



Michael Kuszynski

*"- e poi ruppe la stampa"*

Grateful Fond Memories from Jonathon Brown (1974)

Many will write of Michael from extensive and constant contact with him, and their accounts and anecdotes will be legion and rich. That I did not enjoy this frequency, yet, in his company, was never aware of that, is testament to his great heart.

I first met him properly in my last year as an undergraduate, as a splendid party-giver on M staircase. His set had a bathroom - imagine! - with a wide range of *eaux de Portugal*: I immediately took to his discernment, dapper yet discrete, short of dandy, the college Cary Grant, with a purposeful yet unhurried gait to match. For I now see that there were three Michaels, all incapable of inelegance, epitomised by the bow-tie, the necktie and the cravat - which, I am sure, he wore opening the batting for an XI against the Pembroke Players in 1978. In other words, a complete personality adept and at home wherever. Invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace, he took as his 'plus one' his bedder.

Subsequently we crossed paths only once I frequented various reunion dinners in this century, yet his welcome was as if from the day before yesterday. His recall of past Members was matched only by Jamie Campbell's encyclopaedic memory. Like Jamie, he had a hospitable sense of Pembroke as a family, no matter how far dispersed by time or place. On each visit, he took the time to ensure I had access to the Library, and we would dine the next day in Hall, where, describing in detail the College silver (on which he was an expert, "though it is French silver I really know"), he taught me that beer - a word to which his enunciation gave unexpected dignity, with a whiff of trochee - is best taken in a silver beaker. Asked after a Pembroke Players' reunion

dinner what had been the fare, he responded with dactyllic precision, "Alcohol."

Knowing that I live in the south of France, where he had friends, he threatened to visit, but never did; he asked me to visit him in Peru - he had bought a place that turned out to be plagued by roof problems - but I never did. His brother lived there. I asked, "Oh, is he an academic?" To which, "No, he's President." There's no line so good in Potter's *Lifemanship*. Michael's matter-of-factness was disarming, since he had an understated intelligence of nuance, passion and taste that was as elevated, natural and unassuming as the perfect knot in his tie and the college cuff-links.

I believe he was appointed to be Prince Philip's minder when Vice-Chancellor, and I hope these pages contain suitably fine moments of anecdote; it's impossible to imagine a better double-act of characters, each steeped in what is revered and what is hilarious - and their inevitable overlap.

He took an interest in my art - especially a painting I had done of the College - and in 2015 I asked if I might do a portrait sketch of him. He agreed, though I sensed that, while it would be presumptuous of me to imagine he was flattered, he was almost troubled, since he was clearly an intensely private genial man. Nonetheless, he arranged a room on E staircase and the work was done. It would have been better had we had time for me to do a couple more, to relax both him and my hand & eye, but I am grateful that he agreed at all. It is the closest I came to his inner being, which others will know better but which, though we knew but nothing of it, we knew informed his wisdom and humanity.

My favourite moment, over port and stale claret after dinner, was when for some reason he asked me what degree I had taken. (Just the use of 'take' was typical of his command of correctly quaint English. Earlier in the evening he had referred to certain top barristers as "pedestrian", such a gentle dynamite typical of his velvet glove.) I replied, with shame, a II.ii. "Oh goodness," he said, "a rare bird. We give everybody firsts now." To have such kindness, respect, humour and warmth from such a man treasures my life, and whenever I raise my silver vessel of beer, or attempt elegance holding my saucer between cup and lip, I think of the luck I have had to have been in his company and affection, and of the lessons to be learnt as to how to create time for people. The gods created, then broke the mould. A rare bird.

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