

Self-adulation is no path to the joy of genuine affection.

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Robert John Andrews

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“Man Without A Country”

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The historical fiction short story, “The Man Without a Country,” was standard fare in Junior High text books. Is it still on the reading list? You might remember it. The story tells the tale of Army Lieutenant Philip Nolan, a fictional associate of Vice-president Aaron Burr. Burr actually was tried for treason for attempting to break away from the United States and form his own empire. Burr was miffed because he lost the presidency to Jefferson by vote of the House of Representatives. Burr thought he deserved to win. Burr thought he deserved to be anointed emperor. The rot of jealousy. Historically, Burr died ignominiously. Burr, the short story relates, seduced Lieutenant Nolan into his conspiracy. Nolan was tried, found guilty. Nolan renounces allegiance to his country. Nolan’s response to the verdict? “Damn the United States! I wish I may never hear of the United States again!”

The Judge agrees: “Prisoner, hear the sentence of the Court! The Court decides, subject to the approval of the President, that you never hear the name of the United States again.”

Nolan was sentenced to never again hear about or see the United States. He was kept on board naval vessels, never to set foot on his homeland, never to hear news about the United States. Upon his shipboard death as an old man, the reader learns how Nolan had repented.

Some renounce their nation by words, some by actions, some by both. Some boast patriotic slogans to deceive. We’re still waiting for incoherent Donald to explain why he felt entitled to violate the law and hoard classified documents. He certainly seems incensed that he forced the FBI to resort to legal proceedings to retrieve them. No vendetta this, no weaponized justice system this. That’s his thing. It’s the law. If you throw a stone into a pack of dogs, the dog that howls the loudest is the dog that was hit.

Acting from the conviction that life is mortal combat between two competing principles – good versus evil – is a lethal, cultural, moral, and theological trap. Dualism is a sick world-view. Lamentable and destructive. When you believe you alone are good and righteous, then those disagreeing with you must be evil, demonic. This explains how persons throughout history have defended cruel, illicit, and corrupt behavior. Winning justifies immoral means. Lies, deceptions, become useful, symptomatic expedients. Surprising? Donald built his entire life upon fabrications. Listen to contractors he stiffed in Atlantic City. He’s stiffing us still. Machiavellian audacity. Self-adoration. Puzzling is why decent people persist in trusting untrustworthy him, loving him as savior. What’s their self-interest? Hanging onto the client’s self-interest is how you discern someone’s motivation. We’ve long idolized symbols unworthy of idolizing. Malignant narcissism is hardly endearing, though it does reveal a frightened and desperate spiritual, emotional and mental neediness.

Life, precious, doesn’t deserve to copy “The Walking Dead” – this ‘us or them’ mentality. Which suggests another cultural problem: Mimicry. Cartoonish mimicry followed the movie, “Animal House.” Friends just couldn’t let it be a fun, dumb movie. They tried to replicate the experience with toga parties and base humor. Given the prevalence of anti-heroes celebrated nowadays, why do we delight in mimicking them? God save us when culture imitates wrestlemania. Meanwhile, fat-cat promoters sipping scotch in the upper boxes grin at the money they’re collecting from the circus below.

It's puzzling to ponder how some people justify controlling, manipulating, others to be the kind of persons they want them to be instead of the persons God meant them to be. Just isn't right. Saviors don't demand: "Serve me." Neither do leaders. Neither do healthy persons. Self-adulation is no path to the joy of genuine affection. Isn't human happiness found in helping others succeed? Not dominating, dehumanizing, demeaning persons. Rather: by helping persons realize their gifts and use their potential productively.

It's a privilege bearing witness these wrestlemania years. Only when you wrestle in the pigsty do you realize how you want to get clean. We'll likely never convince 30% of the populace that their dualistic obsessions are mutually destructive, but 70% of us can demand and vote for the positive preservation of democracy, uneasy liberty, and respect for the spirit of the law.

If facts warrant his indictment and prosecution (whether for obstruction of justice, stealing documents, insurrection, tax evasion, or witness tampering – take your pick), if the prosecution establishes guilt, and if Donald is to be sentenced, a plea deal should be offered. Over an orange jump suit, I recommend exile.