

Culture Shock: Detroit

Primitivo Solis (David Watson)

1977

1 LOVE

Culture shock: back in Detroit, my life of freedom lies neglected as I de-mothball the artifacts of this daily life. One always returns to Detroit; everyone told me, "You'll be back," just as they snicker along the line when you take your vacation. You'll be back. You can't kick, you are strung out.

Culture shock: I lay the implements of capital, the few accumulated commodities which reflect my personal history out in the sun. I lay myself on the line, the no-line anti-fantasy line, I'm as dizzy as a gyroscope and I ask myself while cruising down Third Avenue, *what am I doing in Detroit?!*, and I'm practicing the silent discourse until my throat is dry.

Something is slowly emerging from the zoomorphic streets and the telephone keeps ringing. A cloud suggests a nascent crocodile as the foundry sun of an August Detroit sky sets over the Ford Rouge complex.

And yes, Detroit sunsets, a sunset over the Rouge plant, all refinery flames, smokestacks, grey smoke-dead houses, sunset over the warehouses and water towers, reflected in the broken panes of glass in an abandoned factory, in the windshield of an abandoned car along the expressway, reflected in the broken glass which pebbles the street, reflected, like the burning end of a cigarette, in the glasses and bottles lined up on the bar, reflected in the eyes of people waiting for a bus, not-yet-dead eyes. They are sleeping, waiting.

Detroit at sunset, yet Detroit is always on fire, Detroit dead and factory-worn and weary, burns, smolders, like my heart, flying into Detroit, thinking of you, of a sunset reflected in your eyes, and my heart is aflame as I think of you, my heart bursts like silversword dynamite.

We look at one another, amazed, as if everything were about to disappear. I look at you: who am I seeing? I am talking to you: what am I saying? I only know that we are forced to love behind conspiracies, between bells. I would take you away, but unfortunately, I am going nowhere. I am back in Detroit.

The sun eventually sets, once and for all, and the world goes black like blind love. Somewhere, a perfect race fornicates beneath the fronds of that blackness. We are condemned to grope our way through it to an abyss which lays us open like men killed twice. And yet we come back for more, a third time and more, the muttering of gargoyles, the logic of spokes, the banishment of a hat lying in the road.

You would like me to stay, and I would drag you away from here, entice you, or by your hair if necessary, if I could only do so, get my hands on you, get my mouth upon you, my words, my foolishness, my longing.

So I seek a missing jigsaw hemlock to color my landscape, and paint trapdoors where there are only paving stones. I stay, and I dream. I dream of the REAL WORLD, away from this unreal carousel bled white and scarred by hours, by the cycle of absurd retribution and digestive suicide. I long for the real world of sunrise, wind, and sunset as I long for your body. I long for your body as I long for the secret to my own. A day is a sphinx. You and I are an avalanche of moths descending a stairway. We are sleep, we are the rippling of a wave.

We stand by the river, I see the water rippling, falling upon itself. Everything reminds me of a magic word, everything seems to be opening like a flower—or a wound. I take your magic hand in mine, and for the moment, I

am happy. Yet you turn as melancholy as I, and we discover that we are trapped within a self-imposed limbo. Why are we so somber? Because life can be so harsh.

And why, why did I return? A bus crawls by like a heart murmur...it turns humid...I am back in Detroit. I seem to have lived this sequence not once, but several times before.

2 WORK

Register, pound the pavement, experienced only. Well, I'm a radical, write manifestos, hate schedules, live for love, make the same foolish mistakes over and over again, have my head in the clouds, have a good rap and little else, am all talk and no action, a loser (though not born one), a dreamer, kidding myself, out of money, and I'M WILLING TO WORK. I've got no skills to speak of, am not "mechanically inclined," nor "good with figures," nor an "ambitious go-getter." But I need money. PLEASE ENSLAVE ME, MISTER, GIVE ME A JOB, GIVE IT TO ME GOOD. I'LL BE THE PERFECT ANDROID. (The only thing worse than working is looking for work...)

Having a wonderful time in Sublimation City, wish you were here. Wasn't paradise just simply a screaming bore? Give me a boring-mill operator position any time. (No chance of that, I've no "tool room" nor "precision" background, nor do I have my own "setups," and since only a "top man" need apply, I may as well just stay home, go into a deep depression and wither away.) I'm the incredibly shrinking man and I'm shrinking incredibly down here at the Blue Funk Bar, I'm pinching myself until I'm blue in the cheeks and I don't wake up.

PLEASE, MISTER, PLEASE, GIVE ME A FUCKING JOB, I want a job more than anything, I've got all this labor power just creaming to be alienated, all this time and energy just dying to be used up. Give a veteran a break, I couldn't make it in the movies.

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