

The Town In Which We live

is losing its visage, its voice too close to the wire:

Mom&Pop corner stores razed for a song. So many raisings,
so many faceless buildings rising, replacing, praising
fast tracks to just that kind of paradise: so much
fast food, big bargains, & bright lights. Buildings abuzz, electric as life.

Strip malls and parking lots plow the earth under. Asphalt is so often the winner.

Where once stood a bench by a Sycamore tree, there now stands a parking lot
slotted & numbered. A lucky number of students purchase their spaces. For a price
they are free to roam: class, work, library, party. From bong(o)s, to bottles, to Blue
Ridge mountains.

They arrive, so (un)certain;

They're living
the dream,

Four years of mountains to wander & courses to take

Four years of Ramen, Tindr and Uber;

Four years to find the mask they think they're meant to honor

to bear to the world as they cross that stage, shake the hand of Dean&Timely Sage,
receive adulation, congratulations, a piece of paper stamped&dated.

A time to turn their tassels and find lives (loaded guns) waiting, cubicle-wide.

Will they stop when they see intersections reminders:

Bamboo & Deerfield, Rivers Street, 105,

Where so much humanity, so many forgotten, forsaken, & hungry reside?

And in that that moment of seeing from their corner perch, will they wake?

Will they exit the bus, cross the town's charted line, picket smoldering classrooms,
& enter into spaces where the broken reside?

Will they see hands outstretched, & place coin, bill, and food
into the (needy), the hungry (many), the all-too-worn through?

Oh graduates, you [(could) (should)] offer coffee, blanket, and coat.

Replace backpacks with cardboard. Gift it away.

Remember the markers you carried to class, outlining passages meant to surpass
all other messages and metaphors?

Those markers are meant for street corner apostles

saluting what we should(once) honor(ed), (the letter)
and what we should (sometimes) cherish(ed) [each other].

Cardboard Apostles

Perhaps they dream of pennies. Is there not one we each may spare?
Unless that is one's moniker, may this world's pennies save
the broken, downtrodden, the outcast that carry the world too much with them.

And while we're at it,
 may we offer homecoming to every creature?
 Let the bells ring. All are welcome.

When weather and time allow it, we wander our town's Greenway trail
& if the day, doesn't steep and steam with our sewage plant's scent, we step off
the asphalt, and head for New River.

Our four-legged companions, our backgammon pieces, fling themselves directly into the
water. Growling & snapping, they tug at river root, wildly happy, so sure of their purpose
(their lives depend on it).
For a moment the world is not a hungry greedy place.

For a moment,

the portly, the surgically etched, the greedy, the people that stand in for Oz,
for a moment, it is simple as breath: Rather than choosing

trafficking humans & privatized jets,
brutalized chickens, pigs, cows, and corn,
oils & wellsprings
or ships of ammunition
 They choose

 the hungry, the tired & offer full bowls:
butterbeans, bokchoy, bay leaf & beef until all bellies stop grumbling
 find that promised night's peace.

For a moment: rather than this gunfire world
with corners torn and rooms marked by spots, damned & indelible
we step into a world full of O m.
Each takes a turn. Breathing again, we remember our wings.