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## *Russiagate and the Men with Glass Eyes*

The hypocrisy and racism of American elites seems to have a depthless quality to it. The vast congeries of hysterical elitists hyperventilating over the phantom collusions of Donald Trump can now add a Shakespearean scholar to their sordid ranks. Trump has lately been limned—and slimed—in a book by Stephen Greenblatt, *eminent* scholar of the Bard, Cogan University Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University, General Editor of The Norton Anthology of English Literature, and The Norton Shakespeare. The Harvard luminary uncloaks his bourgeois liberalism in a freshly minted historical analysis, “Tyrant”, a sterling meditation on, you guessed it, tyrants in Shakespeare, of which there is no shortage.

What mars the narrative is Greenblatt’s tireless need to parallel the Bard’s historically ravenous seekers of power with the Pagliacci figure of Donald Trump. Rather than focus on comparing Trump to Sir John Falstaff, Shakespeare’s memorable fool from Henry the Fourth, Greenblatt gets serious. He leaves no page unturned in his overweening campaign to recast the president as a figure of terrible ambition rather than as a court jester in royal lineaments. As one Amazon reviewer wrote, “Greenblatt’s a smart man, but this is a book that sacrifices Shakespeare (and the nuanced personal and political insights of his work) to the pursuit of Trump.”

### **Inverting Greenblatt’s Objective**

Greenblatt certainly had no intention of using the book to impugn his own fellowship of noble elites. But by summoning the comparison between the president and the Shakespearean past, he leaves the door ajar for reinterpretations of his premise. While

Trump may share the same kind of narcissistic malevolence of Bolingbroke and Suffolk, and the state-wrecking policy of Macbeth, he is in a certain sense like the Duke of Gloucester, Humphrey of Lancaster, from Henry the Sixth, Part Two. Not at all in terms of Gloucester's unyielding rectitude, but rather in his role as a sacrificial lamb in the contrivances of his elite rivals. A man that finds himself in the path of a powerful clan of intelligence agencies that are among the most vigorous and authoritarian pillars of the American ruling class. Inept in leadership, inexpert in policy, Trump is merely an obstacle to the perpetuation of the capitalist imperialism on the neoliberal model so expertly guided by Barack Obama.

Ranged against Gloucester are, as Greenblatt points out, Suffolk, Beaufort, York, and King Henry's conniving and collaborating French queen Margaret (who suggests French interference in English affairs). Here's a representative passage, when the avaricious faction hurl baseless accusations at Gloucester:

*YORK: 'Tis thought, my lord, that you took bribes of France*

*And, being Protector, stay'd the soldier's pay;*

*By means whereof his highness hath lost France.*

*GLOUCESTER: Is it but thought so? What are they that think it?*

*I never robb'd the soldiers of their pay*

*Nor ever had one penny bribe from France.*

...

*No; many a pound of mine own proper store,*

*Because I would not tax the needy commons,*

*Have I dispursed to the the garrisons,*

*And never ask'd for restitution.*

*CARDINAL: It serves you well, my lord, to say so much.*

*GLOUCESTER: I say no more than truth, so help me God!*

*YORK: In your protectorship you did devise*

*Strange tortures for offenders, never heard of,*

*That England was defam'd by tyranny.*

*GLOUCESTER: Why, 'tis well known that*

*whiles I was Protector*

*Pity was all the fault that was in me;*

*For I should melt at an offender's tears,*

*And lowly words were ransom for their fault.*

*Unless it were a bloody murderer,  
Or foul felonious thief that fleec'd poor passengers,  
I never gave them condign punishment.  
Murder indeed, that bloody sin, I tortur'd  
Above the felon or what trespass else.  
SUFFOLK: My lord, these faults are easy,  
quickly answer'd;  
But mightier crimes are laid unto your charge,  
Whereof you cannot easily purge yourself.  
I do arrest you in His Highness' name,  
And here commit you to my Lord Cardinal  
To keep until your further time of trial.  
KING HENRY: My Lord of Gloucester, 'tis my  
Special hope  
That you will clear yourself from all suspense.  
My conscience tells me you are innocent.*

*(Henry the Sixth, Part Two 3.1.104-109, 115-141)*

Here is a predatory clutch of power-seekers attacking an unpopular “Lord Protector” with uncorroborated accusations. They are under a spell of confirmation bias whenever he attempts to argue his innocence. They attribute every assertion of blamelessness to his evil cunning. They leverage baseless innuendo to make charges of tyranny. They use their manufactured indictments to handcuff his power, literally. Greenblatt also notes the reason why (spoiler!) the little power-mad, self-righteous clique choose murder over a proper trial for treason: “...they know the charges they have brought against him are false and since they fear that the king’s ardent support will make it difficult to engineer a conviction in the absence of real evidence...” Greenblatt also points out that, “...they profess to be concerned for the good of the state.” (Note that while they embrace noble intent for themselves, they deny Gloucester’s attempt to claim the same.)

Could this be any more reflective of today’s Russiagate hysteria? Not capable of bringing real proof in an American court of law, corrupt as it is, Robert Mueller’s special counsel cleverly—or perhaps transparently—choose to indict Russians who will never see the inside of a North American courtroom, as well as a handful of Trumpian associates who he is able to convict for crimes uncovered in his borderless troll through Trump’s nefarious real estate backrooms, but which have nothing to do with the so-called “collusion” suspicion

for which Mueller has been engaged. (Mueller had already proven his fealty to the deep state with his pathetic lies about Iraqi WMDs. Add to that his lantern-jawed image of probity and gravitas and he fits the role. Shakespeare could have wielded him well in a production of Henry VI.)

Not only this, but like the anti-Gloucesters posse, the Democrats make a great theater out of exhibiting their all-consuming desire to “protect our democracy” a phrase that economically conveys two falsehoods in three words. It deserves a prime time place in any definition of “two-faced” in Webster’s, or in the enumerated faults of neoliberal Democrats.

### **Precedent Ignored**

Likewise, the Harvard scholar again notes an actual plot against Queen Elizabeth’s favorite, Sir Walter Raleigh, and possibly the queen herself, organized by the Earl of Essex. Essex’s plot partners actually commissioned a performance of Richard the Second, about a king overthrown, just prior to the launch of their own conspiracy (which failed miserably). But what were the conspirators doing? Seeding an idea in the mind of the London public, a historical form of Christopher Nolan’s Inception, when high-tech perception management was used to guide action. The play happily conjures the idea of a salutary coup d’etat, a restorative tonic for the state.

You have to at least admire the gall of Essex’s co-conspirators to stage a play that so obviously prefigures their treason. Yet today, what have the Democrats and the intelligence agencies and their slavish media newsrooms and op-ed departments been doing unceasingly since even before the election: casting the sexist and racist character of the president in the starkest relief imaginable, then adding in the poison of treason to a cocktail of contempt, a trifecta of indictments that they believe will surely product the constitutional coup they hope for. Why? Not because they give a damn about democracy, since we don’t live in one and have long since abandon the practice, if not the pretence, of democracy for plutocracy. We’ve done this on their own watch.

No, the Democrats want Trump out because, still smiting from the embarrassment of their world-historical loss to the buffoon they hand-picked for an opponent, they are desperate to regain power. The effort is led by members of Congress Nancy Pelosi, Adam Schiff, Dianne Feinstein, Elijah Cummings, Jerrold Nadler, and others. They’ve cleverly aligned themselves outright with the intelligence and military community because they know the latter is likewise desperate to maintain the trajectory of American hegemony that has been in place since the end of World War Two. The intelligence front is led by former CIA lead

and the [godfather](#) of Russiagate, John Brennan, who spied on Congress; and also former National Intelligence Director James Clapper, who wittingly lied to Congress about surveillance. Special Counsel Robert Mueller and his ravenous gang of legal muckrakers lead the formal attempt to legitimate the fatuities of Russiagate.

Add to these an ocean of MSM zealots like the *Times* Charles Blow and MSNBC's Rachel Maddow and CNN's Wolf "Blitzkrieg" Blitzer. This loose confederacy of dunces have perfected the art of maintaining permanent crisis mode. This is precisely the same kind of vigilance with which the neoconservatives and its supplicant press corps maintained a perpetual state of alarm before George Bush doubled Bill Clinton's record for Iraqi slaughter (+/- [1M](#) to +/- [500k](#)).

Nobody seems to remember or know about the [Church Committee](#) from the 1970s, which uncovered the rank treachery of the CIA and its peer institutions. Nor do they recall how pliant and tractable some in their ranks were in the run-up to the worst war of the century in Iraq. Nor do they seem to recall the history of our foreign policy community and its biblical devotion to global dominion by any means necessary. They are no less zealous than the Zionists—a compliment of the highest order for true devotees of settler colonialism and imperial expansionists. You can follow the line of imperial thought from button-up imperialist "realists" George Kennan and Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles, to the smug savagery of Henry Kissinger; then to the fell designs of Mackinder acolyte Zbigniew Brzezinski, and all the way through to the Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle Project for a New American Century clan; then on to the empowered manias of Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld; and straight through to the slightly more muted personas of Richard Gates and Ashton Carter, and finally on to the unhinged ravings of John Bolton. The Democrats now lionize these people.

### **Fakery of Liberal Anti-War Posturing**

Shakespeare at least understood the vile character of politicians well, and unflinchingly dramatized it in his work. From *King Lear*:

*Get thee glass eyes,*

*And, like a scurvy politician,*

*Seem to see the things thou dost not*

(*King Lear* 4.6.164-166)

Yet this is precisely where so many "liberals" (of the kind who worshipped Barack Obama like hillbillies once worshipped Elvis) slip into a facile naivete. They continue to overtly trust discredited institutions that need shuttering far more than any Republican charlatan in

the White House needs impeachment. Democrats trust the intelligence agencies they've conspired with to regain power and work to hinder any efforts at peace the president makes in the meantime. This from a community that railed at "Republican obstructionism" and professes a commitment to peace in foreign policy. (Continue reading after you've pacified your howling derision.)

Perhaps the only three decent decisions of Donald Trump since November 2016 have been:

+ Meeting Kim Jong-un, a step dutifully ignored by all other administrations since the Korean War ended, and calling off the threatening and chest-thumping military drills that have helped reinforce a paranoid government in Pyongyang. In an emblematic instance of mainstream media coverage, the *Washington Post* (with its laughable masthead line, "Democracy Dies in Darkness") breathlessly reported on "stunned" U.S. officials who "fretted" like brittle octogenarian grandmothers about meeting with such a duplicitous rogue nation. Naturally, "U.S. officials cautioned..." that we ought not to trust the DPRK after their littered past of broken promises. Of course, the paper forgets to note Washington's own record of shifty deceits and dissembling guile. Much like *The New York Times* did yesterday when it professed faux concern over slaughtered children in Yemen without once mentioning the U.S. role facilitating that war.

+ Efforts to warm relations with Moscow after the Obama administration rebooted the Cold War when the security state realized that fearmongering about Islamic terrorism was wearing thin on western publics. The subsequent reorientation of American power against established powers rather than terrorist cliques flies in the face of Trump's attempts to form positive alliances with Vladimir Putin over Syria, to bring Russia back into the G7, and to end the theatrics over alleged Russian government efforts to subvert the fake democratic process in the U.S. His sideline meetings with Putin in Vietnam—behaving like a young teen trying to escape his parents' watchful eye for sixty seconds—and their summit in Helsinki, perhaps the need for a formal summit being triggered by the intense efforts to keep the two leaders apart.

+ Decision to quit funding terrorists in Syria, as the Obama administration did surreptitiously by diverting weapons deliveries through allies and by rebranding jihadists as "moderate rebels."

Democratic "obstructionism" in the form of Russiagate has foiled efforts to move forward on all three fronts, belying their professed distaste for both warmaking and partisanship.

### **Western Tribalism**

An author unknown to me once wrote, “Crowds of 90,000 only show up when an event is tribal—a thing sufficient to require witness. The nature of this witness is steeped in violence. The collective wish is to witness violence, and to become, by osmosis, a part of the instrument of violence.”

This is what we’re witnessing. Tribal warfare inside the ruling class, happily joined by the wage serfs of each tribe. We westerners affect a cosmopolitan liberalism that claims to have evolved beyond tribalism and sectarianism. We reserve such descriptions for Arabs and Persians and Africans. We have happily matured into partisanship and obstructionism and narrowmindedness, but never anything akin to the barbarism of tribalism. We left all that behind after we escaped the Dark Ages into our sunny Enlightenment from whose bourn no lucky traveler returns. Yes, the scientific breakthroughs of the age were an unrivaled boon, as were the reason-based rebellion against divine right. But plenty of our pre-Enlightenment past remains. But really, our politics are just a variation on the theme of tribalism, our version dressed up in the lineaments of decorum and altruism. Like everything else and unlike tribal conflicts, our tribal battles are over necessary slaughter that has been happily offshored, to the happy relief of sightless America.

It is pointless to join the tribe you’ve nominally associated yourself with between the Democrats and Republicans. The largest voting tribe in the country is actually Independents, a more loosely bound amalgam of the “mob,” as Greenblatt puts it. It is better by half to stand aside of the titanic power struggles at the top of the social hierarchy than to lend one’s sniveling shout to the tsunami of self-righteousness already crashing down on us. Stand aside rather than sit astride. The professional classes have claimed that spot, in any case. Far better to look at the history of American capitalism and its highest stage, imperialism, assess its motives, and call the present “defense of democracy” campaign for what it truly is: a slow-motion constitutional coup and a rapidfire perception management master class. Our own founding father and slave-owner, the “author of America”, Thomas Jefferson, [wrote](#) this:

“The most effectual engines for pacifying a nation are the public papers... A despotic government always keeps a kind of standing army of news-writers who, without any regard to truth or to what should be like truth, invent and put into the papers whatever might serve the ministers. This suffices with the mass of the people who have no means of distinguishing the false from the true paragraphs of a newspaper.”

(Thomas Jefferson)

Was he wrong? Greenblatt would have us believe the champions of justice and decency are making a heroic effort to defang a coming tyrant before he brings us to certain ruin. *Please.* Even Falstaff knew better than that.