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About the Author

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Dedication

*This book is dedicated to my mother,
who gave me the green world and the words,
with all my love*

Introducing

I wish that everyone who said they believed in angels would actually believe in insects. Thanks to the insects, we have food, but it is also insects who, tactfully and quietly, remove the dead. Without them, we would be wading through corpses at every step.

We need the living world, that truest of worlds, both in death and in life: thanks to other animals, human life is vitalized. Animals, their senses alert to every scent and whisper through their paws, antennae, wing-tips and noses, are our guides and our healers. Mindedness surrounds us: in air and water, on land and in the soil under our feet where the lovely, holy worm, in sweet complicity with the dreaming Earth, quickens death itself to life. In the transforming dark, trees are messaging each other through their roots and, where tree roots link with fungi, the network of underground awareness is able to respond differently to the presence of different creatures. Awareness surrounds us. Tingling.

Perhaps nowhere is so full of life as the forest of the Amazon: bursting, writhing, tickling and rotting. Death itself is merely matter quickened into something else because everything is a part of the shapeshifting metamorphosis at the green core of life. In the Amazon I felt, as never before, that I had touched the quick of the thing, had put my finger to the pulse at the heart of the world, in an experience of empathy with that wildest of creatures, the jaguar. Indigenous societies in the Amazon have never forgotten the mindedness of life, honouring it with a way of thinking that is empathetic, willing to cross borders, linking with other species, a way of walking immersed in the true world, sensitive to its ethic.

How we walk the Earth has never mattered more than now. How we treat it, in the spirit of gift or theft, a bill or a prayer, has never been more important, not only for the intrinsic value of the living world, but for humanity's health and well-being. In a startling demonstration, the Coronavirus that has so traumatized the world

was unleashed by our destruction of forest habitat and the slaughter of wild creatures.

Where were you when the music stopped? Everything ceased. Schools closed. Churches were shut. The pubs were silent. Friends could not meet. We cancelled everything to fight the virus: weddings, work, exams, football and theatre. We stopped doing everything except the very thing that had caused the virus in the first place: annihilating the living world. Forests have been destroyed for cattle to feed the insatiable appetite for beef: wildlife is slaughtered for tamelife as soya is grown on previously forested land to feed the chicken industry. Bereft of their seclusion in the forests, wild creatures were forced into contact and the virus jumped to humans. Astonishingly, the cause was quietly noted, and yet nothing was done.

Although humans are just 0.01 per cent of all life, we have destroyed 83 per cent of wild mammals, and we have done so without awareness. Now, aghast, we begin to see and to name. The saddest word I know in any language is the word *endling*. It refers to the last individual of a species, final and forlorn, at whose death the species is extinct. An endling is the very epitome of tragedy, and the word was coined, appropriately, in this age of extinction, this strange age of our dawning knowing, seeing the unhallowed horror that is approaching.

The human conscience needs to be corroborate with the natural world and aligned to its ethic, furthering a politics of kindness. But a political stance that is the opposite of kindness is on the rise: libertarian fascism with its triumphal brutalism, its racism and misogyny, the politics that loathes the living world. Tonally fascist in many countries, it is openly so in some countries and, in the case of Brazil, where it launches its assault on the Amazon and the peoples of the Earth who live within those forests, it is a chiaroscuro of cruelty.

Here, then, the causes for rebellion: survival and awe; beauty and necessity; grace and grief. There is an uprising of life in rebellion for life, those who are griefstruck and furious for the tawny ones, the creatures of feather and fur, demanding that media and governments tell the truth about the emergency we are in, fighting for life in this shared, wild home. I have felt the grief, once diving in a coral reef at its dying moment, as it glows a luminous ringing blue, ultramarine, ultra-dying at an ultra-twilight. And I have been imprisoned in the cells for my activism

for climate and against extinction. I write about my arrest and trial, and the judge's response. (In tears. 'Thank you. You *have* to succeed.')

Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars, and they are lining up now to write rebellion across the skies. Why rebel? Because nature is not a hobby. It is the life on which we depend.

The Solar Flares of Fascism

Fascism begins as something in the air. Stealthy as smoke in the darkness, easier to smell than to see. Fascism sets out an ethos, not a set of policies; it appeals to emotion, not fact. It begins as a pose, often a deceptive one. It likes propaganda, dislikes truth and invests heavily in performance. Untroubled by its own incoherence, it is anti-intellectual and yet it is contemptuous of the populace, even as it exploits the crowd mentality. Fascism is accented differently in different countries and uses the materials – and the media – of the times. It is hostile to egalitarianism and loathes liberalism. It champions ‘might is right’, a Darwinian survival of the nastiest, and detests vulnerability: the sight of weakness brings out the jackboot in the fascist mind, which then blames the victim for encouraging the kick. Fascism not only promotes violence but relishes it, viscerally so. It cherishes audacity and bravado, promotes charismatic leaders, demagogues and ‘Strong Men’, and seeks to flood or control the media. Even as it pretends to speak for the people, it creates the rule of the elite, a cult of violent chauvinism and a nationalism that serves racism.

The fascism of a Thomas Mair (who killed the MP Jo Cox) or the now-proscribed neo-Nazi National Action is so obvious that you can see it coming a mile away. The more insidious kind is the type being nurtured in today’s Libertarian movement. Its precursors are in Italy, not Germany, in Italian Futurism, which bolstered Mussolini, in the poet D’Annunzio and in the mythic Roman figure of Deus Sol Invictus.

Filippo Marinetti, the poster-boy of Italian Futurism, articulated the emotional fascism from which political fascism stems. ‘Our hearts are not in the least tired. For they are nourished by fire, hatred and speed!’ Steel was the archetypal material for Futurist sculpture, but there are materials of the mind, too: the steel of

cruelty, the gunmetal of hatred. 'We want to exalt aggressive action, the racing foot, the fatal leap, the smack and the punch.'

In contemporary Libertarianism there is a similar love of hatred. The Libertarian and far-right website *Breitbart* proudly published *In Praise of 'Hate Speech'* by Libertarian James Delingpole, while Sean Gabb, as Director of the Libertarian Alliance in 2006, said: 'We believe in the right to promote hatred by any means that do not fall within the Common Law definition of assault.' (Gabb said this as he stepped forward to defend David Irving's expression of Holocaust denialism as an act of freedom of expression.) The character traits applauded by today's Libertarians – ambition, *superbia*, speed, drive, spin, success and spikiness – are the qualities the Futurists valued. There is fire here, but never warmth; appetite, but never food.

Libertarians' bullyboy mentality detests the sensibility of liberalism, and torments those they call SJWs (Social Justice Warriors). There should be no regulations to protect the weak, they say, and they loathe the vulnerable: Milo Yiannopoulos, *Breitbart's* star writer, having encouraged the racist and sexist abuse of actress Leslie Jones on Twitter then mocked her for 'playing the victim'. Libertarians scorn individual or cultural sensitivity in promulgating the term 'Generation Snowflake' to describe people who might 'melt' in the heat of hate speech or who want 'trigger alerts' to be issued over material that might traumatize survivors of sexual abuse. This attitude is proto-fascistic, to despise the victim for being vulnerable, using that weakness as a reason to treat them with contempt.

When the Libertarian Steve Bannon became Donald Trump's chief strategist, his appointment was cheered by the former head of the KKK, and approved by the American Nazi Party. Bannon collaborated with publishers of neo-Nazi White nationalist websites to turn *Breitbart* into a platform for the Alt-right, and became its CEO. Bannon describes Tommy Robinson, racist Islamophobe and former English Defence League leader, as 'the backbone of Britain'. He fosters links with the far-right, including Hungary's Viktor Orbán and France's Marine Le Pen, in an attempt to unite 'the Judeo-Christian West'. Part of the playbook of Libertarianism in the USA and in the UK is Islamophobia. He has called for the beheading of Dr Anthony Fauci, the most senior US infectious diseases expert.

It was Libertarianism and the Alt-right that pushed Trump's success. His own ideology is too incoherent to fit exactly with any particular political grouping, but Libertarianism marks both his attitudes and those of his supporters, while his Alt-right allies seek the fascistic outcomes he supplies: his infamous refusal to condemn White supremacism at Charlottesville, for example, or his decision to use unidentified Federal Agents to attack legitimate anti-racist protesters (who Trump calls 'far-left fascists') at the Black Lives Matter protests in Portland. His campaign material included an insignia of an inverted red triangle, which was used in Nazi concentration camps to identify political prisoners.

Not all Libertarianism is proto-fascistic. Mainstream Libertarians claim an anti-statist position, whereas pro-statism is an almost obligatory part of a historic fascist credo. However, when anti-statism is used as a rationale to oppose all regulations, the most powerful are 'liberated' to exercise their power against the most vulnerable, and that is the emotional atmosphere in which fascism flourishes. It is about timbre, about the resonance between present political posturing and future political fact. Libertarians claim they hold an anti-authoritarian view even as they support the 'Strong Men'. I'm not saying that every member of the Alt-right, or anyone named here as espousing Libertarian views, is a fascist. I am, though, illustrating how closely one set of ideas (of Italian Futurism) maps with the matrix of ideas proffered by Libertarianism, and showing that fascism is almost ineluctably linked to Futurism.

The Italian Futurists, opposing political and artistic tradition, saw themselves as anti-establishment, as do contemporary Libertarians. They were driven, as the name suggests, forward to the future. As Marinetti wrote in the *Manifesto of Futurism*: 'Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute.' Libertarians, like the Futurists, loathe the past, which they associate with the natural world: the future is artificial, and they want to own it. Silicon Valley venture capitalist and Trump backer Peter Thiel, who describes himself as 'way libertarian', is heavily involved in The Technological Singularity, often referred to as The Singularity, promoting artificial super-intelligence to create the end of natural history. Futurism wanted to create 'a new type of man'.

The Futurist Luigi Russolo championed a materialist idea of music as pure noise: sound should be 'bruitistic', exemplified in the

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revile sustainability and object to environmental protection laws. Their contempt for the green movement was evident in Libertarian Martin Durkin's infamously deceitful prime-time 1997 Channel 4 TV series *Against Nature*, made by his company Kugelblitz, which shared the name of Nazi-manufactured weaponry.

That Durkin's title echoed Joris-Karl Huysmans' iconic Decadent novel *Against Nature* (1884) is telling. Huysmans' novel reads like a Libertarian tract in wanting to seek freedom from the unbearable restraints of nature. 'Nature,' Huysmans writes, 'has had her day ... After all, what platitudinous limitations she imposes ... what petty-minded restrictions ... the moment has come to replace her, as far as that can be achieved, with artifice.' Artifice was valued by the Decadent movement, while the natural world, so beloved of the Romantics (and, interestingly, the Nazis) was loathed. Artifice is adored by Libertarians and the Alt-right. The Singularity is a Libertarian project. If Aldo Leopold suggested we could 'think like a mountain', then The Singularity's response is 'think like a machine'. In their dream of technological Singularity, humans become mechanistic. The arch-Libertarian Milo Yiannopoulos praises one Singularity-promoting blog (*LessWrong*), because it 'urged its community members to think like machines rather than humans. Contributors were encouraged to strip away ... concern for other people's feelings, and any other inhibitors to rational thought.'

Kindness, concern and humanity, core to the best of human nature, are derided. In a pandemic such as Covid-19, those are the values that are needed. But the countries that have suffered the most (USA, Brazil and the UK) had leaders who were capable only of the opposite qualities. Where humility was needed, to heed advice and to act with care and caution, they displayed reckless *superbia*. Where compassion was required to protect the vulnerable, they responded with cruelty and carelessness. Where a respect for limitations was necessary (wearing masks and obeying lockdown rules), they showed their contemptuous Libertarian desire to be free of such fetters.

The refusal to wear facemasks was politicized. This was far more than a detail of partisan identity: it was an eloquent and significant expression of Libertarianism's creep. The facemask doesn't protect the wearer but protects others: it is inherently public-spirited, its ethos is communal. It is an expression of considerateness,

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