

WINNER OF THE
RICHARD WILBUR
POETRY AWARD



MIDLIFE

MATTHEW BUCKLEY SMITH

The Best

You're wrong, she said,
if you think I don't recall
the drive we made at the end,
from Hartwell to Jasper,
across that summer's last
long weekend, fall
a sobering whisper.
When did we start
to fool ourselves out loud?
You went first, but I
don't hold it against you.
You were so handsome
then, and I was so proud,
though I never convinced you.
A little farther on
was all I wanted,
in the white compact,
humming some aimless song.
I sold it last year. My fiancé
said it was haunted,
and he wasn't wrong.
He's shorter than you, and better
with his hands, and better.
You wouldn't like him,
but he might still like you.
His ex was a beauty, I hear,
though I never met her,
or wanted to.

I'm almost glad
things went the way they did —
the last drive west,
the last fuck by the water,
the last big lie, the best.
Now I hear you have a kid,
a beauty, a daughter.