

Is This anything?

by Bruce Bawer



David Letterman, on his late-night CBS series, used to do a bit called “Is This Anything?” After he introduced the segment from his desk, the curtains on the auditorium stage would part, and there would be a guy in a bee costume playing a xylophone. Or a woman sitting on the floor juggling. Or another woman spinning several hula hoops around her body at once. After a few seconds, the curtains would close again, and Letterman and his bandleader, Paul Shaffer, would discuss the question: “Is this anything?”

Instead of thumbs-up or thumbs-down judgments of entertainment value, then, acts were interrogated in relation to elemental ontological categories. Is this anything?

I was reminded of this recurring bit the other day while contemplating the presidency of Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr.

While hordes of illegal aliens pour into the country through the southern border, entirely unimpeded, and the last remnants of America's presence in Afghanistan prepare to reenact the fall of Saigon in 1975, the man who is supposedly the leader of the free world is entering the White House through the wrong door.

Is this anything?

Every so often during the last few years, I've gone on to YouTube and watched some network's coverage of the 2016 presidential election. I've now watched several of them, hours at a time. At first, while Trump was still in office, I found it endlessly entertaining watching a different set of know-it-all blowhards on CBS or NBC or CNN, or for that matter on some channel in the UK or France or Australia, gradually realize that something is happening that they hadn't expected and couldn't explain and certainly didn't like at all. But when I watched the BBC's coverage the other day, I experienced it as terribly sad and found myself getting extremely angry.

Because on November 8, 2016, American voters shocked the world. In a stunning historic rebuke, they rejected rule by their country's condescending, self-serving, jet-setting Davos elite, who had turned America's great industrial cities into rust heaps and exported countless good jobs to China and Mexico. They took back their country, voting in a Hercules to clean the Augean stables.

But in the end, the legacy media with the entrenched Beltway bureaucrats at the FBI, CIA, Pentagon, State Department, and elsewhere castrated the voters' revolution.

Yes, Trump managed to accomplish a great deal. He revived American manufacturing. He took the U.S. economy to new heights. He reduced joblessness—including joblessness among blacks, Latinos, and other groups—to new lows. He crushed ISIS. He strengthened NATO by pressuring allies to pay their fair share. He created the Space Force. He reversed Obama's reprehensible Cuba policy and Iran deal. Even as he withdrew from the Paris Accords, he made the U.S. energy-independent and reduced U.S. carbon emissions. He moved the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, and brokered peace between Israel and several of its Mideast neighbors. He appointed scores of principled federal judges. And he stemmed the flow of illegal immigrants at the southern border, signing sweeping new deals with Mexico and other Latin American countries while building hundreds of miles of a state-of-the-art border wall.

It was something.

And yet he had to spend all too much of his all too brief time in the White House fighting treasonous efforts by his predecessor, and by his predecessor's allies in the Deep State and mainstream media, to unseat him.

Month after month after month, the media repeated the lie of Russia collusion. And when it unraveled, they moved on, never apologizing. Meanwhile the extremely substantial case against Hillary Clinton came to nothing. Obama never paid for his immense perfidy. The staggeringly shameless Biden gift in China and Ukraine not only went unpunished—it went almost entirely unreported in the legacy media. Hunter, that poor mess—whose terrible addiction problems and overall incapacity to carry off any semblance of adult responsibility were unforgivably exploited by a cynical father who cruelly put him to work as a sleazy bagman—got a book deal. (Even the publishing business is complicit in the corrupt new order.) And thanks to the MSM's refusal to tell even a bit of the truth about all these matters—along with a comprehensive, perfidious effort on multiple fronts to prevent Trump from

gaining a second term—a senile, doddering old fossil was installed in the White House.

The election of 2020 may well have been the single most remarkable example of audacious, large-scale fraud in human history. But state officials and judges closed off inquiry into the fact. The legacy media erected a *cordon sanitaire* around the whole thing. To inquire, to investigate, even to wonder, was tantamount to treason. What had happened on November 3? The answer was wreathed in layers and layers of lies. And a pathetic, quixotic effort by a handful of Trump supporters to stand up to those lies on January 6 in the only way they could think to do ended up being described as an attempt at an insurrection.

Yes, the Trump presidency was something. Before it became entirely clear that the fix was in, it looked like hope, a new birth, morning in America. It was about the Constitution, the pursuit of happiness, a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It was everything those of us who are of a certain age had been taught about in school: in America, the government's primary obligation was to guarantee the freedom of citizens and protect them from enemies foreign and domestic—and otherwise to leave them the hell alone.

In any event, Trump was given the bum's rush, and this sad old thing—the pitiable, shambling remains of a despicable third-rate political hack and all-around dim bulb—was put through a joke of an inauguration and propelled into a parody of a presidency—a pantomime, a farce, a travesty. And every day the White House correspondents sit there facing Jen Psaki and go through the motions of acting as if this is something.

In fact, what we have in the Oval Office right now—after the brief shining moment of Donald J. Trump—is the closest thing possible to absolutely nothing.

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