

Ken Bolton

## "A FEW DAYS

Are all we have. So count them as they pass.

They pass too quickly,"

says Jimmy Schuyler.

Today began not so well,  
but at first I think of Anna tonight humming at  
ten years of age  
a Sonny Boy Williamson song — that she has  
picked up from me — I'm so proud "!" Well, "amused" —  
I hum it too & we dance for a bit. Earlier,  
Cath, Anna & I go out for coffee — something  
sweet — & meet, fortuitously, George & Carlo -  
George (Georgina) with her second son  
at the coffee shop of tout  
le monde — "tout,"  
anyway, of this part of the world. Not like  
Rundle Street, where the action  
really is. King William Road — Hyde Park — is for  
the stiffer gentry &  
for their rich children, a near-enough-to-home  
amenity. Well, it  
does for us. Before that Anna & Cath played  
flute together.  
But thinking back, I realize,  
the day started with a ride into town, the paper,  
then the attempt to use the bromide machine, whose  
complexities, now, no one understands —  
& nor did I. Gave up in disgust. Its owners hoped I  
would work it out & thereby help them. Old  
technology. No such luck. This may mean  
I must spend more money — get things done professionally.  
After that I came home, showered, calmed down  
& set to some final odds & ends —  
before getting *this* load to the printers, some time,  
in  
the next few weeks — details of design: that I love.

I worry: the imagery is  
too American — tho it's not exclusively — & if  
I can get at the bromide machine  
it won't be. As I work I listen to Crab's band,  
*The Cocktail Hour* they were called — or  
more precisely *Crab's Cocktail Hour* circa 1985  
with its endless, demented patter between every  
song, that reaches high points of cynicism,  
frankness, disinterested bile, disinterested  
curiosity even — & surprised-by-joy discovery, where  
Crab & Arnold say things that surprise even them  
& are amused. As well, the band are at cross purposes  
never has the word "shutup" been so much used. It  
all works out for the best in a terrific finale  
where Crab makes a speech that parodies  
an impromptu MC at a bingo party thanking  
all for coming & putting  
the "best face on things." Those nights at Lark &  
Tina's really were — to quote  
one of the band's chosen preoccupations for the night —  
A Long Day's Journey Into Night.  
Really a long night working to dawn — rapport  
between band & audience  
(like the love between Liz & Richard in *Virginia Woolf*)  
acknowledged finally with the last two songs & the  
encore. We knew  
we'd lived another day &, en route, had seen some Real Life.  
Nightclubs made me so uncomfortable — still do -  
I'm very lucky I was introduced  
by Mary & Micky & Crab  
to that particular scene. My friends in  
Sydney & Melbourne never saw it. And it was only that  
one club, that one band. *Speedboat*  
was musically superior, but was much less about values.  
Or they were more purely musically expressed -  
the *Cocktail Hour* was a tour of duty, the whole experience.  
Anyway, I experience them again, two or three times over,  
in the afternoon, in my room, down the back, glueing this,  
drawing that, looking for useable images,  
noting corrections. Cath comes home

with the Banana, who watches  
television, demands food,  
borrows a pencil for her homework, while Cath sits  
reading on the lounge near her, calm. Dinner, &  
then the flute thing. The night is nearly over  
because we've managed all on the same night for a change  
to be tired together  
& hit the bed early — tho Gabe comes in, lateish,  
home from the other house (his father's).  
But goes to bed, quickly. Only I  
am up late, scribbling. A letter to Pam  
to write, maybe, a letter to another poet. James  
Schuyler to read. Crab to ring — to-  
morrow.  
Mary I should ring or see more often. And  
Dave, whose daughter died. I wrote — late enough -  
to say I'd visit, & haven't still.  
I live on the other side of only a very tiny city.  
Large enough to come between us.  
I am going to ease myself into my usual state of anxiety.  
Ah, equilibrium, you have found me! Mildly  
Crazed, mildly happy — happier, really, than that.  
I turn off the light.

