

Tales of Political Infidels: Trump's Lickspittles and Lackeys

Rainer Link

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In the satirical novel Tales of Political Infidels: Trump's Lickspittles and Lackeys, other people's stories have the power to change minds and history, for better or for worse.

A writer processes his anger and concern over modern American politics in Rainer Link's humorous novel *Tales of Political Infidels: Trump's Lickspittles and Lackeys*.

Despondent over the irresponsibility and lack of accountability within the Trump administration, an anonymous writer decides he must do what he can to make Donald Trump's supporters acknowledge his crimes. With the help of a friend he knows only as the Whistler, he is able to acquire insider knowledge of the true depths to which the administration sank. He then turns these revelations into fantastical tales of egotism, ignorance, and despair in which desperate men are trapped by their own machinations. Only time will tell if his words can change the course of history, or if the US will continue down a gullible, unsavory path.

The story blends fact with fiction to illuminate the extent of a former president's malfeasance. The ratio of fantasy to reality remains ambiguous—fitting for a depiction of an administration and an era in which truth, as the unnamed narrator sees it, is malleable. Each story deals with a different aspect of corruption within the administration or in the US in general: in some stories, Trump's sycophantic followers are likened to poodles; in one, a former police officer explains what happened when he tried to report on his fellow officers for taking bribes from an unnamed real estate mogul. At times, the narrator addresses the audience directly, asking for consideration or understanding and encouraging participation and reflection.

The book's main characters prove to be less important than the people they meet and the situations they find themselves in; nonetheless, they are all distinctive. Still, though he's driven by the goal of exposing the former president's perceived hypocrisy, the central narrator spends too much of his time with friends who agree with him or in his own head. The difficulty of persuading people to disavow dangerous propaganda is touched upon but is underexplored, and the eventual efficacy of the hero's labors is not discussed. Instead, his flights of fancy and devotion to his mission make for an offbeat, whimsical organizing principle—one used to analyze the Trump administration and loosely discuss how easy it is to be taken in by those saying what one wants to hear. Ableist language appears, to the book's detriment.

The book's descriptions of the June 1, 2020, protests in the wake of George Floyd's death are a text highlight, exposing the trauma of the suppressed protests while mocking the way Donald Trump's followers spoke of him as a messiah. And in "Tales from the Attack on the Capitol," people reflect on the events of January 6, 2021, in amusing, poignant, and chilling ways. Nonetheless, much of the book's humor falls flat: often, the real events drawn upon were more outlandish than the satirical versions shared here.

In the satirical novel *Tales of Political Infidels: Trump's Lickspittles and Lackeys*, other people's stories have the power to change minds and history, for better or for worse.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (October 26, 2022)

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