

Site Map: [MAIN / A Reader's Journal, Vol. 2 This Page](#)



## *A READER'S JOURNAL*

### **Into the Silent Land Travels in Neuropsychology by Paul Broks**

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2008



"Why does raw meat give me a hard-on?" is an amazing first sentence for a book, right up there with "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times" by Charles Dickens. And "Into the Silent Land" is about the worst times which humans have to go through — journeys into neuropathology, when suddenly parts of their body act in strange ways or just go silent on them. Michael, who spoke that first sentence above had a dent in his head about three inches up from his right eyebrow, indicating some injury involving damage to his brain.

The next day the author Paul Broks is visiting another patient with a dent over his left eyebrow, Stuart, which he received when his head hit a rock in the grass after a fall from a tree.

**[page 4] We sit in his stuffy front room. An ornate black clock (his early-retirement present) clings to the wall like a huge fly. As I struggle with milky tea, Stuart locks me in his gaze. He is about to say something, but doesn't. It is a long pause. Eventually he speaks.**

**"I don't love you any more, do I, love?"**

**The words are intended for his wife, Helen, who sits beside him. "No, love," she replies. "So you say."**

Mirror image sides of the brain are damaged in Michael and Stuart and the effects on their life are completely different. In the next patient we find an autistic man, Martin, who acted similar to the one played by Dustin Hoffman in the movie "Rain Man". When Broks's research assistant arrives, she asks Martin a simple question, but the answer is one that Broks has trouble dealing with.

**[page 8] "And what have you been up to?" she asks him.**

**"I've been masturbating quite a lot," he replies, as if through a tiny loudspeaker. I press mouth against knuckles to block the laughter. It's no good. I snort and cough.**

Broks talks about sleepwalking and gives an example from his own life when he was young as an example of acting without awareness.

**[page 16] I was in the Combined Cadet Force in my teens. One night, at camp, I somnambulated through the barracks and mistook the NCO's quarters for the lavatory. I shuffled in and urinated over one of the officers as he slept. Unfortunately, the following morning I was fully conscious.**

**How convenient it would be sometimes to turn off consciousness and carry on with ordinary behavior. Imagine flicking a switch on difficult days and flipping into oblivion, knowing that your body will continue going about its normal business. No one would notice. A pre-programmed wake-up call would return you to sentience in time for a film or the football. Controlled automatism might be preferable to periods of physical or emotional discomfort, or sheer boredom. If everyone had a consciousness switch then the world, most of the time, would be teeming with zombies. Perhaps it already is.**

These few paragraphs gives us a good idea of the humor which Paul Broks mixes in with the insights in the course of this book. If one looks at the people who are taking various conscious-altering prescription drugs for depression, bi-polarity disorder, and various other medical conditions, at young people imbibing various legal and not-so-legal combinations of drugs and pills, helping them to keep the real world at arm's length while they enjoy some store- or street-bought ecstasy, at the prevalence of Lite Beers designed to allow all night beer drinking for getting drunk without getting fat, one might agree that the world is teeming with half-conscious zombies already.

Let us pause to consider that Paul Broks is a materialist scientist, who recognizes the effects of spiritual phenomenon, but lacks the tools to understand them within his sensory-based instruments. When he looks into a person's face, he see an "I" — that outward effect of the spirit within, that glimmer of recognition which survives throughout a person's lifetime when all the other features have changed. That look in the eye is the person's spirit, the "I", looking out and into us, into our eyes, where our spirits meet, as the people of India yet greet each other today, *Namaste*, which means "I see the place in you where, when I am in that place in me, we are in the same place." But, being a neuropsychologist, Broks tries to locate the "I" within the skull of the brain and cannot. His described attempt to do so reminds me of my friend's looking inside a PC case and asking me to show him the software that makes the computer operate. I cannot show him the software in the computer: it does not exist in visible things, but rather in the status of minute positions of electromagnetic fields and voltage levels lying unseen within the visible hardware. Yes, I can show him the box the software came in, the memory chips and hard drives which the software was loaded in, but I cannot show him the software while it is in the computer and operating. It's just there. Why we can believe that the software is *there* and we only see its effects, but that the spirit is *not there* even though we see *its* effects has to do with our long evolution of conscious from the fifteenth century until now.

Broks might say, "Oh, yeah, that's true about software. But one could detect the status of those bits and voltage levels while the software is operating." True, but the computer is man-made and we have developed man-made instruments to allow us to do this. Human beings are not man-made, and the only instruments we have are built into us. One of those instruments is the "I-detector" which allows us to recognize a person we knew from 50 years earlier by looking into their eyes, and it is really their "I" we recognize, not the shape or color of their eyes. Give a PC to any animal and it will never discover the presence of the software within. Its tools are sub-human and it is unable to comprehend what software is, much less locate it. We humans are in that position of being unable to comprehend our own "I" using our human tools and are the same position *vis-à-vis* comprehending our brain as animals are of comprehending computers. Broks illustrates his belief about the non-existence of spirit dramatically in this next passage, going so far as to say, "There's no one there." Imagine a roomful of trained chimps looking into the inside of a running PC and signing to their trainers, "There's no software there." We would be chumps to believe chimps.

**[page 17] The illusion is irresistible. Behind every face there is a self. We see the signal of consciousness in a gleaming eye and imagine some ethereal space beneath the vault of the skull, lit by shifting patterns of feeling and thought, charged with intention. An essence. But what do we find in that space behind the face, when we look?**

**The brute fact is there is nothing but material substance: flesh and blood and bone and brain. I know, I've seen. You look down into an open head, watching the brain pulsate, watching the surgeon tug and probe, and you understand with absolute**

**conviction that there is nothing more to it. There's no one there.**

It is interesting to note that Broks can "imagine some ethereal space . . . charged with intention", but imagination is not enough, he must look at only dead tissue for what can only exist in live tissue and which exists in an ethereal space indeed, one that is by definition not amenable to observation with one's physical eyes and sensory-based instruments.

To his credit, Broks gives us data, even data which he is unable to explain, data which point to the presence of that *essence* which he claims does not exist(1). Here is an example is of a 17-yr-old boy who fell three floors and survived, but now his face is in constant contortions of anger and dread, punctuated by howls and volleys of obscenities. Nothing the hospital staff do for him seems to help. But another *essence* shows up and notice what happens.

**[page 19] Then, one day, I happened to be around when the boy's mother came to visit. I watched as she cradled his broken head in her arms. For the time that she was with him, but not much longer, an extraordinary transformation came over this face. It became still. The rage subsided . He seemed to regain his humanity. Here were two selves, not just a mother and a broken shell of a son. The whole was greater than the sum of its parts.**

When his own son claims one night to have "swallowed dark", Broks doesn't correct him, but he holds onto the memory of that short episode of a winter's evening.

**[page 19, 20] I have a memory of being with my son when he wa four years old. It is deep winter. We have to go out, so we leave the warmth of our house for the freezing night air. There are few lights in the village and the sky is full of stars. We are hardly beyond the front door when he starts coughing.**

**"Are you all right?"**

**"It's okay," he says, "I think I just swallowed some dark."**

**He has the notion that darkness is a substance. It will make you choke if you swallow too much in one go.**

Unable to access the essence of the brain, the "I" directly, neurosurgeons have to remove or disconnect parts of the brain that they deem to be the cause of some problem. When they did that to a patient known as H.M., he ended up cured of his previous intractable problem, but was left with a disastrous form of amnesia in which he was unable to retain a memory for more than a couple of minutes. Every time he met you, you had to re-introduce yourself to him. Surgeons learned from HM that they should restrict their exploratory operations to one side of the brain. If H.M. had regular memory on just one side of the brain, he would be unaware of having any amnesia in the other side. [Two books with more information about H. M. are [Memory's Ghost](#) and [Strange, Familiar and Forgotten](#). ]

Broks is called into help before patient Naomi is operated on.

**[page 29] Since [H.M.], surgeons have restricted their interventions to just one side of the brain, but even so there have been similar disasters where it was not established prior to surgery that the other side was in good working order. That's the reason we're here today, I remind myself, going through these arcane rituals. We want Naomi to continue in mind as well as body.**

In a PC, the electrical pulses are scattered throughout the main board's CPU, memory chips, and peripheral interface chips and the various hard drives and peripherals. There is no special point of convergence. Sure, the pieces of software stream through the CPU as each instruction is executed, but they diverge as quickly as they converge and never stay in one place for more than nanoseconds. Where does the software reside then? one might ask. And lacking an answer, one might say that the software is a fiction, a mere story

made up by someone. In a real sense this is true. It is the essence of programming to make up a story which, when told, performs a useful function in a computer. A monkey could not understand this, could not see this when looking into a PC, but Broks takes his inability to understand the equivalent situation in the milieu of the brain as proof that our brain has *no software*, that the existence of the *essence* of the brain is but a fiction, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing", to quote the Bard.

**[page 41] From a neuroscience perspective we are all divided and discontinuous. The mental processes underlying our sense of self — feelings, thoughts, memories — are scattered through different zones of the brain. There is no special point of convergence. No cockpit of the soul. No soul-pilot. They come together in a work of fiction. A human being is a story-telling machine. The self is a story.**

Mary had an aneurysm which poured blood into her frontal lobes. After the surgery to stop the bleeding, she talked incessantly about crazy things. She didn't know who she was. Only when her husband came to visit did she calm down and get herself together. Broks uses Mary's case as an example to justify the neurological belief that humans "assemble a self" as a "means of negotiating the social environment." Again we find comforting connections between Mary and her husband as we did earlier with the young man and his mother.

**[page 50] When Mary's husband came to visit he had a calming effect. They seemed to function as a unit. Mary's behavior meshed into the networks of partnership and so became more coherent and consistent. In any relationship each person is partly defined in terms of the other. So, for Mary, her husband's presence was a guide to self-definition. He provided a template. He drew from her a behavioral repertoire and a mental structure to complement his own, and the center of gravity lay between them. There was stability, a kind of equilibrium. This effect was not of his deliberate doing. That's just the way it happens.**

**If Mary's heart or lungs or liver had been the primary site of pathology, rather than her brain, it would be possible to describe the disease in terms of its effects on that particular organ system in relation to the rest of her body. The function of the heart is to pump blood, the liver secretes bile, the lungs enable the supply of oxygen to the blood, and in each case the frame of reference for a description of function is the individual organism. In defining brain function we have to go beyond this, extending the frame of reference beyond the systems of the body.**

In a science which includes only materialistic hypotheses, one would certainly define brain function as extending the beyond the body to other humans, but in a science which includes soul and spirit within its domain in addition to the material, one would describe this comforting *not* as a brain function, but as a soul function. To a full science, one which includes body, soul, and spirit, there is much more to know about how our mind works than a mapping of the brain. For matters of imagination, inspiration, and intuition, the brain is the not the originator of these ineffable thoughts, but merely the receiver of them, converting them later into thoughts which can be expressed to others. Scientists like Broks, on the other hand, exclude such possibilities, not by proof, but by their *strongly held beliefs* or what in religion is called simply *dogma* — if you will allow me — that word fits aptly in this matter.

The chapter ends with Broks' example of what I would call the Materialist's Litany.

**[pag 56, 57] Like the surface of the Earth, the brain is pretty much mapped. There are no secret compartments inaccessible to the surgeon's knife or the magnetic gaze of the brain scanner; no mysterious humors pervading the cerebral ventricles, no soul in the pineal gland, no vital sparks, no spirits in the tangled wood. There is nothing you can't touch or squeeze, weigh and measure, as we might the physical properties of other objects. So you will search in vain for any semblance of self within the structures of the brain: there is no ghost in the machine. It is time to grow up and accept this fact. But,**

**somehow, we are the product of the operation of this machinery and its progress through the physical and social World.**

**Minds emerge from process and interaction, not substance. In a sense, we inhabit the spaces between things. we subsist in emptiness. A beautiful, liberating, thought and nothing to be afraid of. The notion of a tethered soul is crude by comparison. Shine a light, it's obvious.**

To identify humans as mere machines and a product of the machinery of bodies, Broks uses the English verb "to be" several times in the above passage, apparently oblivious to the harmful effects of such usage as described by [Korzybski](#). He warned specifically against such usage in any field of science, comparing it to donning semantic blinders. A scientist with semantic blinders on cannot catch a glimpse of the peripheral phenomena of soul and spirit. Shine a light and such a scientist will miss the obvious.

To Broks, one's marvelous human brain never receives inspirations or intuitions, but instead it is meat and one's self is a fiction.

**[page 63] When we see the brain, we realize that we are, on one level, no more than meat; on another, no more than fiction.**

Broks finishes the chapter by saying, "Despite myself, I fear for my soul." (Page 64) I suspect that "myself" refers to his "Doctor Self" which had to be "carefully taught" to think of humans as meat and the mind as a fiction, which leaves the possibility of a soul out of the question, in fact, non-existence. The fact that he would write, "I fear for my soul" seems to indicate that his Soul has some existence apart from the Doctor self.

Let us take a break here to get a handle on how the brain is organized. The approach is simple: make each hand into a fist and each will serve as a model for one side of the brain, then put them index fingers together and you will know that the brain from the midline outward comprises the occipital, parietal, temporal, and frontal-lobe regions, mapped directly upon your index through little fingers.

I suppose the title "Brains for Dummies" sounded too facetious to Bruno Aldaris, who chose the title, "Neuroscience for the Brainless", which is rather humorous in itself. With a simple visual aid of the fist, Bruno gives us a simple mnemonic for remembering and mapping the main areas of the brain.

**[page 76] Make a fist with fingers wrapped around thumb. This is the brain. Palm upwards, the outer ridge of forearm becomes the *spinal cord*. It turns into the *brainstem* at the wrist. Now look at the fleshy part leading up to the base joint of the thumb. This is the *hindbrain*. The protruding base joint itself represents the *cerebellum*, which is the most prominent feature of the hindbrain. In reality it looks like a kind vegetable outgrowth at the brain's rear underside.**

**Moving upwards and into the tunnel of fingers, the shaft of the lower thumb bone represents the top end of the brainstem. This is known as the *midbrain*. Finally, there is the *forebrain* — the upper thumb bone, hidden under the fingers, and the fingers themselves. Each finger stands for a division of the topmost part of the brain — the *cerebral cortex*. Starting with the index finger, we have the *occipital lobe*, the *parietal*, the *temporal* and the *frontal lobe*. The upper thumb bone represents various forebrain structure that lie beneath the cerebral cortex (the *amygdala* and *hippocampus*, for example).**

**There you have it. The gross anatomy of the brain — or half of it. The brain is a double organ with two mirror image sides. Put both fists together to get the full picture.**

Several times in this book either Broks or someone else talks about how heavy the human brain seemed to them. Each time the brain was a preserved one they were handling. What Brok never mentions is that the human brain floats inside the skull and its effective weight is only a few ounces in its live condition, which is how we feel our own brain. We feel it to be a couple of ounces.

Inside a room full of dead, pickled brains, Broks imagines the brain to be a creator of the infinite spaces around us: the sky, clouds, people, pleasure, pain, in other words, the entire universe. But our brains are not creators of these things, but merely a temporary home, a hut where travelers of the spiritual world reside for a time. Plus, our brains are actually pink and pulsating with blood when they are inside living human beings.

**[page 90, 91] "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space," said Hamlet, "were it not that I have bad dreams." The infinite space was within the shell of his head. And so, inescapably, were the dreams. But looking around now at these dead still, grey-beige objects it is hard to see them as erstwhile progenitors of infinite space. They each represent the opposite: a singularity. A point at which the universe has collapsed. I love the stillness of this place and the hum of the void — the sense of worlds dissolved and dissipated passions. It fills me with a sense of being. I am not yet pickled meat.**

Add the pickled meat comment to Broks' litany of the limitations of human beings. He admits about human self-awareness, "I have no idea how the trick is achieved." He is in the one occupation where his knowledge of the material he works with falls far short of explaining the very essence of its functioning as a receiver of spiritual inputs. Unable to accept that his very way of examining the functions makes it impossible for him to explain it, he is left clueless.

**[page 92] Wouldn't it be absurd for an airplane pilot to deny knowledge of the principles of flight, or for a physician to claim ignorance of the basics of human physiology and anatomy? Yet I, a neuropsychologist, can give no satisfactory account of how the brain generates conscious awareness. Worse still, I find myself edging towards a doubt that it means anything at all to say that the brain generates consciousness.**

Perhaps the brain doesn't generate consciousness. Perhaps consciousness arrives as a sojourning soul and spirit to take its place inside the *soggy flesh* of our brain and departs again later, allowing the no-longer necessary flesh to decompose. But that is not permitted within the materialistic dogma of Broks' field of science. Perhaps that is the fundamental misunderstanding that he is leaning towards correcting in his thinking. For now, he seems to have the form of philosophical disease which he says Wittgenstein talks about below, but Broks does not apparently recognize the symptoms within himself.

**[page 96] For Wittgenstein, philosophy was not so much about finding solutions to puzzles as about correcting fundamental misunderstandings. The philosopher's treatment of a question, he said, is like the treatment of an illness. Our minds are knotted with misconceptions about the world and the job of philosophy is to unravel the knot, or, as he said, to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.**

Paul Broks is interested in the boundaries of the body, boundaries which he has difficulty defining. He asks:

**[page 108] How much a part of us are our hair or our fingernails? What about bodily fluids? What about food? I pick a strawberry from a basket, I swallow it and it becomes incorporated into my body. At what point does it become part of my body and so a part of me?**

The answer to his last question is one that Rudolf Steiner gives a clear answer to [\(2\)](#). In the process of digestion, the live food we take into our mouth must be dead before it becomes part of us. If any shred of *live* food were to get into our blood, *we* would die. The entire digestive process involves the progressive killing of the food until the *not-us* of the food becomes the *us* of our blood stream and an active agent of life-giving nutrition. Below is my summary of the digestive processes outlined by Rudolf Steiner in his

book, [Harmony of the Creative Word](#) [from my review]:

**Food is dissolved in the mouth by saliva, the pepsin in the stomach, secretions from the pancreas and then from the gall bladder, etc. Each of these processes must be linked in a chain because when the next process in the chain takes over it and checks the previous metabolic process, which if unchecked would make one ill.**

A spiritual scientist like Steiner can perceive when food in one's body is no longer *live* and when it is *dead* — incorporated into one's body. Materialists, concerned primarily with chemicals, have no such tools to perceive at which point in digestion food changes from *live* to *dead* when it is passing through the human body.

In the chapter on Einstein's brain, we learn that the only difference found in his brain *post-mortem* was an unusually high ratio of glial cells to neurons in the inferior parietal lobe, an area known to be associated with mathematical and spatial reasoning. Neurons are the basic functional units of the brain and the glia provide the metabolic and structural support required for them to do their work." (Page 119) Clearly it was not a higher number of neurons in his brain which led to Einstein's imaginative thinking and spectacular reasoning capability, by which he discovered the photoelectric effect, postulated his theory of relativity, discovered Brownian Motion, and tied together mass and energy in a grand simple equation, among his many innovations in physics.

Broks equates mind and brain the way a computer engineer might think of hardware and software, you can't have software without hardware *and* you can't have mind without a brain. But you can have the hardware without software in it, and it becomes useless; so, too, you can have a brain on oxymoronic *life-support* without any life (soul and spirit are gone) — the brain is useless and quickly decays to nothing when life support is removed. Does the brain support the soul and spirit? If so, why does the brain collapse after the soul and spirit leaves the brain? Certainly, if you scoop away the brain, the soul and spirit will also leave, having been deprived of their residence. Clearly brain and mind are not equal as the mind no longer functions when the soul and spirit are gone. No amount of life-support can encourage the mind to return once it has departed. Yet, Broks must demand that brain and mind are equal as a matter of dogma. (Page 123)

Broks is writing using his PC.

**[page 126] Both hardware and software are irrelevant to the content of the text. I happen to be writing about minds, brains, and selves, but it could be anything — a guide to sea fishing, a suicide note or a Japanese haiku. Think of the brain as the hardware, the mind as software, and the self as the text on the screen.**

**In fact, why not a haiku?**

*A true enigma:*

*The self looks inward and finds*

*Nothing but neurons.*

Why don't [I](#) write a haiku which counters his nothing-but-neurons-dogma haiku? — A haiku which, instead of Broks' blatant statement about an empty self, asks an intelligent and non-dogmatic question. — An unanswered question for materialist scientists to hold onto. My haiku is titled "Where's the Programmer?":

*If the brain is hardware and*

*The mind is software*

*Where's the programmer?*

Broks tries to play on both sides of the fence, but his medical training prevents him from doing so and restricts him to the materialist side. He reminds me of a kid, obeying his mother's commands to stay in his

own yard, while spying kids playing in other yards through his chain link fence, yearning to go play with them. Unfortunately his mother will not relent and he must satisfy his yearnings in his dreams and vivid imaginations, many of which he shares with us in this fine book.

In his "Right This Way, Smiles a Mermaid" chapter, he meets Collicula Brodman, President of the Academy, who pops into his midtown Manhattan apartment during thunderstorm blackout. She says, "Come with me." and leads him through a door he hadn't "noticed before." They have a dialogue about his yearnings with respect to the other side of the materialistic fence, which can be sampled in this next passage. Broks is in front of the Investigatory Panel and is questioned about his beliefs:

**[page 142, 143] "Are these your beliefs?" Number 1 asked.**

**Come to think of it, I really wasn't sure, and the words spilled out in the thinking: "I'm really not sure."**

**"So, what do you believe?" Collicula demanded for a second time.**

**"I am a materialist," I said. "I believe that the world and everything in it is made of physical stuff and, whatever the origins of the universe, we are a natural product of its material evolution: sentience, intellect, emotions, moral codes and all. All behavior and experience, all knowledge and understanding of the world and ourselves, depend upon the workings of a physical device: the brain."**

Later, playing in that longed-for yard across the fence, Broks sees a vision of an apple tree which is not really there, but seems to be there. He calls it a *ghost tree* and dismisses it as an hallucination, an artifact of the dim light. Someone told me once if one person says you're a horse's ass, you can ignore it, but if another person tells you the same thing, perhaps you should buy a saddle. The ghost tree will re-appear later as a vivid Christmas tree, sparkling of tinsel, smelling of the forest, yielding pine needles to the touch.

**[page 151] It is getting dark now. The clouds have thinned and a crescent moon is visible. At the bottom of the garden there is an apple tree. It looks tired and forlorn. This, instantly, is how I see it. It is an old tree, bearing fruit for the last time. I see not just the fading shape of the trunk, the twisting branches, the leaves darkening in the gloom and the pale, half-grown apples; I see the age of the tree and its weariness. I have in mind the sharp taste of the fruit. This is how it appears to me. And how do I know it is bearing fruit for the last time? Because I realize it is not there at all. My brain has conspired with the failing light to conjure a fleeting illusion of the tree from memories of similar grey evenings a year ago, before it was felled by a February gale. It is a ghost tree, rooted only in thought.**

The second ghost tree happened during Broks' first college term when he roomed with a working-class family near Sheffield. He calls them the Fancys, and this family had a ghost visitor who regularly would project her spirit from Scotland to the foot of Mr and Mrs Fancy's bed. (Details on pages 159, 160) So there was already a ghost presence in the Fancy house, but Aunt Judith from Scotland never appeared to Paul Broks. Then the ghost tree came again, only this time it was a *fancy tree*. Broks is required by his stated belief to slough it off as a dream or hallucination, but you, dear Reader, read his description of what happened and tell me if this sounds like a dream.

**[page 160, 161] Just before I left the Fancys I had an unsettling experience. I woke in the early hours, aware of something glowing faintly in the corner of the room. My heart thumped an offbeat. When I turned to look, it wasn't Aunt Judith I saw but a Christmas tree. I'd got back late, let myself in, helped myself to a snack, then gone straight to bed. I hadn't noticed a tree. How could I not have noticed? I got up for a closer look. I brushed a branch and caught the scent of the pine needles.**

**Returning to bed I was soon asleep, but something else disturbed me. Perhaps it was**



**voices in the street. I can't remember. But I do remember getting up to shut the window and noticing that the tree had gone. It appeared from nowhere, then, silently, it disappeared. It was there. I touched it. I could smell it.**

**I slept in. Winter sunshine filled the room. The Christmas tree looked splendid, red baubles and silver tinsel splintering the light. So there *was* a tree. I tried to get up, but found I was paralyzed. I looked at my right arm and willed it to move. I commanded it to move. It stayed put. When I tried to sit up or roll over nothing happened. I panicked. On the inside I was a twisting fury, but the shell of my body remained motionless. I gave up the struggle, overwhelmed by an intuition that if I tried any harder I would break through the shell and float away.**

**I closed my eyes. The room was still a block of sunlight when I opened them again, but there was no tree.**

**I now recognize this as a lucid dream, an hallucinatory state in the hinterlands of slumber where the mind is alert, but the body remains bound by the paralysis of sleep — the intersection of dream life and reality. Perhaps intra-operative awareness is like this. It's happened several times since, and each time I found myself restrained by the same forceful intuition. Next time I'll grit my teeth and let go.**

My guess is that the shell he would have broken and floated away from was the encrustation of dogma which requires his world to be solely a world of physical material in motion completely devoid of spirit. Perhaps next time he will let go. Or perhaps early in his life he held on so dearly that the next time he lets go will be at his so-called *death*, when he is born into the very spirit world he did not fully allow himself to believe existed. It will be a very tough time for him as he will be very lonely. This is the path of the materialist.

Mr Barrington has lost his hair in clumps over the weekend when Broks sees him as a client. Broks looks him over and suggests that Barrington take a walk out in the fresh air. Barrington won't leave and gets more agitated. Broks asks Mrs Barrington to leave.

**[page 198] Clara understands. 'I'll see you later,' she says, and leaves. Mr Barrington gazes out of the window across the suburbs towards the distant hills, his wet, blue eyes unblinking. He isn't admiring the view. He is adrift somewhere in a vast, inner space, the exhausted prey of a relentless emotional predator: guilt. I shake his soggy hand at the end of the session. He is very grateful. I listened. I advised. Outside it has started to rain.**

**Clinical supervision. While Clara fills the kettle, I think back to Mr Barrington. I see his arms swing down at his sides, his head roll back. I hear the sustained, oscillating groan like a child exhausted by a bout of crying. Then the confession: a single, weedy act of marital infidelity, a long time ago. His wife never knew. He'd almost forgotten.**

What Barrington tried to hide advertised itself when his hair fell out in clumps. Guilt can indeed be a relentless emotional predator and confession good for the soul.

I have now finished the text of the book and there is a surprise waiting for me on page 235: the eponymous quotation — the quotation from which the title was taken. It's from a poem by an obscure nineteenth century poet, Christina Rossetti. Here is the stanza as it appears alone on the page with *italics* added to the title text:

**Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away *into the silent land*;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Christina Rossetti, 'Remember'**

What took me aback was that I had seen that stanza in some movie recently, probably last night. It was the author I remembered, even though I had never heard of her before, to my knowledge. For some reason, the name stuck with me. I asked my wife and neither of us could pinpoint the movie. We had watched three movies the night before, but which one? I went to Google and did a search to find out more about the author. She was born in 1830, died in 1894, and wrote this poem in 1862 while the Civil War was in full swing. The rest of the poem(3) contained this line which helped recall the movie: "For if the darkness and corruption leave/A vestige of the thoughts that once I had" — it was "Kiss Me Deadly" a Mike Hammer movie in 1955 from a Mickey Spillane novel in 1952. Once Mike had read that line in a book at the victim's apartment, he went directly to the morgue and got the coroner to confess removing a safety deposit box key from the victim's body, her dark corruption, a key to the box containing the whatzit. Imagine, I thought to myself, Mickey Spillane reading Christina Rossetti and incorporating her poem so beautifully into a mystery novel.

People who suffer neurological disorders often enter a silent land from which they do not return. Broks gave us examples of many different disorders in people for whom it was too late to counsel or pray. He also assembled a book which will leave a vestige of the thoughts he once had when he has gone into that silent land when his brain must decompose because his soul and spirit, no doubt much to his chagrin, has left it. We will remember him and smile.

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----- *Footnotes* -----

**Footnote 1.**

1. See Broks' statement of his beliefs in [Page 142, 143 passage](#).

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

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**Footnote 2.**

2. See Steiner's [Harmony of the Creative Word](#) for more details.

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**Footnote 3.**

3. The rest of the poem can be read in full here: <http://www.doyletics.com/digest08b.shtml#section6>.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 3.](#)

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