

January 28

A man, a plan, a canal – Panama! A man, a plan, Afghanistan. Rhyme beats palindrome going but not coming and going. And both beat reason. But what objects (direct or indirect) are implied? Whose (who's) subject? ¿Y donde es el verbo – el acción? No drama? Well, perhaps some residuum of it.

Headlines the *Times*:

[Obama Says Not a 'Moment to Spare' on Stimulus Plan](#)

But you don't click and instead read a few more pages of Jullien:

After perforce recognizing that in warfare uncertainty is inevitable and deducing from this that any sort of strict theory about it is impossible, Clausewitz unexpectedly discovers a reason for finding that uncertainty admirable. By prompting an enthusiastic surge [!] of energy, it opens up a new space and allows new aspirations to be fulfilled. He recognizes that, although warfare is a "gamble" and cannot be treated as an object of science, it is "the element that in general best suits the human mind." For, "instead of complying with mediocre necessity, it deploys itself in the realm of possibilities." "Courage rapturously takes wing," and audacity and danger become an element into which the human spirit launches itself "as an intrepid swimmer launches himself into the current." That is precisely the kind of gamble accompanied by risk and danger that Chinese strategy has always avoided.

As conceived in Europe, an opportunity generates the kind of pleasure afforded by risks, surprise and the unknown, in a word, the pleasure afforded by *adventure*, which is also the source of the pleasure afforded by stories (that generally set in

opposition images of warfare and images of love, in all of which opportunity turns out to play an important role). When regarded as a risky coincidence, an opportunity operates as a stimulus [!] and triggers aspirations and so, in the last analysis, seems to operate in connection with desire more than with efficacy. Or rather the logic of its irrationality seems to stem from a different level, that of the imaginary and of passion, as is conveyed by allegorical images of *kairos* [opportunity] and indicated by common expressions such as “the whims of Fortune” and also by Machiavelli’s advice to approach it – or rather take it by storm – as though it were a woman.

On the one hand, then, a logic of pleasure; on the other, a logic of efficacy: there is a defining parting of the ways here. Pursuing what initially seemed to be the European path of efficacy (based on the interaction of a goal-action and an opportunity), we now find ourselves moving toward in a direction that eventually turns out to lead to heroism rather than strategy. Could it be that Machiavelli himself and Clausewitz are less concerned with efficacy than is usually claimed? For both of them, there seems to be a persistent surplus or extra element over and above the pure function of efficacy, an element that seems to have more to do with the exaltation of an individual’s personality and human glory. Perhaps we never did emerge from the world of the epic.
(*A Treatise on Efficacy*, pp. 82-83.)

House Passes Obama’s Stimulus Package

January 29

Frigid Nights for a Swath of States

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) – More than a million homes and businesses were left in the cold without power Thursday in the wake of an icy winter storm could face a lengthy wait for electricity to come back, even as federal help was promised to two states hit hardest by the blast.

President Barack Obama signed requests late Wednesday from Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear and Arkansas Gov. Mike Beebe for federal emergency declarations. Crews – even the National Guard in Kentucky – worked around the clock to resurrect [!] power lines downed by thick ice....

...Utility officials estimated more than 1.3 million homes and businesses from Arkansas to Ohio were powerless, and warned it could be mid-February before some customers had power....

...Some huddled next to wood-burning fires and portable heaters to fend off the frigid air. Communities urged people to conserve water because the outages could limit supplies. Those who stayed put in their homes relied on gas stoves to cook food, and emergency officials feared the crisis could escalate as temperatures plunged....

...The storm has been blamed for at least 24 deaths so far....

...Tony Cipolla managed to keep warm by building a fire at his powerless home near Seneca Park in Louisville, cooking a pot of soup over a gas stove. But there wasn't a long-term plan for Cipolla and his two children, ages 5 and 9, if electricity wasn't soon restored.

"If it'll be a couple days, then we'll be in trouble," Cipolla told The Courier-Journal in Louisville, where temperatures dipped into the 20s overnight.

More than a half-million were without power in Kentucky, where the power outages produced by the ice storm were outdone only by the remnants of Hurricane Ike, which lashed the state with fierce winds last year, leaving about 600,000 customers without power.

"We've got lots of counties that do not have any communication, any heat, any power," Beshear, the state's governor, said Wednesday.

Kyle Brashears' family rode out the storm in their Mountain Home, Ark., home

before fleeing to relatives after half an ice-caked oak tree fell into their home.

"It caved the roof in and ripped the gutter off, although it didn't penetrate inside," he said. "I was walking around outside until about 1 a.m. and it was just a nonstop medley of tree limbs cracking off." ...



Loomis Dean for LIFE

Mannequins used to gauge the effects of an atomic bomb on the human body, Yucca Flats, Nevada, 1955.

Aka See the USA in your Chevrolet, America is asking you to call.

Drive your Chevrolet through the U.S.A. America's the greatest land of all.

On a highway or a road along a levee [but the levee was dry]:

Performance is sweeter, nothing can beat 'er. Life is completer in a Chevy.

See the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet. The Rockies way out west are calling you.

Drive your Chevrolet through the U.S.A., where waving fields of wheat pass in review.

So make a date today to see the U.S.A., and see it in your Chevrolet....

LOOK RIGHT
LOOK LEFT
LOOK TO THE REAR
OBJECTS ARE CLOSER
THAN THEY APPEAR
BURMA SHAVE.

But first, *how are you fixed for blades?*



Nati Harnik/Associated Press

Ford vehicles await buyers on a dealer's lot in Omaha.

Stim-u-less? Unthinkable. So, if all goes well with the debt surge, other countries will impoverish themselves, harnessing their labor and energy to the paramount task of keeping us fat. Keenly focused on filling our bottomless maw, they won't even notice as we edge their own eggs to the rim of the nest and shove them overboard.

The cuckoo that screams like an eagle. Will those silly birds ever get wise?

*The Lord above gave man an arm of iron
So 'e could do his job and never shirk.
The Lord gave man an arm of iron – but
With a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck,
Someone else'll do the blinkin' work!*

October 28, 2008

The question is not so much how to make the system survive as why one would want it to. Or imagine it is capable of being saved.

And with Barack comes the new, wondrous amnesia. With every passing day, we're evermore convinced that the past never happened. There there now, it was all just a bad dream.

January 30, 2009

One way to pose the question is: how to step down from Empire? Another much deeper one concerns how we de-exceptionalize ourselves, internally.



The troopship SS Empress of Russia, 1918.



Dazzle-ships in Drydock at Liverpool, by Edward Wadsworth, 1919.

Dazzle camouflage, or razzle-dazzle they called it. Used on certain large WWI and WWII-era warships. The idea, purportedly dreamed up by an English artist, Norman Wilkenson – later Sir – not for concealing a ship by blending it into its surroundings, but rather confounding the eye of the beholder as well as the range finders used for naval artillery. Dazzle also made it difficult for observers to tell the ship's speed and heading. Where exactly was the stern and where the bow? In short, WTF am I s'posed to shoot at?



HMAS Yarra, sunk by a Japanese cruiser force whilst escorting a convoy near Java in 1942.



Destroyer USS Charles S. Sperry, 1944.

Escher, eat your heart out. But, uh, what's that strange, familiar-looking thing standing on her second forward gun turret? Some kind of nautical ornament?

A typewritten letter, with hand corrections, from Ernest Hemingway to his soon-to-be father-in-law, Thomas Welsh. The stationery reads: FINCA VIGIA, SAN FRANCISCO DE PAULA, CUBA. Dated June 19, 1945. The latter had sent some books to Hemingway along with a letter that attempted to draw the former out on his religious beliefs. Hemingway replied:

"...If it is any use to you to know how war affects one man's religious faith this may help start our discussion which... I look forward to greatly. In first war (alleged World War) [I] was really scared after wounded and very devout at the end. Fear of death. Belief in personal salvation or maybe just preservation through prayers for intercession of Our Lady and various saints that prayed to with almost tribal faith.

"Spanish war seemed so selfish to pray for self when such things being done to all people by people sponsored by Church that never prayed for self. But missed Ghostly comfort almost the way a man who was accustomed to take a drink would miss it when he was cold and wet. This war got through without praying once. Times a little bad sometimes too. But felt that having forfeited any right to ask for same no matter how scared. All this could be considerably elaborated..."