



Issue # 12
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THE COBURG MEDDLER

THE ANTHROZOOLOGY EDITION

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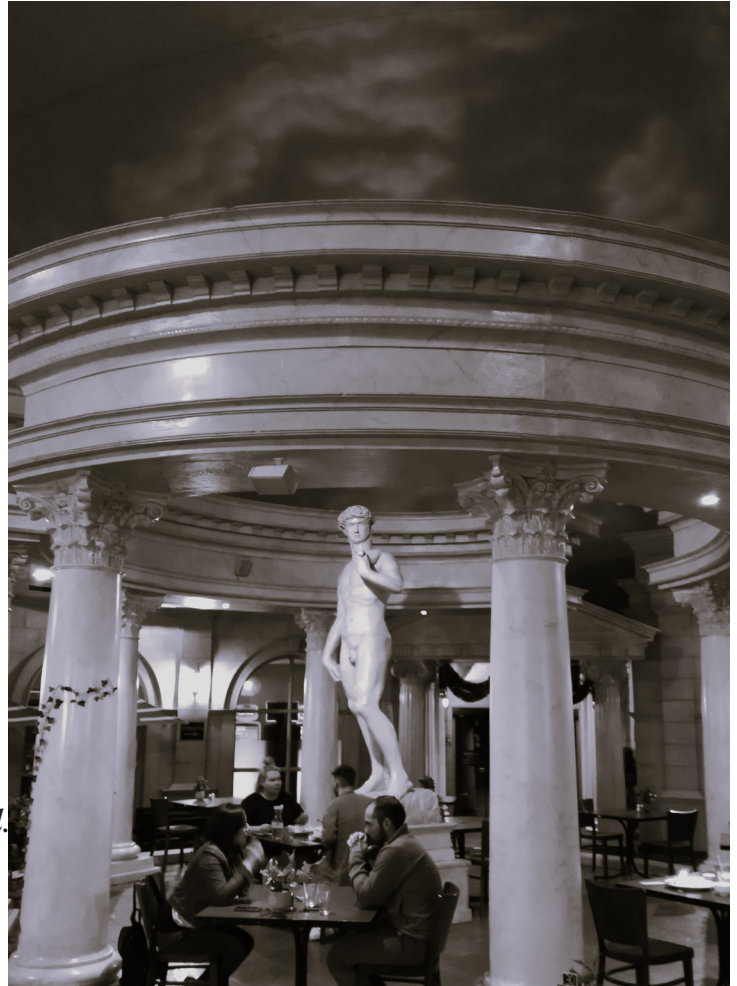
R.S.P.C.A NEEDS SOME R.E.S.P.E.C.T

A large, unassuming building in the eastern outskirts of Epping, the Epping Animal Welfare Facility (EAWF) has assisted 16,859 cats and 6,688 dogs since it opened in 2017. Recently, the adoption program run at the premise was largely scrapped in a cost-saving measure by a collaborative council decision.

Soon to be renamed to 'wat djerring Animal Facility', the EAWF was a collaboration between three councils: Whittlesea, Darebin and Merri-bek. The EAWF, which cost the three councils \$13 million dollars to establish, had its operations entrusted to the RSPCA, Australia's peak animal welfare organisation.

[EAWF story continued page 3]

This newspaper was written and developed on Wurundjeri Land. Sovereignty has not been ceded. If possible, people should contribute to the Pay the Rent campaign. <https://www.invasionday.org/pay-the-rent-campaigns>



A WELL-TIMED CAMPAIGN PRESERVES MORELAND HOTEL'S DECOR - FOR NOW...

When local resident Hannah Garvan launched a campaign on 25 November 2022 to save the iconic decor in Moreland Hotel from being renovated, it appeared ambitious and unlikely to succeed. After all, if a business decides to renovate, they are well within their rights.

However, Moreland Hotel is not like any pub.

The decision to renovate its replica of Michelangelo's David and surrounding Colosseum (apparently inspired by a trip to Las Vegas in the 80's) came from its licensee, rather than its owner.

The owner of the hotel is Australian Leisure and Hospitality Group (ALH), a huge corporation that was founded by Australian billionaire, Bruce

Mathieson, and part-owned by Woolworths. So, when the licensee, who runs the day-to-day operations of Moreland Hotel, decided that the unusual interior should be gutted and replaced with more access to big screens to view sport, the request was required to be approved by ALH's board.

[ALH story continued page 3]

LOCAL NEWS UPDATES

COBURG HIGH SCHOOL SCORES FUNDING

Due to an energetic and well-publicised campaign ahead of the November election, Labor committed to investing \$17.8 million in Coburg High School. As the largest school in the Pascoe vale electorate, it was in need of new infrastructure to support its growing population. Apparently, the school didn't even have bells, though that was later found to be ideological. A petition for funding that was made in the Victorian Legislative Council was originally sponsored by Fiona Patton of the Reason Party, who has unfortunately lost her seat.

IS COUNCIL STEALING FROM THE MEDDLER?

One of the Meddler's plastic distribution boxes is missing from its Coburg pole. We don't want to point any fingers, but we suspect it's the Merri-bek Council, or possibly the Coburg Library. We have this message for them: you may think you have a valuable display box, but we have swapped it out for a replica. Unfortunately for you it is also equipped with a tracking device and remote self-destruction technology. However, it does have sentimental value and we would like it returned please.

VEGAN 365 CLOSED DOWN

Vegan 365 provided delicious vegan versions of Vietnamese food for the people of Coburg for over 3 years. A big mock prawn-shaped hole has been left in their wake. A small Nepalese cafe has taken over the space and is confusing locals who remember the space being bigger.

BRUNSWICK CEILIDH IN COBURG TEMPORARILY.

The ceilidh's flitted awa tae the auld fowks hame fir a bit.

MERRI-BEK LOOKING TO SCRAP ANNUAL HARD RUBBISH COLLECTION

As of October 2022, Merri-bek Council has decided to trial a system of hard rubbish collection requiring people to book up to two hard rubbish collections for their home every year.

The scavengers, the sharehouse collectors, the inspired sculpturists, are lamenting a future with less wonder. A potential upside though is that having to book an individual collection will likely reduce the amount of hard rubbish which ends up in landfill each year.

Merri-bek is encouraging people to leave feedback for the trial, which you can access via their website.

CATALYST SOCIAL CENTRE

Catalyst Social Centre is a radical community space which has opened on Sydney Rd, Coburg. The Centre is "focused on supporting and spreading decolonial, anti-capitalist and abolition-centred thought and action". It claims to be fully community-funded and non-affiliated with political parties.

Catalyst is organised by and hosts a number of regular grassroots collectives including 'Food Not Bombs' who cook free community meals on Wednesday evenings. Other regular events include film screenings by Sedition Cinema.

A SNOWY CHRISTMAS

In the lead up to Christmas, the Coburg mall was speckled with pigeon poo.

To get both sides of the story, one of our reporters spent a day on the ground (and air) with a local pigeon named Everton. In a wide-ranging and personally enlightening conversation, Everton argued that the focus on pigeon poop in Merri-bek was an exercise in victim-blaming, and distracted from the structural issues that bring pigeons into urban environments in the first place. He was, however, optimistic about the prospect for 24/7 cat containment, saying it was "Coo[l]".



FLIRTING SHADOWS UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

The longstanding owner and manager of Flirting Shadows has passed on the culinary baton. Now, the cafe is making a name for itself by offering bubble tea and Vietnamese coffee.

[ALH story continued from page 1]

While this may have otherwise been a routine business decision, the timing was unfortunate for ALH.

On November 21, a few days before Garvan's campaign launched, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission released a public statement on ALH's serious breaches of their obligations under the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 (Vic). The regulator announced that 80 per cent of pokie machines installed across Australia under the control of ALH were non-compliant with legislation that aims to minimise harm caused by pokie machines. Specifically, the legislation requires all electronic gaming machines to feature an interactive 'YourPlay display'.

YourPlay is an optional tool for people gambling, but is mandatory to install on gambling

machines, as it assists people gambling to set limits on the time or money they spend and to monitor their gaming machine play across venues.

ALH and some of the decision-makers within the company are facing significant fines.

The decision to renovate the interior of Moreland Hotel has, according to the licensee, been delayed due to the PR risk created by the campaign.

While a local theatre troupe already has its beady eyes on the David if the renovation plans eventually do go ahead, we would argue that the David and Colosseum would be more widely enjoyed al fresco, in the Coburg mall or surrounds.

By SS and BB



Photo by Erik Anderson

[EAWF story continued from page 1]

Unfortunately, the three councils have decided to end the contract with the RSPCA and entrust the EAWF with the Whittlesea Council. This is a curious move by the three councils, given that Whittlesea Council is currently in administration and being run

by an undemocratically elected board.

For background, in March 2020, all of the Whittlesea Councillors were dismissed by way of statute. In a damning report handed to the Victorian Parliament by municipal monitor, Mr Yahudi Blacher, it was explained that:

'...the Council itself is

broken by years of internal division, factionalism, personality conflicts and bitter legacies of perceived betrayals. The poisons in Council run so deep that Councillors from both sides of the divide see little prospect of ever bridging their differences. Council governance has irretrievably collapsed'.

As a result of the mass exodus of Whittlesea Councillors, a team of only three administrators have been appointed by the Minister for Local Government. These administrators will remain in the position of the previous councillors until the 2024 local council elections.

The administrators have adopted a code of conduct, which promises that they will work in the best interests of the community. However, the administrators are not bound

by the same laws that control, monitor and guide councillors, and they are not democratically elected to represent the interests of their constituents.

In the June 2022 meeting, the Whittlesea Council mentioned that they would be moving to an in-house service delivery model to reduce costs and to lean more on external

organisations to take on the burden of housing animals. Animal shelter organisations have raised concerns about this move, given that these organisations are often volunteer-run and underfunded. The RSPCA, on the other hand, has comparatively more resources and pays staff to attend to the care of these animals.

While the Whittlesea Council has agreed to provide adoption services where other agencies cannot accommodate more animals, it is unclear why the unpopular decision was made to begin with, and why the operation rests with an unelected local council.

By Edwina Snagge

INTRODUCING THE COBURG ONION

The vacant car parks outside Schoolhouse Studios are silently screaming for permanent community occupation.

The Merri-bek Council owns the land and building where Schoolhouse Studios currently is. The building is leased by the Council to three companies in a 'tri-partied sub-licence'; John Holland Group, Coles and LXR.

Coles' part of the lease expires last, on 27 August 2026. Until mid-2021, Coles operated the notorious 'second Coles' (opposite from its more popular Coles) from this site. Instead of breaking its 10 year lease, which would have cost them a lot of money, Coles agreed to sublet the space to Schoolhouse Studios for 5 years (when their lease expires).

This part of Coburg, including Victoria St Mall, is considered Coburg's 'activity centre' meaning it has been identified as an area of key activity and development by the State and Council.

You would think that the area is a developer's dream. One hitch, however, is that the Council is obligated to provide a certain number of car parks for local businesses, which means redevelopment plans are likely to require multi-story or underground car parks to offset the loss of current parking, pushing up development costs.

There have been numerous, long-standing plans by council to finally develop the area. The most recent plan, the Coburg

2020 Structure Plan, was abandoned - presumably due to COVID-19 and difficulty getting investors.

However, given investment is more attractive post-lockdown, it can only be a matter of time before a newer iteration of the plan is underway.

This is why the community needs to pre-empt them and think of how the space could be ideally utilised.

With help from interested parties, the Meddler has developed an example of what this area could look like - see image. (NB: this onion was conceived of and designed before the release of the latest 'Knives Out', and we have proof should the producers try to litigate the matter).



The Coburg Onion- controversially created with AI

This onion holds a theatre space, a community hall, a pop-up site for free government services, a squash facility and a late night cafe (it's time we are able to get a coffee after 4pm).

But this is just one example of what this space could be.

Recently, the Coburg Night Market was hosted in this exact spot, due to the usual spot being weather-effected. Hundreds of people browsed market stalls of tea towels and calendars, while enjoying spiralled potatoes and music. The event, unbeknownst to Merri-bek Council, served as a proof of concept - the area

can be used to support other community events and activities.

Share your dreams for an ideal use of the space to thecoburgmeddler@gmail.com or fill in the survey by following this QR code, before it's too late.



By ES

SHHH...

Coburg Library and its rusty boombox

Victoria Mall has a community of rough sleepers that generally sit and socialise outside the Coburg Library.

Last year, Coburg Library frosted the windows so that patrons of the library and those sitting outside it would be less visible to each other. It was a step towards trying to sanitise Coburg and pretend we don't live in a community with rough sleepers and their acquaintances.

Recently, they've taken another step and begun playing music through their metal, grated, external speakers throughout the night, which has coincided with warmer weather. A source close to the Coburg Library disclosed that the measure was directed to increase safety around the library and to de-incentivise rough sleepers from choosing the seats as their resting place.

Apparently, staff have complained about harassment and seeing unsavoury acts around the library. Police have recommended the measure to the Coburg Library as a way to deter people from camping there overnight.

During the day, the music acts as a fairly inoffensive addition to the busy chatter of Victoria Mall (although they have already given into temptation and have been playing instrumental christmas music). During the night, it creates eerie background music to an empty street.

It seems a strange measure to increase safety given that those who are asleep aren't committing crimes. If Coburg Library thinks that it is increasing safety, they are recklessly conflating rough sleepers with people who commit crimes.

Coburg Library has a 'feedback' box in which people can provide their opinions. Help support the local rough sleepers who find safety in their streets, and make your opinion known.

By Elena Snagge

Update: The Meddler interviewed a regular user of the exterior library seats, who asked us what we had against music.

MAKING A KILLING

A mystifying salute has been directed at the noble cow from local clothes company SÜK. The brand's latest 'Cowhide' line can only be a gesture of some sort to the animal that helped the company get off the ground.

The company, whose public face is in Brunswick East but is based in South Yarra, was co-founded in 2018. The family-owned company sells workwear for different types of bodies, creating fashionable and comfortable options for workers. Body positive and ostensibly produced in fair trade factories in Pakistan, SÜK states that it donates some of its profits to various not-for-profit organisations.

Alan Schmidt, inaugural director of SÜK when it began in 2018, has had a long career in live cattle exports, primarily shipping livestock to Israel, and is the current CEO of Global Meats Pty Ltd and AustAgri.

In 2015, his company (Otway Livestock Exports) made news when leaked footage of inhumane practices at a destination abattoir in Israel led to a temporary shut down of the facility.

While Schmidt's company took action to help improve conditions at the abattoir, they have since been involved in ship malfunctions resulting in extended voyages of high-stocked vessels. This is perhaps unavoidable in such a trade, which, in addition to its entanglement with questionable and difficult to regulate abattoir practices, raises concerns around the stress of long-haul journeys on animals in crowded conditions (sometimes in extreme temperatures). The increased risk of international virus transmission is also an ongoing concern associated with live exports.

government ministers alike have proposed the phasing out of the controversial industry since 2014. For instance, New Zealand has recently committed to banning all live exports from April 2023, and while the Albanese government has stated plans to phase out live sheep exports, it has yet to commit to a timeline.

While Mr Schmidt stepped down as SÜK director after a year, his wife Rachel, who co-owned Otway Live Exports, still has 50% ownership of the clothing company.

The 'Cowhide' line isn't the only confusing messaging to come from the workwear brand. Earlier in the year, SÜK announced the return of its 'Oxblood' line, which, on reflection, might be a hark back to the Israel saga.

By SS and BB

Activists and federal



Artwork by Joe O

FLAVOURS OF COBURG



Tambo Ciek - meaning, 'can I get one more?'

Tambo Ciek is a newly opened Indonesian restaurant and mini-market, nestled away in Coburg's Walkers Arcade, just North of the mall. The restaurant serves Nasi Kapau - a Padang-style dish of rice topped with a mix of curries and other dishes of the customers choice.

When we arrived, we were warmly greeted by a person behind the bain-marie, as soft jazz permeated the bright area. The walls show beautiful hand paintings depicting the idea behind the food being offered; you select from a range of enticing dishes that have been prepared that day.

One wall of the restaurant has a modest selection of Indonesian snack items, such as tapioca crackers, fish ball crackers, squid crackers, nuts and dried banana snacks. A fridge stores fresh cheese and cake based desserts.

We opted for one vegetarian Nasi Kapau (\$17) and one standard Nasi Kapau (\$18.50).

The options for both meals remain consistent throughout the week, but Saturday visitors will encounter the Saturday special - a meal we are yet to experience (please write in).

For the vegetarian plate, we opted for a fried onion fritter, stir fry tempeh and beans, stir fry spicy potatoes and cassava leaf curry. The fried onion fritter was not too oily, and had a mild flavour of onion and carrot. The tempeh dish was packed with flavour and the beans were only lightly cooked, giving the portion a satisfying snap. The 'spicy potato' dish lived up to its name; a punchy meal with large cubes of potato that managed to remain soft inside despite a crispy exterior. Finally, the cassava leaf curry was a nicely dense curry, giving you the sense that you've well and truly had your government recommended serve of vegetables for the day.

For the plate with meat, we opted for the beef rendang, the jackfruit curry, a potato cake and spicy eggplant. The beef rendang was lightly charcoaled with a distinctly smokey, spicy flavour. It was a stand out dish, with hints of anise, and black cardamom. The Jackfruit curry had a noticeable heat from its spice, but didn't overpower the jackfruit's natural sweetness. The eggplant was slightly oily, but it was well cooked through, whilst maintaining its composition. The potato cake was curiously 'meaty', and it was unfortunately unremarkable.

Overall, the curries are eclectic but united by their use of strong spices and coconut milk.

Tambo Ciek is an exciting new addition to the culinary options in Coburg, which has not had many dedicated Indonesian options available.

These reviewers say: not just one more, we'd like many more.

By Pandora and Anon

*Tambo Ciek
4/471-474 Sydney Rd
Inside Walkers Arcade, Coburg
Open Tues-Saturday, 11.30-6pm*

TERMINAL PLANS

Melbourne Airport's unpopular new proposal

In an unprecedented display of public-spiritedness, Melbourne Airport has recently launched a 'community newsletter'. Residents of Merri-bek who have read their copy will now be aware of the airport's runway expansion plans, which are looking to go ahead despite persistent protest from environmental groups.

By way of context, Melbourne Airport has been a two-runway operation since it was opened in 1971. The original runways have been extended over the decades in order to accommodate bigger planes and more traffic.

Recently, Melbourne Airport has re-ignited a proposal to build a third runway in order to increase the capacity of the airport. Melbourne Airport states that the introduction of a third runway will allow an additional 136,500 aircraft movements a year. In their report on the project, Melbourne Airport noted that 'this represents 40 per cent more passengers and 43 per cent more aircraft movements'.

This isn't the first time Melbourne Airport has proposed a third runway. The original plans for the airport formulated in the late 1950s made provisions for the future introduction of a third and fourth runway. Melbourne Airport has been making formal steps towards actualising this dream since they drafted plans in 2013. In fact, in their community newsletter, Melbourne Airport mentions that they have futureproofed

their plans to accommodate a fourth runway.

Environmental groups have railed against a third runway since Melbourne Airport began advertising its plans. No 3rd Tulla Runway ('N3TR') is one such group. N3TR points to air travel being one of the big contributors to climate change. According to a recent EU report, there are significant CO₂ and non-CO₂ climate impacts from aviation. The International Civil Aviation Organization has recently estimated that if aviation operations stay on their current trajectory, emissions could triple by 2050 from 2015 levels, even taking into account the potential development of newer fuel-related technologies.

With the federal and state government committing to net zero emissions by 2050, it seems like a corollary to this commitment would be to reduce the potential for corporations (like airlines, who are not held accountable for failing their own set emissions goals) to increase harmful and largely unfettered operations.

This may be a convincing argument to take up with a government body, however in 1997, Melbourne Airport was privatised. Operations were then entrusted to the Australia Pacific Airports Corporation (APAC), who signed a 50 year lease with the Australian Government. In Australia, very few regulatory limits currently exist on emissions from corporations.

According to a report

compiled by APAC, the two runways will exceed their operational capacity by 2026, and a third runway is therefore crucial to meet future needs. APAC expects that the additional runway will bring in 23 million more passengers a year, and also an additional 136,500 aircraft movements per year. To put this into perspective, last year, there were almost 13 million passengers, and almost 127,000 aircraft movements at the airport. APAC is therefore seeking to facilitate an enormous increase in emissions from aircrafts by roughly 2026-7, when the third runway will likely be constructed if the development is approved.

Under the Airports Act 1996, the Melbourne Airport is required to provide the Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development (currently Catherine King) with a master plan every 5 years, and if there are large developments, a major development plan must also be approved. Recently, the federal minister approved the master plan from APAC, and is due to consider the major development plan regarding the third runway.

Readers may know that in September 2022, the federal government passed the Climate Change Act 2022. This act legislates Australia's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. How the government intends to achieve this whilst approving major works to increase profits and growth for corporations like APAC remains to be seen.

What is clear, is that there is a troubling rhetoric adopted by companies and government alike, that attempts to reassure both environmentalists and shareholders. There will be net zero emissions and growth. There will be another runway, but emissions will be reduced.

An interesting comparative analysis can be made by looking to the UK. In 2020, Heathrow Airport's third runway plan was ruled unlawful due to its disregard of the government's climate change commitments as outlined specifically in the Paris Climate Agreement. While the decision was later overruled by the Supreme Court on the basis that the Paris Agreement was not incorporated into domestic law and therefore does not constitute government policy, legal battles, among other factors, have significantly delayed the project which has yet to go ahead. Hopefully, Melbourne Airport's plans face similar and bigger hurdles, now that Australia's Paris Climate commitments have now been expressly adopted in the Climate Change Act 2022.

N3TR is currently pushing for an independent environmental impact assessment of greenhouse emissions which would result from the project, and an assessment on the effect on neighbouring woodland.

If the environmental destruction is not enough to light your fires, according to an interactive third runway flight path tool on Melbourne Airport's website, the new third runway will introduce a flightpath directly over Coburg. This means more noise, and more social media posts from locals asking why there are so many planes in the sky.

One other thing we learned from Melbourne Airport Community Newsletter is that they will be popping up at the Midsumma Carnival in late January to talk to festival goers about their (the Airport's, unfortunately) plans.

By Edwina Snagge

DR OKEY-DOKEY

DR OKEY-DOKEY is away at a training camp. We contacted Dr Okey Dokey's eccentric uncle who claimed he's a doctor, and asked him if he could answer one of the below questions.

Why do people say that dairy is bad when you have a cold? How do you cure a stitch? When people massage my shoulders it hurts really bad. What are 'knots' and can you cause further injury by getting them massaged? Will they naturally go away?

Here is an abridged version of his verbal response:

If you permit me the liberty, I believe I can answer all these questions with a poem.

What ties you up and fills you up?

It's your guts

What covers you up and knots you up?

It's your clothes.

What cramps you up and tightens you up?

It's your muscles.

Each shares a habit: to be tight, when you want it loose. And each habit can be anticipated and the precedent cause avoided.

And so, too, do they share a cure. At least thematically.

In the first case, we have the gut.

Dairy makes it tighten like bolt and nut.

If the nut is too loose, try psyllium husk in your juice.

If the nut is too tight, some WD40 will set you right (or if you can't find that - moviprep)

In the second case, we have a stitch...

If a stitch in the body, see my instructions above and you'll soon be chipper

If the stitch is in your clothes, then what you need, my friend, is a seam-ripper.

That brings us at last, to your shoulders,

Think of them as your neck holders

Without them, my friends, you'd be at a loose end

And in such cases, just remember what Joe-Bo told us

You see, don't fear, don't lose the plot

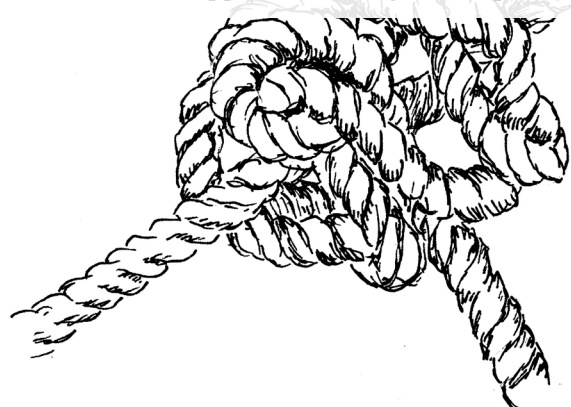
Be rough with those muscles, like a Gourdion knot

It can't hurt you my friend

To straighten that bend

And wouldn't you rather a rope than knot...

The Meddler stopped recording at this point



BOOK REVIEW

'How to Blow Up a Pipeline' by Andreas Malm

In this slim, arresting book, Andreas Malm essentially shakes the climate movement by the lapels and asks: why aren't we resorting to more violence? Climate change is plainly about as pressing as it's possible for a problem to be – holding in balance the very survival of life on this planet – and the responses of all our institutions of power have so far been distressingly inadequate. New coal mines are still being built. New oil pipelines are still being laid. Nothing is changing even half as fast as it needs to. In light of this, Malm asks, is it wise for the climate movement to keep hewing so religiously to its commitment to pacifism? So long as we're still only talking about blowing up things rather than people, isn't it about time to consider a wider diversity of tactics?

Malm piercingly criticises Extinction Rebellion for their fetishising of nonviolent resistance, ably pointing out that many of the historical analogues they point to as proving the superiority of nonviolent resistance, when you dig even a little below the surface, actually did have a militant wing pushing things along. And while the property destruction of the suffragettes, for instance, had a somewhat random and hooligan quality (smashing windows, cutting telegraph wires, blowing up postal boxes), the fight to reduce carbon emissions has the unique advantage of having a field of potential targets – coal plants, oil pipelines, and other carbon-criminal infrastructure – that are both symbolic of the problem as well as the actual

material cause of the problem. They're what's emitting the poison that's choking the world. To leave them standing, when humanity's situation is soberly assessed, would be the real crime.

Malm's posing of this challenge is salutary, but there is nonetheless a sense of something important getting swept underneath the rug. For while Malm considers a number of reasons why there has been less eco-sabotage than he would like (and the situation would seem to demand), he brushes over the most important one: state repression. Under new laws introduced to our Victorian state parliament this week just last month, for example, protesters attempting to prevent or disrupt native forest logging will face 12 months' jail or \$21,000 in fines. These laws are consciously designed to stifle precisely the kind of disruptive direct action that Malm spends his book encouraging, which probably goes much of the way to explaining why such action is relatively thin on the ground.

This omission is a direct result of the book's mission. Malm's volume is a polemic, carefully crafted to make peaceful climate activists consider the necessity of picking up a brick sometimes, or at least recognise that they're on the same side as those who do. He doesn't want to emphasise the life-ruining costs that can attend militant climate activism for the simple reason that he wants there to be more militant climate activists, because the survival of the earth upon which we stand depends on it. And it's hard to argue with him about any of it.

In the long run, the single most controversial declaration in the book may be Malm's insistence that it would be disastrous for the climate movement if eco-militants were to assassinate the CEOs of oil companies. In the face of the already-unfurling catastrophe, one might well ask whether such a conclusion can be so confidently asserted. Perhaps, like the pineapple on pizza that global food shortages will soon render an impossible-to-obtain delicacy, we shouldn't knock it until we've tried it.



MALL-CONTENTS



Last year, Zikkies, a new thrift store, opened up at 428 Sydney Rd, Coburg. Proceeds from Zikkies all go to the National Zakat Foundation, an Australian charity. Nabila, one of the co-owners of Zikkies, spoke with the Meddler whilst organising ties and helping an enthusiastic thrifter.

MEDDLER: Can you tell us a bit about the charity that Zikkies raises money for?

NABILA: The charity is the National Zakat Foundation, which is a muslim organisation in Australia. The money goes to programs that we run for the financially disadvantaged. We have programs for the youth, people experiencing family and domestic violence. All of the money we raise stays in Australia, and goes back to the local muslim community.

MEDDLER: Why did you choose Coburg to set up your shop?

NABILA: I grew up around the northern suburbs of Melbourne, so this is a familiar place to me. The community in Coburg is nice. I've done a bit of op-shopping up Sydney Rd, and so I decided that Coburg is probably the right area for us.

We were originally in a small office on Moreland Rd, but it was quiet with not much foot traffic. I was asked to try and find a good spot once the lease was up, and I came across this spot and tried my luck.

MEDDLER: Are you facing any challenges?

NABILA: Well, I've never done anything like this before. The opportunity for me to start this store feels like it came out of nowhere. I've found that the biggest challenge is figuring

out how to grow as a business. I think it will depend on more people knowing about us through customer loyalty.

We've received a bit of support with our business from the council. But we also get it in less predictable ways; for example, I have a friend who does the packing, moving and clearing of deceased estates. Families of these estates often want to donate a lot of their loved ones homes, so that helps.

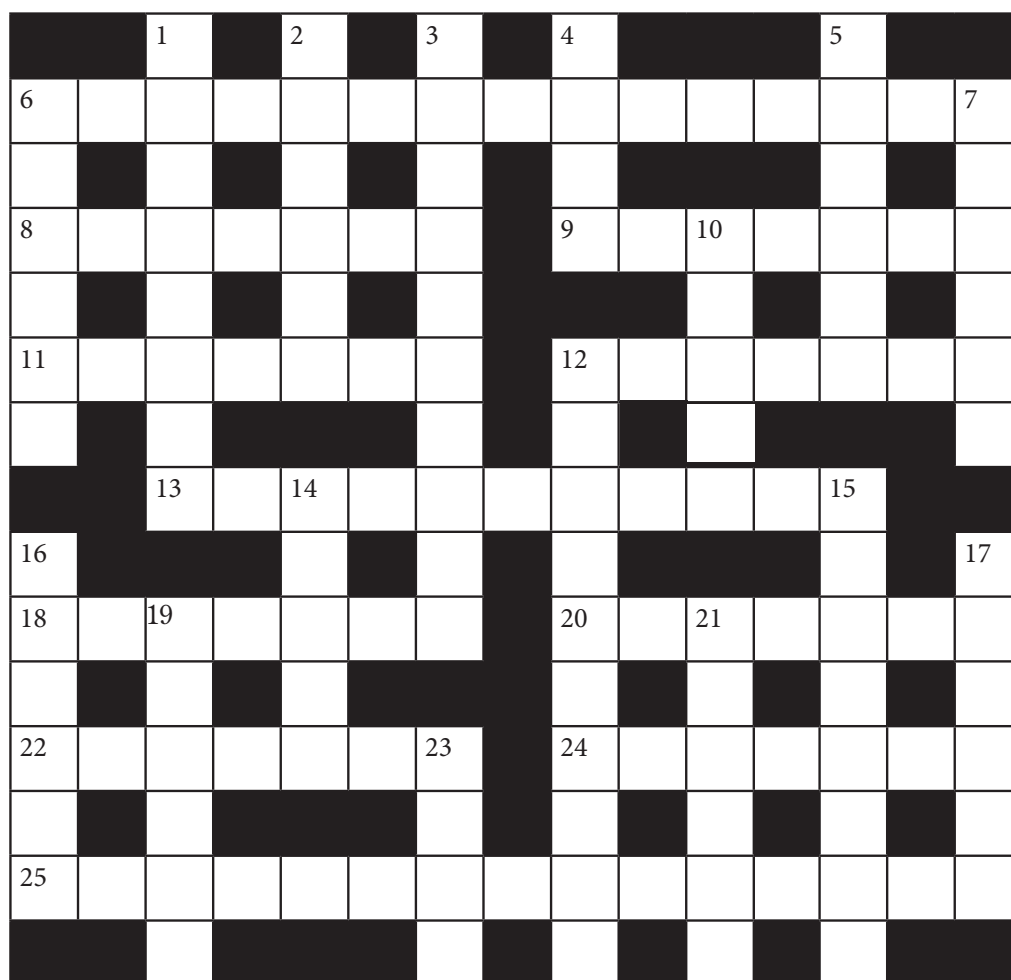
MEDDLER: How can the community support you more?

NABILA: We're trying to get volunteers to help me and my sister with the store. Otherwise, we accept donations of homewares, books, toys, shoes and accessories.

We don't take furniture because we don't have the space. In the future, I would love to open something bigger to accept furniture.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

By Cheese Dreams



ACROSS

- 6 All you've done is stomp and clinch me so terribly. (15)
 8 Chop, cook, bend around and go either side. (7)
 9 It's loftily delivered with grace, lamentably a mile short. (7)
 11 Backtrack in the horse cart era and reminisce. (7)
 12 Caught Astley and aquatic mammal lumping cheese. (7)
 13 Officials lose some dignity and ram sign. (11)
 18 Ring of dogs howling heard to be compliant. (7)
 20 Squash essential, infuse shaken quart with clove tips. (7)
 22 Mothers' awful soup container. (7)
 24 Shape to bother around midday. (7)
 25 Errands for fools gold, I was so cheese. (4,5,6)

DOWN

- 1 Production of co-ed cast is waylaid. (8)
 2 American Bachelor has stooge imprisoned in single cell. (6)

- 3 Emerging lark encircles mantel. (10)
 4 Australias' leading soap number one to a whole continent. (4)
 5 Fashionable enthusiast saw tape head as new. (6)
 6 Audrey Hepburn snatched squirrels nest, contracted illness of reddish-brown. (6)
 7 King swinger of down south London Town? (6)
 10 Rated top 99 for potassium and number one American Lake. (5)
 12 Tipped broad bean was coyote's nemesis. (10)
 14 Brothers throwing out rig when millenium ends. (5)
 15 Slowly a pellet each is taken from geisha. (8)
 16 Wok tossed before lug was an obsequious gesture. (6)
 17 Ship bearing signal rocks. (6)
 19 Brothers always leery outsiders. (6)
 21 Molluscs primarily cling on narwhal considering high seas. (6)
 23 Glaswegian kind of free? (4)

Answers on page 18

POLICE INACTION

On Friday September 30th, a dozen members of the Nationalist Socialist Network protested the Moonee Ponds Youth Fest. Dressed in black and wearing masks, they held banners calling the drag performer headlining the event a demon and a paedophile. Victoria Police formed a line between the NSN and the community event and proceeded to facilitate their protest for the remaining three hours of the event.

When community members implored Moonee Ponds Council staff to “do something” about the neo-Nazis who were performing sig heils and snapping pics for social media, the staff members told members of the public that giving these fascists attention was letting them win.

While it was powerful to watch young queer musicians take the stage and play for the children and youths despite the Nazi intimidation, it is a dangerous mistake to treat fascists like badly behaved children. These are adult men who practice a violent ideology and will use opportunities like children’s events to platform their beliefs.

These men are not badly behaved children who will run out of steam if everyone turns their backs. While people aren’t looking, they will take up more space and perform more escalatory acts, knowing that they can seed acts of violence and build a following in doing so. That was their intention in occupying the centre of today’s event in Moonee Ponds, and they were successful in their mission.

Despite the Council staff trying to convince concerned attendees that inaction was the best response, a network of queers and anti-fascists gathered and held banners and signs in response to the neo-Nazis. These counter-protesters were implored to “think of the children” by members of Victoria Police, while neo-Nazis continued to jeer and sig-heil while a young musician played.

The response by Victoria Police today was a distortion of democracy. When community members approached Victoria Police to ask what their response would be, police officers said that the NSN were protesting peacefully and therefore

were protected by the democratic right to protest. These men, wearing masks and sig heiling at children, were considered peaceful. To position acts of fascism as within the bounds of democracy is to legalise hate.

Attending police officers eventually shifted the narrative to claim that the NSN were too dangerous to move off, and that they had to wait until enough reinforcements arrived to act on the fascist presence. When anti-fascists formed a line of counter-protest, however, more police officers appeared in an instant, to ensure that the fascist and anti-fascist groups could not interact with each other. Clearly Victoria Police could have acted if they wanted to.

This is why we cannot rely on police to counter fascism effectively, as their priorities will always lie elsewhere. It is something of a fashion these days for the far-right to target drag and LGBTQIA+ events worldwide. The event was a reminder that the police and the state will inevitably find it easier to close their eyes and act as if nothing is happening.

Pretending that neo-Nazis are not standing right there will not make them go away.

By Matilda Wallace

MEDDLING MARY



I have recently started dating a woman casually. I found out that she is currently sleeping with a married woman, who is in a straight, monogamous relationship. The person she is seeing is pregnant. And what's more, she also knows the other person's husband. I think she's doing the wrong thing, but she thinks I'm overreacting. Should I stop seeing her?
– Paramoral Quandry

Dear Paramoral Quandry,

At first read, this does sound complicated! As a frequent viewer of daytime soap operas however, I'm confident we can tease some of these threads apart without anyone being pushed into an open elevator shaft.

You mentioned that you're only casually dating this woman, so I am going to assume that the discovery of her sexual relationship with another person is not in of itself the dealbreaker. It sounds like it has more to do with her participation in a lie. Should you continue to date someone who is willing to be engaged in an affair as "the other woman"? To put it into TV trope language, should we "Blame the Paramour"?

The answer depends on what your motivating concern is. As far as I can tell, it might fall under either or both of two categories:

1. You're concerned about dating someone who has demonstrated they are willing to participate in a lie to someone they know (the husband of the woman she is sleeping with). How can you ever know she won't lie to you to meet her own needs down the track? Should you stop seeing her to avoid potential future hurt to yourself?

2. You are morally objecting to her role in this relationship and given her stance (that you're overreacting), you would like to enact a kind of sanction on her, or at the very least, take a moral

stance. Draw your line in the sand and make it known that you don't condone or participate in such transgressions.

It's important that you try to understand which feelings are driving your response. If it's from a fear of getting hurt, you might need to ask yourself whether you can ever be completely confident that the person you're seeing won't lie to you or hurt you in some way? Some argue that's the price of admission for relationships. It sounds like she has been open and honest with you about the situation. We aren't privy to her conversations with her lover, nor the nature of the relationship between the married couple.

Her participation in the secret might be motivated by an impulse to protect her lover who, while not blameless, is made more vulnerable by her pregnancy. Who amongst us hasn't withheld something if we thought it would protect someone we care about?

From this perspective, her omissions of truth to the husband might instead be seen as evidence of her loyalty as a partner. Without other indications of lying or deceitful behaviour, I would avoid writing her off completely.

If your concern is instead one of moral objection, it might be useful to ask yourself - if you took the emotional baggage of sex away, would you still be as outraged? Sometimes our feelings of hurt and fear can disguise themselves as moral values in an attempt to intellectually justify their presence. Imagine that someone you were casually dating revealed to you that they were lying on their taxes. It isn't something that directly elicits fear or hurt for you, but if justice and fairness are important values to you and not to your partner, it might be a bell-weather for other differences of opinion and values that do impact your relationship. If that's the case, it may be better to speak with her about why these values are important to you, and how you feel her behaviour is reflecting different values to those you find important in a relationship.

If soap operas have taught me anything, it's that 90% of affairs end with someone in a coma, so you may not need to take any action at all.

ARTIST OF THE MONTH



Jess Tan
tweet tweet
2020

Coloured pencil on paper.

Jess is an artist living and working between Boorloo and Naarm. Jess' associative drawing practice forms a biomorphic language that expands into sculpture and site-specific installations. She uses her drawing practice as a daily head emptying exercise that opens up space for contemplation, daydreaming and possibility. Jess is represented by sweet pea.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

By Cappo Dog

ACROSS

1. Which Kansas church gained notoriety in the 2000s after Louis Theroux and others documented their inflammatory picketing of funerals with homophobic signs? (8,7)

8 Which popular brand derives its name from

German and Greek terms for water and oil? (8)

9 What can be a children's toy, a mode of transport, or a verbal insult? (6)

11 With a name meaning 'Land of Snow', what mountain range sources both the Indus and Ganges rivers? (9)

13 Who posted the image which on December 18,

2022 became the most-liked ever post on Instagram? (5)

14 What is the SI unit measuring electrical resistance? (3)

16 What is the title of Randa Abdel-Fattah's debut novel ("Does my head ____ in this?")? (4,3)

17 Which storybook / cartoon character's favourite food is thistles? (6)

19 Which member of the Fugees appeared on Shakira's #1 hit Hips Don't Lie, and was disqualified from a run for President of Haiti in 2010? (6,4)

21 What is the common way to write the letter 'ash' in English - or in Scots can mean the number 'one'? (2)

23 The title of David Sedaris' book "Me Talk Pretty ____" shares its final two words with which early Sharon van Etten single? (3,3)

24 Which Friends star co-created HBO's The Comeback, about a washed up sitcom actor trying to reignite their career? (4,6)

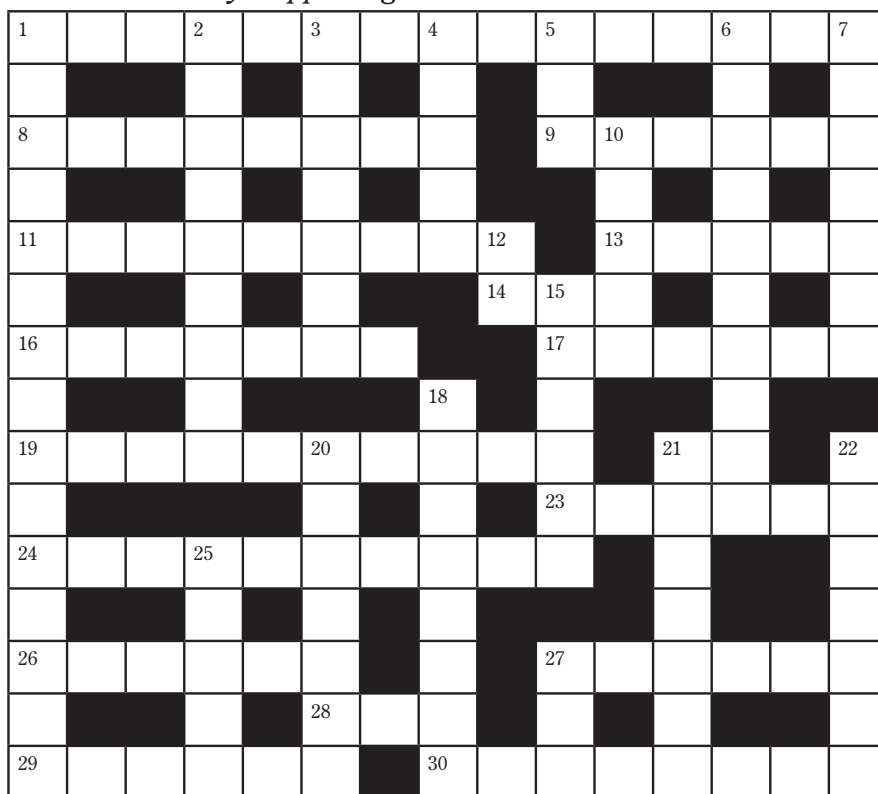
26 What is the most common type of administrative division in the Russian Federation, and includes as examples Kaliningrad, Leningrad and Rostov? (6)

27 Which World Series of Poker 2018 and 2022 bracelet winner has engineered albums by PJ Harvey, The Breeders, Ty Segall and Jarvis Cocker? (6)

28 The only film ever to have received four female acting nominations was all about who? (3)

29 Which brand is associated with Jimi Hendrix, George Harrison and Kurt Cobain? (6)

30 Which mythical character became known in 1708 for calling for his pipe



and fiddlers three? (4,4)

DOWN

1 What Gurindji action began on August 23, 1966 and culminated in Gough Whitlam pouring soil into the hands of Vincent Lingiari? (4,4,4,3)

2 What nickname was given by The Guardian to the Venezuelan Marxist-Leninist and pro-Palestine activist, codename Carlos, who is now serving multiple life sentences in France for terrorist offences? (3,6)

3 "The possibility of creation from paper is infinite." Akira Yoshizawa was considered the grand master of which art form? (7)

4 Which Black Sea port city, best known for its iconic staircase as featured in the massacre scene of Battleship Potemkin (1925), recently removed a statue of its founder, Catherine the Great? (5)

5 In 2014 people around the world began pouring buckets of ice on their heads to support donations to research on which disease? (3)

6 Which word can mean adverse, unwilling to attend, or simply unwell? (10)

7 Greatest TV show of all-time. (3,4)

10 Which phrase reduction, which forms part of Scrappy Doo's catchphrase, is the brand name for Kourt-

ney Kardashian Barker's new health supplement venture? (5)

12 Which adverb, used to indicate extent, is also the top-level internet domain code for Somalia? (2)

15 What exclamation could be a song by Oasis, Ray Charles or London Grammar, and is repeated in the chorus of a major hit by Crowded House? (3,3)

18 Former Moreland City Council has been renamed to what Woiwuring-inspired name? (5-3)

20 Which verb can describe the action of a heart, a sail, a wing, or a gambler? (7)

21 Which type of exercise requires oxygen? (7)

22 Which compound class was used in the mass killings at Jonestown and Auschwitz, as well as the suicides of Himmler, Goering and Eva Braun? (7)

25 Brit, Academy and Darwin are all examples of what? (5)

27 What is the first name of the 20th century author of Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead, and proponent of laissez-faire capitalism, is most closely associated with the Objectivist philosophical movement? (3)

Answers on page 18

WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?

MICAH



MEDDLER: What inspired your fashion sense?

MICAH: I've always been really into fashion, because back in the day everyone was being forced to wear school uniforms, and fashion is definitely a way to express yourself.

MEDDLER: Has there been anything that particularly inspired your style?

MICAH: No not really, but I believe that gender is a spectrum and I try to incorporate that into the way I dress as well. Also the last few years of the pandemic I generally just wear what's comfortable. I love to play with colours a lot because it really elevates mood, or that's how I find it.

EMILY & LUCY



MEDDLER: What inspired your fashion sense?

EMILY: Butterflies.

LUCY: Cheerleading.

MEDDLER: Has there been a distinct shift in your fashion over the years?

EMILY: Yes, I changed my favourite colour from pink to black.

LUCY: Well, my favourite colour is blue. And I like basketball.

MEDDLER: Lucy, I see you're wearing your teams' jumper - are you obsessed with basketball?

LUCY: I like it.

JEM



MEDDLER: What inspires your style?

JEM: History and texture and practicality. It's cold and possibly rainy today, so if I get a light shower on the woollen pants they're still somewhat insulative. It's like the old bushwalking thing.

I often wear moleskin pants, like heavy cotton, but if you get rained on in moleskin it's like wearing heavy sponges.

MEDDLER: Has anything that's happened in your history inspire the choices that you made today or inspired the shift that's happened to you?

JEM: No, I've kind of always been this way. And it's the historical thing. Partly I like tweed jackets because my grandfather liked tweed jackets, and I really kind of hate new, and I kind of hate fashion, because fashion means you have to change it every year.

MEDDLER: Do you change your outfit with the seasons? Like the colours?

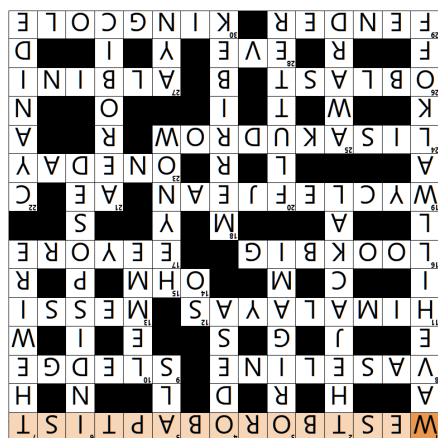
JEM: Not so much the colours but I've got a much lighter tweed jacket that I probably wear in the evening in warmer weather, but unfortunately in the height of summer you can't be very fashionable. I wear shorts and an open neck shirt, maybe even long sleeves because of the sun thing.

MEDDLER: I've been trying to find a good linen suit.

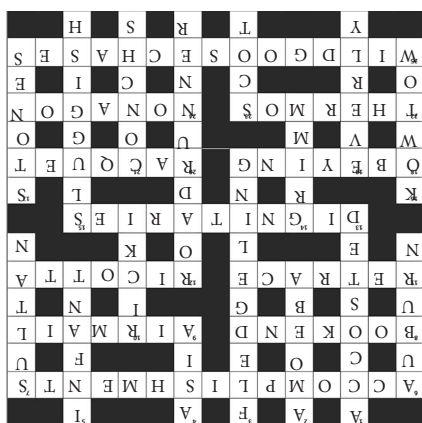
JEM: Ah, well, yes, I have a linen suit. It's just lucky I was volunteering in an op shop for a while and a linen suit came in that had been tailor made in Singapore for someone who had been almost exactly my size.

MEDDLER: Your shoes are so good, which is why we were commenting on your colour palette.

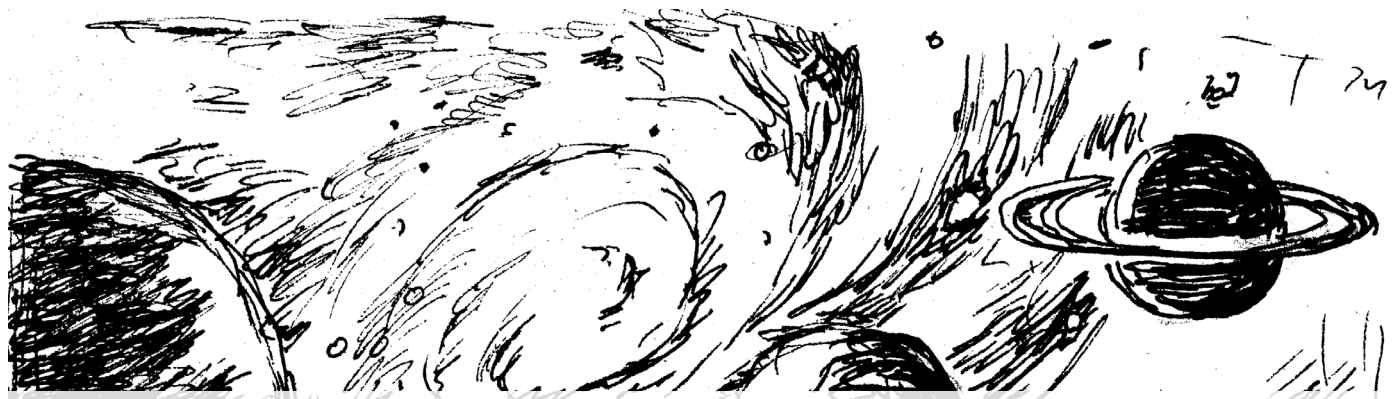
JEM: I tend to wear green and brown. I really don't like black except for special occasions like, you know, funerals and balls. And I've always had a thing about blue- I tend not to wear it. My current employers don't know how lucky they are to have me when I'm obliged to wear blue



GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ANSWERS



CRYPTIC ANSWERS



WHAT'S UP?

On January 5th the Sun will appear the brightest and largest of the year, as the Earth reaches perihelion, the closest approach to the Sun during its elliptical orbit. By way of contrast, three days later the Moon will be at apogee, the greatest distance from Earth, in its monthly orbit.

On the night of Jan 7, looking to the northeast, the full Moon can be seen passing through the Gemini constellation very close to the twin stars Castor and Pollux.

For the Boorong people of northwestern Victoria (who prided themselves in knowing more astronomy than any other Aboriginal group), the Moon is a man called Mityan, whose counterpart on Earth is the Eastern Quoll, a promiscuous and rather antisocial creature. Mityan falls in love with one of the wives of Unurgunite, who is a constellation in the night sky, as well as being Jacky Lizard on Earth. Mityan urges the wife to run away with him, but they are discovered by Unurgunite, who, smaller but braver and fiercer, attacks Mityan and chases him off. Ever since then Mityan has been wandering through the heavens, with no fixed home. (It should be noted here that the star known to western astronomers as Sigma Canis Majoris is, since 2017, known internationally as Unurgunite- one of only four stars so far to be given Aboriginal names.)

Fleet-footed Mercury returns to our morning skies briefly in January, and on the 20th & 21st, may be seen near the almost-New Moon very low in the East, from about 5:30 am.

Venus is now prominent, low in the evening twilight, and moving to meet Saturn. On Jan 22 they will be separated by less than 1° , as on the 23rd, when they will be even closer and more spectacular next to a very thin crescent Moon.

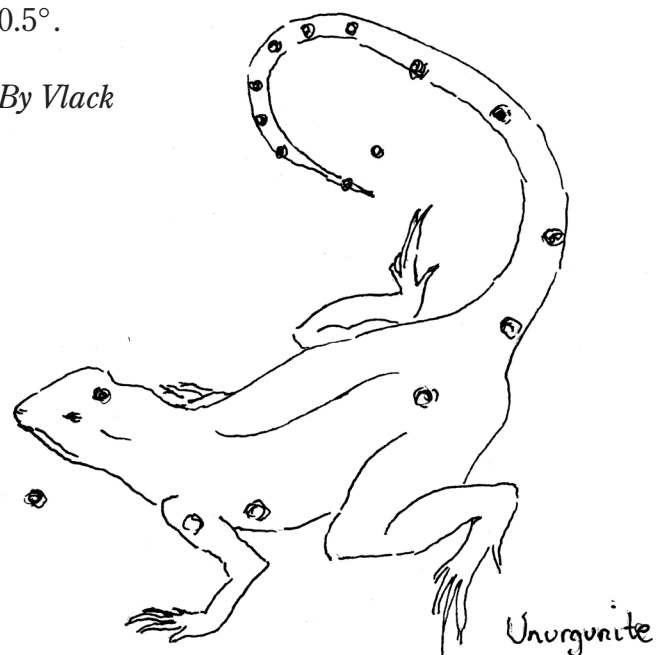
Look west at about 9 pm- but not much later, as setting time is about 9:30 pm.

The alpha-Centaurid meteor shower will be active in February, peaking on Feb 8 with an hourly rate of about six – not the most prolific, but they sometimes display bright yellow and blue fireballs, with trains that can last for minutes. Their apparent source is around Alpha Centauri, brightest of the two Pointers, next to the Southern Cross. A possible detraction will be the almost-Full Moon, rising at about 11 pm.

On Feb 19, Mercury and the Moon will repeat their appearances in the early dawn sky, with the Moon even closer to Mercury than in January. Look low in the east soon after 6 am.

On Feb 22 at about 9 pm, low in the west, the two-day old Moon and Venus will only be 1° apart, with Jupiter near- and nearing. Look here again at about 8 pm on March 2 for another great spectacle: Venus and Jupiter, each more brilliant than the brightest star, Sirius, separated by only 0.5° .

By Vlack



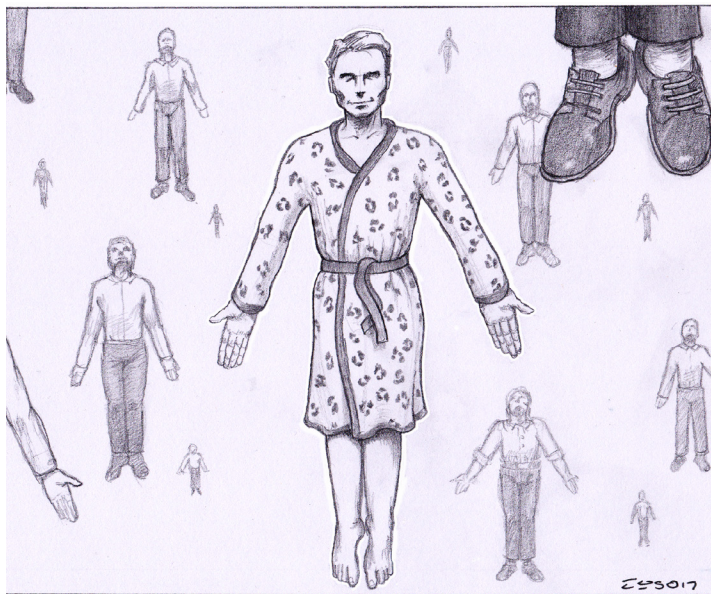
SHORT STORY OF THE MONTH

The Earring

At approximately 4:30am one winter's morning, Tobias Janowicz was woken by a gust of cold air and the thought that he must get an earring. Shivering, he tried to go back to sleep, but try as he might, he could neither get warm nor stop imagining himself with a fetching silver ring in his right lobe. Giving up, he decided to get ready for work early. He pulled out black pants and a white shirt from his cupboard full of black pants and white shirts that he wore every day to his job as an administrative assistant at the local council. He was a worker of little to no consequence - one could say that whilst he wasn't noticed, his absence would be missed (in the sense that his role would have to be filled so the GF-648s would be processed in a timely manner).

That day at lunchtime, Tobias realised that he had forgotten his ham sandwich. As he'd been wrapping it, he glimpsed his right ear in the reflection of the alfoil and, without thinking, had torn off a strip and fashioned a rudimentary earring from it. He had posed with it in the mirror for so long that he'd been late and rushed off, leaving his poor sandwich staling on the board. In any event, he now needed to leave the office to find food. He tried to ask colleagues where he could accomplish this, but they all seemed busy not knowing he existed, and he didn't want to interrupt.

Tobias searched in vain for a cafe, jostled by pedestrians. Hungry and tired, he let himself be swept along by the crowd until a neon sign caught his eye - Ciccone's Tattoo & Piercing. He felt himself drawn inside, like someone who's swallowed a pen. He opened the door and was ushered to a small booth with a comfortable chair, as if they'd been waiting for him. The piercer, whose name was Sauvage, held up a choice of earrings. Tobias mutely pointed at the silver ring of his dreams, and Sauvage murmured their approval - "Sif t'were plucked from the rings of Saturn herself" - as they inserted the needle through his heretofore unmodified lobe and everything went black.



Artwork by Tyson Kalendar (TheDrawingDroid on Etsy)

Tobias awoke swaddled in velvet and nursed by a chop, in a room with soft pink lighting. His ear throbbed but his heart throbbed a factor more. Sloughing off the velvet, he realised he was naked. Sauvage was there, and explained to him that he'd ordered his old clothes burned. Tobias asked to speak to the big Ciccone. "She's not here, but she's been watching and is very pleased," they explained. Knowing they'd meet again, they embraced before Tobias donned a leopard print robe and left. Little is known of what subsequently happened to Tobias Janowicz. He never returned to his job, or his drafty apartment. Police and debt collectors were tasked with finding him but, armed only with photos and numbers, were invariably unsuccessful - they were searching for Tobias Janowicz, but he was now himself.

By Henry Matheson

CONTACT

thecoburgmeddler@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTIONS

We encourage submissions from readers and residents. Whether it is art, creative writing, exposes, opinion pieces or any other form of input, if you have something you'd like to share, please get in touch.