

Braiding Brexit

A Lemming's-eye View

Chris Armstrong

In preparing for a couple of recent poetry readings - at Gwyl Lyfrau Aberaeron Book Festival and, the next day, at an evening reception at that lovely treasure trove of a shop in Aberystwyth, Broc-Mor - I suddenly came to realise that I had - over the years - written ten poems around Brexit. I read one in Aberystwyth but it occurred to me that it might be worthwhile... or at least fun... to bring them together in one publication!

And so *Braiding Brexit: a Lemming's-eye View* was born!

Someone in Broc-Mor said to me that if I hadn't spoken of the context, it was probable that no one would have understood that the first poem was indeed referring to Brexit - I can see that this is true, but it is also true that the poem doesn't make much sense without some context! And mine was certainly Brexit when I wrote all of these poems, although I acknowledge some are more obscure than others! The poems are presented in the chronological order of their writing.

If you have read this far, persevere! I hope you will enjoy them! Perhaps it will even tempt to explore some of my other poems in *Mostly Welsh* (Y Lolfa, 2019 - Available on [Amazon](#)).

Chris Armstrong
5th November 2019

Role Reversal

¿Le gusta este jardín, que es suyo? ¡Evite que sus hijos lo destruyan!

Malcolm Lowry¹

It had been a good party...

But

As more arrived, we decided we had to go -

Too quickly; or perhaps too slow

For some, who said it would be best

For most if not the rest

Uncaring of the past

Or the gloom we cast

Bickering with old friends

About the future trends

Arguing with our peers

Over their misplaced fears

We left!

Grabbing the wrong coats

And the best man's notes

Our children in a rage

That nothing would assuage

Trampling garden flowers

As if all right was ours

Slamming the gate

Behind our hate

Breaking its old latch

We shunned the patch

Refusing to talk

Or even listen

We left!

¹ From *Under the Volcano*; the quote translates as: 'Do you like this garden, that is yours? See to it that your children do not destroy it!'

We knew

We could never return to their table now

He said "Did you like that garden, that was ours?"

He knew it had been a place of peace

Where harmony might yet increase

He said "They will never let our children in to play again"

Late Wisdom

You're aching for peace
I'm hurting too
Let the arguing cease
There's polling to do

You look for meaning
I offer a word
No sense for your gleaning
I'm not sure they heard

You called referendum
I thought it was flawed
A meaningless thrum
On democracy's chord

You were not aware and
I never knew
That voting out fanned
A nationalist view

You want ongoing union
I'd hate a divide
But the voted opinion
Is not on our side

You sought my advice
I thought for a while
But my ivory dice
Show leaving's in style

You know we need people
I know we need trade
But the bells in the steeple
Ring for the exit brigade

You asked for insight
I looked for a thought
But all I can write
Counts only for nought

Colourblind

It was black and white
for a while

Until the first line
was drawn

Then the pale grey people
the people who could only draw
a black cross
in a white box
began to sense
other possibilities
shading the palette

The colours of debate
splashed clumsily
over everything:
the harsh red of anger
the yellow of injustice
screaming crimson
a harsh royal blue
weeping vermilion
splashed all over
pale greens and blues

As they spread
 it was clear:
 on this canvas
no artist held soft brushes,
mixed subtle shades -
over everything
there were only black lines
smudged with her finger
to soften their edges

The grey people
had won their grey
reward

And so this is eX Ministerial Accord Season

Can it possibly be true
How the twelve months flew
Really twenty-four have passed
In terror of being outcast
Since that dire vote to leave
The parties it seems must all deceive
Mindless of the real cost
All thoughts of governance long lost
So the lady May survive
Gainst all that ministers contrive
Regardless of the pundits' sense
Ever blind to the expense
Ever deaf to all advice
Trading on the word SUFFICE
In spirit, at the very least
No agreement, no hope, no feast
Giving us Brexit as a path to tread
Stupid Woman, someone said

Juvenal 2 (: Europe 0)

I will! I will join Juvenal
at the North world's end
on the frozen ocean ice
if one more lie is penned
another argument to slice
our country from its friend:
to make us pay the price.
Enough! We see the trend
let that one vote suffice
another will just offend
divide and not entice.
Let the peoples' will transcend,
better not to ask them twice!
We're doomed to live without a friend
but government can finally advise
on services forgot 'mongst EU spend!

Dyn Hysbys

There are no wise men any more
 their old wisdom is lost
 no old spells that cure
 no potions endure
where once they saved the farmer's herd
the mystery is blurred
and spells that helped a marriage spurned
are no longer learned
the people who once were in their debt
turn to the internet

There are no wise men any more
 their actions show their flaws
 no old spells that cure
 no potions endure
where wise words once secured the way
leaked news holds sway
where lengthy debate would matter
bickering and idle chatter
the old terms are just repeated
their magic lost

There are no wise men any more
 but of course you knew that
 no old spells that cure
 no potions endure
every day we see the same charm fail
another bent nail
hammered into the rotten wood
on which our dreams stood -
the bridge on which we stood in wonder
torn asunder

Broken

Broken

it is all bleak broken; half-heard House, blight blasted, a sound spoke maelstrom where we see no substance swirling over heads and hearts unheard - untending - unending obstacles to speech where he, bright-eyed, oversees the game's communication farce fail debate: debate dire-drowning in the noise.

Order!

Broken

it is all blame blighted; wrong-rung-rigid replay, as rock-like she sole stands alone amongst the chaos seeing nothing but her words - proud-pausing as the waves break over her - continuing untouched, besieged, unhearing ... she clinging to the wrecking rock of her policy, speaks: speaks sure-certain of her plan.

Order!

Broken

it is all bleak broken; dark-dire-demoted democracy, feebly frail, the House is now not even half-heard, we see its accountability discounted - scorned - she says she stands for the people against the House; but caught between required delivery and a denied third vote must fair find passage - should: can one man control that dire destiny dream?

Chaos!

The Last Man: A Conversation

Speakers: Z. [once known as Zarathustra, herald to a new future for mankind]; Gwyntav, the first man; Parzival, the seeker who speaks in favour of religion; Dynolav, the last man; Sarff, the personification of evil/the devil.

Z.: Bleak black the future I descry
your little world a broken isle:
spoilt, riven - alone - does that imply
a lack of vision, of human guile?
You do not dream your future fate
poor brutish mortals, you -
split by a moment: mankind's present trait
is ne'er to fight against that coup
never to risk your easy all,
pacific in your life of cheer
no wish to rise or even crawl
to risk your country's sacred sphere!

Gwyntav: Before my rib was sundered
I wondered
Before the apple core
I saw...

Z.: Nay! Your vision of that one world
of complete, contented bliss
unfurled,
exposed the abyss

Sarff: Had I not unveiled wisdom's light in you
What purpose was your life's due?
That light offered sense and great value
And with *that* belief you could know me too!

Gwyntav: The wisdom that I thought I gained
was mine alone when chained -
from the moment I was set free,
cast from beneath the tree,
my fellow man: mankind in *every* guise
thought wrongly they were wise

yet knew the pressing weight of God
that guilt for life that bore them to the sod -
cast out: condemned to be free
thus sensible of responsibility

Dynolav: We only seek for a pure perfect peace
secure in our free and pleasant land
we will not see our lone tenure cease
lose those pleasant pastures, our green strand -
you may think I tire of life but it is polity
that wearies my soul and drags me down
its civic squabbles rob us of life's quality,
of harmony in an isle with no despotic crown
in our sea-cloistered home: no conflict,
no strong, no weak, no person rules supreme
if we can but this other worldliness restrict
I think we shall retain our happy dream

Gwyntav: Ah! How far have you sunk since I, poor mortal,
first passed from heaven's pearly portal
the eternal garden's beauty lost to my disgrace
and passion's too physical embrace.
So worldly gravitas has held you for far too long
you see no dream and hear no choral evensong
you have no purpose left: you live - you die
no lasting passion, no parting sigh

Z.: Now it seems your god is dead to you, he will provide
no meaning to your time in the land he made,
your worship, the psalms and hymns you hear, divide;
his word no longer offers value - you have strayed -
I think your souls no longer see life's moral reason
You are undone!
No will to rise, no means to triumph this deciding season,
all land is lost, no land is won!
God is dead! And you are left no goal,
no master moral code to follow
through denial's twilight of the soul
where your perfect world spins illusory and hollow

Parzifal: Stay your hand - there is yet still hope:
the God of your dreams that lit your soul
and marked your course throughout life's scope
can even now lend life reality - it is my role
to seek the crucible of his death
and from its brazen lip to pour
its molten life-spring breath
to quicken earth's holy corps
I know his coming... and his passing ways
you may yet cling to God's spiritual sustaining,
rejoice in its necessary and vitalising praise
and know your course while he is reigning

Sarff: If God is dead then I am as nothing in this world
for his great good shines shade where I lie curled
and leaves my dark and evil-tempting demons hurled
to Tartarus' musky depths; but by the dark clouds swirled
I know this cannot be - I *own* the underworld!

Z.: I see no hope in his religious teaching
too many priests in too many missions
too many religions all similarly preaching
the power of good; of evil ambitions -
there are too many fighting for a voice
the clamour rings across each chancel
as elsewhere it echoes across the House
religion will never be mankind's Ancile
and debate will never our folly dowse.
I teach another way to enlightenment
that raises the masses from drab mundane
conformity praised by a fourth estate:
I celebrate *supra humanus* and I campaign
mankind, to let his enlightenment translate
enslavement to a broken democracy of power
into full awareness of his strength to transcend
that limited view of right, of wrong, of evil and of good
and seek the vision to attain his own alternate end:
to stand a shining beacon where once the altar stood

Dynolav: I do not know how this can ever be -
we are sunk so low we quarrel with every friend;
I yearn to travel to a future we all can see;
we need to travel well as travelling is the end.
Our peaceful aspirations to do good should show -
to live a useful life in peace with every being
is not so strange a way that we will not grow
to love the path for its means of freeing
us from the threatening tithes of heaven and of hell
the means, our aspirations lie only within each true mind:
a stronger force than marching to another's knell
if we have only strength enough in love refined...
but I see no future, no prospect for our land!

Parzifal: Again I say, stay your hand - there is still hope
just as you are herald to a future supra humanus
so I am a herald on the wilderness stony slope
to a vision of a spiritual future that is more luminous!

Gwyntav: Joy!
I see again the gates to a paradise wherein
our race can live as God instructs
doing only good and abjuring mortal sin:
our lack of grace eternity obstructs

Z.: You seek in vain:
your fellow man has lost your God and cries in pain -
he cannot even see
how his world can be
he kneels without passion,
cannot see in what fashion
the world should spin
what future lies therein,
cannot face the trial
to defeat his own denial.
I offer another goal
to make mankind whole -
if humanity can raise
eyes to its own rays,
can see with perfect sight
that religion *is* that light,

that the journey and its landing
in themselves give understanding.
Such vision to accept past life
and see a future without strife
let mankind see his soul
as a future within his whole.

Sarff:

With no good there is no bad
but only a lesser, hopeful good -
as mankind strives towards its future
I leave one last ironic thought
as everything must needs be good
there is no reason for a schism:
nor national trust
nor doctrine's thrust
should ever separate a nation.

Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying!

Falstaff: 'Henry IV, Part 1' act 5, sc. 4

There is a man
Who would be a king. This is such stuff
As past dreams would make his many morrows
That he, Princeling, may strut upon life's stage
As one with pride.

Yet this is a man
Who must know a past. That is the stage
As present nightmare on which he played so sad a part
That he, Pretender, needs now attend our courts
As one who lied.

So this is a man
Who misled his people. Yet we are his votes
As now may ask account and question why today
That he, prosecuted, may still stand for high office
As one who leads.

We are the people
Who he would rule. Are we such puny stuff
As would allow such a man his power to lead our land
That he, Prime Minister, may lie some more
As one we trust?

May his past be his final prologue

With apologies to Shakespeare

Sin

"There is no sin except stupidity." Oscar Wilde -The Critic as Artist.

Mea culpa! Mea culpa!
Nostra maxima culpa!
Thus should we weep, we cry
As it all ends with a whimper, a sigh
It is the people's will, they say
Proroguing to get *their* glory day
Your vote was for an ideal state
For nation, borders, Keep Britain Great
Now, your vote means a total schism
As we see no agreement mechanism
Six hundred pages that define
The ways our nation will decline
No trade agreements with the old Market
A dearth of imports - how will we mark it?
No doctors, no drugs, a future stark
As borders become one huge lorry park
Will industry decline without its freight?
Manufacture with no markets just abate?
We can only say we voted thus
Seeing promises writ large on a campaign bus
A lame excuse - did we not think for ourselves at all -
Remember the United States of Europe and *OUR* call
To make a family based on freedom and on peace:
Those great ideals that we shall just let cease
What have we done? What is our fate -
Begging outside the Union's gate?
Of course we won't - we will stand tall
As all men do before their fall
But after, as in poverty and in debts
We struggle with huge national threats
Will we cry, This was not what we thought?
Let us back in! Without you we are nought!

y/Lolfa

Mostly Welsh

Poetry of landscape, love and loss

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