

LOCUST SIX

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FOREWORD

The moment a new issue comes out is basically a painful moment. Yes, the editor is relieved, but also—paradoxically—terribly worried. But what does a small press editor really want? What does an editor expect from his publication? Does he just want his small press magazine to be *one* voice amongst many others? If he said that, he would be a downright hypocrite! NO! He wants his magazine to be THE voice! Well, of course, there are hundreds of people out there eager to swear that no sensible editor would ever say such a preposterous thing! But fortunately this “preposterous thing” is the only reasonable thing an editor can say! If the editor didn’t think he was so good, and if the poet didn’t think he/she was so good, how could literature move on and make wonders? What if all poets thought they would never be worthy of Faber & Faber? What if they thought they would never be able to compete with Seamus Heaney? Thank God the world is brimful of pretentious artists, poets, writers, and... editors! And thank God there are so many artists, poets and writers that think that Locust Magazine is pretentious enough to showcase their work!

And is there a better conclusion than the following short excerpt from Charles Bukowski’s novel, *Hollywood*?

Sarah looked up from the *Herald Examiner*.

“Somebody send you some more poems to read?”

“Yes, it happens 3 or 4 times a month.”

“You’re not a publisher. Why do they do it?”

“It’s a hate-love relationship they feel toward me.”

“How are his poems?”

“He’s not as good as he thinks he is, but then most of us feel that way.”

July 2008

WHAT'S BEEN DONE
~ A Poem by Ray Succre ~

Years and phonyms on felled tree,
and poems parched on coasters,
and lips chocked with things to say,
said, done and been,
and perch in the sound,
and sound in the line,
bass in the lake,
bass in the song.

Run, you.
Let your parts make
scuffing running in an arc,
hawked between
the things you've done (A)
and the things that had you (B)
and then bald,
and end,
leading,
rapping,
cured.

FANCY JUDAS
~ A Poem by Gary Beck ~

Old man of no legs
longing for the automat,
sensitive as Cyrano
tired of callous prying
at his insensate mutters.
His last supper tray,
piled with meager fare
and sad blessings,
drops thirty slices of toast,
accusing us
of irreverence and impiety.
Defenceless,
we dodge the plumes of drool
and watch him waft away,
industrious as death.

GOD HAS NO LEGS
~ A Poem by Rosemarie Crisafi ~

Here angels have Down's Syndrome,
musicians' hands move
in sign language,
and God presses on though the smoke
in a wheelchair.
His feet are on backwards.
He has no arms.

You shuffle and your mother thinks
you are ugly. Still, you come
from underwater caves
to see God, one who works for a living—
busy in the factory
with a hump and withered arm.

Anger is gift wrapped
in mottled skin.
Here he constructs wheels that move
boxes that speak; voice-controlled
flying machines,
mechanical limbs and eyes.
Even as the guards
cross their arms before the gate,
he teaches an armless girl
to write with her toes.

TABLE THIS
~ A Poem by John Grey ~

I bathed.
I scrubbed all those
tiny creatures off me,
even the ones
that only show up
under microscope.
Thanks to soap, shampoo, deodorant,
my skin is braced,
I smell like lilies.
I let others wallow in their body odor,
be nothing more than a haven
for creepy-crawlies,
insidious bug life.
I'm so clean
you could eat off me.
Yes, I'm a table.
But I could just as easily be a man.

AVOIDING AMY
~ A Poem by William Doeski ~

My new red nylon jacket
from L.L. Bean fits badly,
flapping like a parachute.

As I sneak past Amy's office
it betrays me with a whisper
of fabric. She glares at me

with predatory glee so I dash
down the hall and lock myself
in my cubicle. The phone rings,

but damned if I'll answer it.
Even hanging on a hook
the jacket looks malevolent,

like a clue at a crime scene.
Last night outside a restaurant
it rendered me a target for

a drive-by egg-thrower. He missed,
but hit a woman in purple
who screamed obscenities in Polish

as the egg-boy's car disappeared.
And two days ago a stranger
pointing at my jacket accused me

of ugly politics, communist
or Tory, he wasn't quite sure.
The jacket glares at me. I glare back,

determined to master it.
I could wear it inside-out
with the gray plush liner showing

but that would be like hiding
a famous war wound; or maybe
I could drape it on a chair,

convincing Amy it's someone else,
confusing her for a little while;
but later she would catch the sizzle

of nylon as I crept through the hall,
arousing her vampirism
as she peered through her half-open door.

MOTHER'S DAY
~ A Poem by Clifford K. Watkins Jr ~

After Madre informs waitress we're not a couple
Inane hag!
Illegible poem bleeds onto napkin from Logan's
Semi-coagulated
Lighting the ballpoint
Shaking the pen
Beginning again
Eavesdropping on Wally World co-workers
Both venting about their manager's approach
Blonde waitress slips me her number
With lipstick print
I look away
Light a cigarette
Fold the napkin into a paper football
And kick the ball into imaginary uprights
Trying not to fall prey to a migraine
Utterly annoyed by the strobe light!
As I walk into the sunlight
I shout
Happy Mother's Day!

TWO POEMS by Michael Lee Johnson

*

INDIANA POEM

Breaking loose from the state line
of Illinois, bursting down the Indiana
toll road, near Lake Station
heading south,
smelling smoke of old
gray steel mills
seeping out
of Gary,
left behind me,
steel men, strong men,
ribs of fire, courage of
union dreamers,
long gone, most laid off,
pension plans stolen,
now gas station employees,
travelers of the
past, snuff chewers,
and labor wages—
small lakes and fishing ponds
with half-sunken boats
with tips pointed sky high,
and memories dripping
off the lips of clouds.
I'm banging out 75 mph,
in my raspberry Geo Tracker,
but as Jesus said: "I tell you
the truth, nothing ever changes in
Indiana but the seasons
and the size of the corn ears."

*

CRAZY OLD JACK

Fifty-six today,
and Jack died
in his room years ago.
He still sits there I swear
watches television
philosopher of sports,
entrepreneur of sleep,
dream weaver of single men,
their dreams, their tragedies.
Jack never leaves his room,
seldom shuts his television off.
Jack seldom gets out of bed, boils
on his naked body, no need for razors,
Turkish bathes, for this man.
Jack's prescription pills, then herbs,
then vitamins—but he is incurable.
Jack died in this room years ago.
He eats toast and jam,
toast without jam; fingers
wipes butter from a dish.
I hear Jack yawning from
his room, his coffin again.
Sleepy old Jack coughing again,
dreaming slowly in, drifting slowly out,
quiet old room—
just below a beauty salon,
Fifty-six today and Jack died here.
Crazy old Jack.

FOUR POEMS by Devin Davis

*

TOPPING

two scoops,
strawberry-

vanilla, pairs
nicely
with a little black
liquorice...

not chocolate-mocha
—nor your usual flavors
of the month...

a cupful melting,
under an august sky...

doesn't help if buildings are tall,
solid, and stock constant shade.

the combination is strange...
yet, i would pick you,
here on

this side of the counter
...looking through glass

at italian ice,
and frozen yogurt...

i would have liked
to come upon you, both.

*

LIVER

a thing undefined;
except within
its context.

there's discovery
—what's hidden,
and a part of us.

there is always
regeneration: the greed;

lust for more
self-destruction...

*

BUSH

on
halloween,

i tried to pick a citrus fruit—

and habanero
—from their camellia.

goddamn the whole year.

*

BEGUINE

liberty
& poverty
model gray habits.

and all is fair
—i swear, erwin,
by a dead dude;

or holy
northern women...

mr. churchill
said it.

hail! lucid christ.

TWO POEMS by Harry Johnson

*

HALITOSIS

Her beauty slammed me in the gut from across the room.
Straight blond hair, black turtleneck jersey, tomboy body,
a face like a movie star whose name I couldn't think of.
She was listening to some guy going on about
something. I would later discover he had a cold.
I asked around—she had a boyfriend elsewhere,
someone she planned one day to marry.
I had nothing to lose, no time to tarry.
Weaving through the brie and stemware
and sycophantic laughter,
I reached the edge of her small group,
waited for the perfect opening,
watched her bluest of blue eyes sparkle.
I injected myself into the convo and her friend said,
Oh, hi. Everybody, this is Daniel.
She said, Hi, Daniel,
and turned to face me,
Nice to meet you.
Her breath!...
I spun away and out the door, vaulted over
snowdrifts into the street and screamed,
howled, wailed up through frozen moonbeams,
praying my '73 Chevy would start because
I felt like driving non-stop to Ft. Lauderdale.

*

PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY**A Flash Memoir Prose Poem**

I was eleven years old when we moved to our family's very first free-standing, single-family home in a brand new cookie-cutter housing development on Frances Lane in Plainfield, New Jersey where I was given the new chore of mowing our new lawn and trimming our new shrubs with our brand new modern tools my father bought. Following his logical instructions to guide the new power mower in an eddy of shrinking circles so as not to waste gas or time or energy in that order, oh, and to be careful not to get my hands or feet anywhere near the dangerous, high-speed blades, and every so often emptying the grass catcher—not at all like a cow-catcher on a steam engine, nor like the City Dog Catcher or the Catcher in the Rye or a major league baseball catcher squatting and flashing signs to the pitcher. Ahem. Emptying the grass catcher was a pain 'cause you had to detach it and empty it and hook it back on the power mower, taking away from the exciting notion of this new, modern invention doing all the work for you—it promised to take the task of lawn care into a new era of the Life of Reilly, so to speak;—no more pushing, not more straining, no more raking, new and improved, more power, half the time, half the effort, more time for lemonade and relishing the good life, relishing the hot dogs on the backyard barbeque, relish being a fancy word for pickles chopped up for spreading around on packed meats in buns (why eight buns and nine hot dogs?—a conspiracy of commerce?), chopping the pickles, transforming them from a side dish to a member of the condiment family, as warm and generous-seeming families came from up and down the block to meet my family, to greet us and welcome wagon us into the one big happy family of suburban life in the 1950s when the war was over and all was once again peaceful and tranquil and stomach full and my brand new Schwinn bike and we all liked Ike.

When I tried to frighten my drooly, droll little four-year-old brother, by snip, snip snipping the shrubbery shears too close to my face, daring him to watch, as if I was going to cut off the end of my nose, which was a very small nose for a big guy, even as a kid. Years later my Jewish girlfriend would jokingly ask, “How do you breathe through that nose?” But I misjudged and the shears found their mark and I actually did clip the end of my nose all right, and I think I swore out loud and

sauntered inside and casually asked mom for a Band-Aid and she gasped and almost fainted as blood was by now pulsing, gushing, squirting out of the end of my nose which I had all but clipped off with our new suburban shears for trimming the edge of the shrubbery bed in Plainfield, New Jersey. She blamed herself because she was Irish and everything was already her fault.

She drove me to the office of Dr. Konya, the short, dark, hairy GP who looked like he needed to shave four times a day, where he jammed a Novocain needle directly into the wound at the end of my nose and sewed about eight stitches in a little circle at the end of my nose and handed me a small bar of Hershey's Cocoa Butter and told me to keep it in the Fridge and rub it on the end of my nose every day in the morning and at night for six months and the scar would go away. Now, whether or not Dr. Konya (banana-Bana-BO-fon-YA) was a quack who got his medical degree from Bubbychub State in East Mooofallla where they taught him to prescribe cocoa butter for clipped noses, or whether he was a born genius of the home remedy variety does not really matter as the scar did go away just like he said it would in six months time, during which period he probably shaved over 350 times and now I have a story to tell, and I loved seeing my mother panic, thinking her oldest was dying of some asinine self-inflicted fatal wound and needing to blame herself because, in addition to being Irish, my father certainly would blame her, but, in fact, she blamed him, simply because he was there and also because all things good and bad or worse emanated from him and besides, and more to the point, he was the one who forced me to do these stupid, and, as it turned out, dangerous chores that did not exist back in the good old days before he insisted we move, back when we were renting the first floor of a two-family house from the McMullens in East Orange, New Jersey and didn't have to care for shrubbery and lawns.

But my father was determined to move up in the world of men and own a home with a mortgage and who doesn't, it's *The American Dream* after all, but with this modern, post-war progress come new kinds of accidents that can and will occur at this higher level of Living the Dream, yet my father never regretted buying his two-bedroom, single-family, free-standing, cookie-cutter home which naturally led to his buying the shrubbery trimming clipper device necessary for life at this new,

exalted level of suburban living and therefore forcing the heir to this precious piece of property, me, to trim the shrubbery beds, essentially arming me with the weapon which eventually caused this favorite son's severe injury which the father would not admit to or talk about because he wanted me to be tough like him and get over things fast like him and grow up strong and forget about it and move on and don't make waves and don't rock the boat even though we were nowhere near any water in Plainfield, New Jersey.

DISINTER
~ A Prose Piece by David Backer ~

Disinter

To take from the grave, exhume (v)

One time I was in the car with my friends and we were all in high school so they weren't really my friends and they started talking about this time when they stole a goat from Old Man Rumdle's farm out by the elementary school and brought the goat to the cemetery nearby and dug up this dorky kid Eugene's grandmother that'd recently died and strapped Eugene's dead grandmother's body to the goat they stole from Rumdle's farm and set the goat loose and chased it around the cemetery and then they said that the next day at school they told Eugene all about it and that Eugene said,

“Oh my gosh, you guys are so dead.”

THE GOOD DISCIPLES
~ A Prose Piece by Mark R. Drost ~

They poised in a three-pronged closure, at their backs the object of their defense, their master, the Encyclopedecollater, upon the line of sight the Long Arm of the Claw was nearing. Upon its sighting each of the three took two steps out, the Claw's pawns entered, a party of four ganging up on each sentry. The SuicidalGrinder studied those closing on herself, saw them opening their lips to speak. The Hands-O'Plenty's eyes concentrated as they all synchronically took in a breath. The ChillingTurbine overheard the words, "-surrender. Lay yourself down-": The SuicidalGrinder's ears heard, "-come out where we can see, bare yourself-" The Hands-O'Plenty looked upon their mouths and read "—down on your knees. Get down, all the way, as-low-as-can-go-”...

CT mused quietly, "don't. Don't. Damn them to hell... no, no... do it, just give it up, collapse, break-down-" H-O'P thought, "suck it in... drain..." SG uttered breathless, "I can't, I-yeah, yes, I'll do it, I'll strip-"

CT momentarily slouched, its skull sunk, level with its shoulder breadth, then in a clatter its joints, and all connective parts whereabouts, pieced out, the pawns saw this and stepped in to claim it. H-O'P, filled with defeat, and consequently despair, frowned, a look turning steadily more sour, until the creases on his expression elongated unnaturally, resulting in eventual caving of his head, front first. SG, overcome with cold anticipation, brought her fine carver's fingers up one side to the other shoulder, and began removing the first of the flays, bringing them down, delicately tendering the area down her ribs.

Their hands went in to arrest it, and suddenly found their reaching arms caught within the opens where CT had disassembled, its undone coil springs caught them around the wrists, then their necks... SG turned up her open lesions to those coming on her, they looked upon the lattice of sinews inside the sliced open folds, then the scaled gridwork dermic pulp under those folds, their gazes became snared within the crosshairs in the mine of that darker-than-red rough, and none of them could pull their eyes back... H-O'P continued turning, twisting in on himself as his will left him, and as they grasped his extremities to carry him off, his crumpling drying self snatched at them, and its tight wrings wouldn't let go-

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