

"COTTONMOUTH"



SPIT DICTION

ISSUE 3

APRIL 2008

COTTONMOUTH

ISSUE 3 APRIL 2008

editor SCOTT-PATRICK MITCHELL

layout PATRICK PITTMAN

illustrations JESSYCA HUTCHENS

COTTONMOUTH is a monthly performance night which is produced in conjunction with a national podcast and publication. please direct all submissions or requests to info@cottonmouth.org.au and be sure to check regular updates online by visiting www.cottonmouth.org.au (.)

© 2008

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any other means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise – without the prior permission in writing by the publishers. Any work sent to Cottonmouth is considered to be an agreement of use within Cottonmouth publications. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of the editor, publisher or Cottonmouth Committee.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Byron Bard</i> TALKING DIRTY	4
<i>Hayley McKee</i> UNTITLED #1	6
<i>Patrick Pittman</i> WAR CRIMES	7
<i>Jessyca Hutchens</i> BURNT RICE CELLS	10
<i>Janet Jackson</i> CORACLE	11
<i>Lily Chan</i> TWO PLACES	13
<i>Michael Farrell</i> TOWNLIFE ...	15
<i>Hayley McKee</i> UNTITLED #2	17
<i>Matt Giles</i> EXCERPT FROM FIRST PAGE	18
<i>Janet Jackson</i> SPLIT	21
<i>Doctor Byron von Bard</i> THE POSTMODERN PROMETHEUS	22
<i>Haylee McKee</i> UNTITLED #3	24
<i>Martin McKenzie-Murray</i> LETTERS FROM PUPPET HILL	25
<i>Lily Chan</i> MOUTH LINED WITH SILENCE	28
<i>Michael Farrell</i> SUPERSTAR	29
CONTRIBUTORS	30

TALKING DIRTY

Byron Bard

“Talk dirty to me,”
she says.

Shouldn’t be a problem.
It’s just one
of my many talents.

“I yearn
to be
inside you,”

I say.
“Your beauty
is a beacon
which guides me
inwards.”

She looks at me
blankly.
Too crude?

“I crave
the glorious bounty
of your warm light.
I beg you,
let it
shine through me.”

Her hands
retract from my trousers.
Not crude enough?
Not to worry.

“Take the raw clay
of my manhood
in your hands
and mould it.
Create
a spurting sculpture
and allow me
to put you
on its pedestal.”

Her hands are in her pockets now.
Still too gentle?
Still not crude enough?
Not to worry.

“Protest though you may
this weapon
of arse destruction,
I shall bury it so deep
that your beautifully manicured
weapons inspectors
will never
extract it.”

She gets off the bed.
Surely, this is crude enough.
Takes all sorts, I suppose.
I redouble my efforts.

“Kneel before
the mighty Hydra!
For each head
you strike down,
two more will appear
and spit salty venom
on your
awesome boobs.”

She opens the bedroom door.
A tough nut to crack.
Aha! Inspiration.

“My balls
swell with excitement
and ache
for battle.
Their towering commander -”

She guides me firmly down the stairs.
What more does she want?
This woman is perverted.
I hope she realises I’m not enjoying
this.
One last ditch effort.

“I will totally
take my
you-know-what
and cram it
in your whatsit!”
I cry
to the window above.
“Ram it up there
and leave you
weeping with ecstasy!”

She turns out the light.
Still not crude enough.
Takes all sorts, I suppose.

UNTITLED #1

Hayley McKee

I often think I have no bones
Just an inflatable soul that fills out my skin

If I made a little cut on my arm
It would open like a zip

I'd be able to see, all my thoughts and hurts
Flowing upside
my limbs and heart

WAR CRIMES

Patrick Pittman

They met in Saigon, at the Museum of American War Crimes. If you listened to the authorities, they met in Ho Chi Minh, but he was never really one for that sort of thing. They met in Saigon.

His eyes were freshly burned by the pickled agent orange foetus—a remarkable testament to the properties of formaldehyde, if nothing else. He always tried to tell himself it was nothing else. He scanned the room, full as it was of veterans with regret-stained eyes, sipping ice-cold Coke, confused to be standing at the centre of everything they'd watched good men give their lives to prevent. He saw her looking curiously at the shell of an old jet fighter in the courtyard, clutching in her hand a photocopied edition of *The Quiet American* she'd just bought from an eight year-old counterfeiter on the street outside.

Copyright was a fluid concept on these streets, this much he knew.

"She's either Reuters, or she wants to be," he thought. Vietnam then seemed full of Westerners who wished they could have spent

hot days on hotel roofs with Graham Greene, drinking scotch with the well-dressed of MI5 and the CIA, watching the tanks roll in from somewhere just barely tangible at their general level of permanent insobriety. It was a romantic idea, but the rooftops were still there, as were the drinks.

He watched as she wandered towards the prison cells, waiting for the customary jump back that always happened when a newbie looked inside for the first time and saw the gaunt, emaciated mannequin within. He thought to himself that this must be the only government-sanctioned display of massacred mannequins on the planet. And he tried to tell himself that, following that path of logic, the foetus in the jar must be a mannequin too. It had to be.



But she didn't jump back. She stared, for a while, exhaled enough breath to show sympathy but not enough to show shock. He edged towards her, wondering exactly how you introduce yourself in so wretched a place as this. "Do you come here often" wouldn't really work—he did come here often. She

was new. “What’s a nice girl like you doing in a torture chamber like this?” Please, he had class.

“You think this is bad, you should see what they have rigged up for the Russians in Kabul these days,” is what he went with. She was supposed to laugh. She did, sort of—a little crinkle, a slight raise of the ribs. It counted.

They wandered the markets; he told her little, she told him less. They avoided the street urchins attempting to sell them lighters fashioned from decommissioned grenades. They drifted zenlike through the traffic, waves of 50cc motorbikes parting around them. They explored the tunnels of Reunification Palace, mazes of underground bunkers with war plans, interrogation chambers and 1970s telephony that would fetch a sterling price on the retro market.

On the roof, they stood over a red painted circle, memorialising the bravery of First Lieutenant Nguyen Thanh Trung, most accurate bomber of this very spot. Like everywhere else in this city, and in this country, aging military equipment stood proudly by, enjoying retirement as monument. He imagined the day when the neocons—who’d been slithering into the bureaucracy for a decade now—took the White House, and decided to come back to finish the job. Sure, they’d have to do something crazy first, like take out the entire Middle

East, but if that worked, this new idea that preyed on the edges of his dreams would blossom like a clot in a misguided bureaucratic brain and would spread like cancer through the arms of government. War could be virulent that way.

And then these ornamental helicopters would slowly start spinning their blades, dust shaking off onto the red velvet ropes that protected them from tourists. The tanks at the Cu-Chi tunnels would shed their stepladders for children and trundle out through the newly reforested jungle, ready for action. The bars and trinket shops on the banks of the Mekong Delta would quietly crumble into the ground, and all would be quiet. And scary. As fuck.

This Vietnam, he told her, this new place, felt like little more than a blanket thrown over the pain. They sat in circular leather couches in the surreal swinger’s lounge that was Madame Nhu’s greatest achievement and final folly, discussing the fate of this corner of the world, feeling a remarkable desire for either a fondue set or a key party. He felt like checking the bar for martini glasses, but a stern looking guard shooed him away.

She wasn’t Reuters, she was AP, but covering the financials in a communist country was hardly what she signed up for. He’d always been good at spotting the correspondents. She told him her father had died here; not here in the

lounge, next to the wall-hanging rugs, but somewhere out there, maybe not even this country—Laos maybe, Cambodia—they wouldn't say. He was lost somewhere in the vague shape of Indochina. She was here to see what he died for. She hadn't yet found it.

As they stared from the windows of the palace, watching hulking 1960s Chevys and Lincoln Continentals wrestle for space with the stream of motorbikes that moated their building, she asked what kept him here: why didn't he leave when the helicopters had?

He thought about this for a second, ran fingers through greying hair in nervous, time-stalling gesture. He attempted an answer.

"I'd hoped... well... I'd hoped that if I stayed here, that would be the end of it. You know? Nothing worse could happen than that which already has. The old home was falling apart, it wasn't the same place I'd left. There was too much blood, in too many places. At least this blood here I knew. At least this blood here I shed.

"And then, well, the world changes shape depending on where you stand. Things which were at the center slip towards the edges. Time passes. Borders shift. This place, at least, is constant."

He told her that if you're not careful, your world can end up being bordered by the formaldehyde babies that, once seen,

can never be unseen. They fence you in.

"If nobody else will be their prisoner," he said. "I'll take the job."

BURNT RICE CELLS

Jessyca Hutchens



CORACLE

Janet Jackson

I will find a place to wait.
A niche in the shore-held sea-crags.
I will watch the lighthouse and the coming
and going ships, the world-cruisers,
oil-bringers, war-makers,
the private and public yachts,
the racers, fishers, fighters,
pirates and smugglers,
the ships of dull metal and
boats with bright paint,
with sail-quilts, mast-needles, nets,
radar, radio, GPS,
pitching and reeling and rocking and
blustering with a Babel of balloons and
sparkling miniature winebirds and
tinny electronic bells and
genetic gladiators and none

of them will detect me
in my grey waitplace. I will watch them all
until that ship comes, the ship

with the black and red sails that are made of pure skin
with the decks of ebony and carbon steel
with the tall sailors whose robes bear
witness, who reserve
their grey-and-silver wings, worship
their titanium anchor on its hawser spun
from their once-long hair. They will cast
their continental-shelf-gripper gently, with careful
hallelujahs, place their sleek ship
in the tossing flapping sea and in the sea of vessels
and sing and sing, rumguttet, steelsilked,

calling, responding, calling the land,
naming it.

And I in my hermit-hole will have built
my coracle, small
and sturdy, its
making a ritual. Built
my boat and carved my oars
and practised to strengthen my arms
and heart. I will hear
the singing and launch,
row my raw face through the buoys
and dinghies and liners, row and row, back burning,
arms screaming, row and row, and throw my line,
climb cold railings, fall,
collapse
among coiled ropes and mysterious much-used tools

and salt rain will needle me,
giant wings will beat on me,
torn tongues will lash and lacerate and feed on me,
as I lie on that wet deck bleeding in ecstasy.

TWO PLACES

Lily Chan

Dear Sir

I don't want to be in two places at once
In Autobiography of a Yogi
I read about holymen who
meditate for years
levitate
disappear and
materialise
in two places at once.

When I meditate, a series of explosions like fireworks
occurs in my forehead
lotus flowers open and close
the tyrannosaurus rex eats the toilet, man and all
in that scene from Jurassic Park
over and over again

If I meditate on the bodhi tree
where Buddha was enlightened
it begins to wilt and shake and a horde of crows
descends upon it and strips it bare of any greenery
and meditating on a skeletal tree
is slightly disconcerting
so I usually stop.

I don't want to be in two places at once
When I'm with you I long to be home.
When I'm home I long to be with you.

I want to be like confetti
or spores

painlessly dispersing on the wind
wherever I go
luminous.

Yours sincerely,
xxxxxxxxxxxx

TOWNLIFE ...

Michael Farrell

"It' Wasnt. Going to happen a? Peach was on the
doorstep?"

"Frantic, kenny wa's going through, his dirty? Clothes what a
marvel hed rewound his life & felt. Yet again complete hey I's
this it the [way, to mythology the, woman,
leaned]. Out!"

"Of."

"The car its breaking down?"

"Oh forget it – she got out of the rustbucket?"

"&' she &, kenny a?"

"Kookaburra sat, in the. Young gum tree relatively & again?"

"Mary answered the! Pho'ne its those angels again."

"The ..."

"Bakery was?"

[ON FIRE]

&' a river of glue ran through.

"It soon stopping?"

"Everything thi's town. Wh'y read!"

Someone punctured a Tyre but who cares about radios
the symphony orchestra is on again.

"Tonight the stars are foreboding after a week of mildness so what are.
You going to do with, the summer, chase
it to within. An inch of its life the cockatoo smiles in. A
way its my summer thought kenny mentally reviewing his.

"Shirts and snipping off the 'sleeves' it was cherry
season & a good 'a reason'. As Any to fee'l your lips
are bleeding kenn'y imagined he could. Visit Her in autumn when her son

was home why cant you (live here always, things) were improving & by the time he was. Lime Juice mm-
m hello soon carla would soon Be on the highway

a third character called dale or 'dark' eyes was helping i-
f, i could only it seemed to cut across
national borders the world wildlife fund arrived & were filling
their, arms with, dogs saying everything would be
all right & cleaning the glue off their paws perhaps he
shouldnt – mention. Dale pointed at the moon & they
backed 'away into the shadow of the exhibition build-
ing' apparently you can still find. People, & fall into 'a joint
inner life afterwards realising.' Their good qualities *on the* bus everything
was different shannon really had no idea how to keep
it On the road they, were Screaming and she thought about her failed,
diets and miserable relationships, people holding.

“Dogs aroused feelings of jealousy she skidded & the, screaming changed tone
what would they have written 'something about' a possum & a bill-
y. At, the auction the iron was going fast kenny could af-
ford something for; himself so, he kept-it-he. Didnt want
to let, go tomorrow everything would be different & time
stretched out like a, broken waistband dale bought some milk & dropped
in at the library kenny stared at him in wonder
they headed back to dales house first walking then. Jogging
then running then jogging then running

UNTITLED #2

Hayley McKee

Sideburns and cigarettes
When we get up
I awake in your arms

It's riddling

Just like in the movies,
you are good.
You aren't second best.

You could confess
But I wouldn't see your point of view

See, it's a rude affair
Yet so sweet,
I stumble on my words.

EXCERPT FROM FIRST PAGE

Matt Giles

Can you eat that somewhere else, Walt?"

"What?"

It was Eric, at Walt's sister's place in Perth. The kids were playing Xbox in the lounge room and Walt took this as an opportunity to watch them without the pressure of having to talk to them, or be talked to. Eric was the middle boy, usually quiet.

"I can't stand watching you eat that pie," he said, staring at the TV.

Stuck for a reply, but also happy enough to be in a legitimate conversation with his nephew, Walt said, "Oh?"

"Look at it, it's a cup of gravy. Gravy speckled with bits of... knuckle, or whatever."

Walt looked at the pie. It was how he'd always known a pie to be.

"That's the good part of the pie," he improvised. "If it wasn't for the gravy, it'd be dry."

"It's all gravy. They're ripping you off. There's hardly any meat in it."

"Of course there is," Walt said. "It's a beef pie. It's got beef in it."

"The pies down the road have big chunks of steak in them without any gravy, and they're not dry," Eric said.

"They're well-cooked," said his older

sister, Marie. "So they wouldn't be dry even without the gravy."

They continued to play Xbox, a racing game, and did not speak to Walt again. He sat behind them at the head of the couch, looking at his pie, and its brown, wet depths.

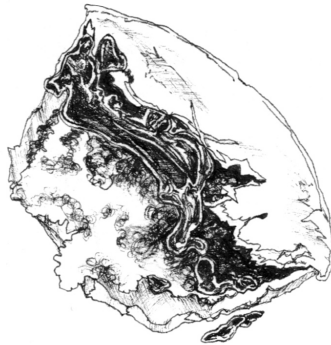
ACCC RULES: PIES MUST
CONTAIN 28% MEAT

He tried not to think of Eric when he bought his pie in Northam, but when the mess tumbled in his mouth he felt the reproach of early and mid-teens boring into his pie-holding hands. He visited town after school was out because he liked to watch young people in groups act out their early lives, embarking on the rest of them charged with anonymous promise, unspoiled by the reality of how they would actually unfold. This was the high point of his day. Nothing intruded. He had no thoughts; they were withered by the sun. He was hazed into obliterated consciousness.

But then the thoughts continued. The pie's nearly done, he thought. The return to normality is nigh. He can see himself dusting his hands, throwing the wrapper away, crossing the road to the car park, finding his car, making his way out of the car park, down Gordon Street, past John Deere, under the Railway Bridge,

through the bypass, down Old Northam Road, back on his property, confronted again by the yellow paddock and his memories. As quickly as he could, so that his thoughts could not keep up, he stood and did all these things, and at every stage he groaned at inevitability, the dull force of its thud.

Between his property and town, along the road he had just travelled, there was a drop in pressure. Walt put his shopping bags on the kitchen table and left them for a minute to turn on the kettle. Along the Great Eastern Highway the bitumen heated and softened and the roadside bushes snap froze and disintegrated. There was no sugar and Walt hadn't bought any so he cursed and paused a moment to mourn his absent mindedness while black light cast negative shadows under the trees on the way toward Northam. A long series of crackle sounds spread out across a paddock grazed by several camels whose heads bolted up and eyes, ears and nostrils shut before – in a rush of unidentified molecules – their flesh was flayed from their bones like tree bark. Walt reached into his pantry for a squeeze bottle of honey, an interesting but inexact replacement for sugar, and poured what he thought was equivalent



to a teaspoon of sugar into the bottom of a cup, over a tea bag. Lipton, his favourite. A girl interested in the sudden sound of a million crickets went to her living room window and breathed in at the distant sight of camels knocked head first into the ground, their skin flying off in chunks under a shower of blood spreading out into a mist in the direction of her house. Then she screamed a noise that eventually became the word “Sammy”, who was her brother, who ignored his younger attention-seeking sister and continued listening to the radio until it suddenly cut out and the music was replaced by the sound of popcorn popping. Walt waited until the tea was just a shade less than opaque before adding the milk, just enough to make the water golden brown, “Creole” he thought to himself, and Sammy realised that his sister was not going to stop calling his name and crying so he got off his bed before a great hot wind tore the walls and roof of his home apart and threw

them in a hundred metre arc across the Wheatbelt countryside, his body one of the things lost among the jumble of brick and plaster and forms and bottles and washing and drying and dish washing machines, and a misshapen wall of ash and embers scorched the

base of the house and the surrounding property and continued eastward to Northam. Walt tasted the tea and found that so well had he measured the honey, the milk and the time to leave it brewing that it became the latest in a long canon of perfect teas. Surprised at his luck, and confident that his anxiety from the day had quelled into peace by now, he opened the paper to a random page before the fold, disregarding the cover photo of Elton John boarding a purple private jet, waving to an off-camera crowd, and the headline below:

SIR ELTON'S COMIN' TO TOWN

The above is an excerpt from a story from Matt's contribution to First Page, an anthology of writing and art by a group of 22 Perth writers and artists. The story, as well as the chapter it will occupy, are as yet untitled. For a sneak peek at First Page visit www.firstpage.org.au.

SPLIT

Janet Jackson

I am a woman and I speak.
I am a woman with lines on her face and I speak.
I am a woman with lines on her face and scars on her belly and I speak
with the voice of a mother
I said, a mother

twice split
once by a scalpel
once by the violence of a baby's head

a woman who writes and plays guitar with hands scarred
and aged from cleaning up shit

a woman who called herself 'expecting'
but didn't expect to be split,
body and soul,
half the precious young personality blasted away

I speak with the voice of a woman who knows what it means
to have her choices removed
to be so tired she can barely walk
and keep walking
to be so sick she can barely speak
and keep
singing

I speak with the voice of a woman who knows how to
love unconditionally
and who is ready to die when it is necessary.

THE POSTMODERN PROMETHEUS

Doctor Byron von Bard

Do you have it, Igor?
the final piece?
Bring it to the laboratory,
and bar the oaken doors
against the wind and rain
and angry peasants.

Lay it here on the table, Igor,
that it may join its brothers.
Look!
My hand is steady, my stitching fine.
Though I defy the very gods themselves,
I do not tremble.

The finest parts I have collected,
of the freshly dead and centuries buried.
All taken into my possession,
and given new life, new meaning,
in service to my art.

Mad, they called me, Igor, mad!
Charlatan! Heretic! Necromancer!
I, who have scaled Olympus,
and returned with fire to warm these unthinking animals in their caves.

There! It is complete.
It is time.
Look at my creation. It is beautiful, is it not?
Watch, as I give it life with mine own breath.
Close your ears to the thunder and the lightning.
Hear it, Igor, hear it speak!

“In Xanadu did Kublah Khan
gyre and gimble in the wabe.
I wandered lonely as a cloud,
but neerer a drop to drink.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times;
I took the road less travelled,
not with a bang but a whimper.

Out, damned spot! out, I say!
Shall I compare thee to a summerís day?
Get thee to a nunnery!

Macavityís a ginger cat,
a fellow of infinite jest.
All animals are created equal,
we are all stardust,
and a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose
that would by any other name smell as sweet.

‘Death be not proud,’
quoth the raven.
Out, out, brief candle.
Do not go gentle into that good night
which they ate with a runcible spoon.

Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!”

UNTITLED #3

Haylee McKee

From the corner of my eye he looked like Elvis
When I turned to face him -
he had the head of a cauliflower

Meanwhile,
Silvery birds as small as butterflies
shot past Sturt Desert Peas

The landscape sat

In a slumber
knitted together
this was like being on a road trip
with someone else's father

LETTERS FROM PUPPET HILL

Martin McKenzie-Murray

Suffering a severe drought of ideas, writer Annie Proulx was desperate. And then, sometime in March 1999, a dramatic breakthrough—the discovered love letters of Toby Terrenson.

Toby was a self-employed puppet-maker, living with his lover Nigel on Puppet Hill, an isolated ranch in the heart of Alaska. His partner Nigel was a hunter, and would often take long and dangerous expeditions into the wild backwoods. One day Nigel failed to return, and a distraught and lovesick Toby began dispatching letters to Nigel's last known whereabouts—a lonely shack in the Johnson High Mountains.

Copies of these letters were anonymously forwarded to Proulx, and would later form the loose basis for her successful short story Brokeback Mountain. The letters prove to be a captivating mapping of love and madness.

January 20, 1998

Dearest Nigel,

Puppet Hill is so very cold without you here to warm me. So very cold. It reminds me of Narnia, except worse.

The antelope are fine, and send their regards. Antelope Jack is shedding the crudeness of adolescence, and will soon wear the cloak of adulthood. He misses you also. We look forward to your return from the mountains.

Always yours,

Toby.

January 27, 1998

Dearest Clover,

Where are you? I'm starting to worry. Please send word as quickly as possible. Just a few days back, as I was walking home from the town square with my two pints of milk (I still buy one for you) I overheard the young boys discussing the body of a hunter that was found way over yonder. My heart froze. Is it my darling? The thought of your frozen body, and your lovely little prick all rigid with God's ice, made me delirious. "Oh Heaven, send me a cheese sandwich!" I screamed, and the boys laughed at me and called me "shit-for-brains". I am so lonely without you.

So send word, and end the suffering.

Forever and ever yours,

Toby

February 10, 1998

To my Muppety Muppety Pumpkin Pie,

This is agony, but I write you, just to reach you, which is a John Lennon quote. I know you hate him, but I don't care what you say, Antelope Jack and I love the man.

I am not feeling myself, Nigel. Please send word.

Toby

March 2, 1998

To my strong, but probably no longer enduring Alaskan Petal,

It's been months since I last caught glimpse of you. Or touched your hair, as black as man's heart of darkness, or licked the sweat off your brow, as deep and aromatic as Calvin Klein's earlier stuff.

You cannot begin to imagine the pain, sweetheart. And Antelope Jack has undone all of his good work. He's biting more, mingling less, and has turned off Dickens' more serious stuff. In short, Antelope Jack has turned into a petulant demon, and I fear only your return can save him.

I cry myself to sleep each night, darling. My petal, my petal, my petal, a thousand times I weep. Suffering truly does have the nature of infinity, and my hand is calloused terribly from the lonely rigours of self-love.

Well, this should be it. The final letter. If no response is forthcoming I will hold a small funeral for you out here, on Puppet Hill. Something small and dignified. Just me and Antelope Jack. I'll get him a good suit, and I'll pray that he can behave himself.

Goodbye my sweet thing, you were the mousse in my soul.

Toby

Toby, as promised, held a small service to commemorate the life of Nigel. A transcript of the eulogy was forwarded to this editor by

the Terrenson family. The speech signposts the oncoming mental collapse. It reads as follows:

In 1968 Senator Kennedy was gunned down by a wacky shithead with a strange name. And millions wept. That's how many stars weep for you, petal. As so now, out here on Puppet Hill, star rain falls. It smells like normal rain, except that it's hotter and a little viscous.

The weeping stars are a fitting tribute to a man whose soul could comfortably fill the four corners of the universe, and whose asshole was tight and pucky.

It's appropriate that I evoke the Kennedy years, baby. Courtesy of Gore Vidal, we know about JFK's preference to have the Secret Service surprisingly dunk his partner's head underwater, just prior to Jack's climax, as so the vaginal contraction enhanced his orgasm. We learnt a lot from those brothers, and I will forever miss being able to practice their lessons with you.

I'm just about to press play on our favourite song, honey—"Walking on Sunshine" by Katrina and the Waves. May it spring above and beyond these desolate, windswept plains, turn left at the Pyramids of Despair, successfully negotiate the round-a-bout of loneliness, and make the hard right straight towards your comfy chair in Heaven.

Cruelly, fate was to deliver another blow for poor Toby. In May of 1998, Toby

received word from his estranged mother that Nigel was in fact alive and well, and shackled up with a woodsman on the far side of the mountains. It quickly emerged that Nigel had in fact faked his own death in order to extricate himself from an increasingly exhausting relationship.

Battling anorexia, agoraphobia, and, bizarrely, a rare tropical ulcer, Toby's dispatches from this period is chilling documentation of a disintegrating mind. Gone is the easy eloquence of former letters, replaced with the rabid, shot-gun prose of a madman.

May 28, 1998

To Shithead,

So you haven't shuffled off? How dare you? Antelope Jack cried for days when he heard how, after your body had frozen, the vultures came and chipped out your marble eyes. God how he cried. The other antelopes wouldn't play with him because of the tears, and they called him vicious things, like Homo Luke, Piss Eyes, and Sad Faced Jesus. And let's not start with the grief you caused me. No, let's—let's detail the pain, my two-timing devil-man:

Oprah's charm was lost on me for three weeks. I found her cold and unmoving;

I stopped drinking milk, instead preferring a drink I've dubbed the Grenade Fuck—a volatile marriage of lukewarm turps, vodka, bourbon, and tobasco sauce; and

I slept with Chuck Norris. He temporarily made the pain go away.

So go to hell, prick. I hope that you do shuffle off, and soon, and horribly. Antelope Jack sends his love.

T

June 2, 1998

Dear Nigel,

You are spineless filth. Like an ink-soaked rag caught in a gutter. I wish death upon you in a thousand ways, but because of time constraints, and a vicious Grenade Fuck headache, I've reduced my death wishes to these:

A renowned Chicago jazz troupe trades the smoky pleasures of bohemia for a murderous rampage. Travelling north in a stolen Hyundai, the group's body-count is already 8 before they stumble across your wooden loveshack. Hog-tying you, the group commandeers your stereo system, putting on Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* to set the mood, before disembowelling you with clarinets. and,

Hitler is brought back to life and falls in love with you. You would then enter into a death pact with him, just like that chick did in the bunker.

Yours sincerely,

Toby Terrenson.

This was the last known correspondence. Sources inform this editor that Toby and Antelope Jack are backpacking happily around Eastern Europe.

MOUTH LINED WITH SILENCE

Lily Chan

Chingchong I won't let you out of the pool
said the boy with a mullet and smattering of blonde freckles
blocking my way to the ladder.
I was 6 and didn't care. Boys were vermin. No one listened to rats.
So I waited politely, egg beating water,
and he left. Eventually.

In that country town there were no asians
so I forgot I was one
and stepped back, startled, whenever
I caught a glimpse of my reflection.

A boy I had a crush on asked me
Why did you come here?
as if I needed permission
to enter the town.
Why?

But I had it good. They only talked about Pauline Hanson
they didn't try to shove her policies in my mouth.
My brother wasn't so lucky. There were times
he would come home with his shirt sleeves
ripped and school bag full of dust

a mouth lined with silence.

SUPERSTAR

Michael Farrell

Forced To hide Sad Story

Theres a place he can go where he
outshines the traffic &. Good meals dont show memo play
th'e bowie lps when he gets home the doors open
& the red & the blueve taken
bankers hostage everythings collapsed. Into liberalism even the
tvs faded into 2d but not. Us were
the impacted heavily distracted gaze son
when youve bleached, & shaved it takes
more than stockings & a shift in officer tone
come on in.

The poems are epic the histories of superstars through
the ages think in silver & tat.
Wont hurt classic, money, flattening
progressive nature the brick in the
handbag polyurethane, at least he has some, drawing
skill always; in demand like crystal meth & fresh faces.

CONTRIBUTORS

Byron Bard is a poet, playwright, novelist, visual artist, martial artist, and genius. When not basking in the glory of his renaissance masculinity, he gazes wistfully at the night sky.

Lily Chan is a walking thought of the universe.

Michael Farrell has published three books of poetry, '*ode ode*', '*BREAK ME OUCH*,' and '*a raiders guide*'. The second of these contains his own drawings and is influenced by a minimalist style of cartoon. While at Aichi Shukutoku University, Nagoya, Farrell explored the possibilities of a relationship between manga and poetry and made connections with Japanese poets. His work often uses pop music as a model or starting point and he is interested in karaoke.

Matt Giles is a creative writing and cultural studies student at Curtin University and a music writer for the *West Australian* and *Mess + Noise*. Last year he co-published the *Love is My Velocity Cookbook* with Katie Lenanton and this year is co-publishing *First Page*, a book of writing and art, with Jessyca Hutchens and about 20 other people. You can view the beginning of this project online at www.firstpage.org.au.

Jessyca Hutchens is a student, illustrator and sometimes writer. She is currently co-publishing a book called *First Page* which will exhibit many and varied explorations into merging, combining and sometimes colliding image with text. Presently she is mesmerized by the pictures in histology books.

Janet Jackson plays the guitar and collects loud vests. Since 1986 she has sculpted eclectic English in liquid lines that liquidate the line between the loud and the literary. Most of her poems are online: get uncomfortably close at Proximity, www.proximity.webhop.net. Janet's poems have been published in various other media including three self-published zines. Her first book is coming soon (we promise). She once won a poetry slam in a Dublin bar.

Hayley McKee was born in England and got off to an awkward start being named after a Disney child star. She moved to WA in 1990 and was lucky enough to have a few Summers of Love in the Perth hills, but now she is based in Melbourne where she edits a not-for-profit online art magazine called *Bandito* which is a collaboration with a Mexico City artist. Hayley plans to expand *Bandito* into an independent publishing house late 2008.

Martin McKenzie-Murray is a writer living in Perth.

Patrick Pittman fashions zeroes and ones into a variety of shapes, depending on passing clouds of mood and fitting interest. These include words of fiction and words of reportage, radio broadcasts, blogs, successful businesses, many thousands of websites, databases and strange pieces of software, glorious Gantt charts, ridiculous art projects and far too many long, verbose emails. When asked what he does for a living, he usually shrugs and lets someone else answer the question. He supposes he is some form of bitsmith.

Thanks to the Cottonmouth committee

They are Rebecca Giggs, Patrick Pittman, Scott-Patrick Mitchell, Simon Mongey, Simon Cox, Jessyca Hutchens and Tomás Ford.

Our posters and other beautiful (and occasionally creepy) accoutrements were designed by Michael Barlow Stringer.

**We're in the 459 Bar of the Rosemount Hotel on the second Thursday of every month.
459 Fitzgerald St, North Perth, Western Australia.**

You may visit us online at cottonmouth.org.au

COTTONMOUTH.ORG.AU