

R I C C O C H E T

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*M a g a z i n e*



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Managing Editor

*Emily Tatti*

Editorial Team

*Melanie Seward*

*Meg O'Rourke*

*Sarah McDermott*

Layout

*Rachel Tatti*

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Contact the editors via [ricochetmag@hotmail.com](mailto:ricochetmag@hotmail.com).

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COVER IMAGE BY RACHEL TATTI

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# Editor's Note

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Well here we are, on our second issue. We have some great stuff for you this quarter - tears, laughter, merriment. We hope you enjoy.

With the New Year just here and gone, I've been stuck on the idea of New Year's resolutions. I always make them, setting myself up for some inevitable self-flogging and self-recrimination. After about the first week my resolve disappears and I'm back to my bad old habits again.

This year, I decided to compromise with myself. Instead of making the same old resolutions - 'I will not eat chocolate' (please), 'I will learn a foreign language' - I decided to set a few writing challenges for myself. The number one being: 'I will get cracking on that novel.'

In the past when I've set about completing this goal, I've excitedly settled down at my desk only to burn off my energy in the opening chapters. In these instances I was focusing on a fleeting idea, some minor and incendiary inspiration, and that was no doubt my mistake. This year, I've decided to focus on an idea I've had germinating for a long time; one my mind continually returns to. I've drafted small pieces exploring the characters it involves and the scenery I see them inhabiting, and I'm hardly satisfied. If anything such exercises have made me twice as determined to tackle my narrative.

Several authors included in this issue have been drawn to discuss a similar concept; that we become enslaved to certain ideas, and have a hard time letting go of them, even if we want to. This affliction seems to be a standard response from authors when asked why they write - at his Wheeler Centre appearance last year Bret Easton Ellis said it through gritted teeth, but even he had to admit that the only way to sate his obsession with an idea is to write it down. Otherwise it consumes his life, making him sullen, withdrawn and unreachable, like a junkie twitching for a fix.

It's this I'm counting on to get me through the task ahead. Not a resolution, but the compulsive need to purge myself of inspiration.

I would also like to blog more, which includes adding content to the Ricochet blog. It would be absolutely fantastic to have a go-to crew of bloggers on board; people willing to share their publishing experiences and offer writing advice for 2011. If any readers are interested, please do let us know, (contact details are on the above page).

For those who have made resolutions this year, I hope they go well. For those who haven't, may the New Year bring you all the best. We're excited to showcase even more of your art, fiction and poetry in the months ahead.

*Emily Tatti*  
**Managing Editor**

# Network Connection

*Phillip English*

Gary's speckled pink bald spot shines with sweat under the angry buzz of caged fluorescent lights. The humidity is pervasive this far north, and even the huff and blow of the air-conditioning struggles to keep it at bay. His knees groan and the vacuum pack shifts awkwardly across his shoulders as he shambles backwards out of the last office in his rounds. With a final sweep of the hallway he unclips the straps, winds the power cord around the whole ensemble, and stores it away in the supply closet for the following morning. He slaps his hands clean of dust on his tracksuit pants and stumps back to the office; it's time for Gary to catch up with his son.

The ancient screen thrums to life with a press of the power button. The owner may be kind enough to let the cleaner use their Internet, but that kindness doesn't stretch to a modern computer. About the only thing this beast has going for it is a network connection, but that's all Gary needs. While he waits for the operating system to load he takes his glasses out of their case and perches them on his scabbed nose, peering down at the start up messages that flash across in what might as well be another language. A tinny jingle brings up the log-in screen and he begins the chicken peck of his username and password. G-a-r-y. Enter. J-u-l-i-a-n-8-5. Enter. A solitary icon sits in the middle of the desktop, renamed Internet Click Here as if the patient instruction will save an old bloke like him from getting confused. Still, he dutifully double-clicks, using the loading time to dig around in his pockets. After a moment of panic he finds the scrap of paper he's looking for nestled right down the bottom of his sweaty back pocket. Some of the ink has run but he can still make out the bubbled loops of

his son's print, scribbled at their last meeting more than a year ago. He promises himself he'll make a copy when he gets back to his flat. With practised care, Gary hunts for each letter in the seemingly random string of characters and stabs down on the enter key before he can change his mind. Once he is satisfied that the new destination is being fetched, he leans back in the chair and closes his eyes.

When he opens them the page is bursting with a stream of high colour action shots only slightly desaturated by the fuzz of the old monitor. A day at the beach plays out haltingly between the photos: the group is playing Frisbee, now surfing, now burying each other in the radiant sand. The series continues into the night, the harsh flash of the camera showing the group sitting in couches and unwinding with drinks. He stops the slide-show on a photo of a young man in his early twenties smiling up into the lens. Ignoring a pang of guilt at using office supplies, he navigates the menu and prints the photo off. The printer crackles and presses the warm sheet of paper into his hands. The smile is pixelated and the toner cartridge has almost run out of magenta, casting a green hue over the face. A beep from his watch reminds him he should be out of the building by now but Gary remains seated, staring into his son's eyes for as long as the paper's warmth lasts.

# RTThnx

*Bronwyn Mehan*

Thanks for the Retweets @ benjaminsolah, pmnewton, whitu, samuelcooney, canislatrans, ireadiwrite, MsUnreliable, keredm

For lonely writers, Twitter is the office water cooler. Okay. Back to it.

The Nine Stages of Dating a Novel.

Found my way in. Wrote a sketchy page. That'll do for today. Feels like I've pitched my tent at base camp at least.

You know, if I killed all my protagonists now, I'd be done and could go play.

Just noticed I have 1000 followers... E.B. White says: writing is both mask and unveiling... does that mean I now have to guarantee interesting and witty tweets?

What Is The Best Genre To Write If You Want To Get Published?

Memoirs – will anyone care?

It is surprisingly hard to watch life & the Internet go on as usual as bulldozers raze old-growth in the Ivanpah Valley.

Just dashed down to Danks Street to stock up on macaroons & a mocha.

“What I like in a good author is not what he says, but what he whispers” Logan Pearsall Smith (1865-1946)

Use Your Network To Market Your Book.

Going to Parramatta. I'm pretty sure for the first time. Wonder what it's like ... I'm in that part of town; kids won't let train leave 'cause their pregnant mate is taking her time coming up the stairs... they ended up leaving w/o her anyway.

Every time I hear about a new Dr Seuss iPad app, a little part of my childhood dies. I do not like that, \$am I Am.

What Is The Right Publisher To Best If You Want To Get Genre?

Top End news: Rivers of grog. Tsunami of child abuse. Perfect storm of mosquitoes

The inevitability of the update: like a Big Breakfast without eggs.

When i click on 'your tweets, retweeted' i see a condensed / edited version of me. One the public approves of.

I cried because I had no Twitter account, until I met a man who had no internet access.

Forget about bed. I srsly need to do some blogging!

# Turn, Turn, Turn

Rebecca Dempsey

*Summer's end  
Tears from tree branches  
fall, leafing the yearning earth  
sating its own hunger*

Each story begins with the birth of an idea, or the germination of a series of ideas in a kind of knowledge field, a cloud of knowing. It should centre on a primary relationship: author to work and, in my case, recollections of a mother/daughter plot during a warm, dry March.

Over summer, I'd waited, but it's when I began to write that I found you: heralded by a certain tension in the forehead and across the shoulders when hunched over the keyboard, fumbling over keys.

This is my task. To form a person from words, which pull together the pieces shattered by your passing. To form you for others to imagine. It's a life and death matter and Here be Dragons. I'm spelling out memories of you and in my reading I find memoir is a word 'linked to the idea of mourning'. I write of you to forget myself and in forgetting myself be myself.

I write now to recreate you; you the cause of me formed in a primal urge. But we had a complicated relationship: a three-old-daughter playing carer to her own desperate pregnant, innocent mother. I remember (see, imagine, envision), your blue eyes, wide in fear, drooping in sad fatigue and you again with your soiled gardener's hands, supportive as I took tentative steps across a well-worn carpet of yellowing couch grass.

What else returns with the writing of it? There you were, a blonde planter of seeds and a writer struggling to understand my own struggle to read and write, at five, at eight and at ten. When I suddenly I could write, like a dutiful daughter I made a record of your words. The words you wrote and sent to Women's Magazines. Your words earned me praise: Grade four: A+ The Mystery Shadow. You saw it straight away. I plagiarised you even then. But this no new thing, 'all daughters mock their anxious mothers with their mothers eyes.' But my words don't mock you, not now.

You inspired in me a search for clues of you. I look in the tapestries you wove and in the gardens you grew, which turn

labyrinthine in my memory.

Even your sunflowers turn their heads from me. You're elusive, unlike your poetry, which is limpid and distant. No mum, you're an Escher-scape of confusion. How can I paint you for others to see when tanned arms turned hospital white and your once strong fertile frame became an irradiated plane, a chemically desiccated husk blown away on the wind? I wonder what any work can really say about its author with certainty? I see your talent, your eye for detail and remember your insecurity. I recall your need to build wild hedgerows with Rosemary for Remembrance. But where you ended, my search really began. What I've found is that something of you is here in everything I write and you were all along. It's not plagiarism; it's my Selfish Genes. You're more than anything I write... but you who made me, taught me, fought for me and died and left me will always be a part of me, Mother, like I was a part of you. It's the circle of life. I'm reaping what you sowed. So I will make the words turn to me like your sunflowers.

*Autumn*

*Shadows spread softly*

*Ground yielding long dusk, wrapped close*

*In misty blankets*

Circles within circles. Post scriptum, post mortem in memoriam. It's autumn, just after the Old World Easter fertility rites of life and it's resurrected deep-rooted notions of death making us all April's fools.

It's still warm, the earth, and all of us, eventually, are folded into to its loamy depths. What remains are traces, multiple mirror images cast in the minds of others. Warped, dusty and dim or bright and garish, these memories of the dead become stories we tell each other. Collecting them as we go, we pass them on, share them, and embellish them,

smoothing the rough edges of lives under the steady flow of narrative. Our memories erode the dead as much as they preserve them. At the same time, the living are forced onwards, while the dead fall away into the past. We reach back but our fingers can only brush over the traces of their yesterdays.

All that's left to the living is action so death prompts the quest to collect facts, evidence, explanations, ascertain the proper cause, and ascribe the blame. We ask why when we cry no and placate ourselves with how. No matter though, the dead main broken apart and we each keep a piece for ourselves, setting it amongst the stories we cement in place in our loss. And it's made canonical in the hardbound revised edition. The dead remain, though, despite clumsy attempts to mould them into a historical narrative, multiple beings: mother, sister, wife, aunt, friend, acquaintance, colleague, patient, daughter, lover, student, worker, gardener, writer, victim and something else, something evolving in a place beyond death beyond which the living can't conceive.

*Winter*

*Stems crackle and scratch*

*Hillside bracken skeletons*

*march in grey accord*

In the depths of a drab winter, as trees, which have survived the drought, are uprooted by the harsh winds wheezing over a depleted soil, I'm undergoing a creative symbiosis.

As a diary, this is a catharsis enabling me to smash down barriers so everything divided is sinking down into a stewing humus of desires to create an experimental non-conflictual story, which includes poetry of dead mothers and this. It occurs to me the Brontes never had such problems and these ideas won't fit into a classical Hollywood three-act screenplay.



So, there will be no neat denouements in this drama. Once again I break the Conventions of the Academy. I put down the Sword of Conflict, thrust aside the Microscope of Literary Theory and bin the Spear of Linear Narrative to head out into different territory.

Stepping carefully towards the womb of story, I spy three cackling women weaving narrative threads. I fear them and it's bitter chill out here in this dark cavern. Beware MacDuff, I mutter to myself, these moors are bleak. But then it occurs to me, why fear of this place and these women? Is it really cold, sitting at the naval of the world? Isn't it warm and cosy? Is it the result of my education and culture, which leads me to fear these wise women and the places where they dwell - or where they are imprisoned? Is it cold and dark because the light of reason flickers less luridly here? And if they're mad at all, are they are mad with wisdom and prophecy? Maybe it's why I'm drawn to write of the dead - as exiles they defy logic as madwomen do.

I've found these women are not Demons or Classically Clad Muses, but guides who help me carry stories. They are midwives who encourage the birth of creativity. I keep studying the signs and I see it now (Ursula LeGuin was right), stories are not conflicts, but containers enabling women to bring forth, rear and lay out.

### *Spring*

*Jewels swing gently*

*Pearly moisture suspended*

*On dawn lit cobwebs*

Spring and Fall. In a rite of passage on a dewy September morning I continue to read and piece together clues. It was Luce Irigaray who said we're always mothers once we're women. It seems apt in this time of burgeoning which is the eve of my mother's birthday I find out not only am I her daughter but also

I'm a mother. Something is passed on after all, something creative, from grandmother, to mother to daughter. Seeds beget fruit. And if the next generation is nothing more than a web of words on a screen or page, it's still something. I'm the mother of my writing about my mother, who, as a text, is my daughter. I hear Freud laughing but writing is, after all, like being a parent, an act of faith. I will continue to weave this web out of myself, to defy entropy. If the writing be now, tis not then, if not now then soon. The readiness is all.

### *Summer*

*New trailing couch grass*

*Strings across ash blackened earth*

*Green tendrils sew soil*

Summer and an end at the beginning. Dry days and stormy restless nights, during which I wrestle with bushfire nightmares and wonder, at what point it is too late to do or become? Children are constantly told they can do or be anything. So at what age do you become what you've tried instead of what you dream? Did I dream only of writing before I understood what letters are and what words can do? Am I dreaming of you mum, because there is no me? Is there something wrong with me that I'm not content with the world and invent my own? And why should I be content with a world without you? And endlessly reviewing the words I have written, is it a survival instinct? A hesitant step towards immortality? All of the above? It's all too Penelope unravelling, just like I pulled apart the threads of your tapestries, mother.

I'm locked in a closed system.

Tracing the path of the Ouroborous. But so are we all: life and death, creation and destruction. Seasons turn, the sun always rises and I must learn to love my world even if you're now only words on paper.

Then I remember. There is no one world. Every perception of reality is an invention of the perceiver. As a teller of stories my imagination allows me to dip into them in order to create. But all works are in progress ad infinitum. There are no last words, no complete unabridged version. It is why scientists use letters for DNA, and why, once upon a time, to spell something was a magical process. So, no matter how much my mind wants to escape history, stories of death and studies of literature through this purgation, I'm bound and free at the same time.

In an attempt to sow the seeds of other ideas I steel myself to begin again and perhaps instead of yearning to escape this maze of mother, memory and me, I will understand it. Soon. Of this I am certain.

# When Poems Like Bedbugs Bite

---

*John Ryan*

I awake every two hours  
with a case of pins and needles

did I alienate the reader?  
did the poem go anywhere?  
did I give them bits of sugar  
before the bitter tonic?

poems bite like bedbugs  
in the unwitnessed hours  
between midnight and dawn

did I speak the common tongue  
keeping one foot in the pulpit?  
were the words the artifice of  
blinking lights in a Dr. Who episode?

I fossick around for a balm  
behind the sliding mirrored door  
of the vanity, but the nipping...

did the butter come before the bread?  
how predictable was it?  
was it flat like soda water left open?  
was its spontaneity  
just the prattle of a troubled mind?  
would James Wright  
get even more depressed after reading it?

someone forgot to wash the sheets,  
the dog has been sleeping  
on the bed, under the doona  
and I can't help asking

did I pad it out for fear  
of letting it end too soon  
as I almost did just now?

# Me, Frank and a Monkey

*Daniel Hedger*

It was the monkey that started it, really. He threw the apple first, I mean. Frank doesn't just go around throwing apples at monkeys willy-nilly. He needs a good reason.

Usually, monkeys don't have to worry about things like this happening. They can just sit around all day practicing throwing apples. This monkey was good at it too – he almost hit me square in the head.

One moment I was just standing at the enclosure, chewing my gum in peace; the next, an apple was whizzing past my ear and the gum was flying out of my mouth. It was my last stick too, since I'd accidentally dropped the rest into the monkey house from the pathway above.

So I don't agree with what Frank did, but it was the monkey that started it.

"Almost got him," Frank said, turning from the barrier. "That'll teach the little bugger."

Frank is just that kind of guy. He won't take any flak, even from a monkey.

I looked down into the enclosure to see if my chewy had survived the fall. From somewhere over our shoulders, a little khaki blur was yelling at us.

"Oi!" it said. "Stop that!"

The blur got closer and I saw it was a man. The moustache gave it away.

The man said: "Stop taunting the chimps." He looked the way zookeepers do in books, only bigger.

I just stood there, looking innocent. The monkey hadn't actually hit me so I couldn't look injured. If only I still had some gum to chew; that would have given me something to do. We watched as the zookeeper jogged over to the pair of us. His moustache jiggled. His hat just sat there.

"I mean it," the zookeeper said, now beside us. "Don't throw things at Sanka."

"Well, he started it," Frank said.

"Yeah, but you're a grown man," the zookeeper said. He looked the pair of us up and down. "What are you two doing hanging around the zoo anyway? Don't you have jobs or something?"

"Actually," said Frank, with a swagger, "we're in a gang."

"We probably shouldn't tell him that," I said from the side of my mouth.

Frank held up his hand. "No, Tommy, we shouldn't be ashamed of it. We have to have pride in our gang."

It wasn't really a gang. We didn't have membership cards or wear coloured bandannas to mark ourselves out to rival gangs. We didn't even have rivals yet. We did have a secret handshake, but Frank always told me I was doing it wrong. So I guess we didn't even have that.

But I wanted to keep the peace. Frank can be excitable, which is a nice way of saying he can be stupid.

So I said: "Look, Mr. Zookeeper, we're very sorry about throwing the apple. We promise not to do it again."

The zookeeper looked at us and his moustache twitched again. This time his hat twitched too, somehow.

"Well, good." He paused. "Still, it was a pretty good shot, hey?"

"What?" said Frank.

"I taught him how to throw like that," he said. "Pretty good, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, real good," said Frank.

"Almost hit my buddy in the head, right Tommy?"

"Yeah, but I'm OK," I said.

"How do you know if you're OK?" Frank said. "You don't know you're OK."

"Well, I think you got what you deserved," said the zookeeper. "Stay out of trouble, gangsters."

He smirked and walked off towards the butterfly house.

Frank made a rude sign with his fingers behind the zookeeper's back. A family walked past while he did this and looked at him funny. I rolled my eyes at him, like I was babysitting him. Then the family looked at me funny.

"You shouldn't have apologised, Tommy," Frank said. "You let me down. You're in a gang now; you can't just go around saying 'Sorry' to people."

"Well, you shouldn't have thrown that apple."

"No, Tommy, don't defend him," Frank said.

"He should have known better."

"But he's only a monkey!"

"Monkeys have 99 per cent the same genetic material as humans, Tommy. So, it's just like throwing an apple at a child,"

"I wouldn't throw an apple at a child, Frank," I said.

"Well, that's why you're not the leader of this gang, Tommy," Frank said. "No guts."

I don't remember voting Frank leader of the gang, but it was times like this I wish I hadn't, because in order to acquire some guts, I apparently had to buy a bandanna. Before I knew it, we were in the zoo souvenir shop looking at monkey-print bandannas. They were red with little pictures of monkeys all over them.

"Once we have a uniform, we'll feel more like a real gang." That was Frank's theory. My theory was that Frank would give up on the idea of this gang in a few days. Buying bandannas was probably a waste of money and time. But I admit Frank's enthusiasm can be contagious. He really is a better leader than me in that sense.

If our time in the souvenir shop was a movie montage it would have gone like this: trying on the bandannas, trying on sunglasses, trying on the bandannas and sunglasses together, coming out of the

change rooms at the same time, realising we had been in the ladies' change rooms, being asked to leave the souvenir shop.

Fifteen minutes later we were walking past the butterfly house in our swish new bandannas. I was happy with the monkey print. Of all the zoo animals I'd seen, the monkey was my favourite so far.

"Just wait 'til you see the lion's den, Tommy," Frank said. "You'll love them. They can't throw anything at you."

I've actually always been scared of lions. I think it goes back to the time I read that Bible story about the man thrown in the lion's den. I got so frightened by the idea that I never could finish the chapter. That way, he never gets eaten by the lions.

I asked Frank: "Now that we've got our new bandannas, can we try out our secret gang handshake again?"

The one aspect of gang life that I was really into was the secret handshake. But Frank didn't care much for it. We're kind of like yin and yang in that way.

Frank made a noise that sounded like, "Ugh." But I just looked at him. That noise didn't scare me. It didn't sound anything like a lion.

Then he said: "Oh fine, we'll try it."

There was a dispute over the proper way to do the handshake. As far as I was concerned, the handshake went like this: fake shake, spin, clap, high five, real shake. But Frank was convinced it should be: fake shake, clap, clap, spin, high five and no handshake at the end. This made absolutely no sense to me.

We each tried the handshake our own way and both ended up unhappy and on the ground in a heap. So that failed.

Then we played thumb wars, to try to cheer ourselves up. But we couldn't get that right either. I somehow ended up poking Frank in the eye.

"Let's go back to that monkey cage," Frank said, rubbing his eye.

“We didn’t really get to see it properly before.”

“I think the zookeeper said they were actually chimps,” I said.

“Same thing.”

“I don’t think that’s true.”

“Tommy, there is no difference between chimps and monkeys. That’s a myth.”

“I’m not sure about that, Frank.”

“Nah, believe me. I definitely think I read that somewhere.”

“But he’s a zookeeper.”

“Yeah, but is he a book reader? Forget about it.”

We were still arguing about this when the next thing happened.

Someone said, “Well look-ee what we have here; appears we’ve got ourselves a rival gang.”

And when Frank and I looked up, there was another gang standing not twenty metres away. We knew they were a gang by the way they stood. They stood like kings or emperors or game show hosts. You could tell they’d been a gang longer than we had. They were also wearing bandannas. Blue ones.

Frank grinned. “Tommy, I think the bandannas are working.”

“Hey, don’t you know the zoo is our turf?” the gang leader said. “Other gangs aren’t allowed here.”

They started to walk towards us. Their blue bandannas had little pictures of lions on them. I have to admit, they frightened me; but only a little bit, since they were only little lions.

What frightened me more was the gang itself. I felt a bead of sweat run down my back. Then it ran back up. That only happens when I’m really scared.

“Um, Frank, I think we’d better be on our way,” I said.

“No, Tommy,” Frank said. “We have the bandannas now; we can fight this out like men.”

“Frank, wake up!” I said. “You’re being excitable; we can’t even play thumb wars properly! Let’s just, you know, get out of here.”

“Tommy, do you want to be in this gang or not?” Frank grit his teeth at me. “Because I’ll toss you out if I have to. There’re no scaredy cats in this gang.”

By then, the other gang had us surrounded, which was pretty impressive since there were only two of them. I don’t know how they did it. Clearly, we were face to face with a more experienced gang.

Up close the gang leader’s pimples were purple and his sidekick smelled like tuna. The gang’s muscles were... Well, they had them.

“This zoo is ours,” the gang leader said. “So you guys had better vamoose!”

“Vamoose?” Frank said. “What the hell is that?”

“Vamoose — get out!” the sidekick said.

“That’s not a real gang word,” Frank said.

“Frank, shut up!”

“Nah, I want to know who told them vamoose was acceptable gang terminology.”

“Vamoose is acceptable,” the rival leader said. He scoffed and looked us up and down. “Look at this pathetic excuse for a gang. I bet you don’t even have a secret handshake.”

“Oh yes we do,” I said, louder than I’d intended.

Frank’s face fell.

“No, Tommy, let’s not do the handshake.”

I shot Frank a look. ‘Trust me,’ it said. Maybe now I could show him that I did have guts after all.

So we did the handshake.

The rival gang burst into laughter, grabbing their bellies as if they were laughing so hard it hurt them. If you ask me, they were laying it on a bit thick.

Nothing's that funny.

I shot Frank another pointed look, but this time it said 'Oops' and 'Sorry' at the same time. He knew what I meant. If only our handshakes could be as effective as these looks.

"Right, I'm gonna teach you a lesson now," the sidekick said, still laughing. "As soon I stop laughing."

Oh great, we didn't even get to be beaten up by the leader. How humiliating.

That's when the monkey kinda, sorta saved us.

Just as he was breathing in to produce another over-the-top guffaw, something struck the leader of the rival gang right in the temple. He dropped to the ground like a packet of chewing gum.

Frank and I felt something sticky on our faces. I poked my tongue out for a taste. It was apple. Frank looked down into the enclosure and gave Sanka a big thumbs up.

"Hey! That monkey really can throw."

"Chimp," I said, scooping apple from my face.

"Owww!" the gang leader said from the footpath. "That really, really hurt."

His blue bandanna was now covered in globs of wet, pulpy apple. The sidekick was helping clean it off. I wasn't scared of those lions anymore.

In fact, seeing the other gang covered in apple made me laugh. I actually grabbed my belly while I did it. I guess some things are that funny.

They scampered off, holding their bandannas. Nobody likes being beaten by a monkey.

"Oi! Who taught you that?"

There was a khaki blur in the distance again.

"What?" Frank said, turning in the direction of the blur, which kept getting closer until it was standing right beside us.

"That signal, where'd you learn that?"

The zookeeper's voice wasn't so much angry as baffled; maybe even a little impressed. But probably just baffled.

"Secret gang business," Frank said.

"Right," the zookeeper said. "Well, that's the same signal I use when I play catch with Sanka."

"What?" Frank said.

"I make that signal so that Sanka will throw things to me."

"But it's a handshake," I said. Then I said it again, for emphasis: "A handshake."

The zookeeper said: "That's a handshake?"

He demonstrated for us. He made a good approximation of our handshake — using only one person — and sure enough, Sanka threw something from out of the enclosure and the zookeeper caught it. He looked down at the item in his hand and shook his head.

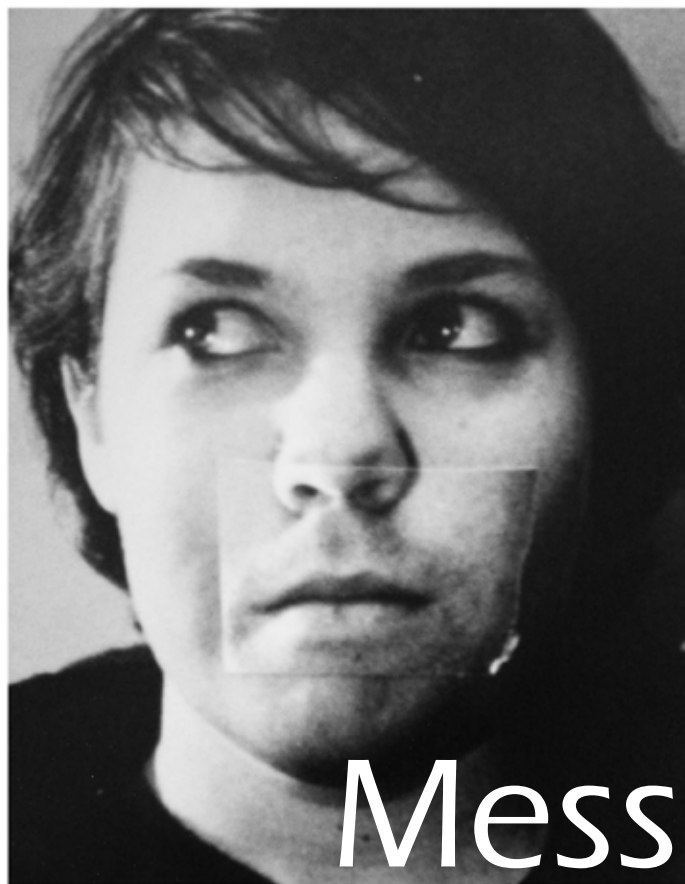
"Bloody kids."

He tossed me the item. It was a packet of chewing gum. I quietly took the last stick and put it in my mouth. Then I smiled. This trip to the zoo had turned out all right after all.

"Look," the zookeeper said, "don't do that handshake around the monkeys anymore."

"You mean chimps," I said.

"Whatever," he said, as he started to walk off. "I'm pretty sure they mean the same thing."



# Mess

*Michael Savic*

She knocks the carton  
sucking drops of  
iced coffee from his lips.

He drops the packet  
fumbling for her Burger King  
stained  
finger amongst the crumbs.

They miss the bus  
making mess.



# A Rose in the Moonlight

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*Navjit Singh*

I saw a rose in the moonlight,  
its fragrance enchanted my soul;  
the dew clinging to its petals,  
glistened delicately in the gentle breeze.

The distant sound of music,  
thundered through my body;  
with every long whiff of air,  
I was lifted to heights unknown.

A blissful energy regenerated me,  
clarity prevailed over confusion;  
the rose embraced me lovingly,  
as I slept in ecstasy.

When I awoke my dream shattered,  
like broken glass shearing my heart;  
I realized my precious rose,  
was gone, truly gone forever

# *The Little Lost Lamb*

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*Alice Berkeley*

I climbed a tree  
so I could see  
the world  
Instead I found  
a land made light with birds  
each iris filled with blue  
and framed by cloud  
swallowed  
by the openness  
around  
And though I heard  
the cries  
of those below  
I drenched my eyes in sun  
and let them go

# Contributors' Biographies

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## AUTHORS

**PHILLIP ENGLISH** is a writer and theoretical chemist from Perth. In his spare time he enjoys biting his fingernails, collecting vintage Russian cameras, and gaming in all its forms. He blogs at [www.toothsoup.com](http://www.toothsoup.com).

**BRONWYN MEHAN** is a Darwin-based writer. She is published in NT Writers chapbooks: *How to look after your poet in the event of a cyclone* and *Adrift*. Her poems also appear in *Etchings*, *Famous Reporter* and *Island*. She blogs at <http://bronwynmehan.wordpress.com>

**REBECCA DEMPSEY** is a Melbourne based emerging writer. She is an award winning short story writer, a former newspaper advertising copywriter, published essayist and reviewer of books and films. Rebecca works in the media industry. And is succinct. She can be found at: <http://writingbec.wordpress.com/>

**JOHN RYAN** resides in Perth, Western Australia where he is writing a suite of poetry about the native plants of the region. His poetry evokes threshold moments of inspiration, epiphany and kindredness during migrational movements across landscapes.

**DANIEL HEDGER** is a 26-year-old writer and editor from Melbourne. He has had short stories published in *Voiceworks* and his wildest dreams.

**NAVJIT SINGH** enjoys travelling and has visited Australia, Canada, India, Mexico and the United States. He enjoys sports, holds a Bachelor's Degree in Science, and is currently a primary school teacher in Canada.

**MICHAEL SAVIC** is an Adelaide boy who currently lives in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is a researcher and scribbler who wears Where's Wally-esque glasses.

**ALICE BERKELEY** is a slightly-employed inhabitant of Melbourne city. She spends most of her time staring at the ceiling and dreaming of things she's too scared to try, like sky-diving. She's too embarrassed to go outside without a bra on. She likes to dance and talk in the third person.

## ARTISTS

**RACHEL TATTI** is a photographer and aspiring graphic designer. She currently lives in Bendigo.

**TRISTAN HODGETTS'** choice of medium is the airbrush, but these days he mostly works with indian ink and wash. He has received two highly commended awards in Queensland at State art competitions. He has also received funds from the Queensland Government for his portfolio.

**ASHLEIGH GARWOOD** has a degree in art history and is studying towards a Masters. She is interested in traditional film processing and developing techniques and working in portraiture and self-portraiture. She was lucky enough to be a finalist in the National Youth Self-Portrait Prize at the National Portrait Gallery the last two years running. She has also recently done some portraits with General Pants Co. and Starlight Children's Foundation.

*image by Tristan Hodgetts*

