

LOCUST TWO

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FOREWORD

This new issue of Locust Magazine is online exactly one year after volume 2 # 1. And that is a quite different trend from the early days, when three or four issues were published each year. The reasons for such a change are many, and it is certainly nobody's fault. Even so, this foreword must be something of an apology, because some promises have been broken in the meantime.

First of all, sorry for the long delay many contributors have suffered—especially all those poets whose work has been published about eight months after it was submitted. Unfortunately, things are unlikely to change in the future, and long delays are here to stay. Contributors should be well aware of that when they submit their work.

Secondly, in the Foreword to last year's issue there was the promise that a *New Manifesto* would be ready by summer 2005. Now, December is here and no new Manifesto is in sight. Sorry! But in spite of this broken promise, what was written last year can be repeated now. The plan is to make Locust Magazine a real haven for new voices, with an emphasis on unconventional and experimental work. So, as a rule, unknown and unpublished poets and writers will be preferred to widely published authors. And—once again—contributors should be aware of that when they submit their work.

Finally, a vision of what a small magazine should be, and the best way to materialise it is a quotation from *The Catcher in the Rye*. A mixture of transgression, anger and scorn...

I stood for a while next to the stairs and took a last look down the goddam corridor [...] then I yelled at the top of my goddam voice, "Sleep tight, ya morons!" I'll bet I woke up every bastard on the whole floor. Then I got the hell out.

December 2005

DEATH OF A BASTARD
~ A Poem by Kristi Swadley ~

never speak ill of the dead
but Porter was a right bastard
wasn't he?

oh, don't hush me now
it's a disservice to the dead
to blow sunshine up their cold
arses

you go on, eat the food from the wake
fill your bellies with manufactured good cheer

all of you despised him in life
but now focus on his so-called
good qualities, fearing your god
would hear and condemn your
rightful hate

so you go on, don't mind me
my god is not yours
Porter was an asshole
and I won't ever let him forget it.

SUMMER
~ A Poem by Ashok Niyogi ~

Baby leaves reflect back the sun,
They are arrogant.
The mature ones are opaque with dust
And sun block lotion.

My Anastasia was a puppy from Finland
Fascinated by the Indian April sun,
Now she seeks refuge beneath the sofa,
Or snuggles close to the air-conditioning.

We almost bought that excellent Land Rover,
Except for the moon roof
Which lets in too much sun,
Too many sunflowers, which are yellow.

Let Van Gogh cheer visitors to the Hermitage
By the dark Neva
Beneath the gray sky,
You sunbathe by the Black Sea,
I have melanoma in my head.

IT WAS WRITTEN ON THE BLACKBOARD
~ A Poem by Sean Kilpatrick ~

Imagine how a belly dancer shits.

One student, a smoldering young boy,
face of thin, red lips, from point A to point B,
raised his hand,

In circles?
Messily? A poofy girl chimed in.
Beautifully! Added the class pervert.

In four asymmetrical triangles,
pointing toward the one man
she's willing to take home,
the class resident
genius
finally
answered.

PERC
~ A Poem by Spencer Dew ~

In Mexico, live beetles are worn,
Leashed to clothes, gilded and bejeweled

This is no more odd than any other

The barista with her silver labret
Tongue stud nervously clicking

As she tells you her boyfriend, dead

Lingers on around her, sighing, fucking
With the television, untucking sheets

She sleeps with cold feet, these days

And the channel always changing
As if in search of more spiteful imagery

FOUR POEMS by Devin Davis

*

TALK

a dove left
a bloodless dump
upon the trunk
& your supportive ribbon
—this cowardly fish
was harpooned with
an extended radio antenna.
wear
metal,
depreciate.

*

DOLL

imagination hangs
a paper angel, dangling on cable,
5 flights up an old home...

*

NICK

young men at work
have come back here
from afghanistan/iraq

old, as i am; &
when you look them dead

in the eyes,

they return—

even if a term of service
did not make me a man;
nor, any body
i knew.

we talk. i listen
for distant terror,
with virgin interest—

just like a kid; could

believe
in big fish,
homerich myth,
that rattling box

at christmas.

*

CHLORINE

according
to your memorial, on the fifth,

you were seasalt. a crystalline
mirror held into
wallace stevens' wind...

and then...
william carlos wrote about a wheel barrow...
still you

can pound those can'ts.

spout
hot and cold
soup undone, but lid closed
off. a heavy bulb blown out. now

...how to come out of the coffer?
your back against this century of walls
knowing when you've reached borders
you'll get back home.

DOWN THE WRONG ATRIUM
~ A Prose Piece by Mark R. Drost ~

Onward they gnash, the supportlines at their backs, seeing nothing but grit, clasping land on all limbs; supportlines cradling thinbone shanks supplying more grain to the push while corralling the flanks from inset collision—the unlit sap flushes unsound through the vertivalves as softthinned containment lays himself lulled in the bellied wet of the vertivalve without; the applicators can be tightened or relieved with just a tug, points of access multiplicated over the curveatures entering 3+ sheets of block—the cord turns westward in defiance of its own leverage, the cord spirals and spirals and becomes a gloss of waxenfiber and when knee struck its counter weight the bash of cradlepans whupped every head beat ever inner tightpress—the tusks wish for further departure, “the small red threads will not bind it tracks up, intersecting my lip’s right corner, through my nostrils on over my left eye,” tuskplicators tense their own marrows airward to keep the icechest at cradlines’ epicenter from its seating over the vvale’s only jugular passage containment hunching audibly cracking, chipping but supportlines’ base finally takes its seat, it isn’t believed any thing ever stirred under the shade of that great tabular ark, there is nothing that would move breathe, wince or retreat because the vertivalve without is thoroughly, inexcusably unlit.

THE 15 DAYS OF SIMON BURT
~ Prose by Michael Ernest Lantagne ~

Look at the history of beauty and you will see that great beauty is the byproduct of absolute horror.

DAY 1

All I have is two hands, twenty-six letters, and the truth.

DAY 2

Let's all drink. Drink to life. Drink to death. Drink until your entrails rot within. Drink until the muse can no longer find you. Find you alone, in darkness and vomit. Words create you, become you, alienate you, at times cause love. They are the nothing that is. By definition they define. They bind without translation from heart to heart, from mind to mind. Control them so as not to be controlled. Work to understand them, nothing about them is permanent. Their meaning has already changed for me. They age. Some live and convey. Some never reach paper or air never having a chance to become. The universal mind remains incomplete. Drink to that. Put down the glass and dream of music to heal a corrupt and tortured world. I am not yet prepared to become a memory, yet.

DAY 3

I sit in a room. I sit in a chair in a room. I sit on a gray chair in a blue room. I sit on a gray chair in a room painted blue. I sit on a gray overstuffed chair in a blue room. I sit on a gray overstuffed chair in a blue room with a short tan carpet. I sit on a gray chair in a blue room with a tan carpet surrounded by objects. I sit on a gray chair in a blue room with a short tan carpet surrounded by objects created by man; the exceptions are several fish a green potted plant and myself. I sit on a gray chair typing in a blue room, short tan carpet, living things mix with man made objects. I sit in a gray chair typing in an attempt to extract meaning from the man made objects that surround me. I sit in a gray chair in a blue room typing in the hopes that brilliance will spring from my fingers onto paper with the dream of becoming immortal among the passing. I sit in a gray chair in a blue room, with blue eyes, eyes with the ability to take in the shapes, which surround me. I sit in a gray chair in a blue room typing, trying to describe that which my blue eyes see. I sit in a gray chair in a blue room typing to avoid becoming as soulless as the brushed aluminum lights above my head, lights that jut from a black base several

inches to my right. The aluminum contains wires that then branch off into five shoots that mirror the five shoots of the plat which sits potted diagonally across from the lights. I sit in a gray chair, the room is blue or rather the walls are blue, I am unable to distinguish any particular color with which to describe the room therefore I am describing the room as being blue because of the walls which are the reason that I call the space which I am occupying a room, the walls are blue not the room. I sit in a room with a black entertainment system, the television and stereo are black, the VCR is black, and a black suitcase sits in the corner it has been there for some time. I sit in a room with blue walls. I sit in a room with blue walls typing, my left leg rests on my right leg at a forty five-degree angle, and my pants are blue and white. I sit in a room typing; my right foot rests on a short tan carpet. I sit in a blue room typing nothing about what I feel, I could write like this for days without giving you any sense of the room in which I sit nor the feelings and emotions which are rushing through me as I type, this room can never be accurately described it can be seen and experienced but never accurately described. I could write about the room in which I now sit and you will never be able to see it as I do, now how can I ever be expected to describe others or myself or an emotion accurately, it is impossible. A sense of this room is all that I can offer you, a sense of myself is all I can offer you. Yes it will be fragmented and jagged in its tone and form in order to crate a feeling within you which comes from me, it may never work, it may be futile but I guess it is as noble as anything else. I sit.

DAY 4

Oh great muse, oh Diane goddess of night. Oh shit something come to me that makes the clatter of keys become music and redemption. Tireless noise, a finger dropping to key triggering a mechanism. Clack; ink on page in a preconceived form. Puts enough of these ink blots together and uncover the psyche. What a dirty unsophisticated process I have let myself become a part of. I should have become a painter, regardless of the fact that I have no innate feeling for the medium. Writing is conducted by the mind and fingers, and sometimes, with luck, the heart. But painting requires the entire body to become involved. You can cover your own body in paint. You can swim in paint. Masturbate and mix the result with paint. Paint visibly stains you, becomes one with your skin. Words roll away, water off oil coat. Paint moves and congeals without sound; it does its job without chatter. Words must be written, typed, or uttered. This vulgar thing.

DAY 5

Imagine this. What if the only possible method of creation was suicide? A

shotgun blast to the head and you are understood as blood mixes with words scattered across the wall with a virtuoso touch. It is your deepest thoughts, your untold desires, beauty, density, ecstasy for all to admire and no bleach can wash it away. A drunken businessman hangs himself in his study. His dog pukes on the floor. Empty bottles dull the leather of books, created by the deaths of others. So he kicks away his small footstool by rocking back and forth. He descends, his neck snaps, the rope holds his weight and a symphony bursts forth from his twitching body. The whole world hears his song, they stop, they listen without being asked and this man who has never played a note in his life has created more beauty than any living person on the planet. Finally they understand. No questions would be left unanswered the song is there for the questions, containing all answers in terms of one man. A beautiful young actress with red hair slits her wrists. The result is more powerful than any abstract expressionist ever dreamed possible. A housewife overdoses on pills and vodka, the Guggenheim is put to shame. Well I put in my time muse. I'm here; you know where to find me.

DAY 6

Writers of my generation have gone in a direction of excess. Not that I am not impressed by some of their works but they can be, at times, nauseatingly over the top. (I just referred to a number of faceless millions of approximately my age as a generation. That was a mistake. That was ridiculous. Oh well, I started it.) Too superfluous with their words, no one is careful; no one crafts, least of all me. We ripe open scabs out of rage and boredom and expect the public to lap up the blood. We give nothing but heart-aching realism. Gone is sacrifice. Gone is the greater good, for we can see none. We would rather drone on and on in the guise of genius about cultural phenomenon. Blather about pop culture. Self deprecate and self-reference as a means of showing you, the old and vapid, how witty and classless we all are. We are brilliant. We have something to say. We can right the wrongs of the world with self-richness and narcissism. Oh, woe is me but don't feel bad because at least I am not an empty shell of sixties rhetoric. No, I know better than you do. Civil rights, sexual freedom, Vietnam... please, we are so beyond that. We are so politically correct in our scathing denouements of all that you stand for. Bullshit! We are empty. We are fatherless. We are tattooed and pierced because our skin makes us uncomfortable. Do you wonder why I gave up writing? Do you care? Do you have any concept, Mr. portable laptop, of what that work was about?

We need to look back. We need to look back with fresh eyes. What work of literature in the last a forty or fifty year has any power of its own? Is it not all slight

nods and winks to the real writers of the past? Is this a stupid question? Are words dead, has the language changed so much that it can no longer be beautiful? Must it be a fluffy, cute, sensational, life affirming, life hating, one sided... have we forgotten that words can last centuries without losing their desired impact on a reader? Will anything of this new century last beyond the point when society forgets about the sit-coms we make fun of yet base our lives on? What is the greatest sentence ever written? Who will write the next great American novel? I thought I knew these answers once. Once I knew much more than I know now. Would you like to know where that faith and knowledge went? Do I? Am I just typing to hear the sound of keys striking paper? Am I screaming into the void for its own sake? Do I really believe that this process will bring me immortality? Did Hemingway? Does Vonnegutt? How much must one experience before they are valid as an artist? Have I walked that tightrope far enough? Would I be a better writer if I were a junky instead of a fucking drunk? At least the room around me has disappeared for fifteen minutes. My heart rate is stable. My breathing is deep and controlled. I have lost myself in the process. I have remembered what I forgot. I put down the bottle. I have focused without focus. If I didn't hate the Buddhist subtext of it I would call this meditative. Or have I simply fallen into the trap of picking at my own scabs, how does the blood taste?

DAY 7

This machine just keeps humming. My head is killing me. Every day, day in and day out, Oh, just a drink or two, do I even think to fool myself with the old lies? Give in, you give in anyway. This kind of justification is of no use to anyone. This whole process of pretending. I think being inside is getting to me. No one is here, but I can hear their wheels turning outside. I can feel their voices. The door is locked. Is the door locked? The door is locked. At least on the streets I was faceless, they were scared of me. I was the dirty insect. They knew not my fear of their crushing boots. In here I am at their mercy. After a shower and a pair of Larry's clothes I am victim. I am subject to their rules again. Eating, sleeping, this halfhearted attempted at writing. They're breathing down my neck through the walls, eight stories up, locked in a room.

For the sake of clarification I am actually writing on a laptop computer not a typewriter. I just fucking hate to think that I am using a computer, its against the principal of the whole process. There is no click, clack, click, and clack. So, if I refer to this machine as a typewriter you will forgive me. I need to hear the sounds of the imagined typewriter keys. What difference does it make anyway? Who am I

writing to? What's your life like? When was the last time you had sex? Are you drunk? Are you drunk because you believe that it will produce some sort of artistic epiphany? Are you drunk because you just can't deal with the pair of three's that life dealt you? How old are you? You know nothing about me. With very few exceptions none of you ever will. With that said, you can't judge me. You can judge only the words and the form that the words take. You can only take what I choose to give you. That which I can not articulate or choose not to articulate is mine and mine alone. I'm not even sure if I believe that! Am I hiding something from myself? If so then this entire work is evil at best. You are a conspirator. You are creating this work. You are imposing your own thoughts and values upon it. There is no intrinsic meaning here. If you're looking for answers or a hero, look elsewhere.

DAY 8

I can't describe the simplest detail, no one can. Meaning is created within. I am only giving you a set of tools. You have to build your own tree-house. Away from it all, height in trees, alone with the wind, breath... Equinox or Solstice. Do you know the difference? Am I a better person for knowing? You can all do this you know. You just have to shut off the fucking TV, put down the bong and write. Create your world. Think. It can't hurt. Who fucking knows you might become famous. That's what you all want, isn't it? I'm not going to belittle Warhol by putting his quote in here. One of handed comment and that's all they remember you for. Most people don't even know that you are the one who said it, they just know the stupid phrase. Does that piss you off Andy? Or do you just look at us all through your sunglasses with your mouth open and say WOW! You, such a beautiful person and so many that I have never known and so few that I do. The ones with the talent, the ones who live with fault and beauty, the honest ones, (No one is entirely honest). The people who sweat in the middle of winter. The ones who will watch the same movie five hundred times and cry at the same part because it hits something so genuine inside them that they don't even know what it is.

DAY 9

Layers are unfolding. They spring back to close off the world. They unfold, spring back. It takes so much, I don't know... time?... effort?... questioning? Something real will come from this. It may be only a single word or image. Possibly something that won't be captured here in. Something real will come from all this. Do I believe that? Of course I do or I would get a bottle of vodka. Rob a

pharmacy in broad daylight and end it all in a few hours. Vodka, I had to say it. It all creeps in here. Of course I'm still drinking. Larry can't stop me. What am I talking about? Place blame. No, waste of time.

Morning, day whatever. Click, clack (all work and no play makes jack a very dull boy). Did you expect me to be playing catch in a field? Not me, I'm still here in the same spot with this wretched machine. Thinking on paper is all mental masturbation. I am waiting for it all to blow up in my face. I should be out there. I swore I would never do this again. I'm still here. And I'm waiting.

DAY 10

My hands are shaking. My vision blurred. Something is wrong, I'm taking shortcuts. These pages are nothing but shortcuts. Nothing feels precise or carefully placed. Words spill out, unchecked. No connections are making themselves apparent. How many brain cells are involved in writing? My synapses are frayed and my hands are shaking. What kind of charade is this? Who am I putting it on for? Certainly not for Larry, I've not spoken to him in days. I haven't spoken to anyone. I have nothing to say. My inner monologue has gone dry. Sensations are nothing more than momentary, they stand for nothing. No grand insights waiting to be taken down.

DAY 11

I think that I'm doing this only to prove to myself that I am still here. To prove that, although base and dull, I can still place words on paper in a fashion that resembles a thought. Is this how Fitzgerald felt as he wrote, "Crack Up"? Was his mind ever this unsure of every movement? Every word forced. The need to create still so strong and the mind so incapable of fulfilling its own inherent need.

DAY 12

My fingers twitch, hitting wrong keys, never poised or elegant. A crippled stance full of ticks and starts, an odd fumbling apparatus of convoluted signals. This is all so frightening. To watch yourself attempt to do that for which you no longer have the capacity. To know that others are doing that which you can't. The one thing you ever took pride in. Your deal. Your one talent, gone and the struggle to realize that it was yours to destroy and that ultimately you did. Only question remains, can you bring it back? Just keep the fingers moving. Let thoughts come, as they will. Not all stories have to make sense. Life does not agonize over its structure. But you're not trying to capture life. You are not one of them. You wanted to move beyond. This is not your memoir. You hate memoirs. They are for the hacks to bash out. They are the last resorts of the unimaginative. You only fall

back on your own life when you have nothing else to say. And I have nothing else to say and yet this process must continue.

DAY 13

My hands are sweating. Leaving inkblot pictures with my palms. Even this makes me nervous. Safe and alone and my hands are sweating. I am getting worse. Why the fuck did I ever come here? Am I trying to regress and become that which I use to be? And the fact that I am incapable of doing so, what does this say? Is this progress? Being in an apartment instead of on the streets. At least out there I knew who I was. I was nobody. I was a shadow. But here I am forcing myself to pretend to be something. Who am I to be wasting words? Let someone else take them, form them, create through them. Let someone else try. I did. I failed. Those words no longer belong to me. They were created when the spark was there, the spark that lulled them from air. Forced them to cohere and become something more. Something good. The spark created that, this much I know. How? Look what happens when the spark moves on.

Moving on. How clever I can be. Do you realize how few creative people there are in the world? No one gives themselves a chance. People are too busy thinking about sex, money, and food. They lull themselves with the mind numbing details of life. They never even sit down and think about the state of the world or even the state of their own minds. Imagine how different things would be if everyone actively persuade a creative outlet. Think of the lives that would be transformed. Think of the stories that would be told. The truth would exist in everyone. We would know each other for who we really are. Beauty would be measured in the stroke of a brush or pen not in breast size or facial features. Movie cameras would capture textures of life never before imagined. Whole new facets of creative life would be open to us all. The doctor who writes a short story about a blade of grass between patients. The businessman who films his desk between meetings, the young and old mirrors held up to light and reflected off of one another inner selves. How we would respect each other. You could buy a pack of cigarettes and discuss oil painting with the middle-aged woman behind the counter. The snotty college students who think that their lives are worth more than the lives the men and women who clean their bathrooms would be forced to confront these people as equals, as fellow artists in search of beauty and truth. Self-righteousness and conformity would become obsolete. Fear and hatred could be dealt with on stage and screen. Everyone would have a voice. No one would remain faceless. No one would try to get on television simply to be noticed. They would be there to say

something. All of our lives would be enriched. The world would be less violent by the very nature of art. Art as weapon, art as exorcism, art as a seed for love, art as difference, art as understanding, art as individual as every human being. Fame and celebrity would no longer exist in their current state. We would not have to emulate and worship the talents of others. We would embrace their talent with the knowledge that we have been inspired to push our own art further. Billions of typewriters, brushes, cameras, blowtorches, tap shoes, snapping out truth and bringing fulfillment to all with each passing second. The thing that hurts most is that all of this is possible. It could all begin today but we are too tired, too lazy, too full, too rich, too attached to the things which tether us to our overworked and stagnant world. Say it, Paint it... Do something. It's not instant. It hurts to look inside. It takes a piece of you with it. It consumes you. Let it happen. I forgot all of this but hear I am a voice again, in the void.

DAY 14

The red numbers on the clock are three, two, and four. The upper circle at the top is light indicating A.M. I hate the large face of the clock. I hate its LCD display; I hate its silence. The whole package is so over the top, so unnecessary, so gaudy and efficient. My clock would be small, silver, and heavy. Its face would be white with black roman numerals and hands. My clock would audibly tick off the passage of time. My clock would have to be wound. It would have no cord. And when the room is dark its face would be dark. It would be a tool for telling time only. It would not be some fucking glowing neon reminder of how little sleep you've had or how many hours had passed in front of a blank page. I would probably forget to wind it and lose all sense of time. Waking and dreaming would become one in the same for there would be no buzzer or digits to differentiate the two.

DAY 15

In this room I am the last man on earth. I have all the time in the world to create. I am free of the conventional notion of work. I sleep when I'm tired. I can shake with fear without being looked at. I can drink without having to speak. I am alone in a cavernous expanse that is language. I am the man in the old episode of the Twilight Zone. The world has ended and I am alone with the one thing that matters, to him it was the library full of books with which he was alone. He has all the time in the world to be alone with his books; his glasses perched on the edge of his nose. I am he alone with the blank page and all the words in creation at my disposal. His joy is unforced is real and fulfilling. He momentarily loses his

glasses. He searches frantically for them, for without them all his time and all these books are useless, a crunch of glass under his foot. His dream is over, his glasses are broken. He is alone, he has no hope of getting new glasses, and he is blind. I am he. I am alone with all the time and words in the world. I never heard a crunch, I only feel the panic and know that the tool I need to make use of what I have been given is lost under some unseen heel, broken and irreplaceable. The clock now reads four eleven a.m. in monstrous red.

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