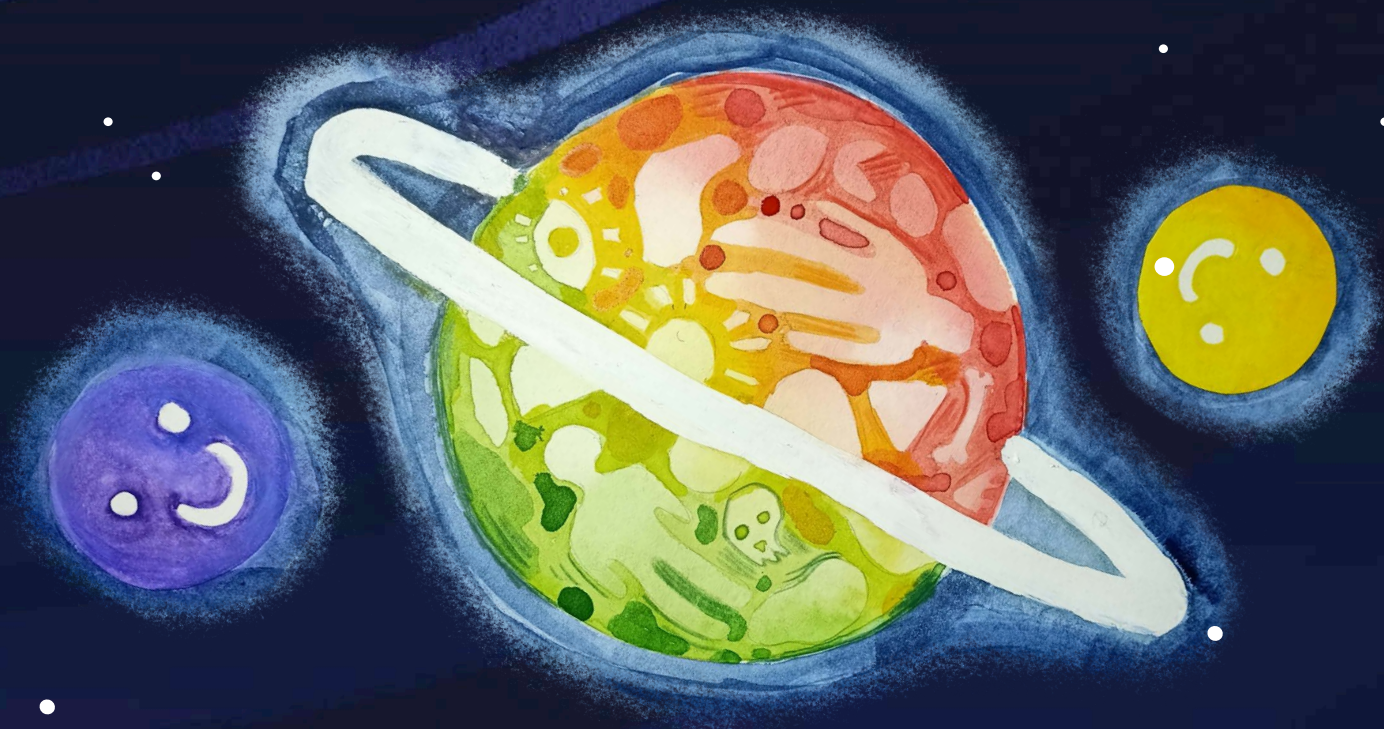


# THARUNKA

ISSUE 01, 2022

## BECOME



### FEATURE:

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### SATIRE:

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**Tharunka acknowledges the  
traditional custodians of this land,  
the Cammeraygal, Gadigal & Bidjigal  
people of the Eora nation, on which  
our university now stands.**

## Welcome to Tharunka

Established in 1953, Tharunka is UNSW's longest running, and spiciest student publication. While we started as a student newspaper, we have since expanded our scope to include different styles of art and writing that capture the UNSW student experience.

In all of our past and current issues, you'll see student opinion, personal reflections, comics, digital art, short stories, and poetry. And on our website, you'll find our juiciest articles, including student journalism, university critiques, current affairs, and political and cultural opinions. Like our Facebook page and follow us on Instagram (@tharunkaunsw) to stay updated.

## Interested in contributing?

Is there anything you think the university should change? What makes you angry about the world? What is going on right now that everyone needs to hear about?

Tharunka is edited, designed, and written by students, so we thrive on student submissions. If you're interested in contributing to Tharunka's journalism and opinion section, or just looking for an outlet for your creative non-fiction, art, essays, poems, stories, reviews, or anything else that comes to mind, send a two-sentence pitch about your idea to: [tharunka@arc.unsw.edu.au](mailto:tharunka@arc.unsw.edu.au)

## On the Cover:

Jelena Xu



Yanti Peng



Hana Thomson



Kelly Quach



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Nadia Maunsell  
**Managing Editor**

In our earliest conversations about Become, we considered shifts in thinking since COVID-19 had become less urgent. There was a shared anticipation for the future, intermingled with writers' ponderings about identity and purpose. Nicole weaves strands of identity and art together in her feature piece about defining the self beyond cultural identity. Rosabel muses on the future of comic books, particularly as physical shops are shifting online. We introduce many emerging poets in this issue, including Marell's poignant remembrance of the physical markers of romance.

And this is merely within the first twenty-five pages. A smorgasbord of originality awaits you within.

I am grateful for and proud of the 2022 team who coaxed these stories to life. Their talent exudes out of every nook and cranny of this wonderfully crafted publication. To our reporters, editors and designers, thank you for energising Tharunka's resolution to become more.



Harrisen Leckenby  
**Lead Reporter**

The theme of Tharunka's first publication for 2022, Become, means something different for everyone. For me, become is synonymous with becoming. Life is constant change as we move through its stages, becoming different versions of ourselves. A huge congratulations to every one of our contributors who submitted incredible works and to our fantastic editors and designers who work tirelessly to present you with this document you have in your hands or on your screen. We hope you enjoy our first issue of 2022!



Alex Neale  
**Features Editor**

The early part of my tenure as features editor has been an overwhelmingly positive experience. From letting my own artistic soul fly free to facilitating others to do the same, I am humbled to work in an environment whose inhabitants share themselves with the world out of nothing but pure (and in some cases greatly intimate) creative passion.

What you're about to read is the regurgitation of two years of pent-up artistic fever. When the team agreed on the theme Become, they each had their own reasons, but at its core, it is a reflection on the fact that few, if any, in our world is the same person they were before the pandemic hit. We at this publication are all young people forced to adapt to the world thrown out of balance; Become is an extension of our desire to establish personal jurisdiction on what we turn out to be.



Katelin Jaegers  
**Lead Designer**

Become and the process of becoming is such an important part of being alive, being human. When designing and illustrating for this issue, the concept of 'become' reminded me of space, how it's ever-changing, ever-expanding and most importantly, ever-beautiful, in all its mess and in all its perfection. For Issue 1 of 2022, I wanted something fun, eclectic, slightly whimsical and reflective! Leading a team of amazing designers adding amazing visual flair to beautifully written pieces and having incredible artworks contributed has been so fulfilling and so joyous. I hope you enjoy the adventure through Issue 1 and find pieces to add to your own journey of becoming.



# An Obligation

By NICOLE CADELINA

*As a Filipino-Australian creative, I grapple with the expectation to perform cultural stereotypes at the detriment of my art.*

August 2020, Starbucks Parramatta. I reconnected with a long-lost ex, who now hails from the distant beaches of Umina. As we waited for my tall matcha green tea latte, I decided to kill the dead air that comes when connections with past lovers are rekindled.

"There's this movie I watched the other night," I began (my dear ex knew nothing about cinema). "It's called *Before Sunrise*. It's about these two people, they go around somewhere in Europe – I forget which country it was – but it was great."

**"That sounds cool," he replied.  
"...Are there any Filipinos in it?"**

I laughed awkwardly and said no. I moved onto another film. "I watched this other thing called *Midgots*," I continued. "It's set in the uh...mid-90s...and it's directed by Jonah Hill."

"Oh nice," he said. Then, "Does *that* one have Filipinos?"

To clarify, my ex did not have yellow fever (or so he claimed). But from that exchange alone, his makeshift "Are they Filipino?" litmus test reminded me of a phase I went through during our brief four-month relationship – my 'born-again Filipino' phase. For a full year, I became impassioned by Filipino culture on social media, to such a degree that I vowed to be an influencer for Filipinos diasporas – the 'FlexMami of Filipinos'.

**"I felt more educated by fellow kapwa (peers) in the States than I did here in Western Sydney, aka the 'hot spot' for most Filipino communities."**



Most of my knowledge about Filipino culture came from Filipino-American platforms – from *One Down Media*, the Pinoy answer to BuzzFeed, to the Igorot-American run platform IKAT Voices. I listened to podcasts like *This Filipino-American Life* and *The Filipino-American Woman Project*, and religiously followed Filipino-based literary presses, such as *Marias at Sampaguitas*, and *Luya Poetry*.

I felt more educated by fellow kapwa (peers) in the States than I did here in Western Sydney, aka the 'hot spot' for most Filipino communities. Walk down Blacktown's Main Street, and you'll be greeted by the savoury scents of sinangag and longganisa. If you ever find yourself at Westfield Mount Druitt after three o'clock, you best prepare to be surrounded by groups of Tagalog-speaking teens entering the food court.



ILLUSTRATION BY KATELIN JAEGER



Despite these emblematic signs from the homeland, it was difficult to find a Filipino-Australian my age who was as passionate or knowledgeable as our American counterparts. Aware that most of my mutuals hailed from Western Sydney, I used my socials to educate Filipino-Australians about the culture, with the intent of filling the gaps of knowledge within the community. I used Instagram to channel my passions for all things Filipino. I reposted tokenised "Pinoy Pride" pics from *Kampeonco*, shared memes from the problematic *Subtle Filipino Traits*, recorded myself writing in Baybayin (the pre-Hispanicised Tagalog script), and typed photo captions in poor Taglish (Tagalog and English).

The most incriminating part of my faux-influencer phase was all the days I spent vlogging and venting on my Instagram stories – from rants about cultural appropriation and colonial mentalities, to polls and questionnaires about the Filipino diaspora. But by 2021, these passionate talks dissipated. I decided one day that I no longer wanted to be that Pinay baddie that plastered everyone's stories. Plus, I realised that I'd educated other Filipinos from a place of ego, rather than humility, which wasn't a good sign either. However, some people continued to see me as a cultural aficionado; one friend of mine even introduced me as someone who "knew *everything* about Filipino history and culture."

**"One day, I decided that I no longer wanted to be that Pinay baddie that plastered everyone's stories"**



But there is so much more to my life. I watch films by Ingmar Bergman and Robert Bresson on Criterion Channel. I read Bell Hooks, Gertrude Stein, and Zizek-inspired critiques about capitalist realism. I love listening to Esperanza Spalding and Rita Pavone. When people reduce me to “being, knowing and loving all-things Filipino,” was that all that I’ll ever be to everyone else? Am I cursed to only speak about my culture?

The frustration cannot be helped sometimes. To reduce my identity and interests in this manner is dismissing every other pocket of my life. As an artist, I’ve outgrown the diasporic metaphors about mangos, loss of mother tongues, and traditional cuisines. For once, I don’t want to be defined by this cultural singularity and be pressured to explore my Filipino identity in all my artistry. Simply put, I just want to be an artist who happened to be Filipino.

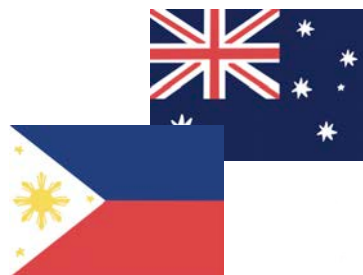
A part of this change had to do with the fact that I don’t always play into common stereotypes or habits – the real-life “subtle Filipino traits.” Due to unresolved conflicts, my family is rarely invited to outlandish Filipino parties and drunken karaoke nights. My mum is mature enough to avoid tsismis (gossip) with other titas (aunties). My parents always speak English around the house, as one spoke Tagalog and the other Bisaya. Except for my ninong (godfather), no one in our family took the time in their busy lives to send off balikbayan boxes (repatriate gifts) to distant relatives in the Philippines. And as a vegetarian, I cannot recall the last time I ate a meat-heavy Filipino dish.

In this new age of diversity in popular media, talking about cultural identity can feel more like an imperative than a choice for creatives of colour. This is especially overt when Filipinos express utmost patriotism when celebrities succeed outside the homeland; be it singer Jake Zyrus of *Glee* fame, or Canva CEO Melanie Perkins, who is only one-quarter Filipino. So why should our image and successes always hinge on our cultural identities? What if we had more to talk about beyond the freshly cooked ensaymadas and toxic Filipino traits?

Sure, there’s no easy answer to this. Taking a rest from cultural discourses doesn’t erase my Filipino-ness. However, there is solace in defining myself beyond cultural identity. If watching Andrei Tarkovsky and listening to Talking Heads is enough to break people’s expectations of me, a Filipina-Australian creative, then perhaps I’m finally doing something right.

**“To reduce my identity and interests in this manner is dismissing every other pocket of my life.”**

**“In this new age of diversity in popular media, talking about cultural identity can feel more like an imperative than a choice for creatives of colour.”**



Nicole Cadelina is a writer and artist from Blacktown (Darug), completing her final year in Bachelor of Fine Arts/Arts. She currently writes for the community-based platform The Western and admins the cinephile Facebook group, Patrician Filmposting 2049. Her favourite genre of film is R-rated SBS World Movies after 9PM.

Follow the author here:  
Instagram @ni.muy  
LetterboxD @nimuy

# HIGH ACHIEVERS REPORT STRUGGLING TO FIT IN WITH OTHER UNSW STUDENTS.

**“I’M SICK OF ACTING LIKE I’M STRUGGLING TO FIT IN. I’M ACTUALLY BETTER THAN YOU.”**

Alex & Alastair Ho

There’s one in every UNSW friend group; a high-achiever, too afraid to talk about their High Distinctions, for fear of alienating their “sub-par inferior ape-brained friends”.

Stephen Kowalah (WAM 98.89), a third-year engineering student, has had to hide his real identity as a high-achiever out of fear of being ostracized.

Fatima Khan (WAM 94.20) tells Tharunka that “I can live with the fact that I am institutionally and academically superior to my friends. The hard part is pretending like it’s not true. It’s a very real internal struggle.”

Many high-achievers, after coming out as ‘people of superior intellect’, have reported increased discrimination by way of reduced invitations to hang, reduced group chat invites, and general loss of friendships.

One high-achiever (WAM 98.89), who has asked to remain anonymous, reports “[My friends] kept telling me that I shouldn’t act like I’m better than them, and that I should pay for my own food and stop asking them to pay my rent...but I am better than them. So like... why should I stop?”.

Many high-achievers have reported finding new ways of adapting to their ejections from their social spheres. Huy Nguyen (WAM 99.10) says to Tharunka, “I just dropped Facebook and started using LinkedIn to make new friends. They’re in their late 50’s, so we share the same mental age. It’s just easier this way.”

Despite being a campus which prides itself on inclusivity, acceptance, and recognition, UNSW seems to struggle with a dismissive culture towards its high-achievers. An act of discrimination so violent it is akin to every single crime in the entire Crimes Act 1900 (NSW) literally being performed all at once.

More to come.



HD



Alex Ho is a fourth year Law/Arts student at UNSW. He is a chronically sweaty person who always worries about his health but not in a health nut kind of way, more in a doomsday prepper kind of way. As a brother, Alex is of the eldest kind and he reflects this by routinely downing 5 glasses of metamucil in one sitting like a 78 year old man who hasn’t shit right in years.



Alastair Ho is a first year Psychology/Fine Arts student. Alastair has always been an artistic soul which explains why he chose a degree that not only ensured he would have no job prospects once he graduated, but provided him with an outlet to psychoanalyse his own insecurities. When he is not painting or writing he spends his time relaxing in the shadow of his brother.



A+





# COMIC DISTRIBUTORS FORCE CHANGE IN THE INDUSTRY: WHAT IS THE NEW FUTURE OF COMICS?

By Rosabel Hibbert

Comic book sales continue to rise, but are comic book shops surviving?  
Without them, where can comic fans go to buy, talk, trade and create?

## Where did all the comic book shops go?

Recently while attempting to track down one strangely unattainable issue of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, I was slapped with the realisation that my closest comic book store had permanently closed. Not only this but, after some googling and dead-end phone calls, I became aware that many stores had closed down, including some real long-standing institutions (shoutout to Comic Kingdom) leaving me seemingly with but one avenue: eBay.

This led me to wonder if comic books were doing okay, or if they were yet another casualty of the pandemic. But comic and graphic novel sales actually went up in 2021 with an increase in sales of around 36% over 2020 and 14% over 2019 (pre-pandemic). While in-person stores may be scarce, the rise of digital avenues such as Comixology (owned by Amazon) offer readers a way to keep up to date without having to leave their house. But what does this mean for comic fans who want to build a community in person?

## How comic book shops came to be

Before 1972, comics were primarily purchased from newsstands and grocery stores who would usually return any unsold merchandise back to the publishers. The risk of a comic flopping was carried by the publishers, who regularly over-printed in order to cater to retailers.

This all changed when a man named Phil Seuling (thanks Phil) developed the idea of a direct market, where publishers could sell directly to retailers (bypassing newspaper and magazine distributors) on a non-returnable basis, often at discounted rates. This paved the way for a bunch of comic book shops to pop up in the US. For a couple of decades these shops were supplied by several regional distributors until eventually – TLDR – enough major publishers signed exclusive deals with one distributor, bankrupting regional distributors and creating a monopolistic fifty-year long chokehold on the entire comic industry. This distributor was/is called Diamond Comics (dun dun dun!!!) who for a very long time were the exclusive distributor of most mainstream comics as we would understand them today – your Marvel, your DC, your Image – as well as many smaller independent publishers. Don't remember the name though, because the mother of all disruptions eventually puts them in their place.

## COMICS-19

Cut to 2020. Rent in Sydney (commercial and residential) is already outrageously high, bookstores are struggling, comic book shops are having to order high quantities of comics from a shady distributor which may or may not sell. And then COVID.

Because of shipping delays, supply chain issues, and retailers having to close down, Diamond announced in March 2020 it would be stopping distribution for who-knows-how-long. This caused huge insecurity for creators, many of whom were told by their employers to cease work indefinitely. Having no access to new stock in Australia, presumably only the largest stores (with their enormous backlog of stock) would be able to stay afloat.

## A shift to local comics

Suddenly there was room again for other distributors to challenge Diamond. DC moved to Lunar Distribution; Marvel moved to Penguin Random House. This also opened the way for a new kind of comic book shop to evolve. Siobhan Coombes, owner of Sydney/Petersham-based Cockatoo Comics, doesn't have a Diamond account, instead order as much as they can directly from creators or small publishers.

"I'm more excited about local comics than I've ever been. Local publishers are only just starting to wake up to the money that could be in graphic novels. There are so many really great Australian creators who are working internationally and being published by international publishers. Big Australian publishers don't seem to value this work, so it falls to local publishers to do something."

Some brilliant examples of Australian cartoonists who have been picked up by major overseas and indie publishers include Lee Lai (Stone Fruit), Safdar Ahmed (Still Alive) and Simon Hanselmann (Crisis Zone).

Illustration by Katelin Jaegers



Siobhan speculates that the comics industry will be a lot more decentralised going forward. What this means is that the planning and decision-making in will be spread out a lot more between regional publishers, distributors, bookstores and creators. There will also be a much larger investment in kid's comics, with publishers such as Penguin Random House announcing graphic novel lines aimed at young readers, which will address a huge gap in the market created by the overabundance of American Superhero comics which tend to be both very conservative yet ultra-violent. Changes might also look like bookstores investing in a new or larger comic/ graphic novel section, something that has been eagerly awaited by comics fans.

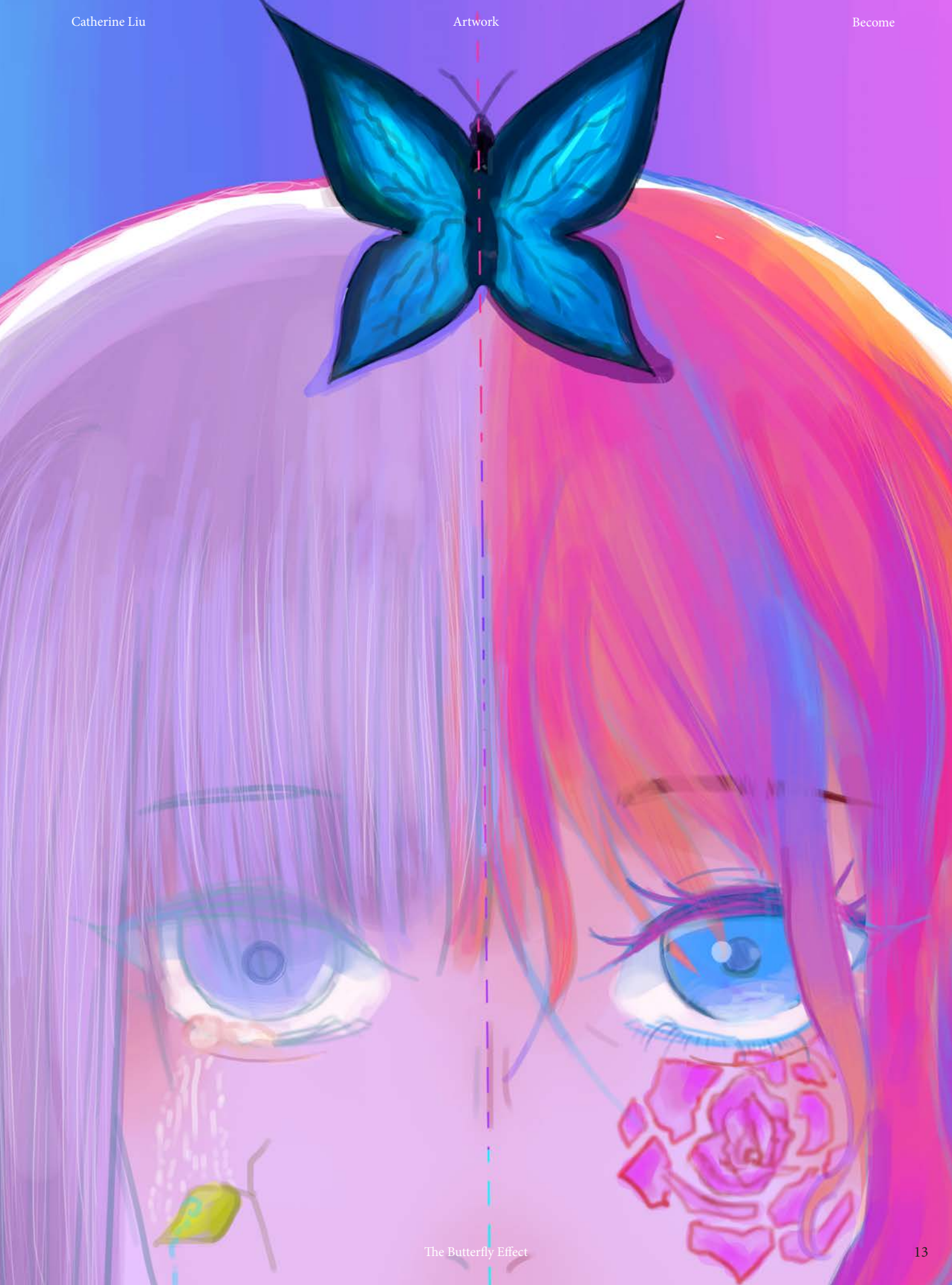
Interestingly, lots of people thought that when digital comics started out, that was it for print. But as Siobhan explains it: "they shake each other's hand," with print sales rising alongside digital. Accompanying this is the growing trend of artists gaining an online following and marketing themselves by releasing free content online. This offers them a way to break into the industry and find audiences who resonate with their work. In some sense there's never been a better time for comic creators to market themselves in ways they haven't been able to before. On the flip side, it also means that cartoonists often have to be gifted marketers as well as gifted artists.

### Comics and Physical Spaces

The future of Australian comics looks promising, but we cannot underestimate the importance of physical and interactive spaces to comic fans. Fans and fandoms rely on these places to network, trade issues, create and display art, meet their (super-)heroes and build a sense of identity and community. If the direct market comic book shop model is changing, what does this mean for fans?



Rosabel Hibbert is an awesome person who enjoys thinking, writing, existing, lounging and drinking kombucha. In her spare time she is also an Arts & Law student, majoring in Environmental Humanities.





# Open Hearts

Theatin van Leeuwen

You were taken from my arms  
Your breathing far too rapid  
For a newborn so small  
You were hooked up to tubes  
One, two, more, they multiplied  
My heart was breaking  
Because yours was broken  
Holes and constrictions  
Without surgery you would die

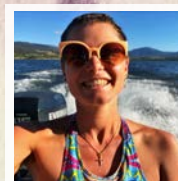
My darling baby boy  
I held you for hours  
In the days and minutes  
Before you rolled off to theatre

They pierced your lung  
Whilst I sobbed in the sun  
Been told you were bleeding  
I thought from your heart  
But your heart was still beating

I visit you and pat your head  
And hold your limp hand  
Too sedated to grasp reflex  
I could see your heart beating  
Beneath the thin sutured  
membrane  
Waiting for the swelling to subside  
Before they close you up

I can't wait, my darling  
To hold your little body  
To my naked breast  
And whisper in your ear  
I love you  
I love you  
I love you

Illustration by Jelena Xu



Theatin is a Chemical Engineering PhD student who writes poetry as emotional release in their spare time, occasionally publishing unedited poems of their WordPress site Wandering Sydney Poet as a conquest to break perfectionism.

# Jido (grandfather in Arabic)

Mariam Abbas

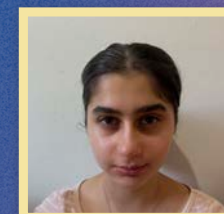
Illustration by Hana Thomson

He always feels slightly too late; out of breath at the top of the stairs, hung up on mid-goodbye, the last one to sit as the bus lurches on. It would be almost shameful to admit; it would make him less of a man and more of a name in a eulogy, to say he would appreciate some goddamned help once in a while. When his breath hitches in his chest as he stands up from the toilet, when his hands shake tipping out pill after pill, when his fingers are too brittle to turn the too-stiff lock in the too-old door, he almost considers it. It almost crosses his mind.

The sun sidles in like an old friend; it stops in front of his chest and murmurs to the old pistachio shells he's left clutched in shrivelled hands. Gnarled by an age of lassitude. The two friends smile at each other. It is an existence they recognise (served well, served for others). The curtains flutter with a nervous cough. There is no going back now. And Home has become a vague memory. The sun exists there too. The sky is left littered with a language he refuses to discard, buried under rays like bodies under the beach, the rolling tide, the wearying shoreline; slumbering, strolling towards the stirring sea. Dissipating.

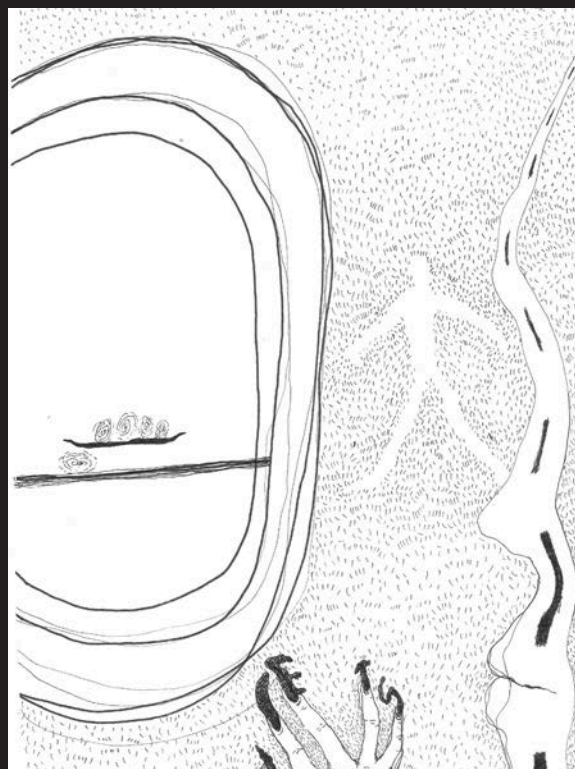
In the height of summer, he says the Lord's prayer for his chrysanthemums. The sunshine smothers him. The children's voices are piercing. His knees find it possible to hold him, all 60 kilograms; he pictures the bags of wheat stacked up to make him. His grandmother appears, laughing, tells him to continue with his brothers, out the back –

Small solaces, as all such moments are.



Mariam is a first year law and media student who spends too much time thinking and not enough time doing. She says her creative inspiration comes from the BoJack Horseman poster that watches her sleep and keeps her humble.

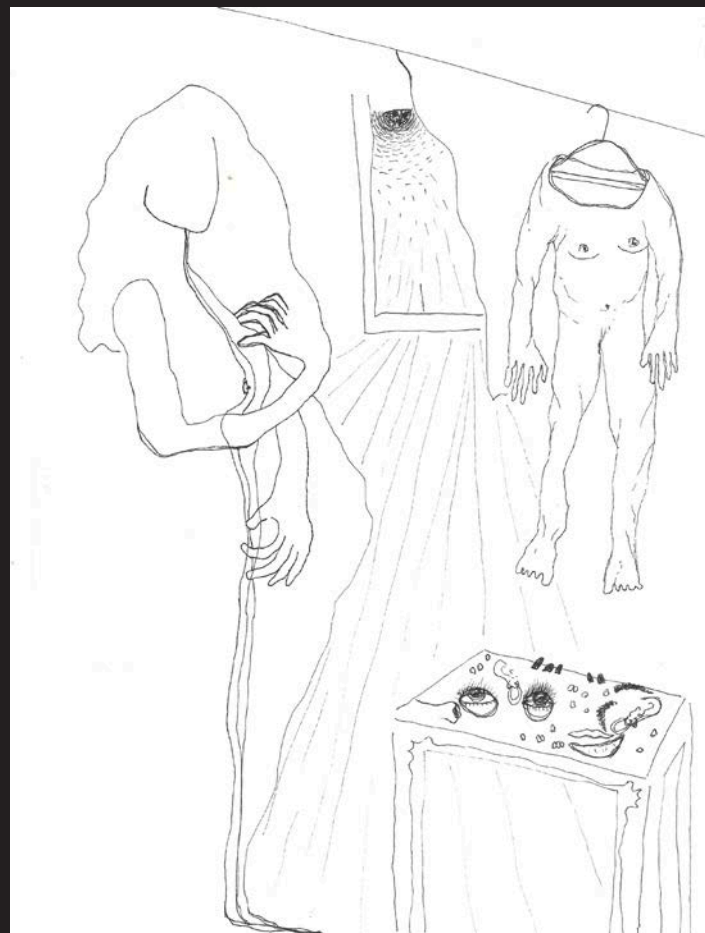




something ----- this way comes

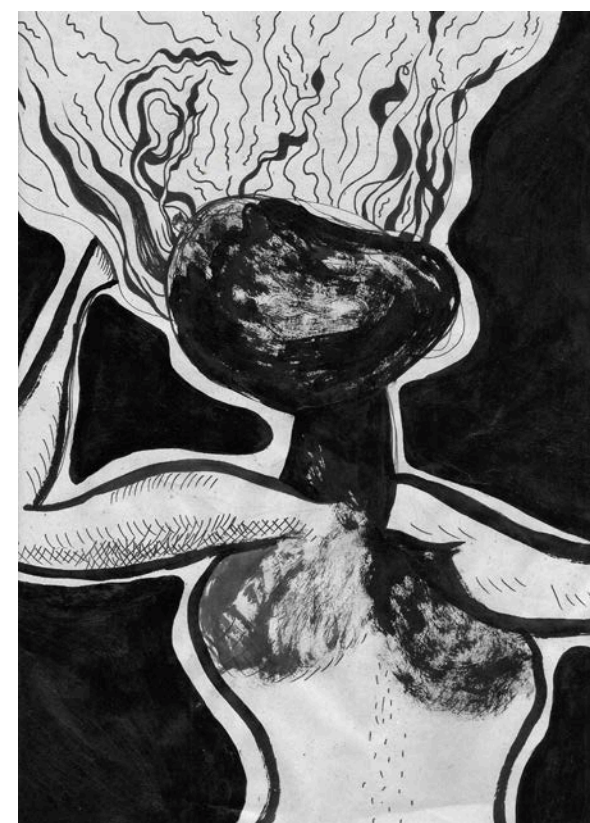
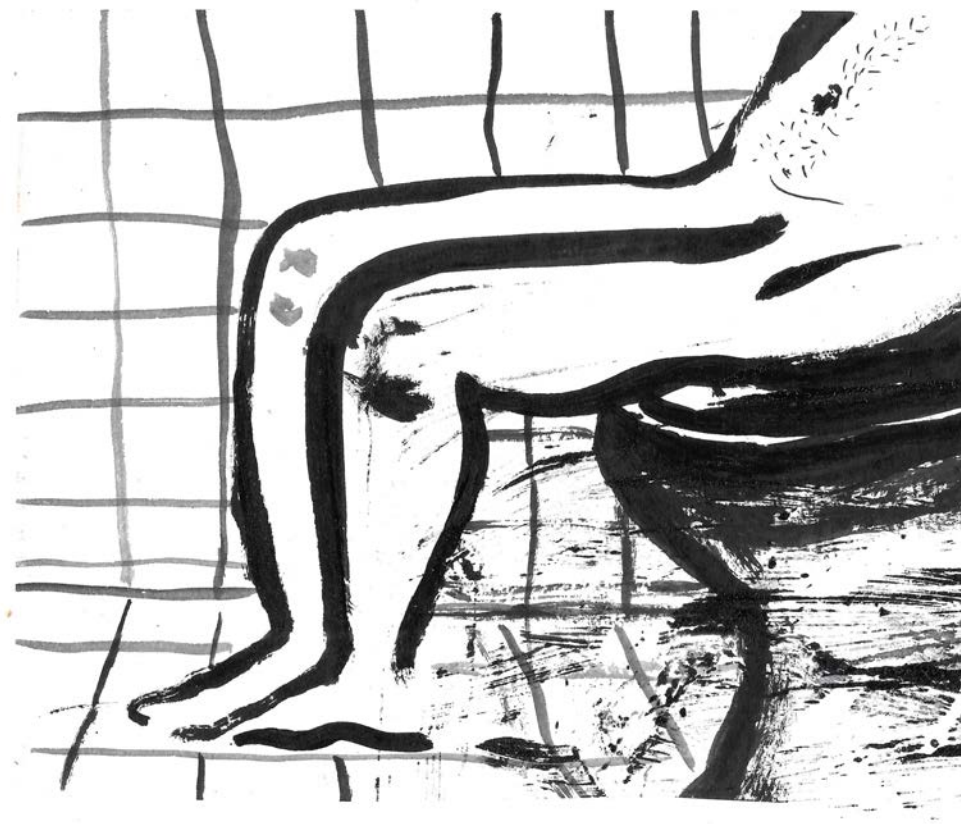


Ma I tore the basket



She bites her teeth and grinds her tongue

I only know how to  
knee jerk but I never  
know when to not



Ripe enough to bleed

Artwork by  
Aarushi Zarthoshtimanesh

@aarushizart\_1



# The story of a dead dad, gay parents and their questioning daughter

By Ainslie Toombs



Illustration by Katelin Jaegers

I was nearly three when my dad died. Unlike the rest of my family, I didn't truly feel his death until years later. I knew I had a dad and I knew he was dead, but it wasn't until I was eleven that my mind could grasp the knowledge. It wasn't until then that I could feel the grief, betrayal and rage that had been waiting, patiently, for me.

Growing up as a father-less child, I noticed how different everyone else was, how strange my friends' families were and, most puzzling, how I was the unusual one. When I went to friends' houses after school or on weekends, I'd marvel at their bathrooms. There were floral perfumes and musky colognes, anti-ageing lotions and beard oils, hers and his towels. Their homes even smelled different. Sweet sweat, slight and unobtrusive, was the indelible mark of a father-full house. But what I recall most is how big their fathers were, in physique and presence. Their deep tones resonated through hallways, laughter and fury enveloping the small worlds built inside the places each family called home.

While I was busy mourning the death of my father at the tender age of eleven, my sister, Clare, was struggling as well. To her, the scent of sweet sweat had been replaced with the gentle aroma of another woman. She struggled to reckon with our new home life, our mum's new relationship, and the isolation that now consumed her. There were no friends in whom she could confide because they had no understanding of her unspoken shame. She was mourning the death of one relationship and struggling with the birth of another, completely unlike it. Where her love for our mum's partner collided with the shame she felt about their newfound relationship, Clare created the only solution her child mind could summon: Murrie would simply be her godmother, our godmother.

**“She was mourning the death of one relationship and struggling with the birth of another”**

At school, around strangers whose questions sought answers she so fought to keep secret, this label provided sanctuary. And while I couldn't understand why at the time, I protected this safe space, creating a vessel within which she could navigate a world she saw as unprepared for what her family had become. Over a decade later, when the majority of the neighbourhood refused our parents' right to love equally, I truly understood the shame she felt as a child. I understood her impulse to protect the family, the self, that was then being carefully pieced back together.

And so, I kept her secret, wavering only once in Year 4, overwhelmed by the unbridled joy I felt one afternoon as my closest friend and I raced through the school playground, seeking shelter in a game of hide and seek. I reached for my friend's hand then, slowing our search, and as she turned and met my gaze – a sheen of sweat lit up her face, excitement in her eyes, as we counted down the seconds we had left to hide – I whispered, “Murrie's not my godmother, she's my other mum.” A beat, a smile,

and then a slightly puffed, “I wish I had two mums” as she tugged at my arm, whisking us away to our favourite hiding place and leaving me to finally realise it was okay to be seen.

**“I knew the nuances that exist within those spaces, but I couldn't help but feel apart from them.”**

I had become so used to our family's narrative, “Murrie is just my godmother”, and so blind to the limits it would place upon my own growth. As someone who knew only the love of two women, and the capacity for it to be shared regardless of one's gender, I easily dismissed those same feelings as they grew within me. I had become detached from that possibility in my later years; a burgeoning teenager mistaking the tenderness I felt for a friend as a mere consequence of exactly that - friendship. But when those feelings became known – a shared kiss, the soft intertwining of fingers as we drifted asleep – I was unprepared for what awaited me when we awoke. Dismissal, a secret to be kept, an evening whose pleasure would remain unspoken. And in a way, while this introduced me to a now familiar pain, it was okay at the time. Keeping those moments between us allowed us to exist in a school hostile to such affection, and soothed the unease I felt about living ever further outside the realm of my peers.



It would be many years before I revisited that part of me, until I gave myself the space to do so. I saw the parades and the colours of my community. People were being who they couldn't help but be and sharing what they couldn't help but share. I knew, know, that nuance exist within those spaces but still couldn't help feeling distant. . I doubted the authenticity of my desires but permission to be who I wanted was something only I could give. I had the space that I needed when I was younger – outside a conservative school, among lives whose diversity is welcomed – and still, by many others' metrics, I didn't fit.

'Trust me. You won't know for sure until you've slept with a woman' they'd say. 'I used to think I was like you too' they'd say.

**“But I’ve never traversed the soft contours of a woman’s body or let this desire be seen by the world”**

But I've never traversed the soft contours of a woman's body or let this desire be seen by the world. No hands have ever been held in the light of day. In a world where being straight is the default, it's never assumed that I'd want anything other than that which society expects. Yet I do. I've never weaved my fingers, nails cut short, through hair that could be my own, or traced those same fingers along an arm, a thigh, the small of a back that could be my own, or truly been with someone who could be me, but isn't.

In the end, I'm left with the common feeling of invisibility that's borne out of straddling two worlds and the pain of having the truth of my desires questioned. It's small comfort then, to know how normal this experience is; that being a part of my community too often comes with feeling apart from it. While I realise that such intimacy isn't an item to be ticked off of some unspoken list – a list that once completed will finally validate the feelings that I know are true, purely by their existence – I struggle.

I have been told who I am, who I will become, so often. And a small, wretched part of me does sometimes wonder if they're right. Instead of universal acceptance into a community that I'd thought would provide sanctuary, I found that the expectations that come with being a man-made-for-consumption object had been replaced. The reasons may have changed, but the effects remained the same: pressure to conform to a stereotype that wasn't me, still existing for others instead of living for myself. But I'm growing. And however wretched, that questioning part of me is small.

I continue to wonder whether this black or white thinking also comes from my childhood. Whether it comes from knowing of the love my mum had for my dad but only seeing the love she has for Murrie, I'll never be sure. Perhaps I thought of them as separate entities when really, I was simply too young see the grey expanse that lay between, and connected, them. Those shades of grey that have been passed along to me.

And now, I find myself revisiting that child who was so sure of her place in this world, letting the warmth of her memories soften the shame that once consumed me.

Ainslie is a third year Journalism student who definitely spends more time listening to podcasts and reading books than her tutors would advise. She's discovered that someone other than her Mum might actually want to read her work, and was recently published in The Sydney Morning Herald.



# 2021

Marel Parono



Illustration by Casey Yu



Marel is a Neuroscience Honours student at UNSW, studying spinal cord injuries at Neuroscience Research Australia. Some of his favourite books are Frankenstein, The Song of Achilles, and The Alchemist. In his spare time (which is a rarity) you'll find Marel outdoors, with mates or himself, listening to music, and acting like the main character.

The best person I met this year,  
Was me.

Not you,  
When you pressed your lips onto mine and  
kissed me for the first time,  
Freeing me from the chains cuffed to my  
wrists.

Not you,  
When you ran your fingers through my  
hair as I nibbled on those lips that begged  
to be kissed,  
Escaping the prison I had helped others put  
me in.

Not you,  
When your stubble grazed over mine as I  
chuckled in disbelief,  
Knowing all too well this fit perfectly like  
cogs of a clockwork machine.

Not you,  
When you removed my clothes and I  
removed yours until all that separated us  
was skin,  
Feeling where you left off being you and  
turned into me.

Not you,  
When my fingers ventured over the veins  
that traced your arms and climbed up to  
your heart,  
Connecting to you in ways I had never felt  
before.

Not you,  
When I tasted those fingers that had gone  
down to my heart and tickled it with  
emotion,  
Showing me the path of love and grief I  
appreciated months later.

But me.

Because when you helped complete the  
puzzle  
that was I,  
I invited myself in,  
And when I entered,  
I was encapsulated by all of Me,  
Finally knowing I was someone,  
I could no longer live without.



## Students express concerns over corporatisation of Mardi Gras

By Pia Lenarduzzi

UNSW's Queer Collective has echoed LGBTQIA+ activists' concerns about the increasing 'corporatisation' of Sydney's Mardi Gras Parade. For the second consecutive year, the parade has moved from its historic home along Oxford Street to the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

On the eve of Saturday's parade, Queer Collective Officer Liora Hoenig (she/they) said big business sponsorship of the event was "taking away from the essence of... Mardi Gras", which was borne out of the June, 1978 gay rights street protests that ended in violence and mass arrests.

"Hosting the Mardi Gras [Parade] on Oxford Street was a representation of how [it] started: a fight to be seen and exist in society... having it in a venue and so tied to corporations and companies take[s] that away," Liora said.

They also claim that "there's been significantly less attendance because it is a ticketed event," adding that the move is "detracting from [its] authenticity – we need the Mardi Gras to be authentic."

Liora's comments support the concerns of activists like those from the Pride in Protest collective, who claim that the involvement of big business sponsors in the event – such as TikTok, Facebook's Meta and Woolworths – is detracting from the grassroots interests of the LGBTQIA+ community.

"A Mardi Gras that isn't for the people isn't a Mardi Gras at all," writes PiP member and Mardi Gras Board Director Wei Thai-Haynes, urging readers to support a vision of the event that is more than just a "corporate party".

Doubling down on this point in a recent interview, she shared that PiP has a distinct understanding of how important the Parade is to what she terms "Mardi Gras Inc."

"They want it to be a company that runs an event, which takes corporate money, platforms the police, and then pink-washes corporates, NSW Police and the Liberal Party."

Despite the controversy, many proud LGBTQIA+ members and their allies from UNSW

**"Hosting the Mardi Gras [Parade] on Oxford Street was a representation of how [it] started: a fight to be seen and exist in society... having it in a venue and so tied to corporations and companies take[s] that away."**

will be among the 40,000 spectators and 5,800 marchers still expected to attend the 44th annual parade.

One of these attendees is Advanced Science student Katia Fenton (they/them), who will be riding on UNSW's space-inspired float in their first ever Mardi Gras Parade, and said they're excited to really absorb the "big atmosphere" of Pride celebrations.

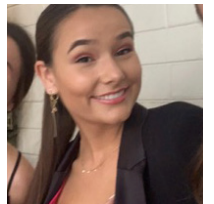
"[I]t's important for me and many others to just have a night to celebrate who we are, and have fun with it.

"Being a part of... Mardi Gras with UNSW shows our colourful history and [its] thriving Queer community."

While Katia recognises that Mardi Gras needs funding to survive, they're also concerned about its increasing 'corporatisation', and particularly dislike when corporations simply add rainbows to their logo for a few weeks without investing in the community year-round.

But for them and many other LGBTQIA+ folks, the event still overwhelming signifies freedom, inclusivity and pride.

"I was in the closet for so long, and this... is the first year I am out enough that I feel like I can go to Mardi, so I want to go all in, meet people and finally enjoy the fun of the queer community."



Pia is a second year Media and International Studies student. She is passionate about public affairs, particularly politics and the media. In addition to her reporting for Tharunka, Pia is a contributor to Western Sydney business publication and works part-time in the real estate industry.



Illustration by Katelin Jaegers



# Faux-nostalgia: a strange sort of utopianism

By Scott Huang

*Nostalgia is a weird feeling. Transient and fragile, yet powerful and easily evoked. Sometimes pleasant and warm. Sometimes painful and maudlin. Frequently bittersweet.*

This attachment to the past is present everywhere around us, hiding in dusty photo albums and old mixtapes, or waiting to be recalled from secluded corners of the mind. In a world so prone to disorder and disagreement, so conducive to cynicism and doubt, I sometimes find it comforting to reflect upon the fact that enclosed in every beating heart, irrespective of time and place, there's invariably a room reserved for these tender and sincere recollections of yesterday. For individuals, nestled in that room are childhood joys of playgrounds, ice cream trucks, and lazy summer afternoons. For communities and peoples, it's stories of discontinued traditions, cultural mythologies, and simpler ways of life. I like to think of these passionate conversations we have with memory as a timeless testament to our common humanity; an enduring reminder of the brighter and more loving sides of our nature. And if we listen closely enough, we might find that nostalgia has quite a lot to say about who and where we are, and about who and where we want to be.

The nostalgia that speaks to me the most strongly is in music; the kind that comes and goes in a matter of minutes, but with an aftertaste that lingers for many hours more. I listened to a lot of music during lockdown. Looking back now, it was probably a coping mechanism; a subconscious attempt at counteracting cabin fever and malaise. When days and weeks began blending into each other with dwindling significance, music was my buffer against emptiness and uncertainty, keeping me grounded with the apparent steadiness of the memories it contained. I went deep into the archives of '60s pop; the type that you'd imagine long-haired hippies in Nixon-era San Francisco listened to while getting stoned.

It might just be the perfect genre for staving off existential panic. Songs like Daydream (The Lovin' Spoonful), Rock and Roll Lullaby (B. J. Thomas) and Waterloo Sunset (The Kinks) reflect a rosy optimism and a starry-eyed belief in human goodness, momentarily restoring the everyday pleasures of a distant, pre-pandemic past. Not yet perverted by the nihilistic punk rock of the subsequent decade, even songs about heartbreak and separation held a sanguine quality—Rhythm of the Rain (The Cascades) and Care of Cell 44 (The Zombies), for instance, glow with the stirring yet hopeful warmth of long-faded love. Maybe, in this way, there's some merit in the Lockean idea of memory being inseparable from identity. Maybe the

**“When days and weeks began blending into each other with dwindling significance, music was my buffer against emptiness and uncertainty.”**

**“Songs like Daydream (The Lovin' Spoonful), Rock and Roll Lullaby (B. J. Thomas) and Waterloo Sunset (The Kinks) reflect a rosy optimism and a starry-eyed belief in human goodness.”**

Illustration by Kelly Quach

nostalgic mind grasps at the past to keep from sinking into the senseless and absurd, to find a reference point by which direction and purpose can be ascertained.

But the thing with nostalgia is that, arguably more than any other emotion, it can present itself to us in strange and very potent forms. By nature, it comes exclusively in waves, and submitting to its influence comes with the risk of being overrun by longing, of being left see-sawing precariously on the edge of euphoria and sadness.

The song that did it for me was America, by Simon & Garfunkel. In retrospect, it wasn't the most appropriate choice of music given the circumstances—if you want to better handle a lengthy lockdown, it's best to stay away from albums devoted to the themes of disillusionment and alienation.

This bittersweet folk hit paints a profoundly touching, cinematic portrait of a search for meaning in which things as trivial as a pack of cigarettes are imbued with sentimental significance. The song tells the story of two travelling lovers who set out to 'look for America', both as a place and as an elusive ideal. In the span of three and a half minutes, the plangent colours of Simon's guitar take the listener on an intense emotional journey; from the youthful hope and possibility of intercity bus rides to the angst and ennui of aimless soul searching. America moved me in a way I'd never experienced before. As the final verse came to an end, I began to feel a desperate sense of nostalgia for something I've never had, for someplace I've never been, and an acute desire to fill a void that I didn't realise existed. Memory-like sequences drifted in and out of my heart. "Strange faces on a dingy Greyhound. A lonely moon creeping over a lonely land. Cars and souls stumbled through highways and byways; they've all come to look for America." It was as if I had taken the narrator's place, 'empty and aching' without knowing why, engaged in a Gatsby-esque pursuit of a distant dream. Somehow, America had left me aching for a time that never was. It had touched me with a melancholy that was so impersonally personal, like memories from a past life seeping into the present.

**“I began to feel a desperate sense of nostalgia for something I've never had, for someplace I've never been,”**

After some research/redditing, I came to realise that mine wasn't a unique experience; there are entire Spotify playlists dedicated to “faux-nostalgia” and “false memories”. But in my attempts to better understand this phenomenon, and to better understand myself, I found these expressions to be unhelpful and quite misleading. The concept of false memories makes an incorrect assumption: that all other memory is unconditionally true. On the contrary, the very act of

**“So, on rainy days and lonely nights, our tired hearts tap into our discontent to create a sort of restorative utopia.”**

remembering often meddles with the past, running it through a filter until it takes on an illusory form. What we see as recollection is a contrived product of the sentiments and desires of our present selves, closer to historical fiction than to history. So, on rainy days and lonely nights, our tired hearts tap into our discontent to create a sort of restorative utopia, an Edenic vision of where and who we want to be. My over-sentimental response to Paul Simon was an extreme example of this. Amidst the monotony of prolonged isolation, the song had triggered in me a latent desire for something more; uncovering the absence of meaning, passion and truth that had been silently weighing me down. I desperately wanted to search for an America of my own, to follow Simon's lovers on their journey back to an apocryphal paradise.

Perhaps you see faux nostalgia as a doomed attempt to restore a blissful moment that never happened in the first place, or to bring back an idealised era whose blemishes have been forgotten with time. Perhaps you're right. But I also wonder if there's a difference between naively searching for a fictitious past and bravely holding onto an unwearied belief. I wonder if our memories, in spite of their tendency to fabricate and deceive, might still carry with them an enduring form of identity and aspiration. Sometimes, I wonder if it matters at all whether Paul Simon's America exists in reality or imagination; if what it really represents is a tireless hope for what we, and the world around us, could one day become.



Scott is a second year Arts/ Law student majoring in Philosophy. In his spare time, he likes to play guitar and listen to music (especially 60s pop and anything by John Mayer or Paul Simon). He also enjoys reading and playing basketball. He used to want to be an NBA player, but then stopped growing after year 10 :/

Follow the author here:

Facebook @Scott Huang  
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# *Sleepless in Sydney...*

Written by Isabella Lee  
Photography and design by Yanti Peng



Amidst the chaos in the world at the moment, safe and all-inclusive spaces have become more important than ever. They give individuals the opportunity to be the people they want to be and realise themselves in an environment that pushes them to express any and every facet of themselves.

We feature and document a night at Honcho Disko: Express yourself Mardi Gras, a monthly fierce queer event.

“The societal rules don’t exist onstage”, says Chloe, Stage Manager for the event.

“My stage name is very similar to who I am in real life. I go by Chloe, who is a cosmopolitan socialite - basically who I am right now but I extend that to a stage setting as well”.

“The idea of a socialite or a groupie but taken further where it has its own character rather than just being a person, it’s more than a person”.

Honcho Disko carves out definitive spaces for LGBTQIA+ communities and celebrates the diversity present in our society today.

John Stout/Pants, Director of the event, had this to say about the importance of Mardi Gras celebrations like these: “On the Monday to Friday we live in a very heteronormative world, so these spaces are where we can be free and discover who you are”.

“It opens up many doors for queer people to see people they may not have seen, explore who they are and connect with other like-minded people”.

We welcome you into the world of the weird and wonderful.







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# Too Busy Earning

by George Raptis

*How an Uber Eats ad convinced me to monetise my unpaid time.*

It starts with you on the couch and it ends with you pedalling towards an apartment block, delivering someone else's Big Mac meal on someone else's time. You were once lazy, dissatisfied, with eyes glazed-over from boredom. Now, you are beaming as you hand over a brown paper bag to its faceless recipient. There is a notable skip in your step when you walk to the steady thrum of a tune whose refrain, "too busy earning", plays out over a glorious day of work. And that you are: you are no longer your unhappy, unproductive self - but a calculatable unit whose every moment is tracked and monetised by a food delivery app. It is equally exhilarating as it is terrifying.

What's even more terrifying is that Uber Eats decided to release a string of advertisements to this effect. In the late summer of 2021, Uber Eats aired multiple ads involving a range of twenty-something year olds who, by some unknown force, are pulled out of their aimless ruts and compelled to use their spare time making money with Uber. Yet the ad appears to work hard to suppress a harsh reality. It offered the middle-to-working-class the potential to obtain happiness and utility by delivering with Uber, where, in reality, this labour exchange is built on precarious workers' rights and no guarantees of minimum pay.

Uber Eats drivers are independent contractors and therefore do not enjoy the same protections that many employees are entitled to under Federal workplace law. Whilst these protections are considered by many to be far from perfect, they do include maximum hours of work, paid annual and long-service leave, allowances and loading entitlements. Although independent contractors should be able to negotiate their own work conditions in theory, this is not the case for all Uber drivers who must sign standardised contracts for service. This distinct lack of workplace protection was made all the more clear in April 2020 when Burak Dogan was killed in a fatal collision moments after he fulfilled an Uber Eats order request. Despite being logged into the Uber app at the time of his death, Uber Eats did not recognise his death - and the deaths of a number of other drivers - as a workplace fatality.

A survey undertaken by the Transport Workers' Union and Rideshare Drivers Network in 2020 also revealed that the average wage for drivers was \$12.35 an hour. While I have spoken to drivers who claimed to make more during peak conditions, the survey revealed that 56% of drivers struggled to pay bills and afford groceries, and that 41% experienced racial discrimination on the job. Although the survey focused on rideshare drivers, you only need to quickly scan the Uber Eats' reviews page to glean the daily realities that "clueless delivery drivers" (as an entitled reviewer put it) are faced with.

**"A survey undertaken... revealed the average wage for drivers was \$12.35 an hour."**

**"In reality, this labour exchange is built on precarious workers' rights and no guarantees of minimum pay."**

**"In Australia, the average wealth of the top 20% is 90 times that of the lowest 20%."**

On top of suppressing the realities of working for Uber, the advertisement went further to suggest that our unpaid time was unproductive time. The ad fabricated the idea that if we filled up- and levelled-off the gaps in our time with paid work, we would be happier. Uber seems to suggest that we can curtail boredom, and perhaps even transcend class, by monetising our spare time. But working for Uber will simply not redistribute wealth, nor would it alter the fact that, in Australia, the average wealth of the top 20% is 90 times that of the lowest 20%. If anything, working for Uber would only deepen the schism between classes, allowing Uber's executives to grow richer one delivery after another. To this end, the ad was nothing more than a fiction: an attempt to convince us that our leisure time is only productive when it generates profit.

But Uber was not the first billion-dollar corporation to obscure the reality of an unequal labour exchange. In 2015, Amazon Flex took a similar approach when marketing its delivery services, claiming drivers would "smile for miles, backed by Amazon." The beaming faces of workers in blue Amazon uniform, along with the assertion that we should "make the most of [our] time", completely overlooks the high rates of injury and low remuneration experienced by Amazon workers. As one Amazon worker told the Guardian, he "...would rather go back to a state correctional facility and work for 18 cents an hour than [work for Amazon]."

What differentiated Uber's campaign from Amazon's was that Uber's nation-wide call-out for new drivers seemed targeted. Since Uber released the advertisements in the throes of a pandemic summer, it seemed that the company deliberately capitalised on our feelings of "non-utility" in a time when there was not much to be done. But in a world where 'getting your f\*\*\*\*\* ass up and working' is a casual solution to the structural problem of economic inequality, I suggest we safeguard our unpaid time with zeal. Whether we choose to spend our time reading books or listening to music, creating art or spending time with others, our downtime gives us the opportunity to engage with others in ways that are meaningful and untainted by capital. Here I am reminded that leisure has not always been considered 'unproductive' throughout history. As Eula Biss wrote in *Having and Being Had*:

***'Leisure in ancient Greece was the opposite of being busy but it wasn't rest or play. It was time spent on reflective thought and wonder. To be at leisure, to live a life of study and contemplation, was to enjoy true freedom.'***

As Biss goes on to write, however, this freedom was reserved for privileged men whose leisure depended on the work of women and slaves. Nowadays, unpaid time has become an expensive luxury that I and many others cannot afford; it is a display of status for the class who simply does not have to work.

So, I could very well sit aimlessly on a couch and read a book, ignoring Uber's call for me to work, but I cannot escape the distant thrum of that tune buzzing in my ear. I cannot hide from the unknowable force that compels me to become more 'useful.' Because I can hear it now, even as I write this in my own unpaid time. The faint noise that grows louder, beckoning me 'to earn to earn to earn...'



George is a fifth year Arts/Law student majoring in English Literary Studies. He writes because he tends to forget things and because he was never good at playing sport.









# Something's gotta give

by Theatin van Leeuwen

As I sit on the open platform  
The grey sky stretching  
Into the harbour  
I feel flecks of water  
Land beneath my eyes  
The weather matches my mood  
Clouds that threaten to spill  
But won't. They're up too high.  
It's what we want to do  
Dump water. Dump emotions  
Circumstances prevent us  
Keep the bushfires burning  
Keep my cheeks high and dry  
By the time I get home  
I'll be spent  
The feeling will have passed  
The release that never comes  
The release I need  
Yearn for  
Left with that uncomfortable  
Feeling.

It'll return.  
At some other inconvenient time  
But now  
I'll wait for you instead  
occupied in preparations  
Cleaning  
Fuck calm, at least that'll  
Be frenzied  
In time for your arrival  
And when you're here  
Hope that your kisses  
Will penetrate internal mess  
And flip my emotions into  
Sexual desire  
And we'll make love  
Till you come  
Pleased that one of us is content  
And in the words of Labrinth  
"When the going gets tough  
Gotta give a little more"

Illustration by Jelena Xu



Theatin is a Chemical Engineering PhD student who writes poetry as emotional release in their spare time, occasionally publishing unedited poems of their WordPress site Wandering Sydney Poet as a conquest to break perfectionism.



# POP CULTURE'S POTENTIAL: TEACHING SKILLS AND ENGAGING STUDENTS

By Kate Mesaglio

\*TW: MENTIONS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND TRAUMA

*In conversation with Dr. Will Clapton and PhD candidate Maureen MacGinley, I explore how pop culture can be a useful tool for teaching professionals and students about valuable practice skills.*

The influence of television shows in inspiring young people to enter some professions is relatively well-known, according to sociologists. When asking young professionals or students what drove them to pursue their discipline, it is not uncommon to hear *Suits* or *Grey's Anatomy* among their answers. Although these exaggerated depictions can influence aspiring lawyers and doctors, they aren't necessarily great at teaching practical skills. You can't really learn the nuances of contract law from *Suits*, and I would highly doubt any budding doctors learned how to perform an appendectomy by watching *Grey's Anatomy*. However, despite these dramatized portrayals of professionals, pop culture can be quite useful in engaging students with relevant content.

UNSW academic Dr. Will Clapton's article *Pedagogy and Pop Culture: Pop Culture as Teaching Tool and Assessment Practice* illustrates the relevance of pop culture to international relations studies specifically. He explained to us that, in general, pop culture is a useful tool that can "enhance active student engagement in the learning space." This, he told us, would "help students to understand complex theories, concepts, and subjects in ways that cannot be achieved by academic texts."

I spoke to social work lecturer and PhD candidate Maureen MacGinley who has a long career in social work counselling, therapy, and trauma-informed care. As an educator, Maureen has been using

pop culture as an educational and training tool for the last 20 years. Maureen says that pop culture encourages audiences to engage meaningfully with the characters. She adds that the construction of knowledge and healing is deeply connected to the creation of meaningful relationships with others. This interesting connection highlights the potential of pop culture in helping people and professionals better understand themselves and others, even if those relationships are simulated within a scene of a TV show.

**"Shows can be used to expose us to accessible and relatable characters and contexts where we can see these skills articulated in context".**

"Shows can be used to expose us to accessible and relatable characters and contexts where we can see these skills articulated in context". Therefore, she reasoned, learning and developing skills are much more complex than they appear because they are relational and contextual.

I have found film and TV depictions of professionals to be highly useful in depicting some of the critical skills needed in the field of social work – such as developing rapport, active listening, non-judgement, acknowledging feelings and experiences, empowering clients, and sitting with silences. This applies to all professions who have a therapeutic relationship with their clients.

A particularly strong example comes from the hit series *Sex Education*, which follows the complicated lives of a group of high school students navigating friendship, heartbreak, and intimacy. In the show, Dr Jean Millburn, a sex therapist provides sex therapy along with counselling for teenagers in a range of areas. In a particularly powerful scene, Jean counsels Aimee, a young student who has been sexually assaulted. Jean validates and empathises with Aimee's feelings and helps her understand that she is not to be blamed for her assault.

**"Jean validates and empathises with Aimee's feelings and helps her understand that she is not to be blamed for her assault."**

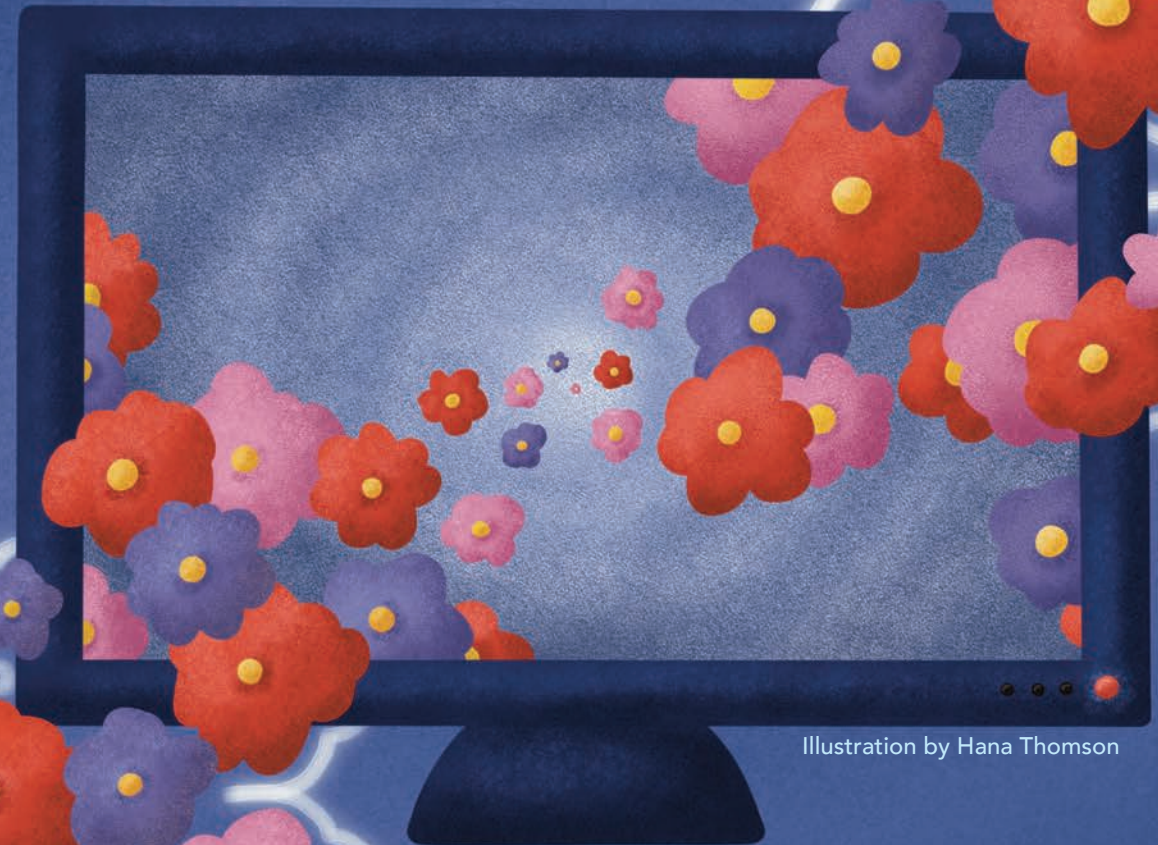


Illustration by Hana Thomson

Another great example can be found in the show *Unbelievable*, which is based on a true story. It follows two converging story lines – one focusing on two female police detectives on the hunt for a serial rapist, and the other following the experiences of Marie. Marie is a victim and survivor of the rapist in question, who is discredited, betrayed, and traumatised by the system that is meant to protect her. In one highly compelling scene between Marie and her court-mandated counsellor, Marie is an uncooperative and involuntary client; however, Dara, her counsellor, allows Marie to remain silent and doesn't attempt to pressure her to engage, allowing Marie to choose how she engages and what she discloses. To connect with Marie, Dara acknowledges Marie's history of abuse and betrayal by various systems in a validating and non-stigmatising manner. Similar to *Sex Education*, the scene exemplifies valuable skills and ideals that demonstrate effective practice.



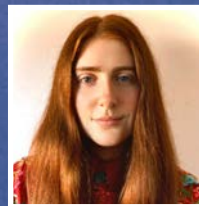


Illustration by Katelin Jaegers

Despite the strengths and potential of pop culture as an educational tool, its limitations should be acknowledged considering TV shows can sometimes get it wrong. There are probably too many shows and movies that feature therapists, social workers and counsellors that can only be described as snobbish, judgemental, patronising and/or ethically dubious. It's important to create boundaries between the scenes being used to teach with, and the episodes or series, which might be problematic as a whole. Another limitation that should be acknowledged is that not all students can meaningfully engage in learning through pop culture. Some students are more practical learners, and their individual needs should be taken seriously.

**“Many shows feature scenes that demonstrate best practice and excel at enhancing the therapeutic skills and emotional intelligence of viewers.”**

Using pop culture in a controlled environment – where an educator and/or professional can offer checks and balances – is an effective and valuable educational tool that can be used in conjunction with academic material. Many shows feature scenes that demonstrate best practice and excel at enhancing the therapeutic skills and emotional intelligence of viewers. Education is evolving, and it's important to acknowledge and capitalise on useful resources when they present themselves, so that learning can be effective, accessible and fun.



Kate is a fifth year Social Work/Arts student, majoring in Politics and International Relations. Kate particularly loves sci-fi and fantasy but enjoys any piece of pop culture with well written, relatable characters. She is especially passionate about topics including gender equality, Indigenous rights, LGBTQ+ rights, climate justice, and government accountability.

## Wen Yu Yang

# I Channel Homesickness Into Telling You That The Sun Here Is a Stranger

& you ask how come & I say back home the sun is the heat is the sweating air that becomes my skin  
or my skin is the sweating air is the heat that becomes the sun but here the sun is fake 'cause it's too close but

without the heat just those UV rays razoring to my bones like phantom acupuncture needles in all the wrong places as I wait for the 392 buses that my phone promises would come but they never come like my 932 buses would &

sunscreen sizzles towards the foreign heavens as the air on my tongue dries the way flies dry up when they fly too far from rot & ooze &

somehow find themselves on the bottom of IKEA packages crushed under limbs of quasi-furniture & smashed between empty pizza boxes long gone cold & did they used to

dream & dream did they used to of frosted ginger syrup & shaved mango ice & the sweet stench of stinky tofu & unattended soy sausages & seasoned tempura over the spitting barbeque coals smoking our eyes while the adults are busy laughing tears at our broken Taiwanese-Hokkien & we're giggling at bad karaoke singing ballooned by exaggerated reverbs & echoes & cheerful outdated beats upstaging a nearby stream rushing by &

everything melts & swims in the moist & heat & sun &

everyone melts & swims in the moist & heat & sun &

here I dry & fizzle out &

causal wisps of crisp wind usher me along while the sun watches &

you're still saying we share the same sun but do we really

because back then they believed the sun dies on one riverbank &

is reborn on the other until eventually the sun dies again &

their children quit believing in reincarnation so

the sun that rises is now alien &

the other is dead

& so yes,

the sun here is

a stranger.

Illustration by Kelly Quach



Wen Yu Yang hails from the subtropical island of Taiwan. She writes dreams, fantasies, families, and is currently trying her hand at poetry. When she's not coordinating the UNSweetened Literary Journal 2022, you can find her either playing volleyball, listening to her chaotic playlist, or trying to convince people she's a second-year studying BA Commerce at UNSW (because she is).



# Chasing Happiness

by *Gina Syromahos*

It was another Monday. I was on the train home from uni at 6.30pm, peak hour. I closed my eyes, dozing off for my ritualistic train-nap. As the train prepared to stop at Burwood, a middle-aged woman in a neat black suit sitting on the other side of the carriage slapped her book closed, waking me up. She stood up, making her way towards the exit of the carriage. As she shuffled past me, a phrase from the bright blue title of her book caught my eye. The only words I managed to capture were "FINDING HAPPINESS THROUGH GRATITUDE".

When I was young, I remember always being told to "just be happy" or, better yet, "put a smile on your dial". My parents, grandparents, uncles, teachers—everyone—said these things to me. At home, we even had this plaque-mounted animatronic fish that would sing Bobby McFerrin's 80s classic, "Don't Worry, Be Happy", whenever anyone touched it. Of course, my brother couldn't keep his hands off the thing. I just recall feeling like I was always being bombarded by the reminder to be happy.

This experience isn't unique to me. Every one of us, including yourself, is constantly being reminded to be happy. Log onto your Instagram account, and a motivational quote is bound to pop up on your screen. "Feel-good" music continually buzzes in the background of every clothing store. Big fat smiles are splashed on the cover of every magazine. It never stops. Our culture is absolutely obsessed with happiness.

**"Our culture is absolutely obsessed with happiness."**

Happiness feels nice. Happiness has many health benefits. But it has been observed by researchers that problems arise when we obsess over

happiness. According to a paper published in *Emotion*, it was found that when people overvalue happiness, they're more likely to ruminate over their failure and stress when any "negative" emotions arise.

So I'd say we should probably stop obsessing over being happy because ironically, it's making us unhappy. But how do we do it? This is where John Keats might help. Keats is an English Romantic poet who wrote during the nineteenth century. I stumbled across a poem of his called "Ode on Melancholy" when I was sixteen. The poem changed my vexed relationship with happiness, and my view of life more generally, forever.

Illustration by Hana Thomson



Keats' poem essentially encourages us to embrace melancholy. This is for two reasons. The first is because melancholy is fundamental to the experience of joy. That's to say that we should appreciate melancholy because without it, we wouldn't be able to experience joy to its full intensity. This idea is similar to those sayings you've probably heard about how you can't have light without darkness. One lesson we can take from Keats is that we should appreciate "negative" emotions because we need them to be able to experience "positive" emotions like happiness.

**"We should appreciate melancholy because without it, we wouldn't be able to experience joy to its full intensity."**

The second reason why we should embrace melancholy is because it's beautiful in its own right. What do I mean by this? Keats' poem pretty much connects beauty with death: "She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die". Keats implies that things are beautiful because they don't last. This all makes sense: if you knew you'd live forever, the things that excite you in life would probably lose their meaning because you know you'd always have access to them. So Keats' second

lesson is that melancholy should be appreciated because it's temporary (and that's what makes it meaningful).

It's not just the emotion of melancholy that doesn't last, but everything. All of our emotions change. One minute we love something, the next minute we hate it. We can feel happy for one moment and sad for the next. Maybe this is why we're always chasing happiness.

Our thoughts also change every second. So does our physical appearance. Everything in life is changing. The problem with making it our goal to "find happiness", then, is that we're seeking to feel one emotion permanently in a world where everything is impermanent. This is precisely why psychologist Michel Hansenne argues that the pursuit of happiness is "counterproductive".

It seems we need to alter our goals. We need to do this not because it's impossible to be happy, but because it's unrealistic to think that we can remain in some perpetual state of happiness. As psychologist Brock Bastian explains, "We have evolved to experience a complex array of emotional states, and about half of these are unpleasant. This is not to say that they are less valuable, or that having them detracts from our quality of life." The goal in life should be to embrace change, then. It should be to simply be, and to find the beauty in being.

**"The problem with making it our goal to 'find happiness', then, is that we're seeking to feel one emotion permanently in a world where everything is so impermanent."**

Gina is a fifth year Arts/ Law student who enjoys loafing about on her grandparents' farm and exploring the world with her mum.





# eleven o'clock depression shot

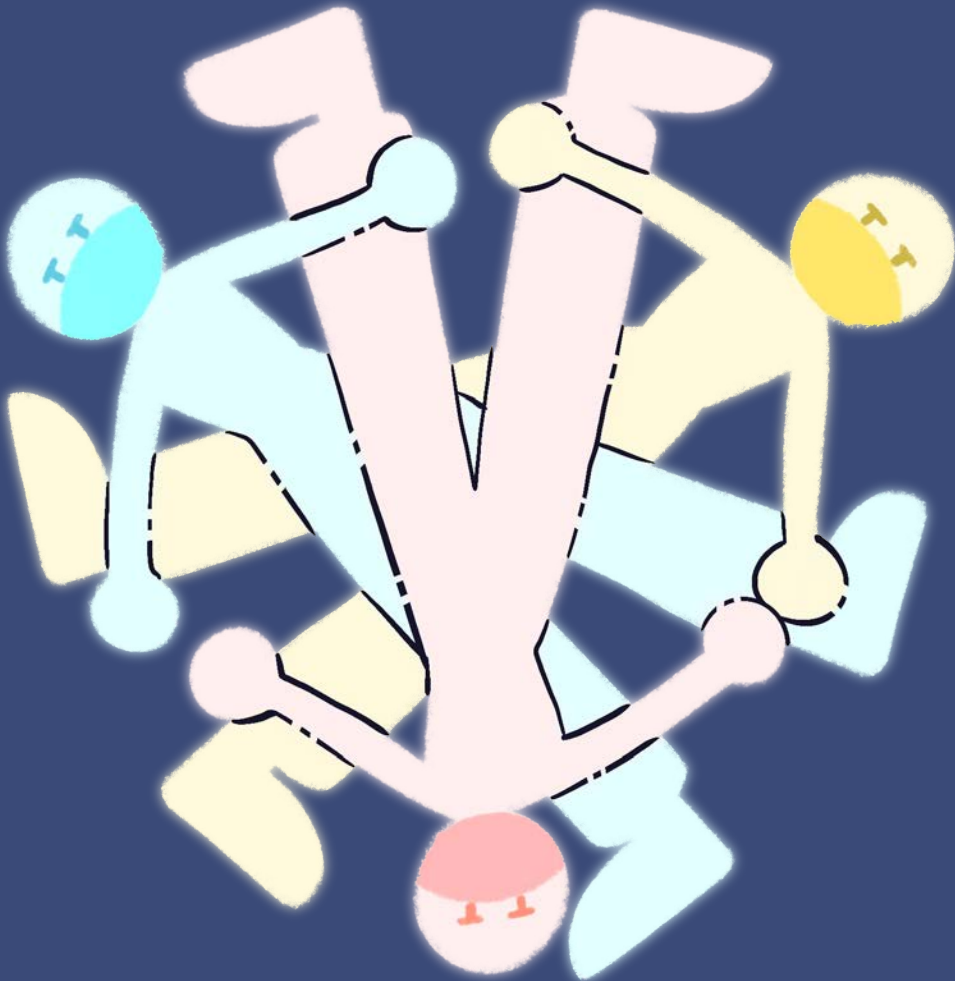
CONOR CARROLL

limousine driver in a fancy  
mercedes-benz has shutdown  
the entire city, how careless,  
how thoughtless, how utterly human,  
let's lock him up, let's hang him  
in the gallows of public outrage.

mask our fear by preaching  
magical contact tracers,  
police suburb to suburb  
handing out fines like a parking hellscape,  
don't worry  
we have got this under control.

but remember the gloom of dates  
disappearing like dreams left  
in the wake of an empty cruise ship?  
remember the lost year that ended  
thirty-first december, midnight,  
harbour bridge, forlorn fireworks?

season two of press conferences



Illustrations by Katelin Jaegers

on coughing and sneezing,  
masks sliding down faces,  
puppet master losing control,  
can science take the stage?  
no matinee on climate change.

the most reliable health information  
is emerging from the black hole  
of tiktok, he calls himself  
‘THE PEOPLE’S PREMIER’

because  
fairfield                      gladys  
of                                      doesn't  
diameter                      know  
the

two days, two weeks,  
two months, for once  
time and targets descend  
into meaningless speculation:  
will this purgatory ever end?  
well, that depends ...

trudge downstairs,  
prisoner on day release from zoom,  
how many, how many today?  
the economics of dying,  
nightclubs, nursing homes,

one last drink for the road.

thinking about farmers  
and open spaces,  
weekends at jervis bay,  
somewhere other than  
the suffocating streets  
of greater lesser sydney.

the neighbourhood spy  
agency watches each step  
beyond  
the  
front  
door

reality tv was never meant  
to hit this close to home,  
I much prefer survivor  
to survival, can't handle  
the eleven o'clock depression shot  
erupting in my throat.

first person singular  
creeps onto the page.  
no more  
‘we’ ‘us’ ‘australia’  
my land is girt



by the fence and  
the driveway,  
borders much more  
tangible than the  
lines of a poem

ruined by the indiscipline  
of a wandering mind  
subject to house arrest,  
but who can write  
after ...

after ...  
stop.  
breathe.  
turn off the tv.  
find another screen.

my instagram feed is dominated  
by ex-schoolmates combing  
every sentence of the public  
health order, shame they never  
applied this fevered intensity

to group projects or purcell's  
fifth period english class

or anything they could  
ever influence, yet I cannot  
stop listening to their voices

reverberate in the hollows  
of my brain, eventually I  
swipe them into silence,  
unfollow them into irrelevance  
block them into oblivion ...

and look at my watch  
edging  
towards  
eleven  
o'clock.



Conor Carroll is a second year  
Commerce / Arts student.  
In his spare time he obsesses  
over football, books and politics.  
Sometimes he writes poems.

Follow the author here:  
Instagram: @conorcarroll4





# Feminist: To be or not to be?

Angelene Concepcion

*Feminism is about empowering women and creating a fairer, more just society for all. Of course, it's more complex than that, with many brands of feminism now including trans, non-binary, and otherwise gender fluid folks, and prioritising Black and Indigenous voices. But across social media, this complexity is being boiled down to millennial pink infographics and identifying as a feminist has become a trendy way to gain popularity in an increasingly crowded online world.*



Illustration by Jelena Xu

## #Not All Women

Those who have led the fight to tear down the foundations of our male-dominated world have historically been cisgender women – women whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. But while misogyny affects all women, the view that women are inherently feminist is wrong.

When I stumbled across Jubilee Media's video Do All Feminists Think the Same?, I was confronted by the truth of this. Many of the women in the experiment expressed outdated opinions, such as womanhood only being ascribed to those who are able to bear children or have a period. One even claimed outright that trans women "will never be real women." However, more people are now aware that gender and sex are separate entities, so are the women making these claims ignorant or just being outright cruel?

Sayings such as "women supporting women" are attempts to build solidarity, but these attempts are particularly transparent when the women touting them are already powerful female celebrities. The code of conduct that calls for such unconditional support not only encourages a sheep-like mentality, but is often not applied to women of colour, trans women, or non-binary people. Those most in need of support are the ones constantly denied it.

So, including people such as Kim Kardashian and Amy Coney Barrett in DoAllFeministsThinktheSame? borders on the ironic – their actions and opinions consistently undermine the efforts of grassroot feminists. From Kim Kardashian's repeat offences of cultural appropriation to Amy Coney Barrett's homophobic and anti-abortion views, their status and privilege lend them the power to maintain the status quo, not disrupt it.

## THE WORLD IS A STAGE

These days, everyone has a hot take on each day's trending social issue, and the impulse to repost the first relevant infographic you see is an almost knee-jerk response. While there is no harm in raising awareness in an accessible way, there's a fine line between being genuine and being performative. And as social media has made it easy to adopt an activist position without the need to – ironically – act, these platforms have become stages upon which people can simply perform.

The old adage "easier said than done" perfectly captures the essence of this performative activism. Social media has made fighting inequality nothing more than a thread of likes and quick hits, where onlookers can assume a 'hero' role by diligently reading a trending infographic. But it's not enough to put on a show if you are only playing a part for the round of applause.

This issue is a symptom of social media's popularisation of feminism, and while good causes need support, this behaviour often only leads to bandwagoning. It creates a vicious cycle of falsehoods, where the lines between fighting for the cause and getting a few likes blur.

## LET'S GET INTERSECTIONAL

Intersectional feminism is an effort to fill the gaps that white feminism has created. While less palatable to those who believe their struggles against the patriarchy are the only valid approach, intersectional feminism presents a challenge, focusing on those who have been left behind. Many of the issues faced by trans women, Black women, queer women, and disabled women have taken a back seat. But with greater access to social media, you'd think that marginalised voices would be louder than in the past, that their struggles would finally be seen en masse. In theory, anyone can create a profile and build a following, but the emerging phenomenon of shadowbanning exposes this as a façade.

Shadowbanning primarily affects marginalised voices whose feminism challenges the ideals of the white men and women who have designed social media platforms. Their content is slowly muted in subtle ways, such as their usernames not coming up in search. But white feminists peddling watered-down 'empowerment' quotes and parading their 'socially acceptable' bodies? No problem. It's unsurprising then, why white feminism has flourished on sites such as Instagram.

## WHY SO WHITE?

White feminism, as the name suggests, is feminism that centres the concerns of cis, straight, middle-class women. While feminism is multifaceted, white feminism is commonly marked by pink hats and "pussy power". These signifiers have been latched onto by mainstream media because they're easy to digest, but they come with a cost. They reinforce ideas that hurt trans people, people of colour, and other marginalised groups; in their world, womanhood is based solely on biology and stereotypical displays of femininity.

This creates a narrow, tunnel-vision focus on sexism, rather than the overall inequality that comes with not being a man. But sexism is just the tip of the iceberg. Often forgotten is the work of many Black trans women, such as Marsha P. Johnson, who fought for the rights of LGBTQ+ peoples in leading the Stonewall riots. While the competition of who carries the heaviest burden bears no winner, it's downright wrong for the white women who benefit from mainstream feminism to turn a blind eye to issues that don't affect them.

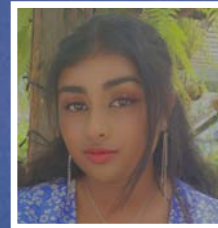


Angelene Concepcion is a second-year Law and Criminology student. She has a deep passion for all things 'coming-of-age' as well as getting to the bottom and addressing social issues present in our society.



# Meet the Contributors!

## Sub-Editors



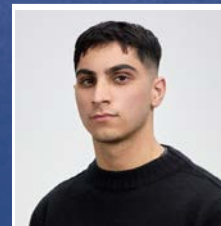
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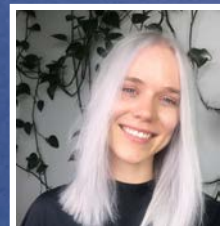
Abhranil Hazra



Sashka Wickramasinghe



Andy Sambar



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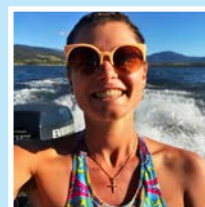
## Writers



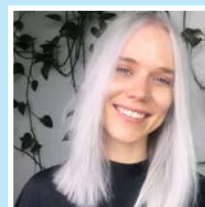
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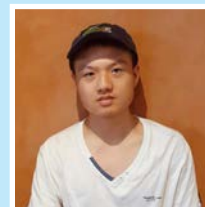
Conor Carroll



Theatin van Leeuwen



Ainslie Toombs



Scott Huang



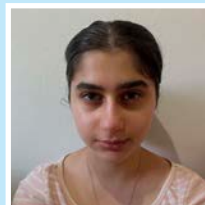
Gina Syramohos



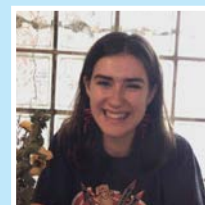
Wen Yu Yang



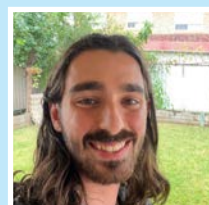
George Raptis



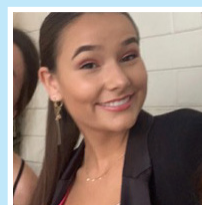
Mariam Abbas



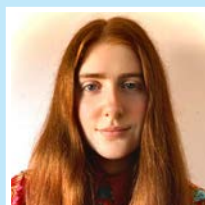
Rosabel Hibbert



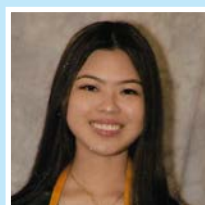
Marel Parono



Pia Lenarduzzi



Kate Mesaglio



Angelene Concepcion



Alex & Alastair Ho

## Sub-designers



Kelly is a second-year interior architecture student who loves to experiment with different mediums to produce her meaningful arts. The medium she used in her practice ranged from pencils, pens, colour pencils, paints and digital tools.

You can follow her creative journey on Instagram, where she posts her process works, inspired precedents, and relatable memes as a fellow artist. @K.Q\_Design



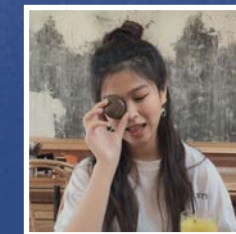
Yanti (彭妍纓) is an emerging interdisciplinary designer in her 4th year studying Commerce/Design. Currently focused on 3D visualisation, AR filters and photography. Hybridity is key for her, collaborating those mediums and experimenting forms the foundations of her practise. Investigating like a documenter is how she frames her approach.

To explore her work further find her at @anti.peng



Hana Kinoshita Thomson is a 3rd year Design student, specialising in illustration & graphic design. She is passionate about mental health, sustainability, the Japanese language and culture, picture books, and rabbits. She always aims to make work that is colourful, playful and engaging, that puts a smile on your face.

You can see her drawings on Instagram @hanaunderthetree



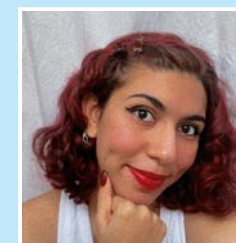
Casey is one of the sub designers this year. She is currently in her third year of the Bachelor of Media (PR & Advertising) degree.



Jelena is someone you often see at the train station looking put together but internally a hot mess. She enjoys being home most of the time exploring different hobbies. Recently she is self teaching herself to play ukulele. Not going so well but oh well. If you see her around campus, don't be afraid to say hi.

Find me on LinkedIn: Jelena Xu

## Artists



Aarushi is an artist, poet, student, and mango lover. Her practice delves into gender roles, identities, cultures and their inherent diverse dichotomies. Studying her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Arts, her moving image and painting practices are equally plaited into the strand of her linguistic thoughts and writing. Inspired by artists pushing the boundaries of familiar unfamiliarity like Hito Steyerl and Agnes Varda, she seeks to position her own narrative through the performativity of art making, thinking and creating.

Instagram: @aarushizart\_1



Catherine is a second-year student studying Commerce and Computer Science. She loves to draw and write in her spare time (if she has any) as well as read both angsty and fluffy stories. Apart from that, you'll find that she occasionally watches anime and cartoons but otherwise spends time making memories with her closest loved ones.



Stephanie Ung is a fifth-year Commerce and Design student at UNSW, majoring in graphics and digital media. When she's not being a potato snuggled up in bed, she loves drawing, eating spicy food, and vibing to Keshi. Her current favourite artists are Audrey Kawasaki and Huang Po Hsun.

Instagram: @faniefairy



Christine is a freshly graduated illustrator and graphic designer who studied Design and Commerce at UNSW. She enjoys creating works that bring joy to herself and others, and often draws inspiration from her life experiences - this can range from her existence on this mortal plane or her interactions in fandom and internet spaces. In her spare time, Christine also enjoys playing video games (i.e. Genshin Impact), reading manga and watching anime, hanging out with her friends and buying bubble tea.

Instagram: @specclee



# Online News Recap

## myExperience survey data to be published after successful UNSW appeal

By Caitlin Bailey

Students will soon be able to see how other students have rated UNSW courses, with data from the anonymous myExperience course surveys to be publicly released. The NTEU is planning to raise the issue during enterprise bargaining, which is due to take place later this year.



Read more on  
our website!

## Heated SRC debate over Religious Discrimination Bill

By Meg Trehwella

UNSW's first Student Representative Council (SRC) meeting for 2022 erupted into a fiery debate over the Religious Discrimination Bill (RDB). Bhattacharya responded to Tharunka after the SRC meeting, stating "While personal beliefs on the Council may vary, the Council has always steered itself toward protecting the wider interests of students."

## Students left in the lurch as transport negotiations de-rail their commute

By Andrea Bunjamin, Emma Partis and Harrisen Leckenby

Sydney-based trains were spectacularly left in the rail yards on Monday morning as tensions between NSW Transport and the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) steamed off a cliff. The planned industrial action resulted from a breakdown in communication during a Sunday mediation session between NSW Transport and the RTBU.

## Migration Amendment Bill passes at House of Representatives

By Isabella Lee

The Migration Amendment (Strengthening the Character Test) Bill has passed at the Australian House of Representatives. This would grant the Immigration Minister more power to cancel people's visas based on certain crimes. It is currently in the process of being passed in the Senate.

## Women's Collective calls for inclusivity on International Women's Day

By Andrea Bunjamin

Despite the relentless weather, there was no stopping the Women's Collective (WoCo) from uniting UNSW's female-led societies to celebrate International Women's Day last Tuesday. From crochet to kick boxing, attendees were welcome to try the diverse range of activities planned out and have a peek at what they might like.

## SRC Report

The SRC is a democratically elected body of 27 students here to assist you if you would like independent and confidential advice or assistance with anything unrelated. This might include enrolment, student fees, academic appeals, misconduct allegations or emergency support.

Get in touch with us at [src.president@arc.unsw.edu](mailto:src.president@arc.unsw.edu).

The 2022 SRC have so far successfully called for 24/7 access to the law library. In the coming term our priorities include:

1. We will continue to hold the university accountable to deliver a comprehensive action plan to make the university safer.
2. Continue ongoing conversations to address the limited availability of affordable accommodation.
3. Improve prospects of employment and support for graduating students.
4. Ensure student support is prioritised and respond to the federal budget impacting the Higher Education Sector.
5. Lobby for better support for international students and address the ongoing gaps in online/hybrid education delivery adopted by UNSW.

## PGC Report

The PGC has experienced an explosive start to the year. As the key postgraduate representative body, the Council has already engaged in various activities to advocate, engage and support students as UNSW returns to a new normal. Social events have seen some much needed reconnection, including Holey Moley Bar meet up (Sponsored by ARC), Coogee Picnic, Roundhouse dinner, and various catch-ups at the Postgraduate Lounge and online. The PGC leadership team continues to advocate for concerns which matter to you, included improved employability, better safer parking options and fairer concessions.

For more information, follow us on Facebook!

[facebook.com/unswpgc](https://facebook.com/unswpgc)





Scan the QR  
code to follow us  
and get involved!

