

January 14

Would that you could remove, or at least make more transparent, the gauzy strip that blindfolds so many of your fellows – who for all they see, might as well be eyeless.

How many cataracts in denial?



On January 15, 2007, Eric Dash of the Times wrote:

“Citigroup, the global banking giant, is shrinking – but only its name. Executives are prepared to rebrand the company ‘Citi’ and to fold up its familiar red umbrella and instead use a logo with a stylized arc above the name.

“The new name and look, which follows a 14-month review of the bank’s brand, will be presented to the Citigroup board this week, according to several executives close to the

process. No final decision has been made and it could still undergo some minor changes.

“We continue to work on our branding effort and will announce our decisions when it is completed,” a spokeswoman, Leah Johnson, said. If adopted, the revised Citi brand and logo will be used at nearly all the vast financial services company’s businesses, including retail branches and its investment bank concentrated in the New York area, and showcased around the world.



Betty Alexandra Bastidas for The New York Times

The logo atop the Citigroup building in Long Island City, Queens.

Two years later, under the headline “Citigroup Plans to Split Itself Up, Taking Apart the Financial Supermarket,” the same scribe offers prose of a different flavor:

“Staggered by losses despite two federal rescues, Citigroup is accelerating moves to dismantle parts of its troubled financial empire in an effort to placate regulators and its anxious investors.

“Under pressure from Washington and Wall Street, the financial giant plans to split itself in two, people with knowledge of the plan said on Tuesday, heralding the end of the landmark merger that created the bank a decade ago....”

“...But some Wall Street analysts and investors questioned whether the plan, which included the announcement on Tuesday that it would split off its prized Smith Barney brokerage, goes far enough to address Citigroup’s immediate troubles....”

Nor was it long ago – a decade menos o más ago in the roaring '90s – that Travelers Group hung a huge red neon umbrella from five or so upper floors of its Lower Manhattan skyscraper. Illumed all day, but pop-out-yer-eye gaudy by night, the logo so offended the tender sensibilities of a host of civic-minded downtowners that their protests via erected officials eventuated in the corporate behemoth turning the sign off for four hours after sunset, and dimming it a few lumens until dawn, at which time they cranked it back up to maximum warp.

In truth you don't recall precisely how things fell out, but you did take note of the aggrieved tone of the Traveler's spokesperson, a senior VP: "I think New Yorkers should be proud to have a company headquartered here," she said. "If we're proud of it they should be too."

Ah, the old We and They. In the days of I and Dow.

But even as the umbrella hooah played out, Citi was busy gobbling up Travelers, and in a New York minute, the bumpershoot eyesore went the way of all logos...



Photo: Rick



Sara Krulwich, The New York Times

Looks like it's time for the second-liners to step out and lead the funeral dance.

Will our grammar ever take into account the appropriate use of worlds?

*You'll never get to heaven in an old Ford car,
'Cause an old Ford car can't go that far...*

Billion by billion, the investments go south...

January 15



Brendan McDermid/Reuters

Passengers stood on the wings of a US Airways plane after it ditched into the Hudson River on Thursday.

“A US Airways plane that took off Thursday at 3:26 p.m. from La Guardia Airport landed in the Hudson River five minutes later, where it remains mostly submerged. Ferries and other boats converged to help with a rescue effort, as the plane drifted south in the water. Initial reports from police and people at the scene suggest that everyone on the plane appeared to have escaped.

“The plane... was bound for Charlotte, N.C. and had 148 passengers and 5 crew members. The plane may have hit a flock of birds, according to a Federal Aviation Administration report, and then descended. The pilot tried to return to the airport when the plane fell into the Hudson....”

It's the multitude of choppers whirling around over the river to the south that clued you in to the story, but your first thought was that maybe a helicopter had gone down or a boat capsized.

From your bedroom window, a narrow sliver of Hudson around Canal Street is available to your sight. Many a tug, barge, Circle Line, water taxi and cruise ship have you traced, passing up or downriver, but so far no planes have floated by. According to press reports, the twin-engine Airbus landed in the water within spitting distance of the USS Decrepid, an old aircraft carrier turned war museum and permanently moored at Pier 86 (46th Street). An hour later the plane had drifted over a mile south, slowly sinking, with only the cockpit still visible by 4:30. It's 5:10 now and daylight's fading. So it's most unlikely, even if the current bears it swiftly along, that from your coign of vantage, you'll get to see the plane vanish beneath the surface.



Michael Appleton for The New York Times



Choppers over river. Drama out of frame.

The ton of bricks is indeed on its way. It's just that the building its falling off is very high.

"Birds in Both Engines May Have Brought Down Jet," headlines the *Times*. And goes on to report that:

"Federal investigators are pursuing early indications that the US Airways jet that crash-landed in the Hudson River was struck by Canada geese shortly after taking off.

"The accident involving the jet, which took off from La Guardia Airport, would be unusual, though, in that both the plane's engines appeared to have been damaged by birds, aviation experts said on Thursday....

"...All commercial airplane engines are required to pass a bird-strike test before they can be certified for use. Engine manufacturers, including CFM International, which produced the engines on the Airbus A320 jet that crashed on Thursday, test the engines

both physically and through computer simulation.

“In the physical tests, the engines are revved to full power inside a test facility, and then ingest birds of various sizes one at a time. They also ingest multiple birds in tests meant to simulate what happens when they hit a flock, said Matthew Perra, a spokesman for the engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney.

“To pass the test, engines must continue to operate without losing significant power, Mr. Perra said. The engine must maintain enough thrust to take off, fly around the airport and land the plane safely, he said. That is because commercial airplanes with two engines must be able to take off using one engine.

“Mr. Perra said engines are tested one at a time, so manufacturers cannot physically measure what would happen if a flock of birds hits both engines at once. However, they do study that possibility via their simulation tests.”





Maybe it were geese and maybe it warn't. But if so, whatever were they doing here in this frosty clime?

Later in the evening, the online *Times* amplifies and modifies its earlier prose:
“In the physical tests, the engines are revved to full power inside a test facility and absorb various kinds of birds, from those the size of sparrows to those the size of herons, one at a time. (The birds are already dead.) The engines also ingest multiple birds meant to simulate a collision with a flock, said Matthew Perra, a spokesman for the engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney....

...Airports around the world have encountered bird collisions through the years, making them a standard hazard for commercial, military and private pilots alike.

'Any time you get an open field and grass, you've got birds,' said Robert W. Mann Jr., an aviation industry expert in Port Washington, N.Y. Mr. Mann said birds pose the greatest threat during takeoff, when jets use the most engine power in order to become aloft. Birds are also a hazard as the planes climb to cruising altitudes.

"Bird strikes are frequently reported around 8,000 feet, especially during migration periods.

"Although birds generally do not fly higher than 12,000 feet, there has been a report of a bird strike at 37,000 feet.

"New York's airports are particularly vulnerable to ocean-loving birds, according to Susan Elbin, director of conservation at New York City Audubon. Indeed, there are colonies of gulls on islands adjacent to J.F.K.

For years, the F.A.A., the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the United States Department of Agriculture have tried 'to minimize the conflict between birds and planes,' Ms. Elbin said. Falcons, along with pyrotechnics, recordings of wild animals and propane cannons that create loud, startling noises, have been used to scare bird populations away from runways.

"But sometimes, the airports have been forced to relocate the flocks, or in the most extreme cases, kill them.

"As a last resort you have to do lethal control to convince the rest of the flock that we mean business,' said Russell DeFusco, a member of the steering committee for Bird Strike Committee USA, a group that collects data on bird strikes."

Apparently the plane reached the foot of Manhattan Island before it sank.

"(The birds are already dead.)" Well that's a relief, but what exactly does it mean? Do the companies that manufacture jet engines employ some kind of avian Burke and Hare-type fellows to supply them with the necessary quantity of corpses?

And falling short, might they not resort to murder most fowl – not to mention strange and unnatural.

November 17, 2008

Times headline:

If Detroit Falls, Foreign Makers Could Be Buffett

Look again. That's "Buffer."

November 16

2 p.m. A formation of six or more large helicopters – Chinooks? – flies north over the Hudson. It's all part of the festivities for NorCom's Operation Vigilant Shield '09.

Rerum Cognoscere...

January 16, 2009

Ah, the Airbus did not sink. It was towed and moored at a bulkhead in Battery Park City. Moreover, the left engine's gone missing. "In addition, the transportation board member, Kathryn O. Higgins, said it was not clear if the right engine was still on the wing either, because it is submerged.

"The left engine is not there; it's somewhere," Ms. Higgins [sagely] said. 'We've got to go find that.'

Hmmm. It's all queer as Dick's hat, far as you're concerned.

November 13

Ens individuum = individual entities (from atom to god).

Brokerage = broke + rage.

At the café, M. reports seeing a vast neon sign along the highway on an arterial approach to the city. The sign's letters read STORAGE USA But the STO was blown out.

Proposal for a Pit and Pendulum: Install a line with an oscillating bob in the WTC bathtub comme l'un dans le Panthéon de Paris. Folks can watch it swing to and fro. A meditation. And proof the world still turns round and round.

Furlough these many years.

January 16

Twenty-one days of relentless bombardment. Well over a thousand Gazans dead – a toll the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon called “unbearable.”



Khaled Hasan/Bloomberg News

An Israeli attack on Thursday on a United Nations agency in Gaza City destroyed a warehouse full of food and medicine.

Wonder of Wonders the Guardian UK headline: “US Suspends Munitions Delivery to Israel.” And a wonderment the story that follows:

“As Israeli forces push deeper into Gaza City, Amnesty International is calling on the US and the EU to place a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, Hamas and

Palestinian armed groups.

“The Pentagon has suspended the delivery of a shipload of munitions to Israel after international concern that it could be used by Israeli forces in Gaza.

“The German-owned cargo vessel, Wehr Elbe, under charter by the US Military Sea-lift Command, is currently in Greek waters with its transponder tracking turned off to prevent its location being identified.

“Amnesty International has written to the foreign secretary [of the UK], David Miliband, asking him to make ‘urgent approaches to the US, German and Greek governments to prevent this, or any pending or future shipments of weaponry until it can be verified that they will not be transferred to the Israeli Defence Forces or other parties to the conflict in Gaza.

“‘We urge you to ensure that no EU member state will allow their ports or other facilities to be used to transit these or any other weapons to any of the parties to this conflict.’

“The Wehr Elbe, owned by the Hamburg company Oskar Wehr, arrived outside the Greek port of Astakos on 1 January, where it was due to transfer its 1,000 containers to another vessel for delivery to Ashdod in Israel.

“But after a two week stand-off, amid local protests in Greece, it moved out into the Mediterranean two days ago and disappeared off tracking websites.

“Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Ryder, a Pentagon spokesman, said that the contract for the munitions had been arranged last summer and approved in October. He said the munitions were due to be delivered to a US pre-positioning depot in Israel for US forces. But he added: ‘If the government of Israel requests munitions they can do so direct to the US government under the Foreign Military Sales programme.’”

“He said the ship’s journey had been delayed due to ‘safety concerns’ about unloading the cargo at Ashdod and that other arrangements were being made by the Military Sealift Command’s European office in Naples.”

“A US pre-positioning depot in Israel for US forces”? “Other arrangements being made”? WTF?

You read the paragraphs above a second time and though the sentences are written in plain enough English, they make very little sense. Certainly the statements

made don't substantiate the headline, they smokescreen it. The only thing that seems clear is that the ship's gone missing. Queerer and queerer gets Dick's bloody hat.

What's happening in this epoch is so utterly fantastical that it couldn't be thought up, plotted, or even free-associated. What we're experiencing must be some sort of collective dream from which we have neither the desire nor the capacity to rouse ourselves. Is this, as Debord posited, the spectacle living for itself? Have we dissociated so definitively that there's no possible reintegration from the aspects of ourselves which we've denied and displaced? Has this unwanted material now become a separate world that, at every turn, threatens to overwhelm us with a patternless carpetbombing of brute consequence and sheer absurdity?

For example, the complete failure of an Airbus's engines over a densely populated area on the exact day that news broke of the European company's overtaking of its chief rival, Boeing. The whole narrowly-missed catastrophe caused by a handy and massive flock of seemingly invisible geese? What magnitude of coincidence are we at here? And what are the odds, given the precipitous loss of power Flight 1549 experienced, that its pilot – on the verge of retirement, btw – would be the one guy in a gazillion who actually possessed the wherewithal to land the thing, when properly it should have fallen more or less like a stone?

Divine play of prankster and dancer? Perhaps. And why not? Or is it some scenario out of *Harry Potter*, with master wizards dueling, outside the bounds of muggle perception, for the fate of the world, magikal and otherwise?

*Let us rejoice
that unseemly as are the happenings
on this planet –
it is on course,
tenaciously in orbit.*

Said your aunt Nell, thirty-odd years ago. Ah Nell, had you lived to see today!