

Eldest

There is a rule here that only the eldest may write. One waits very long to be eldest, and then one is tired, or has nothing to say. Meanwhile, younger men force you into trite alliances with their political interests. Your children fear for your health should you exert yourself fully.

It has been an exceptionally long wait for me. My predecessor has bequeathed me a veritable tome before shutting out the dear world. I can hear in his gurgling tone how enormously he enjoyed the role of authoritatively connecting life's dots. The pages turn in my hands and I feel I am peeling back an onion to its false core.

What would that author say if he knew I have not straightforwardly valued a word of his legacy? I am tempted to erase it rather than add to or address it. In fact, I have started that work, and each evening, before ceremoniously bowing to the attendants outside the enormous doors to my cavernous writing parlor, I sternly call for a pencil and extend my hand to receive it. On my wrinkled palm the instrument appears completely out of place, especially the bright pink eraser. I twist that end in my ear before withdrawing into solitude, and also afterwards.

Then starts the process of rubbing away my predecessor's ebullient penmanship, which seldom fits beneath the eraser in one stroke. I keep at it all night. The desktop swims in pink dandruff, which afterwards I faithfully brush into the drawer above my legs. I have already deposited the strata of nearly five hundred pages.

The work does not vary anymore. No nuance escapes my attention even as it wanders. I am ready to die, and have my predecessor to thank. He has fulfilled his role admirably, as did his predecessor and his predecessor before him.