

1/4 Severe clear encore. Arctic on the ground. While up in the skydome, contrail city. As though a very distracted child was playing tic tac toe.

How many degrees of meaning? And how do they call and respond?

In response to Gaia theory, you've hatched Goya theory. Less to do with Latin food and more about a world in which two legless giants pummel one another with tree branches in a bleak and rocky landscape which trembles with their absurd yet deadly blows. Black painting in Darktown.

Turn out the light.

Except it's not time yet. Still morning, though two hours on and the distracted child in the troposphere is busy tracing over the lines he made earlier. Apparently the wind's so swift up there that whatever's sprayed disperses almost instantly, to who knows wheresville.

Boys, blow me outa here. Doesn't even have to be Bermuda. I'll settle for Carrickfergus.

But the sea is wide, and I cannot swim over.

Nor have I wings, or I would fly.

I wish I could find a handsome boatman,

To ferry me over, my love and I.

A welcome repudiation, last night, of the Clinton leviathan. Still, the hopeful caucus folks of Iowa went Baracking up the wrong tree – nor could one find, in so corrupt a woods, a right one.

How hard it is, with the scent so strong and one's blood up, to keep all four paws on the ground.

Under the rubric of "Health," the *Messenger* headline "Drugs Offer No Benefit in Curbing Aggression, Study Finds." So... give me that old time lobotomy.

But wait, there's more. A Bloomberg news release: "Merck Makes Deal to Develop Schizophrenia Drug." That is, they'll pay Addex [?!] Pharmaceuticals, a Swiss company, \$702 million to help develop a nostrum to focus on a "brain-signal transmitter linked to functions like mood and motor control." One is helpfully informed, in case one may be trolling for an investment opportunity, that "about 1 in 100 people have schizophrenia, which causes hallucinations and distorted thinking."

Let's see, there are, as of recent count, six point five billion folks on the planet. Of which, therefore, sixty-five million are schizophrenics. Wow that's some market daddy. Unless the numbers are being crunched by a schizophrenic experiencing hallucinations and distorted thinking.

Or could it be a new spin on the old developer's axiom: Make a drug and they will cop?

This may be the segue between the Holocene period and the Whole-obscene period. On verra.

Interspersed by the irregular crenellations of the downtown massif, a stunning sunset band of flame-orange, from east to west, fur as the eye can see. Cloudcover mostly, alas, or else you'd finally get a glimpse of our hero Holmes, making his way past Algal in the precincts of Perseus. Dance for a clear mañana.

The *Messenger* calls it a "fierce Pacific storm [that] howled into Northern California on Friday, bringing a treacherous mix of flooding, hurricane-force winds, and blizzard conditions for millions of residents." Dozens of power outages, affecting millions. Repair crews in some areas "retreat in the face of flying debris and tree limbs." Freak winds flip four trucks on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. Whitecaps slap at the foot of the SF airport runway and surging waves force the cancellation of cross-bay ferries. Collapsing scaffolds take down power lines and all over the city, folks dodge "airborne construction materials." South of the Bay Area, houses that survived when the fires raged and denuded the hills last fall now face the imminent threat of mudslides.

What to do but wonder at the work of these preternatural winds as they dance willy-nilly across the globe – winds that one somehow feels must have been born on some distant and harrowed moon, and have no idea how to behave themselves on earth.

If you were a river what would you do? Leave a dry bed, or overflow your bounds? Whose will is written in these wisps?

The feelings of mountains and streams, grasses and trees, are not far from those of humans, and it is wrong to think of them as nonsentient. That a stream should dry up in times of disorder is an ordinary, natural reaction.

Said Liu Zheng, around the time the choir of Beauvais cathedral was being piled, stone on stone.

John McCain, the country's pre-eminent legislative war criminal got clobbered in Iowa. Still he's hoping for a big win in New Hampshire where the Live Free Or Diers will presumably cotton to his campaign's rationale as nutshelled thusly by one of his aides: "If the world was stable, we could afford [a different GOP leader] as the national CEO. But in an unsafe and unstable world, Republican voters, and some independents, are coming to see that we need a warrior in the White House."

O' Mac, for his part asserts that it's fine for the U.S. to maintain a military presence in Iraq for "millions of years," as part of a "generally accepted policy of America's multilateralism."

1/5 Peekaboo duck.

Exit the dragon.

Drink up the white man's bourbon.

In the café this morning, F., introducing you to a friend, describes you as a polymath. Nice word that. Part of which is that you are, to some extent, a polygraph.

Denial is more than a river in Egypt. It's oceanic.

Nor just six degrees. A banana peel of separation.

Inhuman all-too-human.

Sweeny Clinton, the mad Bubba of Rhodes.

For the second straight day, serious contrail action in the late morning. It is written.

On the street, a general cellphoned-out obliviousness. A New York state of mindless.

Tell me O enchanting mahatma, tell me O wise Gopi, what is the relation among energy and ego?

The logs are in the flume.

One more cup of coffee 'fore I go – to the valley below.

From her aerie eighteen floors up, S. emails from Oakland with a firsthand report from of high wind in a high-rise: "Yesterday morning though about 1:30, the

winds were high and pounding like mad. You could see the winds beating the rain in giant vertical sheets across Lake Merritt, right in front of my building.”

The *Messengers* in their various incarnations, persist in using every possible formulation, up to and including “hurricane-force winds” to describe a storm that, for all intents and purposes, and given every atmospheric characteristic of one, *is* a hurricane – but they can’t say the H word.

It isn’t, after all, hurricane season – which has an official beginning and end and whose scope is restricted to a particular set of coordinates. Plus, hurricanes only form over sun-warmed water, right? Everyone knows that.

Still, if a furry four-legged animal that you petted cause it wagged its tail suddenly barked and bit you, then pissed on a fireplug, what kind of creature would you say it was? Still, appearances are deceptive? So you’d better tell the ER triage nurse you want a rabies shots ‘cause a “dog-like animal” sank its teeth into your hand. Phew. Safety. Behind a wall of words. Slide into someone more comfortable.

Shapeshifters of the world, dissimulate! You have a delusion to gain and a world to lose.

Still, eventually, dream comes to shove.

Upstairs, the sun reverses polarity. Bottom of one cycle, top of another. And if you lived a few latitudes north, tonight would be a biggie for auroras.

Northern India in a snap-freeze. Europe under a snowbank, including the U.K. Let it blow let it blow. And embrace the suck. But wherever, from killer storms in Madagascar to Washington, Oregon, Cally and Nevada – where 3,500 are stranded when a canal levee gives way and inundates five hundred homes with storm drainage – to massive waves Down Under, wind is the word and the word is...

Ah to skate, town to town, along the frozen canals of Holland drinking Genevres at every stop.

Castor and Pollux – c'mon you guys, help a fellow Gemini in need. If you can't manage Bermuda, or Holland in the 17th century, or Carrickfergus, then at least blow me to Duffy's Tavern.

"This weatherplay," writes S., "is quite a thing to witness. We just saw a blast of lightning a minute ago – very unusual for this area. But T-storms are being predicted for today and maybe tomorrow as well. This torrent is very different from lazy, slow Bay Area rains to which we are most accustomed."

What happens when Huracán comes north? Oh Maya! Mercy, mercy me.

Not the end of the world, just the gods attempting to create us. Again. Keep chanting "earth," and we might get born this time, right ways up for once.

1/6 Nacrescent end-of-an-epoch sky, Are we hatching from a clamshell? All new, yet somehow déjà vu.

Celebrate, however you may, the arrival of the Magi. 1, 2, 3. Cut the cake. Somewhere in the heart of it lurks the *fève*.

Join, join, conjoin. The disestablished states of the Americas: Canada, Mexico and southward to Tierra del fuego, and the slab in the sandwich: the former forty-eight U.S. of A plus Seward's Folly. Let Hawii be. Down at Panama, the oceans kiss already. No separation. Take it farther.

Mario seems truly downcast that the three kings cake he ordered has turned out to be the French kind, not the much larger and oval Mexican rosca de reyes, seeded with several porcelain muñecos. Still it's cut and shared among the assembled staff and early customers. One of the more withdrawn and hunted-looking of the kitchen workers receives the *fève*. By tradition he must invite everyone present to a tamale fiesta on February 2nd, Candelaria – a pre-and-post Christian holiday that now also signifies the taking of the baby from the manger and the exchange of his swaddling clothes for garments suitable for his presentation in the temple.

An unhappy couple, early-middle-aged, sits to your left at Table 5. The woman has a low, slow voice, very attractive, but your eyes turn to the window instead, to the roofline across Ninth Avenue. No way to tell in this ambivalent light whether it is morning, or nearing dusk.

Your dominant story has been that you have no lineage, that, like Topsy, you just grow'd. But you can trace your lines of blood and affinity if you allow the signs to cohere. The waves have not obliterated them entirely. It is possible to tell, however faint the traces, who walked where. And, like Holmes, to analyse the qualities of their footsteps and extrapolate from these, the nature of the ancestor.

Each Magus represents a cist: consist, subsist, persist.

In the beginning the word was with God. At the end, Word's gone to the dogs. No need to ask who let them out. Given time, it'll all come back to creation's exhale again. For now, à bout de souffle.

One guitar lick from Carlos Santana could defibrillate the the world heart.
Corazon Espinado. If it chooses to live.

Turn on the current, Nicola, and crank the Marshall to 11 and beyond.

At Table 5, the unhappy man seems more talkative now, between jam-spread bites of tartine. Coffee too, as rocket fuel for the spirit. As his voice gains in amplitude, the woman's timbre shifts upward and toward the staccato. Small loss of a sonic ideal.

Da-da, da-da, dum, he says. Ba, ba-da-ba-da-ba-da-bap! she replies.

The glass of your window is condensing on the inside. See, your finger makes a slash. Time to go. More and more her voice sounds like it's coming out of a coil. But

as you wrap your scarf and zip your jacket, her laugh breaks through. A mini-jolt through your fibers, dendrites, the works. Don't look, no face could compare to that laugh. Biking home will be cake now.

River deep. Mountain high.

Establish if you can a safe zone within.

Don't send all of your horesmen out of the castle at once.

Black dragon waves its tail.

Sparrow-hawk drills up to the sky.

Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, blow me to Bethlehem! Yearning to be born.

Progressive present: Bells am ringing. Holmes be homing.

So, given the nature of the struggle, *writing what you like*.

An extraordinarily tedious puppet show last evening as the candidates waved their string'd arms and clacked their wooden hing'd jaws in faux combat. Where is the purity of young Guignol and his bad cop adversary when one needs a breath of life-giving differentiation? Odd spectacle too, in that the Republicans came off, on the whole, as more dynamic and full-blooded than the gray-faced Democrats who followed

them after an “ecumenical” moment wherein all shared the stage in a kind of tepidly swirling mush of the slavering powermad.

The only reference – during the whole four hours of ungrounded abstraction – to the impact of governmental policies on actual living people was made by, of all odds and sods, Rudy, who claimed he had not, as mayor, enforced certain provisions of Federal immigration law because he saw them as “inhumane.”

As for Hillary, Barak and John, they appear to have run a gantlet but somehow not realized they came out the other side. Each looked more disoriented than the other. Like someone slipped ‘em a collective mickey. Or is it their own internal head trauma, the ego bashing away inside the skull, yearning to crack out and birth itself as another head, scanning frantically for an empty spot on anyone’s shoulder. Is it possible that the Democrats – to whom a TKO come November was handed on a silver plate – could contrive – against all odds and against, almost, nature herself – a way to fuck this up?

Like dogs fighting over a bone. Except the bone is their own hind leg. Youch!

Down to Claude’s with K. to pick up the galette des rois. You can see he’s busy back there among the pans and trays so you ask the woman at the counter to retrieve your order. Just as you turn to go, Claude’s face appears in the window between the kitchen and the front end of the shop. Eye contact. Inspired by the moment, you wave and call out *bonne année*. Not only does Claude avert his eyes, he springs back as if shocked. Visibly, you’ve intensified some already keen distress.

From thirty years ago when you first started patronizing his patisserie until fairly recently, Claude always favored you with a wan smile or a wave, and

occasionally, on particularly effusive days, a handshake. Your dialogues over cake orders were never lengthy but always cordial in tone. Now it seems your face reminds him of some primal horror, or confronts him with the evidence of a long-buried crime for which he bears conscious guilt, but cannot bring himself to atone. Your hair and his have gone gray, such as remains. His cakes, croissants and brioches remain perfect, unchanged.

3:55 p.m. Looking down Broadway and Amsterdam from 71st, a bright, metallic haze over midtown.

Whilst on the Left Coast, twin hurricanes suck inland from the not-so Pacific – a story which the BBC features more prominently than does the *Messenger*, and arguably with greater detail.

Bill Gates and a passel of other wannabe Earthlings are buying themselves a big ol' digital telescope on a mountaintop in Chile – one that will complete an incredibly hi-def sweep of the heavens every three nights. Among the, er, shareholders, in the venture is Charles Simonyi, a major lobe in the Microsoft brain, who last April paid twenty mil to rocket, tourist class, to the International Space Station.

But despite the \$500 million-odd pricetag for the Large Synoptic Survey Telescope, or L.S.S.T., the project's goals are demotic to the max. "It'll be a form of celestial cinematography," says J. Anthony Tyson, a physicist at the University of California, Davis. "The biggest movie ever." Tyson, chief PR man for the multinational constellation of universities, observatories and corporations, including Google, which

supports the project, says that the data gathered will be made immediately available to the public, allowing any and all interested parties to “mine the sky.”

Pero I me me mine as some Beatle once clicked.

1/7 After cryogenic days, an unseasonable thaw. After sunrise, another nacrescent WTF sky.

The carnival of souls sends shills up and down your spine.

Shave and half a haircut, 1.875 bits.

Once, not many years ago, yet still it seems a long time gone, a well-respected editor at a highly-regarded publishing house enthused: “You are my James Joyce.” Oy, such a benediction you wouldn’t wish on a god. And would she know a shout in the street if it bit her?

Bit her. Are you? Sometimes. Not every day. But yes, occasionally there is reflux.

The comfort of daughter.

Fog of friction in the Strait of Tonkin, er, the Gulf of Hormuz:

“WASHINGTON – In a brief confrontation in the strategically important Strait of Hormuz, five armed Iranian fast boats took aggressive actions on Sunday around three United States Navy warships in international waters, according to a Pentagon spokesman, who called the moves ‘reckless and dangerous.’

“The confrontation, which ended uneventfully after about 20 minutes, took place as the three American vessels were sailing into the Persian Gulf, according to Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman. The American vessels were a destroyer, a frigate and a cruiser.

“The Iranian government played down the episode, saying that it ended immediately when the vessels recognized one another. But Mr. Whitman and other officials described a tense confrontation in the strait, a narrow but vital passage through which millions of barrels of oil move each day. Oil prices on world markets spiked briefly on the news, which was first reported by CNN....

“...The United States has conducted significant war games to prepare for the kind of encounter that occurred over the weekend, as Navy officers have expressed concerns that the smaller Iranian fleet would choose to confront American warships in an asymmetrical manner by swarming with larger numbers of smaller craft.

“In an interview in Bahrain last month, Vice Adm. Kevin J. Cosgriff, commander of American naval forces in the region, said that while Iran was unlikely to try to close the strait, it might take actions to intimidate American allies in the Persian Gulf and to illustrate its ability to damage global prosperity. ‘I wake up thinking about Iran, I go to bed thinking about Iran,’ Admiral Cosgriff told reporters traveling with Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates during a visit to Bahrain.”

Sez *The Messenger* today.

Said the *Messenger* back in 1964:

“WASHINGTON, Aug. 4 – The Defense Department announced tonight that North Vietnamese PT boats made a ‘deliberate attack’ today on two United States destroyers patrolling international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin off North Vietnam.”

Then, three and a half years later, in February, 1968 came the headline:

“[Senator Wayne] Morse Declares Navy Messages Show Intent to Bait Hanoi in Gulf of Tonkin Incident of ‘64.”

By which time there were half a million American combat troops in Vietnam and, by year’s end, thirty thousand U.S. soldiers dead. Mostly members of y-y-your generation. Not the greatest generation perhaps, but the one which won’t get fooled again – oh no not we! These Americans abroad shared death with several million Vietnamese, combatants and non, their precise number never having been determined, in part because of the scale of the carnage.

BTW: Is it categorically possible for an event to end uneventfully?

While in New Hampshire, the snow blowers work with such fury one could easily mistake the haze of frozen crystals for a smokescreen.