

Texas
Chair at window
Where have all the fireflies/butterflies gone?

9 July 2022
clouds

In Baltimore, Maryland, a group of five teenagers beat a 72-year-old man to death with a traffic cone at 3 in the morning. They frolicked through the whole thing. Being this generation, they (digitally-captured) dig-capped the whole scene. Race of the deceased? Race of the teens? Does it matter?

The dead man is important. The phone-camera is the story. Be patient. I do not disrespect the deceased. Let's examine...

Since mankind carried a rock or a club he has killed. This is the nature of man. In my youth of the '70s in NYC – lots of crime. Many murders. The Summer of Sam. Many muggings. Very few back then, far as I recall, ran to a pay phone post-crime, and prattled on about what they did. Much less take pictorial evidence. Criminals liked anonymity back then. They were only proud with the ones they ran with.

A time when the penalty for crime was, if not weighed, it was known: prison. Prison for crimes weighed before risk. Except for circumstance, like drugs, or baby diapers and formula. But the phone as social symbol mattered only as status e.g. how many one had in their house. A bedroom phone was a big deal. In '72, the telephone, with extension cords, rotary and touch-tone, served as a communicative tool. They were not the focus of our development, our lives, or the means that fed the dreams of a generation.

Fifty years later, it seems every kid now comes with a performing studio in their head. Anything to get on the stage of the world. Getting seen validates being. They have been seduced by the idea of space as the actualizing medium of self. The medium of expressed identity within the cold eye of immediacy, before

which they audition alternate selves.

The unblinking lens is all, like a magical power. The space within which they become other: roles inversely learned from the other side of the lens. Conditioned through repetition in the role of object. The role, whereby we are seen and validated by the mass of the unseen watchers to our performance.

These grew up mostly before some kind of screen. Watching, learning roles bathed in digital glow. Children are made for dreams. Not screens. But now an unnatural stage for the trying on of identities. By such roles, social and moral values are imprinted. The longer the hours before the lens, via visual inculcation with sound but a pacing refrain (it's why everything has a soundtrack) in the observing, much gets imprinted on consciousness: views on love, gender, truth, sexuality, politics, violence, cosmetics, and the other.

Where once a family or tightknit unit spoke, hammering out value codes through shared experience, screens have subsumed most parental and many social mentoring roles. All of us are conjoined to the mechanism of distraction. Some as employment. Others to opine on all the ills of the world. Others, to live secret, virtual lives, lacking the courage to live in reality. A generation grafted to the beast.

Of course it has a multitude of benefits and curses. As does everything Pandora brings into our lives because we made it i.e. imperfection can only impart an imperfection. And so we are seduced by and fall in with our imperfections. This is the lifeblood within the cold lens. That ever-looking eye rinses the humane and the gentle from our hearts, in this sad, unsettled age, where all values are prone to chaos. Not the lens; the place where spectacle glances upon itself and so tragedy must follow.

These dear teens were parented by mass-culture through a lens that had long taught objectification of the female form. Now, all are objectified and game for petty derision. Petty hates. Pathological grudges long held.

They murdered a man who was not a man to them. A prop within and of our culture. A means to an end. Murder as means to a lens, where their eyes became one with the lens. That cool overwatching, parental presence. They draw so close to Mother Lens, protectively so. At the cost of life.

They are no longer rehearsing identities. The auditions are over. The watchers bathed in digital blue are seeing the performers as they ascend the starry stage of the world. A million adorations in a single turning of the sun. They have been seen. They have found a place in the space of a lens. A refuge of their own.

Refuge; something parents lacked, church did not provide, and schools often grapple with: Breaking the sleepwalkers of Mother Lens. Freeing them before their audition as human sacrifice comes upon them. Cold Mother Lens is no place to leave a child; A generational consciousness wired and wedded to zeroes and ones through pixelated reductions of the self.

When our children fall to debauch we can weep that things have come undone. Ever seen a toddler in a car seat on a phone? Ever had a room full of students, year-after-year, who really struggle with any creative imagination (outside the technosphere)?

A man was sacrificed for Mother Lens on the stage of our world, as we watched. I'd be surprised if they saw any humane value to him. Head bashed in with a traffic cone. Murder and laughter framed in dig-cap. We can all tune-in, login, watch from anywhere. Mother Lens is our world.

Sad thing is, they are just teenagers. What's left to grow from such

darkened hearts? Can they feel remorse or the value of the life taken? Does cold Mother Lens teach that?

