

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

john sweet

jumper's song, incorrectly remembered

hopes to breathe in this pure white
light for the rest of his numbered days

sound of birds, of the bones of
birds, of small talismans breaking
beneath his bare feet and you are not lost yet
but you are losing

i am laughing at the
thought of it

empire of empty parking lots and so i
wear my crown of rust and rain

please is one way, a boot pressing down
an exposed throat another

subservience

obedience

a lot of city streets wet with blood before
the century comes to an end,
but how much can any of us really care?

art born of suffering is a
dubious achievement at best

smell of decay after the rain and
then your lover's suicide

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a whole lot of
pain that means nothing to me

a job digging through the pits

each corpse deserves a name,
of course,
but math is a tricky concept in
this bleak new century

we forget what we're forgetting and
then we forget why

we exist without direction
beneath the smokewhite sky

kept telling me time could only ever
move in one direction
but it always felt like a lie

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willingly into oblivion

was young and saw the
world as it was

laughed against the pale flesh of
yr stomach
and you asked me what was funny

asked if i'd
remember this moment in ten years
or in twenty

asked like there were lives
depending on it and so i
said yes

traced the curve of yr breasts with
my free hand and
said yes

started waiting for
that day to arrive

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dive

keeps thinking about the desert
about getting high
about the girls he's fucked in any number of
shithole apartments

finds the slight depression at the far
edge of the field where the horse was buried

no songs but the
songs of bees

the smell of lilies, of
dogwood and roses, clouds like mounds of
faceless corpses circling overhead and he
thinks he had a son

remembers watching the bus pull out of
the parking lot but has no
memory of it ever coming back

and so he's stoned at the far edge of
summer, 85 miles an hour down the interstate,
hills in every direction, shredded tires from
eighteen-wheelers, crows at the roadkill,
all of these pointless metaphors for
a wasted life

he's 25 and then he's 43, a father and an
emotional cripple, sunburnt, unshaven,
no use for anyone's god

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he doesn't support the war and he
doesn't support the soldiers and he
doesn't support the government

walls are walls, of course, and
every window is a target

the dogs are always hungrier when the
corpses are bulldozed into pits and burned

but he's thinking about the desert,
you see,
or he's thinking about a woman he still loves,
and the two have become interchangeable
in his mind

he's thinking about this child he
may or may not have

about a poem he should but won't write

he's lost, yes, but only because
his eyes are closed

only because he never knew where he
was going in the first place