

2/15 The morning fixing.

Morphing, unfixed, non-standard.

A clatter of cutlery hitting the floor: forks, spoons, knives. Company's going.

All you need's a shove(l).

And shove(l)'s all you need.

The forms are built and the ready mix is on the way.

And the new currency, should it be issued, will it be worth \$1.68...

The morning fixing is the golden mean – no more, no less.

How many pyramids in a pentagram and vice versa? Triads in a pentagon,
and the other way round?

Penta.

Gone.

Edison wax cylinders look a bit like not-too-nappy paint rollers. One degree

out and this could be Janovic Plaza. The name of the tune's incised in tiny letters around the rim of the circular metal core. This one, found lying on a shelf with its myriad brother and sister cylinders in an antique electronics shop in Chelsea, LLC Waves, reads: DUET. BYE AND BYE YOU WILL FORGET ME. Then the name Edison, and the patent number.

Company's going.

Went looking for the brave old world, but you were gone gone.

Down by the ocean, it was so dismal

Women all standing with shock on their faces,

Sad description...

And at the morning transfixing, ready mixing. Forms already built. Just stick in the hose and turn the valve. It's in the cement. Logs in flume, shooting toward the river. Log jam's broken, winter ice breaking up. Sounds like the end of the world, or the beginning of long range guns turned around and firing home.

Said the Kaiser to Ludendorff: This war's a bad idea. I've thought it over. Why should we slaughter our English cousins? Call it off!

Said Ludendorff to the man with the withered arm: Mein Kaiser, I regret to say that with our new fast trains, our troops are already half way through Belgium.

What! This is impossible. Call them back!

Ach, would that I could...

And the rest is...

Silence?

In less than four years, a quarter and more of the French male population gone. *Women all standing with shock on their faces.*

And that's before influenza.

Six harmonies.

But Gwen got it right that evening of the 11th, several years back, when you put her to bed, tried to reassure her without lying, lowered the shade to shut out the plume of unholy particulate to the south and told her that you'd do everything you could to take care of her as best you could, not knowing the circumstances to come. You switched on the nightlight and with the door nearly closed behind you her voice came from the shadows in the corner of the room: *They can't bomb our love.*

And glove is all you need, or get, when the not-so-hidden hand comes down and suddenly boots stomp on the ground all round.

O you that are so strong and cold,

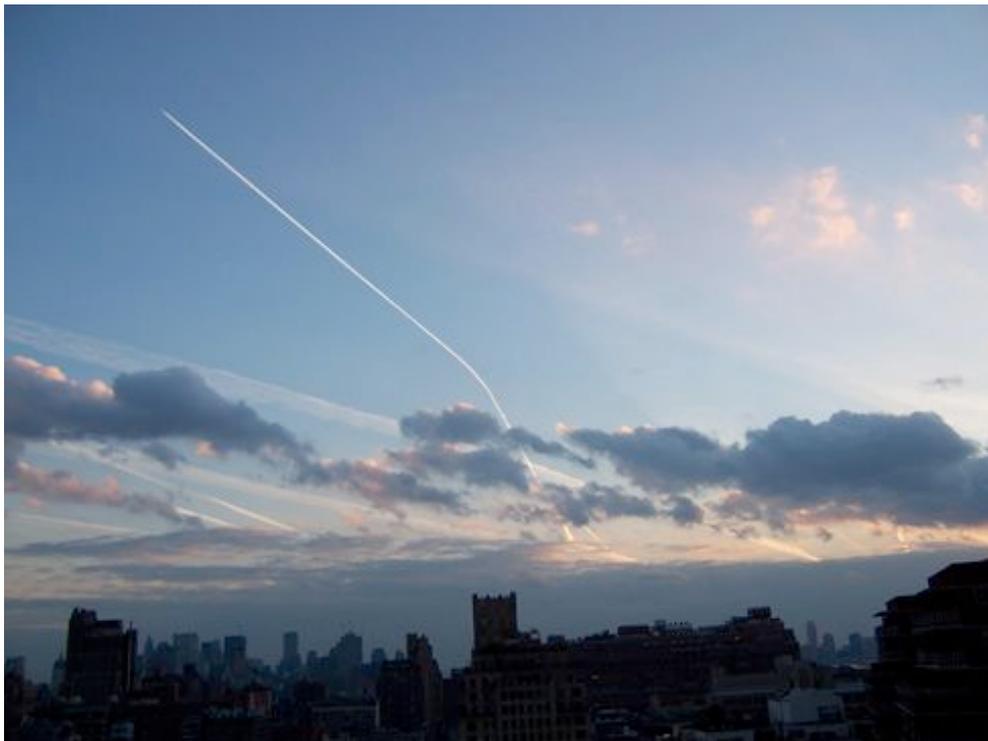
O blower, are you young or old?

*Are you a beast of field and tree,
Or just a stronger child than me?*

Or as Boston's own two-fisted mural painter Bob Killian used to say: *The cat's in the bag. And the bag's in the river.*

Cuidado en la calle.

Cinco en la pay emay. Over la ciudad de Nueva York on this día después St. Valentine's: the busiest man-made sky ever. A skydome cat's cradle. Weftless warp. Unstrung harp in the heavens. Contrails and tribulations by the dozen outa Newark Liberty International Airport.





And amidst it all one dreams of the day that freighters, borne upon the tides, will carry goods – well-made and well-intended for the supply and sustenance of our several billion *compañeros de planeta*, yea even unto to the multiplicitous corners of *el mundo* – their crates stenciled proudly in red: Hecho en Nueva York. Nueva Nueva New York. That we might receive on the incoming tide a just and mete return.

¿Y entonces?

If not now, when?

Amy Winehouse – the Grammy-award-winning. Embodies the moment. A trainwreck of a human bodysoul capable of uttering amazingly clear, robust and nuanced vocalities. Complete disconnect. Head's off and chucked into the sawdust, but the chicken's half way 'cross the killing floor already and still going strong.

C.f. Billie Holiday who did, in fact, sound like who she was. But that was then...

Though he made it to four score and ten, sad news of the death of Henri Salvador. Born in French Guiana to parents from Guadalupe, he pulsed a rare combination of Latin syncopation and fantastical comedy into the clockwork heart of Le Hexagon and the wider world as well. The Brazilian trovère Caetano Veloso once praised him in a ballad: *¿Quem não sentiu o swing de Henri Salvador?* – *Who hasn't felt the swing of Henri Salvador?* Blame it on the bossa nova, with its magic spell...

Paranoia strikes deep, but Metanoia spirals deeper. If, that is, one is prepared to risk all. But this is no speculation, no Collateralized Debt Obligation with its vast fields of collateral damage, nor Credit Default Swap, which is like unto de-fault as de-Nile am to a river. Yessir and yesmam, default packs a hell of a *swap!* when it snaps back to the point of no credit at all. No, this state of circumstance feels and smells very different. It is not a derivative of anything. It is

the thing itself. Which belongs to itself. And to anyone who claims it.

Little likelihood that they'll start popping away at USA 193 until next Thursday, the 21st at the earliest. This'll give the space shuttle Atlantis, currently docked to the ISS, a chance to get back to terra firma before pieces of ex-satellite start zinging around.

2/16 Ba gua zhang. Walk in a circle so that you "need not fear gods or devils."

Sebastian Smith, an eyewitness to the Chechen war, tells of a Sufi Zikr ceremony, where the men of the village turn circles within circles as a Russian bomber screams low overhead. "Yet no one even looks up. The whooping grows louder."

2/17 *Amor vincit omnia.*

Everything's moving faster than a satellite skipping off the atmosphere like a stone across a lake surface. Swifter than the misguided missiles trying to hit it, or the soundwaves that pull to pieces men and their best friends. Yet in the little snowglobe of this sad, mad country so much psychic energy rests on a pinnacle: the balance of the Super Delicates.

While on the outskirts of Kandahar: "Hours after the explosion, pale and shaken survivors were still at the scene. Abandoned shawls, shoes, caps and bits of human flesh were strewn on the bloodied field. Five vehicles, including police cars, had been badly damaged. The body of a man the police said was the bomber lay mangled.

“Muhammad Khan, 25, said he had been knocked over by the blast. ‘I couldn’t hear or speak or walk,’ he said. ‘My whole body was numb, and I thought I was injured, but my heart is working. Luckily my brother rushed and picked me up and poured water over my head. Thank God, I am fine.’

“People had traveled miles to watch the dogfights, a pastime that was banned by the Taliban when they were in power because it entails gambling. But the fights, involving huge Afghan mastiffs, have returned to much of the country, often sponsored by local commanders and landlords. In Argandab, they take place every Sunday during the winter, and huge crowds gather, attracting street vendors who hawk food and drinks.

“Noor Muhammad, 32, said he survived because he was sitting down and a dog in front of him blocked the force of the explosion. The police chief, who was nearby, was killed along with five of his bodyguards...”

Sayeth the *Messenger*, all out of breath and panting. Someone pour water over his head.

Dogsbodies.

Tweedle-dee Dee and Tweedled-dee Dum

Neither one gonna turn and run

They’re making a voyage to the sun

“His Master’s voice is calling me,”

Says Tweedle-dee Dum to Tweedle-dee Dee...

Chanted the troubadour-prophet Zimmerman a generation after the

troubadour-angel Samuel Cooke made his brief tour of the Earthgasm and blessed our souls with his confession:

Don't know much about history

Don't know much biology

Don't know much about science book

Don't know much about the French I took

Don't know much geography

Don't know much trigonometry

Don't know much about algebra

Don't know what a slide rule is for

But I know that one and one is two

And if this one could be with you

What a wonderful this would be...

Do the math, chanted Sam very gently to each and every sisterbrother who had ears to hear. *And I know that if you loved me too...* Do the math.

Fierce winds out there of a Sunday, the howls of air whistling through the terrace balustrades and round the sharp corners of the brickwork vying with sirens dopplering and distressed bleatings from car alarms set off by what – some robotic, neurasthenic sense of violation? Chill out, Mr. SUV, no fear – it's only the wind moving your chassis, beating against your surfaces, probing your orifizi, not some carjacker. Be

cool Mr. Avalanche, save your battery my man – you’ll need it.

Sequelia of a series of bigtime solar flares along with a road-closing snowstorm in San Diego, an huge-ass hurricane about to plow into Madagascar and another North Atlantic hurricane, all errant and out-of-season that’s spinning anti-clockwise toward Las Islas Canarias.

Now what makes the Annabelle Selldorf condo slab over on Eleventh Avenue such a trip is not so much that it’s got a garage adjacent to each floor-through apartment and a dedicated elevator to get the cars and their condistas up and down, but that in no time at all folks by the multi-thousands will most likely find themselves inhabiting a very different sort of feng shui – living in condos that are, in fact, their cars. As long as there’s credit on the card for gas and the bank ain’t found ‘em yet...

Or just a stronger child than me?

Aegis. That is the name of the missile the Navy will use to try to blow apart USA 193 – one sick puppy of a satellite. Aegis – nice word, meaning in a modern sense, protection, carries with it, woven into its trailing coma, a cool etymology which includes “violent windstorm,” and “I rush (or move) violently.” As a mythic object, the Aegis refers to several things, among them, the goatskin buckler of Zeus – which he occasionally lends to Pallas Athena, or, alternatively, a belt worn diagonally over the shoulder as a support for a shield. Or again, Zeus’s breastplate, something “awful to behold.”

As body-armor, the Aegis may also be Athena’s cuirass, made from the hide of

a chthonic, fire-breathing monster. Or the flayed skin of another monster Athena slew, the giant Pallas, and whose name She appended to her own.

If the Aegis belongs to Zeus, its origin is said to be the skin of the Cretan goat Amalthea, who suckled him and which, transformed into a shield, he used in his battle with the titans. If you listen to Euripides, he says the goatskin originally belonged to the Gorgon, but more commonly it's believed that the Gorgon's head – used as the shield's boss – was a votive gift from Perseus. Often, there's a theme of snakes attached to the Aegis, either sprouting Gorgon-like from a central device, or stylized as tassels.

As, apparently did many Greeks of his day, Herodotus, Father of both Lies and History, regarded the place they called Libya as a semi-magical origin of many a powerful thing.

“The robe and the aegis of the statues of Athena the Greeks copied, I think, from the Libyan women. For except that the dress of the Libyan women is made of leather and that the tassels they have for their “aegises” are not snakes but made of leather, their dress is exactly the same. Indeed the name suggests that the raiment of the Palladia came from Libya. For over their other clothing the Libyan women wear tasseled goatskins, stripped of hair and steeped in madder, and it is from these “goatskins” that the Greeks have borrowed and transformed the word into “aigides.” I personally also believe that the *ololuge* [a Hallelujah!-like shout] first occurred at sacrifices in Libya. Certainly the Libyan women chant it very prettily. The Greeks also learned from the Libyans the practice of harnessing four horses together.”

Following Herodotus as to its Libyan origins, Robert Graves contends that the Aegis is not a garment, but a shamanic pouch filled with powerful ritual objects and belonging to Athena.

Whatever its outward form or origin, the Aegis is generally agreed to be a durned awesome thing, the wearing or wielding of the which is done by some Olympian on a mission. When Homer's "Aegis-bearing Zeus" shakes his shield, clouds envelop Mount Ida, home of the goddesses. Thunder rolls and claps, and down below on plains, in forests and in the cities, or sailing on the seas, mortals cover their heads in terror.

Hmmm. Four horses. To make one Apocalypse?

All that Aegis to shoot down one little satellite on the other side of the atmosphere?

Well, why not? Given that on July 3, 1988, on this side of atmosphere, an Aegis missile fired from the U.S. destroyer Vincennes did indeed, shoot down not so much a small-bus-sized satellite as an Airbus filled with 290 people. The Vincennes was sitting in the Persian Gulf and the Airbus, an Iranian airliner, was caught winging its way on its accustomed flightpath from Bandar Abbas on the coast of Iran, to Dubai.

What was once a missile and an aeroplane and a goodly number of living beings soon became reduced to a Case, which having worked its way through the International Court of Justice resulted, eight years later in no apology, no admission of error or responsibility, just a cold cash transfer of \$61.8 million from one sovereignty to another.

The official U.S. story is that the Aegis, which is not merely a missile, but "an integrated, computerized communication and weapons system," mistook the Airbus for

an attacking F-14 Tomcat fighter, of the sort which we'd sold a few years earlier to his Emperorship the Shah. And the Vincennes, why it was just lending its diplomatic gunboatness, and perhaps some electronic eyes and ears to a certain Ba'athist President who, at the time, was our man in Baghdad. While also helping to ensure the free passage of "friendly neutral" shipping through the Gulf. You see there was a war on at the time, between Iraq and its neighbor, a newly-Islamicized republic. Which wasn't thought so bad by we, but for the possible constriction in the flow of petróleo. And the rest is...

Rock of Aegis, cleft for me, let me hide my soul in thee.

Official estimate is that the attempted reverse-thunderbolting of US 103 will ka-ching in at between \$40 and \$60 million – which seems a lowball since the presumably warheadless rockets they'll fire cost \$9.5 million a pop. Yeah, yeah kid, ya get three shots, just like at the carney.

According to CNN.com, a Pentagon official, speaking anonymously because planning the hit remains classified, allows that "since early January, a Navy team, including 200 industry experts and scientists, has been working furiously to modify its sea-based Aegis missile defense system so it can shoot down a satellite in low orbit." Moreover, "Among the challenges is [sic] modifying sensors designed to detect the heat from an incoming warhead so they can spot the much-cooler satellite, which has no heat source and is warmed only by the sun's rays" – well, just like Sister Moon.

At a recent press briefing, a delightfully-named Pentagon spokesman, Gen. Carter Ham (does he wear green scrambled eggs on the chest of his uniform?) put forth

the proposition that the game is worth the candle because the satellite's fuel tank, if not "taken out" would very likely survive re-entry and land in a populated area. Given that USA 193 malfunctioned immediately after launch in December 2006, it remains pretty well tanked-up with 1,000 pounds of toxic hydrazine, which could "disperse harmful, even potentially deadly fumes over an area the size of two football fields."

Golleee, general, that's a faire parcel of acreage even by Texas standards. So what are they going to call this mission: Operation Hail Mary?

Ham takes the fifth on that one – still classified after all – but does own up that the Navy will "want the period of a day or two to assess the effect of the first missile... to probably get an orbit or two, to get an understanding of what effect the first intercept had on the satellite before launching another interceptor."

And further skinny: the anointed Aegis shooter will be the USS Lake Erie, a cruiser, to be accompanied by destroyers USS Decatur and the USS Russell. And, Highway 61 being unsuitable for a Naval mission, *where do you want this killing done?* Well, that's classified too, but Ham'll tell you this: It'll be somewhere in the Pacific north of the equator. The Decatur will feed trajectory information to the Erie, and the Russell will back up the Decatur. That's all I can say for now gentlemen, ladies. Thank you and good morning.

Working. Furiously. All so that at least one modified member of the class known as RIM-161 Standard Missile 3 can meet with USA 193 at a combined speed of 22,000 mph. Boy, is your nose itching. And it's way early for allergy season.

Operation Rolling Thunder, Operation Urgent Fury, Operation Just Cause, Operation Earnest Will, Operation Prime Chance, Operation Praying Mantis, Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Ultimate Justice, Operation Infinite Justice, Operation Enduring Freedom. Good names, though for only a fraction of the adventures undertaken in your lifetime. Still, the Israelis trump us when it comes to designating military strikes: Kadesh (Holy), Peace for Galilee, Accountability, Grapes of Wrath, Days of Penitence, Summer Rains.

Hezbollah too exhibits a certain, dare one say it? Levantine rhetorical flare as well. Operation Truthful Promise was code-name for their July 12, 2006 kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers – proximal cause of Operation Just Reward, the air force campaign against Southern Lebanon.

And all over the planet, in every imaginable quarter, the constant and ever-escalating, endlessly-multiplying ricochets from which there are no safe corners: Operation Home to Roost.

“I knew a chap who once lived in the country, near Bridgend,” said Tom, “and they had a munition works there in the War and it spoiled all the birds. The chap I know says you can always tell a cuckoo from Bridgend, it goes: ‘Cuckk bloodyoo! Cuck bloodyoo!’”

“Cuck bloodyoo!” echoed the arch we were standing under.

Writ Dylan Thomas, kan ya makan in “Just Like Little Dogs.”

And if perhaps a hundred years

From now an airship with Greek wine

High-laden through the red dawn steers –

Who would not be the ferryman?

Asked Gottfried Keller in a hopeful mode, mid-19th C.

Whereas the closest thing you've got to Plan A is Operation Be. All. And nothing.

Newcastle-based Northern Rock gets nationalized. The "struggling mortgage lender," which the government attempted to shore up late last year with \$107 billion in loans and guarantees, has a hopperful of creditors. Will they, and the bank's depositors be paid in lumps of coal?

Whilst on the Left Coast, the USDA recalls 143 million pounds of frozen beef, destined for school lunch programs and fast-food chains. Apparently the company in question, Westland/Hallmark Meats, did not see fit to contact its vet when downer cattle keeled over after passing inspection. A video shows the slaughterhouse staff shoving them sick doggies along with forklifts.

"On the one hand, I'm glad that the recall is taking place," quoth Jean Halloran, director of food policy initiatives at Consumers Union. "On the other, it's somewhat disturbing, given that obviously much of this food has already been eaten. It's really closing the barn door after the cows left."

Barn, huh, what barn?

Barn baby barn. Whole lotta shakin'

Et moo-la-la! Who can resist when Lady Mondegreen whispers *shut the door?*

It being winter recess, Gwen has school off tomorrow. So you ask if she'll have an hour or so to consult with you on the cover design for *Beaky Chronicles*. She'll make the time, she says. Got any preliminary suggestions, you ask? She shakes her head no. "Ideas blossom as I work."