

# the weekly Standard

MARCH 6, 2017

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## Microaggression & Macrononsense

**ANDREW FERGUSON**  
on another social science failure



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# Pants on Fireball

Is there nothing so *louche* that Trump supporters won't indulge in it? According to the *Washington Post*, apparently not. So low have we been brought, the *Post* suggests, that in Donald Trump's capital there is a fad for that odious cinnamon-flavored sugar gargle that masquerades as whiskey, "Fireball."

The article took up most of the front page of the paper's Style section plus a jump to the inside pages. It started with a big picture of a bottle of Fireball and a display headline: "Is This the Spirit of Trumpism? Fireball whiskey's sales rise in D.C.; theories abound."

Of course theories are just theories, but the factual part of the headline is simple and unambiguous: "Fireball whiskey's sales rise in D.C."

How surprising it was, then, for THE SCRAPBOOK to find, in the article's 14th paragraph, way back on page C5, this:

Tanner Smith, a liquor distribution representative whose market includes 95 bars and restaurants in the District, thinks the whole idea is "comical" because Fireball sales are actually slowing in the capital.

To her credit, the reporter cites the testimony of multiple bartenders and "beverage directors" who are dismissive of the article's very premise. She even notes that Fireball became a Washington sensa-



tion not over the last few months, but back in the glory days of the Obama administration.

But the editor responsible for the headline clearly didn't feel as constrained as the reporter.

After all, the claim that Fireball's sales are in goose-step with the Trumpian hordes was the whole point of the article in the first place, so why let inconvenient information get in the way? If it takes contradicting the factual reporting of a story to get the Trump-bashing headline just right, well, so be it. ♦

## White Out

Who knew that in the age of America First, the greatest threat to Hispanic communities in the United States wasn't marauding bands of ICE agents wielding mass deportation orders or the construction of a border wall? No, the scourge is Art.

That's THE SCRAPBOOK's takeaway from the news this week that a small art gallery called PSSST had been driven out of the hard-scrabble Los Angeles area called Boyle Heights. PSSST, you see, was one of several art galleries making insidious inroads into the predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. The nonprofit galleristas thought they were bringing welcome Culture to an underserved area; the locals saw them as the thin-wedge of Anglo infiltration, the shock troops of gentrification.

It's an old story: First come the art galleries and, before you know it, the local bodega has been replaced with an artisanal *boucherie* selling acorn-fed *ibérico* ham for \$15 an ounce.

And so the neighborhood organized, forming groups such as the Boyle Heights Alliance Against Artwashing and Displacement. They picketed the galleries; they confronted patrons arriving for show openings with shouts of "Get out!"—well, actu-



Everyone's a critic.

ally, "Fuera!" Parties had to be canceled. Canapés and Chardonnay went to waste. Donors were rattled.

Other efforts at bringing Art to Boyle Heights have met with similar resistance. As the *Guardian* reported

last April, "An opera company which tried to stage a performance at the [neighborhood's Hollenbeck Park] was drowned out by shouts, whistles and a brass band." When the opera company's music director tried to talk to the woman organizing the protest, he was told, "This is not a park for white people. You are white people."

Given the contentious atmosphere, it's no wonder PSSST is packing up its easels. But rather than expressing defiance, the gallery organizers issued a rather pathetic statement, whining on about how theirs had been an effort to democratize art given that art "institutions privilege the already privileged." They also declared that art is about "community," never mind that the Boyle Heights community wasn't interested. They even said something about how it was a mischaracterization that they were "fundamentally in opposition with the varied intersectional communities we aimed to support."

Contrast the mewling mush of

TOP: SAZERAC; BELOW: LIZ O. BAYLEN / LOS ANGELES TIMES / GETTY

“varied intersectional communities” with the anti-gringo movement’s memorable slogan, spray-painted on one of the galleries: “F— White Art.” No wonder PSSST lost the struggle.

One can understand the feelings of those who having lived for some time in a neighborhood wish to see it retain its character. But THE SCRAPBOOK can’t help but note the sad irony of an immigrant community—who should be in favor of the free movement of peoples, after all—dead set against people of a different ethnicity immigrating into their neighborhood. ♦

## Snuggly Vestments

A leading case in constitutional law it ain’t. But we now have a ruling: The Snuggie—“The Blanket That Has Sleeves!”—is indeed a blanket, the sleeves notwithstanding. So says Judge Mark A. Barnett of the United States Court of International Trade. And rightly so, as far as THE SCRAPBOOK can tell.

How did the Snuggie—that comical “as seen on TV” accessory for couch potatoes who want their hands free to drink beer and eat chips while otherwise swaddled on the sofa in polyester fleece—get to be an object of such gravity to warrant the judgment of a federal court?

It all has to do with the sort of differential in taxation that makes for full employment for Washington lobbyists.

In this case, it is the fact that imported blankets are hit with an 8.5 percent tariff, whereas, under subsection 6114, “garments, knitted or crocheted,” brought into the country require the payment of 14.9 percent duties. The Snuggies people have been bringing their product into the United States as “blankets,” thus enjoying the lower “blanket” tariff. The clever fellows at Customs and Border Protection were not fooled. No one



can pull the polyester fleece over their eyes. They demanded that Snuggies be treated as garments, what with the sleeves and all.

The dispute ended up in court, with Allstar Marketing Group squaring off against no less than the United States itself.

Which is where the Department of Justice came in. The geniuses there argued on behalf of Customs that the Snuggie was the same as “clerical or ecclesiastical garments and vestments” (which may be true if one worships at the altar of junk-food). And if the court wasn’t buying that, Justice maintained that the Snuggie was akin to “professional or scholastic gowns

and robes,” garments that “have wide-armed sleeves and flow loosely around the body.”

Needless to say, the United States lost. Have the lawyers for the Justice Department never been in court before? If they had, they might have noticed that judges wear robes. THE SCRAPBOOK suspects those judges are not inclined to have their workwear equated with Snuggies.

Case closed. ♦

## Democracy’s Eulogists

Last week, the *Washington Post* unveiled a new slogan displayed just below the paper’s masthead:



HEAD, JARED CRAMER; BELOW, SNUGGIE

“Democracy dies in darkness.” As Count Floyd might say, “Scary stuff, huh, kids?”

The *Post*’s new slogan may be hilariously overwrought, but it does suggest a parallel motto: If democracy dies in darkness, journalism surely dies in self-aggrandizement.

For the last few weeks, the scribes and prattlers of the press have been plumping themselves as civilization’s last best hope. There they are, manning the barricades, militants of a movement. The *New York*

*Times* no longer merely asks people to subscribe, it pleads with them to “SUPPORT OUR MISSION.”

We don’t dismiss Trump’s attacks on the media lightly. Indeed, THE SCRAPBOOK wishes he would spare us all the “media is the enemy” hoo-ha—mainly because it just inflates reporters’ already intolerable sanctimony.

If there is an imminent threat to journalism, we suspect it is less in the bluster of one Donald J. and more in the self-regard of the Fourth Estate. ♦

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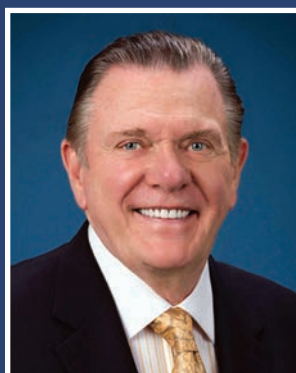
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## Release Me

There is nothing more boring than other people's dreams, so I try to forget most of my own. Life's waking nightmares are vivid enough. But I'm dogged by one I had the other night. I was standing in a favorite fishing hole up to my waist, attempting to release a largemouth bass I'd just caught. Slow on the trigger, I'd missed the lip-hook. So my fly had lodged deep down his gullet. As I struggled to work it free with hemostats, trying not to injure the fish, hands grew out of his pectoral fins, gripping my wrists, as he patiently awaited his fate.

I woke up with my heart pounding out some thumping, jungle arrhythmia. What if fish had hands? Could I spend all this time doing what I love to do most, catching-and-releasing them? Thank God they don't. A good break for me, a bad break for the fish. Anatomy is destiny.

I've written about catch-and-release fishing in these pages before, almost exactly 10 years ago. Since then, I've caught 13,005 more fish on a fly rod and have let them all go. I know the precise number, because I've counted and recorded each one. They say fishing is cheaper than therapy, which my wife suspects I'm in need of. Though after tallying up the tabs for rods, waders, boots, flies, gas, and convenience-store junk-food on my runs, I'm not so sure. But it's given me a lot of time to think about this seemingly pointless blood-pag-eant I participate in, and why. With another decade gone, I haven't come

up with anything better than a weak paraphrase of Thoreau: Some men count fish all their lives without knowing what it is they're counting.

Non-fishing friends often look askance at you when you tell them how many fish you catch without eating a one. "Oh, you're just a sadist, then," they say. They call me "fish molester," "fish torturer," and worse,



Releasing a trout in Alberta, Canada

as though my fly rod and I amount to some piscatorial Abu Ghraib. I tell them I like to eat fish just fine on occasion. But Mrs. Paul has already done the dirty work for me. Why commit felonies when misdemeanors bring you more pleasure?

I'm free to just fish. I don't have to kill them, clean them, cook them, or take their PCB loads into my bloodstream. I can just hold something beautiful and wild for a second, before turning it loose to be fruitful and multiply. Maybe I will even catch its children and grandchildren down the line, before evolutionary calculus kicks in, and it finally dawns on the progeny that a woolly bugger isn't actual food. The fish, in the bargain, gets a good human tale to tell to his fish kin, scaring the bejesus out of them. Maybe

fish like to be scared a little, the same way people do. Fear reminds us that we're still alive.

The science is divided on whether fish feel pain. But from my hands-on experience, I safely assume they don't relish being caught. While I enjoy communing with them, they seem like they'd be perfectly willing to go it alone. But even if fish had the neocortex and microcircuitry to guarantee they feel pain, it's nothing like the pain I feel when I can't catch them in deepest winter or when life presses in.

I don't know what it says about me that I always feel closest to God when I'm giving His majestic creation a lip-piercing. But the book of Hebrews states plainly that without bloodshed, there is no redemption. Jesus himself was a bit of a catch-and-release story. The Romans thought they had Him good and dead; then three days later, the tomb let Him go. Not for nothing were at least five of Christ's disciples fishermen, including his two favorites (Peter and John). So I rest confident that He'd forgive this minor blasphemy.

As for counting and logging all my escapees, I can't say what it amounts to. Except that each of those marks on a page represents a fleeting window of time. One in which I was looking neither forward nor back—I was just looking. It's my favorite kind of time, since it's the time we have the least of. String enough of those moments together, and a good fishing moment becomes a good fishing life, irrefutable evidence of what Roderick Haig-Brown called "living a life, instead of enduring it."

I'm not pretending that fish can save our souls. But on some days, they come close enough.

MATT LABASH

# Remember Henry Clay

When your mind runs over the history of the Grand Old Party, you think of the presidents first. You think of Abraham Lincoln and are proud to be in some way associated with a political party whose first president was our greatest. You recall Ulysses S. Grant and Theodore Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge, and you think . . . not bad, not bad at all. And you move along to Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan and the two George Bushes, and you conclude: It's an impressive legacy.

Who knows whether President Donald Trump will ever be looked back on with comparable nostalgia and respect? If he is, we suspect it will be due mostly to the actions of Republican members of Congress. It won't primarily be due to their diligence in supporting him. What will prove more important to success for the Republican party and for Republican principles over the next four years is the success of Republicans in Congress in guiding Trump, in correcting him, in checking him—and, yes, at times in opposing him.

Republicans in Congress shouldn't be intimidated by this responsibility. They do, after all, have a grand congressional history to look back upon as well. From the great Whig Henry Clay, who might be considered the forefather of the Republican party, all the way down to the present, Republican members can reflect on senatorial and congressional statesmen galore. In the modern era alone, they can, for different reasons and in varied ways, take pride in the legacies of Robert Taft and Arthur Vandenberg, of Everett Dirksen and Barry Goldwater, of Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich and Jack Kemp. And there are current members to admire like John McCain and Paul Ryan and a host of younger members recently arrived, who bid fair to step forward and join their illustrious predecessors.

Most of these congressional figures made their names cooperating with Democratic presidents or resisting them, or leading from the Hill when there wasn't a Republican in the White House. But it would be a mistake to assume, just because a Republican holds the presidency, that the task of congressional Republicans is primarily to support and to follow him. Republicans on the Hill haven't quite adjusted to the current situation. When you ask them these days what their plans are, they typically say they're waiting for the White House. When you inquire about plans on taxes

or spending or defense or health care, most of the denizens of the Hill—understandably, given recent history—defer to forthcoming guidance from the administration.

But it's becoming increasingly clear that such deference may be self-defeating. This is unlikely to be a White House that provides concrete or consistent or sound guidance in many policy areas.

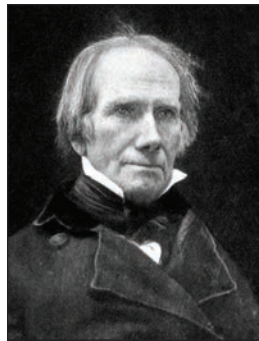
So, senators and representatives: This is your moment. Don't be intimidated by the Master of Mar-a-Lago. You were also elected by the American people, in most cases by a larger margin. Your grant of legislative powers comes in Article One of the Constitution—his in Article Two. He will be the executor of your legislation; he can be a kibitzer in your deliberations. But you know more than he does, you've thought more than he has, and you have a longer time horizon than he is capable of. You can guide him, you can check him, and you can override him.

As most of you know but will say only privately: If the next four years are the years of Trump alone, they're likely to be years of failure. If the next four years are the years in the House of Paul Ryan and Kevin Brady, of Mac Thornberry and Jeb Hensarling, of Mike Gallagher and Liz Cheney, and in the Senate of Mitch McConnell and John McCain, of Lamar Alexander and Mike Lee, of Tom Cotton and Ben Sasse, they're far more likely to be years to be proud of.

The first Republican president had a high regard for the legislative branch. Here's what he had to say in his eulogy for Henry Clay, who served almost four decades in both chambers of Congress and never became president, but did more for his country than most presidents:

Mere duration of time in office, constitutes the smallest part of Mr. Clay's history. Throughout that long period, he has constantly been the most loved, and most implicitly followed by friends, and the most dreaded by opponents, of all living American politicians. In all the great questions which have agitated the country, and particularly in those great and fearful crises—the Missouri question, the Nullification question, and the late slavery question, as connected with the newly acquired territory, involving and endangering the stability of the Union—his has been the leading and most conspicuous part. . . .

Even those of both political parties who have been



*'Still shining high'*

preferred to him for the highest office, have run far briefer courses than he, and left him, still shining high in the heavens of the political world. . . .

Mr. Clay's predominant sentiment, from first to last, was a deep devotion to the cause of human liberty—a strong sympathy with the oppressed everywhere, and an ardent wish for their elevation. . . . He loved his country partly because it was his own country, but mostly because it was a free country; and he burned with a zeal for its advancement, prosperity and glory, because he saw in such, the advancement, prosperity and glory, of human liberty, human right and human nature.

Members of Congress: Act so that when the antics of Donald Trump have faded in memory, your deeds will be memorable enough to inspire a eulogy half so heartfelt and so powerful from a future Republican president.

—William Kristol

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# Drawing Boundaries

Political correctness holds too strong a grip on too much of American life these days. Religious citizens who politely and conscientiously object to working gay weddings may be crushed by the state and driven into bankruptcy. In academia, the very place where the life of the mind is supposed to flourish, critiques of Islam, feminism, or transgenderism may be treated as thought crimes to be stamped out. On many a college campus today, saying 2+2=4 is an act of rebellion.

And so some conservatives have been drawn to Milo Yiannopoulos, a rebel whose cause is provoking the left and promoting himself. The flamboyantly gay Yiannopoulos made a name for himself as a Breitbart News personality who took his anti-p.c. message to colleges across the country on his “Dangerous Faggot” tour. Yiannopoulos made more headlines last week when he was announced as a headline speaker at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) and then disinvited two days later, after attention was drawn to a video in which he defended sex between adults and children as young as 13. “We’re talking about 13[-year-olds with] 25[-year-olds], 13[-year-olds with] 28[-year-olds]—these things do happen perfectly consensually,” he said in a January 2016 video. “In the gay world,” he went on, “some of the most important, enriching, and incredibly life-affirming, important shaping relationships [are] very often between younger boys and older men; they can be hugely positive experiences for those young boys.”

The Yiannopoulos affair is a reminder that just because many on the left have lost their minds, along with any sense of decency and civility, that’s no excuse for conservatives to do the same. It shouldn’t have taken a video in which Yiannopoulos said child rape could be “perfectly consensual” for conservatives to cut their ties. His anti-Semitism and racism should have been enough. As Ben Shapiro, a conservative and Yiannopoulos’s former Breitbart colleague, wrote on February 3 at the *Daily Wire*:

[Yiannopoulos] says Jews run the media; earlier this month he characterized a Jewish BuzzFeed writer as “a typical example of a sort of thick-as-pig shit media Jew”; he justifies anti-Semitic memes as playful trolly and pats racist sites like American Renaissance on the head; he describes himself as a “chronicler of, and occasional fellow traveler with the alt-right” while simultaneously recognizing that their “dangerously bright” intellectuals believe that “culture is inseparable from race”; back in his days going under the name Milo Wagner, he reportedly posed with his hand atop a Hitler biography, posted a Hitler meme about killing 6 million Jews, and wore an Iron Cross; last week he berated a Muslim woman in the audience of one of his speeches for wearing a hijab in the United States; . . . he personally Tweeted a picture of a black baby at me on the day of my son’s birth, because according to the alt-right I’m a “cuck” who wants to see the races mixed; he sees the Constitution as a hackneyed remnant of the past, to be replaced by a new right he leads.

When CPAC organizer Matt Schlapp appeared on *Morning Joe* on February 21, he explained that Yiannopoulos had been disinvited because his pederasty comments crossed “very important boundaries,” but he suggested anti-Semitism was not one of those boundaries. Joe Scarborough asked Schlapp: “[Yiannopoulos] has also made some extraordinarily offensive anti-Semitic remarks. So can’t you find somebody else . . . to fire off a speech against p.c. codes on college campuses? Get anybody at CPAC that’s not an anti-Semite?”

“Joe, it’s a fair point. But the other point is that, whether we like it or not, he is a big voice in this movement,” Schlapp replied. “The question is this: Is it okay for people who are offensive to speak on campus? And that was the point of why he was invited.”

What nonsense. Of course it is okay for people who are offensive to speak on campus. The violence and intimidation that shut down a Yiannopoulos speech earlier this month at Berkeley was criminal. College students who shout down speakers invited to campus are a disgrace. But supporting the right to free speech, including vile speech, does not obligate anyone to honor and promote vile speech.

As for the claim that Yiannopoulos is already a “big voice,” that looks more like an excuse to justify a poor decision. More important, it ignores the duty of conservatives to marginalize rather than elevate such voices. Yiannopoulos didn’t rise to semi-prominence all on his own. Breitbart

News, whose former head Stephen Bannon is now President Trump's chief strategist, gave Yiannopoulos a job and bankrolled his college tour. "Mr. Yiannopoulos, whose college tour was being subsidized by Breitbart, did not charge a fee," the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported following a recent speech. "[Steve Bannon] made me into a star," Yiannopoulos said in November 2016.

Bannon acknowledged that he wanted to make Breitbart News into a "platform for the alt-right." In 2014 remarks, Bannon shrugged off anti-Semitic and racist elements within right-wing European parties and movements because "over time it all gets kind of washed out, right? People understand what pulls them together, and the people on the margins I think get marginalized more and more."

That comment glosses over how marginalization takes place. It ignores the important work it took from prominent conservatives—men like William F. Buckley Jr.—to purge the American conservative movement of anti-Semitism. It ignores the role of people who control microphones and assemble audiences in deciding which "big voices" they will choose to amplify. Technological changes in the media may have made it more difficult to marginalize vile speech, but that's no excuse for anyone who pretends to care about American conservatism to promote the idea that such speech is within the bounds of civil discourse.

—John McCormack

# An Outlaw State

Since 2009, each edition of the State Department's annual *Country Reports on Terrorism* has contained a cheerful fiction: State has given the nation that it insists on calling the "DPRK"—using the anti-democratic, anti-people, and anti-republican Pyongyang government's laughable official appellation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea—a clean bill of health. North Korea "is not known to have sponsored any terrorist acts since the bombing of a Korean Airlines flight in 1987," last year's document reads. The country has therefore remained safely off the United States' list of state sponsors of terrorism.

This year's report, due to be released by April 30, will require a revision. For what last year was—at a minimum—a highly questionable judgment now looks utterly indefensible in the wake of North Korea's brazen assassination of

## Regulatory Relief Is on the Way

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

After a relentless, eight-year regulatory onslaught that loaded unprecedented burdens on businesses and the economy, relief is finally on the way. The president and leaders in Congress have quickly made good on campaign pledges to rein in the regulatory state.

President Trump promptly halted most pending regulations until the administration has a chance to review them and signed an executive order to slash current rules and their costs. He also issued executive orders to begin finding ways to relieve burdensome requirements from some of the most sweeping Obama-era actions, including the Affordable Care Act, Dodd-Frank, and the Department of Labor's Fiduciary Rule. Significant executive orders to unravel major environmental regulations are also expected soon. These early and aggressive actions show he's serious about reform.

Congress is taking bold action too. Lawmakers exercised their authority to review and rescind many recent rules using the Congressional Review Act (CRA). The Obama administration issued an estimated 38 major rules after President Trump's election in November. Under the CRA, Congress has already repealed the Department of Interior's Stream Buffer Rule, which threatened to severely restrict access to domestic coal resources, and the Venting and Flaring Rule, which stunted our energy revolution with unnecessary restrictions on oil and natural gas production. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce will continue to push lawmakers to use the CRA to undo ill-conceived 11th hour rules.

Some of the worst regulations of the last eight years are tied up in the judicial system. As a result of aggressive engagement by the business community and its allies, many of these rules have been temporarily or permanently enjoined by the courts. And with a new administration, there's an opportunity

to withdraw or modify those rules.

While this progress is welcome and badly needed, regulatory relief alone is not enough. We also need to reform the system itself. In the opening days of the 115th Congress, the House passed the Regulatory Accountability Act, which would update our regulatory system for the first time in 70 years. This legislation would increase scrutiny on the rules with the highest costs and the greatest impact and demand more transparency and accountability. We're pushing the Senate to quickly follow suit.

The Chamber has long fought back against overregulation—and for smart, balanced regulation—for a simple reason: A heavy-handed regulatory approach stokes uncertainty, repels investment, stalls hiring, and suffocates growth. Now that the government is starting to get out of the way, businesses can focus on what they do best—creating jobs and growing the economy.



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[uschamber.com/abovethefold](http://uschamber.com/abovethefold).

its dictator's older half-brother at Kuala Lumpur's airport on February 13.

In the waning days of his administration, George W. Bush removed North Korea from the State Department's terror list. Pyongyang had been on the list since that aforementioned 1987 bombing, which killed 115 innocent people. Call it the audacity of hope: Bush figured that by rewarding Pyongyang with a delisting, the North Korean regime would agree to halt its development of nuclear weapons and allow international weapons inspectors inside the country. Like many dubious propositions, Bush's move gained widespread bipartisan support. Then-senator Barack Obama praised the deal, calling it a "modest step forward."

Four nuclear weapons tests later, we see how well the denuclearization component of the arrangement has worked. And in the meantime, North Korea has continued to aid and perpetrate acts of terrorism, rendering the claim that it "is not known" to have sponsored terrorism true only if one has never cracked a newspaper.

Writing in these pages in July 2015, attorney and sanctions expert Joshua Stanton noted that

under U.S. law, and according to the precedents of the State Department's past *Country Reports*, international terrorism includes both material support for terrorists and terrorist organizations, and also the use of a state's own clandestine agents to commit violent, politically motivated acts against noncombatants, across international boundaries, that are unlawful in the place where they are committed, with the intent to influence the conduct of a government or members of the civilian population.

North Korea has committed such acts in spades. Since its delisting, several shipments of arms have been intercepted on their way from North Korea to Iran and its terrorist proxies. In the first half of 2015 alone, at least three delegations of North Korean nuclear scientists traveled to Iran to provide assistance to that regime's illicit nuclear program. Crucially, Iran (along with Syria and Sudan) is considered a state sponsor of terror, meaning that North Korea has certainly provided "material support for terrorists and terrorist organizations." Oh, and in 2009, it was discovered that North Korea had attempted to ship more than 10,000 chemical weapons suits to Syria, another example of Pyongyang aiding a regime that the State Department considers terrorist in nature.

There's more. Even before Kim Jong-nam, a prominent critic of his half-brother's regime, was brutally murdered in Kuala Lumpur this month in a brazen public attack ordered by Pyongyang, North Korea was known to

have committed or attempted to commit multiple assassinations abroad. And closer to home, the 2014 cyberattack on Sony Pictures, which was clearly designed to "influence the conduct of . . . members of the civilian population" by preventing them from seeing a movie that mocked North Korea, was arguably an act of terrorism.

Happily, some lawmakers are waking up to this reality, with several members of the House of Representatives calling for North Korea to be relisted. The State Department should heed their advice. Re-designating North Korea a state sponsor of terror would, for one, affirm that the truth matters: North Korea supports terrorism and it does no good to pretend otherwise. It would also be an important symbolic step in its own right and a sign of solidarity with South Korea, an ally that is feeling shaky about America's commitment to it.

Relisting North Korea would have concrete salutary upshots too. As Stanton explains on his blog,

Banks would have to apply for a Treasury Department license to process dollar transactions on North Korea's behalf. That would be extremely powerful by itself. Just ask BNP Paribas, which paid a multi-billion-dollar settlement for violating similar requirements on behalf of Iran, Cuba, and other countries subject to that sort of licensing requirement. Second, it would trigger SEC rules requiring corporations to disclose their investments in North Korea in public filings. That, in turn, could trigger a North Korea divestment movement by NGOs. . . . Third, it would require U.S. diplomats to oppose benefits (like loans) for North Korea from international financial institutions. Fourth, it would mean that U.S. victims of North Korean terrorism could sue North Korea for its acts of terrorism.



*Kim Jong-nam in 2001*



*Kim Jong-un*

Of course, the most brutal form of terrorism that North Korea commits is the kind it perpetrates on its own citizens. Dictator Kim Jong-un—who holds the distinction of being a morbidly obese leader of a country that suffers from chronic food shortages—operates a slave state. Political, intellectual, religious, and economic liberties are nil. Hundreds of thousands languish in labor camps. That South Korea has over the past several decades blossomed into a prosperous and vibrant democracy while North Korea has remained stuck in Stalinist misery highlights the tragedy of the situation.

Anything that prudently moves us closer to the end of the North Korean regime is worth doing. Labeling North Korea a state sponsor of terror would be a small move, yes. But it would certainly qualify as a "modest step forward."

—Ethan Epstein

# Take Two at the NSC

McMaster and commander.

BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

It has been a tumultuous start for President Donald Trump's National Security Council, to put it gently. General Michael Flynn was forced to resign as national security adviser less than a month into the new administration, amid controversy over his contacts with a Russian ambassador. It is clear from press reporting that some NSC staffers have been leaking negative details while others are being heavily scrutinized and criticized in the press.

Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, a highly respected scholar and military leader, is now tasked with stabilizing the situation. As Trump's newly appointed national security adviser, he holds one of the most important positions in government. The amount of power a national security adviser wields can vary depending on the level of trust a president has in him. But McMaster certainly looks well-positioned to help shape America's role in the world.

A veteran of the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, McMaster knows America's jihadist enemies well. He is widely credited with helping to turn around the Iraq war (albeit briefly), by working with local Iraqis to defeat al Qaeda's men in the city of Tal Afar. McMaster got deep into the war in Afghanistan, too. And even while prosecuting the war on terror, McMaster has been preparing the American military for other conflicts that may lie ahead.

It is clear from a review of his writings, interviews, and congressional testimony that he has been thinking deeply about America's role in the world—and how our nation's enemies are attempting to undermine it.

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McMaster is no apologist for Vladimir Putin. He has carefully assessed how the American military might deter and counter Russian provocations. “Historians will likely regard Russia’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine as the event that punctuated the end of the post-Cold War era,” McMaster wrote in a book review for the *Wall Street Journal* in March 2016. He may very well be right. History has turned on less consequential events.

For McMaster, Russia’s prying Crimea away from Ukraine and annexing it should not be viewed as an isolated act of aggression. Instead, it is one of a series of challenges to American leadership. And it isn’t just Russia that is seeking to shift the balance of power in the 21st century. Regional

powers such as China and Iran are expanding their footprints. Russia, China, and Iran may not be capable of mounting a sustained challenge to America’s global leadership on their own. Not yet, that is. But working in parallel, and sometimes through coordinated action, they could tip the scales in favor of anti-democratic, anti-Western forces.

McMaster’s warning with respect to Russia’s invasion of Crimea was based on his reading of *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and the Crisis of American Power*, by Jakub J. Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell. The authors are keenly aware that Americans are questioning the value of our alliances today, more than in the past. And they seek to reestablish the case for American supremacy in the world.

President Obama believed that the time for America to hold its traditional adversaries in check through alliances with other nations was over. “In an era when our destiny is shared, power is no longer a zero-sum game,” Obama said in a speech before the United Nations General Assembly on September 23, 2009. “No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation. No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed.” Obama believed that rival nations jockeying for power was a thing of the past. “No balance of power among nations will hold,” Obama continued at the U.N. “The traditional divisions between nations of the South and the North make no sense in an interconnected world; nor do alignments of nations rooted in the cleavages of a long-gone Cold War.”

Obama began his presidency with this post-Cold War view, attempting to “reset” relations with Russia. He ended his presidency by ordering the expulsion of 35 Russian “diplomats” from American soil, after Russian hacking became a factor in the 2016 presidential contest. That move followed the imposition of sanctions on Russia for the annexation of Crimea—a belated recognition that some nations do, in fact, still seek to “dominate” others.

It is significant that McMaster

THOMAS FLUHARTY

has been thinking along the lines of Grygiel and Mitchell. The pair defend America's leadership role in the 20th century and argue that the United States must continue to take a proactive stance in various contests for power. They advocate continued support for a host of small to medium-sized countries neighboring China, Russia, and Iran. Grygiel and Mitchell recognize that America's alliances are costly, but they argue the benefits far outweigh the liabilities. In fact, the more America retreats from the world, the more dangerous the world becomes.

After eight years of Obama's illusions about the world, all is not well. "The American alliance network is in a state of advanced crisis," Grygiel and Mitchell write. "Many long-standing U.S. allies believe that the United States, for reasons of either decline or disinterest, is in the process of pulling back from decades-long commitments and inaugurating a multi-regional diplomatic and military retrenchment."

It remains to be seen how the Trump administration will address this dire situation. President Trump often seems more comfortable questioning the value of America's allies than seeking to reassure them. There are competing schools of thought within the new administration. McMaster seems unlikely to side with those in favor of deeper American retrenchment.

McMaster spearheaded the Russia New Generation Warfare Study, a government panel that pondered how the U.S. Army should adjust to Russia's evolving military doctrine. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in April 2016, McMaster warned that Russia had learned from the American military's shortcomings. "It is clear that while our Army was engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq, Russia studied U.S. capabilities and vulnerabilities and embarked on an ambitious and largely successful modernization effort," he testified. "In Ukraine, for example, the combination of unmanned aerial systems and offensive cyber and advanced electronic warfare capabilities depict a high degree of technological

sophistication." *Politico* reported at the time that the McMaster-led review was expected to have a "profound impact on what the U.S. Army will look like in the coming years."

In testimony delivered to the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2015, McMaster and other U.S. officials warned that Putin's Russia was "willing to use force to achieve" its objectives. Although they noted the "centrality of land forces" in Russia's "effort to assert power and advance its interests in former Soviet states," McMaster and his colleagues recognized that Russia also "used cyberspace capabilities and social media to influence perceptions at home and abroad." The reference to social media is noteworthy. One of the ways Moscow is seeking to destabilize Europe is by spreading disinformation and misinformation, "fake news" in the current parlance.

McMaster and his fellow military commanders warned, "Without a viable land force capable of opposing the Russian Army and its irregular proxies, such adventurism [as in Ukraine] is more challenging to deter."

In other words, the U.S. military, degraded by budget sequestration, must be rebuilt, especially its ground forces. If American military might does not evolve to counter what Grygiel and Mitchell describe as Russia's "revisionist probing," it will be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to deter further aggression. The result could be an even more disastrous conflict.

The concept of "probing" plays a prominent role in Grygiel's and Mitchell's thinking. In his review of their book, McMaster endorsed this way of framing strategic behavior. "Russia, China and Iran are using aggressive diplomacy, economic overtures and military action to test America's willingness to defend its interests and its allies," he wrote. In addition to Russia's invasion of Crimea, "China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, and Iran's support for terrorist groups and militias across the Middle East are all examples of probing." To be sure, this trio of American adversaries have many other

reasons for their behavior, but challenging American power is central to their thinking.

Outside of these regional powers, other actors continue to threaten American interests. The jihadist threat is as virulent as ever. Many foreign policy thinkers tend to underestimate the jihadists as strategic adversaries. Not McMaster. In an op-ed for the *New York Times* in 2013, he decried the "hubris" in America's military circles leading up to the 9/11 wars. The dominant theory held "that further advances in military technology would deliver dominance over any opponent," so less advanced adversaries "would not dare to threaten vital American interests." That was grossly mistaken. In Afghanistan and Iraq, McMaster wrote, "planning did not account for adaptations and initiatives by the enemy" or recognize the complex "political and human dynamics" of the insurgencies raging in both countries.

McMaster's celebrated 1997 book, *Derelection of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, is an extended case study in the failures of military leadership. "The war in Vietnam was not lost in the field, nor was it lost on the front pages of the *New York Times* or the college campuses. It was lost in Washington, D.C.," he concluded. He has made similar critiques of Washington's role in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, arguing that the enemy gets a vote and that American military planners did not sufficiently understand who they were fighting.

America's enemies are surely hoping to capitalize on uncertainty surrounding the nation's role in the world. And as the first weeks of the Trump administration have demonstrated, the knives are out in Washington, too. McMaster has earned a reputation as an effective commander, a military intellectual, and a contrarian—someone who can buck authority and still succeed. Now that he is at the center of power he will need all those traits. As national security adviser, he will no doubt be reminded daily, if not hourly, of the perils of underestimating his adversaries. ♦

# Gunning for Hillary

The NRA's unheralded role in 2016.

BY FRED BARNES

There are many claimants to the honor of having nudged Donald Trump over the top in the presidential election. But the folks with the best case are the National Rifle Association and the consultants who made their TV ads.

The NRA did just about everything right. It endorsed Trump last May when he was still just the de facto nominee. The goal was to persuade Second Amendment supporters who'd backed other candidates to unify behind him.

The NRA planned ahead. It had lined up TV time months beforehand when rates were lower. That saved money. Thus when the *Access Hollywood* tape threatened to capsize the Trump campaign a month before the election, the NRA had cash on hand for a fresh ad to steady Trump.

And the NRA kept track of every word Hillary Clinton uttered on the subject of guns. This wasn't new. It's what an interest group does. Once she was the Democratic nominee, they were ready to shred her claim to back the Second Amendment and the right of women to own guns.

Democrats helped too. They made the mistake of going on offense on gun control. They were playing with fire. But the issue proved irresistible after Terry McAuliffe stressed gun control in his successful race for governor of Virginia in 2013. McAuliffe didn't get any gun restrictions passed, but he hooked Democrats. Next was the former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg. He poured millions into Senate races in 2014, tightening the Democratic party's attachment to gun control.

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"That's when the politics changed on the Democratic side," says Brad Todd of OnMessage, the Republican firm that created the ads for the NRA. They softened the image of gun owners by featuring women. The ads were cleverly sequenced, the final one suggesting Clinton would create a Supreme Court majority opposed to the right of individuals to own guns.

In the 1990s, Bill Clinton had per-



The NRA's July ad featuring rape victim Kim Corban

sued Democrats to avoid the gun issue as a political loser. That was wise advice and spared Democrats years of grief. But first President Obama, then Hillary Clinton changed course and stepped forward on gun control.

In her primary fight with Bernie Sanders last year, Hillary gave gun control top billing. She harped on it in debates and it got her to where she wanted to be: to the left of Sanders. He fought back clumsily. Vermont has many gun owners, and Sanders wasn't willing to alienate them completely, not even in a presidential race.

Hillary eased off on guns in the general election, only addressing the issue when asked. And in the second and third debates with Trump, she was.

"I respect the Second Amendment," she said in the second debate. In the third, she went further. "I also

believe there is an individual right to bear arms." But she quibbled with the Supreme Court ruling that upheld that right. She would gut the right by mandating that guns in homes be kept in pieces "to protect toddlers."

Clinton's debate comments turned out to be the least of her worries. The NRA had decided to go all out to defeat her. Its series of ads ran from June through early November.

Just before Clinton's acceptance speech at the Democratic convention, an ad ran in four battleground states and on Fox News and sports channels, the same formula followed in airing later ads. It featured a woman, Kim Corban, who changed her mind about having a gun after she was raped. "My fear of firearms disappeared when I got my second chance at life," she said.

In August, an ad showed Clinton arriving at a private airport in a motorcade of black SUVs. She's been "protected by armed guards for 30 years," the narrator says. "But she doesn't believe in your right to keep a gun at home for your self-defense."

The next ad began with a woman, fearing a break-in, who leaps out of bed and rushes to get a gun out of a safe. The gun vanishes. "Hillary Clinton could take away her right to self-defense," the ad says. "And with Supreme Court justices, Hillary can."

Then came a crucial and timely ad. That it had been produced in July meant it was available to be aired immediately. And it was, the same week the *Access Hollywood* tape was leaked with Trump's crude talk about groping women. A young woman tells of fighting off a man who was wielding an eight-inch knife. "I carry a pistol," she says. "I fight back. That's why I'm still here."

This ad contrasts Clinton with Trump. "Every woman has a right to defend herself with a gun," the woman says. "Hillary Clinton disagrees with that. Donald Trump supports my right to own a gun."

The ad series ended between the

NRA / YOUTUBE

eighth and ninth innings of the seventh game of the World Series. Again, the NRA had money to pay for ads on short notice in both the sixth and seventh games.

The final ad focused on the 4-4 tie in the Supreme Court on guns. Clinton sides with the four anti-gun liberals, the ad says. “Hillary’s made her choice. Now you get to make yours. Defend freedom, defeat Hillary.”

How do we know these ads were critical to Trump’s victory? We don’t know for certain and never will. But after the election, OnMessage polled 5,100 voters in Florida, Indiana, Maine, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

The poll found that more NRA supporters voted for Trump in 2016 than for Mitt Romney in 2012. This meant 208,000 additional votes for Trump in North Carolina, which he won by 173,000 votes. In Ohio, he got 479,000 more votes from NRA backers and he won Ohio by 447,000. In Pennsylvania, Trump received 421,000 additional votes and won by 44,000.

A second group was tested in June 2016: the 19 percent of voters in the battleground states who viewed both candidates unfavorably. The poll found that 60 percent of them supported the NRA. Moreover, it found that most were “very willing to believe” that Clinton was corrupt and hypocritical. And it found that “most women” polled were conservative and liked the Second Amendment.

There was a third test. The post-election survey found that 3 percent of 2016 voters in battleground states said they hadn’t voted in 2012. And 79 percent of them were supporters of the NRA. “This means 784,000 NRA supporters in battleground states did not vote in 2012 but did vote in 2016,” the pollster said.

This is neither definitive nor conclusive evidence the NRA elected Trump. But it certainly suggests that the NRA ads played a critical role. And it’s the best case I’ve heard for crediting anyone with tipping the election to Trump. Absent the NRA, I think we know how Trump would have fared. He’d have lost. ♦

# An Extraordinary Career

Michael Novak, 1933-2017.

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

**O**n March 14, 1976, a writer, academic, and Democratic party operative published a 1,200-word op-ed in the *Washington Post* called “A Closet Capitalist Confesses,” and all hell broke loose. Nearly every intellectual journal in America felt compelled to opine about the absurdity of a modern intellectual defending capitalism. Nearly every religious journal denounced the Catholic thinker’s apparent apostasy. Across the nation, angry letters and harsh newspaper columns raged at the sight of a rising figure in the public intellectual life of America being so . . . so . . . *stupid*. So atavistic. So wrongheaded.

If you have trouble imagining that there was a time in America when democratic capitalism seemed to have almost no intellectually respectable defenders, you owe a debt to the author of that op-ed. If you can’t picture a world without widely read outlets for intellectual conservatism—a world in which socialism and secularization were the unquestioned air that all American thinkers were assumed to breathe—you should offer up a prayer of thanks for the life of a man named Michael Novak.

Those who knew him owe him even more, for Michael was not just someone who influenced the history of the age. He also radiated a gentleness that touched all around him. He spent his life working among public intellectuals, politicians, and writers—which is to say, people given to a level of ambition, backbiting, and status-seeking not usually seen outside of junior high school. But he seemed not even to

notice, assuming a public seriousness and personal kindness in others that matched his own.

For that matter, Michael had enormous amounts of abuse directed at him for his public positions, from his praise of the working class to his support for Reagan and his success at helping establish the American Enterprise Institute as one of the premier think tanks in the nation. The years saw a parade of lost friends, hostile reviews, withdrawn invitations. Crowds in South America gathered to scream “Yankee Shit!” at him for his arguments against liberation theology. European audiences hissed at his name. And through it all, he kept inviting his opponents to conferences, kept writing notes to his old lost friends, and kept conversation going even with those who announced to the world how much they despised him.

When Michael Novak died last week at age 83, there came an immediate outpouring of reminiscences and obituaries, remarking on his extraordinary career. All of it was deserved. He had been an adviser to popes and presidents, written more than 40 books and hundreds of essays, founded (with Ralph McInerney) the magazine *Crisis*, and forced into American public life a counter-current of conservative thought.

Not that he was alone in the effort. William F. Buckley Jr. had founded *National Review* in 1955, Milton Friedman published *A Monetary History of the United States* in 1963, the Philadelphia Society began meeting in 1964, Allan Bloom and other students of Leo Strauss were beginning their careers by the mid-1960s, and various Catholic, libertarian, and anti-Communist

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writers had been producing serious studies for decades. Nonetheless, well into the 1970s, all that work seemed invisible, unnoticed by much of the intelligentsia in the United States.

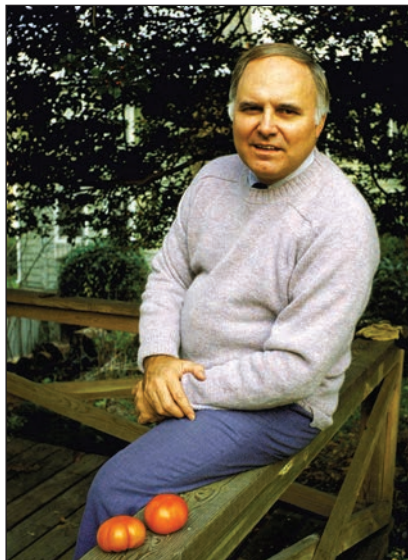
And then there came along a generation of former leftists who compelled the nation's thinkers and writers to pay attention. Of all the classic works of the original neoconservatives—Irving Kristol's essays, Norman Podhoretz's indefatigable work at *Commentary*, Richard John Neuhaus's *The Naked Public Square*, Jeane Kirkpatrick's influential essay "Dictatorships and Double Standards"—the most irreplaceable may be Michael Novak's 1982 book, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. The expansion of his *Washington Post* op-ed into a full-blown theoretical account of the American experiment, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* stands as the one volume from which much of the entire project of the new conservatives could be reconstructed, were all else lost.

These days, the book is remembered mostly for its economics, but in truth it ranged far beyond that, reflecting Michael's interests in theology, philosophy, social organization, public culture, and even sports. *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* insists that the family and the church—and not just the entrepreneur and the investor—are engaged in high social and moral endeavors, and they flourish best when left to their own devices. They stand as bulwarks against the tyrannies, great and small, to which all societies are prone, because they require economic, social, and even political power to be distributed widely, scattered in too many places for any government to seize complete control.

However successful he was, Michael never lost the formation he received growing up among Slovak immigrants in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Sent to the Holy Cross fathers for preparatory seminary at Notre Dame at age 14, he studied for the priesthood at Stonehill College in Massachusetts and the Gregorian in Rome, before deciding against taking priestly vows. Articles in the Catholic journals *America* and *Commonweal* turned into a gig helping

cover the Second Vatican Council for *Time* magazine—and a subsequent, well-received book on the council by what seemed the hotshot young reporter on intellectual topics.

Michael's return to the United States, however, was marked by uncertainty. He had written a novel, *The Tiber Was Silver* (1961), and met Karen Laub, the artist he would marry. His graduate study at Harvard was abandoned after gaining a master's degree, and he wrote



Novak at home, November 1982

mainly philosophical texts—*Belief and Unbelief: A Philosophy of Self-Knowledge* (1965), *The Experience of Nothingness* (1970)—while he worked in academia at Stanford, SUNY, and Syracuse and tried to see his way forward.

His magazine writing on Catholicism and politics brought him into the circle of Catholic politicians with intellectual interests: Bobby Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, and especially Sargent Shriver, the vice-presidential candidate whom Michael served as a senior adviser and speechwriter during George McGovern's doomed 1972 presidential campaign. And yet those political experiences, the peak of his career on the left, are what began his turn to the right. His travels with Shriver convinced him that political and cultural liberals were abandoning the traditionally Democratic working class, especially the old Catholic constituencies he knew from his childhood. Predicting

the Reagan Democrats who would vote Republican in 1980, he wrote *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (1972), arguing that the actual nation was far different from what the elites supposed it to be—both more optimistic and more pessimistic than the politics of the 1970s could represent.

From there, it was only a small step to "A Closet Capitalist Confesses" and all that followed: the influence on figures from Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan to John Paul II and Lech Walesa, the ambassadorships, the medals and awards, the 26 honorary doctorates, the million-dollar Templeton Prize, and all the rest. Along the way, he wrote on sports, the American founding, the nature of business, the structures of theology, and nearly everything else under the sun.

Along the way, as well, he carried on his conversations and his kindnesses. The first time we heard Michael give a lecture, my wife got the giggles, having to flee outside at the sound of that surprisingly high-pitched voice coming from the distinguished, barrel-chested man at the lectern. But she and I quickly learned to love Michael not just for the books he had written but for the company he was always willing to provide.

Dozens of dinners with Michael and Karen followed from our meeting, especially the one they threw for us when I first moved down from New York to join *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*—a gathering of people whom Michael and Karen thought we should know, if we were going to live and work in Washington. It was there that I first met Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ben Wattenberg, Walter Berns, and others. Professional talkers, all of them. Accomplished people with amazing careers. Sharp, quick, and deep thinkers.

But what I remember best from the evening is Michael himself. His joy in our toddler daughter. His concern that all his guests enjoy themselves. His intelligence, yes, but overwhelmingly his kindness and gentleness. Michael Novak was not just a great man. He was a good man. And all who knew him are injured by his passing: some essential part of us, wrenched away. ♦

DIANA WALKER / TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY

# Friend of Freedom

The spirit of Michael Novak.

BY CHRISTOPHER DEMUTH SR.

Early morning on February 17, word was getting around that Michael Novak had passed away in his sleep, and email klatsches were forming. In mine, one of his close friends wrote that “the generosity of Michael’s friendship allowed him to obscure the fact that he was among the few truly great men that any of us have known.” We all piled on with fervent assents. That a man of such towering achievements should also be a down-home, kindly friend (even “cuddly,” discerning women would attest) was so unusual that we had pretended he was just one of the guys.

Which is not to say that Michael was modest. He wrote more than 40 books and countless essays on everything under the sun and many things beyond the sun. He promoted his ideas assiduously, through 50 years of nonstop lecturing, debating, and classroom teaching and in everyday small-talk that never stayed small when he was around. He was driven by a firm conviction that he was in possession of singular talents for educating and improving mankind. Early in my time as president of the American Enterprise Institute, I told Michael that he had exactly 12 minutes, not a minute more, to summarize his current work for a gathering of trustees and donors. He cheerfully agreed and then, as he warmed up at the podium, spoke for 50 minutes (on baseball and American democracy) to a rapt and appreciative audience.

And Michael was ardent for recognition and honors—which, among friends, he never bothered to conceal, treating praise simply as evidence that his labors were indeed moving the world. As he lay dying, a visitor

noticed that his daughter, Jana, was reading him the numerous emails she was receiving attesting to his great works and influence. *Enough testimonials*, the visitor interjected, *it is time to turn to larger matters*. Michael mustered a smile and said: *No, no, read them all!* Which was his way of telling everyone assembled that the Novakian spirit they knew and loved was still burning strong.

Michael’s combination of ambition and friendliness was more than personal disposition. His thinking and writing, too, were at once aggressive and gentle, tough-minded and irenic. This was an expression of his intellectual position and Catholic faith—as I tried to explain in remarks at a dinner in honor of Michael on his retirement from AEI in 2010, printed below. Here let me elaborate with words of his own.

Michael was a Reagan Democrat, proud of his ethnic (Slovak-American) roots and upbringing in working-class Johnstown, Pennsylvania. In the 1970s, his intellectual migration from left to right was inspired by the left’s (and the Democratic party’s) abandonment of working-class sentiments and aspirations for a new-age progressivism that he regarded as utopian and effete. Accordingly, his conservatism was sinewy, and distinctly non-libertarian. Human freedom, for Michael, was not an abstract good but rather a social artifact—the fruit of lived experience, grounded in family and community, and demanding continuous struggle against the forces of moral entropy. Democratic capitalism is the preferred political system for more than its palpable material benefits: It is the most auspicious arena for the incarnate struggles among groups and nations and within the human heart. Economic prosperity is evidence that the struggles are going well for the

time being. “Free to choose,” when we gain it, is an obligation.

I thought of Novak the Reagan Democrat last election night, November 8, 2016, when the early returns from western Pennsylvania were beginning to upset expectations of a Hillary Clinton triumph. (Johnstown’s Cambria County, heavily Democratic in party registration, went 66 percent for Donald Trump.) In my political set, sharply divided between Trump supporters and opponents, we had learned to be circumspect about election preferences—but when I reached Michael he was bluntly at the barricades. “If America is going to come apart into those who went to college and those who did not,” he said, “I want to be with the folks who did not go to college.”

I did not question Michael in any detail, but am certain that he was not rooting for the Trumpsters as if they were the Steelers. I think he regarded the Trump revolt as the rough-hewn, extravagantly flawed, internally conflicted agency of freedom in its latest struggle. But in Michael’s conception the struggle is a noble one, because freedom is at once contingent and divine, and it can succeed only by attaching itself to human goodness. That is the teaching of the stem-winding conclusion of his address at Westminster Abbey on receiving the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion in 1994:

No one ever promised us that free societies will endure forever. Indeed, a cold view of history shows that submission to tyranny is the more frequent condition of the human race, and that free societies have been few in number and not often long-lived. Free societies such as our own, which have arisen rather late in the long evolution of the human race, may pass across the darkness of time like splendid little comets, burn into ashes, disappear.

Yet nothing in the entire universe, vast as it is, is as beautiful as the human person. The human person alone is shaped to the image of God. This God loves humans with a love most powerful. It is this God who draws us, erect and free, toward Himself, this God Who, in Dante’s words, *is the Love that moves the sun / and all the stars*.

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Michael was one of the last remaining (a few are still with us) of those giants who collaborated directly with Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II on the great liberal achievements of the 1980s—the defeat of Soviet communism

and the expansion of economic freedom and prosperity in much of the West and beyond. Today we are once again beset by violent totalitarianism, economic stagnation, angry social divisions, and an abundance of unpleasant options. Many conservatives, and

many young people, seem to think we have lost our grip and fallen away from a halcyon past. In the face of such despair, Michael Novak's legacy is that the struggle for freedom is ever present, ever changing, and ever in need of active, tough-minded idealism. ♦

## A Tribute to Michael Novak

**M**ichael Novak and his work during the past 35 years have been abundantly feted. Celebrants have expounded on his brilliance, his prolificacy, and his influence. But brilliance and industriousness, although highly important virtues, are not nearly as rare as the total Novak phenomenon. And influence, although highly admired, is not a virtue at all—it puts Michael in the company of Eliot Spitzer and Peter Singer. So I would like to take a different tack and remark on Michael's character, in particular his ambition and his bravery.

He spent the first 20 years of his professional life in academics. To the brilliant and industrious, university life offers wonderful opportunities for achievement and fulfillment. Michael could have continued to hold the best chairs at the best schools and to win all the teaching awards. But the academy favors work on discrete, manageable problems “in the literature” and can punish departures from certain orthodoxies. At some point in the 1970s, Michael decided that he would go after bigger game.

I have often marveled that in the midst of the Jimmy Carter administration, the hardheaded businessmen on the American Enterprise Institute's Board of Trustees would countenance the appointment of a theologian, and moreover a theologian with a colorful paper trail in left-wing politics and Democratic party electioneering. But it was Michael who took by far the greater risk in accepting the offer—throwing away tenure and respectability for God knew what (but He wasn't talking, not even to Michael).

Since then Michael's vocation has been the conquest of momentous, difficult, contentious problems. Problems with large practical and political components, where his philosophical learning provided a foundation but everything else was left to his own wits and experience. Today we recognize the moral architecture of democratic capitalism because Michael built it for us—even the terms were unknown before he and Irving Kristol started their work.

And, since publication of *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* in 1982, he has provided many elaborations and applications: on the moral architectures of economic development, of escape from the welfare trap, of nuclear deterrence, of the corporation and business-as-a-calling, and of the income tax, intellectual property, mediating structures, ethnic politics, and even sports (the last however limited to Notre Dame football). If you listen in on Michael debating the progressive income tax with a professional economist, you will get an idea of the moral clarity he has brought to questions that everyone knew to be terribly complicated and endlessly nuanced.

Along the way he has dispatched many cherished liberal

shibboleths and theological wrong-turns. In his 2001 book, *On Two Wings*, he grafted back the second wing of faith onto the long-prevailing narrative (even at AEI) of the American founding as a secular exercise in institutional ingenuity. Bravest of all, he has provided religious instruction to Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

What Michael's greatest projects have had in common is audacity. In taking them on, he was committing himself to originality, which risked failure, and to unflinching truth-telling, which risked elite derision if he succeeded. His brilliance may have given him the confidence to take the big risks; his industriousness may have been inspired by fear of failure. But they alone cannot explain what Michael achieved. They had to be coupled with guts—sheer obstinate confrontational Johnstown guts.

Michael's toughness is often masked by his sweet, magnanimous disposition. Don't be fooled. If you have watched him make a big concession in a debate, or respond sympathetically to a hostile questioner, or provide a generous account of an opposing view in a book or essay, then you know that his kindness is often the sign that serious intellectual vivisection is about to commence.

And then there's his vast philosophical mastery: He already knows Argument 27 better than the other guy, and he also knows that it is conventionally trumped by Argument 8—but he also knows that it is completely annihilated by Argument 131-C, which he derived himself 15 years ago.

But most of all, Michael's sweet magnanimity is genuine and in fact reflects the ambition and bravery of his intellectual position. For it expresses his certainty that there is good in human nature—good that calls for earnest entreaty on its own terms. Among career pundits and haut thinkers, nothing could be more politically incorrect, more embarrassingly naïve. Yet in Michael's choices of projects, and in the particulars of his arguments, one sees three overarching propositions constantly at work:

First, that man for all his failings is ardently concerned to know what is right and just.

Second, that politics for all its flaws is capable of pursuing social betterment and sometimes finding it.

Third, that reason for all its frailties can help us find our way.

To dedicate a lifetime to such propositions in late-20th-century America one had to be not only brave but downright reckless. That the endeavor has proven so astoundingly fruitful is reason to doubt the cynicism of the age and to work, as diligently as he has, for a return of the better angels.

—Christopher DeMuth, July 2010 ♦



Michael Novak

# Trump's New Enemy

Hating the press is a venerable presidential tradition. BY JAY COST

Donald Trump declared in a tweet on February 17 that the mainstream press is “the enemy of the American People.” This inflammatory remark was greeted by outrage mixed with anxiety. Chuck Todd of NBC’s *Meet the Press* spoke for many journalists when he responded, “This is not a laughing matter. I’m sorry, delegitimizing the press is un-American.”

Of course, it was just a tweet, thus far unaccompanied by any state-sponsored efforts to suppress the liberties of the media. Without excusing the president’s choice of words, it is important to understand the larger historical and political context. As uncouth as Trump’s rhetoric was, the fact remains that the government and journalists have long had an uneasy relationship, and prior presidents have, unlike Trump to date, used the power of the state to censor the press and even criminalize free speech.

The first and most egregious example of this pattern came in the early years of the republic. During the presidency of John Adams, the opposition had coalesced behind James Madison and Thomas Jefferson under the banner of the “Republican” party (different from the modern GOP). They placed special emphasis on the press, such that by 1800 Federalist senator Uriah Tracy of Connecticut lamented there was a Republican newspaper “in almost every town and county in the country.” The Federalist Congress responded by passing the Sedition Act, which imposed a maximum penalty of \$2,000 and two years in jail for publishing “false, scandalous, or malicious writings” about

the president or Congress, with the intent to “bring them . . . into contempt or disrepute; or to excite against them . . . the hatred of the good people of the United States.” Fortunately, this blatantly unconstitutional law expired in 1801, and the Jefferson administration did not renew it.



In prosecuting the Civil War, the Union government sometimes took a hard line against the media. In 1863, General Ambrose Burnside suspended publication of the

*Chicago Times* because of “repeated expression of disloyal and incendiary sentiments,” an order that President Abraham Lincoln quickly rescinded amidst widespread protest. The *New York World*, initially sympathetic to Lincoln, was sold to a group of New York Democrats and became highly critical of the administration. In 1864, the government shut the publication down for two days.

During World War I, the Woodrow Wilson administration used the Espionage Acts of 1917 and 1918 to suppress the media. These laws effectively made it a crime to criticize the government or its prosecution of the war, and the administration halted anti-administration publications from being sent through the mail. During the New Deal, the sweeping nature of the National Recovery Act’s licensing system led newspaper publishers to worry that it would be a handmaiden used to censor the press, prompting extensive negotiations with the Franklin Roosevelt administration.

Presidents have also been prone to use “rough elbows” against the press—hardball tactics that fall short of systematic suppression, but nevertheless have a chilling effect. In 1908, the *New York World* accused President

Theodore Roosevelt of “deliberate misstatements of facts” regarding the purchase of the Panama Canal, based on reports from the *Indianapolis News*. Roosevelt responded by accusing the papers of “a string of infamous libels,” and the *World* was charged in a New York district court in 1909, though the indictment was eventually quashed.

Lyndon Johnson’s administration lied to the press so often about the progress in Vietnam that the phrase “credibility gap” was coined to characterize the disconnect between what the White House said and what really was happening. Richard Nixon confided privately to Henry Kissinger that journalists “are the enemy, and we’re just gonna continue to use them, and never let them think that we think they’re the enemy.” His administration famously sought a court injunction to stop the release of the Pentagon Papers; it got one, but the Supreme Court eventually overturned the decision. More recently, Barack Obama’s Justice Department investigated Fox News’s James Rosen as a potential criminal co-conspirator for seeking classified information. In December 2016, James Risen of the *New York Times* blasted the administration for its “criminalization of the press” and said that Obama’s was “the most anti-press administration since the Nixon administration.”

Trump’s “war” on the media is substantially different from all these examples, at least so far. No news outlet has been prosecuted. No journalistic endeavor has been enjoined. Nobody has been put in jail. Trump’s assaults have been strictly rhetorical in nature and political in purpose. The president is calling the press the enemy in the same sense that Barack Obama encouraged liberals to “punish” their “enemies” at the ballot box and Hillary Clinton called Republicans her “enemies.” This is American factionalism at work—the difference being that rather than calling out the other party, Trump has turned his voting coalition’s ire against the press.

Or to be more precise, Trump is exploiting the ire that already exists. A September 2016 Gallup poll found that just 30 percent of independents

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and 14 percent of Republicans trust the mass media. During the election, Gallup determined that 80 percent of Republicans thought the media was biased in favor of Hillary Clinton, while most Democrats perceived no bias at all. By extending partisan warfare to the press, Trump is taking advantage of the fact that most Republicans, and many independents, seem to agree with University of Tennessee professor Glenn Reynolds that mainstream journalists are “Democratic operatives with bylines.”

Ultimately, the propriety of Trump’s remark hinges on one’s view of the press in 2017. Is it fairly calling the balls and strikes? If so, Trump’s

tirade is unsettling, for the people need a press that can reliably inform them of the goings-on in government. But if the press is indeed part of the Democratic team, even though it wears the uniform of an umpire, Trump’s harangue is not nearly as outrageous. It’s just a continuation of the martial-style rhetoric that has characterized our politics for some time.

Either way, these are hardly dark days for American journalism. It is incumbent upon the president to be more considered in his rhetoric, but presidential rhetoric is only fearsome when it is supported by the heavy hand of the state. That is not hitherto the case with the Trump administration. ♦

decades of appearing before different regulatory bodies. Some regulators are dumb, some endlessly seek ways to expand their reach, others look for solutions that as closely as possible mimic the results that markets would produce, still others know when circumstances have changed enough to allow or require them to find a different way of supporting their families. Most notable among the latter was Alfred Kahn, the late Cornell professor who enabled the Civil Aeronautics Board to end its regulation of the airline industry, and to let the market decide which planes could fly to which cities, charging prices that would attract customers.

One obvious step a president can take to minimize the reach and cost of any regulation is to appoint regulators whose first instinct is not to figure out how to expand the reach of their legislative remit. So far as we can tell from his appointments thus far, Trump aims to do just that. Which explains the revolt of the masses of civil servants and rules-interpreters who have made a career of taking long-dormant bits of legislation and parlaying them into control of entire industries. Think the EPA. If Trump has his way, that game is over. But it is important not to overuse the rule-shredder.

The president’s men should begin their review of the fiduciary rule by recognizing that the sale of investment advice is different from the sale of many other products. Commissions give the salesman an incentive to do his clients harm. He makes a living getting them to buy and sell financial instruments, and maintains his living standard by getting them to do so often—it’s called churn—and by persuading them to buy the products that offer the highest commissions. Not all will succumb to such perverse incentives, but some will.

Added to these perverse incentives is what economists call “information asymmetry”—the seller inevitably has more knowledge of the product than most buyers can have. We now have Yelp and HomeAdvisor and the like to recommend the best plumbers, but

# A Case for Caution

Think twice before throwing out the fiduciary rule.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

Who could be against a rule that requires investment advisers to act in the best interests of their retiree-clients? Donald Trump, the Washington branch of the Goldman Sachs alumni association, the *Wall Street Journal*, and well-intentioned policy wonks who have never met a regulation they like, that’s who.

President Trump has set in motion a process that will allow the so-called fiduciary rule to die a quiet death, rather than become effective in April. He has postponed the application of the rule, which would require brokers to act in “the best interests of clients,” with the expectation that postponement will become permanent. That’s what Gary Cohn, a Goldman alumnus who heads the National Economic Council, says he wants to happen. The intention of the rule was to protect

investors, especially retirees, from advisers who would assign their clients’ interests a lower priority than earning fees from sales of financial instruments. Some who are advising investors are already subject to such a rule but others—insurance and annuity salesmen, for example—are held to a lower “suitability” standard. Opponents of the rule argue that it will unleash a wave of meritless lawsuits by unhappy investors when the prices of shares and other assets decline, and will deprive small investors of the advice of professionals unwilling to expose themselves to that risk.

It is of course true that the fiduciary rule, 1,023 pages in length, opens a path to the courthouse for class-action lawyers, and that not all judges are willing to dismiss meritless suits. But that is true of any rule, including those that require food companies to label their products truthfully. In the end, it is the regulators that matter as much as the regulations, as I have learned during

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I doubt they are up to the job of warning investors away from bad advisers.

In anticipation of the activation of the rule Bank of America's Merrill Lynch is offering retirees a fee-based rather than commission-based advisory service and, for investors who might find that too expensive, a robo-advisory service is aimed at clients who have at least \$5,000 to invest. The fee, 0.45 percent of assets, is less than half that charged by Merrill's brokers. UBS, Wells Fargo, and Morgan Stanley are readying similar digitalized services. In short, the mere prospect of the fiduciary rule has already increased reasonable options for small investors. All to the good, but another nudge in the direction of developing incentives that align advisers' and investors' interests would prompt others to get on the reform bandwagon.

Even if President Trump agrees with the rule's critics, he might reflect on the likely political fallout from scotching the fiduciary rule. One lesson those of us who have tangled with the regulatory agencies have learned the hard way is that anecdotes are more politically potent than data. If he scraps the fiduciary rule, the president had better be prepared to watch a stream of defrauded widows tell tearful stories to TV anchors about how they were taken in by the tips of smooth-talking advisers.

At a recent partially televised meeting with business leaders, Trump, a well-informed investor, thanked Larry Fink for making him a lot of money. Fink, CEO of BlackRock, a premier investment advisory group with over \$5 trillion under management, is unlikely to do cold-calling in search of new investors or to fritter away his reputational capital by running up his firm's already-adequate fees. The president, Cohn, and other members of the administration's branch of the Goldman Sachs alumni association might not need a fiduciary rule. Many less advantaged retirees probably do, a probability high enough to persuade the president to do what he does least well—think twice. ♦

GARY LOCKE

# The Democrats' Last Hope

Their attorneys general may be the president's most redoubtable foe. BY FRED LUCAS

Democrats were decimated at nearly every level of government over the past six years. Republicans control the House and may well do so for the foreseeable future; the party is looking at a very favorable Senate map in 2018. Democrats control just 31 of the 99 state leg-

New York attorney general Eric Schneiderman told CNN, "There's a sense of urgency and a real sense that we are now the guardians of the rule of law in the United States." New Mexico attorney general Hector Balderas told the *New York Times*, "It does seem that we are becoming, potentially, the fourth branch of government."

That fourth branch is responsible for Trump's chief policy setback so far. Washington state attorney general Bob Ferguson sued to stop the president's executive order restricting travel from seven Middle Eastern countries. Washington state, later joined in the suit by Minnesota, won a temporary restraining order against the administration, which was upheld by the 9th Circuit.

Other Democratic attorneys general haven't wanted to be left out: Many signed a statement condemning the executive order shortly after Trump issued it, denouncing the order as "unconstitutional, un-American and unlawful." A total of 18 attorneys general joined

in an amicus brief supporting Washington state.

Extreme vetting will hardly be the only target of litigation. A group of Democratic AGs, led by Connecticut's George Jepsen, has already filed a motion to protect the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, an agency with wide-ranging powers created under the Dodd-Frank law, which Trump wants to roll back. The AGs want the courts to defend the bureau, even though a district court last fall found the structure of the CFPB to be unconstitutional.



islative chambers across the country and have a measly 16 governorships.

The opposition's glimmer of hope: Democrats have 22 state attorneys general—enough to gum up the works for President Donald Trump's agenda when congressional Democrats can't.

And these AGs aren't humble about this point.

*Fred Lucas is the White House correspondent for the Daily Signal and author of Tainted by Suspicion: The Secret Deals and Electoral Chaos of Disputed Presidential Elections.*

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The Democratic AGs have a lot on their plate. They've stated their plans to challenge a reversal of the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan and other Environmental Protection Agency rules; to protect sanctuary cities; to push back against potential voter integrity measures from the Justice Department; and to protect funding for Planned Parenthood and contraception.

Virginia's attorney general, Mark Herring, is pushing for more power to prosecute hate crimes because he doesn't think Trump's Justice Department will.

**Republican AGs who hounded the Obama administration were following the Democrats' lead. It was a dozen Democratic state attorneys general who sued to force President George W. Bush's EPA to regulate greenhouse gases.**

Such state challenges to federal authority might almost make one think Democrats have discovered federalism. Republican AGs such as Greg Abbott, Scott Pruitt, Pam Bondi, and Ken Cuccinelli became stars challenging the Obama administration on Obamacare, immigration, and environmental rules (as chronicled in these pages by Fred Barnes, "The Last Redoubt," July 22, 2013). So why is it any different when Democrats do it?

"Conservative attorneys general have had some success at this, but progressives have a broader agenda," says Curt Levey, president of the Committee for Justice and a senior legal fellow with FreedomWorks. "Conservatives will use state litigation to fight government action. The left has always used litigation as another means of legislation."

Still, the Republican AGs who hounded the Obama administration were following the Democrats' lead. It was a dozen Democratic state attorneys general who sued to force

President George W. Bush's EPA to regulate greenhouse gases. It resulted in a 5-4 ruling that gave states wide latitude for bringing lawsuits. And of course, well before that was the pioneering model for activist attorneys general: the tobacco wars of the 1990s, in which states sued to force tobacco firms to pay for Medicaid costs attributed to smoking.

But don't expect a repeat of the successful tobacco litigation, says Peggy Little, a constitutional litigation attorney in Connecticut: "So many states cite the tobacco model, but there is a much more even spread with Republican and Democratic attorneys general," she says. "With tobacco, you had 46 states. It's not the same today."

Democrats aren't expecting any Republicans to join their litigation, which has an air of election fundraising about it. The Democratic Attorneys General Association (DAGA), for example, is an arm of the Democratic National Committee. After the Washington state victory, DAGA posted on its Facebook page: "Tonight is a win for The Constitution, for the idea that no man is above the law. Democratic AGs will lead that fight. Chip in and stand with them."

When it comes to sparring with Trump, New York's Eric Schneiderman may have the most experience. He brought the civil fraud suit against Trump University (which, after the election, Trump settled for \$25 million without admitting guilt). New York provides expansive powers to its attorney general over the state's businesses and financial institutions. Schneiderman may use those expansive powers to turn over every rock of the Trump corporate empire based in New York state, making himself a de facto special prosecutor.

But is this sort of national activism what states have attorneys general for? No, says Hans Bader, senior attorney for the Competitive Enterprise Institute: "There is always an incentive to sue because that's what they do. The traditional role of state attorneys general was supposed to be to defend and advise state agencies, not being roving inquisitors." ♦

# Restoring Solvency

The military buildup we need.

BY HAL BRANDS & ERIC EDELMAN

Foreign policy, Walter Lippmann wrote, entails “bringing into balance, with a comfortable surplus of power in reserve, the nation’s commitments and the nation’s power.” If a statesman fails to balance ends and means, he added, “he will follow a course that leads to disaster.”

Today, America is hurtling toward such a disaster. Since the end of the Cold War, Washington has possessed uncontested military dominance and enjoyed it at bargain-basement prices. Now, however, America confronts military challenges more numerous and severe than at any time in decades—just at the moment its military resources are showing the effects of prolonged disinvestment in defense. American politicians boast that the nation has the finest fighting force in the history of the world. But the brutal truth today is that the United States is slipping into what Samuel Huntington—building on Lippmann’s ideas—termed “strategic insolvency.” American military power has become dangerously insufficient relative to the grand strategy—and international order—it must support.

That grand strategy might be described as “enlightened liberal dominance.” After the Cold War, U.S. policymakers committed to averting a return to the unstable multipolarity of earlier eras and to perpetuating the more stable unipolar order. They committed to fostering a global environment in which liberal economic and political institutions could flourish and in

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which international scourges such as rogue states, nuclear proliferation, and catastrophic terrorism would be suppressed. And because they recognized that military force remained the *ultima ratio regum*, they understood that doing so would require “military strengths beyond challenge,” as George W. Bush indelicately put it in 2002.

Since the early 1990s, Washington has therefore accounted for 35 to 45 percent of world defense spending. It has maintained peerless global power-projection capabilities. Perhaps most important, U.S. primacy has also been unrivaled in the key strategic regions: Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. From thrashing Saddam Hussein’s million-man military in 1991 to deploying two carrier strike groups off Taiwan during the China-Taiwan crisis of 1995-96, Washington has been able to project power superior to anything a regional rival could employ even on its own doorstep. And yet, this dominance has come at a remarkably affordable price—usually between 3 and 4 percent of GDP, as compared with 12 percent at the peak of the Cold

War. In a comparatively benign international environment, Washington has had military primacy—and its geopolitical fruits—on the cheap.

Today, however, the strategic landscape is darkening and U.S. primacy is eroding. This is due to four interrelated factors.

First, great-power military competition is back. China and Russia are seeking regional hegemony and contesting global norms such as nonaggression and freedom of navigation. They are also developing the military punch to underwrite these ambitions—namely, advanced power-projection capabilities meant to bully their neighbors and anti-access/area denial capabilities meant to prevent U.S. forces from coming to those neighbors’ defense.

Second, the international outlaws are more dangerous than at any time in a quarter-century. North Korea has a growing arsenal of nuclear bombs and is developing intercontinental ballistic missiles with which to deliver them. Iran is a nuclear threshold state that tests ballistic missiles while backing sectarian proxy forces across the Middle East. The Islamic State has displayed far greater military competence than any previous terrorist group and shown that counterterrorism will continue to place significant operational demands on American forces.

Third, the rapid spread of precision munitions, stealth, and other technologies that were once the sole preserve of the United States means that we now face more actors who can contest American superiority in dangerous ways. As Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel noted in 2014, “we are entering an era where American dominance on the seas, in the skies, and in space—not to mention cyberspace—can no longer be taken for granted.”

Fourth, the number of challenges has multiplied. Rogue states, jihadist extremism, great-power rivalry, instability in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia: Today’s security environment has it all.

And as the world has become more menacing, the United States has dramatically cut back its investment in defense. The triple whammy of the

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Great Recession, Obama-era budget cuts, and the Budget Control Act reduced annual defense spending from \$768 billion in 2010 to \$595 billion in 2015, a decline of nearly a quarter. Defense spending as a share of GDP fell from 4.7 percent to 3.3 percent, with the Congressional Budget Office projecting that military outlays will fall to 2.6 percent by 2024—the lowest percentage since before World War II.

The effects of this budgetary buzzsaw have been severe. Readiness and modernization have suffered, and all the services are at or near post-World War II lows in terms of end-strength. The U.S. military is now significantly smaller than the 1990s-era Base Force, which was designed as “a minimum force that constituted a floor below which the nation should not go if it was to remain a globally engaged superpower.”

This combination of increasing threats and decreasing capabilities is having profound implications. For one thing, it ensures that U.S. forces will face far harder fights should conflict occur, whether against Iran, North Korea, Russia, or China. American forces might still win—albeit on a longer timeline, and at an appalling cost in lives—but then again, they might not. Reports by the RAND Corporation have cast doubt on whether NATO can actually defend the Baltic states from a Russian assault, and if the United States would prevail in a conflict with China over Taiwan. The prospects are even worse should the United States have to fight or deter in several regions at once.

As the shadows cast by U.S. military power grow shorter, American alliances are likely to be undermined, adversaries emboldened, and the stability of the international order imperiled. The United States is rapidly reaching the point of strategic insolvency, with all the resulting dangers.

So how should America respond? Great powers facing strategic insolvency have three options. First, they can reduce their commitments. For example, the United States could walk away from guarantees to the Baltic

states or Taiwan. But such retrenchment has historically worked best when the overstretched hegemon can transfer its burdens to some friendly power. Today, there is no liberal superpower waiting in the wings. The beneficiaries of an American pullback would be precisely those hostile powers that U.S. strategy seeks to constrain. Retrenchment is a recipe for aggression and instability.

Second, U.S. officials could simply live with greater risk. They could gamble that the nation’s enemies will not test vulnerable commitments. But while hoping that exposed commitments won’t be challenged might work for a while, there is enormous risk that those guarantees will eventually be tested and found wanting, with devastating effects on America’s position and credibility. Another possibility would be to employ riskier approaches—such as nuclear escalation—to sustain commitments on the cheap. But relying more heavily on nuclear weapons would hardly be credible. If Washington balked at paying for the conventional forces needed to defend Taipei or Tallinn, would it really fight a nuclear war on their behalf?

This leaves a final option—to dramatically increase defense resources, bringing capabilities back into alignment with commitments. This Reagan-like buildup would require permanently lifting the Budget Control Act caps to provide increased resources and budgetary stability. It would require not just procuring more existing capabilities, but also investing aggressively in future capabilities. It would entail recapitalizing the atrophying U.S. nuclear triad and investing in a “high-low” mix of assets to enable effective operations against threats ranging from jihadists, to rogue states, to great-power challengers. And crucially, greater resources must be coupled with innovations in how to project power where it’s needed.

Several recent proposals give a sense of this approach, including the bipartisan National Defense Panel’s report in 2014 and proposals by Senate Armed Services Committee chairman John

McCain and the American Enterprise Institute. The McCain budget calls for \$430 billion in new money over five years, resulting in a defense budget of \$800 billion by 2022; the AEI proposal advocates a \$1.3 trillion increase over 10 years.

How viable is this option? Critics offer three primary objections. The first is that a major buildup is unaffordable. The second is that this approach would simply spur arms races with American adversaries. The third is that it would incentivize continued “free-riding” by U.S. allies. None of these arguments is persuasive.

Although a multiyear buildup would be expensive, it would hardly be unmanageable. Even the most aggressive buildup would push defense spending only to 4 percent of GDP; the United States has supported far higher defense burdens without compromising economic performance. Nor does defense drive federal spending or deficits to the extent often imagined. Defense consumes around 16 percent of federal spending; mandatory domestic entitlements consume 49 percent. America’s fiscal solvency will hinge on its ability to control entitlement spending and generate greater revenues, not on whether it spends 3 percent or 4 percent of GDP on defense.

It is also hard to see how increased U.S. defense spending could trigger arms races with Russia or China, because these countries have already been competing militarily with Washington for years. Finally, as for free-riding, America has historically been most successful at securing increased allied contributions when it, too, has been willing to do more for the common defense.

A Reagan-style military buildup is therefore the best way to reassure allies, deter adversaries, and stiffen the hard-power backbone of the global order. “Peace through strength” is not a catchphrase; it is good strategy. And though not cheap, the price is affordable for a wealthy superpower that has benefited so much from its military primacy—and certainly cheaper than the price of strategic insolvency. ♦

# Microaggression and Macrononsense

*Another social science failure*

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

**E**very few weeks, it seems, a new crack appears in the seemingly impenetrable wall of social-science dogma. The latest appeared last month with the publication of a paper by the well-known research psychologist Scott Lilienfeld, a professor at Emory University and coauthor of the indispensable primer *50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology*. Among other things, he is a great debunker, and he has trained his skeptical eye on “microaggressions.”

Sophisticated, affluent people in the United States (SAPs) have been trained through years of education to respect whatever is presented to them as “science,” even if it’s not very good science, even if it’s not science at all. Their years of education have not trained them how to tell the difference. Sophisticated and affluent Americans, as a group, are pretty gullible.

So when their leaders in journalism, academia, and business announce a new truth of human nature, SAPs around the country are likely to embrace it. The idea of microaggressions is one of these. It was first popularized a decade ago, and now the pervasiveness of microaggressions in American life is taken as settled fact.

We could have seen it coming. Already, by the time microaggressions became widely known, social scientists had invented the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The test, administered online and to college students throughout the country, pretended to establish that anti-black and anti-Latino prejudice among white Americans was ever-present yet, paradoxically, nearly invisible, often unrecognized by perpetrator and victim alike. Even people who had never uttered a disparaging remark about someone of another color were shown by the IAT to be roiling cauldrons of racial animus. You know who you are.

The IAT thus laid the predicate for microaggressions.



They were the outward, unwitting expressions of implicit racism; not only were they evidence of it, they were offered as proof of it. (Circularity is a common tool in cutting-edge social science.) Microaggressions are usually verbal but they don’t have to be. In their pathbreaking paper “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life” (2007), the psychologist Derald Wing Sue and his team of researchers from Columbia University helpfully listed many common microaggressions. Saying “America is a melting pot” is really a demand that someone “assimilate to the dominant culture.” Having an office that “has pictures of American presidents” on the wall announces that “only white people can succeed.” Also, an “overabundance of liquor stores in communities of color” carries the microaggressive message that “people of color are deviant.”

Sue’s paper came at a crucial time, just as it was becoming obvious that public, systematic, and institutionally enforced racism was declining toward zero. The paper perfectly matched the prejudices, if you’ll forgive the expression, shared by nearly every credentialed social psychologist and cognitive researcher. “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life” has been cited in more than 1,700 published papers over the last 10 years, better than three times a week on average. It also inspired more sequels than *X-Men*. You can fill in the blank: “Racial Microaggressions and . . .” “the Power to Define Reality” . . . “Daily Well Being Among Asian Americans” . . . “Difficult Dialogues on Race” . . . “Psychological Functioning” and so on. The pursuit and explication of microaggressions is a cottage industry in the larger industry of social-science research, and guaranteed grant-bait.

The SAPs of higher education tumbled first to the idea. As Lilienfeld points out, microaggressions now include using the phrase “politically correct” at the University of Wisconsin and describing America as “the land of opportunity” anywhere in the University of California system. From higher ed the idea quickly migrated to the world of business, where more SAPs were waiting.

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ANDRE KARWATH

Lawsuit-shy executives and easily excited personnel directors instituted elaborate and expensive programs to convince employees, first, that their workplace was lousy with microaggressions, and second, that they were about to be deloused, ready or not.

As always in corporate America, political correctness (I'm not in Wisconsin) comes packaged as good business sense. One commonly cited figure—that microaggressions cost U.S. businesses \$450 billion to \$550 billion in lost productivity—is predictably dubious. It came from a Gallup finding that “actively disengaged employees” diminish U.S. productivity by that amount. A former Harvard dean, citing “Gallop,” then told readers of the left-wing website *Huffington Post* that microaggressions contributed to the \$450 to \$550 billion loss in productivity. And now, from a legal website: “The ‘soft bigotry’ of microaggressions has real costs—\$450 to \$550 billion in U.S. workforce productivity

according to Gallup.” At least they've fixed the spelling.

And recently, in a solemn act of validation, lexicographers included the word “microaggressions” in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary's website.

**Y**ou'd think that an idea like this, passing from social science into the larger culture with astonishing speed, would have received a lot of scientific scrutiny from social scientists: how microaggressions work, socially and psychologically; how frequently and under what conditions they occur; how they can be avoided or ameliorated . . .

But you would be wrong. This is where Lilienfeld and his paper come in. What he calls the “microaggression research program” has been a daisy-chain of confirmation bias rather than a rigorous pursuit of scientific truth. Indeed, he says, the very concept of microaggressions is

## The ‘Stereotype Threat’ Reconsidered

“Stereotype threat” is another discovery of social science designed to account for a racial disparity, in this case the academic achievement gap between black students and white students. The gap shows up in high school graduation rates, proficiency levels, and especially in average scores on standardized tests.

Stereotype threat emerged in psych lab experiments under the direction of Claude Steele, a Stanford social psychologist (and twin brother of the great essayist Shelby Steele). Claude Steele theorized that African-American students, confronted with an achievement test, were held back by the internalized stereotype that whites were more intelligent than blacks.

In his basic experiment, two groups, each with a mixture of “high-achieving” white and black students, were given the same SAT-like test. The first group was told the test was a measure of intelligence, thus conjuring up a stereotype threat. The second group was told that the same test was a simple problem-solving exercise; no stereotype threat was introduced.

According to Steele and his colleagues, the test scores of the group under stereotype threat showed the typical black-white disparity in scores you'd expect to find in such tests. But in the second group, they said, the disparity effectively disappeared. Their paper, published in 1995, has been cited more than 5,000 times and spawned yet another cottage industry. Social scientists eagerly embraced the idea that intellectual performance, and other kinds of performance, could be improved or discouraged by merely tweaking a few environmental factors. Stereotype threat has come in especially handy in explaining the gap in math scores between girls and boys.

It wasn't until 2004 that another team of researchers



*What kind of a test is it?*

discovered that Steele's findings had been misinterpreted, owing to a statistical confusion. The African-American students in the non-threat group had indeed scored better on the test than those in the threat group. But the most exciting finding, the one that had made Steele's paper famous, was

false: The gap between white and black scores was proportionally the same in both groups. The achievement gap had not been closed by removing the stereotype threat. Nevertheless, many psychology text books and other researchers continue to report the original misinterpretation.

Replications of stereotype threat experiments have rarely been done in real-world settings. Variations on the original experiment are usually conducted in university psych labs, with small, nonrepresentative samples, under the watchful eye of sympathetic researchers. In 2014, two researchers finally did the first meta-analysis of studies of stereotype threat and girls' math scores. When they adjusted for “publication bias”—the tendency of researchers and journals to publish papers that reach a popular conclusion—they found that the effects of stereotype threat on math scores were statistically insignificant.

In social psychology generally, stereotype threat remains too good to check. One renegade psychologist, Lee Jussim of Rutgers, thinks he knows why. “Stereotype threat,” he wrote last year, “is a great rhetorical tool in the quest for egalitarianism. . . . It is, therefore, professionally risky to challenge ideas that serve egalitarian rhetoric.”

too hazy and ill-defined to be studied systematically, even by social scientists.

His “Microaggressions: Strong Claims, Inadequate Evidence,” published in the journal *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, is a tour de force. Lilienfeld undertakes a critical review of the literature that social scientists have produced on microaggressions. He begins, as he should, by conceding the fact of ongoing racism in the United States. He knows too that words can be unintentionally wounding. He points to an incident in which an engineering professor expressed surprise before his classroom when an African-American student got a perfect score on a test, apparently on the assumption that no black student could be expected to do such a thing. All of us have been witness to similar incidents of callousness and gaucherie. I once heard of a well-loved public servant who referred to a rival politician as “the first mainstream African American who is articulate and bright and clean.” Racial prejudice can indeed be insidious.

But is it ubiquitous? Does it soil even the most innocent encounter between persons of different races—or rather, between a white person and a person of another race? (In the scheme of microaggressions, a white person is ipso facto the perp.) The answer is, and Lilienfeld’s point is, we don’t know. Anecdotally it’s clear that words taken as a microaggression by one Latino or African American may go unnoticed by another. Despite such common experiences, which would seem to undermine many definitions of the word, no scientist has “challenged the central assumptions that microaggressions, as currently conceptualized, . . . comprise a psychologically meaningful construct.” The most important and worrisome claim of microaggression researchers is that microaggressions cause consistent and measurable harm to the mental health of their recipients—and yet no one has done a systematic review of the empirical evidence that supposedly establishes such a causal link.

Lilienfeld says that the incoherence of the concept begins with the word coined to express it. “It is doubtful whether an action that lies largely or exclusively in the eye of a beholder can legitimately be deemed ‘aggressive,’” he writes. To be aggressive, an act must be intentional. Yet microaggression scholars insist that many microaggressions are involuntary, an unconscious ripple from the depthless sea of racism in which we have been soaking all our lives. And there’s the oxymoron problem. A truly aggressive act is unlikely to be best described as “micro.” Aggressions tend to be big.

And so do the holes in microaggression research. It passes over the most basic questions of how the concept should be applied. Researchers have yet to use Sue’s list of microaggressions to test precisely what proportion of minority students are offended by them and whether

they see in the microaggressions the same offensive message that Sue’s researchers did. “The association between microaggressions and specific implicit messages remains conjectural,” Lilienfeld writes.

He finds in the literature all the methodological flaws that we have come to expect from politically motivated social science: small sample sizes, self-selected nonrandom samples, self-reporting of results, the embedded bias of researchers, the lack of an agreed-upon terminology and system of measurement, and an inadequate use of control groups. Most obviously, the all-important matter of personality traits has not been factored into the research. If a microaggression is “in the eye of the beholder,” then we should know something about the beholder. What traits are shared by people who are most likely to sense and be offended by microaggressions?

The research, says Lilienfeld, “has all but ignored the potentially crucial role of negative emotionality [NE] in shaping perceivers’ judgments of microaggressions.” NE is one of those complicated social science-y terms that describe something utterly commonplace. It refers to the gloomy disposition of someone who is given to worry, irritability, and feelings of victimization. Often researchers investigating psychological reactions to others will try to control for NE. This way they can be sure they are measuring an independent reaction and not just the person’s normal disposition. The single microaggression researcher who did consider NE found that it could not entirely account for the mental harm attributed to microaggressions. Otherwise, however, “in light of the virtually wholesale neglect of NE in [microaggression research] it seems especially premature to advance strong causal assertions regarding the ties between microaggressions and mental health outcomes.”

If NE and not microaggressions account for some of the mental harm experienced by people who claim to perceive them, should we be surprised? None of what Lilienfeld suggests is novel, after all; none of it would have come as a surprise to anyone lucky enough to have lived long before any social scientist felt the need to invent the term “negative emotionality.” Just about everyone understands that some people are ornery, and orneriness, by my own unscientific calculation, seems evenly distributed among human beings whoever they are. After many thousands of years of human behavior, men and women in authority should know that priming such people when they are young and impressionable to detect insults and slights even where they don’t exist will result in a great deal of general unhappiness.

Given our estrangement from such home truths, and our hypnotic devotion to whatever we are told is “science,” Lilienfeld’s approach may be the only one that

will return the conversation to the realm of life where it is actually lived. He emphatically wants research into microaggressions to continue, assuming the term can be meaningfully defined. At the same time, he's using modest and plausible social science to undo the damage that bogus and extravagant social science has done to life on campus and elsewhere. He is translating basic human understanding—common sense—into the only language many of our SAPs understand and accept.

And he is not completely alone among social scientists. Just within the field of race relations, a handful of researchers are casting doubt on once-unquestioned findings. New research, for example, threatens the conceptual underpinnings of the IAT, one of the most widely used tools in social science (see sidebar below). "Stereotype threat," a hazy phenomenon uncritically accepted by students of racial disparity, has failed multiple attempts at rigorous replication (see sidebar on page 27). Even diversity training programs,

which now include initiation into the ideology of microaggression, are increasingly understood to be worthless. "The positive effects of diversity training rarely last beyond a day or two," wrote two researchers in the *Harvard Business Review* last summer, "and a number of studies suggest it can activate bias or spark a backlash." ("Nonetheless," they add puckishly, "nearly half of midsize companies use it, as do nearly all the Fortune 500.")

Cutting-edge thinkers who boast of their devotion to science may soon have to concede that many fashionable assumptions about how human beings behave are as unscientific as racism itself; so is the vast belief system based on them. And if this process of self-correction continues, with brave researchers willing to question the assumptions at the foundation of their discipline, we who are skeptical of the whole enterprise may have to concede that some social sciences do, after all, qualify as real science.

I hope nobody takes that the wrong way. ♦

## IAT or BS?

Few inventions of the social sciences have been as influential and unavoidable as the Implicit Association Test. Introduced at a press conference by a team of social scientists in 1998, it has since become an essential tool for marketing researchers, corporate trainers, and anyone else who hopes to discern, and hence manipulate or improve, the views and behavior of other people. The powers of the IAT are said to be large and various, but it is most famous for divining hidden racial attitudes, or what the trade calls "implicit bias." The bias is implicit because the poor subject who takes the test isn't aware of his own racism. He may even pride himself on his egalitarian racial views—indeed, such people are often the worst offenders, implicitly.

You can take the test online, and millions of people have, at a site called "Project Implicit" run by Harvard University. The subject presses one key or another as faces and words flash on his computer screen. Sometimes bad words appear with pictures of black people, sometimes with pictures of white people. Measured to the millisecond, the test-taker's reaction times—how quickly he associates bad words with black faces and good words with white faces—are deemed to convey his true racial attitudes. The mechanical process by which implicit racism adjusts its travel time from the brain to the fingertips has never been traced, or at least publicly revealed. Still, the Harvard researchers insist that implicit racism is found in nearly everyone and, unchecked, will often lead to brutish behavior. The implicit racism uncovered by the IAT is routinely brought out to explain any disparity between white people and black people, from per capita income to criminality. When a white



Truth—  
if convenient

police officer kills a black suspect, journalists and lawyers will lunge for the IAT. Rare is the cop who has escaped schooling in the science of his own implicit racism.

But for several years the science behind the test has been under pitiless assault. In 2015 two social scientists, Gregory Mitchell of the University of Virginia and Philip Tetlock of the University of Pennsylvania, undertook a clear-eyed review of the vast, mostly credulous literature

on the IAT. I might as well quote their comprehensive conclusion directly rather than paraphrase. "On issue after issue, there is little evidence of positive impacts from IAT research: theories and understandings of prejudice have not converged as a result of the IAT research; bold claims about the superior predictive validity of the IAT over explicit measures have been falsified; IAT scores have been found to add practically no explanatory power in studies of discriminatory behavior; and IAT research has not led to new practical solutions to discrimination."

The best science reporters are on the case. In an exhaustive and heroic account of the IAT controversy, Jesse Singal of *New York* magazine concluded that the critics had the better evidence and the better argument. He quoted one of the inventors of the test, now a much-decorated professor at Harvard. "I don't read commentaries from people who are non-experts," she wrote in an email. Then she suggested her critics might be suffering from racism themselves, or something still darker. Their study of the race IAT, she wrote, "seems not to be about the evidence. It will need to be dealt with by them in the presence of their psychotherapists or church leaders." ♦

# Manufacturing Optimism

*Can factory jobs be made in America again?*

BY TONY MECIA

*Gastonia, N.C.*

**F**or nearly 20 years, Michael Philbeck drove forklifts and fixed machines at a factory here that makes materials for car tires. Over the years, as dozens of other plants west of Charlotte closed, his hung on.

A few years ago, though, Philbeck started looking for ways to boost his pay. With a wife and five kids, the \$20 an hour from the Firestone Fibers & Textiles plant wasn't going far.

The Army veteran returned to school, to the local community college. But he didn't train for a career in technology or health care or some other flashy field that receives a lot of positive press. Instead, he started studying something called mechatronics—a blend of mechanical engineering, electronics, and computers.

His new job? It's back at the Firestone plant, where he will make \$5 an hour more when he finishes his degree at Gaston College. That works out to a raise of roughly \$10,000 a year. Philbeck, 41, says he feels good about staying with the company in a new role, and he's optimistic he can establish himself with skills that are in demand. He doubled down on manufacturing.

"Rather than me turning wrenches," he says, "I can turn PLCs." He laughs. I laugh. Then I admit I have no idea what a PLC is. It turns out a PLC is a programmable logic controller, an industrial computer that controls factory machinery.

*Tony Mecia is a business writer in Charlotte, N.C.*

As Philbeck continues to train for his new factory job, the Trump administration is talking up manufacturing. Trump has visited a Boeing plant and met twice with executives of the country's largest manufacturers, most recently on February 23, at the White House. Rebuilding U.S. manufacturing the Trump administration is facing choices on how to make

good on the president's promise to reawaken American manufacturing. It would seem to be a daunting task—one that depends upon thousands of discrete business decisions by companies of vastly different sizes, international profiles, and sophistication. There are plenty of policy levers to pull, too, in areas including trade, regulation, taxes, worker training, energy, and health care.

With the new administration just starting to spell out its manufacturing agenda, it's too early to guess whether the effort will unleash a new era of prosperity for workers left behind in the anemic recovery, envelop the United States in a disastrous trade war and recession, or land us some-

where in between. What seems more certain is that whatever the policies from Washington, new jobs in manufacturing are unlikely to resemble those of the past. They're not going to be the low-wage, low-skill, repetitive-motion factory jobs that we remember from the opening sequence of *Laverne & Shirley* (brewery) or the end of *An Officer and a Gentleman* (paper mill). The jobs are more likely to be like Philbeck's: high-skill, solid wage, with at least some college and brain-power required. Those PLCs don't run themselves.

In contrast to the public image of a sector in perpetual decline, manufacturing these days is on the upswing. Output has increased even as jobs melted away, though job losses have stabilized. Manufacturing employment



*Michael Philbeck adjusts a machine that makes webbing for roofing material, Gaston County, North Carolina.*

COURTESY OF GASTON COLLEGE

has risen nearly 10 percent since 2010, to about 12 million jobs (the peak was 19.5 million in 1979). Productivity is at an all-time high. One analyst even wrote in 2015 that the country seems poised for a “manufacturing renaissance.”

In conversations over the last month in Gaston County and with national experts, it is clear that there is now optimism among manufacturers and workers. Some of it stems from larger economic trends, but some also emanates from the feeling that they have a booster in the White House.

“This notion that we can bring manufacturing jobs back to this county to levels like we had in the ’80s, that just can’t happen,” says Donny Hicks, longtime executive director of the Gaston County Economic Development Commission, which recruits companies to the area. “Can we bring it all back? No. Can we do a better job of keeping what we have? Yes. . . . For so long, the manufacturing sector has been used as a chip for other political agendas. We gave up a lot we didn’t have to give up.”

**G**aston County’s manufacturing roots run deep. In the late 1800s, as Europe and America industrialized, rural Carolinians left the farms and headed to Gastonia and surrounding communities to work in the textile mills. The factories spun cotton into yarn, or put yarn on looms and wove it into fabric, and they sat at the center of a textile belt in the Carolinas that surpassed New England as the hub of U.S. fabric-making. There was occasional labor unrest: A violent 1929 textile strike that resulted in the shooting deaths of Gastonia’s police chief and a millworker helped sour the South on union labor.

The urbanization around the mills imbued Gaston County with an identity separate from that of nearby Charlotte, the trading and banking town located across the Catawba River. Gastonia was known as more hardscrabble and gritty.

Charlotte grew into a modern-day financial center, with shiny bank buildings rising above its downtown. Gaston County has been slower-growing. To help offset the textile layoffs that peaked more than a decade ago, Hicks has worked to attract new manufacturers—companies that make products such as bedding fabric, automotive foam, industrial adhesives, and hydraulic lifts. The county’s experience, though, shows how tough it can be to add factory jobs in big chunks: While those new Gaston County companies made large investments in plants and

equipment, they required fewer workers than the factories of the past. None of the new companies announced in the last five years expects to employ more than 150 workers, and most are much smaller. Still, about 20 percent of the county’s workers are employed in manufacturing, double the national average.

The county isn’t relying solely on manufacturing, of course. The school system is the biggest employer. The medical center is expanding. Old mills are being redeveloped into breweries and loft apartments. Gastonia is not one of those depressing, boarded-up former industrial towns. While some parts of the city look the same as they did decades ago, the area also has big, new \$500,000 brick homes, horse farms, a highly regarded private day school and thriving shopping malls.

Gaston has voted reliably Republican in recent times. Trump won here in November by a two-to-one margin over Hillary Clinton, and with a larger share of the vote than Mitt Romney in 2012 or John McCain in 2008. Gaston’s results mirrored Trump’s successes in the industrial areas of Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, which helped power him to victory.

In addition to being more culturally conservative than residents of bigger cities, many factory folks are drawn to Trump because he speaks to them like no other politician in recent memory. When I covered manufacturing for the *Charlotte Observer* in the early 2000s, the local jobs in textiles and furniture-making were in free fall. There was a sense among workers and business owners that manufacturing powered the economy but that nobody in Washington—Republican or Democrat—really minded that factories were closing. Yes, politicians would pledge money to retrain laid-off workers. Maybe they would even take an occasional plant tour wearing a dark suit paired oddly with safety goggles and a hardhat.

People in manufacturing at the time felt that politicians shrugged off the migration of factory jobs to other countries, preferring to build a “knowledge economy” based on high-value services. To economists and policymakers, that approach made sense. Classical economists have long argued that economic growth is enhanced for all by letting countries produce what they are most efficient at producing, and that trade barriers only increase consumer prices.

Dan Pearson, who served for 10 years on the U.S. International Trade Commission under George W. Bush

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and Barack Obama and is now a senior fellow in trade policy at the Cato Institute, echoes that assessment: “When we have a government trying to allocate resources or drive decisions in a nonmarket way, we are going to get a lower standard of living.”

Looking at data showing roughly 10 percent of the country employed in manufacturing, with factory automation on the rise, Pearson says: “It’s not like there are no opportunities in this country outside of manufacturing. The opportunities in manufacturing are rather few. If you want to build a career for yourself as a young person, you might want to look at something else. . . . The goal should be: Let’s keep the business climate strong, let’s keep the manufacturing sector growing and train these people for the service jobs that need doing.”

**M**any of the workers I talked to in the early 2000s believed that Pearson’s view was the dominant government view. Now, though, we have a president pursuing a much different agenda. The solutions to fix manufacturing that I was hearing in 2002—punish China, enforce trade agreements, rebuild America’s industrial might—were almost identical to Trump’s talking points 14 years later. They still resonate here, whether the president is decrying the “false song of globalism,” hectoring automakers on Twitter for opening plants in Mexico, lamenting the “rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation” in his inaugural address, or telling visiting executives at the White House: “We’re bringing manufacturing back to the United States, big-league.”

Like other Trump pronouncements, the rhetoric on manufacturing is concise, muscular, and thin on specifics. From his public statements, his administration’s manufacturing plan appears to consist of a mix of tougher trade deals, robust enforcement of existing trade agreements, pro-growth tax changes, higher duties on imports, and fewer regulations, combined with the occasional public shaming of American companies choosing to make products abroad.

At a South Carolina Boeing plant after a month on the job, in one of his first visits outside Washington and Mar-a-Lago, Trump characteristically described the approach like this:

We wanted to make much easier—it has to be much easier to manufacture in our country and much harder to leave. I don’t want companies leaving our country, making their product, selling it back, no tax, no nothing, firing

everybody in our country. We’re not letting that happen anymore, folks. Believe me. There will be a very substantial penalty to be paid when they fire their people and move to another country, make the product, and think that they’re going to sell it back over what will soon be a very, very strong border. Going to be a lot different. . . . To achieve that goal, we’re going to massively reduce job-crushing regulations—already started, you’ve seen that—that send our jobs to those other countries. We are going to lower taxes on American business so it’s cheaper and easier to produce product and beautiful things like airplanes right here in America.

We are going to enforce—very strongly enforce our trade rules and stop foreign cheating. Tremendous cheating. Tremendous cheating. We want products made by our workers, in our factories, stamped with those four magnificent words: “Made in the U.S.A.”

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**Trump’s talking points on trade resonate here, whether the president is decrying the ‘false song of globalism,’ hectoring automakers on Twitter for opening plants in Mexico, or lamenting the ‘rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation.’**

The crowd started chanting, “U-S-A! U-S-A!” Trump then promised a “level playing field” for American workers and took credit for announcements by automakers and Intel of plans to keep production in the United States.

Trump has some knowledge of manufacturing realities in his business résumé. His line of dress shirts, ties, suits, and accessories was criticized during the campaign for being made in China and Mexico. Asked during one candidate debate why Americans should trust somebody whose clothing line was manufactured abroad, Trump said: “Because nobody knows the system better than me. . . . It’s very, very hard for our companies in this country . . . to compete. . . . But I’m the one that knows how to change it.”

Of course, over the years, plenty of industry groups and government panels have crafted specific proposals to help the manufacturing sector. Often, those proposals gather dust. For instance, the Commerce Department has a manufacturing council composed of business owners, who make recommendations on improving competitiveness. It has weighed in on a range of issues, from energy to tax policy to trade agreements.

When Mary Isbister, president and majority owner of GenMet Corp., a metal fabrication company north of Milwaukee, first joined the council during the Obama administration, she noticed some council members became frustrated at the lack of political will to enact their recommendations. “Given the makeup of that group, there would be times we would ask things of the Obama administration that weren’t going to happen,” she says. “There were people who lost heart and left.”

Later, she says, under the guidance of Obama's third and final Commerce secretary, Penny Pritzker, the council made some headway by focusing on items that were achievable, given the political realities. Today, Isbister says she is optimistic about the future of manufacturing and pleased at its prominence in the political discussion. "The more manufacturing gets into the public consciousness, the better it will be for everybody, the more it becomes demystified."

The National Association of Manufacturers, the sector's leading trade group, also recently recast its policy agenda in light of the Trump victory. On its website, it now introduces its "Competing to Win" agenda like this: "Many of the policy decisions made over the last eight years have been extraordinarily difficult for manufacturers. Now it's time for a reset—and a better direction. . . . After all, it was manufacturers who, in big numbers, decided this election." The document goes on to detail manufacturing-friendly initiatives in the areas of taxes, trade, energy, the environment, transportation and infrastructure, labor, immigration, workforce, health care, research, and regulatory and legal reform.

**O**f all those issues, some Gaston County manufacturers say one in particular stands out for them when they think about what American manufacturing needs most: a skilled workforce. In 2011, Owens Corning started thinking about building a new plant to make materials used in ceiling tile and flooring. It looked at China, a popular pick among U.S. manufacturers, but worried about its technology being stolen. It looked at India, which would have been cheaper than China with better intellectual property protections.

But in the end, with 80 percent of its customers in North America, Owens Corning settled on building a \$135 million plant in Gaston County. Building in this country reduces worries about managing a far-flung supply chain, and the plant is so automated that it requires little human labor. Nearly 800 people applied for the 60 jobs running the equipment, says Suman Raha, director of operations for Owens Corning's global nonwoven technologies business. Finding people with the right backgrounds was difficult. "It's not a physical job. You've got to think," Raha says. Another 40 workers have white-collar jobs such as product development.

"You have to do the math," Raha says. "Any manufacturing can be done in the United States if there are skilled people there and there's a market there."

Manuel Diez, chief executive of CTL Packaging USA, agrees. His company, which makes packing materials for the cosmetics industry, opened a \$30 million plant in Gaston County in 2012. Before it opened, he sent 15 new hires to Europe for six months to learn to operate injection-molding equipment. The plant now employs 60.

"We have been a service-oriented economy in the last 30 years, and manufacturing has gone somewhere else,"

Diez says. "To bring that back, we need to give people the tools to be able to run machines and understand how that works. Only through training can we do that."

Michael Stumo, chief executive of the Coalition for a Prosperous America, a pro-U.S. manufacturing and farming educational and advocacy group, says predictable regulations, lower taxes, and worker training are nice, but "the big-money numbers in relative costs are in the trade sphere."

He says most economists who advocate free trade just don't understand the complex ways that other countries beat U.S. manufacturers on price—that it's not just lower labor

costs and automation, but taking advantage of currency exchange rates, subsidizing industries, and devising favorable tax schemes. He says the notion that U.S. manufacturers can't compete is "baloney, fake news, alternative facts." He points to Germany, which has high wages and stringent environmental protections and ran a \$270 billion trade surplus in 2016, while the U.S. ran a \$502 billion trade deficit. Stumo thinks better trade policy could lead to as many as 5 million new manufacturing jobs in America.

That sounds good to Philbeck, the Gaston County worker training for a better job at the tire cord plant. He says he doesn't have all the answers, but he thinks Washington politicians haven't helped. "They're done the opposite, those NAFTA trade deals," he says. "If you were a company and could go overseas and pay people less per hour, with less restrictions, then ship it back and not get charged, that makes more sense for them. All them trade deals hurt us. Maybe we can halt that, or in the best case, build that back up." ♦



*Francisco Sanchez, under secretary of commerce for international trade in the Obama administration, tours a Parkdale Mills plant in Belmont, N.C.*



Margaret Thatcher (1979)

# In Search of Mrs. T

*The elusive woman behind Thatcherism.* BY GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

**D**avid Cannadine dedicates his biography of Margaret Thatcher: “In memory of Mrs T.” But that Mrs T is not, as one might suppose, Mrs. Thatcher, the longest-serving prime minister of Great Britain in the 20th century. Instead, the preface informs us, it is a Mrs. Thurman, the headmistress of Cannadine’s primary school—an “unforgettable, intimidating, charismatic, and inspirational” figure, who, unlike many of her profession, was a “staunch Conservative,” a “committed Christian,” and

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**Margaret Thatcher**  
*A Life and Legacy*  
by David Cannadine  
Oxford, 144 pp., \$14.95

a “vehement anti-Communist.” Cannadine concludes the tribute to his Mrs. T, the admirable headmistress, by hoping she would have recognized herself in his portrait of the more eminent Mrs. T, the prime minister.

This brief biography is a welcome addition to the considerable literature about Margaret Thatcher, all the more welcome because it captures the “Life and Legacy” of the subtitle so succinctly. It may be a short book, but it is one of the longest entries in the *Oxford*

*Dictionary of National Biography*, from which it has been reprinted. Cannadine is eminently qualified to be Thatcher’s biographer: A distinguished historian, author of many books, and recipient of many awards, he is almost Anglo-American in his life and career, having studied and taught in both countries (he is now a professor at Princeton). As something of a public intellectual, a commentator on TV, radio, and the press, he also had occasion to meet and converse with her frequently.

The reader may well see Cannadine’s headmistress in “the Iron Lady,” as she is now known, but not in “the Grocer’s Daughter,” as she was more familiarly called. Born in 1925 to a hardworking grocer and wife in the provincial town of Grantham, Lincolnshire, Margaret

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Roberts gave no intimation, in her childhood or youth, of her later eminence. After attending a local school, she ventured to seek a scholarship to Somerville College, Oxford. Failing that, she was admitted the following year as a regular student at a painful cost to her family. A good, conscientious, but undistinguished chemistry student, she graduated in 1947 with a second-class honors degree and went on to work as a researcher in a chemical firm. Her initiation into politics came in her final year at Oxford with her election as president of the Conservative Association—a break with her father, who, like most Methodists at the time, was Liberal. Three years later she stood, predictably unsuccessfully, as a Conservative candidate for a safe Labour seat.

Her marriage in 1951 to Denis Thatcher was another break, this time in economic and social status. He was 10 years older, divorced, a businessman, not rich but comfortably off, not particularly interested in politics but tolerant of her views and indulgent in her activities. The birth of twins two years later was no hindrance, or even distraction: As was often the custom, they were sent off to school for much of their childhood and then found their way to distant parts—her daughter to Australia and her son, whom she favored, to Texas.

“The home,” she once said, “should be the center but not the boundary of a woman’s life.” It was not the center of hers. Politics was her center, her passion.

That passion was satisfied, in 1959, with the victory of the Conservatives in the general election and her victory in Finchley, a middle-class London suburb with a sizable Jewish population. After a series of lowly ministerial positions, with her party in power and out, in 1970 she became secretary of state for education under Edward Heath. One of her most controversial acts was the abolition of free milk for schoolchildren between the ages of 7 and 11, which earned her the epithet “Mrs. Thatcher, the milk-snatcher.” Similar cuts in later years in funding universities earned her the bitter and

enduring hostility of the entire education establishment, symbolized by the refusal to bestow upon her the honorary degree from Oxford that had been the tradition for all earlier prime ministers.

This was symptomatic of much of Thatcher’s career. Even when her policies—cost-cutting and government retrenchment, denationalizing industries and privatizing council housing—had the positive effect of stimulating the economy by reducing inflation, unemployment, and the public debt, they alienated many in the public, as well as in her own party. Her personal



Margaret Thatcher (1959)

popularity was low even at the best of times, and there were constant predictions of defeat.

Yet she continued to be reelected by increasing majorities. What may account for this anomaly—the disjunction between political power and personal popularity—was the vigor and determination she brought to her agenda, which gave her an aura of authority that seemed to empower her and legitimize her policies.

Challenging Heath as leader of the Conservatives, she was elected to that position in 1975, the first woman leader of any party. Heath’s former deputy, who had sought the leadership position himself, derided her as “governess”—first cousin, perhaps, of Cannadine’s “headmistress.”

More memorable is another label she acquired at the time—“Iron Lady”—from a Russian newspaper protesting her criticisms of the Soviet Union. That label was promptly picked up, for good and bad, in England and abroad, and remained with her throughout her lifetime—and promises to be perpetuated by biographers and historians.

It was this Mrs. Thatcher, the Iron Lady, who presided over Britain as prime minister from 1979 to 1990. In domestic as in foreign affairs, she exhibited the same iron will. At home, it was evident in her persistent attempts to undo the welfare state and establish something like the free market advocated by Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek (whom she had read at Oxford). Towards the end of her first term in Downing Street, she prided herself on having done more “to roll back the frontiers of socialism than any previous Conservative government.”

She was equally resolute in foreign affairs, resisting the expansionist ambitions of the Soviet Union, vigorously pursuing the Falklands War, strengthening Britain’s nuclear facilities, and opposing the establishment of a European Community. As she was earlier pleased to have rolled back socialism at home, so she later declared, at a meeting in Bruges:

We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels.

“Iron Lady”—a feminist might bridle at the word “lady” as archaic, elitist, sexist. But she would have more reason to quarrel with Thatcher on other grounds, for not being a woman in the proper feminist spirit. Margaret Thatcher was well-dressed and properly coiffed, womanly in attire and appearance, but “manly” (as Cannadine says) in other respects, exhibiting “the assertive, domineering, and aggressive attributes commonly associated with alpha males.” Rejecting the very idea of “women’s lib,” she did not associate herself with “women’s causes,” made no effort to accommodate demands for female representation in the government (there

was never a woman in her Cabinet), and did not seek election for herself (as one candidate recently did in America) as a woman and because she was a woman.

On one occasion, she seemed to forget that she was a woman, let alone a lady. At a dinner celebrating the Falklands victory, wives were invited to the reception after dinner. Thatcher concluded the dinner: "Gentlemen, shall we join the ladies?"—"we," herself a gentleman among the gentlemen. (There had been other woman prime ministers, Golda Meir in Israel and Indira Gandhi in India, the former praised as the "Iron Lady of Israeli politics." David Ben-Gurion's tribute to Meir as "the best man in the government" could as well be applied to the Iron Lady of British politics.)

If Thatcher is notable as the first woman prime minister in Britain, she was also notable as a conspicuous example of social mobility in a political system that was still class-ridden. "From the Grantham's grocer's shop to St. Paul's Cathedral"—it was a long climb up the social ladder that Cannadine describes, longer than Disraeli's, who prided himself on having "climbed to the top of the greasy pole" but who started that climb from the London home of an affluent man-about-town and man-of-letters (a Jew, to be sure, but one accepted in the best clubs and in most social circles). Her climb was more notable still because it resulted, as Disraeli's did not, in an "ism" attached to her name.

"Thatcherism" was coined in the first year of her premiership and has endured throughout her lifetime and beyond. It is still something of a puzzle. No other prime minister, not even Winston Churchill, has enjoyed the distinction of an "ism." More puzzling is the definition of Thatcherism. It does not, Cannadine insists, imply a coherent philosophy or even ideology; at best, it describes a "political phenomenon" or, more simply, an "attitude." Yet those terms do not convey the ambitiousness of Thatcher's goals: economic liberty in defiance of the militant trade unionists (the coal miners, most notably) and national greatness in spite of the movement towards

globalization. Nor do they account for the assertiveness and aggressiveness with which she pursued them.

Nor, and this may be even more decisive, do they do justice to the compelling ethic that inspired her, the Methodist ethic of her father—better known as the Puritan ethic or, perhaps, the Victorian ethic. In my obituary of Margaret Thatcher in these pages ("The Victorian Lady," April 22, 2013), I recalled my meeting with her at the British embassy in Washington shortly after her retirement. I was introduced to her as someone who had recently delivered the inaugural Margaret Thatcher Lecture at Tel Aviv University on the subject of "Victorian Values."

"But of course," she replied, "I know Gertrude, we've met before. What a great subject, Victorian values. Let me tell you about Victorian values"—which she proceeded to do at some length, and with great enthusiasm.

A few years earlier, during an election campaign, she told an interviewer who observed, rather derisively, that she seemed to be approving of Victo-

rian values: "Oh, exactly. Very much so. Those were the values when our country became great." On another occasion she informed another critic that she was pleased to have been brought up by a Victorian grandmother who taught her those values—hard work, self-reliance, self-respect, helping one's neighbor, and pride in one's country: "All of these things are values. They are also perennial values."

David Cannadine hopes that his headmistress would have recognized herself in the Iron Lady of his portrait. She might also have recognized herself in the Victorian Lady lurking behind that formidable figure. What is more challenging, perhaps, than Margaret Thatcher herself is the Thatcherism she bequeathed to us, which is as controversial today as it was in her day. Is Thatcherism more than an exercise in nostalgia? That question will occupy another generation of biographers and historians, who will continue to be fascinated by her life but disarmed by her legacy—what to make of it and what remains of it. ♦



# Mark My Word

*From ancient tongue to everyday language.*

BY DAVID WOLPE

**I**n 1992, the exiled Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide spoke to Jewish leaders in New York City. Having studied for three years in Jerusalem, he spoke to them in Hebrew as well as English. Aristide was slightly shocked to discover, after the talk, that he was not understood: Most of the American Jewish leaders did not speak Hebrew.

Although unmentioned in Lewis Glinert's elegant book, that anecdote

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**The Story of Hebrew**  
by Lewis Glinert  
Princeton, 296 pp., \$27.95

is emblematic of the paradoxes of modern Hebrew. Even after the establishment of Israel, being Jewish does not always entail speaking Hebrew. Before the establishment of the state, Hebrew was a language familiar primarily to the pious. As the secular Theodor Herzl asked in *The Jewish State*: "Who among us knows enough Hebrew to use it to buy a railway ticket?" Hebrew

was not exactly a “dead” language, but lived only in sacred tomes and learned discourse. When the early Zionists began their push for statehood, the number of genuine Hebrew speakers could be counted on one hand.

The revival of modern Hebrew is only the latest chapter of the story. Glinert begins with the Bible, whose Hebrew shows a variety of levels and covers centuries of language development. The rabbinic texts following the Bible—the Mishnah, an austere and stately law code providing the foundation on which the mostly Aramaic discourse of the Talmud is based; the Hebrew of interpretation (midrash); and the proliferation of written legal decisions—sustained the thread of Hebrew. Yet as Glinert writes of the rabbinic age of Rome: “By any sociological yardstick, the prospects of native Hebrew’s survival were now minimal.”

After the destruction of the Temple in the first century, Jews were scattered among non-Hebrew-speaking populations. As the Aristide incident demonstrates, keeping linguistic proficiency in a foreign land is difficult.

Jews continued to pray in Hebrew, however, and a succession of adepts modified and clarified the workings of the language: The Masorettes standardized the text of the Torah, and the mystics and poets performed exegetical acrobatics with letters and numbers. (In Hebrew, letters have numerical values as well: aleph is 1, yod is 10, and so forth. So each word also has a numerical equivalent, giving rise to ingenious and often far-fetched connections.) Along the way, Hebrew benefited from the efforts of religious genius as well: In 11th-century France, the great commentator Rashi used a compact and elliptical Hebrew to illuminate the meaning of the Bible and Talmud. When, in the next century, Maimonides wrote

his monumental law code, he fashioned a form of Hebrew that made the code both a linguistic as well as a legal landmark.

The poets of Spain’s golden age wrote beautiful odes to God, but also poetry about war and wine and women. Other medieval poets, living in a textual echo chamber, composed elaborate referential poem/prayers, called *piyyutim*. These were not only creative and pietistic exercises, but intellectual feats: Some were of great beauty, others as much puzzle boxes as poetry.

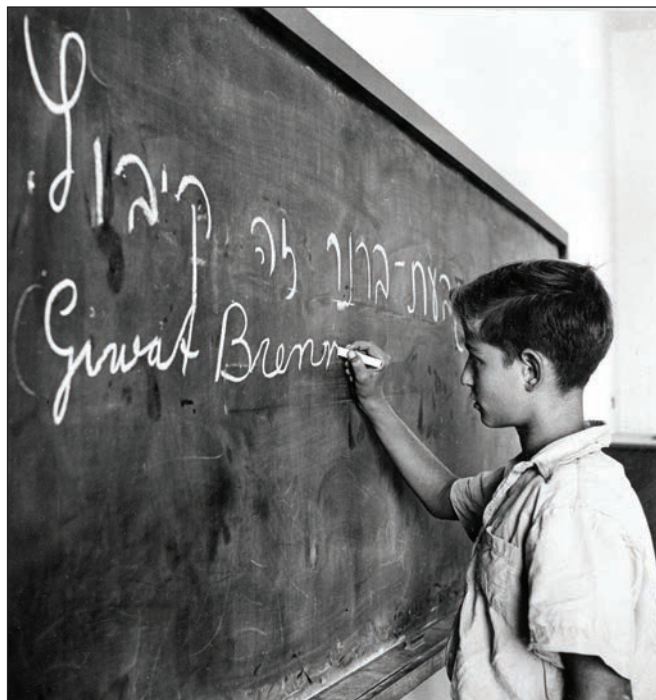
Glinert walks the reader through

was not only necessary to invent words denoting locomotive, telegraph, or parliament; the language would also need to express such conceptual distinctions as people, nation, and state.” It was left to the collective creativity of a new movement, Zionism, and individual fanatics, such as Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, to shape, update, and enforce the new language. (One of the many piquant details Glinert includes here is that the national poet laureate of modern Hebrew, Hayim Nahman Bialik, was forced to apologize in the press for speaking Russian in public!)

Ben-Yehuda would only allow Hebrew in his home, which condemned his wife Dvora to silence for a long time, as she knew no Hebrew. Their son Bentzion was probably the first child in thousands of years raised solely in Hebrew. In conversation with Bentzion’s surviving sister, in 1990, Glinert learns that Ben-Yehuda caught his wife singing a Russian lullaby to their child and flew into a rage. His response evoked the very first “native” Hebrew word: The frightened child said, “Abba, Abba!” (“Daddy, Daddy!”)

Now, an ancient tongue is the everyday language of a people living in their land. There are still debates about how much foreign influ-

ence should be permitted—when I’m stumped by a word in a Hebrew newspaper it invariably turns out to be a transliteration of something like “Twitter” or “computation”—and Glinert touches on these debates and others. But this is not so much a book for linguists or scholars: Deeper questions of Hebrew’s relation to other Semitic languages, and its morphology, are barely discussed. Yet *The Story of Hebrew* covers a great deal of ground in a readable style, studded with stories and quotations that make clear how astonishing it is that out of the fossil DNA of this sacred language, a new creation has arisen. ♦



*Student of Hebrew in Israel (ca. 1950)*

the phases of Hebrew with sufficient historical background to make the story clear but uncluttered. There are fascinating byways, such as the place of Hebrew in the revival of science during the Renaissance. The early story of our nation is also deeply affected by the centrality of Hebrew to the Pilgrims and their intellectual descendants. The first two presidents of Harvard were Hebrew scholars, as was the first president of Yale, Ezra Stiles, whose university seal still bears a Hebrew motto.

The capstone of the story is the miraculous revival of Hebrew as a spoken language. As Glinert writes: “It

# Ghostly Women

*A sisterhood of the supernatural—in fiction.*

BY MICHAEL DIRDA

Every year, during the bleak months of winter, I try to read some ghost stories. Since mine is a gentle, pacific nature, I prefer classic tales, mainly from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Gruesomeness, in my view, ought to be kept entirely offstage. A reader's imagination alone, under the direction of an accomplished writer, should be sufficient to generate what M.R. James called "a pleasing terror." In fact, James's own "ghost stories of an antiquary" are precisely what I like best, even though my own favorite tale in the genre has long been the truly scary (and sexy) "Amour Dure" (1887) by Vernon Lee, the pen-name of Violet Paget. It concerns a young scholar in Italy researching the life of Medea da Carpi, a Renaissance femme fatale able to bend any man to her will. To rid himself of such a formidable enemy, an Italian duke had finally ordered Medea strangled—by two women. Yet so indomitable is this vengeful beauty that her seductive powers might even survive the grave.

Lee lived from 1856 to 1935, the golden age of supernatural fiction. In this period, a multitude of professional writers, most of them better known for their "serious" novels, regularly produced ghost stories for special Christmas annuals and magazines. For my seasonal binge this year I decided to read some of those stories but restrict myself to women authors whose work I didn't already know and admire. Consequently, you will look in vain for a mention of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"—that

key text of American feminism—or the ghost stories of E. Nesbit, Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, or Elizabeth Bowen. If, by chance, you've never read them, you should.

Anthologies of English ghost stories frequently begin with Elizabeth Gaskell's "The Old Nurse's Story" (1852), in part because it provides a particularly apt example of what the Victorians liked in a tale of specters and revenants. Told in the first person, its eerie events take place at an isolated country house, concern multiple generations, hint at mysterious (or evil) events in the past, and build suspense with threats to the present generation, in this case a child.

Revered even now as a pioneering Egyptologist, Amelia B. Edwards produced at least a dozen fine ghost stories. "The Phantom Coach" (1864)—partly based on folklore—again sets its action in the past, with the narrator vouching for the truth of what happened to him on a snowy night 20 years earlier. Barrister James Murray had been out hunting and lost his way but, eventually, found a solitary house where he begged for food and shelter. There he discovered that his inhospitable host had withdrawn from the world to pursue theosophical studies.

He spoke of the soul and its aspirations, of the spirit and its powers, of second sight, of prophecy, of those phenomena which, under the names of ghosts, specters, and supernatural appearances, have been denied by the skeptics and attested by the credulous of all ages.

In the course of their conversation, Murray—eager to return to his wife—learns that the night mail travels a road five miles away. If he hurries, he can flag down a ride just where that terrible

accident happened. What accident? Some years previous, the coach pitched over a parapet into the valley below and six people died. Later, waiting nervously on the dark road, Murray finds himself growing confused and lightheaded from the extreme cold, but eventually sighs with relief when he hears the sound of approaching hooves.

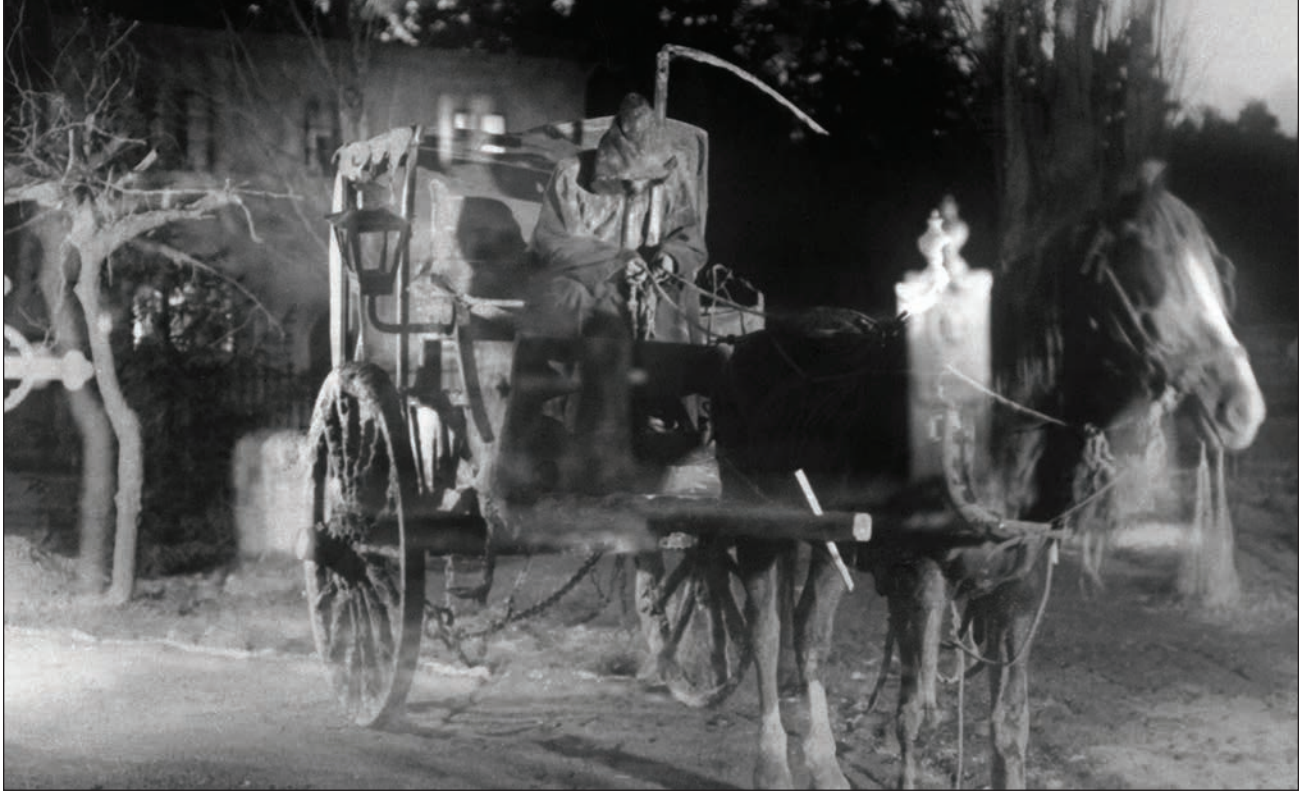
I won't reveal the conclusion of Edwards's story—nor of any other, for that matter—but note that she sets up a climax that is liable to both a natural and a supernatural explanation. Murray had just been listening to occult speculations; he'd drunk some strong whisky; he was worn out with fatigue and cold. Perhaps what occurred was just an hallucination?

Many ghost stories build in a chink that would allow readers to rationalize apparently uncanny events. But the best, I think, offer no such comfort. "Nut Bush Farm," by the prolific Charlotte Riddell (1832-1906), immediately introduces an ominous tone: "When I entered upon the tenancy of Nut Bush Farm almost the first piece of news which met me, in the shape of a whispered rumor, was that 'something' had been seen in the 'long field.'" We soon learn that this "something" resembles Mr. Hascot, the former tenant of Nut Bush Farm who, one day, simply disappeared. What happened to him?

When the narrator starts to investigate, Riddell ratchets up the tension by the diverse reactions of several women, including the eccentric Mrs. Gostock, who actually owns the farm; the pale and delicate neighbor, Mrs. Waite; a beautiful servant girl; and even the narrator's own sensible wife. In the end, Mr. Hascot's spirit walks for a highly traditional reason: It can't rest easy until its bones are found. Almost to the end, "Nut Bush Farm" could hardly be bettered, but then Riddell winds up the story in an idiotic, perfunctory manner.

After J. Sheridan Le Fanu—author of *Carmilla*, the classic novella about a lesbian vampire—Riddell may be the best, and most wide-ranging, high Victorian writer of ghost stories. "The Open Door" verges on comedy, as a clever young clerk tries to determine why a certain door in an empty country

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A scene from *'The Phantom Carriage,'* directed by Victor Sjöström (1921)

manor never stays closed, even when locked. “The Last of Squire Ennismore,” by contrast, is as lean and spare as a folktale: In it, an old reprobate first discovers a cask of superior brandy on the beach, then encounters a dark, silent man who walks with a peculiar ambling gait. The two take to playing cards and drinking steadily until, one night, the brandy is all gone.

In “Walnut-Tree House,” Edgar Stainton moves into a mansion that has been uninhabited for seven years. During his first night there he is approached by “a child with the saddest face mortal ever beheld.” But instead of being frightened away by this phantom, Stainton shows it kindness—and in so doing, learns the reason why Walnut-Tree House is haunted. He quickly resolves to make what amends he can for the crimes of the past. As must be obvious, this story—though effective—contains a considerable amount of sentimentality, the Victorian era’s fallback emotion.

One finds an extreme case of this in Margaret Oliphant’s 1880 short novel, *A Beleaguered City*. The citizens of a French town, given over to materialist values, are driven from their homes by the risen dead. The gates are then closed against the living, and Semur is shrouded in fog. Narrated largely by

the town’s smug mayor, whose unconscious vanity is beautifully sustained, the story unfortunately grows tediously religious and didactic. A similar slushiness mars Oliphant’s “The Open Door.” Something haunts the ruins near Brentwood, something that crawls and moans piteously near a broken-down doorway. The child of the estate’s new owner proves especially sensitive to these unearthly cries and longs to help the poor suffering creature.

While Oliphant builds up an impressive eeriness—so much so that a modern reader imagines some Lovecraftian lurker on the threshold—she ultimately opts for pathos rather than horror. I was pretty much ready to dismiss Oliphant as too moralistic for my taste—until I read “The Secret Chamber,” about an inescapable ancestral curse and a truly frightening vampiric immortal. It never flinches at the end. “The Library Window” is even better: An adolescent girl, recovering from an illness, is spending the summer with her aunt in the Scottish town of St. Rule’s. For the most part, she devotes her time to reverie, watching the people passing by or studying the old library across the street. For some reason, it seems unusually difficult to determine the number of its windows.

Rudely ignoring Lady Carnbee, Mr.

Pitmilley, and her Aunt Mary, the narrator grows increasingly obsessed with one particular window. Sometimes it seems to disappear; at other times, she can actually see through its glass into a room. Gradually, she makes out more and more of the room’s furnishings, and eventually notices a young man seated at a desk, busily writing. Like Henry James’s “The Turn of the Screw,” Oliphant’s “The Library Window” neatly tantalizes the reader with the undecidable and unresolved. For example, is Lady Carnbee a witch? “Maybe she once was,” says Aunt Mary. Like so much in this magnificent story, the answer is exquisitely evasive.

Do you need to be clever, then, to produce an effective eerie tale? Not necessarily. Sometimes a single strong image, or the creation of tender empathy for an endangered protagonist, will be enough. Take the stories of Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915), author of the immensely popular sensation novel *Lady Audley’s Secret*. In “The Cold Embrace,” a callous lover, who has caused the suicide of his fiancée, learns that he cannot escape the clutch of her spectral arms. In “Good Lady Ducayne,” a wizened aristocrat hires a vivacious young woman as her companion. But Bella soon begins to lose her bloom and energy. Could this

languor have anything to do with the marks on her arms, caused (according to the sinister Dr. Parravicini) by a virulent species of mosquito?

For me, though, Braddon's finest story is "Eveline's Visitant." Hector de Brissac kills his cousin André in a duel over a flirtatious court beauty. On the field of honor, the dying man pronounces a curse and vows revenge. Years later, Hector weds the innocent Eveline, who adores him. Yet once the couple settle at the family estate, Eveline, on her country walks, regularly glimpses a pale, handsome young man watching her: André has come back to haunt not Hector, but his wife. Braddon ends this story with a shocking confession.

In fact, sex—often represented by vampirism or submission to a powerful Other—crops up regularly in Victorian supernatural fiction. In Rhoda Broughton's "The Man with the Nose" (1872), Elizabeth tells her fiancé that she was once hypnotized by a traveling mesmerist. It was just a lark, though she was made to do all sorts of "extraordinary" things and was very sick afterwards. Later, on their honeymoon in Germany, this bantering couple behave like the leads in a romantic comedy—until Elizabeth sees the hypnotist again. She recognizes him one night by his prominent nose as he stands (quite impossibly) in the newlyweds' hotel room and wills her to leave her husband's bed and come to him.

Just a nightmare, of course. In fact, the real nightmare is just beginning, and one hardly needs to be a Freudian to interpret Broughton's symbolism.

Half-a-century later, May Sinclair's "Where Their Fire is Not Quenched" (1922) carries sex into the afterlife. Having missed out on true love, Harriott, now in her thirties, finally yields to the advances of a married man whom she nonetheless finds mildly repulsive. They spend a week in Paris at a seedy hotel. After they both die, she and her paramour find that for them, Hell is the Hotel Saint Pierre:

We shall be one flesh and one spirit, one sin repeated for ever, and ever, spirit loathing flesh, flesh loathing spirit, you and I loathing each other.

In Sinclair's equally unsettling "The Villa Désirée," Mildred Eve finds herself assigned the bedroom of her new fiancé's dead wife, later learning that the poor woman was frightened to death. But by whom—or by what? "The Villa Désirée" first appeared in 1926 as part of *The Ghost Book*, edited by Lady Cynthia Asquith, who had commissioned "sixteen new stories of the uncanny" from her many literary friends. That astonishing volume includes such masterpieces as L. P. Hartley's "A Visitor



Edith Wharton (ca. 1889)

from Down Under," D. H. Lawrence's "The Rocking-Horse Winner," and Hugh Walpole's "Mrs. Lunt," as well as "The Corner Shop," by C. L. Ray, a pseudonym for Asquith herself.

J. M. Barrie—for whom Asquith once worked as a secretary—would have loved that sentimental time-slip classic, but her other stories are much darker in tone. In "The Playfellow," for example, Claud Halyard returns to his ancestral home in England with his American wife and daughter. Hyacinth soon seems perennially occupied and the reader quickly realizes that the little girl is playing with the ghost of her look-alike cousin Daphne, who died in a fire some years earlier. In due course, the past reaches out into the present with a vengeance.

By contrast, in Ann Bridge's "The Buick Saloon," the present reaches back into the past, though the end result proves equally heartbreaking. After recovering from a long illness, Mrs. Bowlby finally joins her banker husband, who has been posted for some time in Peking. There she purchases a used Buick saloon and, when inside it, occasionally hears a woman's voice, murmuring words of love in French. Her curiosity aroused, Mrs. Bowlby tries to learn more about her car's history, its former owner, and an obviously passionate love affair. Even when the reader begins to guess the truth, Bridge brings off the story's climax brilliantly.

When I first started this project, I intended to chart some common elements or themes among all these women writers. Certainly, many of their stories are implicit *cris de coeur*, addressing marital or sexual tensions, thwarted love, and societal or patriarchal constraints suffered by wives and daughters. Others, as I've mentioned, display a didactic religiosity, and still others emphasize a cozy homeliness and domesticity undermined by an otherworldly intrusion.

One also detects a gradual shift from external to psychological horror. By the 1930s, Dorothy L. Sayers pertinently observed, "In the old days the wickedness always belongs to the haunter, whereas today it so often wells up from the soul of the haunted. . . . We have realized only too well that the kingdom of hell is within us." True enough. And yet, many early stories also turn on spiritual terror. Consider Violet Hunt's "The Prayer," first published in 1895. Addressing the corpse of her husband, who has just been pronounced dead, a hysterical Mrs. Arne prays that "if there be a God in heaven, and if He ever answered a prayer, let Him . . . give you back to me." Shortly afterward, an amazed doctor finds that the patient he had thought dead has somehow miraculously recovered. But as time goes by, it's clear that there is something unsettling about Edward Arne, something that frightens people, including his once-adoring wife.

While clearly a variation of "The

Monkey's Paw," Hunt's story can also be interpreted as a study of marital estrangement. Helen R. Hull's "Clay-Shuttered Doors" takes the same theme and gives it yet another twist. A pushing, vulgar businessman named Winchester Corson, about to complete a big merger that will make his fortune, crashes his car. His wife Thalia is, apparently, killed; but he cannot accept this—especially not now, not when his entire future is at stake. Corson holds Thalia's inert body, and pleads with her to come back to him. In fact, it seems that Thalia might only have been knocked unconscious. Hull's tale of a loyal wife's devotion to an unworthy husband has become a feminist touchstone.

Of course, the more stories I read last fall, the more new writers I kept discovering. To name only a few, and just one story by each, there was Eleanor Scott, whose "Randalls Round" depicts a Cotswold village's monstrous ancient ritual; H.D. Everett, whose "The Death Mask" recalls one of M.R. James's most celebrated horrors; and Alice Perrin, whose "Caulfield's Crime" shows what may happen if you shoot an Indian *fakin*. Lady Eleanor Smith's "No Ships Pass"—about castaways on an island out of time—could be a lost episode from *The Twilight Zone*. In "The Shell of Sense," Olivia Howard Dunbar represents a ghost's thoughts as it gradually transcends human pettiness. At times, Harriet Prescott Spofford resembles her contemporary Poe, especially in her phantasmagoric prose poem about an eerie arctic voyage, "The Moonstone Mass," or her bizarre *conte cruel* (albeit with a happy O. Henry ending) "Circumstance."

While Edith Wharton stands pre-eminent among American women writers of ghost stories, two of her contemporaries are nearly her equal. Of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's weird tales—most, but not all, collected in *The Wind in the Rose-Bush* (1903)—no praise is adequate. In "Luella Miller," a helpless New England beauty enchants the people around her into working themselves to death on her behalf. In "The Hall Bedroom," a woman rents a room that somehow seems to grow larger at night. Could the painted land-

scape hanging on the wall be a portal into another world?

Some years ago, a famous list of the 13 most terrifying horror stories of all time included Gertrude Atherton's "The Striding Place." I'm not sure I agree; but Atherton's "Death and the Woman" remains a true tour-de-force, presenting the stream-of-consciousness hysteria of a wife as she passes the night by the side of her wasted, dying husband. My own favorite Atherton, though, is "The Bell in the Fog" (1905), in which an American



Amelia B. Edwards (ca. 1890)

writer, much like Henry James, buys an English country house and slowly grows obsessed with the portraits of two children, a boy and a girl. One day, on a walk through the nearby woods, he encounters a little girl who is the image of the one in the painting. Did the Master ever see this homage to his own ghostly fiction?

And finally, I can't overlook the genre's finest British woman writer of the early-20th-century, Marjorie Bowen (1885-1952). *Julia Roseingrave*, in particular, ranks among the best short novels of the uncanny, with George Eliot's superb *The Lifted Veil*—in which the narrator can read the minds of everyone around him except that of the calculating *femme fatale* he marries—and Lanoe Falconer's *Cecilia de Noël*, which explores the reactions

of a skeptic, a doctor, a clergyman, and others to what seems to be a ghost.

Bowen's novel opens on a dark night at a lonely country manor when the Devil knocks at the gate and demands a room. The frightened servants quickly send for Julia Roseingrave, a poor but beautiful young woman who lives nearby and cares for her idiot sister and sickly, bedridden mother. She, they believe, will know what to do. As it turns out, she does—though things aren't quite what they initially appear, nor is Julia. Before long, in an orchestrated campaign to capture his heart, Julia is bathing in a supposedly enchanted pool, deliberately exciting a visiting London nobleman with her nakedness. As the novel proceeds, its plot hints at the occult and alchemical, then gradually thickens to include such sensational elements as an abandoned wife, blackmail, an incriminating letter, even the prospect of coldly calculated murder. Some of these same dark themes are taken up by Bowen in other famous short stories such as "Scoured Silk," "The Avenging of Ann Leete," "The Crown Derby Plate," and "They Found My Grave."

Most of the stories I've described here are available as public domain e-texts. Some have also been gathered together in individual author collections. The vast majority, however, crop up regularly in anthologies of classic supernatural fiction or may be found in thematic volumes such as Richard Dalby's *Victorian Ghost Stories by Noted Women Writers*, Jessica Amanda Salmonson's *What Did Miss Darrington See?*, S.T. Joshi's *The Cold Embrace: Weird Stories by Women*, Mike Ashley's *The Darker Sex*, and A. Susan Williams's *The Lifted Veil*.

To modern sensibilities, of course, only a few of these 19th- and early-20th-century stories are likely to truly shock or surprise. Instead, the reader's pleasure typically derives from their often-leisurely exposition, the deft characterization of even minor figures, the creation of an air of spookiness, and the conscious use of symbolism. Enjoy these tales, partly, for their scary touches, but mostly for the accomplished manner of their telling. ♦

# An Unquiet Belle

*The mysteries of Emily Dickinson revealed.*

BY DANIEL ROSS GOODMAN

*New York*

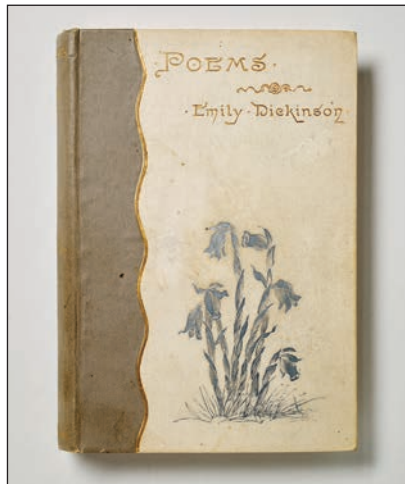
**T**he myth of Emily Dickinson as the dark-haired, inveterate recluse who created her innovative poetry in isolation from the outside world is just that—a myth, according to this wonderful, unprecedented exhibition.

Never before have Amherst and Harvard, the two institutions that maintain the largest holdings of Dickinson's documents, letters, and original manuscripts, cooperated in allowing their Dickinson collections to be shown simultaneously. Not only does this exhibition reveal that Dickinson was not a brunette—she was a redhead, as a portrait and lock of her hair prove—it also demonstrates that her reputation as a recluse is not nearly as accurate as it has previously been made out to be. As an adolescent, Emily Dickinson participated in many meetings with an eclectic society of individuals; and as the thousand-plus letters she wrote will attest, she cultivated a small but close-knit group of friends with whom she continued to correspond throughout her life.

The exhibition traces Dickinson's social and literary influences back to her birth and upbringing in the small college town of Amherst, Massachusetts. She was born there in 1830, where her grandfather had cofounded Amherst College as a school dedicated to training pious, impoverished young men to be missionaries, and where Dickinson's father served as treasurer for nearly 40 years. As the town of Amherst gradually evolved into a more cultured, cosmopolitan hub, Emily Dickinson grew up in the center of

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**I'm Nobody! Who are you?**  
*The Life and Poetry of Emily Dickinson*  
 Morgan Library & Museum  
 through May 28



*Emily Dickinson's first edition (1890)*

one of the more important intellectual regions of antebellum America.

The exhibit also contains Dickinson's extensively marked-up Bible. Though religious people might commend her for how well-read she was in sacred texts, others would likely disapprove of the irreverent way she treated it, dog-eared pages and cutting out words and phrases she used in some of her poetry.

Dickinson's willingness to push against the bounds of convention—both religious and poetic—began at the age of 16 during her brief tenure at the Mount Holyoke Seminary for girls. The Second Great Awakening—the nationwide Protestant revival—had reached Amherst, and a spirit of zealous Calvinism swept through Mount Holyoke. The school's Congregationalist faculty pressured students into making

religious declarations, and when Emily declined to do so, her friends worried that she was a “no-hoper,” one of the unsaved. Though she would never be conventionally religious, spirituality remained one of Dickinson's lifelong concerns, as reflected in “My Sabbath,” one of only 10 poems published in her lifetime and showcased here in its original 1864 publication:

*Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—*

*I keep it, staying at Home—  
 With a Bobolink for a Chorister—  
 And an Orchard, for a Dome—*

*Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice—  
 I, just wear my Wings—  
 And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,  
 Our little Sexton—sings.*

*God preaches, a noted Clergyman—  
 And the sermon is never long,  
 So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—  
 I'm going, all along.*

Dickinson's childhood verse was conventional and sentimental, long narrative poems with tight rhyme schemes and religious themes. Later, when she was taken out of Mount Holyoke and confined to her home out of concern that she might be developing tuberculosis, her poems became shorter, unsentimental, and more lyrical, employing advanced meters and themes and containing idiosyncratic punctuation (especially dashes)—all so unconventional, for the time, that editors either declined to use her poems or published them in revised forms against her wishes.

Far from creating her unconventional style in a vacuum, the Civil War had a major impact upon Dickinson's work: Of her 1,789 poems, about 900 were written between 1861 and 1865, and with Amherst close to Springfield, home of the Union's primary arms manufacturer, news of the war reached Amherst early and often. As this exhibition makes clear, the Civil War clearly provided a major stimulus for her artistry—although in what precise ways remains a mystery, as does much of the life of Emily Dickinson. ♦

# Magical Kingdom

*The unlikely origins of a classic movie.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

A wonderful movie is a small miracle. So many things have to go right, and they usually don't. What is needed? A good story, and good actors, and a competent cinematographer, and a talented editor, and decent dialogue, and a sensible producer, and a director capable of mixing all the elements together into a cohesive whole.

A terrific new book by a Hollywood producer named Jonathan Sanger tells the story of the almost-enchanted series of lucky breaks and clever calls that made his first film a singular and genuine classic.

Sanger was a young go-getter in 1970s Hollywood who learned the craft of filmmaking as a production manager and assistant director. One day his babysitter asked him, shyly, if he would read a script cowritten by her telephone-solicitor boyfriend. He did, and was stunned by it. He paid the boyfriend (and his cowriter) \$1,000 to reserve the right to produce the screenplay as a movie.

Soon thereafter, the 33-year-old Sanger found himself working for Mel Brooks on Brooks's Hitchcock parody *High Anxiety*. Brooks was setting up a production company to make serious movies and immediately took to Sanger's optioned script. Brooks thought Dustin Hoffman might want to star in it. Showing both nerve and judgment, Sanger said the part had to be played by a relative unknown: "The audience would always be looking for Dustin under the makeup."

The script was called *The Elephant Man* (1980), and it told the story of a sideshow freak named John Merrick who had a moment of glory when sen-

## Making the Elephant Man

*A Producer's Memoir*  
by Jonathan Sanger  
McFarland, 208 pp., \$29.95

timental Victorian London clasped him to its bosom. In the first miracle of its miraculous gestation, Brooks hired Sanger to produce it and left him mostly alone. The second miracle was Sanger coming across a crazy little movie called *Eraserhead* at an art-house theater. Sanger went to it, was transfixed, and set up a meeting with its director—a Reagan Republican from Montana who'd made *Eraserhead* in his spare time and on the weekends.

It is hard to convey what a wildly unconventional choice David Lynch was to direct a picture set in the 19th century with a cast right out of *Masterpiece Theatre*. He'd never made anything with a plot line, or with more than a few characters, and had never been to London, where the movie was to be filmed. But Lynch was as likable and self-effacing as his work was extreme.

Sanger's book is a tale of exhilaration, as every element seemed to fall into place with shocking ease—including the hiring of veteran editor Anne V. Coates and cinematographer Freddie Francis, who recognized Lynch as a master in the making and served both as teachers and protectors of a man who was something of a novice. Lynch and Sanger managed, as well, to cast the movie perfectly, with Anthony Hopkins as the doctor who treats the deformed title character—played with unimaginable elegance and pathos by John Hurt, who died this past January.

But *Making the Elephant Man* is also a story of high anxiety itself. The movie almost plunged into disaster

when it came to Hurt's appearance. Lynch spent months working on a full-body get-up for John Merrick, the Elephant Man—he had done all the effects for *Eraserhead* himself—but when Hurt finally donned Lynch's creation, it looked like a costume and had to be scrapped. A desperate Sanger hired an obnoxious and unknown Briton named Christopher Tucker to do the makeup at an outrageous price. Tucker needed weeks to perfect his effects, and so Lynch had to film around the fact that Hurt could not yet be seen as John Merrick.

This concession to reality provided the most important miracle of the process. Before Lynch shows us Merrick, we see how others react to Merrick—including a staggering shot of Anthony Hopkins's eyes slowly filling with tears of terror and sorrow, a mark then and now of his all-but-unparalleled greatness as an actor.

Only three years after the babysitter had handed Sanger the script, *The Elephant Man* was nominated for eight Oscars. The winner that year, *Ordinary People*, is now recognized as the mediocre melodrama it always was. But take two hours to watch *The Elephant Man* today and you will see a movie of great beauty and power undimmed by the passage of time. Indeed, it seems to have emerged full-blown from nowhere and has proved unduplicable. Sanger never made anything remotely as good, the screenwriting duo never wrote anything a tenth as good, and Brooks never produced anything as good. Neither Hopkins nor Hurt were ever better. Lynch went on to become perhaps the most adventurous American director of his time, but his often-perverse and inexplicable oeuvre has never been as accessible as *The Elephant Man*.

A wild comedic auteur allowed a novice producer to hire an inexperienced avant-garde art student to direct a major motion picture from a highly dramatic script by the boyfriend of the novice's babysitter. As Sanger shows in this highly detailed and engrossing memoir, *The Elephant Man* could have been a disaster. It should have been a disaster. It should never have been made. And yet it was. Miracles do happen. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

**“New on the Washington Post homepage—‘Democracy dies in darkness.’ Bob Woodward also said the phrase on ‘Face the Nation’ Feb. 19.”**

**—Politico, February 22, 2017**

**PARODY**

