

1/19 Ser o estar, esa es la pregunta.

“Steel” scaffolding parts made in China for use on NYC skyscrapers – who knows, maybe recycled bits of the World Trade Center. But even if not, how funny is that – importing crap metal from a place where they use bamboo for the same purpose?

Look out. Sky qi is all fucked up.





1/20 Mind leads qi. Blood follows qi.

Avoid, if you can, the three harms. The six harmonies – cultivate 'em.

Silk reeling. Too slow, the thread sticks to itself and tangles. Too fast or hard, filament snaps.

Phoenix eats its ashes.

A not is a knot. Tension is not intention.

Searching the sea.

Some notice when birds fly. Some how birds fly. Others neither or both.

Swallow skims the water.

Black dragon enters the cave.

King arises from the throne.

J., a friend from Chicago emails in response to *BW* installment 10. She's been rereading Emerson's "Self-Reliance."

...The sinew and heart of man seems to be drawn out, and we are become timorous, desponding whimperers. We are afraid of truth, afraid of fortune, afraid of death, and afraid of each other....

...We want men and women who shall renovate life and our social state, but we see that most natures are insolvent, cannot satisfy their own wants, have an ambition out of all proportion to their practical force and so do lean and beg day and night continually. Our housekeeping is mendicant, our arts, our occupations, our marriages, our religion we have not chosen, but society has chosen for us. We are parlor soldiers. The rugged battle of fate, where strength is born, we shun.

She signs off: "Cheers (despite all)..."

Three tigers descend the pass.

Nine ghosts drawing swords.

Pushing heaven and earth.

Once upon a time in what is now the 14th arrondissement, a giant named Isoré, Isouard, Isoire or Issoire used to attack and kill travelers on the Orleans road, and in particular pilgrims heading toward Saint-Jacques-de-Campostelle. Others report that Isoré was a Saracen come to Paris at the head of an army of 10,000 men. Somehow, the giant was caught and killed, and, given his enormous size, buried on the spot. He shared, perhaps, a cavern with the bodies of Knights Templars of Malta, in what is now the Ossuary of Denfert-Rochereau, one section of the astonishing and labyrinthine Catacombs.

But as of today, Isoré no longer reposes underground. He sits, in purple hat, plum-colored shirt, green pants and black boots, looking quite tame and almost rueful, and despite his awesome frame, suspended in mid air, legs drawn up against his chest, his back against the diagonal corner wall of the *École Maternelle* on the rue de la Tombe-Issoire. Once fearsome, he has become the kindergarten's guardian. With help from a sculptor friend, Corinne Béoust, he's just hanging out.

Overlord holds up the tripod.

Rhinoceros gazes at the moon.

Plucking and resetting stars.

1/21 Birthday of MLK who would've been 79. Holmes swallows al-Ghul, eye of Medusa.

Department of things passed by often yet not noticed: the brick tenement at 233 Ninth Avenue between 24th and 25th has a vernacular weather station on the roof.

You only spot it this a.m. because a phenomenal number of fire trucks have converged on both sides of Ninth, called to a blaze that may or may not exist in the building next door. This is deducible from observing that the firemen deployed on the street, and their more numerous brothers taking shelter from the arctic air inside their trucks, are all gazing toward the roofline of number 235 with the fixity of so many devout Catholics awaiting a puff of white smoke from the Vatican chimney.

But you see no smoke, nor human action within the building. So your eye wanders one rooftop to the south, where there is movement: the whirling cups of a pair of anemometers, a weather vane, a wind sock and the subtler motions of a host of other instruments whose function remains a mystery to you.

You sit there on your bike for a moment or two, exhaling steam. A civilian fellow wearing shorts is chatting up one of the fireman who, like his compatriots keeps staring at the roofline. Cold begins to seep in through your knitted cuffs. You become conscious of your toes. Up and away, homeward, to the news that all over Asia,

markets are collapsing in freefall, like the badly-made scaffolds of a dozen nonexistent towers.



Bernd Kammerer/Associated Press

And then Europe.

Ape arms enliven the blood.

Wei Tuo presents the pestle.

Jade dragon weaves around the body.

Uniting the original qi.

You get a sense, at least in the West, that many people – beyond panic or fatalism – actually welcome deep down the idea of the market’s collapse. It’s as though finally, finally, a force has entered the scene that’s powerful enough to ground us. To slow the awful march of what has passed for progress. And now internally we’ve opened up a space for this great energy – more puissant by orders of magnitude than any mundane Other – to do its thing.

Strange how, by the billions, we can convince ourselves that our bidding has brought to bear what’s happening. Wilde moment, wish-wise. And beware too the eruptive rising of yang.

Such as: horrible fire in Lawrence, MA. Sixteen wood-framed buildings destroyed. No fatalities denks gott. But out into the frigid night go scores of the most economically vulnerable people in these United States. Arson, it seems.

Exploitation, pronounced ex-ploy-shun. Explosive exploitation is what it sounds like to you. But it’s up for grabs, and easily imprinted with meaning since it’s hot out of the forge.

The Indian. And there’s one comfort. I heard the wise Iachim, looking down when the railroad cut was fresh, and the bleeding earth offended us. There is nothing made, he said, and will be nothing made by these new men, high tower, or cut, or buildings by a lake that will not make good ruins.

Judith. Ruins? This?

The Indian. Why, when the race is gone, or looks aside only a little while, the white stone darkens, the wounds close, and the roofs fall, and the walls give way to rains. Nothing is made by men but makes, in the end, good ruins.

Van. Well, that's something. But I can hardly wait.

Wrote Maxwell Anderson in *High Tor*, a piece of '37.

Have I already indicated that even before the revolution, the entire city of New York, and in particular Manhattan Island, had been in ruins for a long time? I am speaking of course of the surface constructions, those in what is still called the open air. One of the last houses still standing, the narrator's, located in the West Village, is now in the hands of a team of dynamiters. Having invoked the plan to construct soon, in its place, something higher and more modern, these four men with severe faces, dressed in dark gray sweatshirts, are skillfully and diligently planting all through the building their Bickford fuses and explosive charges, with a view to an explosion which cannot be long in coming now. Cut.

So wrote that bad, bad man, Alain Robbe-Grillet, *kan ya makan*.

Below runs the entirety of footnote #24, cut, like hundreds of its sister and brothers – perhaps unwisely – from the final draft of *Divided We Stand*:

Though “boom” has many, including several nautical definitions, its usage here is of recent U.S. origin “with reference not so much to the sound (of a distant cannon or large bell) as to the suddenness and rush with which it is accompanied.” It is worth reproducing here in full the first OED definition and its etymology. **1. a.** A start of commercial activity, as when a

new book, the shares of a commercial undertaking, or the like 'go off' with a 'boom'; a rapid advance in prices; a sudden bound of activity in any business or speculation. ¶ 1879 *Lumberman's Gaz.* 19 Dec.: There has not been the boom upon lumber experienced in many other articles of merchandise. 1880 *World* 3 Nov. 5: The election of the American President is expected to be followed by a 'boom' that will take up prices. 1884 *St. James' G.* 26 Jan. 4/1: With the revival of prosperity in the United States the great boom in railway properties set in. 1884 *Times* 28 Nov. 4 Building 'Boom' in the United States. – MARSTON *Frank's Ranche* 36: One railroad spoils a town, two brings it to par again, and three make a 'boom.' 1911 E.M. CLOWES *On Wallaby* ii. 31: The Land Boom – 'the Boom', as it is always called... had a most potentially humanizing effect on the people. 1936 M. PLOWMAN *Faith called Pacifism* 28: The people of this country were enjoying a post-war boom. 1955 *Bull. Atomic Sci.* Mar. 88/2: Thus the uranium boom began. 1966 *Economist* 19 Nov. 778: The country is in boom and therefore deficit. ¶ **b.** Phr. *boom and (or) bust*: a period of great prosperity followed by a severe depression. orig. U.S. ¶ 1943 H.S. CANBY *Walt Whitman* iii. 18: The building trade, as usual, suffered from boom-and-bust. 1947 D. REISMAN in *Yale Law Jrnl.* Dec. 194: The luxury market would be... entitled... to its privilege of boom and bust. 1962 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 13 July 502/1: Cataclysmic alternatives – destruction or utopia, boom or bust.

A boom is associated with a bull market, its compelling image drawn from the headlong charge of an aroused bovine. Another sort of bull, this

one the official Papal edict, comes from the Latin *bullā*, a bubble or swelling. So in the peculiar, elliptical way of language, we come around to the tulip, Mississippi, South Seas and other celebrated investment bubbles.

Following these associations one leap further, a friend with ties to the international investment community related to me a Japanese client's business reversals since the market "crapped" in 1987. This word, a rich neologism, sounding like a conflation of *crash* and *collapse* – is mentioned here to illustrate the epiphanies possible in the play of language. When we make an unlucky dice throw and "crap out," our speculative bubble bursts, our boom turns bust, and we return violently from airy heights to primal soil – to the cellar of our dreams. q.v. Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* and OED definitions of "crap," among them wheat chaff, beer dregs, fat renderings and excrement.

Still, Phoenix eats its ashes.

Bing bong. *Doce de la noche en Darktown, Nueva York.*