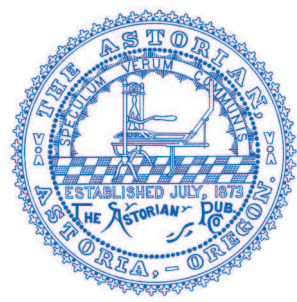


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Yes, Virginia there is a Santa Claus

*Editor's note: The following editorial, written by veteran newsman Francis P. Church, first appeared in The New York Sun in 1897 and was immediately lauded by the Sun's readers. It became one of the most famous editorials ever written, the first truly viral communication of its time long before the internet and Facebook. It now stands as the most reprinted newspaper editorial in history. We take pleasure in keeping in the spirit of the season today in reprinting it as well. To all of our readers, the staff at The Daily Astorian wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*



AP Photo/Laura Haapamaki

**Santa Claus leaves for his annual Christmas journey from the Santa Claus Village at the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland, in 2014.**

We take pleasure in answering thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of The Sun:

*"I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in The Sun, it's so.' Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?"*

— Virginia O'Hanlon.  
 115 West Ninety-Fifth Street.

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy.

Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The external light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see.

Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love and romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernatural beauty and glory beyond.

Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else as real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, maybe 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the hearts of children.



# Books for the Trump era

By ROSS DOUTHAT  
 New York Times News Service

The Donald Trump presidency is not yet officially upon us, but the Trump era has already been good for political reading lists. Book buyers baffled by Trumpism and seeking understanding have turned to various sociologies of the ur-Trump voter, making best sellers out of J.D. Vance's "Hillbilly Elegy," Nancy Isenberg's "White Trash" and Arlie Russell Hochschild's "Strangers in Their Own Land."

Liberals looking to feed their sense of alarm have been steered toward Hannah Arendt's "The Origins of Totalitarianism," Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here" and Philip Roth's "Plot Against America." "What Is Populism?" by German political scientist Jan-Werner Mueller has been widely recommended; so has Mark Lilla's anatomy of reactionary thought, "The Shipwrecked Mind"; so has Richard Rorty's "Achieving Our Country," from back in 1998, mostly for a prescient few paragraphs on "the nonsuburban electorate" and its potential affinity for strongmen. The racial element in Trumpism has sent people back to W.E.B. Du Bois on "Black Reconstruction" — once they've finished, of course, with the latest from Ta-Nehisi Coates.

But for your last-minute Christmas shopping, I have some slightly different recommendations to make. The Trump-era reading lists I've seen include many worthy titles, but they also tend to focus heavily on the dark forces lurking somewhere outside enlightened circles — in the hills of Appalachia, in the post-industrial heartland, in the souls of racists and chauvinists and crypto-fascists. They are anthropologies of populism, cautionary tales from history, blueprints for blunting revanchism's appeal. But they do not generally subject Western liberalism itself to rigorous critique.

And that might be what liberal readers need right now: Not just portraits of the Brexit and Trump-voting domestic Other, but a clearer sense of their own worldview's limits, blind spots, blunders and internal contradictions.

### Internal critics

So my reading list starts with two of liberalism's sharpest internal critics, both deceased — a reactionary of the left, Christopher Lasch, and a conservative liberal, Samuel P. Huntington. Their most-cited works, Lasch's "Culture of Narcissism" and Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order," have obvious applications for our culture and politics today. But the books I would recommend are a little different.

For Lasch, it's "The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy" (1995), a polemic against the professional upper class' withdrawal from the society it rules and a critique of the ways in which multiculturalism and meritocracy erode patriotism and democracy. For Huntington, it's "Who Are We? The Challenges to American National Identity" (2004), a book widely denounced as racist for arguing that the recent wave of Latin-American immigration might not be easily assimilable and might instead balkanize the country into identitarian redoubts.

Both books are imperfect: Lasch's is too angry, Hunting-



AP Photo/Brynn Anderson

**President-elect Donald Trump stands on stage during a rally Saturday in Mobile, Ala.**

ton's too pessimistic (I think). But in different ways they both offer, in Lasch's words, a "revisionist interpretation of American history, one that stresses the degree to which liberal democracy has lived off the borrowed capital of moral and religious traditions antedating the rise of liberalism." And they illustrate how the Western elite has burned the candle of solidarity at both ends — welcoming migration that transforms society from below even as the upper class floats up into a post-national utopia, which remains an undiscovered country for the people left behind.

### Across the Atlantic

My next recommendation is from across the Atlantic: "The Abolition of Britain" (1999), by Peter Hitchens, Christopher's right-wing brother. Writing early in the Tony Blair era, Hitchens argued that Britain's rulers had broken faith with the island nation's past, burying its history, customs and traditions, subjecting their people to a misguided European pseudo-empire, and tolerating social decay and disarray as the price of tolerance and progress. Nearly 20 years on, you will not find a clearer case against both Blair and David Cameron's shared worldview, or a clearer explanation for why so many Britons voted for Brexit.

Then I recommend widening your gaze to Europe as a whole, through Christopher Caldwell's "Reflections on the Revolution in Europe" (2009), which critiqued the Continent's rulers for welcoming — out of idealism, economic calculation and indifference — an unprecedented level of immigration from the Islamic world that their societies lacked both the competence and the civilizational confidence to assimilate.

### Shades darker

Which is why my next recommendations are a few shades darker: First "Submission" (2015), Michel Houellebecq's seemingly dystopian novel about an exhausted near-future France that ends up choosing between Isla-

mism and fascism (it picks the veil), and then one of Houellebecq's earlier novels, "The Elementary Particles," whose portrait of a loveless, sex-fixated and disposable modern masculinity reveals that its author believes the real dystopia is already here — that the end of history is actually a materially comfortable desert, from which the political and religious extremisms of "Submission" offer a welcome and rehumanizing form of escape.

This is itself an extreme idea, of course, and so is the comparison offered in my final recommendation, Ryszard Legutko's "Demon In Democracy" (2015), in which the author, a Polish political philosopher, explicitly links the ideological conformism and faith in capital-P Progress of contemporary liberalism to the oppressive communism of his youth.

Legutko is a member of Law and Justice, the right-wing party currently ruling Poland, whose ascent has provoked the Western media to panic over its religious nationalism and illiberal forays. Which is all the more reason to read him, and to see through his eyes how the open society as envisioned by contemporary progressives can seem to conservatives like a closed and stifling one — closed to transcendence, closed to memory, closed to the pre-liberal traditions upon which Legutko would argue the liberal democratic order actually depends.

Liberal readers probably will not finish "Demon" ready to vote for Law and Justice; Houellebecq probably won't convince them that our civilization's choice is porn and cloning or the caliphate; Hitchens probably won't persuade them to become Brexiters.

But even for the unconvinced, reading these writers will go a long way toward explaining the most unexpected thing about Western politics in the strange year of 2016 — the sheer number of people in our prosperous, at-peace societies who don't seem to want to live in liberalism's end of history anymore.