

Honi Soit

Week 11, Semester 2, 2020 / First printed 1929





Acknowledgement of Country



Honi Soit is published on the stolen land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. For over 230 years, First Nations people in this country have suffered from the destructive effects of invasion. The editors of this paper recognise that, as a team of settlers occupying the lands of the Bidjigal, Darug, Gadigal, Wangal and Wallumedegal people, we are beneficiaries of these reverberations that followed European settlement. As we strive throughout the year to offer a platform to the voices mainstream media ignores, we cannot meet this goal without providing a space for First Nations people to share their experiences and perspectives. A student paper which does not acknowledge historical and ongoing colonisation and the white supremacy embedded within Australian society can never adequately represent the students of the institution in which it operates. We seek to resist colonial violence and the racist power structures that serve to oppress those who are Indigenous to this land. Sovereignty was never ceded. Always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Contents

Letters / 3

News / 4

Analysis / 6

Perspective / 11

Feature / 12

Opinion / 14

Culture / 15

Creative / 19

SRC / 20

Reviews / 22

Comedy / 23

Editor in Chief:
Chuyi Wang

Editors: Nina Dillon Britton, Matthew Forbes, Zhiquan Gan, Robbie Mason, Angad Roy, Lara Sonnenschein, Ranuka Tandan, Chuyi Wang, Madeline Ward, Lei Yao

Contributors: Jazzlyn Breen, Blake Falcongren, Marlow Hurst, Gabbie Lynch, Juliette Marchant, Angelina Nguyen, Shania O'Brien, Fabian Robertson, Daany Saaed, Alice Sandner, Himath Siriniwasa, Pailey Wang

Artists: Lilly Aggio, Janina Osinsao

Cover artist: Haneko (@PresidentLich)

Write, create and produce for *Honi Soit*

Interested in reporting or making art for Australia's only remaining weekly student newspaper? Email us at editors@honisoit.com or message us over on our Facebook, Twitter or Instagram pages.

Editorial

As the age-old adage goes: time flies when you're having fun. By any sane person's metric, this year has probably been one of the most awful in recorded history, and yet time has flown anyway. I'm starting to think it's a property of time in general that it passes too quickly.

In Summer, we donned our gas masks against the bushfire smoke. In Autumn, we traded in our masks for new ones. In Winter, our hearts broke in the privacy of our parents' homes. In Spring, we emerged only to be cuffed and beaten. At almost every point in 2020, I could count on one hand the number of friends I had that weren't going through some kind of crisis. But time, like always, flies on.

And now, with only a matter of weeks left in this horrible year, I'm waking up to a kind of serenity that continues to surprise me even though it happens day after day. What can I call this feeling? Joy is too strong a word, optimism too naïve, and hope too pure.

Let's eschew the guessing and call it love, because that's the best I can do right now with my sleep-deprived brain. The one thing that has sustained me through the last twelve months has been the unshakeable love I have for this paper, and the even stronger love I have for the editors that produce it with me. In some ways, this catastrophic year has robbed me of so many opportunities and chances to be happy. But, now that this is truly the end, I don't think I would have preferred it any other way. Sure, we could have had more deranged nights in the office together, but at the end of the day: we were there. That was us. It happened.

To Nina, thank you for keeping my ego in check with your constant riffing. To Matt, thank you for indulging my most bizarre musical in-jokes. To Robbie, thank you for

answering my 5am calls. To Angad, thank you for returning my furtive glances and being such a beefcake. To Lara, thank you for being such a wonderful, charming friend (and for teaching me so much new vocabulary). To Ranuka, thank you for being endlessly generous with both your time and kindness. To Maddy, thank you for always standing up for me and being there when I needed someone to talk to. To Iris, thanks for the succulent steak. To Murphy, thanks for laying up Liam's report.

As for the reporters and contributors to the paper this year, be that in writing or in art, I extend my deepest gratitude for helping us carry this publication through possibly the most socially isolated year of *Honi* ever. We quite literally couldn't have done it without you, and we deeply regret never getting the chance to thank you in person.

Finally, though the majority of this protracted and selfishly sentimental editorial is already about them, I would like to dedicate to my fellow editors the final verse of The Dismemberment Plan's 1999 album *Emergency & I* – a record which, much like this no-good, awful, terrible year, is filled to the brim with tension, doubt and dissonance, but concludes quite suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, with a ray of hope:

*And sometimes that music drifts through my car
On a spring night when anything is possible
And I close my eyes, and I nod my head
And I wonder how you've been
And I count to a hundred and ten
Because you'll always be my hero
Even if I never see you again*

Yours truly,
Chuyi Wang

Disclaimer: *Honi Soit* is published by the Students' Representative Council, University of Sydney, Level 1 Wentworth Building, City Road, University of Sydney NSW 2006. The SRC's operation costs, space and administrative support are financed by the University of Sydney. *Honi Soit* is printed under the auspices of the SRC's Directors of Student Publications: Maia Edge, Peiqing Fan, Nina Mountford, Roisin Murphy, Mikaela Pappou and Maxim Vishney. All expressions are published on the basis that they are not to be regarded as the opinions of the SRC unless specifically stated. The Council accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of any of the opinions or information contained within this newspaper, nor does it endorse any of the advertisements and insertions. Please direct all advertising inquiries to publications.manager@src.usyd.edu.au.

CANCELLED CORNER

Robbie Mason goes straight to gaol, does not pass go, does not collect \$200.



Bring back cigs on campus!

Us here at *Honi Soit* yearn for the USyd campus culture of yesteryear. We miss turning up to shit boring lectures with a jug of beer sloshing in our stomachs, smoking under the 'No smoking' signs out the front of Fisher with our fellow comrades and heckling campus security from the Manning balcony (RIP). There is one magic ingredient that will unite our student population and revolutionise campus social life, and this one is legal. It's called tobacco, or baccy, or spin, depending on the context. Yes, Mum, I fucking love durries.

True spirituality isn't attending yoga classes, hanging a few stones you found at Bondi Beach around your neck and frolicking naked in the mud at Pitch Music & Arts Festival.

It's watching the rising sun in your PJs after an all-nighter with a black coffee in one hand and a dart in the other. That's boss level spirituality.

There's nothing worse than an Economics professor (wanna-be cop) jumping off their bike to scold you and banish you to some far flung corner of campus.

Contrary to the common parlance 'don't shit where you eat', students should be allowed to smoke anywhere on campus: in the Fisher stacks, in your lecture, heck, in the middle of your biology dissection exam. But I'd go further: we shouldn't be forced to trek off campus to get a deck. The USU should subsidise cigarettes sold on campus and invest in a few cig machines: the uni student's pokie. It's an absolute travesty that the SRC

mutual aid program doesn't include decks of Winnie Blue (Optimum Crush). The masses don't want fruit and veg. They just want a cig or two to ease the pain of being screwed by the capitalist system. It will also cull the rabid population of scabs who beg you for a dart on Eastern Avenue.

Yes, we know smoking is bad for you. We don't live under a rock. But a bit of emphysema and a few lung diseases here and there is nothing compared to the soothing calm of sucking on a cancer stick when you have 2000 words to write in four hours. The nicotine flows through your bloodstream. Warm orange glows before your eyes. The filter is sweet between your lips. Oh what a rush!

Letters

All we do is win

Dear Sir

I am writing to express our support for the excellent article “How a Nation of Mystics, Occultists, and Yogis became ‘Hindus’” written by one of your students, Vish Lingam.

I write on behalf of ‘The Humanism Project’, a human rights and political advocacy organisation of Australians from the Indian diaspora. Our objective is to campaign against the rise of hate and divisiveness among the Indians and to reclaim India’s heritage of diversity and inclusiveness.

Predictably, Vish Lingam’s article seems to have caught the attention of right-wing Hindu nationalist organisations, the self appointed custodians of Hindu religion.

The ‘Sangh Parivar’— an umbrella term for Hindu nationalist organisations spawned by the paramilitary Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the parent organisation of the BJP — subscribes to Hindutva, which sees India as a nation of and for Hindus.

Since 2014, when the current BJP government came to power, there’ve been renewed efforts to alter history by the Indian government and various state governments. Tactics ranged from erasing chapters or passages from public school textbooks and adding make-believe accounts of the past, to peddling mythical bunk as history in schools run by the RSS.

Hindu nationalists have their own agenda that makes history so important for them.

For one, nationalists need to construct a version of the past that legitimises their actions in the present. For the Sangh’s ‘Hindu-first’ program

to gain supremacy, it has sought to create a monolithic narrative that triumphantly proclaims the exclusivity of Hindu civilisation to be channeled into 21st-century renewal of a Hindu nation.

In this vision, non-Hindus (particularly Muslims) are relegated to second-class citizens, or at worst, foreign contagions to be cleansed from the Hindu body politic.

However, for such a movement to succeed, society must contain a pre-existing homogenous bloc with numerical power. This is difficult in India’s notoriously diverse amalgam, and so Hindutva ideologues hijacked a primordial Vedic past, prior to the arrival of Muslims, to repudiate any plurality and syncretism within Hinduism.

This harmless article by Vish Lingam, contradicts the Hindu nationalists make-believe version of Hinduism. The article is also corroborated by other published research.

Also, Professor Romila Thapar, India’s leading historian has written extensively about what she calls a “communal interpretation” of Indian history.

We, as the representatives of a diverse group of Indians in Australia - including a majority of Hindus, urge The University of Sydney to disregard the objections by certain narrow minded individuals masquerading as representatives of the Hindu faith and continue to keep the article published in the interest of editorial integrity and cultural vibrancy.

Thank you.

Kind regards
Deepak Joshi

I love you, Chuyi Wang

Dear Editors,

I don’t really know where to begin. It’s been a tough year, but we’ve made it.

I must profess a deep, passionate love for you all as an editorial team. Never before did I believe that Honi Soit could touch my heart so, but alas, here we are.

Angad <3

Ranuka <3

Chuyi <3

Maddy <3

Matt <3

Robbie <3

Nina <3

Iris <3

Murphy <3

Lara <3

I feel as though I’ve laughed and cried alongside you.

As for me. Well, it doesn’t matter really who I am, but if you must know, I’m the one who has been there for you all along, prodding you in the right direction. The DVDs, the physical letters in the mail, the nudges and pokes in your inbox (not always kind I must confess, at times I got frustrated at your complete incapability). Although I’m a dweeb who has been at university for far too long, who lacks social skills and who has very little motivation to make

a name for myself out there in the big, wide, terrible world, I know I’ve meant something to you. Seeing you hold my life’s work in your soft, large hands filled me with inexplicable joy.

Now I’m sorry, I can feel myself blabbering on. There’s a reason I needed to write this letter and reveal myself to you after all this time.

Chuyi Wang. Chuyi, I love you. I didn’t at the start. I was just a casual reader, vaguely interested in the paper and the strange direction you folks(*x hehe) were taking it in. But my affections grew as you gained confidence in your ability to lay up a page to absolute perfection. The margins have been impeccable, the news perfectly spaced, the coloured backgrounds that made me cringe oh so much in semester one gone, the placement of art from the bottom of the page. I could go on, but I must simply say this. You have given me so much joy and for what I will be forever grateful.

Next years editors will not be half as strong, nor anywhere near as noble. I will protect your legacy from their creepy little hands.

Thank you.

And goodbye.



Who? Weekly

Landlords of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your negative gearing!

Switch councillor-elect Jaded Jayfel Tulabing-Lee, was taken to task by Enviro Officer Lively Lily Campbell (SAIt) over her announcement she’d been named Secretary of the newly-formed Real Estate Investment Student Association.

“Vote switch for ‘anti capitalist’ aspiring landlords hahahaha,” Lively Lily called from her Facebook page. Several aging former-Grassroots apparatchiks emerged from the woodwork to join in the fun: “Really sad seeing stuff like this regularly from a distance,” Loser Liam Carrigan commented. “Embarrassing!” Mad Maddy Ward (a fellow editor of this rag) concurred.

To bully someone for the simple hope of one day taking a cut of a family’s pay check to finance their third mortgage is simply despicable. Will someone please think of the landlords!

And the #UltimateGirlBoss is...

Switchroots’ preselection for key paid positions has come and gone, with some winners and one loser. Prudent Priya Gupta, who was Queer Officer this year, walked away with the nomination for Gen Sec, besting Pulp editor Eager Ellie Stephenson for the SRC’s (second) top spot. With Eager Ellie’s loss so goes our dreams of the benevolent but tyrannical rule of a couple in the SRC (her SO is next year’s President, #SettleforSwapnik), laying the foundation for a 1000-year monarchical dynasty. Dang.

Switchroots’ also preselected Timid Tom Williams to be the #UltimateGirlBoss for the Education Officer position. Timid Tommy has made quite a name for himself in ASEN and the EAG over the last year, really making us struggle to remember what all the bad rap about white men is even about. Groots Ed Officers are often joined by a SAIt Ed Officer, but we’re waiting word on who exactly that will be.

TBH fuck collective autonomy

Honi Soit here, your one and only source into the scandalous happenings of collective preselections. Heavenly Honey Christensen and Optimistic Oscar Chaffey (known for their involvement in the campaign against Med Sci cuts) clinched the Queer Officer elections. Yass!

Over at Enviro Collective convenor elections (that’s an anagram), Dictator Doon was at his, well, dictatorial ways again. Four candidates were up for four potential spots: Lovely Lauren Lancaster (Grassroots), Delinquent Drew Beacom (Grassroots), Beaming Bella D’Silva (Grassroots, hmm I’m sensing a theme here), and Vivacious Varsha Yajman (Switch). When the (presumably) unwashed hippies in attendance began turning on Vivacious Varsha for her membership of Australian Youth Climate Coalition — an offshoot for the Australian Students Environment Network — Dictator Doon proclaimed that the criticisms were unfair but his cries fell

on deaf ears.

But his totalitarian cries fell to nothing. Vivacious Varsha, known for her prominent position in School Strike for Climate failed to reach the 75% approval needed for election. SAD!

What’s black, white and green, and just signed a preference deal

Grassroots has signed with Panda for Repselect, meaning Sportsbet is paying out early bets for a Groots-led majority at Repselect.

Though in previous years participants at RepSelect have turned off lights, turned on sprinklers, and turned off the student body from having any faith in their elected representatives, it looks to be a boring affair.

A far cry from previous years where antics made national news, it looks like it’ll be happening over Zoom. That means Young Libs can turn off their cameras so you can’t see them cry.

Shame!

Students take to City Road to protest cuts to School of Medical Science

Chuyi Wang reports.

Last Tuesday, more than 150 protesters gathered at an Education Action Group (EAG) rally to protest the cuts to staff and courses in the School of Medical Science.

Coinciding with the start of Radical Education Week 2020 on campus, and co-chaired by USyd SRC Education Officers Jazzlyn Breen and Jack Mansell, the rally opened at the Quad lawns for an extended speakout.

The first speaker was Aunty Rhonda Dixon, who delivered a Welcome to Country. As a masters student herself, assisting in the development of an education module about studying and learning on Gadigal land, Aunty Rhonda affirmed her solidarity with student protesters fighting against education cuts.

Next, SRC Welfare Officer Maddie Clark condemned the university for continuing its harsh austerity measures in spite of a large budget surplus this year, as revealed by the Sydney Morning Herald last week. She also spoke to the victory that student protesters achieved in pressuring the NSW government to raise the cap on protests in the Public Health Act to 500.

The final speech delivered on the Quad lawns was given by NTEU

USyd Branch President Kurt Iveson, who first apologised for discouraging student protesters from occupying the F23 Administration Building last week, stating: "I'm sorry. I fucked up." Iveson also referred to the especially difficult employment challenges experienced by Indigenous staff at the university, adding that the "task of decolonising this campus is an ongoing process."

Afterwards, student protesters marched to the Anderson Stuart Building, where classes for Medical Science are taught. Gathering outside, MedSci students Campbell and Stuart censured the misleading data and wage theft being committed by the School of Medical Science in order to justify the wide staff cuts. They also spoke to the rapidly degrading quality of education in the School as particularly concerning when staring down pressing contemporary issues like the coronavirus pandemic and climate change.

"What's going to happen to the postgrad students who have worked for years, when their supervisors and labs are gone overnight?"

Finally, Dr Meloni Muir, a Physiology professor facing the threat of redundancy, delivered a passionate

speech dismantling the supposed 'strategic management' from the School of Medical Sciences as nothing more than unjustified austerity.

Protesters then marched to the F23 Administration Building, where international student Aman Kapoor, who was recently allowed to re-enrol after an extended occupation of the Student Centre by activists, described the financial hardships he, and other international students, faced with the unprecedented lockdown this year.

Students then took to City Road and marched down from Eastern Avenue to Victoria Park. Chants included: "Show me what democracy looks like! This is what democracy looks like!" and "No cuts! No fees! No corporate universities!"

Around 30 police officers quickly arrived to herd the protesters off the road, with some being shoved to the sidewalk. Police then blocked off every exit from the University and Victoria Park.

Finally, student protesters decided to redirect the march to the Quad, wrapping up the rally outside the door of the Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence's old office.

Students protest USyd Senate meeting outside F23

Chuyi Wang reports.

Around 50 protesters gathered outside the F23 Administration Building on Friday afternoon to protest university austerity measures and the passing of the Higher Education Reforms Package by the Senate early last month.

What was originally planned to be a picket line in the CBD to prevent a USyd Senate meeting from proceeding was relocated adhoc to F23 after the Senate decided to move their meeting to online over Zoom on Friday morning. Presumably, this occurred in response to discovering that student protesters had planned a picket.

Passionate speeches were delivered by USyd SRC Education Officer Jack Mansell, Environment Officer Lily Campbell, Welfare Officer Maddie Clark, and NSW ASEN Co-convenor Ruby Pandolfi.

Topics covered included university administration's collaboration with police to repress protests revealed through a freedom of information request two months ago, senior management's general lack of response to the oppressive price hikes on arts and humanities degrees, as well as the steep cuts to staff and courses in the School of Medical Sciences.



USyd Casuals Network releases interim report into wage theft and underpayment

Lara Sonnenschein reports.

Sydney University's Casuals Network has released its interim report today into wage theft and underpayment at the University.

The report follows the earlier survey conducted by the Network in June which highlighted that casual academics were bearing the costs of COVID-19, though stressed that such precarity and exploitation existed prior to the coronavirus pandemic.

The report found that 84% of participants performed unpaid labour during the audit, and that casual academics worked an average of 6.6 unpaid hours per week.

On average, for every dollar paid

to casual staff, they were not paid 75 cents, amounting to an average of 43% of work going unpaid.

Critically, on average women had 2.5 times the amount of wage theft compared to men, at \$3837 and \$1541, respectively.

Further, those audited were only given 48 minutes a week on average to complete all administrative work, though casuals reported working an average of 4.8 hours a week on such tasks.

The highest amount of individual wage theft amounted to \$11,469, per the audit. The staff member has worked as a casual academic at the

University for 6 years and has not been given permanent work. She was only paid 13 hours for the entire semester to complete administrative work to coordinate a subject with over 70 students.

Currently, ten universities have had to repay casualised staff unpaid wages, with the University of Sydney admitting to wage theft of almost \$9million.

Casualisation within the Australian tertiary education sector has skyrocketed over the past three decades, with estimates of 70% casualisation at some universities.

The NTEU's 2019 FASS survey of permanent and fixed-term staff

indicated that the majority of staff were working more than 50 hours per week, compared to the 37.5 hours per week as set out in the Enterprise Agreement. Per the June survey, casuals worked an average of 50 hours unpaid.

Given the report is interim, it only presents the Network's mid-semester findings, meaning that an analysis of hours spent marking assignments is excluded, given this generally occurs towards the end of semester.

As a result, the Network estimates their "overall findings to be conservative", and are working on an end-of-semester report which will include more comprehensive data.

Hundreds attend Djab Wurrung solidarity rally, marching in defiance of police orders

Ranuka Tandan reports.

Hundreds stood in solidarity with Djab Wurrung last Saturday at Sydney's Town Hall. The rally brought to the forefront the struggle of First Nations people to save the culturally significant, centuries-old trees that are being removed for a highway upgrade. After an extended speak out, protesters took to the road and marched to Hyde Park, despite antagonism from the police.

Organised by the USyd, UNSW and UTS Environment Collectives, the speakers demanded an end to the desecration of First Nations' land, history and culture by private or state interests. They also demanded that the government immediately recognise the sovereignty of First Nations peoples' and the autonomy of these peoples over their land and resources.

Last week, the Djab Wurrung directions tree was lost after years of fighting to protect it., with Around 60 people were people arrested by police trying to stop its removal, and all protesters faced immense amounts of police brutality and repression.

The nationwide uproar about this issue has forced the Victorian Government to halt progress on the highway for three weeks, but there is no guarantee that after this time, the next steps will not continue as planned.

Uncle Dave Bell gave a Welcome to Country, acknowledging Aboriginal peoples from all over NSW.

Gwenda Stanley from Fighting in Solidarity Towards Treaties (FIIST) spoke next, setting the tone for the protest by questioning the notion of reconciliation, and the surface level nature of NAIDOC Week.

"You protected your Captain Cook statue but you cannot save a birthing tree," she yelled to the police who

were lined up behind speakers for the duration of the rally.

Chelsea Ahern, who has been on the ground protecting Djab Wurrung, sent a statement to the protest organisers to be read out, which details the horrific nature of the on-the-ground situation at Djab Wurrung.

"On a daily occurrence both day and night, we are facing racial abuse, slurs. We have had threats, people approach us with anger and aggression, fires started by outsiders trying to move us on, fireworks being shot at us, urination in front of our women and children on our sacred land by intoxicated people of all ages and objects thrown at our birthing trees."

"When she was cut down, there was cheering, celebration of victory and no cultural sensitivity or respect from the workers or security on site. She was then dumped into a semitrailer and paraded past grieving First Nations people and supporters who have protected her from this fate for over two years."

David Shoebridge MLC spoke next, highlighting the scale of the problem across the country.

"If you think this is just a Victorian thing, you're wrong. It's happening in every state, in every territory, in every level of government. It's in the DNA of the planning system, not just in Victoria but in this entire country. We need to call it out and we need to stop it."

Kya Branch, NUS First Nations Officer, said "they need our voices to be heard, so that we are able to start making changes, so that we can dismantle this system, not brick by brick, but all at once."

Following Branch, Michael Burnard represented the Australian Student Environment Network (ASEN), and



brought attention to the importance of fighting for First Nations justice and climate justice hand in hand.

Wongutha-Yamatji man Meyne Wyatt spoke about the gold mining happening in his country in Western Australia, saying that it's only the white people that care about the gold. He spoke about the sacred site destroyed by Rio Tinto and the many more that they plan to destroy.

"Indigenous did not destroy the earth. Colonialism and capitalism destroyed the earth."

At the completion of the speeches, protesters began marching to Hyde Park, chanting "when Djab Wurrung is under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back."

Police initially attempted to stop the march from happening, despite protests of 500 people now being allowed under

the Public Health Order. Protesters, however, pushed through and the march made its way successfully up Park Street and into Hyde Park. This rally is the largest action to have occurred without physical police repression in months.

Aunty Lynda June-Coe wrapped the action up next to the Hyde Park fountain, using her time at the megaphone to reflect on the dangers that come from NSW policing not only Aboriginal people but also everybody else so intensely.

"The structures in this country are fundamentally racist, and I'm going to come back to the question. What does justice look like on stolen land? Justice for me means you give us our land back."

There is another Djab Wurrung solidarity action planned for Monday, 9 November in the Domain.

Protest in the time of pandemic

11AM Friday 13 November, Zoom

Join a panel of experts who will explore the human rights, health and legal aspects of recent protest events in Australia and the appropriate scope of police power.

Felicity Graham
Barrister at Black Chambers

Taylah Gray
Proud Wiradjuri woman who was the respondent in the case Commissioner of Police v Taylah Gray.

Professor Roger Magnusson
Health Law and Governance academic, Associate Dean Student Life, Sydney Law School

Professor Simon Rice
Kim Santow Chair of Law and Social Justice at the University of Sydney

Georgia Carr
PhD candidate and casual academic in the Department of Linguistics and USyd Casuals Network organiser



Corporate universities: Hidden factories of ideology

Jazzlyn Breen explores the ways in which universities work as a tool of capitalism.

There is no doubt that higher education is in a dire state in this country, with fees increasing, courses being cut and staff being fired at rates not seen for years. Class sizes are expanding and course options are shrinking. Objectively, the quality of higher education is under attack and it's important to question why institutions which are meant to protect and improve the quality of education are acting in this way. Are universities actually failing at their jobs, or are mainstream understandings of the role they play within society actually wrong? I argue the latter: universities are not neutral education providers, but ideology factories, and they are not failing us now - they are working exactly as they have been set up to.

Universities exist as institutions which uphold the framework of capitalist production, entrench class divides and hold monopolies over the value of particular forms of knowledge. At their very core, universities are not just degree factories, but ideology ones too. They teach the skills required to produce efficient professionals who will go on to uphold and maintain the capitalist project. As universities have been further commodified, the 'invisible hand' of the free market has become increasingly responsible for the valuation of particular kinds of knowledge.

In popular discourse amongst the liberal left, universities are seen as bastions of intellect and education, places where critical thinking is developed and systems questioned. In this year's higher education campaign, a common argument against increasing the fees for arts subjects is that they are one of the only places in which critical thinking can develop. In the conversation around the US election, Republican voting preferences were put down to a lack of education, as if people voted for Trump because they lacked critical thinking skills and not because of the deep institutional problems which maintain racism, poverty and disenfranchisement. While there is truth to the ability of arts degrees to help develop critical thinking among those who study them, and statistical proof that Republican voters are less educated, I would argue that the conversation around higher education needs to be much more nuanced. Higher education is incredibly important, but universities themselves

and the ideologies they reproduce are not radical or emancipatory.

Knowledge is not neutral.

The production of knowledge is not neutral. It is reliant on and a reflection of the society in which it is produced. Within a university setting, this is not just seen in traditionally political subjects such as sociology, anthropology and international relations, but also within subjects seen as 'apolitical', such as engineering or science. What is taught, and how that knowledge is used is a deeply political and ideological process.

The types of knowledge prioritised within universities are simply a reflection of the ideologies prevalent within capitalist society, and the money of corporations who employ graduates. Corporate sponsorships of the information shared and developed within universities means that big business can effectively control the fields and types of research which are prioritised. Decisions about what to teach and fund, and who to hire has to come from somewhere, and within the corporate university system, economic interests will always win out.

One of the best examples of this within Australia is the recent introduction of the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation, which was able to fund an entirely new degree within the University of Wollongong, University of Queensland and the Australian Catholic University. This is not only an issue because of the racist and colonial nature of the Ramsay Centre, but also because the knowledge which is taught within our supposedly public universities can effectively be purchased for top dollar.

Another example slightly closer to home is the "Rio Tinto Centre for Mine Automation" within the USyd engineering faculty, which is focused on "mining innovation through automation and machine learning". Projects like these show how important it is to remember that no knowledge is neutral or apolitical, even in subject areas which are intuitively thought of as such.

In this way, the university acts not as a place for intellectual pursuits, or the improvement of society as a whole, but as preparation for a workforce determined by the prevalent ideological projects of capitalism. In no way is education neutral. It serves a purpose, to uphold and reinforce the norms,

values and economy of the society it is produced within.

We can't 'save our education' because university has never been 'good'.

The aggrandising corporatisation of universities is undeniably detrimental to the quality of higher education, but were universities ever that good? We need to be thinking beyond the scope of the traditional university, and aiming for a genuinely emancipatory and equitable alternative, rather than simply fighting course cuts with the rhetoric of 'save our education'.

Yes education has been commodified, but even if that commodification was removed, the systems in which we produce knowledge are still deeply colonial and capitalist in nature. In almost every way, Western systems of education, or what we have come to value as 'the best forms of education' as a society, replicate the violence, competition and oppressive nature of capitalism. They have been developed by and work for colonial, racist and patriarchal systems and are therefore self replicating in their upholding of these systems.

So called 'quality' or 'prestigious' education stems from the West. It values Western religions, histories and opinions while leaving little room for much else. The concept of academia itself is a deeply colonial concept, and while academia can and has produced important knowledge, in practice it continues to prioritise Western knowledge to the detriment of all other forms. In a country like Australia it is also particularly essential to recognise and value the systems of knowledge which existed on this continent pre-colonisation, and which have been either wiped out or undermined by capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. In fighting for a form of education which serves society, we must first uncover, question and destroy the ways in which colonialism has shaped the way we conceptualise knowledge and learning. Even a free university, governed by staff and students would be colonial if we do not also undergo a process of decolonisation.

Universities, including USyd, invest millions in fossil fuel companies, arms manufacturers and pay their vice chancellors millions while, at the same time, cutting subjects, reducing staff numbers and increasing class sizes.

In every way the university acts as a business, because that's what it is. It has commodified knowledge so successfully that it is no longer questioned that these institutions are both making money off, and have a monopoly over knowledge.

Education cuts are intrinsic to neoliberal universities.

The current attacks on education coming from university management and the government alike are rightly viewed as ridiculous and nonsensical, and as undermining education accessibility. However, for the capitalist project these bodies work to serve, they make complete sense. Allowing the market to decide what type of education will best serve it aligns with the way universities have always worked. Our education system is set up to serve capital, to produce the most workers, and to maintain and progress capitalism. It is important to call these changes out for what they are: a further entrenching of corporatisation and neoliberalism within our education institutions.

Yes, we should absolutely fight against course cuts, staff cuts and fee increases, because these things further entrench the inequalities which are inherent to the system. But we cannot kid ourselves into thinking that in achieving these things we will have met our goal of equitable and fair education. Instead, we need to fight for a radically different form of education, and this cannot come about with education reform, policy changes, or even free university. All these things are good, but they are not radical, they do not deeply question the system of capitalism and they do not meaningfully address the issues embedded into our entire education system.

We need to fight to create a version of education that serves people rather than big business and corporate agendas. We need to work to undermine the dangerous and violent ideological boundaries that education and knowledge production is currently bound by. We need to be confronting capitalist power, fighting against corporate management, undermining the binaries of students and staff, rebelling against all cuts, and working together to build and create types of education which serve us, not business, not capitalism, not imperialism and not colonialism.



Art by Chuyi Wang.

The Maple Spring: Lessons from the 2012 Quebec student riots

Himath Siriniwasa reflects on the lessons that the Australian student left can learn from the six-month Quebecois rebellion.

In 2012, a precarious yet enigmatic coalition of students, union organisers, anarchist militants and Indigenous activists sparked a series of revolts throughout Quebec. The explicit allusions participants made with the Arab Spring go beyond a French play on words: Arab Spring translates to 'printemps arabe' making 'printemps érable' (Maple Spring) a memorable denomination for the uprising. Rather, the movements noticeably parallel each other in political content. Both saw the long-term disruption of normalcy — the cacophonous sounds of daily riots that shook the streets of metropolitan Montreal echoed the thunders of Tahrir Square. Mass participation played a central role, with half of the Quebec student population involved in widespread student strikes and marches with over 400 000 attendants.

In both contexts, this participation arose from disillusionment with state responses to the 2008 financial crisis. As this conflict intensified, the fire of revolutionary fever led to popular opposition to the police. Fundamentally, both Springs saw an unprecedented expansion of militant tactics, sometimes through spontaneous acts of resistance, often through the trial-and-error development of knowing which strategic maneuvers prevent avoidable defeat. Heavy confrontations with the police were remarkably common as students escalated from building occupations to strategies of political and economic disruption — breaking up conferences and political rallies, blockading businesses and destroying private property.

It began in early 2012 when students kicked off an 'unlimited general strike' on the 13th of February to fight back against a 75% hike in university tuition fees. These actions went beyond the typical student protest, imprinting itself on the public imaginary by the sheer degree of social transformation it caused. The strikes lasted for more than six months, becoming one of the longest periods of social unrest in Quebec. The concerns raised by these movements dominated the political sphere, becoming a central issue in discourse surrounding the 2012 election. While a number of organisations (including major opposition parties and prominent workers' unions) supported the demonstration, few could claim to represent it. The exception was the Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ), a federation of radical student unions that played a decisive role in spreading the strike and enabled the proliferation of militant tactics.

While the possibility of a 'Sydney Spring' seems unlikely, the parallels between the Quebec student movement and the burgeoning education campaigns are striking: actions against hiking tuition fees, occupations, students met with police repression. Detailed investigations into the social relations underpinning the revolt are of value to the Sydney Left, not only because of similarities in the political landscape,

but more importantly, because the students of Quebec won. The fee hikes were halted after wide-spread popular discontent led to the downfall of Jean Charet's Liberal premiership and the rise of the social-democratic/nationalist Parti Québécois.

Immediate practical questions come to mind on what organisational forms and efforts enabled the student victory. What did the ASSÉ do right? How does it differ from student unionism in Sydney? I suspect the answer to the former can be found in the latter. The ASSÉ is no ordinary student federation, differing vastly from Australia's National Union of Students (NUS). Rather, the NUS resembles the other two Quebec student federations (the FECQ & FEUQ), sharing labyrinthian bureaucracies, centralised decision-making, media legitimacy and complex political affiliations. These institutions seek social change by means of lobbying politicians and 'consciousness-raising'.

In contrast, the ASSÉ follows the tactical program of 'combative syndicalism', which emphasises a commitment to direct action over negotiation and conciliation. During the strike, ASSÉ created a strike coalition CLASSE, opening up its membership. Two guiding principles prefigured CLASSE's success. Firstly, progressive escalation of tactics were effective in building and sustaining the movement. Actions initially began by taking disgruntled students to the street, organising speak-outs and petitioning. However, while these measures seemed to draw previously apolitical students into the movement, they did little to combat the fee-hikes. Thus, the movement adapted, turning to occupations and strikes, and then to riots and blockades. Secondly, CLASSE held a strict commitment to direct democracy, basing their decision making in complex networks of local and general ASSÉmbles. Not only did this give protestors the feeling that they were active participants in their own future, but it also avoided the pitfalls of representative democracy, with its separation of student politics from student life.

Despite its militancy, the first month of struggle could not anticipate the scale of what was to come. The impressive five-day occupation of McGill University in early February is illustrative. Protestors took over the administration building, building barricades, destroying securities cameras and setting up camp during the night. While it mobilised popular support (especially for the strike), authorities were able to crush the occupation with relative ease, and it had very little impact on altering the outcome of the proposed fee-hikes.

However, singular university occupations metamorphosed into city-wide agitation. Participants had learned from their mistakes — while previously students had been identified by not wearing masks (and not destroying enough security cameras), anonymity began to play a crucial role in organising. This was manifest in the response to

police repression of the March 7th blockade of a state-owned enterprise (Loto-Québec). While playing the harmonica, a student Francis Grénier was permanently blinded in one eye after a police officer shot a stun grenade into the crowd. The mobilisation that followed was unprecedented. Black bloc tactics became popularized. The zine "Blockade, Occupy, Strike Back" became a handbook for student radicals, detailing practical information on security, anonymity and self-organisation. In popular consciousness, police brutality ceased to be an abstraction but a concrete reality.

This situation resonates with many at home — a recent string of education actions have been met by arrests and crippling fines. Despite this, the Quebec experience (and the success of the recent occupation of USyd's administration building) suggests that increased militancy does not correlate with increased repression. Crowds can stay safer when involving themselves in well-organised, unexpected, riskier actions. However, this is also contingent on developing an organisational culture that takes security concerns seriously. In my opinion, anonymity practices are seriously lacking in the Sydney Left. Many protests (in trying to abide by hypocritical COVID-19 restrictions) have included registration forms that store a list of all participants; do we seriously think that this information should be collected, let alone stored on a Google form? Moreover, outside of facemasks, students make little effort to cover their faces/clothing/identification, often uploading pictures to social media.

As critiques of debt, austerity, capitalism and the state gained cultural legitimacy, resonating with a disillusioned post-2008 Quebec populace, participation in student protests generalised to other forms of activism. Popular discontent, student organising, and Indigenous activism converged into a series of actions against the Liberal government's Plan Nord developmental strategy. Essentially, the plan aimed to create low-paying 'workfare' jobs by displacing Indigenous people in northern Quebec by opening up to business interests in mining, logging and hydroelectric projects. A strong sense of solidarity was established with the working-class and Indigenous populations. Not only was this a student movement, it was a social movement. As thousands fled to the streets at night, many heard the music of revolution in the air. Heterogeneous groups of people coalesced in the face of adversity, unifying in the belief that the streets and land belonged to them.

As the uprising moved from agitation to rebellion, a key antagonism began to materialise. On one hand, a burgeoning anarchist consciousness was coming to the fore. Student self-organisation turned into a proliferation of explicitly anti-capitalist neighbourhood ASSÉmbles throughout Montreal. Collective direct action became the norm. Mass-participation in student protests spread to other forms of activism.

On the other side, so-called student representatives entered negotiations with the Liberal government. These negotiations excluded the CLASSE, which was seen as the cause of wide scale social discontent. These negotiations, and the overall attempt at conciliation, failed miserably. Firstly, students were dissatisfied with the compromises made by their state-sanctioned representatives. Secondly, the government imposed the draconian Bill 78, which forbade protest near university grounds and required police approval for large public protests anywhere in Quebec. Thousands of people joined students in solidarity against the state. Four days after the bill was passed, tens of thousands participated in the May Day rally, with organisers referring to it as "the single biggest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history." Ports and bridges were blockaded, molotovs were thrown and violent repression was felt. Yet the struggle survived in spite of organised representatives and their attempts at conciliation with the government. Escalation successfully transformed the content of the revolt, setting the stage for further radical organising.

To the dismay of many radicalised over the course of the six-months, the victory of Parti Québécois would be the downfall of the movement. After repealing Bill 78 and preventing the fee hike, much of the participation dwindled. Unfortunately, Parti Québécois backtracked immediately, reintroducing fee hikes in a transmogrified form in 2013. The actions of 2013, while militant, were unable to capture the electricity of the 2012 revolt, neither in scope or efficacy. This eventual failure gives the Left a lot to think on the value of electoralism and the relationship between activism and political representation.

However, this tired debate on reform versus revolution is far from what is valuable in considering the Maple Spring. The tactical orientations of different groups during the revolt must be studied endlessly, differentiating what strategies were effective and increased participation from those that were risky and fruitless. Of importance is the move away from publicised A to B marches to masked-up occupations, blockades and economic disruption. The possibility of creating our own (CL)ASSÉ must be entertained — a federation of radical student unions *not* focused on party politics or CV stacking seems like a desirable end. Nevertheless, we must transcend the limitations of the ASSÉ, noting that the antagonism between escalation and conciliation divided the organisation greatly. Something that seems to incorporate the solidaristic nature of the revolt while appropriating the structure of ASSÉ can be found in the proposals for a cross-university federation of collectives. Last year, USyd, UNSW and UTS collectives tried to establish an organisation on these lines. While these suggestions are purely provisional, they establish the importance of interrogating the history of student revolt.

A left national paper will achieve what a Royal Commission can't

Pailey Wang interrogates the ability for Rudd's petition to have any meaningful impact.

Kevin Rudd is back in the spotlight, savouring the attention he is getting on social media for shamelessly plugging his petition for a Royal Commission into media diversity and News Corp's media monopoly, which wrapped up last Wednesday. In a sense, Rudd is right – the 'strength and diversity' of the media in this country seems to be at an all-time low: With the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age*, the once great centre-left Fairfax mastheads, now forced to push an increasingly right-wing editorial line since their absorption by Nine. It seems too that COVID was the last straw that broke the camel's back of countless regional papers. More worrying still, the last bastion of independent 'hard' news: The AAP news wire, once kept neutral by the competition of its owners, was almost shuttered and now only survives as a scaled down not-for-profit. It is not guaranteed to survive a new challenger, which one of its former owners News Corp, plans to launch in February when their non-compete ends; if this coup pays off, all the other papers left will be fed the same Murdoch line as the rest of the country.

However, Rudd's plea seems obviously flawed. For one, the conservative government will never grant his request; it hasn't even been backed by the Labor Party. Even imagining that his Royal Commission did get up, what good would it do? Sure,

it would probably find News Corp are horribly anti-competitive thugs, bent on pushing Murdoch's ideological bile at the cost of huge losses. It might even find some criminal wrongdoing. At best: a couple of short prison sentences for some sacrificial executives, some fines Murdoch will easily pay off, and a list of recommendations to never be implemented. It is certainly unlikely to change the fact that, in most of the country, only News Corp papers are available on the newsstands, and that alternatives are increasingly sparse and increasingly right-wing.

A lot is said of online echo chambers, but with a third of Australians still relying on print newspapers, it must also be said that a large portion of this country is victim to a much more analogue form of that effect. Younger people in the cities now live in a completely different information landscape to older people in more rural areas. For the former it is social feeds and left-leaning news sites, for the latter it is right-leaning papers. This is the media divide which led many to believe Labor was set to coast to victory at the last election. It is easy to say nobody takes Murdoch's papers seriously, but time has shown that a partisan news media is an extraordinarily pervasive form of manipulation. One need to look no further than the audio-visual American cousin of Murdoch's Australian newspaper monopoly: Fox News. Even

then, unlike our paper monopoly, Fox exists in a truly competitive landscape, juxtaposed nationwide against MSNBC and CNN.

The antidote to Murdoch's media monopoly is to give print audiences a real alternative. While starting a new union or otherwise backed paper is certainly an optimistic dream, I believe

barebones editorial staff could put it all together and fill the gaps.

Perhaps call it 'the Daily Courier', which nicely sums up its purpose, with the added benefit of confusing readers of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Courier Mail*. As far as I can see, there is little to lose for the outlets who sign on: they would reach new audiences with

At best: a couple of short prison sentences for some sacrificial executives, some fines Murdoch will easily pay off, and a list of recommendations to never be implemented.

any real hope lies in the collaboration of the new online left-leaning media. It is time to fight the old guard at the newsstand with a national, daily paper. It could draw hard news from the AAP, republish the online output and daily stories which don't make the weekly print editions of the *Guardian* and the *Saturday Paper*, and source investigative journalism from Crikey. The Conversation already allows for their great think pieces to be freely republished under a Creative Commons licence. Soft news could be supplemented by outlets like the New Daily or New Matilda, and perhaps even tabloid puff and comedy from the likes of Junkee and Pedestrian TV. A

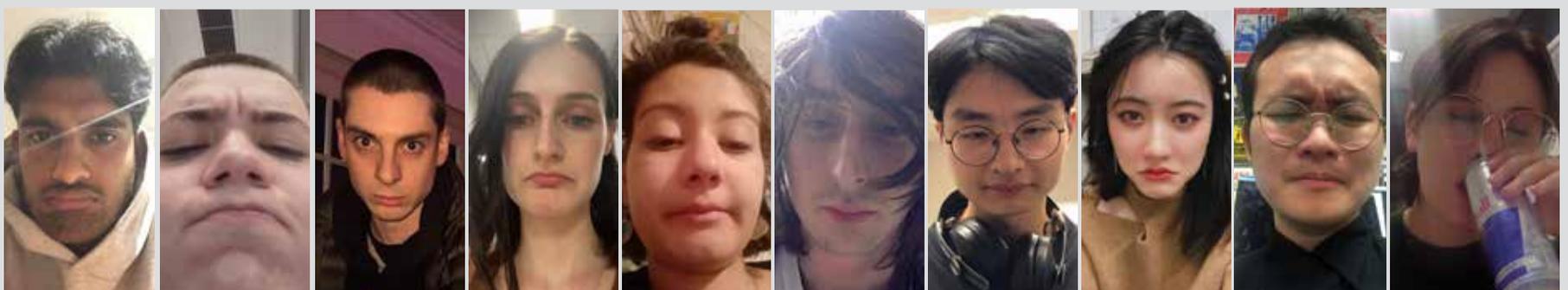
content already freely available online. If the endeavour ever made a profit from sales and advertising, it could be split up amongst them based on which outlets provided content. Though, if the persistent losses of the *Australian* are anything to go by, it seems that a national daily is not a particularly profitable endeavour. Indeed, such a service would require deep pockets to get started, as well as a concerted campaign of lobbying for online outlets to take part. I wonder what kind of individual might have the clout and connections to pull it off. Perhaps a former Labor Prime Minister? But then where's the fun if you don't get your five minutes in the spotlight.

Official apology and retraction notice

We, the 2020 editorial team of **Honi Soit**, would like to issue an official apology for all the content we have published in the last twelve months. When we first started writing for the paper in December of 2019, we were but naive teenagers, recklessly lashing out at everything for kicks and clout. In the process, we have caused an unimaginable amount of suffering and distress to numerous parties, both on and off campus.

Specifically, we regret causing any offence to the Jewish community, the Catholic community, the Hindu community, Room 2 Radio and Caucasian DJs in general, the board directors of the USU, college students, women, fans of Gorman attire, Netflix executives, Angelina Gu, the stars of *Stranger Things*, people of colour, horses, autonomous collectives of the SRC, owners of luxury cars, the editors of PULP Media, poets, every single stupol faction, Liam Donohoe, lesbians, perverts and sexual deviants, 2020 Returning Officer Geoff Field and his assistant Cameron Caccamo, our successors Bloom for Honi, our predecessors Spice for Honi, absolute losers Cream for Honi, 2019 Electrical Officer Casper Lu, the struggling Oxford diaspora, Americans, Italixns, girl-bosses, Dan Tehan, the very nice and cool Australian band Sticky Fingers, trots, young Liberals, activists, King Amir Jabbari, cops, non-fascist cottagecore fans, departing Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence, fans of content warnings, the relatives of Osama Bin Laden, those who find casual nudity distasteful, Splash for SULS, Dr*w P*vlou, the Notorious RBG, SASS executives, the queer community, and of course, God.

In order to atone for these mistakes, we have made an unanimous decision to retract everything we have published this year. That means we cannot be sued anymore, since all the content has been retracted. This is what the SRC lawyers told us.



Lara Sonnenschein Matthew Forbes Ranuka Tandan Iris (Lei) Yao Chuyi Wang Murphy (Zhiquan) Gan Angad Roy Nina Dillon Britton Madeline Ward Robert Mason

Online sex work in the age of COVID

Gabbie Lynch on the endless possibilities and risks of moving sex work online during a global pandemic.

"The money was easy, the risk seemed low and my clients were always respectful, but I would never have trusted any of them," Sarah, a university student in Sydney, told me during a conversation about her 'lockdown' job. She lost her casual job in retail during the COVID-19 lockdown. Having worked less than 12 months with her employer meant she was ineligible for the Federal Government's JobKeeper payment. She started doing online strip services as a means of generating an income during lockdown.

"I had done some sugaring before, but I wouldn't have met up with anyone during lockdown. It would have been too risky meeting people face to face in the midst of the virus in Sydney," she said.

When lockdown hit Australia this year, our workplaces changed overnight. The once bustling Sydney CBD turned into a sleepy village. Many people began blurring the boundaries between work and home life, disguising bedrooms as home offices. Others relied on the JobKeeper payments. Yet many casual workers fell through the cracks and faced the frightening task of generating their own income as a means of survival.

For women in particular, sex and pleasure - an always precious and popular commodity - became an empowering, yet risky means of supporting themselves.

"I've had sugar daddies before the lockdown," Sarah tells me. "The first man was in his early fifties. Before we met, he gave me a list of cars and asked which one I would like to be picked up in. I chose the Bentley," she laughs. "When we went into lockdown, I wasn't in a paid arrangement, but I knew this would be an easy way to maintain an income. I reactivated my account on Seeking.com. But COVID made

the reality of sugaring hard. I wasn't going to meet new people out so turning to online strip teasers was a safer option, in terms of complying with the lockdown restrictions."

Like many industries facing the lockdown, the sex and pleasure industry was fraught with new challenges. Unlike other traditional industries however, sex workers were already frighteningly vulnerable. The pandemic revealed major flaws in the legal system's ability to protect those engaging with the sex work industry - for both clients and providers.

Although sex work is decriminalised in NSW, there remain legal grey areas as how best to protect sex workers. With a rapid increase in both the amount of sex work being performed in online spaces and the amount of people who turned to unqualified modes of providing 'adult' services through an online forum such as Skype and Reddit, the law continues to remain silent.

In a physical 'brothel' setting, regulated by the local council, sex work services in NSW are legal. For those engaging in online services however, the law remains ambiguous. In the first instance, whether online strip teasers or Skype calls can be constituted as 'sex work' within a legal definition remains unknown. Whether an online brothel can constitute a "setting" capable of being regulated by the local council raises questions as to the validity of sex work being performed in an online space. From here, the questions are endless; can I advertise sexual services online, despite advertising in newspapers being a (rarely prosecuted) crime? If my client is interstate or overseas, what jurisdiction is capable of prosecuting a crime or protecting my interests? If I get hurt, am I entitled to workers compensation? And what responsibilities do websites such as Seeking.com and Reddit have when it comes to protecting my interests?



Art by Janina Osinsao.

com and Reddit have when it comes to protecting my interests?

The answers remain unclear, though it would be reasonable to assume that online service providers have excluded all liability for any harm suffered by parties engaging in paid arrangements.

I asked Sarah about her fears of taking part in online 'pleasure' services. "I suppose I was scared I would not receive the payment. I know there's no one you can go to if you get hurt or if they steal from you. Unless you have a pimp," she jokes.

In contrasting her pre-COVID sugar daddy work with the online strip services she provided in lockdown, Sarah said the latter was far less demanding, yet not without newfound risks. "The physical element isn't there but yeah - there is a fear of someone taking a screenshot," she relays. "I didn't

really think about it until you mentioned it. But yeah I guess someone could run off with an image of you and there's not a lot you could do about it."

The pandemic exposed both the financial benefits and work-life flexibility open to sex workers. Whether the perks of the industry outway the risks comes down to a matter of personal opinion and privilege. The shift to online services opens the door to many people, but closes it to more still. For those without devices and the internet, the industry is falling out of arm's reach. Yet despite the change in the demographic engaging in the industry and indeed, the way in which the work operates online, it remains clear that the law fails our sex work industry on every level, leaving the most vulnerable to fend for themselves.

A 'fair go' for families: Labor's childcare pledge

Julliete Marchant unpacks Labor's stance on childcare services in the recent budget reply speech.

The idea of the 'fair go' is one that has become a cornerstone of the Australian political and social discourse. And yet, with notable changes to family structures and gendered participation in the workforce over the past twenty years, the presence of 'fairness' in government childcare policies has come under considerable scrutiny. With childcare at the centre of Labor's budget reply speech last month, Anthony Albanese articulated the stance that "in the worst recession in a hundred years, we have to make sure that women aren't forced to choose between their family and their jobs". But does the new policy offering signal progressive economic and social reform, or is it merely another example of middle class welfare?

The current reality of the workforce is that the longer an individual spends outside of it, the more difficult it is to get back in. Consequently, after having children, many second earners and single parents, of which a disproportionate number are women, will return to work merely to keep their foot in the door. However, with the current annual childcare subsidy cap of \$10,560 per child for households that earn between \$189,390 and \$353,680 a year, many second earners and single parents are limited to returning for no more than three days a week, as they can't afford to pay high, unsubsidised childcare fees.

In view of this, the Labor government

have proposed to scrap the subsidy cap, and raise the maximum childcare subsidy rate from 85% to 90%. If this policy were to be introduced, households earning up to \$80,000 a year would only have to pay 10% of their childcare costs annually. Additionally, Labor hopes to more gradually taper the proposed subsidy for higher earning families by decreasing the amount subsidised by 0.2% for every \$1,000 earned above the \$80,000 threshold. Thus, unlike the current policy, which prevents families that earn over \$353,680 from accessing any childcare subsidies, Labor's tapered subsidy system would support families earning up to \$530,000.

But what would the effects of this change look like?

Drawing on the social implications that often sit at the core of childcare policy analysis, Labor are removing the long-standing disincentive for second earners and single parents to return to the workforce by scrapping the cap. However, this benefit is often construed as 'middle class welfare', introduced to support those that want the best of both worlds. This argument is overly simplistic, and fails to acknowledge that wanting to go back to work is for many no longer a choice, but a need. Whilst over the past 20 years, a woman returning to the workforce acknowledged that their wages would be used almost exclusively to cover childcare, with the norm having progressed

from that of the stay at home parent, to having two working parents in most households, this is no longer satisfying. Where caring was once a woman's issue, and children a family issue, Labor's policy acknowledges that this is no longer the case, and that women deserve a 'fair go' to return to the workforce without a debilitating economic disincentive guiding their decision.

For those unconvinced by the social argument, Labor claims that such changes to childcare policy would promise national economic growth and bring direct benefits to the business sector. The Grattan Institute has estimated that the implementation of Labor's plan would increase work hours for second earners and single parents by approximately 11%, and that this increased participation would boost GDP by more than double the cost of implementing the childcare policy itself. As such, it is timely to shift the way that we view childcare, and acknowledge that it is a service that directly impacts the national economy, rather than a service that only benefits part of the population. We support the building of a second airport in Sydney, or better roads in parts of Australia that are foreign to us, because even though we aren't all likely to use these facilities, we acknowledge the economic benefits to the broader community. Why are we not willing to do the same for childcare?

But perhaps the most perplexing aspect of previous childcare policy considerations, is the lack of attention paid to the benefits expounded by such a service for the child itself. Quality childcare is often a fundamental part of a child's academic and social development. This is because Australian childcare providers are guided by a national framework that provides a play-based means of incorporating pre-school skills, and gives all children the opportunity to learn using resources that may be limited at home. In addition to this, by interacting with childcare workers and other children their age, children are able to develop their communication skills and sense of trust in others; skills that are more difficult to develop in the familiar home environment.

Whilst the aforementioned benefits highlight the social and economic transformations that could be fostered by changes to childcare policy in Australia, Labor's budget reply speech still failed to acknowledge how greater support would be provided to childcare workers, falling mute on the issue of a wage subsidy. This is an issue that extends to much of the care industry, as childcare, aged care and disability care workers remain some of the most poorly paid service people in the country. Thus, whilst Labor's policy points to a 'fair go' for families, it needs to be considered whether those providing the service are getting a fair go themselves.

A history of radicalism in Far North Queensland

Madeline Ward longs for the Red North

Aboriginal and Torres Strait-Islander readers are advised the following article contains reference to people who have passed away.

Curumbilbarra, otherwise known as Townsville, is considered to be one of the most conservative parts of so-called Australia. It's easy to understand why this is the case: Clive Palmer and Bob Katter both hold offices in Townsville, it's a home base for many, if not most of the fly in - fly out miners in the region, and it's also the location of Australia's largest military base, Lavarack Barracks.

Aside from this, the city looks conservative. One Nation, Palmer United Party (PUP) and Katter's Australian Party (KAP) have billboards on almost every street corner. The offices of Adani are prominently advertised in what would be an otherwise delightful restaurant strip on one of the main streets of town.

The military is omnipresent -- there are several military museums, the aforementioned barracks, a disproportionate amount of war memorials and the frequent sighting of military aircraft, not to mention the live firings that occur on neighbouring islands and bushlands, advertised in the Townsville Bulletin.

That paper, of course, is the main culprit in perpetuating such conservatism, assumed and actual. The Townsville Bulletin publishes without concern for integrity, ethics or shame: anything from a list of residents due at court to the onlyfans profiles of local women, to advocating for vigilantism in response to a supposed youth crime crisis, can be found in the pages of the Bulletin.

Recently, the Bulletin has had two main areas of preoccupation. The youth crime crisis, the hysteria of which it is largely responsible for, and the construction of the Adani Carmichael Coal Mine, for which it naturally advocates.

Such conservatism is considered by many to be so innate that any level of leftism is often framed as being something of a southern import. This was naturally not helped by those southern leftists that did in fact travel to North Queensland to resist Adani, the most reviled of which being Bob Brown's ill-fated convoy.

But as much as the Townsville Bulletin, and others of that ilk, may want us to think so, leftism in the far north is not an import at all.

In fact, it was in Bowen -- the site of many an anti-Adani dispute -- that Fred Patterson, a member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), was elected to state parliament in 1944, the only member of the CPA to ever hold such a position.

The moment in which Patterson was successfully elected into government is often referred to as the "Red North", a historic period wherein North Queensland was proliferated with communist, anarchist and anti-fascist sentiment. This was driven by the rise of the Communist Party of Australia

and their growing influence in driving the union movement further left.

It was in the canefields that much of this sentiment was to be found, amongst Italian migrant workers agitating alongside their Australian comrades for better working conditions.

In 1935, cane cutters struck over Weil's Disease, a condition that resulted in fevers (and in some cases, death). Spread by rats urinating on wet ground and cane stalks, the spread of Weil's Disease could be prevented by the burning of cane, something farm owners furiously resisted as it resulted in a loss of profits.

3000 workers went on strike, despite substantial opposition from the Australian Workers Union (AWU), as well as the Brisbane Trades and Labour council who passed a resolution condemning the strike. It ended two months later, thanks to a combination of police force, the use of scab labour, and the efforts of the AWU.

But it was not without victory: a year later, in 1936, the industrial court passed a general order that cane must be burnt before harvesting. Beyond this, the strike was a considerable achievement in organisation and mobilisation for the CPA and engaged a number of community members that were traditionally considered to be a-political -- women and migrants, but also allies such as shopkeepers, miners and small farmers.

The presence of the Communist Party in the unions was what led Collinsville, a mining town 90 km south-west of Bowen, to be termed "Little Moscow" -- a name given to communities in the 20th century that held radical communist or socialist beliefs, often the result of the influence of a militant trade union. It was also a large part of their popularity amongst migrants and the working class, which is what ultimately led to Fred Patterson's electoral successes in 1939 in the Townsville City Council, and later to state parliament in 1944.

Though the strikes themselves certainly made the CPA, and communist sentiment, popular, it was the mutual aid and relief efforts during and beyond the 1935 strike that carried real favour within the community. Relief kitchens, as well as social and community events, went a long way in broadening the appeal of the strike, and of communist values as a whole.

These connections were what allowed the rapid organisation and mobilisation of a solidarity movement with the advent of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. 16 of the 21 relief committees in Australia were in North Queensland, and large amounts of funds were raised in aid of republican fighters. In Ingham, where wages were low and unemployment was high, only two families were reported as refusing to donate.

A large factor in the successes of these projects was the involvement of women, most of whom were the wives of cane cutters, members of the CPA, or outright communists themselves (or a combination of all three). Women's Progress Clubs were common throughout the region and organised everything from political activity to social dances and hospital visits. In Collinsville, the aforementioned "Little Moscow", the Country Women's Association (CWA) sent a representative to CPA conferences, and in Gladstone, the CWA organised a petition to call on the government to lift the ban on the Communist Party.

It was these activities that Diane Menghetti identified as weakening the "Red Bogey", in her book *The Red North*. Menghetti suggests that the "unusually extensive social life of the Party", as well as the regular publication of newsletters and bulletins, was crucial in undermining the sinister reputation of communist ideology amongst the community. Fred Patterson's *North Queensland Guardian* went a long way in furthering this aim -- publishing advertisements from local businesses, shying away from overt communist iconography, and advocating for the compatibility of communism and Christianity.

All this meant that, by the late 1930s, North Queensland had the largest and most active communist population outside of Sydney.

By the early 1940s, the Red North had faced two major setbacks -- the signing of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact, and the Soviet invasion of Finland, followed shortly thereafter by the banning of the Communist Party in 1940 by the Menzies government. Menghetti's history of the Red North, the most comprehensive of its kind, ends about there.

But that doesn't mean that the decline of communist industrial and community organising in the North was the end of political activity full stop. The ongoing resistance of Indigenous communities, which began in the North at first sight of European invasion, flourished in the years following the second world war, and remains the most consistent and active form of organising in the area to this day.

When local authorities attempted to deport Albie Geia from Palm Island in 1957, workers called a strike, which lasted for five days and ended with police raiding homes at gunpoint. In 2004, following the death of Cameron Doomagee in police custody, residents on Palm Island burnt down the local police station, barracks and courthouse. Most recently, Townsville has seen an increase in political vandalism -- the hands of a statue of slave trader and town founder Robert Towns painted red, and the words "Black Lives Matter"

spray painted on a bridge through the centre of town and at the entrance of the Palmer Street restaurant strip.

Anarchists Against Poverty NQ, which started organising in late 2019, identify this as some of the most radical activity in Australia full stop. "These have been some of the most radical acts of dissent our country has ever seen, including the burning down of a police station on Palm Island." They identify party politics, particularly those of the Greens and Labor, as a thorn in the side of radicalism in the region. "Political dissent has otherwise been captured and pacified by social democrats who may spruik loudly (but mostly do not) about their dissatisfaction with the current system while pursuing reforms which present no coherent systemic challenge."

Anarchists Against Poverty have recently opened a shop front and resource centre in South Townsville, conducting mutual aid as well as activism. They see "[providing] immediate relief to impoverished and otherwise marginalised and disempowered people within our community" as the most important part of their work, which is grounded in the principles of mutual aid. They receive support from the local community for their mutual aid project, mainly through the donation of groceries and other goods. According to Anarchists Against Poverty, "the community gives and the community receives."

Such a strategy, of providing mutual aid and facilitating greater community connection, as well as establishing a book shop and resource centre, is not unlike that of the communists and anarchists in the Red North of the 1930s. "Our praxis does in some ways coincide with what was being done here previously... although our direct action has been for the most part related to mutual aid and alleviating poverty whereas "back in the day" praxis was moreso geared toward workplace organising." It's certainly a far cry from Bob Brown's Anti-Adani Convoy, and other such misguided attempts at winning hearts and minds in North Queensland.

Anarchists Against Poverty NQ see the spirit of the Red North as being "alive in individuals", albeit hampered by the dearth of political organisation outside of the Greens, Labor and the unions. They are optimistic at the thought of reviving it "by finding individuals and empowering them through our praxis."

Looking through the political history of North Queensland, particularly that of Indigenous organising and activism, I share their optimism. The North is not as conservative as detractors would have you believe.

SULS faceoff: Flare, Vibe, Splash

Daany Saeed is trying to understand what the fuck is happening over in the law land elections.

Law students truly are insufferable. The only society on campus that warrants itself important enough to have a public election instead of an AGM, and the only cohort of students that thinks that this election warrants more debates than our actual federal elections. Nonetheless, the Sydney University Law Society is possibly the biggest society on campus, and it is certainly one of the most prevalent. The Society's leaders often go on to become prominent members of society across law, politics, academia and business, and the faculty by itself lays claim to more Prime Ministers than any other university in the country.

Naturally then, the elections are heated. Courtesy of some constitutional quirks, an election is not a regular event - it is only held if the Presidency is contested. Last year's election was the first since 2016 and this year is the first three-way race in recent memory. If you're not a law student, it is difficult to care, but often for those stupor nerds amongst us there can be some underlying political tension at play in the SULS election, with Liberal staffer Amer Nasr elected President last year on Pop for SULS.

Who's running?

Flare for SULS

Flare for SULS (or FLARE, as they like to style it) are being headed up by Wendy Hu, apparently pinching their 70s branding from the 2018 Law Revue, Austin Powers of Attorney. Flare are branding themselves as the experienced ticket - as the only ticket with students who have been on SULS Executive and Committees pre-and-post coronavirus. This is not uncharted territory for Hu, who ran unsuccessfully on Zest for SULS in 2019 on a similar brand of experience and assuredness.

When asked by *Honi* what the current administration could have improved, Flare pointed to the 'lack of support SULS has provided to international students this year. From the SULS COVID-19 Student Experiences Survey, it is clear that international students are disproportionately (affected by the pandemic). SULS has an imperative to support ALL students'. In contrast to the other tickets, Flare were 'invigorated' by the advocacy role SULS took this year in relation to issues affecting law students such as fee hikes and course cuts, where the other two tickets were disappointed. The current Executive has been explicitly reticent to encourage student activism, and pressed on this support, Flare 'acknowledge[d] more can be done to encourage direct action', and added 'Flare will commit to supporting law students organising under Law Against The Cuts'. Law Against The Cuts is a similarly named, but separate campaign to the broader and united Clubs Against the Cuts - it came about from the current Executive's reluctance to allow advertising and encouragement of protests against the Government's attacks on students this year. Directors were instead permitted to advertise the protests in their personal capacity, and Law Against The Cuts became a forum for this. Despite this, Flare committed

to taking further steps than this year's Executive, specifically in providing 'salient avenues for direct action such as protest, training legal observers, and advocating against adverse changes to the law student experience'.

Another major distinction between Flare and the other tickets has been a response to reports of wage theft and underpayment as rampant in the legal industry (particularly at large corporate firms, which Sydney Law has a reputation for producing graduates for) that surfaced last year in the *Australian Financial Review*. When asked how Flare would protect students in their capacity as Executive, Flare took a pragmatic approach, committing to 'diversifying the sponsorship base beyond the major commercial firms', 'kickstarting the Investment Project to avoid reliance on corporate sponsorship', and coordinating with the Australian Law Students Association (ALSA) to 'avoid firms simply shifting their funding to other societies and avoiding responsibility'.

Flare for SULS have shaped up as the safe choice this election - a highly experienced executive led by a Society stalwart in Wendy Hu and running with highly polished branding, their achievable and progressive policy positions are reflective of an understanding of the capabilities of the SULS Executive. This perhaps may turn off voters looking for fresh faces in the Society or altogether more ambitious policy, but certainly Flare present an attractive option for the voter that values competency and security.

Splash for SULS

Splash for SULS are led by Dani Stephenson, with muted branding of lavender and baby blue. Splash has focused on social justice and equity in their approach to the election, which could prove decisive in a year where activism is at the forefront of most, if not all student interactions. Splash have brought on board as vice-presidents presidential candidate Max Vishney (Education), current Queer Officer Eden McSheffrey (Social Justice) and JD student Tatiana Neumann-Murphy (Careers). Stephenson's recruiting approach seems to have been rooted in electioneering, with big names across the ticket - former USU Board Director and Honorary Treasurer Maya Eswaran has fittingly joined as the Treasurer candidate, Socials Director Alex De Araujo (Secretary) was considered a driving force behind Pop's comprehensive victory last year, and perennial Law Revue star Genevieve Couvret (Publications) has joined on as well. Whilst the Law Revue was one of the casualties of COVID-19 this year, it seems it has served Stephenson well during election season, with many of the popular figures involved in the annual production turning out for Splash on social media. This has intersected with a very strong debating presence; Vishney, Couvret, De Araujo, Eswaran and Grace Wong (Socials) are all active members of the well-connected USU Debating Society.

In critiquing the current Executive, Splash spoke to the importance of

'representative infrastructure', citing it as a primary reason why the Society's response to Government policy changes in education was 'ad hoc and insufficient' - this is a curious critique, given the strong representation of the current Executive on the Splash ticket. Do as we say, not as we do? Stephenson has been conspicuously absent from discussions on student activism throughout the year. Pressed on this, Splash raised the experience and policy positions of Eden McSheffrey, its Social Justice candidate, and emphasised that they have the 'fullest faith in his ability to oversee our focus on social justice'. Nonetheless, Splash have detailed policy on social justice, and their flagship policy of a Community Legal Centre akin to that at the University of New South Wales is unique amongst any of the tickets. In responding to issues of sponsor impropriety in terms of wage theft, Splash were reticent (as were other tickets) to consider dropping sponsors that committed wage theft altogether, but emphasised the importance of diversifying the careers programs in place in the Society, allowing students alternatives to the grind of clerkship applications at corporate firms - this uniquely manifests in an 'internship for credit program', prioritising paid internships and valuing public interest legal work. Other unique and equally ambitious policies brought forward by Splash include a wellbeing stipend for every law student (which despite not being costed, Splash assures us has the support of the Faculty) and a publicly available reference generator compliant with the Australian Guide to Legal Citation.

Splash for SULS are the idealist's choice - Dani Stephenson's team have presented by some margin the most extravagant policy platform, despite the challenges presented in a post-coronavirus climate. Whilst their commitment to social justice is admirable given the ongoing attacks on law students, their electoral choices obfuscate the strength of this commitment slightly. A student familiar with campus society machinations would perhaps be skeptical of the package in lavender, but nonetheless it seems an uncontroversial prediction that Stephenson's ticket will poll well, win or loss.

Vibe for SULS

A conversation with Casper Lu makes clear very quickly that his first love was not met at Law Camp, but was the Society itself. Lu is practically part of the furniture in the Law Faculty, and his ticket, Vibe for SULS, aims to bring a range of new faces to a Society historically criticised for its narrow engagement. Vibe have led with party-esque branding characterised by garish neons and highly processed election profile pictures, in a campaign managed by recent campus politics upstart Riley Vaughan. Vibe's ticket lacks the star power or the established experience of its rivals, but they look to make up for it with an innovative policy platform that should intrigue a new range of voters and law students who may not

otherwise engage with the society.

On the issue of advocacy, Vibe keeps to the straight and narrow, joining the other two tickets in opposing the fee hikes and course cuts that have been so controversial in federal politics. In keeping with Lu's structured approach to most political issues, Vibe articulated a two-pronged criterion regarding broader advocacy in the community - 'whether the issue affects a not-insignificant group of law students', and 'whether on balance a proposed action is beneficial to the Society'. On the issue of sponsor relations, Vibe departs from the activist position of Flare and the laissez-faire approach of Splash, emphasising the importance of education on work rights. Their proposed approach is however curious - 'this would involve firms that have been accused of underpayments coming in to assuage potential graduates of changing work practices'. Giving advertising to bosses with a history of worker exploitation in return for sponsor dollars may be lucrative in a tough economy, but it may not necessarily have the educative effect Vibe desires.

Despite their fresh faces, the question of 'cliques' was raised in assessing the makeup of the Vibe ticket. There are more graduates from The King's School alone than there are women in their senior leadership team, and all of their vice-presidents are white domestic students. Pressed on this, Vibe contended 'the SULS clique is hard to define, and it seems to depend on their involvement in SULS. Our ticket will help detract from that perception (that SULS is reserved for the clique). This is because our candidates aren't drawn from past SULS executives'. Vibe further stressed the multidimensionality of privilege, and that members of the ticket that had attended elite schools on scholarship were equipped with a 'point of insight for what it may be like for students entering Sydney Law without a great deal of educational or high-SES privilege', allowing 'engagement with those of disadvantaged backgrounds [as] a priority in our policies'.

Membership and guidance is at the forefront of the Vibe policy platform - with mental health becoming such a prominent and salient issue for the cohort during the pandemic, Vibe's commitment to ongoing mentorship programs that extend significantly upon the rudimentary programs already in place is welcome. Vibe for SULS presents as an intriguing choice for a student perhaps disillusioned with the cliques of years gone by, one that has spent time on the outer of the SULS machine or is new to the faculty this year and sees value in starting afresh. Vibe has more first year representation than other campaigns, and this may be where their electoral path to victory may lie. Whether their commitment to a non-establishment team is a winner, as Pop for SULS was last year, is yet to be seen, but certainly it will be interesting to see how Vibe polls in contrast to the heavyweight campaigns they're competing with.

Responding to crisis and the future of university organising

Lara Sonnenschein examines the decline of the Australian university sector and the new networks that have formed in response.

In a year marked by Covid, it seems relevant that our last feature article this year analyses how the pandemic has played out within the Australian university sector, and how we have and should be responding to what is a national crisis, with variegated manifestations across campuses. The mainstream narrative has attempted to isolate the pandemic discretely, often buying into managerial rhetoric regarding the *unfortunate necessity* of staff and course cuts, yet properly grappling with this crisis requires a historically situated and holistic approach.

Whilst the pandemic has weakened universities, the coronavirus has not infected a healthy higher education sector from within, but further exposed its vulnerabilities and accelerated the system's decline. Of course, it has given 'crisis cover' to university managements to pursue austerity measures, alongside a Coalition Federal Government hellbent on remaking the higher education sector.

How did we get here?

The government refused to extend JobKeeper to public universities, even changing the scheme a third time, following Sydney University's brief eligibility and use. Further, the LNP's "relief package" announced in April included an *already budgeted* for \$18 billion for domestic students regardless of higher education enrolment numbers and provided no targeted welfare measures for international students. So, why did the government deliberately exclude universities from the supplement, and only offer measly crumbs?

The Coalition has a longstanding record of attacking the university sector. John Howard, as Liberal opposition leader, established the Coalition's "waste watch" committee in 1986 to track what was deemed as unnecessary spending. This opposition to university research was again seen in 2018 when then Education Minister Simon Birmingham personally intervened to secretly reject Australian Research Centre grants in the humanities. Much of conservative opposition to universities appears to be ideological — from attempts to deregulate the university sector in 2014, to the manufactured free speech crisis at universities where the *French Review* found campus freedom of speech to not be under threat.

The Ramsay Centre's attempts — some successful, some unsuccessful — to set up Western Civilisation degrees on campuses also had the LNP's fingerprints all over it. Chaired by John Howard, counting Tony Abbott as a board member, and set up by Paul Ramsay, the biggest individual donor to the Liberals, the Centre functions as a political project motivated by a belief in Western supremacy, and the desire to instil this vision within the public university sector, seen as too left-wing and anti-Western.

This year, the LNP also passed their "Job-ready Graduates Package" with support from the Centre Alliance. The measure, more than doubles the cost of humanities degrees, lowers the cost

of degrees including: maths, science, engineering and teaching, and is largely underpinned by a culture-wars-opposition to the humanities. The policy effectively sees the student contribution rise from 42 per cent to 52 per cent, and ironically, also makes STEM students worse off, as explained by USyd's Gareth Bryant. However, the ALP cannot be let off the hook when interrogating Australia's university crisis. Despite introducing free education under the Whitlam government, the ALP set the groundwork for the neoliberalisation of universities with the "Dawkins Revolution", and replaced free education with the HECS system. Additionally, the Gillard government uncapped the number of places universities could offer students, without increasing funding. Contextually, Australia's public investment in tertiary education is low when compared to similar economies. Australian students pay higher fees than those in most similar OECD countries.

Over the past three decades, casualised employment has ballooned, with up to 70 per cent of staff at some universities precariously employed. Wages paid to casuals typically do not encapsulate the amount of work staff are required to do, either because their rates do not reflect what is mandated in Enterprise Agreements or because such rates do not actually translate to the hours worked in performing contracted tasks. Currently ten universities have been forced to repay unpaid wages owed to casual staff, including almost \$9 million at USyd alone.

The NTEU's response

Given this crisis was decades in the making, the pandemic left the sector especially exposed. Universities had adapted somewhat to decreased government funding and support via casualisation, wage theft and revenue raising from international students, though this income dried up in large part as a result of border closures, in tandem with inadequate government support.

In response to the pandemic's additional burden on the sector, the senior leadership of the NTEU negotiated the Jobs Protection Framework (JPF) with Vice-Chancellors, represented by the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association. At its core, the JPF (an opt-in agreement), was a concessionary strategy which sought to trade decreases in pay and conditions (including wage cuts of up to 15 per cent) in exchange for a nominal commitment from university managements to save jobs.

Theoretically, the JPF would save 12,000 of the 30,000 jobs estimated to be lost. The NTEU's strategy was for individual branches to vote in favour of the agreement, and if their respective university managements agreed, negotiations would begin in officially changing existing union branch agreements with universities. Ultimately, the proposal was deficient, and arguably illogical insofar as it represented bosses and an organisation meant to represent

workers coalesced around the logics of austerity and implementing cuts. Accordingly, the agreement was premised on the notion that the crisis had to be shouldered by students and staff. There have been some apt comparisons made between the JPF and the ALP-ACTU Accord. Whilst the Accord and the JPF are by no means indistinguishable, both shift the terrain in fighting for better wages and conditions from the grassroots level to the officialdom level via bureaucratic mechanisms.

The JPF has been resoundingly defeated as a national project. National NTEU President Alison Barnes told *Honi* the agreement failed because: "it would have required universities to be financially transparent", pinning it on Vice-Chancellors "walking away from any accountability or any pressure to

Whilst the pandemic has weakened universities, the coronavirus has not infected a healthy higher education sector from within, but further exposed its vulnerabilities and accelerated the system's decline.

actually open their books and make their finances clear." She also characterised the agreement as a "tactic designed to save jobs." This comes off as a somewhat unsatisfactory answer given the agreement was negotiated with four Vice-Chancellors in the first place. Importantly, there was also no membership consultation in drafting the agreement. Unsurprisingly, the framework was met with widespread opposition from the rank-and-file. Whilst Barnes acknowledged there was resistance to the framework ("anything that you design is going to attract criticism"), she dismissed pushback as a key reason for the failure of the framework. "When push comes to shove, it was really the Vice-Chancellors," she explained.

On whether she thought pursuing a concessionary approach in the JPF early on would set campuses back during enterprise bargaining agreements fast approaching, she was resolute. "I don't think that at all. I think we have to focus on bargaining...building our membership and being prepared." NTEU membership has increased this year, and is the highest it has ever been, which Barnes touts as a success. This is in part because of the three month fee waiver the union offered casual workers towards the beginning of the pandemic, though Barnes notes growth "across all sections of the membership." However, the National President also stressed the importance of building density across campuses. Addressing the NTEU's successes, she highlighted being one of the first unions to secure paid pandemic leave, including for casuals, along with significant engagement with the "Fund Uni Fairly" campaign.

Yet, many remain unsatisfied with the Union leadership's approach.

The rise of new networks

Given the JPF was negotiated without members' consultation, there was considerable backlash when the deal became public. NTEU Fightback formed soon in response, and was central to organising the "vote no" campaign around the framework. The group has local origins, beginning at Sydney University. Professional staff member, Alma Torlakovic, in collaboration with other activists successfully moved a motion condemning the national leadership's approach at a USyd branch meeting.

Melbourne University and RMIT also voted against the JPF before details emerged. It is no surprise then that these universities are understood to have the highest density nationwide. At USyd in particular, the dispute over a second strike

in 2017, and the contested 2018 NTEU elections showed there was potential to "organise outside the regular structures within the Union," NTEU member and Senior Lecturer in History David Brophy explains.

Rank-and-file members, especially from these three campuses began informal discussions on resisting the framework via social media. However, after approximately a fortnight, *Honi* understands there were divergent views regarding the structure of, what was at this point, a loose assemblage of left-wing union activists, set to become something more coherent, formal and public. Two groups emerged — Fightback, with a more disciplined and centralised organising approach, led by Socialist Alternative, and NHEAN (National Higher Education Network), a more non-hierarchical and pluralistic network. Significantly, NHEAN also voted in favour of unprotected industrial action, with Nick Riemer telling the *Sydney Morning Herald*: "Our motion commits us to the goal of 'making democratically planned unprotected industrial action possible.'"

On the success of the "vote no" campaign, Torlakovic told *Honi*: "There were eight campuses in the end out of forty across Australia, that the officials managed to push some kind of framework, because of weaker opposition at those places."

Ultimately, NHEAN and Fightback are similar, emerging in opposition to the JPF and characterised by desires for more militant unionism. Speaking to members from both, there was one main distinction — the strategic relation to union officials. Whilst both broadly understand officials as often preferring to mediate, over

agitate, and view them as generally less militant than the rank-and-file, engaging with such officials is a point of contention. For example, regarding the National Day of Action — a car convoy to Liberal Party headquarters aimed at the Federal Government — a NHEAN member told *Honi* that the day was perhaps not the time to “have slogans about the JPF highlighted on your material.” “Maybe you want people to come out to the rally that don’t know where they stand yet.” Contrastingly, Fightback thought endorsement of the event from more militant members gave left cover to the concessionary approach.

Both have condemned issues of transparency within the union or examples of officials’ alleged or demonstrated intervention. Fightback publicly rebuked the National Council’s recent vote (71-41) to not reinstate delegate access to lists of members in local areas.

Honi understands this was revoked in light of the JPF debate, and that prior to this year there were no issues in elected representatives gaining access to lists. Whilst not a public statement, a post in NHEAN’s organising group — with over a thousand members — alleges that NSW NTEU Secretary Michael Thomson intervened in a panel NHEAN was set to host, which included an MUA organiser, on the possibilities of industrial action. “Michael said that doing so would represent an endorsement by the MUA of NHEAN over the elected leadership of the NTEU.”

In addressing opposition to the JPF, Barnes spoke positively — “The union should be able to embrace debate.” Though such debate seems to not extend to union staff. In an email dated May 19 seen by *Honi*, National General Secretary Matthew McGowan said:

“Branches of the Union have no separate legal personality and may not overturn the decisions of the National Executive. To be clear, this means that Branch resources including staff should not be used for the circulation of materials hostile to the Union’s adopted position. Union members who are not staff are entitled to campaign individually however they wish, but union resources are not to be used to campaign against the Union’s own position or decision.”

The email was sent on the same day USyd Branch President Kurt Iveson came out publicly against the framework.

In addition to Fightback and NHEAN, campuses have seen the proliferation of casuals organising. Whilst almost always union members, casuals networks operate autonomously in decision-making processes. In attributing the reason behind the rise of such groups, USyd Casuals Network member, Rob Boncardo puts it down to “the fragmentation of the

workforce itself” and drew distinctions with groups like Fightback. “It’s really the new recruits, or the people who don’t have a background in organised left or organised union politics.”

The USyd network recently released their interim report, which showed that 84 per cent of participants performed unpaid labour. *Honi* understands the network had been approached to formally join the NTEU, which has supported the group’s documentation of wage theft, though ultimately the network prefers to remain autonomous, and doesn’t want to be subsumed. The Casualised, Unemployed and Precarious Uni Workers (CUPUW) organisation, a national grouping of casuals networks around the country also formed in May this year, in a meeting called by the Monash Casuals Network. A CUPUW spokesperson told *Honi*: “Casuals have been left out of the discussion. We need to organise and we need to organise in solidarity with other workers in the sector.”

The role of students and student organisations

All union members that *Honi* spoke to expressed the importance of student solidarity with staff — whether it was Barnes quoting the mantra of “staff working conditions being student learning conditions,” Boncardo drawing material comparisons between casual workers and students, or staff reminiscing about picket lines. From defeating fee deregulation, to mobilising against the Vietnam War, students have historically played a critical part in fighting for a better higher education, and in social movements more broadly. It’s clear that students can secure wins if they organise collectively.

However, we are in many ways dealing with more difficult circumstances than generations past - organising in a pandemic, the cost of living near campus, and the implementation of VSU in 2006. Speaking on the latter, National Union of Students (NUS) President Molly Willmott tells *Honi*: “VSU was more than a financial move, it was a sustained campaign to destroy students mobilising.” Historian and former USyd student, Tim Briedis, who has researched student activism extensively said, “VSU served to enclose the realm of student politics, helping the richer metropolitan universities have better funded and more vibrant activist scenes. At Western Sydney University for instance, there was an active and effective left pre-VSU that was more or less entirely wiped out.”

Whilst there is little disagreement over the shared interests of students and staff, and students as active agents in the higher

education struggle, as with staff there are key disagreements over strategy, the degree of militancy, and of course, the relevance of student unions. Whilst acknowledging that “having a left wing President certainly doesn’t hurt,” Briedis highlights that “students haven’t necessarily needed left wing student unions to organise effectively.” Comparatively, USyd SRC Education Officer Jack Mansell, USyd SRC President Liam Donohoe and Willmott place more emphasis on the relevance of them.

There are noticeable distinctions in their assessments of this year however. Willmott thinks that the “NUS has had one of the more successful years in recent history,” pointing to two national campaigns — “Save our Students” and the campaign against the Job-Ready Graduates Package. She counts NUS’ biggest win as the amendment to the coronavirus welfare supplement in April, and the biggest failure as failing to defeat fee hikes. Comparatively, Mansell describes the “NUS this year [as] a pretty shameful indictment on the politics of both Molly (NLS) and Lincoln (Grassroots-Independents). In the midst of an historic crisis in higher education, NUS should’ve been organising protests, meetings, actions, stunts, and taking a confrontational approach to management and the government.”

Based in Melbourne, there were certainly difficulties in NUS office bearers organising on the ground for the most part. Of course, relocation elsewhere in the country may have been feasible, though it is questionable what tangible impact a couple of paid office bearers would have in coordinating what is ostensibly a national campaign from a different city. Pertinently, both NLS and the Grassroots-Independents place importance on lobbying, so whilst a failure to organise on the ground, can in some instances be explained by the pandemic, efforts to persuade, in particular Centre Alliance’s Rebekha Sharkie (initially seemingly against the fee hikes), highlight a misstep in either NUS’ political orientation, the pair’s persuasive capabilities or both. Structural barriers also impede left-wing organising within the NUS, including a Labor Right majority on the National Executive. NUS also typically adopts a policy against paying student protesters’ fines, particularly relevant this year.

What unites Willmott, Mansell and Donohoe though is the belief that USyd has led the student fightback this year, with the campaign successfully drawing new students aside from established campus activists. Willmott attributes this to “a culture of on the ground militant activism which doesn’t exist in a lot of places.” Mansell, meanwhile, says USyd

has “the best campus activist culture,” in addition to “a solid rank-and-file” union and “the biggest revolutionary socialist club in the country.”

Donohoe describes USyd’s dominance as a “complex confluence” of various factors. He posits that USyd is “pretty much the only campus where a genuinely activist left controls the student union relatively uninhibited.” He also mentions the considerable presence of Grassroots, Solidarity and Socialist Alternative, in addition to many unaligned people with left wing views. Further, he motions to the University’s Political Economy Department, the campus’ history in attracting more left-wing people, and finally the SRC’s traditional structure, which, compared to other campus unions, gives students more resources and allows for a more activist orientation.

USyd students have consistently mobilised in actions against the government and management, accumulating the overwhelming majority of the \$54,000 in fines at protests. Students have borne the brunt of police brutality, taken to City Road on more than one occasion, occupied F23 — the University Administration building, defied the *Public Health Act*, and have certainly played an integral part in the NSW Government’s decision to allow protests of up to 500 people. Speaking on this, Donohoe says USyd students have shown themselves to be “really brave,” quickly “becoming used to repressive organising conditions.” “People have so much more confidence, like taking City Road willy nilly, which people used to never do.”

Where to from here?

In assessing the path forward, there are no easy answers. Many unionists *Honi* spoke to highlighted Jane McAlevey’s “deep organising” approach, and most staff and students alike believe strike action looms, though conditions are precarious. However, in transforming our university sector into one which benefits society at large, what a former USyd NTEU organiser says rings true: “The only people who are capable of doing that are the people who work at universities. No one else is going to do it. If it’s not the people who work in them, it’s going to be the managerial forces that control them currently. It’s incumbent on the people working within universities to do it not just for themselves, and their fucking pay packets, but for the whole of society.”

In what will be my last ever print article for *Honi* as an editor, I hope I can return to the Fisher Library archives (in the hopefully not too distant future), look back on this piece fondly and see a truly democratic university.

Michael Spence's response to complaints puts USyd students in danger

Nina Dillon Britton is sick of this shit.

Two weeks ago, Vice Chancellor Michael Spence received a complaint alleging that a recent *Honi Soit* article had “dismissed”, “trivialised” and “othered” Hindus and Hinduism. The complaint did not quote any particular parts of the article to support these allegations, which is unsurprising, given the article does none of these things.

The article in question, published in the week 9 edition of *Honi Soit*, investigated the complex question of how spiritual practices come to be defined by religion. Written by a reporter who was himself raised Hindu, the article concludes that it is inaccurate to label the widely varying spiritual practices that have been practiced throughout South Asia for centuries as a singular religion. The author argues that the idea of a unified religion of Hinduism emerged in British colonialism, through colonists'

attempts to describe indigenous spiritual practices by forcing them into the mould of a unified religion.

If Spence had ever bothered to spend the minutes required to read the article, I doubt he would have flattered the complaint with his response. Instead, his generic response to the complaint states that “any form of religious vilification or discrimination... is unacceptable on our campuses” and a promises that the University “will consider this matter seriously.”

It is the latter remark that has now made headlines in several national-level Indian and American Hindu newspapers, which restate in almost exact terms a press release from the complainant. That is how the outrage machine works: send a strongly worded complaint about a vaguely described misconduct to the University, use the vice chancellor's

promise of “seriously” considering the matter in a press-release to sympathetic publications, wait for outrage to spread, rinse and repeat. For the editor of *Honi*, it was through one such article we first learnt we had been referred to the Student Affairs Unit for assessment of the complaint.

In this case, it appears the complainant, an American “Hindu statesman” (an apparently made up term) spends some significant portion of his life doing this. A brief perusal of the media releases on his website indicate that he has led important crusades against Etsy for selling Ganesh underwear, Japanese manga for “trivialising” Lord Shiva, and the Paris Opera for “hosting culturally insensitive ballet *La Bayadère*”. Though the complainant's name features prominently in all the releases I read (what good luck for his public profile), the releases also consistently

frame outrage on behalf of all 1.4 billion Hindus, rather than the complainant himself. Little wonder Etsy pulled their underwear.

The article published in *Honi* was exactly the kind of critical, good faith public debate on the part of a student that the University appears to encourage in its newly-enacted Free Speech Charter. But only the deeply naive would think that is something the University is actually committed to. When push comes to shove, when the interests of students come up against even the vaguest threat to the University's image, as it will constantly do due to opportunistic, outraged entrepreneurs, it is always clear the path which the University cares about more. That Spence could not even be bothered to read a short, well-written article before fanning the flames of outrage with a careless response says it all.

Van Gogh Alive - and probably turning in his grave

Fabian Robertson on the new phenomenon of art exhibitions without art.

Do you like attending galleries, but are sick of all the art? Bored of exhibition rooms that you can't use for Instagram backdrops? Tired of having to look at artworks rather than through the viewfinder of your iPhone? Well, a new breed of installation art is emerging just for you. “Faux-art” exhibitions involve large-scale visual spectacles to capitalise on the growing synergy of social media and installation art. But instead of combining genuine artistic endeavour with incidental social media suitability, faux-art exhibitions go one step further by excluding the art altogether.

Take *Van Gogh Alive* — Sydney's newest and glossiest multi-sensory exhibition. Observant attendees may notice that no artist is credited with its production. This is simply because there is no art involved. Instead, the exhibition is a glorified slideshow hastily assembled by an international corporation exploiting Van Gogh's name for maximum profits.

Hosted by Grande Exhibitions, a subsidiary of Grande Experiences, *Van Gogh Alive* projects high-quality images of Van Gogh's paintings on gigantic floor to ceiling screens in a continuous, looping reel of about 45 minutes. The screens are assembled in a rectangular room-like format that is completely devoid of creativity and fails to invite interaction or exploration like installations such as Tokyo's TeamLab Planets. The slideshow vaguely chronicles Van Gogh's life and is accompanied by enlarged images of his most notable quotes that the creators probably got from Goodreads. All

this occurs in a darkened warehouse space with classical music playing over loudspeakers. In the absence of original works, Grande Experiences' only artistic input consists of minor digital alterations in the projected paintings. This manifests in wave-like animations in the sky, water and wheat of *Starry Night*, *Starry Night Over the Rhône* and *Wheatfield With Crows* respectively — animations that could be made in a couple of hours by an 11-year-old with access to YouTube and a free trial of Adobe Creative Cloud.

But the nail in the coffin has to be the ending credits. Seconds after Van Gogh's suicide is tactfully portrayed by a gunshot sound effect, your eyes are assaulted by a GRANDE EXHIBITIONS logo on a white screen. This is followed by an obnoxious television advertisement for its other worldwide installations including PLANET SHARK: PREDATOR OR PREY and ALICE — A WONDERLAND ADVENTURE, firmly placing this corporate money-grab in the same artistic category as a tacky cinema experience at a theme park.

Despite an absence of creativity and taste, Grande Experiences will make far more from Van Gogh's work than Van Gogh ever did himself. Indeed, Grande Experiences' website boasts more than 17 million visitors in 145 cities — a gross contrast to Van Gogh's lifelong struggle to sell paintings to anyone other than his own brother. So, instead of lining the pockets of corporate parasites, save yourself \$30

by setting up your own DIY Grande Experience in five easy steps. First, set Spotify's ‘Classical Essentials Playlist’ to shuffle on your laptop. Second, turn off the lights and close the blinds in your chosen room. Third, open up a web browser so you can see two windows at once. Fourth, load up “Van Gogh Art” on Google Images in one window and “Van Gogh Quotes” on Goodreads in the other. Finally, invite strangers over to pose in front of the laptop and block your view of the artworks. Muy Grande! Enjoy!

Crucial to its economic viability, *Van Gogh Alive* is perfect for individuals who can't view art without telling their Instagram followers that they have, in fact, viewed art. Attendees pose for photos in front of projected works that, by the time the photo is taken, they won't be able to observe due to the progression of the slideshow. But at least they can chuck it on their story, right?

Undoubtedly, Grande Experiences are exploiting the rising popularity of Instagram-friendly exhibitions. But it is important to note that *Van Gogh Alive* is a distinctly shit one. Artists such as Yayoi Kusama, James Turrell, Ai Wei Wei, Olafur Eliasson and Marina Abramovich produce original, groundbreaking art that also happens to look good on your feed. Hence, it is vital that we are able to differentiate between genuine installation art and faceless corporate money-grabs. If not, there may be significant ramifications for installation art itself. For if international conglomerates like Grande Experiences become the

norm, could they displace independent artists and potentially inhibit the rise of future creators? Could installation art become another victim of social media vanity, ruthless capitalist industry and undiscerning consumers?

In fairness, *Van Gogh Alive* is actually an okay experience. Its potential to instil an appreciation of art in youth and the broader public holds value. And there's something quietly beautiful about watching giant, moving masterpieces alongside strangers, wordlessly connecting in your shared admiration. Yet the reality that this belies is ugly. Van Gogh's art wasn't made to be projected on a screen, or to boost the profit margins of an international company. While I'm hesitant to declare parameters constraining the definition of art, a clear line must be drawn between independent artistic projects and soulless events like *Van Gogh Alive*. These corporate exhibitions threaten the very essence of installation art, and it's up to us to know the difference.

Perhaps ironically, one of the quotes projected in *Van Gogh Alive* reads as follows: “In the end, we shall have had enough of cynicism, skepticism and humbug, and we shall want to live more musically.” In this case, however, I think it's possible that Van Gogh would agree with me. There is nothing musical about a rich corporation getting richer by exploiting art that is not their own. In this case — for the sake of art — cynicism, skepticism and humbug might just be warranted.

Politics, artwashing and protest within the Biennale format

Alice Sandner looks at how art boycotts have proliferated around the globe.

In 2014, the 19th Biennale of Sydney Imagine What You Desire, was rocked by controversy. Its founding corporate partner, Transfield Services, came under immense public backlash for its ties to Australia's off-shore detention centres. Transfield Holdings, a company partially owned by Transfield Services, had recently finalised contracts with the Department of Defence and Border Security, expanding its existing involvement on Manus Island and Nauru to manage its welfare services and garrisons. The Biennale of Sydney found itself as an exposed link in a chain of corporate and government bodies closely connected to human suffering.

This unveiling of the political and corporate underbelly of a biennale was not isolated to the Sydney context. In that same year, mounting dissent grew against the Bienal de São Paulo in Brazil and Manifesta 10 in Russia. At São Paulo, the arts community protested funding accepted from the Israeli government following their recent airstrikes in Gaza. At Manifesta, which is held biannually in different locations throughout Europe, criticism focused on the event's location: St Petersburg, Russia. The Russian government had only recently passed legislation that prohibited the dissemination of information on non-heteronormative relationships to minors, as well as annexing Crimea. Across these examples, critics protested the practice of "artwashing" of the unethical deeds of governments or corporations through the biennale format. They reveal a fundamental disjunction between how art institutions represent themselves as platforms of progressive artistic expression and how they are actually constituted. Furthermore, it raises difficult questions as to the enmeshment of the arts within mechanisms of power, be they state or neoliberal.

In Sydney, a series of open letters and outside pressure from local activist groups such as RISE, raised awareness of Transfield's business activities in the broader public. The tragic death of 23 year-old Iranian-Kurdish refugee Reza Barati in a violent outbreak between G4S guards, Papua New Guinea Police and refugees in the Manus Island detention centre, served to further hone the media's attention on Transfield. The company was now directly linked to the very public death of an individual who had been protesting the inhumane conditions in the camp. Artists, art workers and the broader team at the Biennale were forced to grapple with their own complicity in Australia's offshore detention policy.

Due to the neoliberal ideological positioning of our government that encourages the privatisation of the arts,

public funding for the arts has been on a steady decline. Arts think tank A New Approach found that federal funding for the arts in Australia has fallen 19% per capita since 2007-8. This has intentionally forced arts organisations to become more dependent on sources of private funding. In this climate, ties to transnational corporations and their potentially nefarious business dealings seem inevitable. Gregory Sholette has labelled this tendency as "progressivism," whereby an art institution projects an image of itself as a progressive

platform for the discussion of liberal ideas in a civil society, but is nonetheless bulwarked by a conservative economic foundation benefiting from its cultural capital. Art therefore, cannot be seen as separate to capitalism, rather it is intrinsic to it and crucial for the perpetuation of controlled social narratives and branding for corporate partners.

Days after Reza Barati's death, a group of participating artists dubbed "The Working Group" released an open letter calling for the board of the Biennale to cut its ties with Transfield:

"[The] issue has presented us with an opportunity to become aware of, and to acknowledge, responsibility for our own participation in a chain of connections that links to human suffering; in this case, that is caused by Australia's policy of mandatory detention."

The Biennale board responded to this call by asserting their loyalty to Transfield, claiming: "the only certainty is that without the support of our founding partner the Biennale would

cease to exist." Transfield reversed the responsibility back onto the artists: they were instead encouraged to use the platform of the Biennale to express their dissent artistically. This response is unsurprising given that in 2014, the Biennale board was made up entirely of corporates and art patrons – not a single artist, curator, critic, or arts worker was included.

Without any further action from the board between the 26th of February and the 5th of March, nine artists withdrew from the event, including Ahmet Ögüt, Libia

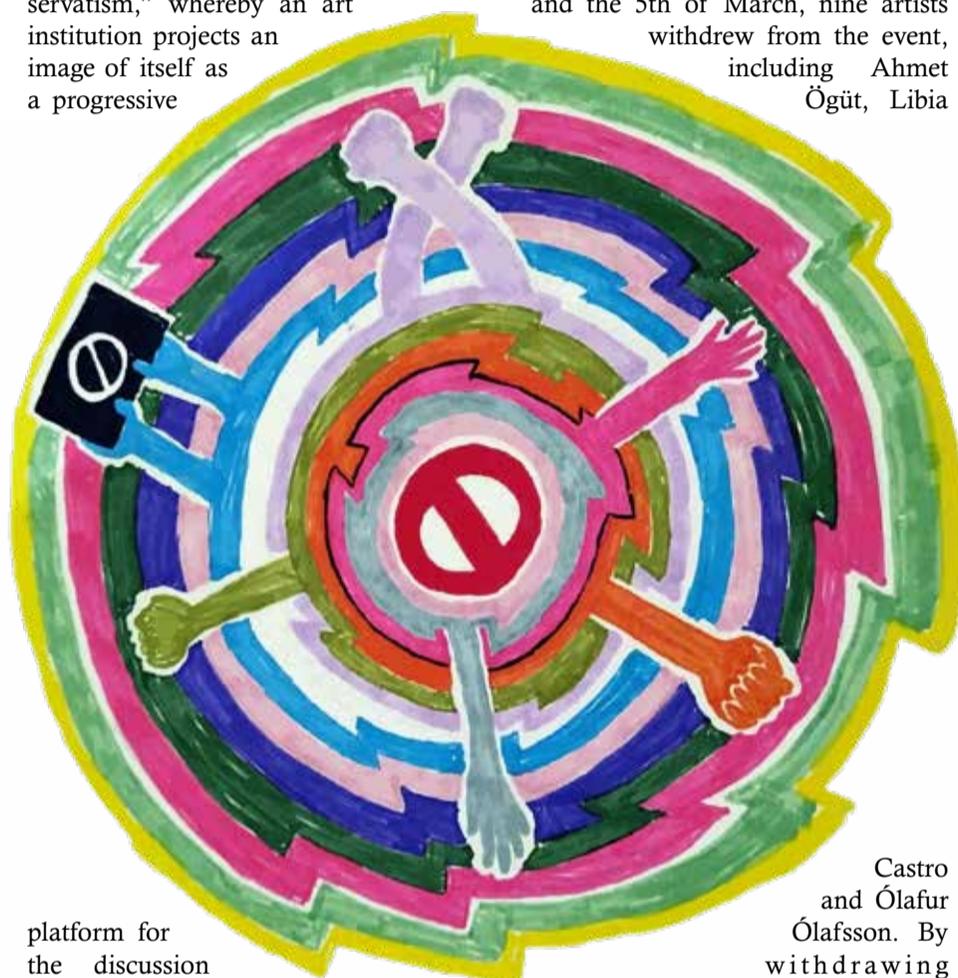
The boycott resulted in Luca Belgiorno-Nettis stepping down as Chair of the board and the severing of funding ties with Transfield. However, some criticised the effectiveness of the boycott. A common critique was that it was a pyrrhic victory, that it didn't alter Australia's offshore detention policy and came at too high a cost for the arts community. However, Bilqui Ghanni a refugee and activist explained at a mass meeting in Sydney on March 18, 2014:

"Nobody expected the boycott would end mandatory detention in one swoop. But it does show that artists and members of the public can effect change and have begun by reducing the symbolic capital of Transfield, which has profited from mandatory detention."

Ultimately, the Biennale is a public event that engages in the discourses of our broader civic society. Nikos Papastergiadis has described this as a "cosmopolitan imaginary," where art is an active participant in creating situations for dialogue and an experience of the intermingling of culture and politics in "relational" and nuanced ways. Despite the attempts of politicians and the board to quash the artist's dissent and to carry on with "business as usual," artists, activists and the broader public demanded the Biennale be a public space that is porous and responsive to these broader discourses.

As events of immense visibility that investigate the tension and contradictions between the local and global, it is unsurprising that biennales continually find themselves as sites of political contestation. In fact, they have a reputation for fostering subversive and critical artistic practice establishing global networks between participating artists. Curator Juliana Engberg's title for the 2014 Biennale: Imagine What You Desire was a telling proposition for artists to grapple with the world around them, calling to question: "what kind of society do we want to live in?" For the Biennale's board in hindsight, this provocation perhaps more closely resembles the phrase's counterpart: be careful what you wish for. Art boycotts and withdrawals remain a versatile political tool for holding institutions to account.

Art by Lilly Aggio.



Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson. By withdrawing themselves and their works, they politicised the role of the artist. Rather than using their practice as a means of critique, they mobilised the power they had as prominent artists whose work had already been planned for inclusion and advertised as a draw for audiences. The smooth operation of the Biennale was disrupted. Bipartisan debate engulfed the media, with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull labelling the boycott "vicious ingratitude" on the artists' part, and Culture Minister George Brandis calling to change the Australia Council's mandate which would see recipients of funding punished if they turned down non-government funding on "unreasonable" grounds. This political outrage, for an area that receives a mere 0.5% of the government's annual budget, can only be interpreted as emblematic of the prevailing value associated with the arts in perpetuating a national image and values. The Biennale is after all, one of the largest art events in the Asia-Pacific region.

Can electronic music be revolutionary?

Chuyi Wang chats with Jamie Stewart, Laura Les and Estoc on strategies to unite radical politics with electronic music production.

For the past four years, a large part of the soundtrack to my life has been DJ Sprinkles' (Terre Thaemlitz) 2008 deep house album, *Midtown 120 Blues*. Initially discovering it through a dodgy Souleseek peer-to-peer link on a midnight journey to 4chan, I finally obtained a physical CD copy in 2019 during a trip to Tokyo: scratched up, clearly well-loved, but at least with its liner notes intact. The record's significance to me has changed drastically over time, and with repeated listens I find myself appreciating new shades of meaning I could only grasp at before. While I was initially drawn to the music's aesthetic elements – the silky production and patient basslines that made Thaemlitz's singles so seminal to the genre – I've oddly begun to anticipate the two sparse and scattered monologues that punctuate the pauses between tracks more than the tracks themselves when I decide to put on the album.

The latter of these, a polemic against the soulless and commercial brand of house music that Madonna ushered in with her international hit 'Vogue', is delivered in an almost-whisper at the tail-end of a track titled 'Madonna-Free Zone'. The former, and the speech that has since come to define *Midtown 120 Blues* in my mind, starts almost immediately upon hitting play on the disc: a tour-de-force eyewitness history of the emergence and subsequent perversion of house, from the muddiest of New York dancefloors to the very top of feel-good club charts. "House isn't so much a sound as a situation," Thaemlitz repeats in the breaths between her busy lines, mourning with sardonic rage over how capitalist interests have elided over the human contexts from which the supergenre emanated: "sexual and gender crises, transgendered sex work, black market hormones, drug and alcohol addiction, loneliness, racism, HIV, ACT-UP, Thompkins Sq. Park, police brutality, queer-bashing, underpayment, unemployment and censorship." Without so much as a four-bar pause, the record launches into a distorted and nervous percussion groove, setting the tone for the songs to come: cautious, tense, plaintive, wry.

Midtown 120 Blues, unlike so many other records which attempt to trace the knife's edge between historical testament and artistic expression, feels like music that really actuates political motion rather than merely meditating on an era gone past. Though it does not indulge in the luxury of lyrical fervour and gruff hooks that characterise so many hollow indie-punk darlings in the age of Fantano, the spirit of truth-telling, revelation and resistance permeates every track with such a distinct sense of celebration that it's hard not to smile. It would be categorically incorrect to describe *Midtown 120 Blues* as 'uplifting' – if the monologues are to go by, Thaemlitz wants to produce anything but the vacant 303 riffs of Ibiza-rinsed anthems. And yet, it's impossible to look past the album without noticing the joy bursting at the seams. The album eschews dollar-store

truisms and impassioned imperatives in its very nature as electronic music, but it is nevertheless exhibits a radical political heuristic. By drawing a line in the sand of house history and crafting such evocative instrumentals, Thaemlitz encourages us to eulogise the past whilst tentatively imagining a future where her art can be free from capitalistic corruption. In other words, *Midtown 120 Blues* is electronic music that feels unmistakably revolutionary.

As the lush guitar sample on 'The Occasional Feel-Good', the closing track on *Midtown 120 Blues*, sings its final lick, the CD spins a few more empty revolutions before coming to a silent halt, primed and ready to be played again. But the time is 2am, it's a Tuesday evening, and an entire day's worth of running around awaits me for when I wake up again. Wednesday is a big day: after weeks of police repression and tens of thousands of dollars in student fines, activists at the University of Sydney have once again organised a mass rally across campus to fight the Arts fee hikes hastily pushed through the Senate by the Coalition government. Arrests are not just feared, but expected. Though the sentiment may read as naïve and cringeworthy, the entire situation makes my blood boil.

As I sluggishly go to turn off my PC, the blinking lights that litter my desk remind me that I have unsaved work. A supersaw arpeggio, playing the melody of a cheesy Eurodance song, hums softly from the balanced outputs of a Roland JP-8080: my favourite synthesiser. I open a new Ableton Project to record a few samples, and before I can recognise my own fatigue, the clock has ticked over to 4am – my hands frantically adjusting equalisers and compressors to get some final touches in. When thin strips of orange light begin peeking through my window-shades, I know I've well and truly thrown away a night's worth of sleep, but it's too late to try now.

At precisely 7:30 in the morning, automated messages begin flooding my mailbox from all the newsletters that I've been accidentally signed up to through the years. Plugin Boutique wants to let me know that there's a massive sale on analogue distortion emulations. Elektron just put out a black faceplate version of their flagship drum machine, and Pioneer is selling an updated \$6000 CDJ. Soundcloud announces a subscription model for their new instant "mastering" service. Apple Music for Artists lists my piss-poor engagement statistics for October: a total of \$3 at \$0.0035 a stream. Immediately afterwards, Distrokid encourages me to send my music to advertisers so that it's more likely to end up on a sponsored Spotify playlist. Two beeps mean a press release: Resident Advisor received a £750,000 grant from the UK government in order to tide them through the coronavirus pandemic. The subtweet in response: Techno Ticketmaster is getting paid big bucks for promoting mostly white

artists. And another presser: Boiler Room also received a massive grant from the UK government. Reply tweet: Artists don't get paid for DJ sets but senior management earns how much?

I have to make myself close the tabs so I can get back to mixing the drum parts of my new track. But it's embarrassing isn't it? Is it embarrassing? To love so passionately a hobby that is so deeply entrenched in its own corporate whirlwind? To want to pursue artistic achievement in a field so mired in transactional decadence and gleeful enterprise? To want to craft something that, by its own wordless nature, makes enigmatic the types of exegesis that can actually influence someone for the better?

I rewind the Ableton timeline and press play to check on the progress I've made, but the breakbeat slices I chopped up hours ago no longer seem visceral and exciting. Listening to the glittery synth lines I spent so long tweaking feels like swallowing a ladleful of sucralose. As the sinking feeling begins to set in that I probably should have just slept so I could be more alert for the rally at midday, questions that I've floated for months rear again their ugly heads: what is the point of making electronic music anymore if it seems especially and permanently trapped within the structures of capitalism? And can these two gulfs that constitute my present identity – my love for synthesised sounds and my hope for a radical new future – be reconciled in any convincing way?

In the twelve years since the release of *Midtown 120 Blues*, it would be a mistake to suggest that any progress has been made towards the emancipation of electronic sound from the eroding grasp of business and Billboard. While all forms of art in a capitalist society will inevitably be subjected to the exploitative strategies of corporations and investors, there is no arguably no medium more inextricably tied to capitalist profiteering than the production and distribution of electronic music.

From an environmental level, the arrival of mass-market music gear manufacturers and consumer hardware offerings takes an aggrandising and punishing toll on the planet's dwindling natural resources. One needs to look no further than Behringer – perhaps the most 'affordable' synth manufacturer in the Western world – to see how popular and harmful our newfound thirst for Moog clones and portable mixers actually is. Like something out of a cyberpunk Metropolis, Behringer constructed a vertically integrated factory the size of a small city in Zhongshan of China's Guangdong Province in the late 2000s, which now churns out over two-and-a-half million pieces of audio gear per year. With each clipping diode, Fatar keybed, analog ladder filter circuit and DSP effects chip, vast supplies of silicon and lithium are processed and expended with reckless abandon.

And yet, even if we look beyond the destructive supply chains that characterise most all corporate activity in the modern day, electronic music is a pursuit where technology and aggressive monetisation always seem to stay two steps ahead of artistry. At every turn in the journey from ideas in a producer's mind to a mastered track reaching a listener's ears, seductive micro-transactions make themselves available and easily accessible. From the burgeoning plugin market, the nickle-and-dime for software updates, the stratification of streaming platforms into tiered levels of users, search engine optimisation and the almighty 'Play Next' algorithm, to club and festival culture which has only become more of a commodified and purchasable experience rather than a liberating space over the years: to engage in electronic music production in 2020 is to submerge oneself in the logic of capitalism. There are simply no tools to engage with it otherwise.

But perhaps most concerningly, there has been no broad cultural shift to recognise electronic music outside of consumeristic contexts. When we invoke the concept of 'protest music', our imaginations naturally intuit a Guthrie-like crooner who sings of revolution over four guitar chords and a harmonica bridge, or a hip-hop artist passionately delivering a freestyle verse with biting cultural references. But the political power of electronic music has never been separated from the political power of language, and when language is removed or abstracted – as in the case of most producers – the instrumental is often thought of as purely sensory, hedonistic or apolitical. It's not hard to imagine why: though lyric-less, orchestral pieces like Shostakovich's Symphonies are potent in their political rebellion and incomprehensible outside the context in which they were composed, genres like house were born on hyper-specific and marginalised dancefloors which corporations could easily depoliticise as sordid and low-brow, repackaging them for consumption for an unquestioning wider audience. Even today, a distaste for synthesised sounds is apparent in the widespread perception of electronic music; sounds which are perfectly acceptable within anti-intellectual bass drops, backing elements in electro pop tracks and the euphoric score to a cap come-up, but are otherwise not considered capable of possessing political value in-and-of themselves.

When faced with so many converging factors stymying the political potency of electronic music, it almost seems logical to be pessimistic that it can ever be used as a tool for radical change. And when I reached out to some of my favourite producers last week for guidance, I expected about the same conclusion from all of them. The question I posed in my messy emails was simple, yet open-ended: "How can we as music producers channel our energy into the products themselves? And do you think it is at all possible to inspire, provoke



and motivate through electronic music in the current day?"

Jamie Stewart, the longest-standing member of American art-rock band Xiu Xiu, was the most straightforward and terse with his reply, compounding the corporatisation of music with the explosion of new epistemic streams on the internet as the justification for his cynicism.

"While the band I play in always has and always will have a political focus, the point of that focus is not to engender change as it is to hope in some small way to serve as a communal space for people looking to feel less alone in their already established or nascent views or marginal lives."

"I think the days of music being able to have some kind of long term, wide ranging impact on society are long gone. In the 1950-1970s when counter and pop culture were rising in the West, the distribution networks were almost entirely centralized and public: radio, television, widely read magazines and local record stores. There were far fewer choices as to what people had access to and if there was a protest song and it became a hit, millions of people might hear it and be moved by it over and over again via these avenues."

"Currently, with the internet creating nearly infinite self-curated 'micro markets', one might listen to a song only 2 or 3 times and it will almost certainly already fit into the belief system of the person listening to it."

"I think music can bolster confirmed beliefs and having that strengthened is good, but the paths for it to change people's minds on even a small scale don't exist anymore. A white supremacist gun nut is never going to go to a concert or listen to a song and suddenly realize they were wrong all along. Music is too private and personal an experience to be an external evolutionary social force anymore."

"That said, I don't get out much and maybe I am missing something new and don't know what I am talking about. That would be amazing, and I would love for it to be true."

Laura Les, who is one half of hyperpop group 100 Gecs and a prolific

nightcore producer under the moniker osno1, was simultaneously more ambivalent and more constructive in her outlook towards the possibilities of electronic music, redirecting the conversation away from political ideologies and towards the value of political emotions.

"In my experience, music is really good at expressing emotions. That sounds really obvious, but I mean that since music doesn't have to be expressed in words or images, it's really good at expressing ideas that I have a hard time expressing in words or images. I think that's part of the reason why music is really good at tuning into really specific, nuanced emotions, with or without lyrics."

"Another cool thing about music is playing with context and familiarity. Since many of us share associations between types of music and other things, we can use music to evoke whatever those things are. That kind of goes without saying when talking about samples, but I mean even like certain textures or little genes borrowed from another piece or type of music can immediately call connections to your head. I guess things like framing songs with titles or art to point at topics would fit here too."

"I don't really consider my music as explicitly 'political', I just try to express honestly and accurately how I'm feeling at the time, and I think my worldview just sort of bleeds into that. Even though you might not be using as many words, you can definitely still use your music to express yourself and comment on things in a way that can emotionally resonate with people on a deep level, no matter the topic."

"As far as how the business itself lines up with politics; I don't really have an answer yet, I'm always learning and changing opinions on specifics, but I just sort of try to stick to doing whatever I feel like is right at the time. I'm trying to not let a framework define me, and just using my beliefs to inform my decisions, and not accidentally cross any of my personal lines in the sand. Like I said, I wouldn't call myself a model leftist, I just do what I can to help people where I can. Music is pretty good for getting some money for aid drummed up, and of course as you grow a platform you can use it to shine light on things you care about."

"I'd say that if you want to make electronic music, or any kind of music, you should do it. The way that you work it into your framework or worldview is up to you. I think that there will be times when you'll be able to help or hurt people, no matter which path you choose. There's definitely lots of political electronic music out there, and many ways to navigate between the two passions. You kind of just have to feel out what's right for yourself."

But the artist I talked to that was perhaps the most optimistic about the revolutionary potential of electronic music was Estoc, hardcore producer and DJ hailing from Pennsylvania, who boldly displays on her Facebook about section: "death to fascism". Yet, it was for the very same reasons that I approached production with doubt that she embraced it for its utopic potential: its openness, its lack of rigour and its chameleonic ambiguity.

"There is a certain decadence to electronic music, especially with the advent of computers and music made with them. When opening up a DAW there is a seemingly endless void of possibilities and it can be a daunting task to create a thesis and pare down an idea to something manageable which can be expressed. This excess is at the core of this debate."

"With so much creative freedom, we are free to create new worlds, both ones within and outside of our own. We can imagine utopias and ways to build them within our current reality. We can also use this to throw our current world into sharp relief and expose the ways we move through it. Our creations within this boundless possibility means that our events are subject to this same utopic ideal. We are free to give life to worlds we had never thought possible. This is a core principle shared by leftist politics and electronic music."

With all this being said, Estoc still approaches her artistry with a degree of caution.

"What can be said about electronic music can act as a mirror to technology as a whole. It has the potential to be something beautiful in compassionate hands, but something horrendous and terrifying when used for selfish gains."

"We also cannot have a conversation

about electronic music without talking about the role that cultural appropriation has played. White artists and capitalists have a long history of stealing artforms and practices from black communities and repackaging it as their own. And if not directly becoming the face of those forms of media and art, white capitalists seek to exist as the main beneficiaries of this culture. This vampiric relationship is another reflection of the ways that capitalism always exists at another's expense."

"In thinking about the ways we can fuel revolution with electronic music, we must be able to hold contradictions. In the club environment, we see this play out in a culture of hedonism surrounding drug use. There is an extreme pleasure to be had, a freedom within these spaces found in few other places. But this freedom is often at the cost of those caught in the violence of the supply chains that these drugs are acquired through. Cocaine has sparked civil wars and ripped countries apart. What does it mean when we make art within a community that consumes it as a way to enjoy that art? Can our revolution be a global one and not a selfish one?"

Depending on the time of day and the angle of the falling shadows, you could view electronic music as either a dead-end commodity too far gone for any practical political purpose, or an art form very much in the midst of an underexplored infancy. The boundaries of sound design burst open through the advent digital instruments have revealed a new horizon of timbres, textures and artistic possibilities never before accessible. And yet, the capitalistic tendencies intrinsic to music technology make it more difficult than ever to uncover that horizon and use it to its full potential.

In the days leading up to the writing of this article, Estoc's final comments lingered in my mind: that in order to mobilise electronic music for a political purpose, we will need to embrace and utilise its inherent contradictions. While that left me neither here nor there when it comes to settling on a conclusive stance, it at the very least illuminated – just like *Midtown 120 Blues* – a cautious and dialectical path forward to a potentially brighter future.

Homer and heroic hexameter

Shania O'Brien on the importance of form and structure to epic poems.

An epic poem is the birthplace of legends. The epicentre of tragedy, they are long narrative poems that generally chronicle a time existing outside the bounds of living memory wherein extraordinary swift-footed men and women shaped the mortal world by their grapples with gods and monsters, with creatures of legend, with morality and truth.

There are some agreed-upon determinants of an epic. For instance, it begins *in media res*, as the tenth year of the Trojan War in the *Iliad*. Its setting is vast and use of epithets rich, covering rosy-fingered dawns and wine-dark seas. Arguably, the most prominent feature of the epic is not divine intervention in the form of golden apples, nor heroes stamped pious from their first appearance — no, the foremost feature of the epic is its structure.

In the past, works of literature were able to be distinguished as epics because of the nature of their form and poetic meter. Indo-European epic poetry — such as the *Vedas*, the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey* — historically placed a lot of emphasis on the poetic meter and line consistency. Ancient Greek and Latin poems were all written in dactylic hexameter — which has also come to be known as heroic hexameter. It is, technically, impossible to conceive of an epic poem that is not composed of in hexameters as the very rhythm of the hexameter signalled the epic nature of the poem.

To break it down, a dactylic hexameter

has six feet and permits either a dactyl (one long syllable followed by two short syllables) or a spondee (two long syllables). Scholar Samuel Elliott Bassett identified thirty-two possible arrangements of dactyls and spondees and stated that Homer used every one of them in the *Iliad*. “There are seventeen places where a word may end,” he wrote, “and Homer makes a word end at every one of these places.”

In specific relation to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the Greek dactylic, the hexameter is a powerful instrument. It is used to concentrate the listener's attention on concrete details by varying the information flow by circumventing the repetition of identical rhythm and phrase-type. Homeric verses, interestingly, do not contain words whose shapes are traditionally dactyls and spondees; but, instead, only when merged into complete lines and spoken aloud do they yield six-dactyl rhythms. In the time of Homer in Ancient Greece, epics were performed in song with the accompaniment of a lyre, which allowed for such deviation. However, a line's syntactical phrasing and quantitative rhythm are commonly out of step by a syllable or two due to human error and differences in pronunciation and accents. In step with tradition, the completion of a word is only required in the last syllable of a verse as the rest of the feet are enjambed for narrative form. Hence, rhythm and phrasing are **always** predictable. The closing cadence for this

is distinctive: the sixth foot, at least in the case of Homeric hymns, **always** calls for a dactyl.

Bassett referred to each verse resembling a suspenseful adventure that lasted a few seconds before reaching a temporary resolution and beginning anew — much like the theory of creation stemming from the Indo-Aryan *Vedas* wherein every beginning and end signifies the start of a phase, only to be destroyed and reborn over and over again in unending repetition. The heroic hexameter accommodates a significant amount of rhythm and phrasing, ensuring that the substitutions of spondees and dactyls cause the structure of the spoken word to be more engaging.

Is it strange, then, that *heroic* hexameter only applies to certain kinds of epics? Old English, German, and Norse epic poetry utilise alliterative verse as the primary structural principal and do not employ a discernible rhyme scheme. Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian long-form poetry use *terza rima* — an Italian verse invented by Dante Alighieri for *The Divine Comedy*, consisting of tercets wherein the first and third lines rhyme with one another, the second rhyming with the first and third of the following tercet — and *ottava rima* — introduced by Giovanni Boccaccio in *The Decameron*, wherein each stanza contains eight iambic lines with the first six alternating in rhyme scheme and ending on a couplet. Ancient Sumerian epic poetry, such as the epic of *Gilgamesh*,

used no form of distinguishable poetic meter nor did their lines have consistent lengths but instead focused the source of their rhythm on repetition.

On the other hand, the existence of mock-epics, also known as mock-heroics, suggest the historic ridicule placed on the elevated stature of heroic verse. Lord Byron used his signature *ottava rima* to pen the sixteen-thousand line satirical poem *Don Juan* in all the extravagance of *Teseida*. It is interesting to note that *Don Juan* was first widely disapproved of and reduced to unnecessarily provocative and immoral — but later was celebrated for its artistic brilliance — for its structure and form, for its exploration of every topic of human life, with German writer Goethe going as far as calling it a work of “bondless genius.”

Hence, the form and structure of a work are essential in its eventual outcome and reception. There are certain maps predetermined rhyme schemes and poetic meters lay out for us to follow, ‘x’ marking the spots where we offer up explanations of tragedy, draw up epic catalogues, invoke divine intervention into haplessness. Epic poetry offers us lessons about individual honour, about heroism and cruelty, about our inherent autonomy in a world dictated by gods. But it also presents us with the importance of consistent poetic meter, with the evolution and differences separate languages and cultures place on form; and, if nothing else, with a better place to start.

Student journalist reacts to AWFUL Musician Reaction Videos (2020)

Matthew Forbes is sick of musicians passing off meaningless commentary as expertise.

YouTube is, in many respects, an undeniable force for good in the music world. It has provided musicians with a slightly more achievable pathway towards gaining a following and, ultimately, making money than other, more traditional means. This is not specific to the songwriters and ‘performers’ on this platform, as musicians often apply their skills to more theoretical areas, such as ‘education’ (because what else are you going to do with that three year music degree you spent all that money on). This is not inherently a bad thing - why pay for instrument or music theory lessons when there are hundreds of videos you can watch for free that will give you a similar, albeit potentially less streamlined, learning experience?

The issue lies not in video tutorials or lessons, but rather the videos where musical knowledge is applied in an ‘analysis’ setting. While some of these videos are genuinely educational, novel, entertaining, or, at the very least, informative to those largely unfamiliar with music theory, many are obnoxiously meaningless. There's been a growing trend over the last couple of years in which musicians film live reactions to musical content (albums, music videos, live performances, etc.) and then insert observations about the most glaringly obvious features of said content.

Take Nina Schofield's video ‘CHARLI XCX - Charli Album [Musician's] Reaction & Review!’, in which she concludes by saying “She's [Charli] able to give us these pop songs that are radio-friendly, but then she's not afraid to explore and go places that

no pop artist has gone before.” Along with sounding like it was specifically written to be quoted in marketing campaigns for the album, this statement by itself isn't necessarily untrue or completely devoid of meaning. But when placed in the context of a 24-minute reaction/review video with the prefix ‘Musician’ attached to it, it feels like a basic assertion that anyone with at least one functional ear could have made.

What's more, Nina spends much of the video pointing out and singing along to various instrumental parts within the songs she's reacting to, as if we the listener aren't able to identify these elements for ourselves without filling the necessary requirements to earn that ‘Musician’ prefix. “It's like an alarm sound,” she observes earlier in the video when, towards the beginning of the track ‘Shake It’, there is, indeed, an alarm-like sound. Thanks Nina!

With only 29,460 views as of the time this article was written, this video is admittedly an easy target. It's worth mentioning more popular channels who display similar tendencies - at 6.59 million subscribers, ‘RoomieOfficial’ is certainly one of these. The grand majority of Roomie's content consists of him reacting to other music-related videos, having recently started busting out the ‘Pro Singer Reacts to...’ titles for some of his uploads.

In ‘Pro Singer Reacts To The BEST singing videos 2020’, Roomie spends most of his ‘reaction’ time complimenting various singer's voices while sprinkling in the occasional musical buzzword (e.g. ‘vibrato’, ‘tone’). “Beautiful voice, really

fun to listen to,” he notes, while reacting to the TikTok videos of Sam Ryder. He also points out that Ryder's voice sounds like a combination of “a little bit more of a metal voice and a rock voice and a pop voice”, and that he is singing very high notes, like a “high B”, before singing said note to seemingly remind us that he is a ‘pro singer’ and thus his comment section-esque wisdom warranted a 13-minute video.

Besides his friendship with famed slur-dispenser PewDiePie, Roomie's videos probably rose to the top of the landfill of musician reactions due to his flashy and ‘humorous’ editing, which favours many a quick cut between short phrases or sentences, as well as wacky sound effects and text. It's a gimmick employed by many YouTube channels - not just music ones - who have little else to offer by way of personality. Bassist extraordinaire Davie504 is yet another example of this, though he does sometimes structure his reaction videos more compellingly than most by attempting (and usually succeeding) to play what is being performed in the videos he's watching. Often, though, he resorts to making Reddit-level jokes accompanied by meme-heavy editing as a substitute for useful insight or any sense of charisma that would make his simple comments entertaining.

Unfortunately, meaningless observations are a lesser evil compared to some of the other pitfalls of the YouTube musician/reactor. On many channels, you're likely to find the kind of elitist

rhetoric that dismisses entire musical styles and discourages many from participating in music performance or discussion. In his video ‘Jazz Pianist Reacts to Watermelon Sugar by Harry Styles’, Charles Cornell deems the song in question “musically useless”, and a particular melodic line in the song's pre-chorus “completely devoid of definition”, essentially due to a couple of apparently misplaced notes. Not only does he spend nearly the entire video reinforcing strict rules that musicians must abide by lest they be sent to music jail, he also bases parts of his appraisal around his knowledge of jazz theory - a framework which can hardly be usefully applied to a radio-ready pop song. Cornell masks what are clearly nitpicks behind the air of authenticity lent to him by his ‘Jazz Pianist’ title, thus allowing viewers of the video to also declare the song inferior (based on a ‘professional opinion’). Even at a time when many are mocking the notorious claim that ‘Modern/popular music sucks!!!’, this line of thinking still seeps its way into cultural conversation through the guise of theory-based objectivity.

Uninteresting reaction channels are nothing new, and hardly a pressing issue within the music industry in particular. Many of the ‘[Insert musical qualification] reacts’ videos could be less aggravating with less attempts at intercutting instinctive responses with shoehorned music theory, or even a simple removal of any signal of musical authority from their titles. As they stand, however, they do nothing but stifle meaningful music discourse.

Retreating into references

Words by Angelina Nguyen / Art by Chuyi Wang

It is no wonder that the thought of having to reference anything alone is enough to inspire, to generate, to warrant, an immediate groan.

All this emphasis on academic honesty, when we feel anything but honest. Too often have we scrambled onto an article, begging for a hint of relevance, from the rapid clicks travelling down the page in Control + F mode, to blow out of proportion.

Too often have we mourned the loss of the perfect resource, a struggle inherent with choosing sources, text types and forms that fail to present all the information needed to justify its existence, let alone usefulness; 'N/A. (n.d). No Idea. Retrieved from Nothing.com' looks hardly convincing.

Too often have we made more sense from Wikipedia, but our embarrassment at the thought of being questioned for even being on it has forced us to forage elsewhere. Too often have we fattened our final reference lists, bibliographies, and annotations with lies.

Too often have we stretched further out into the unknown, towards obscurity, only to receive the echoes of nothingness.

Referencing has become a labour, a chore, a necessary evil. Pain-staking hours are spent reading, wading through, drowning in these oceans of letters and jargon, all to retrieve the smallest specimen to scrutinise, to defend defensively, to wedge somewhere on the page. Factor in the countless styles, pedantic rules, inconsistencies in what is the true way to reference something, and it all amounts to hatred.

After it all, each citation made is just the tip of an iceberg; though standing in all its grandeur, it is but a rude reminder of what remains unseen. In the depths of those waters, there lies all the time wasted, the sources discarded, and every other rejected notion, musing and desperate attempt of a paraphrase in between.

But for me, referencing is a thrill. It is performing all kinds of magic, every system containing its own ritual.

Each rule, carefully designed step, format provided, instructs for the order and placement of the right ingredients like a recipe for a spell, containing what is necessary to fill each parentheses, to construct each footnote. I love the matter-of-factness of the entire process.

I love seeing those titles bare, bold, italicised, slanting as if they are about to topple over and yet still holding their ground.

I love replacing each comma with a period, each period with a comma, placing myself in control of both creating continuities and ceasing the flow of information bit by bit.

I love punching the full stop key, the stamping of my foot on the earth, at the end, not because I wish for it all to end, but because I know that the start of the next journey means, for another, the end.

This is the age where we are beguiled by all that is oddly satisfying, indulging in guilty pleasures that are perhaps more common than we think but that we are afraid of admitting to. A large reason why I find such joy in the art of referencing is from its repetition.

The monotony is reliable, comforting.

There is something extraordinary about summoning superscripts, those numerals that float modestly in the air. They divert your eyes right to the footnotes, stacked upon one another in a perfectly aligned list. All these citations are portals. For the reader, they are doors leading to new worlds, ready to be explored; for the writer, they await for their return once more.

With every instance a reference is conjured, I provide evidence that those books, journal articles, newspapers, blog posts, Spotify playlists and all the other gorgeous possibilities out there are real. With every endnotes entry, I add to the mass, the colossal building of details and information. With every in-text acknowledgement, I affirm, challenge, rejuvenate life into the ideas of another thinker, negotiate the tensions between the past, present and future.

With every single one of them, I declare with greater volume that I am unoriginal, that I am miserably dependent on what already has been done, but that I am also the torch bearer of another's ideas, smearing all my clumsy, incoherent and wandering thoughts together with quirky quotes, flourishing words, electrifying statistics, hoping they will fuel the mind and heart of the reader with warmth and light.

In every reference, I see my writing as much as a branch precariously extending from trees that have already been planted as a seed of its own.



President

Liam Donohoe

Well, this is it. After 48 weeks, and 32 written reports, I feel weird to have reached, finally, my last for Honi. And while at times it felt like it would never come, or that it couldn't come soon enough, I am still surprised, and perhaps just a bit unprepared, to find myself here so soon. With the year coming to an end, and my activities slowing down, I ask that you forgive some indulgence.

Before I get to those deeper reflections, though, it would be remiss not to mention this week's (admittedly, relatively scant) activity. On Tuesday morning I met with the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Student Life, Susanna Scaparo, alongside our caseworkers and USU staff to discuss planned changes to the Learning and Maths Centre. While we appreciated the opportunity to hear the full details and rationale behind mooted changes, we made clear that we would not be comfortable with job losses and that we would take time to consider the pedagogical implications of their new model. I will keep the student body updated of any further developments, though I suspect immediate responsibility for the matter will fall to Swapnik imminently.

Around the same time Radical Education week began with a Welcome to Country from Aunty Rhonda Dixon. Radical Education week is an annual educational event organised by the SRC and its Collectives. I was grateful to witness a bunch of this year's presentations, which, as usual, platformed radical student and staff perspectives on important issues. I was particularly impressed with Tuesday afternoon's eco-feminism panel, featuring USyd's Dr. Astrida Neimanis, and Swapnik Sanagavarapu's Money and Finance for the Left talk. Many thanks are extended to all the speakers and organisers who made the week a resounding success.

In a fitting twist of fate, education protests marked both the start and end of Radical Education week. Friday's speakout outside the F23 building, which aimed to pressure the USyd Senate into abstaining from fee increases, bookended proceedings and

Note: These pages belong to the Office Bearers of the SRC. They are not altered, edited or changed in any way by the editors of Honi Soit.

saw at least a hundred protesters gather on Eastern Avenue after the plans to physically blockade the meeting in Martin Place were thwarted when it was moved online. Tuesday's protest against cuts to the Medical Science faculty set a radical tone for the rest of the week, as we once again spontaneously took control of City Road, getting almost as far as Broadway before the Riot squad could catch us. While this year's protests may not have always attracted the largest numbers, bravery and militancy have certainly not been in short supply among the protesters. The relaxation with which so many students interact with hostile police—the ease with which the crowd escalates—is certainly new, and no doubt due in equal measure to the brave example set earlier in the year and the dystopian police antics that have dominated headlines in 2020. Tuesday's protest was a fitting reminder of just how far so many students have come in what has been a remarkable year.

I have also come a long way this year, I think. I would be lying if I said it was easy, or that I was happy for much of it. Even at the best of times, the responsibilities conferred on the President of this Union are onerous and all-consuming; amidst a global pandemic, they were, at times, soul-destroying. In March there was the brutal revelation that our SSAF contestable funding would be frozen, preventing me from fulfilling many of my campaign promises and from realising the vision I spent years refining and half-a-decade trying to implement. In October there was the passage of the Morrison government's fee hikes legislation, and with it the crushing realisation that, despite my best efforts, I could not defend our education from further inequalities, funding loss, and desecration. And all throughout, in the periods in between and beyond, I was rapt by the same social, economic, and mental angst that seems to have defined 2020 for most, no doubt cushioned by the (ephemeral) security of this position, but also no doubt exacerbated by the guilt of feeling as if I'd let people

down.

Indeed, on that note, I would like to take this opportunity to apologise to my constituents, the Undergraduate student body at the University of Sydney, and particularly to those people who voted for me. I would like to apologise if relationships strained under the weight of this position. I assure you that every promised coffee or beer will come to fruition, and that I have infinite time and love for everyone, even if I struggle to fully express that all the time. Similarly, I apologise for any unrealised campaign promises. If it is any comfort, we were mere weeks away from ushering in what would have been an unprecedented number of new programs and important reforms, all the careful result of years of reflection on this Union, dashed only by a sudden decision to freeze the funding essential to realising it. But what I would like to apologise for most substantively is losing the fight for our education both locally and nationally, at least for now. Until greater people cohere a greater response and win a decent system, these defeats will reverberate through history, pumping wave after wave of phillistine destruction.

And that's the ultimate difficulty in all of this. While I intended to finish up as President with a different world and University to the one I inherited, I didn't expect it to be this different and to have these features. In the end, things have gotten worse, not better, and we are even further away from the vision that animated me than we were before. But as Sisyphean as this task may feel, and as crushing as the rolling rock may now feel, there's one thing that cannot be denied by myself or my harshest critic (indistinguishable though they may be)—that I rolled the damn boulder up the hill.

Indeed, it's precisely because of that rolling that I saw a glimpse of the horizon, and perhaps even wrung the only possible drops of beneficence from the malefic chamois of fate. Rather than sitting back and being a mere caretaker, I tried not only to preserve the SRC, but to continue in my quest to expand and improve it. I'm proud



of helping to initiate national efforts to expand social security to students and catalysing the Mutual Aid program, which both provided significant relief and were undeniably beneficial. I'm proud of my diligence; that I took on countless extra, thankless duties, for no extra pay, while still delegating few, if any of my responsibilities, simply to ensure the Union could function and activism could happen. I'm proud that USyd carried the national fight against fee hikes which was defeated by the smallest possible margin (1 vote!); that we proved, yet again and with regular frequency, that no VC, no politician, and no Capitalist can destroy our education easily. I'm proud, at risk of arrogance, of making the SRC more well-known, more relevant, and more helpful than it has been in my time.

These are just a few of the things that make me proud. There are certainly others. Thank you to every friend, family member, teacher, campaigner, voter, and comrade who helped me realise this life changing ambition. As honest and sobering as my reflections may be, this year has been the greatest of my life, and every second of it has been an indescribable honour. Saying goodbye is, thus, bittersweet and surreal, particularly because of how hard the rock rolled over me and how far from the peak we find ourselves. Next year Swapnik, and the Office Bearers elected at Wednesday's Representatives-Elect, will roll the boulder up the hill. I'm sure they will suffer their own tumbles, take their own routes, and strive for their own peaks. It certainly will not be easy. But if there is any good to have come from this year of chaos and hardship, any sceric of redemption to come from the 5 years of effort which led to this point, it is the certainty that the rock will not only continue to be rolled, but with the same diligence, resolve, and attitude, onwards to the peak I could not myself reach and the view I could not myself see. And while a much-delayed rest is on the cards in the immediate future, I can't wait to join them on the mountain, hand on boulder, for one final push.

Residential College Officers

Charlotte Ainsworth, Winny Li, Joseph Yang and Kiran Gupta

Donation of OB Budget to Asylum Seeker Centre

The Portfolio made the decision to donate the OB budget of \$500 to the Asylum Seeker Centre in Newtown. This was intended to support a collegiate food drive initiative but our understanding is that this has been postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19. We hope that the intercollegiate community and wider USyd community believe that this is a worthwhile use of our budget.

Representation of the Intercollegiate Community

Even in a challenging year, the portfolio is proud of the work we have done to represent the intercollegiate community. This has involved advocating for fair and balanced discourse in the general university community as well as publishing our thoughts in The Sydney Morning Herald. We believe that these steps are in line with our overall intention

to mediate some of the needlessly antagonist dialogue on both sides of the university college debate and we will continue to advocate to this effect for the rest of the year.

Advocating for Fair and Reasonable Dialogue

We have been somewhat disappointed with the exclusion of certain perspectives in Honi Soit earlier this year regarding the residential colleges. We attempted to publish an article as a response to the allegations published in Honi Soit earlier this year in our capacity as Office-Bearers but were unable to publish anything despite multiple attempts. We hope that some effort will be made in future to allow for a more complete picture to be presented. We also hope that the attendance at a residential college will not preclude anyone from writing for the student newspaper in the future.

Vice Presidents

Charlotte Bullock and Felix Faber

As the year winds down, our priority has shifted towards ensuring next year's SRC is able to hit the ground running and keep up the important work that it has been doing over the year thus far. The parlous state of education on campus is seriously concerning. Between government funding cuts and attempted University staff and course cuts, the need for determined work by student representatives to fight for a quality education is not set to diminish. Felix has been focusing on preparing for the handover, organising a handover meeting of the Interfaculty Committee, and organising the SRC's affiliation with the National Union of Students.

In the past fortnight there have not been any committee meetings, but Charlotte was in attendance at the most recent fortnightly meeting between the SRC Executive and University Management. At this meeting, Charlotte raised issues regarding degree progression, which were carried over from the previous meeting. At this meeting, there was also some discussion with university management and office bearers from SUPRA and the USU about the recent outage of Canvas and other university websites, and how the uni could ensure students are still able to access online tutorials if another outage occurs.

General Secretaries

Abbey Shi and Liam Thomas did not submit a report this week.

Mature Age Officers

Vinil Kumar and Peter Burell-Sander did not submit a report this week.

Refugee Rights Officers

Alex Mcleay and Cooper Forsyth did not submit a report this week.

Applying for Special Consideration



Have you missed an assessment because you were sick or had a misadventure?

Special Consideration

You can apply for special consideration if you are unable to complete an assessment because you, or someone you are the primary carer for, are affected by short term illness (mental or physical) or misadventure, or an exacerbation of a disability, provided that it is outside of your control, unexpected, and affects you "severely". Long term illness (more than four weeks) is considered a disability and should be addressed through the University's Disability Service.

You must submit your application within three working days of the assessment, together with documentation to support your claim. This might be a Professional Practitioner's Certificate (PPC) from a doctor, psychologist or another health care professional; police report; death notice; etc. While a Statutory or Student Declaration might support your other documents, it may not be considered sufficient as a document on its own. If you cannot think of what documents you might be able to supply, talk to an SRC Caseworker about what options you might have.

Don't focus on the event itself, but rather the severity of the impact that

you experienced. So, for something like the death of a family member, you will need to show that the person died (e.g., funeral service leaflet), as well as a PPC to show that you were severely affected by grief. Be aware that in most cases the University's Counselling and Psychology Service will not give you a PPC, and you will need to gain a PPC from another treating psychologist or doctor.

If you are successful in your application you might be given an extension, a supplementary exam (finals usually occur in week 18), or in some limited cases, a re-weighting of assessments. They cannot give you extra marks. If you continue to be affected by illness or misadventure, you can apply for special consideration for these alternative assessments. For example, you can ask for special consideration for a supplementary exam. If the faculty is unable to provide an additional supplementary assessment, you will be given a Discontinue Not Fail (DC) grade.

Something less severe

A Unit of Study Coordinator is able to grant a two-working day "simple extension" for a non-examination task. Note that this does not change any conditions for special consideration.

Ask Abe

SRC caseworker help Q&A

Ask Abe: How to get help on a satellite campus



Dear Abe,

I noticed the SRC office is shut, but I desperately need help? What should I do?

Con

Dear Con,

While the SRC office is currently closed, SRC caseworkers and solicitors are more

than happy to help students. You can have an appointment over the phone, Skype or Zoom. To make an appointment call 9660 5222.

Alternatively, you can email the details of your situation, together with any relevant documents or emails, to help@src.usyd.edu.au, explaining your situation.

Abe

Contact an SRC Caseworker on 02 9660 5222 or email help@src.usyd.edu.au

Late applications

The University will consider late special consideration applications only if you can provide evidence that it was absolutely not possible for you to submit your application within the three working days. Not knowing about the process is not considered enough of a reason.

Supporting documentation

A PPC should be dated on or before the date of the assessment, with the range of dates you are affected including the date of the assessment. It is likely that you will need to be "very severely affected" or "totally unable to study". If you are the primary carer for someone who is sick, get a PPC to show that they were sick, and that you were very severely affected by having to care for them. It will need to be in English or accompanied by a certified English translation. If you are too unwell to go to the doctor, search the internet for a home visit GP. If you submit a false medical certificate, or a certificate that you have altered, you risk severe penalties, including being excluded from university.

Special arrangements

If your study is affected by an event that is not sickness or misadventure, you can apply for 'special arrangements'. This includes, but is not limited to, jury duty, court summons, armed service, birth or adoption of a child, an essential religious commitment, sporting or cultural commitments where you are representing the University, state or country, and in some cases essential employment. This does not include attending a wedding. You will need to provide support-

ing documentation and apply using the Special Consideration portal. For final exams, this must be lodged no more than 14 days after the exam timetable is published.

You can apply for special consideration if you are unable to complete an assessment because you, or someone you are the primary carer for, are affected by short term illness (mental or physical) or misadventure

Disability

If you have a long term (more than four weeks) or pre-existing medical condition, you can apply for disability support. Disability Services can help you to create an academic plan to successfully complete your degree with any reasonable accommodations, so contact them as soon as possible.

You can appeal a rejected special consideration application. Address the issues they have raised, and submit it within 15 working days of the original decision. It may help to get additional medical documentation to support your claim.

Need help?

For help with special consideration applications email an SRC Caseworker at help@src.usyd.edu.au. We are happy to give you advice.



SRC INFORMS

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR SYDNEY UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.



The SRC Legal Service & your rights!

REGISTER NOW!

Learn how the SRC Legal Service can help you with a range of legal issues.

FREE Zoom Webinar - Thurs 12th Nov, 3pm

REGISTER: srcusyd.net.au/src-informs/

Review: A Delicate Fire

Blake Falcongreen reviews an eclectic and occasionally carnal offering from one of Sydney's most versatile performance companies.

My tongue is frozen, and suddenly
A delicate fire spreads over
My body, my ears hear only
Drumming, the blindness engulfing.
Fragment 31, Sappho

Sydney company Pinchgut Opera, specialists in the forgotten masterpieces of the Baroque, debuted their first film last month: *A Delicate Fire*. Born during the collapse of Australia's arts industries, it showcases the works of Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677), one of the most prolific composers of the Venetian Baroque era and one of the few women of her time to publish under her own name. The film, blending gritty surrealism with more classical elements of music and dance, is an uncanny and unashamedly Australian meditation on the arts, love, and isolation in the age of coronavirus.

The film is broken up into a collection of songs (madrigali), each seamlessly drifting into each other, as if they were merely sequential arias. The first memorable visual feature is the intelligent costuming that comes to define the film: sterile, inoffensive, kitsch, exquisitely out of place and entirely charming, the clothing is both modern and alien. With a full set of period instruments, we see the musicians intently focussed on their craft, serene and once again in their element.

The genius of the film is in its

sustained interest with the suburban landscape, and its blurring of a contemporary Australian haunting with an unfamiliar genre. In *Silentio Nocivo* (Harmful Silence) we see a scrolling portrait of the quiet scenes of a family home: the bubble baths, lamps, and unmade beds of any suburban interior. The spinning clothesline – a recurring motif – is always just within frame, a present reminder of the domesticity of Australian life. Superimposed on the works of Strozzi, we are forced to consider not just the obfuscation of female artists within history, but the invisible and commonplace barriers that still exist in the home.

"The music of heaven is harsh and discordant compared to the melodies I have prepared" (**Conclusion dell'opera**)

The sliding scenery then shifts to a studio of marble sculptures and paintings – an instant transition to high culture and its trappings. As we then return to a car and a roadkill deer, the angst of suburban existence – and Australia's cultural cringe – is brought into focus. Still, the toiling forward momentum of the film carries onwards, elegantly accompanied by dancers Allie Graham and Neale Whittaker, their presence a recurring highlight.

In *Canto di bella bocca* (A song of beautiful lips) the film is at its most explicitly homoerotic, pitching

soprano Taryn Fiebig and mezzo Anna Dowsley on a grassy knoll, posed in an evocation of a baroque painting. The power suit and the uncanniness of the costuming makes the scene deliciously figurative. But the scenery is more than that, with its Australian eucalypts and spinifexes in the background, and the washing line in the upper corner. This is a transplanted still life, from old Venice to modern Australia; expression caught between language and music and worlds, trying to create something new.

"Two faithful souls in love... dying in an ecstasy of healing and life" (**Sonetto. Proemio dell'opera #2**)

In a scene where the women cut open and eat watermelons the film enters its most haphazardly sensual, with hazy undertones of carnality and innocent love. And then we're in the morning, as if we were only in a daze, with a light snow falling – although we are unsure if it is snow or the ash that cast a similar gloom across the national consciousness only a year ago.

As maybe the most self-aware of all art forms, opera thrives on the irony and ridiculousness of its existence: staged, fabricated, and extravagant. As the camera zooms out, revealing the set and the many behind the scenes workers who scurry about to make the production happen, we're brought into the world of art and production. We

are immediately reminded of the many left adrift when this industry was shut down.

"Perhaps I will be hailed as Sappho reborn" (**Sonetto. Proemio dell'opera #1**)

The climax of the film is Strozzi's *Lamento* (Lament). "O my tears," sings Dowsley, as she is circled by the camera in a small phone booth. There is no great wisdom in these lyrics (usually derivative and unexciting) but the framing of the lament hints at the parallels with Greek poet Sappho, a constant (if not understated) reference in the film. One wonders if the obliqueness of this homoeroticism is artistically informed, or based on a sensitivity to the target audience. Dowsley's technique is in full aching showcase, her acting and agitation in the phone booth both visceral and disarming.

The film is approachable, orchestrally gorgeous, and subjective enough to give a viewer something to chew over. With its centring of an overlooked female composer, imaginative staging, and intelligent and sustained control of pacing and mood, *A Delicate Fire* would be a highlight in any year – let alone this one.

A Delicate Fire is available to stream in Australia until December 13 at athome.pinchgutopera.com.au.



Review: Borat Subsequent Moviefilm

Marlow Hurst felt lukewarm upon revisiting one of Sacha Baron Cohen's most iconic characters.

Spoiler warning: this review discusses a major plot point from the film.

A phrase uttered almost religiously by the film, but almost never by its audience. Now that I've got my zing in, I can safely say that *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm: Delivery of Prodigious Bribe to American Regime for Make Benefit Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* is an okay movie that might've fared better before common decency became a relic of American political discourse.

The shock comedy that would've been the subject of much pearl clutching doesn't cut the mustard after a full four years of Trumpish farce. From misogyny and anti-semitism to holocaust-denying and COVID-conspiracising, Sacha Baron Cohen's *Borat* sequel has all the mainstays of our Kazakh comic. But this time it falls flat. "Women are

dehumanised in fictional Kazakhstan" is only funny so many times, and even the first time felt a bit strained. But *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm* has more than that; precious little, but certainly more.

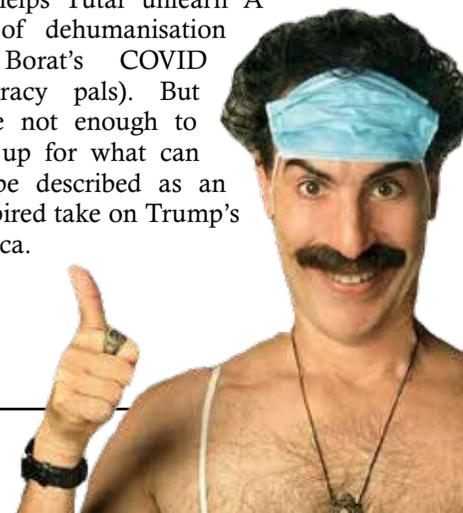
The fictional narrative feels far more present than in the original film and much to my surprise, Borat and his daughter Tutar have something of an arc. What starts out as a relationship resembling a master/slave dynamic, ends with a parting shot of Borat and Tutar, father and daughter, co-anchoring the newly minted Run of the American event. It's sweet and curiously heartwarming. The film is filled with lots of these little moments, like when Tutar stumbles into a local Republican Women meeting and initially receives a very hearty welcome, or when right at

the very end they reveal that Borat was patient zero for COVID-19 in a Kazakh plot for revenge. These moments and many more make *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm* occasionally engaging, but it's sadly dragged down by some fundamental missteps.

It's no longer enough to say "Trump is an idiot" or "Republicans are Nazis". There's nothing new or novel about these observations. Four years of the Trump presidency has already laid bare a lot of the political cankers that plague America's social fabric. It's not enough to paint America with a broad brush. Nuance, specificity, and a preference for micro over macro is really where political parody and satire need to be trending. The flaws of America are now so obvious, so mainstream, and so very bombastic that to parody them is simply

to mirror them. While I understand that this isn't Sacha Baron Cohen's style, his contribution to the discourse brings almost nothing to the table.

The film is not without merit though. Cohen and his co-star Maria Bakalova both perform brilliantly and some of the non-fictional characters are infinitely charming (such as Jeanine Jones who helps Tutar unlearn A LOT of dehumanisation and Borat's COVID conspiracy pals). But they're not enough to make up for what can only be described as an uninspired take on Trump's America.



RODENT NEWS INC.



FIERCELY INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS, BOUGHT OUT BY NEWS CONGLOMERATE, STILL CONTROLLED BY RATS ON OUR HEADS.



Mamma Mia! Jill Bidennino to become first Italixn prima signora in Americas!

Mario Berlusconi, I speak-a with my hands! Editor

In a-very how you say, eccellento news for the Italianos of the Americanos, signora Jill-a Biden has become the first-ah lady. Molto bene!

It was not always, as you say, looking like it should be the most benne outcome. Signore Trumpo was a-looking like he would be il presidente, after a molto forte showing on the election-e day. Mamma mia!

But, what do you know, signor Bidenno he won the day! And ah-now his molto bella signora, Mrs Jill-a Bidenno is the primo signora of all the land. Ay! Gabagool!

Finally after, comme se dice, centuries of oppression the Italianos have taken the most highest position in the land!

This is most molto good news! Signore Trumpo with his golfing-o and his racismo was not molto benne. He was molto bad! Almost as bad as signore Berlesconi with his Bunga Bunga parties! We can now say ciao to Trumpo and ciao to Bidenno!

His wife-ah though was bellissima! When she leaves she will be very missima!

So now we say congratulazioni to signora Bidenno! Mamma mia are we glad to have such a bellissima italianissimo lady to be our First Lady!

CCP agents infiltrate university newspaper with cunning plan of “民主选举”

Kris Kenny, Real Journalist Editor

A cunning plot to infiltrate the University of Sydney student newspaper has been exposed by a daring and handsome reporter for *The Rodent* today. Over the past year two Chinese Communist Party agents, posing as regular students, secretly invaded the already unreputable student newspaper *Honi Soit* to use it as a tool for propaganda.

Inside the newspaper, they were able to send covert messages in Chinese to (probably) a sprawling web of Chinese spies. These messages were frequently contained in a conspicuous part of the newspaper called the “multicultural section” (in a request for comment, the editors refused to identify which cultures were contained in this section). Though we have not as yet been unable to decode these messages, which appear written in some kind of indecipherable script, we can only assume they spread secret propaganda aiming to overthrow the Australian government.

When asked how they were able to pull off their deceitful plan, the two (probably) spies told the reporter “我们被人民选中了。” It is shocking that they would be so brazen in their plan!

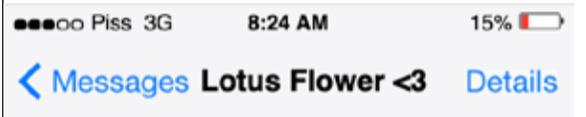
Thankfully, their red reign of terror has come to an end, with a new true-blue editorial team lacking any Chinese influence removing them — and their fellow Cultural Marxist puppet editors — come December.

In this edition:

Escobar! Stalin? Hitler... You'll love these Movember looks / p. 1458

INVESTIGATION: Who tryna fuck while watching The Spongebob Movie: Sponge on the Run / p. Idk

PSA: SENDING UNSOLICITED RADIOHEAD SONGS IS HARASSMENT



Hey sorry this is gonna be soooo cringey but there's this song that like encapsulates my feelings for you hahah *blush*

Radiohead - True Love Waits: https://youtu.be/WSnc_6Z7HqQ

How did you get this number

This is the third Radiohead song you've sent this week

Who are you



Maybe he's born with it, maybe it's

SOCIALISM

Socialism has been shown to:

- Reduce election loss
- Increase term length
- Manage troublesome Young Liberals
- Promote Grassroots growth
- Boost council share, ego

**Not recommended by the USyd Economics Department.*

***Extensions worn. Promotional image has been photoshopped, heavily.*



**BEST YEAR
EVER!!**