

March 1

Victor Bobbett

Cloud cover in Darktown, so you couldn't see Moon and Venus conjoined, unfolding beyond your view. But someone did. This taken near the Praying Monk on Camelback Mountain, Paradise Valley, AZ.



Alessandro Dimai, Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy

And Lulin gliding past Regulus in Leo. The comet's alignment with the sun may well have triggered some of the extreme and wacky weather of the past several days: severe storms that seem to have developed out of nowhere and the like.

And then there's volcan Chaitén, in Southern Chile, which, after a nine thousand year slumber blew its top most spectacularly last May...



...and only a three days past, spewed a vast cloud of ash, gas and molten rock...



Reuters

In one of your old commonplace books, dated January '01, más o menos, you discover the introduction to a performance piece, the rest of which remained unwritten:

The Hat Which Mistook Itself For a Head

There is a great tradition of stupidity, exclusivity and viciousness that flattens any weak-kneed tendencies toward egalitarianism that may now and then tap on the brain pan entreating admission to the community of beliefs.

Fortunately, our brutal exercises do not impede the use of the word democracy to describe the highly differentiated, value-laden and violent hierarchy in which we live.

This disclaimer, prescribed by law, custom, utility and plain good manners, is offered in the hopes that we can all relax, leave our weary prejudices at the door and enter into a – *click!* – receptive mode.

The process of canonization is, stripped of its mystical pretensions, a process of data gathering, and is never an easy task, fraught as it is with moral complexities and ethical ambiguities. Nevertheless it is, I am sure, to all of our great relief that the testimonies you are about to hear were all offered absolutely free of any coercion –

[SFX – SCREAM OFFSTAGE]

Such is the magic of representation....

...Patron Saint of the Disappeared.

[BLANK CANVAS]

A saint for every form of suffering, every anguish and vicissitude – of course this saint is invisible, or at any rate transparent as befits – but how to represent in symbolic terms?

Certainly it would be eyes – not like St. Lucy’s the Enucleated, but hundreds of eyes – the eyes of all who beheld him or her, all who even glanced, all who scrutinized for whatever purpose, who gazed with love, longing, abomination or indifference – eyes that saw a friend, a dupe, an object of desire, ridicule or fragment of a market...

And then a trail of comet dust:

...Mistaking clocks for hearts.

And everything for nothing.

Everything is coming to a head. Well, two heads – actually three.

Trauma can be incremental....

Foucault, in *Order of Things*, quotes Borges referring to a Chinese encyclopedia:

“Animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) suckling pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camel hair brush, (l) etcetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.”

Fiat Iustitia

Ruat Caelum

Let there be justice

though heaven fall.

*so much depends upon
a red wheel barrow
glazed with rain water
beside the white chickens.*

Wrote WCW, kan ya makan.

“Although Machiavelli [in his *Art of Warfare*], draws up lists of traps and stratagems (in fact, precisely *because* they are just lists), these seem no more than warnings in response to certain (deplorable) current practices; they do not constitute Machiavelli’s primary interest. He is above all interested in military institution and how it is structured (how militia are selected, the primordial role of discipline, and so on). For him, basically, it is always a matter of describing *forms* (the forms of battles, of marches, of camps, and above all of recruitment): problems to do with order or with models (the model of order is provided by the Romans). According to Machiavelli, established order is the sole source of strength. These are all notions that inevitably return us to the Greeks.”

Says Jullien in *A Treatise on Efficacy*, p. 147.

According to the *Laozi*, “Only since the country sank into disorder has there been talk of ‘loyal and devoted’ ministers.”

His commentator, Wang Bi, points out that if the country remained in order of its own accord, “nobody would have the slightest idea where these loyal and devoted ministers were to be found.”

From which Jullien concludes: “The capacity of a process only coagulates, so to speak, or becomes ostentatious where there is some deficiency. Otherwise it remains fluid, diffuse, present everywhere in equal measure – and is consequently imperceptible. And, just as all virtues draw attention to any absence of virtue, every effect that is well adjusted draws attention to all that remain ill adjusted (cf. Wang Bi,

who... puts that the other way around: 'as soon as it seems as if nothing is deliberately aimed for [like a target], the possible use is endless').

"One then becomes caught up in a frenzied race to make all those other adjustments that each new adjustment reveals to be a crying necessity.... As can be imagined, this is theoretically bound to turn into an endless race in which one scours the whole world in search of an efficacy that, in order to achieve its goal as quickly as possible (always seeking the most direct means, what the *Laozi* calls 'false shortcuts') in fact leads farther and farther away from its goal."

What needs to be written is a how-not-to book. First off, don't write it.

Instead set your pen and intention to a new what-the-Dickens novel – working title: *Daft Expectations*.

March 2

You coin a putdown that, at this rate, will be good for a week or so: "Oh that's so 7,000." Might take a little longer for "Oh that's so stimulus" to join the ranks of obsolete phrases. But not much.

Trillion is the new billion. Just add zeroes and hope it'll Twitter® away.

March 3

...As the island slowly sank
The loser finally broke the bank in the gambling room
The dealer said "It's too late now
You can take you money, but I don't know how
You'll spend it in the tomb"...

Cantó Bob Dylan *kan ya makan*.

March 4

Iran Looms Over Clinton's Mideast Agenda

There are those looms again. As though, unlike knotting a carpet, there's an implication of something to be woven there. Here. Everywhere. Whilst in Afghanistan too, someone knows something about rugs.

Looms conjure "shuttle diplomacy." Or is that phrase *so* Camp David? And certain looms, under certain circumstances, are housed in dark, satanic military industrial complexes.

It's the social fabric, stupid. It always was. Or lack thereof. Disintegrating *ahorita* at warp speed. What's weft of it.

March 6

And this, via the *Army Times*:

As Army officials announced the beginning of Brain Injury Awareness Month, they offered up a figure that makes it hard to believe anyone in the military could be unaware of the problem:

Between 45,000 and 90,000 troops have been treated for traumatic brain injury symptoms ranging from headaches to vision problems to an inability to function beyond a coma state.

Brig. Gen. Loree Sutton, director of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, [say wha'?] said between 10 percent and 20 percent of soldiers and Marines - about 180,000 people - have screened positive for TBI.

Yet military doctors still fight a culture in which some troops believe they can head right back into the fight after being exposed to a blast... and commanders may decide to risk sending someone outside the wire [!] after an injury because there aren't enough people to make up a patrol team.

Experts at the U.S. Military Academy have said it's important for someone who has suffered even mild TBI to avoid the risk of re-injuring the brain - especially the not-yet-fully-grown brain of someone younger than 24 - because a second injury can lead to permanent damage or even death.

...A brain injury results from a blow to the head or from the waves of a blast from an explosive device [which can perforate the brain with myriad

tiny holes].

Symptoms that can last hours, days or years include loss of balance, short-term memory loss, vision problems, tinnitus or ringing in the ears, headaches, seizures, irritability, sleep problems, or an inability to concentrate.

Sutton said the symptoms usually go away on their own, especially if troops “allow themselves to get the rest that they need.”

If the problems don’t go away, doctors can treat the symptoms with medications and therapy.

Sutton stressed that 80 percent to 85 percent of TBIs are categorized as “mild,” but even mild TBI can cause headaches, vision problems and short-term memory loss.

...More than half of such injuries come from explosions.

About half the service members who screen positively for TBI recover on their own, while one-fourth recover with the help of treatment and one-fourth need specialty care.

Over the past year, Sutton said the military has begun doing a better job of screening service members in the field so exposures to blasts or blows can be recorded and treated.

The Defense and Veteran’s Brain Injury Center also has increased its network of civilian and military doctors and therapists to come up with better treatments and screening methods. Troops also have begun taking the Automated Neuropsychological Assessment Metric, which gives doctors baseline information on a person’s cognitive skills before an injury occurs....”

And, to add yet more on the plus side, at least now the VA knows how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall.

“...the illusion that...people foster as to their own interests: in their desire for rewards and their fear of punishment, every one...believes he is promoting his own

personal interests, without realizing that in truth he is simply bolstering the power of his oppressor.”

The writer is Jullien [...*On Efficacy*, p. 151] and his subject is the manipulative stratagems of Chinese despots in antiquity. But could this passage (lightly edited by yours truly to despecify its specificity) not serve as a description of the condition of people within consumer culture – in which the “oppressor” no longer manifests as a prince, but rather a refraction of power into billions of self-enslaving selves and wherein the culture itself has transformed into a molecular despotism as invisible, yet ubiquitous as air? Culture as microbial agent against self and other alike?

For Jullien, the ideal tyrant “proceeds by invisibly predetermining the situation without the knowledge of his subjects, like a ‘ghost,’ [Han Feizi’s term] that is to say he intercedes at the root of their desires and aversions, while he himself remains ever unfathomable.” [p. 152]

And when the ideal tyrant, instead of existing as a figure or figurehead effectively melts into, becomes coextensive with, the culture itself – what then?

