

Lithuania

Dan Bern

I'd like to be a good American and write an elegy to
the automobile
But no matter where it takes me I don't really feel any
different
I got one foot in the black and white two dimensional
ghosts of Lithuania
And the other foot in sunny California where the people
are all friendly
As they drive their Mercedes to the mini-malls and take
a lunch
Or network with you or drive past and kill you for no
reason

These are my ghosts: Uncle Emmanuel, Uncle Eli, Aunt
Mia
And my grandparents, Jenny and Tobias, none of whom
I've ever met
I saw some letters once that they wrote to my dad in
Palestine in 1940
Not too long before they all were shot
My only link to them is my dad, he knew them, he knew
me, now he's gone too

Sometimes I want to get next to them, sometimes I want
to drive them all away
Say: You're not my ghosts, I live in Sunny California,
I drive a 1992 Red Chevrolet
I drive fast, and I drive as far west as anyone can
drive
Eight thousand miles from Lithuania and if I could
escape
By driving further then I would, but it doesn't get me
anyplace new

I guess if I was a true American, I could write an
elegy to the automobile
But when I jump in it doesn't get me any place
different
Sometimes I want to dance on Hitler's grave
And shout out: Groucho Marx, Lenny Bruce, Leonard
Cohen, Philip Roth,
Bob Dylan, Albert Einstein, Leonard Bernstein, Harry
Houdini, Sandy Kofax!

And then I want to sing as loud as I can
Watch the chandeliers sway dangerously overhead
Proclaiming Kristallnacht is over
I say Kristallnacht is over!
The only broken glass tonight
Will be from wedding glasses shattered under boot heels
We're not the ones in the museum, it's you,
Your curious mustache and your chamber of horrors

I've a friend my age whose parents met in Auschwitz on
the Day of Liberation
She lives in San Francisco, a good job, just moved into
a new house

I've a friend who lies in her hospital bed
After fifteen operations from a botched appendectomy
I go to visit her with a heart heavy from the things on
my mind,
And she cheers me up

I saw my dad tell jokes, and teach me how to laugh,
Thirty years after his parents, brothers, and sister
were all shot,
Murdered in the streets of Lithuania
I see trees growing tall and the sun coming up, and the
ocean roaring home,
And know I must go on I must go on
It would be cowardly to stop
It would be an aberration to do anything else

Amid something you tried to remember for days
The fog is suddenly lifted
The haze is gone from your mind
And its no so much that your memory finally heeded
But you gave up needing to need it

Hey, the fog has gone
Hey, the fog has gone
Its time for you to come out
There's no longer a reason to die

When something is over, something else begins
The end of the century is coming
Like a blind woman relentlessly spinning
But before it's sewn shut
You wanted to scream: Hold on just a minute, was this
just a dream?
Or is there something to learn
Besides who got the gold,
And who's been losing and winning?

But a century's a man-made process
An attempt to stick order on chaos
We're born with ten fingers
So we count up to ten
But if everyone counted the cracks on the wall
We might all count to three, and then it wouldn't be
The end of the century at all

Hey hey, the fog has gone
Hey hey, the fog has gone

It showed signs early today
I knew when I woke in my bed
That something was going on
Throw up the window
I want to scream out your name

Hey hey, the fog has gone
Hey hey, the fog has gone

C'mon we'll drive up the coast
Its a Tuesday or Thursday
But I can't remember, and I don't care
We'll drive to Seattle or else Oklahoma
Or else if we wanna boat to Hawaii
Or maybe Japan with the kings of karaoke

Come out!

Come on out girl, you gotta come out now
Maybe the only thing jumping in the car and driving can
get us
Is an empty tank of gas
But it sure beats sitting around here
Maybe we'll get lucky, find our own private river
valley
Or at least an all-night diner where they know how to
poach an egg
Maybe we'll meet some good people along the way
And anyway, you know I'll never leave you
I'll never leave you