

“The Manor House, mainly 18th century has 12 Reception Rooms, 18 Bed and Dressing Rooms, 11 Staff Bedrooms, and 10 Bathrooms. Immaculate Timbered Grounds. Walled Garden. Courtyard with Garaging and Flat. Estate Office. Victorian Dairy House with about 19 Acres [77,000 m²]. Two Coach House Cottages with Magnificent Stable Yard with Paddock and Woodland 16 Acres [65,000 m²]. Cheapside and Shafford Farms, 2 Well Equipped Corn and Stock Farms with about 724 Acres [2.9 km²]. 146 Acres [591,000 m²] of Timbered Parkland, 37 Acres [150,000 m²] of Railed Paddock and 104 Acres [421,000 m²] of valuable Commercial Timber”. In addition there were “18 Attractive Houses and Cottages, some with Paddocks. Old Mill and other Buildings for conversion, Stud Buildings, 30 Loose Boxes, Potential Riding School, and fishing in River Ver and Mill Race. Total 1,100 Acres [4.5 km²]”

Source: Wikipedia

She is a lovely old woman. She says little. She takes me by the hand to the tree under which he is buried. We stand and say nothing. I lower my eyes. Say a prayer but lose the pattern of the words (forgive us our bread .. trespass our enemies ..) and so I turn from her, and she releases my hand. I crunch gravel, walking toward the house. Can horses haunt things, places? Can the stories of a mysterious man? Inside is Private Joker: Inside is horrorshow: All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Slim Pickens rides the Bomb bareback and the mushroom cloud billows out of what was formerly the billiards room. Piled in the corner: stacks of VHS tapes .. Roseanne .. Seinfeld .. Johnny Carson .. The Simpsons. Americana. Why am I here, I keep asking myself. Thirty miles north of London, in the incongruous English countryside...*

*This imaginary travelogue to Stanley Kubrick's house, where his third wife still lives and one of his daughters is buried—this desire to write it—came as an afterthought, a throwaway line from somewhere, buried inside a half-formed joke. Or not a joke: I associate Kubrick with irretrievable journeys into deep space and so the most mundane thing I could think of as a counterpoint was *What does that man's house look like?* It seemed silly that Stanley Kubrick would have a house, maybe a favorite pillow, a breakfast nook. And so I looked it up online, and now I'm dreaming myself into it from my own house—attempting a journey into someone else's mind space (space space too)...

Fiction has lost its hold on me, for now. I think of the novel I was working on and have lost, and I feel lucky that its fudgery won't see the light of day. I'm not interested in writing lies anymore. Not right now, anyway...

My son lies sleeping in his little bed, the shades drawn on a rainy afternoon in the American South. Outside, a disease (novel) runs its course. Here inside I sit in a rocking chair, pecking at a laptop, dreaming up (then quickly abandoning) stories about a place where

I have never been, where I am not likely to ever go. I gather it is a creative place, a good place to dream, to invent, even now. An enormous country manor refashioned for freedom, flights of fancy—irretrievable journeys into deep space...

There are giraffes and monkeys, lions and elephants on the quilt cushioning my son as he naps. I can't imagine what he is dreaming. I don't want to. That's his deep space, his alone. My only task is to make enough room and freedom for him to dream it how he wants it to be.

Commentary

I have to be careful about footnotes and endnotes—they are basically the same thing as parentheticals. Sort of buried thought, an extended internal aside that nobody wants to read because it interrupts the flow. I do, however, like the weird associative leaping animating this one. A Wikipedia quote, a shard of half-hearted fiction, then a mini-essay about my son and how much I love him, which is pretty much all I want to write about nowadays. The challenge I face with that impulse to write is that I write pretty much the same thing every time I sit down to write. And writing about your kids is a little bit like telling other people about the dream you had last night: it's way more important to you than it is to them. You love your son? Duh. What else you got for me? But then again: that's an audience question. Writing is an important way for me to feel connected to the things (people, places) I'm writing about. This serves that purpose. And that's an important kind of success.