

2/18 “Strictly realistic stories,” writes Bettelheim, “run counter to the child’s inner experiences; he will listen to them and maybe get something out of them, but he cannot extract much personal meaning from them that transcends obvious content. These stories inform without enriching, as is unfortunately true of much learning in school. Factual knowledge profits the total personality only when it is turned into ‘personal knowledge.’” Bettelheim goes on to cite Michael Polany’s observation that “The act of knowing includes an appraisal, a personal coefficient, which shapes all factual knowledge.”

A few pages on, elaborating ways in which the child’s process of constructing personal knowledge may be unwittingly derailed by presumptively well-meaning adult interventions, Bettelheim marshals JR Tolkien to the cause:

“‘However good in themselves, illustrations do little good to fairy stories... If a story says, ‘He climbed a hill and saw a river in the valley below,’ the illustrator may catch, or nearly catch, his own vision of such a scene, but every hearer of the words will have his own picture, and it will be made out of all the hills and rivers and dales he has ever seen, but especially out of The Hill, The River, The Valley which were for him the first embodiment of the word.’

“This is why a fairy tale loses much of its personal meaning when its figures and events are given substance not by the child’s imagination, but by that of an illustrator. The unique details derived from his own particular life, with which a hearer’s mind depicts a story he is told or read, make the story much more of a personal experience. Adults and children alike often prefer the easy way of having somebody else do the hard task of imagining the scene of the story. But if we let an illustrator

determine our imagination, it becomes less our own, and the story loses much of its personal significance.

Asking children, for example, what a monster they have heard about in a story looks like, elicits the widest variations of embodiment: huge human-like figures, animal-like ones, others which commingle certain human with some animal-like features, etc. – and each of these details has great meaning to the person who in his mind's eye created this particular pictorial realization. On the other hand, seeing the monster as painted by the artist in a particular way, conforming to *his* imagination, which is so much more complete as compared to our own vague and shifting image, robs us of this meaning. The idea of the monster may then leave us entirely cold, having nothing of importance to tell us, or may scare us without evoking any deeper meaning beyond anxiety."

Out of the wind and gray, an enchanted little spring. Temperatures in the 60's.
Zephyr de do dah...

In olden times when wishing still helped, there lived a king whose daughters were all beautiful, but the youngest was so beautiful that the sun itself, which had seen so much, was astonished whenever it shone on her face...

So begins "The Frog King," as told by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm.

Early this morning, the death of Alain Robbe-Grillet in Caen. At dawn, more or less the same time as R-G breathed his last, French police numbering in the thousands staged Battle-of-Algiers-like raids on several *cités* north of Paris, including

Villiers-le-Bel – all of them hotspots in the riots of November last. Armed and black-hooded, the cops kicked down doors and dragged away scores of young men suspected of having participated in the unrest.

It's a transparent bid by Sarko to consolidate his crypto and not-so-crypto fascist base in the runup to next month's municipal elections. But it also diverts attention from other maneuvers, not least Kauchemar's mad-ass brinksmanship with Iran, and the unfolding fiscal drama of which the SocGén scandal served as only a prelude.

Like a diurnal race of bats, documents fly from folders on your laptop, some of which you haven't opened up in years. Some of these docs are fragments that felt significant in some way at the time of your first encounter, so you collected them toward a future moment. Which is now. They include an Alain R-G excerpt, from his *For a New Novel*, 1963:

“Before the work of art, there is nothing – no certainty, no thesis, no message. To believe that the novelist ‘has something to say’ and that he then looks for a way to say it represents the gravest of misconceptions. For it is precisely this ‘way,’ this manner of speaking, which constitutes his enterprise as a writer, an enterprise more obscure than any other, and which will later be the uncertain content of his book. Ultimately it is perhaps this uncertain content of an obscure enterprise of form which will best serve the cause of freedom. But who knows how long that will take?”

Cutting and pasting this when suddenly the sky goes dark and you jump up a to see a vast gray cloud engulfing Chelsea. When you look south, through a gap in the buildings, you can see Staten Island and the Bay, and the sky above them cast in a weird

sunset-orange glow. How'd it get so late? Check the clock. For Christ's sake it's only 2:34. Grab the camera, open the window to snap a pic, but you've got to move back into the room to get the shot because now comes a hard rain slanting in sharp from the south west. *Kshk* sounds the shutter. Slam the window so your books on the shelf below the sill don't get wet. Listen to the drops hammer against the glass and thwack on the plastic sill. The gods aren't angry, they're mad.

Robbe-G. encore:

...Having invoked the plan to construct soon, in its place, something higher and more modern, these four men with severe faces, dressed in dark gray sweatshirts, are skillfully and diligently planting all through the building their Bickford fuses and explosive charges, with a view to an explosion which cannot be long in coming now. Cut.

The bats have dispersed to various quarters of the apartment and back into the computer. Only one last one remains fluttering on the screen, R-G again, from *In the Labyrinth*, '59:

"I am alone here now, under cover. Outside it is raining, outside you walk through the rain with your head down, shielding your eyes with one hand while you stare ahead nevertheless, a few yards ahead, at a few yards of wet asphalt; outside it is cold, the wind blows between the bare black branches; the wind blows through the leaves, rocking whole boughs, rocking them, rocking, their shadows swaying across the white roughcast walls. Outside the sun is shining, there is no tree, no bush to cast a shadow, and you walk under the sun shielding your eyes with one hand while you

stare ahead, only a few yards in front of you, at a few yards of dusty asphalt where the wind makes patterns of parallel lines, forks, and spirals.”



One glass of Spanish wine with dinner – garnacha grapes from el Campo de Borja – and into your head pops a phrase popular in the ‘60s: *infra dig*, beneath one’s dignity. What ancient harvest did that come from and how long bottled up? Infra a penny, infra a pound, it’s shove that makes the world go round.

American markets on vacation for Presidents' Day, but starting first thing in the morning, them Wall Street banks are going to get write down to business.

Web-buzz has it that the Navy's going to take first crack at whacking US 193 on Wednesday after the Atlantis lands. They can't do it earlier because flying bits of satellite could prove most un-shuttle. The rumor is based on an air traffic advisory warning pilots to avoid flying near Maui between 4:30 and 7 p.m., around the same time as the lunar eclipse is in full swing. If they actually nail the thing, folks along a fair stretch of the Pacific coast may see, in addition the full moon – tinted reddish, or possibly turquoise in the earth's shadow – some brief, bright flashes of re-entering debris.

2/19 *Just give me a moment, the half-man whinnied, to centaur myself.*

All the tired wooden horses.

Caballos de palo. Speak softly. El Commandante's dismounted.

Silence is argument carried on by other means.

Outside the café, a big white truck stops at the light. Huge green letters:
NOBLE ELEVATOR CO. Noble going up. Noble on the way down. Graces, not airs.

According to Ibn Hazm, sage of Cordoba, *the man of nobility is like pure gold, sometimes under the hammer's blow, and sometimes in the crown of a king.*

FIDO: Fuck it, drive on.

AO: area of operations. Or alternatively: acronym overload.

She sells sea shells in the Seychelles.

Wind moving the upper branches of that big gingko tree across Ninth. Or is the trunk's twisting that causes the branches to sweep the air to and fro.

Circle walk so that you need not fear gods or devils.

Credit Suisse schussed another \$2.8 billion down the slippery slope. Qatar, where the sand is white as snow, buys itself a goodly chunk of Helvetican banking at fire, no, going-out-of-business-sale prices. And petróleo, as the *Messenger* puts it, "vaulted through a psychological barrier," to close at \$100.01 on the NY Merc. Blame heaped upon Chávez 'cause he threatened to cut off exports to the gringos over a deal he don't like with ExxonMobil. But beyond Hugo's goading and the blood simple greed of oil companies and speculators, the proximal cause, more likely, was the loud, but fortunately not fatal, kaboom Monday morning at a refinery in Big Spring Texas. Buy, buy, buy!

And leap. Leap that psychological barrier *over men and horses hoops and garters – lastly through a hoghead of real fire!*

...Having been some days in preparation, a splendid time is guaranteed for all!

But what of the fire in the Deutsche Bank tower and no standpipe? OSHA slaps Bovis Lend Lease and John Galt on the collective wrist for a bit less than half a mil for twenty-five separate “willful and serious” violations in deconstructing the hulk. Who knows if John Galt even exists – except as a heroic type in Ayn Rand’s fiction and a former maildrop in the Bronx? But Bovis, being a multi-billion dollar global bigfish, splutters with indignation and vows to appeal.

What sort of consequences, legal or otherwise, ought to devolve upon the heads of the white-collar’d mafiosi that comprise the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and who hired Bovis and Galt in the first place? And what of the FDNY commanders who sent in scores of firefighters willy-nilly into a blaze in which no lives were immediately threatened with the result that two of them died? How does one calculate a just and mete reward for these crimes?

As if previewing the Aegis action to come, what was most likely an asteroid broke up most spectacularly in the pre-dawn skies over Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. Joggers and other early rising folk saw the fireball streaking west to east. Did any meteorites bits make it through? The hunt is on: for holes in the rooves of barns, and objects metallic, half-cratered in the wheat fields.

2/20 Is today Aegis day? Very likely they'll be popping away at US 193 from the USS Lake Erie, stationed off Hawaii – which begs the linguistic paradox of a Lake sailing upon an Ocean.

But what if there's another, perhaps more puissant Aegis out there – another satellite with its beam already locked upon its errant brother? Wouldn't this be a lovely and efficacious way to test and demonstrate such awesome weaponry? A real two-fer: letting the other players know the game and upping the stakes – while offering to the great unwashed a spectacle of false causality. A little touch of Dealy in the night. Bang! Eyes turn to the sound source, and a heartbeat later we see a falling object. It's a very powerful and enduring circuitry that gets encoded in such an instant: that image of what we imagine we saw. However much it never was.

O God, our help in Aegis past...

The Death of Denial. The proofs are in. But don't hold your breath.

Los Marcianos llegaron ya

Y llegaron bailando cha-cha-cha...

Such was the chorus of a big '50s pop hit in Latin America, at the height of the near-global fascination con las alienigenas, la gente del espacio sideral.

The Martians have already arrived

And they arrived dancing the cha-cha-cha...

I get no kick from McCain...

If a noia meet a noia comin' through the rye...

Bonneville: a car named after a dam, named for a river, named for a town on its banks or another town somewhere which in some concrete or wished-for way resembles it...

On the subway a poster advertising a TV series concerning a psychotherapist and his practice: IN TREATMENT. The actor Gabriel Byrne leans forward, his face a shadowed masque of concern, almost anguish, yet his eyes seem strangely dead. The protagonist clasps his hands, but the gesture seems less one of formalized prayer than supplication. "He's listening," runs the tagline. "One doctor. Five sessions. Five nights a week. HBO."

Look again. The therapist seems deeply troubled. Troubled by your trouble, assuming you, the viewer are his patient? If so, countertransference to the max. Listening he may be. But it looks more as if he's attending to a voice within himself that admits no other sound. Can such a one help us? How can he reach us when he's so caught up in wringing his own hands?

The bronze bull looks larger today – truly humongous. He's still collapsing forward on that right foreleg, but damned if he ain't grinning ear to ear, attended as he is by a healthy throng of admirers.

Jai guru deva om.

World beyond therapy.

And right on schedule, around 8:45, the moon begins to fade into the earth's shadow. But it doesn't disappear, not really. Through your binoculars you can make out the near full disk, the darkened section tinged with red, particularly at the circumference.

Breaking news: Navy says its first shot hit USA 193, despite earlier caveats about a too-rough sea.

Tired as a dog. Into bed before midnight. Goodnight moon.



The same moon as you saw as seen and recorded by Ilia Teimouri. The city's Teheran.

2/21 More or less at the same in the same moment that the moon basked in deep red earthshade and the Aegis missile zeroed in on what's now being described as a "school bus-sized" satellite, the *Messenger* attempted an editorial shutdown of candidate McCain. He had an affair, they strongly imply, with a telecom lobbyist, a certain Vicki Iseman, who looks to be a right handsome woman thirty-one years his junior. As a result of their relationship, the paper alleges, old Mac intervened improperly on the lobbyist's behalf, leaning in a Senatorial way on the FCC to aid and assist certain of her clients in matters of deregulation. McCain denies both the romance and the legislative improprieties. But what is not a matter of dispute is that the lobbyist's clients have, over the last few years, contributed multi-thousands of dollars to his various campaigns.

The DOD pinky-swears they exploded USA 193's menacing fuel tank and that its toxic cargo is a fearful thing no more. Mission, as on dit, accompli. Given the low altitude of the satellite – 130 miles above the earth, when it was, supuestamente, disarticulated – bits of it, "no larger than a football" should be descending through the atmosphere tootie sweetie. Don't take off those K-pots, even for an instant.

Say no more about imagery

You're starting to confuse...



Heesoon Yim/Associated Press (NYT)

We swear on the blood of 290 Iranians, uh, I mean a stack of bibles, uh, I mean we're pretty much 99.9% sure we scored a direct hit on that, uh, malfunctioning school bus, uh, satellite. If you look right here, you can, uh, see a chunk of its fuel tank...