

CONCATENATION¹

The concatenation of the first few months of 2011 — my dictionary says concatenation means “*a series of interconnected things or events, or the action of linking things in a series, or the condition of being linked in such a way.*” A word rarely used where big words are mistrusted and writing has become texting. Concatenation jumped out at me in an article about the series of events in Japan, appearing in *The Nation* of April 4. It seemed the very word I had been looking for to describe the strange but obvious trends everywhere these first few months of 2011.

The massive world-changing events that are blossoming, finding connections. The mass protests, true uprisings, in the American Midwest and the Muslim Middle East have in common a ground swell of popular dissatisfaction, disapproval, that is not new but suddenly emerged in the open. The commonality is a popular reaction to ruthless disregard for personal integrity. In the Middle East long suppressed by dictatorial regimes in place for 20, 30, 40 years. In the American Midwest against newly elected governors who very obviously had an agenda to destroy what social laws we’ve had since before the middle of the previous century. We the People want democracy, but the people we elected want to take us back to the 19th century. In the Mideast somehow the immolation of one poor guy in Tunisia set off true popular uprisings all over the Muslim Arab and North African countries. They want more democratic governance, we in the Midwest want to hold onto what democracy we have left. The dictatorial leaders there, and “conservative” governors here, fight us with guns and secret legislation at night. We protest *en masse*.

And then the enormous earthquake closely off the coast of northern Japan, resulting first in a tsunami, then the nuclear disaster. How does that relate to popular uprisings? And yet the synchronicity is too obvious to ignore.

Could it be Spring Fever? Here, it seemed suddenly all the hens had to lay eggs; we found dozens. It did not last long, only until the next full moon and then the egg-laying stopped altogether.

Everywhere masses of people, millions of people, went to the streets to protest. A huge earthquake shook Japan and caused a tsunami all over the Pacific Ocean, sweeping away a house in far Nuku Hiva, in the Marquesas, probably ten thousand miles away. And, as if a 9-rated earth quake and destructive tsunami is not enough, now four of six nuclear reactors are failing.

Ten years ago an assault on America, literally out of the blue. That is how perhaps all the world remembers that day. The targets seem to tell something else. Of all the hundreds of sky scrapers in New York the men who had hijacked four planes chose the two towers of the World Trade Center. Wasn’t there a huge protest in Seattle against the World Trade Organization? And the twin towers were attacked once before: a truck loaded with explosives in the underground garage. But on that day this country certainly changed. A mountain of new laws, all about security we were assured. We are a whole lot poorer ten years later. More secure?

This country constantly reminds itself that it is the richest and most powerful on earth, the richest and most powerful in all history for that matter. Why then is a large portion of our population grossly impoverished, jobless, homeless, sick with no way to pay for medical care costing ten percent more each year. Ours is supposed to be the largest economy in the world. Where is it? Not down here certainly. Here jobs are hard to find, pay less, but the mortgage has to be paid. We are told the banks have all the money and they are playing roulette in the globalized world.

¹ concatenation |kənˌkædətʰeɪʃən|

a series of interconnected things or events : *a singular concatenation of events unlikely to recur.*

- the action of linking things together in a series.
- the condition of being linked in such a way.

This from the New York Times: "G.E.'s Strategies Let It Avoid Taxes Altogether. Despite profits of \$14.2 billion — \$5.1 billion from its operations in the United States — General Electric did not have to pay any U.S. taxes last year." The Times's David Kocieniewski reported, "Its extraordinary success is based on an aggressive strategy that mixes fierce lobbying for tax breaks and innovative accounting that enables it to concentrate its profits offshore." G.E. is the nation's largest corporation. Its chief executive, Jeffrey Immelt, is the leader of President Obama's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. Easy to understand how ordinary workers might look at this cozy corporate-government arrangement and fear that our government is not fully committed to the interests of working people.

Asymmetry. Overwhelming imbalances in wealth and income inevitably make enormous imbalances of political power. The corporations and the very wealthy continue to do well, very well indeed. The employment crisis does not get addressed. The wars never end. We nation-build in occupied countries while breaking down our own. Nations are not built by armies, but nations are broken down by having to pay for wars far, far away.

The thread that I see is that all these events heaped in the same three months are about attempts to balance grossly unbalanced forces. An earthquake is the earth getting rid of pressure. And so are popular uprisings.

Here the minority party believes it has the power to change everything. Forcing through system changes that get rid of all the social instruments and improvements that made the so-called middle class possible. We the People awoke, protested in our masses. So far not able to stop the juggernaut that is certainly changing the country but does not do anything for jobs. Our mass protests in the streets of many cities are attempts to balance a dangerous imbalance.

The Muslim Arab world tries to break out of their oppressive regimes, asking for democracy; our democracy is being dismantled. The Arabs protest in order to get democracy, we protest to hang on to what is left of ours. And all the while Nature seems on the verge of breaking Japan, the third or fourth biggest economy of the globe. The people at the top are soothing us, but there are enough hints and warnings from people who know the power our science figured out how to unleash from the heaviest element to make us worry about radiation drifting our way.

And, despite the deniers, Climate Change is here and we, the richest etc. country in the world, the world's police, the model of democracy, are doing nothing. Have we divorced ourselves from Nature so thoroughly that we cannot hear Her telling us that our profligate life style and science bonded to capitalism are rapidly destroying the planetary ecology, and so, threatening our very survival as a species?

This is the time. The end days, less than twenty-one months from the end of the Mayan Calendar which is supposed to be an end and a beginning. Man against Man against Nature. What do you think?

robert wolff, 2 april 2011

Note: I am well aware that I should write Humankind, or Human against Human. However, it seems abundantly clear that it is men who have invented this asymmetrical world that they force on all of us. As a psychologist I used to wonder where men got the idea they were better, stronger, more important than women. I think it is because deep inside they feel inferior. Men know perfectly well that women are the ones who grow new people; our role in that process is minuscule, more often than not an accident. Women are essential for the survival of the species; frozen sperm could continue humankind without human males for generations. Modern men overcompensate. But that may be another essay...