

As a Perfectly Foolish Young Man I Wanted 35

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As a Perfectly Foolish Young Man I Wanted - Part Two - Book Five(a)



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As a Perfectly Foolish Young Man I Wanted 35



An Autobiographical Narrative: 1960s

Born on the Goldhawk Road

Provides a fitting preface
To a long autobiographical piece,
Consisting almost entirely
Of versified prose, and linear in nature,
Which is to say,
Beginning with my birth,
And leading all the way
To the early 2000s.
Whilst dealing with my earliest years,
It was fashioned only recently.
Although *An Autobiographical Narrative*
Has been composed not solely of
Stray pieces of prose
That failed to make the first team.
For it includes
Further versified phenomena,
Such as refugees from the memoir,
Rescue of a Rock and Roll Child.
The piece itself is a versified version
Of one much reproduced
In various forms throughout my writings,
Although it bears little resemblance
To its original, which first glimpsed
The light of day in around 2002,
As a meagre and mediocre slice of prose,
And while it can still be read
On the World Wide Web,
It's undergone much modification since then,
Including the alteration
Of all names of people and places
For the solemn purpose of privacy.
Although it was first published
In a form resembling that found below
At the Blogster website,

On the 1st of February 2006.

Born on the Goldhawk Road

I was born at the tail end of the Goldhawk Road
Which runs through Shepherds Bush
Like an artery,
And in the mid 1960s,
Served as one of the great centres
Of the London Mod movement,
But I was raised in relative gentility
In a ward of nearby South Acton
Whose vast council estate
Is surely the most formidable
Of the whole of West London.
Although my little suburb
Has since become
One of its most exclusive neighbourhoods.

My first school was a kind of nursery
Held locally on a daily basis
At the private residence
Of one Miss Henrietta Pearson,
And then aged 4 years old,
I joined the exclusive
Lycée Français du Kensington du Sud,
Where I was soon to become bilingual
And almost every race and nationality
Under the sun was to be found
At the Lycée in those days...
And among those who went on to be good pals mine
Were kids of English, French, Jewish, American,
Yugoslavian and Middle Eastern origin.

While my first closest pals were Esther,
The vivacious daughter
Of a Norwegian character actor
And a beautiful Israeli dancer,
And Craig, an English kid like myself,
With whom I remain in contact to this day.
For a time, we formed an unlikely trio:
"Hi kiddy," was Esther's sacred greeting
To her blood brother, who'd respond in kind.
But at some stage, I became a problem child,
A disruptive influence in the class,
And a trouble maker in the streets,
An eccentric loon full of madcap fun
And half-deranged imaginativeness.

And my unusual physical appearance
Was enhanced by a striking thinness,

And enormous long-lashed blue eyes.
Less charmingly, I was also the kind of
Deliberately malicious little hooligan
Who'd remove some periodical
From a neighbour's letter-box
And then mutilate it before reposting it.
The sixties' famed social and sexual revolution
Was well under way, and yet for all that,
Seminal Pop groups such as the Searchers
And the Dave Clark Five;
Even the Fab Four themselves,
Were quaintly wholesome figures.

And in comparison to what was to come,
They surely fitted in well
In a long vanished England
Of Norman Wisdom pictures;
And the well-spoken presenters
Of the BBC Home Service,
Light Service and World Service,
Of coppers and tanners
And ten bob notes;
And jolly shopkeepers
And window cleaners.
At least that's how I see it,
Looking back at it all
From almost half a century later.

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1960s

In its most primordial form,
Snapshots knew life as spidery writings
Filling four and a half pages
Of a school notebook
In what is likely to have been 1977.

And these were edited in 2006,
Before being tendered a new title,
Subjected to alterations in punctuation,
And then finally published at Blogster
On the 10th of March of that year.

Some grammatical corrections took place,
Which were suitably mild
So as not to excessively alter the original work,
From which certain sentences were composed
By fusing two or more sections together.

Ultimately, parts of it were incorporated
Into the memoir, *Rescue of a Rock and Roll Child*,
And thence into the first chapter

Of the definitive autobiographical piece,
Seven Chapters from a Sad Sack Loser's Life.

But recently, it was newly versified,
With a fresh set of minor corrections,
Although as ever with these memoir-based writings
The majority of names have been changed,
And they are faithful to the truth to the best of my ability.

Snapshots from a Child's West London

I remember my cherished Wolf Cub pack,
How I loved those Wednesday evenings,
The games, the pomp and seriousness of the camps,
The different coloured scarves, sweaters and hair
During the mass meetings,
The solemnity of my enrolment,
Being helped up a tree by an older boy,
Baloo, or Kim, or someone,
To win my Athletics badge,
Winning my first star, my two year badge,
And my swimming badge
With its frog symbol, the kindness of the older boys.

I remember a child's West London.

One Saturday afternoon, after a football match
During which I dirtied my boots
By standing around as a sub in the mud,
And my elbow by tripping over a loose shoelace,
An older boy offered to take me home.
We walked along streets,
Through subways crammed with rowdies,
White or West Indian, in black gym shoes.
"Shuddup!" my friend would cheerfully yell,
And they did.
"We go' a ge' yer 'oame, ain' we mite, ay?"
"Yes. Where exactly are you taking me?" I asked.

"The bus stop at Chiswick 'Oigh Stree'
Is the best plice, oi reck'n."
"Yes, but not on Chiswick High Street,"
I said, starting to sniff.
"You be orought theah, me lil' mite."
I was not convinced.
The uncertainty of my ever getting home
Caused me to start to bawl,
And I was still hollering
As we mounted the bus.
I remember the sudden turning of heads.
It must have been quite astonishing

For a peaceful busload of passengers
To have their everyday lives
Suddenly intruded upon
By a group of distressed looking Wolf Cubs,
One of whom, the smallest,
Was howling red-faced with anguish
For some undetermined reason.
After some moments, my friend,
His brow furrowed with regret,
As if he had done me some wrong, said:
"I'm gonna drop you off
Where your dad put you on."

Within seconds, the clouds dispersed,
And my damp cheeks beamed.
Then, I spied a street I recognised
From the bus window, and got up,
Grinning with all my might:
"This'll do," I said.
"Wai', Dave," cried my friend,
Are you shoa vis is 'oroigh'?"
"Yup!" I said. I was still grinning
As I spied my friend's anxious face
In the glinting window of the bus
As it moved down the street.

I remember a child's West London.

One Wednesday evening,
When the Pops was being broadcast
Instead of on Thursday,
I was rather reluctant to go to Cubs,
And was more than usually uncooperative
With my father as he tried
To help me find my cap,
Which had disappeared.
Frustrated, he put on his coat
And quietly opened the door.
I stepped outside into the icy atmosphere
Wearing only a pair of underpants,

And to my horror, he got into his black Citroën
And drove off. I darted down Esmond Road
Crying and shouting.
My tearful howling was heard by Margaret,
19 year old daughter of Mrs Helena Jacobs,
Whom my mother used to help
With the care and entertainment
Of Thalidomide children.
Helena Jacobs expended so much energy

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On feeling for others
That when my mother tried to get in touch
In the mid '70s, she seemed exhausted,

And quite understandably,
For Mrs O'Keefe, her cleaning lady
And friend for the main part
Of her married life
Had recently been killed in a road accident.
I remember that kind
And beautiful Irish lady,
Her charm, happiness and sweetness,
She was the salt of the earth.
She threatened to ca-rrrown me
When I went away to school...
If I wrote her not.

Margaret picked me up
And carried me back to my house.
I immediately put on my uniform
As soon as she had gone home,
Left a note for my Pa,
And went myself to Cubs.
When Pa arrived to pick me up,
The whole ridiculous story
Was told to Akela,
Baloo and Kim,
Much, much, much to my shame.

I remember a child's West London.

The year was 1963, the year of the Beatles,
Of singing yeah, yeah in the car,
Of twisting in the playground,
Of "I'm a Beatlemaniac, are you?"
That year, I was very prejudiced
Against an American boy, Raymond,
Who later became my friend.
I used to attack him for no reason,
Like a dog, just to assert my superiority.
One day, he gave me a rabbit punch in the stomach
And I made such a fuss that my little girlfriend, Nina,
Wanted to escort me to the safety of our teacher,

Hugging me, and kissing me intermittently
On my forehead, eyes, nose, cheeks.
She forced me to see her:
"David didn't do a thing," said Nina,
"And Raymond came up and gave him
Four rabbit punches in the stomach."
Raymond was not penalized,

For Mademoiselle knew
What a little demon I was,
No matter how hurt
And innocent I looked,
Tearful, with my tail between my legs.

I remember a child's West London.

*

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1960s

*

In September 1968,
While still only 12 years old,
I became a Naval Cadet
at the Nautical College,
Welbourne,
Situated then as now
In the Royal County
Of Berkshire.
Which may have made me
The youngest and unlikeliest
Serving officer
In the entire Royal Navy,
If only for a very, very short time.

*

The Four Precious Years (I Spent at Welbourne)

*

My third and final school
Was the former Nautical College, Welbourne,
Where at still only twelve years old
I became the youngest kid in the college,
And an official serving officer
In Britain's Royal Naval Reserve.
Founded at the height of the British Empire,
Welbourne still possessed her original title in '68,
while her headmaster,
A serving officer in the Royal Navy
For some quarter of a century,
Wore his uniform at all times.
However, in '69,
She was given the name Welbourne College.

While the boys retained their officer status,
And naval discipline continued to be enforced,
With Welbourne serving both
As a military college
And traditional English boarding school.
The Welbourne I knew
Had strong links to the Church of England,
And so was marked by regular
If not daily classes
In what was known as Divinity,

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Morning parade ground prayers,
Evening prayers,
And compulsory chapel
On Sunday morning.

Later in life, I felt grateful to her
For the values she'd instilled in me
If only unconsciously, even though,
By the time I joined Welbourne,
These were under siege as never before
By the so-called Counterculture.
And in the early 2010s,
I'd insist if I possessed
A single quality that might be termed noble,
Such as patience, or self-mastery
Or consideration of the needs of other people,
Then I'm at least partially indebted
For such a wonderful blessing
To the four precious years I spent at Welbourne.

*

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1960s

For all the Beatniks of SF consists of
Edited and versified extracts
From one of my earliest
Existent pieces of fictional writing.
Dating at an estimate from about 1970,
It reflects the spirit of the times,
Even though its been sanitised
For online publication.
In the years immediately following
The revolutionary events of '68
I was deeply in sympathy
With the West's prevailing
Adversary Culture
Or Alternative Society
Which is very much not the case today.
And my attitude is dictated
Not by increasing maturity,
But by my Christian beliefs,
Without which I might
Be an ageing hipster by now,
Blithely festooned
With ostentatious symbols of revolt.

For all the Beatniks of San Francisco

Shirley Brown was a very beautiful girl,
And her brunette hair
Hung down her back
And as the wind blew thru the window,

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It waved around. It waved around.
She was making sandwiches,
And was packing them with fruit,
And two massive bars of fruit
And nut chocolate.
She lit a cigarette, picked up the basket,
And with a nod of her head,
Waved her hair backwards
And walked out the back door
Into the alley where,
Propped up against a fence
Was a blue mini-moped.
She mounted the bike
And with a little trouble, started it.
And the rider made a sudden jump
As a horn blew behind her,
And a leather jacketed youth
Sped by on a butterfly motor-cycle.

People turned away
And the music blared on
And the youths talked on.
Then, a park keeper came
But the youths took no notice.
"What are you kids doing,
The keeper shouted,
I've had complaints from all over,
Clear off, wilya,
This is a park
Not a meeting place
For all the Beatniks in San Francisco."

John Hemmings started dancing:
"Cool it, grandpa, get on,
Get going, don't bug me!"
The kids had gone too far
And they knew it.
Some of them turned away,
As the radio blared even louder,
Litter was scattered everywhere.
"I ain't chicken of dying,
John Hemmings then said,
We've got to go on,
ALL RIGHT! Who are the crumbs
Who want to chicken out at this point,
Just take your bikes and go.
We're free people now.
Nothing can stop us,
We'll rule the streets,
The young people will triumph."
He was perspiring wildly

And his black hair
Hung down his back.
It waved around. It waved around.

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1960s

This jackadandy's original title was
*An Essay Written by a Guy
Who Was Too Lazy to Finish It,*
And it dates from
My college days, ca. 1971,
At a time I was yet enamoured
With the hedonistic
Hippie way of life.
It's been reproduced more or less
Verbatim, notwithstanding
Some minor editing,
And versification.
And I don't think it's necessary
To add there is no such cologne
As *Monsieur de Gauvich*™.
As the first title implies,
It was never finished,
But I've taken the liberty
Of belatedly turning the protagonist
Into a dandified danger man
Somewhat in the mould
Of Peter Wyngarde's
Stylishly overdressed secret agent
From the classic television series,
Department S and *Jason King*.

Englishman, Jackadandy, Spy

He made no move at all
As the alarm clock went off.
But ten minutes later,
It was obvious he was awake.
He lifted himself out of bed
And went towards the bathroom.
He shaved himself
With a Gillette Techmatic
After having sploshed himself
With a double handful
Of icy cold water.
He washed again, dried his face,
Put on some *Monsieur de Gauvich*™
And got dressed.
He wore a Brutus shirt,
A Tonik suit and a pair of
Shiny brown boots.

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He was six foot two,
And he smoked sixty Players
Medium Navy Cut cigarettes
A day, and he lit each one
With a Ronson lighter.
His name was Titus Hardin,
And he had the biggest
Wardrobe in London.

He was a fair-haired man
And very good-looking.
He was thirty two years old
And a bachelor,
And lived near Richmond, Surrey.
He was immaculate,
Wore long sideboards
And a long moustache,
And his hair was shortish
And well-combed.
His shirt was light blue,
And he wore a dark blue tie.
He wore two rings on each hand.
He washed himself
After his usual breakfast
Of toast, black coffee and health pills.
He cleaned his teeth thoroughly,
Put some more cologne on,
And then went to do
His isometrics.
His name was Titus Hardin,
And he had the biggest
Wardrobe in London.

He was born in London in 1940.
He went to Eton and Oxford,
Had taught at Oxford for eight years
But was sacked.
He had been an Oxford Rowing Blue,
And got a degree in English, Art and History.
His father was Lord Alfred Hardin, M.P.
Titus loved teaching,
And not many people know the reason
For his dismissal at the age of thirty one.
He was nearly expelled from Eton
For smoking, drinking,
And being head of a secret society
With secret oaths, but he was
Too promising a sportsman,
And all the boys respected him
As a prefect.
He was a fair-haired man

And very good-looking.
He was thirty two years old
And a bachelor,
And lived near Richmond, Surrey.
His flat was beautifully furnished.
His name was Titus Hardin,
And he had the biggest wardrobe in London.

*

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1970s

*

To See You at Every Time of Day
Is a song lyric, penned in 2003,
But heavily based on one composed
Almost certainly in 1974,
And which I originally sang
In a voice I stole from Bryan Ferry,
Who'd begun his career
As a conventional Glam Rock icon,
But who by '74,
Had reinvented himself as an old-style
Crooner cum matinee idol,
And it was his eccentric version of
These Foolish Things
That was the direct inspiration
For the lyric in question,
Indeed the song as a whole.

To See You Every Time of Day

To see you in the morning
Be with you in the evening
To see you here
At every time of day
Such a simple prayer
To see you at every time of day

To hold you when you're laughing
Console you when you're crying
Take care of you
At every time of day
Such a simple prayer
To see you at every time of day

So tell me why you push me away
When I've sworn to be forever true
When I've pledged
My pure and simple heart to you?
How can you be so cruel?

To see you in the morning
Be with you in the evening

To see you here
At every time of day
Such a simple prayer
To see you at every time of day.

*

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1970s

The Athlete, the Poet and the Reprobate

Was based largely on writings
Created possibly as early as 1976.
And as such, it's been reproduced
More or less word for word,
Despite having been recently edited
And subject to basic versification.
And in its original form,
It constituted some kind of
Unfinished fantastical novel
Centred on the titular
Athlete, Poet and Reprobate,
An absurdly self-exalting
Version of the original.
For within less than two decades
Of penning these self-same words,
I'd come to saving faith in Christ Jesus.

As to novels reflecting the luxurious lifestyle
Of a bygone age,
None had been even remotely completed
By the time of writing,
And unless I'm grossly mistaken,
I was several years shy of becoming an actor.
That said, the timidity described
Is at least partially accurate,
And I did feel the need to provide
An outward show of my significance
Through a peacock display of dandyism,
Which included
Some wildly idiosyncratic behaviour,
As well as the subtle deployment of cosmetics.

The Athlete, the Poet and the Reprobate

"I can't decide," she said,
"Whether you're an aesthete
Or an athlete
A poet or a reprobate."

"Even when I'm a lout,
I'm an aesthete," he answered,
"I lure, rather than seek."

"So why do you
Need to dress up?"

"Like Ronald Firbank,
I suffer from a need
To give an outward show
Of my significance.

His lifestyle is an uncanny
Parallel
To my own young manhood

I alienated people
Through a crippling shyness
Which I disguised
With my violently idiosyncratic

Behaviour, wore cosmetics
And wrote novels
That reflected the luxurious
Lifestyle of a bygone age.

The sensation
Of never quite belonging
Lingered about me always
That's why
I became an actor.

Through heavy experiences
I have built up
A stoned wall
Resistance
Against arrogance and aloofness

I am a sophisticated cynic
With a kind heart
And a tendency towards regret."

*

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1980s

The origins of *An Actor Arrives*
Lie in the barest elements
Of a story started but never finished
In early 1980,
While I was working at the Bristol Old Vic
Playing the minute part
Of Mustardseed the Fairy
In a much praised production
Of Shakespeare's celebrated
A Midsummer Night's Dream.

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It was originally rescued in 2006,
From a battered notebook in which I habitually scribbled
During spare moments offstage
While clad in my costume
And covered in blue body make-up
And silvery glitter. And while doing so,
Some of the glitter was transferred from the pages
With which the were stained
More than a quarter of a century previously
Onto my hands...an eerie experience indeed.

An Actor Arrives (at the Bristol Old Vic)

I remember the grey slithers of rain,
The jocular driver
As I boarded the bus
At Temple Meads,
And the friendly lady who told me
When we had arrived at the city centre.
I remember the little pub on King Street,
With its quiet maritime atmosphere.

I remember tramping
Along Park Street,
Whiteladies Road and Blackboy Hill,
My arms and hands aching from my bags,
To the little cottage where I had decided to stay
And relax between rehearsals,
Reading, writing, listening to music.
I remember my landlady, tall, timid and beautiful.

*

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1980s

*

Nineteen Eighty Tell Me
Has been reproduced more or less
As it was originally scrawled
In a red Silvine memo book
In the very summer of 1980,
Almost certainly as I was waiting
To go on as Mustardseed the Fairy
During the London run of a much-praised
Bristol Old Vic production
Of *A Midsummer Nights Dream*.

*

Nineteen Eighty Tell Me

Nineteen Eighty, tell me,
Where are you?
What are you trying to be?
This week, you're 1963
And there's even

Talk of a rebirth of '67
But that's next week.
Nineteen Eighty, tell me,
When will you be mine?
A little bit '59,
I'll not share you with a Beatnik
Take a rest after the exertions,
Punk revolutions,
Before our old friend,
Sweet nostalgia,
Goes round the bend.

*

An Autobiographical Narrative: 1980s

*

1.

*

Thanks to the large quantity
Of notes I committed to paper
While at Leftfield College, London,
My beloved college can live again
Through sundry writings
Painstakingly forged out of them,
Such as the poetic pieces that follow,
Which is to say, *Some Sad Dark Secret*,
Sabrina's Solar Plexus,
She Dear One that Followed Me,
And *I Hate Those Long, Long Spaces*.
And as in the case of all
My memoir-based writings,
The names of people and institutions
Have been changed
In the solemn name of privacy.

*

2.

*

Some Sad Dark Secret was inspired
By words once spoken to me
By a former tutor and mentor
Of mine at Leftfield in around 1982 or '83.
And which then ended up
As informal diary notes
On a piece of scrap paper,
Consisting of both
The words themselves,
And my own perhaps
Partly fantastical
Reflections on them.
Some quarter of a century later,
They were edited and versified,
And then the process was repeated
A half decade or so after that.

*

3.

*

I Hate Those Long, Long Spaces

Was recently conceived
From thoughts confided to a notebook
Sometime between 1981 and '83
While I was a student
At the University of London.

As I see it, they betoken
An undiagnosed depressive condition
Which ultimately led to my contracting
A serious drinking problem,
And ultimately some kind of crack-up,
From which I emerged while not unscathed

Another man entirely,
And while I'm still the victim
Of a depressive condition, it's not as it was,
Which is to say, one alleviated
By spells of great elation,
And yet fundamentally rooted in desperation.

Today, it's seen by its sufferer as long term
Yet temporal, to be dispelled,
Once he comes into a new glorious body,
Which is his hope and his prayer,
So all the sicknesses of the old,
Will be a thing of the past, never to return again.

*

Some Sad Dark Secret

*

"Temper your enthusiasm,"
She said,
"The extremes of your reactions;
You should have
A more conventional frame
On which to hang
Your unconventionality."
"Don't push people,"
She said,
"You make yourself vulnerable."
She told me not to rhapsodise,
That it would be difficult,
Impossible, perhaps,
For me to harness my dynamism.
The tone of my work,
She said,
Is often a little dubious.
She said

She thought
That there was something wrong.
That I'm hiding
Some sad
Dark secret from the world.
"Temper your enthusiasm,"
She said,
"The extremes of your reactions;
You should have
A more conventional frame
On which to hang
Your unconventionality."

*

Sabrina's Solar Plexus

"You were frightening, sinister,
You put everything into it
I took a step back
You get better every time
How good can you get?"

People are scared of fish eyes
They confuse, stun, fascinate
Coldly indifferent
Fish eyes
Sucked dry of life fish eyes...

Sabrina was unselfish,
Unselfconscious,
Devoted, unabashed,
Spontaneous,
A purring lioness:
"Yes," she said,
"I can imagine people
Wanting to possess you."

People are scared of fish eyes;
They confuse, stun, fascinate;
Coldly indifferent
Fish eyes;
Sucked dry of life fish eyes...

Sabrina said: "I'm sorry;
I'm just possessive
I'm frightened of my feelings
You'll miss me a little,
Won't you?
You should read *Lenz*.
I'm sure you'd
Identify
With the main character."

People are scared of fish eyes;
They confuse, stun, fascinate;
Coldly indifferent
Fish eyes;
Sucked dry of life fish eyes.

Have I written about the
Crack-up?
When I came home
Empty-handed
And I just couldn't
Articulate
For latent tears.
But am I so repelled
By intimacy?
When will someone
Get me there (the solar
Plexus) as Sabrina said.

People are scared of fish eyes;
They confuse, stun, fascinate;
Coldly indifferent
Fish eyes;
Sucked dry of life fish eyes.

"You look beautiful;
I wish you didn't,
Malignant
Flim Flam Man."
"I like it when you really feel
Something;
But then it's so rare."

People are scared of fish eyes;
They confuse, stun, fascinate;
Coldly indifferent
Fish eyes;
Sucked dry of life fish eyes.

She Dear One Who Followed Me

*

It was she, bless her,
who followed me...
she'd been crying...
she's too good for me,
that's for sure...
"Your friends
are too good to you...
it makes me sick
to see them..."

you don't really give...
you indulge in conversation,
but your mind
is always elsewhere,
ticking over.
You could hurt me,
you know...
You are a Don Juan,
so much.
Like him, you have
no desires...
I think you have
deep fears...
There's something so...so...
in your look.
It's not that
you're empty...
but that there is
an omnipresent sadness
about you, a fatality..."
*

I Hate Those Long Long Spaces

*

I hate those long, long spaces
Between meals and drinks
Specifically the afternoon
And after midnight.

I hate mornings too
Until I can smell the bacon
And coffee. I cheer up
Towards the end of the afternoon,

But my euphoria stops short
Of my final cup of tea.
I sink into another state of gloom
Until my second favourite time of the day.

My favourite is that of my
First drink and cigarette.
I hate those long, long spaces,
Specifically the afternoon and after midnight.

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