

A Labyrinth

Michael J. Wilson

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Michael J. Wilson's lyrical, pensive novella *A Labyrinth* reimagines the Greek myths of Daedalus, King Minos, Queen Pasiphaë, and the labyrinth of the minotaur.

The book begins with a direct address regarding the concept of a "story": when a "metaphoric author coaxes the eyes open [of] a metaphoric listener," all possibilities of expression, experience, and meaning are initiated, it says. "The second there is a character to follow," Wilson adds, "that is the moment you are taken by the story down a path beyond your control."

That is, if one is willing to surrender—or is up to the challenge of surrendering. Approaching this poetic novella requires accepting discriminating, elegant, and distinctive prose, structured in a cryptic manner with a twisted chronology. Using invented terms including "roamfeed" "edgepain," and "cleanfresh," the novel eschews commas and delights in fragmentary sentences: "The echo a reverb"; "Which one price thank you." Poems appear throughout as well:

*When it was over [Pasiphaë] collapsed slept erased herself from existence.
The baby was
was it was
was it it
was fire —
a hum inside it — oxygen waiting
to remind itself that it too has a body.*

The myths' retelling unfurls in a layered, deliberate manner. Knowing the individual stories is critical to recognizing and appreciating the novella's nuances regarding Daedalus (the envious and disassembling personal craftsman to Minos and inventor of the labyrinth) and Pasiphaë, the mother of Asterion, the minotaur.

Wilson's work ends with a return to the notion of "story." He writes: "All stories end with eyes open ... with the image of everything everywhere etched over the retina." A text with literary merit, *A Labyrinth* unfolds like a dazzling maze of abstractions,

AMY O'LOUGHLIN (November / December 2023)

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