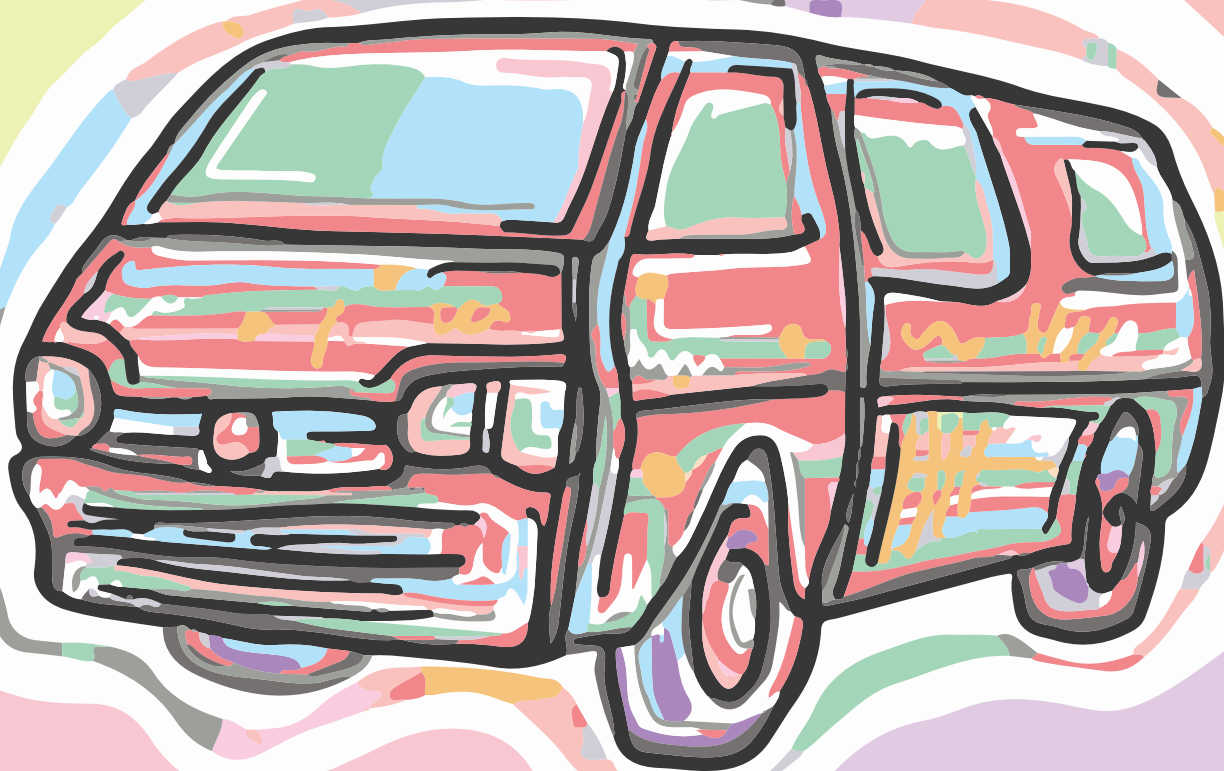


CRACCUM

magazine 06



sex robots or sex no-bots?

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CAITLIN AND MARK
EDITOR@CRACCUM.CO.NZ

We've said it before, and we're bound to say it a thousand times more, but by the time this goes to print it may well be totally irrelevant. The great unwashed will have moved onto the next big shiny internet turd, leaving last week's faeces to fester in a forgotten comments section.

For this reason, we usually write our editorials on the perennial issues of humankind – y'know, the major moral questions that remain relevant across the centuries (see last week's on *How Much Miso Can You Buy For The Price Of A Movie Ticket*). However, every so often something happens at our University that demands our attention and we have to do our best to simmer down and actually take it seriously.

UoA made headlines for all the wrong reasons last week. Two female Chinese students were brutally attacked while walking through Albert Park. The horrible incident was part of a spate of assaults on international students, which also included attacks near Unitec and Myers Park. After the assaults were reported in the NZ Herald, the idiots came out in droves. A post to the Overheard @ University of Auckland page – supposedly written to warn students – stated, "Cross the street if you see a pack of young Māori/Polynesian males, be prepared to sprint." And so the shitshow began.

Let us just establish first that *both these things are bad*. Another dipshit on Overhead posted a stupid meme that read, "Asian students are attacked, no one bats an eye. Someone starts racial profiling and everyone loses their minds!" This is quite obviously moronic. This is like saying "A child is run over, no one bats an eye. Someone robs an elderly woman at gunpoint and everyone loses their minds!" There is more than enough room for multiple shit things in the world – *that's why the world*

is so fucked up. The attacks on international students were just awful. Even the drongos on the internet can't argue with that. But so were the comments made about avoiding "Māori/Polynesian males". The fact that this was even up for debate, as evidenced by the hundreds of subsequent comments and posts on Overheard, is mind-boggling. The idea that Māori/Polynesian males a) belong to one big "Māori/Polynesian" race and b) ought to be avoided is just so fucking abhorrent – not to mention just patently ridiculous – that we can't believe we even need to bring it up. But there were so many comments on Overheard that fed into this big racist bukkake and we at *Craccum* just got so sad thinking, "is this the state of our University? Is this really what students think?" Until we realised something totally crucial:

People on who comment on posts are complete fuckwits.

The normal, semi-rational, empathetic human being observes comments on Facebook and tries to understand the debate from a semi-rational, empathetic human perspective. The problem is that Facebook commenters, as a general rule, are neither rational nor human. We use the term "Facebook commenters" not to describe people who occasionally comment on posts, but for those people who have made it a way of life. These people fall into two distinct groups, and both sets are munters.

The first group is the more troublesome one. These are the offensive bigots that make us sad when we read their offensive, bigoted comments. The key to dealing with these jerks, as the Overheard saga demonstrated, is that they are total parasites. They feed off your reaction and the more you reply to them, the more fuel you provide for their dickery. We know that it is so damn tempting to put them in place. Their arguments never make any sense – that's the point. They don't give a shit about their argument. They spend all night locked in their fetid, mouldy bedrooms, feasting on

the righteous indignation of the poor souls unfortunate enough to engage with their online bile. We cannot treat them as actual humans with actual opinions, worthy of our debate. They are walking talking wankstains, and how do we deal with wankstains? We ignore them. We flip the duvet over and pretend they're not there. Right?

The other group is made up of the Look At Us We're Liberals (LAUWLs). Distinguishable from actual liberals by virtue of the fact that their online activity revolves around proving just how liberal they are, and exploiting situations like the Overheard fiasco to promote their liberal selves. LAUWLs are the parasitic bigots' favourite plaything, as the LAUWLs will insist on replying to each and every comment on each and every post explaining why the parasites are wrong and also problematic and definitely unsafe. You may think the LAUWLs are virtuous; we certainly did at one point. We were wrong. The LAUWLs spend a huge chunk of their time on social media. This ain't their first time at the rodeo. They *know* that the bigots are trolling. They know that absolutely nothing will make the parasites change their minds; they don't have minds, they only have a burning desire to provoke. LAUWL comments only serve as fuel; they arguably make things worse. So it follows that the only reason the LAUWLs engage with the jerks is to prove to everyone just how liberal and righteous they are. This is gross. They are also wankstains. Wipe 'em off and ignore 'em.

The Overheard administrator eventually responded by deleting all posts related to the incident. As tempting as this approach is, censorship is never the answer. But instead of engaging with the fuckwits in comments sections, try having conversations in person, and signing petitions, and attending the panels and forums that are constantly on at UoA. This may seem pretty futile, but it's a damn sight more constructive than trying to reason with the irrational idiots online. ■

STUDENT STUMBLES ACROSS JOB SEARCH SCAM



An Auckland University of Technology student has unwittingly uncovered a scam while searching for a job online.

Emma Pascoe, a Graphic Design student, came across the scam when looking for work on Student Job Search. She took on a one-off job, offering \$20 to take a photo of Queen Street. The employer then asked if she could pass on her details to a friend. Ms Pascoe was then contacted by a supposed artist, who offered her \$6,000 to take photos of hands and feet – allegedly “reference photos” for an art project. The enormous amount offered alerted Ms Pascoe’s suspicions. With the help of her father, Detective Senior Sergeant Aaron Pascoe, and Netsafe, she looked into the artist’s website. The only form of contact available, an email address, was traced back to California. The artwork on the website was taken from other sources, and the “referral” videos appeared to be staged. They then discovered that other photographers had produced images for the artist, had not been paid for their work, and had found their photos published on fetish websites.

Netsafe has received around a dozen similar complaints since 2013, and believes the reports are linked. Since Ms Pascoe went public, other job search sites have been alerted to listings

which appear to be linked to the same scam. In an interview with Radio New Zealand, TradeMe’s Jon Duffy stated, “we were able to identify a listing and a membership as most likely being part of the same group... we’ve emailed all the people who got in touch through that listing with the advertiser to warn them that it could be part of the same scam.” Netsafe’s Chris Hails expressed concern over both the financial repercussions of the scam, and the emotional consequences of the deception, saying, “It may not be graphic pictures of your own body or other people’s, but I think it’s the fact that you have been deceived and tricked into sending images which later end up on a niche interest fetish site – that can be really quite concerning.”

Speaking to *Craccum*, Ms Pascoe says she decided to go public with her story by approaching the *New Zealand Herald* to “to warn students not to believe everything they see, as many fraudsters target students specifically and they know what we want to hear.”

She stipulates that it is the issues of fraud and consent that concern her, not the fetishes themselves. “My aim in going public was not to shame anyone with a fetish... I don’t believe it’s any of my business if someone has a fetish. But if someone is trying to manipulate me, saying they’ll use my photos for an art project when

they intend to use them on fetish sites, it becomes my business.” Ms Pascoe has expressed concern that media coverage of the issue has been carried out in “in a way that made it seem my main issue was with fetishes.”

The *Herald* article is titled “Student’s photography job turned out to be a fetish scam”. The writer states that “[f]etish websites often use photos of people’s body parts without permission” and provides multiple examples of photos being published on fetish sites. The edited video of Ms Pascoe’s interview includes close-up shots of her hands.

Following the *Herald* article, Ms Pascoe says, “many people have made comments suggesting it doesn’t matter if it goes on a fetish website, it’s only pictures of feet. They’re missing the point – consent.” She states, “a lot of people seem to have the idea that I was offered a legitimate \$6,000 contract, in which the employer was honest about the purpose of the photos, and I doctored in a poor unsuspecting fetishist. That did not happen. I was offered \$6,000 which was never going to come – this has happened to dozens of other New Zealanders and they were not paid. The scammer told me the photos were ‘reference photos’ for an art project, there was no mention of a fetish site.” ■



"I GET IT, BUT WHAT'S WITH THE CHOCOLATE SAUCE?" CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVISTS GET WEIRD AT STUDENT FORUM

The AUSA student forum was last week used by a group of students from University club Fossil Free UoA as a platform to protest the ongoing investment in oil companies by the University of Auckland. The staged interruption took the form of a faux-graduation ceremony, complete with gowns and cardboard trenchers. Certificates were presented to three students along with descriptions of their 'research' after which oil was poured onto the certificates, said to be compliments of Shell and other major oil companies.

The move was a symbol of protest against the refusal on the part of the University to divest from fossil fuel companies and their continued undermining of students' research into climate change issues, according to FFUoA. The group claims that money, donated by alumni in good faith, is going to oil companies carrying out work that is causing the damage that University research is attempting to mitigate. After the graduation ceremony, FFUoA sought to pass a resolution confirming the support of

the student body in their quest to divest. The resolution was passed 28 votes to none, 0.06% of the University population.

AUSA President Will 'Taco Bell Presents' Matthews, never one to shy away from a corporate sell-out, took a break from cooking sausages on the (gas powered) BBQ to speak in favour of the resolution and shared with the dwindling crowd his struggles in convincing the University Council to commit to divesting from fossil fuel. When approached by *Craccum* for comment, Taco Bell Matthews stated that "Fossil Free is a fantastic example of a student club creating change. The university has a social responsibility as well as a financial responsibility to its investors, and it's good that Fossil Free are reminding them of that." He also added that "Fossil Free are all very attractive people with very attractive politics" and went back to his sausages.

However, the protest was not a complete success. Despite the presence of the oil can, and

the large 'OIL' sign taped to the side, the significance of the action was lost on some forum attendees, with some overheard questioning the logic behind pouring "chocolate sauce" on the degrees.

Later that evening, AUSA held the first edition of panel-style event 'The Flat' on the topic of climate change. Guests included Labour spokeswoman on climate change Dr Megan Woods, social activism researcher Nikki Harré and the Greens at UoA co-president known only as Ricardo. The panel spoke at length about the issues surrounding the perception of climate change and the practical steps that can be taken on a personal and public level, as well as tackling questions from the audience on the role of indigenous communities and the effectiveness of Crown Research Institutes in developing climate change solutions. The event, the first of its kind, was well attended and described by a high ranking AUSA executive member as "very nice." ■

THE FOLLOW ON THE ALBERT PARK ATTACKS

The aggravated robbery of two UoA students in Albert park on Tuesday 22nd of March has sparked reactions from AUSA, the New Zealand Chinese Students Association (NZSCA), UoA Feminists of Colour (FOC), Auckland City Council, and local police concerning safety in the city.

The two Chinese woman were walking through Albert Park around 8:30pm when they were attacked by a group of teenagers. The students were kicked and pushed to the ground before their phone and bag were stolen.

AUSA has expressed concern with "unacceptable" safety conditions in Albert Park, which connects the campus to the city and is a logical thoroughfare for students. They facilitated a rally in the park on Friday evening, in which attendees carried out a safety audit assessing visibility, lighting and security access in areas of the park. AUSA has launched a petition to the Auckland City Council demanding "at a minimum, increased lighting, ac-

cess to security phones and an increased physical security presence in the park". Councillor Mike Lee has responded to the online petition affirmatively, also asking action from the Vice Chancellor who Lee says is underestimating "the scale of the problem and the threat to his students".

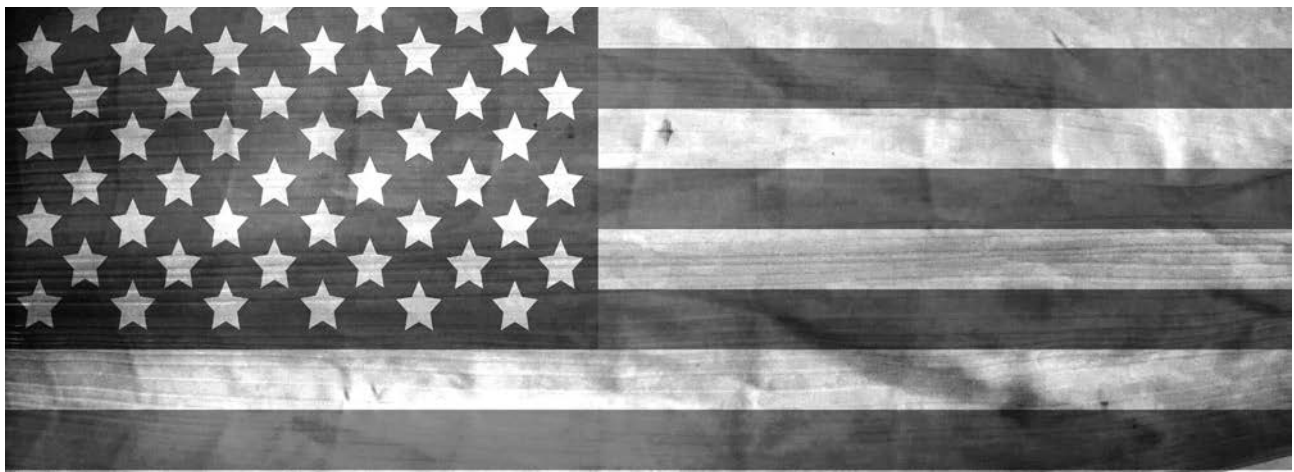
FOC facilitated a public forum on Friday night. The discussion, "Albert Park Attacks: Digging Deeper into Racism, Poverty and Violence" explored the underlying, systemic factors of the assaults. UoA FOC has expressed dissatisfaction at "punitive" solutions like increased surveillance, as they avoid social culpability for the root of violence and lead to victim blaming.

NZSCA held a public meeting on campus with representatives from the Police, Auckland Council, Parliament, UoA, AUT and UNITEC and coverage from national media organisations to discuss safety. The meeting addressed the Albert Park attack in the context of the three other attacks of a similar nature that took place within that week. On Wednesday 23rd a Japanese woman was attacked near Myers Park, Thursday

24th a Chinese man was attacked near the Unitec campus in Mount Albert, and on Monday 28th an international student was attacked on Khyber Pass Road.

Speakers expressed their intolerance for assault in public areas and the need to make safer spaces. They also recommended students avoid poorly-lit places at night and not to use their phones. There was no comment on the paradox of using your phone as a torch.

There was controversy regarding whether these attacks are intentionally directed at Asian individuals. Councillor Lee believes Chinese students particularly are being targeted by "predatory gangs". The attacks have caused particular worry amongst Chinese students, who feel unsafe walking around campus after dark. Inspector Joe Tipene and Len Brown argue there is no evidence that Asian individuals or students are being specifically targeted, and the assaults are "opportunistic theft". Tipene stated that despite these recent attacks receiving attention there has not been a rise in assault reports. ■



TRUMP BERNING UP HIS CHANCES AT THE OVAL OFFICE

Don't worry, Donald Trump is not going to be President. Neither is Bernie Sanders. Not that you'd know this if you happened to stumble upon any American TV pieces in the last few weeks.

While Sanders may have won six of the last seven contests on the Democratic side of the ledger, the gap to Clinton is a bridge too far, momentum on his side or otherwise. Political blog FiveThirtyEight, the authority on mathematical based political predictions, currently has Sanders as a real longshot to win the nomination, as he is almost 10% behind where he needs to be at this stage of the race. This also excludes the superdelegates, a thing which you don't actually need to understand, you just need to be aware that they favour Clinton.

So while it is not impossible, the only chance that Sanders now has to beat Clinton is New York, and beat her well, then take California by an even higher margin, and win every other remaining state. Not that he will give up. Bernie didn't enter this race to win – the fact that he has become a household name, and his policies are being discussed, is more than he could have hoped for.

Trump has a different problem. While in recent times his chances of winning the nomination have been reduced, he is probably still the favourite. But this really doesn't matter, simply because of demographics. So far Trump has received around 37% of the votes in the Republican caucuses and primaries; however if you look at who these supporters are, there is a demographic skew towards white, uneducated male supporters. Therein lies the problem – with almost every other demo group Donald Trump does poorly, and I'm not talking small

groups. Women should not really be considered a homogenous group, yet his unfavourable ratings in this group are above 70%. That means that more than 70% of all women view Trump negatively. Now we can start to see why Trump will not be President. That's 50% of the electorate that he is not going to do well with. Add in the additional 9% of voters who are Hispanic, another group without a favourable view of Trump, and we start to see why almost every poll and model has him below 40% of the vote in a general election. One poll has him behind Hillary Clinton by two points in Utah, a state that Mitt Romney won with 72% of the vote. The same poll had both Cruz and Kasich winning by 30 points. Electorally, Donald Trump may lead Republicans to the largest defeat in their history and in a race that, on paper, should have been a slam dunk. ■

Note: All Polls and numbers taken from either FiveThirtyEight.com, or realclearpolitics.com.

BASIC INCOME ISSUE HAS NO BASIC OUTCOME

As part of its Future of Work think-tank, the Labour Party recently released a proposal to trial a universal basic income as a new, fairer alternative to welfare.

The right wing of New Zealand politics promptly went off its rocker, touting the obvious problems such as cost and implementation.

But of course, what was ultimately lost by the media was the fact that Labour is never actually going to implement it because it can't – not yet at least.

The main issue is seemingly obvious. Most people assume that the universal income will be paid for by tax. But if you think about it, it can't be. There is no point in giving someone \$200 a week if they already pay more than that in tax, which everyone earning over \$57,000 a year would be. The universal income is based on the idea of a social dividend – a share of the profits made by State-Owned Enterprises. That's why Alaska is always offered as an example. Their universal basic income is completely paid for by royalties from the oil industry.

New Zealand does not have the natural resources to provide such a payment. But Labour's think-tank was about the future of work, not work today. As the world becomes more automated, jobs will become increasingly hard to get. The question then becomes how the economy will operate. Believe it or not, the big multinationals want you to have money, if only so you can give it to them. This is where Labour's proposal comes in. In this world, a universal income would be needed to ensure that the economy could continue to operate, paid for by corporate tax. At least that's the theory behind it, and remember that if you had talked to Roger Douglas before free market reforms, he would have seemed crazy too. ■

RACIST NONSENSE OVERHEARD @ UOA



Controversy has rocked Overheard @ University of Auckland, a popular university Facebook page, after students used the platform to encourage racial profiling. Posts made to the page warned students to “cross the street” if they encounter groups of Māori and Polynesian people around the inner city, telling them to “be prepared to sprint”. “In Western culture it’s not politically correct to profile, but it really is better to be safe than sorry.”

The comments immediately sparked a wave of intense criticism. “It’s not about the feelings” said one student, “it’s about the message you send when you make sweeping generalisations about an entire people out of ignorance and anger, that alienating them is alright when you can work together instead to protect each other.” Another member of the group criticized the post for being intentionally divisive, saying: “It’s just stupid, it’s not helping anyone and it’s not solving any problems.” Satirical posts, including one warning students to avoid pigeons across campus, were also common.

All posts to the page – both the original comment and the follow up posts – have since been deleted, with the student associated with the original post banned from the group. Page ad-

ministrators have vowed to be more proactive in banning members who make openly incendiary posts in the future. However, this cleanup didn’t come fast enough – the posts and the ensuing controversy were reported upon by a number of national news outlets, including by the New Zealand Herald.

The group, which has nearly 27,000 members, is intended to be a forum in which university students are able to share anecdotes about their experiences across campus. Similar pages exist for universities across the country, including AUT, Victoria, and Otago. ■

THE TOP 5 THINGS WE LEARN'T LAST WEEK

5. Twenty20 cricket is unpredictable, entertaining and not over till there is no mathematical chance of a team winning. It is also notable that cricket overall has a sexism problem. The men played for a \$1.6 million top prize, the women for \$100,000. However, running the men’s and women’s tournaments concurrently did undoubtedly increase viewership for the Women’s World Cup.

4. Albert Park is not a place you want to be after dark. Also, the internet fosters racism.

Not just on Overheard, however: Microsoft’s new AI system “TAY” was taken offline last week after it learnt from the humans that it was interacting with, and became somewhat offensive to certain racial groups.

3. #NeverTrump seems to be making inroads. Though Wisconsin was not quite made for Trump demographically, he was way below where he should have been if he is going to be the Republican nominee. And it wasn’t the party elites who led this anti-Trump charge in Wisconsin, it was the local conservative media – traditionally one of Trump’s best friends. What does it mean for his chances going forward?

2. Vegan lunches are the new student staple. Though they are not new, their popularity has increased dramatically, and can now be found three times a week. Some students have reported waiting up to twenty minutes to get theirs, plus the traditional extra five to discuss with the guy selling the cheap food why veganism is the future.

1. That arresting people would increase the repayment rate for student debt. No analysis has been done to find out if this increase in dollars collected is influenced by the overall increase in total amount payable, as student debt per capita continues to climb. ■

WHAT'S ON APRIL 11TH - 17TH

Honestly, does it get better than free ice cream? Ben and Jerry's are trying to steal Aucklanders' hearts at 160 Ponsonby Road. **Free Cone Day** this Tuesday commences at 1pm and goes until 9pm. Expect queues and elbows to the ribs.

The concert **Lawrence Arabia in Collaboration** is this Thursday at the Music School in Studio One, Kenneth Myers Centre. Starts at 7.30pm, free admission – an amazing event considering his sold out concert last Friday.

Engage in a classic Saturday Morning activity that is the **garage sale**. The twist? For sale is previously shown art work at **Inky Palms** which is hidden in La Gonda Arcade at 203 K Rd. Have a rummage from 10am and update your room with some local art including prints, merch, zines and much more.

Did the French Film Festival pass you by or you just can't get enough?? This Saturday evening is the second of **Auckland Art Gallery's April series of French film screenings**. At 2pm head to the Auditorium, lower ground level to see *Les Châteaux de Sable* (2015). Free admission! ■



AGONY AUNTIES

Dear Aunties

A few days ago, a girl at my hall (who I'd never talked to) started to send me inappropriate and confronting messages. I thought maybe it was a joke and tried to ignore it. But then the next day, I was chowing down on my meatball pasta bake, and she approached me in the hustle and bustle of the dining hall and tried to kiss me. I felt a little bit flattered but also extremely uncomfortable. What should I do?

From

Scared at Home

Dear **Scared at Home**,

We're quite bemused at how one might attempt a kiss mid-meatball, but she does sound like a very determined lady! First off it's terrible to be scared in your own home! We think you need to confront this girl – straight to the point. If you're not interested, let her know in your most polite but stern manner, but if you're intrigued by this vivacious and perhaps a little misguided person, suggest a date which suits you. If the inappropriate behaviour persists maybe let your hall R.A. know.

Aunt Phryne and Aunt Wilhelmina xxx ■

PLEASE SEND YOUR PROBLEM IN 50 WORDS OR LESS TO LIFESTYLE@CRACCUM.CO.NZ, ANONYMITY GUARANTEED.

BURB BRUNCHIN': FIND YOUR LOCAL

Forage

90 DOMINION ROAD, MT EDEN/EDEN TERRACE.

You certainly have to 'forage' for this stylish, sunny café – hidden amongst a rather ugly stretch of shops at the top of Dominion road. Great coffee and varied cabinet options – my favourite so far: their Croque Monsieur which they toast to gooey perfection.

The Workshop Kitchen

10 CHARLES STREET, EDEN TERRACE.

Eden Terrace's best kept secret is this hole-in-the-wall café, run by the lovely Louise (her husband works in the furniture workshop next door) and her niece Maia. Come here for delicious and ever-changing lunch options – baps, cakes, biscuits and a bacon and egg potato salad that I still dream about sometimes.

Domain & Ayr

492 PARNELL ROAD, PARNELL.

Right on the corner of a busy and confusing intersection (which actually makes for some great in-house entertainment), Domain & Ayr is a cosy local café with a varied and interesting brunch/lunch menu. There are both healthy and treat-yo-self options, including The Famous Fluffy Pancake (think: pancakemuffinsoufflé).



Big Beat

700 DOMINION ROAD, BALMORAL.

I do love a good themed café. Big Beat has a 1960s British and American pop-inspired interior, complete with large posters of Mick Jagger and Bob Dylan. Fairly classic brunch options, but done well, and good coffee.

The Florentine Tea Room

51B RANFURLY ROAD, EPSOM.

A great place if you're looking for something a bit fancier than a café, but not a formal high tea. All their cakes are beautifully presented and they have a big tea selection, as well as plenty of frilly décor.

The Store On Kahi

3 AVERILL AVENUE, KOHIMARAMA.

This tiny store is always packed with so much food there is hardly any room for people. Cabinets are crammed full of sweet and savoury baked goods, all made fresh on site. Also, they have peanut butter ice cream. ■ EMILY FREW

COLLECTIVE READING LIST

Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou - Struggle Without End by Ranginui Walker:

Provides an account of the origins up until today of the difficulties in justice, equality and self-rule including specific issues apparent today.

Trying Not to Try: The Art of Science and Spontaneity by Edward Slingerland:

Chinese philosophies of spontaneity varied with neuroscience – "A fun read".

The Poetics of Space by Gaston Bachelard:

Explores the impacts of architecture on lived experiences through the perception of a 'home' and how it resonates within our different psyche.

Merchants of Doubt by Eric Conway and Naomi Oreskes:

Identifies the controversy surrounding global warming politically and socially.

Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism by Judith Butler:

Employing Jewish philosophical positions

to critique political Zionism and claims of "illegitimate state violence, nationalism and state-sponsored racism".

A Field Guide to getting Lost by Rebecca Solnit:

Anecdotal philosophy about a myriad of things regarding memory and nostalgia.

Matisse Drawings Curated by Ellsworth Kelly:

Curation of a show that's on point.

The First Man by Albert Camus:

Semi-autobiographical in an unfinished state, exploring poverty in Algeria in a poor French family personally through nostalgia – "real and enchanting".

Objectivity: A Very Short Introduction by Stephen Gaukroger:

Investigating science, aesthetic and ethical perspective.

On Humour by Simon Critchley:

A good overview on the history of humour and jokes and illustrates how little it's been looked at formally. ■ BONNIE HARVEY

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Hana Aoke and Lila Bullen-Smith's show *Boundaries of Time and Glance* opens Tuesday 12th at **Window Gallery** – that's the space in the General Library foyer that's always confused you. Yes, it's an art gallery. Check it out!

The Architecture School take over **George Fraser Gallery** with their exhibition *4 Futures*. This is the last week to see the show, which closes on the 17th April.

Do you have an idea for an exhibition yourself? Want to get involved? **Studio One Toi Tū** on Ponsonby Rd is accepting proposals until April 17th. Check out their website for details. ■



THE CRACCUM GUIDE TO THE METRO GUIDE TO AUCKLAND'S CHEAP EATS: RAMEN TAKARA

All of the previous cheap eats I have visited have met the same conclusion: I enjoy my meal, then lament how many hours of my life that meal cost. After Ramen Takara I wasn't so upset, in part because I was in Ponsonby, but also because the main only cost \$14.

Ramen Takara is on the edge of Ponsonby and features a quaint little heated courtyard. This, coupled with its cheap prices, makes for a unique wallet-friendly dining experience. The quantity you get is some of the best value for money out there, and unlike Shadows lager or a Munchie Mart pie, there is no chance of you regretting this.

While there is a traditional Japanese aesthetic, the menu plays it fast and loose, combining flavours from all over Asia in its ramen. Fair warning, however: they are not messing around when they say that a meal is spicy. While the house sake is both delightful and equally cheap, it will do nothing to ease the burn.

Ramen Takara somehow manages to strike a trifecta of low cost, good food and large quantity that has not yet been rivalled by *Metro*'s other contenders. From now on they will be the benchmark for a good cheap meal, a title once held by Kebabs on Queen's \$5 deal.

Eating here made me question my perception of *Metro*. Maybe they weren't so bad after all? Maybe they weren't so out of touch with the sensibilities of an Auckland student? But then I saw their most recent issue, featuring an in-depth look at "Insta famous DJ Max Key". I don't feel so bad disliking them anymore. ■ SAM LYNCH

HOURS OF MINIMUM WAGE NEEDED FOR TWO PEOPLE TO EAT HERE: 3.1

FASHION ON CAMPUS



Kieran and Zoé

Holly: "I love your tops"

Kieran: "They're both mine"

■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLLY BURGESS



FREE ★ BBQ

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EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 12PM



From the Media Officer

AUSA has been busy over the past few weeks! Our Political Engagement Officer, Sarah 'Shandy' Butterfield hosted the first Flat in Shadows. We ran an audit in Albert Park in an effort to reclaim our park and make it safe again. Plus, we've had a number of excellent student forums - don't forget to come along this week on Wednesday at 12 PM at the Quad.

In this week's AUSA pages, be sure to check out Will's piece about Albert Park that got published on Stuff and the interview with Isobel Gledhill, our Administrative Vice President for 2016.

AUSA NOTICEBOARD

NEWMARKET PARENTS

Did you know that Newmarket campus was built without a sick bay, a common area or any breastfeeding facilities? Property Services do not see that there is enough use of these spaces to justify even putting blinds on the windows, so AUSA is distributing a survey to create a mandate for them to be established and furnished appropriately. Check it out if you're a student or staff parent at Newmarket campus, or just if you want to leave a message of support for a Newmarket parenting space! If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Rachel Burnett at evp@ausa.org.nz

RUBIK'S CUBE STEIN!

Let loose at the start of the holidays... In conjunction with the Education and Social work Student's Association (ESSA) over at Epsom, we're organising a Rubik's Cube Stein at Shadows on May 16th. Come dressed in lots of different colours, and leave in just one! Tickets are just \$5, and there will be drinks discounts for you too! Check out the event on Facebook, and get your tickets from Event Finder or from AUSA Reception!

RUN FOR AUSA

Notice has been given for a by-election for the positions of Culture and Arts Officer and Inter-

national Student's Officer. Nominations open on Monday 11th April, and close on Thursday 28th April. Nomination forms can be picked up from AUSA House. Email avp@ausa.org.nz for information on these opportunities.

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Run for AUSA.

Nominations are now open for the positions of **Culture & Arts Officer** and **International Students' Officer** on your student executive.

**Notice is hereby given for Nominations of
2016 AUSA EXECUTIVE POSITIONS
Culture & Arts Officer
International Students' Officer**

- Nominations open on Monday, 11 April 2016 at 12pm.
- Nomination forms are available from AUSA Reception, 4 Alfred Street
- Nominations close at 3.00 pm on Thursday, 28 April 2016. They must be handed in to AUSA Reception only.

In accordance with the Auckland University Students' Association's Constitution, nominations are open to currently enrolled students of the University of Auckland, who must be members of AUSA. Accordingly, all nominees must present proof of current enrolment, and any other required information, to the Returning Officer no later than the close of nominations, or their nomination will be ruled invalid.

Voting for the By-Election will be held on 3, 4 & 5 May 2016.

Daniel Haines
AUSA Returning Officer

EMAIL AVP@AUSA.ORG.NZ WITH ANY ISSUES OR QUESTIONS

AUSA
SERVING STUDENTS

Reclaim Our Park

As a student, particularly one from outside Auckland, one of the first things you learn upon arriving at the University of Auckland is to avoid Albert Park.

We're told to avoid the park at night, avoid the park if you've been drinking, avoid the park if you're on your own.

The entire park is marked with a big red cross to anyone who doesn't want to run afoul of drug addicts, the ever-expanding homeless population of Auckland, or just some lowlife looking for an excuse to make someone else's life miserable.

The recent widely publicised assaults in the park and around Auckland show that our public spaces aren't even safe during the day.

The scary part is that these assaults can be for any number of reasons. You can be targeted because of the colour of your skin, because you're a young woman, because you look like an easy target, or just because you were unlucky enough to choose to walk through a public area.



There is something incredibly wrong with this.

AUSA and all the students we represent, have had enough.

We should be able to walk through a public area without fear of assault. We should feel safe in the spaces that are there for our use and enjoyment.

The most disturbing part of all this is our collective attitude as Auckland residents. All too often, the response to hearing of those who have run into trouble in Albert Park is: 'they entered the area at their own risk, they knew the dangers'.

This kind of response is victim blaming, pure and simple. Blame should not be fixed on people

who want to access a public space. Instead, we need to address the obvious safety issues in Albert Park.

Making change happen is our responsibility as good Aucklanders and good neighbours. AUSA has begun a petition to improve the safety conditions in Albert Park through simple measures such as increasing the lighting in the park, installing security phone boxes and increasing physical security presence in the evening.

This is the very minimum Auckland Council can do to protect Aucklanders. ■ WILL MATTHEWS

broadcast 95 FM

Congrats student. You've made the greatest decision of your life: turning to this page and reading about the coolest radio station of our times (95bFM). This week we're excited (obliged) to tell you about our flagship afternoon programming – bFM Drive.

Five hot days with five hot hosts spitting their pungent flavoursome take on drivetime radio and making all those traffic jams, all g.

On Mondays bFM's hardout head-honcho of programming, Pennie Black gets on the decks, spinning all the best big-hair gotho numbers from the past and present. On Tuesdays, Eliza puts her intense sounding medical student daytime life on hold to pop out a bit of the

good music. Wednesdays find Courtney Davis reviewing the best (and worst) home-brew beer in town and spinning fresh vinyl, while Jonny and Big Hungry get spiritual as and and enjoy some fancy cocktails. On Fridays, Emily and Sigrid have the start of your weekend sorted.

It's every weekday from 4 till 7. It's bFM Drive. It's good. Listen to it.

If you're interested in joining the b team, come say hello and drink some complimentary water or Red Bull. We're on the top floor of the AUSA building, opposite the cultural space and Craccum office.

The 95bFM Top 10

- 1 **AVERAGE RAP BAND FT KODY NELSON**
Entertainment (NZ)
- 2 **PURPLE PILGRIMS**
Is You Real? (NZ)
- 3 **I.E. CRAZY**
An Incident on the Edge of Town (NZ)
- 4 **AVOID! AVOID!**
Drones (NZ)
- 5 **THE BETHS**
Whatever (NZ)
- 6 **CAT'S EYES**
Drag
- 7 **PJ HARVEY**
The Community of Hope
- 8 **MALES**
Chartreuse (NZ)
- 9 **ILLS WINTER**
Not Ours To See (NZ)
- 10 **DANDELION SET WITH ALAN MOORE**
Judy Switched Off The TV

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AVP

In her early days at AUSA, Isobel Gledhill spent hours typing membership signups into an Excel spreadsheets. Rumour has it that she now spends 20 hours a week making spreadsheets. Is this true?

Maybe like 2 hours of making spreadsheets and 28 hours of doing [other] stuff.

This corresponds with my experiences over the past week - in her current role as AVP, Isobel assigns Exec members the task of typing signups into Google Drive spreadsheets.

As AVP, Isobel works closely with President Will Matthews, who last year, was AVP himself. I wanted to know whether there was any tension in this relationship and whether Will had any issues 'letting go' of his AVP tendencies. I started with the easy question, to test the water, and asked whether Isobel had a comment about the Pokémon Will had assigned her.

I didn't watch Pokémon. My Mum thought it was weird, so I just have to have faith in Will's choice.

I ask whether this is how she approaches most of Will's decision making.

No! Absolutely not! (Will's note: 'rude'.)

As AVP, Will was known for his own ability

to make spreadsheets. When asked whether she feels constantly in the shadow of Will's administrative prowess, Isobel replies:

No. Do I constantly feel like I'm in Shadows bar? Yes.

I'm unsure whether this is because Will drives her to drink or she now prefers filling cells with alcohol rather than names and numbers... What's your favourite alcohol?

I like Gin & Tonics... We have lots of tonic at our flat, because I always buy them just in case we don't have any. We always end up with half bottles of flat tonic...

Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Labour Party?

No, but I've been well and truly scared off by members who have.

Final question, was AUSA what you expected?

I think I was just so stoked to be involved that I didn't really mind. However, first year me probably thought Craccum was a far more glamorous publication to be interviewed in (sorry Caitlin and Mark), and that by being interview would mean I was way cooler and more popular than I actually am right now.



SHE USED TO CALL YOU ON HER CELLPHOOOONE



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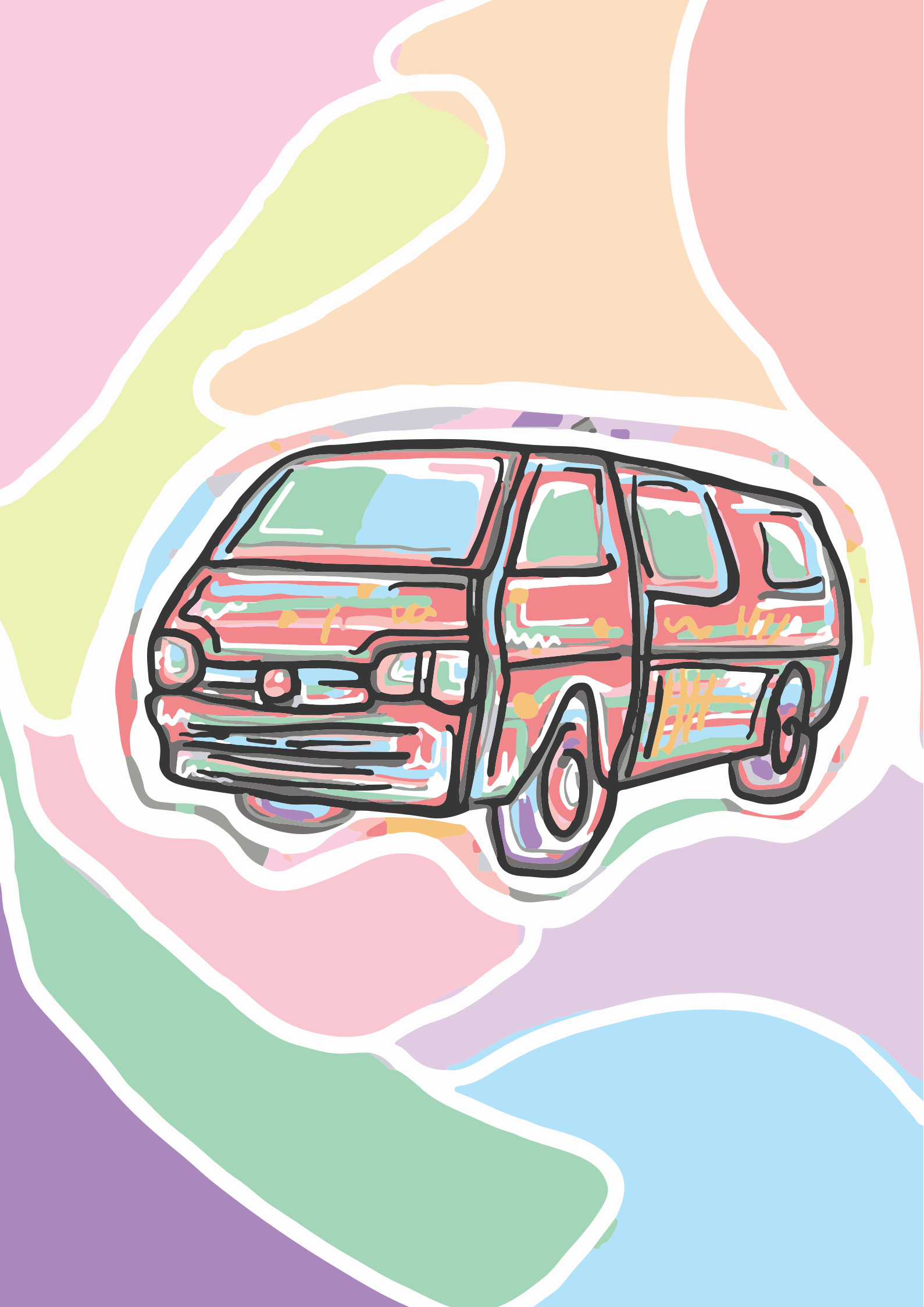
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something wicked this way comes

saia halatanu gives you the low-down on
what freedom of expression really means

"I've often wanted to drown my troubles but I can't get my wife to go swimming."

"Men have two emotions, hungry and horny. If you see him without an erection, make him a sandwich."

"Does your asshole ever get jealous of the shit that comes out of your mouth?"

"Smoking is cool."

Are these offensive? Depends who you ask. Cabinet Minister Paula Bennett thinks so – offensive enough for everyone else too. So much so that she has launched a campaign to either ban or censor Wicked Campers.

A joke isn't funny if you have to explain it, but it seems necessary for the sake of argument. Are the slogans sexist? Vulgar? Crude? Violent? Absolutely, but that's the point. The humour in these quips is found in the unlikelihood that any sensible person actually thinks in this manner. It's the shock to the sensibilities that causes one to snigger guiltily. It's also a reassur-

ance that "the line", which so many are afraid to cross, still exists. The word to keep in mind when reading these slogans is "joke".

Of course, caution is necessary here because the words "funny" and "offensive" are both influenced by individual tastes and partialities. However, it seems the latter has somehow been given particular power, as if the offended person is to be respected or given a special right to tell his or her offender what he or she can or can't say.

This article is not about determining what someone should or shouldn't be offended by, but too often a person's "hurt feelings" are given far too much value than they deserve. Comedian Steve Hughes encapsulated it perfectly when he said: "what happens when someone gets offended? Well, they can be offended." The point he is making is that being offended requires no correspondence from anyone. It's an emotional response to being confronted by something uncomfortable and in recent times it has been given the expectation that, rather than owning the responsibility that comes with such emotions, someone else has to deal with them. This is the voluntary capitulation of one's autonomy – giving your feelings to someone

else to handle and then being upset when they say it's not their job. Sometimes one needs to recognize the control they have over their critical faculties, engage with these faculties, decide how they feel about what they've been confronted with and, if the worst thing that has resulted is that they are offended, condemn what they deem offensive and move on.

The objection may come from the fact that the slogans appeal to the prurient interest – they induce you to think dirty. But other than being explicit and vulgar, there's not too much the words and images painted on the sides of these campervans can force anyone to do. Some arguments seem to say there is a promotion of unwanted behaviour here; that the crude slogans will lead to similarly crude behavior. If any of the slogans prompt an individual to act on them specifically, then the problem here isn't with the words. The problem is with the person, long before he or she was exposed to Wicked Campers.

In New Zealand, freedom of expression (including from government interference) is found in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 ("NZBORA"). It appears that Bennett understands the importance of this right, so

has been careful to keep the proposal of legislating against Wicked Campers as a final resort. Instead, she's made headway through the censor's office (Office of Film and Literature Classification), which has deemed the scribbles on the sides of these vans a "publication" and thus fit for their scrutiny. The logic she offers in her interview with *The Spinoff* runs like this: "I'd spoken to police – what would their enforcement be – and for the censors to look at it they have to have all four sides of the van, because otherwise one side is not considered a publication. Apparently it's like reading a quarter of the book."

It's also a reassurance that "the line", which so many are afraid to cross, still exists.

When *The Spinoff* questioned whether "the speech we should defend most vigorously is the speech we find most disagreeable", Bennett responded: "At some level I would agree... I agree with freedom of speech... I don't get morally outraged at things that some other people do. I can usually see the funny side of something...if I can understand where it's come from... But I do think as a society we also need to have a bottom line." It's difficult to read this self-cancelling gibberish without cringing, knowing she meant what she said literally and without irony. A more comprehensive answer could have been given with a simple "no".

This article is in no capacity a defence of the content of the Wicked Camper slogans. Nor is this an argument against decency. Restraint from the use of such obscenities and vulgarities is reasonably fair and honourable and there are ways one should behave in certain situations. This is purely an assertion of the principles of free expression "including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form" (s 14, NZBORA). A defence of one opinion, even an opinion that one doesn't wholeheartedly endorse, is a defence of all of them.

Consider the following extract by John Stuart Mill, in his essay *On Liberty*: "The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation – those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error." A person who understands what is being said here by Mill, as well as the freedom to "seek, receive, and impart information and opinions", understands the absolute importance of free expression and inquiry and how any limitation on the ability to

express oneself is an automatic limitation on the ability to receive, examine and interrogate information. Being offended seems to be utterly useless except as a prompt that should engage one's thinking muscles.

A more admirable argument for the censorship of the vehicles is the "what about the children?" argument. We already legislate and make decisions on behalf of our children, with the belief that they don't yet possess the ability to distinguish thoroughly right from wrong or determine the consequences of their actions. Fair enough. But no one should be telling anyone else how to raise their children and this argument assumes a consensus. In an online video joining the campaign to censor the Wicked campers, radio DJs Gary McCormick and Simon Barnett argue their position by saying these slogans are "making parents have to explain to their children what they mean". But explaining things to children is more or less an inalienable feature of parenting. Does this mean I think our children should be constantly exposed to pornographic and violent material? Yes. Jokes. Of course not! But if on the rare occasion a child sees a Wicked campervan or is confronted by such information and has questions, the best way to combat information one believes is wrong or harmful is with counter-information.

It's difficult to read this self-cancelling gibberish without cringing, knowing she meant what she said literally and without irony. A more comprehensive answer could have been given with a simple "no".

All information is propaganda. Or, at least, most information is somewhat biased. The assertion of freedom of expression is an assertion of individual agency. Not only is it a freedom to express, but it's also a freedom to receive. Allowing information the freedom to be dispersed is an active affair and it requires curiosity, discernment and taste – self-filtering as well as self-censoring. A high opinion of humanity would suggest that in a world where access to information is unimpeded, good ideas would flourish and naturally cancel out bad ideas. Decisions regarding the sharing of information between private bodies shouldn't be a matter decided by the government. Everyone has the choice of how they interpret and react to what they see, read or hear. But be critical about it, because simply being offended helps no one. ■



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this house looks forward to a world with sex robots

the debating society has been around since 1887 and meets every thursday to discuss issues both topical and whimsical. www.debating.co.nz

AFFIRMATIVE

The existence of sex robots provides so many benefits, both to the person and society, that we should celebrate and strive for increasing sophistication in their design.

These robots are ideal for pursuing sexual fulfilment. Normally people regulate their conduct to match the expectations and preferences of other people – it's why people self-police when there are security cameras and why you subtly gauge people's reactions before asking for kinkier things in bed. In a world with sex robots, you don't have to regulate your conduct to anyone's expectations: it's perfect masturbation with endless possibilities.

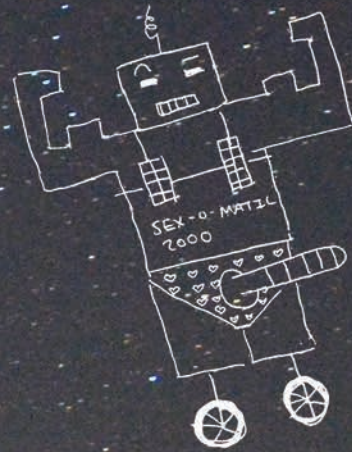
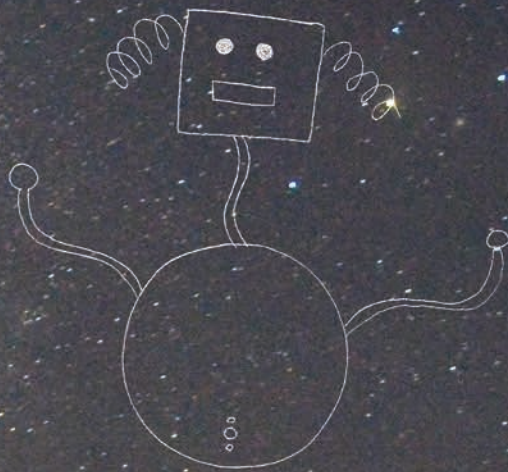
In terms of potential implications, this could be hugely positive for personal relationships. Currently people enter into relationships

hoping to find a match between a positive personality and someone that is reasonably attractive. This fusion of interests often means people are forced to compromise on both fronts, as it's nearly impossible to find someone who is both sexually attractive and also has a unique character you personally prefer. But once a robot can fulfill someone's sexual desires, it removes the need to prioritize sexuality in finding a partner and more squarely shifts focus onto the character of other individuals.

Moreover, it also opens up opportunities to the disabled. In Denmark, sex therapists have legal status and provide their services to the disabled, who due to their own individual conditions are often locked out of experiencing sex. Given how our society values sex as a means of fulfilment, as conveyed through many forms of media, it would be unfortunate if the disabled were denied something that

is represented as a fundamental experience simply because there aren't enough sex therapists and their condition hinders them from forming sexual relationships.

Another benefit is a reduction in sexual violence. Currently if you work as a sex worker, you constantly face potential violence and STIs, which is often hard to foresee when selecting clients. The beauty of having sex robots is that it almost reduces sexual interactions into two classes. For those who have negative sexual preferences it would be more expedient to enact those on unfeeling robots and, over time, that would be a preferable way to express those preferences. This means that for those who currently operate as sex workers, the clientele they would face will be less likely to enact their violent fantasies and would be more likely to seek some emotional gratification along with the sexual experience. ■



NEGATIVE

It is important to define what we mean by a sex robot. The distinguishing feature of a sex *robot* compared to say, a sex *object* or sex *doll*, is that they have a degree of instructiveness and artificial intelligence which is designed to be similar to a “person”, albeit programmed in a way that is targeted at our sexual needs.

The first reason to be sceptical of this dystopian future is the issue of consent. If these sex robots resemble humans, can they ever be capable of consenting? Proponents of sex robots might argue that these robots are not “persons” but essentially pieces of technology and therefore using them is no different from masturbation. However, this is an overly simplistic understanding of rights (and raises the philosophical question of sentience that cannot be dealt with in this piece). “Personhood”, and the rights and corresponding duties attached to this condition, are not simply a function of “consciousness” or being a natural person. We can never be absolutely certain that other human beings have consciousness, yet we grant them rights (see Solipsism). This is because other humans share features of humanity that resemble our own. We also grant residual “rights” to individuals who may not be conscious, for example those who are dead or in a coma (we cannot and should not have sex with those who are dead or in a coma), either because we can still empathise with the individual or that it offends something about our common humanity. If sex robots appear to be sentient in a way that resembles people (which presumably is the distinguishing

feature that makes them “robots” instead of sex “toys”), then at a certain point it does not preclude the possibility of granting them at least a limited subset of rights. Imagine the sexual enslavement of a robot that may not have (biological) consciousness, but in all other ways acts like a human being to the point where it is indistinguishable from a real human, even to the person performing the sex act. These robots can be constructed to resemble individuals in society who are incapable of giving legal consent (such as minors), thus no amount of technical “programming” would be able to bypass what is essentially a social and legal problem.

Even in the cases where these robots do not quite act like humans (say they are just advanced sex dolls), and are instead designed to perform specific (sexual) functions, there is still a strong case against them as they will likely perpetuate rape culture. This argument is a variation of the first argument – *even if* these sex robots have no personhood and no rights, we should not simply adopt the libertarian line of absolute property rights and ignore the social costs. The ownership over a “thing” that partially resembles another human being causes us to objectify other people as (sex) objects, because our experiences with others are ultimately intersubjective and performative through the values and experiences which we have “learnt”. An analogy is how watching porn, which can be degrading or even violent, is a very private activity that is not moderated by public discourse. Porn may be legal but can still perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and certain expectations of sex. It is important to remember this motion is not about banning sex robots *per se* (although there is probably a strong case to do so or for heavily regulating it), but it is

asking us to make a judgment about whether one should “look forward” to such a world, even if we do not or are incapable of banning them. If we live in a world where human-like robots are objectified for sexual pleasure, it can have various negative flow-on effects for the progress of feminism.

When sex robots provide sex, or simulate “affection” or even offer “partnership” on-demand, we ought to ask the question – what becomes of love? Humans have an enormous need for affection, but what happens when we become incapable of giving it? Love becomes meaningless when it is not part of a bigger process of interacting with another human being, which comes with compromise and working through adversity together. Love is more than just the hormones flowing through our bodies, which at best only provide a physiological and descriptive explanation. Love is a social phenomenon that cannot be explained by disaggregating it into its constituent components. It is already under assault by materialism, consumerism and science. What happens in a world where even love is commoditised and the final part of the human condition becomes something that is simply purchased, easily substituted and even disposed of? Humans are already increasingly atomised and love remains one of the only virtues that often shelters us from the harshest elements of a society where human worth can already be quantified, bought and sold. In this age of obsession and want, the proliferation of sex robots in the future could finally tear away at the remnants of our humanity. With only sex and no love, the irony is that in the end, we become the robots: we are no different from these technological advancements that we expect to liberate us. ■



finding art in the sciences & truth in the arts

zachary ardern gets philosophical and explores the flaws of scientism

Scientific imperialism has the short-term effect of gutting humanities departments, which is fairly disastrous for culture. The long-term effects though are even worse, undermining science itself and ending in epistemological relativism, furthering the downward spiral of doom.

The non-scientific distortion of *scientism* is a scourge on society, but the pursuit of natural science is still a noble and essential task. Scientism claims that only science provides knowledge of the world. To say science is not everything – that there are non-scientific forms of knowledge – is not to say it is nothing. Those bent on reductionism may stick their fingers in

their ears and insist I'm anti-science – I'll let you work out whether the charge sticks. The humanities currently feel pressured to establish their scientific status, because what it really means to know something is to know it scientifically. Or, so we're told. They cannot win such a battle, set up on the terms of an opponent, but they shouldn't feel the need. The sciences on the other hand, currently feel little pressure to demonstrate their artistic credentials, but would benefit from thinking about it.

The human aspects of science, such as history and psychology (among others), deserve more attention. Perhaps there is even a theology of science? Scientism and related schools of thought and practice can and should be critically studied by humanities researchers, and alternative philosophies need to be explored for the sake of culture and science. Limiting truth to the beautiful but limited

realm of science undercuts both rationality and metaphysics – both of which are important to science. Scientism undercuts rationality because reasoning is a human activity that cannot simply be reduced down to interactions between atoms. The laws of logic are immaterial and logical inferences are made by human persons, however this is fleshed out in terms of mind-body relationships. More obviously, scientism undercuts metaphysics, because the claim that there is anything beyond physics is taken to be absurd or irrelevant to real life if what matters is always able to be discovered by physics. But science depends on controversial metaphysical claims about the real nature of the world: including that causality is real, that natural law or something like it holds true, that the apparently abstract objects of mathematics somehow apply to the physical world, and that simplified conceptual models bear a good

relationship to reality.

If that wasn't enough, scientism is damaging to ethics, aesthetics, and testimony. If only scientific claims are knowable, ethics is destroyed. There is no plausible scientific description of an ethical fact that explains its ethical nature as right or wrong – ethical properties simply are not scientific properties. This, however, does not stop them being real and apprehensible by us. It is true to say that torturing a child for fun is wrong. Sure, we can give scientific accounts of pain and pleasure, but science doesn't explain why pain should be bad and pleasure good. Ethics are a foundation of the scientific project because not all science is equally worthy of pursuit. What counts as an "important" discovery often has an ethical edge to it, which scientism unjustifiably discounts. This view of the world also obliterates beauty, making it an incidental property that humans happen to have a preference for, rather than a real and important feature of the world. Of course, whether beauty is real or purely culturally constructed is debated, but aesthetic properties do seem to be important in science itself, as well as a core foundation of music and art. Mathematical physicists are known to prioritise theories they find elegant or beautiful. Paul Dirac, for instance, who was deeply anti-philosophical early in life, gained an increasing appreciation for this and said, "It is more important to have beauty in one's equations than to have them fit experiment." British mathematician GH Hardy said that "Beauty is the first test; there is no permanent place in the world for ugly mathematics." A 2014 study in *Journal in Frontiers of Neuroscience* titled "the experience of mathematical beauty and its neural correlates" found that equations classed as "beautiful" by mathematicians produced similar neural responses to great art. If beauty really helps us get to true physical theories, this is truly astounding.

Finally, scientism undermines the legitimacy of human testimony. Most of our knowledge of the world is based either on direct experience or on the testimony of other people in some form. Science itself depends on a vast network of trust; on accurate transmission of information and, perhaps more importantly, on sincere motives of those involved. Historical claims, including things of supreme interest in politics, economics, sociology, theology, and many branches of science, depend on testimonial

evidence. But they're seldom repeatable or testable. Without these things, science falls. Not immediately – for most scientists aren't aware of how crucial these things are to science, but eventually, entrenched scepticism about these areas would destroy scientific consensus on any conceivable topic. Scientists should be among the first to defend the importance of ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and testimony, as well as rationality – for science's sake!

Okay – people will tend to agree to the falsehood of scientism after hearing some of these arguments (after all, only one or two need to be okay for it to fall). But, not so fast! What, after all, is the alternative? Perhaps the pendulum could swing away from scientism and towards romanticism or subjectivism or mysticism – an emphasis on the aesthetic and intuitive over the empirical, analytical and understandable. But this would deny science, because it is a successful project in describing the world and making helpful predictions from it, allowing for advances in technology, healthcare and innovation. Perhaps even more importantly, or at least more ironically, subjectivism undermines the integrity of the humanities. To retreat away from science or the objective in face of the claims of scientism is to needlessly cede territory to an ideology based on brash façade and assumption rather than argument. We don't need to accept that objectivity is limited to the reducible, repeatable and testable. Interestingly, the foundations of science itself are actually human perceptual experiences, which on the individual level are fundamentally irreducible, unrepeatable and untestable. History, literature, music, and other real aspects of human experience are similarly based on a host of personal encounters, real choice, concepts, and other irreducible events. Though irreducible and mediated through human subjects, there are real empirical components to all human intellectual projects and a shared understanding between people – a presupposition of all communication and art – relies on a shared reality. The purely subjective or mystical may provide entertainment for a hermit, but not the foundations of a culture. While communication is seldom if ever perfect, there is a shared human nature of some sort, as well as proper ends for it – the discovery and fulfilment of

which together constitute human flourishing.

It may be objected that this ambitious article sets up to solve a simple false dichotomy – clearly empirical, analytical, intuitional, and aesthetic aspects are all needed to make sense of the world and all sensible people take the combination for granted. Perhaps so! But how are we to hold all of these things together? And can we do so while hanging on to the basic presupposition of naturalism (that nature is all that exists) that undergirds modernity? And, if we dare to drop it, what then? Science does really describe the real world, but the real world seems to extend beyond the boundaries of science. Or, more accurately, we should talk of "the sciences" rather than a monolithic Science. As a Christian, I happen to think there is an ultimate harmony between the personal and the physical, as illustrated in all of the key biblical elements of creation, fall, incarnation, atonement, and resurrection. On this account, creation has personal or mental aspects, like mathematical order, beauty, and ethical requirements because of its personal source. These personal aspects are shaped by the character of this God, revealed as love. And it also has "impersonal" empirical aspects because there is real metaphysical distinction between creature and Creator.

So, "what is truth?" The question was cynically asked by a provincial Roman prefect in the world's most famous unjust trial 1983 years ago. Perhaps the answer is still the same – the truth is ultimately personal or at least has personal dimensions and stands before us – paradoxically awaiting *our* verdict. To not choose is to choose. To not decide is to decide in favour of the status quo. In our culture, this is probably a form of scientism, which in its vain attempts to swallow up humanity causes much damage. To decide for the personal over the impersonal though, even to be open to exploring it, opens doors to other worlds. If we keep our feet on the ground and remain open to scientific critique while allowing our minds to deeply explore dangerous ideals like truth, beauty, and justice, perhaps our actions in both the sciences and the arts will better promote both human flourishing and understanding. ■

"Perhaps the pendulum could swing away from scientism and towards romanticism or subjectivism or mysticism – an emphasis on the aesthetic and intuitive over the empirical, analytical and understandable."



Pie on ya face

ARTS EDITORIAL WITH SAMANTHA GIANOTTI

The other day I slunk away from my job serving what are presumably humans but are arguably virulent and aggressive aliens in wigs à la Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks*, to indulge in a Georgie Pie combo. That is a lie – it was a Georgie Pie Hunger Buster. It also comes with a Quarter Pounder and a sundae. I am not proud.

I sat in McDonald's, shoving seven-odd fries in my mouth at a time in order to make the most of my half-hour break before returning to serve said virulent aliens. As I was taking a bite of a particularly sloppy mince and cheese portion, making that weird "hoh hoh hoh" face as the hot dairy-meaty pie innards scalded the roof of my mouth, a man of fourscore and seven years slowed his swift stroll to wink at me in my present sweaty state.

This was not the kind of meet-cute I was promised by the old man in *The Holiday*. (I'm specifying this to ensure that people know I am not a knowledgeable film aficionado, but learn all of my movie lingo from the old man in *The Holiday*. His name is Arthur Abbott and I have seen that movie thirty-seven times.) Where is Hugh Grant offering me a travel book about Turkey? Where is Leonardo DiCaprio peering at me through a fishtank? Where is Oscar Isaac, complimenting me on how well I sport his leather jacket, biting his lip as he claps me on the shoulder? (#stormpilotforever) Instead of Tom Hanks bringing you daisies once he finds out you're the woman he's been emailing

Godfather quotes to for months, you get a bunch of d-bags leering at you out of passing car windows, or old men turning your high-fat low-nutrition lunch into a spectator sport.

This sort of interaction is not uncommon. I went to friends to ask them to share their own bizarre or uncomfortable experiences of being hit on or catcalled, hoping to find some hilarious tidbits to share with you all, faithful *Craccum* readers. What I got instead were a series of stories that just made me really fucking upset. Friends asked if they were virgins by creepy men who loitered for far too long in the frozen yoghurt store where they worked, others subject to humiliation by men, decades older, yanking towels off their bodies as they walked home from a day at the beach. I was furious, dear readers, the opening riff of Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It" building to a crescendo in my head.

A recent article posted by Fox News (abandon all hope, ye who enter here) posed the question of whether 'raunchy' female leads in films were a help or a hindrance to the feminist movement. The article raised the point that the aim of feminism is not just to encourage the sexual liberation and promiscuity of women, but to encourage women's strength in all areas. This is true. The article also states that Hollywood "needs to include women that can be classy without being crude; women who adhere to values and human dignity – maybe even ones who pray. Right now, Hollywood sends the message that only one kind of woman exists. One kind of woman is valued." This is not true. And this type of woman being lauded and admired is also not a bad thing.

We've seen films populated with women overawed by men, daunted by men, subdued and overpowered. Alongside this Fox article were links to other articles, featuring women in bikinis and titles like "Alessandra is a bikini babe" and "Ava Sambora's sexy photo shoot". For too long women's success and likability has centred on their attractiveness, and ensuring that they're cool and confident but, you know, know their place. And maybe we're just a little tired of it.

Without a doubt, films should not tell young women that there is one type of person that they should aspire to be. We should be able to have Mary Poppinses, Amy Schumers, Leslie Knopes and Fraulein Marias. But when women are still afraid to walk home at night, when their bodies, their clothes, and their goddamn McDonald's combos remain fair game for comment or lascivious gesticulation, maybe confident, self-assured, kind of crass women are not the worst thing we can see on our screens. Women who pull the corners of their mouth up with their middle fingers as they are told by strange men to smile (*Broad City*) or women who cut off men's penises in retaliation for acts of horrific sexual violence (*I Spit on Your Grave*). That one may be just a little too far, but we can embrace Jennifer Hill's fighting spirit without the dismemberment, I suppose. If we see these women on our screens, women may know they don't have to stand for this kind of shit anymore – and others may learn that no longer are they going to. If this wasn't raggedy ol' print media, and I could link you all to the music video for Twisted Sister's only Top 40 single, I would. ■



a nightmare on film street

the brutal murder of quality horror

MATTHEW DENTON AND MARIA FORTE RAMOS

Horror films are a special breed. Unlike other genre, horrors have the power to invoke strong emotional reactions that are rarely felt. The sense of fear, tension and dread that seeps through a horror film creates a sense of heart-pounding adrenaline that thrills, without experiencing the actual pain and terror firsthand.

Simply being a horror fan forms strong ties to other horror fans. Horror buffs are a tight-knit community where movie marathons are in abundance and themes and style are discussed and dissected. There is always someone willing to experience these emotions with you. It's always a confusing notion to find those that hate horrors. Apparently they're "boring", "stupid", not "fun". Well, that's not true. At all, actually.

However, it must be conceded that most 21st century horror films are utterly shit. These horrors are boring and stupid. The thrills are cheap. They don't make sense and don't try to.

Horror films in particular are major victims of Hollywood box-office butchery. Most genre have been subject to stupid sequels and regretful remakes. But horrors suffer from these crimes more than any other genre. Since the start of this century, there have been 70+ horror remakes and well over a hundred sequels by the US film industry. These remakes include

redoing horror classics like *Poltergeist* or *Carrie* (twice), restarting franchises like *Halloween* or *Friday the 13th*, or making English versions of foreign language films like *The Ring* (or every other Japanese horror movie, really) because subtitles are "too hard". Both combined, that's on average at least ten remakes or sequels being released a year.

The biggest problem with remakes or sequels is that they too often lack the originality of the first film and are simply created to milk every dollar by cashing in on the same tropes of the original. The movies become predictable. The scares are expected and this dulls the hit. It then becomes boring and stupid. See: *Poltergeist*, *When A Stranger Calls* and any sequel with a number 4 and above (if it's a sequel and you don't see a number, then it's definitely past four).

That doesn't mean that some sequels or remakes aren't good – in fact, some are very well done. The recent *Evil Dead* remake used the technological advances to deliver supreme shock and gore and gave new direction to the franchise. *Saw 2* expanded the *Saw* universe to an exciting world.

Another issue is the exploitation of certain plot premises or styles, in particular demonic possessions and found footage films. When done right, these films can be brilliantly frightening (*The Blair Witch Project* is an absolute favourite, wonderfully tense). Yet the early success of these films has caused a regurgitation of copycats with the belief that the very premise and style will invoke terror without

actually attempting anything innovative. See *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* or *The Gallows*. Once again the genre is cheapened by the attempt to profit from it.

What is noticeable then is when a horror is not one of these categories, it often receives great acclaim for *simply not being in one of these categories* and sometimes this is not deserved. *It Follows* is a prime example of this. While it is still a good movie, its label as a masterpiece of horror is a definite stretch. *It Follows* succeeds in establishing a mood and the crafty and crisp camerawork is impressive, but there are few genuine scares, the tension is weak and the ending is incredibly anti-climactic. However, the poor field of comparison has given this film far more credit than it's worth.

Horror is at its best when it's dynamic and new, but still delivers the fear and tension integral to the genre. Quality films with genuine scares have been *The Descent*, *A Tale of Two Sisters*, *Let The Right One In* (based off an equally superb book), *The Conjuring*, *Sinister*, *Oculus* and (unashamedly) *Paranormal Activity*. Special mention also to *The Babadook* for a genuinely great film that, while not as scary, was brilliantly acted with a great concept and *What We Do In The Shadows* for being a hilarious horror comedy (although hardly a horror).

So before you claim horror is boring or stupid, start with these in mind. You might get scared, but that's half the fun. ■



Everything You've Come to Expect

The Last Shadow Puppets
ALBUM REVIEW BY CATRIONA BRITTON

It's been eight years. I feel like the old woman from *Titanic*, having eagerly awaited the resurfacing of Alex Turner and Miles Kane, the dynamic duo comprising The Last Shadow Puppets, from the depths of the Brit alt-rock sea. And finally it has come. Turner, now a millionaire rockstar, still has enough swagger to burn into this side-project. Kane, having developed his own fanbase over the years, is ever the trusty sidekick in promotional photos where they're clad in matching outfits – something that perhaps harks back to a bygone era, but instead comes across decidedly twee.

So, naturally, after investing a solid amount of time in their primary musical outfits, you'd "expect" them to pick up where they left off from debut album *The Age of the Understatement* – an album that was met with high critical acclaim. This is exactly what they've done. A touch of the galloping 60s-inspired string ballads can be heard in opening track "Aviator", but on the whole they've moved into the soulful 70s with soft-rock guitars and a two-step lilt to their beats. Those strings are still there though, bordering on monotonous, still lusting after a Bond theme.

Turner's knack for a good melody and his incredible talent as a lyricist continues to shine through, as seen in "Miracle Aligner". Kane even gets to wail and groove on "Bad Habits", which is a belter of a single. Overall, there is more of a touch in the experimental with these tunes, as if Turner can truly release himself creatively from rockstar to crooner without the need to appeal to the masses with a good riff. ■



RuPaul's Drag Race

Season 8
TELEVISION REVIEW BY ASTRID CROSLAND

The show that keeps on giving is back again, welcoming twelve new queens to the work-room and the runway with high hopes of being America's Next Drag Superstar". This season is more professional than ever, the queens coiffed and painted more flawlessly than before.

Artistry and craftsmanship have truly come together so far this season, both in the queen's looks and the excess shade thrown around by the editing team. Admittedly, forced feminisation of verbs and nouns is getting thin, and frequently bordering on outright transphobic, and the contestant queens seem to be increasingly distancing themselves from RuPaul's language. Ru is known for being extremely resistant to change – especially when others suggest it – and this could be the death knell in a society more aware of the power of language and queer community histories.

Highlights so far this season include Acid Betty's neon deep sea finfolk runway look, Bob the Drag Queen as Chocolate Chip Cookie in the *Empire* skit, and guest judge Chris Stein clocking Chi Chi for wearing the same boots in back to back performances. Next week is Snatch Game, the episode where you get a real feel of where the queens are going to line up later on in the competition; previous high placers in Snatch Game tend to get to the final three of their respective seasons, with season five's Jinkx Monsoon's Little Edie going down in "herstory" as one of the most accurate and entertaining impersonations in the run of Snatch Game. Jinkx, incidentally, went on to win her season.

My final three predictions for this season: Bob the Drag Queen, Kim Chi, and Thorxy Thor. ■

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The Path

TELEVISION REVIEW BY EUGENIA WOO

We often associate religion in films and television shows with controversy. Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* was a box-office hit in 2004, but was also accused of being virulently anti-semitic by film critics. The film adaptation of Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons* was populated with villains who wouldn't have seemed out of place in a Disney movie – the Vatican newspaper only gave it a positive review because they thought a negative one would draw more attention to the franchise. Rotten Tomatoes hasn't been kind to faith on the silver screen, and it was with this rather discouraged mindset that I sat down to watch the pilot episode of *The Path*.

Produced by Jason Katims of *Friday Night Lights* fame and innovated by playwright Jessica Goldberg, *The Path* is Hulu's first heavyweight fighter in the TV arena. It stars Aaron Paul and Michelle Monaghan as a married couple living in a compound as followers of the Meyerist movement – a cult-like religion that believes in ascension after death. Hugh Dancy, fresh off his celebrated performance in *Hannibal*, plays the tortured leader of the movement whose attitude to religion rivals Old Testament revenge in brutality.

The pilot centres around Paul's character having a crisis of faith, disrupting his idyllic suburban existence with fevered dreams and panicked hallucinations. The claustrophobic cinematography and foreboding orchestral score serves to amplify the tension between the characters and their conflicting desires. Monaghan delivers a tour de force as a paranoid believer caught between her worry for her husband and the demands of her faith. While the series is disadvantaged by not having a wider narrative focus beyond its trio of leads, it was unsettling and offbeat enough to get me to tune in again next week. ■



Hunt for the Wilderpeople

FILM REVIEW BY GEORGIA HARRIS

Taika Waititi seems to be on a one-man mission to bolster the New Zealand comedy film genre out of oblivion. Following his other hits *Boy*, *Eagle vs Shark* and *What We Do in the Shadows*, *Wilderpeople* is a bush-whacking adventure sprinkled liberally with the comic relief and Kiwi idioms that we've come to expect from Waititi, and will certainly go down as an instant classic.

Ricky, played by Julian Dennison, is a foster kid whose destructive behaviour has left him all out of options that don't involve juvenile detention. His new foster parents, Auntie Bella (Rima Te Wiata) and Uncle Hec (Sam Neill) are his last chance at living in a normal home. Without spoiling the story for anyone who is planning to see it, the film is centred on Hec, Ricky, and his dog Tupac running away into the Urewera Ranges, and the nationwide manhunt that ensues.

Many things make this film shine; the Wes-Anderson-esque cinematography, the references to Kiwi classics like *Goodbye Pork Pie* and *Smash Palace*, and the often cringe-worthy, but always inherently Kiwi cast. Rachel House, Rhys Darby, Stan Walker, John Campbell and Oscar Kightley all have screen-time in Waititi's fourth feature.

It's by no means a perfect movie. The acting seems forced and awkward at times, threatening to overshadow the charm of the film. It's a pretty predictable plot line, and it struggles for originality at times. But, it would appear I am in the minority with that view; the movie theatre was packed out, full of hearty Kiwi chortles the whole time. ■



John Cleese and Eric Idle: Together at Last... For the Very First Time

SHOW REVIEW BY JAMES BROWN

When I heard about this, the very first thought that popped into my mind was this one: this is going to be two hours of them stroking their egos over their long and highly successful career. But as a colossal Python fan I shelled out over two hundred dollars for the privilege to be able to say, "I've seen John Cleese, Eric Idle, Robin Williams and Billy Connolly live."

With expectations somewhere in the middle, I found myself half-right. Much of the show was Cleese and Idle talking about how Python came to be and spending a lot of time stroking each other's egos, but they also acted out a few sketches from a previous work, *At Last the 1948 Show*, which were fresh and very humorous. John Cleese lamented the decline in controversial humour in an increasingly politically-correct world. He actually made us think about whether that decline is a good thing or not. "If you can't make fun of other people, how can you sympathise with them?"

All these great comedians are getting on, and given the amount of time the two spent sitting down and watching clips, you could clearly see it. When the two spent a while discussing death, and Eric Idle's amazement at how popular his song is at funerals, you could feel the chill of mortality in the room. All these great comedians who carved out comedy for us are gone or going, and it was a pleasure to get to see them in the flesh while I could. If only the ice creams at the Civic were cheaper. ■



Cheap as chips: cinema deals

(Buying chips at the cinema is not cheap, and therefore not recommended)

If you're tired of sacrificing your first-born child at the movie theatre counter just to snag a ticket to the latest Kevin James shitshow, here is a run-down of when and where you can find yourself some cheap tickets around Auckland:

Academy Cinemas: \$5 tickets to all films, all day on Wednesdays / Student tickets: \$9 before 5pm on weekdays, and \$12 the rest of the time.

Berkeley Cinemas: \$9.90 tickets Sunday through to Wednesday.

Capitol Cinemas: Student tickets: \$11 on Tuesdays / \$12.50 after 5pm on weekdays, and on weekends.

Hoyts Cinemas: Hoyts Rewards Members: sign up and gain points to redeem towards free tickets, plus entitlement to \$11 tickets for the "Movie of the Week".

Event Cinemas: \$12 student tickets on Tuesdays / Cinebuzz Rewards: join and rack up points to redeem for a freebie, add a student concession and get \$10 tickets every time (woo).

Lido Cinemas: Student tickets: \$11 on Tuesdays / \$12.50 after 5pm on weekdays, and on weekends.

Rialto Cinemas: \$11 student tickets on Tuesdays / \$13 for students the rest of the time, which is pretty sweet. ■



Do Film Critics Matter?

The talk of the film world right now is *Batman v Superman*, DC's latest big film that has, of course, made a killing (nearly \$600 million at the time of publishing). The divide between film critics and audiences was evident here after critics came out of early screenings mostly unimpressed.

We've all seen the Sad Batman video, showing Batfleck with a defeated expression accompanied by Simon and Garfunkel's "Sound of Silence" while hearing snippets of the harsh reviews. The video went viral and incited a flurry of comments in support of the film, saying things like "critics just want wussy Marvel" and "critics always hate on superhero movies".

Not only has every Marvel film (besides *Fantastic Four*) been praised by critics, but the darker, less "wussy" *Dark Knight* trilogy impressed critics so much that they forced the Academy to allow for more Best Picture nominees after *The Dark Knight*

was snubbed. It could be argued that critical praise for superhero films from the last decade has had a massive, positive impact on ticket sales.

There is a reasonable point that some people made in the Sad Batman comments though - critics say this, but who cares? Is there any use for film critics if nobody seems to trust their opinion?

Though we may not all admit it, film critics are a net positive for us. Every time we go to the movies we have to spend (at least) \$10 and we're spoilt for choice, so it helps if we have some perspective on whether a film is good or not. Of course, we all have our own opinion and will disagree from time to time, but watching films with a positive critical consensus on Rotten Tomatoes may give us a better shot at watching a goodie.

But Rotten Tomatoes isn't perfect either. The Fresh/Rotten rating to indicate the sway of consensus can often hide dividing opinions on a film. It also gives the impression that critics meet in a room and agree on whether they like a film, which is not actually true, since individual film critics frequently state their

own opinion and give reviews that differ from the consensus.

Audience criticisms of Rotten Tomatoes are usually less nuanced, and refer to the fact that critics didn't like a film that they themselves fancied. IMDb is often the preferred choice for these people, which is surprising given that IMDb's biases are clear. In their Top 250, all three *Lord of the Rings* films sit in the top fifteen, and there are five Christopher Nolan films in the Top 50. While these are quality films and directors, it's obvious that action and spectacle films are favoured over drama, with the exception of the classics like *Casablanca* (placed 33rd).

The point of film critics is not to tell audiences that they can't enjoy films that they, the critics, didn't like. Film critics work for us and the industry to unearth the great films of our time and dismiss those not worthy of our money. So you might like *Batman v Superman*, and that's okay, but it's important to recognise that film critics aren't the only people out there with biases. ■ JACK CALDWELL

Outrageous Fortune: Taking your roots from the ground to your bed

New Zealand television is the forgotten ginger step-son of modern media. It doesn't quite grasp the façade of wisdom of newspaper, nor can it compete with the speed, diversity, and hilarity offered by the internet. Television, in its entirety, remains in a crisis of identity.

The content straddles the wick of sincerity and popularity, often producing neither and succumbing to the waxy dregs of Mike Hosking's ashen glare and tweed suit. Few shows have ever nurtured a national zeitgeist like that of *Outrageous Fortune*. The show looks into the lives, tribulations, and coital interjections of the West family.

Outrageous Fortune brings with it a sense of unity through the latency of Kiwi affairs, the "backyard" of families. Part of the charm is to present the foibles of hiding reality behind the

guide of familial tropes. Characters within the show are all clearly of a particular personality. No matter their attempts to deviate or deceive, they're never happy until they present themselves in veritable circumstances. Similarly, New Zealanders seem to set up their own identity. This is seen whether it's a student abroad applying a poorly presented accent or those that indulge in preaching elocution online, despite their innermost desires, a driving passion, to use the declarative particle we've come to know and love, eh bro?

The kiwi ethos has always been an almost unattainable optimism. Various trends still linger within our modern day apathy. *Outrageous Fortune* preaches a sermon of the pursuit of desire. Many Mitre 10 ads would lead us to believe that a deck is a one-man job. The age-old slogan dangles off the sleeve of every Kiwi, from the half-baked primer on the window sills or burnt brownies left in the oven never to be consumed: "DIY, it's in our DNA". The show plays on kiwi

intuition of wealthy pride, an ingrained sense of that to which we must aspire. The rhetorical rags to riches is eschewed. Instead of working to our limitations, we must work around them. There is never a physical portrayal of wealth in the West household, there is only the ethic of determination. A sense that wealth comes not through the dregs of crime, but the principle thought to value. This pride exists as the idea that we can get it if we tried. It seems that *Outrageous Fortune* isn't our law-diverging fantasy or union as kiwis, but our sense of "we could do it". We manage our pride as currency, a pride that we could. We could change a flag, we should be proud of that. We could build that retaining wall; we have the ability - that is enough.

It's *Outrageous Fortune's* unpretentious mockery that lends itself to be this touchstone of Kiwi identity. A mild satire on our absence of activism, but by no means an absence of conviction. We are but the west-side yoke. We are kiwi. ■ RICKY H. KINGS

The Swede Sounds of Scandinavian Pop

Imagine this scenario: you're at an ultra-cool party and there is a tall, probably blonde, and very attractive person sitting in the corner looking lonely.

You walk over to them, hoping to strike up a conversation, but are met with only a dismissive "hey" in an odd accent you can't quite place. After a few more stabs in the dark (that reveal nothing about the person except for their peculiarly perfect grasp of the English language), you realise: they're Norwegian! Of course they are. Don't worry – this kind of thing happens to people all the time in New Zealand. But there's a problem. Have you ever thought about what happens in Scandinavia apart from Bjork, a perfect social structure, and lots of snow? Probably not. What are you going to do to impress them? Talk about under the radar Scandinavian music, of course! You won't know you needed this list until it's too late. These bands are excellent in their own right, so you also might enjoy listening to them as you ponder the likelihood of meeting your dream date through an engaging conver-

sation about the Scandinavian indie scene.

Mew (Denmark): Mew formed in the mid '90s while its members were in high school together, and they've been making great albums ever since. Their drummer's style, lush with gentle long-decay cymbals and deep-tuned snares, very much enables an image I have of Mew's music as a fairytale. Many of their songs, with high-pitched breathy male vocals, eclectic guitar riffs, and sweeping orchestral arrangements, culminate to support this idea. They're a great band for getting lost in your own imagination, and they've been a long-time favorite of mine for nearly ten years.

RECOMMENDED SONGS: SNOW BRIGADE, INTRODUCING PALACE PLAYERS, SPECIAL, COMFORTING SOUNDS

School '94 (Sweden): In one sentence: Swedish Hanson-like dream pop with a female lead singer. They're probably the most commercially friendly group on this list, combining a vulnerable, soulful vocal style with upbeat musicianship. However like many bands starting out in the present-day music scene, they seem to have fallen victim to the fact that music costs money and time to make.

Everything on their first EP is an instant earworm, and I am eagerly awaiting their debut album, hopefully forthcoming this year pending life's aforementioned practicalities.

RECOMMENDED SONGS: LIKE YOU, HANG OUT IN HAZE, EASIER

Madrugada (Norway): This band is how Nick Cave would sound if he was backed by a heavy-ish 90s/2000s rock sound (and most importantly, if he could sing in key). They're somewhat more fun to listen to with this image in mind, though in a general sense they fit the dark, depressing tone of introspective male-dominated alt rock, which seems apt if creating music in Norway's winter.

RECOMMENDED SONGS: BELLADONNA, BEAUTYPROOF, STRANGE COLOUR BLUE

Honourable mentions: Boat Club (for writing music that seems inspired by sunny islands while living in Sweden), Whitest Boy Alive (best known for providing "Burning" as the soundtrack for an old New Zealand advertisement), Little Dragon (who you should already know about), and Sigur Ros (every hipster's favourite 'obscure indie group').

■ CHRISTY BURROWS

spotlight

Movies My Dad Recommends

Maybe once a week, sometimes twice, or three times if there's not too much happening, I'll receive a text from my father (in Wellington) telling me his thoughts on whichever movie he's watching that evening.

I enjoy these recommendations because, with study and work, I find it difficult to find time to watch *anything*. With his tips I can convince peers and acquaintances alike that I'm literate across a wide range of cinematic adventures. I asked him to give me a top five (in no particular order). They're all movies I've seen as well, although I don't think my endorsement holds nearly as much weight as his does.

Kaikohe Demolition: "I didn't know what I was getting when I picked it up, but it seemed to work really well as a documentary about the far north...with a demolition thrown in." When my dad first saw Florian Habicht's documentary (available on YouTube) about five years ago, he talked about it for weeks, citing the rest of the family's mirth at his rental of a "demolition movie" as the reason it was particularly good. It is good, possibly one of the best movies filmed

in the Kaikohe region. Habicht captures his subjects with real warmth and engagement, while maintaining his own directorial eccentricities.

Two-Lane Blacktop: "A movie with no start or no end...a really good American movie that no one's ever heard about." Almost fifty years on, *Two-Lane Blacktop's* charm may have been overridden by a more famous road movie from the New Hollywood movement (*Easy Rider*), but that doesn't mean it shouldn't be required viewing for all aspiring members of the counter-culture. Three street racers, identified by their roles rather than first names ("The Driver," "The Mechanic," "GTO"), race cross-country for pink slips, encountering a hitchhiker and interpersonal turmoil along the way.

Burden of Dreams: Les Blank, one of my father's favourite filmmakers, made this documentary on the set of Werner Herzog's operatic *Fitzcarraldo*. It's one of Blank's few features, the majority of his output being short pieces on subjects varying from the multiple uses of garlic to the thriving polka scene of the 1980s. In Dad's words: "An amazing documentary that, in a funny way, is much better than *Fitzcarraldo*. Both *Fitzcarraldo* and the documentary are about the same thing...a man that is doing something stupid."



Knife in the Water: "That was such a beautifully shot movie with only three actors in it. And the yacht. Elegant...with quite a lot of suspense." Roman Polanski excels at intimate tension. Watch *Rosemary's Baby*, watch *Repulsion*, and you'll agree. I believe the "boat-movie," as a genre, doesn't receive enough attention in critical circles. Watch *Knife in the Water*, *Jaws*, *Fitzcarraldo*, *African Queen*, and *Titanic*, and I think you'll agree there are some shared qualities worth discussing, such as how they're all set on boats.

The Seventh Seal: "An extraordinary movie with lots of exciting chess scenes. Death and Chess. Surprisingly funny, for a death and chess movie." I agree. ■ THEO MACDONALD

Labouring the Point

WITH ANA HARRIS

In my six-and-a-bit-years of uni, I've had seven different part time jobs. Three involved a casual contract. Two had no written employment agreement of any kind. Only one provided opportunities for paid leave. As for the rest, coming down with the flu meant a choice between dragging my snotty nosed self to work or missing out on a day of wages altogether.



Since the 1990s, New Zealand's labour force has suffered from increasing 'casualisation'. For employers, casual contracts are attractive because they provide more flexibility and come with fewer obligations. Bosses don't need to guarantee their employees a minimum number of hours, or worry about providing redundancy packages if they want to let people go. It's common in the retail and hospitality industries to be sent home after only an hour or two because the day isn't as busy as expected, despite being rostered on for an eight-hour shift. Sound familiar?

Unfortunately the flexible attitude doesn't necessarily go both ways. I worked as a retail assistant at Esprit for about six months during my third year. I was rostered on every Saturday, and was told it was my responsibility to find a replacement if I ever wanted a day off (despite my contract explicitly stating that I could back out of any shift as long as I provided 24 hours notice). A few weeks before Christmas I got a phone call from my manager asking me to work Boxing Day.

"Oh sorry," I said, "I'm actually going to be out of Auckland with my family over the Christmas period."

"I'm afraid that's not good enough. Everyone's expected to work Boxing Day, it's company policy."

"I don't remember reading that anywhere in the contract."

"Look it's not about the contract. It's just *something we do*."

Taking your boss to court is a terrifying thing to do. Any existing conflict in the workplace will almost certainly be escalated, making relationships tense and eye contact across the coffee machine more awkward than ever.

The prolific use of casual contracts creates instability and uncertainty for workers. They have no assurance of

set wages from week to week. This is particularly problematic for low-income individuals – like students or single parents – who rely on money from their 'casual' job to get by.

Something that a lot of people aren't aware of is that employers are actually supposed to provide permanent employment contracts to anyone who has an on-going expectation of work, especially if the job involves set days and hours. If your employment contract is headed 'casual' yet you're expected to turn up at the same time on the same day, or do a set number of hours, then you've probably signed the wrong kind of agreement. Casual contracts are intended for people who work irregularly, or on an 'as needed' basis, not students who work every Saturday from 10 to 5. To put it simply, casual contracts in this country are frequently misused to allow businesses to exploit part-time workers.

The good news is that New Zealand's employment laws tend to fall on the side of the little guy when it comes to spats over casual contracts. Courts don't really care whether employers specifically refer to arrangements as 'casual' or not, instead they'll look at actual obligations and expectations. Chances are, if I'd bothered to take Esprit to the Employment Court, any judge would have found that I should have been on a part-time permanent contract, because the company *treated* me like a permanent worker.

The bad news is that even though legal remedies are technically available, the system remains stacked against casual workers. For one thing, a hearing in the Employment Court costs about \$250, which for many students who work part-time hours is more than a week's wages. The higher a person's income, the more likely they can afford to go to court, the less likely they actually need to in the first place because they probably have the benefit of permanent employment.

Cost isn't the only barrier. Taking your boss to court is a terrifying thing to do. Any existing conflict in the workplace will almost certainly be escalated, making relationships tense and eye contact across the coffee machine more awkward than ever. Employers are also more likely to favour workers who don't rock the boat. Even precarious or uncertain working arrangements are better than none at all – most students aren't willing to risk their job altogether in the hopes of getting a better outcome through formal legal avenues.

So with the status quo against us, what can be done? We could lobby the government, but they'd probably pay no attention (and who has time for that anyway). We could put up with the situation, but that's pretty unsatisfactory. The most likely outcome? We'll sit tight until graduation when we can *finally* secure a stable income (at least for those with a degree in engineering or finance). Of course, the graduate job market comes with its own set of hurdles, but that's a topic for another column. ■

The Good, The Bad, and The High-Grossing

WITH RAYHAN LANGDANA

There's a great Dave Chappelle joke about going to the circus. We don't watch the lion-tamer's act because we *want* the lion to be tamed, he says, but because we want to say that *we were there* when the lion-tamer was mauled to death. We go because we want the front-row ticket to the trainwreck; we want to be able to show off our blood-spattered shirts as we stand around the water cooler on Monday morning.

In the eyes of most film critics around the world, recent release *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* is 140ish minutes of the lion-tamer getting mauled. Kinder reviewers have referred to it as "Yawn of Justice" (a pretty average call, if you ask me). A comment that better represents the consensus on this film came from Robbie Collin of *The Telegraph*, who wrote: "No major blockbuster in years has been this incoherently structured, this seemingly uninterested in telling a story with clarity and purpose." Even poor, recently divorced Ben Affleck was forced to deflect Jimmy Fallon's sycophantic praise on a recent episode of *The Tonight Show*, telling the audience that "this movie isn't for the critics" and imploring them to believe him when he said that "people *like* this film." Affleck, who went from directing Best Picture-winner *Argo* to donning the cape and cowl, must be battling flashbacks to the *Gigli* fiasco of the early 2000s.

So: critics hate it, its own stars look on the verge of tears during its press tour, and apparently the team behind the upcoming *Suicide Squad* movie has been desperately adding jokes to that film in order to pre-empt and prevent comparisons to *Batman v Superman*.

What's the result of this? People have been buying tickets to see a film they already think sucks. The movie has crossed \$500,000,000.00 worldwide and counting. It had one of the biggest opening weekends in the history of film, and has ensured that Henry Cavill's Superman and Affleck's Bruce Wayne will be appearing onscreen for countless future instalments. Why? Perhaps the tickets are being bought for the same reasons as those in Dave Chappelle's joke – we want a front-row seat to the bloodbath. We want to be part of the narrative; we want to tell people that we saw, up close, a piece of shit film that cost \$400million(ish) to make.

This is actually a really affirming, ennobling message. It shows us that in our fractured age of smartphones and sub tweeting, large-scale catastrophe still has the capacity to move and even unite us. What's funny or what's moving or what's "high art" might be subjective, but every once in awhile we find something that is just objectively reprehensible and worthy of our unified scorn. The power of the cinema to shake us may have

dimmed, as we have grown numb to longform visual stimulation, but we can still be brought together in opposition to a product that was solely made to please us.

I think of queues outside cinemas across the world, whether in the Deep South of the USA or the muggy streets of Mumbai. I think of countless group chats on Facebook with filmgoers (comic book aficionados and armchair fans alike) finding fault with every second of Zach Snyder's hyperkinetic camerawork and Hans Zimmer's retirement-inducing score. It shows humankind's bottomless ability to unite against something. It's like the Donald Trump of films – we don't know what we do like, but we sure as hell don't like it and that's something we can agree on.

In years to come, *Batman v Superman* will be remembered fondly for signifying the moment where we finally projectile vomited after gorging at the buffet for too long. The moment when we finally had a taste of our own medicine; when we woke up and smelt the coffee. And I think this is why I enjoyed the film so much – after years of eating burgers, I was served the juiciest, fattiest patty I've ever seen. My taste buds had been growing ready for this moment without me even knowing it, and in that moment – after that first bite, oil trickling down my chin – I was happy. No salad will suffice. Subtle flavours and degustation menus are better suited to those in dinner jackets. For me, from my position sunk deep into my couch, in my sweatpants and *San Andreas* t-shirt, this is all I deserve. ■



It shows humankind's bottomless ability to unite against something. It's like the Donald Trump of films – we don't know what we do like, but we sure as hell don't like it and that's something we can agree on.

Sex, Drugs & Electoral Rolls: Thirty Xanatos Pileup

WITH CURWEN ARES ROLINSON

One of the great and regrettable truths of politics is that some of the more significant events are often less due to broad-spanning democratic consultation and more to close-knit cabal and conspiracy.

And, as everybody knows, we are hard-wired to hate cabals and conspiracy – particularly if we're not part of the cabal and/or conspiracy in question.

However, in a country - and a politisphere - as small as New Zealand's, the trouble is that even the relatively smaller cabals (to say nothing of the conspiracies) almost invariably find themselves rubbing up against one another, if not outright intersecting. If philosophy is searching in a dark room for a black cat that possibly isn't there, then the serious business of politics is arguably dancing around a smoke-filled back-room, while semi-inevitably forming a conga-line with several other interested parties so you don't keep on running into each other and treading on everyone else's feet.

The best example for this that I can think of in recent days is the apparently inexorable migration of one Shane Jones from his sunning-spots in the mid-Pacific back to NZ national politics - and into the indefatigable company of New Zealand First.

So what is a "Thirty Xanatos Pileup", and why is this one? Well, the term was coined by the excellent TV Tropes website, and refers to a confusing intersecting confluence of several different conspiratorial efforts, with unpredictable and potentially disastrous results - like a several-car pileup on a motorway, but with elaborate plans in the style of *Gargoyles* villain David Xanatos in the place of automobiles.

And while co-ordinated comeback efforts for has-been politicians are virtually a dime-a-dozen heading into election years (witness, for instance, the many and various political reincarnations of John Banks - or, for that matter, Laila Harré's stint as Internet Party leader), there's something altogether more convoluted and cloak-and-dagger about this latest effort at what we're tentatively calling the Game of Jones.

For starters, there's the sheer number (and boggling diversity) of players involved.

This isn't just a Shane Jones operation. Nor is it even, really, a New Zealand First (i.e. Winston) and Shane Jones operation. Instead, by my crude count, there are at least four different parties/factions pushing a Jones comeback - enlisting all manner of freelancers, mercenaries, Party Insiders,

and assorted other agents for the purpose of making things happen.

First up, there are the non-Winston NZ First people. A certain Parliamentary Services staffer called Api Dawson has been pushing a Jones-into-NZF bandwagon not quite single-handedly since about 2012. It was about then that mentions started appearing in mainstream media outlets, such as the National Business Review, of a potential Jones defection from Labour to NZF, and we have reason to believe that subsequent mentions of Jones by figures such as TV3's Patrick Gower as a potential future Leadership successor for NZF may also have been his handiwork. The reasons why the ostensibly Ron Mark-linked Dawson might have been dabbling with such an agenda can only be guessed at - but would presumably be linked rather closely to his desire to 'graduate' to Ministerial Services. You need to have a Minister for that to happen, and as we'll see in a minute, it appears a number of people have made the calculation that Jones represents the best shot at somebody from NZF elevating themselves into Cabinet in the near-to-mid future.

This brings us to the next group - the National people. As you may recall, Jones was extracted out of Labour about this time two years ago in the run-up to the 2014 Election by National, creating for him a bespoke sinecure job on perma-vacation around the Pacific. National therefore believes with some justification that Jones is not only pliable - but potentially outright *buyable* into the bargain. It has, after all, happened before.

So how does this relate to New Zealand First? Simple. National really, really want to keep being in government. They know damn well that their own support reached a high-water mark in the 2014 election, and that they'll need ever greater shares of votes and seats for their support parties if they are to keep on governing post-2017. Unfortunately for them, neither ACT nor United Future show any serious signs of being able to bring in a second MP, while the Mori Party will be under increased threat in their Waiairiki lifeline next time around.

So where are they going to go? Well the obvious answer is New Zealand First. This possibility must have sounded strategically tantalizing to National's brains-trust for a number of reasons. First, they know Labour and the Greens require NZF support in order to form a Government - by co-opting NZF, they deny the Opposition the numbers they require. Second, they know that a coalition or confidence and supply arrangement with National would kill NZF's electoral appeal in

the medium-to-long term. They don't like us - not really - so a chance to benefit directly from our lingering misfortune must have seemed lascivious.

Of course, in order to convert their most vituperative Opposition party into a pliant Nat satrapy, National needs a man on the inside. They're cagey about working with Winston, and my sources inside National suggest that they've all but written off working with Ron Mark (he's too combative in the House and keeps annoyingly holding them to account) which leaves their man Jones - the man they've already conclusively demonstrated will, when they say "jump", ask "How far across the aisle/Pacific?"

All of this makes the final faction worthy of note pushing Jones all the more inexplicable: the Unions. Not only was a certain union operative responsible for disseminating the narrative of "Jones is the logical pick to succeed Winston" into the media in the first place about a year ago, but I'm also given to understand that Labour and The Greens have also been approached about a potential electoral pact that would see each of them stand aside their candidates in Whangarei in order to allow Shane Jones a clear run at National's Shane Reti. With ten thousand votes between them, plus three thousand NZF candidate votes up for grabs, it almost begins to make cracking Reti's twenty thousand vote return and thirteen thousand vote majority seem plausible.

So basically, if you've been following so far, there are concurrent plots by National, a Union, at least one NZF cabal, and a few other people on top of that (whom I don't have space to mention) to bring Shane Jones back to Parliament as an NZ First notary. Never mind that all of their strategic interests are, ultimately, diametrically opposed. For the moment, they've all aligned behind one man. To get such a broad coalition of disparate forces pushing in one direction,

you either have to be a preternaturally gifted statesman, or pulling one hell of a con/snowjob. And, to be fair, there's often precious little difference between the two.

In any case, the quote from the *Legacy of Kain* series springs to mind: "What game is this, where every player on the board claims the same pawn?"

Although I guess Jones is actually more of a bishop - they sidle, move diagonally. As Terry Pratchett noted, "that's why they often turn up where the kings don't expect them to be." ■



Playing Catchup

WITH ADITYA VASUDEVAN

I regularly find that there is a gap between when I intellectually understand something and when I emotionally understand it. The former consists of being able to wrap my head around the 'arguments' in favour of and against a certain proposition.

It's the so-called rational process. It's the advice you give to others when you're not personally involved or emotionally entangled. (It's easy to be wise when you've got no skin in the game.) Conversely, emotional understanding is something quite different. It's closer to acceptance or acknowledgment. You don't just understand the reason for someone doing something - you understand their motivation, their passion.

Consider this example. I have long had intellectually-based thoughts on race and oppression. African Americans have been enslaved and managed to fight off that enslavement to now face structural discrimination in the housing market, the job market, the

education system and politics more broadly. Racism certainly didn't end when formal discrimination ended, it persisted in often more perverse forms. Despite my strongly held views on this, it took reading *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngoze Adichie to really feel a more personal churning about some of the more subtle racist encounters that crop up every day for people living in America. I didn't feel like I'd learnt something new. I felt like the truth of what I already knew had crystallised.

In my experience, the rational, arguments-based process has always preceded the emotional one. At an anecdotal level it could be said that I needed the intellectual to access the emotional, like the key that unlocks a great door. In simpler terms, perhaps the reasoning process just opened my mind to receiving someone's real experiences in a validating way. Who's to say really. One probably doesn't always have to precede the other: an emotional realization could prompt an investigation into the arguments underpinning such a realisation - an ex post facto rationalization.

The gap between the two realisations raises some interesting questions about privilege and representation.



Traditional liberals would say that we can engage in a kind of Socratic dialogue with each other, regardless of who we may be, to discover valuable truths. This underpins the notion that any kind of person can

represent the views of any other kind of person in a democratic system. Such a philosophical tactic engages only the rational intellect, though, and not the emotional one. If anything it takes a certain level of emotional acceptance to truly be a vibrant advocate for any group. Privilege can mean that such acceptance is hard to obtain. You can rationalize certain struggles but

you can't understand them fully.

This doesn't have to mean the concept of privilege is absolute and that no-one except the most oppressed has a right to speak on matters of oppression. It simply means that there are barriers to representation that have to be recognized. The gap between the intellectual and the emotional have to be bridged before serious advocacy is broached. Have some humility and start playing catchup. ■

Note: 'emotional understanding' and 'intellectual understanding' are most definitely shorthand forms of somewhat nebulous and slightly more complicated states of mind than expressed above. Nonetheless, the distinction does serve some purpose to shed light on the way we respond to other people's perspectives.

How the Republicans Win

WITH ADEEL MALIK

It feels like the inevitable tide of destiny is with Hillary Clinton this time. The FBI have put their investigation into her e-mails on hold, the nomination is all but guaranteed and now she will probably run against Trump.

Trump is really her trump card - having insulted almost every denomination of non-white-male-cis voters by now. The election will be a mere formality. Or will it ... The following will probably not happen, but if it does it will be like watching the freaking *West Wing* live.

America has a convoluted electoral system. In

order to be President, a candidate must win a majority of the Electoral College votes. Each precinct awards one Electoral College vote. USA is broken up into 538 electorates, of which a candidate needs to win 270, if they hope to become president. If a candidate fails to win a simple majority, Congress will elect a President. (btw this did happen once back in 1825.) Currently Congress is controlled by the Republicans and they can't lose their majority - irrespective of the outcome of November elections. Only a third of Congress is up for election every electorate cycle, and the Republicans have a large enough majority that even if they lose every congressional contest in November, they will still control Congress.

**Also some states like Ohio are winner takes all because fuck representation. So if you win 10 of Ohio's 18 electorates, you also get the other 8 - given it's a 2 party race.*

So to win the presidential election, Republicans don't need to beat Hillary Clinton, they just need to prevent her from winning an outright Electoral College victory. How do you beat a candidate that has shifted to the left on most issues due to a surprisingly competitive primary? You run the most centrist, apolitical nominee imaginable as a third party candidate. You run a John Key - but the American version - and you put the weight of the Republican establishment behind him.

It's no secret that everyone who is anyone in the Republican Party hates Trump. He has insulted

senior Republican senators, news anchors, governors - you name it. Trump also disagrees with Republicans on core policy issues as well. He has advocated building a wall, budget deficits, banning Muslims and opposes free trade agreements, to name a few. Many Republican pundits openly oppose Trump. Carl Rove, the architect behind the Bush presidency, openly opposes Trump, and he has few endorsements from current or previous Republican lawmakers. His almost certain inability to win a presidential election means that there is no incentive for the Republicans to coalesce around him. There are more than enough reasons why many in the Republican establishment will at least think about supporting a centre right third party candidate. Lastly, the winner of this presidential election will also get to decide the balance of the Supreme Court for the next generation.

Given the low levels of turnout that primaries tend to have (mostly between 10-30%), the Republicans have chosen an almost unelectable man as their nominee. A candidate elected by the fringe of the Republican Party is unlikely to win over centrist Republicans or independents voters - voters who would love an alternative to Hillary Clinton. A third party candidate doesn't need to capture the nation's imagination to be successful for the Republican Party, all they need to do is eat a little into the Democratic vote. They need to win a few key states like Ohio. Then amidst the stalemate, Congress gets to select the next President. The Republicans walk away with Congress, the Oval Office and the Supreme Court. ■



Life Is Too Long: Tess Tickle Performs

WITH SHIMULY LEOPOLD



Wellington City Councillor and mayoral candidate Nicola Young is arguably the most powerful woman in the world. Hair like a cadaver. Coat like the Gestapo. A total hack. A woman with no absolutely no social utility. Whose father was in cabinet and whose sister was an MP. A shameless and mediocre careerist. And a Facebook champion. She posts statuses, some about her son biking, some about concert halls, some about night-mayors.

And most recently, a post about filthy hobos:

The number of beggars in central Wellington has rocketed in the past six years – something I notice as a Te Aro resident, walking around the CBD. Opportunistic begging has become rife around special events, cruise ship arrivals – and whenever Wellington is at its busiest. It's a terrible look for a city marketing itself as the events capital of the country, and it's something I will address as Mayor – after all, there's nothing compassionate about letting people rot on our streets.

Begging is often driven by lifestyle choices (drugs and alcoholism) and crime; sadly mental health issues complicate matters further. People assume beggars are homeless, but that's rarely the case and our Council staff do wonderful work for those who genuinely need shelter.*

The problem is partly due to Wellington's relative wealth, but the Mayor's failure to develop realistic solutions has made the situation worse – the idiotic 'Alternative Giving' scheme squandered \$40,000 of rates to raise \$3,500 in eight months.

As Mayor I will introduce a bylaw banning begging in the CBD and near cash machines – the most lucrative spots in our city – as part of a larger strategy involving the Police, WINZ, the DHB and charities. We will guide vulnerable people to a more secure existence: this will require extra resources from the Council – but I'm confident these can be found when we dump some of the profligate municipal expenditure for which Wellington has become famous in recent years.

*Nicola later edited her post, changing “lifestyle choices” to “driven by addiction” after sustained attacks from whimpy bleeding heart liberals.

I don't think I need to explain to the genius readers of *Craccum* the plethora of problems with this. Hint: bad lifestyle choices do not

result in begging, they result in Nicola's haircut, and her being elected to any city council anywhere in the world outside of her own mind. Banning begging should only come after banning that fucking haircut. Anyway, this is not a column about real opinions, or convincing you to have the right views (read Adeel, Ana, Aditya, Rayhan, and those editorials clearly written by Caitlin for that), this column is about banter. So the team here at *Craccum* hatched a plan, after being banned for commenting (I may have called her a cunt... and mentioned her hair). A plan to see how stupid this woman was. All the below are invented. All the below are hilarious:

Pippa Pepperoot: Nicola I just wanted to say don't let all the comments get to you there is definitely a silent majority of people out there who support you on this. The other day I walked past a “homeless” person but he had a phone and even had a dog! If he was homeless then how could he afford a phone? I felt really sorry for the dog too he was CLEARLY using it to get sympathy and for people to give him more money. It was practically animal abuse the dog looked like it hasn't been fed and probably had a skin infection and I really wanted to call the SPCA so that they could look after him properly. Shame on these people, good on you Nicola for speaking the truth even if people don't want to hear it!

Nicola Young: [after liking the comment] Thank you. If people are genuinely in need then let's give them help and get them (and their dogs!) sorted. That's my take on compassion – glad you are with me.

Now this was fake enough. But hey, this woman could still be a real woman, and the reply (though of course shitty to those disgusting hobos) was still plausible. So we upped the ante. We created the ultimate right wing candidate. The ultimate facebooker. Enter Miss Tess Tickle:

Tess Tickle: Nichola Young I want to

share a very personal story with you, I don't know whether you saw my previous post but it really tears me apart to see people attacking you like this because I think you are a good person. It took a lot of courage to write this and I agonised over whether to post it, in fact I deleted my previous post only to share it again. I know you are really busy but I hope you will read this. Before all of you judge me, I want you to know I was essentially one of “those people”.

I had a good life, my father was a successful property developer in Auckland. He made a lot of money speculating the Auckland housing market and we had a nice house in a gated community in Remuera away from these “other” people. But we lost everything when the global financial crisis happened. We had to move into a small house in South Auckland in Onehunga and essentially beg our extended family to support us through the family trust fund. It got worse when my parents divorced because we were so privileged and now we had nothing.

I had a lot of teenage angst in me at the time and I decided to run away from home. How could my parents mess up so badly? We had it all and now we have nothing. I was on the street for a while, but I didn't just rebel against my family, I rebelled against society. I realised begging was an easy way to make money, and it actually gave me a thrill every time someone pitied me because I could say I was young and “homeless”. They gave me some money which I was able to use to buy cigarettes, alcohol and clothes to show off to my “friends”. In fact I was so good at begging, I was able to buy a second-hand car at one point. I chose to live in it because it felt like I was being independent but deep down I actually quite enjoyed how people felt sorry for me.

I went back home for a bit, but I wagged and eventually dropped out of school to beg fulltime. Eventually, I moved into a shelter so my dad could make more money by renting out his room to one of those international students. This was until one day, someone I knew walked past me. It could be a coincidence, but I now believe everything happens for a reason. He wasn't just anyone. He was an ex of mine who I loved very much, and he was in a suit with some work friends. He saw me, but he saw right through me. I felt so ashamed, but this was also the point I realised I still loved him and I needed to turn my life around to win him back.

I was essentially addicted to begging even though I always had a choice. All I needed was someone or something to show me the light and nudge me in the right direction. I cleaned myself up and found God. It was love that allowed me to triumph over my adversity, first my unrequited love for my ex-lover and now my love for Jesus.

Nicola, I am sorry people are saying all these negative things about you when many of them haven't experienced poverty themselves. The problem of poverty is very real but that doesn't mean that that these individuals don't need support or a gentle push. Everyone, Nicola might not be the most articulate person to have ever become a politician, but her heart is in the right place. I went through these support services and now I am doing a dancing degree and trying to tell my story and express myself through performance. My life is a stage, and the stage is a mirror. We are always looking for something in all this chaos, but all you need to do is stop searching because all you ever needed has been right there all along staring right back at you. In fact, I have now reconnected with my ex-lover because one time he saw me at one of my shows. I've been passing it forward and my church goes around handing out bibles and extra sandwiches we have every month to homeless people to tell them God works in miraculous ways. Thank you for raising what is admittedly a very complex issue, of course there are no easy solutions but at least something needed to be done. People just don't get what you are saying – you can ban something undesirable and have support services at the same time, just like with drugs and sex-work. No one should ever have to consider those degrading activities as viable options.

As an ex-beggar, I have a lot of time for you and what you have to say. All you need is someone to shine the light on you when you are in a dark spot, and believe in yourself. There is always a home out there for you somewhere.

Nicola Young: *Tess you are brilliant. 'Show me the light and nudge me in the right direction' – that's exactly the plan. People have focused on the nudge – but the light is more important. It is missing at the moment, but I can't let the status quo stand. I don't see beggars as 'those people'; they just need help that is lacking at the moment.*

Thankyou for sharing your story – and I look forward to seeing you on stage. Will you let me know when you're performing? I'd like to come and support you.

Nicola later shared this genuine story:

"A young woman who had previously begged messaged me tonight to tell me her story. She pointed out that 'all I needed was someone or something to show me the light and nudge me in the right direction'. I will put the extra resources in that our council officers need (and that they're not getting at the moment), and I'll work with agencies across government – but as the young woman said, the nudge is important too."

Now many would call us dicks. But I hate Nicola. A compassionless cunt. A woman born into privilege who openly and ignorantly disparages the homeless. Who accuses people reduced to sitting on the street, *begging* for spare change, of being opportunists. Who thinks anyone in the world would want to expose themselves to threats of violence, rape, and hypothermia. Who thinks bad choices are the real problem, not the fact that most of these people either grew up without families, or suffer from mental illness. This woman is somehow a city councillor. No doubt thanks to all her great life decisions. The decision to be born into a wealthy family was a particularly meritorious one.

A woman born into privilege who openly and ignorantly disparages the homeless. Who accuses people reduced to sitting on the street, begging for spare change, of being opportunists.

I hope she gets a stroke and dies. But in the meantime, a few quick notes from our experiment:

1. Nicola Young's "plan" for dealing with the begging problem in Wellington is based on a drunken parody.
2. We have a whole lot more trolls. It's like a treasure hunt, see which of the posts Nicola has agreed with are secretly mocking her.
3. Nicola Young, mayoral candidate, right wing Te Aro resident, current city councillor, WANTS TO SEE TESS TICKLE PERFORM.

Life is art. Art is life. ■

the people to blame.

Editors

Caitlin Abley and Mark Fullerton
caitlin@craccum.co.nz mark@craccum.co.nz

Subeditor

Hannah Bergin

Designer

Nick Withers

Section Editors

Arts & Culture Samantha Gianotti **Columns**

Jordan Margetts **Features** Catriona Britton

Lifestyle Felixe Laing & Winifred Edgar-Booty

News Andrew Winstanley

Writers

Adeel Malik, Aditya Vasudevan, Ana Harris, Andrew Winstanley, Astrid Crosland, Auckland University Debating Society, Bonnie Harvey, Caitlin Abley, Caitlin Lynch, Catriona Britton, Christy Burrows, Curwen Ares Rolinson, Emily Frew, Eugenia Woo, Felixe Laing, Georgina Harris, Jack Caldwell, James Brown, Maria Forte Ramos, Mark Fullerton, Matthew Denton, Patrick Newland, Rayhan Langdana, Ricky H. Kings, Saia Halatanu, Sam Lynch, Samantha Gianotti, Shmuly Leopold, Theo Macdonald, Winifred Edgar-Booty, Zachary Arden

Cover Artist

Lily Worrall

Artists

Avigail Allan, Caitlin Abley, Emily Frew, Hannah Bergin, Holly Burgess, Jasmine Lim, Jessica Thomas, Lily Worrall, Mark Fullerton, Mandy Chan, Patrick Umbers, Samantha Gianotti, Shmuly Leopold, Tania Fu, Winifred Edgar-Booty

Contributor of the Week

Rayhan Langdana



Editorial Office

4 Alfred St, Private Bag 92019, Auckland

Advertising

Aaron Haugh

Ph 021 813286 advertising@craccum.co.nz

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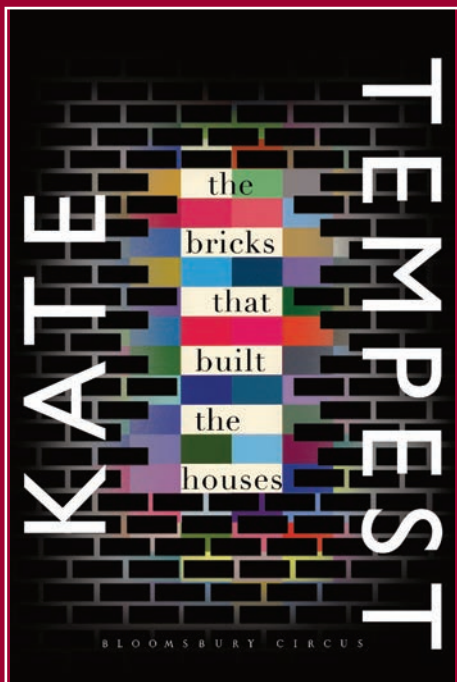


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