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Americans

BY ROY BENTLEY

1.

This is the end of the nineteen fifties.

And so factory work is booming in Ohio.

My father holds title to a pair of Cadillacs,

used, his and hers, an Eldorado and a DeVille,
though the two of them will soon piss away
both great American cars and everything else
hiring lawyers and getting divorced. I would

show you Ohio as if you were some lucky kid
in margarine-colored sweater and ironed Levis
being allowed to cowboy the front-seat armrest

between his young mother and a father ripped
from family and friends in Kentucky for work.
A boy awash in unclouded skies of windshield.
My mother is smoking. Lighting another L & M

and pulling out an ashtray. I'm about to overhear
my father asking the thick smoke about presents.
Furniture, I recall her telling him over the radio—

Six Translations from The Dickinson Archive

BY MARÍA NEGRONI

Translated from the Spanish by Allison A. deFreese

Pain

A spring of water where I must burn by myself until all flames are well extinguished, as if I were approaching death, a body — nearly without mouth or eyes or heart, and so on — flung into its own turbulence, with no beatitude whatsoever. Eros again (who else?), is beside me and far from me — *irresistible pest*. What can I do to love his ever-present wounds? My house laps up the flames, and the wrong creatures keep appearing throughout the musical score.

Eccentricity

My whole life, I wanted the self to be absent, so that the — blind — bees would give being to beings. Because of this yearning, a honeycomb of silence came into existence — and from it emerged a courage for which there is no pronoun.

I like to dream of other worlds, to write — with my lips — about desire as an abstraction.

Body below, unreality taking frantic sips.

If I continue like this, I will wind up completely orphaned.



Photo by Mohamed Lammah

Progress Notes

BY KYLE SEIBEL

From Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 9th edition:

progress notes

Notes made by healthcare professionals that describe condition and the treatment given or planned. They may include responses to prescribed treatments, the ability to perform activities of daily living, and acceptance or understanding of a particular condition or treatment.

22 December 1993

Routine check-up. Patient is nine years old and shares a bedroom with his younger brother at the top of the stairs in a vinyl-sided, two-story, suburban Cleveland home. Vision, hearing, and reflex tests all conclude he is a normal, selfish child.

The patient complains of having to go to bed in the summertime when the sun is still up and the frustrating inability to get what he wants immediately when he wants it. He appears to be unable to articulate what he would do with a pocketknife when questioned by his mother, though it is the only thing on his Christmas list. The patient reports of having recently learned Santa Claus isn't real, but takes solace in the continued existence of Easter Bunny and Tooth Fairy.

Physician administered two stickers and two candy canes — one for him and one to share with his brother.

Lillian

BY DANIELLE TALLEY

Lillian Burke stood by the attic window and looked down at the many cars that had flooded the driveway. She tried counting how many there were, which was tricky. The glass was filthy, patchy with dirt spots, and already it made things fuzzy. But the rainfall outside was getting heavier and heavier, thus blurring her view even more. Thankfully, the people who'd come to her house clearly were fans of color. She could spot the cars even through the wet haze.

She counted them like she counted jelly beans — one orange, three red, two blue, two green, one brown, the rest (maybe) silver or black. The surrounding lawn was a lush spring green. Lillian wanted so badly to kick off her shoes and go dancing in the rain. She wanted to feel the cool asphalt under her feet and the freshly moistened soil between her toes. She wanted to play hopscotch in the puddles with Jane and have a contest to see which of them could catch the most raindrops in their mouths.

Of course, her mother wouldn't allow this. Mrs. Burke considered many things to be improper — whatever that means — and apparently having fun was one of them.

She let out a tired sigh as she traced a smiley face on the glass. It baffled her how the sky could go from being so clear and sunny one minute to gray and weepy the next. The change itself wasn't what bothered her. Things changed all the time, she knew that. They had to. If everything stayed the same, her dad always said, the world would lose its luster. Mr. Burke said that nothing new or interesting or beautiful could ever come without change.

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Hillbilly Guilt received the 2019 Hidden River Arts / Willow Run Poetry Book Award. Recently released *My Mother's Red Ford: New and Selected Poems, 1986–2019*.

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