

January 17

“Both Engines,” quoth the *Times*, “Missing From Airliner That Crashed.”
Is it possible that it never had engines at all, and flew propelled by will alone?

Photo: Diane Airbus.

Hurry down to stone soul picnic.

A banner day for deadly serious journalism of the absurd. And it’s not even noon yet:

“NEWS ANALYSIS: Torture Remarks May Force Hand of New Administration.

“The attorney general-designate’s view on waterboarding may have unpredictable legal and political consequences.”

Ah, those forced hands – one never knows what they’ll do.

A wounded spirit who can bear?

– Proverbs 18:14

THE 44TH  PRESIDENT

“Fearing Crowds, Some Avoid Inauguration.

“Chaos is engulfing Washington days before what is likely to be its biggest gathering ever.”

Prompted by which charged locution, you click on the article itself. Nowhere in the text – trust, if you may, your interlocutor’s reading of it – does there appear any evidence of the assertion made above, nor is the statement affirmed, contradicted or even elaborated upon. The piece turns out to be a fluffy anecdotal account of how some Obama fans think it sounds like too much of a hassle to attend his inauguration. Is it possible, therefore, that chaos is engulfing the sensibilities of those doing the reporting?

But the lead horse in the front page trifecta wins by a country mile:



Hatem Moussa/Associated Press

Men carried the bodies of three toddlers on Jan. 5. [Twelve days ago!?] They had been killed in an airstrike, Palestinian medical officials said.

The accompanying headline and lead-in read as follows:

“Weighing Crimes and Ethics in the Fog of Urban Warfare.

“Whatever the military and political results of the war against Hamas in Gaza, Israel is facing serious accusations about the legality of its military conduct...”

A very cogent and important point is raised here. There are, of course, legal and illegal ways of killing other people and their children, and it is very important to make certain that one is operating securely within the terms of the former. This distinction means a great deal to all concerned. If for example, it is determined that one’s children have been killed legally, well then...

The actual article and accompanying video go on to soberly analyze the degree to which the *real* victim of this war may be Israel's international image.

The Lord is a man of war.

– Exodus 15:3

My Lai. You Truth.

To whom do I speak today?

Brothers are evil,

friends of today are not of love...

To whom do I speak today?

There are no righteous,

the land is left to those who do inequity.

– Anonymous papyrus, circa 2000 BC.



Jose Luis Magana / AP

Stacks of Barack Obama T-shirts for sale at the Official Inaugural Collectibles store in Washington, DC.

Put not your trust in princes.

– Psalms 146:3

Be not afraid of sudden fear.

– Proverbs 3:25



Brennan Linsley/AP Photo

“In this file photo reviewed by the U.S. Military, Guantanamo detainees pray before dawn in the Camp 4 detention facility on the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Camp Pendleton Marine Base in southern California tops the list of military facilities the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended for a new prison to house the 250 detainees currently being held at the US Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, US military officials tell ABCNews.com.”

Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets.

– Proverbs 1:20

Not to be outdone, AP weighs in with its own entry for Best Headline in a Journalistic Madhouse: “Israel Says End is Near.”

The first paragraph following is not, as one might expect, a call to repentance, but rather a steep anticlimax: "Israel said today that it was close to winding up its offensive against Hamas..."

But the *Chicago Tribune* will not cede first place without a struggle. The president-elect's hometown paper proclaims: "Barack Obama Channels Lincoln."

And continues as follows: "As Barack Obama prepared for his arrival in Washington, he embraced the same historical imagery that he used to kick off his presidential campaign: the spirit of Abraham Lincoln.

"Obama was traveling to the capital by retracing the final stages of the train trip Lincoln made to assume the presidency, beginning the fanfare for an inaugural celebration in which the Great Emancipator will be an unmistakable presence. With an official theme for the festivities taken from the Gettysburg Address, Obama will appear at the martyred president's memorial for a televised concert, take the oath of office on a Bible used by Lincoln and even attend an inaugural luncheon that will feature favorite Lincoln foods."

Yet on elaborating this last point, the *Trib* falls mysteriously silent.

Let loose the dogs of Spectacle!

Ah, the Airbus's right engine is still attached after all. And certain descriptive details emerge: "The first response of distress came at 3:27:32.

"'Ah, this is Cactus 1549,' came the call from the flight deck. Ms. Higgins [of the National Transportation Safety Board] said she did not know if the pilot, Capt. Chesley B. Sullenberger III, or the co-pilot, Jeffrey Skiles, was speaking. 'Hit birds. We lost thrust in both engines. We are turning back towards LaGuardia.'

"Radar from Kennedy and Newark Airport confirmed that the aircraft had intersected 'primary targets' between 2,900 feet and 3,000 feet, Ms. Higgins said, almost certainly birds that were about five miles from LaGuardia Airport.

"The air traffic controller asked if Flight 1549 wanted to land on Runway 13. 'We're unable,' came the response.

"Dismissing the notion of trying to land at Teterboro Airport, six miles west, in

New Jersey, the response from the cockpit was, 'We can't do it.'

"When asked which runway the pilot wanted to land on, the answer was: 'We're going to be in the Hudson.'

"The plane splashed down at 3:30:30, Ms. Higgins said.

"Two flight attendants, both of whom were sitting in jump seats at the front of the cabin, said they felt one impact, no bounce, and that they did not even realize they were in water.

"Initially, the flight attendants heard a loud thud. 'It was a sound that neither one of them had heard before,' Ms. Higgins said.

"At that point, all the engine noise ceased, and there was 'complete silence, like being in a library,' she said, adding that the two flight attendants heard a passenger sitting in first class remarking that birds might have hit the plane.

"Hazy smoke started to fill the plane, and the pilot said on the address system, 'Brace for impact.'

"Flight attendants then ordered the passengers, without an intercom, to 'brace, brace with your heads down.'

"Once the plane came to rest in the Hudson, the captain issued a one-word command: 'evacuate.' One flight attendant went to open the left front door, Ms. Higgins said, and the other went to the right door...."



Robert Stolarik for The New York Times

Whereas, on July 28, 1945, nine days before Hiroshima:



January 18

You've no memory of what you'd been dreaming, but when you woke up, your head kept chanting a kind of children's rhyme:

I will fill my days with wisdom

I will practice revolution...

That's it, over and over while you feed the cat, then brush your teeth.
Snowing like mad outside. And sticking.



Record low temperatures across the heartland deliver up frost flowers.

“When I went out to get firewood on the morning of Jan. 16th, I noticed these little luminous beings of ice scattered all around our yard,” says photographer Chyenne M. Star, of Edgemont, Arkansas.

Who knew from frost flowers? But botanists, physicists, geologists and folks in general have puzzled how delicate ribbons of ice wrap themselves around the stems of certain plants during winter. Currently, the closest thing to a consensus is this: Liquid water from deep soil flows up into the stems. Linear cracks in the stems expose the water to freezing air. Water turns to ice, and the ice extrudes from the cracks in thin sheets. Sure, why not?



Greg Ruppel, Ellisville, MO

Welcome to the inner solar system, Comet Lulin. If indeed you're headed here.

Discovered in 2007 by a team of Chinese and Taiwanese astronomers, Lulin is currently gliding through Libra in the southeastern sky before dawn. In the photo Lulin's passing the 5.0 magnitude star 47 Librae. Lulin's magnitude should increase from 8 to 5 in coming weeks, making it visible, dimly, to the naked eye, and a pretty easy spot with binocs under the right conditions. Closest to us on Feb. 24.

Glory be: the wheels and gears of the Gaza death machine disengage. If only *por ahora*.

Means-end: at one end, and already more or less to hand, a wide range of resources in the shape of tools and markers; at the other end, far away on the horizon something that is at once an end and a goal (*telos*), to which we unswervingly march, with our eyes fixed upon it. This goal draws us along, getting us to make an effort, and at the same time holds out a promise. The opposition is so well established and has become so convenient that it eludes our thought (our thinking takes it as its starting point, but we do not think *about* it). The framework that it provides is of the most general nature: our understanding is based upon it, and from it we expect efficacy. (Generally speaking, action, for us, means employing certain means with a view to achieving a given end, so efficacy is an element that figures in the means-end equation.) I would even suggest that those concerned with "management" today, although in quest of new models, cannot do without this concept, not even if they redefine one of the terms in the pairing or push it to the limit (for example, they may consider the end that is envisaged to be a fiction but nevertheless consistent enough to call for useful means). The framework that the pairing provides can be

reworked and its limits can be redefined, but it is hard to step outside it. The framework remains for it is the framework of our thought.

So writes François Jullien in *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking*, pp. 32-33.

*A cheerful youth joined Coleridge on his walk
("Loose," noted Coleridge, "slack, and not well-dressed")
Listening respectfully to the talk talk talk
Of First and Second Consciousness, then pressed
The famous hand with warmth and sauntered back
Homeward in his own state of less dispersed
More passive consciousness – passive, not slack,
Whether of Secondary type or First.*

*He made his way toward Hampstead so alert
He hardly passed the small gray ponds below
Or watched a sparrow pecking in the dirt
Without some insight swelling the mind's flow
That banks made swift. Everything put to use.
Perhaps not well-dressed but oh no not loose.*

Wrote Thom Gunn of "Keats at Highgate."

*Heark the frozen
chimes of winter.
Crystal shimmer
In your mind.*

Washington Post online headline:

“Obama Ratraces Lincoln’s Path on Slow Train Ride to Capital.”
Durn, that’s “Retraces.” For a moment you’d hoped they’d got it right.

Riding on the City of New Orleans,
Illinois Central Monday morning rail
Fifteen cars and fifteen restless riders,
Three conductors and twenty-five sacks of mail.
All along the southbound odyssey
The train pulls out at Kankakee
Rolls along past houses, farms and fields.
Passin' trains that have no names,
Freight yards full of old black men
And the graveyards of the rusted automobiles.

CHORUS:

Good morning America how are you?
Don't you know me I'm your native son,
I'm the train they call The City of New Orleans,
I'll be gone five hundred miles when the day is done.

Dealin' card games with the old men in the club car.
Penny a point ain't no one keepin' score.
Pass the paper bag that holds the bottle
Feel the wheels rumblin' 'neath the floor.
And the sons of pullman porters
And the sons of engineers
Ride their father's magic carpets made of steel.
Mothers with their babes asleep,
Are rockin' to the gentle beat
And the rhythm of the rails is all they feel.

CHORUS

Nighttime on The City of New Orleans,
Changing cars in Memphis, Tennessee.
Half way home, we'll be there by morning
Through the Mississippi darkness
Rolling down to the sea.

And all the towns and people seem
To fade into a bad dream
And the steel rails still ain't heard the news.
The conductor sings his song again,
The passengers will please refrain
This train's got the disappearing railroad blues.

Good night, America, how are you?
Don't you know me I'm your native son,
I'm the train they call The City of New Orleans,
I'll be gone five hundred miles when the day is done.

So wrote Steve Goodman *kan ya makan* in 1970, the same year Salvador Allende is elected and takes office as president of Chile.

U.S. authorities at Saigon charge Captain Ernest L. Medina and five other soldiers with having committed premeditated atrocities in My Lai in 1968. General Samuel W. Koster, who commanded the American Division whose First Battalion C Company men were involved in the massacre at My Lai resigns as superintendent of West Point. This following accusations that he and thirteen other officers suppressed information pertaining to the multiple killings, maimings, vaginal rapes and sodomies members of Charlie Company carried out. A secret Army investigation found that the number of victims was reduced as information moved up the chain of command.

Yukio Mishima commits *seppuku* at the age of 45. Paris guts "the belly of France," by demolishing Les Halles which had occupied its location since 1137, and moving the market to the suburbs.

Amtrak takes over virtually all U.S. passenger railroad traffic in federally-bankrolled attempt to halt the decline in rail service. The takeover effectively ends rail passenger service to hundreds of cities and thousands of towns.

Several score New York construction workers use their lunch hour to break up an antiwar rally on Wall Street and force City Hall officials to raise the American flag to the top of the pole. It had been lowered to half staff in mourning for the four students killed earlier that week at Kent State. They then return to building the World Trade Center.