

Cultural Daily

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Sed quid?

Todd Alcott · Wednesday, February 8th, 2017

The United States is now 319 million people in an abusive relationship with a president.

Anyone who has been in an abusive relationship knows the signs. The abuser is always right, the abused is always wrong. The abuser has a bottomless need for obeisance from the abused. No amount of power, no amount of fawning or acclaim will appease him. Any back-talk will be met with fury and reprisals. The rallying cry of abusers is “Look what you made me do!” After Trump’s whirlwind first two weeks, where major executive orders sowed chaos around the world and the tiniest niceties of the highest office in the land, from routine press conferences to prayer breakfasts to phone calls with allied leaders, were turned into contemptible displays of raging, narcissistic ego and lies were sprayed like machine-gun fire on our TVs and computer screens, it’s impossible for the screenwriter to imagine how bad the future will be. The Trump presidency is already ten times worse than anyone could have imagined; our nation’s satirists will have to take a step back and question their career choices. Well-researched, well-written articles by important national thinkers, predicting dire results of four years of a Trump presidency, written the week of his disastrous inauguration, were obsolete by their publication date.

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So that’s where we are. The question, stated above in Latin, is “Now what?” Or, as the screenwriter asks, “Now that we have our inciting incident, how does the plot develop? What are the beats of the narrative?”

The action of the drama is, of course, rooted in character. Who are the characters? Character dictates action, action creates conflict, conflict creates drama.

DONALD TRUMP, as we’ve discussed earlier, wants only “love on his own terms.” He likes power, but power is only a means to an end. He likes money, insofar as money is a concrete expression of love. When people give him money, that means they love him. He expects to receive a *lot* of concrete, measurable love from world leaders and corporate heads over the course of his presidency.

In order for Donald Trump to function as a chief executive, it’s vital for him to surround himself with flatterers and sycophants, people who express to him the pomps of love. Those flatterers and sycophants include Steve Bannon, Rex Tillerson, Betsy DeVos, Michael Flynn, KellyAnne Conway, Sean Spicer and many others. Here I will discuss the major characters and how they will

affect the narrative moving forward.

STEVE BANNON is an anti-Semitic, white supremacist, conspiracy theorist who has stated his intent to create World War III in order to remake the United States in its “fourth turning,” an apocalyptic event involving a Christian army and an Islamic (and Jewish) enemy that will allow him and his white-supremacist friends to rule the United States for fifty years. I know that sounds like the worst bad-guy plot since *Superman Returns*, but those are all things that Steve Bannon has said, publicly, in videos and interviews he’s done, that he wants to do. Yes. Those are the things he *wants us to know he intends to do*. God only knows what *secret* plans he has.

Bannon slithered his way into the White House by using his publishing platform, Breitbart, to flatter Trump. Does Trump share Bannon’s views? Does he understand Bannon’s views? Does he even *know* Bannon’s views? Difficult to say; if a paragraph goes by without the word “Trump” in it, it’s most likely that Trump doesn’t register it. But if a news item involves the words “terrorist,” “Islam,” “war” or “massacre,” you can bet that Bannon is behind it. This bona-fide supervillain deserves his own column in this space, but the important thing to remember here is that a man who spent years cooking up fanciful conspiracy theories about Obama and the Clintons has now been given a platform and a blank check to create one of his own.

REX TILLERSON is a Texas oilman and the CEO of Exxon. What does Rex Tillerson want? Rex Tillerson wants to merge Exxon with Rosneft, the largest oil company in Russia, which is controlled by Vladimir Putin. Exxon’s merger with Rosneft will create the largest corporation in the world, a corporation large enough to dictate its own foreign policy. The cost, of course, is lifting sanctions on Russia for their crimes in Eastern Europe. So that will happen. Tillerson will lift sanctions, maybe slowly, maybe all at once, when it suits him, or when he and Putin agree it is meet to do so. Then Exxon and Rosneft can merge and plunder the Arctic for its oil, and the US will have an ally to invade the Mideast and, why not, China.

Does Donald Trump understand what Rex Tillerson’s plan is? Oh my yes. Very clearly. It’s why he’s expressed such love and admiration for Putin and continues to do so. Trump admires Putin because Putin has figured out how to take the wealth of nations and place it directly into his pocket, making himself worth, some say, \$200 billion. That’s the kind of love Trump can get behind, and it’s why he will never release his taxes. Does Trump care about the thousands or millions of lives that will surely be lost in the ensuing wars and environmental disasters that will flow from this change in policy? No.

Trump also loves Putin because Putin doesn’t put up with nonsense like “dissent,” he has his political foes locked up or murdered. Will Trump start copying that habit? Only time will tell.

THE GOP: What does the GOP want? Here’s where it gets interesting. The GOP believe — sincerely, with every beat of their red-blooded hearts, believe — that only they are “real Americans,” that only they are fit to govern, to make laws, to adjudicate morality. They stress the important of Christianity, but their philosophy is strictly Old Testament. The Father is the head of the household, God works in mysterious ways, and He often smites the ones He loves in order to keep them in line. Republicans believe themselves to be the sole possessors of “rights,” that others are not born with them but must earn them, that only straight white men can grant rights upon others. If you pay homage to their supremacy and play by their rules, they may, if they are so inclined, grant you rights, on condition. If you misbehave or do not sufficiently respect your benefactors, they see it as their due to take your rights away from you.

And so, what the GOP wants is “to take back America.” Take it back from whom, exactly? Why, from the women and minorities, the gays and the trans folks, all the masses who have so flagrantly expressed their desire to be alive and part of American society.

The way the GOP plans to address this monumental enormity is to take away those people’s right to vote. This plan has been underway for decades through gerrymandering, and got a big push in 2016 through repeal of the Voting Rights Act in key states. Trump has now aided the GOPs efforts by announcing his plan to stage a full-blown “investigation” into “voter fraud.” He’s already announced that he won’t be investigating states that voted for him; only blue states will be investigated. You can be assured that this “investigation” will remove millions of Democratic votes from the rolls.

Which is why the GOP is currently running hog-wild in Washington, backing everything Trump suggests, rolling back regulations on everything from banks to pollution standards and reveling in Trump’s new policy of open corruption and bribery. They know they won’t be voted out of office in 2018, they’ve already made that an impossibility. Trump controls the Congress, the Senate, 33 state houses, and, soon, the Supreme Court. He’s already flouted more rules and laws than can be counted, not to mention repeatedly committed treason, and the GOP has shown no interest whatsoever in harnessing him, or even slapping his wrist. To adapt an old showbiz saying, you don’t have to be nice to people on the way up if you have no intention of coming down.

SED QUID? What is the way forward for us, the abused populace of the United States? Who will help us in our time of need? Not, unfortunately, Washington Democrats, whose only interest is “keeping their jobs.” Democrats in the House and Senate are playing politics when the name of the game is “Fascist Dictatorship.” Our nation’s judges will also not help us, they can only issue orders that cannot be enforced when the Justice Department is merely a rubber stamp for a tyrant. The media seems to have suddenly realized its complicity in electing this monster and is trying to make amends, but it’s much too little and much too late, they’re bringing truth to a lie fight. Lies always win in a lie fight.

No, the only ones who can save us is “the people,” the people who poured out of their homes and into the city streets the day after the inauguration, not only in the US but all over the world, in the largest worldwide demonstration in history. We are 319 million abused spouses, but our numbers are our strength. Trump, Spicer and Conway can lie all they want, but they cannot contradict what we see with our own eyes. The abuser requires secrecy to enforce his dominance, which is why “Look what you made me do!” is always followed by “If you tell anyone about this I’ll kill you.” We are all here to bear witness to this unprecedented national tragedy, and to, at the very least, to assure each other that what we see is actually happening.

Image from the Los Angeles Women’s March. Photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher.

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