

## *Phineas Finds a Treasure*

Phineas walks, a forgotten now found  
Soft pound or two in his hand ('twas there in  
A pocket. Remarkable, providence).  
Finds the shop where it left him, sniffing  
And scouring wrinkled shelves he overlooks  
A bleached bit of coral, a biscuit tin  
Whose time-stroked and rusted mermaid is now  
Medusa: salt blonde hair now scratches  
Snake the metal and faded font.  
A spider-cracked tower of china cups  
Millenia washed, now dusted  
Fat and floral on the rubbed tea chest.  
Too-white even now, with their dull dulled gold  
Thumb-screw holes for too-fat thin thumbs. Crumb cake,  
Anyone?

How much for that/For what/This, here. This:  
Green felted box with spoons, clasp.  
So, stern and miserable turns, looks at once  
Over and under her blue eyeglasses  
To appraise Phineas: man, rogue  
Who comes to shop and buys to rape her goods.  
Four pound! Four pound. Four 'tis. Used to be his.  
The Sunday set of the Reverend/Oh/  
Yes, the Reverend/what was his name now –  
But she has turned to her red-booked accounts  
And a sucked pencil, too late  
To recall when his name was hers to arrange. *Four.*

Back at his box, yet however he cleans  
His purchase he cannot remove the dust,  
The shoe-box sugar bronze scent of years.  
He waves the neighbours over – come over! –  
Who smile, inspect, but know they have the same  
(where?) somewhere, under the house, in a chest  
In something, don't recall, it's somewhere, there.  
And so from this swift war defeated, he  
Retreats, sleeps, dogs bark in the downstairs gloom.  
The kitchened spoons will gorge on his new dust,  
And rejoin the lost, on the mantel or  
The bench, the case, the wall, the tabled floor  
Of a ten feet by ten feet life.

*Duncan Ley.*