

LOCUST EIGHT

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FOREWORD

Just a few prophetic words as a preface to Locust #8! Today people easily move from one country to another. They use the internet and, no matter what their country of origin is, they learn about and, in a way, take in ways and attitudes typical of other people living far away from them. That's what common people usually do, but that's also what poets and writers usually do. Perhaps a *globalised* kind of literature is just a utopian idea, but certainly the multitudes of e-magazines active on the web have already started off this utopian process of literary globalisation. Of course, a poet in New Zealand will produce quite different poetry from the one produced by a poet born and bred in the Scottish Highlands or on the outskirts of Los Angeles; but what about an online magazine? An online magazine doesn't have any material boundaries, and it can feed on many different cultures simultaneously, and by doing this it can create a *ÜBER-culture*! "English literature", "American literature" or "South-African literature" will soon become meaningless, obsolete sub-categories! *Thus spoke Zarathustra.*

June 2009

OF ANIMAS, NOW
~ A Poem by Oliver Rice ~

We are occupied by gods, said Jung,
but must not submit to them.

This is Harry's persona,
his time and place in the world—
barkeep from six until closing.
His gift is to be alert to every stool,
companionate, cool and competent,
ready in his sweep along his aisle
to give attention, left-handed
and intermittent but eye to eye,
to whatever is your concern,
your team, your arthritis,
your politics or your drunken remorse,

or to serve you well without interference
in your deal making or dalliance,
yet overhearing fragments of whatever,
how to live, prosper, age,
tricks of the trades, lore of the genome,
of aerodynamics, firearms, whatever.

DRAWING THE DRAGON
~ A Poem by Changming Yuan ~

There was a contest
Once
For the most faithful representation
Of loong
(Or the Chinese dragon)

In England

An inflated Satan
Or was it Sua proper
Came to squat among
The letters

Then stroke by stroke, again
It rose right
Upon
Each slate of white

Mind

SCHIZO
~ A Poem by William Bryant ~

Listen—How can you not hear that?
I don't want to hear
I can't do that.
Leave me alone
The cat and the pot latch work diligently
Digging out a dugout canoe
The FBI has placed the bugs
And the roaches tip their top hats
While they speak in tongues
I saw the black rabbit again
It is actually a rabbit dragon devil
Today I will learn Hebrew and how to make spaghetti
I wonder how the nutcracker
Works the crossword puzzle
In the convertible moon machine
Why are you out to get me?

MAKE VERDANT AGAIN THE HILLS**~ A Poem by Danol Mahoney ~**

She walks the rack of bright frocks
as her husband, the Angus aging,
paws at the carpet behind her.
She wants the right dress

to make verdant again the hills
that summers ago
brought her young bull
into her valleys.

Now he needs
prodding
even to graze.
Now she no longer

has to rope off
what he used to rip up,
sometimes uproot.
Now he causes no pain.

ART DECO
~ A Poem by John Grey ~

The room, the floors,
the furniture are painted
a brilliant stainless white.
Everything else
from lamp to bed frame
to coffee mug
is pitch black.
Flowers on the table
are a combination,
of white roses, black tulips.
The man lying on the black sheet
is naked, striped from head to toe
like he's wearing
an old nineteen thirties prison garment.
The television broadcasts constantly,
in black or white of course.
A commercial sings the praises
of monochrome.
Some black cops, white cops,
hunt down shades of gray.

A MORNING RAINRIDE INTO SAN FRANCISCO**~ A Poem by Janet Butler ~**

I like the rush into angry rain
as bus rocks.
A tin cradle, it lurches us along
over the thump thump thump of bridge
that slaps thick black wheels
in rhythmic frisson.
We crash through walls of rain
we shatter puddles
and glide on a sheen of streets
into the monochromatic city.

BROOKLYN RAINBOW
~ A Poem by Alex Galper ~

(Translated from Russian by Misha Delibash)

once i had two fiancés.
black Esther and a russian jew Inna.
in the night
the predatory whites of Esther's eyes would sparkle:
"why do you refuse
studying for a loan notary?
how are we going to afford to send
our brown kids
to Harvard?
i'm willing to convert to Judaism for you, don't you know!"
Inna and i would gossip
through the nights
about our jewish friends
elucidating anti-Semites.
she wanted me to become a psychologist
and i ran from one girl to another
trying to figure out
what is it that i need
and of what
racial configuration.

TWO POEMS by Michael Lee Johnson

*

RAINDROP BABY

I'm a raindrop baby
silhouetted in the night,
single-ringed single person
minus the 24 carat gold.
A harvester of night life,
star crystal,
a gather of sluts in my imagination,
a wild driver of the
anal sinful products of sex.
I run the highways drunk
as a skunk with his anus high in the air
in search of what I wished
or dream wild factual fantasy about.
Offended I simply piss somewhere.
Where does the highway buckle up:
DUI, DUI?
Are these your initials lover
on my driver's license
or just a pained memory
the morning after my dream
turned to real piss?

*

CHARLEY PLAYS A TUNE

Crippled with arthritis
and Alzheimer's,
in a dark rented room,
Charley plays
melancholic melodies

on a dust filled
harmonica he
found abandoned
on a playground of sand
years ago by a handful of children
playing on monkey bars.
He now goes to the bathroom on occasion,
relieving himself takes forever; he feeds the cat when
he doesn't forget where the food is stashed at.
He hears bedlam when he buys fish at the local market
and the skeleton bones of the fish show through.
He lies on his back riddled with pain,
pine cones fill his pillows and mattress;
praying to Jesus and rubbing his rosary beads
Charley blows tunes out his
celestial instrument
notes float through the open window
touch the nose of summer clouds.
Charley overtakes himself with grief
and is ecstatically alone.
Charley plays a solo tune.

TWO POEMS by Peycho Kanev

*

OBVIOUS

I am sitting by the curb with bottle
in my hand.

One bus stops at red light
and I take a look—
it's full of old, fat and blond people
tourists.

Maybe German maybe Dutch or
Swedish after all.

Everyone has a camera in the hand
and they take pictures around,
two of them take pictures of me,
I don't smile.

Maybe their lives are happy and complete,
I don't know what that is,
maybe they have kids and grandkids
big houses and vacations all over the world,
maybe their lives are happy

but soon there is green light,
and they go
and the big happy bus takes them
somewhere I don't belong,
yet.

*

PETER THE DOG

my friend Peter works
in a slaughterhouse somewhere in the deep South
he kills horses
and make them into dog food
just slid them throats and puts them
hanging on big hooks until their blood
runs out

I hear him on the phone often

I can't take this anymore, dude
I will do something horrible

and I imagine him now
how he stands in this big storage freezer
surrounded by tons of dead meat on hooks
covered in dry blood
how he runs his index finder along the edge of
the butcher's knife
and looks thoughtfully at his manager's
throat
no tears in his eyes
no remorse
blood and dirt

just this unbearable world

I hang up the phone
open the fridge
take the bottle
and I sip

thinking about my 9 dollars an hour

don't worry my friend
we will succeed
just wait
we'll show them

we'll show them.

TWO POEMS by Gale Acuff

*

NO MAN KNOWETH THE HOUR

On Friday evenings we go out to eat'
at the Hawthorne Brothers' Cafeteria.
After dessert I get my allowance
—twenty-five cents—from Father. Here you go,
boy, he says. Don't spend it all in one place.
But I do, in the drug store, next door—on

comic books, twelve cents each, and a penny
for Georgia sales tax. It's '67,
I'm 11, so I take my heroes
home with me, and read in their derring-do
until my eyes are red, like the scarlet
of Superman's cape. I want to do good,

and fight evil, but I want power more,
I tell myself, as I lie in the dark
on Saturday night—church tomorrow and

I'll have to wear a tie and slick my hair
and sit in Sunday School class, probably
between Rita Poore and Daisy Griffin,
and try to stay awake to the story
I forgot to study up on. Oh, yeah

—Lazarus: Jesus brought him back to life.
There's a lesson to be learned and I'm sure
they'll tell us. And then the doughnuts after.
But here tonight the ceiling looks as dark

as death must be. Still, there may be hope: those
dots of light my eyes pick out—I can see
a little, not enough for reading, but
more than a blind man sees, I guess. They say
cats see well in the dark, so they don't need

Jesus. They don't need Heaven. They don't need
Hell. Maybe not even all nine lives. Life
doesn't make sense, though I do well in school

and sweep the porch and feed the dog and set
and clear the table and run the vacuum
and help Father in the field and take out
the trash and fetch the mail and newspaper.
If I were Superman I'd do it all
in a flash—and if I were the Flash, too.

In my attic bedroom I get lonely,
but it makes a V at the top, like church
but upside-down, an A without the cross.
I guess that the Holy Ghost gets caught up
there in the angle where the two roofs meet.
And, being lighter than air, He's cornered
and can't escape—I see it all now: I
shouldn't be afraid. They say God's my friend
—but so is Father, and I'm scared of him,

too. But not enough not to take what he
gives me—I did so well in school this year
that my allowance will be thirty cents
next week. That's two comics and a nickel
for a candy bar. God will not be mocked,

Preacher says, though he stole it from the Bible

—I'd give that nickel to him just to clam
him up. I fold my hands behind my head
and wonder what God does in His free time
—reads magazines or watches TV or
holds the ball of yarn while His mother knits.

If I were super I'd soar to Heaven
and see for myself—Jesus did, after
He died and rose and rambled around and

never came back. One day He will, they say.
Get ready, they say. Be prepared, they say.
No man knoweth the hour, they say. But my

clock radio reads 9:47
so it's past my bedtime. If I should die
before I wake, that means no Sunday School
tomorrow and, what's more, no school next week,

and all just for me, forever. Amen

*

GUARDIAN

I'm Captain Hero. I've got my towel-cape
and red underwear pulled up over my
jeans, and a Halloween Zorro eye-mask
and I fight evil, with my trusty dog,
who's in-vis-i-ble, mainly because he
doesn't really exist and I'm too young
—eight—to have one. I jumped off the kitchen
table yesterday and sprained my ankle

so I'm out of action today. What if

it was krypt-to-nite that robbed me of my
powers so now I know what regular
folks feel when they're in pain? I won't forget
it when I'm on my feet again—four days,
the doctor said. I got to wear my mask
to the E-mer-gen-cy Room—to protect
my secret identity even though
Mother gave my real name. That's alright
—I'll just change it because I can't let them
or anyone else get to me through my
family. I can hardly stand up and
I haven't regained my su-per-i-or
strength and in-vul-ner-a-bil-i-ty but
I have a lot of heart and, anyway,
we keep the front and back doors locked. When I

grow up I want to be im-mor-tal so
I'll never die and can battle evil
until I've licked it all and then maybe
I'll do the right thing and kill myself. Oops
—I'm in-vul-ner-a-ble. I forgot. I
can't kill myself. Or can I? Mother brings

me chicken noodle soup. I ask her if
someone who's in-vul-ner-a-ble can take
his own life. She says, Honey, you can do
anything you want to if you try
hard enough. She smiles. I believe in you.
That makes me feel better but I wonder
if she understood the question. I have
a su-per-i-or brain, too. But she's all
heart, and my job is to protect the weak.

So I command my faithful dog to stick
close to Mother and keep an eye on her
and bark twice if she's in any danger.
And if she's not I'll dream up something for her.

IN NEED OF REPAIR
~ A Short Story by Ethel Rohan ~

I remember the river, its slick smell, dirty brown-green color; the rats, swans, tadpoles and eels, tens of thousands; long sharp grass that curled around our legs like ropes. To make men of ourselves, to prove we were strong and brave and not afraid of school, our parents, or girls, we dived into the chilly river, tossed each other and the girls, the ugly girls, into its depths: the girls we wouldn't even kiss for the practice.

I can still hear the girls' screeches as we chased them, see their nostrils flare and the whites of their eyes widen as we closed in, grabbing at their squishy ankles like dogs. How they'd cry out in fright and temper once we'd wrestled them to the grass. They'd kick and grunt and struggle, and still we carried them like sacks of potatoes to the banks of the river, swung them back and forth over the stinking water, their screams sending up a scatter of black birds into the gray sky, making the bored swans crane their crooked necks, and sending the eels just below the water's surface into a crazed slippery dance. What a splash the girls made, especially the bigger girls, the water spray and their hurt angry cries making us laugh harder.

The girls knew their worthlessness according to how often we boys picked on them, chased them, tossed them into the murky river. Ava Byrne, lovely Ava Byrne of the silver eyes, long glossy black hair and golden freckled skin, we never touched, unless it was to brush our sad, urgent lips against her bright wet plump mouth during a game of spin the bottle. All hail to whoever invented that game, to whoever made Ava Byrne and deigned to put her down in our little corner of the world.

Maggie Moore we threw into the river more times than a zooed gorilla pleasures itself in its lifetime. That's how much we all hated her. How much she reminded us that we were bored, stupid, sad little boys wanting and needing and not knowing what to do with ourselves but long for Ava Byrne. Long for Ava Byrne while realizing full well that we wouldn't ever be good enough.

CURSESTEIN STATION
~ A Short Story by Mark R. Drost ~

“This is Headboard to Engine No.2... Engine No.2, what is your malfunction?”

“Engine No.2 to Headboard... no malfunction detected in working operations... blasters are firing to precise program calculations...”

“Headboard to Engine No.2, assessment error... blasters are firing at 9.0197 degrees in excess... correct inconsistency or Engine No.2 will be ordered to eject from CSS station body...”

“Engine No.2 to Headboard, repeat, no inconsistency detected... blasters are firing to precise—”

(Engine No.2 with a burst of sparks and a buck leaps from its position upon the CSS station’s rear hull and hurtles, inert and helpless, backward from the CSS station body’s straightaway course.)

two hours later—

“This is Headboard to Reparations Cabin... Reparations Cabin what is your malfunction?”

“Reparations Cabin to Headboard... no malfunction detected... Engine No.2 is reported missing from CSS station body... replacement engine being crafted at this time... will be fully restored in 2.03 hours...”

“Headboard to Reparations Cabin... Engine No.2 was given order to eject from station body direct from Headboard command... cease operations on replacement engine now...”

“Reparations to Headboard, last order does not compute... please repeat—”

(With a soundless shatter of glass and chrome the Reparations Cabin busts out the side wall of the CSS thoracic connector, somersaults its way out to space.)

Throughout the course of one morning’s pre-dawn time span, before the next star’s light came within view, a solitary metal physique went running through a blinded backwater, unable to shake itself from its self-dismembering inclination. Continuing to cut off, cut out or wring itself free of its own trappings, it did not stop, did not slow, until there was no further mechanism by which to move.

MUSTACHE
~ A Short Story by Andrew N. Morris ~

A sharp bristling sound wakes me. The noise that's made when you flip through a deck of cards.

I keep my eyes closed for a second. When I open them I look around the room, trying to find the source of the noise. I see nothing. But something doesn't feel right. There's a stiffness. And not the typical morning fare. This stiffness lies elsewhere. Higher. My hands trace my body, top to bottom, until they find a most peculiar thing. It sits there between my top lip and my nose.

I probe it for a second. Run my pointer finger through it. Right to left.

Mustache.

Startled, I let go. I touch again, and it's still there.

The problem is... It wasn't there last night. At least... I don't think it was. No, no. I remember. I even shaved yesterday morning. I would have seen it...

I stand—naked—walk quickly to the bathroom.

I see it in the mirror. Staring at me from the center of my face, like a caterpillar that decided to set up camp. I pull on it and it doesn't give. Upon a closer inspection, inches from the mirror, I see that it is not glued or taped. The hair pokes out from my skin. It also strikes me that the mustache itself looks completely un-ridiculous. With my fabulous bone structure I kind of remind myself of a young Doc Holiday.

"Johnny Ringo," I say out loud, "You look like someone just walk over your grave!" It's from that one movie. I don't know if he said it in real life.

This is serious, though. How long have I been sleeping? But that thought doesn't make much sense. I don't also have a beard.

What happened?

I went to Mickey's last night. With Denise and three of her girlfriends from work. All three of them fat and just dying to reveal who did what and to whom at the Christmas party the week before. We ordered appetizers. Some sort of organic green goop spread onto stale flat bread. I took a bite out of one. I didn't much care for it so I stuck it on the under-side of the table. I promised Denise that I wouldn't drink, so I didn't. The waiter, some neon kid, zits and glow-stick-necklace, came to

the table and he... He couldn't stop smiling, I remember that much. He started laughing, even. And he... Hm. What did he say?

He came to the table and he said—No. I didn't hear what he said because he said it— whispered it, to Denise. Looking at me but whispering to Denise.

Then nothing. Then I heard the mustache and that woke me up.

I'll call Denise. She's bound to know SOMETHING.

I go for the phone in the living room. I'm still naked but I live on the top floor. So even though my blinds are open, nobody is able to see my privates. I dial Denise's number...

Ring Ring Ring.

Perhaps the waiter put some old-timey mustache curse on me. Yeah, maybe he was thinking that Denise was an attractive girl. *Ring Ring Ring.* And he saw me touch her hands and thought to himself that I was some obstacle. And the most logical way to get me out of the picture was to make me hideous to the only girl that has slept with me since I moved to the city. *Ring Ring Ri—*

"Hello?"

"Hello! Denise? It's me!"

"Don't you DARE!"

"Hm?"

"You can go right ahead and fuck yourself if you think I'm gonna let you worm your way back in!"

"What does that mean, exactly?"

"Jesus FUCKING Christ. Don't ever call this number again!"

"Denise? Are you alright?"

Click.

That's just great. I set the phone down, walk back to the bathroom. No idea what happened last night. Maybe I shouldn't know. Maybe I should just shave it off and forget the whole damn thing even happened.

I stand there and flex my muscles.

On second thought... I saw a place on Main St. the other day that sold these awesome cowboy boots.

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