

4/13 Bottom of the world, Ma!

It's taken you the better part of a week to grok that Marty's MI triggered a heart attack in you. But hopefully one that did not result in necrosis, rather an opening up. A breaking through of backlogged fluids. Once again, through his death, you become aware that grief, uncompleted, winds itself up and punches back with redoubled force when the channel is forced open. In this case, grief for one's adolescent self. And for the fate of the others with whom that self shared a moment of intense and frustrated hope.

We dodge nothing.

Use self gently and firmly.

All around the University of Chicago campus, you are reliably told, on virtually every available surface, graffiti has appeared: *It will all be over April 14.*

A real Lacanian chicken, sporting the plumage of Baudrillard, comes home to peck at the eyes of Milton Friedman Land.

The Homeland Security folks are having themselves a field day.

And Ratzinger, black-wing'd arch-priest of the Phobos-Thanatos cult, arrives next day on these shores. Oy oy oy – a big vay ist mir.

Do less more.

She wore black, I wore red.

I do, tristesse.

The Age of Anti-alchemy: all gold to dross.

Still, more things in earth and heaven, Horatio, than in your dream philosophy.

4/15 I read war. She red black.

Wore over, but we war on.

Rise up Hidden Master, you're not dead yet. And even when you're in the urn, who'll keep your ashes still?

What did Hive say to Herpes?

Don't do anything rash.

Eastern hemlocks, so it's said, nearly disappeared from the pollen record five thousand years back. Which means they came close to dying off. Once abundant, the hemlock, which is capable of several centuries, never came back in anything like its former strength. Now a bug is after them, the woolly adelgid. Attacks the needles and sucks the sap. Kills a full grown tree in four years. One hundred percent mortality rate, it's thought. Though that'll only be verifiable when the last one's gone.

Up to the forest preserve of the Botanical Garden along the Bronx river last

week, with F., who grew up near there and whose woods these are, if anyone's.

No hemlock saplings in this part of the forest, only dead or dying mature trees, green only at the tops. No more to be done.

For these fifty-odd hemmed-in acres of forest, few hopeful signs. But even so, here and there, on the ground, a thriving patch of trout lilies. Adder's tongue. A wound-healer associated with Venus.

And beeches, of various ages, their kept leaves an indescribable luminescence, even in this dispirited, yet still struggling place.

A half mile away as the crow flies the old Commie Coops. Over the building doorways, cast reliefs of a bygone iconography: science, industry, technology, the arts. And not least, the hammer and sickle.

What to do but sit on the banks and watch the river burn?

4/16 Escape by the skin of your motif.

Obama finally outs with a direct and truthful description of a political situation and is immediately tarred and feathered. It's as though three hundred million people live in a pet shop where it's verboten to use the word "dog." The cardinal sin, these fear-filled days – being to call a thing what it is.

The mania organizes itself around a word that had officially been abolished – as was "Negro" – and now Obama has, Pandora-like, let it fly free. O.'s sentiment was sure to raise hackles, but what got them barking and biting was: "bitter" – an emotion no American can, by definition experience, this being the land of sweetness to the

exclusion of all other qualities or even sense-impressions. Carter's "malaise" got him slammed into the, er, lodging for domesticated canines, but it wouldn't these days because almost no one understands the word anymore, deriving as it does from that dead language, French. On the other foot, perhaps persistent and unacknowledged malaise has made us bitter. One good truth eventually meets its partner.

In any event, as of the moment, "bitter" launches from many a tongue.

The old kid's joke comes back to you with augmentations:

Q) What's black white, re(a)d, and bitter all over?

A) The newspaper! (And TV and internet.)

He did it, O. did – hit the rhetorical anti-jackpot. O. as in B-I-N-G-O.

Bitter. The new Awesome. Language repressed, like so much else, comes back to sink its teeth into the first ass it finds. And many more thereafter. It having grown voracious in exile.

"The Bitter Tea of General Yen." Capra directed it in 1933, just pre-Hays. Starring Barbara Stanwyck as the kidnap victim cum lover of a Chinese warlord. Tagline: *They found a love they dared not touch!*

You said I must eat so many lemons

'cause I am so bit-ter.

I said I'd rather be with your friends, mate

'cause they are much fit-ter...

Sings young Kate Nash.

4/17 Barked at him. Bit her.

Extraordinary. A two day run of no clouds whatsoever. Which looks like it might extend itself to three tomorrow. A slightly reddish haze over Lower Manhattan, nearing 6 p.m., but otherwise visibility clear as anything.

RAND issues a 500-page report, "Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery," the gist of which is that 320,000 American vets of the wars begun since 2001 have sustained brain injuries. 300,000 suffer from PTSD. Logically, these categories, cannot be mutually exclusive. This out of a total deployment of 1.6 million.

The report, according to AP, "appears consistent with a number of mental health reports from within the government, though the Defense Department has not released the number of people it has diagnosed or who are being treated for mental problems."

It'll be interesting to see if this gets any real media play, and if so, how it's spun. Might these vets, approximately half of whom have neither been properly evaluated nor sought VA help, make up some goodly proportion of the rank and file of the grand army of the "bitter"?

Chihuahuades: a small Greek-Mexican cynical philosopher.

4/18 6:26 a.m. Several bands of cirrocumulus, that look oddly like glacial moraines, stretch more or less north to south. And further east, a perpendicular sweep of high

cirrus. Cloudless sky's broken its streak.

Well now rules are alright

If there's someone left to play the game.

Well now rules are alright

If there's someone left to play the game.

All my friends are going

And things just don't seem the same.

Chanté Paul Butterfield de Chicago back in The Day.

The Day. By virtue of which this is – what?

Hidden Master, Hidden Master – how gaily jingle your bells!

A sheepish yesterday, a wolfish tomorrow.

Admission's free on Friday evenings at Morgan's Library. In the main reading room, shelves full of books imprisoned behind glass, in brass-grilled cages. Scan the spines for Darton-published titles. *Lessons on Common Things*. *Useful Gossip*. *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin*. *Food For the Young*. All marked London, and dated in the early 1820s. Ah, here's an older one, 1796: *Juvenile Trials*, by a certain Johnson. Would that you could pull them out and have a deeper look.



Todd Heisler/The New York Times

Pope Benedict XVI at an ecumenical prayer service in Manhattan.

...You're a ghost la la la

You're a ghost

I'm in the church and I've come

To claim you with my iron drum

la la la la la la...

Sings John Cale, "Paris 1919."

4/19 Back to cloudless.

Along 25th Street, pears on both sides of the street in full bloom. It being high allergy season, all you have to do is stop blinking and let your eyes water, even as you

pedal, and lo, the blossoms arch themselves into a canopy above, even without wish-fulfillment.

A page-wide pic of Ratzinger addressing the General Assembly. He's tiny at a podium as are his listeners, but enormous twin projections of HH flank the UN on the far wall of the chamber. Consciously or not, the photo has been framed so that the architecture of the room, at least from this angle, reveals itself as an immense cross.

Above this literally iconic picture runs a banner headline in classic *Messengerese*: "In New York, a Worldwide Message of Humanity." Strangely, in the twin video projections, the placement, angles and reddish coloring of the two little microphones on Il Papa's podium make it look like he's wearing a heart-shaped necklace.

Read that again. Try to parse what the sense of the sentence: "In New York, a Worldwide Message of Humanity." Surely, O Best Beloveds, among all humanity, and the other creatures of earth, water or air, there must be one who understands WTF that headline means.

Lie down with ostriches, wake up with feathers.

Should I get an iPhone or a lobotomy?

We were the bridge people who had to be burned to preserve the order on opposite sides of the river.

Too heavy, not ready.

Tomorrow night, for Passover, Sprouting Grass Moon. Pink Moon for the color of the phlox that spring up among the grasses. Fish Moon it was called by the coastal tribes who observed that this was when the shad swam upstream to spawn.

Scads of shad.

But because of a kink in our rods and cones, on a fully moonlit night, the grass may look tealish, the phlox tints lavender and as for the shad, well, in a sense, all out of season, the blues are running.

Behold, nearly everywhere you look, the triumph of the Death Eaters. We've had many a refracted Dumbledore to set us on the path, but unlike in Rowling's tale, there is no evident Voldemort organizing this march of evil. So to whom, or what, do we live in such an abject thrall? Behind and within this great Thanatos machine lurk men and women very like ourselves – possessed of ideas filled with anomie and terror of the self and other. But these awful people are as mortal as we are. At once as necessary and insignificant. Grass can grow on sand. In certain circumstances a few blades can slow down desertification. So where is the stuff of our resistance? Even within us the dust blows without spirit or intention and refuses, even magnetically, to gather into balls.

4/20 As if in compensation for three near clear days, this morning a low,

unremitting cloud cover like the hull of a battleship.

Dense enough to disappear altogether the tops of certain buildings, the vapor, if you switch ground for sky, seems a topsy-turvy becalmed sea.

River of consciousness.

4/21 Gust out of the west on 25th. You pedal through a blizzard of pear blossoms.

4/22 In Praise of *Fa Li* (whole body force).

Oil heads for \$120. The dollar kisses not the sky, but the \$1.60 Euro. City's Commissioner of Buildings resigns in the wake of myriad construction fatalities, an epidemic of unaddressed violations and botchagalup'd permits. But is it really her fault? Could anyone, even a competent anyone, ride the bull of this great greed-driven machine?

That rascal Carter negotiates a potential deal with Hamas and Syria. Upsets the Rice cart. What could be more distressing than the possibility, however slim, of peace?

We're taking the Warsaw Ghetto approach to Sadr City. There is hell to pay for doing this to folks who've done you no wrong.

Gates, Secretary of War declares Iran is "hell bent" on acquiring nuclear

weapons. And Hillary in her aspect as devouring mother promises to “obliterate” Iran should they launch a nuclear strike against Israel whilst she’s in situ as Commander in Chief. The military industrial corporate nihilist centrifuge whips up great cotton candies of shock and awe. And Johnny’s so long at the fair!

At your alternative café this morning, had a fast conversation with a lovely woman, an architect friend of T.’s. Remarked that she’d gotten some sun. Was down in Pennsylvania working for Obama, she replied, eyes alight with that unearthly *I have seen the Messiah* glow. “I walked all over Philadelphia. Boy is it poor.” She shakes her head. “Wonderful people. Wonderful people. The war...” she continues, then trails off. You know what she means to say. The war is the cause of all this present badness. But Obama is going to stop the war and make the poor middle class. Just like it oughta be. Hell, we’ll all be middle class. And no, *he* won’t do it – *we* will! Yes we can. Together. We’ll flutter our butterfly wings and rainbows will soar across the heavens. You hear me? It’ll be amazing when this intelligent, elegant – nay, beautiful! – hybrid of all that’s good is elected President, he’ll humbly lend himself to our wishes. He’ll be our instrument. And we will only wish for the best things. Always. Because underneath, we are decent and caring people who only want to embrace the planet and our brothers and sisters in it.

You don’t open your mouth. What can you possibly say? She’s gotta run. Her young son, like Gwen has the week off from school.

Must be getting early

Clocks are running late

Paint by number morning sky

Looks so phony

Dawn is breaking everywhere

Light a candle, curse the glare

Draw the curtains, I don't care

But it's alright...

It's a lesson to me

The deltas and the east and the freeze

The little things we all think of

To try and win a little love...

4/23 Two days ago, Krzysztof Polakowski, an amateur astronomer living in Gniewowo, Poland woke himself up well before dawn to photograph the Lyrid meteor shower. Despite moonlight, the night sky seemed promising, but then a bank of fog rolled in and the meteors rolled on, unseen above. Polakowski fell asleep and woke up an hour or so later. "When I opened my eyes, I saw a strange light right in front of me. It had the shape of a rainbow, but very pale." He took this picture, and sent it with a query to SpaceWeather.com.



Krzystof Polakowski

What Polakowski saw, according to atmospheric optics expert Les Cowley, was a lunar fogbow. Fogbows are similar to rainbows, but are caused by light refracted through tiny fog droplets rather than large raindrops. Typically, a fogbow is “broad, ghostly and almost colorless.”

The best shot at observing one of these would be a foggy, moonlit night. The idea is to face the moon, then turn around and look behind you. That’s where the ‘bow will be if the conditions are right. “A golden rule of atmospheric optics,” say Cowley, “is whenever there is something interesting in the sky check out the opposite direction. You could find a rarity.”

The World Betrade Center.

Ah, but it wasn’t the first time.

Welt as Wunderkammer.

Nor the last. As of the latest *Times* online page refresh, Petraeus nominated to head CENTCOM. If it's to be war against Persia, he's our man.

Kid can't read at seventeen

Words he knows are all obscene

But it's alright...

Tentative Museum.