

Wilderness House Literary Review 14/2

John Cuétara

Dog and Country

My dog and I are falling apart,
a couple of old men on pain meds,
taking Tramadol, damn it all,
struggling to get up the stairs
as our country falls apart.

He lies on his mat, eyes wide open,
scanning the kitchen, watching for any
special treats going into his bowl,
maybe a little ground turkey
or shredded cheese.

I stare at the TV, eyes wide open,
hoping the world won't end tonight.

It's time to turn it off
and talk to each other.

He watches me fill his bowl,
struggling to stand up.

We'll eat, drink and celebrate
tonight because who knows
what'll happen tomorrow.

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Drinking Buddies

Drunk-talking me
over the phone
like an old lover
at midnight, you recall
the golden boyhood
we never had,
the naked swimming
at Walden,
that nice girl
from high school
we shared.
Since then we've
lost too much,
our youth, our minds
and now this stubborn
friendship is drinking
itself to death.

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Snow Men

I'm waiting for the snow men
who always show up,
Dominicans toiling in
someone else's country
plowing someone else's snow,
husbands, brothers and sons
sending money home
to a steamy island.

I wake up sometimes on a
cold white night to find a couple
of teenagers shoveling my steps
and stand there watching
from inside my warm house
like a robber baron.

Some people don't want
them here, these short dark men
who work too hard
to worry about happiness,
but I'd be lost without them.

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Your Father

I hear the news after
a week in the wilderness
by listening to three messages
from my father's friend
who says the weather's
been wild on the Vineyard,
high winds and flooding,
trees blown down, a real
rough spring and by the way,
your father's been sick,
then he says the weather's
improved but your father's
worse, it's pneumonia and
finally he says the sun's
come out, forsythia
are blooming and
I'm sorry to say
your father's died.

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Meeting Death

From my bicycle I see
death weaving down the road
in a black Mustang.

I'm riding past the lake
on a sunny spring day
thinking about good things
like my health and
the environment but
death doesn't care.

The car swerves wildly,
nearly hitting me, then pulls
over by a Forsythia bush.

I see a shady figure
through the glass
and ride over to
introduce myself.