

The - Roger - Stone Age Man

Written by Matthew Sharpe, Associate Professor in Philosophy, Deakin University



Roger Stone: for some the brain behind Trump and the star of a new documentary film **Please
d to meet you ...**

We are entering the “Age of Stone”, the hero of Netflix’s new documentary [Get Me Roger Stone](#) concludes by announcing.

It is blue skies a-comin’ as far as this unlikely hero, one part Machiavelli, another part Oscar Wilde is concerned:

We’re in the Age of Stone because the change in politics, the rough and tumble cutthroat and slash and burn of what was the nastiest campaign in American history [Trump’s campaign to win the Presidency] are now in vogue.

To people who will watch the film and loathe him, Stone answers with a characteristic glint: “I revel in your hatred because if I weren’t effective you wouldn’t hate me.”

The answer points to the heart of what can be called Stone’s “philosophy”, a kind of two-beat Machiavellianism, as [this philosophy](#) is popularly understood.

The ends justify the means. Effectiveness is all.

Besides, “ [losers don’t legislate](#) ”, as Mr Stone’s hero Richard Nixon had said.

And everyone for Stone is a “bitter loser” who for instance criticizes him for his role in lobbying the US Congress on behalf of third world dictators with the infamous ‘80s Lobbying Agency [Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly](#)

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Or who criticises him for pretty much any other of his words and actions in a remarkable backroom career looking back to the infamous Republican Campaign to Reelect the President in 1972 and forwards to the 2016 election of Donald J Trump.

Past is prologue

Stone boasts that, in his early 20s, he was the youngest man indicted by the committee investigating the Watergate break-in.

His earliest introduction to politics, Stone tells, was an exercise in deceit. He won a class election at his school on a Kennedy ticket (his parents were Irish Catholics), by lying that if Nixon was elected he would bring in school on Saturdays.

“For the first time ever I understood the power of disinformation. Of course, I’ve never used it since,” Stone laughs as he recalls the tale from behind an elegant overcoat, cigar in hand.

Yet, as the film rolls on, Stone contradicts this one fig leaf to “liberal” moralising, as well as the reassuring rider appended to his Master Rule: “do whatever it takes, *short of breaking the Law*”.

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~~Advertise, advertise, advertise~~
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Stone is known by his friends and his enemies as “the Prince of Darkness”, a label he has made his own.

He is presently under investigation for his possible links to the alleged Russian exercise in [hacking](#) the 2016 election. His approach so far has matched another of his Rules: “deny, deny, deny.”

Then admit, and move on, and subsequently glorify in the action: perhaps even make a film about yourself.

Stone thus claims to have been the mastermind behind the “[Brooks Brothers’ riot](#)” which stopped the vote-recount in Florida in 2000 and ensured that George W. Bush would win that recount.

With some pride, he now admits to having single-handedly brought down the [Reform Party](#) in the same year 2000, through an arch double or triple game.

First, he encouraged [Pat Buchanan](#) to run for the ticket, secure in the knowledge that Buchanan had an illegitimate child: information whose threatened disclosure could then be used to undermine Buchanan.

Then, Stone suggested that Mr Donald J. Trump—who for over a decade Stone had already been urging to run for President—should run against Buchanan.

This would give the property mogul a taster of life in the political limelight. It would divide Buchanan's vote, making the way straight for the Republicans to beat Al Gore.

The Donald duly stepped up to the plate. With Stone at his shoulder, he poured out the kind of vitriol that has indeed come of age as of 2017.

Mr Buchanan, the now-President informed his fellow Americans, was an “anti-Semite, doesn't like gays ... he is in love with Adolf Hitler in some form ... and the Reform Party shouldn't be taking losers ...”

(There's that word again, key vocab for the Age of Stone.)

In the event, Buchanan got less than half a percent of American votes for the Presidency. The Reform Party collapsed. Aided by Stone's other triumph, the riot in Florida, “W” made the Oval Office.

Interviewed in a diner, Stone for once uses understatement as he ‘fesses up to this backhanded *chef-d'œuvre*: “yeah I might have played some role in derailing them as a party.”

Apotheosis

Most of Stone's Rules are about “doing whatever it takes” without mercy, without morality, without remorse.

It is better to be infamous than never to be famous at all.

He has open contempt for the media. Stone thinks it is either evil or incompetent. When a winner knows this, he can win big.

For politics, his own profession, there is no less cynical an assessment: it is “corrupt” through and through. Washington is a “cesspool”. Stone knows, since he has “seen how the sausages are made”.

He has made a few himself.

Another of Stone’s Rules enjoins admirers that “Unless you can fake sincerity, you’ll get nowhere in this business.”

Stone embraces the politics of shock, advising that it is better to be wrong than to be boring.

[Hit it](#) from every angle. Open multiple fronts on your enemy. He must be confused, and feel besieged on every side.“

In several scenes of the movie, the only ones when he is not immaculately decked out in pinstripe suits, Stone 2016 sports white T-shirts with images of Bill Clinton, captions reading “Rape”; or black Tees picturing “Crooked Hillary” behind bars.

“Politics isn’t theatre. It’s performance art. Sometimes, for its own sake,” this sage rhapsodises: “Be bold. The more you tell, the more you sell”.

Per the Tee-shirts: “Hatred is a stronger motivator than love”.

The apotheosis of all of this indeed came last year. Stone was, then wasn't, then was again, an official advisor to the successful Presidential bid of Donald J. Trump. As we have seen, he boasts that he was instrumental in inspiring the "nastiest campaign" in American history.

In the midst of it all, of course, came the hacking scandal which looks very like the kind of "whatever it takes", underhand action that Roger will eventually advertise if a "Who is Roger Stone?" is made come 2027 or 2030.

While he [denies foreknowledge](#) of the Clinton Campaign Leader's email leaks, five days before the leaks Stone tweeted, "Wednesday Hillary Clinton is done. #Wikileaks."

Again before the leaks, Stone turned prophet: "it will soon be Podesta's time in the barrel."

Mr Trump, after apparently sacking "Roger" in 2016 before reinstating him again, has only good things to say in Get Me Roger Stone about his long-standing ally.

For Trump, Stone is "a quality guy ... a nice guy": "he loves it, he loves the game, and he's very good at it." For Stone, Mr Trump is "quality political horse-flesh" for a jockey like him to ride to power.

And yes, gentle readers, we are asked to believe that it is this Roger Stone—unrepentant founder of multi-million dollar lobbying, who retails his cynicism as the stone cold truth; and it is the "Roger Stone types" now installed in Washington in his wake, who can overturn the corruption of the political "elites".

In the Age of Stone, it is these new types of amoral politicians who are going to "drain the swamp" on the Potomac.

Para-Machiavel

Legend tells that when Frederick the Great wrote a work, [Anti-Machiavel](#), some wit observed that to deny his Machiavellian credentials is exactly what “Tricky Nic” would have recommended.

Frederick’s career hardly bears out his matchless humanity. (Will and Ariel Durant comment that they will not dwell on the wars he started, since they are writing a [history of civilization](#)).

Yet there is something positively refreshing, naïve, or idealistic about Niccolo Machiavelli’s texts, compared to the pithy “wisdom” retailed by the titular hero of Get Me Roger Stone.

Of course, Machiavelli was a patriot, as Stone claims to be. But Machiavelli argued for some seasonable mixture of virtue and vice, with cruelty less desirable than mercy, fear a less desirable political motive than love; and deceit only to be used in case of exceptional need.

Machiavelli, that is, preserves a sense that cunning, deceit and cruelty are far from desirable in themselves. And it was for this many concessions to what men do, rather than what they ought, that he was for a long time shunned by all Christendom.

In the dawning Age of Stone, by contrast, “winners” can apparently agree that immorality for the sake of “conservative” causes is less something to be concealed than to be celebrated. Having lost its cloak of shame, ruthless cunning in this dawning Age is newly chic: if not the new red, then decked out in elegantly tailored pinstripes and slippers.

Watching Get Me Roger Stone is thus like the in many ways equally bizarre tele-series [Homeland](#).

This show, far from downplaying the ostensibly troubling idea that America has routinised espionage, including on its own citizens, and illegal drone strikes in foreign lands, makes these things one of the open *premises* of the action.

Winners will surely no longer need to “deny, deny, deny” when the Age of Stone reaches its

zenith.

As another talking head on the film comments about Roger's close relationship with [Infowars](#) and [Breitbart](#) media: "we are all conspiracy Americans now".

Perhaps America will become great again. But if it does so, it will need to recall what people like George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin and its other founders would have thought and done about a character like Roger Stone, and the moral decay that he wants to enshrine as the *Novo ordus seclorum*.

We are a long way from George Washington on campaign asking players to act out dramas of [the life and fall of Cato the Younger](#), dreaming of emulating the Romans' republican virtues.

In the Age of Stone, the emperor is naked, but that is because he is flashing.

Disclosure

Matthew Sharpe works at Deakin, where he has taught political philosophy. He is part of an ARC funded project on Religion and Political Thought.

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