

Downtown Diary: Mid-day Madonna

To escape
the irrational chill
of midsummer
air conditioning
I took a 2 o'clock walk
down Eighth Street.

Just past the
County Recorder's Office,
emerging from
the protection of trees
into a radial blur
of pure street heat,
I sensed a most
miraculous procession
waving towards me.

A young latina
in dress jeans,
bubbling baby
in her arms,
led the way.
She was immediately
and most certainly
followed by
Our Lady of
Too-High Heels
in a foaming white
wedding gown,
her train
dusting the sidewalk.

Glowing serenely
through three facefuls of
midnight makeup,
she was intently navigating
a rattling carriage
overflowing with flowers;
burning a vision
so complete,
I did not dare
turn around
after they passed.



Downtown Diary: Bad Plaid Polka

If I was a
fashion cop
I would sit on this corner—
the intersection
of 4 or 5 decades of
“The Next Big Thing”—
and cite,
with tailored disdain,
the most blatant offenders
as they danced by.

Polyester Pavane,
the hottest ticket
current and re-currently;
rippling, stately,
breathless...
featuring colors
not found in Nature
bound by strained
non-metal fastenings.

A slower step in a
polka dot muu-muu
imported from
an imaginary island
in a mirrorless
archipelago.

A major fine for
that orange outfit;
maybe a little jail time
for those shouting
purple pants;
and to you,
Bad Plaid Polka,
a midlife
sentence.



Downtown Diary: Hymn

There's my favorite
sidewalk preacher
flinging his verse
with fervent certainty
between the tracks,
his pious force field
parting the
unmindful wave of
lunchtime traffic.

Dressed in his
Everyday Best—
baggy shorts
pressed polo shirt
black socks,
white sneakers
and a
very serious
sailor hat—
he hands me
a small brochure
"Is Hell for Real?"
I long to suggest
maybe it's time
to drop the debate
on existence
and focus on
location location location.

I'm in Heaven now;
leaning back in
the protective shade
of the grand cathedral,
inhaling the
whirrrrr
of a thousand
carefree souls
winging by.



Downtown Diary: Finale

You big Town!
Can't fool me with your
travel brochure allure and
dry heat.
Half-way to everywhere
and Nowhere...

When we were 17
we couldn't wait
to be gone;
to split this cowtown forever
with all its
darn trees and birds
and space
and get to
someplace grittier
where it's happening
and somewhat
dangerous...
Real life,
no deposit
and definitely
No Return.

OK little city,
give it up.
Explain again how
the mystery magnetism
quietly reeled us
back to Sac
when we weren't looking;
and how you
got me to admit
it's really not so bad
to be
where you're from.

