

3/4 A narrative with abandonment at its heart.

Yet *the theme*, as the estimable Carman Moore once composed, *is freedom*.

And I know you won't believe me

Though it is the truth to tell

That the living it is hard, oh,

But it suits me well.

Caucus and primary day. Farce repeating as farce. A Sherman tank in a pants suit confronts a self-evangelist on Valium. Robbery with and without violins.

For the second straight day, the Dow begins to centrifuge downward into the abyss when, zip! it spins out again to circle the rim and find a toehold at -45.10. The boys in the Fed basement sure know their valves and pressure gauges.

While Mams Naturaleza lets loose with the waterworks and brother wind doth blow: vast stormplane from the Mississippi Valley all the way east. Crick's a risin'.

3/5 Whatever swirls around you, never lose sight of the one true dust.

Beyond this dawning's cloud cover: Mercury, Venus, and a crescent moon gathered in close order. And above them, the bright eye of Jupiter.

Why we write? Well, as best as *you* can reckon it, it's because you're trying to create, through the narrative process, a rapprochement between inner and outer realities which were radically breached when you were young and have remained at some distance ever since.

That is why, no matter how true to your sense impressions your narrative hews, nor how rigorously presented your analysis of real world events, what you write is always, essentially, fairy tale. Novel, essay, poem, fable: all constitute ventures into the impossible world of what your own experience *is*. Each writing opens up a receiving chambers for incommensurable material, created just as much for the self of the writer as for the resonance it may find in the heartmind of the reader.

Jack the Giant Killer. Says Chesterton in discussing fairy tales: *Giants should be killed because they are gigantic*. And further, that "the great lesson of 'Beauty and the Beast,' is that a thing must be loved *before* it is lovable.

Once upon a time, when wishing still helped, into the bodymind of the child came a new knowledge for which the child was unprepared. Which is to say that no receptacle had, as yet, opened up of its own accord to receive it. But since the new knowledge could not simply pass back out the way it came in, it sought for a place to root itself, and, finding none, implanted itself by force. Now the child, even as she or he grew up, at times denied this knowledge, and at others accepted it after a fashion, but cast differing lights upon it in an attempt to make it blend in. But even when fully grown, the childadult could never expel this knowledge. So over time, the organism learned to adapt itself to the invasion and its consequences as best it could. And the

child lived, as happily as possible, for his or her allotted time.

But it should be said, albeit as a post-script, that a such a piece of knowledge remains distinct from other forms of knowledge the child has comes into possession of. It never fits quite right, it chafes. Nor can the childadult really make sense of it. It defies being readily useful, fully assimilated, or, put another way, it cannot be seamlessly woven it into the overarching narrative of the child's other experiences. It distorts, to a greater or lesser degree, the whole warp and weft of the cloth. The commonness of such occurrences, and our ability to see how a similar situation has affected others does little, if anything, to help us integrate this knowledge, if it has been our lot to receive it. Still, paradoxically, the knowledge that once overwhelmed the child's resistance, in certain times of crisis, may help the adult survive.

You write this, then play the message blinking on the machine, whose content you already know. Your caller ID displayed the number and the name of the phone from which the call was made, but it couldn't have been Frank himself, because, even under the best circumstances, he couldn't have got out of the ICU so quickly given the shape he's been in.

And yes, it is what it is: R.S. calling from Frank's house to tell you that himself died last night. Which, your bones and fibers already knew because – inexplicably, at the time – you'd spent the evening in a state of frustration so total and full-on you couldn't sit still for more than a moment. Frank, it seems, wanted off the planet, but his body wouldn't go. Until it did. Around midnight, when fatigue overtook you and you hit the hay. Another Gemini, another New York-born half-Jew. Another person of the

book by avocation too. First son of several. Three pounds and change at birth, swaddled and put behind the stove with a liquored sop in his mouth – and little expectation. Mais on ne sait jamais. That was May 23th, if your counting's right, in the year the Great War began.

“My last official student,” was how Frank referred to you when making introductions. Which was partly true. There had been three other participants in the seminar you took with him back in, Lord knows? '89. But you'd become friendly then friends with both Frank and his wife and zealous protector Gloria. To your amazement, he lasted a good ten years past her death, though some of that felt, to you at any rate, like marking time.

Many conversations under the bridge. He's one of the three “fathers” of *Divided We Stand*, to whom the book is dedicated. In recent years, your talks turned circular pro forma, though the bond still held. Still, whatever significant material you had to exchange had already passed between. But if Frank had one dime to drop on you he did it seven years back – and you've carried the moment with you ever since. And set it down on paper too, in *Notes of a New York Son*:

May 9 – Horatio Street – Midmorning

Frank's currant scones improve with every batch you taste, and they were terrific to begin with. He asks what you're working on now, and you tell it as best you can, though really you've no idea what it is.

A skeptical look from the rocking chair. "A diary," he says, "is a form of primitive self-analysis: a wailing wall. A journal is a point of observation."

Gwen hasn't seen Frank since about a year ago when she went by with you and ended up fixing his computer. Of late her world's been focused almost totally on her peers and their joint reception of this strange new world. So how will she deal with his death? Hard to say. As far as you know, your father is still alive, but he's never seen nor communicated with her. Thus it was Frank who, from the time she was born, assumed, at least to some degree, the role of paternal grandfather.

In advocating for the developmental importance of fairy tales, Bettelheim states that:

If a child is told only stories "true to reality" (which means false to important parts of his inner reality), then he may conclude that much of his inner reality is unacceptable to his parents. Many a child thus estranges himself from his inner life, and this depletes him. As a consequence he may later as a adolescent no longer under the emotional sway of his parents, come to hate the rational world and escape entirely into a fantasy world, as if to make up for what was lost in childhood. At an older age, on occasion this could imply a severe break with reality, with all the dangerous consequences for the individual and society. Or, less seriously, the person may continue this encapsulation of his inner self all through his life and never feel fully satisfied in the world because, alienated from the

unconscious processes, he cannot use them to enrich his life in reality. Life is then neither “a pleasure” nor “a kind of eccentric privilege.” With such separation, whatever happens in reality fails to offer appropriate satisfaction of unconscious needs. The result is that the person always feels life to be incomplete.

When a child is not overwhelmed by his internal mental processes and he is well taken care of in all important respects, then he is able to manage life in his age-appropriate manner. During such times he can solve the problems that arise....

[But] once the child’s inner pressures take over – which happens frequently – the only way he can hope to get some hold over these is to externalize them. But the problem is how to do so without letting the externalizations get the better of him. Sorting out the various facets of his outer experience is a very hard job for a child; and unless he gets help, it becomes impossible, once the outer experiences get muddled up with his inner experiences. On his own, the child is not yet able to order and make sense of his internal processes. Fairy tales offer figures into which the child can externalize what goes on in his mind, in controllable ways. Fairy tales show the child how he can embody his destructive wishes in one figure, gain desired satisfaction from another, identify with a third, have ideal attachments with a fourth, and so on, as his needs of the moment require.

When all the child’s wishful thinking gets embodied in a good fairy; all his destructive wishes in an evil witch; all his fears in a voracious wolf; all the demands of his conscience in a wise man encountered on an adventure;

all his jealous anger in some animal that pecks out the eyes of his archrivals – then the child can finally begin to sort out his contradictory tendencies. Once this starts, the child will be less and less engulfed in unimaginable chaos.

Francis Gerrard Jennings was his full name. Last of the great New York Jewish Irishmen.

Among the books of his you borrowed that no longer need returning: Frank Butler's *Erewhon*, an undated edition published in New York around 1910, *Collected Poems* of Philip Larkin, *Report From Iron Mountain: On the Possibility and Desirability of Peace*, the 1967 first edition. The latter purports to be a leaked document assembled by a governmental think tank, The Special Study Group, and its dust jacket contains this extract from the editor's introduction: "The unwillingness of [The Special Study Group] to publicize their findings [is] readily understandable... They conclude [that] lasting peace, while not theoretically impossible, is probably unattainable; even if it could be achieved it would almost certainly not be in the best interests of a stable society to achieve it..."

Still, you realize that, au fond, you can't be that much of a bibliomane since you've really no lust to pillage Frank's library, all four floors of it, many a first edition and chockablock with goodies like those remarkable, erudite, utterly accessible and elegantly-bound Bollingen books of the fifties. Volume for volume, its an extraordinary collection. And in it, nearly every published piece of your work too. In your perfect world, Frank's house would be left just as it is. And

folks could come in and wander through it. They'd borrow things, books included, and return them. There's something about that place that seems so perfect an embodiment of his spirit and Gloria's that it ought to be treated as a kind of living shrine, not just to them, but to their fast-vanishing tribe: urban, world-citizen intellectuals with genuine working class roots. The townhouse they lived in for so many years could serve as a capsule artifact of the culture within a culture that they helped make, and the values they, and a goodly number of their generation, held dear.

Incredible too how far in the past their moment seems.

And Katie, what was he to her? Frank knew her from before she went to law school, and afterward nicknamed her "our Portia."

I'll be in your neck of the woods tomorrow. You said that to a friend this afternoon. *Neck of the woods.* What in heavens does it mean?

When you open the Larkin book at random, it's page 93 you find yourself looking at first, and a poem from 1954, just as you did when you borrowed it ten years ago.

Water

If I were called in

To construct a religion

I should make use of water.

Going to church

Would entail a fording

To dry, different clothes;

My liturgy would employ

Images of sousing,

A furious devout drench,

And I should raise in the east

A glass of water

Where any-angled light

Would congregate endlessly.

Why does the book seem inclined to open there? The spine looks perfectly sound. No overt creases. Neither is p. 93 right in the middle of a signature, nor between two of them. Yet still it seems to want to fall that way.

OK boys and girls, get ready to read these words the fast way – get ready!

Called. Wa-ter. Go-ing.

Church. For-ding. Clothes.

Employ. De-vout. Drench.

That's right – get ready –

Glass. An-gle. Light. End-less.

3/6



A worker donned a hazardous-materials suit to inspect the damage to the Armed Forces Career Center in Times Square. (Photo: Robert Caplin for The New York Times)

Curiouser and curiouser. Not long before dawn, mas ó menos 4 a.m., person or persons unknown exploded a small bomb – described by police using Iraq-speak as an “improvised explosive device” – in front of the military recruiting station in Times Square, blowing out the plate glass window covering a larger-than-life-sized Uncle Sam à la Ernest Flagg who points and declares: “I WANT YOU.”

About which incident, the *Messenger* offers:

“‘I just heard a boom,’ said Deon Halliday, 43, a maintenance-security worker at Silverstein Properties at 570 Seventh Avenue who was standing on the avenue, examining the scene, at 6 a.m. ‘I thought it was a garbage truck. It happened around 4 o’clock. I stayed in the building because I didn’t know what it was. I had to secure the

building.’ He added, ‘I came out later and I was looking at the street and no cars are coming by. I saw all the helicopters.’”

Then come a couple of really strange paragraphs:

“As the sun came up, at least three helicopters flew overhead, but it was not clear whether the helicopters were operated by the police.

“Mohammed Hossain, 39, whose coffee cart, is at the corner of Seventh Avenue and 44th Street, said he heard the explosion before 4 a.m. ‘I heard a loud noise and I turned around and saw smoke,’ he said. ‘And then the cops were everywhere, within minutes.’ Mr. Hossain, who has operated the cart for 15 years, said police asked him to close up until about 7:15.”

Caught on a surveillance tape, supuestamente, a hooded bloke riding a bicycle away from the scene. Predictably, a vast task “anti-terrorist” task force has been deployed to investigate.

Now a military recruitment center has stood, in one form or another, in that peculiar triangular island since just after WWII and, as may be imagined, the little building served as a lightning rod for demonstrations in the Vietnam War era. Back then, it was known as “The Booth” and its oddly-proportioned trapezoidal walls housed four recruitment desks, one for each branch of the armed services. And no bathroom. One can imagine a recruiter, say a Marine, in full dress uniform and liberally bedecked in fruit salad and scrambled eggs, dodging traffic to take a leak at Howard Johnsons across Seventh Avenue only to be told the restroom was for customers only.

Well, the strangest thing is that by coincidence-cum-synchronicity you know the guys who redesigned the sleek and groovy new U.S. Armed Forces Career Center that, in 1999, replaced The Booth. Steve and Adam were semi-pals of yours from the

days when Le Grainne was Le Gamin. Nearly every morning, they had breakfast at the café, often sat at the table next to yours, in the palmy days before the demands of their architecture partnership and caring for young children curtailed this modest little detour and frolic.

Very fresh in your mind's eye, an image of Adam, bent forward, nearly doubled-over in his urgency, pushing his kid's stroller past the café's window down Ninth towards daycare. You'd exchange waves – occasionally the child would notice, turn and wave too – and Adam would either halt and wait for the light at 21st to signal WALK, or if he had the all clear, just barrel through. And the day'd move on.

You had to give Steve and Adam credit for a bang-up design. The two long walls of the recruitment center got transformed into jumbo neon American flags, highly visible and, in the archaic sense of the word, gay. They probably got the idea from a Lenny Kravitz video, the images of which stuck with you though the song itself has long departed from your front burner memory. The structure no longer came off as a grim little depot, it now looked like a club entrance – a kind of MTV take on the Louvre's crystal pyramid. On the broader of the narrow ends, they installed a big ol' flat screen TV that cycled through the DOD's flashy pitches hoping to attract any latent cannon fodder that passed within its eyeshot. And, they built in a bathroom. Which is a good thing, 'cause there's really no place to take a leak in Times Square any more, whether you're a customer or no.

“Ouch!” you thought, as you read the *Times* dispatch and imagined Steve picking up the phone to receive the news. And then, in less time than it takes for an IED to blow a Hummer into kingdom come, sound waves welled up from within your

head: John Lennon's straining vocal chords, his voice, urgent as Adam's momentum toward the daycare center – except that Lennon's utterances seemed to erupt from some impossibly deep core of rage and yearning:

*Instant karma's gonna get you
Gonna knock you right on the head
You better get yourself together
Pretty soon you're gonna be dead
What in the world you thinking of
Laughing in the face of love
What on earth you tryin' to do
It's up to you, yeah you*

*Instant karma's gonna get you
Gonna look you right in the face
Better get yourself together darlin'
Join the human race
How in the world you gonna see
Laughin' at fools like me?
Who on earth do you think you are
A super star?
Well, right you are*

Instant karma's gonna get you

Gonna knock you off your feet

Better recognize your brother's

Everyone you meet

Why in the world are we here

Surely not to live in pain and fear

Why on earth are you there

When you're everywhere

Come and get your share

Well we all shine on

Like the moon and the stars and the sun...

And it's true that instant karma found John too in the form of someone with an idea about guns and superstars. An army of one, as the adverts say. Every time you walk past the Dakota you wonder, was this the spot? And today it occurs to you that John, killed in 1980, years after the official peace was concluded, may have been one of the last victims of the Vietnam War. Or does this war goes on forever, like the stars and the moon and the sun? Was that a little fireball this morning? A micro bang in the kosmos of this war, that lit up – faster than an eyeblink and brighter than neon – the crossroads of the world, thirty blocks due south of Strawberry Fields?

Yesterday Wolfgang introduced you to a recently coined German word-concept, *Heilenschlaff* – healing sleep, as it applies to nations and cultures which fall into an unconscious state during certain epochs and awaken somehow transformed.