Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Nikolai Garcia: Two Poems

Nikolai Garcia · Wednesday, September 11th, 2019

Ode to East Hollywood

East Hollywood, that lesser known Hollywood; bordering the neighborhoods of drug use and depression. It means no stars—not in the sky—nor on the sidewalk.

East Hollywood: a blunt-wrap package left in the bushes; a used condom near the 101 on-ramp; a half-eaten taco left out in the sun. East Hollywood, you are all the evidence from last night's bender.

East Hollywood: where the aromas of pad thai and shrimp fried rice meet clouds of kush as you turn a corner, hearing someone say, "It smells like California."

Speak Armenian to me, East Hollywood. Tell me why your palm trees look like they are fleeing west? And why the deer from Griffith Park don't venture out onto your boulevards anymore?

East Hollywood is the carcass of a stadium-sized department store on the corner of Sunset and Western, left to rot before it could be completed.

East Hollywood, you are a prostitute on her day off; a homeless youth with a new pair of Jordans; my last two dollars spent on a lottery ticket.

East Hollywood is Bukowski-dropped classes from L.A. City College. East Hollywood, even White people won't gentrify you anymore.

*

Felix the Cat is the Mayor of Los Angeles

I spend most days, atop a nopal, devouring
a snake. Sometimes, I substitute
the snake for a pupusa, and sometimes
with Korean BBQ.

Sometimes I substitute the nopal
for a train. My view extends
and I can see the Queen Mary sleeping.

Sometimes I substitute the train
for a bus. Some days the bus
is lonely except for empty beer
bottles and the smell of poetry.
But, some days the bus is packed
and I’m squeezed in with five
people in the back row
where we all fall asleep
and all have the same
dream of owning a Prius.

Sometimes I’m on the 110—the Harbor
freeway—with no harbor in sight;
just a million cars running
a gauntlet of giant palm trees
while Felix the Cat looks on.

Sometimes Florence doesn’t intersect
with Normandie and I can hear
flowers laughing in the park.

Sometimes the smog is so
thick you can’t see three inches
in front of you and the smog hides
police murders and handshakes
between businessmen and councilmen.

Sometimes a storm comes in
to substitute the smog for a rainbow.
Just kidding—it never rains here.

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