

**Nick Wadley**



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**MIND'S EYE**

# Mind's Eye

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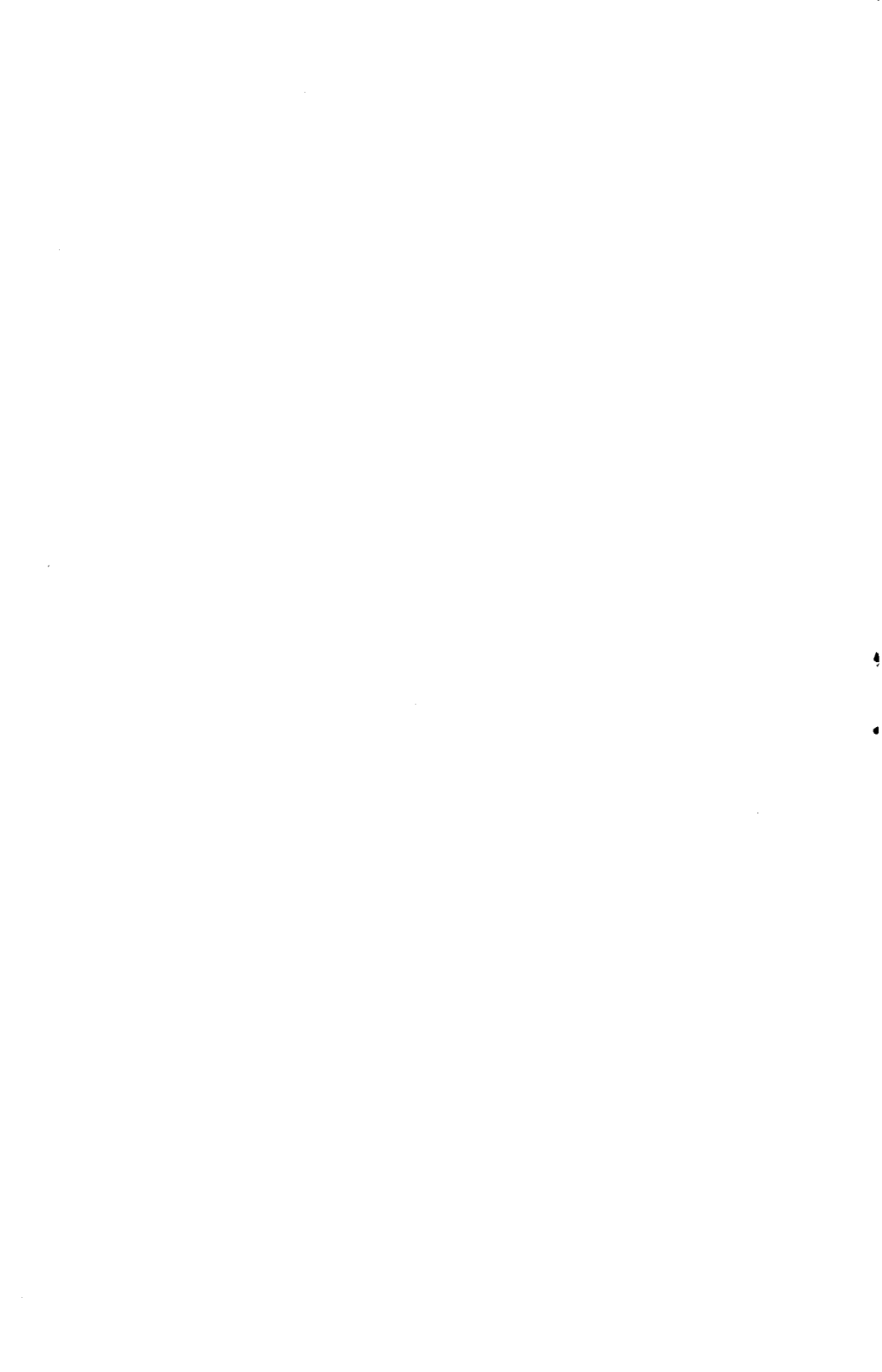
“Watch Out for Obscure Publications”

# MIND'S EYE



Nick Wadley  
poems and drawings

Obscure Publications 2005



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 else,  
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.

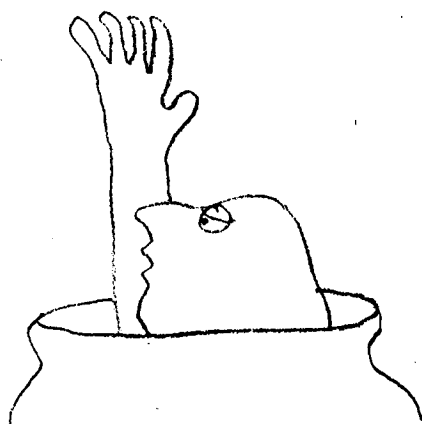
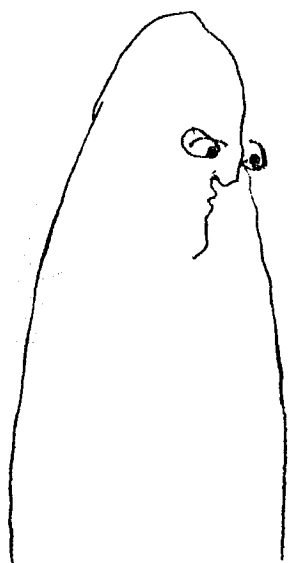
Not much talk,  
just pecking away at the brain.

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.



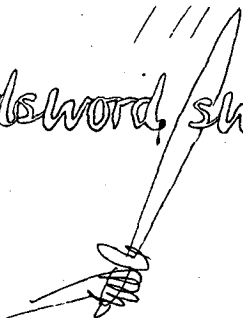
### **poem in space**

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.

wordswordswordsword, sword





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.

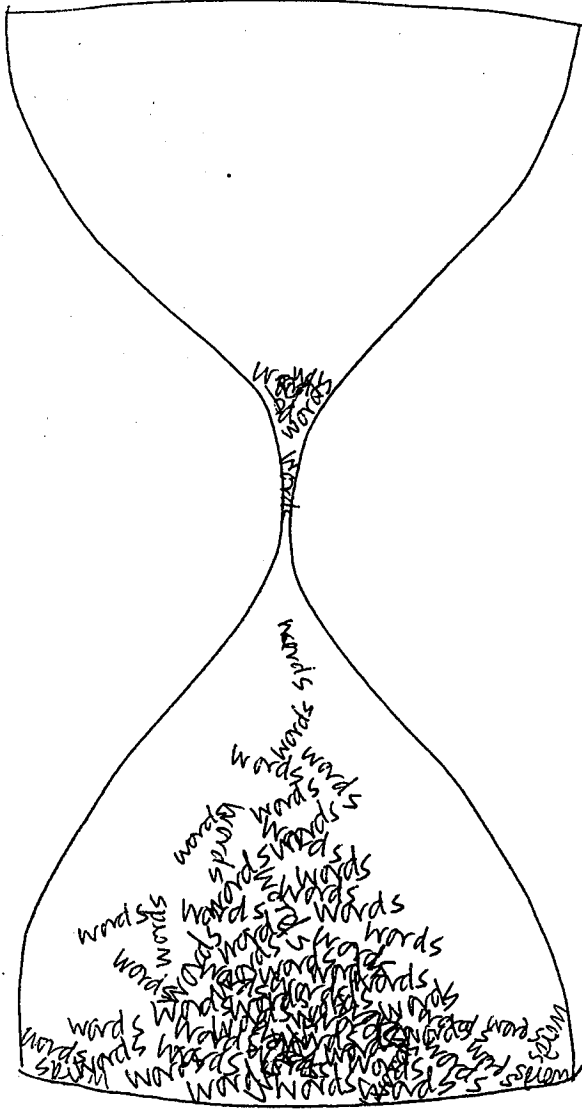
## tea and empathy

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?





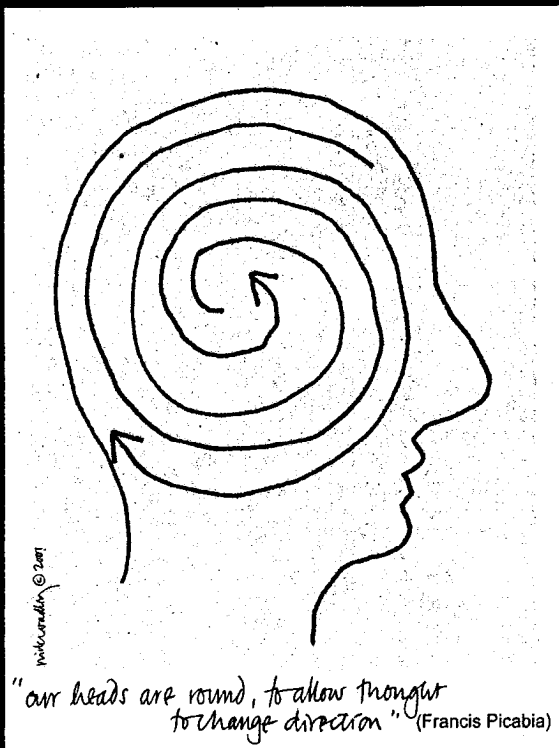
**touch paper, first light**

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.

NICK WADLEY was head of the art history department of Chelsea School of Art, London, until 1985. As an art historian, his publications include *Noa Noa, Gauguin's Tahiti* (1985), and *Impressionist & Post-Impressionist Drawing* (1991) and he has curated exhibitions of Kurt Schwitters (London 1981), Drawings of Franciszka Themerson (Denmark 1991), Gaberbocchus Press (Paris 1998), and 'Ubu in UK' (London 2002). As an artist, cartoons made in collaboration with Sylvia Libedinsky appeared weekly in the Daily Telegraph and Financial Times (1996-2001). Their exhibitions together include 'Vested Interests' (Cartoon Trust London 2000), 'Men in Suits' (London 2003), 'Heads you Win' (Mexico Gallery, London 2003), 'Gente' (Centro Borges, Buenos Aires 2004, Santiago de Chile 2005). Nick illustrated *Christmas Poems* by U.A.Fanthorpe (Enitharmon, London 2002) and in 2003, Pomegranate published two books of his comic drawings (*Guide to British Artists* and *Drunk with Pleasure*). For Obscure Publications, he has illustrated *Nine Stories*, by Robert Walser, translated by Christopher Middleton (2003), and *Strange Alleys*, by Tom Whalen (2004). Together with Jasia Reichardt, Nick maintains the Themerson Archive. He is a Régent of the Collège de Pataphysique. This is the first collection of his poems.

# heads you win

31 may - 24 june 2003



"our heads are round, to allow thought  
to change direction" (Francis Picabia)

**sylvia libedinsky  
& nick wadley**

This edition is limited to 60 copies.

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Nick Wadlow



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