



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 or 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 4th 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 5th 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 10th 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 10th 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 10th 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 10th 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 12th 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 15th 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 14th 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 16th 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 22nd 2018



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 30th 2019



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



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



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 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 5th 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*



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

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
16th 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 7th 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
9th March 2019



Jezebel 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 11th 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 15th 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 21st 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 23rd 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 25th 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
28th 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 13th 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 15th 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 out of nowhere 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 23rd 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 25th 2019*

Still the Parrot Paces

And still the parrot ponders, that wanton eye probing, those little legges 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 6th 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 14th 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 2nd 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 5th 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 11th 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* ? Lost and fanatic Tories. Good faith holds no appeal for this crazed nation. We lurch from shame to utter degradation.

Rogan Wolf
June 13th 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 16th 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 21st 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 23rd 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 25th 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 26th 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 2nd 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 11th 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 13th 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 bides
mercy ? 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 21st 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, a throne, a castle, climbs inside.
Spurn him. Seek present sanity instead.

Rogan Wolf
July 23rd 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, Creation gave to this species both power to serve Truth, and to replace it with false fantasy. A choice. We choose replace. We hide in division. We abuse.

Rogan Wolf
July 24th 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 27th 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 28th 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 juggle frontiers,
defy facts, ignore laws. I'll leapfrog the stars !

*Rogan Wolf
August 2nd 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 words except for indoctrination and lies.
The unhinged and vicious steal control. Truth dies.

Rogan Wolf
August 7th 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 12th 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 14th 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 19th 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 27th 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 30th 2019



Mr Toad and the Doombeetle

The Toad recruited a doombeetle 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,” he hissed. “And 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 31st 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 1st 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 5th 2019



The Parrot Watches Another Circus Act

The Toad and his “genius” doombeetle 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 6th 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 9th 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 11th 2019*



Mr Toad Refers to the Tower

Our Toad insists to the Judge the Queen 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 12th 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 13th 2019

The Parrot Takes Stock of the Flotsam Hulk

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

Rogan Wolf
September 16th 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 19th 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 jails -
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 Ten.

*Rogan Wolf
September 19th 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 20th 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 21st 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 25th 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 26th 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 23rd 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 24th 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 rule to my direction, a language of lies,
community shredded,” the beetle hissed. “You talk
of grace. Fuck grace. And fuck your body politic.”

Rogan Wolf
September 27th 2019

The Parrot Alights on a Beetle's Shoulder

The Parrot dares today to alight on the shoulder
of the genius Doombeetle - to understand
better the nation's soul. You are the holder
of many strings, says Parrot. It's by your hand
that Toad et al. perform their parts to send
us into the dark. Menace and power delight
me, hisses the beetle. Humanity does not.

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 29th 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 overwhelmed the Earth. Just look
at our plight. In dread of truth, encased in lie,
you befoul what is sacred. And your own children you
sentence to pay for your crimes. 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 Ten
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, rehearsing that smirk, those lies.

Rogan Wolf
October 5th 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 6th 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 8th 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 10th 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 16th 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 17th 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 19th 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 20th 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 22nd 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 22nd 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 24nd 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 26th 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 30th 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 7th 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 this fragile symphony of light.

Rogan Wolf
November 12th 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 15th 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 23rd 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 24th 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 25th 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 27th 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 1st 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 4th 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 8th 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 lieing to,
to please them. The other half ? The dark side ? You ?

Rogan Wolf
December 11th 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 12th 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 13th 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 31st 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=lm41lU5QJGk> 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 sets out with (a degree) more clarity than before 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 thought to include this fine public poem as a kind of interval and refreshment. It is by Michael Rosen and its subject is very different from the Parrot's. 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. Or maybe they were nettles. 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 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 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 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, 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 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 (and sanity) 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.

Notes and References

(v)

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 guaranteed refuge. 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.

Notes and References

(vi)

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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(vii)

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 In writing this stanza, I was remembering a scene from an early "Star Wars" film. An ominous “planet” approaches Earth. And I remember that image also 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 like worlds afloat in space, at odds, not complementary, with little battle craft dashing ominously between them. And we transform our world around us in a way that reflects those internal civil wars.

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 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

Notes and References

(viii)

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 Remainer 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 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. This was 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 I wrote this stanza 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 as a result, 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 the 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 It was the beginning of May, 2019 and the UK local elections had just taken place. 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 looking ahead to Trump's State Visit to the UK due during the following few days, which would also be 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 Prime Minister. Last week had all been about the Tories, fighting over their lies and fantasies and then that boozy fight in a London flat, and so on. In the meantime, a large question mark still hung over the small figure of the Labour leader. 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, wandering among the campers.

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 Johnson was now 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 Yousef 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?

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.

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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 the triumphant Mr Johnson, tousled and trumped up. 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, 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. It turned out that there had also been an exchange of letters between Mr Toad and Mr Tusk.

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 the UK 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 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.

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Mr Toad and Dr DoomBeetle 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” even though no weaponry had been found

Dr Doombeetle might just be a reference to Dominic Cummings, imported into Number 10 by Boris Johnson as his senior advisor. Dom - Dr Doom ? - seemed to be calling - and shooting - a lot of shots. In our new real world no less than 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. Or, as Mr Johnson would claim, he and “The People” (or enough of them, he hoped) vs the Westminster “establishment.” Or, more like it, 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. 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 were now in question. In the UK, Brexit alone has been causing a great number of those shapes to buckle. Democracy was 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

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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 were 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 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. Curious timing, Jon. Here was a Party not very interested in being a government.

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

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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.

The Parrot in the Ring of Chaos This stanza was written a 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 the Prime Minister's prorogation of Parliament, finding unanimously that the prorogation was unlawful and that Johnson had misled the nation's Queen on his reasons 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.

Did this signify the turning of the tide ? Might the example set by the Justices – in defiance of lawlessness and mayhem coming from the Prime Minister and his gang – be followed in other parts and settings of this nation ?

The hope was irresistible that it might.

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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 continuing to happen 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. It took a few days to catch up with the implications : 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...

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...

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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 References : 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_heTDxXRMkcVC5j3V_A6ETdDoeS1w_pukZ3hkOvtGOiZQS5vRkU](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/oct/09/tory-mps-react-with-fury-to-talk-of-no-deal-brexit-manifesto-promise)

For reference, Damian Green had earlier been demoted by Theresa May, 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, 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.

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The Parrot Gives a Lecture 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 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 ?

The Parrot Keeps Lecturing as the Rain Pours in “The Parrot Keeps Lecturing...” was written as news was coming in that – despite the DUP’s dissent – 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.

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.

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 skulduggery 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. But, as things turned out, the Toad was left frustrated on that occasion. Today, however, another crunch had come. Anxiety had returned.

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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 control over our "sovereignty?" - ie our Parliament and our judiciary, and so on - the very components of sovereignty they are currently attacking ?

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.

The long-standing tension had suddenly relaxed. The parliamentary forces, or combination of forces, which had seemed to be holding Johnson in some kind of check, had now given way with very little warning. What readings had been taken to cause the change ? For the bystander, it was hard to understand. It seemed just a surrender to the demagogues and shadowy enforcers working on their behalf.

Was it a real decision, requiring energy, or just a failure to make a decision, requiring only weakness, or inertia, or self-delusion ? 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 recent implosion of the "People's Vote" campaign. 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." Reality and Right Conduct are harder to champion, it seems, than the Lie.

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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 a Question Time 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.

And the Parrot begins to think here of Noah and that earlier flood by which humanity was almost swallowed up. But the Toad prefers "Lord of the Rings" and thinks strange Gollum thoughts.

The Toad Goes Hunting for Votes Toad's progress around the country during this election campaign was less about "meeting the people" than a search for TV images which might benefit him in the evening newscasts. This of course has become a common approach and is a corruption of what elections are supposed to offer and to mean.

There had already been one picture of him, smirking to camera, wearing boxing gloves with "Get Brexit Done" printed on them. And now here he was in Scotland, a tousled toad in wellies, "mastering" a large bull in a remarkably clean Scottish farmyard.

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. Johnson immediately sought to take political advantage of the attack, despite the appeals of the father of one of the victims that he should not. He said it was Labour who were responsible for those deaths.

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The Toad Negotiates with the Underworld. 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.

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 I wrote this one on the night before the UK General Election, 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. 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 and even provide us with something unexpected, inspirational, gladdening...

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.

The Parrot’s in his Tower—and that’s all Folks ! Now it was the day after The Toad’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 new. The tension and doubts 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 victory for the Lie, and maybe of a wider dissolution even than that. But of course, Johnson was, and is, a shameless and constant practitioner of the Lie. In a democracy, in any real community, the Lie is theft, a crime. But, rather than being punished for being a criminal, the Toad has been allowed the role of our elected leader of government, at this time of crisis for nation and further, for humanity at large.

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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 William 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