

7/22 The rocks are harder to communicate with, but any honest tree will tell you, if you stand close enough: *Man, you're putting yourself out of business.*

*Death speaks our language. In order to be understood it comes down to our level – or lifts us up to the level of catastrophe, and even lends us its own voice.*

Jabès, in *Book of Questions*.

In every passing cloud bank, a memento mori, sometimes two. A hollow-eyed shape with a beak, the tail of a horseshoe crab, the sporeprint of a wallaby.

7/26 The story told, world for world.

What we perceive as fear is the presence of death, like an isotope, within us.

Has there ever been a species so fragmented, yet bound together?

Children, if we let them, can be a great antidote to abstraction.

Eric B. avers that inside he's mush, undifferentiated stuff – that it doesn't matter what he takes in, it all turns to mush. If you have an image for yourself, it's as a dust-devil, whirling in the faintest breeze, just mass enough to cohere, however briefly in the movement of earth and air.

So many economies, separated by a common humanity.

Up at Mark & Bruce's last weekend, or rather nearby at the pond, traces of the extirpated beaver much harder to find than a few months ago. And, as you walked about, identifying the nipped-off branches whose raw tips have faded brown, little sense that he was ever present there.

In the world around, in nearly every transaction you observe, a friction, a sense of irritation playing. Voices rise higher, more breathlessly in attempted good-fellowship or outright conflict. Half sentences or less. Unstrung. What pearl, what strange pearls are being made here.

It's taken until now for you to decode it although you've read more or less the same sign a thousand times and again today, as you pass by the scaffolded townhouse, the sound of debris rattling down. Bright red capital letters on two yellow sidewalk easels: *DANGER MEN AT WORK*.

Yes, in city and in countryside, in thousands of locations, signed and unsigned, truer words never posted.

Title for a new self-help book: *Protestant Yoga*.

7/27 To grasp, *coger, apprendre*: none of it, none of it. The door, the window, the portal, the vitreous wall. Any apparent opening testing, always testing your capacity for mystery.

Misplaced, mislaid, misled: testing always testing. Your capacity to knock things over trying to be helpful.

And where in the whirled is Condoleezza Rice?

What appears to be suspend or frozen is moving very fast.

You've lost the reference now, but buried in yesterday's *Times* coverage of the market slide was a quote from a money manager exhausted from reassuring investors prostrate with panic. He told the paper: "All afternoon I've been going from gurney to gurney here."

The sounds of the city crumbling, even as it is built.

Nasdaq, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Guess which one burns up in the fiery furnace?

7/28 (With nothing else to eat) the rats are gnawing the hawsers.

At the lip of knowledge that cannot yet be thought.

Curious about the stock market: how it waited to see how Voldemort died and if Harry Potter lives.

Ultra radical idea of property proposed in *HP* Book 7, *The Deathly Hallows* wherein ownership of the Sword of Gryffindor is claimed by the Goblins who forged it. While wizards, particularly the oligarchal ones, believe such property passes along a bloodline, a lineage. The position JK takes is that what's seen as ownable property – in this case the sword – belongs to itself, and in some sense, by extension, to the common good. Hence the sword's magical flight across time and space from Griphook's possession in the vault at Gringott's into Neville's hand when he reaches into the sorting hat on the playing/battlefield at Hogwarts.

The thing belong to itself. That's what she's saying as you read it.

7/29 The bourgeoisie spends the summer deciding which balls to drop, as if it were up to them.

7/30 On the stoop, waiting for the gray ghost to go legal, Agnes asks you about what it's like to have finished *Notes of a New York Son*. It comes to you, or rather she opens up the space for you to say, "I became the brush."

Later it occurs to you that you left out something – that once done with you, *Notes* flung you into the corner. And now you're expected to rise up, wash off the hardening paint, change shape and form and function, make a frame for the painting and find it a home.

7/30 The sparrows flitting from ledge to ledge of the Serbian Church pipe *cheap*, *cheap!* But what do they know?

Leave your tribe, find your tribe.

Snape: his life cost him dearly.

The tufty-furred little dog decides not just to pee upside the scaffolding in front of your building's entrance, but to take a tiny dump on the walkway as well. His biped, attending to this, reaches into her mini-shopping bag for the requisite plastic sack. Only as you turn away do the black letters against the turquoise background cohere into a word: TIFFANY.

As you bike home up Eighth, a cop car shoots past on your left. Brand new cruiser. Still you hear a lug nut pinging inside the front hubcap.

*The summer, Teddy says, without rhythm.*

If only one could point one's wand at social life and silently utter *Reparo!*

Thus closes the great circle that opened with Chaucer and Wycliffe's Bible, that turned the Elizabethans to the top of the water wheel, Defoe and Swift, the steam and iron flowering of the 18th and 19th centuries, through Joyce and Huxley's dynamo.

*Harry Potter, Harry Potter:* resolving chords of a final movement conducted with a twin-cored wand. Age of the Book, finished at last. An eyeblink really. Onward, onward to the margins and beyond. Are we on the same page? Not a chance.

8/1 A voice comes to your clearly: *Don't stir the pot.*

1 on its way to 2. 2 on its way to 0.

Waiting for dodo.

*All my writings are playful. One could not call them skillful or unskillful.*

Said Yüan-chang, aka Mi Fu, Northern Sung calligrapher of our eleventh century. *Other people write with one side of the brush. I write with four sides.*

*If you need water but cannot get a drop,*

*The far-off West River is of no help.*

*Everything must be done at the right time,*

*Why is it I have come so late?*

– excerpt from Mi Fu's "Poem written in a boat on the river near Wu-chiang, on paper sent to me by Chu Pang-yen from Hsui-chou.

*In studying calligraphy one has to know how to handle the brush. That is to say, the brush must be held with ease, then the palm will be hollow. The movement should be swift and spontaneous as the image appears unexpectedly. This is the reason why, in the calligraphy of the old masters, identical characters never resemble each other. If they were all alike, it would be the writing of slaves.*

A contemporary, Huang T'ing-chien, described Mi Fu's writing as "a rapid sword slashing on a battlefield and a long-distance arrow penetrating all obstructions."

Mi Fu said: *It my idea is fulfilled, I myself will be fulfilled; releasing the brush, I write playfully.*

8/2 The bridge on I-35W, eight lanes to and from Minneapolis, collapses in three sections. "Experts mystified." Bodies unrecovered due to "concerns over safety." Mississippi currents. Samuel L. nods in understanding. Tricky dems.

The span that no longer spans was raised in 1967, a full two-score years past. Summer of love, exhausted at last.

Meanwhile hurricanes resign from the job of forming in the Atlantic. Or at least pull a slowdown.

C.f. the Great Storm of 1703, from November 24th through December 2. The "perfect hurricane," with barometric readings low as 973 millibars. Extraordinary destruction. Documentation by Defoe.

This summer, however, Britain drowns like Bangladesh, Budapest bubbles and so much else ignites.

8/3 Inside the American Museum of Natural History there's a Hall of Asian Peoples. How strange, given the world's demographics, when outside the museum and all around, the burgeoning *world* of Asian peoples. And as for the museum, why it has

contracted into a kind of preserve, a Hall unto itself, encapsulating a very particular notion of what is Natural and what is History. Yet still, there's magic there.

8/4 In Ogonquet, ME, you remark to Peter, a venerable car mechanic, that the AC died around the same time one of the motor mounts popped out. The Gray Ghost is up on a lift and Peter's arc-welding a bent piece of steel bar to the chassis to serve as an improvised bracket. He fits the old stripped bolt into the hole and tacks it into place as reinforcement. The engine hopping around, he speculates, might have crushed the AC pipes. It's late Saturday p.m., nearing closing time, so neither of you have time to explore the matter further. "The weather," he says, lowering the lift, "will be your air conditioning."

Pop song: "Shut up and drive."

8/5 North Brooksville, ME. Remote enough that there's rarely a passing car on the road near the clapboard white cape sits, screened by trees. Lie in the meadow in the sun. Birdsongs. Feeling of an ant wandering through the hair forest above your ankle. No, not firecrackers at a distance interspersed with warblers. Several bursts, a few pulses apart, automatic rifle. Target practice? Katie doesn't seem to have heard it. When you walk into the house, she's lying on the sofa, on the phone with Bette, telling her how much safer she feels here than in NYC.

8/6 *Besides there is a general Custom amongst them, at the apprehension of any Excellency in Men, Women, Birds, Beasts, Fish, etc., to cry out Manitoo, that is, it is a God, as*

*thus if they see one man excell either in Wisdom, Valour, Strength, Activity, etc., they cry out Manittoo, A God.*

– Roger Williams, *A Key Unto the Language of America*, London, 1643.

A curious, twisty tale: After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, a radical Calvinist sect from the Cévennes Mountains, known as the Camisards, takes up arms and eventually begins to wage war against the Kingdom of France. For three years, beginning in 1702, the government deploys a force of sixty thousand troops against them. Defeated, the Camisards remaining in France go underground for a long spell, until the penal laws against Protestants are repealed with the advent of the Revolution.

Others scatter, some taking refuge in the British Isles, where, in 1742, their practices of fasting, bodily agitation, end-of-world and Second Coming prophecies, repentance calls and interpretation of celestial events and other natural phenomena are adopted by a group of Manchester Quakers. Thus turbo-charged, this cell, led by Jane and James Wardley, or Wardlaw, breaks off from the Society of Friends in 1747 and becomes known as the ‘Shaking Quakers.’”

New England yes, an England as it never were of Olde.

Over time, of course, the Camisards became so diaphanous, they turned into camisoles.

8/7 First morning here, two days ago, Katie spotted a bald eagle. This a.m., practicing Ba Gua, you saw a great blue heron over the far meadow working hard to stay aloft in the humid air that dried out remarkably fast with the rising sun. Also

overhead, a small blue heron. Yes, and by the planter at the edge of the slate patio, a hummingbird.

8/8 Ding shi circles around an ash tree on the lawn near the house. Then to the Blue Hill Library and a wifi connection. At a distance you read of the torrential storm that swept the city in the early hours. The tempest flooded the subways, shut them down, and a tornado in its wake tore along the line between Sunset Park and Bay Ridge, smashed houses and uprooted trees, sent branches like eldritch spears through the windshields of the SUVs it tossed across the streets. Soon to come, if predictions prove correct, a bizarre surge of heat, mercury spiking over a hundred and then, a further downpour. "Stay home!" counsels Bloomie, and advises those at risk to visit city "cooling centers." Did you miss something? What are they? Gigantic public meat lockers? And when did the term become a commonplace?

How does this man, the consummate blasé corpo-rationalist come to grips with supernatural rebellions of the weather? His priests foregather, grave-faced at these auguries. "Great Chieftain, the gods are angry. We must mend our ways!" He dismisses them with a wave, of course. Nonsensical superstitions! But does his visage, as they scurry off, reveal the shadow of a doubt? He's had his way in the mundane world more times than not – manipulated much to his advantage. On his watch as ruler, there's been a kind of Pax Bloomiana. Save for a tribe of hooligan cyclists the town's lain quiet, like a conquered land. And as for flux, he knows it from the markets, takes their shifting atmospheres in stride. But this? First the geyser and now the flood and twister. What to make of these sudden insurgencies of the elements? And what comes next?

Ahl al-kitab = people of the book.

These recent nights your dreams have felt like thresholds, one after another. Two nights ago, you encountered aspects of the same young woman, first seductive, then great with child, then drowned – although this last may have been a different woman. Nonetheless you revived her.

Last night, fascist snipers systematically shot your comrades all around you, purposely missing you by a hair's breath. Your back turned toward them. One bullet grazed your right heel. The unspoken deal was that if you didn't move, held absolutely still, made no attempt to aid your fellows, they'd spare Katie and Gwen. Something woke you momentarily and when the thread of the dream picked up, you'd resolved to turn around and face them.