

December 16, 2008

After all these days, sepulchral silence on a Fed “lifeline” for the US auto companies. A superpower inextricably bound to its super highways.

The Fed cuts interest to virtual zero and the Dow soars 360. *Market of the Living Dead.*

What gives people the idea that they are entitled to more wealth than their labor produces?

December 8

Panic covers grief.

Seven billion beads of sweat whipped into a froth.

January 7, 2009

Gazprom’s pipeline to countries in the European Union runs through Ukraine, and Russia’s turned off the tap.

*Signs in the street that say where you’re going
Are somewhere just being their own.*

November 26, 2008

After the English Luddite uprising and the French Revolution, for the remainder of the 19th Century, Europe relentlessly beat down its radical social movements, the revolutionary, generative manifestations of its own productive forces and those it engendered in its colonies. By the early 20th century, Europe’s distorted energies, having no other field of deployment, began to rip apart its own social fabric, while continuing to destabilize development everywhere else.

The involvement of the US in World War II and subsequent explosion of consumption-driven economics gave the West a final burst of apparent strength – its strange fruit borne out in the “American Century” – which now can be seen more

clearly as the final seizures of a system with already one foot in the grave and the other descending upon the proverbial banana peel.

Perceived at the time as attempts to destroy the system, the worker and student rebellions of the late '60s and early '70s have since become legible as attempts, however violent, to restore the system to some kind of functioning. With the alternate repression and cooptation of these movements combined with the nullification of the UN as a mediating institution and the further unleashing of both covert and overt operations against freedom-seeking peoples – or, for that matter against any solidarity that sought to redistribute the world's evermore asymmetrically apportioned wealth and resources by non-market means – the corruption of the developed world's entire cultural fabric, economics included, became irreversible.

It remained only for the '80s and '90s to give off a sickly sweet odor, while unseen beneath the surface, nature did its work.

November 11

The east is orange.



January 7, 2009

A friend sends you an email complimenting K. on her objectively profound and beautifully rendered holiday card. The remainder of her note is filled with the by-now ubiquitous “hope” that despite ever stronger signs to the contrary, a tide of positive world-change will flow from the new administration. She attaches a brightly-colored electronic flyer featuring the president-elect’s face and advertising an Inaugural celebration in Dumbo that you could attend for a mere \$20.

Your mass may be going critical, because you experience in reading the note and glancing at the image an acute sense of being importuned, yet again, by someone who can do the math but persistently ignores the numbers they don’t like the look of. On top of which, these folks want you to leave off the same numbers so you get the same bogus answer they did. For the sake of some kind of ephemeral solidarity that’s really collusion? *Is a puzzlement*, as Yul Brynner and certain other Kings of Siam once said. And it takes all your circumspection to craft a reply:

Dear S. -- glad to hear you like the holiday card. I’ll pass your compliments on to K. And thank you for the performance info.

I think the morning-after phase of the Obama bender that many folks have been on will be truly stunning. Particularly since the narcotic effects of the campaign and the election have masked, like a collective nitrous oxide high, the seriousness of the situation we’re in.

What I’m hoping is that at least some of Obama’s supporters don’t emotionally collapse when their idol does, but rather shift gears quickly and use the heightened expectations and the youthful energy he’s aroused to organize concretely for peace and economic justice through means other than electoral wish-fulfillment. Historically this would be unprecedented. But one never knows.

Warmly, E.

January 8

Hawk come down, or hawk down is, you hear apocryphally, a term used by some southern African-Americans for the descent of a protracted cold front.

Our capacity to forgive (others and ourselves) must always find a way to expand beyond and penetrate beneath our capacity to wound life. If it does not, we truly will be dead, and no longer need bother killing one another.



This image, courtesy of the Fear of Heights Treatment project, illustrates a *Le Monde* editorial, "Banks on a Wire," which title plainly refers to:



The James Marsh documentary on Philippe Petit's exemplary crossing between the towers of the WTC, which, in turn was based on Petit's book *To Reach the Clouds*.

Ah, but if only we could reach the clods. Do not despair dear clods, we're coming soon!

WIRE SALE – EVERYTHING MUST FLOW!

The U.S. Senate unanimously passes a resolution in support of Israel's 13-day-old war on Gaza. The House will likely pass a similar measure tomorrow. By then, in the absence of a cease-fire, the death toll of Gazans will likely rise above eight hundred.

Scroll of wonders. Scroll of abridgements.

It is always the same, dit Baudrillard, once you are liberated, you are forced to ask who you are.

January 10

We don't have to make exceptions, they're already there.

Elizabeth I: Piracy used to aggrandize the state.

Bush II: Piracy used to disarticulate the state.

What is hoarded, eventually gets looted.

That which we call evil is often nothing more than the manifestations of our attempts to subjugate, or disavow, unwanted aspects of our own nature.

Pardon our disappearance.

At the Met, a limestone capital with four very distinctly-featured carved male heads. South Italy, Apulia, probably Troia, c. 1230.

Four centuries earlier, a monk named Theodosius wrote of the grandeur of Palermo, describing it as “full of citizens and savages... Blended with the Sicilians, the Greeks, the Lombards and the Jews. There are Arabs, Berbers, Persians, Tartars, Negroes, some wrapped in long robes and turbans... faces oval, square or round, of every complexion and profile, beards and hair of every color and cut...”

November 22

Entre chien et loup.

“Our job is to set a tone at the top to incent [!] people to do the right thing and to set up safety nets to catch people who make mistakes or do the wrong thing, and correct those as quickly as possible. And it is working. It is working.”

Dit Chas. O. Prince III, Citigroup’s [now ex] CEO in mid-2006.

January 10, 2009



Susan Walsh/Associated Press

Robert Rubin was the Treasury secretary for President Bill Clinton before joining Citigroup.

Times: “Citigroup signaled a breakup of its unwieldy financial supermarket model with a possible deal to sell a share of its prized retail brokerage business to Morgan Stanley, said several people with knowledge of the discussions, underscoring the enormous problems the bank continues to confront even after receiving taxpayer bailout funds.

“The new chapter of wrenching change came as former Treasury Secretary, Robert E. Rubin, who came under fire for his strong support of that model in an advisory role that helped fuel the bank’s troubles, said he would resign.

“The developments highlight how badly Citigroup has been damaged by the global financial crisis. Deepening losses, declining confidence in its leadership and a desperate need to raise capital have forced the bank to rethink the strategy it has clung to for years.

“This is either a one-off or the first inkling of a dismantlement of the company, taking apart of what John Reed and Sandy Weill did,’ a senior executive with ties to the company said, referring to the two leaders who forged the landmark deal to bind Citicorp and Travelers Group in 1998.

“With pressure mounting on Vikram S. Pandit, Citigroup’s chief executive, the company’s executives say the decision to split off Smith Barney, the ‘crown jewel’ [if not the Star of India] brokerage business he said he loved a few months ago, suggests the bank’s troubles are so deep that he is looking to reshape the company in a former image of itself...”

Narcissus had that problem too...

“He said he loved a few months ago...”

“Incent people to do the right thing...”

November 19, 2008

Proposal for a Viagra ad: “Times are Hard. Shouldn’t Your Cock Be Too?”

Maximum yin. Earth stops receiving, Heaven ceases initiating.

If god gives you cobalt, make blue.

8 a.m. Flock of geese to the south over the rooftops as you walk down Ninth. For some reason, they’re flying northwest.

If god gives you diamonds, make dust.

If god gives you feet, make tracks.

Week after week of fin del mundo skies.

The evermore microscopic red thong of the tanking market.

November 21

Times headline:

Markets Dive in Last Hour, Carving New Lows

And this just before Thanksgiving!

January 10, 2009

Gaza Gaza Gaza and Gazprom. And what says President-eject Barack O.? Nada nada nada de nada.

Whilst in the *Times*, high anxiety columns abound: Is Obama's "stimulus package" big enough? Well that depends on the size of the chasm, don't it?

Could there be enough friction generated and just the right pressure to create and orchasm? Or will the trillion-strong stimuli plunge into a bottomless ur-chasm?

What goes around comes surround.

November 18

Panier à crabe. Literally, a crab basket. But the implication is a messy, dangerous, or uncomfortable situation.

As peace talks in Paris got underway in December 1968, the US military launched Operation Speedy Express, a large-scale tactical maneuver to "pacify" huge swaths of the Mekong Delta. Carried out by the 9th Infantry Division with support ranging from helicopter gunships to B-52s, the operation, which terminated in May,

1969, produced an official enemy body count of 10,899 as well as 276 American fatalities.

A year later, when Seymour Hersh broke the story of the massacre of Vietnamese villagers in Quang Ngai province, an American soldier who participated in the operation wrote to then Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland that the 9th Division perpetrated atrocities that amounted to “a My Lai each month for over a year.” If his estimate is remotely accurate, it would mean that this division alone slaughtered approximately six thousand unarmed civilians.

After all these many years, the soldier who authored this letter has now been tentatively identified as one George Lewis, a Purple Heart recipient.

January 10

Estoy buscando a América y temo no encontrarla.

I'm searching for America and I fear I will not find it.

Sus huellas se han perdido entre la oscuridad.

Its traces have been lost in the darkness.

Estoy llamando a América pero no me responde.

I'm calling out to America, but it does not answer me.

La han desaparecido en los que temen la verdad.

It has been disappeared by those terrified of truth.

Envueltos entre sombras, negamos lo que es cierto:

Surrounded by shadows, we deny what's certain:

mientras no haya justicia, jamás tendremos paz.

while there is no justice, there can never be peace.

Viviendo dictaduras, te busco y no te encuentro.

Living under dictatorships, I search but cannot find you.

Tu torturado cuerpo no saben donde está.

Your tortured corpse, no one knows what has become of it.

Te han secuestrado América, ye amordazado tu boca,

You have been kidnapped, America, your mouth gagged,

y nosotros nos toca ponerte en libertad.

And it is up to us to set you free.

Te estoy llamando, América. Nuestro futuro espera.

I calling to you, America. The future waits for us.

Antes que se nos muera, ayudenme a buscar.

Before it is lost to us, help me search.

Coro:

Te estoy buscando América,

I'm looking for you, America.

te estoy llamando América...

I'm calling to you, America...

Estas palabras fueron cantados por Rubén Blades, kan ya makan.

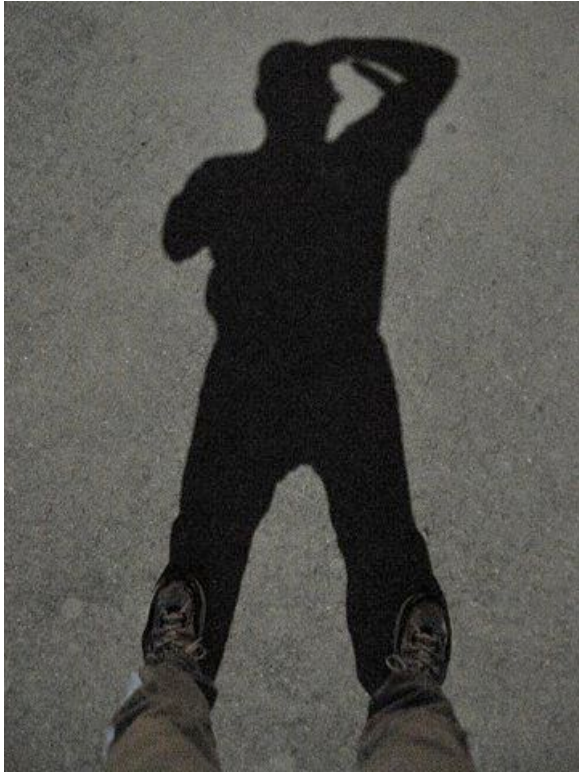
January 11

Perigee wolf moon. Big as she gets. Shadow knows.



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Amador County, CA



Jonathan Sabin

Ellenton, FL.



Jim Saueressig

Burlington, KS

Even as Mercury's backpedaling for all his sandals are worth.

January 13

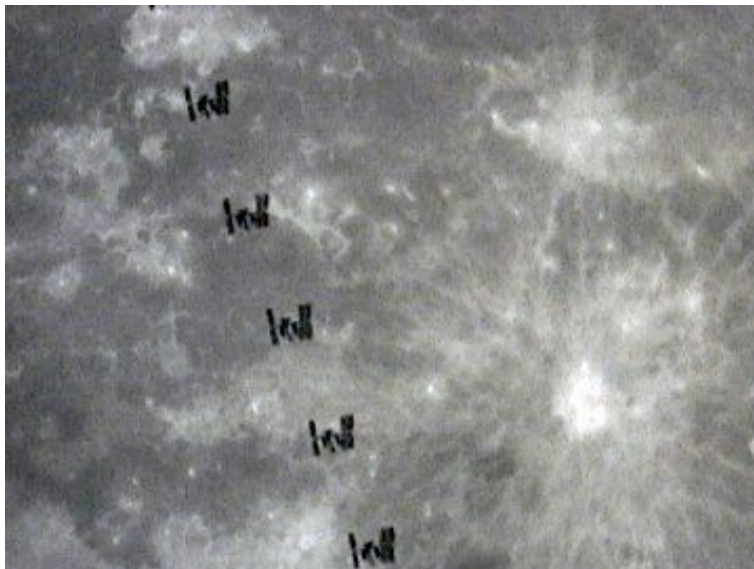
There's no one more literal-minded than he who seeks to live within his own elaborated fiction.

Two months ago, when astronaut Heide Stefanyshyn-Piper was attempting to fix the frozen arm of a solar panel outside the International Space Station, she dropped her tool bag when a grease gun inside it "exploded."

The toolbag is still orbiting earth, and last evening, members of the Astronomical Society of the Caribbean threw a toolbag-sighting party in Cabo Rojo, PR to see if they could spot it. According the Society's spokesperson, "Joxelle Velázquez, using just a pair of 7x50 binoculars, was the first to spot the tumbling object passing 1° below the Pleiades star cluster." The brightness of the toolbag was recorded as equivalent to that of a 6th magnitude star.

Now that's pretty faint. But despite our plethora of ambient light, Gothamites might still have a shot at glimpsing the ISS itself in the west-southwest skydome two days prior to and on the evening of the inauguration itself when it should appear at an elevation of 81° and at a much brighter -4.0 magnitude.

Vamos a verlo. Tal vez. But you'd rather be in Cabo Rojo, seguro.



Stop action photos taken by Beijing Planetarium on Nov. 15, 2008. The ISS, or what looks like a fleet of them, with the docked shuttle Endeavour attached, transits the moon.

It's high time to invoke The War.

As a general term for social life. And an answer to all mysteries.

Sample email: *Sorry, I'll have to cancel lunch Thursday on account of The War.*

Sample dialogues:

They fired three people at my company last week. There's only the eight of us left.

Damn, that's a shame. Don't tell me it's...

Yep, The War.

When will you have unbleached flour be back in stock?

Hard to say. You know – The War.

Did you hear that Jen and John broke up?

No shit! Just last week they were going strong – what happened?

[Shrug + punchline]

Geithner, Choice for Treasury, Questioned on His Tax Returns

Beneath which: “Timothy F. Geithner, President-elect Barack Obama’s choice to be Treasury secretary, failed to pay tens of thousands of dollars in federal taxes and also faces questions about the immigration status of a former household employee, according to the committee and the Obama transition. After the underpayments were detected, he paid back taxes and interest totaling \$43,200.

“The underpayments, according to people familiar with them, involve Mr. Geithner’s income earlier in this decade when he was a senior official at the International Monetary Fund before taking his latest job, as president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, in November 2003.

“From 2001 until 2004, when he received his final payments from the I.M.F., Mr. Geithner paid his state and federal income taxes but did not pay self-employment

payroll taxes. The I.M.F., as an international organization, does not withhold U.S. payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare from its American employees' paychecks, so they are required to pay the roughly 15 percent tax on their own. The Obama transition is calling his mistake a common error for American employees of the I.M.F.

"After a 2006 Internal Revenue Service audit identified the lapse on his 2003 and 2004 tax returns, Mr. Geithner paid tax and interest of \$17,230 and the I.R.S. waived penalties, according to the transition.

"But Obama vetters discovered the same lapse for 2001 and 2002 and brought it to Mr. Geithner's attention last Nov. 21, after which he paid tax and interest of \$25,970, transition officials say.

"That leaves for Mr. Geithner the question of why he did not correct the earlier years' non-payment of self-employment taxes after the 2006 IRS audit identified the problem for 2003 and 2004."

But it might go a ways toward explaining why Little Timmy looks like he's seen a geitht.



Charles Dharapak/Associated Press

At this rate it's going to be a long, hot Summers. Or is it just the zeith-geith?

September 17, 2008

BBC News online:

World's smallest man meets world's leggiest woman



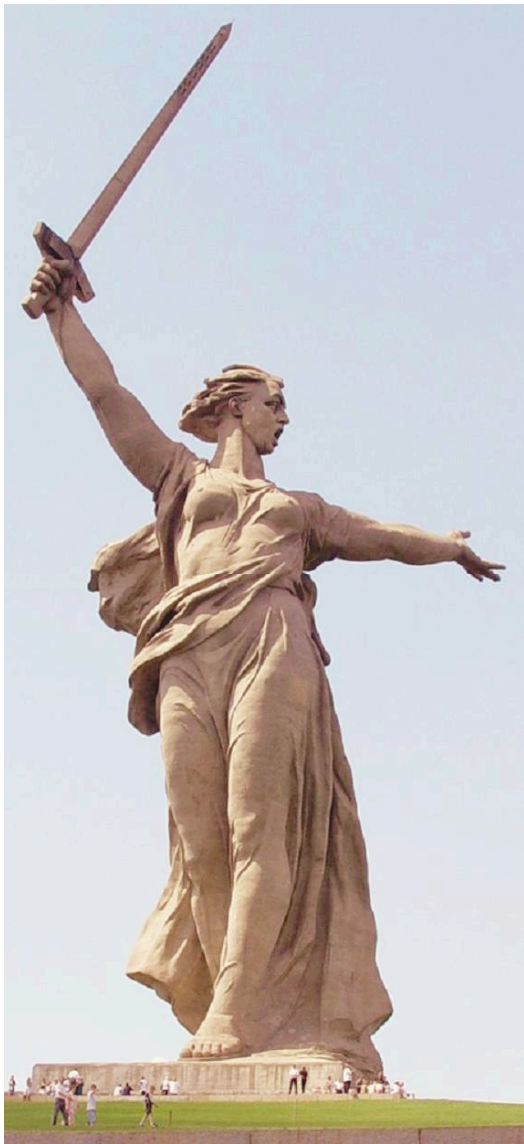
He Pingping, the world's smallest man, met up with long-legged Svetlana Pankratova in London's Trafalgar Square, posing for a photograph showing him standing up comfortably between her legs.

Pingping, 20, from Inner Mongolia, is just 74.61cm tall - a result of his being born with a condition known as primordial dwarfism.

Meanwhile Pankratova, a 36-year-old [real] estate agent from Volgograd, Russia, boasts a height of 1.96 metres, with her legs alone measuring 132cm.

The pair met on the steps of Trafalgar Square to pose for the launch of the 2009 edition of the Guinness World Records book, which is published tomorrow.

She's from Volgograd? What's that – some industrial city in Siberia devoted to making Swedish cars? Or could they have misspelled Volgograd, the de-Stalinized name for Stalingrad? If so, it might go some way to explaining Ms. Pankratova's nearly superhuman scale. For was it not on the heights commanding the city that *The Motherland Calls*, the world's largest freestanding sculpture – 182 meters – was erected to commemorate, or perhaps celebrate, the legendarily horrific – and strategically pivotal – battle fit below?



Ah, but how to explain He Pingping? Primordial. Hmmm.