

4/26 *Sharia ya shahadat!* Sharia or martyrdom! Among some, a popular chant these days.

4/27 Talmudic solutions: If there is no wood to knock on, another material, say aluminum or styrofoam, may take its place. Should there be only nine men on a desert island, nine men and a chicken can make a minyan. Or an asparagus.

Dark, dark morning. Light rain. Down Ninth Avenue, a never ending stampede of cars, headlights on, wipers working doubletime.

5/1 Beltane.

Conversation with Gioia wherein you work your way around to the triumphs of various wills. She mentions Frankl and the will to meaning. So essential, so different in its quality from the wills to pleasure, or power.

5/3 Melinda, to accompany her stone boat sculpture, "Passage," has composed these words:

We cross the centuries of our watery colonizer to reside in each other's gaze.

5/4 Galloping days.

Look again at the video of the towers pancaking. All those little puffs of smoke or dust at the corners, like multiple Vatican chimneys. Scores of popes being born.

When you first started coming here to write beneath the forest green canopy, the place was called Café Le Gamin. A few years ago it became Le Grainne Café, eponymously after the new owner, a woman of Cork you believe, whose name means Isolde in Gaelic. Practically no one who doesn't speak Irish can say her name right, so they usually refer to Café Granny, when it's supposed to sound as "gron-ya."

As a result of "Le Gronya" not exactly tripping off the tongue, folks have variously taken to euphemisms: "the watering hole," "the living room," "Le G.," "the G. spot," "the council elm," or some such alias.

This morning, as you park your bike, you watch a third jet complete a triple cross of white contrails up across the skydome. Far higher, wisps of what appear to be genuine cirrus slowly migrating east toward where strange rhomboid clouds lower over the building tops. What to do but shake your head and breathe whatever's in the air.

From the gutter wafts some rank barf splashed alongside a mosaic of tire-flattened restaurant debris. If you had a choice you'd infinitely rather navigate around conventional refuse, even piles of dogshit like back in the day, rather than deal with whatever it is that parties unknown are pumping into the atmosphere. If.

Click goes the bike lock. Ah, Table 4 is open, though it's ten or so minutes after 8 and it's the hot spot. Alan and Mark talking amiable across Table 5. Under the awning you go, to catch an hour, *hors de combat*, at least in your mind, among friends inside the Green Zone.

So intense the texture of day-to-day life that it only dawns on you now, several days after the fact, that Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia

and New Zealand, and her consort, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, visited Virginia to comfort those who lost loved ones in the Virginia Tech massacre. The Queen! Jamestown. Sir Walter. Declaration of what?

5/6 The French, gol durn 'em. It's like having a puppy dog that follows you around. We have a revolution, they have a revolution. We go fascist, they go fascist. G'wan, France, get a vie!

The occasion rises to itself.

Whoever says You does not have something for his object. For wherever there is something there is also another something; every It borders on other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering on others. But where You is said there is no something. You has no borders.

Whoever says You does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation.

Said Buber.

Désouvrement: in Blanchot's sense, an un-working.



Local artists display their skills with murals on the blast barriers and concrete walls that dot Baghdad.

Above which caption a photo of a man in blue overalls painting – across a good ten meters of ad hoc vertical concrete – a stampede of wild horses – alternately brown and white, manes flying,. Reminds you of *The Horse's Mouth*, a book you never read, but that's supposed to be quite good. Saw the movie as a child though, with Alec Guinness and remember the name of his character, Gully Jimson, a painter-muralist, and recall his delight at discovering, through his (drunken) POV, a dilapidated alley and down at the end of it, the wall of his dreams.

The picture and caption come from the May 5, 2007 online issue of *The Telegraph*, UK. Astonishing the journalistic prose these days. In what universe of urban physics does it become possible for a wall to “dot”?

5/7 La belle France has turned Sarkopathetique.

Ah, non, they have fallen into a Sarkolepsy.

Mais, non, aucune des deux phrases n'est vrai. They've leaped into a Sarkasm.

5/11 When I was a kid, I wanted to be like Ivy, eating little lambs all the time.

O body, make of me always a man who questions. Said Fanon.

The world, coming to a boil.

5/14 The *Times* front page attempts the editorial equivalent of an old-school KGB pistol shot to the head:

Ground Zero Illnesses Clouding Giuliani's Legacy. You can almost smell the gunpowder. And when, oh when, does the gray lady deign to quote a labor leader out on a topic extrinsic to union politics per se?

Yet here is Lee Clarke, director of health and safety for District Council 37, the city's largest public employees' union, asserting that Giuliani used "very, very poor judgment" in rushing the clearance of the trade center site and reopening the area for business. They even let Clark close the article by speculating that if the Ground Zero workers found themselves in a meeting with Giuliani today, "a number of them would be standing up, wanting a piece of Rudy."

All taxonomy and no meaning.

5/16 Andreas Gursky: a too-realist.

Marianne says "tornado watch," so you pedal out onto Pier 66. Stand for a

moment by the water wheel. Hudson's heading north. Approaching from over the Jersey bluffs, the closest thing you've seen to a day-black sky. Dead calm in this spot, barometric void, but down a few blocks, near where the Frying Pan used to be moored, a veritable sandstorm sweeps eastward from the construction site into Galleryville.

You ride homeward, pumping to stay ahead of the front, and arrive under the scaffolding just at the point where it feels as though the sky's about to open its floodgates or else the wind god-demons will start ripping trees out of the ground. But somehow the river must have dissipated the brunt of the crucial force, so you spend a half hour hanging out in back of your building by the dumpsters with José, watching the top branches of the sycamores dance, and nothing, really nothing, out of the ordinary going down below.

So it's down to this: "Commander's Veto Sank Threatening Gulf Buildup" via Gareth Porter of Interpress News Service.

"Adm. William Fallon, then President George W. Bush's nominee to head the Central Command (CENTCOM), expressed strong opposition in February to an administration plan to increase the number of carrier strike groups in the Persian Gulf from two to three and vowed privately there would be no war against Iran as long as he was chief of CENTCOM, according to sources with access to his thinking...

"Fallon's resistance to a further buildup of naval striking power in the Gulf apparently took the Bush administration by surprise...

"At a mid-February meeting of top civilian officials over which Secretary of Defense Gates presided, there was an extensive discussion of a strategy of intimidating Tehran's leaders, according to an account by a Pentagon official who attended the

meeting given to a source outside the Pentagon. The plan involved a series of steps that would appear to Tehran to be preparations for war, in a manner similar to the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

“But Fallon, who was scheduled to become the CENTCOM chief March 16, responded to the proposed plan by sending a strongly-worded message to the Defense Department in mid-February opposing any further U.S. naval buildup in the Persian Gulf as unwarranted...

“Fallon’s refusal to support a further naval buildup in the Gulf reflected his firm opposition to an attack on Iran and an apparent readiness to put his career on the line to prevent it. A source who met privately with Fallon around the time of his confirmation hearing and who insists on anonymity quoted Fallon as saying that an attack on Iran ‘will not happen on my watch.’

“Asked how he could be sure, the source says, Fallon replied, ‘You know what choices I have. I’m a professional.’ Fallon said that he was not alone, according to the source, adding, ‘There are several of us trying to put the crazies back in the box.’”

5/17 Entire generations have come to maturity innocent of the notion that language might be a vehicle for containing ideas.

Try a little *Socialism* in your life!

José Padilla. The reason they are trying him so publicly – unlike those unfortunate invisible ones in Guantánamo – is to demonstrate how possible it is to break down a man. If they can do this to him, then what about you?

The police disperse a crowd of potential voters by firing rubber ballots at them.

Once upon a time in the East, post-bellum industrial cities were dangerous places to be a kid. Huge numbers of young folk were trampled by horses, run over by carts, or hit by trains, a set of conditions the *Times* conflated into the trope “child slaughter.” Hence the growth, among the urban working class, of the practice of taking out “life” insurance on one’s children. Thus ran the logic: for a total sum of \$10, paid in installments of a few pennies per week, one could safeguard against the tragedy of a child’s loss being compounded by a diminution of the surviving family’s income.

One day in 1893, as she crossed Ludlow Street, a seven-year-old named Ettie Pressman was run down by a team of horses and killed. Though the insurers disputed the amount of the sum due, the court awarded her grieving father \$1,000 in compensation for Ettie’s future “services and earnings.”

There’s a theory about why the pronghorn antelope of the West – also known as the “prairie ghost” – can run at up to sixty miles per hour, twice as fast necessary to escape its predators. The notion is that the pronghorn clips along at a ghostly blur to escape a ghost predator, a species of lion or dire wolf that didn’t survive the megafaunal extinctions of 14,000 or so years ago.

5/20 A young German couple has been coming to the café for years, and for years you’ve nodded to them and in turn they’ve acknowledged you. Their comportment, to your eye, suggested a kind of Egon Schiele-like dissolution, and in the absence of

discourse, your imagination ran with that notion. Until, finally, a conversation today, in which it comes out that S. works for a company in Arnsberg that manufactures a device called the AirRobot[®]. He writes down the url on a napkin, and later, at your desk, you watch a video wherein the wing'd thing zooms around inside a convention center, then swoops over a variegated countryside, the latter shown from the AirRobot's eye view. Click on the little English flag and up comes the copy.

MISSION POSSIBLE

Picture the scene: dangerous ground, darkness, and obstacles.

If only one could fly in such situations... Right, human beings can't fly, but with the AirRobot[®] you can get pretty close. The AirRobot, an exceptionally light and quiet video probe capable of autonomous flight, can be flown without any pilot experience.

This flight platform is directed like a CNC [computer numerical control machine in the air: the pilot can fully concentrate on his exploration mission.

Due to its silent electric drive, its diameter of one meter and its weight of less than one kilogram, the AirRobot can also be used in residential areas. Our customers include mainly the police and the army. Further application areas in which the AirRobot proves itself are fire brigade missions, security missions and aerial photography.

Built into the AirRobot as well are night vision and thermal cameras. Think of the possibilities. Next time they're in for breakfast, you'll find out more of their story.

5/22 Global warming, or is it just our blood coming to a boil?

Purple faces, foam sliding down. All chairs electric.

Rearranging electric chairs on the Titanic.

5/23 Trellis full of miracles.

Half a league, half a league

Half a league onward...

5/24 Twin valves open the floodgates on two great streams of lucre. On page 2 of the *Post*: "WTC insure war is over. A deal at last. Seven holdouts agree to pay final \$2 billion Total payout to be \$4.55 billion." Thus the Swiss pony up on something less than the value of two discrete "events" but certainly more than one.

Kicked into the tall grass of p. 27: "9/11 TOXIC SLAY: Civilian's '02 lung death a homicide." Felicia Dunn-Jones, a 42-year-old civil rights lawyer, engulfed in dust on 9/11, died five months later from sarcoidosis. She's become official victim number 2,750.

Cashes to cashes, dust to dust.

A woman in capri jeans and a shirred black sleeveless top sits down at Table 3. Lively, intelligent face. She seems to be looking toward a horizon. Allergies, red nose and eyes. Despite which, gobsmacked by her beauty, when she passed, you read the CALVIN KLEIN label on her jeans as CHICKEN LIFE.



Dick Cheney in an undated, unattributed photo in *The Washington Note*, 5/24/07.

Global warming, global schwarming – you’ve got Al Gore-ophobia. Luke but not fuzzy feelings. These are the times that fry men’s souls.

Strange how we set ourselves up to judge, to revile or ridicule the acts of characters in dramas, or politicians, or celebrities – acts that are essentially the same as those we carry out in our more mundane lives.

5/27 Dionysus meets Cockaigne: Athanasius in *The Learned Banquet*, describes an early festival held in 3rd Century Alexandria, seat of the Ptolemaic dynasty, in which a cart drawn by six hundred men conveyed an immense wineskin made from stitched-together leopard’s pelts and holding thirty thousand gallons. This cart was followed by another, bearing a silver krater capable of holding six thousand gallons and studded with gems.

5/29 The unintended consequences of law.

5/30 Apocryphal story to the effect that moments before Baudrillard died, his wife Marine asked him, "Jean, why are you smiling?" To which he replied, "What else is there to do?"

5/31 A *Times* article: "New Buildings Are Proposed Among Projects" – the subject being the construction of "middle-income" apartment buildings on what are now parking lots in several public housing complexes. In peerless prose, the Fulton Houses, three immense ocean liner-like buildings on Ninth Avenue between 19th & 17th Streets, are journalized as "a dark red brick complex on a quiet, leafy street in Chelsea." Indeed, if one didn't know better...