

this way" "But the axe" "must becomes" "a long cloth, I think," "to tie"  
 "My head back on" "What about" "the ghoul?" I asked "Forget"  
 "the ghoul for now" "We must tie my" "head back on" "But first" "I will  
 tell you" "some more of what" "only a throat," "only a headless"  
 "body knows" "Only your first" "mother knows"

[...]

"Lay his hear down" "for a moment," she said, "her voice trembling"  
 "Lay it on" "the grass" "& wipe your hands clean there too—"  
 "I did—" "Then let's sit" "for a minute" "enjoying this night"  
 "before we change" "Change forever;" "We sat quietly" "a short while,"

"a mist" "about us now" "that softened" "her headlessness,"  
 "obscured" "her body slightly," "hid the horror" "of her neck—"  
 "I'm afraid," "she said," "to take my head back;" "Why?" I asked  
 "I'm afraid" "I'll loose my power" "to speak from" "deep inside of me"

"Lose my power" "to make visions..." "But we must put it back on" "anyway"  
 "How do we do it?" I asked "Please bring my head here" "I lifted it—"  
 "It felt dry," "the face looked chalky" "Place it on my neck—"  
 "I will hold" "very still—" "Now find the heart in" "the grass"

"I brought" "the heart close" "to the newly" "headed creature"  
 "Smear blood from" "the heart" "on the line of" "separation"  
 "I daubed" "a ring of sticky red" "all around" "her neck, like a  
 necklace" "of liquid ruby" "Now find" "the axe," "the girl's axe—"

"Over there somewhere;" "Her voice issued now" "from a pale mouth"  
 "though the lips" "didn't move yet" "I found" "& brought the axes"  
 "Smear blood on" "the blade's edge," "she said" "Which I did"  
 "The axe went limp" "became a white scarf" "Tie the scarf around"

"my wound" "When I had done so," "her face" "began to change"  
 "Color" "poured into it:" "her skin was golden brown" "her eyes  
 deep-set & brown," "tender" "beneath fierce eyebrows" "She was young"  
 "Younger than I" "& yet she was, I felt" "truly" "our mother..."

"Wide nostrils, wide lips..." "She smiled at me" "warmly" "I'm not  
 afraid" "anymore," she said "My voice has not lost" "its power"

## Life, End of Christine Brooke-Rose

2006

The head top leans against the bathroom mirror so that the looking glass becomes a feeling glass. But what does it feel? This position is for body-balance during the brushing of teeth and the washing of face neck arms and torso. Below is for the biddy, and the feet, if sitting on a stool. But especially the torso. For in fact the teeth can also be brushed if the loins touch the washbasin however cold, or the hand grips the edge, on condition neither is wet.

And then the drying of the body-parts, one hand on the tall towel-radiator, the other on the lower part of the towel to dry the lower body. Dressing means sitting on the bed, entering pants, rising, legs in calf-love with the bedside, to slide the pants then trousers past the bottom before swiftly sitting again. The feet feel where the entrances are, whether of pants or slippers.

Standing, on its own, without support somewhere, causes a tidal wave of nothingness in the head and a limping rush to the nearest armchair or bed. That means that nothing, nothing at all, no action or gesture, can now be done with two hands, if standing. That's a lot of gestures to unlearn.

But one contact is enough for minimum stability, one touch anywhere, from headtop to hip to hand or even one fingernail on the wall as the blood pressure is measured first sitting then standing, orthostatic as they say, when the tension drops by several degrees in a few seconds. Or sometimes rises, for no reason unless euphoric, or falls systolically and rises diastolically or vice versa. It staggers and lurches, like the body unless contact is made through headtop hand finger thigh calf with the ground the earth the planet the galaxy the universe. But then the universal is what is wrong with humanity.

The tidal wave of nothingness is not vertigo, from the inner ear dipping like a builder's plumb rule, for which there is a cure with turning lights, undergone. It is at unlucky times a faintingness due to the latest change of pill prescribed by the cardio, cancelled by the doctor after heartbeat drop, represcribed by the cardio, recancelled by the doctor, the process repeated with three different pills until a pacemaker is put in.

Besides, many seek vertigo, addicts of all kinds including mountain climbers vertigo all that trouble for a moment of spurious hegemony above all that beauty and now, like everywhere over-populous, leaving their human garbage all the way up, all the way down.



No, it's an imbalance from the brain's wrong messages to the inside of the feet and legs, their nerve fibres slowly withering and reversing their tasks, so that where there should be feeling there isn't and vice versa. Just like love of all kinds. At first the feet on the car-pedals feel like two blocks of ice, then can't feel the pedals at all, but steadily burn and braise where they shouldn't feel more than the normal fatigue of a long walk, which, like the car, slowly becomes a thing of the past.

But who feels what? A looking glass is for looking in, not looking out. The finger-nail of contact feels nothing. Is it the feet that feel or their boss the brain? Nous no use. Mirrors, once polished steel or later crystal to flatter more, are soon called glace from Latin for ice, or miroir from Latin for looking, however icy the image. Both get borrowed as ever by the English élite, the first fused with native glass, the second just chic, then disdainfully discarded when picked up by the then-called lower orders and shattered down to become a class-labelling code, replaced higher by two native words, looking, plus glass. Looking becomes a window-pane or a drink, not frost. Grammatically, it's the glass that looks, as in blinding light (for who can blind a light?). Or at least ambiguous, like running-board, dressing-gown, drawing-room, frying-pan (who fries, man or pan?), driving-wheel. But then the so-called higher orders are never hot on grammar, any more than the so called lower. Similarly serviette is replaced by napkin. The tain foil behind the glass causes the so-called upper to look at the so-called higher orders are never hot on grammar, any more than the so called lower and vice versa, as in distorting mirrors, until eventually the upstairs doors are opened to all and that particular élite learns domestic chores, at once therefore made fashionable and easier for them by the new labour-saving devices, and the social code shatters again.

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The thalamus and hypothalamus are in the forebrain under the cerebral hemispheres. The thalamus is the main relay between the medulla in the hindbrain and the cerebrum in the forebrain.

Thalamus means inner chamber, or cavity, or the receptacle of a flower, a ventricle in the brain, and so, surely, a cerebral womb. Yet like a phallus it takes over the medulla's transmission from the spinal cord to the cerebellum, still in the hindbrain, and sends it all to the cerebrum, the top brain, that convoluted glory as developed in the higher mammals and more especially humans. There the transmitted sparks clash into motor neurons inside a synaptic cleft and create impulses.

Hypo means under, lesser, for the hypothalamus is a lower or downstairs inner chamber (a kitchen? a pantry? a scullery?), controlling pleasure, pain, hunger, thirst, blood

pressure, body temperature, the sex-drive and the hormones governing the phlegm secretions of the front pituitary gland, not to be confused with the pineal gland, called epiphysus cerebri meaning a growth upon the cerebrum, a parasite which, structured as an eye in the lower vertebrates, is not organised as an eye in the higher, where it functions as a light-receptor, its endocrine job being to elaborate the hormone melatonin, causing the concentration of melanin, the black or brown pigment cells called melanophores. To act perhaps as the tain foil of a looking glass? The eye-shape but not the eye as mirror of the soul? Seemingly endless, like that sentence. At any rate this gland is where Descartes places the soul, thus putting de cart before de hors.

But the hypothalamus does not control balance and coordination. That, in the division of labour, is the task of the cerebellum (the war of Ceres?), back in the hindbrain, receiving the signals from the spinal cord.

The floor the ground the earth are for walking on feet, the world the universe for walking in the head. A walking illness keeps the universe for the head but leaves, for the feet, only the floor. How long will the head last? The few remaining pleasures are not the sex-drive, nor body-temperature hunger thirst or blood pressure but pleasures in the head so rich and devious, and, also, pain as the dubious pleasure of a constant companion, sometimes intolerable, and now vanishing only in the just reachable armchair or bed. And only insofar as the cardiovasco de gamma network still functions, more or less. Pain is from Old French *pener*, to punish. For what? *Nulla poena sine lege*.

You must walk, says the physiotherapist, for your legs. Of course, walking is a joy. But slowly the rest of the body prevents it, with flailing anginal pains and breathlessness, demanding sit-downs on low walls or electricity meters, first at the end of the walk, shorter and shorter, now even before leaving. Just moving from one room to another, from the bed to the bathroom, the bathroom to the revolving armchair, the armchair to the kitchen, the kitchen back to the table or preferably the armchair with a tray held between hand and bosom to keep the other hand for support from passing walls and slow-flowing furniture. And sometimes not so. Sometimes the whole tray clatters, shatters to the floor (the earth the universe). Then comes the collapse into the revolving armchair in order not to crouch, and the picking up of the food, the broken plate and glass. For the hardest is the rising after crouching. Hence the resurrection myths, all gods rise so easily. Whereas the rising of the human blood pressure signals a fall. Did Eve have high blood pressure?

Objects also have trouble being picked up.

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And the body, though it may cause laughter, has no sense of humour of its own, no small sparks of slow but planetary motion, no fleeting stars of word-play, only the mind has those. But then, what is the mind but body, the corn-goddess at war with the gleaming cerebroom that sweeps up for a little peace and order and doubtful cleanliness. The mind without the body couldn't laugh nor murmur nor shriek nor have tears in the eyes. It couldn't play nor run nor stumble with words, it couldn't read.

Even languages die, like species, thousands per century. All those colonised people lose theirs to the stronger power, while those overlooked by the colonisers shrink back through isolation into a tribe, a clan, a family. Whichever is our own language we can hear the grammatical and phonetic changes, the lapse that may grow into an unimaginable transformation during one lifetime, but can we spot the slow death-symptoms?

It is the brain, it is the brain endures.

But is it? Or the pillars of fire? All these streaking snippets of facts occur only because of long familiarity, long love of language and its bones and flesh, and how it grows from Primitive Human to Old High Human to Middle High Human to Modern Low Inhuman. The world in other words. Nobody else is interested.

And now, in any case, new information, from the still retained and enjoyed passion for reading, is quickly lost. So are proper names, even of well-known politicians, reporters, writers, sudden black holes although the names of stars familiar and loved from youth are remembered, and pang slightly when they die, after a longish spell of vanishment so as not to advertise their old age. And holes for what has just been seen, the original place of a word in a huge puzzle after looking up to think, or the reason for grindingly moving into one room from another, to fetch what, a black hole. The only access now to the world, the universe, is made through bits and pieces, clung to as small heroes battling against withdrawal.

A scientist on some learning programme says black holes can hide renewed creativity.

Painfully jerking, like a babe learning to walk, stagger, jerk, plonk, old age a mirror of childhood but childhood not for one second reflected in the present-bound, floor-bound eyes. The child trips towards its mother, the old towards Mother Nature, looking into a glass darkly.

## See Now Then *Jamaica Kincaid*

2013

Oh, and this was the word Mrs. Sweet heard, that poor dear woman, mending socks upstairs. Oh, it was the voice of the monodist, her poor, dear Mr. Sweet. Whack, came a sound from Heracles, as he made a put, a basket, and a score and yet was under par or over par, Mrs. Sweet could never be sure. The boy's head, free of his body with its entrails, filled up all the empty chairs in the auditorium of Mr. Sweet's youthful recital. Not that, not that, cried the young Mr. Sweet and he made the chairs empty again. The strings of the harp, gut and wire, broke and he bent down and over to make the instrument well again, so ancient was this instrument. The Shirley Jackson house was not known to him then. Never did he imagine then—his youth was his now—that he would live in such a house, so big, so full of empty spaces that were never used, never filled up even in the imagination, the young Heracles with his endless tasks of hitting balls, large and small, into holes of all sizes; the young Heracles, growing in youth, not growing older, growing in his youth, becoming more perfectly youthful, his many tasks to perform, performing them more perfectly, at first performing them awkwardly, not right at all, but then becoming so good he could place any ball of any size in any hole, no matter its width or depth or height. Thwack, was a sound caused by the quick movement of Heracles' hand sweeping a ball through the teeming air; whack, was the sound of his head sliced away from his body. Oh, was the sound that came out of the mouth of the monodist, Mr. Sweet, Mr. Sweet, as he saw Heracles pick his head off the floor and replace it on his neck, which was just above his shoulders, with such deftness, as if he were born to do only that, keep his head in that place just above shoulders.

Young Heracles, his tasks, so many, so many: wash the dishes, put them away, clean the stables, walk the horses, fix the roof, milk the cows, emerge from his mother's womb in the usual way, slay the monster, cross the river, return again, climb up the mountain, descend on the other side, build a castle on the top of a hill, imprison the innocent in a dungeon, lay waste to whole villages to the surprise of the villagers, trap and then skin the she-fox, eat his green vegetables and his meat too, kill his father, not kill his father, want to kill his father but not kill his father, keep his head on his shoulders, survive the threshold of night, await the dawn, take a pickaxe to the iris (his eyes, not the flowers growing in his mother's garden), seize the sun, banish the moon, at every moment his skin so cold, the fire at his back, cross the road by himself, tie his