

Scroll of Wonders



Who can retell the things that befell us?...

December 31, 2008



Gazprom's Alexei Miller said he blamed Ukraine entirely for the situation.

The situation at issue being a dispute [Disputin?] over whether Ukraine has or has not paid its gas bill claimed by Russia as totaling \$4 billion or so. As a result of which Russia is threatening to shut the valve on the pipeline to – and through – Ukraine at the crack of New Year's dawn unless it receives payment, a move which potentially compromises gas supplies for the European Union. But oy, Alexi, such a punim!

December 12, 2008

Heading for Tarallucci on your bicycle, you almost overrun it lying in the middle of the street. 18th Street, between Fifth and Broadway.



Later it occurs to you: just round the corner from Victoria's Secret.

June 15, 2008

Free and Flush, Russians Eager to Roam Abroad



Johan Spanner for The New York Times

A water aerobics class at a hotel in Antalya, Turkey, built for Russian tourists to resemble the Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral.

January 1, 2009

Here then may lie one possible dovetail between American and Israeli exceptionalisms. We are a nation (of abandoned children) that (despite our rebellious, no, spontaneous nature) can intend only good. And good for all humanity results from what we do. Its goodness is of one and the same nature as our doing it. Consubstantial.

Israel: the ancient patriarch, reviled, insulted and yea, murdered repeatedly in a series of great historical crimes, culminating in a holocaust so unspeakable it empties the lungs of all oxygen. Yet, miracle of miracles, Israel is now reborn as the most

vulnerable of infants, surrounded by jackals intent on fanging its tender throat – yes, our baby brother whom by instinct and out of duty we must protect.

And when one looks at England, our joint progenitor, and the awesome resources at stake, mythical and viscous, one falls more breathless still.

What is it that inserts itself between idea and goal? What wedge, like Lincoln splitting rails, busts theory and practice ever further apart until they mutually collapse?

Perhaps there is some ineffability at work to widen the gap. But suppose the divergence is a natural result of imagining the two as separate in the first place?

December 31, 2008

Last night, just after sunset, the grand conjunction of Venus and the waxing crescent moon. So powerful a sensation that your knees shook as you crossed Lafayette Street heading toward the fish store in Chinatown.

Salmon \$6.40 a pound.



And tonight, again, from your bedroom window.

But what you can't see for the intervening buildings is that it's a double conjunction. Down toward the horizon, Mercury and Jupiter get intimate too. But in Meade, Colorado, one could catch it all.



And here's a hand my trusty fiere!

And gie's a hand o' thine!

And we'll tak a right gude-willy waught

For auld lang syne...

December 28

Château du Val d'Or, St. Emilion Grand Cru, 2005.

December 31, 2008

De la idea al hecho

Hay un gran trecho.

Macy's tells Goebbles?

"Threnodial."

November 4, 2008



Photo: Axel Aubrun

Celebrants, cops and chopper searchlight beam, Williamsburg street party, just after Pennsylvania went Obama.



Photo: Axel Aubrun

Chopperlight, or North Star? What railway? Whose freedom?

January 1, 2009

Threnody: a song or hymn of mourning, as distinct from aubade, a song or hymn of morning. Though one might be the other in different or combin'd forms.

Threnody comes from Greek, surprise, surprise: *threnodia*, from *threnos* (lament) + *oide* (song). The root, supuestamente, in Proto-Indo-European *wed* (to speak), forebear of: *ode*, *tragedy*, *comedy*, *melody*, *rhapsody*.

Don't touch that threnodial. Let the music play.

January 1 – Sixth day of Gaza bombardment

“Israel stepped up its diplomatic activity while continuing its airstrikes against Hamas for a sixth day, killing a senior Hamas leader and two of his wives and four children....” (NYT)

Diplomacy, of course. The Israelis sent their foreign minister to talk with Sarkozy.

And the airstrikes? In recent years American taxpayers have bought Israel well over a hundred Lockheed Martin F-16s and, between '01 and '06, \$200 million-plus worth of spare parts. A happy day too for the IAF this past July when 186 million gallons of JP-8 aviation jet fuel arrived. And to make sure the F-16s don't fly around toothless, in '07 we signed a contract with Raytheon to transfer thousands of TOW, Hellfire, and bunker buster missiles. A mere bagatelle at \$1.3 billion.

Interviewed by the *Times* back in April '02, two years before he was blown up in an IAF aerial assassination, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, a top Hamas official, lauded the strategic efficacy of suicide bombings. “It is the same,” he said, “as their F-16.”

By the end of the day, the Gaza death toll tops four hundred. And the “senior Hamas leader” has been identified as Nizar Rayyan, killed with *four* of his wives and *nine* children.

December 28

No collusion.

No compliance.

No complicity.

Nunca más. Basta.