

# Uncle Bill's Puzzles

by Jim Minick

1.

In his shop, he jig saws  
the outline of Virginia,  
tiny teeth whirring through plywood  
cutting the path of the Potomac,  
Byrd's surveyed straight edge,  
the jagged line of western mountains—  
the traced triangle  
now a silhouette in his hands.

Next the counties fall away, fragments  
of a whole state, ninety chips of places  
foreign to his lumberyard hands.

With tweezers, he holds each county,  
paints it a different color,  
and waits for dryness to print  
Floyd, Fluvanna, Caroline.

At Christmas, he'll gift me  
his newly-moved nephew  
with this map, and ask  
"Where do you live?"

2.

Uncle Bill imagines a room large enough  
to hold the United States.

He dreams this each evening  
in his cramped shop  
where a work light creates an island  
around a quiet man and a roaring saw.

New puzzles of Maryland and West Virginia  
would nestle Virginia and Pennsylvania,  
each new state, a puzzle itself  
of counties, would become a piece  
in this country of growing puzzles.

People would come to work  
their home states,  
to hold rough wooden edges  
of mountain and river and memory

before starting on the next piece.