OPINION

The Global Swamp

WONDER LAND
By Daniel Henninger

Maybe Donald Trump should export red MAGA caps to France and the United Kingdom. Make France Great Again. Ditto England.

The photos this week of a shell-shocked Emmanuel Macron and beyond-beleaguered Theresa May show what a heavy lift renewed greatness has become for once-great nations. How come?

With all due respect to the glories of 18th-century France, the only measure of greatness that concerns us now is the period after the devastation of

Donald Trump should export MAGA caps to Macron's France and May's England.

World War II. Europeans rebuilt their economies from rubble and did so quickly. At the same time, they erected a welfare system to ensure social well-being, an Enlightenment idea.

It took Europe's leaders about 40 years to see that welfare spending was eroding the growth of their postwar economies. So in 1992 they produced the Maastricht Treaty, which both mandated measures of fiscal discipline on profligate members—not least France—and created an institution called the European Union. The fiscal discipline largely failed, but the rules-making institutions of the EU flourished.

It is possible to draw a straight line from Maastricht to the mayhem this week in London over Brexit and in Paris over gasoline prices.

By now, a commentators' consensus has emerged that the cause of these troubles is the people living in cities, towns and villages across Europe who feel the past 25 years have benefited everyone except them.

This global revelation sank in, of course, only when the reviled Donald Trump succeeded to the U.S. presidency after appealing to these presumably forgotten men and women.

What are known as "the political elites" aren't happy with any of this. They believe that the postwar political and economic institutions created by people like them produced widespread well-being—which was true for a while—and that the path forward now requires giving them a chance to fix things for the forgotten.

They flatter themselves.

The hero of global economic growth the past quarter-century isn't them. It's the microchip.

Every historic burst of progress since the Industrial Revolution has depended on innovation, and I don't mean political innovation. That hasn't happened since John Locke.

The microchip—it is a banality to point out—has been a historic multiplier of productive possibilities. New ideas about what, where and how to do business exploded everywhere, leading to more new ideas, which created the global economy, a fantastic achievement for a tiny electronic device.

Some people, however, believe they came up losers in this economic revolution, and they are in revolt.

ABDULMONAM EASSA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Paris's Arc de Triomphe, Dec. 1.

Let us segue to another truism today among the commentariat—that the economic and social damage endured by this discontented working class is mainly the result of the financial crisis of 2008. And let us assume there is something to this point.

Some day a young, politically neutral economist will do a comparison of the U.S. economy from 2009 to 2016 and from 2017 through midyear 2018.

A short version of this comparison is a question: How did the U.S. economy go from an OK condition in January 2017 to an intense, nationwide labor shortage and rising wages less than 18 months later?

The "sugar high" explanation is partisan obtuseness. Something more economically interesting had to have happened.

The answer likely lies in deciphering the effects of the Trump administration's abrupt unwinding of the Obama era's economic regulations.

The Obama years don't necessarily bring into question the idea of regulation itself but of *hyper-regulation*. They overdid it, suddenly layering rules across the entire U.S. industrial landscape. The economy gagged.

Against the backdrop this week of Paris in flames and London's Brexit struggles, our interest isn't so much in the Obama regulations themselves as in the state of mind that produced so many of them.

Presumably each Obama regulator assumed that individually he or she was doing good. It wouldn't have occurred to any of them that in the aggregate they and their rules were anesthetizing a fundamentally healthy economy.

This is the mandarin mind-set that has prevailed in the nations of Europe for nearly 70 years and in the European Commission for 25. They built a welfare and regulatory structure piece by incremental piece until the U.K., France, Spain and Italy choked. Germany unilaterally reformed itself in the early 2000s, and grew.

This is the mind-set that drove so many Brits to Brexit. It is the mind-set Mr. Macron was trying to undo with reforms of the French labor system until he himself succumbed with a gas tax on the middle class in the name of saving the planet.

This is the global swamp.

Oddly, the U.S. in the third year of the Trump presidency may be remembered for trying to manage the economy through tariffs, quotas and the forced immobility of labor and business. Meanwhile, the post-Obama Democrats, laughably, want "socialism."

But that astonishing, bursting economic resurrection of the first two Trump years should stand as a case study of the good that can happen when a nation's leaders choose microchips over mandarins.

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The Cynicism of Georgia's Stacey Abrams

By Karl Rove

In one state and for one candidate, the 2018 midterm election isn't over.

Georgia Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Stacey Abrams lost to Republican Brian Kemp by 54,723 votes, 50.2% to 48.8%. Turnout was 3.9 million, the biggest ever in a Peach State governor's race.

But Ms. Abrams insists she "cannot concede" that the outcome "is right, true or proper." At issue is what she calls Mr. Kemp's "appalling" actions as Georgia's secretary of state. She asserts his objective was the "suppression of the people's democratic right to vote," in a "deliberate and intentional" effort that left the election "rotten and rigged."

Because "democracy failed in Georgia," Ms. Abrams has filed a lawsuit. She's seeking to do more than overturn state laws: She wants to brand Mr. Kemp a racist election thief and discredit his tenure as governor.

Ms. Abrams has claimed that Mr. Kemp unlawfully purged 1.5 million voters from the rolls, put 53,000 new registrations on hold, created long polling lines on Election Day, and misplaced provisional ballots. She says her "accusations are based entirely on evidence." Let's take a look.

First, removing names from the registration rolls: The 1993 National Voter Registration Act, passed by a Democratic Congress and signed by President Clinton, requires states to keep voter lists "accurate and current" by identifying persons who died or moved, using "uniform, nondiscriminatory" procedures.

Georgia's law to comply with the federal act is similar to Ohio's, which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld this year. It works like this: If the U.S. Postal Service's change-of-address list shows a Georgia voter has moved or is no longer at his address of record,

The Democratic gubernatorial loser goes to court with bogus racism charges.

the state sends him a postage-paid confirmation reply card. It there's no response for 30 days, the voter is considered "inactive," but can still vote if he wants. If he doesn't turn out in the next two federal elections, he is removed from the rolls. The removal process can take as long as seven years. And about the impact of those removals: While Mr. Kemp was Secretary of State, the number of Georgians registered to vote rose from 5.8 million before he took office in 2010 to 6.9 million this year.

Then there's the charge of holding up registration applications. This involves the state's "exact match" law, which requires the last name, first initial, date of birth and other simple information on voter-registration applications match the information in the Social Security database or the Georgia driver's-license file. If they don't match, the prospective voter is notified online and by mail, and given 26 months to correct any discrepancy. Meanwhile, he can vote by presenting a valid ID that is "a substantial match" with his application. The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals recently upheld a similar law in Florida. Moreover, local election boards in Georgia's 159 counties check registration forms against the databases. The secretary of state's office is only a backstop.

Ms. Abrams herself may be responsible for many of the botched voter applications. Before running for governor, she led a $12.5 million registration drive that paid her $442,000 over three years for serving as its part-time leader. Despite ample resources, Ms. Abrams's efforts relied on paper forms, not online registration or electronic forms. As a result, many applications contained mistakes or fraudulent signatures.

Ms. Abrams's complaints about long lines at polling places and mishandled provisional ballots are also misplaced. County election boards, not the secretary of state, decide on poll closures, set the number of voting machines, and handle provisional ballots. These local officials are in many cases Democrats, and Ms. Abrams carried the three Atlanta-area counties—Fulton, Cobb and DeKalb—with the most closures, the largest numbers of machines withdrawn from service, and the bulk of provisional-ballot problems.

As a rising star on the Democratic left, Ms. Abrams drew millions in donations from the Soros family and billionaire hedge-funder Tom Steyer, as well as campaign appearances by Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama and many of the party's 2020 presidential hopefuls. She lost anyway.

Ms. Abrams now cynically claims she's a victim of election fraud motivated by bigotry. Even in this ugly period of American politics, trying to use defeat in a close election to create racial resentment stands out as dangerous and corrosive. Ms. Abrams's suit, *Fair Fight Action v. Crittenden*, is unlikely to have a happy ending. And damaging the state's reputation won't help her win future races, no matter how much she says she loves Georgia and wants to serve it. Sometimes you should exit gracefully.

Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

Check Your Progressive Privilege

By Carrie Lukas

Progressives are constantly checking their "white privilege," but what about *ideological* privilege? Particularly for women, the prevailing assumption is that you aren't normal unless you're a liberal Democrat. Conservative women aren't only left out, but increasingly stigmatized.

Women's magazines and news outlets depict women who vote Republican as deviants. Vogue headlined a postelection commentary "Why Do White Women Keep Voting for the GOP and Against Their Own Interests?" The Guardian asked: "Half of White Women Continue to Vote Republican. What's Wrong with Them?" The latter article asserted that "white women vote for Republicans for the same reason that white men do: because they are racist." Barbra Streisand claimed "a lot of women vote the way their husbands vote; they don't believe enough in their own thoughts." Hillary Clinton, Michelle Obama and Madeleine Albright have all expressed similar sentiments in public.

Conservative women have been left out and stigmatized too long.

Progressive women see their intellectual and political leaders glamorized in glossy magazine photo spreads and celebrated on daytime TV talk shows. Conservative female policy makers are invisible, if they're lucky. Glamour's 2018 Women of the Year included gun-control activists and anti-Trump celebrities, along with California Sen. Kamala Harris. No recognizably conservative woman made the cut.

Progressive women enjoy the benefit of the doubt when they say insensitive or prejudiced things. Mrs. Clinton recently joked that two black men "look alike." No conservative could get away with such a remark.

College administrators tout the value of diversity. Yet the National Association of Scholars "could not find a single Republican with an exclusive appointment to fields like gender studies" among 8,688 tenure-track professors at 51 top liberal-arts colleges.

Far-left activists next month march on Washington again under the banner "the Women's March." The media will present them as simply "women"—as if women with other views don't exist.

Rooting out bigotry isn't easy. The first step is to recognize the prejudiced messages that make their way into the public square. A truly fair and inclusive society would include positive, aspirational images of conservative and libertarian women as well as liberal ones. It wouldn't marginalize women for their ideology or politics any more than it would exclude women based on race, age, looks or sexual orientation.

Once woke to progressive privilege, we can make strides toward a fairer, more inclusive culture for all women.

Ms. Lukas is president of Independent Women's Forum.

BOOKSHELF | By Adrian Woolfson

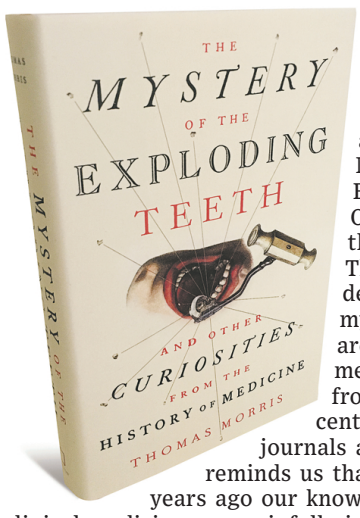
Desperate Remedies

The Mystery of the Exploding Teeth

By Thomas Morris
(Dutton, 351 pages, $26)

An international consortium of molecular biologists recently synthesized a number of baker's-yeast chromosomes from scratch. Before long they will have completed the entire set of 16 chromosomes. In the process, they also streamlined the chromosomes' design. Regions that these biologists reasoned were unnecessary for healthy function were deleted. Some genes were relocated to an artificial 17th chromosome, sites were introduced to allow chromosomal reshuffling and the genetic code was modified. Remarkably, the remodeled synthetic chromosomes appear to function perfectly.

With this proof of concept in place, the next step may be to synthesize a human genome from scratch, eventually enabling us to permanently fix some of the broken genes that cause human diseases. The related ethical issues would be considerable, but nevertheless tractable. More important, it would mark the apotheosis of the molecular paradigm of modern medicine, dispelling any vestiges of metaphysics from the philosophy of medicine and precisely defining the causal structure of human existence.



But things were not always so. In "The Mystery of the Exploding Teeth and Other Curiosities From the History of Medicine," Thomas Morris takes a delightful romp through a myriad of entertaining, arcane and obscure medical anecdotes plucked from 18th- and 19th-century newspapers, journals and textbooks. He reminds us that just a few hundred years ago our knowledge of causality in clinical medicine was painfully inadequate. Our ability to remedy the malfunctions of the human body, in a manner free of pain, was correspondingly rudimentary.

Using a panoply of colorful examples, the author artfully illustrates the frustrations, uncertainty, poorly founded confidence and frequent futility of medical practice in the prescientific age. Employing a consistently light and humorous touch, he effortlessly navigates a cornucopia of fascinating, esoteric and obscure patient histories.

The carefully selected vignettes demonstrate the befuddled mindset of the well-intentioned physicians who were forced to contend with the vagaries of damaged and failing human flesh without the benefit of anesthesia, and armed with little more than the fanciful theories of Galen (a second-century Greek who attributed disease to imbalances of the four "humors": blood, phlegm, and yellow and black bile) and an elementary knowledge of human anatomy.

Yet despite their lack of mechanistic understanding, these individuals showed leaps of ingenuity no less startling than those of today's physicians and genome rewriters. To avoid subjecting himself to the dangers of 18th-century surgery to remove a bladder stone, Mr. Morris tells us, the French-born surgeon Claude Martin fashioned an instrument out of a knitting needle and a whalebone handle, which he then inserted through his urethra and used to manually file away the stone.

Treatments of old for common health ills included tobacco-smoke enemas, arsenic cigarettes—and the 'Pigeon's-Rump Cure.'

Mr. Morris also recounts the fate of the 57-year-old Earl of Kent who, in 1702, was given laxatives and a vomit-inducing solution made from camel's urine and the toxic metal antimony, had snuff stuffed into both nostrils, was subjected to blood-letting and a tobacco-smoke enema, before finally being wrapped in the bowels of a freshly slaughtered sheep—all in an attempt to resuscitate him from cardiac arrest. Needless to say, he did not survive.

Other such treatments in history included cigarettes laced with mercury or arsenic, port-wine enemas, the excreta of chameleons and Indian river snakes, and the gastric juices of crows.

Mr. Morris documents an especially intriguing 19th-century therapy (the "Pigeon's-Rump Cure") used to treat convulsions in infants. A pigeon's rump would be held up against the child's exposed bottom; the bird would then begin gasping for air. While the child gradually recovered, the same could not be said of the pigeon. One doctor's conclusion at the time was that, despite the clear success of the treatment, "experiments with other poultry" were necessary.

One thing that hasn't changed with the passage of time is human irrationality and our apparently limitless ingenuity when it comes to identifying novel ways of harming ourselves. Mr. Morris tells us, for example, of the young sailor who, in order to impress his friends, in June 1799 swallowed a penknife. His knife-swallowing habit proved hard to give up, and led to his eventual demise. Another unfortunate individual's case is described in the section titled "The Boy Who Got His Wick Stuck in a Candlestick." Yet another patient compulsively swallowed needles. This continuity of human folly across the centuries is simultaneously surprising and reassuring.

The author emerges as equal measures social historian and voyeur. Little attempt is made to connect the various incidents into a substantial overview, in the manner of the greats of the genre such as the British medical historian Roy Porter. Indeed, the material, although both fascinating and entertaining, is left displayed naked on the dissection table in a somewhat disjointed and frivolous manner that is ultimately disappointing. It nevertheless provides a curious window into a vitalistic era of medical practice that, fortunately for us all, has been eclipsed by the significant advances of contemporary molecular medicine.

Dr. Woolfson is the author of "Life Without Genes" and "An Intelligent Person's Guide to Genetics."