

“The 2019 General Election threatened us with the prospect of a Big State socialist authoritarian who wanted to treat “our” NHS as a deity, shut down our liberties, and tank the economy. Unfortunately, he won.”

- *The biggest disappointments of 2020.* A tweet by @SirDanofC, 14th August 2020.

“**Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive..**” Boris Johnson’s honeymoon period as the ‘surprise’ Brexit prime minister lasted for roughly three months. It began, with hindsight ominously enough, on Friday 13th December 2019, and lasted until Imperial College released its infamous forecast on 16th March 2020, of 250,000 Britons dying of Covid-19, after which the government abandoned any aspirational policy of herd immunity it might once have had – and decided simply to concentrate on destroying the economy instead. Since March and “the lockdown”, the honeymoon has soured into a bitterly dysfunctional divorce-in-the-making, a ‘game of chicken’-style tug of common sense between the Johnson government and the people, with Boris practically **daring** the electorate to vote him out of office as he deploys the very latest policies epitomising the acme of pointless, inconsistent, dangerous, counter-productive farce. The pantomime of hygiene that is mask-wearing is only the tip of the iceberg of Big Government (sunk costs fallacy) cretinocracy.

When making big statements about the human condition, simile is all very well, but if you seek real impact, metaphor is the *real* bomb. Science fiction has always understood this, which is what makes the best science fiction simultaneously benign and subversive. Benign, because sponsors that will run a mile from endorsing contemporary political criticism will rush to their chequebooks if the contemporary jeremiads are voiced by Martians. And subversive, because sponsors that will run a mile from endorsing contemporary political criticism will rush to their chequebooks if the contemporary jeremiads are voiced by Martians. This correspondent remembers well the moment when the penny dropped for him personally: so much science fiction is set in the future or on alien worlds not just because kids like stories about Martians, rockets and ray guns, but simply because it’s easier to critique the present-day there. Rod Serling, the multiple Emmy-winning creator of *The Twilight Zone*, acknowledged the dance with the commercial devil he was reduced to performing on a weekly basis:

How can you put out a meaningful drama when every fifteen minutes proceedings are interrupted by twelve dancing rabbits with toilet paper? No dramatic art form should be dictated and controlled by men whose training and instincts are cut of an entirely

different cloth. The fact remains that these gentlemen sell consumer goods, not an art form.

So which science fiction trope best describes the tobogganing-toward-national-bankruptcy insanity that passes for life under the 2020 Johnson administration ? That of the parallel universe is certainly a contender. Somewhere out there in the fifth dimension is a society that, faced with a pandemic, only quarantines the sick. This correspondent's nominee, however, would be the baroque conspiracy thriller. Something is going on, and everybody is in on it except you.

<John Carpenter proximity klaxon.> *They Live* may not be John Carpenter's best film, but it is certainly one of his most enjoyable. Over time it became a cult classic, in no small part due to a robust and, above all, *honest* central performance by Roddy Piper, better known as a professional WWF wrestler. The plot, inspired by a Ray Nelson short story, *Eight O'Clock in the Morning*, has Roddy Piper as a drifter, John Nada, who comes across some special sunglasses. When worn, these sunglasses reveal the world for what it really is. Media and advertising extolling the virtues of conspicuous consumption are actually subliminal orders to obey and conform. Dollar bills, seen through the sunglasses, carry messages like 'This is your god'. Society is split between an ever-widening underclass and a narrow, controlling elite – who just happen to be aliens in disguise. No, *They Live* did not win any Academy Awards. *The Chicago Tribune's* verdict is probably fair: "the looniest movie of the season and also one of the most engaging". And somebody recently created a [wicked Coronavirus edition](#).

Seen from the perspective of the financial markets in summer 2020, however, *They Live* looks less like dystopian science fiction and more like a state-of-the-art documentary on current western capitalism. The economy has cratered not despite government policy – but precisely because of it. Having triggered a depression, western governments and their agent central banks are now furiously attempting to prime an already knackered pump through monetary stimulus. They clearly never got that memo stating that it is easier to put the fear of God into people than it is to remove it. Hey teachers, just get back to work and do your effing job ! The private sector is *tired* of being incinerated on the altar of veneration for a criminally workshy public sector that despises it.

And then there's the parallel universe of the financial markets. The worst economic environment perhaps in modern history – but with many US stocks close to, or at, record highs. A slowdown throughout the world (and perhaps something worse). Monstrous numbers of jobless to come. An orgy of money-printing and the promise of yet more fiscal stimulus ahead. Rising commodities prices – and a humongous rally by both gold *and* silver. What's wrong with this picture ? It took special sunglasses for John Nada to see the world for what it really was. Today's investor only has to open his eyes.

For anyone trying to invest unemotionally, objectively and scientifically, this is a treacherous market environment, in which pretty much all prices – equities, bonds, currencies – are being constantly distorted by the Big State cheerfully if obviously jumping in with its Size 12s.

There was once a notorious exchange in the Australian parliament. Sir Winton Turnbull in the heat of a debate shouted, "I am a country member !" To which the former Australian

prime minister Gough Whitlam responded, “I remember.” Both sides of the aisle applauded his intervention. Unfortunately for Boris Johnson and for the rest of his regrettable Cabinet, we do and will, all of us, remember.

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