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# THARUNKA Raw

**Living in a Post-  
Cannibal World** - pg. 4

**The divide between  
Rural and Urban  
Australia** - pg. 8

**The Myers-Briggs  
test is just Astrology  
for businesspeople** -  
pg. 28

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Tharunka acknowledges the Bedegal, Gadigal and Ngunnawal peoples as the traditional custodians of the land upon which UNSW's three campuses are located, and where this publication was produced. We pay our respects to their elders past and present, and extend that respect to our Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander readers. We acknowledge that Tharunka was produced on stolen land whose sovereignty was never ceded.

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**CONTENT WARNING:** This edition of Tharunka contains depictions of raw flesh. There is discourse on violence, gore and cannibalism (pg 4) and domestic abuse (pg 15), as well as descriptions and illustrations of blood (pg 6). Tharunka is not liable for any radicalisation of readers to cannibalistic doctrines.



# CONTENTS

1

2

3

5

7

4

6

8

10

9

11

12

13

4. LIVING IN A POST-CANNIBAL WORLD - L. LUI — 6. MY FIRST PERIOD AND THE DEATH OF THE YAHOO ANSWERS - E. WAJON — 8. THE DIVIDE BETWEEN REGIONAL AND URBAN AUSTRALIA - J. NIVISON — 10. ALONE AUSTRALIA - C. CARROLL — 11. CHATGPT: A BLESSING OR A CURSE? - S.CULLEN — 14. SUNSHOWERS - N. FARRELL — 15. FALLOUT. - A. STEVENS — 16. ÉMOTIONS BRUTES- CHE — 18. CONQUERING THE UNCANNY VALLEY - A. KHONG YU XIANG — 21. SRC REPORTS - C.KUEHLMANN, D.MULIA — 22. GIVING THE AUX TO YOUR BOSS - T. ST QUINTIN — 24. THE FEMALE CATHARSIS OF THE HORROR MOVIE - R. AZWAR — 26. THE STORY OF MALAYSIA'S MAY 13 TRAGEDY - N.N — 28. WHY MBTI IS JUST ASTROLOGY FOR BUSINESSPEOPLE - A.SAUNDERS



# Living in a

Lychee Lui

What's rawer than cannibalism? Yes, this is an article about cannibalism but not really. This is the Leo moon in 8th house talking. If you don't understand, I wish you a pleasant life unburdened by this knowledge. If you do, well, organised religion is an option too.

## PART 1: Indifference

Meat is a site of labour in my eyes. Instead of enjoying the sizzling grill on a lazy Sunday afternoon, I spent my youth bagging and moving so much meat that my arms became noodles moving hundreds of kilograms of beef and chicken. Defrosting prawns didn't mean hauling twenty kilo boxes well above my once-paltry height in an industrial freezer. Seafood never betrayed me like its landed brethren.

I get queasy at the sight of violence on the screen and am tepid about the aisles of meat in plastic packaging kept cool in a sanitised supermarket. Bloodless cuttings ready to be seasoned and cooked whichever way a human could possibly desire. They are terribly convenient, but retail pricing is bloated due to economic conditions. Fun to think about!

I went through an entirely theoretical phase where I entertained being vegan, or at least vegetarian, but meat is baked in the dinner spread. Not eating meat when it's offered to me seems disrespectful of life. Wasteful. My blood work comes

back and pings regularly about low iron. Spinach can only be stomached for so long.

Meat (begrudgingly) it is.

## PART 2: Curiosity

Cannibalism is so extreme it reads alien to us: detached from reality, every instance pulled apart and examined with grotesque fascination, detailed to the point of fiction even when it is real. You can know the minutia of a cannibal's life in exhaustive detail. Online videos, documentaries and books on the gruesome details pull apart the motivations, and punishment of the act. The taste of human flesh is somewhere between pork and veal, although cannibals have sold human flesh as pork more than any other kind of meat.

True crime can be given a hint of credit in exhuming the victims, the dead and the digested. It centres killers sometimes. But attributing sole responsibility of introducing us to cannibalism to true crime disregards the wealth of fairy tales, myths and faith we grew up with.

The Grimm's tales are overflowing with the taste of human flesh. Yes, Disney's iteration of Snow White may have skimmed on the gorier details, but it kept the Queen's desire to eat Snow White's heart. Hansel and Gretel escape from being fattened for soup. Little Red Riding Hood





# Post-Cannibal World

was tricked into eating her grandmother by the wolf. Many Christians eat the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, a sacrament common to most denominations of Christianity. This is, of course, a metaphor- bread and wine are served, not flesh and blood.

Cronus, Zeus' father, ate his children as soon as they were delivered to sidestep a prophecy about his children overthrowing him. Rhea, Zeus' mother, swapped Zeus out with a rock wrapped in baby clothes. Zeus forced Cronus to disgorge his siblings in a battle. With them by his side, he was able to defeat Cronus in a ten-year war known as the Battle of the Titans. Out with the old, in with the new. The prophecy was complete.

Now the examples cited so far rest in the realm of faith and fiction, but we learn about real cannibals from history. It has served multiple functions. For the Aztecs, cannibalism was a conduit to their gods. Neanderthals ate their brethren out of necessity. To European peasants, cannibalism served a medical purpose from the 17th century until the 19th century. We have modern medicine now.

\* No need for flesh as a panacea.

## PART THREE: Utility

We're out of the era for prophecies handed to us by oracles. Reading your fate is outdated. Prophecies are out, manifestation is in. Or out with hustle culture: Is Bartleby in yet? The ebb of culture on a centralised internet is not so much an ebb but a mimicry of waves

against the shoreline. By the time this makes it to print, grift and well-meaning advice alike will be going by a different name.

Let us return to the subject at hand.

In fiction, cannibalism often is not about cannibalism itself. Psychoanalysis is not about cannibalism — except when it is. Cannibalism is a fundamental betrayal of what it is to be human, hence its presence in horror. Horror is about fear, except when it's about people and a displaced unquiet framed monstrous. It's not about the consumption of flesh itself but the horror of doing so. That people could eat others in the most extreme of conditions.

Cannibalism as a utility has been rendered moot in modern society. I have never been so glad to live in a post-cannibal world. Its utility lies in fiction where it papers horror and burnishes cruelty with a bloody relish. Horror is a haven of cannibalism. The real world is not.

There is no call to action to round out this piece. No prophecy. You make your own fate. Just, you know, keep it free of human flesh alright? Let's keep this streak of non-human meat consumption going.

Editor: Anh Noel

Designer: Annie Nguyen



# My first period and the death of Yahoo Answers

Eloise Wajon

sweet  
pea

It is hard to say anything that hasn't already been said about menstruation. All the way from *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* to *The Vagina Monologues*, it seems that the well of both feminist and non-feminist takes about periods has truly run dry. And yet, I've never read any poem, play or book about menstruation that describes it the way I experience it. My period doesn't make me feel like a woman, in any sense of the word. It has never made me feel closer to my female relatives, in the same way that making fun of people who watch *The Bachelor* while we watch *The Bachelor* does. Even my mother, a certified girlboss, executed the feminine art of shame when it came to discussing my period. Along with the tiny, thin pads they make for novice bleeders, she gave me several scented bags to dispose of used products when I was in Year 6 and eagerly expecting. To my credit as a

girlboss myself, I have never used them. I've never quite felt the sting of indignity around my period either, apart from instances I've engaged in accidental free-bleeding. After 6 years of the implanon, I got a copper IUD (which does not hormonally impact your fertility) in some TikTok-addled delusion. It was later when I stood, topless in my high-waisted period undies trying to figure out what actually differentiated me physically from the Pillsbury doughboy, that I realised. The divine feminine was some kind of gory Tooth Fairy that blessed other women with cycles, with some kind of sense and order to their monthlies. Sometimes I had two-weeklies and three-weeklies. Once I had a 6-monthly. It was never particularly shameful, or beautiful or pertinent to my identity. When I would wipe, and see that the toilet paper was red, I would find myself thinking "there it is again." The only other way I have ever felt about my period is confused.

**Remember Yahoo Answers? I certainly do. Yahoo Answers is a relic of an internet where people had questions, rather than an arsenal of unsolicited and incorrect answers. When it was announced that Yahoo Answers would be shutting down as of May 4th, 2021, I was mournful. Not only were some of the funniest things I have ever seen online published on Yahoo Answers, but something I could never replace was too - a record of exactly how I felt when I got my first period in 2014.**

I was 12 when I got my period. It was a simple affair, in terms of events. I went to the bathroom after I woke up, around midday on Wednesday. It had been months since I had attended school, and I was home alone. I wiped, and there it was - a smear of rust-coloured blood on the toilet paper. This sounds rather standard, doesn't it? I was perplexed. See, I had been attending school when they taught us the all-you-need-to-know stuff about periods. I knew the where and why and labelled each part of the female reproductive system. I had the answers to those pressing questions all girls my age had. Along with my (in retrospect disturbing) habit of scouring parenting websites as a child, I was as prepared as you could possibly be. But I stared at the toilet paper, and then I cupped my hand under my vagina to see if I could feel it dripping. I could not. In the absence of any adults in my apartment, I took to the internet.



**A RECREATION OF MY QUESTION ON YAHOO  
ANSWERS APPROXIMATELY DATED NOVEMBER  
14TH, 2014**

**Eloise Wajon**

NOVEMBER 14TH, 2014.

**QUESTION: DID I GET MY PERIOD?**

TODAY I WIPED WHEN I WENT TO THE BATHROOM AND SAW BLOOD. BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S MY PERIOD BECAUSE THE BLOOD ISN'T DRIPPING OUT OF ME, IT'S JUST THERE WHEN I TOUCH IT. IS IT MY PERIOD?

**ANSWERS:**

BBYGIRLX36: YES IT'S UR PERIOD. YOUR VAGINA ISN'T LIKE A LEAKY FAUCET LOL!

KEN W: I SERIOUSLY WORRY ABOUT THIS GENERATION.

KESHAFAN120: OH HONEY...

See, I had always assumed that your period must be like rain, with drops falling rhythmically, colouring one round area of your sanitary pad red. I had never thought to ask. Why would I have? I'd read the books in the back of the school library. There was surely nothing else for me to know. Upon checking the question a few hours later, I was thoroughly embarrassed.

I wish my period made me feel feminine. Instead, it comes over me like a bashful flu, afflicting me with headaches and moderate cramps, leaving in a week or two when I've run out of sick leave. My period is not a hurricane, like it is for some of my endometriosis and PCOS afflicted friends, and for that I am grateful. But my period will also never lend itself to poetry, or provocative performance art. To cope, I have come to think of my period as the force that humbles me. Every month, I spend a few days feeling indignant and then it comes, and the blood reminds me that I'm a human, not an all-knowing god. Gods don't bleed.

Editors: Shree Baskar, Anh Noel,  
Dominique Lakis  
Designers: Julie Luong, Kelly  
Quach



# THE GREAT DIVIDE

## THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REGIONAL AND URBAN AUSTRALIA

Jack Nivison

**T**here is a long-held belief in regional areas of the state of New South Wales, that those who reside in our state capital are convinced that the four corners of the globe can be found in Palm Beach, Campbelltown, Kurrajong, and Cronulla.

I'll be the first to stand up for the concrete cow-people — it's easy for residents of areas with more sheep than people to level the wand of ignorance at those who live in the far off lands of traffic lights, stop signs and fast-food chains.

Regardless of whether or not you grew up in Sydney's east or the Central West (think Dubbo — the one with a zoo), this sentiment is emblematic of what can only be considered a great divide. There is a distinct difference in way that city-siders and country bumpkins observe and pass judgement about issues that we face in modern social, cultural, and political arenas.

For example, those in the city would assume that any rational person would be jumping for joy at the introduction of wind farms in their local area. They bring with them an incredible source of renewable energy, and a variety of jobs that inject

funds into local economies — something that small country towns are all-too conscious of in the age of urbanisation.

So, when people in my hometown of Walcha rejected a proposal made by energy giant Vestas to open a wind farm on the outskirts of town, it came as instinct for some people to critique the NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) mindset of the semi-wealthy landowners that reside in those rolling green tablelands. But the truth, as always, is more complex than throwing up a windmill, accepting a payment of \$20,000 a year and patting yourself on the back.

The companies take advantage of farmers, holding them hostage with the looming threat of environmental disasters and comfy cash benefits they claim will keep their families and legacy secure.

The need for renewable energy development has, in this case, been hijacked, and an industry that should be paving the way for the ethical development of world-saving technology that becomes as exploitative as the mining giants we so vocally call for these companies to replace. And what is left but overwhelming critique of the sceptical farmer. The grazier who lived their life and will die on this country. The stoic provider of home and livelihood through drought, flood and bushfire is reduced to an insult. The farmer then becomes a scapegoat for a nation's angst. Shouldn't this be better directed towards the corporations who feed off the notion that people will be blindsided by projects that are tagged simply as 'renewable'?

People in the country are not afraid of renewable energy, nor are they stupid enough to believe that renewables aren't part of what needs to be an immediate solution to a global crisis.

Editors: Anh Noel & Dominique Lakis  
Designer: Kelly Quach





My home region, the New England North-West, has a population of roughly 186,000. In a NSW government survey conducted throughout the region, 94% of respondents expressed support for use of renewables to generate electricity in New South Wales.

After all, the environmental implications of climate change are the ones that people in the regions, more than anybody else, experience first-hand.

Farmers in Narrabri and Armidale watch their crops and livestock wither and die around them as years of drought turn everything to dust. First responders from Lismore and Tamworth stand in the path of raging bushfires and haul family friends out of flooded homes. The local sporting clubs in Forbes and Young support members who are fighting mental health battles. This support can be the difference between tragedy and recovery.

Don't get me wrong, there are plenty of critiques that can be levelled at people who live in regional areas. They struggle to embrace socially progressive thought (trust me, I've fought those dinner table battles as much as any kid that was born and raised in Manly). They often turn to political conservatism out of nothing more than a reluctance to embrace mindsets that are unfamiliar or somehow foreign. I have the unique privilege of being from the same town as Barnaby Joyce, a well-known evangelical Christian and former Deputy Prime Minister, lucky me!

They — we — do struggle with all of these things. But we are not shallow. We are not thoughtless. We do not have an incapacity to learn.

All of us (yes, even Barnaby) care about our communities and our towns. We care about the livestock that we raise. We are conscious of our carbon footprint, and we desperately seek solutions to the same problems that those in the city believe us to be oblivious to.

On the off chance that you find yourself driving through Cootamundra or Gundagai, just remember that these places do not exist in a vacuum. The locals here are some of the hardest-working people on the planet. They live and breathe for their communities. They deserve, more than anything else in the world, a seat at the table. A place in the discussion. A contribution to the discourse.

So, when you're driving up Thunderbolts Way on a cold winter's morning, be sure to stop by that pretty little town they call Walcha for a cup of coffee and a chat about the weather. You may just find that the locals aren't so crazy after all.



# alone Australia

Connor Carroll

Animals night-walking,  
wind-stalking, sourcing meals  
and lining stomachs, this country  
of symbiotic ecosystems,  
this country you've failed to rule.

Set nets and build traps ...  
they're smarter than that,  
whitefella with copious amounts  
of rope and nylon thinks he can  
dance in the ancient land.

Collect insects for bait at least  
they're out of your face, no small  
game to waste haven't  
tracked movement in days,  
hunger haunting the place.

Will to live fading, dreams caught  
in a rip of your own making,  
defeat you're facing, one sliver  
of silver and a bite on a line all  
you're craving.

Where to turn and who to fight,  
starvation sharpening its knife,  
god, everybody's watching the  
survivalist in strife, flailing  
without the kids and wife.

All you need to do is pick  
up the phone, tap out,  
crawl back to the couch,  
you're nothing special,  
aggressively unexceptional.

A shot at a quarter million  
to hear your heart echo  
to feel your bones mellow  
to curse every decision which  
led you here, alone and scared.

A jolt, a fish kiss and now  
you're in business, writhing  
body slaps the river surface,  
hooked through the retina,  
bleeding eyelids, seeing sins.

Still grasping for breath as  
you cleave its scales and  
pull out entrails, lower its  
carcass onto the fire and  
burn through the raw wild.

Editors: Marissa Seymour, Alexa Stevens  
Designer: Natrikia N



# ChatGPT: A Blessing, a Curse or Both?

Sean Cullen

Even though ChatGPT was released way back in November 2022, the essay-writing, poem-making program has blown up in the last few months.

Some love ChatGPT, with many students viewing it as an invaluable tool for their academic pursuits.

Some fear the implications it may have on student practice in educational institutions.

But is ChatGPT all good or all bad? Perhaps it can be a combination of both. This article aims to explore the varying perspectives surrounding this technology, providing insights into its implications specifically for students at UNSW.

## PRO – ChatGPT creates a private learning environment.

Not all of us like speaking up in class. For some, vocalising our thoughts feels like jumping across a ditch blindfolded, weighed down by reservation and self-doubt.

Some learners don't thrive in a learning environment that demands speaking up in class, yet there are gaps in our knowledge; ChatGPT can open new doors for studying.

Indeed, we UNSW students shouldn't forget to draw on lecturers and course materials as the academic core. But ChatGPT gives us 'quieter ones' a new private learning environment to explore unfamiliar ideas.

So how does ChatGPT create this private learning environment? As explained in the Medium article: The ChatGPT Framework Explained, there are at least two answers to this question.

First, ChatGPT relies on a process called 'autoregression.' This determines that as ChatGPT is writing sentences word by word, it depends on the words that are already typed in by the user or generated by ChatGPT. The result is a cohesive piece of writing, generally accessible for students to understand. Secondly, ChatGPT draws on various online sources when it generates responses. For students, this simplifies the process of understanding complex concepts concisely.

ChatGPT's learning environment includes generated responses; however, the chatbot could help more than just the quieter students in class.

With ChatGPT's language translation function, students who don't speak English as their first language may find heaps to benefit from the tool. This is especially true when considering how ChatGPT is more sophisticated than, say, Google Translate, since it draws on an unprecedented amount of online text to inform translations.





Professor Haris Aziz, interim Director of the UNSW AI Institute, agrees that there is value in the non-judgmental learning space that ChatGPT provides for individuals who face disadvantages:

*“[ChatGPT] can serve as a language assistant for people [...] with huge language disadvantage.”*

(Prof. Aziz, ‘UNSW experts weigh in on ChatGPT’)



## PRO – ChatGPT is great for brainstorming.

In addition to creating a private learning environment, this tool can be highly valuable when brainstorming ideas.

We all know the hesitation that comes with reading a new assignment from a course. And it can be even worse if the subject matter makes you question why you chose to do that course in the first place. In this situation, you may wonder; How should I answer the question? What ideas should I draw upon?

Assignments generally involve two levels of research; surface level and deep/scholarly/big-brain level. Before we get to the big-brain level, though, we have to scout out the assignment’s core ideas. ChatGPT can help students find these core ideas. When providing information, the chatbot’s prose format allows for an easy way to get a quick overview of subject-specific terminology and become familiar with the relevant research literature. After drafting the big picture with ChatGPT, students should delve into trustworthy academic databases like course readings, scholarly articles, and UNSW Library collection to complete the research progress. Think of ChatGPT as your floaty research device before you dive deeply into the rest of your assignment’s research.



## CON – ChatGPT may generate incorrect, misleading, or biased information.

While it’s true that ChatGPT may open doors to some learners, it has undoubtedly opened other doors for misinformation. Could ChatGPT undermine the truth, spreading fake news and harmful human bias?

ChatGPT draws on swathes of online information — all of which are (mainly) produced by humans. Yet when a chatbot draws on that much information, including from Wikipedia, it’ll inevitably come across either clearly false information or socially harmful and degrading.

Fake news disseminated by technology is already a big issue around the world. ChatGPT could make things worse. Take this example, where ChatGPT was asked to write some fake news about Barack Obama:







As comical as this fake news about Barack Obama may seem, imagine if that was the only media you were internalising. Clearly, ChatGPT requires all of us to be wary of the validity of the information it is fed and ultimately generates.

And what about socially harmful information, including sexist and racist language?

Associate Professor of Media at UNSW Michael Richardson comments on the dangers of ChatGPT reproducing such harmful language — especially when produced “in a form that makes it hard for unsuspecting users to realise what’s happening”.



## **CON – ChatGPT may encourage plagiarism and attempt to replace human creativity.**

We can’t ignore the elephant in the room. Could ChatGPT inadvertently lead to a surge in plagiarism, jeopardizing students’ academic integrity?

According to a Daily Mail article published on the 29th of January this year, ChatGPT has already been used to plagiarise. A UNSW student made history for the wrong reasons when becoming the first university student in Australia to fail a university exam due to plagiarising from a chatbot... which happened to be ChatGPT.

Though UNSW’s Academic Integrity policy has firmly prohibited plagiarism of any kind, ChatGPT has prompted universities to use more complex AI content detectors to root out any AI-generated assignments.

Blurring the boundaries between human creativity and AI-generated content has become a significant concern for academic institutions and artists.

With ChatGPT’s ability to formulate convincing human poetry and entire novel chapters, what does this mean for the future of artists in general?

As someone who writes creatively on the side, maybe ChatGPT won’t be the next Shakespeare or Toni Morrison. But the technology certainly raises questions about how human artists can create and maintain their distinctive writing style in ways AI cannot replicate.



## **What does this mean for all of us?**

ChatGPT has its virtues in creating non-judgmental learning and brainstorming environments for students. But AI- technology also has its apparent vices; spreading harmful information, tempting students to plagiarise, and possibly despoiling our traditionally unique ability to create.

As AI chatbot technology continues to develop, it is crucial to actively explore and question the implications behind this technology.

Only then can we adapt and respond to AI’s ever-increasing challenges and opportunities.

Editor: Haley Vu, Anh Noel  
Designer: Jackie Tran



# Sunshowers

Words by Niamh Farrell

Blaire wasn't awake when her mother died. She only knew that she died alone on an old daybed in the kitchen. The daybed was topped with a waterproof mattress they'd taken from the hospital. It rustled every time her mother turned, though she'd done less of that recently. Out of pride, she would not make herself a nuisance as far as her body would allow her to—even now, it seemed like the noisy machines she was hooked up to marched on as if she hadn't yet told them they could rest. Blaire never thought they'd continue even after she'd died. Sometimes at night it was all she could hear, cicadas finding their match. It's somehow helped her to sleep knowing that as long as they were still methodically working, her mother's body would be too. Clearly that wasn't true, her mother's body was now a shell waiting for everyone else to sort it out.

Blaire stood at the entrance to the kitchen, shielding herself with the pillar separating her and the body. Her mother's jaundiced skin made her seem almost like a wax figure, glowing in a room illuminated by the morning sun. Blaire stood paralysed, not able to remember if anything was ever really real. She died peacefully yet alone, and Blaire wasn't sure if that was worth it. Screaming, crying and begging — that was real. There was nothing more terrifying now than not knowing you're about to die. Hopefully she'd felt the oppressive heat of the sun one last time, or the dull chill of the night. Blaire slowly lowered herself onto the cool tile and when her hand met the light chill, the body became just bearable to be around. It was all over, and yet her back still ached and her body remained still.

Blaire's body moved on its own, calling the hospice nurse with a voice she couldn't be fully sure was hers. For hours her mother laid on the bed. A person walking quickly past probably wouldn't know she was dead, but Blaire knew. She sat opposite her on a dining room chair half a metre away. She watched, waiting for her mother to look more like herself. The more she stared the less she could remember how her body looked in their old backyard. Sprawled on the grass, she would shield her eyes with an unwrinkled hand, a smile that would soon wear into her face. Her skin was mottled, and even now she looked tired. By the time she found herself back at the kitchen entrance, Blaire couldn't remember letting the two hospice nurses in. She couldn't bring herself to sit back down in the chair. She worried about what they thought of her. Blaire wouldn't cry, instead barely nodding when the second nurse asked her if she'd like to say goodbye.

When her grandmother died, Blaire's mother hugged her, kissed her, and touched her. She cried—but not too hard because just like Blaire she knew that her mother's death was inevitable. Blaire, however, wouldn't dare touch her own mother, scared of how cold her skin might be. She couldn't tell all her secrets. Even now she worried about what would happen if her eyes opened one last time to gasp. Instead, all she could say was 'Goodbye, I love you.' She didn't know why she'd said I Love You but something about looking at the outline of her face convinced Blaire that it was indeed her mother.

Editor: Shree Baskar  
Designers: Natrikia N, Kelly Quach



# FALLOUT.

Alexa Stevens

WE ARE MOURNING. I SMEAR  
THE WATER ACROSS YOUR CHEEK.  
A CATALOGUE: SMOOTH SKIN,  
EYES YOU STOLE FROM YOUR MOTHER,  
DIMPLE. I WATCH  
THE SHEET BENEATH US STAIN  
WITH THE INEVITABLE. YOU,  
A LIVE WIRE ALONG MY SPINE.  
THIS, WE BOTH KNOW, MEANS NOTHING  
NOW. WE ARE MOURNING, IN THIS LIGHT,  
OLD AUTOMATONS LEARNING  
INTIMACY: A HAND,  
RAISED. A SENTENCE  
STOPPED.  
I BIDE MY TIME.  
WE COUNT THE RUSTY BREATHS  
IN, AND OUT.

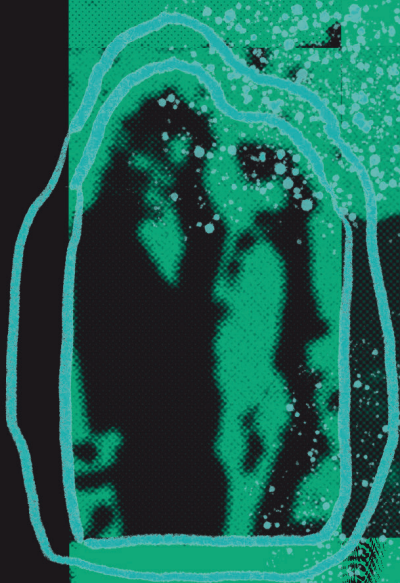
Editor: Alex Neale, Anh Noel  
Designer: Kelly Quach  
Photo: Anh Noel



WHAT DOES  
RAW MEAN TO  
YOU?



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04

Aaron Khong Yu  
Xiang

Editors: Haley  
Vu & Dominique  
Lakis

Designer: Annie  
Ngueyn

## Conquering the Uncanny Valley

The Consequences of Photorealism in Gaming



*Jedi: Survivor*, a game released by Electronic Arts (EA) in late April, received glowing praise from critics and fans alike for its spectacular photorealistic visuals. Despite this, the game's performance faced multiple issues and crashes, requiring developers to refix its software. This is the same story we see nowadays in Triple-A games (high budget games that are produced by well-known publishers). Though these have bloated production budgets, they lack innovative merits, and sometimes require multiple post-launch fixes to reach a playable state. Many gamers argue that mismanagement and incompetence are to blame, but an often-overlooked factor is the industry's usage of photorealistic graphics in games to its own detriment.

The obsession with photorealism within gaming culture and industry has always boggled me. As an artistic medium, its unique feature is the interactive nature of it. In a rule-oriented system, players interact with the abstract which evokes emotional responses. The irony between gamers using this medium as a form of escapism and still desiring realism in their visual experiences does not escape me.

If I am beginning to look like some curmurmudgeonly trench-coated hipster waving a stick at clouds, allow me to clear the air. The amount of progress made by the industry toward emulating realism is truly staggering. However, this bull-headed obsession with photorealism has given rise to several unfortunate realities.



Early video games had an uphill battle with graphical realism; especially in regard to emulating human appearances. This challenge is explained by Professor Mashiro Mori's theory known as the uncanny valley. He claims that objects attempting to replicate human resemblance can result in detachment and unease. Therefore, early developers focused on graphical stylisation by simplifying models and focusing on art direction. Games such as 'Shadow of the Colossus' or 'Bioshock' exemplify this developmental ethos.

In the mid 2000s, computing processors became exponentially more powerful and gaming companies found themselves at a crossroad. What exactly should they do with the extra power? The industry powerhouses decided to pursue realism and dedicated themselves to conquering the uncanny valley. The demand for better computer processing units (CPUs) and graphic processing units (GPUs) increased

the support for this endeavour. This led to software manufacturing companies such as NVIDIA and AMD flooding the market with higher performance processors. The cycle of gaming companies leading the charge, software companies fueling the trek and customers loyally marching onwards behind them was the leading pattern in the industry for a decade.

Now, the zeitgeist of high-definition graphical realism is a looming specter that hovers around the gaming industry and culture. Triple-A games are now a mess of photorealistic tech demonstrations and amateur Hollywood productions. Art direction has been eschewed in favour of photorealism, making the majority of games visually homogenous. Gaming companies now desperately market shiny graphics and pre-rendered visuals like movie trailers in the hopes of luring enterprising gamers like an anglerfish without showing anything of substance in terms of gameplay or gameplay mechanics.





The pursuit of graphical realism consumes the majority of resources during development. This leaves game mechanics and the design starved for attention. Ask yourselves how many innovative ideas we've seen in the Triple-A circle this past decade and you'll have an easier time trying to find a drop-bear in the wild.

The demand for photorealism has pushed developers into obscene work schedules which has come at the cost of their physical and mental health. The common belief is that overworking developers is necessary to achieve great games. Is this effort worth it if precious resources are used to model superfluous visual features such as realistic horse testicles or detailed cheek hairs? Growing issues of backwards compatibility between older tech and photorealistic games combined with the ever-increasing hardware requirements for HD graphics have led to a financial barrier for gamers looking to access triple-A products and rookie developers looking to get a foot into the market. Attempting to play high-end games such as *Cyberpunk 2077* on older computers is likely to burn your house down before you get the chance to complain about how it crashes upon startup. Increasing costs, longer development times and the sheer technical challenges of incorporating HD graphics are making triple-A games riskier than ever.

So, is the solution to forgo photorealism entirely? Perhaps not. Photorealism is here to stay and regardless of our preferences, it is crucial to promote feasible alternatives within the industry.

Rather than chasing the misleading perception of over-designed graphics and photorealism, the industry should focus on a more simplistic and thoughtful approach. By embracing art direction and accepting technical limitations, game developers can

avoid last-minute fixes before launch to ensure smoother development. Given the prolonged stagnation of crucial aspects in game development, such as physics engines, artificial intelligence, and level design, it is high time to harness the surplus processing power available to bolster these areas. However, to truly make a substantial impact, it is crucial to encourage the promotion of unionization and worker's rights among game developers, both through legislative measures and civil proceedings. This will help transform triple-A games into a more sustainable and equitable environment for both new and experienced developers.

In 2003, James P. Wolf, author of *The Video Game Theory Reader* observed that from the 70s to the 80s, videogames increasingly relied on visual conventions from film and television to create graphics representational of reality instead of relying on abstract interactivity to communicate artistic intent. Whilst Wolf's observations may not have fully anticipated the extent of graphical innovations in the 21st century, his insights still hold true, particularly in the world of triple-A game development.



If one wishes to conquer the uncanny valley, the best way is to go around it entirely.





# SRC Reports

## **Education Collective**

Written by Cherish Kuehlmann

This year the Education Collective have been campaigning around two key issues: the UNSW staff strike and affordable housing.

During week 1, UNSW staff went on strike in their fight for real wage increases, job security, improved workloads, and reversing casualisation. Strikes are the most important action staff can take to stand against university management attacks on working conditions.

Management in recent years have delivered countless attacks on our education too: trimesters, reduced course offerings, faculty and degree mergers. There is nothing inevitable about pay and job cuts, it's a choice. We know that UNSW management has the money to provide a decent standard of education. The Vice Chancellor earns over \$1 million a year and the university recorded a \$300 million surplus in 2021.

Throughout campaigning it was great to receive an overwhelmingly positive reception from students who supported staff taking strike action and knew that a win for staff demands would directly improve education at UNSW.

We are campaigning for UNSW to cut rents, which would also put pressure on other rentals in the area to lower their prices too. They should provide housing for students, not profit! Get in contact with the Education Collective to get involved!

Designer: Antonia Tsang

View your SRC Representatives' full statements online: [tharunka.com](http://tharunka.com) or on Insta @tharunkaunsw

## **Paddington Representative**

Written by Daniel Mulia

This year, our union have set up a Food Pantry at Paddington. Thanks to the help of Miles (Portek) and his Volunteers at the FoodHub. After waiting years, students have taken action into their own hands.

Currently, student volunteers make deliveries on weekly basis through public transport or through students with a car. We are seeking solutions so that deliveries will be managed by Arc in the future.

With increasing amounts of volunteers in our union, we are expanding our free lunch/toast program from once to twice a week, with plans to expand to five days a week by the start of term three.

This term, we organised and supported Paddington NTEU members, sending a mass email to all tutors and convenors to not hold class on strike day. We stopped a handful of classes from running. Moving forward, we will support further NTEU action through withholding marks during assessment periods.

Volunteers are creating a course rating website for Paddington. Following CSESOC's electives website, we will provide students with an informative method of selecting courses. UNSW's current system tricks students with partial course outlines, causing students to sign up for something they did not intend on taking and being stuck as it's too late to change. We seek to provide an alternative to MyExperience, so students can see peer feedback before class signup. Instead of providing free market research for UNSW and receiving a summary sentence of student feedback about the course.



W henever the rich are depicted in media, it is more often than not in conjunction with a feeling of untouchability; that with immense wealth, the successful can do as they wish. Think of the parties from *The Great Gatsby*, the allure of Willy Wonka's magical factory, and the very concept of Batman playing into this power fantasy of money and masculinity. Though they have their extravagance and exaggerations, the rich are always depicted in a hyper-reality so that we, the audience, may see their magical world's downfall or continuation. Alas, an aspect of this hyper-reality I find enthralling is the music taste of these capitalistic icons. Like everyone, these characters obsess over songs and genres.

Arguably simplest recent example is in Matt Reeves' *The Batman* (2022), in which Robert Pattinson's Bruce Wayne spends extensive periods of time brooding to Nirvana's 'Something In The Way'. The song makes sense in the context of the film, its gritty atmosphere, and its neo-gothic setting. The Bruce Wayne of this adaptation is a recluse, and the thick eyeliner, the song, the mumbling,

all coalesces into a very stylised take on the character. But it's a double-edged sword: it doesn't take too much of a leap for it to become cannon fodder for memes, and this depiction of Bruce Wayne makes him feel more like an angst-y teen and not the eligible bachelor one would think of. The subtext is that Wayne doesn't really care for the glitz and glamour offered by his wealth. It does characterise him as a member of the populace, which is necessary for the film's thriller angle, but at any rate, as Wayne is still a billionaire in the context of the film, with a butler, a decrepted mansion, he remains privileged.

Famous again for its song selection, Mary Harron's adaptation of *American Psycho* (2000), also falls into the realm of the meme. Look no further than the classic "you know Huey Lewis and the News?" scene, in which Bateman, performed by Christian Bale, proceeds to lecture his guest on their discography. Bateman's obsession works on several levels regarding the hyper-reality of the rich. It is that easy for Bateman to be observed through a surreal, unreliable lens.

Throughout the movie, we see moments where Bateman struggles to communicate and make a connection. By way of talking about Huey Lewis, it is an attempt to be human, an attempt to have some form of a personality trait that isn't based on his appearance and the idea of success. But it borders obsession: as Bateman explains his appreciation for the band and their music, it feels rehearsed, as much of a façade as everything else Bateman does to hide a very a sadistic man. He prepares to murder his companion as he spiels his essay, subsequently swings the axe, splattering blood as 'Hip To Be Square' plays. And like Batman, the way that longing comes through, like the silly music taste, is by feeling emasculated, by becoming lost in this hyper-reality. Both wear masks and fall into fantasies. I suppose Bateman wants to be a square but is trapped in a word where he's incapable.

Kendall Roy! Everyone's favourite sad boy and 'eldest son' to media conglomerate founder, Logan Roy is such a fascinating case study. His music taste is an integral part of the identity of HBO's *Succession* (2018-2023), in both moments of humour, but also in the DNA of the show, via the theme's homage to the genre through its subdued hip-hop beat.

We are first introduced to Kendall in the backseat of a car. As we see the cityscape of New York go by, the Beastie Boys *An Open Letter To NYC* plays through a bulky pair of headphones he wears. He punches the seat in front and lets out emphatic 'yeahs' as he is intercut further with the busy streets.



# GIVING THE AUX TO YOUR BOSS

Thierry St. Quintin

Kendall punches to the beat, and we see him mouthing along, until suddenly we are pulled out of Kendall's world and into reality, as in silence, he mumbles the words in a whiny cadence echoing vocalist Adam Yach. The reaction of the driver is finally shown as he looks across the seat and quickly back.

Kendall Roy, who feels like a man with all the power, literally appears as a meek child. I cringe and I laugh — I can't help but obsess over this scene. The editing is just perfect. — arguably, it's the same awkwardness of Patterson's obsession with Nirvana, but what's different here is the intentionality behind it. Kendall is to be a literal man-child here, not a cool brooding millionaire.

What helps this is The Beastie Boys themselves. The persona of the group is built out of parody: they have a frat boy image that is designed to not be taken seriously. But Kendall's, for lack of a better word — hard-on for the group in this scene tells us that this meaning is lost on him, and he engages with them in the same way as their initial late 1980s steenage fanbase. Moreover, the Beastie Boys' popularity has for the most part diminished in our contemporary world, making their inclusion an instant portrait of Kendall's world: the world of a man-child who will try everything he can to just win.

In the end, we are always listening to something. On the bus, the walk home, waiting for a coffee, there is always a soundtrack. But what is interesting about these powerful men's taste in music is that it's seemingly far too easy to laugh at. Maybe it's because it humbles them, maybe it's because we the audience can see a true vision of their mind, or maybe, we see our own music taste in theirs and perhaps, that could be confronting.

Editor: Arieta Varaessos, Rahemma Azwar  
Designer: Sally N



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Grotesque, every surface of skin drenched in crimson red, she screams in triumph as she escapes in a getaway car. Or still, sitting cross-legged in front of a burning flame, her hundred-yard stare haunting as the scene cuts to the credits. Her survival? Secured. But her sanity? Unsure.

The 'final girl' is a trope that has trailed horror films for as long as they've been popular. And their impact is unlike any other.

For example, one of the final scenes in the 2018 remake of Italian horror classic *Suspiria* shows the lead character, played by Dakota Johnson, succeed in becoming the leader of a coven of witches. She stands over the witches' sabbath, chest wide open, dripping blood, flesh carved in the familiar shape of a vulva.

Graphic and jarring, the imagery alone stays with you long after you've finished the film. To some, this is too much. But to others, scenes like these are a kind of cathartic release; a strange feeling of emotional liberation at the survival of the final girl. But is this strange?

Horror is unflinching in its use of gore and barbarity. Nonetheless, their role in these films is to, undoubtedly, evoke a sense of satisfaction; the survival of a woman, despite all odds. In most cases, the graphicness of blood and guts simply elevates the emotions and the strange catharsis we feel.

And, of course, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing the female lead drenched in blood, walking out alive as the screen fades to black.

Most recently, *Evil Dead Rise* (2023) provided that feeling in spades.

The movie follows Beth, a young woman, as she attempts to survive a night in her sister's rundown apartment. The catch? Said sibling is possessed by a demon, thirsty for the blood of anyone it can get its hands on, including that of her three children. Protecting them from their demonic mother, whilst also dealing with the surprise of her unplanned pregnancy, Beth learns about motherhood in the most extreme way one could imagine.

By the end of the film, she is confident in her abilities to take care of her lone surviving niece, and her future child. Whilst the trauma of the characters' struggle is obscene (to say the least), her endurance throughout the movie created a rush that only horror movies pull off.

Like bread and butter, horror movies and the female cathartic release go hand in hand together. The intensely



Rehemma Azwar





charged atmosphere provides the perfect backdrop for allegories of the female struggle. Whether it be motherhood, puberty or sexuality, these underlying themes haunt the plot of so many horror films — it's honestly quite difficult to find a classic horror story that doesn't.

*Carrie*? Puberty and maturing out of girlhood. *Jennifer's Body*? Sexual assault and female exploitation. The *VVitch*? Misogyny and fear of witchcraft, or really, fear of woman's strength.

But why is it satisfying? Perhaps it comes from our instinctual basic human desire to persevere, survive and thrive. It's like those sport success stories where an athlete comes from a struggling background to years later holding a gold Olympic medal. You'd never thought they'd make it, but they did.

In this case, replace a medal with surviving a stab wound and a low-income family with a serial killer in the middle of the woods.

However, there is some justification on why the 'final girl' character isn't the most feminist or progressive of ideas. She's often the cookie cutter 'good girl', who barely hangs out with her friends outside school, and is inexperienced with the opposite sex. Think Sidney Prescott from *Scream* (1996) or Laurie Strode from *Halloween* (1978), who is credited as the original final girl.

So why is it that the lone surviving woman must be socially acceptable, conforming to what is deemed morally right by the patriarchy's standards?

Horror movies have had a long misogynistic legacy. In a largely male dominated film industry, it's no surprise why this is the case. See the archetype

of 'the promiscuous girl' as punishment for being sexually active, she is the one who dies first within the plot. She, who sins, is punished.

She, who sins, is punished.

But an alternative feminist reading of these movies could provide us with a more nuanced and interesting perspective to these films. That we can both acknowledge its more controversial characterisation aspects but still find the story engaging.

In recent years there has been a new wave of horror movies that have centered on more complex female characters. *Ready or Not* (2019) and *Pearl* (2022) are successful both in box office and in execution of providing an outlet to display female rage and that cathartic release that we seek from these films.

The visceral emotions these characters go through are extremely validating. They teach a very important lesson — it is better to die fighting than be compliant in struggle.

It is not the image of women's suffering that provides this feeling, but rather her resilience and rage as she escapes her torment that feeds into it. The idea of the universal suffering that women are destined to receive in the current patriarchal landscape we live in is cyclical and unescapable.

So, when we are shown a fictional woman who somehow, despite all odds, makes it bloodied to the finish line. It's a reminder that this world, as brutal as it can be, is survivable. That every day still living is our survival secured.

Editors: Alexa Stevens, Eloise, Wajon  
Designer: Annie Nguyen





# A NATION SHATTERED:

## THE STORY OF MALAYSIA'S MAY 13TH TRAGEDY

The 13th of May 1969 is a significant date in Malaysian history marked by a tragic event known as the '13th of May Tragedy'. It was a day of violent racial conflict that occurred primarily in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, and was a result of simmering ethnic tensions and political rivalries. It continues to be one of the darkest moments in the country's narrative.

To fully understand the riots, it is essential to dive into the historical context that led to the eruption of violence. Malaya, as it was formerly known, gained independence from British colonial rule on August 31st, 1957. The eventual formation of Malaysia in 1963 brought together a diverse population of Malays, Chinese, Indians, and various other ethnic groups.

The 1969 general elections, held on May 10th, were controversial and its results were highly contested. The ruling Alliance Party won a majority of seats but faced strong opposition from the newly formed, and most importantly, majority-Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Parti Gerakan.

A peaceful victory parade turned violent when members of the opposing political parties clashed. This incident triggered a wave of violence that rapidly escalated and spread throughout Kuala Lumpur. The violence primarily involved fights between ethnic Malays and Chinese communities, but bystanders were often dragged into the brutality. More than 700 buildings were set on fire and around 6,000 people were left homeless. The exact number of casualties remains unknown due to bodies getting hidden or left unidentified, but official figures state that 196 had been killed.

In a thought-provoking interview conducted by The Nut Graph with one of the survivors, Paul Tan shared his personal experience and encounters during the tragedy.

***"Around 4-something pm... everything suddenly went quiet. I mean, that was a very busy part of KL [Kuala Lumpur] ... but within less than 10 minutes the whole street went quiet. People closed [their] shops. Out of the blue, someone said these words in Chinese 'the Malays are killing the Chinese', Tan said.***

All the Malays in his building were evacuated by soldiers in army trucks and only came back 3 months after. Everyone acted like nothing happened and everything went back to normal after 2 months. Ever since the incident, people always tried to forget that it happened, but this tragedy is often used by politicians to gain support during election season.

One of the most tragic incidents of the riot was the REX Cinema mass murder. An advertisement in Mandarin was played on the big screen telling Chinese people to leave the space. The remaining Malays who couldn't read Mandarin were brutally murdered by Chinese gangsters and the cinema was set ablaze.

The government declared a state of emergency and deployed the military to restore order.

The government declared a state of emergency and deployed the military to restore order. The tragedy led to significant changes in government policies, including the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971, aimed at addressing socioeconomic inequality among ethnic communities and cultivating unity among races in Malaysia. The NEP is meant to





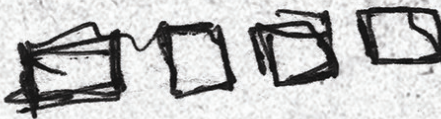


alleviate poverty and reassure the Malay community, who were seen as economically marginalized compared to the Chinese community. Its policies of affirmative action are still in use until today. The government also implemented curfews, media censorship, and other stringent measures to maintain control and prevent further damage.

The tragedy also heightened sensitivities regarding racial and religious issues. It has had a lasting impact on Malaysia's political dynamics and shaped contemporary issues. To this day, the 13th of May is used as a point of division, perpetuating a narrative that promotes polarisation between races, fuelled by fear.

As a newly registered voter, it is my duty to educate myself and to make the right decision that is not heavily influenced by the past. However, I can't help but empathize with other young voters who attach their votes to racial sentiments handed down by their relatives. Consequently, more conversations on this matter are internalised and passed on to the next generation. Therefore, awareness on the issue should come first to eradicate this relic of intergenerational trauma in order to achieve the ultimate goal; the unity that was never realized.

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### Words by Natrika N

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Designed by Natrika





The Myers-Briggs test, or MBTI test for short, is a personality typing system that categorises people into 16 distinct categories across 4 indicators: Extraversion vs. Introversion, Sensing vs. Intuiting, Feeling vs. Thinking, and Judging vs. Perceiving. While this testing system is most frequently used in careers testing to assess suitability for various roles, free online versions of the test can be taken by anyone who wishes to know themselves better.

Once when I asked a man what his star sign was, he told me he was a brontosaurus. This same man was adamant that he was an INTP, which was surprising since the two sets of categories aren't that different. I knew from personal experience that MBTI testing wasn't reliable: in my years of using it, out of the sixteen possible results, I've managed to amass five at various stages in life. And whilst I acknowledge that the teenage years come with changes in personality, something about this turbid and rapidly shifting typing seems implausible. Sure, I've changed throughout life—I'd like to think we all grow and change as time goes on—but I haven't been five different versions of myself at the times I've done the test.

In preparation for this article, I decided to take the test again to see which version it says I am today. I received the result of INFP-T, which is termed "the mediator", which is funny because I've never mediated anything.

# THE MYERS-BRIGGS TEST

## IS JUST ASTROLOGY FOR BUSINESSPEOPLE.

Annoushka Saunders



The 'T' stands for turbulent, while the 'A' stands for assertive. I've received both descriptors at different stages in life, however I've tended to receive the 'turbulent' descriptor more frequently.

The MBTI typing system, despite having up to 24 different possible results (including the T and A descriptors), is binary. Even without prior research this seems reductive — every person exhibits these traits at different points in time throughout their life. Humans have complex experiences, and generally exhibit most or all possible traits on a continuum throughout

their life. This is why most psychological diagnoses have requirements for the length of time symptoms have been present for, or quantitative benchmarks for how they affect functioning.

Adam Grant, Professor of Industrial Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, states that the categories of the MBTI test are not reliable, valid, independent or comprehensive, despite the Myers-Brigg's foundation website's claim that it boasts a 90% accuracy rating and a 90% test-retest correlation.

The test is thought to appeal to people and

companies as all results are framed positively. Participants are generally told that the test is created to align them with their 'perfect job', and 88 of the Fortune 100 companies are clients of the Myers-Briggs Company, according to the its general manager and senior vice president of products and marketing, Suresh Balasubramanian. Interestingly, many of the positive takes on the MBTI test seem to originate from the Myers-Briggs Company and its primarily careers-based clientele. and the test was originally created by a mother-daughter team with no formal psychological training. It's worth noting that these tests cater to the human desire for self-knowledge, some especially to pathologizing the self and human traits.

Personality typing is a \$2 billion industry for a reason. We all want to know ourselves. As with astrology, we all want to feel like we belong to a specific group. MBTI types purport to be able to find the job you're most suited for; while Astrology purports to be able to find the people you're most compatible with. These two categorizations have virtually the same level of credibility, and the false sense of superiority that MBTI fans feel over their astrology counterparts is entirely unwarranted.

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