

Extract from *A Private and Public Ritual*
From monograph *Tim Shaw*
Interview with Tim Shaw by Indra Khanna

IK – One of the reasons I especially like *Parliament* is because of the synthesis of the mythical with the individuality of each rook. One of them seems to even have a knife.

TS – *Parliament* is one of those things that I stumbled across. I had two weeks in this residency right on the very edge of Ireland, and it was the most bleakest, wonderful experience ever. I'd arrived and not known really what to do with myself. I was getting terribly, terribly anxious, and I just sat looking out the window. I'd have these great highs and lows, and I thought I was starting to go absolutely mad, and almost bawling in tears, and laughing my head off the next minute.

IK – Was it because of the spirit of that place?

TS – Just maybe because I was totally on my own, and all these levels of consciousness just started to dissipate. I started going on long walks and drawing crows and rooks and started to look at black plastic snagged on the barbed wire and trees - I wasn't sure what were crows and what was plastic. I thought 'Right', and I got some plastic and some straw, and I had a glue gun and some wire, and I just made this rook. And I kind of made another and another. And then just at that time the Iraq War had kicked off, and I was thinking of the behaviour of parliamentarians, and I wondered if it was any different from the rooks.

When you listen to *Today in Parliament* on the radio late at night the behaviour, the sounds, they're very like rooks, and people get shouted down, and 'HEAR HEAR HEAR'. I just thought, this is a piece of work it's about order, absolute dis-order, and madness.

IK – And in folklore there is this idea that rooks have a king, and a trial, and a parliament and punishment.

TS – They will sometimes just decide to attack one rook, ostracise it and kill it maybe. Why do they decide to gang up on one individual rook? So what the piece was getting at was that thing of the group, when somebody decides something and the group follows.

IK – Your Midsummer celebrations, the rooks, these feed from more British myths, for want of a better word, than Dionysus. As does *Thank God for the Pregnant Fairy*. I notice that in some of the early maquettes, you've got her standing on a can of Jolly Green Giant.

TS – I had actually modelled her propped on a can of Green Giant corn. I just thought of this scenario where the fairy had led the green giant down the garden path, and there we have the pregnant fairy. It's a silly thing. I think that sometimes things do not have to be heavy and terribly serious.

IK – Fairies go back at least to Celtic times, this other kingdom of equals, these dangerous people that you have to watch out for in the woods.

TS – Well that's interesting because you're leading me to talking about *The Green Man*...