

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/3

Roy Bentley
Lazarus, Later

I recall a voice. That it carried light like a lit torch.
I heard him through the graveclothes, gossiping softly
with a body, mine, and all that hovers at the periphery.
I imagined neighbors aiding my wife, her hefting jugs
heavier for the weight of grieving. I was sleepwalking

in the vision of two sons fallen sullen upon witnessing
my exit. Didn't my presence debunk doubt about Spirit
and the Almighty lacking a power to pivot between life
and reviled death? In the gospel of repair and renewal
a name was called twice before it registered as mine.

Then I ad-libbed motions I'd characterize as foreign.
Don't get me wrong. I was in a hurry to flee the tomb.
Quick to step from one imperium of flesh into another.
However, I paused a short while to let my eyes adjust.
Not to be honored or genuflect but to let it all sink in.

About then I overheard: *Lazarus, you weren't dead!*
as if there are more verifiable end-of-life departures.
Later, there were fatted-calf offerings in the Temple
and a formula to calculate the overall faithlessness.
Sidestreets reeked of reckoning and then it rained.

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Flying Turns Roller Coaster, Lakeside Park, 1953

The other Flying Turns coaster is in Cleveland. Euclid Beach Park. This fiend is in Lakeside Park, Dayton, Ohio—where my parents meet and marry. Today, Nettie Potter Bentley—my mother, belly bump conspicuous—and a fledgling Roy Bentley climb into a 2-person bobsled. Nettie turns to Roy. Grins as if her portion of uncharacteristic happiness is over the next wood hill and she is here to claim it. She has knotted back Ava Gardner shoulder-length hair as if fun starts with what she does to prepare.

Neither cares that the old coaster (built in the 30s) will be closed down for repairs come September. Never to reopen. They are thrilled to be thrown around between an operator's cigarette breaks. If they knew who John Norman Bartlett was, that the classic Flying Turns model was his creation, they might thank him. If the shape the world assumes hereafter is anything like forms taken till now—hear the chain noises as the car starts its ascent? There is music

older than the Flying Turns roller coaster. Dayton radio is playing the hits from 1911. Irving Berlin. "Alexander's Ragtime Band." Clarinet notes glide alongside cars where riders cry out and their yelps of joy say loudly that there ought to be rules for and against this sort of thing. Today there isn't, and so they exit the car shaken, stars in the movie of how much of a life is beyond control.

The Leap Thought Makes at the Synaptic Bundles

Who would believe in love if he thought a woman outfitted only in black fishnet stockings comes down to cerebral blaze? According to the latest research, the act of just being seated and crossing one's legs transforms into a chemical missive. Message translates into neurochemical meme negotiating limited-access highways and sexual stirrings detonating in a neuro-equivalent of the Six-Day War: erotic fire.

Astonishment is the funeral-home fan resting on her lap, a red-lacquered mechanism tapped open in a deft motion acknowledging you surveilling her in this room of sunlight. She's co-authored something of a ruckus in the forebrain: one moment, a dull-winged bird of hands; and the next, somewhere between blood-red and sunset and a story of a ladder-back chair the hour its occupant is seated.