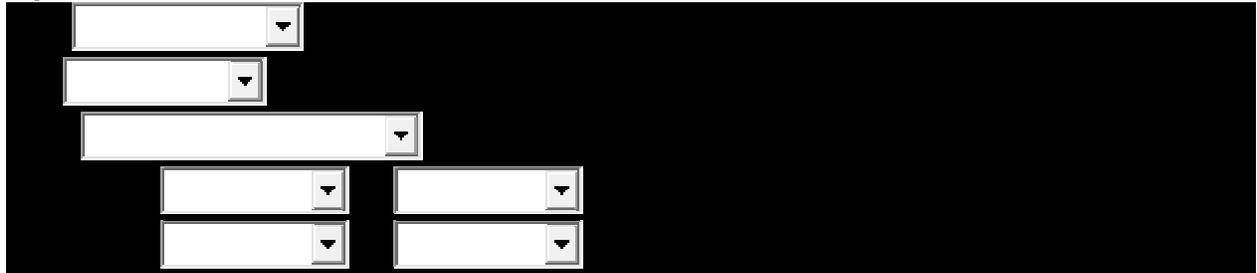


# Sickened by 'Healthy Holly'

By Patricia Schultheis  
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A lawyer for Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh said Tuesday the state prosecutor has opened an investigation into sales of her self-published children's book. (Lloyd Fox / Baltimore Sun video) (Lloyd Fox)

Congratulations, Healthy Holly, you've made me sick. Given me a headache, nausea and a broken heart. And the prognosis isn't good. Over time, my headache and nausea may fade, but my broken heart? I'm not certain about that.

I fell in love with Baltimore soon after the August afternoon in 1965 when I got off a train from Connecticut and had my first date with the man I married a week later. A history teacher, my husband made the city's rich past become alive, and the happiness of my life with him extended to life in Baltimore. Baltimore had just enough culture to support my intellect, variety to satisfy my curiosity and quirkiness to surprise me. Even after the 1968 riots eviscerated it, and the four Howard Street department stores at its commercial core abandoned it, Baltimore and I remained a perfect match.



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**After a semi-white Christmas, snow possible into Monday before warmup begins; temps could be above freezing by end of week**

Over the decades, I kept hoping for the turnaround I sensed was just one project away. I kept believing that the Inner Harbor or Harbor East, or, more recently, Station North, would catalyze further growth.

But, like many lovers' eyes, mine were blinkered. I didn't realize that the city's foundation had become unstable when its homegrown financial institutions, those banks and brokerages that had bolstered the city's past and could have supported its future, merged with out-of-state entities or closed altogether. Without a major local bank, Baltimore had to compete for dollars in the tight fists of investors who saw less risk and better returns elsewhere.

And I didn't appreciate the impact of the city's shrinking population, (down almost 300,000 since I moved here), leaving Baltimore with an eroded tax base and less clout in Annapolis, where Baltimore has become a poor stepchild tugging at the apron strings of Mother Maryland. While so many plans gather dust — State Center, Park Heights, a realigned Jones Falls Expressway to name a few — the rest of Maryland, the rest of America, has moved ahead.

Baltimore's one indisputable trump card, it was argued, was its medical institutions. Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland, plus Baltimore's proximity to the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, gave the city a unique advantage to build a future based on biotechnology. Foolish me; I believed the argument. And then Healthy Holly ripped the blinkers from my eyes.



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Turns out, the University of Maryland Medical System, one of the key players in Baltimore's imagined biotech future, was engaged in an entirely different game. While masquerading as a well-intentioned group of civic leaders, behind closed doors, the medical system's board members were busily enriching themselves. In a massive shell game, they shuttled monies from insurance companies and charities to elsewhere, including City Hall.

In a no-bid contract, Mayor Katherine Pugh was paid \$500,000 for some second-rate, self-published books all of which may or may not have been delivered to Baltimore schools, while Baltimore's school children froze in the winter because of malfunctioning boilers and baked in the summer because of the lack of air conditioning.

So, the true plot of Healthy Holly had nothing to do with exercise or a balanced diet. Rather, Healthy Holly's real plot is a story of rampant greed, double-dealing, self-enrichment, cronyism and cynicism. With the reach of today's social media, it's also a story heard round the world. I turned on the radio one morning and heard Baltimore's woeful tale on the rarefied airwaves of NPR. That's when my stomach turned. And my heart broke.

After the death of my husband nearly 11 years ago I became very familiar with the second stage of the grieving process: anger. And anger is what I feel now over the betrayal of my beloved Baltimore by its leaders. My fury burns red hot at their callous enriching of themselves while the city sank into a mire of false starts and unrealized

initiatives. Maybe other Baltimoreans feel the same rage I do, and, maybe our common wrath will ignite the spark of ethical, creative leadership Baltimore needs.

Despite Healthy Holly, deep in my wounded heart, the ember of that hope still burns. It simply refuses to die.

*Patricia Schultheis ([bpschult@yahoo.com](mailto:bpschult@yahoo.com)) is the author of “Baltimore’s Lexington Market,” and of a short story collection titled “St. Bart’s Way.” Her latest book, a memoir titled “A Balanced Life,” was published by All Things That Matter Press in September. She will be giving a reading from it at 6:30 on May 2, at the Roland Park Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library.*

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