navigate. It is not an action, nor is it functional; rather, it is focused on individual and group judgment. The price of art varies greatly based on patterns and perception. In the last 30 years, the value of contemporary art has skyrocketed by 129%. In 2019 alone, contemporary art value soared by 14%. Records from global auction houses saw contemporary art made over \$1.58 billion in one year alone. Numbers don't lie and thus it is safe to say that the world of contemporary art is a business, the galleries make money with every sale and the high valuation of price allows them to remain profitable.

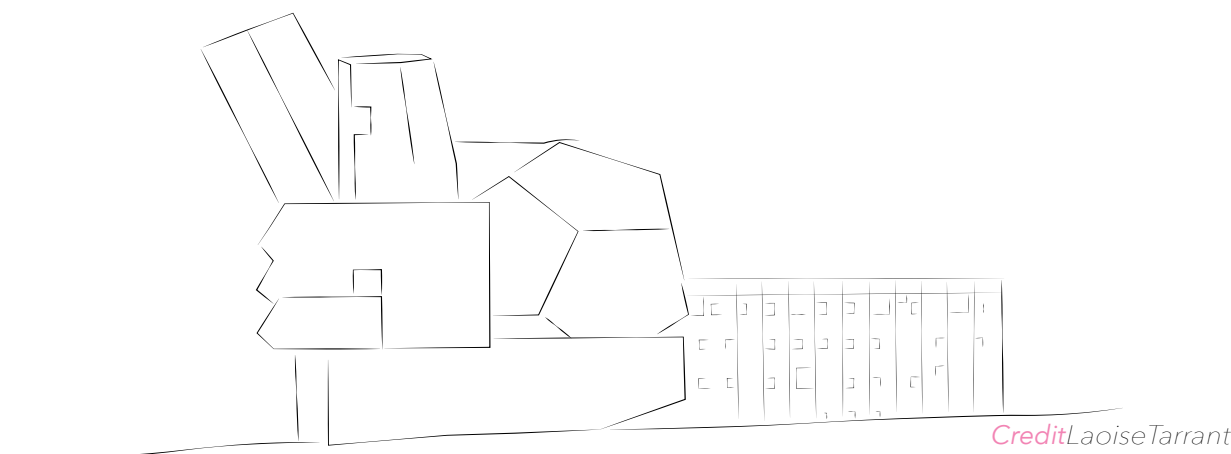
The galleries need new talent to keep themselves running. In order to break into the market, the artist needs to find a gallery that would represent their work. About 78% of the contemporary artists being represented by big galleries are graduates from art colleges. Emerging artists' works are generally priced based on size and medium. Representation from a well-known gallery would help bump up the price even if the name of the artist is unknown. The artist whose work stands out may be invited to participate in shows elsewhere or even get a solo show at a gallery. For artists, being in the right place at the right

“There is a story to the chimneys. They once provided a service, and are a direct link to a more industrious time for Dublin.”

2006 and 2010 respectively, but the Poolbeg Generating Station is still operational, supplying electricity to over half a million Dublin homes. For the past ten years, both chimneys have garnered praise and enamour from residents of Dublin as an easily identifiable skyline landmark.

Standing at 207 metres at their highest point, the Poolbeg stacks are one of the tallest structures in Ireland. They have quickly become an identifier for the city; the primary Dublin landmark in the city centre, the Spire, seeming cold and harsh in comparison to the welcoming rust of the chimneys. The popularisation of the stacks is largely down to their location. A steadfast in the Dublin coastal horizon, they make their way into most pictures taken along the waterfront anywhere between Sandymount and Dún Laoghaire. The chimneys are adorned with a striped red and white pattern atop their upper half, allowing them to stand out in an often muggy and grey Dublin coast. They are not in competition with any of the buildings in the city, allowing for the stacks to stand alone, together.

Another reason as to how the stacks ended up becoming so beloved by Dublin dwellers is that they have a history - that they are an accidental landmark. There is a story to the chimneys. They once provided a service, and are a direct link to a more industrious time for Dublin. The stacks received their name from Poolbeg lighthouse



“Holl stated that his inspiration comes from James Joyce's Ulysses, the UCD water tower and the octagonal stone columns of the Giant's Causeway”

time is a key factor in the valuation of work. In fact, about 83% of the total contemporary art auction turnovers are accounted for in just four locations: New York, Beijing, London and Hong Kong. In the era dominated by social media and internet celebrities, the number of collections an artist exhibits, their living status, and even their reputation all influence contemporary art valuation. As a result, contemporary art can be appreciated not only for the content of the work, but also for the star-quality of the artist.

The contemporary art industry is dominated by two main players, big galleries who give the artwork a platform and, the second and probably more significant factor, the individuals who buy work from these galleries and flip the pieces at auction for exorbitant prices. A valuable piece of art is a luxury commodity, an investment, and in some cases, a way for the ultra-rich to avoid paying taxes. Here, the markets would look at quality signals, for example, what an important curator has to say about an artist, whether the artist has exhibitions in museums; and whether prominent collectors are purchasing their work?

Collectors can take advantage of a tax loophole that allows them to delay capital gains taxes on such transactions if the proceeds were invested in a similar manner. This meant that a collector who purchased a painting for a certain sum of money – say, \$1 million – and then sold it for \$5 million a few years later would not have to pay capital gains taxes if they used the \$4 million profit to buy another piece of art. Donating items from a collection to museums may also result in tax advantages for collectors. This is where buying low and donating high pays off, as the charitable deduction is based on the present value of the job, not the price the collector paid for it originally. In some cases, avid art collectors even set up in their own private galleries which further help them in tax reduction.

In the case of auctions, the artist doesn't profit, financially at least, and the money and access to art are increasingly concentrated among the super-wealthy. Auctions help to bring the names of artists into the public eye and this helps them to increase the primary prices of their work. Collectors continue to pay high rates for pieces produced by a limited selection of living artists, leaving new artists and galleries that represent them competing for the scraps.

This rift in the market needs to be narrowed to make art more accessible and allow artists to sell their work and survive. Affordable art fairs are becoming more popular in recent years for people who want to purchase art but cannot afford to spend millions of dollars on a single piece. *Superfine* is an example of such an art fair. Developed in 2015, the exhibition, according to co-founders James Millican and Alex Mitov, is a reaction to the inflated values they saw on the top end of the "insular" art industry. Art patronage has been around since antiquity, and will not disappear anytime soon but possession and appreciation of art should not be limited to the rich.

which also resides on the South Bank. Dublin Port was also once home to Pigeon House, a popular Dublin restaurant opened by the first caretaker of a preceding generating station by John Pidgeon.

The sheer size of the chimneys is not felt until you are walking along Sandymount strand, the two imposing figures unchanging and constant in contrast with the ever-changing and vast coastal landscape. Unlike the Spire, similar in affection and stature, you can enjoy the view of the chimneys while out for a leisurely stroll. The Spire has connotations of coldness, as thought is not meant to be admired but passed on one's commute.

While the Poolbeg chimneys have enjoyed many decades of uninterrupted retirement, there is cause for evaluation of their contribution when the cost of their maintenance is brought into question. At best, the work on the stacks could permanently alter their silhouette, which arguably defies the point of attempting to maintain them. The cost is the main issue, with millions seemingly being required to fit the chimneys with support material. While all of this has yet to happen, the stacks were fitted with steel caps in 2015 and were listed as protected structures the previous year.

While the chimneys hold a place of fondness and familiarity for many who live both in Dublin and abroad, there is the question of whether this is enough to warrant such an investment in their protection and maintenance, especially one that might alter their appearance. The Journal.ie conducted a survey which concluded that 65% of people like the Poolbeg Stacks. Without a consensus of a larger percentage of people who enjoy having the Poolbeg chimneys around, there might be an argument for assigning those funds elsewhere.

While I believe that the Poolbeg stacks add life to a largely dilapidated part of Dublin city, and pull tourism to the docklands and further, you cannot ignore the cost and potential visual alterations. While this is the risk, the bottom line for someone who catches a glimpse of them at some point every day is that they would be sorely missed. The Poolbeg stacks should be protected, for the same reason that green areas and historical buildings are. They not only add to, but create the Dublin skyline, and act as a marker of getting close to home once they come into sight.

buildings is the group work and crit spaces adjacent to the studios, providing much-needed space to display and discuss students' work. The social life of students within the building is also considered, with several break-out spaces and casual group workrooms on each floor.

The dodecahedron houses a tiered auditorium to be used as a lecture space. Accessed from the second and third floors, it rests on the library and nestles into the master's studios space, all expressed on the facade as separate elements. The facade has a contemporary palette of metal panels and glazing to set the tone for the other masterplan buildings to come later. There is a focus on sustainability with green roofs on all flat rooftops and shelters over the new pedestrian walkways that will be equipped with solar panels.

An attractive feature of this building for the judging panel is the tallest tower, reaching eight stories, that houses *The UCD Experience*. Described as an exhibition space for visitors with an observation deck on the top floor, it is unclear how this space will function day-to-day. Symbolically, this is the element of the building that will be visible as the beacon of UCD from the Stillorgan Road.

Overall the building achieves a striking form, a functional arrangement of spaces and above all, fulfilling the university's agenda for the future vision of UCD.

Images and drawings of the building are available on Steven Holl's website, the UCD competition website, or the planning application on the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown planning page under reference D20A/0028

literature & drama

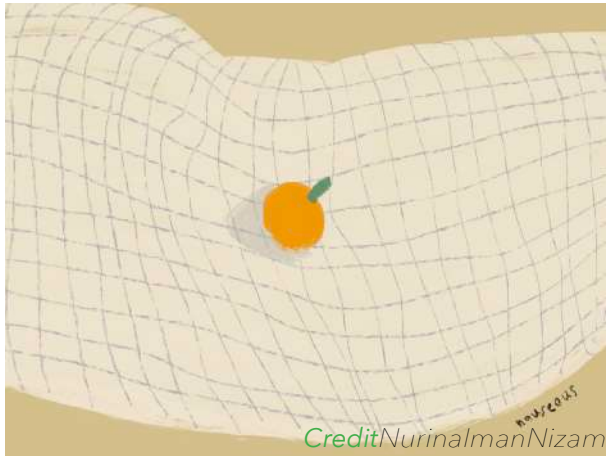
The Orange by Wendy Cope: A Film Proposal

"The Road Not Taken": A Film Proposal

The Trees by Philip Larkin: A Film Proposal

Director's Cut

Three students chart their way through their favourite poetry and imagine an on-screen adaptation.



Wandering around Edinburgh on a summer's day, I stumble across a crumbling second-hand bookstore. Weaving around the unwavering piles of stories and the mountains of curious texts on dusty shelves, it catches my eye. *Serious Concerns* by Wendy Cope. After a difficult year, the title immediately resonates with me, and as I leaf through the tattered pages, I discover and find great solace in a poem titled *The Orange*.

Cope's delight at having bought 'a huge orange', which she shares with two friends, is the poem's central expression. This simple exercise in Cope's life makes her reflect on her newfound appreciation for the company of others and the beauty of life's ordinary moments. Cope hints that this sense of joy and tranquility has come after a period of depression, while the last line of the poem suggests she is freshly in love and treasures her existence.



While adapting a poem as a film presents some challenges, it ultimately offers many creative opportunities. *The Orange* is exact, yet it has an abstract quality. While the poem suggests many things, several details are omitted, leaving the reader to interpret and imagine how it might be expanded and developed as a longer form story.

I imagine that this film would take place in Edinburgh, Scotland, during the festival season. An unnamed character would find herself living alone after a dark period of difficulty. The story would follow the character's development (think *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*) as she opens up to new experiences and makes close friends who change how she understands herself and her experiences. Moving on from the past, she would slowly find her feet and learn to see the wondrous joy and beauty of the world around her once again.



For this production, it would be desirable to assemble a diverse cast of young lesser-known Scottish, English, and Irish actors. The story would be directed with great sensitivity by someone like Hettie MacDonald (Normal People) and filmed by the brilliant Kate McCullough (Arracht), who could capture the story's rawness and intimacy, while paying homage to Scotland's beautiful natural landscape. The style of the piece would be abstract and poetic.

As the film comes to a close, the audience would be left with a universal message about overcoming difficulty and finding love for ourselves in the simple moments shared with others. As Cope writes "I love you, I'm glad I exist."

Forever Young Adult: A Book Podcast

Heather Reynolds

UCD alumni, Aife Kearns and Ciara Murray are the hosts and founders of *Forever Young Adult*. The podcast is about Young Adult literature and I asked what led them to start a podcast together?

Aife Kearns answered: "Well, we're both loud. Ciara's a librarian, and so they have a lot of contact with books and care a lot about books. I believe I had a few other podcasting projects around that time that I was trying to get off the ground. Ciara was aware of this, and then was like, "God I would actually love to do this podcast idea", and, if I remember correctly, I was the only one that was like "That sounds like a great idea!"

"Other people did agree that it was a good idea, but nobody wanted to collab with me on it," said Murray, "I remember being like, 'Aife! You were just hunting for a podcast that someone will consistently do with you, this is my idea', and you were like, 'You know what? I can get on board with that as a project!'"

"It's definitely that Ciara brought the book enthusiasm", Kearns explains. "I'm still into books, but less into YA as a genre...but don't make it sound like the podcast is my least favourite child and Ciara's the better parent!" Though, Murray interjects "On that, we wouldn't be able to keep the podcast going for two years just on my enthusiasm for books. There does have to be a balance between 'I want to read these books and I want to talk

about them', and Aife being like, 'Yes, and we have to do some business strategy as well.'"

To understand the podcast better, I asked how they would define YA literature. Aife defined it rather broadly: "My son says, 'We look at books that are targeted at a YA audience, so that's books that, when you go into a bookshop, 'Young Adult' is written up [above] them."

"But we also have read Jane Austen on the pod, and that's partly because the characters themselves are in that YA categorisation of being older teens and finding who they are. Sometimes we do younger books that are still relevant to people in their teens. There's a whole range of books that we do cover, but it's predominantly books that you walk into a bookshop and you see 'Young Adult.'"

As university graduates when founding the podcast, I ask why they decided on YA as the genre for the podcast? Murray explains that, "I feel like there are a lot of other people talking about other books. Children's books get a lot of publicity because of advertising to their parents and adult fiction gets a lot of its own publicity as well, but, partly because Young Adult is so new, it does have a lack of places to turn to to find out more about it, teenagers have a harder time finding it I think. As a librarian, you cannot read every book, but you have to be able to recommend a whole range of books, so podcasts, book reviews, book

'Original writing' can mean many things: originality in plot, character, style, narrative, dialogue, invention. But what is originality in the 21st century, when books and media are so widely available and the demand for such things is still increasing?

Take *Beauty and the Beast*, for example. Published in 1740 by French author Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve, this story is still widely popular. There are more than two hundred and twenty-five retellings of the tale of Beauty and her beast, and these are only the ones listed on popular literary sites. The most recent popular retelling of the tale has been Sarah J. Mass's 2015 novel, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, which was quickly followed by Brigid Kemmerer's *A Curse so Dark and Lonely*, published in 2019. The plot of *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (shortened to ACOTAR by fans) follows nineteen-year-old Feyre, who, after killing a wolf, is dragged into a new realm by a beast demanding retribution.

The 'beast' in this version must also be freed by true love, cursed by an evil enchantress. 'Belle' is captured by him, and over time the characters fall in love, and the curse is broken. Similarly, in *A Curse so Dark and Lonely*, the main character, Harper, is kidnapped by Prince Rhen's henchman, Grey. An evil enchantress has cursed the Prince and his curse can only be broken by true love. Again, the two characters fall in love, and the curse is broken.

At their core, these two novels contain many similar elements. The idea is not original - an evil enchantress, a curse broken by true love, and two characters who fall in love in order to escape their fates. But it is the writing that makes these original. Harper, from *A Court of Thorns and Lonely*, has cystic fibrosis. She struggles to adapt from the modern world to this traditional, medieval setting, and the love story between her and Rhen is inspiring. Feyre, on the other hand, is a skilled hunter and painter, and the love story between her and Tamlin grows as their understanding of each other grows. The writing in both these stories is incredibly original and contains

E. Keogh

E. Keogh shares their proposal for poem *The Trees*, and how they would direct it.

The poem, *The Trees* by Philip Larkin, has always stuck with me since studying it for the Leaving Cert. It represented hope for me during an extremely difficult time in my life. The last line of the poem: "Last year is dead, they seem to say. / Begin afresh, afresh, afresh" was particularly memorable to me, as it reminded me that no matter the hardships I endured, I could always look forward to a new future.

Many directors would be very capable of capturing the scenes I envision for the poem, but I'd have to say I would prefer to direct it myself, in order to preserve the story and meaning behind the film. As for actors, I'd cast a younger Robert Sheehan as the main character. He'd be the sole focus of the film, the rest of the cast would be mostly blurred out, background actors.

The plot would centre around a Leaving Cert student, as he struggles with the feelings of isolation and the uncertainty of what his future holds. I love scenic shots, so I'd be sure to include a fair chunk of them in the form of flashbacks. They'd be full of natural imagery to reflect the tone of the poem, but they'd be contrasted by bland and boring colours in the school uniform, the school, and everything else that focuses on school and the Leaving Cert.

After all the doom and gloom of opening his results, he'd find he wasn't accepted to his first few choices but ended up in an art course in a smaller college. His Mam, although in an out of focus frame, could be seen and heard crying. However, he'd be chuffed - all his first choices were all things he could study to get "a proper career".

The scenery would change to be more colourful, and everything would be brighter. The last shot would be from behind and as he approaches the front entrance to the college, the camera would swing around to be in front of him, and he'd begin to smile as he mouthed "begin fresh" and all sounds start to fade apart from the sound of leaves thrashing in the wind.

The main difference between a book or in this case a short film would be the challenge of making it long enough to be a book, but it could be done by adding more backstory to the character and fleshing out other characters. Although personally, I feel that a short film conveys the main message a bit better due to its short and easily accessible nature.

listings, these are all things that I turned to to get an idea of what was in fiction for different books, and I [thought] 'I just cannot find that, I cannot find a good solid one for YA specifically, so I decided I'll just make it myself, I'll do it!'

Throughout the podcast, the hosts talk a lot about uplifting stories that are 'own voices'. "I think the best person to tell a story is someone who the story has happened to", Kearns explains. "I remember I attended a conference a few years ago, and you know how they do the whole 'How to react sensitively and deal with confidentiality in such a room', and the rule they had was treat people's stories as you'd like your stories to be treated, and I think there's a lot of stories in the world that don't receive that sensitive treatment because of who's telling them. We can't speak for people whose experiences are not our own, but we can amplify their voices when those people speak for themselves".

Forever Young Adult can be found on all major podcast hosting sites, as well as @ForeverYAPod on Twitter, and @ForeverYAPodcast on Instagram. Kearns says that the goal of the podcast is to bring attention to Irish authors, but also to include: "Uplifting LGBTQ+ stories, minority stories, Irish stories".

things not at all seen in the original tale. ACOTAR has sold more than six million times worldwide and was recently announced to be adapted as a Hulu show. *A Curse so Dark and Lonely* landed Brigid Kemmerer on the New York Times bestselling list in February 2019 for the first time in her nine-year publishing career.

It is not the fact that these novels are retellings of Beauty and the Beast that made them so popular amongst readers. Cruel Beauty by Rosamund Hodge (2014), yet another retelling, has not had the success of the others. The other books: it is the author and their original takes on the tales that made them so popular. These books are not unoriginal simply because they are retellings. They are original works in and of themselves. The characters are not the same as those in the original, nor are the plots. Original ideas are starting to become few and far between, and this is only one example of retellings of a classic fairy tale. Retellings of Snow White, Cinderella, and many other classic stories about princesses have been done time and time again.

Original writing is what an author makes of the story. An original idea, however, is hard to come across. One author might write one novel about a magical school - does that then make every novel about a magical school that follows the story's antagonist, President Snow, and how the games developed in the first years following the war. Before he was President, Coriolanus Snow was a student at the Academy in the Capitol and the Hunger Games were a savagely unorganized annual event created to keep the citizens of Panem in their place. But as the years passed, the Capitol leaders found themselves unable to get people to watch, and that is where the story begins.

Original writing now means more than a new idea, a new world, a new place. Original writing is a fresh take on something old, and with many PO authors now being introduced to the scene with more space being made for them in writing circles, these stories will again be reshaped, rewritten, and represented with diverse characters, new backdrops, and in new, modern times, something all readers are, unsurprisingly, very excited to see.

21st Century Irish Literature

Aoife Rooney

Aoife Rooney takes a look at recent Irish literature and examines how the stories change as our society does

The works of popular and successful literature are usually tethered to issues facing society. Although this formula has remained mostly unchanged, many of the issues discussed have evolved, developed, and culminated in

much of the Irish literature on bookshelves today. Several successful writers of the 20th century had the hindsight of full careers, however, there are many new Irish authors whose work has comparable effects on their readers. While it would be unfair to compare James Joyce to Sally Rooney, there are faint thematic parallels through much of the literature that has seen success in the past century.

Literature released in the past twenty years has often dealt with issues such as money, relationships, and life in Ireland. These topics are undoubtedly echoed in other famous works, such as Joyce's *Dubliners* and Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments*. However, contemporary pages are more enthusiastically filled with stories of emigration, class, and the inward search for oneself. These themes can be seen running throughout novels such as Brooklyn by Colm Tóibín, *Dark Lies The Island* by Kevin Barry and Naosie Dolan's *Exciting Times*.

So much of the twentieth century in Ireland was occupied by various strife and wars, and this was directly reflected in the literature produced at that time. Unlike writing from the past two decades, there was a consciousness of the turmoil not just on the island but abroad too. It is echoed in so many Irish writers' attempts

to understand and absorb violence surrounding them, including *Easter, 1916* by William Butler Yeats and the poetry collection *North*, by Seamus Heaney, detailing the Troubles. Irish culture and society has developed throughout the century and shifted the focus away from the country and onto the self, so too did the literature produced as a result.

Conversations on Nationalism have fallen back to make room for more relevant discussions on race, gender, sexuality, feminism and melancholy. Novels in the past two decades have been less about big, world-shattering events, and focussed more so on the every day - and the enviable monotony that accompanies it. A stark departure from bombings and Mother and Baby homes, 21st-century literature in Ireland is overwhelmed with stories of flawed individuals - the more chaotic and difficult the better. This a common theme among books from even the past five years, such as Sally Rooney's *Conversations With Friends* and Anne Enright's *The Forgotten Waltz*, stories which detail the twenty-something struggle to adjust to adulthood and their impending thirties. These novels are emotionally attainable and appeal to a large audience, a factor often lacking in some of the classic works of the previous century. *Ulysses* for example, masterpiece status aside,

requires an understanding of a whole breadth of English literature, inevitably excluding many readers from a full understanding of the work. Whereas current literature is colloquial and uses the vernacular. This is seen evidently in Roddy Doyle's *The Snapper*, and in the work of Colm Tóibín.

Tóibín in particular has been an enduring figure in the literary landscape during the turn of the century. His novels deal excellently with religion, grief, emigration, sexuality, and life in Ireland, and have managed to stay relevant for more than three decades. He successfully bridged the gap between the arguably gatekept writings of the twentieth century and the more diverse and accessible literature being produced today.

It would be incontestable to say that literature today is a more accurate reflection of Irish society and the people that call Ireland home, but the works of authors such as James Joyce and Samuel Beckett have endured almost a century of criticism because they are the exception to the rule. They are universal. It will only be a fair comparison if we are still talking about Sally Rooney and Louise O'Neill at the turn of the next century.

Dostoevsky, Isolation, and Politics

Caroline Kelly

It is tempting to look back on our lives before the Covid-19 pandemic to figure out how to feel during tumultuous periods, but art can more accurately portray the emotion and pulse of the past in comparison to a history book. Today, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is that work of art. It serves as a cornerstone of moral philosophy, as well as a claustrophobic rendering of isolation which we have all grown to know too well during this last year.

Told through a sequence of dreams, *Crime and Punishment* explores the psychology of crime, the untheoring of reality, and the anguish of isolation—all while bridging the gap between literary value and moral-philosophical resonance. After murdering an elderly pawnbroker, Rodian Romanovitch Raskolnikov – the novel's protagonist—obsessively ruminates over his actions and consequences. Raskolnikov physically and emotionally isolates himself from the rest of the world. Subsequently, delusions, nightmares and hallucinatory woolgathering seep into a landscape where good and evil are forever sparred. The cause of this collapsing world is expressed as an "unknown and unseen pestilence."

The final dream sequence feels all too real in the present context: people would agree among themselves to make a difference and promise to stay together, but they'd soon contradict that collective identity and become violent due to hopelessness. The struggle has a macabre ending as the survivors of the disease are purified and destined to start a new life. This final dream envisions a society even more lonely than Dostoevsky's representation of Saint Petersburg in the first chapter.

At the time of publication in 1866, Saint Petersburg—the city in which *Crime and Punishment* is set—was in complete and utter shambles. Desolation was concealed within the city, for St. Petersburg internalized both the tyranny of past Tsarist regimes and the fiery chaos they stoked. City planning was largely ignored, and repercussions followed. Prone to flooding, Saint Petersburg failed to control the sewage, which seeped into the drinking water. In 1831, Saint Petersburg was devastated by a cholera epidemic, and ordinary citizens—battered by quarantines—gathered in protests that quickly turned violent. In 2020, Covid-19 invaded nearly all cities across the globe and impacted billions of lives, with resulting "anti-mask" protests storming city streets and government buildings.

Nowadays, everyone has their own imagined St. Petersburg. Lives took a sudden turn when the intangible "pestilence" we know as Covid-19 took over their city. Many wish to return to the time before a pandemic forced us indoors and away from others. Many wish to return to a time before we turned the first page, when Dostoevsky prodded the dormant and veiled demons inside us all and, because of these demons, forced us to rethink what "normal" means.

During this current lockdown, I returned to Dostoevsky's book in search of signs proving how collective purpose can heal the torment of social isolation, as well as anything that contradicts what Raskolnikov's final dream envisioned: "In the cities, the bells rang all day long: everyone was being summoned, but no one knew who was summoning them or why."

Classic Novels - as relevant as ever

Lauren Cassidy, Caroline Kelly and Hannah Byrne all make a case for why their favourite classics truly stand the test of time.

Frankenstein: a Proto-Feminist Masterpiece

Lauren Cassidy

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is like the monster itself - it's alive!

Contemporary pop culture is saturated with references to Shelley's monster, inspiring film adaptations, television shows, parodies, prequels, and spin-offs. Although many readings focus on Shelley's mad scientist, his reanimated corpse, and the secret to life itself, *Frankenstein* - at its core, is a proto-feminist text. An epistolary novel, the story's structure replicates the sewn-together limbs of Victor Frankenstein's monster. If you look close enough at its seams, Shelley's allegorical tale carefully unpicks the joints of patriarchy, deconstructing gender binaries, and essentialism. In an age of #MeToo, revenge porn, trans-exclusionary politics, and countless gender-based crimes, Shelley's *Frankenstein* has never been more vital - its pages holding the potential to spark new life in modern activists.

Shelly was the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, author of the landmark proto-feminist philosophical text *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Conscious of contemporary arguments around women's rights, Shelley produces a highly imaginative space in *Frankenstein*, displacing the reader in a world removed from their own. It's a world where men can defy death, gestate new life, and transcend the laws of science. It's a world where a writer can discuss fear of pregnancy, postpartum depression, and how maternal love is not always implicit in mothers. Through Victor (Shelley's literary surrogate), the text explores maternal anxiety, the terror Frankenstein feels towards what he has created, and what it may become. As a man, Victor does not appear monstrous for his aversion - conversely, his progeny is labelled Frankenstein's Monster. Shelley's message is cleverly concealed.

Shelley is commonly referred to as the inventor of science fiction. She defied societal expectation, evincing how women can write about the gothic and grotesque; the monstrous, feral, and loud. Her title *Frankenstein*, or *The Modern Prometheus* taps into Greek mythology, exploring how new perspectives can revive, and breathe new life into archaic stories. Committing her modern Prometheus to paper, Shelley showed how new voices are imperative for the advancement of human understanding, empathy, and art.



women can write about the gothic and grotesque; the monstrous, feral, and loud. Her title *Frankenstein*, or *The Modern Prometheus* taps into Greek mythology, exploring how new perspectives can revive, and breathe new life into archaic stories. Committing her modern Prometheus to paper, Shelley showed how new voices are imperative for the advancement of human understanding, empathy, and art.

Shelley's *Frankenstein* established a genealogy of empowerment. The author was fearless in her production of a new literary genre, and its pioneering discourse on the inauthenticity of gender, gender roles, and patriarchal hierarchies. Her legacy continues today - in the resurrection of Frankenstein's monster in infinite facets of popular culture, as well as in the ever-growing science fiction genre, which harbours liminal repectacles for authors, and readers alike. We must forge ahead, and continue to invent new ways of looking at the world. In the words of Shelley herself, "Beware, for I am fearless, and therefore powerful!"

book nook :

The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes by Suzanne Collins

Anna Blackburn

Anna Blackburn shares her thoughts on the new addition to *The Hunger Games* series, and where to read it.

It has been over a decade since the release of the popular YA dystopian trilogy, *The Hunger Games*, hit the shelves, and in that time it has become an internationally best selling series of books and films, starring Jennifer Lawrence and Josh Hutcherson. Suzanne Collins' epic tale of Katniss Everdeen and the fight for her life and her freedom in the Hunger Games arena left readers wanting more, and last year she finally delivered.

In May of 2020, Collins released her new novel, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, a prequel to the series which follows the story's antagonist, President Snow, and how the games developed in the first years following the war. Before he was President, Coriolanus Snow was a student at the Academy in the Capitol and the Hunger Games were a savagely unorganized annual event created to keep the citizens of Panem in their place. But as the years passed, the Capitol leaders found themselves unable to get people to watch, and that is where the story begins.

Preparing for the 10th Annual Hunger Games, Coriolanus and his fellow students are each assigned a tribute from each of the districts to help and promote before the games begin. Coriolanus is stuck with District 12's Lucy Gray Baird, and he seems to feel his luck has run out before the games even begin. The pair deal with personal tragedies and work together in an attempt to win the

what to read



CreditSamanehSadeghiMarashi

Hunger Games, but their widely opposing beliefs may be just what they need.

The Hunger Games trilogy is a well-written, action-packed series, but this new addition has made it clear how much Collins has developed as a writer. The first notable difference is that *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is written in the third person as opposed to the trilogy, which follows Katniss' journey from the first person point of view. This shift in narrative perspectives allows for more room in layers of explanation and detail regarding characters other than the protagonist. This is a logical shift in perspective, giving the reader more context and a deeper understanding of life in Panem shortly after the war, which is exactly what prequels are meant to do.

Collins also cleverly ties in references to the trilogy, giving origin to things like President Snow's infamous white rose and telling the story of the development of the Games. I would recommend this novel to anyone who enjoyed *The Hunger Games* trilogy, whether the books or films, because it gives a more profound appreciation for the world created by Collins and may even change the way you view President Snow the next time you get around to reading the books.

where to read it



CreditSamanehSadeghiMarashi

19 May 2020

There was a knock at the door and I rushed down the stairs to get my package. I had been waiting five months for the pre-ordered prequel of my favourite series, *The Hunger Games*. I spared no time retrieving the book from the postman and rushed out to the deck to read it. The cushions on the outdoor sofa were years past their prime, worn to the point where you could feel the rungs and the structure of the couch through the pillow, but I didn't even notice anymore.

It's been a decade since I've read the entire series, but it has stuck in my mind ever since. I could feel the warm sun on my face, sensing its excitement toward seeing that I've started my summer reading a bit early, and found it illuminating the thick white pages as I sunk into the tale. "Coriolanus released the fistful of cabbage into the pot of boiling water and swore that one day it would never pass his lips again".

23 May 2020

I would've finished the novel sooner had I been a faster reader, but it took me less than five days to finish the

"The Hunger Games trilogy is a well-written, action-packed series, but this new addition has made it clear how much Collins has developed as a writer."

517-page story. When I finally put the book down, I took a moment to look up at the sky and let myself take in everything I had just read.

As a writer, I found myself equally intimidated as I was in awe of the story of a man who no one liked. Yet somehow I came to care for the young Snow, empathising with him every time got nervous or afraid, and similarly being proud when he and Lucy experienced a win. They were two opposite sides of a coin who managed to detangle the web they were forced into, and came out feeling like gods.

When I write, I want my characters to have struggled and earned their place, just as Coriolanus and Lucy did. They may not have made the most ethically sound of decisions all the time, but I fell in love with both of them and routed for them until the very end.

music

Our 2020-2021 music in reviews

After a tumultuous year, read on as Michael, Isabella, Luke and Andy tell us about their year in music.

Lockdown helped me discover new music, and music helped me survive lockdown

Michael Bergin

It's a worn-out bit of old housewives' reasoning, I know, but nevertheless, it's true - you always yearn for what you just can't have. In many ways, the past year, with empty stages, silent mics, and cancelled festivals, gives this bit of old wisdom new breath and fresh meaning. No, I can't say at the time that I particularly enjoyed waking up with back pains in the middle of a mucky tent in Stradbally, but given the events of the past twelve months, I'd happily trade my comfortable rural abode for a hastily erected campsite any day of the week.

And yet, despite the fact that no encores were had, no pits were moshed, and no pints were thrown, the pandemic did offer an opportunity to rediscover some fantastic music. I'll be damned if you can show me anyone whose Spotify minutes are down this past year in comparison to 2019. And if they are, seriously, get off the bandwagon and put down the banana bread.

“ (...) the Monkey's first two albums are virtually perfect - a raucous combination of killer hooks, lethal wit, and youthful charm.”

Personally, before Covid, I had reached a point of crisis with my music. I had always been a fan of old-school rock starting from the 60s and 70s, but simply put, the stuff was getting to feel outdated. Listening to throwback bands such as Dea Matróna didn't help. Gifted musicians they may be, cutting edge they are not. In short, I had run out of old-timey artists to listen to and didn't want to expose myself to heavy rock and metal, for obvious reasons.

Enter The Strokes, with their flawless 2001 debut *Is This It*. The Strokes to me came to represent everything that rock and roll could be. Here was a band that played joyful, nostalgic music, effortlessly cool and able to shed themselves of the legacy of grunge. To put it succinctly, lockdown would have been much, much harder without them.

Then, of course, you've got the bands that the Strokes inspired, chief among them being Alex Turner and his Arctic Monkeys. By far the most successful act of the post-punk revival, the Monkey's first two albums are virtually perfect - a raucous combination of killer hooks, lethal wit, and youthful charm. Though their later offerings, such as 2013's *AM*, turned them into global superstars, it is the endearing nature of their first two records that kept my attention throughout lockdown. There's just something so reliable in Turner's trademark wit, as he winds a narrative around urban romance and youth culture that makes it impossible to turn off.

Of course, Turner's other projects then came to my attention, in particular the artistic contributions of the Last Shadow Puppets. This pseudo-supergroup, and their flair for lush orchestral arrangements and peculiar wordplay, not only engrossed me but opened my mind, at long last, to the world of the avant-garde. Through listening to the Shadow Puppets and Turner's inspirations, I uncovered a list of figures, ranging from Courtney Barnett to Serge Gainsbourg, whose musical contributions to the avant-garde are at once integral and indelible.

But what of Irish music? What Irish musicians could I honestly say lived up to the standards of the aforementioned artists? Here we come to Fontaines D.C., perhaps the brightest Irish band since U2, who this year were nominated for a Grammy for their second album, *A Hero's Death* (losing out to the Strokes, ironically). The Fontaines' blend of harsh brooding melodies and stinging lyrics about life in the capital allowed me to connect with Dublin again through music, a city I had come to love before being separated from it due to the pandemic.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not one of those lockdown apologists who yearns to look wise by reflecting on how much peace and quiet sitting at home affords, as opposed to the hustle and bustle and noise of normal life. Frankly, I think such people are morons. I'm in my twenties and I'm a musician. I like the hustle. I adore the bustle, and you can bet that I bloody love noise.

Perhaps my argument shouldn't be that lockdown helped me to discover new music, but that music helped me to survive lockdown, perhaps more so than anything else. When it comes down to it, what other medium can inspire us to create so effectively?

I guess you can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you just might find, you get what you need.



Pop will always have a place in my heart

Luke Duffy

Musically speaking, my first love is pop music, and I have no problem saying that. There was a time in my early teens when I insisted (read: pretended) I was "different" - that I wasn't obsessed with what Rihanna wore on the red carpet that week or that Lady Gaga's ARTPOP wasn't the greatest cultural milestone in living memory. Fundamentally, a lot of my music taste is pop divas with a few notable exceptions - but I still feel like that taste has evolved over the past year.

At the start of the first lockdown, I feared the worst, and in some ways that is reflected in my listening habits. St. Vincent's *Fear the Future* is abundant in Spring 2020. *The Suburbs by Arcade Fire* is on my March 2020 playlist for the sole reason that it was the very last song I heard in the Clubhouse the day that the first "two-week" lockdown was announced. There's also a lot of Lorde, specifically *Pure Heroine*-era Lorde - I walked into the pandemic terrified and confused, so it was only appropriate to listen to an album all about teenage anxieties and a deep fear of the future.

Thankfully, the first lockdown wasn't all doom and gloom - while I knew it would be months before I could dance in a nightclub again, I had Dua Lipa and Lady Gaga's masterpieces, *Future Nostalgia* and *Chromatica*, to keep me sane and let me dance alone in my bedroom until then. Rina Sawayama's *SAWAYAMA* was also a gorgeous introduction to her music and added some early 2000's nu-metal influences to my Spotify algorithm that I was delighted about.

As restrictions briefly lifted between the first and second lockdowns, I discovered Jessie Ware's *What's Your Pleasure?*, which would eventually become my favourite album released last year. The lyrics are beautiful, it speaks to my deep love of disco, and there are zero skips - I can't recommend this album enough.

Where the first lockdown was largely about revisiting familiar pop girls or falling in love with new ones, I found that the music I listened to in the second lockdown was often heavier and more intense. After finding out that Boys Noize worked on *Chromatica*, I discovered his debut album *Qi Qi Qi*, which is an hour and eight minutes of maximalist electronic dance music - my favourite form of sensory overload.

“ Rina Sawayama's SAWAYAMA was also a gorgeous introduction to her and added some early 2000's nu-metal influences to my Spotify algorithm that I was delighted about.”

Miley Cyrus' *Plastic Hearts* was a surprising favourite of mine in 2020 - I had only passively enjoyed her until then, and her latest album demanded I keep my eyes and ears on her going forward. The definitive pop-rock experience of the year. I also revisited Paramore's self-titled album - I've loved this album for years, but something about its spit-in-your-face attitude just fit well with how frustrated I was with the government's mismanagement of the pandemic at that point.

My already strong love for the experimental stylings of SOPHIE was amplified during this time. The second lockdown was also my first encounter with Arca, specifically in her deeply strange but endlessly fascinating @a@a@ - a 62-minute mix released as a single track. I understood very little of it, but I didn't care - I was entranced.

Lockdown 3.0 has built on the deeper appreciation for hyperpop and experimental pop that I have developed over the past year. I reviewed Rico Nasty's *Nightmare Vacation* in a previous issue because I immediately fell in love with tracks like 'IPHONE'. I was, however, devastated by the sudden death of SOPHIE - I hadn't been as upset about the death of a celebrity in a very long time. I have been listening to a lot of her work lately - she has a 20-minute set called *HEAVEN SUSPENDED* that I listen to frequently. SOPHIE's tragic passing led me to properly look into those who had collaborated with her, and I have seriously enjoyed the work of Shygirl and Arca. Arca's *KiCK* features collaborations with both Shygirl and SOPHIE, and while 'Watch' and 'La Chiqui' are among the best tracks on the album, it's an astounding piece of work, even without the featured artists. I recently listened to Arca's bizarre and instrumental *Mutant*, and I can't wait to listen to more.

Going forward, I expect my music taste to shift and develop as it already has over time, but fundamentally pop music will always have a special place in my heart. I don't know what specifically to expect from 2021 - I wouldn't be surprised if we never got Rihanna's ninth album, for instance. Regardless, I like the way my music taste has changed over the past year, and I am excited to hear what's next.

Life isn't changing, but hey, at least I had my headphones in.

Isabella Ambrosio

Covid is a curse, but it blessed me with one thing - a plethora of new music. Whether the albums had been written before the start of the pandemic or during the endless amount of time musicians found themselves to have due to their inability to tour, it felt like nearly every two weeks one of my favourite artists was dropping something new. It was only exciting I seemed to have in my life, the weekly check on Apple Music of newly released rock music.

My music choice varied greatly. I went back to old favourites, such as the Arctic Monkeys' *AM* and the Neighbourhood's *I Love You*. The moody ambience of both albums captured the essence of the constant state of sadness I found myself in. The strong basslines and deep voices resonated with me. For once in my life, lyrics didn't feel important. I simply laid and listened to the music for its melodies and the moodiness that lingered in Alex Turner and Jesse Rutherford's vocals.

But the number of new favourites I found was astounding. Ashton Irwin (drummer of 5 Seconds of Summer) released an independent album full of psychedelic rock and indie influences that captured my attention for the better part of two months. *Superbloom* was rejuvenating after the moody favourites I had been dwelling in. 'Drive' has one of the best melancholic bridges I've ever heard, with no lyrics, but a melody supported by soft riffs and a smooth bassline. 'SCAR', a simple song talking about the way life can absolutely rip you a new one, and the necessity to keep going, was complemented by a beautiful blend of harmonies and strings. The entire album was a mixture of genres and different instruments, a massive experiment if you will, but an experiment that captured my attention.

A quality release from Slaves was just what the doctor ordered. The album title itself, *To Better Days*, happily filled the teenage angst that still lives inside of me. My inability to not consider lyrical quality returned with the song 'Talk to a Friend', the opening lyrics 'I just called to see how you're doing / That's a lie, I've been going through it' was the epitome of the mental toll quarantine had been taking on me. The entirety of the album talked about mental illness and self-sabotage - a concept that was incredibly relevant to me during the 2020 - 2021 academic year. While the actual instrumentals themselves were quite common, nothing absolutely mind-blowing, the album showcased the lyrics, and the style of the vocals, a mix of an R&B style with your typical post-hardcore riffs.

PVRIS, a long-time favourite band of mine, put out my favourite album of 2020. *Use Me* which was a mix of electronic, post-hardcore and Lynn Gunn's voice which one hundred percent makes me question my sexuality. The steady beats, the lingering synth, their signature strings were just a recipe for a good PVRIS album, but the different mixtures of tempos and melodies made it a great PVRIS album. 'Hallucinations' is the perfect example - ethereal strings, a slow steady beat until the chorus, Lynn Gunn's vocal shining along the track. This is contrasted by 'Thank You (feat. RAYE)', a nice introductory synth, a gentle enough guitar riff, and meaningful lyrics. The songs vastly differ in their emotion, but the same elements of each song keep it cohesive. The album felt far from repetitive. The only repetitive thing about this album is its appearance of it on my most recently listened list.

“ The lack of vocals make it nearly perfect for drunk karaoke for the depressed kids who refuse to karaoke to real music.”

2013 introduced me to a band that I still listen to eight years later. ISSUES, a prevalent prog rock band in the metalcore scene, released *Beautiful Oblivion* in 2019, one of the best records that I have ever had the pleasure of listening to, but re-released it as an instrumental at the end of 2020. The stellar basslines, the funky guitar riffs, the complex drum rhythms and the inclusive use of synth was front row and centre. The lack of vocals makes it nearly perfect for drunk karaoke for the depressed kids who refuse to karaoke to real music. I spent many nights singing along to the instrumental while clutching a bottle of Moscato.

My music library thrived with so many new albums. The genres felt ever-changing. My favourite genre shifted by the week - pop-rock the first week of the month, psychedelic rock the second, electronic rock the third, and good ol' post-hardcore the fourth. It was the only changing thing in my life. My environment didn't shift, my same days and weeks spent lying in my bed, the blinds shut, but hey, at least I had my headphones in.

“ Going forward, I expect my music taste to shift and develop as it already has over time, but fundamentally music [from this time] will always have a special place in my heart... I like the way my music taste has changed over the past year, and I am excited to hear what's next.”

Central Bank happened, and we let it happen.

Andrew Nolan

In hindsight, I didn't realise how lucky I was at the start of 2020. Just a couple of months away from seeing our first lockdown, I was able to see Slipknot play, with Behemoth as openers, in the 3 Arena. I walked away with a newfound appreciation for Behemoth, and I could just about feel my neck after hearing the latter's track Nero Forte played live for the first time. Having just seen Mac Demarco two months beforehand, and with tickets to Sunstroke Festival for summer, it was shaping up to be an amazing year for concerts. Curb my enthusiasm, I guess.

“ I saw some of these albums for what they really were - cakes and sweets that, while they were lovely at the time, were now a decade past their use-by date and had gone all mouldy while nobody was looking.”

Though, the year did start strong with some solid releases. Both Edén and \$uicideboy\$ saw new albums release on Valentine's Day, with *No Future* and *STOP STARING AT THE SHADOWS* respectively. The former in particular is one of my personal favourites of that year. Edén's sound has something special to it, and no matter what he happens to release, it always seems to stick with me. 'Projector' and 'isohel' were two tracks I consistently found in my On Repeat playlists, even as Christmas decorations began to crop up. The latter of the above albums encapsulates the opposite end of this musical spectrum: fast-paced, heavy-hitting tracks that helped to maintain energy in the mundanity of online learning. 'What the f--- is Happening', which was quite aptly titled now in retrospect, being chief among them. 'You also have'. And to Those I Love', and 'Thanks for Sticking Around' to end the record on a melancholic note.

A couple of months had passed, and we found ourselves in the sun again. Believe it or not, during lockdown I was a World Champion runner for about 5 weeks or so, and as such, I needed tunes to get me up and going. My go-to ended up being the soundtrack to Bethesda Studio's Doom games, composed by Mick Gordon. Say what you want about a video game's soundtrack making it to a playlist, but this album is on a completely different planet. Seriously, 'Track 9 - BFG Division' would make you want to break into your own house, or maybe key your own car. It's just that energetic. To relax after this, I found myself on a hefty indie-rock buzz. Well, I think. There's always someone to argue that it's actually 'mellow contemporary jazz' or something along that train of thought. Yellow Days, Surf Curse and Current Joys quickly became favourites of mine. Skeggs were also a reliable beat, adding that true summer feeling to a June that didn't fully feel it.

From that point through to now is where it becomes a little hazy. This mix of metal and indie would continue until I subconsciously made it a mission to revisit all my Central Bank favourites to see what albums held up today. I covered a hefty amount, from *Asking Alexandria* to *Breaking Benjamin* and back again. Now, before most of you point and laugh at my awful music choices, I have only this to say - I know. After this nostalgic hit of these records wore off, I saw some of these albums for what they really were - cakes and sweets that, while they were lovely at the time, were now a decade past their use-by date and had gone all mouldy while nobody was looking.

Not all mouldy cakes were created equal, however. For example, revisiting the likes of Bring me the Horizon and The Story So Far was a treat. With the odd exception, both bands still hold up excellently today, more than justifying an inclusion into a playlist or two.

Around wintertime is when things got a little drearier. The November days saw the likes of American Football, Modern Baseball, Brand New and La Dispute all being given the revisit treatment. I can't say for sure whether it was the general mood of the time, or if my love for over-the-top emo just never really left, but I still saw a lot of value in these records. American Football are a bit of a meme, admittedly, but the rest of these bands far outlived their 'revisiting a cringey band' intentions, and they still litter my recent plays today.

I think I can sum up the awful nature of 2020 in one very hard confession: I listened to Lil Peep for a grand total of 100 hours that year. Top 0.5%. Yeah, I'd like to move away from that time, thank you very much.

music OTwo Interviews Robert McGinley from Teenage Fanclub

Isabella Ambrosio

Isabella Ambrosio sits down with Robert McGinley of Teenage Fanclub

Teenage Fanclub has been going strong for the last three decades. Originally founded by members Robert McGinley, Gerard Love and Norman Blake, they've released ten records since their formation in 1989 in Glasgow. They've been through a plethora of drummers, some sticking around longer than others, but up until 2018 when Gerard Love departed from the band, the three founding members had remained consistent. Since then, they've gone on to have multiple records that have commercial and critical success. Notably, *Grand Prix* in 1995, *Songs from Northern Britain* in 1997 and *Here* in 2016.

Robert McGinley was happy to set the scene for me. I called him on a beautiful day in Glasgow. He told me that the weather in Scotland was incredibly similar to that in Ireland, and he was cherishing the sunshine. He told me that he had been watching what was originally one fox bask in the sun, before the first was joined by a second. It was picturesque. And his Scottish accent added to the bright energy of the phone call. His tone throughout the phone call very much reminded me of my dad, kind, and I was happy to share any information that I had been curious enough to ask about.

I had started the interview by mentioning my dad and brother's absolute adoration for the band. I recalled how my father had told me my brother was raised on Teenage Fanclub. They would sit in the car together, as my father played their records for my brother. The love for their music carried on through the last twenty or so years. They had even shared their adoration with me, something I was quick to pick up on after listening to their earlier records. It was interesting to me that you could hear the evolution and growth of the members throughout their music. The beginning of their career was marked by teenage angst, a heavy punk influence within their music. But as the records went on, they seemed to grow more seamless

OTwo reviews	Rehearsal
	Andrew Nolan
	Album: Rehearsal
	Artist: Skeggs

First popping up on the scene with singles in 2014, Skeggs have been at the forefront of the recent emergence of Australian rock. They released their debut album, *Everyone Is Good at Something*, in 2016, which set the fast-paced garage rock benchmark that the band would go on to follow. Their indie-punk style sound has seen them compared to bands like FIDLAR in the past - quite a fitting handle when listening to their second release *My Own Mess*, as well as the singles released in the years following. It is important to establish this, as their most recent release *Rehearsal* diverges slightly, causing a discussion amongst their fanbase.

Still quite rooted in their garage rock sound, this album diverts somewhat in its softness. It may be Skeggs' most careful, sensitive album yet. It also implements some countr-yesque progressions into the mix, smoothing out many of the rougher edges that they have come to be known for, for better or worse. Tracks like 'Running from Nothing', for example, abandon the band's hectic energy in favour of a more cut back, vocally melodic sound. Tracks like these highlight an almost folk or country inspiration to their song-writing, something that doesn't show as much in their earlier offerings.

Though, the sound that they established originally hasn't been completely abandoned - tracks like 'Bush TV' is a refined take on the energetic sound synonymous with their first two albums. The main difference I noticed was the organisation of the music. Their earlier releases carried more of a chaotic, outgoing sound, while this album sounds much more carefully put together and structured.



and less noisy. The evolution was something that greatly piqued my interest - the musicianship evident throughout their years of experience. But something else that was interesting to me was their continuation without one of the founding members, Gerard Love.

The conversation started, of course, with lockdown and Covid-19. It was the general, 'Hope you're keeping well', because that's all that anyone can do right now. I commented on their process of writing a record, possibly during lockdown and McGinley was happy to respond, 'I think we were lucky, because we got most of it done before the lockdown. So, we were just finishing it off as that started to happen, whenever it was, March? And we knew things were going to slow down, so we slowed down a lot for a few months... So at least we got to finish the record, I think we were lucky in that sense. So, hopefully, we'll get to finish the other part of it, which is tours at some point.'

The next question was tricky, so I wanted to word it in a way that focused on the remaining members, because that was truly what was important. Their newest album, 'Endless Arcade' due out at the end of April was their first without Love, and somehow, it didn't feel too different. I simply queried with, 'How was it this time around knowing that you and Norman were the only songwriters?'

McGinley took a thoughtful moment, letting out a breath, 'I suppose, it's kind of, for us in a way, going back to the very start of the band, in a funny kind of way. I also think as a band we've always... whenever we make a record, we kind of go back to the idea that, 'We'll go back into this little bubble and work on a record in our own little world'. And that's how we made our first record, before we had played any shows, before there was a band really. So, we always just kind of go back into that world of, you know, like we're starting all over again whenever we make a record. So, you know, we're not going to assume that because we had something before that people liked before, doesn't mean that they're going to like it again. So, it really is just about starting all over again.

"I mean in terms of when people ask, 'Oh, is it hard to write songs for the record?' or whatever, but it's like 'Well, I only wrote one or two songs'" he laughs, "It didn't feel that different, in terms of when you go in as a songwriter, you're in a time and space where you're completely self-absorbed and put yourself in a space where you can be self-indulgent, and in that space, you're not really thinking about anyone else, or even anyone else in the band. In terms of the song writing process, it might seem as if it allows people individually to go into themselves and see what's in there, you know? So, it's just like, 'Well, okay, yeah, we'll have some more songs', so to be honest, we hadn't really spent any time thinking about it in any big kind of way. We're the kind of people where we like to deal with what's in front of us and just kind of get on with it rather

“ The most interesting aspect of this record is the fact that there are two vocalists that switch from track to track. That's it.”

Imagine a before and after shot of a student who has just started their college course, and the same student a few years later starting their career - same person, just a little more mature.

There are shades of the past, and what may be their future, but the sound doesn't exactly marry at any point. With the discourse surrounding the album, this has turned out to be the most common complaint. Each track works as an individual piece, doing more than enough to justify its existence. The error only arises when placed in an album that it doesn't fit in, causing a mismatch of songs that jolt you to multiple different places. This is fairly apparent upon a listen - the album does noticeably jump from place to place. Where I would disagree is that the overall presentation isn't a cohesive one.

To me, Skeggs just sounds like summer. It's the band you shuffle while you're out in the sun, having a bottle with some friends. That is the essence of the band, and that hasn't gone away here. It isn't a complete separation from what they've done before, the sound is just more polished than what has come to be expected from them. Expectations differ from person to person of course, but for my money, this album fits perfectly as a piece of Skeggs' discography.

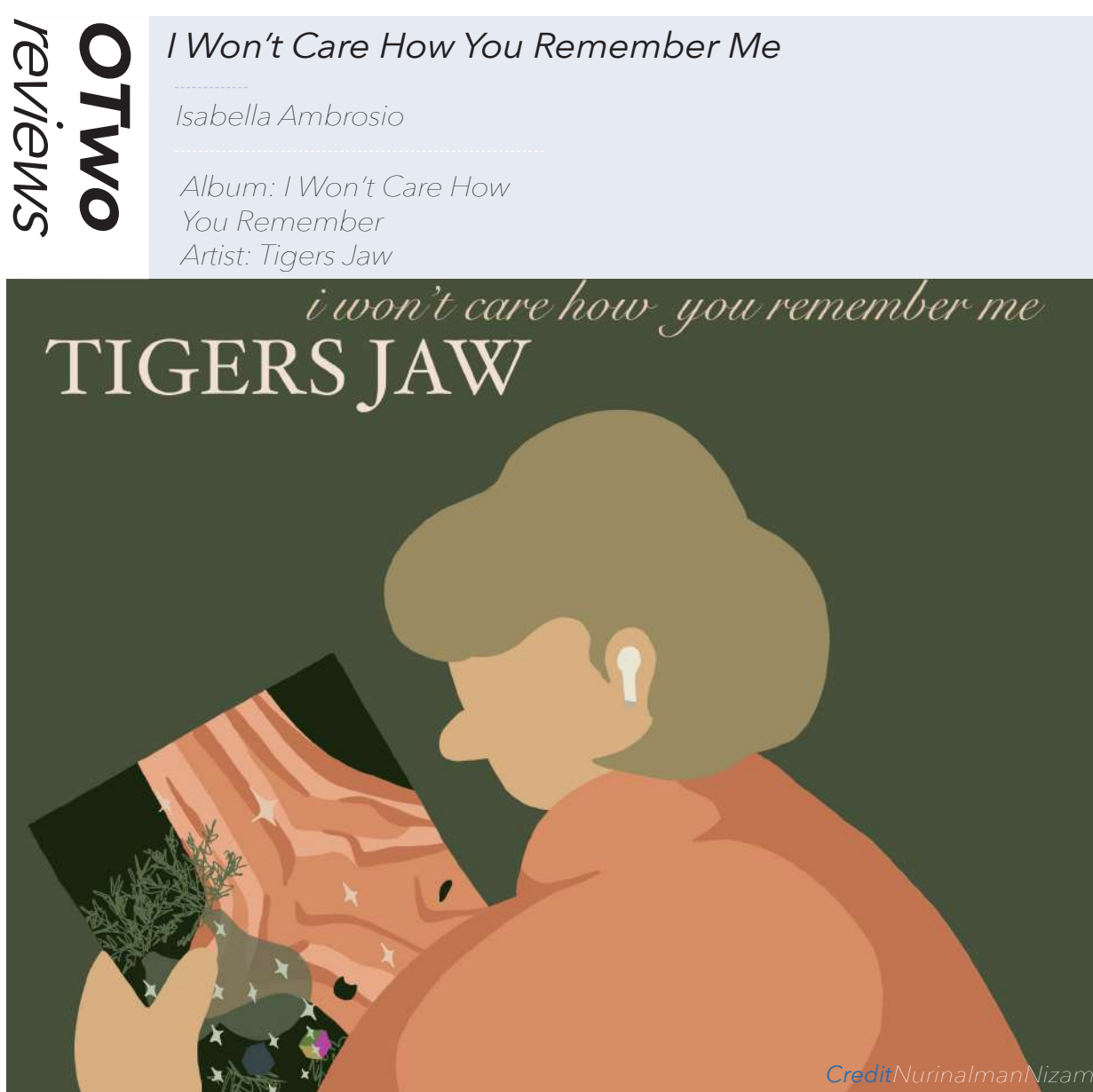


than conceptualising ourselves as a band, or who we've been or before, or what people are going to think. We try not to, when we do something, think of the band as being a concept... It's, 'Here we are' and we get on with it."

This led me to follow up by asking, 'Did you have any kind of conversations knowing that the dynamics had changed, or was that not really on your mind?' I start to notice he likes to take a moment and sigh before he answers a question,

"Well, in terms of interpersonal dynamics, they kind of change all the time and that's something you deal with. And it's something that we kind of never talk about," he laughs at this, "You know? As people, we don't really examine ourselves in the whole of it, or whatever, we just deal with interpersonal dynamics that everyone deals with in their everyday lives as we're no different than anybody else. We don't kind of examine it ourselves. But a bit of difference along the way is a good thing. We've been through, I suppose, previous changes in the band, like Spinal Tap, have been through a few different drummers. And as any one-person change in a group of people being creative together makes a difference in the whole thing. But I think whenever you move through whatever kind of realities, you're not really thinking about what went before. You're kind of thinking of it more as what is now, you know? One person in the room makes a difference to everything."

This piqued my curiosity in whether or not the album had been recorded live, as he had mentioned how any one person can make a difference, and I was curious to see how those changes reflected throughout the music. "What we did is, we kind of set up in a room of things, and we played the songs live and we'll do some kind of vocals,



The one part of this album that truly struck me was the first track. The title track included Andy Hull from the Manchester Orchestra, and, for the first two minutes anyway, was an acoustic track. There are few albums that open with an acoustic, slow-paced song. You always walk into an album with the expectation that the first song is going to absolutely knock you off your feet with guitars or a catchy chorus. To me, the only redemption for this song was the bridge and the pick of tempo, along with Hull's incredible vocals.

As the album goes on, songs like 'Cat's Cradles' and 'Hesitation' feel average, at best. There's no true creativity to the song. It feels like it's almost a carbon copy of it, and every indie-alternative band that's currently on the market. They're playing it safe, and no true risks are being

“ The most interesting aspect of this record is the fact that there are two vocalists that switch from track to track. That's it.”

taken. 'New Detroit' simply feels like they desperately want to be The 1975. There's a shimmering glimpse of hope in 'Can't Wait Forever' - it's more tolerable than the rest of the tracks, and the last 30 seconds include an interesting guitar riff that captures more attention than the last 15 minutes of the record combined. 'Lemon Mouth' follows in the style of the second and third song on the record,

“ So, you know, we're not going to assume that because we had something before that people liked before, doesn't mean that they're going to like it again. So, it really just is about starting all over again.”

but it's never the final vocal", he said. "We do try to work with a bunch of musicians in the room, kind of working with each other rather than constructing building blocks. So, in the process of the record, some of it we didn't even rehearse or anything... And one morning someone asked, 'Well, what are we going to do?' And I responded with, 'Let's work on this idea, mate.' And I'll go in and kind of, half-sing, half-yodel this idea in the studio. And from there, I go, 'I think maybe the tempo is a bit like this,' and we'll start playing it and it starts to take shape.

"But we're trying not to control... no one is trying to be like Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys or see ourselves as like 'visionaries' or whatever. Like the person who wrote the song isn't going to tell everyone what to play... We're not going to tell Dave [McGowan] exactly what bassline to play, he'll come up with something. And Euros [Childs] will come up with some keyboards, and Norman [Blake] will come up with some guitar thing. We're not telling each other exactly what to do, but you kind of have to trust each other that the song is there from the songwriter, but in terms of everything that gets filled in, the personality of it all, comes from that contribution."

They were regularly name-checked by Kurt Cobain as 'the best band in the world', and Teenage Fanclub is still going strong with their changing songwriters and collaborative writing style. Their newest album, *Endless Arcade* is a beautiful representation of their strengths as individual songwriters and harmonious structuring of songs.

They were regularly name-checked by Kurt Cobain as 'the best band in the world', and Teenage Fanclub is still going strong with their changing songwriters and collaborative writing style. Their newest album, *Endless Arcade* is a beautiful representation of their strengths as individual songwriters and harmonious structuring of songs.



A Guide to Shopping Small and Sustainably with Irish Fashion Brands

Hannah Ryan Murphy

Support local has been the slogan for much of lockdown. Hannah Ryan Murphy has compiled a buying guide for shopping small, Irish fashion brands. From streetwear to underwear, she has it covered.

If the past year of lockdown has taught us anything, it is to shop local, and this applies to our clothes as well. Below is a non-exhaustive list of small Irish fashion-based businesses that make sustainability a priority.

STREETWEAR/LOUNGEWEAR

ELN

Founded in Northern Ireland, ELN aims to bring authenticity and personality back to streetwear. Far from being just another brand following trends, each sweatshirt, hoodie, t-shirt, beanie, tote bag and scrunchie is designed by founder Ellen Mooney, who ensures that every bit of her business is as sustainable and ethical as possible. The logos and designs on her clothing won't fade for a long time, and when they do, they're designed in such a way that they'll look retro rather than washed out.

Instagram: @by.eln Website: www.by-eln.com

All Things Fiona-Lily

Another Irish business that stands out from the crowd is All Things Fiona Lily. The brand is based on positivity and promoting mental health, selling accessories, books, stationery and self-care kits alongside sweatshirts and t-shirts. Fiona Lily handprints her uplifting designs and encouraging slogans onto clothing that she has saved from going to landfill. As a result, most of her pieces are unisex M, L or XL but are suitable for smaller sizes as they'll just look intentionally oversized.

Instagram: @allthingsfionally Website: www.allthingsfionally.com

Teddi Lounge

Comfortability and affordability are key to newly founded business, Teddi Lounge clothing. They sell sweatshirts and hoodies for both men and women with the aspiration of helping their customers create a calming atmosphere at home. Aiming to be as sustainable as possible, each piece is manufactured in a green warehouse from between 85%-100% organic cotton and the remainder from recycled polyester. Their pieces are then embroidered and printed in Dublin. Even their packaging is sourced from other small Irish businesses!

Instagram: @teddilounge Website: @www.teddilounge.com

WARM CLOTHES

Lil Bits

Lil Bits sells fleeces, cardigans, corset tops, two-piece outfits, bags and hats that are all handmade by college student Susie. Having drops every two weeks, with premade items or slots for the customer to choose their own colours/designs, Lil Bits' pieces tend to sell out within minutes. With the variety of colours and patterns available, an item from Lil Bits is truly unique.

Instagram: @lil_bits Website: www.lilbitsbysusie.com

Geansai

This Dublin-based business offers classic handmade knitwear such as the aptly named 'granddaddy cardigan', jumpers and hats. Oversized and cosy, each item of clothing is made to order and available in different colours. With such thick wool, you'll be kept warm throughout the freezing Irish winters (and let's be real, probably cold Irish summers as well) with a Geansai piece.

Instagram: @geansai.official Website: Coming soon

TOPS

Lazy Banana

Alongside accessories, Lazy Banana creates light patchwork tops made from recycled fabric scraps, ensuring that nothing is wasted. Their items are one-of-a-kind and have a variety of patterns and colours even within the one item, with custom options also available. Unique and ethically made, you cannot go wrong.

Instagram: @lazy_banana_shop Website: www.depoc.com/lazybanana

ÉADAÍ AS GAELIGE

Gaeilghheansaí

A business founded in UCD, Gaeilghheansaí aims to promote the Irish language through sustainably produced

sweatshirts, t-shirts and hats in a variety of colours. Beginning with just one slogan, "Tá Gaelige Agam", they have now expanded to offer a number of different phrases, including 'Bí Brodúil', produced for Pride month, and even a Christmas edition!

Instagram: @gaeilghheansaí Website: www.gaeilghheansaí.com

Beanantees

As the name indicates, Beanantees sells sweatshirts, t-shirts and other accessories based on Irish language puns or short phrases. 'Dia Bitch' and 'Buzzáil' are amongst the choices available, with a bunch of different colours to choose from. Ensuring their business has an ethical supply chain is of huge importance to Beanantees owners Lana and Ciara, and through selling their products they've raised over €10,000 for LGBTQ+ and women-focused charities and organisations around Ireland.

Instagram: @beanantees Website: www.beanantees.com

Hoopla Focal

Born in Dublin, this small business hand-embroiders phrases as Gaelige onto sustainably produced sweatshirts and bags, while also selling bespoke items if you have a particular word or phrase you want. Every piece is made to order from 100% recyclable materials, with even the packaging being biodegradable.

Instagram: @hooplafocal Website: www.hooplafocal.com

LUXURY CLOTHING

Aoife Ireland

This slow-fashion brand creates unique clothing aimed to empower women. From blouses and suits to tops and dresses, Aoife McNamara's signature features such as puff sleeves and shoulder pads make for a vibrant collection fit for a woman of any age. Aoife also offers one-to-one consultations in her studio in Adare where you will be measured and advised by a senior stylist before deciding to purchase one of her pieces.

Instagram: @aoife_ireland Website: www.aoifeireland.com

Hope MacAulay

Handmade by a team of knitters and seamstresses in Northern Ireland, Hope MacAulay's chunky knitwear stands out from the crowd. Woollen cardigans, jumpers, sweater vests and crop tops alongside patterned suits and graphic tees encompass MacAulay's colourful collection, which has appeared in magazines such as Vogue and Vanity Fair

Instagram: @hope.macaulay Website: www.hopemacaulay.com

Lulabelle The Label

This one-woman operation offers Bridgerton-esque corsets, blouses and the occasional trouser, all made to order using locally sourced vintage/deadstock fabric to ensure sustainability. Some of these romantic-style designs are premade but custom orders are also available, and every piece is tailored exactly to the buyer.

Instagram: @lulabelle_the_label Website: www.lulabellethelabel.com

OTHER BITZ

Carousel

Designed in Ireland and ethically made in India, Carousel's premise is truly different: they offer vintage-inspired new clothing, but with a modern twist. They have colourful dresses, skirts, tops, jumpers and cardigans as well as similarly styled accessories, so whether you're looking for something from the 1940s or with a signature 60s flare, Carousel has a number of options with patterns that range from hot air balloons to dandelions.

Instagram: @ilovecarousel Website: www.ilovecarousel.com

Sewing Wild Seams

You might think underwear is the one thing you'll always have to go to Penneys for, but think again! Sewing Wild Seams offer handmade, sustainable underwear made to order based on your measurements. They cater for up to 60" bust and up to 74" hips, with a variety of patterns to choose from in both briefs and bralettes. Comfort is of huge importance to this small business, so all of their bras are underwire-free while still giving support.

Instagram: @sewingwildseams Website: www.sewingwildseams.com

OTwo Interviews

Aisling Byrne

Ellie McCreanor

Ellie McCreanor interviews Aisling Byrne the founder of the app Nuw that allows you to borrow and swap clothes in your local area.

Beginning in Ireland as a swap shop in the basement of Wigwam, the app is now available in Ireland and the UK and has grown exponentially in the past year. Here is how it all came to be.

Apps for reselling clothes have grown in popularity over the past few years. People are turning to platforms such as Depop and Vinted for not only unique or vintage clothing, but also for more affordable options. With the growth in popularity of secondhand fashion, there has been a rise in borrowing and swapping platforms as well. Nuw being among them. In an interview with their founder, Aisling Byrne, we talked all things secondhand, borrowing and swapping.

In her own words, Aisling described Nuw as "an app to swap preloved fashion, it's all about breathing new life into the clothes that already exist. Our thought process is that there are so many clothes out there that aren't getting enough love and we're all individually buying more clothes first hand and that's where the societal and environmental impacts come from. If we can recirculate what we already have we extend the life-cycle of those clothes and still enjoy fashion... How the platform works is any pieces in your wardrobe that you are ready to part with, you can upload them to the platform. For each item you get a token and then you can use these tokens as your currency on the platform to take items that are new to you." The tokens can be used for both borrowing and swapping. The swap section was something that had been on the cards for a while for Nuw. However, lockdown last March pushed them to make it a reality and they are an excellent example of a company who have thrived and survived in a truly unpredictable climate for businesses. Nuw has grown by a whopping 2000% in the past 6 months all because of swapping.

Aisling travelled to India in 2013 as part of the Suas programme. This trip is what pushed her to try and help change fashion to become a more circular industry. Before going she was "so into fast fashion, I didn't know it was fast fashion, I just went to Zara like every weekend when

“ We then want it to be upcycled, recycled, downcycled so that it can keep going, so that it's eventually able to go into the ground and be designed at the beginning in such a way that it can actually biodegrade. ”

we were going out...” However, when she got there, her eyes were opened to the realities of the fashion industry. “The starkest thing for me was at the start of going to India I heard that in Delhi that there's like this massive market where they where they sell all the clothes that don't make it over to Europe and the states because they might have a button missing or something tiny is wrong with it. And I was like this is so exciting I'm going to get a whole new wardrobe for next year and it's going to be great and so cheap. Fast forward to meeting the people, seeing the pollution, understanding the really ingrained social issues and the environmental issues that are involved in fashion...I'd never felt so sick in my life. I just couldn't believe that I'd never thought of the life of clothes before they hit the shops...I was so angry that it wasn't something we were taught in school...there's nothing luxurious about children making clothes.”

Aisling and her friend Ali, another founder of Nuw, had both travelled India that summer and had returned with the same change in their relationship with fashion. They wanted to make a change, and that resulted in the inception of Nuw. “We wanted to be able to recirculate

clothes and we could see that the solution was actually something we were already doing by sharing with friends.” They realised that “you had to have an alternative [to fast fashion] that was accessible...We started with a swap shop in the basement of Wigwam...we started to see that actually people really like this idea...we realised that technology was the way to be able to scale this and to reach the kind of impact that we wanted to reach” And so Nuw was born.

Sustainable fashion has really exploded in the past few years and now occupies its own space in the fashion industry. We asked Aisling what it was like starting a sustainable fashion business back in 2018 when it really wasn't in the mainstream. “At that time it was really hard. No one really got the concept of why clothes were polluting... At the beginning we probably kept the focus too much on sustainability and less about how fun this is 'cause you need the alternative to be just as fun, just as affordable and the outcomes to be pretty similar to fast fashion in order for it to change. There was two challenges in that, there was getting mass market adoption and then getting investors to buy in and fund it...Overtime, people became more open to swapping because thrifting became the trend... so that's been really good for us.”

It can seem quite daunting to make the jump from the accessible, fast paced world of fast fashion into the world of second hand and sustainable fashion where not everything is a click or a shopping spree away. When asked what her ideal sustainable fashion industry would look like Aisling said, “It's easy to imagine it if you think of the lifecycle of a person. We hope to be made with and born out of love. That we have a range of different experiences and by the end of it we feel that we have fulfilled what it was that we wanted during life. We then die and go back into the ground. And then we come back as resources... so it's like the circle of life. Our clothes shouldn't be any different from that because they come from natural resources so they are just a part of nature, they just get changed depending on how we structure and build them. So, we want the lifecycle of a piece of clothing to essentially come across in the same way as any of our lives. So we want it to be made with love, and respect and nature in its intended capacity. We want it to fulfill its entire lifecycle and to be worn as much as possible. We then want it to be upcycled, recycled, downcycled so that it can keep going, so that it's eventually able to go into the ground and be designed at the beginning in such a way that it can actually biodegrade.”

Aisling and her colleagues have an amazing platform and the app is downloadable today. They have an upcoming swap event with Fashion Revolution which involves lots of amazing brands and all details are available on their Instagram @wearenuw. Their plans for the future involve expanding their business globally to have a global community of swappers. If Nuw can grow by 2000% in a pandemic, I can't wait to see what the future holds for them.

Above Credit PhotographyCredit XPLUSX collective

ModelsSara O'Donovan, Martha McLoughlin, Erica Collins, Connor Courtney, Charlie Blue Whelan

StylistXPLUSX collective

ReversibleTartanLooks // Ralph Lauren reworked shirt two piece // Dillon Quinn Orange hand knitted texture jumper // Erica Collins Black 'Fatal Error' jumper // Oversized spray paint, hand embroidered jumper // Butterfly overlocked rework corset // Reworked black + neon futuristic two piece // Martha McLoughlin Hand-painted / Screenprinted pants // Olivia Murphy

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film & tv

Why are some films so bad they're good?

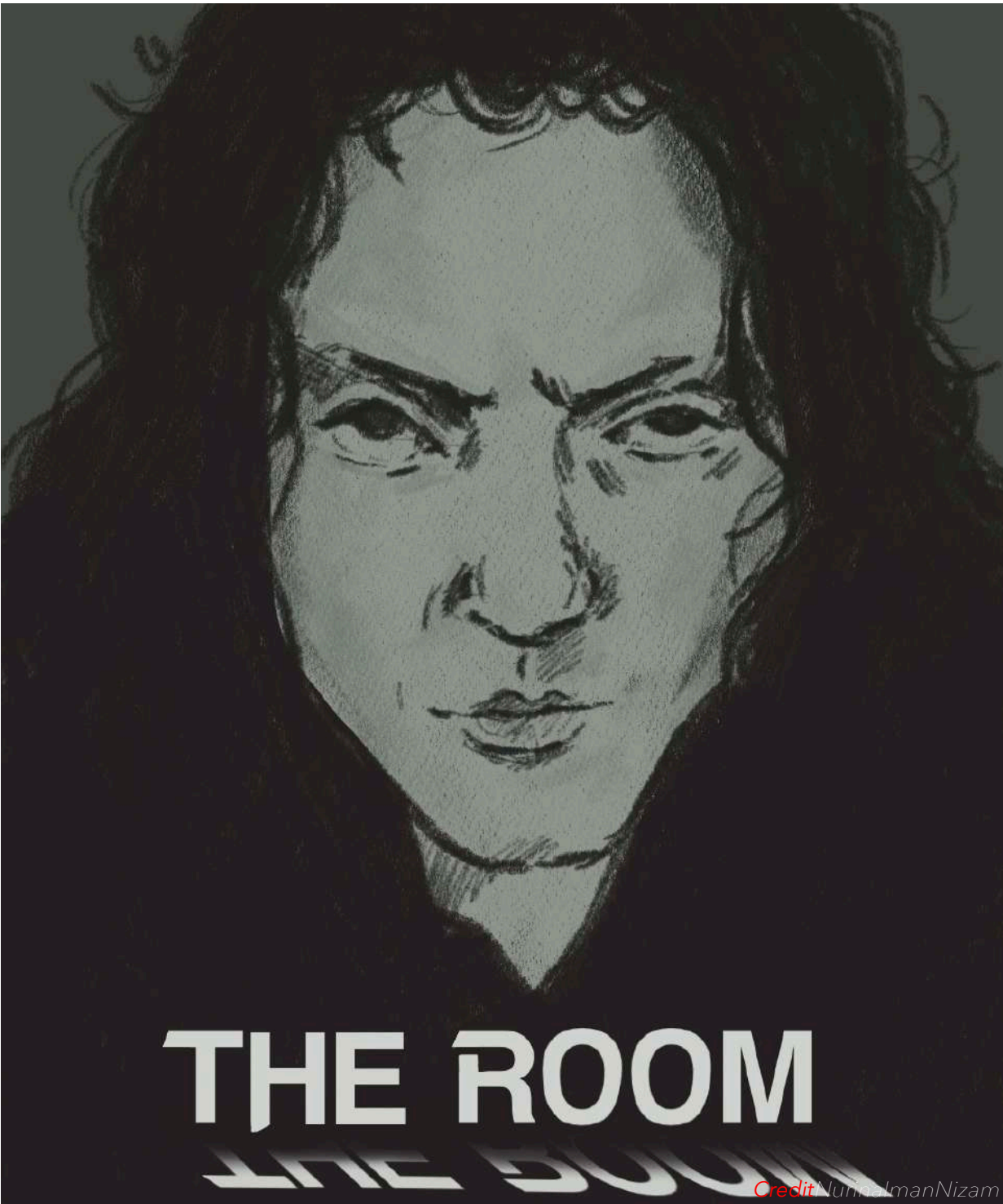
Liam Ferguson

Liam Ferguson looks into the "so bad they're good" film phenomenon

The medium of film is often used as a place to lose yourself in, becoming absorbed in compelling worlds and characters to feel something on a deep and emotional level. Although, sometimes all that's needed is some absolute schlock to dig into and laugh at. The concept of a film being "so bad it's good" is, admittedly, a strange one, yet it is something most people would understand. There are plenty of real merits to watching movies that are objectively garbage but can still hold a welcome place in your heart. Of course, some movies are just bad without any point of redemption but a special few are able to be so worthy of ridicule that they exist to be laughed at.

Firstly, films that are bad but in a funny way are infinitely more entertaining than purely mediocre and overtly boring ones. Taking two films from similar lBs for example, *Batman V Superman* (2016) is a miserable and drawn-out slog while *Batman & Robin* (1997) is hilarious for all the wrong reasons. I can appreciate George Clooney waving around a Bat-credit card and Arnold Schwarzenegger making ice puns much more than Zack Snyder trying to frame Superman as Jesus for three hours. *Batman & Robin* managed to single-handedly kill Batman movies for a few years and that is extremely funny, and when you watch the movie in hindsight, you can see why and laugh at almost every part of it. Ultimately, I won't be checking my phone every ten minutes if what's on-screen in front of me is making me cackle at how awful it is and that takes a special blend of bizarre choices behind the scenes to craft.

That being said, it takes a certain level of almost self-parody in order to create a movie that can fit into the moniker of being so bad it's good. Anyone can string together a terrible and incoherent mess of a film on purpose but there's a certain level of charm to something that clearly is as bad as it is on accident. For example, the sheer insanity of *Birdemic: Shock & Terror* (2010) is a poster child for something uniquely abhorrent, but in a way that makes you smile. Its sequel, however, tries too hard to be bad on purpose and replicate the feeling of the first one but cannot stick the landing as a result of it being nearly impossible to catch lightning in a bottle like that twice. In



order for a film to go from just bad to so bad it's good, there needs to be an underlying sense of irony within it. Tommy Wiseau is well known for thinking he was making a masterpiece with *The Room* (2003) and because of that, the dumpster fire of a movie is discussed frequently and has been seen by millions. It is basically the go-to movie that is so bad it's good and has managed to stay relevant, even gaining an Oscar-nominated adaptation of the story about how it was made and that is in large

part due to how much it now feels like a parody of itself.

On top of this, there's a very simple reason that movies that are so bad they're good are so popular; people love to laugh. Terrible but enjoyable films make for easy viewings with friends that you can all sit around and jeer at. There's a reason you can find a million different drinking games for *The Room* but you would be hard-pressed to find one for, say, *Good Time* (2017.) These delightfully

dismal pieces of cinema make for great communal viewing experiences that make for easy, laid back events.

Overall, certain films manage to transcend popular culture and become so bad they're good because they accidentally strike a perfect balance. It is easy to see why they are so popular and hold a distinctive place within the circle of film criticism and viewership.

The je ne sais quoi of a "so bad it's good" film is earnestness

Our favourite 'bad' films

Following on from Liam Ferguson's explainer on the phenomenon, Aoife, Odin, Andy and Nathan pay homage to their favourite movies that are so bad they're good.

Grown Ups

Aoife Rooney

The 2010 comedy 'classic' *Grown Ups* has endured the past ten years as one of Adam Sandler's most successful projects. His production company is also responsible for *Jack and Jill*, which really puts this film in perspective. It ticks all the boxes for an easy-to-watch summer flick. While you have to admit the main redeeming factor that makes this film in any way palatable is the soundtrack, it does have some real moments of heart, albeit well hidden amongst the Sandler school of comedy's gags.

The story itself is endearing, despite its 11% rating on Rotten Tomatoes. It very blatantly shows character development that is required for the film's resolution and caters to the viewer who doesn't want a challenge. In an age where movies are watched with a phone-in-hand, this is a really good option. This is the film I put on while choosing what to actually watch, like a white noise that facilitates thinking.

If you've never seen it, give it a chance, there may or may not be a sequel. To epitomise my thoughts on the film, I present the top-rated IMDb review for consideration: "I'VE SEEN A LOT WORSE."

Howling II: Your Sister is a Werewolf

Odin O'Sullivan

Ever since I was seventeen a few of my friends and I have run a film night we affectionately refer to as "Shitty Movie Club." At SMC we usually handpick two or three films with "so bad it's good" credentials or potential as our evening program, drink some beer and get ready to laugh.

By this point we must have watched over 100 "shitty" movies, but one will always reign supreme in my mind. *Howling II: Your Sister is a Werewolf* also known as *Sterba: Werewolf Bitch* is one of the greatest bad movies I have ever watched. Featuring Sir Christopher Lee as a monster hunter really giving his all alongside some of the very worst actors I have ever seen on screen, the film is truly hilarious. Watching Lee deliver lines like "I saw her sent upon a hairy beast and she held forth a golden chalice full of the fitness of fornications" with his trademark gravitas is a pleasure I never knew I desired until I saw it. To Lee's credit, he appears to take it incredibly seriously, and that seriousness is what makes it so funny.

Seek it out if you can, you won't be disappointed.

Daredevil

Andrew Nolan

Daredevil (2003) epitomises much of what happens when a director not named Sam Raimi tries to make a cheesy superhero flick.

To match the main character's blindness, the movie is rife with visual and auditory effects and, while the effort is appreciated, they don't really land all too well. They're almost a missed opportunity – the effects could have added something fresh to the tired superhero experience, but instead, leave a jarring impression on the viewer.

The use of directing methods like *in media res* just goes to highlight that, while they did at least try something, it's often the charm, or lack thereof, that makes or breaks these movies.

Two points do justify a watch though. Firstly, Colin Farrell's performance as Bullseye is outstanding – he literally could not care less if he tried. Chewing the scenery in every shot he's in, he is a breath of life in an otherwise lifeless production. Secondly, the soundtrack. The use of *Salva, Nickelback* and *D'Angelo* ages the movie like milk, and the try-hard, out-of-place edgy backdrop creates one of the most unintentionally hilarious watching experiences you'll ever have. Seriously, the 'Bring me to Life' scene kills me every time, without fail.

Someone once said that the world would be a better place if the first Star Wars had bombed at the box office and instead of spawning a myriad of sequels, spin-offs, video games, and tie-ins, became a cult hit recognised for what it was; a sort of schlocky low budget film about space wizards. Instead, Star Wars is treated like some sacred text handed down from on high to the prophet George Lucas to tell us all that it is okay to still base your personality around something you enjoyed in childhood. We have to watch grown adults get furious at a director for attempting to do something different with the series to the point that the most interesting changes that are made get taken out again in the following movie, or watch vicious online pile-ons for an Asian actress daring to not conform exactly to what the fans think she should. It's insane - and deeply overrated.

There was a brief period after the prequels were released in which culture washed its hands of *Star Wars* except for in a nostalgic sense. I remember the prequels; I was a child and I thought they were great (if confusing) but in reality, they are not very good films. Messy, confusing, laden with unexplained politics and terrible CGI, they are a mess (if an enjoyable re-watch for humour's sake). Now, there's nothing wrong with that and I think they have their merits and are enjoyable to watch, but a certain amount of Star Wars fans insist that they are not only good films, but they are the world's greatest art, genius flowing from the third eye of daddy Lucas. The sequel trilogy



over under rated
Star Wars

Odin O'Sullivan

Odin thinks Star Wars is over-rated, and he's right!!!

Should we settle for representation?

Nicola Kenny

Nicola Kenny asks if representation of minority groups is the best we can hope for? What more needs to be done in film and television?

Beyond Representation is a project that aims to champion women of colour breaking new grounds in Irish media, arts, and business through events, performances, and social media. Ola Majekodunmi is a broadcaster and multi-talented creative who, along with her cousin Jess Majekodunmi, and fellow broadcaster and friend Zainab Boladale, founded Beyond Representation in 2019.

In conversation with O'Two, Majekodunmi tells me about the initiative: "We wanted to put [Beyond Representation] together as we felt there was a lack of representation of women of colour in Ireland." She explains, "We felt like there was so many [of these women] doing such amazing things but not getting the platform to showcase that."

Describing the experience of coming together at their first event in 2019, Majekodunmi reflects on the occasion of gathering and hearing everyone's stories. "In the Irish context..." she explains, "I don't think we always get a chance to have those discussions. [...] If organisations aren't going to do it, you might as well do it yourself and showcase [those talents] and then get their attention," she tells me. Majekodunmi points out that while everyone is listening now in the wake of the Black Lives Matter Movement, Beyond Representation focused on these issues well before that. "It was such as a special time, and it was so heart-warming as well", she says.

In more recent times, critical points have been brought forward within the industry by people such as Dr Zélie Asava, who presented her talk *Diverse Narratives* as part of the Irish Film Institute (IFI) Spotlight in July 2020. At this event, Dr Asava recognised how Ireland is today home to significant, "multiracial communities, many of whom are citizens." While drawing on various examples, she identified how Irish Cinema has often portrayed non-white citizens and presented them as foreigners. Additionally, she noted the use of negative tropes and stereotypes in the Irish Screen Industries and the framing of ethnic communities as "newcomers



[Irish] shores" and "not as one of us." Dr Asava also considered how minority characters have often been used in Irish media as metonyms for social disadvantage.

Outlining the negative consequences of misrepresentative screen culture, Dr Asava reflected on the experiences of microaggression as well as covert and overt racism within Irish society. "Leading figures such as the Lord Mayor of Dublin (Hazel Chu) [have been] referred to as migrants, referring to the idea that Irishness can only ever be white", she described.

According to the most recent census carried out in 2016, nearly 10% of the Irish population is constituted by Traveller, Black or Asian ethnicities. However, as evident at last year's IFIA awards, those voices and faces are often absent in front of and behind Irish television and cinema screens. Projects such as Beyond Representation highlight how diverse talent and stories are abundant in Ireland. Equally, there is a public demand for them. Yet, it appears that issues of recognition, advancement and success continue.

Several structural changes have taken place in recent times. RTE has developed its strategy (2018-2022) in

which it states a "responsibility to represent and reflect the experiences and perspectives of all the people of Ireland". Additionally, Screen Ireland have broadly acknowledged a need to enhance the greater diversity of Irish screen talent "whether understood in terms of ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation." However, crucially there is no statistical data available in the industry in Ireland as a whole, and Screen Ireland does not monitor race or ethnicity. In 2019 critical changes were introduced to section 481, the Irish tax incentive for the creative media industries, aiming to address inequality issues. Productions must now provide details on gender equality and diversity and inclusion initiatives as part of their work.

Speaking with O'Two, Dr Asava, who is also a UCD Alumnus, said, "I think there remains significant problems in terms of both underrepresentation and misrepresentation [of ethnic communities]." She describes how while "racial/ethnic on-screen representation has improved in recent years, the diversity of the crews behind these productions has not."

"The introduction of Section 481 is a very positive step, but we need to see employment practices shift at all

levels of the industry to create meaningful change," says Dr Asava. "Recent years have seen a plethora of reports on diversity in the screen industries globally, and each state that the only way to create real change in terms of toxic stereotypes and tropes is to address the underrepresentation of minority groups in the creative teams behind film and television productions" she explains.

She describes how "for example, last year's BFI report on racial inequality showed that the introduction of Diversity Standards (since adopted by the Academy) has produced significant gains." Nevertheless, she acknowledges that "much more is needed to address the embeddedness of structural racism and to respond to the complexities of the sector."

Speaking about recent developments in the industry, Majekodunmi points out that while "there has been a good mix of contributors coming on to talk about different topics, it's usually about racism. [People] are noticing different talents from minority backgrounds," she says, "but there's obviously still a lot of progress to make."

"Growing up and watching RTE, it would always be a surprise to see someone of colour on," she recalls. "I think when we get to the point when it's no longer a shock when people of colour are on screen, that's when we know we've done well."

She explains how "we need to go beyond [representing different groups] and to realise that just because people are black doesn't mean they want to talk about race all the time. It's about realising that people are versatile and they have more to them. For me, I feel like I struggle sometimes because I am so passionate about identity, [but] I don't want people to think that's the only thing I talk about."

"Sometimes it does feel like you are shouting, and you know that they realise you're there, but they're not paying attention. It's really about going beyond that; I suppose it's just about more awareness." She tells me.

Majekodunmi also points out broader issues of diversity in the media industry. She describes how we also need "to see more people with disabilities [as well as] more women on air [...] so it's not just old white men on screen," she explains.

Reflecting on these conversations, it becomes clear that much more significant consideration needs to be given to see a more diverse and inclusive voice emerge on-screen and to empower people to tell their stories. We need to see greater visibility, advocacy, and engagement at all levels on and off-screen. These are Irish stories with which we can all identify, celebrate, and be inspired by. We will be all the better for them. See more from Beyond Representation on Twitter: @BRepresentation

See Dr Zélie Asava's talk "IFI Spotlight 2020: Diverse Narratives" on YouTube.

OTwo reviews

One Night in Miami

Odin O'Sullivan

Odin O'Sullivan reviews Regina King's directorial debut, *One Night in Miami*.

After a year of worldwide civil unrest, protests, and insurrections fighting against extensions of police power and the murder of Black people in the United States and beyond, a plethora of striking and important protest art was released across all mediums. Regina King's directorial debut *One Night in Miami* is a film in that tradition that reaches back into history to showcase how we can move forward.

Set on the 25th of February 1964, the film is a fictionalised account of a real night spent at the Hampton House by friends Malcolm X (Kingsley Ben-Adir), Cassius Clay (Eli Goree), Sam Cooke (Leslie Odom Jr.), and Jim Brown (Aldis Hodge) after Clay's surprise World Heavyweight title win over Sonny Liston. The imagined account of what they may have spoken about is dynamic and wide-reaching, set as it is, on the eve of huge change for the four protagonists and the struggle for civil rights and Black liberation. Malcolm X is about to break from the Nation of Islam (and spends poignant moments appearing to foresee his own murder), Cassius Clay is about to convert to Islam and be reborn as Muhammad Ali, Sam Cooke is about to record and release a defining record of the civil rights era "A Change is Gonna Come" before his untimely death, and Jim Browne is about to quit the NFL to become an actor. The film's imagined account situates this evening as a catalyst for these now-iconic developments, the discussions had by the four men

covering the reasoning behind these choices, different approaches to Black liberation, interpersonal conflicts, as well as many others exemplary moments of insight into these characterisations of some of the 20th centuries most iconic Black figures.

Written originally as a play by Kemp Powers before being adapted to the screen, the film retains some of that theatrical feeling. Most of the action takes place in one motel room, with few excursions to the roof, phone booth, liquor store, and car. Despite this, the film does not feel like a filmed play and all the derisive connotations that term holds. The cinematography is dynamic, the colours in the room, the production design, and the costuming all create a beautiful and period-correct aesthetic. The blocking and pairing off of characters in different parts of the small room at different times does make it recognizable as having been adapted from a play, but



the camera movement provides us with a certain intimacy unachievable in a play.

Despite *On Night in Miami*'s 1964 setting, it is frighteningly contemporary. Jim Brown's assertion to Clay that, to the white sports fan, "we're all just gladiators" is stark in light of the events of the past few years. The young Black men only to drop them when too injured to continue playing. This insight is even more devastating having seen in the opening of the film an old family friend of Brown's tells him how proud he is of him and his football career before refusing to let him in the house due to his race. Both Aldis Hodge and Eli Goree are excellent as Brown and Clay but where the performances really shine is during the vicious ideological disputes between Leslie Odom Jr.'s Sam Cooke and Kingsley Ben-Adir's Malcolm X. Malcolm sees Cooke's financial success as a result of "sitting on the fence" and pandering to white audiences, while Cooke sees financial freedom as the only legitimate freedom for Black people in America. After a particularly stinging bar and forth between the two Cooke storms out. Clay follows him and in the company of only Brown, Malcolm X breaks down. The scene is as passionate as any that "there's no room to be on the fence anymore... Black people are dying in the streets every day!" is heartbreaking in its continued relevance.

One Night in Miami is a triumph for all involved and an excellent directorial debut from King. It currently stands nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Original Song at the Oscars, and Leslie Odom Jr is nominated for Best Supporting Actor, something which he roundly deserves. Beyond award nominations aside, it is a film which is well worth watching, for its presentation of a revolutionary cultural moment, for its 'too amazing to be true' collection of four icons in one room, and for its beautiful design, visuals, and performances. Not one actor feels like they're doing an impression, or pulling from hackneyed phrases of traits of the real man. They embody these figures each in their own way. Ben-Adir's Malcolm X is particularly well done, considering both the defining performance of Denzel Washington almost 30 years' previous, and the larger than life persona of X himself. The film is currently on Amazon Prime. I should I wish I had been able to see it in the cinema, this film deserves to be seen regardless of the size of the screen.

Despite On Night in Miami's 1964 setting it is frighteningly contemporary.

OTwo reviews

Ginny and Georgia

Robyn Murphy

Robyn Murphy Reviews the popular new Netflix hit *Ginny and Georgia*, which is entertaining but unsure of its audience.

Since its Netflix release at the end of February 2021, *Ginny and Georgia* has been the subject of much internet chatter. While the series has been praised for its predominantly female cast and crew and its refusal to shy away from taboo topics, it has also been subject to some criticism. The most prominent of this criticism has been from Taylor Swift who called out the show, its writers and Netflix for making a "sexist" joke about her dating history. As a whole, the series is enjoyable and entertaining, and there is certainly enough action and plot to keep you gripped for ten episodes, but it is not without its failings. Arguably as a result of the creator's desire to appeal to the widest audience possible, the series feels unsure as to who its target demographic is. As well as this, in an effort to address as many social issues as possible, the series does not give these issues enough time to be examined properly and often forgets about them entirely.

The premise of the show is intriguing and has a lot of potential. Centred on a mixed-race fifteen-year-old girl, Ginny, her white thirty-year-old mother Georgia, and her younger brother, the show follows the family as they move to a new town following the suspicious and



The main struggle the series grapples with is trying to determine who exactly its audience is.

unexpected death of Georgia's wealthy husband. It is quickly established that the family has a history of running and starting over in new places, something which dates back to Georgia's own teenage years. The show follows the women as they adapt to their new town, and reveals the long-held secrets they endeavour to keep hidden. Featuring many twists and turns the series is entertaining, humorous and presents audiences with a compelling and impressive character in Georgia (Brienne Hovell), who has the art of manipulating situations for her benefit.

If you go into this series expecting a *Gilmore Girls*-esque feel-good, loving examination of mother-daughter relationships, you'll be sorely disappointed. Ginny and Georgia are as different as they come, and while there are a handful of heartfelt moments between them this certainly isn't the mother-daughter bonding storyline that you might expect.

The series makes an effort to address a variety of social issues and talking points - almost to its detriment. Whilst such open discussions and examinations of issues such as racial prejudice, self-harm, anxiety and therapy should

be celebrated in such a mainstream series, none of the topics are given adequate time or attention, and so it feels like the creators are trying to fit in as many social issues as is possible instead of choosing one or two to focus on in-depth. A scene in which Ginny is racially profiled by a shop manager is glossed over and never mentioned again once she has had a brief conversation with Georgia about it, and Ginny's concern for her brother Austin's anger issues is dropped when Georgia refuses to bring him to the therapist appointment Ginny had arranged. Were issues such as these examined in greater detail, the show could have been more impactful, but they don't resonate as much as they should because of how quickly they are forgotten about.

The main struggle the series grapples with is trying to determine who exactly its audience is. Focus and plotlines are split evenly between the mother and daughter duo, and both characters are so vastly different that they become alienating to other demographics. Teens might be able to relate to Ginny, and adults or parents with Georgia, but the show also strives to appeal to the 18-30-year-old demographic and doesn't sufficiently provide this cohort with anyone they can fully relate to. For me, I found Ginny's character to be insufferable, and whilst I admired Georgia for her quick wit and street-smarts I couldn't see a lot of myself in her character. The actions of Ginny and her friends, all of whom are meant to be high school sophomores, are unbelievable for their age bracket and had they been aged up by a couple of years I feel it would be easier for audiences to understand and relate to their actions and storylines.

In spite of some failings, the show as a whole is certainly an entertaining one, and I was hooked from the first episode. As the series developed, I found the adult characters to be far more interesting and impactful than the teens, likely as a result of the frequent flashbacks to Georgia's own teenage years which provide viewers with a greater understanding of her motivations and actions. What I enjoyed most about the show was the focus placed on female characters and storylines, something that I am happy to be seeing more of in film and television.

games

The Problem with Harry Potter: A Hogwarts Mystery

Liam Ferguson

Liam Ferguson takes a look at Harry Potter: a Hogwarts Mystery in light of J.K. Rowling's retconning of information, extreme views on LGBTQ people, and a new game in the works.

It has been two years since the release of the mobile game *Harry Potter: A Hogwarts Mystery* and its subsequent slamming by members of the games media. With *Avalanche Software's Hogwarts Legacy* slowly but surely rearing its head towards release, as it continues to be smeared with controversy it is time to wonder why we should even care about *Hogwarts Mystery* - or any game that results in J.K. Rowling gaining profits for that matter. In recent years, the *Harry Potter* IP has been one associated with its disgraced/controversial author thatwho should have simply have never insisted Twitter, and *Hogwarts Mystery* does not help its case. People are seemingly starting to realise that despite their childhood affection for the franchise, it is simply not worth supporting anymore now that Rowling has so overtly drawn her line in the sand regarding human rights. Regardless of this, *Hogwarts Mystery* was not a game worth caring about in the first place, and these comments from Rowling only cement the desire to ignore the mobile game entirely.

When *Hogwarts Mystery* launched on Android and iOS in April 2018, it was immediately met with harsh and justified criticism. The game lived up to almost every stereotype you would associate with the mobile gaming genre. There was an appalling amount of microtransactions hammered inside of it that made you wait, unable to play the game for hours on end unless you were willing to part with real money on the premium currency that

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If you're a die-hard Harry Potter stan, there is no shortage of great fanfiction to read instead of playing something that Rowling directly profits from.

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was set up. This premium currency, energy, is used to do practically everything within the game and frequently runs dry. When that happens, the game comes to a complete standstill as you have to either wait (for what could be hours) so it can replenish or break out the credit card and buy bundles of it. As a result of this, the game is basically pay-to-win and requires you to spend money if you do not want your immersion to be broken. The game is, at its core, a cash cow that uses predatory pay-to-win tactics in order to lull its audience into spending as much money as possible in the app store. There really is not much merit in caring about or supporting a product like that.

On top of this, releasing a game like this deals with a much larger audience than any books or movies. Gaming is a billion-dollar industry, and the fact that everyone has a phone makes this cash grab immediately accessible to many, many people. *Harry Potter* is ultimately a franchise aimed towards children and the developers behind *Hogwarts Mystery* are well aware that these same children will impatiently go towards their parents' credit cards. There is something inherently deplorable about cramming so many pay-to-win elements inside a children's game based on a beloved IP. Any kid can watch a *Harry Potter* movie on Netflix, look up the name of it in the app store and download this game to begin a descent into spending money on timesavers, and it is plain to see why that is wrong.

On a more positive note, the game seems to sit well from a lore perspective with most *Harry Potter* fans. The inclusion of actors from the films such as Maggie Smith's Professor McGonagall is a nice touch, and any praise directed towards the game is typically in regard to its story and how it influences and expands upon the universe as a whole. The game is still consistently updated and, microtransactions aside, appears to have been a huge hit with high download rates and a steady player base. The largest complaint stems from the fact that the player gets to pick what house they're a part of at the start of the game instead of being randomly sorted in true *Harry Potter* fashion, but that is a very minor gripe and makes sense for a videogame. That being said, if you're a die-hard *Harry Potter* stan there is no shortage of great fanfiction to read instead of playing something that J.K. Rowling directly profits from. In spite of it being a decent tale (if you're willing to put up with the grind or spending exorbitant amounts of money), in my opinion, the game is still not worth the effort of caring about.

Unlike most "separate the artist from the art" arguments, the separation of Rowling from the *Harry Potter* franchise is nearly impossible. For one, the fact that she is alive and still actively profiting from anything to come from it means a ticket to *Fantastic Beasts* or the purchase of energy in *Hogwarts Mystery* adds to her wealth. The *Harry Potter* franchise is unabashedly her vision and hers alone, there is no separation. She repeatedly retcons matters after the fact, whether it be the backhanded inclusion of more diverse characters such as a claim that Hermione was always envisioned as a black woman, or a comment on how wizards used to defecate on the floor of *Hogwarts*. It's been made abundantly clear that she did not have that coherent of a vision when crafting the universe, and with every retcon, she digs herself into a deeper hole as to how the wizarding world is seen. Another thing she has made very clear are her radical feminist views, specifically in regard to how she is a trans-exclusionary radical feminist (TERF) her views on transgender people's rights. Rowling has publicly doubled down on harmful and dangerous beliefs about transgender people, specifically women, publishing incredibly troubling rhetoric about how they should not be in the same bathrooms as cis o police trans womens' right to use the same bathroom as cis women, among many other comments. While some former *Harry Potter* stars have come out against her views, urging people to not let her ruin these stories for them, I believe it really has come to a breaking point. There truly is not much use in trying to defend her or continue to fund a franchise that is so deeply rooted in her specific vision and this microtransaction riddled mobile game falls into that bracket.

Ultimately, pop culture is moving on from the wizarding world as a result of remarks from the original author and mediocre spin-offs. In regard to gaming, the future for *Harry Potter* also looks quite grim. The aforementioned *Hogwarts Legacy* has already been drawn into controversy after it was revealed to be helmed by a known supporter

would go on to become the next Andy Murray. Playing tennis against my already-better cousins was maddening. You could practically see the steam coming out from my ears. I played for hours by myself just to get better against the generic premade Miis. From this practice, I then played against my friends, and eventually went on to even defeat my dad. It took a lot of patience, and commitment, but one dodgy controller later, I was ready for the next lesson: baseball.

I always refused to call it that: it was rounders. Nevertheless, I was determined to learn how to win. It took me ages to get the hang of using a Wiimote in place of a bat. I didn't have the vocabulary to express it at the time, but the number of times I "missed" now drum up a few words I probably shouldn't put to print. In the end, after the controller had slipped out of my hands more than once, I had a long and illustrious career as the best batter for my team of Miis - a record of hundreds of home runs, and over 30 misses. I had learned the way of *Wii Sports* rounders and had become better aware of my surroundings.

Bowling was the next challenge. Too many controllers were thrown at the telly, as I refused to use the safety straps. I wasn't about that life. Most of the near misses at my telly were down to the lack of strap. Most, but not all. Other times it followed a loss when the bowling ball went askew and didn't land me a strike. I trained under the random Mii that was assigned to me. She was wise beyond her years and taught me how to not throw the controller at my telly in a desperate attempt to get a strike.

Bowling was followed by golf. I trained under... I'm going to be honest, I can't remember who taught me golf: so let's just imagine a really cool training montage. My Mii strutted up to the green in what I can only describe as a clown costume. Using my skills from rounders and bowling, I knew what I had to do. I failed miserably, and my first swing put the ball about 5 meters in front of me. I wanted to cry. I restarted the game because I



of gamergate. Many were already set on boycotting the game because of what Rowling's views represent, but this point resulted in the popular forum ResetEra banning all threads regarding what should be a major and hotly anticipated AAA release. But for now, *Hogwarts Mystery* almost perfectly summarises what *Harry Potter* has become as a whole; a dressed-up but insidious marketing play with a few good ideas to string itself together.

wasn't having that as my first shot of the game. When I started again I got a good 50 meters between me and the starting position. Golf was by far the most boring of the sports, but by the time I challenged my friends, I was probably better than Rory McIlroy himself.

The last sport I needed to perfect my technique in was boxing. I was drained of energy, I had been broken down by the other trainers, only to be met with the strongest, most fierce and scary trainer of all: Matt.

The look in his eyes frightened me to my core. The man looked like he'd seen horrible, horrible things. His voice didn't match the man that stood before me, with no arms or legs. "RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT" he'd shout optimistically. I felt unsafe, I felt like he was teaching me a lesson far beyond my abilities. I punched so hard out of fear that I dislocated my shoulder. The controller slipped out of my hand, and I struck Matt straight in the face. I kicked the controllers across the room and yelped in pain. He didn't even flinch, he was a God. I got up, picked up my controllers, and continued cautiously. Nothing happened. Without saying anything about it, Matt had taught me fear was something I controlled, and that the only thing to fear was fear itself.

I was ready.

The screen turned black, and I heard Matt's voice. The sound of a bell dinged, and on the screen was a ripped shirtless Matt. I tried everything - dodging, weaving. But he was too fast and powerful. He beat the ever-living daylight's out of my Mii. He had won. I bounced the controller and Nunchuk so hard off the wall, it left a dent. When we moved out, the dent in the wall was still there. I felt angry I hadn't led in years as I touched it one last time, vowing that one day, I would annihilate him once and for all.

it is still an excellent device. As well as that, the device has massively improved over the course of its lifetime and continues to get better with every iteration. The phone is innovative and could lead to more game developers taking mobile gaming more seriously.

This doesn't mean we should forget about the flaws, though. Gaming on a phone or tablet has never been a good experience for anything other than traditional mobile games. The phone has impressive specs on the processor and graphics side, but the phone overall doesn't outperform flagships within the same price range. That's not the main issue with the device - the issue is why would you go out of your way to get a phone for gaming?

The ROG phone 5 as mentioned earlier, has non-expandable storage, which means you're pretty much stuck with what you buy. As well as that, a flagship with little-to-no water resistance is quite the rarity. Microsoft's partnership with Samsung has vastly improved gaming on the go, and with some devices, you get a free 3 months of Xbox Game Pass. So for less than the cost of the ROG phone 5, you could get a tablet with expandable storage, a controller and a games pass. It's not the best at what it does in comparison to consoles, or even some other phones and tablets, but so far it's been the closest to creating an all-in-one mobile device to serve not just as a phone, but as a daily driver for gamers.

Tech like this shouldn't be immediately shot down as not worthy of your money - this is an example of how tech companies are working for the interests of consumers and trying to innovate technology. The price is way too expensive for what you get if you're looking for a device for gaming, but it's clear that Asus is working towards better mobile gaming experiences, which means competition between companies that will lead to better developments in gaming technology.

OTwo reviews

Rage quit: Wii Sports

E. Keogh

E.Keogh relives the trials and triumphs of their glory days, when they were very nearly probably an elite sports athlete.

Wii Sports is the all-time ultimate challenge for any gamer. The *Wii* came out on November 19th, 2008, and was sold with a free game that no one could complete. Even as an adult, its final boss haunts my every waking moment.

Wii Sports' challenging nature played no small part in paving the way for all competitive esports. As someone who considers themselves a highly competitive casual gamer, *Wii Sports* puts the fear of God into me. I'm super duper good at games, by the way - I almost went pro a few years ago before I ruptured a ligament while trying to defeat the main boss of *Wii Sports*.

It all started when I was 10, and from then on, I would play until I developed calluses on my hands. From all the intense training, you know? I started with tennis, where I



The Asus ROG phone 5: What's the point?

E. Keogh

E.Keogh considers the pros and cons of the new ROG phone 5.

The Asus Republic Of Gamers (ROG) phone 5 dons some very impressive internals. Looking at the specifications of the phone, the Snapdragon 888 chip features twice the performance in gaming, battery life and CPU performance than that of the 845 chip. The standard model (expected to launch sometime in April) has 128GB of non-expandable storage and 8GB of ram. The more powerful variant comes with 256GB of storage and 12-16GB of ram. At the time of writing, the only way to buy the product when it becomes available is directly from the Asus website. The 256GB memory with 16GB of ram will retail for £879, approximately €1056. In terms of what you get for your money, the overall picture is not terrible. While other models do not touch the gaming capabilities it includes, in terms of things such as camera quality, the iPhone and Galaxy offerings have it beaten.

The phone aims to provide a powerful and attractive device to serve as an on-the-go solution for gamers. Although it does tote an expensive price tag, the phone does seem to serve the intended purpose. The phone has Asus' own software, meaning the user can see the

performance of the phone at a glance while gaming. The ROG phone utilises the Game Genie software, which makes it incredibly easy to map touch screen controls to physical game controllers. Any controller will work, but Asus's ROG Kunai 3 gamepad attaches to the phone Nintendo Switch-Joycon-style. But this introduces the question; why would you pay over a thousand euro for a gaming phone when you could buy a console?

The latest offerings from Sony and Microsoft blow the ROG phone out of the water in terms of power and performance. If mobile gaming is a must-have for you, with the introduction of Xcloud gaming and PS Now, small portable devices don't need to have as much power behind them. As long as you meet the minimum requirements for streaming Netflix, and can connect a controller, your device becomes a portable Xbox or PlayStation. The money it costs to buy the ROG phone 5 could perhaps be better spent on a tablet and a subscription to Microsoft's Game Pass. This would also mean that you're not going to be limited to the small selection of games available on mobile device storefronts. Game Pass allows the user to stream lots of AAA titles on almost any device. Granted you do need a connection or space to download the games, but it would still work out cheaper than the ROG phone 5.

Even better yet, if you're looking for a truly portable console, the Nintendo Switch is the obvious choice. You can play most of the bigger titles on the Switch that you can find on Google play, with the added bonus of access to all of Nintendo's recent titles. The newer variant of the Switch comes with improved battery optimisation, meaning you can get anywhere from 6-12 hours depending on what titles you're playing. In comparison, the ROG phone 5 doesn't fare so well.

There definitely is a market for the ROG phone 5. It's a very powerful device in its own right, and with the aforementioned bonus of Asus software on the phone, it makes gaming on a phone much more enjoyable.

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Why would you pay over a thousand euro for a gaming phone when you could buy a console?

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The addition of the AeroActive Cooler might seem like overkill until you think about running the likes of *Fortnite* on mobile data, so it does serve a purpose. I do find the use of RGB lights on the phones logo and the logo on the attachment to be tacky though.

The phone is built with gaming in mind, so making the right shoulders of the phone "Air triggers" is quite a smart move. No matter what variant of the phone consumers buy, right out the box you'll find a very capable device that can play a decent selection of games. The appeal of the phone isn't its price - it's the fact it's a flagship device that comes with everything you'd need in a phone, coupled with some very interesting features that make playing games on the device a manageable experience.

Building a computer would be a much better way to spend the money if you're so inclined, but that's not who Asus are targeting with this device. They're looking at consumers who want a great mobile gaming experience, and a great daily driver. Buying an Xbox or a PS5 leaves a €500 - €600 dent in your pocket, but buying a good phone could be more important to certain people. Asus cuts few corners with the ROG phone 5, meaning

games

OTwo nostalgia review

Grand Theft Auto IV

E. Keogh

E. Keogh delves back into the broad, open world of Grand Theft Auto IV

When I finally got a PlayStation, the first game I bought for it was *Grand Theft Auto IV*. *GTA: San Andreas* was such a massive part of my childhood, so when I found *GTA IV* on sale for 20 pounds, I knew I had to have it. I used all my pocket money and had my Dad buy it for me after what felt like hours of begging. Leaving Gamestop with *GTA IV* in hand felt like a dream come true.

I turned on the PlayStation as soon as I got back to the flat, and popped the disc in straight away. The loading screen with all its colour and the music with its hypnotic beat still makes me feel as though all my troubles are melting away.

I grew tired of the game's loading times fairly quickly, but it was worth it, and I kept coming back for more. The story

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After school, me and my friends would go back to my house and we'd play until one of us died, or completed a full mission. Then the controller would get passed on.

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follows Niko as he travels to the US in search of becoming rich and wealthy, living the American Dream. One key point of interest is Niko's desire to escape his past and find the person who sold out his unit during the war. Liberty City is yours to explore as Niko, and through progressing the story the city slowly becomes more and more real to the player.

Playing as Niko, you progress up the ladder of crime in the city, killing several characters in the game, finding love, being betrayed, and finally being given the choice to kill the man who sold out his unit. The game itself was amazing for the time, but by today's standards it's quite jarring; the graphics now don't really hold up, and the cars handled so badly. But *GTA IV*'s incredible story stands the test of time, and further expansion packs like *The Ballad of Gay Tony* only added more in-depth exploration of characters that made the story mode so appealing. *GTA IV* also had an online mode, allowing the player to free-room with other players and join together for modes like deathmatch, racing, and many more. Unfortunately, the *GTA IV* PS3 servers shut down in early 2020.

Playing the game wasn't just about the story. After school, my friends and I would go back to my house and we'd play until one of us died, or completed a

When looking at the mode of transport in the game, it can be vexing and repetitive, but it's true to the era and adds to the hyper-realism of the game for the player. Horses are the main mode of transport, unlike *GTA Online* where you can hop in a car or an aircraft. In the Wild West it's on foot, horse, or hopping on an incredibly slow steam train that is fun for about a minute. Though the transport is irritating, it truly makes the game more authentic for the player. If hyperrealism isn't your thing, there's also the option to fast travel to towns for a few dollars. This hyper-realism works for the game's weaponry too, staying true to its western roots; guns and bows are the only options. However, with more gameplay comes experience and levelling up which allows the player to get the best on offer.

A massively aggravating issue with the online mode, especially for players like myself who strive to relax by playing the game, is the issue of grievers, those who join public lobbies with the sole purpose of causing chaos. If you've played *RDR2* online, it's certainly bound to have happened to you once or twice. There's nothing more bothersome when you're minding your own business in the game, whether it's treasure hunting or finding collectables, and another player decides to hogtie you

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The picturesque scenery is something you could travel endlessly and never tire of, unlike the setting of Los Santos. In the wild west, the player is always spotting something new.

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and take you out. Oftentimes, they have more in-game experience than you and a better pistol, making it nearly impossible to get away, especially on horseback. So, you die and respawn, and then in the event that the griever is a pro, the chance is they'll hunt you down and it'll happen again. The 'press charges' option doesn't help much with the issue, but it's certainly modified since the initial release. However, it's still irritating, and sometimes if you see a red dot coming towards you, it's best to hit the road in fear their lasso finds you first.

Arguably, it's pretty clear *RDR2* online is better in many ways than *GTA* online. Its hyper-realism, the scenery, roles, story missions, and familiarity with the main game make it such a better experience. Rockstar brought the wild west to our homes and is still letting us wannabe outlaws and bounty-hunters, cowboys, and collectors turn to the online mode for a little western escapism that has yet to become tiresome. It's the perfect online game for roaming and relaxing, hunting or fishing, collecting or looting within the vast world of *Red Dead Redemption 2* online. What these characters after the post-game blues of finishing Arthur's story. You can even stumble upon the wacky pair of creepy hillbilly siblings in Aberdeen Pig Farm.



Credit: Samaneh Sadeghi Marashti

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I used all my pocket money and had my Dad buy it for me after what felt like hours of begging. Leaving Gamestop with *GTA IV* in hand felt like a dream come true.

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the map on single player. You could try and get high scores on ramps, start gunfights with cops, or just show pedestrians around. If all else fails, why not go bowling with your cousin Roman? Getting drunk and trying not to hit anyone with mates is so funny. Maybe go to an internet cafe and do some browsing, or see a comedy show with a genuine Ricky Gervais cameo as the main act.

Sure, playing *GTA IV* might be fulfilling "the male fantasy" or whatever, but with mates, by yourself, online or just driving around when you feel sad, it's so nostalgic. It's a game that you could just put on and have a laugh at. The memories of coming home and rushing through my homework so I could hop on and mindlessly play are ones I remember fondly. The story was funny, and it featured dramatic twists and turns that still hold up. If I could forget the story and play it again, I would without a doubt. But I'm glad I played it with friends when I did because I can look back at it now and think of all the fun I had.



Has travel gotten safer

Killian Conyngham

Killian Conyngham sets out to answer the question of whether, international pandemics notwithstanding, travel has become a safer pastime over the last 50 years?

I grew up on the fantastical tales of my grandparent's travels. I would sit and listen to my Grandad's whirlwind adventure that saw him travel overland up the length of Africa, from South Africa to Egypt before tripping over my Grandmother on a beach in Greece. Or to my Grandmother's tales of leaving her hometown of Cork for a job in the newly formed EEC in Strasbourg; hitchhiking her way all around Europe with her friend Valerie before she ended up on that beach. I heard stories of being stopped by Stasi in east Berlin, sleeping in bag racks in Egypt, and everything in between, with my parents even chiming in at times with tales of their own ill-advised travels.

Hearing those stories, especially as a child, I wanted more than anything in the world to recreate them, to continue what I saw as my family's legacy of carefree adventure. To my surprise, these plans were not met with enthusiasm. The phrase used so often when I set out my plans came to ring in my ears: "You just couldn't do something like that now, it was a different time."

As I grew older, I couldn't get this phrase out of my head. Not only because it was standing between me and my dreams, but because it was more fundamentally at odds with the world as I understood it. For most of my childhood, I had been implicitly sold on a view of history as progress. Hadn't the advances in medicine and technology made the whole world a safer place? Weren't global institutions lauding the reduction in global poverty over the last 50 years? Shouldn't these advancements and others make it safer to travel now than ever before? How could I possibly have missed the golden age of carefree travel? Unsurprisingly, I never found satisfactory answers to these questions.

Tourism, Crime and Commodification

One key factor in understanding the sentiment of some bygone era is mass tourism's tendency to be self-defeating in many regards. Whether it is the often-heard complaint by tourists that all the other tourists are ruining their authentic experience, the hotels which bulldoze cultural sights to cater to those coming to experience them, or the environmental damage often wrought by tourists on the sites they seek to see, rising tourism levels can often have self-limiting effects. These and other negative effects wrought by tourism can build resentment from locals towards tourists. This, in turn, makes it less likely that those tourists who do wish to engage in the local culture or get to know local people have a chance to do so.

One key area where this self-defeating effect can be seen in regards to safety is with crime. As more and more people travel, a proportional rise in the number of crimes committed against tourists is inevitable, but many tourist hotspots have noticed that crime levels can actually increase more generally with rising tourism. Tourists are often easy targets, and in many cases, more affluent than the average person in the places they visit, making them prime targets for thieves, pickpockets and scam artists. Tourists themselves can also bring disorder, as many locals in cities designated as party destinations would attest. It is almost taken for granted that many of the world's most popular tourist hotspots, such as Barcelona in Spain, also have significant problems regarding crime. This has become a key issue in the development of sustainable tourism sectors, both because the perception of high crime rates can lead to destinations being avoided, and more generally because high crime rates come at the expense of local citizens, who should be on the receiving end of the benefits of tourism if it is to be truly sustainable.

To me, this correlation of tourism and crime levels hints at a more subtle shift in the last century too, whereby the commodification of everything has reframed those who travel from visitors to tourists, the latter term carrying a whole lot more economic baggage. As consumer capitalism sweeps most of the world, disrupting the livelihoods of millions, throngs of tourists often follow. And when capital becomes king, it should hardly come as any surprise that tourists arriving with cash to spend



CreditNurinalmanNizam

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These trends all paint a picture of a world becoming safer to visit, rather than the opposite.

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are seen as opportunities. While it is most commonly the corporations involved in tourism responsible for the most egregious acts, it is hard to blame locals for not welcoming with open arms the tourists who populate their hotels and tours.

On a purely anecdotal basis, I have always tended to feel the safest precisely in the places where the nearest hotel complex was the furthest. One tends to receive a far warmer welcome in a small countryside town far from any famous sights than in a big city full of them where the sharp costs of mass tourism are all too familiar.

So maybe, when people say "it was just a different time", they are harkening back to when all these effects had yet to kick off in earnest and on such a global scale. A time when tourism was less common and hadn't yet had the chance to turn so many against it. Of course, if this is the case, then there is no simple solution. Pandemic years aside, travel is becoming accessible to more and more people every year, and the behemoth travel industry seems to care little if their expansion comes at the expense of a widening rift between tourist and local.

Regional Differences and Statistics

Putting tourism's self-destructive tendencies aside, it is very hard to build a compelling story when it comes to global travel safety. One of the key problems when setting out to answer a question as broad as whether travel is safer now than it once was is that the world is not a homogenous place. Travel to many countries across the world has likely become much safer over the last 50 years, but one could equally find countries where travel has become more dangerous in the same time period. A convincing narrative of travel as either a more or less dangerous past time could be constructed with the right choice of destinations.

The numbers seem hopeful, however. Huge strides have been made in the safety of air, sea and land transport that get us to where we want to go. Many global diseases which ravaged the world when my Grandad was making his trip have been eradicated or significantly curtailed

(even though it can be hard to remain optimistic on that front currently). There are countless examples of countries that have dramatically reduced homicide and petty crime rates. The advent of the internet has also made it much easier to do research on destinations before you go, and phones and global banking have made the nightmare of being stuck somewhere with no money or way home much less likely. These trends all paint a picture of a world becoming safer to visit, rather than the opposite.

It is important to remember in all this, however, is that countries do not and should not exist solely to be visited. Considering whether countries have become more or less safe to travel to over the last 50 years often means considering wars, revolutions, dissolutions and political upheavals. To consider decolonisation or devastating proxy wars through the lens of those countries becoming more unsafe for tourists to visit seems uncomfortably reductive at best. Countries being safe for their own citizens is unquestionably more important. There are likely examples of colonial nations which were relatively safe for those from colonising countries to visit, at the expense of brutal oppression of the local populace. This can hardly be seen as a positive. If a trade-off had to be made, a country becoming safer for its citizens at the cost of being less safe for tourists would seem to me to be an unequivocally good thing.

Perception Versus Reality

Most people who say "you couldn't do that nowadays" haven't come to that conclusion by sitting down and looking at global trends, crime statistics, technology changes, inequality ratios or any statistics at all. Now that's not necessarily a problem; measures can be reductive, narratives of progress can be misleading and statistics can be misused or misconstrued. It takes a whole lot of time to parse through all the studies on travel safety, and you can emerge with few more concrete answers than when you started (or at least that was my experience).

Most of the time we simply arrive at our safety judgements through heuristics and anecdotal evidence from people who've been mixed in with some media and news mentions. For the large part, these anecdotal safety

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Letting our snap judgements limit the slice of the world we get to experience would seem to me to be an awful shame.

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evaluations can be sufficient. We don't need statistics to build a sense that Spain is a safer destination than North Korea - especially when we know many people who have visited the former with no incident and have only ever heard a harrowing news story about a tourist in the latter.

That does not mean they cannot lead us astray, however. The shortcuts we employ to personally quantify safety can often incorporate significant biases. When it comes to travel, one of the most common examples of this seems to be the idea that rich and western means safe - a notion that might have some support in data but also implies a far more dubious inverse, whereby low income automatically equals danger.

Adding to this is the barrage of contradictory reports at our fingertips on the internet. An easy way to scare yourself about any destination is just to google "is _ safe?" and click on the first result from a travel forum. You will almost certainly be greeted with a series of horror stories, as a pretty heavy selection bias means that the people with the worst experiences are those most likely to chime in. Equally, one blogger or forum poster might espouse how very safe somewhere is, having been there themselves and not gotten in any incidents. This information, while very nice for them, tells us very little about the country's safety, as even in the most dangerous places some people can simply get lucky.

If it wasn't all confusing enough, many countries which rely on tourism spend inordinate amounts of money trying to cultivate a perception of being safe destinations. As such, hopeful advertising and sponsored influencers can muddy the waters even further. Our brain interprets the happy people smiling on beaches to mean the place must surely be a crime-free paradise.

Much as with the original question of whether the world truly is a safer place to travel now than it was 50 years ago, you can convince yourself a country is either perfectly safe, terribly dangerous or anywhere in between with the right selection of sources. So does this mean we should all give up on trying to judge the safety of any destination and stay home forever or travel the world with indiscretion? Of course not. What it tells us is that safety is a complicated topic, so it might be worth thinking twice before writing off a part of the world because none of our friends have been there and we don't see it quite so often on Instagram. Letting our snap judgements limit the slice of the world we get to experience would seem to me to be an awful shame. From my own limited experience, often pushing past a bit of fear is exactly what is needed for the most memorable experiences.

This is not to say you should always go directly against their instinct when deciding where to go, though. A perception of safety can be just as important as safety itself. Feeling safe somewhere is absolutely a valid criterion by which to choose a destination. For me, a white guy with no underlying health conditions or allergies, there is objectively a shorter list of things that even my hyperactive brain has to worry about when I am choosing a destination. No matter how many cliches one repeats about places being safer than you might think, that does not change the fact that there are real risks out there in the world, and a trip spent in constant fear is unlikely to be an enjoyable one. I suppose, more than anything, it is just worth knowing what biases might shape our perception before we let them limit ourselves to any one corner of the planet.

So is travelling the world really a more dangerous pastime than it was 60 years ago? Well, I maintain it seems unlikely, so I reserve my right to be annoyed when someone harks back to a simpler time. There is no definitive answer one could give to such a question, however, so I will try to reserve my judgement next time it happens. The world is a complicated place, and as we are all aware now more than ever before, stepping out the door always brings risk. I suppose that's just something one has to accept if they want to see the world, whether it be today or 50 years ago.

Underrated Foods

Doireann, Sophie and Heather make a case for why their top foods are not appreciate enough



CreditLaoiseTarrant

Canned sweetcorn

Sophie Finn

My most underrated food is, hear me out, sweetcorn from a tin. For me, it is the epitome of versatility. I always have at least 4 mini tins from Lidl in the cupboard at any one time. I actually begin to feel a little insecure if I get below 2 tins.

I love sweetcorn because you can throw it in anything and feel good about having had more veg - it's like the equivalent of frozen peas, but sweeter. I also think there's something about food from a can that the elderly Irish woman in me finds quite novel. I put it in pasta dishes, burritos, chilli, chicken soup, anything really. However, my favourite sweetcorn dish is a tuna cheese melt. I mix a tin of tuna, sweetcorn, a spring onion and chilli flakes in a bowl with salt and pepper and pop it into a pitta bread, then load it with cheese and grill it. It's definitely my favourite lunch of the moment.

My love for sweetcorn has become a slightly contentious issue in my house because my roommate hates it. His most detested foods are tuna and sweetpot (unlike me he has a keen distrust of anything from a tin), so lunchtimes have understandably become a strained affair. I understand people have strong feelings about tuna, but I find his recoil at the thought of tinned sweetcorn quite strange. I also find it quite entertaining.

My past roommates have also expressed a bitter dislike for the tinned corn. But to be perfectly honest, other than several of my roommate's weird hate for it, I don't know if sweetcorn really is an underrated food. Perhaps I have just had slightly strange roommates, or maybe I have had a slightly overly enthusiastic approach to it? I remember a strange phase I went through in my first year of college when I decided the perfect, absolutely ideal hangover cure was sweetcorn straight from the tin using a spoon..? Don't judge me, we were all strange in first year.

I for one do not believe tinned sweetcorn deserves the ruinous distrust it has received from several of my acquaintances. To quote the severely overly quoted W.B. Yeats, "what man does not understand, he fears; and what he fears, he tends to destroy". I believe sweetcorn is simply misunderstood, and therefore feared, let us hope it too is not destroyed and does not meet the doomed fate of other fallen veg, such as the mighty brussel sprout.

Oh when the pubs re-open.....

Laoise, Sinéad, Heather and E. Keogh all whet our palettes for that first drop of that sweet pint when the bars once again embrace our presence.

Blue Moon

Laoise Tarrant

Hot-take: I kind of enjoyed the pubs being closed over the last while. The sweet victory of finding a place that does takeaway pints was such a novelty. I loved the excitement of bringing in the bounty, everyone giddy before their first sip. *Note the tense I am speaking in.*

My opinion changed Thursday, as in yesterday as I write this. I was having drinks on the canal (again), nursing a pint of Guin (again) when I realised something. It was the faintest whisper from the murky canal water. It sang to me of warmer times, indoors. Of unmasked, hugs which weren't the slightest bit awkward, with the stranger that leant you their lighter in the smoking room. It hit me. My ass doesn't have to feel like it just thawed from the icebergs of Antarctica. There are warmer, indoor, grosser times ahead in the lovely grimy pubs of Ireland.

When I get the vaccine, I'm not going to have Guinness. No, I'm going to drink a delicious Blue Moon from an ACTUAL PINT GLASS. Yes, you're dead-on if you think I'm one of those people who orders a blue moon for the novelty of the orange segment in it. Look, if I'm drinking OUT OF A PINT GLASS, I want notions. Guin, you've served me well, you've served me very, very well over lockdown. I thank you for your service, but it will no longer be required when we are indoors. I want a five star pint, with all the snobbery, thanks very much.

Cupboard Love: Coca Cola

Ellen Duggan

Filling our heads with dreams of bubbly sugary deliciousness, Ellen Duggan shows how the liquid temptress is also your cupboard staple.

The main attraction of this volume's final Cupboard Love is that it could be considered either a household staple or enemy. You decide.

I firmly believe that your family's relationship with Coca Cola will determine your relationship with the carbonated beverage in your adulthood; its strong and consistent placement in the darkest points of the cupboard touched only on a sunny day after a swift dipping of it into the freezer; a childhood in which it was purchased in multi-packs and served at the dinner table in a glorious jug; or its place as an infrequent accompaniment to a 2am McDonald's, a result of a "only sugar on your holidays" parental rule. No matter what your relationship to the drink may be, even the sugar tax itself cannot deny the pivotal role Coca Cola (original, always, please do not ever speak about Coke Free in my presence) can hold in kitchen dishes.

Today I am going to speak about the power of Coca Cola as a meat marinade. I understand your initial impulse may be one of confusion, however, I believe an essential symptom of progressing from teen to adulthood is the changing role of Coca Cola in one's life: from an alcoholic mixer of choice, to a staple of cupboard love.

Spaghetti Hoops

Doireann de Courcy Mac Donnell

I would like to thank the Academy for this opportunity. I couldn't have done this without my wonderful Tami, and Troy the cat, and my parents who taught me so much. I am finally able to put in print a testimony to my one undying love: Heinz Spaghetti Hoops.

Spaghetti Hoops are such a good food, and they're wildly underrated. They are good with potatoes (mash, chips, waffles - you decide the form), with eggs, even with toasties full of delicious melting cheese. You can eat them for a tasty, filling breakfast, a lazy afternoon lunch, or even a comforting cosy dinner. They also conveniently come in two different size tins and in snap-pots, so you never need to let them go to waste.

When writing this article I began by trying to describe what Spaghetti Hoops are to those poor uncultured folk who haven't been blessed with their presence. However, I came up against an unforeseen difficulty. It is only when you try to describe what's inside the friendly looking yellow tin that you realise just how unappetising they seem. Spaghetti Hoops are a can of (and I hesitate to use the word because it makes everything seem so much worse) pasta rings in a tomato-based sauce akin to the sauce you would find in a tin of baked beans.

I have to admit that I burst out laughing. When I read back on my best attempts to represent what a tin of Spaghetti Hoops is I realised how nasty they sound. That is probably why they are underrated, because if I had only heard that description, even I wouldn't touch them with a six foot pole.

However that being said, now is the time to put aside your preconceived ideas (and my poor attempts at a description) and trust me. Take my word for it - Spaghetti Hoops are just wonderful.

At the beginning of this testimony I did clarify Heinz Spaghetti Hoops. Don't bother with the own-brand stuff (I wouldn't risk it, you're already dancing with the devil) and I see that Bachelors' have taken out a version also, but I haven't been brave enough to mess with what I know yet. My favourite Spaghetti Hoop based dish is one of my Dad's creations - *Crocque Monsieur a la Spaghetti* 'oop. Bread, ham, cheese, fried in egg and milk, with delicious steamy Spaghetti Hoops (don't let them get to boiling point- the sauce becomes too runny) atop and a dollop of mayonnaise as the pièce de résistance. What more could you want! It's cheap, it's cosy and most of all it's an incredibly delicious lunch.

Bon Apple Teeth.

Bread Rolls

Heather Reynolds

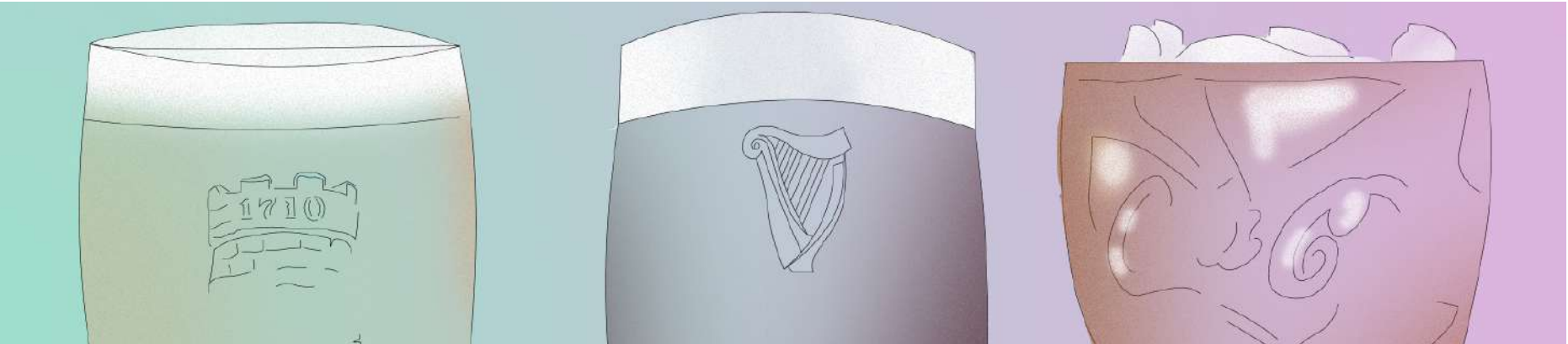
They say you don't know what you've got until it's gone, and while I'm not sure who "they" are, I know they're dead right. Since learning that gluten was a bad idea for my particular digestive system, there's no food I've felt the absence of more keenly than that of a fresh, crusty, bread roll. From the moment my toddler self was able to eat hard foods, until the day the doctor told me if I kept eating that one pesky protein I'd develop scurvy, I ate about 1.2 bread rolls a day (factoring in breadbasket binges), and there is not a person alive who could convince me that I was wrong to have done so.

Soft and fluffy on the inside, crisp and crusty on the outside, deliciously versatile in every form, it is fundamentally underrated in the key role it plays in everyone's favourite lunches and sides. From a simple bread and butter, to the classic chicken fillet roll, to the decadent butter loaded, parsley topped, rich and crispy garlic bread, there is no aspect of a meal that cannot be improved by the addition of a good bread roll. You may argue that they are just a basic food, a vehicle to transfer greater flavours, however, I, in turn, would argue that if that were the case, then why are the bread rolls the first thing to go when you're brought a bread basket at a fancy restaurant? Riddle me that, contrarian!

Setting aside how wonderful bread rolls are on their own for a brief moment, this contrarian would be right, they are a fantastic vehicle for flavour! Soups, stews, salad, all are uplifted by the inclusion of this wonderful bread product. It pairs with literally every flavour, and catches every form of sauce. No waste, biodegradable and compostable (if the unlikely occurs and you, for some insane reason, are unable to finish your roll), and delicious in its own right. Truly, there is no better utensil to use for any given meal than a bread roll.

Setting aside its rich absorbency that makes it perfect for consumption alongside soups, stews, and sauces, it also has the wonderful addition of being incredibly portable. There's a reason why a roll is a go-to lunch, and that reason is that it's as easily transportable as it is tasty. All in all, there is no God-given reason, allergies excepted, as to why bread rolls should not be given the pride of place they deserve on every table.

Also, to reiterate: garlic bread. Just. Garlic bread.



CreditLaoiseTarrant

Smithwicks

Sinéad Keating

The date is not too far from now - it's mid summer, the sun is out and the temperature is up, but I choose to sit inside the pub to not miss one second of the experience. There's gentle background noise of people talking, glasses being moved behind the bar, and sport on a big TV turned down low. I can see myself going up to the bar to order, I'll gladly lean my elbows on it no matter how sticky it may be. Throughout the last year I've made many a G&T and cocktail at home, but pints are one thing that are hard to replicate out of a can. Of all the taps lined up on offer I'd go for a cold, dark pint of Smithwicks for my first drink out. Imagine the first sip, slightly sweet, strong, but not as heavy as a Guinness and wonderfully refreshing. It's the kind of pint that goes down well both sipped slowly or downed quickly in longer gulps. There's no satisfaction like it and I will gladly part with many fivers for the luxury to do that again as soon as possible.

Guinness

E. Keogh

I started drinking just before the first lockdown, so I've only been drinking in a pub twice in my whole life. Both times the most memorable one was a pint of Guinness, the elixir of the old gods in all its splendor. Perfectly poured, its dark ruby hue seemed to call my name. The nice head on it looked so smooth and creamy, I could already taste the picture-perfect pint.

As I mentioned, I'm a very inexperienced drinker, so the first time I had Guinness was from a can, and my pour was atrocious. The pint, glass was only 40% full, and the head was... well, it was virtually non-existent. I was berated for my horrible pour over a video call, but to be fair, it looked exactly like a flat glass of coke. I've improved since, but I still struggle with getting it to perfectly fit the glass, to get a smooth head without massive bubbles, and getting cans that aren't bitter as all hell.

So when lockdown ends and I can finally go for drinks with friends, the first item on the agenda will be to get a Guinness. I'll be tipping quite well to have one more perfect pint of the black stuff.

If you still don't believe me, perhaps you will believe Nigella Lawson, the creator and author of today's recipes. Neither recipes are particularly complex or time-consuming and all ingredients can be easily and locally sourced (unless you live in Stoneybatter and kombucha is the only beverage of choice in your local Spar- in which case, jog on).

Today's first recipe is, you guessed it, Nigella's infamous Coca Cola ham. Infamous, perhaps only to myself, as it has been my mother's Christmas Day ham-cooking staple throughout my entire life and I associate it with food hangovers of epic proportion. Given the large portions of this recipe, let's imagine we exist within a post-restrictions utopia. Your friends have arrived back from Berlin and Australia, deserting their masters and desk jobs in a fever dream of excitement to reconnect on a summer weekend. You host them all and aim to wow - without breaking the bank or any brain cells - and, within this context, This is your recipe of choice.

For the ham you will need: 2 kilograms of gammon joint, 1 onion (peeled and cut), doves, English mustard and 2 litres of Coca Cola (please don't skimp on full-fat Coke, diet or zero won't even touch it).

In a large pan of the more "pot-like" variety, place the gammon, the onion and the Coke. Bring to the boil, reduce to a simmer, place on the lid and allow to continue to cook for around 2 ½ hours. In the meantime, preheat the oven to 240 Celsius. When the ham is finito, remove it from its pot position and allow to cool on an oven tray, lined with foil. Using a sharp knife remove the outer layer of skin until you are faced with the ham's generous covering of fat. Score the fat until you have created a pattern of large diamond shapes upon it. Within these diamonds, place whole cloves. Over the fat, generously spread English mustard, place more foil around the ham and then pop it in the oven for ten minutes- or until the skin is crispy,

brown and perfectly glazed. Serve cooled with a side salad and a balsamic dressing on the aforementioned occasion and you will be king of the restriction-free world. Mark my words!

Our second recipe is Coca-Cola chicken, this recipe serves four and is a cheap and delicious dish to last you over several dinners - I promise you will come back for more though, so perhaps double up the portions if you are in any way inclined.

For this recipe, you will need: 500 millilitres of Coca-Cola, 125 millilitres of soy sauce and 4 breasts of chicken (drumsticks also work fabulously, please let your intuition guide you!)

Measure and add the Coca Cola and soy sauce into a bowl- mixing lightly. Heat a pan on medium heat, add a light splashing of rapeseed oil and place in your chicken, turning them often until their skin is lightly golden. Turn down the heat to as light a blast as possible, and proceed to pour in your Coca Cola, soy sauce mixture.

Leave this to cook away and for the chicken to absorb the mix, for a solid 20-25 minutes. This is fantastic: served with potato salad, or used the next day on a sandwich with sourdough and rocket leaves.

Your eyes may still be rolling back in your head at such a thought, wondering if Monsterenergydrinks will be the next "cooking hack", (no, stop, Andy) but trust me on this one. Once you foray into the carbonated-beverages subsection of Cupboard Love- you will never quite be the same.

staff writes Are graduations overhyped?

fatal
fourway

Ellen Duggan

I am going to play devil's advocate here, not only because it is the last issue, but because I truly need to vent.

I don't just believe graduations are overhyped. I believe any school-related memory is overhyped. In fact, I believe memories in general are overhyped.

I say this as someone who has a horrendous memory. As proof of this, I once downloaded an alarm app that emitted a North Korean wake up call-esque siren every morning that would only cease when I had completed a set of memory quizzes. The quizzes in question involved memorising flashing orange tiles and then recreating their pattern. I set my alarm at 6am and it did not stop wailing until 6:30. It took me thirty minutes to do this quiz. Thirty minutes I could have spent sleeping, downloading another app, or not thinking about my Graduation.

When it comes to school-related flashbacks in particular- NO, I don't remember finger painting Auntie Mary, and I am a better person for it. I do not stare at photos of my first sports day in a bout of nostalgia, and when I look at photos of my graduation? It may as well be a Getty Images photo. I don't believe my lack of memory signals towards the event in question being particularly negative and in need of a quick repressing, more so that perhaps our relationship with school-related memories need to be readjusted. Who cares if Graduation is overated? Underrated? Rated at all? School was overall helpful I suppose, but awful in equal

Isabella Ambrosio

Fifth and sixth year were some of the worst years of my life, but somehow, somehow, my graduation night was entertaining. The drinks were cheap enough, the music was decent, and everyone was riding a nice buzz from the fact that we were no longer in secondary school. But would it sound too philosophical if I say it depends on the group of people you graduate with? And it also probably helps if you're at the same level of intoxication as they are. But I know a massive amount of people who had a miserable experience at their graduation; perhaps the people they were with got too drunk, there were too many chaperones or the 'vibes' were just off... Graduation nights can be overrated to a certain extent, or simply just bad.

It's a lot of pressure to put on one night - a singular night that feels like your entire academic career has led up to. As a kid in secondary school, your last year is literally what movies are based on. And there's this certain impression that it has to be great. The year itself, and the night that you graduate will be even better. I think that if you don't have high expectations of your graduation night, you'll be pleasantly surprised. And if your expectations are too high, well, your night is going to completely suck. So, my advice? Don't overhype your graduation night. It isn't that worth it. The years that follow will be a hell of a lot more exciting than just a single night after secondary school.

Adesewa Awobajo

Grad nights are definitely overhyped, but they're allowed to be. When you have nothing but exams looming over you why not solely focus on and overhype a night out? It's like the only thing worth looking forward to. I can't think of a nicer way to end 5/6 years of suffering. (I can, but you get my point!)

The grad night was the first time my whole year group actually got on. From the organisation of it to the day of we all got on... and there were quite a number of us and an interesting mix at that! Everyone put in the work to find a venue that would risk losing their alcohol license to make us happy. It just had to work out and it did eventually - last minute. It was the first time cliques merged and conversations were struck. Like wow, it took me 6 years to realise some of those people were actually sound. Freedom definitely changes people.

I don't remember much of the graduation ceremony besides reading out a reflection, hearing speeches from teachers and the principal and then stumbling outside to take those customary 'I just graduated' photographs with the name of the school hovering above. I think the grad night definitely won. But the night is a bit hyped up just for it to be over and you realise you still have a Leaving Cert to sit and you're probably never going to see 90% of people again.

Luke Duffy

Short answer: yes. Long answer: it depends. I think whether or not graduations are overhyped depends on the kind of experience you had before graduating. I have a year left in my degree so I can't talk about graduating college - but I can talk about my graduation from secondary school.

In many ways, my secondary school graduation was an emotional rollercoaster. Not because I was devastated about leaving - as a rural homosexual, I did not enjoy my second-level experience and couldn't get out of there quickly enough. My grad was weird because I somehow had a lovely night. I was pleasantly surprised that so many of the gals "wanted to be my friend" but thought I wouldn't like them so they never initiated contact. On reflection, this is a polite way of telling someone they're a huge bitch, but at the time it was nice to hear. I also had to endure this painfully heterosexual girl telling me - at length - that she really, really loves the LGBT community, that I was "brave" for being out about my sexuality. She was later kicked out of the club about an hour into grads. The LGBT community loves you too, Lauren.

I still had a nice time at grads, even though I found myself being Yaass Queen'd at several different points. I think it was overhyped though - I don't remotely miss secondary school and you could not pay me to go back. That was never going to change no matter how good grads was. Maybe that's a good thing - it's a sign I didn't peak at 18, if nothing else.

soapbox

Collecting stationary

Aoife Rooney

A few months ago, I suffered an integral loss to my stationery arsenal. When shops reopened over the summer, my first priority was to head to Muji to replenish my pen stocks. Over the preceding year, I had been collecting my used pen of choice in a burned candle pot, a prevalent reminder that the day would soon come wherein I could swap them with brand new ones. Cut to July; I marched

into the store on Chatham street, debating whether I should really stockpile for the foreseeable. I was met with rows and rows of multicoloured gel pens, my humble ballpoint nowhere to be seen. I am under no assumption that my particular pen of choice was Muji's top seller, and

is probably the reason why they took it off the shelves, but had they only waited until my arrival, my purchase would have fulfilled the quota for the foreseeable quarters.

Nearly a year later, I reflect on it as a moment of revelation that prompted a re-evaluation of my stationery preferences. I have come to admit that the pens weren't that special. If I'm being honest, the gel pens are the special ones, but the ciotóg in me precludes their use. This is also true for spiral notebooks. In the end up, I sourced an alternative from Bic for about one-third of the price. They don't look the same, but the quality of the writing has not improved, so I'm calling it on the €3 ballpoint.

This level of senselessness extends to all corners of my stationery purchases, especially in my judgement of other people's stationery choices. I am still dumbfounded at the thought that some people don't have planners? To not have deadlines and plans recorded on paper or digitally is to live recklessly. Although to be fair, those mavericks don't have to deal with the stress of a lecturer changing a deadline after it has been written down for the original day in pen.

In an increasingly paperless world, the argument for stationery is becoming futile for many. Despite there being so many ways to take notes both on paper and devices, people still make bad choices. For example, it is never a good idea to spring for the 400-page refill pad. It will have died a death at the bottom of your bag before you come close to using it up. Another scam is the Bic 4 pen. We've all been there, but society has surely developed beyond a need for them. There's the incessant clicking for one thing, from blue to red and back. While you think you're getting a deal on pens, I don't know anyone who has ever used all four colours. There is no sane person carrying around one of those pens with just the green left. It will be long lost by then, as it should be.

Stationery is not, and should not be a bone of contention, I know there are people who have never once thought about what pens or paper they prefer, and maybe that is how it should be. The destination is the same regardless if someone gets there via Parker or Paper Mate.



Credit Laoise Tarrant

Staff recommends Best scenic spots of Ireland

Howth Head - Killian Conyngham

When I was 16 I consciously set out not to fall into the trap of never exploring your homeland, and I've seen plenty of the amazing sights this country has to offer since. I suppose it makes my bias and penchant for sentimentality even more obvious that I still contend Howth head is the best scenic spot in Ireland.

Only a dart ride away from Dublin city centre, few places leave me so consistently content, and I swear it's not just because I always used to finish walks there with a pint. The views there are great from the start, but I can only recommend taking the cliff walk as they only get better further along, and are seriously compounded by the accomplishment of the hike. Plus, the far side of the peninsula sports an uncharacteristically lovely view of Dublin, as well as some quality swimming coves if the weather is nice or you don't mind the cold. When blackberries are in season you barely even need to bring lunch. And, if I'm being perfectly honest, the fact that you can finish it all off with a wide selection of quality chippers doesn't hurt either, even if they do charge you distinctly Dublin prices for the privilege.

The Navan Fort - E. Keogh

Although I've not been back to Northern Ireland in a long time, the sight of the Navan Fort is forever ingrained in my mind. It's my home away from home, and it's one of my favourite places in the world.

The site itself in more recent years has been said to be some sort of massive Iron Age temple, but for years it's just been where my dad and I would walk his dog, Zeus. A lot of people overlook the spot, as it seems to be just a massive hill, but for me it's much more. The visitor centre, although at times can be filled with tacky trinkets for overseas guests to buy, provides a lot of information about the history of the site.

Although I do love the history side of the fort, the things I love about it most are at sunrise and sunset. It's a magnificent feeling walking up to its peak and being able to see a good chunk of Armagh city, all the surrounding fields, and even better to feel the warmth of the first rays of morning light. To me the experience feels almost magical - I'm not fond of being up before 6am, but to see the breathtaking sunrise, the beautiful golden sparkle cast on the icy grass, and to be able to walk around and almost sense the story of the Navan fort and all the goings on that happened there? It's a feeling I miss dreadfully, and one I highly recommend experiencing for yourself once it's safe to do so.

Scenic spots around Tallaght - Andrew Nolan

I remember looking up Tallaght on a tourist site a while back, curious as to what was listed as attractions. Seeing some of the top spots taken up by a Jackpott's Bingo and a Leisureplex summed it up quite well, in all honesty. However, luckily enough, the area can also be quite pretty in places.

Going just up the road from the Old Mill pub, you'll find a number of parks which are lovely for a walk - my favourite of which being just behind the Kiltipper Woods Care Centre. Down by the river, there's a few spots in particular to unwind by the water. But if you don't venture down, there are a number of hilled, grassy areas where you can sit in the sun, whether it be for a picnic or for some cans with friends, that offer a great view of the Bohernabreena mountains.

If that doesn't do the trick, there's still plenty to see in the area. From the aforementioned park, you are only a short walk away from the Waterworks, a grand reservoir based in the Glensmole valley. While it may be a trek, you're not too far from the Killakee Woods and the Hellfire Club. On a clear day, you'll see arguably one of the best views of Dublin from here. There is also the 65 bus through Tallaght that will take you to Blessington. We may not have the pubs right now, but there are still plenty of scenic spots around to relax in.

Croagh Patrick - Anna Blackburn

With the countless number of castles, cliffs, and scenic spots in Ireland, it's unlikely you'll be stumped for things to do while travelling around the gorgeous green countryside. During my stay, the first time I visited Ireland in 2017, one of my favourite things we did was climb Croagh Patrick. While I would also recommend other places to hike such as Glendalough and Killarney National Park, the view from the top of Ireland's Holy Mountain in Co. Mayo was unbeatable.

My aunt and I warmed ourselves up at the Visitors' Centre with a cup of coffee and hot cocoa before making our way onto the trail. Greeted by a statue of Saint Patrick and motivated by the enormity of the task that lay before us (not just my Catholic grandmother's recommendation of the pilgrimage) we started up the mountain walking alongside other tourists, visitors, dogs, children, and sheep. We followed the babbling brook upstream and paused every so often to catch our breath. They told us it would be an entire day's journey to reach the summit, but we were prepared.

When we took our much-needed breaks, we would turn around to take in the view, whose beauty increased with every step we took. The mountains were so far, yet so visible, they looked as if they had been literally painted on the skyline. The hike was rewarding and the view from the top was indescribable. I highly recommend doing this hike and bringing a buddy.

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!

I'm incredibly alone in my course. I'm in 2nd year and living at home with the closest friend over an hour away. There is only 50 of us and about 20 live on or around campus atm and have gaffs every night, any time I reach out to any of them it's pointless and I'm being ignored, really thought UCD was going to be the place I'd have a good friend group in my course.

You probably don't need me to tell you that it's a really isolating time for everyone right now, but if it's any consolation; you're absolutely not the only person who feels this way. While I am an extrovert who is both incredibly sexy and unbelievably talented, I'm also human - I've struggled a good bit myself with suddenly not being able to spend most of my time around other people.

What's worth remembering is that the best friends you make in college may not be people from your course. I've met some lovely gals from my course, but for the most part, I have made my friends from things that have nothing to do with my degree. This year I was on the committee for the LGBTQ+ society and also wrote this column - both of those have let me befriend people I would probably never have met otherwise.

A lot of the college experience is about trying new things, not having a comfort zone, and discovering new things about yourself along the way. You are very likely to make friends this way - going forward I would recommend attending society events that interest you, regardless of if you know anyone already involved.

And quite frankly, to hell with those 20 people in your course - better to find your own friends than to be at a load of gaff parties in the middle of a panasonic. Pangaea. Pangelina Jolie. Something like that.

My boyfriend has a rare kink where he really enjoys the look and feel of a cyst. This has been going on for a few months, it started with him watching pimple popping videos, which carried on into watching cyst removal videos. I really want to support him because he does so much for me - should I try to get a cyst? Or should I get something that looks like a cyst? Really appreciate your acystance!

I'm not going to lie to you - I had to read this a few times to make sure I wasn't hallucinating. I get the morbid fascination with pimple popping videos, but it's the leap from YouTube to the bedroom that's sending me a little bit. To clarify, I'm absolutely not kinkshaming here - I just think this is a really juicy question (ba dum tiss).

As someone who was born with eczema and makes it everyone else's problem, I'm hesitant to say you should give yourself a cyst - everything I could find about this was about getting rid of them. I did find exactly one Reddit post saying it might happen if you put on makeup and leave it there for a day or so. From experience, I would not recommend this - I did a Grinch-themed drag look in December, accidentally fell asleep in it, and I looked jaundiced for about three days. Not the vibe I'm afraid.

But ultimately it's up to you - as long as everything's safe, sane and consensual it's entirely your call to make. Keep in mind that this is literally about your body - if you don't want a cyst there's absolutely no obligation to give yourself one. That's a sentence I never thought I'd write.

My boyfriend finds it too physically painful to bottom - we've tried a lot (especially bored over lockdown), but I am really unsatisfied having to constantly bottom. What can we do when an open relationship is out of the question?

I can't say I've been too active myself over lockdown, but as someone who has been hatefully described as "bottom-passing" I feel like I have some authority here. You probably know this already but bottoming isn't something you should just rush into all of the time - sometimes you need to build up to it and that's alright.

I think you should tell your boyfriend that you're unhappy and that this is important to you. Once you've had that conversation, there's a lot he can do to be more comfortable here. Make sure that you're communicating fully throughout the whole experience. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't right - use plenty of lube, take it slowly and make sure the two of you are as at ease as possible. Part of it might be that he's nervous - if he hasn't bottomed a lot before he might be afraid of trying it. I know it's frustrating but sometimes the best thing to do is be patient. You'll get your hole eventually, my child.

Also, I'm no scientist, but I've heard that the chorus of Into You by Ariana Grande will shake even the strictest of tops.