

A Summer's Night on Skid Row

Corey Cole

Down the block
Addicts lurch and dodder
outside the service station
at 10th and Rural
like moths to a gaslight.

Strung-out whores
promise good times
desperately strutting like
feral cats on the prowl.
Their glazed eyes lit
by the orange glare
of street lamps.
Peering through
the night, my windshield,
and myself
coming home late.

Police and ambulance sirens,
M-80's, .38's, and the cruising bass
of a Monte Carlo with a bad muffler
mix with a train horn that separates
the right and wrong sides of the tracks
stir me from sleep
in my new bedroom.

Light pollution and smog
render the sky a tepid brown.
What happens when
entire generations pass
without seeing the stars?

Life becomes a word
with a hollow and mundane meaning.
A checklist:
the next hustle, the next high,
the next meal, the next fuck.
Checking boxes
until Jesus or gentrification come.
I teach their children,
but they've seen more than me.