the weekly Standard

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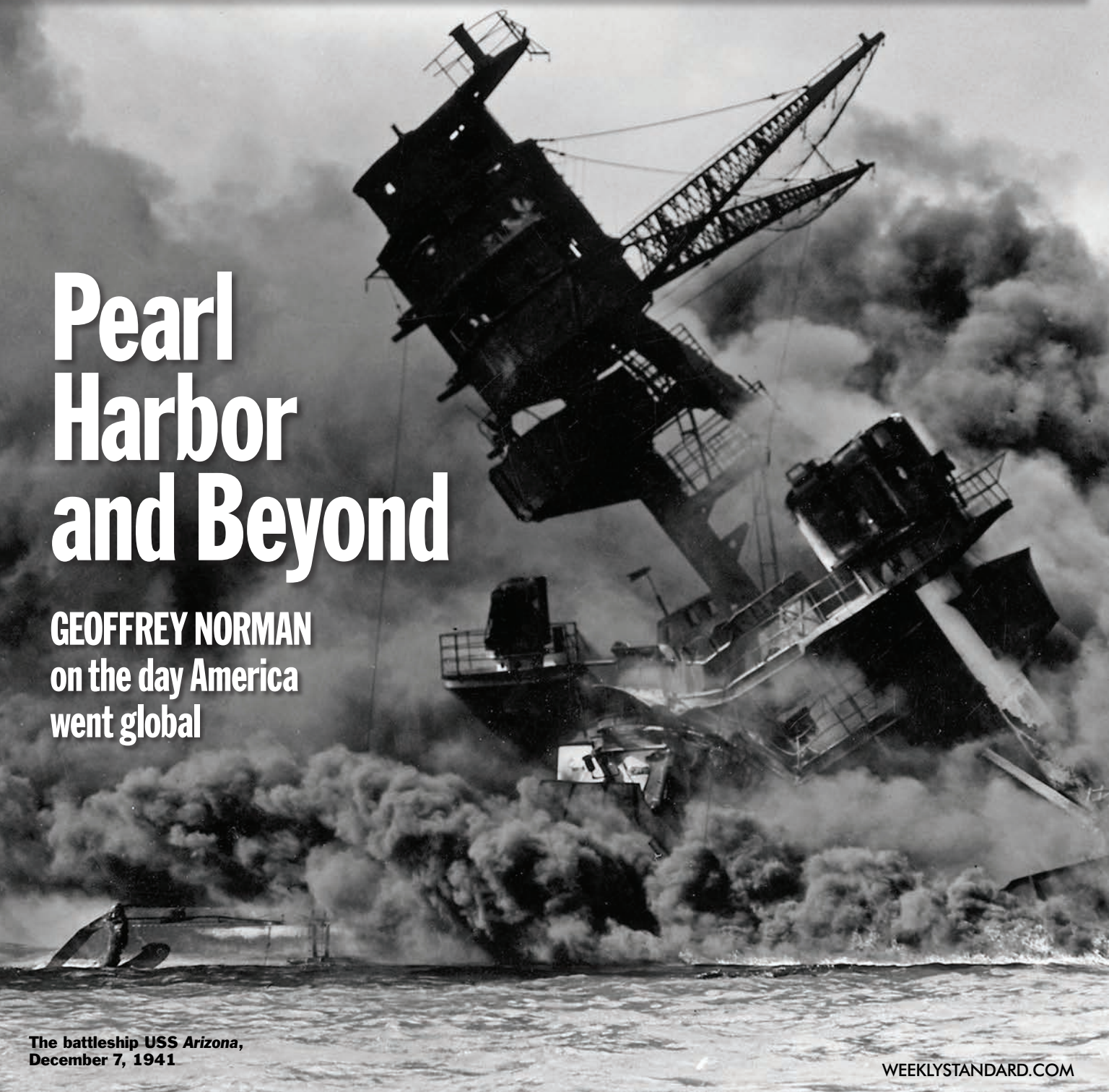
TRUMP AND TRADE
IRWIN M. STELZER



Pearl Harbor and Beyond

GEOFFREY NORMAN on the day America went global

The battleship USS *Arizona*, December 7, 1941

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Where's the Welcome Mat?

Ever on the lookout for irony, The Scrapbook's attention was drawn the other day to two stories—conveniently situated next to one another—on the front page of the *Washington Post* Metro section. The first, entitled "D.C. readies for horde of inaugural protesters" (December 4), explained that hundreds of thousands of people are expected to arrive in Washington next month to protest Donald Trump's inauguration, but capital officials are ready "with thousands of police officers and National Guard members from across the country."

This was not a novel story, in The Scrapbook's estimation, since we've read it before; but it seems only to occur when Republican presidents win elections and are sworn into office. That modern tradition began in January 1969, when Richard Nixon succeeded Lyndon Johnson and his inaugural parade route was lined in places with antiwar demonstrators, some of whom turned violent in the course of the day. The tradition was revived in 1981, when Ronald Reagan supplanted Jimmy Carter; in 1989, when George H. W. Bush succeeded Reagan; and again in 2001, when George W. Bush followed Bill Clinton. On that occasion The Scrapbook recalls, in particular, a large contingent of Yale undergraduates who held signs aloft "apologizing" for their fellow alumnus and jeering, at high volume, during his Inaugural Address.

It should be mentioned, at this juncture, that no comparable demonstrations (or violence and vandalism) seem to have taken place in 1977, when Carter replaced Gerald Ford; or in 1993, after Clinton defeated Bush I; or again in 2009, when Barack Obama succeeded Bush II. This might speak to an essential character difference between left and right in America or, perhaps, reflects the fact that the press tends to treat the arrival of a Republican administration as the political equivalent of a hostile takeover, and reports accordingly.

A case in point was the second Metro section story, which featured this headline: "In Pence's new neighborhood, not exactly the welcome wagon." As his temporary residence, Vice President-elect Mike Pence seems to have rented a house in an affluent neighborhood in Northwest Washington, D.C., and the local homeowners aren't happy about it. Apart from complaining about his presence to reporters and on their neighborhood Internet mailing list, they've taken to flying gay pride flags along their street—"a response to Pence's opposition over the years to equal rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community"—and one of the more bumptious residents slipped an especially patronizing/hostile "greeting" under Pence's front door.

Mike Pence is a busy man these days and not likely to notice such minor incivilities. But The Scrapbook is not so distracted. Once again, we have no recollection of pointed political messages flown from local flagpoles when the Joe Bidens rolled

Not a Parody

washingtonpost.com

Sections

The Washington Post

JustAnotherRich...

Solo-ish

Trump's election stole my desire to look for a partner

By Stephanie Land December 5

(Getty Images/iStockphoto)

In August, I went on six dates in one week. I had decided that I was ready to look for a partner. Enough of this dating unavailable men a half-decade younger than me. They'd never seriously consider a relationship with me, my two children and our needy dog. No. I wanted to find an equal. A man who wouldn't feel the need to step in and rescue me. I didn't need rescuing.

But I knew deep down that was only partially true. I often felt the sort of loneliness that settled in my stomach, starting from a chaotic afternoon with my children, lasting well

into town, or a general mobilization of cops and soldiers to do battle with anti-Obama demonstrators. On the contrary: In the nation's capital, the modern changing of the guard from Republican to Democratic administrations has invariably been peaceful, respectful, and dignified; from Democratic to Republican, however, it's been churlish, nasty, and sometimes violent.

Needless to say, not every Democrat is to blame for this state of affairs, but Democrats do tend to hold Republicans responsible for what they describe as a loss of civility in modern politics. That's something to think about when those thousands of anti-Trump demonstrators arrive in Washington next month. ♦

Just the Facts

Don't mistake The Scrapbook's recent silence on the subject of the mainstream media's meretricious "fact-checking" enterprise for a sign that things have improved on that front. They haven't. The "fact checks" are as biased and misleading as ever, it's just that The Scrapbook got tired of spitting into the wind.

We were therefore delighted to come across an honest and bracing left-wing attack on that same enterprise. Sisyphus Scrapbook is always happy for help rolling this particular boulder uphill, and we don't care what ideological neighborhood the muscle comes from.

Writing at *Current Affairs* magazine, editor Nathan J. Robinson decries "the media's own lack of credibility on matters of fact," which has disarmed it in its current obsession with so-called fake news websites. He continues: "Especially with the rise of 'fact-checking' websites, whose analysis is frequently shoddy and dubious, the political media contribute to the exact kind of 'post-truth' atmosphere that journalists criticize Trump for furthering."

Here's a choice excerpt:

> Conservative writer Sean Davis similarly encountered the topsy-turvy world of Clinton Foundation "fact checking." When Davis wrote an article about the small percentage of its funding the Clinton Foundation spends on charitable grants (as opposed to its own in-house programming), PunditFact argued that the claim, "while technically true" was nevertheless "mostly false." Davis was understandably puzzled by the idea that something could be rated false despite "technically" being true.
>
> But this happens frequently on fact-checking websites. Fact-checkers claim that while claims may literally be true, they are nevertheless false for giving "misleading" impressions or missing crucial context. For example, when Carly Fiorina claimed that she had gone from being a secretary to being a CEO, her claim was given "Three Pinocchios" by the *Washington Post*, even though Fiorina had indeed (by the *Post*'s own admission) been a secretary before she was a CEO. The *Post* reasoned that while Fiorina was literally telling the truth, her statement was nevertheless false since she had advantages in life that other secretaries did not have.
>
> The fact-checkers might think that by going beyond the literal meaning of statements, and evaluating the impressions they leave, they are in fact doing a greater service to truth and reality. In fact, they are opening the door to a far more

subjective kind of work, because evaluating perceptions requires a lot more interpretation than evaluating the basic truth or falsity of a statement. It thereby creates far more room for bias and error to work their way into the analysis.

You'll want to read the whole thing. It's posted at the magazine's website, www.currentaffairs.org, headlined "The Necessity of Credibility: Ridding ourselves of fake news requires having media outlets that are actually worth listening to." ♦

Oops

Speaking of media credibility, The Scrapbook itself has screwed up, for which we are very sorry. But we are grateful to Theresa M. Towner, professor of literary studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, for her gracious letter of reproval. She noted that "Knock, Knock, Knocking," an item in our November 7 issue on Bob Dylan's giving the cold shoulder to the Nobel prize committee (as he was then doing), contained a few errors. "First of all," she wrote, "William Faulkner was not Writer-in-Residence at the University of Virginia in 1962; he was there in 1957-58." She continued:

> He was in Charlottesville in spring 1962, where his friend and biographer Joseph Blotner brokered his comment about why he turned down President Kennedy's dinner invitation. At first, Faulkner didn't want to respond to the White House's inquiry, which went from the English department secretary to Blotner when Faulkner happened to be in Blotner's office; he changed his mind, though, and told Blotner, "Say I'm too old at my age to travel that far to eat with strangers" (Faulkner [1974], pp. 1820-21). The Nobel ceremony this year is scheduled for December 10 (not November). There is wry irony in this date, too, since it marks the 66th anniversary of the very day that Faulkner accepted his award from the Swedish Academy. I have tried to resist the urge to invoke the ghost's lament to Hamlet: "O what a falling off was there." ♦

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Goldwater's Blowout

Hillary Clinton could do worse than to take up the trombone. That was one of the consolations Barry Goldwater pursued after the epic thumping he took in the 1964 election. The defeated GOP presidential nominee returned to Phoenix to lick his wounds—and learn some licks.

Goldwater didn't exactly take up the slip-horn from scratch. Going back a decade or two, for weekend fun, Barry would listen to his vast collection of Dixieland records and try to play along, sometimes on trombone, sometimes just scraping on a washboard. Goldwater was particularly fond of the feel-good, New Orleans-style jazz revivalists who popped up in the '40s to counter the stern asceticism of bebop modernists. Barry's favorite trombonist was Turk Murphy, a great gut-bucket yawper of the Kid Ory school who led a band in San Francisco. (Quipped Dizzy Gillespie: "All I can say is I don't blame Turk for that.")

But Barry never thought of tootling in public. Appearing on Jack Paar's show in 1963, Goldwater was asked if he could do anything musical. After all, Richard Nixon had plinked away at the piano when he was on the program. "I have a trombone" was Barry's reply—not, it should be noted, "I play the trombone."

That would change with the local cause Goldwater took up in 1965, the rescue of Camelback Mountain from developers eager to carve it up into luxury house plots. In best conservative fashion, Barry set about raising money: He would save the mountain by buying it. Goldwater hit up his brother for a donation. Bob Goldwater made it a bet: He offered to give $1,000 to the Camelback fund, but only if, by Christmastime, Barry learned to play "Silent Night" on the trombone.

Bob seems to have expected his brother to make a hash of it. Barry, after all, was a legendary tinkerer who liked to work things out for himself and who had already proved that he thought he could learn to play the trombone just by goofing around on his own with records. Goldwater would mess around with the horn all year—probably get distracted with the stupid washboard—and then, come Christmas, he would just blat and blare and have to pay his brother $1,000.

Instead, and in secret, Barry went to see my grandfather.

BRITT SPENCER

Lester D. Felten Sr. was easily the best trombone teacher in Phoenix. He had started giving private lessons in the 1930s as a young man in New Jersey. Among his first students were his younger siblings: Ruth Felten would play for two years with Ina Ray Hutton's all-girl band, the Melodears; Ellsworth Felten would play trombone with Lester Lanin and, later, Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians. Having moved to Arizona, my grandfather was the go-to brass teacher for everyone from high-school students to the local Salvation Army band and even a musically ambitious Greyhound driver (who, having dropped off his passengers at the end of a regular route, would park his bus in front of my grandfather's house for his weekly lesson).

That's also where Goldwater would show up on the QT. I can picture the set-up, because years later, I would show up for Wednesday night trombone lessons myself. There would be two chairs, side by side, and a single music stand. On the floor would be spread out a newspaper for catching spit-valve effluvia. Grandpa taught not so much by giving instructions as by playing along: One tried to match his clear articulation, his Tommy Dorsey tone.

He would have given Barry encouragement about how to present himself to an audience—he liked to hold out a cupped hand and say, Do this or that and you'll have them right in your palm. But when it came to showbiz, Goldwater had ideas of his own.

To win his bet, Goldwater didn't just play "Silent Night" for his brother or at one of their friends' Christmas parties. No coward, Barry won his bet by boldly taking the stage at the Save Camelback Mountain Dance, a big high-school bash being thrown at the fairgrounds. Not only did he play "Silent Night" successfully in front of a few thousand teenagers, he did so with a self-deprecating nod to the sort of music he knew they really wanted to hear—he wore a Beatles wig.

That was the high point of Barry's musical career, though, over the years, Goldwater would still occasionally take out his horn.

"A musician, he plays a lousy trombone," William J. Casey once said. Roasting the senator's hawkish reputation, the old spymaster razzed him: "His trombone is known as the Goldwater deterrent. This comes of threatening his friends that if they don't behave, he will play his trombone."

Which may explain why, for Christmas 1965, fresh off his Beatle-wigged trombone triumph, Barry's family gave him a tuba.

Eric Felten

the weekly Standard

Taipei Calling

Thirty-seven years is a long time to wait for a phone call. That's how it must have felt to the Taiwanese people when their president, Tsai Ing-wen, had a 10-minute talk with Donald Trump on December 2—the first direct conversation between a Taiwanese leader and a U.S. president or president-elect since 1979.

The phone call, which was reportedly midwifed by Bob Dole, who lobbies for Taiwan, was a laudable display of solidarity with a beleaguered ally and a beacon of democratic values. Taiwan is one of the world's great success stories and all the more impressive for what it has achieved under stifling pressure. When Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces fled to the small island in 1949 after being routed by Mao's Communist army, Taiwan was an impoverished, largely agricultural economy. And the Republic of China government that Chiang established in Taipei was repressive—a one-party state with severe restrictions on civil liberties and political rights.

Fast forward to today, and Taiwan is a marvel. After a peaceful transition to democracy, Taiwan now boasts a raucous free press and competitive elections. The country has just elected its first female leader: a liberal, gay-marriage-supporting law professor. Its export-driven economy is a powerhouse; despite its small size, Taiwan is America's ninth-largest trading partner. And Taipei is a wonder of urban redevelopment: The formerly gritty, industrial center—once known as Asia's ugly duckling—now features lush parks, a world-beating subway system, fabulous restaurants, and the world's eighth-tallest building. Taiwan's very existence stands as a powerful rejoinder to two myths that Beijing likes to propagate: that the mainland's style of state-run economics is a more reliable way to lift incomes than the free market, and that the Chinese people are somehow "unsuited" to democracy.

It is no doubt in part for this reason that Beijing has persisted in a largely successful campaign to ostracize Taiwan, which it officially views as an illegitimate breakaway province. Today, only 22 countries have diplomatic relations with Taiwan—and 6 of those are obscure South Pacific islands (no offense, Tuvalu). The United States hasn't officially recognized Taiwan since 1979, when our Chinese embassy moved from Taipei to Beijing. Taiwan can't fly its own flag at the Olympics and can only compete under the name "Chinese Taipei." Just this year, Taiwan has been shut out of important global meetings, including the U.N.'s aviation safety confab in Montreal and an INTERPOL conference in Bali. And China, unhappy with President Tsai's administration, has heaped extra economic pressure on the island as well. It sharply curtailed tourism from the mainland to Taiwan, for example, in retaliation for Tsai's victory. Many Taiwanese are acutely aware of their nation's Rodney Dangerfield status. They deplore that, despite their country's laudable record, they just get no respect. Trump's phone call with Tsai will do something to change that perspective.

Beijing, naturally, is unhappy with Trump's phone call, as they are with any display of respect to Taiwan. Many in the American media, reflexively opposed to anything the president-elect does, also went after what he did and used the same arguments that the Chinese regime employed. They fretted at Trump's breach of "protocol." They said the phone call would "anger China." (As if that, in itself, were the end of the discussion.) They said China would "retaliate." Some of our more hysterical commentators said Trump's courtesy phone call would spur "World War III." They were nearly universal in their contention that if Donald Trump wants to talk to a democratically elected ally, he'd better check with the Politburo for permission—just to be on the safe side.

Yet in truth, Beijing's scope for retaliation is limited. Fudan University's Shen Dingli, a prominent spokesman for China's official line, told the *New York Times* that were Trump to speak again with President Tsai after Inauguration Day, "I don't know how you are then going to expect China to cooperate on . . . North Korea and climate change." But China is *already* not cooperating on reining in North Korea, as it fears precipitating the collapse of that regime, which it views as an ally. Professor Shen is therefore threatening that China will do something that it's . . . already doing. As for climate change? Beijing has its own, domestic reasons for curtailing emissions, namely the horrific air pollution that plagues many

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Chinese cities. Trump's posture towards Taiwan is utterly irrelevant to the urgent task of cleaning the air. (Reached via email from Shanghai, Professor Shen seemed to concede this point: "China shall do what is good for itself and the world, incl. climate change," he wrote.)

The benefits to Trump's phone call could be significant, meanwhile. Not only will it boost morale among a beleaguered people who deserve American support—a good in and of itself—it also sends a message to Beijing that it badly needs to hear. While the United States sells weapons to Taiwan, the island is not a treaty ally—we are under no legal obligation to come to its defense in the event of a Chinese invasion. This is particularly worrying given the precedent that has been set by Russia's successful annexation of Crimea. National boundaries, it is now apparent, can be redrawn with only minimal consequences. And the parallels are clear: Crimea, historically, had been part of Russia as indeed Taiwan had at one point been part of China. It wasn't that hard to envisage Chinese strongman Xi Jinping going for the "Crimea option" at some point. That seems much less likely now that the U.S. president-elect has made such a bold stand in defense of Taiwan.

Trump's shift towards Taiwan is all the more welcome for having been rather unexpected. The president-elect did not campaign on the idea that promoting democracy and bolstering U.S. allies would be key features of his foreign policy. What's worse, Trump at one point seemed even to *praise* the Chinese regime for its violent suppression of the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

The chat with Tsai Ing-wen was controversial, yes. But this time Donald Trump made the right call.

—Ethan Epstein

Learn from His Mistakes

Shortly after his inauguration in 2009, President Obama invited Republican leaders in Congress to a White House meeting. The House members brought a proposal with ideas for stimulating the economy, then suffering through the Great Recession. In the meeting, Eric Cantor, then the House minority leader, suggested a small business-related tax cut. A few days later, Obama complained Republicans had decided to oppose his stimulus before he had spoken to their conference. Republicans had a reason. House Democrats had already drafted the bill without consulting them. Every GOP idea had been left out.

This was Obama's first mistake. At the time, Republicans were ripe for the picking. They had lost both the House and Senate in 2006 and the presidency in 2008. They were terrified. A concession or two—even small ones—would have gone a long way toward gaining their votes. And Republicans would inherit part ownership of the stimulus package. No concessions were offered. Every House Republican voted against the bill, as did all but three in the Senate.

Then came Obamacare and the second mistake. The president and Democrats were in a hurry. They didn't have the time or the inclination to seek Republican support. Instead, the health care bill was put together, in secret, in the office of then-majority leader Harry Reid. No Republicans were invited to the drafting party and none voted for it. Democrats became sole proprietors of Obamacare.

The third mistake was the handling of Dodd-Frank, which increased regulation of financial markets. Republicans were interested. And Democrat Max Baucus, then chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and now ambassador to China, was negotiating with Republican Bob Corker on a bipartisan bill. But Obama and liberal Democrats feared Baucus was conceding too much. So the measure was snatched from the committee and written without Republican input. Just four GOP senators and three House members voted for it.

Mistakes one, two, and three were the beginning of a disaster for Obama. He and his party have an explanation for blowing off Republicans. In 2009 and 2010, they had large majorities in both chambers and didn't need GOP votes. So why compromise? They could pass exactly what they wanted without adulterating their signature initiatives with Republican ingredients.

Politically speaking, this approach was justified. But there's a rub—a very big rub. There happens to be great value in compromise and bipartisanship. On most legislation, those features don't matter. On big matters that involve the entire country and affect most Americans, they are critical. They act like a seal of national approval. When both parties agree, controversial measures are no longer in serious dispute. When one party insists on having its way, controversy lingers.

Obamacare is a prime example of what can occur, Dodd-Frank less so (and the stimulus has expired). As a product of bipartisan compromise, it would be, at worst, less unpopular than it is now. But as wholly owned property of the president and Democrats, forced on an unwilling public, it's loathed. For Democratic candidates, it's an albatross. It was partly responsible for the defeat of two ex-senators, Russ Feingold in Wisconsin and Evan Bayh in Indiana, who were seeking to return to the Senate. Having once voted for Obamacare caught up with them on November 8.

As bad as Obama's relations were with Republicans in his first two years, he's managed to make them worse since then. He's benefited not at all from this. In 2011, he and House speaker John Boehner agreed to a $4 trillion deal of spending cuts and tax hikes—the so-called grand bargain.

But the agreement unraveled when Obama insisted on hundreds of billions more in tax revenue. At that point, Boehner pulled out, saying he couldn't trust Obama to honor a deal. Obama threw away a breakthrough that would have enhanced his presidency. Another mistake.

Thus ended Obama's efforts, minimal though they were, to get along with Republicans in Congress. Reelected in 2012, he announced he would use his pen and the phone to handle Congress. He mainly used the pen. Rather than negotiate with Republicans, he turned to executive orders and memoranda. No need to compromise on those. He routinely exceeded his constitutional authority. He issued presidential orders on matters Congress was already working on and might enact. This was a fifth mistake.

Don't follow my example.

On the few occasions when they met with Obama, Republicans found him impossible to deal with. "He always wanted it his way or not at all," says House majority leader Kevin McCarthy. "He thinks we're obstructing because we don't agree with him." Vice President Biden was different. He wanted to negotiate but usually wasn't allowed to. When he asked Republicans a question about their plans at a White House session, Obama hushed him.

There's a huge downside to the way Obama has done business: His entire legacy is now in jeopardy. Republicans intend to repeal Obamacare in January and replace it later. That won't be easy. But executive actions can be nullified by the stroke of President Trump's pen, and there's every indication he will cancel most if not all of them. With that, much of the Obama legacy will be wiped away.

For Republicans, there's a lesson in Obama's experience. It's a simple one: don't spurn negotiation and compromise. In this, the filibuster may be their friend. Republicans can repeal Obamacare with 51 votes in the Senate. But they will need 60 to replace it, when Democrats unleash a filibuster. Republicans will have to find at least eight Democratic votes. The more they get, the better. A bipartisan replacement, with emphasis on free markets and patient choice, is bound to have flaws. That's the price of compromise. But the replacement won't be doomed to an early death like Obamacare.

When sweeping tax reform was enacted in 1986, bipartisan compromise was a given. Two Democrats, Senator Bill Bradley and Representative Dick Gephardt, saw it much as Republicans did (and still do). You kill tax preferences and special breaks and use the savings to lower tax rates. Today's Democrats want the first half of the equation, but not the

tax cuts. They prefer to spend the money. When Paul Ryan and Democratic senator Chuck Schumer sought a deal in 2015 on repatriating overseas corporate profits, they couldn't agree on how to use the new tax revenue. Reaching even a broader reform measure will require Republicans to trust Ryan to get the best deal possible.

Infrastructure? Handing out billions to build roads, repair bridges, and upgrade ports should please everyone, right? Wrong. Trump has talked about a $1 trillion program, but Republicans in Congress are bent on spending less. It's still true, as Obama learned, that there are no "shovel-ready" projects to fund instantly. A compromise might focus on modernizing the interstate highway system, which was laid out according to where people lived in the 1950s. There are twice as many Americans today, and they've clustered in new places.

Obama's mistakes are a gift to Republicans. They know what not to do. This is as good a lesson as they could have expected, considering the source.

—Fred Barnes

Beware Delay

For years now, the Republican party has promised to "repeal and replace" Obamacare. Now that voters have delivered Republicans control of the White House and Congress and they can make good on that promise, suddenly they are singing a different, decidedly off-key, tune: "Repeal and delay."

The plan is to effectively repeal Obamacare through the budgetary process known as "reconciliation." But after campaigning hard against the law for six years, some Republican leaders are now hedging their bets about what to do next with health care. "We're talking about a three-year transition now that we actually have a president who's likely to sign the repeal into the law," Senate majority whip John Cornyn said earlier this month. "People are being understandably cautious, to make sure nobody's dropped through the cracks."

Fair enough: If the Obamacare debacle has taught us anything, it's that when you're overhauling the laws governing one-sixth of the economy, you should do it cautiously. That said, dragging out or delaying the replacement of Obamacare would be a catastrophic mistake—and for three main reasons.

One, voter anger over Obamacare can't be overestimated. In a January 2010 special election, voters in deep-blue Massachusetts went so far as to elect a Republican to fill the Senate seat of the late Ted Kennedy. They did so expecting his vote to be the one that would scuttle the Affordable Care Act. Democrats found a procedural ploy to force the bill through anyway. That only stoked voter anger, which found voice in the Tea Party movement that stormed congressional town halls later that year and, in the 2010 general election, would deliver Democrats the largest electoral wipeout for a major party since the end of World War II. Because implementation of the law was largely delayed until after his reelection, President Barack Obama managed in 2012 to get reelected in spite of his signature "accomplishment." Democratic senators would not be so lucky, losing control of the Senate in 2014 in an election in which the rolling disaster of Obamacare was the driving issue.

Voters who have gone to the polls in election after election to cast ballots against Obamacare are not going to be interested in GOP excuses for not fixing the law.

Two, perhaps the biggest mistake Democrats made after Obama's 2008 election was to believe they would control Washington for years, if not decades, to come. After ramming through both the trillion-dollar stimulus and Obamacare on party lines, voters punished them the first chance they got. In an era of political instability and populist revolt, it would be rash of the GOP to assume their control of Congress will survive the next midterm election.

Three, not fixing the law leaves an awful lot of people in the lurch. However substandard Obamacare coverage may be, it remains that some 22 million Americans have been incentivized—or forced—to get coverage through the ACA. And they aren't the only ones to have made important decisions based on the law: Entire industries have shaped their businesses based on the demands of the ACA. Repealing Obamacare without a clear plan for what comes next will only compound with uncertainty the damage the law has done to health care and insurance markets.

The good news is that a number of Republicans in Congress—including Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and the president-elect's pick to be secretary of health and human services, Rep. Tom Price—have put forward thoughtful, comprehensive replacement plans. Savvy wonks at conservative think tanks have offered still more.

Repealing Obamacare is an urgent priority. But the bigger leadership test will be keeping lawmakers focused on finishing the job, which means selecting one of the many replacement plans already written or combining the best ideas from several of them to create a new approach. It is a test the GOP had better not fail. North Carolina's Mark Meadows, the new head of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, has already said any effort to push Obamacare replacement past the next election will be "the first big fight I see coming for the Freedom Caucus."

There have been a lot of petty intra-Republican squabbles in recent years. But if GOP leaders are foolish enough to try kicking the Obamacare can down the road, it will be worth pushing back. Obamacare was foundational to the Republican resurgence; if they don't fix the law promptly it may yet prove instrumental in Republicans' downfall.

—Mark Hemingway

The Not-Talking Cure

Worse than the disease it targets.

BY SAM SCHULMAN

Censorship was once so simple. Kings, emperors, hierarchs, dictators stifled free expression to protect their authority. They decided what ideas were dangerous; organized a network of schoolteachers, priests, and informers to sniff out expressions of these ideas; then hired policemen, judges, and civil servants to punish the speakers. The censors didn't want to make us good or persuade us of anything in particular: Obedience would suffice. As we began, more or less, to govern ourselves, the first thing we did was rid ourselves of the informers, demote the priests and schoolteachers, and find other work for the cops.

What we're doing these days is something quite new: The people themselves seek to rehire the censors, restore the (social) network of snitches, and redeploy the police—to govern our own speech. The aim is not to ensure the stability of a regime but to save us from being unkind to one another and encourage moral excellence. The notion that vigilantly watching what we say makes us better people is a crazy one. But it has an even crazier corollary: the widely shared conviction that what people say aloud is a reliable gauge of their private thoughts. Consider the case of the student journalist and the terrorist.

"That thoughtful, engaged student I had met the first day of classes had snapped. He had tried to kill people."

In these words, Kevin Stankiewicz, a student journalist at the Ohio State University daily *Lantern*, describes two different people: The thoughtful engaged student is the late Abdul Razak Ali Artan, whom Stankiewicz had the luck to interview for a roving reporter feature for his paper on August 23, the day OSU classes began. By coincidence, the subject of his paragraph turned out to be the man who set out on November 28 to kill as many students as he could knock down with his car and then stab with a butcher knife. Artan had injured 10 students and a professor before an OSU policeman stopped his attack by shooting and killing him.

Abdul Razak Ali Artan

The student journalist who found Abdul Razak Ali Artan 'soft-spoken' and 'friendly' three months before Artan's bloody spree at Ohio State lacks the journalist's rage at finding himself misled. Why not consider that Artan might have been lying?

In a gracefully written op-ed for the *Washington Post* published two days after the Columbus attack, Stankiewicz describes his "quite intense" conversation with Artan last summer. Artan had given not the slightest hint that he considered himself a soldier of ISIS or intended any harm to anyone. Far from it: Artan shared his "thoughtful frustrations and fears" that the media had so badly informed American students about Muslims that other students might be afraid of him. Stankiewicz reported Artan's own words in his original *Lantern* feature: "If people look at me, a Muslim praying, I don't know what they're going to think, what's going to happen. But, I don't blame them." Artan was "soft-spoken," "friendly," "measured and intellectual not angry or violent." He indicated to Stankiewicz that he wanted to "spread understanding and awareness." Artan mentioned violence only as something that might be directed at him, as a Muslim who wanted to pray in public. Stankiewicz told Sallee Ann Ruibal, another *Lantern* reporter, that Artan "specifically mentioned he was afraid someone might shoot him."

On a Facebook page discovered by law enforcement officials, Artan had quite different complaints from the concern about the bigoted thoughts of OSU students. He was enraged at Burma's oppression of its Muslim minority and connected it to the war on ISIS conducted by America and its "fellow apostate allies": "We are not weak. We are [not] weak, remember that. If you want us Muslims to stop carrying [out] lone wolf attacks, then make peace with 'Dawla in al sham' [ISIS]." He advises Muslims to listen "to our hero Imam Anwar Al-Awlaki"—the prominent al Qaeda cleric killed by a U.S. drone strike in Yemen in 2011. He fingers as traitors to Islam several prominent Islamic teachers and imams in Texas (where he and his family arrived as Somali refugees in 2014). He concludes by swearing on the deity that he is "willing to use a billion infidels in retribution."

It is possible, if unlikely, that Artan only became persuaded of his duty to radical jihad at some point in the 97 days between his *Lantern* interview and his attack (in which case he

VIA FACEBOOK

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concealed his change of heart from everyone who had contact with him in the interval). There is no way Stankiewicz could have known that Artan felt that way. But Stankiewicz lacks the journalist's rage at finding himself misled. To him, the Artan who disclosed his hopes and fears without rancor or hatred was the true, the only Artan, not an agent of vengeance but a recipient of hatred. Well, to be more exact, he was only vicariously the object of hatred. Stankiewicz told another *Lantern* reporter that "Artan listed several instances of Islamophobia that Muslims and refugees have experienced."

That Artan was gentle in speech and fearful in manner proves that something must have happened afterward. Stankiewicz remembers Artan's "comments about his fears of a nation divided by hate and lack of understanding" and finds the discrepancy between his words and actions "chilling." I am astonished that Stankiewicz didn't even consider that Artan might have created the discrepancy by lying.

Why on earth not? That we are lying animals is the *raison d'être* for every institution—from marriage to justice—that mankind had to create to make it possible to live in communities and not as lone wolves. Brides, thieves, husbands, rustlers, farmers, murderers, shepherds—we suspect them all. Even the victim and witnesses to a crime must swear on penalty of being a criminal themselves to the truth of what they say about the accused, who is himself so likely to lie that common law excuses him from having to speak at all. Couples about to marry were, until quite recently, dragged before an altar or a judge with both their families and made to swear to their fidelity, so little do we trust young love.

Our reliance upon speech censors to detect and cure evil has disarmed us to such a degree that even a journalist forgets the first tool of his trade: suspicion. It doesn't occur to Stankiewicz that a man who in November dies as a soldier of ISIS might in August have concealed his thirst for revenge on America and on Muslim scholars whom he considers heretics. (There is nothing particularly Islamic about deception; any secret agent in Artan's position would dissemble, whether Nazi, Communist, Irish nationalist or French *résistant*.)

Stankiewicz is admirably careful about making too strong a case for the theory that hate speech against Artan's religion caused the "thoughtful, engaged" student to "snap" and become the very different person who tried to kill as many of his fellow students as he could, using the techniques that ISIS recommends to its admirers in the West. Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary, is not so reluctant. Commenting on the attack, he told reporters, "If we respond to this situation by casting aspersions on millions of people that adhere to a particular religion or if we increase our suspicion of people who practice a particular religion, we are more likely going to contribute to acts of violence than we are to prevent them." If expressing dislike of Islam to Muslims will cause them to become terrorists in the future, then this must be what the White House believes happened to Artan. There is an easy cure in that case: don't cast aspersions, don't say that a small minority of Muslims are more likely than a small minority of adherents of other faiths to become terrorists. If we watch our tongues, we don't have to keep watch on radical mosques, which will please the ACLU.

London, February 8, 2015

PRESS ASSOCIATION / AP

White House press secretary Josh Earnest said, 'If we respond to this situation by casting aspersions on millions of people that adhere to a particular religion or if we increase our suspicion of people who practice a particular religion, we are more likely going to contribute to acts of violence than we are to prevent them.' This must be what the White House believes happened to Artan.

I am doubtful that a perfect control of speech and the militant guarding of the faith from aspersion would have prevented the Artan of August from becoming the Artan of November. The French journalist David Thomson just published a book of interviews with French Muslims who left the country to wage jihad with ISIS and have now returned to France, called *Les revenants*—the ghosts. Consider the words of Zoubeir, son of middle-class parents in Paris, describing his gradual radicalization as an adolescent. Whenever a terrorist attack takes place in France, Zoubeir's high school teachers vigilantly mark the distinction between Islam and jihadism. The poor boy can't bear it. "The more they told me that it wasn't Islam, the more I was convinced of the opposite." The massive and well-coordinated media and political enterprise intended to deny that there is any connection between terror and Islam is pointless and counterefective. Says Zoubeir:

> I don't like this constant attempt to say, "no, that's not right, it's not written in the Koran." Well a kid . . . isn't stupid. . . . He's going to look at the book and see that it is written there. . . . He's going to see that [the Koran] does legitimate fighting against the people who fight against us.

The still-prospective terrorist Zoubeir testifies to the futility of permitting only those opinions that are flattering and chic. I wish others would mind attractive lies as much as he does—or be able to detect them. ♦

Rattling the EU Cage

The voters are restless.

BY DOMINIC GREEN

The European state system, Leon Trotsky wrote in 1932, resembles "the 'system' of cages in an impoverished provincial zoo." The European Union, the ideal of postwar reconstruction, was intended to replace the tariffs, borders, and belligerence of the old Europe. With the euro currency and the "four freedoms" of the movement of goods, people, services, and capital, it aspired to turn Europe into an economic safari park. Instead, the union has created a new set of problems and unleashed a political wildness that threatens its future.

The common currency impoverishes the states of the "southern tier" for the same reason it enriches users north of the Alps and Pyrenees, especially the zookeepers in Berlin and Brussels. The departure of jobs to Asia and the arrival of migrants from Africa and the Middle East have revived nationalism in the provinces, and the red-meat politics of bigotry too. The German economy has recovered since 2008, but the southern eurozone remains a wasteland of bailouts, enforced austerity, and unemployment levels last seen when Trotsky wrote that, in global economic terms, "Europe is on the downward trend."

The work in which Trotsky made his zoological comparison was called *What Next?* It is now unavoidably clear that what happens next in the European Union will not resemble what its builders intended to happen. The architecture of economic and political "convergence" cannot be erected, because the electorates of the member states will not allow it. After June's Brexit vote, the question is not whether the union and the eurozone will contract, but when and how. Europe's centrist politicians may insist that the union will survive, but the markets think otherwise. In the last two years, the euro has slid from nearly $1.40 to near-parity at $1.06. Both Citigroup and Deutsche Bank expect the euro to drop below parity in 2017. What next, and where next?

Hence the nervousness about last weekend's votes in Austria and Italy, and their remarkably high turnouts. On the face of it, neither vote should have been a cause of international concern. The Austrians were electing their president, a ceremonial official in a country that has not played a significant role in international affairs since the time of *The Third Man*. The Italians were voting in a referendum on reforming Europe's most dysfunctional political system. Both ballots reveal how the economic and political failure of the union is undermining liberal democracy in its constituent states, and how the breakdown of national politics in turn undermines the union and its currency.

Van der Bellen, left, and Renzi

The result of the Austrian election was received with relief, but the choice itself should be cause for alarm. The winner, with 52 percent of the vote, was Alexander Van der Bellen. He led the Green party from 1997 to 2008, but ran as a nominal independent on a pro-EU platform. That a single-issue candidate could win by campaigning as *Unser Präsident der Mitte*, "Our President of the Center," indicates the decay of the traditional center parties in Austrian politics. So does the strong showing of the loser, Norbert Hofer of the Freedom party.

Hofer also calls himself a centrist, but he is also a single-issue politician. The issue is national identity, narrowly defined. The preponderance of former Nazis among the founders of the Freedom party was remarkable even for 1950s Austria. As late as 2013, Hofer attended party gatherings wearing a blue cornflower on his lapel—a symbol of 19th-century pan-German nationalism and the marker by which Austrian Nazis identified each other when their party was banned between 1934 and 1938. Hofer has suggested that South Tyrol, a largely German-speaking province that has been part of Italy since 1919, should be returned to Austria. Earlier this year, Hofer said that Islam "has no place in Austria," without explaining what that means for Austria's Muslims.

Hofer ran an anti-EU campaign and took 48 percent of the vote. His defeat spares the European Union the shame of having to recognize Western Europe's first postwar neofascist leader—for the moment, anyway. Austria's next parliamentary elections will take place by September 2018. Current polls have the Freedom party set to win, with at least a third of the votes. The decay of capitalism, Trotsky observed, results in "social and cultural decomposition."

The result of the Italian referendum could not be explained away, though it may yet be annulled by political maneuvering. Elected in 2014 as Italy's youngest-ever prime minister, Matteo Renzi, the center-left mayor of Florence, promised to revive Europe's fourth-largest economy. Nicknamed *Il Rottamatore*, "The Scrapper," for his assault on state bureaucracy, employment law, and the tax system, Renzi managed to generate a small improvement in the economy; in May 2015, growth of 0.3 percent marked the end of the post-2008 recession.

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VAN DER BELLEN, CHRISTIAN JANSKY; RENZI, NEWSCOM

The referendum was on Renzi's proposal to extend his powers and ease further reforms, by weakening the power of the senate and shrinking it from 315 directly elected members to 100 local officials. But the voters took the referendum as a plebiscite on his premiership and an economic strategy that, placing the austerity economics of Brussels ahead of the needs of Italian voters, has failed to cure high unemployment, low growth, and wage stagnation.

Renzi, like David Cameron in the Brexit referendum, underestimated public dissatisfaction. He and his strategists believed that a turnout of over 70 percent would favor them. In a sense, it did. Renzi won in three high-turnout regions. Two, his home region of Tuscany and its neighbor Emilia-Romagna, are wealthy and reliably center-left. The third, curiously enough, was semi-autonomous South Tyrol, or Alto Adige as the Italians call it, another net contributor to the national budget. Unfortunately for Renzi, the other 17 regions, some of them notably less wealthy, also saw voters come out in force. With an overall turnout of 69 percent, Italians rejected Renzi's proposal decisively, by 59 to 41 percent.

Renzi resigned, and Italy is now in limbo until elections scheduled for spring 2018 can be brought forward. After the vote, the nonpartisan Centre for Economics and Business Research said that there was "no doubt" that Italy could remain in the eurozone if Italians were "prepared to pay the price of virtually zero growth and depressed consumer spending for another five years." But this is "asking a lot of an already impatient electorate." The CEBR estimates the chances of Italy sticking to austerity measures and staying in the eurozone at "below 30 per cent." Meanwhile, Italy's banks are undercapitalized; the Monte dei Paschi di Siena, the world's oldest bank, is five billion euros short.

The winner of the referendum, for now at least, is Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement. Grillo, a comedian turned activist, leads the oddest and most innovative of Europe's new populist movements. The "five stars" of the FSM program are indistinguishable from the platitudes of the EU: clean water, public transport, sustainable development, Internet access, and environmentalism. But the FSM is Euroskeptic and against global liberalism.

Grillo has promised that should he enter government, he will hold a nonbinding referendum on Italy's EU membership. Under current polls, the FSM could take 30 percent of the votes. The established parties may exploit another of Renzi's reforms, a return to proportional representation, to prevent the FSM from turning votes into power. But absent an economic recovery, this would only defer and exacerbate popular frustration.

The Austrian and Italian results will not lead to "Öxit" and "Quitaly"—at least, not yet. They do show, however, that anti-EU populism is now on the cusp of victory within at least one of the eurozone states. Where next? The Netherlands, with elections in March 2017. A late November poll showed Geert Wilders and his anti-EU, anti-immigration Party for Freedom winning the largest number of seats. After that, the French presidential election in April looks likely to produce a second-round run-off between Marine Le Pen, who wants to withdraw France from the EU, and François Fillon, who recently called for the restructuring of an "inefficient" EU that is "an obstacle to our development and our freedom."

And what next? As Fillon says, the EU is in a "critical" situation. The smart money is turning against the euro, and the voters, rattling their cages, are undercutting the zookeepers of Brussels from below. "As the witch's house in fairy tales, so the entire European system has for its foundation a pair of hen's legs," Trotsky wrote in 1932. "The great and salutary hegemony of France is in danger of toppling over." ♦

Obamacare

The sooner the better.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

It's the opportunity Republicans have been awaiting for six years, which invites the obvious question: Are they going to screw it up? In January, a united Republican Congress and Republican White House will finally have the ability to dispose of Obamacare, the unpopular and destructive health-insurance law. After running four straight national elections against the jammed-through, unconstitutional, failing, expensive, and disastrous Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the GOP finally has the power to do something about it.

It didn't take long for Republican leadership in both houses of Congress to get over the shock of winning the election last month and start gaming out a repeal plan. The details remain under discussion, but House speaker Paul Ryan, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, and Vice President-elect Mike Pence (who is working closely with Ryan and McConnell on repeal) are already coalescing around a rough legislative framework. The plan might be summed up as: repeal, delay, replace. More precisely, Republicans plan to repeal most of the law, delay the implementation of most of that repeal for at least two years—and figure out what to replace it with in the interim.

It's a legislative strategy adopted largely from the Heritage Foundation's recommendations. The think tank's health care experts Nina Owcharenko and Edmund F. Haislmaier authored a brief in November

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that advocated a four-step process that begins: "Maximize the reconciliation process for repeal." According to Mitch McConnell, this will come in the form of an "Obamacare repeal resolution" on January 3, the first day of the new Congress.

Why start here and not a straightforward repeal bill? While such a repeal could pass the House of Representatives with a party-line vote, the small majority Republicans hold in the Senate (likely 52 to the Democrats' 48) means there's no supermajority of 60 to override an almost-certain Democratic filibuster. So the GOP plans to repeal Obamacare the same way Democrats passed it: through budget reconciliation, because Senate rules limit debate (and thereby avoid the filibuster threat) on budget legislation.

This process, however, also limits what Republicans can repeal. Obamacare's taxes and penalties (which are the muscle behind the individual and employer mandates), Medicaid expansion funds, subsidies for health-insurance exchange customers, and taxes on the health care industry are all on the reconciliation chopping block. Dumping all of this would effectively cripple the law's enforcement, even if the statute itself remains on the books. It will be up to the administration to undo the regulatory regime of Obamacare in the executive branch.

This is hardly a new plan. Shortly after taking control of the Senate in 2015, Republicans in both houses passed a nearly identical budget reconciliation bill, but President Obama vetoed it. President Trump, almost certainly, would not.

But what comes next is less certain. With 2017 insurance plans kicking in on January 1, immediate implementation of any kind of repeal would be far too disruptive. Republicans on Capitol Hill are debating how long—two years? three?—before the subsidies and mandates are removed. As Heritage Action, the think tank's political arm, put it in a recent memo: The "preferred process gives Republicans the best chance to repeal Obamacare and honor their commitment to the people who put them in power—while providing plenty of time to enact a replacement plan. Then there will be a time of transition for Congress to pass a replacement bill."

Senate majority whip John Cornyn sees it this way as well. "It took six years to get into this mess; it's going to take us a while to get out of it," he told *Politico*.

GARY LOCKE

This is exactly what the American Enterprise Institute's James Capretta, a leading conservative health care policy expert, has feared. Capretta spent years researching and documenting Obamacare's legion of pitfalls and distortions of the health-insurance marketplace. He's worked with other experts to develop free-market solutions, not only to the problems that have emerged since Obamacare's passage and implementation, but also to what he calls the "pre-ACA status quo." He's also thought a bit about the politics of repeal.

"I'm all for the notion of strike while you've got momentum, and the political momentum is at your back," Capretta says. That momentum could very well stall over the next two years as Republicans expend political capital and approach the midterm elections in 2018. What GOP leadership views as time to hammer out a replacement proposal Capretta sees as time for Republican divisions over health care policy to grow.

"A better legislative game plan would be to wait until the incoming Trump administration submits its budget framework, probably a month or so after the inauguration, and then to proceed with a budget resolution and reconciliation bill in Congress that carries much of the reform agenda that Congress and the administration would like to enact," Capretta wrote in a post for *Real Clear Health* last month. The several competing alternatives to Obamacare—from Orrin Hatch's proposal in the Senate, to Tom Price's in the House, to Speaker Ryan's "Better Way" proposal—all have similar but different approaches to, say, replacing the subsidies for health insurance or covering individuals with preexisting conditions.

"You better work out those fights now," says Capretta, before getting rid of Obamacare's funding and spending mechanisms. Otherwise, Republicans could find themselves in 2018 with a major disruption and no consensus for how to address it—ironically giving Democrats the same political bludgeon Republicans used against them during the Obama years.

While Capretta has spoken to Ryan's staff about strategy, all indications are that repeal-delay-replace is the favored path. The only vocal resistance to it in the Republican conference has come from the House Freedom Caucus, whose newly elected chairman Mark Meadows has expressed opposition to any legislation that doesn't repeal and replace Obamacare immediately.

Ryan recently told *60 Minutes* repeal will be the "first bill we're going to be working on" but sounded hopeful that the GOP would find its replacement plan eventually. "We want to make sure that we have a good transition period, so that people can get better coverage at a better price," Ryan said. If for nothing else than his party's well-being, the speaker better hope so. ♦

Always in Vogue

The airbrushed crossroads of fashion and politics.

BY NOEMIE EMERY

Vogue magazine and the drab world of politics are not much alike. They are prose vs. poetry, fact vs. fiction, words vs. music, dreams vs. the cold light of day. Politics is mundane and essential to the running of everything; *Vogue* is escape and essential to nothing, dealing in luxuries that would be nice to have if we had them, but not things anyone needs. Reality in politics is harsh overhead light that flatters few people; reality in *Vogue* is artifice deployed with strategic precision to alter the ways things are seen.

As a result, *Vogue*'s forays into politics have often fared poorly, among them a 2011 piece titled "A Rose in the Desert" that hailed the consort of Syria's monstrous president as "the freshest and most magnetic of first ladies," beloved by her people, "a thin, long-limbed beauty" with a keen sense of "fun." (It is not clear how much fun she is having now.)

But through it all, the magazine's interest in women in politics has been unabated and partisan, ready at the drop of a crisis or poll number to give aid and comfort to Hillary Clinton at each stage of her stormy career. In 1993, when she was under assault as the uber-assertive "new kind of First Lady," *Vogue* was there with a photo shoot that made her look like an old kind of temptress, "a dishy, dreamy, First Lady posing—head tilted over and blonde hair draped—like the old Catherine Deneuve perfume ads Johnny Carson loved to mimic," as Maureen Dowd wrote at the time. The *Irish Times* called her "Hillary the sex goddess," and the *Economist* ran a story on her "pussycat look," with the headline "Come up and vote for me sometime."

Five years later came Monica and impeachment, the blue dress, the vast right-wing conspiracy, and the meaning of "is," and there she was on *Vogue*'s Christmas cover, beaming and radiant in sumptuous red velvet, with a story that opened, "The First Lady has never been more popular—or effective," and contained quotations to the effect that "She's a phenomenal person" and "she looks much better and younger than on TV."

Vogue*'s online endorsement page for Clinton*

In December 2009, when she was secretary of state and made a trip to Africa, Annie Leibovitz came along to take a great many carefully posed and retouchable photos, and Jonathan Van Meter to write pages and pages on how human she was, how lively she was when one got to know her, and how people loved her so much. In 2012, he followed up with a gushing story on Chelsea. And in February 2016, he was there again, with a story called "Will Hillary Clinton Make History?" timed to coincide with the nomination prize that had eluded her grasp just eight years earlier, and with every word shouting, "Yes!" The pictures this time were so retouched as to be unrecognizable.

When *Vogue*'s formal endorsement was made halfway through October, the picture used was from the 1993 dishy, dreamy, Catherine Deneuve-like shots that had so irked Maureen Dowd. Airbrushed out, along with the wrinkles, were the political warts that made her candidacy so problematic: the greed, the truth-shading, the private email server she had used as secretary of state. Airbrushed, too, were any memories of the "bimbo eruptions" she was said to have quelled, along with the humiliations, horrors, and horrible choices that afflicted her protégée, "second daughter," de facto sister, and aide, Huma Abedin.

Never a sylph, like the long-legged and lovely first lady of Syria, Hillary had always been an aesthetic stretch for the *Vogue* crowd, so it was probably with relief that the magazine was able to turn to Abedin, a stunning brunette 30 years younger—rail thin, with a great sense of style, sloe eyes, and yards of black hair—close in style to the late Mrs. JFK Jr., and who stood out from the usual run of women-in-politics just as the first Mrs. Kennedy had from the first ladies before her, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mamie, and Bess.

Huma debuted in *Vogue* in August 2007, in the opening phase of Hillary's first run for president, when "after the second set of Democratic debates [she] has had three hours of sleep and four cups of coffee, but her black Prada suit is wrinkle free." Her rapport with her patron and mentor was seen as remarkable. "I'm not sure Hillary could walk out the door without Huma," said Clinton adviser Mandy Grunwald. "She's a little like Radar in *M*A*S*H*." Her second *Vogue*

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appearance was her wedding in July 2010, an affair of state, or at least of political royalty, which she had by that time become. The scene was a Gilded Age mansion that resembled a chateau; the dress custom-made by Oscar de la Renta; the groom a congressman with a very bright future; the ceremony performed by Bill Clinton himself. The message was clear that the bride, while looking like Jackie, was expected to act more like Hillary Clinton, as part of a young Power Couple that would work with the old. The groom had his eyes on New York's Gracie Mansion (which would have made Huma first lady of something), and the governor's mansion in Albany was not thought unattainable. Had those things occurred, *Vogue* would have been there with stories and pictures by all the best people. But *Vogue* would not cover what did happen next.

It was not *Vogue*, but the *New York Post*, *Daily News*, and of course the *National Enquirer*, that would publish, not to say exploit and revel in, the news that Anthony Weiner, Abedin's new husband, had a habit or hobby of sending pictures of his genitals over the Internet to women he had never met. No photographers captured her expression when she discovered what happened, or what she was wearing or felt days later when her husband was forced out of Congress and became unemployable, or what she felt concerning her obligations to him, his to her, and both to the child she was expecting, no doubt influential in her decision (like Hillary Clinton before her) to stand by her man. In April 2013, she would explain to Van Meter (this time for the *New York Times Magazine*) her decision to stay.

As a "reformed family man," Weiner entered the New York mayoral race that May as the frontrunner, and the pair appeared in a video surrounded by flowers, she with her hair loose, smiling and radiant, and lovely in blue. But it was Reuters that would photograph her on July 23 in a black sweater with her hair in a tight, straggling bun that *Vogue* would not have accepted, looking strained and unhappy as he explained to the world and the voters that under the name "Carlos Danger" he had a prolonged online affair with a woman named Sydney Leathers and other relationships since he resigned. Two months later, he would lose the primary (coming in fifth with 4.9 percent of the vote), failing to mention his son or his wife in his concession, and flipping his middle finger to a reporter as he left.

As all this occurred, Abedin was in Washington at an event with the Clintons, which is where she would largely remain. "My compass was my job," she said. "It was where I could go and life was normal. Nothing horrible had happened there." As the presidential campaign geared up she would be there more often, reverting to her old identity as a Clinton "relation," as she distanced herself more and more from her husband at home. It was in this context that *Vogue* felt free in mid-2016 to produce the piece called "I'm With Her" that ran in the September issue, centered around their campaign relationship and painting the closeness between the two of them as the key to both women. In about seven pages of print, half of a page was given to Abedin's marriage, which having been raised was then abruptly dismissed and never mentioned again.

But life doesn't always accede to *Vogue*'s dreams, and by the time the issue hit the newsstands Weiner had been outed again, sexting a minor with his son beside him, causing the marriage to end with a bang, not a whimper, as Abedin started separation proceedings and gained sole custody of their son. It also caused the FBI to seize his computer, on which it found a large number of government emails, dating from Hillary Clinton's tenure at the State Department, where Huma had been her top aide. The emails turned out to be copies of those already seen in the course of the investigation into the email misconduct of Hillary Clinton, but FBI director James Comey did not know this when he was told of them less than two weeks before the election, and had no way of knowing whether they held anything that would cause his decision not to recommend bringing charges to change. If they did, and he said nothing, he might look like he had engaged in a coverup that had affected the outcome of a presidential election. On the other hand, if he said something and the emails proved inconsequential (which is what had happened), then people would say the same thing.

Caught in this bind, he would choose to say something, and so he did, 11 days before the November election, in a letter to Congress. And it was just at that moment, the Democrats would claim later, that their fragile lead started slipping; and the second letter he wrote, on the Sunday before the election, would do nothing but make matters worse. It was the Weineresque angle that stupefied everyone: "When the movie is made," said someone on Twitter, the opening scene would have to be the big wedding, in which Bill Clinton welcomed into their family and political world the outsider and serpent who at a singular moment would grind their dreams into dust.

The film *All the President's Men* ends with the scribes typing away as a TV carries live the Nixon inaugural, aware that the president, who had won 49 states in the recent election, had already committed the many misjudgments that 20 months later would make him resign. By the same token, on the glorious day of the Abedin wedding, Hillary had already set up her illegal server, and Weiner's addiction, by his own admission, already was well under way. Six years later at the optimum moment they would collide to deny and destroy their ambitions, a plot line the Greeks would surely have recognized, but no modern writer would dare to describe.

A great book remains to be written by the next Henry James (or Edith Wharton) about this saga of folly and failure, but it needs to be told minus the cosmetics, minus the airbrush, and minus excisions, with all the follies and failures laid bare. We don't know when it will come, or who will produce it. But we know we won't read it in *Vogue*. ♦

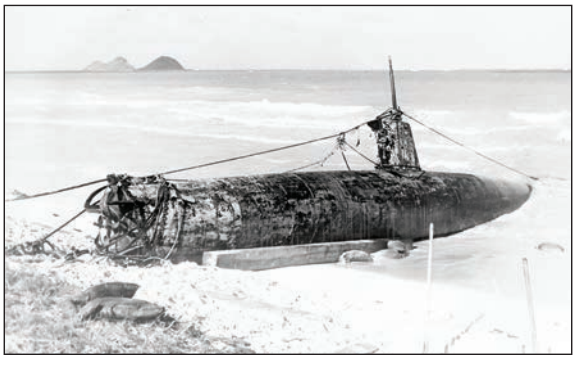
The Day America Went Global

Pearl Harbor and beyond

By Geoffrey Norman

The world, and especially the nation, remembered Pearl Harbor last Wednesday. December 7 is, indeed, a day that has lived "in infamy." So the president and the man who will follow him into the White House both issued appropriate statements. A moving ceremony took place at the scene of the attack, with a 94-year-old survivor from the USS *Arizona* honored and speaking. Among those killed in the attack were 1,177 of his shipmates. A flight of planes, in the missing man formation, passed overhead and taps was played by a Navy band. Hard, even if you were merely watching on television, to keep the emotions down.

A day or two earlier, the prime minister of Japan had announced that he would soon be making a visit to Pearl Harbor. Not to apologize, it was quickly made clear, but as a gesture toward "healing."



A Japanese midget submarine that ran aground during the attack and was discovered the following day

So Pearl Harbor has, indeed, been remembered. And this is undeniably right and proper and, one would hope, wise. But one does wonder if, perhaps, while the event is remembered and commemorated, we may be on the way to forgetting its lessons. Not so much those about preparedness but those about a dangerous world and America's place in it.

Seventy-five years ago, much of the world was at war. In the United States, which was not, there were those who believed that America would be fighting, sooner or later, that this was inevitable, and possibly even desirable, when it came to Nazi Germany. Hitler's objective was world conquest and empire. He had taken out France, which was reputed to have the world's largest and finest army. He had chased British troops off the continent, forcing them to leave most of their equipment behind as they abandoned the beaches of Dunkirk in anything that could make it across the channel. The Royal Air Force had held its own, barely, during the Battle of Britain, and an invasion of the British Isles seemed, for the moment, unlikely—the Germans were tied up in Russia, where they had advanced to within sight of the spires of Moscow before winter and counterattacks by troops rushed in from Siberia had stopped them. Still, the prospects for defeating Germany were uncertain, bordering on bleak, especially if the United States remained out of the fight. And a world ruled by Germany and Hitler was insupportable.

The United States was assisting the British. "Short of war," some might insist, but not very short. The U.S. Navy was engaged, clandestinely, in the fight against German U-boats in the Atlantic. And the Roosevelt administration was resupplying the British through the Lend-Lease Act and such measures as the exchange of 50 obsolete destroyers for a lease on bases in Newfoundland and the Caribbean. Still …

In 1939, the United States had fielded only the 17th-largest army in the world. A draft was not instituted till 1940; it was still a controversial issue a year later when a vote on extending the duration of service passed the House of Representatives by a single vote. There was no shame in those days in calling oneself an isolationist. The slogan "America First" was delivered with pride and confidence by, among others, the most celebrated American folk hero of the century: Charles Lindbergh. Among other notables in the America First movement were Walt Disney, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Sinclair Lewis. John F. Kennedy, son of

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the U.S. ambassador in London and a student at the time, made a $100 contribution by check, with a note that read, "What you are all doing is vital."

The nation's identity and fate were in play. Would America be of the world—and at war—or remain somehow apart from it? It was still possible, then, to believe a kind of honorable isolationism could be achieved. No airplane of that era could easily reach the United States from Europe. No invading army could cross the oceans on the nation's eastern and western flanks. "Fortress America," as the America Firsters would have it, was a plausible idea. The country had gotten involved in the last great European war and that hadn't worked out so well. Over 100,000 Americans dead and for what? Twenty years after the "war to end all wars" and they were at it again, across the Atlantic. Better, this time, to stay out and let them fight it out among themselves.

Then, in a few hours on a Sunday morning, Fortress America perished as a plausible idea and in time gave way to Pax Americana. This conception (as Lincoln might have called it) has lasted for 75 years, and yet it seems suddenly tentative and perishable. An age that began with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor appears to be coming to an end.

It was still possible, before the attack, to believe a kind of honorable isolationism could be achieved. The country had gotten involved in the last great European war and that hadn't worked out so well. Over 100,000 Americans dead and for what?

The Japanese air raid on Pearl Harbor, those 75 years ago, was a military masterpiece and a paradox of history. It was a victory that ruined the nation that won it. The Japanese never recovered from their famous attack. Less than four years later, Japan's cities had been, most of them, burned out and smashed into rubble, two of them by atomic bombs. In time, Japan rebuilt and became a greater economic power than it had been before the war. But the spirit of empire was gone.

This was the essence of the Pearl Harbor attack: that in launching it, Japan was not merely taking a risk—all military operations involve some risk—but engaging in a gamble with the highest possible stakes and against the longest odds.

No surprise, then, that the man who conceived the operation and planned its execution was a gambler. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto liked to play cards and would stay up all night for the pleasure of taking other men's money at poker. It was his passion.

He also knew and understood America, having lived there for several years when he served as senior naval attaché at the embassy in Washington. He had studied at Harvard and traveled the country. He had been deeply impressed by the industrial might and dynamism and the vast resources—especially petroleum—of the United States, and he entertained none of the illusions, common among his more provincial contemporaries, that Americans were soft and would be a pushover in a fight—one that Yamamoto's superiors decided was inevitable.

Japan had designs on empire. It had armies in China, where it was a fearsome invader and occupier and had shocked the world with the brutality and carnage of the Rape of Nanking. With the fall of France, it had moved to occupy that nation's former colonial holdings in Indochina. The German victories in Europe had also made Dutch and British colonial holdings in that part of the world vulnerable, and a Japanese empire—the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere—seemed within Tokyo's grasp.

But there was an obstacle. Namely, the United States of America, which was appalled morally by the atrocities of Japanese occupiers and more prosaically and pragmatically by the geopolitical implications of an expanding Japanese empire, by whatever name, in the Pacific.

So the Roosevelt administration took steps short of war. These were of the sort we would now call "economic sanctions" and "military deterrents." American battleships changed their home ports from the western coast of the United States mainland to Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands, some 2,500 miles closer to Japan. The United States also transferred long-range bombers to the Philippines and, crucially, imposed embargoes on the sale to Japan of steel, scrap iron, and, above all, petroleum—of which the United States was then the world's major producer. Without these resources, Japan could not achieve its territorial ambitions or even hold on to what it had already seized and occupied. It was an island nation, resource poor and import dependent.

It was also very proud and contemptuous of what it considered the "softness" of the United States. If the Germans believed they were the master race, they hadn't settled the issue with their Japanese allies, who held similar views and believed themselves warriors in the mold of the samurai: willing—no, eager—to fight to the death and against any odds.

What the Americans saw as deterrents, the Japanese considered ultimatums. And to give in was unthinkable. The sanctions and the deterrents became, in their eyes, provocations. As the British military historian B.H. Liddell Hart wrote, "No Government, least of all the Japanese,

could be expected to swallow such humiliating conditions, and utter loss of face."

The oil and other raw materials the Japanese needed to sustain their empire could be found in the rich European colonies in the southwest Pacific. But the lines of communication between those lands and the home islands would be exposed to the U.S. fleet in Hawaii and other military assets in the Philippines.

Both nations expected that if the Japanese did move, there would be war. There would, most likely, be a great naval battle in the blue water somewhere west of Hawaii. Lines of battleships firing their great guns at each other from ranges of more than 20 miles. Both navies planned accordingly. Until 1941.

That was when the responsibility for victory at sea became Yamamoto's. His study of the problem yielded several insights, the most important of which was that such a deep water battle would be a distraction from the objective of expanding the empire to the southwest. Another was that it would be possible to remove the American fleet from the equation in one bold stroke, after which Japan would have free rein for as long as it took the Americans to rebuild. By that time, Japan could have established a perimeter defense of fortified island positions from behind which it would defend the empire until the Americans tired and negotiated some kind of settlement.

Yamamoto himself didn't really believe the Americans would tire of the war. Especially not if their fury had been aroused by a surprise attack and a serious defeat. He argued:

> It is obvious that a Japanese-American war will become a protracted one. As long as the tides of war are in our favor, the United States will never stop fighting. As a consequence, the war will continue for several years, during which [our] material [resources] will be exhausted, vessels and arms will be damaged, and they can be replaced only with great difficulties. Ultimately we will not be able to contend with [the United States]. As a result of war the people's livelihood will become indigent . . . and it is hard not to imagine [that] the situation will become out of control. We must not start a war with so little chance of success.

But his superiors were intent on war, and it was his duty to give his country—and his emperor—the best possible chance. That, he believed, would come with a devastating surprise attack on the U.S. fleet in Hawaii, a blow that would free Japan to expand and conquer; then to fortify and hold.

Which all sounds very persuasive in theory, but there were formidable, real-world challenges. There was, of course, only one way to take out the battleships at Pearl Harbor by surprise and that would be by an air attack. And the distances involved meant the planes would need to be flown off aircraft carriers.

Naval aviation was new. The Americans had carriers, as did the British, who had used them to launch a successful surprise attack on the Italian fleet at Taranto. But the Japanese had the better carriers, and more of them—10 in all, to the Americans' 7, which had to be divided between two oceans. The Japanese carrier-launched planes were also the best, especially the fighter that was called the "Zero" by the Americans. It could outfight anything the Americans could put in the air. Japanese bombers and torpedo planes were also first rate.

The USS Shaw *explodes after being hit.*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Japanese carrier pilots were, if anything, overtrained. They were an elite, and the standards were so demanding that in the early days of the war few men qualified and replacing losses was a long and difficult business.

In both the Japanese and U.S. navies, there was intense debate over the role of carriers. Traditionalists argued that carrier aviation was necessary and useful for scouting and for raids but that mastery of the sea still depended upon the battleship. Things would be decided in actions between "ships of the line," steaming in column and firing at each other with increasingly large and accurate guns. Senior admirals of both nations believed in this doctrine as fervently as monks believe in the Mass, and they expected that showdown somewhere west of Hawaii to settle things.

Advocates of naval airpower believed the airplane had made the battleship vulnerable and would soon render it obsolete. Carriers could launch their planes against a line of

battleships from a distance of 200 miles, 10 times the range of the big guns. And those planes could drop torpedoes that would hit battleships below the waterline, blowing holes in their armor and sinking them where the depth of the water would make salvage impossible.

For Yamamoto, there was no debate at all. If he wanted to attack the U.S. fleet while it was at Pearl Harbor, then it would have to be done from the air, and this meant carriers. Six of them.

It also meant planning and training and solving problems like the one presented by torpedoes that went deeper than 45 feet below the waves when dropped from an airplane. At such a depth, torpedoes would bury themselves in the bottom mud of Pearl Harbor. So the Japanese designed a torpedo that would not dive so deep when launched and then successfully tested it. The pilots trained with those torpedoes and with armor-piercing bombs that were to be used where battleships were moored in pairs and torpedoes could only be used against the outermost ship. They worked on formation flying. On target identification. On all the skills that go with combat aviation. By late November 1941, as negotiations between Japan and the United States were breaking down and war looked increasingly likely, they were ready.

General MacArthur was surprised by Japanese air attacks in the Philippines just hours after Pearl Harbor. Then he was surprised, again, a few years later, in Korea. Then there was Tet, which changed the Vietnam war. And, of course, September 11. Being surprised, you might say, is the human condition.

On November 26, 1941, six carriers, accompanied by escorts and tankers, weighed anchor. They had almost 4,000 miles of the Pacific Ocean to cross before they launched, and it was essential that they do this undetected. They refueled underway without incident, even in high seas. The formation broke up and ships dispersed during storms, but they were able to reassemble the formations using only very short-range radio signals. American intelligence, listening to dummy transmissions from the home islands, believed all the Japanese carriers were still in their home ports.

The Americans were not oblivious to the threat of war. Not in Washington and certainly not in Hawaii, where the following message had been received a few days before the attack:

> Japanese future action unpredictable but hostile action possible at any moment. If hostilities cannot, repeat cannot, be avoided the United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act. This policy should not, repeat not, be construed as restricting you to a course of action that might jeopardize your defense. Prior to hostile Japanese action you are directed to undertake such reconnaissance and other measures as you deem necessary but these measures should be carried out so as not, repeat not, to alarm civil population or disclose intent. Report measures taken.

So an attack was expected. But there was no certainty as to when or where. The general sense was that it would fall somewhere in the southwestern Pacific. And perhaps on the Philippines. An attack on Pearl Harbor? Too audacious and too difficult, especially for the Japanese. Americans were, until that Sunday morning, as confident of their superiority as the Japanese were of theirs. It was partly racial, of course. That, mixed with hubris.

So the Japanese fleet reached a point 200 miles north of Hawaii, and at dawn on December 7 the carriers launched their aircraft. There was still time, and there were still opportunities. In the history of war, surprise is never perfect. The Japanese had come up with a plan for attacking the ships in Pearl Harbor with miniature submarines at the same time the carrier planes were dropping their bombs and torpedoes. Compared with the massive and elaborately planned air attack, it was a crackpot scheme. One of the subs was detected and destroyed outside the harbor before the first planes arrived, but this did not set off sufficient alarms.

Then there was the radar station on the north end of Oahu where two young operators detected a large flight of incoming aircraft. They reported this to an officer who wrote it off as the expected arrival of a flight of B-17s from California. This, though the planes were coming from the wrong direction.

The literature of Pearl Harbor—and it is vast—is shot through with a feeling of inevitability. In spite of the warnings, in spite of the sighting and sinking of a hostile submarine, in spite of radar detecting the incoming planes . . . in spite of everything, the attack was going to accomplish its objective. Those torpedoes would find the battleships *California*, *Oklahoma*, and *West Virginia*, among others. The battleships had not deployed their torpedo nets, which operated something like chain fences to detonate warheads before they reached the ships' hulls. The decision not to deploy the nets was made not out of carelessness or laziness but as a small gesture to readiness. In the event of an attack, it would take time to secure the nets, and since the harbor was thought too shallow for aerial torpedoes to deploy, there was no risk in buying those extra

few minutes to get the battleships underway and out of the confined waters of the harbor.

The torpedoes did, of course, deploy and the *West Virginia* sank with men trapped inside the thick hull where it was impossible to get to them. They would live and signal, desperately, for rescue for more than two weeks. Men on duty nearby would cover their ears to shut out the pitiful sounds of their tapping against the thick steel.

An armor-piercing bomb would find the *Arizona* and detonate the ship's magazine. The *Arizona* would blow up. It is still there, in the mud of Pearl Harbor, and when you stand on the memorial that is built over its gutted hull, you can see thin ribbons of fuel oil from its bunkers leaking onto the surface of the water.

The attack lasted for two hours. More than 2,400 Americans were killed. The Japanese lost fewer than 30 of their attacking airplanes. The carriers returned to Japan in glory and then ran wild in the southwestern Pacific for months, even making it into the Indian Ocean where they sank a Royal Navy carrier and several of its escorts. They had accomplished the greatest feat in carrier aviation to that point in history—and a successful surprise attack to rank with Hannibal's victory at Lake Trasimene or the destruction of the Roman legions in the Teutoburg Forest. Or, in the American experience, Washington's attack on Trenton or Stonewall Jackson's flank march at Chancellorsville. The measure of just how surprised the Americans were by the Japanese attack can be found in the famous radio transmission: "Air raid on Pearl Harbor. This is no drill." The second sentence says it all.

As with most of the other great and victorious surprise attacks, the audacity of the effort was crucial to its success. The thing might not have been done—or even tried—had it seemed likely or plausible. Send a fleet of ships across 4,000 miles of open ocean and have it arrive undetected within range of its objective and then launch hundreds of aircraft—well, what are the odds?

Much study was done to understand and diagnose the "failures" of intelligence that led to the catastrophe at Pearl Harbor. They arrived at many worthwhile conclusions (generally speaking, there is far too much "intelligence" to know what to make of it all). Needless to say, the United States has been surprised again. And again.

General Douglas MacArthur was surprised by Japanese air attacks in the Philippines just hours after Pearl Harbor. Then he was surprised, again, a few years later, in Korea. Then there was Tet, which changed the Vietnam war. And, of course, September 11. Being surprised, you might say, is the human condition.

The success of the Japanese attack was undeniable and ephemeral. A mere six months later, four of the carriers that had participated in the attack were sunk by U.S. Navy dive bombers in the Battle of Midway. From then on, Japan was on the defensive, right up until the surrender in Tokyo Bay. One of the U.S. ships present that day was a resurrected and repaired USS *West Virginia*.

But the attack changed the world as nothing since the collapse of the Roman Empire. It brought the United States into the war. But only, in the immediate aftermath, against Japan. Then, on December 11, Hitler declared war on the United States. He and Germany, like Japan, were flattened. Then came the Cold War and then, with the fall of the Soviet Union some 50 years later, the Pax Americana, the high point of which might have been the defeat of Iraq in 1991, by the coalition assembled by President George H. W. Bush. This was "the new world order."

Smoke during the attack rises from Hickam Field, a nearby air base.

NEWSCOM

And now, 25 years later—75 years after the Japanese planes hit Pearl Harbor—there is talk once more, by a man about to be inaugurated president of the United States, of "America First."

The visit, by the prime minister of Japan, to Pearl Harbor will be a nice photo op and an opportunity for "healing," though one wonders just how many people still feel wounded enough to require it.

But if the old hatreds (and Americans did indeed hate the people that all of them, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt, called the "Japs") are mostly gone, there won't be any shortage of new ones. And if Pearl Harbor is studied and remembered, there won't be any end to nasty surprises. Not in this world. ♦

The CIA, Post-Obama

What we don't know can hurt us

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

When the new casts out the old, an incoming administration has the opportunity to review its predecessor's approach to the Central Intelligence Agency. When this is done, the focus is usually on the ethics of Langley and politically disturbing covert action. The Obama administration was prototypical in this regard: In conjunction with Democrats on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the president went after the most controversial parts of his predecessor's war on al Qaeda. He accused George W. Bush of condoning torture and the CIA of devising the means required. The Senate committee staff released a scathing review of Langley's post-9/11 detention and enhanced interrogation program (while largely ignoring the question of whether senior Democrats in Congress had known of and approved the unconventional methods).

John Brennan

Democrats also went after the Bush administration's use of rendition. Its application under Bill Clinton, who started transferring real or suspected Islamic terrorists into harsh allied hands, and Barack Obama received much less attention. News stories about the unpleasant practice under Democrats were inevitably thin, revealing the political preferences of the leakers. Some Democratic officials even suggested that the CIA under Clinton and Obama had exercised a virtuous version of rendition: Agency operatives overseas ensured that air-lifted radicals weren't abused in countries where street thieves, let alone jihadists, are routinely beaten.

Obama and like-minded Democrats wanted to shame the CIA publicly, to ensure its personnel would never again use severe methods. They will undoubtedly prove successful—unless another Islamic terrorist attack inside the United States results in the slaughter of thousands. If this were to occur, anger, patriotism, and a bipartisan desire to protect one's own could well see CIA officers again on the cutting edge, doing things that most of Washington today would prefer take place, with deniability, out of sight in Egypt or Jordan.

Unless Donald Trump is serious about pushing the CIA back into enhanced interrogation—and the odds are high that the incoming director, Republican congressman Mike Pompeo, will just do what his predecessor and the Pentagon did when confronted with the interrogation/incarceration/trial conundrum as regards Islamic terrorists (kill them with drones or put them into foreign prisons)—Pompeo will not have to deal with the agonizing morality play that Obama's CIA director John Brennan has faced since he moved into Langley in 2013. I can sympathize with Brennan. According to two former senior CIA officers involved with detention and enhanced interrogation, Brennan, an analyst who rose through the agency often doing jobs traditionally assigned to case officers, never once expressed reservations when the program was being designed and implemented. But as director, Brennan had to keep in tune with the president, if not the Democrats of the Senate Select Committee, some of whom gave the impression they wouldn't mind seeing CIA officers prosecuted. He also had to work with senior operatives who knew him well and didn't esteem his quick evolution on "torture."

Since the 1970s, case officers, who collect human intelligence and run covert action, have generally viewed Republicans as more fun, Democrats as more tormenting. Analysts tend to be more politically conventional: A big majority of the personnel in the Directorate of Intelligence is probably Democratic. But neither the open nor closed side of the house appreciates outsiders questioning the institution's basic competence in intelligence collection and analysis. Democrats and Republicans have rarely done so, though Republicans have occasionally been meaner in their queries about fundamentals since they aren't as morally disturbed and distracted by the CIA's presidentially mandated sojourns into controversial covert actions. It's hard to think of Democratic equivalents to Republican intel staffers like Angelo Codevilla, a serious intellectual

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whose 1992 book *Informing Statecraft* is a devastating critique of the CIA's inadequacies, and Taylor Lawrence, a Senate staff director in the late 1990s with a Ph.D. from Stanford who questioned the bang-versus-buck performance of the CIA and the National Security Agency.

The bipartisan aversion to questioning the CIA's espionage and analytical performance has held the high ground in Congress and the White House since 9/11. Obama was no different from Bush. So far as I can tell, based on conversations with several former and active-duty CIA officials, no one has systematically red-teamed the Directorate of Operations about its work against America's most important intelligence targets since 9/11. Does the clandestine service achieve an acceptable minimum in its efforts opposing our primary foes?


Mike Pompeo

Director Pompeo will presumably learn that Brennan's boast that American intelligence is capable of detecting Iranian nuclear malfeasance isn't bankable—and that this situation will become much worse.

In the past, this question was sometimes easy to answer. When Langley had a mole in the Soviet avionics industry who supplied the United States with the blueprints on everything Moscow could put into the air, obviously the CIA was worth its budget even if the agency's only real achievement was securely running this asset behind enemy lines.

All the big issues surrounding the CIA—about the basic competencies of how it does its work operationally and analytically—are difficult for outsiders to assess, of course, even the more intrepid in the congressional intelligence committees and the executive branch. One operational success—the right "walk-in" or volunteer in just the right place—can paper over the doubts, which, in any case, tend to evanesce quickly behind the protective barrier of classified information. Were the CIA's routine Cold War operations, for the most part, so much busy work? Has the vast majority of Langley's classified analytical products been less insightful than the unclassified work of Washington's better think tanks? It didn't *really* matter if the agency could provide, now and then, eye-popping information against our number-one threat.

Counterterrorism has replaced the Soviet Union as Langley's fail-safe *raison d'être*. This is in so many ways an easier target for the operations directorate since the most important work is done through liaison channels. Information supplied by others, not information that Langley obtains by itself through "unilateral" human-intelligence operations, is where its bread is now buttered. CIA-driven drones also help to obscure where Langley collects human-intelligence well and where it's just lethal. Collecting intelligence for a drone strike, which can be data- and intercept-driven, is an entirely different undertaking from recruiting and running agents inside the Islamic State, al Qaeda, the Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

How good the CIA is against the Islamic Republic of Iran, for example, which is certainly the agency's oldest and consistently most threatening and powerful target in the Middle East, has never drawn sustained attention. Iran-contra percolated a bit of outsider curiosity, but again, that attention focused on what congressionally unsanctioned covert action the agency—specifically the director of central intelligence William Casey and his selected officers—was taking. Whether Casey's minions were actually gathering good intelligence inside Iran and whether their analysis about "moderates" within the regime was correct were never particularly compelling issues for angry outsiders looking in.

But the agency's Iran competence ought to gain more attention now that the clerical regime is driving most of the big issues of the Middle East, which President Trump will no more escape than his anti-interventionist predecessor did: Iran's ongoing nuclear and ballistic-missile programs; sectarian war, which was the major catalyst in the rise of the Islamic State; the accelerating clash between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic; the god-awful slaughter in Syria, which is being run on the ground by the clerical regime's Revolutionary Guards; and the growth of Shiite expeditionary militias, which the Revolutionary Guards and their first-born foreign children, the Lebanese Hezbollah, are creating and training. It's not just Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian president Vladimir Putin who provoke and control Europe's refugee waves coming from Syria and Iraq; the clerical regime and its foot-soldiers are equally disruptive.

I have discussed before in these pages (see "How Will We Know? The coming Iran intelligence failure," July 27, 2015) how weak the CIA intelligence-collecting network likely is inside Iran, especially against the clerical regime's nuclear program. What has transpired since the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was concluded last summer has

done little to assuage the concern that Washington—chiefly the CIA—lacks the capacity to properly detect Iranian nuclear research that doesn't take place inside the facilities monitored by the United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency. The "self-inspection" of the Parchin Revolutionary Guard base, where the IAEA and the American intelligence community know the clerical regime once worked on nuclear weaponization, really should have made serious people in Washington—especially Director Brennan—laugh. The amusement appeared to be strictly partisan: Serious foreign-policy Democrats largely remained

An Iranian missile is displayed next to a portrait of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran, September 25.

VAHID SALEMI / AP

silent, hanging with party orthodoxy to cast no doubt on President Obama's nuclear diplomacy.

The weaknesses of the nuclear deal will only become more manifest with time, as we count down the agreement's sunset clauses. The Iranian ballistic-missile program, which is unconstrained by the JCPOA and unintimidated by U.N. Security Council sanctions, continues to advance as European money gradually returns to Iran and the Islamic Republic's aggressive, hegemonic behavior in Syria and Iraq moves forward. If President-elect Trump decides to keep the accord, he may want to review the intelligence procedures that the Obama administration put into place to monitor Iranian activity *outside* the JCPOA.

Are there even any such procedures? Pompeo, who has been a trenchant critic of the nuclear agreement, also might want to know how extensive is the CIA's reporting network inside the Islamic Republic. If President Trump is determined to be more demanding than Obama on the nuclear question, if he intends to stop the development of Iranian intercontinental ballistic missiles and counter the mullahs' nefarious nonnuclear activity, then it's obvious that the United States would benefit from having a CIA capable of running a wide variety of assets into the Islamic Republic and Iranian-held and Iranian-friendly territory in the Middle East. A new director free from the categorical imperative to preserve the nuclear deal would want to know if Langley actually has valuable agents inside the country—within the clergy, the Revolutionary Guards, the internal-security Basij forces, the military, the business community, the oil industry, and the nuclear program. He might want to look at CIA intelligence reports on the Islamic Republic over the last year and tie them back to their sources. This is detailed work, but through such details comes illumination. Not just on Iran but about how the entire agency really works. What is true about unilateral CIA operations against the Iranian target—its successes and failures—is likely true of unilateral CIA operations against al Qaeda. Mutatis mutandis, it is also probably true for CIA operations against Russian and Chinese targets.

Director Pompeo may discover the emperor wears no clothes or at least is clothed poorly. He will presumably learn that Brennan's boast that American intelligence is capable of detecting Iranian nuclear malfeasance isn't bankable and that this situation will become much worse as Iranian financial resources grow, along with the mullahs' willingness to clandestinely challenge Western hubris—the audacity of Americans and Europeans to even think they have the right to check the Islamic Republic's nuclear ambitions. Iranian victories in Syria and Iraq will unquestionably fuel the clerical regime's pride, which will likely translate into greater Iranian willingness to challenge the JCPOA and Trump, assuming the president-elect intends to maintain the agreement.

And with the Islamic Republic, the unexpected does seem to happen at least once a decade: As in 2009, popular anger again might ignite, sending millions onto the streets in open protest against tyranny. The CIA director of a new president less concerned about overcoming "misunderstandings" between the United States and Iran, less animated by the guilt of Washington's history with the shah, and less anxious about the exercise of American power might want to be prepared. Although it's hard now to imagine President Trump supporting democratic dissidents in Iran (or elsewhere), strange things sometimes happen in foreign policy. The Middle East is a brutal realm of irony.

In any case, the CIA would certainly benefit from having a director who spends time thinking about the nuts and bolts of American intelligence collection and analysis against hard targets. A director who focuses laser-like on just a few problems might push the entire organization globally to do better. Congressman Pompeo already knows that Iran is one of America's most determined foes. Unlike so many in Washington, he doesn't need to be tutored on the fundamentals. Pompeo may also already know that President Trump's handling of the Islamic Republic is bound to tell us how the president will handle the rest of the world. ♦

Trump and Trade

There are worse things than protectionism

By Irwin M. Stelzer

Protectionism, I once said to Irving Kristol, is a bad idea. It benefits producers, but it harms consumers. "Where," he asked, "is it written that the welfare of consumers takes precedence over that of producers?" Reflection required, not a new experience after an encounter with Irving. And in this case reflection produces the notion that protectionism might not be the worst of policies under current circumstances, and certainly not as harmful as Donald Trump's caudillo capitalism.

Trump speaks at a Carrier plant in Indianapolis, December 1.

Advocates of free trade assume that the interests of consumers are indeed paramount, not least because producers are also consumers and, more important, because international specialization of labor undeniably leads to efficiencies in an assumed world in which goods, capital, and labor move freely in response to competitively determined prices for goods, capital, and workers. A world in which, as the late Joseph Schumpeter describes it, free trade breeds "those principles and practices of foreign policy that are associated with free trade, such as the settlement of disputes by mutual concessions or arbitration, reduction of armaments, international gold monometallism, and the like."

While we await such a world, though, we must live in the one we have: where the prices of goods are rarely set in purely competitive markets, the price of capital is determined by central banks, and the price of labor is set in an unequal bargain between the workman/seller of labor and the buyer, especially now that the power of trade unions in industries manufacturing tradable goods is not what it once was. Equally important, it is a world in which politicians in democratic countries cannot long ignore a public sense that the trading system is working to their disadvantage, cheap microwave ovens in Walmart notwithstanding.

We also live in a world in which the greatest engine of material progress in history is sputtering. Market capitalism continues to produce enormous wealth and, where newly introduced, moves billions of people from subsistence to more comfortable lives. But the American variant is coming through a long period of producing very little growth, most especially in the living standard of the middle class, while the incomes and wealth of those at the top of the heap are rising at very rapid rates.

This, it is believed, is due to globalization, or at least to two aspects of it. The first is the efficiencies available to multinational companies in an era of declining transportation and communication costs. This enables skilled managers and financiers to spread their talents over larger and larger enterprises, and to demand compensation commensurate with those expanded responsibilities. That is compounded by the flaws in our corporate governance system—the absence of term limits on board membership produces what Kristol called a "self-perpetuating oligarchy" that wants no CEO to earn less than the average of those in other companies, a problem perpetuated when the CEO monitors himself by also donning the hat of board chairman.

The second feature of globalization contributing to discontent with the way capitalism and free trade distribute benefits is the entry of billions of relatively low-paid workers into the internationalized labor market, toiling in countries for whom free trade is considered a handy label for trade that is often a one-way street. Suddenly, the little old lady sewing T-shirts in a U.S. factory, law-abiding, her carefully scrubbed children sent off to school and church, her taxes paid, finds she can't compete with a $1-per-day laborer in faraway China or nearby Mexico. She is neither work-shy nor one who prefers benefits to an honest wage. She is the collateral damage of globalization and, if truth

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be told, free trade as practiced in today's world. Chinese-made goods that fill the shelves of Walmart, displacing those she once produced, are made in highly subsidized factories, using highly subsidized capital from highly subsidized state banks, and sold at prices made even lower by the manipulation of China's currency. In many cases, the new imports are manufactured under conditions that we in America long found an intolerable imposition on our workers and imposed costly regulations to eliminate. Add to all that the downward effect on the wages of the unskilled resulting from the free movement of people: immigrants, legal and otherwise, compound the domestic misery created for the unskilled by the free movement of goods, at the same time inflating profit margins.

Making industrial policy great again, one Carrier plant at a time

This is the world in which we live, the one in which President-elect Trump will have to attempt to make and execute a trade policy that gives weight to two realities in addition to those already cited. It is a world in which our trading partners' devotion to free trade is somewhat less than our own has been; witness China's 25 percent tariff on imported cars, compared with our 2.5 percent. It is a world in which the Chinese state is among the top 10 shareholders in 39 percent of its listed companies. Equally important, it is a world in which our attempt to preserve free trade is having dangerous effects on popular support for our political/economic system, and on our national security.

The danger to our system arises from one of its strengths—its survival depends on the consent of the governed, which can no longer be taken for granted. It is not only the untutored affluent college students who find socialism attractive and rallied to the banner of an avowed socialist who barely missed taking control of the Democratic party. A large part of the working class is also disaffected; witness its decision to install Trump, who promises to feel their pain and what's more act to relieve it by whatever means necessary. It no longer believes market capitalism produces a result that is fair. Instead, it fears a future graphically described by Wilbur Ross, the nominee to be secretary of commerce and a billionaire who has made his money turning disastrous investments into productive ones: "You can't have much of an economy if people are just flipping hamburgers, trading stocks and suing each other. . . . Are our grandchildren going to dive for coins from cruise ships in the East River?"

As for national security, the current trading system is directing enormous wealth to nations that do not wish us well. By pretending that the market for oil is not dominated by a cartel led by Saudi Arabia, the home of the virulent form of Islam from which ISIS derives its inspiration, we direct billions to the coffers of Islamic radicals. And to a resurgent Iran, whose oil exports soared as soon as it had access to world markets in which it is earning dollars to buy the equipment it needs to fund its lethal anti-American and anti-Israel campaigns. Instead of doing all we can to wean ourselves off imported oil—a tariff would be appropriate in a market dominated by a cartel even absent the noxious nature of the cartel members—we seem to be doing all we can to retard development of domestic resources and access to Canadian oil.

And by insisting that our free-trader credentials would be tarnished by more than an occasional inconsequential complaint to the World Trade Organization about China's trade practices—cheap tires, steel—we contribute to the funds the regime in Beijing needs to modernize its military and expand its reach, while at the same time allowing the unimpeded flow of Chinese goods to convert what once were tax-paying American workers into benefit-reliant ones.

The great Adam Smith saw all this clearly. Yes, we are wealthier than most other nations, including our adversaries. Still, "It is not the actual greatness of national wealth, but its continual increase, which occasions a rise in the wages of labour. . . . Though the wealth of a country should be very great, yet if it has been long stationary, we must not expect to find the wages of labour very high in it." That is only one of the reasons that plans to include a dollop of protectionism in policies aimed at accelerating economic growth are worthy of a serious hearing.

Smith, arguably the founder of free trade, was not one to rely on abstract theory rather than what his own eyes and experience taught him. What to do "when some foreign nation restrains by high duties or prohibitions the importation of some of our manufactures"? "Revenge in this case naturally dictates retaliation" as part of an effort to get the other nation to change course. "The recovery of a great foreign market will generally more than compensate the transitory inconveniency of paying dearer during a short time for some sorts of goods." The ability to achieve such a reversal

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will depend on "the skill of that insidious and crafty animal, vulgarly called a statesman or politician," of which we have an ample supply.

Smith also warned that free trade should not be introduced or reintroduced so suddenly as to result in goods being "poured so fast into the home-market as to deprive all at once many thousands of our people of their ordinary employment." Moreover, when home markets are "suddenly laid open to the competition of foreigners," which threatens to destroy the fixed capital of a manufacturer, "equitable regard . . . to his interest requires that changes of this kind should never be introduced suddenly, but slowly, gradually, and after a very long warning." Creative destruction, but of the long-fused rather than the immediately explosive variety.

All very sensible, all speaking to the necessity of tempering our desire for free trade with a sense of the realities of its consequences. One of these, it must be conceded, would be the disruption of the international supply chains on which companies from Apple to Ford depend. Such a disruption would almost certainly drive up the cost of American products, at least in the short- and medium-terms and possibly indefinitely. Which, to honest supporters of a new world trading order, is irrelevant. They know that they must sacrifice some efficiency for greater perceived equity, a position to which some conservatives, interested in modifying our market system in order to conserve it, are reluctantly coming around.

More worrying than rising protectionism is Trump's attempt to replace the current trading system with what can only be called caudillo capitalism. Protectionism operates within established institutions and procedures. In many cases, congressional action is required. Dumping cases that are brought to the World Trade Organization are resolved, imperfectly to be sure, by a weighing of the evidence. In short, the rule of law prevails, not always with sensible results, but without the grave dangers posed by Trump's replacement of the presidential pen with the president-elect's telephone or tweets.

This is not the place to argue whether Trump's apparent triumph over the Carrier Corporation is quite as advertised; whether the $7 million bribe, the promise of a relaxation of certain regulations and tax burdens, and the implied removal of a threat to treat Carrier's bids for government business with disfavor were prices worth paying for 800 jobs. But it is the place to point out that when the CEO of the United States tells the CEOs of America's corporations how to run their trading and international businesses, corruption will be on a Clintonian scale. Foreign diplomats and corporate executives seeking Carrier-type deals are already saying they will stay at Trump's new hotel when visiting Washington, presumably not just because it is in easy walking distance to the White House and other government offices. Presidents of other countries in which the Trump clan plans to build hotels or other facilities are unlikely to make it difficult for them to get their deals done, especially if by sheer coincidence trade negotiations are on the agenda. Executives who know that a phone call from the president might throw their capital expenditure and plant location plans into disarray are likely to see to it that their campaign contributions reflect this hard reality, preferably before their phones ring.

Caudillo capitalism would result in a massive misallocation of resources. Rather than seeking the best and most efficient use of capital, tempered by a new realization that equitable treatment of the workforce and some personal restraint on conspicuous consumption is necessary, CEOs will be pandering to an interventionist president—or else.

Worse still, caudillo capitalism would result in a massive misallocation of resources. Rather than seeking the best and most efficient use of capital, tempered by a new realization that equitable treatment of the workforce and some personal restraint on conspicuous consumption is necessary if the system by which they have done so well is to survive, CEOs will be pandering to an interventionist president—or else. Therein lies the basis of Maduro's Venezuela, the Castros' Cuba, Putin's Russia, and other failed economies. Trump would do better not to convert his pressure on Carrier and on Ford into general policy.

He has written, "Deals are my art form. . . . I like making deals, preferably big deals. That's how I get my kicks." Surely successfully renegotiating NAFTA would be a big enough deal and provide a big enough "kick" to make it unnecessary to pick on individual companies. Surely negotiating an end to China's unfair trade practices—going one-on-one with Xi Jinping—is more worthy of his mettle than moving a few thousand jobs from one factory to another. Surely Trump can see that Carrier's decision to "pay" with compliance in order to "play" with the administration is no different from paying the Clinton Foundation in order to "play" with the State Department. Protectionism achieved by established procedures has its place in the Trump scheme of things; caudillo capitalism should not. ♦

Site of the Bataclan massacre, Paris (2015)

Hatred for Thee

In the wake of tragedy, the impulse to forgive. BY STEFAN BECK

"I bear the creature no ill-will," William Hazlitt wrote of a spider in his 1826 essay, "On the Pleasure of Hating."

> [B]ut still I hate the very sight of it. The spirit of malevolence survives the practical exertion of it. We learn to curb our will and keep our overt actions within the bounds of humanity, long before we can subdue our sentiments and imaginations to the same mild tone. We give up the external demonstration, the brute violence, but cannot part with the essence or principle of hostility.

Stefan Beck writes about fiction for the New Criterion *and elsewhere.*

You Will Not Have My Hate
by Antoine Leiris
Penguin, 144 pp., $23

Hazlitt speculated that "without something to hate, we should lose the very spring of thought and action." Antoine Leiris, a Paris journalist, has made a name for himself by attempting to "part with the essence or principle of hostility" in the face of an overwhelmingly good reason not to. When his wife, Hélène Muyal-Leiris, was killed in the 2015 Bataclan theater massacre, he addressed a brief but forceful Facebook message to her murderers. In part: "I will not give you the satisfaction of hating you. That is what you want, but to respond to your hate with anger would be to yield to the same ignorance that made you what you are. You want me to be scared, to see my fellow citizens through suspicious eyes."

Leiris's message has been shared many times; it is now the crux of this brief, heartrending memoir. Leiris's book proceeds from the trauma of learning that Hélène has been killed to the understanding that he must remain strong for his now-motherless 17-month-old son. It is a remarkable

THE WASHINGTON POST / GETTY IMAGES

account, one impossible to weather without tears. When the tears have subsided, however, the reader may find himself pondering some uncomfortable questions.

Is withholding the "satisfaction" of your hatred not, itself, a manifestation of it? Through what philosophical or ethical framework is it "ignorant" to feel anger at those who have done you a grave, deliberate injury? Why has a reverence for unconditional forgiveness survived, like a superstition, into our secular age? Does it really make sense outside of a religious context? Is it honest—or is it just an empty assertion, an apotropaic ritual, a kind of wishful thinking?

Why, in other words, *not* hate?

Consider that among those inspired by Leiris's words, there are without a doubt many people who (to borrow Hazlitt's terms) not only embody the spirit of malevolence but also indulge in the practical exertion of it—enthusiastically so. They see a rarefied moral victory in refusing to hate the Bataclan terrorists but never hesitate to express the vilest opinions of their own neighbors for daring to think or vote the wrong way. In a recent interview with the *Guardian*, Leiris said, "About the journey towards radicalism, I try to understand." It is unusual to see such patience or curiosity extended from one end of the American political spectrum to the other, in either direction.

Hazlitt was right: Human beings love having something to despise. "All that hate's gonna burn you up, kid," says one character to another in 1984's *Red Dawn*. The ready response: "It keeps me warm."

The question isn't whether we can fully subdue our hatred but, rather, when and to what degree we ought to try. One might argue that there is no harm in hating those who kill innocent people. Indeed, hating them, even in the abstract, serves as an affirmation of higher values. This is not a hate that closes the mind or corrodes the soul. It is one that says that these actions are unacceptable to civilized people, to people who, at their best, do understand what love means.

Does hatred of political opponents function in anything like the same fashion? Some would argue that it does. In a *Slate* piece entitled "There's No Such Thing as a Good Trump Voter," Jamelle Bouie addressed Trump's supporters directly, in the fashion of Leiris—and not to tell them that they will not have his hate. "[Y]our frustration at being labeled a racist," Bouie writes, "doesn't justify or mitigate the moral weight of your political choice. . . . To insist Trump's backers are good people is to treat their inner lives with more weight than the actual lives on the line under a Trump administration. . . . [I]t's morally grotesque." Along similar lines, one Charles Gaba tweeted at a *Washington Post* writer: "Not all Trump supporters are racist, but all of them decided that racism isn't a deal-breaker. End of story."

Antoine Leiris

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

In fact, empathy for Trump supporters is in no way incompatible with empathy for those who fear Trump supporters. One is hardly obligated by solidarity with either group to believe the absolute worst about the other. "[A]ll of them decided that racism isn't a deal-breaker," Gaba writes—as though having been told that Trump was racist required all of them to believe it. This is, in essence, a shortcut to hatred: If we can't hate you for what you say you believe, we'll decide what you really believe and hate you for *that*. This is not a behavior that suggests one is devoted to the principles of charity or empathy, let alone the *love* that we hear so much about—in the absence, frankly, of much evidence that it exists at all.

This is not to defend Trump or his supporters from the charge of hatred. Surely they hate "libtards" with as much passion as they are hated by them. Everybody hates. Everyone hates because, as Hazlitt knew, hating is pleasurable. Political hatred is especially pleasurable in the United States, where it may be pursued almost entirely without fear or risk. To imagine that Donald Trump—or Barack Obama—and his jackbooted myrmidons have the potential to do genuine evil is to cast oneself, raging on Twitter or Facebook, as a resistance fighter in a world-historical drama. The reality is less exciting as well as less flattering: Many systems are in place to safeguard our right to vent spleen, and were that not so, many of the most vocal haters would shut up and do nothing.

Seen in this light, our outsize hatreds seem not only childish but also a waste of time, a missed opportunity. Every minute spent fantasizing about improbable nightmare scenarios is one not spent addressing the real, frequently mundane, problems that it's possible to fix. True, trying to give one's political enemies the benefit of the doubt may not sound like much fun at first. Yet grappling with their principles, priorities, blind spots, and flaws is a lot more humane and rewarding than treating them as if they're caricatures of evil. And just think of all the hate you'll have left over for those who really *are* evil. ♦

B&A

It's a Battlefield

A poet's austere rendering of the national drama.

BY JAMES MATTHEW WILSON

Over seven decades, Helen Pinkerton has published a small number of poems admirable for their austere intellectual beauty, such as the newly collected "Metaphysical Song."

First Principle
Being's pure act,
Infinite cause
Of finite fact,
Essential being,
Beyond our sight,
Without which, nothing,
Neither love nor light

Like those of her mentor, Yvor Winters, Pinkerton's lyrics exhibit both philosophical depth and clean, classical lines. She exceeds him in her careful definition of the human condition in terms of its inescapable orientation to the divine "First Principle."

Such qualities show forth in her greatest short poem, an elegy for Winters, set at Stanford, where they both studied and taught literature for many years. The dry and littered landscape of the drought-stricken campus echoes the intellectual decline into which the university has fallen in the years since Winters's death, and the rise of postmodern and Marxist ideologues among the faculty.

Pinkerton compares this desiccated intellectual environment to that of her own student days:

Where I once listened, lonely as these young,
But with some hope beyond what I could see
That meaning might be mastered by my tongue,
Anonymous process now claims them and me.
Perhaps the enterprise of mind is vain;
Where hucksters sell opinions, knowledge fails,
Wit pandering to the market, for gross gain,
Corrupted words, false morals, falser tales.

Standing against the "hucksters" of academic and poetic fashion, in hopes that "meaning might be mastered by [her] tongue," has characterized Pinkerton's work as a poet, literary critic, and historian. She has published few poems, but each of them orders language to truth with a severe discipline. This slender but rich *Collected Poems* brings that life's work to a close and demonstrates that she is not just an important minor poet but a national treasure.

Helen Pinkerton was born in Butte, Montana, in 1927. Her father was a copper miner, killed in an accident when she was just 11. During World War II, she moved with her sister and mother to California, where all worked in a fruit cannery, while Helen applied to Stanford.

She had intended to study journalism, but in her first semester, she took a course with Yvor Winters, and his air of forbidding critical judgment filled her with awe. Her future lay in literature. She began writing poems under his tutelage, and Winters would later praise her as a "master of poetic style." In 1950, she entered the doctoral program at Harvard, writing her dissertation on Herman Melville.

Winters encouraged all his students to read deeply in the Western intellectual tradition, including the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Pinkerton's father was unchurched, her mother notionally Roman Catholic; but when she encountered the metaphysics of Aquinas, especially as explained by the French neo-Thomist Étienne Gilson, Pinkerton returned to her ancestral Catholicism—not out of a sense of filial sentiment, but of intellectual conviction.

In Gilson's books, she learned that Aquinas's philosophy of being demonstrated God as the pure act of existence from whom all things derive and on whose love their existence depends. *The God whose essence is existence grants existence momently*, she writes in "The Return," continuing, God *gives himself / Again in drawing you in* caritas.

Pinkerton soon concluded that she, like most modern persons, was by disposition a "romantic." That is, we seek to remake ourselves and the world in conformity to our own will. We want to be the god of our own world and so become, by definition, an absolute that does not exist; what begins as an ambition to be "all in all" ends as a lust for nothingness.

Gilson and Aquinas exposed this as delusion. Reality is, in fact, God's gift of existence, a good to be accepted with gratitude, not conquered by will. Most of her lyric poems depict the internal struggle between these two positions, between what she calls the "romantic eros" and the existential realism of Aquinas. They have established her as one of the few genuinely metaphysical poets of our century.

Over the years, I have published several articles on Pinkerton, in hopes of bringing her metaphysical lyrics to a wider audience. I see now, however, that I have given short shrift to what may be her most lasting contribution to American letters, her five dramatic monologues in blank verse on the subject of the Civil War. These, I believe, will become classics: miniature epics that, like Virgil's *Aeneid*, draw public history and private tragedy into a poetic whole.

The monologues trace their source

A Journey of the Mind
Collected Poems of Helen Pinkerton, 1945-2016
Wiseblood, 140 pp., $16

James Matthew Wilson teaches at Villanova. His latest book is The Fortunes of Poetry.

to her lifelong study of Melville. She discovered, in the background of the novelist's work, the moral and political questions percolating through the antebellum debate over slavery. Although zealots—abolitionists and "fire eaters"—sought to reduce politics to simple ideology, the greatest men of the age saw that they must steer between evils for the good of the country—often at tragic cost.

Melville's collection of poems about the war, *Battle-Pieces* (1866), awakened her to the Civil War's tragic moral complexity. There, she found a man committed to the Unionist cause who nonetheless admired the honor and courage of the Confederate Army. Pinkerton's poems continue that tradition, retelling the story of Lemuel Shaw, Melville's father-in-law, the Massachusetts judge who opposed slavery but enforced the Fugitive Slave Act in hopes of preserving the Union. She personifies Melville himself, writing to an English correspondent about the meaning of the war, as well as the Confederate general Richard Taylor, writing in old age to Henry Adams about what combatants on both sides learned from battle: "The war's meaning was not its politics," he insists. "It was their confrontation with the timeless," their learning how to die for a "love beyond themselves."

Two other poems spoken by Mary Custis Lee and Margaret Preston also explore the stoic Christian faith that sometimes overcame and sometimes gave way to a war in which (as Robert E. Lee wrote) "All must suffer." These are poems that bring the moral and intellectual drama of the Civil War to life by insisting that the obvious right of the abolitionist cause must not blot out the practical wisdom of those seeking to preserve the Union from war. This, in turn, must not lead us to ignore the piety, self-denial, and martial heroism found among the great figures of the Confederacy.

Melville feared that the wounds of the war would never be healed unless the virtues of North and South could both be commemorated as treasures of one nation. This is not, of course, a popular position in our own day; but Pinkerton writes with the historian's sense of duty to the fullness of the past, the Christian philosopher's concern for the permanent, and the poet's eye for the dramatic and significant detail, challenging us to see our national story whole.

Her lyrics challenged us, first, to perceive and embrace the divine gift of being. But in this age of bitter divisions among the American polity, she challenges us above all in her narratives of the Civil War. There we see that amid what Richard Taylor calls the "foul and rotten Vanity Fair" of democratic life are always to be found tragic heroes who lend to our history instances of nobility, courage, and valor. ♦

B&A

Canary in the Union

Unlearned lessons from the Greek financial crisis.

BY JOHN PSAROPOULOS

In Defence of Europe
Can the European Project Be Saved?
by Loukas Tsoukalis
Oxford, 280 pp., $30

There is hardly a member of the European Union whose past is not more prosperous, secure, expansive, and influential than its present. During every age of European civilization, someone has held the upper hand, and lost it. Perhaps thanks to the maturity that comes of rising and falling, this neighborhood of high pedigrees and inflated egos managed, after its last great conflagration, to settle into the idea of sharing its croquet lawns. That idea is suddenly in retreat. Was the European Union a passing whim?

In Defence of Europe is a work of controlled anger from a disappointed European. Loukas Tsoukalis, who chairs a pro-EU think tank in Athens, argues that the eurozone's sovereign debt and refugee crises exposed design weaknesses, creating winners and losers. He writes from Europe's periphery, the ultimate loser, bringing forth incontrovertible economic data that back up a stinging indictment of the north, especially Germany. "Democracy is not a given, nor is peace," he ominously warns three pages before the end.

Tsoukalis focuses on the European Monetary Union as an inequality machine: "EMU did not succeed in providing the fillip for growth and productivity that many people had hoped for," he says, because assumption that it would encourage everyone to enjoy Germany's high trade surpluses proved wrong. When they adopted the euro, member-states had diverging levels of competitiveness. In the decade preceding the financial crisis of 2008, "unit labour costs in Ireland rose by 46 percent in relation to Germany. The corresponding figures were 33 percent for Greece and 24 percent for Portugal," he adds. Exchange rate fluctuations among EU members had made up for much of the competitiveness gap by lowering the cost of exports. By nailing everyone to a fixed currency, the euro amplified Germany's essential competitiveness, but made it much more difficult for less competitive economies to export goods and services.

Nor is it only the periphery that suffers from currency overvaluation. In a recent interview, Marine Le Pen called the euro "a suit that fits only Germany." She would ditch the common currency for the same reason that Greek leavers

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Anti-European Union demonstration, Thessaloniki (2015)

GIANNIS PAPANIKOS / AP

would: "The IMF has just said that the euro was overvalued by 6 percent in France and undervalued by 15 percent in Germany. That's a gap of 21 percentage points with our main competitor in Europe." If she wins the French presidential election next spring—an antiestablishment vote that seems all the more possible after Donald Trump's success—Le Pen plans to re-create the "currency snake" of 1972, a band of exchange rates 4.5 percentage points wide, within which EU members had some room for devaluation.

When financial markets collapsed eight years ago, they started pricing risk into sovereign bond purchases, and Greece, with its high deficits and debt, was soon unable to borrow. It asked its eurozone partners to set up a distress fund. Greece got its sovereign loan on what Tsoukalis describes as "punitive and economically unrealistic" terms. As government cut costs, it created a deepening recession. Greeks began to talk of a deliberate deconstruction of their economy as part of a northern European plot to reduce them to a cheap worker class and to buy up their companies.

This dubious narrative had its northern counterpart. Germans talked of how the fiscal profligacy of the EU periphery threatened hard-won German budget surpluses should the EU allow the wealthy states to subsidize the less-well-off, as in the American economy. But with the exception of Greece, none of the sovereign debt crises that followed—Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Cyprus—was due to overspending, says Tsoukalis: They were caused by private debt bubbles leading to bank bailouts. Still, the fiscal profligacy narrative enabled German politicians to claim credit for German economic success as a product of political virtue and blame the periphery for its woes and justify the austerity imposed on it.

There was, however, a more ominous financial reason for austerity. Northern European banks, grown fat on the savings of workers in strong economies, had financed a borrowed prosperity in the periphery and were now in danger of going under should the periphery have trouble honoring its bonds. Tsoukalis puts a precise price tag on this: In the third quarter of 2009, "total claims of French and German banks on the countries of southern Europe plus Ireland had reached astronomical figures: US$824 billion for the French banks and US$733 billion for German banks."

Europeans on the periphery have long held that eurozone bailouts were entirely selfish: not to bridge the wealth gap, but to save northern banks and the euro. Again, Tsoukalis tells it by the numbers:

> Approximately 70 percent of the total financial assistance provided to Greece . . . has been spent on servicing, repaying, and restructuring old debts, and another 20 percent has been spent on the recapitalization of banks following sovereign debt restructuring. . . . Politicians [in Germany] have never dared to tell their citizens the bitter truth, namely that the money they lent to other countries in the eurozone was also money to save their own banks and some of it at least may never be paid back.

Had even this been done in a burden-sharing fashion—with, say, part of the periphery's debt being mutualized through a eurobond, or by forcing creditors to accept at least some responsibility for their lending decisions—the political consequences of bailouts might have been less poisonous, and European unity might have been preserved. But the Germans, Dutch, Finns, Danes, and Belgians, with trade and budget surpluses, did it with an authoritarian, punitive, and morally superior tone, partly as an example to others. Never before had European relationships been defined by the raw power of money.

In this process, financially strong countries destroyed the consensus politics traditional to the European Union and took control of what were purportedly councils of equals. At one point, Tsoukalis momentarily drops his academic sangfroid to ask, "Is [austerity] a fiscal virtue in legal clothes or a kind of policy straitjacket

in a European system that is turning into a madhouse?"

It is a maxim that Europe has lurched forward during crises, but Tsoukalis believes that the eurozone crisis ultimately weakened European institutions because they came across as uncaring about people: "The losers turned to the nation-state for protection, because they had nowhere else to turn. Europe did not offer any kind of protection." Thus, the EU came to be seen by many Europeans purely as the instrument of capital and "an integral part of the globalization process in an era of neoliberalism."

European institutions were also weakened by legal sleight-of-hand, says Tsoukalis. Europe's fiscal rules expressly forbid government bailouts, so the institutions created to offer them operate outside EU law.

Finally, bailouts came off as a German *diktat* to national parliaments, which are still the bedrock of European democracy. Austerity bills hundreds (and in some cases, thousands) of pages long had to be considered in periods as short as 24 hours. Lawmakers were, in each instance, told by German and EU officials that failure to pass a bill would result in emergency loans being stopped and national bankruptcy. The key question in Europe has become: "How much economic sovereignty (or democracy) can you afford, if you are bankrupt?"

Loukas Tsoukalis's consternation-by-numbers supports the periphery's dim view of European economic policy with data and argumentation. In effect, he tells the losers of Europe that they are right to be angry, and why. This is a dense work, but the student and observer of Europe will find it an invaluable resource.

In retrospect, Germany's comportment in Europe—forcing acquiescence by others to divisive and often questionable policies—goes back to German reunification. At the European Community Summit of December 1991, Germany muscled through recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, which had declared their independence, ignoring warnings that this would prompt the breakup of Yugoslavia, which it did. After an eight-year civil war (which Europe did nothing to stop), Germany participated in the NATO-led bombardment of Serbia and Kosovo—its first military action abroad since the end of World War II. Germany's Yugoslavia policy marked the first manifestation of her new persona: more assertive and prepared to take a leading role in Europe—but in the national, rather than the collective European, interest.

Now, Germany, along with other creditor countries in Europe, has hijacked European economic policy with her national priorities.

These days, it is tempting to think of the EU as divided along cultural lines. Germany can put herself at the heart of a resurgent Holy Roman Empire consisting of her supply-chain countries and Teutonic affiliates. It is a standard-of-living union, fundamentally different in outlook from countries like Italy, France, Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Portugal, and Malta, which, thanks to good climate and rich history, can claim only a quality-of-life union. If the European Union is to have force on the world stage as a political entity, fiscal union, greater redistribution of wealth, a defense and foreign policy, and a constitution must be on its agenda, to obscure these fault lines. Both the self-proclaimed federalists and the separatists are pulling in opposite directions. ♦

B&A

On Their Feet

How the dance world deals with the politics of succession. **BY CHRISTOPHER ATAMIAN**

New York

Corporations, nation-states, and empires aren't the only social organizations that must confront the ever-vexing problem of succession. Contemporary dance companies in America face many practical problems, including issues as diverse as audience-building in a world of three-day runs, a conspicuous lack of Government funding, and a new digital media atmosphere in which they have a difficult time competing. But perhaps no other issue presents a more perplexing conundrum as what happens when the founder of an established company dies.

In the past several decades, in particular, contemporary dance has lost some of its giants: Martha Graham, José Limón, Merce Cunningham, and Pina Bausch are among the most prominent. Many of the members of the Judson Dance Movement, once avant garde, are now getting older after developing much of the experimental dance of the '60s and '70s. Add to this the AIDS crisis that claimed the young lives of talents such as Alvin Ailey, Robert Joffrey, and Ulysses Dove, and you have quite a situation on your hands.

Should companies continue to perform at all under new artistic directors? And if so, should they only perform repertoire or should they commission new works in the spirit of the predeceased? If not, should work commissioned carry on the technique of the founder or just the spirit of the work?

Historically, contemporary dance—more independent and originally considered "renegade"—seemed to be relatively unconcerned with such issues: One choreographer influenced the next, and so on. But by the end of the 20th century, the contemporary scene had evolved considerably and "downtown/uptown" distinctions slowly disappeared

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as modern dance had also built up a repertoire of "classics" choreographed by its own giants. For a while now in the dance world, a rich debate has revolved around the question of choreographic next steps.

And yet, much of the dance world seems to say *après moi, le déluge* to concerned fans, as succession plans are often left vague—if they exist at all. Fair enough: Choreographers are free to do as they please with their own companies. But where does this leave dancers and the next generation of choreographers, not to mention members of the public who may wish to see works that continue a certain style or tradition?

The Limón Dance Company performs 'Missa Brevis' (2015).

Two prominent New York-based companies, Martha Graham and José Limón, have continued to perform repertoire while commissioning a limited number of new works. The Martha Graham Company, under the artistic leadership of Janet Eilber and Tadej Brdnik, has managed to do a more than credible job of continuing the grande dame's tradition. Performing the same pieces on a regular basis may not be the most thrilling for dancers, and viewer fatigue in a limited audience that attends season after season also has to be considered. But at least it assures a continuity of sorts.

One problem with the Martha Graham case lies in Graham technique itself, with its famously angled positions and movements—and the fact that Martha Graham was such a formidable presence. You cannot just reset old dances and tell dancers to mimic Graham's expressionistically truncated movements without sometimes falling into a bizarre form of choreographic pastiche. Of course, a dancer as talented as Blakeley White-McGuire can reproduce Graham exquisitely; but dancers of such talent are rare. So the Graham Company has also commissioned pieces that continue the "spirit" of Graham. The problem is that this strategy hasn't always worked well, as the new works often pale in comparison to Graham originals, which they follow in the program.

Imagine, if you will, a young visual artist exhibiting "cubist-inspired work" in a Chelsea gallery next to a few Picassos or Braques. No one wants to be framed as derivative, though most choreographers are happy for a new commission. Limón, under Carla Maxwell and Juan José Escalante's leadership, has also opted, more or less, for the same path as Graham. I have, in the past several years, attended performances of both Graham and Limón where the repertory so far outpaced the new, commissioned works in terms of quality that it seemed almost unfair to the young choreographers to present their work next to such classics. (Former Limón dancer Colin Connor recently took over as artistic director at the company and new vistas may be opening.)

On the other hand, Merce Cunningham, who died in 2009, was very clear about what was to happen after his death: His company would continue performing his works during a two-year international tour and then disband. After that all of its assets—from costumes and props to audio and video footage—were transferred to the Merce Cunningham Trust, which was established to document and continue his legacy.

Today, Cunningham works are available to be performed for a licensing fee, but nothing assures that they will be properly set or performed. But his decision to disband his company has also meant that no transmogrified "Cunninghamesque" pieces have since been commissioned, thank God. As John Claassen, agent and producing director of *fusionworks*, notes: "It might sound extreme, but Cunningham knew that in time the work would unavoidably lose its specificity and the qualities that made the technique so special." With the help of a dedicated group of former dancers, Cunningham's works will continue to be performed in select venues, by both schools and professional companies.

A delightful variant of sorts took place last spring at Mikhail Baryshnikov's arts center in Hell's Kitchen, when this jewel of a performing arts center screened an extended clip from a German television archive, filmed during a European tour of solos and duets danced decades ago by Merce Cunningham and Carolyn Brown and discovered in 2014 by Alla Kovgan. Following the screening, the talented Cunningham dancer Silas Riener, along with Benny Olk and Vanessa Knouse, reconstructed *Changeling* and *Suite for Two*

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thanks to the archival footage. As John Claassen notes,

> Choreography always evolves once the master dies, and that's why teaching is so important as a method of passing on one's legacy, thus encouraging dancers to steep their performance in a particular style as part of a continuum. The Limón Company has certainly realized this now and so it has developed a program for teachers specific to this issue.

Meanwhile, in its new studios on the Lower East Side, Paul Taylor Dance Company is expanding its repertory by incorporating Taylor's classics of modern dance, both old and new. And BALAM Dance Theatre is a small New York company that presents exquisite works based on traditional Balinese dance. Less well-known than other companies, BALAM is one of America's hidden terpsichorean jewels, currently run by dancer and choreographer Carlos Fittante. The company was founded in 1979 by the ethno-choreographer and CUNY professor Islene Pinder, who sustained it through the support of a small network of friends and donors. But then Pinder unexpectedly died, in 2012, without having had time to make adequate preparations for the company to continue once she was gone.

Interestingly enough, Carlos Fittante believes that Pinder may have done so purposefully: "I think she felt BALAM could not survive without her presence," he says. "She told me on numerous occasions: BALAM lives in me, in my body knowledge of the Balinese fusion dance and my understanding of Balinese culture gained from years of study in Bali." So how has Fittante continued her legacy? By extending the long tradition of apprenticeship that has always existed in classical ballet. Had Fittante and his colleagues taken the easy road and moved on to greener pastures, the world would have lost a wonderful and unique company.

"Ideally, I wish BALAM had been left a trust," Fittante concedes. "But on a certain level, I think things are truthful this way. If BALAM cannot attract enough supporters, then it will perish." So is the free market the best way for art to survive? "Art shouldn't have to justify itself in usefulness or popularity," Fittante answers. "It's like charging people to enter a church. That goes against the nature of the experience."

Over on West 55th Street, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater may be the ideal example for companies to follow after their founders are gone. Buoyed by large private support and inspired artistic directors such as Judith Jamison and Robert Battle, Ailey not only continues presenting its own work but commissions new work with a focus on emerging African-American talent. Housed in a gleaming multimillion-dollar building, it also has a full series of classes and its own dance school that teaches in the tradition of Alvin Ailey. With multiple practice rooms and several performances areas, space is rented out to other choreographers as the company commissions new work while presenting Ailey classics such as *Revelations* and *Anointed*.

Still, no matter how hard a new generation works, and no matter how clear a choreographer's wishes may have been, maintaining a founder's intensity can be difficult. With time, a founder's style and legacy get distilled—even when young artists study with the original dancers or watch videos and prints of old performances. So, perhaps, this is added incentive to run to the Joyce Theater and other leading presenters of contemporary dance and catch some of our cultural legacies while this still makes sense, aesthetic and otherwise. ♦

B&A

Art on the Line

The hard-edged vision of Carmen Herrera.

BY JAMES GARDNER

New York

Grandma Moses she is not. Rather than painting heartwarming depictions of a mythic American hinterland, Carmen Herrera has fashioned some of the most severe examples of hard-edge abstraction ever conceived. What she shares with Grandma Moses, however, is that now, with a show at the Whitney, she has finally found fame at the age of 101.

Herrera started painting in her twenties, rather than in her seventies like Moses, and she has always had some admirers. But it is only now, after decades of being depreciated and ignored as a Cuban artist, or a woman artist, that she is finally receiving the recognition she deserves. As of this writing, she has lived about half-a-year longer than Grandma Moses and she is still going strong. From an apartment on East 19th Street in Lower Manhattan, her home for nearly a half-century, Herrera still makes art every day (although she now relies on studio hands to carry out her ideas) and she still cultivates that cerebral idiom that has defined her career since the late 1940s.

Carmen Herrera
Lines of Sight
Whitney Museum of American Art
through January 2

Carmen Herrera was born in Havana in 1915 into an affluent and highly cultured family. At first, she wanted to become an architect, then she tried her hand at sculpture, and only gradually did she resolve upon a career as a painter. In 1939, she married Jesse Loewenthal, a New Yorker and high school English teacher who would remain her constant companion for more than 60 years until his death, in 2000, at the age of 98.

James Gardner's latest book is Buenos Aires: The Biography of a City.

Carmen Herrera

Although they were never wealthy, his steady employment made it possible for them to live in Paris for several years in the early 1950s, and they were on intimate terms with many of the important figures in the New York art world. Throughout this period, Herrera produced paintings and took part in group shows and received appreciative notice from Hilton Kramer, among other critics. This Whitney exhibition, though sizable, is not a retrospective: It contains no paintings or sculptures from before 1948 or anything after 1978. As such, the curators have chosen, a little arbitrarily, to confine themselves to the years when Herrera's work coincided with the mainstream of contemporary art.

In the earliest works in the exhibition, when she is still finding her way, Herrera allows herself the indulgence of curves, and even a trace of content. Paintings like *Iberic* and *The Vision of Saint Sebastian*, both from 1949, retain inscrutable traces of symbols. The looping lines of *Les Liens*, from the same year, and the *Habana Series* from two years later, invoke the biomorphic abstraction that predominated at that time.

Soon thereafter, however, Herrera began to evolve the art with which she is most associated, an art of the purest Euclidean geometry. And on the evidence of this exhibition, she has not produced a single curved line in over 50 years. Still, her geometry is different from Barnett Newman's surly walls of color or the sullen grids of Ad Reinhardt: There is an impish busyness to her irregular, asymmetrical masses, and to her wedges, which have been refined down to the head of a needle.

Sometimes her paintings are sequences of serried black-and-white lines of varied width. At other times they are a composite of smaller canvases combined like so many pieces of origami. At that point, they are halfway toward being the sculptures that, in a few cases, they actually become. As often as not, however, it is the sheer force of color that carries these paintings. Many of Herrera's works are conceived in pure and primary colors; and even when they are not, even when they consist of shades and halftones, their sustained immediacy conveys all the elemental force of primary colors.

It is one of the privileges of the hard-edged style in which she works that, at its best, it seems to enjoy eternal youth. To the practiced eye, of course, her colors and forms are specific to a determined time and place in the history of art, the art of America in the postwar years. But one forgets that specificity as one stands before works like *Green and White*, from 1956, and *Green and Orange* (1958), two paintings that are quite perfect in their way. Perhaps these works will one day seem old, but more than a half-century has already passed and that has not happened.

It is one of the sad truths about artists and cultural figures in general that, all too often, they are recognized only after their deaths. Schubert, Austen, Melville, and van Gogh—not to mention a thousand others—all breathed their last in the morbid certainty that (to quote Sir Thomas Browne) they "must be content to be as though they had not been." Mahler might assert that "*Meine Zeit wird kommen*" ("My time will come"), and Keats could hope to be "among the English Poets after my death." But they experienced such hopes more as wishful thinking than anything else.

That was the fate—or so it seemed—reserved for Carmen Herrera. But then, improbably and against all the odds, she went on living, long enough to outlast even the indifference of the world. For once, she was there to see justice finally done. ♦

MATTHEW CARASELLA

B&A

Bleak Houses

The novelty of a tragedy without a happy ending.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

In the great and overlooked 1991 comedy *Soapdish*, a television executive muses on the work of his network's greatest soap opera star. "She is and will always be the Queen of Misery," he says. Well, Celeste of *Soapdish* has nothing on Casey Affleck of the year's most highly-praised film, *Manchester by the Sea*. If Celeste is the Queen of Misery, Affleck's character Lee is the Prince, the Prince Regent, the Dauphin, the Duke, and the King all rolled into one.

The movie is so exacting in its portrayal of Lee's dreadful condition that it becomes one with its lead character. If you think the measure of a work of art is just how lousy it can make you feel, *Manchester by the Sea* is without question a towering masterpiece

As *Manchester by the Sea* begins, Lee Chandler is living the most solitary kind of life. He's an apartment-building handyman in Boston who does good work but cannot make small talk with the tenants, and so without affect that he barely registers a tenant's sexual interest but is still present enough to sucker-punch a fellow customer at a bar for the crime of giving him a look he doesn't like.

One morning he receives a phone call that sends him back to his hometown, where his beloved brother (the wonderful Kyle Chandler, late of the glorious TV series *Friday Night Lights*) has just died of a chronic heart condition.

Over the course of the movie's first hour, we see Lee both living alone in the present in a basement room, and in a much more cheerful condition in a series of haunted flashbacks that coexist in his mind with the present. In the past, he's in business with his brother on a fishing boat. He's a loving uncle to his brother's son. And he's living with his own tough-minded hardass of a wife (Michelle Williams) and their three small children.

Manchester by the Sea
Directed by Kenneth Lonergan

We don't yet know what happened to exile him to his Boston basement, but we know it has to be pretty bad. When the answer finally comes, it's worse than we could possibly imagine. So it turns out that, to save Lee from his exile, his brother has reached out to him from the grave by assigning Lee the guardianship of his now-16-year-old nephew Patrick, whose mother lost custody and fled town due to severe alcoholism. Lee responds with panic at the idea, in part because Patrick is a popular kid in Manchester—a star hockey player, a teenage ladies' man, lead guitarist of a rock band—and has no interest in relocating. But every moment in Manchester is a special agony for Lee, and he cannot bear to stay.

A more conventional telling of the story of *Manchester by the Sea* would take Lee and allow him to find a way back to a full life by slowly embracing his new responsibilities. But the writer and director, Kenneth Lonergan, doesn't want *Manchester by the Sea* to provide easy answers to explain Lee's grief, or provide outs for him against the justifiable guilt he feels.

In a real sense, *Manchester by the Sea* is an aesthetic argument against popular culture works that seek to exploit our emotions by making cheap use of unspeakable horror in their narratives. They want to enmesh us emotionally by depicting calamities, especially calamities that happen to children—and then they want those calamities to morph into meaningful learning experiences that help their characters grow. Just to take one of a million Hollywood examples, didn't the irresponsible fashionista in *Raising Helen* learn to become a real woman by learning to be a good substitute mother to her dead sister's little kids—just as her dead sister wanted?

Because we know this trope so well from every movie we've ever seen, we in the audience find ourselves hoping against hope that this will happen for Lee, even though his inability to get past the mind-numbing horror of his own life's circumstances is entirely reasonable. But Lonergan, whose most notable previous work was the wonderful *You Can Count on Me* (2000), has an admirable horror of such vulgarity and cheap sentiment.

He wants to show the mundanity of quotidian life even in the face of tragedy: a stretcher whose legs won't fold up as the paramedics try to put it into an ambulance; a nurse looking around desultorily for the plastic bag of Lee's brother's possessions in the hospital where his corpse is downstairs in a freezer drawer; a bunch of teenagers getting into an argument about *Star Trek* because they don't know how to talk about death.

Alas, these sharp comic details only serve to accentuate the dreadfulness of what has happened to Lee and is happening inside him on a minute-to-minute basis. In offering this unsparing portrait of earned guilt, Lonergan is offering us a deep truth rather than a comforting pop-culture illusion. The result is an uncompromising and deeply serious piece of work.

Still, what I want to know from Kenneth Lonergan is this: What on earth did *I* do to deserve this punishment on a Saturday night? ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

"Donald Trump Asks a Third General to Join His Administration"
—Vanity Fair *headline, December 7, 2016*

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Trump names Gen. Tso ambassador to China

DEMOCRATS SLAM 'UNHEALTHY' CHOICE

Nomination to spice things up

BY ALEX BUCKLEY

NEW YORK — Standing in the lobby of Trump Tower, President-elect Donald J. Trump announced his choice for ambassador to Beijing: General Tso. "Believe me, he will be an amazing envoy to China," said the president-elect. "We had a very, very delightful meeting. In fact, 30 minutes after it ended, I needed to meet him again. And again after that. So really it was more like a triple delight."

Congressional Democrats expressed skepticism about General Tso. According to House minority leader Nancy Pelosi, "Mr. Trump is sorely mistaken if he thinks we are too chicken to block his nomination." Pelosi went on to describe Tso as "dense and oily." Trump, however, countered by tweeting that Tso was "dripping with charisma." The two men planned on attending a boxing match on Tuesday night at Madison Square Garden. Said Trump: "I love General Tso and I love MSG. It's the best of both worlds."

Tso's nomination marks the sixth general asked by the president-elect to join his administration. Last week Trump announced his selection of General Zod to run NASA and the mustachioed general of General Car Insurance fame to run the Department of Transportation. When asked about his qualifications, the general replied, "For a great low rate you can get online, go to the General and save some

TIME CONTINUED ON A8

TRUMP: MICHAEL VADON

Donald Trump at the Monday introduction of his nominee, General Tso