

# THARUNKA

UNSW'S STUDENT MAGAZINE / OCTOBER 2017



LITERARY

# THARUNKA

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THARUNKA ACKNOWLEDGES THE TRADITIONAL  
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BEDIGAL PEOPLE OF THE EORA NATION, ON  
WHICH OUR UNIVERSITY NOW STANDS.

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(WRITING, ARTWORK, IDEAS, FEEDBACK, LOVE LETTERS, PICTURES OF  
CUTE DOGS - WE WANT IT ALL).

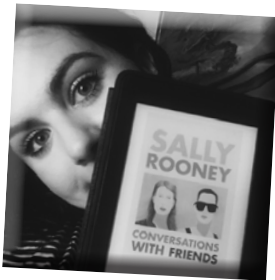
## CONTENT WARNING

THIS ISSUE DEALS WITH  
THEMES OF:

-MENTAL HEALTH



# Letters From the Editors



MANAGING EDITOR

BRITTNEY RIGBY

Goodbyes are the strangest thing. Five years ago, I said goodbye to my hometown to move to Sydney. Fast forward, and here I am saying goodbye to my final year here at UNSW, and goodbye to my editorship of *Tharunka*. I am proud and humbled to have been trusted to guide this ship. There have been rough waters, some almost-crashes, a person or two overboard at times, and too many times where I've closed my eyes, crossed my fingers and hoped I'm not stuffing this thing up (too badly).

I'm really proud of what we've accomplished this year. All of us. Those of you who have gifted me, us, this, with your work this year. Reading your words and polishing them to make them shine even brighter has been a true gift. Admiring your art, poetry, opinions, interviews, wit, reporting, reviews and everything else you've submitted has been the best job I've ever had. I hope this issue is a fitting reminder that print isn't dead. You're all proof that it's just being reborn. Again and again and again. We'll always want stories. We'll always come back to them.

Alicia, Sharon, Dominic and Leo. We've done something really cool. We've shared stories that really matter. We've been constructive and inclusive and messed up and done better. Thank you for your

commitment to uncovering some cracking yarns, your perseverance in the face of tight deadlines and your boldness in voicing your opinion, even (and especially) when there's the risk it won't be a popular one.

In that regard, I think it's only fitting for me to end the year with a reflection on Alicia's piece in this issue, in which she argues for the return to elections for *Tharunka*'s editorial team. It's an argument I've struggled with all year; I've flip flopped on my position, and I see the arguments for both sides of the electoral coin. But I think it's important, as an outgoing (and appointed) Managing Editor, to weigh in nonetheless.

I probably wouldn't have become Managing Editor in an election-based system. The SRC always felt removed from my experience of uni. Election season meant avoiding anyone wearing a coloured shirt holding a stack of flyers. I think that sense of disconnection from campus (a decent commute didn't help) drove my sense of isolation. I prioritised working two or three jobs. I volunteered outside of uni. I rushed home the second classes finished because I never felt tethered to a community here. I know that I would not have put together a ticket to run, or had the time to commit to a campaign in between classes and

work commitments I couldn't get out of if I wanted to pay my rent. A standard job application, followed by an interview in which I was assessed on my journalistic capability, leadership experience and editorial vision felt much safer, and much more accessible for me. "Fairer" even.

But I've come to realise that "safe and accessible" doesn't mean an appointment model is the right one.

I've seen first hand the issues that crop up when we've tried to hold Arc to account whilst also relying on Arc to pay our next invoice. You've read about the censorship and Charter issues we've come up against. And I've worried about whether the job I've done is good enough. I've been paid by Arc, but my real boss is you, UNSW students. I applied eagerly for a position I know I'm qualified for, but one I wouldn't have if I was forced to convince you all to vote me in. An election is a popularity contest, and that is terrifying to me. I never had strong campus networks. I never tapped into those powerful, but intimidating circles. Yet despite all this, it feels only right that if this paper is for you, you should get to decide who runs it.

We've seen in the past that running *Tharunka* elections alongside those for the SRC also isn't a perfect plan. It's attracted politicians, not journalists. And

student politicians have personal and factional motivations that are sometimes stronger than editorial or journalistic ones. We've built up this publication to be a place for creative works and diverse voices and diverse issues. It shouldn't be a platform primarily for self-promotion or stupol in-fighting. We need good journalists and good writers running *Tharunka*. We need the editors who guide this ship to be qualified to do it well. But we need *Tharunka* to have enough distance from Arc so as to be genuinely independent. Alicia's solution is a good one I think: run *Tharunka* elections, but run them separately to those for the SRC.

You are the one who reads this. You are who we rely on for submissions and feedback. You click on our articles and comment on our Facebook posts and like our Instagrams. You are the reason our statistics have sky-rocketed this year, and our pieces have had more engagement than ever. You should have had a say in whether I was the right person for this job, even if that process pushed me well out of my comfort zone and made me anxious and risked prioritising popularity over merit. That should have been your choice.

Regardless as to how I got here though, I'm grateful for this experience and your enormous contributions. It has been a

tricky, confusing, stressful thing to navigate at times. I can't say I've loved every minute of this year or the last half a decade, because I haven't, and a law degree is hard, and five years is a bloody long time and I'm so scared that ditching law to pursue a "dying" media industry could be stupid. My post-uni plans involve throwing together a few applications, crossing my fingers and hoping for the best. It's pretty anxiety-inducing. But I know I'm going to land on my feet. Because thanks to you, I have learnt more than I could have imagined.

Keep making stuff and putting words together and deleting them and rewriting and doing it all over again. Creation is a hard process, but it's the best there is. Here's to knowing that our work matters, and to handing on the baton to a team I hope will make this humble rag even better next year.

Keep up the good fight. Resist. Claim your power. Take care of each other. Take care of yourself. Rest. Keep writing, keep creating, keep publishing stuff that ruffles some feathers.

Thanks for having me, UNSW. Goodbye for now.

# Letters From the Editors



## FEATURES

ALICIA D'ARCY

Welcome to our final issue, which is aptly themed Literary as an ode to all of the excellent writing that has been on *Tharunka's* pages over the year.

Reading has always been a great source of joy for me; as a child I consumed books voraciously, to the point where there was a strict ban on any book-purchasing in our household (the newest *Harry Potter* book excepted, of course). More recently, as I've gotten older and my attention span has seemingly deteriorated, I similarly love reading article after article on my phone.

What we've attempted to do with *Tharunka* this year is to make reading each edition a distinctly literary experience. I don't mean this in the sense of only including a certain style of writing and the elitist connotations of "literature". Rather, we've wanted you to be able to sit down with the magazine – perhaps on the train or as you drink your coffee in the morning – and to relish turning the thick, well-designed pages whilst reading some lovely and interesting writing.

It's been an absolute ball being editor this year and I hope you've enjoyed what we've put out. A big thank you goes to Brittney, Sharon, Leo and Dominic: thank you for making this such a delightful experience and for teaching me

so much. If you're considering applying to be editor, I absolutely recommend it; nothing could be more rewarding.



## ONLINE

DOMINIC GIANNINI

Being an Editor for *Tharunka* has been a great honour over this past year and the myriad of great journalism, both traditional and creative, has been phenomenal. This last edition culminates in a celebration of writing and our tenure as editors, but also symbolises the works of artists, writers, poets and storytellers from the UNSW community who continue to make the arts what it is today.

Some write for the fun of it, others write as an escape, and some use it as a political instrument. During this heated debate about the SSM plebiscite, I encourage everyone in the community to express and codify their thoughts, inhibitions, and emotions onto paper (or computer). Literature can be used for many things, and its pertinence as an artform comes from the expression of free speech. The public needs to know how this debate has impacted those from the LGBTQI+ community. Write, draw, think, create. Just don't stay silent.

The pen is mightier than the sword, and the bigot.



## CREATIVE

SHARON WONG

It's the last issue of the year, and damn. What a year it's been. In Creative, we've seen poems, short stories, comics, memoirs, and artworks from some of the most diverse writers and artists at UNSW, telling the myriad of stories available to us, from us, for us, as students and as citizens of this community.

This year, *Tharunka* was about showcasing the breadth of UNSW student visions; it was about letting the longest running student publication become a platform available for all students to have their voices heard and seen. From taking pride in our individual cultures, to bringing a sisterhood of femmes together, to reaffirming the support for all our LGBTQIA\* students, and so much more, this year has been about carving out a place for each and every one of us to be seen.

Thank you to Brittney, Alicia, Leo, and Dominic for coming together this year and bringing this humble magazine to life. It's been a joy and absolute pleasure working with some of the most creative minds to refine and mould our unique expressions to create powerful sites of memory, love, and strength.



## DESIGNER

LEO TSAO

I've put so much (maybe too much) of myself into every single issue of *Tharunka*, and honestly, I don't have much left to say. I've loved having this platform to share my art and perspective. I came into this job knowing that I wanted to continue the *Tharunka* legacy; I wanted to experiment, to challenge, and not just make digestible and pretty wallpaper.

It was amazing to have so many people react so immediately and directly to my work. The most gratifying and frustrating part was definitely having people challenge me and my ideas constantly ... I definitely didn't see whole collectives coming for me. ;)

I have had an intense love/hate relationship with this job, but at the end of the day, I'm actually just super grateful to have had this opportunity to work with an amazing team. <3



# Agony Ibis



Dear Agony Ibis,

Hope this telegram finds you well [stop]. Would prefer to keep this between you and I for now [stop]. Having some beef with the clowns over at Fairfax [stop]. Wondering if you've got any tips on how to shut down media sources you don't like [stop]. Tried to cry defamation on their stories about how much the Libs suck but unfortunately they were telling the truth so court case failed [stop] [paragraph].

Anyway if you think of anything, give my girl on reception a call [stop]. I've asked her to type this up but she might be busy spying for the Chinese [stop].

Yours,

Rupert M

Hello Rupert M,

I feel like we're in a spy movie! You on your secret dictation machine, me pecking around the rubbish bins behind that dodgy food court on upper campus.

I see your predicament. It's a real doozy, the ol' defamation law, what with its defence of truth. I suggest you try a few moves to get the punters on your side. Maybe you could buy Australia's only cable TV channel and charge enormous prices for literally two or three good TV shows?

If that doesn't work, time to look at the nuclear options. What about skipping town and fleeing for the States, dodging tax obligations along the way? Even better, have you ever considered phone tapping? That's a sure-fire way to dig up some dirt on your enemies. I've got some contacts in the UK who are brilliant at that kind of thing.

Let me know if you need me to go through anyone's rubbish - it's a favourite pastime of mine.

Yours,

AI (as in, the robot)

FEATURES

# Gender Identity at a Morphosyntactic Level: English and Spanish

While we like to think that our own feelings dictate how we express our identities, the language we speak may play a larger role than we realise. Gender identity has come into the limelight recently due to the attempted introduction of new, queer-specific pronouns in English.

and sexual orientation. Gay men will often replace words ending with "o" with an "a", ironically changing it from masculine to feminine. Examine the headline:

*"El youtuber español @jonanwiergo comparte fotos de infarta en Instagram"*

There are a few reasons why the proposed pronouns never *really* caught on. Besides perhaps the more obvious social reasons, one explanation is that in English, personal pronouns belong to a closed class group of words. This is to say that adding or taking away from this group of words is a long, slow process. It may even be impossible to change a pronoun in only a single generation of English speakers. The classes of words that are closed are more or less arbitrary, and vary from language to language. The reason why the pronoun "they" (for use in the singular) got more traction than "xe", for example, is because it already belonged to the personal pronoun pool, and was easier for English speakers to adapt and appropriate.

as compared to the standard:

*"El youtuber español @jonanwiergo comparte fotos de infarto en Instagram"*

[The Spanish YouTuber @jonanwiergo shares heart attack-provoking photos on Instagram] (Escándala, 2017)

The reverse is also applicable, with the popular fictional Internet personality, Señora Católica (Catholic Lady) irreverently captioning photos with any reference to lesbians with:

*"POCODO", "TOJOROSMO" and "BLOSFOMIO"*

as opposed to the standard:

*"PECADO", "TIJERISMO", and "BLASFEMIA"*

But this isn't to say that linguistic gender expression is hard, or futile. Language is infinitely creative, and you can *always* think of a new way to say something. The English-speaking LGBTI+ community alone is *full* of slang, but let's take a look at Spanish.

[SIN, SCISSERISM and BLASPHEMY] (Señora Católica, 2017)

A common way for gay people to express gender identity in Spanish (albeit, mostly jokingly) is the reversal of the grammatical gender. Spanish has male and female grammatical gender, which is arbitrary most of the time. For example, "la pared" (the wall) will be feminine, while "el piso" (the floor) will be masculine. However, in the LGBTI+ community in Mexico and many other Spanish-speaking countries, grammatical gender has a more productive use. Apart from applying to inanimate objects, it can also apply to the human sexes, gender identity

So why can Spanish speakers have gay slang "within" words, while English speakers are, for the most part, stuck with creating *new* gay words? You'd be hard pressed to find any word in English that was morphologically altered to account for its "gayness". This is, of course, a result of the contrast in typology between English and Spanish. English is more or less an *analytic* language, which means that it has fewer units of meaning in each word. For example, where you would have to use six words to explain in English, "He used to play the piano", you could say this in three words

in Spanish: "Tocaba el piano". Or, of course, if he were a gay man, you could say, "Tocaba *la piana*".

This isn't to say that English misses out. The analytic nature of the language opens the door to other unique forms of expression, for example the use of "Polari" in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain. Polari was a secret LGBTI+ language that worked by replacing English open class words with a Polari equivalent. Due to the relatively low morpheme-to-word ratio in English, these words (mainly verbs and common nouns) can be replaced in their entirety. The Polari words easily fit into the English word order without affecting syntax or morphology.

As seen above, the language we speak can greatly affect our own expression of gender and identity. Could we go even further to say that our language, apart from altering our linguistic expression of identity, alters gender identity itself? This is still an issue hotly contested in psycholinguistics, and it is most famously brought to light by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which contends that the structure of a language affects its speakers' worldview or cognition. For fear of reprisal from any linguistics professor, I'll abstain from providing a definite answer.

Language is weird and wonderful, which makes it a perfect fit for gender identity. It'll be fascinating to see how this develops cross-linguistically in the future.

To Read Or Not To Read (A Hard Copy Book):

# THAT IS THE QUESTION

## HARD COPY, PLEASE

By Michelle Wang

Buttery, matte pages flicking underneath your fingers. You're diving in, taking the plunge into a world of words. Reading a book is the experience you can't separate from the literal pages you're holding in your hands. It's the joy of being lent, or lending, a book to a friend dog-eared and creased, maybe coffee-stained or with mystery crumbs in the spine. Or it might be in perfect condition, contacted, with only tidy corner folds. The book you never returned to the library, now it's yours; or it still has a price tag from Borders (remember that sprawling book haven?). It's an object imbued with the rich possibilities of the worlds in its pages as well as the memories around it. Who can resist the nostalgia within pages and pages?

I'll acknowledge that there's convenience in an electronic reader, but so is there in a sleeping bag or a blow-up mattress. They're portable and, for a short amount of time, even kind of fun, but then the novelty wears off and you want a good night's sleep in a proper, comfy bed. The real thing, the real deal – it just can't be replaced. How can you replace that feeling of marking your progress through the book, or the satisfaction of realising the bookmark has inched past halfway? And sometimes, you just want a good ol' sniff, a whiff of those pages, be they brand-new smelly or ripe with history. And then there are times, when you'll need it to prop up a desk or a chair temporarily, or to shield the sun. There is just endless utility and joy in a physical book!

To the naysayers who want a library of choice at their fingertips: don't deny that curating the reads you'll take with you is part of the fun, and so is playing luggage Tetris with said selections. So is going to the bookshop at the airport, or discovering your local library. We have smartphones and gadgets for when we need quick morsels of encyclopaedic information or trivia fact checking. As for the wonderful world of reading? Let's not corrupt it with new-fangled, technology ridden, iPhone X level ~interfaces~. Take off your computer face briefly. Hold a book in your hands. Rifle through it. Smell the pages. Read it. Book is pure and good. Book is human's best, inanimate friend.

## THE KINDLE REIGNS SUPREME

By Catherine Macarounas

Growing up, I dreamed of having a big, beautiful library full of all of my favourite books. I used to spend my weekends scouring op-shops to find hidden gems in the second-hand book section. My little library spilled over my bookcase into teetering piles on the floor of paperbacks I had excitedly bought but never got around to reading.

Unfortunately, life happened and our family had to move houses pretty much once a year between 2010 and 2015. When you move houses, you realise that you have a lot of stuff. Not only did I have a lot of stuff in general, I had a lot of books that I soon realised were really heavy. About three houses in, I decided I'd had enough of cardboard moving boxes succumbing to the weight of my excessive book collection.

I sorted through all my books, kept my favourites and those that had sentimental value and decided to donate the rest. Then, I embraced new age reading: the Kindle.

Whilst browsing the Kindle store isn't as fun as trips to your local bookshop, I have embraced the Kindle life for a number of reasons:

1. Kindles aren't heavy. Not only can I move my entire book collection without taping together any cardboard moving boxes, I always keep my Kindle in my bag so I can be instantly book-ready in any boring situation.
2. You can make the font *really* big. I used to make fun of my Dad for doing this, but it's actually really useful when you've forgotten your glasses or your brain is tired and foggy.
3. You can read in the dark! This is great for sneaking in a few extra hours of reading on family holidays when your siblings are being uncompromising about sleeping arrangements.
4. You can highlight passages and make notes, as well as search for a certain scene, phrase or word, which has been helpful for writing essays.
5. The dictionary. When you're stuck on a word that you haven't seen before you can easily search its meaning and expand your vocabulary.

Whilst I believe that real life, great-smelling paperbacks will always have a place in our lives, the Kindle has made my love of reading more accessible; I hold it as dear as any book.notes, as well as search for a certain scene, phrase or word, which has been helpful for writing essays.

The dictionary. When you're stuck on a word that you haven't seen before you can easily search its meaning and expand your vocabulary.

Whilst I believe that real life, great-smelling paperbacks will always have a place in our lives, the Kindle has made my love of reading more accessible; I hold it as dear as any book.

# Women Call on Men to do Less

On Tuesday 15 August, women released a statement urging men to “just leave everything alone”. Women collectively decided that men no longer need to participate in housework or offer emotional support and, most importantly, they must leave politics alone.

The United Nation’s “Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation” report found that 80 per cent of political figures are male, and the world is rapidly “turning to shit”.

Consequently, women are now encouraging men to have an extra beer, watch the footy, have a wank, sleep until 1pm, stand at the barbecue and crack a joke, while women remain in the kitchen providing food, nursing children and succumbing to the call of a milkshake in a distant yard.

“We get you’re trying to help, but just leave it to us,” said Moira, the spokesperson for all women, everywhere.

Men have yet to respond, although there is a rumour they will “get around to it this weekend”.





We asked  
*Tharunka*  
contributors  
which book  
changed their  
life.

Here are their  
answers, and your  
updated “to-read”  
list.

## BOOK OF LONGING, BY LEONARD COHEN

Georgia Griffiths

Leonard Cohen was the first artist I ever saw live in concert. As a 14-year-old back in 2010, I felt pretty wise for my age, sitting in a sea of adults at Acer Arena, despite only knowing one song (*Hallelujah*, obviously). After the concert, I quickly became obsessed with Cohen and his work. While I found much of his writing confusing and bland, there was one book I loved. *Book of Longing* is a collection of eccentric poetry and drawings, mostly from Cohen’s time at a Zen monastery in California in the 1990s. As an early teenager, I most certainly missed a lot of the references, but it was the first poetry I read and enjoyed. While I still don’t understand all of its context, and probably never will, there’s something about Cohen’s writing that resonates with me. In most cases it’s pretty blunt, yet he can create an intricate picture with just a few words. I still don’t love poetry, and perhaps Cohen’s writing is closer to song lyrics than anything, but *Book of Longing* introduced me to how unique a book can be. The copy I borrowed from my parents now has pride of place amongst other eclectic books and magazines, which I can guarantee I would not have picked up if not for Mr Cohen.

## A LITTLE LIFE, BY HANYA YANAGIHARA

Shivika Gupta

*A Little Life* is not easy reading. Numerous times I found myself crying and more than once I took long breaks to ease immense nausea. If we often laud reading for its dip into escapism, a welcome release from our own troublesome lives, then what could possibly draw countless readers into a fictional work underscored by visceral violence and trauma few would covet? It is, despite this darkening and suffocating sense of reality as we grow older, the book’s rich and heart-warming depiction of selfless friendship which leaves you craving more, well after the final, 720<sup>th</sup> page. Yanagihara traces the lives of four college classmates across 40 years, but it is the trials and tribulations of Jude, whose complex childhood is slowly uncovered, which keeps us on our toes.

When we struggle to understand the intensity of real life happenings, literary representation of that experience or emotion can be cathartic. *A Little Life* came to me at a time when I was in desperate need to understand the all-consuming relentlessness of mental illness affecting many of my closest friends. It was a lesson in deep empathy and patience, finally giving me the tools and framework to better understand an experience we often reduce to platitudes of “R U OK”.

## WORM, BY JOHN C MCCRAW

Albert Lin

*Worm* has changed my life. It’s a 1.6 million-word web-serial written in two and a half years, a superhero deconstruction, with themes of determination and desperation. It tells the story of one Taylor Hebert, a bullied girl turned super-villain, turned warlord, turned hero, turned god-slayer. It proposes questions about ethics and morality, the greater good, doing the right things for the wrong reasons, and breaks down what it means to be a hero or a villain.

*Worm* features world-ending monsters every few months, complex international superpower politics, and incredibly unique powers. More than that, it helped me see things in a more nuanced light, questioning the nature of society, good versus bad, and the masks everyone wears. It has influenced how I read, how I write, and how I compose myself. *Worm* is the only work that truly left me hollow after finishing it, yearning for anything to stop it from ending.

But *Worm* is more than just a work of fiction. It has informed my attitude. It showed me what practice and sustained effort can do. It’s a testament to the fact that with enough grit and effort, you can do anything. *Worm* is why I write seriously. *Worm* told me that all I need to do is write, and write, and write, and write, and write, and read, and I can make things no one else can.

*Worm* gave me hope.

## OF MICE AND MEN, BY JOHN STEINBECK

Debby Xu

When life seems barren and unyielding, with strong gales of wind blowing up dust and sand to blind your eyes and envelope your nostrils so that it becomes hard to breathe and purposeless to take another step forward, it is sweet respite to fall into sleep and dream of the Spring that seems so distant and impossible after a harsh and brutish Winter. Smell the fragrant salt, the earth and bees freely. Don’t close your eyes, open them for the glorious green hues that await you. Except, this garden is no longer a dream, but a new life tenderly wrapped in sarcasm and dirtied old newspapers as a gift, from a friend. You don’t know it yet, but this gift is the world. It is also the gift of his broken heart, knowing that soon it will be woken again to real life, to the senseless hum that is the constant rhyme and rhythm. A heart that when unanchored, is easily swept away like a piece of crumpled paper by the sand and the gale.

## THE NAMESAKE, BY JHUMPA LAHIRI

Shakti Srikanth

Have you ever read something so profound, so humble, so woke ... that you find yourself pausing every few minutes to laugh, cry and gather your thoughts when you’ve well and truly hit blunt? Soon enough, you’re standing in front of the mirror – queue: “When will my reflection show who I am?” That was me the first time I read Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*. I was 19 and my ABCD (Australian Born Confused Desi) was still in full-force. Imagine me, if you will, Azealia Banks on replay (see feud with Zayn Malik for context), sippin’ my pearl-milk tea – how very un-Indian of me.

Lahiri poignantly writes for the multitude of first-generation Indians struggling to find their identity in Western societies. Whilst the protagonist, Gogol, attempts to distance himself from his Bengali heritage, he is ultimately drawn back to his family home – the only point of stability in his life.

*The Namesake* simultaneously celebrates and reflects upon the decisions cultural misfits, like myself, make in navigating an identity that is at once plural and partial. It’s easy to criticise Gogol’s actions, specifically his impetus to discard his ethnic-origins for a “coconut” persona (an Indian who is brown on the outside but white on the inside). However, when you realise you also, at one point in time, held an internalised self-hatred for your own culture, the novel becomes a powerful metaphor for self-discovery. Just like Gogol, the strange smell of my Indian lunch was something I despised, the mispronunciation of my name something I feared and the appraisal of “white-persons” something I eagerly sought.

When I reflect on this now, it’s almost comedic. Schoolyard bullies and divisive politics no longer define my “otherness” ... I could continue but my chicken biryani is ready.



# THE CASE FOR THARUNKA ELECTIONS

For the past two years, the *Tharunka* editorial team has been appointed by a panel including the outgoing Managing Editor, the Chair of Arc Board, the SRC President and the Director of Student Services. This panel firstly appoints the Managing Editor, and then the newly-appointed Managing Editor chooses their own sub-editors and designer.

Previously, the editorial team was elected and would run on a ticket in conjunction with the SRC tickets running that year. However, this meant that editorial teams were often stacked with political hacks and were biased in their coverage. The tipping point came when a 2015 editor went through *Tharunka's* archives and deleted articles that were unfavourable to his Labor Right faction. Hence, it arguably made a lot of sense at the time for Arc to take tighter control of *Tharunka's* editorial team and to appoint its editors, in order to ensure quality and minimise political hackery.

The time has come, however, for this appointment model to end. Editorial teams must be elected by the UNSW student population once more, and must be elected separately from SRC tickets (in order to ensure that they are as unbiased as possible and able to actually report on SRC elections). Here's why.

## MORE DEMOCRATICALLY LEGITIMATE

*Tharunka's* editors are paid by the student service fees that go to Arc, and are supposed to represent student voices. It should therefore be students who select the editors. Even if it is *somewhat* democratically legitimate that the elected SRC President and Chair of Arc Board choose the managing editor, it is *more* democratically legitimate that students choose the editors directly themselves. Moreover, an SRC President may have been elected by students to represent policies that aren't relevant to media practices. More worryingly, given that *Tharunka* has been disallowed from proper reporting on the election of these SRC and Arc Board over the past two years, the democratic legitimacy of those positions are potentially shaky anyway.

## PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT UNSW AND ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT HOLDING ITS INSTITUTIONS ACCOUNTABLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET ELECTED

Both Arc and the SRC have an incentive to appoint editors who are talented and good writers, but who are not necessarily troublemakers, because that could an editor jeopardising their job. Arc, like any other organisation, has reason to stifle criticism. However, given that Arc has become more and more corporate (reflected by the fact it no longer has "union" in its name), it has less reason to encourage democracy. We also see this in the current *Tharunka* Charter, which does not permit effective reporting on either Arc Board or SRC elections.

## BETTER TEAMWORK

It is of the utmost importance that editors in a team respect each other and know each other well, preferably as soon as possible. This means they are willing to work closely with each other throughout the year and are then able to derive energy and motivation from each other. If the ticket gets to choose its members, there is a good chance that a baseline level of respect and common values already

BY ALICIA D'ARCY

exist. In addition, the baptism of fire that is an election campaign means that editors truly get to know each other in a pressurised environment.

## ENSURES THAT EDITORIAL VISION IS ARTICULATED CLEARLY, IN A TRANSPARENT MANNER

An election campaign necessitates that a ticket clearly articulates the values that it stands for. Vision is important because it means that a team works out what it wants to achieve in a year, and will then create steps to work towards that. It means that a team has the fights about what it wants to publish and what content it will prioritise as early as possible. This big picture brainstorming might otherwise never occur once semester and all its corresponding busyness begins.

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There are definitely some genuine criticisms of this election model, however, and I fully acknowledge that. Here's how I deal with them:

## “ONLY BIG NAMES ON CAMPUS (BNOCS) GET ELECTED/IT'S A POPULARITY CONTEST”

I admit, if you know more people on campus and have been involved at UNSW, you are more likely to get elected. However, this is not necessarily harmful: it means that you care about UNSW and are passionate about ensuring that it's a good place to go to uni. Tickets would be able to compensate for this perhaps by having a balance of unnaturally popular people on their ticket as well as very experienced people.

## “YEAH SURE, BUT THIS MEANS THAT PEOPLE WHO LIVE FAR AWAY FROM UNI OR ARE OTHERWISE DISADVANTAGED ARE LESS LIKELY TO GET ELECTED BECAUSE THEY CAN'T BE AS INVOLVED IN CAMPUS LIFE”

This definitely sucks, however it is a product of inequality in society and is

not something that can be meaningfully fixed by either model. Unfortunately, these extra-curricular activities are the type of things that a selection panel and Managing Editor *also* looks at when deciding who will be the editors. If anything, having a person on a ticket who used to live rurally might work in that ticket's favour, because it allows them to claim that they are more diverse. This mechanism doesn't occur when a selection panel's reasoning is not transparent.

## “PEOPLE WHO ARE GOOD AT JOURNALISM OR WHO OTHERWISE DON'T POSSESS THE REQUISITE SKILLS OF PUTTING A PAPER TOGETHER ARE NOT ELECTED”

I think that this is a really pessimistic view of the voting tendencies of the student population. If a ticket has a wealth of students who have contributed to *Tharunka* consistently in the past or are otherwise super talented writers, this is something that they can campaign on and will work in their favour. UNSW students are a generally pretty sceptical bunch when it comes to student politics, in my opinion, and I reckon this means that they'd be more likely to elect editors who campaign on a platform of objectivity and experience.

## “ELECTION CAMPAIGNS SUCK AND ARE REALLY ANNOYING”

Sure they can be annoying, but that's the price of democracy. Also, I just generally take issue with a bizarre pride that many UNSW students have in our campus's indifference to stupor, especially in contrast to campuses like the University of Sydney. What is there to be proud of about this? It just means that student politicians get voted in without much fanfare, get to be in charge of lots of money and stack their CV, whilst not being held to account. It just means that students feel less connected to the overall culture of UNSW. It just means that people care less. That's lame.

# THE MYSTERIOUS \$2,000+ UNSW LAW ELECTIVE ADMIN FEES



Student exchange is a popular option for UNSW Law students, with students able to study abroad for a year, semester or the summer or winter. The faculty promotes these exchange programs heavily (as the university promotes exchange programs regardless of the faculty, with a dedicated exchange office).

Separate from exchanges organised by the UNSW exchange office, the law faculty offers several summer and winter courses at overseas universities, including at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, billed by UNSW Law as “one of China’s top universities”, Columbia University in New York City and Diego Portales University in Santiago. These courses appear on faculty advertisements throughout the law building and are usually one to two weeks in duration.

In terms of fees, however, the courses are not run as a regular UNSW law course. In addition to paying the usual student contribution fees (of around \$1,370 for domestic students), students wishing to take these electives must pay a fee ranging from \$2,200 to \$2,500, which is said to cover “the cost of accommodation, breakfast [not covered for New York course], transportation for field trips, visits and administration costs”. The fee, which appears to be mysteriously arrived at, does not cover flights, travel or medical insurance, or other costs associated with the course.

*Tharunka* conservatively estimates the costs for the eight day New York course as totalling more than \$6,000 per student, estimating around \$1,500 for flights, \$1,370 in standard student contribution fees, \$1,000 in spending money (which also covers incidentals, food, and travel insurance) and the additional \$2,500 fee.

While *Tharunka* understands that a limited number of scholarships are available for some of the courses, it is clear that these courses have significant accessibility issues for students without the financial means to pay the fee on top of the costs of flights, travel insurance and other incidentals. The courses are electives, and thus are not compulsory for students who may not be in a position to afford the fee.

“Chinese Legal System” is the course offered to UNSW Law students at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. In 2017, it ran over a 13-day period,

from 2 to 15 July. UNSW Law stipulated that students must use the arranged accommodation for “management and safety reasons”. The arranged accommodation was an on-campus hotel. At print deadline, *Tharunka* was unable to obtain a quote for a room (the hotel does not appear to have a website).

Although UNSW Law students were forced to stay in the hotel, Shanghai Jiao Tong University offers dormitory student accommodation separate from the on-campus hotel, which costs between approximately AUD\$14 and \$27 per night for short stays. While there may be legitimate UNSW insurance reasons behind the requirement that students stay in the hotel, using the dormitory accommodation costs quoted as an indication, it appears that accommodation at Shanghai Jiao Tong University is relatively inexpensive, leaving further questions surrounding the \$2,500 fee. It is also unclear why students are unable to stay in the non-hotel student accommodation, which is presumably cheaper.

*Tharunka* spoke to several students who have undertaken the Columbia, Diego Portales and Jiao Tong courses, all of whom requested to remain anonymous. There seemed to be no justification provided to students in relation to the fee, other than the information available on the UNSW Law website. At least one student who enquired about the fee was told that much of the fee was passed on to the host institution.

In 2017, approximately 40 students participated in the course at Columbia University, which equates to AU\$100,000 in fees over and above the usual student contribution fee. The course ran for 8 days. It is unclear how 40 students using Columbia University’s facilities for little more than one week could justify such a cost, even with accommodation (and a “welcome lunch”) included.

*Tharunka* reached out to both the UNSW media office and the law faculty for comment and justification of the additional fee charged for overseas electives. We were referred to the UNSW Law website, which provides the general explanation of the fee as described above, and were further told that:

*“The arrangements and therefore costs for particular courses are based on the country being*

*visited/international exchange rates, venue hire, guest lecturers, fieldtrips etc and whether or not accommodation is included.*

...

*In the event that your concern is that the Faculty seeks to make a profit from our students by running overseas electives programs please be assured that this is not the case.”*

*Tharunka* requested a breakdown of the specific costs involved, and an explanation as to how expenses are apportioned, but neither the UNSW media office or the law faculty provided such a justification.

Two students who undertook the Columbia course in July 2017 said that the accommodation provided had a mould issue, and that this spread to their belongings while staying at the accommodation. By comparison, I undertook a short course that counted as an elective for my undergraduate law degree in July 2017 at a law school in New York not affiliated with UNSW Law, and was charged around AUD\$1,000 for two weeks’ student accommodation in midtown Manhattan. Assuming the accommodation provided was charged at AUD\$500 for the week of the course, allowing for another AUD\$500 in “administration costs”, there still appears to be \$1,500 unaccounted for.

*Tharunka* also spoke to students who travelled to Santiago to undertake the course at Diego Portales University. They described the accommodation as rundown serviced apartments, although they were clean and suitable for the students’ needs.

Part of the appeal of studying a short course at a university such as Columbia is obviously the LinkedIn and resume cred it provides. However, students we spoke to said that they were told by a UNSW Law faculty member that they were forbidden from stating on their resume or LinkedIn that they had studied at

Columbia University, because the course was arranged by UNSW Law and the Columbia lecturers were giving up their time to teach them. The subject has a UNSW course code and assessment and grading is organised by the UNSW Law.

UNSW Law’s website describes its student exchange programs as “culturally rewarding” and “intellectually enriching”. It seems that such reward and enrichment is restricted to students who have the means to fork out up to \$2,500 for a vague and unjustified fee.





## SPOTLIGHT ON

## Chris Leben



**Chris Leben is a comedian, writer, director and producer mainly known for his work with *The Feed* on SBS. He's also the mastermind behind popularising the "character" of Lee Lin Chin.**

**Recently speaking at the TEDxYouth event in Sydney, Chris focused on how he turned a respected newsreader into a comedy star. And why exactly has it been such a success?**

**"Because the character depicts an older Asian woman in a position of power," he said.**

**Chris reminded us that as 40% of Australians don't trust mainstream media, we're turning to comedians like John Oliver and Shaun Micallef for our news. Lee Lin is a charming mix of the two.**

**I caught up with Chris after the TED talk.**

**SO WHY DID YOU JUST CARRY LEE LIN OFF STAGE "JUST HITCHED" STYLE?**

That's based on a story that came out the night after the Logies – the next morning after the Logies there was a report that Lee Lin was so drunk that she was carried out of the after party. Now I can tell you for a fact that is not true. *I* was so drunk that I lifted Lee Lin up and carried her out of the party. She was stone cold sober! We had to put out a press release that I was the drunk idiot and not Lee Lin. I just fucked up.

**YOU'RE JUST TARNISHING HER REPUTATION!**

I know, and yet she still plays with me...

**SO JUST ON THAT, HOW INVOLVED IS LEE LIN IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS?**

It's kind of like ... I would write the script then give it to her on the day and then she would tell me what she was and was not comfortable saying, and then she would re-write some of the lines to be more "Lee Lin" genuine. A lot of the words in the TED talk I would never write because I'm a simpleton. But Lee Lin likes to remind me she speaks the Queen's English.

**I GUESS SHE IS A RESPECTED NEWSREADER AFTER ALL.**

Yeah yeah, and she also went to a private Catholic school in Singapore where all the teachers were wealthy ladies of leisure who donated their time to be teachers. She adopted their accents and language. And also, all she does is read. That's the only thing she cares about – she's constantly re-reading Shakespeare and [William] Faulkner.

**SO A LOT OF THE JOKES ARE BASED ON HER TRUE PERSONALITY?**

Yeah! The best comedy comes from exaggerating the truth – I did hear that story about Lee Lin going to backpacker bars to pick up international hotties, but I don't think it's true. And Lee Lin has told me that it's not. But she does love fashion and beer.

**IS IT EVER THE CASE THAT YOU COME**

**UP WITH SOMETHING OUTLANDISH AND SHE'S VETOED IT FOR BEING TOO UNLIKE HER?**

Yes – swearing! She won't swear. I've heard her swear twice. Once, I begged her to do it. It was for our TV pilot and I thought it would be a really funny moment – it wasn't that great in the end ... She was not happy and kept trying to convince me not to do it. In retrospect, I probably should've listened to her. Another time when I said "fuck you" to her, she said back to me "No! Fuck me, fuck you!" And that's the only time I've ever heard her use it in a conversation.

**WAS THAT A PRIVATE QUIP OR ON STAGE?**

No, just the two of us at the pub!

**HAS SHE EVER COME UP WITH THE CONTROVERSIAL IDEAS?**

Nothing so much controversial, but at the Logies she came up with the idea to take one of her makeup artist's sons down the red carpet with her. He was dressed in a tuxedo, they had matching flowers on, all her idea, and she coached him to tell every journalist as they walked up the red carpet that he was something different. He'd be like "Oh I'm Lee Lin's son", the next one "Oh I'm her manager", or "I'm her personal trainer, I keep her fit". That was all her idea.

The plan was, if she won the Gold Logie, he was going to give the speech for her. So I had to carry a milk crate with me all night at the Logies, just in case he had to go up and accept it. Lee Lin was just going to sit back and not leave her seat! I was going to have to run up, put this milk crate down, pick this kid up and place him on top of it. It would've been pretty cute ... I can't remember what the speech was – Lee Lin and I co-wrote it and we wrote it in her voice, so it would be coming out of this 9-year-old boy. We thought that would be quite funny.

**WHAT A LOST OPPORTUNITY! YOU MENTIONED THE FACT THAT THE BEST COMEDY COMES FROM EXAGGERATING THE TRUTH – HOW DID YOU FIRST GET TO KNOW EACH**

**OTHER, TO LEARN THAT TRUTH OF WHO SHE REALLY IS?**

I didn't know her! I didn't watch her on the news, I literally started writing the character based on a few bits and bobs of detail that I got from the people who worked with her. You can watch in those early sketches that we did [for SBS's *The Feed*] ... the character is not the same as it is now, and that's because I didn't know Lee Lin. I was writing for someone that I thought I could get to do all these ridiculous things, and that wasn't the case.

In the first few episodes, she's an alcoholic who drinks whatever – she drinks wine, she drinks beer, she drinks spirits. Lee Lin *hates* every single drink except beer. She will never let it touch her lips. So you slowly learn those things. Just as you learn her great love is William Shakespeare, and then you start writing that into it. There are always these little things that you hear, or she'll tell me family stories about how she did X thing and that ends up being in the script.

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Our interview was then (fittingly) interrupted by Lee Lin herself, demanding to know where her driver was.

Chris's response?

"Wilkins won't be here for another 20 minutes."

# BEST OF 2017

***Tharunka* has published some excellent online pieces throughout the year, which have made it to you through our Facebook posts and a bit of SEO help, but haven't lined up with our print schedule. Here, we take a moment to bring you a few of the best online pieces we saw in 2017.**

BY HAYLEY BARRINGTON

## Same, Same, But Different

*In celebration of International Women's Day earlier in the year, **Tharunka** published a series of stories written by women, about women.*

Historically, ideas of oppression such as racism, sexism, homophobia etc. were viewed as free standing. However, intersectionality holds that these various forms of oppression do not act independently, but rather interrelate to create a system of oppression that reflects the divergence and connection of multiple forms of discrimination. Herein lies the issue for a number of Indigenous women, including myself, when it comes to engaging with feminism.

First and foremost, I am Indigenous. This means that notions of community, caring for country and raising strong, successful children who are proud of their culture and heritage are my priorities. This then means that my responses to issues of gender are primarily informed by my experiences of race, and while the inclusion of Indigeneity is not meant to be divisive, it does assist in highlighting the additional barriers we as Indigenous women have to overcome. For instance, our most notable struggle has been alongside Aboriginal men in the fight against the oppression of the colonial settler state, which is obviously race-focused and monumental to the survival of our people as a whole.

Furthermore, a fundamental difference exists between the approaches taken by white women, who tend to focus their frustrations on men in general, whereas Indigenous women do not. Historically, Indigenous men have experienced a different kind of discrimination, as they were ostracized from the wider population, while Indigenous women were used primarily as domestic servants, however still within the social structure. This is not to subtract from the

hardships this social hierarchy presented for Indigenous women.

In the present day, Indigenous men are far too often demonised or emasculated, portrayed in the media as pedophiles or criminals that fail to provide for their families. Therefore, it is important that we engage with the feminist debate, while remaining cautious as to not shame or demonise Indigenous men to an even greater extent. So while our struggle for gender equality remains, further complexities arise when considering the experiences of Indigenous men in Colonial Australia, highlighting just one of the conflicts we as Indigenous women face when participating in the feminist movement.

A further concern I, as an Indigenous woman, have, is the fact that our voices and Indigenous identity tend to be lost in mainstream feminism, albeit unintentionally, due to the fact that the battle for gender equality is confined to, and fought within structures favoring Anglo-Saxon cultural hegemony. Opening the dialogue around rights for Indigenous women, and all women of colour, is not only necessary, but vital to moving forward together. This would require, at a bare minimum, an awareness of intersectionality and acknowledgment of our differences.

Yet, feminism in Australia appears to be doing nothing but reinforcing white hegemony, failing to effectively incorporate the experiences of women of colour, in particular Indigenous women, into the movement. Moreover, while we all, as women, have experienced oppression at the hands of the patriarchy, it is important to recognise

and acknowledge the further oppression Indigenous women have experienced as a result of colonisation, dispossession and an attempted cultural genocide, all of which was accompanied by a new social structure, lifestyle and economic system.

While the priority for the white feminist movement is breaking through the glass ceiling, Indigenous people, both men and women, are recovering and rebuilding our communities within the confines of a structure that places us on the bottom rung of the social hierarchy.

Feminism is all about sisterhood and solidarity, and as a minority group, the voices of Indigenous women need amplifying. We are all here and ready to fight the same battle, but it is important to recognise that we aren't all equipped with the same weapons.



# To Me, Love Me: UNSW Women Write Feminist Letters to Their Younger Selves

On International Women’s Day, Tharunka asked three UNSW women to write letters to their younger selves about feminism, growing up in a patriarchal society and being a woman. This is what they wrote.

## Nicola Ray

To the 16-year-old girl with a copy of *Cosmopolitan* in one hand, and the watery, incarnation-of-misery that is 60-calorie yogurt in the other,

You’re not terribly uncommon, and that’s the most distressing part.

At this point in your life, you know absolutely nothing about feminism. In fact, you probably think it’s a social movement run by a bunch of histrionic virgins, mainly because you’re too afraid that if you concede otherwise, *the boys won’t like you*.

So let’s start with the basics.

First of all, no one will teach you how to unpack misogyny. You’ve been conditioned to accept that self-hate is an intrinsic part of being a teenager, and that your routine self-confidence issues are the fault of the media. But when it comes down to actually sniffing out misogyny, including the various ways in which women are written over and against one another, you’re completely in the dark.

Take the magazines for example. They will try to “empower” you by slapping pictures of celebrities without makeup on their covers, relegating their beauty to the level of the ordinary “plebeian” woman. They will try to “empower” you by encouraging you to

love your small tits or big thighs, because apparently these are things to be ashamed of in the first place? They will try to “empower” you by encouraging you to “treat yourself this Christmas” so long as you make it your New Years’ resolution to lose weight come 1 January. Without educating yourself on the operationality of misogyny behind these examples, it is all too easy to subscribe to this deliberately misleading cycle of perpetual inadequacy. Without the analytical lens that is feminism, you’ll remain trapped, forever oscillating between an artificial incarnation of empowerment, and rigid paradigms of perfection.

In actuality, the most empowering thing you can do for yourself is to simply not give a f\*\*k about what you’re conditioned to assume men, or anyone else, thinks of you. Educating yourself on the artificiality of the world around you *will* in fact empower you to swim against the tide of the patriarchal discourse.

So close that issue of Cosmo and burn it in the fiery pits of hell where it belongs. And for God’s sake, enjoy the creamy satisfaction of full-fat dairy products while your cholesterol level can afford it.

## Cathy Tan

Dear Cathy,

You’re about to step onto the airplane, worried about the turbulence and whether our luggage will make it to the other side of the world. In eight hours, the bustling, loud city of Hong Kong will become the quiet, green city of Sydney.

Everything about you is going to change in the coming years, except that you are irrefutably a Chinese girl. This may seem superficial to you; after all, you are so much more than that. You’ll be surprised how many times you’ll be reduced to a Chinese girl, especially when there’s a quota to fill.

Navigating this new society will be testing. You’ll distance yourself from your culture in an attempt to fit in with the white girls. Clothes sold in shops will never fit you quite right. You’ll worry about how to fit (the expectation of) being a mother into your long list of ambitions. Magazines will talk about girl power but never show anyone that looks like you. This same girl power, the kid version of feminism, won’t be inclusive of all girls. You’ll soon figure out that everyone will preach equality only to the confines of their own situation.

Men who have never heard the word “no” will feel entitled to speak to you. One will ask you to follow him home from the city; another will approach you and ask you to tell him about your culture; an acquaintance will tell you he doesn’t believe in equality. Boys will play you, rate you and ghost you. Any reaction you give them will play into the existing

## CW: Mental Health

image of you being a submissive Asian girl or an angry feminist.

We don’t have a terrible life by any means. Our home here is lovely, academically you’re doing well and you’ve got a great support network. Every once in a while, a passing remark will remind you of your female-ness and your Asian-ness. It’ll be confronting, uncomfortable and confusing.

This might seem frightening. Trying to make sense of your new reality, you’ll be angry and bitter for a long time. Be uncompromising of who you are, even through your emo phase that no one asked for. Being a woman isn’t terrible. Take joy in your female friendships and strangers who will call you the wrong name to save you on a night out. You’ll have enlightening conversations about the meaning of life and debate when One Direction will reunite over late night Dominos and a bottle of moscato under a string of fairy lights. It’s a wonderful community.

Don’t live in the anger of your inequality. Surround yourself with open-minded friends and pick your battles. It’s easy to hate but much harder to spread love and understand why society is the way it is.

Take a deep breath and get ready to step off that plane. Turbulence was the least of your worries.

Your wildest ride is about to begin.

Love,  
Cathy

## Jeni Rohwer

You’re sitting on the floor of your studio, pen in hand, Moleskine balanced on knee, tears burning in your eyes, a cliché if ever there was one. The thoughts running through your mind are barely making it to the page, and I wish I were there right now to tell you it will get better.

*I am trying to be smaller, willowly, less dense.*

*I squeeze the skin on my body until it bruises,*

*Calculating each calorie as my stomach complains.*

*I am trying to remember when all of this started,*

*When I first started to walk like an apology,*

*When I first started to mark every worthless part of my body.*

*I am trying to be smaller, wispy, less heavy.*

*I hide behind layers of shameful pride,*

*Counting my worth the same way I count my bones.*

*I am trying to remember when all of this started,*

*When I first started scavenging for the past,*

*When I first started to search for my collarbones, my hipbones, my ribs.*

You’re sitting in class, struggling to focus through pangs of hunger, trying to remember how to differentiate equations. The images of girls skinnier than you are taking over thoughts of calculus, and I wish I were there now to tell you that you are beautiful.

*I am trying to be smaller, bony, less thick.*

*I wrench my mistakes from my stomach,*

*Smothering the evidence of my indiscretions.*

*I am trying to remember when all of this started,*

*When I first started to celebrate loss,*

*When I first started thinking of each kilogram as a victory against myself.*

*I am trying to smaller, skinny, less fat.*

*I convince myself it will all be worth it,*

*Longing for the day I finally feel complete.*

*I try to think about the last time I touched myself without trying to take anything away and I can’t remember it.*

Hemingway said that courage is “grace under pressure”, and let me tell you, you’ve been damn graceful.

# Holes in the walls



My brother is making an art gallery on the walls  
Carving his sixteen year old emotions into sculptures  
His hands are his tools  
Touching,  
Feeling  
The plaster,  
Making it his own.

My mother sighed  
*It's just a phase*  
She wanted to take it down  
Before he made any more  
*Cover it up with a piece of bread*  
I said no  
Took her hand  
Squeezed it  
*Isn't it beautiful?*  
We should frame it.

She looked at me  
With something between love and sadness  
Because don't the things we love  
Make us sad sometimes?  
So I took a wooden frame,  
Framed it,  
And there we had it,  
A gallery on the walls.

And he locked himself in his room  
Working on his creations,  
He didn't speak a word to us for days  
And the dinner we left outside his door  
Remained untouched.  
Day and night  
I could hear him chipping away  
Each gentle brush stroke of the fingers  
Bringing new form to life  
Turning his canvas into living holes,  
Something into nothing,  
Nothing into something.

Sometimes when he wasn't looking  
I'd sneak in to look at the holes  
Holes of different sizes and shapes  
Some so rough his tools snapped –  
He left their skeletons on the floor.

BY CARRIE LEE

I put my hand into the holes  
Feeling for stardust  
Or a bird's nest  
But they were just empty,  
Just holes.  
I left a gumnut inside one,  
I wanted to crawl in and hide in another.  
I left a letter written to my future self:  
*Hello?*  
*SOS*  
*Are you happy?*  
We invited people to come and see the gallery,  
First friends and family,  
They said it was very nice,  
Then friends of friends,  
Then strangers,  
Lining up to peek inside our home.  
Some said they were spectacular,  
Others said it was just nothing,  
I said no, they were definitely something.

But only we knew how my brother  
Poured his heart and soul into those holes,  
It was like his heart didn't have enough space  
To hold it inside,  
So he kept making holes  
And we let him make holes  
Until all the walls had holes in them  
And the whole house was one long tapestry of holes,



Bent at the corners to make walls.  
I felt like the walls were alive  
And all the holes were open wounds,  
Bleeding little trickles of paint at the edges,  
I wanted to touch the walls gently  
And whisper  
That everything was going to be okay.  
The walls would believe me  
Because I knew how it felt,  
We all knew how it felt.

Dry, cracked paint,  
Weeping paint,  
Dripping to the floor paint,  
Puddles of paint,  
Like the holes themselves were crying.

Puddles of tears  
That wouldn't stop,  
Room to room, we wore rainboots,  
Paintboots,  
I mopped up the puddles  
Alone  
Absorbing responsibility,  
And I kept the curtains open  
So that every morning when the sun rose  
Light poured into the room  
Turning all the little holes into glowing orbs,  
Sweet little suns.

CW: Mental Health

## Mirror Talk

*Cricket trills its song,  
Two a.m. scream of dark night,  
Morning talks of flight.*

You are naked in front of the lone mirror in your apartment, a cheap white-framed glass that leans drunk against the span of wall between your front door and the cardboard box you've been using as a table, the oil of last night's spaghetti softening its surface. The chill of the floorboards scrapes at your feet to run up your legs, along your calves, through the smooth, fleshy expanse of inner thigh, into your stomach and peaking at your nipples, erect and stark atop the hint of breasts. Shaved ends of hair prickle under armpits, at groin, and you shudder, loose skin and fat shaking – the chicken defrosting on your kitchen counter no longer sounds as appetising for dinner.

*Blood leaves trail in time,  
Night waits under stormy sky,  
Memories drift, lost.*

Torso too long, legs too short, hips too wide, breasts too small. You want to cut here, engorge there, maybe add a little extra to this, your fingers reaching down, tapping at soft belly, body twisting to reach back and pull at that detestable layer of fat on inner thigh. What would you look like dissected? Your legs would look a lot like a cut of ham at the butchers, you imagine, a ring of oily white rimming pink muscle.

*Tea cold by morning,  
Incense veiled in stormy rain,  
Trailing scar on cheek.*

You step closer to the mirror – after all, eyes are the window to the soul, but are souls really beautiful, or perhaps you have even a subtle hint of a Grecian nose (whatever that is), or just maybe your lips are closer to Angelina Jolie's than you've previously noticed – but your breath steams over glass until all you can see reflected back at you are the frayed ends of your unwashed hair, and a single scar slashed over your cheek.

*Spider pearls on silk,  
Fingertip trail of rose lips,  
Moss on crumbling vows.*

## A L I E N

They say home is where the heart is.

My mother, my sister and I are visiting China. My father had visited the year before, and when he'd returned, he'd shown me all the photos he took, comparing them to photos he'd taken decades before. They were all of the same places. His school has been replaced by a parking lot. His university has doubled in size and changed its name. His relatives have faded one by one from the world, leaving behind graves and china bowls filled with incense sticks and rotting fruit, all scattered across fields of tombstones.

I remember asking my father if he had any regrets about migrating. He'd told me he tried not to think about what could have been, and I had wondered – still do – what thoughts seep into his head on the few occasions he can't resist dwelling on how things would have turned out if he hadn't changed his mind. He has lived in Australia for more than half his life now, and intends to stay. He listens to 2GB and 2EU. He's picked up the slang and the accent. He switches between English and his native Shanghainese when he talks with my mother. But calling him Australian doesn't seem to work. Though he has adjusted his second country, and in many ways belongs to it, I don't think he loves it. Assimilation isn't the same as admiration.

I let my mother do all the speaking as we go through customs. My grasp of Mandarin and my native dialect have both slackened long ago. My parents had endeavoured to ensure English was all I heard when I entered the third grade. And so as I walk through the streets of Shanghai, and later Beijing, I hear the lilting tones and the raucous hollering and find them to be much akin to a song; I know the notes but find the lyrics elusive, tucked away in some long-forgotten corner in my mind.

“They are very happy to see their grandchildren,” my mother tells me and my sister on the second day. We're at my father's parents' place. They, for one, did not seem displeased by the fact that their grandson and granddaughter could not even share a conversation with them at the dinner table. “It pleases them that something of them will live on,” she says.

My only aunt has a son. My only uncle has a daughter. With both cousins bearing different family names, and all other branches having fallen from the tree into the mud long ago, my family name falls only to me. My parents tell me this, and have told me many, many times before. I know what they imply. I know what they're thinking. I don't like it one bit. I don't recall asking to bear the burden. I am not sure of its weight.

I remember once hearing someone calling another country a land of extremes: extreme poverty and extreme wealth, extreme beauty and extreme cruelty. The description is not lost on me as I see the rickshaws being pushed under the shadow of skyscrapers, the wedding of an affluent couple being spoiled as passers-by catch the white doves and crack their heads open on the ground, taking them home for dinner, and to the dog farms where poodles and cocker spaniels are skinned to make coats and scarves for the rich.

In the loud markets, on the packed trains and under the burning sun, my mother tells me of how the government increases the pension every year here. That they have blended capitalism's cold pragmatism with socialism's bleeding heart. I jokingly ask her if she still reveres Mao. She tells me that it is hard to condemn that which she was raised to worship.

A month later, I'm back in the classroom. The teacher is talking about the HSC. Talking about concepts of belonging. About connections between people and place, culture and history. She encourages us to write about our personal experiences. To channel our own trials and tribulations into the written word. To pour our trauma onto the page in blue and black for her to mark in red.

She catches me smirking. She asks me if there is something funny. I shake my head and it seems to incense her further.

I catch the train home with friends. I watch Town Hall and Central and Redfern pass by as they discuss where they want to go when they graduate. Japan is brought up, with the need for an empty suitcase and a full wallet. Then Japan becomes Iceland, where apparently one in every ten people is a writer, and then Russia, where the night trains apparently come with beds. Names, places, whole new worlds out there to explore. Alien cultures to soak in.

The train slows to a halt. They ask me what China was like. I tell them it was alright. I say my goodbyes and get off at my stop.

## I Sometimes Wish English Was A Richer Language

I sometimes wish English was a richer language

So I had more ways of telling you

how I feel about you –

Not so much hatred,

but a quiet kind of feeling, creeping

like the mulch on your decade-old shoes

that sit in your closet,

locked forever,

reflecting you.

The same as the grease on my fingers

spreading, every time I tried to enjoy you,

or the Twining's extra-strong tea stain

developing every Monday morning on your

kitchen bench. (Your mother was correct,

you really shouldn't re-use them).

I wish I had more ways of saying

how I feel about you,

but I'm comforted,

as I believe you already know.





## A Letter to Death

Dear Death,

How can I satisfy you?

Do I not allow you hours of nightly torment?

Do I not lay my docile body out each night for you to infest and congest my fragile conscience?

You send surges of constraint around my bruised chest when you slip through the fragments of mental repression that I have damned upon you.

Why the fascination with cessation? Is genesis not a more rewarding occupancy for you?

Your selfish obsession with the decay of anatomy has manifested a fiery fury in my thoughts.

Why must you cultivate your infested garden in the once salubrious pancreas of my Grandfather, or lay down your contaminated roots in the rich marrow of my Aunt's weakened bones?

Your timing of termination steals the rationality of many as they struggle to comprehend the finality of your odious act.

I should not mistake your gluttony for human flesh for greed, when you are so benevolent with the gift of pain.

I envy those that find solace in faith. The comfort of the known in unknown.

I find my solace in substance until I am reeked with the realisation that what draws me in only draws me closer to you.

Death you have stolen my sanity, of this I am sure.

## The Travel Diaries

# FROM MOSCOW WITH LOVE



“So what actually *is* up with them?” my classmate Sophie wondered aloud, as we packed away our laptops at the end of class. “They’re basically trying to take over the world, hey?” The subject of this musing (and our conversation) was the great nation of Russia, where I would be visiting in a few weeks over university break.

“I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia,” I sagely replied. “It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.”

Just kidding. It was Sir Winston Churchill who famously described Russia that way in 1939, only a few months into the second World War. What I actually said to Sophie in 2017 was probably something along the lines of “Uh ...yeah, I think so.”

But Churchill’s quip would have been apt; seventy-eight years later, it is still a fairly accurate description of how the outside world perceives Russia. Mention the country’s name to anyone today and the conversation is likely to jump straight to rigged elections, scandalous video tapes, suspicious politician deaths and the plethora of videos available in the “Russians-involved-in-insane-and-inexplicable-situations” YouTube genre. Russia is still very much an enigma and I was excited to catch a glimpse behind the “Iron Curtain” and learn something new about life in modern Russia.

After sketching out our itinerary, the first stage of the journey for my travel buddy Joanna and I was to procure a compulsory “invitation letter” from our hostel, fill out a lengthy online application, and wait for our visas. As I stood in the Russian consulate, submitting my documents beneath an enormous scowling portrait of Vlad the Putin, I worriedly thought of all the reasons I might be rejected. I had cross-checked arrival and departure dates obsessively and had even gone so far as to ditch a pair of craft scissors on the way to the consulate, for fear of being immediately labelled a threat to national security. But the immigration officer nodded, handed me my receipt, and within a week, I was on a plane to Moscow.

On our first evening, we left our hostel (which could more accurately be described as a two-bedroom apartment with bunkbeds, and what seemed to be a resident cyberhacker) and walked up *Tverskaya*, one of the longest streets in Moscow. It led, as all roads in Moscow do, to the vast, dominating Red Square. “Everything in Moscow is so *big*,” we agreed, as we cast our eyes across the colossal Kremlin compound, past the colourful, fairytale-esque St Basil’s Cathedral and down the length of the grandiose GUM department store, commissioned by Catherine the Great in the late nineteenth century. The city centre in Moscow seemed to be scaled up: wide streets, huge white stone buildings and intimidating, twelve-foot tall iron gates. However, it was also beautifully dotted with sculpture and artwork, strikingly clean, and the continuing glow of soft summer sunlight late into the night gave the city a relaxed and festive atmosphere.

Considering that neither Joanna nor I had really known what to expect from Russia, we were feeling like total pros by our third day in Moscow. We immediately took to local cuisine staples like dumplings, hot pies and *kvass* (fermented bread drink – better than it sounds), which surprised

us both. The Cyrillic script began to look less like Wingdings and more like actual words, and the Red Square became a nice spot for a stroll in our local neighbourhood. An obligatory trip to a vodka museum had even given me a new appreciation for the spirit’s diversity and versatility beyond the always classic Smirnoff Ice.

What we had initially interpreted at the airport as possible disdain for clueless foreigners, it turned out, was just the Russian way. “A smile from a Russian is a *genuine* smile,” Luisia, our “hostel” owner, assured us. “We do not smile just for no reason.” Luckily, we found that most Mosovites we encountered were kind, patient and mildly interested in us, rather than annoyed, as we stumbled through conversations with a few weak “*spesibas*” and “*privets*”. We were joyously on the receiving end of some sweet, Genuine Smiles™ in no time.

Moscow is a modern city, packed with art galleries, cool cafes and underground bars blasting music late into the night. However, the city is also full of centuries-old artistic and architectural gems, often in the most mundane of places. Among the most spectacular sights in Moscow were the thirteen original underground metro stations, built in 1935 as a way to bring beauty and art to the masses, and reflect “*svetloe budushchee*”, the USSR’s “radiant future”. The stations are all individual works of art, likened to the Palace of Versailles, and feature marble arches, chandeliers, sculptures, stained glass panels and ceiling frescoes. The city’s pre-Soviet religious history has also survived; the skyline is dotted with the glimmering gold domes of Orthodox cathedrals, belltowers, and mosques, and many incredible neo-classical interiors have been preserved perfectly, despite their new role as supermarkets or bookshops.

Having only visited one country prior to Russia in which there was a successful communist revolution (China), I was surprised at the survival of so many religious buildings, even within the Kremlin. Just beyond the Moscow region is what is known as the “Golden Ring”, a collection of ancient towns, most of which are home to grand monasteries. Joanna and I visited one of Russia’s largest monasteries in Sergiev Posad, the Trinity Lavra of St Sergius, and between marvelling at the detail of the cathedrals and watching the town locals fill up on holy water, I could only be thankful that such places had survived.

Despite the survival of pre-communist tradition, however, it became quickly apparent that Moscow was a city not only shaped by its Soviet past, but actively nostalgic for it. And this nostalgia influences its public spaces, contemporary design, and even food outlets. Much like Starbucks in the USA, almost every other corner in Moscow has a “Varenichnaya”: a chain of family-friendly restaurants styled to look like a retro Soviet living room, complete with huge bookshelves, propaganda posters, and black-and-white Soviet films playing on every wall. Likewise, at the luxurious GUM department store, nostalgic Russians skip the *Häagen-Dazs* and form long queues to buy *stakanchik*, a cheap and simple Soviet-era style ice cream, considered across Russia to be the most superior. Even the so-called “Fallen Monument Park”, which became a spooky dumping ground for statues of Soviet leaders upon the regime’s dissolution in 1991, now resembles a chic outdoor sculpture garden, where guests can enjoy an afternoon stroll between dozens of Lenins, Sverdlovs and Stalins.

The strength of this nostalgia is sometimes surprising given the many reminders of the USSR’s more brutal years still standing in Moscow today. Just across the street from a huge children’s entertainment centre is the infamous ex-KGB secret police headquarters and down the road, next to a Varenchnaya outlet, is the building in which Stalin-era interrogations would take place, and out of which many would never return. Even though the country went through a rigorous “de-Stalinisation” process in the 1960s, his body still remains buried next to Lenin’s mausoleum in the Red Square, and tourists can still get a snap with grinning impersonators hanging around outside the Kremlin.

At the end of a walking tour around these sites and their tragic histories, our guide Maria stopped and said to the group, “You may be wondering about our government these days. We call it a democracy, but many think it is more like a Putinocracy. We don’t need to guess who will win the elections, we already know.” The group tittered nervously, glancing at each other and wondering if the secret police were about to swoop down upon us. “Under Stalin, I would be immediately sent to the gulag for that joke,” Maria explained. “And you would be too, for laughing at it.” She paused. “But I have hope for Russia. There is a younger generation of Russians now, who see things differently and I think that there are good things to come.”

It would be crazy to claim any real understanding of the future of a nation of 144 million people based on short trip to the capital city, and the Putinocracy continues to be a concern for those on the outside looking in, but Maria’s message of hope has stuck with me. Perhaps there’ll be a world take-over, or another revolution, but who’s to know?

Russia is still a total riddle to me. Just one that’s a little more familiar.





## PRESIDENT’S STATEMENT

G'day UNSW,

Since this is the last issue of *Tharunka* for the year, all of us at the SRC want to give a huge thank you to the students of UNSW for allowing us to serve as your student representatives.

We’ve had so many ideas and so much involvement from so many students this year, and it is incredibly inspiring for me personally to see the passion that UNSW students have for improving not just the UNSW community, but the community at large.

It is thanks to the hard work and support of students that we have been able to secure one of the finest Sexual Misconduct Policies of any university in the country, go straight to Parliament with the issues around the 891 and light rail, and had students voices well and truly heard on the issue of trimesters and marriage equality.

As our terms come to an end, we cannot thank the student community enough. Keep fighting, and please remember that change is always possible if we put in the work.

It has been an incredible honour to be your President this year.

## ABOUT THE SRC

The Student Representative Council (SRC) is the peak representative and advocacy body for students at UNSW. We run campaigns aimed at improving UNSW for all students, fighting for the issues you care about, and also providing you with a community to chill out and socialise with. The SRC is a platform for you to shape your own educational experience, create real change for you and your fellow students and make community connections that will last you a lifetime.

## WHAT’S ON

Check out our website in Semester 2 to check out what’s happening!

<http://www.arc.unsw.edu.au/voice/src/upcoming-events>

## ABOUT COLLECTIVES

Our collectives include Education, Environment, Ethno Cultural, Indigenous, International, Queer, Students with Disabilities, Welfare and Women’s.

The Collectives are a great way to get involved in a community, make some friends, and campaign around the issues that matter to you

Campaigns include:

- Fix the 891 Queues - Accessible and safe transport to and from
- UNSWInternational & Ethno-cultural Room - A safe chill place for ethnically and culturally diverse students and international students.

- Divestment - UNSW must divest from fossil fuel companies and invest in a sustainable and ethical future
- Stop the UNSW Trimonster - Fighting back against the introduction of harmful trimesters
- End Sexual Violence on campus - After the release of the Australian Human Rights Commission survey on 1 August, action must be taken by universities and governments to end sexual violence on campus
- Free Speech Isn’t Free – Focusing on the mistreatment of Women of Colour who have spoken out in the media
- Free Breakfast

## ABOUT SPACES

Need somewhere to chill out on campus? A quiet place to study? A place to connect with like-minded people? Maybe just a microwave or fridge for your lunch? The SRC has you covered. We have equity rooms – safe spaces for you to hang out, nap, or get some readings done.

- Welfare and Disability Room - A place for autonomous collectives, and also for any student to chill out in the meantime.
- International & Ethno-cultural Room - A safe chill place for ethnically and culturally diverse students and international students.
- Women’s Room - The women’s room is a safe and autonomous space for women identifying students.
- Queer Space - A safe autonomous place to relax and connect with other LGBTIA/Queer students. Meetings and other activities are run by the Queer Collective on a weekly basis.

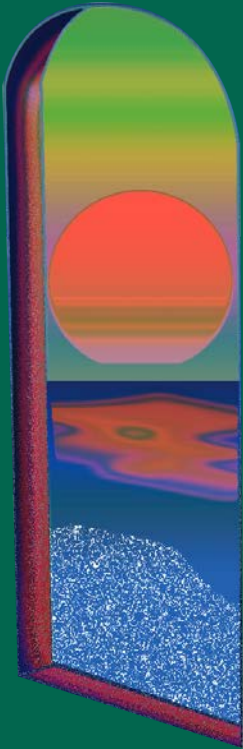
Head to the website to find out where the rooms are located and how you can use them.

## COLLECTIVE TIMES

Check out our website and Facebook page to find Collective times!



BY AMY GE



WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

SEND YOUR STORIES, IDEAS AND OTHER SUBMISSIONS TO  
[tharunka@arc.unsw.edu.au](mailto:tharunka@arc.unsw.edu.au)

