Nick Wadley

MIND’S EYE
Mind’s Eye
At night,
when thoughts walk naked,
unrecognised without their clothes,
they're neither words nor pictures quite.
By day,
they seem to go more one way
than the other.
mind’s eye

It’s easy enough for a camel
to pass through the eye of a mind.
Difficult to stop the traffic flow
no queue at immigration
no imagination control.
It’s a bit like I’ve always imagined
— see, there it goes again —
It’s a bit like I’ve always imagined the Ark,
the rush hour panic
as floodwaters rise.
All that pushing
and the noise
and smell.
Camel’s breath,
imagine.

No, CUT!
That’s not quite true
When they first told me the story
I imagined it less like life of course.
It was all in twos
in queues
and coloured in clockwork patterns up the ramp.

But have you noticed,
when you cut like that,
that the first take doesn’t go away?
It just gets pushed further down the car,
concertina’d.
trampled even, on a busy day.
What with the noise of rising water, too,
you can hardly hear Noah’s voice call next,
as the camel, all elbows, pushes through.
Noah Noah

‘Rain rain rain rain rain rain rain, is that all you can do?’ thought Noah, running late. ‘It’s like a bleedin flood out there, We’ll never get to Calais at this rate.’

‘And it was just like this yesterday, as well’ said Mrs N, ‘funny how things come in twos’. The au pairs all agreed.

‘Fuck’, Noah cried out from the bridge. ‘Just my luck... Where’s the other bleedin dove gone now?’
pillow book

I could make a book
to make you stop and look.
I could write and draw a Lindisfarne Gospel of a book
of all the things I've seen and heard, and done, had done and felt
and touched and smelled.
They'd come for miles
to Waterstones and libraries, to see.

Where can I find a pill, or herbal tea
to shit this book out of my head
and let me sleep in bed?
dawn

Once more it's four fifteen
A lemon meringue of a day,
her primrose acids sweet and brittle as a poet's smile.
Praps death will sidle in this way,
at four fifteen,
eyes closing just as light arrives in style?

* * *

While it's still dark
Ma'am Death can park
her limo in the mews,
and then at dawn
she'll stroke her horn
and chauffeur life to other avenues
Is that you?
Was that breathing? or the wind?

Is this mountains or a face under my fingertips?
Is this the inside or the outside of the cast?

Knots in the thread of memory,
loose tangles pulled hard as it all moves on.

And all the time, the line is just the edge of something elses,
like in Steinberg’s drawings:
where circumstances meet or met.
Time-gap between shifting continents
that’s pressed shut by the past into a silhouette
until we finger it as braille rivers on the time-map
a vein of mortar,
lava squeezed up, molten and misshapen, between compacting people
and hardened into how it was.

It used to be the nothing
but in the half-light, less than half-light
it’s the only something that there is
to feel a way
on hands and knees, across...

Was that a flush of fever,
or your breath against my face?
is that you?
As he stepped into the sky, the wind dropped. Light rain hung in the air, stilled by moonlight, brushed his face like a curtain of cool beads. In his curious fingers the beads warmed into letters, framing words, some strange, and messages. A maze of meanings, he thought, like life. 'What d’you mean like life?', the letters spelt. 'This is life.'
two men on a train,
one of them dreaming
castaway

The father smoked his last that day
The tap was turned, too late to strike a light.
All bridges burned, so old so young, and Christ! too tired to fight
another row. The castaway,
eyes slow from gas and booze and nothing borrowed left to lose,
no IOUs to write, smiled his last smile and
cooked the book he'd chosen for his fragrant desert island.

The kids were by the sea, and each
learned there's another pebble on the beach, that day.
The widow started planning how to keep the debts and dreams at bay.
She never could quite keep them out,
those thoughts that made her shout at night,
they never went away.
Those thoughts never went away.
play it again

At the Riverside Theatre one afternoon,
taking tea with my friend Richard Deacon,
I saw the great man glide through.
Head like a hawk
with a beak on that promised no prisoners.
A squawk and an unflinching eye
echo on in the memory.
Not much talk,
just pecking away at the brain.
Peck-peck-pecking it over again.

peck-peck-peck, peck-peck-peck, peck-peck-peck
peck-peck-peck, peck-peck-peck, peck-peck-peck
Peck-peck-peck peck it
Peck-peck-peck, peck-peck-peck, peck-peck-peck Beckett.
poem in space

close your eyes
imagine where you are
this is the poem

corridor

There's no looking behind you
down that ill-lit passage, lined with doors
in each of whose shadows stands one who owns some of you.
You have been what they think.
There's no looking back.
words words words words word swords
I saw David Sylvester at the zoo the other day. 
Gorillas do it all the time 
aping human beings, to the tails. 
And so since the beginning. 
Darwin thought that we were winning 
but it's always them that's grinning 
through the rails.

*   *   *

Excuse moi, m'sieu. 
Could you just ask the waiter 
if there's crocodile or alligator 
as the plat du jour, or are they not in favour? 
Maybe they're out of stock, 
but I do crave a 
little croc, 
m'sieu.
House of Windsor

House of cards, with faded royal flush.
Touring two-ring circumstance that lost its pomp,
Marquee rowdy with tabloids baying 'More!
*Bring on the crowns!'*

Forlorn ringmaster,
Mixed-up castrato, shorn of whip,
Lets faux pas slip, twixt mind and lip.

No-one could guess the age
of multiple old ladies, stood backstage,
idling in the wings
sipping their gin-&-things.

The clown prince rode his white queen bareback
off the board. And then right off the track.
A crowded, clouded throng
threw flowers and their sentimental song.
tea and empathy

Put the kettle on, it's half past two.
The muse is dormant. Words advance
pour mieux reculer, as they say in France.
Ideas full of promise shrivel promise-free.
There's nothing better left up here to do.
Put the kettle on, it's half past three.

Who makes the tea at Buckingham Palace?
Did Di make Charles the healing brew
in Wedgewood chalice?
Ask, smiling sweetly, 'one or two?',
Was Philip there?
and Queenie too?

Did Marilyn make the tea for mister Miller
or was she just his stocking filler?
All those shapes in fishnet tights,
to help him sleep at nights,
her sexual and her intellectual feller,
Did she ask him to pass the mozzarella?
touch paper, first light

I took the razor to my blunt pencil.  
Shavings on the floor.  
After shave, pin-sharp for that first touch on paper: 
one high-pitched fracture, smaller than snap.  
Bell-clear, like boy soprano,  
alone, like first kiss.  
No sooner drawn than withdrawn,  
but pointed in the memory.
heads you win
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"our heads are round, to allow thought to change direction" (Francis Picabia)

sylvia libedinsky
& nick wadley
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Nick Wadlow