



EDITOR'S NOTE

You coming out tonight? It's going to be a big one, get involved. Forget the deadlines - a little resit never did any harm. We want you to strap on the most extravagantly fantastic, head-turningly flamboyant, 'break-the-internet' outrageous outfit that your 'student-in-the-midst-of-cost-of-living-crisis' budget can sculpt together. We're not going to let anything ruin our fun.

In our last issue we were angry, but now maybe we've gone a bit delirious? The world seems to be gradually refining its fictional dystopia impersonation but we're doing our best to revel in it. For the second edition of the year, GUM turns its once reddened gaze on the land of fame and excess!. What can us Gen-Z kids learn from the early twentieth-century Dada art movement? Is performative satire the same razor-sharp political tool it once was? Are Harry Styles' resplendent outfits groundbreaking and radical, or in fact just a little problematic? Dip into the pages beyond and find out.

A huge thank you to the incredible GUM team and all of our contributors who have worked so hard to put this together. And to all our readers, remember, try not to worry about making sense of it all. If the music's playing, dance. Go big or go home, go OVER THE TOP.

Lots of love,
Ava and Conal xoxo

1 [Cyrus, M / Montana, H. 2009. Party in the USA.](#)

4

FEATURES

THE ANTI-MODERN Naomi Maeve (she/her)

DELIRIUM OR DADAISM Evie Glen (she/her)

8

CULTURE

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PORN BECOMES GOSPEL? Lily Crooke (she/her)

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR 15 MINUTES: THE CELEBRITY IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL AGE
George Browne (he/him)

12

POLITICS

ARTISTIC ACTIVISM: PERFORMANCE AS A GLOBAL NERVOUS REACTION
Robert Goodall (he/him)

SATIRE'S DEAD, HERE'S WHY WE SHOULD BURY IT Andrew Taylor (he/him)

16

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

RETURNING TO NUB LAND: IN CONVERSATION WITH MARLY MERLE

26

STYLE & BEAUTY

TREADING A FINE LINE: IS 'THE HARRY STYLES' AESTHETIC' GROUNDBREAKING OR QUEER-BAITING? Maeve Gorman (she/her)

BEFORE & AFTER: THE TOXICITY OF THE MOVIE MAKEOVER Claire Thomson (she/her)

30

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

KNIGHT IN SHINING SOLAR: THE REALITY OF RENEWABLE Eve Dickson (she/her)

CONSUMPTION, CAPITALIZATION AND COMMERCIALISM - OH MY! Rothery Sullivan (she/her)

34

CREATIVE WRITING

A DATE WITH MICKEY FINN Eve Connor (she/her)

NOTES ON MAXIMALISM Lucy Lauder (she/her)

What Happens When Porn Becomes Gospel?

WORDS: Lily Crooke (she/her)

TW: pornography, sexual assault, sexual harassment

In the absence of adequate sex education in schools, pornography is filling the gap as young people turn to porn to answer their questions about sex. Porn has an extensive and often insidious impact, disproportionately affecting women, people of colour, queer men and those with disabilities. However, this article will primarily focus on the effects of modern pornography on young queer women. To combat its damaging effects, we must depict the good, the bad, and the everything-in-between of sex.

In an age where increasingly young audiences have unfettered access to the internet, the damaging effects of pornography are becoming progressively more evident. Our generation is the first to essentially be raised on internet porn, yet governments and parents have the wrong approach in tackling the issue. Banning “violent” pornography and creating age limits on porn sites will not solve the problem. Porn no longer takes the form of seedy magazines, DVDs and video cassettes. It is virtual and uncontainable. Combatting it must go deeper than box-ticking and ineffectual legislation, it must be rooted in re-education.

Porn has an enormous impact on men, many young and teenage boys having their first sexual experiences in front of a screen. However, some of the greatest consequences are on the women and men who have their first sexual experience with someone raised on internet pornography. As you usually have to pay for independent porn, the market is dominated by Pornhub and other similar free sites which provide thousands of variations on a standard theme: the man dominates the woman, who enjoys the domination, and who is told she likes it. Those who watch porn regularly from a young age become accustomed to this gaze and formula, skewing their understanding of intimate consensual sex.

This dominant form of porn has a universal gaze: that of a heterosexual man. In her book *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey argues that this perspective is constructed for a male viewer to project himself into. However women and queer people who watch porn are also forced to identify with this point of view, which can have damaging psychological effects, especially when questioning sexual identity.

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The widespread influence of lesbian porn has meant that many women and femmes are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with using the term. Lesbian porn is almost always created by men, for men.

It depicts lesbian sex that is enacted primarily for straight male audiences, often with power dynamics that mirror heteronormative sex. Even with no man present, the gaze of the camera is still distinctly male. This influences how young queer women conceptualise themselves and their sexuality. It can subtly generate the belief that in expressing sexual desire and having sexual experiences with other women, they are performing their own sexuality for the male gaze.

Professor Amia Srinivasan argues that men who watch porn frequently are more likely to commit sexual assault and are less likely to empathise with rape victims. Not only is this affecting how they view straight women, but also the way heterosexual men view queer women. From my own experience, and that of many female friends, abuse in the form of leering suggestions and aggressive encouragement when out with another woman is common. Just as watching violent heterosexual pornography can

lead to an increase in similarly violent and non-consensual behaviour, watching lesbian porn can encourage straight men to view queer women as performing their sexuality for male pleasure. Even when boys develop the critical faculties that enable them to critique pornography, they often display a sort of double consciousness by holding feminist attitudes that aren't reflected in their porn-use.

Sex in visual media and pornography isn't always harmful. Independent and feminist porn provides alternative female and queer points of view, creating pornography

that opens up sexual possibilities. Films, TV shows, and books can also create examples of healthy, boundary-respecting sex, providing models of consenting practices that can be emulated to counter harmful behaviour learnt from porn. For example, in *Normal People*, the scene where Connell and Marianne have sex for the first time could be shown in schools to demonstrate that consent - almost never shown in porn - must go further than a simple yes/no exchange.

Consent should be an active conversation about preferences, kinks, worries and past experiences, encompassing the before and after of a sexual interaction as well as the sex itself. Depictions don't have to be didactic. Awkward and inelegant sex is also noticeably absent from media depictions, especially in romcoms and coming-of-age movies. Regularly viewing porn results in an inability to emotionally process sex that doesn't live up to the high expectations set by porn. Consensual sex can be awkward and sometimes even bad, unable to measure up to porn that allows desires to be satisfied at the click of a finger.

‘PORN NO LONGER TAKES THE FORM OF SEEDY MAGAZINES, DVDS AND VIDEO CASSETTES. IT IS VIRTUAL AND UNCONTAINABLE.’

Making the Most of Your 15 Minutes: The Celebrity in the Technological Age



10

The role of the celebrity in the modern day is difficult to decipher. The criteria necessary to fulfil the role is in constant flux. They occupy a fragile existence: appearing indispensable and discardable to society in a single day - they are the perfect scapegoat. We are willing to portray them as icons of positivity and simultaneously as figures encapsulating the very degradation of culture. The celebrity is at heart an entrepreneur: they figure out what sort of personality is found wanting and craft themselves into that mould. Ultimately, their role is mimetic of whatever contemporary society desires as their spectacle, often a spectacle we publicly deny our enjoyment of but nonetheless consume. Yet, when the celebrity miscalculates society's needs or oversteps their hazy jurisdiction, we are all too ready to simply disregard the personality, then engage with the cult that follows it.

The power of the celebrity has reached new heights in the digital age: their influence can be exerted at all times in a multitude of forms. Suddenly, the position of the celebrity is achievable from within one's own home: TikTok has become a crucial platform for record label scouts while the Instagram model has become a clearly defined profession. Yet with the removal of an institutional approval for success and democratisation of content creation, the use of the celebrity's power can go unchecked.

Kim Kardashian's promotion of a cryptocurrency called 'Ethereum Max' illustrates how the celebrity's possession of social status enables their influence to permeate realms far beyond their 'expertise'. Kardashian is a celebrity figure-head with no economic market experience, providing advice under the false guise of 'sharing what my friends told me' (words from her Instagram, 2021) for what was later revealed to be a 'pump and dump' stock. Behind Kim Kardashian's \$250,000 advertising fee was the belief of Ethereum Max founders, Charles Hoskinson and Gavin Wood, that Kardashian's status as a celebrity would suffice for economic knowledge. The idea of a celebrity being chosen to promote a crypto-coin, an economic mechanism based on the idea of decentralising money from the state, is strangely akin to what YouTube has become for content creators or the role Twitter performs (or performed? Has Elon killed it off yet?) for political discourse. No longer does one need a newspaper to spark political debate, a television industry to create a show, or a central bank to transfer money. In many ways, Kardashian is the perfect advertiser for a currency of this nature; the two remind us of the deep integration of technology in our lives. Her fame, like crypto's value, seems baseless yet strangely liberating. Kardashian's status illustrates how the internet is a space where the individual, often through performing acts of extremity, can gain a cultural capital that was previously inaccessible.

WORDS: George Browne (he/him)

'WHILE WE ALL LOVE TO HATE FIGURES OF POWER - WHETHER IT BE CULTURAL OR POLITICAL - WE OFTEN FAIL TO ENGAGE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT THAT HAS ENABLED THEIR INFLUENCE.'

When the celebrity politician replaces the career one, they too draw upon this democratisation of influence. The celebrity politician, like a true entrepreneur, has responded to the collective feeling of mistrust of our beloved politicians in the establishment by offering an anti-establishment rhetoric. This is seen acutely in Volodymyr Zelenskyy's campaign that rejected traditional methods, in favour of YouTube and Instagram, to promote his campaign to the electorate. Boris Johnson's performance as a bumbling pseudo-politician is a more glaringly obvious example, or Donald Trump's re-employment of the phrase: 'DRAIN THE SWAMP' to advocate the removal of long standing members of the Capitol's political landscape. Each figure seeks to give the feeling that they are depoliticising the political. In doing this they provide a sense, similar to how the celebrity gives access to the world of fame, of the public being part of the structure of power. The existence of the celebrity is reflective of society, not only through the content they produce, but also in the areas of life they are allowed to exist within.

While we all love to hate figures of power - whether it be cultural or political - we often fail to engage with the environment that has enabled their influence. In a time where technology permeates every aspect of our existence and our society is ingrained with an arguably justified fear of institutions, the individual celebrity's power is paramount. That's not to say that we should merely accept this as the new status quo, nor re-establish the all-powerful and exclusionary ivory towers of the institution, but maybe, an equilibrium could be found. Our response to moments of outrage cannot simply be extreme and fleeting outcries of disgust towards the individual. Instead, we must face the necessity of a mundane and depressing analysis of what has provided the celebrity with their power. As it is the celebrity's followers, haters, critics, sponsors, and collaborators who ultimately validate their existence. In doing this, we may find out that it is perhaps society itself that has become over the top.

ARTWORK: Lewis Aitken (he/him)

ARTISTIC ACTIVISM: PERFORMANCE AS A GLOBAL NERVOUS REACTION 12

‘WHAT ROLE DO THE
PERFORMING ARTS
PLAY IN THE REALM
OF CLIMATE ACTIVISM?’

As humans, we are linked to the Earth in ways other than purely physical. As the planet suffers, so do we. Whether it's fear and anxiety towards the future, or just simply confusion, we respond to the Earth beneath our feet. We are connected, through an intricate nervous system, to the sufferings, and joys, of the world.

As the climate crisis reaches a pivotal point, with the future of our planet and the species that inhabit it becoming increasingly uncertain, art and performance play a role in communicating our responses to this collective experience. Jessica Johansson, an Edinburgh-based climate activist, offers one way to perceive art and performance: It's the body's nervous response to the struggles of our planet. Over-the-top to some, but to others, this is a form of true self-expression within the all-encompassing crisis which surrounds us. Climate change is increasingly high on the agenda as the years trudge on, and is clearer and more tangible than ever. The urgency of the issue has reached the masses. In

13 spite of that, many continue to turn a blind eye, and choose to ignore the terrifying truth.

So, what role do the performing arts play in the realm of climate activism? We don't have to look any further than our own city - a Glasgow-based Australian artist, Penny Chivas, uses dance as a vehicle to construct the shock, grief, and despair surrounding the climate crisis. Her most recent work, *Burnt Out*, which appeared at the Edinburgh Fringe this past summer, is a solo physical theatre piece, interwoven with spoken word. A provocative performance, emphasising the crisis' influence on personal trauma. The piece presents itself as a bodily reaction, free from the rigid constraints of our current mass-media. Chivas' work transcends language, or cultural barriers, through her visceral movements that are clearly visually interpreted. Anger, frustration, and despair, are represented through universally recognisable physical language. It is a raw, emotive piece of work, exhibiting the real power performance art can have in the realm of climate activism.

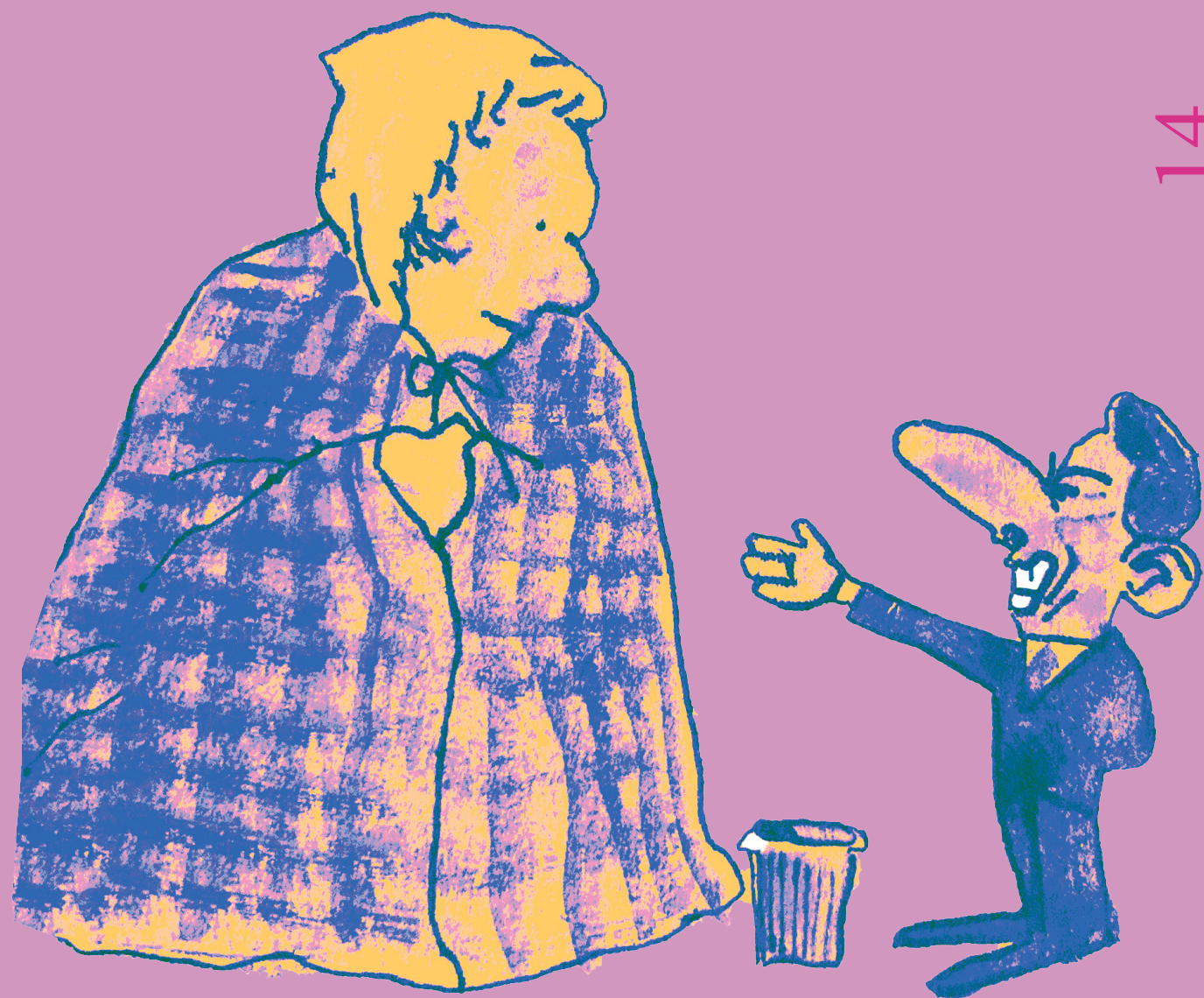
Currently, climate activism is heavily criticised, with performances recently led by Extinction Rebellion producing widespread condemnation in the media - think protesters throwing oil onto various Barclays branches across the country. These acts were not met with understanding, but harsh judgement and hostility from various major news outlets. Maybe more emotion-based, impulsive, and automatic works such as Chivas' can reach a wider audience of individuals, who will be willing to really listen. In a global environment characterised by harsh cultural divisions, the works of artists such as Chivas, promote ideas of unity and inclusivity in climate performance. Her ethos focuses on bringing communities together, and on therapeutic practices targeted towards climate anxiety, whilst simultaneously serving as a reminder of the urgency of the situation, and the anger this entails.

The necessity for artistic expression is clearly visualised when reflecting on COP26 in 2021. On my standard 20-minute walk to the library, I saw the city in the midst of somewhat of a cultural transformation: schoolchildren walked with self-made banners depicting the future of the earth along Kelvin Way; protest posters covered the bus-stops of Great Western Road; artwork was displayed throughout the botanic gardens. The importance of art, as a universal communication method, was unmistakably clear.

Many are now accustomed to the perpetually frightening figures of the climate crisis, the persistent instructions on how to reduce our carbon footprint. But it may be that tapping into the emotional, and reactionary aspect of our human nature is when the true urgency of the crisis might really kick in. Of course, this is an undeniably optimistic viewpoint, in a landscape where pointing fingers, and criticising others is all too commonplace. Regardless, I have hope that performance and art in climate activism is a true means to unify, and communicate the message of the climate crisis. Some may criticise these performances as extreme, or indulgent. But as the comfortable blanket of existence is slowly being pulled from beneath our feet, a brave few dance, sing, and create, as a physical reaction to the surrounding world, to advocate the ever-increasing seriousness of the climate emergency.



SATIRE'S DEAD, HERE'S WHY WE SHOULD BURY IT.



14

From mocking political figures to humourising ridiculous events, political satire has great comedic value. But amongst modern day carnage, it feels increasingly stale and mundane, purely serving as a switch-off for events that deserve real scrutiny.

To put it simply, real life politics can be much more entertaining, and, depending on the circumstances, much funnier than satire. Tuning into ITV last November, you would have been graced with former Secretary of State Matt Hancock eating jungle trash, being covered in slime, and (ironically) talking to snakes. Whilst not the extent of retribution for his time in office that some may have desired, watching his struggles provided substantially better punishment than the falsely exaggerated scenarios found in satire. Indeed, while satirical television series' often depict politicians failing to appeal to their audiences (*The Thick of It's* Hugh Abbot is so out of touch that he does not know the price of a pint of milk, or the meaning of the word "chav"), current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has received similar criticism, laughing at the notion that he would have working class friends, and more recently asking a homeless man if he works in 'business'.

What is the need for false sketches when politics is even more embarrassingly bizarre and awful? Abraham Lincoln once said that 'I laugh because I must not cry', but what we laugh at is just as important.

Yet satire continues on, creating more and more bizarre scenarios, and even expanding through meme culture. This can be a fantastic way of educating people about policies they otherwise would never have heard about; a quintessentially modern way of communicating news to different audiences. However, this also risks trivialising harmful legislation and events by defining all of politics as comedic. Politicians themselves now use satire to their own advantage: leader of the Labour party Keir

Starmer mocked his opponent at the time, Liz Truss, for having a shorter tenure than the shelf life of a lettuce. This risks suggesting to the general public that cheap shots based on character flaws matter more than policies. Failed PR stunts and personal scandals go on to attract headlines, while dangerous decisions do not.

Another supposed purpose of satire is accountability: 'punching up' at decision makers to question their authority. Political blunders are ubiquitous, ranging from US President Joe Biden's unending, stuttering speeches, to the UK government's mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic. But does satire seriously prevent bad decisions from reoccurring, or is it merely an escapist humourising and altering of events? And to what extent does the latter become (apologies for sounding like every American

broadcasting company) 'fake news'? Even if politicians know that any mistake made or unpopular opinion voiced will find its way into late-night comedy sketches, satire will move on the following week. Not giving these events the attention and liability they deserve means we are continually let down, and politicians get away with repeated fuck ups. If someone asked me if I enjoyed satire, I would certainly say 'Yes *Minister*', but its method of comedy only creates fake scenarios or personal attacks, rather than meaningfully holding those in power to account.

There is no point in settling for second-hand media when our own politicians embarrass themselves on a

daily basis. Its ability to entertain falls flat when it turns politics into a pessimistic playground of the biggest jester going over the top to attain headlines. It cannot credibly hold politicians to account when the average member of the public laughs at a few media sketches, feels they've gained their revenge, but still votes for the same party at the next election. I'd much rather stick to the real stuff: Nadine Dorries's online safety rap, and Theresa May's cool dance moves.

'WHAT IS THE NEED FOR FALSE SKETCHES WHEN POLITICS IS EVEN MORE EMBARRASSINGLY BIZARRE AND AWFUL?'

WORDS: Andrew Taylor (he/him)

Artwork: Louis Managh (he/him)

Returning to NUB Land:

Designer: Marly Merle (she/her) (pictured right)
Photographer: Joanna Stawnicka (she/her)
Direction: Joanna Stawnicka (she/her), Rory Mcmillan (he/him)
Assistant: Anouk Liewer (she/her)
Makeup: Jessie Laithwaite (she/they)
Models: Luka Windsor they/them, Lizzie Eidson (she/her)
Interview: Eliza Hart (she/her)

16

In Conversation With Marly Merle



‘WHAT IS NUB?’

A PINK FLESHY CREATURE WITH THE
POWER TO CREATE A NEW KIND
OF LIFE FORM.’







Who are you and what do you do?

I am Marly Merle, a multidisciplinary artist specialising in wearable sculpture, installation, and printmaking. I am interested in exploring new worlds, cities, and spaces to create physical artworks that provoke ideas around new and better places to exist. Focusing on ideas of 'otherness' and rejecting societal norms, I use wearable sculpture to question a person's own lived reality.

How was your experience studying Fine Art at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, Dundee?

I loved my time at DJCAD. I would say the main thing that was super positive was the support from the tutors, especially the technicians. There were lots of one-to-one contacts, which made all the difference; your creativity felt nurtured. The facilities were also fabulous, you got the chance to try a wee bit of everything, as all the workshops were at your fingertips. This was super useful in figuring out what materials you enjoy and work best with.

Why the move to Glasgow?

I lived and studied in Glasgow for a year before studying in Dundee, and it just always seemed like the natural progression to come back after art school. However, I don't see myself staying in Glasgow for a prolonged period of time. I've got my eyes set on moving away elsewhere, but I haven't quite decided where that'll be yet. In the meantime, I am loving being here.

In three sentences, what is NUB?

A pink fleshy creature with the power to create a new kind of life form – Nub Woman. Through a process called 'The Nubbing' – Nub infuses its essence within a woman*. This leads to the breakdown of her inherited predetermined conditioning to reconstruct the ideals of what it is and what it means to be a woman. Once 'the nubbing' is complete, the woman's silhouette, externally transformed, leads to the redefinition of the previously constricted internal self. A new femme form free from the chains of corrupt ideals of societal femininity.

Woman* - Anyone who identifies as being a woman.

How did your practice shift to costume and fashion?

I've always been interested in fashion and textiles. I actually was originally going to apply to textiles at art school but decided to go down the Fine Art route as I could do a bit of everything. I enjoy seeing designs/sculptures I've made interacting with the body as it transforms the work into something else. It can make the work even more outrageous and a bit silly, which I am all here for. I like my work being in limbo between different disciplines; it makes it more exciting.

Who are your biggest influences?

The NUB project is influenced by artist Tai Shani and her book 'Fatal Magic.' Her physical work is full of colour, grand shape, and texture, which I am obsessed with. While reading her book, I lifted all the imagery phrases related to the colour pink. This is where I found the phrase: 'a pink nub of pulsating flesh.' These words then led to creating the basis of my project, so I guess my inspiration from Tai built the foundations of that project.

The Archigram movement, a group of architects in the 60s who created fantastical and imaginary architecture, has always inspired my work. Artists working in wearable sculpture: Rebecca Horn, Nick Cave, and Lucy Orta have also had a big influence.

Could you describe your most significant achievement so far in your artistic career?

Executing the design, fabrication, and installation of my degree showpiece was probably my greatest achievement creatively this far. However, moving to Glasgow, getting my own studio space, and finding my feet as an artist and creative outside of education has been so exciting. I'm proud of where I currently am and very excited about what is next, too.

Advice for a person looking to broaden their creativity or looking to pursue an artistic practice?

I would say just do the things that you enjoy and are drawn to. I think it's always more fun and fulfilling when you do work that 'you' like and take pleasure in, rather than making something you 'think' people will like. Be as weird and wonderful as you can be.

Opinions on art school? Any big regrets?

For me, I feel art school was a great experience. It gave me the freedom to experiment and prepared me, to an extent, for life outside of education. I do believe that art school is definitely not necessary to become an artist, it's just one pathway you can take, but there are so many others too. I feel lucky I had a positive experience as it helped me grow into the artist I am today, but I know for others that this isn't always the same experience.

Dream job?

Maybe not a dream job, but all I'm going to say is 'The Nub Ballet.' It's going to happen one day!

Where can we find your work?

My website, www.marlymerle.com, and on Instagram, @marlymerle.



Treading a Fine Line: Is 'the Harry Styles aesthetic' Groundbreaking or Queerbaiting?

You can't spell Styles without 'style' and Harry is fast becoming a contemporary fashion icon. As a former Directioner and committed fashion lover I have followed Styles' aesthetic evolution closely. From the cringey colour coordinated days of 1D (the definition of high camp), his Saint Laurent era (think Chelsea boots and a bandana), to the muse of former Gucci director, Alessandro Michele, it's fair to say Harry Styles has served some iconic looks. The fashion world agrees, with Gucci giving him his own collection, American Vogue choosing him as the first solo male cover star and GQ naming him the 'best-dressed musician in the world.'

Styles loves all things campy: feather boas, oversized lapels and extravagant accessories are staples in his wardrobe. As a result, he has come under fire for queerbaiting. But to understand the criticisms of Harry we must understand the origins of camp. In the words of Karlie Kloss, it's time to look camp right in the eye.

Camp is about extravagance, theatrics, and fun. My camp holy trinity comprises Eurovision, *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* and Dolly Parton. Susan Sontag's seminal essay *Notes on Camp*, published in 1964, informs much of the discourse on camp. She described camp as 'the spirit of extravagance' and 'corny flamboyant femaleness'. For Sontag camp is a sensibility and the LGBTQ+ community are the 'creators of sensibilities'. Adopting the camp aesthetic is a way for the LGBTQ+ community to 'neutralise moral indignation' taking a playful and ironic approach to that which others take seriously.

Now that we've established what we mean by camp, what is queerbaiting? Queerbaiting was originally a term used to describe TV shows and media that imply LGBTQ+ attraction or relationships to attract a queer audience but have no interest in developing such relationships. Examples include Watson and Sherlock in BBC's *Sherlock* and Will and Mike in *Stranger Things*. Styles' charge of queerbaiting is mainly based on his fashion choices. Harry's style fits the recognisable aesthetic which our heterosexist society brands as 'queer'. The logic is that Harry dresses queer so he therefore, must be queer. This essentialises the great complexity of queerness to an aesthetic. There is not a queer

dress-code or any rules to queerness; that is its beauty. Harry has neatly re-packaged camp for a Gen-Z audience but this has been met with frustration by those who paved the way for him. In response to Styles' 'groundbreaking' Vogue cover where he wore a dress, Billy Porter suggested Harry 'doesn't care, he's just doing it because it's the thing to do...All he has to do is be white and straight.' For Porter, a gay black man who was breaking fashion gender binaries before Styles was born, the frustration is understandable. A Google search for Porter's most iconic looks delivers subversive and well considered ensembles that celebrate queerness. He boldly uses fashion as a vehicle for activism and has spoken about style in a beautiful way saying, 'I would describe my style as free. I've worked a long time to find a space where I don't care what other people think about me. That's a real interesting and hard place to get to.' Harry's style, in contrast, is not a result of bravery, hard work, and adversity, but an aesthetic choice.

Styles floats in the liminal space between straight and queer. When asked about his sexuality, Styles' responses are punctuated with ambiguity. At a recent show he mused, 'I mean, we're all a little bit gay, aren't we?' and in an interview claimed, 'sexuality is something that's fun' and that he 'can't say [he has] given it any more thought than that'. This allows Styles plausible deniability of his supposed queerness and protects him, and his profits, from a queerphobic world. Is waving a pride-flag around on stage and an Elton John Halloween costume enough of a homage to the queer founders of camp on whose shoulders Harry stands?

Styles should do more to recognise his queer style influences and the fashion industry might need to think twice before branding him 'trailblazing'. He sits behind a long line of icons who cultivated camp style. Harry, however, brings messing with gender binaries into the mainstream, and I can only view this as a positive. His ubiquitous presence in the media reminds me that it's okay to dress femme one day and masc another. Fashion is freedom, and for me, Harry embodies this in a beautiful way.

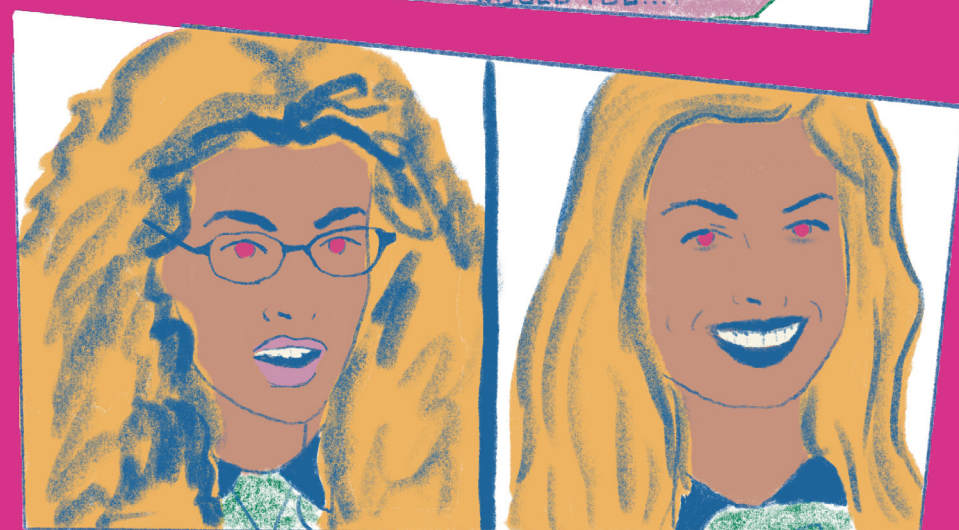
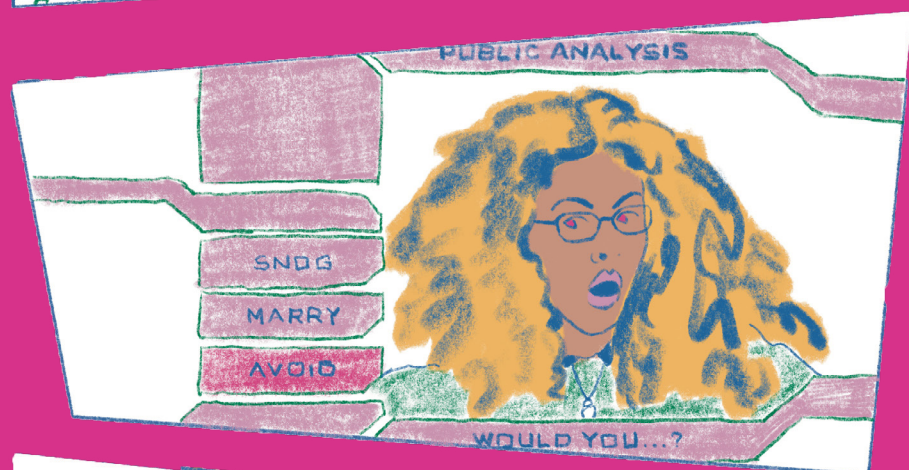
26

27



'IN THE WORDS OF KARLIE KLOSS, IT'S TIME TO LOOK CAMP RIGHT IN THE EYE.'

BEFORE AND AFTER:

THE TOXICITY OF THE
MOVIE MAKEOVER

28

'A BEAUTIFUL, CONFIDENT
CREATURE' WITHOUT THE
REQUIREMENT OF A
MAKEOVER?

If contemporary popular culture is anything to go by, we are profoundly obsessed with the ritualised physical transformation of the makeover. We have hardly progressed from the post-romantic nineteenth-century paradoxical relationship of beauty as an alliance of nature and artifice - a person cannot experience true beauty without some form of manufactured intervention. The makeover has enjoyed a surge of popularity in visual culture, as we look back to the movies that dominated the early 2000s - *Mean Girls*, *Grease*, *Miss Congeniality*, *The Princess Diaries*. It represents a staple of our childhood, as the way for protagonists to enjoy a cinematic rebirth. According to Dr Julia Wagner in BBC Culture: 'Movie makeovers play out a wish fulfilment - that we can all, with just a little expertise, transform into a beautiful, confident creature.' But is this really true? Can we not be 'a beautiful, confident creature' without the requirement of a makeover?

29 Whilst the makeover has become an iconic trope in popular culture, its consequences are widely overlooked. For every woman who finds a sense of empowerment through the reclamation and reinvention of herself, there is another who has been forced to conform to society's narrow beauty standards. One of the earliest film makeovers can be found in *My Fair Lady*, released in 1964. The film is centred around Audrey Hepburn's Eliza Doolittle, a young, poor, Cockney flower-seller who meets Henry Higgins, an arrogant phonetics professor. Betting that he could teach her to speak 'proper' English, Eliza takes lessons from him in order to 'talk like a lady'. Dreaming of escaping poverty, she is forced to believe that abolishing her Cockney accent is a key stepping stone in achieving this. At the end of the film, Eliza is but a shadow of her former self; she looks and sounds like a 'lady', but she has lost all of her courage and strength.

Film makeovers are often influenced by the male gaze. This act of depicting women through a masculine, heterosexual perspective presents women as sexual objects for the pleasure of the heterosexual male viewer. *Grease* is a prime example of this, as Sandy changes everything about herself, from her appearance to her personality, in an attempt to win over Danny Zuko. This over-the-top transformation suggested that the 'good girl' persona is insufficient. A makeover is required for her high-school romance to be successful. This over-the-top transformation suggested that the 'good girl' persona is insufficient. A makeover is required for her high-school romance to be successful.

The same idea goes for Sandra Bullock's FBI agent in *Miss Congeniality* (one of my favourite films, regardless), who undergoes a vigorous makeover montage to represent the intense world of beauty pageantry. Despite the film exposing some of the underlying issues of this world, it plays off of a massive power imbalance. The protagonist is given a whole new identity and her makeover is placed entirely in the hands of two men, neither of which show her any respect until she is beautified.

But it could be argued the movie makeover occurs behind the scenes before the film starts rolling. The 'before' and 'after' idea is a constant within Hollywood that cannot be escaped. Unlike makeovers on TV and in women's magazines where 'ordinary' people are cosmetically transformed, the makeover in film adopts a more complicated persona. It presents us with actors who are already disguised, through a combination of costuming and cosmetic effects. When these actors receive a makeover to play an 'unattractive' character, it becomes simply a reinstatement of their recognised glamour and celebrity identity - an identity that is not achievable to the average person.

There is no doubt that these drastic makeovers have influenced the way that society behaves, with young girls feeling the pressure to constantly change their appearance in an attempt to seek popularity or meet the expectations of society. As Instagram and TikTok continue to dominate, the classic makeover is being replaced with the beauty filter. This converts a natural face into something excessive. The toxicity of 'before' and 'after' has become everyday discourse, and there is no longer a middle ground as we continue to blur the lines between natural and artificial, beauty perception versus reality. We are constantly unsatisfied, believing that something about us must change in order to seek success and happiness. These films have left us with damaging impressions of beauty and behaviour that, two decades on, we are still struggling to overcome in some respects. *The Princess Diaries* made us believe that our hair had to be straight and blow-dried. *Mean Girls* suggested blonde was prettier and fashion was the height of popularity. And even in children's fairy tales, Cinderella was transformed from maid to madam. Whilst on the surface, they remain iconic and loved, the impact of the makeover on the construction of over-the-top beauty expectations in today's society is still great.

WORDS: Claire Thomson (she/her)

ARTWORK: Lewis Aitken (he/him)

Knight In Shining Solar: The Reality of Renewable Energy Technologies

30



Feeling guilty after watching another video of a miserable polar bear on a melting iceberg, I'm reminded of my responsibility to 'Act Now!' and face the irrefutable changing future of our global climate. Inspired, but mostly desperate, I scroll to see what I, a student with a tendency to teeter into my arranged overdraft every month, can do. With the ticking clock and advancing technology, it appears sustainable solutions have become more extravagant, perhaps even a little unrealistic. The message of how to fulfil our eco-responsibility has gone from recycling and taking the bus to spending every penny you have, encouraging big projects and expensive technologies. There's a knight in shining armour here to save the world in distress and it's name is renewable energy. Oh, thank God! There's a way out! Twitter says so! Haven't you heard? It's simple, really, all you have to do is invest thousands in home improvements. Yes, I know food prices have increased by 14% since 2021 but have you tried installing a biomass heating system? What do you mean you haven't got a spare £800 to get an electric vehicle charger at home? Forget rising energy bills and indulge in solar thermals, you know you want to.

31 It's no secret that using new energy technologies to power your home is incredibly beneficial, both for the environment and for yourself. Using solar energy for heat has the potential to save you hundreds annually and significantly reduce your carbon footprint, but this comes at a cost. That cost is £8,000 for an 'average sized home', whatever that means. The good news is the cost of installing solar panels has decreased by 82% over the past decade, and support from the government's Green Deal makes installing new energy technologies feasible. In some cases this proposal has offered a loan to homeowners making clean-energy improvements with a fixed interest rate. So, as long as you have savings, enough disposable income, and planning permission, new energies don't seem too scary. Those who can afford it can bask in green glory, their efforts are helping the damsel, and hope for a happily ever after is restored. However, sometimes reality yanks the knight from his steed. New energy technologies are far, far, away from being inclusive.

WORDS: Eve Dickson (she/her)

It is unfeasible for low income families, long-term renters, students, and people who don't have financial stability to take part in the new energy phenomena. When the UK is polarised by economic disparity, plagued by the cost of living crisis, the trend of sustainable living increasing in price is absurd, but not surprising. In fact, 38% of single women with children are living in poverty in Scotland. As if the cost-of-living crisis wasn't enough, is it fair to place the burden of climate action on their shoulders? What if all they can afford to do is recycle, is that enough in the eyes of eco-warriors?

As headlines become more damning and effects more severe, the media paints the model citizen green. The picture of an abundant garden, a fully equipped renewable energy system, and the ability to live waste free is a happy reality for some and a big dream for others. Speaking from experience, battling the guilt of not doing enough, driven by the looming sense of doom, on top of not being able to afford the dream sustainable lifestyle (£30 for a Hydro Flask, seriously?) can be exhausting. Between buying a new tote bag to replace plastic shoppers, investing in reusable makeup wipes and choosing pricier apples that are sold in recyclable materials, my bank balance is shrinking faster than that melting iceberg.

When reality hits and sustainable solutions are as far out of reach as the knight is from his beloved in the tallest tower, sometimes it feels easier to wash our hands of all responsibility. I'll admit I have found myself asking, when some people are choosing to eat or heat, why should we prioritise sustainability? Even though students like us don't have the same opportunity to go over the top with £8,000 solar panels, we can still embrace the part we can afford to play. It's true what Tesco says, every little does help. So, for God's sake, take the bus! Spread the word! Eat sustainably! Drink all the oat milk you can! Remain hopeful for the miserable little polar bear because, maybe one day, your knight in shining solar will come.

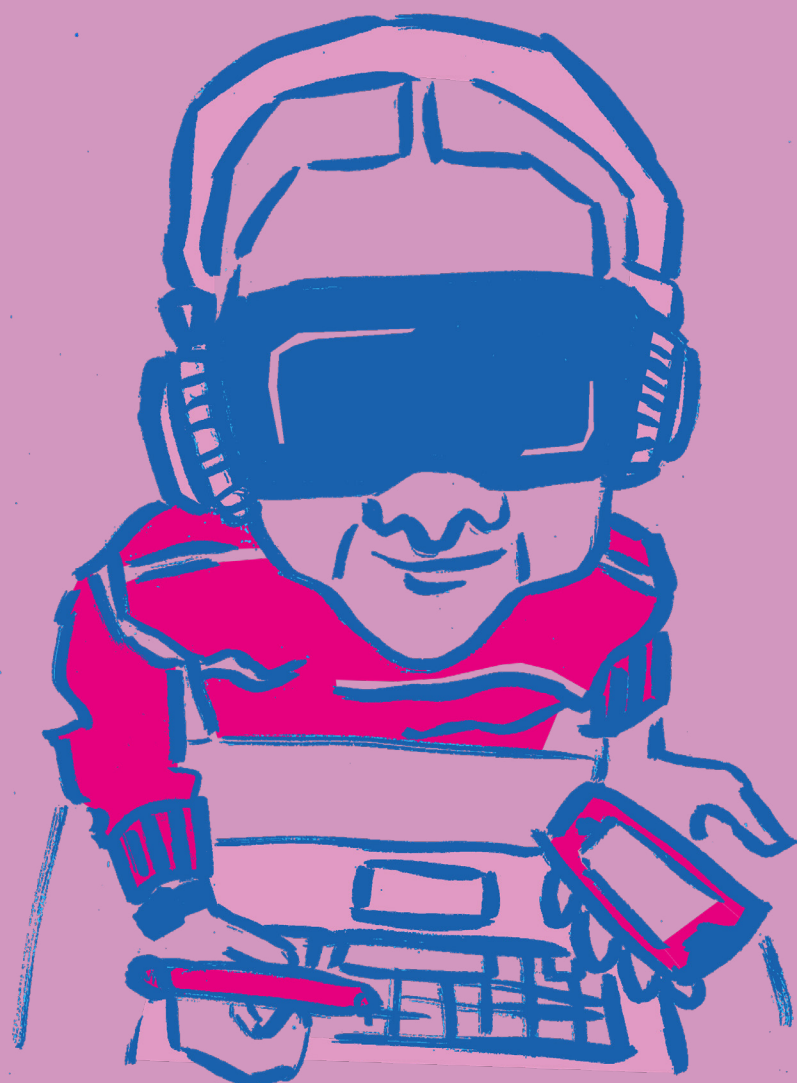
ART: Lizzie Eidson (she/her)

'THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD IT CAN BASK IN GREEN GLORY, THEIR EFFORTS ARE HELPING THE DAMSEL, AND HOPE FOR A HAPPILY EVER AFTER IS RESTORED.'

OVER THE TOP

Consumption, Capitalisation and Commercialism —

WORDS: Rothery Sullivan (she/her)



ART: Sophie Aicken (she/her)

32

Oh My!

The technology fads grow each year as Apple watches, smart phones, headphones, computers, self-driving cars and even VR sets are becoming much more common in households across the UK. Everyone wants faster, more efficient and sleeker technology. With tempting products evolving it's hard for consumers to say no, despite the negative impact technology production has on the planet. While technology is often marketed as a means to 'save' the world from the climate crisis (e.g. renewable energy technologies), many disregard the negative effects an overconsumption of unnecessary technology may have on the environment and the human race.

With each technological advance comes the desire for upgrades; on average, people replace their smartphones every 2.75 years, despite most phone batteries lasting up to five years. Companies encourage this quick turnover of technology with trade-in options that encourage users to swap their phones earlier to get more money toward their next device. This is despite the fact that a new smartphone generates roughly 85 kilograms in emissions in the first year it's used. Designed to never break down, electronic waste takes over 2 millions years to decompose, meaning that each piece of technology

Keeping up with current technology is a part of education, and it's education that many need to survive. For example, consider the UK's dependency on cashless technologies and digital payment methods. With many stores banning cash, those who do not have credit or debit cards cannot access goods, and those who are able to use highly efficient tools such as Apple watches or biometric palm payments will have easier access to these stores.

These new technologies also create more choice for users, such as the amount of sites and apps they have access to at one time. How often have you seen someone in front of a laptop (or two) with their phone out at the library? People often use multiple devices to complete a single task, even something as simple as shopping. Unaware of their web-surfing habits, many people will use multiple websites and social media platforms at once, overstimulating themselves with the online world. Has our consumption of technology become so commonplace that we no longer realise how often we use it?

As we know, modern technology habits have negative health effects on people of all ages. The efficiency of the

33

'IN A WORLD THAT IS MOVING TOWARDS A TECHNOLOGICALLY-DEPENDENT FUTURE, NO ONE WANTS TO BE LEFT BEHIND.'

owned in a lifetime will exist long after human civilisation is gone. What's more, when people toss their phones away to landfills, toxins are transmitted into the environment, destroying natural resources and causing a loss of \$55 billion annually.

The new smartphones people buy each year are not exactly ethical, either. Companies such as Apple and Samsung have been accused of using sweatshops to create their items, and many factories do not provide the appropriate protective gear needed to deal with all of the harmful chemicals that go into phones. Although life-saving hospital equipment or safety devices are necessary technologies, the excessive demand for new phones and gadgets points to the problem of how consumerism is destroying the planet.

With each new technological release, people not only want to upgrade for the ease but also for the aesthetic that comes with owning a new technological gadget. In a world that is moving towards a technologically-dependent future, no one wants to be left behind.

internet causes impatience and a decline in attention spans for many young adults. When people can sprint to information they want within seconds, sitting through a two-hour lecture or reading an hour's worth of material seems like a marathon. Moreover, there are negative permanent effects to our screen-time habits, such as eye-strain and poor posture. If people used their phones less they would last longer and would cause less physical harm. None of this is new information, yet it's not being discussed on a large enough scale. Where 84 percent of UK adults own a smartphone, it's important to consider how much pollution could be reduced if every user got an extra year or two out of their current phone before trading in. Or consider how many people will suffer from these technological health effects in the following decades.

Technology itself is not bad, but the mass consumption of it is. In a capitalist state where people are always desiring 'more', 'faster', and 'better' things, daily technologies have spiralled into a mess of over-spending, over-using and over-purchasing.

A DATE WITH MICKEY FINN

WORDS: Eve Connor [she/her]

This city thrives on blood. It's the only currency L.A. recognises and that means those who spill it run this town. The place has poisoned every average joe who's crossed county lines and damn near corrupted every good one. Only thing to do is resign yourself to the fact you're spoiled goods and continue the trudge to the grave with a little less hope than you had before. This city doesn't like dreamers—it bleeds them dry by punishing those they love, I should know. But when you've lost it all, you've got nothing to lose. I know I've got no chance of winning against this godforsaken town, but every small victory brings it all a fraction closer to collapse.

So I chose the life of a private eye, trailing the likes of Eddie 'Scissors' McGee—owner of this fine establishment and, up until recently, the most feared man in the state. Thing is, last few months there's been rumblings that there's a new cat in town, with Scissors left playing second fiddle. And rumour has it, they're working out of this very gin joint. I order a scotch, neat, and find myself a table in the corner. I sip, swill, and swallow.

'Hello, Mr. Crayview. It's nice to finally make your acquaintance.' A dame's voice, sweet and sickly as molasses, approaching from behind. As she passes I catch a whiff of bergamot and jasmine, the sheen of long dark hair, and the glint of pale green eyes. Lavinia Lockley, heir to the Lockley oil dynasty, current prime suspect in the disappearance of her newspaper mogul fiancé, Henry Crichlow, and Scissor McGee's latest squeeze. Since I started tailing McGee, him and Miss Lockley have been inseparable. 'Cigarette?' she asks as she lowers herself into the seat opposite. I oblige.

34

35

'Thanks, Richard—may I call you Richard? Or do you prefer Dick, as in the private kind?' She leans back, taking a drag and sizing me up. I return the favour. She's wearing a daring-green dress, satin, cut-on-the-bias, with a thigh-high slit that bares her gams like a postman in midwinter. It's warm here though, too warm—I'm starting to sweat. I take another swig. 'I assure you, Miss Lockley, that though you may be a person of interest to the police, I am simply following a lead, not you. Your propensity for sordid company is none of my concern.' She laughs. 'You're slick, Dick. I like you.' 'That's swell, made my day.' 'Only your day? Gee, what a shame.' She leans forward and taps her cigarette against the rim of my glass, letting the smouldering ash fizzle in my scotch. 'I hadn't finished that.' 'You'd had enough. So, what brings a gumshoe like you to this underside of town?' 'Your beau, Scissors McGee.' 'Eddie in trouble with the law?' she widens her eyes and feigns shock.

'Don't act cute with me, precious. You know Eddie's running just about every dirty racket this side of California.' 'Don't believe everything you read in the evening gazette.' I run my finger around my collar, loosening it. I can feel perspiration trickling down my back. The sooner I finish up with Miss Lockley, the better: 'Oh yeah, McGee got his name because he's partial to arts and crafts, eh?

But you're right. Lover boy is losing his grip. Someone else is calling the shots.' 'And you're close to the culprit.' It wasn't a question. Her eyes lock with mine; there's a fire to them at odds with their subtle hue. Lavinia Lockley never leaves McGee's side—or McGee never leaves hers... 'You?' I ask. 'Me,' she flashes me a coy smile, 'I knew you'd get there eventually. Eddie's a sap; he can't run this town. Takes a woman's touch.' 'Henry find out? Is that why you bumped him off?' She shrugs. 'Got bored playing with daddy's money?' 'Something like that.' 'Well, doll, he won't be too happy when I take you in.' She ignores me: 'Sure you don't want another drink, Dick?' I'm eager to get out into the cool night air, ease my increasing discomfort. 'Come on now, the game's up.' 'Archie behind the bar is such a sweetheart. I asked him to slip a little something special in your juice from me.' The sweating. My upper lip is soaked. I wipe it away. Blood. Lavinia rises from her seat and saunters to my side. 'It was a riot, babe, but you were getting too close.' And with a playful slap of my cheek, she's gone.

Her lackeys dump me in an alley. Blood, still trickling from my nose, mingles with the gutter water—the city's latest offering. I knew I couldn't save it; I just thought I'd have more time.

GLASGOW UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

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OVER THE TOP
SPRING 2023

GOVAN MUSIC FESTIVAL



MARCH

15-19 March in Govan with
The Glasgow Barons

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WORLD
ORCHESTRAL
HIP HOP

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Empress / Anna Clyne /
Sibelius / Barber / Ando
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