

5/31 Every step, every turn of every wheel brings you nearer to, farther from.

The secutor, a class or gladiator in 1st and 2nd century Rome. Armed with a sword, he wore a distinctive helmet with small eyeholes. These, supuestamente, provided the secutor with a defense against the trident points of the retarius, against whom he was matched. His round helmet too, impeded his head getting caught in the retarius's net. An allegory, maybe, of Poseidon. Or some other cosmology of the deep. Or perhaps some burlesque of the injunction to Peter, né Shimon, that he should fish for souls.

Other combatants stylized different Others. The Samnis, for example, a Samite whose progenitors Herodotus records. The Murmillo, or Gaul. Thraex, or Thracian. Bestarii, beast fighters. Each characterized by a distinctive armor, weaponry and mode of fighting art. Women battled one another as well, derided by Juvenal as upper-class exhibitionists: *Ah, degenerate girls from the line of our praetors and consuls....* Yet some folks claim to have found tombs in which lie armed and armored women, and reliefs depicting them, in far-flung backwaters of the Empire.

Days of wine, roses, bread, circuses...

Syntonic – from Greek *Syntonos*: being in harmony.

The intersection and reciprocity between an idea and a reality. Idea as “slot” for reality to fit into and activate, or not. E.g.: We do not like blue suits. But then we see a person wearing a blue suit and find ourselves pleased with his bearing, manner and other aspects of his presence. Do we now open up a slot for liking blue suits, or

think the less of this otherwise agreeable fellow? Or do we fall somewhere in between, still convinced of the badness of blue suits, yet doubting, even slightly, our formerly secure judgment?

Would encountering a series of ten agreeable fellows wearing blue suits make a difference? How is our disposition regarding blue suits, our slottiness overall, related to the structure of the ego?

If we're lucky, as we get older, we move from an ontological/epistemological orientation toward a deeper appreciation of the phenomenon. But the ontological puts up a good fight, often holding out until, in the end, we cease to be, and with that cessation come to know every nothing.

A bicyclist in the city cannot afford magical thinking.

6/1 Aside from the wait and cookstaff, this a.m. Le G. is inhabited by three fellows sporting bright red teeshirts on which is written in white block capitals: FIX MY GASKET. When you catch a glimpse of one of their backs, you read that they are REFRIGERATION DOOR EXPERTS, which explains their presence in the vicinity of the refrigerator located under the cooks' chopping counter. But *three* of them? Sure, why not.

On the street, an orange forklift delivers building supplies, its rack of yellow lights a-flashing. Stenciled on the side of the cab: MANITOU.

When did Home Depot, subtly, yet definitively, shade into Home Repo?

Ever desireless, one can see the mystery. Ever desiring, one can see the manifestations.

– Lao Tsu

Creating, yet not possessing.

Work, yet not taking credit.

Work is done, then forgotten.

Therefore it lasts for ever.

– Same guy.

6/3 When is a lie an expression of a wish?

6/5 Dude One is not Dude Two.

6/6 Americans are like rats. We've evolved no mechanism for vomiting up the poison.

So fundamentally insane was your conversation yesterday with a noted book agent, coming hard upon an email from a celebrated editor so manifestly bone-headed you literally gasped at its paucity of imagination and thought, that you've concluded, provisionally, that both agents and editors – in short publishing gatekeepers – some of them at any rate, have become so corrupted in their perceptions that books are no longer legible to them. Those who by avocation and training ought to be the best of

readers, have become incompetent, or worse, antagonistic to the process of writing itself.

Which reminds you of Jane Jacobs's formulation in *Systems of Survival* concerning the way in which certain cultures that succeed within their own terms may be compromised by an inability to deal with external forces and begin to perform, essentially, grotesque distortions of their former functions. The way, for instance, that the NYC transit cops, once the most "professional" of the Finest, became scandalously abusive when their mandate turned from preventing crimes and catching bad actors, to rousting the homeless.

Katie put it beautifully: *They've come to care more about their positions than their values.*

Come with us to Bremen. You can become a town musician there.

Suspended world.

Juneberry trees on 8th Street between B & C. South side. How do you know? Because sitting in the 9th Street garden with Maggie, you shifted your gaze from the doves lining the top edge of a tenement's white wall, to ground level, where you saw Victor, a friend of his and their two beautiful, gamboling children, the latter just released from the rigors of Academy. Maya, Victor's daughter, handed you some lemon mint they'd picked, and told you where to find the juneberries. Scads of 'em. High up too. If someone had a ladder...

6/7 Some cirrus high and to the south. The only natural-looking clouds. Apart from these, the man-made ones, severe parallel chem or contrails dividing the sky into rhombuses that drift east with the prevailing wind, all toward some as-yet unreveal'd purpose. Some of the jet planes passing overhead leave no visible traces. Curious. And, the same shad of white as the contrails, a slightly-greater-than half moon.

Amazing lightness to the air, a delicacy that makes even your normal footfalls feel like stomps. By ten a.m., the sky's turned whitish gray. Then it shifts back to blue with clouds like malformed scales or flattened lozenges of dough set atop a casserole before you bake it.

6/8 Everywhere, social life blooms in meta farce. Smiles like twitches, nods of false understanding.

6/10 Your spirit guides are alarmed, running about confused and bumping into one another like panicked creatures in a slapstick comedy. They've served as boon companions, co-witnesses to a thousand revelations, yet they've no idea how to cope with a material emanation. Awkward this birthing, this emerging from such a state into the bounded world.

6/12 *Each liar obviously feels that the lie is essential for his self-protection. He elaborates fictions which he chooses to relate to as if they were real, and he brings along the other as an unknowing accomplice in the life of the lie. Some liars' lies are acts of omission, they leave out the truth. These persons live in a space like that of the negative hallucination, they choose not to see or narrate that which they know is true. In both types of lying, however, the liar uses*

deception to compensate for a severe lack in self formation...

...(But the liar) can point to the very real fact that every time he is close to being understood by someone (and this includes his own self understanding) he develops an acute sense of imminent catastrophe.

Writes Bollas under the heading "The True and False Self" in *The Shadow of the Object*.

His description could well fit almost any organ of Western media today, but it suits to a tee the *NYT*, as a kind of liar of record, deceiving and obfuscating in the name of an entire civilization which, in actuality, it does not represent. This sense of grandiosity accounts both for the hysterical, and occasionally bizarrely laconic modes of its reportage.

There is another kind of collective participatory social lying which involves over-signifying an event or personality, or undersignifying, and the false assignment of meaning. Bollas seems to assume that others are drawn into the liars' lie unawares. But is it not often the case, certainly in politics, when is there collusion by an active, or at any rate not altogether unknowing accomplice? Or even multitudes of us?

With all your well-honed de-idealization, still today, a part of you persists in believing that if social life were more equitable, individuals might be happier. What makes people unhappy? Is it not fear in its many manifestations? What if we encountered, even incrementally, less fear of, and for, one another? By common agreement. By common sense.

The ties that blind.

6/13 Language language everywhere, but not a drop to drink.

Zizou's World Cup head butt – but! As in, *but wait, there's more*. It – whatever it is – ain't over his gesture seemed to say. Could be history has a few more butts up her sleeve.

As opposed to and replacing the old order, seven billion hyper-entitled narcissists shrieking for things.



Chris Hondros/Getty Images, left, and Hameed Rasheed/Associated Press

Two photos of the al-Askiri mosque in Samarra appear in the *Times*. In the picture on the left, dated 2003, a pair of minarets and clocktower are visible, the magnificent golden dome behind them. The photo on the right was taken yesterday,

from approximately the same angle and distance shortly after the dust cleared – someone having blown down the minarets. There’s a rubble mound too where the dome stood, destroyed by a bomb in 2006. Now, only the clocktower remains – a relatively recent addition, given that the mosque was built in 944. Entombed within it, legendarily, are the remains of the tenth and eleventh Shi’a Imams. Adjacent to this shrine stands another of great significance, dedicated to the twelfth Imam, or the Mahdi, also known as the hidden Imam, an immanence whose manifestation is believed by some to be imminent: the ultimate savior of humankind.



Hazel Thompson for the New York Times

“Muslims’ Veils Test Limits of Britain’s Tolerance.” So says a headline in the *New York Times*, the Lady ever veiled in gray. Do they know whereof their pictures

speaking? And such colors! The scene's the London Underground: a woman, blonde, in beige business gear sits next to a woman in full black purdah, of whom all we see are eyes and hands. Upon the blonde woman's lap, a large red leather bag. In one upraised hand, she holds a crimson apple, bitten nearly to the core. Mouth full, lips pursed in something like suspicion, the camera's caught her glancing sidelong at her curtained sister. O, Eve, were you really blonde? O Serpent, how ebon flow your scales! Now sons of Adam, surely you must fall.

6/17 The child takes in, and responds to, the Object's waxing and waning interest.

Days of Broken Empire.

6/18 The exquisite-featured woman, perhaps 5'11", looking unsure of her bearings at the corner of 21st and Ninth, wears a teeshirt that reads: *If I were your pet, I'd run away.*

The post-world world.

6/19 A lifetime spent in search of a transforming agent, from girlfriend, to eggwhite omelette, to laptop and back again.

Old dog learns the trick.

6/20 NOLA teeshirt: *Got Mold?*

Farce repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as history.

6/21 *Lhude sing cuccu!*

It takes the young couple at Table 3 an amazingly long time to order a crepe and tartine because of all their food aversions. Then they fall to conversation, discussing some sort of investment scheme – a retail deal. The man is simply pompous, square-faced, bright-eyed, handsome. The woman, attractive in an artistically tattered diaphanous dress squeaks in a series of disjointed clauses, never actually completing a sentence. It's as if she's fording a river, leaping from slippery rock to rock as a technique to avoid either losing or finding her footing. You half-listen for a few minutes before Axel walks in and saves you from having no idea at all what they're talking so loudly about.

Caius is dead. Therefore he was mortal. Or wuzzee?

Parallel plagues, Tina and Real Estate.

Harry: "But he (Percy Weasley) knows your dad was right all along now about Voldemort being back –"

Ginny: "Dumbledore says people find it far easier to forgive others for being wrong than being right."

Writ JKR, in *HP & The Halfblood Prince*.

The great moment is met by a faint-hearted generation.

– from Goethe & Schiller's *Xenien*, written mainly in 1796, as quoted by Bloch.

Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it and I shall topple the global economy.

– Ericmedes

Actually, it's doing a fine job toppling on its own.

6/22 *New York New York it's a helluva town*

The tourists visit a hole in the ground...

And in that hole somewhere around what would be Cortlandt and Greenwich once stood the building that housed Herman Melville's father's money-losing dry goods store. A good place to fail.

Still, Melville, in his own description, "swam through the city."

"God keep me," he wrote, "from completing anything."

And from Ahab's mouth issued these words: *The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run.*

Which resonates obversely with Tennyson's commentary, circa 1850, on the images that gave him "Locksley Hall":

"Grooves of change": When I went by the first train from Liverpool to Manchester (1830), I thought that the wheels ran in a groove. It was black night and there was such a vast crowd round the train at the station that we could not see the wheels. Then I made this line.

Places you've never got to and which are definitively changed: NOLA, Cuba. Prague too, and Berlin, before the Wall came down. Once long ago in an interview, you were asked whether you had any regrets and you sang them Edith Piaf's line. You can't really say *rien* anymore but *Je ne regrette beaucoup* just doesn't have the same ring.

6/24 On the east side of the reservoir, just north of 86th Street, two juneberry trees and a red mulberry.

Franz Fanon-Kafka.

In today's U.S. of A., the dominant mode of speech employs the passive-aggressive tense.

The freedom of acquisition by not becoming the freedom from acquisition manifestly ended in tyranny.

Said Ernst Bloch.

We are not in the least afraid of ruins. Said Buenaventura Durruti.

Broken City.

6/25 “Good morning, Expropriative Systems of America – how may I help you?”

Let the body lead.

Wand-like gestures with cellphones.

Late morning: out of Le G. and into the deeply unfresh air, which smells as though the city’s downwind of a great forest burning. But there are no great forests nearby, so it must be the atmosphere itself combusting.

Fantastical faces, animals and grotesque masks, and a dancing cherub relief the entablatures of a brownstone building at 155 West 22nd Street, between Sixth and Seventh, north side. The St. Francis Residence.

Flags blackened. Half price for you. Sure, why not?

Walmart. Voldemort. What’s not in a name?

The lantern is a magic moon...

6/27 Power goes out on the upper east side as you're riding back from Long Island City – literally an instant after you thought lovingly of what a marvelous train the E is, cutting a swath through the great neighborhoods of Queens, then a quick, useful thrust across Manhattan, before turning downtown. Stalled at Lex. Lucky not to get stuck in the tunnel. No current on the line, nor after you climb up the frozen escalator on the #6. So, shanksmare in the indescribable swamp of warm air blasted from the office tower HVACs to arrive at the still-functioning downtown #1.

How better to anticipate, in less than a month, the thirtieth anniversary of the blackout that turned the Bronx into a Great Fire?

When you live in an airconditioned room, it's easy to think you're cool.

Magnificent in its specious intricacy: this world of false relating.

What did you do under Fascism, daddy?