



Parrot Addenda

by Rogan Wolf

A series of reflections on truth, honour and Brexit, in rhyming verse stanzas.

Both verse form and parrot reference are borrowed from the wonderful satire “Speak, Parrot” by John Skelton. Skelton lived in the reign of Henry 8th, when another form of Brexit took place 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



Jes in Yearn Land

Corbyn woke and found himself new-made.
No longer : “On a point of order, Chair” -
from today, that Chair was *Jes*, Jes 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 meansless 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.

Rogan Wolf
November 2018

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



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, 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) keeps using phrases like "The People have spoken" or "The People's Will," as if these in themselves will lend authority and credence to the words' speaker, battling on the "People's" behalf. And somehow that phrase "The People," repeated many times, begins to imply "everybody," or everybody that matters. But 52% of a mere percentage is neither "everybody" nor everybody that matters and the validity and integrity of that 52% figure is itself ever increasingly in question. And Theresa May's government does not even have a working majority with which to "deliver Brexit" and she has 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" 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 Cotswolds, 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 is clear that there will 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 (a bit) more clearly the wrongs and chief wrong-doer of his time, as Skelton saw it.

Notes and References

(ii)

These are the Hands. I have included this fine public poem as a kind of interval and refreshment. It is on a very different subject and is by Michael Rosen. He was commissioned to write it in 2008, in celebration of the NHS's 60th anniversary of that year. Michael Rosen gave permission for me to reproduce his poem on the website of a project I run 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 dividing line from the past, much older than that 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*, 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, until recently, was Theresa May's Chief Whip. He kept a tarantula on his desk, apparently to intimidate Tory MP's into toeing the party line. He has since been promoted and is now Secretary of State for Defence. I have it on good authority that in his new role, he is training a whole vast army of tarantulas to act as a global market force after Brexit. And he marches them up to the top of the hill and he marches 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 within 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. John Bercow is another Tory, but is unpopular with some of his colleagues, presumably because he insists 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 Highjacked 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 notes 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 fragments, has 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 8th. 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, and still taking liberties. Why the link to William Tyndale? He was a contemporary of Skelton's 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.



Afterword

True and plain at last the parrot spake.
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