

pride

20  
X



16  
X

still here still queen

on anna calvi

CHRISTY BURROWS SHARES THE SOUNDTRACK  
TO HER WEIRD LIFE. PAGE 27.

the wonders of ageing

A CRACCUM WRITER ON GROWING OLD AND FEELING  
PRESENT IN ONE'S OWN BODY. PAGE 20.

let them eat cake?

BRUCE WINTERSTONE INVESTIGATES THE BALANCE  
OF DISCRIMINATION AND OPINION. PAGE 18.

The Torpedo7 logo is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The number '7' is stylized with a red diagonal stroke. The background of the top half of the poster features a snowy mountain scene with a snowboarder in the distance and a large, jagged pink graphic element on the left side.

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**LIFESTYLE:** MICHEAL MCCABE TRACES STEPS ON AN EMPTY DANCEFLOOR. PAGE 10.



**ARTS:** CRACCUM CELEBRATES OUR FAVOURITE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL LESBIAN LADIES ON TV. PAGE 31.



**FEATURE:** TRANS ON CAMPUS GOES MYTHBUSTING. PAGE 16.

NEWS 06

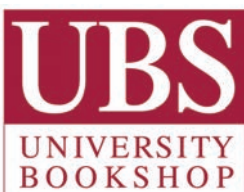
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## guest editorial

with kate worboys, queer rights officer

Hullo loyal Craccum readers.

Finally, the issue we've all been waiting for is here! Pride week has been and gone with the majority of those who participated having a really great time. The week started with a panel on coming out. Debate was held on whether "coming out" should be a thing, with reference to debutantes and Diana Ross. The evening was profoundly positive and had a record turnout for an AUSA panel. My favourite quote from the evening was from Charlie Tredway who emphasized the importance of being your authentic self. This is something that everyone, no matter their orientation or gender identity, should take to heart.

On this topic I would like to tell you my dad's coming out story. In 2014, I was watching music TV with my Dad. Macklemore's video for "Same Love" came on. My father is a man of very few words, unless he's had one too many Corubas, so when he speaks it's very to the point and generally worthy of discussion. He started with the typical rationale of "I don't want to sound homophobic but..." and what followed made me laugh for days. He explained that he likes watching girls make out, he likes watching a girl and a guy make out, but when it comes to watching two guys make out something felt off. I talked to my Dad and told him what he was experiencing is normal. That it's a normal thing for heterosexual men to experience. He's attracted to women, so why would he like watching guys kiss? What I love about this is that at 48 years old my Dad finally questioned his sexuality. Maybe questioned

isn't the right word, but he definitely thought about it. This is great! The LGBTI+ community is slowly and surely becoming more accessible to the masses. This is promoting discussion in all sectors of the community and this can only mean good things. As being LGBTI+ becomes normalized, hopefully members of our community will feel less marginalized and feel like they are able to live their lives as their authentic self. It's common knowledge that our community has the highest rate of suicide. I'm hoping that during our lifetime this will change.

At the University of Auckland we are lucky. We have a student union that pushes for queer rights and runs two safe spaces (Queerspace and Womenspace). The university has the Equity Group, UniQ, TransOnCampus and many faculty rainbow groups (Rainbow Science, Rainbow Engineering etc.) These all provide the foundation for a strong queer community here. If any homophobic/transphobic activity were to happen, we have the support of our peers and our faculty behind us. This was apparent with that assthat who wrote that canker sore of an article about how trans people don't exist. *Craccum* nipped it in the bud and refused to publish it. When the wanker "published" his own literal toilet paper our community was quick to rip his claims to shreds. Good job team. We done good. Even though what he wrote was negative we used that to construct positive discourse. Ultimately, his plan backfired and our community here was made stronger than ever and even slightly inflated.

While our community is united in defending outside attacks, there is still horizontal shade

that divides us. If any of you paid attention to my event pages for pride week, some "debate" was had on the ace/bi/pan awareness forum event page. As a pansexual I found this rather irksome, but as Queer Rights Officer I thought it was awesome. From the sidelines I loved watching people miss the point of the event (the point was to raise awareness of ace/bi/pansexuality, not debate their existence). These were exactly the people I wanted to target. These are the people who needed their awareness raised. The forum was great. Shout out to those who attended, and those who had the courage to speak. I believe we had a really positive impact.

I owe a lot to Tessa Naden. She was the Queer Rights Officer before me and gave me the push to be QRO this year. She's a fantastic lady who has an amazing (unintentional) Danny Zuko impression. She changed Queerspace a lot in her two years in office. While some of this was cosmetic, she also paved the way for how the space is today in terms of demographics. The space is a lot less white-washed and we have more and more mature students who are coming into the space. This is fantastic, because I am no longer Queerspace's second oldest patron! The space and the LGBTI+ community at UoA has a long way to go, but it's something I am proud to be a part of. No matter your orientation and gender identity you too should feel proud. Be proud of being your authentic self.

KATE WORBOYS  
AUSA QUEER RIGHTS OFFICER  
QRO@AUSA.ORG.NZ ■





## OTAGO UNIVER-SHITTY FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Otago University has managed to overspend their entire scholarship budget by over a *million* dollars, pushing the University as a whole into an operating deficit for the beginning of the year.

The blowout is the result of generous new scholarships offered by the University in an attempt to lure New Zealand students down to bitterly-cold Dunedin for their studies.

Last year, the University introduced a variety of new scholarships in order to reel in undergraduate students. These scholarships included an immediate \$2500 cash payout to any student that achieved an excellence endorsement in NCEA Level 2 or Level 3, with the payout doubling if the student achieved excellence at both levels.

The scholarships were put in place as a response to a slight drop-off in student numbers in the last academic year, something the University calls a sign of the increasingly competitive inter-university environment.

As a result, Otago awarded almost *four hundred* new undergraduate excellence scholarships at the beginning of this year. This is despite the University Scholarship budget *already* being expanded in anticipation of the increased expenditure.

The University was pushed into a \$230,000 deficit overall by the spending.

It is unknown if the budget shortfall will affect future scholarship allocation at the academic institution. ■

## WELDON RESIGNS AFTER HILARY-IOUS FUCK-UP

Last week, the biggest news in New Zealand media was meant to be the announcement of a joint venture between MediaWorks and NBCUniversal to replace channel Four (this still is apparently a thing) with a new reality focused, female targeted station based on the US Bravo network. And yet on the day this was formally announced, the question that everyone asked was, “what the heck is happening at 3News?” (sorry, NewsHub). It appears that the announcement of Hilary Barry’s resignation was the straw that broke the camel’s back, as

people realised that, out of the eighteen original members of the network’s frontline news team of two years ago, only seven remained. This problem is not merely skin deep; those working off-camera have also been affected, with high staff turnover plaguing MediaWorks at all levels. This is great for newbie journalism students (yay *Craccum*), but terrible for a company that until recently boasted the most sought-after positions in news media. In a shuddering climax to the MediaWorks ructions, CEO Mark Weldon resigned last Tuesday (lol shame, ya wank), apparently in response to Barry’s departure and facing vocal opposition from his employees.

However, the behind-the-scenes dramas are in

stark contrast to the way the rebranded news division has performed. The controversial switch from 3News to the multimedia platform *NewsHub* has proven far less controversial than initially thought, and Paul Henry is going from strength to strength in the breakfast slot. And it is with Henry that the real threat lies – not only is his contract up this year, but he was reportedly very close with Hilary Barry and the two enjoyed working together. It is now Paul Henry and Barry’s co-anchor Mike McRoberts who hold sway over the MediaWorks management. If one of them were to leave, it would do irreparable damage to the brand. If there is anyone to benefit from this situation it is these two men, who can probably expect a healthy pay rise over the next year. ■



## COMING OUT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

There were “strategically placed” balloons thrown on the floor, a rainbow flag draped over the door and people ambling through from Queerspace into the old SJS offices, some chatting loudly about the conundrum of having a faith and being queer.

With a name like ‘Coming Out Panel’ I thought I knew what to expect: stories of hand-sweating, long-awaited revelations to stony faced family members and a hostile wider society, with the bright and colourful queer community offering a helping hand, the odd parade and many iterations of ‘YAAAAAS QUEEEEN’ emblazoned on the chalkboard in the Queerspace office.

What followed, however, was a stark reminder that the attendees sitting on battered green couches had not only experienced coming out, but coming out at a University. There were questions about the philosophical interactions of colonialism and sexuality labelling, the implications on future generations of boisterous waves of coming out and a strong tone of the politics associated with coming out. Tessa Naden, last year’s AUSA Queer Rights Officer, was quick to point out that a separation between politics and coming out was pulling the rainbow flag over the eyes of those newly identifying as queer.

Although her particular brand of doom and gloom did not go untested by audience members or the other panellists, sitting alongside Tessa were a group of people who knew that coming out did not happen in a vacuum. Paul Heard, a community engagement co-ordinator at the New Zealand AIDS Foundation, was introduced as being around in the dark and dusty years of Civil Liberties and Unions. Further down the bench were two other employees of the NZAF: Tanu Gogo, charged with promoting

AIDS education amongst Pacific communities, himself a gay Samoan man, and Charlie Tredway, an international advocate for people living with HIV. Hardly a trio of men oblivious to the interactions of policy and the safety of queer people.

No-one on the panel, however, got the message across about safety quite like Lola Blades, perched front and centre, adorned in her Miss Drag Queen NZ sash and a dress covered in as many beads as the streets of Mardi Gras. The MC started the panel off with the big one: “So, why not just stay closeted?” With a gleaming smile and a pose like she had just popped out of a cake, Lola immediately reacted with “lower suicide rates!” Other panellists were quick to point out that one should only come out if it’s safe for one to or “a place to stay and food to eat” can be arranged. The most poignant response to the question, however, was the last and most quiet from Tanu: “I can’t even imagine a closet, it’s just me being out in the world.”

It was, however, hard to accept that the divide between being closeted and coming out is insubstantial when sitting next to Tanu was Craig Watson, a Christian gay man who’s coming out was introduced with month specificity (January last year) and as “a late acceptance of who he is”. As the panel went on, however, it became clear that coming out can’t be put down to a month, let alone a single event. In fact, coming out never stops. Throughout discussions, the distinction between a ‘coming out to yourself’ and a ‘coming out to the world’ was made clear.

But then, of course, there is the issue of facing a new public all the time. Tessa talked of coming out in the workplace again and again, Paul of the different forms that the performance of his sexuality has taken through the years, and Charlie of coming out again to others as a person living with HIV, and then to as many as would listen when he became an advocate for other HIV+ people. Charlie was also clear that the possible trauma of coming out, either into a sexuality or

into an HIV status, was not a one-off: “I always let them know that this is not going to be OK for a long time.”

The never-ending nature of coming out is also reflected in how much advisors have to adapt: Tanu talked of different Pacific cultures and their attitudes to queer people, Craig of the varied approaches needed for separate areas of the Church, and Paul of his understanding that the place for coming out as it was in the 80s (dancing in the streets was mentioned more than once) may not be so obvious now. An audience member talked about his role in mentoring young queer youth and that “the combination of words” that his mentees use to label themselves can surprise him – “just because I’m not seventeen any more”.

In response to this, another audience member (there was no need for the MC to open up the floor, or even ask the questions nervously scribbled on his sheet of paper) responded with a recommendation to a book that walked the reader through the different combinations of gender, sexuality and performance identities, in such a way that “you think, well, of course that exists too!”. To which Lola in her ever-poised and sing-song manner declared “there is no limit!” Upon hearing this, Kate Worboys, this year’s Queer Rights Officer (with a fair amount of showwomanship herself), declared that there was indeed a limit and that the panel should end as it had already gone half an hour over time.

Although the Spice Girls and Diana Ross were dropped into the discussion, the Coming Out Panel as part of this year’s Pride Week wasn’t just the familiar moments of denouement recounted for an audience with their own such stories. Rather the panel was a realisation that there was never a clear moment, the closet door was never definitively flung off its hinges and, sometimes, the glitter never settles. ■



## ONLINE VOTING CALLED OFF(LINE)

Everybody knows that millennials like three things: a) they like to #tweet, b) they like selfies, c) they love local government and politics. As a result, I imagine most millennials will be OUT-RAGED by this news story.

Auckland Council has scrapped plans to trial Online Voting in this year's local body elections, citing security concerns. The announcement is a blow to those who hoped that the introduction of the new system would help boost voter engagement

Turnout for the 2013 Local and Mayoral elections was lower than average, with only 34.72% of registered voters in the Auckland region casting a vote. Making the problem worse is the disproportionately low youth vote, with

those in the 18-25 bracket historically being as much as 20% less likely to vote than those aged 25-39.

The Council has faced increasing pressure over recent years to engage with that second problem. Emergency meetings held by the Council to help quell controversy surrounding last minute changes to the city's Unitary Plan earlier this year were widely criticized for having audiences comprised almost entirely by middle-aged, property-owning, economically-entrenched, central-city living suburbanites.

Councillors and a number of youth advocate groups saw online voting both as a way to potentially raise the overall engagement with the electoral process, and to encourage the engagement of young people across the country with Local Government elections.

Louise Upton, The Minister for Internal Affairs, has said timing issues meant that the government could not be sure that the system would be secure before the date elections are scheduled to take place, meaning the government "cannot guarantee public confidence in the election results."

"Security testing has been planned but has not yet occurred. Without seeing the results of testing we cannot be confident the systems are secure enough, and the trial could not be authorised," she said.

The system was intended to face trials during this year's local elections, with a potential expansion to next year's general elections if successful. As a result, the next chance the government will have to test the system will be during the next round of local elections in 2019. ■

## EJP SYMPOSIUM ON TRANSGENDER RIGHTS IN PRISON

WHERE: LIBRARY BASEMENT LECTURE THEATRE B15

WHEN: WEDNESDAY 11TH MAY

This coming Wednesday 11th May the Equal Justice Project is holding its first symposium of the year, on the rights and needs of transgender individuals in NZ prisons. The panel on the night will discuss what solutions might be available to address the lack of rights for

transgender individuals, and whether it is possible for the NZ legal system to incorporate these changes.

The panel will include: Ti Lamusse, representative of No Pride in Prisons, Kelly Ellis, a barrister and advocate for transgender rights, and a third speaker who is yet to be confirmed. The event is designed to promote discussion of these issues in an open forum. EJP is an apolitical organisation and as such, the symposium is intended to present a diverse range of opinions on this issue.

EJP is a volunteer organisation run through Auckland Law School. The organisation is entirely student run and gives students an opportunity to be involved in the community

in a positive way. The EJP Access team hosts symposiums throughout the year, providing an opportunity for students to gather, listen to experts speak and discuss contemporary issues.

Come along to get those brain cogs turning and learn about the rights of transgender individuals. There will be free food afterwards, so stick around to chat to others and munch away on some nibbles! ■

**EQUAL JUSTICE PROJECT**



# FUCK I LOVE TRAMS



Local Body political groups are lobbying for Auckland Transport to consider putting light rail [read: Cool Ass Trams] down certain major arterial routes in the central suburbs.

The campaign, Bring Back Our Trams, is co-ordinated by City Vision. City Vision are a left-leaning political group, made up of politicians vying for seats in various local government positions around Auckland City. They are supported in that endeavour by the Labour party and by the Greens.

Buses currently travelling through main arterial routes in and out of the city – most notably

up through Mount Eden and Dominion Road – currently face a number of problems. Public transport users that take advantage of services on those routes face regular overcrowding, irregular services, and have to deal with issues of congestion and lack of passenger capacity.

Proponents of the plan say replacing Buses with Trams will help ease congestion in the CBD, as well as allowing a higher number of public transport users to easily travel in and out of the city.

There are a number of advantages to light rail systems – they can travel faster than buses, fit more people than buses, and you don't need to find parking for them (unlike buses). There are also downsides – trams are more expensive than buses, for obvious reasons, and they can

often be far more disruptive to traffic.

Trams were at one point common in and around the city centre – that is, until around 1953, when the increasing dominance of the private automobile lead to their removal, in an attempt to maximize available road space.

Auckland Transport has made some provisions for light rail in their 30 year plan, allocating for lines down Sandringham and Dominion Road. City Vision want that plan expanded, to include Mt. Eden Rd and Manukau Rd at a minimum.

## FINAL FACTS

**Trams are Cool  
Fuck You ■**

## TOP 5 THINGS WE LEARNT THIS WEEK

1. There are fairy tales, there are fantasies and then there is Leicester City winning the Premier League. Since the title was clinched after a 2-2 draw between Chelsea and Tottenham, we've seen just how many ways newsreaders can say 'this was unexpected.'
2. The US presidential nominees are set. Barring a minor miracle, it will be Trump vs. Hilary

this November. And while right now it would seem that we're going to see a Democratic landslide, in the crazy world of US politics nothing is assured.

3. The pro-life debate has raised its ugly head again. There have been calls for them to be barred from AUSA club affiliation. Will these calls go unanswered? Who knows, but history says that ultimately free speech will win out. The last time this issue was in the spotlight in 2012, when a resolution to disaffiliate the club was ultimately defeated.

4. Shaky Isles must be pretty fuckin' good. It appears that the new coffee shop has taken over the vegan lunch as the longest (food) line on campus.

5. Apparently the one thing that New Zealand screens have been missing is real housewives. The recently announced 'Bravo' network included the much anticipated *Real Housewives of Auckland*, an announcement followed swiftly by the resignation of embattled CEO Mark Weldon (lol shame, ya wank). ■

## WHAT'S ON MAY 9 – 15TH

Is it getting to that stage in the semester where you could really do with some stress relief? Why not have a good laugh at one of the **Comedy Festival's** shows – it's the last week so it's now or never...

If you're looking for a reason to get out of the house this Thursday evening, or just need to justify enjoying some mulled wine, head along to the **Mosaic Winter Market**. They are promising lots of new creators, mulled wine and other tasty treats. From 6-8:30pm at 28 Ethel Street, Kingsland. Free entry, prices start at \$5 with eftpos available.

Catch Auckland Art Gallery's new exhibition, **Space to Dream: Recent Art from South America** which opens this weekend. They are also running a **series of talks** where the South American artists will discuss their work featured in the show. Some free, some of charge – go to their website for more details.

This Saturday 9-4pm Studio One Toi Tū is hosting a **bookbinding workshop with designer/artist/bookmaker Gabi Lardies**. The one-off workshop features a range of bookbinding techniques and tips for making professional publications. With amazing student rates, if this has really piqued your interest you better book quick! \$295 Pro / \$265 DA Friend / \$175 DA Student Friend. Full details and booking info at [www.designassembly.org.nz](http://www.designassembly.org.nz) (free to become a DA friend).

Another workshop this Saturday but for free is **The Fermenting Vegetables Workshop** from 10-12pm at the Avondale Community Centre, 99 Rosebank Road. Philippa Nielsen is going to give you an introduction to turning vegetables into superfoods, really good for your health and seriously delicious! One for vegans and vegetarians but nothing stopping the omnivorous! ■



## TRACING STEPS ON AN EMPTY DANCEFLOOR

The following text by Micheal McCabe is an excerpt from the draft of his thesis, *Tracing steps on an empty dancefloor, or, where have all the queer people gone?*

Lately I've been thinking *a lot* about dancefloors. The way dancefloors stick to your feet, and the miscellaneous items that stick to dancefloors. How lethargic lasers trace patterns on their surface. How hands reach into the ether, how lips mouth words blasting out of speakers above, how limbs mirror each other across a circle. How at 11pm the night before ANZAC day I went to my first gay bar. How that was a faux pas and that the dancefloor didn't start till much later. I've been thinking about the footsteps on the dancefloor that I can't trace with my limbs, with my lips, with lazy lasers. What has happened to the people who cannot be traced and the space they moved in?

Clubs close down. They shift hands. The change their names. However, in the LGBTQI community they have an important function to perform as one of the very few physical spaces for queer people within a largely heteronormative urban fabric. Consequently they have an important place in our collective history. The KG Club (The

Karangahape Girls Club) founded by Raukura Te Aroha 'Bubs' Hetet was one of the first "public" places for lesbian identifying women to meet. The bar went through several incarnations and locations, the second located in what is now Wine Cellar and the fourth housed above Joybong. The Basement Theatre too was once a nightclub called Backstage, where you put your face up to a screen to be let in, signed a guestbook and paid \$10 for unlimited drinks. A potential ploy to get around licensing laws that also heavily affected the KG Club as women couldn't hold liquor licenses.

Through the act of locating these clubs, bars, dance spaces we begin to remap the urban fabric through a retrospective queering of the city. We also become aware of the privileges we have as an LGBTQI community, a visible physical space we can create community within and around. Where Rihanna's work is played through stressed speakers and screamed through wrought vocal chords. We do this in *relative* safety. Yet we should take some time to think, while you down your red bull and vodka, about those who don't fit within homonormative ideals. Who still might be just traces on a dancefloor. ■

## AGONY AUNTS

Hi Aunties,

*I am a queer-identifying young person and have been having a problem with a friend lately. They often make homophobic and transphobic jokes without realising how much it hurts me. I don't know how to tell them that the jokes aren't funny and are actually really inappropriate and hurtful. Please help.*

**Frustrated**

Dear **Frustrated**,

Urgh, so sorry to hear that you are having to deal with this. We can't believe how regressive some people's outlooks still are, but alas it is the case! The most important thing to consider here is your own safety. It may be that this friend simply has poor judgement about what is appropriate (and be trying to impress in a very misguided way), or it may be that they actually are homo/transphobic. You want to be sure that it is the former before confronting them, as you should not have to put your own safety at risk. Apart



from their poor jokes, do other actions signify a lack of respect for LGBTQIA people? If possible, discuss the issue with a friend that you trust, and find a way to bring up the issue together, so you don't find yourself alone at the receiving end of any retaliation. Remember that just because you identify as queer, you are not *obligated* to educate regressive folks on queer issues. (Unless you want to, then go for gold and thank you for your generosity!) And also remember that not all friends are forever, and if this one really does turn out to be a homophobe, well, that sounds like a deal-breaker to us!

*Aunt Phryne and Aunt Wilhelmina. xxx* ■

PLEASE SEND YOUR PROBLEM IN 50 WORDS OR LESS TO [LIFESTYLE@CRACCUM.CO.NZ](mailto:LIFESTYLE@CRACCUM.CO.NZ), ANONYMITY GUARANTEED.

## HOW NOT TO BE A FAUXMINIST

BE SILENT/BE HUMBLE/HOLD BACK AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, LISTEN  
DO NOT SPEAK AS AUTHORITIES ON ISSUES THAT DON'T AFFECT YOU  
ENGAGE IN FEMINIST ACTION BEYOND SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND NAIL-PAINTING  
DO NOT MANIPULATE US  
DO NOT HURT US  
CONSENT IS MANDATORY  
CHALLENGE YOUR OWN PATRIARCHAL BEHAVIOUR  
CHALLENGE THE PATRIARCHAL BEHAVIOUR OF YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY  
NEVER STAY SILENT WHEN WITNESSING MISOGYNY, RACISM, TRANSMISOGYNY, AND ABLEISM  
DO NOT 'MANSPLAIN': DO NOT BE PATRONIZING, CONDESCENDING OR AGGRESSIVE WHEN SPEAKING TO US  
DO NOT EXPLOIT OUR EMOTIONAL LABOUR: WE DO NOT EXIST TO COMFORT AND SERVE YOU  
DO NOT EXPECT SPECIAL TREATMENT, YOU ARE NOT SPECIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING FEMINISM 101  
NEVER EVER TELL US TO CALM DOWN OR, GOD FORBID, CHILL  
TREAT US AS HUMAN BEINGS AND NOT AS SUBJECTS TO FUCK/LOVE  
SUPPORT AND INCLUDE WOMEN/TRANS FEMININE/NB CREATIVES/ACTIVISTS  
MAKE YOUR SPACES SAFE FOR WOMEN, ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE TRANS, OF COLOUR, AND/OR DISABLED  
CREATE FRIENDSHIPS WITH US AS YOU WOULD WITH MEN I.E. NOT IN THE HOPE THAT YOU WILL EVENTUALLY FUCK  
GO BEYOND LIPSERVICE: BE RADICAL NOT ONLY IN SPEECH BUT IN ACTION ■

## FASHION ON CAMPUS

Bella and Jess, Fine Arts: "Brothers and sisters"



## ARTWORK

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? BY TOMMO JIANG

what are you looking for?

I'm looking for fun. u?

I'm looking for friends. u?

I'm looking for now. u?

I'm looking for acceptance. u?

I'm looking for the one. u?

I'm looking for more. u?



AUSA PRESENTS...

# POLITICS WEEK

16TH-20TH MAY



**MONDAY 16TH**  
**YOUTH**  
**BACKBENCHERS**  
5PM-7PM, SHADOWS  
**BACKBENCHERS**  
8PM ONWARDS, SHADOWS

**THURSDAY 19TH**  
**CARTOONIST**  
**IN THE QUAD**  
1PM, QUAD  
**CAREERS PUBLIC**  
**SECTOR EXPO**  
5PM-7PM, LIBRARY BASEMENT



**TUESDAY 17TH**  
**WELFARE BREAKFAST**  
8AM-10AM, FRONT OF AUSA HOUSE  
**"ARE STUDENTS**  
**SCREWED?"**  
2PM, SJS ABOVE THE QUAD  
**ABORTION LAW**  
**REFORM PANEL**  
6PM, WOMENSPACE

**WEDNESDAY 18TH**  
**PEACE RALLY**  
12PM, QUAD  
**POLITICS QUIZ**  
6PM, SHADOWS

**FRIDAY 20TH**  
**"HOW TO GET YOUR**  
**VOICE HEARD"**  
2PM, SJS ABOVE THE QUAD  
**THE GREAT ANNUAL**  
**POLITICS DEBATE**  
5PM-7PM, OGGB3  
**ACOUSTIC MUSIC NIGHT**  
8PM, SHADOWS



## FROM THE MEDIA OFFICER

May already! I know I seem to spend most of this space talking about how time is passing so quickly, but seriously MAY! Here at AUSA over the last few weeks we have hosted Pride Week, held a Mother's Day morning tea for student parents and welcomed a new General Manager! In this week's Craccum pages, we have a rata interview for you with Grafton Rep Conor O'Hanlon. Also check out how you can get yourself some limited edition cereal (yes. Limited edition cereal. Praise the student life). ■



## AUSA Noticeboard

### MAORI GRADUATION

MAORI GRADUATION IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR MAORI STUDENTS GRADUATING THIS SEMESTER. IT IS ALL RUN BY AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY'S MAORI ASSOCIATION, NTM. SO IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET INVOLVED OR SEE HOW SUCCESS SHOULD BE CELEBRATED WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY, COME ON DOWN TO WAIPAPA MARAE ON FRIDAY EVENING TO GET AMONGST THE FUN AND PREPARATION OF SATURDAYS MAIN EVENT.

### DISCOUNT LOCKERS

WE'RE SHAVING A BIT OFF THE

PRICE OF OUR LOCKERS FOR ALL YOU WHO HAVE REALISED THAT YOUR TEXTBOOKS ARE REALLY HEAVY. COME INTO AUSA RECEPTION TO GET A TOP LOCKER FOR \$50, OR A BOTTOM LOCKER FOR \$45.

### GET SET WITH THE NEW EVALUATIONS TOOL!

FROM THIS SEMESTER ONWARDS, ALL EVALUATIONS FOR YOUR COURSES AND YOUR TEACHERS WILL BE COMPLETED ONLINE! STARTING FROM THE 9TH MAY, YOU MAY BE INVITED TO DO YOUR FIRST SET EVALUATION ONLINE - THIS CAN BE DONE ON ANY DEVICE. YOUR FEEDBACK WILL BE KEPT SECURE AND ANONYMOUS, BUT NOW LECTURERS AND COURSE

CO-ORDINATORS CAN GET AGGREGATED DATA AND START ACTING ON IT SOONER! GO TO [WWW.AUCKLAND.AC.NZ/EVALUATE](http://WWW.AUCKLAND.AC.NZ/EVALUATE) FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR CONTACT YOUR CLASS REP.

### NEW CEREAL!

AUSA HAS TEAMED UP WITH KELLOGG'S TO BRING YOU SAMPLES OF THE BRAND NEW LIMITED EDITION "NUTRI-GRAIN ICE BREAK" CEREAL! WE'LL BE GIVING BOXES (YOU HEARD US RIGHT-BOXES!) AWAY TO LUCKY STUDENTS OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, SO MAKE SURE YOU CHECK OUT ALL OF OUR ON CAMPUS EVENTS TO SCORE YOURSELF THE NEW STUDENT CEREAL! #NUTRIGRAINICEBREAK #KELLOGGSNUTRIGRAIN



### WANT YOUR CLUB FEATURED HERE?

EMAIL JESS P AT [CSO@AUSA.ORG.NZ](mailto:CSO@AUSA.ORG.NZ).

# We offer free support, advice and information to all students.

## Student Advice Hub

Free // Confidential // Experienced // Independent

Old Choral Hall  
(Alfred St Entrance)  
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**AUSA**  
SERVING STUDENTS  
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AUSA PRESENTS...

# POLITICS WEEK

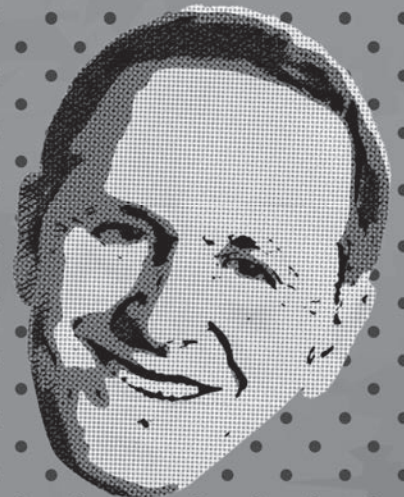
COME ALONG TO AUSA'S AND CDES

## PUBLIC SECTOR CAREER EXPO!

THE EVENT WILL INCLUDE RECENT GRADUATES SPEAKING ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND AN EXPO WITH RECRUITING TEAMS THERE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS AND GIVE YOU MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GRADUATE POSITIONS AND CAREERS WITHIN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. FOR STUDENTS IN ANY PART OF THEIR DEGREE.

HEAR FROM:

**TREASURY, AUCKLAND COUNCIL, MSD,  
MFAT, MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, MBIE,  
AND MORE!**





# Interview with Grafton 2.0

Conor O'Hanlon is the Grafton Representative on the AUSA Executive this year. He makes sure the interests of students on Grafton Campus are taken care of and their voices heard.

**CONOR, IT HAS BEEN ALLEGED THAT THE PICK UP LINE YOU USE AT THE CLUB IS "HEY GIRL, I KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR VAGINA THAN YOU DO". DO YOU WANT TO COMMENT ON THIS?**

Obviously women love it when you tell them you know more about things than they do, right??

**...RIGHT... YOU USE THE TERM "RATA" QUITE FREQUENTLY... WHAT IS A "RATA"?**

What isn't a rata? A rata can mean anything from an undesirable person from west Auckland to an idiot. It can also be used as a term of endearment. In the same way we would say "you're a fuckwit/ fuck", you could say "you're a rata". It can be both positive and negative depending on the context and the intended meaning.

**ARE YOU CURRENTLY OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY?**

No and I'm probably one of the few on the Exec who hasn't been lured in that little love nest. I still laugh when people call AUSA a socialist hotbed and the seat of the looney left at university. But then again I also cry because that might be too much #realtalk

**WHO'S GOING TO BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES? #REALTALK**

Sorry to be boring but I think it'll be Hillary.

**IS HILLARY A RATA OR A RATA?**

Hillary is a rata, but more in the sense of being amazing and cool rather than someone from west Auckland.

**DO YOU HAVE A COMMENT ABOUT THE POKÉMON WILL ASSIGNED YOU?**

Yeah, it's pretty shit lol. After consulting with members of the Exec obsessed with Pokémon, they told me I would be a Golduck. *(Will's note: shut up Conor, Stantler is staunch and cool)*

**SHOOT. SHAG. MARRY. KHIA. HILLARY. GOLDDUCK.**

Shag Khia - who wouldn't? Srlsy. Shoot golduck - not into anime. Marry Hillary - then I could be First Lady when she becomes President.

**YOU COULD JUST MARRY WILL?**

After he assigned me a shit Pokémon... I don't think so.

**YOUR POSITION ON THE EXECUTIVE IS GRAFTON REP - WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE THING ABOUT GRAFTON?**

Well Grafton is pretty much a brand new campus after it was fully renovated a few years ago. So all the buildings are nice, unlike the massive rata human sciences building and most buildings in the city campus.

Secondly, Grafton students are trusted enough to have a common area with 4 microwaves - if that was the city, they would be wrecked in two days.

Finally, the walk to the nearest St Pierre's and Subway is so much shorter than if you are in the city.

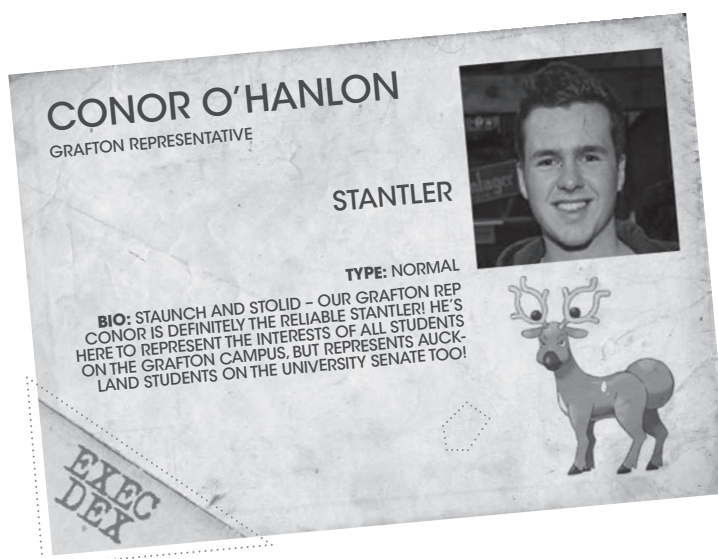
Hmm... just realised two out of three of these reasons are food related...



CONOR AS A YOUNG RATA

**IF GRAFTON IS SO GREAT, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MAKE IT BETTER?**

Grafton is pretty gr8, but I guess giving out more free Coke would be a good idea!



# MYTHBUSTING

trans on campus looks at the common myths associated with trans and gender diverse individuals

In today's society, trans and gender diverse ("T&GD") people are very much in the public eye, but we have always been here! It's only now, with high profile celebrities coming out, that we have become newsworthy. Even in New Zealand, almost every month there is an article about trans or gender diverse people published in the *NZ Herald* or *Stuff*.

While the publicity of trans issues might make it appear that we're being accepted in society – and increasingly, we are – there is still an extraordinary amount of harassment and violence directed towards T&GD persons. Transphobia (less commonly known as transprejudice) is very real and examples of it are everywhere.

Given this, we want to break down a few myths about sex, gender and T&GD persons. Many assume that gender is determined solely by our biology or is entirely socially constructed. The truth of our current scientific understanding is

that it is determined by both, and that sex and gender are not necessarily linked. Anyway let's get on with the mythbusting!

## THERE ARE ONLY TWO SEXES, MALE AND FEMALE.

At birth, your legal sex is determined by a doctor looking at your body and categorising your reproductive ability as male, female or intersex. Yes, that's right: somewhere between 0.1% and 1.7% of births don't fit into those nice normal boxes of male and female. While some intersex variations are obvious from birth, others may not be apparent until later in life. This natural variation in sexual development is an active area of research, and we're really only beginning to understand how our bodies develop. Research published in *Nature* last year shows that gender expression can even vary within one body (see [1] and [2] in the references below). So while the rate of intersex persons has traditionally been thought to be low, the true rate could be closer to 1% (see [3]).

## BUT GENDER AND SEX ARE THE SAME THING!

Gender is the construct by which we categorise

people as a "man" or a "woman" and in many cultures around the world there are possibly other genders. For most people, their sex and gender align (referred to as being cisgender), but for between 1.2% to 3.7% of people they don't and they identify as transgender or gender diverse. These numbers come from the Youth'12 survey: 1.2% of interviewees said they were transgender, while another 2.5% said they were questioning their gender (see [4]). In short, sex is about your body; gender is about how you present and how you wish to be seen.

## IF GENDER IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT, THEN BEING TRANS IS A CHOICE.

While most people seem happy with their birth-assigned gender that is linked to their sex (including many intersex people), some people have a strong desire that their gender and sex are not the same. For these people, it is well-known that being able to live in their chosen gender role and to access appropriate medical treatments as desired leads to vastly improved health outcomes and quality of life. Therefore even if our gender identities are socially constructed, it seems unreasonable to force those who struggle with their assigned gender on a daily basis to just "accept it". There

is also growing evidence that neuroanatomy can play a considerable part in determining gender identity, which is determined by our DNA as well as hormone levels in the womb affecting how certain parts of our brain develop. As such, it's clear that gender is a case of both 'nature' and 'nurture' working together (see [5]).

### **NON-BINARY GENDERS ARE A NEW THING.**

Actually, it is our modern, Western, binary gender view of male and female that is new! There are multiple other cultures (for example: Maori, Samoan, Tongan, North American, Mexican, Indian and older European cultures) where a third gender (or more) is recognised and celebrated. The fact that so many cultures have developed the idea of a third gender indicates that T&GD persons have been around for a very long time, even though we have at times been ignored or marginalised by the dominant culture (see [6]).

### **THERE AREN'T THAT MANY T&GD PEOPLE, SO WHY SHOULD WE WORRY?**

We have 40,000 students at UoA. Assuming the rate of 1.2–3.7% cited above, this means that somewhere between 480 and 1500 current students at UoA are either trans or gender diverse. Get all of them in a lecture theatre and tell them they are unimportant! Another way to visualise it is about 1–2% of people worldwide have naturally red hair, but we don't claim that red hair doesn't exist, or force people with red hair to dye their hair a different colour to "fit in"!

### **BUT I DON'T KNOW ANY T&GD PEOPLE!**

Do you know more than 50 to 100 people? Given the statistics, there's a good chance you do! They might also not be "out" and may be too scared to tell you or anyone else. Or maybe you know someone that has already transitioned and is living as their true gender, so they have had no need to disclose their personal medical history.

### **WHY DO SOME PEOPLE CHANGE GENDER WITH TIME, OR DECIDE TO COME OUT LATER IN LIFE?**

As we grow up and go through life our bodies change, our friends change, our interests change, our priorities change and our confidence and understanding changes. It is therefore not at all surprising that our gender can also change over time. Another reason could be that it takes time before someone is able to,

due to circumstances surrounding their ability to take steps towards transition or experimentation with their gender expression.

### **SO YOU JUST NEED TO HAVE SURGERY AND THEN BE HAPPY?**

For some T&GD people, surgery to align their sex with their gender is very important. A more common step is for trans people to take hormones, which are one of the primary factors in various sex characteristics developing in our bodies. But just as you would not ask any other person for intimate details of their medical history, please don't ask T&GD people about theirs! As with any other person, we will talk about our personal health and the specifics of our bodies if we feel comfortable doing so. If you're interested there are plenty of resources which are freely available to learn more.

### **WHICH TOILETS DO YOU USE?**

For those of us who feel comfortable, whichever option is closest to the gender we're presenting as. This often makes a lot of us feel unsafe, though, so some of us might use unisex/genderless toilets. An increase in unisex/genderless toilets would actually be a good thing for everyone, making it easier for parents out alone with their young children to help out without the barriers of gender segregation, and for personal support workers and disabled people out in public. Not all disabled people want or can consistently have a personal support worker of the same sex, but many of the accessible stalls on-campus are within gender-segregated washrooms. Really though, should what toilet we use really matter?

### **BUT THIS ALL MEANS YOU CAN'T HAVE A NORMAL LIFE WITH FAMILIES, RIGHT?**

Why not? Remember, not all cisgender heterosexual couples are able to have children, yet no one is suggesting that they can't have otherwise normal lives. We can get married, we can adopt, we can have surrogate children, and who knows what will be possible in the future with medical technology? Womb transplants have already been performed, even leading to later successful pregnancies (see [7]), and scientists have managed to create fertile sperm and eggs from stem cells in animal studies (see [8]).

### **YOU'RE ALL SO BRAVE!**

If we are brave, it is only because we have to be. Really, we just want to be ourselves. T&GD persons are 4 to 5 times more likely to commit or attempt suicide due to the harassment,

bullying and transphobia we confront everyday, even from those who we are closest to. Many are estranged from our families, or have lost our jobs, friends, or partners because of our transition. You can imagine that life is even harder when complete strangers are nasty to us too.

### **THIS ALL SOUNDS SO COMPLEX! WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?**

Um, not much really! Just be nice! We're really just normal people at the end of the day, so try and treat us as such. Don't harass or bully us, even if we're different. Please use the name and pronouns we ask you to, even if you don't think they're right. Using a different pronoun doesn't hurt you, but it can make a huge difference to us. Don't ask us inappropriate questions you wouldn't ask anyone else! And finally, please, do let us use the bathroom in peace. I mean really, we all just need to pee! ■

### **References**

- [1] Ainsworth C., 2015, *Nature*, Vol. 518, pp. 288–291.
- [2] Fausto-Sterling A., 2015, *Nature*, Vol. 519, p. 291.
- [3] Fausto-Sterling A., 2000, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*.
- [4] Clark et al., 2014, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 55, p. 93.
- [5] Fausto-Sterling A., 2012, *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World*, The Routledge Series Integrating Science and Culture.
- [6] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender#Population\\_figures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender#Population_figures)
- [7] Brännström et al., 2014, *The Lancet*, Vol. 385, pp. 607–616.
- [8] Hayashi et al., 2012, *Science*, Vol. 338, pp. 971–975.

### **Further Reading**

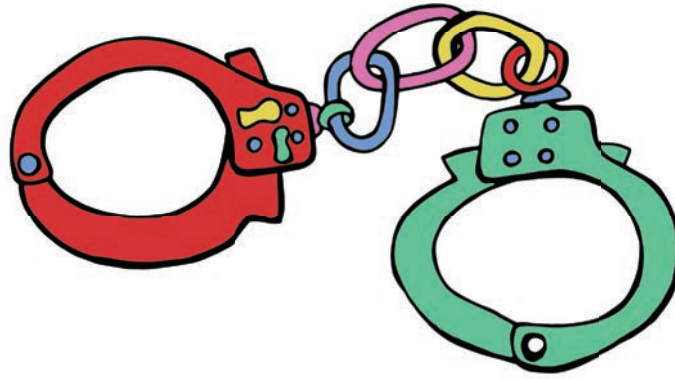
<http://www.auckland.ac.nz/lgbti>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersex>

"Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community" edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth, Oxford University Press.





# let them eat cake?

bruce winterstone takes a legal look  
at the balance of freedom of opinion  
and freedom from discrimination

A gay Irishman walks into a bakery and asks for a cake decorated with the words “Support Gay Marriage”. The baker, a committed Christian, refuses. The punchline? A Belfast court finds the bakery owner guilty of unlawful discrimination, and fines the bakery £500.

In doing so, the Northern Irish judiciary has dipped a toe into the murky waters of determining not just *who* a business must sell to (a relatively straightforward proposition – everybody), but also *what* that business must sell.

The law in New Zealand – rightly in my submission – prohibits businesses from discrimination on the basis of a number of characteristics. Our Human Rights Act makes it unlawful for persons who supply goods, services and facilities from unlawfully discriminating against customers. This prohibition is a relatively simple one. You sell a product, or provide a service. You must sell to all comers, regardless of whatever personal attributes, characteristics and idiosyncrasies they bring in through the front door of your premises.

On its face, our Irish bakery falls foul of the above test. A gay man orders a gay cake. The baker refuses. The court agrees that it is discrimination according to the customer’s sexual orientation and finds against the baker. Case closed, equality wins.

We must be cautious. On its face, the customer’s request was refused on the basis of what

he asked the baker to create, not on the basis of who he was as a person. Needless to say, it is entirely possible that, had a homosexual customer come in and ordered a generic cake, the baker would have still refused to serve him.

Nevertheless, there is a subtle but important distinction between the expectation that a business will sell their product to all comers, and the expectation that a business will make any product available to all comers.

The reasons to refuse to provide a certain product or service are myriad. They may be ethical (a lawyer with a conflict of interest). They may be religious (a kosher supermarket). They may be hipster (as a Christchurch café recently proved in a bout of caffeinated hubris, refusing to despoil its flat whites with trim milk). Should there be an expectation that these merchants extend their repertoire at the request of a customer? Even if there is, should the law intervene to compel it?

In the Belfast cake case, the issue is further complicated by the fact that the bakery was offering as much a service as a good. The business had held itself out as creating cakes to order. Regardless, should that representation justify compelling the owner to create something expressing a sentiment that they profoundly disagree with?

The issue of compulsion sits at the crux of this question. A person is entitled to deeply held beliefs. In a liberal society, that person is further entitled to expect that the law will not interfere with those beliefs. There is an important distinction to be made here. The expectation

of legal non-interference with a belief is a different proposition to the expectation that the law will, conversely, promote those beliefs and enhance the position of those who hold them.

Unfortunately, even our relatively secular society is riddled with examples of the latter. We see this dynamic in the disgraceful legislative sleight-of-hand that allows publicly funded, ostensibly secular schools to “close” in order to allow religious instruction. We see it in the lingering offence of “criminal blasphemy” that remains – however little used – on our statute books. Tax exemptions for religious institutions such as Sanitarium “absolutely not a commercial enterprise” New Zealand. Restrictions on freedom of expression because our words might “offend” those of a religious persuasion. Let us be clear – these practices go beyond mere “non-interference” with beliefs, and stray well into the realm of actively promoting and enhancing those beliefs. The entitlement to hold on to sincere beliefs does not come with the further right to demand the rest of society to adjust itself and its institutions in favour of those beliefs.

That aside, if we start from a general principle of legal non-interference, there is a complex interface to explore here, where the rights of one person to be free from discrimination come into contact with the rights of another person to be free from legal compulsion to take *positive* action that is not in accordance with their beliefs. By all means, we should condemn irrational, hurtful and outdated ideas and actions, with all the force that social convention can muster. That is not the same thing as saying that the law, too, should intervene. ■

# EQUITY OFFICE – TE ARA TAUTIKA

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## PROUD TO SUPPORT OUR LGBTI COMMUNITY AND PRIDE WEEK

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The University supports a safe, inclusive and equitable environment through:

- Our LGBTI Student and Staff Network
- Rainbow Groups in every faculty
- Legal name change support for transgender students
- Unisex toilets for gender diverse students and staff

**Find out more**

**[www.equity.auckland.ac.nz/lgbti](http://www.equity.auckland.ac.nz/lgbti)**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**AUCKLAND**  
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau  
NEW ZEALAND





# the wonders of ageing

BY M.

When I was young, I couldn't wait to be older. As soon as my older sibling was of age to do anything, I wanted to do as much as well: from spiritual rite of passage ceremonies to rollercoaster rides to driving.

Then, when I was eight, I did some numerology. I was eight, I lived at house number eight, I was eight years away from finishing high school; by then, I would be sixteen, thus of age to drive, and it would be the new millennium. I was in awe of this series of numerical coincidences and thrilled at the prospect of everything that would come over the next eight years. But I couldn't conceive of anything beyond that. The more I tried to picture life after high school, the more my future seemed a blur. Nothing about my body after puberty, which I understood to be coming my way, registered. I could not conceive of my body ageing. I cast these perplexing feelings aside and set out to accomplish as much as I could in the coming eight years. By graduation, I hadn't resolved my ageing conundrum. Back then there was no social media. The representation of trans men in mainstream media centred around Brandon's tragic murder in *Boys Don't Cry*, which instilled a sense of doom should I disclose my transness.

I spent the next two years in a mental haze. The only thing worse than my body was that as it aged, it further cemented the changes caused by unwanted puberty. I went to trans youth groups but the facilitators focused on explaining that gender is a social construction and how we didn't have to feel tied to the binary. I wasn't concerned with conforming to or defying binary expectations; I had long grown indifferent to them. I left those groups feeling even more isolated than before.

As depression over my inability to start medical transition grew, I came across grim statistics, including one reporting 50% of trans people died before the age of 30, mainly at their own hand or someone else's (this is now outdated). I took research data at face value and was deeply affected by the odds ahead of me. I was pretty certain I wouldn't take my own life but I fretted over the outcome of my next assault. Over the next years, none of my friends' suicide attempts or completion surprised me. People ascribed a remarkable self-confidence and assuredness to my starting hormone therapy in my late teens. On the one hand, I was doing what I thought was best for me, but on the other, I figured I didn't have much life left to lose, so it wasn't that great a risk.

As my body underwent its second puberty, the mental haze began to lighten somewhat. My 20s were meaningful in a way my life hadn't been in a long time. This was bolstered



by my chest reconstruction and meeting older trans men who'd followed a similar medical path. However, my dysphoria evolved over time. It soon became clear something would have to change below the belt. This was a terrifying realisation as the vast majority of narratives in trans men communities simultaneously insisted surgeries produced horrible results, and they would always remain beyond anyone's financial means. As my distress grew, I began to notice the subtext beneath the disparaging comments. Lamenting the high cost hid their desire – despite constant put downs, many guys secretly wanted it. Meanwhile, my life carried on.

One day, I knocked on the door of my grandmother's retirement home apartment. She thought I was her personal support worker and invited me in. To my surprise, she was naked and getting ready to take a shower. We had a good laugh at the mishap. I excused myself as her personal support worker showed up. She took a shower while I went through life-changing realisations. There was something about seeing her frailty and vulnerability that forced me to consider my own, newly hopeful ageing. I pictured my body slowly greying, acquiring ageing spots and sagging skin. I thought about needing help for a shower. The idea of regularly displaying my vulnerable, naked self to someone else made me nauseous. Along with the increasing distress over my genitals, I couldn't disentangle that discomfort with growing old and having safety concerns. On the upshot, the alarming nature of that prospect lifted my mental haze and I could indeed envision myself ageing! There would be life after 30!

I joined other advocates and we won regional public health insurance coverage for transition surgeries. It was exhilarating fighting for my future! It gave me the necessary resilience to endure the phalloplasty nay-sayers. I no longer cared what others thought; they weren't going to be there when I was older. They certainly didn't need my help to put me down, as much as they tried to frame it as "kindly" informing me of the impending doom of having "Frankenstein-scarred, carrot-shaped raw dough barely resembling genitals" that would destroy my culturally queer dating life. I kept reminding myself: they were putting me down, I was

better off practicing effortless superiority. I did what I needed to address my distress, based on *reliable* research and grounded in the reality that not getting surgery came with increasing discomfort leading to more frequent dysfunction. I wasn't giving up functionality I could no longer access.

Along the way, I casually dated a slightly older trans man. We kept things casual for many reasons, one of which was my growing dysphoria that eventually made it impossible to negotiate someone else's relationship to my body. I could scarcely manage my own. But at the same time, we grew emotionally closer over the years and I intentionally moved into his street so we would see each other every day. After he returned from yet another fabulous dream trip, he suggested that we go on one together. His idea was delightful but I was busy saving for my part of the cost of lower surgeries and contributing to a pension plan. He also wanted phalloplasty but didn't feel that he could take on the social stigma within the community that I was receiving. He scoffed at my contributions to a pension plan. Instead of saving for a pension of his own, he pulled his money out to pay for his trips because he had no intentions of living long enough to retire. I understood him all too well. We agreed that instead of going on a trip together, we would get digital cameras and share amazing pictures of our respective journeys. He would capture the animals and flowers on his trips and I would document my trips to the OR.

Healing from surgery was every bit as challenging as one would imagine, especially when done in protective social isolation. We shared pictures and lived vicariously through each other. He provided some of the scarce support I had and insisted I was laying down a path that he would eventually follow. After I finished healing from my first stage, we began sorting out how we could now date more seriously. Shortly thereafter, he committed suicide.

I was angry and, of course, devastated. I was angry in part because I knew that he had not intended to die quite as he did, and part of what caused his mental deterioration was his inability to picture a future for himself. I'm not suggesting that he'd still be alive if he'd had lower surgery; he'd been suffering from numer-

ous things for so long. But there is something particularly sad to me when trans people are buried within bodies that caused them distress. Transphobes and others have a historical tendency to rewrite and appropriate trans lives to suit their political agenda and narratives of gender. We are often robbed of self-determination and dignity even – and in some cases especially – in death. Indeed, countless people appropriated his death, claiming it symbolised all sorts of things that in actuality were projections of their own understanding of transition. I find some minimal comfort though, when someone dies after finishing whatever they wanted transition to be for them, because at least on the personal level they achieved total cohesion before others could swoop in to disregard it.

Despite this immense grief, the last of my mental haze lifted as I continued lower surgeries. My future was no longer incomprehensible or terrifying. My quality of life since has been much better overall, I don't do mental gymnastics while going to the toilet, taking a shower, getting dressed, or having sex.

I took stock of my grief and triumphs. I applied and was accepted to go back to school, this time halfway around the world. I may return to our old neighbourhood one day, but I needed to leave, to show myself that transition doesn't limit where I can live or what I can do. I continue to do my best to increase my awareness of how reaching this milestone has a lot to do with the many dimensions of my privilege. I'm a white male from an affluent background with dual-citizenship. I've lived most of my life on British colonised land, became fluent in English and earned a graduate degree. I'm immensely grateful that I now look forward to eventually greying and wrinkling.

I've started to take my sense of safety and resolved dysphoria for granted, though sharing my story imposes a level of self-awareness. Up until I left trans groups, guys would judgmentally ask how could I get phalloplasty. The truth is I wanted to grow old feeling present in my body and safer in the inevitable vulnerability of ageing.

I told them I wanted to pee my name in the snow. ■

pride



20  
X

16  
X

still here still queen



# broken pride

former gro tessa naden worries about the monopolisation of auckland pride events

Writing follow-ups is a strange feeling. A few months ago, I wrote a blog post detailing a statistical outline of Auckland Pride events. The original post is on *KiwiQueer* – it would probably make a good *Craccum* article (and believe me, was I tempted to rework and submit it) but I thought it would be better to write something fresh – it isn't February after all!

In summary, there were bugger-all events for trans people, lesbians, and young people. But what surprised me most was the reaction to what I wrote. I felt almost persona non grata in some places, just as people were thanking me and asking me to speak on the issue. It was a big variation from "someone has sour grapes!" to "thank you, you said what needed to be said."

I spent a good chunk of last year keeping my mouth shut: as a representative of AUSA, I couldn't start pissing off other community groups because that meant they wouldn't work with AUSA, and AUSA was certainly the greater good in this situation. AUSA's commitment to queer rights is among the best in students' associations across the country. So for me, my reaction ranged from "someone needs to say this" to "I finally get to be honest". It was disturbing to hear that – are we really *that* frightened or angry when someone asks questions that need to be asked?

I concluded that what's wrecking the queer community is the small circle of People Who Run Things, like GABA and Auckland Pride. This is what probably attracted the most accusations of "sour grapes". I am not the first person to criticise these organisations and I won't be the last. But criticising people in public is another kettle of fish in such a small community.

In a convenient phrase – they are "out of touch". Are they the sole cause of the problems in the Auckland queer community? No. But

the power these organisations wield, and the people who run them, means that Pride reflects a white, upper-middle class sensibility in everything it does. The majority of queer people in Auckland do not fall under at least one of these characteristics. When you confront these organisations, they tend to get a bit shitty. They're "improving", they say. But you don't get to say that without being held to account. So we get a bunch of Grey Lynn and Ponsonby bougies trying to be "diverse and include young people". They also made a lot of promises at the Pride Community hui, which fell flat at the actual event.

Are they trying a hell of a lot harder? Sure. But that's not a high bar to clear. Before there was nothing. A few years ago there wasn't even a pride festival. Now, at least, there's a "Youth" tab on the very Web 2.0 website that shows me they have a few youth events out of 50+ that were held during the pride festival. One of those was AUSA, the rest were Rainbow Youth and a cool event on an ice rink.

Then of course, there was the protest. Do I agree with No Pride In Prisons? Not on everything – at my core I'm a Labour hack and I'm nowhere near that radical. I certainly believe there was no issue with the Police marching. However, NPIP did go through the "proper channels". I met and had a good chat with their representative at the hui I attended. They tried having a discussion in the limited queer media – they went to the Pride board and made a reasonable request. They got fucked over. So yeah, a protest happened. And there were cries for "respect the parade" – but they did. For a lot of trans people, Corrections marching is somewhat disrespectful. Corrections marching without a commitment was even worse.

So the protest happened. It happened because the organisations organising major community events are out of touch, particularly with young people. There are large fees for community organisations to march, even more for political groups, at the discretion of the organisers. For all the cries they should have marched in the parade, could they have afforded it? UniQ had to get an exception to march in the parade – there was no money in the bank to afford the

fees.

And there's the marching past the Glam Stand, which some years has cost triple digits for the privilege to sit in. There's the sponsorship, the corporates over community groups and public sector workers. ANZ comes before "Gay and Lesbian Parents" or UniQ, or the goddamn Labour Party (responsible for many LGBTI legislative victories). There's the lack of events for young people.

Through doing this, these organisations are making something worse – a completely apathetic community. At least NPIP care. At least I care. There are many queer people who really couldn't give a shit about any of this because it doesn't affect them or isn't something they care about. For all the outrage over losing OutGames last year, 99% of the people I know didn't even know what that was, and when informed, couldn't be arsed to give a shit. At the heart of this is an unwillingness to hold major community organisations to account. Given that there is massive funding interdependence between the media, community organisations, GABA, and the bars, it is unlikely to happen out of fear of the money being cut off. It fosters something else – an inability to engage outside of that. And if you don't engage, they don't come, as we can see in falling spectator numbers for the Auckland Pride Parade.

The easiest and quickest way to do this is to break the hold nepotism has over the LGBTI community in Auckland. Nepotism is always at play in a country like New Zealand, but democratising and opening up these organisations for young people and those otherwise not traditionally involved means that its influence is much reduced. In particular, the Auckland Pride Board, responsible for the parade and it's direction, needs to quit the application process and open up the board democratically. An application process only furthers a situation where people similar to the people already there get onto the board.

Perpetuation of the failure to engage and continued apathy is only going to lead to one thing – no community. And that's not what anyone wants. ■





# putting the t in lgbti+

lara croft examines our incomplete rainbow

As I lay in my plaid one evening, it suddenly dawned on me that despite my appearances and efforts, I'm viewed as Trans. It seems daily that I have to come out. Secretly, I'm Trans.

Let me start over. I'm a Lesbian first and foremost, and a woman (a damn sexy one). The thing is, we live in a world where society imbues norms and prescriptions that we as citizens are deemed to follow – endlessly, it seems. But sometimes, we break the rules. This is where Transgender folks step in (binary or otherwise). Sweeping through this male-dominated, Gay landscape, I do my best to 'pass', but when is it considered enough?

It is a strange mix living as a woman. At times I am accepted into the fold with questions on periods, boys or girls and where I got my eyeliner from. Yet conversely I encounter stares, frowns or mutters while I wait patiently to pee, checking my phone amidst the washing of hands, application of make-up and embarrassed first years. Perhaps it's my outfit choice? Dresses are often met with greater suspicion than my skinny jeans.

Again, I find myself at a crossroads of being accepted as the woman I am. I question my Feminist motives at times. Is it okay for me to be vocal? Am I representing myself as Lesbian or as Trans or as Woman? Sometimes that becomes a blur, other times I guess I 'out' myself more than I should. For me this is difficult. Part of me wants to reconcile the innate sense of womanhood that exists within me, despite the body I have. That it is merely society's perception of a 'woman' which derails what I see everyday in myself. My body, I'll have you know, is perfectly capable of fulfilling your fantasy. Often dysphoria is the main killer of our day, not so much the outside perspective. Technically I

have a societal 'nice body', idealised to the 'nth degree, but again it doesn't necessarily align to the conception I have of myself. This realisation when getting intimate can be scary and at times, dangerous.

Then there is the invasive 'you're a woman?' mindset. It's the question rather than the statement this time, something which always stops me in my tracks. Home life can be pretty shitty for Queer people, so my question to you is: what are you doing about it? My community, and yours, is marked by suicide. This simply is not good enough. We live in the twenty-first century – it's 20-fucking-16, you'd think we would be progressive citizens. We have had increasing media coverage for Trans people very recently. This has included Trans people being visually portrayed in a number of TV programmes and ceremonies (yes, Jenner got those awards). But is this enough? Has enough been done politically, too? A vast number of states in the USA continue to support strictly gendered bathrooms, and the refusal of service to homosexuals. Luckily we have artists such as Bruce Springsteen and Bryan Adams using their star power to oppose bigotry, and even a President motioning for universal acceptance (even if it's not federally binding). We have come a long way, but that rainbow is far from complete.

As noted in this year's Pride Week 'Coming Out' Panel, we each have a journey. That journey ultimately corresponds to living fully as ourselves – whatever that means to you. Obviously we need to approach this from a 'safety first' perspective. It is no good coming out if it means we lose all protection and dignity from wherever we are living – I know this all too well. This can be expressly applied to Trans people, where again we are confronted with higher suicide rates and homelessness, especially amongst our Māori and Pacific family.

We all need to support each other, even if that means a high-five or a hug, a bit of coin when it's needed most or simply a place to stay for the night. Trans people especially feel greater pressures – not only are they grappling with a separate sexuality that is not often perceived as wonderful (not all of us are the atypical celebrated Gay man – sorry Mum! #NotSorry) but also are struggling to understand and express their gender identity in front of many disappointed, threatening eyes. These eyes are often from those whom we considered to be our closest and dependable supporters, grown from blood, our families.

Personally, I have grown to understand myself to be the woman I long desired and innately am. And sexuality-wise it allowed me to move back into a sphere which included women in my relationships, to where I can positively identify being Lesbian. You have to revise every aspect of your being. It can take serious therapy to conceptually transform yourself, especially knowing the inevitable bridges that will collapse. To all those who are struggling: it is okay, breathe, understand and see yourself. You're greater than you'll ever know, badass and loved. Aim for the stars! Or the books, they're just as magical as you are. Most importantly, you know yourself, you are valid and what your experience is real.

Really, the T is one part of LGBTI+, yet it can be ignored revoked or made invisible. Don't let this happen. Just as Bi-erasure truly exists (note Pride Week's Bi/Pan/Ace Forum), we must stand together and shut down these farcical responses to invalidation, to instead acknowledge the lived realities of Queer people and to make known the support in whichever way you feel most comfortable. Be Proud, be Queer, be an Ally. Most importantly, be yourself and positively, to the betterment of others. ■



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## Finn-gering Poe DAMeron

ARTS EDITORIAL BY SAMANTHA GIANOTTI

*Craccum* is an underfunded, godforsaken establishment. The magazine does, however, have its own office (siiick). This office is usually used for general banter purposes; reading conspiracy theories about Ted Cruz the Zodiac Killer, pretending to answer phones that are not plugged in, and listening to Neil Diamond's *All-Time Greatest Hits*. Last week, the office provided the backdrop for dramatic readings from the Poe Dameron/Finn fanfiction canon. (Mark delivered a rousing (or should I say AROUSING) performance in both lead roles. This editorial is truly just becoming a weekly opportunity for me to rag on Mark.)

You see, *Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens* left fans with many unanswered questions: Is Rey a Kenobi? Why is Luke Skywalker in Scotland? Is Supreme Leader Snoke projecting such a sizeable hologram of himself to compensate for a tiny dick? There is one thing a fair few fans have decided for themselves, however: Finn and Poe are as gay as the day is long, specifically for each other. Just last week, GLAAD's annual survey of LGBT presence in media highlighted that Disney films were sorely lacking in such representation, and it has since been pointed out that the *Star Wars* universe

should *really* be able to include a gay character, what with its aliens and Wookiees and the fact that they did try to convince an entire generation of fans that Hayden Christensen is actually a talented actor.

Stormpilot shippers have called for a romance between Poe and Finn as the prime opportunity for such representation to find its way into *Star Wars* lore. At this point in time, I would like to make clear that I am not poking fun at stormpilot shippers. I am one of you. I look at countless gifs and memes made from the mere *two* fucking scenes they share in *The Force Awakens*. I live for this shit. But at present, that is all we have; memes and gifs and torrid fanfiction read out by your friends to varying degrees of mirth.

Fanfiction is a goddamn delight. Sometimes, you just want to weep while you read about an alternate *Potter* universe where Lily and James were the ones to drop Harry to Platform 9 ¾, or immerse yourself in a piece of writing about Samwise Gamgee being super in love with Frodo (which we all know is totally fucking accurate). Sometimes, you accidentally come across a story about an author being double-teamed by Tom Hiddleston and Jeremy Renner and you can't look your mum in the eye at the dinner table.

Or so I've heard.

But more important than its propensity for unexpected threesomes, fanfiction gives fans a chance to reclaim characters that are trapped in a perpetuity of heteronormativity, in films and TV shows dictated by studios and produc-

ers that want to create content that is palatable to the masses. Fanfiction lets individuals create a universe where Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes are not only childhood best friends but soulmates, where BBC's Sherlock and John are not only flatmates but soulmates, and where *Supernatural*'s Sam and Dean Winchester are not only brothers, but banging each other. (I'm kind of judging any and all "Wincest" shippers for that last one, ya nasties.) Fans are not limited by any considerations or judgment calls other than their own, and the slightest glance or ambiguous phrase between characters becomes the foundation for a one-thousand-word-long piece of creative writing.

Once a creator delivers their work into the hands of fans, this work is the property of any who consume it, and can be interpreted in any which way such fans choose. Charlotte Lucas' lack of interest in traditional romance can be code for her latent desire to make out with Lizzy Bennet; Timon and Pumbaa are not just best buddies - they are raising Simba in a perfectly content same-sex relationship. What would *certainly* be great is if creators would, in place of tiny winks and nods to potential queerness, offer fully-fledged, out and proud characters. For the time being, fans and creative types are left carving spaces for queer characters in the roast turkey of pop culture.

We await the time when this pop culture turkey and accompanying roast veges are slathered in thick queer gravy. But until then - just like Humphrey Bogart's assurance that he and Ingrid Bergman will always have Paris - we'll always have gay Oscar Isaac memes. ■





# anna calvi's debut album

a soundtrack for figuring out your weird life

In the New Zealand LGBTQIA+ community, things are pretty good. Gay marriage is legal, universities are putting in unisex bathrooms, and we're pretty much a liberal, open-minded society now. It's often thought of as the best time in our history; we're generally happier and more accepted. What a time to be alive.

Yet regardless of how progressive all that big socio-political stuff is, in every personal version of an 'alternative lifestyle' (to use a relative of mine's favourite term), there are times where it seems like things will always be a little bit out of place for you. Sometimes when people realise you identify as anything other than straight, you will still see their smiles become a little bit more fixed, and their conversations a little bit more artificial. Maybe you've noticed that acquaintances can become a little more reluctant to spend time alone with you than they used to be, or that they start leaving awkward pauses in place of friendly small talk. Parents might ask if you're going to cut your hair short because you're a lesbian, and offer to set you up with a young man from work (yeah...). Those little discrepancies in the way some people will communicate with you can make you feel like you'll always be a little bit weird, even while existing in an outwardly liberal world.

Learning to embrace your queer identity in spite of these things involves a clash between self-denial and self-fulfillment: a desire to blend

in and feel genuinely accepted as part of the world by masking the truth, and also a desire to continue to be your 'alternative' self and accept the consequences. To me, that's one of the reasons we have art, and by extension, music: to make us feel less alone when we're trying to come to terms with being a little bit weird.

This mediation of an 'alternative' identity through music is perfectly articulated in Anna Calvi's self-titled debut album of 2011. Calvi is a South London-based guitarist/singer who creates genre-bending music using a variety of stylistic influences: David Bowie, Jeff Buckley, Hendrix guitar flailing, jazzy bluesy reverb, a harmonium, flamenco, and even some Edith Piaf-inspired warbling. On the surface, Anna Calvi's mosaic of expression doesn't seem to make a lot of sense - especially in a world of music journalism based on first impressions and shallow genre placement. Her debut is a peculiar mixture created by a woman who is resultantly very difficult to pigeonhole, and importantly, implicitly quiet regarding her own sexual orientation.

Calvi's debut album took her ten years to create following her graduation from music school. It was released when she was 31, and probably felt like she hadn't succeeded in life for a long time. Maybe this is why its mood and style of expression is so varied. The first track is "Rider to the Sea", a sweeping Spanish-style guitar instrumental played on a '90s Telecaster through a vintage Vox amplifier. From here, the music is turbulent and changeable. There are songs that are soaring and bold, and songs that want to fade into the walls in a quiet sadness. "The Devil," placed halfway through the album,

emphasizes this demon-battling process. This album is beautiful because it is essentially a forty minute summary of many years of both doubtful and celebratory self-formulation.

Anna Calvi still really isn't very famous at all. And that meant that when I went to Melbourne to see her play a show in 2014, a friend and I ended up sitting in an Irish pub with the woman herself at 3am (the last place open), bitterly cold and jetlagged. This unfathomable scenario was befitting to a number of deep conversations about sexual identity and life itself, and Calvi said something to me that has stuck for good:

"All that time you spend worrying about 'am I living? Is this what I want to do?' You're forgetting the fact that you're alive right now, and what you're experiencing is real."

Well, it's not a Maya Angelou quote. But maybe that's exactly why it works. Anna Calvi's debut album (much like her understated yet profound quote) belies a thirst for taking joy in a unique identity, even if it co-exists with the discordance of feeling rejected or hopelessly trapped within yourself. Anna Calvi created exactly what she wanted to create, regardless of its lackluster commercial success and how long it took to come to fruition. And that's why she can teach us all a lesson about believing that what you do and who you are matters, even if there are times when it doesn't feel important or valued by anyone else. The whole point of expressing creativity (and, indeed, your identity) is to affirm what you know is true: 'I am here, I am part of the world, and this is how I exist in it'. ■ CHRISTY BURROWS



## The Switch

Emily King

ALBUM REVIEW BY VICTORIA

I first encountered Emily King about a month ago when I returned to high school to watch an old friend do her Year 13 music performances. The band played her lead single “Distance” and I was instantly hooked. What followed was the discovery of *The Switch* – an album full of practical wisdom clothed in a sweet mix of soulful pop and R&B. The drum-driven opening track “Good Friend” sets the feel-good tone of the album and oozes with the confidence that only comes from being surrounded by the right people. The drums continue into “The Animals”, in which King is adamant that “never again will I ever be friends with a big bad wolf like you”. Clearly the confidence with which she sings was not won without a fight, and her journey towards it is well documented here.

Some of the most interesting moments occur when King lets her guard down. A standout track (and personal favourite) is the melancholic “Off Center” which ebbs and flows between solo acoustic guitar and waves of synths, eventually building to a full band crescendo. While telling of King’s own comedown from her initial musical success nearly a decade ago, the song is relatable for anyone who has experienced self-doubt. As a queer listener, the track that struck home the most was “For Them”, the final track of the album dedicated to her parents. For many of our community, the relationship with our parents is the most difficult to navigate and “For Them” strikes a particularly raw nerve in a surprisingly reassuring way.

*The Switch* is a stellar album and if I had one gripe it would be that the production is almost *too* good. The special ability of King to combine the personal and relatable in all of her song writing gives it a very real quality and what results is an album that is as universally appealing as it is uplifting. ■



## Black Sabbath at Vector Area

CONCERT REVIEW BY JACK ADAMS

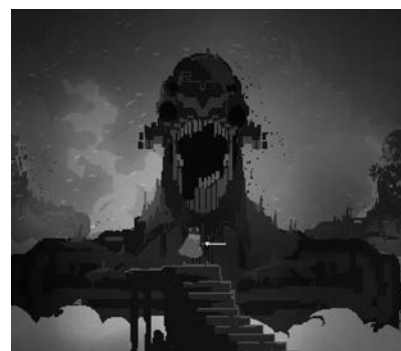
When it comes to testing the extremities of the human condition, not many things can beat the capabilities of the infamous Ozzy Osbourne.

Black Sabbath opened with absolute overdose-inducing tunes. “Children of the Grave” rumbled the stage like Osbourne’s deviated septum. “War Pigs” graced the ears of those battling the intoxicating stench of geriatrics reclaiming their denim patches, leather uniform, and the fleeting nonchalance of needing a cigarette before you’ve finished the first.

The original line-up was not all quite there. After some disagreements earlier this decade, the original drummer was not present, but this was not missed, with the replacement’s youth showing what the band would’ve looked like before Cocaine and Hennessey rid their bodies of any observable health.

Quite frankly, the performance is what I could imagine was the essence of the grunge-y, ejaculatory stitched basements you’d associate with Black Sabbath in a time when colour TV was still an option and drugs were but the milk on your cornflakes. The accompanying brilliance of Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler still proved that arthritis hasn’t deterred the phalangeal superiority we’ve come to expect from the grotty stimulation techniques employed by over-keen teens with jackhammer finesse.

By the time “Paranoid” was on, my vocal chords gave up faster than a geriatric on a tramp. Fucking superb, shit venue. 10/10 would bottle organiser if they gave us more than plastic cups. ■



## Hyper Light Drifter

GAME REVIEW BY MICHAEL CLARK

*Hyper Light Drifter* is a game told entirely through pictures. Other than a few tutorial prompts at the start of the game, there are no words. The story is told entirely through wandering around a vastly colourful and pixelated world, battling creatures and collecting fragments of a machine that are scattered throughout. It can be frustrating at moments but very refreshing at others. With such stunning visuals, the game needs no words really.

*Hyper Light Drifter*’s story is told almost entirely by wandering around the setting. We know that there has been some sort of war between the four main races and a race of giant Lovecraftian titans. The titans lose and their massive corpses are scattered around the world reminding us of the devastation that they caused to the war-struck landscape.

You take control of the drifter, a wanderer affected by some sort of heart disease that is slowly consuming him. After succumbing to a bad attack by the disease, he is saved by another drifter who issues him with a quest to find sixteen machine fragments. Why are drifters taking on this task? And what’s with the shadow monster and the jackal? It takes a pretty eagle-eyed interpreter to decipher *Hyper Light Drifter*’s secretive narrative.

This kind of hyper cryptic storytelling is neither good nor bad. The game does a good job at moving you forward even though you have no idea what your end goal is, and the combat feels so natural that you don’t really need words to explain how it works. Yet, the way it tries to visually describe certain mechanics or story elements without words can be a bit messy and confusing. The game does a good job at keeping everything smooth and to the point - a refreshing game to an industry saturated with needless exposition. ■





## Game of Thrones Season Six Premiere

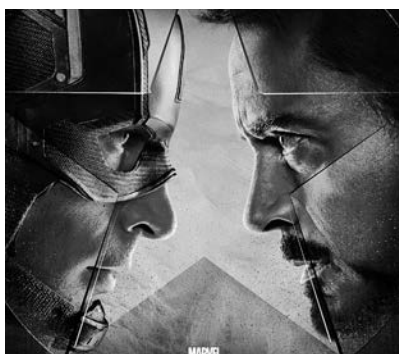
TELEVISION REVIEW BY NICOLE BLACK

**(Don't read if you don't want Game of Thrones spoilers, obv.)**

After that finale, it's easy to see why the sixth season of *Game of Thrones* has been so highly anticipated. As a long-time fan, I was interested in how the writers were going to continue the story with no source material left to draw on. I know the creators have already been told exactly how the story ends, but it's still intriguing to see how the show will progress without the safety net the books allowed. And the beginning of season six certainly gives a glimpse of the struggle the writers are now facing to rush through their many storylines in the small time they have left.

Season six opens with the aftermath of each ending from season five. The answer of Jon Snow's life was first up but (spoiler!) he was left to stay dead a while longer. Surprisingly, we saw no sign of Stannis, whose life hangs in the balance after an encounter with Brienne of Tarth, nor did we see anything about the new characters that had been cast, who are supposed to become integral parts of the story.

The hour went by quickly which suggests I was entertained, and it wasn't until I talked about it the next day with friends that I realised nothing had really happened. It might not have been a complete waste of time, but with only a finite number of episodes left the story needs to progress at a much faster rate than this first episode suggests. *Game of Thrones* should pick up the pace in the next few episodes and with that, we could be in for the best season yet. ■



## Captain America: Civil War

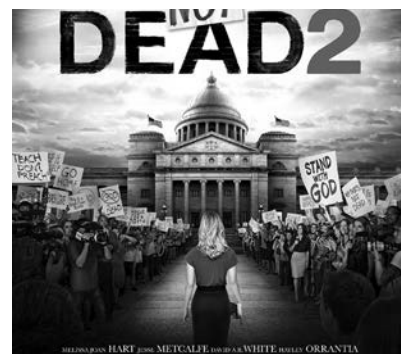
FILM REVIEW BY EUGENIA WOO

Within the first half hour of *Captain America: Civil War*, I knew immediately that as a fan, it would be close to (if not exactly) what I wanted when I paid an obscene amount of money for advanced screening tickets and an accompaniment of stale popcorn.

As Marvel's most recent addition to their stable of smash hits, *Civil War* has done its job. Before I watched it, I was nervous about the rift between Iron Man and Captain America being executed too much like the grudge-match that was *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*. In hindsight, I'm wondering how it could have even crossed my mind to compare that Rotten Tomatoes-certified sack of shit to *Civil War*.

Markus and McFeely do a good job as the screenwriters tasked with making Captain America great again. They've had a storied history with the franchise, and the appreciation that you'll have for this movie definitely depends on how attached you are to the different players in the film. A good portion of *Civil War* is about building anticipation and setting the scene for the superhero showdown that's been hyped in all the trailers. The MCU wants us to know that the Cap and Iron Man aren't just trying to knock each other out for some arbitrary reason.

I'd say that even if you aren't someone who's super invested in the plot's flimsy moral debate about superheroes fighting crime without a government body to rubber-stamp their ass-kicking endeavours, you'll come away from the film decently happy with how Marvel has tried to deal with the bigger picture here. Also, who could be mad at a film with a resoundingly canon Spiderman cameo? ■



## God's Not Dead 2

FILM REVIEW BY JACK CALDWELL

*God's Not Dead 2* is a faith-based drama and sequel to the successful Pure Flix film *God's Not Dead*. It follows Melissa Joan Hart as Grace Wesley, a teacher who answers a student's question comparing Martin Luther King Jr. to Jesus, and due to a mention of the latter in a secular environment, ends up in court. The rest of the film plays out the court case that decides whether or not Grace can keep her job.

For the purposes of this review, it's worth pointing out that there is nothing fundamentally wrong about believing in any God, or mentioning it briefly in a classroom with no attempt to indoctrinate or convert school children.

The issue with *God's Not Dead 2* is that it feels it can't win this court case and sway the audience without completely misrepresenting the motives of the accusers. In one scene, we hear in private that the plaintiff wants to help the school board and "prove once and for all that God is dead". It's obvious to people of any belief that the motives of any accuser in such a case would simply be to ensure that teaching, not preaching, took place.

*God's Not Dead 2* refers to many real-life court cases of a similar nature, which the person of faith typically won and rightfully so. It's almost guaranteed no court case has ever played out like the drama in this film, which would make even the biggest soap opera fans roll their eyes. The film's agenda often extends to politics, as a pointless subplot is told involving the big, evil federal government telling local priests what they can and cannot preach in church.

*God's Not Dead 2* may be a film about faith, but the blatant infeasibility of the story and characters will only leave you in disbelief. ■



# Paolo Rotondo

Paolo Rotondo, director of the NZ film *Orphans and Kingdoms* has a chat to us about making a movie on a microbudget, inequality in NZ, and his early days as an actor on Shortland St - weehey!

## THREE OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN *ORPHANS AND KINGDOMS* ARE YOUNG ACTORS. HOW IS IT DIFFERENT DIRECTING YOUNG PEOPLE COMPARED TO OLDER ACTORS?

Kids don't want any bullshit, they just want you to be real. I had a few gags up my sleeve to relieve tension. Don't patronise them or simplify the main points just to make it easier for them. Acting is such a human art form, full of different emotions. So you need to keep putting them in different situations and hope that they'll give you an honest response.

## AS ONE OF THE FIRST DIRECTORS THAT THEY'LL WORK WITH, DO YOU FEEL ANY EXTRA PRESSURE BEING ONE OF THE SHAPING INFLUENCES IN THEIR ACTING CAREERS?

Oh shit, I hadn't thought of that but I hope I can be! I mean films have a kind of special meaning. They might go on to do a TV commercial or a TV show that isn't quite as intense. Probably a lot of experiences are going to be a little bit easier. This was a really hard shoot. We shot it really fast, with not a lot of resources and the material is really intense – quite dramatic and full of action, with quite a lot of adult themes in there. So if they go and do a fizzy drink commercial out there they'll be laughing!

## *ORPHANS AND KINGDOMS* HAS SOME PRETTY HEAVY CONTENT IN IT. DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO TELL STORIES WITH SOME KIND OF MESSAGE?

Since this was a microbudget film, I didn't have the same kind of commercial pressure on it. So I thought, let's make something that has a little bit of heart to it. Otherwise we're just sell-outs. So since there was less money involved I probably had more freedom to go for it and say something. An artist is a mirror to society. We just happen to have the tools to reflect society, whether that be music, or painting or poetry or filmmaking. I don't think the role of artists is just to be entertaining. For me personally, I think entertaining is kind of like seducing someone so that you can actually talk to them. It's like flirting with someone before you kiss them!

## WHAT INSPIRED THE STORYLINE?

When I was thinking about this film I'd just had a kid and I was living on Waiheke Island. I was thinking, what kind of country is my kid going to grow up in? We've got so many issues with young people. I don't believe that our society has to be neoconservative and capitalist. The world's had enough of that bullshit. I believe our society can be a bit more thoughtful and more community-based. The one story that got me

the most was that little kid who was caught tagging and he was stabbed to death. I remember reading in the media as if tagging was a terrible crime, not the stabbing of the child. I felt like they'd reduced him to this cardboard cut-out criminal. So I stole that from the newspapers and I thought let's imagine that little kid. What's he like, who is he? Why is he tagging? And you can see that in the film – there's a little boy who's a prolific tagger. He's a complete little shit [laughs].

## THERE'S NO HAPPY ENDING FOR THE KIDS AT THE END OF THE FILM. WE'RE LEFT ASKING WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. WHY DID YOU END IT LIKE THAT?

I don't want the audience to be relieved of responsibility. If I tidy it all up, everyone goes home really satisfied and complete. But I want to leave a question for the audience. Next time they go to a mall and see a kid dragging his feet on the ground with a hoody over his head, maybe they'll think again.

## YOU'VE WORKED IN BOTH FILMS AND TV SHOWS. WHICH DO YOU PREFER?

Oh man I was on *Shortland St* and I was really bad [according to Wikipedia he played the 'unlucky in love CEO of the clinic, Andrew Solomon']. I'd done a few films and a lot of theatre so I was a little bit arrogant. But I was really crap on TV! I like cinema because I guess that's where I did my first work that I was proud of. It's very internalised and intense. There's more time to try and craft a good performance in it, whereas TV was really fast and I just didn't get it as much! I'd love to go back now and try it again. But then you know I'd probably see some 14-year old kid nail it on *Shortland St* and be like man why can't I do that!

## WOULD YOU MAKE A FILM ON A MICRO-BUDGET AGAIN?

You know what, I think it's a one-off experience. It's like trying to do something professional but with an amateur process [just like making *Craccum!*]. When you're asking favours from everyone you can't go hey this is your deadline, this isn't good enough – it's really difficult! But young filmmakers should go for it. If I had done that in my twenties I would've just slept on a couch and done this for a year and a half and got a film under my belt.

*Orphans and Kingdoms* is out in cinemas at the moment.

Paolo Rotondo has also organised NZ's first Italian Film Festival. It runs until the end of this week (15th May). The films are showing at Bridgeway, Academy (perfect for students!) and Monterey Cinemas.

Apparently the films showing at Academy Cinema are specifically targeted at students so definitely worth popping down after class to have a look! To see the full line-up, head over to [cinemaitalianonz.com](http://cinemaitalianonz.com).

■ HANNAH BERGIN



## Les-being human

Are you fucking sick of seeing lesbian tragedies on screen? Maybe movies like *The Kids Are Alright* and *Carol*, and TV shows like *The L-Word* and *Orange Is the New Black* are constructive in their portrayal of both the social and individual struggle of coming to terms with one's sexuality – but can't we also just see some goddamn lesbians living their goddamn lives without an ever-present identity crisis looming over head? Thank Big Lesbian Christ that a bunch of television shows are starting to incorporate lady-loving ladies that do so much more than love ladies.

*Note: Before you start bitching there may be spoilers.*



### JESSICA JONES

I unabashedly love this show. One of the many great things about it is the character of Jeri Hogarth, a lawyer who has an affair with her

secretary and then has to deal with the ensuing divorce from her wife. Any of these characters could be replaced with a man and it would be a classic straight storyline – Hogarth's sexuality is never mentioned because IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE. She doesn't have identity crises because she's too busy making money and being kind of a cut-throat bitch. Also, fun fact, in the original comic on which the show is based, Jeri is a man (Jeryn) so it's pretty cool that the producers decided to make the gender swap (fuck you female-Thor naysayers).

### ORPHAN BLACK

If you want to watch a highly competent, super foxy, dreadlocked woman who also happens to be a lezza-babe, tune into *Orphan Black*. Cosima is one of the show's many clones, played by the remarkable Tatiana Maslany, and her romance with Delphine is one of the most heartbreaking storylines on the show. The same-sex nature of their relationship is almost incidental – it isn't the defining characteristic of their romance. They are two people in love and I LOVE that.

### NEW GIRL

I should stipulate that some of these shows need to step their game up when it comes to representation – and *New Girl* isn't exactly a frontrunner when it comes to portrayals of

LGBTI+ characters. But Jess has a hilarious gynecologist friend, Sadie, who is married to – and has a child with – the lovely Melissa. Sadie *does* mention vaginas a lot, which sets her apart from Cosima and Jeri, but she does it in such a way that proves her to be perfectly at peace with her sexuality, and this is a very positive thing to see on screen. Also, to direct your attention away from lesbians for a moment, in last week's episode Jess met her boyfriend's parents for the first time and they were both dads! And nothing was said about it! Yay!

### THE WALKING DEAD

Again, representation in *TWD* could be better, but Tara is a fierce as fuck walker-killing warrior goddess who excels at both driving knives into putrefying skulls and making sweet love to her lovely girlfriend Denise. She is a corpse-bashing, clit-busting cool customer. *TWD* is a little safe in their portrayal of gay sex scenes for my liking, but it is great to see a lesbian character who isn't defined by her sexuality.

There is certainly a need for shows focused on the perks and pitfalls of wrestling with one's sexuality, but it's also a massive step forward when shows start portraying gay people as, well, people – as multi-dimensional human beings with the same concerns as anyone else. ■ CAITLIN ABLEY

## Troye Sivan: a young creative in the gay community

Troye Sivan came out as gay on his YouTube channel in August 2013. Since then, he has turned into a popular singer-songwriter, with his debut album *Blue Neighbourhood* gaining attention through the overplayed radio hits "Youth" and "Wild". These tracks in particular do not highlight the issues that LGBTQIA+ youth face, but Sivan's other content offers comment on the perspectives of a young gay teenager in the Western world.

The main LGBTQIA+ contribution Sivan makes are his *Blue Neighbourhood* music video trilogy, consisting of videos for his hits "Wild", "Fools" and "Talk Me Down". The trilogy forms an artistic short film on his experiences discovering love and sexuality. The "Wild" video shows clips of two little boys who are best friends, as Sivan sings the song while hugging someone. We eventually realise that the young boys, and Sivan and his hugging companion are one and the same. The video allows us to see how their love develops just like others, but we're still shocked when we

find out what happens, highlighting the lack of normalization for LGBTQIA+ romance. This video ends with the father of one of the boys consuming too much alcohol and having to leave a gathering with his son.

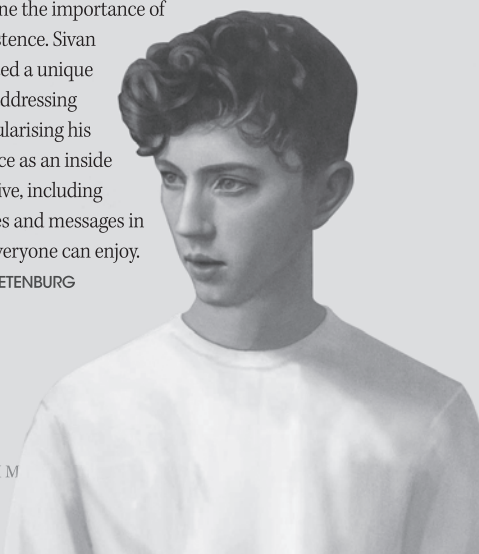
The second video in the series for "Fools" acts as the main tearjerker of the series, where the issue develops. The happy romance turns sour as the alcoholic father begins to get abusive as a result of his son's developing relationship with his friend, forcing the boy to push his companion away. The verses of the song describe how this forceful act goes against how Sivan truly feels for this person, creating a whirlwind of questioning inside his mind, seeking to normalise the romance and heartbreak of an LGBTQIA+ relationship. The boy's father also forces him to participate in the 'manly' activity of boat construction and maintenance. Wait, commenting on sexuality AND sexism? Troye Sivan, what a visionary!

The situation develops in the final video of the series for one of Sivan's more underrated tracks, "Talk Me Down". The video centres on a funeral at a cemetery; it is eventually made clear that the funeral is for the other boy's father. The boy is upset, while Sivan looks more or less distressed. Just as we think Sivan and his companion are

reconnected through mourning, the boy leaves while arguing with an unknown girl, possibly a girlfriend.

We're not left with many answers to the trilogy, other than receiving a slight inside scoop to what Sivan may have had to go through in his coming out experience. Not every LGBTQIA+ person goes through abusive parental situations, and discovering love does not commonly end up with someone dead. Yet the series presents a powerful message to show that big changes must still occur for the full acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community. This video series is not as popular as his other content, but this does not undermine the importance of their existence. Sivan has created a unique form of addressing and popularising his experience as an inside perspective, including references and messages in a form everyone can enjoy.

■ DANA TETENBURG



## HOBBIT ON TOUR

# Climate Change and the Syrian Crisis: Another Serious Column

WITH ELOISE SIMS

Right. Strap yourselves in, kids. Things are about to get grave up in here. If my last column on right-wing extremism expressing itself in Europe wasn't depressing enough, get ready for a rollercoaster ride of soul crushing truths.

Think of it as going on a Ferris wheel with a scientist hanging out the door of the cab, yelling, "I'VE TOLD YOU SO FOR YEARS! AND NOW LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENED – AAAAAAGH...."

Yes, I'm here to talk about the horrendous, terrifying issue of climate change. It's not going to be pretty. But if you're still reading at the end of it, I'll share a terrible story about what happened to me on a 13-hour Megabus ride home from Amsterdam last week. Sound fair?

Great. Then let's talk about climate change for a bit.

Bernie Sanders made headlines recently when he said climate change was "directly related to the growth of terrorism". Interestingly, this wasn't a popular statement, even amongst many of his supporters.

Many responded, quite justifiably, that terrorist acts could be linked to hundreds of different factors. Ethnic hostility, for instance, seems much more related to terrorist activities than climate change itself. I mean, has any suicide bomber ever listed "the earth getting just that little bit warmer" in their last note?

However, his comments show self-awareness as to the destructive properties of climate change and recognition that the devastating social effects of global warming are becoming apparent.

Perhaps when Sanders made these comments, he thought of the international shockwaves wrought by events such as the Syrian Civil War. This war has created a cataclysmic refugee crisis, sparked a fully-fledged international conflict, and left the ruins of a once-proud nation in its wake.

It may also be the first war where climate change can be listed as a direct cause.

While we live with the consequences of this

conflict in our news, surprisingly little is known about its causes. Indeed, many students who I've discussed this with initially attributed the conflict to the relative brutality and instability of the Assad regime.

Certainly, Assad's brutality can and will be attributed to being one of the key causes of the conflict. Yet it is also important to note that, from 2006-2010, Syria underwent the single worst drought of its history. This was a drought that, unsurprisingly, international climate scientists have attributed entirely to global warming. The length of the drought was astonishing. And for Syria's largely agrarian economy, it was utterly disastrous.

Food prices skyrocketed. Cities swelled with mass migration from the arid northern areas. Overcrowding was rampant. Poverty rose. Famine struck. Nutrition-related diseases took hold over cities like Aleppo.

Frustrations rose, and culminated in the 2011 Arab Spring, where popular protests swept across the entirety of the Middle East. In Syria, the protests were focused on the inefficiency and corrupt nature of the regime. The government fought back with escalating violence.

And so, the civil war began.

It would not be fair to say that the Syrian crisis was ENTIRELY caused by climate change. But it is fair to conclude that it was a strong factor in shaping and encouraging the conflict to break out.

Yet the crisis may just be the very beginning in a predicted doomsday saga of conflicts, exacerbated by the phenomenon of global warming.

Richard Seager, an internationally-respected climate scientist, was recently quoted in an Independent article as voicing his concerns as to the futures of Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, and Iran. These nations exist in much the same climate pattern of drought-like weather as Syria.

"However the various social, religious, and ethnic wars play out in the coming years... the region will feel the stress of declining water resources," Seager concluded ominously, before outlining other areas he believes are vulnerable to global warming-exacerbated conflict, such as Somalia, and Mexico.

Already, 161 countries have experienced envi-

ronmental disasters that have caused a mass displacement of people since 2008.

Between 2008 and 2013, the average number of people that were displaced by natural disasters rang in at 27 million.

Certainly, climate change is real. And certainly, we are experiencing its societal effects now. Due to our utter inability to make real changes in our unsustainable practices, we'll now have to live with the consequences of our laziness.

Perhaps we already live with those consequences every time a refugee boat is found empty in the Mediterranean.

*(On the way back from Amsterdam, I decided to try to use the bus bathroom at the exact moment the driver had to make a sharp right-hand turn, and smacked my forehead so hard on the door that I saw stars. There. Congratulations on surviving to the end. I'm going to go and watch Hamilton for the seventeenth time now. Bye.) ■*

ELOISE IS ONE OF THOSE GIRLS WHO MADE A SHOW OUT OF HATING JUSTIN BIEBER WHEN SHE WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD. NOT MUCH HAS CHANGED. SHE LOVES JOHN OLIVER, PICTURES OF LABRADORS, AND WILL BE TRAPPED IN ENGLAND FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. PLEASE FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER (SHE WANTS TO TELL HER MUM SHE'S FAMOUS): @SIMSELOISE





## SEX, DRUGS &amp; ELECTORAL ROLLS

On Becoming  
'The Law & Order  
Candidate'

WITH CURWEN ARES ROLINSON

A few weeks ago, I found myself pushing what you might term 'law and order' issues at a candidate selection meeting. Information I had at hand suggested that many residents of the ward I was looking at running in were increasingly concerned about street-crime; at the same time the Government was closing community policing stations.

Some days later, like an astral projector looking down upon his own material form from on high and tutting, I observed Curwen Ares Rolinson putting together a serious legislative proposal replete with battalions of supporting evidence to try to ameliorate the present woeful spate of shopkeeper stand-overs afflicting the Indian community through much of South and West Auckland.

I had, it seems, become something of a 'Law & Order' candidate.

A pretty impressive (if arguably inexplicable) transition for somebody whose last actual interaction with a police officer ended in handcuffs, a free taxi-ride, ensuing professional photo-shoot, and proffered potential prison term.

So how did this happen? What is it which moved me from an extensive stint under wire-tap surveillance by the police's counter-terrorism division for my political activities as an alleged threat to National(s) security, through to using those self-same political proclivities to agitate for a greater state provision of law and order.

To tell you the truth, I'm still piecing together the answer myself. But I think a surprising degree of it has to do with my own growing involvement in the Indian community. You get talking to people, at the Mandir and elsewhere; you get to know people and you make friends. Suddenly, the nightly newscast story about a dairy proprietor being stood-over – or worse, bashed – for a few cartons of cigarettes and the contents of his till isn't just happening to "some shopkeeper". It's an act of brazen violence being meted out to a person only a degree or two of separation from one's self. Someone with which you feel like you have something of a connection, and therefore a sense of responsibility towards to try and help.

Don't get me wrong. Even if I am something of a newfound convert to the importance of law and order, I still retain a healthy skepticism towards its more obvious enforcers. Excesses of policing do happen. Protesters are roughly manhandled. Arthur Allan Thomas – or worse, Teina Pora – shenanigans abound. Thousands of burglaries and common assaults go uninvestigated in favour of rounding up pound upon pound of a mostly-harmless rural cash crop and its peddlers. The

police force arguably attempts to censor academics. In all areas, and in all ways, the keepers of law are (occasionally somewhat blamelessly) sub-par.

And yet, consider the alternative.

What we're witnessing at present, as a direct result of the steady rollback in easily-available policing under this most recent government, is an increase in petty crime and a decrease in community safety. And yes, I am aware that there are almost invariably deeper socio-economic drivers of criminality – most especially poverty – which have also only alarmingly increased under the current regime.

The most logical consequence of this tangible absence of police is not what you might call an anarchist paradise nor 'free state'. Instead, it's the embedding and furthering of 'no go' areas in our city after dark, and serious and ongoing intrusions in the peaceable private lives of shopkeepers and citizens alike.

Alongside this, as nature (and, more especially, civilization) abhors a vacuum, there are already growing calls for organizations, apparatuses and civic empowerment of civilians to 'step into the breach' and start carrying out minor policing activities themselves. These range in scope from legislative proposals to clarify the Crimes Act sections surrounding 'self defence' and 'defence of property' to give shopkeepers greater surety when using force to defend themselves and their chattels from occasionally quite violent vagrants and intruders, all the way up to the convening of quasi-militia 'shopkeepers' associations designed to provide a more \*ahem\* 'active' deterrence to lawbreaking on our high-streets and corner dairies.

The first set of initiatives, governing the lower end of the spectrum of reform, are legitimate. Everyone has a right to defend themselves from attack using reasonable force – and it can be further extended that if somebody's making off with your property or wares, you have a right to use a reasonable degree of physical intercession to stop them. But with the way the law's drafted at present, police (and others) can and have taken advantage of perceived ambiguities in what the law allows in order to launch prosecutions aimed at shopkeepers defending themselves. In one memorable case from 2009, their explicit reasoning for so doing was to 'send a message' to the community to refrain from 'intruding' on functions the police viewed as their fairly exclusive preserve. The charges against the shopkeeper in question – a Mr V. Singh – were only dropped after a high-profile lawyer stepped in and offered to defend Singh in court free of charge.

But even though there's a strong argument to be made in favour of the aforementioned legislative clarification to give shopkeepers and citizens a greater degree of certitude as to how to defend themselves or their possessions without falling

afoul of the law, I feel pretty safe in saying that the vast majority of us would absolutely balk at the next logical step in civic functioning sans police – proprietors keeping a gun under the counter, American-style.

So what is to be done, then?

Well clearly, the extant status-quo of fewer police isn't working. This ought not to even be a controversial statement to make, and yet it flies flat in the face of both the Government's official reasoning, and the half-vocalized, hare-brained sentiments of the post-#Occupy quasi-Anarchist rump you occasionally encounter round certain portions of the Arts department who still cleave to the belief that no-policing rather than better-policing is and ought to be the teleological way forward. A most curious ideological alliance-of-convenience indeed.

As I've previously argued in this very column, one of the core components of the true University experience is coming face-to-face with some of your preconceptions, and critically re-evaluating them in light of the evidence – and, just as importantly, the experiences of others. This doesn't mean that these previously held beliefs must be axiomatically cast by the wayside in favour of newer, shiner thoughts – and often, this process of critical introspection and exploration will throw up interesting and intriguing new reasons (or old reasons half-observed) to continue to support, in slightly evolved forms, previous positions.

That's why I've found myself thinking about demands for 'more and better' policing from a slightly different angle from which I had previously thought.

Where once I would have balked at the notion of a greater bobby-presence in Albert Park due to their evident penchant for arresting harmless stoners (seriously, I've seen it happen), the idea that there's now insufficient police resources to make Queen St safe to walk down at night is repugnant. And,

as noted earlier, the potential for the redirection of police resources from chasing down morally blameless cannabis-users to generating useful improvements in public safety can be squarely filed under the "better policing" heading.

And while I still remain somewhat uncomfortable with ordinary people taking the law into their own hands, my newfound belief and faith in community militates exploring all possible options to make up for the Government's shortfall in guaranteeing the public good.

It's been an interesting journey from one extreme to somewhere in the middle of the other; but I look forward to using my brain and the trove of my experiences in service of this newfound purpose.

There. Suddenly, I don't feel so strange and different from my previous self after all. ■



# No Country for Old Methods

WITH ANA HARRIS

Teaching methods have come a long way since the mid-twentieth century. Some of the stories my parents tell about their school days might provide grounds for pressing criminal charges by today's standards. Dad still talks about being caned for a minor infringement (not that it stopped him from misbehaving). Mum recalls vicious nuns at her Catholic school hitting her over the head with a heavy textbook when she didn't understand how to do her equations.

No one understood learning difficulties. Students with dyslexia or a language processing disorder were simply written off as idiots. Schools were run like factory lines; discipline and information exchange were emphasised over individuality and lateral thinking. No consideration was given to different learning styles, with rote learning the dominant technique.

Obviously the schooling experience is much better for most kids in 2016. Teachers aren't allowed to beat pupils anymore. I'm sure corporal punishment never instilled a love of learning in anyone. Today students are encouraged more often to think outside the box, and learn in a way that suits them best. But have we thrown the baby out with the bathwater by doing away with certain 'outdated' teaching methods?

My cousin Sam is ten years old. His daily homework is non-compulsory. The school encourages parents to let the child decide whether they feel like doing 'extra learning' after school (as if any ten year old in their right mind would choose to do homework over playing with their friends, watching TV, or just about anything else). When I was his age, my teacher made the class memorise our times tables, sometimes using games to make it more fun. Very little memorisation happens in Sam's primary school. Instead, he's taught to use "skip counting": so  $2 - 4 - 6 - 8 - 10$  is the basis for learning  $5 \times 2 = 10$  (which, to me, seems no less complicated than using an abacus or, alternatively, remembering that five twos are ten). Long multiplication and division are also absent from the classroom, as is the case in many primary schools across New Zealand.

The former head of Auckland Uni's mathematics department says that the problem with the old methods is that they "put most people

off maths for life". According to newfangled ideas,  $218 + 191$  is best tackled by adding 200, then subtracting 9. But is this really easier than adding three columns vertically like we used to? The first option also requires children to grasp  $200 - 9$  before they're able to solve the equation. To some extent, I'm just biased because the 'old ways' happened to work for me in primary school.  $9 \times 9 = 81$  will forever be ingrained in my brain in the same way that I still remember the lyrics to certain songs I haven't heard in years.

I certainly don't have the expertise to determine whether these new teaching methods are better – I'm sure it depends partly on the child. What's interesting is that New Zealand's numeracy and literacy scores for primary school aged children are getting worse, which happens to correlate to changes in teaching philosophies over the past few decades. In 2012, our nine year olds were ranked effectively bottom equal among developed nations.

There are a number of potential reasons for this: the overall quality of teachers has allegedly dropped over the past few decades. There's huge inequality of resources between students enrolled in high versus low decile schools, both in the classroom and at home. Calculators and computers are available 24/7, meaning there are far fewer occasions where we're forced to do basic arithmetic in our heads or on paper.

The risk with any significant shift in policy is overcorrection. Recognising that students have unique learning styles, and that physical intimidation is not an effective incentive to work hard, allows schools to adapt teaching methods to better suit the needs of individuals. But this doesn't mean we should place less emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy – the very skills forming the necessary foundation for achieving at high school and university, as well as in most qualification-based jobs.

I'm not saying we should return to a 1950s model of schooling. Nor should we overlook the importance of incentivising high quality candidates to become teachers, especially in lower decile schools. On the other hand, maybe it's not the end of the world if teachers at least give kids the *option* of memorising their nine times tables. ■





# The Case Against Godlessness

WITH RAYHAN LANGDANA

A recent *New Yorker* article explored the concept of resilience. The article examined how people from various backgrounds – rich, poor; male, female; white, non-white – develop resilience in different ways.

The piece focussed specifically on how resilience (or the ability to withstand adversity and surmount the seemingly insurmountable challenges of everyday life) does not correlate strongly with wealth or status. This finding was surprising: to me, and probably most armchair psychiatrists, the ability to get going when the going gets tough seems pretty intimately connected to your ability to order an Uber when you're running late, or buy a nice dinner when you've had a rough day.

The study found that most resilient people developed their harder traits through experience – everyone falls down, but resilient people somehow get themselves up again – and that because wealthy people fall down less often, they are less likely to be put in situations where resilience is required. While initially surprising, on closer examination it fits within the existing paradigm that suggests those who experience adversity (i.e. those with fewer opportunities or those who begin from a lower starting point than others) are in greater need of toughness, and therefore develop the strength to fight out of their circumstances and into the upper tiers of society.

The most interesting point in the article came towards the end. One of the psychiatrists interviewed found that people who displayed resilience were more likely to “have sources of spiritual or religious support” than the general population. Basically, resilient people might be able to deal with life's challenges better than others because they feel they have god on their side; they have someone in their corner who brings them *certainty* that the dark times will end.

This is an interesting reformulation of Pascal's Wager. Pascal's Wager (named after the philosopher who first articulated the point) presents the following argument:

1. We do not know whether god exists or not.
2. It takes a relatively low cost to “believe” in god – displaying belief (i.e. going to church, praying occasionally) is fairly easy to do.
3. If god is real, and god rewards believers in the way we think she might (i.e. guaranteed lifetime in heaven, or eternal peace of

the soul, or a specified number of virgins awaiting you after death), and if it does not cost that much to “believe” in god, then – statistically speaking – even if the chance of god being real (and these rewards actually being gained) is low, the benefit of believing and thus being rewarded is so much stratospherically greater than the minimal cost of believing in a god that does not exist, that it would be stupid not to believe.

Phew. That is possibly the longest sentence I've ever written. It's 101 words long. It's like something out of Shakespeare or out of a textbook (i.e. terribly written). But the point is that Pascal was onto this idea way before the *New Yorker's* resilience article.

Sometimes, believing in a god, or thinking that there's someone or something out there watching over and protecting you, is an illusion worth believing in if it makes life that much easier for you. The lie that an omnipotent entity has your back can be as liberating as the lies told to us by alcohol, or by advertisements – surely it's better to feel better through artificial means than to force ourselves to inhabit the grey, true world of cynicism and doubt? Isn't that what *Life of Pi* is all about? Believing in the “better story”? Aren't we supposed to “think ourselves happy” and smile a certain number of times every day to delude our brains into releasing the hormones triggered by smiling?

God is like an inescapable song. Even if we don't want to hear it (or tell ourselves we hate it), it worms its way into our consciousness with sufficient frequency to make us realise that it's always been there. Self-preservation is among the most innate human traits, and god is surely the ultimate act in self-preservation. God is the blue pill; taking it sedates us and allows our brains to paper over the cracks in our lives, creating a world of blissful ignorance. God is the feeling of possibility at the start of the New Year; the entirely arbitrary (but incontrovertibly tangible) sense that because the calendar has changed, we can too. God is the lie told to millennials from infancy: that we can achieve anything if we work hard enough, because ours is the world of endless opportunity.

“Blissful ignorance”; “endless opportunity”; the possibility for change: if these ideas formed the foundation of my being, I'm sure I'd be more resilient. In the interests of self-preservation, maybe it's time I papered over the cracks in my fragile psyche and willed myself into believing that the omelette was made without breaking eggs. A virgin omelette. Now that's something worth believing in. ■





LIFE IS TOO LONG

## Requiem For a Dream

WITH SHMULY LEOPOLD

Time for a jog. I change into my exercise gear. Nike shoes. Black tee. Adidas icon. Short shorts. I look fucking fantastic. The tee shirt covers the stretch marks on my stomach.

The shoes cover my feet, ugly. I look fit. Seeing is believing. I believe I can run. I stretch. Bending over is a terrifying nightmare, my stomach blocking my descent.

I exit the property. My thighs touch constantly,

but it's ok some chick on the internet said that's normal and beautiful. My man boobs start bouncing. Sweat pouring down my forehead, I definitely should have washed my hair, grease is traversing my creased brow and launching a full frontal attack on my eyes. I take a quick break, wheezing, coughing, I can taste cigarettes on the air coming out of my lungs. That can't be healthy. My vision is closing in. Time to walk home...

I got a visit from my little brown friend Abdul Monkey Jaffar Chapati. We've both been at university for hundreds of years. You can get up late. Drinking on a Tuesday is totally acceptable. And despite being impecunious and generally unimpressive you have the potential to succeed later. The problem with spending six years on a single undergraduate degree is that your friends stop relying on potential success and start being actual successes.

Abdul Monkey Jaffar Chapati and I are quickly running out of the sort of friends who go for a 10am beer. They were all just having fun while at university. Getting it out of their systems before getting jobs, long term girlfriends, car insurance. Abdul Monkey Jaffar Chapati and I never planned to leave varsity. But the appeal of being an academic is that you get to live as a student forever, once your friends leave you're suddenly

just poor, bored, and burdensome.

I'm enrolling in a job-getting degree next year. I'll probably end up working for the city council. Drinking only on weekends. Quitting smoking, saving for a house deposit. Abdul Monkey Jaffar Chapati is almost totally at peace with his suburban future. Ethnicity seems to accept inevitability with a little more grace than us whites.

Last year *Craccum* spent lots of time smashing bottles, getting drunk, and causing trouble. Now I spend 20 hours a day watching animated sitcoms on one screen and playing *Crash Team Racing* on the other. Soon I'll get a job. Maybe a kid. Have regrets. Never leave Auckland. Hate my wife. Hate my kids. Divorce my wife. Be alone. Hate my kids. Be alone. Hate my job. Remarry. Retire. Be bored and alone (alcohol will be banned by then).

My future looks grim. But I have one consolation. Literally everyone else is the same. Pretentious *Craccum*-plans to be journalists, or novelists, or just plain interesting, won't happen. So why not just lose some weight, go for a run. And follow the tide...

I never actually ran. I wrote this on one screen while re-watching Bojack Horseman on the other. ■

## Improv(e)ise: Premium Octane Existence

WITH ADITYA VASUDEVAN

Music fans of all colours and creeds worship the solo. It is a magical commodity, the use of which can feel like an artist has scooped out your organs and is playing on your heart strings.

Watch BB King, Clapton, Hendrix. Hell, watch John Mayer. There are moments in live solos that happen just so your jaw can drop, so you can make that 'oooh' face that, without context, could mean intense pain or intense pleasure. Live improvisation is an enigma.

Ask an avid follower of jazz or blues why they value improvisation so much and they might say the following: some solos show you not only the raw virtuosity of a musician, but also his or her spontaneity – there is something, sometimes, about the imperfection of a solo that makes it special. Watch John Coltrane powering through a live version of *A Love Supreme* for a good indication of why. It is a marathon, a feat of endurance more spiritual than musical. And this spiritual experience is a one-off; you will never see *that* solo again. Such is the novelty.

As always, for every groupie there is a naysayer. Many philosophers of art, mainly the sort that prefer classical music, argue that the emphasis some art forms place on improvisation is misguided. They say that no solo is truly improvised. It is the piecing together of practiced combinations. If they are right, then it is prudent to ask why we would carve out a sub-category of performance held to a lower standard because it pretends to be 'in-the-moment'. Compose elegant pieces and perform them with feeling. That is all the classicist asks. If you happen to combine a bunch of musical motifs from your already existing songs, that's fine; just label it a derivative composition rather than an improvisation and have it judged for what it is.

It is easy to understand the classicist's concerns, and my response is, at best, anecdotal. Even if parts of a solo are practiced patterns or scales, there comes a point when the speed and variety of ways in which you are combining them becomes a novel form of its own. And there is evidence to indicate that the musicians in genres like bebop jazz placed a premium on this kind of spontaneity. Notably, Charlie Parker is said to have once kicked out John Coltrane

for catching him practicing his solos – or at least, that's how the story goes.

It may be the case that I'm caught up on the ideal and the classicist is right about the cold reality of improvised solos. Perhaps the same is true for freestyle rappers. But what a shining ideal it is. Solos represent in some way, if you believe in them, the best of what we can be. They are imperfect, but often so when aiming for something astronomical. They are spontaneous, but constrained by the rest of the song, by the repertoire of the artist, and even, by the combinations an artist has already practiced. They represent, for me, a pure heart and brain explosion onto a four-dimensional canvas. Premium octane existence. ■





# No Child Left Behind

WITH ADEEL MALIK

Last week I almost agreed with Mike Hosking. *Almost*. The results of the National Standards were out, showing a quarter of the students in New Zealand were failing at numeracy and literacy standards.

After a predictable tirade against the teacher's union, the issue was framed as a case of poor teaching, not a question of resources or other structural factors. Super teachers and principals were hailed as a "genius" strategy by the government to fix this.

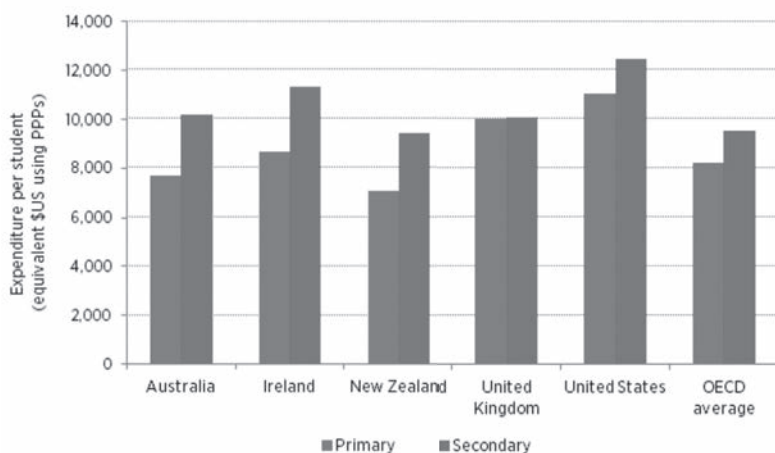
Firstly, super teachers won't change anything. Such a strategy will only work, if one was to believe that a lack of pay was holding some teachers back. Let's take teacher A – who is less motivated and less willing to spend time on their students – and teacher B – a super teacher who is getting paid more. Teacher A sees teacher B works harder to get paid more, the strategy works – "genius" solution. Except teacher A doesn't really exist. Firstly just paying people more just doesn't get them to work better. The subprime crash happened with some of the best paid individuals in human history in charge. Japanese CEOs – whose pay is constrained by the pay of the lowest employee in their company – are not worse than European or American CEOs. Increasing minimum wage doesn't increase the productivity of the Subway "sandwich artist". Secondly, the kind of people who set out to become teachers aren't ones motivated by money as much as civic responsibility, love of children etc. This is why when asked over 80% of primary school teachers reported spending money out of their own pockets to buy lunches for their students or paid for field trips.

The other thing Hosking got wrong is that we spend enough money on schools. This is just data; this isn't an opinion.

We spend a good 15% below the OECD average (34 countries). That is pathetic. OECD includes Chile, which was a dictatorship till 1990. OECD includes Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia – countries that didn't believe in capitalism until 1988. OECD has Greece and Turkey. The OECD average shouldn't be our benchmark commitment to education, it should be our bare minimum.

Lastly, we all know which schools contain the pupils who have fallen behind. You don't need data to know that kids in poor socio-economic areas are going to schools that are doing poorly. And no amount of teacher training or funding will really fix that. Inattentive kids from families that don't prioritise education, will mostly stay inattentive irrespective of how good the teachers are. Children who aren't fed properly, who deal with emotional abuse or neglectful parents will just not do well. Sometimes failing schools are just a symptom of the poverty that has crept into New Zealand.

Of course a more egalitarian society would be a great objective, but in the meantime providing teachers and schools with more funds would also help. Experiments like the High Wire trust can also be useful in providing us with teaching insight as well as with dealing with troubled students. But if we don't fix our public schools, we will only entrench the poverty that is causing their failing. ■



the people to blame.

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