Best of Kevin Williamson 2016

I collected excerpts from the blog for the best of 2016 and so may came from Kevin Williamson at National review that I broke his out to a separate post:

People Aren't Widgets by Kevin Williamson

> *But every expensively miseducated jackass who thinks he should be president of these United States has an opinion about what a bottle of grape soda ought to cost in Des Moines or Dixville Notch. The assumptions in Washington are the same as those in Beijing: that everything is subject to political power, that it all comes down to having the right sort of enlightened rulers with the right sort of enlightened ideas, that everything else — the real world — is detail. But human beings, and their relationships, are not electrical circuits. They are not governed by circuit breakers. Not in reality.*

What Trump Doesn't Understand — It's a Lot — about Our Trade Deficit with China by Kevin Williamson at National Review

> *Our trade deficit with China isn't a product of the Chinese getting rich — it's a product of their being poor. We will not have more-balanced trade with China until Chinese people have a standard of living that is more like that of Americans. Putting a 45 percent tax on American shoppers and people who build computers in the United States (you know who does that? Lenovo, a Chinese company) or build robotics systems using some imported components isn't going to change any of that. What's worse, it will exacerbate one of the real problems that U.S-based firms do face: relatively high business taxes. Remember, much of that Chinese trade deficit comes from electronic equipment and industrial machines used by American companies rather than from cheap plastic waterguns, and Trump wants to put a 45 percent materials-and-equipment tax on top of the 40 percent they pay in corporate*

income taxes.

Engineering Better Voters by Kevin Williamson at National Review

> *Progressives are a funny bunch in that they do sincerely believe that government should be empowered, almost without limitation, to do the will of the People, who are sovereign, but they imagine that the People speak with one voice, or at least that they should speak with one voice. When the People get froggy and refuse to fall in line behind, say, the Affordable Care Act, which the best experts drew up on behalf of the People, who (so the story goes) gave Barack Obama a mandate to reform health care, then something must be wrong. And we all know what that is: Too much debate and too much political discourse including too many voices, some of which — those of Charles and David Koch, for instance — must be silenced in order for the People to be heard as one voice, the way it was intended. (No, we are not allowed to ask: Intended by Whom?) So we arrive at the strange situation in which the Left desires maximal formal participation in democratic processes but heavy restriction of everything ancillary to those processes, most especially political speech.*

Kevin Williams at National Review, Bitter Laughter

> *A nation needs its Twains and Menckens. (We could have got by without Molly Ivins.) The excrement and sentimentality piles up high and thick in a democratic society, and it's sometimes easier to burn it away rather than try to shovel it. But they are only counterpoints: They cannot be the leading voice, or the dominant spirit of the age. That is because this is a republic, and in a republic, a politics based on one half of the population hating the other half is a politics that loses even if it wins. The same holds true for one that relies on half of us seeing the other half as useless, wicked, moronic,*

deluded, or "prehensile morons." (I know, I know, and you can save your keystrokes: I myself am not running for office.) If you happen to be Mark Twain, that sort of thing is good for a laugh, and maybe for more than a laugh. But it isn't enough. "We must not be enemies," President Lincoln declared, and he saw the republic through a good deal worse than weak GDP growth and the sack of a Libyan consulate.

The better angels of our nature have not deserted us. It is closer to the truth that we have failed them, and the impossible situation of 2016 — a choice between two kinds of corrupt, self-serving megalomaniacs — is only the lesion that denotes a deeper infection. There is no national vice-principal's office or confessional into which we can drag ourselves and shame-facedly admit that we messed up, say that we're very sorry, and promise to do better next time. But we must nonetheless admit that we messed up, say that we're very sorry, and promise to do better next time. And there will be a next time, irrespective of the hysterical ninnies who insist that if this election does not go their way, then this is the end of the nation.

Kevin Williamson at National Review, The New New Malthusians:

For well over a century after Malthus's death, variations on his prophecy — that growing human populations would eventually overwhelm the world's natural resources, resulting in famine and other unpleasantries — thrived. They are, in fact, the most popular genre of political writing. Apocalypticism is the great survivor of the world of ideas, mutating as necessary: Many popular modern libertarian figures, natural enemies of the Malthusian creed, make a good living promising that disaster lurks just around the corner, and that it can be best weathered with a large investment in gold coins or freeze-drying equipment for your bunker. A form of Austrian economics (often half-understood) "guarantees" this outcome in much the same way that Malthus's calculations

> *“guaranteed” mass starvation some years ago.*
>
> *The super-neo-reverse Malthusians mainly are concerned with a different commodity: labor. We are getting so good at making things, they say, that there simply won’t be enough jobs in the future. Which is to say, they believe that we are going to make ourselves poor through abundance.*

Kevin Williamson (again) at National Review, Sneaky Inflation

> *The perverse fact is that government efforts to make politically important goods such as education and health care less expensive make them more expensive. This is because most government programs are designed as though supply and demand do not actually exist, or as though they are optional. Consider not only Obamacare but all of the other efforts we’ve made over the past several decades to make health care more affordable. None of those programs subtracts from the number of Americans needing or desiring medical services; none of them adds to the number of physicians, dentists, nurses, or pharmacists available to meet that demand, or to the number of hospital beds, clinics, or pharmaceutical factories. Demand is what it is, and supply is what it is, and the government simply dumps money into the equation. A larger quantity of money chasing an unchanged supply of goods is something close to the classical definition of inflation, so it is no surprise to see medical prices increasing far more rapidly than those of other consumer goods.*

And one of his last of the year, The Last Days of Barack Obama

> *The idea that a large, complex society enjoying English liberty could long endure without the guiding hand of a priest-king was, in 1776, radical. A few decades later, it became ordinary — Americans could not imagine living any other way. The republican manner of American presidents was pronounced: There is a famous story about President Lincoln’s*

supposedly receiving a European ambassador who was shocked to see him shining his own shoes. The diplomat said that in Europe, a man of Lincoln's stature would never shine his own shoes. "Whose shoes would he shine?" Lincoln asked.

As American society grows less literate and the state of its moral education declines, the American people grow less able to engage their government as intellectually and morally prepared citizens. We are in the process – late in the process, I'm afraid – of reverting from citizens to subjects. Subjects are led by their emotions, mainly terror and greed. They need not be intellectually or morally engaged – their attitude toward government is a lot like that of Trump's old pal Roy Cohn: "Don't tell me what the law is. Tell me who the judge is."