

## WHAT THE SHADOW KNOWS

Morris Dickstein. *Why Not Say What Happened*. Liverwright, 2015.

*Paul Pines*

*There was another light in the room now, a thousand times brighter than the night-lights, and in the time we have taken to say this, it has been in all the drawers in the nursery, looking for Peter's shadow...*

James M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*

### ENTER, THE SHADOW

There are many reasons to pursue Memoir, arguably the most intimate form of literary expression. Augustine of Hippo in his *Confessions* admitted to once stealing an apple from an orchard, and in so doing linked his personal experience to Adam's expulsion from Eden, and his life's work addressing the commission and consequences of Original Sin, but not before disclosing that as a young Platonist with strong appetites, he wished to prolong his wickedness a little longer before assuming the robes of ecclesiastical authority. Rousseau hoped to reclaim his original Innocence by writing an absolutely honest memoir confessing his darkest acts and feelings, among these pissing in a cooking pot, and sexual arousal in response to beatings by a dominating Nanny. Modernist Edward Dahlberg, the disposable son of an itinerant lady barber, unleashes a cry of outraged innocence no amount of disclosure can assuage in the eponymous *Confessions of Edward Dahlberg*. Enter Morris Dickstein, whose earlier books, *Dancing in the Dark*, and *Gates of Eden* about the Great Depression and the apocalyptic '60s, mark him as one of the most astute cultural commentators of our time. Now, for his own reasons, he has chosen to become his own subject in his memoir entitled, *Why Not Say What Happened, A Sentimental Education*.

Morris Dickstein makes it clear from the start that he has no interest in writing a Jeremiad like Delmore Schwartz, who shouts desperate warnings at the unfolding reel of his life on the movie screen in his short story, "In Dreams Begins Responsibilities". Morris wants to tell the story of his seventy-four years in the measured but engaging way that Flaubert does in *L'Education Sentimentale*. Dickstein's subtitle suggests a cultivation which becomes deeper over time, to produce a memorable vintage, one featuring complexity with a satisfying finish. The memoir's title, from Robert Lowell's poem, "Epilogue," suggests that such a cultivation in the telling of a life dispenses with artifice and effect:

Yet why not say what happened?  
 Pray for the grace of accuracy  
 Vermeer gave to the sun's illumination  
 stealing like the tide across a map...

There's no smoking gun here, nor skeletons waiting to dance out of the closet. Dickstein's subjectivity is quiet, proportional, free of self-aggrandizement, but not of ambition. The tortuous path of Eros in pursuit of understanding can be as heartbreaking as any love story, and the death of assumptions and received wisdom as compelling as any thriller—in the right hands. But before I say more, this may be the time for my own full disclosure.

I have never met Morris Dickstein. The circles we've traveled in may have been contiguous, but never overlapping. In spite of this, in certain ways, we couldn't be closer. We are both first generation New York Jews whose parents fled the pogroms of Eastern Europe, lived through the Great Depression, and had high expectations of their children. We both came of age in the shadow of the Holocaust, and rooted for the Brooklyn Dodgers, a continuous act of courage and despair. Both now in our 70s, we were born to a cohort that fell between culture defining generations before and after ours. We probably shopped for bagels and white fish at Zabar's on the upper West Side, or Russ & Daughter on Houston Street, wondering as we waited whether to throw in a few herring and some farmer's cheese. I imagine eavesdropping on Morris as he tells another customer what he learned from Kafka—that life throws curve balls at us no matter what we do, before the counterman calls his number and he decides to throw in the herring. Perhaps most important, we've both written memoirs which, though different, draw water from the same well.

But for critical variations in our family dramas, I, like Morris, might've been singled out for my brilliance, a parentified child playing to adults and excelling enough, even when rebellious, to receive a four year scholarship to Columbia, followed by a fellowship to Cambridge, and a graduate degree from Yale, on the way to becoming a distinguished professor, respected writer, and contributing editor to *Partisan Review*. Under other conditions Morris might've been me, the hyper-active kid who didn't fit in, black sheep and incorrigible truant, drawn to pool rooms rather than libraries, on his way to becoming a taxi driver, short-order cook, merchant seaman, bartender, club owner, and multiply-addicted autodidact, who somehow managed to write and publish two novels and twelve poetry collections that, as Keats put it, might as well have been writ in water. Maybe I exaggerate our differences slightly, but what I want to suggest holds true: I may be Morris's shadow, and he, mine.

The prospect of engaging one's shadow in a literary discussion is daunting. Morris was the good boy I could never be, but wished I was in the recesses of my adolescent heart. I'm certain that my anger and determination to be myself at any cost is a quality that Morris feared and longed for in his own secret place. On the other hand, who better to shed light on the hidden parts of the other? I may be well positioned to address a book that, on the surface, details a sentimental education but is full of dark resonances. I hear the voice of radio actor Frank Readick, from a radio program popular during our youth, "The Shadow." Speaking into a water glass for the echo effect, accompanied by Saint-Saens' *Le Rouet d' Omphale*, he asks: *What evil lurks in the hearts of men?* Then delivers the response we all waited for: *The Shadow knows.*

#### SHADOW DANCING

Morris's story starts *in media res*, at Yale in the early 1960s, with the observation that his childhood yeshiva training, at which he'd excelled, had left him unprepared for the level of scholarship demanded by graduate school, to which he'd been irresistibly drawn. In that moment Morris frames a position at the heart of his narrative as being at once entrenched and alienated. With this in mind, he leaps back to the early 1940s, and his three room apartment on Henry Street in the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, where he attended one of the many *chedder* in the neighborhood. In 1949, at the age of eleven, he moved with his family to a rental behind his father's dry goods store in Flushing, Queens, but returned daily to his lower East Side Yeshiva. He escaped the parochial narrowness of his world by prowling the Seward Park branch of the New York Public Library, and later, reading every book at the Flushing branch. While remaining faithful to kosher dietary law, through books he explored Margret Mead's account of Samoan puberty rites, and purloined a copy of Mailer's *Deer Park* from the librarian's private shelf. He journeyed from the French Revolution in Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* to Salem, Massachusetts in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, noting the similarities of Puritan culture to his own. If shared assumptions provided refuge in a hostile world, any deviation was marked by shame.

The *Scarlet Letter* is the mark of Cain, shame made visible. Morris wore his sign invisibly as punishment for his failure to live up to the early expectations of his parents, peers and, indeed, his congregation in Flushing who thought of him as the "great white hope of Judaism," and a future rabbi—just as he realized the cost of being cast in this role. This became evident to him when he joined the local Boy Scout Troop only to become the spokesperson, making speeches at special occasions.

If there was such a thing as a Boy Scout intellectual, that was me, facile and silver-tongued, ever ready to sing out the ideals of the movement and comb through its history. In all this I somehow missed living a boy's life. My friendships with other boys were starved, shallow; I was overflowing with energy but my animal spirits were impoverished.

From his graduate school digs in New Haven, he reflected on the cost and the absurdity of his childhood striving to be the smartest kid in the room. He addressed his lessons with the appearance of enthusiasm long after the Talmud had become stale. In his yeshiva classes students dealt with issues of tort law before they'd reached puberty. He recalled a discussion focused on the laws governing "unnatural intercourse," which remained undefined even as they argued it from various legal positions. For some, this was foundational. He remembered Alan Dershowitz as a "sharp-tongued opponent" in the yeshiva debating league.

Morris hungered for something more.

High school found him skipping classes to see the latest Broadway offerings like *South Pacific* and *Tea House of the August Moon*, predictive of the theater critic he would later become, rather than the rabbinical scholar. Fate sealed his direction when a General Motors Scholarship offered to support his tuition at Columbia, and living expenses there as well.

So begins Morris's journey between worlds, Orthodox/ Secular, Traditional/ Avant Garde, Scholar/ Intellectual, Specialist/Generalist, and found him, in the end, an intellectual outrider subject to the philosophical and emotional ambiguities of the transformational 1960s. The decade carried some forward and left others behind. He recognized that being part of a cohort born between cultural waves might work out to his advantage in navigating cultural change.

It was the good fortune of my in-between generation to come of age on the cusp of a new era. The 1950s, hemmed in by conformity, fear, and intimidation, bedeviled by anxieties arising from the cold war, had fitted us for a political straight jacket yet spawned a powerful literature, including novels by blacks and Jews like Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud. Now, like a return of the repressed, the constraints were stimulating a vigorous counter-culture.

The 1960s exploded suddenly, a fully realized solo that played out over a decade. It was a seismic eruption that took even the best and the brightest by surprise. Those born in the liminal space between generations were forced to find a place to stand, or sink under the weight of change. Morris located his place in what his mentor, Lionel Trilling, called "the bloody crossroads"

where art meets politics.

Morris found important mentors and messages on both sides of the generational divide. On one side, he engaged Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself*, Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death*, poetry by Robert Lowell, Alan Ginsberg and Gregory Corso, and on the other he dove headlong into Dostoevsky, Freud and Kafka which he studied at Columbia with Lionel Trilling. Both Trilling, and his colleague, Jacques Barzun, made no effort to hide their opinion of the emerging generation that so enamored Morris. He recalls Diana Trilling's account of a Ginsberg reading at Columbia in *The Partisan Review* as condescending "though it was leavened with a streak of maternal affection."

The wife of Ginsberg's teacher and Columbia's leading literary critic, a tough-minded observer in her own right, she was at least willing to give these bad boys [Ginsberg, Corso, Burroughs] a hearing, but little more. When she got home she found her husband meeting with W.H. Auden and Jacques Barzun—together the three served as gatekeepers of a highbrow book club. Mischievously, she reports that Auden, the mandarin poet, voiced his disapproval, as if she had gone soft, taken in by childish shenanigans. (74)

From where he stood at the bloody crossroads Morris could love Sophocles and Ibsen, and also bask in contemporary playwrights Edward Albee and Jack Gelber he heard discussed by Robert Brustein and Eric Bentley. His love of film ripened in the penumbra of Ingmar Bergman, John-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut. Morris was inevitably drawn to the anarchistic productions of the Living Theater that broke down the fourth wall and swept the audience onto the stage in *Paradise Now*. All supported by the trend toward General Education at Columbia, "a sweeping introduction to modern social thought." This approach cut through traditional academic boundaries, and encouraged the cultivation of generalists as opposed to specialists.

Talmudic tradition recognizes that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before, but the shoulders Morris points to in his undergraduate years belong to those who changed traditional academic boundaries. Sociologist C. Wright Mills, a proponent of inter-disciplinary education, exposed his students to Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Hannah Arendt. Historian Fritz Stern team taught in tandem with Lionel Trilling. Professor of religion Jacob Taubes was joined by his brilliant assistant, Susan Sontag. The results were often memorable even when the teams were exquisitely mismatched. Morris recalls the thrust and parry between philosopher Sidney Morgenbesser and literary critic F.W. Dupee wherein the

critic silenced the philosopher by pointing out that what Morgenbesser had called a “thesis” might more accurately be termed an “aperçu.” The menu of choices offered was rich in possibility. In an effort to educate his senses, after so much intellectual weight lifting, Morris took a course with Otto Leuning in the History of Opera.

All of this at a time when “...the world felt in flux, shedding its old skin.”

What Morris observed about the world, may have made his personal desire to shed old skin less shameful, but not easier. Graduate work at Yale and his effort to remain Kosher in New Haven, ran headlong into his hunger for independence and his developing love affair with Lore Willner, his future wife, whom he refers to throughout as L. From the start, her adventurousness flourished beyond the constraints of her German Jewish family, and prompted Morris to take risks he might not otherwise have taken. As the world “shed its old skin,” we find Morris, in all of his incarnations, from the lower East Side, through Columbia and Yale, testing bonds that, as Andre Gide once put it, kept him constantly at the bars of his cage.

#### THE SHADOW IN EXILE

Along with tributes to mentors and the challenging dislocations of time and place, *Why Not Say What Happened* includes those life changing epiphanies that often occur when least expected. This memoir is threaded with Joycean moments that are acts of grace rather than productions of reason, and so less likely to stiffen with age.

Take as an example the Professor in a class Yale on Old English, whose mellifluous reading turned the guttural Anglo-German *Beowulf* into a beautiful song. When Morris complimented him, the Professor appeared surprised, even perplexed. Whereupon Morris realized that scholarship has little bearing on the apprehension of transcendence. Academia, at a graduate level, he concluded, was a Herculean labor to establish facts and text, rather than “appreciating beauty, form or meaning.”

After completing orals, Morris won a Kellett Fellowship to Cambridge, another quantum leap from the Henry Street *yeshiva*. Excited by the prospect of a year abroad, fed by his enthusiasm for Dickens, Morris found himself once again alien and entrenched. Early on, he noted that “British Jews kept a low profile as Jews.” Eventually, his disabling cultural habits became evident in his misreading of common social interactions; what he’d thought genuine invitations to friendship turned out to be polite but empty gestures which left him on more than one occasion at a strange door apologizing for his intrusion. Fortunately, for Morris, here, as elsewhere, painful struggle

at the crossroad yielded an insight, this time into what made the English remarkable actors:

Part of the power of the English novel flowed from how writers explored the gaps between what people felt or thought or meant and what they actually said, plumbing their reticence's and silences, their conscious and unconscious motives, the discretion and indirection that oiled the gears of many social encounters. An ingrained virtuosity at role-playing, not Method-like sincerity, was at the heart of the great English acting tradition. (160)

Another durable moment involved recently retired critic F.R. Leavis of Downing College, who had been such a “burr in the sides of the literary establishment,” none of his students had ever been appointed to the faculty. Morris met Leavis, a bald, craggy figure who'd been gassed in the Great War, while preparing with other students for a test based on blind identifications based on style. During one session, Leavis described an encounter he'd had on the fellows' lawn in which the young, ambitious I.A. Richards said to the elderly Master: “My only consolation in this place is that every day an old man dies.” To which Leavis responded, “Yes, and everyday a young man turns into an old man.”

The point was not lost on Morris: the sublime lived next door to the ridiculous in Academic life, but the riches to be mined were as inherent in the messenger as the message—or, put another way, that one could not separate the dancer from the dance.

In the end I learned much of value from Leavis, a critic whose slash-and-burn attack I had at first resisted. For him the moral import of a work was not simply an idea, the striking of an attitude, certainly not any kind of preaching or message, but something fully realized in form and language. Unlike most academics, whose criticism was a catchall for a writer's themes, Leavis could be brutally selective and discriminating.

Along these lines, one of the most powerful epiphanies struck Morris outside the hallowed halls. It occurred while waiting for a train. A working class man on the platform picked up on the pretentious mannerisms of a Cambridge student to-the-manner-born, and began to imitate him. Morris found himself caught in the cross-fire. He was surprised by the ease with which the upper class “twit” dismissed the working class “hooligan,” as if the other didn't exist. Morris became exceedingly uneasy and eventually questioned how he would ever “fit in or feel remotely comfortable in such a class-bound world, even installed in a privileged position.” The impact of this precipitated the start of an ongoing psychotherapy that continued in

different locations over the course of many years. While still at Cambridge, he explored with his therapist the effect of his parents' anxiety on him. His father and mother had been faced with, and then fled mortal danger, survived the Depression, and sought refuge in ritual and tradition that remained ironclad. For the first time Morris understood his own predicament.

But I had little desire to break sharply with my parents' way of life or with the Jewish world in which I'd been a cosseted young star when I was growing up. These attachments still meant the world to me, even if I couldn't fully say why. As a free thinking intelligence yet a child of the ghetto, a vagrant off shoot of a venerable tradition, I would either learn to live with contradictions or perish under their weight. (177)

#### IN THE SHADOW OF KEATS

Returning to Yale, he chose to write his dissertation on John Keats. His advisor, the newly tenured Harold Bloom, was a Falstaffian figure among preppies. He announced to Bloom that he wished to take an untraditional approach to Keats who had died on his birthday, February 23. Morris saw him less as a Romantic than a death-haunted modernist, a moralist facing our existential condition as we now understand it. He proposed this paper at a time of multiple political assassinations, the Kennedys, King and Malcolm X, as well as a burgeoning civil rights movement and hotly contested war in South-East Asia. These events drew him more passionately to Keats, whom he perceived as the emerging shadow consciousness linked to his own.

He was a writer immensely alive to fugitive feelings and physical sensations, even as he was enmeshed in a more shadowy passage of human experience—weakness and decline, illness and death. I was drawn to him as a conflicted, at times tormented figure whose equilibrium was never given, always hard-won.

Keats was an artist with grandiose aims, who also experienced crushing human doubts that Morris shared with the poet. Pouring over Keats remarkable letters, Morris was moved by the rigorous self-scrutiny they revealed, an attitude toward conflict and a quality of insight that foreshadows psychoanalysis. The same intuition that blossomed in his later poems, also shape his psychological acuity. In a prescient moment, Keats describes the ongoing process of psychological development as "Soul-making," a term used more recently by C.G. Jung to describe the goal of "individuation." Keats anticipates the theoretical base of depth psychology when he writes about "how souls acquire identity 'till each one is personally itself'."

Morris completed his dissertation as a young instructor at Columbia. Following the birth of his first child, his family moved to West 105<sup>th</sup> Street, a demographically mixed neighborhood. By 1966 penniless academics were targeted for mugging on a regular basis. Teaching Henry James and listening to classical music felt out of sync with the growing reality of racial bitterness and the rock music of the Beatles and Rolling Stones. His own challenges on the road of individuation had prepared Morris to meet those of this time as one who'd learned to live with contradictions, rather than perish under their weight—to even find in it an edge of excitement.

There was acute moral anguish in the air—about the war, about the enveloping racial bitterness—but also a whiff of adventure, the thrill of the untried, the untested. The sixties had really begun, our sixties had begun, and it seemed at once a moment of grave peril and a bracing time to be alive. (239)

Morris found himself teaching a CORE Humanities course, a survey of western literature starting with Homer to the modern authors. Everything from the Iliad on resonated with Vietnam and Selma. His personal response to these tensions grew until he had worked himself into a critical state that once again gave way to an insight, ironically connected to his work on Keats. It came unheralded, and seemed at first to be far removed from the fierce contentions now at the bloody crossroad. Still struggling with his dissertation, he consulted his advisor. Harold Bloom told Morris, who was stuck in doubt, that his interpretation of a crucial poem by Keats was as good as any other one. This hit him like the well timed slap of a Zen Roshi.

By this light, every interpretation was constructed, provisional, rooted in the circumstances that gave rise to it. I couldn't wholly disagree; there were no absolute truths to offset the doubts built into the modern mind... a *mise en abime*, it would later be called—and he (Bloom) would grow even less happy with it than I would... (248)

This insight went beyond literature and certainties geared to literary theory. It touched on Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, and certainties of any kind, all subject to the position of the observer. But it also opened the door to another way of looking at Keats as a gateway to post-modernity. The extraordinary speed of the poet's development, the ground gained as artist and sage, is a point of departure for the exponentially increasing rate of development that was generating new artists and new works, that grew with the overwhelming changes that loomed like a Hokusai wave about to crash.

## SHADOWING THE WAVE

In the spring of 1968, an out-of-touch administration at Columbia University faced the daunting challenge of student rebellion. With its lofty international ambitions, those representatives of the university often treated college students as unwanted stepchildren. Protesting Columbia's financial investments in support of the war, as well as development plans that would displace the local population, students were moved to make a stand. Black students took over Hamilton Hall. A radical caucus occupied the Math building. Graduate students took over Fayerweather Hall. Architecture students occupied Avery. Another group seized the president's office in Low Library. Morris became part of an ad-hoc group of liberal faculty that met in Philosophy Hall in an attempt to mediate the situation. These meetings were heated, with some advocating continued occupation as the only way to keep the University from "acquiescing in policies that even Martin Luther King equated with war crimes," and others who felt strongly that the occupation was coercive and deprived the majority of students the right to pursue their studies.

Two days later, the NYC police were called in. Black students, under the guidance of psychologist Kenneth Clark, filed out in an orderly way and were arrested. Others groups resisted. The violence is well documented—students limp on the ground, dragged down stone stairs, streaming blood. Faculty blocking the entrance were beaten. Mounted police charged cordoned off bystanders who fell to their billy clubs. Photos of bloody heads and faces became iconic images of the time. What little trust there had been between students and administration was destroyed and the instant radicalization of students by SDS and other covert movements was set in motion.

Morris joined that part of the faculty supporting the subsequent student strike in an effort to take power from the discredited administration. Classes resumed, but not in classrooms. Some met in cafes, or the student union, and even faculty apartments. He pushed to modernize the syllabus, and tackle relevant subjects, ideas in the air like "revolution" and "sexual freedom". He did not attend the 1968 graduation ceremonies.

That summer he was appointed to a committee to study Columbia's institutional structure and suggest possible reforms. While making an earnest effort, and unearthing highly questionable operations run by Robert Moses, the commission's findings went nowhere. It did, however, give birth to a University Senate, which set aside most issues, and a new breed of administrators schooled in counter-insurgency and the use of injunctions and court orders.

For Morris, the bloody crossroads of art and politics had left him as it does those who have suffered and recognized the interplay of personal and

collective forces in life changing events, with the ever deepening questions that Keats called Soul Making.

A scene of detached intellectual activity, a zone of reflection, had turned into a battlefield yet also become an unforeseen learning experience for students and faculty alike. Cut loose from the university as I had known it, watching it implode, I was irresistibly drawn in. The conflicts of the decade had hit home, and I would need to find some way to fathom their meaning. (266)

#### DEBRIEFING THE SHADOW

The search for meaning inevitably involves a debriefing of the shadow, and a return to the opening question, *What evil lurks in the hearts of men?* It is a complicated affair to describe how this takes place in a book that on the surface simply says what happened, one that details, moreover, the sentimental education of a narrator who abandons the Talmud for literature only to find that the deepest areas of the psyche are not completely accessible through Aeschylus, Job or Kafka.

Work on Keats helped Morris approach the shadow directly. It defined, if not his identity, his identifications. He wasn't drawn to the poet's reach for the sublime and apocalyptic, but to the more existential aspect of tragic realism, where longing for transcendence breaks against the seawall of human limitation. Morris stops just short of identifying totally with the *poet maudit*, possibly because as a "brainy Jewish kid" he recognized his fear of annihilation lay not so much in the close encounters with loss that punctuated Keats' life (early loss of parents, his brother from TB), but in the fear filled transmission of his immigrant mother which exerted a powerful influence on him from the wings. Morris's response was more somatic than poetic; panic attacks and stomach problems surfaced whenever he attempted to separate from childhood expectations. His sympathy with the terror that accompanied the desire to capture unheard music linked him to Keats as an aspect of his own shadow.

Morris strikes a resounding note with his cousin, Avrumi, who twice explodes through the Wordsworth-like tranquility at the beginning and end of these recollections. We meet him first at the family vacation compound of bungalows at Rocky Point, Long Island, as a boy who had cast himself in the role of black sheep, getting kicked out of yeshiva even before losing both parents, dropping out of college and moving to California where he became an expert mechanic—the dark star to Morris's bright one. Two years older than Morris, Avrumi's "rambunctious freedom secretly thrilled me." At one point, Avrumi revealed that as children Morris's mother kept him away from her son, judging him a bad influence. Only after his cousin died young, at

fifty, did Morris realize how much he had missed him. Before his death, the two met at the site of Morris's Rocky Point house that has recently burned to the ground. Standing amidst the ashes, Morris recalls this moment:

Orphaned young, he was my dark shadow...and I was shamelessly fond of him since he behaved in ways I couldn't have done. His eyes glimmered with wicked humor but didn't anticipate his robust laugh and mocking words: 'Hello, ex-homeowner!' I suddenly felt a bottomless sense of loss. This was a bit of schadenfreude from someone who had been knocked around, who had never had a real home of his own, the revenge of the outcast, the footloose orphan to whom the gods had dealt a bad hand. Playing the black sheep of the family, he was so transparent that I could never resist forgiving him for anything he said or did.

Morris's embrace of Avrumi is the last note that changes everything in the symphony. When his black sheep shadow dies, for reasons he can't explain, Morris is aware that something of vital importance has vanished from his life. Absent the projected shadow, what he could forgive in the other, there's no other recourse but to recognize what's hidden in one's self that surfaces to reveal an underlying order the rational world can't describe. Perhaps this is the secret impulse that drives all of us who write a memoir, to find in moments of great loss or violence, at the very edge of our assumptions, what threatens to, or in fact does reduce our world to chaos, only to reveal another form of order, enlarged by the risk.

Perhaps we read memoirs for the same reason we read thrillers or romances, to risk an encounter with aspects of ourselves that had been cloaked in darkness, now brought to light. For the most part, Morris just says what happens. His narrative never veers away from a journalistic reporting of events, even when dealing with his own extreme reactions. He describes the moment following the rejection of his undergraduate application to Yale when he dove into a pool, sat on the bottom and resolved to stay there in a rock-steady voice that assures us he will change his mind before his breath runs out.

My own shadow play was much shriller. While he struggled to fathom Keats, I drove a cab. He demonstrated against the war in Vietnam. I swam off the side of a merchant ship in the South China Sea with the poisonous "Mr. Three Step" while my ship mates at the rail wondered if I'd make it back in time to the Jacob's ladder. In the end, we both caught our breath and surfaced from the bottom of our respective pools.

After finishing *Why Not Say What Happened*, I wrestle with the idea that there may be greater courage in his utter transparency than in my insistence

on surgically peeling back the layers of experience. He does this in a way that is unthinkable to me and beyond my ability as a writer. What his investigation reveals is that there is something far more moving, and difficult to discern than *what evil that lurks in the hearts of men*. A certain rare effort is required to uncover it. As Carl Jung writes in a letter to Fr. Victor White dated April 10, 1954:

There is need of people knowing about their shadow, because there must be somebody who does not project. They ought to be in a visible position [like a public office] where they would be expected to project and unexpectedly they do not project! They can thus set a visible example which would not be seen if they were invisible.”

In *Why Not Say What Happened* Morris Dickstein amplifies what Keats, Jung and Lowell articulated in different ways; he makes visible a shadow that is known to itself.

This is what Morris does for me. Rather than replaying the already revealed qualities of my own darkness which are as handy to me as the apps on my iPhone, he moves me to feel what I fear to believe in, the courage (as Erik Erikson puts it) “to be, for having been.” I also recognize in that emerging from the penumbra of our shadows, we share what gives a Sentimental Education its distinctive vintage, a richly layered complexity, with a strong finish.