**Memento mori**

B Y F.S. AIJAZUD D IN 2020-11-12

`REMEMBER, remember the 5th of November` is a date chanted to remind the British of Guy Fawkes, who in 1605 plotted to blow up the House of Lords. `Remember the 3rd of November` will be chorused in the United States as the day on which its 45th president Donald Trump could have demolished American democracy.

Guy Fawkes, betrayed by an accomplice, was caught and sentenced to be hanged, drawn (disembowelled) and then quartered all while he was still conscious. If Trump had his way, he would eviscerate a living Joe Biden and his lively Democrat supporters.

Mercifully, over 75 million Americans decided otherwise. They voted Trump out of the Oval Office. President-elect Joe Biden now has the unenviable task of reconciling 71m grumpy Trumpeteers and convincing them that the United States is what it purports to be a union of states, not an unravelling vengeful democracy.

History will look back on the past four years as a Greek tragedy, enacted in Washington, D.C. To understand them, one has to go back to the ancients. A Greek tragedy had key elements a prologue in which the one or two characters would introduce the plot and prepare the audience for the drama that would be enacted before them.

The prologue would be followed by the parodos in which the various characters appeared onstage. The action itself usually in three or four episodes would be interspersed by stasimon, during which a chorus would comment on the significance of the ongoing narrative. The play concluded with an exodus.

Trump treated the Oval Office as his amphitheatre; its balcony became an integral part of his stage. The prologue of his presidential address on Jan 20, 2017, included these words: `We are not merely transferring power from one administration to another, or from one party to another, but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C., and giving it back to you, the people.

Within days, he introduced a parodos of cronies. Over time, its composition would change as some lost favour, others Trump`s confidence. All fell victim to his growing hubris, that `insolent encroachment upon the rights of others`. The role of the chorus the stasimon throughout Trump`s four years was performed by the news and social media. There was not a moment when he did not keep the world awake, tweeting, hogging attention, battling his opponents, castigating the television networks and, in the end, even flailing Fox News, his avowed supporter.

A presidential exodus usually comes after eight years. Trump has been asked to quit the stage af ter a four-year run. In his inaugural address in 2017, Trump spoke of `that oldwisdom our soldiers will never forget: that whether we are black or brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots`. The blood of patriots is never red nor blue, nor khaki.

Many blue-blooded Republicans could have, should have questioned his political authenticity, his credentials to represent them, and his expropriation of their party into the borders of his personal fiefdom.

They have got their comeuppance.

Between now and Biden`s formal inauguration in January, there will be endless speculation about the significance the ethnic origins of the Vice President-elect Kamala Harris (she is half-Indian, half-Jamaican, with a Jewish husband) will have for the new administration. Or whether President-elect Joe Biden will remember that, as V P-elect in October 2008, he received the Hilal-iPakistan for his support of the Kerry-Lugar bill. It shifted US funding to Pakistan (then$1.5 billion) from military into economic aid.

Such analysts forget history.

Lyndon B. Johnson did not become pro-Pakistani after he as vice president hosted a Karachi camel driver named Bashir Ahmed inWashington, D.C. in 1961. Neither did Barack Obama as president show partiality towards Pakistan, even though a Pakistani in New York had provided him shelter when, at the outset of his political career, Obama was out on the streets not campaigning, but sleeping on a pavement.

Joe Biden, despite his declared obligation to his coloured supporters, will not be a white Barack Obama. Neither will Kamala Harris be a coloured Hillary Clinton. Their unlikely partnership will be a test of the policies of the new Black & White House.

Like Guy Fawkes, Donald Trump is unrepentant. He fears being relegated to the golf course of history, or worse, being held culpable for misdemeanours committed before his presidency. Guy Fawkes, according to his intended victim King James I, displayed even under torture `a Roman resolution`. In ancient times, Romans employed a man to whisper into the ear of conquering heroes:Mementomori(Remember you are mortal). It is a pity no one chanted these two words of caution into the ear of President Donald Trump. The writer is an author.

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