



## At My Window

I was standing in the kitchen the other night, staring out the window at the long shadows on the bike path, the red stoplights, the far traffic on the avenue, and the distant blinking red smokestack beacon on the night horizon. In a melancholy mood, I thought back over the many windows I have similarly stared out of in my moody old life. And as I was doing so, I suddenly realized I was singing a song to myself about staring out a window, that I had learned from some otherwise forgotten LP back in my high school years:

*At my window sad and lonely • Oft times do I think of thee • And I wonder little darlin' • Do you ever think of me*

Currently, I am happily married, my wife was in the next room, and my mood passed like a ghost in a gust. But in my high school years, of course, long dark moods were the norm, and there was quite a bit of "think [ing] of thee" that took place as I gazed nightly from our living room window at the heartbreaking sewage disposal plant lights reflected in the Fox River.

Anyway, Googling for the above lyrics, I found that it's a Woody Guthrie song, though the third line on the Guthrie site is "Sad and lonely and I wonder," with "darling" not coming along until the second verse. The song's title is **At My Window Sad and Lonely**.

But oh, the windows I have stared out of. I've written in a previous Whither Zither about my Homer Louisiana bedroom window which looked out upon the Coke Plant across the street featuring, on Saturday nights, on the second floor, "Teen Town," from whose windows I first heard **Rock Around The Clock**. In later years, as a young grownup, I would have before me a glass of gin on the rocks and a tuna can full of cigarette butts on a peeling window sill as I looked out upon bus stops, bar parking lots, mountains, flashing fried chicken signs, apartment complex swimming pools, traffic jams, and oh so many other evocative panoramas.

There must be more sorrowful songs with

windows in them, I thought. There must be many others who stare out windows and yearn, and sigh, and generally be corny and sentimental and dramatically stupid. And I started brainstorming and Googling, and sure enough.

But even before Googling, this Girl Scout song **Barges** (author unknown) came to me. Not exactly melancholy, but it has a mood, and it has a window:

*Out of my window, looking in the night • I can see the barges' flickering light • Silently flows the river to the sea • And the barges too go silently*

More to the point, here's a verse by Tom Campbell and Linda Albertabo from a song called **Two Ten Train**:

*Well I looked out my window, Mmmm • And I couldn't keep from cryin'. • I saw the train a leavin', Mmmm • Take my baby down the line.*

To cheer things up, here's a window-mention, in the good ol' song **Mockin' Bird Hill** by George Vaughn Horton:

*When the sun in the morning peeps over the hill • And kisses the roses 'round my window sill • Then my heart fills with gladness when I hear the trill • Of the birds in the treetops on Mockin' Bird Hill.*

And back down again with Randy Newman's **I Think It's Gonna Rain Today**:

*Broken window, empty hallway • Pale dead moon in a sky streaked with grey • Human kindness overflowing • And I think it's gonna rain today*

Here's a tear jerker about looking from the outside in, in the traditional **Green Grow the Lilacs**:

*I passed my love's window, both early and late • The look that she gave me, it makes my heart ache • Oh, the look that she gave me was painful to see • For she loves another one better than me.*

And of course there's Bob Dylan. Lots of windows in his songs. Here's one in **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right**:

*When the rooster crows at the break of dawn • Look out your window and I'll be gone • You're the reason I'm traveling on*

• *But don't think twice, it's all right*

Even the spirituals have windows. Here's from **Will The Circle Be Unbroken**:

*I was standing by the window • On one cold and cloudy day • And I saw the hearse come rolling • For to carry my mother away.*

Here's a real blubberer. The traditional **I'm A Little Orphan Girl**:

*I'm a little orphan girl • My mother she is dead • My father is a drunkard • And won't buy me my bread • I leant upon the window-sill • To hear the organ play • And think of my dear mother • Who's dead and far away.*

And here's one of the many homesick-for-Ireland songs that gaze out a window. This is from **Roscommon of my Dreams**, by Larry Kilcommins. Roscommon is a county in Ireland. It's also the name of a village in the county, but I think this song is about the county:

*As I gazed out of the window • Of this old apartment block • Across the concrete jungle • That's the City of New York • My thoughts go wandering slowly back • To those lovely woods and streams • That I left behind in Ireland • And Roscommon of my dreams.*

It didn't take me long at all to come up with these few examples, and I would bet there is a rare songwriter who doesn't have one or two in his bag about gazing out a window. Here are just two more: **Nobody's Business** by Porter Grainger and Everett Robbins:

*I got up this morning, looked out my window pane • I was looking for my love, but all I saw was rain.*

There probably have been songs like this since the first Cro Magnon teen sang "I stared out the cave at the waterfall, and pined for my charming Neanderthal." Here's one final window song by the Girl Scouts, to the tune of **My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean**:

*Last night as I lay on my pillow • Last night as I lay on my bed • I stuck my feet out of the window • In the morning the neighbors were dead*

--WZ for July 2017