

11/26 In 1910, the earth passed through the cyano-laden tail of Halley's Comet. Which, of course, is why we've been hallucinating ever since.

Hale-Bopp, Bradfield, Shoemaker-Levy 9, McNaught, Holmes. Jeeze, in the last decade or so, the Father's been throwing lots of dirty snowballs at the Sun. We must've done something really bad to deserve this. Fortunately, his aim's been bad.

Atropaic – adjective for something – for example: a wand, herb or ceremony, that protects against, wards off, turns back something malevolent.

Take the traditional *I'm with stupid* teeshirt and modify it by removing *with*.

N'entendez-vous pas les cloches qui sonnet, M. Jean D'arcton?

While Sarko trips to Beijing to sell Hu \$27 billionsworth of planes and nuke power, and pleads with him to jack up the Yuan, the banlieues of Villiers-le-Bel, Arnouville, Sarcelles and others to the north of Paris erupt in riots after a police car hits, and kills, two young fellows riding a motor bike. The French media reports their first names only, and ages: Moushin, 15 and Larimi, 16. The cops have variously been accused of splitting the scene, and preventing local folks from helping the youths as they lay in the road.

Back in April, 1997, you jotted in your commonplace book this snippet, which eventually got incorporated into *Notes of a New York Son*:

The fast way home [from Frank's House] is to cross Horatio and cut diagonally across the ball field toward Eighth Avenue. But this time you detour a few paces out of your way to confirm that you were not hallucinating. The manhole cover indeed claims it was MADE IN INDIA. In'ja.

Then another note a couple of months later:

Midafternoon, 68th Street and Park Avenue. Another MADE IN INDIA manhole cover. East side, west side, all around the town. Well you didn't think they just made one of 'em, did you?

Flash a decade forward to this morning's *Messenger* where, front page, pride of place, you read:

"New York Manhole Covers, Forged Barefoot in India."



J. Adam Huggins for The New York Times

"NEW DELHI – Eight thousand miles from Manhattan, barefoot, shirtless,

whip-thin men rippled with muscle were forging prosaic pieces of the urban jigsaw puzzle: manhole covers.

“Seemingly impervious to the heat from the metal, the workers at one of West Bengal’s many foundries relied on strength and bare hands rather than machinery. Safety precautions were barely in evidence; just a few pairs of eye goggles were seen in use on a recent visit. The foundry, Shakti Industries in Haora, produces manhole covers for Con Edison and New York City’s Department of Environmental Protection, as well as for departments in New Orleans and Syracuse.

“The scene was as spectacular as it was anachronistic: flames, sweat and liquid iron mixing in the smoke like something from the Middle Ages. That’s what attracted the interest of a photographer who often works for The New York Times – images that practically radiate heat and illustrate where New York’s manhole covers are born.

“When officials at Con Edison – which buys a quarter of its manhole covers, roughly 2,750 a year, from India – were shown the pictures by the photographer, they said they were surprised....”

The world has correspondents Heather Timmons and J. Adam Huggins to thank for this disoriental prose. And, though he doubtless cannot register it consciously in the intensity of the moment, Pervez Musharraf, under siege in not-so-far-away Islamabad, may be feeling, however ephemerally, just a few degrees less heat. But then, like the manhole-makers, Pervez appears impervious.

God is great.

Two powerful quakes, back to back, in northeastern Indonesia.

Typhoon Mitag ravages the northern Philippines even as Hagabis, a storm that swept through last week is expected to make a return pass, perhaps in concert with a third storm heading for the archipelago. Typhoon: Arabic appropriation of Typhon, an old school giant, and Gaia's most fearsome son.

The venerable Oxford Union plans a debate between Nick Griffin, neo-fascist leader of the British National Party, and David "Denial is a river in Deutschland" Irving. Hmmm. The idea of a debate as a contest of opposing notions no longer seems to apply in this gray cat world. Nonetheless, there are folks who take issue with the whole programme – trade unionists and student protest-types among them. So to keep these potential disrupters of free speech at bay, the Oxford police plan to mount a "ring of steel" around the debate hall in the city center. Ah, those clever Brits with their rings of steel. But how can any alloy match the pure glory of Das Rheingold?

Whilst in not-so-far-away London, HBSC Holdings announces its intention to bail out its two structured investment vehicles, or S.I.V.s, (pronounced sieves) by taking \$45 billion in assets onto its balance sheet. Denial being a river that flows through England as well. Newton would appreciate it: what is held must be dropped.

And then, there's the seesaw of things...

Closer to home, along the banks of the river Mu-he-kun-ne-tuk, so called by the Mahicans because it flows both ways, the stocks are laughing so hard, they're cracking down. At the closing bell, the S.&P. 500 and the Dow Jones indexes are pronounced by

the *Times* to be “officially in correction territory.” Stocks, manacles, or straight-jackets? Life jackets? Try using your seat as a flotation device. Denial is deep. And wide as ocean.

Legendarily, if you remember right, the top currents of the Styx flowed in the opposite direction to the currents below. In any case, Charon only takes coins, real, bitable currency. No derivatives, no mortgages, no plastic.

And again, the dollar sinks against the You-row.

Citigroup, its share price at lowest ebb in five years, having lost \$130 billion in market value, will send up to 45,000 wageslaves packing. *Children go where I send thee. Eleven for the eleven deriders. Twelve for the twelve Apostles...*

Children’s crusade.

Among the Thirty-Six Tactics, ancient military stratagems of China, which include such stunners as *Golden cicada sheds its skin; Kill chicken to scare monkey; Use other’s knife to kill; Rattle east strike west; Stage a false show of sight and sound*, the most direct, if the least poetic is: *Run*.

Holy cow. You look out your bedroom windows thinking to see the bright colors illumining the Empire State Building. But it’s a blackout fog. Only a third of a mile as the pigeon flies and nothing, nothing visible past Seventh Avenue. Gwen looks out with you. Says, “What if we wake up tomorrow and it’s not there?”

Not absolutely certain a presidential election will happen here in '08 despite all the fuss and bother about the candidates. If so it might be the last, or one of 'em. Hard to imagine us holding together politically much longer. Perhaps some form of governmental power-sharing as in Britain during WWII. The Constitution, such as it were, having already been devoured by goats. Or, if the scenario of a really bad war in the middle east plays out – threatens to widen even further – Bush might carry on with the consent of Congress.

From his listening post at Yaffa's café, Eric B. reports that Tribeca, of late, has been weirdly quiet.

Rave on, chanticleer.

11/27 Trickster doesn't lie, but he stirs things up. Walks along the road wearing a hat red on one side, black on the other, starts a controversy among folks who watched him pass about what color his hat was.

I spy-ral.

Weird clouds at nine-ish a.m. Unsettled electrical-fire smelling breeze, like the universe has turned into the dashboard of a fuse-blown car, furtive gusts without intention. If you were a doctor and could read the sky, you'd know what's ailing nature.

JFK, RFK, MLK. Holy moly, 3 K's – what's that about?

The trickster, the lightning, the clearing of the crossroads. Bell done rung.

O Chakra-tease, show me the power of your strange philosophy!

Rice grain = 1. Bean = 0. Arroz y frijoles. The digital world on a plate, and nutritious too.

All corn suggests wheat, all metal suggests gold, all birth suggests human beings. Suggested Meister Eckhart seven hundred odd years ago.

Flatiron, Chelsea streets: new to your eyes anyway, this construction technique. Toward the top of the building, diagonal shafts jut out like bowsprits, webbed together by a net. To catch falling materials, of course, but they give the building the look of a ghost ship, a Hesperus in the making, a derelict. Only creatures alive aboard, the rats. They're after the last of the biscuit and drunk as skunks on rum.

Acronymic conjunctions: What's the relationship between a SIV (Structured Investment Vehicle) and a VBIED (Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device) – given that they both blow up if not disarmed?

Do you smell the bells, Mr. Darktown?

After the ball is over...

Nonsense, one ball's ending begins another.

Smelt bells and vice versa.

Swiftly passes the heart potato.

Are you wit' me Dr. Dee?

Eliminate the... elevate the... sublimate the... bing! Bing! Let's call the whole thing...

Elevate that tripod, sublimate that pipkin, elixate your antimonie.

No no, sublimate your antinomy!

Aha, so much gained in the translation.

The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority pumps \$7.5 billion into Citigroup. Ding!
Saved by the Emirates! Saudi's oil minister promises to step up production – in
premature gratitude for future strikes against Iran – and the price of crude drops \$3 for
the barrel. Dong! Saved by the Wahhabis!

Still, *Faroum!* the bell tolls. The (emi)rates are computed thusly: The sheikdom

gets 11% dividend on its convertible preferred shares.

Gone are the days when Calouste Gulbenkian, genius behind the both the Ottoman and Persian petroleum consortia, asked for only modest compensation, earning for himself the sobriquet “Mr. Five Percent.”

Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines!

Hesperus is Phosphorus.

A ringing in the ears. An eary feeling.

11/28 Coming out of sleep, a course title: Advanced Love.

A line of debarkation. Point of demarcation.

Early morning Ba Gua facing south. Suddenly, left peripheral, a flame-colored gnomon. You turn. The metal smokestack on top of an industrial building at around Sixth and 18th has caught the rising sun. Survey the east. Paradoxical these bright highlights off so many windows and surfaces. Can't be illuminated directly, they face the wrong way, yet still they glow. Which makes the puzzle what and where the reflective surfaces are. The angles are too multiple. You'd never figure them out, not even a few, before the rotating earth moved all the goalposts. And what are the odds that these exact conditions will ever appear again?

Honey, if this isn't cholera, it'll have to do, until the real thing comes along.

Strange playwright this Lope de Marlowe.

Says the evaporating water molecule: *I will rain.*

Death of man who invented Gatorade, aged 80. He was not, as some rumormongers have suggested, consumed by a member of the *Crocodilia* family. Nope, Dr. Cade died of something more prosaic: kidney failure. But in this particular instance, that's a very curious cause.

You vividly recall how in Florence, in the sweltering summer of '91, the only proof against dehydration was to guzzle frequent bottles of the brightly-colored liquid the vendors called *Gah-tor-ah-day*.

Mille grazie!

Sarkosy vows to "bring rioters to justice." Oui, Nicholas, c'est bien entendu. Mais who will bring justice to the rioters?

Offered by today's *Pest*:

"A cell-for-cellphone-users policy has cost a judge his job.

"Judge Robert Restaino "snapped" and "engaged in what can only be described as two hours of inexplicable madness" in March 2005, when he jailed 46 people after none would 'fess up to owning a cellphone that rang in his Niagara Falls courtroom...

“Restaino was hearing domestic violence cases when the phone rang...”

Everything’s unthinkable until it’s think.

So distorted the loudspeakers in this subway car that at the 14th Street stop, what the conductrix says sounds like: “Change for the heaven and hell trains.”

Chelsea streets, evening. Mobs of people with necks crooked over and faces distorted as the mockers of Christ in a Hieronymus Bosch painting. Except they’re normal folks on cellphones.

The *Times* refers to the “just-completed Mideast peace conference in Annapolis,” when in fact what went down was a war huddle. If your nose is right, preliminary rails were laid for the strike against Iran by either us or the Israelis or both. Given Syria’s participation, Golan must’ve been on the table, Bashar’s presence induced by a judicious combination of stick – last September’s nuke strike – followed by carrot of potentially reclaimed territory. Or else they were tricked into thinking it was. As always, the Palestinians used as pawns. Oh hope your nose is wrong.