



OPINION



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**The Janus Identity: More Than Worthy of Robert Ludlum**

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Politics

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So, no done deal, then, or maybe there is. And not for the first time England swings like pendulums do. Maybe Northern Ireland will be part of the Customs Union, maybe not. Who knows who's in, what's out? But what's undoubtedly clear is that this disunited Kingdom is now, however promising the signs or intense the signals, the undiscover'd country from whose bourn no exhausted voter ever returns.

And 'Brexit' still stuck three miles from Britain's rocky shore bound with inky blots and rotten parchment bonds for any and all who would venture to walk on water. And 'Remain' still a spectre doomed to walk the night.

And, come cockcrow, what might then come first; with both the left and right having long made up their minds to leave the EU: a general election or a second referendum. Beats me. It's only the muddle in the middle: the Independents, the Scottish National Party, the Liberal Democrats, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Independent Group for Change, Plaid Cymru, the Green Party, and yes, Sinn Féin, and the inimitable Mr John Bercow, still, as yet, the Speaker of the Commons, who have any God-and/or electoral-given right to come together as something more substantial than the ghost of an idea, and who have any chance of affecting the balance one way or the other.

Hard cheese, whichever way you look at it. And what a complete pickle we're in and make no mistake. But let's not be beastly to the Germans, it's not dear Angela Merkel's fault. Sandwiched, as she is, between the rest of the EU and Boris's threat that, in so many words: "That's all there is on the table. Take it or leave it." And so, of course, they left it: "Danke schön, aber, nein danke." All very much in line with everything every EU official has been signalling and saying to Boris Johnson; despite his many promises, pronouncements, ultimatums, and/or threats to the contrary; ever since he first became Prime Minister.

In? Out? Go right? Go further left? This way? No? That way? You could well be forgiven for not knowing which way to turn. You'd have had to be two-faced and able to look both forward as well as backward, at one and the same time, to be able to make any sense of it; and all of it, by design. More's the pity.

Am I for one minute suggesting that dear Boris Johnson is two-faced?

Hardly. The Boris has never really been two-faced; that's much too easy a performance for him to pull off and he'd soon get bored. No. He has such a remarkable ability to dissemble; indeed, a real gift; that he can be seen and heard to go every which way at the same time; wearing either the mask of Comedy or Tragedy, and both at once, sometimes; that he can still end up

back where he started, convinced he's dealt with everything and answered every question, with no one any the wiser, including himself.

Am I for one minute suggesting Jeremy Corbyn's two-faced?

No. Not, for one moment. Dear old Jeremy has ever worn his heart and his true colours on his sleeve; has ever been a Euro-sceptic, has always wanted to leave the EU, and has never wanted to 'Remain'. It's just that he's been schooled never to say that he "ABSOLUTELY" wants to leave the EU. He's simply been advised to let the question be forever bounced around, like a trial balloon; always temptingly close, but always just out of reach. Never giving a hard 'No'. Always leaving 'Remain' a possibility for all those in the party who still yearn for a second referendum. Always presenting a face of considered thoughtfulness, rather than a tight-lipped, dead-eyed adherence to party dogma. And, amazingly, it continues to work for him still. The only real glint of cold hard truth appearing between the lines of his "rally-the-faithful" speech at the end of the Labour Party conference.

Makes you wonder who's had Jeremy's shell-like ear. Who it is has been 'The Corbyn Whisperer' since he took over party leadership from Ed Miliband back in September 2015. Who it is that's always been on hand to keep him on track, steer him in the proper direction; stop him from wobbling. Just as the doyen of dark digital arts, dear old Dominic Cummings has done as special political adviser to Boris Johnson since both men entered No. 10.

Though, I'd wager that most people in Britain have still never heard of the Labour Party's éminence grise. Or at the very least, the man's name doesn't easily trip from off the tongue when regulars get into over heated discussions down the pub. Nevertheless, the man in the shadows and, in every which way imaginable, the power behind Jeremy Corbyn's vision for: 'People Before Privilege' and 'Rebuild Britain - For the many not the few' is his political advisor, Seumus Milne.

Seumus Milne; committed and really rather radical socialist; who, like his 'Black Mirror' doppelganger, architect of the 'Vote Leave' campaign and arch-disruptor at large, Dominic Cummings; openly despises much, if not all of the British establishment, especially Whitehall. And who, likewise, believes the country and its tired and tawdry bastions of power should all be given a good shake up. The nexus point where both ends meet.

Just as Seumus' world was shaken to the core, no doubt, when Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, abruptly fired his father, Alasdair Milne, from his post as Director General of the BBC. The very public rejection of his dear old dad, no doubt, the beginning of young Seumus' animus against all things conservative; whether spelled with a small or capital 'C.' From such little acorns do...well you know the rest.

Odd, you might think, for someone coming from such a British privileged background to be so profound a radical; educated at Winchester and Balliol, as he was, before working on Fleet Street as journalist for such esteemed entities as 'The Guardian' and 'The Economist'; but that's democracy in action for you.

Yet both Cummings and Milne are unelected aides who, by all accounts, wield disproportionate degrees of influence in the corridors of power. Both men widely viewed by people with close knowledge of the situation to be a good deal smarter than the party leaders they each serve. Demagoguery in action you might say.

An odd situation for the British body politic to have found itself in; the rules of order long established within the Kingdom; social and political etiquette, and all that. As in dukes always go first; then marquises before earls; viscounts before barons; pearls before swine.

Prime Ministers, before aides; not so much, it seems, these days, so radically has the order of things been upended.

Truly, didn't anyone see them coming? These devils or angels; take your pick; who sit upon the shoulders of Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn. To all intents and appearances, the two most able politicians that Britain can muster in its time of great need. Who, even now, can do nothing more than jockey with each other for supremacy as to which man can best prove to 'the people' that he is their true champion: the one who stands shoulder to shoulder with them against the power of parliament and the political elite, as well as all those "your-money-grabbing" EU politicians across 'the English Channel'.

'Take Back Control' Or not.

'Make England Great Again.' Or not.

To this non-LSE PPE (Philosophy, Politics, Economics) trained mind's eye, Dominic Cummings and Seumus Milne resemble nothing so much as two sides of the same coin. As in: "Heads I win. Tails you lose."

As is most certainly the case when it comes to 'Brexit', where Milne (for which read Jeremy Corbyn) and Cummings (for which read Boris Johnson) both see very much eye-to-eye.

It makes me think that 'Brexit' would be better understood by one and all, if it were reframed as 'Breakit'.

As in: whatever establishment entity it is 'The Dom' and 'The Milne' think needs breaking. And where there's nothing but the blink of an eye between the two of them as to who shoots first.

Where on earth is Jason Bourne, when we need him.

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