

THE PRINT

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Strikes blight university once again

Alex Adkins & D'rel Gayle

■ Strikes disrupt classes for at least three weeks

■ Principal Bailey blames 'misinformation'

The Higher Education Committee of the University and College Union (UCU) authorised ten days of sustained industrial action on Wednesday 19th January, including staff strikes at higher education institutions across the country. Since February 14th staff at up to 68 institutions, including Queen Mary University of London, have suspended teaching

in order to engage in collective action against what the UCU have described as a "20% real terms pay cut over the past 12 years, unmanageable workloads, pay inequality and the use of exploitative and insecure contracts."

Faculty striking at Queen Mary cited specific goals to address pay discrepancies along gendered and racial lines, claiming female staff are paid 14% less than their male counterparts, whilst BAME staff are paid 22% less than non-BAME staff - with BAME women suffering a 31% pay gap. Other complaints include real wage depreciation, the increasing casualisation

of contracts for academic staff, and unpaid hours - with the average staff member allegedly working an additional 16 hours per week over their 35 contracted hours.

The schedule of the strikes dedicates a week to each grievance. Week one focuses on the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension dispute (Monday 14th to Friday 18th of February). Week two is on both the pension and pay disputes (21st to 22nd of February), and has the highest turnout of UK higher education institutions with 68 participating. Week three focuses on pay and working

conditions (Monday 28th of February until Wednesday 2nd of March).

Support for the Strikes

The announcement received support from a mix of students and local government. The National Union of Students (NUS) offered their 'solidarity' with staff participating in industrial action and the final day of strike action is to coincide with the NUS-organised student strike on Wednesday the 2nd of March. Apsana Begum, MP for Poplar and Limehouse, in a letter to Queen Mary Principal

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Barts to lose name as QM consolidates brand

Joe Bounds

Temper the bitter things in life with a smile runs the Barts and The London motto, but many are finding it hard to grin and bear a controversial decision to rename the historic institution as Queen Mary Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry.

Barts, the affectionate nickname for St Bartholomew's and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, was founded 899 years ago and the name has been synonymous with medical excellence ever since.

The rebranding provoked outrage among some students and staff who claim it threatens the distinct identity of the college.

Rob Tucker, President of the Barts and the London Student Association (BSLA), has rallied oppo-

sition to the move: "This occurred with no consultation with students, alumni, or the faculty staff," he said. "The Barts name is 900 years old next year and still remains the strongest healthcare brand this country owns - why remove that?"

Tucker helped found 'WeAreBL,' a student-led campaign started in January seeking to preserve the famous name. Their pub-

lic petition has garnered over 15,000 signatures and received attention in the national media, after six alumni wrote to The Times last month accusing the University of "wiping out hundreds of years of heritage and success."

The decision was communicated in late November 2021, in an email titled 'update on branding' from Professor Irene Leigh, the Vice Principal for Health.

She said the university was acting to become more cohesive and collegiate, and indicated that there would be a consultation over the name in the next few months. Three months later this is yet to happen.

It marks the latest step to unify the Queen Mary and Barts' brand. As far back as 2019 students and staff have noticed changes such as the removal of

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Man's Best Friend A dog stands on the picket line outside the East Gate (Photo: QM Solidarity Students)

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Valentine's Writing Competition: Read our winner!



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Editor-in-Chief
Joe Bounds

Deputy Editor
Farrah Farnejad

Copy Editors
Isabelle Book
Yashna Khatry
Sophie Stanley
Georgie Walls

News
Alex Adkins
D'rel Gayle
Maryam Kara

Features
Mariangela Aloj
Mehek Gupta

Opinion
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Inaaya Yousef

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Mohammed Abdillahi
Adela Begum

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

I am pleased to see The Print back and once again true to our namesake for the first time in two years. Absence makes the heart grow fonder? With 16 pages of quality news, features, opinion, arts and more, I hope you will thoroughly enjoy our coverage in this historic relaunch special.

I want to begin with a call to arms: if you are a budding writer/journalist/artist/designer PLEASE join The Print. We are always looking for fresh talent, not to mention that a new team will be needed next year to continue the paper. If you are interested in contributing, get in touch at editor@theprintnews.co.uk and join for our group on Facebook.

I also want to thank all of our contributors who, in spite of the ad-hoc meetings, delays, and incredible uncertainty of the pandemic, have risen to the challenge and produced great content and a paper to be proud of. A special thanks to QM English Society, who collaborated with us to organise the valentine's writing competition. And finally, thanks to the QMSU - whose funding has made this printed edition possible.

All stories printed here will also be posted on our website - theprintnews.co.uk - which is updated regularly with new articles, so be sure to look there for the most recent stories on campus.

Enjoy our 30th edition!

Best wishes,
Joe Bounds, Farrah Farnejad

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Earth has not any thing to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Upon Westminster Bridge, William Wordsworth

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Professor Colin Bailey, highlighted the disputes involving pension cuts that left the average UCU member £240k worse off, the gender, BAME, and disability pay gaps, as well as increasingly precarious casualised contracts.

Begum's letter also emphasised Queen Mary's position as one of only four higher education institutions in the United Kingdom to make the decision to withhold striking staff's pay indefinitely until their missing hours are re-scheduled. The decision undoubtedly encouraged more moderate members of staff to join the picket line, considering the unpopularity of that specific stance.

Anonymous testimonies from various members of staff were collected in an informative handbook by 'Queen Mary Community Solidarity', a group of those in favour of the strike. The statements shine a light on the anxieties, exhaustion and alienation felt by many staff members at the Uni-

versity: "After rent, bills, pension contributions (which are set to go higher) and student debt (yes I am still paying off my tuition fees!) are all taken off from my monthly pay packet (which isn't at much as you might think), I sometimes actually find myself struggling each month. I'm at a Russell Group uni in London, with a vice chancellor on a 6-figure salary, and I'm struggling!"

Alongside the UK's spiralling cost of living crisis, with the energy price cap set to increase by £693 in April, the situation of academics seems to be growing more precarious – a sentiment encapsulated by one protest banner reading: "My colleague would be here, but they can't afford the train fare on their precarious contract".

The atmosphere of the strikes was described by participating staff and students as 'disruptive, yet educative', featuring teach outs – informal lectures by academic faculty members on a topic of their choosing – and guest

speakers, including MP Apsana Begum, across the picket line which falls across East Gate and other entry points. Placards conveying messages of solidarity and hope for "another QMUL" were ubiquitous, alongside slogans highlighting the intense workloads of academic staff: "Staff working conditions are your learning conditions".

Opposition

Some feel less enthusiastic about the strikes. Two years of disruptions following the COVID-19 Pandemic and the subsequent restrictions has left many students dissatisfied with their higher education experience. The high costs of tuition, both for home students and even more so for international students, has also fueled further discontent towards the UCU's decision to pursue industrial action. Despite this, the UCU stressed the last-resort mentality behind their actions, with attempts at recon-

ciliation normally preceding the pursuit of a strike.

Strikes are necessarily disruptive, with the act of suspending one's essential labour being a key method of placing pressure on university management to pursue fairer policies. The problem, however, lies in which party can hold out the longest and with the recent decision of the USS Joint Negotiation Committee to implement cuts to future pension benefits for UK higher education staff, it seems as if university management can hold out just a bit longer.

In an email to all students regarding the strikes, Principal Professor Colin Bailey said: "a significant amount of misinformation has been spread. On the pensions issue we will continue to lobby for the best possible scheme for our staff, that is affordable and sustainable – the scheme simply isn't viable at the moment."

"The trade union is significantly over-estimating the cuts

that staff will see; even with the proposed changes, the scheme will be significantly better than pension schemes available to anyone working in the private sector. In relation to equality of pay: there have been claims that we pay women less than men. This is simply not true: it is illegal to pay women less than men for the same work. At Queen Mary, we are doing better than most in narrowing the pay gap, which is the difference between the average earnings of all men and women within an organisation. We have made good progress so far with closing this pay gap, and are committed to eliminating the gap completely." He added.

He urged those with questions about the strikes to contact him at principal@qmul.ac.uk or the Student Enquiry Centre.

Support tour aims to tackle rampant student gambling

Yashna Khatri

The life of the average university student involves bulk-buying groceries, stacking up on meal deals and hunting for student discounts. Budgeting has become an essential skill in the repertoire of students all over the nation as they work to confront the realities of paying their expenses. After a pandemic-ridden year and an increased cost of living, there is no question as to why some students have turned to gambling to make a quick profit.

Student gambling addicts spend around £30 a week on betting, amounting to over £1,600 a year. Many borrow money to fund the habit, with nearly 10% of UK students betting with their student loans. Both the short-term and long-term effects of compulsive gambling leave students in a state of disarray, as many report having severely worsened mental health. What's more, the impact that compulsive gambling has on one's academic performance can not be overstated, with students missing assignment deadlines, social activities and lectures. In fact,

a recent survey by The Gambling Commission claims that 1/8 of student gamblers have missed lectures due to gambling.

As a result, students must be given the opportunity to engage in conversations about gambling and addiction. Furthermore, the lack of support from universities is worrying, campaigners say. To combat this, three organisations have joined forces to raise awareness and promote the support that is available to students. The Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Trust (YGAM), an award-winning leading education charity, has collaborated with GAMSTOP,

"80% of students have gambled, 41% admit that gambling had a negative impact on their university life"

the national online self-exclusion scheme, and RecoverMe, a mobile health application designed to help those who suffer from a gambling addiction, to embark on 'The Gambling Support University Tour'.

The tour follows the publication of a new survey of 2,000 students, commissioned by

YGAM and GAMSTOP, which revealed 80% of students have gambled, and of them, 41% admit that gambling has had a negative impact on their university experience.

The initiative will see the three organisations visit university campuses throughout the UK to speak to students

and university staff about the issue of gambling-related harms and, importantly, the training and support services they provide. During a visit to a university, the group will have a visible presence on campus to distribute information leaflets and engage with students. YGAM will also provide free harm

prevention training to university staff, student union officers and safeguarding leads. The training and resources will equip them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to identify signs of gambling-related harm and signpost students who may struggle.

Jimmy Parkin, University and Student Engagement at YGAM said: "Students are a key group for us, and the recent survey findings reiterate the importance of educating our young adults on the risks and harms associated with gambling. This university tour is the first of its kind."

"We hope by collaborating with GAMSTOP and RecoverMe, we can utilise our knowledge and services to ensure students have access to the information, resources

and support they need to enjoy a university experience free from gambling-related harms," he added.

In an era when ads for betting companies can be seen on TV, billboards and plastered on the front of football shirts, it is easier to fall victim to compulsive gambling now than ever before. Gambling addicts fall prey to a feedback loop not found in other addictions, where doing more of the original harmful activity can be seen as a practical solution to the problems it caused in the first place. The Gambling Support University Tour allows for an opportunity to break this cycle of instability and pain, with university students at the centre of the initiative.



Facts and figures We pay £64 per seminar, The Print calculates

Rebecca Fall

A recent calculation has revealed a 2-hour university seminar to cost each student £64.24 on average, to the nearest penny.

The calculation is based on the £9,250 yearly tuition fee for an undergraduate degree, with students receiving a yearly total of 288 spoken teaching hours, assuming time is split equally between digitally delivered lectures and in-person seminars.

A single hour of seminar discussion costs £32.12, with the yearly sum of 144 seminar hours amounting to less than the 168 hours in one week. The findings come as teaching has been further disrupted by regular strikes, social distancing measures and students' reluctance to contribute to discussions following a period of online teaching.

'I can hear the money pouring from my pocket,' one student commented.



Victory for locals as square gets its statue back

Joe Bounds

A famous statue which has sat decrepit since it was vandalised in 2002 has been given a new lease of life thanks to a six-year campaign by local residents.

Woman and Fish was once the celebrated centrepiece of Frank Dobson Square, which commemorates the life and work of the eponymous artist, who counted Henry Moore among his pupils and inspired a generation of abstract and figurative sculptors in the UK.

But since 2002 residents have had to walk past an unsightly mass of moss clad cobble and crumbling paving stone, after Wom-

an and Fish was removed by the council following repeated vandalism.

The tipping point came when the fibre glass structure was beheaded by religious extremists, allegedly objecting to the nude female figure.

Undeterred, neighbours Tara Hudson and Richard Kirker began the Bring Back our Statue Campaign in 2016.

"We met to talk about the empty plinth on our estate and how bad the square looked," Hudson recalled. "We then found out that there used to be this amazing modernist statue of a woman and a fish, by Frank Dobson, a great artist."

They started a petition in



Dilapidated The square as it stands now

2018, and after gaining 245 signatures, got a hearing at a council meeting. Ward councillor Sirajul Islam took up the cause, and a letter in November confirmed the replacement of the statue as part of the Tower Hamlets local infrastructure fund, a yearly budget aiming to rejuvenate the borough.

Blake Keith-Jopp, Dobson's great grandson, manages the artist's legacy and website. He is happy to see his relative's work reinstated: "I think naming a part of London after any influential person should also be met with the required maintenance and upkeep - which this square has lacked."

In consultation with the council, he has offered a choice of two replacements - Woman and Fish and The Nest (a bird feeding chicks). He expects a response in the coming weeks and the new piece to be installed before the end of this year.

Frank Dobson Square lies astride the busy Cambridge Heath Road and is familiar to travellers on the 106 and 254 bus routes.

Constructed in the 1960s as a tribute to the artist, who grew up in nearby Clerkenwell, the square brought "high class art into a working-class area" says Hudson.

She hopes the council will opt for the original design: "I hope that the Square can have one of Dobson's beautiful abstract female figures once more, there is not enough representation of the female form in public art, and it would be great for such a prominent space on the thoroughfare to have a woman there again."

Cast in bronze, the replacement will prove harder to decapitate.

Campaigner Richard Kirker commented: "It will be a great victory for local people when Frank Dobson Square finally gets its Frank Dobson back. The square has been in a very sorry state for nearly 20 years, and it makes the entrance to the estate look terrible. It will help everyone feel proud of where they live."

Queen Mary named the top UK university for social mobility

Maryam Kara

Queen Mary University of London was in November named the highest-ranked university in the UK for social mobility. Recording the incomes of QM alumni at age 30, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), in partnership with the Sutton Trust and the Department of Education, compared graduate earnings with universities across the country. The study found that Oxbridge and other prestigious institutions - that admit students from far more advantaged backgrounds - fail to make as strong an impact in improving the quality of their students lives. The IFS said that "Despite having very high success rates, we see that the elite institutions do very poorly in terms of mobility rates, as they let in so few low-income students." Typical is the University of Bristol, which admits on average only 1.2% of those previously on free school meals (FSM) and as a result, just 0.4% of its students are classified as acquiring 'social mobility'.

Instead, "low- to mid-ranking institutions, often based in London are the best performers in terms of mobility" the IFS noted. QMUL Principal, Professor Colin Bailey, commented he was 'proud' of QM's impact on increasing students chances in the world beyond education. "Such work is intrinsic to our mission and ethos of opening the doors" he said.

QM can expect to see more applications from A Level students from lower income households and lower socioeconomic groups in the coming new year.

At Queen Mary, 23% of undergraduates come from households with less than £10,000 annual income and for many, they are the first to attend university in their families. 90% of students also attend state schools.

Following the achievement, the University received widespread support from individuals on Twitter. Chief Executive of the Barts Health NHS Trust in London, Dame Alwen Williams, expressed she was "proud to work closely ... [in a] joint ambition to be truly inclusive, creating a legacy of equity & aspiration for our people & communities." Another user was shocked that QM was "still being ranked bottom of the Russell Group Universities" in the general tables in light of recent news regarding social mobility.

The results prompt more general reflection that other universities in London who are the better performers in mobility - such as Westminster and Brunel - are not receiving due credit in the University tables for their progress made in improving equality. They work to send a significant share of disadvantaged graduates into high paid jobs. Among the other institutions which ranked within the top ten for social mobility are Middlesex, City University of London, and Greenwich.

UKRAINE APPEAL:

If you are a Queen Mary student and have a connection to the country we would like to hear your thoughts on the current conflict.

Please email editor@theprintnews.co.uk to get in touch.

Long delayed QM graduation finally goes ahead

Maryam Kara

After a long-awaited chance to physically attend graduation, former students from Queen Mary University of London were finally able to celebrate their academic achievements this January. Official celebrations were held at East London's Tobacco Dock as fresh graduates from the class of 2021 attended postponed ceremonies and received recognition for their academic efforts.

In-person ceremonies were cancelled in accordance with covid safety measures after government rules last summer prohibited large gatherings. Instead, virtual celebrations were held from late June to 31st July.

Many were anticipating and looking forward to the January events as a chance to properly mark the end of university, and attendees included those who were supposed to have officially graduated in 2020.

One student from the class of 2020 reflected on her time at QM in a speech at the ceremony. She commented on the struggles faced with online learning and "being limited to just a screen in final year". The drastic change came as the pandemic took a hit on

students' relationships with their studies and warped their educational experience.

"2020 did a complete 180 on all of us and nevertheless, we persisted," she said.

Among the thousands of others whose academic lives saw disruption, some have taken to social media to voice their negative feelings about lockdown periods while remaining proud of their successes and achievements made at Queen Mary.

One former student said: "studying and graduating during a pandemic is by far one of the hardest things I have done." They expressed how proud they felt to have "made it through, made friends and found an institution that cares so deeply about mental health".

Such sentiment created a warm atmosphere across the ten long days of ceremonies occurring from Monday 10th January. Former students from the School of Medicine and Dentistry were the first to toss their caps, wave their diplomas into the air and bump elbows with professors in lieu of the traditional handshake, acknowledging the first milestone in their careers; celebrating with loved ones and online peers whom some had



Class of 2020 Graduates at the ceremony in January (Photo: Martyna Macionczyk)

never met in person before. Final celebrations towards the end of the month saw former Law students also revelling in the joy of graduation and enjoying all of the optimism and uplifting moments that the day had to offer.

However, the new venue attracted mixed reviews. Some felt that they missed out on the 'history and formality' lurking in the walls of QM's Great Hall by celebrating elsewhere.

Records and pictures, show-

ing their history as students at Queen Mary and their accomplishments were before the formalities officially began on the day.

"It was great to see with records and pictures, as well as with the support of my friends, teachers, lecturers and the uni itself, how I came to achieve success, ... (especially as) finishing university was not done in the easiest way," graduate Dilafruz Khalilova said.

Additionally, it was excit-

ing for guests to witness the award of three honorary degrees to Professor Dame Ann Dowling, Stephen Bush, and Martha Cover. The recipients were congratulated for their stellar contributions to the fields of engineering, political journalism, and law. QM will not see an end to achievements with more graduation events to come this year. Scheduled for April, are events for postgraduate and postgraduate-research students.

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signage around campus and an altered website title. Then BLSA President Rankin Choudhury raised his concerns in this paper, warning: "For senior management at Queen Mary to kill the Barts and The London brand, as it is doing slowly but surely, it not only extinguishes Barts and The London, it hurts Queen Mary deeply too. Even the greatest of empires can crumble from within."

The 'empire' began in 1123 when divine inspiration struck Rahere, a prominent royal courtier, and a vision of Saint Bartholomew induced him to construct a hos-

pital in the Smithfield area.

Despite officially merging with Queen Mary in 1995, the medical school has managed to retain a relatively separate identity - with its own societies, campus and, until now, name.

Barts has enjoyed a decorated history as Britain's oldest medical school and has produced some of the leading lights of the medical profession, including Sir Peter Mansfield, MRI pioneer, Dame Parveen Kumar, onetime President of the British Medical Association, and Sir John Vane, an influential pharmacologist - as well as cult heroes such as Python Graham Chap-

man and Queen Drummer Rodger Taylor.

It also claims eight of Queen Mary's nine Nobel Prizes.

Simon Fleming is a Barts alumni, currently working as orthopaedic registrar (trainee surgeon) at University College London Hospital. He undertook his undergraduate, MSc and PhD at Barts and is a member of the Alumni Association - where he first heard about the proposal. He is concerned that the Barts brand lends a prestige recognised in medical circles that Queen Mary lacks.

"The world knows BL to be a centre of excellence for education and research and to rename it is to ignore and un-

dermine the hard work and voices of tens of thousands," he said.

"I hope the petition and the thousands of voices are successful in making QM reconsider. Barts and the London, as a community, identity and global brand can exist alongside and within QM. Queen Mary should listen to its main stakeholders and should allow Barts and the London to continue."

A Queen Mary spokesperson stressed the 'proud history and heritage' of its four founding institutions: St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, London Hospital Medical College, Westfield College and Queen Mary College.

"A strong coher-

ent identity is vital to enable us to operate seamlessly as one organisation, breakdown silos, and to underpin strong collaborative working with others to achieve shared goals," they added.

"Across our university community, we have made considerable progress in consolidating and strengthening our clear identity as a leading Russell Group University over the last few years. We are now exploring avenues in order to complete this work to ensure no possible confusion for students, partners and the public."

The campaign group that want meat off the menu

Plant Based Universities is pressuring UK universities, including Queen Mary, to completely eliminate meat options on campus

Rebecca Fall

2022 has seen a rise in public awareness of plant-based diets, with over 500,000 people worldwide signing up to the Veganuary project and 259 new Vegan menus released across restaurants and fast-food outlets.

Though plant-based diets are approached as an individual choice, the lifestyle is fast becoming an institutional change. Across schools and universities, bans are being pushed forward in policy referendums in an attempt to rid canteen menus of animal

assert that even if fossil fuels were to be 'outrightly banned', the ideal reduction of climate damage 'cannot be achieved' without mass shifts to plant-based diets. PBU's informant data is said to be in line with 'modern climate science', with the predicted point of 'irreversible climate damage' set for 5-8 years ahead. This is the same chronology many students have received from the media and climate movements since early childhood.

Vaania and Alfie recall their initial encounter at a Day of Activism event for

PBU has expressed their support for Barrowford School in Lancashire, which has lately made headlines for its ban on meat and fish in school dinners – not only across menus from outsourced catering companies but in the contents of packed lunches provided by parents. Changes in schools have stemmed from attempts to alter local council policies, who are under increasing pressure from Animal Rebellion and associates ProVeg, an international environmental initiative, to intervene in children's diets.

The focus of PBU, conversely, is not the school but the university campus: 'We need our universities, our great institutions where most environmental science research comes from, to practice what they preach.' PBU's activists have expressed their demands using 'autonomous, student-led movements' active in 9 colleges across the United Kingdom. 'We think we have a good chance with today's student population', a demographic that Vaania approximates 'generally care' about the climate. PBU's strategy is to call for institutional change through policies, making it impossible for the individual to consume meat. Referendums will be launched in universities,

by Vaania's prediction, this will serve to change what is dubbed the 'overtone window' – raising the level of tone of the debate. Through constantly 'engaging' with the mindset of the demographic, PBU's strategists will attempt to covertly alter the rhetoric surrounding the animal agriculture debate by shifting public perception of the PBU proposition from 'radical' to 'acceptable'. Though similar techniques of mass behavioural influence are commonplace in public information schemes and advertising, the approach is arguably underhand, whilst outwardly justifiable in the name of climate science. Now that Veganism has been adopted by the world's leading food companies ('big food'), the isolated drives of radical autonomous groups such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) have been dulled. Today's approach is a far cry from the Vegan rhetoric of even 2017, when the ALF boasted in their regular newsletter the liberation of various farmed animals from cages which were individually rehomed to shelters and children's petting zoos.

It is now known by the Office for National Statistics that 'three-quarters (75%) of adults in Great Britain said they were worried about the impact of climate change.' Nevertheless, PBU spokespeople stress the urgency of their plan to 'get into people's minds that animal agriculture equals the climate crisis'. At the same time, a campaigner vouched in a written statement for the importance of making 'informed choices in our lives about what we endorse with our money', which appears inconsistent, as the decisive agency of the student is being manipulated in the contexts of not only what one buys, but the information one trusts. Eating disorders in students are commonplace

and are celebrated in online circles, though PBU's conviction that their goals are not merely 'beneficial, but necessary' justifies an intervention in diets and self-attitudes. A matter of such exigency has even surpassed the need to implement long-term plans to reduce meat consumption through positive reinforcement. The climate crisis is already 'too far ahead' for a comparatively laid-back nudge theory program, in which Vaania is well-versed and the campaign has given significant and evident consideration.

Whilst the knee-jerk opposition to the movement is quick to mention an infringement of personal freedoms, campaigns such as PBU are only one element of a set of new negotiations of the consumer lifestyle. Notions of 'moral accountability' and 'ethical consumption' have permeated our private lives in every way imaginable; the food one eats, the clothes one wears, the sex one has, the things one says and the presuppositions one holds. Despite the value ascribed to consumptive purity, the narrative tends to be presented by a vocabulary of societal collapse and paranoia. PBU's eschatology exemplifies such a narrative: of humanity's inevitable reckoning with the consequences of wrongs beyond the control of the individual.

“A 100% transition to just and sustainable plant-based catering”

products. This report will focus on the Plant-Based Universities (PBU) campaign. I have engaged PBU spokespeople, campaign liaison Vaania Achuthan and social media head Alfie Hall, both 19, in both a conversational interview and a set of written enquiries, revealing an array of insights.

PBU emerged 5 months ago within the University of London, specifically UCL and KCL colleges, and is demanding a 100% transition to 'just and sustainable plant-based catering' across university campuses by the 2023-4 academic year. Whilst the campaign receives funding from Animal Rebellion, associates of Extinction Rebellion (XR), the campaign has broken away from its parent organisation due to different emphasis on the measures used to prevent damage to the climate. Where XR focuses on opposing the use of fossil fuels, PBU extends its demands for policy change in regards to new rules for university canteens. They

animal rights organisation 'Surge', who published claims that '2019-nCoV [Covid-19] is a direct result of animal exploitation'. Surge's philosophy approaches the spread of Covid-19 as 'just the start' of consequences for the global animal trade, with 'something far worse' on the horizon: 'Humanity is beginning to feel the impact of what we have done to non-human animals.' PBU consequently grew out of a similar campaign; Plant-Based Schools and

“We think we have a good chance with today's student population”

Councils. Campaign liaison Vaania traces the initial formation of PBU to a strategy meeting that targeted meat consumption in primary schools, with an obstacle being the requirement for provisions of dairy milk and tri-weekly meat or poultry portions at lunchtimes. These, according to government guidelines, are crucial for young children's nutrition, though bans are considered by PBU to be a 'fantastic idea'.

though the campaigners' high hopes have already faced defeat at Warwick, where the meat-free proposition lost with a 40% 'for' vote. Vaania notes that a great deal of students didn't care to vote – presumably those who are unpassionate about the issue.

Should they face continued failure in referendums, PBU will resort to 'non-violent direct action'. Though it may 'seem to alienate some individ-



Can art go digital?

Mariangela Aloj

Art is constantly changing. It develops, evolves, moves forward with new styles and movements. With the recent increasing use of technology, a new form of art blossomed: Digital Art.

Digital Art is the practice of using computers, machines and digital tools to create beautiful and often very realistic paintings – though its hyperrealism arguably improved with time with the thriving of 3D depictions.

In the 90s, artists would film videos and upload them to their computers in order to then change the images they had captured, creating collages and moving images. More recently, digital art has become interactive too, meaning for the piece to achieve its ‘purpose’ the spectator has to be involved, breaking the fourth wall between a painting and its audience.

This year, art lovers and

creatives from all around the world were not able to visit museums or go to studios to paint.

It appears that with the free time that came with lockdowns, our creativity increased: people felt the need to express their emotions and discuss this global pandemic through art, to comfort and reach out to others. More art was created, and more people started sharing art online proudly, bringing artists and spectators together in the more accessible online realm.

In March 2019, an Instagram account called “the Covid Art Museum” was created by three art directors from Barcelona: Emma Calvo, José Guerrero and Irene Llorca. The account quickly gained followers, and currently has more than 165k, with hundreds of pieces being submitted by people every month, in hopes of them being shared. In particular pieces representing COVID-19

are seen – masks and gloves, expressing feelings that were felt during lockdown, such as anger, fear and boredom.

Most of the artworks produced, were indeed works of digital art, and the Covid Art Museum will one day hopefully open as a physical exhibition, rather than just being online.

But can digital art be considered to be fine art? What defines the worth of a work? Can it be as valued as any other painting?

It can. “Everydays: The First 5000 Days” testifies digital art is able to become something more. This collage of digital pieces, collected over the past 13 years, was made by Mike Winkelmann, also known as Beeple. He produced one piece of art every day, depicting apocalyptic landscapes, futuristic ideas and often referring to political and social issues as well as pop culture. All the different pieces are

arranged by theme, size and colour, and they notably represent Beeple’s evolution as a digital artist; with time Beeple learned how to work in 3D, and also slowly became a “political cartoonist”, as he described.

When the Covid lockdown started, Winkelmann delved into the complicated world of cryptocurrency, learning more about ‘Non-fungible tokens’ (NFTs) – which allow to digitally certificate ownership, basically. He then had the brilliant idea to sell his digital artwork with an NFT, realising that people would be willing to pay, a lot.

“Everydays: The First 5000 Days” was sold for \$69,346,250 at auction, and became the first “purely digital artwork” offered at Christie’s. This is promising for digital artists who want to get income out of their hobbies and creativity, especially the ones who have been strug-

gling to sell their art safely on the internet.

This digital aspect is a promise that art can be even more widely appreciated by people who are quite literally all around the world, and for that we can expect digital art to grow further and provide new diverse ways of looking at the world.

Beeple has become another inspiration for young digital artists, who will hopefully be encouraged to continue sharing their work in this new, innovative, and easily accessible way.

A trip to the QM cafe

Queen Mary quietly opened a new café: letters correspondent Rebecca Fall investigates



Rebecca Fall

I spy the somber black visage of the new Queen Mary Café a second too late as the 25 bus passes it, and I hurry to alight amidst the traveling crowd. Once free, standing on the leaf-scattered pavement, I am struck by the height and beauty of a palatial tower topping the stunted coffee-peddling establishment. This is an office building named Department W, and it makes the café appear to have somehow emerged from a bleaker underground realm in the hopes of one day joining Dept W in a serene union of sunlit glory. The café is as far as I can tell successful in its ascension from Hell, though there remains a suspicion that it is poking fun at its own architectural ‘hat’ as it were.

This place is a beacon of minimalism and honesty. A still-dusty glass frontage gives way to a surprisingly spacious interior, which consists of a laid-back, modern synergy of two seating styles. Wide circular tables, surrounded by a flowing entourage of faux-wooden upholstered chairs, calm the ner-

vous glamour of a built-in rank of angular wooden ‘booths’. These sport imaginably sticky leather couch seats, which seem to be the preferred choice of the café’s customers. Exposed pipes and hanging lights vaguely reminiscent of hairdressers’ heat-setting helmets reign the matte black ceiling. Even though five of them have been bunged into the same corner, the presence of six leafy plants is unobtrusive and adds a subtle, necessary texture to the environment.

I approach the displays of ‘home-made food’ with a cautious en-

“A beacon of minimalism and honesty”

thusiasm, and am soon seduced by an array of genuinely tempting bagels at temptingly genuine prices. Their glazed top halves are tilted backwards with a gentlemanly quirkiness revealing cosily enmeshed layers of smoked salmon, cheese and spinach, and I am

forced to regain my composure. I am here for business only. There is an unpretentious approach evident in the food and drink menus despite the café’s predictable submission to the supposed absolute necessity of certain hipster provisions; I am unimpressed by the insistent niche complexity of some of the boxed meals. I order a ‘cappuchino’ (sic) as per menu indication, which is priced at a careful £2.50. It comes in a disposable cardboard cup.

This is a trend that has recently emerged in particularly student-focused ‘coffee shops’, and it seems to the over-cafeinated, anxious reporter that the cardboard cup threatens to soon usurp the mug in all but greasy-spoons and restaurants. Understandably, as a barmaid myself in a dishwasherless establishment, it is far preferable to avoid the dirge of doing the washing-up, though I begin to question amongst the towers of cardboard porridge and cellophane vegan chicken whether anything in this café can actually be served on a real plate. Coffee shops seem to have forsaken the

comfort of the customer in the interests of transient convenience, and so the takeaway is now identical to the eat-in experience. It doesn’t matter how long you stay or if you stay at all, and it certainly doesn’t matter if you come back. There seems to be no interest in attracting regular patrons based on their homely familiarity with the place, as is further evident in the advertising screens flashing behind the till which extol the virtues of the outsourced Paddy and Scott’s coffee. The brand, also represented on a stack of loyalty cards and the chalkboard outside, bears a stronger presence than the generically named café itself. Nonetheless, this functionalism is admirable. The café has been open for just two months, the friendly barista informs me, (or ‘three if you count the opening month’ which I am told consisted of an exclusively staff-only patronage). After chatting to the staff, who are really, really nice, I find myself sat at one of the circular tables, stirring white sugar into my lusciously foamed drink. Sunlight streams in through the

glass as Toto’s Africa plays over the radio, followed by a Christmas song. I realise with surprise that I am unenraged. I am one with the modern world, tapping suavely at my laptop keyboard.

The Verdict:

The Queen Mary Café trumps every on-campus café I have attended. It is welcoming and harmonious, suited perfectly to studying and quiet socialising. I only wish it would stay open later, since though I mistakenly hurried to a cancelled 3pm seminar, my instinct upon facing such pedagogical betrayal was to return to the Café. This is my new safe space. I would thoroughly recommend this fine establishment.

- You can visit the Queen Mary Cafe for yourself at 81 Mile End Road, Bethnal Green, E1 4UJ

Year of the Tiger off to a roaring start

Farrah and Yashna explore what Chinese New Year has to offer

Farrah Farnejad & Yashna Khatry

You may have seen red Chinese lanterns and paper cuttings hanging in windows and along streets across London. If you were unsure of what this were for, the decorations marked Chinese New Year, celebrated on Tuesday the 1st of February 2022.

What is it?

Chinese New Year is a festival that celebrates the beginning of a new year on the traditional solar and lunisolar Chinese calendar. This celebration is also referred to as the "Lunar New Year." This year, the festival started on the 1st of February and ended on the 15th of February, marked by the Chinese Lantern Festival. This year is the year of the Tiger, which comes from the Chinese zodiac, and is considered the king of all beasts. Those who are born in the year of the tiger are thought to be very loyal to their family and have strong relationships with other people in their life.

Who celebrates?

Chinese New Year is celebrated by millions of people worldwide, mainly in the countries of China, Vietnam, North and South Korea, Mongolia, and other parts of Asia.

Why?

This celebration consists of removing the old and bad, and

welcoming the good and new. It is a time to honour the heavenly gods, ancestors and the household, whilst exorcising evil spirits and praying for good harvest.

When does it occur?

As Chinese New Year, sometimes called Lunar New Year, depends on the moon, the date changes each year. However, it always falls between the 21st of January and 20th of February.

How to celebrate?

Chinese New Year's celebrations start on the eve of the New Year and finish on the 15th day, with children and adults joining in on the sixteen days of fun and festivity. On New Year's Eve, a family dinner, arguably the most significant component of the festival, occurs. Referred to as 'reunion dinner', the festivity allows the whole family to come together. As a result, Chinese New Year is considered the world's largest human migration, with three billion trips made across China in 2019. With the family together, gifts are exchanged. Children and unmarried relatives receive red envelopes containing money. Finally, the celebrations conclude on the 15th day of the New Year, the Lantern Festival. The event is jam-packed with engaging activities, from stilt performances to the renowned lion and dragon dances.



Chinese dumplings are a popular dish at New Year (Photo: Imagesplash)

Food:

It would be remiss not to mention the assortment of food items prepared and consumed during the celebrations. The most famous Chinese New Year dish has to be dumplings (Jiaozi), but these are primarily enjoyed in the North. Southerners are more likely to snack on sweet rice balls (Tangyuan). The pronunciation and round shape of the food are associated with reunion and being together. That's right, not only are these foods mouth-wateringly good, but they also have a symbolic significance! An essential part of the reunion dinner is fish, whether carp or catfish, as the Chinese word for fish (Yú) sounds like 'surplus' and symbolises abundance. Moreover, the head of the fish is placed towards elders or dis-

tinguished guests as a sign of respect. Additionally, the two people facing the head and tail of the fish must drink together. Deserts are just as emblematic and delicious, with glutinous rice cakes (Niángāo) loved by the nation during this time of the year. The desert symbolises a higher income or promotion as it sounds like 'year high' in Chinese.

Events this year:

This Chinese New Year, people flocked to Chinatown, where, despite the lack of parade due to COVID-19, they were able to bask in the assemblage of red banners and decorations. However, there was an online programme of events where traditional Chinese dragon dancers performed. The London Eye illu-

minated in gold and red, and the dancers performed in front of the London Eye. Chinese Dragons are used as they are luck-bringers, and Dragon Dancers are performed to scare away evil spirits. Other events include the National Maritime Museum's Lunar New Year celebrations (including lion dancing, fan making and mah-jong) and the Museum of London Docklands' family-friendly activities and performances.

We hope you tuned into Chinese New Year this year and enjoyed the celebration! If not then no worries! Next year is the year of the Rabbit, which will occur on Sunday the 22nd of January. Until then, "Xīnnián hǎo," which means 'New Year Goodness' or 'Good New Year' in Mandarin!

Faces of QM

D'rel Gayle & Mehek Gupta

1. Queen Mary Solidarity Students

What's personally motivating you to support the strikes?

"I saw inequality! That's the main reason. I also many structural struggles and things that students have the power to fix and should fix. It's time to take action."

Do you feel a connection between students and staff?

"Yes because standing in solidarity with the staff means we connect and understand the staff members and connect through relatability." Another added: "I think there's a connection but there's not enough fire from the students. There hasn't been a realisation of how much our idleness contributes."

Favourite interaction on the picket?

"When I was handing out booklets, a group of guys stopped to talk to me and I told them about the 100% pay reductions and [pay] gaps. They were so shocked and one guy in particular was so mad! They had no idea and said immediately when they get home, they will email The Principal and tell as many people as they can about it. That's what's needed!"



(Photo: QM Solidarity Students)

Do you feel a sense of solidarity or division during the strikes?

Solidarity for sure because even though there are some staff who are not striking and some students who don't agree with the strikes, the solidarity shines through more than division for sure. Light always triumphs.

2. Ananya Mankoo



Ananya is an international student from India

What has been the best thing that's happened to you since you've moved?

Well, I honestly can't start off with one thing because it's not only one thing that has happened. My life in India is very different now with the friends I've met or study-wise, uni work or anything; all of it has been amazing. If I had to put it down to one sentence, I've felt more independent than I ever was in India and that has been a great feeling.

Is that the way you have grown the most since moving?

Yeah! Definitely. When I was in India, we were in a very sheltered situation back home because we had our parents to rely on and a whole familiar environment. Now, you have to do everything on your own, you have to build your own network. You meet others and everything so that's one way.

What's your favourite thing about being away from home?

The same thing really, I've learned to do things on my own. Earlier I'd be like, "Mama, tell me how to do this?!" And now I'm just like, "Oh, I can do this! I don't have to worry about it."

What or who do you miss the most from back home?

My dog! (laughs) My dog, my mum and my dad.

If you could bring one thing from india that would make your life here better, what would it be?

My dog!! (laughs)

And lastly, where do you enjoy being more?

That's a difficult one (laughs). Both the places have their perks and disadvantages. But I would say now, the UK feels like more of a home than India does!

3. Jack Favero

Jack in 'Queen Mary Angels'

What's your role in the cheer team?

"I am a backspot on the cheerleading team, which means that I make sure that the stunts don't fall, nobody gets hurt. Basically, it's the power of the group."

What's the most fun part of being a cheerleader?

"I get to hang out with these awesome people. Becomes like family at some point. And to a certain extent, it becomes less about the sport and about having fun with your friends."

What has been your biggest accomplishment as a team?

"Has to be getting 2nd place at the National Cheerleading Competition and we're aiming for 1st place at the next one next month. Wish us luck I guess, because we're doing amazingly well."

Do you feel a stereotype exists about being a male cheerleader within the team?

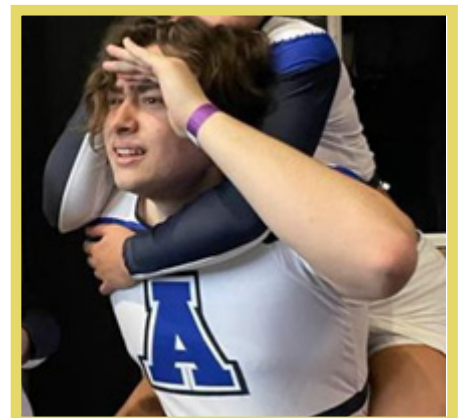
"Yes, there does exist a stereotype where male cheerleaders are 'definitely gay' and I don't agree with that. All the guys on my team are very straight. It's a very dumb stereotype wish progresses this narrative that only girls can do cheerleading. Nobody that I know of stands for that."

What about outside?

"It's very hard because, when you walk outside with a cheerleading jacket on, people automatically assume that you're gay. It's a double-edged sword because people don't usually come up and talk to you about it but then sometimes, chuds will come up to you and say cheerleading means you're gay and then they think 'Oh its easy, I can do it. I can lift girls.' Their only thought is I get to be a guy in a group full of girls."

How have you adapted to help overcome this?

"What I've been told and what I've been taught is to not care what other people think. All I need is my team to accept me and they have done."



The Print Valentine's Writing Competition

Thank you to everybody who entered this month's writing competition, and also to the QMUL English Society for organising it. Congratulations **Zehra Azim** for winning first place with **'Summer Moon'**.

We loved the imagery and language in this poem. Metaphors weave together to blur the lines between the physical and the spiritual aspects of romance, making for a cosmic love story. It's all bound together by a creative rhyme scheme, and the impactful final stanza is a satisfying end which gives the tale closure. Well done!



Winner: Summer Moon

By Zehra Azim

My heart is like a desert,
On a summer night in June;
And like a yearning traveller,
You came trudging through the dunes

My body caught the moonlight,
Wherever your fingers brushed
The milky canvas of my skin,
And smeared me with stardust

Your voice, a saccharine lullaby -
Hummed on as I serenaded;
The wind, it shushed its whispers
as,
Through a silent spring, we waded

Atop a lilac desert bloom,
Bathed in the dusty moonshine;
The stars were rendered breathless
When your lips coalesced with mine

I closed my eyes and lost myself
In berry-flavoured bliss;
Sank in the shady oasis
Of your electric kiss

As you slowly traced constellations,
On my goosebump-spangled arms;
We drowned in a sea of drunken
dreams;
In the quicksand of luscious warmth

Hung in the velvety firmament,
Of that summer night in June -
I went from being a shooting star,
To being the summer moon



Review: Black Country, New Road Ants from Up There

Alex Adkins

Following their 2021 breakthrough debut, 'For the First Time', Cambridgeshire-based outfit Black Country, New Road defined themselves as one of the most inventive and exciting bands in the current wave of envelope-pushing post punk bands, including Black Midi, Shame and Squid.

Combining anxious lyricism with unnerving instrumental timbre and janky, abrasive guitar tones, fusion-inspired brass sections and klezmer-style drum patterns, tracks such as 'Sunglasses', 'Track X' and 'Athens, France' became anthems for 'sad boi' post-punk enthusiasts that year.

With this in mind, expectations for their follow-up LP, *Ants from Up There*, were understandably high. The album's first few singles, 'Concorde', 'Chaos Space Marine', 'Bread Song' and 'Snow Globes' all seem to convey a distinct new sonic direction for the band. Con-

corde's lazy, swung rhythm and Bread Song's use of a clean, almost acoustic guitar tone, are indicative of BCNR's embracement of a more melodic and early-2000s indie-pop inspired sound. Chaos Space Marine also introduces several instrumental elements that were previously unheard on the band's prior material. Featuring a frantic piano line after a bright klezmer opener, the optimism is quickly undercut by front man Isaac Wood's haunting vo-

"A new sonic direction for the band"

cal passage before transitioning into a bittersweet, yet uplifting chorus which sounds as if it's been sampled from an early Killers record: "So I'm leaving this body, and I'm never coming home again. I'll bury the ashes, between the window and the kingdom of men".

It's not just Chaos Space Marine

where this indie influence can be heard. One of the album's standout tracks, 'Good Will Hunting', features infectiously catchy electric guitar riffs throughout the verses, building up to an explosive outro that's rhythmically reminiscent of BCNR's recent cover of MGMT's 'Time to Pretend'. The soothing backing vocals provided by violinist Georgia Ellory and the broader acoustic timbre recreates a sound not entirely dissimilar to early Arcade Fire LPs,

particularly *Funeral*. The track's lyrics especially reflect the melancholically tongue-and-cheek style that Wood pursues throughout the album: "She had Billie Eilish Style, Moving to Berlin for a little while, Tryna find something to hold on to, Never texts me nothing, But she wants to tell me, She's not that

hard to find" - echoing the former front man's longing for co-dependency, a theme that runs throughout the album.

The final three tracks of *Ants from Up There* take up the lion's share of the total 58-minute long run time. Starting with what is the album's most emotionally resonant track 'The Place Where He Inserted the Blade'. This seven-minute long ballad has a rough, rural sound made possible through the woodwind arrangements and heavy use of a discordant piano line. The lyrics centre on Wood's attempted reconciliation of his anxieties surrounding the various un-comfortabilities of intimacy and his unending desire for the domesticity, depicted through the repeated refrain - "Oh, but everytime I try to make lunch for anyone else, in my head, I end up dreaming of you" - as well as the plentiful food metaphors throughout the track.

'Basketball Shoes', offers an explosive finale to an otherwise subdued

and instrumentally minimal record. The three-part odyssey is the heaviest on the album, discordant saxophones, droning basslines and gritty guitar tones underpin some of Wood's most poignant lyrics on the album which successfully tie together the key themes of despair and longing on *Ants from Up There*, "Your generous loan to me, your crippling interest."

In the wake of Wood's recent departure from Black Country, New Road and the confirmation that the band will continue without their former frontman. *Ants from Up There* signals a new beginning for the experimental post-punk outfit, whilst building upon the greatest qualities of their 2021 debut. For fans of modern experimental rock, innovative indie-inspired sounds or sophisticated and eclectic instrumentals, I'd highly recommend *Ants from Up There* - one of the most impressive albums released so far this year.

Review: Euphoria. What are we to do with you?

Thomas Messner dissects the controversial new American series

Thomas Messner

For an ostensibly straightforward teen drama, HBO's 'Euphoria' moonlights under many guises: a raw addiction drama; a lurid, overheated psychosexual soap opera; a repository for a seemingly bottomless supply of ornate, glitter-doused make-up looks; a prolonged music video for an experimental Labrinth concept album.

Above all, Euphoria is a contradiction, striving for earnest empathy with its wayward protagonists while outfitting them with the sticky neon glow and scant clothing of leering exploitation. To watch any given episode of Euphoria is not only to receive a heady dose of its meme-ready aesthetic gaudiness, but to oscillate wildly from the sincere to the sleazy; from soul-baring to shock tactics. When a character rages, "It's like you have a split personality disorder!", it's hard not to apply it to the show itself, and never was this divide clearer than in two pandemic-imposed bottle episodes created to bridge the gap between seasons. In the first, troubled teen drug addict Rue (Zendaya) spent Christmas Eve with her tough love sponsor Ali (the invaluable Colman Domingo), with the latter on a night-long mission to show his young charge the value of forgiveness (in its way, the whole thing was rather festive). The second followed the new girl in town, and Rue's love interest, Jules (Hunter Schafer) to therapy for a fraught confrontation with past and ongoing trauma. In their quiet minimalism, the two specials seemed the polar opposite of the show they heralded from, yet they stood as welcome

proof of the tender soul hidden behind the copious excess. They also raised an exciting possibility: if Euphoria was capable of slamming its foot on the brakes for two whole hours of introspection, perhaps it could do it again, and with greater frequency. Might creator Sam Levinson take this more mature iteration of the series forward, fully realising the emotional depths within? Well, three episodes into season 2, the jury's out.

In the dreamy stretch of Nowheresville California where Euphoria takes place, every step forward is an open invitation to take another five back. Thus, at the outset of season 2, characters and creators alike prove much more comfortable substituting the appearance of change for the real deal. Rue and Jules have given a real relationship a shot, but Rue is still using behind her loved ones' backs. The improbably adorable drug dealer Fezco (Angus Cloud) has survived a narrow brush with death and caught feelings for Rue's introverted former bestie (Maude Apatow), but is still in way over his head with dangerous forces. And evil mega jock Nate Jacobs (Jacob Elordi) has suffered a much-deserved setback, but it has only served to make him even more insufferable in the long run.

Ah, Nate. The hulking, brooding, very boring antagonist of whom Euphoria, for some reason, simply cannot get enough. Viewers may recall that in the first season, a tape of an, uh, illicit encounter between Nate's bad dad (Eric Dane) and Jules was discovered by Nate's ex in a book in his bedroom (a moment that carried the amusing implication

that the Jacobs clan had been undone by the simple fact that there is no way in hell Nate would ever read a book). Thus, a sizable chunk of these new episodes is spent on father and son's very embarrassing quest to find their missing family heirloom. Many questions are raised in the process: will either Nate or his dad honestly reckon with his suppressed queer desires? Will they just kiss already? Most pressing of all, do I care? This storyline has long epitomised all of Euphoria's very worst traits, from its lurid exhibitionism to the silliness of its plotting and the overweening interest in a character who does not warrant the closer look. In Levinson's conception, Nate is an unpersuasive cocktail of the masculine hyper aggression of Biff Tannen, the plotting genius of a teenage Lex Luthor, and least convincingly – and indeed, most problematically – the tortured romanticism of Edward Cullen.

As Nate sets his sights on a new target (Sydney Sweeney's Cassie is stranded in the truly thankless role of being leered at by Nate and the camera in equal measure) the series steers straight from the overcooked into the outright pornographic.

In moments like that – and they are, dispiritingly, plentiful – it's easy to question what it is about Euphoria that keeps one coming back in spite of them. Off the top of

one's head, there are a few candidates. There's the genuine mad audacity of the series' visuals, for one. The entirety of this second season was shot on an essentially moribund 35mm film stock, meaning nary a moment of this ostensible high school drama passes that isn't burning up money for no damn reason other than looking cool.

There's a commitment in it that one can respect. There's also the playfully unpredictable humorous streak in the otherwise bleak series, which can see the show transformed on a dime into a meta mockumentary or cop show pastiche. But the real answer is – and I suspect, will remain so through the show's lifespan – Zendaya and

“The storytelling feels suspended on the edge of a ravine, with every regaining of balance swiftly followed by a careen over the edge”

Hunter Schafer, who remain the heart and soul of the whole enterprise. There is a specificity and genuine depth of feeling to Rue's battle with addiction that the surrounding series has never matched. Part of the reason for this may be that Rue is the only character in Euphoria's ensemble of teens played by twentysomethings who genuinely seems like a kid. Instead of foregrounding the existential angst (though

there's plenty of that to go around), Zendaya consistently leans into the character's relatable, shambling anxiety and goofy humour, amplifying the innate tragedy of her predicament in the process. The bright charisma of Schafer continues to provide a welcome counterbalance, though the actress has so far been disappointingly sidelined in the new episodes, with Jules largely playing second fiddle to a new character, a pot-stirring prankster played by Dominic Fike.

In some respects, the dynamic between Euphoria and its audience can't help but recall Rue's dynamic with her loved ones. They long for her to get better because they know she can be, though they often find themselves on the verge of giving up, resigned to the promise of improvement being just another way to get their hopes shattered. However, therein is a key component of what makes Euphoria so oddly addicting. The series' storytelling feels constantly suspended on the edge of a ravine, with every regaining of balance with an inspired scene swiftly followed by a careen over the edge with a terrible one. This very unevenness may be the most authentically adolescent thing about it. The series is as brashly, petulantly immature as any of its angsty subjects (not to mention just as boner-obsessed), but there's heart underneath. Still, Euphoria's most genuinely transporting moments come when the restless camera finally sits still. To paraphrase a line from the series, in moments like that all the chaos fades away, and nothing matters but the person in front of you.

Alice Cumin: The Productivity Problem

Alice says we should think like Billy Joel.

Imagine you get an extra hour each day. An extra hour to complete that to-do list, polish off that essay, or clean your kitchen. At long last, you would be free of stress and anxiety. Although it's nice to fantasize, let's be honest, we'd spend that extra hour piling on new things, setting higher expectations, and writing longer to-do lists.

That is the problem with productivity culture. We have internalized the idea that our self-fulfillment should rely on professional and personal goals. Productivity has almost become a sign of social status – think of the thousands of influencers promoting this romanticized 'hustle' mentality.

Leisure and idleness used to be signs of wealth and comfort. 18th century nobility would happily flaunt their ability to do absolutely nothing.

Now it's the opposite. As UCL professor Dr Gershuny puts it: "business is a badge of honor." When we reply to the question "how have you been?" with "Very busy, too busy", it almost feels like an implicit brag.

I'm not arguing against being productive. Achieving goals and fulfilling potential is a fantastic feeling and can do wonders for wellbeing. What I take issue with is the perpetual mindset of 'not doing enough.' For students specifically, it's not enough to achieve high grades – you also have to keep your flat clean, drink a ridiculous amount of water, and balance your finances – all while getting enough sleep! It is no wonder a 2018 study from the University of Bath conducted on 40,000 students concluded that young people today present the highest levels of perfectionism than any other generation. Psychologists link this to high records of anxiety, depression, and burn outs within 16 to 25 year olds.

What are we to do? How do you avoid this deeply entrenched productive culture? Aside from deactivating all social media accounts and moving to a farm somewhere in the south of France (which, let's face it, we've all thought of doing) there's no permanent escape. What we can do is find a balance between slothing around the living room and being a productivity machine, heading for a burn out before the age of 25.

A first step is reminding yourself just how dangerous comparison can be: another person's success does not limit your own. Remember the old cliché that 'life isn't a race' and you are allowed to take your time and not rush through what should be some of your best years. Finally, celebrate yourself. Being your own worst critic needs to be balanced out by also being your own cheerleader.

Or as Billy Joel puts it: "Slow down you crazy child, you're so ambitious for a juvenile."

The fact is he's absolutely right. Although high productivity probably will take you further in achieving your goals, maybe it's time to reassess if a dream is worth sacrificing your own happiness and wellbeing for.

Laura Vanaga: Can Elon Musk Be My Best Bud?

Laura discusses how to navigate the crazy world of stocks and space.

Have you heard of Elon Musk? Kind of an edgy name, "Elon" meaning oak tree and "musk" meaning deer scent. He might sound like a nature lover, but he and his ideas are anything but natural. Starting with stocks, the most supernatural of them all.

Stocks are everywhere. It is hard to deny their importance in the world's economy – allowing the expansion of large corporations, driving and influencing recessions, inflations, personal profits and smart investments. They are the tell-tale sign of financial crises or substantial monetary gains. So, yes, they are important and worth analyzing and investing in, but please let's keep it on a personal level.

Conversations about any topic you know nothing about are draining and, well, sad (unless you learn to admit to the existing void of ignorance and fight to fill it). However, I find that conversations that go into finance and stocks leave me feeling extra sad because it is presented as such an important topic and not knowing anything about it feels like a sin. Sorry, priest.

People around me, including myself, admit that our knowledge about the current stock market is nonexistent, yet it feels harder to confess than not knowing much about other topics.

Something else that is natural and yet so hard to grasp, as it is literally way out there, is space. These highly elite, secretive, unreachable organizations like NASA and ESA are now top investments for the world's wealthiest like Richard Branson, Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and many others – the explorers of space. All the YouTube lives of rocket launchings and the lotteries to get a ticket to space (even I tried one, unlucky) are incredible, yet we often miss the point – why are we, humans, doing this?

This poses a moral dilemma of sorts: to do something cool or to do real and valuable science and exploration? Essentially, they are collecting samples, pushing engineering innovations and delivering cargo to space stations. All well and good, but the social media output reflects a display that sometimes feels a bit too gamesome.

As they say, World War III will be caused by crypto and fought in space. Therefore, one must ask oneself – will I be of assistance?

Lance Arrighi: Zemmour and national identity

Zemmour is the symptom of a national crisis; he should not pass as a cure, argues French international student Lance Arrighi

It has become evident, particularly following the 'gilets jaunes' debacle, that a considerable proportion of the French population feels alienated from the Parisian epicentre and blatantly ignored by moderate politics. As a friend, T. Camara, brilliantly put it: 'the May 68' revolt sowed the seeds of social discord rather than those of fraternity'. But what does this hellish state of unrest in a country that was once a beacon of liberty and order tell us about the dwindling notion of national belonging?

In the past, western countries were inclined to propose a clear national model. They took pride in the handful of deeply-rooted principles that characterised their cultures and made them more or less attractive to the external observer. The French peasantry, mistreated though they were, united under a tyrannical figure and flag. However, post-modern notions of morality have made the concepts of universalism and acceptance the upmost concerns of leaders, granting them little space to build a distinct notion of what it means to be French, or British; and those who were once oppressed but united have lost the latter. It is only natural that a figurehead for the notion of being French would leap out of the rubble; someone the provincial ploughman could feel represented by, someone to tell him that he will always remain the essence of 'true' France and the backbone of the country. This observation of the dissipating identity of nations was brought to the political table by Eric Zemmour. It is not only potent, but perhaps the most important issue facing France today. The streets are swarmed with people who feel that they do not belong and division wreaks havoc. More often than not, if one were to ask a Frenchman of African descent where he feels his home is, he would answer in a heartbeat with the name of his country of origin. However, once the observation has been made, an honest thinker tries to address what is at the root of it, asking questions such as: 'What is it that makes our country so unattractive that a Frenchman (whose family may have moved to France generations ago) resides there for nothing more than economic prosperity, and not in order to be French? Is the French model so profoundly corroded that it has become repulsive? Naturally, the answers are as complex as the plethora of reasons that makes such questions relevant; and a presidential candidate scarcely has the resolve to explain such things to the general public.

As a result, characters such as Mr Zemmour opportunistically step forward, proposing solutions that are misleadingly simple to attract the uneducated. A good example is his emphatic proposition of a net-zero immigration system which, as well as being impracticable, does not strike at the root of the issue: the division exists largely between fellow Frenchmen. The ones whom he attempts to blame for the shipwreck were born on French soil, to French parents. This, of course, is much more difficult to admit; and it means that the issue is more deeply ingrained than a populist with seemingly unambiguous answers to a crisis that originated centuries ago would have us believe. Mr Zemmour is the culmination of the profound helplessness that cripples the hope of the forgotten citizen, who feels that the country he once belonged to is vanishing in a great cloud of neo-liberal thought. By virtue of being the only candidate to acknowledge this momentous issue, he takes the liberty to victimise himself and his supporters whilst proposing radical solutions which he knows to be beriddled with utter falsehoods.

*This article was published with several editorial mistakes in our print edition, which have been amended here.

The science of valentine's day

Laura Vanaga

Love to hate it or hate to love it, nevertheless, Valentine's Day is a thing. For many of us it may mean nothing, while others prefer to perform a comprehensive taxonomy on what their love and relationships mean on this day. With all the glorification and stigmas bubbled around this abstract celebration, there is some truth and ideas to shovel out of what this commercialized love day embeds.

Love – an evolutionary minx

How do we love? Most people are not able to describe what "love" is, but some scientists have tried to decode what causes us this sensation, suggesting that being in love might be an evolutionary survival mechanism. Humans have evolved to live in groups for support, shared resources and safety but in these groups, people have also learnt to abide to hierarchy, compromise and self-sacrifice for kin so it is not always "home, sweet home". This "love" to-

wards friends, family, lovers might have arisen for the benefit of maintaining those relationships and enjoying the safety of group settings.

When we meet someone, who might be the "one" or just interesting "someone", our bodies release and respond to different neurochemicals. 'Oxytocin' creates the initial attraction bond as it hushes the fear center of brain to make you more willing and able to approach and explore this person. If done so, dopamine is released as a reward for making this step and together with oxytocin it makes the brain more plastic to create new memories about and with this person. As the dopamine reward feeling is so good, it gets further exploited by wanting to meet and talk to this person more and more. After getting past this initial lust and dizziness of the liked person, our serotonin levels drop, causing the usual mental symptoms like over-thinking and obsession which may even lead to physical ones like loss of appetite or sleep. If we get further in the relationship, the

effects of oxytocin lust wear off, but they are replaced by beta-endorphins, that ensure a long-term commitment by creating an addictive (endorphin etymology being "within morphine") bond with the person.

Hence, if things are to go south, the break-up is felt on both an instinctive loss of lust level as well as conscious loss of an addictive contact, like going sober. Hence, relapse and "on-and-off" is easy due to withdrawal like symptoms.

Don't look a gift horse in the mouth

With the biological part over, Valentine's Day continues its games with psyche. It can be so strongly pushed upon us that we want to resist it. Resistance to commercialized Valentine's Day and themed consumerism meshes with movements of individualism and actively or passively seeking alternative and more personal ways, giving rise to anti-materialism. It has also unnecessarily associated itself with symbolic items like

hearts, chocolate, flowers that bear no meaning to the idea of affection (however a bit of dark chocolate, red wine and feeling loved any day are all good for your heart's health!). Yet, gift giving on Valentine's Day may be overly judged, as gifting can solidify an existing contact or serve as a confidence push to admit feelings. On the other hand, for those who are not ready, gifting on this day may be too much of a commitment sign and anything given may be misinterpreted. So, the best but overused suggestion would be "go with your gut."

Love during covid

There are humorous ways on how to turn this day in pandemic into something useful and positive. For example, a parody take on our beloved Pfizer vaccines recommends "Don't just be her somebody – be her antibody" as a vaccination encouragement, and, hey, vaccinating together would for sure hit anyone's top 10 most memorable dates. 14th of February is also known as the National Impotence Day, 20 years ago serving as a com-

mercial platform for Pfizer to commercialize their Viagra pills in the UK. Whatever the date plans, the topic of vaccination would inevitably come up, and in this case, it is possible to utilize that term coined by our good friend Charles 'Dar-win-ing' or choose a mate based on their belief in vaccine science. The pandemic has given us new criteria by which to shuffle potential love interests.

Though often scrutinized, Valentine's Day doesn't have to take its superficial form. In Finland, 14th of February is known as *Ystävänpäivä*, or Friend's Day, with absolutely no pressure on lovey-dovey stuff. TV has introduced alternatives like 'Galentine's day' and the 21st century has emphasized the importance of self-love and self-care. So, whatever your love status or opinion on this celebration, it truly is just a day on the calendar.

Pick me!

Inaaya Yousef

Pick me, pick me, pick me. If you've not been on social media, or out in public, in the last year, allow me to explain this infamous phrase.

The term 'pick me' refers to a woman who intentionally presents 'desirable traits' in order to seek approval from a man. In her resolve to seek said approval, she may put down the women around her or just women in general in order to set herself aside from the mind forged manacles of femininity. Society has poisoned women against women. In order to be respected by a man you must betray your own, so he does not lump you in with the rest of the

hysterical feminists. The 'pick me' girl is whatever and whoever you want her to be – she will show you every version of yourself.

To be the friend of a 'pick me' is an entirely different, degrading experience. The friend whom you pull into a warm embrace, would distance herself from you – should you step out of line with "the boys". She is unable to separate her 'friend' from her 'competition' due to the fact that she has been taught to view all women as competition.

'Comply with the needs and wants of men.' 'Good girls don't raise their voices, they're seen and not heard.' 'Do not disagree with a man if he is kind to you.' They dismiss his disregard for women whom he deems unattractive.

A fitting feminist theory is the concept that, under the patriarchal society, women can only exist to satisfy the male gaze.

Each subtle subconscious movement is due to the underlying need to appease men. The male gaze is represented in so much around us: film, literature, photography. It was perceived that if a woman ever presented herself as liberated and independent, she would appear less appealing to male suitors. Wollstonecraft proclaims: 'The woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will... become the friend, and not the humble dependant of her husband.' Ideologies such as this that are perpetuated by today's society, manipulate women into the suppression of their mind and femininity. The unfortunate spinster, who you are warned not to become, is a far less terrifying fate than the shell of the woman you could have become. As young women we are told stories of princesses being rescued by the prince and having to com-

pete and undermine her fellow female characters in order to win the prince. Why are men always framed as the prize? Women are continually pitted against each other by society, so that they are able to win the affections of a man. When the term 'pick me' first began circulating the internet, it sparked a realisation. Every girl had to admit that at one moment or another they had demonstrated 'pick me' behaviour. Why? Because the need to placate men is so deeply engrained in society, that it has been subconsciously adapted into vicious cycles that we must now release ourselves from. But of course, like with anything, the internet went too far with the concept. A girl posting a video playing football with a boy would elicit hate and death threats with the words 'pick me' plastered all over the comments. People would then take it upon themselves to

police every video posted by a woman that wasn't draped in feminine energy, failing to realise they were continuing the cycle.

The media too continually commodifies and commercialises feminism with the production of merchandise, to placate women's desire for female empowerment. This ultimately does nothing for women's liberation. Mainstream liberal feminism is preventing women's liberation from the patriarchy, on account of the fact that it promotes the idea that women can live under the patriarchy – which is not a resolution. Real feminism can only be achieved through dismantling the system altogether. Real feminism is intersectional. "You can't use the master's tools to bring down the master's house" – Audre Lorde.

The Black Hole ●

Social media, fast fashion, consumerism.

Thalia Kalai

Tik Tok is the most consumed form of social media. It has the most downloads of any social media app, and its users average at least one hour on the platform every day. That's one hour of undisturbed scrolling through short-form videos, designed to keep us engaged. Its algorithm develops an intricate awareness of the user, and presents videos meant to keep us stimulated so that we don't stop. Tik Tok is a self-perpetuating cycle of constant consumption.

Fashion trends are extremely popular on the app. Innovating new trends such as cutting up clothing or customising it in personal ways has inspired major fast fashion companies to do the same. Zara and H&M, to name a few, are always on the lookout for the newest trends so that they can profit off of other people's ideas. Fast fashion has always been an issue — companies mass-produce clothing every season, only for it to end up in the back of our closet when it goes out of style. In the era

of Tik Tok, where trends come and go at an unprecedented speed, fast fashion is becoming increasingly unsustainable — both mentally and on an environmental scale.

The youth are experiencing something that no other generation has experienced before. A child's development up to the teenage years is extremely important for mental stability as children are at their most impressionable state. Constantly consuming content on social media decreases attention span and subliminally wires children to be stimulated by new things, whether it's viewing a new post or gaining a new like. Being bombarded by so many clothing items on these apps makes us want what we can't have. Viewing influencers wearing new trends each week incentivises us to do the same, as we operate under the illusion that hopping onto recent trends will make our lives more like theirs. This is detrimental to developing a well-rounded mindset because it makes it harder for the youth to experience fulfilment. It makes it harder to

sit and complete tasks for long periods of time because we are so used to short-term scrolling.

Engagement with social media releases a chemical called dopamine which is responsible for making humans feel happy. It is why posting and getting more likes and comments feels good. Dopamine is the same chemical that makes us feel good when we drink, smoke and gamble, and the hormone is highly addictive. But while there are high age restrictions on all of these things, the 13+ required for most social media is easy to circumvent — and much lower. Being on social media and requiring the external validation of our followers numbs the high-stress period of adolescence, which encourages the youth's addiction to social media. As a result, many find themselves unaware of how to cope with high stress and anxiety, unable to form deep, meaningful relationships and instead find fulfilment through buying goods. The high level of anxiety and depression in the younger generation is unprecedented. And

it's no surprise when they are wired to consume constantly, turning to a device instead of a person when they face high periods of stress.

Instant gratification is at our fingertips. If you want to buy something, you can order it on Amazon, and it arrives the next day. If you want to watch a movie, there are millions to choose from. If you want to go on a date, swipe right. You can have anything you want instantaneously — apart from genuine satisfaction, fulfilment, and happiness. This is precisely why so many millennials begin startup companies that fail within five years. If results aren't seen quickly enough, most people quit because they are so used to instant gratification. The long run is no longer a mindset; it's something we're conditioned to fear.

We are at a tipping point as a society. The constant stimulation that we are getting prevents us from becoming happy, fulfilled and innovative. It is important to take a step back from the all-consuming world of social media and fast fashion and question what re-

ally makes us happy because it surely isn't buying new things or getting new likes. We need to rewire our brains day by day so that we are able to experience genuine satisfaction and build meaningful relationships.

“You can have anything you want instantly, apart from genuine satisfaction, fulfilment, and happiness.”

Gen-Z is revolutionising work, but not for the better

Imaan Asim

What does it mean to exist in the world today? As we passively consume social media content, are bombarded with constant news and struggle with seeing a future beyond the pandemic, it is clear that life is meant to be lived, and felt, rather than letting it pass us by.

For Gen Z, it is all about living fully in the small moments — be it lighting a candle, or indulging in iced coffee — a contrast to previous generations who were tied down with the 'rat race' and a desire to move up the corporate ladder.

Instead, Gen Z wants to be able to work on their own terms, dictate their own life

and not be under the control of anyone else. It's a generation of rule-breakers, wanting to take days off for their mental health and find unconventional ways to make a living — such as social media.

Over the past year, the biggest trend on social media has been 'romanticising your life'. There are countless TikTok videos which portray regular life as something beautiful and exciting. Many YouTubers post content advising young people to quit their 9-5 and pursue a more exciting life.

But these trends can be dangerous as the majority of users are young teenagers, and they spread rapidly to across all social media platforms. For

example, I find the trend of women not wanting to work extremely sinister. For decades women fought to have the right to work, not because 'working is fun' but because it gives us economic freedom. This trend is encouraging women to be dependent on men, which can easily turn into financial abuse. It suggests that domestic work can be done unpaid as the women are wives or mothers, when it is in fact a form of labour.

It is not a feminist revolt against capitalism but repackaging the patriarchy, and damaging teenage girls who consume this content and think that it is what they should aspire towards. It also

fails to consider women of colour, who often had no option but to work in order to support themselves while white women were still at home. Every trend relating to capitalism cannot be separated from its violent links to colonialism, as the impacts felt by Black and Brown people will always be far greater. Women of colour are amongst the lowest paid workers, so how is it revolutionary to tell them to quit their job and stay at home with a man?

After the pandemic, it can be difficult to imagine a generation who has grown up with these ideas wanting to be a part of working culture as we know it. Gen Z has revo-

lutionised the future of work through TikTok, but is this sustainable? Is it possible for people to not have any greater career ambitions? Will this ultimately lead to the downfall of capitalism if it continues past social media and into our real lives? Will this disproportionately affect women and ethnic minorities who are already discriminated against in the working world? These are all questions to unpack as we begin to see the long-term effects of social media trends in the world.

Your Letters...

We want to hear from you:

Dear all,

My name is Rebecca Fall and I am the Print's Letters Correspondent.

University (and life in general) is sometimes nice but sometimes it is very bad and it sucks and makes you angry. I for one can certainly relate to this. For example, I was sat in the SU Hub today writing an article and suddenly I became really hungry. It was really annoying. I had already eaten the mini sausage roll in my pocket that morning and life began to feel like a lost cause. I thought of all the tragedy in the world. My stomach was empty and growling. This was serious.

Luckily I managed to brave the Ground Café long enough to get myself some sushi and I soon felt miles better. That's just the way of the world I guess.

Though still, I dare to dream. I dream of a future where there is a sandwich machine in the SU Hub. I dream of a future where I can go and warm it up in the machine and eat it and it will be all hot and melted and delicious.

I am here for those who dare to dream. As the Letters Correspondent, I want to hear it from you. I want to hear your complaints, your hopes and your gripes. I will consensually be on the receiving end of all your vicious angst and burning resentments so that I may respond with the worldly insight that can only be found in a 19-year-old girl who's never been to Nandos and is scared of worms.

I want you to write me a letter. It can say literally anything. I will reply to every single one monthly on this page. I am also open to death threats if need be but these are not compulsory.

Yours correspondently,
Rebecca

An unwanted roommate

I am dealing with quite a conurndrum at this very time which I am hoping you can ameliorate. I am having issue with a spider of habitation in university halls. It is a spider of proportions I cannot speak publicly without fear in the hearts of readers.

This spider is bigger any spider ever have I seen in the life. It lives atop wall abreast the bed onwhich the sleep. It does not move once muscle thou I am fear to touch it lest it run to a minorly visible location. If were to happen I would elicit great call of AH into university halls, and again fear to the heart.

It contirnobute little to study, relaxation nor romance. Nor spider to follow pursuit of study itself.

Time of the essence. What to do?

Sent by: Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

It is with dismay I hear of such a scary situation in your halls. Have you ever heard of the 'glass and paper' trick? I would suggest trying this method of spider removal if the fear should allow it.

As it goes, you find a clear glass, such as a pint glass, and you hold it over the spider. Next, you trap the spider inside the glass against the wall. Slide a piece of paper or cardboard between the wall and the rim of the glass to isolate the spider. You will see it crawling around inside... AH!

Try to restrain your fear for long enough to take the spider outside or to the window so that you can send it on its way.

Sometimes I wave goodbye to a spider if it has been in my house for some time. It seems as though you hold little respect for this creature, however, so this step is not essential.

I wish you the best of luck.

Letters Correspondent

Emma Raducanu: Queen of tennis

Mohammed Abdillahi

A pre-pandemic memory comes to mind whenever the name “Emma Raducanu” is brought up. Whilst I do not consider myself a religious tennis fan, I love the sheer intensity of the sport and how two individuals can be locked into a powerful duel of will and skill. I last witnessed such a duel live two or three summers ago.

Playing outdoor basketball means passing a tennis match or two, and one afternoon I couldn’t keep my eyes from the strangest match I’d ever seen in-person. A little girl – no older than nine years old – playing full speed tennis against a grown man. After a while, it became clear this was father coaching daughter, but the father’s relentless approach was astonishing to me. He barely held back on his serves and at every break he would bellow something in another language, motioning how she ought to move her feet or position her racket. The little girl looked dejected; how could she keep up? So, after a while, I went to my go-to (but highly ineffective) move when cheering up kids – the “grin and double thumbs up” from the court next door. The girl

looked at me perplexed, rolled her eyes and whipped a perfect return serve back to her father, both feet hopping and rotating slightly.

Enter Emma Raducanu into the 2021 US Open and if you’re like me, you love virtuosic performances as much as seeing Piers Morgan look like an egg on television. Raducanu has given us both this past year and I for one cannot thank her enough. Her efforts at the US Open this year – to silence doubters as the first qualifier to ever win a Grand Slam title – was nothing short of fantastical. Almost overnight, the then 18-year-old exploded onto the front (and back) pages as Britain’s own tennis princess who delivered on what the England football team couldn’t – an international trophy.

And if you’re even more like me, then you’re disquieted by how heavy that crown seems to weigh on her and how pervasive the media frenzy has become. The press has consistently feasted on young sports prodigies throughout the years, and Emma has been no different. Everything from her nationality to her mother’s cooking is dissected to discover

some “secret” to her success. The old “build them up then knock them down” trick is a well-known favourite of sensationalist sports press and unfortunately, after Raducanu’s recent round-of-16 exit in the Linz Open (her first tournament as the top seed), there are doubts about the young prodigy’s legitimacy. Just recently, England rugby head coach Eddie Jones received backlash for his criticism of Raducanu’s off-court promotional appearances:

“The big thing for good young players is distractions ... there’s a reason why the young girl who won the US Open hasn’t done so well afterwards.”

Jones then went on to list some of Raducanu’s damning sponsorships, all whilst refraining from using her name. You can imagine the scrutiny, and how much Jones’ comments resemble The Simpsons meme “OLD MAN YELLS AT CLOUD”, as it is impossible to name any star athlete today who isn’t attached to a name or a brand – it’s simply part of the game. But to attribute her recent dip to that is a swing-and-a-miss from Eddie Jones (pardon the pun), and here’s

why.

The US Open – like its cousins Wimbledon and the Australian/French Open – is tennis at its fiercest, with over 60 duels being crammed into two weeks. Tournament structures such as this mean nobody has it easy, the champion must work as hard as the rookie qualifier and vice-versa. Tennis is a brutal and lonely sport, where even your coaches can’t come to your aid. Where you must own your mistakes as much as your successes, so only the grittiest and toughest players shine through. So, when Raducanu trailblazed her way into the final (on enemy territory no less) her accumulated mileage would make Eddie Jones and the England rugby team blush. That’s not to mention the psychological ball-and-chain which every teenager knows all too well – AKA the pressure of “fulfilling your potential”. And yet “that young girl” managed to lift the US Open trophy anyway.

Still not convinced Eddie? Let’s take her playing style then, some serial winners, like Djokovic or Daniil Medvedev, prefer a defensive approach in harsh tournaments like the US Open, to minimize

mistakes and maximize their chances of winning – a little boring but effective. Not Emma though, she takes it to every opponent and presses the action. If Djokovic and Medvedev are meticulous violinists, Emma Raducanu is the heavy-metal drummer who gets the crowd on their feet. As an offensive baseliner, she forces mistakes with aggressive groundstrokes close to the baseline. This approach is risky but incredibly effective when executed correctly, leading to astonishing rallies and scintillating winners. You could call it a double-edged sword gameplan, if you fail to capitalize early then you leave yourself with a mountain to climb, such as Emma Raducanu’s predicament this past Linz Open.

The fact is Emma Raducanu is undefeated when facing top-10 ranked players, that is because she IS a top-ranked player. At 19, she may carry the flustered smile of a teenager but has the poise of a veteran on the court. She needs not the grin and thumbs-up from doubters, but some acknowledgement that she is an undeniable star – one that’s still rising.

Memorable finale for F1 2021

Adela Begum

Chaos, Contention and Conflict. As the fireworks sparked over the Yas Marina circuit drawing the season to a Net-flix-drama close, what other way to summarise the F1 2021 journey?

The season-opener foreshadowed all the drama to follow, with the wheel-to-wheel racing, perilous crashes and controversial decisions between the rising prodigy and Red Bull driver, Max Verstappen, and seven-time world champion and Mercedes driver, Lewis Hamilton. Tensions flared between the championship contenders and their team principals, Christian Horner and Toto Wolff on many occasions, as they collided in Silverstone, Britain, with Verstappen experiencing a 51G crash and then yet again tangling in Monza, Italy.

As we progressed into the season, it appeared that Verstappen was cruising towards a confident clutch on the championship trophy with Hamilton increasingly falling behind; that is until we reached Brazil where the gears

began to shift. Hamilton’s turbulent recovery at the Brazilian track, where he has won two times before, and the two races following dragged him back into the championship duel.

There was nothing Hamilton or his shocked and frustrated team boss could do but watch an unprecedented eighth world championship disappear off into the distance.

As we landed at the intensely-anticipated ‘decider in the desert’, the two competitors were head-to-head in the championship points – an occasion that has only occurred once in the sport’s 71-year history: it was now all or nothing. The race had us on our feet on the opening lap as Verstappen challenged Hamilton, but then a contentious verdict by the FIA determined Hamilton to remain ahead. After this, only fleeting moments materialised between the title protagonists as fans were driven to endure patience for more wheel-to-wheel action until the last five laps. Suddenly, a spin by William’s Nicholas Latifi sent his car drifting to the barriers and the safety car was unleashed.

As the marshals cleared the track, a provocative title-deciding decision from the FIA race director, Michael Masi, decided that only cars between Verstappen and Hamilton would be unlapped for a sudden-death, ultimate showdown. Verstappen on new tyres would now be only inches away from the 43-laps worn tyres of the Mercedes car. As the green flag was raised, there was nothing Hamilton or his shocked and frustrated team boss could do but watch an unprecedented eighth world championship disappear off into the distance, as Verstappen lunged for an opportunistic and title-crowning move. Witnessing this in the very last lap of the very last race, sent the orange-painted Dutch crowd roaring to their feet. It was the dramatic spectacle we wanted but never really fathomed; the season-finale that would go on to make and break history.

For die-hard fans of F1, the closing stages of this season will go down as one of the most suspenseful of the sport’s history – alongside 2008’s Brazilian grand prix. Yet, it was this



Hamilton racing in the 2018 British Grand Prix at Silverstone

tantalising season that kept us watching hours after the chequered flag was waved as Mercedes protested the FIA’s decision while the Hamiltons gracefully shook hands with the Verstappens. But perhaps inevitably, Hamilton was obliged to relinquish his dominating title-hold as Verstappen tearfully prevailed as the champion.

It was this tantalising season that kept us watching hours after the chequered flag was waved

A shout-out needs to also be given to the commendable racing of the other drivers on the grid; including McLaren’s Lando Norris whose hands got ‘sweaty’ a few times with champagne; Ferrari’s Carlos Sainz who was an extremely ‘smooth opera-

tor’; former double world champion and Alpine-driver, Fernando Alonso, whose ‘El Plan’ succeeded in him stepping back onto the podium after seven years; and AlphaTauri’s Pierre Gasly who showed incredible speed out-qualifying his teammate for all but the last race. It was also time to say a poignant goodbye to our favourite Finnish Ice Man, Kimi Raikkonen, who has become the most experienced F1 driver of all time.

For now, Max is the Champion of the World. But with the revolutionary regulation changes coming into force next year, we wait to see who follows in his footsteps.