

litany of concentric circles

finished his drink then
shot himself

said he hoped the poem would be better than the
shit i usually wrote but i didn't even
know him, wasn't even there, and he pulled the
trigger and it was november

was sunlit and cold and the blood on the
walls, sound of the girl smiling in the doorway
of the porn shop and my car wasn't running again

was rusting in the sunlight of someone else's
driveway and the sound of the
shot and she was smiling as i walked by, was sharing a
cigarette with the guy who worked there, asked me
how the poem was going, said she wasn't even there but
he had finished the drink then shot himself and
past the high school was the river

sunlit and cold and i found his body floating
near the shore, knew his girlfriend but i couldn't
lift him up and two kids on the bridge above
throwing rocks down at us, tried to explain that i
wasn't there, that i wasn't here, but my
hands had lost all feeling

mouth was bleeding and the hole in the side of his
head where the light poured out, said the girl
had been his sister and i told him he was dead

do you remember?

it was november, bright blue sky and frozen and
he'd written his girlfriend a letter, had told her
he was sorry and then he pulled the trigger

told her to ask me about the poem

showed her some words i'd scribbled across the backs of
some carry-out menus when i found her
standing in the doorway of the mexican restaurant,
explained that i wasn't even there, and these kids
across the street throwing rocks at us

my car down by the river, *tangled up in blue*
on the radio and she said she'd always hated dylan,
said she'd always hated the stones, and then he
finished his drink and pulled the trigger

static poured out of the hole in his heart and
he said the poem was the important thing

said the gun was just a metaphor but
he wouldn't stop bleeding

laughed when i showed him what i'd written
and told me i'd better try again

John Sweet sends greetings from the rural wastelands of upstate NY. He is a firm believer in writing as catharsis and in the continuous search for an unattainable and constantly evolving absolute truth. His latest poetry collections include *A FLAG ON FIRE IS A SONG OF HOPE* (2019, Scars Publications) and *A DEAD MAN, EITHER WAY* (2020, Kung Fu Treachery Press).