

1/8 Après Ba Gua. Looking down toward SoHo from Sixth Avenue and 26th Street, the extended arm of the crane atop the high Trump steelwork makes the whole apparatus look like a gigantic skeletal Statue of Liberty.

The longing and the shortening of it.

On the sidewalk in front of your building, the two most beautiful gray on gray dappled pigeons you've ever seen. And in the grass, all hind legged alertness and shimmering fur, a completely intact squirrel.

Phone conversation yesterday with J. She wants to run an article contrasting Socialist Realism, Stalin's attempted iconographic monopoly, with what she calls Capitalist Realism, the urban surround of ad images and, in particular, the transformation, on Houston Street and elsewhere, of whole buildings into billboards.

Immediate flash on Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. You read her a few paragraphs from his book to which she responds enthusiastically, so you repeat them and she notes them down. The discussion continues and at one point you riff on a Debordian concept, to try and hook it into the present moment and find yourself saying something on the order of: *Commodified media as a whole, not just the sides of buildings, has become a delivery system for nihilism and Thanatos.*

You hear an unvoiced *huh?* on the other end of the line, followed by a sentence very like: "I can't put that in the piece – my readers are architects and builders and they're not very sophisticated with language."

Whamo, there it is, you've walked straight into the glass wall again. When will

you give your poor nose a break?

California, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, all whipped by demonic winds. A chartered bus swept off a mountain road in Utah killing nine.

Tornados in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Wisconsin. Wisconsin?! In Illinois a twister derails a locomotive and several tanker cars, one of which bursts open in an effusion of brake fluid. Tornado watch in Tennessee. Torrential rains, hence flooding in Indiana threaten a dam on the Tippecanoe river.

"On Monday," says a report from AP, "Bill Lischka was drinking coffee at a restaurant in Caledonia, Ill., when he heard something he didn't expect in January: a tornado siren.

"'Next thing you know...a tornado just popped right out of the clouds,' Lischka said.

"Al Ost said he 'prayed like a sissy' as he fled to the basement of his house in Boone County, Ill.

"Hardest hit Monday in Wisconsin was a subdivision in Wheatland, about 50 miles southwest of Milwaukee, where at least 60 homes were damaged, Kenosha County sheriff's Lt. Paul Falduto said Tuesday morning.

"'With the light of day it always looks worse than at night,' Falduto said."

While in Darktown, it's seventy degrees and muggy.

The Pentagon treats AP to an exclusive screening of its video of the Bight of

Tonkmuz incident. Whereupon the news service reports: "Small Iranian fast boats swarmed around U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf, and a man speaking heavily accented English threatened, 'I am coming to you. ...You will explode after...minutes.'"



A skry for help.

BBC News online shows a heavily-edited video clip of a pair of tiny blue boats zooming past what look like some U.S. Navy ships. With the exception of a voice

saying “you are approaching coalition warships – state your intention,” the audio is indecipherable.

Whilst in the Granite State’s primary, John McCain, who, but for the Tonkin incident, might never have had the opportunity to play his part in Operation Rolling Thunder, flying twenty-three missions over North Vietnam in support of General Curtis LeMay’s stated goal of bombing that country “back into the stone age,” handily defeats his Republican rivals. His wife, Cindy, blinks back tears, presumably of joy, just as Hillary, narrow Democratic victor, and better half of the Mad Bomber of Kosovo, did yesterday in what the *Messenger* termed “The Show of Emotion Heard ‘Round the World,” proving, as though it needed to be shown again, that the water works. Every time.

Adjacent on the front page, news that the nation’s go-to donut maker has fallen upon hard times. “What’s Next,” the *Messenger* asks, “for Krispy Kreme?”

1/9 7:10 a.m. The east is green.

Est-ce que ce monde est sérieux?

Nine for the nine who saw the sign.

Yes, around the rising orange ball, a corona of green. A distinct verdancy. Chlorophylliac. Would that it were an afterimage. But no, it’s continuous.

And the cock crows from New Hampshire echo down to Darktown.

In the event.

*...I saw the figure 0
in silver
on a green
fire truck
moving...*

At the café this a.m., T. picks up on the shift in your mood. You wish you could remember the exact language he used, but you repressed an urge to respond with a pun on one of his words. He went on to say he thought you'd opened up a deeper vein of irony. Interesting, though, how his highly attuned receptors picked up on your distress.

What do the French say when the dawn's tinged emerald?

Ooh, vert.

The most important personal and social lesson a child must learn, is to be disappointed and to have few or no expectations. Furthermore to diminish any expectations she or he may harbor at the drop of a hat. Disappointment needs to transmute, reduce really, into blame which may be turned against the self or other

according to circumstances. Blame as distinct from responsibility, but in any case certainly neither must be seen in their proper scale.

The expectations piece works thusly. Let's say the child wishes to become a doctor in expectation that much of her or his life ahead will consist of easing the suffering of others. At some point, the adult physician comes to grasp, however unconsciously, that the *reason* they are a doctor is so the stock in illness-interested corporations may go up. The long-term deployment of their labor and energy toward remediating pain and disease is a tertiary thing at best, to be considered long after the alpha and beta pigs have been slopped. In short, a doctor is a factor of production whose cost the forces of profit-making will perforce seek to reduce.

Or, say, the eight-year-old wishes to become a policeman in order fight crime, right wrongs, restore what's been unjustly taken. One need not build the scenario out to an adult policeman's experiences to see how much these actualities differ from the child's expectations.

How then, does one adjust? With difficulty. But it's easier if the child has been trained in advance. And it helps too if they've got a lot of company in the overarching game, which, however much ambivalence creeps in, must be ever pushed toward zero sum.

Dum da dumb it down.

Wind and unwind the iPod wire. What beast, rough or smooth, shuffles toward Bethlehem...?

Late breakfast at The Bon Vivant (*Fine Dining* says the awning) on Broadway between 11th and 12th. This place, a traditional “Greek” coffee shop, has been here since time immemorial – since Rafik sold some of NYC’s first public falafels out of the back of an Irish bar ‘cross the street. You order the Omelette à la Grecque, with spinach and feta, prepared by a Mexican. Delicious.

Outside, an unusual-looking fellow enters the your view, passes across the big plate glass window, exits the frame unpursued by a bear. He’s Asian, thin and not very tall, wears a trench coat, yet something about his forelock and mustache make you flash on Charles Bronson playing Columbo.

Viewed from Union Square Park, clouds rumbling northeast across the skydome like an A-train full speed through a local station.

Old saying: *Man who stick head up Khyber Pass looking for Bin Laden find only last night’s shish kebab...*

Oh master, come tell us your wu shu tales.

The sole cause of man’s unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room. Said Blaise, who could do more things than calculate.

Lettuce calculate! Sure, why not? Ask any vegetable...

But in the meantime, go figure.

Tell me, vy, O, vy couldn't Gottfried Wilhelm lieb vell enitz allein?

Breaking news! Fermat's theorem solved, quite independently, by a Starbuck's Frappuccino Light Blended Crème® visiting New York City, a Tazo Tea® based in Seattle and an Iced Skinny Cinnamon Dolce Latte® growing up in Shanghai. Can a beverage win the Nobel Prize? Porque no?

Yes, eventually primaries will pass. But then come the secondaries, tertiaries, quaternaries. And it doesn't stop there. Factors of twelve, yo. The trick is, whomever wins, demand a recount.

Clinton and McCain: a plaque on both their houses.

Writing this book, or any book really, how odd. Unseasonable as a sixty-four degree afternoon in January.

Rattle west, strike east. Under cover of primaries, launch a vast – *ssshhhhhh, it's a secret!* – offensive against the Sunni Breadbasket, a land fertilized by a river which begins in the mountains of Kurdistan Iran, near the site of an ancient city and whose name, Sirwan, means roaring or shouting waters. Eventually, south of Baghdad, the river, now called the Diyala, spills into the Tigris.

Still, when you're a giant, it's hard to walk quietly, even if you throw a boulder way over there to distract your intended prey, a folktale which the *Messenger* uttered

thusly:

“...In any case, it is hard to conceal thousands of American soldiers and scores of armored vehicles, Iraqi military units, interpreters and support workers moving into place through highways and towns in central Diyala [Province], even though their movements were staggered and mainly at night.

“According to First Lt. Max Ferguson, of Company I, Third Squadron, Second Stryker Cavalry Regiment, residents reported that fighters with Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia were tipped off that the offensive was imminent ‘because of the increase in helicopter traffic overhead.’

“The current operation is larger than the one in June, when half or more of the estimated 300 to 500 insurgents escaped from Baquba before the offensive. The soldiers advancing Tuesday encountered numerous improvised roadside bombs and booby traps, barely detectable except for telltale filaments of copper wire glinting in the early-morning sun through the undergrowth and orange trees....”

Whilst in Jerusalem, robots are sent into sewers below the King David Hotel to check for potential bombs. And why? ‘Cause that’s where Bush is staying on his, er, visit to the Middle East. All part of Operation Clear Skies, sir!

Snipers on the rooftops, balloons equipped with cameras, twenty armored limousines and fifteen U.S. trained canine explosives detection teams barely hint at the scale of the festivities.

Ah, yes, the King David, where, *kan ya makan* – 22 July, 1946 to be exact – the Irgun blew up ninety-one people, mostly Arab, though the conceptual targets were British officers. This event celebrated in the Leon Uris book *Exodus* and subsequent

movie (1960) – screenplay by Dalton Trumbo of all people – wherein the young Paul Newman played our Zionist hero, Ari Ben Canaan, prior to his Butch Cassidy episode and the ultimate dispersion, Mona Lisa-like, of his visage onto a gazillion lemonade cartons and jars of marinara sauce.

Wait around, it all turns into farce. Best eaten al dente and washed down with a good glass of vin ordinaire.

Yesterday it was “Look what you did – you made your momma cry.” Today, Bill’s smirk emerges like a trickster sunray from behind Saturnine clouds. “Gotcha!” He can’t help it. She can’t help it. Nor can we poor mortals, more bound up by far in the moods of the gods than in the chafing here and anxious now of our present conditions.

Unless: “Surfers Defy Giant Waves Awakened by Storm.”



Robert Brown/Billabong XXL Big Wave

Mike Parsons, 42, was among four surfers who rode waves of 80 feet or more along the Cortes Bank.

“I’ve made some heavy missions out to Cortes Bank. But this time, it was all on the line: The biggest storm. The biggest swell. The biggest buoy readings ever seen. And as far as the risk factor, it was off the charts.”

“We looked out to the north at these giant mountains of water, and the wind was just perfect. It was creating these giant, giant tubes.”

“We couldn’t go fast enough. The waves were moving so fast it felt like we were moving backwards.”

Coffee at Wolfgang’s. Among other subjects, the dollar’s fall versus Euro purchasing power. Fueled by his espresso, you declare Manhattan condos to be “like a tulip bulb you can live in,” which he finds most amusing. Though on reflection, when all else fails you can plant the bulb and, under the right conditions, something beautiful, will grow. Which makes the bulb, in a sense, priceless. But what happens when the bubble investment consists of a badly built apartment, one that exacts a constant toll for upkeep?

What were you watching when the lights went out?

1/10 Asteroid 2005 WJ56, possessing a girth of 1.2 km and a magnitude of 11 will zing by today at eleven lunar distances.

And on the sun, not a spot to be seen.

The babalaos have spoken. The goddess this cycle round is Oya, ruler of winds and fertility, and the life of the underworld. Womb energy, yo, and like you say, everyone knows it's windy. Justice – which can be spiritual – in the interests of peace. She's the one to call when you get in trouble.

Eleuga's her male counterpart *cette année*, a well-known trickster who also goes by Eshu and more aka's than you can shake a crooked cane at. Elegba. One of your students, a practitioner of Haitian dance, referred to you once, who knows how seriously?, as Papa Legba – part of whose nature is to serve as an intermediary between human beings and gods and, like Mercury, communicate among gods – since which time you've had an affinity for he who manifests himself best at the crossroads. And when are we not at a crossroads?

He's about the relation among false and true, though one can't say he lies. Just loves to use folks' tendency toward self-deception. Toward needing a Truth. One fable for instance, has him strolling down, say Bleecker Street, a path abounding in three road convergences, hence danger. He's wearing a hat that's red on one side, black on the other and being Elegba, he gets plenty of attention. Everyone notices him pass. But is his hat red, or black? Well, you know for sure that it's red 'cause you saw it and the guy on the other side who swears it's black is either blind or crazy or a liar, or playing you for a fool. *Tu me prend pour un con!* So he gets people agitated. Riled up. Leaves it up to them whether to laugh it off, or reach in their back pocket.

Red and black, children. Hurricanes and treachery and that which abides

below the surfaces on which we walk and within the bellies of women.

Red *and* black. Black *and* white. Double red, for Oya.

Heartbreaking and criminal what we're visiting on the people of Diyala. Scores of tons of bombs, house to house terror by our boots on the ground. Let not one orange tree stand upright, nor a stone remain atop another. Beyond words. How can we ever atone?

...The drummer he looks shattered

Trying to keep up time...

...Me I'm just waiting so patiently

Lying on the floor

I'm just trying to do my jig-saw puzzle

Before it rains any more...

A hawk, a large one, gray, circling round above the convergence of Sixth Avenue, Greenwich Avenue and Christopher Street. Does it nest in the clock tower of the Jefferson Market Courthouse?

Autonomy of the bone.

You're not seeing things, you're seeing things.

Syzygy.

We may have lost their sense, but words know what they mean. Por ejemplo, The World Trade Center Captive Insurance Co. – no joke – whatever does that signify? Y la respuesta: a fund with assets of \$1 billion charged by Bloomie with paying medical expenses of ground zero workers including nearly nine thousand who suffer from respiratory and other toxin-induced conditions.

Today's *Post* reports that the fund's CEO, a skinflint named Christine LaSala, is stepping down, her descent assisted, to be certain, by hizzoner, who, formulaically "deeply regrets her departure."

Says LaSala: "After nearly four years at the WTC Captive, I have concluded that this is an appropriate point to resume my retirement."

The fund has thusfar spent \$100 million, much of it for legal fees to fight worker's claims, and a good deal on staff salaries – LaSala's annual slice came to \$350,000. Payouts total \$320,000, to six workers with orthopedic injuries. And yes, along the way the Fund has picked up some pricey perk tabs: cocktails at the Waldorf-Astoria and dinners at Giovanni Ristoranti for LaSala, a gaggle of attorneys and a pack of "Captive executives."

In Mozambique, the Zambezi overflows displacing 45,000, likely only the beginning given torrential rains in northern Zimbabwe, southern Zambia and Malawi which show no sign of letting up any time soon.

Sir Edmund Hillary dies at 88. Though no photographs document Hillary atop the summit, Tenzing Norgay, who died in 1986, stuck by the official account of his

supporting role. "If it is a shame to be the second man on Mount Everest," he said, "then I will have to live with this shame." Still, "It has been a long road... From a mountain coolie, a bearer of loads, to a wearer of a coat with rows of medals who is carried about in planes and worries about income tax."