

Power-hungry downward spiral in citizen kane and there will be blood

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Caligula: an all-powerful Roman emperor crazed into an extremely violent and power-hungry downward spiral. We see a similar character arc in classic film Citizen Kane by Orson Welles and even Paul Thomas Anderson's more contemporary, There Will Be Blood. Charles Foster Kane: a newspaper titan possessed by his greed and hunger for power. Daniel Plainview: an oil tycoon encapsulated by his love for money and influence. In both films there are characters besides the lead introduced throughout the course of three acts that provide perspective. Due to the main character being at the forefront of their respective stories, alternative points of view are necessary in order to truly show change within the main character. Without the other angles, we would potentially only see the main characters' journeys the way they themselves see them - which doesn't allow much room for critique or critical opinion. In Citizen Kane we are given an ensemble of those who were close to Kane. In There Will Be Blood we are given Plainview's son, brother and religious nemesis. Finally, for Caligula we are given his wife and, most importantly, his protege, Scipio. Unlike the many characters of the two films mentioned, the singular role of Scipio is utilized as a distinct and glaring foil figure. Not only does he provide the most insight into Caligula's character and experiences but he is also everything that Caligula is not. His drastically contrasting character is critical to how we view the emperor throughout the story.

The first act of Caligula begins with his senators arguing about his whereabouts and what it is that has caused him to disappear on his subjects. It is amongst this havoc that we are introduced to Scipio as Caligula's "protege". His role of providing insight into Caligula is immediately enacted as

he gives the senators and the audience their first solidified information concerning the emperor. By being the first to contribute this kind of information, Scipio immediately confirms his position as the person with the closest relationship to the emperor. Not too far along in his conversation with the senators, Scipio storms out after there are murmurs of a violent overthrow when Caligula returns. This speaks to Scipio's devout loyalty to the emperor. Although he hardly knows where Caligula is, he is patiently waiting for his return and refuses to give into the paranoia and anxiety that is shown by the senators. Loyalties such as this vital as an emperor or leader of any kind since what they need more than anything is for people to trust and respect them. Without figures such as Scipio, emperors and leaders like Caligula would not result in much and would not be in power very long at all.

After meeting with the senators, Scipio divulges his adoration of Caligula to the latter's wife wife, Caesonia. " He encourages me with words that would sound ridiculous coming out of anyone else's mouth... He once told me making others suffer was the only human crime." It's in this very beginning of Act I that Scipio is establishing his extremely valid capacity as the foil to Caligula. In the conclusion of the first act, Caligula returns with a long rant about why he's been gone and what he wishes to accomplish now that he's back. Most notably, Caligula claims his greatest achievement will be to capture the moon. Scipio waits for him to finish before stating that his wishes are entirely impossible - seemingly taken aback by the already apparent change in his mentor and friend. Scipio is already putting his role into play by providing the contrasting viewpoint launching into Caligula's madness.

Act two begins three years after the first act and is where we see Scipio's function as the foil kick into full gear. At a certain point, in an impulsive fit of rage, Caligula forces Scipio's father to kill himself. Scipio of course is deeply incensed by this but is not entirely sure how to handle it. Being the man of reason that he is, Scipio comes to the conclusion that Caligula must be killed before Scipio himself is murdered by him. Almost immediately after the murder of his father, Scipio is forced to converse with Caligula face to face. Caligula quickly coerces him into talking about some of his poetry and Scipio reluctantly begins to drop his overt anger and starts to open up about his writing. At the most intense point of the conversation, when Scipio feels most angry, " Caligula [took] the young man's face between his hands." Caligula utilizes this immensely extrinsic gesture in order to disarm Scipio and lull him back into his adoration. This conversation is an extremely telling and poignant moment for the two of them as it completely highlights the essence of their relationship. No matter what the man does, Caligula will always have a special place in the life and heart of Scipio. Evident in his earlier words to Caesonia, Scipio holds Caligula to such a high regard and despite having killed his father, Caligula still knows how to tap into the deepest, most earnest parts in his protege. This is exactly what makes Scipio the perfect foil. As Scipio continues to spill details about his poetry, Caligula completes his idea perfectly - much to Scipio's awe. However, what concludes this revealing scene is what propels their relationship into it's most important stage.

Scipio quickly realizes that he's being "lead on" and that Caligula hasn't truly begun caring about him again after all.. This causes them to have an intense argument with each other which swiftly leads to the bottom line of Caligula's entire character descent as well as the main idea of the play as a whole. Caligula gives his first completely transparent monologue about why he's been acting the way he has since his return. He spews on about his misery, his loss and ultimately his loneliness. Caligula's series of very emotional admissions is tremendously indicative of the relationship and the trust he still has in Scipio even to this point - after all he's done to the boy. Although there is a bit more to be told before the end of the story, it's at the conclusion of the second act and of this emblematic conversation where the central idea of Scipio's purpose can be found. Scipio asks Caligula what makes him happy and gives him purpose at this stage in his life. " Have you nothing of the kind? Nothing to which you can turn? No refuge, no mood that makes the tears well up?". While we know Scipio lives through his love - of both art and life - Caligula concludes the act with the perfect response to his foil: " Scorn." The most distinct word to perfectly illustrate just how opposite the two men have become.