

UNSW's Student Paper Since 1953

THARUNKA



Issue 1 | 2023

Acknowledgement

Tharunka acknowledges the Bedegal, Gadigal and Ngunnawal peoples as the traditional custodians of the land upon which UNSW's three campuses are located, and where this publication was produced. We pay our respects to their elders past and present, and extend that respect to our Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander readers. We acknowledge that Tharunka was produced on stolen land whose sovereignty was never ceded.

Content Warning

This journal contains discourse on social and political issues that may distress some readers. Various articles make reference to injury and death, childhood trauma, gaslighting, poverty and refugee experiences. Page 32 contains an image of a deceased infant. Reader discretion is advised.

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Editor's Note

You now hold in your hands the first edition of UNSW's student paper for 2023. Tharunka has been running in various forms for the best part of seventy years now. In that time, the paper has been loved by thousands, and burned by evangelicals. It has covered wars, protests and social movements. Its editors have been sued, defamed and even jailed. We once stole an alligator.

Tharunka watches the world burn and stops to take notes. For this edition, students were asked to write to the theme despoliation, which Merriam-Webster defines as "stealing or violently removing valuable possessions from; plundering." The following was their response.

On behalf of the whole team, please enjoy Generation Z's post-Covid Dear Diary.

Alex Neale, Managing Editor

Disclaimer:

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What is so absorbing about depressing media?

A selection of some of the top films and books about desolation and depredation, hand-picked by Tharunka's Editors.

DESIGNED BY
Annie Nguyen & Kelly Quach

In a quarantine-induced seclusion, two unnamed residents find themselves alone in a crumbling apartment building hiding from an unexplained plague that has ravished society and turned the infected into bugs. Connected only by a hole in one tenant's ceiling and the other's floor, Tsai Ming Liang's musical masterpiece about loneliness and connection in a society of decay is a unique spin on the idea of despoilation. For a movie with such a sad and relatable setting, Tsai's production is so fun, cute and vibrant. His eye for settings is unforgettable. His slow meandering walkabouts of the apartment are some of the best scenes of the film. To me, at least, the combination of rain,

rotting renovations and occasional bone-dry humour are perfect. Between *The Hole* and his later works like *Goodbye Dragon Inn* (2003) and *Days* (2020), few moviemakers come close to Liang's prowess at capturing the feeling of sitting comfy in your bed when it's raining.

Liang ultimately creates an unforgettable musical about the importance of human kindness with earworm tracks and adorable choreography to boot. We need more slow cinema musicals tbh.



THE HOLE (1998)
TSAI MING LIANG

Hamish McPherson

POSSESSION (1981)

ANDRZEJ ZULAWSKI

Possession follows the decay of a marriage, set against a decaying East Berlin, where a man loses his wife to an alien. Zulawski's best known works include 1971 WWII drama *Third Part of the Night*, on the inhuman horrors of the decaying Nazi state, and my personal favourite work of his, *On the Silver Globe*, a sci-fi space adventure set on an empty planet, chronicling a civilisation's rise and ultimate fall. He is most known, however, for what was Isabelle Adjani's unforgettable performance as the eponymously 'possessed' Anna. From flooding pub

bathrooms to graffiti covered concrete walls, from dark, dingy ballet halls to necrotizing wooden hallways encrusted with broken wine bottles and peeling wallpaper, Zulawski demonstrates spectacular attention to detail. Likewise, the ability of the Zulawski's handheld camera to whirl around figures grants every scene an otherworldly, phantasmal nature matched only by the film's leading performances of Adjani, Neill and Bennent.

Hamish McPherson

PLAY IT AS IT LAYS (1970)

JOAN DIDION

In the oppressive heat of the Nevada desert, Maria Wyeth drifts. A fading starlet of the golden age of Hollywood, she drinks and drives her way to oblivion, a mere spectator in the disintegration of her own life. *Play It as It Lays* is a fragmentary stream of consciousness; Didion's razor-sharp prose saturated with the anxious existentialism of holding all the aces in a game you don't know how to play. Orbited by powerful and selfish men, Maria is plundered – her body, her career, her very thoughts and feelings. She is constantly moving – driving, always, along highways and strip malls – but going nowhere. Fulfilment is always at an arm's length. Even her child is separated from her by the dispassionate barrier of modern medicine. A searing portrait of wasted potential in the equally wasted spiritual blackhole of Hollywood, Maria's ennui stands in for the 'cruel optimism' (Lauren Berlant) of a hopeless generation in its pursuit of the 'American dream'.

Belle Campbell*ANNIHILATION (2018)*

ALEX GARLAND

Alexa Stevens

Inspired by Jeff Vandermeer's strange dystopian books, *The Southern Reach Trilogy*, *Annihilation* (2018) paints a very desolate picture indeed. After picking clean the teams of soldiers sent in, the newly appeared forcefield like bubble swallows up a team of female scientists as our plot. It slowly chews through the question of humanity; a rapid, grotesque dance of decay and hypergrowth that moves, dreamlike, through our hearts and minds. It decimates our main cast, and leaves us with only the gristle; questions. What is it to be human? A voice? Our fear? This movie has no answers for us, which is perhaps the most terrifying thing of all.

*COLLATERAL (2004)*

MICHAEL MANN

Mann's portrait of a desolate LA in his 2004 film *Collateral* ironically explores a city heavily populated and yet radically disconnected. The director's first foray into a wholly digital feature film, Mann explains, "I wanted to see LA at night the way you would see it with the naked eye ...the yellow sodium vapour street lamps reflect off the bottom of those clouds and it becomes a soft illumination.

You couldn't possibly capture that with film and that becomes its own aesthetic". In one shot, as Vincent stalks Annie in the dark, illuminated only by the lights of the city down below, he becomes lost in the 'noise' of the camera, scrambling to create an image out of the sheer absence of light in its vicinity. For a moment he is ghost-like, a spectral image which recalls the especially phantom-like apparitions of early cinema. Mann rarely

maps our paths between locations, only sometimes offering a wide-shot of Max's cab cruising an empty five-lane road.

Even when we see the city from atop the high-rise in the film's penultimate scene, the pitch-darkness of the room enhancing the lights of the city below, they barely portray a city with a living, beating heart, but rather an array of individual beacons, exclusive clubs, expensive apartments and yellow sodium vapour street lamps illuminating empty roads.

Cristian Speranza

R.I.P

The Extinction of the Arts Student

Koh Saito

First, think about what career you want to pursue in the future. Think about if it will provide a stable income. Consider what job will yield the most happiness, and then pick a degree that will make that job possible. Find a balance between your work and social life. Once you have picked your job, plan and pursue it pragmatically, you'll succeed in life—or at least, that is what the Agents of Actualisation say.

Why, then, should I study an arts degree? It doesn't fast track a career in FinTech or Investment Banking, nor does it accrue wealth in any tangible way. If an arts degree cannot guarantee me a job, is it essentially worth it?

Firstly, what does an arts degree accomplish? Though this question may seem trivial, a working definition of the value of an arts degree is necessary to understanding its importance.

The concept of an arts education can be traced back to Medieval universities that followed a curriculum of the trivium and quadrivium. The trivium consisted of grammar, logic, and rhetoric; this was followed by the quadrivium, which included arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. These were studied as the first principles required for thinking freely, communicating precisely with the observable universe.

It was the precursor to the modern arts degree and serves as a useful case study in our current context.

For the Medieval arts student, grammar and logic was a necessary condition for one to think and understand their world. While rhetoric was the way for them to articulate their meditations to others. The students' knowledge produced by this educational system was limited by the assumptions of their society.

If we want arts students to flourish in a contemporary context, we must examine the underlying assumptions and goals of education. Endless debates over educational approaches are futile if the starting presuppositions and purposes of education are incongruent.

The students' knowledge produced by this educational system was limited by the assumptions of their society.

In our current society, the dominant purpose of tertiary education is to obtain a job.

Throughout the centuries, the purpose of education has undergone a significant evolution. From antiquity's fundamental principles of critical thinking, effective communication, and comprehensive comprehension of the world, to the more functional purpose of securing employment. Enrolment numbers in Arts programs have suffered because of this, mere funding and better structures alone will not suffice to to change this on a larger scale: we must champion a cogent and compelling purpose of an Arts degree that goes beyond the notion of mere employment.

**“Mere funding and
better structures will
not suffice to recover the
arts student on a larger
scale.”**

UNSW inaugurated its Arts, Design & Architecture (ADA) faculty in 2021, which prompted Tharunka to delve into Arts education and the implications on its future in the education system. Many fear that this merger is little more than a marketing strategy emphasising STEM degrees at the expense of the Arts and Humanities. Most university students already approach their university experience with bigger designs than simply obtaining a degree: many involve themselves in social opportunities at some of the myriad of clubs on campus.

As a Guest Lecturer in Literature at Emmanuel College Sydney, I have the privilege of teaching within a Reformed-Evangelical Christian framework, where despite congruent assumptions and rationales, on the methods of education, it remains challenging to provide a powerful impetus for a Christian Liberal Arts Education due to the perceived purpose of education today. As a small, private college catering to a specific audience, the institution has limited external factors when constructing an outlook for a reformed intensive arts education.

For UNSW on the other hand, a multitude of external and internal factors must be considered, such as:

How does the university balance their focus on STEM subjects as well as the arts?

How should funding be allocated?

With what metrics will the humanities improve UNSW's world ranking and bring greater prestige?

All these questions (and many more) are beyond the discussion of scholars in the humanities, yet they are crucial concerns to consider when providing a persuasive purpose for studying the arts. What is the cogent and compelling purpose of an education in the arts in our contemporary society? In what way can we harmonise divergent ideological perspectives, ranging from the highly progressive to the markedly conservative, in order to guarantee that our arts education serves a meaningful purpose?

Thus, in typical arts fashion, scholars in the arts and humanities must debate and articulate a raison d'être for an arts education to establish the importance of producing the "arts student", lest the impending extinction of the arts student becomes reality.

Amidst the resounding chorus of job acquisition reverberated by the Agents of Actualisation, is there a risk that the prospects of aspiring arts students will be relegated to obscurity?

The arts degree facilitates one's ability to think freely, communicate precisely, and apply knowledge contextually by synthesising and challenging the observations of other intellectuals

Mere funding and better structures will not suffice to recover the arts student on a larger scale.

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education today.

THE CRUMBLING CAMPUS OF UNSW

SPECIAL
GUEST: UNSW



ILLUSTRATION by
Jackie Tran

1 Be born. In under two hours, no less, you emerge from under the veil of your mother's outstretched belly as an undercooked human, red like raw meat. Spend the pre-conversational years refusing to sleep and eating dirt out of your father's garden.

2 Go, with your hair braided and tied up with ribbons, to school. Your dad thinks you would be just fine at Kensington Public, but your mother draws upon forty odd years of waning religious guilt and sends you to a Catholic school. It never takes them long to smell a so-called sinner. Even though you were born in the blue-eyed, blonde haired Shutterstock image of the Lord, they sense that you are rotten and treat you accordingly.

3 Grow some, in years, height and unfurling rage. Start rebelling. Giggle in Mass. Pull out your braids and tie the ribbons to a tree branch. Roll your eyes everytime you hear about Jesus, like he's some trendy indie band you just can't get into. It rings in your ears, day in, day out that he died for you, but you didn't ask him to do that. You just want to play Club Penguin on the library computers.

4 Go for walks with your father and the dog he apparently never wanted. Discuss various concepts with him; many scientific, in order to supplement the bi-weekly 'science' classes in which you mostly talk about recycling. Ask him questions. Why is the sky blue?
Did the first person to get swine flu get it from kissing a pig on the mouth? How do we know God is real? He will answer the last one by getting a children's philosophy book out from the library for you. This could send you on a few tangents, such as:

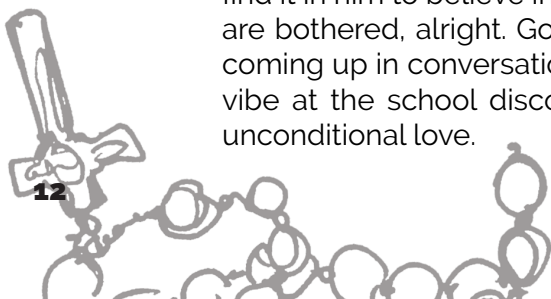
VEGETARIANISM. This will be short lived as in 2009 plant-based mince is very difficult to find, thus requiring you to cut spaghetti out of your diet completely. There are some sacrifices you just won't make.

BELIEVING THAT WE ALL LIVE IN A SIMULATION. This will also fizzle out when you find yourself unable to view The Matrix as the book recommends, due to your age of seven and the parental control settings enabled on your

FEMINISM. You'll stick with this one.

AND FINALLY, ATHEISM. Your father describes himself as agnostic – he says that he has been there, done that and just can't take a stance in either direction. He can't find it in him to believe in God, but he's not really bothered that other people do. You are bothered, alright. God is like the best friend who you never really liked, always coming up in conversations that were seemingly unrelated to him and hashing your vibe at the school disco. You are ready to cut yourself loose from his supposed unconditional love.

DESIGNED BY
Kelly Quach



5 Now, on to the practicality of it all. Here are some actions you can take, today, in the current year of 2009, to express your disbelief in the Catholic doctrine:

TELL YOUR TEACHER THAT YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD. Tell him again. Tell him you're an atheist, in those exact words.

REFUSE TO COLOUR IN PICTURES OF JESUS. When you are forced to colour in a picture of Jesus, colour it all in red. Label it "BLUD" in big block letters with an arrow for good measure.

SPREAD THE WORD! Tell your friends that God is not real. Hold meetings outside the canteen where you discuss atheism during lunch. Sit alone at lunch. Proudly assert to your classmates that your parents are too busy for Sunday church. **TALK TO YOUR DAD ABOUT ATHEISM (AGAIN).** Talk to your mum, too, but she will listen only long enough to say that you should never, ever tell your Irish grandmother about this.

DO NOT LET ANYTHING STOP YOU. No time-out; no red or yellow card shall slow you down.

BLUD

... **6** Grow and grow, until you are finally this adult-shaped thing, drifting through the secular, milquetoast hell of a media landscape. You will be encouraged to go with the flow until you're just like liquid yourself, never feeling any which way that could cause conflict – but you will be whole. You will know what you stand for and what you just won't buy. You will have a hardened core, developed all those years ago in catholic primary school. You will know exactly who you are and what you believe in. You will retain the strength of the little girl who refused to say her morning prayers all your life. Won't you?



theism For Upper-Middle Class Preteen Girls In Catholic School

A gospel-according to Eloise Wajon

Going Down's lesson on a forgotten Sydney

Carlos Hasham

While *Going Down*'s legacy has faded for new generations of Sydneysiders, its portrayal of a wild, untamed city should never be forgotten.

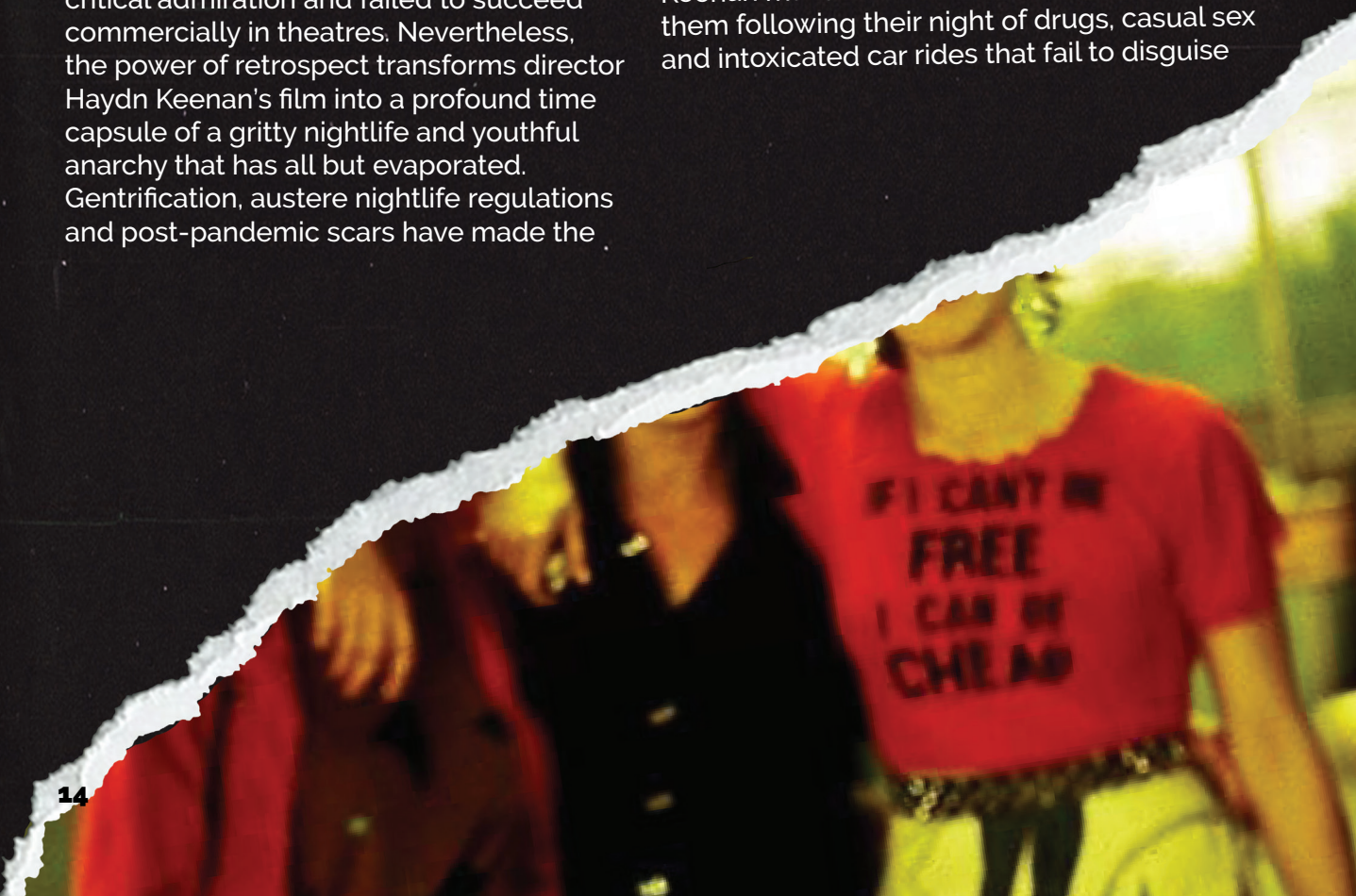
The time is 12:03AM on Darlinghurst Rd, the clubbers have given up and the last train leaves in 15 minutes, so you give up too. You walk past lease signs, stagnant security guards and empty lines; it is all you have known. Until you click on an ominous youtube video and the opening credits read, behind the sound of Australian Crawl, *Going Down*.

Going Down (1983) remains one of the neglected Australian films of the 1980s. With a struggling funding effort, interrupted filming and last-minute casting changes the film gathered seldom critical admiration and failed to succeed commercially in theatres. Nevertheless, the power of retrospect transforms director Haydn Keenan's film into a profound time capsule of a gritty nightlife and youthful anarchy that has all but evaporated. Gentrification, austere nightlife regulations and post-pandemic scars have made the

"boulevards of broken dreams and for-lease signs"

underground film more a far-flung fantasy than imaginable nostalgia for new generations. So, what can this seemingly out of date film teach us about what Sydney used to be?

Set in the grunge underbelly of Sydney's inner-city suburbs, the independent film follows the final night out for Karli (Tracey Mann) who is set to leave for New York and decides to spend her night between nightclubs, house parties and warehouse concerts with her group of housemates. The hand-held camera work contrasted with wide shots of their nightscapes, Keenan makes us feel like we are there with them following their night of drugs, casual sex and intoxicated car rides that fail to disguise



that they are on the tail end of youth. Thankfully the Sydney of the time could meet their yearning for euphoria and a night to remember. The plotline, along with the anti-climactic ending failed to amuse film writers, but the raw portrayal of Sydney's vibrant, nocturnal heart has defined its legacy and its value for the youth of now.

While the pandemic has, for many, cocooned our lives and the psyche of new generations, *Going Down* offers a glimpse to a now far-away world, identified by the rampant nightlife Keenan captures. Karli and her girls, drunk and high on youth, begin their night at the Cross, alive with junkies, artists, students, drag queens, and insatiable partygoers. With over 176 venues closed, many forever, due to the now regrettably enforced lock-out laws that began in February 2014, these once-revered night strips of Oxford St and the Cross are, as Thomas Mitchell coins, just "boulevard[s] of broken dreams and for-lease signs".

Anna-Maria Dell'Oso in an original review for the Sydney Morning Herald praises the film's inclusion of "the Manzil Room, punk-Darlinghurst, parties-in-Newtown face of the city which is well-known but little photographed". The Manzil Room closed years ago, with the iconic Lansdowne almost facing the same fate, poche Darlinghurst is furthest from punk and Newtown parties, well they're still around.

The girls continue their seemingly endless night sporadically attending underground drag shows, warehouse concerts and gritty inner-city house parties. These fleeting scenes not only offer a visual ethnography of sub-cultural Sydney at



the time, but, for new audiences, a portal into city life pre-gentrification. The ongoing rental and housing crisis, a pandemic-induced rise in youth depression and increasing cost of living pressure makes *Going Down* much sweeter than it is and more nostalgic than it should be. The time of cheap tickets, endless gigs and going for the thrill of it all.

Today Karli wouldn't be able to pay her inner city rent without a pair of rich parents footing the cheques, the warehouse concert would have been shut down and the site re-developed into Meriton apartments and with the price of a schooner let alone a bump the girls would still be sober counting change. Their sweet anarchy maybe could have only been achieved in their time.

A time where graffiti was public protest not private narcissism, where street corners were bursting with music not the calm chatter of an upmarket restaurant and where you left a club because you wanted to go to another not because it was empty.


While it is hard to look at the film without melancholy, especially for a twenty-year-old in a shell of city, the heartfelt companionship of the four girls in the film make it an endearing watch. Maybe we just need a little bit of their anarchy, their wildness and spirit to revive the futility of Sydney's nocturnal soul. While the jagged but beautiful night that Karli, Jane and Jackie spend may be forever gone, they are much like us, and are just searching for a good time.

DESIGNED by
Natrika Norizan & Anh Noel



Acolytes of the Barricade

Arieta Varvaressos



If you've been to a concert recently, you would be forgiven for mistaking it for some kind of Olympic sport, or rather, a battle-royale-free-for-all, to the point where it's almost cliché to complain about it. We have all heard the stories, about someone who flew to Perth, then Melbourne and back to Sydney just to follow their favourite artist. Maybe you've seen on Twitter people are camping out and someone brings a sharpie and declares themselves the Supreme Ruler of the Queue or the Arbiter of the Barricade. They number people's hands and delegate 'who' gets to be in the front row. When the doors open, there is a stampede to get to the front. It reminds me of the stampede scene from the Lion King. Good luck, little Simba! And that's all before the gig starts — where, at the risk of sounding like a cankerous old hag — the dreaded phones come up. If you're anywhere other than the front, expect to be watching half a show through the screen of whoever in front of you has the best view.

Complaining about practices and attempting to pick apart the ever-nebulous idea of 'youth culture' is hardly new. Although, the world in which this youth exists does constantly throw newness at the wall. In 1956, Allen Ginsberg wrote a rallying cry and celebration of the artistic youth: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked." That said, ending the line with "in metallic cowboy boots, dragging themselves through Harry Styles' general admission, looking for a glass of water," is perhaps a better requiem

for 2023.

The particular flavour of a Gen Z concert has been discussed ad-nauseam. This ranges from perspectives praising the bonds of "stan" culture, to general sentiment of "these damn kids need to get off my lawn." It's easy to toss it into one box or another, when in reality, what our live music habits reflect is a unique intersection of the internet, our consumption and how our generation defines its identity at this point in time. Historically, the devout fanbase that manifested in real life was limited to megastars such as boy bands or pop princesses. Although it still exists in these realms, the cults of traditionally small indie musicians have exploded. This is predominantly seen in young female artists, and artists with a majority female fanbase. Their music is often downtempo, subdued, or packed with complex emotions; at odds with the traditional image of the squealing fangirl. Aptly pointed out by a friend of mine at Laneway Festival this year, "Why am I fighting for my life in the Phoebe Bridgers pit?"


Sad Girl

Parasociality, which is the one-sided relationship fans have with their favourite celebrities, is yet another concept discussed to death in recent years. It refers to our emotional energy, interest and time invested into someone completely unaware we exist. Although the idea predates any of our lifetimes, the arrival of the Internet has twisted the dimensions of our interactions with our idols. Closer than ever, artists appear on our TikTok recommended pages or Instagram feeds in a never ending stream of content. This simultaneously elevates and humanises these artists, all within an algorithm. It starts to feel as though their performance of identity, a prerequisite of the business of being a public figure, is also attainable. The nature of the internet and how it intersects with the forces of capitalism means that your digital identity, and by extension, your reality, is heavily based on your digital consumption. Combine this with a generation of young women who experienced their teenage years during COVID, and the formation of identity through an odd sort of parasocial consumption becomes far clearer. Artists, and their music, have become a subculture, a digital accessory and a navigation device for the information overload of the Internet. As a result, musicians, who professed their own complexities through their music and personas, became fashionable.

On audiostreaming platforms the relationship between playlists, users and algorithms is highly important. If you consider yourself a 'sad girl' and you listen to the Spotify-made "sad girl starter pack playlist" then of course you listen to Phoebe Bridgers and Mitski. This Extremely Online aesthetic is only possible through Extremely Online curation. How will anyone know that you're the ultimate Sad Girl if they don't know Mitski 'made eye contact' with you or that Phoebe Bridgers held your hand, without video evidence to prove it? When an artist is only known through personas constructed by videos, the audience misses the most personal part of the live experience. The barricade becomes a cultish symbol of closeness beyond the intimacy formed via screen. It becomes another thing to point to as a substitute to self-actualisation — standing on the shoulders of Sad Girls past, through a warped sense of parasocial validation.

This raises further questions of whether we know how to exist outside a network of constant consumption, particularly in regards to the female experience. I'm not depressed, I'm in my Fleabag era! My life is not falling apart, I'm just a clean girl- yoga mat - claw clip - dewy skin - pilates-core person. There is an increasingly nonsensical, curated list of things that serve as a map to our neuroses. Asking our ever-watching audience, "Do you understand me now?"





Everything can be claimed under the guise of self-identity: Gilmore Girls, Otessa Moshfegh, Vanilla Coke, the rat you saw at Central Station or the spare hair tie on your wrist. Yes, this includes Phoebe Bridgers. If I can consume it, I can understand myself, and I can control others' perception of me. It's just a continuous stream of content that unrelentingly pushes individuals to present their personal brand to the world. It is no coincidence the acolytes of the barricade are almost entirely young women: the main dwellers of this internet ecosystem.

When women curate a stream of content online hyper-conscious of their aesthetic affiliations, it's easy and liberating to mistake it for actualisation. And hey, if there's a sad girl starter pack, sponsored by Warner Music Group™ and RCA™ at your fingertips, that is as good a place to start as any, right?

I would love to exonerate myself from this — to act as though I couldn't care less about the barricade, and that if I did it was for the purpose of seeing without a screen in my face. However, I have to admit the allure of closeness is compelling; to see the people whose music has resonated with my identity close-up, and have them see me. To act as though I have not, in some way, internalised my love of Arctic Monkeys as a facet of my image would be to lie. I cannot claim to exist outside the female experience of constantly feeling observed. I post a video of a gig at a pub on my Instagram story, and with it a string of nonsensical nouns that my immediate existence could be categorised into. Always the snippet of the good riff, the steady camera, the right flash of lights — making sure people know just how close I am, even if none of these thought processes or behaviours are conscious. To be a young woman online is to know a script you don't even quite know how you memorised. The phones, the filming, the crowd surges and the jostle for barricade — all behaviours that broke unsaid cardinal rules, and all behaviours undoubtedly linked to the drive for content fueled by parasociality, as if that parasociality

would contribute to self-actualisation. In a way, it's a new vanguard coming through — a new way of interaction that's a product of a world post-COVID, starving for connection.

The contemporary concert experience is only a natural consequence of this script bleeding into the real world, the only prompt to those young adults often sneeringly dubbed 'quaranteens.' In 2021, Billboard released analysis that found the post-pandemic concert boom was primarily driven by first-time attendees. The phones, the filming, the crowd surges and the jostling for the barricade — all behaviours that broke unsaid cardinal rules that had applied before Covid. In a way, it's a new vanguard coming through. A new way of interaction that's a product of a world post-COVID, starving for connection.

In 2022, Japanese-American singer-songwriter Mitski tweeted a simple request to fans: "Hello! I wanted to speak with you about phones at shows. ... Sometimes when I see people filming entire songs or whole sets, it makes me feel as though we are not here together." Even though she had been an acclaimed indie musician for over a decade it was Tik Tok that catapulted her into the limelight. She went from small clubs to selling out multiple shows at the Radio City Music Hall in New York. Unsurprisingly, Mitski is a staple of the 'sad girl' genre. The tweet received immense backlash from people claiming it was insensitive to those with ADHD and depression, to ableists. One response read, "bestie, that's great and all, but some of us have mental health issues that cause dissociation and I film to remember the moment." In response some of the counter-backlash said, "you wouldn't want to disappoint Mitski, would you?"

In the end Mitski's team deleted the tweets. The internalisation of these artists' works and personas becomes an insidious form of entitlement by fans as it becomes integral to their identity.

Beyond fan politics, the consequences of

obsessive fandoms online can result in real world dangers. At several of Phoebe Bridgers' concerts in 2022, there were reports of audience members passing out and crowd movements causing people to be crushed. In Toronto, she reportedly stopped her show five times so paramedics and staff could treat the injuries. Speaking to NME, Erin Laidley, who is a fan, said "i've never been to a show where so many people passed out or needed medical attention. A lot of people...had camped out, in the rain, for 12+ hours to get barricade." When you search twitter for 'Phoebe stopped show' similar events pop up from Montreal, Washington DC, Birmingham etc. There's something to be said that becoming an acolyte of the barricade is simply harmless fun — and in many cases, that's true. But when wellbeing and safety for both audience members and performers is compromised, perhaps priorities need to be re-evaluated.

Yet it's difficult to deny the lucrative nature of appealing to fans' inclination to parasociality, to encourage their consumption of you as a road map to a solidified identity, or at least the performance of one. Not long ago, I saw Maisie Peters live: who, unlike her predecessors, built her very career on TikTok. Her fanbase inspired similar levels of devotion, with one key change: she actively cultivated the formation of parasocial relationships. In the queue, she came out to meet us and took photos with people in the line. I met fans who had included her in group chats to which she occasionally responded and fans who had followed her to different continents. Her merchandise for sale read "Maisie Peters is my best friend," (T-shirt, \$55) and "Maisie Peters is my rockstar gf" (tote bag, \$45). These indicated a conscious alignment of aesthetics and curation of fan energy that you could buy. There are artists for whom leaning into fans' identity-based consumption works for them, and it is likely not a coincidence Maisie herself is also Gen-Z. She's a musician native to the digital world who seems to thrive off connection with her fans. Perhaps the way we now interact with our favourite artists is simply paving the way for

a new type of performer.

It often feels as though formation of identity through our consumption is now an inescapable fact of our lives, the closest thing we have to agency over our own perception. Have we simply just consumed so much that we don't know how to be publicly uncured or unsellable?

Ultimately, live music is a shared experience, and music-based subcultures are not new. Perhaps this is an evolution of that and young women or concertgoers are not at fault. To constantly bemoan "zoomers and phones" at concerts is arguably a striking lack of empathy, if anything. This perception of live music is a product of its environment. It is growing out of the ruins of the crucial years of self-discovery lost to the pandemic. How we choose to navigate the landscape from here, is an ongoing process requiring our own reflection.

Weeks after Harry Styles' Sydney shows, I found traces of feather boas spread throughout the city. It was the remnants of a uniform or an aesthetic marker of the in-group of fans. To some, a nuisance, but to attendees it was undeniable proof of a connection and a memory shared. What can be more genuine than that?

And of course, we cannot discount the new prominence of young womens' own voices and drive. There is something to be said about the breadth of the audience to which the expression of feminine anger and sadness has resonated. Beneath the layers of identity via consumption, it's worth examining exactly why we, as women, choose to curate and identify our existences in the way we do. Among the acolytes, there's undeniably meaning beyond the publicised, a shared bond over the resonance of music. There's a way to write a new script.

If people are always watching - we may as well scream.



You're all wrong about teen dystopias: On the benefits of teen-girl rebellion

Anoushka Saunders

The 2010s were a dystopian golden age. Following the success of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series, many authors were quick to jump on the bandwagon – to the point of oversaturation. People were quick to critique the low-hanging fruit; it just wasn't realistic to have teen girls as the face of anti-totalitarian uprisings.

But, I disagree. The teen girl dystopian protagonist archetype is not only realistic; but has positive real-world consequences.

Looking at *The Hunger Games*, mainly due to its insane cultural impacts, I'd like to prove the critics and misogynists wrong.

These fictional female protagonists are the best representation of contemporary female activists who are in adolescence. At 15 Greta Thunberg started the 'School strikes for Climate' movement. In 2019, at the U.N climate summit she called out the world leaders' for their negligence towards climate change, which has robbed her of a childhood. Malala Yousafzai was also an unwilling female teen activist. Although she continues to fight for women's education rights, she never chose to become the face of this movement at 15. For teen girls wanting to make smaller scale changes, dystopian protagonists mirror the boldness seen in the real world.

Dystopian texts amplify real world issues to a fantastical level. They can be a vehicle in helping teen girls understand politics. Since the beginning of civilization, young women have been excluded from the political sphere. This rejection is exacerbated for teen girls, who are often dismissed as being too naïve to engage in the conversation. The inclusion of teen protagonists actively engaging in politics is so important, as it gives young girls a platform to see someone like them navigate politics. Girls are most likely to drop sports activities during their teens. The sporty and active nature of the teen girl dystopian protagonist somewhat counteracts a facet of gender inequality and could lead to a greater focus on physical and mental health.

ILLUSTRATED & DESIGNED by
Kelly Quach

Following the first Hunger Games movie there was a spike in archery participation in the U.S. due to Katniss' iconic bow and arrow. The Archery Trade Association reported that participation in the sport increased by 14% between 2012 and 2014, which correlates with the trilogies release. A survey of U.S. archery members found 48.5% of women U18 citing Katniss Everdeen as the influencing figure that led to them taking up archery.

"The Archery Trade Association reported that participation in the sport increased by 14% between 2012 and 2014, which correlates with the trilogies release."

With the target demographic being young girls, they too grow up with the characters as each installment of the series is published. These books generally show the teens growing into adulthood, one way or another. Katniss Everdeen is 16 at the beginning of the series and 18 by the final installment. In the epilogue she is 33 and this is arguably the most important part of the series. It shows that even though she survived being hunted, leading a revolution and losing family all while being a teenager, she still had to deal with the resulting trauma. It shows that even if you overcome all the challenges in your life, you have to address the scars that they leave. These stories reassure young girls that they are not alone in the fears and anxieties they experience as they grow up.

"...they are not alone in the fears and anxieties they experience as they grow up."

Katniss' struggles throughout The Hunger Games trilogy encompass heightened versions of the struggles associated with moving into adulthood. Katniss is highly protective of her sister Prim and continues to enter the games in order to help look after her family. Although the exact scenario isn't a common experience, teen girls do begin shouldering more family responsibilities as they grow up, and as a result often have to make sacrifices.



Fiction has always been a powerful tool to inspire mass audiences. These strong female characters have resonated with young girls, and allowed them to take a piece of them into the real world. No matter how 'oversaturated' the genre becomes, strong female protagonists will always be necessary to inspire the next generation.



The folly of Naarmcore

The Commodification & Appropriation of Multiculturalism

Rocco Arce

There's a new trend in Australian youth subculture. It originated on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram as a way to show off one's self-expression in a new aesthetic. You may have noticed the explosion of loose-fitting clothing with random graphics, trucker hats, baggy jeans, jorts and carabiners latched onto belt loops as the new markers of 'cool.' Although it is seemingly innocent in delivery, this trend has encompassed a myriad of controversy. "Naarmcore," as it's known, raises questions of darker undertones attributed to a tone-deaf understanding of culture and multiculturalism, and has a deep history within the gentrification and colonisation of minority spaces.

The name "Naarmcore" was the title originally given to this trend. It's a portmanteau of the First Nations' traditional name for the area known as Melbourne-, "Naarm,"- and "core" is often used as a suffix to encompass the elements and zeitgeist of a particular field of interest. The controversy stems from the liberal use of "Naarm" as a means of describing those partaking in the trend. Many argue that the term's presence is a dishonest rendering of its First Nations origins — ultimately a method of repression under the guise of solidarity. The First Nation names used to reference places; Naarm, Eora and Gadigal (Sydney) have recently been used as a means to show one's recognition of the land they are on. It is also used as an acknowledgement of who the traditional custodians of the land are and their customs. However, the mass adoption of these terms has caused their contextual meanings to be blurred. They've diverged into becoming the branding of bohemian spaces, losing their original purpose, cultural meaning.

For example, establishments such as RAW: Gadigal and filter_naarm host popular and elaborate techno raves. They aim to promote diversity through branding, but have instead skewed how bohemian subcultures approach First Nations branding. It is now liberally and superficially used due to their popularity within the alternative youth circles. The glamour and style is praised before the social messages the brands are trying to promote. This leads to a misconstrued integration of terms and further cultural appropriation.

'Naarmcore' raises questions attributed to a tone-deaf understanding of culture and multiculturalism.

Are growing subcultures in Newtown or Brunswick the ones to blame for the perversion of these terms? Are the artists and creatives really at fault? The short answer is no. The fault is on those who are overzealous about their social standing in these creative circles. They appropriate cultural elements to promote their work without contextualising and respecting the traditional cultures they draw from.

Bohemianism in itself is usually the product of many cultures. This problem isn't necessarily the creative landscape, but to those who feign their acknowledgements. The big word of 'gentrification' comes into play: it is clear that within these areas, there has been a considerable influx of new migrants from the wealthier suburbs of Sydney's North Shore, as well as the Eastern Suburbs. The reason for the great exodus of these reverse economic migrations is the promise of an unconventional lifestyle offered by these areas. They live out their struggling artist fantasy on the back of a trust fund, take part in the underground rave scene, go to the USYD and start their podcast ironically covering all of these 'struggles'. It is in the best interest of these private school alumni not to integrate themselves within the proprietary of traditionally working-class suburbs, but to emulate behaviours that present an eagerness to appear less intimidating to its existing cultures. In turn, the works of these groups — often traditionally marginalised — are appropriated and commodified.

In France, the self-righteous young elite is referred to as the 'Bourgeois-Bohemian,' (aka Bobo's) akin to being a champagne socialist. Such groups simply pretend to care about the working-class lifestyle by familiarising themselves with it in a superficial way. This creates an environment which makes it hard for inhabitants to live in due to the rising costs of living and property prices. For example the upmarket fusion fast food TokyoTaco, where Japanese and Mexican cuisines are stripped of their essence and thrown together. It's located in the trendy Newtown: where housing prices have risen by 30% over the past five years.

Professor Magda Bolzoni of the University of Turin states that "rather than a genuine interest, the fascination of diversity, the enjoyment of a diverse atmosphere and the consumption of exotic goods by the new urban middle classes often emerges as a means of social distinction." In the case of Sydney's suburbs, Bobos often see different cultural groups as the sum of what they produce; food, art or music. Conflating their exposure to these ideas with solidarity and class allegiance.



DESIGNED by
Lucy Sun & Anh Noel

The Bobo believes that by combining these elements with ideas they are familiar with, they are innovating culture, despite the still-active agency of colonisation as a result of false pretences manufactured by their own self-righteous zeal. It isn't hard to imagine the reasons why they would do this. It is hard to imagine what they seek to accomplish without conflicting with the notions of their hypocrisy. Rebuttals and testimonials of their solidarity rather than an acknowledgement of fault become an indication of a cynical point of view, where multiculturalism is merely seen as a tool for social enhancement.


The true alignments of so-called “allies” have been obscured.

Over the past few years, amongst the growing celebration of LGBTQIA+ groups, billion-dollar businesses such as AMPOL, BWS and Absolut Vodka have adopted a brand of marketing specifically engineered to target progressive markets. By signalling empathy and solidarity, it has been aptly titled ‘rainbow capitalism’. The problem with rainbow capitalism is, despite the supposed virtues these companies try to disseminate to improve their ethos, they have not done anything of value to bolster the groups which they claim to support. Instead, rainbow capitalism essentially causes more harm than good — a ploy that rings hollow and false.

Navigating through the jungles of the present-day consumerist landscape, the true alignments of ‘allies’ has been obscured. Brands attempt tactics that try to appeal to a greater audience by forming an image that breaks away from conservative moulds, but don't pursue any tangible actions to improve the conditions of the cultures and groups they take from. It is similar to how Western charities suppress the African textile industry due to the forced donations of second-hand clothing. Assessing these conditions within a vacuum, the average person may find the conditions

presented to be superficially sound, but to promote solidarity within cultural production in our society, it's best to let the creators and custodians of these works do the talking. This can be done by giving marginalised cultures the platform to showcase their own work by supporting authentic businesses and acknowledging the cultural origins of any product. Only then we may stray away from the crux of modern-day saviour complexes and faux-allyship to fully support a healthy multicultural society.





So So what does all of this have to do with Naarmcore, baggy pants with carabiners and a penchant to pay for a \$17 deconstructed bánh mì and an \$8 flat white?

Well... everything. Modern Australia is experiencing a great cultural shift, with increasing immigration rates over the decades and 87% of overseas migrants moving to capital cities, as per the 2016 census. The multicultural landscape of Sydney has never looked more vibrant. This comes during a time where the youth are focused on social consciousness, progressive ideologies, and abandoning the reactionary ideals of the past. These demographics will eventually comprise a nouveau middle class, who will

eventually comprise the majority of the bell curve. It is important to break away from the societal hypocrisies and bigotries which have plagued the past. The cliché of power falling into the hands of the young has become ever more true as the new generation ages. As multiculturalism and cultural harmony become consequentially synonymous with this generation, understanding the facets of self-expression have also become increasingly important. Individuals strive to show their place within society either through the things they make, their interactions with others, or the mannerisms they pick up. But to accomplish these things, they need to know that they are not the great pioneers of the cultures they take from.

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These people will eventually comprise a nouveau middle class, which will eventually comprise the majority of the bell curve — and so it is especially important to break away from the societal hypocrisies and bigotries which have plagued the past. The cliché of power falling into the hands of the young has become ever more true as the new generation ages.

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The Lore of the Domain

Express Way

Ariana Haghighi & Marlow Hurst

Sydney sprawls quickly, with new environments blossoming in each nook and cranny. As a result, disused sections are forgotten just as quickly; they fall into states of disrepair and decay to the chagrin of onlookers old enough to remember their glory days. But whilst once-flourishing environments rust and slow, sources containing their lore vanish. Without the keen few lovers of Sydney local histories desperate enough to conserve them, their stories fade off the Sydney page, covered by the ink of flashy installations.

The Domain Walkway, once touted as one of Sydney's best attractions for families and workers alike, is losing its story to the raiding force of time. A significant source outlining the walkway's construction was a photo album serendipitously stumbled upon by a Northern Sydney cyclist in 2018. Vanessa Berry's Mirror Sydney blog also acts as a permanent treasure-chest, whilst many of the videos and links she consulted fall into 'broken' and 'error' categories.

Below is an affectionate, but incomplete history of one of Sydney's best underground secrets.

Hidden underneath The Domain are 207 metres of nightsky-rubber glory. The pavement once shifted at 0.69 metres a second, transporting clientele from The Domain Carpark to Hyde Park faster than any sluggish lightrail to UNSW. At the time of its construction, the moving footway was the longest of its kind in the world, only to be overtaken by a Disneyland Paris walkway in the far future. Today, the walkway is at a standstill, a vestige of yesteryear's futuristic dreams and mechanical projects.

DESIGNED by
Lucy Sun & Kelly Quach

In the 1950s, cars were bumper to bumper on a network of quickly sprawling roads. It was the decade of pedestrian discontent, and car haemorrhages in the city. Town planners thought outside the roadblock and constructed a car park below ground, with the walkway as an appendage allowing commuters to leave their car-related worries underground and explore the city, no strings attached. The initial blueprint imagined two moving walkways that could be reversed in direction to accommodate peak hour flows and a static corridor sandwiched between them to cater for counter-flow traffic.

An additional difficulty was the implementation of safety measures: emergency stop units to be accessible to passengers were fitted into balustrading walls and automatic speed switches to trigger the motor if the speed rose ten percent above its normal rate. A few days before the moving footway's grand opening, Department of Labour and Industry officials undertook extensive safety tests, including sardine-packing 150 men onto the belts — talk about a traffic jam!

1961 saw the grand opening of the well-awaited walkway. Lord Mayor Alderman Jensen and his 13 month old son Mark were the first official riders, ceremoniously cutting ribbon tape before boarding — Jensen Junior seemed less gleeful than his father in the photos. 200 special guests followed suit, riding the footway like a MetGala red carpet. The grand opening was well-attended by the press, given the media's significant interest in what was to be the 'longest walkway in the world' and potentially a sign of exciting New World Futurism — TV cameramen, radio commentators and press representatives alike flocked to the scene for a morsel of newsbite. The opening ceremony even drew politicians from abroad, such as the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen, a testament to the perceived significance of the footway at the time.

But the Lord (Mayor) was not to know that keen Expressway riders would soon be skating on thin ice: the rubber tongue of the footway became a danger zone. The Expressway's 3/64ths of an inch gap started claiming victims: a child's finger, a man's trousers and a puppy's hind legs among the casualties, and soon the travelator filled with the blood of the innocent and unsuspecting — a hellish sacrifice to a heaving industrial city. Upon report of each incident, the City Council faced liability for damages, opening its pockets to grumblers with maimed hands and ripped garments. "No more!", The City Council cried, and "Our tax money!", the middle class lamented, so its risks were rectified with the didactic warning sign,

**“STEP OFF FOOTWAY
— DO NOT SLIDE”.**

Whilst the Expressway was initially demonised as a place of injury, its novelty proved it could also be a place of first love. In 2010, it was temporarily rebranded as a 'Traveldator' (with the slogan: "Meet, Move, Mingle"), where a person would speed-date another on the journey there, and swap to a new face for the journey back, and so on. The event was run by 'Patchworks', a team of self-described "young entrepreneurs" who wished to test a theory about reviving 'dead' architecture with social interactions. 22 people seeking ambulatory amour participated in this event, with 77% of the riders allegedly reporting they felt comfortable speed-dating in the travelator environment.

Just as the passengers of the 'Travelator' were looking for love, the Expressway almost courted a romantic partner of its own. While eccentric Sydneysiders often mourn the demolition of the Darling Harbour monorail, many are unaware that the monorail was almost a travelator. A serious contender to Sir Peter Abeles' TNT monorail, the proposed 3.6km long travelator had the support of the National Trust and other action groups. To be called the Lazertube-Skywalk, this elevated travelator would have absolutely blown the Domain Expressway's 207 metres out of the water and future-proofed Sydney's travelator length crown against destabilising upstarts like Disneyland Paris. Alas, the proposal was rejected and the monorail was opened to the public in July of 1988.

In the 1990s, the black rubber came to a halt. The mechanisms below the conveyor were eroded by the waves of time. At first, it looked like the worn-out metal was a full stop, punctuating the Domain Expressway's end. The original manufacturer of the materials, Morison and Bearby Pty. Ltd., was no longer in operation. The walkway had a unique steel-cored belt design hailing from the Sandvik Steel Company in Sweden, causing Sydney designers to scratch their heads in confusion and augur the broken belt's doom. Fortunately, whilst the future of the footway hung in the balance, metalworkers in Holland came to our rescue, exporting the needed materials and allowing the cogs to turn for a few more decades.

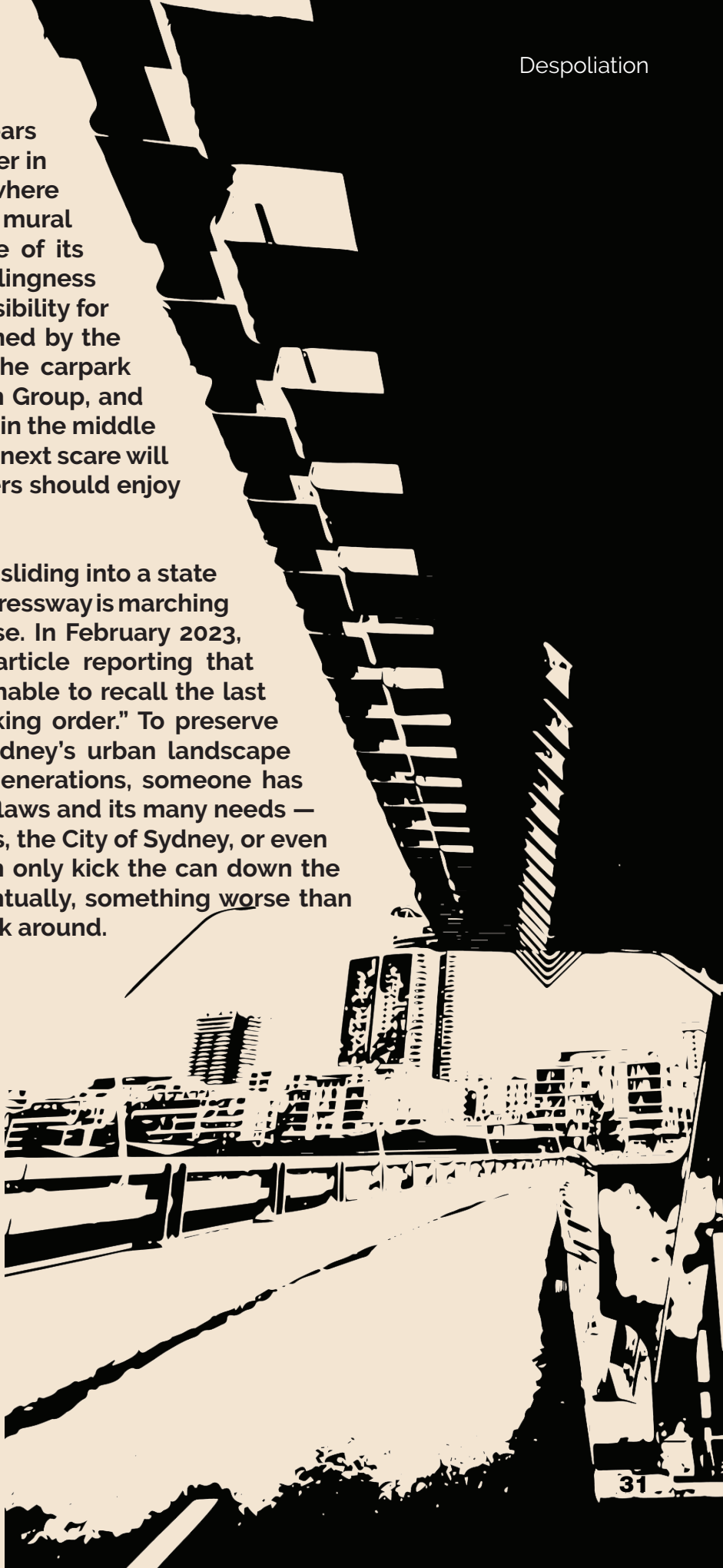
To coincide with this mechanical refurbishment, the tunnel was given new life by a series of murals masterminded by Tim Guider, in collaboration with Indigenous artists and local Woolloomooloo schoolchildren. Guider was an artist who previously served time in Long Bay for offences relating to a bank robbery. More than 200 metres of painted panorama depict contemporary Sydney sights, the invasion and colonisation of Australia, and miscellaneous flora, fauna, and urbane ephemera. Flanked by 3D and illuminated installations at the

Hyde Park end, Guider's 'Tunnel Vision', as it's called, is sorely needed cultural stimulation for users of the footway. It acts as a sort of magazine in a doctor's waiting room or safety manual on a plane. Yet, like the footway itself, these murals have been under heavy siege. In 2008, it was reported that 130 metres of the tunnel mural would be painted white and used for advertising as part of a proposal from Challenger Diversified Property.

**“Commercial vandalism”
Mural artist Tim Guider
called it.**

While that didn't go ahead, fears were reignited in 2020 by Guider in a Daily Mail Australia article, where he expressed concern that the mural might be demolished because of its state of disrepair and the unwillingness of stakeholders to take responsibility for its upkeep (the footway is owned by the Royal Botanic Gardens, with the carpark under the thumb of the Wilson Group, and the City of Sydney smack bang in the middle of it all). Who's to say when the next scare will strike? But for now, Sydneysiders should enjoy the murals while they still can.

It's not just the murals that are sliding into a state of disrepair. Like before, the expressway is marching towards dilapidation and disuse. In February 2023, the Daily Mail published an article reporting that "frustrated commuters [are] unable to recall the last time the walkway was in working order." To preserve this mechanised marvel of Sydney's urban landscape and urban history for future generations, someone has to take ownership of its many flaws and its many needs — be it the Royal Botanic Gardens, the City of Sydney, or even the NSW Government. You can only kick the can down the travelator so many times, eventually, something worse than Disneyland Paris will come back around.



Why don't we care about the 'real world?'

Does social media play a key role?

Sabrine Nasri

In 2015, Alan Kurdi, a 3-year-old Kurdish-Syrian boy drowned in the Mediterranean Sea when his family tried to reach the shores of Europe after escaping the Syrian civil war. At the time, the war had taken the lives of 55,000 people. An image taken of the young boy triggered waves of empathy and captured the world's attention on the burgeoning refugee crisis. It illustrated the magnitude of suffering, and the journeys people were willing to take to safety.

Over 9,000 people have already drowned trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Yet the picture of one child among thousands is what woke people up and created waves of collective concern to a degree that the statistics were not eliciting. In response, Germany expanded their intake of refugees to 50,000 people. The story of Alan is not unique. It is the story of hundreds of thousands of people across the globe, who suffer today as they have for over decades.

The story of Alan is not unique. It is the story of thousands of people across the globe, who suffer today as they have for over a vicennial(?)

Our inability to comprehend such large-scale suffering harms our response to such tragedies.

Ethiopia (2021): 500,000 dead

Afghanistan & Iraq (2001): 507, 236 dead

Syria (2011-2022): 227, 413 dead

Uyghur Muslims detained in China (2023): 1, 200,000



We are living in the most prosperous time in history. There is an increased standard in health due to technological advancements in medicine such as vaccines, increased access to necessary medications, and genetic mapping. Development of communication technologies has meant all the issues of the world come directly to our fingertips. It's not about more people dying and people caring less. This is about despite our awareness and technological advancements, collective mobilisation to prevent human rights abuses has not occurred.

"Our society has become apathetic towards 'real issues' that take place elsewhere."

Perhaps we do not force ourselves to confront the truth. George Orwell said, "the further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it." For example, when a story about violence or someone dying pops up on your Instagram and Tik Tok feed, we are given the option to quickly move on from the content, and we do. Is it because we don't care?

So much has happened in the world that people have become desensitized to viewing trauma and therefore do not register its real-world implications. People shy away from taking any action when presented with an impossible situation because they feel they cannot do anything. The instability and conflicts in the Middle East/Asia have become normalised in the West's eyes.

We naturalise western intervention in these regions so much so that we believe it to be our 'moral obligation'. When in reality they stoke wars for their own economic and political purposes.

The invasion of Ukraine shocked the world and prompted millions to speak out, saying that, 'this shouldn't be happening in the 21st century'. As though Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan had not been devastated in front of their eyes resulting with millions of human casualties. When the Ukrainian invasion unfolded, influencers and media outlets took to screens and advocated, brought attention, and raised awareness. They told Ukraine, "*YOU ARE NOT ALONE! WE STAND WITH YOU.*"

In no way is Ukraine undeserving of this coverage, but none of this has or ever will be done for "uncivilized" countries. Uncivilised, is what CBS Senior Correspondent, Charlie D'Agata called Afghanistan and Iraq. What he means is that they are not white, they are not European, and they do not look like us. We care what happens in Ukraine because they are considered a developed and civilised state. It reminds us that we are not immune to violence because it could happen to any of us.

In 2014, the psychologist Paul Slovic, conducted a series of studies demonstrating how we become emotionally detached as the numbers of deceased people increases and our compassion fades. According to Slovic, "that's because an individual is easier for humans to empathise with. If you see one child, you can focus on the child and think about how they are like your own child. With two, your attention lessens and so do your feelings. Our feelings drive our behavior." Learning the plight of just one child can spur us to action far more efficiently than if we learn they are only one of millions.

It's about understanding the humanity behind the numbers and engaging in critical thinking.

"There were not six million Jews murdered; there was one murder, six million times."

A quote from Holocaust survivor, Abel Herzberg.

Can we really afford to let the risk of desensitization from social media numb us to the point of no return?



CW: Images of Infant Death

The other end



'This stop is UNSW High Street. Alight for...'

As usual on a Tuesday morning, I get off the light rail. I planned my schedule for the day on the tram. Assessments are driving me crazy. I hear a phone ring from a nearby telephone booth.

I don't think that was always there. Is that new.

'Hello?'

'Oh, hey.' A girl is on the other end. My age, it sounds like.

'Thank you for answering,' the voice continues. 'I have lost something. I think someone has taken it from me.'

I don't know how to respond.

'Please? You know, it is really important to me...' Her voice begins to sound very familiar, but I still don't recognize who it is.

A breeze passes by, softening my mind. Maybe she needs help.

'Do you know when or where you lost it?' Maybe she just needs someone to talk to.

'I don't know. But everything changed last night after a shooting star,' she says.

'What?'

'I was chasing a dazzling light ahead of me until I ran out of breath, and a shooting star appeared. I usually make a wish when I see one, but this

of the line

Lucy Sun

time I forgot. I was in such a hurry to reach that light. But when I got to it, it became a dim candle.'

'Sorry - didn't you say you lost something?' I said. My schedule is running off track. I want to go back.

'I can't see girls' elegant purple gowns anymore,' the girl says. 'And when I stand this far away, it seems to just be a huge piece of purple. But I'd rather see the magnificent tiara on top.'

'I wonder if I lost the same thing as you,' she urges.

'I beg your pardon?' I respond. She seems to be trembling.

'Don't the autumn leaves seem like crabs when you kneel down to see them?' she responds. She looks like she's about to continue, but abruptly pauses.

'What's wrong?' I ask.

'Thank you, girl. I think I know what I should do now.'

'You probably need to take a rest,' I suggest.

'Smell the fragrance of the flowers,' she agrees. 'Feel the sound of walking through the autumn leaves inside me.'

'Thank you.' She concludes.

'No, thank you.' I say, slowly and truly, as she hangs up.

Oh My Gosh! I'm late!!

The breeze passes through me again. The telephone booth is gone.

ILLUSTRATED & DESIGNED by
Lucy Sun

You can't choose the cards dealt to you but you can exhale out of the nose at a couple of these.



CANCER

JUN 22 – JUL 22

The stockbroker that argues for endless growth while living in a house made of asbestos. Will make art out of oil spills



TAURUS

APR 20 – MAY 20

You're so stable and responsible for rolling back environmental protections. Thanks for the firepot.



GEMINI

MAY 21 – JUN 21

Probably the cute infographic maker about how we're in the end times. (ノ◡ノ)/*:° ✧
#ApocalypseCore



ARIES

MAR 21 – APR 19

Ride the wave, not ram into the wall. You'll be at home in a ruined city, you domesticated cow.



LEO

JUL 23 – AUG 22

The "main character" of the apocalypse novel in their head. They will eulogise about roadkill.



PISCES

FEB 19 – MAR 20

Crying won't bring back extinct plants, but you'll pet a koala before they're all gone :)



VIRGO

AUG 23 – SEP 22

Let it go. The Dewey Decimal System is rank for a number of reasons. Your corpse will stain Chaucer.



SCORPIO

OCT 24 – NOV 21

Stop with the scorpion aesthetic. You're not going to rebuild society with that attitude.



AQUARIUS

JAN 20 – FEB 18

You care so much about the ocean—it'll be your coffin, sorry about that.



LIBRA

SEP 23 – OCT 23

Clutch that vegan leather a little less tightly will you? The old money aesthetic is an ill-fit for Mad Max.



SAGITTARIUS

NOV 22 – DEC 21

Vultures need to pick your bones clean. You're too keen on the world dying.



CAPRICORN

DEC 22 – JAN 19

Not too much attention on you, and that's exactly how you like it. BUT I know what you've done.

ILLUSTRATED by
Annie Nguyen

The Cash Cows

How Australian unis have been cashing in on international students

Rafael Mocelin

Whether it's the Chinese classmate with \$1000 shoes or the Colombian undergrad working at your local restaurant, international students have fuelled the growth of the Australian education sector for decades. Aggressively recruited overseas and paying exorbitant fees, foreigners contributed to more than 40% of universities' total revenue in 2019. But how did they become the cash cows of this predatory industry?

Australian universities could not profit from overseas students forty years ago. Providing qualifications to foreigners was not a business but a form of aid. Nearly all international students were fully or partly subsidised through public scholarship schemes, such as the Colombo Plan. However, things started to change in 1986 when the Hawke government allowed educational institutions to offer places to full-fee-paying overseas students.

At the same time, neoliberal reforms pushed universities to become more autonomous, self-sufficient, and most importantly, profitable. This policy turned Australia's elite higher education institutions into a market-driven mass system. Increased competition for funding encouraged them to look for new ways to generate revenue, with international students soon proving to be a reliable source of income.

Universities did not spare any effort to

*DESIGNED BY
Narnina Tanious & Kelly Quach*

attract foreigners, investing in heavy institutional marketing and employing recruitment agents. Promised a world-class education and a seemingly easy pathway to permanent residency, foreigners began enrolling in institutions across the country. From a piffling figure of around 17,000 in 1987, the number of overseas students in tertiary education rose to over 360,000 in 2022. Mostly full-fee-paying, they support an industry worth more than \$40 billion annually.

ccomplice to the education sector's plans, the federal government granted universities more freedom to set fee prices for overseas students. In plain English, they were allowed to overcharge foreigners, generally three to six times the price for domestic students. For example, first-year fees for a Bachelor of Medical Studies/Doctor of Medicine degree at UNSW cost an international student \$74,445, compared to \$10,860 for a domestic student.

More than just cashing in on foreigners, education providers have been selling them an unrealistic idea of what life down under looks like. Besides the high cost of living and regular episodes of prejudice, those who wish to stay in Australia will endure discrimination long after graduating. A university degree is not a guarantee of permanent residency, and the status of a work visa holder does not provide equal rights in the labour market. Numerous companies allow only citizens or permanent residents to apply for specific jobs, keeping foreign workers from many higher-paying positions.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Australian education sector has not been entirely truthful with those it has profiteered from for almost forty years. Universities claim to embrace multiculturalism, proudly presenting themselves as diverse and welcoming communities in advertisement materials. However, their long and well-documented record of commodifying international students proves otherwise. That's a reality foreigners learn very soon in Australian unis - you are no more than a cash cow.



Marriage for Money

The youth Allowance Loophole



Angus Tangney

Students are no strangers to being kicked in the guts by successive governments who offer underwhelming changes to what little income support they are entitled to. The latest increase of 6% to Youth Allowance may look good at a glance, until you consider the fact that inflation has breached 7%. There is, however, an additional dimension to the perpetual Centrelink struggle, with many students not even being eligible for support in the first place.

From the age of eighteen you can get married, vote, drink alcohol, and be tried as an adult before the court. It's an arbitrary threshold, but one accepted as the benchmark for independence across Australia. All but except in the eyes of Centrelink, where you'll still be considered 'dependent' until you surpass the age of 22.

Whilst you are considered 'dependent' any application you file for Youth Allowance will consider the income of your parents, which will entitle you to nothing if your parent's income is above a set threshold. The issue with such a benchmark is that it ultimately fails to account for the character and expenses of your parents: you don't choose to have apathetic parents and you don't choose the number of siblings you have to compete with, yet in the eyes of Centrelink you're undeserving of any support regardless of such.

This discrepancy forces countless students across the country into making the uncomfortable choice between living at home in a family environment they may wish to escape, or into a situation where they must work an absurd number of hours a week, often in entry level minimum wage jobs in order to survive. These are crucial hours that could've otherwise been allocated to studying.

This arbitrary age of independence is a cruel benchmark which has challenged millions of students across the country at one point or another, a challenge some have taken on to find loopholes, with one such loophole being none other than marriage.

If you are married you are considered 'independent' in the eyes of Centrelink and any subsequent application you file for Youth Allowance will consider the combined income of you and your spouse as opposed to your parents. Despite being unconventional, this isn't illegal. From the age of eighteen you are legally allowed to get married and Centrelink cannot turn down a marriage certificate or deny that you may really be in a loving marriage with a fellow bludger.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported on a case of two flatmates in Newtown getting married in order to meet the threshold for independence in 2008. In 2010, a student from South Australia got married in order to increase his entitlement and, in late 2022, two students tied the knot in front of parliament house to dually protest the age of independence and qualify for an increase in their allowance, with the wedding being attended by Greens MP Stephen Bates.

The aforementioned examples are case studies in which the married couples have chosen to go public about their circumstances. There is little doubt in my mind that many more 'welfare weddings' have taken place over the years out of the public eye. Marriage is not something most people would seek to engage in for fun, but when the age of independence remains as high as it is now and the dilemma for students who dare wish to live on their own is between studying or starving — it's an obvious solution.



An Ode to Teen Dystopias

Lychee Lui

Teen dystopias engage with the teenage reader. Teenagers read hopeless worlds with teen main characters because they wanted to see something of themselves in fiction, that quality of being a teenager that is desperately terrible and unbearable, and see hope emerge after calamity like Pandora. We may not have opened the box but we live in the aftermath.

Research is thin on the ground about adolescent reading habits but commercial success points towards consumer interest. In the early to mid 2010s, teen dystopia dominated the YA market. The teen dystopia darling, *The Hunger Games*, is synonymous with the genre. In 2012, *The Hunger Games* trilogy had sold 17.5m copies. In 2020, the series had sold over 100m copies worldwide. The kids were reading in the 2010s, and they were reading with voracious appetite.

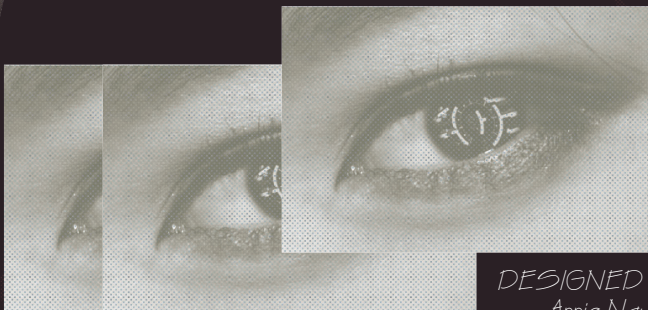
Before we proceed much further, dystopia should be defined. Dystopia emerges from the collision of dys, a Greek term meaning to destroy the good sense of a word, and utopia, a Latin term coined by Thomas Moore, to refer to nowhere--a perfect society without flaw. Dystopia is the dissolution of that perfect island, grounded in a contemporary sensibility. In modern parlance, it refers to an imagined state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic.

Dystopian novels of the past were written with adult audiences in mind. *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) by Lewis Sinclair, 1984 (1949) by George Orwell, and *The Handmaid's Tale*

(1985) by Margaret Atwood all feature adult protagonists that engaged with the post-war fear of the dystopian world's totalitarian governments, and the horrors of war.

The teen dystopia resonated with teenagers because it channelled adolescent fear, anger, and anxiety around growing up in the chaotic present. It recast their feelings into interesting premises and explored them in dystopian worlds. *Maze Runner* explores the post-apocalyptic with its cast of amnesiac teenage characters running in a labyrinth displaced from Greek myth. Death comes in the form of monsters lifted from nightmare. The characters are scared, and they have every right to be.

Divergent delves into a totalitarian city set in post-apocalyptic Chicago with a protagonist that defies the, to us, arbitrary boundaries of dividing people up by traits like Dauntless, Amity, and Abnegation. On a narrative level, it legitimised adolescent fear around life-changing decisions and provided space for a reader to be more than that. The enormity of my desire disgusts me... anyone? Sike!



DESIGNED BY
Annie Nguyen

Uglies crescendoed adolescent anxiety around pimples and aesthetics in a dystopian post-apocalyptic future where an oil-bug wiped out most of the population. At sixteen, every teenager gets plastic surgery and moves into New Pretty Town. The initial premise hooks a reader wrestling with aesthetics and takes it to the imagined extreme. The divisions of yesteryear are smoothed over by the fact everyone is beautiful and nothing hurts, right? Not so. The peace is artificially kept by brain implants, drugs, and enforced by special agents. But the narrative offers a distinctly hopeful ending with the dissolution of totalitarian state control, people gaining autonomy and learning to rebuild society.

The worldbuilding is hooked into the consequence of endless growth and flagrant disregard for the environment. Environmentalism is implicit in the worldbuilding as a cautionary note towards a close future. Authority compensates for its inability to control the environment by controlling the people. The issues felt by teenagers take centre stage in a world failed by the previous generation, a sentiment all too familiar to the present reader. The kids aren't alright, and they're doing something about it.

Nowhere is this seen more than in *The Hunger Games* with Katniss Everdeen, a teenage girl who volunteered to save her sister and became a figurehead for a revolution to take down the authoritarian government, the Capitol, in the process.

The story is set in Panem, a post-apocalyptic America

with twelve districts and a Capitol. Every year, there is a battle royale called *The Hunger Games* where children fight to the death in an arena with a single victor emerging victorious. A boy and a girl are chosen through a mandatory lottery for teenagers between twelve and eighteen.



The trilogy engages with mistrust of authority from Snow to Coin, the consequence of war on a broad scale, and propaganda with how Katniss is perceived as a victor, a symbol of rebellion and in the aftermath of the rebellion.

The impetus for the story is Katniss' love for her sister, and readers root for that selfless love in a dystopian environment. The teen reader is engaged and can see elements of the present in the televised Hunger Games with its similarity with reality TV shows, authoritarian government in headlines, and analysis of propaganda in their history lessons.

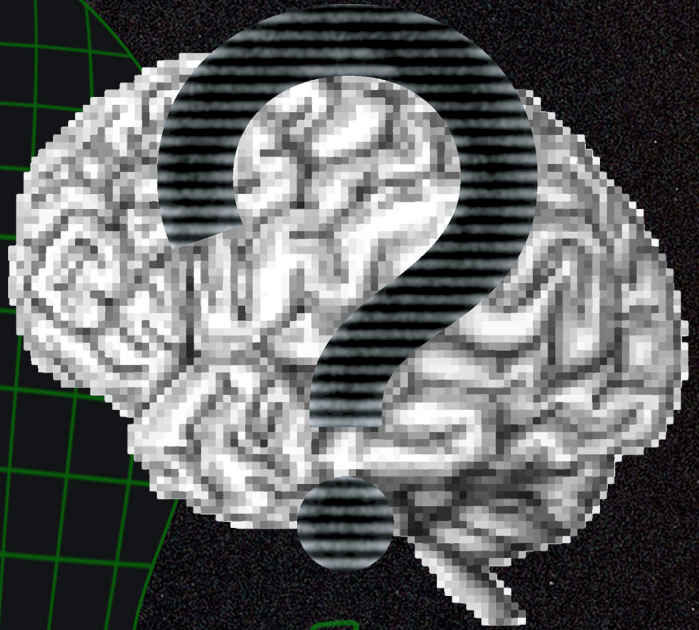
Teen dystopias are proof of youth engagement with reading and the world at large. The stakes may be high in fiction but so are the challenges that teenagers contend with. Teenagers in the early 2010s were bombarded with dire headlines, natural disasters, and apocalyptic forewarnings (remember *2012*, anyone?). But the world did not end. That these dystopias are set in a post-apocalyptic setting offers hope: even with dire circumstances, people still want to do better than what was given to them. The future may be bleak and cold but the endings are not. We're proof of that.

AI art

Erik Jankovic

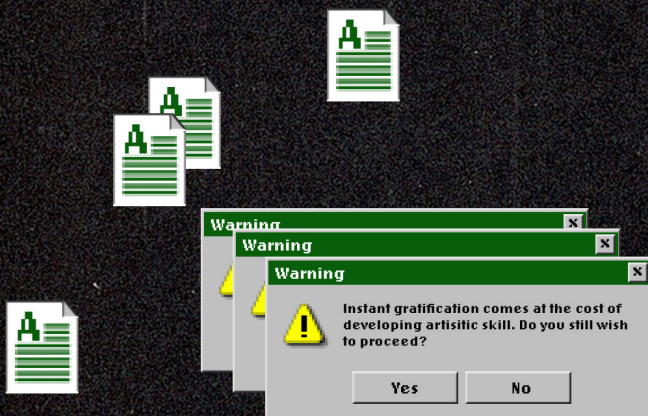
Art is the culmination of human expression. It is a vessel through which the human spirit communicates. It dates back to when our first ancestors placed their hands on the cave wall and started to crudely illustrate stick figures. It perseveres to this day with artists devoting themselves to the creation of their latest painting or drawing. The variability in art is dependent on the culture, the values, preferences, religion and contexts of both the creator and the audience.

Now, imagine if something else could make art for you. I don't mean getting another artist to create a piece based on something you have in mind; what I mean is getting a computer to create an image for you. Enter some keywords – let's say, in this case, 'night sky' – and an Artificial Intelligence will run through an innumerable amount of night sky pictures available on the internet and spit out an aggregate of the images it has available. Maybe this isn't exactly to your liking. You wanted something else. You enter more keywords: 'night sky, stars, bright, oil painting etc.' The AI runs through the same process, this time adding your new prompts to the mix. At long last, the AI spits out an image with brighter stars that resembles an oil painting. You have your very own starry night and you did not need to put in any effort. However, these are not your stars. This is not your night sky. It is not your view and certainly is not really an oil painting. While the fact that this is even possible is amazing, the results of this creation could not be further from that. It is a repetition of what has come before. While the image itself is unique, it does not have anything new or poignant to represent. No one saw the particular outcome outside their bedroom window and felt themselves struck enough to depict it through art.



The Starry Night is an 1889 oil painting done by Vincent Van Gogh. It shows us something familiar that we all know very well – a view of the starry night sky caught from a window – and presents it in a unique and whimsical style. Van Gogh does not copy the night sky directly but interprets it through his own perspective, artistic style and inclinations. It interprets and distorts the world we all know and has since become such an ingrained part of popular culture that if you've never heard of it, you have at least seen it in some form or another. A child recreating the starry night outside their window in crude crayon can be just as valid an expression as Van Gogh's own. Their depiction may not be true to life, yet it captures the scope of their view.

Many of these children fall in love with creative expression and become professional artists in some capacity. Yet, becoming a professional artist is an arduous journey. It is here that many experience the crushing fist of corporate interests beating them down. The trope of the starving artist did not appear out of thin air. Corporations that see art – a fundamental aspect of human expression – as nothing more than a payday, do not hesitate to drop artists



when their work is no longer profitable.

Recently, Netflix Japan created animated shorts wherein AI was used to generate the backgrounds. This essentially cuts down on the number of human staff needed significantly. In the incredibly cutthroat animation industry, planning, drafting, approving, illustrating and finalising the illustrations that would become the backgrounds would be someone's entire job. Even more insultingly, the backgrounds were credited to 'AI + Human', erasing the names of the people involved.

Some see this as a win. A recent WIRED article titled 'Picture Limitless Creativity at Your Fingertips' took a look at the implications of AI Art and defended it as inevitable; another piece of technology moving forward that cannot be fought and an artform unto itself. Some even claim AI Art is reclaiming power from artists who hoard skills for their own personal benefit.

But isn't skill and human limitations the crux of art's significance? Well-known artists did not start off as masters of their craft. They spent an incredible amount of time honing their skills until they reached the point they did with their own unique perspectives and distinct artistic styles. Now, an AI can be prompted to emulate and

reproduce these distinct artistic styles. Many see this as stealing, and artists have taken this to court in the United States over infringement of copyright.

But to those people in support of AI Art, this does not matter.

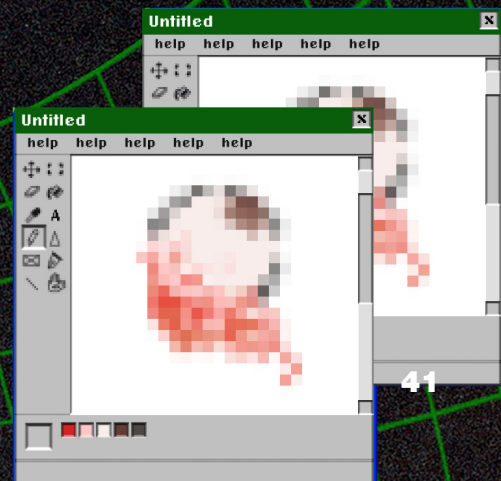
An article in the AI Time Journal titled – perhaps oxymorically – '5 Ways That AI is Helping Artists Become More Creative', states AI to be nothing more than a tool to assist artists. The article states: "AI-powered tools allow artists to explore new creative possibilities, automate tedious tasks, and create unique visuals." These justifications seem naive considering the Netflix Japan example, when there is a choice between money and artistic integrity, financiers will lean towards the former.

The WIRED article marvelled at the technological progress as well as lamenting that this is merely the inescapable cycle of fear of acceptance of a new technology by luddite artists. Even if it is, so what?

Why should they not be able to fight to preserve their craft?

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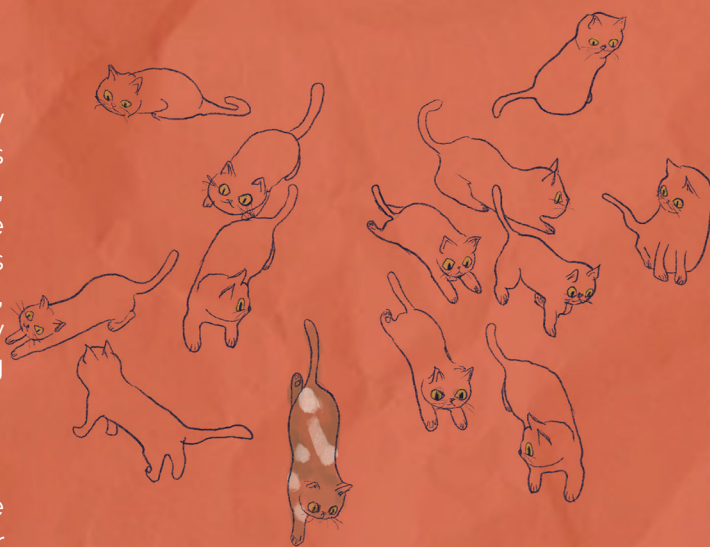
Through an International treaty signed by 147 states, the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the International organisation, UNHCR, were created. These institutions were designed specifically for the events we witness today in Palestine, Syria, South Sudan and, Ukraine. These 147 countries have willingly committed to accepting refugees fleeing conflict and persecution.

That system is crumbling. It is failing, because we do not understand the people and their crisis.

In the modern world, we learn about the refugee crisis through images and statistics presented to us by the United Nations, NGOs and the media. However, while statistics are useful for quantifying humans, big data often dehumanises the people they are representing and removes the human component.

The United Nations, NGOs, and the media, on the other hand, are all big fans of statistics. There's a purpose behind every set of statistics. They are supposed to give the issue — the crisis — weight and seriousness, so that we can better comprehend it.

Just think about it. How frequently do we use statistics to describe things or people that we care about?



For example, perhaps you've never had a pet cat. According to RSPCA Australia, 33% of households own one, and 85% of pet owners say their pet "positively impacted" them in 2022. Good for them! As you've never owned a pet cat these statistics are irrelevant to you, unimportant. What about the 3,739 cats in care at the end of 2022? You can't adopt that many cats — why care? You haven't seen all 3,739 of them.

The point is, we do not learn from images and statistics but from real stories, and real experiences.

Take another popular representation of this crisis in the media; the 'Refugee photo'. A particularly special type of photograph, you probably can call to mind the style simply from this name — a successful refugee photo looks like every other one taken before.

Refugee photos are easy to identify because of the dust or wetness that is there. Most of the time, the faces are just plain tired. Leaking boats and fences with barbed wire are often found in the vicinity.

A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO UNDERSTAND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Most of us would conclude that refugees are generally malnourished and exhausted. They're in some sort of crisis that their government or international institutions couldn't solve.

These images aren't entirely unhelpful; in fact, they have the potential to be rather moving. The issue here is that all of these images are taken from the same perspective. They're here for a purpose. To shock us into action and bring to light pressing issues that might otherwise go unnoticed.

However, they don't live up to their potential. They don't challenge our preconceived notions about the world around us. They are stereotypes, supplied to us in the form of rehashed imagery.

From these images, the audience learns nothing about these people's lives. The refugees who get married or attend birthday parties. The refugees who are active on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Where are these images in our media?

It is evident the Western narrative has become the dominant and only story of refugees. It is a one-dimensional narrative which produces one-dimensional sympathies and grief.



Following World War II, these men, the UNHCR, helped to build the present refugee system. Its core goal is to ensure that when a state fails, or worse, turns against its own people, people have a secure place to live until they can return home.

Still, for years, 5.6 million people have fled Syria to other areas of the world, according to UNHCR reports.

How can we fathom the magnitude of 5.6 million? It would be hard to comprehend 5.6 million m&ms, let alone people. These numbers become meaningless unless we associate them to faces with stories that elicit sympathy. There is a big difference between knowledge and information.

Rather than relying on the UN's numbers and graphs, we need to hear the stories of real people who are living through the ordeal of being a refugee in order to better understand the reality of the crises.

I decided that rather than sharing 5.6 million have fled, in a statistic that is nameless and faceless, I would share one story.

This is what my video project aims at achieving. In *A Journey From Home*, I interviewed my friend Mohammad Zuabi who is a Syrian refugee. I aim to present an intimate perspective on the crisis, from someone who lived it, and lives past it.

"One time, my brother was at school and the army started shooting at the school. My mom went there and brought him home...After that, she didn't let us leave the house at all. We couldn't leave the house for like 10 days and we ran out of food," said Zuabi.

Even though these people have lost their flocks, their fields, their homes and more. They have maintained their dignity, the ability to love, to live to the fullest and to carry on proudly. These are the stories we should be hearing, and my project is only the beginning.

ILLUSTRATED & DESIGNED BY
Kelly Quach

"I can't find a place to live"

Inside UNSW's Rental Crisis

Tamara Amy

The current housing crisis goes hand-in-hand with the accommodation woes of university students (especially now that the majority of classes are offline). But the question is, what caused it and how can one combat it?

Entering 2023 with the hopes of leaving COVID-19 in the past, it seems to be increasingly clear that the virus has had a drastic impact on not just the education front but its allied departments. With the pandemic supposedly subsiding into the yesteryears, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of students - both domestic and international - moving between states and countries for higher education. 360,358 international students arrived in Australia in 2022, which resulted in a 7% increase in the enrolment of international students compared to previous years. This is also reflected in the demand for housing, where university accommodation cannot meet the influx of students and therefore they have to resort to renting apartments and sharehouses with other students.

However, the Sydney housing market has presented its own set of challenges - after a 35% hike in rent mid-way through 2022, students can't afford the rising cost of rent. These rental hikes have not occurred in conjunction with wage increases, which has led to a disproportionate quantity of students' wages going towards rent. This has made finding a home in Sydney a far-fetched dream for a university student.

Another first-year student has said: , "I recall this one inspection I'd been to; there were 30 odd people there for the same inspection and this wasn't the only allocated inspection slot for the day."



“It was pretty difficult finding off-campus accommodations as most of them had a lot of people at the time of inspections and the rent kept on increasing.” – Ayaan Ahmed [First year Bachelor of Data Science student]

So, wouldn't university accommodation be the first preference for students enrolling at UNSW? But how far in advance must a student apply for UNSW accommodation options? A large volume of students began their accommodation applications the minute the 2023 quota was open, however, the majority were waitlisted almost immediately. Applications for returning residents opened in September of 2022, but for new residents they opened in October.

According to Dean of Colleges Isabelle Creagh, the reason it was difficult to find housing on campus this year was a smaller turnover than previous years. This means they had considerably less rooms to offer applicants.

Ayaan applied for the UNSW accommodations in September '22 and was waitlisted within a week.

Maria Ahsan, a third-year transfer student from Malaysia, applied in December '22 and didn't have a better outcome.

“When I called them to enquire about it, they said all the accommodations are full and will only consider the application if anyone empties their current room,” said Maria. “However, they didn't get back to me after that.”

She now considers herself extremely lucky to have received accommodation at New College Village.

Creagh clarified that they do try to respond as much as they can, but are not resourced to respond to the thousands of applications they get.

“Besides UNSW accommodations, I also applied to New College and New College Village through their portal, with an application fee of \$50. Although the New College accommodations were full, I did manage to secure an interview and spot at New College Village within 3 weeks of applying.” New College Village prefers postgraduate students and Maria found herself getting an offer from there instead of from one of the undergraduate options.

The accommodation peril isn't a problem being faced in Sydney alone: the Government of Western Australia has urged residents to house international students to combat this student housing crisis. The University of Western Australia and Curtin University have desperately requested staff members to house students as well.

Two other students report that they applied for UNSW accommodation in January 2023. Despite the portal stating that applications were still open, they were waitlisted within 5 days of applying.

Will such drastic measures need to be implemented in New South Wales as well?

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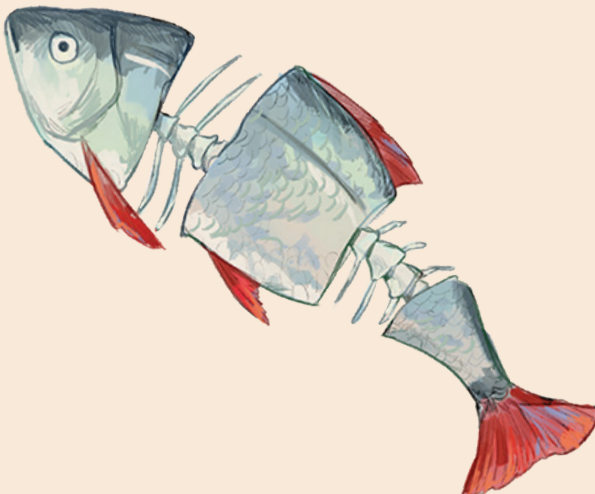
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