



Post-U.S. election obstruction evokes great literary quotes

## Description

# Literary greats come to mind when reviewing the varied obstructionisms in delaying the results of the U.S. elections

By **Byron Toben**

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Literary greats **Mark Twain** and **Herman Melville** come to mind when reviewing the varied obstructionisms in delaying the results of the 2020 U.S. elections, as well as **Shakespeare** and **Rube Goldberg**.

## Lawsuits and elector substitution

Something like 36 lawsuits for recounts, recounts of recounts, and the simple tossing out of votes based on the most minor of technicalities and claims of fraud all failed. A last-ditch attempt to substitute pro-Trump electors for the previously designated electors was also rejected by Governors and Secretaries of State for individual states, many of whom were Republicans. That these Judges and State officials did what their mandates required was a tribute to them.

Among Mark Twain's hundreds of pithy quotes, a favourite is "Do the right thing. This will gratify some and astonish the rest." Famous as this quote is, I could not pinpoint the printed source. It's not in *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn* nor *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.



Bartleby the Scrivener – Image: illustration from softcover book

## Delay at the GSA

Also, delaying the incoming team for at least three weeks to hit the ground running at a time of COVID-19's second wave and the possibility of a terrorist attack early in the new administration, was the director of the General Services Administration, **Emily Murphy**, who seemingly gave no specific public reason, leading *Los Angeles Times* journalist **Virginia Heffernan** to invoke Herman Melville's short story ***Bartleby the Scrivener***. There, Bartleby, a previously efficient clerk to a Wall Street firm, suddenly stopped doing his duties one day without explanation, seemingly because he just didn't feel like it. (Though not as famous as *Moby Dick*, which inspired the classic John Huston film, *Bartleby* did inspire four minor films. Is there a fifth in this saga? )

## Legal team collapse

In the process of losing some 36 lawsuits over the election results, the Trump legal team, headed by **Rudy Giuliani**, made a lot of embarrassing claims both in court and famously at the Four Seasons Landscaping parking lot, all voiced loud and dramatically. This seems foreseen in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, where he declaims that all is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

## Secret super-powerful voting machines

Having not succeeded in attacking fake voters or counting clerks, one member of the team, **Sidney Powell**, proposed that she has a "fire hose" of proof that foreign voting machines were programmed to change ballots physically, converting Trump ballots into Biden ballots. This revelation, she claims, is of "epic" and even "biblical" proportions. (She has since been dropped from the Trump legal team, which denies she was ever on it despite



many videos showing her on the team and speaking for it!)

Her bizarre “connect the dots” theory, which she now pursues as a private concerned citizen, is based on the following. She has discovered a server in Germany used by **Dominion Voting Machines**, which contains the proof. Dominion (invented by two Canadians) produces the second most popular voting machine in the USA. It was sold to a New York investment firm in 2018. During its history, it once had fleeting contact with **Smartmatic** (which was invented by three Venezuelans), allegedly to have then-president **Hugo Chavez** (now dead for 13 years) change the votes in his country.

Powell’s conclusion – Dominion is controlled by Communists who want to take over America.

The U.S. CIA originally developed two programs, **Hammer** and **Scorecard** to change votes, the story goes, and Smartmatic is somehow based on Scorecard technology. Ownership of these entities is in some way connected to a Spanish corporation.

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Seeking a literary connection to this confusing mishmash, I thought at first of **Alice in Wonderland** – “Curioser and curioser” – but decided none were more apt than the wonderful wacky inventions of cartoonist Rube Golberg.

Ms. Powell, incidentally, got **General Michael Flynn**, one of Trump’s many chiefs of staff, out of prison for lying to Congress, despite his two confessions. So maybe she might do the impossible “wherever the chips may fall” as she says. Flynn, in the meantime, will probably be pardoned\* by Trump in January.

Dominion has posted a denial of all this, including a visual of its machine in operation and emphasizing that it is physically impossible for it to change votes – it can just verify the signer and cumulate the totals.

\* Trump pardoned Flynn just as this article was being published – Editor

Feature image: Rudy Giuliani in 2016, by [Gage Skidmore CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

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**Byron Toben**, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*’s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.

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