

6/11 Before we knew...

Wunderkammer.

What if we are a good people driven to do terrible things? What if we have been living, all these misspent years, under the spell of a malevolent sorcerer? Or more likely, given our cultural baggage, some evil witch?

Why then we must find a good sorcerer to free us. Someone pure of heart, yet possessing a powerful wand which he'll wave over this land to lift the curse. Change you can believe in.

Ya gotta believe.

Do ya?

Ya gotta!

No, sorry. I believed at the office.

Before we knew...

Wunderkammer.

The Seventh Seal. Why he's barking for fish just as loud as the rest of 'em.

Verde que te quiero verde.

Hey man, just down the street at that new store...

Yeah?

...they're giving out free minds.

8:20ish p.m. Now that's odd. The Manhattan solstice was supposed to have happened nearly two weeks ago, but as you cross 26th Street and look west, the sun's dropping down dead center in the notch between the north and south side buildings. Like a coin in a slot. And bright as anything. Even now, typing this, dancing dots before your eyes.

6/12 Yet more severe weather in the Midwest. Since February, the destruction across wide parts of the U.S. has been incredible – equivalent in ways to the ravages of war. What exactly is going on? Is the atmosphere itself bent on destroying the country? Has our weather become sociopathic? That seems far-fetched. But the idea that these utterly bizarre storms are somehow being manipulated is even more unthinkable. And to what effect, by whom?

Having written this, you click to the *Times*. "Tornado Hits Scout Camp in Iowa, Killing 4." At least fifty injured too.

It's axiomatic, but should anyway be said. People who feel afraid and

powerless blame others.

“Union Critical of Obama’s Top Economic Aide” – this column to the left and just up from the tornado story: “Labor leaders criticized the hiring of Jason Furman, an economist closely associated with Robert E. Rubin, saying that ‘Rubinomics’ focused too much on corporate America.”

Obummer.

While out on another limb of Phoebus – aka *The New York Sun* – a flare licks forth, hotter still than the *Messenger’s*:

“Obama Taps Wal-Mart Defender as Director of Economic Policy.”

“‘Obama-Nomics,’ a related editorial, is on page 8.”

Sucker’s remorse?

Bill o’ goods.

This way to the Obummer tent.

Here comes the twister.

Same as it everwas.

Le text est un con.

Context.

Tu me prend pour un...?

“...the so-called ‘Kunst-und Wunderkammer’ or cabinets of curiosity – the Museum in its earliest and perhaps purest form, in which... rigorous hierarchies owed to specialist interest were not yet to be found – and in which the wonders of the World, be they of natural, artisinal or artistic origin were placed next to each other with equally measured appreciation.”

– *The Museum Kircherianum: The World is Bound With Secret Knots*, Neuer Folkwang Verlag, Hagen, 2002.

Kitab al bulhan, *Book of Wonderment*, published in Baghdad in the late 14th C.
Gouache, gold ink on paper.

Heterotopia. And bust.

And today it dawns on you that the text you are reading and writing and reading is first and foremost and also least and last a cabinet of curiosities collected in realtime...

Nous sommes tous con text.

Onwardish.

But wait. The man who would play Phaëton now whips his horses into a lather, and another fiery prominence bursts forth: “Eliot Spitzer, in his first big business venture since he was shamed out of office by a prostitution scandal, is shopping around a plan to start a vulture fund that would scoop up real estate assets around the country, revamp them, and flip the properties for a profit.

“Last month, the former governor of New York gathered a group of high-level Washington, D.C.-based union officials in a conference room at the headquarters of his father’s real estate business in Manhattan and pitched them his idea...

“In the half-hour meeting, Mr. Spitzer [said] that he was determined to take his ailing father’s real estate company to ‘the next level...’ and would ask the labor officials to consider investing pension fund money under their control.

“Distressed real estate funds – also known as ‘vulture’ or, more euphemistically, ‘opportunity’ funds – typically promise returns of more than 20% and are active in Florida, Nevada, and Southern California. They rely heavily on pension and university endowment investments. Mr. Spitzer is said to be envisioning projects valued between \$100 million and \$500 million...”

Conward.

Half a league, half a league...

It is told that the Parsi of Bombay, in accordance with their Zoroastrian beliefs,

dispose of the bodies of their dead by bearing them to the tops of two towering cylindrical bastions set in a park called the Hanging Gardens, on Malabar Hill. There, the corpses are laid out and exposed to the elements. Thus one feature of the Bombay skyline are vultures circling above the towers, particularly in the early morning and late afternoon, at body-deposition time.

Weep not, child

Weep not, my darling

With these kisses let me remove your tears,

The ravening clouds shall not be long victorious.

They shall not long possess the sky...

Sang Whitman, "On the Beach at Night."

And it is the first of these lines that furnished that luminescent Kenyan, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, with the title of his masterpiece.

Kan ya makan in the heady days of '69, Gadaffi staged a bloodless coup and took power in Libya. Not long afterward the U.S. abandoned its Air Force base outside Tripoli. And today, toward the end of his speech marking the thirty-eight anniversary of the evacuation, the Colonel declared: "The statements of our Kenyan brother of American nationality Obama on [an indivisible and exclusively Israeli] Jerusalem... show that he either ignores international politics and did not study the Middle East conflict or that it is a campaign lie.

"We fear that Obama will feel that, because he is black with an inferiority

complex, this will make him behave worse than the whites.

“This will be a tragedy. We tell him to be proud of himself as a black and feel that all Africa is behind him.”

Still, Gaddafi suggests that Obama’s position on Jerusalem may reflect his fear of sharing “the same fate as [former US President John F] Kennedy when he promised to look into Israel’s nuclear programme.” By which he means assassination by Israeli agents.

Oy vay, mon Colonel.

Obamarama: from the shores of Montezuma to the halls of...

Dawn’s surly light.

6/13 Iowa: inland sea.

Battering winds. Rain.

Weather war.

Cedar Rapids. Not quite. City as lake.

“We are seeing a historic hydrological event taking place with unprecedented river levels occurring,” quoth Brian Pierce, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Davenport, via Associated Press. “We’re in uncharted territory – this is an

event beyond what anybody could even imagine.”

The H₂O caucuses and declares victory.

Various degrees of inundation in Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Missouri, Illinois.

Cedar River, six feet above any point in human memory. “They said this place would never flood in five hundred years.”

The Wisconsin, Fond du Lac, White, Embarras, Des Moines, Rock, Thornapple, Missouri and Mississippi. All rise.

As will, given the drowning of so many crops, prices for corn, soybeans, wheat, oats and rice.

Planning last year for a banner summer tourism season, Cedar Rapids promoters marketed 2008 as “The Year of the River.”

Hey Eric. Everything cool with my Mom & Sister. Boy Scout Tornado about 40 miles north of them. Big storms, some tornado touch downs in their area but not too bad. Sad thing is Cedar Rapids, Iowa is my Mom's home town. A lot of it is under water now. Biblical stuff.

Hope thing are well by you.

S.

Eric, Thanks for the concerns – we are fine and dry, even. We live up on the hilltops and while the water rushes around and down, it doesn't flood us or carry our buildings and birds away. If you would come for a visit, and stay in our cabin, you too would feel safe in the biggest downpour. Lots of bridges washed out, and lots of strange things moved by the water – a huge culvert pipe dug up and transferred downstream half a mile, huge hay bales in someone's yard, gardens (including mine to some degree) with vet standing on their roots tottering in the wind. Did you hear the word Avoca on NPR this am? Maybe the only time ever. Its the town by the river, about 7 miles north of us – pretty well wiped out, with mandatory evacs.

Hugs to your two girls, and to you,

f.

6/14 A world full of conscious and unconscious con-tempt in these strange and savage con temps.

6/15 What is it that the rabbits are so scared of?

Everything happens little by little. Just sometimes very fast.

Whisky's for drinking, say the good ol' boys. Water's for fighting.

6/16 In the wake of, hundreds of square miles of corn paddies.

Futures spike from \$4 to over \$7 in a couple of days. Whatever happens climatically from here on out, it's raining profits.

*The corn is are as high as an elephant's eye
And that cute little future is winking at me...
Oh what a beautiful mornin'...*

You don't know exactly how it works, this mechanism of Natural Disaster followed by commodities windfall. But as with Katrina it's a sure bet that certain multinationals, Cargill for instance, will be heading for the bank, laughing. More than just a price bubble is slouching toward Bethlehem. Or rafting there.

*"...And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!..."*

And beneath and above it all, a great culling of humanity's end and mean. What percent are they aiming for? Fifteen? Twenty-five? Fifty? Resources managed precisely in such a way as to devastate what's left of our present antediluvian schema.

*But when it comes to slaughter
You will do your work on water...*

And on we rotate in a Sol Invictus wind, loosed by a great flare some days past.
Storms stirred up off Africa, betokening an early start to Huracán's march?



Scott Olson/Getty Images

...Ubique means the tearin' drift where, breech-blocks jammed with mud,

The khaki muzzles duck an' lift across the khaki flood.

Ubique means the dancing plain that changes rocks to Boers.

Ubique means mirage again an' shellin' all outdoors.

Ubique means "Entrain at once for Grootdefeatfontein."

Ubique means 'Off-load your guns" – at midnight in the rain!

Ubique means "More mounted men. Return all guns to store."

Ubique means the R.A.M.R. Infantillery Corps.

*Ubique means that warnin' grunt the perished linesman knows,
When o'er 'is strung an' sufferin' front the shrapnel sprays 'is foes;
An' as their firin' dies away the 'usky whisper runs
From lips that 'aven't drunk all day: "The Guns! Thank Gawd, the Guns!"*

*Extreme, depressed, point-blank or short, end-first or any'ow,
From Colesberg Kop to Quagga's Poort – from Ninety-Nine till now –
By what I've 'eard the others tell an' I in spots 'ave seen,
There's nothin' this side 'Eaven or 'Ell Ubique doesn't mean!*



Stephen Mally for The New York Times

Kipling and Coleridge meet on the banks of the Cedar River. A gathering, no, a

confluence, of ancestors and progeny.

*"...Down dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!*

*All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.*

*Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.*

*Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.*

Lhude sing "Ubique!"

*The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.*

*About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.*

*And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.*

*And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.*

*Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung...."*

"For Gawd's sake git the water, Gunga Din!"

"Why look'st thou so?

'With my cross-bow

I shot the Albatross.'"

Lhude sing "Ubique!"

Midday at the oasis:

"Stocks Mixed as Oil Climbs."

"In Midwest Flood, a Broad Threat to Crops."

"A Delegator, Obama Picks When to Take ~~Rains~~ Reins."

"Bernanke Says Rising Health Care Costs a Strain."

Four headlines from an apocalypse.

A cheerful youth joined Coleridge on his walk

("Loose," noted Coleridge, "slack, and not well-dressed")

Listening respectfully to the talk talk talk]

Of First and Second Consciousness, then pressed

The famous hand with warmth and sauntered back

Homeward in his own state of less dispersed

More passive consciousness – passive, not slack,

Whether of Secondary type or First.

He made his way toward Hampstead so alert

He hardly passed the small grey ponds below

Or watched a sparrow pecking in the dirt

Without some insight swelling the mind's flow

That banks made swift. Everything put to use.

Perhaps not well-dressed but oh no not loose.

Sang Thom Gunn kan ya makan of "Keats at Highgate."

And you must tack your ship among the tricky currents: On one side, the Charybdis vortex of publishing, on the other the many-headed blogosphere of Scylla. Monsters that macerate, monsters that spin. All, all out of control.

Who's for corn at \$8 a bushel?