

A breviary of divagation (aphorisms)

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Madden

1. That the sun gives us life does not prevent us from cursing the sun.
2. Neither can the straw that broke the camel's back pass through the eye of the needle.
3. The architect does not determine the pattern of the bricks.
4. We experience spring as warm and autumn as cool because we know which direction they are heading.
5. To see a shooting star, you can't be looking too fixedly at the sky.
6. I don't dance because I fear repetition.
7. Even the densest novel contains more white space than black words.
8. What power the week exerts over our routines. I would bathe my son every second day but for the week, which imposes its oddity to force skips or unwonted repetitions.
9. My children are beginning to remember moments I have forgotten. That they remember, I understand, not that they exist, is my legacy.
10. The Welsh poet quotes his wife's American doctor: "Bring her back in a fortnight." It's no wonder we don't remember dialogue verbatim; we translate others into our own language, the better to remember, the better to understand.
11. From the stage, every face seems familiar.
12. As we vacuum the rug, we grind in the dirt of our feet.
13. From the stage, every face is the same.
14. The ascetic and the debaucher each believes that the other cannot possibly be happy.
15. From the stage, every face is a mirror.
16. When my head aches, I hold my head, not to alleviate the pain, but to attract your sympathy.

17. The lead nearest the pencil's eraser was never meant for writing, but for holding onto.
18. We trust those who share our sins.
19. We mistrust the weather forecast, yet we peer outside in the morning and believe we can predict the day.
20. Overdevelopment begins only after I have moved in.
21. A certain satisfaction in resisting automation, automaton nation: the new building's bathrooms feature toilets and sinks without electronic eyes. I have to open a valve to flush. The water stays on until I am done washing my hands.
22. With every "yes, but," a dent in objectivity.
23. Having seen it once, we lose the ability to notice its variations.
24. The mechanic's advantage: he has seen your problem before.
25. My daughter, ten months old, walks by falling forward, catching herself just in time.
26. A persistent cough is the illusion that there is something to be dislodged.
27. Closing one shutter does not keep out half the light.
28. One mirror doubles the size of a room. Two mirrors make it infinite.
29. Who mows his lawn first determines the property line.
30. The improviser is great not because his playing knows no limits, but because he knows the limits intimately, intricately, exactly.
31. Bored with waiting for the infinite chimps and their infinite typewriters (and deadlocked in the debate whether to upgrade them to computers), we take matters into our own hands, simplify the goal, allow for intentionality: equipped with digital cameras, we click and clack away aimlessly, expecting to stumble across masterpiece, an Adams, a Liebovitz, a Salgado.