

YOURS, ETC

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"I've never written a letter to the editor in my life," wrote **Keith Syron** to *Metro* staff writer Steve Braunias at metromag.co.nz. "Nor tried to give feedback to a journalist or columnist. But your article on Duncan Garner (*Dinner with Duncan*, January) was hugely moving for me. I felt like you were writing a letter to me about a mate. It is the best piece of biographical journalism I have ever read — and I read a lot. I went into the article knowing little about Garner. He was just another political TV journalist to me. But I came out feeling like I really knew the guy — and cared about him. Thank you."

It was an opinion largely shared by the Twitterati. "Brilliant" said **@damianchristie**. "Had me choking up on the plane. Nice

work." **@AnnaGConnell** thought it "bloody fantastic" and **@miriyananz** judged it "one of my best reads of 2013".

A rare note of dissent came from **@andydruid**. "Generally like Steve Braunias stories, but not the Garner interview. Back-slapping hard-man stuff. Bit dull in the end." **@mstevenz** agreed about the back slapping. "It all just seems so incestuous, this little tiny circle of mates."

Following its posting on metromag.co.nz, Eleanor Catton's essay on literature and elitism (*Five Stars for Elitism*, first published in *Metro*, March 2013) enjoyed a second act on the international stage. Writing on his self-titled blog, *Guardian* columnist **Damien G. Walter** praised Catton's attempt to unravel the issue of literary elitism by "tugging on the thread of consumerism".

"Literature isn't there to entertain you," wrote Walter. "Any more than your friends, parents, lovers or anyone else in the world exists to serve your needs. These are all things that you relate to. And you are responsible for the health of all your relationships."

On salon.com, **Laura Miller** wrote a long and thoughtful response to Catton's piece. While agreeing with Catton on "almost every point", Miller thought she had missed an important point about the gripe (a complaint to the *Paris Review* regarding its use of the word "crepuscular") which initially provoked her essay. "Intellectual insecurity is, alas, a pervasive problem in the literary world. You can find it among fans of easy-to-read commercial fiction who insist (on very little evidence) that the higher-brow stuff is uniformly fraudulent and dull, and you can

find it among those mandarin bibliophiles who dismiss whole genres (on equally thin evidence) out of hand... Even if we're not to blame for our insecurities, we are responsible for recognising them for what they are. And for growing up and getting over it."

Veterinarian **Megan Alderson** wrote in response to Greg Bruce's story on pampered dogs (*Fur Babies*, January), in which she and some of her human and canine clients were featured. Our reference to "posh pets" didn't go down well. "Our clientele are neither 'elite' nor 'posh' and neither are their pets. I take umbrage at making a responsible pet owner seem like a Paris Hilton-wannabe when they choose to invest in the happiness, health and wellbeing of their pet.

"To be a responsible pet owner in an urban city takes motivation, pre-planning and keeping to a budget, just like raising children. There's been a paradigm shift in recent years from a conservative 'rural' attitude to urban pet care. It's not cool to leave them sitting outside barking for 10 hours a day — expect a housecall from Dog Control — thus doggie daycare is not just for 'posh pets' but a necessity for working pet owners.

"With pet insurance to cover the cost of medical misadventure costing approximately \$2 per day for a dog and less for a cat (the cost of half a flat white, one cigarette or quarter of a glass of wine in Auckland city), [it's a small price to pay for] the health benefits, both mental and physical, for those who choose to care for pets."

"Hats off to Simon Wilson, Chris Barton and *Metro* for devoting the necessary time and energy to cover architectural issues of interest in the January issue (*Sticking Their Necks Out*, on architectural practice Glamuzina Paterson; *Fantasy Island*, on



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Frances Cooper’s plan for Wynyard Point; *At Home in a Better World*, on New Zealand modernist design), wrote **Mark Burke-Damaschke**. “Your feature in June about the Unitary Plan raised the profile of such issues too, as did your piece on Nat Cheshire in the Best of Auckland issue in December.

“We’re constantly bombarded with stories about property trends, sales records and price fluctuation but rarely do we see stories written about the broader, civic role that architecture plays in our society. That has to change. At their best (and worst), buildings reflect the story of the time, coupled with how our culture seeks to project itself forward.

“Architects often seek to inspire by enhancing the spatial and sustainable qualities of New Zealand’s built environment. Architecture also influences our domestic infrastructure from public spaces through

to bridges and even the configuration of our cities.

“We don’t always get it right, but local firms and overseas practices often do, most recently when the prestigious World Architecture Festival awarded Auckland Art Gallery its coveted Building of the Year prize. To be fair, local media reported on this accolade far and wide, but more often than not our industry isn’t celebrated, taken to task or even held accountable.

“Sure, people are interested in residential buildings, property prices and leaky homes. But stories about urban sprawl, gridlock, poor transport planning and dislocated communities are arguably more important. The Urban Design column Chris Barton produces for *Metro* is a notable exception to the rule here.

“It’s a given that good architectural design enables us to connect and create communities that work better. And, what’s more, our industry has the potential and responsibility to positively shape spaces in cities that enhance the environment, including designing buildings to last.”

Talking of architecture, in our piece about Glamuzina Paterson architects we should have mentioned that the award-winning Giraffe House at Auckland Zoo was designed in association with Hamish Monk of Monk Mackenzie Architects. Our apologies. **M**

20 QUESTIONS

- 1/ Judith Collins choosing your wardrobe or Denise L’Estrange-Corbet deciding your extradition application?
- 2/ Will Judith be judging the Fashions in the Field at Ellerslie?
- 3/ I mean, officially?
- 4/ Relieved you finally have a highbrow excuse to shop at Pak’nSave?
- 5/ Are backhanders OK if it keeps the sav under 10 bucks?
- 6/ Does anything say “New Zealand” better than four foreign models in the Cooks?
- 7/ Kim Dotcom, in a black bikini, twerking against an oxygen mask: where do we pick up our consultancy fee, Air New Zealand?
- 8/ Who’s going to break it to Schapelle those hats went out in 2005?
- 9/ Ashamed of yourself for thinking Jesse Ryder would never be back in form?
- 10/ Could Ross Taylor please stop having children now?
- 11/ How could coffee possibly cost more than it already does?
- 12/ Can we watch the entire Eminem concert on your phone one more time?
- 13/ Has Act already indicated it would form a coalition with any shapeshifting reptilian aliens?
- 14/ Have to admit you like Paul Henry again?
- 15/ After the interview, did Dalts gave Deano a layday?
- 16/ Wasn’t it good to read SkyCity has big plans for the Adelaide convention centre and casino, in competition with Auckland?
- 17/ You know they solved the Cuban missile crisis with a game of beer pong, eh?
- 18/ Isn’t it comforting to know John Key has Cam Slater on speed dial?
- 19/ Should Dotcom call his mansion Woodstock – if you were there you don’t remember it?
- 20/ Is it true they banned “My Heart Will Go On” from the Arahura’s muzak playlist?



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Arts Foundation Laureate Briar Grace-Smith is one of New Zealand’s most exciting playwrights. In *Paniora!*, she combines Maori mythology with the Spanish culture of the bullfight. A potent blend of dance, drama, magic realism and soul-stirring music, *Paniora!* features leading Maori actors and dancers from Okareka Dance Company.

WE HAVE 5 DOUBLE PASSES TO GIVE AWAY. TO ENTER, GO TO WWW.METROMAG.CO.NZ/COMPETITIONS. CONTEST CLOSSES MARCH 15. PANIORA! RUNS MARCH 20 — APRIL 12.



GIVEAWAY

The best feedback this month receives a six-bottle case of Villa Maria Private Bin Sauvignon Blanc 2013 wines and a copy of *The Winemaker* valued at \$171.

THIS MONTH’S WINNER IS MARK BURKE-DAMASCHKE.