

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/4

dan jacoby
old ways

few miles just
outside of millersburg
past rusting trailer park
across hard road
from Fayette grocery
now fallen in
gravel road snakes
to stock pond
full of catfish
rippling in the wind
on early spring day
crippled trapper exits
old 58 pick up
just back from big box store
his back and his trailer
lean a bit to the east
limping on bad leg gotten
sliding down muddy creek bank
checking trap line
atv fires on first pull
head up into high timber
hunting feral hogs
that killed a good hound
wears leather knee boots
for mausauga rattlers
eye out for poachers
who try to kill everything

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cold harbor

all symbols of hate
these stars
these blue bars
of bravery
history opines
these men died
not the old
architects of this slaughter
seven thousand fell at cold harbor
in just twenty minutes
soldiers grey and blue
wonder at the sacrifice
for lack of compromise

conversations between pickets
night before battle engaged
sharing of coffee, water, hardtack
sharing stories of battle, home
killing each other
very next day
what matter the Cause to them
following their states to ruin
following Melville's meteor
to the grave

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eighty some years after
penning a bill of rights
colonial ties and slavery
pulled many a state's flowers asunder
where was god then
northern arrogance
southern truculence
their honor, memory
sullied by future sins
fueled of hate and greed

gaze at the graves
arlington, chickamaugua, gettysburg
only there is heard
whispers of conscience
of futile prayer
not to forget the lesson
not to disregard the anguish
swords cracked
bayonets broken
bloody angle, pickets charge, the cornfield
assault on fort wagner
our remarkable blindness

mothers, daughters, fathers, sons
torn to pieces
healing no where in sight
of nationalism, sectionalism
grind a ghoulish agenda
bugling another charge
to oblivion
like a gothic sketch
dotted with crosses, headstones
with those left standing
in hell's maelstrom
and darkness of hate

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crystal child

childhood was one
beating after another
so bad, loaded single shot
twenty eight gauge
going to kill him
didn't come back
skull crushed crashing
harley above right eye
lost everything, brother first,
his mind, never had anything
made living making things
most found no value in

loss and failure
created scatological paranoia-
always armed in bars,
parties, picnics
spent many new year's eve
in cahokia gripping 20 gauge ithaca
only daughter fights men
in dark alton bars tattooed and
undefeated to this day

moved from ghetto violence
to quiet country town
where fathers beat sons
with shovels, axe handles
on twelve hundred a month
slowly going mad with anxiety
had to make a history up
to battle life of rendering
the stink of catatonic loneliness
to simple carnie arcade game

(for Richard 4 July 2014)