

tory, which began almost immediately after the United States gained its early twentieth century territories. Sparrow does a wonderful job of distilling many complicated factors into a coherent argument that elucidates the current state of affairs for the United States (the Iraq war, the war on terror, US economic troubles, and so on). Contemporary US policies evolved from a historical/political/economic/military arc in which the United States positioned itself to grasp and maintain global influence.

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Eagle vs Shark. DVD/35mm, 88 minutes, color, 2007. Written and directed by Taika Waititi. Produced by Ainsley Gardiner and Cliff Curtis. Executive Producer: Emanuel Michael. Created by Miramax Films and Whenua Films Ltd in association with the New Zealand Film Commission and Unison Films. Languages: English and Spanish; subtitles: English, French, Spanish. Distributed by Miramax Films. US\$19.99.

Eagle vs Shark is a film in which dorky posers obsessively try to win games they all seem destined to lose. In the backwards metropolis of urban New Zealand, Jarrod works as a video-game salesman at Screenblasterz, while nearby his secret admirer, Lily, serves up burgers at Meaty Boy. When Lily is fired from her cherished fast-food job for being unpopular, she throws caution to the wind and crashes Jarrod's exclusive "animal party." Jarrod,

dressed as an eagle, is impressed by Lily's shark costume and even more impressed by her video-game skills. They soon end up in Jarrod's bedroom where he shows off his most promising art projects, which seem hopelessly unpromising. After awkwardly consummating their new relationship, the viewers quickly discover Jarrod has a hidden dark side. He is obsessed with returning to his childhood home to "kick the ass" of his high school nemesis Eric, a Samoan bully, who, according to Jarrod, is responsible for ruining his life. "I used to be a bit of a nerd," Jarrod confesses.

Lily is seduced by Jarrod's need to win, and in classic codependent form she quickly enlists her brother to give them a ride out to Jarrod's small, country town. Here, Lily discovers the true nature of Jarrod's problem lies more in his relationship with his dysfunctional family than with any Samoan tough guy. Jarrod is consumed with gaining love from his oblivious father, who lives in a constant state of mourning over the mysterious death of Jarrod's heroic brother. Lily learns that Jarrod wants to reclaim his brother's lost throne, and restore his dad's happiness by taking on his high school nemesis and becoming the new family hero. The problem is that no matter how hard Jarrod practices his karate moves for the big fight, his inner geek betrays him. But, following a humiliating defeat, Lily is the one person who still accepts him. Unlike Jarrod, Lily is not obsessed with denying her nerdiness. In accepting herself she is able to accept Jarrod, and in the end, helps Jarrod do the same.

Developed at the Sundance Directors and Screenwriters Lab, *Eagle*

vs Shark is the debut feature film by writer-director Taika Waititi. Before making this film, Waititi was best known for his Oscar nominated short, *Two Cars, One Night*, and his work with Jemaine Clement in the comedy duo “Humorbeasts.” Clement (who plays Jarrod in *Eagle vs Shark*) is a comic genius and very much grounds the film with his unique passive-aggressive presence. Loren Horsley, who plays Lily, does a fantastic job at playing the “straight man” to Clement, and effectively navigates her character through this sweet story without falling into the trap of sentimentality.

Although this story fits into a genre with *Napoleon Dynamite*, *Rushmore*, and a host of other ironic comedies, *Eagle vs Shark* is a unique film because of the culturally specific nature of its world. Waititi sets the story in his native New Zealand, and although he packs the film with eccentric local characters, he deliberately shies away from drawing specific attention to issues of Māori culture. In fact, neither New Zealand nor any town within it is ever mentioned by name in the entire movie. Rather, the film uses the modern mixed-race culture of New Zealand as a universal example of our world culture, where average “losers” obsess over turning themselves into “winners.”

Eagle vs Shark metaphorically comments on this human dilemma in its depiction of the New Zealand landscapes. So just as Jarrod continuously lies and tries to hide his inner self under a veil of cool, Waititi initially conceals the natural New Zealand environment, portraying it as a place trying to be a hip, modern metropolis. Yet because the city is filled with

decidedly unhip characters, the image is comically subverted. Production designer Joe Bleakley further captures this environmental paradox with such inventive settings as Lily’s lonely home decorated with cheery flowered wallpaper, and the Cine-Saures Rex’s giant toothy-mouthed movie theater entrance. This is an artificial world that represses its natural soul.

As the film moves from the city to the country, the physical landscape becomes more prominent and parallels the emotional journey of our protagonists as they begin to confront their true identities. In the beginning, Jarrod and Lily are oppressed by their environment as they obsessively try to act “cool.” The city is filled with stuffy interiors; the sky is literally never shown. As they shift to the country, the natural environment subtly grows and becomes more dominant as the characters begin to accept themselves. Cinematographer Adam Clark masterfully counterpoints the claustrophobic nature of the city with vast green hilltops, majestic bays, and rocky shorelines.

What is most impressive about *Eagle vs Shark* is that even with all the metaphors and analogies, this film never falls into the trap of taking itself too seriously. If anything, the film makes fun of itself in its use of symbolic imagery. For example, both Lily and Jarrod come from troubled pasts that have clearly left scars. Waititi comments on the struggle to come to terms with these problems by comically weaving them into the fabric of the story. This is seen most explicitly in the identical moles awkwardly placed above Jarrod and Lily’s upper lips, which they both choose to ignore

until the end of the film. Yes, these birthmarks are symbols of the scars that bind them together, but the moles' very presence also makes fun of the characters' mutual absurd decision to ignore them.

Because Jarrod and Lily are continuously unsuccessful in their earnest attempts to cover up their obvious vulnerabilities, ironic humor is often the result. Jarrod wants to be the superhero warrior he plays in his video-games. He wants to be the karate expert hero. Yet his quest is hopeless and absurd, because he's a twenty-five-year-old nerd and his eagle costume for the animal party only confirms this.

Indeed, the age of our protagonists informs one of the most prominent motifs in this film: adults acting like children. Jarrod's big fight with Eric literally takes place on the school playground and his sacred art projects look like they were made in grade school. The Phoenix Foundation's sweet melancholy acoustic music further nourishes this childlike world where adolescent obsessions drive the action forward with crank phone calls and backyard campouts.

This innocent world is also organically reflected in the stop-motion animation sequences that structurally ground the film from beginning to end. Masterfully designed by Francis Salole and Guy Capper, the animation parallels the journey of our protagonists with a fable-like love story of damaged goods, or in this case, fruit. A rotten apple (discarded by Jarrod) and an apple core (discarded by Lily) come to life in a series of vignettes that vaguely match the structure of the live-action story. The lonely, rejected

apples finally find peace with each other on a deserted island.

This film could be dismissed as a simple lighthearted comedy, but it actually resonates on a much deeper and universal level. In *Eagle vs Shark*, adults struggle with learning to release the past and grow beyond their teenage preoccupations with winning the big race. In the end, more than a love story, this is a story of self-acceptance. The human condition dictates that we are all rotten apples—we are all damaged goods. Our challenge is to focus on what is good and leave the damaged part behind.

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Resistance: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism, edited by Maria Bargh. Wellington, NZ: Huia Publishers, 2007. ISBN 978-1-86969-286-5; 213 pages, illustrations, appendix, glossary, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$28.00. Distributed by University of Hawai'i Press.

In this recent work (published by Huia, a Māori press), editor Maria Bargh, a lecturer of Māori studies at Victoria University at Wellington, elucidates the ways that neoliberal policies espoused by the New Zealand government since 1984 adversely affect Māori well-being and Māori pursuit of tino rangatiratanga, Māori self-determination and sovereignty. Neoliberalism, the prevailing convention that has been successively adopted by most governing bodies around the world since the 1980s, maintains that the development of a place and people

Eagle vs Shark is another addition to his films that induce in me a violent urge to start over my life in rural NZ. But possibly the strongest impression the film left on me is "WOW Jarrod is a dick". Like could he not have at least apologised to Lily at the end?? A quirky oddball romantic comedy and Taika Waititi's first feature film. You can see a lot of his art and humor in this movie. It's a good indie film but isn't the right movie for everyone. Read Common Sense Media's Eagle vs. Shark review, age rating, and parents guide. Overall the film is pretty funny and Loren Horsley imbues her character with both pathos and grace. But Clement comes across as so despicable that some viewers may find him too pathetic to love. The fun he pokes at geek- and jerk-dom is almost too pointed -- which makes it a challenge to buy Lily's utter devotion. Though awkward, she's dignified, big-hearted, and generous in spirit. Writer-director Taika Waititi's deserves applause for his zeal, which results in a fairly successful and mostly hilarious -- though not always palatable -- film. The movie, after all, is about there Faraz Masrur reviewed Eagle vs. Shark " 5 star. 1 May 2018 . Eagle vs. Shark. Film. 32,614 likes. 11 talking about this. Jenn Gendron recommends Eagle vs. Shark. 10 May 2019 . Best.Movie.EVER. Put on your Pattieeee Geeeeayahs and enjoy! Raul Kykovsky reviewed Eagle vs. Shark " 4 star. 27 January 2017 . Eagle vs. Shark. Film. 32,614 likes. 11 talking about this.