

## Wilderness House Literary Review 5/4

*Ron Yazinski*

### **PENNSYLVANIA**

Just when I was planning to retire and move to Florida,  
Where the sun is not so prudish  
And shows itself like a newlywed bride,  
Rather than as a cloistered nun swaddled in grey,

The birthmark on my chin has to be removed.  
My mother, as mothers will,  
Said it was where an angel kissed me for good luck  
On the day that I was born.

Now it has the shape and texture  
Of a topographical map of Pennsylvania,  
Which fascinates the deadpan surgeon,  
Who tells me he'll have to take it off in two stages:

The first cut will be from the west,  
>From Lake Erie to the Susquehanna River.  
Then he'll see how that heals  
Before he removes my home town.

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### PERSPECTIVE

As kids we'd tightrope these tracks,  
One unsure foot in front of the other,  
As if we were practicing for a future sobriety test.

And as kids we were always amazed how both rails slid together  
Somewhere in the distance,  
Just like the nun in art class said they would.

As a young man, I remember  
My dad describing how he once got so drunk on home made wine,  
He had to leave his car in Olyphant, about two miles to the east,

And, before dawn, stumble these same tracks to get to Mass.  
How he must have passed through the very spot  
Where I'm now standing,

Where one of these rails represents life  
And the other death,  
And how no man alive was ever tall enough to straddle both;

Though in the distant west,  
Right before the trestle that crosses the Lackawanna,  
I imagine my father walking, reconciling the impossible.

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### THE MISTRESS OF HIP HOP

He cheats on her with his wife,  
And on her, with his wife before that.  
It was all there in his music.  
With all the other silly, juvenile things he ever said,  
Like he wants to squeeze his lover until her tattoos pop,  
And that compared to her,  
All his past lovers were on a brothel's JV team,  
Both were from his second album,  
The cover of which was a tattooed kiss on a naked shoulder.

When he's not with her, every time the phone rings  
And his number comes up,  
It's like opening a patio umbrella and hoping a bat doesn't fly out.  
Sometimes, it's him, singing a beautiful song,  
Claiming it's the best thing he's ever done,  
But won't record, because he doesn't want to embarrass his children  
With his confession of love for her.  
Though she remembers it from his first, self-produced cd,  
And that it was originally dedicated to his present wife.  
Then she feels the barbs of her blood cells  
Snagging on the soft tissue of her heart.

But once, when the phone rang, it was his wife, screaming,  
"The devil will wipe his ass with your soul,"  
Which they both recognized as a line from one of his recent songs.

Near the phone is an index card on which she has written something to say  
If she's been drinking and gets out of hand.  
It's a paraphrase of one of the songs he's been working on,  
"Your husband says your breath smells like you've been  
"Doing the men at the homeless shelter again."

But when the wife does call,  
They just listen to each other breathe for a while,  
Wondering if each would have been better off  
If she'd never met him, or better yet, listened to him,  
And then hang up.