

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/2

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In the morning, you'll be gone;

I mean, you'll be here physically-
 (remember matter is neither
created nor destroyed- especially on
work days)-but it won't be the you
 of mischievous pillow talk,
the after-five persona that comes home
with just the right amount of hair still
 bunned and bound, hands just
rough enough to play music if rubbed
together.

 Your morning voice is an instrument
of volatility, a repertoire of silent screams
 quite unlike your nighttime
aloe-soothed elocution. I hear them both
 as I lean in to kiss your cheek,
as you hurry to pack your briefcase,
as we both await the 9-5 kidnapper's
 raps at the door,
bringing you to work
 because we've all been
duped into believing
 freedom is in the ticktock
of a punchclock
 and not in the delayed reaction
to a new day when there's
 still time for two coffees,
nibbles at the neck,
and the poem
 that I composed last night
while watching you ready yourself
 for your cage.

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The story of how we found the giant squid

or Architeuthis (if you prefer
a Greek tongue) is not
as epic as it probably should
have been: there were no writhing
tentacles directed
towards the neckbones
of frightened fishermen,
no screaming beaks, an
intact steel ship (the
mess hall still serving a late,
casual breakfast), alive and beeping.
You would have thought
an encounter with something as Homeric
as the Giant Squid of lore
would have occasioned at least
an oar to its massive
protuberant eye, or, in a
less romantic episode,
a series of small depth charges
designed to greet the cephalopod
with a handshake of modern
Greek fire. You might have thought
it would arise from the glacial
depths like a slippery portend
to affirm its name: *Archi*- Greek
for “chief,” *teuthis* likewise for
squid, the name in a forgotten mythic
epoch of a great Greek general
leading a vaulted phalanx.
Who would have thought the
hardtack sailors yarn would
climax in the hackneyed sea
of the colonizer’s narrative: the

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submersible tethered like
the outstretched tentacle
of civilization, the squid,
once elusive and free, teeming
with hidden song,
now silent and conquered.

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Spring Chill '07

Hardly anyone was ready for it: the late spring chill
that proceeded the Conquistador Spring (Indian
Summer being already taken) like a bitter Awe
to complement the humid Shock of March.

Remember the neon ecosystem graphs from
Elementary school? The plastic laminate, the
smooth curvature of the food chain, who eats
who, a sum of energy transfers and losses, arrows

contorted to point to half smiling fauna: the cricket, then
rabbit, the fox. And on the flora side of things:
the deciduous tree, the black gum, the redbud.
Processes of life and death codified and rationalized.

In south Texas the insects have fallen and
thus there are insectivorous birds that must die for want of
10 million locusts. This we understand. Even the bird watcher
who wakes to find his backyard covered with black sparrows,

floating and listing in his pool like
little ebony sand barges, must substitute
his binoculars for a shovel.

Where on the graph are the illustrations

of the hardy swallows that will
survive this guillotine of cold by flying close
to roadways, eyes zoning the cracked pavement
for pockets of insects kept warm by automobiles?

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Who nourishes whom in this situation? Or better yet,
is the ecosystem graph pasted onto your child's
4th grade classroom wall a colorful obituary
for the South Carolina fallen sumac,

or the Virginia Creeper
that won't make the slow journey this season
up the north wall of a decrepit church
to show the world its beauty?