

PLAYS
Maurice Scully



Smithereens Press

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PLAYS

*Gémadh bréag do bhiadh san duain,
is bréag bhuan ar bhréig dhiombuain;
bréag uile gidh créad an chrodh,
bréag an duine dá ndéantar.*

– Giolla Brighde Mhac Con Midhe

PATH

A dog came up the steps with a tennis ball in its mouth to shake itself dry. On my way back from the disused lighthouse at the head of the pier I notice now he's still there & alone & nosing the ball in quick crafty shifts towards the edge then grabbing it back in his mouth several times just in time until he lets the ball quite deliberately slip over & fall down again into the water. Again. The future. Consilience. And so our dog is in the water again after the ball. Now. Good dog.

PLACED

"where motley etc ..."

Plastic disk
laughs into
its cup.

The plastic
flat primary
colour of it.

The green
disk blinks
into its cup.

Don't let
the cup
tumble.

Dice tickle
the board.
Flick.

Slim textures
in circles squares
diamonds cylinders –

I heard
you rang
you answered
you

you parked
in the park
you too parked
next to the park

roof
roof-roof
roof-roof-roof

disk by disk
the cups open
uplaugh
down to

your turn where
slap here's the cup.
Circle.

Square.

Facts split
the picture
open.

Rice-grains
dimple the
ridges.

Mirrors
shimmer into
out there – *howaya!*
[Bang-bang].

But that was
the past. The sea
of the past. The
fog of the past.

A forest of following
hollowing futures.
Bobbing whens.
Plastics pierced.

O co memor
or emco morat
may by water
vat or em

rald grass.
Brush past.
Trapped stick.
Red splash.

Spread low
with many
mythologies

rippling
a language's
underparts
tapping yr

fingers
quietly
to another
rhythm –

watch them
now focusing
what's to be said
& how.

PATTERN

When your horse
hawed on a
hawthorn tree
by the fence

in the fog
where haws awed
the hoarse kids & me
I think (like me)

you thought god
that's life I suppose
the Vague & the Fixed
or a slick name

for a new pub –
cool, join the club.
What's new?
Who knows?

What will we
do with the blue
behind the
mist & the raw

haws on the
hawthorn tree
I wonder thought
one of the kids

there scratching
his head but said
nothing to me.
(Or to me).

Cawed by crows
out of the blue
across the country
where the hawthorn

was the Seven Static Laws
on Stained Stone Statues
Standing for Shadows
& Shattered Hopes

ordered in words
round roots that
sap dark from a
deep ground square

the air of the vast
in the breathing
network of what-is –
chop-chop. Know the

ropes. Sea. Rocks.
Chance. Unbound wonts
won't right wrongs.
Dogs bark, people

speak, time times
you right down to
here, & to here too,
rigorous, that last

fixed minim past
yr reflection on
the glass after the
completion of the

process & yr theory's
let pass. Pity. Fear.
Beyond the Temple
of Peace Fissured

beyond the Temple
of the Spreading Cloud
in the middle of each
diamond-shaped segment

a tiny diamond-shaped
segment echoed at its tip
each tightly fitted to the next
making this woody fruiting

body from the world
the world. A world.
Detach. So there it is.
A few adjustments

will make things clear.

PRINT

Might be the 10th.
Early spring.
Quarter past
six. Dark.

The action of
burning's a
complex action.
Crumpled

paper napkin
with a base
pattern of
indentations

overlaid with
a pattern of
pumpkins

mushrooms
peppers
their names
in clear letters

under circular
stains where a
cup was placed –
the action of

fending for yrself.
A pencil over a
printer's
ear.

Narrow
floorboards fit
snug & shining
to the door.

One foot
on the ground,
two.

The most energetic
rays that reach
the earth's surface are
those to which

our eyes respond
& we call
'light'. Right.

To prefer plants
to tar. Just
that.

Catherine tugged
playfully at the large
zipper & was
astonished at how

easily & fluidly.
The rain beat a
little tattoo on the
window. A siren

far away in the
city added. Warm.
Already. She had
not followed the

sequence. Jack
shivered. The moon?
He was taken
aback.

To begin
again, the whisper
of the pen on
the page.

Well I don't know
tangles sparks
crumpled up tellings
a "mental refuge

from the realities
of life” – all that.
Hug tight the
comforting falsities

or take the blunt
actual to heart – your
choice. Tiny florets
on a wall-top

a passing crow
staining the pathway
ahead with a crisp
click white.

PITCH

Open yr pen & begin I mean I
yes take the cap off yr biro & begin
to in mild spring sunlight after
lengthy snow to a coaltit feeding
in the appletree quick flicks of
the head pen-tip to notepad someone
laughing & chatting in another garden
in black & white/O ...
I wandered lonely in a crowd
as a meaning-bearing creature digging
over vegetables flashing signals to
light-sensitive weed-seeds in the dark.
Between yr fingers & yr thumb, humble
ambition. Getting the work done, doling,
fixing, electing, purging curricula,
controlling policy, public opinion, dissemination,
the Taste Police quick to be invisible, are out & about
& busy over the generations ready to shame
us with a terrible pun. This is the tilting nib
less because the facts are because dark blobs
of rain because pressure pulsing body of
honeybee on passion flower irreparable past
luminous present lingual chatter squeak pip ripple
swallow-gossip round eaves outside
in the sunlight because symbol & then a
symbol & then none. Once upon a time
you were a baby. Now what?

PANEL

On the wrong
track as they
say who sell
the maps.

We make.
Laugh. What's
new? Touch
base.

Cat-paw prints on
a railway sleeper
in November in

the early morning
nineteen something or
other or was it

no wait – stone –
stacks – files (dip
blot) stencilled
in ice. Blue-bright.

Years pass.

Years pass &
you set to work
now dipping each
piece

here into
that pot
there then
pink the

surface then
pause then twist
then start again –
is that a mistake? –

flatten it work this
square until it gets to
cohere left to right
itself & fall apart

again too –
there. Look.
I took what you
said seriously

was I taken in?
(who isn't?)
I took it in &
what you said

& what that was
& went to
move from
there an inch –

whang! goes
the arrow's
stopped shaft
into the thick

hard surface
of the door.

Talking to you
noticing something its
I think down

walking past
mastering voices
& their colours

falling
quietly
onto the

ground there strange
as the materials
sink

calling – *quite-quiet*
says a bird on a stone –
as you open up

to it already ready walling
round you a demesne where
you've been there that flat

bright what? stunned
but wouldn't you know it
a dog stalking past

a window after a ball
& the window frames it
quite-quiet said the/

but the/*quite-quiet* said
the bird on the stone/been
there/is this *paid* for by
the way?/to make it shiver

& expand/been there
before. Park it.
Touch base.
Talk.

POLITIC

A dead bee in a blue flowerhead.
Yes & No's arguments in the shadows.
Flame-Fruit. Spark Head. (Another holiday
in the murdering world!) To open that window ...
Light mist on glass, clear snail-trail through it –
burst of buddleia, undersplash of cyclamen –
clustered purple, white-green wings
on tight florets, crisp heaps in corners
where a breeze gathers. This is what trees
do. Thank you. And good night:

an apple
on a napkin
on a desk.

I knew you thirty years ago.
You passed with your wife &
child & friend busy, happy, chatting,
laughing, snapping yr fingers, ah.
I passed. We passed. *You* passed.
You'd been moving on to the
Reward Storage Terminal all that time.
I'd been making for the periphery.
I didn't know. Cut. Viscosity. Sunlight
on a leaf. The weight of that.

This is a *poem*, right? Cup hands
to see. Our keynote speaker's paper on
'Mild Hangover & the Urban Muse.'
This is good. This is not good. No ifs
& buts. Smug as a bug in a rug. Vivid
splash of blossom, dark alleyway in a city.
Where am I? You tell me.

PITH

A dog came up the steps with a ball in its mouth & shook itself dry. Then it put the ball down carefully on the pier & began to nose it towards the edge, grabbing it back before it fell over into the water. Nobody on the pier seemed to notice it, nobody seemed to be with it, the dog was absorbed in its game, the day was absorbed in itself. After several little runs like this combined with quick retrievals, the dog – it was no accident – *let* the ball roll over & fall down again into the water. Then he jumped in after the ball with a great splash – different rules, different game, different winners. There are laws & there are accidents, one more powerful than the other, & there may be general laws of accident-prediction (what in this context does *accident* mean?), so that each drop falling over the history of life laughs as it lands to break on water, dog, ball, stone, interpretation ... For whom then is the record made? Who dominate, who persuade? And for how long? And what is 'the truth'? Out 'there'? Where? How? An idea came up the steps with another idea in its mouth & shook itself dry. Now ...



Maurice Scully was born in Dublin in 1952. He has been publishing poetry since the 1970s. His most recent book is *Several Dances* (Shearsman, 2014). *Plays* is excerpted from a work in progress, *Play Book*.

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