

3/30 A difference then between now and the Vietnam war period – or what the Vietnamese call The American War. Many of us were not so much protesting a war as intending the carnage to be stopped. Much as our state, for all the bombs it dropped, for all the young folks it shoveled into the superheated jungle, for all the rhetoric of victory, never really intended to win. Beneath all that, the fundamental aim was to destroy. That unspoken, perhaps unconscious quality has characterized every war the U.S. has fought in your memory. No matter how overwhelming our forces, the folks on the other side know, as if by intuition, what the true game is. Once our destructive energies play out, we'll turn them against some other object we've conjured up. Whereas the Vietnamese intended, whatever their internal contradictions, to have their land for themselves.

That's right off the bat an unequal contest. Asymmetrical. But yes, as you recall your feelings at the time, the war was always over, even before Tet – there was no question about it. And in fact the war never started – not because it lacked an official declaration, but because no collective intent had authorized it. We could never have won, no matter what the Vietnamese did or did not do, because on a deep level we hadn't engaged. So the perception is that we lost. But the truth is that the trope about winning "hearts and minds" referred not to those of the South Vietnamese peasantry but to our own motive organs. Our visceral power never followed all those boots we left decaying in other people's land.

Princeton. On the sidewalk, cast shadows of the duplex parking meters appear as silhouetted ranks of Mickey Mouse heads.

Walking round this glorious Hogwarts with Cousin Jane, you thought of a

picture of your great or great-great grandmother, black dressed, bent and wiry, standing in front of a mostly-thatched house, apparently her home. The photo has caught a tiger cat – ancient descendant of Vovo’s – prowling along a section of shingled roof, less steeply pitched and covering a wooden addition to the main house.

Through the Dartonian grapevine has come the notion that this house was located in Hinchin, England. But Cousin Jane does not do web. So home again, you Google Earth-search and discover that, in all likelihood, this last official holding of your Albionese progenitors lay in what’s now a housing estate embraced by Nottingham’s sprawl, nearby two gas storage tanks and within spitting distance of the grove of trees – once densely forested – that the map calls Sherwood Rise.

Back to the woods, sisters and brothers. With Pooh. And Piglet. Little John too. And Friar Tuck.

Funny how this stuff works. Since Mark S. introduced you to the poem, you’ve lived at least part time in Tennyson’s “Locksley Hall.” And isn’t it a stitch that one version of the Robin Hood tale gives his origin as the earl of Locksley Hall, who returned from the crusades to find his lands expropriated by the avaricious Sheriff?

...What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?

Every door is barr’d with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is throng’d with suitors, all the markets overflow.

I have but an angry fancy; what is that which I should do?...

“If we look closely at our patients, we would probably all agree that each of us

has his or her own sense of existence but that, by virtue of the persistent pathology of their defenses, they live by disowning the self." Says Christopher Bollas on page 63 of his *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*.

Are dreams not also an indication, a recurrent body of evidence that even if we remain the subject, is our *wish* script not a *gift* script. The dream – our dream – possesses an authority in which we recognize the words, but the grammar remains Other, unknown.

Marx 'n' Freud, separated at birth. According to Bollas, Freud saw dream formation as a kind of industrial enterprise, likening dream thoughts to the role of entrepreneur and the wish the dream evokes to Capital.

Can a gap in narrative function not as evidence of things repressed but as a *metaxu* – that which connects and separates? Are "gaps" a form of negative space that serve to lend a mode of representation its peculiar, specific character? Is grammar itself discontinuous in the interest of an underlying coherence?

4/1 Not. March fooled you. It's got thirty-one days, not thirty, so when you sounded the rhyme, you found you hadn't arrived yet. But the true fool need not wait for his designated moment. Any time will do.

4/1 *And the eyes in his head,
See the world turning 'round...*

4/2 New Century Financial, soi dissant “a new shade of blue chip” files for bankruptcy. Two months ago they traded at \$32. Now... mind the gap.

Holocaust denial is bad. Reality denial worse.

Tierra del fuggedaboutit.

Daughter, if you look at the big wheel, why it hardly moves – in one lifetime, or ten. But the medium wheels you can see turning slowly, and the little ones, wow how they spin.

4/13 Comes the news of the planned deployment in Iraq next September of the Osprey, aka V-22, a hybrid chopper-airplane built to ferry troops and developed as the signature aircraft of the Marine Corps. One does not need to be a Jane to see right away that this monstrous chimera must rank among the worst disasters of military engineering in history.

In testing, several Ospreys crashed as a result of getting caught in their own turbulence, or when plagued by jammed hydraulic lines or buggy software. Though fast in high-altitude flight, the Osprey is hard to maneuver, particularly near the ground, so no quick in and out for the crew or for the soldiers jammed into the unpressurized fuselage like sardines. Less raptor than carrion – the Osprey’s an immense sitting duck, whose mechanical systems are especially vulnerable in desert environments.

Nonetheless, the Pentagon’s straw-spinners have billed the Osprey as a

“Wonder Weapon” and put five hundred of them on order from Boeing-Bell at \$80 million a pop. Over all, the Osprey project commands an on-the-books budget of \$55 billion to date.

That such an incommensurable thing as the Osprey was permitted to come into physical existence offers evidence of a malady far worse than hubris: the evermore vast and awful regression into wish-fulfillment, collusive across all strata, of a whole society – billions of souls trapped in the *Narrenschiiff* of late-modernity – brought to the point where it cannot evolve, but only take refuge in grandiose fantasies of omnipotent control. Via destruction.

To anyone living outside the Osprey’s particular delusionary bubble, the thing billed as an aircraft is first and foremost a suicide machine. Yet, says Col. Matthew Mulhern, its chief booster at the Pentagon, marines cannot wait to get on board. “Every marine who sees one, when they do, a light bulb comes on. They say, ‘my God.’”

Part of what makes the whole business so astonishing – beyond the obvious scale of the folly – is the massive amount of energy and resources being directly marshaled toward the destruction of one’s own troops. It’s creepily reminiscent of the situation after the Allied invasion of France in ‘44, when the American brass deployed thousands of lightly-armored tanks manned by hapless crews against well-defended Panzer divisions, thereby offering up their own men for slaughter at a far higher rate than the Nazis could have accomplished on their own. Essentially, these people were packaged for death as surely as those others heading Treblinka-ward by rail. Such was – and is – the logic, however bizarre and buried beneath awareness, of using the enemy’s tactical advantages to destroy, in effect, one’s own children.

And this is what your nose tells you is happening. Infected with some kind of weird virus – the chief symptom being that one either sets up the conditions for one’s destruction, or else destroys oneself to avoid ceding the enemy that power – the Bushies are bent on the annihilation of the society they purport to defend – a nihilistic program in which the military colludes by making the prospect of “winning” impossible even within their own very limited terms.

Underneath and around this distorted logic, a terrible human tragedy plays out. Young people who might otherwise be building shelters or digging wells, or contributing their life’s energy to some generative exercise, will now cram themselves into Ospreys, and either zoom great distances into the hinterland to visit death on people who’ve done them no wrong, or else crash somewhere along the line, either from hostile fire or malfunction. Or both. But in the asymmetry of a war in which the technical advantage is all on one side, it almost seems as if, in some weird way, the high-altitude nutters who imagine weapons like the Osprey are desperately trying to bring themselves, and the rest of us, down to earth.



Michael Temchine for The New York Times

You didn't hear of it until now, but last week, on 4/7, a young Kurdistan woman, Du'a Khalel Asward, age 17, was stoned to death by a crowd of men in an act of public ritual murder termed an "honor killing." Several witness-participants, jostling to get closer to the action, recorded the event on their cellphones. After bluetoothing across the region for a couple of days, video clips of the woman's torture and eventual death popped up on YouTube. As news of the stoning spread, Ms. Asward's father insisted that, contrary to the fatal accusations, his daughter's hymen remained intact.

4/16 Torrential rains yesterday and this morning the early bird, a robin, bops across the path in front of your building and snags himself a worm. Glory be. Air's heavy but lovely. Clean.

Up in the morning little monkey and swing through the trees: hand, foot, and tail. Do you know that somewhere, men are throwing stones? Is that why you keep moving so?

4/17 Cho Seung-Hui, though not an employee of the USPS, nonetheless goes postal at Virginia Tech. Kills 33, self included, and wounds 25. And what does "Ismail Ax" mean, tattooed on the arm of his trigger finger? The lad was born in South Korea, but something about this crime, as with the Beltway Snipers, makes you flash on *Manchurian Candidate*. Like an alarm set for a particular time, and then, it goes off, exactly like it's supposed to.

4/18 A young minke whale, about fifteen feet long, wandered into the harbor and was spotted yesterday in the vicinity of Gowanus bay.

4/19 Walking along 21st Street, your shoe feels loose, so you put your foot up on a standpipe and retie the lace. When you're done, you notice letters cast into the metal and read that the object you've used is a Powhatan Standpipe, manufactured *kan ya makan* in Ranson, West VA.

WE DENOUNCE the lethargy of the putrefied atmosphere of the circles and egos having to do with art. Quoth S. Dalí in his *Manifest Groc* some seventy years gone.

Kitab al bulhan, *Book of Wonderment*, published in Baghdad in the late 14th C. Gouache, gold ink on paper. An incredible, rich miscellany.

Il volo del Turco, engraving on paper, 1816, after a sixteenth-century original in the Museo Civico Correr, Venice. Beginning in the mid-fifteen hundreds, Turkish acrobats performed a spectacle known as "the flight of the Turk," on a tightrope set up between a float over the canal and the upper stories of the San Marco campanile. This, as part of the Lenten carnival celebrations.

The Great Wall of Baghdad, its nocturnal construction by the U.S. military, has been "abandoned," according to Agence France Presse, "amidst violence."

The *Times*, for its part says that Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, the Iraqi PM has ordered a halt to the building of the partition between predominantly Sunni and Shia enclaves. Lt. Col. Christopher Garver, however, says the Americans will remain “in dialogue” with the Iraqi government about the project’s continuation.

In the April 19th issue of *Stars & Stripes*, Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell, who serves as Charlie McCarthy for Coalition forces, said that he was unaware of efforts to build a wall. “We have no intention,” he said, turning his head and moving his lower jaw in a most life-like manner, “to build gated communities in Baghdad.”

Was the General being disingenuous, or had troops further down the chain of command simply taken security matters into their own hands?

Local wags have nicknamed the Gowanus whale Sludgie. He seems not to know where he is.

4/20 “It suddenly began heavy splashing, hit the dock and then just went quiet,” said a marine biologist who had been observing the young minke whale when he beached himself on the Hess Oil depot pier along the Gowanus Canal. The carcass, two tons or more, will be taken by boat to a submersible dock in Jersey for a necropsy. But what more, really, will a postmortem tell that isn’t already known?

4/23 Various techniques for unloading history when it becomes too heavy to haul.

In Ireland, so Tom Carney says, the British flag was, and may still in some quarters, be called “the butcher’s apron.”

4/24 If, as Christopher Bollas posits, “the narcissist’s image of the self is ultimately a defense against facing the reality of the self,” then the great gift of the narcissist is that his presence permits us – for as long as we remain within his orbit – to suspend our their own struggles with the reality of ourselves.

Toyota’s sales now top G.M.’s. Soon, in all likelihood, Wolfowitz will be forced from leadership at the World Bank. There ought to be a celebration of sorts, a holiday instituted to commemorate in every succeeding year, the point – as precisely as such a thing is calculable – that the rest of the world gave American hegemony its pink slip.

4/25 The blue wind of fear through the crack in the subway doors.

Yet Quixote said, and very possibly believed: *wherever there is music, there can be no evil.*