

January 3

Gray lady frontpage headsup:

Madoff Trustee Seeks Wide Power to Subpoena

And the subhead: "A request seeks unusual authority to subpoena witnesses and documents, citing the alleged Ponzi scheme's scale."

Not just the scale though. Given the special status of the "victims," surely the parties will come to a mutually beneficial agreement.

Reuters, dateline Kiev/Moscow: "Gas Dispute Spreads to Bulgaria."

"Russian gas flows to four European Union countries were below normal levels on Saturday after Moscow cut off supplies to Ukraine in a pricing row, and there were no talks in sight to resolve the dispute.

"With temperatures below zero overnight in Europe, Bulgaria's Bulgargaz operator joined energy firms in Poland, Romania and Hungary in saying they had noted falls in supply, though flows to Europe's biggest economy, Germany, were not affected.

"The European Union, which gets a fifth of its gas from pipelines that cross Ukraine, said it would call a crisis meeting of envoys in Brussels on Monday and demanded that transit and supply contracts be honored...."

Gas. Funny sort of word. Turns out it's the Flemish way to spell *chaos*. Initially used by a 17th Century Dutch chemist to describe invisible, apparently formless, products of combustion and fermentation. But there's no need to drill for chaos. It can be found anywhere folks turn liquid fuels into vapor. Or simply witness the transmutation.

All that is solid...

And from that astral place of – what was it, 2005 or 2006? – drifts the vapor of your own notes-of-a-New-York-son-taking at the time, which, like oxygen, you bottled up in a stopper'd glass:

"Far below, back on earth, there is a city rebirthing on what were once marshlands where the Neva disembogues into the Gulf of Finland. Peter the Great,

who conscripted half a million serfs to build it – it took that many ‘cause they died as fast as he could conscript them – dedicated this great new metropolis to his patron saint. One revolution later, and for nearly threescore and ten years afterward, St. Petersburg was known, officially, as Leningrad. But even if that’s what folks called it, the place remained, at least in some part of the mind, Petrograd.

Now, there’s nothing to do but change with the times again, add an L and try to get used to Petrolgrad. And watch, on the industrial bank of the river, how Gazprom’s skyscrapers rise – whether of Nouvel’s design or Libeskind’s, or Rem’s, or some other great maverick aesthetician entailed to the corporate will. From the towers’ summits, not long hence, one will be able to gaze down and across the river onto the picayune spires of Smolny Cathedral. With the certainty of a high pressure atmosphere moving in on a lazy low, Russia’s ‘window on the west’ transforms itself into Neva Neva Land.”

And, from a few pages before:

“In and around the play of the elements, men wield their powers as they may. Russia, via Gazprom, essentially nationalizes the LNG resources of Sakhalin island, consigning Royal Dutch Shell, the initial big investor, to the relative sidelines. Grinning like a Cheka cat, Vladimir Putin announces that ‘the government of the Russian Federation has been informed about this and we have no objections.’”

“Israeli Ground Forces Push Into Gaza”



Eyad Baba/Associated Press

A Palestinian viewed rubble from an Israeli strike on Friday in the Rafah refugee camp in Gaza.

“BUSINESS:

Saving for college Amid the Financial Turmoil”

“If a family puts too much money in stocks, it could easily lose a year’s worth of tuition in a matter of months, Ron Lieber writes.”

“BUSINESS:

Some Forecasters See a Fast Economic Recovery.”



This photo in BBC News online captioned “Israeli forces move toward the Gaza strip.” Now that’s some get-up. Stylish pooch too. Very Halloween in Chelsea. At first you thought the blobby red streak was some kind of rifle scope, but then you saw it was part of the graphics on the side of the tourist bus. Right, the tourist bus. Whew, for a moment you were worried they were serious and someone might get hurt.

Paintball. Gotcha!

January 4

AP: “US Blocks UN Action on Gaza Conflict.”

“The United States late Saturday blocked approval of a U.N. Security Council

statement calling for an immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel and expressing concern at the escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas.

“U.S. deputy ambassador Alejandro Wolff said the United States saw no prospect of Hamas abiding by last week’s council call for an immediate end to the violence. Therefore, he said, a new statement at this time ‘would not be adhered to and would have no underpinning for success, would not do credit to the council.’”

NYT: “Israeli Troops Advance, Bisecting Gaza”

“Israeli troops advanced into Gaza under cover of heavy air, tank and artillery fire after opening a ground war on Hamas.”

In Paris, Boulevard Haussmann – don’t know the cross street. Aftermath of a clash last night between demonstrators – some 25,000 strong – and police:





Eric Tenin

Ehud Barak Olbamert, a composite being? Something out of the anti-Kaballah?

Not eyeless in Gaza, literally, but as blind, and enchained as Samson with strength only to bring down the house. A peculiarly mad form of blindness too wherein the Palestinian other is recognized only as something so odious it cannot be recognized, only expunged like shit.

It's wonderful though, how many Jews – despite the deep appeal of doing back to others what's been done to you – refuse to be Israelis.

And even some Israelis who won't sign onto the hundred eyes for an eye game.

Meanwhile Bloomie visits Israel in company with top kop Ray Kelly and Gary Ackerman, congressstooge from Queens. The story's so weird that even *Times* reporting cannot remain immune from the ghastly surrealism that seeps out of every pore:

“Mr. Bloomberg's stops included the pediatric department of the Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon, which has been transferred to an underground, bombproof ward. There he met with children, including Palestinians from Gaza whose

illnesses [?!] were being treated. He passed out stuffed toys – Cookie Monster, Big Bird and Elmo.

“Do you have *Sesame Street* here?’ he asked a Palestinian toddler who looked at him blankly as the mayor tucked Big Bird next to his small hands. [Had the child been Israeli, would she have had tiny hands? Might she have looked *searchingly* as though for an answer?]

“In Sderot, Mr. Bloomberg visited a house that suffered a direct hit just four hours earlier. He walked through shards of glass and chunks of rubble that blanketed the living room. Most of a bedroom ceiling had collapsed, and a soot-covered microwave and two television sets were upended on the floor, along with a tangle of mattresses and artificial flowers. A burnt smell hung in the air.

“Sunday’s visit was Mr. Bloomberg’s seventh to Israel since he entered public life, and it comes as he works hard to secure support for re-election this year.

“He stayed on message, declaring that Hamas was to blame for the latest round of Israeli-Palestinian violence....”

The article goes on to restate the Israeli position, cite casualty counts, and deliver our Mayor-for-Life (nearly) the last word. “Asked about the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza, Mr. Bloomberg replied sharply: ‘If Hamas would focus on building a country instead of trying to destroy another one, then those people would not be getting injured or killed.’”

But the last words bind – at least rhetorically – Gotham to Eretz Israel as snugly as Samson was chained to the pillars of the temple:

“In Ashkelon, far from New York City politics, [come again?] Marty Davis, a former New Yorker who now lives there, said he was moved by the mayor’s presence.

“It lets us know we are not alone,’ he said.”

And of course, no one could be alone when in your playpen you’ve got Bloomie, Tickle Me Elmo, and a fleet of Little Big Birds that the grownups call F-16s.

January 5

Every day, the gray lady reveals more wonderments at the level of pure language. Today, for example, in treating an Obama who grows only more cypherlike as he nears the commencement of his reign:

“The fighting between Israeli troops and Hamas... adds a new crisis to an agenda already packed with challenges, beginning with the economy.

“During his presidential campaign, Mr. Obama promised a new, positive approach to the Muslim world, including ‘America Houses’ offering English lessons in Muslim countries and an ‘America’s Voice Corps’ to spread the truth about American values. Mr. Obama’s aides have said he will unveil the new approach with a speech in a Muslim capital [!?] during his first 100 days in office. But Israel’s invasion of Gaza, and Mr. Obama’s studied silence about it, threatens to short-circuit his plans for an American image makeover....”

Ah, yes, he’ll *unveil* the new approach... And whose head(s) will roll after the last veil has dropped?



Hexagram 19, Lin. Earth over lake. Approach.

Yang expands and grows and yin retreats.

Cold grows after yin has peaked.

December 6 [Freudian slip. Wish-fulfillment?]

January 6

Funny that you hadn’t remarked until now on the subtle difference in sound between neolithic and nihilistic. Are we moving into the post-neolithic age, or just the

nihilithic, in which no stone will be left unturned, nor one that's been stood atop another.

Joshua fit the battle of Jericho...

If one description of madness is doing the same thing that didn't work last time and expecting a different result this go round, then surely Israel, as a political entity, is delusional indeed. Do we, at least in part, collude so deeply with the Israelis because – despite the vast difference in our states – we share a common condition? We are, or at any rate have actually been, historically, the three hundred pound gorilla whereas Israel simply acts like one and counts the “real” gorilla to back it up.

Which puts us in a curious state of identification and interdependency. Israel's behavior too, may make the American hegemonic monstrosity feel sane and moderate by comparison. So we have an enormous interest, apart from control of strategic resources or other elements of affinity, in perpetuating a shared view of ourselves and the world. Is not the pre-emptive doctrine the U.S. has invoked recently, and rationalized by the supposition of imminent threats against us, borrowed directly from Israel? Oddly, we wish we were them and they wish they were us. Where would we be without one another? Lacking the collusion of the other, we might have to evaluate ourselves differently? And then what?



The New York Times



Runs the masthead of the online *NYT*. Beneath which:



Ismail Zaydah/Reuters

At least 30 people were reported killed at a United Nations school where refugees had gathered, and Israeli troops were said to be moving toward the south of Gaza.

While to the right, a set of bright green numbers signals that, as of the closing bell, the Dow has gone up 62.21 points.

Obama Warns About Years of Trillion-Dollar Deficits



Doug Mills/The New York Times

President-elect Barack Obama met with his top economic advisers for a second straight day in Washington.

Still, why so parsimonious with the flags? A few more would help mitigate the bad news. Surely they bought plenty before the bubble popped.

And the glasses on that table raise a troubling question: Where are they along the continuum between half empty and half full?

Now after centuries, we discover that the ancients were right: We see things because light shines from our eyes.

January 7

Now about that table. Hard to judge its shape, but it looks to be the standard hierarchical boardroom model. Certainly not round. So whom, if anyone, is sitting at its head? Whom at its foot? And which is which? The way the picture's framed, we just can't see. No objective shot to cue us. So all the clues we receive become suspect. And we can't really position ourselves in relation to a field that's incoherent, in any way other than to comply with its incoherence.

But it's clear that all the typical signifiers are misaligned. As though someone dropped a Ming vase, glued the fragments back together not quite right, then tried to pawn it off as perfect.

And still, despite the pyrotechnics, so many Yellowstones, so many super-volcanoes yearning to breathe fire.

*Nowhere is there warmth to be found
Among those afraid of losing their ground...*