

Honi Soit

WEEK 5, SEMESTER 1, 2021

FIRST PRINTED 1929

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Acknowledgement of Country



Honi Soit is published on the sovereign land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, who were amongst the first to resist against and survive the violence of colonisation. This land was taken without consent and sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Indigenous students and staff at the University.

As a team of settlers occupying the lands of the Gadigal, Dharug, Wangal, Bidjegal, Kuringgai and

Wallumedegal people, we are the beneficiaries of ongoing colonial dispossession. The settler-colonial project of 'Australia' and all its institutions, including the University, are built on the exclusion of First Nations peoples and the devaluation of Indigenous knowledge systems. Beneath the sandstone buildings of USyd lie thousands of years of Aboriginal history.

Colonialism is not a one-time event that occurred in the distant past; it is an ongoing structure. The genocide

of First Nations people is perpetuated and enabled by the government, who push ahead with the forced removals of Aboriginal children from their families, their Country, and their cultures. Aboriginal peoples are the most incarcerated on earth, and there have been over 474 documented Indigenous deaths in custody since the 1991 Royal Commission.

We pledge to actively stand in solidarity with First Nations movements towards decolonisation through our editorial decisions, and

to be reflective when we fail to do so. We commit to being a counterpoint to mainstream media's silencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We remain cognisant that *Honi's* writers and readership are predominantly made up of settlers, and aim to platform Indigenous voices in our paper.

There is no justice without Indigenous justice.

Always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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Editorial

I have been writing this editorial since 20 February 2019. Most of you might think I'm exaggerating, but my dearest friends know that I've lived and breathed *Honi* since my first day on campus (and I thank you sincerely for indulging me throughout).

When I go to bookstores, the first thing I look for in a novel is its dedication. I believe dedications are filled with more love and reverence than odes are, and writing one out to a friend, lover, family member is the most intimate thing one can do.

Editorials, much like dedications, immortalise you on paper. They are a record of how you felt at the moment of writing them, and also of the people you chose to thank in its contents. In a way, this five-hundred word block of text will add to my legacy. I wrote about how I couldn't write (pg 12) and how I, like most people, struggle with being vulnerable. Every single one of these pages contains something personal and offers you an insight into my soul.

When I asked reporters to write for this edition, I told them to find a

hill and die on it. This edition is full of the people I love, and I can never thank them enough for writing for me. Juliette Marchant pens an open letter to ballet, reflecting on her fifteen years as a dancer (pg 12). Genevieve Couvret eulogises the novelist (pg 14), writing about the importance of the people behind the stories they tell and what is left of them after they're gone. Marlow Hurst explores universes of myth and legend bound by the rules of contemporary bureaucracy (pg 20), which fits splendidly with Vivienne Guo's love for Shirley Barber's fairy stories (pg 21) and Ariana Haghighi's excellent analysis of mythological intertextuality (pg 20). My experience playing Dungeons and Dragons is limited to one character-building session where I haphazardly scribbled a threadbare backstory onto the back of a notebook, but Felix Faber's article (pg 18) makes me wish the game is how I spent my nights (if I could ever part with reruns of Gilmore Girls and Desperate Housewives).

I dedicate this edition to my fellow editors: to Marlow who writes his name

on every pitch he likes, to Alice without whom our collective vocabulary would be lacking, to Juliette who laid up a coloured spread for me, to Vivienne, my favourite dream fairy. To Deandre and his ire for British accents, for Jeffrey's affectionate long-suffering face when I talk about my imposter's syndrome, and Sam's love for my awfully-iced vanilla cupcakes. For Claire's little laugh from Gosper and for Max, despite his vexation towards the culture section.

I want to thank Annie and Madeline for being better editors than I deserved, and for the endless patience they continue to show with my rambling.

Before I go, I want to leave you with a dedication I wish I thought of first:

*All our dream-worlds may come true.
Fairylands are fearsome too.
As I wander far from you
Read, and bring me home to you.*

All my love,
Shania

Letters

[Edited for brevity]

Hi Honi, in response to your questions, a statement and further information below can be attributed to a University of Sydney spokesperson:

"We used Dataminr for a ... year ... and are ... currently using it ... We are exploring how best to enable ... Our protective services team ... To do this effectively ..."

We strongly defend ... and support the ... disturbing scenes on campus last year.

NSW Police ... invited ... the police [to] take actions they consider necessary. When ... police ... understand ... the safety of our community, we shared this information with ... NSW Police about their plans.

The Vice-Chancellor also sought ... the police and discussed concerns about ... protests on campus.

We're keen to continue working collaboratively ... to help ensure our campus remains a ... place."

Management, management everywhere

I was saddened to see DVC Pip Pattison given a platform in *Honi Soit* to spruik her cuts. Management loved it so much they even reproduced the piece word for word on their staff intranet.

In a time when casuals already experience wage theft at 35% in FASS, Pip Pattison argued to reduce our face-to-face pay by a further 7%. Management have fought tooth and nail to slash permanent jobs, prevent conversion applications, and have forced casualisation to the highest level USYD has ever seen. They don't need any support from the student newspaper.

Though Spence is gone, and

Pattison's 12-week semester defeated, every line of this student chant is needed in 2021 as ever:

Who is Michael Spence? Michael Spence is the 1%. What about Stephen Garton? Stephen Garton gets no pardon. What about the DVCs? They're living off our student fees. And are the Deans on our side? Not while they're destroying lives. And does the Senate represent us? They run this uni like a business. This is an autocracy and we want student democracy.

One angry casual,
Dani Cotton

Apology

Madame Mal y pense offers her sincere apologies to the Sydney Arts Students' Society (SASS) executive for calling them "(alleged) sex pests" in Week 5. She formally retracts this statement and deeply regrets implying that students are unsafe at SASS events, which she has been assured they are completely safe at. Moving forward, Madame Mal y pense will ensure she is critical of the anti-SASS biases in the sources she relies on and recognises her duty to combat the death of student societies in future. Also, Nicole is not a nudist.

Citations needed

What the people need is Ivermectin... Ivermectin Ivermectin Ivermectin [Citation needed]. It is readily available being used for horses to control parasitical worms. It has been shown over and over again to be extremely effective in all stages of Covid 19 [Citation needed]. It has NO side effects [Citation needed]. There is a much publicised campaign against Ivermectin telling people not to use it and governments stalling and people being removed from social media for recommending it [Citation

needed]. I can only conclude that the people with enough clout to command governments and social media platforms in the face of overwhelming evidence are the Big Pharmaceutuals who make multiple billions from vaccines, if Covid has no remedy other than their vaccines [Citation needed]. And/or the super-rich bastards who want lockdown which leads to economic collapse and a cheap buy up for them [Citation needed]. Particularly farming land in India by Bill Gates [Citation needed]!! But vaccines are no use when you have Covid [Citation needed]. A vaccine will not save your elderly mother who has the virus [Citation needed]. But Ivermectin has been shown to reverse the fatal stages of Covid [Citation needed]. Ivermectin is cheap and effective [Citation needed]. Vaccines are expensive and are a preventative, not effective when you have Covid [Citation needed]. On YouTube, patients are immediately out on Ivermectin because it stops the viral replication, so that IVERMECTIN IS EFFECTIVE FOR VARIANTS WHICH ARE UNAFFECTED BY THE STANDARD VACCINES [Citation needed]!! If someone comes in with symptoms of Covid she starts them on Ivermectin [Citation needed]. She tells of family after family who have been infected and given Ivermectin and all rcovered and not one had any side effects [Citation needed]. What more is needed? Lockdown because of Covid only results in destroying the economy so that some super-rich bastard can buy it up cheap [Citation needed]. If everyone had access to Ivermectin you could not justify lockdown [Citation needed]. Lockdown only destroys the economy [Citation needed]. It does not destroy the virus [Citation needed]. We see that international aid is coming to India. But you can bet London to a brick that they are NOT bringing Ivermectin [thankfully, true].

Anonymous



Miss Soit

Sydney Uni's SAUCIEST socialite!

Dear plumptious beauties,

I'm back in town after my sumptuous sojourn, and it's no coincidence that things have certainly *spiced* up since my return. My innocent and incorruptible *Honi* editors had the bumbling Board candidates *shaking* with fear in the face of their *ferocious* questioning.

Drop outs

Some beta board candidates *finished early*, dropping out of this raunchy race before it had even begun. Sly Susan Chen surreptitiously *snuck off* without telling anyone except her close confidante Long-haired Liam 'Puzzles' Donohoe. Meanwhile, shrewd Sarea Bhar ditched it before she copped an electoral *beating*. It was a bad balls-up by Bhar for Board, but as I always say, you've got to end things before you get too *attached*.

Fuckable Fidler

When jaunty Joe 'Flirtini' Fidler dropped by the *Honi* office for his interview, he sent hearts-a-flutter with his luscious locks, humongously high cheekbones and deep, gravelly baritone voice. When he began preparing *cocktails* for my darling editors, they could barely contain their passion. This big-bicepped beefy Board boy can put *me* in a *uniform* any time he likes.

Switch interviews

For a supposedly 'progressive' faction, the censorial Switch sinners certainly don't like change. When word *leaked out* that Innocent Isla's interminable interview would be cut down to size, some feisty factional fuckers thought they could intimidate our videographer into making some artistic changes *against his will*. Some advice: shorter is often better, my darlings.

AOC Comeback

A keen-eyed birdie spotted some curious coincidences in *cum-on-back* with Comino's Board election advertising. The material bears some *eye-raising* similarities to the campaign advertising of American Congresswomen AOC (Ass On Cock). When Madame Mal y Pense accused me of intellectual property theft, I locked her in my dungeon. Perhaps Naughty Nick could *learn some lessons* from me. Call me.

Clarification

As I was reclining on my chaise lounge last week, it *came* to my attention that some janus-faced stupol suckers have been spreading false rumours about my identity! If there is one thing I cannot stand (besides simps) it is gossipers! For the record: I am a socialite and autonomous freelance gossip writer who is contracted by Masc Mickie to provide a weekly column to *Honi Soit*. While I certainly do think the editors are *hot hunks* (awooga awooga) and have developed maternalistic feelings for them, our relationship remains purely professional.

What's On?

USU Election Soapbox

Wednesday 12 May 1pm
The Refectory + streamed via the USU Facebook page

Come along and hear the 10 candidates for the USU Board Director election promise the world and more. *Pulp* and *Honi* will be there to grill these budding student politicians and ask the hard-hitting questions to help you make your vote.

BookSoc: Movie Night

Wednesday 12 May 5pm
ABS Case Study LT 1170

BookSoc is screening "My Salinger Year" on Wednesday. Joanna (Margaret Qualley) is a young aspiring writer. While her eccentric, old-fashioned boss Margaret (Sigourney Weaver) assigns her to answer Salinger's voluminous fan mail, Joanna struggles to find her own voice. Free snacks if you are a BookSoc member!

ChocSoc x PPIA x FSS: Sweets from Around the World

Friday 14 May 3pm
Victoria Park

Need some sweetness in your life? In collaboration with Filipino Student Society x Indonesian Student Association, we bring you local desserts, including traditional Chocolate treats from the classic Martabak to Australia's own lamingtons. \$1.5 for members, \$3 for non-members.

Free Palestine, Commemorate Al Nakba

Saturday 15 May 2pm
Town Hall

The SRC will be attending this rally on Saturday. Come to Town Hall on May 15 to commemorate 73 years of resistance, oppose Israeli apartheid, defend the right of return, stop illegal settlements on Palestinian land and end the blockade on Gaza.

Tamil Genocide Day Rally

Saturday 16 May 2pm
Town Hall

This rally is being held by the Tamil Refugee Council to protest the genocide of Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Their demands are to end military occupation, give Tamils the right to self-determination, and to call on Australia to end military aid.

Write to us!!



Tired of waiting a month for USyd rants to post your submission? Want to have a go at one of our articles or declare your love for Miss Soit?

Email your letters to editors@honisoit.com, use the anonymous tip form on our Facebook page, or send mail to:

Honi Soit Editors
PO Box 794 Broadway NSW 2007

DESTINATION – 2021 Honi Soit Writing Comp

Submit to this year's Writing Competition for the chance to win cash prizes of up to \$1000 and have your work read by renowned judges! Scan the QR code for more info.



Documents reveal extensive surveillance of campus activism by University and police

Vivienne Guo, Shania O'Brien and Marlow Hurst report.

The release of documents acquired under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (also known as GIPA) by the University of Sydney SRC's Chair of Standing Legal Committee has shed new light on the conduct of police and the University during last year's education protests.

Management aware of "plainclothes" officers on campus

2020 was a year marked by fervent staff and student protests against cuts made to courses, staff and funding. The released documents contain emails between members of University management, revealing that USyd Protective Services had been contacted by NSW Police to alert them of their presence in advance of several protests. According to emails from the Director of Asset Management and Operations Ben Hoyle, NSW Police deployed "plainclothes" officers to "initiate engagement" with the organisers of the 23 September 'Day of Action.' The University was made aware of the "plainclothes" officers ahead of the protest. Police were widely criticised last year for their excessive use of force and presence at education protests.

Security briefings of protests and surveillance of staff social media

The documents have revealed significant operations by University administration to track, background, and probe protest events on campus. Asset Management and Operations (AMO) prepared multiple briefings on upcoming protests listing predicted attendance, its political leaning, and its organisers. One briefing infographic simply described the event's issue as "Left-Wing." These

briefings informed "risk reviews" of protests, which assessed the threat level of individual events.

AMO also attempted to identify links between organisers of the education protests and other political organisations. One of the briefs claimed that the Education Action Group was "very much aligned with Socialist Allianz [sic]". It is unclear where this information has been sourced from.

Additionally, emails between members of University management featured screenshots of staff social media posts, including one tweet by Senior Lecturer in Modern Chinese History David Brophy, promoting an open-air seminar on the New Law Lawns in solidarity with students rallying against cuts to higher education on 23 September. Another email forwarded an NTEU communique about an upcoming protest that had been distributed to members by Branch President Kurt Iveson.

The culture of surveillance revealed in the documents extended beyond University management. In a partially-redacted email between Director Hoyle and members of University management regarding security engagement with NSW Police, Hoyle noted that "the event is publicly listed" but also cited "extensive intelligence networks" involved in the preparation for the protest.

Additionally, a number of emails shown in the documents reveal University administration's use of Dataminr, an AI surveillance system that provides real-time alerts on targeted parameters. It

was a Dataminr custom pulse that alerted University officials to a tweet by David Brophy regarding an outdoor teaching. Whether the University established alerts for David Brophy or for NTEU announcements more broadly is unknown.

Building lockdowns "effective"

The use of building lockdowns, also described as "safe and secure mode," to disrupt campus activism was mentioned throughout the extensive chain of emails. The transitioning of numerous buildings, such as Anderson Stuart and the Quadrangle, into safe and then secure mode not only disrupted the movements of protest participants but also the general student population. Director Hoyle described them as an "effective control" which "prevented further business disruption."

Absence of university support for protests despite claims to support freedom of speech

On 23 September, the Executive Director of Central Operations Services Susan Turner wrote to Head of Protective Services and Emergency Management Sarah Holmes about two events that were scheduled to take place that day. One was an open-air educational seminar led by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and hence qualified as an "education seminar" that was "excluded from PHO [Public Health Order] restrictions." In the email, Turner advised Holmes to make contact with the Police's most Senior Official to inform them that only one event was exempt from police intervention.

In the same email, Turner emphasised that the role of Protective Services is not to engage with the police, though it would "be great if [Director Holmes] could support the academics involved by letting the Police know (as an FYI) when they arrive on campus (which I understand is imminent) that we have 2 very different events happening." While Turner did attempt to pre-empt police intervention for the FASS led seminar, the emphasis was on ensuring that the "seminar" was not confused with the protest occurring on campus that day. There was no mention of how police might engage with the simultaneous protest, despite the documents showing awareness of police violence at a number of education protests.

The documents raise concerns about the University's approach to student and staff safety. Despite "safe freedom of speech" arising in numerous management emails, there was an absence of practical measures from University management to support and protect the safety of students. This is unsurprising given the violent outcomes of a number of education protests last year.

Even more concerning is the extensive nature of surveillance of staff and student protests by the University and NSW Police, including the use of AI technology such as Dataminr to monitor search parameters or digital profiles as set out by University management. A significant portion of these surveillance measures remain unknown.

12 week semesters overwhelmingly defeated

Deaundre Espejo, Claire Ollivain and Maxim Shanahan report.

The proposal to adopt 12 week semesters was overwhelmingly defeated at the 4 May Academic Board meeting.

The 12 week model was defeated by 69 votes to 10. The alternative 12+1 week model — which would have seen week 13 turned into a revision week — was defeated by a margin of 55 to 15.

As a result, the current 13 week calendar will remain.

It is the third time in four years that the Academic Board has voted against 12 week semesters. The margin of defeat was significantly larger than in 2017 and 2020.

Throughout the meeting, staff and students of various faculties expressed vehement opposition to the two options.

Particular concerns were raised that a revised proposal had not gone through the Academic Standards and Policy Committee. Additionally, the voting process was described as "shambolic," with board members saying no instructions were sent prior to the meeting and that recommendations were "poorly worded."

Professor Alan Fekete, of the School of Computer Science, criticised the recommendations for being "incoherent," saying he could not approve proposals that were not consulted on.

While staff agreed that the 12+1 model was more "nuanced," Glen Davis, Professor of Clinical Exercise Sciences, said that course structures "[did] not need to be uniformly mandated."

Dr Fernanda Penalzoza, Senior Lecturer in Latin American Studies, noted that it was "unclear" why the proposal was still being raised, as it received the "same level of resistance" and "same arguments" against it at previous meetings.

Throughout the meeting, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Pip Pattison asserted that teaching and learning would not be impacted by the move to a 12 week semester, and that recommendations were a "direct response" to consultation.

Students' Representative Council President Swapnik Sanagavarapu told *Honi*: "Today's vote was a resounding success and confirmed what we already knew in theory and in practice: that 12 week semesters were a bad idea for staff and students."

The defeat of 12 week semesters comes after a significant campaign organised by students and staff, with a forum and several protests held. Before the meeting, the Education Action Group held a small speak-out this morning which saw F23 go into lockdown.



Photo by Aman Kapoor

Online learning takes its toll on languages departments

Deaundre Espejo reports.

As universities continue to move towards 'digital campuses,' students have had to adapt to a new learning environment of Zoom seminars, breakout room discussions and take-home assessments.

But there's one area of study that isn't quite as suited to online learning — languages.

Having had little to no opportunities for face-to-face learning since the onset of COVID-19, language students at the University of Sydney say their education has taken a turn for the worse.

Katie, who is President of the French Society and in her third year, feels that her speaking skills have declined since moving online.

"It's hard enough to speak a language you're not proficient in," she says. "The screen just adds another layer of distance."

Because students aren't in a classroom, speaking or writing French in real time, Katie says there's less incentive to practice.

"You can easily just redo your answer, look at a dictionary or even use a translating app. It's easier to get good marks, but there's no pressure to actually learn."

She also says that online learning is particularly disappointing because there have been adjacent cuts to cultural subjects and she can't go on exchange — an important step in the road to fluency.

"It all just piles up and makes me consider whether doing a language major was the right thing to do."

For students like Adam, a second year Korean major, online classes have meant that a lot more extra study is needed just to keep up.

"Speaking is such an essential component of learning a language," Adam says. But on Zoom, students miss vital opportunities to engage in proper conversations with classmates.

"Other students aren't really participating because you can just hide behind the camera. It feels so detached."

He also finds it difficult to speak in class because of internet lag, poor audio quality, and the less organic form of communication.

"I pretty much have to do everything myself, which is really frustrating and difficult."

In some subjects, timetabling cuts have caused class numbers to skyrocket. Alex, another language major, says that some of their classes have doubled to almost 30 students.

"It's very hard to stay focused. The teachers do their best, but it's impossible to have conversations with everyone when there are that many people."

And it isn't just students having trouble online — Dr Carolyn Stott, Senior Lecturer in the Department of French and Francophone Studies, says she finds it

much harder to teach in front of blacked out screens.

"It's difficult to read a room, understand what a student is saying or correct their accent if you don't see how their mouth is moving."

While her department has found ways to adapt, she says her colleagues are keen to offer face-to-face learning opportunities to students once again.

Currently, the University says they are "looking into the possibility" of offering more campus classes next semester. But in the meantime, people within the languages departments have taken it upon themselves to provide necessary educational support.

Students have praised staff for reaching out and adjusting their classes according to feedback.

Language societies like FrenchSoc, the Italian Society and the Spanish and Latin American Society organise conversation groups on campus, where students can come in, have a coffee and practice speaking.

"It's been really good to see people coming in helping each other improve their language skills," Katie says. She hopes that before she graduates, she'll get to be back in the classroom at least one more time.

If you'd like to share your experiences in your department, please email us at editors@honisoit.com.



Figure 1: "Confidential" email showing University monitoring of Socialist Alternative event "Why we should abolish the police: an anticapitalist forum"

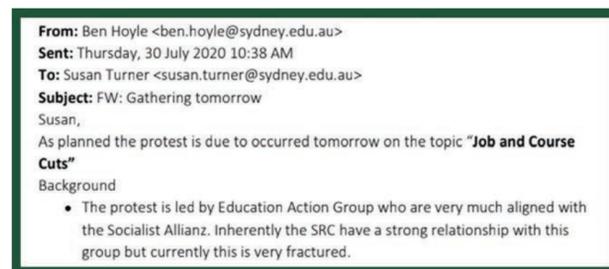


Figure 2: Email claiming that the Education Action Group is "very much aligned with the Socialist Allianz [sic]"

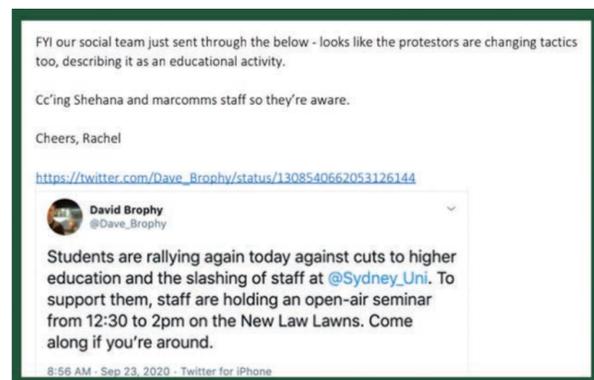


Figure 3: Email by university management showing a screenshot from a Tweet made by Dr David Brophy

AI program briefly used by University linked to CIA, police suppression of BLM protests

Maxim Shanahan reports.

GIPA documents reported on by *Honi Soit* reveal that the University of Sydney used Dataminr, an artificial intelligence information alert system, to keep track of planned protest action in October last year.

A University of Sydney spokesperson told *Honi* that Dataminr was only used "for a week on a trial basis" and that neither it nor similar tools are presently being used.

Dataminr, which is valued at \$4.1 billion, surveys publicly accessible information through algorithms to provide its clients with instant alerts on events. It operates distinct models for private and public sector organisations.

A series of reports last year in *The Intercept* revealed that during Black Lives Matter protests, Dataminr "relayed tweets and other social media content... directly to police" while "facilitat[ing] the surveillance of protests, including nonviolent activity, siphoning vast amounts of social media data from across the web and converting it into tidy police intelligence packages."

Dataminr is one of very few companies authorised to access the entire Twitter 'firehose.' It is Twitter's only data partner which is allowed to "resell the complete stream of tweets." In 2016, Twitter cut off US security agencies' access to the 'firehose' after Dataminr began to work with intelligence agencies. Dataminr has worked with, among others, the CIA, FBI, and the Department of Defense. It holds contracts with a number of local police forces, including the Minneapolis Police Department, which used Dataminr during protests following the death of George Floyd.

The University was alerted to a teach-out organised by the NTEU on 13 October last year after Dataminr picked up a tweet by Senior Lecturer of Modern Chinese History David Brophy promoting the event. The alert was subsequently forwarded to Cheryl Wharton, the University's Operations Manager in the Campus Security Unit.

In a statement, Brophy told *Honi* that "staff and student actions to defend higher education should be something that the University welcomes, not something they monitor with digital warning bells. Unfortunately, surveillance of staff seems to be yet one more practice that today's universities have borrowed from the corporate sector. Given we're in a time of austerity, I'd very much like to know how much the university is spending on software and staff to spy on us, and how many academic jobs that outlay could pay for."

Workers at Better Read Than Dead battle for bargaining rights

Deaundre Espejo reports.

In the heart of Newtown lies a cosy bookshop beloved by many Inner-West bookworms.

Known for its towering blue shelves and staff who are never short of a good recommendation, Better Read Than Dead has become a staple of the community.

But behind the counter, staff are fighting a turbulent battle for bargaining rights.

Late last year, staff approached the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU) due to concerns about their wages, working conditions, and insecure contracts.

With the support of the union, they began organising over the next six months to kick off an enterprise bargaining process with their employer.

Staff eventually wrote to their employer in March, saying they wanted to bargain and that if a response wasn't received within 24 hours, the matter would be taken to the Fair Work Commission.

Although Better Read Than Dead initially agreed to negotiate, their lawyers quickly backpedalled, claiming their client "felt pressured" to provide a response and that they were under duress when they agreed to bargain.

What followed was an onslaught of legal threats against staff.

In April, Better Read Than Dead lawyers sent out cease and desist letters to staff due to a union Facebook

post they shared.

The post in question featured an image of workers holding the union flag and a caption setting out their claims.

Alleging the post was defamatory, the bookshop's lawyers asked for the post to be taken down within 24 hours, else legal action would be taken.

RAFFWU removed the post but contested the defamation allegations.

Better Read Than Dead then issued "show cause" termination letters to two staff members, demanding they attend meetings to explain why their employment shouldn't be terminated.

"What we're seeing is the use of a

law firm and bad laws to stop workers being able to bargain for a living wage and a range of other conditions," said RAFFWU Secretary Josh Cullinan.

But staff aren't going down without a fight.

They are currently applying for a "majority support determination" in the Fair Work Commission, which will legally require Better Read Than Dead to bargain if successful.

While Better Read Than Dead have opposed the application, Cullinan says that he is "optimistic" about its outcome.

RAFFWU is also preparing litigation against the bookshop for the actions taken against workers who are "simply

wanting to bargain" and who have engaged in "lawful industrial activity."

Amidst the chaos, community solidarity has been strong for the workers' campaign.

Regulars and local cafe owners have come into the shop bringing flowers, and social media has seen an outpouring of supportive messages.

"These types of situations can really worry and upset workers, so the support has been fantastic," Cullinan says.

"We encourage the community to further show solidarity as we continue to try to stop attacks on our members and press towards a fair new agreement."



UTSSA asks student activists to sign declaration amid continuing tensions

Vivienne Guo reports.

In the University of Technology Sydney Students' Association's (UTSSA) latest crackdown on activist collectives, a number of office-bearers have been asked to sign a declaration of good behaviour. The declaration outlines that they will agree to follow the UTSSA by-laws, Constitution and Association Code of Conduct, or else face the removal of privileges or even dismissal.

This incident is the latest in a series of clashes between President Aidan O'Rourke (Labor Unity) and the UTSSA Executive, and activist collectives at UTS. Notably, O'Rourke has previously been accused of censoring the Education Action Group and recently called security on two students who interrupted him to ask to hear his President's Report.

The UTSSA has imposed sanctions on a number of office-bearers, which include rescinding swipe access

and refusing access to Association spaces and expenditure. The affected portfolios include Education Officer, Ethnocultural Officers, Environmental Convenors, Women's Officer and Queer Convenors.

The declaration, which was sent to affected office-bearers in line with a motion passed in Council, states that a signatory's failure to conduct themselves in accordance with the by-laws, Constitution and Code of Conduct of the UTSSA would "result in the removal of privileges including swipe access to the Association Office, Collective expenditure, and room bookings."

Notably, the UTSSA's regulations restrict office-bearers from engaging with the media. Section 5.3 of the UTSSA Media Policy outlines that: "Only the President is authorised to make official comment to the media about sensitive or contentious issues;

issues of a political nature; or issues relating to funding or management."

The affected office-bearers remain barred from Association spaces, with Women's Officer Eshna Gupta being told by O'Rourke that she would not be able to book a space to hold a banner paint for youth survivors of sexual assault until she signed the declaration.

In a statement to *Honi*, Gupta said that the UTSSA's declaration "provides collectives with no real chance to do activism."

"If we don't sign the guarantee, we don't get funding for our collectives and we can't book rooms. If we do sign the guarantee, we are unable to poster freely, we have to divulge names of collective members who wish to be anonymous, and autonomous collectives such as Women's and Ethno[cultural] have to get permission from a white man to spend money."

"All this shows is that the UTSSA

is more concerned with the petty university politics than helping marginalised people."

Aidan O'Rourke was not contacted for comment at the time of publication.



CW: Indigenous death in custody, racism, police violence

Inquest into Indigenous man Bailey Mackander's death in custody commences

Bonnie Huang reports.

The coronial inquest into the death of Bailey Mackander, a 20-year-old Wiradjuri man, commenced this Wednesday with NSW Deputy Coroner Elaine Truscott overseeing the inquest. Today, a number of community activist groups gathered at the NSW State Coroners Court to support Mr Mackander's family as they seek justice for their son.

Mr Mackander was on remand at the Kariang Correctional Centre for drug and driving offences, when concerns for his risk of self-harm and suicide arose after consulting with a psychologist three days prior to his death.

ABC News reported that "during his time on remand ... Mr Mackander was 'desperate to be released' after being told his case would be adjourned until January 2020."

Mr Mackander died in November 2019 from injuries sustained after falling over a 10-metre wall during a transfer at Gosford Hospital where he escaped from two Corrective Officers who were supposed to take him back to the correctional centre.

Nadine Silva, an NITV journalist, reported: "A lead police investigator told the court circumstances around the 20-year-old Wiradjuri man's death were 'avoidable,' citing an unfenced wall ... and the medical treatment he received in hospital."

During the inquest on Friday 7 May, a Justice Health nurse testified, "He should never have been taken to Kariang. He'd just seen a psychiatrist, he hadn't long started on a new medication. It's an isolated site. Mental health, there's [sic] no services... Kariang wasn't realistically an appropriate site for him."

Over the course of the inquest, the court was shown CCTV footage and audio of Mr Mackander pacing the cell, begging officers at the Kariang Correctional Centre for help, weeping, retching, and lying on the floor in a fetal position. He could be heard crying out "I can't breathe."

Members of the community, including the Indigenous Social Justice Association (ISJA) and the University of Sydney's Autonomous Collective Against Racism (ACAR), attended

hearings in support of the Mackander family.

There have been at least seven Indigenous deaths in custody across Australia since the beginning of March, coinciding with the 30th Anniversary of the Royal Commission into Black Death In Custody. Bailey Mackander's death is one of many under the carceral system that has seen little reform since the Royal Commission. Despite the spike in Indigenous deaths in custody over the last several months, Mr Mackander's death has seen little attention from mainstream media.

The inquest has since been adjourned to continue on the 6th of July.



Mackander's family.
Photo Credit: Nadine Silva, NITV News

No sexist parliament, no sexist schools: Youth survivors demand justice

Lia Perkins reports.

Hundreds of young survivors of sexual assault and their supporters gathered at Town Hall on Saturday. The group marched to Circular Quay demanding "no sexist parliament" and "no sexist schools."

The rally was organised by Youth Survivors for Justice and chaired by Chloe and Erin, two of its members. The event follows on from a range of actions around consent and sexual assault since Brittany Higgins spoke out in March, and Chanel Contos's viral petition. The chairs provided an emphasis on the need to fully fund women's services, improve consent education and provide economic safety for women in the lead up to the release of the Federal budget next week.

The organisers made the rally a COVID-safe event, with a COVID check in and participants wearing masks.

The Welcome to Country was given by Shanaya Donovan, a Darug woman, who later spoke about her experience as a survivor, and dismay at the Government because "they don't care about the people who are less than them, who are making less than them, who their policies are affecting."

Saxon Mullins, survivor and

Director of Advocacy at Rape and Sexual Assault Reserch and Advocacy (RSARA) energised the crowd, declaring "we're here today to be loud, to be heard." According to Mullins, "when we hide from this topic, we allow it to fester in the absence of our discussions. We allow it to turn from a myth to be disproven into a core belief."

Mullins addressed the intersectionality of the situation, "The Prime Minister is happy to extend an invite to the organisers of the March for Justice but won't meet with the families of the people who have died at the hands of our police and our prison systems. Conditional Compassion does not exist."

The experience of sexual violence by Aboriginal women was addressed by Yattungka Gordon, a Goreng Goreng Kabi Kabi Munanjali woman, who spoke about her work with the Breaking Silent Codes Collective in creating safe spaces for Aboriginal, Māori, and Pasifika women. The Breaking Silent Codes Collective aims to "tell their stories, resilience and resistance their way." Gordon urged for earlier consent education and creating safe spaces for

young people, "in schools we're not even talking about what sexual abuse, rape or consent are."

Fei Zhang and Ruby Wawn described the parallel struggle of women and workers. Zhang, who works in homelessness services and is a member of the Australian Services Union, expressed that "the lack of options for working class and poor women to leave domestic violence is now increasingly terrifying." Furthermore, she identified the \$56 million cut to homelessness services that the Federal Government has proposed, cuts to Jobseeker and allegations of sexual assault by Federal Government ministers as "beyond comprehension."

Tying together the problems of sexual assault, homelessness and cuts to JobSeeker, Jenny Leong, Member for Newtown argued that they are "all part of the same problem: a neoliberal agenda."

At the conclusion of the speeches the rally advanced towards Hyde Park and through the city streets to Circular Quay. With attendees chanting "1-2-3-4, Kick the Liberals out the door, 5-6-7-8 Stop the Violence, Stop the Rape."

2021 SUPRA election results see international students hold strong

Jeffrey Khoo reports.

The results of the 2021 Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association (SUPRA) Council elections, announced on Tuesday, saw the continued dominance of international student factions.

Of the 38 candidates who nominated for a Councillor position, 27 were elected.

All six tickets were based around international student groups, including Alpha (which secured six seats), Ubridge (five), Vision of Us (four), Teamup (three), Smile Quokkas (three) and Pineapple (three).

2020/21 President Minran Liu, as well as previous President Weihong Liang, were returned as General Councillors.

Some of this year's Councillors are no strangers to student politics, with outgoing USU Board Directors Benny Shen and Di Wang, and 2020 USU Board candidate Ada Choi all securing a seat.

SUPRA is the peak representative body at USyd for postgraduate students. 2021's candidate field was mostly indistinguishable in terms of policy; most candidates broadly promised to organise social events, advocate for academic concerns and provide career opportunities.

SUPRA elections tend to be apolitical, with tickets instead built around social groupings. Candidates do not have to run as part of a ticket.

SUPRA has historically seen very low engagement from students, with voter turnout reaching only 4% in 2019.

For an organisation which receives almost \$2 million in SSAF funding (more than the undergraduate SRC) and which provides stipends to senior roles, SUPRA has previously struggled to increase its visibility and advertise its services to postgraduate students.



The USU Board Election: meet the candidates



Candidate: Telita Goile
Slogan: Trust in Telita
Colour: Purple
Quiz score: 84%
Faction: Switch (Grassroots)

Telita Goile is the dark horse of this race. Though she is the lesser-known Switch candidate, Goile is a strong contender, boasting the highest quiz score. Framing herself as a left-wing candidate, she wants to combat what she views as a “misconception” that the USU is politically neutral. Instead of boycotting USU elections, as writers have argued in *Honi* recently, she would instead aim to harness its financial power (the USU receives twice as much funding as the SRC) and prod it in a more left-leaning direction.

She believes that the left has a “moral duty” to oppose conservatism on campus, and tells *Honi* that she is “always developing [her] politics to be more left every day.” In first year Goile campaigned for Liberal Brendan

Ma, but spoke eloquently about the pipeline to conservatism that is rife among the larger societies on campus.

Goile is aiming to “revive student life and make our campus inclusive,” as mentioned on social media — including a re-introduced Language Exchange program and a new peer support program for international students. She would not have cut staff hours during COVID-19, saying that staff should “at the least” have been told in advance, and that reducing staff capacity during a crisis is “counter-intuitive”. She would break fiduciary duties for “dire” issues, publish the recent Transparency Policy, reform austerity measures and invest surpluses back into student programs. It might be wishful thinking, however, to achieve all this

in the year after COVID-19 shoved the USU’s finances into the red.

Goile’s opposition to the new C&S funding model comes from her experience as President of POC Revue. She would also introduce consultation hours with USU staff members for C&S executives.

Well trained in the Switch stable, Goile scored 84% on our quiz. Combining her knowledge with strong factional backing, Telita stands a good chance.



Candidate: Isla Mowbray
Slogan: I’m with Isla
Colour: Gold
Quiz score: 83%
Faction: Switch

Isla Mowbray is Switch’s prime hope for the USU Board. Billed as a “creative” candidate, she wants a USU that “genuinely cares about creating a safe and exciting community.” Her big ticket items are improving the much-maligned USU room booking system, hosting Manning band nights, Courtyard music sessions, and organising industry panels with performing arts societies.

Consent, drugs and alcohol training for all execs is another key promise, with the current training — which is simply a document execs are expected to read — described as “not adequate.” Like her Switch running mate, Mowbray’s policies may be ambitious, but such a flaw has not

stopped left-wing candidates in the past.

An SRC executive member in 2019, Isla is currently the Vice President of SUDS.

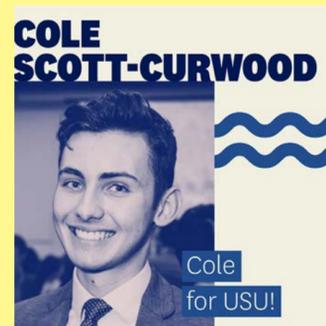
She criticised the current Board for a “lack of care” towards the activities of C&S, while describing as “despicable” the Board’s tardiness in publicising minutes and their failure to invite student media to meetings. Isla was critical of the USU’s new C&S funding model, saying it prevented small clubs from growing and needed “review.”

Positioning herself as “anticapitalist and anticolonialist,” Isla advocates for increased activist involvement from the USU, promising

collaboration with the SRC collectives and publicity for protests through the USU’s social media channels. She said she would find it “difficult” to work with “Liberal-aligned” Directors, and professed support for Pru for President. Interestingly, Isla said that operating at a surplus is “important... but should not be the priority.”

Isla scored an impressive 83% in the *Honi* quiz, which again signifies either strong institutional knowledge or an intensive period of training from her faction.

With strong factional backing, social clout, and a dearth of non-Switch left-wing candidates, Isla is a very strong prospect for election.



Candidate: Cole Scott-Curwood
Slogan: Cole for USU
Colour: Blue
Quiz score: 66%
Faction: Engineers

Cole Scott-Curwood, the Prince of PNR, is running for USU Board. It is hard to argue with Cole’s self-assessment as “the most experienced” candidate. He is a present member of the SRC Executive, having founded the Engineers for SRC faction, is President of SUEUA, and has sat on the executive of ten clubs and societies. He was a defeated candidate in last year’s Senate election. How will he juggle all these commitments? He has “excellent time management.”

Cole hits all the standard policy points, advocating for a more “student-centric” approach, while seeking to “improve campus nightlife, food at venues, and support for mental health.” He holds strong views on the

new C&S funding model, expressing “concern” at the reduction of funding caps for large clubs (such as his own SUEUA), though recognising the previous model was not particularly “equitable” for societies which did hold events. He wants more transparency from the USU on the overall level of funding to C&S. On the issue of transparency, Cole would like to see the President file a regular report on their activities. As to the Presidency, Cole is coy as to who he would support, though praised Belinda Thomas for her work with the Manning Party.

Cole scored a striking 66% on our quiz, demonstrating decent enough institutional knowledge, which

should be expected with his range of experience. His politics are something of a mystery, expressing generally progressive views and advocating for the USU to take political stances on issues which affect students. However, it is not ideology which is likely to get Cole elected onto the Board. He will be relying on the same support from Engineers which got him on to the SRC. Don’t expect to see much of him on Eastern Avenue. If you want to catch a glimpse of this Engineer electioneering, you’ll have to pop down to PNR.

A good value chance to get onto Board.



Candidate: Ruiqi Jia
Slogan: Reach your goal!
Colour: Cyan
Quiz score: n/a
Faction: Penta

A member of Penta and a current SRC Residential Colleges Officer, Ruiqi (Rachel) Jia’s USU Profile provides only scant detail on her policies. Unspecified annual “training” for societies, “more online events,” and improving “the benefits

and welfare” of international students form the basis of Jia’s policy platform, along with a strong focus on the “diversity and creativeness” of USU souvenirs. Given the widely-criticised introduction of USyd Monopoly last year, the importance of souvenirs to the student body is unclear. Other references to “improving” the USU, giving students an “impressive experience,” and being “responsible for the work” of the board are accompanied by little concrete plans

beyond “holding events.”

We wish Jia could have elaborated her policies to us. According to her Profile, Jia will find the time to be a Board Director by putting “all the key dates into my calendar.” Sadly, Jia apparently did not put her Honi appointment into her calendar and was “too busy” to complete our interview and quiz.



Candidate: David Zhu
Slogan: David Delivers
Colour: Purple
Quiz score: 57%
Faction: SULC

David Zhu is ready to deliver. Zhu describes himself as having “the skills, the experience, and the vision.” to get on Board.

And he’s certainly got experience. With executive tenures on the Kiwi Students Society, Liberal Club, Economics Society, and SULS furnishing his resume. From this experience alone, he certainly has the requisite USU engagement to be considered a qualified candidate.

Zhu’s connections to the Liberal Party are no secret. He campaigned for Ben Hines in last year’s USU Board elections and ran on Vibe for SULS in the same year. He says it’s no secret he’s “good mates” with Ben Hines and while he’d need to hear out every candidate before backing one for President, it seems likely he’d be Backing Ben.

Describing himself as a “sensible centrist,” Zhu’s policies are mostly uncontroversial. His vision is all about a revitalisation of campus culture, with an accoutrement of welfare, sustainability, diversity, and transparency policies served on the side. Zhu thinks that a “post COVID campus culture cannot only

be better than what it was but we can also improve on it.” He notes sustainability, diversity, and club funding as areas that could benefit from some much needed tweaks, with off campus alcohol subsidies and a dual-stream C&S funding model being front and center.

While Zhu thinks that the USU should take political stances on issues that matter to students (such as education cuts), he does not think that every decision should be driven by political faction or ideology.

Scoring a 57% on our quiz, Zhu is a strong candidate and demonstrates the necessary knowledge, experience, and comprehension to serve on Board.



Candidate: Nicholas Comino
Slogan: Comeback with Comino
Colour: Pink
Quiz score: 56%
Faction: Moderate Liberal

Nicholas Comino talks big about reviving student life at USyd. His slogan, “Comeback with Comino”, is premised on Comino’s feeling that campus experience was “lousy” even pre-COVID-19. He claims USyd’s social life used to be “one of the best,” saying that the Manning Party should have “played music that people like” — a stance which will no doubt prove extremely controversial.

However, Comino did not provide detail about his policies, only opposing the new C&S funding model based on his extensive Chocolate Society subcommittee experience. He did mention a laudable policy of rapid HIV/STI testing (also offered at UQ), which aims to provide healthcare access for students who are financially reliant on their families, particularly “international students.” Students

need to see more from Comino, however, given he has made campus life a focal point of his campaign.

While Comino is a Conservative Club Vice-President, and managed Nick Rigby’s USU campaign last year, his answers reveal a politically diverse stance. He has “no qualms” about the USU taking political stances (but would defer to the SRC’s expertise in activism), would be okay with the USU opposing 12-week semesters (which he justifies as relating to the broader student experience) and wouldn’t have a problem with USU outlets closing for climate strikes “if that’s what the Board decided to do,” sidestepping his personal position. He “likes [his fellow candidates] a lot” and would be open to voting for any Presidential candidate. One wonders if Comino’s affable, “no worries”

attitude may not translate to effective advocacy for his priorities on Board.

He would have cut wages “from the top 11%” before staff hours during COVID-19, but moderated this statement by acknowledging that there existed “uncertainty if the USU could survive that period.” He echoed concerns about the Board’s eagerness for conducting in-camera meetings, and says that Directors of Student Publications shouldn’t influence *Pulp’s* editorial decisions. While Comino has a wide support base that includes the colleges and delivered a reasonable quiz performance, voters will need more than non-committal, broadly populist stances to be assured of his effectiveness.



Candidate: Yiman Jiang
Slogan: Yiman’s love, immense love.
Colour: Orange
Quiz score: 26%
Faction: Independent (2020 Panda Councillor)

Yiman Jiang is a politically independent candidate whose policies are primarily concerned with revitalising campus culture in the wake of COVID-19. As an international student, she is acutely aware of the impact of the adversities of the past year on the student experience, and is also committed to contributing to and bolstering the ‘Stop Asian Hate’

discourse on campus.

Her stance on the current board is generally positive, as she believes that they have responded well to difficult circumstances brought about as a result of COVID-19. She also claims that there are no transparency issues afflicting the board at the moment. However, Jiang sees value in the board operating from surplus, as she believes that more money allows for greater opportunities to solve problems.

Jiang’s personal experiences, primarily with clubs and societies, inform the substance of her campaign. Jiang advocates for the need to bring all events back to

campus, and is also committed to more regularly advertising clubs and societies throughout the semester. In partnership with this position, she is committed to introducing more diverse events, as she finds that parties are often loud, dark, and not conducive to getting to know people. She is also a firm advocate for a student mentor campaign that would allow for greater networking opportunities and would encourage career and social growth in simultaneity. Despite a lack of previous campaign experience, and a somewhat unclear political position, Jiang maintains that her personal experiences with the USU are enough to make her a worthy board candidate.



Candidate: Pablo Avaria-Jimenez
Slogan: Pablo’s HERE
Colour: Green
Quiz score: 23%
Faction: Independent (ties to SULC)

Pablo Avaria-Jimenez is a bit of a political wildcard in this election. He’s a member of the Young Liberals, and has campaigned for Liberal candidates in previous USU and SRC elections such as Ben Hines, Cady Brown and Josie Jakovac. Nevertheless, Avaria-Jimenez told *Honi* that he is self-managing his campaign (which is decked out in bright, Nickelodeon-slime green), without the support of his faction (who are backing fellow Liberals Nicholas Comino and David Zhu). Though he believes the USU should be “extremely apolitical,” he welcomes it taking stances on “issues that affect all students,” such as 12-week semesters. Avaria-Jimenez isn’t an executive of any other campus

clubs, so we are curious to see where his support base will come from.

He wants to revive Manning (who doesn’t?) and trial it as a nightclub-style venue once a week, which could prove feasible and popular. His leather jacket will certainly suit the role of nightclub baron. However he didn’t advance other strategies to improve campus culture, other than making Welcome Week in Sem 2 just as big as Sem 1. He faltered on his knowledge of the new C&S funding model (only stating he would support “increased funding for activities”). His policy to improve students’ mental health (a new “life hub” space) would be difficult, considering current expenditure constraints, and he did

not touch on current institutional supports. He also wants a salad bar at Courtyard for more healthy food, which is certainly novel.

Avaria-Jimenez’s stances are sometimes confusing. He thinks the current Board is too reliant on in-camera discussions, and would publish all meeting minutes and salaries of senior executives, but would not break fiduciary duties to speak on internal matters (which minutes would reveal anyway). He would have voted to cut staff hours last year, “but not by a lot.” Scoring 23% on his quiz, Avaria-Jimenez faces an uphill battle to get on Board, but the unknown nature of his candidacy could equally be a strength or a weakness.



Candidate: Du Du
Slogan: Let's Du It
Colour: Coral
Quiz score: 17%
Faction: None

Du Du is running for USU to “give back” to the clubs and societies which shaped her university life. As an international student (who hasn’t campaigned or run in student elections, but is adjacent to Benny Shen), her platform focuses on supporting international students who “feel like they want to be included” in campus life, and making them aware of the USU’s benefits. One of her flagship policies is to hold online Zoom study sessions for students with local companies.

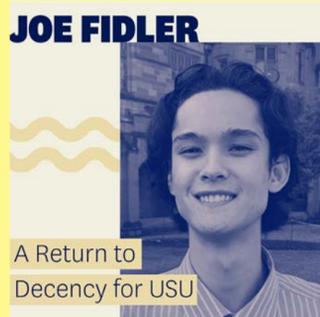
While she has a strong motivation for running for Board, it’s unclear whether she possesses fundamental knowledge about the institution that would enable her to make the changes she wants. Nor, unfortunately, does she have clarity about her own policies; her awareness-raising is limited to

vague “posters and promotion,” and while she wants to revive some initiatives of the International Student Office for international students in Australia, she did not point to any specific programs.

Du demonstrated a strong unwillingness to challenge the USU, even going as far to say that “every decision of the USU is understandable to me.” While she wouldn’t have changed the USU’s decision to cut staff hours, she would have improved “communication” while doing so. She said that Directors’ free meal cards and cab charges were “reasonable” as they “contribute a lot to the USU,” and suggested the USU’s transparency concerns could be solved by students applying to attend USU meetings and prioritised her duty as a Director to “confidentiality rules

and regulations.”

Du is highly cognisant of the USU’s role as a corporation, first and foremost (though she would support the USU taking stances on issues that would impact student experience). While she thought the new C&S funding model was fair in principle, with larger clubs getting more funding, she did not demonstrate an understanding of how the model would work, and claimed that without clubs submitting detailed post-event reports, “money would go nowhere.” Du’s platform and suitability for the job is doubtful, but she potentially has a dedicated voter base to propel her onto Board.



Candidate: Joe Fidler
Slogan: A Return of Decency on Campus
Colour: Beige
Quiz score: 11%
Faction: None

Joe Fidler is a “fiercely independent” candidate, with a slew of policies that are sure to make anyone opposed to capitalism or concerned about the state of the environment quake. Whilst perceived as a “joke candidate,” Fidler maintains that there is no evidence to support such a claim – fervently clinging to the call to “bring back the BNOC” to USyd. With an outlook as refreshing as the mocktails that he made during his interview, Fidler’s campaign is centred around the return of decency, captured by his choice of campaign colour, beige.

Gone are the days of trite policies! Fidler is a man of enterprise, with the introduction of a classy USyd uniform at the top of his plan of action. But if wide-brimmed hats, polo shirts and velcro shoes aren’t quite your style, Fidler is also concerned with bringing class to USU food and beverage establishments, promising lobster pizza and Veuve Clicquot at Courtyard. Although his proposal to frack the historic University of Sydney Quadrangle has raised some environmental and ethical concerns, he argues that such are mitigated by the potential for considerable economic gain. In sum, take the

policies of yesteryear, make them bigger, better and more expensive, and you have this campaign!

Fidler has no experience in campaign politics, and his quiz results also reveal a severe lack of institutional knowledge. However, a man that views Hamilton as one of USyd’s identity campaigns is a man after the hearts of the people. Fidler offers a fresh outlook, unhampered by experience and knowledge, and is definitely one to watch this campaign period.

Bestie alert! USU edition

Bestie alert! This USU campaign is gonna be absolutely breathtaking. I’ve got my campaign shirt on, my how to vote cards clutched in hand, and a head full of policy statement bullet points. I’m locked, loaded, and ready to deliver a nuclear-grade, double barrel blast of factional goooodness to Eastern Avenue!

My name is Marlin Hertz and I am a USU campaigner!!!! I joined SASS on DAY ONE and ever since I have been in loveeeeee with SASS backed, independent USU candidate Thomas Waters. His last name may be a liquid, but his policy platform is SOLID as a rock! Isn’t he smart ... he thought of that slogan all by himself. He’s gonna be an MP one day, but for now he is schlepping it with USU Board elections. I’ve never actually seen him in person, but his photos are enough for infatuation to bloom. I’m working the main street today (Eastern Avenue for those NOT in the know (like losers). I’m walking people across the line like it’s nobody’s business. HOLD ON. You may be confused as to why I’m walking people across the line when voting is online this year. Well, Waters is a Winner has set up a special

drop point where campaigners deposit hostage voters. Those voters are then transported to a central warehouse until voting day commences! Then we give them all a sleek, refined Dell laptop and set them to work voting for Thomas <33333. It’s really quite smart. Anywaysssss, i’m walking people across the line, when suddenly I see him. He’s standing in the warm evening glow of the Wentworth sunset. His hair is sparkling in the light, almost forming a halo. WHY IS HE SO ANGELIC. I walk up to him, maybe I can talk to him about ... SASS camp? I just realised I don’t know what i’m gonna talk to him about. Bestie vibes deactivated!!!! But I’m already standing in front of him.

“Hey Marlin!” Thomas says.

“Ummmmm, hey Thomas,” I reply.

“I thought you were soooooo funny at the SASS AGM. That joke you made about stacking being stacks of fun. Oh lordy, that was a kneeslapper.”

“Wow, I guess I didn’t realise you had noticed me.”

“Well of course I noticed you! You’re my best friend!”

PAUSE. Emergency bestie alert!

Why is he saying that! We aren’t best friends, are we ... did I not notice. The bestie alarms are going off inside my head.

“Yes.”

I am sprinting away from Wentworth! I need to get Thomas out of my head! I am about to reach the Quad when I get hit by a police horse! Neyyyyyyyyy girlfrienddddd!

I look up and see the last person I want to see! Liberal Club Digital Safety Officer Alexander Tonkington. Unlike darling independent Thomas, Alexander is a filthy Lib!!! He’s the worst thing to ever happen to me! He’s got two tickets to Hamilton in his hands though.

“Stall seats my dear?”

How could I say no!

DISCLAIMER: HONI EDITOR CLAIRE OLLIVAIN IS A CURRENT MEMBER OF SYDNEY GRASSROOTS AND IS NOT INVOLVED IN USU ELECTION COVERAGE.

Op-Ed: Why the left must participate in the USU election

Oscar Chaffey, Swapnik Sanagavarapu and Ariana Haghighi argue that the left must participate in the USU election.

Politics has been, and always will be, a struggle composed of a diverse ideological marketplace of ideas. It is such struggle wherein we popularise ideas, seize genuine political power and then exercise that power for the advancement of a better world. It is fundamentally illegitimate to abstain from the work of politics on the grounds that the world is presently imperfect or challenging. This claim is merely a hopeless response in the face of powerlessness. Honi Soit recently published an op-ed arguing that left-wing people ought to abstain on principle from the USU election. We are three left wing students who oppose this perspective on the strongest possible grounds.

The primary claim made is that the left stands to gain nothing from participating in the USU election, as the USU is a corporation. This argument conflates form with function, arguing that simply because the USU often operates against the interests of students, it must be a corporation. However the USU, like the SRC, is an unincorporated association, and definitionally cannot be a corporation. Presumably then

organisational critiques made of the USU must apply, at least in principle, equally to the SRC. While the USU and SRC are obviously dissimilar in the sense that the latter invests more in activist priorities, the assertion that the USU could never function in a more activist or student-oriented manner has no material basis. In the counterfactual scenario where the SRC was persistently controlled by the right-wing and its activist priorities were eroded, would the abstentionists argue that running in SRC elections constituted corporate participation?

Suggesting that abstention is harmless is prima facie untrue. If the left ceased contesting the USU election, the board would be filled entirely with cynical right-wing careerists who have no qualms with its present organisational culture. In this world, cutting staff wages would be done with impunity and without any left-wing opposition. In the best case, the left could win and sustain a board majority, transforming its institutional culture and employing its \$5 million budget for key amenities aligned with student

interest. But even in the worst case, the participation of left-wing people frustrates, in some way, the agenda of these people. Insofar as the left has a moral duty to protect staff and students, we ought carry out this duty and prevent significant harms from being inflicted on those we claim to support. This is not “left wing cover,” it is simply left wing power.

The final, and perhaps strongest argument, is a strategic appeal to the opportunity cost of contesting the USU election compared to organising directly for left wing causes. Firstly, the claim that participation in the USU elections detracts resources from activist campaigns is empirically untrue. As recently as this week, whilst two of us were managing multiple USU campaigns, we played significant parts in defeating the move to 12 week semesters and restoring medical science students to their building and their honours projects. But even if there was some implicit opportunity cost, the USU election is far from an apolitical act. Students, who otherwise would not be, are exposed to left-wing rhetoric, and activist causes are trumpeted in

interviews and campaign materials. To the extent that those invested in USU elections are a distinct set from those invested in SRC elections, we ought to bring these messages to that distinct group. Given that the left’s primary justification for electoral ventures is access to resources, surely the prospect of controlling the USU is an important consideration. The USU is endowed with a much larger budget than the SRC, meaning that important projects such as Radical Sex and Consent Week could receive adequate funding. The USU could support the SRC in numerous concrete ways: advocating concurrently against harmful proposals, continuing to support initiatives such as the FoodHub and striking in solidarity with staff.

The world we wish to see may not manifest in a year, a generation or even our lifetime. To suggest that these political projects and participation are intractable is to reject every left-wing thinker who, like us, believed that in the struggle for justice, the last page is never written.

Community sacrificed in USyd’s corporate ideal

Maxim Shanahan considers the impact of architecture and communications choices on the student/staff relationship.

Most weeks, as barely more than a dozen scrawny students gather outside Fisher Library to hear speeches against the latest malady to hit higher education, down the extreme opposite end of Eastern Avenue, the F23 Administration Building goes into lockdown, completely halting access to that foreboding monument to management.

The University’s reflex to lock itself away in its Camperdown keep at the slightest sign of student dissent is concerning in itself, casting aggrieved students as security threats rather than equally invested members of the USyd community. But such an attitude is also evident in other aspects of the University, and the broader trend of staff separation from students warrants examination.

In the very first scene of the 1997 documentary Uni, Charles Firth strides into a building in hope of obtaining a very questionable extension. Finding his lecturer out of office, he casually consults another staff member before finding assistance at a well-staffed administration desk. Such a scene — of interaction with living, breathing staff members outside of class — is one foreign to many undergraduate students today. After faculty administration desks were closed in a 2016 cost-cutting measure, all administrative inquiries have been centralised and channeled through the black hole of the 1800 SYD UNI phone line, where an inevitable months-long chain of email referrals awaits.

While admin staff are sacked and centralised, academics have become segregated from students in the name of “security.” The New Law

Building, completed in 2009, was Camperdown’s first “secure building,” with staff separated from students by not merely doors and floors, but also an impenetrable swipe-access barrier. The concept has since proliferated throughout the campus, with academics in the new FASS building, for example, sequestered from students by a glass barricade. When not locked down for fear of being overrun by students, F23 staff are guarded by a campus security detail and an array of electronic locking mechanisms. This cloistering of staff is not a belated return to the monastic academic tradition, but rather signifies the sacrifice of an essential aspect of the university — community — for a corporate aesthetic.

‘University’ has its origins in the Latin universitas magistrorum et scholarium (roughly, a community of masters and scholars), implying, according to William Schonfeld, a company of persons, a community, a body...organised for the sake of its protection from hostile outsiders.” While this detachment from society is clearly unsustainable in the modern age, there is a necessary insularity in the scholarly business of the university — concerned with knowledge production rather than economic production — which should separate it from other organisations. The co-location of “masters and scholars” — of old and young — in the campus is a necessary aspect of the university, encouraging learning and debate in both casual and formal settings, and allowing the knowledge transfer which sustains academia. By sequestering academic staff behind locked doors,

something of this shared community is lost, and “masters” and “scholars” come to exist as two distinctly separate communities which rarely interact with each other outside of formal settings. Simply having the opportunity to drop by and speak to academics or faculty in person encourages a sense of belonging and investment in the university. By contrast, the present system of call centres, online forms and email-only communication merely furthers the atomisation felt by the contemporary student. How can one feel attached to an institution that treats its students in the same way a corporation treats its customers — in the cheapest and most efficient way possible?.

By the same token, the anonymity and media-managed pronouncements of University management contribute to this ever-widening distinction between “masters” and “scholars.” While universities will always need management to make difficult and unpopular decisions, the distinction between principles of corporate management and university governance are that decision-makers, at USyd at least, are generally high-achieving academics who have forged careers through frank and open discussion, clear communication, and consideration of, and engagement with, pertinent debates.

Against this background, the existence of a PR-driven ‘University spokesperson’ seems anomalous. Among the core principles of PR are obfuscation, damage minimisation and image protection. These are principles which should be anathema to an academic institution which ostensibly prioritises academic freedom and honest debate.

Delegating communication with student media to a reputation-focused anonymous ‘spokesperson’ evinces a willingness to avoid honest engagement with the university community, especially students. The empty corporate prose of Pip Pattison’s Honi op-ed shows that, even when given the opportunity to justify their actions and engage with debate, management are unwilling to do so. The appointment of Mark Scott as Vice-Chancellor — a non-academic corporate operator — is evidence of a further acceleration away from academic community and towards corporate goals.

Certainly, the University deserves some modicum of sympathy in dealing with a hostile government and strained financial circumstances. However, such problems should not be dealt with by abandoning the honest engagement in debate which is inherent in academia for a corporate communications strategy which prioritises image over honesty, and anonymity over responsibility, treating students with an attitude bordering on disdain.

A university does not have shareholders or customers to whom it must sell itself. Its whole being is centred on academic production — opinions on the purposes of which may differ — and such production rests on interaction between “masters” and “scholars.” Reducing interaction between these groups, and segregating students, staff and management through architectural and communications choices, does a disservice to the university, atomising the sense of community upon which it relies.

Another Drop in the Lake

Shania O'Brien took nine weeks to write 752 words.

I look at my hands, and I do not write.

I lay in bed, and I curl up on the floor in front of my mirror. I sit on the 370, and I buy plaster mermaids with starfish in their hair.

Still, I do not write.

I sit with my feet tucked under my thighs and I think, no one will read this, and I think, this has been said before. It has all always been said before. With better words. By writers like Nizami Ganjavi and R. K. Narayan and Edith Wharton.

There was a time when writing was easy, when I spent hours on end at my desk typing up stories of sun-flooded valleys, ruby-hilted swords, and war-torn glades. There was a time when my prose spread light; but now I press my fingers against my mirror and there is no candle and nothing to reflect it. I never questioned whether I was the right person to write a story, whether I was good enough, whether I cared about who would read it, if anyone did at all. Plot holes would fill themselves up with time, loose threads would

bind together like shivering hands. Though most of those pieces are now lost to me, I remember how I would begin describing a place and immerse myself in it, revisiting that feeling of wonder, until I became completely inseparable from fiction.

Now, getting words out is hard.

In his 1962 essay 'The Poet and the City,' W. H. Auden wrote that the best thing a poet could do was get involved with some craft, with something that does not involve the manipulation of words. So I draw wings and windows and flannel flowers. Thursdays after tutorials are for pottery lessons. I sculpt little bowls and pine trees, and spheres to hold down loose paper. I take the bus to Centennial Park and paint fairy stools and wooden arches, but I can never get the colours right. And during this pursuit of diversion I, at the very least, think about what I want to write.

Often I worry about all the time that I waste thinking. But the act of doing nothing is in itself exhausting. I am stuck, standing behind a closed door, with far more feeling than

range and time. On some days, this unshakeable fatigue bleeds into other aspects of my life, and there is nothing I can do but sit on my balcony and watch the wind move the leaves of my neighbour's arrowhead plants.

Dominican novelist Jean Rhys believed that all of writing is a huge lake. "There are great rivers that feed the lake, like Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky," she said, "and there are mere trickles, like Jean Rhys." But all that matters is feeding the lake, and keeping it alive. I might be stagnant at the present moment, unable to do anything but look at my hands and wish for rapid movement across my butterfly keyboard. I might worry about empty words like 'nuance' and 'innovative' now, but someday I will realise all writing comes in response to those that have come before us.

Yet, as I hold that hope close to my chest like a child holding a teddy bear, I know I will never again be free of the weight of uncertainty. I've been staring at this document for nine weeks now, and it still remains unfinished. No more words come

to mind, only clichés. I don't want to think too much about the irony of this, lest I succumb to it and stop being able to get words out again.

As a child, writing was always an escape. I wrote to get away from the claws inside my mind, created worlds to step into lands untouched by affliction. But as I grow into myself, and into meagre hopes of a successful career in publishing, my relationship with my craft changes still. It morphes from a safe fantasy into a large part of my identity and survival.

Nowadays, writing for myself consists of pouring over manuscripts I started at ages fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. I always thought I wanted to tell a very specific kind of story, but I haven't bothered writing it in four years now. All I have is a document that hasn't been edited since 17 July 2018 and a growing list of excuses I tell myself count as writing.

The only solace is the image of Jean Rhys' lake, and the few droplets in it I get to assign my name to.

How can we know the dancer from the dance?

Juliette Marchant writes an open letter to ballet.

I can't remember which came first, my love for dance or my love for stories. But in a way, I guess that you combined both of these passions.

I can still remember the first time that I saw you. It was Christmas, and I was a toddler wearing a deep red velvet dress. You were a glittering masterpiece, a phantasmagoria of snow and sweets. I sat in awe of your beauty, knowing that your existence makes life remarkable, exquisite, splendid. You are every little girl's dream, and you were mine.

The image of you is so romantic. The plush tuille of tutus, the pink satin of pointe shoes, the appearance of weightlessness. My image is wrapped in cliché. A child, donning my baby pink leotard and wrap skirt. My leotard metamorphosed from pink to blue to navy to black as I grew – my own transition from fragile duckling to black swan, all under your watchful eye.

Taught in broken French, you are perceived, not read. Bound by rules and form, you are rigorous and free all at once. Telling stories through coordination, muscular impulse, feeling; a complex language becomes digestible under your gaze. A performative pedagogy lingers through you. With every shared joy you teach me to laugh. When I fall or strain you teach me to cry. And then, you teach me to feel in between.

It is easier, of course, to find dignity in one's solitude. But you forced me to find it in company. I

warred between a fake enthusiasm and a deep and passionate love for you, surrounded by others that were doing the same. We danced together and alone, with and without you, moving closer and further away with each step. We told stories, and understood some. We gave to you, and you continued to take.

But our relationship was far from perfect. I can still feel the throbbing in my toes from hours spent en pointe. My hip bones still grind against each other when I move. My muscles still echo the astonishing pain that would linger for days after a stretch class. But the truth is, that a sort of masochistic delight is birthed from your grip. I told myself that you are only merciless to those that you love. That every agony is a signal that you are alive, growing, transforming. I think that the phrase 'you make it look easy' was invented for you. You hurt, effortlessly.

I wish that you still made me feel like I was floating. I wish that I was thinking through movement. I wish that the rhythm and language were one again – that I wasn't still trying to force them together onto a page. There is nothing quite like you – physically rewarding and intellectually interesting. My mind, my body, my heart, my being were, and still are, obsessed with you.

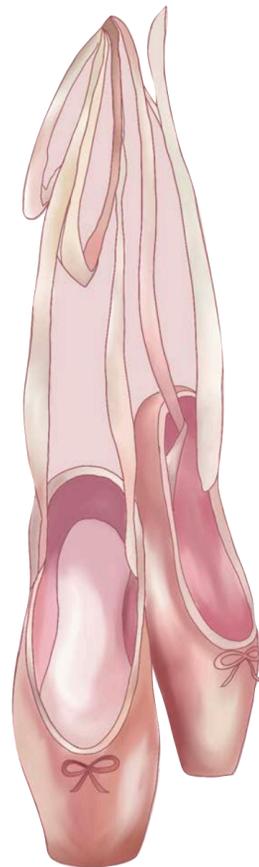
In my obsession, I think about our fifteen year love affair, and convince myself that I could return to you. I search the internet for classes and scale YouTube for videos. But all

the same, I am scared of killing the memory of you that I hold onto like a precious jewel. I'm scared of losing you, but more than that, I am scared of hating you. You were my vacation from the linguistic, but now the linguistic attempts to fill the hole that you left behind. I have traded my body for a pen, preserving an archive of longing with every stroke. There is no reader, beholder or listener here, but myself.

It's been almost 4 years since I left you, and still, I'm finding it hard to say goodbye. I don't know if I will ever get over you – you've left an imprint on my body and my selfhood. I stand at traffic lights in first position. I walk like my shoulders are being pulled back by invisible hands. Scattered memories of choreography are preserved on discs for posterity. Remnants of you are stuffed in the bottom of my drawers, lycra pieces that I can't bring myself to throw away.

Roland Barthes claimed that we each have our own rhythm of suffering, and as I lament that my ankles have grown weak, and my limbs less supple, I assume that my suffering clings to the scores of Tchaikovsky and Delibes. I forget and remember, forget and remember you until my mind won't let go. I write what I wish to retrieve. My memory is a theatre, and it is there that I'm still with you. That I'm still dancing.

Art by Shania O'Brien



How to make a terrarium you're just going to kill anyway

Maxim Adams provides an illustrated guide.

So, you've moved out of home and are feeling lonely, but you're still 5-10 years away from getting a dog or a child. This is what demographers call the 'houseplant bracket,' and right now you are a prime sucker for that oh-so-tempting modern trinket: the terrarium. From total newbies to the greenest thumbs, I believe that everyone can buy, build and kill a terrarium with confidence!

1. Set up your jar

The first step is picking a suitable container. You want something that goes with the furniture, bonus points if it can sustain life. Specialty stores draw you in with sparkling, expensive glass – though you can

find something similar for \$10 at the Reject Shop. Are these different? Wouldn't you like to know.

Container in hand, you can start filling it with dirt – sorry, substrate. The terrariums you see in the shop have lots of substrate layers, which

probably helps with drainage or something like that. I usually opt for a base layer of gravel, then activated charcoal, before capping with organic potting soil. If you can't get these, don't worry! Your neglect will kill the plants just as fast with any other combination.



2. Buy your plants

You could, gauche as you are, buy any old plant and stick it in. Or, you could buy the specialised terrarium-friendly seedlings. These are the smaller pots at the front of any nursery, with more delicate and colourful specimens. While they may look like regular plants, there is

one major difference: they're more expensive.

Choosing plants can be a confusing and complex process. My advice? Don't overthink it. Technically, species like mosses and succulents come from complete opposite environments and don't overlap at all in their light, water or fertiliser

requirements. But this ignores the fact that you've got a biosphere, which is actually more ... biological? And don't even worry, the sill of your south-facing bedroom window is totally full sun. We live in a "she'll be right" nation, extend the same courtesy to your leafy friends.



3. Design the terrarium

When planting, it's important to think about how the setup will look in three months, not how it looks today. As the plants 'grow,' your terrarium will change drastically, so

be sure to reflect on and question your initial design choices. For example, will a silvery, wilted fern frond clash against the richer brown of a dying peperomia? Will any desiccated stems reveal dirt speckled

with unsightly mould?

It takes a while to get your artistic eye in, but you'll get there. After all, the master has failed more times than the beginner has even tried.



4. Add the accoutrements

This is where the design comes together. No terrarium is complete without that final drop of individual flair, just like everyone else's. Colourful gravel, a miniature figurine – these are both fine, if a

little played out. Experienced players favour a loop of red and white twine, laid around the container's mouth. That said, you shouldn't limit yourself, so blue or green twine are also acceptable.

Congratulations! You have just

transformed your plant in a jar (street value \$15) into a bona fide, one of a kind, terrarium (street value \$200). Plus, that twine adds an extra splash of colour and brings the whole design to life. In a few months, it'll be the only splash of colour.



5. Maintain your setup

Once the terrarium is built, the journey is pretty much over. But there's still the final, crucial ritual of maintenance, which plays out roughly as follows. Once every three weeks, you'll remember that

the terrarium still exists. After frantically rotating it or moving it to a different spot on the windowsill, you must now drown your plans in water, haphazardly poured from your tea-ringed mug.

And there you go! Congratulations

on your first terrarium, fingers crossed it'll decay smoothly! Of course, you could also give it to someone as a present, and let them take the fall for a project doomed from the start.



The Eulogy of The Novelist: what comes after the Death of the Author

Genevieve Couvret wonders how to trust writers as much as their words.

If, as Joan Didion said, “we tell ourselves stories in order to live,” then we tell the stories of others in order to better know how to die. How to leave a legacy.

The biography is one such device. Last month, publisher W. W. Norton permanently halted distribution of Blake Bailey’s recent biography of American novelist Philip Roth after allegations surfaced that Bailey had groomed, harassed, and raped multiple women. It’s hard not to relate these revelations to one of the main criticisms from which his biography suffered – that he was uncritical of Roth’s misogyny, claims of which soured and followed Roth for much of his career. In fact, Ross Miller’s very frankness about Roth’s misogyny led Roth to end an agreement with Miller to initially write his biography. But any poetic justice in the mistreatment of women befalling the publication of Roth’s own biography is still deeply unsatisfying.

This is because it’s unclear what will happen to Roth’s legacy in the wake of this incident. Bailey was granted exclusive access to archives and materials about Roth’s life, which may be unavailable to future scholars in light of his passing in 2018. Perhaps there are pages still left unturned in his personal history, now mired in

Bailey’s prose, between which more about Roth could be discovered. Despite everything, why does this feel like a loss? Why is it so unfair that even just a moment of insight could be snared by Bailey’s crimes? These events serve as context for larger questions about what it means to us as readers to preserve the legacy of great writers in a certain way.

Posthumous accounts of famous novelists in the Western tradition often serve to illustrate that great public works are made in spite of, or perhaps because of, private immorality. The collective history of many prolific white, male authors has invariably been one of mental anguish, narcissism, and chauvinism. When reading, it is important to historicise and put these men into context. But more than that, in the dialectic between author and reader that is shaping a legacy, we must learn how to reconcile the value of their literature, the truth of the person

behind it, and the irredeemable fact of their death.

This need not be wholly a question of cancel culture, of separating the art from the artist; yet another way the storm of the individual washes away rivers of manifold experience. Roland Barthes most deftly maligned how literary critics inflect the meaning of a text with aspects of an author’s identity in his 1967 essay *The Death of the Author*. Barthes argued that readers must separate literary work from their creator in order to liberate

all this tension, in the tangle of our understanding, is that it seems to matter a very great deal to us who is behind the stories we tell, both irrespective of and because of what their stories might mean to us.

Consider how there is a scramble to publish a biography, make a tribute and publicise condolences after a famous person’s death. As soon as someone dies we have to ascribe meaning to it. Our fascination is not even entirely with the individual, but with mortality. Why do we need to

or identity in a digestible form: read Jane Austen if you’re a woman into classics and romance, read James Baldwin or Toni Morrison if you want to learn about race in America, read Jack Kerouac if you’re cultivating your identity as a softboi. And while this is all true, in doing so we fail to appreciate what books *do* – how fiction transmutes ideas into people and how those people become us. We instead materialise and thereby minimise what they merely are as products of the people that wrote them. It works, too – personal branding infects a literary legacy. Just consider how unread copies of *Infinite Jest* tend to signal a kind of “literary chauvinism”; the ability to intellectually grasp male privilege, manifesting in performative displays of wokeness, because of how Wallace captures the disenfranchised white male in his work. It makes the rest of us deeply sceptical of these texts. To idealise, just like to hate, is to reduce someone to ideas about them. Fortunately for the writing itself, Didion suggests that “fiction is in most ways hostile to ideology.”

Ernest Hemingway’s life is a fitting example of the idealisation of our favourite authors – a man heralded as being at the forefront of war, surrounded by women and friends and bullfighting, whose sparse prose sparked a reckoning in American literature, pared back unto itself. The fact of his suicide is a lump in the throat when swallowing his personal history. Biographers continue to ask *why*, to decipher it as if it is some mystery, lest our ideal of Hemingway disintegrates. But it is no mystery – a familial and personal history of severe mental illness, alcoholism, and complex childhood trauma scream the answer. Some would say that knowledge of his suicide requires reading something new into his work: an identity crisis, an obsession with mortality, trails of wounded women, won wars and lost bullfights. The darkness of his life discovered after his death now casts shadows across his pages.

It may not even be controversial, merely disappointing, but it still shatters the illusion. To read Sofia Tolstoy’s journals and discover that her husband was cruel, critical, and inflicted much pain on her throughout the life she dedicated

At the heart of all this tension, in the tangle of our understanding, is that it seems to matter a very great deal to us who is behind the stories we tell.

to him is to remind us that love, marriage and family may be no more than concepts in books. It is to render them unreal. In her words, “I devote so much love and care to him, and his heart is so icy.” To read T. S. Eliot’s love letters to Emily Hale during his first unhappy marriage, only to discover that he never married her after his first wife died and married Valerie instead. To think about how Hemingway dumped his first wife and child in Paris. Similarly, D. T. Max’s biography of David Foster-Wallace uncovers a portrait of a complex man “surprisingly disinterested in the real-life concerns of many women he slept with.” We ask, how can he write such exquisite prose and demonstrate such acute awareness of feeling and society, but be so inconsiderate of the people in his own life? Maybe sometimes people like the poetry of what they say more than they mean it or can ever put it into action.

To discover bad things, especially after death, simply hurts. The question, always the question, is *why does it hurt so much?*

The metaphorical death of the author is clearly made more difficult by their real-life passing. Jonathan Franzen provided his own account of David Foster-Wallace’s suicide in *The New Yorker*. He described the suicide as performed “in a way calculated to inflict maximum pain on those he loved most,” demonstrating “infantile rage” and “homicidal impulses.” He felt that Wallace “betray[ed] as hideously as possible those who loved him best.” The brutality of imbuing selfishness into a suicide seeks to undermine any martyrdom Wallace achieved in death. The searing need to be honest about someone who has died, the bleak portrait of being hurt by someone that you loved, captures a much deeper kind of betrayal. But rippling on the surface is the same kind of suffering we, as readers, face when we grapple with the reality of who a writer becomes after – and by virtue of – dying. The pain may come precisely from the fact that we do not know them personally and we can only know them as a representation or projection of themselves. The lines across the pages are like those on the back of our hand, but we still seem unable to grasp or reach anything with it.

In *On Beauty*, a novel itself about aesthetics and how the personal is always more real than the political, Zadie Smith remarks that “the greatest lie ever told about love is

that it sets you free.” We are captured by the writers we love because they make real and legitimate what we are going through. To fall in love with a book is to be rewritten, in a slight and subtle way we may not even notice. There is no technology on Earth that can achieve what the novel can, no engineer like the author, no science like words. Because we emotionally invest in a writer’s work, our hearts get broken when we realise our captors have deceived us into thinking we were free to love them. Perhaps we can’t anymore, because the pedestal on which they sit has been lowered, and in our culture we find it impossible to love and pity simultaneously, to revere and condemn at the same time.

This is because we become complicit in elevating certain writers. We give cultural capital, money, time, respect, and literary status to those who have channelled the worst of themselves into fiction. In Franzen’s own words, Foster Wallace’s fiction “is populated with dissemblers and manipulators and emotional isolates.” Roth’s work was similarly rife with constant self-reference, sexual perversion, and vindictory portrayals of raw masculinity. Compounding those feelings of complicity, we are often guilty of romanticising the relationship between the beauty of a text and the sordid reality of the person who wrote it – to make up for who the man was by what he created. Maybe he was just a bad guy. How can that change things?

George Orwell explores similar notions in his review of Salvador Dalí’s autobiography, *Benefit of Clergy: Some Notes on Salvador Dalí*. Dalí recounts incidents of severely harming children and women; his grave sexual perversity and necrophilia also manifest in his work. In spite of this, Orwell refuses to fail to see any merit in him. Against the facts of his life is the recognition that he had “very exceptional gifts,” was “a very hard worker” and “has fifty times more talent than most of the people who would denounce his morals.” Although Dalí was a visual artist, not a writer, the principle operates in the same way: “one ought to be able to hold in one’s head simultaneously the two facts that Dalí is a good draughtsman and a disgusting human being. The one does not invalidate or, in a sense, affect the other.”

But there is cognitive dissonance in holding these two thoughts in one’s head that is not one of logic, principles, or aesthetics. Indeed,

as Orwell notes, “what is morally degraded can be aesthetically right.” It is emotional. It is a kind of love. Sometimes it hurts too much to accept that both those things are – that they must be – true. But novels should neither be reduced to the aspects which best reflect the person who wrote it, nor entirely removed from them. In Orwell’s words, “these two fallacies” presuppose a false binary: either a piece of art is intrinsically a reflection of the artist, or it bears no relation because its meaning belongs to its audience. The relationship between psychology and art is not so simple as to fall on either side of this dichotomy. People are not the sum of their parts. Authors give us the best and worst of themselves. They might be one terrible moment. They might be a thousand ambiguities.

Let’s not pretend that we can ever be objective or innocent about art. We taint a piece of writing as soon as we begin to read it because it is not the first story we have ever been told. As Barthes explained, a work is “eternally written here and now” because the “origin” of its essential meaning is exclusively in the language and its impressions on the reader. What applies to literary criticism also applies to our modes of appreciation – Milan Kundera speaks of “poetic memory,” the way we lodge into our minds and ascribe significance to that which we find beautiful and meaningful. It may be pretentious. It is certainly self-dramatising. But regardless of the significance you place on it, the process of reading, like remembering, like forgetting, is an act of interpretation.

According to German philosopher Immanuel Kant, aesthetics is a retreat from everyday life and its ethical questions. It requires a stance of disinterestedness, a space of moral freedom. Art is singular, without comparison and non-purposive. We must let art be possible. This does not mean it has to stay in print, that it should ever escape necessary criticism or that its sales can be abstracted from the finances of the person who created it. The artist is not exempt from what they are morally culpable for in their personal lives by virtue of their talent. If the facts demand it, by all means, be appalled! As per Orwell, “people are too frightened either of seeming to be shocked or of seeming not to be shocked, to be able to define the relationship between

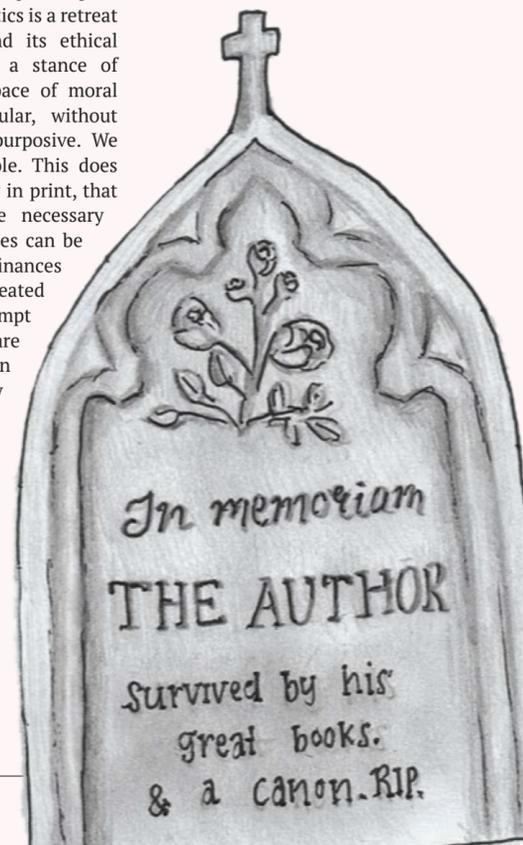
art and morals.” Define that relationship for yourself, as we all must define our own morals. Nothing is worth admiring unreservedly. But we must not take away its capacity for meaning. Letting yourself be upset may be precisely a part of that. After all, as Wallace said, “you get to decide what to worship.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald, as Nick Carraway, tells us that “reserving judgement is a matter of infinite hope.” Why then feel the need to eulogise a writer when their work lives on – to preserve what perseveres anyway, to make an ending out of theirs? When we do so, we attempt to pull together the strings of a person’s life into some coherent narrative – but it is fiction that there is such a thing. Lives do not end like plotlines. Resolution does not happen with time – sometimes it never does. People do not experience arcs like characters – they go through things. Sometimes they go forward, sometimes they regress and fall back upon themselves like waves. Adrift. Sometimes they don’t go anywhere at all, except inwards and onto the page. Could that be enough?

The most simple and morbid answer to why a legacy is important is that there is no answer. The answer is always oblivion. But as Sandra Newman said in her extraordinary novel *The Heavens*, as the character of Shakespeare, “I am a fool, and my greatness is the mumbling of fools; a paper greatness that will burn and be naught. But there is no greatness else.”

Let it be enough.

Art by Ellie Stephenson



Dark academia: how institutions fail learning

Ezara Norton writes about her emotional support subculture.

The daydreams we conjure are often escapist, attempting to actualise what we subconsciously recognise to be missing.

The first time I read Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, my daydreams were haunted by the woollen plaid blazers and wire-rimmed spectacles of dark academia for some time afterwards. What interested me was not just the colour palette and textures, but the base thirst for knowledge free of concern for employment prospects or grades. It was so contrary to my own studies, dictated by exams and assignments where it seemed my marks would determine both my future and my personal worth. But reading Norse mythology in library books and scribbling unremarkable poetry in my Notes app without the daunting awareness of an upcoming exam, I found I didn't actually hate studying—I hated the anxiety that surrounded it. In its romanticisation of study, learning, and academic culture, dark academia had exposed the emaciated corpse of modern institutions of education.

The shutdown of in-person teaching and shift to online learning models saw a marked rise in fascination with dark academia not just as a visual aesthetic, but as a subculture with its own core beliefs. There was renewed passion for seeking knowledge and learning just for the sake of it.

Taylor Swift, innocence, and queer girls dancing

Emily Henderson is dancing 'round her kitchen in the refrigerator light.

There we are again in the middle of the night

We're dancing 'round the kitchen in the refrigerator light.

And just like that, Taylor Swift marries raw emotions to succinct poetic images that, to this day, have me enchanted. In "All Too Well" — the ballad to rule all ballads — Taylor succeeds in capturing an intimate remembrance of the past with all the bitterness and tragic what-ifs that accompany it. The song is a 2012 masterpiece that has wrapped around me with age, as if I am entangled in the old scarf Taylor left behind. Taylor's ex-lover has kept that scarf, and it reminds them of "innocence." It's something that smells familiar, that can't be gotten rid of, that lingers.

From the days of *Red* to the re-release of *Fearless*, Taylor's music has grappled with the complexities of innocence, harkening back to a simpler All-American youth. She's constantly remembering old times, whether that's in the form of a past love or forgotten facets of her younger self. She's lost that wide-eyed, bushy haired girl who first took the country music world by storm with "Tim McGraw." Now, Taylor's image is often closer to a crude wax

figurine (courtesy of the USU) who has schemed her way to the top, and who desperately deserves to be toppled. But her music holds a reverence, a longing, a yearning for the simpler times, for clueless authenticity, for innocence. Yearning? Sappho, eat your heart out.

There is nothing quite like queer yearning: long gazes, the crush of dancing bodies, a whirlwind friendship with your ex's ex's ex. And an adolescent girl realising she's queer? It's an awakening from innocence to understanding, often involving a not-so-pleasant realisation of exactly how much the world wants to knock you down. As she's grown up, Taylor's lyrics have opened into stories about other people, and the possibility of queer interpretation. I'm not saying the rumours that surround Taylor and a certain Victoria's Secret Angel are true; to me, that matters far less than the ability for queer exploration to take place within some of Taylor's best lyrics.

I see queer girls in songs that reflect a troubled nostalgia for youth. It is captured in "seven," with its fairytale images of seven-year-old girls playing together. Taylor sings of the tenuous aspect of memory, where she "can't

recall" her friend's face, though she still loves her. She then brings us directly into the mind of her imagined seven-year-old self, moving from past tense into the present to tell children's stories of haunted houses and pirates. But it's a haunting melody: there are monsters outside. Her friend's dad is "always mad," and they have to "hide in the closet." Taylor imagines her friend into a space free from the monsters of reality, instead making a home in a folk song.

In *Fearless* (Taylor's Version), we get to grasp at our memories of the original album and our lives surrounding it with the added wisdom of hindsight. In giving us room to be queer, Taylor also opens *Fearless* to re-interpretation and as I listen to "Fifteen," I reflect on friendship, high-school innocence, and simply not knowing who you're supposed to be. "Fifteen" ends with a classic Taylor move: finishing a song with the same lyrics as the first line, as though reflecting on the truth of her words, on times past, on the circularity of it all. With time, words and moments have changed their implications, and something impenetrably sweet is lost.

Take a deep breath as you walk through the doors.
God, I love Taylor Swift.

the dark academia preoccupation like literature, languages, theatre, and philosophy are also at the centre of a war waged against education: the proposed restructuring of the School of Literature, Art and Media that would potentially see the Departments of Theatre and Performance Studies and the Department of Studies of Religion axed here at USyd; the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at UTS also faces similar threats of restructuring; and Macquarie University's Gender Studies Program was only narrowly saved after student outcry. These disciplines are crucial to critiquing the epistemologies that underpin systems of oppression in society, and they are prized in dark academia for their ability to enlighten their students, empowering them to critique these structures and aid their abolition.

The main critique of dark academia is its centralisation of cultural and economic privilege. Visually speaking, it is distinctly European and is interested in Victorian or Classical literature, higher learning institutions historically being only available for the affluent. But the fundamental ideals it embodies — namely passion for learning and the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake — are not inaccessible. The structures that dark academia revolts against contribute heavily to the inaccessibility and elitism

in universities and wider academia that it is often criticised for idolising. Deeply entrenched racism analyses subjects through the lens of whiteness and favours the work of white academics. Australian universities are no longer free to attend and HECS-HELP leaves graduates in debt, while courses traditionally less viable in the post-graduation job market become more expensive to pursue and publishers hide papers behind paywalls, privileging knowledge to those who can afford it.

These systems are not idolised by dark academia. Though Gothic architecture may be pleasing to the eye, the visual aesthetic of dark academia is not its sole component. It's foundational beauty is that learning for learning's sake, for self-enrichment, can be applied to any discipline. You needn't feign interest in Classical literature and Shakespeare, nor subscribe to the institutions of classism, racism, and colonialism that universities are historically built upon to be a dark academic — immerse yourself in the formal innovations of Indigenous poetry, pour over histories of cultures less studied, devour well-thumbed novels from the public library, and let your ink-stained fingers smudge the pristine blankness of a Spirax notebook as you hastily transcribe your thoughts. There is nothing but you and the page.

Take a deep breath as you walk through the doors.

God, I love Taylor Swift.

Liminal Heights: representations of presencing in filmic adaptations of Wuthering Heights

Harry Gay is being haunted.

The Brontë Sisters grew up in an era of technological innovation and upheaval. From steam engines to the telephone, the 19th Century birthed some of the most progressive inventions humanity had ever seen, one such invention was photography and by extension, film. The 1800s were also filled with a strange and incessant obsession with the macabre and grotesque, with morgues being open for exhibition and seances and fortune tellers booming in popularity.

Within this context of technological progression and morbid curiosity, it is no wonder that photography and film have been intrinsically tied to abstract notions of presencing and the supernatural since their inception. Emily Brontë was no doubt influenced by these pervasive ideas when she wrote her novel *Wuthering Heights* in 1847, as the book perfectly reflects this convergence of cultures.

Partway through the novel, a character named Catherine Earnshaw passes away, and proceeds to haunt the protagonist Heathcliff from then on. However, her haunting doesn't take place through the traditional spectral apparitions or pervasive flashbacks, but rather in a liminal, abstract presencing. Due to the oblong nature of Catherine's presencing, filmmakers attempting to adapt Emily Brontë's text have had a difficult hurdle to overcome, as they must imagine new ways to represent life after death that are not reminiscent of archetypal presentations conjured up by practitioners in the past. Taking on this hefty challenge, filmmakers such as William Wyler and Andrea Arnold have taken Catherine's presencing and translated the untranslatable, rendering it visual for movie watching audiences.

Since its inception, photography has been interested in the presentation of abstract presencing. Arriving in early 1830s France, photography was developed by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce and began as mere shapes of light transfixed to metal plates via a camera obscura. Already with this primitive technology there is a separation from the realm of the physical and a sense of the ethereal, as a capturing of someone's image deforms and morphs them into something which they are not, emancipating them onto a flat pewter surface, beyond traditional reality.

The below photograph is the first to capture a human being. While at first the photographer had attempted to capture the bustling city street outside his window, due to the long exposure time, the roaring cars and thronging crowds were transformed into a single solitary figure. The reason this figure was able to be captured was because his shoes were being shined, making him the only subject stationary long enough for the camera's exposure time to capture him. From this, the first photograph of a human, we can see themes of abstract presencing start to

emerge and weave their silken threads throughout photography's developing technological narrative.

The figure stands isolated, temporally separated from the world around them, not quite a ghost, not quite a remnant of the past, but a spectral presence nonetheless, outside of the traditional realm of temporal and spatial normality. Due to the long exposure time, we may have multiple versions of the one person within the same shot, each captured at different temporal intervals within the time frame of Daguerre taking his photograph. These multiple people are separate yet connected, all



inhabiting the one body, reinforcing the strange and liminal nature of early photography to capture the lucid presences of individuals.

Theorists have often tackled this intersection between the afterlife and photography, the strange sense of spirituality and spectral emancipation from one's body that the technology allows. André Bazin spoke of how "the plastic arts" is "the process of embalming the dead", a "mummy complex," inferring an intrinsic relation between photography and the liminal nature of life after death. For Roland Barthes, he uses evocative language to describe the photographed subject as "decomposed" and existing dialectically as both present and non-present. Referring to an analogous photo of his mother, he describes her as both within the image while also absent from it, tapping into the strange, abstract presencing of subjects, within time and out of it, living whilst dead.

With the development of double exposure techniques, and an interest in the macabre that dominated Victorian society amid the 1800s, photographers began experimenting with the idea of capturing the dead,

or a life beyond death. Melander and Bro's *The Haunted Lane* from 1889 is an example of photographer's attempts to conjure the spirit world and is one of the more archetypal representations of spectral presencing. Here, it is clear that the practitioners were attempting to conjure up images of the dead, with signifiers of ghostly embodiment such as a pale white robe and transparent appearance dominating the frame and setting the benchmark for future apparition photos in the decades to come.

Catherine's presencing in *Wuthering Heights*, however, does not follow the conventional images of haunting that

film concludes right after Catherine's death, so while viewers are not given access to Heathcliff's interactions with the abstract presencing of Catherine, we are given a small preview of it in her final moments on screen. As Emily Brontë's vision of Catherine is rendered in a way that departs from the norm, so too must Wyler in his conjuring of her ghostly visage.

As Heathcliff mourns Catherine's death, the camera cuts to a long shot of the whole room, capturing him bent over her bed, with the window on the other side of the scene. The window's curtains blow forward, pushed by the wind and towards the bed, as if a spectral presence is ushering them toward the body of Catherine, or towards Heathcliff himself, fulfilling his demands for her to "haunt" him.

The mise-en-scene also features a heavy motif of frames within frames, hinting at the self reflexivity of the film as it attempts to replicate Catherine's presencing from the book that was distinctly filmic in nature.

Andrea Arnold's film adaptation continues this trend of Catherine's presence being embodied in natural elements of the world, rather than any physical embodiment as a spirit or spectre. In the case for Arnold's 2011 adaptation, it was in a series of abstract light formations that occur throughout the film, forgoing any need to depict an embodied spectral presence by Catherine.

Early on in the film, following Heathcliff's arrival at the Heights as a young boy, the audience is given a glimpse at a strange light formation that appears on the wall. The film barely lingers on it, but it catches our eye nonetheless.

Later on in the film, after Catherine has passed away, this same light formation rears its oblong head once again. I argue that this light is evocative of Catherine's strange presence post-mortem, able to transcend time and embodied space as the light is stretched across past, present and future. This mirrors the temporality of the earliest photo of a man, with his frozen figure evoking multiple bodies stretched out over a long period of time. What we witness, then, is a Bazinian "embalming of the dead," with Catherine's presencing preserved and mummified throughout the film.

In this way, each of the filmmakers are drawing on what makes the filmic medium different from other art forms that would make an adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* in any other context impossible, and one I'm arguing Emily Brontë was aware of and engaging with: its eerie spectrality. While an adaptation to the stage could yield some praise, its inability to capture Catherine's unique post-mortem existence is due largely because of the medium's lack of connection with the afterlife, and any notion of liminal presencing.

William Wyler's film adaptation is probably the most well known adaptation of *Heights*, despite the fact that it only adapts half of the book. The

how to design a story: game and narrative in dungeons and dragons

Felix Faber stands at the edge of the world.

The farmboy stands at the edge of the world he knows. A wide vista stretches before him. He turns for a last look at home. He could be safe there, happy even — but that is not what he was made for. He gulps and takes the step.

Dungeons and Dragons (or *D&D*) has occupied a number of positions in the public imagination since it was first published in 1974. At times, it has been a source of moral panic, the supernatural elements of the game at odds with the insurgent Reaganite evangelical conservatism of the 1980s. Seeming to represent a manifestation of the various forms of moral dissolution feared by suburbanites at the time, *D&D* was described by Patricia Pulling, the founder of *Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons* as “a fantasy role-playing game which uses demonology, witchcraft, voodoo, murder, rape, blasphemy, suicide, assassination, insanity, sex perversion, homosexuality, prostitution, satanic type rituals, gambling, barbarism, cannibalism, sadism, desecration, demon summoning, necromantics, divination and other teachings.” More recently, it has operated as a useful punchline, acting as a signifier of a certain type of person: a 35-year-old with pallid skin and gamer spine, putting on a wizard hat and talking about trolls in their mother’s basement.

Today, *D&D* enjoys a relatively good run in terms of public image. Likely aided by popular media such as *Critical Role*, tabletop roleplaying games have grown more mainstream,

with the CEO of Wizards of the Coast (the company behind *D&D*) estimating current tabletop player numbers of its 5th edition at 9.5 million worldwide.

The farmboy sidesteps the ogre's hammer, as three fletched arrows fly into the beast's thick hide. He turns to see the ranger, cape flowing in the wind. They grin at each other, and the farmboy returns to the fray.

While these periods in the public imagination are all indicative of *Dungeons and Dragons'* social, cultural, and even political impact, they are secondary to what it is. Attempts to describe *D&D* can struggle to do it justice: describing it as a fantasy roleplaying game captures the narrative feel, but ignores the rules and processes that make up the game. Describing in detail the game’s rules and procedures may provide a better idea of what it entails, but can fail to capture the spirit of the game.

At its most basic element, *D&D* — like all other tabletop roleplaying games — is a group of people working together to tell a story. That process is mediated by the rules of the game, and refereed by the Dungeon Master (or Game Master, or Keeper, or Master of Ceremonies, or Big Mack Daddy — it seems almost like a requirement now that independent games come up with their own twist on the DM). At the core of any good tabletop roleplaying game, however, is the story. Whether it’s a search for answers in a city shrouded

by mist, a quest to slay a dragon, or the passage of a ship through dangerous waters, the mechanics of gameplay exist to service the story.

They enter the tavern, full of old smoke and creaking floorboards. The dwarf makes his way to the bar. The ranger makes her way to a man in the corner with a face worn soft by age. The farmboy follows.

In one campaign I played, we were tasked with killing a giant snake that resided in a nearby cave. Soon into the combat we found that giant snakes are less easy to kill than advertised, but collapsing a cave on a snake is actually rather simple. So we did that.

Every *D&D* player will have some story like this: an eventful adventure or a particularly memorable character. What can be striking is just how similar many of the stories are — if not in content, then in the form the stories follow. This is because tabletop roleplaying games are not just sets of rules or patterns of clichés. They are a narrative form in and of themselves. It would be easy to dismiss this out of hand, to claim that tabletop RPGs, acting as the dumping ground of every trope imaginable, are simply the detritus of fantasy literature. This fundamentally misunderstands the nature of narrative form. Narrative form is not determined by substance (that is, the story that is told) but rather by means through which that substance is created and conveyed.

Examined through this lens, we can see that tabletop roleplaying games are a unique narrative form — as distinct as poetry, or prose (though admittedly less developed). The stories developed in a tabletop roleplaying game are done so collaboratively, improvisationally, and are mediated by a set of rules. None of these are unique features to the form on their own. Virtually any form of film or theatre requires the creative collaboration of a number of artists, improvisational theatre and comedy are widespread narrative forms, and video games are also mediated by a set of rules — albeit digitally. Taken as a whole, however, these aspects make up the unique narrative form of tabletop roleplaying games.

They creep through the echoing halls of the tomb. The old man had told them of treasure hidden in its depths — treasure guarded by a lich. The dwarf carries a torch and leads the band, forcing its light into every nook and cranny as if to edge out any spirits hiding there. The farmboy stays back, and keeps his hand on his sword.

These distinct aspects make up a type of story that can be exceptionally thrilling. The improvisational, collaborative nature of tabletop roleplaying games means that the beats of their plot are genuinely unpredictable. Player characters apparently have a universal desire to seduce and/or kill every creature they come across, which usually tends

to interfere with the game’s story structure. While the Game Master may have an idea of where the story will go, the influence of the players and the referee nature of the game’s rules means that the actual direction of the plot is impossible to determine. Through the outcome of a die roll, a player can change the direction of a campaign entirely. This creates stories that are unlike those of any other narrative form — yet often similar to each other.

Like any distinct narrative form, tabletop roleplaying games contain tropes, like that of ‘Chaotic Stupid,’ a character whose Chaotic Neutral alignment expresses itself in tedious wacky hijinks (in my first session of *D&D* I tried to set fire to another character’s hair for this reason). Most of these tropes emerge from the collaborative nature of the storytelling. With advancing the plot the responsibility of every participant in the game, it’s easy for the story to get bogged down by players’ impulse to pursue the freedom that a tabletop roleplaying game provides. This can lead to the habit affectionately known as murderhoboing — where player characters devolve into itinerant criminals who kill, maim, and thieve their way across the game world with little regard for the story, setting, or NPCs they come across. While some people see this as a predictable outcome of any tabletop RPG system’s design, others have aspired to design RPGs differently.

The lich bats the dwarf to the side with a casual drift of its hand. The ranger nicks an arrow, letting it fly into the lich's wretched frame. The lich turns to the ranger with a hiss cut short by a wild swing of the farmboy's sword.

The Forge was an online community of tabletop RPG creators and players, focused on creating ‘narrativist’ games.

Narrativist systems are tabletop games where the fun of the game emerges from telling a shared story. These are distinct from gamist systems — based on the fun of competition with other players and the DM — and simulationist systems — based on the fun of following a game world’s internal logic. While these may seem like small distinctions that can be tweaked within the existing processes of a game’s system, the structure of a game’s rules provides an important framework to emphasise or de-emphasise certain aspects of play.

The game systems created by the Forge community reflect this attempt to centre narrative in game design. Forge games have a wide range of genres, themes, and mechanics, but have some common characteristics: methods of conflict resolution that rely on the logic of the game’s story, not external dice rolls; a greater degree of narrative control afforded to players; and an emphasis of improvisation and collaboration in gameplay. Much like a piece of improvisational theatre, Forge games build on offers between players and GM to build the game’s story.

From a narrativist standpoint, the resulting game is exceptional. Players are incentivised to lean into their character’s emotions and arcs, and the aim of the game seems to shift from let’s-see-who-can-kill-the-most-goblins to coaxing a sincere, moving story out of the minds of a few people and some dice. Some of the stories these games create can rival serious works of fiction for their complexity and depth. If you were trying to assess tabletop games based on their ability to facilitate quality art, narrativist games would certainly be the most successful. The question remains, however, as to whether that is how we should measure a game’s success.

The farmboy sidesteps the sickly beam of light that has burst forth from the lich's fingertips, seeing the ground it hits

start to rot. The elf and dwarf lie on the ground dying. The farmboy summons his last reserve of strength. It is now or never. He steps forward, darting his sword to the lich's gleaming phylactery, the blade travelling true and straight towards the amulet.

He rolls a 1, trips, and falls.

The truth is, much of the charm of tabletop roleplaying games come from how hackneyed they are. Murderhoboing may be an easy pattern of play to fall into, but that’s because it’s fun. I won’t pretend that compelling, emotional, and thoughtful stories usually come from a game that largely centres around dick jokes and carnage — but I also won’t pretend that playing that type of game isn’t a joyful experience.

One of my fondest memories in my time playing *D&D* comes from one dungeon that caused every member of my party to die, several sessions in a row. In terms of narrative, this was obviously not ideal. The repeated strain on both the players’ patience and the suspension of disbelief required to justify all of our new characters meeting again each week began to wear the story thin. But despite this, there was some satisfaction in coming back each week with a ridiculous new character, raising the stakes on what was acceptable.

One week, I came back with a foppish rogue; the next, with a barely disguised expy of a hardboiled detective. Finally, the party agreed to play only wizards (mine was a gnome illusionist). From the perspective of a Forge designer, with the emphasis they place on quickly between important moments in the story, this weeks-long stalling on a perpetual meat grinder of a dungeon was not what a tabletop game should be. But it was fun.

The farmboy lies bleeding out on the dungeon floor. Thoughts go through his head — of his ma and pa, his dreams of glory, and how far he made it from the world he once knew. His eyes glaze over, and he breathes his last.

This tension, between the desire for a quality narrative and a quality game, is difficult to resolve. This is not to say that either of these aims is correct, or even that they are mutually exclusive — great joy can be found in a narrativist game, and a moving story can be found in any game. But the question of which gets emphasised — the story or the game — is central to the game design process.

Realistically, the question comes down to that of the audience. The vast majority of games’ audience will be contained to the people that play them. This puts tabletop RPG players in the unique position of being both the creators of a story, and its primary audience — and critic. In a way, this means there is a pretty simple answer: play the way you and your friends agree is fun. But I can’t help but feel like tabletop games can aspire to be better, to make the most of a unique form of storytelling and create beautiful art that’s also fun to play. Playing *Dungeons & Dragons* for the first time as a pale, sweaty teen was the first time I had a captive audience to my imagination. It was the first time I really felt like I had the agency to create a story that moved, that entertained myself and others. Having that experience mattered to me. I hope it could matter to others as well.

A new farmboy stands at the edge of the world again. Many more have stood where he stands. Many will again. In a way, it offers him comfort, that there will always be another one. He smiles at the thought and takes the step into a new story.

Art by Altay Hagrebet



Ocean Vuong's mythological intertextuality

Ariana Haghighi on the interweaving parallel narratives in Night Sky With Exit Wounds.

Greek mythological epics have laid the path traversed by literary greats, Homer's archetypal characters permeating the very essence of Western culture. Literature is colourfully enriched when repurposed and reappropriated into new, diverse narratives — and there are no two experiences more diametrically opposed than those of the Ancient Greeks and Ocean Vuong, a second-generation immigrant whose parents fled war-torn Vietnam. Yet, as he unpacks Western canonical epics, he ties common threads in his variegated poetic patchwork of personal and cultural identity. Despite the spatial and temporal rifts, Vuong claims "displacement, war, violence and trauma is a human and species-wide history," and thus any story is only amplified by the subtle echo of voices of another. By reframing and inhabiting Western works with the use of poetic license, Vuong is also able to broach cultural barriers between him and his Western audience; ultimately, he constructs his own quasi-epic, drawing from and preserving experiences since time immemorial.

Vuong reappropriates the strong martial undercurrents of Homer's epics to construct a representation of queer identity that shatters prior misrepresentations and society's normative model of gender and sexuality. Vuong describes the importance of "mythologising the

queer body," which has historically received inadequate attention in literature, whilst confronting the Western masculine tropes associated with combat. By appropriating age-old tales of Greek war heroes, he both sheds light on the perilous nature of queer expression and subverts stereotypes. Alluding to the famed Trojan myth, he writes, "this belly full of blades/ & brutes," indicating the danger of concealed queer identity — but as the boy experiments with wearing a dress, he becomes "a flame," both potent and transformative.

Vuong explores queer coming-of-age as the poems chronicle adolescence and the path to maturity, with intertextuality functioning as a constant Western frame of reference. Vuong alludes to the fables of Odysseus to evoke a queer journey of self-discovery, portraying caution and reluctance to display intimacy as he, "waited/ for the night to wane/ into decades — before reaching/ for his hands." The heroic connotations of Odysseus' journey endow Vuong with the ability to transcend cultural chasms and bring the mythology of the queer body to the forefront of literature, heightening its valour and value. Here, intertextuality functions to reject the silence and shame conventionally surrounding narratives of minority identity, reconstructing a platform for hushed voices on which discourse can burgeon.

Another shared thread woven through traditional Western and Vietnamese narratives is the concept of steadfast filial piety, and such cultural norm is amplified by the inclusion of the tale of Telemachus' devotion to his father Odysseus. As Vietnam is a collectivistic society, values of unconditional filial piety and parental respect are intrinsic to Vuong's selfhood. Vuong draws from his experience of paternal absence, inviting a comparison of the Western patriarchal value of the father-figure with the power vested in matrilineal heritage in the Vietnamese realm. The contrast in the dominance of masculinity over femininity highlights the cultural differences in perceptions of familial hierarchies, confronting the Western audience.

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Vuong discloses his intentions, that "Western mythology is so charged with the father," providing an apt foundation for the dissection of his father-son relationship in poetry. The intertextuality of Greek mythology does not just function as a point of contrast; Vuong is also attracted to the way in which epics are constructed, and the personal stories they ensconce. He shares, "personally, I am always asking who my father is. Like Homer, I felt I'd better make it up." The mythological allusions serve a cathartic function for Vuong, a testament to the power of mythology to communicate and reconstruct a

personal narrative. Vuong expresses admiration for Homer's "audacity to invent," demonstrating how myths remain a crucial genre of literature, despite their antiquated connotations.

To examine his absent father's complex character, Vuong draws from the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, which explores man's vulnerability to narcissism, seen in Orpheus' direct defiance of divine orders as he could not help but glance back at Eurydice as he made his way out of the Underworld. Orpheus' actions are a commentary on the weakness of the human spirit and its tendency to lose faith; Vuong transfers these characteristics to his father, whose true personality is unknown to him. The collection probes Orpheus' flaws, emulating the essential experience of gradually realizing parental imperfections, as they fall from heroic grace in our eyes. Parental absence inevitably leads to a struggle between forgiveness and spite, so the universality of filial identity among cultures provides a salve. The father-son relationship of both Vuong and the Greek Gods have been tainted by war, interweaving them in a way that invites a collaborative approach to literature as stories are written, and rewritten. This approach, encouraging diverse interpretations and reappropriations, preserves works in that it allows them to be loved and poured over by audiences that have not yet been born.

Fantasy's love affair with red tape

Marlow Hurst rubberstamps the inherent magic of bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy and magic don't at all seem compatible. One is stringent, ordered, and cold, while the other is wild, chaotic, and glowing with an unknown warmth (or the warmth of the unknown). Or so I thought, until the day I noticed that fantasy literature hadn't really got the memo. Throughout the canon, there are numerous examples of bureaucracies regulating magic and magical bureaucracies. They vary from efficient to horribly incompetent, but they're all, in one way or another, some form of bureaucracy.

One of the most obvious examples of this might be the Ministry of Magic from the *Harry Potter* series. To this day, the Ministry remains one of the most magical pieces of worldbuilding to come from the franchise. The creaking flaws of the state are exaggerated and transformed to themselves become magical. If magic is an amplifier, then the Ministry of Magic is a truly amplified version of the British Civil Service. It is delightfully undemocratic, with a Minister for Magic selected by a body of unelected nobles. Enchanted paper aeroplanes carry memos from department to department. There's an agency for everything, from the

Ludicrous Patents Office to the Broom Regulatory Control. A ban on flying carpets exemplifies this marriage of magic and bureaucracy. Is there anything more magical than a world where magic carpets not only exist, but are banned for some arbitrary and nonsensical reason? Regulations make the Wizarding World less, and thus more, magical. The Ministry makes the world of *Harry Potter* more magical by allowing the reader to fathom how something as chaotic and powerful as magic can possibly be tamed by the traditional trappings of bureaucratic regulation.

A similar state of affairs exists in the *Thursday Next* saga. The BookWorld is where every single piece of literature exists. Their characters, settings, and plots are very real and while they present on the pages of books, magazines, and novellas, they inhabit a world of their very own. The series effortlessly weaves the conventions of literature and publishing into the bureaucracy of the BookWorld. The Council of Genres is the main governing body of the BookWorld and its rules and regulations are enforced by Jurisdiction. Their office is in the ballroom of *Sense*

and *Sensibility's* Norland Park and they work tirelessly, with the help of literature's best investigative minds, to maintain the integrity of plots and narratives throughout the BookWorld. In *Thursday Next*, the bureaucracy is the very premise upon which it is built. This premise appeals to people because it makes a great deal of sense. A magical universe of books and their contents is a perfect fit for the micro-managing, bean counting precision of a heaving bureaucratic apparatus. There is something magical about imagining a hidden world filled with your favourite characters and settings, then logically concluding that, like any world, it needs something to hold it together. In *Discworld*, the Auditors of Reality are semi-corporeal celestial bureaucrats, whose main aim is to bring absolute order to the universe. Their schemes are often foiled because they simply lack the imagination to be truly evil. Not only do they enforce the rules of the celestial dance (e.g. gravity and chemical reactions), but they ARE the rules: they are the living embodiment of order and bureaucratic red tape. Pratchett explores how mindless bureaucracy can be arbitrarily

cruel and creatively effective as the 'rules' of the auditors collapse in a self-consuming, double negative bonanza.

Magic is not just flashing lights and powerful zaps, magic is whatever is unexplained, unnecessary, and uninhibited. A universe of myth and legend bound by the rules and regulations of contemporary bureaucracy is immensely magical. When bureaucracy is put in the context of the fantasy genre, it reveals to the reader the inherent impotence of such a system. The Ministry of Magic's attempts to maintain a semblance of order, in a society which itself is inherently chaotic are a farce. While it may not seem a perfect match for fantasy literature, bureaucracy is itself a fantasy. It relies on trust, faith, and absolute belief. Just like magic, its inner workings and final results are often a mystery. While we may not have magic in the real world, the magic of red tape may be the closest we get.

While it may not seem a perfect match for fantasy literature, bureaucracy is itself a fantasy.

A Visit to Fairyland: Shirley Barber and the romanticisation of the English countryside

Vivienne Guo is away with the fairies.

I was very young when I first encountered the work of Shirley Barber, prolific writer and artist of children's books. The memories have largely been lost to time and I remember only snatches: being drawn into the orbit of a pink and purple hardback cover, tugging on my Mum's jacket and traipsing through the parking lot on short, stubby legs, my new prized possession tucked proudly under my little arms.

I have always had a penchant for fairies, and much of this can be attributed to Barber, whose illustrations of woodland fairies, mermaids and animal footmen breathe a sense of hazy wonder into its readers. Barber ushered in a blissful age of imagining fairy houses, secret doorways in willow trees, the whisper of gossamer wings borne on an autumn breeze. Having spent her early childhood on the island of Guernsey in the English Channel, much of the pastoral beauty of English woodland makes its way into her books. When she was twelve, a local paper noted: "cats, dogs and fairy stories are among Shirley's favourite subjects for illustration."

Since emigrating to Australia in 1965, Barber has written whole worlds into being, filled with quaint woodlands alive with magic and fairy song. Of my personal favourites is a short story titled *A Visit to Fairyland*, which follows the adventure of two children who slip through a small green door in the willow tree at the bottom of their garden, finding themselves in Fairyland. Reading along, I followed the cobblestone path and became enraptured with the mushroom villages, the fairy carriages drawn by butterflies and the hidden woodlands where anthropomorphised animals played jaunty tunes. Yet, the lingering wistfulness that I felt as I closed the book was for the quiet countryside cottage that the children returned to after their adventures. Barber's fairy-filled countryside made everything come alive with possibility, like a glittering nexus between two worlds.

When children say they have seen fairies, Barber says that "I have no reason not to believe them."

I had always loved the idea of the countryside, its promises of peace, the dreams of a cottage bordered by rose bushes and a hearth burning steadily within. My world by comparison was a grey one of cracked asphalt, traffic lights, the sleepy rumble of cars on the highway. But as the years pass, it is impossible to shrug off a growing decolonial consciousness because popular impressions of rurality are not accidental. Rather, the most popular conception of countryside is an idyllic site of white, colonial nostalgia. Growing up in Australia meant growing up in a British settler-colony, where conceptions of bushland, dry and steely, have been cheapened in favour of a Eurocentric longing for a different kind of country: sprawling Arcadian fields of wildflowers and mossy woodland. The nostalgia is at once sinister and familiar, as I find myself yearning for an imagined homeland that never existed at all, except as a faded derivative of a colonial longing for England.

Nostalgia unchecked is dangerous. The echoes of colonial efforts to terraform stolen lands can be seen everywhere, in immaculately manicured lawns, invasive flora and fauna, the scars of mining on sacred land. I spend a great deal of time, however futile, grappling with the knowledge that Barber's Arcadian fairylands and depictions of English pastures draw on a Eurocentric culture that is inextricable from colonialism.

I don't like the process of unpicking joyous memories one by one, as though they were a ratty old rug. But growth is uncomfortable, and so discomfort is inevitable. When I delve into this internal conflict, it is difficult — even impossible — to reconcile the delight of Barber's fairies with a decolonial consciousness. The questions that I ask myself now are: Can I still draw joy and peace from these memories while knowing that they perpetuate Eurocentrism, however innocuously? Does this make for bad decolonial praxis?

I don't think it will be possible for me to ever again appreciate Barber's magical worlds without reminding myself of its colonial roots in romanticizing the Eurocentric countryside. But this is not to say that I don't think softly of Barber's stories, but lovely blooms don't always mean that the roots beneath them aren't rotten to the core. Importantly, when it comes to the question of decolonial praxis, there is no fixed answer. Questioning our past and challenging colonialism is a quest without a foreseeable end. The immortal questions I am faced with as I attempt to reconcile childhood joy with violent histories are ones that I think I should keep asking myself as I move through the world. Colonialism isn't easily separated from any part of the world we live in today, and it must be expected that its reach cannot be easily overcome even in the pages of a

children's storybook. It is only through a constant re-examining, the pursuit of a quest to know and unknown, that we might hope to vanquish it.

Barber's influence remains even now. There is seldom a day that I don't glance out my bedroom window, wondering if there might (still) be fairies living under the bougainvillea. Two years ago, I sought out a copy of *Shirley Barber's Fairy Stories and CD* on eBay. It lives in a cosy nook in the back of my car, and I have it with me wherever I go. To this day I maintain that twelve bucks for a childhood relic that has since gone out of print is a bargain. If I could speak to Barber today, I would tell her that I don't blame her for my internal conflicts nor do I seek to villainise her. I simply find it difficult to grapple with the immensity of the colonized world, and I don't think it will ever get easier. Instead, I would thank Barber for her boundless imagination, the gentle soul that shines through in all of her stories, and her ever-faithful approach to the Little Folk. I would thank her for the words and illustrations that live in my heart, for daydreams of glittering wings and the laughter of pixies that I'd like to think I hear on the wind on a bustling day.

Of all the wonderful words that Barber has etched into my mind, I think I like these best: When children say they have seen fairies, Barber says that "I have no reason not to believe them."



Review – Radicals: Remembering the Sixties

Claire Ollivan reads about students in the Sixties being arrested and having drinks at the Flodge.

We find it a cause for optimism that our generation of Sixties radicals is not irreplaceable.”

From the very first page of *Radicals: Remembering the Sixties* — which situates readers in an atmospheric description of the Black Lives Matter protest held at Town Hall in June last year — Meredith Burgmann and Nadia Wheatley underpin their kaleidoscopic vision of the Sixties with a continual awareness of how the struggles of the past are both connected to, and vastly different from, the present.

The book immerses readers in the radical political and counter-cultural spirit of the Sixties, pulling together Meredith and Nadia’s own stories with interviews of 18 figures, each with their own chapter, many of whom encountered radical ideas at the University of Sydney and its surroundings. While the stories have common anchor-points — notably, opposition to Australia’s military involvement in Vietnam, the Redfern Black Power movement, the Women’s Liberation movement, and opposition to the apartheid South African Springboks rugby tour — *Radicals* differs from factual historical accounts of the time by seeking out disparate, personal trajectories of radicalisation. It is also pervaded by a sense of dissident, youthful fun.

Unsurprisingly, many of the book’s characters recount feelings of outrage, spurred by experiencing violence at the hands of police, as the defining point of their political awakening. In a particularly memorable chapter on Gumbaynggirr activist Gary Foley, the book describes how, after an unprovoked police bashing, Gary joined a ‘crew’ of Aboriginal activists in Redfern who modelled themselves on the American Black Panther Party. “So between the cop-bashing and reading Malcolm X pretty much straight after, that’s what politicised me,” he tells Nadia.

Gary recounts how the group went “armed with notebooks and pencils”

to record evidence of persecution in Redfern pubs frequently raided by police, leading to the establishment of the Aboriginal Legal Service in 1970. Gary Williams, who was also involved in the Redfern Black Power movement and was one of the University of Sydney students who participated in the 1965 Freedom Rides, reflects in his chapter that: “It is so often the case that when people are in the thick of something momentous and historically significant they don’t know it at the time.” This feeling of the Sixties as a unique rupture in consciousness recurs throughout the book as a whole.



In the chapter on Brian Laver, *Radicals* brings to the fore another American influence on Sixties radicalism: the emergence of anti-authoritarian New Left ideology. This chapter showcases an anarchist perspective in a book with voices that span the left-wing political spectrum — from Maosim and Trotskyism to the Labor Party. In one paragraph, Brian recalls racing to an impromptu protest upon hearing news that Soviet tanks had rolled into Czechoslovakia, on the same day he and Meredith were in court facing charges from a demonstration against the Vietnam War.

When discussing the Vietnam War, *Radicals* highlights the influence of the American New Left group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) on campus radicalism in Australia. In Queensland, where repressive laws existed to prevent street marches, the campaign against

the Vietnam War first had to fight for the right to protest. “People who were radicalised at Queensland University were more radicalised about the right to march than about Vietnam,” Brian says, which is comparable to the effect the brutal suppression of education protests had on students at USyd last year.

One tactic that Nadia writes about which I had not expected, is that of student leaders at USyd “bleeding newcomers,” particularly young women, by pushing them into their first arrest in order to provoke further radicalisation. In her chapter, Nadia

recounts going to the Forest Lodge Hotel (it’s amusing to find similarities in student life from over 50 years ago) and buying half a kilo of tomatoes with her drinking companions to throw at the Great Hall, where the Sydney University Regiment was present for a ceremony. I was surprised to learn that Nadia later went on to write childhood favourite, *My Place*, which was turned into an ABC3 television series many of us will have fond memories of.

Fitting for a book about the Sixties, *Radicals* is about political anger and the fervent quest for a better world, but it is also about having “fun along the way.” In her interview with Geoffrey Robertson, Meredith recalls an escapade where they stole the Rawson cup, a hundred-year-old sporting prize, from its glass case in St. Paul’s College, and reminds Geoffrey that he contemplated throwing it in the Parramatta River.

She reflects that it was more than just a “student prank,” motivated by a more serious anti-college sentiment, and informs Geoffrey that the colleges are “still appalling” today.

Radicals profiles not only activists, but the artists and eccentrics who embodied the counter-cultural zeitgeist of the Sixties. The chapter on Bronwyn Penrith, who was involved in the Redfern Black Power movement, provides an oft-forgotten angle on how activists used the arts to give voice to political struggle through street theatre, where Aboriginal performers gave absurd impersonations of the police. The chapter on Bronwyn is an important counterpoint to accounts of the Women’s Liberation movement in *Radicals*, as it highlights how Aboriginal women developed a distinct type of feminism, frequently struggling alongside, rather than against, Aboriginal men.

In artist Vivienne Binns’ chapter, she reflects on how she was influenced by the concept of Free Love and the sexual revolution to disobey the male art establishment and create provocative, psychedelic images of sexuality. Speaking on her process in a way that embodies the spirit of the times, Vivienne says “I cracked through and came to this other place — the basic, intuitive sort of place, where you didn’t have the strictures of overlaying rules — there was something else that was going on. And that was really revelatory.”

Many of the figures in *Radicals* had their moments of revelation as they rebelled against repressive familial authority in the Menzies era; some were radicalised by taking hallucinogenic drugs, and others through their involvement in newspapers such as *Honi Soit* and *On Dit*.

By and large, it was the experience of growing up in the Sixties, at the crux of mass political and cultural change, that shaped the characters in this inspiring epic. There is much readers today can learn from this wonderful book.

of Whiteley for a visitor who may have no prior knowledge.

The biography created in the space of this studio is comforting in a melancholic way, with his music of 60s rock stars playing in the background and the forever exhibited mammoth painting of Alchemy. The transitioning throughout this piece seems to capture everything that is evident in Whiteley’s eclectic motifs from the nature of his sexual obsessions shifting through explosions of political and philosophical anxieties and finally reaching the golden light of tranquility.

The Brett Whiteley Studio is open Thursday – Friday, 10am – 4pm

Review: The Brett Whiteley Studio

Dylan-Harrison Waldron revisits an Australian legend.

Since 1995, three years after the death of celebrated Australian artist Brett Whiteley in 1992, the Whiteley Studio has been managed by the Art Gallery of NSW and the Whiteley Estate, serving as a posthumous biography for one of Australia’s most nationally recognised artists. In Whiteley’s early career, his synthesis of European as well as Australian art (particularly Russell Drysdale) hinted at a talent that was yet to flourish. Throughout the sixties and seventies, Whiteley’s travels through Europe and America infused his works with the anxieties of the zeitgeist — the Vietnam War being one of the most noticeable. In 1976, he won the Archibald Prize (with his work *Self-Portrait in the Studio*) and, in 1978, he won all three national art prizes

(Wynne, Sulman and Archibald) and cemented his national fame.

His studio, a comforting, two-storey warehouse in Surry Hills, typically features paintings that depict the erratic and brazen strokes that characterise the confronting dramatism of his works. Despite this, the new exhibition ‘Printmaker’ depicts a perspective rarely seen in Whiteley’s career, with the spontaneous inks inspired by Ukiyo-E manga and Van Gogh drawings dichotomously presented against meditative etchings and prints, a standout certainly being *The Divided Unity*. Despite the soothing tranquillity of Whiteley’s colours in *The Divided Unity*, the tumultuous tempest of its scene seems a common undercurrent throughout his work. Although his

works often have a distinct admiration for natural beauty, there is undoubtedly a fixation on the sinister macabre present throughout this career.

Whiteley seems to possess a constant fascination for the macabre, with references from Yukio Mishima (who committed seppuku in 1970) to serial killer John Christie. The sporadic fascination Whiteley had for Christie is displayed in two works in this exhibition representing the dichotomous relationship he seemed to possess in representing the harshest repugnance of society in order to find and epitomise that which he found so beautiful. The scattered menagerie of Whiteley’s own possessions throughout the studio — his sunglasses, photographs, books — all create an insightful image into the mind

Review: Womn’s Revue 2021 — A Noughty New Year!

Jess Page is feeling Noughty.

After the mass cancellations of 2020, Womn’s Revue was back with a bang on Wednesday night. The energy in Reginald Theatre was high with anticipation before the opening number, which broke out in style complete with high ponies, pastels and Tamagotchis on a set straight out of 90s birthday dreams. In the opening song and dance, Womn’s Revue promised us a very ‘noughty new year.’

The comedy started subtle and simple, gradually becoming more daring. The performers weren’t afraid to sometimes get gross, and the appearance of toilet humour was an oddly refreshing aspect of the show,

done in a way that didn’t feel cheap.

Sketches featuring the Neighbours boardroom, Y2K panic and flip phones all tapped into the nostalgic theme of the night. Womn’s Revue acknowledged the irony of this sentimental longing for a decade that most performers and audience members barely experienced. Perhaps that was why the highlights of the show focused on topical issues, transporting the audience to Bindi Irwin’s delivery room, the set of Riverdale, a guided tour of Circular Quay and Queen Elizabeth’s new Youtube channel. At times, the rhythm of the show seemed to go completely off the deep end,

like in the ode to communism before intermission, but the confidence of some clearly veteran performers kept the audience right alongside them.

The millennium New Year’s Eve theme could’ve been better woven into the show, as each reference to the midnight countdown functioned less like a theatrical motif and more as a jarring reminder of the theme itself. The reciprocal energy that Womn’s Revue established with the audience could’ve been better harnessed so as to truly sweep us back in time and feel part of a real party. Nevertheless, this dynamic invigorated the later performances in particular, as the

audience reacted with love and support even during the flatter sketches. Particular props should also go to the choreography, which was well-organised without coming off as too polished.

After a long break, Womn’s Revue 2021 offered a sweet, carefree night that celebrated female performance and comic ability, at just the time in the semester when we all needed it. The costumes, writing and sketch sequencing showed evidence of the care and attention that went into putting this delightful show together. This was my first Womn’s Revue — it won’t be my last.

Review: Tell Me Things I Wouldn’t Mind Forgetting

Olivia Croker doesn’t wanna forget this play.

It is no small task to tackle grief, guilt, and family dysfunctionality in the space of an hour onstage, but that is what “Tell Me Things I Wouldn’t Mind Forgetting” sets out to do, with varying levels of success. In the cosy setting of the Cellar Theatre, the play just manages a satisfying ending.

The storyline circles around the lives of each of the four characters: siblings Ben, Claire, Caden; and their mother Jen. On the first anniversary of their father’s death, the characters are poised to deal with lingering effects of loss and guilt. The family has broken apart since the tragedy, and the writers structure their disconnect through

monologues, conversations and a handful of interpersonal references.

Disconnection is at the centre of the narrative. Each character has been written by a different writer, to grant them individuality. It’s a clever experiment, but it doesn’t translate particularly well for narrative cohesion and the audience’s investment in the characters. It was difficult to be fully taken in by the play and suspend one’s disbelief. The characters would shout out their angst to an audience that couldn’t quite believe them, and many moments that should have been deeply impactful fell short of their purpose.

That being said, certain aspects of

the writing, acting and directing came together very well. In particular, the dynamic between the siblings when they finally unite managed to illustrate the love and familiarity that keeps this family in its orbit. An explosive argument between Ben and Jen was satisfyingly familiar, and drew on the audience’s sympathy and affection for both characters. The original song “Fairest Father” was an emotional highlight, illustrating the strained relationship between Caden and his dad, evenly mixing Caden’s struggle between vulnerability and bitterness.

I admire the production’s creative intent of experimenting with the well-

trodden genre of Australian family drama. “Tell Me Things” addresses the difficult subjects of what happens to teen angst when kids are forced to grow up too quickly, and how individuals bear responsibility for grieving families — this is heavy stuff to work with. The production tied these dilemmas together as the play ended, with the suggestion that this broken family was healing.

“Tell Me Things I Wouldn’t Mind Forgetting” is showing at the Cellar Theatre until the 15th of May.

Review: Captain America – Civil War

Marlow Hurst is at war with himself.

The saga comes to a close. We’ve watched Steve fight Nazis, Steve fight modern Nazis, and finally, in *Captain America: Civil War*, we see Steve fight his friends (and another Nazi). While *Civil War* is my least favourite of the trilogy, it is still an excellent and engaging piece of cinema.

While it contains the least *Captain America* of any film, it thrives as an ensemble piece. The whole gang’s here (and I really mean it). Black Panther makes his first appearance, Scarlet Witch comes along from *Age of Ultron*, Scott Lang (Ant Man) joins in on the fun, and Spiderman, in a move that was significant not only to the MCU but to the MMU (Media Monopoly Universe), swings into frame. To focus on the main cast, Steve seems thoroughly defeated in this film. The events of *Civil War* only reinforce the doubts presented to him by *The Winter Soldier*: the world is very different today than it was in 1939. Nevertheless, his loyalty shines through more than ever, as his dedication to Bucky and his well-being is really the driving force behind much of the film’s narrative. Steve’s presence in *Civil War* is just another reminder that Chris Evans was a stellar casting choice from Marvel. He plays

tired and downtrodden just as well as he plays boyish and charming.

However, this film is just as much about Tony Stark as it is about Steve Rogers. Steve’s loyalty to Bucky, and Tony’s unprocessed grief over the loss of his parents, are what spark the titular civil war. Tony, like Steve, is also at the end of his tether. Following the incident at the Wakandan embassy, Tony really has no faith in the independent operation of the Avengers. Fresh from the events of *The Winter Soldier* (and compelled by his dedication to Bucky), Steve, naturally, thinks otherwise.

It’s a clash of titans! Tony, Steve, and Bucky are really the standouts, with very strong performances from Downey, Evans and Stan. But the whole team is a delight — seeing Tom Holland’s Spiderman for the first time was an absolute pleasure, and watching Ant-Man become Giant-Man was a highlight for many members of the audience. Of all the franchise character films, this is the closest we get to another Avengers film — it is truly an ambitious crossover.

For the first time, we see the consequences of heroic action. *Civil War* is all about the past coming back

to haunt those in the present. Bucky and Sokovia make the MCU feel truly connected, not only aesthetically, but also consequentially. The actions of the Avengers carry over from the films of MCU past and play an active role in shaping the narrative and outcomes of *Civil War*. In many ways, *Civil War* was the end of a phase in and of itself. It ties together a number of unresolved arcs and brings them together in a way that is satisfying and sensible. While the Avengers films excellently present world-shattering and universe-ending storylines, sometimes it’s nice to have a larger crossover movie be a little more down to earth. And boy is *Civil War* more to earth. This is almost an entirely character driven storyline and it shows. That’s what makes it such a good ending to one of the best character sagas in the MCU. Of all of them, the *Captain America* trilogy is the most cogent and the most consistent. Its themes never waver and the relationship between Steve and Bucky is always center stage.

Since this will be my final review of the *Captain America* franchise, I should try and say everything I want to say. So I will. The relationship between Steve and Bucky should have, and could have, been romantic,

whether from before Bucky’s fall into the German crevasse, or after his deprogramming following *Civil War*. If I have one complaint about the trilogy, it’s that they never took this step. Like Poe and Finn, Disney saw the subtext and said no. This disappointment doesn’t compromise the three films for me (or the ongoing relationship between the two following the conclusion of *Civil War*), but it does make me think of what could have been. There is often a hesitance to make an established character queer, with most modern franchises opting to introduce someone as gay from go (see *The Eternals*) rather than work it into an existing storyline. But at some point you’re gonna have to make someone gay, so why not make it now.

Queer themes aside, both *Civil War*, and the trilogy more broadly, are an achievement in superhero storytelling. They feel real, weighty, and more meaningful than corporate synergy. While not all superhero movies are created equal, *Captain America* shows that the characters and narratives of comic books are so prolific for a reason: they tell universal stories of love, loss, and above all, life.

President

Swapnik Sanagavarapu

This week has been busy and stressful as usual, with a strange mix of remarkable good news and unbelievably distressing news.

To start with the good news, our long-standing campaign against the proposal for 12-week semesters has culminated in an incredible win for staff and students! Not only did we defeat the proposal at the Academic Board, we smashed it by a huge margin! In 2020, the margin against 12 week semesters was in the single digits. This time, we won 69-10. It's nice to know that my hard work over the past few months, and my persistent advocacy on this topic finally paid off. I'd also like to thank everyone who was involved in this campaign, from the student activists, to the members of the Academic Board, to the staff members who advocated so strongly against it and finally to all of those who generally raised their voice. The status quo has been locked in for 2022 at least, and likely until 2026. Hopefully this is the last we hear of 12

week sems!

This victory has been coloured by some quite distressing news uncovered by the SRC. In October 2020, the SRC's Chair of Standing Legal and I placed a request to the University for information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act in relation to student protests on campus. This information was released to us last Wednesday. The revealed documents detail an outrageous pattern of surveillance and repression by the University of Sydney and NSW Police. As I stated in the SRC's Media Release on the subject last week, the documents "reveal the University's knowledge of NSW Police's particularly invasive surveillance of student activists (alluding to plain-clothed operations and 'extensive intelligence networks'). It also details the University's needlessly intrusive monitoring of media appearances by Professor Simon Rice following his violent arrest at a protest on October 14 and social media posts regarding

on-campus actions posted by NTEU representative and Senior Lecturer David Brophy. The University also surveilled students' social media activity, as evidenced by an internal email showing itemised numbers of attendees responding 'going' or 'interested' to Facebook events organising individual contingents to the September 16 protest." Worryingly, the documents reveal the University's use of Dataminr, a CIA-funded social media monitoring tool that was used to crack down on Black Lives Matter protests in the United States. I'm going to continue raising the profile of this issue, and I thank the media figures and parliamentarians who responded to our press release.

Aside from this, I've been raising the plight of Indian international students who are stuck in utterly horrific situations in India. The SRC condemns the government's racist travel ban and the continuing vaccine apartheid levelled against India and the Global South. I confirmed with the University

that evidentiary requirements for special considerations will continue to be waived, and have asked that they send an email to all students in India informing them of their rights under special consideration and discontinuation of study.

I'm also working on two campaigns this week that I'll briefly mention. The first is continuing the fight against the cuts to SLAM - join the SRC's protest in Week 13 to prevent this school from being totally wiped out. The second is the continuing campaign against the destruction of Willow Grove, the heritage site in Parramatta that will be demolished by the NSW government to make way for the new Powerhouse museum.

If you have any questions or issues that you would like the SRC to address, don't hesitate to contact me at president@src.usyd.edu.au.

Until next time,
Swapnik

Academic Honesty Principles: How to Avoid Plagiarism

By now you should be aware that the university takes academic honesty very seriously. When you began your degree you were required to complete the Academic Honesty Education Module (AHM) on Canvas. By completing the module the uni believes that you have a fair understanding of what's expected of you.

Academic dishonesty includes incorrect referencing, plagiarism, recycling your own work, buying an essay or getting someone (whether you paid them or not) to write all or part of your assignment (contract cheating), cheating in an exam or referring to prohibited material during an exam. More examples can be found on the uni's website. [<https://www.syd.edu.au/students/academic-dishonesty.html>]

fact can be found. You might need several references in any given paragraph.

They care about this because:

- it is a clear rule you could be breaking
- you get an unfair advantage if you pass off someone else's work as your own work.
- it is an important part of the academic practice they are teaching you.
- they are marking you on what you know - not what the source knows.

The University uses similarity detection software and other methods to identify and highlight any similarities in written work. This includes assignments such as math based problems and coding.

The University uses similarity detection software and other methods to identify and highlight any similarities in written work. This includes assignments such as math based problems and coding. If you copy any of a classmate's current or past work, the software will identify this similarity. If it is a new assessment you need to do new work and use new words; you cannot reuse work you previously submitted, unless you have approval from your unit coordinator/examiner. Many cases of academic dishonesty occur when students are under pressure and make poor decisions or are focused on getting something in on time, without paying attention to referencing correctly.

- If you are stressed or struggling to complete an assignment, we encourage you to talk to your Unit Coordinator, they may be able to give you some helpful advice, or give you a simple extension of up to 2 days.
- If you are struggling to meet the deadline because you've been unwell or are being impacted by personal circumstances, consider applying for special consideration.

If in doubt, you can talk to a SRC Caseworker. Email us at help@src.usyd.edu.au

Plagiarism can arise if you:

- use someone else's words from a source without including quotation marks around those words. (e.g. through a cut and paste from the internet)
- use someone else's words, or ideas, or facts without a reference or citation at the end of the sentence indicating where you found the words, ideas or facts.
- use someone else's words, ideas or facts without also writing the source you used in the reference list (or bibliography) so the source can be found.
- Use or copy another student's work, or reuse work that you have previously submitted for assessment without prior approval from your Unit Coordinator.

If you are an undergraduate you are not likely to be writing something purely original. Referencing is important because the marker wants to know what you have learnt from the material you have read. If you don't use quotation marks and references for someone else's words or ideas then the marker will assume it's all your work. If the marker finds words from a source that you have not told them about then they will think you are being dishonest.

Referencing styles (such as footnotes, Harvard etc) vary across the University but the main test is whether you have made it clear where each separate word, idea or

Education Officers

Maddie Clarke and Tom Williams

This past fortnight has been the busiest so far, and hopefully things are just going to get busier. The EAG had a speakout outside Fisher library against the 12-week semester proposal. There was strong turnout from both staff and students, with speakers from the NTEU, casuals network as well as students. Overall it was a good way to raise awareness about how detrimental

these changes would have been. We followed the rally up 6 days later with a snap action on the day of the vote. There was solid attendance despite the rain and we stirred up a fuss outside F23. The efforts of everyone involved in the fight were rewarded that afternoon, with the proposal defeated with 69 votes against.

This fortnight has not only been

good news though. "Operation Blue Star" has been slated to cut \$10 million from the arts, with Theatre and Performance Studies and Studies of Religion in the crosshairs for the draft proposal. We had a fantastic reportback at our EAG on Tuesday, and we are organising to fight against this shameless austerity. The win against 12 week semesters is a testament, in

part, to the power of protest and the necessity of students supporting and uniting with staff. We hope to take these lessons forward in the "Save SLAM" fight. Our next meeting is in a fortnight's time, week 11, on Tuesday and we have a rally planned for week 13 to protest the cuts when the details are made clear.

Women's Officers

Amelia Mertha and Kimberley Dibben

THE WEEK 10 COMMANDMENTS

1. Thou shalt honour and demand justice for Indigenous people. Stop the Stolen Generation. Stop deaths in custody.
2. Thou shalt get cops off campus.
3. Thou shalt dismantle the colleges because St Paul's going co-ed will not solve the issue of rampant sexual violence at this university.
4. Thou shalt honour and demand justice for survivors.

5. Thou shalt honour thy right to body autonomy.

6. Thou shalt not take the name "pro-woman" in vain for your anti-abortion agenda. (To our dearest CathSoc: any attempt to pit disabled peoples and pro-choice advocates against each other (as if the two are mutually exclusive) has, and always will, fail.

7. Thou shalt protest the cuts to SLAM. Resist the attack on Arts.

Abolish the neoliberal university - free, accessible education for all.

8. Thou shalt de-stigmatise sex work. Sex work is work.

9. Thou shalt protect trans kids.

10. Thou shalt keep each other safe.

Upcoming

- THURS 13 MAY 1pm @ Women's Room | WoCo Week 10 meeting

- WED 26 MAY 1pm @ Town Hall | Sorry Day Rally co-organised with

Grandmothers Against Removals

- FRI 4 JUNE 7:30PM @ TBA | WoCo End of Sem Party and Fundraiser

Join USyd Women's Collective

New members are always welcome to our meetings and events. Find our autonomous Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/218882649839471> / 'USYD WoCo 2021' and just answer a few questions.

Social Justice Officers

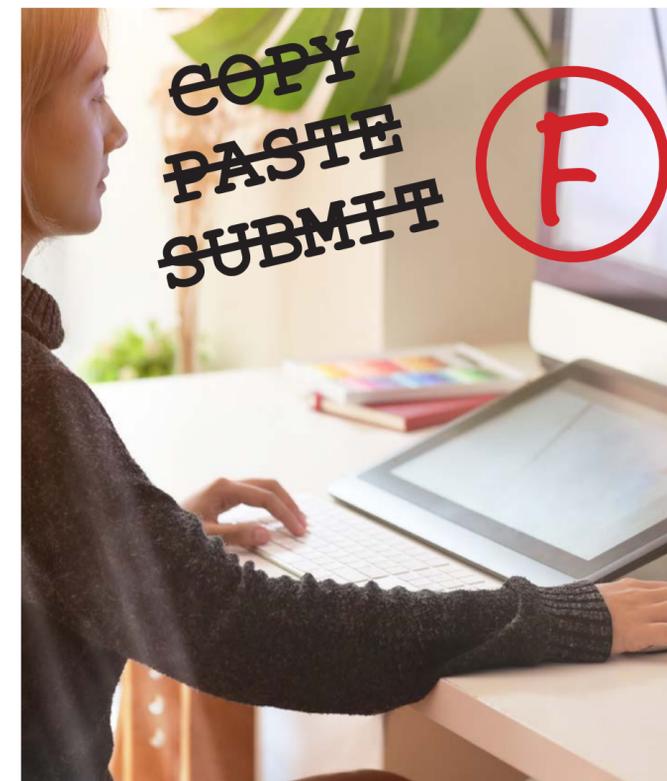
Jiaye Liu, Iggy Boyd and Deaglan Godwin did not submit a report.

Environmental Officers

Lauren Lancaster, Drew Beacom, Isabella D'Silva and Deaglan Godwin did not submit a report.

Intercampus Officers

Grace Hu, Kristina Sergi, Matthew Carter and Alexander Polirier did not submit a report.



Ask Abe

SRC caseworker help Q&A

EXAMS: Caught Cheating?



Hi Abe,

A terrible thing has happened. I've been so stressed the last few semesters and have tried really hard to keep going with my studies. I attended an exam in person, because I thought it would be easier for me than online. It's been so long since I have done an in-person exam that I forgot to take my phone out of my pocket, I felt a message come through so I took my phone out to turn it off, and now the examiners think that I used my phone to cheat. Are they going to kick me out? I have worked really hard in my degree and I am devastated that this is happening to me.

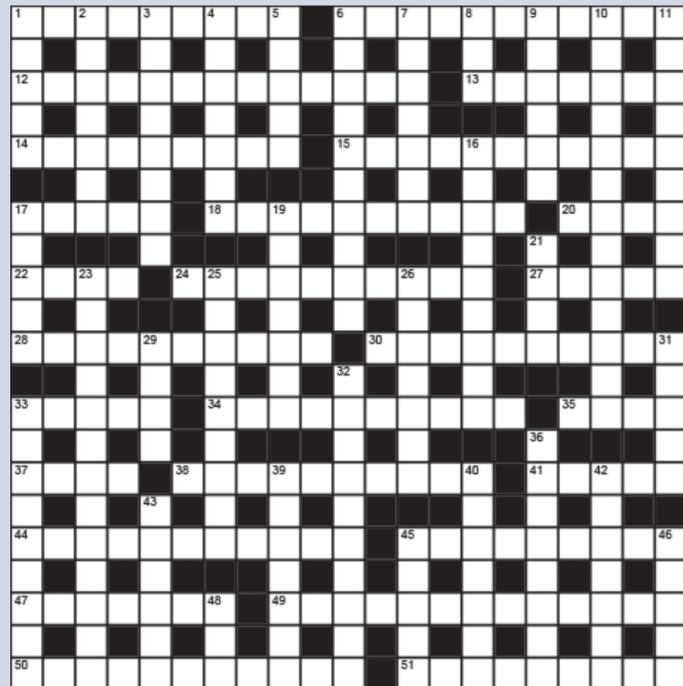
Exam close call

Dear Exam Close Call,

I am sorry to hear about your problem. The Uni will investigate whether or not you have tried to cheat in the exam. It is a good idea to tell the truth in this situation. We all realise how much pressure students are under, and how easy it would be to give

Abe

Omega Crossword



Across

- 1 Nasal haemorrhage (9)
- 6 The biggest seabirds (11)
- 12 These go on the back of cars (7,6)
- 13 Headache medicine (7)
- 14 African Queen (9)
- 15 Showy, over-the-top (11)
- 17 Middle Eastern rice dish (5)
- 18 Light red colour, resembling the flesh of a fish (6,4)
- 20 Damned sign-in verification app (4)
- 22 Jesus of Nazareth, King of Jews (Latin abbreviation) (4)
- 24 Happening every now and again (10)
- 27 Painter of Picture A, Margaret (5)
- 28 Likeness (10)
- 30 Those from other countries (10)
- 33 Mary Poppins' profession (5)
- 34 ? Son cruelly laughs about cross attacks (10)
- 35 Continent (4)
- 37 Polynesian trickster god, voiced by The Rock in Moana (4)
- 38 Second-year college students (10)
- 41 Magic cards (5)
- 44 A significant birthday (6-5)
- 45 Blooming, coming into one's own (9)
- 47 Roman, Milanese, Neapolitan, et cetera (7)
- 49 Those who put people to sleep (13)
- 50 The bane of uni students (11)
- 51 Unusually, in a queer fashion (9)

Down

- 1 Painter of Picture B, Sidney (5)
- 2 A large amount, such as of presents (7)
- 3 Painter of Picture C, Bronwyn (8)
- 4 Dirges, funeral laments (7)
- 5 India's capital territory (5)
- 6 Self-arousing (10)
- 7 Public transport station (3,4)
- 8 As yet undecided upon (3)
- 9 Oliver Twist, Annie, Harry Potter, Frodo Baggins, or Bruce Wayne (6)
- 10 Mass murderers (6,7)
- 11 A place of safety and succour (9)
- 16 Cancellation of a marriage (9)
- 17 ? Reportedly cuts into twos (5)
- 19 ? Steal no shoddy sheds (4-3)
- 21 Painter of Picture D, Sydney (4)
- 23 I, V, X, L, C, M, D (5,8)
- 25 ? Late Late Show host said nothing very loudly, so create a barrier (6,3)
- 26 Aboriginal country of southern Western Australia (7)
- 29 Brand of crisps (4)
- 31 ? Fashionable supermarket (5)
- 32 Cruella de Vil's favourite dogs (10)
- 33 Painter of Picture E, Albert (9)
- 36 Painter of Picture F, Arthur (8)
- 39 Namesake of a Usyd bar (7)
- 40 Suffocate (7)
- 42 Print (a newspaper) again (7)
- 43 ? Cable or call after holy person (6)
- 45 Doesn't eat (5)
- 46 Spruce, zhuzh (5)
- 48 Eating sound (5)



Cryptic clues are marked with a ?

Quiz!

All answers begin with the letter K.

1. What is Australia's largest National Park?
2. Which amphibious entertainer performed the hits 'Bein' Green' and 'Rainbow Connection'?
3. In 2019, who did Forbes declare the world's youngest self-made billionaire?
4. The glomerulus, the loop of Henle, and Bowman's capsule are found in which organ?
5. What tentacle sea monster of Scandinavian lore has become a staple of sailing superstition?
6. Which 1977 ABBA song was re-released in Spanish as 'Conociéndome, Conociéndote'?

Searching for answers? Go to honisoit.com

Sudoku!

9		7			3			6
				7			2	
						9		
			9	6		5		
				1	4	8	3	
5		9	3					
			1					
1					6		9	4
	4	6				7		

THE BOOT

Activist forgets to organise protest after spending 6 hours making cute weekly meeting graphic

Can Va reports.

Greens MLC David Shoebridge was left "shocked" after no one attended a cross-collective speakout he had planned to deliver a speech at this morning.

The Boot understands that organisers forgot to invite people as they were making a social media graphic in the OB room.

"Honestly it's just been such a busy month," said organiser Milly Power.

"Last week, we made some staunch pastel infographics on abolishing the police. We also

had a working bee to make a cover photo for a Facebook event. And to top things off, we made a cute weekly meeting graphic."

Power told The Boot that she is hoping to become a graphic designer after she finishes her term.

"I've gained so much experience through this and I hope to take the skills I've learnt through activism and producing autonomous Honi editions into the industry."



Mafia seek control of USU outlets with frontman Pablo Avaria-Jimenez

Jimmy 'The Snitch' Camperdowner on

"The only legitimate way to establish our violent regime of intimidation of USyd's small business owners is through electoral student politics" Alfonso* told The Boot from the back room of a small cafe in Haberfield.

"We gonna kneecap that lippy sonofabitch Ben Hines — but only after we are legitimately elected in accordance with the regulations as interpreted by the Electoral Officer. Comprende?!"

Alfonso* will struggle to assert control with faculty gangs dominating much of the turf from Science Road to Eastern Avenue and identity gangs having a stranglehold on every outlet between Physics Road and City Road.

"If anyone gets in our way, they disappear. Kapeesh? They're gonna disappear like my participation mark after week 5. You understand?"

In this issue

CHINA!: Uni investigates new bubble tea shop as part of "foreign interference" audit / p 38

SCANDAL!: USyd collaborates with no-clothes 'police officers' for Pip Pattison's farewell party/ p69

YES!: Annamarie Jagose climaxes as she announces latest round of cuts to SLAM / p. 25

BETTER DEAD THAN READ: Newtown bookshop executes staff to prevent unionisation / p 88

TASTE?: Law student brags about his big baguette / p 1.5inches

FINANCE: Tina Lee appoints herself "Honourary Treasurer" of every society / p 0

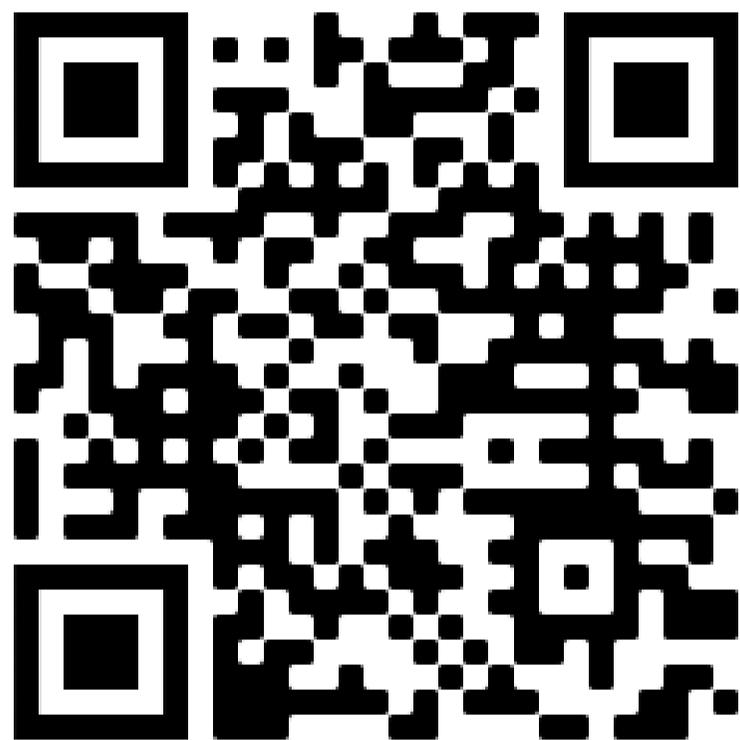
TWO DEAD: Casualties on Eastern Avenue after student arms himself with bow and arrow to avoid USU campaigners; self-defence claimed / p 61

OUCH MY RECTUM!: Real proctologists to invigilate Uni exams as ProctorU dumped

STUPOL: We locked the USU Board candidates in a room for two years and this is what happened! (not much)

destination

HONI SOIT WRITING COMPETITION 2021



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