

**NOW FOR THE POST-
POST-COLD WAR ERA**
THOMAS DONNELLY

the weekly

Standard

JANUARY 23, 2017

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A hand in a dark sleeve is shown from the left, holding a spray can and spraying white paint onto a brick wall. The paint is being applied in a pattern that suggests the letters 'HATE'. The background is a close-up of a brick wall with some white paint already on it, dripping down.

Hate-Crime Hysteria

ERIC FELTEN
on untruth and
its consequences

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A Perversion of Justice

THE SCRAPBOOK finds itself so very, very disappointed in the media for their coverage of the recent salacious assertions about the president-elect.

Typical was the *New York Daily News* report on the alleged compromising material:

U.S. intelligence agencies warned Donald Trump about claims Russian operatives held potential blackmail information against him involving alleged “perverted sexual acts” during stays in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Count THE SCRAPBOOK among those who find the whole story laughable. But what caught our eye—and our ire—was the assertion that the supposed sex acts were to be labeled “perverted.”

Perverted? Isn’t that word awfully judgmental for an age that champions—indeed, enforces—acceptance of any and every consensual sexual proclivity? Isn’t that word anathema to all right-thinking folks, an offensive throwback to a kind of oppressive Victorian morality that denies the sexually curious their human rights? Isn’t



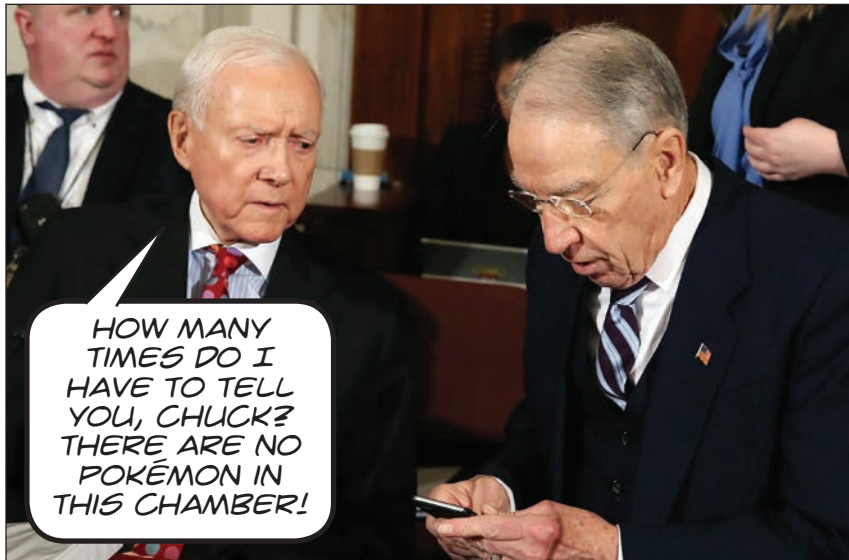
The press wet themselves.

that word an affront to the “water-sports community”?

As those who like that sort of thing have been quick to point out, this is an abominable instance of “kink-shaming.” (Soon enough, THE SCRAPBOOK assumes, even the very word “kink” will come to be seen as unacceptably pejorative.)

Still, it is a measure of how much Trump has unhinged the left that he has driven them to make the old-school claim that kinky sex is perverse. ♦

What They Were Thinking



MARK WILSON / GETTY IMAGES

Senator Orrin Hatch speaks to colleague Chuck Grassley during a confirmation hearing for attorney general nominee Jeff Sessions, January 11, 2017.

Cue the Walking Music

Readers may recall the evening, in 1973, when Marlon Brando declined to accept, in person, his Oscar for *The Godfather* and sent instead a winsome half-Native-American woman (stage name: Sacheen Littlefeather), who proceeded to deliver a Brando-certified speech about the film industry’s ill-treatment of Indians. The incident had two long-term effects: It prompted the academy to ban surrogate recipients for Oscar winners; and it established a tradition of political diatribes delivered by celebrities at televised award ceremonies.

For that reason, THE SCRAPBOOK is disinclined to comment about Meryl Streep’s recent sermon on Donald Trump at the Golden Globes. First, our respect for the integrity of the post-Pia Zadora Golden Globes is too great to lure us into public criticism; and second, there are altogether too many such cringe-inducing moments—at the Oscars, Emmys, Tonys, etc.—in the history of award shows to choose from. We prefer to look to the future.

The Oscar nominations are coming this week, and the Academy Awards ceremony will be shown on television in late February. We can’t predict if any of the likely winners—*La La Land*, *Moonlight*, *Manchester by the Sea*, *Fences*—will inspire left-wing oratory from their lead players and producers. But in our view, there is an opening here for less-exalted honorees to smash the professional glass ceiling and earn lifetime employment in movies and television.



Roger Moore and Littlefeather, 1973

IMAGES ABOVE, LOWER RIGHT: NEWSCOM

Imagine the media sensation if the Best Costume Design winner took advantage of her or his 60 seconds on air to make fun of Melania Trump's wardrobe! Think of the op-ed essays if the winner of the Best Sound Mixing Oscar reminds us (more in sorrow than anger) of the horrifying effects of Donald Trump's voice when heard overseas! Indeed, with Trump in the White House and Hollywood in high dudgeon, the sky's the limit. And the acceptance speech from this year's winner in the Best Makeup and Hairstyling category practically writes itself: "Your orange bouffant masks a brain powdered in bigotry and sexism," he or she will declare to the cameras, "and no amount of lipstick can make anything you say sound pretty." Cue the walking music. ♦

Articles We Didn't Finish . . .

All four suspects in the Chicago torture video now face charges of aggravated battery, hate crimes and kidnapping.

"See Jordon, Tesfaye, Brittany and Tanishia. See the crime they committed. See how swift justice is dispensed when the perpetrators, rather than the victims, are black . . ." (*Tavis Smiley, host of the PBS show of the same name, writing at Time.com.*) ♦

Unworthy, Perhaps

In the middle of a 3,500-word *Newsweek* profile of Betsy DeVos—the philanthropist and education reform crusader Donald Trump has nominated for education secretary—THE SCRAPBOOK spotted this trenchant observation:

Comedian Rob Delaney tweeted, "Trump's pick of DeVos as Sec. of Education is more hateful than pouring a vat of sh[—] out of a helicopter onto a group of 1st graders." Crude as that sentiment may be, it reflects the prevalent perception—unfair, perhaps—that DeVos is unsuited to her post, having never worked in a school or a school district. Her nomination is in keeping with Trump's



apparent conviction that nothing fuels government work better than antipathy to the government.

Since when does a tweeted bit of ad hominem scatology from an obscure comedian pass for noteworthy insight? But the best part is that precious little aside, where the author acknowledges the abuse is "unfair, perhaps." *Newsweek* senior writer Alexander Nazaryan clearly knows what he's done is low, not of course that—unrepentant, but perhaps—that's going to stop him. But it does oblige him to make an—unconvincing, perhaps—attempt to strike the journalist's pose of objectivity. Still, trafficking in the image of dumping excrement all over

a bunch of 6-year-olds is rather nasty-minded—unbecoming, perhaps—for a fellow with an Ivy League degree in English literature.

The gross-out attack on DeVos is just a proxy for the real target. And when it comes to treatment of Trump, all pretense of civility has long since—unabashedly, perhaps—been abandoned. ♦

Who, Me? Nah . . .

Cory Booker's toothless testimony last week at the confirmation hearing for Jeff Sessions failed to derail the nomination of the next attorney general. But THE SCRAPBOOK suspects

that was never the New Jersey Democrat's intent when he announced he would defy an unwritten rule of Senate decorum and testify against his fellow senator. Listen to the lofty language of his introductory apologia:

I believe, like perhaps all of my colleagues, that in the choice between standing with Senate norms or standing up for what my conscience tells me is best for our country, I will always choose conscience and country.

I will always choose conscience and country? Those in the hearing room might be forgiven for imagining that they were at a county fair in Iowa or a diner in New Hampshire.

In other words, Booker is entertaining thoughts of a presidential run. Nor are they idle thoughts: He's serious

enough to have begun the process a few months after the last presidential election finally came to a close. Democrats are desperately searching for their future. It isn't preposterous to imagine a fortysomething, black, Twitter-savvy liberal from a deep-blue state—and one willing to stand up early to the Trump administration, no less—will cure what ails the party.

The campaign-starved press knew what was what. They were waiting for Booker outside the hearing room to pepper him with questions about his next moves. The New Jersey senator declined to admit he harbors designs on the White House. Which just goes to show that there's one Senate tradition Booker won't buck: that of ambitious presidential wannabes denying the obvious. ♦

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Make America ★★eat Again

Years ago, when I was writing about a wave of immigrant violence in France, a higher-up in the housing authority of a provincial city took me on a tour of some slum projects. Alphonse was his name. He was the *directeur de régime de gestion*, which, as best I could translate, meant “director of the directorate of direction.” His job seemed to involve lecturing journalists about food.

Standing in the middle of a parking lot where the cars were still smoldering from the previous night’s riots, I asked Alphonse how he maintained his optimism about immigration when half the neighborhood’s natives had fled. “I eat couscous for dinner every night!” he said perkily. To a similar question about boarded-up shops he replied, “Have you ever had a Turkish pizza?” To me it sounded like a non sequitur. To him it was a logical argument. His city was better because it was more diverse. And food was the only kind of diversity poor Alphonse understood.

Alphonse’s view carried the day. We all came to accept national decay as a price worth paying for varied cuisine. Not anymore! Donald Trump has promised to Make America Great Again. Fine by me. But the risk is he’ll take us back too far. Some morning we’ll wake up and find the country is so great, we can’t keep the food down.

How far can we afford to turn back the clock? Let’s start with two years. Back in 2015 I had never heard of poké or—I will admit it—larb. I like ’em, but I could do without ’em.

Five years ago, I thought kombucha was what politically correct people called Cambodia and that bibimbap was what Charlie Parker played while chain-smokers with black turtlenecks and goatees snapped their fingers and said, “Yeah, man! Crazy! Go, cat, go!” Already we are getting into foods I would miss, and we haven’t even time-traveled our way out of the Obama

administration. Apparently we have a lot of good food to give up before we’re truly great.

So let’s go back 20 years, to 1997. That gets us back into the American Century. It’s a boom economy, and communism’s still dead. No one has heard of al Qaeda except a couple of doofuses at the Brookings Institution. There is a smell of greatness in the air. There is also the smell of really good Mexican food. Nonethe-



less there would be big sacrifices in that department if we had to go back 20 years. Mexicans had not yet been induced to share their best stuff. Soft flour tortillas and white cotija cheese were not yet available outside of the barrio. The word “taco” retained its age-old North American definition: last week’s hamburger meat, slow-fried, with red powder shaken on it, in a folded cracker. “Sorry, guys, I was exhausted,” your mother says as she throws it on the table.

Go back further, to 1987. It’s Morning in America. Unfortunately you can’t wake up this morning because there’s no such thing as espresso. At least not outside of New York, Seat-

tle, Cambridge, and Miami (where people back then referred to standard American coffee as *jugo de paraguas*, or “umbrella juice”). Excuse me? You want a croissant with your coffee? Whyn’cha go to effin’ France! Leggo my Eggo!

This is getting a tad too “great” for me, but let’s go years back, back to the Carter administration in 1977. No one has ever heard of sushi, except Japanese people—and you’d no sooner buy food from them than you would a car. Hamachi? Whassat? Japanese for Hamburger Helper? The country is still too great for *that*.

And a funny thing happens as we go back in time. We don’t think about food so much. Somehow, the country manages to produce a surprising number of interesting things to eat. American businessmen have been hunting down the tastier, more portable, and therefore more retailable items from the second-string cuisines of Europe—Jarlsberg cheese from Norway, Yago’s sangría from Franco’s Spain, Mateus rosé from Salazar’s Portugal, not to mention Swiss fondue in all its varieties. (I can think of three.) Add those to the foods invented by large bureaucracies under pressure of warfare (Spam) or the space program (Tang), and what do you call it? Tell you what I call it, I call it a cornucopia.

To play it safe, though, we could go back further than that. Back to the bitterly cold winter of 1945, when the Allied armies stood at the edge of the Rhine, before a devastated landscape of collapsed bridges, shattered villages, and charred forests. Mortars boomed in the hills and the acrid smell of diesel was in the air. Eisenhower turned to Patton, and do you know what he said?

Neither do I. But I’ll tell you one thing he didn’t say. He didn’t say, “You know, George, there’s something almost impudent about this Pinot Grigio, with its notes of honeysuckle and cinnamon and that beguiling elderberry finish.”

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

Kill This Idea

And they worried he wouldn't be bipartisan! Last week, President-elect Donald Trump met with that scion of America's premier Democratic dynasty, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. The confab, which reportedly occurred at Trump's request, centered on the issue of childhood vaccines and their (nonexistent) relationship to autism. When Kennedy emerged from the meeting, he was exultant: He told reporters that the president-elect had asked him to chair a commission on "vaccine safety and scientific integrity."

"President-elect Trump has some doubts about the current vaccine policies, and he has questions about [them]," Kennedy said.

It later emerged that Kennedy may have been engaging in some rather, well, Trumpian behavior: shooting his mouth off. No decision on a commission—Kennedy-led or otherwise—has been made, the Trump transition team said, though "the president-elect is exploring the possibility of forming a commission on Autism."

If Trump does indeed form such a commission—not an inherently terrible idea, given the rapid increase in autism cases over the past decades—he'd do well to keep people like Kennedy as far away from it as possible. Because for more than a decade, Robert Kennedy Jr. has been a prominent proponent of a discredited and dangerous conspiracy theory that links common childhood vaccines to autism.

The conspiracy theory dates back to February 1998, when the British medical journal the *Lancet* published a paper linking the MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, rubella) to the appearance of autism. The finding was an explosive one and was dutifully recounted through much of the mainstream press in Britain and the United States.

Immediately, however, various scientific organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control, ran their own studies on the matter. None found any such connection. Thanks to the dogged work of investigative journalists at the *Sunday Times* of London, meanwhile, the *Lancet* piece was retracted; partially in 2004, and then fully in 2010. Its author had numerous conflicts of interest, the *Times* found, and worse, had manipulated the data in order to reach its

tendentious conclusion. The article, frankly, was a fraud.

By then, though, the damage had been done. In England, vaccination rates plunged from 92 percent to 80 percent following publication of the paper. Measles infection rates skyrocketed accordingly. In 1998, 56 people in England and Wales were diagnosed with the virus, which is highly contagious; 2,030 contracted it in 2012.

It's been a similar story on this side of the pond, with an increasing number of communities vaccinating so few children that they are losing herd immunity—the point at which such a high percentage of the population is inoculated against an illness that it becomes essentially impossible for it to spread. In the case of measles, between 92 and 95 percent of the population needs to be immunized to achieve herd immunity. They're not close to achieving that in, say, Nevada County, California, where an elementary school last year reported that just 43 percent of its students had been vaccinated. Nor are they doing well at Google day care, where today's best and brightest warehouse their offspring: In early 2015, only 68 percent of children at one Google day-care facility had been immunized; at another Google facility nearby, the figure was



Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

49 percent. (Nearby Yahoo may be struggling commercially, but it's doing something right: 94 percent of the kids in its day-care facility are vaccinated.) In the year 2000, the CDC declared that measles had been eliminated in the United States; in 2014, 667 came down with the illness, many thanks to an outbreak that began at Disneyland. Happily, that number fell last year, though we must remain vigilant: "The majority of people who got measles were unvaccinated," the CDC noted archly. Measles is no joke: Complications may range from high fever and violent coughs to meningitis, encephalitis, and death.

For more than a decade, Robert Kennedy Jr. has flogged the discredited and downright dangerous theory that vaccinations lead to autism. In 2005 he published an infamous piece in *Rolling Stone* and *Salon* arguing that thimerosal, a chemical historically used to preserve vaccines, was linked to autism. (The CDC and other medical authorities uniformly reject this conclusion.)

Though both of those redoubts of political progressivism ultimately backed away from Kennedy's work—*Salon* retracted it, while *Rolling Stone* simply deleted it from its website—he has remained dogged. Kennedy has continued to spread his dangerous theories, including on Bill Maher's highly rated and ironically titled HBO show, *Real Time*. It's safe to say that over the past decade, Kennedy has become *the* leading public face of antiscience vaccine denialism.

Well, with one major caveat: At times, none other than Donald Trump has flirted with supplanting Kennedy for the crown of America's most prominent vaccine crank. In 2014, he said on—where else?—Twitter, “Healthy young child goes to doctor, gets pumped with massive shot of

many vaccines, doesn't feel good and changes—AUTISM. Many such cases!” In a GOP presidential debate in September 2015, he floated a similar theory.

Nonetheless, we are encouraged that the Trump transition team quickly batted down Kennedy's suggestion that he will lead a presidential panel to investigate vaccines. Perhaps Trump's advisers or family members have talked sense into him; perhaps he was pandering all along with his antivaccine sentiments. Either way, there should be a bipartisan consensus to keep RFK Jr. far from the microphone. And if the new president wants to let him down easy, perhaps there could be a plush consolation prize. Ambassador to Fiji sounds nice.

—Ethan Epstein

The Long Holiday

Just weeks after 9/11, Charles Krauthammer declared in these pages that our holiday from history—the 1990s—had come “to an abrupt end.” And the United States did get back to work—briefly. But it turns out that President George W. Bush's exhortation in the aftermath of 9/11 that we should keep on shopping—though understandable and perhaps defensible in context—captured the broader truth: We were still on holiday. We still very much wanted to be on holiday.

So 9/11 turned out not to mark the end of the holiday. The 9/11 generation—those who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, and those who still fight for us in defense of liberty and civilization—is the one group that really reported to duty. But the rest of us mostly drifted on, carried by the current, occasionally steering away from rocks and whirlpools, but mostly going nowhere fast and nowhere purposefully. Conservatives were preoccupied with yearning for a tantalizingly restorable past. Progressives made themselves busy proclaiming an imminent glorious future. Most of the country felt vaguely discontented but remained quiescent.

The desire for a respite from the travails of hard work, from the burdens of history, was understandable. The preceding three-quarters of a century, from the entry into World War I in 1917 through the Depression, World War II, and the Cold War, had been all too full of history. After such a period, after the success marked by the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, any nation—even a Sparta or a Rome or a Britain—would have taken a holiday.

It was fitting that it was the baby boomer generation that presided over ours. The four presidents elected during this

quarter century—a commiserator in chief, an exhorter in chief, a posturer in chief, and now a braggart in chief—were baby boomers. We began our holiday in 1992 and ended it in 2016 with the election of draft dodgers. Dodging responsibility is what baby boomers do best.

We baby boomers inherited a great gift from our parents' and grandparents' generation. It would be an overstatement to say we squandered it. We perhaps did an adequate job most of the time of maintenance, of patching up, of keeping the ship afloat. All was not lost over the last quarter-century. It wasn't a time of disaster or dissolution. It was a time of drift and indecision.

Has that time ended? The accession to the presidency of Donald Trump—the last baby boomer—might suggest not. And perhaps we will try to continue to sustain the holiday for at least four more years. But if Trump's victory is not the end of the holiday, it is surely the beginning of the end.

And history works in funny ways. The 2016 campaign may well have been the end of an era (see Thomas Donnelly's fine essay on Page 26 of this issue arguing that it is). One has the sense that the next years—perhaps in part due to Trump, perhaps in greater part in reaction both to Trump and a discredited opposition—will be a time of choosing. It seems unlikely that the United States will continue to drift. The ship of state will either take on serious water and begin to capsize, or begin to right itself. This wouldn't be the first time that a new age is born in the shadow of the last gasp of the old.

—William Kristol

The Counterpuncher

He always fights back.

BY FRED BARNES

Donald Trump is in the rare position of loathing the media and dominating them—simultaneously. What more could a president-elect want as he enters the White House? Not much.

Reporters, columnists, talk radio blabbers, and even the elite media in Washington and New York think Trump is obligated to deal with them pretty much on their terms. Trump doesn't agree. The notion of catering to them has never crossed his mind. And probably never will.

Instead we get wild events like Trump's first press conference since winning the presidency. It was on his home turf at Trump Tower. He was in charge. The reporters were an unruly mob. As they tried to attract Trump's attention, he coolly surveyed them before deciding who should ask him a question. He was dominant, the press pitiful.

With Trump, rules have changed. CNN was oblivious to this. It had played up the dubious "dossier" story about Trump. Yet, after Trump denounced the story, CNN correspondent Jim Acosta thought he was entitled to ask a question. Trump refused. "You are fake news," he said, looking at Acosta.

Which leads us to the first change. And by the way, it applies across the board, not just to the media. The new rule is simple: When you attack Trump, he will hit back harder than you could have imagined. "He learned this in the New York media when he was a businessman," Newt Gingrich said in a speech in December.

This is "Trump's core model,"

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



says Gingrich, who understands how Trump operates better than anyone else. There's a reason for Trump's counterpunching. He always wants to be on offense. "He's on permanent offense," Gingrich says. This, too, is a change. "He gets up in the morning, figuring out, how am I going to stay on offense?"

That he punches back was lost on Hollywood's Meryl Streep. After she vilified him at the Golden Globe awards banquet, he unloaded on her with bruising force. He tweeted that she's an "overrated actress" and a "Hillary flunkie." I suspect more people read his tweets than watched her speech on TV. More are also likely to remember what he said.

But the main thing was he got on offense. That's an imperative that sometimes puts him in an unpopular position. When Khizr Khan, the father of an Army captain killed in Iraq, delivered a stinging attack on Trump at the Democratic convention, he fired back. He insisted he had a "right to respond." He stayed on offense, though it might have been at his own expense.

Offense is so precious to Trump that he goes to great lengths to stay there. In the third debate with Hillary Clinton, he refused to say whether he would accept the outcome of the election. The media went crazy. They ignored everything else that had happened in the 90-minute debate. The *New York Times* said Trump "seemed to cast doubt on American democracy." At the time—mid-October—

he was "under enormous pressure to halt Mrs. Clinton's steady rise in opinion polls," the *Times* explained.

Trump knew what he was doing. He kept alive the question of whether he'd go along with the election's verdict. It dominated national news for a week, then lingered for a second week. It dwarfed what Clinton was up to. That she had won the debate was overlooked. And two weeks later, Trump was on a glide path to winning the election.

The release of the *Access Hollywood* video was one of the few times he couldn't go on offense. At whom could he hit back? This time he offered an excuse. His vulgar and salacious language was "locker room" talk, he said, nothing more. The result was telling. The story faded but never died.

Trump reached peak offense with what the media saw as a losing strategy. On an average day, Trump woke up and tweeted, called morning TV shows, made a brief press appearance, spoke at a rally, and did a Fox News show in the evening—\$30 million of free media. This allowed Trump to "dominate by saturation," according to Gingrich.

"Your opponents are being drowned and don't even know it," Gingrich said. "The political press reports you aren't raising enough money to be competitive." Meanwhile, Trump was chuckling.

Another rule—or precedent—Trump has set is that it's easy to send the media off on wild goose chases. Whatever he tweets, the press chases. Gingrich calls these "rabbits." During the transition Trump met twice with Mitt Romney,

GARY LOCKE

creating two weeks of press speculation about whether he'd be secretary of state. Romney turned out to be a rabbit.

Still another Trump rule is that bad polls and media opposition shouldn't dictate your decisions. Trump tweets as much as ever, though polls say he should quit now that he's been elected president. Also, he appointed his son-in-law Jared Kushner to be a top White House adviser, knowing the press frowns on nepotism.

It's indisputable that Trump is canny. Scott Adams, the creator of *Dilbert*, credits him with a degree of cleverness that had escaped me. "His opponents did a great job of framing him as some kind of Hitler," Adams noted in his blog. This notion "still hangs over the country like a chorus of stale farts." And extinguishing it is tricky.

How should Trump "deal with the second-largest case of national cognitive dissonance in our history? (Slavery was first.)" Adams says "ignoring the Hitler branding from the other side won't work. It's too sticky. Denying the Hitler branding won't work either. That would just make people debate the details and harden the association by reputation." So "there's no solution, right?"

Wrong. "A Master Persuader" like Trump "neither ignores nor denies. He plays offense and scrambles their frame." Trump had to wait for "the right time and the right opportunity," which arrived with "an intelligence meeting leak and some fake news."

The Master Persuader must enter the third dimension "where persuasion matters and facts do not," Adams said. Trump dispatched a tweet: "Intelligence agencies should never have allowed this fake news to 'leak' into the public. One last shot at me. Are we living in Nazi Germany?" This, Adams wrote, "was the only play that can work. It won't solve the Hitler branding the other side put on him. But it's a start."

I had to read the tweet twice to see its brilliance. Was it calculated or was Trump just lucky? An old baseball saying supplies the answer. You make your own luck. ♦

Trump's Conflicts

He's done enough.

BY EDWIN D. WILLIAMSON

President-elect Donald Trump's attempt to put the conflicts issue behind him has failed, at least according to the mainstream media. His announcement that he would resign from all positions with companies in the Trump Organization, put the Trump Organization in a trust run by his two sons and a Trump Organization employee, and not communicate with the trustees on the business did not stifle the howl from the media and such self-appointed ethics watchdogs as Richard Painter and Norman Eisen, who continue their dire warnings about the new president's potential conflicts of interests. Even the supposedly nonpartisan director of the Office of Government Ethics has chimed in, saying that Trump's "plan does not comport with the tradition of our presidents over the last 40 years" (which is incorrect with respect to President Carter; the others did not have financial interests that came close to the extent and complexity of Trump's).

The media and the watchdogs insist on a full divestiture by Trump of all financial interests in the Trump Organization (he will be the principal beneficiary of the Trump trust). For a variety of reasons, divestiture probably cannot be done at all, but it certainly cannot be done without creating an entirely new set of conflicts. What the president-elect has done would not satisfy the requirements of the federal conflicts law if they applied to him (they do not), but he has made a good-faith effort to distance his role as president from his financial interests. To understand why he has gone about as far as he can or

should go, one must look at the law and the facts.

The Law. The president is specifically excluded from the federal conflicts of interest law. The issues he is dealing with are not legal issues, but appearances of conflicts.

There are no end of these in sight. If President Trump reduces the corporate tax rate as part of an economy-boosting tax reform, the media and the watchdogs will claim that his trust benefits. Even if the laws applied to him, though, this would not be a conflict of interest. In 1990, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, President George H.W. Bush's advisers worried whether the imposition of sanctions on Iraq would create a conflict of interest for those advisers who had domestic oil industry investments. The issue was whether advising on sanctions was "participating personally and substantially . . . in [a] particular matter in which [the adviser] . . . has a financial interest [that] . . . will have a direct and predictable effect on that interest." The Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) held that actions that were focused on resisting Iraq's aggression were not "particular matters." Thus, presidential acts by President Trump that are focused on broad issues like, say, tax reform would not fall under the conflicts law. The media and the watchdogs will decry any big-picture presidential action that has an incidental benefit on his financial interests. As a matter of law, this is just wrong.

The Facts. Most of the watchdogs, citing actions by other presidents, demand that Trump avoid even the appearance of conflicts by divesting his business interests, either through a massive public stock offering or leveraged buyout. No recent president, however, has had financial interests

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approaching the extent and complexity of the Trump Organization. In fact, what Trump has done is not that different from what Jimmy Carter did with his peanut farm and warehouse.

The Trump Organization is vast and complicated. It is in large part based on two illiquid assets: real estate and the Trump name. Real estate holdings are not easily disposed of. The Trump name is perhaps the ultimate illiquid asset—even if Trump himself were willing to sell it, any buyer would no doubt insist on a perpetual, exclusive right to use the name.

Demands that Trump divest are impractical for many reasons, even if the family name were not involved. Besides their sheer complexity and the time that would be required to effect them, an IPO or buyout would generate the same ethical issues that led to their being proposed. As I have pointed out elsewhere (*Wall Street Journal*, December 10, 2016), an IPO would have to be cleared by the SEC. By the time Trump becomes president, three SEC commissioners' seats and the head of the Division of Corporation Finance will be vacant, and in the time required to implement an IPO, the other two commissioners' terms would expire. Trump would thus be appointing all five members of the agency, as well as the director of the division regulating his IPO. A leveraged buyout, on the other hand, would require massive lending by banks regulated by the Trump administration, including some owned in whole or part by foreign states.

The real problem with divestiture demands is that they require that the Trumps give up their name—not just the president-elect, but his wives, his children, and his grandchildren, born and unborn. Is there a buyer willing to pay what Trump would demand, and could Trump deliver a valid, perpetual use of the name?

Could Trump Do More? My conclusion is that he cannot, with one exception. He is stuck with his financial interests. He has tried to distance himself from his business operations. The media will hound him about whether he has had communications

with his trustees or whether some presidential act benefits a financial interest. My advice: He should simply state that he will not participate personally and substantially in any “specific party particular matter” to which an entity controlled by him is a party. This is based on the standard in Section 502 of the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, requiring a waiver or recusal if participation in such a matter would create an *appearance* of a conflict of interest. (Incidentally, the president and vice president are exempted from this standard, and there are no penalties for its violation.)

What About the Emoluments Clause? This constitutional clause provides that “no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust . . . shall without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince or foreign State.”

Painter and Eisen, the primary watchdogs, say that any payment by any foreign government or official to any Trump entity is a violation. The problem is that Painter and Eisen have nothing to back up their position. Period. There are no court decisions or OLC opinions that support this view.

Trump's lawyers have issued an opinion essentially concluding that “Emoluments” are payments for service in an office. The category does not include payment of interest on an existing loan or for an at-market hotel room. (Above-market payments could raise “gift” or bribery issues.)

Trump, however, is going further than the emoluments clause would require, in order to avoid a problem the media has drummed up—foreign officials will try to curry favor by staying at Trump hotels. Trump has committed all profits on rooms rented by foreign officials to be paid to the U.S. Treasury. Thus, he has taken all profits out of staying at Trump hotels.

What About the Hotel Lease in Washington, D.C.? Perhaps the highest profile asset in the Trump Organization is the Trump International Hotel, located just four blocks from the White House, housed in the

historic Old Post Office building and leased from the Government Services Administration (GSA). George Washington University Law professor Steven Schooner has declared that Trump will breach the lease when he takes the oath of office, citing the following clause in the lease: “No . . . elected official of the Government of the United States . . . shall be admitted to any share or part of this Lease, or to any benefit that may arise therefrom.” This clause is meant to bar a lessee from passing an interest on to a government official. If it were intended to bar a lessee from becoming an official, the lawyer drafting it should be fired.

The armchair critics who contend Trump should divest his interest in the hotel lease must not understand what that would entail. From this complex document, made even more difficult to understand by the redactions in the GSA's public copy, one can decipher this: Trump has personally guaranteed the net worth of the lessee, and it cannot be transferred except to an entity that meets specified financial requirements. Add to that the general perception in the D.C. real estate business that Trump substantially overbid his competitors for the lease, and one can see what the GSA has at stake in any proposed transfer of Trump's interest—and in releasing him from his guarantee! And who will be the GSA's boss? President Trump. Again, the media's favorite “solution” only creates new conflicts.

Who Are the Watchdogs? The most prolific critics, frequently cited in media coverage, are Richard Painter, a University of Minnesota professor of law, and Norman Eisen, a Washington, D.C., lawyer. Painter had the ethics portfolio in the George W. Bush White House from 2005-7, and Eisen had the same job at the beginning of the Obama administration. Eisen, I assume, was a co-architect of the understandings between the Obama administration and the Clinton Foundation that were designed to “ensure that the activities of the Foundation . . . do not create conflicts or the appearance of conflicts for [Secretary] Clinton,” but did not stop Secretary Clinton from meeting

personally with donors to the Clinton Foundation with business before the State Department. To my knowledge, neither has any experience in the complicated transactions of the type they are insisting President-elect Trump must undertake.

We are a rule-of-law country; what Trump is doing to alleviate the appearance of conflicts is probably enough; it is certainly well within the law on

these issues. If he were to do something really bad, the media should pounce. But my conclusion from the media's sorry performance so far on the ethics/conflicts coverage is that they are so anti-Trump that even routine actions taken by him will be criticized severely. That's a problem. Effective watchdogs should wait for a real wolf before "crying wolf" if they want to be listened to. ♦

fortunes under Lyndon Johnson, at least for a time.

Even so, it has been the dominant pattern in American politics for almost 200 years. Parties are much more successful at acquiring political power than they are at keeping it. The reason for this is simple: Ours is a very hard country to govern.

Parties face three challenges that eventually prove insuperable. First, America is an extremely diverse nation, yet we have but two major political parties. Party coalitions are quite heterogeneous, and it is difficult to keep so many far-flung factions within the coalition happy at all times. This is especially the case when the opposition is constantly endeavoring to poach marginal supporters. Because the difference between victory and defeat is rarely larger than 10 points, it does not take a lot of work to swing just enough voters.

Second, our system makes parties *look* like governing failures. The Constitution carefully distributes governing authority across multiple institutions—the presidency, two chambers of Congress, the courts, state governments. It is hard to induce these disparate entities to coordinate their efforts to deliver on the bold promises candidates make on the stump. This is a feature, not a bug, of our system, which typically requires a broad and durable consensus before big changes can be made. Candidates rarely endeavor to manage expectations when they're electioneering—and that leaves the victors on the hook when the government does not deliver what they promised on the stump. And, of course, the opposition is always eager to tell voters that only they can make the government work.

Third, exogenous shocks to our polity are common. Wars, recessions, scandals, domestic crime waves, messy foreign entanglements—history is replete with instances when events such as these totally altered the political playing field. Sometimes, events strengthen a party's governing hand, as was the case with JFK's assassination and the 9/11 attacks. But more often than not, voters blame the party

DAVID CLARK

What Goes Up . . .

Republicans should make hay now.

BY JAY COST

January 20 will be a banner day for the Republican party. On the steps of the Capitol, Donald Trump will be sworn in as the nation's 45th president. In the building behind the ceremony, his party will be ready to enact his program with a sturdy congressional majority. The GOP is in historically strong shape in state capitols across the nation, set to implement conservative policy reforms from Idaho to Florida and just about everywhere in between.

But if the Republican party were a publicly traded company, January 20 would be the day to *sell, sell, sell*. This may sound counterintuitive, but the verdict of history is clear, if not quite unanimous: The moment a party achieves total control of the government is the moment just before power begins to slip through its fingers.

Usually, the downturn begins quickly. First the marginal members of the congressional coalition begin to waver in their loyalty, then the midterm revivifies a seemingly moribund opposition. While the incumbent party usually wins its first reelection bid for the White House (Jimmy Carter being the only exception in the last 125 years), the other



side retains a substantial footprint in the government. Their numbers are usually strengthened in the second midterm—at which point they often gain control over Congress.

There are exceptions, of course. The Great Depression during Herbert Hoover's administration brought pain beyond compare, yet the economy turned a corner about the time Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated. That, combined with his vigorous domestic agenda, helped him expand his political coalition in his first term. John F. Kennedy took office near the beginning of a fantastic economic boom. That, combined with his untimely death in 1963, boosted the Democrats'

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in charge for the new problem. The most frequent culprit is the business cycle. Ruling parties get the blame for recessions, which tend to recur every 5 to 10 years.

Some politicians are better able to ride the tides of fortune than others. Franklin Roosevelt, for instance, was a master at holding the Democratic party together; on the other hand, Jimmy Carter, who like FDR was elected with an overwhelming party majority, proved himself incompetent at the task. Still, the tide *always* crashes into the shore eventually. For all his acumen, Roosevelt found his governing coalition torn asunder in 1938. Even though the party retained a congressional

majority until 1946, the liberals in Congress were overwhelmed by a bipartisan conservative coalition, which retained power until the 1964 election.

So Republicans would do well to make hay while the sun shines, for sooner or later it is going to set. Ironically, nobody furnishes a better example of how to make use of a fleeting majority than Barack Obama and congressional Democrats. Blessed with a supermajority during 2009-2010, they implemented many sweeping policy changes with impressive alacrity—as if they knew that the moment would soon pass. Indeed, it did. This one will, too. Republicans should make the most of it while it lasts. ♦

Love and Rage

Nat Hentoff, 1925-2017.

BY LEE SMITH

Nat Hentoff—columnist, music critic, jazz lover, civil libertarian, atheist, pro-life intellectual opposed to abortion and the death penalty—was prolific and productive up until the end of his life. He died last week of natural causes at the age of 91. He was so expansive in his interests and enthusiasms and commitments that there were aspects of his long career in journalism that even many fans and colleagues were unaware of, like the fact that he was a boxing writer early on. “He used to talk about it all the time,” a former colleague of Hentoff’s 50-year tenure at the *Village Voice* remembers. “Nat was very proud of it.”

Nat Hentoff knew so much about so many things that he forgot more than most people will ever know. Really!

A friend who was writing a book on Eisenhower relates how he called Hentoff to ask him about an article the

longtime *Voice* columnist wrote years ago about Ike. “I’d never spoken to him before and called out of the blue,” my friend says. “Hentoff picked up the phone and I asked him my question. ‘Hmm,’ said Hentoff, ‘it sounds like I’d write that, but it was so long ago I really don’t recall.’” And then, says my friend, “we talked for another 20 minutes about a bunch of other things. He was a really good guy.”



Nat Hentoff

That is what I think, too. I worked with Hentoff during my brief stay at the *Voice* in the 1990s. He was one of the alternative weekly’s legends—I’d grown up around the corner from the paper and stuck my head in his office my first day to say hello. I told him I’d been reading him since I was a kid. And then I wanted to retract it immediately. Here was a man who over the course of a lifetime in journalism had taken on virtually everyone, regardless of party or political disposition, and in doing so had earned a reputation as one of the country’s most

fearsome intellectual brawlers. And I had basically asked him to sign my Mickey Mouse ears.

He looked up from his desk and smiled. I don’t recall what he said—partly I’m sure because it was a boilerplate welcome to a much younger colleague, but also because I was struck by what I can only describe as a kind of presence, maybe repose is a better word for it. He was the most self-contained person I’d ever seen. I don’t mean that he was cut off from the rest of the world, far from it, as his work makes abundantly clear. What I mean is that he didn’t seem to need the external stimulation or approval that most of the people who work in the world’s second-neediest profession—right after acting—typically require. He was a man under his own direction, which is why his opinions and positions issued not from the fear that typically manifests itself as orthodoxy, but rather from the character of the man himself.

Hentoff, in one striking example, came to his antiabortion stance late, in the mid-80s. “I became aware, very belatedly, of the ‘indivisibility of life,’” he wrote. He had been reporting on a series of “Baby Doe” controversies, he explained, and he “came across a number of physicians, medical writers, staff people in Congress and some members of the House and Senate who were convinced that making it possible for a spina bifida or a Down syndrome infant to die was the equivalent of what they called a ‘late abortion.’” But, as Hentoff wrote, “These infants were *born*. And having been born, as persons under the Constitution, they were entitled to at least the same rights as people on death row—due process, equal protection of the law.”

Hentoff revered the Constitution and became “pro-life across the board.” The indivisibility of life must extend not only to the born and the unborn but to those the American penal system intended to execute, and also the victims of cruel foreign regimes, which is why he supported toppling Saddam Hussein. And for the same reasons, he went after the George W. Bush administration for holding prisoners at Guantánamo. He gave no quarter to the

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other side either. The Obama administration, Hentoff said in 2014, was the first that had scared him. The president, he said, “is a man who is causing us and will cause us a great deal of harm constitutionally and personally.”

It strikes me that Hentoff’s attack-dog temperament is typically misunderstood—and perhaps was misunderstood even by Hentoff himself. In his last column for the *Voice*, he wrote

that “my advice to new and aspiring reporters is to remember what Tom Wicker, a first-class professional spelunker, then at the *New York Times*, said in a tribute to Izzy Stone: ‘He never lost his sense of rage.’”

I don’t think it was rage at all. I think it was his love of so many things that moved him to protect them. It is fitting that he died surrounded by his family, listening to Billie Holiday. ♦

Elective Surgery

The agony and the ecstasy.

BY HARRY STEIN

My open heart surgery was originally scheduled for 7:30 A.M., November 9—the morning after the election—but a couple of weeks before, I managed to switch it to a day later. Why take the chance that someone vital in the operating room had been up all night watching the returns—or, as it turned out, would be in the midst of a psychic meltdown over the results?

I, of course, had my own concerns on that score. Knowing that the frenzied celebrations following Hillary’s expected smashing of “the highest, hardest glass ceiling” might compromise my immune system—and, indeed, sap my very will to live—I went to bed election night without watching the returns, planning to go under the knife having in the interim avoided exposure to any news source or individual that might deliver the anticipated gruesome news.

Farfetched as this may sound, it seemed entirely doable, since by then I’d already had plenty of practice

avoiding harsh reality. A reluctant Trump supporter, continually disheartened by my candidate’s outbursts, after his midsummer attack on the father of the Muslim soldier killed in Iraq, I went to ground and stopped following the news entirely.



Again, this was not altogether virgin territory, since during the Obama years, I, like so many others, had grown accustomed to immediately hitting the remote at the sight of the president or any of his key toadies. (In our home, the primary safe space was *The Big Bang Theory*—always available somewhere on the dial—while others we know retreated to locales as varied as the Food Network, the American Heroes Channel, *American Pickers*, and ID, the murder channel.)

But this was an entirely new level of denial. Not only did I cease reading the

papers and going online, I made a jerk of myself by walking away from conversations that seemed to be veering toward current events. Only months afterward would I learn that some Olympic swimmer’s juvenile stunt had provoked an international incident or that Edward Albee was dead; and though it did penetrate my fortress of solitude that Trump had been caught saying ghastly things (and that this was evidently the last nail in his coffin), I didn’t find out what those things were until I heard them quoted in a speech two weeks before the election. To this day, I’ve never seen the video.

I filled the huge void this left in my life with books. A politics junkie, never much for fiction, I decided this was my chance to finally read *War and Peace*. But when the elegant, small-type translation proved even longer than expected, with tissue-thin pages, I quickly moved on to an abridged, simplified book club edition from the forties; then gave up entirely. Instead, I read the autobiography of the guy who killed Rasputin, then a biography of J.D. Salinger; which led me, looking to

get more info on Salinger’s old flame Oona O’Neill, to a memoir by Oona’s girlhood pal Carol Matthau, Walter’s wife; which somehow put me onto other books by relatives of famous people: one by Irving Berlin’s daughter, another by Nora Ephron’s father.

I’d just picked up *My Dad, the Babe* when my wife rescued me from this madness. When I asked one late

October afternoon why she was looking so unaccountably pleased, she said: “Something *big* has happened.” She paused, teasingly. “Do you want to hear?”

“All right,” I grudgingly agreed.

“Comey’s reopened the investigation on Hillary’s emails! And there’s an Anthony Weiner connection!”

Just when you think you’re out, they pull you back in again.

Not, as the big day neared, that there seemed much reason for hope—until a friend roused us from sleep at around 11 that night shrieking we had

GARY HOWLAND

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to turn on the TV. In seconds, my hurting heart was soaring.

Thirty-five hours later, before I'd even had the chance to gulp down a full measure of joy and *schadenfreude*, I was on the operating table.

Ah, but was there ever a better time to be stuck in a hospital room, with a TV for company, than in the days that followed? There they were, hour after hour, the still disbelieving and distraught journalists struggling to make sense of it. I'd never before watched MSNBC for more than 30 seconds, but now I was nightly trying to guess who'd be angrier or more bitter, Maddow or O'Donnell. And then there were Joy and Whoopi on *The View*. Talk about bliss!

The one hitch was that, under the circumstances, I had to keep it to myself. If, as Ronald Reagan famously joked to his surgeon, "I hope you're a Republican," I could be pretty sure most of those tending to me in a New York hospital were anything but; and how hard would it have been, really, as I lay there helpless, for some unregenerate Hillary fan of an orderly to slip one of those untraceable killer drugs into my medicine port? More than once, hearing approaching footfalls, I

quickly switched to *The Price Is Right* or *Jay Leno's Garage*.

In fact, there was only one time anyone engaged me on the election: an extremely competent and friendly Filipina night nurse. One late evening, as she lingered to chat after taking blood, we got to talking about our respective experiences in Paris, but then she unexpectedly veered onto Trump. I said nothing as she went on about the vileness of the man and his followers and was relieved when she said she had to tend to other patients.

"By the way," she said, by way of parting conversation, "what do you do?"

"Me?" I said, caught short. "Uh, I'm a writer, actually."

"Really? What do you write?"

"Well, you know, a bit of everything," I said vaguely, "a little fiction, some nonfiction." Not to mention, especially lately, lots of stuff that would mark me in her mind as a Deplorable, if not an out-and-proud Nazi.

"That's really interesting!"—and there was not the slightest doubt she'd soon be googling me.

"But, well, you know," I called after, "there are actually a bunch of writers with the same name!" ♦

politics. But some lawmakers didn't just allow their votes to do the talking. "Democrats are solidly behind controlling the border, and we support the border fence," California senator Dianne Feinstein declared at the time. She is one of seven Democrats in the upper chamber today to have supported the measure—one lawmaker short of the eight that Republicans need to meet a 60-vote threshold to secure new money for that wall. It's a fact the majority is sure to dangle before the public as Congress takes up the issue.

The substance of the matter, however, is more complicated. An omnibus appropriations bill altered the Fence Act significantly a year after it was enacted. Texas Republican senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and a Democratic House colleague pushed through an amendment requiring the federal government to consult local officials, Indian tribes, and property owners before receiving the money to build. Hutchison also secured language that struck the double-layer constraint and inserted a mandate of at least 700 miles of "reinforced fencing" somewhere along the border, eliminating any mention of the five specific areas of construction in the original legislation. The changes were sold as providing the secretary of homeland security flexibility in executing the law. But immigration hawks and the bill's own author, New York representative Peter King, saw them as weakening the statute. The overhaul erected bureaucratic hurdles instead of a fence, critics charged, and whatever fence ended up being built was liable to be ineffective. "This was a midnight massacre. It was absolutely disgraceful," King said in 2007.

For Republicans, then, the Fence Act presents both advantages and disadvantages. What was once seen as diluting its intent may actually add potency to the Trump administration's goals: Free of the mandate that a barrier be double-layer fence and that it be established in specific places along the southern border, the White House has room to dream of an actual wall. Plus, the 700-mile provision is a floor—it's a lot longer than that from Tecate to Brownsville. But the procedural

A Bipartisan Wall

Remember the Fence Act of 2006?

BY CHRIS DEATON

Plans to fund a wall between the United States and Mexico are starting to take clearer shape as President-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office. *Politico* reported this month that congressional Republicans and the new administration are contemplating a bid to appropriate money through an open-ended 2006 law authorizing the construction of fencing. The idea would save GOP

lawmakers the chore of crafting new border security legislation that could earn bipartisan Senate support. After all, such a statute already received that backing a decade ago.

A majority of Senate Democrats, including their new leader, Chuck Schumer, approved the Secure Fence Act. The legislation called for double-layer fences, "additional physical barriers," and new surveillance equipment along five particular stretches of the southern border. Endorsing it may have amounted to necessary election-year

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obstacles remain. As Sen. Lindsey Graham put it nine years ago, “In the name of providing flexibility, I think we may end up slowing construction.” According to multiple reports, more than 600 miles of the barricade have been built, but it mostly comprises single-layer fence and roadblocks. Trump has been insistent that a stronger barrier be built with dispatch.

Naturally, key players on Capitol Hill have been tight-lipped about where they stand on the Fence Act now, as well as its application to present-day border funding. Of the seven Democrats who voted yes in 2006—Schumer, Feinstein, Ohio’s Sherrod Brown (then in the House), Delaware’s Tom Carper, Florida’s Bill Nelson, Michigan’s Debbie Stabenow, and Oregon’s Ron Wyden—only Brown’s office provided comment to *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*. The response sidestepped the Fence Act and whether Brown would vote to fund what it authorizes, instead criticizing Trump for not providing “a single shred of evidence that Mexico will pay for the wall.” Trump has said the country would reimburse the United States, but has not offered details.

On the opposite side of the aisle, King told *TWS* he was looking forward to working with an administration that shared more of his views than President Obama’s has. He didn’t insist his bill was necessarily the way forward—rather, that “discussions are ongoing” about determining what path party leaders will take. “Regardless of the mechanism,” he said in a statement, “there is no doubt that we will have a willing and committed partner in the White House to do what is necessary to secure the border, a far cry from the past eight years.”

The person expected to help spearhead the effort is retired Marine general John Kelly, Trump’s pick to head the Department of Homeland Security. Kelly was reportedly eyed by the president-elect for his knowledge of Central and South America from his time as chief of the United States Southern Command between November 2012 and January 2016. He takes a holistic view of border security—much like the Fence Act itself does. “A physical

barrier in and of itself—certainly as a military person that understands defense and defenses—a physical barrier in and of itself will not do the job,” he told the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. “It has to be, really, a layered defense. If you were to build a wall from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico, you’d still have to back that wall up with patrolling by human beings, by sensors, by observation devices.”

Although the immigration debate has been muted by the confirmation process of Kelly and other, more controversial nominees, as well as the GOP’s move to begin repealing Obamacare, it won’t be quiet for long. Government funding is set to expire at the end of April, at which

point congressional leaders could stuff money for the border into must-pass spending legislation. How much they’d need is a matter of ambition; how much they’d get is a matter of reality. Trump estimated in February that the cost of his idea, 1,000 miles of concrete wall 35 to 40 feet high, would be \$8 billion. Estimates cited by the *Washington Post* and the financial firm Alliance-Bernstein place the figure as high as \$25 billion. What Republicans have going for them is that the Secure Fence Act, as amended, authorizes the spending of “such sums as may be necessary.” But they have to contend with annual spending caps through fiscal year 2021 established by the sequester law, making it possible they might hit a wall in their attempts to fund one. ♦

False Friend

The Putin love-in.

BY CATHY YOUNG

Even as the media, and all of Washington, buzzed with scandalous uncorroborated claims about President-elect Donald Trump’s ties to the Kremlin, a lesser-noticed moment neatly illustrated another side of Trump’s—or Trump-era conservatism’s—Russia problem. After Marco Rubio grilled Rex Tillerson at his confirmation hearings about the secretary of state nominee’s refusal to call Vladimir Putin a war criminal, Trump’s Twitter legion attacked the Republican senator. High-profile Trump supporters mocked Rubio, sometimes crudely, with some followers insisting that if the Russian president is a war criminal, Barack Obama is too.

Since the election, some of the left’s rhetoric declaring Trump the Kremlin’s “Manchurian candidate” has bordered on unhinged, while many of the president-elect’s defenders have

argued the benefits of rapport with the Putin regime. But whatever the facts may be about the Kremlin connection, Trump’s stance on Russia is a genuine cause for concern—as is the drift in the pro-Trump quarters of the right toward rose-colored perceptions of Putin.

An *Economist/YouGov* poll released in December found that 37 percent of Republicans held a favorable opinion of Putin, up from just 10 percent in July 2014. There has been some debate about whether this is a real shift; another recent poll, by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, shows no real change in Republicans’ feelings toward Russia since 2014 (from 33 to 35 percent favorable) but a sharp drop in Democrats’ pro-Russian views (from 36 to 28 percent). Yet, speaking to rank-and-file Trump supporters online, it is easy to believe that the pro-Putin sentiment is real: Many praise Putin as a strong leader and a potential ally against radical Islamism.

Trump himself, of course, is

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notorious for speaking warmly of Putin—"a leader, far more than our president has been a leader"—and downplaying his crimes. "Our country does plenty of killing also," was his response in late 2015 to the observation that Putin is regularly accused of ordering the murders of journalists and political opponents. Some prominent pro-Trump conservatives have joined the bandwagon as well.

After Trump came under fire for praising Putin's leadership in September, a number of radio talk show hosts and other pundits spoke up on his behalf. Hugh Hewitt explained that although Putin may be "an evil man," he has "served his country's national interest better" than Obama has. Dinesh D'Souza tweeted, "What [Trump] admires about Putin is the way Putin—unlike someone else we know—LOVES his country & FIGHTS for its interests." On the Breitbart News Daily radio show, retired Navy SEAL and former Blackwater CEO Erik Prince described Putin as a "large and in charge" leader who had "at least tried to direct the country"—and with whom we can work against "a common enemy . . . Islamic fascism."

Among the more radical segments of Trump's base, the sympathy for Putinism is far more overt and unhedged by disclaimers. In December, Paul Joseph Watson of the conspiracy-peddling Infowars site and the affiliated Alex Jones radio show (which has had Trump as a guest and has a large following among his fans) touted Russia's virtues in a Facebook post he shared on Twitter under the sarcastic heading "Russia is TERRIBLE." Watson's Russia is a country that "protects its own culture," doesn't "bow to radical Islam," "looks out for the economic interests of its population," and "wants to work with leaders of other world powers, not go to war with them."

To be fair, the Putin love-in on the right did not start with Trump. For well over a decade, there has been a contingent of paleoconservative/libertarian Friends of Vladimir, from veteran culture warrior Patrick Buchanan to former congressman Ron Paul. Sometimes, these contrarian views were

motivated by dislike of U.S. interventionism, which these critics saw Russia containing; sometimes, by cultural traditionalism, with post-Soviet, Putin-era Russia idealized as a champion of Christianity and morality against the secularized liberal West.

Trump's ascent unquestionably made mainstream a more positive view of Putin in conservative ranks. Meanwhile, the rise of the Islamic State and Putin's self-positioning as its nemesis has led to talk of Russia as a valuable partner in combating jihadism, a notion shared by Trump's incoming national security adviser Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn and senior adviser Stephen Bannon (both of whom, it should be noted, have also been highly critical of the Putin regime).

Yet both the pro-Putin sympathies and the more limited hopes for an anti-Islamist alliance are profoundly misguided. The idea that Putin is fighting for Russia's interests presumes that it's in Russia's interest to be ruled by an authoritarian regime that has squelched the country's nascent civil society, eliminated all viable opposition to one-party rule, and tightened the corrupt state's grip on the economy while empowering a crony capitalist clique. Even the economic betterment that many Russians have achieved in the Putin years was due primarily to high oil prices, while market-oriented economic reforms have stalled or reversed. As Max Boot has pointed out in the *Los Angeles Times*, both Russia's GDP and Russians' incomes have been suffering a sharp decline; the GDP drop from 2013 to 2015 was a staggering 40 percent.

Nor is Putin a champion of religion, unless "religion" means a Russian Orthodox church hierarchy subservient to the state and ruled mainly by former KGB stooges. Orthodox clerics who have spoken out against the church leadership's cozy relationship with the Kremlin or urged a full accounting of its Soviet-era service to the atheistic regime have been muzzled and defrocked. And Putin-era regulations have hobbled minority faiths. Last fall, American Baptist preacher Donald Ossewaarde, who had lived and

worked in the Russian town of Oryol, was convicted of violating regulations on evangelism by hosting a prayer and Bible study group in his home and promoting it with flyers.

The praise for Putin's toughness toward radical Islam is even more incongruous, given Russia's role as Iran's chief ally and enabler. The actual record of Russia's military intervention in Syria leaves little doubt that Putin's interest is in propping up Bashar al-Assad, not fighting ISIS. It is also worth noting that Russia is home to the only actual *sharia* state in Europe: Chechnya, whose president, close Putin associate Ramzan Kadyrov—granted virtually unlimited power in exchange for loyalty to the Kremlin—has imposed Islamic dress codes and publicly condoned polygamy, honor killings, and murder of blasphemers.

Proponents of conservative-style détente often point out that modern-day Russia is not the Soviet Union, armed with an ideology that regards the capitalist West as the enemy. True. Yet especially in the last decade, Putin has actively sought to bolster his rule by giving it an ideological foundation explicitly hostile to free societies. This pseudo-conservative ideology positions Russia as the vanguard of what one might call an "illiberal international": opposition to European- and American-style liberal democracy rooted in individual rights and limited government.

For all the flaws of the modern West, the free world is still worth defending. Partnership with a dictator whose agenda is to make the world safe for autocracy is bad not only from a moral standpoint but from a geopolitically realist one. Some have cited the West's alliance with Stalin to defeat Hitler as a model for present policies. But that alliance, formed in a far more desperate situation than the one we face today, was followed by the Soviet enslavement of Eastern Europe, the Cold War, and decades of global U.S.-Soviet hostilities whose consequences survive today and include international terrorism. What disastrous legacy will friendship with Putin's Russia leave decades from now? ♦

Untruth and Consequences

The great hate-crime hysteria

BY ERIC FELTEN

Scottish teenager Kate Hume was no stranger to tragedy. By the time the great European powers hurtled into war at the end of July 1914, her older brother had already been dead more than two years: Violinist John “Jock” Hume was a member of Wallace Hartley’s eight-man orchestra that had played on the deck of the sinking *Titanic*.

Just a month and a half into the Great War she received news even more devastating.

At the office in Dumfries where she worked as a “clerkess,” Kate found herself with a pair of letters. The first had the signature of her older sister, about whom the last Kate knew was that she was working as a nurse in the English town of Huddersfield. The letter read: “Dear Kate, This is to say good-bye. Have not long to live. Hospital has been set on fire. Germans cruel. . . .

My right breast has been taken away. . . . Good-bye. Grace.”

The first letter was explained by the other, from one of Grace’s fellow nurses, a Miss Mullard. “I was with your sister when she died,” the letter said, explaining they had been together at a field hospital set up near the front at Vilvorde, in Belgium. The Huns attacked and burned the hospital, according to Nurse Mullard, killing over a thousand wounded men, including through beheadings. As for the nurses, the ones the Germans captured were grotesquely violated before being murdered. Grace was among them: “She endured great agony,” the letter went on, detailing that counterattacking British Tommies had “caught two German soldiers . . . cutting off

her left breast, her right one having been already cut off.”

Kate shared the letters with the press. The story caused a sensation—covered not only in local Scottish papers such as the *Dumfries Standard*, but in London papers including the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Globe*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Evening Standard*, and everywhere in-between. The headline in the *London Star* was typical: “A NURSE’S TRAGEDY: Dumfries Girl the Victim of Shocking Barbarity.”

With such widespread reporting, it didn’t take long for Grace Hume to learn of her own grisly death. She saw

placards up at the newsstand advertising the big headline “Terrible Murder of Huddersfield Nurse.” She bought the local *Post* and, astonished by what she read, wired her father: “Reports untrue. Safe in Huddersfield.”

Kate, it turned out, had made the whole thing up.

Jump forward a century and the case of the Mutilated Nurse has a newfound relevance. For we are in a new age of hoaxes, with frequent

tales of Trump-inspired atrocities that have unraveled, as did so many of the stories of atrocities committed in WWI. Understanding the propaganda of the Great War may help us understand the motives and methods of the modern propaganda in what we might call the Hate War.

The Hate War got going in earnest in the immediate aftermath of the election with a raft of reports of malicious Trumpkins taunting and attacking young Muslim women, targeting them for wearing traditional religious head-coverings.

One of the most distressing of the hijab stories was that of Yasmin Seweid, who told police she was assaulted on the New York subway by marauding Trump supporters while fellow passengers did nothing, said nothing. The



A French propaganda image from WWI

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perpetrators were described as three drunk white men talking about Trump. “They were surrounding me from behind and they were like, ‘Oh look, it’s an f-ing terrorist,’” the 18-year-old Baruch College student told a CBSNewYork reporter. They pulled at her bag, breaking the strap. She said she begged to be left alone, only to be met with a torrent of abuse: “They kept saying ‘you don’t belong here, get out of this country, go back to your country.’” The men grabbed at her hijab, and her fellow straphangers, she suggested, were, in their cowardice, complicit: “Everyone was looking, no one said a thing, everyone just looked away.”

The police didn’t look away. They combed through the subway’s security video looking for the men Seweid had described. They found none. Though the case was hugely publicized, no witnesses were found. Then, with the police looking to interview her again, Seweid went AWOL. When she finally turned up, “Suspicion,” the *New York Daily News* reported, “went through the roof.” Facing continued questioning by skeptical detectives, the young woman admitted she had been lying all along. The whole thing was a fraud. She was arraigned, charged with making a false report.

(If one thinks that a trifle harsh for a bit of youthful fibbing, it’s worth noting that Britain, in the midst of war with Germany, prosecuted and convicted Kate Hume for her lies.)

Seweid’s was hardly the only hijab hoax. There was the University of Michigan student with the story of being accosted by a smelly, drunk man with a lighter who supposedly demanded she remove her headscarf or he would set it on fire right there on her head. When she told of the attack in the days after the election, university police called in city cops and the FBI. As in New York, security video was reviewed. “During the course of the investigation, numerous inconsistencies in the statements provided by the alleged victim were identified,” the Ann Arbor police finally announced before Christmas. “Following a thorough investigation, detectives have determined the incident in question did not occur.”

The day after the election, a University of Louisiana student told Lafayette police she had been attacked and robbed. The “18 year old middle-eastern female” said two white males jumped from a gray sedan, struck her, stole her wallet, and made off with her hijab. Police went to work. “During the course of the investigation,” read the press release soon issued by the police department, “the female

complainant admitted that she fabricated the story.”

Also on November 9, there was the case at San Diego State University, where a hijab-wearing student reported that two young, Trump-talking men assaulted her in the school parking garage, taunting her, grabbing her purse, stealing her keys, and making off with her car. School police worked the case for over a month, calling in the FBI for help. The only thing they were able to nail down? “The initial report of a stolen vehicle was unfounded,” says university police lieutenant Gregory Noll, “as the victim forgot where she parked her vehicle.” The investigation has been shelved: “The victim made the decision to no longer pursue the matter,” Officer Noll says. When “the victim no longer wants to cooperate with the investigation our hands are tied.”

Why *do* people make up such stories? Scoring partisan points against ideological enemies is clearly job one. When she was first hyping her New York subway hoax, Seweid was quick to denounce not only her imagined attackers but the man she considered ultimately responsible: “The president-elect just promotes this stuff and is very anti-Muslim, very Islamophobic, and he’s just condoning it.” A friend of the San Diego State student was quick to blame Republicans: “I think this absolutely relates with [Trump



Yasmin Seweid, right, and father leave Manhattan Criminal Court, December 15, 2016.

winning],” sociology senior Aisha Sharif told the campus newspaper, the *Daily Aztec*. “It’s sad that it’s only—hasn’t even been 24 hours since he’s been elected and we’re already getting this type of hate.”

It’s a fine way of vilifying one’s enemies. And in their political potency, hate hoaxes function not unlike wartime atrocity propaganda. “Rumors and reports of German atrocities—many of them untrue,” encouraged the allies “to view Germans not as human beings, but as marauding brutes, thereby galvanizing ‘us versus them’ thinking,” wrote the great literary historian of the First World War, Paul Fussell.

Then again, though clothed in political garb, there may not necessarily always be a political agenda at work. Don’t discount the desperate need for attention so central to our social-media age: Hoaxers used to be eager to be in the papers or on the news; now many are eager to be “liked” on Facebook. And sometimes the most fundamental reasons can be distinctly personal. In admitting she had fabricated her tale of trauma on the 6 train, Seweid had explained to police that she was having difficulties with her parents. The *New York Daily News* reported that police told them

SAM COSTANZA / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

“Seweid made up the story because she didn’t want to get in trouble for breaking her curfew after being out late drinking with friends”—an offense for which her father punished her by shaving her head.

Kate Hume was also having troubles at home, as the judge in the “Mutilated Nurse” case pointed out to the jury: “It is palpable that [her forgery] was done with the motive of horrifying her father and stepmother.”

There may be psychological explanations for the particular forms atrocity stories take. A widely believed WWI fiction was the tale of the “Crucified Canadian.” In its most common form the story went that a Canadian soldier captured by Germans was crucified—pinned to a tree, arms outstretched, with bayonets through his hands, feet, and side—and left in the sight of his friends across no-man’s-land to die an excruciating death. Fussell, in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, suggests that the crucifixion meme resonated with soldiers for whom a sense of martyrdom was deeply felt: “The sacrificial theme, in which each soldier becomes a type of the crucified Christ, is at the heart of countless Great War poems,” Fussell writes.

Could there be something similar going on with all the hijab-grabbing tales? For young Islamic women living in the West, whether and how to cover their heads is a fraught question. Could it be that stories end up centering on the hijab not because the covering is an incitement to Muslim-hating bullies, but because it is such a difficult and self-defining issue for the young women?

It was obvious even during the First World War that many of the lurid tales of barbarous crimes were frauds. “It is now pretty generally admitted that German atrocity stories as a rule were magnified by the time they were published in the States,” wrote Edwin L. James a few months after the war was over. The *New York Times* correspondent (who would later be the paper’s managing editor) believed this was true of all the atrocity stories, “except those in Belgium the first three months of the war and the deportations of Lille. Those things couldn’t be exaggerated, but others unquestionably were.” James’s favorite falsehood was the widely repeated story that American prisoners were being exhibited in cages as if in

a zoo. It wasn’t a concocted hoax but a rumor that, born of mistranslation, grew into an imagined atrocity. In an “official statement the German Army said something about Americans in prison cages,” James wrote in the *Times* in May 1919, noting that it was common practice for prisoners on all sides of the conflict to be locked up. “But some-

how or other the fact that German captors put American doughboys into an ordinary prison cage came to grow to the point where the Germans were exhibiting these captured men in cages as they would monkeys. I have even read that these American-filled cages were transported about the German Empire and exhibited on stages of theatres with lectures. Such, it is the best opinion, never happened.”

What’s so curious about the craze for phony atrocity stories in World War I is that the entire war could itself be described as one huge, appalling atrocity. There’s something peculiar, for example, about accusing the Huns of using dum-dum bullets, Fussell points out, when you’ve “seen the damage done by quite ordinary bullets fired from high-velocity military rifles.” Why is it that, amid the incredible brutality of the war—the deaths, even

executions, of civilians; the unimaginable slaughter of combatants in and between the trenches; the use of chlorine gas and mustard gas and phosgene gas; the whole grand mechanized Guignol—somehow there was still a widespread need to invent cartoonish versions of the enemy’s enormities, stories that would stand out from the daily butcher’s bill?

Something strangely similar seems to be at work in the tales of Trumpian atrocities: It’s not enough just to be outraged by the opposition’s stated positions, there’s a need to believe the enemy to be irredeemably barbarous. Goodness knows there are real, documented, unambiguous hate crimes enough: White supremacist Dylann Roof last week was rightly sentenced to death for his ghastly killing spree at a black church in Charleston, S.C. There are even clear instances of racially motivated hate crimes pegged to the election of Donald Trump: The four African Americans who live-streamed video of themselves torturing a young white man in Chicago, while shouting “F— white people” and “F— Donald Trump” is a particularly well-documented example. Aren’t we witness to behavior terrible enough without having to make it up?

But make it up they have been doing: The day after the election an African-American student at Bowling Green



An anti-German recruiting poster for the U.S. Army, WWI

State University in Ohio reported that three young white men in Trump shirts had thrown rocks and hurled racist abuse at her. But when police investigated, her story kept shifting. After subpoenaing her smartphone records, detectives found that she hadn't been anywhere near where she said the incident occurred. And as for hate, police found that she had been sending such enlightened political messages as saying of Trump supporters, "I hope they all get AIDS." Bowling Green police charged her with falsification and obstructing official business.

Even the cases that clearly happened are often presented in ways that are less than straightforward. Take the *New York Times's* editorial page feature, "This Week in Hate," which has been running regularly since November. The December 20 edition included this alarming item: "A man is accused of attacking a Muslim woman at a Manhattan Dunkin' Donuts on Sunday, throwing coffee in her face and putting her in a headlock. According to police, he told the woman he 'hated Muslims' and was going to kill her. He has been charged with assault as a hate crime." Unlike so many of the phony reports of hate, here we have an unambiguous incident seen by multiple witnesses. Nothing to doubt here. Then again, follow the online link to the *New York Daily News* story originally reporting the attack and it takes on a

somewhat different quality. That article begins: "A rampaging homeless man chucked hot coffee at a Muslim woman, hit her and accused her of being a 'terrorist.'" Manhattanites are all too familiar with the dangers that the homeless exhibiting signs of mental illness pose to themselves and others. Then again, the *Times* seems all too happy to conflate what may well be derangement with what it takes to be the political pathologies of Trump supporters.

Or consider acts of vandalism labeled as hate: It isn't always—or even usually—clear what sort of crimes they are. Take the case of the swastikas at Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven, Connecticut. Spray-painted in red on the school gym's bathroom wall were both the Nazi symbol and, below it, the word "Trump." One could, of course, just assume that this is the triumphalist tag of some menacing, white-power Trump supporter (and those setting out to catalogue the supposed wave of hate do just that). But we know that some number (a large number?) of such graffiti incidents are the work of Trump antagonists. Some are clear—as when vandals spray-painted cars in front of a house in Burtonsville, Md., on November 30. The give-away was that they not only spray-painted swastikas and the word "Trump" on the cars, they also tagged the vehicles with the accusation "racist." According to the Montgomery County

Let's Grow: Ideas to Get Our Economy Moving

THOMAS J. DONOHUE
PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Last week I detailed how stronger, faster economic growth is in the best interests of all Americans. Here are some of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's specific ideas for setting our country on a path to achieve that growth.

Provide Regulatory Relief and Reform. We must roll back many of the costly and excessive rules that are hampering economic growth. The regulatory system itself, which hasn't been updated in 70 years, must also be reformed to promote smarter, more transparent regulation.

Harness U.S. Energy. America must safely and responsibly develop energy of all kinds to help drive growth, create jobs, lower energy costs, generate tax revenues, and strengthen national security.

Modernize Our Infrastructure. From roads and bridges to airports and seaports to pipelines and power grids, America's infrastructure should be the

most modern and efficient in the world. We need a permitting process that works quickly and efficiently, and we need both private financing and a sustainable federal funding source to cover the costs.

Overhaul Our Tax Code. We have a once-in-a-generation chance to adopt commonsense tax reforms that will drive tremendous growth in our economy. These reforms should include lowering tax rates for both businesses and individuals, ending the bias against capital investment, and instituting an internationally competitive system of taxation.

Expand American Trade. The Chamber will continue to lead the fight for tough, enforceable trade agreements that benefit American businesses, farmers, and workers and help the United States set global trade standards. If we want stronger, faster growth, boosting trade would help significantly.

Foster a Competitive Workforce. Fixing K-12 education and rethinking our approach to workforce training will enable us to better meet the needs

of our economy and connect people to jobs. This is critical to driving growth and helping those who feel left behind in our changing economy.

Reform America's Legal System. Excessive litigation is one of the biggest barriers to job creation. We have a golden opportunity to enact medical liability reform, fight unwarranted litigation, and prevent the legal extortion of billions of dollars out of private companies every year.

I laid out each of these priorities in detail at the Chamber's annual *State of American Business* event last week. You can read the full speech at uschamber.com/soab. These policies are among 300 that the Chamber will advance this year, all of which support stronger economic growth. We believe that every American can unite around this mission because growth is the only way to achieve job creation, higher wages, and expanded opportunity for all.



Learn more at
uschamber.com/abovethefold.

police, the incident was being investigated as “related to the homeowner’s possible political affiliation.”

As for the Wilbur Cross High School gym, we’ll likely never know whether the graffiti was the work of some Trump-emboldened white supremacist or a student angry at the Republican’s victory and eager to express his contempt for the candidate by painting “Trump” together with a swastika. The New Haven Police Department has no leads: The high school’s “video surveillance system wasn’t working,” says Officer David Hartman. “There wasn’t anything to go on.” Absent proof to the contrary, the New Haven swastikas will continue to be listed as acts of hate, though there’s of course a difference between graffiti that means “Trump won, hurray for Nazism” and the very same tag meant, instead, to condemn Trump as some sort of Nazi.

There are other crudely drawn swastikas that have nothing to do with Trump and everything to do with traditional antisemitism, such as the mad proliferation of Nazi graffiti at Nassau Community College on Long Island this fall. Though it began in October, there were suggestions it was the work of Trump’s white-power minions—that is, until police arrested, *in flagrante*, student Jasskirat Saini, who seems to have had a gripe against Jews.

Many of the cases of menacing graffiti have turned out not to be what was first assumed. Williams College discovered one of its buildings had been defaced with “AMKKK KILL” in blood-red paint the weekend after the election. To his credit Williams president Adam Falk was cautious: “This vandalism is disturbing and intolerable, no matter what motivated it.” But then he couldn’t help but invoke the potential menace of Trump: “In the current post-election climate, we have a heightened awareness for any actions or expressions that may be bias incidents.” The vandals were soon identified: two Williams students who explained theirs was a commentary on “racism in our society.”

Or how about the Elon University classroom whiteboard that was found, after the election, with the words “Bye Bye Latinos, Hasta La Vista.” A vicious expression of Trump-inspired hate? After much gnashing of teeth and rending of garments, it turns out, no, it was actually “satirical commentary” penned by a Hispanic student.

Encounter enough of these hoaxes, and one starts to feel like Edward G. Robinson’s character in *Double Indemnity*, Barton Keyes, the insurance investigator with a finely tuned instinct for fraud. “Every month

hundreds of claims come to this desk. Some of them are phonies. And I know which ones,” he tells a hapless scammer. “How do I know? Because my little man tells me . . . the little man in here,” Keyes says, gesturing to his gut. “Every time one of these phonies comes along it ties knots in my stomach—I can’t eat.”

My Keynesian “little man” went into action the week before the election when the Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church in Greenville, Miss., burned down. Not only was the historically black church torched, it was tagged—the side of the building was spray-painted “Vote Trump.” It was assumed the perpetrator was engaged in racial intimidation.

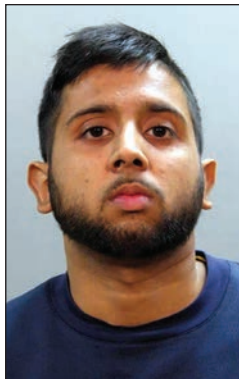
“I see this as an attack on the black church and the black community,” said Mayor Errick Simmons. The FBI and the ATF were called in to help solve this obvious hate crime.

A month and a half later an arrest was finally made—an African-American member of the church.

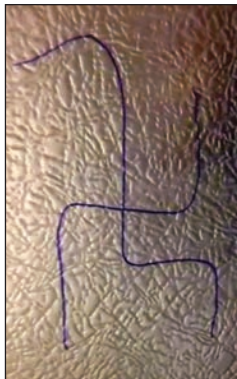
Our little Keynesian men are helpful in winkling out hoaxes, and we should all cultivate them. But those hard-earned habits of skepticism point to what may be

the greatest damage done by atrocity propaganda, whether a century ago or now. Fed enough preposterous whoppers, we become unwilling to credit even those stories that are true. It happened in Britain after WWI, where “propaganda became a dirty word. The falsehoods that had been put out, and the lies that had been believed, greatly discredited its use,” writes Taylor Downing in his book on spycraft and psychological warfare during the Great War, *Secret Warriors*. People had learned to dismiss hysterical tales of atrocities. Which is all well and good, except: “When genuine atrocities, such as the Nazis’ gassing and burning of millions of innocent civilians in the extermination camps, were revealed, many therefore dismissed them as alarmist propaganda.” The grim irony, Downing writes, is that having been all too willing to believe lies, people then “disregarded what was dreadful but true.”

Arthur Koestler wrote, in January 1944, a distraught article for the *New York Times Magazine* “On Disbelieving Atrocities” that despaired of convincing people of Hitler’s crimes: In a “public opinion survey nine out of ten average American citizens, when asked whether they believed that the Nazis commit atrocities, answered that it was all propaganda lies, and that they didn’t believe a word of it.” It may be satisfying to paint one’s enemies as brutes and monsters, but the cost of telling lies may well be that one loses the ability, when it matters most, to tell terrible truths. ♦



Long Islander Jasskirat Saini and his sorta-swastika



Now for the Post-Post-Cold War Era

The ‘unipolar moment’ has come and gone

BY THOMAS DONNELLY

As Barack Obama leaves the Oval Office, so too will the “post-Cold War era” exit the scene. Another Lost Ark, it may wind up in an endless, dusty warehouse, a torrent locked in a raw wood crate.

What was the post-Cold War era—a time first and forever defined by what it was not? Was it even a fleeting Pax Americana, this “unipolar moment”? Or were such pronouncements merely hubris, the pride that inevitably comes before a fall? The temptation always has been to see this period as one shaped by ineluctable forces: a Hegelian end of history revealing liberal democracy as the only legitimate form of government, or the apotheosis of “gloeconomics,” when commerce supplanted military power and national sovereignty “devolved” to supranational institutions or super-localism or some hybrid of the two. The Big Thinking of the past generation has been one long parade of Big Ideas, none of which seemed to last more than a season or two.

But to be content with Lexus-and-olive-tree history is to lose a sense of the contingencies, the counterfactuals, and especially the influence of individuals and their decisions on the course of events. This past generation has been, when compared with the recorded past, a unipolar moment. “Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power, nothing,” wrote Paul Kennedy, previously the prophet of the rise and fall of great powers, of U.S. preeminence in 2002. Yet now, at the transition from Obama to Donald Trump, it is

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apparent that this unprecedented disparity was not translated into anything of permanence. The unipolar moment did not become a Pax Americana. Far from it.

What happened?

The answer to that question must begin by recollecting what a surprise the collapse of the Soviet Union was, how rapid it was, and how it reflected internal rot much more than external pressures or influence. The conventional

wisdom at the time was that the twilight struggle with Moscow’s empire would go on for ever. In their remarkably plainspoken memoir, *A World Transformed*, George H. W. Bush and his national security adviser Brent Scowcroft reacted to the events of 1989 as though they were reruns of similar Eastern Bloc tumults from previous decades. What they feared most was a replay of Hungary 1956: “I did not want to encourage a course of events which might turn violent and get out of hand,” Bush wrote, “and which we then

couldn’t—or wouldn’t—support, leaving people stranded at the barricades.”

That the Soviet empire imploded quietly was an astounding stroke of luck, and the principal strategic result—the reunification of Germany in NATO—was an achievement of immense proportions, the seeming resolution of centuries of bloodshed. But such an epoch-defining event proved disorienting, perhaps understandably so, to men such as Bush and Scowcroft. They had grown up in a world where the aim of statecraft was stability, managing and preventing great-power confrontations, and defending the frontiers of freedom rather than exploiting the weaknesses of autocracies.

So if they were coldly cautious in guiding Mikhail Gorbachev to ground in Moscow, Bush and his lieutenants



Robert Gates, left, and Brent Scowcroft, center, with George H. W. Bush in the early days of the Gulf war

SUSAN BIDDLE / WHITE HOUSE / THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION / GETTY

froze in place when faced with the Tiananmen Square crisis and massacres in Beijing. The president was deeply and personally involved with China policy—although, as unofficial ambassador in Beijing, he had been largely out of the loop when Henry Kissinger engineered his “opening” during the Nixon years—and felt he knew Chinese leaders well. He embraced the gospel of the “U.S.-China relationship” as a pillar of U.S. strategy. Tiananmen suggested a degree of great-power instability and uncertainty beyond what Bush, Scowcroft, and company could handle.

Bush’s caution and moderation seemed to receive its reward in 1990 and 1991, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and threatened to continue his offensive into northern Saudi Arabia. Bush’s “new world order” was in fact a defense of the status quo, of state sovereignty in a chaotic time. Thus he was able to get support from the United Nations and, in particular, in exchange for relief from sanctions imposed after Tiananmen, the abstention of China in the Security Council vote on the critical go-to-war resolution.

In geostrategic terms, it might be said that Bush was prepared to accept what was on offer in Europe, unwilling to rock the boat in East Asia, and bold in expanding the American position in the Middle East, all the while positioning himself as the defender of the traditional state system. He was dealt a surprisingly strong hand and played it competently, if perhaps not for all it was worth.

Schooled in traditional great-power balancing, he found it hard to chart a lasting course for history’s sole superpower; Bush had no template for the end of history and wanted any new world order to be as much as possible like the old world order, with its familiar rules.

For Bill Clinton, the apparent absence of international competition was a holiday from history, or at least the traditional exercise of power. Geopolitics had been superseded—at least in the academic fashion of the times as displayed in the work of Frenchman Pascal Lorot and American Edward Luttwak—by “geoeconomics,” a modern version of mercantilism wherein states competed not for territories but for market share, and commerce was less a source of profit than an “element of national power.” The 1990s were also the high-water mark of influence for *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, who popularized notions of “globalization,” arguing that advancing technologies were changing the nature of human societies and politics.

The Clinton administration tried to stay in tune with

the times. Indeed, it produced new national security strategies at a record clip, generating four in eight years and revising several of them multiple times. But strategies that are working don’t get changed; innovation in strategy is usually a measure of failure or, in this case, fad. By the time Clinton had his final say in December 2000 with *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*, he was in end-zone-dance mode. “As we enter the new millennium,” he wrote:

we are blessed to be citizens of a country enjoying record prosperity, with no deep divisions at home, no overriding external threats abroad, and history’s most powerful military ready to defend our interests around the world. Americans of earlier eras may have hoped one day to live in a nation that could claim just one of these blessings. Probably few expected to experience them all; fewer still all at once.

In other words, if George H.W. Bush, the last Depression-World War II president, could never quite believe his strategic luck in living to see the end of the Cold War, Bill

Clinton, by the end of his term, had come to take it for granted. Indeed, in the reckoning of his grand strategy, “prosperity” had come to take precedence over “security.” The priorities of the American Founders—“life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”—had been inverted.

To be fair, Clinton was clever enough to know that “the most important matter is what we now make of this moment,” but he had regularly shied away from the implication that this

might mean the use of military force or hard power of any sort. The Clinton years were marked by the “Black Hawk Down” withdrawal from Somalia, inaction in Rwanda and Bosnia, and “pinprick” cruise-missile raids in response to al Qaeda attacks on embassies. Arguably, the most consequential achievement of the administration was to secure the onetime “butchers of Beijing”—the phrase used by candidate Clinton in 1992 to ridicule the Bush response to Tiananmen—as members of the World Trade Organization. Even the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe, a move that has had serious consequences, was sold as a cost-free measure.

In sum, Bill Clinton was as surprised by the post-Cold War world as his predecessor had been. If Bush was wedded to stability, Clinton seemed to think that politics was infinitely plastic, that after millennia of irrational and violent behavior, humanity had at last come to its senses. International law and organizations would create and maintain order. The United States might preside—we were,

Bill Clinton was as surprised by the post-Cold War world as his predecessor had been. If Bush was wedded to stability, Clinton seemed to think that politics was infinitely plastic, that after millennia of irrational and violent behavior, humanity had at last come to its senses.

after all, “the indispensable nation”—but it would only compel under extreme circumstances and after consultation with others. Indeed, Clinton may have “made” less of his moment—in the sense of expending blood, treasure, national resources, or presidential attention—than Bush made of his. Clinton’s energies were absorbed at home, first in trying to change the health care system and later in fighting, tooth and nail, to preserve his political career. He later lamented that lacking a great villain to fight, he had been denied the opportunity to be a historically great president and thus may have overlooked the opportunity he did have.

By contrast, George W. Bush brought a sense of moral mission to the White House. The born-again Bush had campaigned as a “compassionate conservative” not simply to take the rough edges off the Newt Gingrich-era Republican party but also to bring the good news of peace, liberty, and prosperity to all. Including the rest of the world, as he made plain in his 2001 inaugural speech:

Through much of the last century, America’s faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations. Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along.

But if Bush had a “freedom agenda” from the beginning, the attacks of September 11, 2001, cemented his faith all the more. Beyond avenging the harm done by al Qaeda and removing their Taliban hosts from power in Afghanistan, or later bringing the long-running conflict with Saddam Hussein to a conclusion—actions even a cold-blooded Roman emperor might have taken—Bush determined to remake repressive societies into representative republics. To be sure, there was a strategic rationale behind it all, in that liberal democracies have been unlikely to go to war with one another. Still, it was the sense of moral purpose that seemed to drive Bush, especially once “mission accomplished” turned into a “long, hard slog.”

Bush and his “Vulcan” lieutenants were convinced that the post-Cold War world was indeed a moment of American “primacy.” And to whom much is given, much

is required. The administration was divided, however. Many, such as Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, thought the way to exploit these advantages was to further accentuate and preserve a favorable great-power balance. Thus, Rumsfeld sought to “transform” the U.S. military, to leap ahead several decades to dissuade potential rivals; the message for China and others was “don’t even think about it.” The “nation-building” that bogged the Clinton administration down in the Balkans was not for them.

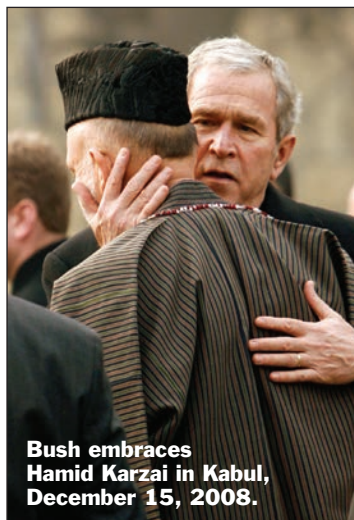
Taken together with the certainty that liberty was an “inborn hope,” part of human DNA rather than a learned behavior shaped by culture, the rapid triumphs of the Afghanistan and Iraq invasions proved dangerously deceptive; Bush could have his cake and eat it, too. Sole-superpower America was both militarily and ideologically irresistible. Sunni insurgents were no more than Baath party “dead-enders,” Saddamists on the run; the downtrodden Shiites of Iraq were our natural partners, looking to breathe free not to exact revenge.

Not until the 2007 Iraq “surge” did President Bush begin to match his power to his purpose. The last two years of his administration give a tantalizing taste of what the post-Cold War might have been. Bush, who had styled himself the “Decider,” took a much more active role, paying close attention to military affairs and giving constant teleconference therapy to Hamid Karzai in Kabul and Nuri al-Maliki in Baghdad—two very flawed leaders whom Bush disciplined well enough. It was, alas, too little and too late.

The intense focus on Iraq, in particular, left the Bush administration open to charges of missing the larger geostrategic picture. This was hardly fair—Bush solidified the budding relationship with India and helped Japan take its first steps toward increasing its military capacity, and, with the exception of the 2008 Georgia invasion and the silly “look into Putin’s soul” quip, he had a generally sober attitude toward Russia, negotiating further nuclear arms reductions. But it was effective. It gave Barack Obama cover for the global withdrawals that have characterized his presidency.

For Obama promised not only to transform American society and “end” U.S. involvement in Iraq and other

George W. Bush determined to remake repressive societies into representative republics. To be sure, there was a strategic rationale behind it all, in that liberal democracies have been unlikely to go to war with one another.



Bush embraces Hamid Karzai in Kabul, December 15, 2008.

IMAGES: NEWS.COM

wars in the Islamic world, he was going to reboot grand strategy for the 21st century. In particular, this demanded a “pivot to the Pacific.” Not only was China’s rise the salient great-power question of the era, but also the economic growth across the region was going to make it an “Asian century.”

The debate over the Obama legacy was joined months before he left office and will no doubt rage for decades to come. But he’s been, intentionally so, a consequential president. And the geopolitical consequences have been devastating to the United States. While America remains fundamentally strong in the world—a superb, if smaller than needed, military; a sound, if underperforming, economy; a world full of rich, if doubting, allies—we are divided at home and uncertain of our course. The world itself is sickening. Europe, becoming unmoored from America, is governed by elites of questionable legitimacy and competence, prey to Vladimir Putin’s poking and prodding, and awash with immigrants it cannot easily assimilate—or protect against. Across the Middle East, Iran is ascendant, the Sunni states are in turmoil, Turkey is governed by a paranoid potentate with Islamist leanings, and Russia is renewing its influence. America’s absence has been an accelerant to all these trends. In East Asia, Obama’s “rebalance” has seen China push its way across the South China Sea in search of tributary states, substituting nationalism and territorial expansion for economic growth, and positioning Xi Jinping to make himself another Mao.

In sum, we have come to a point of renewed geopolitical competition and greater “multipolarity” than we’ve had since 1945. The reality is increasing conflict, even if for the moment it is expressed in proxy wars (which we’re losing) rather than direct great-power conflict. At the same time, the prospects for such conflict seem substantial, especially as there is one very disgruntled rising power in China—with at least two centuries’ worth of national humiliation as baggage—which, despite its long history, has no experience as a global power. And of course there is a second near-nuclear power, Iran, with at least regional hegemonic ambitions if not millenarian motivations.

Obama has been both the like-Bush and the anti-Bush: as certain that he’s been called to do special things as he is reluctant ever to employ American power. Unlike his predecessor, Obama has not learned anything new while in office. In his many end-of-term interviews, he’s been adamant that he’s made no mistakes. The failure to enforce his chemical-weapons “red line” in Syria was not a loss of credibility but a moment of courage: “I’m very proud of this moment,” he told Jeffrey Goldberg of the *Atlantic*.

This is the world President Trump inherits. He was elected to “make America great again,” and he’s got his work cut out for him.

Liberty-loving, English-speaking peoples have been here before, as I wrote in the October 3, 2016, issue of *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* (“Reversing Decline: The example of Elizabethan England”). The Glorious Revolution of the late-17th century marked such a recovery, as did the American Revolution, the Civil War (often described as the “Second American Revolution”), and, in many ways, the post-World War II period. Our times may seem bleak, but they pale in comparison to 1688, 1775, 1861, or 1941.



Barack Obama presents Chinese president Xi Jinping with a gift of an inscribed redwood park bench in Rancho Mirage, California, June 8, 2013.

It’s helpful to think of these past Anglo-American revivals not as revolutions, but as “Whig restorations,” meaning an adaptation of existing political principles and strategic habits to new circumstances. These moments have much in common. They were provoked by security crises governments could not handle, at least to the satisfaction of the larger political nation. They resulted in wars against threatening autocrats: Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV of France, George III, the Confederate “slavocracy,” Hitler’s Germany, and Stalin’s Russia, all of whom seemed militarily invincible but in the end were brought low by the blundering but durable forces of more representative polities. Victory in each case was defined by the expansion of “liberties”—whether that meant the power of smaller states or the rights of individuals.

Whether Donald Trump is a man to lead a Whiggish restoration is not the right question. The Strategic 8-Ball says “ask again later.” It is better to know what the character of our revival will be—better to let the leader be defined by the purpose than the other way around—and to know where we’ve been before deciding where to go. ♦



Sigmund Freud's office at his home in exile in London

The Doctor Is In

Rescuing Freud from modern misunderstanding. BY GAIL A. HORNSTEIN

Sigmund Freud, still hailed as “the most famous and most controversial thinker of the 20th century,” published 20 books and more than 300 articles during his long lifetime. He also left extensive drafts, notes, diaries, and annotations in his vast library, ransomed from the Nazis by Princess Marie Bonaparte upon his forced relocation from Vienna to London in 1938, a year before he died.

Of the more than 20,000 letters Freud wrote, about half survive. The

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Freud
In His Time and Ours
by Élisabeth Roudinesco
translated by Catherine Porter
Harvard, 592 pp., \$35

man has already been the subject of several dozen biographies. Indeed, as the French historian and psychoanalyst Élisabeth Roudinesco remarks: “Every moment of Freud’s life has been discussed and every line of his work interpreted in multiple ways.” There have been countless essays on “Freud and . . . religion, Freud and women, Freud the clinician, Freud the family man, Freud with his cigars,

Freud and neurons, Freud and dogs . . . and so on.” And then, of course, there are the Freud-bashers, among whom still more versions can be found: “Freud the rapacious, Freud the organizer of a clinical gulag, the demoniacal, incestuous, lying, counterfeiting, fascist Freud.” As Roudinesco notes:

Views of Freud appear in every form of expression and narrative: caricatures, comic books, art books, portraits, drawings, photographs, classical novels, pornographic novels, detective stories, fictionalized narratives in films, documentary films, television series.

So why would we ever need another biography of Freud?

COURTESY OF THE FREUD MUSEUM LONDON

Precisely for the reason that Roudinesco wrote this brilliant new book: because Sigmund Freud, declared dead more times than anyone can count, is nevertheless very much alive. And despite the vast profusion of materials by and about him, or perhaps as a consequence of them, “we have great difficulty knowing who Freud really was, so thoroughly have the commentaries, fantasies, legends, and rumors masked the reality of this thinker, in his time and in ours.”

The need is even more acute now that the Sigmund Freud Archive at the Library of Congress—with reams of correspondence, family documents, patients’ files, notebooks, photographs, school records, interviews, etc.—has finally, after almost 70 years of continuous collection, been opened fully to researchers.

Roudinesco, author of many previous works on psychoanalysis, has made extensive use of this huge trove, and *Freud: In His Time and Ours* is the culmination of her life’s work. No matter how much or how little you know of Freud, reading it is eye-opening and deeply satisfying.

Scrupulous and exhaustive in her use of every imaginable source, Roudinesco performs a huge public service by debunking dozens of errors, myths, caricatures, and rumors that have long circulated about Freud. And by truly situating his life within the philosophic systems and political currents that gave rise to his ideas, she avoids rehashing details already widely known about what he did at any particular moment. Instead, she explains *why* he wrote what he did at each point in his life. And instead of a timeline of events at the end, Roudinesco provides as complete a list of Freud’s patients as can be assembled from existing sources, as well as a family tree spanning five generations.

She seems to have read absolutely everything, published or unpublished—and in the rare instances where she did not directly consult a source, she states this openly. The

Freud Archives, founded by the exiled psychoanalyst Kurt Eissler in New York in 1951, began as an effort to document the Viennese world from which Freud had been largely extracted by his official biographer, the canny Londoner Ernest Jones. During a 30-year period, Eissler obsessively sought out every letter, document, photograph, and interview created by or about Freud. He persuaded every analyst who had known Freud personally as



Freud and son in Paris (1938)

well as most members of his extended family to contribute their own documents and testimonies.

Eissler then imposed hegemonic control over this entire archive, refusing access to professional historians and granting it only to those psychoanalysts who were members of the International Psychoanalytic Association. As the first biographer to have access to the full archive, Roudinesco is able to restore Freud to the world in which he actually lived.

And among her many ways of contextualizing Freud historically—in his culture, his family, among his intellectual friends and adversaries—Roudi-

nescio also refreshingly includes, “as a counterpoint, the stories of selected patients, [who] led parallel lives that had nothing to do with the presentation of their ‘cases’” by psychoanalysts, and whose interpretations are of interest in their own right.

In beautifully evocative prose, she takes us into a “society in which women had no means other than the display of a suffering body to express their aspirations to freedom.” These women, diagnosed as “hysteric” and long dismissed as malingerers and manipulators, became, in the privacy of Freud’s office, “the major players in the construction of an approach based on listening: a practice focused on internal rather than external states. . . . Their existential distress allowed male scientists to develop a new theory of subjectivity.” In this new world, not only the doctor spoke: “Psychoanalysis restored speech to the subject,” writes Roudinesco, and understood “the patient, rather than the doctor, possessed the power to come to terms with mental suffering.”

Roudinesco takes clear positions on controversial issues, carefully assessing the evidence and picking her way through paths strewn with polemic and innuendo. For example, despite the many criticisms of Freud’s abandonment of the so-called seduction theory, she argues that he remained “the vigorous defender of suffering patients”

against “the accusations of those who maintained that the confessions of hysterics were not trustworthy, or that they were induced by the doctors themselves.” By creating a theory that “accepted simultaneously the existence of fantasy and that of trauma,” Freud was insisting on the complexities of psychic life. Roudinesco plunges us back into the unconscious mind, where ambiguity and contradiction abound, and the yes-no answers of the courtroom—did this really happen in exactly this way?—cease being the only arbiter of what is experienced as true or not.

Freud’s elegantly crafted and provocative case histories gave “unusual,

lively accounts of the everyday dramas of the private insanity dissimulated under the appearances of complete normality.” Awarded the Goethe Prize for Literature in 1930, he was “inventing a new origin narrative in which the modern subject was the hero not of a simple pathology but of a tragedy.” In each of his famous cases, Freud drew on Greek myth, anthropology, history, and literature, writing “with immense narrative talent, an account that could be read as a novel.”

Roudinesco demonstrates convincingly that despite Ernest Jones’s determined effort to remake Freud solely in the image of a scientist, he remained attracted to the occult, to mythology and legend—and of course, to dreams. He took cocaine, kept a journal of his dreams and symptoms, participated in moments of telepathy and table turning, and wrote a famous paper on “the uncanny.”

He also worked 16-18 hours a day, adhered to strict mealtimes, and “always looked visitors straight in the eye, as if seeking to show that he never missed a thing.” Freud read or spoke eight modern and ancient languages, “had no patience for any form of negligence,” played cards with old friends on Saturday evenings, and had his beard trimmed by a barber every morning. He never saw the point of Surrealism, or the avant-garde, or Expressionism, and remained attached to “the world of yesterday,” as his friend Stefan Zweig called it.

Roudinesco admits that “like many founders, Freud chose to be a ferocious guardian of his own concepts and inventions,” and she is understandably impatient with the “senseless jousts” in which he and Carl Jung struggled to establish the superiority of their respective versions of analytic theory and method. “Each had his own way of wielding the instruments for exploring the psyche so as to make the other suffer,” she remarks, and it took the outbreak of World War I, when analysts in different countries could no longer meet together or correspond easily, to end the “ludicrous war” between Jung and Freud.

Later, when yet another world war threatened to destroy everything he had done, Freud stubbornly persisted in thinking that psychoanalysis could “remain ‘neutral’ in the face of all social change, and thus ‘apolitical.’” Roudinesco reveals the absurdity of his “blind conviction” that this approach could survive under Nazism and, in uncompromising terms, presents Jung’s and Jones’s collaboration with the Nazis, not by appealing to stereotype or veiled accusation, like so many others, but by quoting their actual words.

Despite the vast profusion of materials by and about Freud, or perhaps as a consequence of them, ‘we have great difficulty knowing who Freud really was, so thoroughly have the commentaries, fantasies, legends, and rumors masked the reality of this thinker, in his time and in ours.’

Freud never expected psychoanalysis to meet with much interest in America. After his only visit, to speak at the celebrated Clark University conference in Worcester in 1909, he confided to a friend: “My success will be brief. The Americans treat me the way a child treats a new doll: fun to play with, but soon to be replaced by another new toy.” Ironically, as Roudinesco notes:

In fact, the Americans received psychoanalysis with acclaim for what it was not—a therapy for happiness—and they rejected it 60 years later because it had not kept that unfulfillable promise.

She is excellent at identifying and critiquing Freud’s blind spots without vilifying him in a more general sense, allowing him to be a fallible person living in a historical moment, not a symbol. And she acknowledges his personal weaknesses without denying his intellectual courage: “Despite years of work on himself, Freud was as neurotic as ever,” she remarks of the man who, at age 61, continued to suffer from various physical and mental ills and avidly to smoke cigars, despite the first signs of what was later diagnosed as cancer of the mouth, the disease from which he would ultimately die after dozens of operations and years of disfigurement and suffering.

Refreshingly, Roudinesco restores some vivid examples of what appear to be Freud’s shocking departures from “correct” psychoanalytic practice—loaning money to his patients, analyzing his daughter—to the world in which they actually occurred. The many specifications and boundaries now considered the hallmark, indeed sometimes the caricature, of the psychoanalyst—remaining largely silent, taking a neutral stance, never giving advice—were only rarely practiced by Freud. His patients, especially in the early years before the field started to become institutionalized in the 1920s, came largely from the same bourgeois Jewish community in Vienna as he did. It was natural for a person he treated to refer his cousin or mistress or child; many people (then and now) go to doctors who have successfully helped someone they know. And psychoanalysis before the Second World War was an insular and incestuous field, where there was rarely more than a degree or two of separation between colleagues, lovers, patients, or friends.

Freud, who “adored rumors,” was “always inclined to intervene in the amorous adventures of his disciples,” and the early history of the field is filled with the picaresque consequences. The rules of psychoanalytic practice with which we are familiar today were invented by Freud’s colleagues in the first generation of analysts, intended not for them but for those who

would follow in decades to come.

Throughout her book, Roudinesco engages in a lively dialogue with Freud and his work, and with dozens of other commentators, analysts, and historians. Respectful, except to those who make serious errors or simply repeat rumors, she is happy to accept the insights of others but still stakes out her own interpretations. In so doing, she gives us anew the man who did more than anyone else in the 20th century to shape our ways of understanding ourselves. No brain scan is ever going to destroy a belief in our own subjectivity. Love him, hate him, declare him dead yet again—Freud

remains a force to be contended with.

As events in the world, and in our own country, make us wonder whether human life ever progresses to the point of being free of cruelty or violence, we would do well to remember Sigmund Freud. The absolute depravity of World War I, and its shocking erasure of any distinction between combatants and civilians, profoundly shaped his thinking. The simultaneous presence in every individual of the most evil and the most generous impulses makes society an inherent contradiction. Freud forces us to confront this deeply distressing fact, which is one reason we'll never let him die. ♦

at all. It had geographic factions and secret cells and Communist-style groupthink and self-criticism sessions where the works of Frantz Fanon and Régis Debray were analyzed. Bernardine Dohrn, one of its best-known leaders, is heard praising Charles Manson and his gang during the “Flint War Council,” and there was even a “smash monogamy” campaign, in which couples were forced to separate, the better to assure that they would give their primary loyalty to “the collective.”

Eventually, notes Eckstein, revolution in the United States “proved to be a forlorn and doomed enterprise.” Although the Weathermen probably numbered only about a hundred people at their peak—not the thousand or more that the FBI estimated and warned against—and set off a grand total of 25 dynamite bombs in a six-year period, it is important to remember that they did do some serious (and unimpeded) damage. Well-remembered are the explosions they set off at the New York City Police Headquarters, the U.S. Capitol, and the State Department—usually by walking in casually and planting bombs in bathrooms. At the Pentagon, in May 1972, the bomb they planted allegedly damaged a computer that was coordinating bombing runs in Vietnam.

But after debating the point and deciding that they did not want to kill people randomly, they would call in warnings before each attack, so that potential victims could escape. In fact, Eckstein says, no one was ever killed or injured by the Weathermen's bombs—with the notable exception of three of their own, who perished in March 1970 during an explosion at their bomb factory in a Greenwich Village townhouse. (There is also the matter of a holdup of a Brink's armored car by the Black Liberation Army in Nyack, New York, in 1981, in which at least three “Weather bitter-enders,” as Eckstein calls them, participated. A Brink's guard and two policemen were killed, and two of the ex-Weatherman perpetrators, who drove getaway cars, remain in prison.)

The FBI emerges from the saga with an even lower degree of success



In Circular Pursuit

When the New Left met the Old FBI.

BY SANFORD J. UNGAR

It all seems a bit like an ugly fairy tale now—an allegory, set in the heady and hectic late 1960s and early '70s, of good versus evil, order versus chaos, revolution by dynamite sticks and law enforcement by black-bag jobs. This was, in retrospect, a match made in heaven: The Weather Underground and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, up against each other and both failing miserably.

While “it might seem strange to compare them,” says Arthur M. Eckstein, professor of history at the University of Maryland, “they were two organized groups of confused, frightened, and very angry Americans who broke the law. . . . No one on either side really knew what they were doing.”

Eckstein was a graduate student at Berkeley at the time—a good perch for

Bad Moon Rising
*How the Weather Underground
Beat the FBI and Lost the Revolution*
by Arthur M. Eckstein
Yale, 360 pp., \$35

watching this drama unfold—and it is clear that he has been saving string on the story ever since. The release, a few years ago, of some 30,000 pages of FBI documents from the era led him to take up virtual residence at the National Archives, and after poring through them and many other sources, and conducting a large number of interviews, he has produced a volume that has the distinct aura of a life work, complete with 69 single-spaced pages of meticulously detailed end notes. It can, in places, be a slog.

The group portrait that emerges of the Weathermen, essentially an offshoot of Students for a Democratic Society, is less of a fearsome cadre than of a gang-that-couldn't-shoot-straight—and, in fact, couldn't decide whether and when it wanted to shoot

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Greenwich Village bomb factory, post-explosion (1970)

in achieving its objectives. Having put the photos of several Weather Underground personalities on its Ten Most Wanted list of fugitives—giving them outlaw status and years of celebrity in every post office in the land—the bureau pulled out all stops to find them, to no avail. On at least one occasion documented by Eckstein, agents missed an opportunity to arrest a group of Weathermen sitting together in a movie theater simply because they did not recognize them.

President Richard Nixon, for reasons that are still unclear after absorbing this volume, was convinced that the Weathermen had funding and other influence from overseas, and that somehow this was all related to other New Left activities, such as the mas-

sive antiwar demonstrations convulsing Washington in 1969 and 1970, not to mention Daniel Ellsberg's leak of the Pentagon Papers in 1971. The news that Bernardine Dohrn and some of her fellow revolutionaries had met with the Vietnamese Communists in Fidel Castro's Cuba did not exactly help to calm the White House.

So Nixon ordered the bureau to find evidence supporting his suspicions. Eckstein has plumbed a trove of FBI documents, all now legally available, to demonstrate how twisted and hapless the investigation became.

Here is J. Edgar Hoover, by then in his fifth decade as director, cutting off longstanding permission (dating back to the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt) to engage in extralegal tactics

against subversive elements—and then somehow suddenly reinstating it, at the urging of lieutenants who competed for influence with him by escalating their own warnings of the grave dangers the nation faced. The result was break-ins, wiretaps, and various other invasions of the privacy of the aboveground parents, siblings, friends, and sympathizers of the Weather Underground. All these measures were internally acknowledged to be illegal, often in writing, and virtually all were pointless.

In a development that epitomized what Hoover (who died in 1972) feared most, two former top bureau officials—including Mark Felt, “Deep Throat” of Watergate fame—went on trial in 1980 and were convicted of federal crimes. Ex-President Nixon insisted on testifying in their defense, and they were pardoned the following year by President Ronald Reagan.

Along the way, Eckstein clears up a few matters. One is the reputation of Bill Ayers, one of the original Weathermen, who has taken to describing their actions as “vandalism” and reinvented himself as a professor of education and community leader in Chicago. Eckstein finds evidence that Ayers, as leader of the group's Detroit branch, was actually a leading advocate of violence.

And then there is L. Patrick Gray III, whom Nixon named as acting director of the FBI upon Hoover's death. Gray lost any chance of his appointment becoming permanent when it's was revealed that he had destroyed evidence related to the Watergate investigations. But he has been remembered primarily for gestures such as hiring the first female FBI agents and relaxing J. Edgar Hoover's outdated dress code. In his autobiography, published posthumously in 2008, Gray disavowed the bureau's illegal tactics against the Weathermen, but Eckstein finds evidence of the “startling ferocity” of his efforts to find the fugitives, including an order that agents hunt them “to exhaustion.”

Virtually everyone in this story was exhausted by the time it ended, and it is hard to say that anyone on either side was better off for the effort. ♦

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Character Counts

How shall we measure the human dimensions of friendship? BY TEMMA EHRENFELD

Nearly every year, I attend a Christmas service, even though I'm Jewish. Every year, the officiant delivering the homily points out that Christmas occurs in winter, bringing us hope in dark hours. As he says, "Perhaps it is the winter of *your* life."

One of those "winter" years, this made me so sad I almost needed to run out. For comfort, I took the pendant of my necklace in my hand. It was a gift from a friend. And I found myself taking a kind of inventory: My dress had been suggested by another friend, while shopping, and my jacket was a hand-me-down. Of everything I wore that night, the only item I had chosen without influence was my underwear.

Although I'm hardly a fashionista, the exercise with my clothing made me feel solid, for reasons Alexander Nehamas helps explain in *On Friendship*, a response to a famous essay by Montaigne. Nehamas, who teaches philosophy and comparative literature at Princeton, argues that our friendships make us distinctive. He also says that modern friendship is mostly about taste.

By this logic, taste defines us. I disagree—despite my experience at All Souls and the rise of social media, clusters about taste. Loyal friends may be more important than ever in a world of unstable jobs, marriages, families and organizations. Although Nehamas gives us a lovely insightful appreciation of friends, his emphasis on aesthetics leaves out ethics. He leaves out character, dare I say *virtue*.

Our culture understands that friendship provides essential nutrients, and yet, like vegetables, considers it a side

Temma Ehrenfeld is a writer in New York.

On Friendship

by Alexander Nehamas
Basic Books, 304 pp., \$26.99



'Friendship' (1908) by Pablo Picasso

dish for most of adult life. Family, work, or romance should be more important by a certain age, or you're immature. There also have been dark times when, as far as we know, Nehamas says, friendship was rare, private, and restricted to aristocrats. But philosophers and artists have always considered friendship to be the most significant relationship, with the essential clause that your friends be trustworthy.

Nehamas combines an introductory lecture, including academic-style endnotes, with his own thoughts, likening the attraction between friends to appreciation of art. He begins with Aristotle, who divided *philia* into three kinds that still sound familiar: Some friends exchange favors; some are for

fun; the highest kind of friendship is possible only among people who are good and admire each other's virtues—sharing ethics, not necessarily tastes.

As Nehamas points out, however, in our lives, friendship seems to be more arbitrary, like taste. Virtuous people may not choose each other. Bad people can be true friends, he argues, and good people can treasure the friendship of bad people. Also, because friendship is selective, it cannot be the basis of political idealism, so it is meaningless, he says, to call everyone "comrade." We call strangers "buddy" and "brother," referring to an ethic of political equality or God-based universal love. Nehamas's ideal friendship is more intimate, dangerous, and demanding.

It feeds us in the way that art does, which is why the experience of art can feel like spending time with a friend. The emphasis on art goes beyond liking the same music or books: Friends *make* each other through interaction, like sculptors modeling each other's clay. Admirable people, he says, are coherent, able to make use of their faults, so that "it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste govern[s] everything large and small."

Given this all-encompassing purpose, nothing between friends is minor:

Our idle conversations and commonplace interactions . . . are in the end neither idle nor commonplace . . . we respond to them . . . as parts of a longer process . . . what friends say and do together ramifies through their entire being.

The ramifying continues for years, or decades. Just as new friends—like new romances—change you, old friends must as well. A friendship that no longer makes you more individual and coherent loses that invigorating sense that you are enriching your shared future. Although you might meet for dinner, you're not really friends. And when a friend cuts you off, you are "losing a self."

I have felt all this, intensely: Losing a friend erased years and diminished me, a new friend enlarged me, friends old and new give me the strength to be "who I am." I am glad and grateful to hear so much explained so well.

Yet *On Friendship* is also irritating and chilly. In his analogies to art, Nehamas glides over the most important questions:

The love of art preserves the most essential feature of the love between people: the exhilarating sense that things will go well with both of us, though in ways we can't ever fully articulate, if they acquire a place in our life.

This is a moving, exciting view of art and love. But is exhilaration the *most essential feature* of the love between people? Art is static and doesn't have feelings. Friends change. Does the author really mean that abandoning a friend who no longer exhilarates you is no different than taking down a painting? He spends many pages on a play called "Art," in which the purchase of a trivial painting threatens to destroy an old friendship. One friend can't bear the idea that the other values something he doesn't. They sound very much like teenagers who switch among cliques. In fact, teens exemplify the kind of friendship Nehamas makes definitive. Lavender hair and holes in your earlobes make sense if you see yourself as a work of art under Nietzsche's "constraint of a single taste." Adolescents feel every exchange as identify-defining, opening up the future.

Adolescence is also the time when we learn that the act of *being* a friend presents plenty of challenges that can make us more virtuous. If you pick well, true friends also influence you for the better by example, and as Nehamas says, these lessons continue through life. When friends drift away or make their leaving clear, even as an adult I may feel judged, ethically. It is soothing (and perhaps accurate) to believe that lost friends moved on because I was no longer helping them to become the people they wanted to be—because I was different, not flawed—even if they had some justification in their minds. But I want to know.

Character counts, on both ends. I have also found that friends have wounded me in ways that were predictable and in midlife am learning to be less surprised. "Before friendship is formed, you must pass judgment." Seneca once

wrote, "Ponder for a long time whether you shall admit a given person to your friendship; but when you have decided to admit him, welcome him with all your heart and soul."

Nehamas doesn't seem engaged with the question of why people might, or might not, persist when a friendship is difficult. This isn't a book of sociology, but I wish he had noted that work, marriages, and friendships all seem to go better in a community of friends. He doesn't touch on the elevated importance of friendship for people who live and work alone.

There is no mention of loneliness.

His vision seems to fit our times. In modern life, with some freedom and cash, we define ourselves through our selections in a marketplace of cultures. Social media make the point dramatically, with online acquaintances curating our news feeds. We rightly complain that online friendship usually isn't the real thing—or rather, the whole thing. The problem isn't solely the medium:

True friendship goes beyond taste.

The author is right, of course, that a friendship shouldn't deteriorate into an obligation. A friend freely chooses to spend time with you, again and again—weathering nights when you're dull, because you may brighten again.

Sitting in the All Souls service that night, I was grieving the loss of a context. Later that night, I thought of Auden's words written on the eve of World War II:

*[T]he error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.*

Universal love couldn't reach me, and romance seemed far away, so I turned in my mind to my friends. We understand that friendship isn't exclusive or required. Close friends fill, and expand, the space between the id and indifference. They free us from the "error." They soften the craving. ♦



God's Wording

Translation as literature, in the biblical sense.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

My youth in the very Protestant North Carolina of the 1940s was suffused with Bible translation. One version stood supreme and virtually alone: the King James, or Authorized, version of 1611, whose words and rhythms remain the stuff of memory. Schooldays, their rituals as yet uncensored by the United States Supreme Court, routinely opened with the serial recitation of scriptural verses—"Jesus wept" (John 11:35), in its brevity, being the hands-down favorite.

Were we aware, in those tender

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is the author, most recently, of Vacancy: A Judicial Misadventure.

The Murderous History of Bible Translations
Power, Conflict, and the Quest for Meaning
by Harry Freedman
Bloomsbury, 256 pp., \$28

years, of the elegance of this biblical language with which few were unfamiliar? Probably not then. We were more fortunate than we knew.

There assuredly were few who knew the contentious history chronicled in Harry Freedman's useful book—not even how the Greek Septuagint replaced a Hebrew word *almah* (young woman) with *parthenos* (virgin), thus igniting a paramount issue of the Christian era. Nor could

linguistic innocents of that era have identified *koine*, the demotic Greek in which the Gospels and Saint Paul's epistles to new churches were composed. As for the early translations placed comparatively side-by-side in the Complutensian Polyglot Bible in a Spanish university in the 16th century, they were mentioned only in advanced college courses.

In the Lutheran circles of my father's family, Martin Luther and his challenge to the pope's agents were familiar, especially among the many family clergymen—and possibly his formative translation into German. But information about the Latin Vulgate, the influential version Luther used in shaping modern German, was yet to come.

Unfortunately, a title emphasizing the word “murderous,” like so many present-day titles and subtitles, falls strangely on the ear. It wasn't contentious translations but their doctrinal foundations that produced attitudes hardening into bigotries and hatreds. It was not, for instance, disputed phrases that sent Henry VIII's counselor Thomas More to the block. Nor dissident translations that incited that heroic figure, celebrated as a proto-libertarian in *A Man for All Seasons*, to burn heretics. More died for declining to acknowledge the king as head of the church.

Notwithstanding the learned labors of the author, an authority on Aramaic, the tongue presumably spoken by Jesus of Nazareth, it taxes the memory to think of anyone who was ever “murdered” over a disputed translation. Friction, yes, and lots of it; but a roll call of those executed for verbal error would be sparse. The pioneering English translator, William Tyndale, saw his translation burned in 1536 by Henry VIII's henchman, Thomas Cromwell. Later, in his Brussels exile, he himself was executed as a heretic.

Dr. Freedman is surely aware of the stretch of his title, just as he undoubtedly knows that the “invention of printing,” which initiated a new era in the creation and circulation of vernacular Scripture, is at best inexact, though he uses it more than once. In fact, it

was Gutenberg's invention of movable type that was revolutionary. But this is a common misconception, even among the learned. Printing in certain crude forms is ancient technology.

Biblical translation, and its allied controversies, remains of the greatest interest, though the mid-20th-century passion for simplification seems to have subsided. In what C. S. Lewis called “the liturgical fidgets,” translators of Scripture and ritual too up-to-date for their own good—or that of the English language—supposed that the King James Bible (and the earlier Book of Common Prayer) had



William Tyndale

grown too esoteric for the common ear and needed flattening. God, wrote one British wit, now “speaks like someone you meet on the bus.” Thus we passed quickly from the 17th-century “Shakespearean moment” to the 20th-century moment of banality. It was, to say no more, a misreading of human psychology, which values challenge in ultimate matters.

Translations and revisions of the 1960s and '70s, with the elegant exception of the Jerusalem Bible, revealed that tin ears were widely distributed. An example, which this writer recalls from a college English class, came from a Pauline epistle: The King James translated one admonition as “See

then that you walk circumspectly . . . redeeming the time.” The revised version was “See that you go carefully, making the most of time.” The metaphoric bite of circumspection (looking about) and redemption (as of a pawned treasure) were both lost, and with it the sense and depth of the verse. It is fortunate that burning at the stake for verbal offenses—as imaginatively echoed in Freedman's title—had passed from use. An Episcopal priest of my acquaintance once admonished his flock not to drag out their “grief work” over the Prayer Book of 1928, then targeted for revision.

Grief work? Good grief!

Harry Freedman's scholarship is engaging and interesting, once one gets past the dubious “murderous history” notion. His book is especially enlightening in its discussion of the history of Saint Jerome's Latin Bible and the “translations of translations” springing from it—and of course, the process by which King James I finessed Puritan demands for plain language and worship by sponsoring the version that bears his name. The Puritans were represented among the 1611 translators but happily were prevented from laundering its eloquent and elegant phrases. Those hallowed words go on ringing today in the ears of those fortunate enough to be schooled in them, as do the felicities of Thomas Cranmer's incomparable Book of Common Prayer. Without the King James Version, would we know of “the world turned upside down” or “a thorn in the flesh” or “a still small voice” or the beating of “swords into plowshares” or “lambs to the slaughter”? And many other wonderful phrasings?

Those who find deep language challenging could no doubt find commentaries and dictionaries helpful, and improve their ears. The lesson of the liturgical and biblical fidgets of the 1960s and '70s is that literacy, an essential part of what Edmund Burke called “the unbought grace of life,” may be damaged, even lost, by eager revisionists who miss the deeper mysteries of life and faith. If it weren't uncharitable, I would say: a pox on them and their tinsel works! ♦

Parsimonious Eye

On the New Wavelength of Éric Rohmer.

BY JONATHAN LEAF

Eric Rohmer was 50 when his mother died in 1970. They were in regular contact, and he often took his two sons from Paris to see her at her home in Tulle. But she went to her grave convinced that her eldest child was a classics teacher at a provincial lycée. She had no idea that he had been editor of the world's most influential magazine of film criticism, *Cahiers du cinéma*, or that he had recently directed the Academy Award-nominated film *My Night at Maud's*. This is one of the many curious aspects of Rohmer's life, and one of the revealing aspects of his impressive but peculiar character that comes up in this definitive biography of the writer-director.

It's safe to say that Éric Rohmer (1920-2010) must rank either first or second among postwar French filmmakers. When you consider how many remarkable movies he made, and that his name has been turned into a widely used adjective in France—*rohmerien*—it's hard to argue that anyone other than his friend François Truffaut can be regarded more highly. But it wasn't only his mother who initially disregarded him: His tenure at *Cahiers* had ended with his dismissal, and he found himself, in 1963 at age 43, in the position of a failed moviemaker with a wife and two young children. Consequently, he spent the next few years making educational documentaries for the French government.

Born and raised in Tulle, Rohmer was a quick study with a passion for literature and languages who passed the written examinations for the École Normale Supérieure three times. Yet, held back by his great shyness, he failed the oral exam on each occasion.

Jonathan Leaf's new play, deConstruction, opens in New York in March.

Éric Rohmer

A Biography

by Antoine de Baecque and Noël Herpe
translated by Steven Rendall and Lisa Neal
Columbia, 608 pp., \$40



Éric Rohmer (2001)

That led him to a passage as a classics instructor. When Rohmer left this post to work as a journalist, he asked his wife to help him keep his family in the dark about his life. So, in daily exchanges, he was Maurice Schérer ("Momo"), and in the world of show business, he was Éric Rohmer. And in the early 1950s he actually wrote articles under his birth name praising the movies of his alter ego.

But he was relatively alone in championing these films. For the most part they went unreleased or were treated with indifference. Still, throughout the 1940s and '50s, Rohmer busied himself writing stories, screenplay treatments, and novellas while becoming active in the Parisian film club scene, where he befriended most of the figures who would soon define the French New Wave, including Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, and Jacques Rivette.

Yet Rohmer stood apart from them, to some degree, because he was older, a practicing Roman Catholic, and very much a political conservative. This conservatism ran sufficiently deep that Rohmer was among those who disdained Charles de Gaulle from the right, believing the general had betrayed his country's loyalists in Algeria. Later, and still working into his eighth decade, he would advertise his convictions in his much-acclaimed account of the French Revolution, *The Lady and the Duke* (2001), which has been widely interpreted not only as an attack on the Jacobins but a brief for the Bourbons.

That late triumph, however, stands apart from what Rohmer is best known for: offbeat comedies of manners that fondly examine the motivations and morality in love affairs among the bourgeoisie. The classics of this genre that he wrote and directed include *The Collector* (1967), *My Night at Maud's* (1969), *Pauline at the Beach* (1983), *The Green Ray* (1986), and *A Tale of Winter* (1992), along with such slighter but charming films as *Chloe in the Afternoon* (1972), *The Aviator's Wife* (1981), and *A Good Marriage* (1982).

What all of these movies have in common is a simple, immediate style and recognizable characters. Produced at low cost, nearly all made money. Set on actual streets and photographed with rudimentary equipment, their focus is upon their characters and story, not on effects or constructed sets. So Rohmer's parsimony, which extended to 16-millimeter filmmaking in the late 1960s, allowed him another chance in his film career, following his early failures. Eventually, this method would become so ingrained that when Emma Thompson asked to star as an Englishwoman of the 1790s in *The Lady and the Duke*, Rohmer turned her down in favor of an unknown.

This decision may have also reflected his belief that the effect of his films drew from what he had learned as a documentarian: Awkward-and-improvised is more persuasive and affecting than artful-but-false. Arguably, that is the general lesson of the New Wave, one that current American filmmakers would do well to absorb. ◆

The Trump Dilemma

What is a man of principle to do?

BY JOE QUEENAN



When Donald Trump was elected, I promised friends I would do everything in my power to retaliate against his craven Red State supporters. That winter getaway to Florida was off. So was the spring jaunt to the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. And my cheesehead friend up in Milwaukee would have a nice long wait until he saw me again. If ever.

I dutifully took many other steps to join the Red State boycott. Henceforth, I would eat potatoes grown on Long Island, not Idaho. I would eat no sausage produced in Dixie. And I would buy no cars built in vile, perfidious Michigan. A lot of this was easy to do: I never buy American cars; I hate Florida; I have no special affection for potatoes. But then things got tricky. What about my New Balance sneakers? The guy who runs New Balance had injudiciously remarked that Trump's election would be good for his company, whose

footwear is crafted by American hands. Immediately, enraged Hillary supporters began burning their New Balance shoes. Friends, knowing that I was a big fan of the company, demanded to know if I were going to join in.

I wanted to join in. Honest. But I have fallen arches and plantar fasciitis, and New Balance sneakers are the only things that help. So I finessed the issue. I took my really old pair of frayed, dirty, smelly New Balance running shoes and set them ablaze. Now they smelled even worse. But with the other two pairs, recently purchased and still in great shape, I simply covered the letter "N" with duct tape. I'd love to take a more principled stand on this issue, and I would—but not if it's going to imperil my orthopedic well-being. And not if it's going to set me back \$300.

Pennsylvania was the next major stumbling block. Much as I would like to wreak economic reprisals on the Keystone State, which went for Trump, I have one big problem going forward: I grew up in Philadelphia. Worse, I had a wedding to attend in the outskirts of Philly the week after the election.

Though it went overwhelmingly for Hillary, Philadelphia is now in a Red State. Talk about an ethical dilemma! If I refused to visit the Keystone State until a Democrat was back in the White House, it would mean that I couldn't see my three sisters, or the Eagles, or the statue of Rocky, or the Liberty Bell, for at least four years. Worse, I couldn't have a cheesesteak, much less a hoagie. From a culinary point of view, I was staring directly into the bowels of the fathomless abyss.

But then I hit on a brilliant, ethically elastic, solution. I would visit Philadelphia but I wouldn't spend any money there. I'd buy my gas in New Jersey. I'd stay in a hotel in Delaware. I'd get my cheesesteak at People's Pizza on Route 38 in Cherry Hill. I'd see the Eagles the next time they played in New York. This way, I could savor the innumerable joys of the Quaker City without compromising my principles.

Then I hit the wall. Visiting my acupuncturist in Queens (where Trump grew up) I was shocked to learn that he had voted for Trump: "He's a businessman; he'll cut taxes; he'll bring back jobs," Dr. Lee explained. "The pain is down here on the lower right-hand side, right?" So now I was face to face with the very crux of the conundrum. If I continued to patronize Dr. Lee, knowing that he had voted for the Bringer of Darkness, I would have to betray my friends and family. I would have to admit that I was shallow, hypocritical, a phony, maybe even evil. I would have to turn my back forever on the great, noble democratic experiment we call America.

I would have loved to avoid all that. But I have a nasty cyst on my spine and acupuncture is the only thing that eases the pain. So yes, the Trump administration may suspend civil liberties, plunge the nation into a Great Depression, wipe out my 401(k), sabotage my children's future, and start a nuclear war. But back pain is back pain. As Groucho Marx put it, "Those are my principles and if you don't like them . . . well, I have others."

So until I find a gifted acupuncturist who voted for Hillary, and is based in a Blue State, I'm sticking with Dr. Lee. The guy's got my back. ♦

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of One for the Books.

“Donald Trump’s inauguration will feature a ‘soft sensuality’ rather than be a ‘circus-like celebration,’ according to the chairman of the president-elect’s planning committee.”

—Politico, January 10, 2017

PARODY

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying 'variety.com/2017-01_the_donald_after_dark'. The page features the Variety logo, navigation tabs for 'FILM', 'TV', 'DIGITAL', 'CONTENDERS', 'VIDEO', 'DIRT', 'SCENE', and 'MORE'. The main article title is 'THE DONALD AFTER DARK' with a subtitle 'Sensual Inauguration to Air on Cinemax 11 P.M.'. The author is 'Variety Staff' with a Twitter handle '@Variety'. The article text discusses the inauguration of Donald Trump, mentioning Chairman Tom Barrack and director Paul Verhoeven. A sidebar on the right contains '2016-2017 OSCAR PREDICTIONS' with an image of the Oscar statuette, and an 'In Contention' section with three items: 'Seeing Double: Kate Upton attends the Golden Globes', 'Neocon Claims 'Imperials are Rebels Mugged by Reality'', and 'Streep Tease: 'Actors Come From Places on Planet Earth!'. A Netflix logo with '???' is also present.