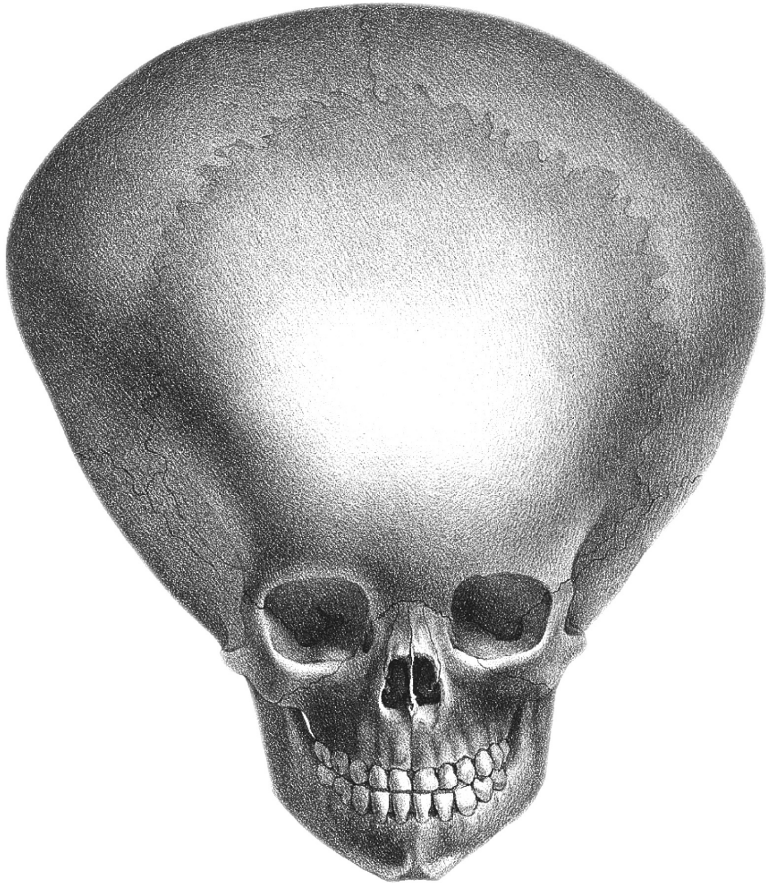


“COTTONMOUTH”



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COTTONMOUTH

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COTTONMOUTH is a monthly performance night which is produced in conjunction with a 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 (.)

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Department of Culture and the Arts
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CONTENTS

<i>Alexander Kannis</i> BOND 34: PEACE AND QUIET	4
<i>Anna Dunnill</i> MUSIC MAN	5
<i>Kolya Lebedeff</i> ON THE NEW CONFORMISTS	6
<i>Emily Taylor</i> CHANGI PRISON	9
<i>Alexander Kannis</i> BATTLE CRY	10
<i>Janice Loreck</i> SUNDAY	12
<i>Anna Dunnill</i> TENTACLE LADY	15
<i>Emily Osborne</i> GO FORTH	16
<i>Stuart Cooke</i> MEAT ANTS, BROOME	17
CONTRIBUTORS	18

BOND 34: PEACE AND QUIET

Alexander Kannis

A gentleman commands the screen

grey

“Bond...James Bond.”

The orderlies, now, limit his martini intake

and hand out little disposable cups

filled with pills.

He talks of dashing in suits.

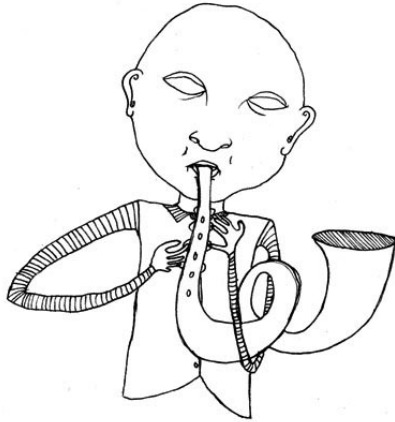
He talks of gadgets.

He talks of floozies.

He talks of controlled slides in his Aston Martin.

MUSIC MAN

Anna Dunnill



ON THE NEW CONFORMISTS

Kolya Lebedeff

In 1994 I was at an AFL scratch match and saw a man wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with Speak English Or Fuck Off. While vaguely offended on general principle as well as on the grounds my grandmother could scarcely speak English, I shrugged it off. The man was simply a bigot, probably a racist and almost certainly a nationalist. Above all, he was just one man.

Complaints now often heard (as they were before the brief window of seeming sanity in this country which closed sometime in the late 1990s) that “they” don’t even learn the language are nothing new.*

*Of course, the fact “the language” is English rather than Nyoongar because the original “they” didn’t even learn the language seems lost on just about everyone. Yes, they showed up on their rickety boats, bringing their criminals with them, they didn’t assimilate and worse still they started killing large numbers of the locals. Now that’s the sort of immigrant horror story that should be on Today Tonight.

When I was a kid posters appeared in my neighbourhood calling on the reader to ‘Stop The Asian Invasion’ and, more rarely, warning me that Jews were ruining my life (They actually said; “Jews Are Ruining Your Life”). These were

posted by Jack van Tongren’s Australian Nationalist Movement, a more obvious manifestation of a generally low-key racist rumble seething under the surface of Australian society. It’s always been there, but for a while we seemed to be learning that it probably wasn’t such a good thing. Now it’s out in the open again; loud and proud.

Unthinkable? I saw a group of Anglo-Saxon (maybe Anglo-Celtic?) diners, men and women, in a Vietnamese restaurant two months ago complaining about foreigners. ‘If you don’t love it, leave’ one of them parroted. The other loudly declared ‘Fuck off, we’re full’. How unseemly. But these slogans weren’t the product of the diners and their diseased sense of irony, you can find them anywhere. You’ll see them on cars, both flash and shit, utes, t-shirts. The West Australian is handing out free flags for you to fly on your vehicle in the manner of a diplomatic dignitary.

But while the growing and hazardous brainlessness of nationalism is a worry, there’s something far more insidious going on here... More recently associates of mine have advised me of the existence of singlets and t-shirts stating ‘Fit In Or Fuck Off’. I am told they were even on sale at a recent music festival. Let’s have another look at that;

FIT IN OR FUCK OFF

This goes beyond racism, beyond patriotism and the muddle-headed yearning for the return of a monoculture that never really existed. This represents an aggressive demand for conformity. When someone chooses to buy and wear this shirt, what do they think they are saying to the world?

Fit In or Fuck Off is not a rejection of Sheik Al-Hilali. It is not a vote in favour of the Pacific Solution. It is not calling for stricter language testing as an entry visa requirement. Fit In or Fuck Off is a militant command for you – the reader – to be just like the wearer. The shirt says “don’t challenge my ideas, don’t be new, different or unfamiliar, don’t be a bit strange or ‘a character’ or a freak – be like us”.

Fit in with whom? We can only hazard a guess, so it is the principle behind the slogan that warrants proper examination.

It’s an extreme manifestation of what is ultimately a very conservative view point. The half-wit who wears this t-shirt probably doesn’t realise they are holding aloft a scared, narrow-minded, reactionary banner dressed up as

rebellion because of the use of the word Fuck. Would they wear a shirt that says “Conform or Go Away”? They already are.

Beyond the direct meaning of the Fit In Or Fuck Off shirt are the broader implications of its proliferation. What does it mean that young people are prepared to wear this shirt?

Fuck Off We’re Full is belligerent xenophobia coupled with a poor grasp of demography.

If You Don’t Love It, Leave is the dark – and inescapable – flipside of declaring your love for the landmass you were, by chance, born on.

There’s nothing particularly original about these qualities being abundantly clear in people of all ages and from all walks of life.

Fit In Or Fuck Off is something else.



It’s someone complaining that boys wear their hair long and girls wear their hair short these days and we should bring back national service.

It’s someone calling the police because

their neighbour is playing loud music at 5.30pm and they don't like it, instead of knocking on their door and asking them to turn it down.

It's someone cutting someone's face open with a broken bottle because he is wearing a top hat and tails.

It's someone beating someone almost to death on a beach because they're Greek or Jewish or Italian and they look Lebanese.

It is someone saying – there is one culture, one kind of person we want here and we want everyone else to fuck off. And I am not even talking about ethnicity. There are a lot of eighth generation Anglo-Australians that don't fit in.

Fit In Or Fuck Off is as dangerous as it is stupid. The logical conclusion of this mantra is Rod Serling's 'Number Twelve Looks Just Like You', Ray Bradbury's 'Fahrenheit 451' and, while I hate to use this old chestnut, Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'.

When did the world become a giant school yard, where nothing is more important than fitting in and the winning team isn't shy about reminding everyone else? These slogans are part of a growing anti-intellectualism, a growing tide of contempt for the artistic, the creative and the different. They are the battle cries of a new generation of banal bigots, opposed not only to particular cultures or races or ethnicities but to anything that

is not their own, anything at all that is not familiar and easily understood. Stand against this tide, or it will sweep you aside.

CHANGI PRISON

Emily Taylor

Those sunken eyes
leathered skin stretched
across bodies emaciated.

They were *your* eyes
The same bowed legs
willowed by starvation.

I saw your hell
and felt its closeness
for the first time

I wish I could tell you
I glimpsed inside the spy hole
of your suffering

I read about the torture
saw the letters that never arrived
wondered how you survived
Hell for three years

Photos of your nightmares:
Beheadings
Water torture
Electrocution

I wept in the place you wanted to forget,
And understood why you never forgave.

BATTLE CRY

Alexander Kannis

Kid shouted from the street
“I’m
going to war, nothing finer,
going to war, going to war.”
I just stared.
Kids in the street.
Y’know. Just kids.

At night,
in bed, poised and tense and in the dark,
and all these staircases walked right up him
and the house exhaled,
creaking through every room.
A rumble, a tremble, a distant storm,
the invisible end notes buzzing home like a tuning fork.

Veterans dreamt
of good harvests
and unreasonably attractive people.
Their now bed was matted and ancient,
lying in the dirt,
and companionship, at the time,
was a man to the right with no face.
The wind whistled ‘tween blackened bows,
a one night gale that would bend the trunk of every tree in no man’s land.
Fields far and complete of dark and fog,
and the sun, when risen, changes nothing of this.
Colour bled out and went pale in the face,
overhanging thunderheads replacing the sky.
They shed not a single tear.

Those who could not foresee
a future
of geriatrics and the disabled
united by a hate and fear more true to them than God,
more powerful than any holy book could inform but otherwise.
So much blood spilled, and We could never be sate.

Honour is some reptilian joke played on the young and idealistic.

Like bayonet battles in a trench,
they persisted in stiff silence
with gas masks over their faces.
Boys, almost children, really, reminiscing and nostalgic
for hunting trips
and cobblestone lanes.
Total War was a concept too much
for his little head.

But they're of age.

War isn't an essay on becoming a man.
It doesn't have principles or margins or scope.
It'll have you fucking shot.

SUNDAY

Janice Loreck

It's a boring Sunday afternoon. The sun is shining right through the window of our bedroom in North Perth. It gets in my eyes, but warms the very chilly air inside.

Outside of the window I can see one bath towel and a beach towel, lying side by side on the long grass. They're covered in dried brown vomit; Morgan spent a large portion of Friday night and Saturday morning throwing up in an 89c bucket by the side of our bed. We bought two of these buckets almost exactly a week prior. Morgan cryptically explained that it was "handy" to have a few buckets around the house. I wondered at the time if he meant handy for vomiting in. He had, after all, been forced to throw up in a casserole dish after our housewarming party. Just as I had been forced to cook a large shepherds' pie in the same dish a few days after. We are rather short on home wares at the moment.

Unfortunately, the problem with 89c buckets is that they're far more unstable than a Pyrex casserole dish, especially if they aren't holding a lot of volume. Morgan threw up a lot, but not enough to prevent the bucket tipping over and splashing the contents all over our unsealed wooden floorboards, a *Dungeons and Dragons* Player's Handbook and a large wad of file paper.

The next day, I sacrificed my only two towels to mop up the spew. Now, two days later, they are on the lawn, still waiting to be hosed down. I'm not going to spend \$2.20 at the laundrette to clean them properly. It's not as if the washing machine could remove the chunks as an aptly-wielded garden-hose might anyway.

Morgan perked up mighty well after his ablutions. He was happier than he'd been all week. I made pasta with the nice shells from European Foods. I played Final Fantasy VII. I thought about the thesis that I should thinking about, but wasn't. About the book I had ordered, *Backlash* by Susan Faludi, and why it hadn't arrived yet.

I thought about my professor and something she had said to me a few days earlier, on Friday, before Morgan threw up. I called in sick and went to see her at the university. Work in the public service didn't live up to my post-university hopes, and I think she knew. So she said I looked well. She asked me if I'd been thinking about my PhD. She asked me if I'd written anything, or read anything. I hadn't done any of those things. So I instead talked about Morgan.

He's doing his articulated clerkship, I told her. He's on rotation in the Criminal Law department; he goes to court every day. He sometimes comes home so tired that

he can't fall asleep at night, though if he drives to his parents' house he sometimes sleeps there. I wondered if it's because I'm not around.

I also told her about Sam, my six foot four housemate who locks himself in his room and won't come out, except to make chive-flavoured Insta Mash. And Emile; how Emile leaves his socks everywhere. Oh, there are socks everywhere around my house, I said. And jocks. God, how we laughed about that.

That was when she called me Wendy.

"Hun" she said "It sounds as if you're in a 'Wendy and the Lost Boys' situation.

"But it's nice" she had said, quickly "It's nice that there are people who want to be with you, to live with you. And that someone wants to love you.

"Isn't it nice to be loved?" she asked.

But she had meant it as criticism. I never take criticism well.

Later when it got dark, Morgan came home. Sam was with him. Morgan had gone to the pub right after work and had been throwing up for the entire walk back to our house, apparently. It is a long distance to travel at night; there are mice and large cockroaches on the footpath along Walcott Street. Plus the old Italian lady next door to us is observant and judgemental. She sweeps her veranda vigorously whenever I walk past after work. Her arms wobble when she sweeps,

as does the gold crucifix around her neck, getting caught on her moles. Emile once overheard her talking about how dirty we are.

My neighbour's disapproval bothers me as much as my professor's criticism does. I wonder if Signora's rage is directed at me. Perhaps her rage is jealousy because I am surrounded by lost boys, young men who are not bitter in the way that old men are. That was what my mother told me; that men become bitter and angry as they age and that I should pick boys who are happy, so that they might not be so angry in their later years. The Italian lady's husband might be that way; bitter and angry and not able to get it up anymore. I see him sometimes, his pants always too high, hosing the lawn.

Maybe Signora knew we were kids playing house. Not Signora though; she was in it for it all. Radical prostatectomy, hysterectomy, proteins in the brain. Serious perimenopausal mole problems. And after forty-eight hours, vomit stained towels are still on my lawn, and she can probably see it.

When Morgan came home, he fell on our bed and I fetched the 89c bucket. The supports underneath the mattress, below Morgan's head, had snapped under his weight.

"Darling, you finally broke the bed" I said to him.

"I'm sorry". He drooled on his pillow.

"You shouldn't have drunk so much."

"Sorry"

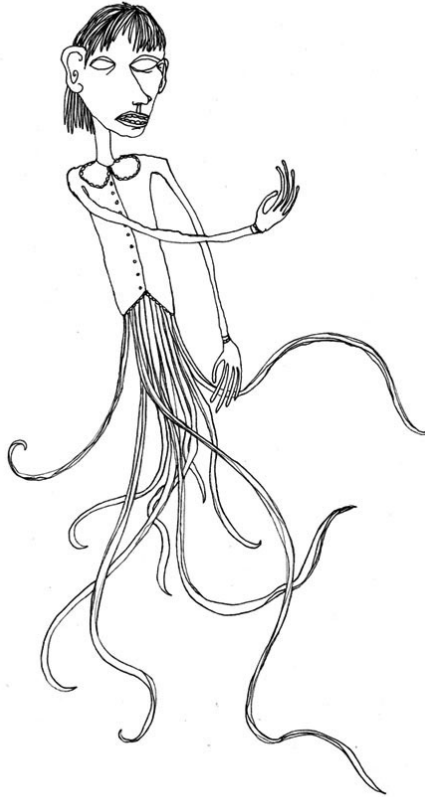
"And you threw up my nice beef salad. It took me an hour to make that salad"

He didn't say anything after that. I hugged him around his waist, but he shuddered and I let go.

It is dark now, and Sunday, but I can still see the towels on our lawn. My beef salad is out there somewhere.

TENTACLE LADY

Anna Dunnill



GO FORTH

Emily Osborne

I see my lights leading forth,
Dotted, etheric.
The darks
Cling, cling, cling.

MEAT ANTS, BROOME

*after Philip Hodgins
Stuart Cooke*

Since we set up camp
the meat ants have started moving in.
At first they were a slow, trickling stream
over there in a corner, wandering about
with their own business to attend to.
Then their numbers began to grow.

The early sun spills their shadows across the red earth,
effectively doubling their population. When you stare
long enough, their mosaic of trails
blurs into a swarming,
breathing skin.

If you stop
in the middle of one of their highways
they pour upwards over your boots.
You can't go anywhere in bare feet
without worrying about them. Often
you can just be pottering around, making
a cup of tea or something, and you'll feel
a little nibble on your ankle or big toe which,
by the time you've bent down to swipe
the little bastard off, will have begun to feel
like a small nail being pressed firmly
into the bone of your foot.

*If you stop,
straight away the big ants pour upwards over your boots; they're
jointed, globular and
stilted like
the mechanical explorers of another world.
- from 'In the Mallee' by Robert Gray.*

CONTRIBUTORS

Stuart Cooke is a Sydney-based poet and critic. His poems, translations, essays and stories have been published in most major Australian literary magazines, as well as in the UK and USA.

Anna Dunnill is an art student who writes. Actually, most of her art is really writing in disguise. She is interested in personal narratives and translucent paper, as well as tea, music and interstitial fiction. Her work has been published in *Voiceworks* Magazine and a few small and widely undistributed self-made zines.

Alexander Kannis is gonna get things DONE! He's FORWARD THINKING! He likes THINGS! He does STUFF! He's gonna SELL OUT! Get the BIG BUCKS! Just you wait and SEE!

Kolya Lebedeff is a writer with an opinion. Complaints, death threats and lucrative writing commissions can be arranged via Kolya.Lebedeff@gmail.com.

Janice Loreck is a writer living in Perth.

Emma Osborne is a graduate of the Deakin University Professional Writing course and has been published in the literary journal *Verandah*, as well as in the Vignette Press mook *What is Our Sex?* She is far too cheerful to be a real poet, and once wrote a sonnet dedicated to a box of goon.

Emily Taylor is inspired by the relationships between people and landscape and has travelled in the outdoors for 7 years. An interest in telling the stories of real Australians led her to complete a Bachelor of Contemporary Performance in 2007. Emily is a physical performer, with a passion for script writing and poetry. She is interested in developing site specific performance work and telling stories in contemporary ways. She is currently working as a dramaturge for the 'Duckhouse' theatre company, Perth, and as a tutor for Barking Gecko Theatre Company.

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Poster art and creepy anatomia curation by Michael Barlow Stringer

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

You may visit us online at cottonmouth.org.au

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