

Not Fade Away

You know the kind of thing: buying six plastic daffodils from Woolworths for your mother's birthday, plus a chocolate clock you ate yourself, offering her little chips from it.

Only to discover it was a kind of faux chocolate, floury, like *Ex-Lax*, but without the after-effects. Yet don't we all spin threads from our bowels like Blake's maidens, you could call them word-

strings. All chin music has a gut origin, that's non-negotiable, like an agreement to settle for a check-out tiff. Of course she has forgotten the clock now, thoroughly forgotten along with

the mental version of what the chief boy scout calls 'the body core'. My body core was invaded by the shadow of my dead father last week. He entered through my right hand joining

my still-living mother's shadow, which must have entered through one ear. I forget. We three lived a small life quietly within a shell of blue-black wash, a kind of mussel.

And now I am fully liaisoned as one I find
my emanation Phorlah standing behind me
making me melt a plastic lily under
a cigarette lighter flame onto an electric

blue blouse made of poly-something of the kind
bought for a later birthday. My guide from
the lower Heaven of Willesden pulls me away
making a drip of light grey fall onto the back

of my hand. The pain was bad, but worse
the way the globule was centred like
the spectre Boolle upon the red-brown Sea
of Forgetting. I could not remove it, despite it all.

A True-Dream Run

So what happens to you when you have shot all the tigers
and it's impossible to soothe you with a stronger pain,
when your heart is used-up, yet you are almost satisfied?
You notice the organic rot, the sag and crack of things
constructed not with you in mind, as some central burgeon
of fluid matter punctate with rust and grimy seedlings.
And the food you eat is only food — then food for the earth.
I see your descendants, Lucretius, lapped and hearty.
I see their cycle helmets, their answers for everything.
They have your confidence and breeziness; they have your youth,
but they don't have your funny arguments and gift of light.
Well, my arguments are funny, but in a different way.
They spring from being matter-sick, right from the sag and crack
I mentioned in line four, and it will seep through my lines like sweat.

Lucretius, you extracted beauty from unbeautiful
Physicalism: the doctrine that gives you a good laugh
just when you want one. Its says — it really does say just this:
only the physical exists, that's it, *tout court*, stroll on.
Your joys and inklings, Kay's exquisite boredoms, your pretences
are absolute *gar Nichts*. The bogie in your pocket, though
scrunched up in some kitchen towel (the sort a child might
save for later) is concrete in the cross-hairs of space and time.
Your memory of the kid at school that Bigwood called Bogie

Boy? That's it: an ontological under-achiever.

Your memory image of his licking his upper lip, then going up for seconds before he'd forked food from his plate.

And — the thought of it — what's it like to be him now, no longer the whippet-clown, but an obese self-loathing Clown in Daventry? I break into song: *nothing is real...*

Now listen hard: when I turn to a philosopher, another one of those sporting a beard that looks just like hairy ectoplasm, who said that if — let's call him — God wanted to reproduce this very world 'as is', all He'd have to do is duplicate the physical.

And those who like to dribble on to goal with this fine thought will add with a flourish of their cycle helmets, 'mental life comes for free'. *Comes for free!* Some cog-sci jargon sure to get the goat, then curry it with rabbit shit passed off as juicy raisins. But, here's a tougher raisin to chew on: this tacitly assumes the mental is an existent effect, and thus a something, a something that must exist, as effects exist no less than do their causes exist.

So, now you have my pith and kernel plated like display meals in the windows of Mediterranean restaurants, or maybe in the traffic dust and exhaust air across the road from *El Prado*. No one would eat them as they are; nobody with sense would gobble down my motive flounces. But, in both cases, queasy-making display and plastic

sheen are true emblems of a nutrition un-sneeze-at-able. Let me explain. I must explain. I know this is too four-square to seduce, but listen well. As I adumbrated in a line above (line twenty-two in fact), one often hears ‘the physical exists in space and time, mentality exists in neither’. Quite false. Take heed of this Martina, as you blow-dry the table cloth, listen up all you swains with spiky hair and maids with first-generation élan.

The physical does indeed exist in space. That spindly copper horse Szilvia bought me in Lesbos sits beside a photograph of my beloved done in Portugal in 1997 by her blazored oldie love.

Who would deny that’s where they are! But, where on earth’s the time? The time is Now, you will say, and if the time were two hours ago the photograph would be deep within a trash bin before I had got round to cleaning my appalling flat.

But, this is where the error comes. The time is always Now. Past and future locations can merely allude to change. For ‘medium sized dried goods’, as they are archly dubbed by those who ply their trade as philo-types, and even, dare I say, for sub-atomic tit-bits, Now is not even default. It’s *a*-temporal, old son, quite meaningless. For the past and the future too are children of a mental point.

Let me, tongue deep in cheek, call this ‘a place-holder’ for now
(My cog-sci shudder and the world moves on. The traffic sighs).
Let us indeed return to space before we tackle time.
Please note, my instances back in lines 57-60
were of what is near what or what is inside what. Which means
that the only space at issue here is the kind we call
all-o-cen-tric — Do look it up right now and learn a thought —
while *egocentric* space, the space of left and right, of near
and far, above/below requires a sensing body at
a point. One need not say, ‘a mind’, but something with, call it:
a sensorium. And that’s well within the mental scheme
of non-things. So I conclude — I have no cycle helmet
to flourish at you, though I have a skull that’s thin as thought —
that the existence of globs of matter (my socks lie on
the floor) is only spatial in one of the two senses,
while egocentric space is mental, as you please, or don’t.
At which comfortable-seeming padding down I turn back
to time and the flow of it within a mind. I say flow,
but mean another thing. I mean transitions between points
of a sensorium or cogitating entity
(oh yes, I know how dry this sounds, the syllables
stick to the sides of the cheek and make a plashy exit
through the lips. The drier the thought the heavier the stream
of Oxbridge saliva in the churning chilling concourse).
Sometimes sensorium’s slave of the will and sometimes not.
When not, you see Ned drain his pint then walk the sticky trail

to the bar and speak his husky words; when it *is* you look at the silent jukebox, then at Ned trying to open a packet of crisps and then at Vicky pulling at her bra strap behind the bar. In each case, this, then this, then this, then that. And that is time, a product of a sense-input or the will. The cogitating entity? Where's will and sans-will here? Willed sequences you ask? Trains chuffing past with token thoughts. And what gives rise to a thought? The thought before that thought. The unwilled case? You now insist. Those ordered bubblings up. You lie upon your bed, dead from the day, and there's the thought unwilled by you – by which I mean not caused by a prior conscious tokening. Thoughts about her look that hovered like the Parsifal spear in its glister ambiguity, then about what you said to her — context, crushing-velvet. Then, after a refractory gap, a different thought of something left undone ... then you have quite forgotten what. No, I will not flourish the point: mental existence is temporal and the physical's spatially real enough. No, I will not flourish, but sit here hands folded over my belly like someone well dinnered, not me, with korma on my cleanest shirt. For I have a task ahead of me. Or rather a dragon in a cave to slay. A dragon of this sentence kind: 'Deluded one, the mental depends upon the physical and not vice versa!'

More gently,
the allocentric spatial stuff ‘grounds’ the temporal wraith.
This ‘grounds’, now here’s a glory for you a word thick on the
(yes) ground when it comes to digging to the bed-rock for the
black cat. Oh a pint of ‘grounds’ will be your only man.
In short, we see around us so many un-mental things,
but never a mental entity standing — excuse me
as I snort — alone. Never a claim so meaning-free, ne’er
a thought more pishy-enamoured of its tidy little
self. Let me tell you why, and hold on tight to this novel turn.

First step is: all we know of the mental springs from ourselves.
Solipsism is the case — and don’t look like a child
walking past a graveyard! The mental is temporal and ...
first person. You can know nothing of my mind (thanks be)
and I draw a dead blank at yours, waving belief-desire
reasoning at you like the flag of a defeated team.
There are two aspects to the meaninglessness of the claim
that mental is dependent as it’s never found alone.
First, the bare idea of evidence *for* independence
is unintelligible. ... You wake one day to find that you
have no body, you can float through brick walls and glow
in the back seat of a commuter car, invisible,
unfeeling, a pure experiential point. But, how
could you tell this from a dreamed event (you are still in bed)
or from the grim aftermath of sniffing glue at Trev’s place?

Given the sequestered privacy — yes, Ludwig, spin on in your grave — of the mental, this could never be distinct from fantasy; so meaningless! And meaningless too the second route in which we say, ‘I can quite easily and wilfully imagine my mind body-free, and so the claim’s a simple shining Truth: my mind moves back and forth and on through space and time’, while instantly we recognise it’s false: the luring fact that when the brain comes to a stop the IQ drops. Nothing can be both true and false at once so meaningless, once more.

More generally, I say to you, that no distinction can be made, given the central place of mind, between ‘my’ world and ‘the’ world. When you walk down to the Angel Tube and sit in the near-empty boozier next to it ‘my’ and ‘the’ are one. ‘Reductio’, you say? No — and here I must admit that my didactic project is floating out to sea like Iggle Piggle’s boat — ‘I got the moonlight and I got the sun, I got the stars above’. I mean, no, not reductio of course, but fessing up (another cog-sci tic) to a hard fact, or rather a soft truth — a lonely launching pad to the idea, if you can call it that, to traverse me to the final breath of this.

Listen well again, though now my tone is more wheedling and hazy than sharply poised. Given a certain cast of sense there *is* escape from this phenomenal cage if one thinks. No, feels. No, lives the view that just as bits of matter are all parts of Matter, so minds are parts of Mind. Stop, don't go just yet. Again, like Iggle Piggle (eleven lines up), I float only. And what's external to one's mind? Why Mind of course. And now, dear neo-Lucretians, they bank like thunderheads, your questions: Is this Mind merely the sum of all the minds down here — Ned's, Vicky's, Simon Cowell's and John Ashbery's — or does it stand as Queen Bee to the drones and working girls? Is Mind the Mind apart, in short: 'a fact' with which we share some mental genes, and does it will the good and think good thoughts? In other words — they strap their cycle helmets at this point — 'your Mind's the old firm, the horrid pseudo-postulate of line 33? What tablets do you take for this right now?'

I could frame an answer upon a dying fall. All I will say is: what I feel on this depends upon my mood. I do not type in underpants beside a can of grog. I wear a tie and work in Austin Reed, live just off the Holloway Road. The living room of my appalling flat's triangular, huge sash windows at the vertex painted shut. In summer I'm the final unbought item in a shop; in winter I hover within grey light checking if a radiator's on. This weekend one of my friends will

visit. I can't recall if it's the one who bullies me
or the one I carry like a baby. For sure, to think
this is the world is not. ... Oh you complete the thought.
But, on some days it feels as if there is a landscape where
I thought only a hut was standing. This I call my wealth.