

A dissertation on the diurnal habits thereof(!)

- 11.01-05. Deals efficiently and kindly with the twelve students who have surrounded him with post-lecture questions. Questions such as: "What use is all this junk?" "Is it to late to transfer to another course?" "What did you say just before you said: 'The concatenation of circumstances forces us to consider at length the price of washing machines...?'" "My tutor is a goof; can't you do sumpin about it?" "What's your name?" "Does the college have a psychiatric clinic?"
- 11.06-07. Moves back to his office, stopping in a doorway when he hears one of his students say: "That's the best lecture I've ever heard!" His triumphant smile fades, and he turns off his portable tape-recorder as the next student says: "I think that old fake knows what he's trying to say, but he sure can't say it."
- 11.08-10. Reaches office, to find that the crowd has swollen to about thirty. Realizes that fifteen of them are members of his graduate class, gathering for a seminar. Decides he can just spare time to talk to one of the other students, whom he ushers into the office, saying, "Now let's have a relaxed chat about your problem - what was it now?" The problem is that the student has athlete's foot, her mother's boy-friend's typewriter has broken, the food in the residence is awful, and as a result her essay is six weeks late. He suggests that she visit the college's psychiatric clinic, pushes her out, and makes a note to write the registrar to find out if the college has a psychiatric clinic.
- 11.11-12.14. Graduate seminar takes place. For the first hour a student reads a paper on a subject in

which nobody else in the room is interested, and about which only three people know anything. what they know is that they aren't interested; the others are just confused.) The professor, who once knew quite a bit, alternates between looking absorbed, lighting his pipe and cleaning it (he can never remember to clean it before lighting it), and fidgeting with the further pile of mail that has arrived during the morning. He also makes notes from time to time. Most of these cannot here be reproduced, as they consist of doodles of knives, ropes, and guns. One says quite clearly: "When did all this happen?" One slightly smudged says: "Please open the door!!!" (Inadvertently he has opened some of his mail.) The last one says: "Don't forget to buy an electric hairbrush." (There was one phone call while the paper was being read.) (In fact, there were six phone calls while the paper was being read. Two were wrong numbers, one was from the Chairman of the Committee on Realignment, moving the meeting from 2.00p.m., when the Committee on Committees is meeting, to 4.00 p.m., which hour has been made available because the Committee on Extra-Committee Activities has vacated its usual time of meeting to meet at 11.00 a.m. This means that our professor has to phone - as he does - Chairman of the Committee on Extra-Committee Activities to apologize for missing the meeting, which is currently in progress. He of course can't reach the Chairman, who is at the meeting, but leaves a message with his secretary.) One of the calls was from the Chairman of the Committee on Extra-Committee Activities, returning the call

which didn't get through, and saying that, because there was such a small turn-out at the meeting, there would have to be another one tomorrow at the same hour (or failing that, some other hour or other). The final one was from one of his colleagues, saying that the heat was off in his office, and asking if it was on elsewhere.

- 12.15-25 Ten-minute break, while the professor assembles his note on the paper so that he can talk about it. He is interrupted by a scratching at his leg, which he finds is caused by a student kneeling beside him, reaching out in supplication. This student doesn't belong to the graduate seminar, but sneaked in with the rest and sat quietly for an hour, hoping for a few words in answer to his question.

The professor inadvertently kicks him, and listens to the question, which is: "Did Shelley drown accidentally, or was he pushed from the boat, or did he jump?" The professor kicks him intentionally, and with the help of two graduate students carries him out into the hall. He then phones his colleague to say that the heat does seem to be off, and asks him to phone the Superintendent of Buildings. He then leaves the phone off the hook.

- 12.26-1.00 For the first ten minutes, the professor talks in a persuasive, commanding, authoritative way, and concludes by asking for other comments. There aren't any. He delivers a five-minute homily on the benefits, indeed the all-importance, of an independent, strenuous relentless search after truth. He again asks for comments. A student asks: "What did you say just before you said: 'The concatenation of circumstances forces us to consider at length the price of furnaces...?'" This gives the professor the chance he has been waiting for, and he talks for the rest of the hour. The only interruption is by six maintenance men who have come to repair the heating system. They do, and leave as the temperature soars to 97 degrees.

- 1.01-06. As he dismissed the class, he asks the last students to shout, as soon as he is out of sight of the office: "Fire!" "Pot!" Student does so, and the mob outside the door flees, allowing professor to get to dining hall before the rubber chicken runs out and is replaced by plastic turkey.

- 1.07-14 Finally gets to W.C., where he closets and waters.

- 1.15-45. Takes a leisurely lunch, discussing the while the practicability and feasibility of establishing a Cross-College Interfiliation Committee on Infrastructures. Agrees to write a circular letter advocating such a committee.

- 1.46-49. Drinks leisurely cup of coffee while criticizing efforts of distinguished Professor Emeritus to cut out paper dolls. Tries it himself and cuts finger, which he already burned while trying to clean lighted pipe.

- 1.50-2.10. Walks across campus to meeting of Committee on Committees. Being a kindly man, he throws a few peanuts covered with pocket lint to the squirrels, who refuse to eat them. Also smiles warmly at several students who look vaguely familiar; they look at him queerly.

- 2.11-3.59. Committee meeting occurs. Nothing much else happens, though our professor makes two errors. He advocates uniting the Committee on Committees with the newly-proposed Interfiliation Committee on Infrastructures, of which no one has heard, and is branded an impractical idealist. He speaks forcefully on the question of scheduling meeting on Sundays at 7.30 a.m., and is ostracized for the rest of the meeting as a practical realist.

- 4.00-15 Walks across campus to meeting of the Committee on Realignment. On the way he throws a co-ed to the squirrels, who receive her joyfully, lint and all. Finds the meeting has been cancelled; the Chairman had tried to inform him, but couldn't get through, as the phone was off the hook. Walks back to college with a colleague who had gone to the wrong meeting by mistake. Asks colleague's advice about buying light-bulbs; colleague takes copy of *The Medium to the Messiah* out of pocket, slips off the dustjacket to reveal a copy of *Consumer's Guide*, and says that the question is too complicated for a simple answer.

- 4.16 Climbs in window to avoid riot of students outside door.
- 4.17-5.37 Sits down with eagerness (a student aide) to answer pile of mail, which has grown again

during the afternoon. Begins by writing letter of recommendation for graduate student who has in fact already accepted a job as organizer for the new Union, SWALOFF (Students Who Are Lined up Outside Offices). Writes a note to the publishers of *Consumers' Report on Consumer Guides*, asking for a subscription. Writes letter to editor of the *Canadian Intelligentsia*, saying he hopes his review will soon be in the mail, and asking what book he is meant to review. Writes cheque to College, paying for ten meals of plastic turkey and one of rubber chicken. Feeling somewhat better, he opens door and shouts that he can now see three students. The three at the top of the heap jump in, are seated quietly in the two chairs in the office, and then begin to discuss the possibility of forming a club to debate the problem of staff-student relations. Professor reminds them politely that there are two such clubs in existence, who have been trying for three years to get a staff member who can spare the time to debate the subject. Suggests that they might put the problem to the Committee on Clubs. They politely remind him that they have been trying for three years to get the matter on the agenda of that Committee. He suggests that students waste too much of the staff's time trying to talk to the staff. They make a quite improper suggestion and leave. Their anger so excites the students outside that the professor is able to close the door before any more can get in. He sits down again and starts to write a letter to the telephone company complaining that he hasn't had a call all afternoon, and then remembers that he's left the receiver off. He replaces it, and the phone immediately rings. It's the telephone company apologizing for the interruption in service. He settles down to think about his own work, i.e., a philosophic article on the theory that time expands to fill the work available for it. He gets an idea, and starts to write: "The concatenation of circumstances..." but is interrupted by the phone ringing. He reaches for it, changes his mind, and picking up his briefcase, climbs out the window.

- 5.38-48 Walks to car, kicking any squirrels and co-eds within reach.

- 5.49-6.49 Drives home, pursued by nagging fear that he has forgotten something. Finally remembers that there's a danger of power shortage, and stops to buy two candles. Slightly damages front bumper on young man who looks as though he might be a student. Still pursued, this time by a nagging noise.

- 6.50-51 Reaches home, and opens trunk to remove nagging noise, which is being made by student who had hidden there in hope of having a word with him. Agrees to answer question if student will baby-sit for the evening. Student agrees. Professor asks, as he hails a nearby notary public to witness the deal, what her problem is. Her problem is that she is poor, her mother is spending all her money trying to get her boy-friend's typewriter fixed, her own boy-friend is working the swing shift in Montreal, and consequently she has to baby-sit all the time. Could she, therefore, have a three-week extension of the essay due three months ago? Professor agrees, knowing from her story that she's mistaken him for someone else, and isn't even in his class. Tells her to come back at 8.00 for baby sitting duties, and not to bring her mother, her mother's boy-friend, her mother's boy-friend's typewriter, or any shifty swingers from Montreal.

- 7.00-8.00 Opens front door, to find five children and wife huddled waiting for him, with shouts of "Here's Pop!" "Where've you been?" "Want to Indian wrestle?" "Look at how much of my popsicle is left!" "Did you remember...?" "What did you say just before you said...?" "Wanna see my muscles?" "Pick me, me, me, me, up!" He has a little pick-me-up, most of which gets splashed down his rumpled Swamps Bros. shirt by quick-flitting hand, elbows, and teeth. Reminds wife that they are going out for dinner to friends, and asks if it isn't time they started to get the kids to bed, and to get themselves ready. Wife says it is, but she has been just so busy that she hasn't yet been able to get the children's dinner. Husband volunteers to get it while wife unwinds. He does. She does. The kids, they laugh. Baby-sitter arrives; husband tells wife that he's hired baby-sitter. Wife tells husband that she's hired baby-sitter, just as

second baby-sitter arrives. Second baby-sitter is girlfriend of repairman who is fixing first baby-sitter's mother's boy-friend's typewriter, so they both decide to stay.

- 8.00-44 Husband races down with children to spend a happy family half-hour together watching *Batman*. Phone rings and wife is in the middle of unwinding, so husband answers it. Colleague who is going to same dinner party is on the phone asking if they could have a little chat later about the new curriculum proposals that he hears are about to go before the new Committee on Interfiliation of Committee Infrastructures. Puts down phone. Three children tell him what he has missed, while other two roar that there's so much noise that they can't hear what they're missing. Two minutes later husband laughs. Laughter is interrupted by ringing of the phone; this time it's colleague's wife, saying that if he talks to her husband about the proposed curriculum changes tonight, she'll personally alter his curriculum. He shouts up to his wife that the call's for her. She finishes call, all wound up again; *Batman* finishes, with the children all wound up again; he calls hosts to apologize for being half-an-hour late (explaining that his mother's boyfriend's typewriter, etc.), and saying that they'll be along in another half-hour, but not to hold the food for them. Wife appears asking just when he's going to be ready. He asks if he can go as he is. Wife says, gently, "No." He asks if he has time for a bath. Wife says, gently, "No." He asks if he has time to change. Wife says, gently, "No." He goes as he is.

- 8.45-9.04 They drive to colleague's home. As they drive, wife tells husband about the phone calls during the day. There were ten from students asking when he'd be in his office. There were ten from students asking when he'd be coming out of his office. There were three offering great deals in gas mixers, washing machines, furnaces, light bulbs, and candles. He confesses that he had time today only to get the electric candles. She forgives him. They arrive at host's house, where no one else has yet appeared, all the other male guests being at a committee meeting to discuss rotation of speeches at undergraduate functions.

- 9.05-30 The other guests arrive, while the drinks circulate, and the talk centres on staff-student relations, which seem to be reaching a crisis; meanwhile the female talk centres on husband-wife relations, which seem to be reaching a crisis.

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- 9.31-10.30 Dinner, during which there is a wide variety of opinions expressed on a new perspective: student staff relations as they affect wife-husband relations. A good deal of acid wit is displayed, and some hysteria.

- 10.31-1.32 Over coffee, liqueur, and the dead bodies of their wives, the academics strive manfully to reassess the committee structures and infrastructures to resolve the crisis situation in faculty-administration relations, which has a clear non-relation with yet another crisis situation (this a new one) among faculty-administration board-students. Our hero makes only one major contribution, which begins: "The concatenation of..." Six of seven baby-sitters phone to ask when the crummy party is going to end so they can go dragging with their typewriter-repairing boy-friends. The party gradually cracks up. Our professor apologizes to colleague for not taking the opportunity to talk about proposed curriculum alterations, but says that they must get together over lunch about it tomorrow. Agreed.

- 1.33-52 Wife drives home, asking why it is that wives drive home, and suggesting that, if their evenings out are to be so stimulating, they spend more of them at home. Husband says very little.
- 1.53 Arrive home.

- 1.54-2.31 Husband, slightly more vocal, drives two babysitters to their respective mothers' boy-friends' homes, picks up their respective mothers, and drives all four home.

- 2.34-36 Puts car away. Enters, goes upstairs, goes downstairs (he's in wrong house); tries it all again. Loving wife, worried about him, is lying awake. She says: "I'm sorry dear. I forgot to ask you what kind of a day you had." He replies, pulling the covers well up: "Oh, quite good. I got more done than usual. Good night." Shudders at cold clammy grip on his ankle; reaches down and pulls out student who has been hiding there hoping for a few moments' chat. Flushes student down toilet, and says good night again.

- 2.37-5.43 Dreams dreams of the academic life.



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