



Speak, Parrot

by John Skelton (c. 1463 – 21 June 1529)

adapted for new times by Rogan Wolf (b. 1947)

WHERE ONE IS THE OTHER MUST BE

My name is Parrot, a bird of paradise,
A seeding from Nature of celestial kind,
Deliciously dieted on diverse delicate spice,
Till sweet Euphrates carried me to Inde
Where men of that far country took me in hand
And delivered me to these ladies of high estate :
Who cosset now the Parrott with almond and date.

India

A cage exquisitely carved, with a silver pin,
Daintily painted, to be my coverture ;
And a mirror of glass, that I may gaze therein ;
These delicate maidens, with foliage and flower,
Dress and freshen and make sweet my bower,
With "Speak, Parrot, I beg you," intently they say ;
Parrot is a goodly bird, a pretty popinjay :

With my scythe of a beak , my little wanton eye,
My feathers like emerald so fresh and green,
About my neck a circlet red as ruby,
My little legs, my feet both neat and clean,
I'm a page in training to attend a queen ;
"My handsome Parrot, my witty pretty fool !"
I learn with the ladies, I go with them to school.

Ha ha ha, Parrot, you can laugh prettily !

Parrot has not eaten all this long day :

Smooth as a cat, the Parrot can purr and cry

In Latin, in Hebrew, Arabic and Chaldy :

"Chaldy" is Aramaic

In the Greek tongue Parrot can work and can play,

And as Persius the poet recited to me -

quis expedivit psittaco suum "Χαῖρε" ?

Latin for *"who taught the Parrot to say" Greetings" in Greek ?"*

Dulcet Parisian French Parrot can learn,

Pronouncing my purpose after my property,

With *Parlez bien, Parrot, ou Parlez rien ;*

French for : *"speak well or don't speak at all"*

With Dutch, with Spanish, my tongue can agree

And in English Parrot can pray to God properly :

God save this nation, this isle of ripe increase,

With roses red and white, and races at peace!

And our Queen of many bloods, of friends also,

That peerless pomegranate, God save her grace !

Parrot, *saves hablar Castiliano ?*

Spanish for *(do you speak Castilian Spanish ?)*

With *fidarsi di se stesso* in Italy and Thrace ;

Italian for *"have faith in yourself"*

Vis consilii expers (as cautioned by Horace)

Mole ruit sua, (This counsel is pregnant)

Latin for *"strength without wisdom falls of its own weight" Horace*

Souvent fois, Parrot, en souvenante.

French for *many times within memory*

My lady mistress, Dame Philology,
Gave me a gift, in the cage where I lay,
To learn all languages, and to speak them aptly
But *pandez mory*, wax frantic, as they say,
For zealot over intelligent heart holds sway.
“An almond now for Parrot, delicately dressed ;

In Salve festa dies, toto all disgraced.”

in Latin, from the Easter Hymn : “*Hail, festal day, venerable of all ages/By which God conquers hell and holds the stars./Behold, it declares grace for a world reborn...*”

Moderata juvant, but toto will exceed ;
Discretion is mother of noble virtues all ;
Μηδέν άγαν in the Greek tongue we read;
But reason and wit lack their provencal
When a Felon Lord is Vicar General.
Haec res acu tangitur, Parrot, par ma foy :
Taisez- vous, Parrot, tenez vous coy !

Latin for “*Some delights us, but all will be too much*”

Greek for “*nothing in excess*”

Skelton was referring to Cardinal Wolsey. Felons come and go.
Latin and French for “*that hit the nail on the head, by my faith*”
French for “*Shut up, Parrot, keep your own counsel*”

Busy, busy, busy, and busying again !
Que pensez-vous, Parrot ? How sane is our state ?

French for “*what do you think ?*”

Deceit in Parliamant troubles Aaron’s brain,
For the righteous and benign just add to the Felon’s hate ;
To secure control he’ll tear our world apart;
In measure is treasure, *cum sensu maturato ;*
Ne trop sanno, ne trop mato.

Latin for “*with a mature understanding*”

Italian “*not too sane and not too mad*”

.....(4 stanzas cut)

Such scatterings of wisdom, strewn about the shop

Of market philosophies high and low

I gather together and hide in my crop

And hold them, in my conceit, *unde depromo*

Dilemmata docta in pædagogio

Sacro vatum for when the news shall break.

Latin : *whence I produce learned arguments in the poet's sacred school*

I beg you, let Parrot have liberty to speak.

But beware the cat, Parrot, beware the sly cat !

With, "who is there - a *true* friend ? no, no, not so,

Beware his greed, his lies, his hacking, all that !

Meat, meat for the Parrot, for his strength to grow

And the truth behind these many tongues to show :

But, Kiss me, sweet Parrot, kiss me, kiss, kiss ;

Take cover where your love is, Parrot, be wise.

Parrot, Parrot, Parrot, pretty popinjay !

With my beak I still pick my little pretty toe ;

I delight in laughter, leisure, in clowning and play ;

Like a jester, when I need to, I dance to and fro :

Parrot can also say, *Caesar, yes I know* ;

Though Parrott has no hearing in Parliament or Town

Above all other voices, set the Parrot's alone.

.....(five stanzas cut)

Μόνον καλὸν ἀγάθόν

Greek : the only beauty is goodness or the only good is beauty

Quod Parroto

Latin : said Parrot

.....(8 stanzas cut)

But let strategy inform this war-cry in art,
And call it *Confusé distributive*, Parrot's words,
For these hints and obscurities, this fit-and-start
And tentative advance by Truth towards
The terrors we face, their lies, their armed guards.
And so *metaphora, allegoria*, any and all,
Will be his protection, his shield, his wall.

For Parrot is no churlish chough, nor some dire magpie,
Parrot is no penguin that once was called a carling,
Parrot is no woodcock, nor fleeting butterfly,
Parrot is no stammering stare, that most would call a starling
But Parrot is my own dear heart and my dear darling.
Galathea in her good faith burnishes his beak.
I pray you, let Parrot have liberty to speak.

Parrot is a fair bird for a lady,
By God in his goodness well-fashioned, well- wrought ;
When Parrot is dead he does not putrefy
For remember, all things mortal turn to nought,
Except the human soul which Christ so dearly bought ;
That never can die, nor never die shall :
So make much of the Parrot, the popinjay royal.

For that Peerless Prince who Parrot did create
Also from the dust brought us to his majesty :
Mark well these words which Parrot must repeat
And remember in passing how Parrot and we
Shall scurry from this life, as merry as we be.
The trappings of greed, envy and worldly lust,
Parrot says plainly, lead nowhere except to dust.

Thus Parrot now beseeches
That you hear him in good part
And consider what he teaches
And take it to heart.

Psittacus, ecce, cano ; nec sunt mea carmina Phoebo

Digna scio ; tamen est plena camena deo

In Latin : *"Parrot, behold, I sing ; I know my songs are not worthy of Phoebus ; yet my inspiration comes from the god."*

Itaque consolamini invicem in verbis istis

In Latin : *"wherefore comfort one another with these words" (Pauls's Letter to the Thessalonians, Ch. 4, verse 18)*

Candidi lectores, callide callete vestrum fovete Psittacum

In Latin : *"Fair readers, shrewdly cherish your Parrot."*

WHERE ONE IS THE OTHER MUST BE

GALATHEA

Tell me, Parrot, I pray you, for Mary's sake,

How to bear reality while refusing to break.

PARROT

My proper Bess,

My pretty Bess,

Turn once again to me !

For sleepest thou, Bess,

Or wakest thou, Bess,

Mine heart it is with thee.

My daisy delectable,

My primrose commendable,

My violet amiable,

My joy inexplicable,

Now turn again to me.

I will be firm and stable,

And to you serviceable,

And also profitable,

If ye be agreeable,

To turn again to me,

My proper Bess.

Alas, I am disdainéd,

And as a man half maiméd,

My heart is so painéd !

I pray thee, Bess, unfeignéd,

Yet come again to me.

By love I am constrained
To be with you retained,
It will not be refrained :

And turn again to me,
My proper Bess.

Quoth Parrot, the popinjay royal.

Martialis cecinit Carmen, fit mihi scutum : - *In Latin : As Martial sings, " poetry acts for me as a shield"*
Est mihi lasciva pagina, vita proba. *"My pages are naughty, but my life is pure." (from Martial's Epigrams)*

GALATHEA

Now kiss me, Parrot, kiss me, kiss, kiss, kiss !
May God's blessing alight on your sweet little face !

Vita et anima

Latin : Life and Soul

ζωή και ψυχή

Greek : Life and soul

WHERE ONE IS THE OTHER MUST BE

Concumbunt Graece. Non est hic sermo pudicus. *Latin : They will lie together in Greek. This is not obscene talk (Juvenal Satires VI line 191)*

WHERE ONE IS THE OTHER MUST BE

Multigena autem impiorum multitudo

non erit utilis

et spuria vitulamina non dabunt

radices altas nec stabile

firmamentum conlocabunt

But the legions of the wicked

shall not thrive

and their spurs and off-shoots

shall not take deep root,

nor any fast foundation. The Vulgate, Sapientia. Iv. 3

WHERE ONE IS THE OTHER MUST BE

Amen, Amen,

And then add a D

Which brings us to AMEND

Our new-found A.B.C

AMEND AMEND AMEND

Cum caeteris paribus

Latin : all else being equal of course

Part Two

From CONCLUSIONS PRIMUS , SECUNDUS, & ROYALE, MONOSTICHON, DISTICHON MISERABILE, TETRASTICHON, ET AL

Go, little poem, called "The Popinjay",
To Galathea, still wading through the flood.
The cock begins to crow in face of day
But the ways of the Felon can only waste and fade.
Like feathers in the wind are the towers He made
But those who read these words with care may find
Fruitful matter. If cherished, these will stand.

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.
The Lord of Felony has become so bold
He has brought Law and Justice as well as all trust
Under His sway. Our cities turn to dust.

Like Parrot, the Truth is caged. Outside in the street
Felony's slaves and creatures sing their song.
Up and down upon untaxed 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 Lord on top.
And caged is Truth and Love and Youth and Hope.

Speak, handsome parrot, my popinjay,
Bear witness to the truth here and abroad.
Find your community and beg them, I pray,
To forgive your trespasses but also they should
Defend and protect you from that angry flood
Of denial, rejection, and terror in face of fact
Which strikes in consequence of the righteous act.

For parable can make the truth safe to view
And hidden in many tongues, one truth can rest.
This is precious matter, and blinding, and you
Need your cage to keep you safe. But best
Not hide that truth, best reveal. In duty dressed
You may yet find the worthiness we seek
The true community of Parrot, speak.

WHERE ONE IS THE OTHER MUST BE

This England

this Bling land

this Bling and Buy Land

this Hack and Spy Land

This Try a Lie Land

this Me and My Land -

We're all in this together

In Me and Mine Land.

What price the soul

In Buy and Lie Land,

My lord ?

“What price ?

The soul ? Ah yes.

The sole's a kind of fish

I point at once a year

before my darling

orcish cameras

to show the plebs their plaice

and my dynamic qualities

as Prime Minister.

My sole is sought

my sole is caught

my sole is bought

at the lowest price

and in a trice

and tastes so nice

when ridden out

on an old police horse..."

Part Three

GALATHEA

Now Parrot, my sweet bird, speak out yet once again,
Set aside the riddles and speak now, true and plain.

PARROT

Of the Felon Lord of Murdor I must speak
Swallowing my dread. That crocodile
From the far Out-Back wants by steal and stalk
To devour Democracy. See him smile
At that wedding and open wide his jaws. They all
In greed or terror gallop down his throat
And become the orcs of Murdor, his creatures, his shit.

How he hates all humankind, this lord -
Our laws, our language, our yearning for words to trust.
His own imprint is the only footage he'll read
And nothing he touches is left clean of his lust
But is plundered, perverted and turned to dust.
"The humblest day of my life !" he lies, his mind
At work on new ways of harming humankind.

Contaminated , contaminating, each orc
Works the Felon's will each day. They hate,
On his behalf, all truth, all trust. Now Davie.orc ,
Head Rude-boy of Blingland, our lawless State,
Please smear us with your latest lie. (We rate
Our leaders by their lies). You torture the poor,
Davie.orc, then claim to be Christian. What's more,

You say you're gifting them their dignity.
"Come to me, you fucking plebs, and hear
My hymn to Enterprise. For Truth, I say,
Is just another regulation. Clear
Away all measure and restraint, all fear
For our children. I only need to lie to you,
To make you mine. What better can I do ?"

"Mumsy, Mumsy, it's all Gordon's fault, not mine' -
That's a good one - Georgie thought so too.
And look, they bought it ! Making people toe your line
Means feeding them the lies they like. Like sleek glue
My lies have cleaved my friends to me. Except you,
Andy.orc, you crook . I said sorry for being so good
At granting second chances. Georgie agreed."

Ah Red Rebec.orc, your birds have flown,
So now, maybe, poor Parrot in his cage
Will have to visit Oxfordshire again
For lessons in horse riding. But grief and rage
Are not enough to restore hope to our age.
The Truth shall set us free. Then help me seek,
Galathea, the right cage from which to speak.

WHERE ONE IS THE OTHER MUST BE

Cum caeteris paribus

all else being equal of course

Quoth Parrot, the popinjay royal.

Note : *During the Summer of 2014, the phrase "Where One is the Other must be" was hung in uppercase at the eastern end of Uppsala Cathedral in Sweden, above the high altar. It was part of a commissioned art work by Mats Hjelm and relates to the Christian Eucharist. The words were part of an exhibition called "Heaven is Here."*

<http://www.himlenarhar.se/?lang=en>

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September 2014

Background notes

We have enthroned Greed, Envy and Acquisition and we worship them as gods. They constitute yet another fundamentalist retreat, among so many, rife in anxious times. These false gods require creatures, bought orcs and robots, to evangelise for them and to defend them.

The language they speak is not rooted in truthfulness or heart or soul or community or social responsibility, but in manipulation and a search for personal advantage. It threatens Community and Democracy and finally they, and we all, fall victim to it.

What was Skelton trying to do, in his time, from behind the dangerous joke of his Parrot ? He was attacking Cardinal Wolsey for upsetting the right balance of things. Wolsey was taking on too much power in Church and State. He was breaking open the frontiers of order and probity. He was making power a personal and merely human matter, all pride and inevitable corruption. Wolsey was of his time and place. Who acts similarly in ours ?

The Parrot must "sadly salute our sullen sire Sydrake,

And show him that all the world dothè conject

How the matters he mells in come to small effect ;

For he wanteth of his wits that all would rule alone :

It is no little burden to bear a great mill-stone.

To bring all the sea into a cherry-stone,

To number all the starrès in the firmament,

To rule eleven realms by one man's wit,

To such things impossible reason cannot consent..

For the original text, see :

<https://archive.org/details/poeticalworksjo02dycegoog>

For more background, post the following into google :

["The origins of the parrot image for the poet John Skelton"](#)