

May 1, 1991 Washington DC

[To David Mason]

Dear David,

Your letter to us was elegant and welcome, and both despite the fact that much of what you had to report was dispiriting. I am thinking primarily of what you have had to go through regarding the care of your mother. But it seemed perfectly apt that you should have segued smoothly into the Persian Gulf within the precincts of the same paragraph, and continued with your views (which exactly match our own) of Bush.

Bush, and his pathetic war, and its victory parades, and all the blazing oil wells of Kuwait, the whole terrible mess has been taken by the administration as a giant photo-opportunity and campaign strategy; and in the midst of the initial rejoicing about the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, Bush received his highest ranking in the polls, and all the Republicans were serene in their conviction that the next election was a settled matter. Nobody seemed much concerned about the dead and the dying, the Kurds, Shiites, and Kuwaiti, or, for that matter, the flaming wells. Bush wanted only a tidy, clean little war, from which he could bring American troops back home very promptly in fulfillment of an early promise about not repeating the Vietnam situation—he continued to claim that the “Vietnam syndrome” was now and forever laid to rest by the military efficiency of his staff. The whole thing was, and continues to be, sickening. [. . .]

We send our warm and affectionate greetings.

Tony

May 10, 1991 Washington DC

[To Harry Ford]

Dear Harry,

David Lehman, who recently published Signs of the Times, a sort of exposé of Paul De Man in particular and Deconstruction in general, wrote me a note that runs, in part, as follows:

“I just received a letter from Donald Keene, the great scholar of Japanese literature, whom I visited in Tokyo last fall. He was writing to compliment me on Signs of the Times, and in the process he says the following, which I think will please you:

‘Until I read Signs of the Times I had only one comfort—the fact that there were some people writing literary criticism that was what I always thought criticism should be—a servant of the text who helps to illuminate it. A couple of