

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

John Zedolik
Above and Below

A blue thrumble of thunder cracks
my dream's shell in the still three a.m.

but I am a mature robin in little fear
of sundered crust in speckled blue

true to the full-grown heavens arriving
this day after the dark and rain's

sovereign heavy hours of pour and tap,
pour and tap, on the sturdy skylight

that has held up against the dropping
water-slap threatening an incurring

stream to shake off any shards of wanted
sleep that would yield to stress and upright

steps emerging into the early morning,
which masquerades as night, this wool

not for walking up and into, pushing aside
the billows of ink, ejected by phantoctopi

who swim unsensed to those down,
and out for what should be the soft duration

until dawn and beyond, so let us hope
that thrumble only presages seconds

of waking with just a sprinkle of worry
for those in suspense just above the dry ground

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Sustaining Thought

Wild strawberries are rubying small
patches of our yard, like those I ate

in the woods with a little stream water
when pretending I was not suspended

from school that day, meager and not so
sweet but benign, no lethal juice in my guilty

gut nor tainted currents from that now ancient
or extinct rill, the micro-threat far away

as the time, so the consequences relatively mild
like that spring day despite my double foolishness

now, I believe, crushed in years and blooming
experience, fit sustenance for the rest of my time

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At Liberty

Knowing the bay's breeze would blow away
my floppy hat, I bought a brim in the Tenderloin,

wide but anchored by a cord that I could tighten
against my neck, a confinement

for the semi-stiff fabric that orbited my skull
like a ring around Saturn, so far

from these waters and this rock whose Spanish name,
I was wonder, was known to the Birdman

or just another bar among the many from which none
escaped save Frank Morris and his vanished crew?

Whose bones were probably rolling
beneath us since no strings attached had they now

in the half-century-plus since they grew fins
and fish-stroked away into the unforgiving

salt flood to dissolve as we and my lid did my not
on that windy day even with our freedom

to tour the defunct jail shackled in infamy,
and be taken back to safe ground, hat still held tightly

on my head, the cost of coming and going
over an ocean's open arm