

ISSUE 2: VIRAL

APRIL 2018

# THARUNKA

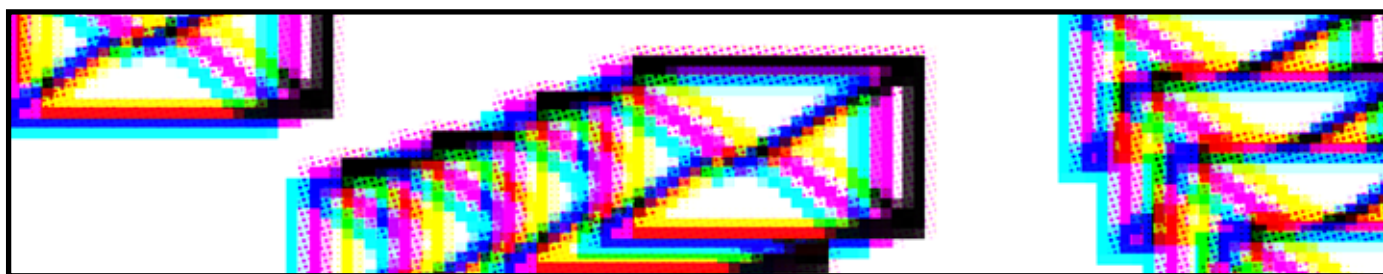


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# LETTERS FROM

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## **LUNGOL**

*Managing Editor*

Viruses.

Dead, yet undead. Fatal, yet nourishing. Physical, yet virtual.

The evolution of the term “viral” is indicative of modern human advancement. What was initially a term for infectious agents affecting change at a cellular level expanded into a definition inclusive of malicious software that wreaks havoc and leaves digital ruins in its wake. Virality then evolved into a worldwide phenomenon with the rise of social media and the newfound capacity for individuals everywhere to prompt the widespread dissemination of information.

But virality, at its core, is transformative. Regardless of whether said transformation is positive or negative, a virus builds where it has destroyed. Its power lies not only in the reach of its dispersal, but in the change it has created.

This month, *Tharunka* is viral because our speech is viral.

Whispers have become rebellions.  
Speeches have become legislation.  
Hashtags have become movements.

Our voices are no longer distant stars separated by thousands of light years in a cold, uncaring sky. They are giant spheres of energy hurtling through space, ready to transform. We have the capacity, now more than ever, to create a world unmatched by anything that has ever existed before.

Words have sparked revolutions and brought entire empires to their knees.

So what will yours create?

## **JACK**

*Features Sub-editor*

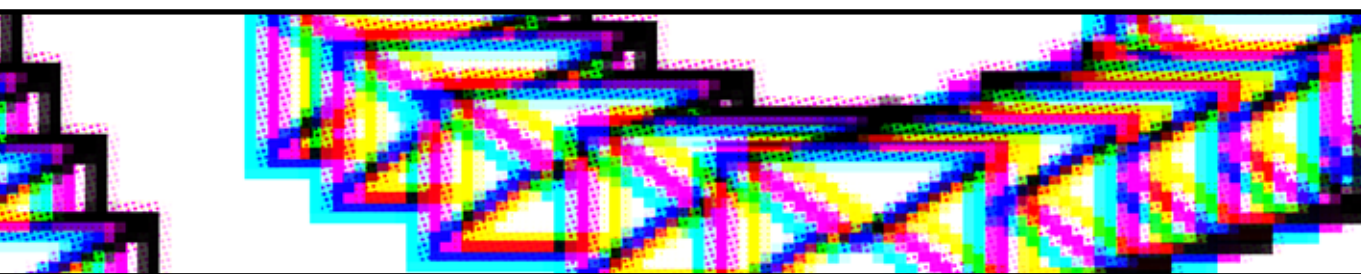
The Viral edition of *Tharunka* is a great success in capturing my own, and the editorial team’s, vision for the publication this year. We envisaged a magazine of broad interest, including articles on diverse topics from many disciplines, but united under single important themes.

The contributors to the Viral features have nailed these requirements. Rachel Ryu does an excellent job of identifying how mindlessly we respond to “viral” media, which compounds Georgia Griffith’s and Masrur Ul-Joarder’s analysis of online content and our responsibilities as consumers. In a complimentary way, Zeeshan Siddiqui and Henry Chen identify the uncertainties of working with, or against, viruses in the medical and biotechnological fields, and the difficulties and possibilities we face when dealing with imperfect scientific information.

While we have included articles on digital media, on psychology, and on bioscience and medicine, the inclusions do not feel to be in conflict with each other. Rather, they all investigate different facets of this mysterious phenomenon of virality – of blind self-reproduction, and how human beings must shape our behaviour, our technology, and our understanding of ourselves, around the existence of this phenomenon.

I trust this edition of *Tharunka* will make you question just how much of your own behaviour, and the dynamics of our shared environment, are blind in agency and viral in nature.

# THE EDITORS



## TOBY

*Creatives Sub-editor*

**VIRAL:** infectious, malicious; life, lifelessness. That's what I had in mind, at least - and the contributors of this issue drew upon this to deliver a fantastic range of pieces.

Viral initially conjures images of bodily infection, and Axel-Nathaniel Rose delivers a wonderful short story, *-genic*, that expresses infectious virality in a vivid and terrifying way. A small read that puts you in the mind of someone who's body is in revolt. The contributors had plenty more to stay about infection - Emily Olorin once again delivers a deliciously erotic poem, *Valentine*, about love and/or smallpox. Love is infectious, or you begin to love your infection - I read it a few times to take from it what I did.

Other writers took viral in a more abstract direction. The series of photographs by Billie-Jean Bullard have a wonderful tranquility and movement to them. Without diving into medial descriptions, it captures the core of life and lifelessness. I count my own piece among the abstract in this edition, called *Blight*. It thinks viral in the sense of cannibalistic ambition, and a neglect of purpose and vision. If you like gardens, old, jealous, women, or daytime television, you will love this piece.

It's not always usual to include reviews in a creative section, but Isobel Knight's review of the New South Wales University Theatre Society's rendition of *Coriolanus* was so well written I couldn't help it.

My advice: take these pieces slowly, there's often a lot more to it the second time around.

## SAHANA

*Digital Sub-editor*

What I loved about Viral was that it spanned from the smallest particle to the largest problem in the world. The high digital relevance of the topic led to articles on media monitoring and why information gains popularity on online platforms. On the other hand we had writers reviewing and analysing the momentous events of the month. It's a wide range of categories that we covered and you are in for a vivid read!

What's truly exciting (at least for me) is the fact that Tharunka's new official website was launched along with the issue. With captivating designs and engaging content, it becomes the one URL you really need to visit. It's also where you can diplomatically stalk our amazing contributors and follow up on what they have been up to.

If you aren't one of the many I forced into liking and following all our social media platforms, take a minute to do so now, because if you are at UNSW and you are reading this, then I'll find a way to catch you. Trust me, I'm desperate, it's my job.

## AMY

*Designer*

The concept behind the design for this issue was regularity and its disruptions. I hope, as you read through this issue, that you start to think about the repetitions and mutations that shape, and occasionally take over, your life.



Welcome.

"I first got involved with the SRC because I didn't just want to study at a University - I wanted to help shape it. I grew up in a country where nothing was achieved without advocacy, change required involvement and nothing gives us more of an opportunity to do this at university than the SRC.

So if you want to learn valuable skills, help other students and make incredible friends who are passionate and care about the same things that you do, then the SRC is the place for you."

Student  
Representative  
Council

[arc.unsw.edu.au/src](http://arc.unsw.edu.au/src)

– Zack Solomon

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## Collectives.

Joining a collective is an amazing way to get involved in something you are passionate about whilst meeting a wide variety of people. Collectives generally meet weekly throughout session.

COLLECTIVE / REP (S)	MEETING TIME	<a href="http://arc.unsw.edu.au/src">arc.unsw.edu.au/src</a>
<b>Women's</b> Angela Griffin	MON 12-1PM	<a href="#">/womens</a>
<b>Disability</b> Axel-Nathaniel Rose	TUE 12.30-2.30PM WED 12.30-1.30PM	<a href="#">/disability</a>
<b>Environment</b> Elizabeth Morley	MON 1-2PM (FOSSIL FREE) MON 2-3PM (ENVIRO COLLECTIVE)	<a href="#">/environmental</a>
<b>Queer</b> Roisin McGee Meri Wilson Reuben Challis	MON 11AM-1PM	<a href="#">/queer</a>
<b>Welfare</b> Max Kennedy	THU 5-6PM	<a href="#">/welfare</a>
<b>Education</b> Toby Walmsley	TUE 2PM	<a href="#">/education</a>
<b>Indigenous</b> Ian Brown	CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS	<a href="#">/indigenous</a>
<b>Ethno-Cultural</b> Humaira Nasrin	THU 12-1PM	<a href="#">/ethno-cultural</a>
<b>International</b> Lanfeng Shi	CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS	<a href="#">/international</a>

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/

Tharunka acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land, the Gadigal and Bedigal people of the Eora nation, on which our university now stands.

[www.tharunka.arc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.tharunka.arc.unsw.edu.au)

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Any complaints should be made in writing to the Marketing & Publications Manager.

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# -GENIC

by Axel-Nathaniel Rose

He can feel it in his fingers first. 'I can't lose my hands,' he says to his mother, 'I'm too young'. The doctor thinks he's faking, he knows it. But he can feel the trickle of it up his arm from where he touches the doctor's desk, where lots of people had touched the doctor's desk, and surely they must have felt the same.

It crawls up his arm. *viral viral viral*

He can't touch his own jittering leg in class, lest it catch it. *viral viral viral*

He can't feel his fingers - his hand crawling with jittering phantom germs *viral viral viral viral*

The infection seeps into his elbow, and whether or not the doctor knows, he knows. He knows that the burning in his temples and the shaking of his hands mean just one thing, and he's so scared he can barely breathe. He knows he's going to lose his hands. And he doesn't understand *why*, why it had to be *him* or how it was him or—

Sepsis. Maybe it was sepsis. Or that day he didn't get out of the bath until the water got too cold and looked like dust. Meningococcal meningitis—

He doesn't touch his siblings anymore. He'll kick them under the table, bump their hips as they pass one another in the doorway. But not touch. Not proper touch, not a hand in the hair, no fingers digging into the wrist. Not a hug.

His sleeves fall down past his fingertips and he's still scared that they'll transmit the sickness. He starts doing all his own washing, else he'll get Mum sick.

He can feel it up his arm and 'round his elbow. It digs into the crook, the vein. It penetrates his bloodstream. Father says he looks ill, and that's really saying something. *viral viral viral* in his bedroom alone because if he spreads the bacteria the sickness will go *viral viral viral*. His heart-rate is escalating day by day, beat by beat. It's *viral*, too. He can feel it in his toes and his thighs, and his elbows and collarbones, in his eyeballs. His hands are so dirty from the inside that he can't feel anything properly on the outside.

His dirt contaminates everyone he talks to, let alone touches. he can see it, all sick and red, congealing, twisting blood. The way his breath gets sticky, like tar, in his lungs. He can see the way they look at him and he knows that it's his fault he's sent this *viral viral viral*

He knows amputation's an option, because he's seen it on TV. He's seen people get healthy on TV and they just don't have their whole body anymore but that's okay they're not *viral* anymore, their bodies aren't going *viral*. The virus was incubated, *born* from his body and it could end in his body because they weren't all sick, not yet. Anti-virals, steroids, NSAIDs – those were all words he'd heard and why wouldn't they work?

Why would no-one talk to him about it?

Isolate him?

Why didn't they earlier before he turned *viral viral vi*

If he amputated it would just be to his wrist

no to the freckle on his right forearm and the hair on his left one

no that spot where the nurses go in for blood where the blue is a stronger hue but only on the right because it's creeping up the left to his muscle—

no to his shoulder

If he ate he'd throw it up and if he threw it up he'd spread the virus so he just didn't try and he'd already given it to so many people. He did his best to pull back, to be selfless just once, but he hadn't and now they gave him that look which said they knew the truth. He'd killed them.

Still, it was strongest in him, he was the source of the sickness. He could feel the strength of it, ready to pour out the sides. It itched. It burned him and he wished someone would talk about it, because they must feel it just the same. But nobody spoke. He certainly didn't, curled up on the floor of the shower. Sickly water, boiling hot, never quite cutting the virus away. Hot, stinging tears dripped down his nose and his nasolabial creases, and were washed away.

*viral viral viral*

*viral viral viral*

# BLIGHT

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Tia had already had a cup of tea, but it was going to be a difficult morning, so this once she allowed herself to brew a second cup. She mulled over her mug at her dining table as the television hummed in the background. A tired sun rose from the horizon, soft beams of light warming her skin. It draped the earth in light yellow, like champagne. The warmth from her tea began to sting her hands in the heat, so she lay it on the table. As the mug rested on the table, the TV sung into life.

PRESENTER

Welcome back to Morning Breakfast on Channel Eight! Just before the break we were talking about some of the best gardening tips to launch your spring lawn and backyard. Joining us now is renowned garden expert, Tia Ginger, and Alex Foran, the star host of Eight's new adventure gardening show, *Guerilla Gardening*!

Canned applause, polite smiles. She walked into the living room with her tea and fell into her couch. The presenter had been polite on the day, but rushed from place to place like she was responsible for the entire show. Tia had hardly got to know her. She had sat on an aggressively red couch, pretending to look comfortable in front of two strangers and an audience of a few million.

ALEX

It's a pleasure to be here in such good company.

TIA

You are too kind.

She had worn a black dress speckled with bright, blooming sunflowers. The lighting of the studio made the flowers pop like bleach marks. She should have worn something darker - her skin looked drab and grey. Alex looked like she was ready to go to war, in cargo pants and a wide brimmed hat. She was inside, why did she wear that hat? Her face was young and energised, and she leaned towards the camera.

PRESENTER

Now Tia, I hear you are coming out with a new book this season, *A Floral Spring*, all about how to arrange your spring garden to be the pride of the neighbourhood. What have you got in store for us this year?

The presenter sounded fake, robotic, tired. Hardly the electric showrunner who had introduced themselves ten minutes earlier. Tia began to wonder if she was even awake, under the makeup and monotony. Tia daydreamed as she heard herself explain her book on the TV. She had heard it all before. The joys of creating something beautiful. Floral arrangements. Keeping yourself young. Being in touch with nature. This book, *this* book, was different - and why? It was about *spring*.

PRESENTER

Wow, sounds amazing! I am so excited for it to hit the shelves. Alex, you must have taken some inspiration from this powerhouse of gardening history. Do you care to tell us about how Tia's work has had an impact on your career?

ALEX

For sure! Tia has had a huge impact on me. I've found that the bulk of my career, especially through *Guerilla Gardening*, has been about breaking away from the antiquated, floral style of the past. Modern gardening needs to be functional for people to embrace it. It can't just be aesthetic.

She had forgotten how much of an ambush it was. This was meant to be a light, fluffy segment to butter your toast and brush your teeth to. Alex came for combat - Tia was woefully unprepared. As was the host, who scrambled to keep things light.

PRESENTER

Ohh, sounds like you really have thought hard about Tia's work!

TIA

I don't disagree that gardening has to be functional. But aesthetics, beauty, these are key parts of people's lives. We're not subsistence farmers anymore. But we are still human. That's why we love to love our environment, and beautiful gardens are an important part of that.

ALEX

To be human means more than to look pretty - people take pride in producing things they use. That's why DIY is so popular. Flowers themselves just don't cut it. Gardening as a hobby, and a





by Toby Walmsley

features

profession, has lost the sense of purpose that something like fishing has - I want to give it that sense of purpose back, by giving people the tools to grow what they need.

Tia was caught on the line. She was thrashing and turning, bleeding and splashing on stage, but the hook was firmly in her mouth. Who talks about purpose in an interview about spring flowers? Wasn't she just there to talk about gardens? She remembers that she thought about just giving in and walking off the stage, but she was too proud for that, even at sixty five. Perhaps more proud than she's ever been. Instead her cheeks had flushed red and a few beads of sweat began to glimmer under the harsh light. She took comfort in how uncomfortable the presenter looked. She hadn't noticed at the time, but her face had twisted as soon as Alex had said pride.

TIA

I think gardening already has that purpose - it's about finding new ways to make it accessible and satisfying for people.

ALEX

Flowers aren't accessible and satisfying as a centrepiece in the 21st century. People don't have acre plots to transform into luxury gardens - they have small, difficult spaces that they want to make the most out of. As gardeners it's critical we show people what's possible in these spaces. *That's* what makes gardening accessible and functional.

She turned off the TV. That was enough. She knew already how it ended. A bit more thrashing before the presenter weighs in with some words to smooth things over. The segment ended, and Alex gives her a wave before walking off set without a word. An accessible and functional dismissal of her life's work.

When Tia felt frustrated or alone when she was younger, she would go into the garden in the morning and sit on the rotting wooden chair her mother had left in the corner one summer. It's why Tia became a gardener, she often thought. There was hardly a memory she loved more than the afternoons she spent with a book, watching the trees sway in the wind. So she didn't disagree with Alex. Gardening was about creating with what you had, if that's an acre of grassland, a tree and a chair, or a pot of soil. That is what

she wished she had said. But how can you sell a book about flowers whilst telling people to grow tomatoes? Or to go outside and look at the sunshine instead?

She walked outside. Behind the fields of fledgling flowers, down a winding cobblestone path in her backyard, was a patch of vegetables she grew, and an old chair to watch the sun rest on the plants. She kneeled down to look at her vegetable patch, and turned discoloured leaves on her fledgling crops.

She turned the leaves back and forth, and scurried across the garden. There was no denying it. It was blight. A fungus that eats away at plants with no delay or remedy. The infection would take hold of every root of every plant. The greenery would last maybe a month, at most, before everything would shrivel and die.

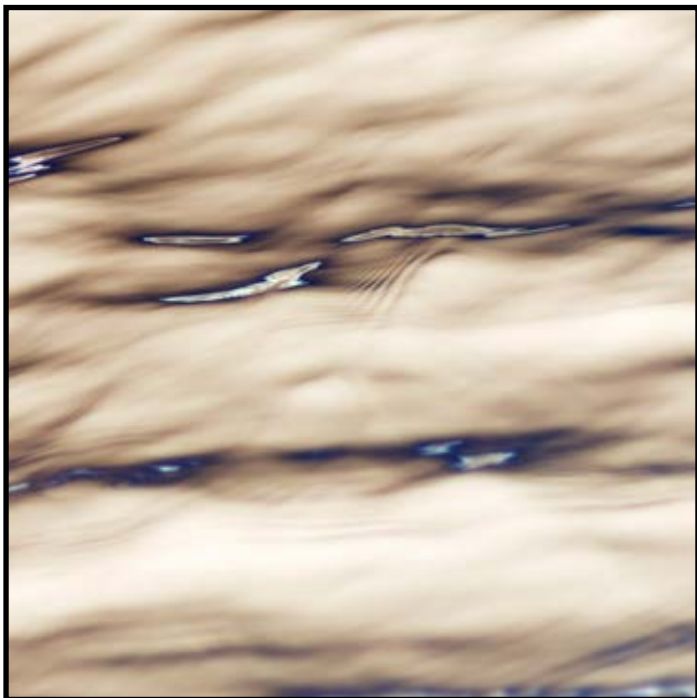
Tia sat next to the garden bed. How could a *gardening expert* not catch something so obvious, she thought. She maybe wanted to cry but she wasn't altogether sure. The sun had risen higher and it was being harsh on her skin, causing her to sweat. But a light, cool breeze tumbled through the leaves of the overhanging trees. Somewhere above, a bird chirped and danced. The smell of a sweet flower was in the air - it really was spring.

When had she last sat outside and listened to the trees? Gardening, far from connecting me to the world, is a violence to it, Tia thought. Earth is turned and cut for energy and further turning. And through the cutting and turning the earth remains quiet in its suffering. Somewhere, like a garden, the land is being cut clean of life for fields of wheat. The air cracks and reeks of dynamite and diesel - trees are cut for timber and mulch. And, all around her an infection had taken root, through the soil and into the plants, rooting her to the ground, making her old. She sat in her garden chair, and looked for something beautiful.



Untitled by Billie-Jean Bullard

Untitled by Billie-Jean Bullard



Untitled by Billie-Jean Bullard

Untitled by Billie-Jean Bullard

# REVIEW OF “CORIOLANUS”

**by Isobel Knight**



**Naks Suresh as *Coriolanus***

The atmosphere in *Coriolanus*, NSW University Theatrical Society’s (NUTS’) latest theatrical offering, is tense. The play is a Shakespearean tragedy, innately intimidating for both actor and audience in wordiness and rhythm. The soundtrack to the show is pulsing and constant. From the beginning, the intention is an immersion in the stressful political climate of Rome amid the Roman-Volsian war, albeit in an updated and abstracted version.

The play follows the political and personal struggles of Coriolanus, a military leader with a quick temper and a cutting tongue, as conflicts between integrity and political necessity play out. This titular role is traditionally male, but the choice to change the gender of Coriolanus is one of the key things that helps this production to succeed so engagingly. Coriolanus in this production is a woman of colour in a teetering position of power. The new dimensions this adds to the role allow the bones of the tragedy to ring true, giving their questions more depth.

This production is bold. The set is abstract and parts of it move between scenes, and while the significance of this isn’t always clear, this definitely changed the space each time. Some speeches are delivered stock still, some in an ‘echo-chamber’ of other characters. There are next to no

props. The most immersive moment in the show was a bold interactive beginning, which definitely took some audience members by surprise. In the scheme of the show, however, the idea made sense, but it made for an uneasy start.

The moments that worked best in this production, however, were the ones that were familiar in their timelessness – two lovers reunited yet separated by the things they’ve experienced while apart, or a woman in power surrounded by people telling her she must be softer, more personable in order to lead. What struck this reviewer particularly was the image of a woman, one whose years of faithful service led her to be put forward for a position of great power, having her political career sabotaged by rich wordsmiths who construct narratives in order to incite anger. The phrase “You have done a good work,” is rarely uttered with such devastating sarcasm. It could have been in response to Brexit, or the election of a certain President.

Naks Suresh is a revelation in the title role. From her first step onstage, Coriolanus is an unknown quantity. She pulses with rage and fearsome physicality, somehow simultaneously stone-faced and expressive. The relationship between Coriolanus and her mother Volumina, played by Hannah Irwin, is worth seeing the show for. Volumina is one of two characters who wear traditionally “feminine” clothing in the whole show, and she wears her red dress like a suit of armour. Her world weariness and carefully harnessed anger shapes the events of the story in big ways, and changes the audience’s perception of Coriolanus every time she enters.

Shakespearean tragedies in their nature are long and at times confusing. The language, especially at pace, is, at times, a little obtuse. But the essential moments in the play land. Instances of comedy don’t feel jarring or out of place. The sequences of more stylised movement aren’t clumsy. The moments of romance are believable, and honestly, a little devastating. The role of Coriolanus’ husband; somehow patient, loving and despairing all in one, is a highlight.

The casting was phenomenal, and Lisa Gluckman’s costume design complemented it perfectly. The play worked smoothly enough that, unlike many student productions, the audience was thinking about the story, not the mechanics. NUTS’ *Coriolanus* offers plentiful food for thought, and the plethora of imperfect characters presented with such precision are what make this a show worth seeing.



# VALENTINE

*by Emily Olorin*



I slip inside you,  
Unnoticed,  
slinking into your mucous membranes,  
sinking deep into your nerves.  
Once we are together  
you will carry me in you  
For the rest of your life.

I love you, my darling host,  
I show you my love  
with blooms on your skin  
Red roses, purulent and painful  
Lines of my love encircling  
your ribs,  
your hips.

Not just once, my love,  
But over and over  
For as long as you have;  
For as long as we have.  
My love for you  
does not fade like a lovers  
It lingers deep inside of you  
Setting your nerves alight.

Pain?  
The pain I cause  
is the pain of love,  
Deep and searing  
Commanding you to focus only on me

Even my name on your lips  
"Varicella"  
sounds like benediction  
the pealing of church bells.



# WHY CAN'T QUEER MEN DONATE BLOOD?



In Australia, men who have sex with men (MSM) cannot donate blood for 12 months after having homosexual intercourse.<sup>1</sup> In practice, this means all sexually active MSM, irrespective of safe sex practices, are barred from donating blood. Concerns that this policy is a form of homophobic discrimination have made it a source of contention for decades, coming to a head in an unsuccessful 2009 challenge in the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Tribunal. The issue gained particular urgency in the media in 2016, after US health agencies turned away queer male donors seeking to aid victims of the Orlando nightclub shooting.<sup>2</sup>

## A QUICK REFRESHER

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a sexually transmissible infection which weakens the immune system. Late stage HIV infection is known as AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), a disease state in which profound weakening of the immune system means the body can develop diseases that would not normally affect a healthy person. HIV can be transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. All forms of penetrative sex, including anal sex and, in rare cases, oral sex, can transmit the virus. In the absence of blood exposure, HIV cannot be transmitted through kissing or casual contact.

The probability of HIV transmission in a single instance of unprotected anal intercourse is between 0.24-3%.<sup>3</sup> In 2014, the Kirby Institute found that MSM accounted for 75% of new HIV infections in Australia, and the prevalence of HIV among “gay community-attached men” was 8-12%.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that with the availability of antiviral medication to manage the disease, and the development of pre-exposure prophylaxis (antiviral medication taken by HIV-negative individuals prior to possible exposure), HIV is no longer as terrifying as it once was.

The Red Cross screens blood for HIV, Hepatitis B and C, Human T-lymphotrophic virus, and syphilis. This screening process is not perfect. During an initial ‘window period’ (about 5.6 days for nucleic acid testing, and 22 days for antibody testing), HIV will not be detected.<sup>5</sup> There is also the possibility of a false negative result. Concern over these two issues is such that the Red Cross strongly discourages ‘test-seeking behaviour’ (donating blood for the purpose of getting a blood test), reportedly practiced by 0.74% of donors.<sup>6</sup>

Above all else, the crucial statistic relied upon by the Red Cross, derived from their mathematical modelling, is that “even men in a declared exclusive gay relationship have, on average, a 50 times greater risk of HIV infection, compared to heterosexual Australians with a new partner.”<sup>7</sup> For reference, the rate among MSM generally is 113 times that of new heterosexual couples.<sup>8</sup>

## REPUTATION AND RISK

Any intersection between a cultural struggle for recognition, and a bureaucratic risk assessment, is bound to be messy. In this particular mess, it is no surprise that the Red Cross is particularly risk-averse. Not only is the risk to recipients a concern, but the Red Cross is also hesitant because it relies so heavily on reputation and community goodwill to carry out its work. It doesn’t have the authority of government (though it’s largely funded by the government) and it doesn’t pay blood donors.

Furthermore, the Red Cross has a veritable history of scandal – take, for instance, the tainted blood scandal of the 1980s, which left thousands of patients infected with HIV and Hepatitis C, owing to the sourcing of blood from overseas companies and prisoners. More recently, there was the 2016 database leak, in which half a million blood





**by Henry Chen**

donors had their private information, including whether they had “engaged in at-risk sexual activity in the past 12 months,” deposited on the internet.

Faced with this matrix of indiscretions waiting to happen, hesitation to allow queer men to donate blood would be entirely understandable; the Red Cross, however, isn’t hesitating. In fact, they’ve been ready for years. It’s the Department of Health that’s standing in the way.

In 2011, Australian Red Cross Blood Service established an expert review committee which advised that the deferral on MSM blood donations should be reduced from 12 months to 6 months.<sup>9</sup> This is still far longer than the most conservative estimate of 76 days needed for HIV to appear in antibody testing.<sup>10</sup> Instead, it aimed to account for the longer incubation period of Hepatitis C (188 days).<sup>11</sup> The Blood Service followed up with a ‘compliance study’ to inform the decision by finding out how often people lie on their donor forms (don’t do this – you could face a \$5500 fine and be imprisoned for a year).<sup>12</sup>

However, in December 2013, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), a division of the Department of Health, knocked back the Blood Service’s proposal, stating it “could increase the risk of an infection being passed on to a blood recipient with no significant boost to donor numbers, or to the blood supply.”<sup>13</sup> As justification, the TGA cited the 10% increase in reported HIV infections in 2012, as well as the compliance study’s finding that 0.23% of male blood donors had failed to report having sex with a man in the 12 months before donating.<sup>14</sup>

### ON REFLECTION

At this point it is worth asking ourselves, for what reason do we want change? Homophobic discrimination is fundamentally a social question, not a medical one. By their own admission, the TGA is not considering the social value of recognising the autonomy of queer men; they merely made an assessment “on the basis of risk-benefit to the blood supply”. As such, there can be no coherent debate on this issue, because the TGA and its critics are having different conversations. Nonetheless, the Red Cross commenced another review of the deferral regime in mid-2017, and will be making another submission to the TGA in the coming years.

Whatever the outcome of the 2017 review, the legitimate struggle for recognition and autonomy among queer men

should not be seen as diminished by the decision of the TGA. There remains a genuine and ongoing disagreement between the Blood Service and the TGA on whether the deferral period should be shortened from 12 months to 6 months. The role of the decision-maker, forced to act on incomplete scientific knowledge, is unenviable. In the ‘tainted blood’ saga of the 1980s, plasma infected with Hepatitis C was deliberately returned to the blood supply because it was wrongly thought that processing would kill the pathogen. But a judgement must be made, and we all, including medical decision makers, must do the best we can in imperfect circumstances.

So have a look at the Red Cross website and, if you can, book an appointment to donate blood – on behalf of those among us who can’t.

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# PSYCHOLOGY OF VIRAL CONTENT



Viral content is, arguably, the dominant form of media on social networking sites, and a major force across the Internet as a whole. The content itself varies: cat videos, memes, momentous news, trypophobic images, and even outrageous acts of violence. Regardless, there is a central criterion of this content – universally, it triggers a strong, emotional reaction from the viewer. Whether it is sadness, happiness, anger, or disgust, viral media intensifies our emotions. The significance of viral content online has expanded to the extent that viral marketing has become a new discipline of business, which calls for an examination of the nature of viral media.

Viral content has existed since the early stages of human civilisation, and has had an intimate relationship with the prevalent technology of the time period in which it is created. Ancient religious stories are one of the oldest examples. It is argued by some anthropologists that religions functioned as a form of social “virus”, improving social cohesion by promoting pro-social behaviour, for the sake of survival.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the Dreamtime in the identity of Indigenous Australia, which originated thousands of years ago, is perhaps testament to the strength of this form of “viral” information. The persistence of Dreamtime stories also demonstrates how content spread and persevered via the earliest medium of communication available – that of spoken words.

Further examples coincide with new technology appearing in the historical narrative. Paper, as the first “permanent” form of transferring information to other people, can be seen as one of the first facilitators. Ancient texts which still survive to this day, such as Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*, are proof of how widespread specific examples became. The printing press, capable of producing printed media far more rapidly than manual transcription, can be seen as another example of a technology facilitating the rapid, “viral” transfer of information. It is at least partly responsible for perhaps the truest example of viral content in the 19th Century: the Sherlock Holmes series by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The explosion of the series’, and the character’s, popularity is evident in Sherlock Holmes’ death at the Reichenbach Falls, which led to more than 20,000 subscription cancellations to the Strand magazine.<sup>2</sup> Radios and televisions, and their ubiquity in households in the 20th century, contributed to the generation of viral content more similar to what is seen currently, from the fear-inducing news of World War II, to dramas and talk shows.

Currently, we encounter most viral content online, through social media. Along with the increased flexibility of online platforms for content-sharing, the potential reach of viral content has steadily increased. Perhaps it can be inferred that globalisation, through the expansion of social media, is a major contributor to growing the limits of accessibility





by Rachel Ryu

features

of viral content. Our intimate connection to social media also mandates that we are inevitably exposed to all kinds of viral content every day.

Why does viral content, in its current form, become “infectious”? One key factor is the important role that emotion plays in our decision-making process and subsequent action. In *Descartes’ Error*, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio claims that “we are not thinking machines. We are feeling machines that think”, a claim that our emotions determine our thinking more than our reason does.<sup>3</sup> Berger and Milkman seem to link this hypothesis with viral media in their finding that content which evokes a strong emotional response, was more likely to be shared than content which evokes a weak emotional response.<sup>4</sup> It has also been found that the specific emotion attached to the content, and the level of attractiveness or averseness, has less of an impact on diffusion than the strength of the response.<sup>5</sup> This explains why content which popularises quickly is generally hilarious rather than funny, outrageous rather than offensive, and depressing rather than sad. The strongest and most extreme reactions lead to the highest likelihood of “liking” and “sharing”, which, in turn, drives more views.

Another contributor to the virality of content is whether the content is seen to have inherent value by the consumer. The usefulness of knowledge in self-enhancement and self-presentation (in other words, in improving one’s image) grants the knowledge a higher likelihood of becoming popularised. This was shown by Wojnicki and Godes, who found that the generation of word-of-mouth reviews of a consumer experience is more likely when those reviews had a positive correlation with the desire to self-enhance; in other words, when someone encounters content they are interested in, they are more likely to be attentive to the content and share it in order to “show off”.<sup>6</sup> Improving one’s self-presentation through showing off knowledge is why some news items, like the discovery of new exoplanets among non-scientists, become widely popular if the title of the article is catchy enough.

While the specific psychology behind viral content varies between individuals, where evoked emotions and perceived value both play a role, it is undoubtable that these factors come into play in viral marketing. Businesses frequently take advantage of content that is either already viral, or anticipated to go viral, as a method of promotion or to gain advertising revenue. Advertisements are often embedded

within or between particularly popular viral videos on Facebook, for example. However, the nature of viral content can also work against businesses. An offended customer’s complaints on social media can quickly become viral, due to the strong emotion of anger and anxiety they carry, as well as the shared novelty associated with attacking a corporation.

For laymen (the author included!), distant from the world of business and marketing, the contagiousness of such content means that there is a specific need to have a critical view of the viral news or content we see. This is particularly true when the content evokes strongly negative emotions, or where the content asserts something highly surprising, as these are the most likely to be spread very quickly. There are enough examples of unsuspecting aunts and uncles believing articles from *The Onion* for the warning to have sufficient weight.

In a society of social media, where connections are instantly made and messages travel thousands of kilometres in less than a second, viral content is produced and shared substantially faster than factory-manufactured goods. Our physiological and social psyches easily draw us to viral content and goad us to further distribute it. We ought to all be hyper-aware of the volatility of viral content, to avoid becoming entangled in its production and reproduction.

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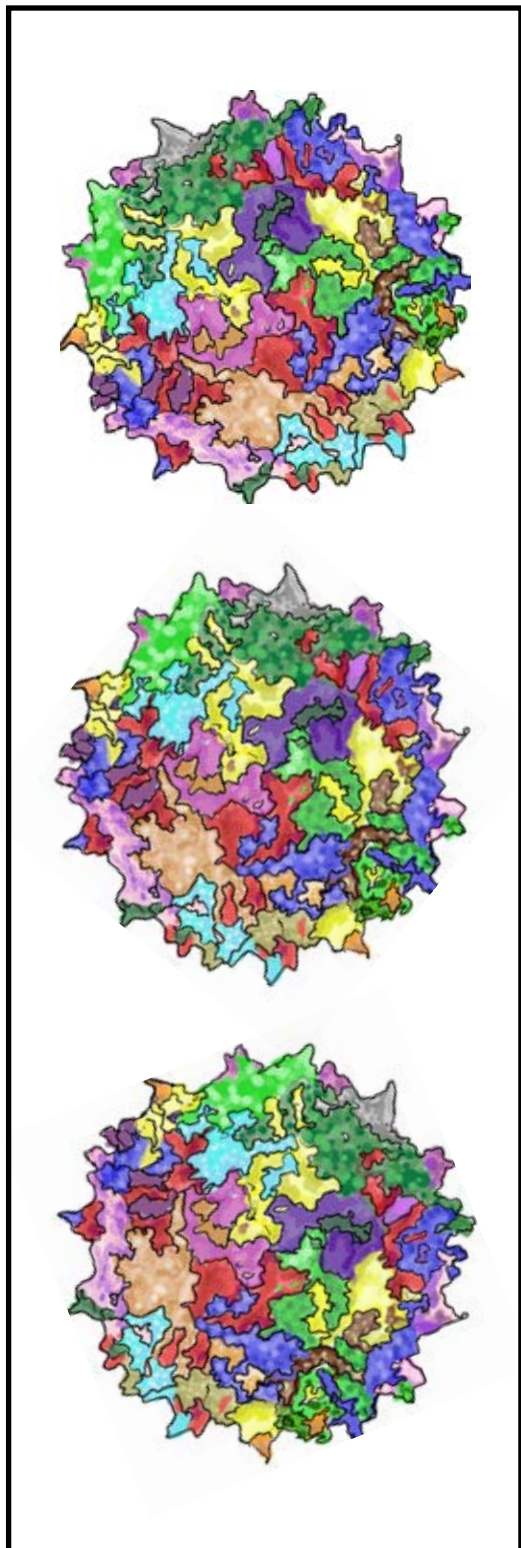
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# PERSONALISED MEDICINE USING VIRUSES, AND THE BIO-HACKER WHO JUST WANTS A SLICE OF PIZZA



Illustrations by Jean-Jacques  
Ong of UNSW Metal Society

Some of the most extraordinary innovations in recent years have been advances in personalised medicine. Every individual is unique in the way they develop a disease and respond to treatment. Hence, the growing paradigm of personalised medicine is to design medications and interventions that allow for a customised treatment plan best suited to that individual. This gives patients more control over their medical decisions and could lead to improved results when tackling illness. Examples of these wonderful innovations include the adoption of wearable health monitoring technologies, bespoke diets, and healthcare apps for cancer and diabetes patients. Personalised medicine has the potential to fundamentally change how we view healthcare; the end goal is to develop medicine responsive to an individual's own physiology, rather than therapy based on data from whole populations.

One area of medicine in which an individual focus is paramount is in gene therapy, an emerging field in which brilliant breakthroughs are made every year. Gene therapy is used to correct defects that have occurred in the individual's genome. Some of the most successful clinical examples include using viruses to tackle both acute lymphoblastic leukaemia<sup>1</sup> (CAR T-Cell Therapy) and sickle cell disease.<sup>2</sup> However, there are significant barriers to accessing gene therapy, as the technology used to develop the biological molecules and treatment plans is expensive. Furthermore, the time period taken for this type of therapy to progress from invention to implementation can be several years. This high cost is also worrying to insurance companies, leading to more out-of-pocket charges for patients.

If we take the example of lactose intolerance, which is caused by a genetic mutation, close to a million people (and growing) in Australia<sup>3</sup>, and approximately 12.5% of the population of the United States, are affected, with no cheap and efficient medical care available.<sup>4</sup> One bio-hacker in the United States (whose real name can't be revealed, and will be referred to as 'K'), has been suffering from lactose intolerance for over 18 years. K decided to bypass doctors and the Food and Drug Administration, and take matters into his own hands to create a cure for his lactose intolerant body!

A bio-hacker is a 'do-it-yourself' biologist or biotechnologist who chooses to experiment in the interface of technology and the human body, in order to enhance their biology. As K was lactose intolerant, his body could not produce the enzyme, lactase, which would normally break down lactose, a sugar found in milk. This meant that he could not eat or drink the majority of dairy products, leaving his midnight pizza cravings unsatisfied. However, after coming across a research paper describing the use of viruses to treat lactose intolerance in lab rats, he found a way to potentially change his life.

**by Zeeshan Siddiqui**

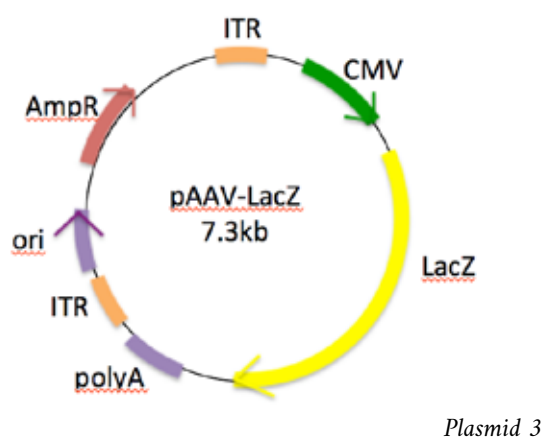
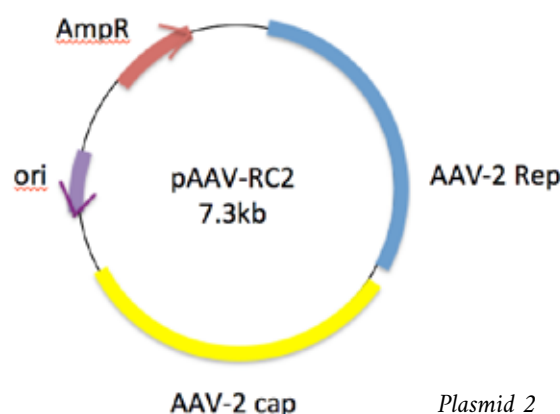
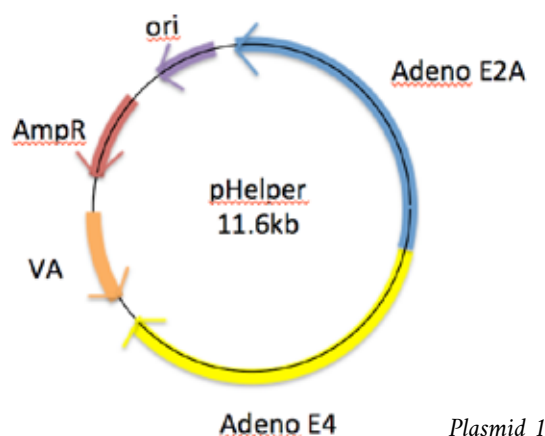
The research paper involved two groups of lactose intolerant rats. The first group was injected with a virus (non-harmful form) that had the gene for lactase production, known as “LacZ”, sourced from E.coli bacteria, inserted into its own genome. The second control group was not injected with the virus. After several weeks of feeding the rats a lactose-rich diet, it was seen that only the first group was producing the lactase enzyme and breaking down lactose for use as energy. This result would only be possible if LacZ had been incorporated into the rat’s genome. Hence, this paper showed that it is possible to use a virus as a “vector” (a transporter used to carry and insert genetic material) to insert LacZ into another organism’s genetic code.<sup>5</sup>

After analysing the results of the research paper, K decided to repeat the experiment on himself. He had the requisite knowledge from a degree in genetics, as well as access to the necessary resources at a friend’s personal biology lab. Furthermore, as long as he was only experimenting on himself for medical purposes, what he was doing was not a clear criminal offence. Hence, with no financial, medical, or legal barriers, K attempted to cure his own lactose intolerance.

### THE EXPERIMENT

K needed to have the lactase enzyme produced by the cells in his small intestine. To do so, an Adeno-Associated Virus (AAV) was assembled inside the nucleus of another mammalian cell (he chose to use ovarian cells from a Chinese Hamster). He then ensured that during the assembly of the virus, LacZ was packaged within the viral DNA. The construction of the virus, and the insertion of LacZ, was achieved through the use of circular pieces of DNA called plasmids. Plasmids can be likened to flash drives that contain genetic information. If inserted into the nucleus of a cell, that nucleus will translate the genetic information on the plasmid, which was used to assemble the virus and include the lactase gene within its genetic code.

Three plasmids were used by the bio-hacker. Plasmids 1 and 2 contained all the genetic sequences needed to make the proteins for the replication and shell of the Adeno-Associated Virus. Plasmid 3 contained LacZ, which was to be packaged within the virus. Although it appears complex, the diagram demonstrates one particularly elegant part of the technique - the LacZ gene sits on the plasmid between two ‘ITR’ (Inverted Terminal Repeat) sequences (shown in





orange), which function as a signal, instructing the virus to package the LacZ gene inside of itself, as if it were its own DNA.

Once the plasmids had been successful in assembling and replicating the virus and LacZ gene inside the chosen mammalian cell nucleus, the virus was harvested and isolated from the host cells. Once that was done, the virus was added to a solution containing phosphate buffered saline (a salty solution that helps maintain pH levels) and mixed with microcrystalline cellulose (refined wood pulp that is used in drug tablets). The resulting semi-solid solution was packaged into a gelatine capsule and was prepared for consumption. Bottoms up!

In January 2018, the bio-hacker took the pills and up until now (March 2018), he is happily satisfying his pizza cravings. This suggests, amazingly, that his experiment did work and his body is producing the lactase enzyme. However, gene therapy using viral vectors is known to only provide temporary cures. Furthermore, this experiment is at a very early stage of development. It would take a significant amount of further research, years of testing and refining the protocols, and approval by medical authorities, before it can be prescribed for use in humans.

Experimenting with medicinal drugs in a personal science lab certainly sounds very sketchy, dangerous, and possibly even unethical. After K made his experiment public, there were multiple concerns from the wider scientific community, as well as from the public.

A major concern is how personal health will be affected, as the side effects of this kind of gene therapy are currently unknown. The immune system may respond with hostility to the inserted gene, as it is a foreign body. This may initiate a potentially dangerous inflammatory response over an unknown time period. Furthermore, the working copy of the gene may overproduce the enzyme, causing other health issues, with one possibility being the eventual development of cancer.

The growing possibilities offered by gene therapy also raise a number of ethical questions. For instance, there is no clear answer on the extent to which human beings should be permitted to manipulate their own “nature”, or the biology of other living things. The social and legal controls that should be placed on this type of research are, therefore, hotly debated. Even though this technology is expected to decrease in price, private companies may acquire patents and limit access to this therapy to a privileged few, in a sadly similar way to how some current medical therapies are inaccessible to those who are unable to pay and cannot access them through public funding.

Despite these safety and ethics issues, K did achieve a successful result, which had a positive effect on his ability to digest dairy products. What the long-term effects may be are unknown, but he hopes to continue to monitor himself and make his findings available to the public. He

also strongly suggests that no one (else) should try this at home.

For now, the bio-hacker is enjoying his pizza-heavy diet.



Biotechnology and its use of viruses is a growing area of science and may herald the beginning of a new era in medicine. It could lead to a real version of what is seen in science-fiction movies, in which members of society have embedded microchips able to monitor vital signs, genetic diseases are a thing of the past, and almost any disease is curable. It may also lead to humans becoming susceptible to computer viruses, with the prospect of everyone having to update their chips with the latest version of Norton Anti-Virus every few months (and hopefully we can all afford the monthly membership fees!). While progress happens in small steps, like in temporarily curing lactose intolerance, the future may require humans to rethink what it physically means to be human. These ideas all filter back to our shared curiosity, sense of adventure, and the drive to enhance the reality around us. Only time will tell if these ideas can go viral.

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# #Logang4life: Online Virality and Virtual Witch Hunts



## CONTENT WARNING: DISCUSSIONS OF SUICIDE

December 2017 was a simpler time for the Internet. The “start your 2018 right” meme was at its (mostly) wholesome peak, Bitcoin was making everyone a millionaire, and most of us hadn’t heard of Logan Paul. Mainly well-known for being an annoying, obnoxious YouTuber, Paul was about to ensure that none of us started our 2018 right. On 31 December, he posted a vlog entitled “We found a dead body in the Japanese Suicide Forest...”. The clickbait-y title proved to be accurate, with Paul making the ill-founded decision to show the body of a man who had committed suicide in Japan’s infamous Aokigahara “suicide forest”. Had it been any other YouTuber, it might have gone unnoticed by the general public. Paul, however, has more than 16 million followers, most of them children, and within 24 hours the video had millions of views.<sup>1</sup> The aftermath, though, was far from textbook. To use a clickbait term: what happened next will SHOCK you.

First came the backlash. Thousands upon thousands of tweets called for Paul to be removed from YouTube. The more vulgar called for his head on a platter, while some took the opportunity to publicise suicide prevention resources - the exact causes Paul purported to be drawing attention to through his video. The video was taken down within a few days, and a somewhat non-apology apology was issued by Paul in a tweet:

*“I do this shit every day. I’ve made a 15 minute TV show EVERY SINGLE DAY for the past 460+ days. One may understand that it’s easy to get caught up in the moment without fully weighing the possible ramifications.”<sup>2</sup>*

Paul pointed to the fact that the video hadn’t been monetised, meaning he wouldn’t make money from ads on that video, as evidence of his altruistic purpose. In his eyes, it was a misguided mistake. In the eyes of the broader Internet, it shouldn’t have been one he recovered from.

YouTube’s policies, however, in combination with decisions from their upper management, have allowed Paul to continue his career on the platform relatively unscathed. YouTube has a range of guidelines that, supposedly, creators must adhere to. It operates on a “three-strike” system, under which creators are banned if they receive three strikes, within three months, for inappropriate content. As it currently stands, the Policy Centre section entitled “Violent or Graphic Content” contains this key paragraph:

*“It’s not okay to post violent or gory content that’s primarily intended to be shocking, sensational or gratuitous. If a video is particularly graphic or disturbing, it should be balanced with additional context*



**by Georgia Griffiths**

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*and information...In some cases, content may be so violent or shocking that no amount of context will allow that content to remain on our platforms."*

It is likely that Paul's video was "primarily intended to be shocking, sensational" and "gratuitous", and very likely that the footage wasn't balanced with enough "additional context and information" to justify YouTube's decision not to remove it. Logan and his friends appear to stumble upon the body in the vlog-style video, with minimal warning, and Logan both shows the body on-screen and describes what may have happened. Logan turns back to the body multiple times while saying, "I'm so sorry Logan, this was supposed to be a fun vlog". There is a brief mention of how devastating suicide can be, after the body is shown, but there was no reference to any support services. In fact, it could be argued, especially given the young demographic of Paul's viewers, that the content may have been "so violent or shocking that no amount of context" would be suitable for it to remain on the platform. The video was reported thousands of times, but it was manually reviewed by YouTube and left up without so much as an age restriction. In the end, it was removed by Paul himself, but not until it had been viewed more than six million times.

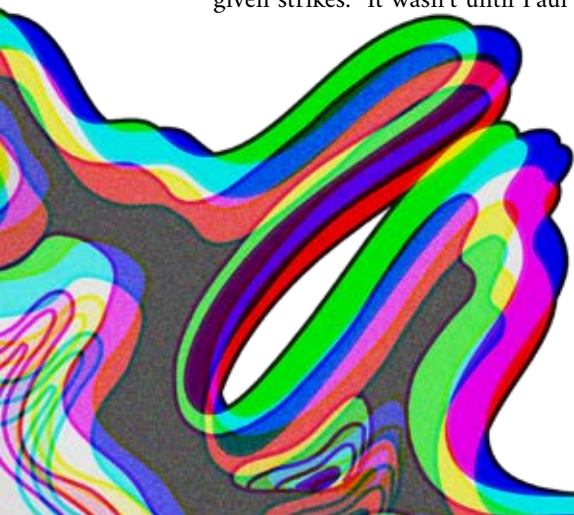
There's no doubt that Paul's monolithic position on the site means he gets special privileges. As much as YouTube tries to deny it, Paul generates huge amounts of revenue for both himself and the site, and to severely punish him would be to lose a key money maker. After waiting nine days to comment on the incident, YouTube tweeted a vague response stating *"the channel violated our community guidelines, we acted accordingly, and we are looking at further consequences."* Paul was eventually given one strike. In contrast, it was reported by a member of YouTube's "Trusted Flagger" program that smaller accounts that re-uploaded the footage after its deletion were automatically given strikes.<sup>3</sup> It wasn't until Paul later uploaded videos of

tasering dead rats, and taking a live fish out of a pond, that his ad privileges were temporarily taken away by YouTube management. It seems that online, as within most of Western society, money and fame can give you a free pass.

The Logan Paul incident highlights a key issue for social media platforms: where is the line to be drawn between protecting content consumers, particularly those of a younger demographic, such as Paul's viewers, and creating an inappropriately censored environment? To what degree are companies like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter even responsible for the content posted on their sites in the first place? Many platforms argue that it's not their role to police user-generated content. Facebook, among others, frequently refers to themselves as a "technology company", similar to Microsoft or Apple, as opposed to a "media company" like BuzzFeed. By positioning themselves as merely the "disseminators of information" instead of a "media outlet", social media companies aim to protect themselves from the predictable onslaught in the wake of questionable content becoming available on their platforms. Paul himself, as an example of a creator responsible for "questionable content", takes a similar view, suggesting that the onus to protect vulnerable viewers falls to sources outside the platform, such as parents. *"I'm going to be honest... I think parents should be monitoring what their children are watching more,"* he told Good Morning America in the aftermath of the Aokigahara video.<sup>4</sup>

The risk we run in giving responsibility over user-generated content to platform owners is systematic, or (possibly more insidious) accidental, censorship. Just last year, The New York Times reported on the automatic removal of videos documenting the atrocities occurring in Syria, a move that could *"potentially jeopardiz[e] future war crimes prosecutions."*<sup>5</sup> This was an inadvertent side effect of YouTube's efforts to stop militant propaganda from being posted on the site, through the introduction of algorithms which remove content in breach of the company's guidelines without needing content to first be flagged by users.

Yet, despite their hesitations, social media platforms are clearly starting to take some responsibility for filtering uploaded content. This is demonstrated, for example, in YouTube's attempt to remove extremist content. Facebook has also recently begun removing any live streams containing graphic or violent content, after a spate of live-streamed murders cast light on the unpredictability of the medium. There remains an argument, however, that despite





these efforts it is simply impossible for platforms to keep track of the huge volumes of content being created each day. According to Forbes Magazine, four hundred hours of content was uploaded to YouTube every hour in 2017. Given the impossibility of human moderators assessing all uploaded content, the platforms rely on both algorithmic methods, which are evidently far from perfect, and on users to report inappropriate content.

Humans reviewing content, are, of course, also prone to mistakes. Combined with increased ability to connect with other people, metaphorical online “witch hunts” are becoming more visible and more problematic every time someone offends. The concept of a “witch hunt” is obviously not new, and it is not confined to the cybersphere; the advent of social media, however, has allowed instances that may have otherwise stayed within limited groups to be broadcast across the world, meaning anyone with a passing interest can comment and dissect the actions or words of others. In some contexts, this can be valuable - having the ability to report images that are genuinely offensive, inappropriate, and/or distressing is not an inherently bad thing. The issue arises when misinformed or uninformed parties throw their opinion into the ring as if they were truth.

Not knowing all facts of the case is not always entirely the fault of the participants. The Internet cycle tends to prioritise the juiciest parts of a story, those that will garner the most clicks and follows. Similarly, the ‘offending’ content may not be offensive to all, but those who do find it offensive might be the ones that can, or do, shout the loudest. At its core, whether material is offensive or not is an individual’s subjective moral decision. Some things, such as showing a dead body online like Paul did, are generally recognised within Western society to be offensive and inappropriate, but it isn’t always so clear cut. This is where reasonably justifiable online outrage morphs into a “witch hunt”.

For Rachel Tuvel, an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Rhodes, “mob justice” was delivered swiftly. In 2017, Tuvel wrote an article for *Hypatia*, a feminist journal, as summarised by Justin Weinberg of the Daily Nous, considering whether social frameworks which “support accepting transgender individuals’ decisions to change sexes...provide support for accepting transracial individuals’ decisions to change races”. While that topic is undeniably controversial, the backlash afforded to Tuvel was harsh and disproportionate, considering that she was merely exploring her theory in an academic journal, supposedly the environment in which all theories can be rigorously tested. According to Kelly Oliver, from Vanderbilt University, “some academics supported Tuvel in private while actually attacking her in public... [while others] were pressuring, even threatening, Tuvel that she wouldn’t get tenure and her career would be ruined if she didn’t retract her article.” The attacks on Tuvel included comments by other academics on social media sites, and an open letter to *Hypatia* seeking that the article be retracted. This case,

while largely remaining confined to academic circles, is a clear example of how a “witch hunt” can seriously damage an individual’s life. Googling Tuvel’s name reveals a first page of results largely dedicated to reports on and analysis of the article and the backlash that followed. While Paul may be able to overcome that kind of backlash, as his massive following is primarily among children, it’s likely that the circus around Tuvel’s 2017 article will follow her forever. Justifiable backlash or not, there’s a strong argument to be made for the right to a fair trial, as opposed to life-long punishment at the hands of a group of, mostly uninformed, strangers online.

Ultimately, these questions will continue to re-emerge as social media platforms continue to grow and evolve. Should “justice” be left to the online mob? Or should we trust huge corporations to deliver appropriate sanctions to those who violate social standards online? There will be more Logan Pauls. There will be more Rachel Tuvels. The highs and lows of online virality will reappear, just as soon as the next online spectacle occurs.

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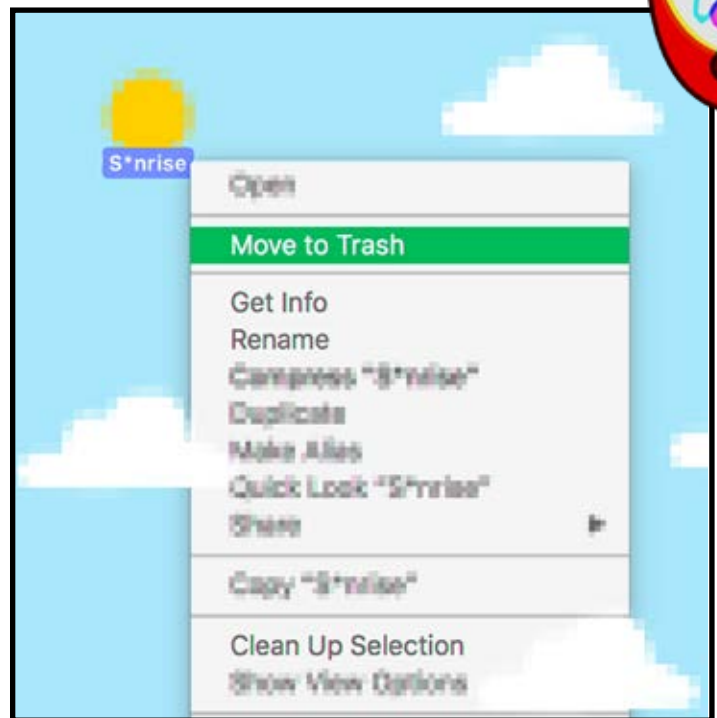
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8. Ibid.



# BREAKFAST TV'S PROBLEM WITH REPRESENTATION



Channel 7's *Sunrise* program has recently attracted widespread criticism, sparking a large protest outside its studio in Martin Place following a segment discussing David Gillespie's proposal to allow white families to be able to adopt abused Indigenous children. Prue MacSween and Ben Davis, who were invited onto the panel as commentators, favourably likened the proposal to a second stolen generation. MacSween stated that "a lot of children were taken... for their own wellbeing, we need to do it again perhaps". Both Davis and *Sunrise* co-host Samantha Armytage expressed their support for MacSween's argument.

It is not difficult to establish how incorrect and out of touch these thoughts are. Described as being "victims of torture and oppression" by historian Henry Reynolds (an expert on Australia's Frontier Wars), the existence of the stolen generation, and the damage its victims have endured, is rarely disputed.<sup>1</sup> Further, 78% of respondents rated Kevin Rudd's apology as either "good" or "excellent" in a Sydney Morning Herald post-apology poll, which demonstrates that the panel were not representative of the attitudes which most Australians have towards the historical treatment of Indigenous children.<sup>2</sup> This is not to mention the existence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, by which abused Indigenous children can already be adopted by white families if no safe Indigenous family member, or other safe Indigenous family in the child's community, is able to adopt them.<sup>3</sup>





**by Masrur-Ul Joarder**

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There is essentially nothing worthwhile, or true, in what was included in the Sunrise segment.

Regardless of how shocking and inaccurate the broadcasted sentiments were, it is not surprising that they were aired on breakfast TV. It is not the choice of topic that is really concerning, but rather the lack of expertise on the panel, which seems to be typical of morning show discussions. The commentators were brought onto the show and asked to speak on a topic about which they knew next to nothing - neither Prue MacSween nor Ben Davis are Indigenous, nor are they experts on the adoption or wellbeing of abused children. The panelists' position in this segment could not have been more out of place. It is also, unsurprisingly, not the first time one of the panelists in question has come under fire. In July last year, Prue MacSween stated that she would be "tempted to run over" Muslim activist Yassmin Abdel-Magied. MacSween refused to apologise, and her response to critics was that they should "get a life". It was irresponsible for Sunrise to have invited her to be part of the segment.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time Sunrise has chosen to provide platforms to people with a similar history of discrimination, likely for the sake of creating controversy and generating views. It was revealed in 2016 that the program paid Pauline Hanson to appear on the show in the lead up to the election.<sup>4</sup> This is hardly surprising, considering the number of times she was invited onto the show to talk about everything from vaccinations to the Paris terrorist attacks. Her appearances were extremely damaging for minority groups, particularly Muslims, who were never represented on the show alongside Hanson to respond to her attacks against their communities.

In the rare cases that Sunrise does interview individuals who are connected to the topic being discussed, they are usually outliers with extreme beliefs who do not represent the general views of the community they supposedly represent. In May last year, Sunrise invited controversial right-wing personality Imam Tawhidi, who has been dubbed by some as a "fake sheikh" due to his questionable qualifications, to discuss the Manchester terrorist attacks.<sup>5</sup> His proclamation that "our books teach the beheading of people" were not representative of what the majority of the Muslim population in Australia believed. Again, it was likely Sunrise's strategy to invite such an inflammatory speaker like Tawhidi onto the show to generate controversy and amplify viewership, even if doing so was to the detriment

of the community being discussed.

It is important to reiterate that it is not only Sunrise that chooses to air controversial views by unqualified people just for the viewership; examples of this pattern are easy to find from other programs. However, the solution is also quite simple. Prue MacSween and Ben Davis are more than welcome to have, and express to those around them, their own opinions about the adoption of abused Aboriginal children. From this vantage point, they can safely be ignored. When the discussion occurs on a national media platform, however, the lack of relevant expertise, and representation of the communities in question, ought to be corrected. It was absolutely necessary for there to have been a properly informed, Indigenous perspective on the Tuesday morning panel, and this should have lead the discussion. That is exactly what would have prevented a panel of people unanimously supporting calls for another stolen generation during prime-time television.

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1. Reynolds, H. (n.d.). *The Public Role of History*. Retrieved March 19, 2018, from [https://www.nla.gov.au/events/history/papers/Henry\\_Reynolds.html](https://www.nla.gov.au/events/history/papers/Henry_Reynolds.html).

2. Korff, J. (n.d.). 'Sorry' apology to Stolen Generations. Retrieved March 19, 2018, from <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/sorry-apology-to-stolen-generations>.

3. Arney, F., Iannos, M., Chong, A., McDougall, S., & Parkinson, S. (n.d.). *Enhancing the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle*. Retrieved March 20, 2018, from <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/enhancing-implementation-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-child/aboriginal-and>.

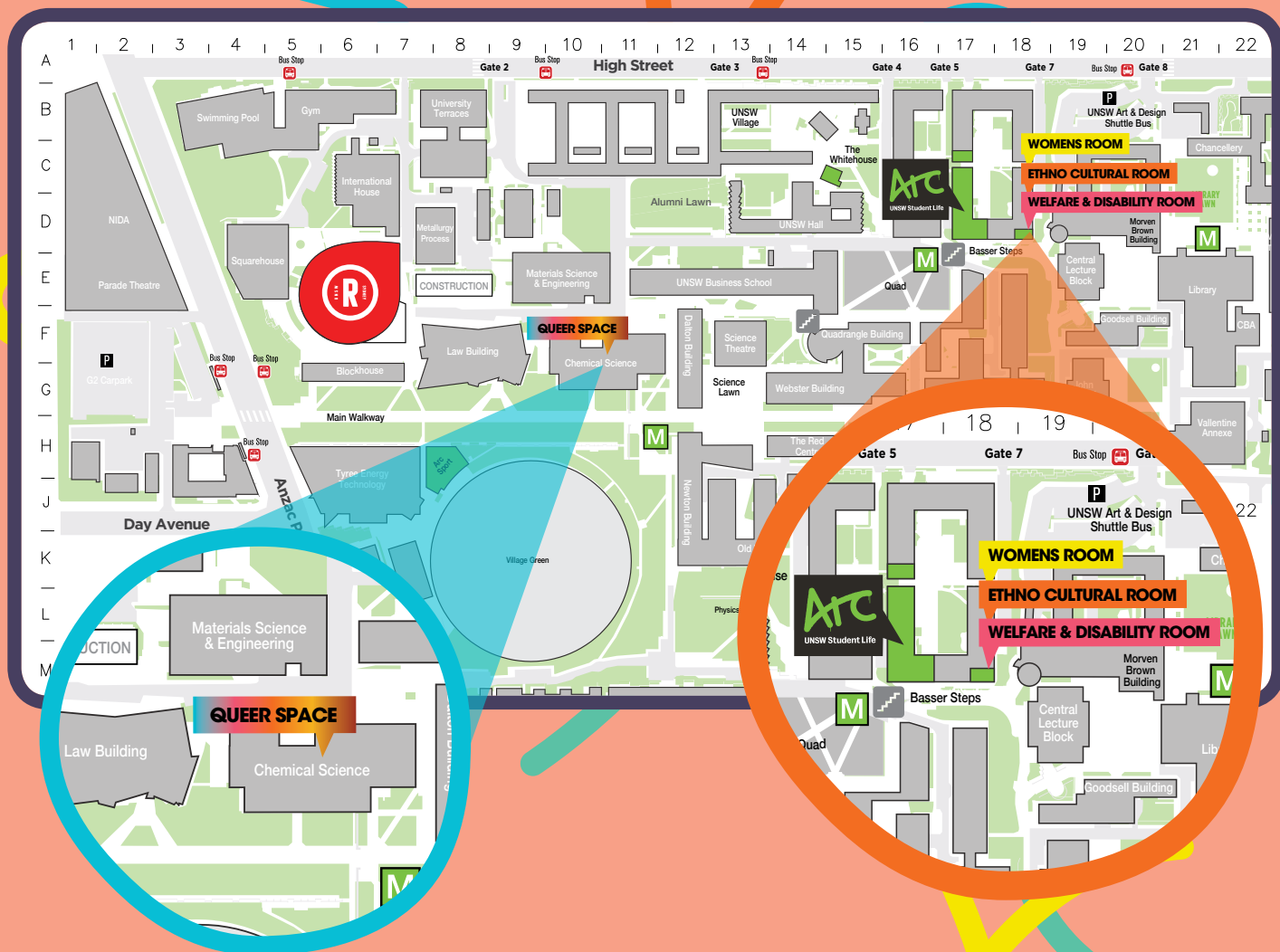
4. *Sunrise was paying Pauline in the lead up to the election*. (2016, July 05). Retrieved March 19, 2018, from <http://www.news.com.au/national/federal-election/sunrise-admits-paying-pauline-hanson-for-regular-appearances-in-lead-up-to-the-election/news-story/3509f5d399f9d49f8b7cddb9db329888>.

5. *Welcome to the Weird World of Australia's 'Fake Sheikh'*, Mohammad Tawhidi. (2017, April 10). Retrieved March 19, 2018, from <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2017/04/11/4651763.html>.



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The image is a full-page abstract composition. It features a dense, swirling pattern of vibrant colors including yellow, orange, red, purple, and green. The colors are separated by thin, dark, wavy lines, creating a sense of movement and depth. In the center of the image, the text 'THARUNKATHARUNKA' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is slightly shadowed, making it stand out against the busy background.

THARUNKATHARUNKA