

*History of the
word C*NT*

Why VSU Worked

Young Marriage

*Twilight &
Romanticising Abuse*

tharunka

UNSW STUDENT PUBLICATION • ISSUE 2 • VOLUME 55

SEX



ARC
UNSW Student Life

50 OUT OF YOUR 950

Make the decision to properly fund Indigenous Health

Australia is in the grip of an emergency: the Indigenous health crisis. The government is spending \$42 billion on the stimulus package, handing out huge sums of money to encourage people to spend and invest. Let's direct that investment where it counts.

Let the Australian Government know you care about Indigenous health. Show that you're willing to put your money where your mouth is by giving 50 out of your 950 to Indigenous health, through Oxfam's Close the Gap campaign or an Indigenous health organisation of your choice.

How to do it: Make a pledge by uploading a photo of yourself at www.stimulatechange.org and then send us a copy of the donation receipt when you get your 'mullah' from the government!

- *You will get a payment of \$950 if you are a full-time Australian student receiving Youth Allowance, Austudy, ABSTUDY and other student related payments.*
- *Many students who may not qualify for the \$950 can still get \$900 if they lodged a 2007/2008 tax return and paid net tax.*
- *The stimulus money will be paid between the 24th March and 6th April.*
- *We will send out follow-up emails requesting people who made pledges to forward us electronic/photographic evidence of their donations (e.g. receipts).*
- *Then we'll post all the photos of these receipts on the results page so policy makers can see how many people are putting their money where their mouth is.*

For every person signing a petition, there are many others who share the same views. For every person rallying on the street, there are even more people at home, nodding in agreement at the TV. Policy makers know this. Now imagine how seriously they'll take Indigenous Health if instead of just signing petitions and marching through the city, we actually show what it means to put your money where your mouth is.

Your donation will go directly towards closing the Indigenous health gap.

But it will also do much more.

If STUDENTS show they can put their money where their mouth is, then SO CAN the Australian Government.

tharunka

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Tharunka is published periodically by Arc @ UNSW. The views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of Arc, the Representative Council or the Tharunka editing team.

Tharunka acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the University now stands.

There are Good Reasons for a Women's Collective

DEAR THARUNKA EDITORS,

This letter is in response to Bart Cummings' article, 'Why Not a Men's Collective'? (edition 55, issue 1).

I wholly agree with some parts of the article. The dismantling of some of Steven Biddulph's arguments is somewhat commendable. The vitriol directed towards women and feminism and the blindness to women's varied experiences that can come out of some men's groups is a worry. I feel excited to see a male writer foregrounding the notion of male privilege. However there was a central and critical concept missing from Cummings' opinion piece that unfortunately ended up doing a disservice to feminism and Women's Collectives. This concept is asymmetric power.

Cummings criticises author Biddulph, and certain groups as the Lone Fathers Association, the Australian Men's Party and Robert Bly's Wild Man (Mythopoet Movement) for their questionable theories and isolationism. But he seems to be arguing that ALL autonomous gender groups, including Women's Collectives, are bad and "isolationist". This is where Cummings fails. And fails badly.

First, Cummings disregards the gendered power imbalances that structure society. I think that we live in a society where women are generally told that they are less in so many different ways. I have experienced, heard and read that many women feel disrespected and unheard by some men.

Sometimes around issues to do with violence against women, some women prefer to work only with other women. It is the developing of self-confidence and the empowerment from working with other women and working in a non-hierarchical manner where collectives try to hear everyone that renders autonomy sometimes necessary. These do not always necessarily correlate with the traits that Cummings associates with the listed authors, men's groups and the men's rights movement. As long-time activist Wenny Theresia told me last year, "being part of a Collective is the complete opposite to how we have been socialised." This insight is the opposite to the functioning of the authors and groups to which Cummings refers. Those groups especially want to reinforce a singular masculinity without much critical thinking.

Second, being part of a Women's Collective or women's caucus does not mean that members believe that autonomy is the final or even the only answer. It also doesn't have to be an either/or situation in agitating around women's rights. When the 2008 Women's Collective campaigned around Sexual Violence Against Women on Campus, the positive response was astounding from people of all genders from all different backgrounds. Solidarity!

Finally, last year the Women's Collective had a one-off mixed genders group. I think it was pretty much a disaster.

The piece was important but I suggest that all writers who want to discuss feminism and Women's Collectives speak to people who identify as feminists (not just the prominent ones) and to people who are or were part of Women's Collectives. I'm not sure how an outsider can make the claim that Women's Collectives are inherently isolationist.

Also for everyone: if you don't already know it – this website is HOTT <http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net/>

CLAIRE NEMORIN.

EDITORIAL

DEAR UNSW,

Gently you trace your fingers down the spine of the magazine. You caress its pages, cool at first and then warm between your eager palms. Slowly you move between its crisp sheets, and then faster and faster. The friction builds against your flesh. On and on it continues, longer than you would have imagined possible.

It's true that the second time is better than the first. This edition of Tharunka is positively swollen with humour, content and ideas. In university news, Sean Lawson and Alan Zeino release their pent-up frustration regarding Arc's rather flaccid attempts to reinvent itself post-VSU. On page 14 Matt Kwan directs a hot spray of loathing at Pink, while on page 10 Alice Lang offers a gushing appraisal of marriages in New College. And be sure to delve into our centrefold spread, a deep and probing examination of the word 'CUNT'.

At last you emerge, breathless with pleasure and exertion. A strange calm creeps through your body. Lying on your back, you imagine you can see the wisps of breath from your body tracing up to the sky.

Then you look over to the magazine. It is splayed wide open, as if to invite you in yet again. You plunge back into its depths.

With love,

Tharunka Editorial '09

Build a Bridge and...

DEAR THARUNKA,

As an Engineering student I am writing to share with you my concerns regarding the article "UNSW Anthropology 101" published in the last issue.

While I can understand the author's attempt to create some light hearted O-Week humour, I feel that the stereotypes featured were sexist, racist, politically intolerable and over all just inappropriate.

Personally, I took offence to being labelled a Fascist Bogan. Stereotyping the political beliefs of a whole faculty is a symptom of poor character and judgement, Mr Author. I feel that the negative and untrue accusations you created have the ability to disengage an already apathetic student body.

Also, I didn't know that UNSW only accepted international students from America.

Cheers,
Faithful Reader
PETER MANNIX

Change We Kwan Believe In

DEAR THURANKA EDITORS,

Every article (no exaggeration) written by Matt Kwan has made my blood boil, and his latest piece – NoBama: Change We Can't Believe In – was no different. While being closer to the Democratic Party on the political spectrum, I am no spirited Obama supporter. Despite his best efforts to remain policy light throughout the campaign, I am resigned to the idea of inevitable disappointment. However, Matt's criticisms were largely unjustified, hypocritical and disingenuous. Criticising Obama for hackery and character emphasis while praising the virtues of George W. Bush and John McCain seems like the pot reproaching the kettle. Matt believes Obama represents a backward step in American society, yet it is only a backward step if Obama seeks to reform the system. Clearly he does not, the system 'works'. Instead, Obama's change seeks to affect the outcomes provided by the system, and it is this reform of ideas that provides 'hope' to many Americans.

Sincerely,
MARIEL BARNES

PS. Sarah Palin deserved it. Anyone who thinks sharing a border with Canada is a major achievement that lends foreign policy experience is delusional.

The Laboratory Strikes Back

THARUNKA,

Emily Margo (Letters, Tharunka Issue 1, Volume 55) has a very active imagination, but little idea of the reality of scientific research.

To begin with, the Draize eye-test is no longer used in Australia except when testing substances designed for use in the eye. In these exceptional cases experiments must be approved by both the Animal Ethics Committee of the institution involved and the relevant state Minister. This has been the case for at least the last 20 years. Unless the particular brand of toothpaste Emily is using is somehow intended to clean your teeth by applying it to your eyes, it will not have been tested on the "pink cornea (of) a white rabbit sitting on a laboratory bench".

Even in less enlightened countries, use of the Draize test is very limited and usually involves anaesthetisation, very small amounts of substance, and washing out of said substance at the first sign of irritation. Any chemical that is known or suspected to cause pain is not tested by this method.

Emily's inaccuracies continue: it is not the case that rabbits are ideal for the Draize test for the reason of not having eyelids. They do. It's called a nictitating membrane – or third eyelid – which protects and moisturises the eye without obscuring the animal's vision. Cool, huh? In addition, rabbits are not limited to a life of silence. They may whistle as a sign of distress or scream when in severe pain. This is a very loud and horrible sound, and any activity that causes such a noise is not carried out in Australian laboratories. Contrary to Emily's apparent belief, scientists are not some breed of morally bankrupt human, uncaring for the welfare of animals. Most act not only to prevent unnecessary harm or pain to an animal used in research, but also to enhance the well-being of those animals.

Interestingly, rabbits also buzz when they are horny. Perhaps this is the real reason for the name of that other famous kind of "rabbit".

I conclude with some words of advice. Be aware of pashing ill-informed animal welfare worriers. They might have a bad case of fear-induced halitosis.

NICOLE BATTEN

How It Should Be

DEAR THARUNKA TEAM,

I've said it before (in my facebook status), but I'll say it again: the first Tharunka edition for 2009 is quite the shiznit. I read it cover to cover (bar the SRC reports...), which I rarely do for anything and have never done for a Tharunka. The "wow this is a great edition" epiphany came when I realised that I wanted to write a response to almost every single piece that featured in the first edition, even most of the letters. Even illiterates would have appreciation for the hot design and formatting, yo.

I am not just saying this because I am friends with most of you all and/or because I was published in said edition. Truly. You guys are quality.

Love!
ANH TRAN NAM

WORLD NEWS OF THE WORLD

Excessively Cheerful Friend Fucking Irritating

Recently at a party you bumped into an excessively cheerful friend who you had not seen for some time. She uttered your name in a high-pitched tone and gave you an enthusiastic hug which you weakly returned. She then demanded most detailed and up-to-date information regarding your mutual friends, partner, pet, job, parents and house. Undeterred by your monosyllabic responses, she volunteered that her new job was "fantastic" and her new boyfriend "awesome", going so far as to say that she was "having the time of her life." At the end of the night, when you were about to leave, she cornered you to say it was great to catch up and you should meet up some time. You left the party feeling vaguely guilty about your failure to reciprocate her generous affection, but not enough to turn up for the coffee date you just made.

3 Australians and 20000 non-Australians **DEAD** in earthquake

RAPIST REPELLED BY UNATTRACTIVE CLOTHING

Late last night, a would-be rapist approached his intended victim, 24 year old Jian Hai, intending to overpower and violently sexually assault her. However, the woman was prudently dressed in an extremely unflattering coat and jeans, and the rape was thus averted. "Thank God I did not appear in any way sexually attractive. Who knows what might have happened if I had worn a pretty dress or makeup?" the woman said of her near miss.

The thwarted rape is considered a victory for known rape-aversion tactics like not dressing slutty, not drinking alcohol, and not leading men on. "This demonstrates once again that women only get raped when they are attractive or dress in an attractive manner or when they otherwise spark sexual interest in men," commented a member of the NSW Police's sexual crimes unit. "Everybody

knows that rapes did not occur in the good old days, when women dressed in a more conservative and frumpish manner."

Police cautioned women against wearing *excessively* attractive clothing and suggested that flattering clothes should only be worn in daylight in the company of trusted friends. They further cautioned against women going outside at all unless in the accompaniment of a trusted male friend or husband, since this is the best tactic for preventing rape. "Friends don't rape friends, and a husband can't rape his wife" the spokesperson said.

The 274 other men who committed sexual assault in Australia yesterday, including the 210 date-rapists, were unavailable for comment.

YOUR EX IS HAPPY and never coming back

Anonymous sources reported yesterday that, in stark contrast to you, your ex is happy. It was also revealed that they will never be with you again. While you continue to mope, cry, and struggle to perform basic functions like eating, working and studying, your ex has moved on, rebuilt their life, and found happiness with someone else.

Sources further report that your ex's new partner is better than you in almost every way. They are smarter and funnier and satisfy your partner sexually in a way you never could. Your partner's parents are also very glad that they have moved on and found somebody they approve of. Any one of these deficiencies could be the reason that your ex left you, but given how many deficiencies you have, sources say the precise reason that your ex left may never be known.

You were advised by all interested parties to get over them, stop crying, and move on with your life, but at this stage such advice seems unlikely to be heeded. Your ex expressed hope for an end to the late-night drunken phone calls, pathetic text messages and stream of passive-aggressive emails, but at the time of printing this hope, too, seems unrealistic.

**BLEEDING-HEA
NAZI: only want
kill SOME Jew**

Stocks go up and down

Many stocks closed up at the end of trading today while other stocks finished down. In some sectors the trend was stock prices becoming higher throughout the day because of positive perceptions amongst stockbrokers, but lower stock prices were the result of negative perceptions in other sectors. Experts attribute these movements to various factors, such as people buying and selling stocks at different prices, levels of confidence rising and falling, and demand for different stocks changing positively or negatively.

In foreign markets, some centres experienced rises and others saw falls in trading after some governments made positive or negative announcements which beneficially or adversely affected investor expectations in some markets. Concordantly, certain currencies rose as a result of this trading but others fell thanks to other currency trends.

Most analysts say that such behaviour will continue tomorrow as further financial developments ensue but others disagree and say that different fiscal shifts will occur.

Racist discovers ideal employment level for migrants

Mark Damian, racist and bigot, has strong opinions on immigration. Everywhere he looks he sees migrants clustered in ghettos, committing crimes and threatening the fabric of society. Or if they're not doing that, they're being too successful and seizing all the best jobs in law, medicine and business through unfair tactics like hard work and commitment.

"If they can't learn English, they should get out," he said from the door of his modest suburban home. He complained that by doing menial and crappy jobs like cleaning and construction work, migrants were depriving Australians of the ability to be "Aussie battlers". "Or else they're stealing the dole out of the wages of good honest Aussie battlers. And dole-bludging is against Australian culture."

On the other hand, migrants fluent in English, successfully integrated, and getting ahead in society, also raise Mark's ire. "If they're too good at English, they should get out," he said, going on to describe excessive intelligence as un-Australian. "These people crowd out our selective schools, flood our universities and become scientists, lawyers and brain surgeons. This steals jobs from the mediocre children of good Aussie battlers who are too busy drinking and relaxing to work as hard as them. It's unfair and it's against Australian culture."

He worries that the flood of migrants will result in white Australians being swamped, losing their position at the top and bottom of society and being consigned to the middle strata because of average

intelligence and unremarkable work ethic. "The problem with immigrants," he said, "is that they're lazy, or they work too hard. They don't do the proper, honest, Australian amount of work."

Thankfully, Mark has found a way out of this dilemma. "I have compiled an exhaustive list of appropriate migrant jobs," he explained. "Every immigrant should work in a bakery, a deli, or a supermarket. Their English should be just good enough to hold a friendly conversation while they serve us. Overly intelligent foreigners will be deported, and quotas will be imposed in universities and schools to help white kids take back their rightful place at the top of the social pyramid".

Esteemed Gentlemen Bandy Pleasantries



A thoroughly agreeable chance encounter was enjoyed by two well-regarded men-of-society during their daily errand-makings in the streets of our fair town, this yester-day just pass'd. Polite greetings ensued between the two parties, and these were shortly follow'd by more a thoroughgoing and satisfying exchange, more than befitting a happenstance crossing-of-paths betwixt two sometime acquaintances possessed of refined manners and habits of conduct.

Inquiries into the health of loved ones, discussions of various events in the upcoming social calendar, and commentaries on the present inclement weather conditions were prominent among the subjects broach'd during this brief social interlude to the two men's busy workaday schedules.

Finally, the two gentlemen utter'd cordial tidings of farewell and thence parted, with hopes sincerely expressed that another serendipitous encounter would soon occur in those self-same streets.



CUNT

RECLAIMING A GREAT WORD

SEAN LAWSON & SU-MIN LIM

MAUDE LEBOWSKI: *My art has been commended as being strongly vaginal which bothers some men. The word itself makes some men uncomfortable. Vagina.*

THE DUDE: *Oh yeah?*

MAUDE LEBOWSKI: *Yes, they don't like hearing it and find it difficult to say, whereas without batting an eyelid a man will refer to his dick or his rod or his Johnson.*

THE DUDE: *Johnson?*

-The Big Lebowski

There is a lexical gap in the English language. It is the lack of a general purpose, casual, slightly swear-y term for female genitalia, something analogous to 'cock' or 'dick'. This double standard reflects our lingering discomfort with female sexuality – we've spent the last 6000 years building monuments to penises whilst constraining, marginalising and generally despising women and their parts. So it makes sense that the male organ has a richer array of terms.

Of the three main possibilities, 'vagina' sounds sterile and medical, 'cunt' is obscene and 'pussy' is just weird. You can't drop any of them with ease in a casual conversation. Using them during sex is a minefield. So what to do? Only one of the three is salvageable. It's time to reclaim the word 'cunt'.

Never in the House did I use the word which comes to mind. The nearest I came to doing so was when Sir Winton Turnbull, a member of the cavalleria rusticana, was raving and ranting on the adjournment and shouted: "I am a Country member". I interjected "I remember". He could not understand why, for the first time in all the years he had been speaking in the House, there was instant and loud applause from both sides.

- Gough Whitlam

Why cunt? Well, its problem – obscenity – is the most easily conquered. Let's explore why we find cunts offensive. Why is it far milder to call a guy a 'dick' than a woman a 'cunt'? Both reduce a person to their respective sex organs, and invoke vivid associated stereotypes. Why do we compare men with women's genitals to offend them (interestingly, calling a dude a *pussy* seems to mean nearly the exact opposite to calling him a *cunt*) but not the reverse?

(Incidentally, note how insults such as 'slut' and 'bitch' refer to a woman's behaviour, whereas compliments like 'gorgeous', 'pretty', 'lovely', etc focus on appearance. Funny how in our language 'good girls' have no agency but bad ones do).

It all comes back to cocks being far more acceptable than cunts as a subject of conversation. Men are supposed to be proud of theirs, whereas women are often thought to be ashamed of theirs. Adolescent boys regularly adorn their classrooms with permanent marker representations of their own genitalia; few teenage girls could draw themselves in any recognisable way.

The thing about swear words is that they are magical. Swearing taps into the forbidden, something frightening or distasteful: no taboo, no offensiveness. That's how religious profanity (hell, damn, Jesus) lost its power and why racist words are even stronger than sexual swearing these days. A word itself is just a set of sounds. The offensiveness of 'cunt' has a lot more to do with our attitude towards women and their nether regions than it does with the inherent qualities of the word.

What about the etymology? 'Cunt' is an old, old word, tracing back to at least the 1200s and probably right back to proto-Germanic or Norse. The red light districts of medieval England often had a 'Gropecunt Lane'. Chaucer used the word openly and Shakespeare made puns on it. Incidentally, it's worth noting here that the word 'vagina' derives from a Latin word for a sword-sheath or scabbard, originating as Roman soldier's slang, reducing the cunt to nothing but its relationship with penises. Hardly ideal from a feminist standpoint.

"It all comes back to cocks being far more acceptable than cunts as a subject of conversation."

But really all this quibbling misses the point. Meaning is cultural and changeable. The way we assign vulgarity to these magical words doesn't make much sense. If you think about it, what does "fuck you" even *mean*?

What does matter is the pure *sound* of a word. Swearing is a verbal exclamation mark, used almost unconsciously. It's a shorthand way of adding aggression or intensity. Its audio profile is vital, and 'vagina' and 'pussy' just sound childish or wrong. Remember, we're after a good casual sweary analogue for 'cock' or 'dick', which also means suitability for bedroom usage. "I need to taste your vagina" just *does not work dammit*. In English the timbre and rhythm of good profanity is important. This is especially true of sexual words, where a little vulgarity is fine but the wrong sound is a dealbreaker.

There's a reason why "shick" could be a swear word but "stronevarn" couldn't. Our most powerful taboo words are monosyllabic and beautifully Germanic. *Fuck. Shit. Cock. Dick. Cunt*. Flat vowels, harsh percussive consonants. These are words that can be used in the heat of sexual passion, the depths of anger and pain, the heights of joy. When the brain is barely functioning, they're something to shout, breathe or grunt for maximum impact.

It's not a perfect choice. It might be difficult to reconcile reclaiming the word for positive usage while still calling people cunts when they act like cunts. Difficult, but not impossible. Our best profanity is incredibly flexible, and hatred and misogyny arise not from the word but the intent. 'Cunt' works for what it's needed to do, and should be embraced rather than feared.

ALICE LANG

On Valentine's Day this year, I went to the wedding of a good friend. She's 23, and her husband is of a similar age. Just back from a trip to Europe and still jet lagged, I probably wasn't feeling as excited as I should have been. However, once the service began, I was astonished at how overwhelmed I felt with happiness and love for my friend; it felt as though everyone in the church was just bursting with hope and optimism for this couple.

The part of the ceremony where they took each other to be husband and wife was very brief. Merely seconds. And yet after that, it's all different. It looked so simple from where I was sitting, and to me, this deceptive simplicity of saying "yes" in front of people is precisely what makes marriage both a logical and an illogical step.

At about the same time, a friend wrote to me from France, where she's been for several months with her (Australian) boyfriend, to say that they had gotten married. Just like that! Apparently there were a few days between deciding to get married, and going to the registrar's office for a civil ceremony. She's 21.

"Perhaps having God as part of the marriage equation gives greater confidence to the young people getting married"

When I returned to Sydney after being away, there were yet more engaged couples to learn of! They range in age from 19 to 23. Since starting at university, I've been amazed at how many people my age have chosen to get engaged and married. It is only fair to say that this phenomenon is most obvious amongst Christian friends. Many of my non-Christian friends, when I mention this to them, find the whole notion somewhat absurd and certainly perplexing, though that isn't to say there aren't young non-Christian couples getting married as well.

With no prospect of marriage any time soon, I've decided to comfort myself with the statistics: as of 2000, women were most likely to be married between the ages of 25-29, while for men it is 25-34, both of which are an older age bracket than in 1970. The marriage rate has generally been falling since the 1970s. The divorce rate has generally been increasing since the late 1970s.

When my parents married at the age of 21 almost four decades ago, marriage at that age was quite common. But half way through my degree, the idea of marriage seems like an unattractively huge commitment. More generally, such early marriages don't gel well with a contemporary desire to explore different options: of lifestyles, partners and relationships, to finish university and to travel the world. Committing to a life long relationship with one person seems to limit the scope for experimentation and discovering what you think about the world. But perhaps this is entirely the wrong way to look at it...

When I talk about this with secular young people, they frequently say "well, they're just getting married so they can have sex." But if this means to say that Christian couples will later tire of each other and eventually find others to have sex with, that doesn't seem to be the case. In fact, one Christian man I spoke to believed that many, though not all, of those people choosing to get married early do so because they believe that a sexual relationship is a one off, for life, arrangement. In this context, the "try before you buy" mentality does not make a lot of sense, but to a certain extent the secularist simplification is correct.

However, it's more interesting to consider the "real" reasons that Christians marry, as interpreted from the bible and presented by Christopher Ash in *Married for God*. Bearing in mind the idea that sex should be confined entirely to marriage, he identifies these reasons for marriage:

1. Children rather than barrenness: sex is in order to have children, and children are a good thing.
2. Faithfulness rather than selfishness: sex is for faithful intimacy, and an intimate relationship is a good thing.
3. Order rather than chaos: marriage guards sexual desires from destroying society, so that society does not descend into sexual chaos.

It might strike you that within these three points, there is no explicit mention of personal satisfaction, pleasure or even love, which are things that society in general seems to think are reasonable justifications for a sexual relationship, and probably necessary for marriage. The title of the book should have given a clue that in the Christian world view, marriage should be something undertaken to serve God, rather than solely personal interest and desire.

By contrast, secular couples don't have this "third cord" of God in their marriage, and are unlikely to see their actions as being inherently good or necessary for society. The three reasons for marriage given by Ash seem much less idealistic and much more pragmatic than secular reasons for entering such a relationship. This notion of serving a higher purpose through marriage is perhaps the most interesting difference between secular and Christian marriages. This seems to make secular marriages more introspective than Christian ones, at least in terms of where they find their motivation.

Perhaps having God as part of the marriage equation gives greater confidence to the parties getting married, and perhaps this confidence is one reason why more young Christian couples seem to get married than young secular couples. Without believing in the support of a higher authority, it might be hard to believe that you could know yourself or another person adequately to make that sort of commitment.

On the other hand, perhaps this lack of God in secular relationships is a real strength. It's plausible that the declining rates of marriage could be at least partly attributable to people choosing other foundations for their relationship than a commitment to God, and the outcome of that process is the rejection of the need for a formal ceremony.

This returns us to the idea that a deceptively simple "yes" in a ceremony committing two people to married life is both logical and illogical: logical because if you care about someone enough to say it, then you might as well. Simultaneously illogical, however, because if you care about someone that much, it doesn't need to be said.



Tying the Snot

HIV

out with the old problems and in with the new.

EMILY BEK

Things are getting better. The number of deaths from HIV/AIDS has undergone a modest decline since 2005. Three massive programs have completely changed the global paradigm of the epidemic: the Bill and Melinda Gates' Foundation, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

Treatment is more widely available than ever before. For years, activists have protested the lack of affordable medication which condemns thousands of sufferers to an early death. These days, however, the situation is more hopeful. Thanks to the organisations above, there has been a 10-fold increase in the distribution of Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) in low and middle-income countries. In 2002 just 300,000 patients received HAART. By 2007 this number had increased to 3 million.

Largely as a result of cheap rates negotiated by the Clinton Foundation, the cost of HAART drugs per patient can now be as low as \$331 per year for originator drugs, or \$87 per year for generics. Distribution and administration can more than double the cost, and the newest drugs are more expensive. On the bright side, prices will probably be further reduced, and the money is already pledged to provide enough drugs at their current cost. Coverage is being increased about as quickly as it can be.

Conspiracy theorists allege that most HIV drugs will be less effective in Africa, because they were developed against the western HIV-1 subtype B strain rather than sub-Saharan African strains. However, this theory is outdated for two reasons. First, there is now significant evidence that the standard HAART drug cocktail is very effective in Africa. Second, most HAART is now consumed in Africa and research funding grants from the three programs I have described are targeted to the African epidemic.

HAART also has a prophylactic effect, and can prevent mother-to-child transmission in nearly 100% of cases. Since 2004, the three programs have provided this protection to 1 million HIV positive pregnant women. The programs also fund a range of other measures, including condom distribution, male circumcision, education programs, training for health care workers, orphan care, tuberculosis treatment, and methadone for heroin users.

The Foundation, the Fund and the Plan, along with other organisations, have dealt with issues of the HIV epidemic that dominated the debate just five years ago. They have done so with a speed and efficacy few would have imagined possible. However, the campaign against HIV has endured tremendous setbacks in recent years.

Years of experience in global public health, evidence from scientific studies and computer modelling tell us that a vaccine remains our best hope for ending the HIV pandemic. However, the quest for an effective vaccine suffered a severe blow in September 2007, when the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) announced that the STEP trial of a Merck HIV vaccine would be discontinued. The vaccine had been found to be ineffective at best. In one group of participants, higher rates of infection were observed in the vaccinated group than the placebo group.

This result has devastating implications. In July last year, NIAID announced that the PAVE 100 vaccine trial would also be discontinued following an analysis of the STEP trial results. While there are some 30 other HIV vaccines undergoing preliminary trials, the PAVE 100 trial was the only other efficacy trial for an HIV vaccine. It is likely to be some years before another putative vaccine reaches that stage of development.

There are many lessons to be learnt from the failed vaccine trials, and the research community is already regrouping to understand and move forward from these setbacks. The three programs I have described continue to invest heavily in HIV vaccine research. US\$800 million is dedicated to the cause each year, with the important caveat that researchers must share their findings with each other. This collective approach to vaccine development will be coordinated in part by The Global HIV/AIDS Vaccine Enterprise (the Enterprise).

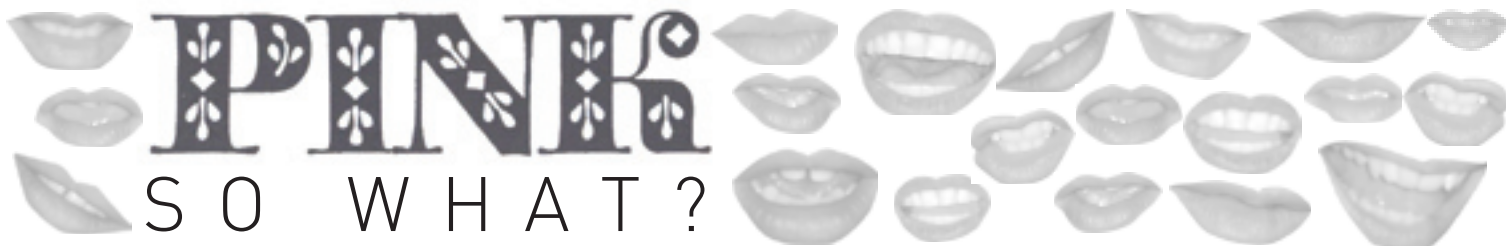
Sadly, there is more bad news on the horizon. Not only is the epidemic in Africa entrenched, HIV incidence in Eurasia (China, Russia, India) is increasing rapidly. Some estimates suggest there will be 259 million new infections there between 2000 and 2025. In these countries, the epidemic will be spread mostly by injection drug users (IDUs). This calls for some serious policy revision. Evidence suggests that needle sharing between IDUs increases during police crackdowns. Needle and syringe exchange programs are likely to be the most effective strategy against HIV in these areas, but are opposed by the United States and most Eurasian governments.

Another major challenge is a growing sex industry. Commercial sex workers and their clients account for an estimated 19.6% of HIV infections in China, and India has a well documented problem of HIV spread between truckers and sex workers. In China, there is an additional problem of HIV transmission through the now illegal, yet persistent, sale of unclean blood.

While the treatment and prevention of HIV still lags behind other diseases, basic problems in dealing with the epidemic have been addressed.

Furthermore, in many countries there are significant epidemics in the men who have sex with men (MSM) populations. This is despite very low infection rates in the general population. In the US, 63% of new infections are in MSM, predominately from minority groups. In fact, in a study of five American cities, 46% of the black MSM population was found to be HIV positive. According to UNAIDS, vulnerability to HIV infection is dramatically increased when sex between men is criminalised.

We are making progress. Since 2000, the Foundation, the Fund and the Plan have had a fundamental impact on the eradication of infectious diseases. While the treatment and prevention of HIV still lags behind other diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, many basic problems in dealing with the epidemic have been addressed. This should be a source of optimism that the outstanding problems will be addressed in good time. Ultimately, however, our hopes lie with the HIV vaccine research community, and we must offer them our support and encouragement.



MATT KWAN

When I was told that this edition's theme was 'sex', one person I did not immediately think of was Pink (a.k.a. Alecia Moore). On a scale of sexiness, she is on the negative side. The very sight of Pink would temporarily put most people off sex.

Other unattractive famous musicians, such as Yoko Ono and Bjork, at least attempted to look unique. Yoko Ono regularly tried to look like John Lennon, and Bjork likes to dress up like an alien from a science fiction movie. Pink just looks like something that fell out the back of a garbage truck. She doesn't even have pink hair anymore.

Despite looking worse than a *Ladette to Lady* contestant after a night on the town, she has managed to find studio executives sufficiently tolerant of her to assist in the production of numerous songs. Whilst some ugly singers like Billy Ray Cyrus and Jimmy Barnes have produced some great songs (*Eds: poor examples, Matt*), her lack of aesthetic talent translates into disappointingly unpleasant music. She sounds like Chewbacca being put through a meat grinder. Listening to a Belinda Neal speech would be more pleasurable.

True to her trailer trash image, one of her most successful singles is 'Get The Party Started', which is about Pink taking drugs, getting high and acting inappropriately all the time. The music video is like an exaggerated version of the 'before' scenes in *Ladette to Lady*. If Pink auditioned for that vile show, she would be rejected for being impossible to turn into a lady.

Another popular song is called 'Leave Me Alone (I'm Lonely)'. The fact that she was lonely when she wrote

"She doesn't even have pink hair anymore."

that song is no real surprise, given her unappealing appearance and lack of musical talent. In 2008, Pink divorced her husband, Carey Hart, an unattractive, tattoo-covered bogan who makes a living doing back flips on dirt bikes. Apparently, they spent too much time apart and never had sex. It's just ridiculous.

Pink's most controversial song is 'Dear Mr President', which accuses George W. Bush of being incompetent. This seems a bit odd, considering her incompetence in singing. Nevertheless, the song asks Bush whether he can be proud of himself and whether he holds his head high. These are like the lame questions people in tutorials ask just to boost class participation. The answer is obvious – yes. She makes fun of Bush's former addictions to 'whiskey and cocaine' in the 1970s, in ignorance of her current lifestyle exemplified in 'Get The Party Started'. She also tells Bush 'You don't know nothing about hard work', which contains a double negative, so clearly she correctly identified that Bush works hard. In this circumstance, the song is simply pointless and unnecessarily mean-spirited.

Pink, on the other hand, does not try very hard to improve her general knowledge. Let's take her animal rights campaign history. Pink loves animals in an attempt to appear sophisticated. Unfortunately, she decided to join People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, thereby losing all dignity. Nevertheless, she soldiered on, and accused Australian farmers of treating sheep cruelly by using a process called mulesing. What she failed to realise is that it is a life-saving procedure that prevents sheep from being slowly poisoned to death by fly larvae. She also failed to realise that Australia was where she was most popular. Her ignorance is worse than that of Wayne Swan.

Some may argue that I am simply wrong because Pink is really popular and has achieved great things in the world of music that I will never achieve. But what has she really contributed to the world? Rubbish songs and Nick Xenophon-style politics. That is nothing to be proud of and nothing to admire.

Some say she is a positive role model to young women. Yes, she is certainly an example of what perseverance can achieve, no matter how small your brain or how feeble your talent. However, do we really want girls aspiring to be recreational drug users and participating in the violent activities depicted in her music videos? Or activist hacks embarrassing themselves by peddling misinformation? If anything, she is an example of what people ought not to aspire to. Pink has not and will not save the world. Her presence is an impediment to the advancement of humankind.

SEX IN HISTORY

SEAN LAWSON

Sex has played many roles throughout the history of human society – sacred ritual, symbol of love, relaxing past-time, traded commodity, billion-dollar industry, disease vector, competitive sport, weapon of war. It has a profound impact on human civilisation, on its language, values and culture. Here then, *Tharunka* brings you a brief history of some of the highlights in the long and illustrious history of sex.

Circa 3000 BC – Religion first attempts to control sex

Before the rise of civilisation, the primary purpose of sex was fun and enjoyment after long days hunting animals and gathering berries. However, over time, newfangled *organised religions* began to attempt to corrupt and control this ancient practise and redefine sex strictly in terms of its use for *procreation*. This upset many traditionalists who felt that the act should remain a sacred thing between two or more people and felt that associating it with such crass and tawdry things as childbirth merely cheapened the act. This dispute between modern religion and *ancient tradition* continues to this day.

Circa 500 BC – Homosexuality in ancient Greece

Attitudes towards homosexuality in ancient Greece were complex. On the one hand, it was expected that men would love and be interested in *younger boys*, but on the other hand, actual homosexual sex was frowned upon and seen as shameful. In this respect it was much like the TV show *Will and Grace*. Homosexual sex was first described by Plato in a passage of his major work *Republic* in which he argued that the ideal state would be ruled by a philosopher king and would legalise *gay marriage*. However, contrary to popular belief, homosexuality was not as widespread in Greece in ancient times as it is today. During the era of classical Greece, lesbianism was initially confined to the island of *Lesbos* whilst male homosexuality was mostly practised on *Gaydos*, which had the *prettiest Greek boys* of them all.

AD 62 – First recorded instance of oral sex

Roman emperor Nero is said to have pioneered the practice of *oral sex*, but the innovative new technique was initially slow to catch on; seen as nothing more than an eccentricity of the decadent ruling classes of Imperial Rome. It wasn't until when people realised that oral sex could be performed much more easily on *other people* later that the popularity of the practice really took off.

1300-1600 – Catholic Church Gone Wild

The history of the Catholic Church and sex can be briefly summarised: in the Middle Ages there were a bunch of popes who held orgies and had illegitimate children. Then *Pope Benedict* got elected and the practice was ended. It is impossible to make sex-related jokes about Catholicism.

1837-1901 – Victorian Era

After the irrepressible libidinousness of the *Middle Ages*, authorities in the 19th Century felt it was necessary to bring sexuality under repressive control. They created a culture built around the careful covering-up of all potentially stimulating sights and channelling sexual urges into the conquest and subjugation of native peoples around the world. The era is named after Queen Melbourne Victoria, who didn't believe in sex. Thus, the fact that she had nine children came to be known as "*Victoria's Secret*."

1905 – Sigmund Freud publishes his theories of sexuality

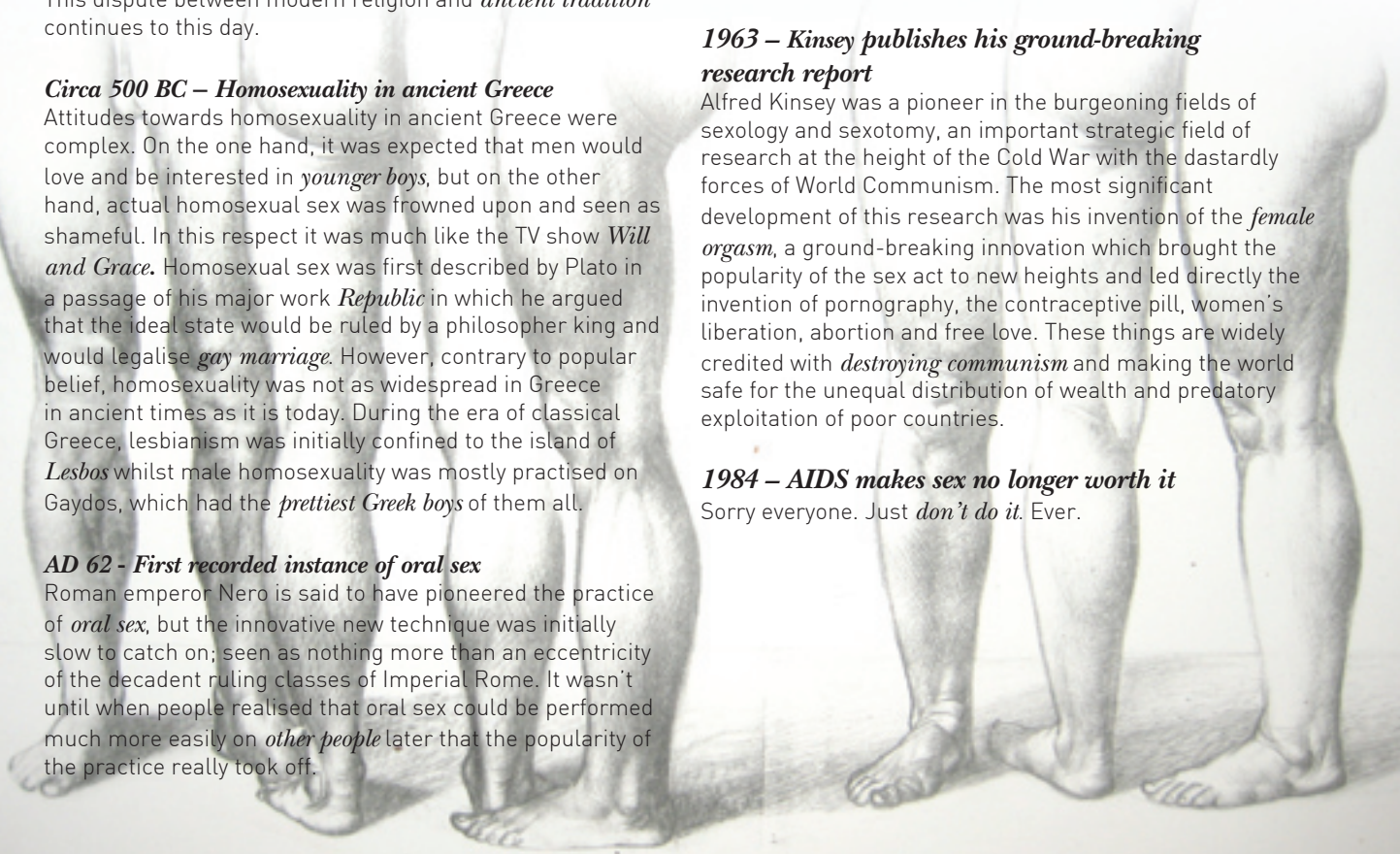
Sigmund Freud was a noted therapist and put the "psycho" back into "analyst". In fact, he put the "*anal*" back into "analyst" as well. Freud came up with a number of interesting and revolutionary theories about sexuality and the human mind, all of which were wrong. He was also the first and possibly only person in history to be interested in other people's *dreams*.

1963 – Kinsey publishes his ground-breaking research report

Alfred Kinsey was a pioneer in the burgeoning fields of sexology and sexotomy, an important strategic field of research at the height of the Cold War with the dastardly forces of World Communism. The most significant development of this research was his invention of the *female orgasm*, a ground-breaking innovation which brought the popularity of the sex act to new heights and led directly the invention of pornography, the contraceptive pill, women's liberation, abortion and free love. These things are widely credited with *destroying communism* and making the world safe for the unequal distribution of wealth and predatory exploitation of poor countries.

1984 – AIDS makes sex no longer worth it

Sorry everyone. Just *don't do it*. Ever.



Twilight and Romanticising Abuse



ALISON O'CONNOR

When I was in primary school, I told my mother that Beauty only fell in love with the Beast because she had no alternative. Deciding that at 10 years old I was too young to learn about Stockholm Syndrome, my mother took two Panadol and went to lie down. She was probably more prepared for my reaction in Year 9 to *Romeo and Juliet*. I said that Juliet was insipid, Romeo was fickle and the way they fell in love was implausible.

I am not anti-Romance, far from it. The bittersweet beauty of Lyra and Will as they part in *The Amber Spyglass* remains long after you finish the book. The image of an aging Antonio attempting to milk a male goat for Pelagia in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* is magical. However, you will not convince me of the romance of *Jane Eyre*, because Rochester is controlling, dishonest and narcissistic (and they're his good points). I shouted "Yes, I do!" every time the narrator piteously asked "And do you blame me, dear Reader?"

I understand that certain allowances need to be made for the era, that we cannot judge Rochester, or Jane for that matter, by modern standards. In truth, there is a part of me that

would stay with the Beast because of his library. Admittedly, this isn't the soundest basis for a relationship, but it wouldn't be the first one based on what happened between the covers – book covers, that is.

I am more concerned about the books and movies being produced now, particularly for the teen or young adult market, which entrench controlling behaviour and emotional violence.

Something crucial happens in the teen years when forming opinions about acceptable behaviour in relationships. According to Nicola Harwin, Chief Executive of Women's Aid, when they are 11 years old, almost all children think it is not acceptable to be told what to do in a relationship; however, by the time they are 17 years old, almost 25% think it is acceptable. She also found that 50% of those surveyed said they knew someone who had had their phone or email checked, or had been told by a partner not to go somewhere or see someone. More than half of 15-year-old girls have been publicly humiliated by someone they are going out with.

When I finally read *Twilight* (the phenomenon largely having passed me by), I found the story insidious. The bloodlust "kiss me/kill me" dichotomy has its origins in the seductive *Dracula* of Bram Stoker, and the age difference is one of the conventions of the genre. Buffy and Angel had centuries between them as opposed to the decades of Edward and Bella. The age difference is important. The vampire must be old enough to be mysterious, but not so old that his first music concert was the same as your Dad's. Yet these were not the most poisonous elements.

Although Edward has reached cult status now as a romantic figure, in reality, he is half of an unhealthy relationship and exhibits controlling behaviour. The relationship is based on Bella's lack of self-confidence and his apparent perfection, to the extent that she refuses to write on the worksheet because not even her handwriting is adequate. Edward's sneaking into Bella's room without her knowledge to watch her sleep is seen to be a sign of his sweet devotion, whereas I would be waiting to serve him with an Apprehended Violence

Order. He controls the pace of their sexual relationship at all times and tries to stop her from seeing her friend. Edward decides to leave Bella 'for her own good', because 'he knows best', and this is unquestioningly accepted by her. Possessiveness, jealousy and control are not attractive traits.

Twilight is not the only teen-targeted product which elevates unhealthy elements to desirable traits. Tamora Pierce has more than twenty books in print for young adult readers, and *In the Realm of the Gods* has a 16 year old girl in a relationship with her teacher in his early 30s, where they make it to "second-base". A comparable incident would be the jailing earlier this year of Beau Campbell, a martial arts teacher who had sex with his 16-year-old student. Relationships between teachers and students are prohibited

"Although Edward has reached cult status now as a romantic figure, in reality, he is half of an unhealthy relationship and exhibits controlling behaviour"

because the power imbalance and breach of trust is unacceptable.

By their nature, Fantasy novels flout convention. Hell, when there are cross-species relationships, you could argue that anything goes; except that it shouldn't. However, the trend of emotional violence and controlling relationships is not limited to this genre. I could list examples from *Gossip Girls* or *The Clique*, among others, but it seems a cheap shot to attack those shows which are already acknowledged as depicting bad relationships.

Instead, look at more widely accepted examples where controlling behaviour is idealised, romanticized, and accepted. In *Gilmore Girls*, Rory sees Dean's jealousy and possessive attempts to stop her from seeing Jess as signs of commitment rather than a lack of trust. The relationship between Bette and Tina in *The L Word* shows Bette controlling finances, dinner dates and abiding by a different

standard of behaviour with other women, when compared to Tina.

Reaction by teenage boys and girls to the allegations of domestic violence between Chris Brown and Rihanna is also disturbing. Chris Brown websites (fan-run, not officially endorsed) have messages of support and even of congratulations. Fan-base apart, boys and girls in workshops with American outreach programme Between Friends, are saying that "she deserved it" or "she must have done something". In Australia, only 1% of offenders of sexual crimes are convicted and studies suggest that up to half of female university students have been sexually victimized, including physical abuse.

If we can't properly address physical and sexual violence, then how do we begin to address emotional abuse? Writers of teen novels are not solely responsible for controlling relationships, low self-esteem and emotional violence but it doesn't help that they condone and romanticise unacceptable behaviour. Something in these books and films speaks to their intended audience and reflects the society in which we live: that is what should concern us.

ASSESSING *Arc*

Before 2006, student organisations were funded through a compulsory member fee. The rationale was that they provided a mix of services (food outlets, clubs, advocacy, misguided idealism), so we all had to fork over several hundred dollars to attend uni. Kind of a weird set-up but maybe it worked.

Then came Voluntary Student Unionism. VSU was, essentially, the final vengeance against university life wrought by the cadre of bitter former Young Liberals once known as the Howard Government. The scorched-earth approach they took wiped out most of the funding for student organisations, creating a huge challenge for the country's student bodies. Many haven't survived, most others have reformed drastically.

So what of UNSW? Our student organisation is currently known as Arc (not ATC, despite what the logo looks like). Arc is the remnants of pre-VSU student representation and services provision from the Guild and Union, salvaged and wrapped in the protective not-for profit corporate cocoon within which it now resides. Arc resides in the Blockhouse and operates on a mixture of tedious managerial kill-speak and some lingering sense that what it does maybe has something to do with students. Our office is there, and they pay us.

To be fair, there are two things that must be emphasised when looking at the current state of Arc. The first is that a lot of its present problems can be attributed to the VSU panic and personnel that are no longer there – the current board and CEO have begun working to restructure and redefine Arc, and weed out a lot of the “corporate monstrosity” (their words) aspects that arose during and after its formation. The goal is to actually live up to the whole existing for students thing by eliminating complexity and bullshit.

The second positive to keep in mind is this: the fact that Arc still exists and prospers in a VSU environment is a huge achievement. Other unis have experienced the total death of organisations and campus life. Even among surviving bodies, some run on a joke of a budget. Compared to Arc's \$8-ish million, many others operate on much less than \$1 million per year. Meanwhile, Macquarie University's farcical cycle of chaotic power-plays, lawsuits and arrests has become a running joke among anyone remotely aware of student politics or university administration. Arc is doing okay by simply still existing, but beyond that, according to the Government's 2008 review of VSU's impact, we have the only student organisation outside Western Australia that looks like becoming self-sustainable in the next few years.

But nonetheless, problems remain at the Blockhouse. The biggest problem is just how bureaucratic and corporate Arc has become in pursuing economic self-sufficiency. In response to VSU, the student organisations decided to combine into a single body in the interest of survivability. However, after the shift



SEAN LAWSON

to a single body, a corporate and bureaucratic culture set in. Focus on students was lost, an exaggerated, business-like focus getting students' membership money became the absolute priority, rather than clubs and societies, or even (god forbid) politics and advocacy. Arc now has a complicated and rigid bureaucratic hierarchy and when you walk into the building, there are shiny posters on the walls referring to Arc's 'vision' and 'values' and 'pillars'. It's like being in a second-rate dot.com.

Another problem is one which pre-dates Arc: the representation aspect of things is weak and barely visible. The Student Representative Council survived the end of the Guild and was transferred wholesale into the new

When you walk into the building, there are shiny posters on the walls referring to Arc's 'vision' and 'values' and 'pillars'. It's like being in a second-rate dot.com.

structure as a component of Arc – becoming something like a 'democracy department' of Arc. However there's almost no linkages between the two elements of the company at present. Even Arc documentation recognises that 'SRC has little knowledge or understanding of Arc organisational structure, which means low ability to use Arc resources effectively'. One wonders whether this is really a problem with the SRC, or a problem with Arc's organisational structure, if even some of the most committed and knowledgeable students on campus can't use it.

Representation has never been a strong-suit of student organisations at UNSW. SRC is theoretically the student's democratic voice, since everyone can vote. However, almost none of you did. Turnout is typically about 2% and last year, half the positions were elected unopposed. The rest were swept in with crushing majorities because Socialist Alternative were the only other people running and those guys are nuts. Student politics at our commerce

and engineering oriented university was pretty lax before VSU, but Arc did exacerbate things. To run for office under Arc, you currently need to be a paying member, which has entrenched the existing incumbents and reduced electoral competitiveness. The Liberals disappeared from the scene entirely because they didn't have paying Arc members, and most of them didn't see the point of paying 150 bucks for the privilege of enduring their yearly, crushing loss to the popular cool kids. Deciding whether the loss of political competition is a bad thing is left as an exercise to the reader.

The pedantic mindset and rigid structures have also manifested as problems for clubs and societies, arguably the most direct way in which a student organisation should interact with students. A lot of smaller clubs and societies find the process of dealing with Arc's red tape time-consuming and confusing. Things like onerous documentation requirements and a confusing array of departments make interacting with Arc difficult, disadvantaging smaller clubs, leaving them unable to access all the resources they should be entitled to.

The confusion extends to, well, us. *Tharunka's* history as a student voice, including a 1960s legacy of general lawsuit-attracting shit-stirring radicalism, is well known. This radical spirit is long since dead (I certainly don't want to claim that we represent such a thing. I mean, it's 2009, radicalism is way uncool). However, *Tharunka* now rather bizarrely answers to the same 'marketing department' that also prints *Blitz*, Arc's propaganda arm and 'what's on' guide. This is not to imply censorship, because Arc's marketing people are only there to provide resources and expertise to the editors, but it's still a pretty anomalous situation and has created problems in previous years, especially when certain past marketing staff members got the idea into their head that *Tharunka* has some obligation to support the Arc message or 'brand' beyond not getting the organisation sued.

All over the organisation, the problem seems to be that Arc's structures were put together by some human resources consultancy and are too complicated and bureaucratic for what is, in the end, a student organisation. Even half the people who work there don't seem to know who does what.

Does all this make Arc irredeemable? Is Arc doomed to stay an economically sustainable but overcomplicated and rigid mess? Is it really just a service provision company, rather than a student organisation? There are positive signs within Arc, especially in the attitude and efforts of the current board and leadership. Its staff are good, passionate, well-meaning people, and they seem to be aware that the present corporate mindset is alienating students and causing problems for clubs and societies. There is hope, but how the restructuring plays out, and how the Rudd Government's new student services fee legislation affects things by altering the post-VSU landscape, remains to be seen.

VSUCKONIT:

Why VSU Worked

ALAN ZEINO analyses the impact of VSU on campus life, and then berates you for caring.

Another year, another VSU article. VSU was announced to be repealed late last year amid a chorus of cheers and red/blue posters in the Blockhouse, and we're now once again facing the possibility that student union fees will become compulsory. What does this mean for the union¹, and what does this mean for us?

In many ways VSU was bad for campus life. It hurt student services and killed advocacy on campus. As a society executive, I saw first hand the damage it did to club funding. And if the Roundhouse events with shitty 'house' DJs and hardcore/emo bands are any indication, it did a number on our campus music scene too.

But offering choice to students brings benefits as well. VSU brought us a union that realised it needed to work hard for our money. Arc was forced for the first time in years to offer more than a diary and a discount card, and those who still weren't seduced had more money for textbooks, coke and prostitutes than ever before. This year, Arc is offering arguably one of the best membership packages of all Australian university unions.

VSU has also cut down on wasteful expenditure directed at partisan student organisations. We saw a streamlined amalgamation of the Guild and the Union, and it was nice to know that less money was going to whoever was running the Representative Council at the time (don't ask me, I've never run in any student elections!).²

Shut the fuck up everyone and focus on the real evils on campus

So which is the greater, the pros or the cons? Come on - who really gives a shit! At the end of the slightly-reduced 13-week semester, the Representative Council is going to vent about the same crap every year (although the criticism falls almost silent when the ALP is in power) while the Young Liberals are going to fight a losing fight with irrelevant slogans and Facebook groups.

The 1% who claim to represent the other 99% of students are always going to squabble over VSU. Meanwhile, all students may be forced to pay an inordinate amount of money for services they might never use. Funny that the people who argue that we're living in poverty are the same ones who want us to pay \$250 a semester in union fees.

My beef is that the reintroduction of compulsory fees will make the union (or the Arc, or whatever the fuck it wants to call itself in the future) complacent and unprofitable. The money doesn't flow directly to the union - from now on, the university will decide who gets what. Given the nonchalant manner in which Supreme Leader Fred Hilmer cuts services while riding high in his palanquin like the Oriental kings of old, I really don't think the university is the right body to decide where my money goes.

Incidentally, why the fuck can't we finance the fee with our HECS debt? [Ed: Under the compulsory union fee system being proposed, this option will be available] Rudd has no problem with lending us money, and students need to use the little cash they have on affording the shit that is served to us at certain campus outlets, where it's Soviet cooking standards all year round.

I liked VSU. It was cheaper. I paid for Arc membership happily, and will do so again this year as the services offered outweigh the \$149 outlay for it. Ultimately, however, is this really the topic we should be focusing on this year? No. So shut the fuck up everyone, and focus your attention on the real evils on our campus - from the fucking library that has been in renovation for the better part of three years now, to the poor state that the Arts faculty is in because of the penny-pinching singers of Hilmer - we have more important things to worry about.

¹ Dear First Years, please look beyond the Arc's marketing team. Most of it is still the union - ie a retirement home for lazy and overweight luddites.

² Facts in this Article are not necessarily true.

EDUCATION OFFICER

Andrew Looi

Hey do you know one in two students report that their studies are adversely affected by financial stress!? That is a pretty damning statistic but students have successfully advocated for change in the past, and will continue to do so with your help! What do we do? We are a group of passionate students that advocate for quality of education & equality of access to education. We achieve real outcomes for students like you & me. Past wins for students include: abolition of full fees for local students (ie those \$200k+ med degrees are gone), meaning all students can afford to come to uni! We've eased the workload off 40,000 students – when the uni reduced contact hours, we fought for an increase in semester duration. We've reduced HECS costs for science & maths students. Our campaigns for the upcoming year are: advocating a \$900 cash stimulus for all students; saving the Humanities; demanding no illegal course costs; fighting for funding of campus services; and no deregulation! Meetings are on Tuesday 4-5pm, weekly at the Blockhouse. Email me at education@arc.unsw.edu.au. Come along, get engaged, and get active!

ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER

Alex Surace

The Environment Collective has just returned from an awesome weekend in Newcastle, taking part in the annual Flotilla (blocking the world's largest coal port): [//www.risingtide.org.au/](http://www.risingtide.org.au/) and catching up with our state network SEAN (Student Environment Activist Network).

We are continuing to put our efforts towards On-Campus Sustainability, and Climate Change Awareness Week, coming up in Week 6. Check out our website for more details on both of these streams and a more thorough report back from Newcastle: <http://unsw.envirocollective.com>

Our meetings are on Monday 12-1pm at the Quad Lawns.

WELFARE OFFICER

Matthew Ward

Hey Kids, just a quick update from your friendly neighbourhood Welfare Officer. The Welfare Room mentioned in my last report is well under way – we have a location! When completed, you can find the Welfare Room on level 1 of the Blockhouse East Wing. Also if any of you have stories of being downtrodden, down on your luck and down in the dumps I want to hear them. I am compiling a list of stories from students being affected by student poverty to help lobby MPs for fair student income support so come and visit me in the Blockhouse for a chat if you can help with this endeavour. Also for your datebooks on the 25th of March there will be a cross campus action, for part of which the focus will be on student income support so if you want to get involved come along!

For your information, our collective meeting time is now Tue 2-3pm at the Blockhouse.

ETHNIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS

Celeste & Aaron

This week the Ethnic Affairs Department is proud to present Harmony Week 2009 – a weeklong celebration of the multicultural melting pot that is UNSW. The week will include workshops, informative Library Lawn stalls, badge-making and performances. Most events will be scheduled around lunch time in order to maximise opportunities for student attendance and participation. Keep an eye out for our posters which will provide specific information about events.

Looking forward to seeing you at Harmony Week!

POSTGRADUATE OFFICER

Georgie Smith

Welcome to all the new Masters and PhD students who are joining us this year. And to all those returning for another season of toil, welcome back!

On Wed 25 March we'll be screening *The Constant Gardeners* in the Postgrad Lounge, ground floor of the Blockhouse, from 6pm. All PGs welcome!

Remember too that we'll have a new awesome movie screening every odd-numbered week, Wednesdays at 6pm in the PG lounge, so come along any time.

Enjoy yourselves, Georgie



PAPER Blog

Sophie Braham

The other day at work I announced urgently to my colleague that during my lunch-break I would probably to "go in" to "uni" to get my "student card". I worry that I give away a lot when I'm forced to lie on my feet, so I've found reaching in to the past to be an effective strategy. Since the act of getting my student card had happened in the course of my life, there would be no crumbling under the pressure of being accurately imaginative with a fictional excuse designed to cover the fact that I just felt like going shopping for some sick outfits. It worked a treat, I was even able to retrieve casual tidbits from history as I planned my prandial whirl around the local Vinnies. "I hope it's not too hard to get a park 'on campus'..." I mused, artistically scattering tertiary-speak throughout my sentence to plant the seed that this outing would not only would be central to my identity as a clever young thing with prospects far beyond this job, but that it also might take a while.

As it turned out, St Vincents De Paul was particularly loving to me and I took a bit longer than I had meant to. "I think everyone had the same idea as I did about trying to get a card today ha ha ha!", I said on my return. What I didn't mention was that I was also slowed down by tweeting about something that was ripe to be twoted about. So I twunted: "Hate to lol at the misfortune of others, but just noticed that the Japanese homeless guy in Randwick drinks sake." Luckily nothing came of my shadowy worry that @mywork or @japanesehomelessguyinrandwick might see what I'd said, join the dots and #fireme or #feelsad.

This was the second time since joining Twitter that I'd felt even the slightest bit worried about the dangers of broadcasting to my own lovingly acquired micro-audience. My first inkling came just after I'd gone to uni to (actually) get my student card just a few weeks before. After battling with my juvenile grasp of myunsw.edu.au, the suffocating bureaucracy of any administrative experience, my sickening unease about going back to study following a few years off (which followed some spectacularly unsuccessful years on) and my easily activated tear-ducts, I tweeted "crying at unsw for the millionth time in as many years" as my way of dealing with having left sans-card. I can't remember what arrived sooner, my student card in the mail (thx FM assist- sorr for being such a baby!) or the request from 'UNSW' to follow me on Twitter.

For those who don't use Twitter, it's basically just the Status Update bit on Facebook, but with more possibilities. You not only Follow your friends, but also celebs and those who are now encompassed by that term because they are really good at Tweeting. Then you put the letters 'tw' in front of any word and away you twgo! The other interesting thing is that it's impossible to understand before you sign up, yet easily comprehensible once you do so. Your experience becomes more rewarding the more you take part yourself, the more people you Follow, and the time you spend on there. Which makes it the perfect medium on which to advertise. So this is where the UNSW Twitter account comes in, and rather surprisingly with: "UNSW @sopholol Hope it's nothing too serious, can I help :)" After a few private messages back and forth... sopholol: Can you finish my degree for me?! Who is running this Twitter, and from where? Intriguing!"

UNSW: "I've already done one degree, so I can't do yours. I do try to make it a little easier for others to do their degrees, if I can."

sopholol: "Ah, such a pity. That would've been a beautiful solution. But who are you? How did you come to embody a whole university? Do you work there?"

....I established his true identity:

UNSW: "I'm Tim from Marketing Services. I look after certain aspects of the internets, like branding and online reputation (hence Twitter)."

A bit like Baz Luhrmann's decision to call his movie 'Australia' when quite a few of us weren't heaps in to it, Tweeting as "UNSW" and not 'Tim from UNSW' seems a bit iffy.

Tim seems just as awkward about this personification. Many of his 205 tweets are a touch genre-confused. 'UNSW' has toyed with the whole gamut of personal pronouns; "our" when trumpeting UNSW's achievements: "Have a look at some of our second-year media students' production work: <http://tinyurl.com/5gq2ph>", 'me' in this rather sweet moment: "makes me happy to see international students using free wifi to make video calls home", and "Sure, let's work something out" when arranging lunch dates with other UNSW twstaff, @mbogle and @robynjay. Sometimes I envisage a iPod-listening glasses-wearing semi-babe in the marketing department tapping out these 140-character delights, and sometimes I imagine it's the lion itself, with one raised paw pictured in the UNSW logo (and in the 'UNSW' avatar) thumping down on the keyboard.

Social networking mediums are always exploited for commercial purposes as soon as they become popularised, and Twitter lends itself particularly well to advertising. I mindlessly followed UNSW, and suddenly its pithy messages about UNSW's latest achievements in science, research and conservation were being absorbed in to my information flow. Grtwoss.

Evidently UNSW's answer to the question 'What are you doing now?', the central imperative that flashes across the website imploring its users to hack their lives in to a series of aphorisms, is "only pretty fucken great things".

Yet there is something a bit more genuinely warm about Tim's approach to marketing than the usual sales pitch. Observing his interactions over the past few weeks have lead me to believe that he genuinely delights in the process of typing 'UNSW' in to the twitter search engine, happening upon someone who has mentioned that they have just been accepted in to Computer Science, or someone complaining about gen-ed's; and then responding with a heartfelt "UNSW @faldo_Congratulations!" or "UNSW @sammyjopeters GenEd subjects are meant to give students a more rounded education outside their focus, so Arts students can't do arts geneds". My encounter with Tim was more on the un-useful side; he didn't solve my problem, and probably the only reason he tried to was that he wanted to quickly snuff out the notion UNSW makes people cry. That said, I'm sure any of the Tweeters who have recently found themselves in an unexpected conversation with their place of learning got as much of a kick out of the experience as I did. Meaning the marketing goal of making UNSW seem like an innovative and friendly place has been successfully achieved.

But Tim's interaction with UNSW students is contingent on those who actually use the very specific term 'UNSW' to narrate their experiences. What about those who publicise their thoughts and questions about life at 'uni', or what about those who (heaven forbid) don't Tweet at all? And what about those with whom Tim curiously hasn't yet engaged: "CyrilXhou I THINK I ALREADY HATE UNSW. (And I wish i got in to sydney!!!!!!) Uh oh..." or "CyrilXhou is wondering what the difference between O WEEK and WEEK O at UNSW is lol!?!?!" or 'Frank_Sartor Dude ordering lunch in front of me has a vuitton purse and a Scottish hat. Looks like UNSW material, if ya know what I mean fellas!" or 'Frank_Sartor Pralines and dick: the icecream flavour Benjamin would be if he were an icecream flavour. Also, should I study law at UNSW?'

Sorry Tim, I don't mean to be so harsh, I'm probably just cranky that you didn't take this column in the direction I would've liked by failing to respond to the fake UNSW related tweets my friends and I generated for 'research purposes'. And mainly I am jealous that you get to Tweet for a living.

Because after all these years, Tim marks the first time I have ever been approached by any representative university to find out about my experience on this campus. Tim is also the only representative of UNSW that has spoken to me since since I've re-enrolled after a 2 year absence, when it all just got a bit hard. So hurry up anyone who doesn't speak English and might be lost somewhere in the system, sign up for Twitter and be sure to include the word 'UNSW' when you could do with a bit of support.

You can't care about everything in life. Sex, politics, music, global hunger, the packs of chips you get out of vending machines – all of these command my immediate and urgent attention. Leading the full, rich existence that I do, I simply don't have the intellectual or emotional resources to expend on trivialities. That is why I devote a considerable portion of my time to repetitive, tedious and menial employment with no prospects of promotion, networking or personal development.

I spend two nights a week working as an editorial assistant for a major paper. "You're a real journalist now!" exclaimed a friend. Well, not quite. At the beginning of my shift I position myself on a chair in the middle of the office. Within my field of vision rests a plastic tray. Periodically a man deposits one or more sheets of paper into that tray. I pick them up, create five copies and distribute them to five different locations around the office. I then return to my chair and await a further deposit so that the process may repeat itself, roughly sixty times over the next six and a half hours.

Initially the purpose of all this activity was a mystery to me. What had happened to all those photocopies I had so painstakingly created? I never saw anyone read them, or write on them, or even touch them. For all I knew it might have been someone else's job to photocopy them again, and someone else's again, on and on *ad infinitum* like some journalistic creation myth. Then, about a month into my employment, all was revealed. 'Deposit: Four Hundred and Twenty Seven Dollars' read the latest entry on my bank statement. Suddenly everything became clear. I resolved to be an editorial assistant for life.

In my other life I am employed as a casual IT analyst. People bring me computers that have gone bad and I make them better again. I perform this function without any technological proficiency whatsoever – I do know that computers use binary, but only from *Flight of the Conchords*. I've never had an affinity with computers; I don't like the way they smell. Nevertheless I am able to fix virtually all problems through careful consultation of the office instruction manual, a little brown book labelled 'IT Help for Dummies'. Management, perhaps not entirely coincidentally, keeps this under my desk.


Maintaining this level of ignorance requires considerable commitment. Just the other day a customer brought in a laptop which had ceased to connect to the internet. A quick look at her wireless settings revealed the problem, and within five minutes Google was smiling at us from the screen. "It was your default IP address," I explained graciously. It was then that the danger presented itself. "What's an IP address?" she wanted to know.

The circumstances called for strategic action. "Weeeell...." I began, with a slight grimace implying that I could explain if she *really* wanted, but that such a process would be elaborate, time consuming and beyond her comprehension anyway. A look of apprehension crossed her face, and she hurriedly assured me that it "didn't matter". We unplugged and she left. Crisis averted.

It wouldn't be that hard to find out about IP addresses. I could ask a superior, take out a library book, Google. But why? Further investigation is superfluous. The computer worked, and then it didn't, and then it did again. That is all I know. That is all I need to know.

*You can't care about
everything in life.*





Not everyone shares this perspective. Periodically a friend will inform me that he or she has obtained the honour of an Internship. There is always a faint inflection on the *in*, a sort of verbal capitalisation. You get a whiff of professionalism, a sense that the person engaged in such an activity must be *going somewhere*. I myself am currently undertaking an Internship, and have derived pleasure from the public announcement of this fact. The thing about an Internship, however, is that it requires you to carry your mind to work as well as your body. That's not what I look for in a job, and while I've found it to be a wholly rewarding experience, I'll be relieved when it's over.

This can't go on. Eventually I will have to *do something*, before my brain and muscles have atrophied beyond all recognition. Recently, though, I read an interesting story about the economist Keynes, who placed extraordinary emphasis on the value of maintaining employment during a recession. Apparently he once said that if no other jobs were available, government funds would be well spent paying one half of the population to dig holes and the other to fill them up again. It doesn't sound like such a bad idea to me.



Bringing Back Sisyphus

SU-MIN LIM explores the joys of meaningless employment.

HYPOTHETICALLY SPEAKING

A laboratory has developed a pill that can transform a person of any ethnic heritage into a person 'white' in physical appearance. It is irreversible and free of side effects. Should it be made available to the public on a voluntary basis?

Gabriel McManus

I think that most people agree, in principle, that each person should be in control of their life and identity. Everyone should be able to live in whatever way makes them happy (so long as this doesn't involve the coercion of others).

So if I want to live my life as a woman, then I can undergo sex reassignment surgery. Some people won't like it. It might offend their moral sensibility; they may even believe that my sex change is "tearing apart the moral fabric of society". But my right to control my life overrides any concerns about the social change it causes. When I decide how to shape my life and my identity, I have no obligation to consider the feelings of others or the effect on society. After all, it's my life. The rest of society can learn to deal with it.

The same principle applies in the case of this pill. If someone wants to live the rest of their life with the appearance of a white person, they should be free to do so.

Of course, the decision to take the pill should not be taken lightly. Perhaps some people will take the pill and then regret it. But people make irreversible, regrettable decisions all the time [Dear reader: what was your most recent?]. This is no reason to prevent others from making decisions that are right for them.

However, the pill will at least make the change to white appearance less costly, be it good or bad (Michael Jackson, I hope you are reading this). Currently, it is difficult to radically change one's physical appearance: painful and expensive plastic surgery is required. This pill would make transformation to a white appearance painless and cheap.

We live in a world where, unfortunately, there is significant advantage in having a white appearance. The richest nations have mostly white citizens. Within these nations, the richest and most powerful people are mostly white. As a result, it is easier for white people to become wealthy and to enter positions of power.

This pill makes the advantage of white appearance available to everyone who wants it. Without this pill, this advantage is only available to people with mostly white ancestry. Is it not racist to deny this real benefit to non-white people?

Note that I am not advocating the pill as the solution to racism. In fact, I believe it would be unfortunate if some people take the pill to escape the pressures of racism and discrimination: not because the pill was a bad option, but because it was the best option. We should fight racism until the pill is no longer desired as an escape from it. (This is just the same position many people take on abortion: it is unfortunate, but should be "safe, legal, and rare".)

This pill makes the advantage of white appearance available to everyone who wants it. Is it not racist to deny this benefit to non-white people?

Fortunately, however, use of the pill will make racism less prevalent. In recent decades, race has slowly become a more fluid concept. The pill will hugely increase the fluidity of racial identity. People will realise, more and more, that race is primarily a social construction. Racism will decrease as a result. It will also become less feasible for genuine racists to practice their bigotry: a white appearance will no longer signal white ancestry. And organisations like the Ku Klux Klan will have to reconsider their membership policy.

Of course, not everyone will take the pill. In fact, were the pill available today, I think the vast majority of people would not want what it offers. Being white just isn't as cool as it used to be. But imagine, if you will, a young man who wants to be white. For his entire life he has suffered from racism and discrimination. He is grateful for the growing pressure against racism, but he must still face prejudice because of the colour of his skin. He doesn't want to struggle daily with false preconceptions and bigoted remarks. He doesn't want to be another martyr for the cause against racism. He just wants respite. He wants to at least pretend he lives in a world free of racism: just like the majority of white people do. Who are we to deny him?

SPEAKING HYPOTHETICALLY

A laboratory has developed a pill that can transform a person of any ethnic heritage into a person 'white' in physical appearance. It is irreversible and free of side effects. Should it be made available to the public on a voluntary basis?

James Fehon

While each person has the freedom to do what they like with their life and body, an important limit is placed on this and all rights. Your actions are yours to determine unless the implications negatively affect the rights of others. Let's look at why allowing people to take this pill would be destructive of diversity and of the struggle against prejudice and racism.

To explore this hypothetical, we have to consider why people would want to take this pill. The majority of people seeking treatment would do so as a means of escaping discrimination. Currently we have a class structure linked to ethnicity. White people globally tend to wield influence over the lives of the rest and to enjoy higher incomes, greater opportunities and a better material standard of living. Racism is ingrained and minorities continue to experience discrimination even in the most progressive of societies.

However, allowing some individuals to reject their ethnicity by looking 'white' would exacerbate racism for others who wish to retain their ethnic identity. Racism would come to be framed as a 'choice'. "You can be 'white' if you want to, so if you choose to retain your ethnicity and continue to be subjected to racism, that's your problem". The onus is shifted onto the victim of discrimination to abandon their identity in order to participate in society. It should really be up to society to accommodate and accept diversity.

Some might argue that allowing people to switch races would combat racism by illustrating that race is actually not that important to a person's identity. In reality, it would have the opposite effect. If race doesn't matter, why bother to change?

In my own experience we don't need to be able to superficially change between 'races' to break down prejudice. We're human, not chameleons, and there are human solutions we're already capable of using such as protest, dialogue and simple empathy. People using this pill would undermine these strategies by offering an alternative way out. It's an easy fix that avoids addressing the actual issue of equality and minority rights. Take some responsibility!

If there were a pill which removed whatever creates prejudice based on difference, I'd be all for making it widely available. Until then, let's agitate for society to embrace the diversity of the identities around us. Supporting a pill which destroys this would do us no good.

Ultimately, such a pill would punish the victims of racism rather than the perpetrators. Changing your skin colour to escape racism is akin to punishing the Greens Party instead of an arsonist, or a woman instead of a rapist.

There might be some exceptions. The closest real-world example of a change like this would be sex-reassignment surgery, which we allow in the case of an identity mismatch such as transsexuality. Analogous cases with racial identity are pretty much unheard of, but for the sake of consistency we could allow racial reassignment after a stringent process of psychiatric approval. However, I think that these cases of genuine medical need would be incredibly rare.

Racism would come to be framed as a 'choice' - it should be up to society to accommodate and accept diversity.

The pill would also exacerbate inequality. As with any medical treatment the elite would have the best access, and their earning power would be enhanced by their newly developed 'whiteness'. I personally think we have enough rich white people already. If all those in power are white, whether 'born' or 'made', then who will represent the interests of the rest of the world's ethnicities?



Ageism & Doctor Who

MATT WARD *explains how it takes a Timelord to combat discrimination.*

Ageism is discrimination against individuals based on age. In University life, this can be most clearly observed in the divide between mature age students and the rest of the student population. Mature age students are often of the opinion that their long years of experience render them superior to other students: 'Let me tell you about my divorce...' Younger students, however, take the view that mature age students either couldn't get into uni earlier, or are engaging in an unsuccessful attempt to relive their youth. 'Who's the old guy and why is he taking 'Intro to Crim'?'

Let us however move from these visible forms of ageism to another, far more urgent and relevant example. Recently it was announced that Matt Smith, a 26 year old British actor, would be taking on the role of the Eleventh Doctor in the science fiction series *Doctor Who*. The Doctor is a bivascular (two-hearted) alien over 900 years of age. As a Timelord, he is able to regenerate into different bodies and has been portrayed by ten different actors to date. Matt Smith will be the youngest ever – a full eight years younger than David Tennant when he took on the role as the Tenth Doctor.

Many fans have raised concerns that such a young actor will lack the key features of the Doctor. The Doctor is a character of intensity and wisdom, aged far beyond his apparent years. It is said that such a young actor will be unable to portray these qualities.

Taking such a view before filming has even started is clearly ignorant and ageist. It ignores Matt Smith's previous work in which he has demonstrated himself to be a talented and versatile actor. Smith has portrayed a diverse range of characters and emotions in programs such as *Party Animals* and *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*, as well as various theatre performances.

During auditions, head writer Steven Moffat and executive producer Piers Wenger were enamoured of Smith from the start. He was one of the first to read for the part, and yet both men have expressed that "it had always been Matt". Moffat even went so far as to describe Smith as "doctorish". High praise indeed.

Let us recap, ageism is bad. It involves making assumptions about people with little basis in fact. It hinders you from forging relationships, gaining experience and learning things that could help you adapt and grow as a person (or Timelord). We must work to combat this pervasive and harmful form of discrimination by reserving all judgement on Matt Smith's performance until he actually performs. He will then succeed or fail on his own merits, not because of his age.

As a mature age student I realise that a lot of you may not grasp the concepts in this article, but you'll get there one day. Even if I have never had a divorce.

Dr Lurk

Dr Lurk,

I was swimming in the UNSW pool recently when I noticed a gaggle of children in the shallow end and I couldn't help but notice that several of them had large, angry warts on their extremities. Am I safe in the water?

WILKE, B Arts/Media

Dear Wilkinson,

No man wearing speedos is safe in the UNSW pool. Long ago, when my calves were a little more shapely than they are in these advancing days, I used to attract considerable attention in the men's locker room. The word "Arrhus" was emblazoned across the backside of my cossies, which may have caused the kerfuffle (I was a member of the champion 1968 freestyle team at Arrhus University in the Netherlands, where I transferred for a year to complete the casual sex component of my Medical Degree). It's not unusual for people's eyes to pop at the sight of flesh in a public pool – I advise you to repress this sexual reaction to warts by smearing a thick stinging layer of Dencorub over your scrotum before entering the water.

Dr Gordon Lurk

Dr Lurk,

I Googled your name the other day and could find no evidence that you practise anywhere in the Sydney metropolitan region, nor after further searching could I find you listed in the wider Australian health profession. Are you in fact a professional doctor?

CONSTABLE JONATHON JERUSALEM

Jonny,

I remember the day well when I first used "the Google" as you young folk call it. To my surprise I found that I could type in a simple, innocent term like "crack-whore", and my three and a half inch floppy became a three and three quarter inch stiffy. For five long weeks I couldn't eat, sleep, or even leave my chair as I trawled the far corners of the information super highway, gorging myself on a veritable cornucopia of smut and degradation. Some of the things that I saw shocked me to my core. It was only when one of my patients dragged me from my filthy chair, naked and still self-abusing, to write them a script for heroin that I courageously broke the cycle. Anyway, I can't remember what your question was, but I'm sure it was a good one, and I wish you the best of luck.

Dr Gordon Lurk

Dear Dr Lurk,

Like most people I like to wash my fruit before I eat it. But lately I have become obsessed. I now wash not only my apples but also the outer skin of bananas and oranges. This compulsion is consuming a large portion of my time and I would like some advice.

AMANDA, Library Admin.

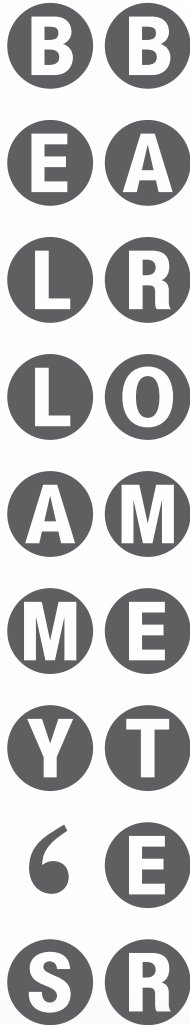
Dear Amanda,

Your attitude to the coloured races has made me a little nostalgic. Years ago I once traveled beyond hearth and home to visit the Pleasures of the Orient. After sating myself at that Surry Hills gentleman's club, I boarded an aeroplane and went to Asia. Like you, I found myself furiously scrubbing my skin and the skin of the puzzled Asian girl-servant provided to my hotel suite – I had to rid myself of the stain of what you coyly euphemise under the code-word "oranges". Take it from an old man of the world – when you peel back the skin you discover that we are all a bit seedy. And who was ever hurt by a squirt of citrus in the eye? You see Amanda, when a yellow banana turns brown, it's not actually dirty.. like myself, it's just getting old. But you just want to wash it, don't you? You just want to scrub it until it's all yellow again!

For your despicable racist sins, I think you should immediately delete my enormous overdue fees. It's about time the library just let me keep Mein Kampf.

Dr Gordon Lurk





JESS BELLAMY

Hello to my old friends and my new friends, and those of you who aren't sure where you stand, who await an effort of cajoling and flirtatious prising from my end, until you finally hop onto the Bellamy Boat, until you are a firm, steadfast sailor of HMAS Barometer. Hoist the anchor, scrub the decks, puke over the edge, 'cos you're here and you're staying.

This week's Barometer might be a bit kerazy and out there, because I'm sitting in a really hot room listening to the new Guns n Roses album while trying to concentrate on my Important Literary Endeavours, but instead rocking out to Buckethead's flamin' riffs. But enough about my Saturday night in. Time to set sail.

HOT

Facebook notes

I have a bit of a routine in the morning. It goes: get up, get the bus, stare at the blind guy who takes my bus while imagining his inner monologue, get to work, drink a cup of coffee, delete my new emails, then go on Facebook. One of my favourite things on Facebook, apart from stalking those fuckers from school who called me Bell-armi Salami, is to check out who has written Notes lately.

There is a new 'meme' (nerd-speak for: 'e-list of shit') sweeping the internet at the moment, where people write twenty-five facts about themselves like, "I've never felt comfortable in crowds" or "I have loved twice and lost twice" or "I still haven't kicked that paedophilia thing".

Because I am a massive FB-friend-whore who 'friends' people I've met only once at parties, I get to read a whole bunch of incredibly personal and awkward confessions from virtual strangers. These are amazing, not only as a source of inspiration for future writing, but also as a chance to build up my arsenal of "people whose lives are not as good as mine". That's what makes life rewarding.

Seachange

I'm not normally in the habit of staging 90s nostalgia revivals, but this show is AMAZING. It has Sigrid Thornton's lopsided smile, David Wenham's shaggy stubbled charm, cute bratty kids and Kevin Harrington who isn't JUST my favourite character in *Neighbours*, but my second favourite character in *Underbelly* (a close second after the hilariousness that is Roberta Williams). Our house has recently invested in this box-set and let me advise you to do the same if you are a fan of HAPPY WEeping and UNCONTROLLABLE EMOTIVE THIGH-SLAPS.

NOT

Waiting

Those of you who know me (and let's face it, you're probably the only ones reading this because you know I'll test

you on the contents later) will know that I have an attention span best described as "like a fox-terrier on crack". I can only clean my room if I'm watching a TV show at the same time, something like the aforementioned *Underbelly*, where there are drugs and guns and angry sex to distract me from the fact that I'm doing something constructive. Similarly, if there were a prize for Facebook time-wasting, I would come second only to my friend who niftily CHANGES NETWORKS WILLY-NILLY in order to stalk as wide a pool of people as possible.

So you may understand the inherent difficulty for someone like me in performing a simple task such as waiting for a bus. I have therefore set myself a challenge for every time I find myself waiting for a bus that is running late, since challenges are known to make life more fun AND rewarding. I make myself write the first line of a crap romance novel, and so far have come up with two openers:

1. Things were frosty back at the ranch. It had come to a stage where the only place Jenny could get any thinking time was in the bath.
2. Ethel wondered if every marriage would feel like this, or if, yet again, she had managed to snag a dud.

And don't get me wrong; they're good lines. However their majesty didn't quite make up for the time when the bus I was hailing DROVE RIGHT PAST ME despite my enthusiastic flagging and even pausing Flo Rida's new single on my iPod so I could concentrate on the important task of getting on the bus. It drove right past me, this empty bus; the driver sort of shrugged at me in contempt and drove on, and I bubbled with a rage best described as 'primal yet ladylike'.

Only one thing could calm me down and let's just say the theme song starts with "I don't wanna live in the city, my friends say I am changing" and ends with "The time is right, now I'm going through a seachange".

Ahh. That's better.

Dear Auntie,

This sex is on fire!

- THE KINGS OF LEON

Dear Kings of Leon,

You should probably see a gynaecologist about that.

(Dave) *the* *Agony* *Aunt*

Dave the Agony Aunt
fields questions from
students and celebrities
alike, answering
questions on life, love
and getting by on campus.

Do you have a question
for the Agony Aunt? Email
absolutely anything to
tharunka@unsw.edu.au

Dear Auntie,

I've found this abandoned house in the woods, but it totally sucks! The chairs, for example, are too big or too small. And I'm trying to eat some porridge - but it is all either too hot, or too cold! What should I do?

- GOLDBLOCKS

Dear Goldilocks,

This is the type of indecisiveness that will lead to you being molested by a group of bears.

Dear Auntie,

I have great trouble picking up on the dance floor. Others break out amazing acrobatic moves and impress all the women, but all I can do is the old "teabag" manoeuvre. In fact, when I describe my up-and-down bobbing dance as "teabagging" to women, they often throw a drink in my face. What am I doing wrong?

- ANONYMOUS

Dear Bart,

Let me suggest that the problem isn't the teabag move itself - like your moves, tea can sometimes just be too hot to handle. Now let me share with you the type of timeless dance-floor advice that will work whether you're sneaking around Purple Sneakers or crossing into the Cross. Advice that could be dangerous if it got out to the general population. Simply: Thrust your hips in time to the music, flex two fingers forward as though you have a pistol in your hands, and fire away at the ladies. When you can wink in time to the pistol shots, you're in what I like to call the "firing zone". You'll never dance alone again.

Dear Auntie,

I've been doing my arts degree now for three weeks. While my courses on the Canon of Armenian Literature and Post-Marxist Gender Studies are interesting, I don't feel like I've learned anything that will help me get by on campus, or decipher the poorly-photocopied articles in my course readers. Help me, Auntie - how can I pass my subjects? How do you avoid the Campus Bible Study kids? Can you make it from the Law Building to Morven Brown without going up any stairs?

- TONY GADDIS

Dear Tony,

From what I gather you are a Communist with reading difficulties who hates Christians. You are also too fat to walk up stairs. Unlike your father, who didn't care for you (that's why he got the divorce) I am under an obligation to provide support and assistance to all of the readers of this magazine. Yes, Tony, even to you.

While course readers can be hard to understand, I can only think of one reason why your eyesight could be so bad that you can't decipher them at all. Like Redtube, everyone knows what it is but no one wants to talk about it. Stop doing it. This will free up some time to practise stair runs.

As for the Campus Bible Study kids - simply say "I'm Jewish". You'll never be bothered again.



50 REASONS

to stay in a shitty relationship.

They have hot friends * They just lost a family member * The sex is great * The sex is okay * You know you can make them love you * They have a car * Fear of loneliness * They live with your best mate's girlfriend (convenience!) * They can cook * Pregnancy * Sloth * They like or tolerate your weird kink * They're way hotter than you, so your mates think you're awesome * The one you really love lives on another continent * Flat is convenient for staying the night * Mutual friends will side with them * Built-on expiry date, eg. going overseas soon * Spite * They have videos * Lots of your stuff is at their place * Trying to make someone else jealous * They promised they can change * They don't care if you cheat * Rebuilding shattered life just too hard * Your parents hate them * They make a lot more money than you * When you watch them sleep, you still remember the good times * Still stealing their stuff * Stubbornness * Cowardice * They owe you money * Can't break up before their birthday/Christmas * Staying together hurts them worse * Guilt * Trying to prove heterosexuality * Already paid for travel plans * You want your suicide to have maximum impact * Sweet release of death only a few decades away * They're your boss * Easy to please sexually * Marriage will fix everything * Can't do any better anyway * Winning a bet * Have grown fond of their child or pet * They hit you because they love you * Pretty much asexual now anyway * Prefer to passive-aggressively make them end it * At least you won't get an STI * They speak the language you're learning * Hate is all that sustains you.

THOM LOVEDAY
& SEAN LAWSON

