

2/22 Dis too shall pass.

You live in Penn South, building 4. Drink coffee in the a.m. at Table 4. Crazy 8's. Vocation, vocation, vocation.

Yesterday the *Messenger* blasted away at McCain. Today, they went gunning for Hillary, whom, supuestamente, they endorse. Weird timing too, given that she scored last night in the debate with O. and thereby gained a toehold. The lead story runs: "Clinton Donors Worried by Campaign Spending: Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaign finance report appeared to be a map of her management failings."

That rhetoric, timed as it was, weeks short of the Texas primary, could be Hill's Alamo right there. Now why'd they go and do that? Is there some reflex response in the American media to sacrifice the blonde when the going gets rough? In this instance going after her for mismanaging a few millions – or in Martha's case, for looting them like any other smiling pirate – in order to divert folks from the Noah-like follies of the Wall Street boys who've pissed away gazillions and now lie drunk and naked in their tents?

Finally, a snowstorm worthy of the name. *Tormenta de la nieve*. A silenter city *que normalmente*, interpolated now and again by the rumble-whoosh of plows. Same technology, but how different they used to sound when the streets were cobblestone.

Brian Battersby, member of the Prince George Center, Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, reporting: "At approx. 19:43 PDT while observing the lunar eclipse

at the PGOA (53 45' 29" N, 122 50' 56" W), a group of about 30 people, PG Centre members and public, witnessed what we assume was the demise of the spy satellite USA 193.

"Many debris trails were witnessed moving from south-west to north-east at high altitude. One was especially bright and long lasting. I can recall about 6 bright trails and 15 fainter ones.

"The debris trails seemed to come in 'waves' with the first wave being brighter than the debris that followed behind it. The trails seemed to be in a fan shape with the trails being wider apart in the north-east than they were in the south-east."

"If it follows the orbit," says the *Post*, "the debris field will pass over the city on Monday at 11:37 p.m. on a northwest-to-southeast track." The field, as it were, carries with it "a football-sized chunk" of US 193. Ah, but in such a game, who gets to play the Tuesday morning quarterback? And who moveth the goalposts where?

Satellite's gone...

Yes, it's true: the little satellite that couldn't was but one small fritz within a massively dysfunctional plot known as Future Imagery Architecture. Conceived initially as a "constellation of satellites" the FIA was about using electro-optical and radar sensors to gather clear images of life on earth, even at night or under cloud cover. Boeing scooped Lockheed in 1999 for the contract and by 2005 they had managed to burn through \$10 billion on a system that had no concrete existence – hardly a surprise since Boeing had no prior experience engineering or building these sorts of gizmos. So

eventually the government turned to Lockheed to carry on the project, et voila! the first FIA satellite was launched: USA 193. And the rest is...

2/23 Larry Davis, aka Adam Abdul-Hakim, killed the other day in the yard at Shawangunk Correctional Facility, a maxi up north in Ulster County. A fellow New York City-born Gemini sixteen years your junior who didn't quite make it to his forty-second birthday. He'd have been eligible for parole in 2016, thirty years after he survived, thanks to his own blazing guns, an extraordinary police fusillade, followed, after a lengthy manhunt, by arrest, trial and incarceration.

Official account is that he was stabbed multiple times by Luis Rosado, a fellow-inmate with a record of assaults longer than his nine inch shank. But who'd have imagined L.D. would have made it this far? How many among us possess that sort of bone deep chutzpah? And something more.

Your nose twitches over this one too, because you know how unforgiving the system is, how by hook or crook, if you mess with them, they will find their moment, their opening and their tool of enforcement. By temperament and training, you're always looking for the elusive evidence of the hidden hand. But hey, it could've been a simple beef between two irreconcilable masters of the violent act. Sure, anything's possible.

And then, on the other side of the invisible membrane that casts one life into a definitively different mode than another, comes the tale of Joseph Pannell, now 58, who, as a 19 year-old black militant in Chicago, shot a police officer, Terry Knox, and permanently damaged his arm. Arrested, Pannell jumped bail and fled to Canada

where he changed his name to Gary Freeman, married, raised a family, and for well over thirty years comported himself as a model citizen. Until a finger-print match-up in 2004 that resulted in his arrest. Pannell fought extradition, but has now returned in the wake of an exceptional plea bargain agreed to by the policeman he shot, to wit, Pannell/Freeman will serve thirty days, and pay \$250 G's to a Chicago charity that aids the families of killed or wounded officers.

But the kicker is that JP/F decided to give up his extradition fight because of perceived political changes in home town. His Canadian attorney argued that two score years ago, his client had “acted in self-defense during a time of intense distrust between the Chicago police and African-Americans” – a diplomatic statement if ever there was one. But today, what convinced JP/F to put his fate into the hands of an American court was, most especially, the support of mayor Richard M. Daley, and others, for Barak Obama’s candidacy.



Chicago Sun-Times, via Associated Press

Joseph Pannell, in custody in March 1969.



Ángel Franco/The New York Times

The police captured Mr. Davis on Dec. 6, 1986. Seventeen days earlier, he fled a shootout where he wounded six officers trying to arrest him on charges of killing drug dealers.

A perennial category, the great unwashed. But now, borne upon the credit tsunami, the great washed-up. Por ejemplo: “Plan,” headlines the *Messenger*, “to Rebuild Penn Station Area May Be Close to Failure.” The article was penned by Charles Bagli – whose middle name is V. (for Vornado?) – one of the paper’s venerable real estate warhorses of shock and aw-shucks. The dispatch reads thusly, edited a tad for concision’s sake:

“The sweeping \$14 billion proposal [in *Messenger*-speak, *sweeping* connotes an appropriately up-market real estate plan. Whereas a public housing project where they’d rather see condos is referred to as *sprawling*] to transform Pennsylvania Station and the district around it is in danger of collapse because of the softening economy,

shortfalls in government financing, political inertia and daunting logistical problems, government officials and real estate executives involved in the project said this week.

“The proposed project, known as Moynihan Station, [once upon a time, you and your mates gave the long-running Senator and White Horse habitué the nickname Moneyed-ham] calls for building half a dozen skyscrapers, relocating Madison Square Garden one block away and constructing a monumental new train station on 34th Street, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. [Various pressure groups, developers and government officials have embraced the plan as an act of civic redemption for the demolition of the original Penn Station in the 1960s, saying it will also create a first-class business district around the nation’s busiest rail hub.]

“But the project has grown in size and complexity, and the estimated cost of the new station has tripled, to \$3 billion. There is squabbling between developers, the Garden, government officials, community groups and preservationists over the designs and how much the public would benefit. And now negotiations have stalled, despite three years of planning and lobbying in Albany and Washington, the officials and executives said. Those people spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid inflaming state officials.

“Proponents of the plan, who view the \$14 billion project as a rare opportunity to refurbish Penn Station and revitalize the district, say they still hope that Gov. Eliot Spitzer will be able to drag it back from the edge of failure. In an interview Friday, Mr. Spitzer said he was committed to the Moynihan project, which he contends is critical to the future of the city.”

“Officials say the governor plans to meet next week with the developers behind the project – Stephen M. Ross of Related Companies and Steven Roth of Vornado Realty

Trust – and the owners of Madison Square Garden in an effort to resolve major financing issues.

But the developers, who have spent more than \$50 million on the planning effort, and the Garden have grown weary of the slow pace of progress, the executives said.

“The project’s linchpin, [wouldn’t “keystone” be the better word?] moving Madison Square Garden one block west to the Farley Post Office, may fall out of place. Frustrated by the delays and rising costs, Madison Square Garden has revived plans to renovate the 30-year-old arena instead of relocating. Garden officials have told real estate executives and civic leaders that they plan to announce the renovation plans in early March.

During discussions in December, Garden executives, developers and government officials agreed that if they did not make progress over the next two months, they would part ways, according to two people who have been briefed on the talks. Garden officials did not attend a scheduled planning meeting on Thursday.

The plan to build a grand train station and erect the skyscrapers was always dependent on the demolition of the current Garden, the brown doughnut-like structure that sits over the crowded corridors of Penn Station, where the station would be built. More than 550,000 passengers pass through the station every day.”

After which ensues, for several paragraphs, a great deal of tedious scribal blah-blah concerning the positioning, arm-twisting and raw manipulations of various interests. Then things get interesting again:

“It’s a critical investment for Midtown,’ Mr. Spitzer said in a telephone interview. ‘This, in conjunction with Hudson Yards, where we have taken a vacant piece of land and now have five competing bids to add 12 million square feet of commercial and residential space, will redefine Midtown Manhattan.’

The governor was referring to the pending sale of the development rights over the West Side railyards, which sit three blocks west of Penn Station, from 30th to 33rd Street, between 10th and 12th Avenues. The second round of bids for the development rights are due Tuesday.

Some government officials and real estate executives are concerned that a slowing economy and the current state of the credit markets, where there is little money available for large real estate deals, could cause problems for both the sale of the railyards and the Moynihan project.”

No shit, Sherlock.

“The Spitzer administration can ill afford a setback for either project, urban planners say, after its announcement in January that it had significantly cut back its plans to expand the nearby Jacob K. Javits Convention Center.

“We’re convinced that this is the key catalyst to West Side development,’ said Robert D. Yaro, president of the Regional Plan Association, a supporter of the Moynihan project [an organization that, in it’s nearly hundred year history never met a community-busting urban renewal plan or mega-real estate grab it didn’t reflexively endorse]. ‘It’s got lots of moving parts, and they’re not meshing well. But there’s so much money to be made by everyone and there’s so much in the public interest. It’s

essential that we get it done and we get it right.’

“One of the key issues for the Moynihan project is the cost of building a new train station, whose estimated price has grown to \$3 billion from \$1 billion.... The negotiations involve state and city officials and officials from the Long Island Rail Road, New Jersey Transit, Amtrak, two subway lines and the Port Authority.

“Patrick J. Foye, co-chairman of the Empire State Development Corporation, said that the city and the state have each pledged to invest \$300 million in the station, and that the developers have agreed to put up \$550 million. The developers, in turn, would get valuable development rights to build skyscrapers in the surrounding area.

“That would be especially tantalizing for Mr. Roth, whose company already owns a major portion of the neighborhood, including the Hotel Pennsylvania and No. 1 and No. 2 Penn Plaza.

“But even if the developers can whittle the cost of the station by several hundred million dollars, there is a serious shortfall. Both government officials and the developers are hoping that they can obtain what is essentially a matching grant of \$800 million from the federal government, a figure that Congressional officials say may be unrealistically high.

“There are also a raft of design issues, ranging from what the new Penn Station would look like to how a new arena for the Garden would fit into the Farley Post Office. The developers have proposed inserting 1.2 million square feet of shops and department stores into the station, which critics say would turn the building into a shopping mall rather than a monumental train station like Grand Central Terminal.

“The Garden, which signed a nonbinding agreement with the developers in February 2006, would essentially trade its current site between Seventh and Eighth

Avenues to the developers for a new \$1 billion arena within the walls of the state-owned post office, a landmark building between Eighth and Ninth Avenues.”

So many clowns, so few Volkswagens.

The things that pass for knowledge I can't understand...

And it's all happening, or not, two blocks north of the border of your little red-brick Socialist enclave, now nearly fifty years old and named by Robert Moses in some ephemeral and uncharacteristic fit of planning modesty, Penn South. Otherwise known as *where you live*.

My name is Jan the Gypsy

I travel the land.

There are no chains about me

I am me own man.

I can tell a fair old story which I'm sure ain't no surprise

Of the places I have been, oh,

And they ain't no lies.

I've never had a proper home,

Not one like yours is.

I've nearly always had a caravan

With horses.

And I know you won't believe me

Though it is the truth to tell

That the living it is hard, oh,

But it suits me well.

Sang Sandy Denny, kan ya makan.

2/24 Zeitgeist para todos.

5.86 trillion miles. That's a long time. But I know that one and one is two...

Solar flares off the charts. Can't see the origin because it's not in our field of view. Could be symptomatic of a major sunspot, something we'll know in a few days when Old Man Helios rotates round a jot or two.

Could it be our Sun's displeased with the antics of his earthly patriarchs?

At the café, you meet and converse briefly with a fellow you've exchanged friendly nods with for years. He usually takes Table 2 on the opposite side of the room, and buries himself in some electronic device. A big, strapping, square-jawed surfer-looking guy who, leveraging off of being a fitness coach, now owns an exclusive gym. His next venture, so he says, will be into "corporate wellness," a phrase that trips as lightly off his lips as it clunks in your ears. So much so that you ask him to repeat the last part of the sentence just to make sure you it right. The fault lies not in his diction, nor in your ears, but in the antique architecture of your mind, that can no longer leap with agility over so formidable a paradox. You still shut down cognitively when you

hear the word lifestyle. Wellness, schmellness, abi gezint.

Many recall her or his words, but few have met or personally known the great poet and philosopher Anon.

Joy, says Tom B., is heart qi scattering. A wonderful sensation, but, like grief, it can create problems. Therefore no emotion is good or bad in and of itself, it's more a question of maintaining the harmonious movement of qi. In the West, people say "When I get angry, my face turns red." In Chinese thinking, the red face *is* anger.

Once upon a time in *The Tempest*.

Décalage, mon amour.

What would it be like to live on Rue des Cinq Diamants, a little street that runs into Boulevard Auguste Blanqui, a radial artery leading to and from Place d'Italie?

Nevertheless, le 14ème, c'est toujours ton arrondissement préféré.



Wednesday, August 24, 2005. Rue des Thermopyles. Gwen carries her pain au chocolat. Biologique.

2/25 The entire culture reduced to a second hand clothing store: *Trash & Vaudeville*.

You chant Carmina and I'm like "come-on-a" – let's call the whole thing Orff.

The goal posts have left the field. And the grid iron's off the griddle. The once bounded terrain spreads and shrinks in all directions. And whatever lines are left lying on the ground don't signify at all. You can step on them or over them. Your mother's back is just what it is. Where you put your feet doesn't affect that condition at all.

But the poor old toilet seat! Since the bowl up and gone, it don't care if it's left up or down. Times ain't flush no more.

Mud step.

The ball skitters away from all players.

And demolished to make way for whatever slouches on, Kommodity Funhouse, where one once upon a time, one confronted one's desires in their nightmare form.

Out, out brief Ken doll.

And the West is silenced.

Winners have yet to be renounced.

Not that you're an expert witness, but it seems that in a trainwreck, sometimes the locomotive derails first and pulls however many cars off with it. Alternatively a "passive" car can come off the tracks and drag other parts of the train along for the brief, ungroov'd ride. And then, there's the possibility that the trestle will simply go, or the embankment may have been undermined little by little.

*Virgil Caine is my name
and I served on the Danville train,
Til Stoneman's cavalry came and tore up the tracks again...
...And all the bells were ringing...*

So wrote the Mohawk-Jewish troubadour Jamie Robert Klegerman, aka Robbie Robertson, kan ya makan.

*Back with my wife in Tennessee
when one day she called to me:
"Virgil, quick come see,
there goes Robert E. Lee!"
Now I don't mind chopping wood,
and I don't care if the money's no good.
You take what you need
and you leave the rest,
but they should never have taken
the very best...*

...And all the people were singing...

¿Por qué tú no bailas?

Nearer Magog to thee.

If gigantic chopping knives, cleavers and steel rolling pins scare you, it'd be best to avoid the season premier of *TOP CHEF* on Bravo, coming to TV screens March 12. At least if the show in any way resembles the subway poster whereon a multi-cultural phalanx of kitchen implement-wielding toughs of each gender and a few members of the sliding scale in between stare out at the peaceable platform-standing train attender with looks and gestures of palpable menace. They don't seem to like one another too much either.

And then there's the tagline the PR folks could've adapted from James Baldwin: "Let the Flames Begin." Of course they could've borrowed your motto: "All will be re-vealed."

While we all anticipate, with varying degrees of hope or trepidation, what's not going to happen.

Here's a game sure to thrill: Grand Theft Autonomy.

Warning: Scaffolding chained to bicycles will be removed.

From the 37th floor of the Hilton, you can look down on a lot of rooves, including City Center's amazing dome. On one office building there's a castle-like structure, its walls rising just a bit higher than water tank it was built to enclose and disguise. But here's an unanticipated consequence. Shielded from the winds, and lying as it does in the shadow of taller buildings, the water tank remains crowned with a cone of brilliant white snow – days after it's melted pretty much everywhere else.

Which makes you flash back to the trucks you used to see from time to time, owned by a company that built and maintained these tanks. Rosenwach. And there was another company that did tanks too, Fiedler, whose slogan ran: *See Fiedler on Your Roof.*

Curious juxtaposition of two headlines on the front page of the online *Times*. Midway down the left column: "Poll: Obama Rises in Voter Popularity."

And just above it, the headline of Adam Nagourny's column: "Could even the best-run campaign have done better against Barak Obama?" Odd locution, no? As if Obama were some kind of putatively acknowledged enemy, cast as a force of nature, that We have been defeated by. Something on the order of, "Could even the best missile defense system have stopped the deadly asteroid?" Of course one could infer that whomever wrote the headline was, in actuality, wondering out loud whether Hillary might have played her cards better. But that ain't what came out the *Messenger's* mouth.

Sang the O'Jays back in the day: *What they do? The back stabbers.*

And in more or less the same moment, The Undisputed Truth delivered Barrett Strong's admonition:

...I'm telling you beware,

Beware of the handshake

That hides the snake

Listen to me now, beware

Beware of that pat on the back

It just might hold you back

Smiling faces, smiling faces sometimes

They don't tell the truth

Smiling faces, smiling faces

Tell lies and I got proof...



Down below in Mali, rain from an electrical storm whose thunderheads blocked the ground-based earthlings' view of this giant anvil cloud. It's mostly composed of ice crystals, and gets its wide, flattened-out shape from rising air that expands outward as it presses against the bottom of the stratosphere. This shot was taken on February 5th from a window in the ISS, which was zipping by at an altitude of 200 miles above the earth. So reports Spaceweather.com. But this doesn't make optical sense in our universe given that the top of the anvil is, max, ten miles high. How then is

it possible to have taken this picture from 190 miles above that? To get such a low angle on the cloud from that far up, you'd have to be thousands of miles off to the side. At which point the cloud would be way over the horizon.

Mysteries. Mysteries.

Who threw the overalls in Mrs. Murphy's chowder? Nobody spoke so he shouted all the louder...

...He visto cosas muy claras que no son verdad.