"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.