

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Thaddeus Rutkowski: Three Poems

Thaddeus Rutkowski · Wednesday, September 30th, 2020

WHERE I'M FROM

I don't think anyone outside of a ten-mile radius
has heard of where I'm from.

The one-street town lies downstream
from another one-street town.

I never made it more than a mile or two from my home.
For transportation, I used a bike, my feet, or skates.
Surrounded by nature, I had no choice but to appreciate it.

I was raised as white, but I'm not white.
My father saw no difference between races,
while my mother never forgot hers.

My goal was to learn to drive,
then climb into a car with a full tank of gas,
floor the accelerator, and blow out of there.

*

EMPTY NEST

I have a feeling that something is missing,
because our child is no longer living with us.

I was focused on her, and on her only,
and now I'm not focused on her
unless she contacts me,
and she doesn't contact me often.

I could contact her,
but I would need a good reason.
She and I aren't in the habit of waving
at each other over distance, in cyberspace

just for the sake of waving.

I can see this emptiness as freedom,
 a space in which to do what I like,
 I don't need to fill the space
 with someone else to take care of,
 someone like a pet: a dog or a cat.
 I don't need a pet to feed
 and/or walk on a regular basis.
 I don't need to worry about the pet's survival
 when I go away from home for a while.
 A pet wouldn't make me happier,
 though I would make a pet happier.

*

FOREIGN FILLINGS

I'm asked if the fillings in my teeth
 were done in a different country.
 I wonder if foreign fillings look different,
 if they are higher or lower on the tooth,
 or have a different color.
 Maybe what looks different is my face,
 as if I'm from a different country
 and had my earlier dental work done there.

“What country do you mean?”
 I ask the dentist and his assistant
 because I can't quite figure out
 what country they think I'm from.
 Maybe they don't know;
 maybe all they know is,
 I don't look like they do.
 I wait for their answer with my mouth open.

VOTE!

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