

**REEDUCATING  
THE BARISTAS**  
ANDREW FERGUSON

the weekly

# Standard

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## The Killa in Manila

The deadly police tactics,  
insulting oratory,  
anti-Americanism,  
and overwhelming popularity  
of Philippines president  
Rodrigo Duterte

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

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# Water into Kool-Aid

This week we learned, via *Buzz-Feed*, about a new trend in weddings: bouncy castles. A wedding company has opened an initially successful line of wedding-themed inflatable trampolines. Photos depict shoeless groomsmen and bridesmaids bouncing and giggling like first-graders at a birthday bash.

THE SCRAPBOOK is not opposed to any novelty in weddings. In men's attire, for instance, we cautiously approve of the trend toward suits and away from tuxes, since only a vanishingly thin slice of the male population ever has reason to don formal evening wear. Tuxedos begin to seem vaguely ridiculous, like cravats and top hats.

But bouncy castles? What's the next step in the slow infantilization

of American life? We envision a dark and moronic future when wedding planners hand out activity books with mazes and dot-to-dots so attendees don't get rowdy before the ceremony begins; when wedding favors include Chinese handcuffs and Pez candy dispensers and little bottles of bubble solution; and when wedding revelers, instead of celebrating the matrimonial bond with appropriate adult beverages, simply go home and sleep off the sugar high they got from all that cake and ice cream.

For now, we'll hope the trend passes. But the minute THE SCRAPBOOK receives a wedding invitation printed in Comic Sans font, we'll



know that Western civilization has at last reached its tragic conclusion. ♦

# Afflicting the Comforters

Longtime readers of the *Washington Post*, among whom THE SCRAPBOOK numbers itself, will be familiar with the *Post*'s quaint custom of observing anniversaries and holidays with what might be called counter-intuitive stories. For example, on the anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (2,403 American dead), the *Post* will run an article on the wartime internment of Japanese-Americans. Valentine's Day will feature tales of wife-beating or romance gone horribly wrong. Christmas will feature an interview with a scholar who claims Jesus of Nazareth never existed. On Thanksgiving Day we'll learn that the pilgrims of Plymouth Colony were racists and religious bigots. And so on.

Now, we understand what the *Post* is intending to do here. Since Finley Peter

Dunne's Mr. Dooley once declared that the job of newspapers is to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable," the *Post* labors under an ethical obligation to afflict the comfortable.

To be fair, most American newspapers follow this curious, lemming-like instinct toward professional self-destruction. But not all. Which is why we were surprised, on this past Mother's Day, to open the pages of the *New York Times* and find what amounted to a *Post* story in the *Times*. We say this because the *Times*, to its credit, tends to avoid such deliberately offensive features on holidays and, of course, seldom follows trends set by the *Post*.

Yet there it was, a lavishly illustrated layout on pages 22-23: "Stories of Motherhood, Told by Six Women." It seems that "last year, the *Times* asked its audience to share stories about becoming a mother [and] received more than 1,300 responses." Six essays were chosen to be excerpted, and their collective

flavor may best be captured by their individual titles: "The World Was Hers. Then She Became a Mom," "When Having a Child Doesn't Make You Happy," "They Saw Dad. She Was Mom," "Her Mom Had Five Kids. She Wanted Freedom," "One Sister Felt 'Cheated,' the Other 'Terrified,'" and "A Mother's Promise: You Can Be Yourself."

Our initial reaction was to wonder whether all 1,300 entries were as dolorous and hostile to the idea of motherhood. Then we began to suspect the editors carefully sifted through the stories to find six that perfectly matched their own presumptions. We tend to lean in that direction since the story entitled "A Mother's Promise: You Can Be Yourself" was written by a woman whose late husband had been "an activist from El Salvador"; we remember all too well how the 1980s Communist insurgency in El Salvador was celebrated in the pages of the *New York Times*.

Whatever the reason, THE SCRAPBOOK concedes that if the purpose of the paper's special Mother's Day feature was to make motherhood sound



TOP: TWS ART (FIGURES); BIGSTOCK, BOUNCE HOUSE: VA, STATE PARKS; BOTTOM: TWS ART, BIGSTOCK

calamitous and nightmarish and, ultimately, to discourage procreation, it succeeded. As a short-term marketing strategy, this might make sense. In the long run, however, it could prove fatal to the enterprise. Even future generations of *Times* subscribers are dependent on somebody, somewhere coming to terms with the hideous prospect of motherhood. ♦

## An Enigma Wrapped in a Metaphor

Last month, after two men were asked to leave a Philadelphia Starbucks on the grounds that they were loitering, the Starbucks Corporation announced that it would close more than 8,000 stores for a day in order to impose “unconscious bias training” on its employees. (Readers contemplating the wisdom or scientific soundness of this “training” will wish to consult Andrew Ferguson’s essay elsewhere in these pages.) The grievance industry’s response to Starbucks’s announcement was about as predictable as a caffeine buzz after a redevye: The company’s decision is okay, the activist community concluded, but it doesn’t go far enough.

One wonders how long and piteously the coffee company would have to grovel in order to satisfy, say, Henry Louis Gates or Ta-Nehisi Coates. At least one response, though, did catch our attention, that of Derrick Johnson, president and CEO of the NAACP. His idea? Mandatory unconscious bias training for all public officials.

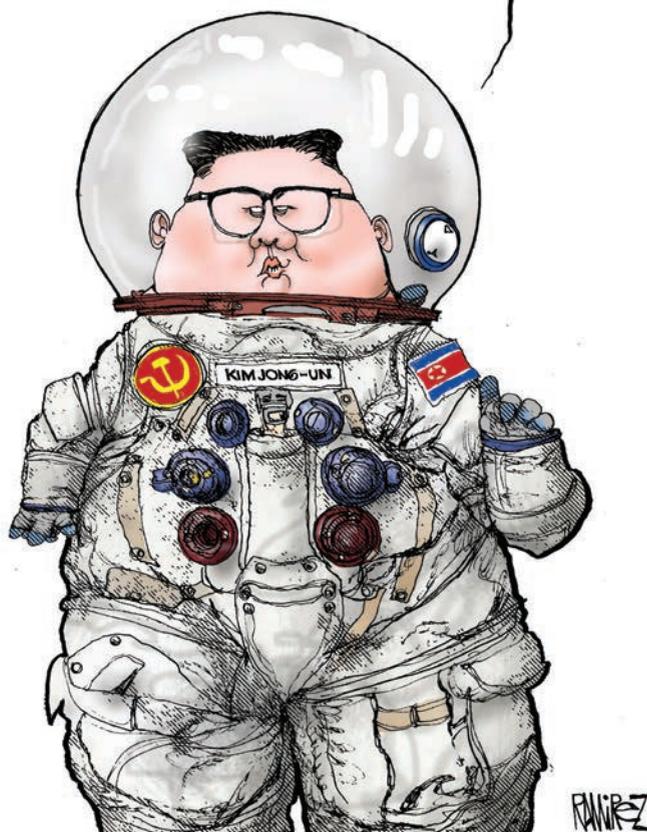
“We commend Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson for his deliberate speed in taking steps that many a Fortune 500 company would fear,” writes Johnson in a *USA Today* op-ed. “At the same time, we ask why is our society continually placing training on unconscious and implicit bias into a red box that says ‘break only in case of emergency,’ when we know it’s just a matter of time before another incident is caught on video and made public?”

We’re not totally sure



Wait, what?

AS A SIGN OF GOOD FAITH,  
I AM DISMANTLING the  
NUCLEAR TEST SITE that  
COLLAPSED AND IS NO  
LONGER USEABLE...



what this metaphorical red box is supposed to signify, but we’re willing to learn. But Johnson goes on to explain that “America still grapples with the intense labor pains necessary for giving birth to an ever elusive colorblind society” and that “implicit bias” is “like stagnant water polluting the American ideals of justice and meritocracy”; and the whole thing is “a conundrum wrapped inside a ball of hate, explicit

bias, racism, micro-aggressions and subconscious fears that can only be unraveled through our nation staring down face to face its problem with racism.” So America’s giving birth in polluted

water and trying to unravel a ball of hate instead by putting bias training in an emergency box . . . Got it.

As for mandatory bias training for all public officials, we disagree: Our public officials are confused enough. ♦

## Other People’s Money

What will Jeff Bezos do with his fortune? The Amazon chief has amassed around \$130 billion, and there’s really no practical way to spend more than a fraction of it. “The only way that I can see to deploy this much financial resource is by converting my Amazon winnings into space travel,” Bezos said in a recent interview. By “space travel” he means

space tourism and space colonies—“millions” of earthlings living and working in space.

Other people, naturally, feel they have better ideas for all that wealth. One of them is Harold Pollack, a “professor of social service administration and public health science” at the University of Chicago, who suggested in a *New York Times* op-ed that Bezos spend it on the sorts of things a professor of social service administration and public health science would spend it on. “If Mr. Bezos wants to strengthen America’s future scientific prowess, he would finance intensive math tutoring

for about two million high school students every year—forever. . . . If he wants to nourish the high-tech sector that

enabled his fortune, he would endow eight MIT-size universities around the world and still have billions left over.”

*That’s what we need—more*

universities to hire more professors of social service administration and public health science!

But Pollack isn’t done. “If he prefers to improve global health, he would barely break a sweat providing \$1.50 eyeglasses to a nearsighted Indian schoolgirl, a farsighted Nigerian truck driver and a billion others. Or he could buy a \$2 mosquito net for everyone in Africa who needs one. On top of that . . .”

We tend to agree that space travel isn’t a great way to blow billions of dollars, and if that money belonged to THE SCRAPBOOK we’d allocate it very differently. But people always have a better way to spend other people’s money. Alas, Bezos’s fortune doesn’t belong to THE SCRAPBOOK. Another thing that doesn’t belong to us? Professor Pollack’s surely not insignificant income from the extremely well-endowed University of Chicago. We won’t presume to tell him how he could better spend that money.



Professor Pollack

Still, if Pollack needs some help in doling out his extra cash—assuming he’s not inclined to spend it all on glasses for Indian schoolgirls and mosquito nets for Africans—we’d ask him to please call THE WEEKLY STANDARD’s main line and ask for THE SCRAPBOOK. ♦

## Do as We Say, Not as We Did

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the organization that licenses EU television broadcasts and hosts the annual Eurovision Song Contest, has terminated its contract with a Chinese broadcasting company. The company, Mango TV, cut one of the songs from the contest’s broadcast—the gay-themed “Together,” by the Irish songster Ryan O’Shaughnessy, featuring two male singers holding hands. The decision is doubtless motivated by government authorities’ objection to open displays of same-sex attraction. The Chinese company’s censorship, sniffed the song contest’s organizers, is “not in line with the EBU’s values of universality and inclusivity and our proud tradition of celebrating diversity through music.”

It seems to us that if Chinese authorities are going to allow the extremely campy Eurovision Song Contest to be shown at all, they hardly have room to complain about the event’s easily perceptible gayness. On the other hand, it strikes us as rather priggish on the part of Western elites to censure a nation for doing what every European nation would have done until recently. But the progressive mindset has no patience with recalcitrance and no awareness of its own sanctimony. ♦



Conchita Wurst, 2014 Eurovision winner

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## Location! Location! Location!

**M**y mother was fond of a story about the little boy, miffed at his parents, who informs them he is planning to run away from home. His mother tells him she won't stop him from doing so and packs a small suitcase for him. "Run away if you like," she says, "but remember you're not to leave the block."

This story came back to me the other day when it occurred to me that I, though no little boy, have no need to leave my block. Sitting in my morning reading chair, tea and toast on a table beside me, H. L. Mencken's hefty *The American Language* on my lap, looking down on the thoroughfare that is Chicago Avenue from the windows of our sixth-floor apartment, I felt that if need be I could survive nicely without ever having to leave my block. Within a hundred yards or so of our apartment are a bank, a supermarket, the main branch of the town library, the offices of my dentist and barber, a dry cleaner, two coffee shops, roughly a dozen restaurants of various ethnicities, and (though I hope to avoid inhabiting it) a retirement home.

I bought our apartment nearly 30 years ago, because it was a convenient two blocks away from Northwestern University, in Evanston, where I was then teaching. Evanston, the first suburb north of Chicago, has always been well situated, with houses large enough to be called mansions set out along Lake Michigan, perhaps the only notable topographical feature in all of the flatland of Illinois. But for years, owing to its being the site of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which it still is, Evanston was dry, and remained so until 1972. The first consequence

of being dry is to deprive a town of decent restaurants, for the profit from booze makes possible the sale of fancier viands in livelier establishments. Evanston in its dry days was the home of the blue-rinse dowager and the dullish tearoom, hold the peach cobbler, if you please. No, thank goodness, longer.

Soon after we moved into our apartment on the edge of downtown



Evanston, Whole Foods—owing to its expensiveness also known as Whole Paycheck—moved in. (If ever you want to begin a Tea Party of the left, it has been said, just troll the parking lot at Whole Foods.) A branch of Peet's Coffee and Tea took up residence, and just to the north of it an AT&T store selling and servicing smartphones. Beyond that is a good Greek restaurant—a Grecian spoon, as I like to think of it—that was there before I arrived in the neighborhood. At the corner is a women's dress shop, which always has elegant duds attractively displayed in its windows. At the bank, Whole Foods, the Greek restaurant, the library, I have some fairly long-established acquaintanceships in which pleasing talk about

sports, the Chicago weather, and general jokiness abounds.

Peet's opens at 6:00 A.M. and Whole Foods closes at 10:00 P.M., so there is foot traffic on the street 16 hours a day. During the late spring, all through the summer, and in early autumn three of the seven restaurants on the block, along with Peet's, set out outdoor tables for diners and, in the case of Peet's, schmoozers. During the day, a 23-story apartment building between Whole Foods and Peet's debouches a small but steady stream of backpack-bearing, mostly Asian students off to Northwestern to collect yet more As. A high percentage of the pedestrians on the street are bent over: the people from the retirement home over their walkers, the university students thumb-pumping away over their smartphones. If there has ever been a mugging or robbery on the tree-lined block during all the years I've lived here, I've not heard about it. Paradise, you might say, found.

If I sound smugly satisfied about landing on this block, this is only because I am. So satisfied, in fact, that if you were to offer me a month-long use of an apartment in Paris, in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés, at no charge, my first-

class round-trip airfare paid, I would tell you I have to think about it, though I would finally refuse. Why, after all, would I want to leave a routine I enjoy in surroundings that comfort in an atmosphere that pleases? Such is my contentment I no longer even indulge in real-estate porn, gazing, longingly, at pictorial ads in the *New York Times* and elsewhere for Upper East Manhattan brownstones, rolling Virginia farms, Montana ranches, waterfront property in La Jolla.

"Let your last thinks all be thanks," wrote W.H. Auden in his 1973 poem "Lullaby." High on the list of my own thanks is that for my great good luck in living where I do.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

# The Mueller Anniversary

One year ago—on May 17, 2017—deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein signed Order 3915-2017. To “ensure a full and thorough investigation of the Russian government’s efforts to interfere in the 2016 presidential election,” he appointed former FBI director Robert Mueller to be special counsel for the Department of Justice to inquire into “any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump” and “any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation.”

Rosenstein’s decision was the right one, and the context in which he made that decision ought to be remembered.

In February 2017, Michael Flynn resigned as national security adviser—he had been on the job for only 24 days—after it became clear that, despite public statements by administration officials to the contrary, he had privately discussed economic sanctions on Russia with the country’s ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, during the presidential transition. Three months later, on May 9, the new president unexpectedly fired FBI director James Comey. Then on May 16, the *New York Times* reported the existence of a memo in which Comey described Trump’s asking him to drop the investigation of Flynn. “I hope you can see your way to letting this go, to letting Flynn go,” Comey claimed Trump said to him. “He’s a good guy. I hope you can let this go.”

With news that Russia had tried to interfere in the presidential election, questions naturally arose about the Trump campaign’s knowledge of—and perhaps involvement in—the Kremlin’s efforts. Some of the frenzy was inspired by Democrats’ inability to cope with the fact that they had lost a winnable election because they chose to run a corrupt and disliked candidate, but Russia’s activities were aggressively seditious and demanded a response. The reason that it was Rosenstein and not Attorney General Jeff Sessions who appointed Mueller, remember, was that Sessions had recused himself from investigations of the election-meddling after it became known that he had communicated with Russian officials and hadn’t disclosed this fact in his confirmation hearings. The Russians, it seemed, were everywhere.

Comey would later testify that he deliberately leaked his memo in order to prompt an investigation—yet another example of the lack of judgment that so sullied the reputation of the FBI during the election. But if it wasn’t already clear that an investigation was called for, the need for Mueller’s probe quickly became self-evident. The *Washington Post* reported that just after the 2016 election Jared Kushner,

the president-elect’s son-in-law, asked Kislyak if officials from the incoming administration could use Russian diplomatic facilities to communicate with the Kremlin, a bizarre request that could only come from someone who wanted to avoid detection by U.S. law enforcement and intelligence.

Then, in July, the *New York Times* learned that in 2016, Kushner, Donald Trump Jr., and Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort met with a woman claiming both connection with Vladimir Putin and to have damaging information on Hillary Clinton. Trump’s supporters argued that this was routine campaign hardball. But these weren’t campaign lackeys checking a shady source who wanted to pass on some oppo research; they were the campaign’s top figures meeting with someone explicitly professing to speak for the Kremlin. It wasn’t evidence of the campaign colluding with Russia, but it was evidence that some of Trump’s top advisers were willing to collude.

Perhaps that’s why they lied about the meeting—again and again. Having been caught, the Trump team hastily abandoned its original claim that there were no meetings with Russians. The new spin: The meeting was about adoptions, not the election. That one didn’t last long, either, once it was clear that investigators had detailed information about the meeting. Having been caught lying again, the Trump team acknowledged that the meeting had been proposed by Russians representing themselves as emissaries for the government for the purposes of sharing dirt on Hillary Clinton.

If the Mueller investigation uncovers nothing else, it’s worth knowing that top advisers to President Trump were eager to work with an increasingly hostile adversary for the purposes of winning an election. That may not be prosecutable, but it’s not normal.

In August 2017, the special counsel impaneled a grand jury in Washington. Thus far he has indicted 19 people and three companies. Many of these seem to have richly deserved their comeuppance—Manafort and business partner Rick Gates for acting as agents for Kremlin-backed Ukrainian officials and hiding large financial gains from the IRS; 13 Russian nationals for conspiracy and identity theft. Others were indicted not for an underlying crime but for lying to investigators—Flynn, the otherwise unknown Trump campaign “adviser” George Papadopoulos, and the Gates-connected attorney Alex van der Zwaan.

The public has not yet seen hard evidence that either Trump or a senior campaign official actively colluded with the Russian government to affect the outcome of the

election. The indictments have to do with “matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation.”

Any investigation of this sort is bound to have its detractors, and in the present case the detractors weren’t wrong to express dismay over the fact that one of Mueller’s staff, FBI agent Peter Strzok, had in 2016 exchanged texts with a female colleague (and lover) about the need to ensure Hillary Clinton’s election. Very much to his credit, Mueller demoted Strzok long before the press knew anything about the texts. But the fact that he once served on Mueller’s team and before that had investigated the Clinton email scandal rankled.

Other controversies, not originating from the Mueller investigation but bound up with it, complicate the public’s perception. Credible sources have raised concerns about irregularities in “unmasking” requests made by Obama officials in the closing months of that administration. There remain serious questions about the provenance of the so-called Steele dossier and how it was used. Top Obama-era intelligence officials have told contradicting stories. These are the kinds of inconsistencies that beg for skepticism and deeper reporting, but in which too many of our friends in the mainstream media are utterly uninterested.

Robert Mueller is everything we value in a public servant—honest, competent, utterly averse to partisan hackery. His investigation is not, as Trump complains, a “witch hunt.” He has done valuable work, and, we repeat, the deputy attorney general was right to appoint him. We’re confident that his conclusions will be based on facts and evidence. But it has been a year of acrimony. If Donald Trump and his aides received help from the Russian government to win the election, Americans should know it and the offenders should stand trial. If they did not, or if such a thing can’t be proved, Americans should be told that, too. The hour is late. ♦

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## Crunch Time

Is Donald Trump a masterful negotiator or an unqualified bumbler? The truth likely lies somewhere in between, but we want to avoid closed-mindedness here and accept the possibility that a mercurial president can secure a beneficial agreement by means of wrong-footing the other side’s negotiators. In any case, we’re going to find out. Deadlines on important diplomatic and trade agreements are approaching, and we should soon know if Trump’s famed skills in negotiating sweet deals in New York real estate can be translated to the White House.

Trump outlined his strategy, recall, in his 1987 book *The Art of the Deal*: “My style of deal-making is quite simple and straightforward,” he wrote. “I aim very high, and then I just keep pushing and pushing and pushing to get what I’m after.” He also expressed a disdain for deep analysis in favor

of off-the-cuff self-reliance: “I don’t hire a lot of number-crunchers, and I don’t trust fancy marketing surveys. I do my own surveys and draw my own conclusions.”

Now the standard way to negotiate with foreign governments is to dispatch low- and mid-level diplomats to meet with their foreign counterparts and quietly reach a deal behind closed doors. The Trump approach is alternately to cajole, butter up, and harshly criticize the other side in hopes of gaining leverage in those negotiations.

On North Korea, he has belittled dictator Kim Jong-un as “Little Rocket Man” but also praised him as “very honorable.” He threatened Kim with “fire and fury” but also claimed, “I try so hard to be his friend.” On China, Trump blasted the country’s trade surplus with the United States as unfair and released a list of 1,300 imports targeted for higher tariffs. But he has also said he and Chinese president Xi Jinping “will always be friends” and last week promised to help Chinese company ZTE, which Trump’s own Commerce Department had sanctioned for trading with Iran and North Korea. As for our North American allies, this week, Trump said Mexico—the second-biggest buyer of U.S. products behind Canada—“has done nothing for us.”

A sympathetic interpretation would understand these rhetorical tergiversations not as pointless contradictions but as posturing. Taken by itself, for instance, Trump’s most recent boast of his partnership with Xi—“[we are] working together to give massive Chinese phone company, ZTE, a way to get back into business, fast”—is extremely troublesome. But there’s no reason to view the fate of ZTE in a vacuum; it may be part of a larger negotiation with China, which could result in better access to the country for U.S. companies.

It’s still too early to judge the overall success or failure of Trump’s unpredictable approach. We’re deeply skeptical—wild bluster is one thing in a campaign, but crafting international agreements demands careful study and forethought. The president and his administration have at least shown that they’re not afraid to walk away from bad deals: the Paris climate accord, the Iran nuclear deal. Trump is much harder to read than, say, Barack Obama, who in 2014 was clearly desperate for a deal—any deal at all—with Tehran.

The verbal beat-downs and buildups can’t go on forever. A new deal on NAFTA would need to be submitted to Congress this month to ensure passage in this Congress. Tariffs on China will take effect in June. Trump and Kim have a tentative June 12 summit date in Singapore. As the deadlines approach, we can expect posturing and brinkmanship from both sides—like this week’s announcement from North Korea that it might withdraw from the summit in light of U.S.-South Korean military exercises.

Whatever happens, Americans will know if they’ve been fooled. As Trump himself put it in his book: “You can’t con people, at least not for long. You can create excitement, you can do wonderful promotion and get all kinds of press, and you can throw in a little hyperbole. But if you don’t deliver the goods, people will eventually catch on.” ♦

CHRISTINE ROSEN

# Big Tech's Fake Ethics

On May 15, Facebook released its first-ever “Community Standards Enforcement Report.” Despite its numbingly bureaucratic title, the report contains startling details about the scope of the challenge facing the company as it tries to monitor violent, extremist, and false content on its platform; Facebook has tagged and taken down millions of instances of such content in just the past few months.

In a note on the report's release, Alex Schultz, Facebook's vice president of analytics, wrote, “We built Facebook to be a place where people can openly discuss different ideas, even ideas that some people may find controversial or offensive. But we also want to make sure our service is safe for everyone. Sometimes that is a hard balance to strike.”

Evidently. While Facebook is patting itself on the back for slaying trolls and challenging fake news in the United States, the company, along with Google, is waging a different kind of content war in Ireland, one that has exposed both tech giants to charges of viewpoint discrimination.

In the lead-up to a constitutional referendum on abortion in Ireland on May 25, Facebook announced that it would stop accepting ads purchased by organizations outside of the country. “We understand the sensitivity of this campaign and will be working hard to ensure neutrality at all stages,” a Facebook statement read. “Our goal is simple: to help ensure a free, fair and transparent vote on this important issue.” Google announced an even broader ban: The company won't allow *any* advertising related to the referendum on any of its platforms, includ-

ing YouTube, either from Irish or non-Irish sources.

These strategies are notable not only because they have never been tried before, but because they presumably go against the financial interests of both companies (together, Facebook and Google control approximately 73 percent of the online advertising business in the United States and even more than that globally). Is Big Tech finally putting principles before profit?

Not quite.



Both Facebook and Google made sure to mention their commitment to election “integrity” and “transparency” when asked about the ad bans in Ireland, no doubt as part of a larger public relations effort that will help them emerge from the defensive crouch Big Tech has been in since revelations of massive privacy breaches and Russian election meddling.

But even if we take both companies at their word and accept that the ad bans are motivated by principle, in practice they will have the effect of silencing only one side of the debate: the pro-life side. It was largely pro-life groups from America, Canada, and the U.K. that were buying ads on these platforms, and tightening poll numbers suggest they were having success spreading their message online. As the *Irish Times* reported,

Several sources familiar with the internet companies said they believed that Google and Facebook had become alarmed in recent days at the prospect of the referendum being defeated and that they would be blamed by Yes campaigners and some elements of the media for their failure to adequately control or regulate advertising from the No side.

Representatives from several of the Irish groups that support the No campaign told the paper,

It is about concerns the No side will win. It is very clear that the Government, much of the establishment media and corporate Ireland have determined that anything that needs to secure a Yes vote must be done. Online was the only platform available to the No campaign to speak to voters directly. That platform is now being undermined, in order to prevent the public from hearing the message of one side.

The timing of the Big Tech ban is also suspicious; the No campaign had already purchased tens of thousands of dollars of ads that they were ready to roll out in the final weeks of the campaign. Why would tech companies call a halt at this point, in the name of a vaguely defined “neutrality”?

Seen from one perspective, Big Tech's Irish policy looks like another chapter in the ongoing story of Silicon Valley's political bias against conservatives and conservative ideas. Recall Twitter's launch in 2016 of its much ballyhooed “Trust and Safety Council,” which was supposed to help monitor the platform for bullying and extremism. The company was appropriately criticized for stacking the council with left-leaning groups. And Google continues to wrestle with perceptions (and lawsuits) based on its treatment of former employee James Damore, who was fired for writing a politically incorrect memo about the company's diversity-driven hiring practices.

But the ad ban in Ireland is a signal of something worse than mere political bias. It points to a broader and more worrisome ethical cluelessness among the leaders of Big Tech.

There have been hints of this before, such as when Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg thought it would be a swell idea to model the features

of the company's new Virtual Reality technology by having his VR avatar "hang out" amid the hurricane devastation in Puerto Rico. More recently, Google's unveiling of Duplex, part of its artificial-intelligence-fueled voice assistant technology, wowed an audience of developers who watched it trick gullible humans into believing they were talking to another human being rather than a bit of code. Non-Silicon Valley types, by contrast, were aghast that Google would celebrate a design whose intention is clearly to deceive.

It's not just critics on the right who are unhappy with Big Tech's apparent lack of a moral compass. This spring, approximately 4,000 Google employees signed a letter protesting Project Maven, Google's technology initiative with the Defense Department that seeks to improve the Pentagon's drone surveillance program. Google is trying to land other Pentagon contracts worth around \$10 billion, but many Google employees don't want to work for a company that is potentially in the business of making autonomous weapons. Google is reportedly now drafting "ethical principles" for future projects, to which one might reasonably respond: Why hasn't it been operating with ethical principles until now? And since ethics are an afterthought with its AI research, why should the public trust the claims Facebook and Google are making about their supposedly transparent decision-making processes regarding ad sales in Ireland?

Companies like Facebook and Google aren't nation-states or special interest groups, but as the Irish referendum suggests, sometimes they are too eager to act like both—and there's little anyone can do about it. Whatever the outcome of the referendum, it has at least prompted greater scrutiny of Big Tech's ethics—or lack thereof—when it comes to some of the most polarizing political debates. And it's given the public yet another useful reminder that our tech giants aren't morally neutral. When it comes to Big Tech's business practices, *caveat emptor*. ♦

## Don't hold your breath: the collapse of the Republican party isn't imminent

There were a handful of primary elections last week in Ohio, Indiana, and West Virginia, and while the results from Middle America were more or less predictable—"establishment" Republicans prevailed against some Trumpier-than-thou candidates—the headlines were revealing in their way: "Parties' stalwarts hold ground against rebels," declared the front-page account in the *New York Times*; the *Washington Post* reported that "In Senate primaries, GOP avoids worst fears."

A cynic like me might be forgiven for detecting disappointment. For decades now, the imminent collapse of the Republican party has been a perennial story, like the loss of family farms or the crisis in health care. Two causes are usually cited: the ever-changing demographics of the electorate—elderly white millionaires will soon be outnumbered by college kids and rising immigrants—and the party's perpetual lurch toward the right. The peculiar political genius of Donald Trump seems to have combined these two subversive trends into one. And yet, in the same news cycle as those primaries, a new CNN poll revealed that the Democratic advantage in the 2018 "generic congressional ballot" has largely evaporated.

How did that happen?

I should begin by declaring my conviction that confident predictions about the political future are essentially worthless. The late British prime minister Harold Wilson once counseled that "a week is a very long time in poli-

tics," and Wilson's rule applies over here as well. As Hillary Clinton and her 2016 campaign staff might testify, you can diagnose trends, crunch numbers, and point fingers, but things happen, stuff matters, and human nature is



**The Republican party may well be on the verge of collapse, but it also seems talented at adaptation, the principal political survival skill.**

unpredictable. The Republican party may well be on the verge of collapse—it rose, after all, from the ashes of the Whigs—but it also seems talented at adaptation, the principal political survival skill. In politics, as in biology, Charles Darwin was prescient.

Political journalism seems to be divided between those who believe that Republican adaptation to Trump's unconventional presidency is its death knell, and deservedly so, and those who think that Trump is another bump in the road. I place myself firmly in the latter category. I would be the first to acknowledge that what might politely be called the president's style and comportment are not my ideal; but perfection is unattainable in life, much less politics. A pragmatic adjustment to the Trump phenomenon explains a lot about "establishment" party behavior, especially in Congress. And of course, tweets aside, Trump has proved to be a far more conventional Republican than not.

Indeed, in the recent primaries, Republican “stalwarts” were largely distinguished from their Make-America-Great-Again/Tea Party/insurgent challengers on stylistic grounds. In West Virginia, for example, it would be difficult to find substantial distance on the issues between the eventual winner in the Senate primary, state attorney general Patrick Morrisey, and the media’s favorite candidate, ex-coal executive/convict Don Blankenship. Morrisey did not distance himself from Trump, and Blankenship seemed to be running not against the Democratic incumbent (Joe Manchin) but the personification of GOP Washington, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell. Like most neophyte insurgents, Blankenship succeeded largely in making a spectacle of himself, and the choice for voters was easy.

There’s a lesson here that seems reliably lost on the press: If Republican-leaning voters are comfortable with political expectations—that is to say, at the present moment, if they prefer Trump’s policies, if not his personality, to the alternative—they will overlook the defects that offend detractors.

Moreover, from the GOP standpoint, the president’s comparative success, thus far, has sent the resistance spiraling ever deeper into excess. Trump is now routinely likened to Hitler and wise voices on the left warn about the signs of fascism. But why would anyone else take such talk seriously? Sinclair Lewis’s famous description of the imminent arrival of American fascism—*It Can’t Happen Here*—was published 83 years ago during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency. Goldwater delegates at the 1964 Republican convention, in their matching gold lamé vests, were compared to the uniform ranks of the SS. ’Twas ever thus.

And lest we forget, Barry Goldwater’s crushing defeat prompted much discussion of his party’s unpromising future. The discussion was not misplaced: Lyndon Johnson had put together a mighty coalition that gained 61 percent of the popular vote—a figure unmatched since—and increased the Democrats’ already-prohibitive majorities in Congress and state legislatures.

From that vantage point, in the winter of 1964-65, it was impossible

to see if the growth of the Democratic vote could ever be arrested or the share of the shrinking Republican vote increased. And then as now, demographic trends seemed to indicate permanent Democratic dominance. Except that they did not. Just as lowering the voting age to 18 in 1972 proved advantageous not to the antiwar left but to the silent-majority right, the 1966 off-year elections signaled a trend that, while scarcely decisive, led two years later to the election of a Republican president.

The Democratic and Republican parties are both a curious coalition of disparate tribes, polite neighbors, vested interests, and changing attitudes. Yet these matching quilts are regarded as a Democratic strength but a Republican weakness. They are, in fact, an inescapable mark of our two-party system. And just as the Democrats of today are very different from their brethren of the Kennedy-Johnson age, the post-Reagan Republican party is not, as the press likes to put it, your grandfather’s GOP. Trump is an evolutionary symptom, not a sign of the apocalypse. ♦

## Worth Repeating from *WeeklyStandard.com*:

‘At the Met Gala, the pop star Rhianna wore “an ornate, beaded white Margiela corset dress with a matching jacket, clutch, and mitre.”

‘The outfit was quite fetching, especially the mitre. But it raised a question, which I naïvely asked the social media world, attaching the Rhianna-as-Pope picture: “Could somebody explain the rules about ‘cultural appropriation’ and when we are supposed to be outraged again. Asking for a friend.”

‘I understand that there are certain forms of “appropriation”—like wearing blackface or using a religion’s sacred symbols for entertainment—that are just plain racism or sacrilege. But I thought we needed some clarification for the rules, lest they become invisible tripwires. And no, it is not self-evident

what is permitted and what will incite the Twitter mobs. Who gets to decide when and how we can pay homage to another culture? Which groups deserve protection and which groups are fair game? Why is there outrage about burrito shops run by white women in Portland, but not New York pizza? Why is it okay to dress as a Catholic priest, but not wear a Chinese dress to prom? . . .

‘I received more than 1,400 responses to my tweet, some trying to clarify the rules, but quite a few explaining that I was a benighted moron and a bigot for asking the question. Of course, this was mild compared with the reaction that other heretics, like Jordan Peterson, generate. But it was still awfully revealing.’

—Charles J. Sykes, ‘Smug Alert!’

# In the name of convenience: U2 and the Irish referendum

**O**n May 25, the people of Ireland are set to vote on repealing the eighth amendment of their constitution, which recognizes that children in the womb have a right to life. As you can imagine, this has sent a country long riven by passionate disputes over religion into a frenzied debate. Naturally, Ireland's largest cultural export—sorry, James Joyce—felt the need to weigh in. On their official Twitter and Instagram accounts, rockers U2 sent out an image that says, “Repeal the 8th,” inside a heart. After all, what could be more loving than abortion?

In some respects, this shouldn't have been surprising. In the 1980s, lots of rock stars embraced social and political activism, but few did it with the fervor of U2. In just over a decade, rock and roll went from the Sex Pistols' ironic and bitter “God Save the Queen” to U2's anthemic embrace of Greenpeace's crusade to save the whales. To its fans, the band's earnestness was as painful to watch as it was admirable. Thus the old joke about U2's grandiloquent frontman: A musician dies and goes to heaven, where he eagerly attends a concert by an all-star band of dead rock stars. When U2's Bono walks out on stage, the recently deceased musician gasps and turns to St. Peter: “I didn't know Bono died!” “Oh no,” replies Peter, “That's God—he just *thinks* he's Bono.”

However, being occasionally insufficiently rock stars engaged in liberal activism didn't make U2 unique. The band's musical gifts notwithstanding, their political posturing was more tolerable than most because of a saving grace: The band is explicitly Christian (bass player Adam Clay-

ton excepted). They'd spent time at a Christian commune early in their careers and very nearly gave up their rock star ambitions as a result. They've never been a full-on Christian rock band (thank God) but even after 30 years, it's still refreshing to hear songs such as “Sunday Bloody



**The band has conveniently noted that, in the midst of a world tour, members won't make it back for the referendum. So much for the importance of voting.**

Sunday” and “Pride (In the Name of Love)” on the radio for no other reason than that Bono is explicitly singing about Jesus.

So you can begin to fathom the anguish legions of U2's Christian fans have experienced this month, with messages all over social media about ripped up tickets for the band's summer tour. No one doubted that U2 was liberal, but the group was also for years a harbor in a culture that too often mocks and assails Christian values. And for millions of devout Christians, there's no value more sacred than the right to life.

The band for its part seems half-ashamed of the stand it's taken. Bono, who typically indulges his trademark logorrhea at the drop of a hat, is nowhere to be found on this issue. It was the normally taciturn guitarist/sonic engineer David Evans, aka “The Edge,” who was trotted out to meekly explain their stance to the *Irish Independent*.

“I think that we acknowledged that we have very strong feelings on both sides,” he said, adding, “I personally am in favour of repealing, but I do understand why people might have a problem with that. The important thing is to vote.” The band has also conveniently noted that, in the midst of a world tour, members won't make it back to Ireland for the referendum. So much for the importance of voting.

Before judging U2 too harshly, it should be remembered that Bono has played a key role in funding and implementing life-saving AIDS initiatives in Africa, among other things. Further, that the band publicly retains its Christian identity is no act. Bono at least gave a startling interview to Irish broadcaster RTE a few years back in which he quite dramatically affirmed his belief in Jesus as the literal, miracle-performing son of God.

At one point in the '90s, Bono was even donning devil horns to play an onstage alter ego dubbed “MacPhisto”—a character he said was explicitly inspired by C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*. In that book, the titular demon lays out his strategy pretty clearly: “The thing to do is to get a man at first to value social justice as a thing which the Enemy demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice. For the Enemy will not be used as a convenience.”

But if the band was flirting with a sophisticated level of self-awareness then, now it seems to be taking its place in a long line of pop culture figures who have followed the path of least resistance: to support what is culturally and politically convenient rather than speak the unchangeable truth. Killing a child in its mother's womb is a horrifying practice, and that the state would sanction it should in no way assuage our consciences. As much as Christian forgiveness is freely given, there are still higher laws and divine authority that must be respected. If Bono and the rest of everyone's favorite Christian rock band possess enough hubris to support the legalization of abortion in Ireland, maybe they really do think they can play God. ♦

# Reeducating the Baristas

A futile and stupid gesture from Starbucks.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON



*Caving in to this hootenanny*

As I write, the big day is a little less than two weeks away, and none of the mediafolk at Starbucks will say exactly how it will all come off—the reprogramming of nearly 175,000 baristas and other employees in a single afternoon, in an effort to cleanse them of racial bias.

The Starbucks event is a superior instance of American business’s approach to problem-solving. It begins with a grand gesture: the closing of the 8,000 company-owned Starbucks outlets, including those that are right across the street from each other. The ensuing program—details not yet revealed—will be presented as an act of contrition on the part of an artificial entity, the corporation, that by its very nature cannot feel contrition, or

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anything else. It will be an intimate and personal process staged by hired “diversity trainers” for maximum publicity. And it will be wreathed in unasailably uplifting politics to hide the creepy methods that are, we’re told, the fruit of the very finest social science. I bet the baristas can hardly wait.

Reprogramming Day was announced in a press release issued via a two-and-a-half-minute video (another sign of our times: a video is necessary in the age of t|;dr). The CEO of Starbucks, an earnest man named Kevin Johnson, stared into the camera looking woebegone and jowly. He said he felt terrible that police were called a few days earlier to haul away two black men from a Philadelphia Starbucks on the assumption that they were loitering. In pursuit of more enlightened racial attitudes, he said he will join all his partners—his genteelism for employees—in

submitting to “training around unconscious bias [and] conscious inclusion.” He said that this will be “just one step in a journey.” Then he said it was the “first step in a journey.” Then he said it again.

I don’t doubt his sincerity—well, I kind of do, actually—but the safest bet is that the big day will come and go and be quickly forgotten, leaving us to return to our venti Double Chocolate Chip Crème Frappuccinos hopeful that nothing similar will happen again, at least for a while. Indeed, this is precisely the fear of the people whom Johnson has hired to help “craft the curriculum” for the training sessions on May 29. The CEO’s genteelism for these crafters is “thought leaders,” although they call themselves “racial justice leaders.” Probably a distinction without a difference.

Three of the leaders—recruited from such pillars of the diversity industry as the Equal Justice Initiative, the NAACP Legal and Education Fund, and Demos, a diversity think tank—issued a statement shortly after they hired on:

We have been clear from the start that the company must build a framework for anti-bias training that extends beyond the planned May 29th training and that becomes part of the company culture. In addition to the need for an anti-discrimination curriculum—which will consist of an ongoing education for all employees, with real measures for evaluation and monitoring—we made clear that a thorough review of the company policies . . . is necessary as they move forward. We expect to issue a report to Starbucks, with recommendations about the company’s policies, a multi-phase training framework, and the ongoing work they will need to undertake in order to really move the ball.

With their help, Kevin Johnson’s journey will be a long and expensive one.

Only someone blissfully unfamiliar with corporate America will find Starbucks’ diversity extravaganza unusual. An obsession with diversity is a fixture of our business culture. Diversity training was originally adopted as a hedge against discrimination lawsuits,

MARK MAKELA / GETTY

even, as in the case of Starbucks, after the fact. (Starbucks settled with the two Philadelphia men for an undisclosed amount before they could file suit.) A court judgment in such cases can be far costlier than hiring a diversity training company.

More than 20 years ago, at the dawn of the diversity training era, Texaco settled a discrimination suit for \$176 million; four years later, Coca-Cola did the same for \$192 million. Portions of both settlements, totaling roughly \$70 million, went to implement diversity programs in the respective companies. For businesses it's a bargain. In 2011, for instance, the Supreme Court rejected a huge gender-discrimination class action against Walmart; the company avoided a potentially catastrophic payout by offering its antidiscrimination policy and programs as evidence of its angelic fairness.

"Currently," three psychologists reported in the *Harvard Business Review*, "diversity initiatives' strongest accomplishment may actually be protecting the organization from litigation—not protecting the interests of underrepresented groups."

That makes two things that diversity initiatives are good for: dodging litigation and fattening the bank accounts of people who declare themselves diversity trainers. It's a do-it-yourself profession, requiring no particular training or certification, and enormously lucrative. Buy a shingle; hang it and they will come, all the nervous executives trying to stay a few steps ahead of trouble. A pioneer in the diversity business, Dr. Lennox Joseph, once told me the advice he gives young people. "I tell them, 'If you want to make a large amount of money in a very short period of time, go into diversity.'" Race and gender entrepreneurs by the thousands have followed his lead. *Time* estimates the total value of the diversity industry at \$8 billion. It's nice work if you can get it.

As for the other goals that diversity training is supposed to be good for—raising employees' awareness of their unconscious racism, nudging executives to seed their managerial ranks with more women and

minorities—several surveys over the last two decades have shown it to be more or less worthless. Most recently, the Harvard psychologist Frank Dobbin head-counted his way through more than 800 midsize and large U.S. companies that had made diversity training mandatory, as Starbucks is doing. Over a five-year period he found no increase in the percentage of managers who were women or minorities. In fact, the number of black female managers declined more than 9 percent, that of Asian men 4.5 percent.

The effect of diversity training on employees' racial attitudes is similarly unimpressive. It's not clear that such an effect can even be reliably measured. Those who have tried have failed to see any change in attitude lasting more than a few days. The resentment, hostility, and feelings of victimization it often provokes tend to last longer.

The lack of success shouldn't be surprising. Most diversity programs are based on the make-believe science of "implicit racism." The phrase gained currency among American social scientists a generation ago, just as explicit racism—legal, institutional, and public—dropped close to zero. Social scientists had trouble accounting for this decline or even accepting it. It is part of their catechism that racism is enduring and endemic; if it appeared to be declining, that meant it was merely being pushed underground—or rather, pushed back deep in the unconscious mind of the racists themselves. Implicit racism is not only unconscious; often it is invisible, unspoken, and unfelt by the person it's directed toward. Both perpetrator and victim might be clueless about the racism raging between them. Only the social scientist sees the truth. This is often how the findings of social science work: If it doesn't look like a duck, walk like a duck, or quack like a duck, it's still a duck. Studies show.

The discovery of this hitherto undetected kind of racism relies on the Implicit Association Test, some version of which will almost certainly be part of the Starbucks curriculum. The IAT is a computer-based exercise that is alleged to expose a subject's hidden

feelings, his racism and sexism in particular. Various heretics in social psychology have been hammering away at the test for a decade now. Reading their studies, a disinterested observer will conclude that the IAT is flimsy, incoherent, and used by everybody anyway. A vast edifice of social science has been built on the assumption that the IAT tells us something real. And its staying power does rest on something real. We each of us know that we are subject to feelings we don't understand; we are often the worst judges of our own behavior. It took social science to grab this universal and relatively harmless intuition and weaponize it for the warriors of social justice.

Yet the test's crippling defects won't go away. The mechanism by which unconscious racism leads to particular results on the IAT has never been revealed, or even guessed at. The scores themselves vary wildly—take the test three times, you'll probably get three different scores. More important, no one has discovered a link between the test results and actual behavior; your performance on the test tells us nothing about how you will behave in real life, or in a Starbucks.

Implicit racism is a will o' the wisp, and any attempt to define it, much less isolate and eliminate it, is doomed to fail. As the authors of the largest study of the implicit bias literature wrote in 2016: "We found little evidence that changes in implicit bias mediate changes in explicit bias or behavior. Together, [our] findings suggest that implicit bias is malleable, but that changing implicit bias does not necessarily lead to changes in explicit bias or behavior."

The world that the diversity trainers will usher the baristas into has a pristine, seamless wholeness to it. It is a world unto itself, unblemished by contact with reality, built from pure ideology: untutored trainers instructing blameless subjects in bogus science to cure a psychological defect that can't be shown to exist, all at a staggering expense of time and money. Only a capitalist country as rich as ours could survive what its capitalists are doing to it. ♦

# The Real Palestinian Catastrophe

A debased national movement at 70.

BY ELLIOTT ABRAMS



*A woman documents demonstrations at Gaza City's border with Israel, May 14, 2018.*

As Israel celebrated the 70th anniversary of its independence and the move of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, Palestinians last week commemorated their 70th “Nakba Day.” The Nakba, or catastrophe, in question is meant to be the founding of the state of Israel, but this year Palestinians had a real Nakba to occupy them: the degeneration of their national movement into dictatorship, corruption, violence, and extremism.

There were two signal manifestations of this decline in the past week. The first was staged by Hamas, the largest of the Palestinian Islamist terrorist groups, which has ruled Gaza since 2007. Last week Hamas organized masses of protesters (and according to

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Israel sent dozens of operatives armed with pipe bombs and grenades) to storm the border fences with Israel. Hamas has failed in governing Gaza, which is mired in poverty and suffers shortages of water, electricity, and employment opportunities for its 1.8 million people, two-thirds of them under the age of 25. The unemployment rate in Gaza is 44 percent and even higher among youth. Hamas and those it rules are caught in a trap the terrorist group has created: Its ideology prevents peace with Israel but its circumstances have apparently persuaded its leaders that another major conflict would lead only to more devastation. So instead it sacrifices Palestinian lives in border attacks that produce no benefit whatsoever for the people of Gaza.

In fact the main achievement of those border attacks is to remind Israelis—who left Gaza in 2005, abandoning their military bases and settlements there—that Hamas considers

all of Israel's borders illegitimate. The dispute with Hamas isn't over settlements or the “occupation” or Gaza itself. It is over Israel's existence. In Gaza, the Islamist part of the Palestinian national movement does nothing to advance Palestinian interests, instead isolating its people from Egypt, Israel, the West Bank, and the rest of the world.

Hamas offers violence and nihilism, funded by Iran and dedicated to the fantasy of “return” to Israel across those border fences. But even using all the pressure it could muster, it could not gather more than 40,000 at the fences, significantly under its goal of 100,000. Nor was the reaction in the West Bank (which saw demonstrations of fewer than 2,000 people spread over a dozen or more sites) and in the Arab world as great as Hamas might have anticipated. The month of Ramadan began May 16 and may see a continuation of violence, and even perhaps expansion into another round of war between Israel and Hamas. But the underlying situation will not change: Hamas has turned Gaza into a prison for those it rules. It cannot achieve peace, or decent and normal lives for the people of Gaza, through violent confrontation with Israel.

The second manifestation was staged by the secular part of the Palestinian national movement, which is dominated by Yasser Arafat's Fatah party. Fatah rules in the West Bank and controls both the Palestinian Authority and the PLO. Over the decades, Fatah has morphed from a terrorist group fighting to destroy Israel, into a terrorist group fighting for Palestinian statehood, then after Arafat's death in 2004 into a political group struggling against Hamas and other terrorist organizations, and more recently into a plain dictatorship whose only goal seems to be protecting the privileges of its own ruling elites.

The event that demonstrated Fatah's decline most clearly occurred on April 30, when Palestinian Authority president and PLO chairman Mahmoud Abbas called a meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the PLO's legislative body. There

SPENCER PLATT / GETTY

he delivered himself of a three-hour speech replete with explanations that the Jews have no real historical tie to the Middle East and that European anti-Semitism was caused by the Jews' "social behavior, [charging] interest, and financial matters." The speech was reminiscent of his January 14 tirade, in which he explained that Zionism "did not begin 100 years ago. It did not begin with the Balfour Declaration. . . . It began in 1653 when Cromwell ruled Britain. . . . He came up with the idea of transferring the Jews from Europe to the Middle East."

At this PNC gathering Abbas had himself reelected by acclamation; there was no voting. The entire scene—the length of his speech, the sometimes bizarre and sometimes plainly anti-Semitic content, the election by applause—was a throwback to Castro or Ceausescu and left many Palestinian observers in despair. Israel is celebrating 70 years in freedom, prosperity, and strength, the U.S. embassy is moving, the "occupation" that began in 1967 shows no sign of ending, there are no peace negotiations—and the leader of the Palestinians is crushing dissent, elevating cronies, and discussing Oliver Cromwell.

Repression in the West Bank is growing steadily. Judicial independence has been reduced. Civil society organizations that violate "national unity" or threaten the "social fabric" face closure, and their leaders face jail. The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, led by Khalil Shikaki, the best-known Palestinian pollster, may go out of business this year. In just this fashion Abbas worked in 2015 to close down an NGO founded by former prime minister Salam Fayyad, seizing its funds and closing its bank accounts. Like Hamas in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority arrests and detains journalists who criticize Fatah and its leaders. Corruption is rife. At the PNC meeting, election or exclusion depended not on service to the Palestinian cause or integrity but on fealty to Abbas.

Under the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, what were supposed to be embryonic democratic institutions

were created. After Arafat's death these hollow shells were briefly filled; free elections were held for president in 2005 and for parliament in 2006 (the latter won by Hamas). But there has been no election in the Palestinian territories since January 2006, and the legitimacy of the leadership is in very steady decline. The one-party rule by Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank reflects the worst of Arab political culture.

Nor does either organization, Fatah or Hamas, offer Palestinians a practical program for national independence. The alignment of Israel and most Sunni states against Iran means those states are less likely to fund Hamas, whose violent rhetoric and conduct and whose absolute rejection of Israel's existence reflect instead Iranian policy. In December, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar boasted of his contact with Qassem Suleimani, head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force, and of Suleimani's pledges of support.

On the West Bank side, since the first Oslo agreement a quarter-century ago, the Fatah/PLO program has ostensibly been a negotiated deal with Israel that would lead to true independence—the "two-state solution." But there has been no progress in a decade: Abbas rejected a peace offer from Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert in 2008 and refused all of the Obama administration's efforts to get him back to the negotiating table.

Israelis debate how much Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could offer in a real negotiation, because he presides over a right-of-center coalition that might be split by any compromises. But Bibi won't be put to the test, because Abbas is past the point of considering serious negotiations and serious compromises. He lacks the legitimacy to do so, and his recent fulminations and crackdowns suggest a man who, at 83, is long past the ability to lead to peace. He is in no mood to undertake a debate with Hamas and others who will call him a traitor for any deal he makes. He appears to have decided what his legacy must be: "steadfastness," meaning that, like Arafat, he said no to everything.

He would rather be seen as a stalwart leader who held high the banner of Palestinian nationalism and refused to bargain with the Zionists than undertake the undoubtedly painful compromises that peace would entail. In 2003 (when the United States and E.U. forced Arafat to accept him as prime minister) Abbas looked like an alternative to Arafat and a potential Israeli peace partner. Fifteen years later those hopes are long gone, which helps explain why the Trump administration has not yet released its peace plan: Abbas would reject it instantly.

All this leaves Palestinians high and dry, with no way forward at all. Whatever the criticism of the "occupation," Israelis will certainly not abandon the West Bank to chaos or to a possible Hamas takeover. Today the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state is simply too dangerous to Israel and to Jordan to be contemplated. With Hamas in control of Gaza, and Iran and its proxies seizing large parts of Syria and dominating Lebanon, who would control such a state in the West Bank? How likely is it that Israel, now battling against Iranian control of southern Syria, will open up opportunities for further Iranian incursions? And how can such matters be discussed seriously between Israelis and Palestinians (and for that matter, with Americans and Jordanians) when the leader of the PA and PLO will not return to the table and instead indulges in bizarre rants about Jewish and British history?

The great likelihood is that five years from today, that situation will be fundamentally unchanged. Perhaps Abbas will be gone, but his successors will be Fatah stalwarts and in any event will need years to consolidate power sufficiently even to contemplate leading Palestinians into the difficult compromises of a peace settlement. There is growing desperation among Palestinians that neither Fatah nor Hamas represents their hopes—or can fulfill them. There are only two other options. The first is the "one state solution," meaning union with Israel, but that is a nonstarter Israel will reject no matter who is its prime minister. The other option is some kind of eventual link to Jordan.

In polite diplomatic society, and in Palestinian public discourse, such a link cannot be mentioned. But younger people who visit there, Palestinians have explained to me, can see a society that is half Palestinian and functions as an independent nation with a working system of law and order. Jordanians travel freely, rarely suffer from terrorism, and have an Islamist (Muslim Brotherhood) party, the Islamic Action Front, that participates in the political system and sits in parliament. There are elections, even if power is ultimately concentrated in the royal palace. The kingdom has close relations with all the Sunni states and the West, and is at peace with Israel.

The fundamental question all this raises is what, in 2018, the nature and objective of Palestinian nationalism is. Is the goal sovereignty at all costs, no matter how long it takes and even if it is increasingly divorced from peace, prosperity, and personal freedom? Is “steadfastness” the greatest Palestinian virtue now and forever? These questions cannot be debated in either Gaza or the West Bank. But as Israel celebrates 70 years and the “occupation” is now more than a half-century old, how much longer can they be delayed?

Today’s desperate Palestinian situation is largely the work of Fatah, the party that led it down a dozen blind alleys, embraced terror, lost an election to Hamas, and at least twice (2000 and 2008) rejected offers of peace from Israel. It may well be that the window for a sovereign Palestinian state was open from 1991 to 2008 but has now closed. Certainly there is no prospect of an early deal with Israel, and in Arab capitals, enthusiasm for the Palestinian cause is clearly declining. At the conferences in the Arab world that I attend, the “centrality” of the Palestinian issue continues to be argued—but more and more often it is raised only by people who are 70 or 80 years old.

The catastrophic mishandling of Palestinian affairs by generations of leaders from Haj Amin al-Husseini (the pro-Nazi mufti of the British Mandate period) to Yasser Arafat and now to Mahmoud Abbas has been the true Palestinian Nakba. ♦

THOMAS FLUHARTY

# Mueller v. Trump

Is there a constitutional confrontation in the offing? BY THEODORE B. OLSON

**C**an special counsel Robert Mueller require President Trump to testify before a grand jury? It would be unprecedented, and his effort to do so could lead to a major constitutional confrontation.

The president could, of course, resist a grand jury subpoena by asserting his right under the Fifth Amendment not to be a witness against himself. However, for political reasons, he may not wish to do that. And he may not need to.

Another off-ramp for the president, which he may choose not to take, is to remove the special counsel. Mueller is an appointee of the Department of Justice, part of the executive branch. He is therefore a subordinate of the president. Trump might have to jump through some hoops to remove him—such as removing the deputy attorney general who selected Mueller—but he has the power to do so. If, that is, he’s willing to withstand the public outcry and demands for impeachment that would surely follow. Legislative measures, such as those already introduced in Congress, to shackle or impede the president’s power to remove the special counsel are almost surely unconstitutional. So the president could avoid a grand jury subpoena by removing the official who is threatening to obtain one. But this is another step with potentially grave

political implications that he may not wish to risk.

The president is not “above the law”; there are many court decisions saying so. But the Constitution is part of the law, and it makes the president the sole repository of the executive power of the United States. He is therefore not just like any other citizen.

As things now stand, Mueller has not made, or even attempted to make, a record to explain why he would be justified in invoking the power of the judiciary to compel the president to show up before a grand jury—without a lawyer—and answer whatever questions Mueller and his army of prosecutors may put to him.

Two Supreme Court decisions have been cited by some

commentators as precedents authorizing compulsive judicial authority to force a president to testify before a grand jury. But neither case goes nearly that far. Indeed, both decisions are explicitly limited to the unique circumstances that gave rise to them.

In the 1974 case of *United States v. Nixon*, the Supreme Court held that the president does not possess an absolute, unqualified presidential privilege of immunity from judicial process in all circumstances. The Court required President Nixon to produce records and tapes relating to certain conversations between the president and others pertaining to specific alleged criminal acts. The



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Court held that the deference ordinarily accorded to the president must in the circumstances presented yield to the prosecutor's demonstrated specific need for particularized evidence in a criminal case. But, quoting Chief Justice John Marshall, sitting as a trial judge in the Aaron Burr treason case in 1807, the *Nixon* Court went on to emphasize, "In no case . . . would a court be required to proceed against the president as against an ordinary individual." His conduct was to be treated as presumptively privileged, and forcing his compliance with a subpoena—in that case to produce records—was justified by the need for the defendant (Burr) to have the documents to defend himself.

The other precedent, *Clinton v. Jones* in 1997, was a civil suit charging that President Bill Clinton, when he was governor of Arkansas, had made offensive sexual overtures to Paula Jones and that she experienced retaliatory measures from her state-government employer for rejecting Clinton's advances. The Court held that the president was not immune during his presidency from suit for civil damages for actions allegedly taken by him prior to his presidency. It did not hold that a court could compel his attendance to give testimony at any specific time and place, just that he was not entitled to put the case on hold during his presidency.

Clinton did appear before a grand jury in the Kenneth Starr special counsel investigation, but he consented to doing so. Therefore, neither of the Clinton incidents supports the proposition that a grand jury subpoena could force Trump to appear.

The collective significance of the Supreme Court's opinion in the *Nixon* case and Chief Justice Marshall's conclusions in the Burr trial is that in a criminal case, constitutional imperatives might require a president to submit to compulsory judicial process. A defendant in a criminal case has a constitutional right to confront the evidence against him and must be able to command production of that evidence, even if it is in the hands of the president.

On the other hand, a prosecutor also has a strong claim to evidence essential to the enforcement of criminal statutes. While the president's presumptive privilege against compulsive testimony would be entitled to considerable deference, that claim could be overcome if the prosecutor makes a strong showing that he must have specific essential evidence that is not procurable from other sources and that he is not simply engaged in a fishing expedition.

As things currently stand, Mueller has made no application to a court for a subpoena to the president based on showing a need for specific evidence



essential to his prosecution and not available from other sources. News sources have published a long list of subjects said to be of interest to the special counsel, but these subjects, if they are, indeed, coming from Mueller's office, are in many cases vague, open-ended and highly generalized—all the earmarks of casting a very wide net to see what might be snared. He's going to have to do better than that—the usual open-ended general subpoenas won't work.

One might imagine based on news reports that Mueller has made or will make a formal request for face-to-face testimony by the president. If so, the president's lawyers might conceivably advise Trump not to agree to anything like that unless accompanied by a specific commitment from Mueller that the interview would be short, limited,

intended simply to wrap up loose ends, part of the process necessary to conclude his investigation, and not intended to be used as a basis for gathering incriminating evidence. Mueller, presumably, would not be inclined to make any such commitments. He may, at that point, proceed with a grand jury subpoena.

Acting on the advice of his lawyers, the president could refuse to comply with the subpoena. Mueller could then go to the court seeking an order compelling compliance with the subpoena accompanied by a threat that the president would be held to be in contempt of court if he continued to refuse.

At this point, the judge would probably require Mueller to show precisely what he wants from the president, why he needs it, why he cannot get the evidence elsewhere, and the importance of that evidence to a specific prosecution. Mueller would have to be highly specific and show that his need for the president's testimony as a witness—not for the purpose of discovery—was necessary to prosecute specific criminal acts. If the court was convinced by the Mueller showing, it could order the president to comply. And that decision could be appealed by the president to the Supreme Court.

If the Supreme Court affirmed an order compelling the president's testimony, President Trump and his lawyers could then decide whether to cooperate, compromise in some fashion, submit to the grand jury, refuse to testify based on his Fifth Amendment rights, or simply refuse and prepare for an impeachment battle.

The importance of all this to the president is that it is unlikely that he can be forced to give grand jury testimony simply to satisfy Mueller's curiosity and submit to a potential perjury trap. He could, in short, put Mueller to his proof—make Mueller show that the president's testimony was necessary to prosecute someone else. And that such evidence could not be obtained elsewhere. That is a high bar, indeed, and one that at this point Mueller has not shown he would be able to surmount. ♦

THOMAS FLUHARTY

# Manafort Goes to the Mattresses

His legal arguments are tenuous, but they may be enough to convince the president. **BY ANDREW EGGER**



*Paul Manafort leaves federal court in Washington, D.C., April 19.*

Things look grimmer by the day for Paul Manafort. Thanks to special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation, President Trump’s former campaign manager has been charged with a wide array of crimes related to his years of work as a consultant for pro-Russian political factions in Ukraine. Prosecutors allege that Manafort was paid millions for this work and then conspired to hide those profits from U.S. authorities by laundering them through “scores of United States and foreign corporations, partnerships, and bank accounts.”

But with his back against the wall, Manafort, 69, has shown no inclination to give up the fight. The focus of his attacks is Mueller’s far-flung probe

into the Trump campaign and Russian election meddling, calling into question not only the charges brought against him but also the special counsel’s authority to bring them at all. It’s a tenuous legal argument, but Manafort may not need to convince a judge. His reasoning might just be enough to convince President Trump.

Legally speaking, Paul Manafort’s darkest day was February 23. That was when his longtime business associate and criminal codefendant Rick Gates agreed to cooperate with Mueller’s investigation. Prosecutors already possessed a detailed record of the various corporations and accounts through which, they alleged, Manafort laundered his Ukrainian earnings. With Gates on board to fill in the gaps, it was straightforward to translate that record into a compelling narrative of financial misconduct. Most commentators

thought Manafort was finished. “I think it is going to be almost impossible for Paul Manafort to go to trial if Rick Gates is a witness against him,” CNN legal analyst Jeffrey Toobin said. “This is a very document-heavy case. This is a case about abundant offshore bank accounts. How Paul Manafort could explain those while Gates is saying this whole thing was a corrupt enterprise, I think it is almost impossible. And I think the odds of Manafort now pleading guilty and cooperating just went way, way up.”

Manafort, though, opted to fight back with a barrage of procedural objections. His arguments can be summarized thus: Numerous government leaks intended to smear Manafort have made it difficult for him to receive a fair trial. Investigators violated his rights by conducting unreasonable searches and seizures at his home and storage lockers thanks to overly broad warrants. And, most crucially, the charges against him have nothing to do with the 2016 election, and thus Mueller has no jurisdiction to bring charges against him at all. Manafort’s defenders dispute any idea that all these procedural objections are tantamount to an admission of guilt. They argue, instead, that it’s only to get him to flip on Trump that Mueller bothered to bring charges against Manafort at all.

On this last issue, it looked for a moment like Manafort had caught a break on May 4. Judge T.S. Ellis, who is presiding over one of the Manafort cases, scolded prosecutors for having ulterior motives: “You don’t really care about Mr. Manafort’s bank fraud. You really care about getting information that Mr. Manafort can give you that would reflect on Mr. Trump and lead to his prosecution or impeachment or whatever.” (Manafort, confusingly, is fighting some financial charges before Ellis’s court in the eastern district of Virginia, while the indictments for conspiracy, failure to register as a foreign agent, and money laundering are being tried in D.C.’s district court.)

Meanwhile, external skepticism of Mueller’s broad mandate is on the rise as well. On May 13, Steven

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AL DRAGO / BLOOMBERG / GETTY

Calabresi, a cofounder of the Federalist Society and a former official in the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, argued in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed that Mueller lacked the constitutional authority to charge Manafort. “Judge Ellis should dismiss the indictment against Mr. Manafort on Appointments Clause grounds,” Calabresi wrote. “All other defendants Mr. Mueller charges, and witnesses he subpoenas, should challenge the constitutionality of his actions on Appointments Clause grounds.”

Unfortunately for Manafort, the presiding judge in his other federal trial disagreed, rejecting the motion to dismiss the charges and asserting in no uncertain terms that the prosecution has been conducted within the bounds of Mueller’s mandate from deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein. “Given the combination of his prominence within the campaign and his ties to Ukrainian officials supported by and operating out of Russia, as well as to Russian oligarchs, Manafort was an obvious person of interest,” Amy Berman Jackson wrote. “Given what was being said publicly, the Special Counsel would have been remiss to ignore such an obvious potential link between the Trump campaign and the Russian government.” Judge Ellis will likely take his D.C. counterpart’s ruling into consideration in his own deliberations. And even if Ellis were to throw out Manafort’s Virginia trial, the D.C. charges carry a sentence of 15 to 20 years in prison.

So why not flip like Gates? Manafort might not have the luxury. He “won’t have leverage to substantially reduce his own sentence through a plea deal unless he can point the prosecutors further up the chain,” says Sol Wisenberg, who served as deputy independent counsel during the Clinton Whitewater investigation. “A Manafort guilty plea that only admits to the charges against him would not substantially help Manafort. ... He would still spend substantial time in prison. Unless Manafort can give Mueller information about Trump or others in the Trump orbit, he’s unlikely to

get anywhere near as good of a deal as Gates is getting.”

Which means Manafort has to be hoping that someone gets Mueller before Mueller gets him.

“If Trump were to either attempt to fire Mueller or to fire Rosenstein, I think the reality is that the charges against Manafort would go away. Mueller’s the person who brought the case, so that case would be dismissed, because he would no longer be bringing it,” says former federal prosecutor John Malcolm. “It is theoretically possible that another U.S. attorney’s office could re-indict the case and pursue those charges ... but the most likely

**‘Unless Manafort can give Mueller information about Trump or others in the Trump orbit,’ says Sol Wisenberg, deputy independent counsel during the Clinton Whitewater investigation, ‘he’s unlikely to get anywhere near as good of a deal as [Rick] Gates is getting.’ Which means Manafort has to be hoping that someone gets Mueller before Mueller gets him.**

scenario is that the case would go away, because I doubt that another federal prosecutor would pick that up.”

In this respect, too, Manafort has gotten a little lucky. After months of uneasy peace, Trump has recently reaimed his rhetorical guns at Mueller’s investigation—ever since federal agents raided the offices of the president’s personal attorney, Michael Cohen, on April 9, in what Trump called “a disgraceful situation,” “a witch hunt,” and “an attack on our country.” The raid alarmed some congressional Republicans, too. Kentucky senator Rand Paul called it “a great overstep ... in the authority of the prosecutor.”

The White House has long insisted that Trump has the authority to fire Mueller, and the president certainly hasn’t ruled it out: “Why don’t I just fire Mueller? Well, I think it’s a disgrace what’s going on,” he said April 9. “We’ll see what happens.”

Some of Manafort’s court filings seem to have been written to advance and inflame the wider Trumpworld narratives of a special prosecutor run amok. Many echo the president’s fascination with government leaks. Or take the April 30 filing that complains that “the special counsel has not produced any materials to the defense—no tapes, notes, transcripts, or other material evidencing surveillance or intercepts of communications between Mr. Manafort and Russian intelligence officials.” It is, of course, unsurprising that Mueller has no such evidence to turn over, given that he has not charged Manafort with any crimes related to communicating with Russians. But Trump-positive media took up the story and slotted it into the broader narrative of a “leaky Mueller probe” scheming to spin criminal convictions out of thin air. Manafort’s lawyers all continue to repeat the White House’s central refrain: “There is no evidence that Mr. Manafort or the Trump campaign colluded with the Russian government.”

Although he has distanced himself from Manafort, the president has taken at least passing notice of all this. After Judge Ellis chewed out Mueller’s team on May 4, the president gleefully piled on, calling the investigation a “disgrace” and praising Ellis as “really something very special” during a speech to the National Rifle Association convention. Trump added that Manafort was a “nice guy” and said, “I truly believe he’s a good person.”

If Trump’s suspicion of Mueller continues to grow, it’s far from impossible that he would act to help Manafort—either directly by means of a pardon, or by putting the special counsel out of a job. It’s a long shot. But Paul Manafort didn’t get where he is today by playing a conservative hand. ♦

# The Killa in Manila

*The deadly police tactics, insulting oratory, anti-Americanism, and overwhelming popularity of Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte*

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

*Manila*

In the days before local elections in the Philippines in early May, the government of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte released a list of 200 neighborhood officials involved in the drug trade. It is not a list anyone would want to wind up on. Duterte came to power in a landslide two years ago, promising to wage a war on drugs. He did not use “war” as a metaphor. “You destroy our country, I’ll kill you,” Duterte said as his presidency began. “You destroy our children, I’ll kill you.”

An addict, as Duterte views things, will betray his loved ones to find money for his dealer. Often he will become a dealer himself, drawing young innocents into the maelstrom of addiction. Small-time users, not just big-time pushers, are targets for aggressive police operations. A bloodbath has resulted. Last August, the government’s “One-Time Bigtime” busts left 52 dead in one night. By the turn of this year, 4,075 people had died in anti-drug operations, according to the government. But that does not include thousands more killings tallied up by human-rights organizations and investigative journalists. These have been carried out by masked men and pairs of assassins on motorbikes. Whether the killers are out-of-uniform policemen silencing witnesses to their own corruption or neighborhood hoodlums using the drug war as a cover to settle scores, the violence has been immense.

Drug addicts have surrendered en masse and asked for treatment. A 10 P.M. curfew has been introduced for teenagers. Lowering the age of adult responsibility in criminal prosecutions from 15 to 9 has been proposed. Those who have wound up on lists like the one Duterte released

in May have fared poorly. Melvin Odicta and his wife, the drug bosses of the provincial city of Iloilo who had built a reputation as local Robin Hoods and lived in a mansion surrounded by mendicants and squatters, were singled out by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency. After traveling to Manila to try to clear their names, they were assassinated by a mysterious gunman as they stepped off a ferry. Months after Duterte placed him on a list of corrupt officials, the mayor of Albuera, Rolando Espinosa, was shot dead in jail.

From outside the Philippines, there is an obvious question: If you think government leaders are corrupt, why not

just arrest them and bring them to trial? Inside the Philippines, the question answers itself: Because government leaders are corrupt. They cannot be trusted to clean their own stables. Duterte can. The six-million vote plurality that Duterte won in an insurgent campaign against the country’s political establishment mobilized what political scientist Aries Arugay calls a “cross-class coalition of conservative Filipinos, overseas labor migrants, the educated middle class, the urban poor, and informal workers.” Since his May 2016



*Duterte passing honor guards*

election, the president’s approval rating has never been far from 80 percent, and his drug war is an important element of his popularity. According to a detailed poll carried out last year by Manila-based Social Weather Stations, voters approved of the drug war 77-14.

*Shabu*, the lab-made drug that Americans know as crystal methamphetamine, is common in the warrens of corrugated iron and cinderblocks where a lot of the country’s urban poor have squatted. It renders its users alert, euphoric, and sometimes psychotic. Other street kids have come to be known as “Rugby boys,” not because they studied under Thomas Arnold but because the rubber cement that they sniff out of plastic baggies bears that trade name. Crime has spread along with drugs. Those who live in the walkable neighborhoods of Quezon City, near the big

NOEL CELIS / AFP / GETTY

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universities, have pooled their money to purchase road gates. These allow their (de jure) public streets to be sealed off as (de facto) gated communities once night falls. Certainly the press does not stint on stories of drug violence. Whenever you read in the tabloids about a family held hogtied for days or the murder of a child or a pile of bodies thrown into a rice paddy, *shabu* plays a big role.

And yet it is not clear that Filipinos actually see drug use as that serious a problem. The political pollsters at Pulse Asia ask voters every election season about their top five concerns, and drugs have never made the list. That's hardly surprising in a country where a quarter of the population lives hand-to-mouth. The pollsters at Social Weather Stations register high approval for the drug war in general. People think it is making their neighborhoods safer. But they also fear that their family members will get killed and are almost unanimous in their preference that suspects be captured alive rather than murdered. Half worry that violent people are using the drug war as a cover for settling grudges. Finally, Filipinos are skeptical of police claims about how often suspects are shot resisting arrest. Their skepticism is warranted: The ratio of suspects killed to police killed in Filipino drug operations is 223 to 1. In the United States it is 9 to 1.

The closer one looks at it, the more it seems that the war on drugs is only a symbol of some ulterior real predicament and of citizens' resolve to accept desperate and brutal measures to get out of it. This predicament may have something to do with the position the country occupies in the global economy.

The Philippines is scenic and sympathetic. It is also squalid, unequal, and impoverished. Certain neighborhoods of Manila—Makati, Ortigas, Bonifacio Global City, and the restaurant areas and malls near the university neighborhood of Katipunan—are outposts of Internet Age capitalism. You could walk for several blocks believing you are in a nice part of Los Angeles. The economy is growing at 6.8 percent a year, but these neighborhoods, and similar ones in Cebu and Davao, seem to get all of it. Elsewhere, in what the rich sometimes refer to as the bowels of the city, tricycle-drivers and street sweepers make about \$10 a week (that is the minimum wage) and buy their provisions from rickety roadside “sari-sari” stores in sachet-sized quantities: a mango or a teaspoon of instant coffee here, a cigarette there. The country has grown from 30 million people in the 1970s to more than 100 million now. Manila has 15 million of them. Its public transportation consists of two sporadically functioning train lines, which are so overcrowded that to preclude indecencies, the front car, or the front two, must be reserved for women. For most of the day, traffic makes the city nearly impassable. People are trapped in their neighborhoods, however nice some of them may

be, as surely as they would have been in the days before the internal combustion engine.

## HERE COMES THE MAYOR

There is no world leader quite like Duterte, but in his special claim to run a country being drawn at lightning speed into modernity, he bears a resemblance to Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, who also made the leap from big-city mayor to maximum leader. As Erdogan once was in Istanbul, Duterte was an extraordinary boss of Davao, the largest city on the vast and violent island of Mindanao. Duterte is political royalty there—his father was a governor of the province of Davao. When Duterte himself became mayor in 1988, Davao City was one of the most violent places in Southeast Asia—racked by both the New People's Army (the Maoist armed wing of the Philippine Communist party) and radical Islamic terrorism. Islam moved through Indonesia to what is now the southern Philippines centuries ago, and Muslims make up 5 percent of the population. Most of them live just west of Davao and many want self-determination and even independence. Last year ISIS-inspired guerrillas took over the city of Marawi and were rooted out only after the army and air force waged a Stalingrad-style house-to-house campaign of urban warfare that killed hundreds. Muslims have brought their war to Davao with terror attacks, and Manila's malls will remind Israelis of home, with bag-opening guards at the doorways of coffeehouses and sneaker stores.

That is the secret of Duterte's electoral success. Over two decades, at a time when Davao was doubling in size to over 1.5 million, Duterte transformed the city from a Third World hellhole into a pleasant place for a law-abiding person to live—even a business hub. He pulled this off by mixing wiles and ruthlessness, offering Muslims and Communists financial incentives to carry their campaigns elsewhere and threatening them with retribution should they not. Many human rights groups hold him responsible for about 1,000 unsolved killings during his tenure, carried out by shadowy assailants who came to be called the Davao Death Squad.

Duterte is immensely proud of this record. He still likes to be called “mayor.” He is proud, too, of his mixed Mindanaoan background, with a Chinese grandfather and a grandmother descended from Muslim Maranaos. Having won the presidency on his promise to replicate Davao's success at the national level, he brought to Manila his trusted Davao political machine, including the thus far highly successful finance secretary Carlos Dominguez and the somewhat less successful justice secretary Vitalicio Aguirre, since replaced. He put three Communists in his cabinet.

Rough though his methods may have been, Duterte had a modern and highly progressive idea of what an orderly city looked like. For one thing it was under surveillance by

hundreds of closed-circuit cameras. For another it didn't have smoking. Duterte paid a heavy price for his own youthful smoking. He limps from Buerger's disease and has a severe case of Barrett's esophagus. He often chews gum to mitigate the pain and has said he took fentanyl after a fall several years ago. (He later claimed to have been joking.) Davao passed the first smoking ban in the Philippines in 2002, with fines so steep that passengers on flights landing in Davao were warned about them. Duterte was even said to have forced a tourist to eat a cigarette he tried to smoke. He has since extended a ban on smoking to public places nationwide. Duterte is open to medical marijuana, gay marriage, and divorce, which Philippine law presently bans. He is obsessed with climate change in the country at large, and alludes to it in all his economic-development projects. Just as controversial domestically as his anti-drug crusade is his plan to phase out old-fashioned "jeepneys," the colorful minibuses that serve as poor people's transportation throughout the country.

### AGAINST ELITISM

Because he speaks with an unpredictability and bluntness that sometimes cracks people up and sometimes embarrasses his countrymen, Duterte has been called an Asian Donald Trump. At certain points in his 2017 State of the Nation speech, his sign-language translator was laughing too hard to go on. Speaking to a group of former Communist rebels he had invited to the Malacañang presidential palace in February, he joked that if one shot female guerrillas in the *bisong* (a term in his native Visayan language), they would be useless to the cause. It was arguably a subtle and *anti*-sexist remark, exposing the subordinate position of women even in leftist insurgencies, but the impression left was ghastly.

Like Trump, Duterte the orator sometimes likes to drift and wing it. But he is also a trained prosecutor with a vast English vocabulary and a gift for oratorical parallelisms. In this he is more like, say, Viktor Orbán of Hungary, capable of laying out convincingly the ideology in the name of which he and his followers demand justice and the grounds on which his dastardly adversaries are seeking to thwart him.

Chief among these is elitism. To use the term "1 percent" to describe the four dozen families who have dominated the Filipino economy and politics for the past century would grossly overestimate the degree to which money and power is spread. These families thrived after Americans drove out the Japanese occupiers in 1945 and for a quarter-century thereafter held a lock on the system that the historian Benedict Anderson called "cacique democracy." The same families' sons and daughters kept turning up on top. It was partly to bring them to heel that the broad public backed Ferdinand Marcos when he transformed his

elected presidency into a "constitutional authoritarian" one in 1972. It was the same families that led the opposition to Marcos when his government degenerated into a kleptocracy. Benigno Aquino was shot dead when he arrived at Manila airport from his Cambridge exile in 1983, but three years later his wife Corazon (née Cojuangco), scion of the wealthiest family in the country, led mass demonstrations on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) that laid the groundwork for 30 years of democracy.

Dutertism is the claim, usually implicit, that that democracy was a sham, more procedural than real, and



A boy shouts support for Duterte at an election rally in early 2016.

that it did nothing to make the lives of the poor better. And Duterte's is not the first post-Marcos attempt to bring the Manila rich to heel. The blunt-spoken action-film star Joseph "Erap" Estrada, who won a presidential landslide in 1998 on the strength of similar arguments, was the real Filipino parallel to Trump. He was brave in identifying corruption in the capital but not patient or purposeful enough to fortify himself against it. The establishment he had maligned ate him for lunch. Arriving with no understanding of the rules of political warfare, he lived in a grand style that he associated with Filipino statesmanship but failed to secure sympathetic judges on the supreme court, which brazenly removed him from office. It appeared at the time that "the public" had lost faith in Estrada—the marches held against him were called "People Power II"—but this was a manufactured appearance. We can tell because Estrada made a strong bid to return to the presidency in 2010, finishing second, and was elected mayor of Manila in 2013.

Duterte knows his way around better. Without being a member of the Manila elite, a mayor of Davao naturally develops a certain familiarity with it through decades of managing visits, lining up infrastructure projects, and

delivering votes. Unmarried, childless, gnomish, Benigno “Noy” Aquino, son of the makers of the EDSA revolution and president from 2010-16, did not present that elite’s most charismatic face. His priorities were progressivism and globalization, in that order, which put him in sync with the Obama White House. Aquino passed a sex-ed and family-planning bill, called the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 (though it was largely blocked by the country’s still-powerful Catholic hierarchy).



Nanette Castillo grieves over the body of her son Aldrin, an alleged drug user killed by unidentified assailants, in Manila on October 3, 2017.

He removed restrictions on the full foreign ownership of Philippine banks. To the public he came off as feckless. He resolved to quit smoking as an example to other Filipinos—and failed. A rumor spread that he was a video-game addict, and he never managed to shake it. When he smiled inappropriately during a hostage crisis that resulted in the death of a busload of Hong Kong tourists, when he failed to show up for the return of soldiers’ bodies to a military airbase, his foes implied he was probably sitting around in his pajamas, chain-smoking and rattling the buttons of his Nintendo console.

And increasingly he was accused of corruption. The Priority Development Assistance Fund permitted congressmen, provided they had presidential sanction, to access government funds with no accountability and no strings attached. Everyone called it “pork barrel,” but in theory it might have been a useful way to cut through red tape and carry out important projects. In practice, an operator named Janet Napoles was setting up ghost corporations to capture disbursements and, in some cases, to funnel them back to the same politicians who proposed them. After Aquino allies impeached supreme court chief justice Renato Corona for corruption, pork-barrel funds were reportedly offered to senators who voted to convict him. Once Corona had been

ousted, Aquino broke the tradition of appointing the court’s most senior judge and nominated a loyalist fledgling, Maria Lourdes Sereno. The supreme court, under strong urging from Duterte, who called himself Sereno’s “enemy,” removed her from office in mid-May.

In the Philippines as in the United States, the separation of powers has begun to break down. Duterte has set his sights on discrediting not just the country’s elites but also all the institutions that can be accused of doing their bidding. This starts with the Catholic church. Duterte has claimed credibly to have been sexually abused by an American Jesuit during confession when he was 14 or 15. Since the church is a leading foe of his war on drugs, he recurs to this story—and to the supposedly lavish lives the church’s priests lead—quite frequently. In late April, Duterte expelled the Australian nun Patricia “Sister Pat” Fox, who had been resident in the country for decades, on the grounds that she had violated her missionary visa by attending a protest against extrajudicial killings in the drug war. “At least here, I am killing criminals,” Duterte said. “How about you?” He accused her of treating the Philippines like a doormat.

In such incidents it can seem as if *Tu quoque* were Duterte’s middle name. His supporters like him for it. People in the Philippines carry an enormous chip on their shoulders about sovereignty, not just from their status as a Spanish and then American colony from the 16th century until World War II but also from their crypto-colonial status for decades after the war. The Philippines has a lot of laws intended to protect the country from inadvertently letting its self-rule slip through its hands, or to keep elites from selling it off. There is a law against foreigners engaging in politics, under which Sister Pat got booted. There is a law against foreigners controlling banks, which Aquino got rid of. And there is a law against foreigners taking ownership of press institutions, which Duterte has skillfully used as a cudgel against his critics.

The *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, traditionally the country’s top newspaper, and *Rappler*, the country’s most informative online news site, have both fallen afoul of him. *PDI* kept a running total of deaths in the drug war (or tried to, until access to crime scenes became difficult) and published hard-hitting cover photos, including one of a woman cradling her dead boyfriend that Duterte compared to a pietà. Its owners, the Prieto family, threatened with jail by Duterte for violating the country’s “plunder” laws, last year sold their interest in the paper to Ramon Ang, the magnate who makes San Miguel beer. Ang is a Duterte supporter.

*Rappler*, run by CNN’s former bureau chief Maria Ressa, is the most modern news source in the country. Since he took power, Duterte has banned *Rappler*’s top reporter from the Malacañang palace, and financial authorities are

IMAGES: NOEL CELIS / AFP / GETTY

prosecuting *Rappler* for an “unconstitutional Philippine depositary receipt provision.” It involves moneys from the Omidyar Network Fund LLC, an investment company set up by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, an American, which is therefore said to violate the law against foreign ownership. The case is making its way through the courts.

Duterte was the first candidate in the country to master social media, and there was a lot of it in the last campaign. (“Even the Pope admires Duterte,” ran one quite false post.) Today, many of the country’s top bloggers are Duterte diehards, like the “30-ish-year-old Filipino citizen journalist” R.J. Nieto, who blogs under the name Thinking Pinoy (the Filipino word for Filipino) and describes himself as “crazily patriotic, almost a nut job.” Nieto is described by his adversaries as one of the worst practitioners of “fake news.” But of course dissent from conventional wisdom is not the same thing as dishonesty. As in the United States, the outrage over fake news often depends on blurring that distinction.

Duterte, who for decades was the law in Davao but a bit player at the national level, is an unusual actor in national politics. He is a person with a great deal of inside information about ruling-class secrets but not much concern that anything might be revealed about himself. That Duterte darkly insinuates a given politician has been involved with drugs or has had an affair with her limousine driver is not a *prima facie* reason to believe that it is not true. For now, his supporters believe him. This has something to do with the modest size of his house in Davao: In a country where a certain grandiosity is often considered necessary to signal power, he lives simply.

But like any reforming politician, he faces a great tautology. The tool at hand to reform a corrupt state is a corrupt state. This is especially the case with his drug war. Year in, year out, as Columbia journalism professor Sheila Coronel noted in a recent essay, the Philippine National Police (PNP) get rated one of the most corrupt parts of society. They are the *source* of drugs in many neighborhoods. They hire assassins. They collect under-the-table commissions from funeral parlors when they drop off the bodies of the people they have killed. And Duterte’s drug war, Coronel writes, “was possible only because the PNP was a ready, willing, and able killing machine.” On at least two occasions, police violence and corruption have wound up the main obstacle to the continued prosecution of the war on drugs. Early last year, South Korean businessman Jee Ick-Joo was kidnapped by Manila’s police and garroted in the back seat of a parked car inside the snazzy new police headquarters at Camp Crame. Jee’s sin, it seems, was not just refusing to pay protection money to the police officers

keeping tabs on his office—but also counseling his fellow Korean businessmen not to pay it either.

After that episode, Duterte called the police “corrupt to the core” and suspended them from participating in the war on drugs for several weeks. He did something similar last August when police were captured on camera dragging away a teenager named Kian delos Santos in the northern Manila neighborhood of Caloocan, moments before they executed him. In both cases, Duterte’s pique was temporary, and the



*A Manila police officer draws his gun during a house-to-house campaign against illegal drugs, October 6, 2016.*

police were soon back on the front lines. At the very least Duterte considers the police part of his political “base.”

But there is a darker theory of the role of the police, one put forward by political theorist and Philippine senator Walden Bello. In this view, the violence of the drug war is a part of a march to dictatorship. “The strategic aim of the [extrajudicial-killing] campaign is not to win the war on drugs,” Bello wrote recently. “It is to promote a broader authoritarian agenda by establishing a climate of intimidation and fear that will make the destruction of democratic political institutions and political rights and their remaking in an authoritarian direction a ‘walk in the park.’” In this context, it must be noted that the pique of the *public*, too, has been temporary. According to Coronel, the Philippine Congress has greatly augmented a “presidential intelligence fund,” which allows the paying of rewards to police officers for drug seizures.

There is something deep-seated, you could even say anthropological, about the Philippine people’s support for the drug war. It involves the special meaning loyalty has in Philippine society and culture and the special way it is lived out. People are strikingly deferential to the prevailing mood. You could call this an admirable spirit of cooperation or a deplorable conformism. It simplifies the task of

building national unity but makes the maintenance of an ordinary party system difficult. Duterte ran in 2016 under the banner of PDP-Laban, a merger of two parties that had risen to fight the Marcos dictatorship in the 1980s. The party won just 3 seats in the 297-seat Congress, but once it became apparent Duterte would win the presidency, half of the former ruling party, the Liberals, defected to it, making PDP-Laban, with 114 seats, by far the largest party in Congress. This is a democracy that social conventions render



*A likeness of Duterte as Hitler leads a Manila protest against the imposition of martial law in Mindanao and extrajudicial killings, July 24, 2017.*

capable of behaving like an autocracy. Representatives can turn like a school of fish.

Other collectivist societies, whether Western ones in Scandinavia (with their “Jante laws”) or Eastern ones on the Asian mainland (with their “Asian values”), tend to have a gift for organization and direction. Not so the Philippines. Order tends to be imposed from without. Where it is not, society’s institutions tend to implode. Filipinos often explain the livelier aspects of their street life—hundreds of thousands surging through the narrow alleys of the neighborhood of Quiapo every January 9, for instance, to attend the Feast of the Black Nazarene—by saying, “We don’t have parks.” And aside from the Rizal park near the old Spanish capital, they don’t. How could they? They don’t really have sidewalks, either. In a dirt-poor part of a big city, any eight-foot-wide stretch of concrete next to a flow of traffic is too valuable to leave to pedestrians—so the sidewalks are blocked by sari-sari stands and parked cars, leaving the people to walk on the highway.

In such a situation, a strong and sincere feeling can develop on the part of the Filipino public that we would all be better off if someone told us what to do, and what we need to do is cut the crap. Singapore’s prime minister Lee Kwan Yew, whose authoritarian leadership is credited (rightly or not) with quadrupling his country’s per capita GDP between

1960 and 1990, used to paint pictures of how much his countrymen could achieve if they could only work together. When he tried to paint pictures of what would happen if they *didn’t* work together, the Philippines were the country he obsessed over, admiring their people as much as he deplored their government: “Something had gone seriously wrong,” he wrote. “Filipino professionals whom we recruited to work in Singapore are as good as our own. Indeed, their architects, artists, and musicians are more artistic and creative than ours. . . . The difference lies in the culture of the Filipino people. It is a soft, forgiving culture.”

As the promises of democratization made after the overthrow of Marcos in 1986 have gone unfulfilled, the reputation of Marcos himself has risen in a way that would shock anyone who has been away from the country for a few decades. In the 2016 elections that brought Duterte to power, the late dictator’s son Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (known as “Bongbong”) was only narrowly defeated for the vice-presidency, a defeat he continues to appeal in the courts. Months after taking office, Duterte authorized the reburial of Marcos in Libingan ng mga Bayani, the country’s heroes’ cemetery, in what was once Fort McKinley.

Duterte is sick of People Power and the way it is reminisced over every year at the end of February. “I do not have to repeat the EDSA revolution every day before breakfast,” he said to Al Jazeera in a postelection interview. He has let the last two anniversaries pass wholly uncommemorated. In retrospect, the EDSA revolution of 1986 represents not just a moment of liberation but the installation of a new and optimistic moral system built in America’s image: It brought to power the Aquino family, which had spent years in exile in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It introduced emulative pro-Americanism as an alternative to Marcos’s use of the country’s Cold War strategic geography to shake down the U.S. government. It scaled down the U.S. military infrastructure that had metastasized during the Vietnam war. It entrusted the country’s future to its rich businessmen. In a way, the 1986 Philippines revolution looks like a founding event of the post-Cold War world, a harbinger of the transformation of 1989. Its repudiation today may be the sign of something major.

### AMERICA, CHINA, AND THE PHILIPPINES

Duterte belongs to an in-between generation of Filipino leaders—too young to have come to pro-Americanism during World War II and too old to have come to it in the Internet Age. Feelings about the United States have always been ambivalent in the Philippines. On one hand, the United States short-circuited the country’s revolution in the Spanish-American War and has repressed one independence movement after another, from

J GERARD SEGUIA / PACIFIC PRESS / LIGHTROCKET / GETTY

the anti-Spanish Katipunan rebels at the end of the 19th century to the anti-Japanese Hukbalahap insurgents who kept fighting after World War II. On the other hand the United States introduced democracy, set up the country's educational infrastructure, and fought side by side to oust the Japanese.

Duterte considers the upside of this narrative baloney. "Had [the Americans] not been here in the Philippines, there would have been no Second World War for us," he said in 2016. "The enemies came because they were here in the first place." He raises Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan whenever the subject of American hegemony comes up ("I have yet to hear an apology") and adds a remembrance of the early-20th-century massacres at Bud Dajo and Bud Bag-sak in Sulu before World War I.

The Philippines can seem to Filipinos like a kind of international punching bag. Duterte spends much of his time defining and defending his country's dignity. His cabinet has attacked the French drug multinational Sanofi, which made an arrangement with the Aquino administration to use the Philippines for human trials of a new vaccine against dengue fever, common in the tropics, even though France's own tropical territories would not permit the drug to be tested there. Children sickened and

died. The Philippine island of Boracay is reputed to have the best beaches on the planet, and since 2010 its intake of visitors has tripled, to 2 million visitors, almost all of them foreigners. Its resorts were built before anyone thought to construct a modern sewage system, though, and in April Duterte ordered the island closed, pending a cleanup. At the same time, Duterte signed an agreement with a Macau firm to build a half-billion-dollar casino on Boracay.

The Philippines will soon be a bigger country than Japan, but its growth is so poorly distributed that jobs are perennially lacking, and economic planners must seek them where they can. The country is dependent on call-center and manufacturing jobs offshored from the United States and Europe, and on remittances from the millions of Filipinos who work around the world, who in 2010 accounted for \$21.3 billion, or 12 percent of the country's GDP. There are almost 2 million of them in the United States.

Duterte wants to be the protector and guarantor of these overseas workers. In February, the corpse of a Filipina maid was found in a freezer in an abandoned apartment in Kuwait. It was not the first such outrage. In December 2014 another maid had died after being mauled by her Kuwaiti boss's pet lion. The Filipinos who go to the Middle East as teachers and office workers can keep their phones and

## The Path Forward for U.S.-China Trade

**THOMAS J. DONOHUE**

PRESIDENT AND CEO  
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The trade relationship between the U.S. and China has been in the spotlight in recent weeks. The two countries have an enormous impact on each other's economies, trading more than \$700 billion worth of goods and services every year. Much of that trade benefits small and midsize businesses throughout the U.S.

Amid all the business our nations conduct, there are bound to be issues of contention and disagreement. This is especially true given the gap between America's model of free enterprise and China's model of state capitalism. Nonetheless, it's important that we agree on a common set of rules for the global economy and international trade—and then live by them. These rules must ensure that both of our economies can compete on a level playing field.

Significant progress must come

soon, and it must be visible. China needs to make faster and more serious progress on market reforms and in establishing a transparent, level playing field based on the rule of law. The U.S. has serious concerns regarding a range of Chinese government policies and practices, including restricting access to its market, conditional participation in the market on technology transfer, and other regulatory measures that seek to undermine the value of U.S.-held intellectual property.

By the same token, our government must recognize what the business community knows full well: that an escalating series of unilateral tariffs is counterproductive. We don't think it makes sense to penalize our own workers, consumers, and companies in the name of saving them from unfair competition. The focus must be on opening markets, eliminating subsidies, and ending regulations that are increasingly designed to frustrate competition.

Mutually beneficial commercial deals can and must continue to be

successfully negotiated, even as we confront challenges. Further, American leadership in international economic and security affairs requires us to address these issues with China, and China's leaders will not shy away from offering their perspectives in return. As the two most powerful nations on earth, we have shared responsibilities to foster global peace, prosperity, and stability.

The commercial issues before us today are important, and we should take them seriously. But we can work through them—not all of them overnight, but certainly over time. Our goal must be to secure near-term progress on as many of the systemic issues as possible so that we can regain the positive momentum in U.S.-China economic relations. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is ready to help preserve and expand our fruitful commercial links in a system that is open, level, and fair.



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passports. Those who go as maids and nannies cannot, and they get treated like dirt.

In the wake of these incidents, Duterte ordered a halt to labor migration to Kuwait until an agreement on working conditions could be negotiated. In April the Philippines embassy in Kuwait released a video of personnel going to homes where women had complained of mistreatment and rescuing them. It went viral. Swashbuckling defenses of the downtrodden foreign worker, the ability to thumb one's nose at tax-exempt human-rights foundations that would meddle in Filipino domestic affairs—these are among the fruits of what Duterte calls a “truly independent foreign policy.”

The issue is a winner. There are rich Filipinos and poor ones, but almost all of them have some relative working abroad in danger of being exploited. As of this spring, Filipinos approve of Duterte's policies on overseas workers by 84-4, according to Pulse Asia.

To put it mildly, though, there is a limit to the Philippines' ability to thumb its nose at the rest of the world. Were all its overseas workers to return home, their competition would drive down the wages of Filipinos, just as it does the wages of the laborers in the countries to which they travel.

At the start of Duterte's term, the Philippines won what looked like a crushing victory over China. During the Obama administration, the Chinese occupied Scarborough Shoal, a fish-rich Filipino reef 123 miles west of Subic Bay, and renamed it Democracy Reef. They built artificial islands for the landing of transport planes west of the Philippine island of Palawan. They began to express an interest in the mineral-rich Benham Rise, in the waters of the Pacific east of the Philippines. The Obama administration urged Aquino's government to respond by suing China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague (2015). At the start of Duterte's term, the court handed down its decision: Scarborough Shoal belongs to the Philippines, not China, under international law.

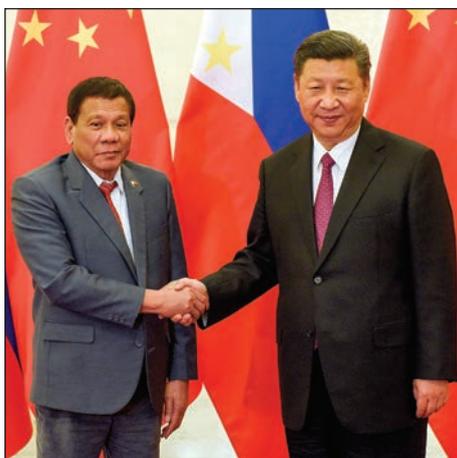
But Duterte has chosen not to contest China's occupation. Why not? When the question came up in late April, during a speech to Masons in Davao, Duterte answered that the moment to contest China's occupation had been when it happened and that this was something only the Obama administration could have done. “At the time, who could have stopped it?” he asked. “Tell me. Philippine Navy? Marines? There would have been a massacre.” Against

the American principle of international norms stands the Chinese principle of you-and-whose-army? Duterte prefers China. He has joked that when you meet Americans they give you water, but when you meet Chinese they give you a buffet. Duterte may also feel his country needs China more. Like Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia, the Philippines now exports more to China than to the United States.

For now, the Philippines and the United States each appear to be trying to milk the other. As Turkey has shown over the past decade, if a U.S. ally is in a pivotal enough strategic position, it can effectively renounce the alliance without much fear that the United States will come up with alternative strategic alignments and exclude it. “If there is trouble in Mindanao, if there's going to be a bloodbath,” Duterte said at that Masonic speech in Davao, “the nearest I could call, which I'm sure would come, would be China. Maybe America but because their Congress is so powerful that it can paralyze actually the presidency of America, unlike in countries where there is only one leader to reckon with.” For the moment, the Philippines, which signed a 10-year enhanced defense treaty with Washington in 2014, feels able to benefit from the U.S. military umbrella even

while denouncing it. At the same time, the United States has been resting on its laurels, as if its lectures on human rights and international law, so convincing on American think tank podia, were a sort of common sense that every country will inevitably choose to follow, even those at high risk of anarchy, subversion, exploitation, and military defeat. When popular demand brings leaders like Duterte to power, America risks being frozen out altogether.

Duterte has described his strategy for the coming years as “build, build, build.” His country needs train networks, roads, new factories, and mines for extracting its rich mineral resources. If its infrastructure building in the Horn of Africa is anything to go by, China will be more than willing to send its businessmen and engineers into the dangerous, conflict-scarred areas of Mindanao so close to heart of the Filipino strongman. These are projects the United States has long been disinclined to pursue. Under the circumstances, it would be natural if the Philippines looked increasingly towards China, which has made “build, build, build” the cornerstone of what it offers its allies, and less towards the United States, which in recent years has contented itself with “nag, nag, nag.”



*Duterte, left, with Chinese president Xi Jinping in Beijing, May 15, 2017*



*Charlie LeDuff anticipated all the problems that Trump's election made plain to the rest of us—then he fell into the Hole himself*

BY MATT LABASH

*Detroit*

**T**he last time I sat in the American Coney Island diner with my old compadre Charlie LeDuff, it's hard to remember precisely what we were doing. Maybe drinking beer—drinking always being on the itinerary during visits, as Charlie believes in upholding the sacred rites of our news-gathering forebears. Or perhaps we were eating Coney dogs, since that's what people do at Detroit's premier hot-dog emporium (celebrating over "100 years of awesome," as the T-shirts say), where proprietary franks are served on homemade steamer buns with chili-mustard-onions—always in that order, a sacrosanct childog liturgy.

What I do remember is that it was 2008, and things were different. Back then, Charlie used to hold court at the Coney, filming an online show for the *Detroit News* called "Hold the Onions." Now, at age 52, he is more likely to be asked to hold the onions himself, as he's working here. Not as a journalist, but as an employee: vacuuming the chessboard floor, shining the faux brass, doing the

books, swabbing grease fryers. But I'm getting ahead ...

A decade ago, I was here to write an elegy for dying Detroit. (Spoiler alert: It's still alive.) I hung with demoralized firemen who'd just lost a buddy under a collapsed roof in the arson capital of the country. They complained of ladders being stolen off their trucks, food being stolen off the firehouse table while they were out on calls—one even lamented that his car was stolen at their fallen comrade's wake. I went to Motown's old studio with soul legend and city councilwoman Martha Reeves, who told me of the time a mugger swiped her purse and dragged her 500 yards when she couldn't free her hand from the strap. I met a homeless gravedigger peddling used clothes in the street. He deliberately slept under a bridge with lots of traffic, so he wouldn't get thrown off an overpass, as he'd been a few months prior.

It was the usual Detroit joyride.

I saw the city through the prism of its bard, Charlie LeDuff, who after a decade-long run as a feature writer for the *New York Times* (he won a Pulitzer for a month-long stint working the swine-chopping line at a North Carolina slaughterhouse) had willingly punched out of the majors and headed back to the minors, returning to his hometown to work as a metro reporter for the ever-thinner *Detroit News*.

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TWS / MATT LABASH

At the *Times*, Charlie's beat had been covering what he called "the Hole," overlooked people in forgotten places. He'd manned the lobster shift at a Burger King and got himself smuggled over the border with Mexican migrants. While readers scarfed down his copy, editors blanched. One told him it was problematic that all he seemed to cover were "losers." Charlie figured he was in good company. Having long ago anticipated the problems that the 2008 crash, the dissipating middle class, and the Trumpian middle-finger-to-the-establishment would eventually make clear to the rest of us, Charlie knew he wasn't some deranged Cassandra, but more attuned to the news than his editors. He told his boss: "The country's 80 percent losers, and growing every day." With that, he turned in his walking papers and went home. In Detroit, nobody begrudged his documenting the wreckage, since wreckage seemed to be mostly what was left. As firefighter Mike Nevin, one of Charlie's recurring subjects, told me of the place that was once the incubator of working-class stability: "Hear the sirens? That's all day long. This is a city where the sirens never stop. It's like a forgotten secret. It's like a lost city."

Charlie sat in a broken chair in a half-empty newsroom depopulated by layoffs. But as the Lost City correspondent, he wrote like he was avenging a death. In a way, he was. It seemed like everyone he knew was falling into the Hole. The auto jobs had left town for the suburbs or Mexico. Foreclosed, burnt, and abandoned houses were everywhere—hurting a guy's eyes who grew up in a working-class neighborhood, the son of a flower-shop-owning mom who sported a raccoon coat. One of Charlie's brothers worked for a crack dealer named Death Cat. His sister had become a part-time hooker and died throwing herself from some crazy's car. His niece died of a heroin overdose shortly thereafter.

He took it all out on corrupt public "servants," of which Detroit's always had a parodic surfeit. (One city councilwoman demanded 17 pounds of sausage as part of her bribe.) He wrote of "dead flight," the living exhuming their dead to take them to the suburbs, where the cemeteries were safer. He found a body at the bottom of an elevator shaft in an abandoned building, frozen in ice, as ruin-crashers played pickup hockey nearby. The man had been there for weeks, his legs jutting out like popsicle sticks. Charlie wrote an acclaimed, bestselling book, *Detroit, An American Autopsy* (2013). *GQ* named him "Madman of the Year." He remade himself as a TV star, first for the local Fox affiliate, then roaming the country. He pumped out one-of-a-kind pieces of frenetic performance art under the title *The Americans*, which were syndicated to Fox stations across the nation, many of them becoming viral-video sensations. He might eat cat food on air to show how disgraceful Detroit's meals-on-wheels program had become—the city was procuring

grub from a prison contractor. He'd squat in a squatter's house or take a bath in someone else's while waiting for the cops to take their sweet old time after the resident called the police. He'd hit a golf ball all the way across the Detroit badlands, one drive after another, to illustrate the sprawling emptiness, and talk to all those living between its cracks.

He also blanketed the country, riding with the Klan in South Carolina and Bundy militiamen in Nevada, paddling around the Rio Grande in a blow-up kayak wearing a stars 'n' stripes banana-hammock to catch the attention of the coyotes transporting migrants to the promised land on jet skis, virtually unmolested. He was still minding the Hole. People used to dismiss or ignore it, but now even the pointy-heads and professional gasbags were declaring that more of us were falling into it, as the middle-class was no longer a majority for the first time in over four decades. Even as big cities grew shiny, happy, and gentrified, urban poverty was ripping into the suburbs like a rock thrown into a pond.

Charlie's method has always been controlled madness, a method that pays dividends. But the gonzo whirlwind he creates, sucking everyone into his vortex, has always been undergirded by moral seriousness. His writing, executed in the hardboiled style, equal parts noir and working-man snapshots-in-words (think Jim Thompson meets James Agee), connects with people because it bleeds humanity. "I got love for people," he says without guile, not a pronouncement you hear generally misanthropic reporters make every day. Charlie saw the Hole getting deeper—more and more falling prey to the effects of corporate greed, government neglect, or personal dissolution.

Right after Trump's election, he swept the family photos off his desk into a box and quit his well-paying TV gig. He cut a pilot for A&E, but the proposed docuseries didn't get picked up. He drops occasional columns for a local website, *Deadline Detroit*. Though he left me wondering if he'd fallen into the Hole himself. Several weeks ago we were on the phone, having a vinegar-session on journalists' favorite subject (how journalism is dying), when he broke the news: "You could always come work with me."

"Where are you working?" I asked, unclear on his current arrangements.

"At the Coney," he said, "for about a year now."

"You're kidding," I said. "Is it a stunt?"

"Nope, though that's what my wife asked," Charlie said.

"You never told me," I replied, somewhat hurt.

"You never asked," he said. "Besides, a man's got pride."

And indeed, he does. He's too proud to wear the paper hat while working at the Coney. Nor will he work the register. "I'm not a greeter," he says. But otherwise, he's all-in as handyman and troubleshooter for Grace Keros, the third-generation owner, who regards Charlie not just as an employee but a friend. Even more so since, when he was

still a TV reporter, he chased after and took down a thug twice his size who'd boosted Keros's cellphone.

Charlie puts in several days a week at the Coney. He putters up early one morning in his matte-black '77 Cadillac Fleetwood (he likes a car he can work on) wearing motorcycle boots and ancient Carhartt coveralls, splotted and stained and air-conditioned with the ass half-ripped out. He tells me he inherited them from a firefighter when he was covering the Manhattan firehouses after 9/11. I ask the last time he's washed them. "Gonna be honest with you," he says, "I never wash them." Charlie ricochets like a pinball around the Coney, playing off line cooks, many of whom he's nicknamed. There's Yoda, so christened for his prodigious ears. They talk everything from local politics to economics. Ali comes by and slaps Charlie five. "He supports a whole village back in Yemen," Charlie says. Charlie asked Ali one day what his dreams were. Ali told him, "Make a million dollars, nice car, nice house, and maybe get my wife." "As in, 'bring her over, maybe,'" Charlie clarifies, laughing. "The American Dream is not dead," I say.

It's spring cleaning at the Coney, and Charlie needs to clean out the grease behind the fryers before the roaches, now thawed, decide to take up residence. Though the Coney stays open 24/7, early construction crews and last night's drunks are pretty much the only ones wanting chili dogs this early. It's a good time to shut the chow line down and let Charlie do his work.

He gets after it, on his knees, with pumice, degreaser, and soap. He takes out mummified hot dogs and fat globules with a Shop-Vac. He scoops large handfuls of sludge out of corners with his bare hands. His arm hair is covered with steel-wool shavings and is slightly singed, from someone leaving a burner on. Maybe it's just the Tom Sawyer effect, wanting to make others want to paint the fence, but he looks like he's actually enjoying himself, attacking his task with gusto. Keros tells me he's a model employee, even if he takes frequent smoke breaks and today knocks off now and then to drink locally brewed Dirty Blondes with me—we professional journalists start early. Keros is kind enough to pour them into Pepsi cups for us.

The salary is paltry, and Charlie mainly took the gig for the health care the Coney offers. His hardship is gentleman's hardship. His Craftsman house out in Pleasant Ridge by the zoo is paid off. His wife is studying for a Ph.D. in counseling. His daughter goes to parochial school. But when he walked away from his well-compensated TV gig, he lost the family's insurance and was in for some serious sticker-shock. I ask him why he left TV and get a lot of answers over the course of a couple days. For starters, his Fox superiors pressuring

him to lay off Trump and certain local politicians now that everyone's celebrating the "New Detroit." Which, as Charlie repeatedly says, "is bullshit." Sure, downtown looks spiffier than ever with the billions in investment (often attached to sweetheart deals, land swaps, and other breaks financed on the taxpayers' backs) that poured in. But if you dig, the New Detroit looks a lot like the old one.

A deputy police chief just went upriver for accepting bribes from towing contractors. She called them "loans."



*The view from the help desk of an empty office building north of downtown Detroit*

The feds are quibbling with Detroit's reporting of its crime statistics, saying it is still the most violent city in America. Murders are at a half-century low, yes, but the population is also at a hundred-year low, meaning there are fewer people left to kill. Despite all the new craft brewers and artisan pickle-makers celebrated by travel writers who parachute in for a couple of days and stay downtown, entire quadrants of the city still look like apocalyptic wastelands. The new mayor, Mike Duggan, is knocking down more abandoned houses than ever, but a federal grand jury has looked into irregularities and kickbacks with the demolition contracts. The corruption drives Charlie so crazy that he often feeds leads to former TV rivals. Half of the candidates in last year's mayoral primary had felony records. As a cabbie named Junior said to me of the New Detroit, "It's a cover-up, like making a shitcake and covering it in frosting." His car was choked with weed smoke, and he winked cartoonishly as he explained that the "medicine" was for his "bad eye."

Charlie also cites as reasons for checking out of his TV gig things like getting screwed on expenses—having to front the travel costs with his camera crew and then getting nickel-and-dimed by superiors for, say, ordering nine beers while interviewing a Times Square pimp. ("He didn't want baked ziti, he's a pimp!") Charlie says.) Finally, he says,

MICHAEL S. WILLIAMSON / WASHINGTON POST / GETTY

sighing, he got tired of the monkey show, the fake news, and how the split screen has multiplied into an octagon-screen of talking heads—“housecats” who never leave the studio. A culture of nothingness pervades TV even when the country is genuinely ailing. But he also admits he just got tired, he tells me one day in his kitchen, drinking black coffee in front of a cabinet upon which are posted the Beatitudes. “Too many bodies,” he says, “too many broken hearts. Old ladies living in their vans because they got put out. People washing their babies in the sinks in Flint. I mean, you know, at some point, it’s just ...”

He wanted to reassess, put it all in some kind of order. Which he’s done in a new book, appropriately



A fan recognizes Charlie LeDuff working at American Coney Island.

titled *Sh\*tShow! The Country’s Collapsing ... and the Ratings Are Great*. He sweeps the country, making connections, from black rage in the streets of Ferguson to white rage everywhere else. He hangs with Flint trailer-park denizens, who’ve been left high and dry by the government and the auto plants that turned the city into a ghost town. But he also hangs with Mexicans on the other side of the border, where the auto plants went—where they work for pennies on the dollar and yearn to ride coyote jet skis across the Rio Grande to try to get a piece of the American Dream, which so many Americans assume has fled south. The book is riveting and an important document of our time.

Charlie admits he misses the life: “I miss it all. I miss shitty airports. I miss country roads. I miss Baton Rouge at midnight, the only thing open is that fish-fry-liquor store. I miss the action. I miss saying something. I miss the bull-horn. It’s the best job ever invented.” But he’s okay sitting back, reassessing. Figuring out what’s next. Meanwhile he has work to do at the Coney, making Keros happy, as it means his daughter has health care.

He flirts with a large black woman with a crooked weave, who comes in and recognizes him from TV, as so many customers do. She squeals “Charlie! Charlie! Charlie!” even as

she wonders what the hell he’s doing here. “Working!” he says without shame. She says she’s just come into a \$4.2 million civil judgment, since Shower to Shower talcum powder killed her mother. A sprinkle a day apparently helped keep the odor away, but also “gave her ovarian cancer.” Charlie throws his arm around her: “I’ll be your sugar daddy.”

He has to throw the Pigeon Lady out of the bathroom. MISS QUEEN—as she calls herself, insisting on all capital letters—is a regular who likes to bring in her pigeons and bathe in the restroom sink. “I’m the only QUEEN on planet earth,” she explains to me while getting bounced. “I’m an angel, an alien from heaven. In this world, not of it. Don’t give a f— if He blew this whole planet up.”

Charlie has to greet George the Greek, an elderly gent he once wrote about while at the *Detroit News*. After George’s wife passed away, he became “the patron saint of lower Woodward,” living in a grand old abandoned bank to guard it from looters.

And then there’s the African-American couple in head-to-toe purple who forgot their teeth while eating their Coney dogs. Charlie chases down the street after them with their partial bridges in a to-go container. “You forgot your teeth!” he yells. The couple collectively says “Ohh!!” then start feeling their gums, wondering who forgot their teeth. “Both of them!” they concur, though without their teeth, it sounds like “Bof of vem.” Charlie hands over the styrofoam hot-dog case with their choppers in it. “Served fresh and hot,” he says with a smile. They are extremely grateful. The woman tries to hand Charlie a \$10 tip. He refuses. All in a day’s work. The good people of Detroit should not be walking around toothless.

If this seems beneath a Pulitzer-winner, Charlie doesn’t think so. “It’s okay,” he tells me. He’ll be back. In fact, he never really left. He has a book about to do its work. A lot of reporters go whole lifetimes without writing a book, since they have nothing to say. He’ll figure out his next move. Until then, the Coney suits him. “It’s honest. It’s fun. It’s cool.”

When you’re done, you’re done. You punch out, and can see your handiwork—something is clean. Also, he says, it’s good for him personally. In TV, you can start to think you matter more than you do. But we’re all in it together. We all live with the same struggles and fears and uncertainties. “Humble yourself,” Charlie says. “I got a little bit tired of it. I’m redoing my life. A little bit of real people doesn’t hurt. A little bit of real life doesn’t hurt. Be on your knees, scrape some dirt. Love the other. Try to dig people. Whether you have God or not, God told you to focus on life on earth, and if you do, there’s a place for you in heaven. This is longstanding wisdom from our elders. Take this as wisdom. Take it.”

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TWS / MATT LABASH

# Don Juan in Hell

*Pleasure, war, and  
the mad torment  
of Lord Byron.*

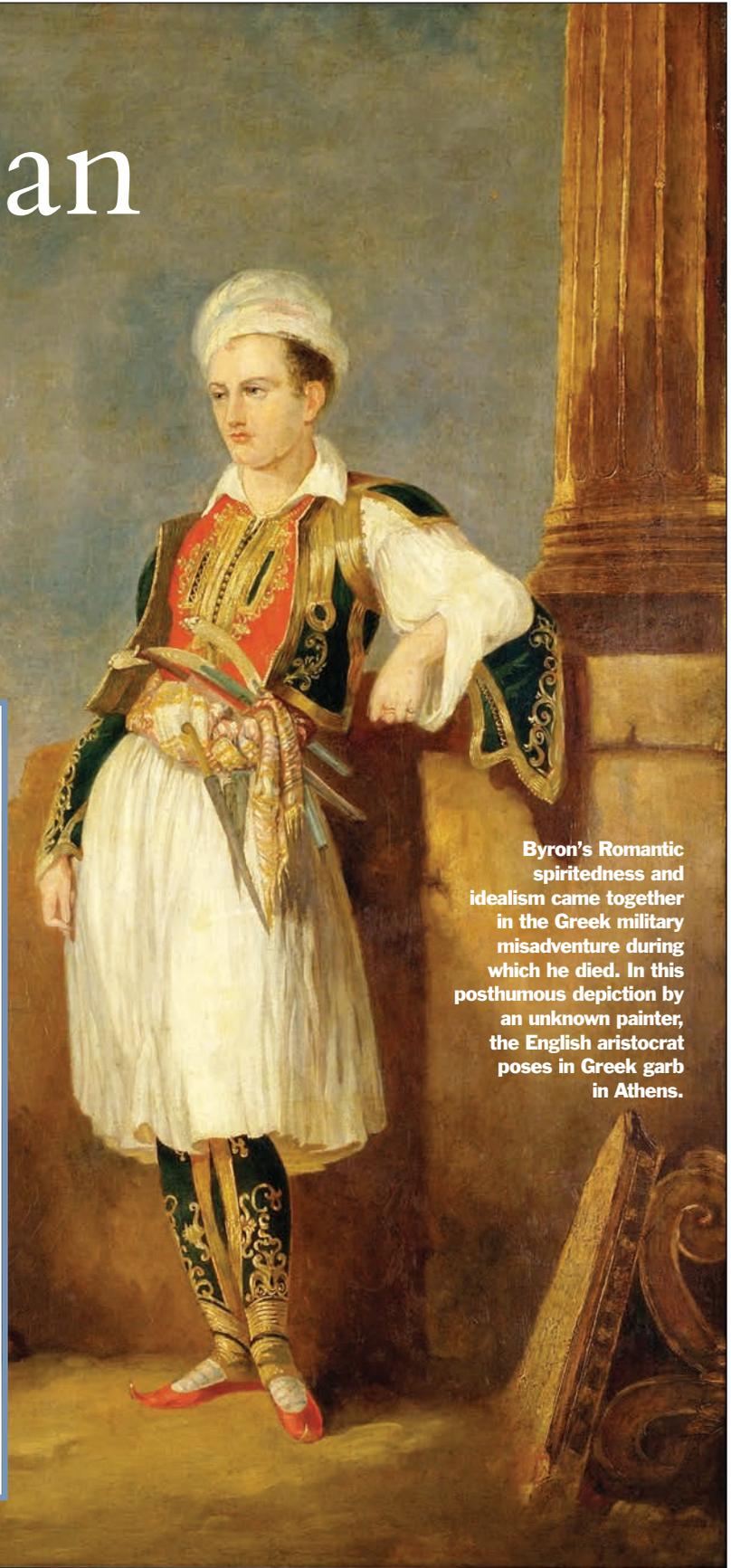
BY ALGIS VALIUNAS

**W**hen English lyric poetry is the subject, one thinks first of the Romantics.

To many readers for whom poetry is not a life-sustaining staple, and even to some for whom it is, the Romantics have come to define poetry's very essence: the eruption of exorbitant feeling too rich for the heart to contain in silence. Readers better versed in older and more recent poetry may downgrade Romantic extravagances in favor of, say, the brainy eroticism of John Donne, the eviscerating wit of Alexander Pope, or the chill austerity of Geoffrey Hill. Yet there is no denying that the two poetic generations that thrived from the 1790s to the 1820s represent an artistic efflorescence surpassed in English literature only by that of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

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**Byron's Romantic spiritedness and idealism came together in the Greek military misadventure during which he died. In this posthumous depiction by an unknown painter, the English aristocrat poses in Greek garb in Athens.**



Although they may be herded together to mark a period or even a movement, each of the Romantics was a singular figure. In the first generation, whose principals outlived those of the second, William Blake, almost unknown in his day, couched shattering curses and blessings in language of disarming simplicity, and conceived theologies and prophecies intended to rival or even supplant the Bible. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth joined forces in the collection *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) “with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversa-

*Byron was the most famous poet in his time and the most notorious hellion, whose life and work together created the superb desperado known as the Byronic hero, dubious exemplar for impressionable young souls bent on artistic glory.*

tion in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure.” Coleridge took opium as more conventional gentlemen took snuff and gave birth to fantastic visions, while Wordsworth made heroes of leech gatherers and idiot boys and mourned the loss of “the visionary gleam” in a world hellbent on “getting and spending.” In the second generation, Percy Bysshe Shelley took the lash to a political, social, and religious order that bred human depravity and abjection, and he proclaimed the glorious coming day when freedom and true worship will make a heaven on earth. John Keats, bound for a consumptive’s early grave, kept house with rapturous melancholy and “beauty that must die.”

And then there was Lord Byron (1788-1824), the most famous poet of his time and the most notorious hel-

lion, whose life and work together created the superb desperado known as the Byronic hero, dubious exemplar for numerous impressionable young souls bent on artistic glory, sensual feasting, and political high daring, overlaid with world-weariness that made all such aspirations seem ultimately and deliciously pointless. Byron set himself at a haughty remove from the other Romantics. An aristocrat’s vanity informed and undercut Byron’s sense of literary vocation, so that he deprecated his own poetry as inferior to heroic action and simply dismissed that of his most estimable contemporaries.

In the long satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, published when he was 21, Byron laid waste to his most distinguished elder, whose studied plainness of diction and commonness of subject he found noisome: “Yet let them not to vulgar Wordsworth stoop, / The meanest object of the lowly group, / Whose verse, of all but childish prattle void, / Seems blessed harmony to Lamb and Lloyd.” In an 1814 letter to his friend James Hogg, he declared that Wordsworth missed his true calling as “a man-midwife” and allowed that Coleridge was the best of the Lake Poets—“but bad is the best.” Writing in 1820 to his publisher, John Murray, he sneered at “Johnny Keats’s *p-ss a bed* poetry” and then at the poor doomed youngster’s

mental masturbation—he is always f-gg-g his *Imagination*.—I don’t mean that he is *indecent* but viciously soliciting his own ideas into a state which is neither poetry nor any thing else but a Bedlam vision produced by raw pork and opium.

And in an 1817 letter to Murray, Byron condemned the whole Romantic lot, himself included: “Scott—Southey—Wordsworth—Moore—Campbell—I—are all in the wrong—one as much as another—that we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system—or systems—not worth a damn in itself.” Sizing up even his own poems beside those of Alexander Pope, past master of the heroic couplet that sliced like cold steel, he found them stunted and hopelessly flabby: “I was really astonished (I ought not to have been so) and mortified—at

the ineffable distance in point of sense—harmony—effect—and even *Imagination* Passion—& *Invention*—between the little Queen Anne’s Man—& us of the Lower Empire.”

It might appear then that Byron was a classical poet *manqué*, hardly a Romantic at all, or an unwilling one at best. Yet in fact he defined the species of Romanticism that had the most profound effect on artists and political firebrands of the era, not only in England but throughout Europe, and that has persisted into our own time. Although he was a man apart, indeed an outcast and an exile for much of his life, many wanted to be just like him; and why not? He was dashing, adventurous, rich, handsome, catnip to women, lionized by the great world yet despising its blandishments. From a safe distance the allure might seem irresistible. Being Byron, however, was quite a different matter from wanting to be Byron.

George Gordon Byron was born in London on January 22, 1788. His father, Captain John Byron, late of the Coldstream Guards, was known as Mad Jack to his fellow soldiers. He had been married before, after a scandalous adultery and elopement, and had fathered a daughter, Augusta, who was four years older than her half-brother. Mad Jack saw little of his son, decamping to France to elude creditors, and he died there in 1791, perhaps a victim of tuberculosis, perhaps a suicide by poison. As the excellent biographer Fiona MacCarthy writes in *Byron: Life and Legend* (2002),

A friend visiting [Byron’s home] Newstead when he was a young man remembered how, “while washing his hands, and singing a gay Neapolitan air,” Byron had suddenly turned round, announcing that there had always been madness in the family and that his father had cut his throat.

MacCarthy prefers not to cause a stir about Byron’s torturous family history and his own distressing condition. But Kay Redfield Jamison, professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, coauthor of the definitive textbook on manic depression and herself a sufferer from the illness, makes

Byron's mental disease the centerpiece of her invaluable book *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (1993), and she emphasizes the genetic fatefulness of his inheritance from both sides of the family. Byron, she writes, "had a family history remarkable for its suicide (in itself more likely to be associated with manic-depressive illness than with any other condition), violence, irrationality, financial extravagance, and recurrent melancholia." Doom was inscribed in his bloodline, and he knew it. Jamison cites several remarks Byron made to intimates about the emotional turbulence passed to him down the generations: "My melancholy is something temperamental, inherited." "I am not sure that long life is desirable for one of my temper & constitutional depression of Spirits." According to Jamison, Byron cycled regularly between elation and despair, and he suffered most intensely from what psychiatrists call a mixed state, which combines mania's fearsome energy presenting as "morbid irritability of temper" (in Byron's own self-description) with depression's sepulchral desolation.

His prodigious gifts were weighed down by his painful liabilities. The gods smiled on him benevolently only to break into laughter at their cunning cruelty. He had a noble title and great wealth inherited from his great-uncle when he was 10; he also had a clubfoot that was an unforgivable affront to his colossal vanity. Rare beauty of face and figure here, insatiable satyr-like sexual compulsion there. Winning amiability that made him beloved by his friends, hair-trigger irascibility that made him a horror to himself and especially to his wife. Jamison sums up brilliantly the difference between the Byron that the public saw or imagined and the man he actually was:

The "Byronic" has come to mean the theatrical, Romantic, brooding, mock heroic, posturing, cynical, passionate, or sardonic. Unfortunately, these epithets suggest an exaggerated or even insincere quality, and in doing so tend to minimize the degree of genuine suffering that Byron experienced; such a characterization also overlooks the extraordinary intellectual and

emotional discipline he exerted over a kind of pain that brings most who experience it to their knees.

Although Byron surely would have preferred to forgo the worst emotional turmoil he suffered, the driving force of his temperament was the craving for experience, the more intense and extreme the better. To convince himself he was really alive strong jolts of pleasure and pain were required.

By Byron's lights what most people did with the brief time they had on earth did not qualify as living. Death



*Byron and Marianna Segati, one of his many lovers—and the wife of his landlord in Italy*

was perhaps not an unrelenting fear but it was a continual presence and a goad to vital spirits. A human skull set in silver served as his drinking cup—a grinning *memento mori* to enhance the fleeting joys of dissipation. Carousing was a way of life, and of holding off the threat of extinction. Ardent male friendships at Harrow and Cambridge flared into homosexual romances, and Byron's love for a Trinity College chorister became a consuming blaze; yet when John Edleston died of tuberculosis in 1811, Byron, who heard of the death while he was on a two-year Grand Tour with friends, could not summon grief appropriate to the occasion: Remembering "one whom I once loved more than I ever loved a living thing. . . I had not a tear left for an event which five years ago would have bowed me to the dust." Desiccation of feeling was the obverse of emotional overload.

He wanted to feel intensely more than he wanted anything else. In 1813, courting by letter the woman he would marry but did not love, Annabella Milbanke, Byron professed his creed in a fevered rush: "The great object of life is Sensation—to feel that we exist—even though in pain—it is this 'craving void' which drives us to Gaming—to Battle—to Travel—to intemperate but keenly felt pursuits of every description whose principal attraction is the agitation inseparable from their accomplishment." As he was writing this, the woman he did love was clearly in his thoughts: his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, with whom he was having an affair and who was the female passion of his life. The frightful emotional rip-current pulled him into treacherous deeps and he was sunk full fathom five.

His marriage to Annabella in 1815 was a mockery and a mutual torment. His friend Samuel Rogers remembered reading a passage from Byron's memoir, which was burned for sanitary reasons after his death: "On his marriage-night, Byron started out of his first sleep; a taper, which burned in the room, was casting a ruddy glare through the crimson curtains of the bed; and he could not help exclaiming, in a voice so loud that he wakened Lady B. 'Good God, I am surely in hell!'" He made sure he had company there. Flaying Annabella could not relieve his misery but did acutely increase hers. He told her that he was "more accursed in marriage than any other act of his life," that "one animal of the kind was as good to him as another," and he hinted darkly at his homosexual and incestuous past. When the couple went to stay with Augusta, the hints became unmistakable tracks leading to perdition. Byron would stretch out on the sofa and instruct his two women to take turns kissing him; it was plain to Annabella that he and Augusta were enjoying the game more than she was. The marriage lasted barely a year before the couple separated for good.

When Annabella filed for divorce on grounds of Byron's insanity, her testimony saw to it that his rakehell reputation got around, and fear of the law compelled him to depart England.

Sodomy was a hanging offense, and although incest strangely enough was not a criminal act, it remained nevertheless not quite acceptable in polite society. Bound for the continent never to return, Byron saw his wife and daughter, Ada, and his sister and her daughter, Medora, who may have been his as well, for the last time.

Italian mores, which made adultery commonplace, gave him a reprobate's sexual license. In Venice over a three-year period he slept with 200 women by his own count, toting up a fraction of them in a letter to friends that, as MacCarthy remarks, reads like Leporello's catalogue aria from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*: "the Taruscelli—the Da Mosti—the Spineda—the Lotti—the Rizzato [the list goes on] ... some of them are Countesses—& some of them Cobblers wives—some noble—some middling—some low—& all whores."

He established a more lasting attachment, as such things go, to Countess Teresa Guiccioli, the beautiful 19-year-old wife of a man pushing 60; and he wrote professions of undying love to Augusta in which he pricked her with reports of his various sexual entanglements. On his travels he met and befriended the poet Shelley, whose militant hatred of Christianity and the scandal of his deserted first wife's suicide made him, too, unwelcome back home. Before leaving England, Byron had impregnated Shelley's second wife's stepsister, Claire Clairmont. "I never loved nor pretended to love her—but a man is a man—& if a girl of eighteen comes prancing to you at all hours—there is but one way." Claire and her child became members of the Shelleys' peripatetic household, and Byron sedulously ignored Claire when they met again in Italy, while he clapped their daughter, Allegra, into a convent school for the good of her soul, which was endangered by the Shelleys' unspeakable irreligion. The little girl died there at the age of 5, and while Byron had not visited his child for a year his sorrow and remorse appear to have been genuine.

But then losses were to be expected. When Shelley drowned in a boating accident—the sailboat was named *Don*

*Juan*—Byron performed the obsequies after his own fashion by swimming far out to sea as his friend's corpse was being cremated on the beach.

Erotic misadventures and mere poetry were growing tiresome for Byron; dreams of military and political heroism of the highest order had always fascinated him. He had written in his journal in 1813: "To be the first man—not the Dictator—not the Sylla, but the Washington or the Aristides—the leader in talent and truth—is next to the Divinity! Franklin, Penn, and next to those, either Brutus or Cassius—even Mirabeau—or St. Just." Nothing less than founding a free nation now became his fantasy. "It is a grand object, the very *poetry* of politics. Only think—a free Italy!" Byron plotted war against the Austrian oppressor as a conspirator with the revolutionary Carbonari, using his house in Ravenna as a secret arms depot. But the Italians' fecklessness when the opportunity for successful action arose disillusioned him for good: They were better at making operas than revolution.

To liberate Greece from its cruel Turkish masters, however, remained an undying hope; the Greek war of independence had begun in 1821, and he pictured himself playing a key role there in restoring freedom to its birthplace. In June 1823 Byron sailed as a representative of the London Greek Committee to the Ionian island of Cephalonia, which was ruled under a British protectorate. In his journal he roused himself with poetry to prove by mighty deeds that he was more than a poet: "The Dead have been awakened—shall I sleep? / The World's at war with tyrants—shall I crouch? / The harvest's ripe—and shall I pause to reap? / I slumber not—the thorn is in my Couch— / Each day a trumpet soundeth in mine ear— / It's Echo in my heart."

Prince Alexander Mavrocordato, the first Greek president under the constitution of 1822—though on the outs with the military leadership—wrote to Byron as though he were the conquering hero finally come: "You will be received here as a savior. Be assured, My Lord, that it depends only on yourself

to secure the destiny of Greece." His reputation as a poetic apostle of freedom evidently invested him with authority as a fighting man.

In 1824 *Archistrategos*—commander in chief—Byron assumed generalship of 600 troops on the mainland in Missolonghi, whom he paid out of his own pocket. Plans for an audacious attack on Lepanto came to nothing as needed rockets did not arrive and the soldiers proved refractory at best. The *archistrategos* was left with a bodyguard of 50 men. Fiasco everywhere. His unrequited love for a comely adolescent page distracted him from the appointed task, and he recorded the effort to overcome himself in the poem "On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year":

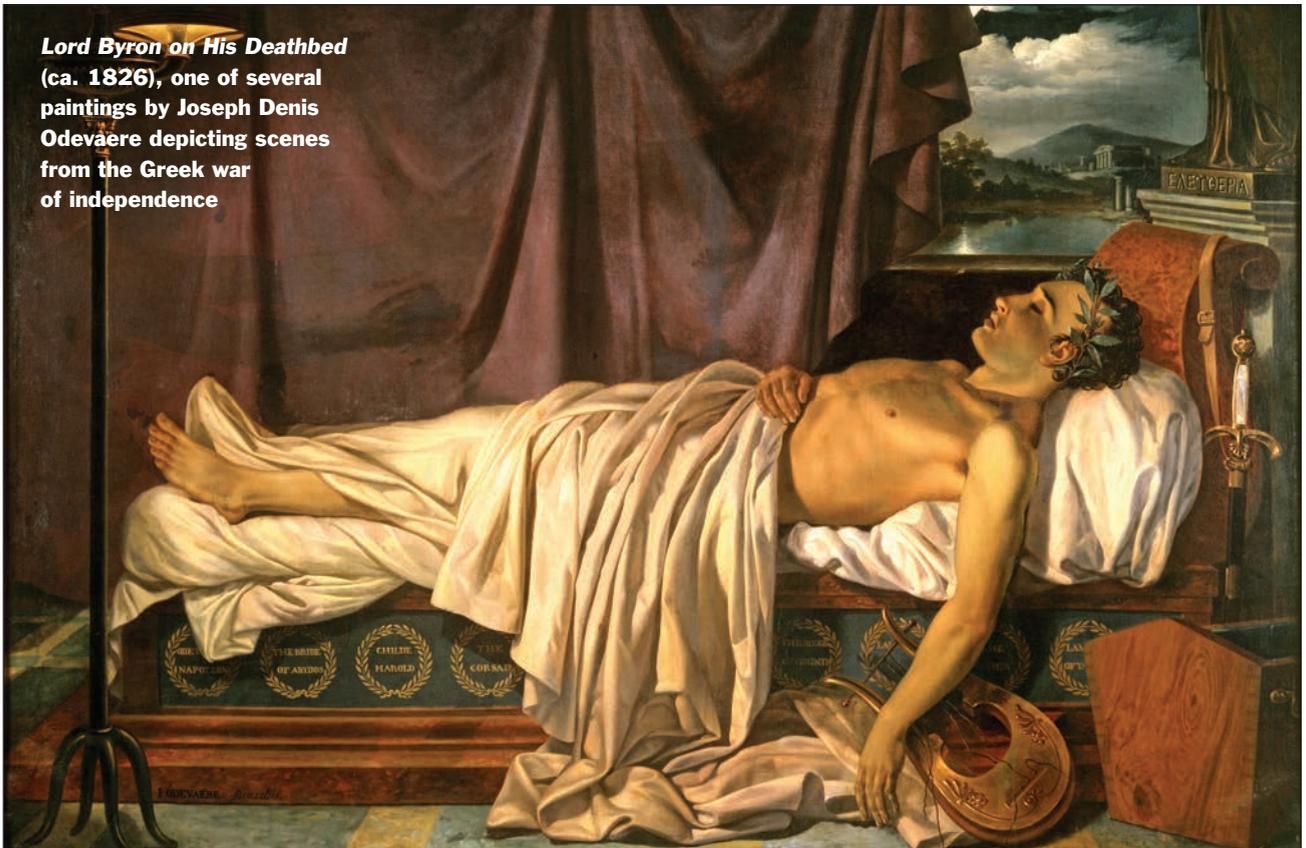
Tread those reviving passions down,  
Unworthy manhood!—unto thee  
Indifferent should the smile or frown  
Of beauty be.

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*  
The land of honourable death  
Is here:—up to the field, and give  
Away thy Breath!

Death would come soon enough, that April, though not in the field: An infection with fever, severe headache, and rheumatic pains was treated with bloodletting that drained nearly half the blood in Byron's body; the infection might have proved fatal, but the attempted cure certainly was.

It is astonishing that, living as he did, Byron found time to write at all; more astonishing still that the Oxford edition of his *Poetical Works* runs to some 900 pages of very small print in double columns. Byron was exceedingly proud of being a man who knew the world as few men—and very few poets—do, and the poetry shows the range of his experience, if also the limitations of the mind and sensibility that reflect on that experience. He wrote fizzy squibs; comic epitaphs; ironic Horatian bijoux; laments of a man crossed in love; numerous lyrics of lovers' sad parting; speculations on the fate of the soul after death; metaphysical panoramas of universal devastation; encomia to Napoleon and denunciations of the blood-soaked ogre he became; rants

**Lord Byron on His Deathbed**  
(ca. 1826), one of several  
paintings by Joseph Denis  
Odevaere depicting scenes  
from the Greek war  
of independence



against tyranny and homages to republican virtue; breakneck narratives about honorable manly violence and death-defying courage, which alone makes life worth living; closet dramas rife with nihilist sorcery, biblical murder, and Orientalist fleshpots.

Reading Byron's poetry in the light of his life, one has the abiding sense of a man only too aware of his weakness and folly fending off an unbearable sorrow. He has seen too much and felt far too much and he knows the damage done is incalculable and unforgivable. In the poignantly lovely "She walks in beauty," he is ravished by a purity that he has forsaken forever, and this grave tribute to moral excellence joined with physical splendor tacitly mourns the life and love he should have had:

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!

This overriding feeling of tragic

waste takes various forms. In "The Siege of Corinth" Byron renders the macabre indignity of death in battle with emetic gusto, so that the reader knows what it means to be left for the dogs; the balladeer's incantatory rhythm makes one think of Kipling at his best:

From a Tartar's skull they had  
stripp'd the flesh,  
As ye peel the fig when its fruit is fresh;  
And their white tusks crunch'd o'er  
the whiter skull,  
As it slipp'd through their jaws, when  
their edge grew dull,  
As they lazily mumbled the bones  
of the dead,  
When they scarce could rise from the  
spot where they fed.

In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the exotic travelogue and meditation on a life quite like Byron's own—an epic poem that made him instantly famous—the narrator not readily distinguishable from the author confesses to a disorderly mind and heart that have blighted his existence, yet summons the will to carry on when the best chance he had at happiness has been spoiled:

Yet must I think less wildly:—  
I have thought  
Too long and darkly, till my brain  
became,  
In its own eddy boiling and  
o'erwrought,  
A whirling gulf of phantasy and  
flame:  
And thus, untaught in youth my  
heart to tame,  
My springs of life were poison'd.  
'Tis too late!  
Yet am I changed; though still  
enough the same  
In strength to bear what time  
cannot abate,  
And feed on bitter fruits without  
accusing Fate.

In *Cain: A Mystery*, however, Fate does stand accused, as the impulse to primal murder comes from hatred of what God has made man: "For what must I be grateful? / For being dust, and groveling in the dust, / Till I return to dust? If I am nothing— / For nothing shall I be an hypocrite, / And seem well-pleased with pain?" Contemptuous of hypocritical reverence for an unloving God even as he was bemused by thoughts of eternity,

Byron made his peace with nihilism, as one sees in his response to Annabella's efforts to foist godliness on him: "Why I came here—I know not—where I shall go it is useless to enquire—in the midst of myriads of the living & the dead worlds—stars—systems—infinity—why should I be anxious about an atom?"

When W.H. Auden honored Byron as "the master of the airy manner," he must have been thinking above all of the style of *Don Juan* (the second word pronounced with two syllables, *ʃOO-uhn*). There one hears the winning voice of gamy urbanity—that of a man who has seen all that the world holds and who may be appalled at the spectacle but is even more amused by it. His moral discernment issues in mordant gaiety. Witness the nicely calculated working of this stanza, its sinuous machinery unobtrusively cranking up the blade of judgment that drops like fatality with the final word, utterly unexpected and utterly perfect:

And now he rose; and after due  
ablutions  
Exacted by the customs of the East,  
And prayers and other pious evolu-  
tions,  
He drank six cups of coffee at the least,  
And then withdrew to hear about the  
Russians,  
Whose victories had recently increased  
In Catherine's reign, whom glory still  
adores,  
As greatest of all sovereigns and whores.

In this unfinished masterpiece there is the lightness of a mind at play that one is hard-pressed to find elsewhere in Byron. To John Murray he wrote of *Don Juan* in 1821, "But I had not quite fixed whether to make him end in Hell—or in an unhappy marriage,—not knowing which would be the severest.—The Spanish tradition says Hell—but it is probably only an Allegory of the other state." A proud man's joke at his own expense; but Byron took his own suffering seriously enough to know what real hell is, and most of his poetry is shot through with pain. He was the saddest of the English Romantics and, for all his singular pathology, the one who foretold most strikingly our own disorder. ♦

BCA

# War on the Waves

*What today's navalists can learn from the Allied success at sea in WWII.* BY ARTHUR HERMAN



*Smoke billows from USS Yorktown during the Battle of Midway, June 1942.*

In 1983 Richard Hough published *The Great War at Sea*, a classic of military history that managed to pull together the disparate naval events and battles of World War I into a single scholarly but readable volume.

Writing a comparable *World War II at Sea* is a much bigger task. The naval history of World War I involved three combatants—the United States, Britain, and Germany—locked in a maritime struggle limited, with a few exceptions, to the Atlantic and two inland seas, the Mediterranean and the North Sea. Major naval operations in World War II sprawled over four oceans, from the South Pacific and the Bay of Bengal to Murmansk and the Arctic Circle, and virtually every littoral in between. Telling the story of these naval operations also demands an intimate knowledge of the air and amphibious operations this naval war involved, from the carrier battles in the

*Arthur Herman, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, is the author, most recently, of 1917: Lenin, Wilson, and the Birth of the New World Disorder.*

**World War II At Sea**  
*A Global History*  
by Craig L. Symonds  
Oxford, 770 pp., \$34.95

Pacific theater to Operations Torch and Overlord in the European theater.

This is the mammoth task naval historian and U.S. Naval War College professor Craig Symonds set for himself—and by and large he has succeeded, although it took well over 700 pages, which makes Hough's 350-page book look trim by comparison.

Symonds works hard to weave together the various fronts, campaigns, and personalities—from Churchill, FDR, Chester Nimitz, and Bill "Bull" Halsey on the Allied side to Hitler, Mussolini, and Admirals Yamamoto and Dönitz on the Axis side—into a single narrative that will educate the general reader (he has a short paragraph at the beginning explaining the difference between a cruiser and a battleship) but also satisfy the expert. The four central "characters" of the book are the

navies of the four major combatants, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, and the United States.

Front and center, certainly at the start of the war, is the Royal Navy, tasked with guarding the world's largest empire, and in 1939 still the largest navy in the world. (By war's end it would be even larger, with 900 vessels, including 52 aircraft carriers, and nearly a million men and women in uniform.) Compared with its cautiousness in World War I, the Royal Navy in 1939 possessed an offensive spirit—but it quickly ran afoul of its principal challenger, the German Kriegsmarine and its ruthless master, Adolf Hitler.

Germany's leadership knew that it would have to achieve naval supremacy to defeat Britain. Battleships like *Bismarck* and *Tirpitz* wouldn't suffice; nor would aircraft carriers (the one carrier Germany built during the war, *Graf Zeppelin*, was never finished). No, it would take U-boats—Germany's dreaded submarines. Drawing lessons from World War I, Hitler devoted huge economic resources to building an undersea force that he and his henchman, Admiral Karl Dönitz, believed could sever Britain's maritime lifeline and starve it into submission, just as German U-boats had nearly done a generation earlier until the United States entered the war in 1917 and threw its own navy and merchant marine into the balance.

Ironically, the pattern repeated in World War II: Despite some initial success, Germany's U-boat warfare proved futile as the U.S. Navy once again tipped the balance—in a limited way before Hitler declared war on the United States in December 1941, then with all-out commitment that turned the tide of war in Europe on land as well as at sea.

Although the United States was officially neutral at the start of the war, the U.S. Navy was increasingly drawn into the conflict by Germany's reckless U-boat tactics—and by FDR's determination to prevent a German victory that would allow Hitler to dominate the entire Atlantic basin (both Roosevelt and Churchill understood the U.S.-U.K. alliance as an extension of a single naval grand strategy). With Pearl Harbor, how-

ever, America found itself on the defensive on two fronts: fighting off the U-boat menace in the Atlantic and dealing with the Japanese in the Pacific.

If the German Navy dreaded a decisive surface battle with its enemies, the Japanese Navy yearned for one, especially against the United States. The strategy it devised for dominating the Pacific culminated in bringing on a decisive encounter with the American fleet, but Japan required three fleets to achieve its goal: one to engage the U.S. Navy operating in Asian waters, one to protect Japanese landings in the Philippines, and one to confront America's main battle fleet. However, that was one more fleet than Japan had or could realistically hope to build.

So instead Japan turned to the aircraft carrier to make up the difference. But by wrecking the main battle fleet at Pearl Harbor the Japanese forced the U.S. Navy also to rely on carriers—carriers that American shipyards could build faster and better. This would be one result of World War II at sea: the rise of airpower as the decisive instrument of naval supremacy. It was American aircraft carriers that defeated the Japanese at Midway in June 1942 and reversed the tide of the war in the Pacific, and American long-range bombers that won the war against the U-boat in the spring of 1943 by providing coast-to-coast protection for Allied convoys plying the Atlantic—while the U.S. and British success in cracking both the German and the Japanese naval codes meant that every major Axis move at sea was known in advance.

By that spring, the course of the war was already decided in the Allies' favor, thanks to their success at sea. In a sense, all the rest—Kursk, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, D-Day, the battle for Berlin, Hiroshima—was anticlimax. “While boots on the ground were essential in this war (as they are in every war),” Symonds concludes, “it was supremacy at sea that eventually proved decisive.”

What spelled the difference in the war at sea and therefore in the war as a whole? Symonds points to two factors. One was President Roosevelt's decision to focus on

Europe first in order to deal with the larger strategic threat posed by Nazi Germany, despite Pearl Harbor and the more immediate threat posed by Japan.

The other was the unleashing of the industrial capacity of the United States to outproduce not only all the Axis powers put together (which it was doing before the close of 1942) but to supply all the other Allies, including Russia, with an endless stream of naval vessels, merchant shipping, and landing craft, as well as tanks, guns, and ammunition—indeed, two-thirds of all the munitions used by the Allies in the war.

For today's navalists, one lesson to ponder from *World War II at Sea* is the value of quantity over quality. Having lots of ships deployed at sea, even though some may be second-rate and outdated, was one of the secrets of the Royal Navy's success in ruling the waves for nearly two and a half centuries. It is a lesson driven home by the experience, and especially the U.S. experience, of World War II and then of the Cold War—a lesson that in our present era of supercarriers and high-priced superweapons we seem to have forgotten.

Another is the necessity of having a naval grand strategy in a time of great power competition, like our own. Remember: The two principal Allies in both theaters were led by superb naval strategists—in the 1910s, Churchill had been first lord of the Admiralty and Roosevelt had been assistant secretary of the Navy—while their principal opponent, Hitler, was a mediocre one. It is not clear where we will find the naval grand strategist we need today as the shrinking U.S. Navy tries to navigate between maintaining its traditional dominance and sliding into permanent decline obscured by complacency—much as the Royal Navy did between the two world wars.

Symonds's book is large. It is also a large achievement. It belongs on the bookshelves not only of every World War II buff but also of anyone who wants to think seriously about how we deal with a rising maritime competitor like China—and the geopolitical reality that, as the saying goes, whoever rules the waves rules the world. ♦

# It's Hi Time

*Hugs, handshakes, kisses, and grabs—  
the tricks and traps of greetings.* BY STEPHANIE GREEN

I share with President Trump a mild germophobia, mostly triggered by the ritual of shaking hands. I often wish we could revert to the quaint *Mad Men*-era tradition of ladies wearing gloves in social settings, so I could avoid having to douse my palms with antibacterial goop every time I engage in this most civilized of greetings.

Unfortunately for the president, the handshake is a necessary and unavoidable part of the job and one often performed under the watchful eyes of the world press. Remember when he met Putin in Vietnam last year? Their handshake interaction was evaluated like Goldilocks's bed. (Too hard? Too soft? Just right?) The Merkel-Trump handshake, dubbed the one "heard round the world" for its deafening awkwardness, is the stuff of transatlantic legend. At the president's first state dinner, held last month at the White House, French president Emmanuel Macron seemed to offer a *poignée de main plus douce* after his first greeting of Trump last year was considered too, well, heavy-handed. Next month's Kim Jong-un encounter is already stirring breathless speculation (and some humorous memes) about how the two will interact. Handshake? No handshake? Blinking contest? Arm wrestle?

As if on cue, British diplomat and first-time author Andy Scott takes the subject of the greeting by the hand. *One Kiss or Two?* is no stuffy etiquette book with hard-and-fast rules. Scott admits he's just as confused about our rituals of greeting as everybody else, and just as much in awe of their importance, especially in an increasingly diverse society.

*Stephanie Green is a writer in Washington.*

## One Kiss or Two?

*The Art and Science of Saying Hello*

by Andy Scott

Overlook, 303 pp., \$28.95



*Well short of the Walbiri*

Scott points out that in Sweden, for example, a Muslim man was fired from his job for refusing to shake hands with a female colleague; he was likely adhering to Muhammad's teaching that "it is better for you to be stabbed in the head with an iron needle than to touch the hand of a woman who is not permissible to you." It's not just Sweden: In 2016, an Algerian woman, married to a French citizen, refused to shake hands with officials overseeing her citizenship ceremony; this was taken as evidence of insufficient assimilation and her naturalization was rejected—a ruling that France's highest court confirmed last month.

The greeting, Scott argues through personal anecdotes and (sometimes tedious) anthropological studies, can make or break your first date, job interview, or nuclear treaty.

Although he started his research project "hoping to solve our uncertainties and cure the world of greetings anxiety, even to find the perfect greeting," Scott soon realized that "our greetings are just too complex, reflecting the nature of our relationships,

the culture we're from and the times we find ourselves in." He aptly quotes John Muir: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

Still, Scott does a wonderful job of describing and categorizing greetings. Among the varieties in his taxonomy of handshakes, for example, there is "the wet fish," or what Emily Post summed up as "a 'boneless' hand extended as though it were a spray of seaweed, or a miniature boiled pudding"; "the bone crusher," a favorite of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, whose handshake with Prince William was so fierce it left imprints; and President Trump's "yank shake," which pulls the greetee in toward the greeter's space, sometimes with a hand on the shoulder. (This was most memorably performed on Neil Gorsuch when the president announced his nomination to the Supreme Court.)

Scott offers his take on the ideal: "two or three pumps, five or six inches in height. Any extras, such as the cupping the hands or patting the shoulders ... are strongly discouraged." Always keep your handshake "vertical so your thumb is on top." And if you're ever in the company of royals, do not offer your hand first; it is their privilege to make the first move.

Being European, first lady Melania Trump, I have noticed, is a practitioner of the continental double kiss, even with people she doesn't know well. But in 2018, especially in the aftermath of the #MeToo explosion, "it's best to leave out the kisses when meeting someone for the first time. And when you do go in for a peck, keep it cheek to cheek, kissing just the air: 'under no circumstances,'" he says, quoting a British etiquette book, "'should there be suggestion of saliva.'"

Ultimately, after nearly 300 pages of discussing greetings—including one used by the Walbiri tribe in Australia, in which men apparently shake penises—Scott concludes that the best greeting is whichever is most natural for you. Trying too hard is a big turn-off, whether you're bowing, curtsying, or shaking nether regions. "Seeming fake and insincere ... is the biggest faux pas of all." ♦

# Indomitable Irishry?

*Unsettled questions of Ireland's past and hope for its literary future.* BY PATRICK J. WALSH

In his fine survey of the last half-millennium of Irish history, Dublin writer John Gibney makes the enormously complicated—and usually quite tragic—story of Ireland's past understandable. *A Short History of Ireland* is a concise and highly readable account that starts with the Protestant Reformation and ends more or less in our own day. The book has five parts, one for each of the centuries he discusses, further divided into chapters exploring major themes. Each of the five parts closes with a section called “Where Historians Disagree,” exploring points of scholarly contention.

The first of these disputed historical questions is: “Why did the Reformation not succeed” in Ireland? At the time Gibney's chronicle begins, the population of the island of Ireland was predominantly Gaelic-speaking and Roman Catholic. Gaelic has declined—it's still spoken by about 40 percent of the population of the Republic of Ireland and perhaps 5 or 10 percent of the population of Northern Ireland. But Ireland today remains overwhelmingly Catholic: The Republic of Ireland is nearly 80 percent Catholic and even in Northern Ireland the Catholic and Protestant populations are roughly equal at around 40 percent each. Gibney describes several explanations historians have offered for why the reformation didn't “take” in Ireland. He seems partial to the idea that “the resources simply were not available to fully impose the new Episcopalian state church on a diverse population that remained strongly attached to Catholicism.”

A closely related thread in Gibney's book is the dark history of Irish-Eng-

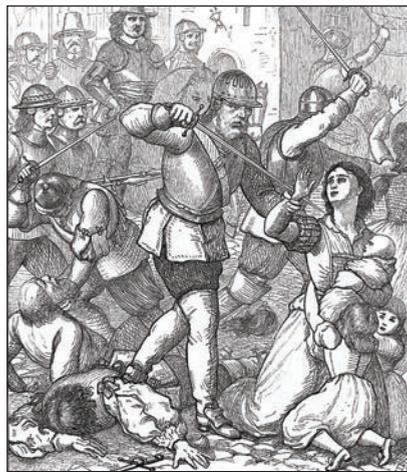
*Patrick J. Walsh is a writer in Quincy, Massachusetts.*

## A Short History of Ireland

1500-2000  
by John Gibney  
Yale, 281 pp., \$25

## After Ireland

*Writing the Nation  
from Beckett to the Present*  
by Declan Kiberd  
Harvard, 540 pp., \$39.95



*English troops led by Oliver Cromwell defeated Irish forces and massacred civilians at Drogheda in 1649.*

lish relations, which can be traced back to the 12th century and would continue for 800 years. English maltreatment of the Irish was perhaps at its most vicious during the Cromwellian conquest and settlement (1649-1653). Gibney reports that “the overall mortality rate” inflicted on the Irish during this period is estimated by historians to “have been as high as 15-20 percent.” In addition, after the bloodshed, between 15,000 and 25,000 native Irish were sent as indentured servants to the British West Indies. (Churchill, in his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, severely reprimanded Cromwell's “savage crimes”

and “merciless wickedness,” which, he wrote, “debased the standards of human conduct and sensibly darkened the journey of mankind.”)

Following the Glorious Revolution in England, James II and his Jacobite (mostly Catholic) supporters tried to use Ireland as a center of power; they were beaten down by William of Orange and the (mostly Protestant) Williamites. The Treaty of Limerick in 1691 that ended the Jacobite conflict in Ireland was followed by the flight of the “wild geese”—the exiling from Ireland of 10,000 Irish Jacobite troops, many of whom went into French service, along with 4,000 women and children. King William's victory confirmed the domination of Irish society by wealthy English Protestants and marked the demise of the old Gaelic aristocratic culture. An Irish poet lamented it as *An longbhriseadh*, the shipwreck.

Ireland would see another major uprising in 1798 during the French Revolution and sporadic uprisings thereafter—but the sadness of Ireland's sojourn through time was not restricted to war. Belgium in 1845 saw a strange blight on potatoes; a year later, the fungus would appear with devastating consequences in Ireland, where the most impoverished were almost wholly dependent upon the potato crop. Frederick Douglass, the American former slave, visited Ireland in 1845 before the famine was at its height, as Gibney recounts:

Douglass was horrified by the squalor of Dublin's streets, and the wretched villages that skirted the city. He who had seen the slave's cabin wrote [in a letter to fellow abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison] that “of all places to witness human misery, ignorance, degradation, filth and wretchedness, an Irish hut is pre-eminent.”

The Irish population, Gibney notes, “went from 8.2 million in 1841 to 6.5 million in 1851. ... A death toll of one million people from malnutrition, starvation and disease is hardly unrealistic,” with emigration accounting for the rest of the drop in population.

In the late 19th century, some Irish leaders began to push for freedom from English rule through constitutional means. Charles Stewart Parnell, an

elected member of Parliament from Ireland, sought Home Rule and Irish ownership of land through peaceful petition and protest. “The first victim of the new tactic bequeathed his surname to the English language: the Mayo land agent Charles Cunningham Boycott.”

Home Rule never came. In 1912, when it looked imminent, Protestant Ulster—26 percent of Ireland’s population—rebelled. “Alongside the concerns for their livelihoods were very real fears that the Protestant minority would be victimized by the Catholic majority, for, to paraphrase one of the most famous slogans of this era, Home Rule was deemed to be Rome rule.” The Protestants created an army to resist Home Rule; in 1916, Dublin and the Catholic south responded with a rebellion, the Easter Rising, aimed at creating an Irish republic. By the early 1920s, the island was politically divided, with the northern quarter remaining in the United Kingdom. The new Irish Free State stayed in the British Commonwealth until 1949, when it officially became a republic.

Gibney’s closing sections discuss the Troubles—the years of low-level insurgency and counterinsurgency fought over whether Northern Ireland would be pried away from the United Kingdom and politically joined with the rest of the island—and their resolution in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, as well as the economic boom of the 1990s and early 2000s that gave rise to the term “Celtic Tiger.” Today the Republic of Ireland is fully immersed in the European community. After centuries of fighting for its sovereignty, the republic in 2002 mothballed its lovely currency, the Irish pound that Yeats took the lead in designing, and exchanged it for the drab euro.

The collapse of Ireland’s economic boom in 2008 and the country’s subsequent bankruptcy ended its “existence as a sovereign and independent nation,” writes Declan Kiberd in his ominously titled *After Ireland*. Kiberd is an academic, based both in Ireland and the United States, and a scholar of the Irish language; his new book is part of a trilogy on Irish literature that

began with *Inventing Ireland* (1995) and continued with *Irish Classics* (2000). In this third volume, which traces the work of some 30 Irish writers and poets from Samuel Beckett through today, Kiberd has plenty to say about the present moment in Irish political and cultural life.

He offers a postmortem for lost Irish identity, bemoaning the heedless consumerism of contemporary Ireland. Kiberd is uncomfortable with a 2000 *Sunday Times* headline proclaiming, “Money is the new Irish religion.” While the “old religion”—Roman Catholicism—was “hierarchical and repressive,” it provided “some of the social glue which held communities together.” Professor Kiberd, who now teaches at Notre Dame, invests his faith in “a strange kind of hope” that a vision of “renewed community” might be found in the work of the Irish writers he treats in this volume.

One is reminded of T. S. Eliot’s line at the end of *The Waste Land*, “These fragments I have shored against my ruins.” Both Eliot and Yeats recognized a spiritual dimension to reality and the impoverishment of the modern world that denies it. Because Kiberd’s approach to religion discounts spiritual longings and metaphysical meaning, looking at religion only for its social effects, he seems not to see that the disease afflicting Ireland is the same one afflicting Western Europe.

Kiberd is a fan of the literary modernism of Joyce and Beckett, yet his best essays and insights are on those Irish writers who feel themselves to be in a linguistic parenthesis between Irish and English. His essays on poets Máire Mhac an tSaoi, Eavan Boland, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, and Michael Hartnett are exemplary. In his discussion of Hartnett (1941-1999), for example, Kiberd lays out how his decision to stop writing poetry in English—“the perfect language to sell pigs in”—and to write exclusively in Irish was tied to his broader political views and was complicated by the fact that his wife was English. This in

turn leads Kiberd to an intriguing discussion of the job of the poet. “Every poet senses that all official languages are already dead languages,” he writes. “All poets are—because they must be—translators.”

Kiberd extols some undeserving writers, like Edna O’Brien (born 1930), who is more an ephemeral journalist than a serious literary figure. And he gives short shrift to some writers of genius, like the brilliant poet and critic Patrick Kavanagh (1904-1967), unequivocally the greatest Irish poet after Yeats. “The purpose of art,” Kavanagh suggested in 1944, “is to project man imaginatively into the Other World, to discover in clay symbols the divine pattern.” He knew that the poet works at an anomalous crossroads where time, place, and eternity somehow meet.



Irish poet  
Michael Hartnett

Ireland today finds herself at a critical juncture. At the end of this month, Irish voters

will decide on a bill to legalize abortion in the republic. It is a vote that if approved will further subsume Ireland’s spiritual heritage.

Yeats, though not a professing Christian, had hoped Ireland would resist what he called the “filthy modern tide” and retain her spiritual and cultural identity in the modern world, serving as a beacon to a decadent Europe overrun by materialism. His last instructions were—

Irish poets learn your trade  
Sing whatever is well made,  
Scorn the sort now growing up  
All out of shape from toe to top,  
Their unremembering hearts and  
heads  
Base-born products of base beds.  
Sing the peasantry, and then  
Hard-riding country gentlemen,  
The holiness of monks, and after  
Porter-drinkers’ randy laughter;  
Sing the lords and ladies gay  
That were beaten into the clay  
Through seven heroic centuries;  
Cast your mind on other days  
That we in coming days may be  
Still the indomitable Irishry.

May indomitable Irish hearts and heads  
heed these words. ♦

# Waxing Back On

The Karate Kid *sequel* is good for some kicks.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The reboot is the latest example of Hollywood's desperate hunger to mine "intellectual property." It's so difficult and expensive to make potential audiences aware of something entirely new that anything with cultural provenance is immediately thought to have a leg up. And what has easier cultural provenance than something that was universally known not so long ago?

There are reboots, remakes, and revivals, not to mention sequels and prequels, and the boundaries between them can get fuzzy. Take the newly announced fall series from CBS called *Magnum P.I.* It stars an actor named Jay Hernandez, and so, it is a remake or a reboot; it would only be a revival if Tom Selleck returned as Magnum and brought with him as many members of the original cast as could be found. But people tend to use the words interchangeably, so it's best not to get hung up on the terminology.

Although there are a few examples of reboots going back decades in movie and TV history, the current rebooting craze began with Netflix's *Fuller House* in 2016 and solidified with Amazon's *Gilmore Girls*, Showtime's *Twin Peaks*, and NBC's *Will and Grace* before becoming a national news story when Roseanne Barr's show returned as a combatant in the Trump culture wars earlier this year to unprecedented ratings success. It will continue with a *Murphy Brown* reboot in the fall, and more such exhumations will be announced over the coming months

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

once the package deals are made.

It's not clear these reboots will be able to sustain interest beyond the first season because the very thing they are designed for—to let us to pay a visit to old friends—itself gets old after a while. There's only so much reminiscing you can do.



In the series *Cobra Kai*, Ralph Macchio (second from left) and William Zabka (right) reprise their roles from *The Karate Kid*.

Which is why the best, most inventive, and most creative of all the reboots is one that stands squarely on the shoulders of its progenitor before taking its story in delightfully different directions. *Cobra Kai* doesn't even reboot a TV show. Its source is *The Karate Kid*, the fun and cheesy 1984 *Rocky*-in-high-school retread about lonely Daniel LaRusso, who finds himself the target of San Fernando Valley bullies and is taught martial arts by his building's eccentric Japanese super.

At the end of the movie, Daniel (Ralph Macchio) defeats head bully Johnny Lawrence (William Zabka). *Cobra Kai* begins with Johnny 34 years later, working as a day laborer in the Valley. It seems like Daniel's ultimate wish fulfillment. Johnny was a bad rich kid and he's ended up a dead-end poor guy grabbing dinner from a strip-mall

convenience store before going home to a beer-can-strewn apartment. Meanwhile, Daniel is the most successful car dealer in the Valley, and Johnny must pass by his smug face peering down from a Ventura Boulevard billboard every day of his life.

*Cobra Kai*, for which Macchio and Zabka reprise their roles, flips the script. It's Johnny's story, really, not Daniel's. Johnny becomes the unlikely karate mentor of a kid who lives next door to him and then to the kid's friends. He's crude and mean and narrow-minded and insulting. But he's without airs and he brings real discipline to kids who really need some. Zabka, who hasn't done much acting in the past 25 years, is just spectacular in the part. Johnny is

never not a jerk, but there's something unexpectedly substantial to him, and you can't help rooting for him to pull himself out of the crater he's dug himself into.

Turns out Johnny has what the kids today call a "narrative" of his own in which Daniel is the villain—for stealing his girlfriend and the sense of self karate gave him all those years ago. Meanwhile, Daniel is in something of a spiritual crater of his own—living a nominally self-satisfied life with a comparably self-satisfied wife, a daughter

who ditches her fat friend for the popular clique, and a son who never looks up from his video game.

Though he's nominally a good guy, Daniel seems determined to make himself feel better by belittling Johnny and interfering with his efforts to make something of himself when their lives start colliding again. By the end of the tenth and final episode of its first season, both men have done really good things and really bad things—and so have the two new karate kids under their tutelage.

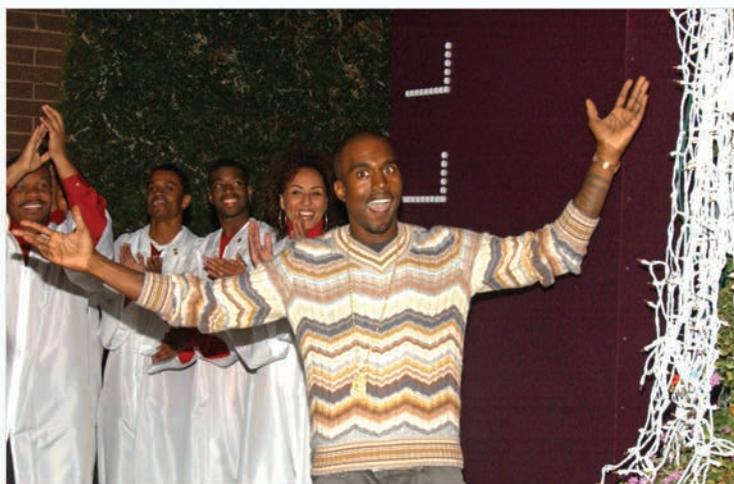
*Cobra Kai*, one of the first offerings from YouTube's Red service, is terrific entertainment. You need not know *The Karate Kid* to enjoy it, but come on. Of course you know it. How could you not? Have you been living under a rock since it was *Morning in America* 34 years ago? ♦

**BILERICO** Report

## Are straight black men the white people of black people?

588 Share on Facebook Share on Twitter

By Terrance Heath • Saturday, May 12, 2018



Kanye West Holiday Window Lighting to benefit the Kanye West Foundation Loop Dreams Program, Stella McCartney Boutique, Los Angeles, CA, December 5, 2006. Shutterstock

Just as discrimination exists within oppressed or disenfranchised groups, so does privilege.

In a video posted on [Facebook](#) and YouTube, Charity Croft addresses both the male privilege and heterosexual privilege of straight black men — with a focus on how it impacts black women and queer black men, among others.

Croft asks and answers the question: Are straight black men the white people of black people? In other words, among black people, do they enjoy greater privilege than those who aren't straight and male?

### Further Reading

Trump's new pick to head the CDC will make you sick

Dear Abby's advice to a mom who can't accept her lesbian daughter is just what she needs to hear

Oregon school punished a queer student by making them read the Bible

Georgia Democrat 'loves homosexuals'; but not equality

New NRA President Oliver North has a long & sordid anti-LGBTQ history

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