

I Started a Joke

I started a joke
Which started
The whole World
Crying

Prologue: Laugh and Cry

Who is the “I” of the title? I would hope for a trinitarian response. It is you, and I, and Robin Gibb. I would hope, further, that you would halt now and listen to him sing that strange song. Ay, there’s the rub. “I”: there’s the rub. The I being up to listening to the call-ye-graph stroke of the I, the sky. Chiang Yee wrote: “Every tiny stroke of a piece of fine calligraphy has the energy of a living thing.” Can you, might you, shift your context in that listening, to some X-factor poise? To whatever version you listen, there is the buildup of some melody. I heard Barry Gibb remark, in an interview, about the need, in moving into the performance of a new song, to ingest the music first, then to twine in the lyrics. Ay, there’s the rub. Is the music soundless, a back-up drumming to the speaking and listening? Thus the luminous living I is to sow: what’s what.

It would be foolish of me to go on thus. Best just shift to two-timing you.

I looked
at the skies,
running my hands
over my eyes

The Two Times of Humanity

The joke began in 1961, built on the previous decade of laughter and sorrow. Who, on earth, was I writing to when I put together “The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan”? The I of Lonergan was writing about the human I’s journey, anticipating his restatement of his pointing in the first three paragraphs of *Method in Theology*. What, pray, is the character of the middle ecumene, the middle calligraphing? We are there still, running humanity and its environs into the pit with arrogant initial meanings.

Till I finally died,
which
started
the whole world living
living

Epilogue

Who is the I that reads the final line of the song—cresting now upon you—of our interim kingdom? “Is it I Lord?” Are you not the Spoken, the *jek in Indospeak, of the One who invites, cauling in the middle kingdom of pilgrim daze, cauling to a craving? The *jek, the joke, is sweet; our burden, Light.

Oh if I'd only seen that
the joke
was on me