

# An American Scene

By Peter McLaren

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Petulant young politicians  
fresh from a strategy meeting  
about how to spin the government shutdown  
file past the continental breakfast table  
at the local Motel 6  
snapping shut their Samonsite attaché cases  
wiping oat muffin crumbs from their seersucker suits  
while across the street  
at the local cemetery of dead dreams  
within the sprawling assemblage of contentious corpses, casualties of a full metal civilization  
the groundskeepers  
fresh from a blue-plate special  
are picking up refuse  
with nails driven into tips of old rake handles  
spearing with imperial vengeance  
plastic wrappings and paper cups  
agitated by irascible winds of change  
chasing them across great sweeps of marble-studded grass  
following them along the putrid streams of spongy gutters  
as they spill into open graves  
waiting for the next debt-ridden customer  
(perhaps one of the politicians)

at Motel 6  
who forgot  
his cholesterol medicine]

The men in baggy pants  
clutching their rake handles  
festooned with collapsed styrofoam cups  
and Chuck E. Cheese and Happy Meal coupons  
stare with empty eyes  
at the abandoned chapel  
across from the fenced-off precinct  
that's reserved for the granite vault of some corporate big shot

In front of the doors  
chained shut by despair  
a communion chalice sits  
on a lawn chair  
beside a coke can and bagel crust  
filled with particles of lost hope  
as well as dead leaves and dandelion fluff

In the distance someone plays a trumpet



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