

# Fire and Fury; Oprah for President

by Bill Herbst

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Journalist Michael Wolff's explosive and lurid book, ***Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House***, went on sale this past week. As a behind-the-scenes look at the Trump Administration's first year, the book created a sensation even before it was available. As of today (January 9th), the book is #1 on Amazon and has completely sold out its first million-copy press run. However brief its moment in the limelight may turn out to be, the book has already produced windfall profits for its author and publisher (Henry Holt & Co.).

I haven't read the book and feel no need to do so. My knowledge of the President's eccentric character is already sufficient. Trump's "unfitness for office" that apparently constitutes a central theme of *Fire and Fury* is an opinion I already hold and for which I require no further substantiation. I have, however, watched much of the ongoing coverage in the mainstream and alternative media, including many of Michael Wolff's recent video interviews, and I've read numerous online articles about the book, some by the author himself. Nothing surprises me about any of it.

Wolff — who used extensive interviews he conducted with White House personnel (staffers, cabinet members, Trump family members, etc.) as his source material — paints a disturbing and disparaging portrait of President Trump. The administration is presented as chaotic — a house divided against itself that is characterized by endless back-biting, egomania, and self-aggrandizing ambition. Much of what the book presents echoes what we've heard before, but *Fire and Fury* is a compendium of all that terrible stuff, virtually an all-you-can-eat buffet.

Wolff's book occupies a niche in the pantheon of journalistic publishing that has a long history — the vulgar exposé that reveals the steaming rot under a surface (usually institutional or organizational) upheld as normal, appropriate, authoritative, or otherwise proper. The book is a variant of *The Emperor's New Clothes* fable. It's not from the muckraking school of the early-20th century (think Upton Sinclair), since Wolff didn't start out crusading for reform. Neither is it "yellow journalism," the tabloid propaganda style embraced by William Randolph Hearst with screaming headlines and fictional or false coverage. Yellow journalism is, of course, remains alive and thriving. In addition to tabloid rags

that still exist, it's found a home on the Internet (in one form as the Alt-Right). The phenomenon of "fake news" is hardly a recent invention; history reveals that even "trusted" news sources are not always trustworthy.

Reactions to *Fire and Fury* have been totally predictable so far. Trump-haters feel that the book authenticates their negative opinions and confirms their deepest fears about the President, while the White House and Trump's base regard it as scurrilous and a pack of lies. Whether the book will have any significant impact or simply be another brief melodrama in the passing parade of Trump's Presidency remains to be seen.

I make no secret of my disdain for Donald Trump. I regard him as utterly reprehensible and completely despicable. I also feel that Trump — a thoroughly corrupt, authoritarian demagogue who is clearly a malignant narcissist — is a nearly perfect symbol for the insanity of our times, and particularly the ongoing and (so far) slow-motion collapse of our culture and nation.

Getting rid of Trump, by whatever means — impeachment, the 25th amendment, or by his defeat in the 2020 presidential election — will not, however, magically solve America's problems. That would be like cutting off the top of a weed without digging up the roots. While admittedly dangerous, Trump is more a toxic symptom of what ails us, which runs far deeper than whoever sits in the Oval Office. Trump may be providing us with an opportunity, however, as the ultimate dystopian stimulus who single-handedly spurs millions of Americans — especially women — toward greater participation and formal involvement in governing our republic.

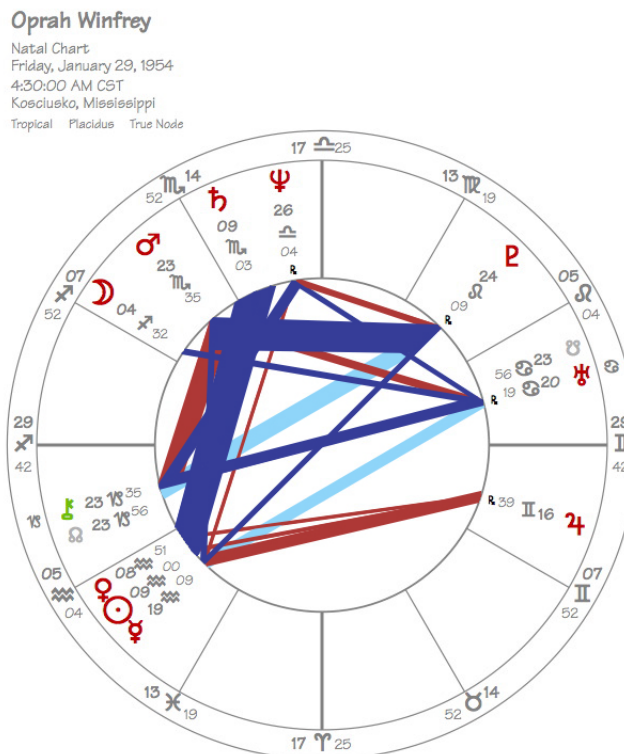
The most interesting part of *Fire and Fury* that I've heard and read about is the book's contention that Trump's campaign for the Presidency was designed to lose. That's an opinion I've held since Trump first announced his candidacy in June, 2015. I firmly believe that Trump never wanted the burdensome responsibilities of the Presidency. What he really desired was maximizing his fame, and (after losing the election) increasing his personal wealth by expanding the Trump commercial brand. The prize for him is Stardom, not Responsibility. After his first year in the White House, I find that argument more compelling than ever. Trump doesn't want to be President.

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More compelling to me than Wolff's book, however, is the speech given by Oprah Winfrey at the Golden Globes on Sunday night. I didn't see it; I don't watch any Hollywood awards ceremonies. As of Monday, the media and blogosphere were all atwitter (if you'll forgive what is now a pun) about Oprah's speech and, in a nearly instantaneous leap of faith, growing rumors about Oprah's running for President as the Democratic party's candidate in 2020.

OK, I get it that such speculation is ridiculously premature. We have the 2018 mid-terms Congressional election still nine months away, and traditionally candidacies for the Oval Office are not declared until after the mid-terms. But we are not in traditional times. Nevertheless, the question of whether Oprah might consider running for President in 2020 is intriguing.

For those of an astrological bent, Oprah's birth-chart appears below. The time of her birth is somewhat questionable, but this is the chart that commonly appears for Oprah across the Internet:



If this momentary inspiration (that Oprah should run for President) isn't quashed immediately by the woman herself, but turns out to have legs and builds into a social movement, I'll have more to say about Oprah's chart in future commentaries. For now, I'll offer only a brief reaction:

Oprah is one tough human being, and nobody's fool. She has the drive, the grit, and the ambition to be President. Whether she wants to take on climbing that mountain is by no means certain, but her chart and its major active transits over the coming years, especially in 2020, paint the picture of a very successful woman who doesn't have the temperament to rest on her laurels and is approaching a new beginning.