

## ADAGES AGENDAS

Michael's

*Every cloud has a silver lining.*

Have I said more than I meant. Or mean to? I mean have I said too much, shy of either revelation or burden. Not so much said as wrote. Letter. Poem.

I hardly think I have any or many secrets. What is it doesn't want, literally, to be given away?

Years ago I realized that were I to encounter myself on the road I wouldn't recognize me. Has that got something to do with this? What I know, better to say "report," skims across the surface of speech, as though the said were the surface tension spread across silence. Making sense only happens in talk's immediate instance. Otherwise it's pulled in upon its own density.

*Know the ropes.*

Scrap of paper.  
Usually a grocery list

but on this is  
written:

What has come is gone.  
Without time's wear

and tear.  
Tears.

*Back to the drawing board.*

Doors of a warehouse burst open. Fifty years of my life come cascading out. Rather than an avalanche, the details, the things, the people (none of which match my life) quickly settle into a sort of Robert Altman movie where simultaneous scenes are being played out.

An old and wealthy woman mentions Storrs to me. My reply refers to the poetry collection and archive there. Her grand daughter sits beside her, five or six years old, dressed in a lacy Edwardian outfit. She dandles an infant sibling on her knee. "You must be sixteen," she says to me.

*In the red.*

When I first came to England in the 60s I wanted a daily life, an idea I got from Gertrude Stein, who somewhere describes how only on an island can you have a daily life. Which I thought meant a walk to town to buy that day's provisions. It was a romance pitted against mid-century suburban America, the station wagon loaded up with groceries for the week.

That was pretty much accomplished during those years living in the Yorkshire Dales.

But the most astounding thing, unanticipated, was scale. Looking out the window there stretched a horizon along which you could be walking in less than twenty minutes.

*Hands down.*

Mother's Day. A large screened in porch off the dining hall. A handsome couple in their sixties, perhaps older but looking younger. Late afternoon. Warm breeze.

Seated at a table on which is set a small wooden crate of peas in their pods. They're shelling them.

I scoop out a big double handful and join them.

We talk. They're painters. Live in California. The Bay Area.

The conversation meanders. When the bowl is full of peas and the crate with pods I get up and say, "My name is Thomas Meyer" and she says "I'm Inez Storer" and he says "I'm Andrew Romanov."

I hesitate. Then you must ... "Tsar Nicholas II was my grand uncle." I bid goodbye to the Head of the House of Romanov (disputed), Prince Andrew Andreyevich Romanov and his wife.

*Not my cup of tea.*

There's that cheap poetic trick. Let's just say rhetoric since it's prevalent in fictions. The placement of incongruent items, apparently fragmented, their simple serial nature obscured by being one thing after another.

But isn't that our tedium, our everyday, a washday occasion. The sun sets upon these steps.

This, I hide behind. Incapable of seeing cause and effect as anything more than this after that. "Seeing?" In Sanskrit a way of looking, a view, prospect means "philosophy."

*Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.*

A windfall.  
Neither one thing  
nor another.

*Making a scene.*

It's I think called something like "locophasia" or maybe "topophasia." It's when you can't place familiar places, you come round a familiar corner and suddenly it isn't. Is the bank this way or that? I've had it all my life attributing it to no sense of direction. Left hand. Right. West. East. Had no inkling. Everything for me was a bead on a string. Going the right direction was remembering or seeing what came next. The church, soon the little café.

Topographagnosia, that's what it's called.

In the last six or so months, ever since Michael and I decided to live in Skinburness, the UK, not the US, I'm having frequent, momentary disorientations. They begin with a sudden uncertainty as to whether or not I am in North Carolina or Cumbria. It's necessary for me to tell myself just where I am. Just that. Tell myself. No dependency upon landmarks. Eventually the disorientations began to also include familiar domestic locations, much smaller distinctions. Was I in Skinburness, on the Solway, or in Wetheral, along the Eden.

*Rain cats and dogs.*

Dark brown, dry leaf flapping  
on a branch. A gate post. Fire  
hydrant. I mistake

for someone bending to tie a shoe.  
Climbing the hill into view.  
Rounding the corner.

Who are these  
momentary figures?  
Parts of my past? My

hopes? The dead surrounding  
us in Time's gravity? Just as  
lately in recollections

the roles are familiar, father-in-law,  
husband, former lover but not  
their players.

*Lickety split.*

### A Winter's Tale

Sixteen years we hid away  
from each other though

our reconciliation knows no  
jealousy but plants and

overwhelms custom in a  
glistening present not

made stale through  
Time's quick or

slow passage.

*Cry wolf.*

Trying to remember who played Madame Arcati at the Seattle Repertory Theatre early in its history, 1963 or so. She was the Wicked Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. Hamilton. Edith, first came to mind. No, she's the Classicist. Then like a sudden morel, blue bird, or rainbow the name came: Margaret.

Independent of thought. The same thing happens when we do the Times crossword puzzle. The fascinating how do things occur. "Out of the blue" physics.

Occasionally a line, rarely a whole poem. Inspiration. The Muse or The Dead. James Merrill's Quija Board. Jack Spicer.

*Par for the course.*

What am I hiding from? Most of my life. Perhaps I need to call on the passive voice: What am I being hidden from? A constant, consistent invisibility.

This isn't privacy. The details are on the table.

Could be that this secrecy is the way I experience a lack of me where a kind of transparency wants to set itself up.

*Go out on a limb.*

The story of my life. Everything I am I owe to poetry. (Not “pasta,” pace Sophia ...) Or is that my kiting a moral signal. Is it even true. Maybe I’m no more than part of a good fortune. And as it unfolds. An eye, my ear: *poetry*.

All I’ve ever cared about. Or is that more luck, the lack of serious obstacles? Which causes me to wonder in a somewhat neurotic convoluted way. Yet provides me with occasions for writing sentences.

*Eat my hat.*

Radio Four has Jeremy Irons reading all of T.S. Eliot’s poetry over the course of the New Year. What a relief when Old Possum gets to *The Waste Land* and lets go of rhyme. The clattering (peach/beach/each to each) of the 1917 and 1920 collections testifies to the paucity of rhyme in English, and how inherently awkward it seems to an American ear. Christopher Middleton was surprised and probably a bit annoyed with my observation that James Merrill rhymed better, quieter than W.H. Auden.

It simply sounds wrong to me, or “precious,” antic. Not native to our language, not a development of Anglo Saxon. Perhaps I should get out the Chaucer, *The Pearl*, Piers Ploughman and see how French tricked us into it.

What does dazzle me is Eliot’s use of repetition, an almost Hebrew grid, simple parallel syntax.

*Jack of all trades, master of none.*

An incredibly blue sky. Mid February. I put on the Boston Modern Orchestra Project’s recording of *Four Saints in Three Acts* and weep inconsolably. The depths of me, if such a place exists. A source, not unacknowledged but perhaps somewhat shadowed. In a manner that makes me say “the yet-to-be.”

Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, Pound’s *The Cantos*, Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. Those are nodded to, but Madame Sosostris, I’ve no doubt, cards on the table, would tell me: “You come from Gertrude Stein and Jackson Mac Low, hands down.”

The dissolution of content’s source. Captivated by the language of a utility bill, words becoming music without looking over the shoulder. Poetry’s huge story, Psyche led by Orpheus, the danger and loss, separation anxiety big-time, incurred by a “backward glance.”

I fully subscribe to Gertrude Stein and Jackson Mac Low as our, or my “prospect.”

Lest Virgil Thompson be forgotten. Much as I cherish *Pelléas et Mélisande*, it washes over me as I listen. Unlike *Four Saints in Three Acts* which engages my ear entirely. Each word, each phrase, crisp and standing in full sunshine. A happiness. Don't let this be passive-aggressive, this gift, the emerald green of grass (or grace) on the fence of Time's Other Side.

*My first rodeo.*

This time of year

Egyptian in its expansive horizontal  
is our new littoral life  
on this firth

these ever changing muted grays and blues  
with slashes of vivid green  
and when up and awake to see it

dawn's fat pink fingers

*Let her rip.*

When I remember almost anything, book, movie, something I am writing, cooking, from the last ten or twelve years I am alone. Jonathan isn't there. Whatever that recollection, I'm uncertain whether whatever happened happened before or after he died.

An unsentimental soul, my life with him comes out black and white. On a page, bound in a book between two boards, not laid open but closed, on a shelf.

Is that to avoid something? A trauma familiar to the caregiver for someone in the last, yet drawn out, stages of a shared life and domesticity?

We were fairly housebound his last four years. There are people, events that have dropped entirely from my consciousness. Things other people mention or remind me. "You gave us such a wonderful lunch when Patty and I spent the afternoon with you and Jonathan." The speaker can't be recalled, nor the occasion.

Is this dementia? Will I eventually wonder how we got here. A car accident? Where do you go every night? When I wake why aren't you there?

*Between a rock and a hard place.*

I shall if then and will. When.

*Keep your shirt on.*

Watching a YouTube clip of Julian Ovenden singing “Make Our Garden Grow” from Bernstein’s *Candide*, I think “Wow, what black hair he has!” Then recall at your mother’s funeral cousins who remembered playing cricket off the dunes at Blitterlees when you were children and how black your hair was. And we are dripping sweat, naked, rolling around on a bed in Dentdale one hot June night in the dark but I can see the incredible white of your eyes. You say to me: “I’m so happy!”

*Fit as a fiddle.*

Often I like having a small dream in the hour or two before I get up and out of bed. Usually a silent voice in me is ticking off small chores: pay the newsagent, clear the garden path, buy milk. As a small gap begins to appear between subsequent thoughts, probably because sleep has begun to overtake me, another voice, or voices, conversations blot them out. Overheard, nothing to do with me, the price of tea in China, doping in the Olympics when abruptly a silence replaces these with an image, an inconsequential detail, almost floating, without context, a turning page, a box of paperclips, spools of thread. Instantaneously this disappears and a dream happens, a dream having nothing to do with my restless thought, overheard discussing, or an object found midair.

*Give a man a fish.*

I ask myself.

Again, but it was a while ago, I’ve just about decided to decline reading in public. Not that I’m asked that often, nor do I promote those possibilities. Be that as it may.

I’m hardly alone in this. Those readings when no one shows up except for oneself and the organizer. When much of the audience gets up and leaves, some huge distraction, students in a lounge just beyond turn on the football game ...

But isn’t this a kind of projection on my part, some conflict inside me that manifests itself in the “real world?”

I ask myself.

A hiding behind the poem sets itself up as saboteur, an unacknowledged yet willed disruption. To what end? To open the poem, the poetry to its emptiness?



As though (and this is my loosely considered, weak ownership issue) letting the poem go relieves me of having written it. Why? The pain of admission, a fear of failure? Though my work is hardly a failure, at least by any standard I'm aware of combined with a sense of my own devotion to the poem itself. Publication, award, public presence, I won't ask.

*A chip on your shoulder.*

Listening to *Four Saints in Three Acts* and remembering *The Steins Collect*, an exhibition we saw in Paris (December 2011), I pause. Here is a past I make part of my past, and have done so for a long time, since my late teens ...

But what unsettles me is that this is no more than fine bone structure, a solid genome, this is not a virtue.

This is a place to begin from, and while it is a place one comes from, how much of an advantage can it be? These aren't things we know.

*Tug of war.*

It is perhaps amusing to note the etymology in Sanskrit of the words *sukha* (pleasure, comfort, bliss) and *dukha* (misery, unhappiness, pain). The ancient Aryans who brought the Sanskrit language to India were a nomadic, horse- and cattle-breeding people who traveled in horse- or ox-drawn vehicles. *Su* and *dus* are prefixes indicating good or bad. The word *kha*, in later Sanskrit meaning "sky," "ether," or "space," was originally the word for "hole," particularly an axle hole. Thus *sukha* meant, originally, "having a good axle hole," while *duhkha* meant "having a poor axle hole," leading to discomfort, a bumpy ride.

*Scot-free.*

Born in Seattle, growing up there probably explains it. I love the rain. Here I sit. On the porch. A deflated hurricane come up from the Gulf blows itself out headed north-northeast.

The intimacy of sheltering in the rain, a pearly, dove gray isolation.

There's Marc Blitzstein's "Rain Quartet" in the third act of his opera *Regina*, "Make a quiet day/Consider the rain." It never seems right to me, to sit and listen to the rain in the company of others. Yes, homeliness and containment, but for me the comfort experienced here is solitary.

As solitary as thought.

*Up in arms.*

Something of the glyph is perhaps what I'm after.

100 useful things; not an enchiridion, nor a digest, nor commonplace book or even a list. More like notes or table talk.

A personal archeology. A florilegium. Some little project akin to Walter Benjamin's *Arcades*?

Piths & gists. What "spoke to my condition" as George Fox might've said — or Martin Buber.

Sort of "an anthology of influence," which may in fact be no more than "the invention of influence."

*A piece of cake.*

There came a station in my life, a three prong fork, a trivium. Which path to follow: Astrologer? Actor? Designer?

Astrologer. But when settling down to imagine my own chart there was way too much going on. It shimmered and vibrated. Geometries coming into focus then fading. I stared and stared, trying to grasp the shape made by the distribution of elements and the lines joining them.

Dante during his lifetime was known as an astrologer, whom it was rumored had written a book about Hell.

Aha! Eliminate all the trans-Uranian planets. And lo! A solid shape I recognized appeared, until then I had no identity except one discovered in passing. Let go of, and standing still, held until it returned.

*Shot in the dark.*

We stand before heaven's gate.  
What to have for dinner?

What goes where? Is an  
apple an event holding still

a long time? The metaphysical  
back in fashion. Yet again.

*Love birds.*

My partner of almost 40 years, his mother and my mother shared a birthday though they were born eleven years apart. And my father died on the same day as the mother of that partner though four years before her.

*Short end of the stick.*

I'm so afraid it'll all come crashing down on me  
this world I've buried myself in  
alive

hoping  
to disappear

by vanishing into what hasn't happened yet  
hoping God won't notice me

thanking  
Ganesha

for every thing he's put in my path to stop me.

*Down to earth.*

Sense of place. Not sure I know what that is. Pacific Northwest. Seattle. Do they provide an aesthetic influence? I wonder. Roethke advised his students to stamp their work with pines, alders, salmon, gulls, fog. To take strength from the specifically regional.

Don't think that has anything to do with me or my work. But, perhaps it's something you just can't know about yourself.

Landscape, or the stuff of landscape has made itself felt. More than anything else? No more than any other part of my day to day life, my love.

*Heads up.*

The Middle Voice. What takes place, observation rather than intention. It has been a necessary invention or misreading of mine to prevent my urge to anticipate outcomes.

Not that I have any clear sense (how could I?) of this in Classical Greek (it exists only lexically in English!).

When you drop a fork it knows exactly where to go. Just as the *I Ching* is there to relieve you of wondering what to do.

*Like father, like son.*

There was a boy, a young man really, the second son from a good family, the brother who'd have the adventure while the older one would be charged with family duties. And he found a box, or was it a book? Both, really, which when he opened it told him his life was about to change.

*No questions asked.*

What did I do to deserve this?  
Forever? Yesterday, it seems.  
Twenty some years. Always

saying goodbye. A train platform.  
Cinematic romance but never  
not passionate. Then.

Didn't seem we'd ever  
see each other again. How  
to credit that? Not a loss

but encounter, however  
brief. But this. A life together.  
The quiet dishonor.

What did we do?  
All Greek to me. What is it I don't say. Or  
don't say enough

to the one I love?

How beautiful you are.

*Right off the bat.*

I paint the walls the color of the firth and think not about death, but about the dead. How they are a closed or sealed up door.

Proximate but mute. Less palpable than brume. A brief history. Grief.

*Fish out of water.*

Under cover of dark's onset, I used to walk down the drive, almost half a mile, to the highway just as, in summer, fireflies began to rise from the ground. By the time of my getting back to the house they'd be blinking midair.

While earlier, at the entrance to the property the roadside beyond was now a riverbank somewhere in southern India, and the drive walking back up it, a forest path.

*Old one-two.*

My father was a policeman, my mother a nurse. That explains it. She died on Wednesday and he the following Sunday morning.

One early spring evening I met a man on Christopher Street in the Village. He took me back to a flat he'd just leased, not far from James Merrill's I now realize more than fifty years later. It was unfurnished except for a mattress, some bedding, a few glasses.

We had sex. It was the strangest experience, as though I was caressing, fondling, arousing, fingering, grasping, tonguing myself. This went on for several hours. We fell asleep. Woke the next morning and went out for a late breakfast at the *Brasserie* in the Seagram building.

*On the same page.*

What have we here? An algebra? A calculus? A geometry? That which is counted yet haptic in completely other ways. Knowing it is three in the afternoon but not knowing why. Or not even knowing what time it is.

*Peaches and cream.*

Puja. A TV documentary on India, the dedication of a film studio, something like that gave me the idea for a daily blessing. Years ago a friend presented me with a beautiful statue of Ganesha, it'd belong to another friend of his, an accountant for a successful pop group, now on the run, in a sort of witness protection program.

So, every morning I'd place something sweet, fruit or candy, in a dish beside the god, and something natural, flower or leaf, a small stone. Light a joss stick and play the *Sri Rudrum* on an iPod.

I suppose I've done this for twenty years. To what end?

*It's not all it's cracked up to be.*

Katha. At one of those "everything's falling apart" moments, a waking vision presented itself to me. Long dark hallway, at the end of which a small figure stands, hard to see quite who. A voice says "Kathy." Or sounds like it says "Kathy." My spirit guide or help from beyond? A few weeks later on an airplane flying to the UK, I saw a figure coming down the aisle from the seats farthest back and realized it was not a little girl but a tiny Indian woman in a sari, old but spry. Not "Kathy," but "Katha."

She was always there to talk with her anytime I wanted. And did. Usually about astrology. When she spoke to me she spoke to a blind beggar on a street corner. A prince in disguise?

*Down and out.*

Three things come to mind as I lie in bed this morning listening to the rain.

Said to be the most beautiful line of poetry in Classical Chinese.  
The fifth of I Ching hexagram 44.

*Willow covers a melon.  
Something held in the mouth.  
A gift from above.*

A native Chinese speaker told me: "In succession each male of my family receives a name corresponding to a character in a poem. Only the eldest of each generation knows which poem."

Early apple blossoms covered with a late snow. Petals. Flakes.

Actually there's a fourth thing. Roland Barthes has requested a friend enroll in a course he is teaching. I am proud of her but envious of the attention she's been given. We attend the first class together.

*Long in the tooth.*

Nightcap. Often Michael sets a Dubonnet Blanc with a twist of orange on my bedside table. Then lies down beside me and reads, usually Proust. I almost never sip the drink, but almost always fall deeply asleep within a page or two. Ah, in the early morning hours my head is filled with, or is it the room, filled with a light floral scent, and rich citrus bite.

*Cry over spilt milk.*

This is me.  
This crosses me.  
This is above me.  
This below me.  
This before me.  
This behind.

This is my present.  
This how others see me.  
This I am afraid of.

This I hope for.

What I want is my past to go away.  
Run away from me. Memories, recollections, inhabitations.

*Head over heels.*

The guy picked me up out cruising in the Village earlier that evening. I was about 19. Upper East Side, the wee hours. Sitting across from me a wealthy, unhappy, handsome, middle-life crisis, he asks: "What are your poems about?" There's an incredulous note to his voice. It prompts an answer preternatural, immediate and cold: "Deception and boredom."

Isn't the usual answer: "Memory and loss?"

To be nineteen and a poet, is to be nineteen ...

Without knowing it at the time, from a back alley, here I am entering the Ivory Tower of Spirit's Romance. Things are not what they seem. Though they are always something said. An uncertainty grappled after.

*Wake up call.*

So when does a poem end?

I hate punch lines. Though "ever after" resonates for me. As do "They returned home tired but happy" and "She would never forget what had happened to her that morning."

Or when does a poem begin?

In the middle of things has always struck me as a good place. As, no doubt, I've been heard to say, I favor the feminine close, the completion upon an upbeat.

But then I try not to be willful, try to go forward without a plan. Was that what they meant by Projective Verse. That's what I took them to mean.

*Birds of a feather flock together.*

Eight, nine, ten years old I did some summer stock in Seattle, and hung out in the dressing room to admire the young men in their dance belts, their shapely asses and large mango-like packages.

A couple of them would arrive from New York with that year's choreographer, usually a boyfriend and a favorite or two.

At the cast party for *Damn Yankees* Arden Craig who had taken an interest in me during the run said "Give me your address and I'll send you something from New York."

I wrote out my address and handed it to him. A little later he came back to me. "I didn't realize you lived in the City! This is certainly a Manhattan address: 332 East 59th.

"No, it's here, in Seattle."

I was thrilled for years, probably even today, to have such a Big Time address.

Nine some years later I met up with Arden Craig again. A bit of romance and exactly what I wanted from him all those years ago.

*Lovey dovey.*

Lately my dreams have been gatherings of people unknown to me though not unfamiliar. Awake, almost nothing of the complicated circumstance and lively discussions are recalled. What remains is the great satisfaction of having had a dream.

*Foam at the mouth.*

I've let myself slip through the cracks of publishing. At least as far as magazines are concerned, having no idea how an online presence works. Or I've made that a "difficulty" through inexperience. Books have never been a real problem, their opportunities have remained a constant in my life despite, now and then, longer stretches of hiding under a bushel.

Otherwise what to do with the poem has never been clear to me.

What has my work to offer? Except as unassuming example. What more?



*Needle in a haystack.*

Neither remorse nor regret. A lighter feeling, a flutter but pervasive. Waking at, say, two in the morning and there is no thought that grazes my mind that doesn't make my heart cringe. *Worry*, perhaps that's the word for it. One after another, details, a chance remark, a missed call, no word from someone for ages, it doesn't matter how tentative or how profound the matter might be, it is drenched in "no."

The introvert's silent "no?"

Getting up, walking about, a cup of chamomile tea and this feeling's gone.

*An arm and a leg.*

Watching Bela Tarr's *The Man from London* yesterday afternoon, a podcast popped into my head: "Condensation is the difference between Art and .... Art and what? Life? Science? Entertainment?"

Dichten = Condensare, Pound's formula in *The ABC of Reading*, something Basil Bunting found in an old German dictionary.

Could it be that an aesthetic invented at the beginning of the 20th century in reaction to the 19th might lack application at the beginning of the 21st? We don't need to compress, we need to expand. Slow poetry? Take time, make time?

*Hit below the belt.*

That cat with a cockatoo ruff.  
Or the dog I can't see but feed anyway.

These figments I must remind myself are.  
And everyday several times a day

something says to me: This!  
Right in front of you. This! Only this!

Sometimes. Silence. Contained  
quiet.

*If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.*

Plaisir d'amour

The sheen of love glimmers a moment  
then lost

enflames a lifetime.  
A cruelty come to a happy end.

*Quick on the draw.*

A picture of heaven.

When I speak I can only talk about you.  
When I'm silent I think only about you.

*A dime a dozen.*

Imagine sentences, paragraphs, pages so articulately detailed that their reader cannot remember anything he's read of them.

*It's not rocket science.*

In my dream Arthur Rimbaud was coming to lunch. A visit arranged by some shadowy figure not quite visible, corner of my eye, hovering, identifiable yet not familiar. What to serve? Tuna fish! And it seems an occasion to gather a small company. Rimbaud might read some of his poems?

My immediate take, how unsettling I find putting a book out into the world. For reasons of vanity mostly, fear of appearing foolish, "over sharing," betraying the trust and care of historical relationships, mongering gossip.

Eventually, I get over this, back onto an even keel. Just let the poems fend for themselves.

*My cup of tea.*

I shall if then and when. Will.

*Everything but the kitchen sink.*

The first poem I wrote was inspired by an affair the object of my love broke off. Me fifteen, him twenty-two. A wrenching experience, although it wasn't obvious to me at the time (How could it 've been?), its "prospect" or "vista" surveys my work to this day.

What happens when we encounter love? Whether that be approach, withdrawal, or enduring. The quotidian, *occupatio*, the concurrence, and accident of life.

*Neck and neck.*

In order to understand anything in this world we must learn how to read it, which doesn't mean it will always be read the same way on subsequent occasions or even during the present one. That these variant readings can be concurrent comes as no surprise...

St Augustine: *Tolle Lege* — Take Read

Take. To grasp, grip, seize, lay hold of, to touch with the fingers.

Read. The sense of considering or explaining, ordinary writing expressed as speech.

To read is to be counseled, hence ready.

*On Cloud Nine.*

Before we go  
let's remember Cole

Porter. Not his wit  
but his longing

provided the first flush  
of our romance

with its music.  
Separation.

Infatuation. The tick  
tick tock of the clock

in the hall. We  
never say "Goodbye."

*Goody two-shoes.*

It came to me the other day: Memory.

Isn't recollection but recovery. Not so much of what's lost but what blurs then blanks only to appear when bid. Sometimes not.

Is ambivalence a memory thing?

I like to think. Memory is praxis. Or is that pretentious? By which I guess I mean fact not sense. Outside not in. Not a day at the beach. No. A phone number. A recipe. When something slithers from a list into daylight.

Into second nature.

*Throw in the towel.*

Did I ever tell you. 1992. I'm at a meeting in North Carolina.

You're either in Cumbria or more likely, January, skiing in the Alps.

Middle of the night I wake. In your arms. You in mine. I know this can't be real. But it feels real. It isn't. But is.

*Under your nose.*

Yes, I know. A novel. Our lives, shared and apart, provide a patterned source. But I'm no good at plot. Wait. No good at people, inside or out. No ability creating the likable — if that's the word. Maybe I don't have that voice novelists listen for?

Or would that voice I hear when going to sleep or waking be it. A second voice. The first is mine. The other comes from a complete elsewhere. A chance remark, but more often a simple trivial detail: "What color is the ceiling?" "When does the train leave?" "Who left their coat on the sofa?"

*Wild goose chase.*

One — starts the climb.  
(A face appears.)  
Two — halfway there.  
Three — the end in sight.  
A face appears. (Again.)  
Four — done.  
Five — doesn't count.

*Curiosity killed the cat.*

I've been reading Tina Brown's *Vanity Fair Diaries*, shocked at my tangential experience of much she mentions. Because of Jonathan, his St Albans connection, but more so his relationship with Francine DuPlessix Gray. Having been to dinner at Alexander and Tatiana Liberman's house in Connecticut, lunch at The Four Seasons, and oddly enough, just in the last few years, dinner at Le Perigord. Watering Holes.

Consequently my half-thoughts are filled with teen-angst and power scenarios. Do I have the right shirt on, what do they think of me ...

My fate has been to have small aspirations. A tiny career as a child actor, age 9 through 13 used up all of my desire for recognition. Or a lot of it.

Or perhaps sublimated it. By the time I was 18 or 19 all I wanted to do was write poetry. Hardly a road to celebrity. Limelight shy am I.

Could the MacDowell Colony compete with the homes and time I've had to write in North Carolina or Dentdale? Best to be humble about that.

Elephant in the room.

My desire to be silent and unseen comes from wanting not to be in the way. Or not wanting to be exasperating. And persists buried deeply in the father/son commonality, a primal fear of disturbing then arousing less anger than irritation. An attempt to avoid the watchful eye of judgment.

But wasn't it my father's attention I sought? Which wasn't mine until my late teens, early adulthood. As a child my younger sister, the apple of his eye, was my shield, in her company I was in his.

*Close but no cigar.*

Catullus Eighty-five:

Love. Hate. Why do I? You ask. Maybe.  
Don't know, but it rips me apart.

*Under the weather.*

So, I wade out into the fading light, into the dark waves, into the ocean of pretension, speculation, and eventual confusion. Isn't David Hume's moral compass the circumference of sentiment. Intricately yet clearly, it provides Marcel Proust's great work a full life.

*Knuckle down.*

Walking from the bedroom into the sitting room, just a sentence or two. Not more than an hour or so ago. Can't for the life of me remember what. What? A small event in my history.

Yet, I realize now, my imagination has given me an entire biography filled with personas, locations, presentments, incidents that don't match any in my own life yet never lack an immediate authenticity — this happened to me. Is happening.

*Greased lightning.*

Songs, sentimental movies, soap operas, scenes  
all of which fizzed with me wanting you. Wanting us.

Then. Now.

*Cup of Joe.*

I toyed with the idea of calling my translation of the daode jing *Wha' Happened?* But felt uncomfortable about the jokey nature of "Wha'." What Happened though made good sense, yet for whatever reason, I decided on *daode jing* risking the unfamiliar take on *Tao Te Ching*. Perhaps.

What Happened with a question mark. What Happened with a colon. Events, the story they make, valencies, powers to combine or displace a narrative.

She enters the garden. He hides behind a tree.

*Plot thickens.*

The opacity of the poem, its being in shade. Trobar Clus.

*High and dry.*

Corralled. That delicate flutter. The clod-hopping thud.  
An emptiness. Its comfort. Wool socks or leather harness.

*Jumping the gun.*

Speaking from a condition neither active nor passive but somewhere in between. Something like a field of possibilities where intention arises through observation.

The transubstantiation of attention and experience.

The poet as the poem's own instrument.

What is the difference between having a strategy and having a tactic?

*You can't judge a book by its cover.*

Cares, worries, wants, even happiness remain a parasite anchored by the huge flux of everything, creating a distraction made out of the mask and masque of personal impulse.

*Bark up the wrong tree.*

My husband was born on the 22nd of February 1965 in Northern England the day I vowed to run away and live there. But it would be another four years before that happened, and 24 years before I met the man who was to become my husband, and 24 more until our wedding in Vermont.

*Cut to the chase.*

I've had to cancel a talk and reading for The Appalachian State's Black Mountain College Semester this coming February. Even so, am still pondering what my comments would've been. There's the cluster of vignettes I wrote for an issue of that school's journal devoted to the project. My idea was to stand up and tell the story of my extensive connection to the place, its students, and teachers because of a life with Jonathan Williams. As collateral observer, younger member of the family.

Robert Richman wrote for Hilton Kramer's *New Criterion* about attending a symposium in the summer of 1987 at Bard, "Poetry at Black Mountain College: The Emergence of an American School of Poetics."

"Thomas Meyer's love poetry showed a gift for language, too, but what he was doing among the Mountain Men was a puzzle."

*Burst your bubble.*

As a child I was a chatterbox. My father claimed I'd been injected with a phonograph needle. Articulate in class, eventually full of ambition or aspiration for "culture." Ideas, though it took me several years, not until I was in my early thirties, to realize my lack of proper intellect. Always in the company of brainy people, it never occurred to me, I was their mascot: Mine a skewed point of view, never a schema.

Happy really to admit my deficit of mind, comfort came as I told myself I could spot "thinking" when I saw it? When it presented itself? An instinct.

This comes up now because my talkative nature has eroded. Age? At least publically, and makes me feel increasingly dull, this not saying much.

But too, there was this notion, or romance, from my youth that there comes a point in a poet's life when he enters a silence. An idea from Yeats or Robert Graves? Probably impressed upon me by Pound's later years.

Dementia? Literally, being out of one's mind, which isn't quite having nothing to say, except as one might put it. Having nothing in mind.

*Jaws of death.*

East Hamlin and Shelby Streets, Montlake, near the Seattle Yacht Club on the city side of the Evergreen Point Bridge maintains an eidetic presence for me but completely free of any personal association, making it all the more haunting.

The same is true of where Cleveland Place runs onto London Road, the curb (kerb) there, in Bath.

Both are places I've been by myself, but also at least once in the company of someone else. Yet no conversation, incident, memory to account for these vivid imprints. Presently they are the only such charged loci for me, and have been for twenty, twenty-five years.

Are these places haunted? Scenes of some bloody killing, divine visitation, blinding revelation still transmitting itself? Or perhaps they're specific intersections generating a physics that allows, even prompts, just such occasions?



*Making the scene.*

Waiting makes a space. In that gap something occurs.

Even it if doesn't

there is that part of fortune  
which lets time be

a series not an "all at once"  
and so creates

somehow  
discretions

this night after another  
day by day anew

*Ring any bells?*

About 50 years ago (this amazes me) Gerrit and I were *en rendezvous* NYC, staying the night with Kenward Elmslie. John Ashbery was to give a reading at St Marks. Kenward had himself, us, and John for dinner at his Cornelia Street mews.

What I remember were the potatoes! Cubes, steamed, tossed with butter, yet perfectly compact and individual on the plate. But alongside what? Lamb noisette? These had been cooked by Suzy. She was wonderful. Never quite knew: housekeeper, cook?

For dessert *macaron*, deemed as "*incroyable*."

What impressed me most about John's reading was he took off his watch, set it on the podium, and read for exactly 30? 45? can't remember how many, but exactly to the minute.

For the next 35 years, I've been sat next to John, always in New York, at dinner, all kinds, usually lavish, private tables. We shared a goofy fixation on Uncle Wiggly and Mrs Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch.

And a year or two after that dinner Kenward came to read at Bard under my auspices as Chairman of the Literature Club. We ate at the Beekman Arms, and he told me (or have I made this up?) how much I reminded him of Frank O'Hara. Could that be? Only years later would that catch up with me, that kismet of my admiration for Frank O'Hara.

*Right out the gate.*

A snowy February in New York, I spent a couple days sleeping on the floor of Diane DiPrima's flat. I'd never met her until then, but she was the friend of a friend of mine. One afternoon she read to us from a work in progress, *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. The closeness, it wasn't really an intimacy, the domestic tone, not lyric, yet occasional, as in conversation, affected me profoundly.

*The Spring and Autumn Annals*, the source of DiPrima's title, is a primary Confucian classic. An empty text, edited by the Sage that, it is said, only reveals itself when read correctly.