

by Derek Morrison

*Troll Kings now ride the wave
New prophets, the world to save
Deadly weapons they now wield
Vicious words seed virtual-field
Fracking anxieties and discontents
Fuelling egos, exploiting vents
Thought leaders of the virtual age
Putative masters of creating rage
Recruiters for intellectual bubbles
Silo builders for shared troubles.*

*So grains of sand can feel like rocks
And tiny birds pretend they're hawks
So setting out to make their kill
While claiming it is the people's will
Their message is, 'destroy the nest'
For only they know know what is best
And in their silos the people hear
Because their world is full of fear.*

*Farage tapped the English soul
Claiming out was his only goal
Cameron fell and so left the stage
Stoking fires of increasing rage
Then Boris made his leader grab
But was felled by Gove's Brutus stab
Arise the saviour Come What May
"Out means out" was all she'd say.*

*Because Ed had left his brothers' Band
His Stone of Promises failed to stand
So Comrade Corbyn had come to pass
Minor Troll King of the working class*

*His disciples dug a deep deep moat
On which to launch their leaky boat
To hold a Party for times gone by
Only true believers need apply
Comrade Corbyn denied the link
He as Captain would make it sink
General Elections he may not win
But he only existed to expunge the sin
Of heretics from the New Labour sect
So comrades again command respect
Come What May had gold struck
She just could not believe her luck
How all the stars could so align
Surely this was a sacred sign.*

*But now, even bigger kites would fly
Enter true Grand Masters of the virtual lie.*

*Apprentice seducer makes Trumpet call
Roaring promises of a mighty wall
"Keep them out" became his war cry
"Push them out" meant his lesser fry
Irradiating patriotism until mutations form
So cancerous nationalism becomes the norm
And in its magnetic lies and hyperbole
Attractive solutions to set them free
Spawned post-truths that did so resonate
Bypassing any intellectual gate
Mind antibodies readied to deploy
Nascent dissonance to destroy.*

*Putin could so rub his hands with glee
As such Trumpet notes were his key
His virtual missiles now had the range*

*For targeting insecurities of global change
Anxieties and prejudices that lay beneath
Were nudged now into sharp relief
So Clinton fell and she was no more
As Trumpet blasted through the door
And so the Troll Kings to their surprise
Found they had won their mighty prize.*

*Meanwhile, on East Asia's stage
An angry Troll King paced his cage
For half-brother love he had none
So he knew what must now be done
So Kim Jong-nam met sticky end
Flyers' VX face-cream now latest trend
For projecting power and striking fear
Into non-believers in leaders dear.*

*And in Europe too, things look tough
As motley prophets strut and puff
Promising Utopias by going alone
As long as they ascend the throne
"Keep them out" is their war cry
"Push them out" means lesser fry
But making 'the other' disappear
Removes how Troll Kings focus fear
And then new villains must be found
"Enemy of the People" become Trumpet sound.*

*But such Troll Kings don't exist to lead
For it's ego furnaces that drive their need
Populist woodlands must now provide the fuel
Where such wolves feed and dribble drool
The populus however will prove fickle food
For the Troll Kings have so misunderstood*

*That true leaders always put others first
Discarding approbation to slake ego's thirst.*

[To listen to this verse select below]

<http://www.cyberstanza.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TrollKings.mp3>

Commentary

First, acknowledgement is due to Edvard Grieg's orchestral piece *In the Hall of the Mountain King* (part of Ibsen's 1876 satirical play (poetic fantasy?) [Peer Gynt](#)) for influencing the choice of title for my verse. Intended as a satirical interpretation of major events as they happened in 2016-2017 as viewed from the UK. The *Peer Gynt* world of Trolls, egotism, fantasy, battles, avoidance of responsibility, and an absence of consideration of consequences, somehow seemed an appropriate driver for *In the Hall of the Troll Kings* (which deliberately blends the more traditional and the more modern 'virtual' meanings of a Troll).

A key challenge is that time moves in one direction only and so actors and events will move on so that in a few years time it will be difficult to remember just how important it all seemed at the time or, conversely, just how important we should have viewed these actors and events given what did – or did not – happen in whatever future awaits. So this commentary will provide, hopefully, a useful aide-memoire for looking back from these future times.

In the UK the so called Brexit movement evolved as the portmanteau term for the ultimately successful 2016 campaign for Britain's exit from the European Union via a UK wide referendum on 23 June 2016. The still-evolving history of Brexit in the UK certainly provides rich satirical fodder. The key actors of the time referred to (directly or indirectly) in *In the Hall of the Troll Kings* are:

- Nigel Farage – then leader of the radical and right-wing UK Independence Party – UKIP (despite multiple retirements from the role) and the person most identified with the Brexit ideology. Ironically – and controversially – he is also a Member of the European Parliament (MEP). Farage had fully expected that the Brexit campaign(s) would lose and had actually prepared his concession speech after close of voting on 23 June 2016. Under Farage's leadership, UKIP both fed and rode a populist wave and, at one

time, looked like splitting the right wing from the UK's Conservative Party. At the time of writing, however, since the Brexit referendum result, UKIP's influence appears much reduced and the future of the party is uncertain. Nigel Farage, despite his influence, has never held UK political office, despite, ironically being an elected Member of the European Parliament (MEP) which he vigorously both insulted and sought to undermine during his tenure.

- David Cameron – former Conservative Prime Minister who had devised the UK's 2016 referendum as a means of neutralising the growing influences of both his Party's own right wing and the UKIP both whose mission was for the UK to leave the EU. Cameron miscalculated and narrowly lost the referendum vote held on 23 June 2016 and announced his forthcoming resignation on 24 June 2016. He formally resigned as UK Prime Minister on 13 July 2016. Arguably, Cameron's failure to specify a clear majority result in the EU referendum, e.g. 60:40 for each country of the UK enabled the eventual narrower England & Wales leave result to prevail (England 53.4%, Wales 52.5%, Scotland 38%, Northern Ireland 44.2%) and so has served to amplify divergent national opinions.
- Boris Johnson – flamboyant former journalist and Mayor of London who became a Conservative MP. After Cameron's resignation he withdrew from his leadership bid of the UK Conservative Party after betrayal by his then friend and fellow MP Michael Gove. At the time of writing he is Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs a high profile role to which he was appointed by Theresa May thus ensuring he remains in the public eye and so retains accountability during the Brexit process (while also weakening opportunities for realising any future leadership ambitions).
- Michael Gove – Conservative, Secretary of State for Education 2010-2014, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice 2015-2016. Failed leadership bid UK Conservative Party 2016 after withdrawing support from his friend and fellow MP Boris Johnson in the former's leadership bid. Not reappointed to any UK Government role by Theresa May the successful leadership candidate.
- Theresa May – At the time of writing she is Conservative Party Leader and Prime Minister who survived the turbulence after the then Prime Minister David Cameron lost the EU referendum of 23 June 2016. She emerged as the victor on 11 July 2016 after the very brief leadership campaign that followed the referendum. She assumed office on David Cameron's formal resignation to the Queen on 13 July 2016. Despite the narrow EU referendum vote and her own low-key EU 'remainer' preference she

invoked the 'Article 50' process on 29 May 2017 that will take the UK out of the EU probably in 2019.

- Ed Milliband – After Labour UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown was defeated in the 2010 General Election Ed Milliband succeeded him and became UK Labour Party leader and Leader of the Opposition, In turn he was defeated by David Cameron in the 2015 General Election and then resigned. Famous for his memorable but disastrous election campaign *Stone of Promises* (alias the Ed Stone). Ed Milliband's brother, David Milliband, was also a respected Labour politician and was considered by many to be a more promising leadership candidate. David Milliband, however, did not enjoy the same level of support from the UK union movement as Ed did and so withdrew from politics when his brother Ed Milliband was elected Labour Party leader.
- Jeremy Corbyn – current UK Labour Party leader and Leader of the Opposition who succeeded Ed Milliband in 2015. A politician who, while respected for his deeply-held political conviction has been much criticised for poor leadership and being wed to an outdated ideological approach based on the world of the 1970s rather than the challenges of the 21 century. At the time of writing Corbyn's leadership had been contested on two occasions. Despite not enjoying support from UK MPs in the Parliamentary Labour Party each time he has stood for leadership election he has defeated challengers by dint of his majority support from the Labour membership vote which now seems to have coalesced into those seeking a more traditional form of socialism rather than the New Labour reforms first introduced by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and to varying degrees, those who followed him. At the time of writing his party faces a General Election and his political fate may be determined by the result although, as the verse suggests, his priorities may well lie elsewhere. Consequently, his supporters may well prefer he continues as leader so that they – as they perceive it – return the Labour Party to its founding ideology.



Ed Milliband with his Stone of Promises
(alias the Ed Stone). Labour general
election campaign 2015

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The key international figures referred to were:

- Donald John Trump – 45th President of the United States. A reality television star with no background in politics this Republican wildcard of the US 2016 Presidential Election confounded the expectations of both the traditional mainstream political class (of all parties) and the mainstream media by defeating his Democratic opponent Hilary Clinton and taking up office in the White House on 20 January 2017. An enthusiastic user of social media or public platforms to communicate directly with his audience Trump at times gives the impression of being driven by an ‘impulse engine’ with his apparently improvised unfiltered reactions to issues or events attracting plaudits from his supporters and censure (or expressions of anxiety) from his critics. Trump appears to be an unashamed populist who has declared the traditional US political culture to be an elite ‘swamp’ that he intends to drain. Among his many promises were: to “build a big beautiful wall” between the US and Mexico; replace the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), ban all Muslims from entering the US, and eject all undocumented immigrants, plus build a ‘partnership’ with the Russian Federation. It remains to be seen whether this apparently unpredictable White House incumbent can adapt sufficiently quickly to the exigencies of his Presidential Office, or whether global political systems will adapt (or react) to him. The quality of the team he builds around him will be key to the outcomes of his election – both positive and

negative.

- Vladimir Putin – President of the Russian Federation. A major but controversial figure on the world political stage since 1999, when he assumed leadership of the Russian Federation after the resignation of Boris Yeltsin. An effective, wily, but ruthless political operator he appears to view the Western democratic model as unsuited to the needs of Russia and allies and has progressively adopted autocratic and interventionist policies when he perceives either opportunities or threats. It is asserted that the Russian Federation sought to influence the result of the 2016 US Presidential Election Campaign that brought Donald Trump to power via the selective release of material hacked from the Hilary Clinton campaign servers. At the time of writing the investigation within the US continues and the careers of several key figures within the US have already been affected with more likely to follow.
- Kim Jong-un – Supreme Leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (alias North Korea) since 2011. Despite growing international sanctions he has continued the unpredictable and bellicose traditions of his dynastic predecessors with a particular emphasis on the elimination of internal threats and the development of nuclear weapons. The most recent examples of the former was the execution of his uncle (and probably his extended family) in 2013 and more recently, his regime is implicated in the assassination of his half-brother Kim Jong-nam (by VX nerve agent) at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on 13 February 2017. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons makes this by far the most likely trigger-spot for major conflict with US President Donald Trump appearing willing to confront the North Korean regime if this continues.