

THE PRINT

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Hats off: Biology students celebrate graduation, July 25th (Photo: Queen Mary University of London)

Story page 16, overleaf

Marking boycott over as QMUCU settles

Late marks, staff left unpaid, offshore companies, the principal threatening to shut down the Department of Film Studies. Now the saga has finally ended, and *Muhammad Zahid Iqbal* gives you the story so far...

After weeks of negotiations the Queen Mary branch of the Universities and Colleges Union (QMUCU) voted to accept a joint agreement with QM management to end the marking boycott.

The provisions of the agreement include a 21% increase in London Weighting (?), no deductions for August pay, and a commitment to joint 'work' between the university and the QMUCU on pay, conditions, and pensions.

QMUCU commented on Twitter, 'The resilience of our members has achieved much more than many anticipated against a uniquely acrimonious employer. That QMUL management made concessions is down to the commitment of members and the solidarity of students, branches and individual members.'

It is understood management did not overturn its July pay decision, where one month's salary was withheld from staff who participated in the marking boycott.

The 'action short of a strike' (ASOS), which included a marking and assessment boycott, began on

the 19th May and was due to last until 20th September - until the boycott was called off by QMUCU on 17 August.

The announcement concludes a turbulent chapter in the university's history. While the long-running industrial disputes over pay and pensions at other UK universities stalled, the situation at Queen Mary remained persistent. The Universities and College Union (UCU) board met on the 3rd of May, at the start of the examination period, to announce 10 further days of strike action and a 'marking boycott' commencing May 19th. Participating staff would refuse to grade student work submitted after that date. This led to widespread chaos and anguish among students, especially for final year students meant to graduate in the summer. One international student at the School of Law needed their grades on time for a job and visa application: 'I have worked extremely hard to secure a job and to only see it getting delayed due to external factors is distressing', they said.

As the tension built, Principal Colin Bailey sent an email all students downplaying the impact of the industrial action and guaranteeing graduation would go ahead on time. 'All students due to graduate this year, who reach the required standard, will graduate on time and as planned' he wrote. 'I also want to reassure you that we will not compromise on the quality and standards of our assessment processes as a result of this industrial action', explaining that many schools will 'see little to no disruption'.

A new development came on 19th May after a tweet from the QMUCU alleged, 'We have learned that @QMUL management is considering using external staff from Curio, an Australian Higher Education consultancy @curio_group, to try to break our marking boycott and grade student essays'. It was later revealed that these specific plans were dropped by QM management and markers would instead be sourced from other UK universities and subject specialists. A source inside the School of Law confirmed to

■ Senior lecturer states case for UCU, accuses QM of 'exploitation'

■ Student furious as she has dissertation graded externally

The Print that the principal had instructed each Head of School to hire these 'external markers' to ensure graduation progressed on time.

An email received by School of Law students from the head of school, Penny Green, did not deny hiring external markers and instead assured 'all marking in the Department of Law will have been completed by subject-experts with knowledge of the materials covered on our modules. There will be no change to our usual feedback processes.' However, reports soon emerged that several modules marked by external markers included poor

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Arts & Culture

Review: Shakespeare's classic villains return to the stage

Page 10.



News

Her Majesty the Queen dies at 96

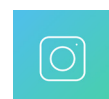
Obituary: Page 7.



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Please recycle this newspaper

(FINAL) NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Dear reader,
I am afraid we have to greet you with goodbye. As this academic year draws to a close, so too does our leadership of The Print. But what a fantastic year it has been! We have learnt so much as a team and *The Print* has gone from strength to strength. Articles have been consistent and of a high quality throughout the year. We covered big stories, showcased a diverse range of opinions, and welcomed lots of new contributors. Like our university, it has brought together people from different disciplines, backgrounds, and perspectives to create something we can all be proud of. Mission accomplished.
At the beginning of the year, with just the two of us as members, we were unsure if *The Print* could even continue. How wrong our fears proved to be. It was challenging at times, with the lingering disruption of covid and everybody busy with their own courses, but our collective effort has raised the newspaper out of obscurity and into a thriving society, providing a respectable source of news and entertainment for Queen Mary

students.
For this reason, me and Farrah want to thank every contributor who has worked on The Print this year. We hope your memories of the paper are fond and will stay with you. Without volunteers giving their time, energy, and effort it would simply be impossible.
This final issue is right on form and has a lot to offer. Here are some of my favourite pieces:
- Mohammed Zahid's investigation into the marking boycott was a mammoth undertaking, but he proved equal to the task, reaching both a senior QM lecturer and a student for comment. He did an excellent job at untangling a situation that affected many but few understood. I was proud to run it as our lead story.
- Another highlight has to be Ilina Kabra, who dominates the opinions section with her personal, deeply felt observations on university and - after much persistence - her article on Netflix show *Never Have I Ever*.
- Maryam Kara is diligent as ever in her two pieces for the News section. Her reporting this year has carried



the section, and she is able to consistently make interesting the stories most choose to pass over.
- And finally, the witty, eccentric responses in the Letters section could only have come from Rebecca Fall. Going into next year I am confident *The Print* will be in safe hands. With the leadership of current Arts & Culture editor Georgie Walls, joined by Yashna Khatri as deputy, I know the paper will continue to grow in quality, readership, reach and impact - read their profiles on the back page. I look forward to seeing where they take it.
Thank you everyone,
Joe Bounds & Farrah Farnejad.

Editor-in-Chief
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Farrah Farnejad

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Zed Mohammad
Features
Mehek Gupta
D'el Gayle
Yasin Kheradmand

Opinion
Ilina Kabra
Arts & Culture
Clera Rodrigues

Letters
Rebecca Fall
Introducing
Georgie Walls
Yashna Khatri

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NEWS <i>Mixed results for UK universities in the National Student Survey, reports Maryam Kara.</i> Page 6	INTRODUCING... <i>Meet the team leading The Print next year.</i> Page 16	LETTERS <i>Rebecca Fall answers 'your complaints, your hopes and your gripes'.</i> Page 15

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

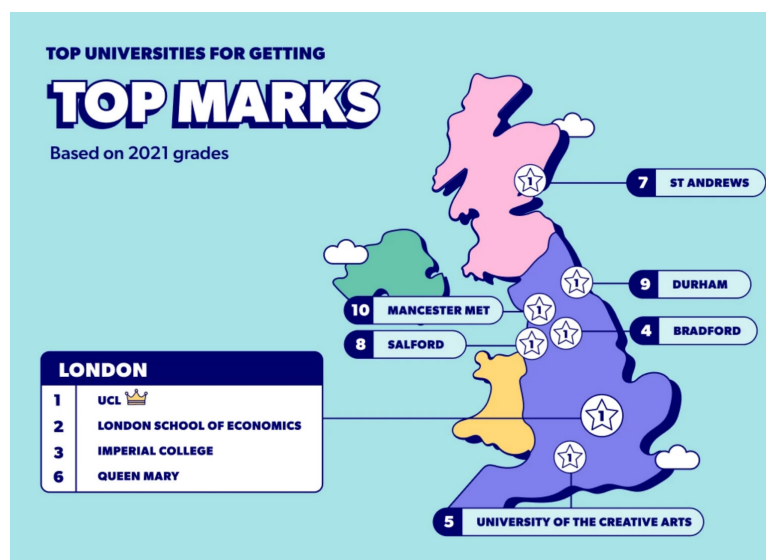
How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

London, William Blake

Queen Mary 'one of the best places to secure a first'

Joe Bounds



London universities were greatly overrepresented (Image: Student Beans)

Queen Mary delivered the sixth highest proportion of first class honours students in the country, according to a recent survey by Student Beans.

Using graduation data from 2021, the survey uncovered the universities where students were most likely to attain the top degree.

The findings will bring a new boost to the desirability of Queen Mary as the college prepares to welcome a new cohort of undergraduates this September. Students place 'doing well in their degree' higher than making friends, experiencing new things, and having a good social life when selecting a university.*

University College London (UCL) topped the chart with 57% of graduates securing a first,

while Queen Mary came sixth with 48% getting the highest grade.

London was home to the top three universities in the table: UCL, the LSE and Imperial College respectively.

The results continue the trend of rising firsts following the coronavirus pandemic. In 2020, just over one-in-three UK students received a first-class degree, making it a record year, after many universities adopted a 'no detriment' promise to final assessments in response to coronavirus.

The Government has repeatedly expressed concern over grade inflation, calling upon the Office for Students, the universities regulator, to bring down the rising number of firsts. The regulator has since warned universities could be fined

or even struck off the official register if they fail to address grade inflation.

The proportion of university students awarded first class honours has risen by almost fourteen percentage points since 2011, when just 16% of students who graduated from an English university attained the highest possible classification.

The inflation continues when expanded to include 2:1 grades; four out of five students graduated with first class or upper second class honours this year.

You can view more details about the survey online at <https://www.studentbeans.com/blog/uk/student-beans-best-university-guide/>.

*Student Beans interviewed 1,455 respondents aged 16-24

Map: Student Beans analysed
Tripadvisor HESA 2020/2021

Universities and public at odds over continued online testing

Maryam Kara

Despite Covid-19 restrictions being eased as far back as July of last year, online examinations continue to take place at universities.

For many, life returned to normal after lockdown restrictions were lifted but students still face a number of Covid-era measures. In recent months many UK universities, including Queen Mary University of London, decided to continue with '24-hour online exams,' which give students a 24-hour window to start their work at any point in the day and take 3-4 hours to answer questions. In some cases, students have the entire day to complete tests.

Colm Harman, vice-principal of the University of Edinburgh, voiced his support for the continuation of online examinations, suggesting that the digital experience is beneficial for students as digital platforms for studies have proved efficient in lockdown, stimulating



With Covid-19 over, questions are being raised over why some universities are opting to keep assessments online

positive responses from younger people who have already participated in online learning and examinations. Harman also pointed out the 'ambivalence' toward traditional written exams and opined that, even if physical exams are successful, they might be wrongfully construed as 'normal' by students.

Harman also pointed out that changes to GCSEs and A-levels

could leave students unprepared for the switch to written assessment. 'Some students have not experienced a conventional exam, **'I would not have been able to do my Law exam in three hours.'**

including during their time at secondary school, so we must be careful not to simply move back to

'old style' examinations without recognising the fear that some students may have of that,' he said.

But it is not just higher education officials embracing the move online. Many students hope universities will switch to online testing permanently. One individual from Queen Mary told the Print, 'I would not have been able to do my Law exam in three hours.' Crumbling under the stress of exams, some students appear more content with taking a full day to complete questions.

These decisions have been met with some backlash from the general public. It is felt by some that students are given inadequate because of a lack of closed-book exams and virtual 'open book' ones with fewer time constraints lack the rigour In a letter to The Sunday Telegraph, Yorkshire resident Mary Marshall expressed disappointment over the 'ridiculous' form of testing: 'What kind of test is it when students have

access to the internet, notes and perhaps even help from others?'. She called it 'beggars belief' that leading universities were 'using covid as an excuse' to keep exams online.

Students across the country must wonder whether universities will ever return to their former traditional methods of examination - or even teaching. Whilst life returns to pre-covid normality elsewhere, universities such as Queen Mary and the LSE continue to deliver lectures over video format, rather than in-person, particularly for humanities subjects.

At the start of the pandemic, The Print reported that Queen Mary would continue online learning and assessments after Covid-19, in an interview with Vice-Principal Stephanie Marshall. Read the piece on our website at: <https://theprintnews.co.uk/2020/11/blended-learning-here-to-stay-after-pandemic-says-vp/>

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1... feedback, and sometimes none at all.

For instance, in the School of Geography, a post shared on QMUCU's Twitter account displayed a screenshot of one student's feedback where a 65 mark had been awarded with the comment 'Perfect!'. This raised questions over the qualification of the external markers.

This fiasco of external examiners and minimal to no feedback on work led to widespread student and faculty backlash, prompting formal negotiations between Queen Mary management and the QMUCU on June 23rd. However, these initial talks failed to settle the dispute. A resulting statement released by QMUCU in July read: '[the negotiations] have not so far committed to meaningful statements or a concrete offer on pay. They expect us to call off the boycott on a promise.'

In one extraordinary episode during the action, the principal appeared to threaten to close the Queen Mary Department of Film Studies. While most of the academic schools circumvented the boycott by hiring external markers, Film Studies stood firm in their solidarity with boycotters by refusing to

outsource their duties. In response, Principal Bailey sent an email to all faculty warning, 'If we cannot get the final year marks for Film then we will need to consider whether we can recruit students onto these programmes next year. We can't take new students onto programmes where staff refuse to deliver the promised education.'

The reaction to the boycott from staff was varied, but many sided against senior management's behaviour. One head of school, who wished to remain anonymous, commented, 'The behaviour of the senior management has been appalling. We have been put on the frontlines to neutralise the boycott while they refuse to have serious negotiations.'

Then, on the 30th of July, 103 staff members at Queen Mary – including teaching associates – lost 21 days of pay as a result of their industrial action. The Guardian reported that staff feared a 'wider crackdown' and missing out on future pay despite carrying out the 'vast majority' of their duties. One academic voiced their frustration at the pay cut: 'It is like being slapped in the face: in the three – now unpaid – weeks, I directed research, supervised PhDs, advised undergraduates, sat on 2 appointment panels, chaired a

school viva, conducted appraisals, and marked all scripts required for our finalists to graduate'. A QM spokesperson told the newspaper that payment had been deducted due to 'partial performance in June' and blamed the QMUCU for 'not accepting a reasonable agreement'. They reiterated the impact on students had been 'limited'.

A student in the School of Law responded to this, saying, 'Trying to play down the impact is appalling. My School has been severely affected with most of our exams marked by external markers. There is little or no feedback, and so I cannot appeal my grade as there is no feedback to back it.' Over 50% of striking members of staff were from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The school accounts for almost a third of students at Queen Mary.

In a statement on its website, the university said: 'Very few people have taken part in the industrial action, and the impact has been limited and localised. The vast majority of our 32,000 students have been unaffected.'

'Out of a workforce of around 5,400, 113 members of staff took part in the 10 days of strike action between 14 February and 2 March. Of these 113 members of staff, 56

participated in 3 days or less and 12 took part in all 10 days strike action.'

'An independent investigation found that the amount of pay we have deducted to date is among the smallest of all Russell Group universities. This is because only a limited number of our staff take strike action, and the staff that do take action typically only strike on the days that they are scheduled to teach.'

In a joint statement on the recent settlement released by QMUCU and the university, both parties pledged to 'work together on areas of mutual interest for the benefit of our staff.'

'The recent discussions between the university and QMUCU have led to agreement to undertake new joint work in the following areas with all our local campus trade unions, which will be taken forward by local sub-committees of the Joint Consultative Forum,' It continued.

'The university and QMUCU will commence joint work to review the use of fixed-term, part-time and hourly paid contracts, budget allocation and related terms and conditions, to ensure such contracts are being used appropriately.'

'In relation to pay gaps, the university will undertake joint work to review and understand

existing actions to reduce gender and ethnicity pay gaps among staff, and introduce new actions where needed with the joint goal of closing these gaps. The university will also initiate similar work with disability pay gaps'.

On pensions, it said: 'The university and QMUCU are both committed to ensuring staff have access to the best possible pension scheme that is affordable and sustainable, and attractive to staff at all levels.'

'The university will continue to work with all stakeholders to secure the best outcome, including active discussion on the valuation of the pension scheme and the implications of changes to contributions and benefits for staff. In these discussions, the university recognises that, for QMUCU, maintaining promised benefits is a priority over reductions in contributions.'

Students can be relieved that strike disruption will not continue into the new academic year. It remains to be seen whether this latest deal will bring some permanent closure to what are long-term grievances from staff and UCU members over the way the university treats its staff.

Student has all five modules graded by external markers

Muhammad Zahid

Muhammad Zahid sat down with Kayla Johnson (right), a recent law graduate of Queen Mary's three-year LLB law programme, to discuss what she made of the strike action. Kayla is an international student hailing from Canada and holds a degree in Sociology from The University of British Columbia.



1. How have you been affected by the marking boycott?

I have been severely affected by the marking boycott, more than any other person I know. I have enrolled in five modules this past term and all five of my module convenors – and one tutor – participated in the strike and subsequent marking boycott. This means that final assessments and exams from all five of those classes were reviewed and graded by replacement markers. Being that this was my final year, I was enrolled in mostly small seminars and researched-focused modules, including one module with a 13,000-word dissertation. These classes demanded a significant amount of collaboration, both with other students as well as in one-on-one supervision with the convenors

contravenes the quality assurance provisions purported by senior management.

2. Have you tried contacting the academics or the management? What has the response been?

Absolutely! I started writing letters to senior management in the School of Law, as well as the principal directly, in April. This was at the onset of the exam period and following the last of the strike days where others and I had experienced significant disruption due to the missed teaching hours. The response has been non-existent from management. Not once did I hear back from our principal, Colin Bailey, or anyone in his office. In sharp contrast, the communication and transparency originating from the academics and teaching staff has been incredibly valuable and heavily relied upon. The same support and encouragement felt throughout the year was just as present from these individuals into and throughout the industrial action. I know for myself that professors were incredibly responsive over email. They were willing to answer any question I posed, and one in particular even offered their phone number for questions to be answered via WhatsApp. It was that level of support that cemented the idea that these are educators who have students' best interests at heart.

themselves. It is incredibly distressing to understand that the replacement markers who graded my work were not privy to those discussions, did not consult the convenors and tutors in their evaluations, nor did they have a complete and accurate understanding of the content and aims of the modules more

"I started writing letters to senior management in April. Not once did I hear back from our principal or anyone in his office."

generally. To make matters worse, some of my final assessments were marked without providing any feedback or justification for the grade received, which directly

3. Being an international student, and more importantly self-funded, how would you summarise your university experience?

To be brutally honest, I am glad this is my second degree. My first university experience was spectacular, one that I have come to cherish even more so through this time at Queen Mary. I feel for those who have no prior degrees, and no other sense of what it is like to be immersed in the academic experience. The feelings I am left with are complete disappointment and dismay. I waited some time to attend law school (having worked for five years after completing a degree in sociology) and had the highest of hopes for this degree and this time in my life. Not only did our cohort have to deal with the precariousness of Brexit (more salient for international students) and strikes in 2019, but we are most notably the Covid cohort. We wrote exams in the first two months of the global pandemic that took hold of our freedoms and certainties and were separated from family and friends as borders closed indefinitely. It was an incredibly unsettling time, not one that you would want to endure whilst undertaking a law degree, and yet we persevered. Fast forward to 2022, and it appears as though that tenacity and determination were all for nothing. We learned that our academics, some of the most accomplished legal minds in the world, faced poor

working conditions, inequality, and precarious employment contracts. It was as if Queen Mary had broken character and revealed its true self, which has left me with the feeling that I have quite frankly been duped.

4. What message would you give to a) the staff involved in the strikes and b) the senior management at Queen Mary?

First and foremost, my message to staff involved in the strikes is to not back down. Too much has been lost already for them to concede; I do not want my experience to be in vain. Otherwise, my message

"My message to staff involved in the strikes is not to back down."

to senior management at Queen Mary is about as straightforward as it gets: look around you. The staff are the university. Of course, we as students value the Russell Group name and benefits, along with Queen Mary's central location in London. However, the staff are intimately involved in our development, the cultivating and honing of our skill sets, and shaping the professionals and future individuals we will become. From my personal experience, they are also an incredibly undervalued source of inspiration, and there is nothing more important than that.

Senior lecturer: ‘We only strike if we have no other alternative.’

Dr Ruth Fletcher, a member of the QMUCU Branch Committee levels some searing accusations at university managment. The most striking revelations are picked out in bold.

Muhammad Zahid

As Queen Mary students have been badly affected by the industrial action taken by QMUCU, **Muhammad Zahid** spoke with **Dr Ruth Fletcher** who is a member of the QMUCU Branch Committee. She lays out the bigger picture and the reasons why Queen Mary is one of the last universities that continue to be affected.

1. Can you introduce yourself?

My name is Dr Ruth Fletcher and I'm a Senior Lecturer in QMUL's School of Law and a member of QMUCU Branch Committee with responsibility for Equality and Social Justice issues. I got involved in QMUCU because we have amazing staff, students, and neighbours here in this global community at London's East End, especially in the unions! Connecting through unions is the best way to make sure the University becomes accountable to all of us – staff, students, and neighbours – the people who bring the University to life every day. I and my union colleagues want Equality to become a lived reality for everyone at QMUL, not just the goal of some piece of paper, such as the 2030 Strategy, that management uses to promote the QMUL 'brand'. Universities could be places of imagination and innovation where everyone's hopes and dreams flourish, not places that extract wealth from the many for the few.

2. Why is the UCU at Queen Mary boycotting?

QMUCU, the local QMUL branch of UCU, is participating in a marking and assessment boycott as part of a national challenge to poor pay and working conditions (#FourFights), including savage pension cuts (#USSStrike). We're also participating because of a local dispute over a new managerial policy of deducting 100% of our wages for partial withdrawal of labour in action short of a strike (ASOS), such as a marking boycott. As Andrea Brady [also a Queen Mary lecturer] explains, **universities are often thought of as elitist places educating the leaders of the future, but they actually often exist as exploitative gig economies, where too many are employed on disrespectful and dehumanising terms.** We don't want universities to be either elite, or disrespectful, places of work and education for ourselves or for our students. So, we have to do something about it. And this year's marking boycott has succeeded in getting management back to meaningful negotiations with the union after months of industrial action and years of poor managerial engagement in collective bargaining with staff representatives.

Students have already been active in fighting back against an uncaring senior management which refused to furlough student workers during the lockdown for Covid-19, because Principal Bailey and the Senior Executive Team think they know

what's best for you as students. Students also won £4 million back from university landlords through the rent strike when lockdown meant rented rooms could not be used. Now staff are fighting back against this new managerial policy of 100% pay deductions for ASOS because we can't allow management to steal our wages like this. **And we have to be able to defend ourselves with ASOS against a management that threatens and impoverishes us.** We need to be able to organise as trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining and industrial action in order to be able to protect ourselves as ordinary people in the workplace. That is why we have human and labour rights to assemble together and represent ourselves.

3. Why has QMUCU, unlike your equivalents at other universities, failed to settle with the management yet?

That's an interesting way of framing the question! As a university student you'll understand well that the answer a person can give is shaped by the way the question is posed. I always advise my students to challenge the terms of the question if they think it is problematic. You might not have intended this, but the framing of your question implies that QMUCU is responsible for the ongoing dispute because we have 'failed to settle' with management. But management is obviously responsible for managing, or running, the university as a whole, while staff are responsible for researching, teaching and organising the everyday activities of the university including running modules, libraries and school offices.

So, **if there is an ongoing workplace dispute then the first responsibility lies with management** because they are managing the university in a way which gives rise to such disputes. Secondly, this is a dispute between two differently positioned parties, and solving the dispute means recognising and doing something about the uneven power relations between management and labour, or staff. Management has access to the whole university's financial and human resources, including law firms, accountants and consultants of different kinds. Staff on the other hand, like students, do not have access to the wealth of the university, even though that wealth is generated by students and staff. Instead, staff have to rely on each other and on the backing of trade unions for support. Thirdly, it is because university management has been acting unilaterally that we have to take action to defend ourselves. **They have slashed our pensions by 35% on the basis of a bogus pension fund evaluation, refused to address gendered and racialised inequalities meaningfully, and now are robbing us of our wages while we are working and using industrial action to improve working conditions.**

As QMUCU co-chairs Zara Dinnen

and James Eastwood explained in a July 7th letter to QMUL Council, the chief governing body of the university, QMUL is a major outlier when it comes to dispute resolution and negotiating with UCU. A quick examination of the settlements reached at other universities confirms this:

- Durham University reached a settlement with their UCU branch three days before a marking and assessment boycott even began, and their statement included strong commitments on the USS pension scheme as well as a £1000 'thank you' payment for all staff.

- One week later, the University of Sheffield made firm commitments on USS and pay and conditions, and agreed a budget of £5 million to reform pay grade boundaries.

- On 2nd June, both SOAS and the University of Nottingham announced agreements. Both included strong statements on USS, which was notable given that the vice-chancellor of Nottingham, like our principal, sits on the Board of Universities UK. Nottingham also committed to significant changes to salary scales to achieve a pay uplift for staff.

- The following day, the University of Ulster, which had initially threatened 100% pay deductions, reached an agreement which withdrew the threat of deductions and made a 'local cost of living' payment to all staff.

- After initially proposing a deal that was rejected by the local UCU branch, Newcastle University later reached an agreement which shortened the working week, extended short-term contracts, and committed an extra £10 million for staffing to address workloads.

- Subsequently, the University of Leeds and the University of Sussex made agreements with strong commitments on USS and pay and conditions. The agreement at Sussex included a 'cost of living' payment.

- Most recently, Heriot-Watt University reached an agreement with strong statements on USS and pay and conditions.

4. If the exams weren't marked by academics at QM, where did students get their grades from?

Exams and coursework affected by the marking boycott are likely to have been marked by other Queen Mary staff, or by temporary staff recruited on fixed term contracts for the purpose of marking. These are actually the kind of short-term contracts that already contribute so much to precarious and insecure working conditions in the university. **While at one point, QMUL senior management investigated hiring Curio, a private Australia-based company, to supply markers, they did not pursue this option. This was because there was public uproar when QMUCU publicised the plan and how impracticable and expensive it would have been.**

The practice of hiring in replacement markers, rather than settling the

dispute through negotiation and agreement with staff, has been damaging to university life in various ways. Students did not get the kind of marking they earned and expected after working hard on their modules with their tutors. Some students have communicated their disappointment about this to Principal Colin Bailey, the Senior Executive Team, and the Council. Students are involved in making appeals and complaints, which again is a stressful, and totally avoidable, situation for everyone involved. The collegiality that QMUL claims to value (2030 Strategy) has been ripped apart by a senior management seemingly committed to the generation of conflict, and by those employees who went along with senior management and undermined the sacrifices of their colleagues during industrial action. In paying replacement markers more than the usual marking rate, if not quite the extortionate fees Curio would have charged QMUL, management has once again shown that the issue is not a lack of financial resources or unwillingness to spend, but a refusal to spend added financial resources on the human beings who make this university work.

5. How certain are you that academic standards were upheld?

I cannot see how academic standards in their richest sense can have been upheld in such circumstances. Perhaps a version of academic standards was fulfilled that fits a technocratic approach to university education, where almost any old mark will do in order to get the students through. But such an approach is at odds with a research led and careful approach to education, in which most staff and students are deeply invested. **Higher education can be a meaningful social force which contributes to global sustainability and human innovation. Why would we throw the richness of that away for a thin, superficial version of education that demeans teaching and supervisory relationships?** I think it does students a great disservice.

Replacement markers will have been hired or appointed under significant time pressure and without being integrated into the teaching and marking teams in the normal way. **In some cases, we know about in QMUCU, tutors who had little or no subject expertise replaced staff on research-led modules with supervised coursework.** The students who took those modules had a legitimate expectation that their coursework would be marked by those that taught and supervised them. The module design was part of the reason why those students took those modules, and depriving them of supervisors as markers deprives them of part of the learning experience they signed up for. It is worth noting that Management was willing to pay 'replacement markers' over the going rate for doing this work. As I mentioned, **they are**

clearly willing to spend money and have financial resources available. They are just not willing to spend it on their existing staff, especially staff who are fighting to improve working conditions.

6. There have been talks about a potential pay deduction at QM as a result of strikes. How certain is UCU that this will happen, and how will it respond?

Pay deductions for ASOS are no longer just a possibility, they are an actuality as of the 22nd of July pay-day. Pay deductions have moved from being a paper policy, and a chilling threat hanging over staff and students, to being a live policy which has robbed staff of their July wages. Working under such a managerial threat was difficult enough in itself. But the actuality of having 70%, or even 100% in some cases, of your monthly salary taken out of your pay packet by your employer is shocking, and strengthens our resolve to challenge this bullying behaviour. It's like we've been living with the possibility of this financial blow since January 31st, and now on July 22nd the blow has landed. We are coming together to 'lick this wound' by demanding that management never deal such a financial blow again, by providing deductees with UCU and QMUCU hardship funds, and by seeking redress through grievances and legal actions.

7. Do you think that students will continue to be affected by strikes and boycotts in the coming year? What message would you give to them?

I do think that strikes will continue to have an impact on student life because we are living in a moment when working people, including students and those who do unpaid caring work, are coming together to reclaim and regenerate our society. Striking is hard work! **We only strike if we have no other alternative.** But striking can be joyful and uplifting because it reminds us of the power we have when we come together. **We cannot stand idly by while the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.**

Students are the future! You have a wonderful opportunity to be part of a historical movement with #SummerOfSolidarity to repair a post-Brexit, post-Covid Britain, to remake universities as exciting places that lead on important global projects like stopping destructive climate change, and to make this country into a place where we all thrive together. We are already big admirers of what QMUL students have achieved. Many of us watched with pride as QMUL students addressed Council members and stood up to a university management that called the cops on students for speaking their minds. Get in touch, we in QMUCU would love to work more with you!

Mixed results for universities as National Student Survey released

Maryam Kara

The results of the 2022 National Student Survey (NSS) distributed to all final year undergraduates in January have been released. The NSS offers students in their final year of studies the chance to give feedback on their university experiences. This year, the results express a mixture of contentment and disappointment about university as the academic year draws to a close.

At Queen Mary University of London, the overall satisfaction score was 73% - below the national average of 80%.

This is marginally lower than in 2020, where 84% of students across the nation believed that the quality of teaching was positive. A research director at Ipsos, a market research company, admitted that there were areas 'that are yet to get back to pre-pandemic levels, such as teaching quality.'

A staggering 325,000 students completed the survey.

Whilst Covid has dominated student life, multiple aspects of university life have proved challenging. Findings show that, in England, only:

■ 52.7% of full-time students agreed that it is 'clear' how feedback on their course was acted on.

■ 53.2% agreed that their students' union effectively represents their interests.

■ 65.7% agreed that feedback on work is timely.

However, perspectives about teaching varied wildly across students studying different subjects. Whilst Veterinary students consistently regarded the quality of teaching highly, those on computing, dentistry and medicine courses did not.

The Office for Students, the universities regulator, announced that the survey may not have been promoted as widely in comparison to previous years as universities sought to mitigate negative feedback due to Covid-19

continuing to worsen student experiences. For many respondents, almost three years of their learning was in some way affected by the pandemic. Questions about Covid that were in last year's survey were not repeated this year.

Despite this, the recent results also highlighted some areas of education that have improved for students.

For instance, in England:

■ 84% of full-time students said that staff were good at explaining things.

■ 83.7% agreed that they were able to access course-specific resources when they needed to.

■ 81% agreed that their course was intellectually stimulating.

Queen Mary also received a silver lining to its results, with undergraduates broadly positive about IT facilities following recent library renovations at its Mile End campus. The NSS feedback will no doubt embolden QM to continue to offer good work experiences for all, and remain ambitious about its aims to improve student resources.

Interim chief executive at the Office for Students, Susan Lapworth, remarked, 'It is welcome to see a marked increase in the proportion of students agreeing that the resources universities and colleges (across the UK) offer are up to scratch.'

Another individual said, 'Students can now access high quality teaching in a way that suits their circumstances and goals. Universities will not take these results for granted, and will continue to work to ensure students enjoy every aspect of their time in higher education.'

NSS 2022: Queen Mary student satisfaction rating

Cost of living breakdown: how the crisis affects YOU

Joe Bounds

The great squeeze is upon us, and students are not exempted. As the cost of living crisis wracks the UK, some student staples are becoming increasingly unaffordable. The average cost for a concert ticket? £89.85. Eating a meal out? £54.80. An Uber journey? £18. A humble coffee? £3.40.

Analysts at Penfold, a pension provider, compared common consumer prices over a five-year period. The results reveal the most expensive everyday items and predict their costs in 2025. They found that the cost of living has risen by as much as 41% in 5 years.

Beers and Cigarettes
PINT COULD REACH £14 IN THE CAPITAL by 2025

The average cost for a pint of lager has risen 16% since 2017 to £4.00 and it's expected to increase further to £4.42 by 2025. That is almost a pound more than the £3.52 drinkers paid in 2017.

For Londoners however, the average cost for a pint of beer is predicted to reach a whopping £13.98 by 2025, from its already steep position of £8.

A pack of 20 cigarettes has increased by nearly £3 in the last 5 years and could near £15 by 2025. If a smoker consumes a pack every day, this amounts to over £5000 spent on cigarettes each year.

Taxi
Uber is the transport method of choice for many after a night out, but costs

are climbing. The average Uber ride has risen 80% since 2017, from £10 to £18. Brits already have the highest prices in all of Europe at over 55p per mile. At this rate, the average single journey could cost up to £26.64 by 2025. Fuel prices are mostly to blame for the increase.

Accommodation
Average weekly rental prices recently hit £256.14, equivalent to £13,319.28 per year.

Things are just as grim in the housing market. The average house price escalated from £223,807 in 2017 to £281,000 this year. Buyers could be paying £323,150 for a home by 2025.

Hotels
The UK already boasted the most expensive hotel prices worldwide prior to the pandemic, with the average hotel costing £97.20 a night in 2017. Between 2019 and 2021, prices rose by 41%, the equivalent of £300 more per week. A night's sleep is now priced at £112.

Daily Essentials
Rising by 27.91% since 2017, the price of milk has gone from 43p to 55p per pint. By 2025 a 64p pint of milk is expected to be the norm.
The average cost of coffee has soared over 50% in the last 5 years. To put this in perspective, a cup of coffee each working day would cost Brits £225 annually in 2017. In 2022, the exact same purchase would result

in an annual spend of £840, hitting £1154.4 in 2025. That is one-tenth of the current minimum wage!

Recreation
On average concert ticket sales have seen a 98% increase in price in comparison to 5 years ago. By 2025, the average ticket is predicted to rise up 58%, costing a whopping £142.42.

Streaming services are seeing higher levels of demand, especially in a post-pandemic world. By 2025, the monthly price of streaming service subscriptions is expected to nearly double since 2017.

Eating out
The average meal out has seen a 91% increase in the past 5 years, costing nearly £55 in £22. This would have cost less than £30 back in 2017, whereas it is predicted to be nearly £85 in 2025.

Chris Eastwood, Co-founder at Penfold, said of the data: 'Rising prices are impacting people across the UK, with almost every activity, commodity, and service observing increased costs as shown from our research.'

'The reality is the heightened levels of inflation we are experiencing do not align with how quickly wages have risen. An increase of 15.35% has occurred in the last five years, yet overall costs of living have nearly tripled by 41.27%.'

Item	2017/18 Costs	2021/22 Costs	5 Year Difference	Increase by 2025	2025 Predicted Costs
Music Concert Ticket	£45.49	£89.85	97.52%	58.51%	£142.42
Restaurant Meal	£28.59	£54.80	91.67%	55.00%	£84.94
Uber Journey	£10.00	£18.00	80.00%	48.00%	£26.64
Gym Membership	£23.00	£40.00	73.91%	44.35%	£58.00
Cup of Coffee	£2.25	£3.40	51.11%	30.67%	£4.44
Vehicle	£13,500	£20,000	48.15%	28.89%	£25,778
Education (p/a)	£296.40	£431.60	45.61%	27.37%	£549.73
Streaming Service	£6.74	£9.24	37.09%	22.26%	£11.30
Rent (p/w)	£192.00	£256.14	33.41%	20.04%	£307.47
Clothing (p/a)	£726.00	£951.00	31.00%	18.60%	£1,127.96
Pint of Milk	£0.43	£0.55	27.91%	16.75%	£0.64
House Price	£223,807	£281,000	25.00%	15.00%	£323,150
Cigarettes	£9.91	£12.33	24.42%	14.65%	£14.14
McDonald's Cheese Burger	£0.99	£1.19	20.00%	12.00%	£1.33
Transport (p/a)	£4,144	£4,820	16.30%	9.78%	£5,291.40
Pint of Beer	£3.52	£4.00	16.19%	9.72%	£4.42
One Night Hotel Stay	£97.20	£112.26	15.49%	9.30%	£122.70

Obituary: Queen Elizabeth II

The Britons have had many queens, curiously in a field often dominated by men, but few like Elizabeth II. Bloody Mary, Boudica of the Iceni, Victoria, Elizabeth I (who was keen not to be a queen at all: 'I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king'). In our history monarchs were power crazed and hungry for glory. Politics was a gruesome affair, often about deciding whose head should be cut off or which country to plunder.

Instead, Queen Elizabeth redefined monarchy in what is best in the British character: self-restraint, gentleness, peace, service. 'Absolute power corrupts absolutely' held no merit in her case.

On her 21st birthday she pledged to live a 'life of service', exhibited ever since in her extensive public duties. She acted as a figurehead for Britain, present at moments of national celebration and tragedy. In this capacity, she was the patron of Queen Mary University of London, visiting several times and opening our library in 1988.

She travelled tirelessly around the world to represent Britain's diplomatic interests; particularly in commonwealth countries, making it her mission to amicably settle the troubled legacy of empire. Whether she succeeded in this or not depends upon who you ask.

In the span of her long life

famously opened Buckingham Palace to television cameras in 1969 for the programme Royal Family. Her words were broadcast into the rooms of millions in her annual televised Christmas messages. She was the 'best known woman in the world', her visage plastered on coins, stamps, art, and album covers.

Other times she was more reluctant to draw back the curtain. Not least after the death of Princess Diana, where her initially muted reaction drew strong criticism from the public. As Head of State, she was bound by convention to remain neutral on political events and so remained silent through some of the country's most difficult political challenges such as Brexit and the Scottish independence referendum. As the Beatles famously lyricised: 'Her Majesty's a pretty nice girl but she doesn't have a lot to say.'

This contradiction of celebrity and distance imbued a sense of mystery into twentieth and twenty-first century British life. The Queen belonged to that great, vague phenomenon known as 'culture' - hard to explain and sometimes harder to defend. Sometimes you have to pinch yourself to remind yourself we live in a 'kingdom' and our sovereign's motto reads 'God and my Right'. She embodied the pageantry and values of another era; a world of titles, empire, and religion. It is a world fast disappearing.

That such an institution



Queen Elizabeth II 1926-2022 On her 90th Birthday, 2016 (Photograph: Press Association)

much has changed. She was Britain's longest reigning monarch, celebrating her 70th year on the throne this year. Her era witnessed the retreat of the British Empire and with it Britain's status as a world power, post-war reconstruction, the Troubles in Northern Ireland, a parade of different governments, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the meteoric rise of consumer technology.

The advent of mass media in her reign redefined the relationship between ruler and ruled. Never had royalty been so accessible for millions of subjects. Sensing the change, she cultivated a cautious relationship with the press and

could survive the tumultuous 20th century is a testament to her unique appeal and the long-standing success of our peculiar form of government: constitutional monarchy.

The country has lost a great stabiliser during an uneasy period of our history. It remains to be seen how Charles III will take up the mantle, and what his approach to the throne will be. With a new prime minister and a new monarch, all is change for our island.

That her passing should inspire such authentic emotion - even bringing some to tears - must be the envy of despots the world over.

Author Bernardine Evaristo awarded honorary Queen Mary degree

QMUL Press

Celebrated author Bernardine Evaristo collected an honorary doctorate from Queen Mary University of London in July as part of summer graduation ceremonies at the historic People's Palace in Mile End. Bernardine Evaristo OBE is the author of ten internationally acclaimed books with a focus on the African diaspora. Besides her 2019 Booker Prize winner 'Girl, Woman, Other', her writing spans a range of genres, including verse fiction, fiction, non-fiction, as well as theatre and radio drama. She is also a well-known champion for inclusion across education and the arts.

Queen Mary chose to awarded Bernardine a Doctor of Letters (DLitt) 'not only to recognise the outstanding distinction of her literary works', which have been taught in the University's School of English and Drama for decades, 'but also for her activism and advocacy'. The 63-year-old has been a leading voice calling for social justice and affecting structural change across the creative arts and education world, particularly regarding diversity in the profession and the inclusion of writers of colour.

Dr Evaristo has long been a supporter of and contributor to Wasafiri, the magazine of contemporary international writing based in Queen Mary's School of English and Drama. In 2010 she co-edited a special Black British issue, 'Beyond Definition', with poet Karen McCarthy Woolf.

Wasafiri founding editor and Queen Mary's Professor of Modern and



Dr Evaristo recieved the doctorate on Friday 29th July (Image: QMUL)

Contemporary Literatures, Susheila Nasta, said: 'A staunch activist and advocate for the inclusion of artists and writers of colour, Bernardine is a model of inspiration for our students, whose writing has long engaged and moved those in our School of English and Drama.

'Throughout her career, she has always been generous in mentoring and supporting writers and professionals at whatever stage in their work - but Bernardine's major contribution has been her determined resolve to continue to challenge inequalities and achieve structural and positive change for writers and especially writers of colour across the arts and publishing sectors.'

As well as this new DLitt degree, Dr Evaristo has received many distinguished honours. The University's patron, Queen Elizabeth II, awarded her an OBE in 2020 following her MBE in 2009. Last year, The Bookseller named Dr Evaristo their 'Person of the Year'. She was also voted one of 100 Great Black Britons in 2020, and made the Black Powerlist 100 in 2021 and 2022.

In 2019, Dr Evaristo became the inaugural Woolwich Laureate at Greenwich and Docklands

International Festival. Other honours include Fellowships at the Royal Society of Arts, the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, the English Association and St Anne's College Oxford. In 2021 she was appointed President of the Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance, and in 2022 she became President of the Royal Society of Literature - the first Black woman to hold this role.

Her books include 'Feminism' (2021), a survey of the representation of women of colour in British art; 'Manifesto' (2021), a memoir; 'Mr Loverman' (2014), a novel about a closet gay Antiguan-London man; 'Hello Mum' (2010), a novella in the voice of a teenage boy; 'Lara' (2009), a verse novel based on her family history spanning England, Nigeria, Ireland, Germany and Brazil; 'Blonde Roots' (2008), a prose novel in which Africans enslave Europeans; 'Soul Tourists' (2005), a novel-with-verse about contemporary and historical Europe; and 'The Emperor's Babe' (2001), a verse novel set in Roman London. They have been translated into more than 40 languages including Czech, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian and Mandarin.

August 2022

On campus we see so many faces passing by without knowing the stories behind those faces. As Queen Mary students, we are no strangers to big events and big personalities, and we want to echo the voices involved in these important moments.

For this second instalment of Faces of QM, we have been talking to some recent graduates! Our graduates have completed degrees in History, Psychology, and Drama. They spoke to us about many different aspects of their lives as students. We talk about life as a commuter, the impact of covid and even editing a certain newspaper!

If you could go back and experience something in your uni life for the first time, what would it be?

No hesitation or thought Freshers week but do it exactly the same!

So, you're the editor of *The Print*. What is your favourite story that you have covered?

I'm going to have think about this one... My favourite story was about a local statue that was being restored. It was great to get to know people who cared about their community and see a successful campaign in the local area. It was also my first experience having to get quotes, talk to people and really write a proper news story. So, I enjoyed the experience of writing it.

What would you say your hardest job as editor was?*

The hardest part was learning everything for the first time. I had never really done anything like it before and so to pick up the skills to not just run a society but to write good stories, create a newspaper and actually print it. I was sort of discovering this for myself and it took a long time to be able to overcome the fears and challenges I had.

You've done a great job! What is something you've achieved as editor that you are really proud of?

My proudest achievement would be printing a real paper. The print is not called the print to be just online! We had 2 years of no newspaper and I think people have really missed that on campus. It's good for the university to have a newspaper that's in touch with its students, and a lot of people had never heard of it before that. So, a real highlight was distributing it on campus and spreading familiarity with the paper. I hope it continues into the years to come.

So, you've just finished university. Whats your biggest takeaway?

Life is what you make of it and you have to throw yourself into everything 100%. You know, I realised too late

Faces of QM

Faces of QM returns to profile three more Queen Mary students

D'rel Gayle & Mehek Gupta

1. Joseph Bounds

What degree did you study?

History, and I did quite enjoy it.

What is your greatest achievement at university?

hmmm... my greatest achievement... Successfully finding friends to move into a house with!

What's one thing you would change about your experience here?

I would get involved in sport, I have missed playing football and being part of a team. If I were to do it again, I would join a sports team.



*Joe has edited *The Print* since 2021*

that nothing good comes easily and with uni you really do have to join all the societies, meet as many people as you can. Don't get hung up on if people will like you, or whether what you're doing it right. You've just got to embrace it all and it will bear fruit.

What is one thing you want to achieve before your 10-year reunion?

I would want to come back to the reunion with an outlandish story to tell my friends. Something like climbing Everest or reaching the North Pole. I guess I would also like to have another qualification.

**Ed's note: 'This interview'*



Ryan Reynolds with Isaac

2. Isaac Ellis

What degree did you study, and did you enjoy it?

I studied a drama degree. I enjoyed it for the most part, but it wasn't exactly what I had expected. There was a lot more written work and theory and such. You kind of expect that when you come to university, but there wasn't as many seminars as possible that I did enjoy or find interesting. The ones I was looking forward to ended up being quite disappointing. Yeah... it was a mixed enjoyment over the course of the degree.

How do you feel your overall uni experience has been?

The overall uni experience has been lacklustre to be honest. Well, first year was really fun don't get me wrong. I came into it in a situation which meant I didn't really experience freshers and didn't really go out and go crazy during first year. So I only started to do it at the end - but obviously then that big world changing event happened and the next two years kind of stood still and that ruined a lot of the overall experience of uni. It tainted the final year of my degree as well because even though it was in person it was very flat. It lost its 'pazzazz,' it lost its wow factor. I was ready for final year to end almost as soon as it started.

What is one thing you would change about your experience here?

I think, as I said earlier, I could've experienced the night life and explored some more. Probably gone out to the student's union bars and stuff earlier on, I feel like I didn't experience that soon enough. I wish I'd signed up for more of the societies, like the sports ones. I wish I had continued with sports. If I did know what was coming, I would have been more active but because my exercise levels really dipped, and I didn't really continue with any of the sports or hobbies I used to enjoy doing.

What is your greatest achievement at university?

My greatest achievement at uni is probably writing, directing, and doing a lot of work on a play called, 'Keep Your Mouth Shut'. It is an important play to myself, the cast and the crew involved. Well, I say crew, but it was really only me! Because... we did it in the middle of covid! It was quite a big thing to do. Not a lot of people have seen the show because we weren't able to distribute it due to some... factors. It was a monumental step in a time where theatre and art weren't really being made. Especially in the university, people weren't making anything in person, but me and the cast made quite a wonderful little play that holds up still despite it being weird and without an audience present during the whole experience. It was quite a monumental achievement to get that produced and recorded. I look back at it very fondly, even though there were some hard times related to it.

3. Mahnoor Rafiq



Mahnoor graduated in Psychology

What degree did you study, and did you enjoy it?

I studied psychology which I always knew I wanted to study from A Levels. I took a gap year before I started where I worked in a psychiatric hospital as a doctor's assistant, just to consolidate whether psychology was the path I wanted to take. In all, I did enjoy the degree itself. I did like the modules we were taught, however, when covid came about it did hinder that enjoyment and I found myself falling out of love with the subject with such a drastic change of being taught from home.

How do you feel your overall university experience has been?

With the scale of the pandemic after first year I had to move back home which was quite difficult and quite isolating because I live in West Sussex which is about an hour away from all of my uni friends. Obviously I missed out on a lot.

What's one thing you would change about your experience here?

If I could change anything, I probably would have continued living out in London for 2nd and 3rd year instead of staying at home. I would get to live with my friends who are also going through the uni experience themselves and I feel like it would have been a lot less isolating for me. And maybe having that support from your flatmates would play into the motivation factor. Like when you're in the library or when you're just surrounded by the uni itself and the student environment. I feel like you need all of that, like it comes under one package. I also wish I got more involved in uni societies and saw more of the events that uni had to offer. I joined the freshers group chat and because I would meet up with friends I already had, I didn't get as involved in events at uni as I should have. The pandemic definitely taught me that as well, seeing that there was so much on offer and not making full use of it.

What is your greatest achievement at university?

So I would say it was definitely getting that certificate that said I had got a First Class. That was rewarding you know, particularly after all that hard studying and trying to work from home away from everybody else. But also, a personal achievement of mine was maturing through uni. I feel like I've learnt so much more since the beginning, both about myself and also things on how to do general stuff. Like I was clueless before. Yeah, I think it's an achievement in itself having more self-awareness and self-confidence. Because when you come straight out of schooling and even though I had that gap year, I still didn't really know what to do or anything about myself.

How do you think your uni experience was affected by the fact that you're a commuter?

Again, with commuting – especially more than an hour away – it can be really isolating. When you are on campus, surrounded by students, you get the university feel.

Besides financially, how do you feel like you've benefited from being at home?

A benefit is spending more time with your parents, and your family in general which you don't get when you're living away.

If you could give your first year self one piece of advice what would it be?

It would be to have more self-confidence and stop looking for reassurance in other people because I did that a lot. I always had this self-doubt in my mind about coursework and exams and I immediately thought that I'd failed no matter how much I'd prepared for it. On some modules, you may not do as well as you did in others, but you can't dwell too much on that. It was very much black and white thinking with me, thinking just because I didn't get the grade I desired, there was no chance I would do any better. One bad grade doesn't define your degree or who you are, so I had this unnecessary anxiety around it. If anything, [in first year], you need to take the constructive criticism and use it to propel you forward rather than push you back!

If you could go back and experience something in your uni life for the first time what would it be?

Moving in for the first day. It's just a different feeling because it's something so new, living away from your parents and discovering things on your own. Sure, it's overwhelming, but there's never going to be an experience like moving out for the first time and living on a campus environment. Anyone who's going to experience that, I'd say don't let any anxieties get the best of you and try to take it all in and live in the moment. And experiencing the QM Fresher's Fair for the first time was really nice because there was such a big, community feeling. You had all these new students; everyone was in the same boat, and everyone was excited, happy.

What's one thing you want to achieve before your 10 year reunion?

Ten years? I haven't even thought that far ahead if I'm being honest. I don't really think I have anything that I have to achieve or want to achieve that much. It would be nice to be in a comfortable area of my career, but I don't think it's a necessity. Wherever I am, I think I'm gonna be happy with it. As long as I'm happy and enjoying what I do, I don't have a particular thing that I have to be at. Although I am pursuing a path in clinical psychology, if I'm not there, or I decide to change my mind, it won't be the end of the world

What has been your favourite project or piece that you have created?

This kinda links to what I was talking about earlier; the play 'Keep Your Mouth Shut' is not my favourite project but it was very monumental. My favourite project was a play called 'If I Were a Sparrow'. It was written by Peter Smart who is a very well renowned playwright from the university, who was at uni while I was. Overall it was a fantastic play and the cast and crew were phenomenal. I couldn't have faulted it in any way! We had a wonderful time and was such a wholesome piece about dealing with grief, loss, and family issues. We made it fun and had a laugh. It was also one of the very few plays I've seen at the university that was in the round as well. It was a nice little ending to my first year of uni, even though we didn't know it was the end.

In a creative sense, how has university helped you?

University has enlightened me in the world of performance art and different forms of creating performances. So, a lot of the work I've been doing since I joined uni has been performance art instead of straight plays or musicals like I was used to at my high school. I've become more open to the idea of using my body to create art rather than a script and enforcing a physicality onto the work, rather than reading lines and being directed. This was quite a different aspect of drama that I didn't experience before university. That has helped my creative side grow and develop.

If you were given a free pass to do any creative project without the logistical restrictions uni placed on you, what would you have done?

One of the great project ideas I did have at one point was looking into the concepts of death and funeral customs and seeing how different cultures performed funeral rituals. For example, the funeral pyres in India where people are cremated are a beautiful thing. From there I got the idea to build a funeral pyre and sit in the middle of it for a performance. It is quite a difficult thing to do because obviously fire is dangerous to work with. I love the image I was trying to create but the logistics of it mean I couldn't do it. In this hypothetical, I would have loved to do it so long as I was safe. I think the heat wouldn't have been too much of an issue, it is more the lack of oxygen in the middle of the fire. I really wanted to create that image!

If you could give your first-year self one piece of advice, what would it be?

Get out there and do stuff!! I didn't do as much as I should've in first year. I should have taken part in more events, activities, societies, sports teams, or a club of some sort. I should've also explored the area we lived in more.

If you could go back and experience something in your university life for the first time, what would it be?

Umm, I don't know. I feel like a lot of my uni life has been unpredictable. The thing I would say I wanted to experience was the in person lectures I never had. So, all of second year that was all online. I feel we missed out on the enjoyment factor of it being in person.

What's the one thing you want to achieve before your 10-year reunion?

I just want to be in a place where I am doing what I want to do within the theatrical world. And in a place where I'm getting comfortable. I don't think I'll be in a place where I will be comfortable yet. I think it'll be a rough 10 years, but I want to be in a place where I'm getting there. I hope the hard work I will have put in is paying off and I'm getting towards where I want to be in the end. I know you can't predict these things but it's about how much effort you put in and what you get out of it. It's going to be rough, but I think I've got this!

Isaac Ellis (cont.)

This hidden gem of a book reveals the fascinating history of Queen Mary

Few universities can claim such illustrious origins, writes Joe Bounds

Joe Bounds

The other week I was rummaging through a box of books condemned as ‘surplus stock’ by Queen Mary library; books given one final chance to find a home before being tossed into the bin. Among the heap of boring and dusty tomes was a glossy paperback, shining out like some rare gemstone: *From Palace to College: An Illustrated Account of Queen Mary College*. Compiled for the university’s centenary in 1985, G. P. Moss and M. C. Saville’s *From Palace to College* charts the evolution of Queen Mary from a disparate collection of charitable institutions to a fully-fledged university. The result is a fascinating story fraught with setbacks, colourful characters, and great achievements. I have done my best to retell the story below.

Humble beginnings:

What we now call Queen Mary started life as a small almshouse nestled in the bucolic surroundings of Stepney Green. In 1727, nobleman Francis Bancroft left funds for a poor boys’ boarding school in his will and entrusted the Drapers Company – of which he was a member – with its maintenance. Ironically, given the use of the Draper’s namesake for our less than holy student club, Bancroft’s school required its borders to ‘refrain from Vice, Swearing, Cursing, Profanation of the Lord’s Day, and other enormous crimes’.

The school was left relatively undisturbed until the nineteenth century brought a wave of renewed attention towards the working poor. Walter Besant’s explosive novel *All Sorts and Conditions of Men: An Impossible Story* was typical of a new genre seeking to expose the depths of poverty in London. His protagonist ‘Angela Messenger’ foresees an extravagant life in Mayfair for the slums of the East End and its inhabitants. Her attempts to edify the downtrodden include the construction of a ‘palace of delight complete with concert halls, reading rooms, picture galleries, and art’.

The novel brought the deprivation of the East End to the attention of the Upper Classes. The concept of a ‘People’s Palace’ began swirl about high society, and at a soiree in the Bethnal Green Museum in 1884, the

Prince of Wales announced his backing for such a project: ‘For some time my thoughts have been given to ameliorate the condition of the laborious working classes of the metropolis... They like all other, or above all other classes of the community must have their recreations and amusements.’

Edward Robert Robson,

story’ had been realised. Thus far this collection of buildings was yet to resemble a cohesive educational institution and the project required constant emergency funding from the Drapers Company. Nevertheless, optimism was high. In 1893, *The Palace Journal and Educational Herald* was so bold as to venture: ‘Perhaps the

preparing for university and the civil service exam; classes in trade and commercial subjects. Upon expiration the trial was extended, then maintained indefinitely in 1915, cementing East London College within the London University group. This fledgling university with an enterprising mission to educate the East End attracted

this stipulation has been lifted today. The magazine published all student degree classifications and reams of student poetry – little news reporting made the cut.

The dawn of the First World War in 1914 brought this flourishing to an end. Student numbers ebbed as men went off to fight; two German teachers were let go. When the war did end, recovery was slow due to the large deficit of young students, and the college entered an unhappy period of prolonged stagnation. Disaster struck again on 25th February 1931, as the Queen’s Hall was engulfed in flames following a boxing event. Not even the fifty fire engines dispatched to the scene could extinguish the blaze before irreparable damage was done. The roof fell in, and the hall was permanently destroyed.

Thankfully, the beneficent Drapers Company made an intervention which transformed the destiny of the palace. Taking stock of the situation, they thought it would be a mistake to rebuild the Queens Hall as before since the university was now devoted solely to education rather than recreation. Against vociferous local opposition, a nearby terrace was acquired and a new ‘People’s Palace’ constructed to modern specifications and the demands of teaching. During this period, classroom space was so scarce that ‘it was not unusual for a lecturer and his class to be seen perambulating the college in search of a vacant room’.

With the separation of college and palace came a rebranding. ELC Magazine asked why ‘if this college is the East London College, University College is not called North London, and the Imperial College not called West London College’. In January 1932, a motion to change the name was passed by the academic board, who thought it ‘especially unfortunate to have a local name because the eastern half of London, perhaps unjustly,

“Not even the fifty fire engines dispatched to the scene could extinguish the blaze”

was published. Issues were released on the proviso that all material was submitted to the principal for screening before publication. We are grateful

is generally disparaged in other quarters of the metropolis’. They decided to honour Queen Mary of Teck, wife of King George V, and



Opulent: Edward Robson’s initial design for the People’s Palace (Image: *From Palace to College*)

Architect to the London School Board, was enlisted to design the palace. He envisioned an estate complete with all the trappings of a royal residence and then some, sporting winter gardens, a concert hall, swimming baths, as well as technical and trade schools. Building began in 1886 and work was constant through night and day. It was completed within a year and opened by Queen Victoria to great public fanfare.

The centrepiece of the project was the elaborate Queen’s Hall. Its interior was a sight to behold. Robson’s vaulted ceiling was so intricate, and the hall’s acoustics so impressive, that architects studied its delicate patterns for future reference. With the hall finished, work started on the gardens, technical schools, and the Octagon library – all financed by the Draper’s company. The ‘impossible

day is not so distant when around the People’s Palace there may grow up something worthy of the name of an East End University’.

A turning point in this direction was the appointment of John Leigh Smeathman Hatton, an Oxford mathematician who was solicited for the position of Director of Evening Classes at the palace. At a spritely 27 years of age, Mr Hatton agitated ceaselessly for the official accreditation needed to offer the London Bsc degree. After great persistence he got his wish in 1896 when the Palace’s educational programme was formalised as ‘East London College’ and admitted as a School of the University of London for a trial period of three years. The college set about launching three official departments; day classes in engineering, chemistry, and art; evening classes for those

some of the country’s – indeed the world’s – most esteemed educators. Hilaire Belloc, the trenchant catholic polemicist, was appointed head of the Department of English Language and Literature in 1911, and Francis Clarke, a prodigy of All Souls College Oxford, was appointed College Professor of Modern History in 1912. Growth was fast and a Students’ Union launched in 1908. Shortly afterwards, the first edition of *The Print’s* predecessor ‘East London College Magazine’ (ELC)

the board handed the charter of incorporation of ‘Queen Mary College’ to Mr Ashby, chairmen of the Drapers Company. Royal assent was granted soon after in 1934. Importantly, the Royal Charter freed the college magazine from the tyrannical oversight of the principal. Free to associate as a ‘Students Union Society’, a technical detail of great importance, the magazine soon reformed as *The Leopardess*, borrowing the animal motif from the Arms of the Draper’s company, and set about publishing long-repressed political content. The *Print*’s current logo bears *The Leopardess* symbol in tribute. So began a new era in the history of the university dubbed ‘Reconstruction’. The Drapers’ company proffered a £5000 interest free loan to construct a lecture theatre, chemistry laboratory, dining hall, student’s union, and the extension of the physics department to include a ‘high voltage laboratory’. The new People’s Palace was finally completed and coincided with a central line extension linking Stepney and Mile End in 1936 (‘the ingenuity of the work and the speed with which it was accomplished are still cause for admiration’ remarks the book). Despite the expansion, it still remained the smallest of all the London Universities, with student numbers under 500.

War years:
As the Second World War loomed the university began to make preparations to evacuate from Mile End. In February 1939, the principal reported to governors that, should war break out, the college would be transferred to Cambridge, allowing the campus site to be requisitioned by an infantry battalion. This took place just a few months later, and the entire university was bungled into King’s College Cambridge. The association is remembered with the award of the ‘Soley Studentship’ post-graduate scholarship for one QM graduate at King’s. Given its proximity to the London docklands, Queen Mary was fortunate to escape heavy bombing. There were a few close shaves; the first German V1 rocket to hit London struck nearby on Grove Road in June 1944, and another in July destroyed Mile End Hospital. The university building itself escaped with just minor damage to the

clock tower. Still holed up in Cambridge, the QMC governing body appointed a new principal, Dr Ifor Evans. Dr Evan’s immediately decided it was time for the university to return to its true home in the East End. The sojourn was over. As early as February 1944 – before even the Normandy landings – the new principal was authorised to return to London.

“Queen Mary soon joined the atomic age with a nuclear reactor and a particle physics laboratory”

The years after the war were filled with hardship. Coal supplies were a trickle and water had to be delivered by cart and boiled. The dramatic society attempted to lighten the mood by performing ‘She Stoops to Conquer’. Despite the adversity, a new post war drive seemed to propel development. Student numbers swelled to

which had flattened swathes of the surrounding land. Property on Bancroft Road and Cripplegate was acquired for an engineering building. Queen Mary soon joined the atomic age the war had inaugurated with a nuclear reactor and a particle physics laboratory on Marshgate Lane, Bow. The reactor received an announcement in the House of Commons, and the government granted its licence in 1960. Mathematics and biology tower blocks soon followed. Again, the Drapers Company footed the bill. The demand for more space necessitated a move eastward towards Regents Canal. At great effort and expense, about 4/5ths of the Nuevo Jewish Burial ground was cleared. For this drastic manoeuvre, the university signed a contract with the ‘London Necropolis Company Ltd’ for the disinterment of the 7000 bodies; to be reburied in a plot some 16 miles away at Dytchleys, Brentword, near Romford. The other 1/5th of the grave site remains protected at the centre of the university on a 999-year lease. 1966 saw the introduction of the new BSc system, and with it a revolution in degree studies. The BA, BSc (Econ) and BSc (Eng) allowed for the selection of ‘branching’ modules as students progressed through their course, as their changing interests or skills dictated. Aided by the new buildings and courses, Queen Mary experienced an ‘explosion’ in growth to over 2000 students by 1984.



The Queens Hall, destroyed by a fire in 1931 (Image: From Palace to College)

783 – the highest yet – and the university embarked upon several ambitious construction projects, with the expansion presided over by the ‘energetic persistence of Dr Ifor Evans and the Drapers Company’. This was largely made possible by the German bombing

Money troubles:
The years 1979–1982 brought extreme uncertainty. Margaret Thatcher’s conservative government slashed the public grant given to universities. Coupled with the dire national economic situation of those years and a low birth-rate generation, the

Huzzle: The app that offers to blunt the pain of job rejections

Yasin Kheradmand

Only 1 in 4 job applications ever get seen by an actual human being. The rest are filtered out by heartless algorithms that filter by keywords. ‘I applied to 121 internships, got 4 interviews, 3 rejections, one offer. That one offer was then pulled due to COVID-19’ says Manuja Jayawardana, a student who recently started a podcast about how hard it is to get into industry. This story is incredibly familiar, and is recounted over and over by students of all backgrounds, and from all universities. Students have to search for hours on job boards, create excel spreadsheets where they keep track of all of their applications, and their progress – all while juggling schoolwork, exams, essays and deadlines. This already stressful situation is only exacerbated by the receipt of numerous rejection letters which have been clearly sent by a computer that has just converted their valuable skills and experience into keywords and data. Our London-based company, Huzzle, is trying to solve this problem. Founded by a few students who know these pains first-hand, we set out to take the heartache out of this journey. ‘Every time a student gets a rejection email in their inbox, their heart sinks, and they feel the pain

for the whole day. By matching students directly to the jobs that fit their skills and background, we help them get accepted more quickly.’ says Parham, the founder – who recently graduated from UCL. The team have been working on their matching algorithm, and have released a beta version of their app which students can download now. In parallel, ‘In order to already help relieve students’ heart ache’, they’ve launched Huzzle Love Letters; where they will re-write rejection emails into funny love letters that open with tidbits such as ‘Dear Candidate no. 3218’, and sign off with ‘An Automated Response System’. One funny example sent to Alicia, a Westminster student after she got rejected from an internship at a big bank said: ‘Unfortunately, we have concluded that you are quite simply too awesome for our organisation, which is incredibly dull and boring. Please do not be disheartened, your application suggests that you will be a great success as long as you don’t work for a boring company like ours.’ While Huzzle continues to work on solving the recruitment problem, students can send their own rejection letters to love@huzzle.app in order to have a laugh, and take a breath, before diving back into the job search.

financial situation at Queen Mary became bleak. Early retirement was encouraged, vacancies were frozen, and foreign students were sought to bolster the university’s coffers. Several courses were discontinued to save money such as single honours Russian, Geology, and Classics. Most tragically, the handsome Welsh Calvinistic Chapel which had played host to the university’s gymnasium had to be sold to the Half Moon Theatre. It finds new life today as every QM student’s favourite haunt – the Half Moon Wetherspoons. **Happy Ending:**
The book tails off in the mid-1980s with a cautious optimism. There are vague details of a new library and what can now be recognised as Creed Court and Lodge House. Planning and some early sketches of the Bancroft building are present. There are also some fanciful projects that obviously never came to fruition – chief among them the ‘proposed college social area and theatre in the round in the present Library Octagon’. If I were to recount the cascade of admirable faculty members, management staff and students mentioned by the book it would fill the entire newspaper. The

myriad projects are equally impressive: eight Queen Mary physicists worked to build CERN’s hadron collider and five on the Infrared Astronomical Satellite. Finishing it leaves you with a sense of the weight of Queen Mary’s history and the superhuman efforts of the our predecessors. It was clearly at the centre of so many lives. If you want all the detail, you too can pick up a copy on eBay for just a few pounds. As I leave Queen Mary I will cherish this book as a parting gift, safe in the knowledge the legacy of the university has been preserved. In 50 years time perhaps some contemporary of ours will write the history of QM anew. With the current exploits of strike action, graduation ceremonies and the interesting people and projects found in this paper, it remains as vibrant as one hundred years ago. There will be plenty to fill the pages.

From Palace to College: An Illustrated Account of Queen Mary College was first published in 1985, by Queen Mary College. The views expressed within are not necessarily the views of Queen Mary.

Review: Lubaina Himid at the Tate Modern

This exhibition showcases the most riveting artworks of Lubaina Himid's career, confronting normative ideas of urban spaces, race and gender writes Clera Rodrigues

Clera Rodrigues

This immersive exhibition provides an engaging encounter with physical art and the ideas behind it. Curated by Michael Wellen with Amrita Dhallu, this epochal exhibition at London's Tate Modern displays three decades of paintings and multimedia work by the black British artist Lubaina Himid — the first and oldest black woman to win the Turner prize. Himid's artworks over the decades exhibit her use of subversion in various forms, most significantly concerning urban spaces, geometric patterns, black female agency, race, and representation. Behind each piece is an ideological goal to change perspectives. Although primarily a painter, she is virtuosic in the way she interweaves various artistic mediums together, such as material and sound.

Before entering white gallery rooms, visitors are greeted with a magenta pink corridor which foreshadows Himid's signature scheme of vivid colours. *Work From Underneath* (2019) is a sequence of paintings framing miscellaneous objects accompanied by imperative slogans and backed by an audio recording dramatising the subjects. As the first piece, it nudged me to begin thinking beyond what is conventional.

The next gallery room houses *Blue Grid Test* (2020), a collaboration between Himid and Magda Stawarska-Beavan. This audio-visual installation presents items such as cardboard, parts of a piano, a clock, and a drum connected by a small blue line containing irreg-



Surreal: 'Lubaina Himid' exhibition at the Tate Modern, London (Photograph: Clera Rodrigues.)

'Himid complicates the notion of spectatorship, compelling viewers to adjust themselves to the art'

ular patterns across the four walls of the room. Six speakers circularly positioned and facing inwards project six different channels of sound, drawing me into the centre of the cacophony. The piece creates a soundscape of the word 'blue' in various dominant languages such as English,

French, and Spanish. It manages to create harmony and beauty out of incongruous chaos.

Further into the exhibition is *Freedom and Change* (1984). A rose-pink drapery hanging from a wood-

en rod depicts two black female figures in motion whilst confidently holding the leashes of four black dogs in front. Two white male heads — just heads — on a wooden cut-out are stationed behind the women at the level of the dogs and visitors' feet. By levelling her subjects like this, Himid subverts the racial and gender power dynamics present in the 1980s. The piece reflects upon the societal empowerment of black women as they finally, albeit gradually, take the reins in society. Himid was herself involved in the UK's Black Arts Movement during that time. In light of the 1960s civil rights movement and 1980s second-wave feminism, *Freedom and Change* speaks volumes to today's audiences undergoing a fourth wave of feminism. It reflects the persistence of feminism's fight for gender equality and civil rights.

The core of the exhibition is Himid's installation *A*

Fashionable Marriage (1984–1986), in which several pieces of art, many depicting figures which could just as well stand alone, are laid out in the space like characters onstage; a tableau. This most magnificent display consists of at least fifteen different materi-



Lubaina Himid, *A Fashionable Marriage* (1984–1986) (Photograph: Clera Rodrigues.)

als, including gloves, foil, and a wicker basket. Himid pastiches William Hogarth's satirical painting *The Countess's Morning Levee* (1743) — the fourth of his six-part series *Marriage A-la-Mode* ('Modern Marriage') — which depicts the transgressing of behavioural norms amongst

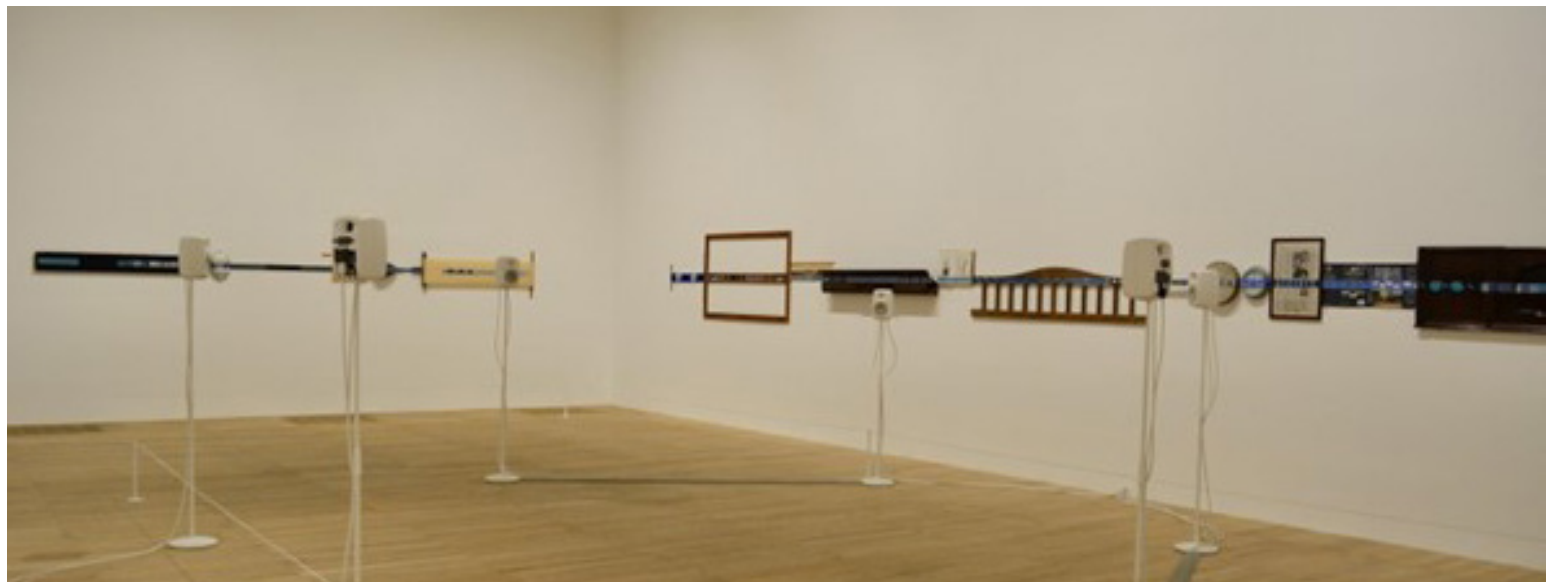
various figures. A subversive scene indeed. Describing herself as a 'satirist', Himid targeted anyone involved in art or politics in 1980s London. Each piece has its own visual world open to infinite interpretations, into which I got lost. The pompous aristocrat; the black female artist; the nude and genitally mutilated biological male. Himid's experimentation with visually and physically immersive artworks and participatory spectatorship makes the exhibition highly immersive. However, other than with *A Fashionable Marriage*, I am not convinced the entire exhibition is as 'theatrical' as it is marketed, however immersive it may be. Theatricality connotes a sense of performance, be it of the artist, materials, or visitor-spectators, yet not all of her works give off this impression.

Recurring motifs and artistic techniques appear throughout Himid's paintings, linking them together. For example, geometric patterns reminiscent of

cubism often crop up. *Tide Change* (1984), amongst four others in a patterned blue colour scheme, presents two different yet harmonious patterns. In *Plan B* (1999), the recurring perspective of a building interior with a body of water visible through a window is infiltrated by a similar strip

of cubism. Tiny black and white flags from *Everybody Is (Plan B)* (1999) reappear in *Ball on Shipboard* (2018), where a business social gathering occurs aboard a boat.

There is more to the paintings than their primary subjects. Himid's intellectual messages are subtle yet pervasive. She fiddles with levels and perspectives to make spectators contemplate alternative, uncommon viewpoints. Intriguingly, *Man in a Pencil Drawer* (2017) and *Man in a Paper Drawer* (2017) present painted portraits of black men inside physical drawers at a distance from the viewer, forcing my short self to stand on tippy toes to view them. These drawers complicate the notion of spectatorship by compelling viewers to, rather unconventionally, adjust themselves to the art. By using household furniture items of drawers as the



Lubaina Himid, *Blue Grid Test* (2020) (Photograph: Clera Rodrigues.)

canvas, the artwork touches upon the politics of consumerism and recycling as well as of repurposing objects for unexplored uses. Likewise, the aforementioned painting *Everybody Is (Plan B)* (1999) depicts two paintings of the interior and exterior sides of a building against a body of water on two coupled

canvases. When reading the images from right to left, the perspective 'zooms out'. Catching the 'Himidian' drift by this point, I looked upwards and spotted a curious wooden structure with designs painted in primary colours, aptly titled *In Plain Sight* (2018).

Himid's exhibition is a showcase of subversion. She

subverts the dominant laws of art, as well as architectural structures, by altering the viewer's conception of what constitutes art and prompting them to consider different viewpoints and dimensions. Himid's rejection of traditional Western artistic concepts like subject matter and artistic mediums serve to convey a po-

litical rejection of all that is conventional in contemporary society, and shows an impressive interdisciplinary approach to her art.

Lubaina Himid (exhibition) is at the Tate Modern, London, until October 2, 2022.

Review: *Shakespeare's Villains* return to the stage in brilliant reimagining ★★★★★

Director Thomas Lafferty breathes new life into old characters in a thought provoking production

Joe Bounds

Falstaff, Shylock, Tybalt and Caliban all walk into a room sounds like the beginning of a 17th century joke, but it is in fact the ingenious premise of a recent play shown in Queen Mary's Pinter studio. 'Are you ready for a game?' opens Thomas Lafferty's (English & Drama '22) directorial debut which pits Shakespeare's most infamous characters against each other in a struggle to be 're-written' and their have tarnished legacies wiped from the annals of English literature.

In a scenario that is half Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* and half Shakespearean social experiment, the characters battle it out in purgatory for the mercy of their creator, the 'Great Author' (Kristina Munkova), who presides over all in the rafters above the stage. Only one will triumph while the others must remain 'forever hated'.

The characters are true to the Bard's originals. Caliban (Isaac Ellis) is a pitiable creature, seeking protection in the other characters and his naivety leaves him open to betrayal. Falstaff (Emma Semani) is gregarious and overbearing. Ever the artful wheeler-dealer, he asks for a pie eating contest to settle the situation. The deceitful Shylock (Sam O'Sullivan) offers to lay down his life for Caliban in an apparent

self-sacrifice, then throws his motivations into suspicion when he cries, 'I hope you're listening to this great author'. Sword-branishing Tybalt (Davide Castejon) proposes they end the contest with a duel. These whimsical explorations flesh out Shakespeare's characters and the traits which make them memorable in a new setting. The language too, while tempered, retains some of Shakespeare's lyricism.

But there is sufficient invention to keep things interesting. There is an intelligent blend of the figurative and the literal as the director tries to incorporate modern performance techniques. Tybalt and Shylock exchange verbal blows over what appears to be a tennis match, each stroke and parry mirroring the flow of their argument. In a visual representation of her ver-



Take a bow: *Shakespeare and villains*, from right: Falstaff (Emma Semani), Tybalt (Davide Castejon), Great Author (Kristina Munkova), Shylock (Sam O'Sullivan), Caliban (Isaac Ellis)

bal manipulation, Falstaff attaches clothing pegs to Tybalt to play with him as he would a puppet. At other times the symbolism is less clear. What, for instance, is the significance of the intermittent triangle dings?

All the performers were excellently cast. Shylock was a highlight: always contorted and speaking with a raspy drawl he looked and sounded twenty years past his age. The Great Author too oozed malevolence through both her

voice and physicality, shrieking down her commands while clinging beetle-like to the guard rail above the stage.

The story reaches a dramatic climax when a victorious Tybalt confronts the Great Author to rail against the cruelty of the experiment, speaking what is upon all our minds: 'Is this what you wanted?' he cries amidst the bodies of his fallen competitors. He then snubs the Great Author's offer at redemption, asking instead to be rewritten 'as a stonehearted, cold-blooded killer... after a lifetime of hating now I have known guilt. Remove my conscious author, I want to forget.'

The Great Author responds mockingly: 'Tybalt you are simply whatever I say you are,' and threatens to 'rewrite' the devoted Capulet as a Montague. Tybalt takes the only way out he has any control over, turning his blade upon himself. It is an insightful comment on the author-as-God, free to torture

and bless his creations in equal measure.

To finish, the Great Author gives a grim summary of the play's events: 'That's what happens to the innocent in this cruel world,' she says. 'I may have been dead for 300 years' - making her identity as Shakespeare explicit - 'but these villains are immortal. The only one who can rewrite, redeem, forgive these villains is you.' And with this she lays down her feathered quill before us, the audience. Not only is this a clever reflection on the circumstances of the play (as spectators we must judge the actions of the characters ourselves), but isn't this also true of our own lives? It issues a challenge that only we are able to 're-write' our story, and our redemption must be of our own choosing.

Verdict: This philosophical minded production explores themes of God, morality, and history. It is an original and fascinating treatment of Shakespeare's characters which makes you laugh as much as reflect. The audience were in all agreement - as the lights went down a standing ovation erupted throughout Queen Mary's packed-out Pinter studio. An extremely promising first production from this budding playwright.

Ilina Kabra: Reflections on first year



‘One day, you’re 17, and you’re planning for someday. And then quietly, without you ever really noticing, someday is today. And then someday is yesterday. And this is your life.’—John Green.

When I was 17, I remember sitting in a meeting room with my college counsellor, discussing the contents of my university statement. We were taking what had already been written in my life to plan for that day when I one day would have to flip the page and begin writing the next chapter of my life. Before I could blink, I was standing in front of the East gate of Queen Mary University of London. I could now call myself a ‘University Student,’ with the beginning of a new chapter symbolized by the key on my lanyard to my new home. For the first few days, I thought about the time when someday I would get on a plane and return home for Winter Break and spend five weeks at home.

Then someday became yesterday, as I woke up after spending my first night back in my dorm room following the holiday break. And again, in those days I dreamt about the time I would go home for the summer break. Well, that time is upon me, as I write from my desk at my home with my family in the other room. The time passed so quickly, like the Flash running through Central City. Only a blur is visible for a split second, and then it escapes, hurrying off into the distance. The

blur: the first year of university. I hope this article gives some guidance for those coming into my position.

One thing I realised fast is that university makes you feel older than you are. This fact hit me like a freight train in my first couple of weeks. Suddenly, there was no one to ‘tell’ me what to do; instead, they ‘advised,’ ‘suggested,’ and ‘recommended’. The autonomy granted to me was something I believed I was not ready for. I realised that the consequences of my actions would rest solely on me and not my parents.

When I arrived at Queen Mary University of London for the first time, I was a mix of excitement and nerves, and not quite sure that it was really happening. It hit me with a sudden rush of emotion that I would be staying, and my parents would not. I will never forget the feeling I had when I gave my father a hug before he left to go home. I always used to say my father would be my roommate, and with me always. However, that final hug made clear that the vision my four-year-self had was a fantasy; I would be living on my own.

I has a similar feeling when I gave my mum a final hug 5 days later and watched her taxi drive off to the airport. It is difficult to put into words, but saying goodbye to the woman whom I’d never spent more than two consecutive weeks away from made me feel truly alone. Loneliness was something I had felt before throughout secondary school. But back then I was never truly alone, as I had a

couple of friends and I was always around people I knew. This was different. All my excitement disappeared but would soon reappeared again – I knew I had to be brave and walk into campus with my head held high, ready to start making friends.

Holding my head high was a little harder than I thought it would be. The first few weeks were tough. Speaking to other international students from all corners of the world made me feel so much more comfortable. Knowing there were people going through the same thing and experiencing similar feelings made me feel part of a community and not alone. It turns out that making friends at uni is not as daunting and horrible as I thought. I learned that pretty much every first year is in the same boat and feeling the same emotions: lost, sad, excited, nervous... the list goes on.

Soon I found the confidence to open up. I found friends and like-minded people within my area of study and through joining the various societies QM has to offer. I have to shout out a few societies worth joining that personally helped me love university: Queen Mary Running and Athletics Club (QMRAC), The Print, CUB Magazine, and the Politics Society. Joining these societies has made my first year so much fun.

One of my favourite parts of university life is Mile End. Every day brings new experiences on the same stretch of sidewalk. The smell of chicken and chips; the fresh, breezy air when walking from campus to Victoria Park; the

smell of a fresh cup of tea blowing from the small, lovely cafes on Mile End Road.

One of my favourite parts about university is the clean slate it gives you. You are free to be who you want to be. While university has made me more aware of how I am perceived by others, I am not scared to go out without a full face of makeup, sweats (occasionally pyjama bottoms depending on how late at night I am going to the Co-op or the pub for a takeaway and groceries), and a ‘should have washed about a week ago’ shirt and jumper. People care about more than your surface-level appearance, such as your intelligence and personality.

A few wise words and lessons I learned during the first year:

1. Venturing out to Drapers (or any other club) without filling up your stomach and drinking tons of water will result in the walls, floor, or any surface of East London being painted with the contents of your stomach. I speak from experience.

2. Your food is not safe in a communal fridge. Do not bother using labels, they will be ignored. Put the food you would like to keep safe in your room, the freezer, or if the item needs to be refrigerated, good luck, cross your fingers and hope it is still there in the morning.

3. Red Beer at Drapers takes some time to get used to. Also, if you have never taken a shot, maybe don’t do six in 30

minutes... and for sure, don’t mix).

4. If you like tea, stock up on tea bags. From experience, they run out quickly.

5. Good, solid friendships can be formed through talking to someone as your walk back from Drapers at 12:30 am.

6. Walking back to accommodation down Mile End Road at 3:45am is not a good idea. Stick to the quote ‘safety in numbers’.

University is a rollercoaster of emotions. Nerves, to begin with, excitement when you find friends, sadness when missing home; the list goes on. At first, I felt like I was in a desert, isolated with no one to care for me or help me. But by participating in social activities and societies at QM, I made some amazing like-minded friends. Gradually I began to embrace and love my new life. I am studying a subject I love, have the most wonderful friends, and study on a beautiful campus surrounded by nature, parks, and local bakeries. It is ok to feel homesick, get stressed, feel anxious, but it is also ok to be happy, comfortable spending time with yourself, possibly overspend at times and find yourself in some delightful messes – all experiences you will learn from and remember fondly. One thing I have learned though: taking a chance on Queen Mary University of London was one of the best decisions I have made.

Netflix hit “Never Have I Ever” is a triumph in representation

Ilina Kabra

With over 4.5 million Indian Americans in the United States, we make up over 1.4% of the population. Although this makes us the largest group of South Asians in America, there is a significant lack of accurate representation and relatability on screen in mainstream media. I am used to watching my favourite TV shows without seeing anyone who was remotely like me. That was until I saw Maitrayi Ramakrishnan as Devi Vishwakumar in the hit Netflix Show “*Never Have I Ever*”.

This is no accident. Creator Mindy Kaling is of Indian descent herself and has said that every character represents a little bit of her. Furthermore, the show is made up of writers and directors who are of South-Asian descent, and some of the events that occur throughout the show are drawn from their real-life personal experiences. Through the masterful use of comedy, enhanced by John McEnroe as the narrator, and the emotion enhanced by broken hearts, grief, and relationships between the characters, the show is nothing the world has ever seen before and has become a hit in millions of households across the world.

Never Have I Ever follows 15-year-old Devi Vishwakumar, a first-generation Indian American girl attending Sherman Oaks High School in the San Fernando Valley of California. Following the unforeseen death of her father Mohan (Sendhil Ramamurthy) at a

school event, Devi spirals into a deep, grief-stricken state, losing mobility in her legs as a result of the sudden psychological trauma. The show leads audiences through Devi’s recovery following her temporary paralysis and her attempts to navigate her popularity, social standing, and hunt for a boyfriend at high school, which sometimes comes at the cost of her friendships. The series depicts high school life perfectly – love triangles, best friends, self-discovery, struggles with school, getting into college, parties, and feeling not being ready to leave home.

This is what I love most about the show. It manages to showcase a diversity of adolescent experiences in which we can all see ourselves. Personally, I find myself relating to Devi as I sometimes make impulsive, rash decisions that do not end well. Devi’s struggle to love herself in season three is also something I can relate to, best expressed when Paxton tells Devi: ‘I don’t think we can have a real relationship until you like yourself’. Her worry that ‘What if nobody ever loves me because I’m always too much?’ is a question I struggle with. I find my-

self relating to Ben’s determination in always striving to get good grades (although not to the extent Ben goes to!). Then there is Paxton, in feeling underestimated academically which I have felt greatly, and continue to feel.

As an Indian American, I am pleased to see people like me on screen who are relatable and human, capable of making mistakes and bad decisions. It’s about time that a primetime show on a major network like Netflix put forward a show that touches upon the many aspects of Indian culture, debunking the pervasive stereotypes out there. One scene that impacted me was in season three, when the potential love interest Des (Anirudh Pisharody) calls Devi out for her prejudice towards Indian men. Devi stereotypes Des to be a computer geek, and he calls her out for it: ‘You’re one of those Indian girls who only like white guys and

thinks all Indian dudes are just computer geeks.’ The show also discusses arranged marriages through the character of Kamala (Richa Moorjani). Initially, Kamala is torn between familial duty and her true love, contentiously choosing her ‘arranged’ husband

Prashant (Rushi Kota) after breaking up with her true love, college boyfriend Steve (Eddie Liu). In season two however, Kamala decides she is not ready for marriage, and runs out of the house before Prashant has a chance to propose. Season three has Kamala face her family about the decision, who are incredibly humiliated and disappointed with her. When Kamala begins to date Devi’s English teacher Mr. Mannish Kulkarni, she begins to stand up to her family and fight for true love, explaining, ‘I’m an adult. And I don’t want to end things with him. So perhaps the best way forward is for me to move out.’

I believe the show is so successful because it blends emotion with comedy. While sometimes wildly funny, the sit-com never forgets what Devi has bottled within her: the death of her father and the grief she faces. This delicate blend would not be possible without the stellar acting of Maitrayi Ramakrishnan, who responded to the global open casting call on Twitter to land the role of Devi Vishwakumar. Ramakrishnan gives a flawless performance, making Devi appear truly human through a blend of light-hearted comedy and sincerity: it never feels forced. The scenes with Devi in therapy with Dr. Jamie Ryan (Niecy Nash) is a good example of this, when Devi asks, ‘Do you think I’m crazy’, which leads to a conversation about how everyone calls her ‘Crazy Devi’ at school. Dr.

Ryan responds, ‘That’s a lot. But you’re not crazy. You’re just hurting, and you might even be a little depressed. And that’s ok because I can help you through it.’ After an emotional conversation, Devi replies ‘Thanks Dr. Ryan. You’re pretty smart for someone who has Cookie Monster’s turd around her neck’, bringing a touch of comedy into an otherwise emotional scene.

Ramakrishnan is not alone – the ensemble cast is also filled with additional truly shining minority characters, who add to the series. Jaren Lewison, who plays Ben, portrays a character who is very brash and outspoken but with a deep sense of loneliness and neglect from his parents and his peers. Lewison exaggerates the more emotional and vulnerable side of his character with such truth and sincerity that I found myself rooting for Ben towards the end of the first season.

Never Have I Ever has been a much needed breath of fresh air for me as a South Asian girl. At the heart of the show is the portrayal of Devi by Ramakrishnan. She is comedic but sincere, intelligent but outspoken, reckless, and sometimes impulsive – but altogether human. The show tastefully tackles topics like cultural identity, grief, sexuality, and sends an important message to its audience that there is more to high school than boys. I hope there is more like *Never Have I Ever* to come.



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

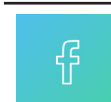
A fan writes

You Suck.

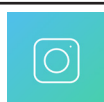
- **Anonymous**

At the Print we operate a very strict policy on hate mail. It is crucial you realise the potentially life-threatening impact of affronts to the meek such as this spiteful quip. I might suggest I return the sentiment in your general direction, though I consider it a mark of great dignity in myself that I am able to sigh, ignore it (despite my deflation) and carry on with my day.

- **Letters Correspondent**



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Please address letters to 'The Print Letters Correspondent'. Anonymity is granted upon request, otherwise please include your name. Your writing may be edited upon publication. Response not guaranteed.

Job hunting

I have just graduated from Queen Mary and I am searching for a job. I really don't want to end up in (another) bar. Any tips on how to go forward? Thanks.

- **History Graduate, E1**

Consider applications for think tanks, museum roles, freelance writing positions, archivism, civil service, primary and secondary education training, heritage work, conservation, curation, government, and staying at Queen Mary to do a masters degree. Give up, slam head into nearest hard surface then pour me a pint of Brixton Pale Ale (please and thank you).

- **Letters Correspondent**

Film woes

I cannot be the only one to notice how dull the current crop of films are. Can the letters correspondent recommend a decent flick - past or present?

- **JB, Shadwell**

I divulge that I am a great fan of science fiction adventures such as *Flash Gordon*, *Arrival*, *Blade Runner* or *Moon*; from these 'flicks' much can be learned about the infinite possibilities folded into this seemingly simple universe. A certain recommendation for those looking to usurp the humdrum laws of physics.

For a less 'alien' and more 'human' interest I would suggest films matching the doom of this current media age and of your personal attitude. With all the vintage trappings one might think these are 'nostalgic' rather than 'bad' or 'depressing'. Try *Taxi Driver*. *There Will Be Blood* is a similarly tragic yet riveting modern choice.

- **Letters Correspondent**

Introducing...

Introducing the incoming executive committee:

Editor-in-Chief: Georgie Walls

Hi, I'm Georgie, the new Editor-in-Chief of *The Print*. I'm going into the third year of my English Language and Linguistics degree and I'm very excited about what the next year will bring. *The Print* has an amazing team of contributors with interests that span a wide variety of topics and I'm excited to work alongside them throughout the next year and create a paper we're proud of. The next year of *The Print* will (hopefully) include more printed copies, more great journalism and of course more socials!



Deputy Editor: Yashna Khattry



Hello everyone! My name is Yashna, and I will be your new Deputy Editor-in-Chief. I am starting the second year of my biology degree and am also an international student. I was born and raised in Kenya but am fully Nepali. I'm really excited about the up-and-coming school year and cannot wait to start working with Georgie on *The Print*. I will continue to bring you the printed editions of the paper and consistent online articles, concentrating on student-centred reporting. I hope you all had a great summer and will have an even better rest of the year!



Joe Bounds

After three years fraught with disruption and uncertainty those students who persevered to the end were in July awarded their degrees. In ceremonies spanning three weeks, from July 18th to 26th, thousands crossed the red-carpeted stage in the People's Palace to shake hands with Queen Mary Principal Colin Bailey and collect their certificate. The moment was the summation of three – sometimes four – years of laborious studies blighted by strikes, the Covid-19 pandemic and an unprecedented shift to online learning and examination. Helen Beckett, who graduated with an honours degree in Biology, said: 'Although there were many challenges along the way, I really enjoyed my time at Queen Mary. There is a real community spirit which makes any problem you face in your time there easier to deal with'. There was some fear that graduation would not proceed on time, due to the extent of industrial action (see lead story, pg 1.). However, with the help of external markers, most final year students were unaffected. *The Print* wishes a hearty congratulations to all those who graduated this year, and every success in the future!

