

I watched the whole of *Gavin and Stacey* and *How I Met Your Mother*.
My Year Seven geography teacher told us how much we need structure,
And now that more months have since gone by with nothing to punctuate my days,
I can't help but agree.

I must say: this poem has really helped my headache.

Oops!

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

-T.S. Eliot

Yet, no matter how many more minutes there are to come,
You cannot return to that one
In which you tried to get into a space to parallel park into
Without attempting to parallel park.
Now your car is

Swung out,
Blocking the road for a driver oncoming
Along with minutes that will feel like a millennia.

You cannot return to moments you instantly yearn to return to
When the next moment is miles worse.

A boring time washing dishes
Sure beats an exhilarating

SLASH

To your hand your gaze was

Diverted from —

You had labelled washing up, whether a pan or a knife,
A mindless task.

Now at least this shock has grabbed and thrown out
Other worries from your mind
That is far from being handleless.

Trying to Impress Someone Ahead

Up I go
 three steps at a time
trying to out-do the masculine climb
she must have remarked from other guys
with feet double my size.

Double my size or half, muscular or scrawny,
if you stride up stairs, that's solid,
but when you stride into a conversation,
how do you come out of performance ?
And when you stroll into a chat,
how do you stride into something more than friendliness?

Coming to the top of the staircase,
 I attempt to skip more steps,
only for it to then become apparent
that my tent has lost its pegs
to a non-existent storm.

Instead of on the ground, they could be in casts
had the hands that had just come behind me
not prevented the tumble so fast.

We get each other's socials,
and raising pints we say,
not that anyone even noticed,
but we're men with small hands, and that's okay!

"Ain't" Ain't a Word

Stopping more customers from going into Primark

On reopening day,

A mum exits to get somethin' for her kid

Or somethin'.

Let them straight back in,

A colleague instructs me.

I find myself turning

To the chums first in line and expressing,

That's a bit unfair, innit ?

And they passionately agree.

In my last year of it, I'm at last a teen.

Literally!

I reply to a guy

Who jokes that I'm a keyworker

Working at Primark on reopening day.

The next evening, I call the absence line and say,

I'm gonna be slightly late.

I wonder if the slang was noted

As laziness.

Glad it ain't just me,

I send to my chum, chatting 'bout finding the new tills tough to use.

In a message, a message where you have time to type things well,

Why is that

The non-existent word I choose ?

Next thing I know, I'll be ditching apostrophes,

Exclaiming *it is what it is*

On the way to what they call *Maccies*.

Maybe after that I'll even try a spliff,

S'ppose it'd be insignif.!

The Existence of Synonyms

Grub is such a grubby word
That shouldn't refer to food.
Meal just makes me think of worms,
Yet *dish* is far too posh.

Tea comes in cups, not bowls,
And *dinner* does its best to dominate
Two scraning sessions —
Confusing, but that I can tolerate,
No urge there to spew,
Unlike when the offer of a cuppa
Is made unpalatable with *brew*.

Living room should not be the same thing as *lounge* —
In every room, we live.
I don't mind the variations of settee — sofa, couch,
So long as they're not made of cows' skin,
Skin that goes by *leather*,
On which lots mindlessly sit.

A trim is just a trim,
So don't go calling all haircuts *fresh trims*.
These last few lines
I probably could have trimmed,
But then, there would be no
Antanaclasis or condiplucatio!

The Piggy Bank of Time

Time, no matter how many times it's said,
Is not something you spend,
But rather something you must see tick by
Unless you look away from the clocks.

Even then, there's the one inside.
And screwed even more tightly in that
Is the delusion that time can be saved the same as coins.

Of course, one can try
To make more than those hands big and small move on by.
Whatever we do, to clocks and currencies, the world is confined.

But can we at least make phrases other than *spend* and *waste*
For something not quite the same as cards, paper, coins?

Cat, Table, Car

I just saw a cat go under a car.

No need to flap, I mean one that is parked.

Now he's scurrying again, as if on a boot camp course.

He's not a puss in boots, he's swift on all fours.

More than ten years ago,

I would slip with my siblings under the table,

My nan, parents, uncles, aunts, cousins on their tenth round of teas.

At our energetic play, they would chuckle.

Back then, I was adamant I would never want to go to university.

Of course, I'm still free to go under the table —

I did the other day

When I couldn't get passed my mum ironing in the kitchen,

So not really the same.

I wonder whether in another decade, thereabouts, less, more,

I will write a poem reflecting on how I didn't want my own children

For my own children to read under a table

That could be here in England but could be in France.

Perhaps, though, I will have stuck with Larkin's advice,

And perhaps I will not have found a partner that nice.

Alternatively, we could have opposite offspring desires,
Whichever way around that shall be,
And I guess that would likely

Drive us apart —

Scurrying cats won't stay under cars.

The Road or the Pavement?

The road:

The pedestrians are happy,
But the drivers get annoyed
If I pedal slowly,
Even though they were going to overtake me either way.

The pavement:

I am not
A burden for those driving,
But I could knock into a passer-by
If I went too quickly.

I cannot decide
If I want to go quickly or not.
I cannot decide
If I have the confidence for this roundabout.
But I must make a decision now
So that I do not indicate
Too late.

And yes, there are a few cycle paths,
But they are not everywhere.
And once one joins them,
After barely any distance,
By law, one must go back onto the road.

On the road are cyclists by law.
But according to common sense,
When the pavement is clear,
And the traffic lights are red,
Why wait behind the line,
In front of an intimidating lorry?
And how is it fair
That there are points when cyclists have to dismount,
Prioritising the vehicles
Which can kill?

The road:
Annoyed drivers,
Happy pedestrians.

The pavement:
Annoyed pedestrians,

Happy drivers.

Cycle paths:

There are not enough of them.

Finding Without Looking

Meeting you for the first time will be
Like reversing a car in between the lines
Without a reference point,
Without having to adjust,
Without stress.

I am happy I have taken a step back myself —

When I was fifteen, I wrote a list of all the attractive girls I "knew"
As well as a plan to attract them —
A concept which is foreign to me now.

Each day after school, I would research how to find a girlfriend,
How to kiss.
But the first time we give a hug,
Have we researched it before?

Alas, I continued to
Obsess over romance —
I used to write horrible songs,
I made a Tinder account and drew a beard on my face in charcoal.

And when that account was
Quickly deleted,
After assuring myself
That my reputation at school was no longer important,
One of my teachers asked me to do a presentation,
A presentation on LGBT+ issues.
I made several of them,
And for the last that year,
I asked my classmates
To raise a hand
If they would intertwine it with that of someone transgender.

From time to time,
I feel jealous of couples,
But finding someone is not a priority.
Despite those who describe it as a game with a list of rules —
Do not give more than one compliment during one conversation,
A conversation one cannot initiate since one was the first to speak yesterday,
No matter identity, appearance, genitals,
Love is not found with a map, an itinerary,
But rather instinct. This instinct comes
In abandoning the rules,
Unable to explain why one has turned at that instant
In order to stop between the lines.

