



Parrot Addenda

by Rogan Wolf

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

They provide, in effect, a live commentary on Brexit events as these took place, the individual stanzas being uploaded on Facebook and on blog sometimes within hours of their subject matter appearing in the media. “Parrot Addenda,” keeps being updated and at the time of writing, it is unclear when the series will end...

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, another form of Brexit took place at that time and speaking out was dangerous.

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



Parrot Speaks of a Pit bull

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

Parrot Speaks of the People's Will

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

Rogan Wolf
June 2018



Parrot speaks of the Law and Dust

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

Parrot speaks of Community and Dust

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

Rogan Wolf
June 2018



Parrot Speaks of Youth and Hope

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

Parrot speaks of the Brexit Agon (I)

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

Rogan Wolf
June 2018



Parrot speaks of the Brexit Agon (2)

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

Parrot speaks of Dividends and Dishonour

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

Rogan Wolf
June 2018



Parrot Speaks True and Plain

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

Rogan Wolf
June 2018



These are the Hands

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

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

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

These are the hands
That fill the bath
Mop the floor

Flick the switch
Soothe the sore

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

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

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

Michael Rosen

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

Poems for...one world

<https://poemsforthewall.org>



John Lewis Partnership





T-Bone Trump

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

The Parrot Ails

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

Rogan Wolf
July 2018



Jez in Yearn Land

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

Parrot Spots an Old Defence Line

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

Rogan Wolf
July 2018



Going Nowhere to Mean Nothing

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

Rogan Wolf
July 2018

Paradise Destroy

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

Rogan Wolf
August 2018



...And Smash the Butterfly

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

Look to my spite, my greed, look to Me...”

The Self and its Lies our paradise destroy.

The Crier Frets

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

Rogan Wolf
August 2018



In Despite of White Horses

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

The Parrot Seeks a Cage

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

Rogan Wolf
August 2018



Satan at Meat

Satan sees a continent complete.

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

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

Parrot Speaks to the 2-Bit Mobsters

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

Rogan Wolf
September 2018



The Parrot Peers

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

Parrot's Cage

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

*Rogan Wolf
September 2018*



The Parrot finds Honour Lying Forgotten

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

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

Demos Highjacked

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

Rogan Wolf
October 2018



Parrot Counts the Cost of Youth

(i)

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

(ii)

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

Rogan Wolf
October 2018



The Parrot on the People's March

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

Rogan Wolf
October 20th 2018

That Jez

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

Rogan Wolf
November 2018



Parrot Writes a Letter

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

Rogan Wolf
November 2018

May Dance

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

Rogan Wolf
November 2018



The Parrot, the Cage and the Pulpit



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

Rogan Wolf
November 2018





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
4th December 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
5th December 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...

*Rogan Wolf
December 2018*

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



Jez Labours

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

Rogan Wolf
January 25th 2019

Plain Words from the Cage

(i)

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

Rogan Wolf
January 26th 2019



Plain Words from the Cage

(ii)

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

Rogan Wolf
January 26th 2019

The Parrot and the Lie

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

Rogan Wolf
January 30th 2019



The Parrot Weeps for the Lost

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

Rogan Wolf
January 31st 2019

How Chaos Multiplied

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

Rogan Wolf
February 2nd 2019



The Parrot Speaks of Fre-dom

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

Rogan Wolf
February 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



Jez the Phantom Striker

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

Rogan Wolf
9th February 2019

A Brexiter Takes Stock of the Dark Star

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

Rogan Wolf
February 13th 2019



The Maybot Crashes Yet Again

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

*Rogan Wolf
February 14th 2019*

Boy Jez and the Die-Hards

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

*Rogan Wolf
February 15th 2019*



The Parrot Looks at Leadership

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

Rogan Wolf
February 15th 2019

Safe Passage

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

Rogan Wolf
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 from the road-side by chaos. Their robes don't fit.

*Rogan Wolf
April 20th 2019*

The Parrot shakes the Bars

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

*Rogan Wolf
April 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* ? Felons and fell Tories. Honour 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 friends we want on a platter."

Rogan Wolf
July 13th 2019

Notes and References

(i)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes and References

(ii)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes and References

(iii)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes and References

(iv)

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

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

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

Jez Hoeing Three days later, on Friday 7th December, Jeremy Corbyn spoke at an international conference of socialists in Lisbon. On the Tuesday following, Theresa May was due to present her "deal" with the EU to the Commons, facing almost certain defeat. Her party was in ferment. At the week-end, two major demonstrations took place in London, representing conflicting positions. We all knew that we were close to one of the major climaxes of the Brexit story, with momentous consequences ahead of us. And here was the Leader of the Opposition, Prime Minister presumptive, taking leave of absence, almost as if Brexit did not exist for him. It was hard to avoid the conclusion that Jez is 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 well into 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 include the expenditure of a great deal of public money and the army would be called out for support duties. The fantasy of Little England is not just mischievous and regressive, but is 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 Worship of Self* is also a brief exploration of the nature of fundamentalism. In the stillness of the Christmas break, I also remembered that Skelton wrote his “Speak, Parrot” within the precincts of Westminster, at a time when the medieval laws of sanctuary were still operating. Under those laws, Westminster was still a place a sanctuary. It is unclear whether Skelton was relying on that fact for his sense of safety.

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

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

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

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.”

Notes and References

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 is now almost impossible to be sure that one is 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 to staying intact, of hanging on to old securities.

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

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

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

Our Leaders left Behind This was written on a day when a million people marched the streets of London, calling for a second referendum; and when the figure of 4 million was reached for the number of people who've 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's looking forward to Glastonbury, And Maybot was also otherwise engaged, delivering for "The People."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Parrot on Maybot and the Minotaur This stanza was obviously about Trump's State Visit to the UK over the following few days, May's last as Prime Minister. It seemed astonishing how much space we were continuing to give to blatant felony and the lie and to the creatures thereof. The more space we give 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. At the time of writing, 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 – twice sacked for it, surely unemployable now in any profession requiring trust and integrity. To be our Prime Minister. The final disgrace and disaster. And what had Labour been up to in the meantime? Anything useful? Anything that would help? Anything that would cleanse the air or restore hope? They'd been having a chat with dear old Jez. And Jez was still saying no.

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

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

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

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

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

Parrot on the Labour Die-Hards When this was written, Johnson was about to become the nations 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 pole figure, in this, as I saw it. He took and vocalised positions of decency and integrity and kept publically challenging Corbyn and his circle, isolating himself and inviting attack in the process. The context, of course, was Labour's anti-semitism scandal, the 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..



Afterword

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

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

Rogan Wolf
September 2018