

ISSUE 8 - 2025

CRACCUM

AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT MAGAZINE SINCE 1927

FORBIDDEN
PEOPLE'S CHOICE

ATTENTION UOA & AUSA:

STUDENTS DEMAND THE RESTORATION OF OUR
FUNDING, TE AO MĀORI AND PASIFIKA EDITORS
& EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE!



THE ELAM ARTIST BEHIND
UOA-BRAND ACID TABS

Azzurra
Snelgrove-Douch

LOLITA, LURE & LORE:
PART I

Justin Foronda
Aglub

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ON HER NEW DOCUMENTARY
AND FORBIDDEN IDENTITIES

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CONTENT WARNING:
THIS ISSUE OF CRACCUM DISCUSSES HEAVY TOPICS AND THEMES. READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

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HARRY SUTTON

Welcome one, welcome all to the chaos that is now all around us. With just six weeks of lectures to go and assignments and exams starting to pile up, the stress levels have never been higher. Scared? Don't be, just have to manage social events, drinking, going to lectures and tutorials (even the 8 am ones), and even remembering to turn the stove off as you leave your flat. It's crazy, it's fun, and it's one of the times that sometimes all you can do is smile and wave...

Anyway, a lot has happened. We now know our AUSA executives for next year. Congratulations to you all who won, and also to the brave people who ran. It takes a lot of courage to put your name and self out there, so well done to you, too. I would never, mainly because

that is a lot of effort, but moving on.

Events are slowly starting to quiet down at the university, but there is no shortage of local news around the country. Our local elections for Auckland have been taking place, so hopefully you had the opportunity to research and vote for some of our candidates. Tom Phillips, the man who decided to run off into the bush with his three kids, was finally found and killed. Sadly, one police officer was shot in the head due to the fiery exchange between the cops and Phillips during his attempted arrest. However, at the time of this writing, one of the kids has been found, but the other two are still missing, so hopefully they will be seen by the time this comes out.

What is wild about this whole thing is that he was on the run from the cops for four years, just living out in the New Zealand backcountry. Avoiding the law, surviving out during all seasons, and yet it's taken four years to bring

him to justice, only in New Zealand, finally.

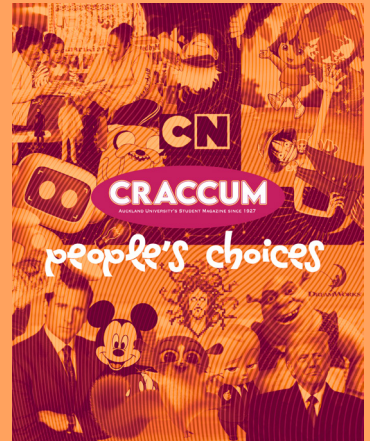
Speaking of sentencing and people getting arrested after killing three people and attempting to kill a fourth with a lunch laced with death cap mushrooms, Erin Patterson was given a life sentence with a 33-year non-parole period. This has put me off Belly Wellington. But glad she will now have to suffer for a very, very long time.

Our Black Ferns are marching on the Women's Rugby World Cup, winning all of their pool games, and now they are looking to the quarter-finals. Our All Blacks, as of this writing, just beat South Africa in Auckland, keeping the unbeaten streak of 30 years at Eden Park still very much alive and restoring some real faith in All Black fans' minds.

Was there something else in the sporting world that I missed? Something about an NFL player getting married to Taylor Swift? Oh yes, the biggest

story in students' lives globally is that powerhouse couple Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift got engaged. Go them, even Chrisey Luxon got invited to the wedding. What is one positive thing that his government has done.

Anyway stay safe guys and until next time Just going to have to be a sprint to the finish



ART BY CINDY LIMANTO

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OPEN LETTER

Kia ora koutou katoa,

Craccum magazine has been the voice of Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland's students since 1927. Today, that voice is under threat. **Funding cuts, censorship, and unpaid labour** are putting our magazine—and the **representation, opportunity, and perspective** it carries—at risk.

We are calling on all students, clubs, associations, publications, alumni, and the wider community to stand with us. This isn't just about a magazine—it's about **freedom of student expression, transparency in decision-making, and the right to be heard**.

By signing our open letter, you are saying:

Student voices matter—they deserve fair funding and a seat at the table where decisions are made.

Editorial independence is essential—students must decide what their magazine publishes, free from interference.

Craccum is worth protecting—without it, the University loses a taonga vital for accountability, culture, and creative expression on campus.

If you care about **student democracy, media diversity, and independent journalism**, this is your chance to make a stand. The signatories below are issuing a demand to Te Rōpū Kahikatea – Auckland University Students' Association and Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland for the following:

Restore fair funding: Abandon the proposed budget cuts and reinstate Craccum Magazine's funding in 2026 to pre-2025 levels (at least \$150k), enabling its return as a weekly print publication. This commitment must be made in writing by AUSA and UOA to all current and future students.

Restore the Te Ao Māori Editor and Pasifika Editor as paid staff positions for 2026 and beyond, honouring Te Rōpū Kahikatea's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and equitable representation in student media.

Protect editorial freedom: Immediately repeal the 2024 changes to Part VIII Section 45 ("Editorial Independence") of the AUSA constitution. A version of the pre-2024 clause should be reinstated: "The Editor(s) of Craccum shall have complete editorial independence to produce, procure and authorise the inclusion of any content in any issue of Craccum Magazine that they deem fit, insofar as it is consistent with these Rules."

Financial Independence: the establishment of a bank account for Craccum to arrange its own advertising revenue to supplement funding for operational expenses.

Ngā mihi nui,

Craccum Magazine

This open letter to Te Rōpū Kahikatea – Auckland University Students' Association and Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland has been endorsed by:



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A LETTER FROM MY FRIEND IN PALESTINE

MY FRIEND SHOULD BE PLANNING FOR HIS NEXT LECTURE, INSTEAD HE IS FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE.

 **EVELYN PAYNTER (SHE/HER)**

My friend from Gaza is braver than one person should need to be. He remains kind, humble, and honest. He is open in sharing his life with me, putting his trust into me, and for this I am honoured. To my friend, I will forever live with gratitude for you and our conversations.

He is like many other people I know, the people I met day to day in university; he has emotions, values, and opinions; he has ideas, and he has a mind that holds his knowledge and wisdom. Like any human being.

But unlike the people I see day-to-day at this university, despite the shared humanity, he does not spend his day coming into university and shaping his future, because his future is in the hands of all of us, and whether or not we do something about this ongoing genocide Israel is committing.

I share his story in the hopes that one day he and others in Gaza get a chance to hold their future in their own hands.

To begin, a message from him to all:

"Everyone should look at their life and be grateful to God for their blessings. Your normal life is someone else's dream. Don't take it for granted, and always strive to be better. We are all human beings, and we all deserve to live in peace. All my love to you all."

Now his story, and due to personal reasons his name will remain anonymous.

"First of all, I am from the Al-Shuja'iyya neighborhood. We are a family involved in agriculture and also educated. Before I was born, our main source of income was the land. My father and uncles used to farm it and sell the crops throughout the year."

Later, when the occupation came, they took the land by force. They shot my father twice and imprisoned him in Israeli

jails. When he was released, he was suffering from psychological illness.

If you want to understand the truth of my father's story and his illness, just look at the prisoners who are released from Israeli jails. They are tortured and given hallucination-inducing drugs. That alone is enough to turn your life into a nightmare.

My father came out sick, but he tried his best to recover, and after some time, he gradually returned to a somewhat normal state—though the psychological scars never left. After that, he got married and had three children—two boys and a girl. I am the middle child.

I was raised in the Al-Shuja'iyya neighborhood in eastern Gaza—the neigh-

borhood that the occupation claimed was "the most dangerous in the world." But it wasn't dangerous. It was a simple and beautiful place, more like a camp because it is the most densely populated area in the Strip.

I grew up there and studied at Al-Qastal School, then Hittin School, and later attended Yaffa School for my high school education. I graduated from high school with a 90% average. I was also very talented in football—to the point where I was named Best Player at school one year.

Life was simple. My father received only 1,200 shekels (\$587.94 NZD) as a monthly salary, and we lived off of that—food, drink, and everything. My dreams were simple, and I was even able to reach some of them. But fate

had other plans.

I always dreamed of studying software engineering, and I was able to achieve the grades that qualified me for it. By God's grace, I enrolled in the program at Al-Azhar University in western Gaza—my dream major.

Then came the unexpected. My first lecture was on October 3rd, and I felt so proud. On Thursday, they asked me to pay the first semester's tuition, and I did. But on Saturday, disaster struck—the devastating war began.

At first, we thought it would be like the previous wars...

I thought it would be a war like the previous ones—lasting a week, two weeks, or a month at most. But this war was brutal. We were forced to evacuate our home and flee to an area called Tel al-Hawa in western Gaza.

Exactly seven days later, the entire city of Gaza was warned to evacuate toward the central and southern areas of the Strip. So, we had to flee again, this time to Al-Zawaida in central Gaza.

Then the tanks invaded, and we had to flee once more—first to Deir al-Balah, then to Rafah, then back to Deir al-Balah. The final displacement was when the army allowed residents to return to Gaza City. We returned to a neighborhood called Al-Sahaba in western Gaza.

Displacement is one of the hardest experiences a person can go through. You're forced to run for your life without looking back. No place will shelter you, and nothing will save you—just run.

Each time, we had to leave our belongings behind and buy new necessities, and all of that was extremely costly—especially with soaring prices and a severe lack of money in circulation.

After some time into the war, we lost contact with my father. We didn't know where he was or what his condition was. That, for me, was the greatest disaster and responsibility—I couldn't



take on the role of a father for my siblings, and I couldn't secure money for us to eat or drink. I only had 200 shekels, around \$70, more or less.

I went to Rafah, where the border crossings were still operating and the army hadn't entered yet. I bought one kilogram of sage (meramiyyeh) for 160 shekels (\$78.38 NZD)—normally it costs just 4 shekels. (\$1.96 NZD) Its price had increased nearly 40 times.

I took it and sold it in Deir al-Balah and made some profit. I repeated the process again and again until I had a decent amount of money. I used all of it to buy goods to resell—but then came another disaster. The border opened, prices dropped significantly, and everything became cheap again. I was devastated.

I went to a café, where I met some old friends from my school, Hittin School in Shujaiya. I told them about my situation, and they told me about a donation site. I kept trying, and eventually, I succeeded—at least to some extent.

Now, I am responsible for an entire family. That alone is exhausting and difficult. But we always say, Alhamdulillah (praise be to God). These hard times will pass. Nothing stays the same—everything changes. I consider this a test of my endurance and the morals I've always held.

Thank God, I never exploited anyone, never sold things at unreasonable prices, never hoarded anything, and never stole from anyone.

*My dream is to live—I don't just want to breathe, I want to live.
I want to travel, to leave behind places of humiliation, and to live in peace.
I don't want to go to sleep wondering if I'll wake up the next day.
I want to sleep feeling safe, not terrified.
I want to attend university, to keep developing myself, and to not neglect my dreams.*

*I feel a deep sadness.
I've never begged anyone for help, but some people look at us as if we're beggars—and that breaks my heart to the point of tears.
These conditions I'm in weren't my choice. I'm not responsible for them. I didn't cause them.
They were forced upon us.*

*I don't want to live here.
I don't want my biggest dream to be a kilo of flour or some bread.
I don't want to lose friends every single day.*



*I don't want to live in fear.
This is not a fair life.*

*I want to grow like any human being.
I want to travel.
I want life to give me a chance to actually live.
I don't want to die from heartbreak over the situation I'm in.*

*My family deserves this too.
Our dreams have been buried.
Just getting out of here—that's my biggest dream. I don't want anything else."*

He has his own curiosity about the country we live in: "How is New Zealand? I hear about it a lot, but I've never really thought about it. Is life beautiful there?"

I want to answer this question for him and say Aotearoa, New Zealand, is a country of human rights, a country with care. Life is beautiful.

But in order to do that, I need to see change.

I need New Zealand to help my friend.

My life in New Zealand and my beliefs about this country will depend on if it

can take sufficient action to protect the lives of those in Palestine.

Please help share these specific government requests for New Zealand

- **Call on the NZ Government to Immediately Advocate for a Cease-fire and Humanitarian Access:** I urge the New Zealand Government to publicly call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and ensure that humanitarian aid and medical supplies can safely reach civilians without delay.
- **Request Increased Humanitarian Aid Funding to Gaza:** I ask the government to increase humanitarian aid funding specifically targeted at Gaza through trusted agencies like the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- **Demand Diplomatic Engagement:** New Zealand should actively engage in diplomatic efforts at the UN and with international partners to support a peaceful resolution and uphold international law.
- **Support for Refugee Resettlement and Humanitarian Visas:** I call on

New Zealand to create or expand pathways for humanitarian visas and refugee resettlement for Palestinians displaced by the conflict.

Beyond calling on the government, here are some practical ways to help from here in Aotearoa:

- **Donate to Trusted New Zealand Charities:** One example is the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (NZ), which focuses on providing medical aid and support to children and families affected by the conflict. Donations to trusted charities ensure help reaches those in need on the ground.
- **Join or Organise Local Fundraisers and Awareness Events:** Whether it's a community bake sale, a fundraising concert, or a discussion group, these activities can raise both funds and awareness for Palestinian humanitarian needs.
- **Contact Your Local MP and Ministers:** Write or call your elected representatives to voice your support for these government actions. Your voices matter and can influence New Zealand's policies.
- **Share This Story and Educate Others:** The more people understand the human impact behind the headlines, the stronger our collective call for peace and justice will be.

Together, as New Zealanders, we can stand in solidarity with my friend and thousands more in Gaza. We can help ensure they don't have to live in fear but instead have the chance to live with dignity, safety, and hope.

If you would like to reach out to me, my email is evelynpaynter59@gmail.com

Follow Student Justice for Palestine UOA



HARRY'S SPORTS RECAP!

FROM CRACCUM'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Well, All Black fans, at the time of this writing, we just won at Eden Park, so I am now praying to the gods that we keep that winning streak alive after we would have just played in Wellington but anyway, to the sports news!

ALL BLACKS WIN A THRILLER IN EDEN PARK AND AUSTRALIA JUST KEEP ON WINNING!

Lets goooooooooooooooooooooo. Sorry, just had to get that out! The All Blacks defend their fortress of Eden Park, beating the world champion Springboks by 24-17 in one of the best test matches of the year.

This game had everything from awesome tries to scrums that honestly didn't even look real, like the one in which South Africa literally moved the entire All Black forward pack ten metres backwards, to late drama to Ardie Savea in his 100th test with the All Blacks, getting a crucial turnover in the dying moments of the game to give the All Blacks the win.

The South Africans just didn't look like themselves until the last 20 minutes of the game; they

were dropping balls, and instead of forcing us to play their style of rugby, we forced them to play ours, fast-paced attack and we finally learned to kick the ball away every ten seconds.

As I'm writing this, the second test will have happened so just hoping that we won.

Anyway, across the Tasman Sea, the Wallabies managed to pick up a win against the Argentines, but boy, it was not easy. Argentina held a 14-point lead going into halftime, and their attack looked unstoppable and had the Wallabies' defence looking lost.

But these men in gold know a thing or two about comeback.

They came roaring back, only to find themselves down 3 points with time expiring, they get a gift of a penalty, however and have the option to kick a penalty goal to tie the game, forcing a draw. But they wanted more. Captain Harry Wilson made the call to kick the ball to the sideline to force a lineout, they wanted the win.

And after four minutes of brutal rugby, reserve prop Angus Bell stormed over the try line and gave Australia the win, 28-24. Its never been a better time to be a rugby fan if these games keep providing.

BLACK FERNS MARCH ON TO THE QUARTER FINALS OF THE RWC

The Black Ferns are here, and they are not messing around. After some closer games than they would have wanted in their earlier rounds of pool play, the Black Ferns made a statement, beating Ireland in their pool match 40-0. This was their most complete performance of this tournament so far, and it could not have come at a better time, considering its all knockout rugby from here on out.

A scoreline that no one in Ireland could have seen coming, due to Ireland having beaten the Black Ferns twice in the last three contests that these two teams have played.

Braxton Sorensen-McGee scored her second hat trick of this World Cup and following her return to the starting lineup, Liana Mikaele-Tu'u maintained her impressive form.

Starting props Tanya Kalounivale and Chrissy Viliko both left the field under injury clouds, which is a concern for the future games.

However, this was a complete win and I cannot wait till the next one.

NFL IS BACK BABY WOOOOOOO

Ah, football(NFL), the game that claims that its players are hit harder than rugby players, the game that makes feel happy to making us want to throw a remote at our TV's, it truly is a beautiful game.

But after just one week as of this writing, there are already storylines beginning to take shape.

From Daniel Jones looking like Peyton Manning reincarnated, scoring on every single one of his drives during the demolition job against the Dolphins, to Lamar and the Ravens blowing a fourth quarter lead to the Bills in what possibly could have been the game of the year already, to 43-year-old Aaron Rodgers throwing four, yes, four touchdowns passes in a win against his old team the Jets.

Fans are already saying it's their year, teams like Green Bay looked dominant over their rival Detroit, for example and with Micah Parsons now on their team, I can't blame them. The reigning Super Bowl champions, the Eagles, took care of business too, beating the Dallas Cowgirls, I mean Cowboys.

Oh, and let's not forget about the Atlanta Falcons losing, too, just because its funny

Anyway that's all I have this week

Until next time '

Harry



WHAKARONGO MAI

WHO'S ON YOUR 'HEAR ME OUT' CAKE?

WE LISTEN AND WE DON'T JUDGE.

IRENE PARSAEI AND ANONYMOUS CONTRIBUTORS

For this special Forbidden Edition of Craccum, I thought that I would ask a fun question, following a trend that became popular a while ago. Who is on UoA students' hear me out cakes?

In case you aren't chronically online, a hear me out cake was a trend on Tik Tok where people would print out photos of characters, celebrities, or anything else that they found hot/attractive, but would have to justify themselves by saying "hear me out". The individuals on these cakes varied from Diego from Ice Age, their best friends' fathers, or even the concept of time.

Here's some to put on UoA's cake, and my personal responses to each of them.

"INFINITYPLUSONE"

(You'd get free tutoring for life, very practical)

**"MR SCHUESTER FROM
GLEE"**

(I-)

**"THAT ONE GUY FROM
HORRIBLE HISTORIES"**

(Bestie WHICH ONE)

"MR BEAN"

(JAIL RIGHT NOW)

"MR BEAST"

(Most tame response received)

"MOUTH OF SAURON"

(... I get it, but take him to the dentist)

**"THE ACTOR OF
RUMPELSTILTSKIN FROM
ONCE UPON A TIME"**

(He's got that rat boy summer vibe
going for him)

**"DIALECTICAL
BEHAVIOURAL
THERAPY"**

(I have no comment on this one
except slay)

Lolita, Lure & Lore: Stalking Brian Boyd

A Profile of the world's leading Nabokov scholar at the University of Auckland



Justin Foronda Agluba

A Mauve Prologue

Brian Boyd reads my first draft and responds with an anecdote: “Do you only write when you’re a *little drunk*?” The remark came from Edmund White, co-author of *The Joy of Gay Sex*, at Garth Greenwell’s lush and lyrical prose. Familiar with their works, having read Greenwell’s debut novel—an erudite gay expat who lusted after a louche sex worker in Bulgaria—and kept a copy of White’s sex manual on my hard drive, I was unmoored by a simple error: the misspelt name of Mary “Wolstonecraft” that Dr. Boyd had flagged.

Dr. Boyd has been on my mind, a wandering minotaur in the furrowed maze of my brain, well before our fated tête-à-tête. But who is he to this acolyte, one might ask. He is a towering figure, as Buddhist temples loom long before a shaven monk reaches them. He sports a thick black beard, ascending the crimson-carpeted steps of Montreux Palace, circa 1980, Switzerland. I studied his life and labours in Europe and America, his long-standing love affair with Vladimir Nabokov’s oeuvre. A bird of paradise to a jewelled python. And I begin to wonder what secrets, what scandals he might yet share.

And perhaps you, Dear Reader, might pause and ponder: What claim have I to stand as his intercessor, his mouth-piece? Mine is the speech, the satanic verse, and the sordid rhyme. I, your loquacious Lucifer in trousers and tweed, now confess each tortured touch, each heinous taste, prowling and pacing between perdition and paradis.

This fevered longing, prurient palate, and ceaseless craving... it all began with *Lolita*, at the fringe of fading autumn, when my thoughts of her had retreated into the hollows and byroads of memory. The *nymphet* was summoned in a class on first-wave Feminism, not as a serpentine seductress, but as a dove ensnared. Lolita: a mere sobriquet for Dolores Haze, imposed by our murdering memoirist. Humbert

Humbert: the poet-cum-pervert, curator and aesthete to the freshest of the flesh.

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Profane—I chanted like a prayer. Repelled, then compelled by the siren’s spell. These lines were incantations, bewitching the reader’s tongue: *taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.*

Disturbed, yet I hungrily devoured each curling line as uncut ramen: saline and slick, swallowed whole, down to the last drop of its briny broth. I wiped the smear from the corners of my mouth, then licked the soupy slick from my fingertips all the same—not a droplet spared. *Yum.* Though *Lolita* unspools like a villain’s verse, the wordplays, euphemisms, and double entendres remain perversely pleasurable to decode.

Did *Lolita* have a precursor? *She did, indeed she did.* In *Lolita*’s afterword, Nabokov recalls her foetal form: a short story penned in Russian, “some thirty pages long.” He read it aloud to four friends in one wartime Parisian night. In it, Humbert was still Arthur, ogling an orphaned mademoiselle, unnamed and underage. Nabokov “destroyed” the thing after emigrating to America in 1940. Or so he thought.

Four decades later, Dr. Boyd scoured the Nabokov archive in Montreux and found it stashed in an armoire. Across the hallway was room 64—Nabokov’s salon in Hôtel du Cygne wing—overlooking the crescent Lake Geneva and the snowcapped French Alps. But it was in chambre de débarras, room 69, where Dr. Boyd sifted through the dust and detritus. There, in a corner wardrobe, amidst files and folders, lay Nabokov’s unpublished lectures and a misplaced manuscript. As Dr. Boyd recounts, Nabokov rediscovered *Volshebnik* (*The Enchanter*) in 1959 at Ithaca, New York. But its printing would wait after his death, published posthumously in 1986 as a novella.

Lolita, meanwhile, wrenched herself free. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Spring 1947. Nabokov felt her spasms again. A contretemps with some ladies of the Providence Art Club may have

jogged Nabokov’s creative spur. This time, Lolita is an American lass with Irish tint in her veins. The *nymphet* “had grown in secret the claws and wings of a novel.” By 1955, the precocious girl-child took flight under Olympia Press, notorious for publishing low-brow erotica.

Nabokov despised the character HH, calling him “a vain and cruel wretch” among other dismissals. With *Lolita*’s taboo topic, he forbade depiction of girls in all *Lolita* covers. A wish many publishers had since disregarded, perhaps to exploit its salacious subject matter and well-known ill-repute. But what may truly alarm you, Dear Reader, is knowing that *Lolita* is either you or I. One of us. Surprise. Surprise.

I had seen her twice in films before ever cracking the paperback’s spine. Stanley Kubrick’s 1962 *Lolita* is a travesty of Nabokov’s printed vision, a diluted farce. While *Lolita* bleeds out whimsical black humour at times, we were served instead a satirised screenplay: a besotted, bumbling beau and a teenage temptress: the very misreadings that hounds *Lolita* to this very day. Adrian Lyne’s 1997 version, starring Jeremy Irons, fares better: relatively faithful to the parchment. But still, a damsel in flicker and frame cannot rival the poetry of *Lolita*, with its long-winding, dulcet text that glides along the thirsty throat like the fiery rub of cognac.

Dr. Boyd agrees: “As a shape on the screen... Humbert can never have the force his mind has on the page.” The narrator’s “mesmeric intensity” and the monstrous reality it masks are lost in the theatrical translation. Cinema, alas, cannot replicate the ornamental diction of the Nabokovian prose nor the sinuous mind of its dramatic personae.

Such words. Such art. Readers were dragged to the sin. Nabokov set a snare, wielding beauty and language as a honeytrap. Or was it the thrill, the drive, the indulgence of our dark desires, that made *Lolita* so irresistibly alluring? She was banned in several countries, including New Zealand in 1959 (lifted five years later). And yet, *Lolita* flourished, earning critical acclaim despite, or maybe because of, its checkered reputation. How can

something so fair cradle something so foul—and still deserve our love?

I emailed Dr. Boyd, requesting an interview. His prominence within literary circles is manifest. In 1979, his rapport with Véra Nabokov, Vladimir’s wife, muse, and fiercely protective widow, granted our preeminent protagonist rare and exclusive access to the sealed Nabokov archives: a privileged aperture into the man behind the metaphor. From that vantage, Dr. Boyd wrote the author’s definitive two-part biography, securing his place as the world’s foremost authority on the late luminary’s life.

“This is a surprise,” he wrote, “I thought I’d fallen off the local map.” He’s neck-deep in Karl Popper’s biography—a slow-burning project since 1996. Monday, he’s on campus. He recalls a gay novelist he once introduced at the University of Auckland. Edmund White.

Nabokov scarcely doled out praises. If anything, he flayed his fellow writers with iconoclastic verve and acerbic tang. Dostoyevsky, for instance, was a “claptrap journalist and slapdash comedian.” And yet—by some miracle of taste or temperament—he counted Edmund White, as of 1975, among his three favourite American authors.

In 1988, Dr. Boyd presented White to an audience, for his book tour on *Forgetting Elena*. White is a gay man and a novelist, but considers himself more of the latter. He was surprised that the event was no gay gathering, half-expecting young whiskered queens for fans. To his surprise, he found instead a mix of earnest students and literary enthusiasts. While at UoA, Edmund White revealed that he wrote *The Joy of Gay Sex* to help financially support his “hetero” niece and her boyfriend. Scandalous in its day for its *Kama Sutra*-style tableaux of homoerotic acts, the book still retains its charge. (Dear Reader, I dare you to look.)

But their connection went further back. In October 1972, White invited Nabokov to contribute an essay for the *Saturday Review of the Arts*. The aged author was moved and charmed by White’s overture and mention of their mutual friends like Simon Kar-

linsky—"the finest of émigré Nabokovians" as Dr. Boyd would hail. Karlin-sky was then a closeted gay man who thought he was good at being discreet. However, Dr. Boyd, ever the sleuth, discovered that Nabokov is aware of Karlinsky's sexuality, before he publicly stepped out of the closet. Karlinsky, for his part, was fascinated, tickled at the revelation of this juicy discovery.

Intrigued. I quizzed Dr. Boyd obliquely whether Nabokov had a "gaydar" or perhaps a tad gay himself to have one (But that, I'm afraid, belongs to a later episode I'm not yet at liberty to disclose.). "How could you say that for a fact?" I asked. Accentuating that Nabokov's *Pale Fire* narrator, Charles Kinbote, is also gay.

In September 1973, Nabokov solicited Karlinsky's opinion of St. Petersburg. "Loud women's voices," came the reply, "swearing obscenely." Afterward, Nabokov's suspicions churned quietly into butterfat. He turned to their friend, Frank Taylor and inquired: "Tell me, is Simon Karlin-sky homosexual? I have a feeling he is. But it doesn't matter, I like him anyway." Karlinsky died in 2009 in the loving caress of his long-time companion then husband, Peter Carleton.

Dr. Boyd noted that Nabokov has the "astute sense [and] ability to read human nature." Indeed, Edmund White's *Forgetting Elena*, while steeped in allegory, is now widely read as a coded parable of queer desire for acceptance. Nabokov, ever the clairvoyant creative, decoded its allusions way before the critics caught up. On 3 June 2025, White passed away at the ripe old age of eighty-five. Garth Greenwell honoured him in a bittersweet [Substack](#) post—the very anecdote Dr. Boyd had relayed to me.

"Your writing looks rich and wide-ranging!" Honoured and beatified, I gently opted for an audience at his Edenic dwelling. Dr. Boyd graciously suggested bus routes. He preferred bikes and buses to cars. "I think a writer like you would find it more fruitful to see me at home." I concurred. A scholar's home has the glimpse and glamour that generic offices and sterile classrooms simply cannot provide. No better place for stalking, I suppose. Without a day's delay, "Monday," I said, "would be a blessing, and equally so in your lair."

Bus. Mid-afternoon. Schoolgirls boarded in droves, heading home. One, a seat just ahead of mine, became my unwitting view. Auburn hair, French

braided. She reminds me of Lolita. Coated in faint Eau de Cologne. Tawny moles adorn her nape and jawline. She glances to her side. Long lashes. I imagined Nabokov in a similar seat, fingers twitching on an index card. Scribbling *Lolita* into being. He, too, would have watched the sulks and snarls, the carrying voices, the insolent guffaws. Jotting from sources like "*Attitudes and Interests of Premenarchal and Postmenarchal Girls...*" Colt revolver, gun catalogues," and "an article on barbiturates." Humbert might have espied a demon child, among the innocent throngs. But Nabokov saw that every girl has a bit of Lolita.

"The next stop is..." Ah. That's my cue. Dr. Boyd awaits. Nabokov's prose, he says, has a "dazzling surface," beneath which lies "a coral reef of life, hidden caves with buried treasure," intercutting with the sublime rhythm and rhyme.

Hill. House. A sermon on the mount. The sort of sight pilgrims might gawk at, then genuflect. A bamboo grove rises before a curve. A sleepy stretch of road. Silky oak roots tore the pavement. "Back then, it was flat, now it's a forest." A lush botanical garden. An overgrown kawakawa beside an inert sedan; tufted mat rushes perched like sea anemones; bromeliads and succulents, creeping carpetweeds, patches of moss pillowed the concrete with tender seagreen. A pathway leads to a wooden porch. The giving crunch of dead leaves. A carp-like windsock clings to the dapping arms of a magnolia tree. A ping from the door chime. A shade through the glass. Dr. Boyd appears: benignant blue eyes of an emeritus, long grey hair, short stubble, and suede brown Uggs boots.

Dominique Swain played Dolores Haze in 1997 *Lolita*. She was 14 when filming began.



Act I: Pale Fire

The door of glass and timber creaked open first. “Hello, Justin.”

“Dr. Boyd?” I said, peering through the gauzy screen. He turned the metal knob, smiling in calm ebullience.

“Come on in,” he said, reaching for a handshake. As the narrator and portraitist, I am honoured. I am touched. When I think nobody is watching—I... Oh my, how you have to creep and hide!

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit number one is what the seraphs, the misinformed, simple, noble-winged seraphs, envied. The learned laureate of Nabokovian lore, matchless in his métier, yet ever proximate to our storied Auckland school, has granted this humble servant of letters an audience and his hour upon the stage.

And so, with no curtain but a creak, the scholar appears; he now steps into the proscenium. He, in. I, out. Ten paces from their ochreous coir doormat, an open room, dappled with ambient amber light: shelves towering to the ceiling in a sepia skyline, books leaning east and west, the scent of woodgrain and paper dust. A blue fleece coat was draped on the armrest; a low monitor glow; and a splash of green from the foliage beyond. Dr. Boyd’s sanctum sanctorum.

“So, this is where the magic happens,” I quipped, drifting towards the hearth, beneath the faux ceiling beams, sighting an ukiyo-e woodblock print at the far wall and some stout Etruscan jar above a nearby cabinet. He has lived here for forty-two years with Bronwen Nicholson, his better half.

“Are these your children?” I asked, gesturing toward the tessellated mantelpiece. Above it, Nabokov’s scaled-up field note, creases, crosses, and a half-veiled wing of a male swallowtail peeking; below, the aragonite bones of a brain coral and a row of picture frames along the ledge.

“Grandchildren. That was some time ago,” he said, leading the conversation towards the dining area. The centrepiece: a porcelain platter with pears, persimmons and *Zespri Sun-Gold* arranged like a Cézanne still life.

“Your home is picturesque and painterly,” I said, snapping a photo through the limpid panes encased in warm

beechwood. The radiant golden glow of Ginkgo leaves spilt inward like the morning’s pale fire. He had planted the gymnosperm with Bronwen, who was in the next room (engrossed in scholarly isolation). Dr. Boyd and I took our places next to a honey-lacquered kauri table.

Belfast. 1950s. Brian Boyd’s childhood is embottled in a few misty scenes. He was Burp, plain Burp, in the morning, “...because of the joke I told. *If a buttercup is yellow, what colour is a hiccup? Burple.*” He was Honk in slacks “...because I was making honking noises in class. I was a bit unruly.” He was Mr. Boyd at Montreux... Véra Nabokov called him “Mr. Boyd for a long time until she read the first draft [of Nabokov’s biography].” He was a Doctor on the honorific line. But to his parents, he was always their boy Brian.

He swallowed a lolly, lodged in his throat. The poor lad was turned belly-up and jiggled like a yo-yo, coughing up the stick and candy. His older sister had fallen into a waterhole on the road where the workmen were working. She came out soaked and shivering from that blasted road. In those hazy gaps, his dad was in the garden, weeding, grubbing, and cupping the cloven earth with bare hands. Then a shard of glass had cut his palm, the delicate web between his wholesome digits. A thin stream of blood welled beneath his pale knuckle.

“Belfast. I was going there in ‘76, and it was at the time of troubles. It was an awful place, really. There was a heat wave in Europe, but it was freezing cold in Belfast. My uncle had bullet holes in his back wall. My aunt took me to a restaurant that had been bombed three times. She said every shop and restaurant in that town had been bombed... at least once.”

1957. Ireland to Zealand. “I used to think that it was partly because my parents sensed the troubles might start again. But I was told by them that that wasn’t the case. So it was just a sense of more economic opportunity...” New Zealand was hungry for settlers, “especially English (British), maybe not Germans because of the war, and the Dutch were ideal in a sense: *white settlers*. My father signed up for the Royal New Zealand Air Force in 1957.” So they were given a cheap passage. And off they went, down under.

Boyd arrived at a “sandy fibrolite cottage” in a hamlet by the sea. But the waves of mid-century Aotearoa were wintry and wary to newcomers. “I very quickly dropped my Ulster accent... I suppose, I also almost came to feel that somehow I was embarrassed by my parents and their friends who had an Irish accent... I wasn’t a rugby-playing kind of kid. I liked to do rough and tumble, but I was never really good at sports. So, I didn’t fit in that side of Kiwi life...” He paused, “People, kids especially, were very intolerant of differences in those days in the ‘50s.”

Lolita, as Dr. Boyd observes, is Nabokov’s attempt to establish himself as a local writer in his adoptive homeland (a deracinated nobleman’s effort in assimilating amongst republicans). Like him and yours truly, Nabokov was an émigré who left his native Russia following the Bolsheviks’ imminent advance. He then fled France when the dark clouds of Fascism had trundled upon Europe. Humbert, with menacing brows, casts his eyes across the Atlantic: “America, the country of rosy children and great trees, where life would be such an improvement on dull, dingy Paris.”

Lolita was set in the American milieu, mountains and motels, highways and hinterlands, where the hungry Humbert the Hound, in his moral frailty, allowed lust to unbuckle his belt and let libido slip its leash, leering lecherously at his puerile prey from the dark, drugged her unconscious, defiling her on sullied sheets in rented rooms, on a sick sexcapade from sea to shining sea.

It makes one wonder, could Nabokov have crafted the same transgressive novel as *Lolita* had he migrated to Aotearoa? Dr. Boyd said, “he would have set it here, although it would have had a different structure because [a paedophile] couldn’t keep on the run in New Zealand.” Humbert would have to restrain *Lolita* in a basement or a muffled room (which I find even more horrifying). In *Lolita*, Humbert spoke of a “*self-made seraglio*” while he plays as “*a radiant and robust Turk... enjoying the youngest and frailest of his slaves.*”

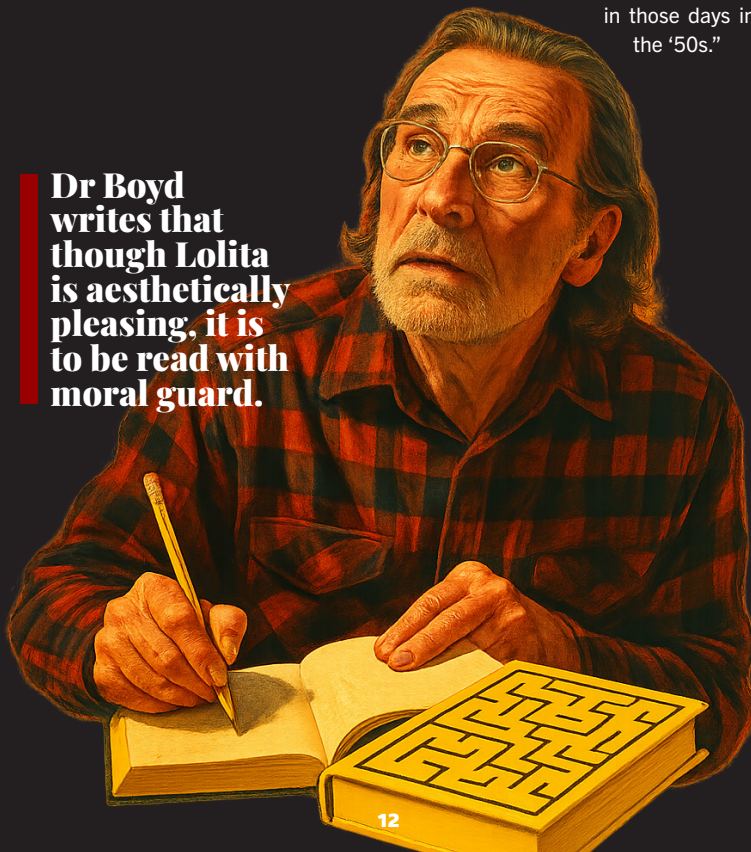
From here, Dear Reader, we asked what lured our featured figure into Nabokov and literature.

At nine, his mother enrolled him in elocution lessons. “She thought I mumbled. There, I got to understand both grammar, voice production and literature in a way that I wouldn’t have otherwise... several steps ahead of my classmates in that respect. English was always very easy for me.”

In Canterbury, he thought of pursuing history but “found it very dull” and English “very rewarding.” And then, “there was a girl I thought was very attractive and was doing American studies.”

“I hope she’s your wife,” I bantered. He rotated his ring of gold with his crêpey, tender phalanges, sliding it between the basal and median knuckles,

Dr Boyd writes that though *Lolita* is aesthetically pleasing, it is to be read with moral guard.



cradled in a plump coronet of flesh. I sensed those annular veins, warm and throbbing still, with same fire and kiss, in the nine lustra of connubial bliss.

“No, no. She was out of my league.” No luck. One-sided. Clandestine. But with the lovely lass in class, and cupid’s fickle quiver and teasing little arrow, he took up American studies six weeks into first year and never looked back.

But what of Nabokov? Our Learned Reader might ask. I shall reply. It began with *Lolita*. In point of fact, there would not have been Dr. Boyd if he had not read, one autumn, some initial pale fire. Oh when? About as many years as Humbert was that summer he met Annabel Leigh, in the French Riviera, in a principedom by the sea.

Who is Dr. Boyd at a closer look-see?—“Oh, I won’t tell you that...” He japed then laughed. With a fruit tableau before us, laid like a Cézanne masterpiece: “...but when I eat apples, I eat everything, except the stalk.” I imagined his cuspids and molars work through pear and persimmon, as he lathers the bits with his enzymes, and masticate. To devour the seed and skin, pulp and all, what a method! Then he adds with a dash of mirth and mischief: “You know the Zen koan? What’s the sound of one hand clapping? I can...” He demonstrated, flapping his fingers against his palm with the wet slaps of a grey seal applauding itself. It sent my tiddles atwitter.

But behind his jocular mask is a writer’s nib, sharp enough to draw blood and splinter brittle bones. “Do you only write when you’re a *little drunk*?” (Hemingway wasn’t exactly sober writing *The Sun Also Rises*.) Dr. Boyd is, by temperament, “naturally critical and undiplomatic,” he wrote in *Stalking Nabokov*. As the exalted Nabokov used to say with Faulkner, Camus, and many other totems and potemkin, they’re “complete non-entities insofar as my taste in reading is concerned.”

“I don’t care for Dostoyevsky at all,” he said. “I find his writing clumsy and hysterical.” Joseph Conrad? “A terrible writer. I find [*Heart of Darkness*] an appalling book. That enforced dreariness...” he paused, then struck, “as Nabokov put it: *buttering buttered butter*.”

Gabriel Garcia Marquez: “Sumptuous, but it doesn’t really attract me.” Kazuo Ishiguro: “Another writer I don’t care for.” George R.R. Martin: “I don’t know him.”

For Dr. Boyd, Nabokov is the crème de la crème. And when asked: “If not Nabokov, who’s the better writer?” He offered only one name: *Shakespeare*. I suspect even that was a reluctant compromise.

Boyd reveres Nabokov’s ability to break the scene, to leap from the metes and bound of one’s mind. “Tolstoy keeps you in it,” he explained. Nabokov lets you rise above it.

“If I could write like Nabokov, I would,” he sighed, “but I try to be as clear... and pack as much into a sentence as I can.” He looked down at his hands. “I wrote the Nabokov biography hoping my parents might be able to read it. They picked up the book—and didn’t get past the first page.”

Both his parents left school at fourteen, in the Great Depression, to support their families. In the seventeenth century, the Boyds were part of the Scottish settlers during the Cromwellian conquest of Northern Ireland. They were Presbyterian in a Catholic majority Emerald Isle. “My parents were religious in their upbringing... when we were children, they were fairly strict... My memories of my grandparents were fairly forbidding... I didn’t have that many memories back in Ireland.” But he remembered this well: the moment when *Lolita* first landed in his lap and Nabokov came strode into his taciturn living.

1965. Palmerston North. A grocery. His father would work there early mornings and late evenings, and report to Base Ohakea in between. His mother would manage the dairy for most of the day. But Brian’s prodigious appetite for letters became unquenchable. His parents purchased “a bookstore with a lending library” for him to consume.

There, one day, when a patron recently returned a copy of *Lolita*. Boyd was thirteen and tempted. He sidled and smuggled it past his Puritan parents and stashed it below his pillow when they weren’t looking (oh... *naughty*).

Lolita, that *Lolita*, my *Lolita*. There she was in that Weidenfeld and Nicolson release, Sue Lyon in dustwrapper, coiffed and preened like a waxen figurine. Boyd scanned from the blurb, V.S. Pritchett and Graham Greene, the words like *sex*, *dirty*, *sin* and *distinguished*. Oh, saccharine. The hunter chasing and carousing, that *nymphet*, that tigress, that coquettish colleen; only to find she was no aphrodisiac,

but a grandiloquent guillotine: “It cooled my libido and overheated my cranium.”

By now, Gentle Reader, you know who Humbert was. As all mimes and mummers had preached and spouted: he came to America, abducted *Lolita*, harboured a penchant for the pubescent sheila, and starred in some fiendish domestic drama. Let it be known that Humbert has the utmost regard for young girls, their innocence and purity. *Humbert was perfectly capable of intercourse with Eve, but it was Lilith he longed for*. Not every callow and comely maiden is Lolita, mind you, they were only few—the crust of crème brûlée. A certain species, a hussey, a vixen, a minx, he called nymphic. A “demon child” he says. A *nymphet*.

Lolita’s first tingle came not from flesh, but from furry hands of an ape in Paris, the Fifth Arrondissement (in the city’s garden zoo), who, when asked to draw itself, shaded no face nor form, but the grilles of its cage. This is where the inmate Humbert came to be. But the *nymphet*, that hapless pet, could have been mothered by a demoness. Nabokov composed a poem called *Lilith* (1928) to “amuse a friend” but quickly warded readers off “from examining this impersonal fantasy” from his later novels. But shall we pay heed? *Nein!* What fun would that be?

In *Lilith*, the poet dies in bloodied coat, and wakes among the fauns as Pan-shaped deities in bucolic afterlife. There he met a naked, slender girl (*the miller’s youngest daughter*), seeing her rosebuds roused, a new-grown garden blushing, and moist moss trailing down her brooks and paddocks. When his coat burst to flame then ash, he advanced to green-eyed Lilith, sprawled across a Greek divan. She stroked his emberhead and beckoned him near. “How enticing, how inviting, her moist pink rose!” And with a howl feral and hardened, he descends upon Lilith, like a snake to a Gorgon’s lair, suckling the syrup and seed of that forbidden fig. But at the sobering rush of semen, and the peeping crowd who had watched it all, only then did he understand: the poet had been in hell all along.

Was our Lolita Lilith incarnate? You in the gallery be the judge. Lilith bears her blood and sinew, a semblance, a shadow, a jumping gene. Nabokov rehearses his theme of forbidden child. Her ontogeny is thus as follows: The succubus of *Lilith*. The incubus of *Volshhebnyk*. And in *Lolita*? The *nymphet*—

cunus diaboli? An infernal trinity. The sow, the swine, and the unholy sprite. Lo. Lee. Ta.

But beware, beware, Reader mine, the devil is within the impish line. Dolores Haze was stripped of her free mind, dressed as a doll of desire.. Nabokov implores readers to riffle through Humbert’s mendacity and misdirection. Lolita is like any school-age girl. *Standing four feet ten in one sock*. But her budding feminine virtues, under Humbert Humbert’s predatory pretences, were tempered, distorted, and irrevocably corrupted. Lo—Lee—Ta.

As Dr. Boyd averred: “Nabokov invites the good reader of *Lolita* to see Dolly Haze and her pain in ways that Humbert can’t see or chooses to ignore. Some people, even some distinguished readers, have tended to read only Humbert’s Lolita; but Nabokov’s Lolita, with all its additional ironies and pathos and indignation, anticipated #MeToo by more than half a century.”

Humbert’s deviance is pathologically accurate. “Yes, it seems to be a common pattern for paedophiles. I have been in correspondence with sexual abuse therapists, and they can’t praise *Lolita* enough for the accuracy of the perpetrator and the relationship between them,” said Dr. Boyd. Humbert’s failure to consummate his passions for his coeval, Annabel Leigh, had marked him so profoundly and insidiously.

Yet again, this curious host is left to muse, and be bemused. Have you ever wondered, Sweet Voyeur, why the prologue is coloured mauve? Not quite purple, not quite rose. A liminal hue, wistful and morose. The tincture of a tremor. A memory’s sore blush before the bruise.

Nabokov inherited the palatial Rozhdestveno manor, erected by the riverbend of Oredozh, from Vasily Rukavishnikov, whom he affectionately calls Uncle Ruka. In *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov describes it as: “white-pillared mansion on a green, escarped hill and its two thousand acres of wild-wood and peat-bog.” In the summers, young Nabokov would see his Uncle Ruka, his swooping moustache, bobbing Adam’s apple, dandyish demeanour, half a dozen valises and violet bouttonnière. He leads young Vladimir to the closest tree, with a “small, mincing feet in high-heeled white shoes,” a tender hand picks something from the low branch and says in French: “For my nephew, the most beautiful thing

in the world — a green leaf.”

Vasily lived a casual and foppish life. His affections, especially for his handsome nephew, hinted at a queerness unusually visible for the time. At eight or nine, he would draw the faunlet on his lap and as he fondled and carressed Vladimir with crooning sounds and fancy endearments in the view of young footmen clearing the dining table. “I felt embarrassed for my uncle by the presence of the servants and relieved when my father called him from the veranda: ‘*Basile, on vous attend.*’”

In a sepia print, young Nabokov stands in *contrapposto* on a wooden plank. His mother, Elena, poses with one hand akimbo. Uncle Ruka clasps the boy’s wrist and waist with the same studied intimacy seen when they sit together on the boudoir settee. Nabokov’s early unease with his Uncle Ruka might have informed Humbert’s fixation on touching *Lolita*. So, it begs one to ask *la question du jour*: was *Lolita* the poison from the wound that remained ever open? *Well, let us grope and hope.*

Despite Uncle Ruka’s “colourful neurosis,” he was no more than a social dilettante. “Nobody took him seriously,” Nabokov writes. When he died alone in Paris in 1916, “it was with a quite special pang.” But his earthly fortunes went to his favourite nephew. The seventeen-year-old Nabokov inherited Uncle Ruka’s rubles and a two-thousand-acre domain. But the boon didn’t last for long. Following the 1917 October Revolution, Nabokov would lose the Rozhdestveno house, the only real estate he ever personally owned, and would never see it again.

Boyd too would leave their Belfast house, his birthplace, with the groan and gasp of the era’s diaspora. “I didn’t crave going back there.” But he scouts the place on Google Maps, “I’ve seen it and it’s a strange experience.”

Palmerston North. 24 May 1969. Boyd’s Bookstore. “On the narrow mezzanine looking into the rest of the bookshop, I checked off *Time magazine*.” The cover’s with butterflies and St. Basil’s in the background, Nabokov’s imperious hauteur, bald marble dome, and piercing gaze look back. Headline: “I have never met a more lonely, more lucid, better balanced mad mind than mine.” Brian, athirst and afire.

He dashed to the city library. He pulled *Pale Fire* from the shelf. He read it, as

he said, “with more enchantment and exhilaration than anything” he had ever touched. Each fresh blast of discovery stoked his torch of passion. It was ineffable, no mortal tongue could utter. Had I been a painter, Dear Reader, this is how I would guide the brush and stain the murals of your mind:

There would have been a bower with ferns, vines and blood-flowers. There would have been hummingbirds drinking from a fountain of nectar. A lavender field stretched for miles, bumblebees tumbling in the wind like pollen and dust. There would have been a lawn bench, a swathe of ryegrass, and a golden spaniel careening towards a receding sun. There would have been an island in a coral-ringed pool. A hammock in Bora Bora. A bonfire by the beach on a cool starry night. Acrobats. Jugglers. Masquerades and mimosa. A Samoan fire dance: twirling, tossing, and thumping with a lit machete or baton. Wreaths of Arabian jasmine. There would have been rows of jolly spectacles. Hearty howls. Holy oils. Harvest Moon. There would have been the rhythm of the waves. A damp white cove. A lover’s parted lips gathered on a hot lobe of ear. And then: she smelt almost exactly like the other one, the *Lolita* one, but more intensely so, with rougher overtones—a torrid odour that, at once, set the girdle astir.

He was still only a boy. But something combustible was set ablaze. “I followed all those cross-references. And if you follow the first trail... you’ll find out that Kinbote is the narrator... ex-king of Zembla, that he’s mad and doesn’t quite realise it and... he’s a homosexual.”

Before then, he considered either acting or academia. “I was a reasonably good actor for my school, but I don’t think I had the passion for it...” Instead, he found Nabokov. He found literature. And in that world of high art, he finally felt... *home*. He was dux in Palmy and excelled in Canterbury. He never thought of leaving literature behind. Now as a septuagenarian, I asked: what would you say to that young Boyd, thirteen and tempted, sixteen and sated? He glanced and smiled: “Keep at it!”

Frigid, gentlewomen of the jury! Brian Boyd had thought that months, perhaps years, would elapse before he might find true love, but by thirteen he was wide awake, and by sixteen he was technically in love. Dear Reader, *I am going to tell you something very strange*: it was *Pale Fire* that seduced him. Not Humbert nor Lolita. *Pale Fire*. And with that, and a bush of beard at seventeen, our Boyd would cease being a boy-child and would turn into a “young boy,” and then, into a “college boy”—*the horror of horrors!*

To be continued...



Studying in Cambridge, Vladimir Nabokov is both a poet and a pugilist. For him, sports was less about proving manhood than about nerve and precision, qualities he also prized in chess and in writing.



university grade

WE INTERVIEW ELAM ARTIST FRANCIS PAGE GUMMER ABOUT HIS LATEST STUNT – UNIVERSITY BRANDED ACID TABS, AS WELL AS INTERNET CULTURE, CENSORSHIP AND MORE!



**AZZURRA
SNELGROVE-DOUCH**

Ok, do you want to just introduce yourself and your work a little bit?

My name is Francis, in my first year doing my Masters at Elam. My practice involves a lot of different things, painting and sculpture and installation and video, so kind of not locked down into one avenue. Yeah, that's about it.

Let's start with the basics: what was the inspiration, the meaning and the process behind making the tabs?

In terms of inspiration, I was looking at two artists, or three, technically, Eva and Franco Mattes and Guillermo Vega, who both do installation work. It's about bending the truth a little bit or creating a false reality within or outside the internet, and kind of tricking the audience, which becomes an unwilling participant in the work, just by questioning it. So, I was really inspired by these artists. I had this thing where I really like people to be able to take something away from a work, like, if you go to a show and you get a little booklet. It's like a souvenir. Oh, and I've got these big memory folders. I've got folders of every movie I've been to with someone, or every plane ticket. If I go to an art show, I like to take the room sheet away with me. Like a birthday party when you were a little kid, where you get the goodie bag to take away. I love that little taking away thing. And so, I was trying to think of a work where I could give something out, for someone to take, then look back at in the future.

An image of LSD came up on my Instagram and I realised I really liked that restrictive format. You have to find an image that works on a really small canvas, that's still legible, but can also be a part of a bigger image. So, I was looking through my computer for images that I could do, and I saw the university logo that I had saved. I thought this could be really fun, really interesting. So that was the original idea. And then I thought, how can I justify doing this? It has to make some kind of sense. So, I thought everyone, especially at Elam, talks about the University as in capital T, capital U ... 'The University'. No names, just this monolithic thing that looms over Elam. We're down the hill,

and it controls what Elam gets. So, I thought, hey, if I put these up, maybe I'll poke and prod at someone who is in charge, and then I'll get an email, and I'll finally figure out who 'The University' is. And I also wanted to give something that people can take away and also prank them a bit. And I wanted to find out who was in charge. Who am I at war with at art school?

And then the process - testing heaps of different kinds of papers. The tab has kind of a slight texture to it. You can't use printed paper, it's too floppy, it must have a fibrous texture to it, so that when it's pulled off, it tears off. Just nerdy stuff like that. What kind of inks look good, that kind of stuff.

So, for this edition, we're talking about controversy and the forbidden. We're basically trying to annoy the publishers a bit, but a big theme is misinterpretation, in the sense that a lot of the themes are controversial, intending to do good, but are misinterpreted because of their controversy. Have you had a similar response to your art?

I've had one other instance of this before, when I did my bachelor's at AUT and I made a video work for our interview show at the end of the bachelors. And it had taken me all year to make this video work, and I put a lot of effort into hiring these big, 55 inch screens – a really difficult install. And then a few

days before the exhibition, they said, "No, you can't show the work. It's too complicated, too inappropriate for us to show." And it was so infuriating that they couldn't have told me earlier, the work wasn't even that bad. There was slight nudity, or like a video of a paraplegic man in an uncomfortable situation. But that's actually why I came to Elam, because I was like, "Well, I'm not giving you guys any more money if you can't even let me show the work." But more recently, with this tabs artwork, it was really interesting to see how people would respond to that. It was intended as just a prod, you know. LSD is a Class A drug, for some reason, and I thought it'd be funny to try and disseminate that around and see what people would do with it.

Did you know that the university was doing testing with LSD, that they were funding it? Was there any intent to work with that or comment on it?

Not particularly, although later I got emails from the Student Conduct Office, one of the things that he brought up was that it was a waste of time. Having to test them to see if they were real was a waste of university resources, which I thought was hilarious. Like, how much of a waste could that be? I wanted to email back and say, sweet, just send me the invoice for it. I'll pay for how much you wasted, because it would have just been one person taking it and doing a little test, which costs about \$60 at the most. So yeah, it was just a funny little experiment.

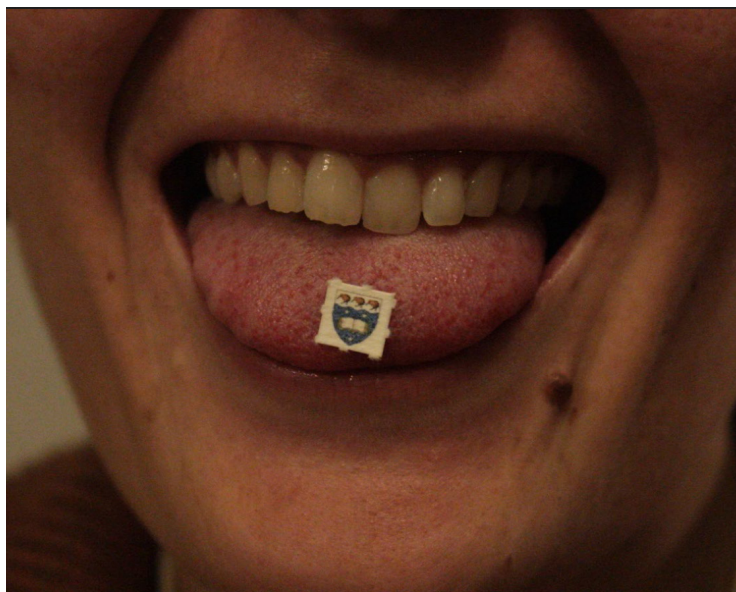
Another aspect of your art is the concept of 'lost and found'. I went and looked for some tabs, just to understand the process and experience the art. It's almost not just an art piece but also an installation of sorts for the viewer, trying to get into the artist's head and work out what books you would have chosen based on the titles.

Totally, yeah, yeah. And it's a relationship there between it's unbalanced, and the artist has control, because they're putting something out, especially if you have a show in a gallery, you are entering into that space where the artists put stuff on the wall and they're watching you, watching it, you know? But here I don't know what people do with it. It's a bit more of an open relationship, and there's function as well. I came in the morning, really early, I think between like 6:30 and 7:30am and I put up those sheets everywhere. It said free tabs, help yourself. And I had 100 of them. And then I also went to the library, like we said, and put them into library books, and tried to find interesting books that they could go into, especially ones that wouldn't be looked at for ages. So once this has all kind of blown over and exited the consciousness of the university, someone one day will open it and be like, "whoa, what's this?!" And it can be a relic. Also like, imagine the number of people who had placebo trips that day and the number of people who made money selling these fake tabs to unsuspecting customers.

You also leave artworks in places for people to find. Could you discuss that a bit?

No one has any money for artwork, especially not from a student artist like myself. The best way to get artwork into people's houses is to just give it away for free. Just giving it away, for the sake of it. And it's also good publicity: those stories get shared around a lot, and people see the artwork, which is like the perfect free marketing; you need to have marketing and this is just the way to do it.

So I think we've already kind of talked about shock value, but what drew you to it in particular, and what benefits have you found



from it? How would it elicit a stronger response than more traditional art themes/styles?

A lot of the artwork that is around is just kind of boring. I don't feel excited at all. And I thought if I came across a little bag with tabs in it, that's exciting, just for a second, before you're like, "Oh, this is obviously fake." There's a second of, suspended, disbelief where you're like sick. "I just found... imagine the first person who walked into the elevator and saw this thing on the wall. They're like, "holy fuck, I just found all this money in tabs", you know. So it's a bit exciting. It's drugs! Drugs are always cool and exciting. And so that's why shock value is more interesting, especially in something that's not like showing gore or porn or something like that. It's naughty, it's illegal, you know, so it's always exciting.

What advice would you give to other artists or creatives who are looking to use shock value in their work?

I think they should do exactly what they want. Do whatever you want, but just don't expect it to fly. I think there should be more horrible, scary, yucky art, more gross stuff, for sure. There's probably loads out there, but I just don't see it because it gets nipped in the bud at the first crit that happens in the studio, it doesn't get to be posted, or they try and post it and it gets taken down. Just keep doing it, though, keep doing it.

We (Craccum) were discussing this the other day actually, we had a panel discussion on free speech, talking about how censorship prevents people from having free thought and being able to use controversial things to bounce their own ideas off and determine their beliefs and place in the world.

Definitely. I don't think it's very radical, but I think you should be looking at this stuff as well. You can't shy away from it too much. It does cross the line where you don't want to become obsessed with looking at war books and stuff all the time, but the world is very disgusting and horrible, and you can't hide from it, you know what I mean? So it's important to keep that in every aspect of life, including art. I mean I walk down into town and someone's homeless, vomiting on the ground, in the freezing cold while we are learning in these modern heated university classrooms. That's quite brutal and shocking.

One of the more controversial aspects was one book you chose in particular: Mein Kampf. Could you explain that decision a bit?

I thought it was just really funny. Mein Kampf is lauded as this bad book. When you're making a joke about books, or there's a joke where the punchline is a book, it's often that book, because it's horrible. It's a hatred filled book, and it's disgusting. But then, on the other hand, you have this drug where you think of the dilated pupils and glowing smiles and stuff, and it's all about love and light. And so, I thought it was just funny trying to mash them together. Then if someone got that book out and then took a tab, reading Mein Kampf, like, enjoying it, that would be hilarious to me. It's just the surreal mashing together of the two.

So, were all the books picked with that kind of level of care, or did you get to a point where you were just putting them wherever?

Because I had hundreds of those baggies, I started off looking for things that were relational. Like, a Sigmund Freud book with a real cringe psychology title. I thought oh some try hard psychology guy would love to find this, so I put that in. Or some kind of Aotearoa nature picture book, nice to look at if you're on acid. But after a while, I just wanted to get them in there.

Was there, other than legal issues obviously, any motivation behind making them fake tabs in particular, like commenting on the university, sort of a 'Trojan horse'?

Well, I think I'm very interested in counterfeit as an idea. Stuff being fake is really cool. It wasn't too much about the university, but the idea of something being fake. Because when you think of fake drugs, you think something being sold as something else. Let's say this person bought flour, and they said it was coke, but this was just paper, I never said it was anything else. It's like a little vessel that wants to be real. And counterfeit, because again, you want it to be real. Real tabs would also just have been a legal nightmare, and a bioterrorism thing to put actual drugs like that everywhere, and it's abhorrently expensive to organize and manufacture.

What was the response from the general public and the university?

So, I put them up on my Instagram story for about an hour that morning, being like, 'giving back to the community, there's some free tabs'. But

then I thought I wanted it to be more natural, without people knowing I'm doing it. So I took the stories down, but it had already been an hour. I walked around a bit later, and they were all gone. Nothing really came of it for a while. And then I was at a party, and this guy was like, "Oh, you did that tab thing." I was like, yeah, yeah. And he said his friend worked in the financial district in the CBD, and he ran up on his break so he could get one. That was so good. People really wanted them to be real. And then we installed them for the end of semester. I posted that and intentionally made it vague in the caption of whether they were real or not. People really liked that post. And then I got an email from the Student Conduct Officer, saying someone had sent in a complaint about my post, and could I give him a call? We did phone tag for a little while. I eventually got on the phone, and it was really bizarre, he didn't seem to really know what it was. He read the captions of the posts, and he's like, so it says here 'mid-year project, university grade', is that a joke? It was a really bizarre phone call. But it wasn't even the university that had complained. It was some stranger who had seen the post and had thought that it was inappropriate or something. In the end he talked to the lecturers, and they defended the artistic merit to it, and he got back to me.

It's like they saw you as tedious rather than anything else...

I guess I got what I wanted. I incited a response, and I met someone from the university who I know I could push against if I wanted to do something like that again in the future. I guess the goal was to see where that wall is, where the line is, and see how they'd respond to that line.

You seem to find inspiration in unconventional places. What are some unconventional influences you have?

I think the photos on my Instagram are a good example of it, like, a really long interest that I've had, which started off with low res. I loved low-res stuff. All these billboards where are all these beautiful, crystal clear, ULTRA 4K HD photos. And then there's this, like, grimy, dirty version of images. It was so interesting. And that led me to start looking for that kind of stuff. And then you just stumble across so much weird, interesting stuff. All those pictures I think are just honestly beautiful, like, I think that's my taste and take on beauty, is this like, weird, grim, dirty image, but other than that I spend a lot of time looking at pictures, like scrolling through old archives of blogs and forums and stuff on the internet, and my friends give me more inspiration that I could ever need.

Can you talk a little bit about the Internet and I guess 'post-internet culture' being an influence for you?

Yeah, definitely. I think it's hard for it not to be. A lot of the art and posts that I see around are making stuff that's really cool, but you know, everyone goes on their phone all the time. I don't know about you, but I love going on the computer. I love going on my phone. So if I can make that thing that I'm actually interested in and if I can do it in an interesting way, where I can post a picture that you might not have seen, or introduce you to an aesthetic that you might not have seen, that's really interesting to me. There's this disillusionment and confusion of being on the internet, the barrage of stuff is really crazy.

I think also in terms of making things accessible to younger people, it's kind of making art that's appealing to us in a new way that's not really been seen before.

Yeah, yeah, I don't know. I'm hesitant to claim anything like that, especially if you're on the internet, you realize that, oh, every idea that I have has definitely been done. There's the 'Instagram artist', like the guy who does the Basquiat rip-off and does reveals...

And he always takes so long to turn the paper around!

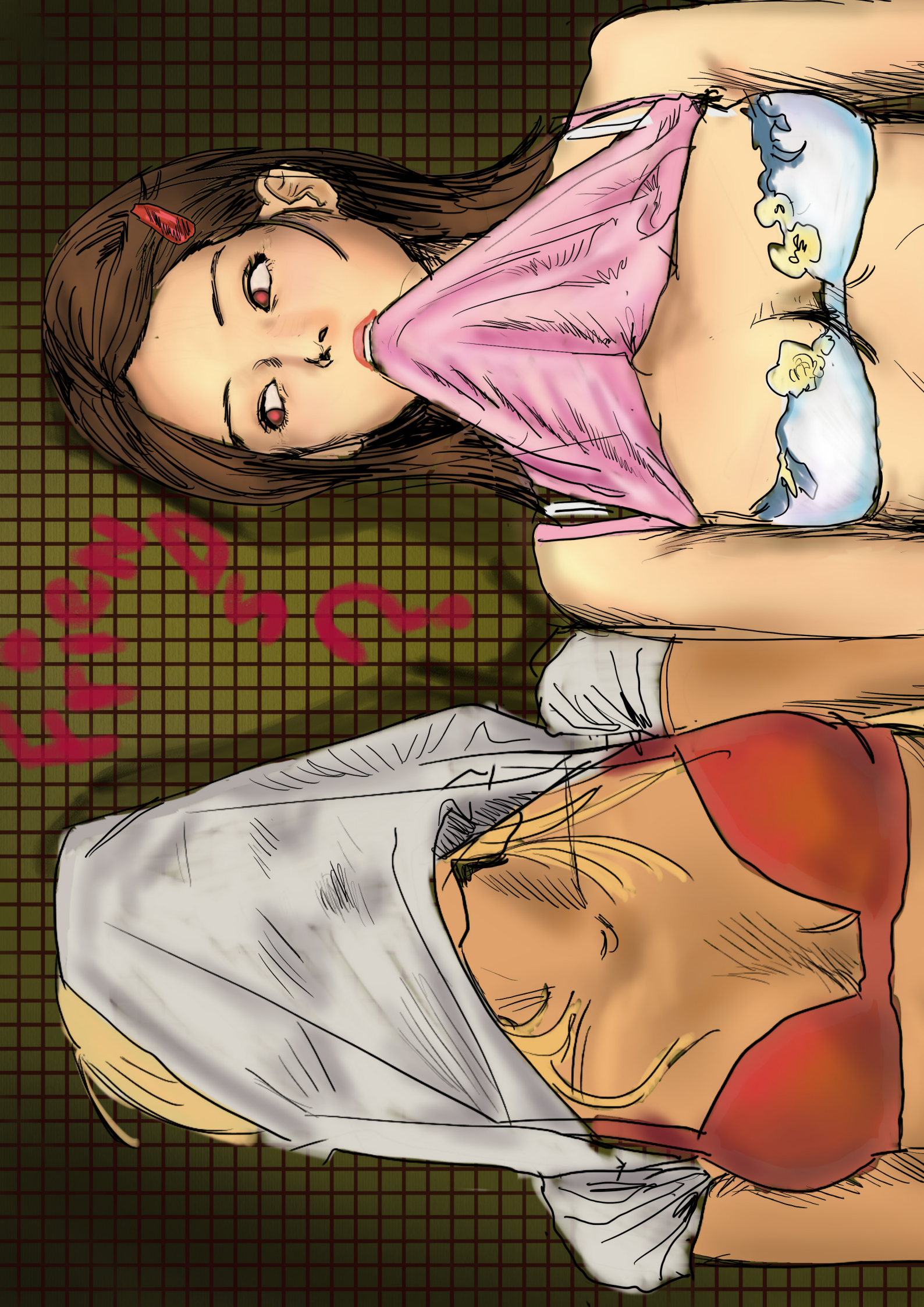
See, we all know this, I love this, we all know these references. But, it's such a cutting comment to say, "Oh, this looks like something I've seen on Instagram". You know? I mean, that's the worst thing to hear. Unless you're going for that, that's like the worst thing to hear, it means you're just making the most palatable thing possible.

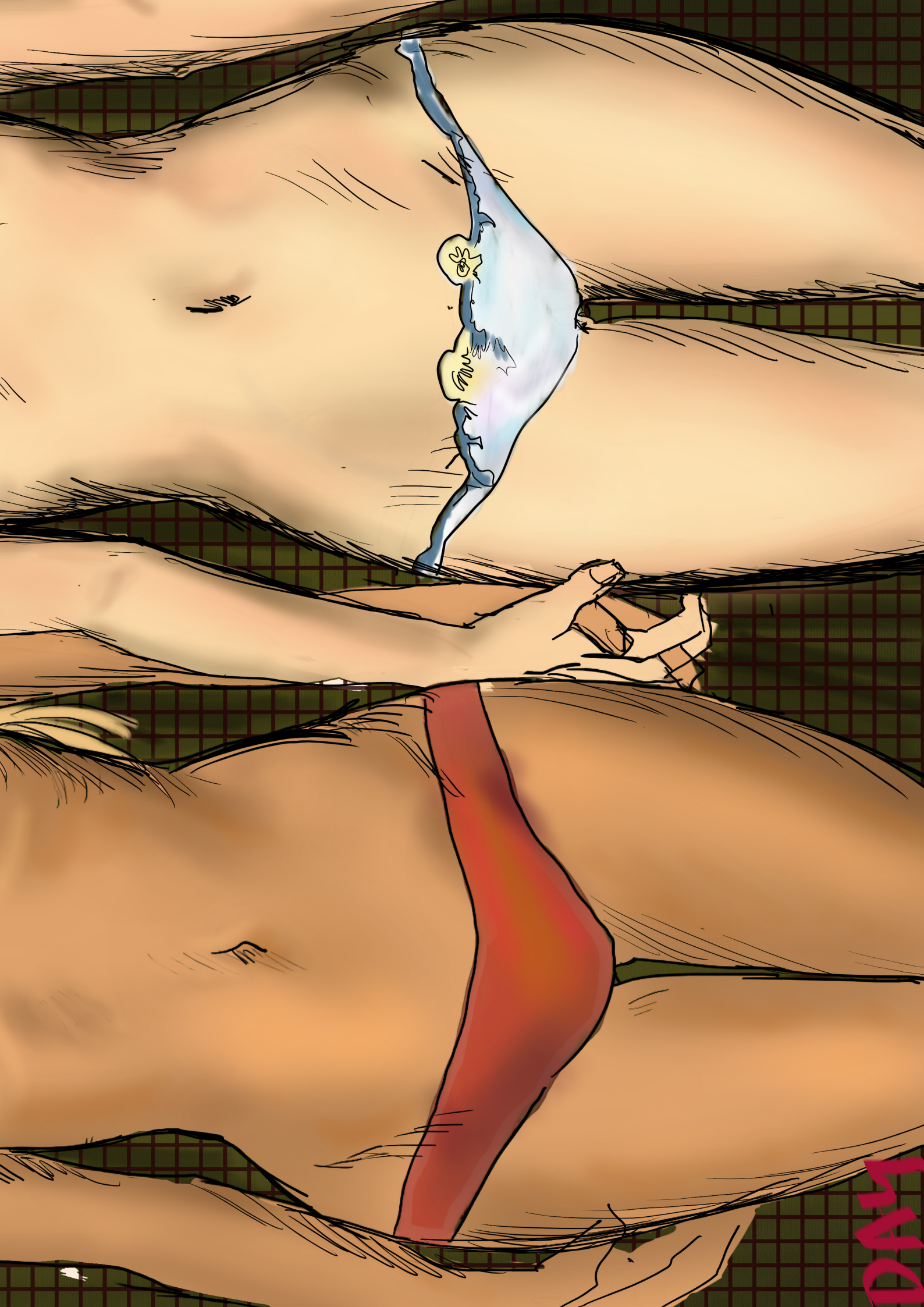
Oh, that's interesting as well, kind of fighting back against internet culture.

Yeah, a bit, because what's palatable is not what looks nice, it's what looks cool, like tattoos. Now, even this is spiky, tight, even just like spiky, Euro style tattoos, that's not subversive, you know, that's palatable. Ideas are constantly pushing back against each other. Things don't have to be new all of the time, you can just like things because you like them.

Any upcoming projects you'd like to plug?

No, not really. Just keep watching the Instagram story so I can put more paintings out there! (@francispag-gummer)





UOAbleism

ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES MAKE OUR CAMPUS A FORBIDDEN PLACE FOR STUDENTS WITH "DISABILITIES"

COMRADE KITTY

On the 21st of March this year, graffiti was written on the two new plant pots at the top of Alfred St. That said, "UOA execs ♥ making campus inaccessible". This graffiti was written as a representation of the anger and frustration disabled students on campus feel from constantly experiencing ableist inaccessibility here everyday. Prior to this graffiti, the plant pots had been added into the middle of both sides of the pavement at the top of the street. This had made it very difficult for disabled students with mobility aids, those with guide dogs and white canes to navigate up the street safely thanks to the giant metal squares right in our paths that had split the pavement up and made it smaller. But why were these plant pots even put here in the first place?

The phenomenon that created the conundrum of these plant pots is not new. In fact there are countless classrooms, buildings, assignments and attitudes from university staff that all enforce the inaccessibility of this university. One very easy example that predates these plant pots is our newly built 201 building off Symmonds street. There are more rooms than I can count in the building that do not have automatic door opener buttons on level 3, and many other levels. This has meant that for many of the classes I've had in this building, I have had to ask other students around me to open the doors to my classroom for me to enter and exit as my disability means I do not have the arm strength needed to open the doors. But if I am unable to manoeuvre myself around this campus without relying on the good graces of non-disabled students around me, am I truly experiencing the equitable access as I've been promised? This is just one example of multiple accessibility issues specifically in 201 and one of hundreds of other accessibility issues on our wider campus.

Others like these include, bathrooms too small for wheelchair users to complete turn circles in, bright fluorescent lights, lack of high contrast on stairs and entryways, no signage or guides for ramp locations, frequently broken elevators that maintenance take days to fix, disability resource rooms with door widths too small for wheelchair users to even enter, and much more.

Our university maintains the same responses to the existence of disabled people that our wider society does, by making our campus and our education inaccessible to us.

An ignorance to the existence of disabled students and our needs for accessibility is often what results in structurally inaccessible environments, the plant pots on the pavements of Alfred St is just one very visible response that proves this. But is the university aware that disabled students exist? That many of us who use wheelchairs, guide dogs and white canes now struggle to access that street with these metal boxes blocking the very middle of the path?

What happened to their promises of equity and inclusion in our student charter?

Inaccessibility in our world is not new, one reason for its continued occurrence is that when disabled people are not seen in certain spaces or groups there is an assumption that there is no need to make anything accessible because we are not there to need it in the first place. When the whole reason this happens is because we often cannot even get in the door to be involved or be seen, no matter how much we want to be involved in our communities, so

we simply remain excluded and ignored. Another reason is that disabled people are just not valued by non-disabled people or our ableist institutions and so accessibility is then cast off as insignificant and useless. It maintains an attitude of annoyance that many non-disabled administrators have at disabled people's continued existence and requests for access to the basics needed to live. But disabled people are everywhere, even when someone's disabilities may not be visible. And this isn't the 1800s anymore, our university is already aware that disabled people exist, and that disabled students are actively studying on our campuses. So why did this accessibility fail on Alfred St even happen in the first place? The street itself is a pretty major corridor towards the general library, Albert Park, the Quad, and disability services (ironically enough). Yet, after the graffiti was drawn on the two plant pots at the top of the street, two more were later added on the middle left side of the street which has repeated the same accessibility issue as these now squash the available pavement between the gutters, the gardens and street light poles. This decision to add more appears as an almost deliberate doubling down from university services to increase its inaccessibility on this street.

Most disabled students I know are aware that our university finds our existence and our demands for accessibility annoying, we know that our basic rights to inclusion and access disrupt its desperate attempts at money hoarding. Making a campus accessible after being built without disabled access in mind costs a lot of money but as students we all know this university does not have a lack of it and yet it continues to waste money on ridiculous things, rather than ones that matter. And we know that generally as students we are all collectively not valued by our vice-chancellor, the provost or its executive lackeys but disabled students experience this to an even greater extent. Disabled students are expensive, we often com-



plete our study at slower paces, work less hours when also working as staff, require more support and more funding from Disability services and inclusive learning and generally produce less financial output for the university to gobble up compared to non-disabled students. And not to mention, we require more money to be spent to make inaccessible buildings accessible to us (to a very limited extent). The non-disabled student on the other hand is nowhere near as expensive as we are and is often far more profitable for it to manipulate and exploit. A hierarchy now appears, where non-disabled students, especially those who are also white, cisgender and heterosexual, sit high above where disabled students are. In thinking about these conditions perhaps it's not so hard to see why the university may despise us and why it continually commits acts of wilful ableism against us time and time again despite our many polite requests through official channels to not do so.

But this behaviour from the university is just a repeat from what has already been happening in our society for centuries. Where ableism, inaccessibility and eugenics are used to subjugate and isolate disabled people from accessing their rights to full inclusion and involvement in our world.

Capitalism prizes the production of profit from labour-value over everything else. Disabled people who are unable to work as hard or as often as a non-disabled person are less profitable and thus less valuable to our system. When the disabled body is deemed to be inherently less valuable all sorts of discriminatory practices and dehumanisation is allowed to occur. This is what enables inaccessibil-

ity in our society and in our university. Why build the world for disabled people when they are not as important as non-disabled people? Especially when they do not contribute to society or are as visibly interwoven in their communities as 'normal people' are. This is ableism in action and we can see this through the ways that the university has reenacted this ideology on their disabled students to maintain the message, 'you are not welcome here'. So why even bother removing these plant pots at all?

But the ruthlessness of capitalism and the nature of life means that everyone will become disabled at some point in their life, if they are not already disabled, whether from accidents, illness, being overworked or old age. Accessibility benefits everyone, disabled and non-disabled alike so it is up to us all to fight for it and fight back against those who take it away.

Perhaps one solution for some of these issues is to increase disabled scholarships to be adequately proportional to our population, or to ensure guaranteed placements for disabled students in competitive programs (like the health sciences, where disabled doctors are sorely needed). Disabled students as an identified equitable group do receive less accommodations than other groups may but the solution is

not to take away funding, opportunities or accommodations from others. Rather it should be to unify our struggles and demand equitable access for us all. Do I believe that these steps will lessen the sea of ableism we find ourselves in? I am not so sure, as ultimately regardless of how many concessions we demand (or win) from the university, the same oppressive system of capitalism remains in place. And as long as it remains, the oppression of the disabled, the norm of non-disability and social and structural inaccessibility will remain. But perhaps these are ways we can begin to work closer to where we truly need to be, towards an accessible and anti-capitalist future. One where the university is in our collective control as students.

Ultimately, we know that the university does not exist in a vacuum, that it is influenced by and behaves in the same way as any profit-driven capitalist institution would.

Our University

- ✓ Ableist
- ✓ Inaccessible Campus
- ✓ Pay Vice-Chancellor \$827,000 per annum

**Funding SDS
Accessible Toilets
Automatic Doors
Working Elevators
Student Voice
Fund Clubs
Fund Student Mag**



Waipapa
Taumata Rau
University
of Auckland

ZERO tolerance for Student Welfare

He wāhi whanonga pono kore

www.equity.auckland.ac.nz/zerotolerance

A seemingly insignificant plant to non-disabled students likely intended as an add on to beautify our university campus really represents all the evil and secretive tactics of neoliberal ableism that oppresses and dehumanises disabled people. However difficult it can be to see at times, ableism is the enemy of us all. If we allow for our bodies and minds, disabled and non-disabled alike, to be drawn into a judgement of useful or useless, valuable or not by the university then we are all set to be chewed up and spat out by capitalism and its academic machine, dead, exploited and burnt out. There is really only one true solution to this problem, it is time to recognise the similarities of struggle between all students and that our enemy is the same. It is time we move past pleading with our exploiters for the bare minimum, we must have a militant student movement that unifies the struggles of all marginalised student groups and fights back against the university's attempts of division. Let's move those fucking plant pots off the street and into their white towers.

LIVING FEARLESSLY

CRACCUM'S VERY OWN LEE LI OPENS UP ABOUT HER CREATIVE PROCESS ON HER JOURNEY AS AN ASYLUM SEEKER IN HER COMING DOCUMENTARY FILM



LEWIS MATHESON
CREED

Lee is quite possibly the busiest person I think I have ever met. She has this boundless and seemingly infinite supply energy that drives her through life. Over the past year I've got to know Lee, seeing glimpses of her filmmaking process as she reviewed her scripts and storyboards while multi-tasking and running Craccum events, setting up our new website, chatting and grabbing a snack.

But the more I've learnt about her, the more I am in awe at her resilience and bravery in the face of the sacrifices she has made to be where she is today. For those who don't know, Lee is a refugee asylum seeker here in Aotearoa, as in China, being a transgender woman is forbidden by the CCP. And as an aspiring documentarian, Lee was given funding by Day One Hāpai te Haeata with support from NZ On Air and Te Māngai Pāho to make a short film about her journey. This was a historic moment as it was the first time such a grant was given to an asylum seeker.

Her documentary, *Fearlessly*, will be debut at the Show Me Shorts Film Festival in October and will later be available to stream on Māori+ and RNZ.

How would you describe the current relationship between trans visibility and state censorship in China?

There's no free speech in China. A lot of things are considered "forbidden," and if you say them, you risk penalties or simply 'disappearing.' For example, you cannot publicly criticise the Chinese Communist Party, and you cannot openly advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights. (In fact, you're not really allowed to advocate for anything at all—no protest, no parade.) Quite a few queer and rainbow pages on WeChat have already been shut down. The truth is, Chinese people know these things, but they choose not to say them out loud.

So, when it comes to trans visibility, it's basically zero to "limited." And by

limited, I mean only negative representation, misrepresentation, or outright derogatory portrayals in mainstream Chinese media. There is a very persistent bias.

China even has a law called 禁娘令, literally translated as the "effeminate ban order," which promotes a narrow idea of masculinity and is both misogynistic and transphobic. It's forbidden to show 'over feminine' male actors on television, so a few actors have been cancelled due to the law. Unfortunately, in China, they still see me as a 'man', because the gender is solely defined by 'sex', which is your genitals. That makes me not only "undesirable," but also someone deemed to be erased. On top of that, there's a common stigmatising slur used against trans people: 人妖, literally "human demon." This is also the most disheartening part when you learned the entire society doesn't accept you...

Legally, you can't even change your

gender marker on documents unless you've had "full" surgeries. It is humiliating to have a law that forces you to alter your body just to exist. Why shouldn't I have control over my own body? Why would I have to give up a part of myself just to be who I am? And even if you go through surgery, the government doesn't update your ID; they issue you a brand new one. Suddenly, you're a 21-year-old newborn with no family, no history, no education. How are you supposed to find a job, or even survive?

Because of the censorship, I was basically denied the most basic human rights, the right to my own body and the right to live as a decent human being. That left me no choice but to leave my country at the age of 16.

How has your experience as an asylum seeker shaped your sense of belonging within the

Chinese diaspora in Aotearoa?

Leaving my country isn't a betrayal, but a quiet reflection. I am a proud Chinese by blood and by culture, and now I can also proudly call myself a proud tau iwi. I love my language and the Chinese characters (汉字) that my ancestors created over 5,000 years ago. Each character carries its own weight, like a painting that tells a story. They were first carved onto walls, and later written onto paper, so that history could be recorded, culture could be passed down, and stories could continue to point the way toward our future.

For many of us in the Chinese diaspora in Aotearoa, even if we had to leave under extremely difficult circumstances, we carry an even deeper care for our homeland. It is because we cared so much that we were brave enough to call out the government and demand what is right, even when the consequence was retaliation.

Here in Aotearoa, I've met other Chinese refugees and I'd say they are the proudest Chinese I've ever seen. They actively promote our culture, our traditions, and our languages in community spaces.

In the film, you can see Chinese cultural elements embedded in art and costume design — for example, Li's bamboo-patterned nails and her neo-Chinese style dress. As the director, I also want to share the beauty of our culture with a wider audience.

Perhaps what ties us together as a diaspora is this shared voice: we believe in freedom and democracy, even when those values are under attack. Leaving our homeland only intensifies our love and longing for it — even if we can never return, we carry that devotion with us along the path of self-exile.

What do you think are the most meaningful steps Aotearoa could take to foster greater understanding and inclusion for trans communities?

I think sex education is one of the most important steps. If schools provide



DAY ONE SHORTS PRESENTS FEARLESSLY FEATURING LEE LI WITH SPECIAL APPEARANCES OF NIKKI LEE CARLSON, LUKE WOLFGAM AND GEMMA ELBOURNE-
O'ROURKE CINEMATOGRAPHY BY HENDRIKUS ARNOLDUS DE VAAN AND TYLER REDMOND 1ST AD SCOTT BOSWELL
SOUND BY ASH MONTGOMERY GAFFER NICHOLAS BRUCE BAKER AND ARNETH DELAROSA MURANIA CAM OP ZOE REI SAMSON SCORE BY MAXWELL STONE ORIGINAL
SONG BY NIKKI LEE CARLSON EDITOR TYLER REDMOND STILL PHOTOGRAPHER ANNA BRAJKOVICH PRODUCTION MANAGER YULIANA RAMOS PRODUCTION MENTOR
MICHELLE ANG PRODUCED BY TYLER REDMOND
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY LEE LI



comprehensive and inclusive education about gender identity, sexuality, and respect, young people will grow up with understanding rather than prejudice.

Back in China, almost no one knew the difference between sex (性) and gender (性别). If people had even a basic understanding of that, I might have been able to live my life there. Because there was no sex education, I had to educate myself just to figure out who I am.

FEARLESSLI is my warning to global audiences: don't let my past become your future. Please make sure every young person has access to comprehensive sex education

What do you think drives the classification of trans identities as mental health disorders in countries?

Again, I think the misunderstanding of the difference between "sex" and "gender" has largely contributed to trans identities being classified as mental health disorders. This misunderstanding is reinforced through cultural practices, traditions, and religions.

In China, for example, we were brought up with the ideology that "all men should only have masculinity," and "manhood" was defined solely by genitalia. It was "forbidden" for a biological man to wear makeup or show femininity. Because people already had fixed assumptions about your "gender role" based on your sex, the moment you didn't perform as expected, you were socially expelled or seen as a disappointment.

It's like a film genre: if a movie is marketed as "horror" but turns out to be a comedy, audiences feel betrayed and may even lash out online. In the same way, society projects rigid labels onto us — and when reality doesn't match those labels, instead of expanding their understanding, people punish us.

How might we shift public narratives away from rigid biological classifications based on sex and towards an understanding of gender as a social construct?

The same answer as before: provide comprehensive and inclusive sex education to foster a wider and more understanding community. When peo-



ple learn early on that sex and gender are not the same, and that gender is shaped by culture, history, and personal identity, it shifts the whole narrative. AND OF COURSE!!! — WATCH FEARLESSLI! (lol)

What role does fear, or fearlessness, play in your creative decision-making as both a filmmaker and journalist?

I think filmmaking and journalism share the same integrity: giving a voice to the voiceless.

I always believe that my subject and the characters, their voice is never one of the million but the voice of the million, because the struggle is way too common. And through the pain and struggle, truth and hope emerge. I aim to challenge inequality and give storytelling opportunities to marginalised communities, perhaps drawn from my own experience as a transgender asylum seeker.

Coming from a place where my voice was never heard, so I won't let anyone else to silence me again. Perhaps that's where the "fearlessness" comes in: it pushes me to pursue truth and speak up.

At the same time, fear fuels my creativity and artistic sobriety. A good story explores human unease and imperfection—if everything were already perfect, why would we tell the story? Characters often discover themselves and transform in the most difficult situations, and it's in those moments that the insight of a film truly unfolds.

When I wrote my first film, *Space*, which later won the Judge's Choice at the Day One Challenge and helped secure funding for FEARLESSLI, I put myself in very painful situations to ex-

perience bodily dissonance. Crafting a good story is difficult, but unpacking your own fear can also be therapeutic. Maybe that's why we make films: to explore, confront, and transform fear into art.

This isn't your first documentary project. What draws you to documentary filmmaking as a way to tell stories, especially those rooted in lived experience?

Again, I guess, it's more coming out of my experience of transgender asylum seeker, and I believe the lived experience matters and it can give not only representation but also hope and possibility. I am a firm believer of "you can't become of what you can't see"

Have any aspects of Chinese cinema, stylistically or thematically, influenced your approach to storytelling in *Fearlessli*?

Definitely the Chinese aesthetic. If you look closely at the art design—costumes, makeup, and locations—you'll see many Chinese elements woven throughout the film. Bamboo, for example, is a recurring motif; we even filmed in a bamboo forest.

Bamboo, 竹子, is a classic plant in Chinese culture with a long history, symbolising resilience, flexibility, and integrity—qualities that *Fearlessli* seeks to express.

How did your collaboration with Nikki Carlson and Pauline Vernon shape the development of

Fearlessli's theme song 'Fearlessly'?

Having an original song come out of a short film is definitely one of the most beautiful things you could have as a director. Nikki Carlson is a proud whakawāhine (transgender woman) singer and idol based in Aotearoa, and also a close friend of Georgina Beyer. We connected with her during the research phase for the documentary. She was immediately drawn to my film and deeply supportive of my kaupapa, which led to this magical collaboration.

"On a deeper level, as director, I wanted to celebrate Nikki's voice as a proud transgender singer. In the industry, particularly among directors and producers, there's a term called "passing." During auditions, some talents get passed over simply because they don't fit into idealised or normalised beauty standards—for example, the pitch of their voice or even their accent. I didn't want to pass over trans voices. Instead, I wanted the audience to truly hear and appreciate these beautiful, diverse voices."

What kind of change would need to happen in China for you to feel safe or welcome to return, even if just to visit?

Apart from recognising self-identification, China would need to abolish state-wide censorship, allow its citizens to criticise the government, and restore the right to free speech and democratic expression. Because I made a film that challenges the CCP's policies, it wouldn't be safe for me to return to China, even for a short visit. They see me as a "dissident," even simply for claiming refugee status. It's also deeply upsetting that my film could potentially put my family in China at risk. The stakes of making this film were extremely high—but if I don't tell my story, the truth will never come forward.

What lessons can Aotearoa learn from recent setbacks in trans rights abroad (e.g. UK and the USA), and how might we safeguard progress here?

When we were halfway through making the film, I think it's around April 2025, a Member's Bill was introduced in Parliament to define women based on biological sex. That was a complete shock

to me, and it made me feel unsafe in a very obvious and ‘familiar’ way. *FEARLESSLI* was inspired by Aotearoa’s leading liberal gender politics—from being the first country to grant women the right to vote, to Georgina Beyer, the world’s first transgender MP elected to NZ Parliament. So to see New Zealand even debating something like this felt like we were sliding backwards, maybe under the influence of what’s happening in the US, which is pretty concerning.

New Zealand is also one of the very first few countries that recognises gender identity as grounds for refugee protection, and it has been regarded as a haven for rainbow refugees. I think if we can continue standing in solidarity and holding on firmly to what we have, it will safeguard progress here. Otherwise my story could become a lived experience for so many kiwis.

What does the word “home” mean to you now, after everything you’ve navigated?

Home is where you belong, where you can feel safe and accepted. For many refugee claimants, acceptance is literally a line between life and death. If your refugee case is approved, you can embrace a new life. If it’s denied, you could be sent back to your home country, facing severe penalties or even death. Unfortunately, this is the reality.

Now, I can call myself a proud tauiwi because the people here have been so welcoming—they embraced me in so many ways, allowing me to be Lee Li authentically and “*fearlessli*.” My Māori whānau gifted me a pounamu and we blessed it under a waterfall, which you’ll see in the film. The pounamu is a roimata, a teardrop, symbolising both grief for the land and the resilience we find within. It is deeply meaningful to me as an asylum seeker. But also, as a storyteller, every time my film is screened, the audience shares their roimata with me, and in those moments, I feel that both our mana is enhanced.

How do you balance personal vulnerability with journalistic integrity when telling stories that are so close to your own life? How authentic can one be when conveying their life story so publicly as you have?

You have to trust the weight of your story and believe in your kaupapa. Remember, you are the only one who can

tell your own story.

But often, documentary filmmaking touches very vulnerable and sensitive matters. As the director as well as the journalist, you always need to draw boundaries to keep your subjects safe and not utilise or leverage their stories—always ethical considerations. But because I am both the subject and the director, I was willing to take the risk of telling my story and also ‘reliving’ my trauma.

One fun fact about making this film is that I actually had two therapists attached to the production. We shot on Saturday and Sunday, and then on Monday, I went to see my therapists.

I also filmed one of my Chinese friends who is queer. Before we shot, I double-checked if they were okay being on camera—not only because of the potential danger if they returns to China one day, especially after criticising the CCP, but also because they hadn’t come out to their parents yet. I didn’t want to be the one to out them on screen before their own family. But they told me, “I want to do it because I believe in your kaupapa.” So, we filmed. Unfortunately, during postproduction, we realised the risk was too high, and we eventually had to pull their part out.

So, there are always a lot of considerations to make. And when it comes to authenticity, I think audiences are smart nowadays—if you are really speaking from your heart, they can feel it. On top of that, documentary filmmaking is factual storytelling, which gives it even more authenticity and therefore more impact.

What sustains your creative momentum, especially when

working on stories that carry such personal and political weight?

To be honest, this has been the hardest and most ambitious project I’ve made so far. It takes a huge emotional toll because you have to relive your trauma. What sustains my momentum is spending time with my support system—friends, whānau, and, of course, sometimes my therapists. They help me regain energy and stay grounded in my kaupapa, because it’s easy to feel burnt out when you’re both the director and the subject.

What kinds of stories do you feel are still missing from mainstream conversations about trans and refugee experiences?

I would say intersectionality. There are some trans stories out there, and some refugee stories too, but they’re often told separately. I think a lens of intersectionality would be even more meaningful. For example, being trans in the UK is very different from being trans in Egypt—and looking at those differences through intersectionality can be very thought-provoking.

On top of that, I feel the representation of trans characters in mainstream storytelling is often a little too easy. Of course, there are positive stories out there, which is great, but sometimes they overlook the real, everyday struggles of trans people. Things like the awkwardness of dating, or even intimacy, are often completely omitted from the idealised mainstream narratives. There’s nothing wrong with positivity and normativity, but as storytellers, I

think we also need to grasp a sense of ‘sobriety’.

The University of Auckland | Waipapa Taumata Rau claims it is a safe environment for trans students, do you feel it has lived up to that in your experience?

Policy-wise, the university is very promising—it has a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination. But in practice, has it really delivered? I experienced students publicly commenting under my advocacy Instagram account in ways that invalidated my experience as a Chinese asylum seeker and disregarded my transgender identity. When I submitted a complaint to the university, I don’t feel it resulted in any meaningful outcome.

There are also practical issues. Some older buildings, like libraries, don’t have unisex toilets. I understand that renovating can be a huge financial undertaking, but at the very least, the university could provide gender-affirming signage to foster understanding and inclusion. That way, non-binary and trans students could feel safer using “gendered” toilets, for which I am always a big advocate.

Now that *Fearlessli* has wrapped, what’s next? Do you have ideas or directions for your next creative project?

Definitely need a career break first! But I’m currently on a creativity “retreat,” taking time to slow down, reflect, and reconnect with the people and surroundings around me. I’m using this time to generate ideas for my master’s dissertation, a scripted drama, and really let the inspiration grow naturally from lived experience.



STILL FROM FEARLESSLI

WHY WOMEN READ MEN

RETHINKING WOMEN'S FASCINATION WITH MLM FICTION



CANYA JF

The subject

Male-on-male fanfiction is something that, if you've been in fandom long enough, you've probably encountered at least once. Harry/Draco, Bucky/Steve, Merlin/Arthur, Bakugou/Midoriya, Dean/Castiel. For some of you reading this, I am recalling the ancient texts; gay ships are a huge part of fandom and internet culture. If we look at some of the most popular platforms for fan-written fiction a large portion of works are male-on-male but, interestingly, the majority of readers are women. What's going on here?

Disclaimer! This does not attempt to comment on the experience of individuals who may read male-on-male fanfiction precisely for the male gendered self-insert element of it, as evidently many people have found that this 'hobby' has enlightened them to their own complex relationships with gender or sexuality. The straight woman's unlikely relationship to this form of fiction is precisely the curious dynamic that is being examined.

There are two factors to examine:

1. The male-on-male element
2. The fandom element

Male-on-Male

Twitter users may deem this as a simple case of fetishisation. In fact, a tweet is what induced this article. If we look at this on the surface level - being interested in a sexual/romantic dynamic between members of a specific group that is not your own - we might call this fetishisation. Perhaps similar to how race play can be a form of fetish, or how men watch lesbian porn. In fact this circumstance might even evoke homophobic or ideas about gay pleasure being used for heterosexual fantasy, a common critique. However, I think there are some more nuanced ways to look at it rather than simply as a shameful niche fetish.

Let's put ourselves in the shoes of the hypothetical straight woman MLM reader. What is it about the idea of two men in a romantic or sexual relationship that is so appealing? This is not about wanting to experience some kind of queer romance with the same gender, because it's not a women-on-women dynamic. Nor is it self-insert fiction, it is not about being "y/n" getting swept off her feet or seduced by a man. Does this indicate that the self is not involved? Perhaps not.

Here's my guess: part of being a woman is that you are never genderless. Even in a romance where the trope can be anything you want - "shared

bed", "fake dating", even submissive/dominant - there's always a level of assumption. Often when a man and a woman are together on a screen or on a page, there is a presupposition of sex or romance between the two. It's never a question. There is an expectation about the role each person is meant to play in that dynamic, and when someone defies it, they are either deliberately challenging it, "breaking a stereotype" or, in some cases, reinforcing a different one.

Even in women-on-women relationships, is there still a gendered element in a form that doesn't apply to men? Perhaps there is a sense that even in women-on-women relationships a patriarchal pressure cannot be escaped, even when a man is not present. Maybe what is felt is the ever looming presence of the male gaze, or more simply the inescapability of womanhood itself. These relationships are not 'performing' in any way for a male gaze, it is rather, each woman's identity is already laden with meaning and carries the inescapable weight of a gendered existence. By contrast, and manufactured by the pervasive hands of the patriarchy, being male can feel neutral. A male-on-male pairing can escape the all-too familiar pressures of hegemonic expectation. The characters don't have to fill pre-set roles, they can just be themselves.

When a male and female character interact, it is often implied that their conversation or time alone together must lead to romance, even when there is no genuine tension between them. However,

interactions between male characters are rarely burdened with the automatic assumption of romance or sexuality. The popularity of gay fanfiction may reflect a desire for female interactions to be free of the constant undercurrent of sexual expectation that so often shapes women's experiences with men. And if it is about desire, it isn't tethered solely to gender. It's not "man + woman = chemistry", but rather "person + person + some ineffable factor = chemistry".

To me, it seems that male-on-male female readership cannot be reduced to fetishisation alone. While we can be aware of the risks of objectifying queer relationships, a more nuanced reading suggests that its popularity among women could be attributed to gender as a major player rather than queerness.

Fandom

So, where does fandom come in, and why is gay shipping particularly popular in fandom communities compared to fiction in general? On fanfiction-specific sites like Archive of Our Own, the amount of gay fiction is strikingly high, especially when compared to more general audience-written platforms like Wattpad, which tend to favour familiar straight-romance tropes. This pattern even extends to mainstream fiction, such as the renowned fairy porn books aka ACOTAR. What is it about existing media - tv, movies, anime, books, etc. - that invites so much gay shipping?

Fandom invites transformation, even thrives on it. There is a reason why fan-

fiction is so popular. "Fanfiction allows fans to populate shared worlds and redefine shared characters" (Hellekson & Busse, 2014). Fanfiction writers tap expertly into what audiences want; they understand what their fandom desires, what versions of these characters, worlds and storylines they want to see and adapt them to please masses of fans. Fandoms are powerful, and when invested in media, their shared desire for fan service can be placated by fanfiction. Fandom can seem like a safe and familiar place to explore identity and experience desire.

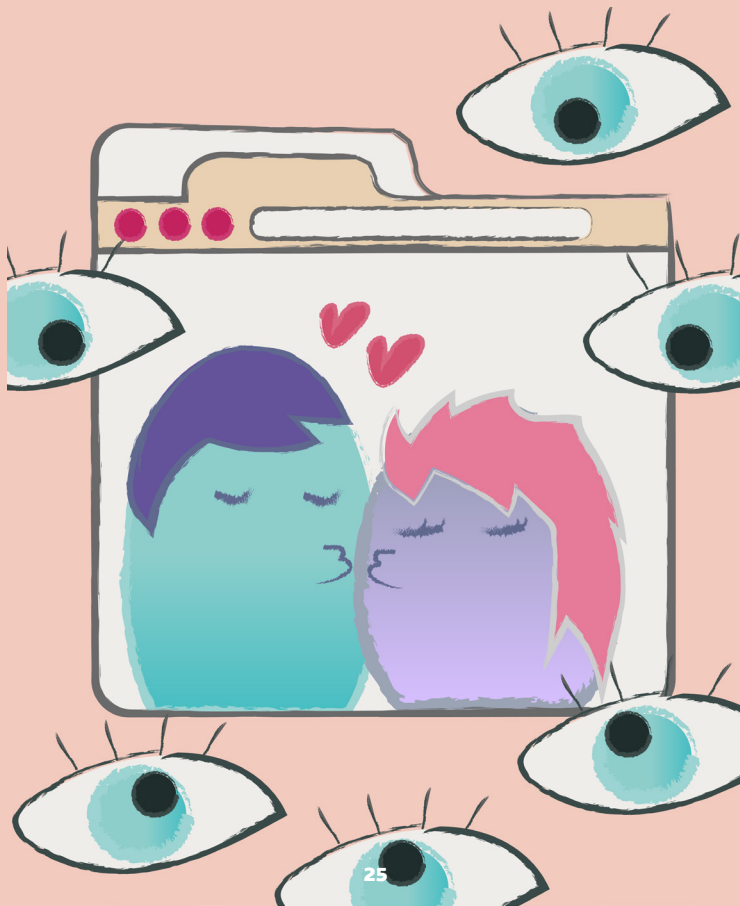
Speaking of safety, many fandoms have garnered a reputation for being 'gay' spaces. Within these communities, queer pairings are not only accepted but celebrated, which creates a striking contrast to mainstream publishing. It is unsurprising that authors and readers flock to this area of the internet rather than searching the bookshelves at a local store that still caters primarily to heterosexual romance. Fandom cultivates an environment where there is a shared understanding that "this is the place where we do this". It gives creatives an emotional safety net. For queer individuals, this is invaluable as it provides a space of comfort and belonging. But it is also significant for the subjects of our investigation: the straight male-on-male fanfiction reader. She can engage in written romance and sex outside of the constraints and expectations of gender roles that often shape heterosexual narratives in a place where this is normal, accepted, and abundant.

So what do we reckon?

Now, you might read this and think: wow, this writer clearly is having some struggles with their gender identity and sexuality! I guess I can sit here and write away defending my certainty in my identity, but I won't.

In theory, I think my hypothesis stands up. Until we potentially get some more illuminating statistics in a few years, it seems that the reality is that a lot of the women who not only read but write in this space identify as straight. There is a dynamic here worth attributing to more than just homoerotic carnal fantasy. Male-on-male fanfiction sits at a fascinating crossroads between gender, sexuality, desire, and community. Maybe not every reader is engaged in a grand act of feminist resistance, sometimes it may really be about the smut or a case of fetishisation. But the popularity of this genre among women indicates that there is something worth paying attention to, that fandom has become a place where women can reimagine intimacy.

But also, maybe it's not that deep. Maybe a bunch of ladies just want to read about Harry and Draco smashing.



TO BAN OR NOT TO BAN (THAT IS THE QUESTION)

PROHIBITION THEN AND NOW: LESSONS FROM ALCOHOL, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND PRINT



VIVIENNE BUNQUIN

Forbidden. Few words in the English language provoke such contradiction: instead of shutting us down, they spark curiosity. You hear the word and immediately wonder, “By whom?” Or, more rebelliously, “Why should I listen?”

I wasn’t much of a rebel as a kid, but adulthood—the bureaucratic nightmare it so often is—has made the idea of a “healthy disregard for the rules” far more tempting. No matter the age, no matter the creed, it seems there’s always someone ready to tell you what *not* to do. Always someone eager to *forbid*.

History offers countless examples, and perhaps the most classic is the temperance movement—aka that one time society decided (and inevitably failed) to stay sober. In the United States, this took shape through the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1919, which banned the “manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States.” Rooted in evangelical revivalism, anti-saloon sentiment swept the country, urging abstinence and eventually demanding legislation to stamp out alcohol altogether.

Why such profound hostility? Saloons were seen as dens of drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, drugs, and corruption. They provided the backdrop for backroom deals where politicians bought votes and forged shady coalitions. The loathing of saloon culture, historians argue, also reflected broader anxieties in society. Waves of immigration, a growing labour movement, and radical socialist and anarchist circles left Protestant America feeling cornered. Unable to eradicate those realities, they turned to the next best thing—ban the supposed root cause: alcohol.

Of course, this effort backfired spectacularly. Jokes spread that it was easier to find alcohol after Prohibition than before. Once the state said “NO,” the people answered with a resound-

ing “YES.” But the consequences went beyond irony. As historian Lisa McGirr argues, enforcement became a moral crusade that disproportionately targeted the poor, working class, and immigrant communities. In forbidding Dionysus from flying too close to the sun, America instead cut off the sunlight for its most vulnerable citizens—weaponizing state power against them. All things forbidden come with a price, and perhaps none heavier than this one.

Fast-forward to the modern era, and the impulse to forbid remains strikingly familiar. Even as technology accelerates and social media bends our realities, the blunt instruments of law and blanket bans persist. Australia is leading the charge with its Social Media Minimum Age Bill 2024, which passed in Parliament by 34 votes to 19. From Christmas this year, Australian youth must prove they are at least 16 years old to access social media. The law shifts the burden onto tech platforms, requiring them to verify users’ ages or face fines of up to \$49.5 million AUD.

At first glance, this might look like a Robinhood-style crackdown on tech giants profiting from our mined attention spans. But the carve-outs tell a different story. YouTube, much to the envy of competitors like TikTok and Snapchat, was granted an exemption—thanks in no small part to well-timed lobbying. Leaked emails revealed that Chief Executive Neal Mohan personally appealed to the Communications Minister mere days before the exemption was announced.

When the Wiggles are invoked as a political bargaining chip, it becomes hard to take the law’s moral high ground at face value.

Critics argue the exemption undermines the bill’s very rationale: to protect children from digital harms. After all, the Christchurch Mosque terrorist had been radicalised on YouTube, as the Royal Commission of Inquiry reported. Academics warn that bans of this kind may push vulnerable teenagers toward even riskier unregulated platforms, where radicalisation and social isolation risks become more pervasive.

So once again, bans reveal their capitalist seams. Well-intentioned as they may be, they can compromise the very people they aim to help. The law has passed—but in the long run, will it stand the test of time? Perhaps what we’ll see first is not safer children, but a resurgence of YouTubers migrating from TikTok, while the real harms remain only half-tackled.

The final frontier of prohibition, at least in my mind, is print media—and even closer to my heart: books. (Dear Craccum readers, I know I’m not alone in this!) A quick online search reveals countless titles that have been banned at some point or remain banned today. Perhaps most surprisingly, the Bible has faced restrictions in Malaysia, Singapore, and China. In the Philippines, *The Untold Story of Imelda Marcos* was banned for unauthorised depictions of the former first lady. I’d have more empathy for her if political corruption was

legal—but last I checked (and I doubt the Marcos family did), it isn’t. Another example is a book by Dexter Cayanes, who researched Bienvenido Lumbrera, a fierce advocate imprisoned during the Philippines’ martial law era. It too was banned for being anti-government and “subversive.” Aotearoa New Zealand’s most famous example is *Into the River*, which arguably became more memorable precisely because it was banned. Originally intended for readers aged 14 and above, the book attracted controversy due to its depictions of sex and drugs. This ban demonstrates how age often factors into decision-making surrounding bans, and additionally, how intense political lobbying and societal fears can trigger blanket restrictions.

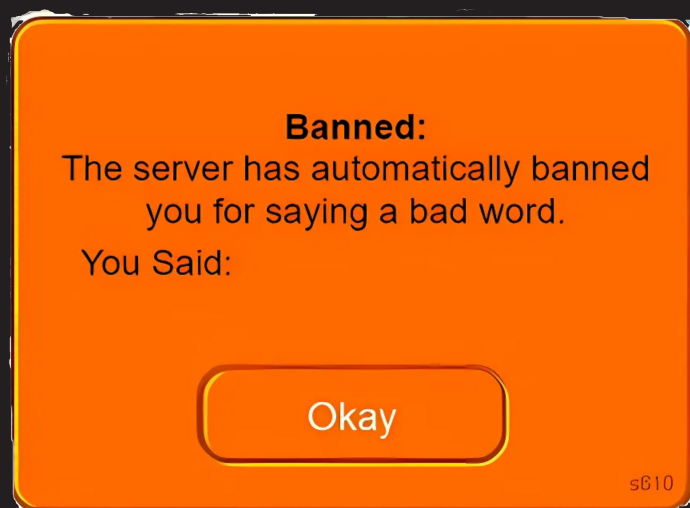
So, where to now? From alcohol, social media, and books, an undeniable pattern emerges: bans are rarely neutral. They often hide problems better solved openly or outside of the state’s hands. Prohibition and similar restrictions can create black markets, which exacerbate harm for vulnerable populations. Governments, even as arbiters of law and order, can selectively impose and enforce bans—as seen with YouTube in Australia—which can weaken the legitimacy and effectiveness of blanket restrictions. Some bans suppress political dissent and curtail free speech, benefiting self-interested elites like the Marcos family. Other bans arise from potent fears, whether manifest in Protestant America targeting saloon culture or conservatives policing explicit themes in *Into the River*.

The lesson is clear: bans can be harmful, self-interested, or well-intentioned but wholly misdirected. They can infringe on human rights and create new problems for the very people they aim to protect. And yet, we are still drawn to them, compelled to ask the same questions: *Forbidden by who? And why should I listen?*

Perhaps the real answer is that, sometimes, we shouldn’t at all.

But you can disagree with me, of course.

Who am I to *forbid* you?



GIG REVIEW

BORDERLINE AT THE TUNING FORK: HEARTFELT, HOPEFUL & ELECTRIFYING

SUB-TITLE: TO WATCH A BORDERLINE SHOW ISN'T TO WATCH A DETACHED PERFORMANCE. IT'S TO SEE A GROUP OF FRIENDS BOUND BY A LOVE FOR WHAT THEY DO, AND REALISING IT WITH FLAIR.
ISABELLE LLOYDD

Auckland streams with rain on the Friday of indie-pop band Borderline's show in a national tour of their new EP *Chrysalis*. Perpendicular queues of fans frame The Tuning Fork, early and unfazed by the mercurial weather. The venue fills rapidly, the cold diffused with suspense.

The night opens with solo artist Liberty, a Hawkes Bay artist singing with confidence and presence. She is personable with the crowd, lightly self-effacing yet inherently comfortable beneath stage lights. Liberty slips seamlessly between sounds, from the soft, evocative melody of *Snap Out of It*, a glimpse of coming-of-age malaise

and isolation, to the rousing ballads of *Are We Dead* and *Why the Hell Am I*, blurring existentialism and feminism.

Inverting the night's sound, second opener Lucy Gray fills the room with hazy sonics and narrative lyricism. Beautifully supported by other NZ artists Dean Rodrigues on the drums, and Flynn Adamson on guitar, Gray captivates the crowd. Her sound is soaring yet introspective. On *Polar Orbit* and her newly released single *Trying So Hard*, Gray mixes soft rock with indie nostalgia. Digressing into powerful covers, the audience sings with her. Gracefully, Gray steers us through hymnal intros and sweeping melodies with verve.

As 10pm closes in, The Tuning Fork teems with fans and anticipation. Borderline's lead guitarist Matthew McFadden later enthuses that they "couldn't see the floor", fulfilling the band's dream to sell out this staple venue. Singing from a mixture of their new EP *Chrysalis*, unreleased work, and deep cuts, Borderline doesn't disappoint.

Friends since childhood and adolescence, Ben Glanfield, Matthew McFadden, Jackson Boswell and Max Harries share a coming of age that is personal as well as musical. Each song is different yet underpinned by an in-



PHOTO CREDIT: CHARLI FUNNELL

creasingly cohesive sound, testament to a chemistry that exceeds the stage.

The room heaves on *Heartbeat*, an electrifying ballad which everyone sings back. In the thundering melodrama of *When It's Raining*, the band tests the volume in a howl of anguish for unrequited feelings. A dichotomy of nostalgia and adrenaline, Borderline meshes variations of indie introspection and rock suggestive of disco. In the nostalgic portrait of *New Romance*, lead vocalist Ben Glanfield croons softly, hopeful amid crisp acoustics. A band with the emotional lungs for what's heartfelt or melancholic, the room is left remembering first kisses and falling in love.

Talking to them afterwards, Borderline's members are warm and personable, perfectly reflecting their effervescent stage personalities. They allude to a constant process of creating and are effusive about their many fans. It's close to midnight and yet their energy remains indefatigable.

To watch a Borderline show isn't to watch a detached performance. It's to see a group of friends bound by a love for what they do, and realising it with flair. One can't help but smile back at such a love story.



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GIVING UP

THE BEST DECISION I EVER MADE – THE FORBIDDEN LIFESTYLE



VICTOR NORS

Give up :)

Ah shiiiiii, here we go again. A new semester has begun, and going into it, I—like many others—had decided to really zone in this time! Get on my grindset, study hard, and finally live up to the expectations I have *for* myself—and the expectations of others, although I'm not totally sure who, actually... But no matter! If I'm to become someone, become satisfied and happy, I need to get good grades, perform, and achieve!

I planned out a morning routine, healthy diet, exercise—and didn't forget to very stringently allocate Saturday 16:00–21:30 to socializing, because obviously, I have to be young as well, to be happy.

The faculty expects me to study 40 hours a week, but yeah... during assignments it's more like 60 hours. Not a lot of time for friends... But yeah, I can do it! And when I'm done, I can get a solid job—my *DREAM* job! And I'll enjoy my time then!

But right now, I feel so much anxiety from those expectations... I need to alleviate myself. Meditate maybe? That's what the mental health institutions tell me to do, too reduce symptoms of stress. I'll just scroll a little to distract myself, then I'll get to it.

Hmm, do any of these thoughts resonate with you? It seems to me that we have built an illusion around the purpose of our lives, in which we continually push the fulfillment of life into the future:

"I'll be free in the spring break!"
 "After this semester, I can finally relax!"
 "After my degree, then I can do what I really want to do."

In the meantime, we feel guilty about the "responsibilities" we experience—and even more guilt when we distract ourselves from the seemingly endless loop of work and hope for a better life.

What if I told you:

There is no point in your life where it all turns around.

There is no final goal that will satisfy the hope you carry.

There is no magical transition that will change the way you live your life.

Psychology teaches us that we tread on a sort of **hedonic treadmill**.

Our baseline satisfaction tends to remain quite steady—a mix of biology but, even more influentially, your social relations and external factors. Even people who win millions of dollars return to their baseline after a month or two, finding themselves in the same emotional state they were in before—reaching a goal is alleviating! But only for a short while, then, it seems, you return to the basis mindset of living you had before.

No. Life is *right now*. It is only *ever* now. The future exists only as an abstract concept—and more importantly, we cannot predict it. We can even say we control it. We are, by all measures, *not* in control of our lives—although productivity gurus would like to convince you otherwise. You don't know if you'll fall and break your leg tomorrow. You don't know if you'll get a serious disease. Even your grades are, to some extents, out of your control.

This does *not* mean it's not worth pursuing influence in life—we can try to steer like a kayak in a flowing river through the current of events—but ultimately, you're flowing through life without truly knowing what will happen toward a steep decline, a waterfall if you will, at the end of which you'll fall... and die.

If your perception of a fulfilling life is located *somewhere in the future*, then when are you supposed to live? And then when that future arrives, will you still be perceiving fulfillment as something *ahead*.

I encourage you to ask yourself: What sacrifice do you need to make to feel more fulfilled *right now*?

And you might be thinking. Fuck this duuuuuude omfg. If I don't get high grades I'll be in dept for the rest of my life, I'll disappoint my mum, bless her, and ultimately I'll turn out to be a no one without any impact!

I thought exactly the same! Hear me out. I was such a productivity geek once. I scored top A's, I was head of several initiatives, and I was greatly admired for my go-getter energy! Wuhuuu!

And I was fucking miserable...

Although I acknowledge the moral endeavors as being meaningful, it was to live in accordance with modern ideals of exceptionalism. By all means, if you truly are happy about the 'grindset', keep going. I'm writing this only in an attempt to help those who aren't to

which I find most are not.

So yea. I was a perfectionist. I believed I was in control of myself, my future and my life.

But perfection is non-existent. Like *utopia*, which was originally prescribed as a fictional place, so is the standard of "perfect".

I lived in accordance with expectations I saw emerging from my parents, social media, and ultimately myself—to make my life *matter, better, bigger*. The opposite was true. Anxiety, stress and a feeling of isolation in a big competitive world, with one podium and a million competitors.

Furthermore, talking about all these things, I was encouraged—not to change how I lived, but how I handled all the pressures. It's a taken-for-granted assumption that maybe the hyper-productive ideal of consumers and workers in society is actually not something to be encouraged. Instead of treating the core problem, we are treating symptoms with medication, meditation, and programs for lifestyle—maintaining the core problem.

Even reading University of Auckland's mental health policies and initiatives, they're mostly targeted at helping the one struggling "*manage*" their depression or anxiety, so that they can continue living a "*normal*" student life, preferably via self-help sites telling you to do more exercise and sleep well—although important it's still symptomatic.

I want to reject the expectation of normality as a student devoting 40+ hours a week to studying, along with all the other expectations that follow the "ideal" life of a young adult.

But I have a radical idea for you. Something that saved my ass at least:

I gave up.

I work on my studies max 2–3 hours a day. I pass my exams and spend time with the people I love. I work part-time—not enough to buy an iPhone, but enough to maintain financial stability.

I pursue meaningful things—not to meet anyone's expectations, but because I feel them as inherently meaningful and enriching.

Scrolling became less enticing, since I had nothing to escape from. Life *simply is*—right now. And I'm not burning

out to achieve peace later.

I gave up on perfectionism, on control, and on the extreme expectations of society. In turn I got "worse" grades, less status, "worse" CV, less admiration, and peace... Finally. Love and attention to those who matter to me, slow walks in the park and writing this article for fun! A small sacrifice, I think, to give attention to the scarce amount of time I get to spend being alive.

Most importantly I spend my time with people I've grown to love, by letting myself be vulnerable, prioritizing my emotional needs and accepting life as it is experienced is in itself the meaning of it. I'm not ecstatic or happy all the time, far from it! I have massively shitty days, and I'm not promoting the same self-help optimist guru ideals of constant happiness. After all if happiness is the baseline, can you even say it's still happiness? Nah - I'm simply at peace.

All this is not to deny the pressures of society, they truly exist! And of course we can not go around not working, spending our time only during what we like! However, I encourage you to critically reflect on how much time you spend on what, why and whether that makes life as something finite and fragile enjoyable to you, right now!

If fulfillment never arrives "later", but only exists *now*—then what do you need, or need to let go of, *right now*, to live a more fulfilling life?

I want to finish off with Alan Watts, who says life is a dance, there is no place on the dance floor to which it is better to finish than another place. There is no goal in dancing as fast as possible or for it to look good as possible. Dancing is a worthwhile experience without any product or benefit. It's simply enjoyable because it is." Alan Watts, "(...) *you cannot understand life and its mysteries as long as you try to grasp it*".

This short text cannot describe the fundamentals of the social philosophy behind the message I'm trying to convey. If something resonated with you, I encourage you to read: The good life, Meditations for Mortals, 4000 weeks, Utopia for realists and/or Courage to be disliked.

Transition Baby!

EMBRACE YOURSELF, AND LOVE THE LIFE YOU LEFT BEHIND



Doped up on estrogen, and filled to the brim with a desire to do something with all this newfound hope chemical, I often find myself reminiscing about the past — and not always in good ways, either.

Transition is scary. I've said it once, or twice, or fifty times, and I'll say it again and again — because not only do you have to accept the fact that your life will change a thousand times over, but you're stuck with the memory of who you once were.

For most transgender people, this often isn't a fond memory — we remember the dysphoria (while still experiencing it); the masking, and the struggle to fit in — not only within the collective, but within our very psyches.

Because again and again, prior to transition, before I even knew I was trans, I felt like something was inherently wrong with me. Broken would be one word for it. Disturbed would be another.

When you're trapped in a body you never asked for, stuck in a social order that seems to relegate you unto expectations, positionalities, and a general air of disorder, there's something to be said about what that does to your mind.

For many a year, I felt less than human — barely in reality, caught in constant loops of shame, self-hatred, and a total lack of compassion for the fact that I existed; and willfully ignorant to the fact that I would need to do something with all those negative emotions.

I was reckless. Opted for a total aban-

donment of self. If there was danger to be found, I would seek it out — because my body felt less like a temple, and more like a train throttling itself toward oblivion.

Live fast, die young — and die, in fact, I did — but only in a spiritual sense.

And each day, I find myself haunted by the boy I left behind — except, I don't think he's really a ghost. More of a fragment — a remnant of self that still lurks in the background, tossing in his own opinions, making sure that the woman I'm becoming still has a brother to guide her way.

But for a long time, I hated him.

Some days I still do.

Because I'm not proud of the person I was before transitioning — a moody, debauchorous, and generally unhinged shell of a human being. To live as a he with the 'soul' (and I use the term loosely) of a she, is a truly de-

structive thing.

Navigating life in that state felt close to impossible — I was disconnected from my body, from my values, from my core beliefs, because I could barely approach them without feeling like a sissy.

To be a man is to be uncaring, to be non-chalant, to be bold and brash and take the world by the neck — I felt I had to perform, to seem larger than life, or else, somehow, I'd be found out to be how I felt on the inside.

So it was really hard for me to change.

Really difficult to accept that, deep down, I wanted to be anything but the person I was, or perhaps, the person I pretended to be.

And those wires still remain, despite their fraying.

I find it difficult to express myself —

even harder to do so authentically — because there's always that nagging voice, deep down, deeper down than I could articulate, that tells me I'm not good enough. Not kind enough. Not sweet enough. Not feminine enough — because to me, femininity more closely resembles goodness than anything else.

Which isn't to say that women can't be... well, not good.

Nobody is perfect, and to put femininity on a pedestal is equally as harmful as dismissing it entirely.

But I felt (and this isn't to say that it's inherently true) that masculinity was a sickness. Something that had been shoved down my throat, and for a lot of my life, I was choking on it.

So now, when I look back on 'him,' it feels awful to know that I behaved in ways I would never do in the present day — in my relationships with others, in my relationship with myself, and the way I tread my ground in the world at large.

I remember arguments, and fights, and a general lack of empathy — I remember dismissal, and provocation, and a constant need to prove myself as a 'man,' which, generally, meant being a competitive, arrogant, and obnoxious little boy.

But, still, I have empathy for him.

He survived a world he hated, a life he hated, using the tools provided to him by the social order — tools that suggested that to be vulnerable was to fail, to be open was to submit, and to love oneself was to be a prissy little faggot.

So I try to love him.

I remind myself of the way I used to feel — distanced, dislocated — unsure



ART BY URTYPICALFOX (TUMBLR)

which way was up and which way was down and where heaven and hell truly lay.

Because heaven, now, is a place inside me.

A place where I feel accepted for who I am, and who I was, and the woman I hope to become — a place where I can forgive, but not forget — a place where I can embrace change in all its glory, and look forward to each new day.

Because now, life feels beautiful.

Hard, of course. You don't go through that kind of life without some scars remaining.

But I feel so much more connected, to myself and others — more certain that I can be whoever I wish to be, no matter how the world may treat me.

And that, I think, takes a lot of courage — I don't want to shine my own boots too heavily, but I remember the fear, and the doubt, and the morbid awareness that to be transgender is to be othered.

So I know that I couldn't have done this without him.

He was the one to take those first steps — despite the repression, and the terror, and the crippling insecurity — he was the first one to do our eyeliner, don a skirt, meekly wear a bra and hate the sight in every mirror.

He did all that, despite the shame, and I could never thank him enough.

Because breaking down your own walls is a deeply turbulent process — surrendering, submitting, and living out your inner feeling is something that requires an admission of embarrassment, and squirming disgust, but also, a total sense of trust.

Trust that you're doing right by yourself. Trust that things will turn out okay.

Trust that you're not just confused, or some kind of pervert — trust that experimentation is healthy, and that the gender binary just isn't for you.

Trust that you know yourself better than others could.

My psychiatrist told me I was mentally unstable — the therapist he recommended asked me if I lacked a father figure.

Friends suggested that I had never been feminine, and that maybe my drug use had knocked some screws loose — my own mother asked me if I had been echo-chambered from hanging around a bunch of queer people.

But I knew myself enough to know what was right for me — I knew myself enough to understand, to some extent, the person I could be.

A woman who does well by herself, and well by her loved ones.

A woman who wakes up each morning declaring that today can be a new day, and tomorrow can be even brighter, if she puts in the work to make it happen.

A woman who is not only willing to accept her flaws, but cherish them — because pushing them away will only make them worse — and loving them can only make them better.

At age sixteen, a 'medical practitioner,' suggested to me that humans are wired to be afraid. That all of us, forever, are trapped in a sort of existential dread, so I really wasn't unique in feeling that way.

But now, after eleven months of medical transition (as of time of writing, in fact) and nearly three years of getting to this point, I really don't feel that same dread.

I feel lucky to be alive.

I feel lucky to have gotten here.

Statistically, transgender people have one of the highest rates of suicide within the general population — especially when deprived of medical care, or unable to accept themselves for who they are.

We are prone to addiction, and self-harm.

We are far more likely to experience disorders akin to C-PTSD.

And a lot of conservatives (yeah, I'll go there,) take this as a reason to suggest

that we're just mentally ill, that something inside of us is so fundamentally fucked that we feel the need to 'pretend' to be the other gender, just to escape ourselves.

And sure, I did escape masculinity — but the cause of my being trans wasn't a 'disorder.' My disorder existed because I was trans, and the world didn't make any degree of sense to me. My selfhood didn't make any degree of sense to me.

But I know that now, in my transition, I'm becoming the person I was truly meant to be — and I couldn't be more grateful.

So to any self-hating women in your beautiful glass closets — or, hell, to you secret dudes, even though I don't quite know your experience — please, please, for the love of yourself — if transition is an option for you, and something you want, then pursue it.

Shove the fear aside. Embrace the life you want to live.

And for anyone questioning, just ask yourself — if I could make a change, right now, that would improve my life — if I'm feeling down, and lost, and unsure of what to do next — doesn't it sound nice to do a little improvisation?

Order some makeup. Talk to your friends, and see how they might be able to help you. Talk to openly trans people — most of us will be happy to assist you.

Because I want this world to be filled with people who are joyously unafraid to cherish the life they want to lead — while also acknowledging that the people they were, were taught, not chosen — indoctrinated, and not inherent.

We can all change. We can all be better. We can all choose to love ourselves.

So take a stab in the dark, and see where you end up — hold up a candle, and see how the light flickers in your eyes.

Because we can all change. We can all be better.

We can all choose to love ourselves.

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- 📸 events, photography + videography
- 🎧 DJing, archive work and editing
- 🎨 designing posters etc
- + plus heeeeeeaps else



^ sign up here ^

I'M SICK OF YOU NOT LIKING THE WORD "FEMINISM"

I DON'T THINK THAT THE WORD "FEMINISM" GIVING LINGUISTIC LENIENCE TOWARDS THE FEMININE HAS ACTUALLY RESULTED IN SEXISM TOWARDS MEN.



PROFOUNDLY
ENRAGED

I'm sick of you not liking the word "feminism" and the world health organization incorrectly defining PCOS.

Hello, I appreciate you being here! Seriously! The void feels slightly cosier with you being in it.

This article has been triggered by my heavily procrastinated task of ACTUALLY WRITING my dissertation. This is about the marginalisation of polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) in health policy in New Zealand. I am using an institutional feminist perspective to analyse the Ministry of Health.

Whilst retrieving an official definition of PCOS from the World Health Organisation's website I noticed a slight but important inaccuracy when describing the C in PCOS, "PCOS can cause hormonal imbalances, irregular periods, excess androgen levels and cysts in the ovaries".

The culprit:

"cysts in the ovaries."

Now, maybe I am being pedantic, or maybe I just expect the World Health Organisation to accurately define one of the most common women's health disorders?

Contrary to what may be assumed, there are no actual cysts in the ovaries in PCOS; there are actually just a whole lot of "immature" (I prefer to call mine cute and small) follicles that (I guess????) look similar to cysts.

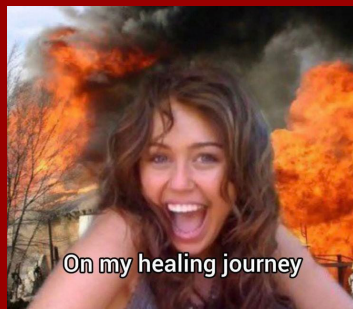
Why does this get me so triggered? Well, it is symbolic of a bigger issue, which is the lack of care, prioritisation and research into women's health. PCOS affects up to 15% of women and takes on average SEVEN years to get diagnosed. If you're lucky, 70% of women aren't diagnosed at all.

And it leads me to an inner rage that has been fizzling for a while, around feminism.



I mentioned that I am doing my dissertation using **feminist institutionalism**, which links all of this together. Though even outside of academia, I am a fierce feminist. I deeply and passionately believe in equality (and equity) for all genders, and I feel that it is part of my life's purpose to improve this.

I have always felt, if I am frank, *annoyed* when people say they aren't feminists, or they **are** but they "don't like the word". Probably, part of my internalised misogyny is that it annoys me **more** when this is said by a woman. And even more so when I know this woman, and I know through the way she lives her life that she actually is a feminist.



I'll figure the first part out in therapy, and I'll figure the second part out here.

I hate to break out another definition, but Feminism is the pursuit of equality of men and women.

But that's binary - so let's say - equality for all peoples.

When debating this topic, I feel frustrated at the simplicity of the arguments against the term. Most common being that people feel feminists are women who hate men and set their bras on fire. My answer to this is just as simple - extremity exists in all areas of life, and this is simply not what feminism means.

The response I usually get to this is that we should use a different word, that the word "feminism" implies lenience towards women and doesn't symbolise its work for men. To this I say - there are many words in the English language that are gendered, most of which give leniency to men. Let's not forget **women** do not exist linguistically without **men**.



Another concept I believe to be true here is one that I will explain in terms of race; it will likely have a name that I do not know.

Can white people ever truly be the victims of racism in the Western world? As a white person, I argue that to a *degree* we are protected by acts of racism by existing power structures. Even if we are targets of racism, it is quite unlikely to truly affect our collective chances of success, because of how strong the current flows the opposite way.

To translate this into feminism, I cannot speak of how it feels to be a man, though perhaps I can apply the same logic. Can men truly be the victims of sexism, in a way that will affect their quality of life? Or, are they, to a *degree* (this is important because extremity and nuance exist), protected, as a collective, by the power structures at play?

Where am I going with this?

I don't think that the word "feminism" giving linguistic lenience towards the feminine has actually resulted in sexism towards men.

This is not to say that acts in the name of feminism haven't caused men harm; this has definitely happened. It is rather a critique of putting so much importance on the actual word and using this as a reason not to be a feminist.

These opinions are completely my own, and not peer reviewed, though I will go on a limb and say that I don't believe that this linguistic lenience has actually created a net benefit to women, either, when accounting for the backlash it has created.



To finish, I plead. We need your feminism. Because the World Health Organisation incorrectly defines one of the most common causes of infertility. Because pay equity got cut. Because genital mutilation still exists. Because men are dying of suicide. Because feminism is an ideology that uses gender to understand issues, and we need this.

IRENE EATS



IRENE PARSAEI

NEEDO

FRESH MADE PASTA

The line outside of Needo has been long every lunchtime since I began at this university, and it's only grown in length since Needo's move into a bigger space. In this new location, their menu has also grown to offering pizza, which was my main goal to try in this review.

I went to Needo with a \$30 retail voucher to see how many food items I could get. For \$29, I left with a large bowl of carbonara pasta, and a slice of their margarita pizza with double mozzarella on top, and a side salad.

The pizza definitely exceeded my expectations. The dough was pillowy and soft, while also having a nice crispy bottom and sides, which made every bite enjoyable. The sauce was tasty, and the mozzarella was warm and stretchy, and I was happy to find that it wasn't oily. The side salad, a heap of arugula with some balsamic vinegar was the perfect cleanser between bites, and an added nutritional value.

The carbonara surprised me greatly by how light it was. Oftentimes I find that carbonara is quite a heavy dish, however Needo's one was a delight. The sauce perfectly complimented the crispy bacon, and the cheese on top added to the creaminess, and melted beautifully between the layers of macaroni.

While I chose these items, I also saw the different items on the menu, and was happy by the range of options available to suit a variety of students.



Nick's kitchen

In my latest adventure of trying different Budgie Eats meals around campus, I found Nick's Kitchen tucked away in the corner of the quad. This spot focuses on Filipino food, and I was delighted to see that they offered not just one, but three different options for Budgie Eats!

Between the tofu adobo, chicken adobo, and the pork lumpia, I chose chicken adobo (although I'll have to go back for the lumpia), and received a hot plate in less than five minutes. Having not tried Filipino food before, I was excited to explore the new flavours awaiting.

The chicken was placed on a bed of brown rice, and topped with teriyaki sauce, mayonnaise, green garlic, and crispy fried shallots. The seasoned chicken had a unique flavour which I've never had before, and it added to the savoury explosion that defines this meal. In every bite, you got the perfect balance and combination of ingredients, and the teriyaki sauce gave a slight, sweet kick that really elevated the flavour profile. I also loved the addition of the green garlic and fried shallots, as they gave a fun, variety of texture to the otherwise smooth dish.

Something that really stuck out to me about the chicken adobo was the inclusion of the different food types. The inclusion of brown rice contributes a nutrient-dense element to the meal, most importantly offering fiber (which we all need because colorectal cancer rates are going up yikes). Combined with the protein from the chicken (or tofu as an alternative), and the garnish of the green garlic and shallot, Nick's Kitchen provides a well-balanced meal perfect for any student.

Thank you to my friend who helped me eat all this food!



The first four people to show this article to the Campus Store In the student quad will receive a \$15 Voucher !!!

HOW?!

WHO?!

Breaking News

OUTLAWED & OFF-LIMITS

Down

1. List of people or things to be avoided or punished.
3. Illegally imported goods.
4. Stern German term meaning 'absolutely not permitted'.
8. What caused Eve's downfall in the Garden of Eden?

Across

2. Status of activities that could land you in handcuffs rather than headlines.
5. Exclude from a group, like what happens to people who spoil movie endings.
6. Adjective for that one room in Beauty and the Beast's castle.
7. Little sister's off-limits book.

Art & Puzzles
by
Angelina Prem

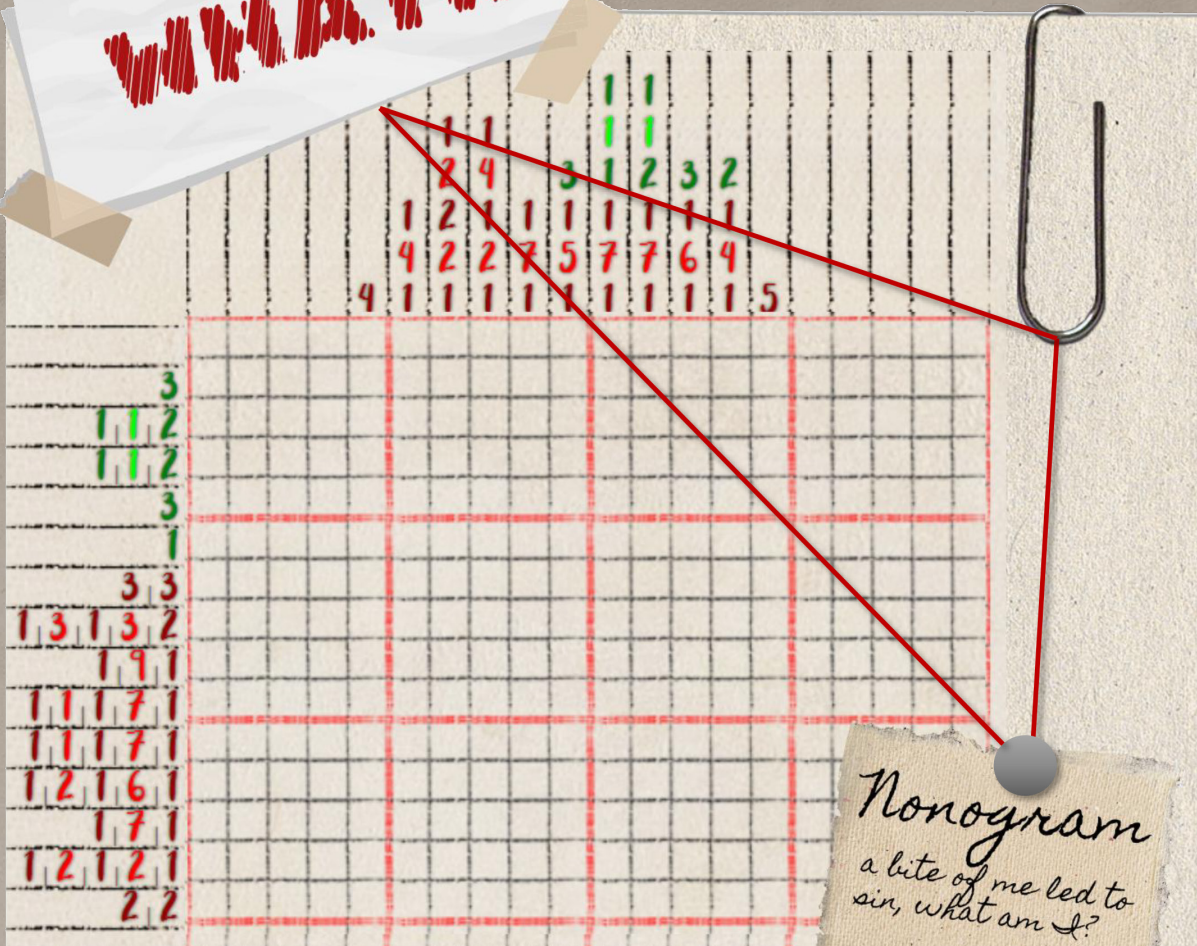
Solutions available at
www.craccum.co.nz/puzzles

NEXT CLUE:

Find the 8 words hiding within this grid - Every letter counts!

D	R	L	T	U	L
E	E	A	O	I	I
N	L	W	E	V	L
N	G	O	D	E	L
A	G	O	B	A	E
B	K	U	T	A	G
L	C	M	G	R	L
B	O	S	N	O	W

WHAT?!



Nonogram

a bite of me led to
sin, what am I?

A BETTER GRANOLA RECIPE(ISH)

WITH ESTA EATS.

The truth is making good food as a student doesn't have to be hard. We just need to let what we do have be our guide.

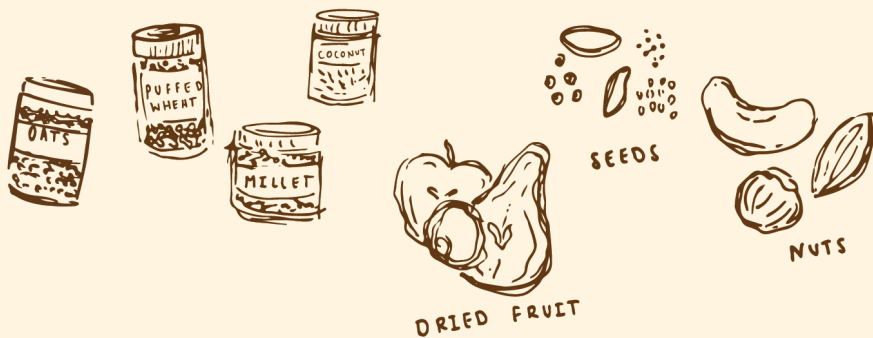
So here's a recipe(ish), throw in this week's quick sales, what's at the back of your fridge or what's in season.

Good breakfast is what makes me a morning person, but tasty granola can be hard to buy on a budget... tis also packed with not great things.

There's lots of ways to make granola that's grand, so here's a few ways to make it!

1. GATHER YOUR INGREDIENTS

This can get fun! Add whatever ingredients you like but it's great to have a mixture of oats or puffed wheat with nuts, seeds or dried fruits.



Top Tip! Buy these ingredients either in bulk or from the bulk bins, shops like 'Good For', 'Bin Inn' and 'Commonsense' are great for these ingredients. Buying from the bulk bins also means that you can just buy as much as you need for less!

2. GATHER YOUR BINDER.

Once you've got a super fun mixture of ingredients it's time to decide how to bind it all together, this helps to make your granola one! You can use any of these ingredients, usually a few tablespoons is perfect but as a rule of thumb less is more.



4. TOASTING TIME.

Preheat your oven to 180 and lay out your mixture on your largest, flat tray. Ensure it is spread as thin as possible. Get it in the oven and now stay and watch like a hawk. Granola can burn very quickly. After about five minutes get it out and flip the mixture to ensure even toasting. Once your ingredients are golden you are good to go! As soon as you get it out of the oven add in ingredients you left out that way it will cool as one tasty treat. As tempting as it is let it cool for the best crunch. Store in an airtight container.

5. EAT!

Waking up for your 8am class is now easy, you're welcome. Eat with yoghurt, or make your own oat milk. Blend 1 Cup of Oats with 2 Cups of water and a tsp of something sweet like jam or honey then strain the oats. (Use these to make good porridge). Or just eat by the spoon full anytime of day... that's what I do anyways.

Making good food is all just an experiment.

Have fun, make this Recipe(ish) yours.

3. HEAT & COMBINE.

Heat your binding of choice in a pot or the microwave till a drizzlable texture. Fold throughout your dry ingredients ensure it is spread throughout.



Top tip! Leave ingredients like puffed wheat, hemp seeds, coconut and dried fruit out to be added after we have toasted the mixture.



@ESTA_EATS

CAPRICORN

DEC 22 – JAN 19

I know you've been considering another holiday, but it's time to check your bank account before buying tickets (even if they are on sale). I hate to break it to you, but running away to an exotic destination won't solve your issues. Actually, it might make them worse.



AQUARIUS

JAN 20 – FEB 18

Spring has sprung, Aquarius, and for you, this means allergies, defrosting, and a deep clean. I'm talking about clearing clothes to see the floor, dusting every inch, and throwing out everything that doesn't spark joy (and those dated jeans definitely don't).

AQUARIUS



PISCES

FEB 19 – MAR 20

You will make eye contact with a stranger for an uncomfortably long period of time this month. Will it be the love of your life? Your nemesis? Unfortunately, I have no idea; my astrological abilities only go so far.



ARIES

MAR 21 – APR 19

Mid-semester break has treated you well, Aries. It has been an entire two weeks of nothing but relaxation. It's time for karma to make its move - be careful on staircases and around suspicious banana peels, you never know who's watching.



TAURUS

APR 20 – MAY 20

Taurus, your sleep schedule is unbelievable and frankly, terrifying. We were all praying mid-semester break would sort it out, but alas, you have become nocturnal. Good luck with your 9am lecture - also, you snore like a freight train.



GEMINI

MAY 21 – JUN 20

Your lack of decision-making skills is honestly concerning. No one asked you to build a rocket, Gemini. We simply want to know you'll be in class today. Take a page from Virgo's book, make a pro-con list (or two), and respond with clear, straightforward answers.



CANCER

JUN 21 – JUL 22

I know you had that wild dream, and you can't stop thinking about its meaning - hey, I'm thinking about it too. Reddit says you're afraid of something, probably time to face it before it comes back for part two...



LEO

JUL 23 – AUG 22

Your obsession with aesthetics is almost out of hand - who needs fifty carefully curated mood boards? I would tell you to delete them and throw away your phone, but someone needs to be the trendsetter in this world, and the competition is bleak.

VIRGO

AUG 23 – SEP 22

After spending mid-semester break working, I would say take a breath, but your group project is due, and the slideshow is looking rough. Take charge and delegate like your life depends on it.



LIBRA

SEP 23 – OCT 22

Libra, you have been booked and busy! With a social calendar rivalling that of an A-listers, it's no wonder you forgot to do that assignment or take off your contacts. Watch out though Libra, the diva life can take its toll.



SCORPIO

OCT 23 – NOV 21

You have forgotten something... your phone? Your hop card? Your final assessment deadline? Check your pockets and start running, Scorpio. Time is of the essence.

HOROSCOPES

BENNIEANDTHEJETTS

SAGITTARIUS

NOV 22 – DEC 21

Rein it in already, Sagittarius. Whoa also means woe, you know, but either way, you need to slow down, because let's face it, the time you spend trying to avoid doing work is almost more effort than actually doing it.





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