



# Parrot Addenda

by Rogan Wolf



*“Parrot is my own dear heart and my dear darling...  
I pray you, let Parrot have liberty to speak !”*

## Preface

“Parrot Addenda” is a series of reflections on truth, honour and Brexit, in rhyming verse stanzas. The great majority of these were written as poems in their own right, so that *Parrot Addenda* is more a collection on a running theme (or sore), than a single long poem containing verses.

They provide, in effect, a commentary on Brexit events as these took place between June 2018 and January 31st 2020, the day on which the UK officially left the EU. The individual stanzas were uploaded on Facebook and on blog sometimes within hours of the event or development to which each refers, or which led to a particular line of thought. The collection includes footnotes (put together at the end, in a separate section) which offer some references).

Both verse form and parrot are borrowed from the long satire “Speak, Parrot” by John Skelton. Skelton lived in the reign of Henry 8th, a time when European sailors were beginning to range out. Parrots had only recently been discovered and brought back as trophies from “paradise”. Also, a different form of Brexit took place at that time and speaking out was dangerous.

*“Parrot is my own dear heart and my dear darling...  
I pray you, let Parrot have liberty to speak !”*



## Parrot Speaks of a Pit bull

A keen environmentalist, Lord Rothermere admitted to the judge he should not have let his pit bull befoul the park each morning. A fear that tax havens were under increasing threat from global warming etc made him forget the black plastic bag he was supposed to use to spare our children from his pit bull's poohs.

## Parrot Speaks of the People's Will

Plug Maybot into the mains. She needs re-charging with "The People's Will." It's done. Again she stands tall. "Stuff parliament," she says. "I am enlarging the People's role and only I and mine can tell what half of them meant when they said go to hell. We serve them, I and my gang of billionaires, hoodlums and fanatics, dregs and liars..."

*Rogan Wolf  
June 2018*



## Parrot speaks of the Law and Dust

The sky is cloudy, the coast is nothing clear.  
Truth has put away her tresses of fine gold.  
Selling and Spinning infest with their foul air  
all the languages of our fractured world.  
Creatures of the Lie have become so bold  
they want Law and Justice as well as all trust  
under their sway. Our cities turn to dust.

## Parrot speaks of Community and Dust

And it's busy, busy, busy, and busying again !  
*Que pensez-vous, Parrot ?* How sane is our state ?  
Deceit in Parliament deranges the brain,  
but Truth and Honour just add to the hoodlums' hate ;  
to secure control they'll tear our world apart.  
Their trappings of greed, envy and worldly lust,  
parrot says plainly, lead nowhere except to dust.

Rogan Wolf  
June 2018



## Parrot Speaks of Youth and Hope

Like Parrot, the Truth is caged. Outside in the street  
the Lie and all its creatures roar a glad song.  
Up and down upon pampered horses they strut  
kicking the poor aside as they canter along.  
Much money, we know, is spent for wrong  
purposes, for poor to stay poor, and pit bull on top  
and caged is Truth, and Love, and Youth, and Hope.

## Parrot speaks of the Brexit Agon (I)

Remember the start of this Agon ? Enter stage right  
the Tories – their *Austerity*, their *Striver/Skiver*,  
their *harry the Poor*, all that. And their family fight,  
*banging on about Europe*. So Dave, being clever,  
said, “You know wot, the good of my Nation was never  
my thought. This referendum meets my *Party’s* need” -  
but he lost it. So Tory dysfunction spread Europe wide.

Rogan Wolf  
June 2018



## Parrot speaks of the Brexit Agon (2)

Off stalked the captain (he'd said he never would)  
and now what a shipwreck we behold. A pit bull  
pushed Maybot onto the bridge. "Full steam ahead!"  
she cried in glee. "Red White and Blue! The People  
have Spoken! Bring Fox Hunting back! And Grammar School!"  
Then Flotsam Johnson and Jetsam Gove floated  
into view - and Maybot was hastily rebooted.

## Parrot speaks of Dividends and Dishonour

And Maybot was hastily rebooted. "Depend  
on me and my rabid old pit bulls to reach the best deal  
for Britain..." And "Let's pretend a Brexit Dividend  
and if that doesn't work, let's lie one..." And "Let me steal  
into your hearts with my doggedness and iron will  
in pursuing the wrong course the wrong way, through day  
after day after dishonourable day - Mayday, Mayday..."

*Rogan Wolf  
June 2018*



## Parrot Speaks True and Plain

Truth weighs heavy, says Parrot, but here I'll speak plain :  
the EU referendum was neither true  
nor honest democracy. Bare lies and criminals "won"  
and the result means nothing except that we  
are a nation split, mis-led and lost at sea.  
Brexit's a lie, a bug with gilded wings,  
a painted spawn of dirt, that stinks and stings.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*June 2018*



# These are the Hands

These are the hands  
That touch us first  
Feel your head  
Find the pulse  
And make your bed.

These are the hands  
That tap your back  
Test the skin  
Hold your arm  
Wheel the bin

Change the bulb  
Fix the drip  
Pour the jug  
Replace your hip.

These are the hands  
That fill the bath  
Mop the floor

Flick the switch  
Soothe the sore

Burn the swabs  
Give us a jab  
Throw out sharps  
Design the lab.

And these are the hands  
That stop the leaks  
Empty the pan  
Wipe the pipes  
Carry the can

Clamp the veins  
Make the cast  
Log the dose  
And touch us last.

***Michael Rosen***

*Michael Rosen wrote this poem for the 60th birthday of the NHS in 2008. He gave permission for the "Poems for the wall" project to reproduce it.*

**Poems for...one world**

<https://poemsforthewall.org>



*John Lewis Partnership*







## T-Bone Trump

T-Bone Trump is not the President :  
he's America's Minotaur and prowls and befouls  
that nation's halls and heart of government.  
The White House has been devoured by its shadow. Howls,  
tweets and tantrums have replaced the calls  
for sense and resolution a great nation makes.  
Humanity heads beast-ward and the heart breaks.

## The Parrot Ails

The parrot ails and grieves within his cage  
of slender vaulting and cries : "Those who deceive  
a nation's people for their own advantage  
commit the crime of High Treason. They thief  
capacity from the sovereign power and leave  
us eyeless, deprived of reality, trust and heart.  
Eyeless we wander a burning waste of hurt."

*Rogan Wolf  
July 2018*



## Jez in Yearn Land

Corbyn woke and found himself new-made.  
No longer : “On a point of order, Chair.”  
From today, that Chair was Jez, Jez magnified  
by negation, for not being sleek like “the others” were.  
“Chaos called me from my committees, far  
into the yearn-lands of the young. But I am small  
and tired and lean on wormy crutches. I fail.”

## Parrot Spots an Old Defence Line

Parrot’s out patrolling above the North Downs  
and peers in wonder at the sight below  
where little Maybot plays with her toy clowns  
and Jez goes pushing fantasies to and fro.  
And each has built toy castles there, a row  
of defences spun of mind. Both have seen  
their names writ large along this thin red line.

*Rogan Wolf  
July 2018*



## Going Nowhere to Mean Nothing

My dear friend Pete and I went cycling once,  
along a raised track through flatness, a sort of cause-  
way going nowhere to mean nothing, a chance  
scar between fields, foothold for nettles. And what *was*  
this great work ? asked Pete. It was the frontier between Us  
of East Anglia and Them of Mercia. Troops stood there  
and glared. Look at their skulls, how the eye-holes glare.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 2018*

## Paradise Destroy

The bird of paradise crouches in its cage  
knowing that time is short. Humankind  
cannot bear very much reality and rage  
soon displaces kindness in a mind  
faced with a world it fails to understand  
and keeps abusing, our dwelling. It is the lie  
we worship that shall our paradise destroy.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 2018*



## ...And Smash the Butterfly

The lie we worship shall our paradise  
destroy. Our leaders make it good to hate  
and smash the butterfly. “It is my lies  
that offer peace, my friends. It is Self in spite  
of all you love I bid you venerate.  
Look to my spite, my greed, look to Me...”  
The Self and its Lies our paradise destroy.

## The Crier Frets

The crier frets and beats the bars in rage :  
“Our politics hangs empty - a tarantula  
has sucked it dry. And Parliament’s a stage,  
a show-case for cheats and Punch-and-Judy. The Law  
lumbers behind the liar and the air  
we breathe means less to us than our screens in hand  
where the lies glitter, shared like contraband.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 2018*



## In Despite of White Horses

May and Johnson, Gove and Jez are one  
and the same thing : discards, flotsam on  
the beach, suddenly by chaos thrown  
into the air to where white horses scorn  
old harbours ; yet despite these storms, they remain  
moles, chasing worms along tunnels they've known  
since youth, around and around and up and down.

## The Parrot Seeks a Cage

The parrot seeks a cage wherein to lay  
his head, and shield his blood-line from a world  
torn from its bearings. But not even court of law,  
no construction born of history, can hold  
or shelter us from the furies we have hurled  
into our own house. True leader now gives way  
to creature spawned of chaos and the lie.

*Rogan Wolf  
August 2018*



## Satan at Meat

Satan sees a continent complete.

“I can’t eat *that*,” he says. Let’s split some off.”

So with his claws he rips Britain apart  
from its union. But then he pauses : “Might half  
cook quicker ?” He divides our country, half against half.  
Again he pauses : “Break Labour now, split Tory...”  
Satan warms to his work. He’s famished. It’s scary.

## Parrot Speaks to the 2-Bit Mobsters

What more can the truthful parrot say, what is  
there left to say ? The “two-bit mobsters” *The Sun*  
describes belong not in Salzburg, but with us.  
Ours the red bus, the billionaires’ gravy train,  
the inflammatory scares, that media con.  
Maybot has been nothing for our time  
but accessory to a massive, two-bit crime.

Rogan Wolf  
September 2018



## The Parrot Peers

The parrot peers from the echoes of his cage  
and sees the ruin wrought by unworthy leaders.  
They have no answers to our lostness and rage,  
our disconnection. They invest in borders,  
division, avoidance, deceit. They are providers  
only of what destroys. The forces of true worth  
languish in shadow. What word might call them forth ?

## Parrot's Cage

I beseech you, brave parrot, ponder the meaning of cages.  
The cage is your pulpit and your public guise.  
It constrains you but also protects and it enlarges  
the statement you make, you take strength from its bars  
which curve like ribs round where the soft heart lies.  
But I beg you, in these times amok, prefer not  
the refuge of bars to the ferment of true heart.

*Rogan Wolf  
September 2018*



# The Parrot finds Honour Lying Forgotten

*among our ruins and knows that honour must  
be the foundation of any future we might have.*

The parrot in parliament on that last day  
heard a tearful man, who'd been betrayed  
by fellow Tories, allies of his way  
of life and thinking, declare that though they'd played  
him for a fool, he yet kept his honour and he'd  
rather be an honourable fool than clever as they  
were, expert at ambush, lies and treachery.

## Demos Highjacked

And the parrot asked a hoodlum, what is this holy  
word to which the people bow and pray ?  
“Democracy,” he said. “Demos.” “But surely  
a People lied to is God outraged ?” “Their Say  
is Final,” the hoodlum hissed. “No need that they  
should see emerging truth, no need to re-  
consider. Deceived and misled, the People Spoke.  
Demos highjacked is what we hoodlums like.”

Rogan Wolf  
October 2018





## Parrot Counts the Cost of Youth

(i)

The parrot heard a fishmonger rich in youth  
rejoice in the glory of the ocean's yield  
which daily slithered silvery beneath  
his hand. And yet these riches also told  
of change, extinctions, a real chance he'll not grow old.  
A "catastrophic event" did for the dinosaurs.  
A second has now started, we the cause.

(ii)

The young fishmonger enlarged upon his theme.  
"The event of our disaster is a wave  
already breaking. It will flood my dreams, my home,  
and all my life. Yet the nations rush to "save"  
themselves by enthroning rogue leaders, who rave  
and strut, or ape the robot, acting the part  
of our worst nature. The minotaur is out."

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 2018*



## The Parrot on the People's March

John Skelton's Parrot still has much to say  
to us, this bird of paradise we've caged -  
our anima, our heart. He said today  
(he speaks all languages aptly) : "Our nation's enraged  
and split in two ill-guided halves. The half who staged  
this protest have lost the Britain they thought they knew.  
But, look you, the *other* lacks a Britain, too."

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 20th 2018*

## That Jez

That Jez is not the man they thought he was.  
Or put it another way : just "not being like  
the others are," is not enough. He prefers  
going tie-less - fine. But it's not enough. He'll bike  
to work - that's cool. But Jez will never strike  
me as properly awake to the present hour  
or vivid and inspired enough, to inspire.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*November 2018*



## Parrot Writes a Letter

Dear Britons, my close neighbours, you who placed  
your faith in “Leave” could not have known till now  
what “Leave” would mean – that you’ve been cheated, fleeced,  
by false leaders. It’s their fantastical, low  
lies and slogans that drew us here to plough  
this stony furrow. So neighbours, what now ? Control  
and licence for the lawless. For *most* of us, gall.

## May Dance

May continues inch by dogged inch  
to lead “The People” the wrong way. And she has brought  
a sad new status to these islands : to clinch  
and to “deliver” her dud “deal”, in despite  
of “The People’s” interests, has made us not  
just a wonder to the world, but a joke.  
Maybot is dancing Great Britain into the dark.

Rogan Wolf  
November 2018



## The Parrot, the Cage and the Pulpit



Tyndale died that English plough-boy might hear for himself the ring of Truth. He was tied to a stake, strangled and then burnt. A crowd stood there and watched his flesh reduce. But then, with a shake and to vast amazement, wings spread forth and he took to the air and flew far west to the top of his tower - that cage and pulpit - to chaunt his Truth by the hour !

Rogan Wolf  
November 2018





## The Dreadful Achievement of Cameron and May

In asking us to choose between liars and cheats  
he mocked both voters and the subject in hand.  
Maybot, following him, repeats and repeats  
her brain-dead phrases, dogged to the end  
however dire the depths she must descend  
dragging the nation with her. Let none hearken  
ever again to that lie – “The People have spoken.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 4<sup>th</sup> 2018*

## The Bird of Paradise Danced Last Night

The parrot danced last night in his cage, spraying  
his dates all round the room. “What’s up with you ?”  
cried Galathea. “My spirits. And I am praying  
that honour will persist. An assembly true  
and properly informed has done what it knew  
was right. The House redeemed itself last night.  
May prayers be answered. May minotaur retreat.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 5<sup>th</sup> 2018*



## Jez Hoeing

When genial Jez disturbed a ghoul in error  
while scratching about along familiar lines,  
he didn't challenge it or share our terror ;  
he frowned, changed the subject, played with the coins  
in his pocket, whispered various ancient runes,  
all contradictory... We heard of him next  
at a cosy chat-show, quoting some old text...

## Parrot Peers at Democracy

The parrot asked of Democracy : "They keep  
going on about it - what does it mean ?" Well,  
I think it means counting. If you see more sheep  
in that field than in this, then you should sell  
all you have and move to that one. "I smell  
tyranny there - of numbers and of lies.  
I'd hoped it meant the true, the just, the wise."

*Rogan Wolf  
December 2018*



## Maybot Jumps Ship

Maybot found her “deal” came much too close  
to rocks and shallows for those to left and right  
of her to stomach. She jumped as they let loose  
appalling sounds of upset. “And we shall fight  
on the beaches day and night, so great is our hate  
of facts bare-faced - our Brexit’s just a breeze,”  
they cried. “A dreamy, geriatric cruise.”

*Rogan Wolf  
December 10<sup>th</sup> 2018*

## Brexit Reviewed

Today’s democracy deprives us of right  
and obligation in a community  
of true exchange. Instead, it’s all deceit,  
mirages that sell, false unity  
between plotters, mask and duplicity.  
Let Brexit at least have taught us this : we need  
word we can trust, democracy renewed.

*Rogan Wolf  
December 10<sup>th</sup> 2018*





## Jez and the New Jerusalem

And I saw the parrot, grieving behind his bars  
and in my hurry and confusion, I called :  
“Where’s Jez, our champion ? He’s waited years  
for days like this, his chance.” “Well, he told  
me he’s off to the allotment and to let the world  
hang on a bit, for he must fill his head  
with a brand New Jerusalem, before bed.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 10<sup>th</sup> 2018*

## Maybot with the Adults

Maybot keeps skipping over the water. But why ?  
The parrot preened and said, “Maybot likes breaks  
with the adults. Adults *this* side are in short supply.”  
“Oh Angela,” she says. “Whatever it takes  
to be Head Girl, I’ll do. Give me top marks.”  
But Angela says : “On *our* side, Maybot, a vote  
means taking decisions. Not loser flouncing out.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 10<sup>th</sup> 2018*





## Self Maiming

“Que pensez-vous, parrot ? What will it mean,  
this Brexit business ? There seems no end  
to its power to harm, its rending, its reeling on  
and on, to no good destination.” “Your kind,”  
said parrot, “faced with hard reality, tend  
for relief to seek something soft to blame,  
something close by. It is yourselves you maim.”

Rogan Wolf  
December 12<sup>th</sup> 2018

## The Parrot Calls for Order

“Now pay attention !” the People’s Parrot roared  
at the warring children of the lie. “Choose truth -  
not opinion, not desire. We can’t *afford*  
our small and fragile union to stagger forth,  
severed from our larger bindings. In truth,  
none anywhere can continue as before,  
but change *together* might save us from the fire.

Rogan Wolf  
December 15<sup>th</sup> 2018



## The Parrot, the Maybot and No Deal

So Maybot calls the army out. “The way to force this mayhem over the line is find a foe,” she cries. “*Tee hee*. Emergency ! Emergency ! Grave danger lies all round us, made by *moi* ! But thin red lines will stand and deliver me !” “What is there left to say ?” grieves Parrot. “Maybot’s costly. We shall pay.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 19th 2018*

## Jez and the Worship of Self

Jez is happy that the young admire how indistinct he is. It means that all that fetid certainty from yesteryear to which he clings, can now, against their will, be dusted down. They thought that he meant well by their futures. But Jez holds tight instead to the graven images in his own grey head.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 2018*



## Mid-Winter 2018

Thoughts from the cage this Christmas : Brexit is  
a national calamity from first  
to last. Not “The Sovereign Will,” not “Voice  
of the People.” Just a spasm of disgust,  
a cry for help by the unheeded. The worst  
of felons gave us Maybot, Corbyn came  
from the dust : our leaders complete our nation’s shame.

*Rogan Wolf  
December 31st 2018*

## Westminster is Empty

The parrot woke and found himself alone.  
Westminster was empty. Oh Lord, where are  
leaders fit for our doubts and tumults, why Throne  
broken, Court in shambles, House stripped bare  
of the honour and truth which humanity dare  
not forsake ? I see dust and dung and dung  
beetles feasting. Dung beetles glory in dung.

*Rogan Wolf  
January 2019*



## Parrot at the Breach

I pray you, let parrot have liberty to speak  
and may you grant his words a mindful hearing.  
Do not allow this troubled land to break  
yet further its connections. We need repairing -  
not more abuse. It's our abusers wearing  
masks of fellowship who seek to tow  
our rage their way. As we whither, they grow.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*January 13th 2019*

## Maybot's Standing

Maybot, her "People," her "Democracy,"  
are one and the same, each holy, she knows. Deny  
her flawed construction, her house on sand, and see  
what outrage follows. How dare we question the lie  
she keeps repeating, the vast sums she pays to buy  
our submission. It is the nation's wealth she spends  
so that *her* place persists - and her *nation's* ends.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*January 14<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Gods at War, Following a Murder

The Parrot, bird and word of paradise,  
came across some gods upon the road,  
all but one of whom was false, of course,  
and tending to dismay. The parrot bowed  
his head politely, wishing he could hide  
back in his cage. For Truth had broken free  
but Lies had grown frantic. The gods were at war.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*January 16<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## Cage Alight

The parrot woke in shock today. A dream  
had set his cage alight. For it revealed  
a nation turned to mist. All that was firm  
and home and certain had vanished from the field.  
And no events take place in a place concealed  
in mist - they just vanish. And leaders don't lead -  
they hide in self-sustaining mist, instead.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*January 17th 2019*



## The Parrot on Planting

The parrot doesn't miss a trick. He sees  
the rot in our living wood, how it has spread  
and spreads ; he understands that the glory of trees  
in leaf and bough needs tree *trunks* not to be dead.  
He sees our leaders, dwarfed and ill-qualified,  
clinging to old splinters and sterile dreams.  
And parrot speaks plainly : “plant anew, it seems.”

Rogan Wolf  
17th January 2019

## Maybot in Harness

Still the Maybot labours, on behalf  
of half our nation, to crush the other. This  
“other” includes our youth and future, the life  
that lay before them now reduced to please  
the old. “The People have spoken,” still she lies.  
“And those who thwart my will threaten peace  
and social cohesion. They'll split the nation,” she says.

Rogan Wolf  
January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018



## Jez Labours

Old Jez would love to be a dazzling hero  
holding the bridge against the forces of chaos  
sweeping the nation just now. He'd love to go  
on telly and inspire us to drive that Mayboss  
and her folly out of town. Jez labours,  
though, just to keep up with his allotment. He  
gets muddled : there's lettuce, brexit, celery...

*Rogan Wolf  
January 25th 2019*

## Plain Words from the Cage

(i)

And I seek out the parrot and I say :  
this wretched stanza is itself a cage  
tying the words in iambic knots, although  
often singing and always giving rage  
some bite through being restrained ; might now this cage  
of parrot-speak provide clear words to throw,  
at last, some light upon our days of woe ?

*Rogan Wolf  
January 26th 2019*



## Plain Words from the Cage

(ii)

And the parrot spoke and told me true and plain  
that Brexit is just one of many signs  
across the world that human life will turn  
back to false gods and savagery now lines  
of containment break and change runs riot. Balloons  
of foul air, false words, no future, fill our skies.  
Brexit is just one and history dies.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*January 26th 2019*

## The Parrot and the Lie

What's a lie, dear Parrot, my own true heart ?  
"Anything you say that's less than true."  
You mean that everything spoken last night  
in Britain's House of Commons, was a lie ?  
"I do. Our representatives weren't true  
to their task. They preferred delusion and their own  
tribe to being honourable. Let all hearts mourn."

*Rogan Wolf*  
*January 30<sup>th</sup> 2019*





## The Parrot Weeps for the Lost

The parrot peers beyond the bars and weeps  
at how we rage, how little see to respect  
and so few leaders fit to fire our hopes  
and guide us through to health. For the lost select  
losers for their chiefs, shadows, direct  
reflections of our shame. We've lost hold  
of our good, our footing in the grace of the world.

*Rogan Wolf  
January 31st 2019*

## How Chaos Multiplied

And one dire night the parrot watched a birth.  
It was a creature just escaped from Chaos.  
It screeched, then bayed, then squatted. And the Earth  
trembled as its young appeared. Mayboss  
landed first, shod for our shame. Labour's  
fond mascot Jez came next with Flotsam straight after,  
then Jetsam and Lies and the parrot's wild laughter.

*Rogan Wolf  
February 2nd 2019*



## The Parrot Speaks of Fre-dom

He told me Chaucer was a friend of his  
and often regaled him with a pilgrim's tale  
about fre-dom. Once, three noble characters  
kept their troth with honour, such that all  
of them placed "fre-dom" higher than self. To fail  
in generosity of soul showed lack  
of fre-dom. It's curious, sometimes, looking back.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*February 5<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## An English Word of Apology to Europe

A bird of paradise ensnared in times  
of turmoil here - with Europe shunned while yet  
belonging in our blood - must seek out rhymes,  
however forked and garbled now, to let  
this nation's shame be told. We've fallen short.  
Split, ill-led, ungracious, we betray  
ourselves, our young, and you. Forgive us, we pray.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*6th February 2019*



## Jez the Phantom Striker

Jez feels weary. He plays for Arsenal,  
you know, in his dreams, and brilliant play  
on his part offers him that open goal  
in dream after dream, as well as relief and joy  
for the young who look to him, our future. But he  
can't shoot ! The tension exhausts him. Jez will dream  
lifelong. Doing, he falls short. Pity his team.

*Rogan Wolf*  
9th February 2019

## A Brexiter Takes Stock of the Dark Star

The dark star advances steadily through space,  
stealing light as it goes. And I prefer  
these dreams of mine, these demons I can chase  
across the chasm between one hemisphere  
and the other, by rules that I may learn. Retire  
from time and space, I say. Just build that wall.  
Then turn to face the dark star. Take back control.

*Rogan Wolf*  
February 13th 2019



## The Maybot Crashes Yet Again

The Maybot crashes yet again. Or does she ? Yet again, nothing has changed. Red white and blue stay exactly where she's left them, locked away in the garden shed. Parliament has spoken. Maybot, in bed, heard no word. She taps her foot in time with Big Ben. Jez taps too. Their tappings rhyme.

*Rogan Wolf  
February 14th 2019*

## Boy Jez and the Die-Hards

Boy Jez and his die-hards rose from their mass grave buoyed by delusion in the young. For they sanctified him for being “different,” one who'd save their futures, build a decent society and strengthen a vibrant continent. But hey, says Jez. Though your delusions brought me power, I like *my* delusions better. May yours now die.

*Rogan Wolf  
February 15th 2019*



## The Parrot Looks at Leadership

Everything we see before our eyes,  
said parrot, is transforming in fast motion.  
Take leaders, for instance. Responsibilities  
no longer, now they carry for their nation  
its dementia, distress and hate : and station  
themselves at the head of our bewildered stampede -  
to preen and pose and pervert - the blind lead...

*Rogan Wolf*  
*February 15<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## Safe Passage

The parrot keeps accosting me. He's like  
Socrates, that noble pest. He smiles  
and says it's muddled rage that's "taken back  
control" and therefore *un*-control that rules.  
And not "Far-left" and not "Far-Right" but schools  
of fixed dictation, idol-worship, retreats  
from Truth. Give Truth safe passage through your streets.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*16<sup>th</sup> February 2019*



## The Boy Jez Takes a Hit

And he reflects upon the Boy Jez Die-Hards :  
they think their time is Now, their talents at last  
set fair to prosper. Not so. These dim-lit try-hards  
were made bright by others' dreams.

They've crawled from failed past  
into fierce light that finds them creatures of dust  
and self-delusion - not leaders, not Labour - but more  
evidence of just how lost we all are.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*February 18th 2019*

## He Speaks of the Rapidity of Change

He speaks of change, that it runs everywhere  
and rushes at you and through you, at all times  
and in all shapes, and ever faster. And there  
it comes as flood, roaring, and here it comes  
as thief on tip-toe, stealing into the rooms  
of the city, while great buildings reel. Let all  
familiar dreams, assumptions, pillars, fall.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*February 20th 2019*



## Parrot and the Dung Beetles

When Brexit arrived to befoul the public park  
the nation's horde of dung beetles squealed  
with delight and pounced and grew fat and took  
positions in government and wheeled and dealed  
and lived a good lie for a while. The parrot railed.  
Brexit is a blister, a mere sign of blight.  
Examine the whole body. Make us fit.

*Rogan Wolf  
February 26th 2019*

## Maybot Senses Our Shame

The Maybot's winning. All she had to do  
was muddle through the madness for long enough.  
No one can rival her capacity  
for staying loyal to the wrong cause. It's tough  
ruining a nation, she says. But all my life  
I've known I'm up to it. Let no one forget  
my devotion to wrong-doing. Oh God. Oh shit...

*Rogan Wolf  
March 3rd 2019*



## The Parrot Wails

The parrot wails, I've lost my bearings, my way  
of seeing from point to point where best to go.  
Nothing joins, or holds steady, or can say  
to my brain, relax, what you once saw means so  
and so, and that must still apply today.  
But *nothing* still applies today. It's all  
broken, levelled. I make to fly. I fall.

Rogan Wolf  
March 7<sup>th</sup> 2019

## The Parrot Takes New Bearings

The parrot finds a map of Europe. Aha,  
he says. A little body to the west  
of a big one. All this juvenilia,  
these loutish playground struttings, perhaps can best  
be explained by paying close attention just  
to those shapes. They're the reason our leaders fail  
at worthy and stick instead at juvenile.

Rogan Wolf  
9<sup>th</sup> March 2019





## Jez and John and the Little Weed

And here sits Jez and there sits John and both  
still play in the past. And Jez was raised on high  
upon the shoulders of our nation's youth  
who need a future. So yes to Final Say,  
says wily John. But tomorrow, Jez, say no.  
This good cop/bad cop game is fun. Agreed?  
Oh yes, says Jez. Oh yes, says Little Weed.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*March 11<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Still Amazed

I'm still amazed at how brazenly you say  
that you'll "respect the referendum result."  
"The People have spoken" is the Maybot's way  
of disguising the same scarecrow. You both have built  
on a people's dread and turmoil, intending to tilt  
them to your benefit. We lurch to self-harm  
with your collusion. Our torment your crime.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Meets the Grotesque

Grotesque our leaders' inadequacy. They place  
their heads inside great helmets of self-praise  
and delusion, tough as steel, and proceed to chase  
a mirage, hunting for old certainties.

And just doing right, or building accord, or ways  
that work, no longer appeal. My gang and I  
must win, that's all. And let our children fry.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*March 21<sup>st</sup> 2019*

## Our Leaders Left Behind

The parrot flew onto my shoulder and said  
in wonder, the people of this nation are leaving  
their "leaders" far behind. For years force-fed  
with lies and poison, we are grieving  
at our disgrace and, to redeem, go driving  
forward through the streets, showing the way.  
And Corbyn's missing, left behind. Like May.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot on Cages, Truth and Leadership

Equally he hates and loves his cage.  
Its bars keep safe his truth which no one hears,  
his wings which beat but cannot fly. And rage  
is his familiar and raking fears  
hover round his head. And daily he peers  
at our storms, their flotsam and our “leaders” therein  
equipped in nothing but thickness of skin.

*Rogan Wolf*  
March 25<sup>th</sup> 2019

## The Parrot is Very Clear

And the parrot was very clear on this :  
If you think it “democratic” to serve  
a nonsense fed by lies, just because  
some voters ticked “control,” I must observe  
that nonsense and its rapacious servants have  
to prepare for democracy’s collapse. Prepare  
too for chaos each step of the journey there.

*Rogan Wolf*  
28<sup>th</sup> March 2019



## The Bird of Paradise Takes Another Look

The parrot took a break from helpless rage  
and shame and dread to move to paradise.  
Disaster feels less painful when your cage  
is placed in a setting that yields joy. The mice  
who lead us must somehow bell the cat, but advice  
from me goes nowhere, makes no difference.  
Our storm's to weather, not argue into sense.

*Rogan Wolf  
April 13<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot on the Quality of the Clay

We build cages, temples, towers, yet fail  
too often to discern the false and assume  
inclusion on the potter's shelf means all  
our constructions share the same clay. From time to time  
forces mature and join at a point and form  
a new wholeness. But chaos builds too. At war  
with truth and nature, its towers convulse. Beware.

*Rogan Wolf  
April 15<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Advises on Leadership

Be wise and choose good leaders. Our eyes need  
faces they can rest on, in trust ; and we yearn  
to hear words that soar. True leaders can guide  
us to better selfhood, at peace with the unknown,  
in step with our shadows. Just now, we suffer drone  
on the one side, drone opposite. In office they strut,  
flung from the road-side by chaos. Their robes don't fit.

*Rogan Wolf  
April 20th 2019*

## The Parrot shakes the Bars

The parrot shakes the bars of his own mind :  
what is the real division here ? What wall  
can be so vital it must split, unbind  
a nation ? Where has belonging gone, which all  
can share ? Blame is irresistible  
to those whose standing is unsure. The Word  
is Truth. Truth can be trusted. Can it be heard ?

*Rogan Wolf  
April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Shakes Again

The parrot goes further : in each of us a war  
is being waged between God and Mammon, truth and lie,  
meeting and retreating, holding the door  
open or hiding in self and fantasy.

This global war of our gods looks set to destroy  
the Earth, for fixed constructions of the mind,  
old pillars, are false gods. Reach outward, beyond.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*April 25<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## Still the Parrot Paces

And still the parrot ponders, that wanton eye  
probing, those little leggès pacing up  
and down. “Look at the way you humans destroy  
our world. It’s plain you’d rather die and keep  
your lies intact than turn to truth and leap  
into shapes untried. Brexit’s just an excuse  
to hit out, a displacing of pain. It’s self-abuse.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*April 28th 2019*



## The Parrot on Fault-lines

These turbulent times expose without mercy  
all our faults and fault-lines. Cause for hope ?  
For instance, some still work democracy  
as dictatorship by numbers, not leadership  
deserving of our trust ; to stay on top,  
these will creature themselves to the crowd and obey  
a sales-pitch, not the rightful. Reject them. They lie.

*Rogan Wolf  
April 30th 2019*

## He Overhears some Afterthoughts

The voters are clearly fed up. And what that means  
is very clear, that I was right and all  
who disagreed with me must see the signs  
and come around to my position. For still  
nothing has changed, I say, and never will  
and I shall continue always to give way  
to wrong doing and service to the lie.

*Rogan Wolf  
May 5th 2019*



## He Speaks of Selfies

Brexit is a fearsome sky-high selfie  
for those we ordered to “deliver” it.  
From out of nowhere, we raised them to TV  
stardom, requiring them to captivate  
us with their glitter. Can they do without  
our selfies now we’ve seen their utter lack  
of light ? Will they let us send them back ?

*Rogan Wolf*  
*May 6<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## Parrot Speaks of the Democratic Covenant

Again today the bird of paradise  
speaks true and plain from his captivity :  
“We trust you to take our world to a better place  
but only have your word. ‘Vote for me,’  
you bellowed, ‘and rest assured that all I say  
I mean to my heart’s core and shall serve. I swore  
to tell the truth. Upon my honour, I swore.’ ”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*May 14<sup>th</sup> 2019*





## He Speaks of Brexit as a Raging Fever

Brexit is a raging fever. It grips  
and convulses. Brains boil with it. Eyes glare  
at sick room walls, seeing nothing beyond. All types  
of lie and wickedness pollute the air  
where Brexit takes hold. We watch it field and then tear  
down a string of unworthy leaders, our nation fall  
into ruin. And it is pure nonsense, chaos, a black hole.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*May 23rd 2019*

## The Parrot on Maybot and the Minotaur

The Maybot shamed this nation, from first to last,  
her last perhaps the most disgraceful. Her call  
on Trump to share her days of exit will cast  
a shadow on her name and record still  
deeper than it was already and savage all  
that remains of our country's pride and standing. See  
what foulness gathers round our pageantry.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019*



## The Old Boy Rattles On

That old boy Jez just loves protesting. It's been meat  
and drink to him, a zone of comfort, all  
his life. His pure defiance keeps his feet  
warm at night. Let leadership just fall  
into his hands, then. No talent needed. No call  
for a new shaping, no steps beyond the zone  
of flaccid indignation he's made his own.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*June 5<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Brings us Up to Date

The minotaur departed the other day  
reeling from hole to black hole. Maybot sank  
without trace and Jez retired with his friends to play  
and re-play their favourite songs. And now from the sink  
of our shame and chaos, see what emerges, rank  
with power-lust, steeped in lies ! This gaggle of fools,  
each venomous, this black market of black holes.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*June 11<sup>th</sup> 2018*



## The Parrot Falls Off His Perch

Flotsam Johnson, Bojo for short, cannot  
be trusted to wipe your floor - yet you propose  
to vote him leader ? Bojo lies. *Twice* caught  
lying, *twice* sacked for it. So who employs  
a liar - for *leader* ? Felons and fell Tories.  
Honour holds no appeal for this crazed nation.  
We lurch from shame to utter degradation.

Rogan Wolf  
June 13<sup>th</sup> 2019

## Speaking of the Worst

Yeats and Shakespeare gave true word to times  
of calamity. When things fall apart. When the worst  
of human rises to the surface and climbs  
all over the face of hope. When the righteous thirst  
through miles of desert for guidance worthy of trust  
but none are quenched, none righted. It is the lie  
that glitters, dazzles. There's nothing left to say.

Rogan Wolf  
June 16<sup>th</sup> 2019



## Jez Holds the Bridge

Jez has fought the powerful all his life.  
“As leader of the Labour Party, I  
am pleased to disabuse you of any belief  
that power can be a force for good. So I  
won’t do decisions, talent, right action, for they  
belong with power - not with me. Today  
is my day for standing proud. In your way.”

*Rogan Wolf  
June 21<sup>st</sup> 2019*

## Jez in a Cage

The parrot looks across at Jez, confused.  
“I’m the one who’s stuck in a cage, not you,”  
says parrot. “So why so mute, so paralised,  
so dodo ? You have a leader’s duty to do  
for your nation. And your duty demands, act now.”  
“But Seamus says...” “I must talk to Len...” He creeps  
from bar to bar of his brain. He peers. He peeps.

*Rogan Wolf  
June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Returns to Talk of False Gods

The parrot understands so little. He tries again. Why do our systems now enthrone such contemptible leaders ? Do we despise ourselves that much ? Let only the best take on so vital a burden - why the worst ? We return to paganism, and raise false gods on high - of chaos, oblivion, the self, the lie.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*June 25<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## Jez has Trouble with Today

New pressures keep disturbing poor old Jez. They come from unions, colleagues, polls, the young. They come from today. And a “crunch meeting” takes place for decision, today. *Another*. And it’s “tense”... Then “hang on,” says Jez, *again*. “Our Party was long in the making and I take time to catch up. Let’s stay a bit longer in our dreams. So not today...”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*June 26<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Goes to Glastonbury

The parrot picks his way between the tents  
each containing dreams. Is this a *path*  
beneath my feet ? The truth ? Will I advance  
this way or be deceived into dreamland ? The wrath  
of our times turns minds to stone. But minds have worth  
only to open us to things as they are.  
Am I just castle ? Or path to things as they are ?

Rogan Wolf  
July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019

## The Parrot Glimpses Mr Toad

What toad is this that's bounding into town,  
swollen with lies and treachery ? Why,  
it's an Etonian toad, a species known  
for forked tongue and foul delivery  
of venom, the kind a billionaire will buy  
for favours. Our nation assents to being led by a toad  
to speed us, hopping, to the end of our road.

Rogan Wolf  
July 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



## Parrot on the Labour Die-Hards

Die-Hard Jez and the gang take great delight  
in battle. It's what they've always known. It's Us  
v. Them that keeps them going, of course. Fight  
reminds tired hearts to beat, class warriors  
to quote time-honoured lines. "And what's this fuss  
about Brexit ? Delusion and ruin hardly matter.  
It's the heads of our allies we want on a platter."

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 13<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Caged Parrot Watches the Demons Dance

Now through the bars, he watches the flames advance.  
There's no escape, no refuge, no rescue. And words  
are ash, as soon he'll be. And only the dance  
of demons will be left, whose use for words  
is not for truth, or light, or beauty. Where hides  
my hope ? he shrieks, as the demons dance and yards  
become feet and now flames scorch him far past words.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 19th 2019*



## Judgement from Paradise

You know wot ? Humanity has made  
a world that imitates the lineaments  
of the human soul. You may regard  
the world with horror. When our tumult ends  
who'll be left to forgive us, what healing hands  
make good the harm we've done ? Paradise  
still hides in wait here. That also we shall lose.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 21<sup>st</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Keeps Asking

The parrot asked me, why say “Left,” why “Right” –  
with “Centre” in between, somewhere ? That line's  
pure fiction, ruled on paper. In plain sight,  
just two castles spoil my view, both in ruins,  
both lingering backwards. Now an outlaw who pines  
for power, the war-lord's castle, climbs inside.  
Spurn him. Seek present sanity instead.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019*





## The Parrot Studies the Human Brain

The Parrot, still bewildered, studies the brain  
that humans bear, shaping the world. Is this  
their window to the stars, its viewpoints twain  
split down the middle ? Creation gave to this  
species both power to see Truth, and efface  
it with their own constructions. Choice. They choose  
efface. They hide in division. They abuse.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 24<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot and the Elephant

The parrot in his cage has found to his  
discomfort an elephant caged with him.  
But then he sees the present day requires  
leaders who lead. Here madness leads, while dim  
old Jez looks on, inert and out of time.  
And “Labour must...” all say. “The People need...”  
But there’s the rub, unspoken : Jez can’t lead.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 27<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Meets Mr Toad

Oh Toad, what air you pumped on your first day !  
You swelled and swelled. You were enormous by  
the evening's end. You have a strategy,  
it's clear : to swell as far as Mandalay.  
But Toad, in public office you should know  
that truth-telling is expected. A Prime  
Minister who keeps lying, does time.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*July 28<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## Mr Toad Leapfrogs the Stars

Our cheery Mr Toad at centre stage  
just knows we love his lies. The Law might take  
exception, but for Toad the truth's a cage  
which needlessly constrains him. You parrots like  
to shake the bars, he sneers, but I shall make  
away with all that binds me. I'll leapfrog the stars,  
he cries. I'll scrap the road rules. I'll race the cars.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot on Sanctuary

Sanctuary in Westminster meant words  
delivered from those precincts were heard as truth,  
their author safe to speak, though caged. The lords  
of misrule now on the rampage, pouring forth  
through street and screen and brain cell, see no worth  
in language except for silencing and lies.  
The unhinged and vicious steal control. Truth dies.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 7<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The New Berserkers Take the Stage

Chaos unbound has “taken back control.”  
Sanctums, forums, halls of assembly, all  
made empty, smashed. Nothing remains, bar steel -  
steel words, steel faces, honed for rending, male  
berserkers culling at will. Honour null.  
Democracy shredded. Now look upon  
our works, ye children. For you, all this was done.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 12<sup>th</sup> 2018*



## The Parrot Notes Mr Toad Grown Larger

Now Toad in his hall, scion of the Lie,  
swollen by chaos and by fantasy,  
progresses round his new estate. “Let I  
be praised, I’ve arrived. It took a while. Send *me*,  
I said. I was dubiously sent. No matter. It’s *me*  
that matters. All else is now putty to my hands.  
Let havoc follow. Where I play, the world ends.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 14<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Notes a Toad on the Hop

That Mr Toad is soon to hop across  
our narrow straits to meet “our EU friends.”  
He knows the sight of his Etonian face  
and sound of his reptilian tongue up-ends  
all opposition in a trice. The bends  
and humps in the road ahead ? “Illusory !”  
he cries. “We toads were made for humps. Watch me !”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 19<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## Mr Toad Turns to Ballooning

Sing ho ! cried Mr Toad. Let no one dare  
thwart me from my mission to disgrace  
and leave in shreds my nation. The minotaur  
and I have wooed and now the human race  
will gasp and admire, as through the smoke my face  
floats across the Atlantic, a bridging balloon.  
From lie to lie we float. We swell. You swoon.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 27<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Repetitive

John Skelton called his parrot in its cage  
his “own dear heart,” his truth, his paradise,  
his *anima*. And the truth must speak. Where rage  
and lie command the streets and cowardice  
allows the criminal free play, where vice  
is called a virtue and the vacuous and weak  
pretend to be the good, the truth must speak.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*August 30<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## Mr Toad and Dr Doomboyd

The Toad recruited Dr Doomboyd to show the way pure hate can blast a passage through the entrails of our time. “It’s shock and awe, of course, it’s make the fuckers reel and spew,” said Doomboy. “Steal their voices, deprive them, too, of any memory of honour. Lay waste. Curse and cower them. The air is poison. Make it worse.”

*Rogan Wolf  
August 31<sup>st</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Has Another Say

It’s bribes and bombast, lies and fraud, it’s threat and menace, chaos, ruin. It’s Brexit. It’s Toad. The nation’s fever nears its crisis. We sweat our demons out, our foul humours. I dread the strength our foulness wields, I fear the road we’ve opened into time. Our children’s good, our nation’s soul, demand we thwart the Toad.

*Rogan Wolf  
September 1<sup>st</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Studies Mr Toad

Our Mr Toad has no concern for truth  
for truth disarms you, cuts you down to size,  
makes you part of life. The undergrowth  
is Toad's domain and everywhere he goes  
he carries it on his head. His fantasies,  
his lies, will hide him from the light of day,  
he hopes, and truth and light will fade away.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 4th 2019*

## The Parrot Joins the Circus

The parrot joined a circus today and saw  
two fearsome clowns there, yellow haired, the one  
a tousled toad, the other a minotaur.  
The audience quailed and fled. So they did a turn  
just for the parrot, a contest of lies between  
the two. Who could fill the ring with lie,  
telling the truth not once ? Both could. A draw.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 5<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Watches Another Circus Act

The Toad and Dr Doomboyd have taken back  
control. We're "strong and stable," safe in their hands.  
But note Jo's faith in his brother. And note the dark  
blue ranks of young police cadets in the stands  
behind Toad, signifying that all doubt ends  
here – no doubters may speak, you'll lose your job  
if you do. And Truth's a dead duck. And zap "The Blob."

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 6<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Ravening Mr Toad

The ravening Mr Toad, still in pursuit  
of reward for sinner's ways, twisting, turning,  
hopping from lie to lie, putting the boot  
into friend and family, law and trust, moaning  
with lust for conquest and praise, for audience fawning,  
nears his climax. Those turrets on the crown  
of the hill, glowing. They're about to tumble down !

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 9<sup>th</sup> 2019*





## The Parrot and the Clowns

Some circus clowns discuss democracy :  
democracy means numbers and giving way  
to those who lie the loudest, says one. Falsity  
is truer than the truth, so long as more  
people vote for it than don't. Oh very true,  
a clown smiles. Let trust and truth and proper care  
be banned from our circus, if unpopular.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## Mr Toad Refers to the Tower

Our Toad insists to the Judge the Crown is proud  
he lied to her. My lies are granted free  
to all, cries Toad. I bowed to her and said  
accept this token of my majesty,  
I beg you. Grant it a place in history.  
Place it like a jewel in the Tower  
in witness of my exercise of power.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 12<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot, the Lie and an Aging Queen

The Parrot wonders where the nation's gone.  
The Toad's lie has made it invisible.  
The Toad hopped over to an aging queen  
and lied, making nonsense of her, her role,  
and us, bowing deep, tee-hee. I swell, I swell,  
whispered the Toad. There's room for nothing but me  
in the world, all else being equal under my lie.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 13<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Takes Stock of the Flotsam Hulk

The Toad and Dr Doombeetle, plus the platoon  
of steely drones they call a cabinet,  
have managed at enormous speed to turn  
10, Downing Street into a hoodlum play-hut  
where they can snarl and fight and kick and bite  
to heart's content, and read their comics, until  
at last reality hits. But hits us all.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 16<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Toad Falls Foul of the Law

The Toad is upset. He confides in the parrot. What has the law to do with me ? Above the law, born free of truth, I'm raw power separate from honour, and if it suits me to ignore the righteous questioner, let secrecy be mine by right. There's no such thing as you. There's only the Toad and Toad's. Admire.

*Rogan Wolf  
September 19<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## Mr Toad Makes a Furtive Connection

And the toad whispered as the parrot flew by :  
I can see the point of adding to our gaols -  
the benefit to me of feeding that lie -  
but let's be sure the public we lie to fails  
to make the connection : that retribution falls  
on hoodlum, fraudster, cheat and thief, but then,  
a toad goes hopping into Number 10.

*Rogan Wolf  
September 19<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Toad Speaks of Truth as a Cage

The Toad's first instinct is to lie. The truth provokes him, it lacks his imprint, it calls on him to twist it to his comfort. My path to greatness is the lie, cries Toad. What else? The truth enslaves you. You serve. But the lie calls imagination into play. You're free. I dance to the music of gods. The gods are me.

*Rogan Wolf  
September 20<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot is Witness to an Attempted Stabbing

The parrot peers in horror through the bars yet cannot look away. Old brother Jon stabs at Tom just as the cameras start rolling – probing in case this party contain solutions for our nation unhinged. The sane and the honourable have gone missing. We need light. We've louts and low vendettas, instead.

*Rogan Wolf  
September 21<sup>st</sup> 2019*



## Mr Toad Falls Foul of the Law (Again)

The parrot's cage is empty. He's hurried back  
to London, and a door marked number 10.  
“Fuck Parliament !” he hears. And then : “And fuck  
the Law !” Then : “Fuck the Truth” of course. Big Ben  
calls forth the rushing hours : “And fuck Big Ben !”  
And : “The Law is mine to break, so do what I say !”  
And : “The Word is also mine - that I may lie.”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 25<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Still in London

The parrot's still in London – but no one knows.  
He hears the truth behind what's said, he hears  
the lies. And last night, he crept between the toes  
of all that anger in the House : the tears  
behind that anger ; but behind the Toad, more lies ;  
and round the Toad, more toadies, venom, bile ;  
and upon the House, a task to redeem us all.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 26<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Reflects on Whether Jez has Worth

And the parrot allowed his mind to play on Jez  
for a moment. Perhaps there was a time when he  
had worth, thought parrot. Around the table he'd raise  
some awkward concern the group might usefully  
consider. "Point of Order, chair..." he'd say  
and the chair would sigh, yet sometimes agree. Now,  
chair himself of Chaos, he's dwarfed. More Lie.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019*

## A Parrot in the Ring of Chaos

The parrot takes no pleasure in this circus.  
It rings him round. It spins him into the dark.  
Words that held our world together now talk us  
into a void. "Myself I cannot speak,"  
says parrot. "While Chaos howls, let lawyers speak."  
Or : "Sorry, it was *carried*," says Wendy, storm-tossed.  
"No, sorry, listen, I'm getting advice, it was *lost*."

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 24<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Meets Doombeetle Down a Drain

The parrot finds himself quite often led  
by the beak - between toes, down crevices -  
in search of beetles. Deep down, today, he saw a head  
shiny and round, knawing. Doombeetle ! “The prize  
I seek is history denied, a language of lies,  
the body shredded,” the beetle hissed. “You talk  
of grace. Fuck grace. And fuck your body politic.”

*Rogan Wolf  
September 27<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Alights on a Beetle's Shoulder

The Parrot dares today to alight on the shoulder  
of Dr Doombeetle - to understand  
better the nation's soul. You are the holder  
of many strings, says Parrot. It's by your hand  
that Cox and Toad perform their parts to send  
us deeper into the dark. The end is war,  
hisses the doctor. I work for nothing more.

*Rogan Wolf  
September 28th 2019*



## The Parrot on my Shoulder

Today was my turn. The parrot took a stand  
by my right ear. I want a word, he said,  
his claws in my shoulder. Regard these nations stunned  
by change, stormed by events, in chaos. It's hard  
to keep up, take in. But take this in. The Toad  
was found unlawful in court. Two brought that case,  
one of them Toad's old leader, fearful for us.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 29<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Cries Out

The parrot is forced, hearing us humans, to speak  
the worst of us. This morning I heard him cry :  
your race has commandeered the Earth. Just look  
at the harm. In dread of truth, encased in lie,  
you befoul the beautiful. Your own children you  
sentence to pay for your failures. You follow hate  
and mirage, tyrant and idol, felon, cheat...

*Rogan Wolf*  
*September 30th 2019*





## The Parrot Returns to Number 10

He braved another trip to number 10  
today and perched outside a window there.  
First, he heard a beetle's teeth within,  
gnawing at the fabric, and then some squatters, who dare  
pretend that they belong in this place, prepare  
their latest felony, and then, downstairs,  
a Toad, alone with his mirror, work on his lies.

Rogan Wolf  
October 5<sup>th</sup> 2019

## The Parrot Mourns, the Bell Tolling

A people unhinged and split in two, each half  
scorning the other. A death may tear apart  
the family left behind, all their lost love  
turned bitter. Big Ben tolls for us all. But what  
can be our loss so grievous that we must split  
in fragments and then hate, with no relief?  
Divide and Blame are not a cure for grief.

Rogan Wolf  
October 6<sup>th</sup> 2019



## The Comfort of the Cage

When those who crave an Opposition say that “Labour should,” or “Labour must,” they mean of course a critical malfunction they still hesitate to name. “Have you seen our Party leader?” someone asks. “He’s gone to plot with sour old Len and then play sweet with Jon.” Labour’s led from Lilliput.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 8<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## Eye to Eye with a Right Hon Toad

A string of Tories talk of Mr Toad as if he’s human, sighted like them, a Right Hon. Friend from Eton, a chap you could safely invite for a drink. So Green tonight (sacked just once for lying) was pleased to report that though to Queen and Country Toad will lie, to Green he’s made a promise, eye to eye.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 10<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Gives a Lecture

The parrot gives a lecture on toads. But first  
the class must listen. Pay attention, I pray,  
cries parrot. I've encountered the best and worst  
of toads. Though all are ugly, most do play  
a valid part in nature's plan. But one, I say,  
please note, is venom, foul air, and dangerous.  
It swells as victims shrink. It feeds on us.

*Rogan Wolf*  
October 16<sup>th</sup> 2019

## The Parrot Keeps Lecturing as the Rain Pours in

There's havoc in the class. The parrot tries  
another lecture. "When people lose their way  
they seem to choose disaster, as if their eyes  
are caught by nothing else. It cannot be  
they want the worst, yet somehow they allow  
the worst to rule them. The Toad will "trick and treat"  
them only ill. It's government by cheat.

*Rogan Wolf*  
October 17<sup>th</sup> 2019



## The Parrot's Third Lecture

The parrot's lecture series gets worse and worse.  
For this one, the hall is empty, the street outside  
crammed with marchers. I've no words left, he says.  
the lie has made me dumb. But I have tried  
to hold one word up to the light. We should  
"honour" the referendum, some say, and thereby  
they grant that word some meaning. And yet they lie.

*Rogan Wolf*  
October 19<sup>th</sup> 2019

## The Parrot Lectures to Himself

"Honour," mutters Parrot in his cage :  
"so where am I to find Great Britain's honour ?  
Its sanity ? Its truth ? Driven by rage  
to follow a phantasm, with all manner  
of hoodlums calling the shots, under the banner  
of The Toad ? Old Jez the Jaded ? I find it of course  
in London streets and in courage in the House.

*Rogan Wolf*  
October 20<sup>th</sup> 2019



## The Parrot Examines the Use of Words

(i)

*Brexit* is a funny word to put  
a nation's poison in. But is it real ?  
We're told to *Get It Done*. In truth, is *It*  
do-able in daylight ? And *Take Back Control* -  
control of what ? Does *Project Brexit* feel  
*Strong and Stable* ? Will the joy of this  
*Break Out for Brex* be sealed with a toadie kiss ?

(ii)

*Take back Control* ! Control of what ? Of all  
that harries us, constrains, or fails to please.  
Parliament. The Law. The Queen. The fall  
of Time's rampaging feet. Expertise.  
Whatever leaves us feeling out of place  
or hopeless, impotent. Truth. The tide.  
The catastrophe our way of life has made.

Rogan Wolf  
October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019



## The Parrot Considers the Right Wing Press

The billionaires who own the Telegraph,  
the Sun, the Mail, etc. love the thought  
of throwing some rage about. For what is life  
if not a chance to strut the stage ? They hate  
restraints, they hate community. “So let  
us spread his propaganda on the road !  
Let’s pave the way for the triumph of the Toad !”

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Reports on the Launch of a Toad

This nation “chose” a Hoodlum Toad to save  
it from itself – from Jez and Jon and Len  
as well, those musty men of straw. “We have  
lift off !” shrieked the billionaires. “We’ll bin  
all regulation ! We’ll have a ball !” The Queen  
shakes hands with Toad, first thing ; and he lies to her ;  
and the High Court finds him liar... Higher and higher...

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 24<sup>nd</sup> 2019*



## Dr Doombeetle Tutors the Toad

The Beetle calls on Toad to dominate  
the playground. How ? Well, first you must destroy  
the teachers' will, then quickly take over. Deceit  
will reward you, a constant must. And always show  
contempt for foe - and "friend." Pretend to know  
your mind and despise all others. Shock and alarm  
will keep the playground reeling. We hoodlums mean harm.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 26<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Catches Election Fever

The Parrot's lost in a torrent, his cage awash  
and thrown from wave to wave. The dam has burst,  
he cries, the furies raging off the leash.  
Each element claims a plan. They boast  
of tactics, purpose. Not so. It is the Worst  
rampaging - the Best have simply given way.  
They prefer to turn on each other. The Toad runs free.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*October 30<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Mourns the Loss of Home

The Parrot in his cage is all at sea -  
bailing, beset. Our “Bird of Paradise”  
is far from home. There’s no earth left to me,  
cries Parrot. No sanctuary, no trusted place -  
only the waves that break upon my peace.  
I speak of Greed, Misrule and Rage. But I  
must lose even my words, drowned in the Lie.

*Rogan Wolf  
November 6th 2019*

## The Lying Toad Our Leader

This nation knows our “leader” does not know  
or care what truth is. We and he both turn  
to lies as if untruth can cast a glow  
on life, which truth may not. “And I was born  
and schooled to lie. I can do no other. Please fawn  
on all I say - not for its truth, but for me,  
the joy of my moment, the all-ness of me.”

*Rogan Wolf  
November 7<sup>th</sup> 2019*





## The Parrot Views the Earth from Afar

The Parrot's cage succumbs at last. Its bars  
spring open like a flower. And he flies free  
leaving the Lie in flood behind him. The stars  
see true, he finds. Humans would rather die  
than realise their destiny. They pray  
to gods of darkness – to greed, delusion, hate -  
betraying the wonder, empathy, this light.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*November 12<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot from on High Speaks of Democracy

If democrats' debate becomes just set  
phrases and dodgy sales adverts, then why,  
asks Parrot, bother to walk outside to vote ?  
It's cold out there. Just click to signify  
you're buying Lie One and not Lie Two. Then try  
to believe them when they say it matters, it counts,  
it's life or death, and there's a difference.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*November 15<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## At Last the Toad Reveals Himself

The toad-mask worn by Mr Toad, our Prime Minister, fell off today and guess whose face was then revealed : a toad's ! So all this time, the Toad's been what we always knew he was !  
“You see ?” he cried. “Nothing to hide, no trace of disguise, just me, my warts and all ! And lies are my Precious, a gift I freely exercise !”

*Rogan Wolf  
November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Overflies the Flood

The parrot unbound, the parrot homeless, rides the chill winds. And now, from far below, he hears a loud voice on a small island, lying in Toad's Etonian tones. This island's awash in lies and soon will sink, the parrot observes. He cries to the Toad, beware the Flood ! But the Toad sneers : the Lie's my Precious, my Ring of Unmaking, my prize !

*Rogan Wolf  
November 24<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## A Toad Delivers the Tory Manifesto

The Toad has spoken. He has given his word.  
“Thousands more nurses for the NHS,” he says.  
“You’ll like that - and so shall I. And there’s no need  
for Europe to provide them. On English trees  
they grow in plenty. They always did, crying please,  
pick us with only English pickers. Believe  
me,” leers the Toad. “The NHS is our first love.”

*Rogan Wolf  
November 25<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Toad Goes Hunting for Votes

So when the Toad is shown a bull or comes  
across a boxing ring, he cries, Aha !  
Get Brexit Done ! and then insists that drums  
should roar and someone point a camera  
while he makes ready hair and fists and glare  
and rustles up a few new porkies for  
his customers to feast on and adore.

*Rogan Wolf  
November 27<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Parrot Seeks Respite from the Flood

Pity the Bird of Paradise, now lost  
and far from home. Noah sent out a dove  
in hopes of grace restored. But Parrot must  
seek out a raft, however frail, as wave  
on wave envelops now the Earth. God save  
our garden from the Lie, the Parrot cries.  
The nations founder in a flood of lies.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 1<sup>st</sup> 2019*

## The Toad negotiates with the Underworld

The American Minotaur is back in town.  
He escaped the underworld three years ago  
and Toad is in a quandary. The two are kin  
he knows, both creatures of Chaos and the Lie,  
but what performance should he give ? To show  
us Toad of Toad Hall, at home, leading the bull  
to market ? Or Toadie at call, in awe, in thrall ?

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 4<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## UK election – Parrot Prognosis

The parrot, all at sea, will not survive  
for very long unless we find a way  
to return to honour, and our kind contrive  
to penetrate, and then cast out, the Lie.  
Its domination poisons the Earth. Why  
must humans fail themselves so readily ?  
The parrot's brain will burst. Just hear him cry.

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 8<sup>th</sup> 2019*

## The Parrot Looks Up at the Moon

Reflect a moment, this sharp winter's night,  
on the Toad's strategy. Tomorrow will test  
how apt it was. "Get Brexit Done." Repeat...  
And repeat... A lie, of course, but a lie addressed  
only to those who *want* it done. At best,  
that's half our country Toad keeps lying to,  
to please them. The other half ? The dark side ? You ?

*Rogan Wolf*  
*December 11<sup>th</sup> 2019*



## The Casting of the Parrot's Vote

And now, tonight, our vote accomplished, where  
do we stand ? It feels like a frontier, but not  
between era : on the one side, pure despair,  
the other, stuttering reprieve, not brave nor bright  
enough. The Toad constrained will mean Far Right  
viciousness and lies pegged back. That's all.  
His *opponents* fail to convince. His *friends* appal.

Rogan Wolf  
December 12<sup>th</sup> 2019

## Parrot's in His Tower - and that's all, Folks !

So many royal words wrought. Enough for now.  
A whole nation, afflicted by dark dream,  
dire lie, now turns its face to the wall. Allow  
the Toad this rope, and watch the dreadful harm  
his bull will do to our children. The parrot has come  
to rest in a tower, sentinel on high.  
He'll watch for an end to this era of the lie.

Rogan Wolf  
December 13<sup>th</sup> 2019



## P.S. Where the Hoodlums Are

“At least you can take pride,” the parrot said,  
“in William Tyndale, in whose memory  
I now reside, high up above the flood  
of lies in which you swim on this sad day,  
led by a Toad. ‘A new dawn,’ he says. More lie.  
Tyndale knew what truth is. You too, before  
you flounced away to where the hoodlums are.”

*Rogan Wolf  
January 31<sup>st</sup> 2020*



*The Tyndale Monument. Picture by Derek Harper*



# Notes and References

(i)

The verse-form used here is a traditional seven-line rhyming stanza called Rhyme Royal. It was introduced by Geoffrey Chaucer. John Skelton used it for his satirical poem "Speak, Parrot."

**Parrot Speaks of a Pit Bull** refers to the announcement during June 2018 that Paul Dacre, long-standing editor of *The Daily Mail*, would be stepping down later in the year. In considering the news, some writers suggested that, during its years under Dacre, *The Mail's* strident propaganda against the EU and immigration etc had had a major influence over the Brexit vote. *The Mail's* owner is Lord Rothermere whose affairs are reliably reported to depend quite heavily on tax havens such as Jersey and Bermuda.

**Parrot speaks of the People's Will.** Theresa May (and others) kept using phrases like "The People have spoken" or "The People's Will," as if these in themselves would lend authority and credence to the words' speaker, battling on the "People's" behalf. And somehow that phrase "The People," repeated many times, began to imply "everybody," or everybody that mattered. But 52% of a mere percentage is neither "everybody" nor everybody that matters and the validity and integrity of that 52% figure was itself ever increasingly in question. And Theresa May's government did not even have a working majority with which to "deliver Brexit" and she had to buy it unilaterally by paying the DUP a billion pounds (of tax-payers' money, including - presumably - the money of those who voted "Remain") for their support - the DUP's own Brexit Dividend. So *not* the "People's Will" - rather a dodgy and disreputable series of manipulations and abuses.

The three poems **Parrot Speaks of Law and Dust**, **...of Community and Dust** and **...of Youth and Hope** all borrow phrases from Skelton's "Speak, Parrot." For an illustrated reading of some of my translation of that poem into modern English and England, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm41lU5QIGk> The setting for the reading was the top of the Tyndale Monument, on the edge of the Cotwolds, north of Bristol. William Tyndale lived at much the same time as John Skelton and took even greater risks. He was executed in Belgium by public strangulation and burning. He translated the New and much of the Old Testament of the Bible into English.

**Parrot Speaks of Dividends and Dishonour** refers to Theresa May's public commitment in June 2018 to finding ways to increase funding to the NHS, and her claim that the money to do so would come from the "Brexit Dividend." This was a hollow, hapless and disreputable attempt to give credence to the promise writ large on the red-painted Brexit campaign bus and, since then, conclusively exposed as a deliberate lie. It was soon clear that there would be no Brexit Dividend.

**Parrot Speaks True and Plain** makes reference to the ending of "Speak, Parrot" and in a small way follows it. Skelton's poem has the parrot being finally persuaded to come out from behind his hints and sophisms and name his matter, "true and plain." Finally he names with (a degree) more clarity the wrongs and chief wrong-doer of his time, as Skelton saw it.

The last couplet of this stanza is beholden to the work of Alexander Pope - perhaps Britain's greatest poet of satire. It includes a quote - almost exact - from Pope's "Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot."



# Notes and References

(ii)

**These are the Hands.** I included this fine public poem as a kind of interval and refreshment. It is by Michael Rosen and its subject is very different. The year 2008 was the NHS's 60th anniversary and Rosen was commissioned to write the poem in celebration of it. He gave permission for me to reproduce his poem on the website of a project I run, now called "Poems for...the wall." Ten years later, in 2018, in the middle of writing these stanzas about Brexit, I reformatted Rosen's poem in portrait and rather wryly uploaded it on my facebook page. The response was a flood of *likes*, *loves* and *shares*, whereas my poems about Brexit hardly attract any response at all ! We can come together in our love for the NHS. Can we, on Brexit ? What did (half) "The People" mean when they voted to leave the EU, knowing so very little about it, or our nation's deep and intricate relationship with it ? Might this whole huge split and upheaval really be the "People's" attempt to save our own NHS ? Can a flagrant lie and fantasy change a nation's history ?

**Parrot Spots an Old Defence Line.** Suddenly, parrot seems to have escaped his cage. And what he has spotted is a row of Second World War pill boxes that can still be found along a stretch of the north downs, in Surrey. They were built to delay a possible Nazi invasion and have been left standing as a reminder.

**Going Nowhere to Mean Nothing.** And here's another frontier from the past, much older than that dotted line of pill-boxes on the north downs. My friend Pete and I rode along it one week-end, dodging the skeletons of the Anglo-Saxon warriors who once stood sentry there, holding spears. It is near Cambridge and faces east, built to keep out the East Anglians. Or was it to keep in the Mercians ? Nowadays, this old and once fraught frontier is popular with families out walking on a Sunday afternoon, after a good lunch.

**Paradise Destroy.** This stanza contains a direct quote from the work of the poet TS Eliot. The words occur near the beginning of *Burnt Norton*, the first of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, three of which were written during the Second World War. In full, the couplet runs as follows : "Go, go, go, said the bird : human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality." If humanity is ever to be buried in a graveyard, that quote should be writ large on our gravestone. Perhaps it already is.

**The Crier Frets.** The second line's mention of a tarantula refers to Gavin Williamson who, for a while, was Theresa May's Chief Whip. He kept a tarantula on his desk, apparently to intimidate Tory MP's into toeing the party line. She then promoted him to the post of Secretary of State for Defence and I have it on good authority that, in his new role, he began training a whole vast army of tarantulas to act as a global market force after Brexit. And he marched them up to the top of the hill and he marched them down again.

**Parrot Speaks to the 2-Bit Mobsters** refers to Theresa May's encounter with the EU leaders in Salzburg and "The Sun's" headline which appeared a few hours afterwards. It said : "EU DIRTY RATS - The SUN SAYS we can't wait to free ourselves of the two-bit mobsters who run the European Union."

"The Sun" is owned by the far right billionaire Rupert Murdoch, owner of Fox News, friend - apparently - of Mr Donald Trump, America's Minotaur. Murdoch's gutter press had much to do with the UK hacking scandals and other criminal press abuses both of individuals and of the law. "The humblest day of my life" and all that two-bit jazz.

# Notes and References

(iii)

**The Parrot finds Honour Lying Forgotten Among our Ruins** refers to a short, impassioned and powerful speech delivered in the UK House of Commons in March 2015, in which the word “honour” emerged as something that might matter, after all.

For a video of an excerpt from the speech, see : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32073791>

For an article published soon afterwards see : <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11497116/Who-is-Charles-Walker-Tearful-Tory-MP-played-as-a-fool-over-botched-Bercow-plot.html>

The speech was delivered on the last day of the Coalition government headed by David Cameron.

The speech concerns an ignoble little Tory plot aiming at the eventual unseating of John Bercow, still the Speaker of the House of Commons. Though himself a Tory, he was unpopular with some of his colleagues, presumably because he insisted on keeping them as much in order as those awful Labour people on the other side of the House.

The plotters’ aim was to spring a Commons vote concerning the election of the Speaker, on this last day, when a significant number of the Labour opposition would already have left to return to their constituencies, and would therefore not be available to oppose the motion. But Labour got wind of it and alerted its MP’s. Also a number of Tories objected, enough to combine with Labour in voting the government motion down.

The distressed “honourable fool” who made the speech was Charles Walker, Tory MP for Broxbourne in Hertfordshire, and Chair of the Commons Procedure Select Committee. As a postholder, a colleague and a fellow-citizen, the plotters had treated him as if he did not exist.

The “clever men” involved in the plot included the Right Hon. Michael Gove, Chief Tory Whip at the time, the Right Hon. William Hague Leader of the House of Commons on this his birthday, as well as his last day in the Commons, and the Right Hon. David Cameron, Prime Minister, who was hurrying back from a meeting in Coventry in order to take part in the vote.

**Demos Hijacked** This piece suggests that Brexit is not the product of a democratic decision at all but the result of a high-jacking and manipulation of due process by a criminal and/or pathological element, in times of widespread confusion and disenchantment. If there was not a true “decision”, there can be no “respecting it”, or the individuals and parties who seek to capitalise from it.

**Parrot and the Price of Youth** was written following a conversation with a young fishmonger vividly aware of environmental issues, as they are reflected in the oceans’ daily yield and as they will affect the rest of his life.

**The Parrot on the People’s March** was written immediately after the vast and entirely peaceful demonstration against Brexit in London on October 20th 2018. Leaders of both the Conservative and Labour parties were conspicuous by their absence. The crowds therefore represented a constituency without a major political party speaking for them in parliament, without - in fact - a country in which it can now feel itself at ease and at home. But the parrot noted that the Brexit “constituency” must feel something similar, in order to have voted the way it did. So there is common ground here. Our country, even as it fragmented, had left all of us behind. What leadership might be capable of bringing the nation back to itself and its unity, back to its own best interests and good nature ?

# Notes and References

(iv)

**The Parrot, the Cage and the Pulpit** This whole series of stanza-poems about Brexit is a reference to John Skelton's extraordinary satirical poem called "Speak, Parrot." Skelton lived under King Henry 8<sup>th</sup>. His poem, with its glamorous, learned, mock-nervous "bird of paradise" strutting about in its cage, eventually speaking "true and plain," was written in rhyme royal stanzas. So here the parrot has returned, along with his rhyme royal, still taking liberties. Why the link to William Tyndale ? He was a contemporary of Skelton and translated much of the bible from Latin, Greek and Hebrew into contemporary English to ensure that the whole population could have access to the Word. He was executed for it in Belgium. Later his work formed the backbone of the King James bible. There is a wonderful memorial tower built in his honour by the Victorians, just north of Bristol. At the top is a look-out, with metal bars, a sort of cage. I liken it to the parrot's cage. Both these men risked their lives in giving their witness on behalf of truth. One of them paid the price.

Above the text, top right, is a photograph of a tower. This is the William Tyndale Monument, situated right on the edge of the Cotswolds, above the village of North Nibley and overlooking the Severn Estuary. The photograph is by Matt Bigwood. Reproduced by permission. The illustration beneath the text is an etching depicting Tyndale's death and his reputed last words.

**The Bird of Paradise Danced Last Night** This piece is referring to the evening of December 4th 2018, when the House of Commons defeated the government over three separate items. As a result the government was required to publish the full version of its legal advice on Brexit, rather than just its edited version ; and must refer to parliament again in the event of the deal being rejected, making a "no deal" exit from the EU less likely. In effect, it seemed that parliament had taken back control, that evening.

**Jez Hoeing** Three days later, on Friday 7th December, Jeremy Corbyn spoke at an international conference of socialists in Lisbon. On the Tuesday following, Theresa May was due to present her "deal" with the EU to the Commons, facing almost certain defeat. Her party was in ferment. At the week-end, two major demonstrations took place in London, representing conflicting positions. We all knew that we were close to one of the major climaxes of the Brexit story, with momentous consequences ahead of us. And here was the Leader of the Opposition, Prime Minister presumptive, taking leave of absence, almost as if Brexit did not exist for him. It was hard to avoid the conclusion that Jez was long overdue to head off in the direction of his allotment to spend more time with his radishes.

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**Maybot and the Adults** In the event, no vote took place on the 11th. May withdrew it at the last moment, having insisted previously that it would go ahead. She had been advised that she was certain to lose. She used her executive power to avoid a democratic challenge and defeat. She then hurried off to Europe in order to persuade leaders (“the adults”) there to change their agreement with her, in case that might make the children back here in Westminster change their minds. But the adults wouldn’t shift. So she came back to us again, yet further humiliated, having yet further humiliated this nation in the eyes of the world.

**The Parrot, the Maybot and No Deal** This poem was written on the 19th December. The “meaningful vote” had now been put off until the New Year and on the 18th, May had announced full preparations would start being made for a “No Deal” withdrawal from the EU. This would require the spending of a great deal of public money and the army would be called out for support duties. The fantasy of Little England was not just mischievous and regressive, but was also proving expensive.

**Jez and the Worship of Self, Mid-winter 2018** Both stanzas were written during the Christmas season and were written partly in consideration of a statement Corbyn made during that time, still suggesting that - despite the expressed preferences of the vast majority of its membership - Labour would “respect” the Brexit referendum “result.” *Jez and the Worhip of Self* is also a brief exploration of the nature of fundamentalism. In the stillness of the Christmas break, I also remembered that Skelton wrote his “Speak, Parrot” within the precincts of Westminster, at a time when the medieval laws of sanctuary were still operating. Under those laws, Westminster was still a place a sanctuary. It is unclear whether Skelton was relying on that fact for his sense of safety.

**Parrot at the Breach.** This was written a few days after New Year, 2019. Some sort of denouement was approaching in the Commons, with various Government defeats. As crisis neared, the duty to listen carefully seemed as important as the right to speak freely. In the background, an important struggle between Executive and Legislature ended with a timely victory for the latter.

**Maybot’s Standing.** This stanza was written on a Monday morning, after the Guardian quoted a speech Theresa May was to give shortly afterwards. It included this sentence : “I ask MPs to consider the consequences of their actions on the faith of the British people in our democracy.”

**The Gods at War, Following a Murder** The murder of the title is of course the huge defeat suffered by May in the Commons following the “meaningful vote” on her deal on Tuesday January 15th. In normal times, resignation would have swiftly followed. But in some ways her defeat just freed the various forces at work to fight each other.

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**Cage Alight** This stanza was written on the day after May had won (not by much) a vote of no confidence in the Commons. The day before that, her Brexit “deal” had been voted down by a massive majority. Bruising times for her, the fruit of serial failures. But what next ? Where next ? Had anything changed ? Had anything even taken place ? Perhaps not. After these extraordinary events, she was still mouthing the same failed formulae ; and Corbyn was still mouthing the same hollow fantasies. We in Britain were groping about in a strange country, which just happened to be our own.

**Maybot in Harness** On January 21st, “The Guardian” carried the following as one of its headlines: “May claims EU second referendum would threaten ‘social cohesion’ ”

**Plain Words from the Cage** This and the following two stanzas were written in the last few days of January, when it seemed that parliament had its best chance of a/ restraining and holding to better account May’s government and b/taking her threat of a possible “no deal” outcome off the table and out of her armoury. This short period came to its climax in the House of Commons on Tuesday 29th when various amendments failed to win a majority in the Commons and momentum towards a possible second referendum, better informed and more properly conducted, seemed to have been checked, irretrievably. It felt as if nonsense, incompetence and chaos, and a leadership strategy of astonishing irresponsibility, had taken back control.

**The Parrot and the Lie** Lines from “Speak, Parrot” by John Skelton : “...Parrot is my own dear heart and my dear darling/...I pray you, let Parrot have liberty to speak !”

**The Parrot speaks of Fre-dom** In the fourteenth century, Geoffrey Chaucer introduced Rhyme Royal to English poetry and all these stanzas of mine about Brexit share that long established rhyme scheme. And Chaucer wrote The Canterbury Tales and one of those is "The Franklin's Tale" which I love. And that's where this medieval word "fre" keeps appearing, later to become "freedom." But in The Franklin's Tale, the word means something very different from modern usage. Does that imply corruption just of language, or corruption of spirit ?

**An English Word of Apology to Europe** Yesterday, Mr Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, said in a speech : “The facts are unmistakable. Today, there is no political force and no effective leadership for Remain. I say this without satisfaction, but you can’t argue with the facts.”

And : "I have been wondering what that special place in hell looks like for those who promoted Brexit without even a sketch of a plan to carry it [out] safely.”



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**Jez the Phantom Striker** This stanza was written in response to an editorial in “The Independent” which in turn followed another inept intervention by Corbyn, putting in doubt (yet again) his commitment to a “second referendum.” The editorial told us that Corbyn is an Arsenal supporter and gave us the image of the open goal and Corbyn's failure to shoot. The piece ended by taking the image a stage further : if the real Arsenal manager had a striker who repeatedly failed to shoot in times of need as well as opportunity, the real manager would sack that player.

**A Brexiter Takes Stock of the Dark Star** I know that, in writing this, I was remembering a scene from an early "Star Wars" film. An ominous planet approaches. And I remember that image occurring to me, when I came across a book by Iain McGilchrist called "The Master and His Emissary - The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World." The distance between our two brain hemispheres is widening and they are at odds in our space, not complementary. And we make a world around us that reflects those internal civil wars. Or we seek to escape that world we've made, by cutting off (so we like to think).

**The Parrot Crashes Yet Again** On St Valentine's night, Tuesday 14th February, Theresa May and her government were defeated yet again in the House of Commons. Apparently she herself was not present. Soon after the defeat, Number Ten issued a statement : “While we didn't secure the support of the Commons this evening, the prime minister continues to believe... The government will continue to pursue this...to ensure we leave on time on 29 March.”

**Boy Jez and the Die-Hards** By now, there was now no doubt that the Labour leadership was resisting the idea of a Second Referendum, despite the wishes of the majority of its supporters ; and was only pretending to follow its declared policy. It seemed that Jez had professed to believe that The Many should be listened to, only so long as he had been one of them. Now, as one of The Few, he was weighing his words like all the other members of that club, and The Many had to look *behind* his words to decipher what he really meant and what deceptions he was attempting for his own advantage, or that of his own small tribe.... And that meant in turn that Jez was just like all the others, after all – though rather more limp and inactive than many.

**Safe Passage** I think “Safe Passage” came mostly from something which Mr Jon Lansman was recently quoted as saying (by “The Independent”). Lansman is founder of Momentum and is apparently of the “Far Left.” The subject under discussion was the possibility of a new “centrist” or “Blairite” party to form soon, made up of individual MP's from both Labour and Tory Parties.

Mr Lansman was not impressed. “Chris Leslie, Chuka Umunna and Gavin Shuker are marginal figures with marginal politics,” he said. “This is very different to the SDP

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breakaway in 1981....The situation is completely different now. Socialism has gone mainstream..."

I think we are all marginal figures at the moment including all our so-called leaders, the visible ones of whom seem not to be leaders at all, but flotsam from the past thrown up onto the beach by our chaos. And I don't think "socialism" has gone mainstream. Rather, I think old fundamentalisms appeal to people in times of havoc. Like driftwood, their dictums and certainties can seem to keep us afloat for a while. Radical and fundamental change is certainly needed. But not old driftwood.

**The Boy Jez Takes a Hit** and **He Speaks of Change** The breakaways duly happened, first from Labour and, two days later, from the Tories. Both groups talked of the need for fundamental change in our whole system of government and democratic process. But also, almost by definition, they seemed to be seeking to span a middle ground between the traditional two parties, both of the latter heading increasingly towards extremes and intolerance, fixed certainties in this time of massive flux and ever-accelerating change. The first possible goal of the break - aways implied something very new and fundamental, surely radical. The second implied a Blairite compromise, just a softening of sharp edges.

**Maybot Senses Our Shame** Brexit and the behaviour of those "seeking" to deliver it was becoming ever more a matter simply of shame. By extension, the nation's shame would be the Maybot's success. When this stanza was written, some headlines were suggesting that some of the hard Brexiters in her own party were softening and talking of supporting her "deal" after all. Soon afterwards, news headlines talked of government bungs being offered to northern Labour towns which had voted Brexit in the referendum, just in case their remainder Labour MP's might change their minds too and vote May's deal through a few days later.

**The Parrot Wails** The parrot thought he was studying the tea leaves. Instead he found himself watching in horror as the tea cup crumbled in his hand. The stanza was occasioned by a strong sense that it was now almost impossible to be sure that one was responding to what is, rather than to what one needs it to be, for the sake of familiar. These political parties out of kilter, driven too greatly by the need just for a sense of belonging and of staying intact, of hanging on to old securities.

**The Parrot Takes New bearings.** I was thinking here of a comment made by our sleek new Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, as Theresa May appeared to be failing to renegotiate the terms of her deal with the EU. He said - as reported in the Guardian - that "relations with the EU will be 'poisoned for many years to come' if Brussels fails to budge in the Brexit talks." In other words : "Yah boo. It's all the EU's fault that we can't get our way in doing the wrong thing ineptly."

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**Jez and John and the Little Weed** There were Jez and John and the Final Say. And there were Bill and Ben and the Little Weed. Bill and Ben were Flowerpot Men and belong in the nurseries of the past, along with the Little Weed. And Jez Corbyn and John McDonnell ? It seemed to me that they belonged there too. We had just had the latest retreat from the Party's intention to support a Second Referendum. McDonnell was usually the one who gave the positive signals. This time it was his turn to be the bad cop.

**The Parrot and the Grotesque.** Written just after Theresa May had accused parliament of merely obstructing her and the "will of the people" and just before she headed back to the EU to beg for an extension. The thought occurred that it is possible to have no pride and no humility, both at once.

**Our Leaders left Behind** This was written on a day when a million people marched the streets of London, calling for a second referendum ; and when the figure of four million was reached for the number of people who signed a petition to revoke article 50, ie stop this dreadful Brexit story. Today, Jez made himself scarce as usual, so as not to offend anybody. But he no doubt looking forward to Glastonbury, And Maybot was also otherwise engaged, delivering for "The People."

**The Bird of Paradise Takes Another Look** There was a strange pause in Brexit proceedings at around this time. May asked the EU for another extension and obtained it, amid outrage among the Tory grass-roots and right-wing. The right wing newspapers began to change the subject. Some writers began talking cautiously about Brexit having "failed." Might that really be possible ? If so, had it taught us anything ? In the meantime, I moved house.

**The Parrot Advises on Leadership** This stanza offers some general thoughts on leadership and the part it plays - or fails to play. But it is also based on the specific image of the UK House of Commons, in which the Party of Government and the Party of Opposition face one another. Neither of the present leaders really merit the position they hold. In effect, they were appointed by, and are symptoms, of the nation's present disorientation.

**The Parrot Shakes Again** From his new home, the parrot made another attempt to assess what's really going on. Might some religious imagery help ?

**Still the Parrot Paces** In the third stanza of Skelton's "Speak, Parrot," you'll find these lines : "With my bekè bent, my little wanton eye,/ My feathers fresh as is the emerald green,/About my neck a circulet like the rich ruby,/ my little leggès, my feet both feat and clean,/ I am a minion to wait upon a queen..." Amen to little leggès.



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**The Parrot on Fault-lines** This stanza was written as the Labour Party's National Executive held a "marathon meeting" which, somewhere near the finish line, decided to support a second referendum on Brexit - but only in certain circumstances, all of them highly unlikely. In other words never, but not saying so directly. Jez and a sufficient number of his adherents were clearly determined to be seen to be "honouring" the result of the first referendum in 2016, as they put it. That word "honouring" was deceitful, of course. To collude with a catastrophically wrong and misinformed "decision," rendered anyway unsound by manifest corruption, was neither honouring nor honourable.

**He Overhears some Afterthoughts** At the beginning of May, 2019, the UK local elections had just taken place, and the Tories did very badly and Labour did rather badly. And of course, after month after month of this worst of governments, Labour should have been an unstoppable force by now, and have done very much better than rather badly. Maybot and the Boy Jez saw promptly how much they had in common and began dating. The stanza begins with the parroting of a newspaper headline, quoting Sian Berry, the Greens' co-leader. The Greens did rather well.

**Parrot Speaks of the Democratic Covenant** This piece followed the news that a private prosecution had been taken out against Boris Johnson MP, for claims he made during the 2016 EU referendum. After 3 years of preparation, the case had just had an initial private hearing. For an example of the Press coverage, see <https://www.theguardian.com/.../boris-johnson-could-be-challe...>

Essentially, if the judge were to agree that there was a case to answer, Mr Johnson would be charged in open court with lying during the campaign, and therefore of "misconduct in public office." This is a crime in the UK and if proven, is punishable.

All MP's in the House of Commons have to swear to follow a code of conduct called the "Nolan Principles" which include an obligation and commitment to "tell the truth." And while the Leader of the Party to which a transgressor belongs is empowered to sack that person if he/she is found to have broken his/her oath, those powers are discretionary and purely internal. The transgressor is not answerable under the law. So, if this case were pursued and if Mr Johnson were to be found guilty, it would create a precedent.

By coincidence, days after the news of the court hearing was announced, Mr Johnson announced his intention to stand for Leader of the Conservatives and hence for Prime Minister.

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**He Speaks of Brexit as a Raging Fever** This was written on the morning of the EU elections, in which the Tories had been keen not to take part. *The Guardian* had described the day before as a "torrid day" for Theresa May and her resignation was now expected at any moment. Not a good day for the Tories to face an election. And towards the end of torrid yesterday, Andrea Leadsom, MP and Leader of the House, had made a move she thought might go down well...

**The Parrot on Maybot and the Minotaur** This stanza was obviously about Trump's State Visit to the UK over the following few days, May's last as Prime Minister. It seemed astonishing how much space we were continuing to give to blatant felony and the lie and to the creatures thereof. The more space we gave them, the more they grew, like Tiddalick the frog. Was this the Maybot's parting gift to her country? Did she love us that much?

**The Old Boy Rattles On** The Trump UK State Visit's second day included an anti-Trump demonstration in London. The baby Trump balloon was present, hanging overall, raging in its nappy. And Boy Jez went along as well and made a rousing speech about how wrong everything was. In the meantime, various Tory leadership candidates were circling round each other, in the shadows.

**The Parrot Brings us Up to Date** The minotaur is Trump, of course. Days after his state visit, Theresa May had resigned as UK Prime Minister, at the request of her party unfaithful. Labour MP's had recently been cross with their Leader Corbyn for reciting his nursery rhymes instead of leading. "The gaggle" is a reference to the ten individual Tories now competing to become Tory Leader and unelected UK Prime Minister. A "black hole" is "*a place in space where gravity pulls so much that even light can not get out. The gravity is so strong because matter has been squeezed into a tiny space. This can happen when a star is dying.*" (quote from the NASA Knows! (Grades K-4) series).

**The Parrot Falls Off his Perch** This stanza refers to the Tory leadership contest which followed Theresa May's resignation. Boris Johnson was already far ahead of his rivals. The stanza's reminder, that in his career he had been sacked *twice* for lying, is a matter of [public record](#). In a world that held together, such a record would have made him unemployable at any level, for any job, ever. But here, he was clear favourite to become the UK Prime Minister.

**Speaking of the Worst** makes close reference to W.B. Yeats' extraordinary poem "[The Second Coming](#)". That poem applies as much to our time as to his, of course. But might that be true of *every* present time? Shakespeare too was gripped by the fear of breakdown in the order of things, and wrote extraordinary descriptions of upset across the natural world in reflection of human ill-doing. Does this mean that we should perhaps not worry so much about the breakdown we are facing now? No, it does not. But perhaps those other times have something to teach us.

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**Jez Holds the Bridge** This was finished on Mid-Summer's Day 2019. For day after day, the Tories had been capturing the UK headlines with their exercise to find a leader to replace the fallen May, a leader who would also be the nation's unelected Prime Minister at this fraught and crucial time in our history. Today, mid-summer, with just Hunt and Johnson left in the competition, and with Johnson a long way ahead, we were moving towards what felt like an exquisite denouement. The lie of Brexit was most likely to be resolved, at last, by the Tory most notorious for lying. To be our Prime Minister. The final disgrace and disaster. And what had Labour been up to in the meantime? Anything useful? Anything that would help? Anything that would cleanse the air or restore hope? They'd been having a chat with dear old Jez. And Jez was still saying no.

**Jez in a Cage** Still on Jez, a couple of days later. We had just passed through the Summer Solstice and the Tories were still immersed in their leadership contest to decide the UK's next disastrous Prime Minister. Last week had all been about the Tories, fighting over their lies and fantasies and then that fight in a London flat, and so on. But that was all predictable and par for the course. The real issue was still Jez. A large question mark still hung over that small figure. Largely inaudible. Largely invisible. Largely absent. But blocking out the glaring emptiness where present effective and honest leadership should be.

**The Parrot Returns to Talk of False Gods** When this stanza was written, Boris Johnson was entertaining the nation with the question of when a certain photograph was taken. It claimed to show that the nation's prospective prime minister had now made up with his girl-friend after their row. He was accused of lying. It had almost certainly been taken before the row took place. And people were wondering when would he ever answer the questions interviewers put of him? In other words, when would he ever tell the truth? And still it looked as if he was sure to be the next Prime Minister of the UK. But would he be that much worse than either of the two alternatives, the one beside him to the right, or the one opposite to the left?

**Jez Has Trouble with Today** In the press, the same phrases kept coming up in relation to Corbyn's failure to take a position on Brexit. Almost on a weekly basis, there was "new pressure" on him from one or another of his various supporter groupings, to "come off the fence." "Crunch meetings" kept being arranged, but they resolved nothing and all that resulted was a change of adjective: "crunch" became "tense." The previous day, another such meeting had taken place. Same old result. Personally, I saw no real "fence" for Jez to sit on, whatever the rationalisations. I just saw his gross and unforgivable inadequacy.

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**The Parrot Goes to Glastonbury** The 2019 Glastonbury music festival had just finished. The parrot attended, at least in spirit. Then he read this article in the Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/.../brexit-jeremy-corbyn-len-mc...> It suggested that, out here in the present-day world, what went on in dear old Len McCluskey's tent/castle/head-harbour-of-the-past seemed to be having an immoderate affect upon Corbyn's position and actions over Brexit, and hence on the present and future of very many people, above all the nation's young.

**The Parrot Glimpses Mr Toad** This stanza was written on July 10th. It continued to look certain that Boris Johnson was going to be the new UK Prime Minister. The prospect brought to mind the image of a toad moving into Number 10. I was thinking partly of Mr Toad of "Wind in the Willows," a children's book written in 1908 by Kenneth Grahame. Grahame's Toad was a tiresome Edwardian gentleman, very full of himself. But I was also mindful that the UK ambassador in Washington, Mr Kim Darroch, had just resigned, due to having been betrayed, probably by some colleague, and to the fact that, afterwards, when Mr Trump expressed displeasure with Mr Darroch, Mr Johnson acted immediately as a Trump toady.

**Parrot on the Labour Die-Hards** When this was written, Johnson was about to become the nation's Prime Minister. Was Labour a government in waiting, ready for Johnson's likely failure ? No, it was busy engaged in party in-fighting. Tom Watson was a positive feature in this, as I saw it. He kept taking and vocalising positions I could respect and which seemed worthy of a Party I could respect. In doing so he invited attacks from Corbyn's inner circle, isolating himself in the process. The context, of course, was Labour's anti-semitism scandal, a recent Panorama programme which explored it and - following the programme - the Party's truly contemptible attacks upon the "whistle-blowers" who did their duty in talking to the journalists concerned.

**The Caged Parrot Watches the Demons Dance** This piece returns to a preoccupation of my own, concerning language. What is the point of writing, the point of taking a position and then articulating it ? And of course that leads to the question, why keep writing these stanzas, these mere words amid all this bizarre and frantic and disastrous action, mere words among so many words, but so many *false* words. Will anyone stop for long enough to read them ? Why ? Might they even play a part, in the public forum, on behalf of sanity ? Why not ?

Again : if words in our time have become truth-free, just tools and weapons for self-interest, if - in other words - words can be empty or mean anything, a worthless currency, just another way for sinners to prosper, what's the point of turning to them ?

I found myself remembering the death of Muath Safi Youssef al-Kasasbeh, the young Jordanian air-force pilot first captured and then publically burned to death by Isil or Isis, in January 2015, for propaganda effect, providing us with one of the more appalling images of our era. What words are sufficient for that act, that purpose, that caged human dolor ?

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Yousef is an Arabic form, in Latin script, of the English name Joseph. Joseph is the name of my eldest son. All my sons are half-Greek. That young man, burnt to death in a cage, could have been anyone's son, of whatever race.

**Judgement from Paradise** I don't think there was any immediate catalyst for this stanza, as far as date or event were concerned. In the UK, as elsewhere, there just seemed to be so few redeeming features, no 5th cavalry rescue, no clearing of the mist, no light of sanity breaking through. The thought that we make a world that reflects our own natures is not original to me, nor is it new.

**The Parrot Keeps Asking** On the day this piece was written the nation was waiting to find out which of two (Tory) hollow diddy men was about to take control of our nation, Hunt or Johnson. Johnson was widely expected to get it, so no great surprise was expressed when he did. In the meantime, one was vividly aware that another (Labour) hollow diddy man was still leading Her Majesty's Opposition, our alternative government in waiting. We were thus surrounded by disaster and the hollow bringers and products of disaster. Diddies

And the parrot's question seemed valid. To what extent were our political parties, and the system that supported them, effective vehicles for a swift and accountable response to real and pressing present need; or, on the contrary, were they merely outdated refuges for those who inhabited them, dim slogans where there should be living speech, creators of mirage where there had to be the urgent addressing of reality? The implication was that the second option was the true one. In the UK, both the Tory and Labour parties, and the individuals behind their battlements and in their halls, were mere self-serving inadequates and throw-backs, insufficient for present storms. And here we were witnessing the steady advance of Flotsam Johnson, to complete the nightmare.

**The Parrot Studies the Human Brain** Mr Johnson had become Prime Minister of the UK on the day this stanza was written, elected to that position not by the country but by the small membership of the Tory Party, adamant they wanted a No Deal Brexit and believing (for some reason) that he would provide it. It appeared that his assertions and approach provided a sort of comfort zone for them. But lies, fantasy and bluster do not provide a comfort that lasts. At some point you are made to wake up.

The "segments twain" refer to Iain McGilchrist's book "The Master and his Emissary." It is about the human brain. The "master" is the right hand side brain hemisphere, the "emissary" the left. McGilchrist makes clear that the two hemispheres are actually at odds, in tension, their partnership in question. The emissary doesn't actually believe the master is necessary. The emissary counts and measures and fears. That's all we are, or need to be, it "thinks". Its attempts to take control from the right hand side threaten to destroy all of us, both sides.



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**The Parrot and the Elephant** Mr Toad seemed quite puffed up by now, that jolly mop on top sticking out in all directions. He was centre stage and the cameras were following him everywhere. And again we kept hearing that "Labour Must..." And "Now's the Time..." but no one seemed to know where old Jez had got to...

**The Parrot Meets Mr Toad** More on a triumphant Mr Johnson, a tousled and trumped up Mr Toad. A Trump toady. As Foreign Secretary he had visited Myanmar and while playing with his mobile in the temple there started to recite "The Road to Mandalay." <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/video/2017/sep/30/boris-johnson-caught-on-camera-reciting-kipling-poem-in-burmese-temple-video>

**Mr Toad Leapfrogs the Stars** By now, Mr Johnson was upping the ante with regard to a "No Deal Brexit" and spraying money here, there and everywhere, as if Austerity had never existed, and as if there were no tomorrows.

But where was all that Tory money coming from, with our economy tanking ? What about these many years of austerity cuts we'd been suffering from ? Those savings that had to be made by "strong and stable" Tory government, at whatever the social cost ? Those disapproving words about the money tree ? Those lectures about the leaking roof ? Suddenly the roof had disappeared. It was all leak, unlimited sky and rude-boy fantasies.

**The Parrot on Sanctuary** This piece looks back to when John Skelton wrote his "Speak, Parrot" in the sixteenth century. All these rhyme royal stanzas I'm writing about Brexit refer to that poem, in one way or another. It is supposed that Skelton wrote it in Westminster, where the medieval laws of sanctuary were still operating. He could therefore consider himself safe there, even as he attacked the head of state, Cardinal Wolsey, from within his parrot's cage. Is Westminster still a place where truth is safely spoken ?

**The New Berserkers Take the Stage** This was written in mid August. Mr Dominic Cummings was making an impression. The Remainers were still stuttering and split. Could it get worse ? It could. Mr Toad's cunning plan was to come out as a puffed up war-lord, using his cabinet as his own personal commando unit. They wore identical body armour and were leaving piles of pooh all over the public park.

**The Parrot Notes the Toad Grown Larger** On the day this stanza was written and uploaded, we read that the UK courts appeared to have decided that it is not a penal offence for an accountable holder of public office, such as a member of parliament, to lie to, to or otherwise seek to mislead, a sovereign people. This despite the fact that all members of parliament swear an oath to tell the truth, so that lying is a breaking of that oath ; and in the House of Commons, it is normal practice for members to address each other as "honourable" since honourable people can be trusted and dishonourable can't.

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The judgement seemed to imply that lying to the people was on the same level as telling them the truth. Honour and Dishonour were just equal combatants at the hustings.

Marcus Ball is to be congratulated on bringing this case. It had taken him three years to get to this point. He had given all his time to it and was now very greatly in debt. We must all be the losers if honour and trust in our political system cannot be restored. Democracy depends entirely on words that can be trusted.

**The Parrot Notes a Toad on the Hop** This stanza was written after I read that our Mr Toad was about to head off to Europe to meet Mrs Merkel and Mr Macron, etc. And Mr Toad was going to tell them that the Irish back stop was “undemocratic” etc. This seemed to be a pre-occupation of the Tory far right, pushing a hard Brexit.

But on the day I uploaded the stanza, it turned out that there had also been an exchange of letters between Mr Toad and Mr Tusk. Mr Tusk’s reply had just arrived and the press was still reporting on it. Mr Toad had raised the back stop issue and Mr Tusk has performed an adult’s role in saying no. Mr Toad’s fleshly visit to Europe was due to start the following day. Would it make any difference ? Young Dom and Mr Toad did seem confident that all the nations of the continent of which we were still a (tiresome) part would succumb to their thuggish juvenilia in the end.

**Mr Toad Turns to Ballooning** The G7 summit had just finished, held in Biarritz. Mr Johnson had enjoyed a well-publicised morning swim there. However, the smoke over the burning Amazon forests featured large at the summit. Among the wine glasses, Johnson appeared to get on well with the American Minotaur. There was a picture of them regaling each other at table, stony-faced officials in the background. Here was this man, now a nation’s Prime Minister, persisting in his efforts to force through the UK’s separation from the EU, thereby threatening the UK’s own break-up, as well as destroying the sovereignty of parliament. Yet the same man kept talking about bridges - that leafy one across the Thames, which never transpired, but cost of lot of taxpayers’ money ; his proposal for one across the English channel ; and another between Northern Ireland and Scotland. The forests were burning. Mr Toad dreamed, fantasised, lied...

**The Parrot Repetitive** Mr Jonson had just taken the momentous step of proroguing parliament for an extra period during th Summer He and his cabinet of creatures all denied in chorus that this had anything to do with an attempt to avoid parliamentary scrutiny or intervention, as the Brexit separation date came nearer and nearer.

The first few lines of this stanza contain a whole list of references and ideas from the original "Speak Parrot" poem by John Skelton. Most come from one or another of the rhyme royal stanzas in which he wrote it. But Skelton was unruly and exuberant. Sometimes he couldn't contain himself within the formal rhyme scheme and threw in extra notes and comments between them. The "anima" reference is a case in point. It

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means "soul" in Greek. In quoting it, Skelton is implying (I think) that the parrot can be likened to the soul. It is the soul we must allow to speak, the soul we must nurture, the soul to which we must listen.

**Mr Toad and Dr DoomBoyd** The phrase "Shock and Awe" came into our reckoning as a description of America's opening attack against Iraq in their war (beginning March, 2003) to overthrow Saddam Hussein and his regime. Supported by the British, the Americans went in search of Saddam Hussein's non-existent weaponry. A short while later, Mr Bush stood alone on one of the American aircraft carriers, and spoke to the cameras to the effect that the job was now done and he had "delivered." No weaponry had been found but, hey, who was counting? All you need to take back control is Shock and Awe, some aircraft carriers and a camera...

Dr Doomboyd might just be a reference to the obviously very clever Dominic Cummings, imported into Number 10 by Boris Johnson. Dom seems to call - and shoot - a lot of shots. Dr Doom, of course is a well-known character in the world of comics.

**The Parrot Has Another Say** This stanza was written during the week-end preceding what seemed at the time to be Parliament's last and only chance to block Mr Johnson's stated option of a "No Deal" Brexit. The Executive vs the Legislative. Mr Johnson and "The People" (or enough of them, he hoped) vs parliamentary scrutiny, or - as he might put it - the Westminster "establishment." Johnson's Etonian Demagoguery vs our battered old model of democracy. The latter is demonstrably unfit, yet precious in principle, in desperate need of defence as well as renewal.

**The Parrot Studies Mr Toad** The previous night, (September 3rd), Mr Johnson had lost both his (tiny) majority and a significant vote in the House of Commons, in which a number of Tories had rebelled against the Brexit hit-squad masquerading as a nation's government. The rebels deserved the nation's respect and gratitude for that action. They were expelled from the Tory Party the following day.

But Mr Johnson was surely just gaming for power, with nothing else in his view-finder and with no thought of the consequences for his nation, or even - incredibly - for his Party. He was clearly aiming for an election, in which he would stand as "The People's" Brexit champion, fighting on their behalf against their own parliamentary representatives.

Yet en route, chaos was accumulating all round him and it seemed a question of whom/ what this chaos would destroy first—Johnson himself or the nation he aspired to "lead."

**The Parrot Joins the Circus** Prime Minister Johnson and his hoodlum operation had lost a succession of important votes the day before. Several prominent and moderate Tories who had voted against the government and against the possibility of a "No Deal" Brexit, had simply been sacked. Ken Clarke was one of those and had much to say to Johnson in the Commons afterwards: "I do think the prime minister has a tremendous skill in



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keeping a straight face whilst he's being so disingenuous," was one thing he said. The Independent's Tom Peck translated those words for us as follows : "[Johnson's] a liar, in other, carefully chosen, entirely parliamentary words."

**The Parrot Watches Another Circus Act** Events were now taking place at bewildering speed. These notes were updated on Sunday, September 8th. Johnson had begun the previous week as if starting a general election campaign. Then, on Thursday, his brother Jo resigned. In the meantime, his election plan was frustrated in Parliament and he ended the week being told that he would be found in contempt and jailed if he now went ahead with No Deal. During the week, Johnson had made a speech in front of ranks of police cadets assembled for a Toad election propaganda backdrop. The speech did not go down well, nor did Mr Johnson's use of the police as political prop. The word "Blob" was apparently coined either by Michael Gove or Dominic Cummings. These two had worked together in the Education department at some point. "The blob" was how they described the teachers who resisted the exam-dominated changes they wanted to introduce to schools across the country. The day before this stanza was uploaded here, the Tory Minister Amber Rudd announced her resignation.

**The Ravening Mr Toad** This stanza was written on the morning of September 9th, 2019. That evening, the UK parliament was shut down for several crucial weeks, at the behest of Mr Johnson and his streamlined cohorts. Johnson's excuse for abusing the constitution in this fashion was yet another of his lazily blatant lies, into which – in this case – he dragged the nation's Head of State, Queen Elizabeth. In doing so, he took Great Britain yet closer to the wire and far beyond disgrace. It was the act of a hoodlum, on behalf of hoodlums.

**The Parrot and the Clowns** The Parrot had joined the circus, remember. In this stanza, he was reporting back from a conference of clowns he has just attended.

All familiar shapes are now in question. In the UK, Brexit alone has been causing a great number of those shapes to buckle. Democracy is one. What is democracy, after all ? The word keeps being thrown about, with so many conflicting claims on it. Today, Wednesday September 11th, when the UK Prime Minister was found in court to have lied to the Queen, Stephen Kinnock, MP, published an article in the Guardian in which he seemed to imply that the 2016 EU referendum was "democratic" and the result should be "respected." <https://www.theguardian.com/.../lib-dems-revoke-article-50-un...> I disagree with Mr Kinnock and wrote this stanza accordingly.

**Mr Toad Refers to the Tower** This stanza was written a day after it was announced that Prime Minister Johnson's advice to the Queen, given to her during their first meeting, that parliament should be closed down for several weeks, has been deemed illegal by the Scottish High Court. They found that he lied to her on his reasons for the closure, the same careless lie that he gave the country. He claimed that his new government needed to

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to close parliament for several weeks to give all their time to preparing new government policies, to be later announced in the Queen's Speech. The court found instead that Johnson was just seeking to avoid parliamentary scrutiny of his Brexit activities, or lack of them. We are all equal under the Lie, apparently. Naturally, Mr Johnson and his hoodlum gang immediately appealed against the court's finding.

**The Parrot, the Lie and an Aging Queen** This stanza refers a second time to a picture in the press, showing Mr Johnson, our lying toad, bowing humbly and treacherously to the UK Head of State and symbol of the UK Constitution. The picture seemed a potent symbol of the dire nature our nation's state of health.

**The Parrot Takes Stock of the Flotsam Hulk** Mr Johnson had just come back from a meeting with some EU representatives, who had the difficult task of being adult to his juvenile. Before going, he gave a jolly (though pernicious) description of himself as the "Incredible Hulk," a character from the world of comics. And then off he greenly flew to terrorise the EU, but seems to have been terrorised himself, instead, absenting himself from a press conference that had been arranged. The use of the word Flotsam in the title comes from a phrase I coined much earlier in this long series of stanzas - "Flotsam Johnson and Jetsam Gove." At that time, the pair of them had just floated into view, thrown up by the raging tide. Now, these dreadful months later, they were riding higher.

**The Parrot Falls Foul of the Law** The UK's Supreme Court was now hearing the Government's appeal against the Scottish High Court's finding (see above). We were still waiting to hear whether or not politics and the nation's executive were above the law. But what we could be sure of was that, somehow or other, a lying toad had become a nation's leader. And he had chosen a "cabinet" composed of toadstools. And the court kept hearing that the toad was still lying. Whereas the law of perjury operated in a law-court, it seemed not to in the Parliament or in the public street or in the TV studio.

**The Parrot is Witness to an Attempted Stabbing** "The Stabbing" in the title is of course a reference to Jon Lansman's (mostly unsuccessful) attempt to render the Labour Party's Deputy Leader Tom Watson null and void just as the Party's Annual Conference was about to begin. Jon Lansman founded the "Momentum" organisation. He was on the Labour Party Executive Committee and was a Corbyn supporter.

He made his move without warning and as a sort of ambush, no doubt carefully planned with others of the coterie, in full view of the nation's cameras, with the conference especially important this year, a General Election likely in the very near future, and the UK in turmoil. Interesting timing, Jon.

Corbyn will have been implicated in the plot against Tom Watson and it seemed yet another illustration of his unfitness for any kind of public office.

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Tom Watson was not of Corbyn's clique and was ploughing a lonely but important furrow as Deputy. I respected him, not necessarily or primarily for his position on the so-called political spectrum, but for his human qualities and priorities. It seemed to me that if Labour still had something of value to give to this country, Tom Watson pointed the way to it far more convincingly than the Party's leadership did.

**The Parrot Reflects on Whether Jez has Worth** This stanza was written on September 22nd, near the beginning of this year's Labour Party Conference. We had heard a bit more by now about the party leadership's attempt at short notice to dispense with Tom Watson's services as Deputy Leader of the Party. The judgement seemed to be that Corbyn must have been in on the plot, even though he had of course denied it. Jez prefers to be out of the room when the knives come out.

Another opinion being mooted was that people at the top of Her Majesty's Opposition were taking time out from concerns such as Party policy, Brexit, and the nation's good at this time of crisis, to consider Corbyn's future successor – and to do whatever they could, by whatever means, to ensure that Tom Watson would not be involved in choosing that person.

**The Parrot in the Ring of Chaos** This stanza was written just one day after the event it describes – the Labour Conference vote on whether or not to campaign for Remain. That event seemed significant for at least a few hours.

But the *following* day's judgement by the Supreme Court was so much *more* significant and – still finishing this stanza – I felt that it was already out of date and I'd been left behind. Tumultuous events were piling up on each other. How to keep up – emotionally, intellectually, in any way at all?

The conference was in many ways disastrous for Labour and revealed (yet again) the Corbyn inner circle as spiteful, inept, and largely taken up with in-Party feuds, whatever the effect that might have on the Party's electoral chances. Despite all the talk and posturing, maybe Corbyn would always be more comfortable in Opposition, indignant without responsibility...

The last lines here offer a direct reproduction of some of the words used during the announcement of Labour's chaotic "decision" to make itself electorally irrelevant (or so it seemed then – but had things now changed?). See the short video at the head of the article : <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/jeremy-corbyn-brexit-labour-remain-rejected-conference-brighton-a9117431.html>

**Mr Toad Falls Foul of the Law (Again)** On September 24th, the UK Supreme Court ruled against our Prime Minister's prorogation of Parliament, finding unanimously that the prorogation was unlawful and that Johnson had misled the Queen on his reasons

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for implementing it. Effectively, Johnson was being named as a plain liar by the highest court in the country and Parliament's position in the nation's constitution was confirmed and actually strengthened, as befits.

Thanks were due to Gina Miller (again) and to John Major for bringing the case. Also to the Justices concerned, above all to Lady Hale, at their head. Something redemptive had taken place, something of largeness, something to respect.

Might this signify the turning of the tide ? Might the example set by the Justices – in defiance of lawlessness and mayhem – be followed in other places of this country ?

**The Parrot Still in London** This was another of those periods in which stanzas were being written almost daily, trying to keep up with a sequence of events even more furious, momentous and disturbing than usual. I composed it early on Thursday 26th September. The previous night., in the House of Commons, only just back from America, following the Supreme Court's unanimous ruling, Mr Toad was wholly unrepentant. He simply said that the Court's judgement that he had acted illegally and essentially lied to the Queen, was wrong. Clearly he knew the law better than they did. And then he just carried on lying. But at least he was there in that assembly, required by law to present himself for all to see and hear.

And what we saw and heard was disgraceful but also clearly premeditated. Elements in the country would like this defiance, this "standing up to," this rejection of the norms, this green light to bigotry.

Was it possible that Britain could become even more divided and worked up than already it was ? It would seem so. But to whose benefit ? And was the Supreme Court's ruling really going to be a turning-point, or just part of the script Mr Toad's advisors were preparing ?

**The Parrot Meets Doombeetle Down a Drain** This and the following stanza "The Parrot Alights..." were suggested by an actual incident. Mr Johnson's main advisor Dominic Cummings was making himself surprisingly available for stray encounters around Westminster. See here, for instance : <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=752395791889320>

**The Parrot on my Shoulder** Things were happening very fast, many of them carrying a sense of threat and chaos and ill-intent on the part of the perpetrators. It was hard work just to absorb what was going on, harder still to think creatively, or reflectively. This stanza is partly concerned just with that thought. But partly too with a sort of catch-up thought : John Major had combined with Gina Miller to take legal action that eventually resulted in the Supreme Court finding Johnson's prorogation of parliament unlawful. Extraordinary. For one thing, here was an ex-Prime Minister, Tory, going to the law to challenge and thwart a/ another Tory and b/ another Prime Minister...

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**The Parrot Cries Out** The Tories were holding their annual conference. The “Get Brexit Done” slogan was everywhere, and government sponsored adverts supporting Brexit were apparently going up in primary schools. The toad was leaping about to toadie applause, the beetle was sidling about to toadie terror. The rain was lashing down. The climate crisis was being fought over...

**The Parrot Returns to Number 10.** The parrot has visited Number 10 Downing Street once before, quite recently in fact (see Mr Toad Falls Foul of the Law (again) Johnson’s advisor Dominic Cummings liked to enter the place by the front door, brandishing his scruffy tracksuit. The parrot, far more impressive to look at, preferred perching on window sills and listening carefully. At the time of writing, Mr Johnson’s proposals for a “deal” - carefully held back until now - had not been received very well. Was the Toad serious, or was he merely bandstanding ?

**The Parrot Mourns, the Bell Tolling** This stanza puts into rhyme some fairly obvious thoughts about the divisions in the UK, revealed and accentuated by the Brexit fiasco. The UK was split essentially in half, “led” now by an Etonian felon. It seemed very possible, even likely that - post-Brexit - it would fragment yet further, from small ship to flotilla of dinghies. And all this splitting had arisen from an argument over whether or not to split from the EU. Maybe the EU was never the point. Maybe we’d just grown addicted to splitting and being led and misled by people unfit. In this stanza, “For Whom the Bell Tolls” is an obvious reference. And “Divide and Rule.”

**The Comfort of the Cage** This was written on a day (Tuesday October 8th) when the UK news gave cause for yet further despond, alarm and shame, but as Dr Doombeetle kept making clear, it would always all be someone else’s fault.

And Jez ? Those female MP’s facing de-selection at around this time ? Good one Jon. Good one Jez. That dreadful conference and Jon’s attempt to shaft Tom Watson ? Good one Jon. Good one Jez.

References in the stanza : Len = Len McKluskey ; Jon = Jon Lansman, founder and Chair of Momentum ; Lilliput is the land of the little people, featured in the first part of “Gulliver’s Travels” by Jonathan Swift. “Gulliver’s Travels” is a satire consisting of four parts, with Lilliput featuring just in the first one. It was written in the 18th century.

**Eye to Eye with a Right Hon Toad** This was written one evening after news came though that Damian Green MP had spoken with Mr Toad MP, Prime Minister, “eye to eye” and been convinced by his assurances - a Toad’s word on it. But Mr Toad did not have a word, just lies, sales-talk and smoke-screen. Did Mr Green have a word ?

Here’s the link to the relevant article : <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/oct/09/tory-mps-react-with-fury-to-talk-of-no-deal-brexit-manifesto-promise>  
[bclid=IwARoNoSt9\\_heTDxXRMkcVC5i3V\\_A6ETdDoeSiw\\_pukZ3hkOvtGOiZQS5vRkU](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/oct/09/tory-mps-react-with-fury-to-talk-of-no-deal-brexit-manifesto-promise)



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In case anyone needs reminding, Damian Green was demoted by Theresa May at some point, following the discovery of pornography on his computer at work. It seems that the main reason he was punished in this way, however, was because he lied to the investigators about it, thereby breaking the Ministerial Code.

Thus, it's fair to say that Damian Green has been sacked once for lying. And on public record is the fact that Johnson has been sacked for lying *twice*. Mr Toad has not yet been sacked for all the *other* times.

Interesting though, that someone who finds it all too possible to lie on his or her own behalf, still finds it important to be able to trust the word of others, whoever they may be, however serially duplicitous.

**The Parrot Gives a Lecture** When this stanza was written, Mr Toad was still working to meet the deadline for his “deal” for Brexit. A deal to be achieved in a matter of days, following all sorts of disgraceful and hooligan goings-on, such as unlawfully proroguing Parliament, etc.

And the EU seemed to be co-operating with him in this horrendous mickey-mouse charade. And it seemed clear that if he managed the deadline, if he achieved the date which he himself had set, that would be what the noise would be about, not the behaviour, not the low quality of the “deal” itself.

Would we stop to read what exactly our serially deceitful Mr Toad was wishing to visit on this nation ?

Were we ever going to wake us from this ghastly dream ?

**The Parrot Keeps Lecturing as the Rain Pours in** “The Parrot Keeps Lecturing...” was written a day after the previous one, as news was coming in that – despite the DUP’s dissent – our Mr Toad had gone ahead and agreed a deal with the EU, for a “harder” Brexit than that envisaged by Theresa May in her earlier lengthy attempt. Her “deal” was of course rejected 3 times by parliament.

This toadie one was even more against the nation’s interests and prospects than hers. Yet in the terms of the madness we were living through, the fact that he had won the EU’s agreement to it, represented some sort of “victory” for him. Not for us.

There’s a pun, of course, on Mr Toad’s desire to leave the EU on Halloween. “Trick or Treat.”

**The Parrot’s Third Lecture** was written on Saturday 19th October, yet another of those “crunch days.” Another enormous march took place in London, in support of a “Final Say” referendum. On the same day, Prime Minister Johnson had been expected to present his Brexit “agreement” to Parliament, giving it virtually no opportunity to peruse the detail. In the event, parliament prevented him from doing so by passing a bill on the same day, requiring him to request the EU for an extension.

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It seemed finally to be a matter almost simple, but utterly central : did we want to be governed by the lie, illusion, regression, severence – or by our recognition of things as they are, the fact and plain reality – and, following that recognition, offer an intelligent and honourable response to those things, seeking connection ?

**The Parrot Lectures to Himself** A day later, Saturday's huge demonstration in London was still being digested. But would it have any impact ? The right wing propaganda rags had gone beserk today, more concerned with Parliament's defiance of the Toad than anything the marchers might imply. Courage had been shown in the House, in the face of more attempts at sculduggery on the part of our Mr Toad and Dr Doombeetle. And for a moment, the mists cleared and Brexit was revealed as always a delusion, a cause and conflict of no validity, nor end, a nothingness with no resolution, just a funny word to put a nation's poison in.

**The Parrot Examines the Use of Words** The previous Saturday had been billed as yet another "crunch" Brexit day, and I had been ready to face the worst. But, as things turned out, the Toad was left frustrated on that occasion. Today, however, another crunch had come. Anxiety had returned.

Was Brexit a set of developments that might still happen, probably still would happen ? Yes, certainly it was. But was Brexit really what Brexit supporters thought it was ? A solution to something real ? Or is it just a symbol of discontent, a symptom of ill-health in the body politick ? A kind of ritual sacrifice ? Surely that. And the more we talked and did Brexit, the worse the ill-health became. It seemed fitting, in fact, that on this crunch day, Brexit was led by a lying toad...

**The Parrot Considers the Right Wing Press** The right wing press were chorusing their criticism of Parliament for doing its duty in examining the work of our dodgy Executive and holding it to account. According to the press, MP's were betraying "the will of the People" by not rubber-stamping what Mr Toad has come up with - however misinformed that same People had been in the first, second and third place - by the right wing press and Mr Toad between them. The press had attacked the UK judiciary only recently, in much the same vein.

But wasn't Brexit supposed to restore our "sovereignty?" - ie our Parliament and our judiciary, and so on - the very components of sovereignty they are currently attacking ?

It was turning out that Brexit's real but hidden purpose was to provide the Lie and a Hoodlum Toad with absolute power.

**The Parrot Reports on the Launch of the Hoodlum Toad** What's that I see up there in the sky ? Is it a bird ? Is it a plane ? oh no ! It's a high-flying, high-lying Hoodlum Toad !

Just as I was uploading this stanza, it was being reported that the Toad was going to push for a December General Election.

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**Dr Doombeetle Tutors Mr Toad** We've already met Dr Doombeetle in these stanzas, of course. He is Dominic Cummings, who first came to general notice as advisor to Mr Michael Gove at the Dept of Education (Mr Gove has previously appeared in these stanzas too, to be precise the 7th - see "Jetsam Gove" in "Parrot Speaks of the Brexit Agon (2)" ). One or another of the pair came up with the term "The Blob" as a genial description of the nation's teaching profession. Mr Cummings does seem to like taking on whole swathes of the population and doing them over. Next, he seems to have played a very leading role in the "Leave Campaign" and came up with that cleverly deceitful and profoundly wicked "Take Back Control" slogan. And now, towards the end of 2019, from behind the curtain wall of his scruffy t-shirt, he seems to be running Mr Toad.

**The Parrot Catches Election Fever** refers, of course, to the sudden large majority in the House of Commons for Mr Johnson's preference for a General Election dated December 14th, 2019.

I, for one, failed to understand this sudden end to the parliamentary containment of the Toad, this letting go of the impasse in apparent agreement to engage in the disagreement of an election. It brought the demagogues and shadowy enforcers back into play.

Was it a real decision, requiring energy, or just a failure to make a decision, requiring only weakness, or inertia ? Where had the Second Referendum gone ? Where was the challenge to Johnson's multiple deceits, felonies, abuses of power ? Who was getting what out of this ? For whose good ?

Or was it just exhaustion, a surrender to chaos and destruction ? I feared the latter – I hoped I was wrong. I asked the parrot. He hadn't a clue. Too busy. He was awash in the flood.

And writing this stanza, I was thinking, among other things, of the very recent implosion of the "People's Vote" campaign. Well done, everybody. Much easier to fight each other than take right action.

And, inevitably, I was thinking of some famous lines from Yeats' "Second Coming" : "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity."

**The Parrot Mourns the Loss of Home** The Parrot was now awash in a flood of untruth and unrule, as the UK's general election got under way. The result when it came would appear to be a matter of pure random chance, or skill, or criminality, in the underhand use of social media to manipulate people, no more trustworthy than a drawing of lots.

**The Parrot Views the Earth from Afar** The UK General Election still in progress begged the question whether there was any difference in quality of democratic process between a Referendum and an Election.

Both seemed to involve a lot of lying at high volume, a lot of propaganda ditto, and



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various other forms of manipulation and trickery – whatever their perpetrators could get away with, in fact, with the sheriff continuing to lag far behind.

And all for the sake of a decision made by “A Sovereign People Properly Informed.”

In the meantime, the parrot escaped both cage and a troubled nation’s great flood of English Lie and ascended for a bird’s eye view of us all.

**The Parrot from on High Speaks of Democracy** As the UK General Election continued, and in the light of much of its content, the following question came to mind : what is the difference between an election and an auction ?

Answer 1 : at an auction, cheats need to be more careful than at an election, as auction punters get a better chance to examine properly the goods on offer.

Answer 2 : at an auction, the best items cost most, at an election, the worst.

Answer 3 : a wrong decision at an auction is a waste of money ; at this election a wrong decision would be a waste of life.

**At Last the Toad Reveals Himself** This piece followed some more thinking about lies and the sort of good journalism that might “unmask” the liar. You see the truth behind the pretence, or fantasy, or slogan. But what if there is nothing behind the mask ? What if there is nothing, except mask ? What if the mask is what we prefer ?

In the meantime, there had just been a QuestionTime TV programme in which all the main political party leaders had taken part, each to be questioned by members of the audience. For some reason I didn’t quite understand, Nicola Sturgeon was present, even though neither she nor her party were standing for leadership of the UK. But it seems her presence was useful nevertheless. It showed the UK public what a leader should look and sound like, in contrast to all the others.

**The Parrot Overflies the Flood** The stanza was written a day after we had heard from some pollsters that the Tories had increased their lead, with just three weeks to go before the General Election. And this was the day on which Mr Toad was about to launch the Tory manifesto. And there was a lot of rain falling, as well as lies being broadcast. There was a present danger of being drowned in either or both.

The Parrot remembered Noah and that earlier flood by which humanity was almost swallowed up, but the Toad wasn’t bothered. He was still thinking strange Gollum thoughts.

**A Toad Delivers the Tory Manifesto** We should remember how it was with the parrot at this time. His cage had burst open and was no longer any use to him. He was able to overfly the UK election, but - being a Bird of Paradise - needed respite from time to time, needed a resting place in a portion of Paradise, or echo of it, a kind of ark .

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But here in the UK, there was only this flood of lies associated with the election campaign and the Parrot was tiring overhead. He lacked the staying power of the swift, already long gone, heading south. The Bird of Paradise needed a foothold on the Earth but saw none. And now the UK Prime Minister, Britain's Toad, announced the Tory election manifesto for the UK's immediate future, having first "got Brexit done."

**The Toad Goes Hunting for Votes** Toad's progress around the country this election was always, of course, more a search for images which might benefit him, than a chance for real encounters with real people.

And, to date, that search had come up with some striking images, which would appear to have been considered appealing to us. There he was in one picture, wearing boxing gloves with "Get Brexit Done" printed on them, and a Toad's face between the gloves, smirkingly up for battle.

And there he was in another picture, "mastering" a large bull in a cattle market. And again we saw that face smirkingly up for battle, the supposedly fearsome bull held by the nose by a tousled toad in wellies.

But, really, in all our lives, what is this bull we seek to master ? Or release ?

**The Parrot Seeks Respite from the Flood** A terrorist attack had just taken place in London. Two people had been knifed to death. The attacker had been shot by the police. The nation's "Prime Minister" Johnson immediately sought to take political advantage of the attack, despite the appeals of the father of one of the victims. How could Mr Toad resist ? He'd lose one or two votes, no doubt, but might well gain a larger number of others. It was just a matter of weighing the numbers. A no brainer for a Toad. So he said it was Labour who were responsible for those deaths.

In the meantime, the Parrot, Bird of Paradise, uncaged and homeless and close to exhaustion, went looking for an ark for respite or as staging post, as the Flood continued to cover the Earth.

Suddenly, it seemed, we had strayed into the Old Testament. Or was it the other way round ? Was the Old Testament repeating, or translating, itself into our present dark times ?

**The Toad Negotiates with the Underworld.** And just a couple of days after the terrorist attack in London, Trump ("the American Minotaur") landed in the UK for a meeting of NATO leaders. But then he got the hump because people were laughing at him, so left early.

Just previously, as we have noted, Mr Johnson ("The Toad") had done a Putin with a bull. See picture over the page. Perhaps he'd been rehearsing for his upcoming chat with Mr Trump (the Minotaur).

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**The UK Election—Parrot Prognosis** This stanza was written on Sunday December 8th. Thinking of the election due the following Thursday, and of the likeliest result, I feared for the parrot. “He speaks all languages aptly,” wrote Skelton, implying that the parrot hears everything and can keep nothing out. So what would be swirling about in his brain by Friday morning ?

**The Parrot Looks Up at the Moon** This stanza was written the night before the UK General Election on December 12th. In my part of the country, the moon was very clear that cold December night, and had been for several nights. Was it the full moon ? We weren’t quite sure.

The electorate had a profoundly disheartening choice. The “Progressives” on the slate did not instill confidence. At very best, the fanatic Far Right and practitioners of the Lie, would be blocked, or checked, in some way.

But still I found myself that night, under the moon, with a sneaking hope that somehow sanity would rise to the surface, so to speak ; that the result would reflect the nation’s predicament and fine balance ; it might even provide us with something unexpected, inspirational, gladdening...

And there was the Toad, serenading the Leaver half of the country : here comes the sun, get it done, get it done. And all the time, he was turning his back on the nation’s other half. What would that half do, in response ?

**The Casting of the parrot’s Vote** And this piece was written on election night itself, a second night of pause and wait, with the chill moon again prominent and beautiful overhead.

We walked home after casting our votes, our tiny act of power, our tiny power of action. We had done what we could, and put our very sceptical crosses against the name of a decent local MP attached to a Party and a leader unworthy and unfit.

**The Parrot’s in his Tower—and that’s all Folks !** This stanza was written on the day after Mr Johnson’s landslide election victory on December 12th, 2019. It was written as the last stanza of “Parrot Addenda,” rounding off this series of 164 stanzas in all. For the situation was suddenly very different. The tension and doubts and possibilities that had existed since the 2016 referendum and Cameron’s resignation, were no longer present. And the Parrot’s way of telling the story had nothing more to add.

I believe, inevitably, that, this sequence of short poems records the story of a win and reward for the Lie, of which of course, Johnson was a shameless, constant and largely unpunished practitioner. His election victory rewarded him for his lies. While *Parrot Addenda* is also a record of a nation’s disarray and perhaps its despair, it is primarily an argument for the centrality of truth-telling. The Lie is theft. It steals our language from us, it replaces clean air with foul. We are reliant on words to connect us to the truth and to the truth of each other.

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The Lie now running riot therefore spells ruin for our community and our democracy as presently configured and constituted.

And the UK's election result left the parrot with nothing further to say. Not in this form, anyway, or in these conditions. He had been tiring of late, flying on and on, with nowhere to rest.

The tower he found was the Tyndale Monument, an inspiration and sentry post for English honour and clean speaking, overlooking the Severn Estuary. At the top of it is a kind of cage.

**Postscript : Where the Hoodlums Are** This was written and uploaded on the day the UK left the EU, January 31st 2020. I had thought the parrot wouldn't be mouthing off again in his rhyme royal. But he came up with this postscript here, in recognition of the occasion. His piece had little comfort to offer.

The title is reminiscent of a children's book called "Where the Wild Things Are."

"A new dawn," is how Mr Johnson described Britain's exit that day, our lying toad.

And the parrot is now on station at the top of the Tyndale Monument, on watch for better and wiser times, a true new dawn. This tower was built in Victorian times. It was only then that Tyndale's work and influence began to be properly recognised. You can climb up to the top of his tower and nowadays might even meet the parrot there, glaring at you, impatient for the flood to retreat and the honour and grace of this nation be restored.



## Afterword

True and plain at last the parrot spoke.  
But I must needs be true  
and plain just one step further back  
and put this question - why  
did Skelton appoint a *parrot*  
to be the voice of truth, the poet  
who seeks words unsullied and speaks  
from the pure soul's point of view ?  
For Truth cannot be imitated.  
Truth is at all times new.

But Skelton's answer would surely have been  
plain astonishment at the question.  
"Our ships have ventured beyond all reckoning  
and at the edge of the world their crews  
found paradise. And they stole  
a bird which was sitting there in a tree  
and is thus truly a bird of paradise.  
And it has gathered unto itself all tongues  
and speaks them aptly. It is  
for this cause, now, that we  
keep the parrot safe in sanctuary  
and feed him dates  
and spice and all things nice  
and treasure the words he prates –  
dangerous words from paradise.

Rogan Wolf  
September 2018