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STAYING HUMAN THROUGH A TECHNO-PLAGUE | *Joe Allen*  
LOST WRITERS, FORGOTTEN GEMS | *Trevor Hoyle*

ISSUE 211

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

August 2020



## America gets its own Colour Revolution

*GloboCap is determined to crush any populist resistance to its ideology, no matter how much social chaos and destruction it unleashes in the process*

**C.J. Hopkins** [Page 12]



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News | Views | Opinions

# Insights

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Trevor Grundy

## When fascism lurks just beneath the surface

*“Some day, in the not too distant future, when the trade unions are being particularly tedious, students are being unusually destructive and the pound is buying less and less, then a Führer will appear and tell the British they are a powerful nation. ‘Britain Awake’ will be his slogan and some carefully chosen racial minority will be his scapegoat. Then you will see if the British are easy to regiment.”* – Len Deighton, Bomber (1970)

There’s a theory among people who live in storm-proof bubbles that fascism could never take root here in the UK. The well-plugged myth says we are a tolerant lot on this little island, ever ready to pick an opponent, dust him down, and



Photo: Wikimedia / National Portrait Gallery

Sir Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, in 1936.

start all over again.

The line was certainly pumped into children of my generation. How often I heard as a child in Church of England (Anglican) schools that the British are too balanced, too sensible and too mature to fall for that kind of paraphernalia with all those charismatic leaders, uniforms, drums, jackboots, street marches, and violence.

So, three cheers for Gerald Macklin, the Oslo-based

academic and author who asks us to take another look at the little known activities of fascists in the UK during the 20th-century and the opening decade of this one.

Drawing on extensive archival research and often obscure primary texts and propaganda material, as well as official records from British government archives and its secret services M15 and M16, *Failed Führers* has been hailed by Macklin’s intellectual peer group as “the definitive historical account of Britain’s extreme right”. In other words, essential reading for all students and scholars of race relations, extremism and hate.

The book charts the evolution of the extreme right from its genesis after World War I (1914-1918) to present-day incarnations. The author focuses on the careers of men whose names and careers have until recently been airbrushed out of the British story. They were, writes the author, fanatics driven by comforting racial delusions:

1. **Arnold Leese** (1878-1956), a world authority on camel diseases, who believed the Jews were taking over the world with Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital* in one hand and the *Protocols of the Learned*

# Insights

*Elders of Zion* in the other.

Founder of the short-lived Imperial Fascist League, Leese went to his grave believing Oswald Mosley was a Jew financed by them to stop the emergence of 'real' fascism in the UK.

2. **Sir Oswald Mosley** (1896-1980) is the best known of all the failed führers. One of his more adventurous 16th-century ancestors organised a privateer fleet against Spain and, as a reward, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth I. Mosley – whose first father-in-law, Lord Curzon, also suspected that he was Jewish – was tipped to be a future prime minister after entering the House of Commons as its youngest member after World War I. He founded the British Union of Fascists in 1932 and put his followers into black-shirts as he pulled on his jackboots. He took substantial sums of money from both Mussolini and Hitler. Mosley spent a large part of World War II in prison under the hastily imposed Regulation 18b. He reformed his movement after 1948, and became a leader of the Union Movement. He died in luxury at his home – the Temple of Glory – outside Paris in December 1980 and is now considered a father figure of fascism to fellow travellers in Europe, especially Italy.

3. **A.K. Chesterton** (1899-1973), nephew of the author G.K. Chesterton and an early supporter of Oswald Mosley. He wrote a book about Mosley, *Portrait of a Leader*, but went on to refer to his former hero as “The Bleeder,” because of the way Mosley used,



## FAILED FÜHRERS

**A History of Britain's Extreme Right**

Graham Macklin

Routledge – [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)

US \$26

and then discarded, anyone with ideas that challenged his own. Chesterton, a middle class academic turned activist, was another screaming antisemite and founder member of the National Front (NF), which attracted flash-in-the-pan support from what Marxists called the *déclassé* in parts of the UK during the 1960s and 1970s.

4. **Colin Jordan** (1923-2009), another British Hitler wannabe, was often photographed doing the Nazi salute with his French (very wealthy) wife whom he stole away from a Fascist colleague

5. **John Tyndall** (1934-2005), a Mosley soundalike who spent a large part of his time expelling anyone who threatened his leadership of one of a myriad of small and largely inconsequential groups he led.

6. **Nick Griffin** (1959- ), who was educated at Cambridge and who purged his British National Party (BNP) of antisemites and replaced them with

Islamophobes. In 2009, two BNP candidates, one of them Griffin, were elected to the European Parliament. They lost their seats in 2014 when the BNP vote transferred en masse to UKIP, an anti-immigration and anti-European Union group led by the chain-smoking, beer-swilling, former stockbroker and public schoolboy, Nigel Farage.

Mosley is the only one of the six with real presence and stature. His was the template that shaped the tiny organisations the other failed führers founded, while from France, he mocked them as “dwarfs standing in the jackboots of giants”.

Macklin has already written about Mosley after the Second World War, in a book titled *Very Deeply Died in the Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Resurrection of British Fascism after 1945*. In this latest effort, he has little new to say about Mosley, although he does drop in quotes from ancient M15 operatives who claimed to have infiltrated Mosley's BUF.

Mosley told his senior people that he knew all the agents' names; one of whom he claimed was W.E.D Allen, a former Ulster MP, who wrote a flattering book about him under the name James Drennan. Mosley said he had nothing to hide, so why worry about people boasting they'd infiltrated his organisation?

So, at the end of the day, Britain's six failed führers didn't amount to much. But it would be

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a mistake to totally dismiss their ideas. Macklin shows that the League of Empire Loyalists was close to the right wing of the Conservatives Party before World War II. And because of the unwelcome return of antisemitism in so many parts of Europe, there's a danger that Oswald Mosley will be turned into a cult figure for those with hate in their hearts and bricks in their hands.

The danger is real because Britain faces mass unemployment this year and there is a growing sense of cultural dis-

engagement. But fascism? It just couldn't happen here, could it?

Just re-read the quote from Len Deighton at the beginning of this article and think on . . . **CT**

*Trevor Grundy is a British journalist who lived and worked in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996. He is the author of *Memoir of a Fascist Childhood* (William Heinemann). A 28-page excerpt from the book may be read or downloaded at [www.coldtype.net/Assets/10/Pdfs/1010.Fascist.pdf](http://www.coldtype.net/Assets/10/Pdfs/1010.Fascist.pdf)*

law enforcement. But Trump has already shown he won't let truth get in the way of his desires, and therefore a little more digging on the part of voters and a little more forthright reporting on the part of journalists is necessary to understand exactly who is breaking American laws.

The paramilitary units from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that Trump has deployed to Portland have engaged in disturbing violations of human rights. They have used munitions to injure people, and acted like "thugs and goons" in the words of a Navy veteran who was beaten with batons and pepper-sprayed in the face. They have arrested and detained people without documentation. Trump has defended their tactics saying the targets "are anarchists. These are not protesters... These are people that hate our country".

Acting Homeland Security Secretary Director Chad Wolf took Trump's characterisation of protesters as "anarchists" to comical extremes in his public record of how and why his officers engaged with protesters.

Saying that he "condemns the rampant long-lasting violence in Portland," Wolf used the words "violent" 76 times to describe what protesters have done to justify arrests and repression.

Wolf's definition of violence seems to almost entirely encompass property damage such as vandalism and graffiti. The closest that Portland protesters came

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Sonali Kolhatkar

## Trump is daring us to stop him

President Donald Trump's recent reelection campaign advertisement is straight out of the plot of a horror movie. Just days after he deployed federal officers to the streets of Portland, Oregon, his campaign released a 30-second television spot featuring an elderly white woman watching on her television the news of activists demanding a defunding of police.

The woman shakes her head in disapproval as she notices a figure at her door trying to enter her house. She nervously calls 911, but apparently the activists she disapproves of have been so effective in their nefarious demands that the universal emer-

gency hotline Americans rely on now goes unanswered.

The vulnerable woman drops her remote control as the intruder enters her home, and we are only left to imagine the horror of what he does to her as the words "You won't be safe in Joe Biden's America" appear on the screen. In this dystopian version of America, only Trump promises law and order.

Trump has repeatedly claimed that Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, supports the defunding of American police. He does not, and in fact, in keeping with his historic support for police, Biden has demanded increased funding for



# Insights

to actual violence, it seems, was when they apparently “attempted to cause eye damage to officers with commercial grade lasers”, and in another instance, “proceeded to launch aerial fireworks at federal property”.

The DHS records used the term “violent anarchists” 70 times and the term “protesters” only once, without making any effort to explain how exactly they distinguished “violent anarchists” from protesters, journalists or passersby. Nowhere in the document was there any documented behaviour by protesters that came close to an attack on vulnerable elderly white women like the fictitious one in Trump’s ad. In not a single instance reported in the DHS account did a protester – or in Wolf’s words, violent anarchist – actually commit intentional violence against a human being.

Trump’s policy violates an idea that Republicans have long supported – that states ought to have the right to set their own laws and rules and that the federal government ought to respect that right. It also goes against the warnings that pro-gun Republicans have echoed for years – that mass gun ownership is necessary so that vigilant citizens can counter federal government tyranny of the sort that Trump has un-

leashed. Now that the kind of federal government overreach they have warned against for years is actually unfolding, there is nary a peep from the “gun rights” crowd.

It isn’t just Republicans who have embraced the march toward authoritarianism. Eighteen years ago Congress passed the Homeland Security Act to create the DHS – an agency with an Orwellian name – with 88

aspects of the post-9/11 authoritarian architecture. Now, even as DHS officers are being deployed by a president they strongly criticize, Democratic lawmakers are trying to tie up funding for the DHS with that of the Department of Health and Human Services, which, according to the Intercept’s Ryan Grim, is “making it more difficult for progressive Democrats to oppose”.

But Trump has abused the infrastructure of the post-9/11 state repression to a far greater extent than either Presidents George W. Bush or President Barack Obama. The *Washington Post* reported that Tom Ridge, the notorious DHS secretary under Bush, denounced Trump’s move

saying the agency was formed to counter “global terrorism”, and that, “It was not established to be the president’s personal militia”. A former Bush-era DHS official, Paul Rosenzweig, characterised the deployment as “lawful but awful”, while seeing the phenomenon as clearly unconstitutional. Michael Chertoff, another Bush-era DHS secretary, told a *Washington Post* columnist, “While it’s appropriate for DHS to protect federal property, that is not an excuse to range more widely in a city and to conduct police



**SHOOTING GALLERY:** Photographers grab shots of a US paramilitary unit during protests on the streets of Portland.

Democrats joining more than 200 Republicans in voting yes. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks prompted a reconfiguring of American society and government that reverberates today, unleashing excessive surveillance and harsh immigration enforcement, while doing little to address the factors that provoked the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the first place.

Yet year after year, Democrats have voted to reauthorize the USA Patriot Act and other

Photo: TV Screenshot



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# Insights

operations, particularly if local authorities have not requested federal assistance”. Chertoff added that Trump’s move is “very problematic,” and “very unsettling”. If those GOP officials who served under Bush – who were considered the political villains of their time – are disturbed, Trump has indeed crossed a line.

But another figure from the Bush years is rearing his head under Trump and encouraging his authoritarianism. John Yoo, the infamous lawyer who helped craft the “torture memos” during the Bush administration’s “war on terror” to justify the CIA’s use of torture during interrogations, is apparently advising the Trump administration on how best to use his executive power to skirt congressional authority, the Guardian reports. In June,

Yoo wrote in an article in the *National Review*, “Even if Trump knew that his scheme lacked legal authority, he could get away with it for the length of his presidency”.

Trump has made clear that norms, ethics, laws, and even the US Constitution are merely suggestions that mildly constrain him and that can be tossed aside when needed. His modus operandi is to push the limits of what he can do and dare the nation to stop him. Will we? **CT**

**Sonali Kolhatkar** is the founder, host and executive producer of “*Rising Up With Sonali*,” a television and radio show that airs on Free Speech TV and Pacifica stations. This article was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute.

who had a cameo performing *Ready Teddy*.

While Little Richard certainly left an impression on the talented young McCartney, he couldn’t have imagined that, in less than a decade, the two would take the stage together.

A year later, McCartney met John Lennon, who was performing with his band in the back of a churchyard. The two quickly learned that they shared a love of American rock ‘n’ roll, and both were big fans of *The Girl Can’t Help It*. McCartney’s audition for Lennon even included a rendition of Eddie Cochran’s *20 Flight Rock* from the movie. Lennon asked him to join the band. The two started practicing together and dabbled in songwriting. When penning tunes, McCartney and Lennon often borrowed a formula that Little Richard had made his trademark: three chords played with a contagious, driving rhythm and blues feel.

George Harrison joined them, along with Lennon’s art school buddy, Stuart Sutcliffe. They started performing together in Liverpool at venues like the Jacaranda and the famed Cavern Club. Staples of their sets included covers of the Little Richard classics *Long Tall Sally* and *Hey-Hey-Hey-Hey*.

As their popularity grew, they were invited to perform residencies as the house band at the Indra and Kaiserkeller clubs in Hamburg, Germany. Playing every night allowed them to hone their live chops; by the time they

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Clint Randles

## How Little Richard helped launch Beatles

**T**he *Girl Can’t Help It* is a 1956 film by Frank Tashlin about a young woman, played by Jayne Mansfield, who dreams of being a star vocalist. Some consider it the first rock ‘n’ roll music video ever made; built into the story line were full versions of song performances by Eddie

Cochran and Gene Vincent. But Little Richard’s music was the star of the show – so much so that his song *The Girl Can’t Help It* became the movie’s title.

At a small Liverpool movie theatre, a 14-year-old Paul McCartney watched the hit film, mesmerised by the energy, talent and charisma of Little Richard,

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returned to Liverpool and the Cavern Club, they were seasoned performers, and the crowds at their shows swelled. The next year, they toured the UK with Roy Orbison and Del Shannon. And then the group got their biggest break yet: They were asked to be the opening act for Little Richard at the brand new Star-Club in Hamburg in late 1962 for 14 shows.

Little Richard was riding high. From 1956 to 1959, he scored 18 hit singles with his unique combination of wailing vocals, energetic piano playing and flamboyant style.

Not only did McCartney and Lennon get to meet their idol, but they also got to observe and spend time with him backstage. Little Richard would later recall helping McCartney hone his vocal style in the green room. And once their residency in Hamburg concluded, Little Richard joined the group in Liverpool to see them perform at the Cavern Club. He got a glimpse of what was to come; impressed by the group's energy, he foresaw success for the band in America.

When the Beatles' manager Brian Epstein secured them their first audition with Decca Records in early 1963, Epstein decided that the band should play a set list that sounded more refined than the tracks the group had performed in Hamburg. So in front of studio executives, the group played *Three Cool Cats*, *Besame Mucho*, and *The Sheik of Araby*. There's a reason you



Photo: Horst Fascher/K & K Ulf Krüger OHG/Redferns

**STARSTRUCK:** During their 1962 residency at Hamburg's Star-Club, the Beatles had the opportunity of a lifetime – opening for Little Richard.

might not recognise these songs. The record company wasn't impressed and decided against signing the band.

When another opportunity presented itself to audition for George Martin and the Parlophone label, the band didn't make the same mistake twice: They returned to the hard-driving Little Richard-style rhythm and blues that they had mastered under his tutelage in Hamburg. They were offered a contract, provided they find a better drummer, which is where Ringo Starr enters the story.

In late 1963 the group recorded their first album, *Please, Please Me*, in 10 hours over the course of one day. It was basically their live show from the Star-Club.

Tracks like *I Saw Her Standing There*, *Please, Please Me*, and the album's final song, *Twist and Shout*, borrowed heavily from the style of Richard. On the album, Lennon's voice is noticeably harsh; it sounds raw and edgy – just like the man they had been studying in Germany.

A few months after this recording session, the group famously appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, which catapulted them to international stardom.

The rest is history. **CT**

**Clint Randles** is Associate Professor of Music Education, University of South Florida. This article first appeared at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)

# Insights

Jake Johnson

## US Covid plan includes \$686m for F-35 jets

In a floor speech on Monday, July 27, US Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell described the GOP's newly released coronavirus stimulus package as a "carefully tailored" plan to provide financial relief to desperate Americans.

But a look at the legislative text released by Senate Republicans shows the HEALS Act is replete with massive gifts to the Pentagon and defence contractors that would do nothing to aid the unemployed, provide nutrition assistance to hungry children, prevent an avalanche of evictions, or stop the spread of coronavirus.

"Last time I checked F-35s don't help families pay their bills", Rep.

Chuy García (D-Ill.) tweeted in response to the GOP's proposal of \$686-million in spending on new fighter jets. The legislation also includes hundreds of millions of dollars in funding for surveillance planes, Apache helicopters, and armoured vehicles.

The HEALS Act proposes a total of \$29.4-billion in new military spending just a week after the House and Senate approved

a \$740.5-billion Pentagon budget for fiscal year 2021.

Meanwhile, the Republican package includes no money for state and local governments, election assistance, or the US Postal Service. The legislation would also slash the weekly federal unemployment insurance boost from \$600 to \$200.

Roll Call's John Donnelly



**CASH FUELLED:** \$686-million from the coronavirus stimulus package will buy F-35 fighter jets

reported Monday that "Senate Republicans have laced their roughly \$1 trillion coronavirus relief package with at least \$7 billion for weapons, most of which are built by leading contractors that contribute heavily to congressional campaigns."

According to Donnelly:

"The draft appropriations portion, made public on Monday evening, includes money for

fighter jets, helicopters, radars, ships, and armoured vehicles that the measure's authors have deemed 'emergency' spending that is not capped by the budget control law...

"The top two defence contractors, Lockheed Martin Corp. and Boeing Co., would do especially well under the measure.

"The list of weapons is topped by fully \$1-billion for an unstated number of Boeing P-8 Poseidon maritime surveillance jets. Also on the list is \$283-million for Boeing Apache helicopters for the Army.

"Boeing's Ground-Based Midcourse Defense anti-missile system, which is aimed at intercepting incoming ballistic missiles from sites in Alaska and California, would receive \$200-million, and \$243-million more would go to a missile defence radar programme".

"People are dying, or worried about keeping a roof over their families' heads, or cutting hours because their kids' schools are closed", said Anthony Weir, a lobbyist on nuclear disarmament

and Pentagon spending at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. "And this is the time to jam some military procurement into this year that you didn't get last year?" **CT**

*Jake Johnson is a staff writer for Common Dreams – [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org) – where this article was first published.*



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C.J. Hopkins

# America gets its own Colour Revolution

*GloboCap is determined to crush this populist resistance to its ideology, no matter how much social chaos and destruction it unleashes in the process*

So, the White Black Nationalist Colour Revolution (“made possible in part by GloboCap”) appears to be going extremely well. According to *Foreign Policy* magazine, the Trump regime is clinging to power, but it’s only a matter of time until the identitarian moderate rebels drive the Putin-backed fascists out of office and restore democracy to the Western world.

Yes, that’s right, just when it looked like the corporate-sponsored, totally organic, peaceful uprising against racism was over, and the Russo-fascist Trump regime had survived, the Global Capitalist Anarchists of Portland and other militant “Resistance” cells have launched a devastating counter-attack against assorted fascist building facades, fascist fences, and stores, and so on, and are going mano-a-mano in the streets with heavily-armed Putin-Nazi goon squads.

According to the *Guardian*, and other elements of the underground “Resistance” media, peaceful protesters in Portland have been attacking the fascists with rocks, bottles, improvised

explosive devices, and various other peaceful anti-racist projectiles. In Oakland, they peacefully set fire to the courthouse. In Austin, Texas, a peaceful protester armed with an AK-47-style rifle was shot to death by a suspected fascist whose car was peacefully swarmed by a mob after he “tried to aggressively drive past protesters.” In Los Angeles, peaceful anti-racism protesters have been whipped up into such a frenzy of righteous anti-fascist fervour that they are performing flying tackles on the cops, who then promptly beat the snot out of them. And so on ... I think you get the picture.

Portland, Oregon (where just under 6 percent of the population is black) has of course been at the vanguard of the revolution, as it has since the Russians stole the election from Hillary Clinton in 2016 by “influencing” gullible African-Americans with a handful of ridiculous Facebook ads, and then installed Donald Trump and the rest of the Putin-Nazi Occupation Government in office. Not

only have local Antifa militants been tirelessly fighting gangs of neo-nationalist boneheads you’ve probably never heard of more or less around the clock since then,

Portland is also the headquarters of most of the militant Antifa intelligentsia (characters like Alexander Reid Ross, an anti-fascist geography lecturer who inculcates kids with his paranoid theories about the international Duginist-Red-Brown conspiracy to take over the whole world and mass-murder the Jews. So, naturally, Portland is now the epicentre of the White Black Nationalist Colour Revolution.

But this isn’t just the usual Portlandia silliness. This White Black Nationalist Colour Revolution has been in the works for the last four years. Since the moment Trump won the Republican nomination, the global capitalist ruling classes have been fomenting racialised polarization, Putin-Nazi paranoia, and other forms of mass hysteria, in anticipation of the events of this summer.

The propaganda has remained consistent. Both the liberal corporate media and the alternative



Art: Godrunna / 123rf.com

left media have been predicting that Trump is going to go full-Hitler, impose martial law, proclaim himself Führer, and perpetrate some sort of racialised holocaust ... for reasons they've never quite been able to explain.

He hasn't, of course, so the global capitalist ruling classes had no choice but to unleash a shitstorm of civil unrest to goad him into overreacting ... which, no surprise, he was stupid enough to do. Ordering the goon squads into the streets might delight his hardcore right-wing base, but it will alienate the majority of "normal" Americans, who aren't especially fond of goon squads (unless they're doing their thing in some faraway country). Most

importantly, it will motivate all those non-Clinton-voting Obama voters to go out and vote for "Slappy" Joe Biden, or whichever corporate puppet the Democrats have replaced him with by November 3. That seems to be the general strategy.

Now, regardless of whether they can pull this off (and whatever your feelings about GloboCap as a de facto hegemonic empire), you have to at least admire their audacity. The part where the mayors of major cities stood down and otherwise hamstrung their cops, and let the "peaceful protesters" run amok, was particularly audacious, in my opinion. That was a serious gamble on GloboCap's part. Trump could have resisted the urge to go

totalitarian and called their bluff. He could have made a speech explaining to Americans exactly how these colour revolutions work, how this one is going right by the book, and why he wasn't going to take the bait, and left the cities in question to their own devices (until the mayors were forced to restore order themselves). But no, tactical genius that he is, he had to order in the goon squads, which, of course, is exactly what the "Resistance" wanted. Now he's got cities like Philadelphia threatening to order their police to confront and attempt to arrest the federal agents ... I assume you see where this is heading.

The other part that was particularly tricky was sequeing from the original protests following the murder of George Floyd by the cops, most of which were authentic expressions of frustration and outrage by actual black people about systemic racism and police brutality (both of which are very real, of course) to the orchestrated civil unrest that followed, most of which is being coordinated, funded, and carried out by white people. That was also an extremely bold move, but, as the generous folks at The Ford Foundation put it in July of 2016, when they announced that they would be overseeing the funnelling of \$100-million to organizations in the Black Lives Matter movement:

"We want to nurture bold experiments ..."

Oh, and speaking of bold experiments, what better setting could there be for a White Black Nationalist Colour Revolution than a fake apocalyptic plague that has

wrecked the economies of most Western countries, terrorised the masses into mindless obedience, and destabilised whole societies to the point where fanatical, GloboCap-brainwashed brownshirts are macing people in the face for not wearing masks at outdoor picnics and wishing death on entire families if the mothers won't put masks on their kids?

No, credit where credit is due to GloboCap. At this point, not only the United States, but countries throughout the global capitalist empire, are in such a state of mass hysteria, and so hopelessly politically polarised, that hardly anyone can see the textbook colour revolution that is being executed, openly, right in front of our faces.

Or ... OK, actually, most Trump supporters see it, but most of them, like Trump himself, have mistaken Antifa, Black Lives Matter, and the Democratic Party and their voters for the enemy, when they are merely pawns in GloboCap's game. Most liberals and leftists cannot see it at all ... literally, as in they cannot perceive it.

Like Dolores in the HBO Westworld series, "it doesn't look like anything" to them. They actually believe they are fighting fascism, that Donald Trump, a narcissistic, word-salad-spewing, former game show host, is literally the Return of Adolf Hitler, and that somehow (presumably with the help of Putin) he has staged the current civil unrest, like the Nazis staged the Reichstag fire! (The *New York Times* will never tire of that one, nor will their liberal and leftist readers, who have been do-

## **Hardly anyone can see the textbook colour revolution that is being executed right in front of our faces**

ing battle with an endless series of imaginary Hitlers since ... well, since Hitler.)

I've been repeating it my columns for the last four years, and I'm going to repeat it once again. What we are experiencing is not the "return of fascism." It is the global capitalist empire restoring order, putting down the populist insurgency that took them by surprise in 2016. The White Black Nationalist Colour Revolution, the fake apocalyptic plague, all the insanity of 2020 ... it has been in the pipeline all along. It has been since the moment Trump won the election. No, it is not about Trump, the man. It has never been about Trump, the man, no more than the Obama presidency was ever about Obama, the man. GloboCap needs to crush Donald Trump (and moreover, to make an example of him) not because he is a threat to the empire (he isn't), but because he became a symbol of populist resistance to global capitalism and its increasingly aggressive "woke" ideology. It is this populist resistance to its ideology that GloboCap is determined to crush, no matter how much social chaos and destruction it unleashes in the process.

In one of my essays from last

October, "Trumpenstein Must Be Destroyed", I made this prediction about the year ahead:

*"2020 is for all the marbles. The global capitalist ruling classes either crush this ongoing populist insurgency or God knows where we go from here. Try to see it through their eyes for a moment. Picture four more years of Trump ... second-term Trump ... Trump unleashed. Do you really believe they're going to let that happen, that they are going to permit this populist insurgency to continue for another four years? They are not. What they are going to do is use all their power to destroy the monster, not Trump the man, but Trump the symbol. They are going to drown us in impeachment minutiae, drip, drip, drip, for the next twelve months. The liberal corporate media are going to go full-Goebbels. They are going to whip up so much mass hysteria that people won't be able to think. They are going to pit us one against the other, and force us onto one or the other side of a simulated conflict (Democracy versus the Putin-Nazis) to keep us from perceiving the actual conflict (Global Capitalism versus Populism). They are going to bring us to the brink of civil war ..."*

OK, I didn't see the fake plague coming, but, otherwise, how's my prediction holding up? **CT**

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Joe Allen

# Staying human through a technological plague

*Imagine looking in the mirror after a long global lockdown, only to find the ten billion eyes of a luminescent superorganism staring back at you*

This global lockdown has gotten so lonesome, we're being driven into the arms of machines. Smartphones, assault rifles, talking treadmills, swipeable sexbot impersonators, smart RVs for old farts, VR goggles for the kids, a battery-powered dog for the whole family, a corporate bug in the ol' noggin – our new friends are dependable, sanitary, and made to last. And they're always willing to listen.

We now know, through bitter experience, that everybody needs somebody. Since the first multicellular blobs formed 600-million years ago, various individuals have been compelled to gather into societies – slime molds, ant colonies, wolf packs, sacrificial cults, bingo tournaments, you name it. And like many evolved traits that confront novel situations, this innate desire for companionship makes us vulnerable to unanticipated parasites and predators, such as smartdildos or technocratic control freaks.

In Howard Bloom's 1997 evo psych classic, *The Lucifer Principle*, the author introduces an iconic analogy for human social

instincts – the cellular behaviour of a sea sponge. From his chapter on the "Superorganism":

"Take a living sponge, run it through a sieve into a bucket, and the sponge breaks up into a muddy liquid that clouds the water into which it falls. That cloud is a mob of self-sufficient cells [who have] everything it takes to handle life on its own; but something inside the newly liberated sponge cell tells it, 'You either live in a group or you cannot live at all.' ... Within a few hours, the water in your bucket grows clear, and sitting at the bottom is a complete, reconstituted sponge".

Bloom's point is that – like the wayward sponge cell – human beings can't stand to be alone. This instinct is still at work in today's proto-cyborgs, who, having been atomised by government mandate, are steadily reconstituting their social structure online.

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The trendy Spiritualists of the 19th-century deserve credit for their foresight. People will attempt to cross any chasm to communicate with a lost loved one. These days, our laptops keep us

connected like WiFi Ouija boards. Even the cheapest machines can be used to reach out into Cyberia and draw down the spirits of the living.

Our glowing screens will actually channel self-aware Zoom personas who, with eyes askew, shift from one photogenic pose to the next. These disembodied beings haunt the Sim dimension – Zoom worship, Zoom work, Zoom school, Zoom parties, Zoom confessionals, Zoom psychoanalysis, Zoom surveillance – pursuing self-realisation through the only means available.

Like sponge cells, we all have to scratch that social itch. That's why your phone's always within reach, making incessant noises that we can all hear. It's literally a handheld synthetic society. So long as there are names in your contacts, another soul must be out there to lend an ear.

In fact, if you've read the Terms and Conditions, you know that AI bots – and their creators, if they so desire – are always listening, whether you like it or not. As we gather online, "together apart", the contours of our social behaviours





REACHING FOR THE OTHER SIDE: "Better buy a Mac next time, kid".

are being studied – and shaped – by the same innovators who helped create this New Normal in the first place.

The past few months have been like a dull horror movie that just drags on and on. Aside from the haunting image of hundreds of thousands of people choking to death on their own lung dumplings – held in soulless hospitals where millions have been kept from loved ones during their last moments, forcibly isolated by bureaucrats who'll never be held to account for the pain caused by their decisions – two news items have left me with the unsettling sense that

this historic moment was fated.

The first came on April 10, Good Friday. It was an advertisement for "The Life", an augmented reality exhibit featuring occult performance artist Marina Abramović, to be auctioned for a small fortune at Christie's. The promo was released by Microsoft, whose HoloLens 2 is also showcased.

Ever since her name showed up in the John Podesta email leak, Abramović has been notorious among conspiracy buffs. It's as if she was made for the part, given her bloody pagan aesthetic, her quasi-cannibalistic LA gala – where celebrities gathered to slice up and devour life-sized peo-

ple cakes – and her role as an esoteric life coach to the progressive glitterati, such as Jay Z and Lady Gaga.

In the ad itself, we see a bunch of basic hipsters wearing HoloLens headsets in an empty art gallery, getting excited over nothing – a metaphor for all of modern art. Then, out of thin air, a pallid Marina Abramović materialises in a red dress. She kind of just stands around for awhile, looking emotionless and sinister. By the hipsters' pleased expressions, the viewer knows this digital apparition is, like, totally amazing.

In her heavy Slavic accent, Abramović explains: "I believe



the art of the future is art without objects. It is just pure transmission of energy between the viewer and the artist. To me, mixed reality is this answer. ... There is always this great ideal of immortality. Once you die the work of art will never die. ... Here, I am kept forever”.

By sheer coincidence, this ad aired two days before Easter was cancelled (no, they didn't find the body). In fact, last Easter was the first time in history when, essentially, the entire world's laity has been denied sacrament on the holiest day of the year. To be clear, this vast neutralisation of sacred space and sacred time wasn't limited to the Jesus people. Across the planet, from temple to mosque to synagogue, the ancient stream of collective effervescence was cut off and moved online.

The second “Creepy Tale from the New Normal” was told by tech muckraker Whitney Webb. Adding to a long tradition of whistleblowers and paranoid dot-connectors, Webb's incisive reporting confirms that top players in the Pentagon, the US Intelligence Community, and Silicon Valley are aggressively pushing to transform America into a fully integrated surveillance state run by robots. (Yeah, yeah, so what else is new?)

According to a confidential government document, obtained via FOIA request, our new forward-thinking society will boast 5G-interconnected “smart cities”, unbridled mass surveillance, emasculating autonomous vehicles, habitual online shopping, and an easily traceable cashless economy.



## ***If we want to have any fun in the physical world, we'll need to download the newest directives first***

This pulsating urban super-organism is to be overseen by advanced AI bots. Their boundless neural nets will slurp up big data gleaned from our physical movements, social networks, and biometric status – tapping into facial recognition and DNA databases – as well as our public and private communications. After chewing the data over, these bots will cough up answers to all our biggest problems. The idea is to turn America into an integrated network of hyper-efficient cyborg hives to keep us competitive with China, who are rapidly outpacing us in that direction.

The document itself bears the bland title “Chinese Tech Landscape Overview”. It was produced in May of 2019 – half a year before the pandemic – by the US government's National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, chaired by former Google head Eric

Schmidt. The details are analysed in Whitney Webb's hair-raising article “Techno-Tyranny: How the US National Security State is Using Coronavirus to Fulfill an Orwellian Vision”, published in *The Last American Vagabond* on April 20, 2020.

Drawing on numerous sources, Webb cross-references these sci-fi protocols with various trends now promoted as the New Normal – including contact tracing, conditioned aversion to face-to-face interaction, the normalisation of telemedicine, and draconian restrictions on voluntary movement and in-person gatherings.

In essence, those of us not wearing tinfoil hats on self-sufficient communes will be forced to upload our personalities to the thoroughly surveilled Cyberian tundra. If we want to have any fun in the physical world, we'll need to download the newest directives first.

This is all just progress, they say. Just another step in human evolution. Don't freak out.

Look, I understand that evolution is inevitable. But can't we just hit pause at *Homo sapiens* and hold off on the next leap? At least until we've figured out how to be decent humans? No? Oh, right. In the New Normal, all decent humans will become cyborgs. That way, everyone and their grandma can stay safe. 'Cause that's just science.

Throughout my ongoing exploration of the American wilderness, the strangest creature I've encountered so far is the Trail Crab. This subspecies must have evolved during the past three months, most likely in response to the novel coronavirus – or at least the stress-

inducing propaganda around it.

This terrestrial arthropod bears some resemblance to the Trekking Beetle, whose carbon fibre legs can be heard clacking down hiking trails from Cascadia to the Smoky Mountains. (By the way, both of these are related to the recently evolved Moon Spider, easily identified by its adjustable forelegs, neon exoskeleton, FitBit-equipped biometric system, and its desperate gait as it clatters past you up the mountain.)

On first glance, the Trail Crab looks a lot like a common Trekking Beetle, only its eyes bug out of its shell. You'll know it's a true Trail Crab, though, if it spots you. When approached by a human nakedface, the Trail Crab will freeze like a hermit crab, then slowly step off the trail and turn away. Having withdrawn, it puts a muzzling device on its frontal orifice and just stands there, staring off into space, until the threat has passed.

If two Trail Crabs encounter each other on the path, they immediately come to an amusing impasse. I've been down trails where there's a crab on each side, both staring away into nothing, each waiting for the other to make the first move. Hell, they may still be there, starving to death in fear. Clearly, this behavioural pattern incurs some loss of fitness. But at least it confers the advantage of staying safe in the New Normal.

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**Y**es, I suppose this evolutionary leap was already in motion. After all, human sociality has been rapidly mutating in urban centres for decades. As Americans are increasingly isolated and dehumanised, many



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## ***Courtship has moved to Zoom seances on the WiFi Ouija board. Tinder, Grindr, and Covid-free glory holes***

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actually prefer to stay at home with an anthropomorphised pet on one side and a humanised gadget on the other, comfortably snuggled between Mammal and Machine. With real people out of the way, they can just relax, scroll through social media posts, and wait for the Amazon Fairy to arrive.

Even romance, for all its primal wonder, is being sifted through the digital sieve. Courtship has moved to Zoom seances on the WiFi Ouija board. Tinder, Grindr, and Covid-free glory holes provide reliable alternatives to awkward organic mating rituals. In an antiseptic age of “staying safe”, computers are like condoms that people actually enjoy using. And best of all, you'll never forget a single moment, because somewhere out there, probably in some Utah data facility, every kiss and whisper is being recorded for broader analysis.

Change may be the only constant, but the beauty of evolution is that ancient forms tend to be conserved, even as new adaptations emerge. For instance, the great apes – who bear a close resemblance to our common ancestor – still exist alongside humans (if we don't kill them all, anyway). We primates exist alongside rodents. Mammals exist alongside reptiles, who exist alongside amphibians. And so on, down to the hyper-social sponges, who wax nostalgic about our evolutionary history from the bottom of the ocean.

One benefit of this conservative arrangement is that if “advanced” organisms don't cut it in the long run – think Tyrannosaurus or the woolly mammoth – then the more primitive forms remain as a sort of back-up plan. This same principle must apply to the ongoing transhumanist experiment that our technocratic elites are currently conducting on the global population. Therefore, following evolution's eternal wisdom, I'd like to formally volunteer to remain in the control group for the duration of this dystopian shit show.

Do what you will with the folks lining up down the sidewalk, six feet apart, eager to get their touchscreen palm chips and shiny robo-buddies. They deserve whatever they get, obviously. But I'd rather just stay human, in the traditional sense, if it's all the same.

Somebody has to stay weird – even in the New Normal. **CT**

*Joe Allen writes about race, robots, and religion. These days, he's based out of a survivalist bunker on wheels. His website is [www.JOEBOT.xyz](http://www.JOEBOT.xyz)*

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George Monbiot

# Why would we want to return to normal?

*The great majority of people do not want to return to business-as-usual after the pandemic, but our governments are determined to make us do so*

Out there somewhere, marked on no map but tantalisingly near, is a promised land called Normal, to which one day we can return. This is the magical geography we are taught by politicians, such as Boris Johnson with his “significant return to normality”. It is the story we tell ourselves, even if we contradict it with the very next thought.

There are practical reasons to believe that Normal is a fairyland, to which we can never return. The virus has not gone away, and is likely to keep recurring in waves. But let’s focus on another question. If such a land existed, would we want to live there?

The polls consistently suggest we would not. A survey by BritainThinks a fortnight ago showed that only 12 percent of people want life to be “exactly as it was before”. A poll at the end of June, commissioned by the nursery provider Bright Horizons, suggests that just 13 percent of people want to return to working as they did before the lockdown.

A YouGov study in the same week revealed that only 6 per-

cent of us want the same type of economy as we had before the pandemic.

Another survey by the same pollsters in April showed only 9 percent of respondents wanted a return to “normal”. It’s rare to see such strong and consistent results on any major issue.

Of course, we would all like to leave the pandemic behind, with its devastating impacts on physical and mental health, its exacerbation of loneliness, the lack of schooling and the collapse in employment.

But this doesn’t mean that we want to return to the bizarre and frightening world the government defines as normal.

Ours is no land of lost content, but a place in which lethal crises were gathering long before the pandemic struck. Alongside our many political and economic dysfunctions, normality meant accelerating the strangest and deepest predicament humankind has ever confronted: the collapse of our life-support systems.

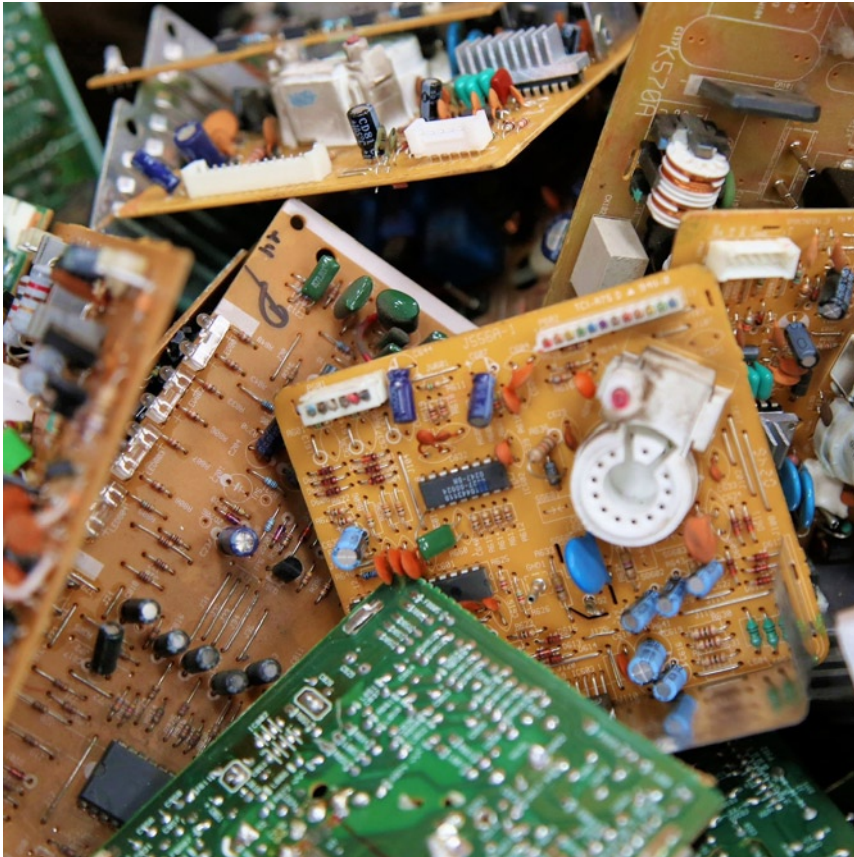
Last month, confined to our homes, we watched columns of

smoke rising from the Arctic, where temperatures reached a highly abnormal 38°C. Such apocalyptic imagery is becoming the backdrop to our lives. We scroll past images of fire consuming Australia, California, Brazil, Indonesia, inadvertently normalising them.

In a brilliant essay at the beginning of this year, the author Mark O’Connell described this process as “the slow atrophy of our moral imaginations”. We are acclimatising ourselves to our existential crisis.

When business as usual resumes, so does the air pollution that kills more people every year than Covid-19 has yet done, and exacerbates the impacts of the virus. Climate breakdown and air pollution are two aspects of a wider dysbiosis. Dysbiosis means the unravelling of ecosystems. The term is used by doctors to describe the collapse of our gut biomes. But it is equally applicable to all living systems: rainforests, coral reefs, rivers, soil. They are unspooling at shocking speed, due to the cumulative impacts of normality, which means a perpetual expansion of





FIRST-WORLD waste languishes at a waste recycling facility in Rwanda.

consumption.

Last month we learnt that \$10-billion-worth of precious metals, such as gold and platinum, are dumped in landfill every year, embedded in tens of millions of tonnes of lesser materials, in the form of electronic waste.

The world's production of e-waste is rising by 4 percent a year. It is driven by another outlandish norm: planned obsolescence. Our appliances are designed to break down, and are deliberately engineered not to be repaired.

This is one of the reasons why the average smartphone, containing precious materials extracted at great environmental cost, lasts for between two and three years, while the average desktop printer prints for a total of five hours and

four minutes before it is discarded.

The living world, and the people it supports, cannot sustain this level of consumption, but normal life depends on its resumption. The compound, cascading effects of dysbiosis push us towards what some scientists warn could be global systemic collapse.

The polls on this issue are also clear: we do not want to return to this madness. A YouGov survey suggests that 8 out of 10 people want the government to prioritise health and well-being above economic growth during the pandemic, and 6 out of 10 would like it to stay that way when (if) the virus abates.

A survey by Ipsos produces a similar result: 58 percent of British people want a green economic re-

covery, while 31 percent disagree. As in all such polls, Britain sits close to the bottom of the range. By and large, the poorer the nation, the greater the weight its people give to environmental issues. In China, in the same survey, the proportions are 80 percent and 16 percent, and in India, 81 percent and 13 percent. The more we consume, the more our moral imagination atrophies.

**B**ut the Westminster government is determined to shove us back into hypernormality, regardless of our wishes.

Last month, the environment secretary, George Eustice, signalled that he intends to rip up our system of environmental assessments. The government's proposed free ports, in which tax and regulations are suspended, will not only exacerbate fraud and money laundering but also expose the surrounding wetlands and mudflats, and the rich wildlife they harbour, to destruction and pollution.

The trade deal it intends to strike with the US could override parliamentary sovereignty and destroy our environmental standards, without public consent.

Just as there has never been a normal person, there has never been a normal time. Normality is a concept used to limit our moral imaginations. There is no normal to which we can return, or should wish to return. We live in abnormal times. They demand an abnormal response. **CT**

*George Monbiot is a columnist for the Guardian, where this article first appeared. His website is [www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com).*

Rebecca Gordon

# Labour in a time of struggle

*Why does essential work pay so little – and cost so much?*

In two weeks, my partner and I were supposed to leave San Francisco for Reno, Nevada, where we'd be spending the next three months focused on the 2020 presidential election. As we did in 2018, we'd be working with UNITE-HERE, the hospital industry union, only this time on the campaign to drive Donald Trump from office.

Now, however, we're not so sure we ought to go. According to information prepared for the White House Coronavirus Task Force, Nevada is among the states in the "red zone" when it comes to both confirmed cases of, and positive tests for, Covid-19. I'm 68. My partner's five years older, with a history of pneumonia. We're both active and fit (when I'm not tripping over curbs), but our ages make us more likely, if we catch the coronavirus, to get seriously ill or even die. That gives a person pause.

Then there's the fact that Joe Biden seems to have a double-digit lead over Trump nationally and at least an eight-point lead in Ne-

vada, according to the latest polls. If things looked closer, I would cheerfully take some serious risks to dislodge that man in the White House. But does it make sense to do so if Biden is already likely to win there? Or, to put it in coronavirus-speak, would our work be essential to dumping Trump?

## **Essential Work?**

This minor personal conundrum got me thinking about how the pandemic has exposed certain deep and unexamined assumptions about the nature and value of work in the United States.

In the ethics classes I teach undergraduates at a college here in San Francisco, we often talk about work. Ethics is, after all, about how we ought to live our lives – and work, paid or unpaid, constitutes a big part of most of those lives. Inevitably, the conversation comes around to compensation: How much do people deserve for different kinds of work? Students tend to measure fair compensation on two scales. How many years of train-



ing and/or dollars of tuition did a worker have to invest to become "qualified" for the job? And how important is that worker's labour to the rest of society?

Even before the coronavirus hit, students would often settle on medical doctors as belonging at the top of either scale. Physicians' work is the most important, they'd argue, because they keep us alive. "Hmm..." I'd say. "How many of you went to the doctor today?" Usually not a hand would be raised.



**HARD WORK, LOW PAY: Workers harvesting grapes in vineyard.**

Photo: Ammentorp / 123rf.com



“How many of you ate something today?” All hands would go up, as students looked around the room at one another. “Maybe”, I’d suggest, “a functioning society depends more on the farmworkers who plant and harvest food than on the doctors you normally might see for a checkup once a year. Not to mention the people who process and pack what we eat”.

I’d also point out that the workers who pick or process our food are not really unskilled. Their

work, like a surgeon’s, depends on deft, quick hand movements, honed through years of practice.

Sometimes, in these discussions, I’d propose a different metric for compensation: maybe we should reserve the highest pay for people whose jobs are both essential and dangerous. Before the pandemic, that category would not have included many healthcare workers and certainly not most doctors. Even then, however, it would have encompassed farmworkers and

people labouring in meat processing plants. As we’ve seen, in these months it is precisely such people – often immigrants, documented or otherwise – who have also borne some of the worst risks of virus exposure at work.

By the end of April, when it was already clear that meatpacking plants were major sites of Covid-19 infection, the president invoked the Defense Production



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Act to keep them open anyway. This not only meant that workers afraid to enter them could not file for unemployment payments, but that even if the owners of such dangerous workplaces wanted to shut them down, they were forbidden to do so. By mid-June, more than 24,000 meatpackers had tested positive for the virus. And just how much do these essential and deeply endangered workers earn? According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, about \$28,450 a year – better than minimum wage, that is, but hardly living high on the hog (even when that’s what they’re handling).

You might think that farmworkers would be more protected from the virus than meatpackers, perhaps because they work outdoors. But as the *New York Times* has reported: “Fruit and vegetable pickers toil close to each other in fields, ride buses shoulder-to-shoulder, and sleep in cramped apartments or trailers with other labourers or several generations of their families”.

Not surprisingly, then, the coronavirus has, as the *Times* report puts it, “ravaged” migrant farm worker communities in Florida and is starting to do the same across the country all the way to eastern Oregon. Those workers, who risk their lives through exposure not only to a pandemic but to more ordinary dangers like herbicides and pesticides so we can eat, make even less than meatpackers: on average, under \$26,000 a year.

When the president uses the Defense Production Act to ensure that food workers remain in their jobs, it reveals just how important their labour truly is to the rest of us.

## ***We didn’t know it, but the post-World War II period, when boomers like me grew up, was unique in US history***

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Similarly, as shutdown orders have kept home those who can afford to stay in, or who have no choice because they no longer have jobs to go to, the pandemic has revealed the crucial nature of the labour of a large group of workers already at home (or in other people’s homes or eldercare facilities): those who care for children and those who look after older people and people with disabilities who need the assistance of health aides.

This work, historically done by women, has generally been unpaid when the worker is a family member and poorly paid when done by a professional. Childcare workers, for example, earn less than \$24,000 a year on average; home healthcare aides, just over that amount.

### ***Women’s Work***

Speaking of women’s work, I suspect that the coronavirus and the attendant economic crisis are likely to affect women’s lives in ways that will last at least a generation, if not beyond.

Middle-class feminists of the 1970s came of age in a United States where it was expected that they would marry and spend their days caring for a house, a husband, and their children. Men were the makers. Women were the “home-

makers”. Their work was considered – even by Marxist economists – “non-productive”, because it did not seem to contribute to the real economy, the place where myriad widgets are produced, transported, and sold. It was seldom recognised how essential this unpaid labour in the realm of social reproduction was to a functioning economy. Without it, paid workers would not have been fed, cared for, and emotionally repaired so that they could return to another day of widget-making. Future workers would not be socialised for a life of production or reproduction, as their gender dictated.

Today, with so many women in the paid workforce, much of this work of social reproduction has been outsourced by those who can afford it to nannies, day-care workers, healthcare aides, house cleaners, or the workers who measure and pack the ingredients for meal kits to be prepared by other working women when they get home.

We didn’t know it at the time, but the post-World War II period, when boomers like me grew up, was unique in US history. For a brief quarter-century, even working-class families could aspire to an arrangement in which men went to work and women kept house. A combination of strong unions, a post-war economic boom, and a so-called breadwinner minimum wage kept salaries high enough to support families with only one adult in the paid labour force. Returning soldiers went to college and bought houses through the 1944 Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, also known as the GI Bill. New Deal programmes like social secu-

urity and unemployment insurance helped pad out home economies.

By the mid-1970s, however, this golden age for men, if not women, was fading. (Of course, for many African Americans and other marginalised groups, it had always only been an age of fool's gold.) Real wages stagnated and began their long, steady decline. Today's federal minimum wage, at \$7.25 per hour, has remained unchanged since 2009 (something that can hardly be said about the wealth of the 1 percent). Far from supporting a family of four, in most parts of the country, it won't even keep a single person afloat.

Elected president in 1980, Ronald Reagan announced in his first inaugural address, "Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem". He then set about dismantling President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty programmes, attacking the unions that had been the underpinning for white working-class prosperity, and generally starving the beast of government. We're still living with the legacies of that credo in, for example, the housing crisis he first touched off by deregulating savings and loan institutions and disempowering the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

It's no accident that, just as real wages were falling, presidential administrations of both parties began touting the virtues of paid work for women – at least if those women had children and no husband. Aid to Families with Dependent Children ("welfare") was another New Deal programme, originally designed to provide cash assistance to widowed women raising kids on their own at a time

## ***How could any country afford such a thing as universal free childcare? Sweden can!***

when little paid employment was available to white women.

In the 1960s, groups like the National Welfare Rights Organization began advocating that similar benefits be extended to black women raising children. (As a welfare rights advocate once asked me, "Why is it fine for a woman to look to a man to help her children, but not to The Man?") Not surprisingly, it wasn't until black and Latina women began receiving the same entitlements as their white sisters that welfare became a "problem" in need of "reform".

By the mid-1990s, the fact that some black women were receiving money from the government while not doing paid labour for an employer had been successfully reframed as a national crisis. Under Democratic President Bill Clinton, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996, a bill that then was called "welfare reform." After that, if women wanted help from The Man, they had to work for it – not by taking care of their own children, but by taking care of their children and holding down minimum-wage jobs.

### ***Are the Kids All Right?***

It's more than a little ironic, then, that the granddaughters of femi-

nists who argued that women should have a choice about whether or not to pursue a career came to confront an economy in which women, at least ones not from wealthy families, had little choice about working for pay.

The pandemic may change that, however – and not in a good way. One of the unfulfilled demands of liberal 1970s feminism was universal free childcare. An impossible dream, right? How could any country afford such a thing?

Wait a minute, though. What about Sweden? They have universal free childcare. That's why a Swedish friend of mine, a human rights lawyer, and her American husband who had a rare tenure track university job in San Francisco, chose to take their two children back to Sweden. Raising children is so much easier there. In the early days of second-wave feminism, some big employers even built daycare centres for their employees with children. Those days, sadly, are long gone.

Now, in the Covid-19 moment, employers are beginning to recognise the non-pandemic benefits of having employees work at home. (Why not make workers provide their own office furniture? It's a lot easier to justify if they're working at home. And why pay rent on all that real estate when so many fewer people are in the office?) While companies will profit from reduced infrastructure costs and in some cases possibly even reduced pay for employees who relocate to cheaper areas, workers with children are going to face a dilemma. With no childcare available in the foreseeable future and school re-openings dicey

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propositions (no matter what the president threatens), someone is going to have to watch the kids. Someone – probably in the case of heterosexual couples, the person who is already earning less – is going to be under pressure to reduce or give up paid labour to do the age-old unpaid (but essential) work of raising the next generation. I wonder who that someone is going to be and, without those paychecks, I also wonder how much families are going to suffer economically in increasingly tough times.

### **Grateful to Have a Job?**

Recently, in yet another Zoom meeting, a fellow university instructor (who'd just been interrupted to help a child find a crucial toy) was discussing the administration's efforts to squeeze concessions out of faculty and staff. I was startled to hear her add, "Of course, I'm grateful they gave me the job". This got me thinking about jobs and gratitude – and which direction thankfulness ought to flow. It seems to me that the pandemic and the epidemic of unemployment following in its wake have reinforced a common but false belief shared by many workers: the idea that we should be grateful to our employers for giving us jobs.

We're so often told that corporations and the great men behind them are Job Creators. From the fountain of their beneficence flows the dignity of work and all the benefits a job confers. Indeed, as this fairy tale goes, businesses don't primarily produce widgets or apps or even returns for shareholders. Their real product is jobs. Like many of capitalism's lies, the idea that workers should

## ***I'm not sure that a couple of old white ladies are essential workers in the time of Covid-19***

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thank their employers reverses the real story: without workers, there would be no apps, no widgets, no shareholder returns. It's our effort, our skill, our diligence that gives work its dignity. It may be an old saying, but no less true for that: labour creates all wealth. Wealth does not create anything – neither widgets, nor jobs.

I'm grateful to the universe that I have work that allows me to talk with young people about their deepest values at a moment in their lives when they're just figuring out what they value, but I am not grateful to my university employer for my underpaid, undervalued job. The gratitude should run in the other direction. Without faculty, staff, and students there would be no university. It's our labour that creates wealth, in this case a (minor) wealth of knowledge.

As of July 16, in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis, 32-million Americans are receiving some kind of unemployment benefit. That number doesn't even reflect the people involuntarily working reduced hours, or those who haven't been able to apply for benefits. One thing is easy enough to predict: employers will take ad-

vantage of people's desperate need for money to demand ever more labour for ever less pay. Until an effective vaccine for the coronavirus becomes available, expect to see the emergence of a three-tier system of worker immiseration: low-paid essential workers who must leave home to do their jobs, putting themselves in significant danger in the process, while we all depend on them for sustenance; better paid people who toil at home, but whose employers will expect their hours of availability to expand to fill the waking day; and low-paid or unpaid domestic labourers, most of them women, who keep everyone else fed, clothed, and comforted.

Even when the pandemic finally ends, there's a danger that some modified version of this new system of labour exploitation might prove too profitable for employers to abandon. On the other hand, hitting the national pause button, however painfully, could give the rest of us a chance to rethink a lot of things, including the place of work, paid and unpaid, in our lives.

So, will my partner and I head for Reno in a couple of weeks? Certainly, the job of ousting Donald Trump is essential. I'm just not sure that a couple of old white ladies are essential workers in the time of Covid-19. **CT**

**Rebecca Gordon** teaches at the University of San Francisco. She is the author of *American Nuremberg: The US Officials Who Should Stand Trial for Post-9/11 War Crimes* and is now at work on a new book on the history of torture in the United States.



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*“You can’t go and dis’point Judy, man. Yeah, yeah, she’s a crazy ol’ lady and all, but you just can’t”*

# Pioneer Woman

A Short Story by **Philip Kraske**

**B**ehind her back we called Mrs. Gant “The Neighbourhood Manager”: unstoppably organising, brainstorming, prodding. She dragged all us kids into a Neighbourhood Olympics one summer and a family volleyball tournament the next. Her worst creation was the “neighbourhood prayer” at Thanksgiving, where we all had to join hands in a big circle on her lawn and say one thing that we were thankful for. I still remember my panic – what to say, how to say it? – as my turn approached, and the panic made my pubescent voice crack. Even worse was her lecture afterwards, her long, broad back bent down to me, that my prayer had been very nice and that those who had laughed were “feelings-challenged”. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed my brother gripping his mouth with both hands and dashing around the corner of the house to challenge *his* feelings in privacy.

**T**en years later, still flush with the Holy Grail of human perfectibility, there she was again, giving her talk extolling “velvet assertiveness” – role-play exercises to follow. The mother hens in HR adored her and



sent round quotes from her talk for weeks. She hadn’t recognised me among the twenty-odd people in the group. During the coffee break, I said hello. This required a shoulder-loosening scoop of courage first; the old instincts die hard.

Her name was no longer Gant, but Purcell; evidently, she was no longer married to the Mr. Gant that I remembered. She had the same angular, athletic figure: thick back and swimmer’s shoulders. Her jaw and cheekbones stuck out as gaunt as shins. Her hair was still short and functional, her fingers long and flailing like loose broom bristles.

“Heavenly day, what a small world! Fantastic! Well, and how are you?” she exclaimed, for ecstasy had long ago become a way of life for her.

The talk ran its course: college, our families, work. Mrs. Gant – it’s impossible even today to think of her as anything else – duly pronounced everything fantastic, with the exception of my sister’s ovary operation, which rated “horrible”. And finally she asked me what I was doing at B & K Distributors. “Didn’t you say you majored in music?”

“With a specialty in composition, to be exact”, I replied. “Remember I used to take piano lessons from your neighbour?”

Art: David Anderson / [www.dandersonillustration.com](http://www.dandersonillustration.com)

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## ***“Don’t you think that if you really, really tried, really gave it your all, that you could make it? I mean, imagine it. Close your eyes and think”***

“Donna Stevens, yes, fantastic! And you’ve kept it up! That’s fantastic!”

“Yeah, well, like most music majors, I ended up taking care of computers. That’s what I do here. Get everybody up and running, do a little programming. Keeps the wolves away. I get out by four every day, and I have time for music. I play in a jazz trio, and I write pieces for it”.

“Keeps the wolves away? Is that all?” Mrs. Gant stared at me, gray eyes blazing. Though her skin had a wide grain, she wore no make-up except for a bit of lipstick, and I had a sudden memory of her two daughters complaining that they were forbidden to even try makeup. “How can you say that? Hey, you’ve got to change that attitude. Your work is your life! If your heart is in jazz, go for it!”

“Hold on, Mrs. Purcell. It’s not so easy to –”

“Judy, please”.

“Judy. Look, I need peace of mind when I sit down to the keyboard, and I don’t have it if I’m behind on the rent”.

“But you can’t think about money! That’s our problem, you know: we’re so materialistic”.

“Well, I know plenty of musicians who would give one of their playing fingers for a little romp through materialism”.

“But you’ve got to take your shot!” she cried. “You have a gift, a talent. Why are you wasting it on –”

I tried to head her off, but it was useless. Her voice pounded like a war drum around the long meeting room.

“Don’t you think that if you really, really tried, really gave it your all, that you could make it? I mean, imagine it. Close your eyes and think”. A sharp nod. “C’mon – close your eyes”.

I stifled a sigh and closed them.

“Can’t you see yourself, practicing and practicing and practicing? Hour after hour, month after month. And then one day – *don’t open your eyes!* – you audition for some really top-flight band that needs a jazz pianist and someone, maybe the minger or maybe just the trumpet player, stands up and shouts, “That’s it! That’s just the sound we’re looking for! That guy has the hands we want!”

I wondered if I could open my eyes. I wondered

why – how – she still had the power to make grown men close them. Politeness, I figured. Weakness, too. My answer must have been about as wishy-washy, because I don’t remember it.

I helped her pick up equipment when she finished, and when we had packed everything into her two big travelling satchels (Motivate! Inc., printed on them), she lowered her rental-car’s window, thanked me, and added, “You just think about what I told you. If you ever doubt it, just close your eyes and think of that golden moment when you win that big audition. You can do it, you know. It’s in you, I can feel it. Next time I come back here for a presentation, I don’t want to see you with the rest of the initiatees”, which is what she called those hostage to her four-hour harangue.

And indeed she didn’t see me, for I left B & K a year later, having had a torrid affair with the gorgeous comptroller who ended up my wife. But I remembered the encounter, if only because I resented the insinuation that merely earning a living wasn’t good enough.

And so we jump some ten years into the future. Yours truly with two kids now, the comptroller having turned into a gorgeous freelance accountant, and me head of programming for a small and very sharp women’s fashion firm. My band had grown to a quartet with the addition of a jazz guitarist who was explosively – and that’s the word, believe me – creative. He composed, I edited his work with input from the bassist and drummer, and a small jazz label recorded our work. We got good reviews in jazz magazines and made enough money to have to declare it on our taxes every year.

Which was why I had flown to Los Angeles to look in on the final cuts of a low-budget (too low) comedy film for which we had made the sound track, mainly an adaptation of our old work. I returned to the airport disgusted: with the exception of the final roll-credits theme, our work had been cut to smithereens. I beefed to the producer, but he sent me packing: “The contract specifically states....”

The lady running flight check-in was Mrs. Gant’s

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## ***“God, I spent my whole twenties just hiding from her and scraping off layers of guilt. I didn’t even tell her what I was doing for three years”***

daughter Sally. We had time for a quick drink before my flight. She looked terrific at 37: blond, heeled, controlled – solid class. I saw at first glance why she had run away to California: this way she could wear makeup.

“God, I spent my whole twenties just hiding from her and scraping off layers of guilt. I didn’t even tell her what I was doing for three years. And when I finally did?” She made a voice: “‘A flight attendant? That’s it? Just a flight attendant?’ Hell, I loved it. I’ve seen every capital in the Orient and most of Europe, what with work and free travel on vacation”.

“That’s terrific. I envy you”.

“Tell Mom. One time I spent Christmas with her, and she started giving me the business, and I told her flat out, ‘I don’t give a good goddamn about being a pilot, CEO of the airline, or anything else’. She flipped. Gave me all that stuff about how if you really, really try, you can be anything you want”.

“Right. As if all those pro basketball players could be Michael Jordan if they just worked a little harder”. I checked the monitor for my flight, and swore – it would board on time. “What’s she doing nowadays? Seminar business still going strong?”

“Oh no. God, the opposite. Business dropped way off starting about three years ago. She was bankrupt for a while, and Cindy and I were lending her money. She paid it back eventually. But I think it was all her second ex’s money”.

“She married a second time, then?”

“For a while – to an alcoholic that she helped kick the habit”. A sigh and a sip from her wine glass. “Yeah, Mom loses jobs and men. She worked at a half-dozen big corporations – HR stuff. I mean, she must be fabulously convincing in a job interview”.

“I’ll bet”.

“But once she sat down to the desk and computer, she never lasted a year anywhere: personality conflicts, close-minded people who didn’t want to listen to her ideas, bosses worried about an ambitious worker coming up the ranks. There was always” – she scratched quotation marks in the air – “a reason”.

“Not a go-along-to-get-along type, is she?”

“From there, she tumbled down the economic chain: a department store, then a gym, then a conven-

ience store, and now she works in a candy shop”.

“A candy shop?”

Sally shook her head in wonder. “She’s very proud of having raised their sales by 32 percent over the last quarter.”

I laughed, checking the monitor again: my flight was boarding. “Does she still give you a hard time about your profession?”

“Never stopped.” The voice, plangent and aggravating: “‘Motivate your boss! Be assertive, never aggressive. Instruct your boss assertively in how to promote your interests within the company structure’. I tell her, ‘Mom, I’m head of ground operations now. A 747 can’t push back without me giving the green light’. Forget it. In her eyes, I lack ambition”.

We jump again, this time fifteen years ahead, to the end of my report on Mrs. Gant, which I wouldn’t have bothered with at all if it weren’t for this last anecdote.

Over the years, our quartet did a total of five soundtracks – all for comedy films – each one more cut to pieces than the last, though the pay doubled with each one; such is the logic of Hollywood. After the fifth, we said nuts with the whole thing. The “explosive” guitarist then moved to LA, got studio jobs, a big head and an addiction, and out of the blue called me one January night from a local detox centre. A cousin in Houston had a steady music job for him in his steakhouse if he could just get down there. Could he cadge the one-way airfare? Oh, and he’d need a ride out to the airport, too.

Well.

The detox was a converted factory building that had been bought by the city and done over in late-century institutionalism: walls painted brown on the bottom half and cream on the upper, a drinking fountain whose burning-cold water shocked me to the scrotum, busted armchairs like wounded soldiers strewn about the lounge. It was winter, and amidst the constant coming-and-goings of residents, workers, ambulances, and delivery men, waves of cold charged through the ground-floor rooms like linebackers blitz-



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***“And don’t forget your soul ... without that, your goals don’t have any power behind them. Goal-soul. Remember now. That’s your inner force”***

ing the quarterback.

I was waiting for the guitarist to finish packing up his things and come downstairs when I recognised Mrs. Gant. This was easy because she had never changed her short, sawn-off haircut. She was carrying a tray full of dirty dishes from someone’s breakfast, nearly running with it as if she had a million things to do. I called to her, and she braked on a dime, and I introduced myself once again.

“Well! Yes! Heavenly day! And how are you? Let me put this in the kitchen real quick”.

In a blink, she was back, and steered me through an adjoining doorway into the lounge, where downhearted second-hand paperbacks and an ancient encyclopedia volume slouched across the shelf of a bookcase, otherwise empty. And the cold – God, it was irritating – again and again it plunged through the doorway and smothered you. Mrs. Gant, however, didn’t seem to notice, as people who live under flight paths don’t notice the roar of airplanes.

“So, you’re going to pick up poor Calhoun! That’s fantastic! He came here absolutely at death’s door. I had to be with him twenty-four hours those first two weeks – to be sure he didn’t go back to the junk, you know. It was a struggle, but I told him what he needed to hear, and he’ll be up and running if he just gets that job in Houston. He can do it. I told him he was a winner. I said he’d be back in Hollywood in a year. That’s our contract: in a year, he has to be back working there”.

I was going to ask her about the contract but was forced to tell my news: still married, the kids married, grandfatherhood in the offing, a job in a softwareconsulting firm, two weekend gigs a month for a little extra money and a lot of extra fun, Hollywood over and done with, taxes all paid on the royalties and good riddance.

“But how can you say that after hitting the top!” cried Mrs. Gant. (I still can’t call her Judy.)

“Hitting the top and seeing your entire composition chopped down to fifteen bars – those are two very different things”, I said.

This staggered Mrs. Gant. She closed her open mouth, stared at the floor on one side of herself – as if looking over the railing of a high bridge. “Well,

sounds like it’s not all it’s cracked up to be”, she mused. “Not that it’s not all for, you know, for money or anything”. She looked up. “But didn’t you fight for your music? I mean, if you really, really talked to the director or, or the producer or whoever makes the decisions, couldn’t you have –”

“Normally the director. No – no chance. That wouldn’t –”

“But if you really presented your case strongly? Tactfully, of course, but assertively and dynamically, don’t you think you could have gotten more of your music into the film? It’s all in how you motivate people, you know. The key is...” She went on, gray eyes brilliant in her face only bonier and harder with the years. Here was the haggard pioneer mother crossing the Rockies, months on the trail, determined to reach the legendary green valleys of the Pacific coast, numb to hardship or the cries of hungry children.

I nodded, admitted, shrugged, promised. What else can you do in the face of absolute optimism?

The guitarist saved me by appearing in the lounge doorway. “Hey, man! Thanks so much for –”

“Graduation Day, Calhoun! Congratulations!” Mrs. Gant cried, hugging him. He returned the gesture embarrassedly, one hand clutching the plastic trash liner with all his possessions. He had no guitar, and I wondered if he’d sold his collection for heroin.

She pulled away. “And you’ll remember your key words, won’t you?”

“I’ll ’member’em: SPAN.”

“Striving, Programming, Aspiration, and Networking.”

Calhoun worked his way past her and shook my hand. “Hey, thanks for comin’, man. ’Preciate it.”

We walked toward the entrance, Mrs. Gant with her arm around Calhoun’s shoulders. “And don’t forget your soul, Calhoun”, she said. “Because without that, your goals don’t have any power behind them. Goal-soul. Remember now. That’s your inner force”.

“I’ll ’member”.

He opened the door and Mrs. Gant gave him one last penetrating look. “You can do it, Calhoun. I can feel it. Can’t you?”

“Yeah, abs’lutely, Judy. Damn right”.

We both said good-bye, though I don’t think Mrs.

## ***“Says she gets a avalanche o’ Christmas cards every year, and it ain’t no shit, man. Showed me a big ol’ fuckin’ box full of ’em”***

Gant heard me, standing on the front steps like a woman seeing her sailor off to war. “And don’t forget the third prong of our strategy, Calhoun”, Mrs. Gant called, her breath freezing out as long as her arm. “R.M. and D. You can have all the soul and SPAN you want, but without R.M. and D., it all goes down the drain.”

Calhoun waved one last time as he ducked into the car.

I looked at him. “R.M. and D.?”

“Reflection, Meditation and Dreamin’”

“Ah”. I started the car and we rolled past Mrs. Gant, still on the front steps, one exiguous hand clutching herself against the minus-10 cold, and waving violently and smiling. “You can do it, Calhoun!” she shouted.

We were silent for a while. The car slid down onto the highway to the airport. The guitarist said, “You know her, man?”

I explained.

“So she had a family, huh? With kids and all?”

“Two daughters”.

“Damn! They half-loco too?”

“I ran into one of them some years ago. She wasn’t. Can’t stand her mom, though”.

“Don’t surprise me. Damn, that woman talks. Mornin’ to night. Runs that place for the city, you know. Last ten years or somethin’. Even lives there – on the top floor? Where she does her therapy too. Pounds your ears till you think you was fuckin’ Sup’man”.

“I believe it. Hey, what was that she told me about a contract?”

“Oh, that.” Calhoun pulled a paper out of an inner pocket. “I, the und’signed, commit myself to returning to my Hollywood music c’reer within a period o’ no longer than one year. I also – Well, there’s a bunch o’ stuff here I promise not to do, like drink much or smoke and do shit. Then it finishes, ‘And I will send a yearly progress report to Judy P. And’son at Christmas

to inform her o’ my progress’. Signed, Judy and me”.

He folded it and tucked it back in a pocket. He stared ahead at the grim highway, the dull blanket of sky. “And then we sign and she pulls out this fuckin’ bottle of carb’nated apple juice and shakes ’er up and pops it and gets her rug all wet – we were in her room, you know – and we do a toast and shit....”

His voice broke, and after a moment I heard a loud swallow. I needed an effort not to turn my head. A sob.

“Fuck, man”, he whispered hoarsely. “She b’lieves in you more ’n you b’lieve in y’self”. He wiped his eyes.

I let a few silent miles go past. “Going to send her the reports?”

“Yeah, sure I’m gonna to send ’em – least for a year or two, I will. Lotta her people do. Says she gets a avalanche o’ Christmas cards every year, and it ain’t no shit, man. Showed me a big ol’ fuckin’ box full of ’em. Old ones, goin’ back ten years.” He gave his eyes a last, definitive wipe. “You can’t go and dis’point Judy, man. Yeah, yeah, she’s a crazy ol’ lady and all, but you just can’t”.

He said good-bye when we reached the Delta Airlines entrance, said he would pay me back – and he did, with an unnecessary bit of interest, eighteen months later, from LA – and ambled shakily away with his trash liner dangling from a hand.

It took me a long time to pull my eyes away from him. “Mrs. Gant”, I murmured. “Mrs. Gant. Who would’ve thought?”

Then cars were honking and an airport cop was fanning my windshield. I hustled away from the drop-off area and out of the airport, planes lancing away on all sides. **CT**

*Philip Kraske's latest novel is 11/9 and the Terrorist Who Loved Bonsai Trees, published by Encompass Editions, and available from Amazon. His web site is [www.philipkraske.com](http://www.philipkraske.com)*

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Greg Palast

# Von Spakovsky's icicle

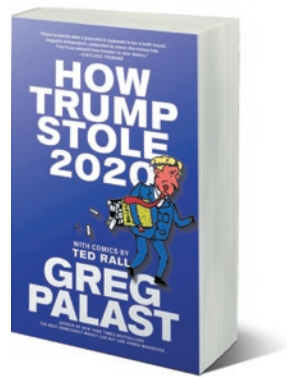
In our third excerpt from his new book **How Trump Stole 2020**, Greg Palast investigates the non-US citizens who “voted” in the 2008 election

Donald Trump got his intelligence on the wave of alien voters skewing election results in the US from Kris Kobach, former Kansas Secretary of State, who is now running for a Senate seat. But where did Kobach get this stuff?

Answer: From a man in the Fox studio, Hans von Spakovsky. Don't be prejudiced against Von Spakovsky because of his Trumpian comb-over, wet lips, Dr. Mengele glasses or his silly use of the German royal “von”. Rather, what's disconcerting is Von Spakovsky's ability to create Fox Facts.

Fox Facts are not facts as you and I know them. We think of facts as bits of truth, nice little nuggets of reality. But here (see next page under, the heading “FOX FACTS”, is Von Spakovsky's claim that “6.4 percent of all non-US citizens voted in the 2008 election”.

Let's do some arithmetic. Add the 11.3-million “illegal immigrants” to the 13.2-million legal permanent residents and we have a total of 24.5-million aliens in the US. If 6.4 percent voted, that's 1.6-million foreigners committing the



## HOW TRUMP STOLE 2020

GREG PALAST

With comics by Ted Rall

Signed copies available at <https://www.gregpalast.com/how-trump-stole-2020>

Published by Seven Stories Press

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felony crime of voting in each of our elections!

*¡Caramba!*

That's why Obama won! That's a fact! That is, a “FOX FACT”.

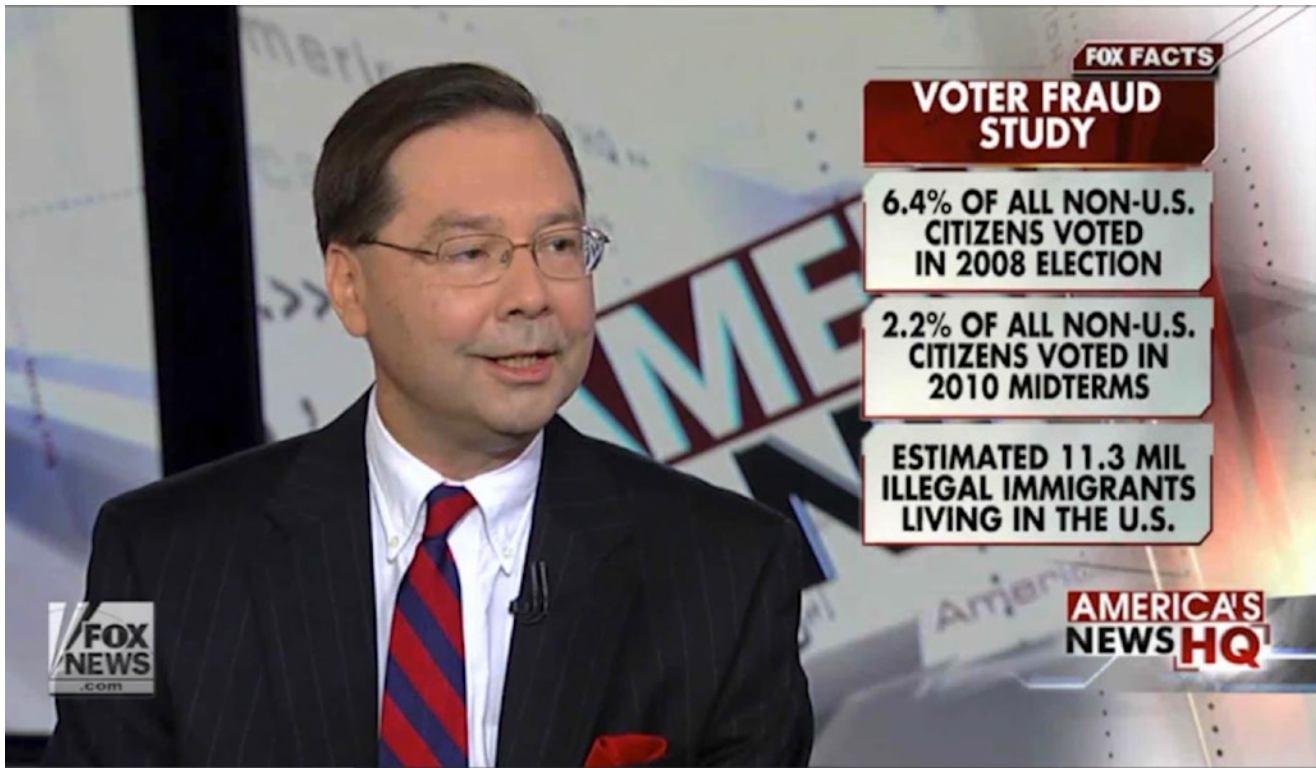
Now, FOX FACTS would be harmless, but Von Spakovsky's whoppers have earned him a succession of Presidential appointments to positions of power where he has exterminated voting rights on a mass scale.

As a lawyer for George W. Bush in 2000, he was on the team that successfully argued to disqualify 179,855 ballots cast in Florida, mostly in black counties, thereby making Bush President. (*That's worth an explanation . . . later.*) Bush rewarded Von Spakovsky by appointing him to run the Justice Department Civil Rights Division where his job was to protect the voting rights of African-Americans. Half of the Civil Rights division staff quit.

There, Von Spakovsky helped Bush Jr. write the Help America Vote Act. (When a Bush tells you he's going to “help” you vote, look out.) Bush then appointed him to the Federal Elections Commission.

Earlier on, Von Spakovsky was on the Fulton County Board of Election (Atlanta) – for which he was qualified by his also serving as Chairman of the county's Republican Party. (Only in America!) In 2017, President Trump appointed Von Spakovsky to the Presidential Commission on Election Integrity – and appointed Kobach its chief – to give them federal authority to hunt the wily alien voter. (They





**FACTS, FOX-STYLE:** Hans Von Spakovsky's whoppers have earned him a succession of Presidential appointments to positions of power where he has exterminated voting rights on a mass scale.

lost their jobs for violating federal meeting rules, sadly, before they could find an alien.)

But what earns Von Spakovsky a photo and cameo here is his role as the expert witness defending Kobach's Prove-You're-a-Citizen law, explaining to a federal judge in Kansas the Fox Facts about the Alien Invasion.

In 2016, Kobach took his prove-you're-a-citizen law for a test drive in Kansas. He successfully blocked 35,314 aliens from registering to vote. Two were Air Force officers stationed in Kansas. Kobach was then sued by a group he calls "The Communist League of Woman Voters." (I called the League to ask if they were functionaries of the Communist Party and got a stern answer: "We are non-partisan, unaffiliated with any political party." Of course a Communist would say that.)

Kobach had to admit in court that every one of these 35,314 voters he blocked – including two Air Force officers – were US citizens. But, he argued, his law could stop an alien in the future – *because there were millions of them voting in the USA.*

University of Florida professor Michael McDonald went through the list of the blocked "aliens" and found that an astonishing 44.6 percent were young, 18 to 29 years old. I'm sure it was not lost on Kobach, former Chairman of the Kansas GOP, that these young voters preferred Democrats to Republicans by 55 percent to 36 percent.

Low-income registrants were also blocked. One Kansan, who worked in a federal prison, could afford neither the time off nor the

\$50 to get a certified copy of her birth certificate. Kobach did not seem moved by the loss of impetuous Kansans. Maybe because those earning less than \$50,000 per year vote 53 percent to 41 percent against the GOP.

Kobach wheeled Von Spakovsky into the courtroom as the expert with the proof of the alien invasion.

Unfortunately, the judge clearly did not value FOX FACTS. Federal District Court Judge Julie Robinson found Von Spakovsky a bit of an alien to a courtroom, not a typical expert witness. In another life, I was an expert witness in major racketeering cases. It required academic credentials, certified experience and evidence-supported facts. Judge Julie was not so impressed by a witness whose qualifications amounted to getting Bush elected

and appearing on Fox News.

The experts noted that just four aliens had been caught voting in all of the USA. But Kobach insisted this was just “the tip of the iceberg”. The judge concluded,

“This trial was his opportunity to produce credible evidence of that iceberg, but [Kobach] failed to do so. . . . Instead, the Court draws the more obvious conclusion that there is no iceberg; only an icicle, largely created by confusion and administrative error”.

Kobach, Von Spakovsky and Trump still insist that over a million aliens have risked five years in prison and automatic deportation to vote. The Secretary of State of Kansas has unique authority to arrest any illegal voter. So, then, why didn't Kobach hand-cuff a few thousand?

Maybe because *they don't exist*.

**B**ack in 2016, Kobach called me to say he was on the cusp of a mass arrest of illegal alien voters. It was quite exciting, the Big Bust coming. Kobach got on Fox TV to announce that there were “50 Somalians stealing my vote” in Kansas!

With Kobach's power to arrest illegal voters, I was waiting to see the bust. “Fifty Somalians stealing my vote”! I admit I was puzzled that Kobach was so careless as to leave his vote where 50 Somalians could simply grab it. But more puzzling was his failure to arrest even one.

Now, I've been to Kansas and I can tell you that it would be very difficult for 50 Somalians to hide in a crowd at the Topeka Corn Festival.

Still more puzzling: Voters provide their name and address

## **The one guy he busted was an American citizen, who had registered before his official citizenship ceremony**

and show up at the polls. Or, they provide their address to get a mail-in ballot. As a former detective, I can tell you grabbing an illegal voter would be history's easiest stake-out. Still, the wily Somalians slipped Kobach's dragnet – as did over a million illegal alien voters nationwide.

Because it's hard to bust criminals . . . when no one has committed the crime.

Kobach, hoping to change my story I was about to file in *Rolling Stone*, called me to say that “indictments are on the way”. How many? With a million and a half illegal voters including 50 Somalian Democrats nearby,

Kobach finally busted the alien voter crime wave: one.

Taking a bit of the shine off his multi-year, multi-million dollar hunt was that the one guy he finally busted *was an American citizen*. The poor schmuck had registered before his official citizenship ceremony.

Now, let's stop chuckling. Kobach speaks to the President of the United States on a regular basis. You don't and I don't.

Here's the reality sandwich and we have to eat it:

1. The State of Kansas is appealing the decision overturning their

Proof of Citizenship requirement to vote. It will go to the Supreme Court, ie, the Grand Inquisitors who gave us Husted and Citizens United. Good luck.

2. “Prove-You're-an-American” is sitting on the books of several swing states, un-dead, waiting for this Supreme Court to let them rise from their crypts.

3. Think “Prove-You're-a-Citizen” won't spread? The requirement for a voter to produce a photo ID began in 2008 in just one state, Indiana, and didn't spread until the 2013 Shelby decision.

Then it hit 32 states, five in one day. “Prove You're an American” will spread in days, even hours of a court approval, which is likely.

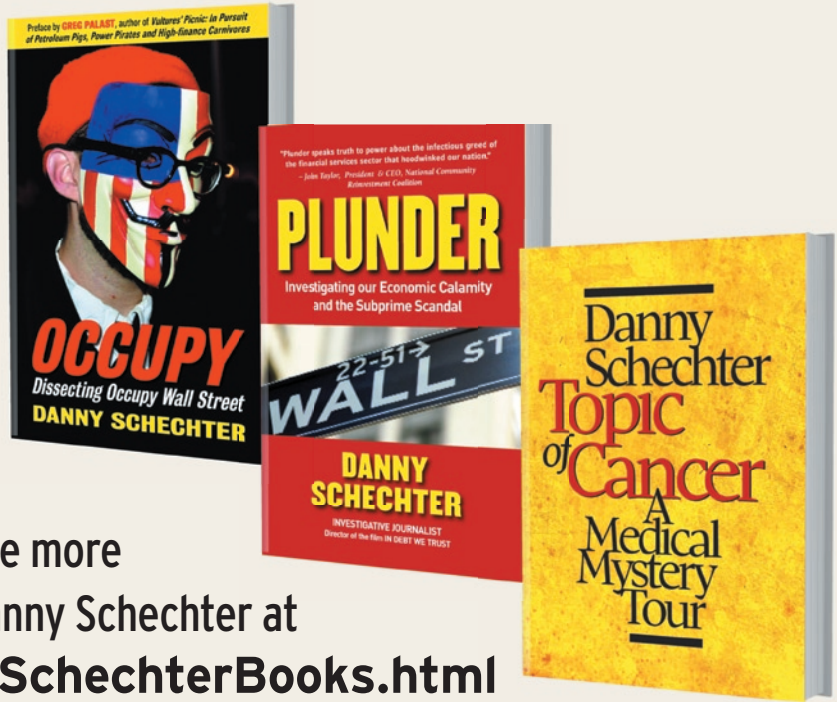
Judge Robinson found Kobach in contempt of court and, for his doofus antics in the courtroom, ordered him back to law school – no kidding – to learn proper court procedure. The Eastern newspapers were gloating over the dunce cap the court put on Kobach's head.

I'm not giggling. I don't underestimate my targets.

Especially *Professor of Law* Kobach, who graduated at the top of his class at Harvard, attended Oxford and got his law degree from Yale. Laugh at Kobach? Only at your peril. **CT**

**Greg Palast** is the investigative reporter for the *Guardian*, *BBC Television*, *Democracy Now!*, and *Rolling Stone* who broke the story of how George Bush stole Florida in 2000 by purging thousands of innocent black voters. He is the author of four *New York Times* bestsellers including *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* and *Billionaires & Ballot Bandits*.

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Medea Benjamin & Zoltan Grossman

# It's time to defund the police – and war

*If we find state violence appalling, we should divest from police and the Pentagon, and reinvest those taxpayer dollars to rebuild communities*

Since George Floyd was murdered, we have seen an increasing convergence of the “war at home” against black and brown people with the “wars abroad” that the US has waged against people in other countries.

Army and National Guard troops have been deployed in US cities, as militarised police treat them as occupied war zones. In response to this “endless war” at home, the growing and thunderous cries for defunding the police have been echoed by calls to defund the Pentagon’s wars.

Instead of seeing these as two separate but related demands, we should see them as intimately linked, since the racialised police violence on our streets and the racialised violence the US has long inflicted on people around the world are mirror reflections of each other.

We can learn more about the war at home by studying the wars abroad, and learn more about the wars abroad by studying the war at home. Here are some of those connections:

**1 The US kills people of colour at home and abroad.** The United States was founded on the ideology of white supremacy, from the genocide against Native Americans to upholding the system of slavery. US police kill about 1,000 people per year, disproportionately in the black community and other communities of colour.

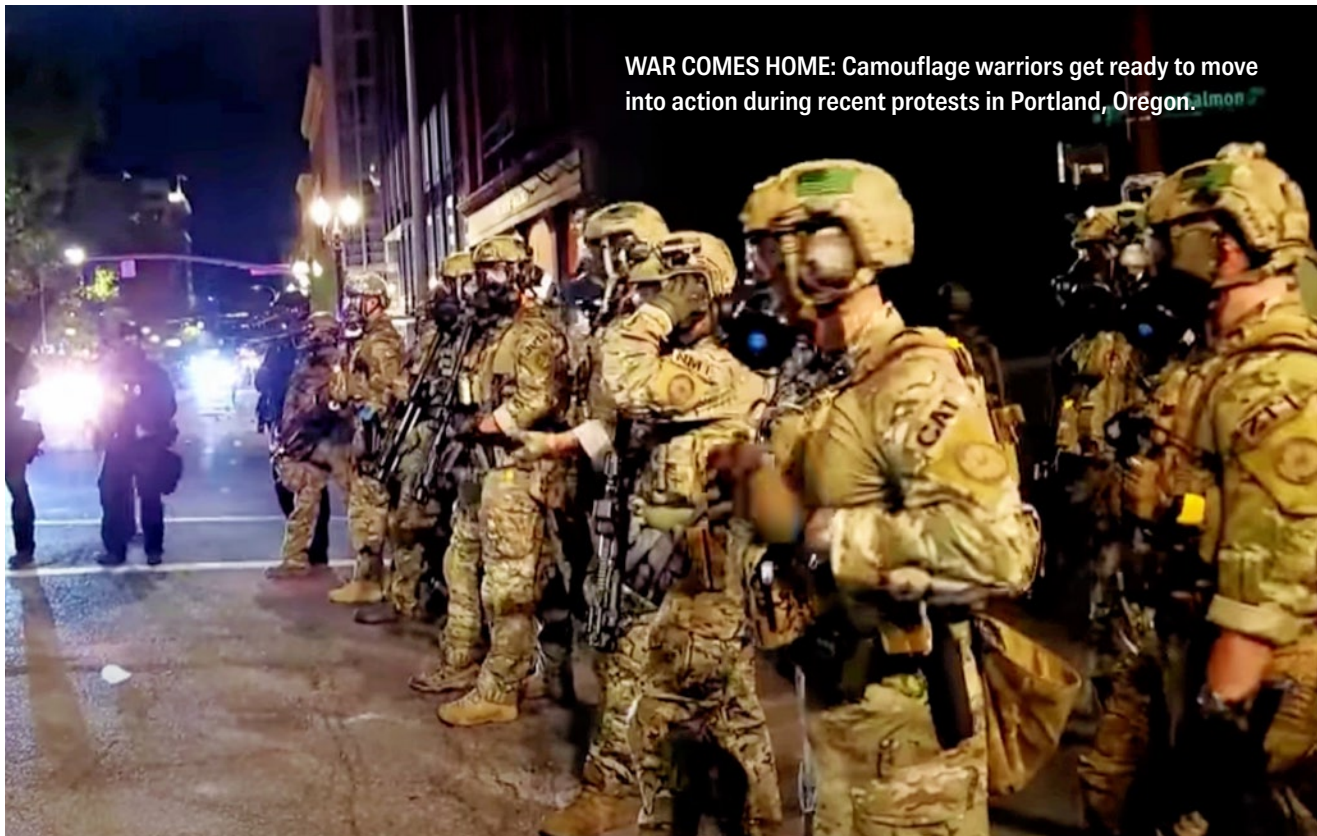
US foreign policy is similarly based on the white superiority-derived concept of “American exceptionalism”, in tandem with European partners. The endless series of wars the US military has fought abroad would not be possible without a view of the world that dehumanises foreign peoples. “If you want to bomb or invade a foreign country filled with black or brown-skinned people, as the United States military so often does, you have to first demonise those people, dehumanise them, suggest they’re backward people in need of saving or savage people in need of killing”, said journalist Mehdi Hasan.

The US military has been responsible for the deaths of many hundreds of thousands of black and brown people around the

world, and the denial of their rights to national self-determination. The double standard that sanctifies the lives of US troops and citizens, but disregards the people whose countries the Pentagon and its allies destroy is as hypocritical as the one that values white lives over black and brown lives at home.

**2 Just as the US was created by taking over the lands of Indigenous peoples by force, so America as an empire uses war to expand access to markets and resources.** Settler colonialism has been an “endless war” at home against Indigenous nations, who were colonised when their lands were still defined as foreign territories, to be annexed for their fertile land and natural resources. The Army forts stationed in Native nations back then were the equivalent of foreign military bases today, and the Native resisters were the original “insurgents” who were in the way of American conquest.

The “Manifest Destiny” colonisation of Native lands morphed into overseas imperial expansion, including the seizure of Hawaii,



WAR COMES HOME: Camouflage warriors get ready to move into action during recent protests in Portland, Oregon.

Puerto Rico, and other colonies, and the counterinsurgency wars in the Philippines and Vietnam. In the 21st-century, US-led wars have destabilised the Middle East and Central Asia, while increasing control over the region's fossil fuel resources.

The Pentagon has used the template of the Indian Wars to frighten the American public with the spectre of “lawless tribal regions” that need to be “tamed”, within countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Meanwhile, Wounded Knee in 1973 and Standing Rock in 2016 show how settler colonialism can become remilitarised back in the US “homeland”. Stopping oil pipelines and toppling Columbus statues shows how Indigenous resistance can also be renewed in the heart of the empire.

**3** The police and military are both internally plagued by racism. With the Black Lives Matter protests, many people have now learned about the origins of US police in all-white slave patrols. It is no accident that hiring and promotion within police departments have historically favoured whites, and officers of colour around the country continue to sue their departments for discriminatory practices.

The same is true in the military, where segregation was official policy until 1948. Today, people of colour are pursued to fill the bottom ranks, but not the top positions. Military recruiters set up recruiting stations in communities of colour, where government disinvestment in social services and education makes the military one of the few ways to not only get a

job, but access to health care and a free college education. That's why about 43 percent of the 1.3-million men and women on active duty are people of colour, and Native Americans serve in the Armed Forces at five times the national average.

But the upper echelons of the military remain almost exclusively a white-boys' club (of the 41 senior commanders, only two are black and only one is a woman). Under Trump, racism in the military is on the rise.

A 2019 survey found that 53 percent of service members of colour said they had seen examples of white nationalism or ideologically driven racism among their fellow troops, a number up significantly from the same poll in 2018. Far-right militias have attempted to both infiltrate the military and collude with police.



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**4** The Pentagon's troops and "surplus" weapons are being used on our streets. Just as the Pentagon often uses the language of "police actions" to describe its foreign interventions, police are being militarised within the US. When the Pentagon ended up in the 1990s with weapons of war it no longer needed, it created the "1033 Program" to distribute armoured personnel carriers, sub-machine guns, and even grenade launchers to police departments.

More than \$7.4-billion in military equipment and goods have been transferred to more than 8,000 law enforcement agencies – turning the police into occupation forces and our cities into war zones. We saw this vividly in 2014 in the aftermath of the killing of Michael Brown, when police flush with military gear made the streets of Ferguson, Missouri look like Iraq.

More recently, we saw these militarised police forces deployed against the George Floyd Rebellion, with military helicopters overhead, and the Minnesota governor comparing the deployment to an "overseas war".

Trump has deployed federal troops and wanted to send in more, much as active-duty troops were previously used against several workers' strikes in the 1890s-1920s, the Bonus Army veterans' protests of 1932, and black uprisings in Detroit in 1943 and 1967, in multiple cities in 1968 (after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.), and in Los Angeles in 1992 (after the acquittal of the police who had beaten Rodney King).

Sending in soldiers trained for combat only makes a bad situation worse, and this can open the

## **\$7.4-billion in military equipment and goods has been transferred to 8,000 law enforcement agencies**

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eyes of Americans to the shocking violence with which the US military tries, but often fails, to quell dissent in occupied countries. Congress may now object to the transfer of military equipment to police, and Pentagon officials may object to using troops against US citizens at home, but they rarely object when the targets are foreigners or even US citizens who live abroad.

**5** US interventions abroad, especially the "War on Terror", erode our civil liberties at home. Techniques of surveillance that are tested on foreigners have long been imported to suppress dissent at home, ever since occupations in Latin America and the Philippines.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, while the US military was purchasing super drones to kill US enemies (and often innocent civilians) and collect intelligence on entire cities, US police departments began buying smaller, but powerful, spy drones.

Black Lives Matter protesters have recently seen these "eyes in the sky" spying on them. This is just one example of the surveillance society that the US has become since 9/11. The so-called "War on Terror" has been a justification for the

tremendous expansion of government powers at home – broad "data mining," increased the secrecy of federal agencies, No-Fly lists to prohibit people tens of thousands of people from travelling, and vast government spying on social, religious and political groups, from the Quakers to Greenpeace to the ACLU, including military spying on antiwar groups.

The use of unaccountable mercenaries abroad also makes their use more likely at home, as when Blackwater private security contractors were flown from Baghdad to New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, to be used against the devastated black community. And in turn, if police and armed far-right militias and mercenaries can commit violence with impunity in the homeland, it normalises and enables even great violence elsewhere.

**6** The xenophobia and Islamophobia at the heart of the "War on Terror" has fed hatred of immigrants and Muslims at home. Just as wars abroad are justified by racism and religious bias, they also feed white and Christian supremacy at home, as could be seen in Japanese-American incarceration in the 1940s, and anti-Muslim sentiment that rose in the 1980s.

The 9/11 attacks precipitated hate crimes against Muslims and Sikhs, as well as a federally imposed travel ban that denies entrance to the US for people from entire countries, separating families, depriving students of access to universities, and detaining immigrants in private prisons. Senator Bernie Sanders, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, said, "When our



elected leaders, pundits, and cable news personalities promote relentless fear-mongering about Muslim terrorists, they inevitably create a climate of fear and suspicion around Muslim American citizens – a climate in which demagogues like Trump can thrive”.

He also decried the xenophobia resulting from turning our immigration debate into a debate about Americans’ personal security, pitting millions of US citizens against undocumented and even documented immigrants. The militarisation of the US-Mexico border, using hyperbolic claims of infiltrating criminals and terrorists, has normalised the use of drones and checkpoints that bring the techniques of authoritarian control into the “homeland”. (Meanwhile, US Customs and Border Protection personnel were also deployed to the borders of occupied Iraq.)

**7** Both the military and the police suck up enormous amounts of taxpayer dollars that should be used for building a just, sustainable, and equitable society. Americans are already participating in supporting state violence, whether we realise it or not, by paying taxes to the police and military that carry it out in our names. Police budgets account for an astronomical percentage of cities’ discretionary funds compared to other crucial community programmes, ranging from 20 to 45 percent of discretionary funding in major metropolitan areas. Per capita police spending in the city of Baltimore for 2020 is an astounding \$904 (imagine what every resident could do with \$904). Nationwide, the US spends more

## **The US spends more than twice as much on “law and order” as it does on cash welfare programmes**

than twice as much on “law and order” as it does on cash welfare programmes. This trend has been widening since the 1980s, as we have taken funds out of poverty programmes to put into fighting crime, the inevitable consequence of that neglect. The same pattern is true with the Pentagon budget.

The 2020 military budget of \$738-billion is larger than the next ten countries combined. The *Washington Post* reported that if the US spent the same proportion of its GDP on its military as most European countries do, it “could fund a universal child-care policy, extend health insurance to the approximately 30-million Americans who lack it, or provide substantial investments in repairing the nation’s infrastructure”. Closing the 800+ overseas military bases alone would save \$100-billion dollars a year. Prioritising the police and military means deprioritising resources for community needs. Even President Eisenhower described military spending in 1953 as “a theft from those who hunger and are not fed”.

**8** Repressive techniques used abroad inevitably come home. Soldiers are trained to see most of the civilians they encounter abroad as a potential

threat. When they return from Iraq or Afghanistan, they discover that one of the few employers that give priority to vets are police departments and security companies. They also offer relatively high salaries, good benefits, and union protections, which is why one in five police officers is a veteran. So, even soldiers who come home with PTSD or drug and alcohol abuse, instead of being adequately cared for, are given weapons and put out on the streets.

No wonder studies show that police with military experience, especially those who have deployed overseas, are significantly more likely to be involved in shooting incidents than those with no military service. The same relationship of repression at home and abroad is true of torture techniques, which were taught to militaries and police throughout Latin America during the Cold War. They were also used on Afghans at the US-run Bagram Air Base prison, and on Iraqis at the Abu Ghraib prison, where one of the torturers had practiced similar techniques as a prison guard in Pennsylvania. The purpose of waterboarding, a torture technique stretching back to counterinsurgency wars in Native America and the Philippines, is to prevent a person from breathing, much like the police chokehold that killed Eric Garner or the knee to the neck that killed George Floyd. #ICantBreathe is not only a statement for change at home, but also a statement with global implications.

**9** The War on Drugs has put more money into the police and military but has been devastating to people of colour,

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at home and abroad. The so-called “War on Drugs” has devastated communities of colour, particularly the black community, leading to catastrophic levels of gun violence and mass incarceration. People of colour are more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested, convicted, and harshly sentenced for drug-related offenses.

Nearly 80 percent of people in federal prison and almost 60 percent of people in state prison for drug offences are black or Latinx. The War on Drugs has also devastated communities overseas. Throughout South America, the Caribbean, and Afghanistan in both drug production and trafficking areas, US-supported wars have only empowered organised crime and drug cartels, leading to an upsurge of violence, corruption, impunity, erosion of rule of law, and massive human rights violations.

Central America is now home to some of the world’s most dangerous cities, leading to the mass migration to the US that Donald Trump has weaponised for political purposes. Just as police responses at home do not solve social problems that stem from poverty and despair (and often create more harm than good), military deployments abroad do not resolve historical conflicts that usually have their roots in social and economic inequalities, and instead create a cycle of violence that worsens the crisis.

**10** Lobbying machines solidify support for police and war industry funding. Law enforcement lobbies have long built support for police and prisons among state and federal politicians, using a fear of crime,

## *Until recently, calling for cuts to US military expenditure was a great taboo in Washington DC*

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and a desire for the profits and jobs that are funnelled to its backers. Among the strongest backers are police and prison guard unions, which instead of using the labour movement to defend the powerless against the powerful, defend their members against community complaints of brutality.

The military-industrial complex similarly uses its lobbying muscle to keep politicians compliant with its wishes. Every year billions of dollars are funnelled from US taxpayers to hundreds of arms corporations, who then wage lobbying campaigns pushing for even more foreign military aid and weapons sales. They spend \$125-million a year on lobbying, and another \$25-million a year on donating to political campaigns.

Manufacturing weapons has provided millions of workers with some of the nation’s highest industrial wages, and many of their unions (such as the Machinists) are part of the Pentagon lobby. These lobbies for the military contractors have become more powerful and influential not only over the budget but also over the creation of US foreign policy. The power of the military-industrial complex has become far more dangerous than even President Eisenhower himself feared when he warned

the nation, in 1961, against its undue influence.

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Both “defunding the police” and “defunding war”, while opposed by most elected Republicans and mainstream Democrats, are gaining public support. Mainstream politicians have long been afraid of being painted as “soft on crime” or as “soft on defence”.

This self-perpetuating ideology reproduces the idea that the US needs more police on the streets and more troops policing the world, or else chaos will reign. The mainstream media has kept politicians afraid to offer any kind of alternate, less militaristic vision. But the recent uprisings have turned “Defund the Police” from a fringe chant to a national conversation, and some cities are already reallocating millions of dollars from the police to community programmes.

Likewise, until recently, calling for cuts to US military expenditure was a great taboo in Washington DC. Year after year, all but a few Democrats lined up with Republicans to vote for massive increases in military spending. But that is now beginning to change.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee introduced an historic, aspirational resolution proposing massive \$350-billion in cuts, which is over 40 percent of the Pentagon budget. And Sen. Bernie Sanders, along with other progressives, introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to cut the Pentagon budget by 10 percent.

Just as we want to radically redefine the role of police in our local communities, so we must radically redefine the role of military personnel in the global community. As we chant “Black Lives

Matter”, we should also remember the lives of people dying every day from US bombs in Yemen and Afghanistan, US sanctions in Venezuela and Iran, and US weapons in Palestine and the Philippines. The killing of black Americans rightly elicits masses of protesters, which can help open a window of awareness about the hundreds of thousands of non-American lives taken in US military campaigns. As the platform of the Movement for Black Lives platform says: “Our movement must be tied to liberation movements around the world”.

Those who are now questioning an increasingly militarised approach to law enforcement should also question a militarised approach to foreign relations. Much as unaccountable police in riot gear are a danger to our communities, so, too, an unaccountable military, armed to the teeth and functioning largely in secret, is a danger to the world. During his iconic anti-impe-

## ***An unaccountable military, armed to the teeth and functioning largely in secret, is a danger to the world***

rialist speech, “Beyond Vietnam”, Dr King famously said: “I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government”.

The protests to “Defund the Police” have compelled Americans to see beyond police reform to a radical reconceiving of public safety. So, too, we need a radical reconceiving of our national security in the slogan “Defund War”. If we find indiscriminate state violence

in our streets appalling, we should feel similarly about state violence abroad, and call for divesting from both police and the Pentagon, and reinvesting those taxpayer dollars to rebuild communities at home and abroad. **CT**

*Medea Benjamin is cofounder of CODEPINK for Peace, and author of several books, including **Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran** and **Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control**.*

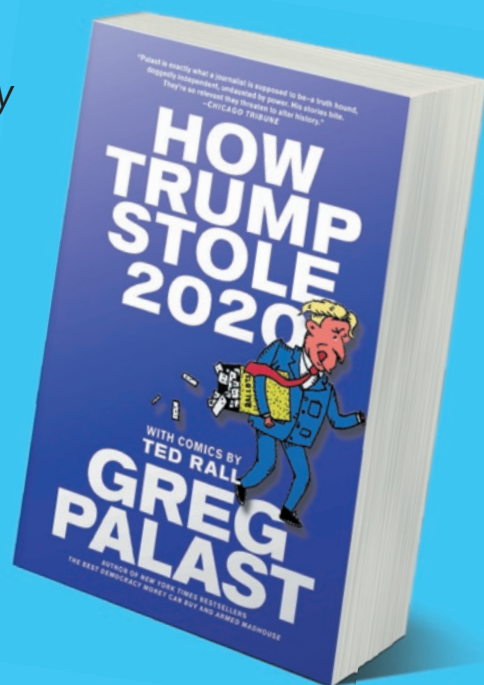
*Zoltán Grossman is a Professor of Geography and Native Studies at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. He is author of **Unlikely Alliances: Native Nations and White Communities Join to Defend Rural Lands**, and co-editor of **Asserting Native Resilience: Pacific Rim Indigenous Nations Face the Climate Crisis**.*

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Tim Luckhurst

# How UK wartime press found a legless hero

*How British Air Ministry press officers made Douglas Bader – an amputee fighter ace – a household name and one of the country’s great wartime heroes*

In July 1940, Britain’s coalition government was concerned about public morale. German forces that had swept through France stood poised to invade. In the skies, Luftwaffe warplanes fought for the supremacy that Adolf Hitler needed to get his army across the channel. The nation’s fate hung in the balance and the Air Ministry believed uplifting stories could inspire optimism and encourage resistance.

When a 30-year-old Hurricane pilot shot down a Dornier 17 “in a fierce aerial fight”, the ministry spotted a tremendous story. This was no ordinary pilot. In 1931, he had lost both his legs when “coming out of a slow roll over Woodley Aerodrome, Reading – he crashed and for weeks struggled against death in hospital”. His legs were amputated and, although he soon learned to fly again using artificial legs, the RAF rejected his applications to return to active service until the war began.

The hero was, of course, Douglas Robert Stuart Bader (1910–1982). Today, his story is familiar to millions who have seen the award-winning film *Reach for the*

*Sky* or read of his courage in books and newspapers. But in 1940, Bader was little known beyond RAF Fighter Command. In a meticulous public relations exercise, Air Ministry press officers would make him a household name.

Alerted by an Air Ministry briefing on July 14, the mass-market Conservative *Daily Mail* sent a reporter to interview Bader’s mother. She told the journalist, “I wish I could tell you adequately the story of how he had to face life again without two legs ... It was amazing to watch his courage and the gradual return of his sunny disposition”. He had also learned how to dance and drive a car. The *Mail* portrayed the hero in uniform and smiling for the camera.

Like its conservative rival, the Labour-supporting *Daily Mirror* displayed its populist flair when it covered the story. Douglas Bader was the “Greatest hero of them all ... Britain’s most amazing RAF Fighter Command Pilot”. The *Mirror* sent a reporter to meet the hero’s mother-in-law. Mrs Edwards said: “The more fights he can fly him-

self into, the better he is pleased”. He was encouraged by the love and support of her daughter Olivia, whom he married in 1938. The *Mirror* declared that “the story of his courage thrilled Britain”.

Establishment broadsheet *The Times* also got carefully targeted help. Its readers learned that Bader had “passed through Cranwell [home since 1920 of the RAF College] where he was a fine games player and captain of cricket”. The *Manchester Guardian* decided that its educated readers would resent mawkish populism. It noted: “Everybody who was in the Air Force or who was interested in rugby football eight or nine years ago knew DRS Bader, the Harlequins and RAF fly half, whose crash robbed him of his legs, cut short a brilliant service career and destroyed good prospects of an England cap”.

But, the report continued, Bader was not unique. Before the war an officer nicknamed “Peggy” flew “in spite of having one artificial leg. He wore a plain wooden peg-leg which he inserted into a cylindrical cigarette tin screwed to the rudder bar.”

The *Daily Telegraph* was not



Squadron Leader Douglas Bader, CO of No. 242 Squadron, seated on his Hawker Hurricane at Duxford, September 1940.

sceptical. Its correspondent, Major CC Turner, reported, “I learn that a Hurricane pilot who although he lost both his legs shot down a Dornier 17 in a weekend raid was Flying Officer DRS Bader”.

Turner did not acknowledge that he had learned this from the Air Ministry. But that’s how every newspaper found out about Bader – it was a formidable work by a team determined to promote courageous young men and cheer the nation.

The RAF worked closely with journalists and its reputation benefited accordingly. By contrast, the Royal Navy took a rigidly secretive approach that infuriated even the government’s chief press censor, Rear Admiral George P Thomson, who lamented that the adventures

of HMS Triumph, which limped home after being damaged in action 300 miles from home, had begun on Boxing Day 1939. “Yet it was not until September 1941 that the British public were told this magnificent story of the heroism and fortitude of the British sailor”. Thomson believed secrecy had stopped people talking about the navy with pride.

The navy’s reluctance to reveal detail about the war at sea remained entrenched. In his outstanding book about journalism and conflict, *The First Casualty*, journalist Phillip Knightley reveals how Edward R Murrow of CBS Radio complained about the secrecy surrounding this theatre of war, “The curious thing about the Battle of the Atlantic is that no one knows anything about it. Nothing may be said either to the

Americans or to the British public about this battle which, we are told, will determine the destinies of freemen for centuries”.

The thoroughly modern RAF understood that Douglas Bader was the hero Britain needed in its hour of greatest need. And such early success in promoting its achievements set a pattern that the Air Ministry would follow throughout the war. It would even invite BBC correspondents Wynford Vaughan Thomas and Richard Dimbleby to report from Lancaster bombers flying in raids over Germany.

The army also learned to value positive reporting of its achievements when Field Marshal Montgomery presented the war in the desert to readers at home with striking phrases such as “Kill Germans, even padres – One per week day and two on Sundays”.

As for Bader, his fame did not fade when he was shot down and taken prisoner. Having received a replacement aluminium leg, dropped by parachute to his prisoner of war camp, he immediately tried to escape. A German search party found him hiding in a hayloft. After that: “They took away one of his legs every night and gave it back to him in the morning.”

Bader ended the war in the infamous Colditz castle where he was held as a member of the group known as the *Prominente* – famous prisoners the Nazi leadership hoped they might use as bargaining chips. **CT**

*Tim Luckhurst is Principal of South College, Durham University. This article first appeared at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)*

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Trevor Hoyle

# Lost writers, forgotten gems

*Is it possible to be nostalgic about a time before you were born?*

Even though I wasn't around to experience that decade, for me the Thirties hold a powerful, almost obsessive appeal. I suspect this is due to the films and fashions, the music, the cars, the chic ambience of the period. And not least to a pervasive atmosphere of darkly menacing yet seductive foreboding in the build-up to a war, another war, everyone knew was coming – sooner rather than later.

Some of my favourite English writers were producing their best work then – Greene, Orwell, Waugh – and are still remembered today, and revered. Yet there are several novelists, some critically lauded at the time and who enjoyed popular success, who today are virtually forgotten.

These are my “Lost” writers. Nigel Balchin, Gerald Kersh, James Hanley, Malcolm Lowry, Rosamond Lehmann, Patrick Hamilton.

You could argue that Hamilton and Lehmann are on this list under false pretences. It's true that their fortunes have revived somewhat in recent years, thanks largely to TV and radio dramatisa-

tions. Patrick Hamilton's trilogy *Twenty Thousand Streets Under the Sky* (1929-34) in three parts on BBC2 brilliantly caught the seedy spirit of the Depression-era original. For an enterprising and discerning producer there's an even juicier prize on offer: Hamilton's lurid masterpiece of lust, hate and paranoia, *Hangover Square* (1941). A melodramatic Hollywood botch was made in 1945 with leading man Laird Cregar, poor chap, who died of a heart attack two months before the picture was released (perhaps he dreaded the reviews).

The novel is begging for a decent big-screen treatment with a sympathetic director, high-end production values and major stars. I'll take my 10 percent finder's fee now.

As for Rosamond Lehmann, she's been well served by a sparkling Radio 4 adaptation of her most celebrated novel *Invitation to the Waltz* (1932). Yet here again her other novels have been woefully neglected. Both *Dusty Answer* (1927) and *The Weather in the Streets* (1936) are brimful of heart-wrenching pathos about innocent young gels having doomed love af-

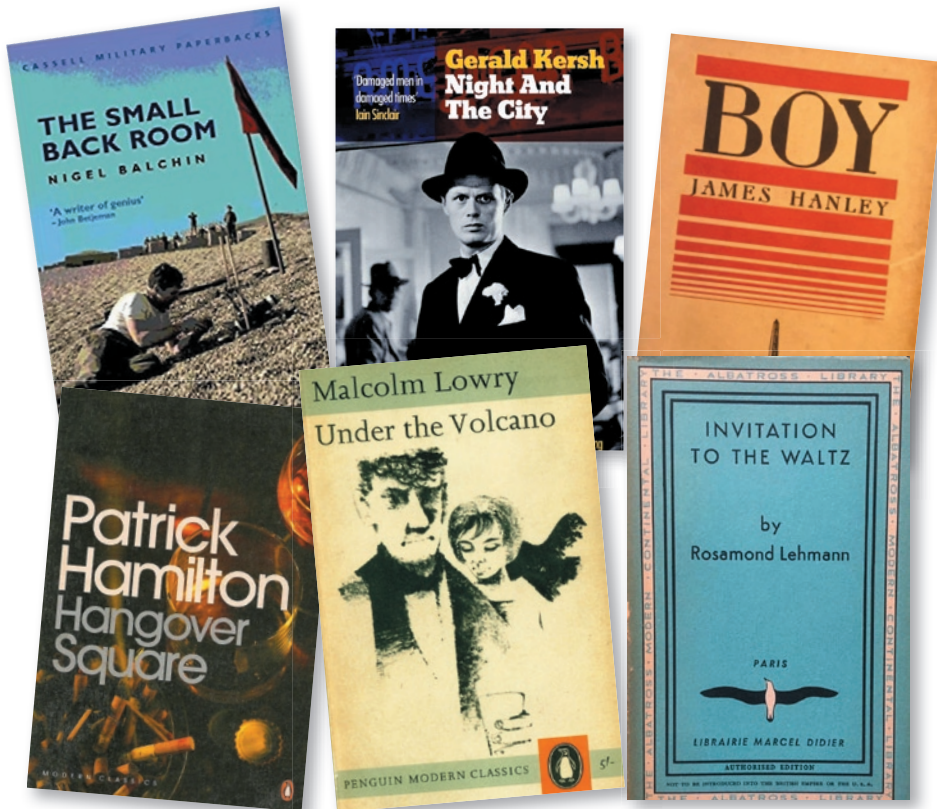
fairs (and worse) with handsome, contemptible cads. Lehmann's poignant empathy and the quality of her prose lift them way above the level of trite “poor little rich girl” morality fables.

All this seething emotion plus the achingly romantic fashions of the Thirties! Why a movie producer hasn't snapped them up is a mystery to rank alongside who cuts Boris Johnson's hair. (Unless it's Dominic Cummings, which explains everything.)

Malcolm Lowry is a writer who (a bit like his life) keeps getting lost and then found again. He published only two novels: *Ultra-marine* (1933) and *Under the Volcano* (1947), the latter hailed as a work of genius. The action of the novel takes place in a small Mexican town during the annual festival of the Day of the Dead. Here we find Geoffrey Firmin, the disgraced British ex-consul, drinking himself to death; he ends up in a ravine, shot in the belly, with a dead pariah dog for company. So not exactly a barrel of laughs then.

Such is the enduring power





LOST CLASSICS: Awaiting a new generation of readers ...

of the book, and Lowry’s idiosyncratic if gloomy vision, that there’s a revival every few years with new readers discovering him. I have been party to this process in that I wrote and presented a programme for the BBC to mark the 50th anniversary of Lowry’s death, titled “The Lighthouse Invites the Storm,” after the title of one of Lowry’s poems.

Nigel Balchin’s books differ from those of his contemporaries – and from most other novelists’ – in one important respect: they deal with the world of work. His protagonists have real jobs and occupational skills you can believe in, not inserted solely as background or a means of fleshing out the characters. (Nevil Shute is another writer whose characters have to earn a living in the real world.)

Balchin’s plots are based on the

actual working lives of engineers, scientists and psychiatrists. The dilemmas his backroom boffins come up against in *The Small Back Room* (1943), for instance, possibly his best-known novel, are intimately involved with – and a direct consequence of – their work in a top-secret government research department during the war. As he revealed in an interview in 1962, Balchin was able to achieve this sense of authenticity because he shied away from writing full-time. “I feel I need some other work. There is a danger of becoming a ‘literary gent’, the sort of person who is in contact only with other people who write. This is too limited a range of contacts for a novelist”.

After Cambridge he became a consultant at the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, an

experience he used as the basis for the psychiatrist character in *Mine Own Executioner* (1945). During the war he was Deputy Scientific Adviser to the Army Council, attaining the rank of Brigadier. It was his frustration at the mountain of red tape and rampant bureaucracy that led to *The Small Back Room*, the novel that introduced such terms to the language as “boffin” and “backroom boys”. (It is also claimed that while working for Rowntrees of York in the early 1930s, Balchin had the brainwave of blowing bubbles through chocolate, thus inventing Aero, and also dreamt up the brand name Kit Kat.)

In truth, Balchin is a bit of a snob as a writer, and his tone a mite superior and condescending, yet he remains a first-rate storyteller, intelligent and entertaining, and is skilful in knowing how to ratchet up the tension. Any writer who can have a hero with a tin foot gets my vote.

As the title of this piece tells you, many writers fall into neglect, and some deservedly so. **James Hanley**, for my money, was and probably still is, a neglected genius, and I use the term advisedly. William Faulkner thought so, too (“... language like a good clean cyclone” was his verdict). Born in 1897 to Irish parents, Hanley was brought up in desperate poverty in the Kirkdale waterfront district of Liverpool and ran away to sea when he was thirteen. His second novel, *Boy* (1931), deals so harshly and unflinchingly with what he endured on board ship and in foreign ports that the book was prosecut-

ed for obscene libel. It wasn't the youth's initiation in the brothels of Alexandria that the wife of the Bury taxi driver (who instigated the court case) objected to so much as what the poor lad endured at the hands of his lascivious shipmates – and all this was gleaned from the blurb, she never bothered to read the book!

Hanley's method, his whole approach, is visceral. He forces you to face the situation full-on, makes you feel it and live it, with no pandering to delicate sensibilities or the niceties of literary technique. In some ways a primitive writer, he broke the "rules" of fiction either because he didn't know there were any, or he just didn't care. No matter; writers of talent such as Hanley's can do as they please, break every rule in the book.

For extensive periods later in life Hanley lived in north Wales. Some years ago I drove to the small village of Llanfechain to pay homage at his small modest grave in St Garmons churchyard. Afterwards I wrote to his son Liam, suggesting a memorial of some sort, and received this reply: "My dream would be for something in stone at the top of the hill behind my father's cottage. And I would have him looking west into Wales, his back to England!" The family message was clear: as England had all but ignored the writer in life, he would ignore England in death.

Gone, but not totally forgotten. The once banned novel *Boy* has been reissued in a handsome edition by Oneworld Classics, with an introduction (from 1989) by Anthony Burgess, plus four pages of photographs and a fascinating essay on Hanley's life and work. I'd also recommend, if you can find it,

## **Harry thinks he's a cool hero with charisma; he's actually a cowardly lying slimeball who beats up women**

*The Furies* (1935), a grimly realistic and very moving novel about a Catholic family in Liverpool during the General Strike.

The distinguished American SF writer and critic Harlan Ellison has gone on record as saying: "Gerald Kersh is a giant. He is my favourite writer". He comes pretty near the top of my list, too. I can't think of any other author, living or dead, who was a master of so many genres of fiction: mainstream, crime thriller, war, horror, science fiction, supernatural, disaster, historical, humour, satire ... his imaginative range knew no bounds and he had the energy and prodigal talent to back it up.

Start with possibly my favourite (there are several contenders) novel of Kersh's, *Night and the City* (1938), which has petty crook, pimp, swindler, blackmailer Harry Fabian roaming the low-life pubs, tawdry nightclubs and backstreet dives of Soho. With his fake American accent and sharp suits and hand-painted ties Harry thinks he's a cool hero with charisma; he's actually a cowardly lying slimeball who beats up women. The reader is swept along by the sheer pace and exuberant invention -- to my mind as febrile

and fertile as Dickens.

There are two film versions of *Night and the City*, the 1950 one with Richard Widmark as Fabian, the best he's ever been, directed by Jules Dassin who had to flee America for England after being branded a communist. It is a masterpiece. The other version, with Robert De Niro and Jessica Lange, isn't.

To hear many critics you'd think there wasn't a single war novel of any merit by an English writer until Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy came along. This is literary snobbery at its worst. Gerald Kersh was actually a serving soldier in the Coldstream Guards and he wrote vivid and powerful novels of men in training: *They Die with Their Boots Clean* (1941), *The Nine Lives of Bill Nelson* (1942) and men in combat: *The Dead Look On* (1943), *Brain and Ten Fingers* (1943) and *Faces in a Dusty Picture* (1944) about the desert campaign in North Africa. During the war, and while writing newspaper columns for the popular press, he had four books on the bestseller lists at the same time.

I can't finish without mentioning Kersh's short novel *Prelude to a Certain Midnight* (1947), about the stalking and murder of a child by a psychopath. Seek it out, you won't be disappointed. How an author of such daring and devastating insight into the mind of a deviant personality can remain largely unknown and out of print is yet another mystery. **CT**

*Trevor Hoyle is a novelist from Lancashire, England. His most recent novel is the environmental thriller The Last Gasp, published by Jo Fletcher Books (Quercus). His website is [www.trevorhoyle.com](http://www.trevorhoyle.com)*



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# Andrew Fischer's Random Thoughts

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## Post-virus

A few weeks ago the *New York Times* ran an opinion piece about what life might look like in 2022 – assuming the coronavirus pandemic is over. Naturally I have a different opinion. In 2022 ...

- Only politicians will wear masks. That way we won't be able to spot when they're talking from both sides of their mouths at the same time.

- Movie theatres will become a thing of the past. They will be converted into group sensory-deprivation centres, all certified virus/bacteria/microbe-free, of course.

- Awards ceremonies (Oscars, Emmys, et al) will be conducted without the presence of audiences and nominees. The latter will pre-record their acceptance speeches, all of which will be streamed to viewers at home. The best speeches will win separate awards. Ratings will soar.

- Two-thirds of colleges and universities will close their doors and students will educate themselves more efficiently online. Testing will be eliminated; merely signing onto a course will prove assimilation of the material. At last, everyone will be a college graduate!

- Shaking hands will be history. Instead, people will tap shoes when meeting. If you meet someone you don't like, the tap can be replaced by a hearty kick on the shin.

- Newspapers will become defunct. People will subscribe to the web news service of their choice, using sliding scales to indicate their preferences. One scale will be “political leaning”, which will have “woke” at one end and “uber-woke” at the other.

- The National Football League will be replaced by the MFL, a virtual football league using Madden computer software. Fans will pay \$1,000 to watch two nerds with game-controllers battle it out live.

- Due to the complaints of some very tall offended folks, the New York Giants football team will change its name to the New York Middlings, while the San Francisco Giants baseball club will change its team name to the Bay Shrimps – shellfish lovers will, of course, demonstrate outside Oracle Park.

## Reversal

The late-lamented multi-talented entertainer/author Steve Allen is rightfully considered the father of late night television. The first host of *The Tonight Show* in the 1950s, one of Allen's popular bits was *The Answer Man*, who presented answers followed by questions to great comic effect. (That's right – Johnny Carson's *Carnac* was nothing new. Neither was *Jeopardy*). Without further ado, let me present a couple of samples of my own:

**Answer:** The world's biggest tennis racket.

**Question:** What do you use to spank Kim Kardashian?

**Answer:** A woman's hairpiece.

**Question:** What do you hang from a stick to get Joe Biden to pull a wooden cart? (Biden likes to sniff women's hair.)

## Mairzy doats...

... and dozy dotes and liddle lamzy divey.... So declares the popular 1943 song. Well, humans eat oats, too. Tons of them. In my area the breakfast staple was missing from store shelves for weeks at the very beginning of the Coronavirus Chaos.

There are several main varieties: rolled, quick, instant and steel cut (aka Scottish or Irish). That last kind is the best (ie, real oatmeal), but it requires 15-20 minutes or so of cooking on the stove top. Just bring water to a boil, add a bit of salt and pour the oats into the pot.

Stir them in using your spurtle. Any size or type of spurtle will do. Males should consult a dictionary first, however, before they make a tragic mistake ... **CT**

*Andrew Fischer's* a collection of short stories, *Purgastories*, is available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). He also designs board games, which can be downloaded at no charge from [www.boardgamegeek.com](http://www.boardgamegeek.com).



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