

January 19

What to do but go along for the writhe?

Family portrait of the water towers of north Chelsea. Mit schnee on the rooves...



Und five minutes later, mit shnee in the air...



Fountains of energy overflowing in D.C. While here, on a virtually traffic-less Monday, the immense tranquility of a moment.

Pete Seeger yesterday, at the Lincoln memorial. Played his banjo too. On May 3 he'll turn 90, kinehora. Sang the lyrics twice, once just ahead of themselves and then in unison with the crowd. Sang it all, including the last three verses – the ones that often get left out:

As I went walking I saw a sign there
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."
But on the other side it didn't say nothing,
That side was made for you and me.

In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,
By the relief office I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?

Nobody living can ever stop me,
As I go walking that freedom highway;
Nobody living can ever make me turn back
This land was made for you and me.

Pete's smile as he sang amazing to behold. As though he glimpsed something wonderful on the horizon made of the same stuff he harbors within.

Then too, he's remembering. That's his work.

Freedom, of course, being only another word for a path we walk together. And alone.

January 20

*The night they burned the Reichstag down
And all the bells were ringing,*

*The night they burned the Reichstag down
And all the people were singing. They went
na na na na na...*



THE INAUGURATION

Millions Watch As Obama Assumes Office

[paste appropriate mental picture here]

Never assume, your old EMT teacher Tom DiMattis used to say. It makes an ass of you, and an ass of me.

If god gives you lemons, dot dot dot,
If god gives you lotsa rope...

HARRY WINSTON
Yes, you can.

The New York Times



No lie. And beneath this,



THE INAUGURATION

President Obama Vows Era of Responsibility

And beneath this, "Millions Witness a Racial Moment in Profound History." Uh wait, what was the order of those adjectives again?

Chacun à son grammaire. Et son histoire. And history has its own grammars and ideas of meaning too.

Hark, citizens of Disneylandia!
Dis land is your land...



Saul Loeb

The Obamas and Bidens waved as the helicopter carrying former President Bush and Laura Bush lifted off from the U.S. Capitol following the inauguration.

You scroll down the *Times* online's "front page." They've disappeared the market ticker from its usual location midway down the right hand side. The accustomed spot is simply blank white. Glitch? You "refresh" the page. Nope. It's been kicked into the tall grass of the Business Section.

1:40 p.m. and the Dow's down nearly 200. Within spitting distance of falling through 8,000.

And just to the left of the red ink, a stamp sized pic of the new pres and a l'il blurb to click on: "Funding the Obama Bash: Wall Street was a big source of donations for what may be the most expensive inauguration ever."

Some take vows. Others wows.



The cherry tree more or less in the center of the lawn was planted by JFK in '62. You were here. And somehow, still there.

Klaatu barada nikto!

What sticks with you these two days past the pre-inaugural musical invocation, apart from Pete, was Stevie Wonder's propulsive, powerfully intentional rendition of his own "Higher Ground." It was a high spot that nearly diverted you from sensing the absence of a more appropriate Stevie hit: "Heaven Help Us All."

Although higher ground is where one hopes to find oneself après le déluge.

"We cannot help but believe," said the inauguree at the podium, "that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve."

Indeed, would that the former. But as for the latter, is such a thing to be wished for, even if it were conceivable? Is he implying that hatred is, in essence, a function of tribe?

Is not the corporation almost an antithesis to tribe? What sort of world has it given us?

January 21

*The men in yon forest they all ask it of me
How many strawberries grow in the salt sea?
And I answer them back with a tear in my eye
"How many dark ships sail the forest?"*

It's a watershed moment. How d'y'a keep all that water in a shed?



Ninth Avenue, corner of 21st. Another great American success story.

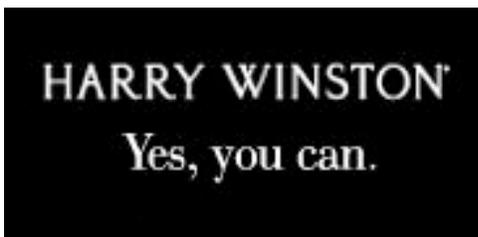
Even as the Israeli government signaled last week that it was soon to declare a ceasefire in Gaza, it intensified military operations, reprising the final days of its war against Hezbollah in 2006 when the IAF delivered a rain of over a million clusterbombs upon Southern Lebanon. The idea was to render the area hostile to any form of human habitation for the foreseeable future. In military circles, if not in common parlance, this strategy is known as the "Dahiya Doctrine," named after a suburb of Beirut that was

almost completely leveled by aerial bombardment. The doctrine was encapsulated by Dan Halutz, Israel's then-chief of staff. The goal, Halutz said, was to "turn back the clock 20 years."



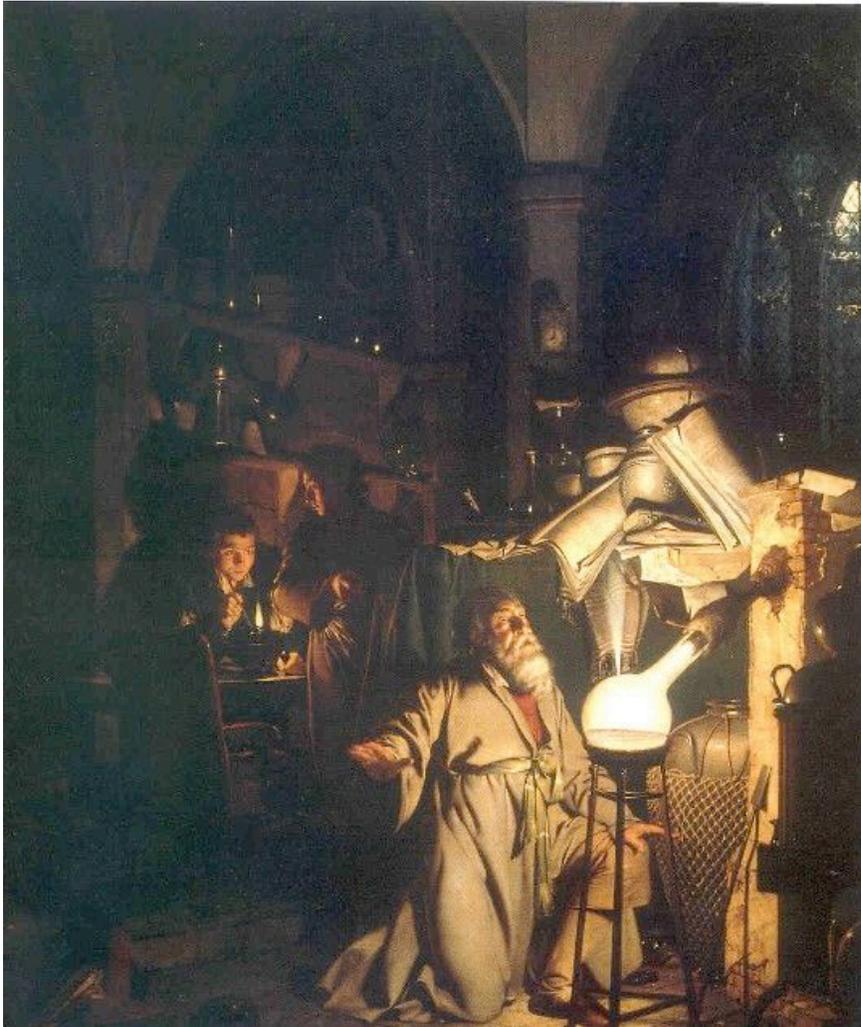
On the Gaza offensive's first day, the commanding officer in Israel's south, Yoav Galant, echoed Halutz's words: the aim, he said, was to "send Gaza decades into the past."

This past October, Gadi Eisenkot, the head of Israel's northern command, articulated the strategy in practical terms: "What happened in the Dahiya quarter of Beirut in 2006 will happen in every village from which Israel is fired on. We will apply disproportionate force on it and cause great damage and destruction there. From our standpoint, these are not civilian villages, they are military bases. This is not a recommendation. This is a plan."



Use white phosphorous shells in a densely populated urban zone. On a UN compound. Or a hospital. Wherever. The IDF codename for its Gaza war was Operation Cast Lead. Unlike its less flashy cousin element, phosphorous, when weaponized, interacts with atmospheric oxygen and is known to cause horrific burns, fantastically painful and difficult to treat.

It was Hennig Brand, a German alchemist of the 17th Century, who unwittingly isolated the latter while attempting to distill the Life Element from his urine. His goal, you see, was to discover the long-sought agent that would transmute the former into gold.



A century later, Joseph Wright of Derby depicted der gute Doktor's "Eureka!" moment in oils.

However, as white phosphorus readily mixes with oils, oily substances or ointments, the US Navy's manual *Treatment of Chemical Agent Casualties and Conventional Military Chemical Injuries* recommends cleaning with "a bicarbonate solution to neutralize phosphoric acid, which will then allow removal of visible WP. Particles often can be located by their emission of smoke when air strikes them, or by their phosphorescence in the dark. In dark surroundings, fragments are seen as luminescent spots.

"Promptly debride the burn if the patient's condition will permit removal of bits of WP which might be absorbed later and possibly produce systemic poisoning. DO

NOT apply oily-based ointments until it is certain that all WP has been removed. Following complete removal of the particles, treat the lesions as thermal burns.”



If we nationalize the banks (and why not major industries as well?), their accounts become public information and we'd learn who's into whom for how much. And we'd find out a lot more about who's got what where. At which point it becomes a matter of determining how to restructure the banking and credit systems so they operate in the public good.

Nor should the levers of credit, under any circumstances, be given back to the bankers. Dealing with the country's finances should become one aspect of a general practice of popular democracy – an expression of collective purpose. Under such transfigured circumstances the term “elected representative” could, just possibly, and for the first time, come to describe an actual political function.