

The Synchronous Aspect of the Bitter Folly

The teenagers smear blood on the torsos of dogs and children.
And the rotting stillness is stalked by the angels of the white people at 7-11.
And the telephone calls to the “shepherds in their yellow corn” are
 placed via gunshot to the skull.
A villager dies and her cousin buys a lottery ticket at the local bodega.
He scratches and snarls and places a bomb in the garbage can in the alley.
Post-detonation all the garbage cans are removed to protect us from
 villagers and cousins.
And we fear ourselves as we fear giant T-bone steaks from England.
And we fear the towers of trash on our streets.
And we fear out of convenience and we fear out of tenderness.
And we fear out of love and we fear out of innocence.
And we connect to the world by shining our headlights at the men who
 sit in their cars and masturbate to the image of darkness.
And the boys who can’t imagine a different world, car jack just for the
 fun of it.
And as the illegal immigrants struggle to explain their illnesses, the
 sentences collapse under the weight of their syntax:
And the colored girls go:
I! have! pulmonary! congestion!
I! have! cholera!
I! have! phlebitis!

Neighborhood Poem

When the SRO finally opened after much protest from the block council the neighborhood was filled with mentally ill citizens who had been thrown out of psychiatric hospitals in the Reagan years.

And the warehouse at the corner was demolished to make room for a building with \$400,000 condos.

And the condos went up next to the public housing unit which was kept in the neighborhood to assure a mix of incomes.

And when the youth congregated in front of the public housing unit, the police drove by slowly, which prevented the youth from smoking marijuana and mugging passersby and residents of the condos.

And when a youth was shot on the sidewalk between the condo unit and the public housing unit, police tape went up on the sidewalk in front of both buildings, physically connecting the residents in a way their shared geography could not.

And the overpriced health food shop, in response to repeated requests from confused residents of the SRO, put up a sign in their window informing customers that food stamps were not accepted.

And a new condo unit was constructed across the street from the public housing unit.

And within a month all six apartments sold for \$390,000 a piece.

And the space that was formerly occupied by the hair dresser whose business had been a front for a meth-dealer was re-opened by a spa that catered only to men, and which charged \$80/hour for a massage, and \$150 for a massage, hair cut, and pedicure.

And the owner of the diner that opened in 1948 resisted closure, but could no longer afford his lease.

And the foodies cheered as the cupcake shop opened next to the overpriced market that sells nothing but olive oil and imported cheese and chorizo.

And the gluten-free bakery opened next to the shop that sells fancy chocolates with ginger and cardamom that opened in the space formerly occupied by the shop that sold fancy shirts for men that opened in the space formerly occupied by a shop that sold expensive baby clothes that opened in the space formerly occupied by the family-run hardware store that had been in the neighborhood for thirty-two years.

And when the city rebuilt the metro station, the construction forced the dry cleaner and the bagel shop out of business.

And after the construction was complete, a Panera Bakery and another overpriced health food store opened in place of the dry cleaner and the bagel shop.

And the Sicilian bakery opened in the space that was formerly occupied by the coffee shop whose name I no longer remember despite the fact that it had been in the neighborhood for so many years.

And the owner of the gym suddenly closed without prior warning. He locked the doors and fired all of his employees, including the illegal immigrants who swept the floors and cleaned the semen off the walls of the sauna.

And the members of the gym roamed the streets like refugees in track suits, looking for tread mills and hand jobs.

And Angel's Restaurant went out of business for reasons that were never made clear to their customers.

And the lesbian gourmands took foie gras off the menu and replaced it with a vegetarian Wellington.

And the bank knew what I was going to say before I even asked how to protect my credit card from the owner of the gym who rumor had it tried to commit suicide after suddenly closing his business.

And from the rumor mill we learned that the guy who owned the gym, Mr. Gay Chicago-1987, actually owned a Cheetah; he did not, however, adopt two kids from South Africa, although one person on the rumor mill claimed to have seen him with his two adopted South African kids at Mommy and Me Yoga the day after he closed the business, the day after he debited the accounts of all 10,000 members of his three area gyms, two days before he tried to kill himself.

And the guy at the dry cleaner lost me as a customer after he refused to refund my shirt that he ruined by staining the arm pits with bleach. He refused to refund my shirt because he was fearful that admitting guilt would harm his reputation.

And the video camera above his door kept me and other disappointed customers from smashing the windows of his shop after hours.

And the video camera kept junkies from buying drugs in front of the dumpster.

And the downstairs neighbor drove his car through the garage and blamed it on a faulty accelerator.