

Two portraits of Jeremy Corbyn by Jeremy Glogan and Ruth Angel Edwards are, for me, inextricably linked to the times and places in which I first saw them. Glogan's painting *Untitled (Corbyn 1)* depicts Corbyn sleeping in a flat, graphic style, with his features outlined with flowing grey brushstrokes and his skin and beard depicted with matte pastel pink and very light grey, juxtaposed with a chaotic background of sharp angular abstraction. It was exhibited in 2018 at the first Church Painting Show, organised by Edwards. I can't remember precisely what was happening in terms of the interminable internal machinations of the Labour Party, which I then followed to an infinitesimal extent utterly unthinkable before or since. However, I do know that at that point there remained a level of buoyancy after the triumph of the 2017 general election, and I recall thinking that the portrait's disarming tenderness—augmented rather than trivialised by its cartoonish aesthetic—was as good a portrayal as I had ever seen of this diffident man, upon whom the hopes of (almost) every leftist in the country were being projected, with varying levels of self-awareness.

Edwards's painting *Untitled (Jeremy Corbyn as Tim Westwood)* depicts Corbyn in a hyperrealist style brandishing a magnum of Moët and Chandon champagne in a gun-shaped holder, with roses sprouting from the bottle. As indicated by the work's title, the torso in the image is drawn from a photograph of the former Radio One DJ Tim Westwood, who has since been accused of a prodigious amount of sexual misconduct. The painting was commissioned by Merlin Carpenter for his outdoor Salon 4 event on Sunday 9th August 2020, at which Glogan also exhibited another Corbyn portrait not under discussion here. Carpenter had given Edwards a brief to reflect on Corbyn's then-current and future status. It had been only two years since the Church Painting Show, but in the time between we had experienced the harrowing defeat of the 2019 General Election, plus the first wave of Covid. Edwards's thinking behind the painting was a speculative vision of Corbyn as analogous to the figure of

Westwood, a posh white boy with a genuine love of rap music who had made his name on pirate radio and was eventually embraced by the establishment at the expense of becoming a caricature of himself. Similarly, Edwards imagined a Corbyn spending the rest of his life touring UK student unions getting selfies with 20 year olds. Upon seeing this painting, however, I remember it resonating with me on a level beyond the absurdism and humour of its premise, because I wanted a Corbyn with that kind of braggadocio. At the time of seeing Glogan's first Corbyn painting, there was still the potential that Corbyn would rise like a lion from the slumber Glogan depicted. But by August 2020 Starmer was leader, the future was cancelled, and I wanted Corbyn to punch someone in the face.

Daniel Neofetou, February 2025