

We pretty much imagined life would change the minute we had seen Orange-Head's numbers tallying on the Electoral College board. Not long after, we saw the popular vote's run-up, noted the disconnect -- once again -- shook our heads briskly, and were certain life had veered off course. Having lived through the opening salvos of Post Election (and Electoral College) Stress Disorder, we are test-flying on a new era, no doubt about it.

This era's airplane, we keep noting, has no wings or engine, we keep noticing -- and the pilot-emperor has no clothes...

As if on cue, the staff at the Oxford Dictionaries has freshly-minted its Word of the Year for 2016. (Their chosen word could have been any number of heart-stopping utterances for mixed company, but, restraint was in session, to their eternal credit.) So, after the blitzkrieging psychosis of pain, hardship, loss, insult, suffering, frustration and disappointment, the Word of the Year for 2016 is "post-truth."

Huh?

The team admits the concept has been around for a decade, maybe more. This year, however, was notable for the twin scenarios of the EU vote in the UK and the presidential election in the US, together with the resulting landslide of bald and pre-baled lies, simply broke the dictionaries' backs.

Added to the machine-gunned mistruths rattled off by many, and in both nations, is an off-the-charts use of fake news -- presentations intended not for comedic parody or ironic effect, but meant to mislead, to deceive, to hide truth and force people to swallow pre-spun poison-capsules of half truths and baked-in lies.

Guess which sides are most guilty, far and away? *Uh-huh. But, you fairly object, both sides lie!* Well, sure. Both sides have been known to stretch the truth, and both sides also have access to currency, say -- but, since when is a penny the same as pallet of hundreds? As two pallets? As two thousand pallets? As all the money in the world?

Here's a term you may have heard before: *false equivalency*. Expect to keep hearing it for a lot of years to come, because Republicans maintain power, simply put, by lying. Republicans object to a level playing field -- except when it comes to pointing out that, *well, shucks, both sides do it, it's just good, clean fun*.

Both sides might also have splinters in a finger, but one side is using a magnifying glass, disinfectant, and tweezers -- while the other's using a triple-A fold-out map from 1958 and all available thermonuclear inventories.

* * *

Always plenty of collateral damage to go around. Funny, how little collateral *benefit* manages to arise. This must be related to Ferd's ninety-seventh law which states *Things can always get worse, but not automatically better*.

* * *

Now, of course, we have people raining down on us, falling out of the walls and ceilings at us, talking about fake news. Where were these people when the campaigns were running? Checking messages, face down, face-planted and facepalmed, in Facebook? Locked up in Trump's New Luxury Non-Ivy-League, Ivory Tower? Tied up in James Comey's basement writing memoirs? Reworking the magazine and newspaper headlines in the Spin Rooms, with scissors and rubber cement?

* * *

Each day brings more absurd, but **real**, news, humiliations, outrages, impossibilities. The nation is bogged down with Near-Utter Insanity not even TEN days after an *apparent** winner has been

The New Abnormal

Written by Alex Baer

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*sort-of**
identified.

*(*I use these disclaimer-modifiers as they have been used in sports record books to note Events That Jumped The Shark, and The Entire Stadium, and Most of □ The Species, if not the Moon. I think there will be a lot of asterisks in legitimate media accounts and in history texts about the 2016 campaign and election, providing humanity retains the ability to maintain written records a little while longer.)*

* * *

The level of amateur-hour incompetence, misdirection, lying, hubris, and sticky-fingered and opportunistic wealth-grabbing among Team Trumpo, *hot out of the gate*, are all reflexively gasp-inducing. I have been left breathless so often since the Day of Infamy, 11/9 --
an eerie reversal of another date of terrible destruction
-- that I hereby recommend all people, everywhere, keep emergency oxygen cyclinders nearby.

(This, in the event that the actual truth of events becomes so staggering that all the air is sucked out of the room and we are permanently rendered breathless and/or insane. Later, when sanity returns, and the smoldering wreckage has been cleared away, we can decide whether or not we want our breath back.)

* * *

I find myself accidentally normalizing our national state of affairs, the way you automatically reach out to balance yourself when the room goes loopy or decides to go for a spin without warning you. We all seek out equilibrium without thinking about it. Just now, however, I'm seeking out *Librium*. (For everyone else, I'm ordering up a Thorazine with beer back, stat.)

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I keep trying to wrap my brain stem in flavorful humor, as a MacGyver'd, protective-transportational culinary device, like bacon wrapped around scallops being shipped point-to-point at HyperLight Speed, but it all keeps coming out hash.

Hashtag:*Ain'tHashtag:Ain'tNobodyEverWarnedMe*
ThatLifeWouldInvertItselfThroughAllAvailableParallelWorlds
-- *OXYGEN HIT* -- *InTwentySecondsOrLessAfterAnEspeciallyAntigravity*
CampaignLifeCycleLastingNineteenMillennia,Falcon.

OK: Exhale (but pretend not to notice the high, squeaky effects on your vocal chords; it'll wear off, eventually).

* * *

I'm not going after the "New Normal" writing gambit ever again -- not that I have my souvenir of this election season: a microscopically-small black hole of a sucking chest wound in my frontal lobes. (Gee, thanks, 2016, you shouldn't have -- no, really.)

In all other worlds, The Orange One lost, Oddly, he won in this one version of Earth. (Surely, this means something, if only to Alex Jones and Steve Bannon, still out back separating chicken plumbing and praying to the god of PVC.) Meanwhile, I have that empty, black-hole ache, still sympathetically with me, flexing its pangs, visiting side-effects on me, making me want to go see if Donnie's new reality show is really going to be called *White House Apprentice II: Code Orange*

, or if they're going to go with
X-Comfort-Factor of the

Rich and Weaselly
originally planned.

as

No, from now on, all bets are clearly off. This is **The New Abnormal**, and our challenge is to adapt without misplacing, dropping, or otherwise losing our little, squishy primate-meat minds -- *can you grok it?*

* * *

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No, there's no one here by the name of Abby Sumwun. And stop calling me Shirley.

* * *

The year of -- *Bedlam. Pandemonium. Havoc. Chaos. Uproar.* All close, but still missing something. *Wretchedly*

Selfish Miasma of Puerile Acting Out --
also close, but still missing
Responsibility
or something. Hmmm. Will keep looking.

* * *

Look: I'm just not into the ongoing, rightwingnut Luntzification of the language for propaganda purposes -- turning harmless and normal concepts into monstrous entities, like Death Tax for Inheritance Tax. Nor do I think, like many have long said, that Pregnancy Control should be called Birth Control, or, for that matter, that Republicans are truly benign, when you come down to it.

Lying, cheating, and stealing should retain those simple, accurate names, and not be made into artful tapestries representing the lesser gods of *story-telling, sleight-of-hand, and lapsed-memory borrowing.*

That might work at the big banks --

if you are a believer in the Big Bank Theory

-- but it should not be allowed into a world where we actually authorize people to act in our individual, communal, and national best interests by people who lie, cheat, and steal.

No: Demonstrated incompetence, purposeful ignorance, and a basic lack of civilized precepts, should all be called out as essential disqualifications of holding public office. But, *duh*, you would have thought grabbing women by their genitals might have thrown the GOP off the Qualification Cliff, but, nope. Neither did hating people based on skin color, language, religion, whom is loved, you name it.

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I don't get it. Republican traitors spent 8 years hating and blocking a fine man based on his skin color -- something Obama *could not help*. Now, we have an unsavory pretend-prez who has specifically *chosen* to beat up on women, and on whole categories of people based on superficial traits, and the country is supposed to about-face, fall down, and *support* this Supreme Clown Entity?

When the lack of valid, basic qualification is so broad and deep, and the presence of harm is so wide and so far, it is time to step in, intervene, and say, basically: *No, Honey, you're only 3 years old, and Mommy doesn't think it's a good idea for you to fly the jumbo jet all by yourself....*

I know the people in First Class are willing to go for the white-knuckled gusto, and flip a gold sovereign on a chance we'll all auger in, because elites always think they'll live forever, by bargaining at the last minute with Fate and the Reaper, but, hey -- the rest of us are simply looking forward to easing down onto the tarmac, with our family and friends, all safe and sound, butts still in our seats, and our underwear unsoiled.

All right -- it's a little late for that. Make that *mostly* unsoiled.

Most of us would settle for that.

Still.

LINKLAND:

Post-truth ambience:

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>

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Lying-gate, anyone?

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/11/17/facebook-fake-news-writer-i-think-donald-trump-is-in-the-white-house-because-of-me/>

Fake news invasion:

<http://www.snopes.com/2016/01/14/fake-news-sites/>

A nod to Comey's play:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/corey-lewandowski-james-comey_us_582dd4f7e4b058ce7aa97d7c

Abbie Outtake:

h <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH97lImrr0Q>

Preview of Coming Distractions: □ Closing moments of the Trump resignation / impeachment / firing / mental health hearing and review:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-95QqBXLG2I>

John Oliver's flight of fancy:

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUPxHRoRUVI>

and

<http://www.alternet.org/election-2016/john-oliver-responds-trump-presidency-what-fck-do-we-d-o-now-two-things>

Reconsidering all options:

<https://www.change.org/p/electoral-college-electors-electoral-college-make-hillary-clinton-president-on-december-19>

BONUS LINK:

Keith's back!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNcji9CknMs>