

Over the Rhine Ghost Tour

by Pauletta Hansel

Not the one they take good money for
 on Friday nights, set a bunch of strangers
 walking the street,
 looking down at their shoes
 as they pass.
 Like you're a ghost.
 One they don't want to see.
 I'll take you on a ghost tour,
 won't charge near as much.
 See that window
 all closed up,
 that's the one I'd poke my head out,
 Friday nights,
 see who's on the streets I know.
 People in that building now,
 they stay inside.
 They might as well be ghosts.
 Used to be I'd walk three streets,
 Vine to Main, hear *hey* and *howdy*,
how's your momma. People'd
 have my back. Pull my
 coat tail if I dared do wrong.
 Now I'll go two blocks,
 not see a ghost of a smile.
 Now there's places even I won't go
 and people I'm afraid of,
 not because I don't know them,
 because I do.
 I'll show you places, too,
 so full of light
 there ain't a ghost be brave enough
 to linger—People's Garden, thirty
 years of corn and squash, sunflowers
 coming up from last year's seeds.
 There's still a lot of richness here;
 we gotta dig down deep
 start pulling some of that back out
 before there's no one's left
 to show you what you're looking for
 not even me.

*(Inspired by a writing experience with Over the Rhine Residents in 2012,
 sponsored by Over the Rhine Community Housing)*